



# NEWSLETTER

**Ladies, why not join us at our meetings, you are most welcome**

## September Meeting

Dennis Swains regaled us with his time in the RAF, both in the war and for a year after the war. It all started in Amersham by joining the ATC, leading to many visits to RAF Halton along with members of Aylesbury ATC. He completed a lot of gliding and thought therefore when he was old enough he would become a pilot!

He had hoped to go to Oxford University but alas his maths let him down so he was called up at the age of 19 1/2. The potential pilot arrived but the RAF saw it differently and he became an Air Gunner! Basic Training at Scarborough followed by Gunnery Training at Bridgenorth.

Having crewed up, conversion flying was done on Wellingtons but just as he was about to go onto the Heavy Conversion Unit the war in Europe ended. It was decided that Bomber Command crews would go to the Far East to fight the Japanese but again just as Dennis was about to go the US Air Force dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

He was asked to retrain and picked Air Movements moving for more training at Abingdon. This time he completed the course and actually went 'on the job'. At one time he dealt with the daily reports coming back from the Nuremberg Trials and the Mosquito that did the return flight in the day.

He married after his basic training on the same day as Tom Payne was married - it was a small world even then! Thank you Dennis for an excellent talk.

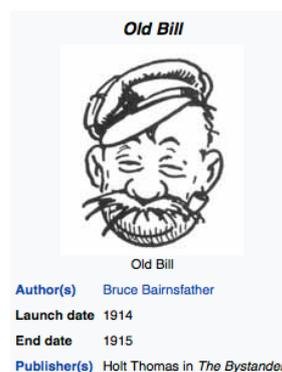
## A welcome to our Ladies

*You are cordially invited  
to join us at  
Greenacres  
for our meetings and lunch*

## October Meeting

George Holt Thomas was the seventh son of William Lusson-Thomas. He was born at Hampton House, Stockwell, south London, educated privately and at King's College School, London he left Queen's College Oxford in 1890 after two years and without taking a degree.

After he left university in 1890 he joined his father's newspaper business as a director then became its general manager and later founded The Bystander with its comic strip character "Old Bill" and Empire Illustrated so making his own name and fortune.



Dave will tell us all about the man who formed AIRCO and lived in High Wycombe.

You may remember Dave's presentation and book on 'Aviation in High Wycombe'. There is another book in the making on Holt-Thomas



**Remember 17th October 2018**

**"George Holt-Thomas"**

with

**Dave Scott**

**Greenacres 1030 for 1100**

**The First World War Pilot J M (Jack) Mason**  
**Part 13**

**Ed:** Extracts from Jack's First World War Logbook, on Active Service. The end of the War approaching but still plenty of action

18	DH4	118 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Rosieres Station & Dump. Clouds practically covered the whole of Hunland so this was a very 'cushy' raid as we could not be seen from the ground. No AA & no EA First time in my new machine. Dickson leading.
18	DH4	94 mins (P1)	Attempted Bombing Raid on Rosieres Station & Dump. Dickson leading. Clouds covered the whole of the sky & it was quite impossible to find one's way to the objective, so after vainly trying for an hour, Dickson washed it out. Landed with all bombs.
28	DH4	19 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Plateau Station & Dump. Was forced to return almost as soon as I left the ground on account of my centre section wires coming adrift. Returned with all bombs.
28	DH4	139 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Plateau Station & Dump. Dickson leading. Not a very good raid. Only three direct hits obtained one of which was mine. No EA. Very heavy & accurate AA.
29	DH4	129 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on La Plateau Station & Dump. Leading. A very poor raid. No direct hits obtained at all. All bombs fell short & east of the target. No EA. AA very heavy & accurate.
30	DH4	132 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on La Plateau Station & Dump. Leading. Not a bad raid. About six direct hits on the target. Both my bombs fell short. No EA. AA very heavy & accurate.
30	DH4	137 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on La Plateau Station & Dump. Leading. Bad raid, only three hits obtained, one of which was mine. No EA & very little AA fire.
JULY 1918			
1	DH4	132 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Rosiers Station & Dump. Elliot's first raid as leader. A proper mess up. The whole formation split up. Out of 16 machines only three bombs went home. About 9 Huns attacked the rear of the formation in a half hearted way. AA light but accurate.
1	DH4	129 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Chignolles Dump. Dickson leading. One of the best raids this squadron has ever done. Four very large explosions of gas shells then in the photographs a number of direct hit on

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1 (Cont'd)			the dump, two of which were mine. It was found by the intelligence that we had blown up a weeks supply of gas shells for the German army & that a lot of their own people had been gassed. AA heavy but ceased immediately the bombs were dropped (presumably because of the gas). No EA.
2	DH4	124 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Rosieres Station & Dump. Dickson leading. A fair raid. About five direct hits obtained, one of which was mine. AA heavy & accurate. EA nil.
3	DH4	125 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on La Feoane Dump. Leading. A very bad raid indeed. The target not hit at all although I attacked from the south & carried on north of the dump before returning. All bombs fell short. AA very light indeed. No EA.
4	DH4	86 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Shelters, Horse Lines & Infantry Rest Camp in Wood NW of Proyart. The Australian push between Villers-Brettonneux & Somme. Flying in flights. Leading 'A' Flight. A very good show. Ninety-nine % of the bombs fell on the objective. Very little archie & no Huns. A very cushy raid indeed & a very good one.
4	DH4	80 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Infantry Rest camp in woods S of Morcourt. Another raid in which I had my own flight. Also a very good raid. Numerous bombs observed to burst on the target. AA heavy but inaccurate because I went too fast for them & most of it burst behind us. Five scouts who attacked in a half hearted manner were engaged with no decisive results.
4	DH4	82 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Village of Bayanvillers. The third raid this afternoon. Again leading my own flight. Not such a good raid as the other two previous ones. A lot of bombs appeared to fall short, chiefly owing to the fact that we were shelled to hell the whole way there & back. No Huns sighted.
5	DH4	130 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Bray, Batrin & Sidings. Dickson leading. A very bad show indeed. Only three direct hits obtained out of over 60 bombs. On crossing the lines we were attacked by 10 Phaetry & 4 Triplanes. They were following us the whole way there & the whole way back. 2nd Lt Crosthwaite flying with Lt Johnson shot one down in flames & 2nd Lt Dew with Lt Heywood shot down another. All machines got home but 2nd Lt Dew was badly wounded. AA very heavy & accurate indeed.

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## Seven Boys and Nancy Part 2

Both the navigator and the wireless operator were ex- Merchant Navy who, having suffered on the North Atlantic and Arctic convoys, thought Bomber Command would be a less hazardous occupation. The mid upper gunner, a dour Outer Hebridean and the oldest member of the crew had four enemy aircraft to his credit whilst the last member of the crew, the 'Tail End Charlie' had five confirmed kills, as you would expect from an ex-gamekeeper and crack shot.

'Nancy' had been delivered from the Avro Woodford factory by an ATA crew, a dark haired young lady pilot and a portly, middle aged, flight engineer. 'Nancy' was then signed over to her new ground crew, the squadron and aircraft identity letters painted on the fuselage and then, and only then, were the aircrew allowed to 'borrow' her from the ground crew. They had flown all their 29 sorties in her. On her nose, underneath the pilot's position were 29 bomb symbols, denoting the 29 raids, including five in red for Berlin, three ice-cream cones for Italy, nine swastikas denoting the nine aircraft shot down and her name, 'Nancy'.

She was called 'Nancy' not, as was usually the case, after a wife or sweetheart but after the blonde MT driver who had developed a soft spot for this crew and made sure she was always the one to drive them from operations to their aircraft for the night's sortie. And this night was to be no different.

'Nancy' had never let her crew down, never aborted a mission. There was never a major systems or engine failure and, apart from the odd shrapnel or bullet hole, no major damage to the airframe. Most importantly, though, in the 29 sorties over enemy territory not one crew member had been wounded. Collectively they were known on Waterbeach as a lucky crew and a lucky aircraft.

After tonight, though, the crew would be rested, dispersed around the country to become instructors, or operation officers or performing some other mundane, but vital, job. And 'Nancy', well, no rest for 'Nancy', she would have the 30th bomb symbol, another red one, added to her tally and then either pick up a new crew or become the squadron hack, being flown by any crew who found themselves without an aircraft.

The squadron had briefed that afternoon for another operation to the heart of Germany, Berlin, with maximum fuel and maximum bomb load. Each aircraft had been fussed over by their ground-crew, making

sure everything was serviceable for the crews to do their checks before disappearing for their pre-flight meal. After the meal the crews picked up all their kit, parachutes, bags and the one hundred and one things they needed to go flying before jumping onto the crew transports and being driven out to their aircraft.

On arriving at their aeroplane the crew performed one of those little rituals that they believed kept them safe but made their ground crew grind their teeth. They all 'peed' on the tail wheel. Thus are the stage set and the cast assembled for the events of that fateful evening.

Although thick fog shrouded the airfield the met-man had forecast a clearance before dawn so the mission was on and, one by one, the heavily loaded bombers lumbered into the air and disappeared immediately into the fog and the darkness. Then it was 'Nancy's' turn. She turned onto runway 04, brakes squealing as she lined up on what little the pilot could see of the centre line. A brief pause as the pre-take off checks were completed, the compass set to the runway bearing and then a green light from the runway caravan cleared 'Nancy' for take off.

As always, there was a small group of people near the caravan to wave the crews farewell and tonight the watchers heard the four Merlin's open up to maximum power, a hiss of hydraulics as the brakes were released and 'Nancy' was on her way. Within a very few seconds the great aircraft was lost in the swirling fog and the sound of the engines became muffled and faded into the distance. The sound of a dull thud that came through the mist some few seconds later was lost to the watchers as the next Lancaster was already running up to take off power.

Very soon, however, a report came through by phone that what sounded like an aircraft crash had been heard north east of Cottenham, and then another call to say an explosion had been heard south west of Streatham. Thus was the location of the tragedy established and when the crash crews arrived they found a scene of total devastation. What remained of 'Nancy' and her crew was still burning in patches with wreckage strewn over the fen. It was immediately obvious that there could be no survivors and so the fires were doused, guards posted and daylight awaited.

With the arrival of daylight, and the fog having, as forecast, cleared, there began the grim task of recovering the mortal remains of the crew, photographing the wreckage for the board of inquiry and then, finally, clearing the site and bringing what remained of Nancy back home for disposal.

This much I learnt from the forms 540s. Then came the hunt for the Board of Inquiry (BoI) documents. Eventually they came to light in a obscure file at Kew and what the findings had to say was most revealing. The conclusions of the Board was that the cause of the accident was 'Pilot Error' due to the pilot turning left after take off when the briefed outbound track was to the right, becoming disorientated, ignoring his instruments and eventually flying into the ground. I realised that wartime Boards may not have been as painstaking as those today but, nonetheless, they had made a number of assumptions in coming to their findings. It also made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end when I recalled the words "It was not our fault. It was not my fault. Make it right. You make it right".

Apparently something was wrong, seriously wrong and, for some reason, after all these years, I had been chosen to right that wrong. But where do I go from here.

The foremost question is why did an experienced crew, at the end of their tour, disobey the briefed departure procedure? As ex-aircrew myself I knew that these procedures were in place for a very good reason. With the great number of airfields in the vicinity, all launching their squadrons at around the same time, departure routes and timings were in place to avoid collisions and near misses in the dark of a November evening. For this reason you would not disobey the briefed outbound routing.

So, here we have 'Nancy' turning left instead of right. If the pilot had turned through error, or even deliberately, the rest of the crew would have physically sensed the change or seen the change on their compasses and raised the alarm. If you accept that the pilot would not have turned of his own volition then what could have caused this action?

There had been no reports of enemy intruder activity that evening so we can rule out German night fighter action.

A control restriction perhaps? Unlikely as all controls are checked for full, free and correct movement before take off.

Pilot incapacitation? Again, unlikely as these men were selected for their good health, fitness and, as operational aircrew, looked after in a better way than their non-flying compatriots.

This now leaves airframe or mechanical failure and this would be very hard to prove after all these years and with no hard evidence to hand. So, back to the scene of accident photographs with the hope that the duty photographer had done a thorough job. The images that remain are mostly faded or grainy or both. However, they do reveal, on close examination, the first clue in the chain of events that led to the loss of the aircraft and crew and we can begin to surmise as to the sequence of those events and the last seconds of the existence of 'Nancy' and her crew.

A furrow in the dark fen soil shows that the left wing tip made contact with the ground first, followed by the propeller blades of the no. 1 engine. Then, as the aircraft started to swing to the left and no.2 propeller chewed into the ground, the fuselage impacted, slightly nose down and beginning now to cartwheel round to the left. With the impact of the fuselage the right wing slammed down with no 3 and 4 propellers grounding. As each of the four propellers bit into the ground the attached engines were ripped from their mountings rupturing the fuel, hydraulics and electrical services.

By now the fuselage is rearing up in a full blown cartwheel and breaking apart. As the nose, with the bomb aimer, pilot, engineer, navigator and wireless operator buries itself in the rich fen soil the centre section is falling over the nose and forcing it deeper into the mud while the rear section, with the two gunners, is folding down and pushing forward, collapsing the three fuselage sections on top of each other. Both wing have now broken away and are tumbling, over and under the wreckage of the fuselage.

All the fuel tanks have ruptured and the fuel, coming into contact with the red hot exhausts, ignites in an all consuming fireball.

All this takes only a matter of one to three seconds. For the crew, death will have come before their conscious beings have time to fully comprehend what is happening to them, let alone react to it.

As the shattered remains of 'Nancy' and her crew come to rest the fuel fire is dying as most of the fuel was consumed in that horrendous fireball, leaving only patches of oil and other combustibles still burning.

Unbelievably the bombs were flung clear and did not explode with only the photo flares igniting.

*To be concluded next month*

**Who said flying was easy?**

*As reported by the Indian Press*

Low fuel, bad weather, system failure: Air India pilot pulls off landing under nightmare conditions in US

The Air India flight also witnessed the malfunctioning of all three of its Instrument Landing System (ILS) receivers on board the jet. This meant that the pilot of the flagship aircraft of the airline needed to manually land the aircraft. Even after multiple system failure, adverse weather conditions and lack of fuel while struggling to land at the John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, an Air India pilot succeeded in saving the life of 370 passengers onboard.



It was September 11, when Air India's AI-101 was flying from Delhi to New York. It suddenly was caught in between the worst flying conditions any pilot would want to imagine.

The pilot reported to the Air Traffic Control (ATC) that the flight experienced multiple system failure and was low on fuel, which also restricted its time of flying when the system failed. Apart from these, the flight also witnessed the malfunctioning of all three of its Instrument Landing System (ILS) receivers on board the jet. This meant that the pilot of the flagship aircraft of the airline needed to manually land the aircraft.

In such desperate conditions and unable to land at the JFK International Airport, the pilot manning AI-101 somehow managed to land at the alternate designated airport in Newark.

According to the latest information, Air India has set up an inquiry on aircraft and constituted an internal inquiry under the monitoring of airlines Flight safety department. Confirming the news, Air India spokesperson Praveen Bhatnagar stated, "For New York diversion, the Flight Safety department is investigating the matter. The Air India pilots have successfully handled the situation."

*Now the Air Safety Network Report*

Air India flight AI101 diverted to Newark-Liberty International Airport, New Jersey, USA, after encountering instrument failures on approach to New York-JFK Airport. The flight attempted an approach to runway 04R at 11:52 UTC (07:52 LT), which the flight crew aborted when it became unstable.

The flight subsequently reported having lost several instruments (localizer, altimeters among others).

As a result of low clouds at JFK and the flight's inability to perform an ILS approach, it was decided to divert to Newark. A safe landing was made on runway 04R at 12:30 UTC.

**Ed:** *How to build a horror story out of day to day flight operations. Having said that, it seems the Air India crew handled the situation well, unlike the Indian Press!*

**An expensive Spelling mistake**

Hong Kong airline Cathay Pacific has had to send a new plane back to the paint shop after the company's name was spelled incorrectly on it.

Travellers spotted the mistake at Hong Kong International Airport and contacted the airline. It painted its name as "Cathay Paciic" on the side of the jet. "Oops this special livery won't last long! She's going back to the shop!" the company joked on Twitter and called it a genuine mistake, although some in the industry said it was inexplicable.

"The spacing is too on-point for a mishap," an engineer for Haeco, a sister company of the airline, told the South China Morning Post.

Twitter users soon saw the funny side, however. "No one gives a F anymore, not even the painters!" said one user.



*Oops indeed*

### SIA A350-900ULR ferry shows off long-haul capabilities

**Ed:** *For those of you who find sitting in an airliner for hours on end, boring or difficult - BEWARE*

Singapore Airlines' first Airbus A350-900ULR demonstrated its long-haul capabilities during an unusual delivery flight during which the aircraft routed over the Arctic.



*The aircraft (9V-SGA) departing Toulouse for Singapore on 22 September 2018.*

Rather than following the great circle route – around 5,900nm overflying Italy, the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and India – the aircraft took a flightpath north to Norway and Spitsbergen.

It crossed the Arctic Circle and eventually turned south into Russian airspace, landing at Singapore at around 16:40 local time.

The duration of the flight, close to 16h 30min, was about one-third longer than the typical 12h for an A350-900 ferry on the same route.

Singapore Airlines is planning to put the aircraft into service on a 9,000nm nonstop link to New York's Newark airport on 11 October, a flight time of some 18h 45min, before opening a nonstop Los Angeles service in November.

All the airlines are looking for these longer runs. Qantas is operating Perth - London (Heathrow) - Perth services and hopes to extend the route to Sydney as well.

### US-Bangla Airways

**Ed:** *You may remember I promised further details of the crash of the US-Bangla Airways Dash 8 at Kathmandu. Well the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Black Boxes have all been downloaded and the accident investigators are joining up all the information. It will probably be a few months before the final report is issued. In the meantime this week they suffered another incident but this time with no injuries to crew and passengers. It looks as if it was a well handled emergency all round.*

A US-Bangla Boeing 737-800, registration S2-AJA performing flight BS-141 from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh) with 164 passengers and 7 crew, was on final approach to Cox's Bazar's runway 17 when the crew went around from about 1500 feet after receiving indication the nose gear had not extended. The aircraft climbed to 3000 feet, the crew worked the related checklists and performed another low approach to Cox's Bazar's runway 17 to have the nose gear checked from the ground which confirmed the nose gear was not down. The crew decided to divert to Chittagong (Bangladesh), about 50nm north of Cox's Bazar, and prepared for a landing without nose gear. The aircraft landed on Chittagong's runway 23 and came to a stop on the runway on the main gear and the aircraft nose. The aircraft was evacuated. No injuries are being reported.



*S2-AJA safely on the runway at Chittagong*

**Programme 2018**

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (\*)

**2018**

**28 Sep Aircrew Lunch @ Black Horse\***  
 17 Oct George Holt-Thomas Dave Scott  
 21 Nov 'Stag Lane Aerodrome 1917-1934' -  
 Stuart McKay  
 12 Dec Christmas Lunch\* 12 Noon

**Your 2018 Committee****President**

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**Welfare****Ladies please take note**

Norma Hagon has expressed her wish to regularly attend our meetings but does not want to be the only lady. Therefore, why don't you ladies join us for the meetings every month. Get in touch with a Committee member for details or any help in getting to Greenacres

**David**

**Secretary/Editor**

Thank you to those who booked for the Aircrew Lunch at Abingdon. Although numbers were down (to be expected) we will continue to run them annually on the last Friday in September each year. This I may point out to follow on from David's report above is also very much open to the ladies.

**Graham**

**Speaker Secretary**

Next years programme is filling up nicely thanks to the efforts of members. The talk on 'Deception in WW2' is also postponed till next year.

Our thanks to Dennis Swains for his excellent talk last month and I am sure others out there could do something similar, so please come forward to offer your services or join forces with another member if you think 45 mins is a bit too long.

**Bill**

**Treasurer**

As usual in my report the accounts are in good order. We have agreed to subsidise the Christmas Lunch and will therefore be able to keep to last years price for tickets. Thank you to those attending meetings for your raffle support and donations.

**Rod**

**President**

When I retired as chairman in January I was convinced that a volunteer would step forward to fill the vacancy. Sadly this has not happened and so I now call on a member to come forward to join the strong and caring committee of Chiltern ACA and so fill the void.

**Geoff**