

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday 9 September 2021

The Air League celebrates aviation excellence

The President, Chairman and Council of the Air League today announce the 2021 honours and awards that were presented to a number of individuals and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to aviation and aerospace in the UK.

The 2021 awards were presented by Aviation Minister, Robert Courts MP at the Air League Annual Reception held at the Terrace Pavilion, House of Commons, Palace of Westminster on Wednesday 8th September.

The individuals and organisations which were recognised for their remarkable achievements are as follows:

Companionship

Companionship of the Air League is bestowed to individuals *“For whom this special distinction seems to be the most appropriate form of recognition following outstanding achievements within aviation and aerospace over a lifetime.”*

Born in 1930, **Yvonne Pope Sintes** fell in love with aeroplanes aged 8 and knew she had to fly. She tried joining the Royal Air Force aged 18, but in the 1940's they would not teach women to fly, and very few were allowed into the male dominated world of aviation.

She was determined to fly and embarked upon her mission and in early 1951 joined Scottish Airlines and then later, British Overseas Airways as a stewardess. Yvonne earned her Private Pilot's License from Airways Aero Club on the 31st of July 1952.

Sadly, Yvonne was widowed in the mid 1950's and became a full-time flying instructor to support her two young sons. Continuing her passion for flight, undeterred she completed her commercial pilot training but was met with difficulty to find an airline willing to accept a female pilot.

She became the first ever female air traffic controller employed by the Air Ministry in 1960. Based at Gatwick Airport for nearly 5 years before finally landing her first flying role as the UK's first female commercial pilot with Morton Air Services in 1965, flying Douglas DC-3 Dakota, de Havilland DH.114 Heron and de Havilland DH.104 Dove aircraft around Britain and Europe.

In 1969 she joined Dan-Air. She again flew the Dakota, then the Airspeed AS.57 Ambassador and then was the first woman to fly the de Havilland DH.106 Comet jetliner, her favourite aircraft.

Gaining her command as the UK's first female airline captain on the Hawker Siddeley HS 748 in early 1972, Yvonne became the world's first female jetliner captain on 16th June 1975 commanding a BAC One-Eleven from Gatwick to Heraklion. Later moving back onto the Comet until her retirement. She also co-founded the British Women Pilots' Association in 1955, holding an active role for over 30 years.

Yvonne was elected a companion of the Air League by the Council on the 1st of July this year and she was delighted to accept the distinction to become the 17th Companion of the League, and was very much looking forward to receiving her companionship address however sadly, Yvonne passed away in August 2021 month at the age of 90.

The Scott-Farnie Medal

The medal is awarded "*for achievement in the field of air education*"

The Scott Farnie Medal is awarded to **David Pitchforth** recognising his long and distinguished career within aviation and aerospace and his selfless commitment in promoting apprenticeships and instigating the Centennial Wings programme,

The Jeffrey Quill Medal

The medal is awarded "*For an outstanding contribution to the development of air-mindedness in Britain's youth*"

The Jeffrey Quill Medal is awarded to both **Air Commodore Dawn McCafferty CBE** for her selfless commitment to promoting air mindedness to the next generation within the Royal Air Force Air Cadets.

The Marshall of Cambridge Medal

The medal is awarded "*For exceptional support of the Air League Trust by a recent scholarship winner*"

The Marshall of Cambridge Medal is awarded to **Bridget Donaldson** for her continued support of the Air League and work curating the Air League's 110th anniversary exhibition at the Royal Air Force Museum.

President's Meritorious Service Award

Sir Roger Bone KCMG

Recognising his service and commitment to the League.

The Billy Deacon Search and Rescue Memorial Trophy

Philip Wrenn

For his selfless and meritorious actions.

Framed Addresses

Martin Aston and James McMicking

To recognise their efforts to invigorate High Value Design in the United Kingdom.

ZeroAvia

For their ground-breaking development of a zero-emission aircraft.

Project Wingman

For their inspiring commitment, dedication, and service to the NHS throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Royal Air Force Chinook Force

Recognising its incredible and illustrious 40 years of service.

The Prince Philip Flying Scholarship

Venessa Njoki