

Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough

Coastal Command pilot who became commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies

Much of John Barraclough's career was involved with Coastal Command, in which he participated in some of the important maritime air campaigns of the Second World War. In the Cold War period, with antisubmarine reconnaissance continuing to be a high priority, he commanded 19 Group Coastal Command, before it was subsumed into the new Strike Command in 1968.

A highly active officer who always preferred command to staff appointments, Barraclough was very much one of the RAF's thinking airmen, both on the tactical and strategic front. Among his successful ideas was that, in a jet age, basic flying training should begin on jets, not propeller aircraft. His proselytising stance on the TSR2 was, however, doomed to failure when the advanced supersonic strike bomber fell victim to defence cuts made by the Labour Government of Harold Wilson in 1965.

Barraclough was the first British serving officer to complete the Harvard Business School advanced management programme (which he did at his own expense) and, fittingly, ended his RAF career as commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies, the country's senior defence college.

Born in 1918 and educated at Cranbrook School, Barraclough began his service career in the Territorial Army, as a volunteer in the Artists Rifles with which he served from 1935 to 1938 while working in the City. In 1938 he was commissioned in the RAF and was soon posted to Coastal Command.

Though the command, which had been formed only in 1936, was at first starved of the latest aircraft and weapons in favour of other, apparently more "cutting edge", branches of the RAF, its vital importance to a maritime power like Britain was soon to be realised. Barraclough was to spend his entire war with the command, flying sorties from Shetland in support of the ill-starred British expedition to Norway in the spring of 1940. In 1941 he was awarded the Air Force Cross for revolutionising operational training methods while serving with the Flying Boat Conversion Unit at Invergordon.

The following year he was sent with



Barraclough was involved in air operations against the French in Madagascar

a squadron of Catalina flying boats to island bases in the Mozambique Channel to support the British attack on Vichy French-held Madagascar. As they had shown at Dakar, the Vichy French could be tough to beat, and Barraclough and his squadron were involved in intensive air operations from their somewhat rudimentary island airfields. For his leadership he was awarded the DFC. He was to spend much of the rest of his war on anti-submarine patrols over the Indian Ocean area, both with 209 Squadron and later as

commander of the airbase at Mogadishu in Somaliland which had been captured from the Italians.

He was offered a permanent commission after the war. Among his appointments was command of the examining wing of the Central Flying School, where he was responsible not only for instructional standards in the RAF, but also for those of other air forces who regarded the RAF as setting a benchmark to be emulated. From CFS in 1952 he flew a Vampire trainer to South Africa, the first such

flight by a single-engined jet, and a long one for pilot and co-pilot in the cramped cockpit. For his time at CFS he was awarded a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Services in the Air.

Subsequent appointments included director of public relations, RAF, 1961-64, and AOC 19 Group Coastal Command, 1964-67, a post which also carried with it the responsibilities of Nato air commander eastern Atlantic. After a year as Air Officer Administration, Bomber Command, he was the first AOA Strike Command, when it came into being in 1968, absorbing all the other combat commands. He was Vice-Chief of Defence Staff, 1970-72, en route to his final appointment at the Royal College of Defence Studies which he held from 1974 to 1976.

Barraclough's retirement was a busy one. He was an underwriting member of Lloyd's and vice-chairman and chairman of the British Export Finance Advisory Council. For the five years 1984-89 he was inspector-general of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. He was also a commissioner of Commonwealth War Graves. As chairman of the Maritime Air Trust 1999-2003, he oversaw a fundraising initiative which led in 2004 to the dedication by the Queen of a tribute in Westminster Abbey to those who had lost their lives serving in Coastal Command.

He was a keen horseman and yachtsman, and in 1973 was navigator of the yacht *Clarion* when she came first in her division in the Fastnet Race.

An influential defence writer, he was involved with the defence magazine *NATO's Sixteen Nations*, as editorial director, 1978-81, and vice-chairman of the board, 1981-86, and he was a collaborator on General Sir John Hackett's bestselling book *The Third World War*.

His wife, Maureen, whom he married in 1946, died in 2001. He is survived by their daughter.

Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough, KCB, CBE, DFC, AFC, commandant Royal College of Defence Studies, 1974-76, was born on May 2, 1918. He died on May 10, 2008, aged 90