

On becoming a Platinum Member

I served in the Army, with REME from 1963 to 1985 and having trained as an Avionics technician, I was always involved with Aviation units, including AAC Flights and Squadrons, REME Aircraft Workshops, Regimental Air Troops, an RCT Flight and the REME Aircraft Engineering training system.

I became involved as a volunteer with the Museum of Army Flying shortly before I left the Army. Initially I was a member of a working group fitting out displays in the original build of the Museum.

On leaving the Army I ended up living locally in Over Wallop. This allowed me to continue with my involvement with the Museum. Later this was followed by being involved with exhibit installation after the new build of the Hayward Hall.

My own full-time work eventually led to the field of vintage aircraft restorations. This had started by working with Ron Eastman, the designer and builder of most of the Museum Exhibits prior to the recent re-organisation of the Museum. We rebuilt three Auster Mark 9 aircraft in the Museum workshop. I then went on to complete thirty years of vintage aircraft restoration, all flyers, ranging from World War 2 Spitfires to the last flying Vulcan bomber.

Throughout this period, I was involved with the Museum, when work allowed. Initially this was with SOFMAF (The Society of Friends of the Museum of Army Flying), particularly with the Sunday Working Group. Our role was the maintenance of exhibits and build of new items.

At a later stage, I recruited a group of my ex-Army colleagues, who meet locally for a lunch-time drink in a local pub, once a week. Initially this was to work through Unit Scrapbooks to identify unnamed people in the photos. This proved very successful as we all had history with the AAC covering from 1957 into the late 1980s. This group continues with research in the Museum Archives.

The Sunday Working Group continued, after SOFMAF was wound up, in much the same role. This eventually led to the group, with further volunteers, being involved in Project Eagle, the refurbishment of the Museum and its transformation into the Army Flying Museum. I was directly involved with this, programming and running the re-organisation of the major aircraft exhibits to allow the work to be carried out.

My whole working life has revolved around aviation, firstly with the Army Aviation, later with restoration of flying aircraft, but one interest has remained constant during that time. It is my involvement with the Museum. Fortunate to live less than a mile from the Museum, it has provided me with more than ample opportunities to be involved in Army Aviation history. I am currently volunteering at another aviation museum, but do not wish to lose contact with a system that has provided many opportunities, entertainment, and great friendships over a period of almost forty years.

That is why I became a Platinum Member, to continue my lifetime membership of AFM.

Ben Cartwright