

AIR VICE-MARSHAL PETER KING CB OBE FRCSE (S36-39)

My thanks to Peter and his son **Nigel King (S60-65)** for providing most of the following biography.

Peter was born on 17 September 1922 and was the first of 3 generations to attend Framlingham. He was followed by his son Nigel and then by his son **James King (S88-94)**.

He went straight from Framlingham into medicine and in 1941 was awarded an RAF Medical Services Scholarship. He was commissioned towards the end of WW2 and served his entire working life in the RAF.

His father had in turn been a regular soldier, one of the Old Contemptibles, who survived 4 years on the Western Front serving in the Royal Army Medical Corp (RAMC). He was latterly attached to HQ Royal Flying Corp (RFC) and in 1918 transferred to the new RAF. He was commissioned shortly afterwards. He also saw service in France in WW2 and was awarded the MBE.

Returning to Peter, he rose to the rank of Air Vice-Marshal in the RAF Medical Branch. For many years he was Adviser in Otorhinolaryngology to the RAF and in time became Professor of Aviation Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians at RAF Farnborough, then Dean of Air Force Medicine and finally Senior Consultant, RAF.

In 1964 he was appointed Hunterian Professor of Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons.

From 1979 to 1987 he was an Honorary Surgeon to HM the Queen.

He was the co-author of 3 books :-

- "Noise and Vibration in Aviation Medicine" – 1972
- "Aviation Medicine" – 1987 (see image below)
- "The Assessment of Hearing Disability" - 1992.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. In 1992 he was recognised as the co-descriptor, with Dr Kopetzky of Chicago, of the "King-Kopetzky Syndrome", which is characterised by auditory disability with a clinically normal hearing threshold. The main reported difficulty is understanding speech in the performance of a listening task.

In 1964 he was appointed OBE and in 1987 was created a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) and Commander of the Order of St John. He retired from the RAF that year. For 8 years he was a Consultant at King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst, before he finally retired.

Outside of the Service, he was a past Vice-President of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf People and a member of the BMA since 1946. Within his profession he was Chairman of the British Society of Audiology (1979-81) and President, Section of Otology, the Royal Society of Medicine (1977-78); council member of the British Association of Otorhinolaryngologists and Head and Neck Surgeons (1960-89) and an Hon Life Member since 1996.

Amongst his awards were the Lady Cade Medal (1967) of the Royal College of Surgeons; joint awardee of the Gilbert Howell's Memorial Prize of the University of London (1993) and the Thomas Littler Lectureship of the British Society of Audiology (1999).



By an extraordinary quirk of fate, **Air Vice-Marshal Simon Dougherty (G60-67)**, who was Director General of Medical Services, RAF, was taught by Peter King at Farnborough. By an even stranger quirk Simon was at Framlingham with his son Nigel.

He died on 11th November 2015, aged 93. He was pre-deceased by his wife Doreen and son **Nigel (S60-65)** but was survived by his daughter Sue and grandchildren James, Ben, Emily, Tom and Ollie and great-grandson Charlie. The funeral was held on Friday 27th November at St Mary's, Woodstock at 12 noon.

OF **Brian Smith** represented the Society at the funeral and recall the following "As you know, both Nigel and I were shooting partners at the OF Rifle Club and as a consequence both my wife Valerie and I knew both he and his wife Tizzy very well. Imagine, therefore, her surprise when she saw me there! She was very gracious and insisted that I be included in the family entourage behind the coffin as it entered the church as well as sitting in the pew beside her. During the service a very poignant moment was marked by an RAF bugler sounding both the Last Post and Reveille."

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**SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND THANKSGIVING
FOR THE LIFE OF
AIR VICE-MARSHAL PETER FRANCIS KING
CB, OBE, C.St.J
(17th September 1922 – 11th November 2015)**

Friday, 27th November 2015

12 noon

Below is the Obituary that was published in the Times on 7 December 2015

Air Vice-Marshal Peter King

RAF surgeon who pioneered a delicate technique to mend damaged eardrums and was a sculptor in his spare time

Peter King was a military surgeon who developed an original technique to close perforations in the ear drum.

This entailed delicate work using a microscope to inspect the inner ear, and the patching of holes with tiny pieces taken from the wall of a vein in the patient's own body.

In King's chosen service, the RAF, hearing loss from working with noisy machinery was frequent. A Phantom pilot flying from the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* once claimed, for instance, that he faced a noise level of 109 decibels inside his headset.

Also celebrated was King's groundbreaking work on a problem of aural processing known as King-Kopetzky syndrome, in which sufferers fail to catch the ends of words, or mishear things, despite their hearing having been measured as normal. Noisy or stressful situations — such as a pilot's experiences in the cockpit — exacerbate these difficulties. The condition was first described by Dr Samuel J. Kopetzky of Chicago, but King was, however, the first to discuss possible causes.

His discoveries proved enlightening beyond the world of aviation medicine, as about 10 per cent of hearing problems are of the sort King investigated, and are common among teachers, doctors, and musicians.



Peter King, and right, Victor, 1940, his sculpture kept in the RAF Museum

Peter Francis King was born at Cranwell, Lincolnshire in 1922, the son of an RAF squadron leader, William King, who had been appointed MBE for bravery in the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War. King's parents were stationed in British Mandate of Palestine. He boarded at Framlingham College, Suffolk, and in the holidays

was "farmed out" to relations and friends.

In 1939 he won a place at Charing Cross Medical School, with automatic entry to King's College London, at that time evacuated to Birmingham. In 1941, he won a Kitchener Medical Services Scholarship — one of five offered each year, and the only one in the gift of the RAF.

In London in 1944 and 1945, he tended victims of V1 "Doodlebug" flying bombs, and later those caught in the blast of V2 rockets. To his surprise, German casualties brought to Britain for treatment after D-Day, June 6, 1944, were so short of dressings for wounds that their field medical staff had resorted to using newspaper.

He qualified in 1945, and the year after worked under the ear, nose and throat surgeon Dr Ewart Martin at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, where he gained, in 1946, his fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The following year, he had his first experience of medical service abroad at RAF Fayid in Egypt. He was 25, and had arrived towards the end of a cholera epidemic. He rode a dark brown Arab mare called Albrighton, owned an alsatian called Rex, and had two servants, Ahmed and Abdul.

On being called to Aden, then a Brit-

ish Crown colony, to attend to an airman with a disfigured face, he remembered, "I was a bit daunted to hear one of the onlooking sisters say: "Good God, they've sent us a boy." Nevertheless his work was found highly satisfactory. At Habbaniyah airbase in Iraq, hospital work left time for afternoon cricket. He returned to Britain having been given, he noted, "responsibility far beyond my years; I had seen a great variety of cases."

From 1950, King was based at Princess Mary's Hospital at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire, spending periods in Singapore, Cyprus, and Germany. By then he had married Doreen Aaroe, a fellow medical student at King's, whose father, a Dane, had jumped ship in Liverpool to escape enforced First World War service with German forces, and having married an English girl, brought up his family in Britain.

King and his wife had a son, Nigel, a solicitor, and a daughter, Su-

zanne, always called Sue, who became a paediatrician. Doreen King died in 2006; Nigel, in 2012; King's daughter survives him. The family remembered hundreds of slides spread on the dining room table, and medical conversations which, conducted during family meals, appeared a little too gory.

For his developmental surgical technique on the repair of the ear drum — tympanoplasty — he was appointed OBE in 1964.

He was an air vice-marshal at Princess Mary's RAF Hospital from 1983 to 1987. After retiring from the RAF in 1987, he became a consultant at King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst, West Sussex, and later lived in Oxfordshire.

King's book, *Aviation Medicine*, written with John Ernsing in 1987, became a standard text. In his spare time, he became an accomplished sculptor. *Victor 1940*, the helmeted head of a pilot (identity unknown), in the RAF Museum at Hendon, north London, is much admired.



Air Vice-Marshal Peter King, CB, OBE, military surgeon, was born on September 17, 1922. He died on November 11, 2015, aged 93

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Second Edition

Edited by

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Royal Air Force Consultant Adviser in Aviation Medicine

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