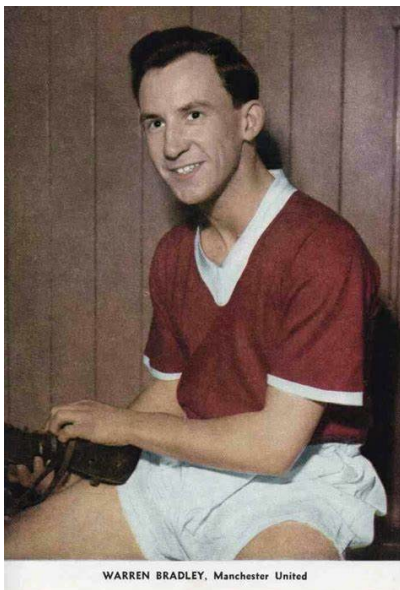


## **An Icarus History by Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) Rob Swinney and Sqn Ldr Si Wain**

For those involved in RAF Football Icarus FC is often mentioned but the heritage and history not fully understood, for others then this may be their first introduction to a key component of RAF Football.

Where to begin? Some say the 1950s, from a private bet between 2 air officers. An RAF officers' team? It won't last a season! Although this bet was for an officers' representatives team to play at the highest level within the service, it was later to come to represent outstanding football that combined comradeship, fun and friendship that has lasted over 70 years. Gp Capt (Ret'd) 'Chalky' White, recalled the bet between the then President of the RAF FA, Air Marshal Sir Leslie Hollinghurst, and Air Marshal Pincher Martin. "20 Cigarettes and it won't last a season". According to Chalky White Icarus went on to win the Southern Football Alliance's Argonaut Trophy and the rest, as they say, is history. Indeed, the second time Icarus won the trophy the final was played at Highbury!

Those early years were great, Wg Cdr (Ret'd) Frank Smith played for the Icarus first XI and Wycombe Wanderers while at RAF Halton. In 1957 Wycombe reached the FA Amateur Cup final and came up against Bishop Auckland. The match was played in front of 95,000 at Wembley and Frank Smith scored Wycombe's goal. Although it wasn't a happy ending for Frank as Wycombe lost 3-1 but amazingly an Icarus member still received a winner's medal. Fg Off Warren Bradley (pictured below), was on the winning side and scored a goal on the day. Warren was one of three amateur England players who joined Man Utd after the Munich Air disaster in 1958. He unsurprisingly gave up his role as an air traffic controller to play 63 times for Man Utd and 5 times for England. Because of National Service, it wasn't unusual to find internationals playing in the full RAF side and, equally, the standard of Icarus football was very high. Possibly the most famous of all Sir Stanley Matthews who served as a PTI, although never booked in his football career, he was arrested while serving in the RAF as a Cpl in Belgium! Matthews alongside another England great Stan Mortensen were arrested for hawking contraband coffee and soap. Matthews was formally charged after selling 5lb of coffee for 700 Francs, during the Police interview, he was asked what he spent his money on for which he replied "A present for my wife"



Icarus won the Argonaut Trophy again in 1965, although Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) Pete Cooper who played for the club for 12 years remembers that the trophy was shared with Oxford University that year. The

game finished in a 1-1 draw and a penalty shootout wasn't an option back then. Pete still pays his annual membership fee even now, although the cost has gone up from the 5 shillings (30p in today's money) he paid in the 60's!

In the early 70s a true stalwart of Icarus joined the Club. Wg Cdr (Rtd) Rick Woodroffe is renowned amongst many of the current older members for whom he was the charismatic chairman of the early 90s. He commented on the uniqueness of the club recently stating that *"The Icarus brand is unique in the Service. The special mix of dogged displays, sometimes brilliant talent, Corinthian attitudes and blindingly good social interaction makes for a rare Officer tagged sporting cocktail – may it ever be so,"*

Due to sheer numbers in the RAF, Icarus were able to maintain a North, South and even an Icarus Germany team. The full Icarus team regularly played against the RAF side and competed well. Icarus tours were infamous during the 80's and 90's Flt Lt Dave Pollock was the main instigator including multiple trips to Annapolis to take on the US Naval Academy. Gp Capt John Hetherington joined the club in 1998 and has been one of the biggest driving force the club has seen in its 70+ year history.

Gp Capt Hetherington made a name for himself by scoring in every single game he played in for the first 2 seasons. He took over as manager of the club in 2003 and oversaw an incredibly successful period for the club looking after a golden generation of players. Whilst based at RAF Valley for flying training, Sqn Ldr Lee Hodgkinson played for Welsh Premier side Bangor City. John would negotiate his release for Icarus games with ex-Man Utd player Clayton Blakemore who was the manager at Bangor at the time. Gp Capt Hetherington moved upstairs to become Director of Football following a decade as manager and was sent a letter of recognition from Sir Alex Ferguson for his achievements not only for Icarus but across RAF football.

Over the last few years, Icarus have been blessed to play against various esteemed opposition in a variety of stadiums across Europe. The team have played against Steven Gerard and Robbie Fowler at Liverpool Academy, they have battled against CSKA Sofia in the National Stadium in Bulgaria and even played against the Gibraltar National team whilst on tour. The opportunities that come about from playing under the Icarus brand are hard to beat.

If you're commissioned and interested in playing for the club, please contact the first team manager; Sqn Ldr Simon Wain or the Masters (over 35s) manager Wg Cdr Andrew Arnison.





Masters





Firsts