

Commemoration Captain Eric 'Winkle' Brown

The Duke of York KG, Commodore-in-Chief Fleet Air Arm, and patron, Fly Navy Heritage Trust, attended an event to celebrate the life and achievements of the world's greatest test pilot Captain Eric Melrose-Brown DSC, AFC Royal Navy, held on Thursday, July 21, at the Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton, Somerset. The prime minister was represented by Sir Gerald Howarth MP.

The Venerable Ian Wheatley, chaplain of the Fleet and archdeacon to the Royal Navy officiated and pronounced the blessing. Rear-Admiral Keith Blount (Assistant Chief of Naval Staff — Aviation, Amphibious Capability and Carriers) read the lesson.

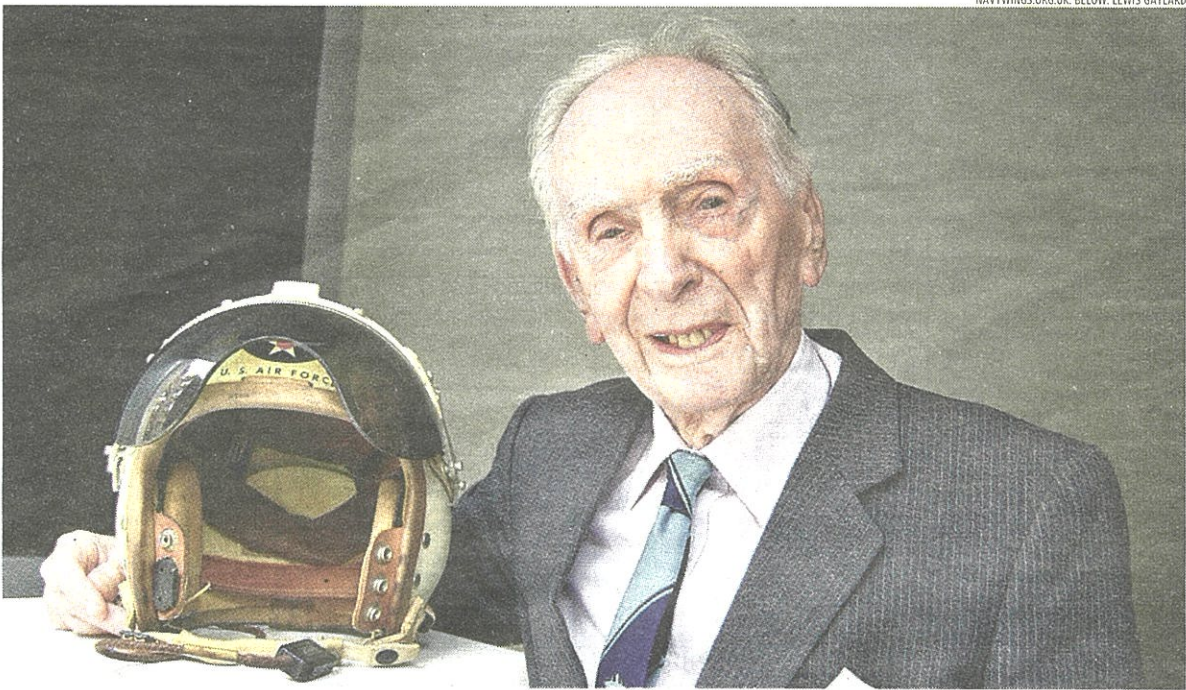
Commander Sue Eagles (communications director, Fly Navy Heritage Trust) read the poem High Flight by John Magee.

The Duke of York KG, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, Vice-Admiral Ben Key, Fleet Commander and Senior Royal Navy Aviator, Colonel Paul Beaver, Captain Todd Wilson, United States Navy Liaison to the Royal Navy, Mr Jeremy Miles (Miles Aircraft Company), Mr Anthony J Blackman and Mr Glenn Melrose-Brown, son, paid tribute to Captain Melrose-Brown and his remarkable career as a test pilot and aircraft carrier pioneer.

During the commemoration, the Yeovilton Military Wives Choir, directed by Mr Matthew Rock, sang Sailing by Rod Stewart, which was Eric's final choice of music when he was a guest on the 3000th edition of Radio 4's Desert Island Discs. The Band of the Royal Marines, Plymouth, directed by Major R P Long, performed a selection of concert band items, including Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines by Ron Goodwin, and music from the big band era. Miss Emily Horton was the compere.

Among others present were: Mrs Jean Kelly, Mrs Glenn Melrose-Brown with other members of the family.

Also present were: Lady Howarth, Lady Lygo, Sir Richard and Lady Matthews, Sir Humphry and the Hon Lady Wakefield, Lady Zambellas, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Benjamin Bathurst, Admiral Sir Ian Garnett, Admiral Sir Michael Layard, Vice-Admiral Sir Adrian Johns and Lady Johns, Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville, Vice-Admiral Sir Jonathan Tod, Vice-Admiral A. Jonathan Woodcock (Second Sea Lord and Deputy Chief of Naval Staff), Rear-Admiral R.H. Burn, Rear-Admiral Paul Bennett (Assistant Chief of Naval Staff — Capability), Rear-Admiral Paul Chivers, Rear-Admiral Chris Clayton, Rear-Admiral (Heritage Trust), Rear-Admiral and Mrs Simon Charlier, Rear-Admiral Tom Cunningham (chairman, Fly Navy Heritage Trust) and Mrs Cunningham, Rear-Admiral and Mrs Russ Harding, Rear-Admiral Graeme Mackay, Rear-Admiral James Rapp, Rear-Admiral A.R. Raybone, Rear-Admiral Ian Tibbitt (deputy chairman, Fly Navy Heritage Trust) and Mrs Tibbitt, Rear-Admiral and Mrs John Tolhurst, Rear-Admiral Simon Williams, Air Vice-Marshal John Ponsonby (senior vice-president, Leonardo Helicopters and trustee, Fly Navy Heritage Trust), Commodore Jon Pentreath (commanding officer, RNAS Yeovilton), Commodore Jack Alexander (chief executive, Fly Navy Heritage Trust), Commodore and Mrs Simon Baldwin, Commodore David Bartlett, Commodore Matt Briers, Commodore David Childs, Commodore Bill Covington (trustee, Fly Navy Heritage Trust) and Mrs Covington, Commodore David Elford, Commodore Andrew Jameson, Commodore Anthony King, Commodore Simon Kings, Commodore Jamie Miller, Brigadier Mark Noble RM and Mrs Noble, Commodore and Mrs Chris Palmer, Commodore Duncan Reid, Air Commodore Harvey Smyth, Brigadier Richard Spencer, Air Commodore Johnny Stringer, Commodore Gary Sutton, Commodore Rick Thompson, Commodore and Mrs Simon Thornewell, Commodore Malcolm Toy, Commodore Martin Westwood, Commodore Tobias Williamson, Captain James Band, Captain and Mrs Andy Barnwell, Captain Michael Bickley, Captain Nick Blackman, Captain Harry Blackmore, Captain Jerry Boddington, Captain Geoff Bowker, Captain Mark Bradley, Captain Henry Duffy, Captain and Mrs David Durston, Captain Ivan Finn, Captain and Mrs Mark Garratt, Captain and Mrs Andy Harris, Captain and Mrs Fred Hefford, Captain Terence Henderson, Captain Alan Hensher, Captain Peter Hore, Captain and Mrs Gerry Hunt, Captain Alun Jones, Captain Mark Langrill, Captain K.A. Leppard, Captain and Mrs David Lilley, Captain James Luard, Captain and Mrs Colin MacGregor, Captain Sharon Malkin, Captain Rob Mallinson, Captain Colin Miller, Captain W Morris, Captain and Mrs Mike Nixon, Captain Kieran O'Brien, Captain Adrian Orchard, Captain and Mrs Robert Rance, Captain Michael Rawlinson, Captain Paul Shawcross, Captain Robin Shercliff, Captain Danny Stemberge, Captain and Mrs Simon Thomas, Captain Robert Turner, Captain Nick Walker, Captain and Mrs Russell Williams, Colonel Richard Green, Colonel Tom Hickman, Group Captain Christopher Huckstep, Group Captain Tom Lyons, Commander Matt Avison, Commander James Blackmore, Commander Gus Carnie, Commander Simon Collins, Commander Johanna Deakin, Commander and Mrs James Dible, Commander Steve Doubleday, Commander and Mrs Gary Duffield, Commander Andy Dustan, Commander Simon Flynn,



Captain Brown with the helmet he wore in the 1950s when based in the US. Below: a Sea Vixen, among many aircraft flown

Celebrated aviator and test pilot

Alli Kefford

Eric Brown first came to RNAS Yeovilton on the day it opened in 1940, when "it was nothing but three runways in an ocean of mud".

Workmen had to be moved before each take-off and the fledgling pilot had his first accident there, belly-flopping his Gloster Gladiator biplane into a pile of rubble.

Yesterday the Duke of York, who is Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Philip Jones and more than 650 Royal Navy personnel, fellow test pilots, scientists and members of the aviation and aeronautical industries gathered at the same air station to commemorate the life of a man who rose from that skirmish with Somerset soil to become the world's greatest military test pilot.

Captain Eric Brown, who died in February this year aged 97, flew 487 different military aircraft — from gliders and jets to helicopters — including many during their dangerous initial testing phase.

He made 2,407 landings on carriers at sea and 2,271 take-offs, world records which will almost certainly remain unbroken given that seasoned US Navy Top Guns notch up about two thirds of these totals.

He was the first man to land a jet on a carrier, and during 70 years of

involvement in British innovative aviation went from flying the Blackburn Skua fighter to advising on the development of the F-35, set to fly from our new Queen Elizabeth Class carriers.

Brown — nicknamed "Winkle" because of his diminutive height — remains revered worldwide throughout the military and aviation industry for his flying genius and unswerving passion for British carrier strike.

He flew Martlets from escort carrier HMS Audacity during the early stages of the Battle of the Atlantic — surviving her sinking. However, it was during his six-year stint at RAE Farnborough in the later stages of the war that his talents as a scientist and engineer blended with a searing intellect that resulted in him playing a key role at the zenith of experimental flying.

The Duke of York said: "The current Royal Navy is all about carrier aviation, about getting us back into that game. Without Eric we couldn't possibly have achieved where we are going. He was a truly inspirational person."

Yesterday's commemoration was attended by Eric's son, Glenn Melrose-Brown, and his companion in later life, Mrs Jean Kelly.

A flypast of more than 40 of the aircraft that Brown piloted, including the Fairey Swordfish,

Grumman Wildcat and Hawker Sea Hurricane, swept in over verdant countryside surrounding Yeovilton, the throb of their engines echoing across the air station.

Brown knew no fear but was never blasé about his achievements, describing deck landings as "one of the most demanding things you can do as a pilot".

"When landing on a carrier you are essentially aiming for a small lay-by in the middle of a large lake," he said. "It is a three-dimensional problem through a fog, with none of the same visual references you get in land."

Brown donated his original test flying overalls, helmet and uniforms to the Fly Navy Heritage Trust, which hosted his commemorative event at their hangar.

He charged the charity to use his legacy to inspire new generations of aviators.

"It's vital people are aware of our heritage," he said. "After I am gone, I hope that the aircraft will be well looked after, and that the men who flew them and those who laid down their lives in them will never be forgotten."



Commander and Mrs Tim Gedge, Commander Darren Goldsmith, Commander Matt Grindon, Commander Ian Halliday, Commander and Mrs Edgar Horne, Commander Simon Joll, Commander Tim Kelly, Commander Roger Kennedy, Commander and Mrs Robin Kent, Commander and Mrs Rich Kerslake, Commander and Mrs Stewart Kilby, Commander Patrick Lacey, Commander and Mrs Mark Leaning, Commander Christopher Ling, Commander Stephen Lynch, Commander James Macdonald, Commander Dave Mackay, Commander and Mrs Mark Macleod, Commander David Marten, Commander Henry Mereweather, Commander Henry Mitchell, Commander Mike Norman, Lieutenant-Colonel Will Penkman, Commander and Mrs Aubone Pyke, Commander and Mrs Jeremy Redman, Commander Philip Richardson, Wing Commander and Mrs Clive Rustin, Commander Dennis Ryan, Commander Knut Sandved, Commander and Mrs Don Stolorthy, Wing Commander and Mrs Ian Strachan, Commander Stephen Thomas, Surgeon-Commander Matt Turner, Commander Malte Von Spreckelsen, Commander Robin Wain, Commander Louis Wilson-Chalon, Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Manson, Lieutenant-Colonel Holger Schmor, Lieutenant-Commander Glenn Allison, Lieutenant-Commander Nicholas Almond, Lieutenant-Commander James Ashlin, Lieutenant-Commander Jonnie Barnes-Yellowley, Lieutenant-Commander Richard

Bartram, Lieutenant-Commander and Mrs John Basterfield, Lieutenant-Commander Duncan Brodie, Lieutenant-Commander K. Burbridge, Lieutenant-Commander Suzanne Clark, Lieutenant-Commander S Cox, Lieutenant-Commander Nathan Dale, Surgeon-Lieutenant Commander Kelly Davey, Lieutenant-Commander Ralph Dodds, Lieutenant-Commander Anthony Eagles, Lieutenant-Commander and Mrs Dave Eagles, Lieutenant-Commander Martin Flanagan, Lieutenant-Commander Chris Götke, Lieutenant-Commander Scott Hughes, Lieutenant-Commander Ralph Jameson, Lieutenant-Commander Adam Jones, Lieutenant-Commander Earl Kingston, Lieutenant-Commander and Mrs Patrick Knox, Lieutenant-Commander Lester May, Lieutenant-Commander Rob Milligan, Lieutenant-Commander Martyn Pinnock, Lieutenant-Commander Chris Roberts, Lieutenant-Commander Alice Saunders, Lieutenant-Commander Alex Simms, Lieutenant-Commander Joe Stevens, Lieutenant-Commander Phil Thornton, Lieutenant-Commander Marty Van Duin, Lieutenant-Commander Barney Wainwright, Squadron Leader and Mrs Duncan Ross, Squadron Leader Robert Tuxford, Squadron Leader Chris Ford, Squadron Leader Dick Kharegat, Squadron Leader and Mrs Rhys Williams, Lieutenant and Mrs Gordon Bradley,

Lieutenant Dan Breward, Lieutenant Ashley Bye, Lieutenant James Cooper, Lieutenant Serena Davidson, Lieutenant Nick Jackson-Spence, Lieutenant Matthew Harding, Lieutenant Ellen Harrison, Lieutenant Charlotte Milne, Lieutenant Freddie Morton-King, Lieutenant Christian Smith, Lieutenant Adam Wheldon, Sub Lieutenant Dev Chowdhury, Sub Lieutenant Jo Huckstep, Sub Lieutenant Ali Sedgeworth, Sub Lieutenant Martin Young, Chief Petty Officer John Campbell, Chief Petty Officer Sandra Parkinson, Petty Officer Air Engineering Technician Devetill, Petty Officer and Mrs Matthew Evans, Leading Air Engineering Technician H Jemison, Leading Airman (Aircraft Handler) Andy Ransom, Leading Aircrewman Rose, Corporal Whilthouse, WO1 Steve Cass, WO1 Mick Davidson, WO1 Andreas Harvey, WO1 Geoff Kendall, Leading Air Engineering Technician Whitmore, Leading Airman 'Wiggy' Whitwham. Mrs Jeremy Miles, Mrs Keith Blount, Mrs Cate Pye, Mr and Mrs Eric Verdon-Roe, Mr and Mrs Ian Whittle, Mr Eddie Albrecht, Mr Richard Allum, Mr Laurence Allum, Mr and Mrs Arwyn Angel, Ms Rosalind Arlott, Professor Chris Atkin, Mr Neil Bailey, Mr Trevor Bailey, Mr David Barker, Mr Darren Barrington-Light, Mr Gary Bartlett, Dr Ian Bartram Harrison, Mr Jan Bassett, Mr and Mrs David Batcock, Mr and Mrs Charles Battersby, Mr Douglas Baynes, Mr Duncan Baynes, Mr Jack Beaver, Ms Elizabeth

Beckett, Mr Peter Benn, Mr Alan Blacker, Mr Michael Blacker, Mr Simon Blacker, Mrs Deborah Blacker, Mr and Mrs John Blunden, Mr Tertius Bonnin, Mrs Michelle Bonnin, Mr Connor Bowcott, Mr Ian Brannick, Mr Andrew Brookes, Mrs Veronica Bryant, Mr Mike Buckland, Mr Peter Campbell, Mr and Mrs Jack Cant, Mr Victor Chavez, Mr Steve Cheyne, Mr Nick Childs, Mr Stephen Clarke, Miss Laura Clarke, Miss Tracey Clempson, Mr Frank Colenso, Mr Gary Copeland, Mr and Mrs Tom Corfield, Mr John Corless, Mr Jason Corless, Mr Hugh Craig, Mr Bob Crosby, Mr Mike Cuttall, Mr P Dale, Miss Rebecca Dalley, Mr John Davies, Mrs Melanie de Watts, Mr Hugh Dibley, Mr Jonathan Dickens, Mr Geoff Douthwaite, Mr Richard Dumville, Mrs Elizabeth Duff, Mr and Mrs Roger Earl, Mr Hesketh Emden, Mr Nick English, Mr Giles English, Mr Colin Evans, Mr Tim Fagan, Mr Marc Farrance, Mr John Fay, Mr Roy Finlayson, Mr Mark Fitzgerald, Mr James Flanagan, Mrs Ruth Fletcher, Mr Ben Francis, Mrs Jennifer Franks, Mr Marcus Fysh MP, Mrs Amanda Gallahar, Mr Richard Gardner, Mr and Mrs Gordon Gardiner, Mr Rob Gearing, Miss Gemma Gearing, Mr and Mrs David Gibbings, Mr Bob Gibson, Mr Terry Giles, Mr Stephen Glancey, Mr John Goodman, Mr and Mrs Anthony Gomm, Mr and Mrs Ronald Grant, Captain Ted Hackett, Mr Mark Haddinan, Mrs Melanie Haddinan, Mr Roger Hall and Petty Officer Janet Hall WRNS, Mr John Hallam, Mr Gordon Hamilton, Master Echan Hardie, Dr David Hardie, Ms Mary Hardy, Mr Patrick Harrison, Mr Nicholas Harrison, Mr Andrew Healey, Mr and Mrs David Heritier, the Rev Andrew Hillier, Mr and Mrs Thomas Horton, Mr and Mrs Alan Hughes, Mr Christopher Hunt, Mr David Hunt, Mr Maurice Hynett, Mr Andrew Jack, Mrs Jennifer Jacob, Mr and Mrs Jeremy James, Mr 'Spoke' Jepson, Mr Brian Johnson, Mr Simon Jones, Mr Mark Jones, Mr and Mrs J. Jowett, Ms Sarah Kenny, Mr Ewan Kelbie, Mrs Jennifer King, Mr Keith Knowles, Mr Robert Kramer, Mr Richard Lake, Mr Lars Landsnes, Mr Knut Lande, Mrs Gill Laurijssen, Mr Nick Lay, Ms Louise Lee, Mrs Carol Lee, Mr Martin Lee-Bapt, Mr Simon Levy, Mr John Le Warne, Mr Paul Le Warne, Mr Darren Lewington, Mr Dan Lewis, Mr Jeremy Liber, Mr John Ling, Mr and Mrs Anthony Little, Mr Derek Long, Mr Ian McDonald, Mr James Mackenzie, Mr Don MacLaine, Mr Phil Macquaid, Mr Robert Manergh, Mr Tim Manna, Mr Geoff Maple, Mr Richard Martell, Mr Fred Marsh, Mr and Mrs John Marshall, Mr and Mrs Howard Mason, Mr Jacob Matthews, Mr Philip Matthews, Mr and Mrs David Mauleverer, Mr Martin Mayer, Mr Michael May, Mrs Jane May, Mr James McDermott, Mr Stu McLaren, Dr Simon Mitchell, Mr Dave Morris, Mr Graham Mottram, Mr Roy Moxam, Mr Jim Munro, Mr and Mrs Bob Neil, Mr and Mrs William Nichol-Gent, Mr and Mrs Anthony Oakes, Mr Christopher Orlebar, Mr Jon Parkinson, Mr Keith Partington, Mr Stephen Partridge-Hicks, Miss Lucasta Partridge-Hicks, Dr Niky Jane Paull, Miss Kelly Paull, Mr Clarence Paull, Mr David Paull, Mrs Gillian Paull, Mr George Payne, Mr Martin Payne, Mr Stephen Pearce, Mr Richard Pearce, Ms Cath Pearman, Mr James Pegg, Mr Craig Penrice, Mr Robert Pooley, Mr Mat Potulski, Mr Clive Powell, Mr Stephen Prince, Mr Peter Rainbird, Mr John Rawlinson, Mrs Ali Rayden, Mr Christopher Rayner, Mr Adam Reynolds, Mrs Jayne Richardson, Mr Norman Richardson, Mr Peter Roberts, Mrs Mary Roberts, Mr Paul Roberts, Mr Arnold Rosen, Dr Chris Royle, Mrs Sarah Royle, Mr Simon Runagall, Mr John Runyard, Mr David Russell, Mr Michael Ryan (trustee, Fly Navy Heritage Trust), Ms Laila Sadler, Mrs Valerie Sayer, Mr Ian Seager, Mr and Mrs Brian Service, Mr Nick Seward, Mr Charlie Shea-Simmonds, Mr Reg Simmonds, Mrs Julia Simmonds, Mr Peter Simmonds, Mr Tim Skeet, Mr Alfie Southwell, Mr Paul Shakespeare, Mrs Ann Shore, Mr Richard Shuttleworth, Dr Ronald Smith, Mr Ian Smith, Mr and Mrs Steven Sole, Ms Nicci Sowden, Mr and Mrs Andrew Sproule, Mr Drew Steel, Mrs Ann Stinton, Mr Andrew Strachan, Mr Stuart Strachan, Mrs Mary Sturgeon, Mr and Mrs Jonathan Suckling, Mr Andrew Sweetman, Ms Tracey Swindale, Mr James Tebbett, Mr Jonathan Thomas, Mr Tom Thomson, Mr John Thorpe, Mr Richard Thwaites, Mr Geoffrey Till, Mrs Geoffrey Till, Mr Tony Tite, Mr Guy Tomlinson, Ms Kate Tonner, Mr and Mrs Michael Turner, Mr Ron Underwood, Mr Matt Walker, Mr and Mrs Christopher Walkinshaw, Mr Gerry Walster, Mr and Mrs Simon Watson, Mr and Mrs Keith Watts, Mr David Weatherley, Mr Gareth Webb, Dr Phil Weir, Mr Chris Welham, Mr Arthur Wells, Mr Desmond Wells, Mrs Rosemary Wells, Mr Philip West, Mr Rowland White, Mr Christopher Wigdor, Mr Graham Wiley, Mr Michael Wilkinson, Mr Chris Williams, Mr and Mrs Peter Wingate, Ms Camilla Winlo, Mr Alistair Wood, Mr Nick Wood with ambassadors of the Fly Navy Heritage Trust and representatives of AVRO, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Airbus, BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, Westland, Empire Test Pilots' School, Boscombe Down, Society of Experimental Test Pilots, Royal Aeronautical Society, Company of Air Pilots, HMS Queen Elizabeth, RAE Farnborough with many more friends and former colleagues from around the world including Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and the USA and other organisations having connection with Captain Eric Melrose-Brown.