



NEWSLETTER

Subscriptions Overdue - don't delay - Details P8

AGM

Despite the poor forecast and bitter cold an encouraging 24 members attended our AGM at The Greenacres Tavern on Wednesday 16th January 2013.

The agenda was as follows:

1. Chairman's opening remarks
2. Committee reports
3. Election of Officers
- 4 Any other business

Our Chairman Geoff Hulett opened the meeting and reported that since the disbandment of the National Association, The Chiltern Aircrew Association had stood on it's own two feet very successfully. He highlighted the work of the Committee and reiterated the fact that we required a new Treasurer to replace Ian Nelson who was standing down.

The Committee reports followed, firstly **Secretary Graham Laurie** reported: As my position includes Editor of the Newsletter, I will combine my report. In fact with the demise of the National organisation my secretarial work has diminished. I keep the website editor advised of our 'In Memoriam' details, which he kindly adds to the website.

With regard the Newsletter. Ever increasing postage rates are quite a problem. The postage on 12 issues of the Newsletter now takes 60% of your subscription. Add to this the cost of envelopes etc and you will see this is a matter of some concern.

It is of course, for many, their only link with us, not just existing members but widows and their families. I am therefore keen to continue 12 editions per year

I make a request that wherever possible you take the Newsletter via email, as this of course costs us nothing to send, so again I would ask you to consider whether you could change to this format. One advantage is that 90% of the photographs appear in colour!

In conclusion I must again thank Stuart McKay for his splendid support, printing and distributing our Newsletter at no extra cost to us, a splendid offer, for which we are all so grateful.

Membership Secretary Gerry Sealy Bell advised that we currently had 66 members and that subscriptions were now due for the year. We sadly had lost 10 members during the year and we stood in memory of them , holding a minute's silence.

Speaker Secretary Bill George reported that he had all dates with the exception of November confirmed and already had a number of dates in 2014 catered for.

Welfare Officer Bill Hyland was unable to attend as he was in Devon at a funeral of a former Squadron member but his report was read: It has been quite a sad year in some respects losing some very revered members, but it is heartening to know that the Association continues in good heart. It certainly means a lot to many people even if they are unable to attend for whatever reason. I am in contact with members who really enjoy reading about what we get up to at our monthly meetings. Some of them are quite remote, for instance Don Appleton's widow in Lincoln. She is now hoping to return to St Albans and to join us, with her daughter, at functions later in the year. Jack Ball's daughter is also hopeful of joining us at one of our lunches from her home in Somerset.

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Don Francis and Johnny Johns are still flourishing in their far away abodes and send everyone their best wishes.

Closer to home we have several members who are a little under the weather but remain resolutely cheerful. Some of them are still regular attendees such as Eric Barnard and Derek Gurney who refuse to let mobility problems get the better of them. Jack Easter is an example to us all, he even invited Ann and myself to coffee last week. Very nice too, thanks Jack.

Saw Peter Tipple this week and he was on very good form and hopes to attend as the weather improves. I was reading a file which his family has produced detailing his wartime experiences and very good reading it is. That emphasizes the point that we often make that we should have more information on your wartime (and postwar) experiences that we can all share. So if you haven't given the Chiltern a profile of your exploits (at least the ones that can be published!) why not jot down a few details so that Graham have a little copy for future Newsletters.

Bearing in mind that quite a few of our senior members are now in their nineties it still never fails to amaze me how diverse and active are their interests. Ted Matthews, for instance, is a great and still very active, amateur radio enthusiast and is presently in the process of designing a new aerial system for the 'hams'.

I feel that I must mention other people who work 'behind the scenes' helping to keep people in touch. Tom Payne and Ron Doble have been particularly helpful and feed me with all sorts of helpful gen. Also my (our) thanks to Mavis Dyson who has as you know, volunteered to make occasional telephone calls to our widows who form a very important part of our Association. She reports that, although she has tried to contact a few who

no longer seem to be at their last known address, she has had considerable success with others to the extent that some are now ringing her, just for a chat. A very rewarding outcome! I know how interesting a chat with Mavis can be. I knew her father and we lived within a couple of miles of each other before the war. We go back a long way and remember about half the people who lived in North Bucks. Needless to say some calls last quite a time!

I apologise to those of you who I have failed to contact recently, but I have had a few problems and things have slipped a bit, but I hope to be more on the ball during the coming year, if of course, I'm still in post.

Treasurer Ian Nelson was also unable to be present but presented the accounts and noted: I must again apologise for my absence today but I should be at the February meeting when I will be happy to try and answer any queries about the accounts which may still be outstanding. Although I am resigning with effect from this meeting I am expecting that I will be around and attending meetings until at least September.

The Accounts

You will note the accounts cover 18 months of our activities, since the last AGM, and should henceforth match the calendar year. Under Administration you will see that subscriptions do not even cover the committee expenses which are mainly the cost of the newsletter and postage but also include speakers expenses. However the raffle continues to net a good profit to bridge the gap and allows us to continue to send 'In Memoriam' donations of £25 to relevant charities as requested by next of kin of our deceased members. Regretfully there have been 10 of these over this period. The committee also authorizes modest payments to other relevant charities when appropriate. These have included the Bomber Command Association,

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Vulcan to the Sky Trust, RAF Ex POW Association and Bentley Priory Battle of Britain Trust amongst others.

Bill George continues to use, and support, our equipment upkeep. You will notice the Lottery Grant of £2336 which appeared in the bank in December thanks to some sterling work by our Chairman. You should start to see the benefits soon as there are detailed plans on how it will be spent on updating our equipment. I have kept it separate from the other accounts.

Under Entertainment you will see that we subsidised all the events apart from the Christmas lunches where we show profits of £10 and last year 75 pence. However these figures do not include the cost of prizes for the free raffle, which are subsumed into the general raffle costs for the year. There was a deliberate policy of the committee to try and run down what were considered to be excessive amounts of money in the bank. Overall expenditure exceeded income by £585.13. Despite this I believe the Total Assets shown at the bottom of the page are adequate to keep the Association going for some years to come. (The new treasurer might consider merging the Savings Account into the Current Account; the 48 pence interest we accrued hardly seems worthwhile.)

I must express sincere thanks to Gerry Sealy-Bell who tends to collect all your money and passes it on with very useful and informative notes. He really does a fantastic job and we should all be very grateful to him. My thanks also to our auditor Alan Fisher, and to Graham for reading these notes and passing on any queries he cannot answer.

Ed: I have put a full copy of the accounts on Page 6 for those that wish to scrutinise them!

Election of Officers: Rod Finn put his name forward during the meeting for the post of treasurer and with his name replacing that of Ian Nelson, with the remainder of the Committee happy to remain, a vote was taken en bloc. You will not be surprised that the Committee was voted in unanimously!

Any other business: The Chairman explained the grant that we had applied and received from the Big Lottery Fund towards the cost of replacing our digital and audio equipment. From now on you will see their logo on our equipment, letterheads and on the future editions of this newsletter.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Roger Miller, Graham Laurie and our Chairman are met in late January to finalise the purchase of the new equipment. Here we must acknowledge the hard work of Roger and Geoff in putting our case forward.

Following the AGM we sat back and watched part of a DVD on **The History of Imperial Airways**. An excellent account of the early airline services from Croydon. We hope to feature the remainder of the story at a later meeting.

Message from our Chairman

The first AGM of Chiltern ACA can be declared a success. Twenty-four members were present out of a total membership of 66.

My thanks to the committee for their dedication throughout the year, a year in which we have survived and thrived.

Our treasurer **Ian Nelson** is retiring on moving from the area and surprise, surprise we had a volunteer to take on the job. Welcome **Rod Finn** and thanks to Ian for his service over the years.

We are grateful to **Stuart McKay** for printing and mailing our Newsletter and to the staff of Greenacres for their kind attention to all our needs. My good wishes to each and everyone and thanks for your support

Geoff

Subscriptions

For those who have not yet paid your subscription, please send a cheque for £10 and a stamped addressed envelope to Gerry Sealy=Bell now, as it is overdue. Now we are a stand alone organization ,it is essential that we get your money promptly in order to keep the rate at it's present figure,

Gerry works hard on our behalf so please pay promptly to enable him to concentrate on his other duties,

February Meeting



Our speaker on 20th February is Wg Cdr Paul Hewson MBE RAF (Ret'd), the Regional Director London, Home Counties and South England of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. He will explain the workings of the modern RAFBF, which has much more variety than the Fund of old. I hope you will come away amazed at what they do and of course you never know when you might need assistance.

Paul was a serving Navigator on the Hercules fleet for many years and hopefully there will be time for him to tell us something of the role he played in the various conflicts, that the Hercules (Fat Albert) was involved in.

Iconic remnant of 'old' Heathrow demolished in latest phase of £2.5billion Terminal 2 project

End of an era: The demolition of the distinctive nine-floor red brick old control tower is the latest phase of



'The bulldozers on site'

the £2.5billion refurbishment of Terminal 2 The iconic structure, with its instantly recognisable glazed Air Traffic Control Room and white radar dome, has stood over the ever-evolving airport since 1955. It replaced the RAF Control Tower shortly after the first modern runway and terminal building were opened by Queen Elizabeth.

Designed by architect Sir Frederick Gibberd, who was responsible for the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral and Didcot Power Station, the Old Control Tower closed last year after almost 60 years service. It was home to offices for the last five years of its life after Air Traffic Control moved to the new control tower in 2007.



'The New Control Tower'

After the tower is cleared the only original Central Terminal Area building that will remain will be the Boiler House. An airport spokesperson said: 'The arrival of the new Terminal 2 is just the latest phase of our ongoing transformation.'

Warrant Officer P J (Jim) Copus
97 Sqn
Part 1



A few minutes after 7 pm on 22nd March 194 I took off on what was to be my last operational sortie as the mid upper gunner of Lancaster OF-P ND351. By the end of that night I was a prisoner of war, having bailed out of the aircraft as it fell crippled and burning, the victim of a German night-bomber. This is the story of that night and the year in captivity that followed.

We have made our turn to the south over Hanover at 18,000 ft. The target, Frankfurt is now directly ahead of the aircraft and already burning. My attention is elsewhere however, the Flak which we can do nothing about anyway, has stopped, a sure indication that fighters are up. An 'own goal' by the flak crews would mean a double quick transfer to the Russian front! Any night-fighter attack will come from the rear of the aircraft. Only the rear gunner and myself can offer return fire, so we are the fighter's primary targets in the hope that he can silence our guns and finish off the aircraft without risk. We are well aware that the odds are stacked heavily in his favour.

Each of our Lancaster's four Merlin engines produces a double row of exhaust flames, we have shiny turrets which can reflect any stray light. The fighter pilot can quickly re-position his aircraft to improve his view of anything suspicious, whereas we have a full bomb load and can only manoeuvre very gently, for fear of tearing the wings off the aeroplane.

Should we be spotted then we must see the slender, head on fighter profile before he gets within range, a very tall order indeed considering that we have to search all that volume of the night sky within our range of vision to the rear of the aircraft. Our rifle-calibre machine guns mean that the best we can hope for, should we be attacked, is to put the fighter pilot off his aim or maybe even make him break off his attack and perhaps lose us again in the darkness. However, since it is possible that the fighter was equipped with radar, that he used to find us in the first place, there is no reason why he shouldn't be able to find us a second time. In an exchange of fire, we are at a severe disadvantage, since the fighter has 20mm cannon as well as machine guns and the resulting weight of far exceeds our own. Taking all these factors into account means that our chances of survival depend almost entirely on the size of the night sky, which although apparently empty, contains our friends and our foes in unequal proportions; there are many more of the latter, ground based as well as airborne, who are determined to prevent our reaching the target, as we are to get there. The element of surprise is no longer a factor, other aircraft in front of us have already released their bombs and the target is literally sprinkled with fires. The fighters will be more concerned with preventing additional attacks than shooting down aircraft that have already bombed. The chances of being seen in silhouette against the ground fires by a fighter pilot increase as we draw nearer the target. Of course height and speed were all fixed before we took off in order to reduce the chances of not only a collision over the target but also of bombs falling on aircraft at a lower level. In spite of these precautions, instruments inevitably have minor calibration tolerances and variations of a few hundred feet are possible. We all know that both these scenarios have occurred. It is as well that we are all to preoccupied to think too

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carefully about the multitude of situations quite apart from the enemy action that could kill us in the blink of an eye.

The Beginning: Our training as a complete crew had involved many 8 hour flights around UK, almost always at night on what were primarily navigation exercises. However, their indirect purpose was to get us all functioning as a team. Apart from that, we gunners were just along for the ride. On completion of training in Lancasters we were posted to a Stirling station! In that remarkable manner which seems only the Military can achieve, we had been wrongly directed and no-one knew anything about us. Our pilot F/O Cooper told us to stay put and that he would arrange something. He disappeared for 2 days. On his return he announced that he had fixed us up with a Pathfinder Squadron, No 97.

That is how, one day late in December, we arrived at Bourn in Cambridgeshire. Only a fortnight earlier, on the night of 16/17th December, known



'A mid-upper gunner in the office'

ever since as 'Black Thursday'. Bomber Command had experienced its worst bad-weather losses of the war, a tragedy which cruelly emphasises the fact that the enemy lurks not only in the human form. We were posted to Bourn as a contribution towards making up 97 Squadron'

The Attack: That night 22nd/23rd March no-one saw the fighter, a Messerschmitt Bf110, in time. His first attack was probably at the end of a gentle climb from behind and below. The climb reduces the speed differential that the fighter needs to catch the target thereby avoiding the risk of an overshoot or even a collision. This tactic also meant that the bulk of the Lancaster on top of which I was sitting, hid the fighter from my view and even the rear gunner's view downward is restricted enough to hide the approaching fighter. In any event that initial attack knocked out the hydraulics which operated the turrets. I was then in the embarrassing position of being able to do nothing but watch the '110' flying alongside, straight and level, slightly below us and 200 to 300 yards off our starboard wing. The '110's relative position enabled their gunner, facing aft in the rear of the cockpit to fire bursts from his machine gun with zero deflection into our fuel tanks and number three and four engines. The results were exactly what one would expect, both engines burst into flames. Some of his rounds, passing within inches of my head shattered my turret at about the same time as our pilot ordered over the intercom 'Prepare to abandon aircraft' and then very quickly afterwards 'Abandon aircraft'. All members of the crew acknowledged the order including the rear gunner, who by some miracle had survived the initial attack. The bomb aimer jettisoned the bomb load. We were on our way down, both starboard engines blazing furiously

Ed: *Next month you will read of the escape from the aircraft, on becoming a POW in the second of a three part story. Our thanks to Jim for sharing it with us.*

Programme
Welfare

All events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless advised (*)

20 Feb	RAF Benevolent Fund Paul Hewson
20 Mar	The Rudolph Hess cover up - Tony Eaton
17 Apr	Fly Girl - Anita Mays
15 May	Guest's Lunch* 1200 Noon
19 Jun	Aeronautical Artist - Chris Sprent
17 Jul	Air Traffic Control - Peter Marks
21 Aug	S.O.E. - Hugh Davies
18 Sep	Guest's Lunch* 1200 Noon
16 Oct	Member's Meeting
20 Nov	TBN
18 Dec	Christmas Lunch

Your Committee**Chairman****Geoff Hulett**

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Bill Hyland reports:

Not much further news since the AGM as I have been away but it was good to hear that some of our hospitalised members were back at meetings, well done boys. Congratulation to Ron and Shirley Doble on their Golden Wedding, celebrated at Thame Football Club on Saturday 26 January at which we were represented by a number of members.

Bill**Membership**

Members will wish to know that Gordon Fountain's wife passed away in early December, our thoughts are with him and his family. Tom Payne kindly represented us at her funeral.

Thank you to the 40 members who have renewed their subscriptions. **I am now keen to receive a £10 cheque and a stamped addressed envelope from the remaining 26 whose subscriptions are now sadly overdue.** I would kindly request that you attend to the matter as soon as possible and to help, Graham has included the membership form with the newsletter, however **a cheque and a SAE is all I really need!!**

Gerry**Treasurer**

Rod and I are now completing the handover of treasurer duties and I would like to thank him personally on your behalf for stepping into the breach and to allow me the luxury of a little time, prior to my move south.

Ian**Editor**

I make no apology of being a little top heavy on the AGM this month, but as only a third of the membership was present, the newsletter is the way the majority find out what is happening. Next month we will be back to normal with an array of articles, many (he says hopefully) supplied by you, the members. Take a leaf from Jim Copus and tell me your story, we would all really like to hear it!

Graham