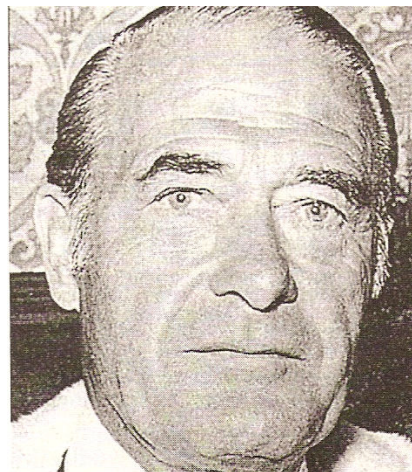


## **AIR COMMODORE SIR ARTHUR VERE HARVEY, BARON PRESTBURY CBE (R17-20)**

He was born on 31 January 1906 in Suffolk.

He joined the Royal Air Force in 1925 and qualified as a flying instructor. In 1930 he went to Hong Kong as a test pilot and representative of the Far East Aviation Co. He also founded the Far East Flying Training School. Two years later Gen Chang Kai Shek appointed him adviser to the South China Air Force, with the honorary rank of Major-General.

He found himself in serious trouble when, flying an aircraft from Manchuria to Tientsin, he had to make a forced landing in Japan. That he was both white and associated with the Chinese did not commend him to the increasingly nationalistic Japanese authorities. He was held in a military prison for a month before being expelled with a fine of 500 yen (£25) and a lifetime ban on entering Japanese territory – a penalty that ended with that country's defeat in 1945.



He returned to England in 1937 to take part in the King's Cup race, in which he came 4<sup>th</sup> race with an average speed of 142.4 mph over the Miles-Whitney Straight. He then joined the Auxiliary Air Force with the rank of Squadron Leader and founded 615 County of Surrey Fighter Squadron. He took it to France in 1939 and won 2 mentions in dispatches. He then commanded a squadron in the Battle of Britain and was instrumental in persuading Winston Churchill to become its honorary Air Commodore. Some years later he revealed that in 1942 he had been responsible for planning the air side of a combined operations plan to seize a German occupied Alderney and hold it for three weeks. He was made an Air Commodore in 1944.

He decided to enter politics as WW2 drew to a close and was elected as Conservative Member of Parliament for Macclesfield in 1945, a seat he held in seven further general elections. The constituency was the centre of the silk industry and within 1 year he had achieved the first of many backbench victories when he persuaded the Government to cut purchase tax on silk from 100% to 35%.

He had an engaging and irreverent streak. During the 1947 fuel crisis he argued that a bout of unemployment for MPs would be a good thing. "To shut down parliament for a month and stop legislation" he declared, "would be the best tonic the country ever had towards recovery." The same year he showed a more serious side when he travelled to India to assist in the evacuation of refugees between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of Partition.

In the Commons, he won respect for his knowledge of the aircraft and airline industries. Over the years he cajoled the state owned British European Airways into putting the Union Jack on the fuselage of their aircraft and bitterly attacked British Overseas Airways for buying American airliners rather than supporting the development of a civilian version of the V Bomber. He consistently urged Government to support British aeronautical and technological innovations rather than let them be developed in the US. But when the Conservatives came to power in 1951 he refused a junior office in the Air Ministry, preferring to concentrate on a career in industry.

He continued as an influential back-bencher and was chairman of the backbench 1922 Committee in the crisis torn years after Harold Macmillan's resignation and the Tory defeat under Sir Alec Douglas Home in 1966. On 14 October 1969 he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Macclesfield.

After declining Government office he became deputy chairman of Handley Page and chairman of Ciba-Geigy, among other City appointments. He also controlled a small trawler firm, the start boat of which was called the Marshall Pak, after Chiang Kai Shek's Chief of Staff.

He was made a CBE in June 1942 and was knighted in June 1957. In 1971 he was created a life peer.

In 1962 he presented the prizes on Speech Day at the College and in his address he said that it was only in later life that one came to realise the benefits derived from one's schooling. He said that there were many benefits to be gained at school besides mere academic knowledge – the most important being discipline, a sense of fair play and loyalty. In 1962 he became a member of the Corporation at Framlingham and was a Vice-President of the SOF.

A tall striking-looking man of great charm and infectious enthusiasm, he revelled in the company of beautiful women, who often found him captivating. He enjoyed to the full the wealth he had accumulated. He owned a magnificent yacht and became as expert a sailor as he had been an airman.

In 1975 he moved to Malta as a tax exile and re-married. His best man at his wedding was Prince George Galitizine, who had saved his life in an air crash in 1937. They were in a private aircraft he was piloting, when the wings folded back 1000ft above south west Scotland. He landed in the sea and was trapped in the cockpit as the aircraft began to sink. Galitizine managed to free him.

He died on 5 April 1994.