



## **John Greaves**

A personal memoir of their father by Christopher and Andrew Greaves.

John graduated from his apprenticeship at Halton (64<sup>th</sup> entry) in December 1952. On pass out he was awarded best tradesman. Shortly afterwards, he was stationed at Allied Air Forces HQ Fontainebleau France under Sir Basil Embry (C-in-C Allied Air Forces Central Europe).

At some point early in his career he was offered a commission. He turned this down and did wonder whether he had made the right decision, but said that he wanted to do what he loved doing most, that is making things work using his engineering skills.

John's RAF postings included Holland, Germany (Geilenkirchen), Watton, Coltishall, Leconfield, Tengah (1969-1971 with 74 Squadron), Cottesmore, BAC Warton (as an instructor on Lightnings) and finally, Lossiemouth.

He first worked on Lightnings in 1964 at Coltishall and became a specialist in power controls. He loved this aircraft and the nature of the work, even though it was gruelling work at times in the heat and humidity of Singapore. 'The kites had to fly seven days per week,' he said. 'Sometimes you had to fix what you had with intuition, engineering skill and occasionally Araldite!' He always said his posting to Tengah with 74 Squadron was the highlight of his career. It was a combination of the planes, the place and the camaraderie.



**Some of 74's groundcrew aboard a Lightning wing at Tengah.**

For us as young lads Tengah and the Lightnings were special, writes Christopher. I remember one day seeing something at the age of 10 that must be unique. My friend and I, on hearing the bang of an engine being started, knew that we had about ten minutes to get from the married quarters to see the aircraft take off. At the end of the runway was a long grassy slope. Being the miscreants that we were, my friend and I crawled on our bellies up to the top of the long slope, ignoring the warning signs. Being careful to keep our heads down to avoid the RAF police, we laid on our backs and awaited the show. We were not disappointed. Two Lightnings took off and when overhead they were on full reheat going near vertical as we stared directly up their exhausts and felt the power! What a sight it was.



**John and a colleague enjoying some liquid camaraderie during a formal evening out at Tengah. Is his colleague wearing non-regulation headgear?!**



**John and other crew members accompanied CO Dennis Caldwell and two aircraft to Bangkok in September 1970. John took this photograph of the CO greeting a Thai official.**

Flight safety was always the first priority of course and John earned recognition on several occasions including being awarded a Strike Command Flight Safety Certificate at Lossiemouth for identifying a lethal control fault on Jaguars. He carried that attitude into civilian life and we have always admired the way he did any job once and did it properly. John appreciated quality and always had the best tools & equipment.

After John retired from the RAF in 1976 he ran his own refrigeration service business before fully retiring.

He enjoyed golf, caravanning, photography, showing prize cats and gliding. He has a superb collection of photographic slides from his tour at Tengah including many of Lightnings in the air and on the ground.



He took up gliding after his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, obtained his Sailplane Pilot's Licence and flew gliders until he was 75. Later in retirement he started model engineering. With a lathe, a mill and some hand tools he created six superb working model steam engines from lumps of metal- a real tribute to the skills he learnt throughout his career on airframes.

John died on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026. He leaves his wife Sheila who he married in 1956, three sons, John, Christopher and Andrew, and five grandchildren. We will miss him.