

**AIR VICE-MARSHAL SIMON ROBERT CHARLES DOUGHERTY MSc  
MBBS FRCP FFOM DAvMed DObstRCOG FCI FRAeS (G60-67)**

Air Vice-Marshal Simon Dougherty was born in Colchester in 1949. He was educated at Brandeston Hall and Framlingham College, Suffolk where he did not excel on the sports fields. He was a member of the choir and reached the rank of Staff Sergeant in the Army Section of the Combined Cadet Force. Although not a scholar, he was placed in the 'scholarship form' [Upper IVa] on entry to the College. On reflection, this may not have been the best option as he was almost always at the bottom of the class. However, he picked up 4 'O' Levels a year early and was allowed to enter the Lower VIth at the age of 15. He gained 2 poor 'A' Level passes and one graded at 'O' at the age of 17. Subsequently, he stayed for a third year in the VIth Form, made a sub-prefect in Garrett House and gained good enough grades in 3 'A' levels to be selected to study medicine at The London Hospital Medical College, University of London in 1967, graduating in 1972. He joined the Royal Air Force as a Medical Cadet in 1969. He married Margaret, a London Hospital Staff Nurse in 1971. After completing 'House' Appointments at The London Hospital and The Royal United Hospital, Bath, he entered productive service in the RAF in 1974.



His initial posting was at RAF Binbrook in Lincolnshire where he experienced his first flights in a 'fast jet' – the English Electric (later British Aircraft Corporation) Lightning. Their eldest son, James, was born at RAF Hospital Nocton Hall, early in 1975. Subsequently, in June 1975 he moved to the UK Support Unit at the NATO HQ at Brunssum (HQ Allied Forces Central Europe) in Holland where he completed General Practice Vocational Training. He gained the Diploma in Obstetrics in 1976. Philip, their second son, was born at RAF Hospital Wegberg in April 1977. Then, in December 1977, he moved to become the Senior Medical Officer (of one) at the UK Support Unit at HQ Allied Air Forces Central Europe at the huge USAF Base at Ramstein Germany, for one year. He was promoted to Squadron Leader in June 1978.

He was selected to attend the Diploma in Aviation Medicine Course at the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine, Farnborough in 1979, when he gained the Stewart Memorial Prize and was designated Flight Medical Officer. Following this he was appointed as Chief Instructor at the RAF Aviation Medicine Training Centre, RAF North Luffenham where he spent 3 years training aircrew in the physiological stresses of flight and their protective equipment. This included giving aircrew personal practical experience of hypoxia in hypobaric chambers. During this tour, he wrote to aviation medicine training package for the then new Tornado aircraft and also introduced training in protective equipment for aircrew against Nuclear Biological and Chemical (NBC) threats. In 1980, he was appointed an Associate of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians (AFOM). In this period, he gained flying experience in the Jet Provost and in the Vulcan and he also had a period commanding No1 Air Evacuation Squadron as a secondary duty. This was a 'shadow manned'

medical unit whose task was to hold and transfer aeromedical casualties at the time of conflict. Clare, their daughter, was born in Oakham, in 1980.

In 1982, he moved to be Senior Medical Officer at the Trinational Tornado Training Establishment at RAF Cottesmore, with a staff of RAF and German Air Force doctors and medical staff. During this 3 year tour, he completed his practical training in Occupational Medicine and was appointed a Member of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (MFOM) and gained accreditation as a specialist from the Joint Committee of Higher Medical Training. In 1983, he became the first RAF non-aircrew to fly in the Tornado. In 1984, he attended the residential Basic Staff Training Course at the RAF Staff College Bracknell, where he was Senior Student. As he had gained his professional qualifications in occupational medicine via a legacy experience route, he chose to study for a Masters degree in Occupational Health, and be tested against his peers, at the TUC Centenary Institute at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine from 1985-6.

Subsequently, he commenced a series of non-clinical (policy, delivery, governance and training) appointments which would continue throughout the remainder of his career. Initially, he was appointed in 1986 on promotion to Wing Commander, to HQ RAF Support Command in Cambridgeshire as Deputy Principal Medical Officer (Occupational Health & Safety). There, his main responsibility was for the occupational health of the Service and civilian workforce of the large RAF Maintenance Units in the United Kingdom. He undertook much work on the development of safe working practices for RAF Painters and Finishers and was the designated medical officer to the then RAF-maintained Nuclear Accident Response Organisation. He was also involved in the management of outbreaks, particularly of food-borne illnesses occurring during recruit training and the control of a meningitis outbreak at the RAF Youth Training Scheme establishment. Subsequently, he made proposals, which were adopted as the tri-service policy on the medical surveillance of food workers. At this time, he was appointed as a Consultant Occupational Physician by an Armed Forces Consultant Appointment Board.



In 1987, he moved to HQ RAF Germany where he served for 4 years as Deputy Principal Medical Officer at the Joint HQ at Rheindahlen in West Germany. There, he was responsible for the functional control of 11 RAF Station Medical Centres and the RAF Hospital at Wegberg. Additionally, he oversaw occupational, aviation and environmental and public health medicine in the RAF Germany and was involved in the immediate investigation of many military aircraft accidents. He flew often in VC10, C130 Hercules, Andover, Pembroke, Puma, Chinook and Gazelle aircraft. He was also the medical adviser to the RAF Germany element of the RAF Nuclear Accident Response Organisation. He was co-sponsor of the RAF Winter Survival School held at Bad Kolgrub in Bavaria, which he visited 2-3 times each spring. He oversaw the routine and special aeromedical evacuation flights which transported sick entitled patients from Germany, Holland, Belgium and Sardinia to the UK. In 1990, he was appointed to a personal chair as Taylor Professor of Occupational Medicine, a joint RAF – Royal College of Physicians (London) appointment which he held for 6 years. In addition, he became an assessor for Membership Dissertations and a Deputy Specialist Advisor for the Faculty of

Occupational Medicine. He delivered the 6-monthly one week TriService Introductory Course in Occupational Medicine at the Royal Army Medical College Millbank, with his Royal Navy and Army counterparts. During the first Gulf War (Operation Granby) he was responsible for overseeing the medical preparation of the deploying RAF squadrons, the deployment of nearly 60% of the RAF Germany medical and nursing personnel and the maintenance of core medical services for the RAF personnel and families who remained in RAF Germany. Following this tour, he was appointed an Officer Brother of the Most Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem.

In 1991, he attended the residential Joint Service Defence College at Greenwich where he was Senior RAF Student and then, in early 1992, he took command of the RAF Institute of Health and Medical Training at RAF Halton. This unit was responsible for the basic medical training of RAF medical personnel, including medical assistants, environmental health technicians, and operating theatre technicians. Further, all RAF nurses and medical officers received initial branch training. The unit also maintained the RAF Environmental and Occupational Medicine Department, including the Environmental Noise Department, which provided analysis of aircraft noise for the Ministry of Defence, the focal point for RAF Public Health Medicine and the organisation that arranged and supervised all RAF General Practice Vocational Training. Further, the Institute recruited and parented all RAF Medical Cadets whilst they continued to study at University and maintained the main RAF Medical Library. He was elected as a Fellow of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine in 1993.



On promotion to group captain in 1994, he assumed command of the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Hospital Halton, a 200-bed hospital with a staff of over 400. After 4 months in post, the closure of the hospital was announced as part of the Defence Review – 'Options for Change'. After putting in place the initial closure plan, he handed over command to a consultant physician on the staff of the hospital as he had been posted after a mere 8 months in command to the newly formed HQ Personnel & Training Command in Gloucester as Deputy Director of Medical Policy and Plans (RAF). There, he was responsible for the preservation of essential medical services for the RAF during a period of closures and redundancies. He oversaw the closure of the remaining RAF Hospitals in UK and the transfer of their personnel to the newly formed Ministry of Defence Hospital Units and the Royal Hospital Haslar. In particular, he ensured that the RAF maintained its world-renowned aeromedical evacuation service, its highly praised community psychiatry service and the safeguarding of a large proportion of general practice care of RAF families within the United Kingdom. He also ensured that resources were preserved to set up the RAF Tactical Medical Wing to train and deploy RAF medical personnel on operations.

In 1996 he took up command of The Princess Mary's Hospital, RAF Akrotiri and duties as Command Medical Adviser to HQ British Forces Cyprus. In this appointment, he was responsible for the provision of secondary health care to Cyprus-based UK military personnel and their dependants, funded and overseen by the newly formed Defence Secondary Care Agency, based in London. The hospital was a 50-bed facility staffed by residential Service and civilian



consultants in the major specialities, without junior staff, and was visited by military consultants in the minor specialties who flew out from the UK on a regular basis. He was also responsible to Commander British Forces for the delivery of health and primary medical services, including aviation, occupational, environmental and public health medicine and child health services. In 1997, he was appointed as Consultant Adviser in Occupational Medicine to the RAF, an appointment he held until 2002. He attended an Ashridge management course in 1997. He introduced Clinical Governance into the hospital.

In 1999 he returned to HQ Personnel & Training Command on promotion to air commodore as Director Health Services (RAF), responsible for the delivery of primary care and occupational health, aviation medicine, public health and environmental health services to RAF and other Service personnel and entitled dependants on RAF Stations and Units. He was responsible for the introduction of Clinical Governance into the RAF. He continued to be assessor for Membership Dissertations for the Faculty of Occupational Medicine and became an examiner for the Diploma in Occupational Health. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society in 2000.

In May 2001, he moved to become Director Medical Personnel, Policy and Plans (RAF). However, from June 2001 to February 2002, he undertook duties as acting Director-General Medical Services (RAF) to cover the serious illness of the incumbent. He was appointed as Honorary Physician to Her Majesty the Queen in February 2002 and moved to the Ministry of Defence as Director Medical Policy where he was responsible the formulation of triservice medical policy on behalf of the Surgeon General. This appointment covered the deployment of UK Forces to Afghanistan and the second Gulf War. In addition, it covered a period of major organisational change, both within the MOD and of the management of higher medical management in Defence. He relinquished his Consultant Adviser and Faculty of Occupational Medicine appointments in 2002. He was selected as Director-General Medical Services (RAF) on promotion to air vice-marshal, in September 2004.

His first challenge as Director-General Medical Services (RAF) was to convince the senior RAF executive of the potential threat to the continued existence of the RAF Medical Services as a separate entity, providing Air-centric medical advice and treatment to RAF personnel. At the time, there was considerable pressure to place medical services personnel from all 3 services into a 'purple' organisation, with treatment being provided to Service personnel without regard of colour of uniform or cap badge. Whilst this had been agreed as acceptable for secondary (i.e. hospital-based) care, it was considered that generic provision would place a considerable risk to the care being provided at Station or Unit level to specialist personnel, such as aircrew, and in the



specialist health advice being provided by Command Staffs to the Executive. Additionally, it was judged that there were huge risks to recruiting and retention of medical personnel who were all volunteers who had made a positive choice to join one of the Armed Forces, not a 'purple 4<sup>th</sup> arm'. The senior executive were convinced and provided the necessary guidance and support, but it took 4 years of continued studies, negotiation and staff work to achieve a satisfactory solution. [However, this decision has been revisited during the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review and another 'solution' has been imposed.] The next challenge was the rationalisation and relocation of the RAF Medical Directorate from HQ Personnel and Training Command to HQ Air Command at RAF High Wycombe in 2006. Coupled with this he assumed additional responsibilities as Chief of Staff Health whilst continuing as Director-General Medical Services (RAF), in January 2006. As DGMS (RAF) he visited most RAF stations and units to meet medical and other personnel and gained air experience in the Hawk, Tornado F3, numerous helicopters and Eurofighter Typhoon. He made several visits to the US which resulted in considerable exchange of views on many common issues, and particularly on aeromedical evacuation from operational theatres. He visited the RAAF where he lectured on the RAF Medical Services experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. He visited Iraq in 2006 to meet RAF Medical Services personnel on the RAF-heavy deployment to the Field Hospital at Shaibah. Finally, he hosted a 5-nation aviation medicine conference to consider the aeromedical aspects of the introduction of Typhoon into service. He was a member of the RAF Senior Leadership Team and various single-service and MOD boards and he undertook Defence Strategic Leadership Training in 2007. He handed over this post in July 2008, and retired from the RAF in April 2009 when he relinquished his appointment as Honorary Physician to Her Majesty the Queen. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 2009.



In retirement, he is Honorary Air Commodore of No 4626 (County of Wiltshire) Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, a Governor of The Royal Star and Garter Homes, a Governor of Framlingham College, and a member of the Court of Governors of The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He is also a Trustee of the RAF Benevolent Fund, and



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Chairman of its Main Grants and Welfare Committees and a Trustee of the Headley Court Charity. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Liveryman of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, a Freeman of the Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators and a Freeman of the City of London. He became President of the Society of Old Framlinghamians in 2011.



Air Vice-Marshal Dougherty has been married to Margaret for many years and they live near Colchester, in the family house from which he was born – he is the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of his family to live there. They have 3 adult children – all Old Framlinghamians. His interests include alpine skiing, travelling, gardening and exploring local coastal waters.