

LT COLONEL ALAN CHARLES NEWSON DSO DSC (S20-28)

He was born on 10 June 1910 and after leaving the College was commissioned into the Royal Marines in 1928.

During WW2 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross on 15 September 1942 "For bravery and devotion to duty in air operations in the Western Desert." This was followed on 6 July 1943 with the Distinguished Service Order "For bravery in skilful and determined attacks on enemy shipping in the Mediterranean, made from light coastal craft and from the air."

He was a Past President of SOF and Governor of the College.

The following is taken from an excellent obituary published in *The Times* on 11 February 2008 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article3345357.ece>



Air Fleet pilot who masterminded dashing nightly raids against enemy aircraft from Malta

The Royal Marines — famously described by Rudyard Kipling as "soldier an' sailor too" — also made a notable but often overlooked contribution to aviation. Indeed, one of the first four pilots to be trained for the naval service in 1911 was a Royal Marine. During the Second World War, 18 Royal Marines commanded naval air squadrons or wings, and eight served as Commander (Flying) in 11 different aircraft carriers, Alan Newson contributing to both these latter figures.

Alan Charles Newson was commissioned into the Royal Marines in 1928 and, after training, was appointed in 1931 to the battleship *Rodney*, witnessing the infamous Invergordon Mutiny. He volunteered for flying in 1932 and completed five years frontline service in the carriers *Furious* and *Glorious* before returning to duty with the corps at Chatham. He was serving in the battleship *Barham* at Alexandria when war was declared.

Swiftly back to the Fleet Air Arm, Newson was allocated to 820 Squadron in the carrier *Ark Royal* and, flying *Swordfish*, took part in operations against the German invasion of Norway. On one occasion he suffered engine failure after bombing Vaernes airfield near Trondheim and had to ditch, being rescued by the destroyer *Hasty*. On another, unable to find *Ark Royal* in fog, he landed in a field on the island of Sandsøy off northwest Norway and waited for two days before *Ark's* amphibian *Walrus* picked him up.

In the Mediterranean in July 1940 *Ark Royal's* aircraft took part in the attack on the French fleet at Oran necessitated by the Vichy French local commander's decision not to immobilise his ships after the fall of France. Newson, now commanding 810 Squadron, led six aircraft to attack the battlecruiser *Dunkerque* but had a galling experience when his own torpedo failed to release.

As a major Royal Marines he executed the role of lieutenant-commander (flying) and flight deck

officer in *Ark Royal* during raids on Cagliari airfield in Sardinia, followed by the abortive attempt to take the port of Dakar in September 1940 and sink the battleship *Richelieu*. On that occasion Free French and Allied forces were repulsed with casualties, much damage to ships and the loss of nine aircraft.

After a short period in command of 735 Squadron at Arbroath in Scotland, Newson was posted in command of 821 Squadron, operating *Albacores*, based at Dhekelia, Egypt, where he was awarded the DSC for his part in night spotting during coastal bombardments by the fleet, finding and illuminating frontline targets, dive bombing, attacks on Axis shipping and minelaying.

The squadron moved to Malta in November 1942 to harass lines of communication from Italy to North Africa. In a single night his aircraft sank or seriously damaged two merchant ships and a destroyer with three torpedoes. Newson was awarded the DSO for his gallantry and leadership during these skilful and daring operations.

In May 1943 Newson went to America to join the escort carrier Trumpeter being built at Portland, Oregon, as commander (flying). With an air group of American Avenger and Wildcat aircraft, Trumpeter saw more operational service than any other ship of her class. Among her 13 operations were Atlantic and Russian convoys, attacks over Norway and against the battleship Tirpitz.

His final tour as an aviator was as commander (flying) at Machrihanish in Scotland. In 1946 he was appointed second in command of 45 Commando based in Malta and saw service in Libya, Suez, Jordan and in the evacuation from the British Mandate in Palestine. His final years with the corps included a staff course and administration until retirement in 1957.

He worked for the personnel department of Whitbreads until 1975 when upon his second retirement he was able to indulge his passion for foreign travel. His wife, Letitia Cradock, whom he married in 1940, died in 2003. He is survived by their three sons.

Lieutenant-Colonel Alan Newson, DSO, DSC, Royal Marines, naval aviator, was born on June 10, 1910. He died on December 17, 2007, aged 97