



NEWSLETTER

£10 Subscriptions are now overdue - see Page 8

AGM

Our 2014 AGM was held as part of our January Meeting which was attended by 26 members. Our Chairman welcomed everybody and reviewed the past 12 months, highlighting the new equipment purchased by our Lottery Grant. Committee reports followed. Your new Committee were elected and will serve until January 2015. Were there any changes, see Page 7 for a full report?

Wednesday 19th February Meeting (Change of Programme)

There has been a **change of programme** for our February Meeting. We now have a **presentation by Andy Hardy on his recent Cherokee Challenge, where he took G-ATYS from UK to Australia** raising well over £10,000 for Oxfam in the process. It promises to be a fascinating story from the original idea, fighting the bureaucracy, the planning of both the flying and the logistics. Having followed the flight on the internet as it happened I can assure you that the photos are spectacular and am equally sure you will find the whole thing, very special. **This meeting is also open to the ladies and friends, so please join us.**



The epic route that raised over £10,000 for Oxfam

Thus if you have any friends you think might like to listen to this presentation, please bring them along as a guest. It would be great to have a full house to listen to Andy's story



The Piper Cherokee at Atherton in Northern Queensland

Back in the 30's

Flying the airlines in the thirties was a lot more fun than it is now. It was more leisurely and had more class. Certain elitist and anti-British people have no time for these period "rich types". People like these, the risk takers (especially with their own money) were the backbone of the UK. They flew from the first airline operations across the Channel in 1919.



A 1930 flying 2 Pilots and a radio operator.

If people had serious money in the 1930s and travelled internationally, they may well have flown on one of these large (130foot wingspan) Handley Page bi-plane aircraft, which were the mainstay of British Imperial Airways at the time. They carried 26 passengers in first class only, in three different compartments. The first class saloon, the bar and cocktail area, and the smoking section. These machines were ubiquitous, extremely safe (no passenger in a HP-42 was ever killed in 10 years of international and domestic operations from 1930 until 1940), very comfortable in seating, leg room and service, hot meals were served on bone china with silver cutlery, free liquor flowed, overnights were in the very best hotels. There was no rush, no waiting in lines and everyone was well dressed

Flying along at a few thousand feet, one could see, (down to the quality of the washing on the back-

yard clothes lines) every interesting feature passing below. At 95 to 100 mph. one also had time to look at the passing panorama. It took four days to a week (depending on headwinds and weather) to fly from London to Cape Town, South Africa. By only flying about four hours a day, staying at the best hotels in Europe, Cairo, Khartoum and Victoria Falls. All stops to India also made for an interesting choice of destinations.



Khartoum, Sudan. Boarding for the flight south. Only one more overnight and then they will be taking in the sights of Lake Victoria.

Old fashioned and good mannered ideas and behaviour, like dressing up to have evening drinks on the balcony and certainly not ever being in a hurry - one can only salivate at how pleasurable that would be. But do not worry Ryanair have just vowed to improve it's service, both on the ground and in the air! See advert below!



Jack Ball's Story - Part 9

Ed: *Jack joins Transport Command*

We finished the course a few days before the atom bombs were dropped in Japan, to our great relief, which meant that our flight from Montreal to the Far East was cancelled, and we proceeded via Moncton and SS. Nieuw Amsterdam to Southampton. When we sailed from New York the banners read 'Welcome to our American boys', and at Southampton they said 'Farewell to our American friends'.

Transport Command.

After a month swanning around Harrogate, Gordon and I went to Full Sutton (now a high-security prison) where 231 Squadron was being formed as a round-the-world, high-speed VIP transport unit equipped with Lancastrians, i.e. a Lancaster sans turrets, but with a cabin and nine sideways-facing seats, plus a long-range fuel tank. Not a very practical aircraft to compete against the Douglas DC4 etc, but the Marshall Plan was finished now and we were in a competitive environment.

All the aircrew on 231 were highly experienced, most had completed at least one tour of operations. For recreation, York was nearby and we often went there for an evening without booking a room, relying on getting a bed for the night by turning up at Mrs P's, a lodging house of many rooms. This kind and generous lady left the door on the latch and a table laid with excellent baked goods for those needing food. There were sometimes a dozen or more of us at breakfast where the menu was bacon and eggs. The total charge was five shillings.

There were hilarious evenings. One two-tour wireless operator had been invited by friends to share their room in a well-known temperance hotel. Arriving there after closing hours, he staggered to a room and took off his shoes and trousers, only to be jarred by a scream from the young lady occupying the bed. Grabbing his clothes, he fled down the

corridor to be hauled into the correct room by his friends. There was an official complaint to the CO and all navigators, wireless operators and flight engineers were paraded. The young lady remembered seeing a single wing brevet on the officer's tunic, so pilots were excused. Nobody owned up until the CO threatened to confine all those on parade to camp until the culprit came forward. Later he did and I believe it was settled by a profound apology.

After retraining on the tail-draggers and various radar courses, sanity intruded and the squadron was disbanded. Some, I read, went to the newly-formed British South American airline under D. C. T. Bennett. We proceeded to Stradishall, near Cambridge, to 51 Squadron, for conversion to the Avro York. The York was a more practical adaptation of the Lancaster. The high wing allowed a roomy fuselage, enabling about thirty passengers to be seated or carriage of mail and freight. The absence of a pressurized cabin and lack of oxygen for passengers meant that there was no prospect of climbing above rough weather, so sick bags were a necessity. This was a good time from May to August 1946: we had an objective in view, the training was interesting and the delights of Cambridge were close. It culminated in a trip to India via Holmsley South. My old friend Bernard Edinborough of the Harrow Road was there on Transport Command, and we decided to visit a pub in the New Forest on his motorcycle. Unfortunately, he had to proceed in low gear to keep the lights on and we ran out of petrol on the way back. Faced with a long walk on a lonely and dark road, I was amazed when a lady driver stopped and agreed to sell a gallon from her 'ration' (at 400% profit). The sight of her pouring petrol from the can to the tank with a lighted cigarette between her lips caused me to retreat hastily.

We left Holmsley South for Castel Benito in Tripolitania, thence Cairo, Basrah, and down the Persian Gulf, when we were warned of storms at Karachi and put down at Jiwani on the Baluchistan

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coast. I still harbour the suspicion that they over-egged the forecast to persuade us to land. On a previous occasion they apparently had a welcome complement of service nurses arrive. We only had a load of diplomatic mail. I could sympathise. The landscape was uniformly grey and the fresh water had to be flown in every week. The bathwater was more than brackish. In the Mess, we were made very welcome, but beer was limited to one bottle per head. Unlimited spirits were available, but there were no mixers. It must have been the worst ever posting - Shaibah in Iraq, with its trees of camouflage netting, was heavenly in comparison. No wonder that the great Alexander pressed on. The evening was brightened by the presence of the wife of a chap flying to Australia in a small aircraft. We were flying the Empire Air Route, where in those days every base was British-controlled, by force of arms where necessary.

On this leg of the journey we would often see great fleets of sailing craft running up to the Gulf: Kuwaiti Booms (modelled on the first Portuguese sailing ships to penetrate there) and sleek schooners.

Britain was still in control of India and we took the balance of our mail to Delhi where I made a point of calling on the Station Warrant Officer who, according to Bernard Edinborough, was the same martinet who had harried us new sergeants at Mount Hope. I wanted him to know that he was not forgotten, so we exchanged pleasantries. After a magnificent curry we returned to find the aircraft almost untenable from standing on the Palam concrete in the noonday sun. I decided to do the take-off stripped to my underpants and get dressed at a cooler altitude. By the time we got to 6000 feet, I was back in my kit and seated when a gaggle of dots materialized dead ahead. I just had time to duck below the windscreen level when they hit us, fortunately on the wing tip, which had a two-inch dent and a smear of blood. I presume they were kite hawks, although surprised at their altitude. The whole trip took nine days, retaining the same aircraft.

In August 1946 we arrived at Lyneham, near Swindon to join 511 Squadron which was running regular services to Cairo, Delhi and Singapore. The co-pilot and the radio officer outranked me, which might have been awkward, but with Gordon as navigator, we all got on well together. I was detailed to go as co-pilot to Singapore with a senior pilot who was being demobbed on return. It was a chance to observe things without the ultimate responsibility. All pilots had been asked to extend their service to assist the repatriation of troops from the East and I had signed on for another eighteen months beyond my demob date. It was a pleasant trip. We were staging, which meant that after two legs of the journey, we stayed overnight, but the aircraft went on. We then took the next aircraft.

Previously in Karachi, I had engaged a young Goanese boy, Manuel, to stop his fellow urchins pestering us and to run errands. He proved invaluable, absolutely trustworthy and a good guide. He worked for other pilots and made it his business to know who was due on the schedule. On one occasion he was unavailable and I had to hire a Pathan. I was a bit uneasy being followed around the markets by this black-bearded giant. Karachi was our main shopping centre for carpets, flatpack furniture and ladies' shoes. Providing you gave an illustration and a plan of the lady's foot, they would turn out a replica in a couple of hours. Tea in bulk was also available.

Karachi was also good for relaxation. We frequently hired a boat at the harbour complete with a skipper and two tiny tots whose job was to squat on a plank set out to windward, thus balancing the craft when underway. I was happier when we anchored. We would have a good day's fishing with an exotic catch, plus a spell around midday when the skipper would set up a charcoal stove to cook the fish, reinforced with eggs, bread and beer.

Ed: Jack's fascinating story *will be concluded next month*

Our AGM 15 January 2014

26 members attended our AGM, which considering the weather was very encouraging. Thank you to everyone who made the effort.

Our Chairman, Geoff Hulett welcomed all and reviewed the highlights of the year. Our Lottery funded new equipment was now in place and thanks to the great work of **Roger Miller**, was now functioning well. Roger was formally thanked for his help with this project. It was also announced that we were able to refund the Lottery Fund £25 of their donation.

The Committee reports followed:

Membership Secretary, Gerry Sealy-Bell reported that current membership stood at 58. We had sadly lost 8 members this year and three members also lost their wives. We stood for a minute to remember them and all our fallen colleagues **Charlie Wilson, Gordon Fountain, Michael Pearson, Don Tanton, John Franklin, David Tideswell, George Carter Jack Easter, and Mrs Heather Chappell, Mrs Joyce Briggs and Mrs Edna Francis.**

Secretary and Newsletter Editor, Graham Laurie thanked the regular contributors for their help with copy for the Newsletters. He also recorded thanks for the memoirs of Jack Ball from his daughter **Stephanie** and said he has one from **Harry Purver** to follow on. He also thanked **Stuart McKay** for his continued valuable help with the Newsletter and particularly with his offer to assist with the postage.

Welfare Officer, Bill Hyland apologised for being a little behind times as he had himself been poorly (**Ed: Despite that, he has worked incredibly hard on our behalf**). He also thanked those who pick up the phone and speak to other members.

Our **Treasurer, Rod Finn** painted a good picture of our accounts and will have the ratified accounts hopefully ready for the next meeting. Suffice to say our accounts are in a healthy state.

Speaker Secretary, Bill George explained that he had nearly got a full programme for this year and had already started bookings for 2015.

New Committee. It was no surprise to find the Committee were voted back in unanimously. No change there then!

In **Any Other Business, Ron Doble** thanked the committee for their work in 2013 on behalf of all the members.

At the conclusion of the meeting after a short film on Martin Baker ejection seats we watched a film **'Lancaster at War'**.

Silver Surfers

If you are having problems with your computer, perhaps it is slow or perhaps you have a new one and would like a bit of help setting it up, then why not call the **Chiltern ACA Duty Engineer!**

Seriously **Roger Miller** our technical expert has offered his services to help with your IT problems. One thing he promises is, to work slower than your grand children, so hopefully you will be able to follow and understand what he does.

If you would like help please contact him:

116 Langley Grove, Sandridge, St. Albans
Hertfordshire AL4 9DY

Roger Mobile 07879 466079

Home Landline 01727 766278

Skype Name quernrigger

email Personal quernrigger@yahoo.co.uk
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Remember 19 Feb 14 @ 11am

Andy Hardy's Presentation

Cherokee Challenge to Australia.

Open to Members, Ladies and friends.

Lets make it a full house

Programme

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

- 19 Feb Cherokee Challenge, Andy Hardy**
 19 Mar History of Leavesden, Derek Sayell
 16 Apr National Service, Wg Cdr John Gearing
 21 May Guest's Lunch
 18 June 'Malcolm's War', Malcolm Clouett

Your Committee

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Welfare

Well this month it is nice to report (well not really) that it is not just the elderly in trouble. One of our young fledgelings **Ian Mason** was helping Judy in the garden and managed to prune his little finger! Not so good was that it soon turned a nasty shade of green and involved 2 days in Stoke Mandeville on a drip. Dressings are now supplied every 2 days by 'Nurse Judy'. The phrase that comes to mind is '*Stupid Boy, Pike!*'.

Our Secretary has a chat with Alan Goldby's widow and through her we have been put in touch with Fay Sunter, who lives in Horsham. Must try and get our former Treasurer to get in touch.

The committee have been 33% hospitalised with both Bill Hyland and Rod Finn keeping the doctors busy, we wish them both a speedy recovery.

Membership Secretary

Subscriptions for 2014

These are now overdue, so for **Membership Renewal**. A simple matter of a **£10 cheque payable to 'Chiltern ACA'**. If you can find your Membership Card please enclose it with your cheque and of course a Stamped Addressed Envelope.

I will of course be happy to take your subs at the February meeting but would prefer them earlier, as we are proposing to issue our new membership list at the end of February.

Here is a change of address:

117 FRANCIS D.V. (Don) Summerleaze, 79 Salterton Road,
 Exmouth S. Devon EX8 2EW 07908 179890

Gerry

Editor

Keep those articles coming, after Jack Ball's tales finish next month I am pleased to say we will have similar reminiscences from Harry Purver. Harry is in the Leonard Pulham (Abbeyfield) Nursing Home at Halton and would love to see any visitors. **Graham**