



Fly Navy

A 17 year old Air Cadet from 134 (Bedford) Squadron has clocked up an impressive three hours of flying with the Royal Navy as his reward for being the Squadron's Cadet of the Year.

Cadet Flight Sergeant Sean Denham recently visited one of Europe's largest helicopter bases, Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall for a two day visit and the opportunity to 'Fly Navy'.

The Royal Navy provides a Search and Rescue Squadron on constant standby, 365-days a year, to react to emergencies throughout the Southwest region. Its red and grey Sea King HAR 5 helicopters can be seen braving all types of weather responding to calls for help on land and sea. FS Denham was given the opportunity to fly for an hour and a half with 771 Naval Air Squadron to experience for himself the role of the unit.

During the flight he witnessed the crew undertaking a winching exercise onto a ship, landed at Lands End and flew along the stunning Cornish coastline which included a birds eye view of St Michael's Mount.

Upon his return to dry land FS Denham then visited 824 Naval Air Squadron which is responsible for training Pilots, Observers, Aircrewmen and Engineers on the Merlin Mk1 helicopter. To achieve this the squadron has eight Merlin Mk 1 helicopters as well as a variety of flight and maintenance simulators.

Having fully experienced life from the rotary perspective, it was time to move on and FS Denham undertook a thorough medical examination, completed a survival equipment fitting and presented himself to the Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit (FRADU) for the next part of his flying experience, a flight in a fast jet.

Taking off in a two ship formation in a Hawk T Mk 1A aircraft FS Denham participated in an hour and a half airborne early warning and fighter controller exercise. Acting as attacking and intercepting aircraft formations he experienced at first hand fighter intercepts under the direction of fighter controllers operating from a Sea King MK7 helicopter fitted with powerful Searchwater 2000 Radar.

Having completed the task it was time for some low level flying again along the Cornish coast and a barrel role over Lands End airport. To finish the experience Sean was able to take the controls of the Hawk and fly the aircraft for himself.

During his trip FS Denham was accompanied by Civilian Instructor James Tye, who himself flew in a Hawk with FRADU in March 2007 when he was a serving Cadet Sergeant. James who now works for Patriot Aviation at Cranfield Airfield, Bedfordshire, was also able to fly in the Sea King and thoroughly enjoyed this unique opportunity.

James said, "Being a member of staff brings additional responsibilities but I was delighted at being able to fly with the Navy and still enjoy everything that the air cadet organisation has to offer, I would like to thank the Commanding Officers of 771 and 824 Squadrons Fleet Air Arm for giving us this wonderful insight into the roles of naval aviation."

FS Denham said of the experience, "Having achieved the Cadet of the Year award and enjoying an hour and a half of fast jet flying I can honestly say this is the best experience I have ever had with the Air Cadets. I would like to express my hard felt gratitude to FRADU and 771 Squadron for a superb, unforgettable couple of days."

Bedford Squadron is currently recruiting new cadets and staff members, if you are interested please contact www.134.org.uk and get in touch with us.