



Woking and District Aircrew Association www.aircrew.org.uk/woking **Newsletter**

2 October 2021

Future Branch Plans

Now that COVID is no longer constraining social meetings, it is time to bring Woking ACA back to life.

Monthly Meetings

The traditional third Tuesday has not proved practical for some members, so future meetings will now be on the **THIRD WEDNESDAY** of each month. The first will be at 1200 on Wednesday 20th October at the White Hart, Chobham. If there is sufficient attendance and interest in continuing with these lunches, we will try to book their upstairs room in future.

Christmas Lunch

A highlight of the ACAW year has always been the semi-formal Christmas lunch and we would like to hold this event again this year. The choice of venue will depend on numbers, so you are **ALL** requested to indicate whether or not you would be likely to attend.

Please reply to the covering email for this newsletter before 7th October saying if you wish to attend and how many in your party so that a suitable venue for anticipated numbers can be booked before others beat us to it. Members plus one will be subsidised.

Other guests will need to pay the full price. Final details and bookings will be requested later - at this stage we only seek an indication of possible numbers.

2022 and beyond

Older members increasingly wish to avoid driving at night, which rather limits us to daytime activities during the winter months November to March, but the lighter evenings during the rest of the year would potentially allow evening meetings with a speaker if an organiser of venue and speakers can be recruited (a volunteer would be very welcome!).

The question of 2022 membership and associated fees also needs to be decided. Without some membership fee, it will be impossible to know who is or is not a member. But unless we plan to hold events or have other anticipated expenditure, the current £12 per member/year will need to be reviewed. Once again your thoughts would be appreciated.

Gathering Views

Attendance at COVID-era Zoom meetings has been rather disappointing and has limited opportunities to get feedback from many of those still on our 20-strong membership list. Attending a monthly lunch will be one way to engage, as will replying to the covering email with your thoughts. Equally, if any recipient no longer wishes to remain a member, please also let us know so that you can be removed from our email list.

Recent RAF Happenings

Squadron Numbers Kept Alive.

With ever fewer flying units, the RAF is allocating some historic squadron designations and badges to ground units.

The Air Surveillance and Control System (ASACS) has been named as No 19 Squadron and the ASACS Operational Conversion Unit as No 20 Squadron. Both these formations are based at RAF Boulmer, Northumberland.

RAF Swanwick, within the London Area Control Centre in Hampshire, has been designated No 78 Squadron.

Contract for New Chinooks.

The contract for the purchase of 14 Boeing H-47 (ER) Chinook heavy-lift assault helicopters has now been placed. These will join the existing Chinook fleet based at RAF Odiham.

RAF Tutors make a Return.

The Grob T1 Tutor elementary flying training aircraft operated by No 3 Flying Training School were grounded earlier this year when a fault with the rudder actuators was discovered. Remedial action has now been taken and most aircraft are now flying again with the remainder soon to be back in service.

Sentries Retired.

Operations by the remaining Boeing E-3D Sentry AEW1 aircraft of No 8 Squadron at RAF Waddington have ended with the withdrawal of the last three aircraft.

One RAF Sentry has been sold to the United States Navy to be used as an in-flight trainer in support of its E-6B Mercury aircraft programme. It is a pleasant change to sell an aircraft to the US – even if they built it in the first place.

RAF support for Iraqi Security Forces

On Monday 6th September, Iraqi ground forces conducting security operations approximately thirty miles south of Erbil came under fire from a Daesh position in an area of heavy vegetation.

Two RAF Typhoon FGR4s responded to a call for assistance and, working closely with the ground forces to ensure no risks were posed to either them or any civilians, used a single Paveway IV guided bomb to successfully eliminate the threat.

*With thanks to Peter Langley of ACA Costa Blanca,
who provided this story to their Flypast newsletter of September 2021.*

Charlie Brown

Charlie Brown was a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot with the 379th Bomber Group at Kimbolton, England. His B-17 was called 'Ye Old Pub' and was in a terrible state, having been hit by flak and fighters. The compass was damaged and they were flying deeper over enemy territory instead of heading home to Kimbolton.

After flying over an enemy airfield, a pilot called Franz Steigler was ordered to take off and shoot down the B-17. When he got near the B-17, he could not believe his eyes. In his words, he 'had never seen a plane in such a bad state'. The tail and rear section was severely damaged, and the tail gunner wounded. The top gunner was all over the top of the fuselage. The nose was smashed and there were holes everywhere. Despite having ammunition, Franz flew to the side of the B-17 and looked at Charlie Brown, the pilot. Brown was scared and struggling to control his damaged and blood-stained plane.

Aware that they had no idea where they were going, Franz waved at Charlie to turn 180 degrees. Franz escorted and guided the stricken plane to and slightly over the North Sea towards England. He then saluted Charlie Brown and turned away, back to Europe.

When Franz landed he told the CO that the plane had been shot down over the sea, and never told the truth to anybody. Charlie Brown and the remains of his



crew told all at their briefing, but were ordered never to talk about it.

More than 40 years later, Charlie Brown wanted to find the Luftwaffe pilot who saved the crew. After years of research, Franz was found. He had never talked about the incident, not even at post-war reunions.

They met in the USA at a 379th Bomber Group reunion, together with 25 people who are alive now - all because Franz never fired his guns.

Simulator Day at Fairoaks

There was a good turnout for our visit to the new Semet Aviation simulator facility at Fairoaks on 12 September.

A light aircraft and a Boeing 737 simulator were made available for over 3 hours, which gave time for many of us to have good sessions in both types under the helpful tutelage of the very accommodating Semet instructors.



We were all very appreciative of the excellent hospitality of our Semet hosts and were very pleased that they were able to join some of us for lunch afterwards in the White Hart.

In lieu of payment for our simulator time, a donation to Aerobility was requested by Semet. We sent £150 for which we received the thank-you letter which has been circulated separately with this newsletter.



Tailpiece - With Feathers

Two seagulls were flying along over Cardigan Bay, minding their own business and enjoying the scenery, when all of a sudden an RAF Typhoon FGR4 went screaming past barely missing the now somersaulting and wildly flapping birds.

"Oh, my God", exclaimed one gull in surprise. "He was certainly moving!"

The other seagull retorted: "I'm sure you would too if you had two backsides and both of them were alight!"