

Wing Commander Martin Bee AFC died peacefully on 21st May 2023 aged 85.

David Jones writes:



I first met Martin when he arrived at RAF Horsham St Faith in February 1959 to join the Tigers. I was still a new boy having joined 6 months previously. From the moment that I met him he was an inspiration. He worked hard and played hard. He made friends easily and was always very supportive of those less able than himself. He would lead from the front and encourage all those around him to do their best. It is thanks to Martin that I studied for my promotion exams – he persuaded me that some study time in the evenings instead of visits to the bar would prove beneficial. As usual he was right. Thank you Martin.

In 1960 the Tigers re-equipped with the Lightning and Martin soon mastered this incredible aircraft. His superb ability as a pilot ensured that he was chosen to be part of the Tiger formation aerobatic team to display the Lightning at the 1961 Paris Air Show and at Farnborough later in the year. In 1962 he took part in a visit to Sweden and Norway to demonstrate the Lightning, and later in the year was in the Tiger formation aerobatic team at Farnborough that performed a coordinated display with the 16 Hunters of the Blue Diamonds (No 92 Squadron). In 1963 he was selected to give an individual aerobatic display at the RAF Lakenheath Air Day and similar displays at Lossiemouth and West Raynham.

His days were soon to draw to a close with the Tigers. In 1964 he was selected for a very special posting to fly the U-2 in America. (Chris Pocock's book *50 Years of the U-2* includes details of this). On completion of this posting he returned to the UK and was back in the Lightning world, and was soon given the command of No 56 Squadron in Cyprus.

Martin had a distinguished career in the RAF and retired in July 1978, but he was never far from aeroplanes.