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Above - April 1992 and below - September 1992



THE USAF UPPER HEYFORD STORY: 6

1992 to 1993

1992

February SAL reports an F-111 engine fails just after take-off resulting in a noisy flight across the village but manages to return to Base safely.

Pril A jet crashes into the car park of Dalgety's Agriculture Ltd, near Finmere, destroying 15 cars and killing a dog. The pilots, Geoff Coombe and Dave Genevish eject before crashing. "Defend Steeple Aston" question whether the stated safety priority in such incidents remains to protect those on the ground. "Sky Pageant 92" announced as likely to be the last.

September Two pilots, Jerry Lindh (a Steeple Aston resident) and Dave McGuire are killed when their jet collides with a fence just in front of the landing strip in Upper Heyford.

1993

An announcement is made that the Base will be shut from September 1994.

December The last F-111s fly out.



October 1993 SAL editorial and PC notes express sadness at the loss of the two pilots. However, the latter notes a change from other villages in their opinions that Steeple Aston and Ardley were exaggerating the difficulties posed by the Base presence. Two letters are published: one from someone who witnessed the recent crash but remains strongly pro-USAF citing the family ties and employment generated by the presence of the Americans and the other vehemently opposed to all aspects of the Base.

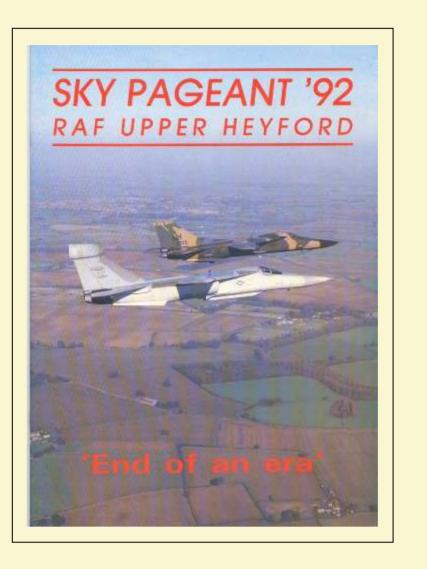
"News Release" thanks locals for their expressions of sympathy extended to the families of the pilots but states that flying will continue whilst the investigation takes place.

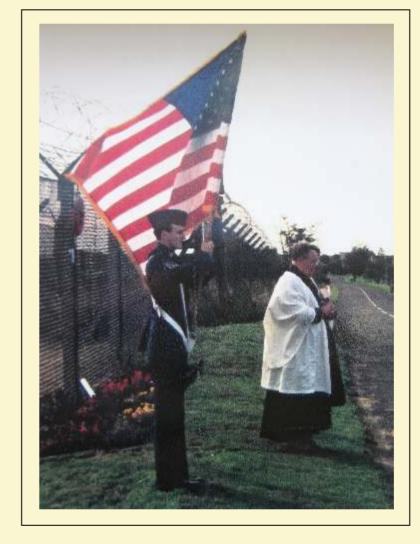
November 1993 In a meeting with parish council representatives, Colonel Schwalier states that the 1988 flight path change was "appallingly mismanaged" and that he would do his utmost to keep communications open in the remaining 15 months of the USAF presence at the Base.

More readers' letters in SA indicating divisions in village opinion regarding the American presence with some indication that particular dissent stems from the northern side of the village and from those sometimes regarded as recent arrivals as opposed to longer standing households who inhabit the southern side. It is generally acknowledged that those living on North Side/ Water Lane receive most noise pollution.

"USAF News Release" states that the Base will be reducing workers on the site from current 4,000 to 2,000 within next twelve months and that 10 F-111s will be removed from the Base.

"Defend Steeple Aston" pays tribute to its Chair, Jean Thompson CBE. who died shortly after Christmas 1992. More tributes appear elsewhere in SAL.





A roadside service for pilots Lindh and McGuire.

