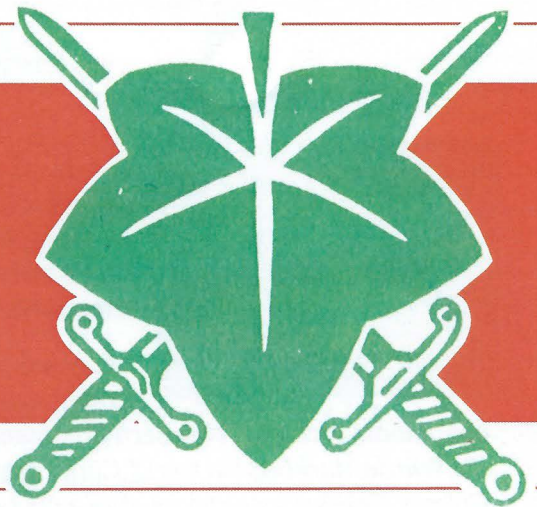


# THE FORMATION SIGN

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## A FLYING BUFF



A No1 Dress uniform of a Captain in the Buffs which C&T Auctions sold for £280 in July carried an unusual badge combination. Whilst these recorded the officer's earlier Royal Air Force service they were distinctions officially prohibited on Army uniforms as Army Council Instruction 499 of July 1950 authorised qualified RAF pilots to wear their wings on Army uniform but instructed that 'Other types of Flying Badges are not to be worn with military uniform'.

Their owner had an interesting career. Having joined the RAF in 1942 Corporal Alfred George Williams Winch was appointed Pilot Officer on 16th November 1943 and on 16th April 1944, around the time he joined 635 Squadron as an Air Gunner, was promoted to Flying Officer.

With 635 Squadron, part of No 8 (Path Finder Force) Group, Flying Officer Winch flew on 41 sorties, a total flying time of 184 hours. Whilst his earliest flights in April and May 1944 were to France to bomb targets in advance of D-Day, subsequent operations involved flying four or five times a month to more distant targets such as Stetin, a seven hour flight. His longest trip was that of 13th February 1945 when he flew for over eight hours to the Squadron's target at Dresden, later the subject of much controversy. The recommendation for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross gazetted on 25th May 1945 describes Flying Officer Winch as an air gunner whose 'outstanding ability and unswerving devotion to duty have been a shining example to other members of his squadron'.

Temporary Flight Lieutenant Winch as he was from 16th October 1945 found that the RAF no longer had need of heavy bomber aircrews and in January 1948 he transferred to the General Duties Branch with which he served until January 1951 when he joined the Aircraft Control Branch. Moving to the Secretarial Branch in September 1951 he retired from the RAF in September 1953. In February 1957 he returned to the Secretarial Branch in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force before relinquishing his RAuxAF Reserve commission to join the Territorial Army as a Lieutenant in The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) in November 1958. Promoted Captain in June 1959 he transferred to the TA Reserve of Officers in March 1963 and became a Lieutenant in the Kent Army Cadet Force. In May 1968 Lieutenant Winch relinquished his ACF commission, retiring as an Honorary Captain.

Few officers in the post-war Army wore the ribbons of the DFC and Aircrew Europe Star, fewer still wearing an embroidered Path Finder Force badge, a distinction normally only worn in metal. Perhaps Captain Winch felt that as the certificate notifying its award states that the recipient is 'Permanently awarded the Path Finder Force badge' he already had permission to wear his well-earned badge on Army uniform.