

100 Years of Aeromedical Evacuation

Lone Airman in Desert Rescue

A lone airman saved the life of a wounded soldier by flying him directly to a field hospital 45 minutes away – a journey by land that would have taken days across hazardous desert terrain. Remarkably, this flight took place 100 years ago on 19 February 1917 and was the first recorded aeromedical evacuation.

Lance Corporal MacGregor of the Imperial Camel Corps had been shot in the ankle as his unit advanced towards Bir-el-Hassana in Egypt. Forty four miles from the nearest medical facility in El Arish, it was felt that L/Cpl MacGregor's best chance of survival was to be flown there in the observer's seat of a Royal Flying Corps B.E.2c biplane.



One hundred years on, and still one year away from its own centenary, the Royal Air Force remains at the forefront of this life saving aviation capability.

The heroism of the RAF's Medical Emergency Response Teams (MERT) became synonymous with recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds of injured servicemen today owe their lives to the RAF helicopter aircrew, Flight Doctors, Flight Nurses and Flight Medics who risked their lives to recover them, sometimes while still under enemy fire.



Specially adapted RAF C-17s and Voyagers, manned by aeromedical evacuation (AE) flight doctors, nurses and medics, provide the next step of the journey home for injured and ill servicemen, wherever they may be in the world. Critical Care Air Support Teams (CCAST) move critically unwell patients, while general AE teams move general ward patients.



The RAF currently has one Regular AE squadron and two Reserve AE squadrons. Squadron Leader Sarah Charters ARRC, has served as a Reservist with 4626 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron for 27 years and has

deployed

to two Gulf wars and twice to Afghanistan. She said: "It is an absolute honour

to be a part of this fantastic service which has such a rich history of saving lives.

"My squadron's motto is 'Safely Home' and this neatly sums

up the role of Regular and Reserve aeromedical evacuation personnel. We provide

high quality clinical care in the air, all the way from point of injury on the

battlefield back to the UK."



Later this year, a re-enactment of L/Cpl MacGregors historic flight in a B.E.2c will further mark this milestone for aeromedical evacuation

services. More information on medical roles in the RAF, either as a Regular or

Reserve, can be found [here](#) or by searching 'RAF medical careers'.

Editor: Flt Lt Peter Lisney

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