



# NEWSLETTER

## September Buffet & Aircrew Lunch Bookings

### July Meeting

On 17<sup>th</sup> July we welcomed Peter Marks who talked to us on Air Traffic Control. For all of us it was a fascinating look at his varied career within the National Air Traffic Service.

He started as an Air Traffic Control Assistant but later returned to the training college at Bournemouth to become a controller. From there he spent time at Boscombe Down, Southern Radar at Sopley before moving to West Drayton and the London Air Traffic Centre. Following many years as a radar controller he moved into Flow Management and spent time at EuroControl in Brussels. He finished his career with the CAA in Airspace utilization. Varied and interesting, his career and his presentation was!

### Royal Mail

You may have heard of the saga of the missing stamps destined to go on envelopes for our April Newsletter. They were seen going into the sack at the local post office but on delivery to Stuart McKay, they were missing. There is no insurance but I pointed out that some 60% of your subscription goes to pay for stamps and that for many of you the Newsletter was your only contact with old friends.

I am pleased to report that having received my letter the Royal Mail agreed to make a 'one off' payment to us to recover the cost of the missing stamps. On behalf of you all, I thank Royal Mail for their kindness.

### Buffet Lunch–Weds 18 Sep 13

We will be holding our usual September Buffet Lunch. You can **book at the August meeting or by post BUT to Graham Laurie not Gerry Sealy-Bell**. The cost is £8 per head so please get your cheques payable to 'Chiltern ACA' in the post to Graham Laurie, 19 High St, Prestwood, Gt Missenden, Bucks HP16 9EE by 10 Sep 13 at the latest.



## **August Meeting-21 Aug 13**

We welcome back **Hugh Davis** who will give us a talk on the **Special Operations Executive (SOE)**. You may remember back in the days at the Rugby Club he came to talk on the Enigma Machine and the work at Bletchley Park. I am sure we are in for another fascinating story.

### **This Month's 'Thumbnail Portrait' – Derek Gurney**

Derek joined the Royal Air Force on 23rd December 1943 at Lords. What a way to spend Christmas! Although he was billeted in luxury flats I think the standard of food left a bit to be desired. After basic training he went to Marston Moor to train as a gunner on the Halifax. However during that period the powers that be, having started Derek on the Merlin engined variety decided that a further conversion was required to the Hercules engine. The wheels turned exceedingly slow and he thought he had become a member of the permanent staff. During 1944 he flew the country far and wide from Benson to Lossiemouth. After many experiences he joined 10 Squadron and his first of eight ops was to Hemmingstedt near Kiel. He went to fairly widespread targets but his lasting memory is swinging round to see another aircraft very,very close. His instant reaction was to shout, "Dive,dive, dive" and they just avoided a mid-air collision with one otheir own Squadron aircraft.

Derek could read the ident letters and as he says they are still quite clear even today. His last sortie was a daylight to Heligoland during which he spotted one of the new Me163s. After VE day there was not a great call for gunners and

Derek remustered as a driver and again after a fair few adventures found himself in India after a long boat trip. He worked with 17 Military Transport Repair Unit until his discharge in 1947. Post war he became a carpenter as he is pretty useful with his hands and for many years he was subcontracted to Wimpey Construction. He then decided to use his RAF skills and moved to Vauxhall in their commercial lorry factory where he honed his welding skills.

He has had many hobbies, not all still practiced, among which was a spell competing in motorcycle grass track racing using many famous marques of machinery from a 1928 Norton through Velocettes, AJS and Matchless to the BSA 'Goldie'. His various skills led him to aeromodelling where he made and flew free flight models. This led him to bigger ideas and he joined the gliding club at Dunstable and was a regular flier for 40 years. I think we all know of Derek's prowess on the dance floor but alas now due to very painful back problems, he is regrettably now only a spectator, although I'll bet he does a little instructing on the side! He is one of our regulars at Greenacres, living near the Magic roundabout. He is unfailingly cheerful despite his recent mobility problems and all we can say is 'Keep smiling Derek'. It does us all good.

### **Aircrew Lunch-Fri 27 Sep 13**

Details of this lunch at **The Black Horse**, Gozzards Ford, nr Abingdon can be found on the back page. Cost is £20 per head and tickets are going fast from those who attended last year. We are limited to 60 places, so first come first served.

### Jack Ball's Story – Part 3

Being the pilot in those days meant that you were captain of aircraft and full responsibility was yours, no matter what higher ranks were carried at any time. Mount Hope was a typical three-runway aerodrome of the sort built all over Canada, the UK and other places where the RAF was the main customer (later American military airfields were generally single runways built to the prevailing wind for tricycle undercars). It lay on an escarpment a few miles from Hamilton, a steel-making city of about two hundred thousand people, nestled against the western corner of Lake Ontario. Our bombing range was on the Six Nations Reservation a few miles south. The aircraft were Ansons, some of which had been 'winterised' by lining them with hardboard, increasing the stalling speed.

On winter nights you either froze or sweated, depending on which aircraft you had been allocated. You sat there in full gear plus Thermogen in your boots, icicles forming on eyebrows or moustaches. Frequently, the pitot head heater failed, leaving you with no airspeed indicated. Nevertheless, I liked the night flights for the phenomena you sometimes saw: the moving ribbons of the Northern Lights, the ice crystals before the rising moon and the great ball of the red sun at dawn. Eye tests were given every six months, but an excellent memory got me through.

One night, snow and engine trouble forced me to land at what is now Toronto International airport. Because of the weather, we were ordered to return by train to Hamilton, glad to be wearing

full flying kit despite the jeers of street urchins.

In summer, the problems were the cumulonimbus clouds building up as they traversed the Niagara Peninsula from Lake Michigan. By the time they got to us they were towering thunderheads. In flying, the weather was always the chief concern; although the forecasts were generally accurate, it was the unexpected for which you tried to prepare. Many of the original staff had been co-opted bush pilots with great experience, but there was some concern amongst the navigation instructors that aircraft landed after exactly three hours, whatever the standard of navigation. The bush pilots tried to maintain that we were built on a magnetic mountain.

I was caught out one May night when we had been flying west along the centre of Lake Erie. The pupils were using astro navigation with the only lights below being the freighters ploughing west to Sault St. Marie or eastwards towards the St. Lawrence. We were battling a headwind clearly greater than forecast, as we had not reached the turning point and the trainees could not believe the fixes they had calculated. I had been keeping a weather eye on a big thunderhead to the northwest when we were recalled by radio. After crossing the coast I recognized Dunville aerodrome, but the weather ceiling was forcing us lower and near base we ran into solid rain and cloud down to the ground, so I turned back. Unfortunately, in the meantime, Dunville had closed. No runway lights were showing, but in the lightning flashes I glimpsed the runways as I did a low circuit at a couple of hundred feet. I decided to aim at the central triangle, which I knew should be

grass. With the pupils pumping the undercarriage down and full flap, I closed the throttles, held the stick back and prayed. Faithful Annie pancaked into waist-high grass. We sat in the blackness and pouring rain to get our breath back and waited for the transport. I had a lot of drinks bought for me that night.

The months rolled by, we were asked what our choice would be for an operational squadron and I put down 'torpedo bombers'. A number of Polish officers came through as pupils, plus a few of my old school acquaintances. We were on Canadian rates of pay that were advantageous and were working hard, especially at night flying.

On camp, home-grown talent provided light relief. We were lucky that the Edwards brothers put on hilarious acts for our concerts. Jimmy went on to fly Dakotas at Arnhem and star on radio and television.

The year went quickly. Much was happening in the war which was passing us by. By April 1943 I was a Flight-sergeant with over eleven hundred hours of twin-engine flight time and was at last posted to Moncton, New Brunswick, the transit camp for overseas. There we went to the cinema, ate lots of steaks, walked the countryside and waited for a ship. There was a scarlet fever epidemic and I was sent to hospital with a throat infection. It was so crowded that we less serious cases were packed end to end in the corridors. After three weeks the next fellow came out in chickenpox and in due course I followed. I was placed in a single room where I grew long hair and a beard, until the Matron looked in and kicked up a fuss. They found I was

suffering from Bright's disease, a kidney complaint and all changed. Thereafter the chef came each morning to find out what I wished for lunch and dinner. They put me through a battery of tests and several weeks of treatment. I recovered, went on leave, relapsed, met Des Dowding, a fellow patient, and finally boarded the mighty Queen Elizabeth on 12th September 1943 for a five day zigzag, unescorted voyage to Greenock. I was not alone. I shared a 'hot bunk' with a stranger: my turn was midnight to noon. We had two excellent meals per day, 5am and 5pm. There were some seventeen thousand American troops on board. We found that they were too good for us at poker, but they were sure the ship had been built in the USA.

We arrived in Liverpool. After two months in the Grand Hotel at Harrogate, where many of the RAF staff were famous sportsmen, I went to an advanced flying unit at Kidlington, near Oxford. These units were necessary because flying conditions were so different in the UK from Canada or South Africa. Weather, the blackout and the enemy each posed their own problems.

We flew Airspeed Oxfords, a lively twin-engined job, not quite as forgiving as the Anson. It was a hard winter again. The Australians and South Africans had not seen snow before, so sun-lamp sessions were arranged in the evenings. Each twin room in the wooden huts had a coke stove, but the fuel ration was minimal. The Aussies burned the steps to the huts and joined us nightly in raiding the coke enclosure. I was having problems with my throat and spent a lot of time grounded. Finally I was sent to

the RAF hospital at Halton for a fortnight to have my tonsils out. There was also a two-week detachment to Holme-on-Spalding Moor in Yorkshire for a Beam Approach course. Conditions were foggy which helped the reality of the situation and it was instructive and enjoyable. We shared the aerodrome with 78 Squadron flying Handley Page Halifax MkI with Merlin engines. These aircraft will be met later. According to an old friend from Mount Hope that I met, morale was low here as they were taking heavy losses. He was gloomy about the prospects. I saw from the official lists that Francis Newport-Teignley, with whom I'd joined up, was now a prisoner in Germany.

**Ed:** *Next month we see Jack join Bomber Command.*

## **The San Francisco 777 Crash**

**Ed:** *There has been a lot of publicity about the ill fated Asiana crash. Much has been said about the training of modern day aircrew.*



Military pilots are well used to flying circuits and thus visual approaches. With modern day airline operations, particularly to international airports, it is normally a case of lock on to the Instrument Landing System (ILS) and

take the autopilot out at 200 feet or in some cases even lower!

Thus picture the story of this U/T Captain, who was being checked on his 9<sup>th</sup> sector as a Captain, by a newly qualified check Captain. After the long flight from Seoul, he was fully rested and took his seat some 90 mins prior to landing. On checking the weather it was fine, but for the runway in use the ILS Glidepath was out of service. Thus although not a full visual approach he would have to rely on other visual signals to assist with the glidepath.

Here is the rub, in my 35 years of transport flying distance versus height was a continuing calculation from top of decent onwards. In most aircraft 3 times the height is the ideal distance (i.e. passing 20,000 feet you should have approximately 60 track miles to run). In this case it was planned as a straight in approach. Whether the Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) normally transmitting from the threshold was working is unclear. In either case GPS and radar distance from the coast were also there to assist.

So let us look at the final approach flown by this crew. There were Precision Approach Indicators (PAPI's) available and the crew admitted they were showing 3 reds (i.e. low but no indication of how low!). What they did or possibly did not do with the other visual signals is currently unclear. They thought the auto throttle was functioning, so the Captain raised the nose to reduce the rate of descent but did not check whether the power had increased. Yes I can hear people say well why, were they not scanning the whole picture. Patently obviously, no but why?

Are we comparing the past with the modern day? Automation has taken over in the modern day cockpit so what was scanned in the old days, is often assumed nowadays.

We thus have to look at training and whether this pilot or indeed crew, were in regular practice of visual approaches? With all the other requirements of the different landing techniques, autoland, Category 2 ILS's (minima 100 ft) and so on. It is thus quite possible it had been a long while since they had flown a visual approach

The investigation will look at all aspects of the Asiana operations and what happened in this particular instance. Stories are already emerging of disquiet by a number of ex-pat simulator instructors of how crews would use social media to tell others what was coming up in simulator courses. The instructors were ordered to strictly adhere to a set course, thus they were unable to add any surprises. Was this accident a direct result of this policy? Eventually we shall find out. Military training is expensive but it is incidents like this that make it also sound very logical!

## **New Equipment**

For those of you at the July meeting you will have noticed some new equipment, the projector, laptop and sound system were all new thanks to some hard work by a number of members.

Your Chairman Geoff Hulett suggested we apply for a lottery grant to update our ageing presentation equipment. He collected together the paperwork and after a committee meeting our 'tame'

engineer Roger Miller was co-opted for his IT skills.

A case was duly put forward and shortly afterwards we heard our bid had been successful. There were many hurdles to go through but eventually most of the equipment is with us. We are so grateful to Roger for his time and effort, not only for his technical expertise for the bid but for mastering (well nearly mastering) the intricacies of 'Windows 8', which shall we say has had its usual Microsoft glitches.

We hope to add a 'lapel mic' to our new sound system which came with two hand held mics, but with the wonders of modern science they work on separate frequencies, so hence, no feedback. OK so half of you are so deaf you don't hear the feedback anyway!

So thanks to all those involved in getting us the successful bid, to Geoff and Roger in particular. To Samuel Snow Ltd for supplying most of the IT equipment. Hopefully once the usual teething problems are over you will notice an improvement in the sound quality, together with a clearer picture quality.

We plan to keep hold of our old equipment as a standby for the foreseeable future, so it will be available if any of you are called upon to give illustrated talks. Bill George, of course, is popular on the local circuit for his talk on being a 'National Service Pilot' (how many hours was it Bill?)

Finally, a big thank you, on your behalf, to 'The Big Lottery Fund' for their generous award. You will see their logo on the front page of the Newsletter, as our way of thanking them for their generosity.

## Programme

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

### **17/18 Aug Internationall Moth Rally at Woburn\***

#### **21 Aug S.O.E. - Hugh Davies**

18 Sep Guest's Lunch\* 1200 Noon

27 Sep Aircrew Lunch\* Abingdon 1200 Noon

16 Oct Member's Meeting

20 Nov The Lightening - Alan Merriman

18 Dec Christmas Lunch\* 1200 Noon

## Your Committee

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## Welfare

Jack Easter is still in dock at High Wycombe (Ward 5b) with little change in his medical state but he remains cheerful, although he obviously wants to be home. Stan Broomhead at last had his heart operation at Harefield after a wait of about six months. He is now recuperating back at home but feeling a little 'secondhand' in this oppressive heat.

Doug Hadland gave himself a bit of a fright when he fell in the bathroom and tried to demolish the cistern with his head. He was whisked off to hospital where he spent a few days being checked over. However we were pleased to see him at the last Meeting. He gleefully said he was pleased to avoid my list of 'casualties' - well, Doug, you didn't!

Jim Tomlinson is not too well and we send him our best wishes. Alan Chappell is also a bit down having been admitted to Stoke Mandeville Hospital (Ward 6) with a chest problem. Many thanks to his old chum Dennis Swains who spent ages trying to determine Alan's whereabouts. Our latest news is that Alan seems to be on the mend. Good to see Dick Haven back with us on Wednesday last.

Keep cool and carry on - Although it may all have changed before you read this.

**Bill**

## Membership Secretary

I will be taking orders for the Buffet Lunch at the August Meeting but please note if you do it by post, this time it is from Graham Laurie

**Cheerio, Gerry**

## AIRCREW LUNCH

**BLACK HORSE,  
GOZZARDS FORD, ABINGDON,  
OXON OX13 6JH**

**FRIDAY 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013 –  
1200 Noon for 12.30pm**

After the success of last year we plan to repeat the 'Aircrew Lunch', open to Military, Civil (ATPL/PPL) whatever and of course partners. We can seat 60 people, so please book early to avoid disappointment. Please select your menu choice and send me, together with a cheque for £20 per head.

### MAINS

- A. Locally made Cumberland Sausage, buttered mash potato and red wine gravy with seasonal vegetables.
- B. Hot grilled Fillet of Salmon, on a bed of mixed salad and hot new potatoes.
- C. Gourmet Fish Pie, seasonal white fish, smoked haddock, salmon and prawns, topped with cheesy mash with seasonal vegetables.
- D. Chicken Madras Curry with rice, naan bread, poppadum and mango chutney.
- E. 10oz Gammon Steak, with egg and pineapple, chips and salad.
- F. Pasta of the Day. Tagliatelle entwined with roasted Mediterranean vegetables and a rich tomato, basil and garlic

sauce, garden salad and garlic bread.

- G. Steak, Ale (Old Speckled Hen) and Mushroom Pie, topped with a puff pastry lid, chips and seasonal vegetables.

### SWEET

- L. Bailey's Cheesecake.
- M. Apple Crumble with cream.
- N. Hot Sticky Toffee Pudding, caramel sauce and vanilla pod Ice Cream.
- O. Eton Mess with fruits of the forest and whipped double cream and Ice Cream.
- P. Classic Cheeseboard, mature cheddar, stilton, brie with grapes and biscuits.

### TEA or COFFEE

If you have any special menu requirements please let me know.

Please send your order and **cheque for £20** per head, payable to 'The Black Horse' by **15 Sep 13** to:  
**Graham Laurie, 19 High Street,  
Prestwood, Great Missenden, Bucks  
HP16 9EE**

Tel: 01494 863492 Mob: 07798  
703022

Email: [graham@kitty4.co.uk](mailto:graham@kitty4.co.uk)