



# NEWSLETTER

**For member's only, check you have the latest membership list**

## **Buffet Lunch 20 May 2015**

It was the usual fare at Greenacres on 20th May for our Buffet Lunch. We were joined by a number of guests, male and female which always makes for a good deal of noise, in between the plentiful supply of food.

Our friends from Woking attended and as you will see below, would like us to reciprocate by joining them at Fairoaks for a 'Flying Evening' at the end of June.

Our thanks as usual go to Stephanie Nash and her crew for all their hard work on the day and to our own Gerry Sealy-Bell for co-ordinating everything beforehand.

## **Flying Friday at Fairoaks 26 June 2015**

Our friends at Woking ACA have invited Chiltern ACA members to join them for a flying evening, scheduled for Friday 26 June 2015.

The venue is Fairoaks Aerodrome, where Woking hold their meetings. The first Take off will be approx 18.00hrs. Food is available in the excellent clubhouse.



Tickets for the Buffet are £7.50, but Tony Boxall needs to know numbers for the BBQ so sufficient food may be ordered. Flying tickets cost just £10 which may be bought on night but again they need numbers so they can plan the flights accordingly.

Thus if you would like to go please let Geoff Hulett know or any other committee member and we will see what can be done to share lifts. For those driving here is the address:

The airport is located on the A319 Chertsey Road, between Ottershaw and Chobham, approximately 2 miles north of Woking Town Centre, around three miles from Junction 11 of the M25, or five miles from Junction 3 of the M3.

**Fairoaks Airport, Chertsey Road, Chobham, Woking GU24 8HU.**



**Remember 17th June 2015**

**“Airliners”**

**Chris Sprent**

**Greenacres 10.30 for 11.00am**

## Malcolm Cloult's Story Part 4

*We join Malcolm in George in South Africa:*

It was here in George that I found a lasting interest in classical music, and I need to explain that in a round-about way: This Commonwealth Country still operated in peace-time ways, such as with early-closing days on Wednesdays, and this practice was pursued on my present Military Station. I was a "loner" not involving myself in other guys' activities, preferring to read alone in the comfortable Aircrew lounge.

Along one wall was a rather magnificent radiogram and extensive record library, so, starting from the first record, I began playing them each Wednesday afternoon. They were mainly light-classical, with singers like Dianna Durbin, but I was "hooked". A couple of years later, as you will read when you come to my visits to Calcutta, I was introduced to serious stuff – Greig and Beethoven – at the Concert Hall there. After each performance I and friends went across the road to a restaurant that offered a magnificent dessert of apple pie and cream! What a treat!

I suppose the musical seed had been sewn in my Choir-boy days, singing Church music by celebrated composers. And of course, I could read music scores. Another factor in my musical education was my Mother's fine piano playing, which she put to good effect in helping me to get to sleep when I was little. She knew I was asleep when I ceased calling, "More Mummy".

And in those 1920s and early 30's days it was common to have musical evenings in the home, my Father having a pleasant bass voice. I was learning to play the violin, and my Sister the piano, so with my treble voice we all joined in. In post-war years I learned to play a Hammond organ, but, sadly, I can't see to read the music now. (Excuse the diversion, but it seemed a good point to bring up my musical interests, and that now brings them to an end.)

So my training wasn't yet over. On my return to UK (I was seasick again). Training in torpedo bombing from Wellingtons was next when I joined a crew in Limavady, Northern Ireland as second pilot. My Skipper was George Reynolds (whose death I will report later), Len Brown a first class Navigator, (later I was his Best Man) and Jack, a likeable rogue, our rear gunner. I'll explain the appellation later, but I didn't approve of some of the things he did. Jack was up before the Commanding Officer for stealing a blanket. It was for the purpose of purchasing the favours of a local lass. Such "luxuries" were not available to the civilian population, nor were they until after the war, and then only with a special permit

if, for instance if you were getting married. Jack's punishment was loss of seniority, which meant that he remained a Sergeant with the appropriate pay) when we were wearing "Crowns" on our arms. Len was an excellent Navigator having no difficulty in finding a little dot in the Atlantic called Rockall.

Anyone seeing inside a Wellington would wonder how the co-pilot could manage to get into an injured Skipper's seat. There were no dual controls. It seemed that my useful, role was as front gunner, a completely novel experience

Our training was completed in Scotland, and then we were posted to Haverfordwest in South Wales to pick up and familiarise ourselves with a brand-new "Wimpy", as the Wellington was known. My Skipper managed to ground-loop ours, breaking the under-carriage, thus providing us with yet more leave to await recall whilst awaiting a replacement. On our return there was no sign of Jack. He had also received his recall telegram, said "Good bye" to his wife and daughter, and moved in with a girlfriend. After a week he telegraphed base, "Note temporary address – await recall".

Our next posting was intended to be to a squadron patrolling the Mediterranean. This meant flying across the Bay of Biscay, where occasional German fighter aircraft were known to operate, thus keeping us "twitching" all the way. Our first and overnight stop was at Rabat-Sale on the Atlantic coast North of Casablanca. That night in Rabat I repeated the Johannesburg experience. Again it was due to the deliciously sweet wine, without realising its potency.

You may have gathered that when I have consumed too much alcohol for my own good, it has been unintentional. The first example that I have recorded was in Johannesburg. There have been others, and they, too, have been due to underestimating the potency of African wines. Two were in North Africa.

One was that first night in Rabat after crossing the Bay of Biscay, which saw me in two or three Bars sampling the delicious rich wine with my crew members. I recall joining them in a dance hall, and watching from a sideline (I don't dance) hundreds of legs waving about in front of me. I was ill outside.

You will learn how I came to be in Algiers shortly after. Following that, on an evening out in the town, three mates and I drank two bottles of champagne and went to a cinema. A Laurel and Hardy film was showing, but I couldn't focus, although I didn't feel unwell. It took ten minutes for me to see straight.

*(continued on Page 3)*

The low price of alcohol didn't help. An example of that was in Rhodesia, where a tot of local brandy cost three pence in the Airmen's Mess (1.8 pence in today's currency). Other chap buys were South African cigarettes; one brand considered the best (like "Players" in England) was called "Cape to Cairo". What a treat for us white-knee arrivals!

As an example of good old British blunders, at Maison Blanche on 6th October 1943 our plane was taken off us, and we were sent to a transit camp near Algiers, to await return to England. The war was rolling on without my playing any part in it. No one in North Africa had thought to tell UK that Torpedo bombers were no longer needed! Already, friends with whom I trained were being killed.

Then followed a long, desultory wait, time being filled in playing "Solo" day and night. That was good for my wallet, but not my health. I suffered severe indigestion, which the M.O. cured with castor oil followed by Epson salts!

There was no lighting in our tents, so we played by the light of a home-made lamp. This comprised a round cigarette tin with a hole pinched in the top, through which a piece of string was threaded as a wick, dipping into paraffin. That was a smelly and smoky combination.

My only useful occupation was putting up Christmas decorations in the Mess, as nobody else seemed interested. I leaned over at the top of a ladder holding end of a streamer in my teeth, while stretching to fix it. The strain broke my upper dentures, making me very "gummy" until getting a repair done back in England. Eating was difficult. How often I have wished that my Mother had not been so soft with me, bowing to my fear of a dentist, for I lost all my teeth when I was only seventeen years of age. My own children have benefited from my experience.

Finally, after nearly three months in the transit camp, on New Year's eve 1943 came another troop ship journey to take us back to England, with the inevitable period of leave on arrival. The journey home saw a repetition of seasickness. I have since been encouraged a little by the C.S. Forrester "Hornblower" tales of his sickness at the beginning of every voyage.

Still more training! Moving from the Branes Wallis-designed Wellingtons to the DC3s was like moving from a hostel to a Hyatt hotel. These amazing flying machines, certainly second to none. They were and remain a Pilot's dream: comfortable and warm, sound-

insulated, novel instrument lighting from a reflected purple fluorescent light behind the pilot's seat, short-wave radio available, immediately responsive to controls, low stalling speed, short take-off run, powerful enough to tow heavily loaded gliders, fly loaded on one engine., easily adaptable for carrying passengers, paratroops or stretchers, and able to snatch a glider off the ground.. The few that have survived are still performing well 79 years later. They are flying "poetry", the most important contribution to aviation of the century.



*RAF Dakota - from Hostel to Hyatt*

I met this great aeroplane on 271 Squadron, part of Transport Command, when we returned to England after the torpedo bomber fiasco (all that training and wasted travelling time!). Our Wellington crew stayed together as we trained on the new aircraft until our Skipper was killed.

To explain how his death came about I have to tell you that our Navigators had to be trained in the use of a new navigational device, called a "G" -set. It was a lot cheaper to use smaller aircraft for this, and old Oxfords were brought into service. We Dakota pilots, having been trained on Oxfords, got the job of flying them until we could be replaced by other pilots. It's an interesting memory that we had to check out these Pilots, and the one assigned to me was the former Flight Commander who passed me out on these aircraft!

My Skipper, George Reynolds, was given two Navigators to take up one night. The weather "clamped down", with a landing attempt ending in tragedy, all being killed in crashing at Little Rissington.. Instead of my taking over the crew as Skipper there were other Pilots with a better claim than mine for a step-up, so I became instead co-pilot to my Deputy Flight Commander Fl.Lt Cooke, qualified to take over when he was unable to fly. *(Continued next month)*

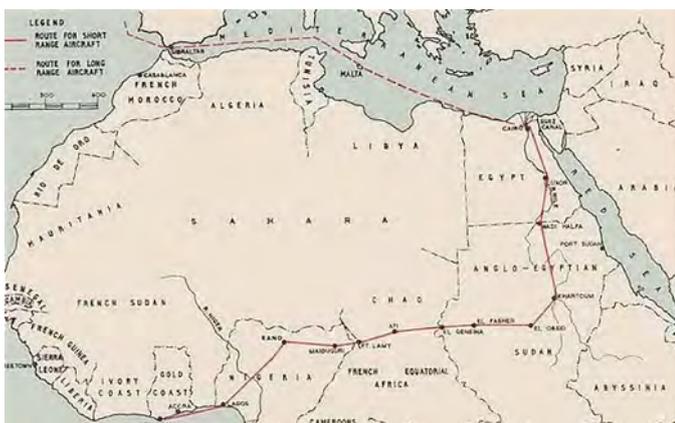
## Guy Buckingham

### Part 5

*We hear of the famous 'Convoy Route' from Takoradi:*

We had a Bombay, Valencia and the Caproni that we had captured, we used these planes for odd jobs until we had a very bad sandstorm, where all the planes were destroyed!

The Italians then decided to leave the war here and we started a new job; aircraft were being shipped in crates to Takoradi in West Africa, where they were badly assembled and then flown in easy stages to Khartoum.



*The 'Convoy Route'*

As the war progressed, more and more aircraft were required in North Africa, the 'Convoy Route' was based on the old Imperial Airways route, they used Empire Flying Boats to Freetown and Lagos; later airfields and staging posts were constructed right across the Southern end of the Sahara Desert; it usually took about two weeks to complete and covered approximately 1600 miles. This became known as the 'convoy route', - Takoradi to Khartoum, via Kano, Maiduguri, El Fasher, El Genena, El Obeid, Wad Medani and Wadi Halfa. From Khartoum many went on to Cairo and the Canal Zone.

Small parties of RAF technicians worked between these airstrips to keep the aircraft serviceable. I was on this route for 9 months. We flew Blenheim's, Hurricanes, Battles, Fulmer's and later the American planes. e.g. Maryland's, Marauder's, Boston's, Mohawks, Tomahawks and Kittyhawks.

When the planes arrived in Khartoum, they were usually in such a bad state of repair that they had to be practically rebuilt before flying up to Egypt, which was another 1000 miles to the Canal Zone.

The convoy route was supposed to be a rest from Ops, but the flying conditions were very bad. The jungle air-

strips were just carved out of the 'bush' and very hard to find and even harder to land on! The planes then had to be refuelled from four gallon drums which leaked all over the place; this had to be done quickly in temperatures of 120 degrees. The planes were never really serviceable, just good enough to get to the next stop.

Spares were a major problem, we hadn't any! So when a plane was in a very bad state, it was sometimes cannibalised to get others going. When they were once again fit to fly, they were taken up to Egypt for the Western Desert. On one occasion we had two Wellesley's, both in poor repair, however one of them had a good airframe fitter called Gerald Reeve; he joined the two halves together, repaired all the geodetics, recovered the canvas fuselage, re-rigged and painted it. The aircraft was airtested and flew perfectly well on many other missions.

On another occasion, a Blenheim had an engine failure out in the bush. A spare engine was flown out to it in the Valencia. No lifting gear was available, so two sloping ramps were dug into the sand and the plane was pushed down until the engine was resting on the ground. The prop was then removed and the engine undone and rolled away; the replacement was rolled into place and connected. The plane was then pushed and pulled back up the ramp and the prop fitted. The engine was started, all was ok and the plane flew safely back to Khartoum!

I remember well an incident with a Fairy Fulmer that had been taken to the hangar for some repairs. As a carrier plane, the wings needed to be folded, a large pin holds the wing; the pin is fitted through two eyelets and has to be pushed out to remove it. The airframe fitter, a chap called Geordie Radford, pushed the pin up with his thumb, as he did so, someone else pushed the wing a little bit too soon and off came Geordie's thumb! Everyone on the camp came to see the thumb lying on the hangar floor.

One type of plane we brought across from the west coast was the Curtis Mohawk, which proved to be a death trap, the radial engines used to break off with disastrous results. They were eventually grounded and all the bits used for spares, many of them were the same as the Tomahawks, which were perfectly safe to fly.

During the convoy runs we had some well known people pass through Khartoum, amongst these were, Cobber Cane, Paddy Finucane, Johnny Johnson and Jim Molison (Amy Johnson's husband) to name but a few. I particularly remember Jim coming in, he was flying the one and only Cunliffe Owen Flying Wing. *(cont'd on P5)*



*Cunliffe Owen Flying Wing*

twin boom type of aircraft; it was carrying some VIP's, when Jim eventually stepped out of the cockpit he could barely stand and inside there were empty whisky bottles on the floor!



*Jim Mollison with Amy Johnson*

The living accommodation on the Takoradi route was very basic; we stayed in wooden framed huts with straw roofs. Water was rationed and food not very good either. Most of the technical tradesmen were regulars, Cranwell or Halton trained and in many cases very much overdue to return to UK. Health could also be an issue, with problems such as yellow fever, malaria, gyppo gut, dysentery and sand fly fever. This all added to our discomfort and we all had to have regular inoculations about once a month. The insides of the aircraft were sprayed regularly with DDT disinfectant, even if you were still inside the fuselage!

Another hardship we learned to put up with was sandstorms, these were very unpleasant, completely obliterating the landscape for hours on end; the wind did untold damage to the planes, if they were not picketed down and

turned into the wind, they could be completely written off. We would cover our faces with scarves or cloths; otherwise the sand would get into our noses and mouths and block our breathing. After the storm had passed there would be hours of cleaning up the planes; air filters cleaned out, undercarriages and cockpits cleaned, this was a monotonous task and sometimes fruitless - of course you never knew when the next storm would come, in fact life here was 'bloody awful'. Everyone would muck in with the work, regardless of rank, just to get the aircraft moving again and to make way for the next convoy.

Every six months I had 14 days leave and visited Cairo, Heliopolis, Luxor, Tel Aviv and many other places of interest. The trip from Khartoum was quite an event; I went by train to wadi Halfa, riverboat to Luxor and then another train to Cairo. During these trips I took many photos of all the wonders of Egypt; the Temple of Abu Simbel, the Valley of the Kings, the Colossi at Thebes, the Sphinx and of course The Pyramids. In Palestine I visited the Good Samaritan's Inn, the Wailing Wall and a Jewish Temple which was later blown up. I think it was called Ohma's Mosque.

During odd weekends off, I volunteered to do some official runs to Cairo, where certain small machining jobs were undertaken for the RAF by Cairo University workshops; these workshops were excellent and could make virtually anything. During the wait of several days for one of these jobs, I played in a service Jazz Band on Egyptian State Radio, which was transmitted to the troops in the Canal Zone. On another of these trips I was introduced to a Flight Sergeant who was the RAF fixer for entertainment, his name was 'Sticks' Gibling, he was a very well known professional dance band drummer. Through 'Sticks' I met many well known musicians, including Sid Lawrence, Basil Jones (who played lead trumpet at the London Palladium) and Doug Swallow who played for the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; I also played on the Forces Middle East network, which broadcast over the whole of the Middle East. On one of my last trips to Cairo I went into RAF Headquarters to look up 'Sticks', only to be informed he was in the 'glasshouse' minus his tapes for fiddling PSI funds!

Another little 'fiddle' that some of the chaps had was, collecting small clocks from F24 camera that were scrapped from crashed aircraft and taking them to a watchmaker in one of the back streets of Cairo; where he would fit them into very nice wrist watch cases, for a few pounds. They made excellent watches as most had been made by Longines or Omega.

**Ed:** Next month we see Guy visiting the Pyramids and then heading to South Africa with 500 Germans



A new state-of-the-art helicopter will allow an emergency service charity to fly missions at night and save more lives across south Bucks.

Thames Valley Air Ambulance is marking 15 years of vital rescues with a new craft equipped with night vision technology and flood lighting to extend its capabilities.

Established in 2000, the charity – which relies solely on donations - has developed over the from a ‘swoop and scoop’ service to an advanced air ambulance service, notching up around 16,000 missions to date.

To coincide with its 15-year anniversary, the charity is relaunching with a new name, having previously been known as the Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance. The anniversary celebrations got off to a flying start at Abingdon Air Show over the bank holiday weekend, before crews take delivery of the new Airbus H135 helicopter from Germany later this year.

Mark McGeown, the charity’s CEO said: “Over the last 15 years, TVAA has significantly advanced pre-hospital trauma care in the counties of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to reach, treat and save more people than ever before. “2015 is set to be an exciting year for us as we look towards night flying.

“As well as introducing a new image for the charity, we are looking forward to the delivery of our new helicopter that will enable us to deliver our life-saving  
*Airbus H135 - delivery in late 2015*



service by night as well as by day.” Mr McGeown said when crews performed their first rescue in 2000, they carried the same medical kit as a land ambulance.

However, today the air ambulance brings the expertise of an A&E department to the roadside to treat patients at the scene. The average cost of a mission is now around £2,500, compared with just £500 in 2000.

Doctor-led teams can perform a range of life-saving interventions at the roadside, providing early diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions that otherwise could only be identified in hospital. Innovations on board have advanced from basic medical kits to a full range of life-saving equipment. TVAA was the first air ambulance to carry an I-Stat machine used for immediate blood analysis helping to shave off valuable seconds in what teams call the ‘golden hour’.

To donate use:

<http://www.tvairambulance.org.uk/donations/make-a-donation/>

or contact: Head Office Thames Valley Air Ambulance  
Artisan, Hillbottom Road High Wycombe Bucks  
HP12 4HJ Tel 0300 999 0135

**RAF Airbus 400 - Atlas**

The RAF Atlas aircraft operations have been paused, as a result of a crash on a pre delivery flight on 9 May 15 in Seville of an A400 destined for the Turkish Air Force. Engine software is currently being investigated.



## Dresden 13 - 14 February 1945

### 70 Years on

70 years ago, on the night of February 13, 1945 Bomber Command turned its attentions on Dresden. In two raids, just three hours apart, more than 2,600 tons of high explosives and incendiaries rained down.

Arguments still rage over the precise number of casualties but it's estimated that up to 25,000 people died in the firestorm that was said to be visible from the air 500 miles away.

Dresden was still in flames the next day when hundreds of US B-17 Flying Fortresses completed the mission. In military terms the raids were a success, as just six of the 796 Lancaster bombers involved were lost.

**Ed:** Here is an account from a veteran who wished to clear up some of the inaccuracies often reported.



*Dresden after the bombing*

At the end of January 1945 the Royal Air Force and the USAF 8th Air Force were specifically requested by the Allied Joint Chiefs of Staff to carry out heavy raids on Dresden, Chemnitz and Leipzig. It was not a personal decision by Sir Arthur Harris. The campaign should have begun with an American daylight raid over Dresden on February 13th, but bad weather over Europe prevented any American operation. It thus fell to Bomber Command to carry out the first raid on the night of the 13th. 769 Lancasters and 9 Mosquitoes were dispatched in two separate attacks on Dresden and at the same time a further 368 RAF aircraft attacked the synthetic oil plant at Bohlen, near Leipzig. A few hours after the RAF raids 311 bombers of the 8th Air Force attacked Dresden. The following day (15th February) the USAF dispatched 211 bombers to bomb Dresden and a further 4406 bombers on 2nd March.

As an economic centre, Dresden ranked sixth in importance in pre-war Germany. During the war several hundred industrial plants of various sizes worked full time in Dresden for the German War machine, among these were such industrial giants as the world famous Zeiss-Ikon AG (Optics and cameras). This plant, alongside the plant in Jena was one of the principal centres of production of field glasses for the Armies, aiming sights for the Panzers and Artillery, periscopes for U-boats, bomb and gunsights for the Luftwaffe. Dresden was also one of the key centres of the German postal and telegraphic system and a crucial East - West transit point with its seven bridges crossing the Elbe at its widest point.

In February 1945 the war was far from over. The Western Allies had not yet crossed the Rhine, Germany still controlled extensive territories, and Bomber Command lost more than 400 bombers after Dresden. The war was at its height, the Allies were preparing for the land battles which would follow their crossing of the Rhine, the Russians were poised on the Oder. This destruction of Dresden meant a considerable reduction in the effectiveness of the German Armed Forces.

The Germans followed Hitler even after the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1945 when its horrors were broadcast to the world. They continued to follow Hitler even after they watched the thousands of living skeletons from concentration camps being herded westwards in early 1945.

A quote from former POW Colonel H E Coe (USAF Ret'd) "on 13/14 February 1945 we POW's were shunted into the Dresden marshalling yards, where for nearly 12 hours German troops and equipment rolled in and out of Dresden. I saw with my own eyes that Dresden was an armed camp; thousands of German troops, tanks and artillery and miles of freight wagons....transporting German logistics towards the East, to meet the Russians."

**Ed:** Next month I hope to report on the recent celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of VE Day, where some of our own members joined the veterans in London.

*In amongst all these celebrations we must not forget those, who for them, the war was far from over. I just hope the British Government gives equal credence to those who fought on in the Far East! On September 2, 1945, a formal surrender ceremony was performed in Tokyo Bay, Japan, aboard the battleship USS Missouri - then the war was over!*

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## Programme 2015

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (\*)

- 17 Jun**    **Airliners - Chris Sprent**  
 15 Jul      Concord, Boom or Bust? -  
               Alan Merriman  
 15/16 Aug   International Moth Rally at Woburn\*  
 19 Aug      Battle of Britain - Chris Wren

## Your Committee

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## Welfare

It was good to see Roger Miller looking a bit fitter at our lunch but also good to hear him praise the NHS! Bill and Ann Hyland also attended and it was great to see them again.

I will be phoning around over the next couple of weeks to see if I can speak to some of the previous regulars who seem to have slipped off the radar.

Good to hear that Roy Briggs attended the VE celebrations and was actually spotted on TV.

**David**

## Membership Secretary

Thank you to all those who sent in cheques and stamped addressed envelopes for the Buffet Lunch. As you know this year we have decided just to have the single lunch in May, plus of course our Christmas Lunch. So we can discuss at the committee meeting perhaps you could give us your views of the menu for the May Buffet. Would you perhaps like a hot alternative as a main course? Just an idea, please let me or any committee member know your views.

**Gerry**

## Secretary/Editor

Well just before I go away for a week in the Lake District, a plea for some articles for next month. The VE Day celebrations, Project Propeller are just a couple and of course photographs are always welcome. Please try and get any copy to me by 23 June so it can be ready for the July issue.

For members you will have the latest Membership List attached, so please check your entry to ensure that it is correct. Do not worry about the initials at the end of the column, this is purely for the committee use.

Oh yes before I finish re Page 4 of the May 15 issue, as a pilot, I am glad to report a 'nil reply' to our assertion that Pilot's make the Perfect Man, so there you have it - we obviously are. We knew, of course, but it is nice to know the other brevet holders obviously agree or could it be nobody really reads the Newsletter!!!

**Graham**