



NEWSLETTER

Book for Guest's Lunch on 21 May

The History of National Service

So Bill George was not the only person to do National Service! Our Guest Speaker for our April meeting was 'Harry' one of three subjects of the talk about the History of National Service.

Leslie Hore-Belisha, Secretary of State for War, persuaded the cabinet of Neville Chamberlain to introduce a limited form of conscription on 27 April 1939, with the Military Training Act being passed the following month. Only single men 20 to 22 years old were called up, and they were known as "militiamen" to distinguish them from the regular army. To emphasise this distinction, each man was issued with a suit in addition to a uniform. The intention was for the first intake to undergo six months of basic training before being discharged into an active reserve. They would then be recalled for short training periods and attend an annual camp.

At the outbreak of war, on 3 September 1939, the Military Training Act was overtaken by the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, and the first intake was absorbed into the army. This act imposed a

liability to conscription of all men 18 to 41 years old. Men could be rejected for medical reasons, and those engaged in vital industries or occupations were "reserved" at a particular age beyond which no one in that job would be enlisted. For example, lighthouse keepers were "reserved" at 18 years old. From 1943, some conscripts were directed into the British coal mining industry and become known as the "Bevin Boys".

Having heard the stories of Tom and Dick it came to Harry's tale. He was evacuated from Hastings to Somerset. After leaving school he attended Oxford University. He did an extra Post Graduate year with the hope of avoiding National Service but after a year as a Physics Teacher in a Grammar School, his number was up!

We soon realised that Harry was in fact **Wg Cdr John Gearing**, who having started National Service, became an Officer and took on a full service career. An Engineering Officer he eventually became the Wg Cdr head of Apprentice Training at RAF Halton. It was a fascinating journey, very well researched and coupled with his personal reminiscences.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Remember 21 May 14

GUEST'S LUNCH
Booking Form on page 7

Greenacres 12.00 Noon.
(Please do NOT arrive early)

My Memories of WW 2

Part 2 of Harold Purver's story

These daylight trips in August and September were quite enjoyable and comfortable, knowing that whatever course the navigator handed the Staff Pilot (Base-Omah-Armagh-Ballymina-Base) they flew their own courses, keeping an eye on Loch Neigh as we flew round it's perimeter. This changed when we started some 30 hours of night flying on 4 hourly trips which were much more interesting, especially when on some flights you were the only Navigator. Later, with experience, we flew 4 hour trips and finally one morning we flew 4 hours to RAF Andover as 1st Nav and then in the afternoon returned to base as 2nd Nav. I remember how difficult it was to map read 'up sun' because of the November smoke pollution in the West Midlands, which was a good excuse if the 2nd Nav couldn't find any pin points for the 1st Nav.

Between training and homework we managed time off and visited surrounding towns and country. About 3 or 4 miles away on the coast, at a fishing village called Ardglass, we could be treated by the WVS in the Village Hall with 'egg and chips'. When the supply of eggs suddenly dried up, we found it coincided with the arrival of American troops in the area whose canteens had bought them all up!

At last, after some 87 hours total flying time, on 9th November 1943, I took off at 0200 hrs in an Anson F3 with Fg Off Marshall CFO pilot to navigate him for 3 hrs 30 mins to the island of Tiree and returning with the help of bearings QDM's from a Staff Wireless Operator. We flew round Tiree to return a minute or so early, happy that I managed to find a small island off the Scottish coast in the dark! A following DR exercise at night was to be even more valuable operational experience than was intended. As 2nd Nav I flew for 3 hours to RAF Valley on Anglesey before midnight. After midnight we then flew for 5 hours back to base, with me being the primary Nav and I remember how beautiful the mountains of Mourne were at sunrise. Less beautiful was the next day when we learnt that one of our aircraft had

crashed into Snowdon, with the loss of crew, due to an undetected wind change. Fortunately our WOP had managed to get the Nav a Practice QDM, in amongst all the operational traffic and we had altered course accordingly to land safely at Valley.

At the end of the month after 96 hrs and 5 mins and the requisite number of dinghy drills in the North Sea, I was awarded the coveted Navigator's Shelf Wing, Sergeant's Stripes and a fiver a week pay. This also entitled me, it turned out, to date an Irish Colleen in Belfast one Saturday evening. The highlight of dinner at that 'Dinner and Dance' I remember, was watching fascinated as she attacked hard hard roll and butter with a knife and fork, crying, 'Bejayeus-there goes me wee bun!' as it escaped across the floor! However my return journey to base was a bit of a let down. The Yankee truck driver I had thumbed for a lift was also a Sergeant and with two medals for crossing the Atlantic, he also earned £5 per week and gave me a packet of Lucky Strike in sympathy.

After some 4 weeks leave at home to rest and recoup, celebrate and flaunt my new decorations, I arrived at 19 OTU RAF Kinloss just in time for Christmas 1943, and settled down in our Nissan hut quarters at the satellite airfield Forres. As we marched up the lane past the WAAF Nissan huts, I heard a language tinged with a Scottish accent that I'd never heard my Mother talking to my sisters before, to be drowned out by two Merlins of a Whitley bomber on it's final approach over a hedge. I remarked so to an Opo that it looked about to clip the hedge, but was assured by our accompanying Chiefy, in a voice appalled at such ignorance, that that was the usual Whitley nose down flight mode: as I appreciated on my first Whitley V Bomber No 782, T for Tommy, as Nav to Pilot Sergeant Hallan's crew, who had selected me from the rest of the section, 'All things considered', as they put it!

Now following training trips as a complete crew almost every other day, lasting about 3 hours for DR cross countries, or 6 hours for bombing and air to sea firing, or 1 hour for fighter affiliation trips, when the fighter boys had pleasure in trying to shoot us down.

(continued on Page 3)

We learnt the serious task of evading their efforts by 'cork screwing'. After some 35 day hours and 10 night hours as a crew, the pilot was deemed as not suitable, so the whole crew was disbanded, so did not share the blame. In this way each new pilot had his own initiative to become 'Skipper' to his own crew since he was always held responsible for them.

A couple of unhappy days later I was approached by a handsome, broad shouldered pilot with a Yorkshire accent and asked if I'd like to join his ready made crew. It was the first time I'd been invited to join anything, apart from a sports team to make up the numbers, or the washing up at home! Apparently his previous Nav, a Canadian, was unable to shake off air sickness although we had both reached a similar point in our training. After a couple of beers I met the rest of the crew that evening in the bar and joined them by mutual agreement. I stayed with the same pilot Geoffrey Norton for the rest of the war, some three years or 1,000 hours. Now training continued apace, firstly for me to catch on to their Northern accents and to catch up on the syllabus. Some four weeks later, mainly night flying towards the end of the course, our training became almost operational, for we took part in a 'Bullseye Exercise' which was an 8 hour tour around Britain, with the cooperation of night fighters, several lights, anti aircraft guns, more trigger happy than the enemy, and balloons.

The Met forecast, that the March weather exhibited a high pressure inversion, so the whole country expected fog below 2000 feet, although no fighters could take off, at least we should see the searchlights shining through the fog. At 1845 we took off from Kinloss, flew south to Glasgow and then across the sea to Ireland and circled Belfast to give us a show of searchlight, we turned back east across the Irish Sea to the Potteries and on to Goole. Spot on ETA there were welcoming searchlights, our coast could not be seen, so we turned on DR, then set course for Aberdeen: a long sea trip intending to take shots for astro navigation. 10/10 ensured no stars could be seen, so flew on DR with occasional practice QDM bearings the WOP could squeeze out of Operational Traffic. As we approached Aberdeen a sudden change in the monotone and drone of the two Mer-

lins brought a sudden spate of activity on the intercom. The pilot and F/E ensured that the failed port engine was properly feathered for minimum drag. Hardly had we started breathing again when the starboard engine hiccuped and stopped. In the ensuing silence, broken only by the drumming of a heavy bomber gliding to earth, a voice on the intercom produced the magic words 'balance cocks' and almost miraculously the starboard engine picked up again from the petrol stored for the port engine, and we continued our course on one engine, losing height ominously, since we were flying over the Grampian Mountains en route to base, not very sure of our position after some hours without a reliable 'pin point'. It was decided to let down carefully through 10/10 cloud and set course out to sea until the ground was sighted. So the Skipper asked me to set course for Montrose with expected ETA and the crew settled down, with me chewing my pencil top! At ETA Montrose neither coast or town could be sighted, although the cloud was lighter, so the Skipper decided to use the 'DARKIE' emergency call-sign. When the normal R/T range of 10 miles reception is extended to 50 miles radius, plain language is to be used, not codes.

After several anxious minutes on this March early morning (hoping the Flying Control were still wide awake) we at last heard a husky, passionate WAAF saying, 'Hello Darkie, V-Victor, hello Darkie V-Victor, this is Dyce Airport calling, this is Dyce Airport calling, hoe do you read me, Over'. So the tension reduced as the Skipper indulged in the usual Flying Control procedures, finding we were some 30 miles distant, and given a course and time to fly. Letting down gingerly through the cloud all eyes peering out through the grey dawn. Dyce soon reported they could here us, but still unseen because it was an early morning mist with intermittent ground detail, until we were circling overhead and the Skipper called for 'permission to land' ads he caught a favourable glimpse of the runway. He called for the 'chance light' to be switched, to be told it was already floodlighting the runway, then with an urgent call of 'funnel, funnel' turned over the runway end and stuffed the Whitley down.

(To be continued)

Tiger Moths to Lancasters

Tom Payne's flying experiences from 1942 to 2008 Part 1

The first time I flew in a DH82 Tiger Moth was November 9th 1942, a year and 3 days after Attestation and 6 ½ months after joining the RAFVR. It lasted 30 minutes but they were the most exciting ½ hour of my life to date. The instructor was a Sgt. Inman and it was at No.4 EFTS, Blackburn Aircraft Company airfield, Brough near Hull.



RAF Tiger Moth

I recall it was very cold and we had to march from our billets round the perimeter to the flight offices and aircraft dispersal area. Before flying we had hours of practice in prop swinging and aircraft handling on the ground. The following 4 weeks were filled with lectures and flying, flights lasted from 30 to 60 minutes with various lessons in stalling, spinning, aerobatics and recovering from unusual positions until finally on December 2nd after 12 hours dual I had my solo test and first solo flight which lasted all of 10 minutes.

Finally departing from Brough on December 10th in high spirits thinking at last I am a flyer, reality sunk in when I arrived at Heaton Park Manchester with thousands of other would be pilots waiting to be sent overseas for further training.

My next flight was to be on March 29th 1943 at 35 EFTS Neepawa, Manitoba Canada, in their

version of a Tiger Moth the DH82C which had the luxury of a canopy.



Canadian built Tiger Moth (with canopy)

The hours of circuits and bumps mounted up, after 5 hours dual I was off solo and life was very good as I gained experience and confidence. Sadly my first instructor, Sgt. Smith killed himself but his pupil escaped, after he "beat up" a recovery truck on the precautionary airfield and misjudged his height. I was on a "precautionary approach" at the time when my instructor suddenly took over and flew at low level back to Neepawa to advise them of the crash.

The lesson learnt by witnessing such a tragedy has stayed with me ever since, whilst the temptation sometimes when low level flying to go lower still, I always refrained from doing so. Tree tops and chimneys belong where they are, keep well clear and you can't go far wrong.

Whilst flying in Canada was regarded as safe it was easy to get lost with the featureless landscape, no radios were installed in our aircraft, the railway line running East-West was a main feature as were a few rivers and lakes. Grain storage silos alongside the rail track usually had the name of the "town" (village in UK term) painted on them so could be read and checked on the map. Several fellow trainees fell by the way side on the course, some applied for re-training as navigators, bomb aimers, flight engineers or wireless ops, very few chose to return to civvy street and wait for call up.

The servicing at Neepawa was carried out mainly by civilian engineers, unfortunately I think that their skilled personnel had all joined the services and the men left to undertake the work did not perform too well. The number of aircraft that were rejected by instructors and trainees meant that practically every day time was lost.

My first major scare whilst flying happened quite unexpectedly, I was solo practicing aerobatics so was at about 6,000 feet, I had dived and pulled up for a stalled turn which fell away. Muttering to myself I then attempted a slow roll, it was a disaster, the plane just wouldn't go where I tried. Still puzzled I re-checked the controls, having walked round and checked all movements manually on the ground before start up, I was sure everything was O.K. To my horror I found that the port aileron wasn't responding to the stick.

I tried "slow" flying and found that the aileron drooped as the speed decreased, this acted like flap, only having heard about flaps in theory of flight lectures, I was getting a lesson in real life which I wasn't prepared for. Without radio contact I was on my own, I tried landing approaches whilst still at around 4,000 feet, and worked out the only way to land was by doing a wheelie. Keeping flying speed and just hope the runway was long enough for me to get the tail down and brake safely. Yes we had brakes, no tail skid, as we had tarmac runways.

I managed to land safely on my first attempt, it was harder to taxi back to the parking area but after shutting down and reporting to the Flight Commander, I was sent to talk about the problem with the Maintenance Section. They examined the controls and checked the plane out, finally apologising to me for one of their staff who had "used incorrect wire",

I questioned them further and it turned out that fuse wire was commonly being used to connect several linking sections throughout the system as there was

a shortage of pins. Unfortunately he had used 5 amp instead of 30 amp which was why it failed.

I passed all tests and with some 74 hours flying Tigers moved on in Mid-May to continue my pilots training on twin engined Oxfords at Swift Current. Here I finally succumbed to Scarlet Fever which had broken out on the troopship, this delayed my getting pilots wings until late October 1943. This probably saved my life, many of my earlier mates returned to the U.K. and reached Squadrons only to lose their lives, it took me another year to get to O.T.U flying Wellingtons, flying Lancasters at a Conversion Unit in early 1945 meant that the war in Europe ended before I reached a Squadron.

Whilst piloting a Lancaster was wonderful, flying Tiger Moths was and is better, being alone in an open cockpit cannot be beaten. I have been fortunate to have flown in some 84 different Tigers plus 16 different Chipmunks in a my career in the RAF and RAFVR.

Only one DH 82 Tiger Moth out of the 84 is still flying in the U.K. today. It is T 6825 G-APLU owned by Mike Vaisey (now a CACA member). It is kept at Rush Green, I was to have flown in it to Cambridge last year for their celebration day of having Tiger Moths in continuous service there for 70 years, a strong cross wind prevented it, so I unfortunately had to do the trip by road.



G-APLU taxiing at Woburn

Visit to White Waltham
Tuesday 3 June 2014
 (courtesy of the Joystick Club)



We have been invited to join the Joystick Club at White Waltham for lunch and a tour on **Tuesday 3rd June 2014**. We will meet in the car park at White Waltham at **12 Noon**.

The committee will organise car transport and we will be limited to 12 places. If you would like to attend please let me know and I will coordinate the visit. Places will be on a first come first served basis. I have thus sent out email copies of this Newsletter to arrive in the same day as postal copies, to avoid any preferential treatment!

White Waltham Airfield is an operational general aviation aerodrome southwest of Maidenhead. A large grass airfield best known for its association with the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) from 1940-1945 and also has a significant history of pre-war flying training, war-time and post-war RAF use and post-war use as flight test centre by the Fairey and Westland aircraft companies. It is now the home of the West London Aero Club, the largest flying club in the UK.

The airfield was set up in 1928 when the de Havilland family bought 196 acres of grassland to house the de Havilland Flying School. In 1938 the airfield was taken over by the government, and during WW2 was the home of the ATA between its formation in early 1940 and disbandment on 30 November 1945. The ATA staged a unique Air Display and Air Pageant at White Waltham on 29 September 1945 which was opened by Lord Beaverbrook and featured a memorable static park of Allied and German aircraft and the flying included Alex Henshaw displaying a Seafire Mk45. After the war, the airfield was also used by Fairey Aviation and later Westland Helicopters, which assembled and

tested aircraft built at their Hayes factory. These included the Fairey FB-1 Gyrodyne, Fairey Jet Gyrodyne, Fairey Rotodyne & Westland Scout & Westland Wasp. The prototype Fairey Gannet was first flown from Aldermaston but production aircraft were completed and first flown at White Waltham too and an example is currently stored at the airfield.

Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was taught to fly at White Waltham in 1952, flying a de Havilland Chipmunk,. The HQ RAF Home Command Communications Squadron (HCCS) was based at the airfield from 1950 until 1959.

The airfield stayed under RAF control until 1982, when it was purchased by the current owners. Until 2007 it was the base of Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance helicopter. Approximately 150 light aircraft are based at the airfield, which with three runways is reportedly the largest grass airfield in civilian use in Europe. The airfield holds a Civil Aviation Authority Public Use Aerodrome Licence, that allows flights for the public transport of passengers or for flight training.

This event has been organised by our new member **Mike Clews**

Check In Baggage

This recently happened to a friend of mine. Checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked:

'Has anyone put anything in your baggage without your knowledge?'

To which he replied, 'If it was without my knowledge, how would I know?'

The check-in clerk smiled knowingly and nodded, 'That's why we ask'

This happened at Melbourne Airport

Emails

As more of us use emails beware of messages from unknown senders, particularly if all they have is an attachment. Do not open to have a look, just delete the message.

Guest's Buffet Lunch

Greenacres Tavern

Wednesday 21st May 2014

Noon for 12.30pm (Please do not arrive before Noon)

Cost £8.00 per head

Please complete the form below and send to Gerry Sealy-Bell together with cheque payable to 'Chiltern Aircrew Association' and a stamped addressed envelope, the closing date for postal requests is Monday 12 May 2014.

----- Please Tear here -----

Guest's Buffet Lunch

Greenacres Tavern

Wednesday 21st May 2014

NAME:

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TELEPHONE

Please send me tickets for the buffet lunch on 21 May 14.

I enclose cheque (Chiltern Aircrew Association) for £..... and a stamped addressed envelope

Post to: Gerry Sealy-Bell, 31 Hempstead Road, Kings Langley, Herts WD4 8BR

Programme 2014

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

8 May	Veterans Day, RAF Museum Hendon
21 May	Guest's Lunch 12.00 Noon
3 Jun	Visit to White Waltham
18 Jun	'Malcolm's War', Malcolm Cloult
21 Jun	Project Propeller, Gloucester/Staverton
16 Jul	LHR Present & Future Richard Smith
20 Aug	Commonwealth War Graves, Roy Rigg
17 Sep	Guest's Lunch 12.00 Noon
15 Oct	RAF Chenies & Bovington, Colin Oakes
19 Nov	Luftwaffe a/c of WW2, G/C Chris Sprent
17 Dec	Xmas Lunch 12.00 Noon

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Welfare

A couple of things turned up during the month which has, overall, been quite good. The improving weather has cheered most folks and long may it continue.

The first item that struck me during my ring round was the fact that **several members are no longer driving and are becoming dependent on lifts to our meetings and other essential journeys.** I know that people are already very good but **if you need transport or can offer same do let us know and we'll try and work something out,** as this will obviously become an increasing problem, as many more join the '90 Club'.

A second taught me a very quick lesson. Driving to our last ACA Meeting I passed a broken down vehicle of the A41. Fortunately I recognised the young man pushing his car to safety, none other than George Meredith. Having moved the car to safety with the help of a passing breakdown vehicle driver, I checked that George could contact his garage, George does not have a mobile phone and I didn't have mine with me either! The Breakdown man actually came to the rescue and took George and car home. George hopes to be back on the road soon. Moral of the story? If you are out and about on your own, **make sure you slip that phone into your pocket.** I am not the greatest lover of mobiles but I will certainly carry mine in the future

Bill

Membership Secretary

We now have a telephone number for Ian Nelson in Horsham. We wish him and Maureen well and hope to see them sometime.

228 NELSON I H (Ian) Flat 3, Talbot House, 20-22 East Street, Horsham RH12 1HL Tel: 01403 261017 GL

Gerry

Programme Secretary

You will see that we now have a full programme for 2014 and I even have one or two in the bag for 2015. I appreciate we have no space for member's meetings but with the stories being supplied to Graham he will be able to continue to print them in the Newsletter for the rest of this year.

National Service 'Bill'