

Obituary – Robert Woodward (50-52)

Bob was born on 11th January 1934 at Portsmouth. After a short time in Oxford during the war his father, a Lt RN, was posted to the gunnery range at Ainsdale. Bob was educated at Waterloo Grammar School until April 1950 when he joined *Conway* then moored in the Menai Strait off Bangor Pier. Intending to follow in his father's footsteps he went into the specialist RN class. He scored consistently high marks for his general ability but otherwise seems to have kept his head down. He joined the Snowdon (Scout) Group and was awarded his Snowdon Badge, Second Class Badge and First Class Badge. Unfortunately he failed his RN direct entry exam but instead gained a place in the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) as a Midshipman Trainee Pilot. He therefore left before the end of his last term on 11th February 1952 to take up his appointment. The photo left is from his QB Term photo.



He became the FAA's youngest Sub Lt when he qualified in 1954 and was promoted early to Sub Lt. in order to join a front line squadron. He flew a variety of aircraft from carriers but he amassed most hours in the Sea Venom. At that time many innovations were being introduced including the steam catapult, angled flight decks and jet engines. He became particularly adept as a night fighter pilot. In 1958 as a Lt stationed at RNAS Culdrose (HMS *Seabawk*) he met and in 1960 married WREN Vanessa Fisher.

He left the FAA in 1960, moved to Sandhurst, self funded his civilian licenses and joined British European Airways as a pilot in Viscounts based at Heathrow. In 1962 he began flying Comet 4Bs. In 1967 he moved to Woodham Walter in Essex and joined Channel Airways when gained his first command. Later he joined Dan Air flying out of Stanstead and became their Chief Training Officer. In 1973 he and Vanessa sold up and moved the family onto a motor yacht in the Greek islands which they chartered to Americans. He later returned to flying with appointments in Malta, Zambia, other parts of Africa and Cyprus. In 1988 he and Vanessa set up TNT's European aviation operation using BAe 146 aircraft. He continued flying in command until 1999. In 2003 he and Vanessa retired to a remote French farmhouse in the Lot region which they restored, returning to live in the UK in 2015.



He had a quiet competence and natural reserve that was both reassuring and endearing, he seldom saw any reason to raise his voice. At home he was slightly quirky, building a sailing dinghy in the family's front room. Vanessa matched him though as they both drove high powered sports cars. He had a deep, understated interest and affection for his children. He crossed the bar on 29th December 2017 aged 83 years.