



NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our new members

January Meeting

Our meeting was held in slightly unusual circumstances in the main bar at The Greenacres Tavern, due to BBC TV filming in our normal part of the pub. After a little bit of furniture shifting, we soon had a top table for some of the committee to sit, with the remainder nearby!

After the more formal part of the morning, a general discussion took place culminating with the Chairman asking for members to tell what squadrons they had been on during their service career. Certainly a varied bunch to put it mildly. See Page 2 for a review of the AGM

Whilst we were in unusual surroundings, one thing did not change and that was the quality of the food which was excellent, as ever. Hopefully this month all will be back to normal but thank you Greenacres for not making us travel further afield.

Membership

We are glad to report that we have had a number of new members join and hope to be able to introduce them in person at our future meetings. If any of you know of a potential member, then let Ian Mason know and he can send them an Enrolment form. This will be checked by the committee at the next meeting and if accepted, their membership will be formalised.



So please have a good think who you know who would be a suitable addition. Our constitution has been reworded, so that not just aircrew, although that is still the primary aim of the Association. Others who can show an interest in Military Aviation will also be considered for membership. To enable the Chiltern Aircrew Association to flourish we need to increase our numbers if we can, so please help if you can.

Bomber Command Association

A number of members have taken BCA ties from the stock that Pete Smith brought along to a meeting. Can we ask you to wear it with pride at our February meeting. You do not have to be a former Bomber Command man, but Transport, Maritime, Fighter aircrew and even Meteor Pilots with ^{364.40} hours can do so!

Why? Well all will become clear at our February meeting when an announcement will be made. **So please wear the BCA Tie with pride.**

February Meeting

One of our recent new members Ron Hedge RNVR/RAF will reminisce about his flying career. Ron was introduced by Chris Brockbank and joined us for our Christmas Lunch.

So we welcome Ron not just as a member but to hear about his fascinating career. So make an extra effort to attend and give him a good welcome

Remember 19th February 2020

Ron Hedge Reminisces

Meet @ Greenacres 1030 for 1100

**Our AGM and the Future
AGM 15 January 2020**

Here is the agenda that we followed for our meeting.

1. Chairman's Introduction
2. Committee reports
Welfare: Any concerns relating to our members
Secretary/Editor: Newsletter, arrangements with Greenacres, possible visits and when.
Treasurer: Accounts review and Raffle success
Membership: Speaking/projection machinery (do we need to improve?)
Speaker Secretary: Any points on speakers? Continuation of role?
3. Election of Officers (President takes Chair)
4. Constitution: A discussion prior to Committee revising current edition, if required. Members see attached file
5. The future of the Association to include Membership
6. Any other business

The meeting commenced just after 11am with an introduction from our Chairman. He explained a brief history of the ACA and why it was originally set up. Of course the National organisation disbanded 8 years ago and Chiltern is one of a few Associations to continue and indeed flourish

Committee reports followed. David Bray talked of those who were poorly but it was really good to see Dennis Swains and Ron Doble in attendance. If any member knows of somebody who is poorly or needs help in any way, please contact Dave.

Graham Laurie thanked those who had sent in articles for the Newsletter and appealed for all members to think of any particular incident that happened to them and write it up so others can share the story. He also mentioned the visits during the year to the deHavilland Museum at London Colney and the Shut-

tleworth Collection at Old Warden and said we hope to continue such visits this year, although we will try and hold our monthly meetings on the 3rd Wednesday and have the visits as an addition to the programme.

Rod Finn explained that the accounts were in a healthy position and explained we were able to subsidise the Christmas Lunch together with the two visits during the year. The accounts hopefully would be ratified by the February meeting. He also mentioned that we were negotiating with HSBC to have 'on line' banking soon. The use of BACS transfers had proved helpful and saved many visits to the bank, paying in cheques.

Ian Mason mentioned that annual subscriptions were due. Apart from 2nd WW members who were now free. He thanked those who had already paid. Although our membership had fallen, we were hoping that some new members would be forthcoming.

Bill George explained that due to falling numbers at meetings he thought we needed some help from members to tell their own stories as Dennis Swains had done twice recently. After some discussion, a number of speakers were suggested and Bill promised to try and build the usual programme for 10 of our 12 meetings.

The election of officers was handled by our President Geoff Hulett and surprise surprise the old committee were voted back in post unanimously!

With Des back in the chair there was a discussion concerning the Constitution, which the committee agreed to revise. This led to a discussion on those who should qualify as members. Again the committee agreed to look at the matter. We had already tried to get some ladies to meetings but with very limited success but the invitation still holds good.

There was nothing to discuss in Any Other Business so the meeting was closed.

Ron Doble led a vote of thanks to the committee for their continued work, which was much appreciated.

We hope to have a revised constitution in place after the next committee meeting and a revised list of members will hopefully be issued with the March Newsletter.

SR-71 Blackbird Breakup at Mach 3.2

Another great flying story.

By Bill Weaver

Ed: *I thank Des Richard for forwarding this amazing story which will be serialised in the next couple of issues*



Among professional aviators, there's a well-worn saying: Flying is simply hours of boredom punctuated by moments of stark terror. And yet, I don't recall too many periods of boredom during my 30-year career with Lockheed, most of which was spent as a test pilot.

By far, the most memorable flight occurred on Jan. 25, 1966. Jim Zwyer, a Lockheed flight test reconnaissance and navigation systems specialist, and I were evaluating those systems on an SR-71 Blackbird test from Edwards AFB, Calif. We also were investigating procedures designed to reduce trim drag and improve high-Mach cruise performance. The latter involved flying with the center-of-gravity (CG) located further aft than normal, which reduced the Blackbird's longitudinal stability.

We took off from Edwards at 11:20 a.m. and completed the mission's first leg without incident. After refueling from a KC-135 tanker, we turned eastbound, accelerated to a Mach 3.2 cruise speed, and climbed to 78,000 ft., our initial cruise-climb altitude.

Several minutes into cruise, the right engine inlet's automatic control system malfunctioned, requiring a switch to manual control. The SR-71's inlet configuration was automatically adjusted during supersonic flight to decelerate air flow in the duct, slowing it to subsonic speed before reaching the engine's face. This was accomplished by the inlet's center-body spike translating aft and by modulating the inlet's forward bypass doors. Normally, these actions were scheduled automatically as a function of Mach number, positioning the normal shock wave (where air flow becomes subsonic) inside

the inlet to ensure optimum engine performance.

Without proper scheduling, disturbances inside the inlet could result in the shock wave being expelled forward— a phenomenon known as an "inlet unstart."

That causes an instantaneous loss of engine thrust, explosive banging noises, and violent yawing of the aircraft— like being in a train wreck. Unstarts were not uncommon at that time in the SR-71's development, but a properly functioning system would recapture the shock wave and restore normal operation.

On the planned test profile, we entered a programmed 35-deg bank turn to the right. An immediate roll back occurred on the right engine, forcing the aircraft to roll further right and start to pitch up. I jammed the control stick as far left and forward as it would go. No response. I instantly knew we were in for a wild ride.

I attempted to tell Jim what was happening and to stay with the airplane until we reached a lower speed and altitude. I didn't think the chances of surviving an ejection at Mach 3.18 and 78,800 ft. were very good. However, g-forces built up so rapidly that my words came out garbled and unintelligible, as confirmed later by the cockpit voice recorder.

The cumulative effects of system malfunctions, reduced longitudinal stability, increased angle-of-attack in the turn, supersonic speed, high altitude, and other factors imposed forces on the airframe that exceeded flight control authority and the Stability Augmentation System's ability to restore control.

Everything seemed to unfold in slow motion. I learned later the time from event onset to catastrophic departure from controlled flight was only 2-3 sec. Still trying to communicate with Jim, I blacked out, succumbing to extremely high g-forces. The SR-71 then literally disintegrated around us. From that point, I was just along for the ride.

My next recollection was a hazy thought that I was having a bad dream. Maybe I'll wake up and get out of this mess, I mused. Gradually regaining consciousness, I realized this was no dream; it had really happened. That also was disturbing, because I could not have survived what had just happened. Therefore, I must be dead. Since I didn't feel bad— just a detached sense of euphoria— I decided being dead wasn't so bad after all.

AS FULL AWARENESS took hold, I realized I was not dead, but had somehow separated from the airplane. I had no idea how this could have happened; I hadn't initiated an ejection. The sound of rushing air and what

sounded like straps flapping in the wind confirmed I was falling, but I couldn't see anything. My pressure suit's face plate had frozen over and I was staring at a layer of ice.

The pressure suit was inflated, so I knew an emergency oxygen cylinder in the seat kit attached to my parachute harness was functioning. It not only supplied breathing oxygen, but also pressurized the suit, preventing my blood from boiling at extremely high altitudes. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but the suit's pressurization had also provided physical protection from intense buffeting and g-forces. That inflated suit had become my own escape capsule.

My next concern was about stability and tumbling. Air density at high altitude is insufficient to resist a body's tumbling motions, and centrifugal forces high enough to cause physical injury could develop quickly. For that reason, the SR-71's parachute system was designed to automatically deploy a small-diameter stabilizing chute shortly after ejection and seat separation. Since I had not intentionally activated the ejection system—and assuming all automatic functions depended on a proper ejection sequence—it occurred to me the stabilizing chute may not have deployed.

However, I quickly determined I was falling vertically and not tumbling. The little chute must have deployed and was doing its job. Next concern: the main parachute, which was designed to open automatically at 15,000 ft. Again I had no assurance the automatic-opening function would work. I couldn't ascertain my altitude because I still couldn't see through the iced-up face plate. There was no way to know how long I had been blacked-out or how far I had fallen. I felt for the manual-activation D-ring on my chute harness, but with the suit inflated and my hands numbed by cold, I couldn't locate it. I decided I'd better open the face plate, try to estimate my height above the ground, then locate that "D" ring.

Just as I reached for the face plate, I felt the reassuring sudden deceleration of main-chute deployment. I raised the frozen face plate and discovered its uplatch was broken. Using one hand to hold that plate up, I saw I was descending through a clear, winter sky with unlimited visibility. I was greatly relieved to see Jim's parachute coming down about a quarter of a mile away. I didn't think either of us could have survived the aircraft's breakup, so seeing Jim had also escaped lifted my spirits incredibly.

I could also see burning wreckage on the ground a few miles from where we would land. The terrain didn't

look at all inviting—a desolate, high plateau dotted with patches of snow and no signs of habitation. I tried to rotate the parachute and look in other directions. But with one hand devoted to keeping the face plate up and both hands numb from high-altitude, subfreezing temperatures, I couldn't manipulate the risers enough to turn. Before the breakup, we'd started a turn in the New Mexico-Colorado-Oklahoma-Texas border region. The SR-71 had a turning radius of about 100 mi. at that speed and altitude, so I wasn't even sure what state we were going to land in. But, because it was about 3:00 p.m., I was certain we would be spending the night out here.

At about 300 ft. above the ground, I yanked the seat kit's release handle and made sure it was still tied to me by a long lanyard. Releasing the heavy kit ensured I wouldn't land with it attached to my derriere, which could break a leg or cause other injuries. I then tried to recall what survival items were in that kit, as well as techniques I had been taught in survival training.

Looking down, I was startled to see a fairly large animal—perhaps an antelope—directly under me. Evidently, it was just as startled as I was because it literally took off in a cloud of dust.

My first-ever parachute landing was pretty smooth. I landed on fairly soft ground, managing to avoid rocks, cacti, and antelopes. My chute was still billowing in the wind, though. I struggled to collapse it with one hand, holding the still-frozen face plate up with the other.

"Can I help you?" a voice said. Was I hearing things? I must be hallucinating. Then I looked up and saw a guy walking toward me, wearing a cowboy hat. A helicopter was idling a short distance behind him. If I had been at Edwards and told the search-and-rescue unit that I was going to bail out over the Rogers Dry Lake at a particular time of day, a crew couldn't have gotten to me as fast as that cowboy-pilot had.

The gentleman was Albert Mitchell, Jr., owner of a huge cattle ranch in northeastern New Mexico. I had landed about 1.5 mi. from his ranch house—and from a hangar for his two-place Hughes helicopter. Amazed to see him, I replied I was having a little trouble with my chute. He walked over and collapsed the canopy, anchoring it with several rocks. He had seen Jim and me floating down and had radioed the New Mexico Highway Patrol, the Air Force, and the nearest hospital.

Ed: *This story will be concluded next month and also a review of this amazing guy Bill Weaver*

Photos from the past



Mike Vaisey, Harry Smith and Tom Payne

Mike Vaisey reports: The photo was taken at the Little Gransden Airshow, at which both the Canadian and the BBMF Lancasters appeared together in formation. The other gentleman in the middle was my friend, the late Harry Smith, who started his aviation career with the Herts and Essex Aero Club at Broxbourne, later post-war with de Havilland at Hatfield and Leavesden (modifying Comet leading edges) before retiring from Bae Jetstream undercarriages at Hatfield and who wrote a very interesting autobiography titled 'One Foot on the Ground' (ISBN 1 902807 14 6).

Ed: Our member Mike owns the Cessna 180 K Skywagon G-CIBO built in 1981 and has now flown over 1600 hours in it, so very much low hours and as you see in immaculate condition. The aircraft current registration was made in July 2004 and before that it was on an Australian register as VH-JNS.

The visit was very successful and the Museum has slowly increased its exhibits and is now known as the "British Airways Speedbird Heritage Centre" and is at the BA Headquarters at Waterside, Harmondsworth UB 0GB. The centre is open to visitors and groups by arrangement. They also have a series of talks on the first Wednesday of the month on various aviation subjects. Your editor has been booked for 5 Feb to talk on Royal Flying and The Queen's Flight and in March one of the Centre's volunteers Keith Hayward will be talking about BEA's Viking Fleet. Details can be found online at www.ba.com/heritage.



BRITISH AIRWAYS SPEEDBIRD HERITAGE CENTRE

Now open at British Airways Waterside



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Aircraft models :: Technical manuals :: Heritage videos :: Gifts
Historic documents :: Souvenirs :: Extensive library

New Members

We have secured some new members. They are as follows:

Peter Hay (Pete), 15 South Hall, Maids Moreton, Buckingham MK18 1QB, Tel: 01280 814835

Ronald Hedge (Ron), 11 Highlands Road, Buckingham, MK18 1PN Tel: 01280 821188

John Wells (John), 26 Great Elms Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 9TJ, Tel: 01442 267747

We welcome them all and hope to let you know a little more about each member in due course when we have a profile on them.



Graham Laurie, Jim Davies (Curator), Ian Nelson and of course Tom Payne on our visit to the BA Museum

Programme 2020

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

19 Feb Reminiscences of RonHedge RAF/RNVR

Our remaining programme is being formulated and will be issued as soon as possible

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Chairman

Despite not being able to use our normal room at Greenacres, and it being the AGM, we had surprisingly good and relaxed attendance. We are in good financial health and generally in good shape. It was agreed, however, that we should modify the constitution to make attendance even more attractive and hopefully entice more military aviation supporters to join us. It will be finalised shortly.

Des

Welfare

Having missed the Xmas Lunch I was pleased to attend the AGM and be reinstated as your Welfare Officer. The shock of my re-election has meant I have had to take some R and R in Mexico but I should be back in time for our February Meeting

David

Secretary

Sorry for the slight delay with this issue, I blame Brexit but can't do that any longer - I hope!!!

Graham

Membership Secretary

You may pay your subscription direct to our account by BACS or a cheque to our treasurer. Please let me and Rod know you have paid so we can update the records accordingly. See Page 5 for our recent members who have joined us.

Ian

President

The AGM was well attended by keen members who re-elected the committee en bloc. That was a very wise thing to do as we have a devoted and hard working team in charge of our affairs and we appreciate and thank them for their continuing care.

The Chairman is in the process of revising the Constitution and we look forward to reading the changes which will better serve our current and future members.

Looking forward to our February meeting.

Geoff