

NEWSLETTER

A Pilot in WWI- join Ian Mason on 18 July

June Meeting

The History of Project Propeller - Gideon Todes

The basic premise of the Project Propeller scheme is to match up WWII RAF air crew with current pilots and to gather together for a day at a significant location. The air crew and pilots meet up at a convenient airfield, fly to the venue for the day, then fly back home once the event comes to an close. In addition (and all other conditions being favourable) it is hoped that the veteran air crew get an opportunity for some more "stick and rudder" time.

Project Propeller began in 1999 following discussions between lan Burnstock and Gideon Todes. Ian and Gideon are both keen pilots and were looking for a more meaningful reason to go flying (other than just for the fun of it!). On their travels around the UK, especially in East Anglia, they became aware of the hundreds of World War II airfields that, though now disused, were still very obvious from an aerial viewpoint. This started them thinking how many of the WWII RAF air crew are still survivng, and would they once again like to get airborne. The cost of the exercise was to be borne by current pilots offering their aircraft for flights from their home field with one or two air crew on board.

With this seed of an idea they contacted the Air Crew Association (ACA) to ask for volunteers to take part in the inaugural event. Pilots were recruited via word of mouth and adverts placed in a few aviation publications - all sorts offered to take part, from basic PPL's to full commercial ATPL's with thousands of hours in their log books. Soon there were about 60 pilots and 120 air

crew all revved up and ready to go.

North Weald hosted the opening 1999 event with everyone enjoying the ambience of a WWII airfield. Complimentary refreshments were provided - tea, coffee and bacon butties - with the mess being available for those with a taste for something stronger. All agreed that it was a great day and we should do it again. The next year (May 2000) saw almost 100 aircraft and over 200 air crew fly into Duxford for a wonderful day, including aerial displays by both a Spitfire and a DC3. Since then, our annual reunion has visited Duxford, Kemble, Elvington, Halfpenny Green (Wolverhampton), Bruntingthorpe, East Kirkby, Church Fenton (Leeds East) and Wickenby.

Since the 2000 event at Duxford, an organising committee has been in place. The committee members are lan Burnstock, Dave Cockburn, Dennis and Lynette Ray, Aneurin Hughes and Peter Rackliff. Aneurin and Peter are WWII RAF air crew, the rest of the committee are current pilots. Gideon retired from Project Propeller in February of 2001, but continues to take part as a volunteer pilot.

The new decade sees a new captain at the controls though. Dennis Ray retired at the end of the 2009 event, and introduced Nick Potter as our new co-ordinator.

They are always looking for more helpers. If you can spare us some time do get in touch.

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Remember 21st June 2017

Join us for The Early Days in RNAS with Ian Mason

High Flight

With thanks to Dave O'Malley and Vintage Wings of Canada.



16 June 1941—Leading Aircraftman John Gillespie Magee, still wearing the white cap flash of an airman in training, beams with pride and delight as he is pinned with his RCAF wings by Group Captain Wilfred A. Curtis, DSC and Bar at No. 2 Service Flying Training School, Uplands.

Photo: DND

It was one week after Magee's nineteenth birthday. Gp Capt Curtis was a fighter pilot with the Royal Naval Air Service in the First World War.

On 18 August 1941, in the heat of an English summer day, teenage fighter pilot John Gillespie Magee of the Royal Canadian Air Force's 412 "Falcon" Squadron strapped himself into a Spitfire Mk I at No. 53 Operational Training Unit at RAF Llandow. going through his checklist, he fired up the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine and waited for it to settle into a steady rhythm. The Spit, RAF Serial R6976, was a Battle of Britain survivor from 610 Squadron and though war weary, was well maintained and running smoothly. Today, it would be his seventh flight in a Spitfire and he was gaining confidence. When he was ready, he trundled to the edge of the airfield, turned into the wind and moments later moved the throttle forward to full power. The Spitfire thundered to life, bouncing on the dry grass, tail coming up, rushing headlong, lifting easily... into history.

On that day, Magee circled and climbed through canyons of clouds, topping out at 33,000 feet on a warm sunlit day. We do not know exactly what he did on this solo training flight, but it is very likely that he

simply had a lot of fun horsing the beautiful aircraft through aerobatics, carving turns through clouds, delighting in three dimensional freedom and getting to know the Spitfire, the already iconic aircraft that would soon carry him to battle. It must have been a glorious thing for a teenager to do. He stayed up for a full two hours.

When he landed, he recorded the flight without any embellishment in his logbook, but it clearly had a profound impact on the young American. In the next few hours, he penned what many consider the greatest poem to come out of the Second World War and certainly the most enduring verse about the unbridled joy and glory of flight. The poem, which Magee entitled "High Flight", is known by every English-speaking pilot on the planet—carried in their wallets, pinned to their walls, tattooed on their bodies, read at their funerals, carved on their headstones.

Four months later, Magee would be killed when his Spitfire, descending through a hole in the clouds collided with an Avro Anson flying beneath the cloud. Both pilots were on a training flight. Both were killed. It was a sad end to a very short life for Magee, who was born in Shanghai, China to a British mother and American missionary father. Magee was later educated at England's famous Rugby School in Warwickshire where he had exhibited a nascent talent as a poet. He had joined the Royal Canadian Air Force from the United States in 1940, declining scholarship to Yale University.

A posed photograph (Page 3) of American student pilots of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan at No. 2 SFTS Uplands, Course 25 in the spring of 1941. This was in the weeks leading up to the filming at Uplands of major sequences of Captains of the Clouds, Warner Bros.' largest production to date. Starring James Cagney, the producers of the film looked to a premier in New York early in 1942. At left is Leading Aircraftman John Magee pointing to some lofty goal with posed determination and perhaps a bit of embarrassment. Perhaps this promotional shot was destined to inspire Americans to step up and get behind the Allies in the expedition of the war. While the film was in post-production, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor eliminated any need for the film to encourage the Yanks. Captains of the Clouds opened in February of 1942 but America hardly noticed, preoccupied as it was with war preparations.

Cont'd on Page 3



The pilots are (L to R):Aircraftmen John G. Magee of Washington (J5824);Arthur C. Young of Cleveland, Ohio; Claiborne Frank Gallicher of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Curtis Gilman Johnston of Chicago, Illinois;Arthur Bernard Cleaveland of Springfield, Illinois; and Ober Nathaniel Leatherman of Lima, Ohio.

Photo: DND



Magee leans casually and confidently against 412 Squadron Supermarine Spitfire Vb (VZ-B, nicknamed Brunhilde)

Judging by the warm gear, this picture was taken close to 11 December 1941—the day that he died over the village of Roxholme, England in a tragic midair collision with an Avro Anson piloted by LAC Earnest Griffin. Spitfire 'Brunhilde' (AD329) was damaged by Magee on 5 November, suffering wing tip damage during a dodgy landing at RAF Wellingore.

Magee's poetic legacy would ensure his memory would never die, and his poem came to symbolize the tragic sacrifice of youth and the risky, but glorious.

trade-off he made—flying above the ordinary, seeking the third dimension and a closer link to the god he so strongly believed in.



Two 'High Flight' Harvards, a wartime one and the modern Raytheon CT-156 Harvard II turboprop trainer both in BCATP colours

HIGH FLIGHT

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, —and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of —Wheeled and soared and
swung

High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark or even eagle flew —
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

3 Lads and a Girl, weekend away



Ready to watch the Huntingdon ATC Parade

Every 2nd weekend in May heralds a 156 Squadron Reunion at The Oliver Cromwell Hotel in March in Cambridgeshire. This year we were graced by five 156 Squadron Veteran's including Roy Briggs ex 156 Sq and Harold Kirby representing 97 Squadron, all six being ex members of the famed Pathfinder Force within 8 Group., I mentioned all attending and us 3 lads were graced by my good lady Linda to keep us in check.

Arriving at The Oliver Cromwell just after noon, it was time for lunch, some of the other 'Vet's had arrived earlier, many 'hello's' ensued, lot' of talking etc etc over what proved to be a long lunch. It is normal for the Huntingdon ATC to attend just prior to the informal Friday night dinner, this year was no exception and they delighted us with their drill and Band routines. It is customary for the 'Vets' to inspect and talk to the Cadets after their display. The gentleman in the wheelchair on Roy's right (above) is Don Briggs......in WWII we heard of the 'Flying Brooms' i.e. Ivor and Tom Broom ...well we now have the 'Flying Briggs's'...!

On Saturday afternoon Linda and I plus Roy thought we would venture half an hour away and head for Chatteris, Chatteris being rather topical at present as it is where our Chiltern colleague Tom Payne is heading for so as to be near his Daughter for a while. Chatteris on a Saturday afternoon appeared to be 'closed'...a quick look in the local map told us that Roy's old airfield of Upwood was reasonably near so 30 minutes or so later we located Upwood which is now 'home' to The Nene Valley Gliding Club., their members made us three most welcome and we had their permission to go onto the airfield proper and another two photo's show Roy on part of one of the



old runway's with an old hangar in the background behind Roy, pride of place in the Clubhouse is the original old RAF Upwood sign (inset), sadly the house in which the Wartime C.O. lived is now derelict and sadly vandalised as are one or two other buildings. All too soon it was time to leave Upwood and head back to the Oliver Cromwell to get 'glammed up' for the formal evening Dinner.

Drinks prior to Dinner were taken, even more conversation occurred, dinner was enjoyed and various 'toast's were made, during and after and were responded to, raffle tickets were sold, as always on these 156 'do's' many prizes were won, all to soon another Saturday night 'dinng in' had come and gone but most importantly thoroughly enjoyed.

Sunday our last day dawned, breakfast taken, checkout occurred and bar bills had to be settled and various cars were quickly filled up by attendee's departing and heading for St. Mary Magdalene's Church in Warboys this being 156's wartime church as well, a beautiful church with a 'Pathfinder' stained glass window within. The service over and is customary and has been for some 40 years the Warboys villagers prepare and lay on a Sunday afternoon tea for everybody '156', a truly splendid occasion, it also customary that the BBMF normally send their 'Lanc' or a Spitfire, Hurricane, last year it was their Dakota but sadly this year BBMF couldn't commit to providing an aircraft.

All to soon it was time to say our good bye's to the '156 family' but not before asking 'is it going to be the same mid May week end in 2018? We await the organisers confirmation.....back in the car to locate the A.142. the A.1 and the M.1. before dropping off Roy in Hemel and Harold back in Pinner, Linda and I arrived home tired but having enjoyed a superb week-end with some lovely people ...roll on 2018.

The Centenary of Royal Flying



On 17 July 1917 The Prince of Wales flew over the front in France, the first recorded flight of a member of the British Royal Family. In total the Prince, a Guards Officer, flew 3 times during the War. In 1919 Prince Albert, later George VI learnt to fly at Waddon Aerodrome (later Croydon Airport) in an Avro 504K and in the latter part of the year was commissioned as a Squadron Leader in the RAF and awarded his wings.

The Prince of Wales was probably the keener of the two brothers and again just after the War he flew in a Sopwith Dove at Hounslow Aerodrome with one of the pilots who had flown him in the war, the Canadian Captain Barker VC. Some members of King George V's Household watched the flight but noticed on return that Captain Barker had his arm in a sling! This story reached the King the next morning and he banned his sons from all flying. The ban lasted until 1928 when No 24 Squadron flew The Prince of Wales to Norwich Aerodrome. The following year, after a lot of pressure on the King, The Prince of Wales bought a Gipsy Moth and was flown by a 24 Sqn pilot to some of his engagements. The next question for the King was 'can I learn to fly? The initial answer was 'No' but eventually the King gave in and in November 1929, the Prince flew a short solo flight at RAF Northolt. He subsequently had to have an RAF pilot with him on all future trips. Various deHavilland aircraft were used including the Puss Moth and Fox Moth and by the mid thirties The Dragon Rapide. It was this aircraft that was first to fly a British Monarch when the day following the death of King George V, King Edward VIII travelled from Bircham Newton to GHendon to attend his Accession Council. Soon after this the new King asked the Air Ministry if they would fund his aircraft and also form an official Royal Flight. So under the Command of Wg Cdr Edward Fielden (his former personal pilot) The King's Flight was formed at Hendon on 21 July 1936.



With the abdication in Dec 39, Fielden had a problem, as King Edward VIII took his Rapide with him. Thus King George VI had a King's Flight but no aircraft! Luckily the Airspeed Company of Portsmouth were just introducing the Airspeed Envoy and one was obtained for the Kings Flight up until WW2. The Air Ministry decided they wished the King to fly in an armed aircraft and the Lockheed Hudson was selected. The front guns were fired by an RAF engineer but the Royal Household would not allow another engineer into the rear of the Royal Cabin to fire the other gun. After much discussion it was decided the Steward should fulfill that task. That was fine but he was not in the services but a Footman from Buckingham Palace. It was recorded that the guns were never fired in anger in WW2, probably just as well! The King's Flight was disbanded in Feb 42 on security grounds and Fielden and the Hudson aircrew joined 161 Sqn (Supporting the SOE) initially at Newmarket but later at Tempsford, where Fielden became Station Commander.

Postwar The King's Flight reformed at Benson, where they had moved to at the outbreak of the war. Vickers Vikings were selected and were still in service when the unit became The Queen's Flight on 6 Feb 52. Of course Her Majesty's first flight was with BOAC returning from Kenya. During her reign aircraft used were the Viking, followed by the Heron, Avro 748 (Andover CC2) and BAe 146 plus Whirlwind and Wessex helicopters. The Queen's Flight was disbanded on 31 Mar 95. The following day No32 Sqn became No32 (The Royal) Squadron and the three 146 and two Wessex helicopters moved to RAF Northolt. Sadly the RAF now does almost no Royal Flying. The Royal Helicopter Flight (Two civilian Sikorsky S76) most fixed wing flying is accomplished by civil charter in a variety of aircraft. The new Airbus Voyager is being used for longer journeys but so far not by Her Majesty The Queen.

Battle of Britain Thanksgiving Service



The Ministry of Defence announces that the 77th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication will be held in Westminster Abbey at 11.00 am on Sunday 17th September 2017.

Applications for tickets, stating all names, addresses, place and date of birth, Passport or Driving Licence number of individuals wishing to attend, should be made in writing and are to be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Applications should reach:

Mrs Michele Small, S03 RAF Ceremonial Events RAF Ceremonial Office, Bentley Priory Building RAF Northolt, West End Road,Ruislip, Middx HA4 6NG

by the 14th July 2017.

To assist with seating in the Abbey, applicants are requested to state which of the following categories is appropriate: former Battle of Britain aircrew who would like to escort the Roll of Honour during the Service; relatives of aircrew who lost their lives in the Battle of Britain or since; past or present members of the Royal Air Force and its Reserve Forces; members of the Emergency Services or ground support staff during the Battle; or member of the general public.P lease state if you are a wheelchair user. Tickets, and a note on dress and timings for the occasion, will be issued 2 weeks before the Service.

Please note pplications are not to be made direct to Westminster Abbey.

Project Propeller 2017

Geoff Hulett reports:

Dark clouds at 2200 feet, a glimmer of sun, rain in the distance. Not a good omen for Project Propeller. A weather report from Staverton showed an improvement as we walked to our aircraft of the day...a Cirrus SR20 known as the 'Porsche of the sky' for its armchair comfort.

Once on board, Harold and Clare in the back. Mark and myself in the front it was time to look at the controls. A walking stick handle projecting from the front panel served as the control column, just three dials ASI, artificial horizon and altimeter, two A4 computer screens showing a wealth of information and two small screens on the centre console, together with the throttle. Checks done, we were soon speeding down the runway and climbing to 2100ft where I was given control, flying via Bovingdon and Oxford, a good look at Blenheim Palace and on to Northleach where Mark took over. We met turbulence at timesand it was reassuring that in the event of either an engine or airframe failurea parachute would be deployed to bring the Cirrus safely down to earth.



Mark, Geoff, Clare & Harold

Arriving at Staverton, it was good to see so many veterans including a largecontingent from 'Chiltern' and we were privileged to entertain at our table, Mary Ellis of ATA fame. Now 100, she recounts with delight that she flew 401Spitfires and without a crew, a Wellington bomber.

A sandwich lunch was served by ATC cadets and vocal entertainment by Hearther Marie backed by John Hunter at the piano. Highlight of the day was a 'shoot-up' of the field by a Hurricane fighter.



Sandy, Ron, Geoff and Harold "Filling their boots"

Our return journey followed the same route with another chance to see more of Blenheim Palace. Weather conditions had improved and with a following wind we made good time to Elstree

We veterans are most grateful for the work done by Graham Cowie and his team, to the pilots who give of their time and aircraft so that we might, once again, savour the joys of flying. Project Propeller, long may you continue.

Geoff

PS. Re Clare Mulley....her latest book is to be published later this month

"The women who flew for Hitler"

Hanna Reitsch and Melitta von Stauffenberg were talented, courageous and strikingly attractive women who fought convention to make their names in the male-dominated field of flight in 1930s Germany. With the war, both became pioneering test pilots and both were awarded the Iron Cross for service to the Third Reich. But they could not have been more different and neither woman had a good word to say for the other.

Hanna was middle-class, vivacious and distinctly Aryan, while the darker, more self-effacing Melitta, came from an aristocratic Prussian family. Both were driven by deeply held convictions about honour and patriotism but ultimately while Hanna tried to save Hitler's life, begging him to let her fly him to safety in



April 1945, Melitta covertly supported the most famous attempt to assassinate the Führer. Their interwoven lives provide a vivid insight into Nazi Germany and its attitudes to women, class and race.

Acclaimed biographer Clare Mulley gets under the skin of these two distinctive and unconventional women, giving a full - and as yet largely unknown - account of their contrasting yet strangely parallel lives, against a changing backdrop of the 1936 Olympics, the Eastern Front, the Berlin Air Club, and Hitler's bunker. Told with brio and great narrative flair, The Women Who Flew for Hitler is an extraordinary true story, with all the excitement and colour of the best fiction.

Ed: Well there we are our boys sat with Mary Ellis and Geoff flew with the author of a book about the women who flew Hitler. What a coincidence!



Celebrating two of the most iconic marques in British history and engineering, Aston Martin
Cambridge has commissioned 10
Vanquish S Red Arrows cars as a unique tribute to the Royal Air
Force Aerobatic Team.

Aston Martin Cambridge is donating the tenth of these spectacular cars – Red 10 – for our amazing raffle. Tickets cost £20 each and all entries into the raffle will have a chance to win Red 10 and own a piece of history.

For ticket details go to

www.rafbf.org

The car marries the exceptional craftsmanship and unforgettable driving experience of an Aston Martin with the iconic Red Arrows brand. All funds from the raffle will go directly to the RAF Benevolent Fund. The raffle closes on 1 December 2017 and the draw date is on 8 December 2017.

deHavilland Moth Club Teague Challenge

Fifty young people were sponsored by members of the Club under the banner of 'The Teague Challenge' to fly in a Moth at Old Warden.

Each young person has been advised of the name and address of their individual sponsor with a request that a letter of thanks and sign of appreciation be forwarded.

This week I received a letter from Sam Walker:

Dear Mr Laurie (Chiltern ACA)

Thank you for sponsoring my flight in a Tiger Moth. Until then I'd never flown in a two seater plane.

It was a great experience; the views were brilliant up there

Yours Sincerely

Sam Walker

This was a wonderful effort by the volunteer pilots of the deHavilland Moth Club and a very worthwhile sponsorship from the Chiltern ACA.



Good on Sam, as many of the Sponsors do not get thanked, as writing a letter proves too difficult for many of the youngsters involved!

A Gathering of Moths. Old Warden Aerodrome Sunday 30 July 2017

The Club's second 'Gathering of Moths' is on Sunday 30 July 2017, at Old Warden Aerodrome, by courtesy of The Shuttleworth Trust. It is the intention to have a quiet and uncomplicated day out in the company of fellow Club members, their aeroplanes and their guests, gathered together on a grass aerodrome with all the facilities in place and little or no paperwork.

Tales from the Tower

by Tony Brown

Just to set the scene for non aviation readers I will explain the very basic procedures for aircraft inbound to Manchester. There are three holding beacons but the one involved in this story was called Barton.

Aircraft arriving from the North and East would be cleared to the Barton stack and in the absence of further instructions would take up the holding pattern.

I have explained to Ingrid, the Swedish au pair, that it is not holding as she understands it. Incidentally, to all of you who have written to me asking for her photograph, she doesn't really exist!! (Or does she-----?)

The position of the Barton stack, when Manchester was landing on westerlies, was in a perfect position for aircraft coming from say Amsterdam or Frankfurt as they would often get a straight in approach and save eight or ten minutes. The scene is now set.

Friday tea time, very busy. Unfortunately the ATIS is out of service and as the approach controller, inbound aircraft would make their initial call to me. I have to read out the latest weather to each pilot as he or she comes on frequency, coordinate all the inbounds with Area control, at the same time laddering aircraft down in the stack and co ordinating the approach sequence with the second radar controller. An aircraft comes on frequency and although anonymous we will call him Lufthansa!

A/C "Manchester Approach this is Lufthansa 123 we are maintaining Flight Level one two zero. We are running very late today and request a straight in approach. And we don't have the weather."

ATC "Negative Lufthansa 123 maintain Flight Level one two zero, proceed to Barton and take up the hold, you are number ten.l will read you the weather shortly " No reply. Aircraft are also leaving the Dayne hold and everyone is working flat out and in those days there was only one runway.

A/C " Manchester Lufthansa 123 we are coming up to the Localiser, shall we lock on?"

ATC " Negative .proceed to Barton".

A/C " But we always have a straight in."

ATC "Not today. Speedbird lock on ILS 24, Air France descend, Aer Lingus do this etc etc"

A/C "We don't have the weather at least give me the QNH"

ATC "Nine Nine Nine"

A/C "GOTT IM HIMMEL WHY NOT !!!!!!,".



It all happened out there to the west!



When Austrian Airlines decided to adorn an aircraft with portraits of the country's most famous citizens, like Mozart and Strauss, there was one notable exception. Actually, there were two. World champion racing driver Niki Lauda was also ignored because he ran Lauda Air

Ed: This was allegedly an aircraft/ATC conversation at London/Heathrow.

ATC. Speedbird 123 taxy behind the Austrian to holding point 27 Left

A/C Whats that on the side of the Austrian

ATC They are the most famous Austrians

A/C Where is Hitler!

Programme 2017

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

2017

19 Jul Early days in RNAS - Ian Mason

16 Aug

20 Sep

18 Oct

15 Nov

13 Dec Christmas Lunch*

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Welfare

Well at last we have some good news on Tom Payne. He has been moved from Watford Hospital into the care of his daughter in Chatteris. He would welcome calls, so if you would like his mobile or home number please contact Rod Finn or Graham Laurie. His address for the moment is

TOM PAYNE 29 St Peter's Drive, Chatteris, Cambs PEI6 6BY

I have also spoken to Norma Hagen who appears to be doing very well and to Rosemary Calvert, who is having to take things very carefully. It was good to see Ron Doble at Project Propeller but I gather his good lady is not so bright at the moment. Our best wishes to them all.

David

Membership Secretary

A change of address for your Membership List:

147 BAYNTON-GLEN J. (Jack) High View Lodge, Cherry Orchard, Gadebridge Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HPI IPD Tel: 01442 239154 (Lodge Number)

Jack has moved into the same care home as his wife. He has the room opposite to hers.

lan

Secretary/Editor

Sorry for the computer glitch last month, I am crossing fingers and toes that all will go well this month. Do try to make our meetings if you can as numbers have been very low recently. This is an appeal to some of our younger members who probably have less hospital appointments than our veterans!@

Graham

Chairman

Fourteen members attended the June meeting to hear Gideon Topes give an interesting account of the origins of Project Propeller. Gideon nominated PP as his favourite charity and a cheque for £50 was presented to Graham Cowie (current organiser) at Staverton on Sunday.

Please make every effort to attend meetings as a courtesy to visiting speakers

Geoff