



# NEWSLETTER

## The End of an Era x 2

### End of an Era Part 1

I took over the Newsletter upon the passing of George Thompson many years ago and have been producing it for over 150 issues. Having made the decision to stand down as Editor, I will continue as Secretary of the Chiltern ACA.

Well, that is what I wrote in March 2020 so what am I doing still here? So simply this IS my last one as Helen has asked me to this for her whilst she organises her computer to continue future Newsletters. Yes, Helen Keeling is taking over and will produce future issues. What size they are will depend on you our dear 'readers'. You need to send Helen snippets so she can produce a readable Newsletter, so please do not let her down.

My first job is to say a very big 'Thank You'. The time it takes to put an edition together is considerable, particularly if you are, like me, a self taught computer user, not a computer geek! Yes, I enjoyed my years of producing our Newsletter but I really think Covid and Lockdown was the time to stand down. I knew it would be hard to find a replacement but I was determined it would be better to stand down now. So the end of an era, the Newsletter not only used to go out to Members but also appeared on line on the ACA website, thanks to David Jones (Woking ACA). It also went out to some 30 aviation friends and contributors. It was worthwhile spreading the words about Chiltern and I hope it will continue to do so under Helen. If you find it hard work Helen, you can always blame Des!

**Graham**

### AGM

At the March meeting we held our AGM. It will come as no surprise that the only addition was that Helen Keeling was voted on to the Committee as Newsletter Editor. Apart from that the Accounts were in good stead and Bill George will have a programme of talks to add to the other events. We plan to have two away days and one will be to Brooklands in June and the second to Duxford in October. These will be on normal meeting days i.e. third Wednesday, rather than an additional day.

Our thanks to all those who attended and helped set the Chiltern ACA on its way for another year.

### End of an Era Part 2

Talking of the 'End of an Era' on Thursday 17th March 2022 the last RAF BAe 146 ZE700 flew into retirement...The day started at RAF Northolt and via RAF Brize Norton and two BAe bases at Warton and Prestwick it was finally delivered to The South Wales Aviation Museum at St Athan. It was sad that the two airfield where the BAe146's were built Hatfield and Woodford no longer exist. Previously the other ex aircraft of The Queen's Flight ZE701 was delivered to Duxford on 24 January, The two BAe146 C3's ZE707 and ZE708 are off to Australia both ex TNT aircraft they are joining Pioneer Australia, already operators of BAe 146s. The third 146 ZE702 was sold by MOD to Indonesia in 2002, sadly as that had been the aircraft that gained so much publicity flying the body of HRH The Princess of Wales back to UK on 31st August 1997.

*(Continued overleaf)*



### Remember 20th April 202

**Jimmy Edwards DFC**  
(Pilot & Comedian)  
with  
**John Waller**

**Meet @ Greenacres 1030 for 1100**

## The Bae 146 Story

### In RAF Service

It all started in the spring of 1983 when the Secretary of State for Defence announced that the RAF would purchase two BAe 146-100 aircraft and subject to a satisfactory two year proving period, The Queen's Flight would subsequently re-equip with an extended range version of the aircraft. Much of the success of the aircraft was due to the work of Sqn Ldr David Gale (OC BAe 146 Evaluation Flight) and his small team based at RAF Brize Norton. The aircraft were used extensively on trooping flights from UK and Germany to Northern Ireland, as well as many flights around Europe and the Mediterranean. They started flying in June 1983 and the announcement in Parliament that The Queen's Flight was to re-equip with two Bae 146-100 in 1986. Making the announcement Mr Geoffrey Pattie (Minister of State for Defence Procurement) stated that over 800 hours flying had been involved in the evaluation, including flying by aircrew of The Queen's Flight. It was also stated HM The Queen and HRH Prince Phillip had viewed the aircraft and Her Majesty had approved the purchase.

ZE700 entered the production line at Hatfield on 30 January 1984, followed by ZE701 on 9 June 1984. ZE700 made its maiden flight from Hatfield to Bae Chester (Hawarden) on 23 November 1984 for completion of the interior fit. On 23 April 1986 ZE700 was handed over by Sir Austin Pearce, Chairman of British Aerospace at the Company's Civil Aircraft Division Hatfield in the 50th anniversary year of the Royal Flight. The aircraft was received by Air Vice-Marshal John Severne (Captain of The Queen's Flight).

Prior to this date the Commanding Officer of TQF Wg Cdr Mike Schofield and Prince Phillip's Personal Pilot, Sqn Ldr Geoff Williams and Sqn Ldr Gale, now posted to TQF, attended ground school at Hatfield and after the arrival of ZE700 did flying training with Bae instructors based at RAF Benson. Likewise on the arrival of ZE701 in mid July 1986, I started my flying training along with two co-pilots.

The first aircraft taxied past the Captain's office and he immediately asked for it to be changed. There was not enough red visible so a red tail was chosen and done in 48 hours by TQF painters at Benson.



*The Original Colour Scheme*

The familiar red, white and blue scheme was back. The first The first Royal Flight in a Bae 146 was flown by ZE700 on the 24 July 1986 taking the Duke and Duchess of York on their honeymoon to the Azores. Prince Phillip was quick to convert to the Bae 146, now



*Red White and Blue back after 2 weeks!*

combining his training with Royal Visits. After his first Royal Flight finishing at London Gatwick the TQF crew prepared to fly back to Benson. The crew chief kept a wary eye on the aircrew who by this time had amassed 50 hours on type but somehow missed bringing in the Royal ensign. The take-off roll was a little noisy but realising his error the crew chief reacted quickly and brought in the flagpole. Alas the Royal ensign was not on the end and never was returned! Luckily this small error was not repeated and the introduction of the 146 went smoothly.

In August 1986 two crews shared a recce flight to China prior to a visit by Her Majesty The Queen later in the year. This proved invaluable training and particularly the operating in China. Yet again proving the necessity of such 'Recce or Proving Flights'. The subsequent Royal tour was a huge success with the 146 completing all the internal flying in China.

By September 1986 things were in full swing and the Prince of Wales flew from Aberdeen via Reykjavik and Gander to Boston and Chicago returning via Goose Bay and Reykjavik to Aberdeen.

By mid 1987 the BAe146 simulator was in service at Hatfield and crews regularly trained there. The introduction of genuine engine failure drills as well as windshear training was again invaluable particularly getting crews used to handling the aircraft and completing drills in a safe and expeditious manner. Our new editor worked as the booking secretary for BAe

One of the most regular passengers was HRH The Princess Royal and this often involved her work for The Save The Children Fund, which normally meant visiting out of the way, small airfields or air strips. In November 1987 ZE700 flew to Seoul where she was involved with setting up the Olympics. From there we flew her via Hong Kong to Singapore. Three days later on to Thailand and Laos before proceeding to Myanmar (formerly Burma). Four days of intensive flying including visits to Mandalay and Bagan on the Irrawaddy. Certainly a first for all the crew and a most memorable visit.

Many of the flights were to and from RAF Northolt and on 11 March 1988 a trip which was sadly to be repeated in 1997 I flew ZE700 from Zurich with the Prince and Princess of Wales and The Duchess of York carrying the body of Lt Hugh Lindsay (Equerry to POW) who was tragically killed in a skiing accident.

Many of the Royal Tours were helping British Industry, such a tour with The Duke of Gloucester and The British Trade Mission in October 1988 was in ZE701 to Turkey and Pakistan. A number of contracts were signed as a result of this particular flight.

In April 1989 ZE700 flew a proving flight for a proposed tour of Ethiopia by HRH The Princess Royal. This included a visit to Jijiga, a natural surface air strip

with an elevation of 6350 feet. The aircraft was fitted with low pressure tyres and this we think was the first jet aircraft to land there. Alas with political problems subsequently in Ethiopia the tour never took place. It did however show the flexibility of the BAe146 and gave our engineers practice with a number of modifications for rough strip operations including fitting covers on lights and protection for radio aerials.



*ZE700 at Jijiga Elevation 6,350 ft*

On 20 November 1990 ZE700 flew the RT Hon Margaret Thatcher to Paris in what became known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'. The aircraft returned the next day and Mrs Thatcher promptly resigned.

In December 1990 ZE702 was delivered and its first Royal Flight was from Benson to Marham with Her Majesty the Queen who was going to Sandringham for Christmas. Her Majesty had flown into Benson on the last Andover which had been in service since 1964.

In April 1991 ZE701 flew The Prince and Princess of Wales to Brazil. BAe staff from Washington brought a BAe146 demonstrator flying dignitaries and the press in an effort to sell the aircraft to the Brazilians. They were successful with one operator but not the main airline they had been hoping to persuade.

In September 1991 ZE700 was involved in an extensive tour of Papua New Guinea with The Duke of York. Among events he opened The South East Asia Games. This also included visits to other parts of PNG including Goroka in the Highlands and home to the infamous "Mud Men". Not to be outdone the crew contrived to get the men to line up as guards for the aircraft whilst the Duke was carrying out his official engagements in the town'





The Mud Men of Goroka

On 29 June 1994 ZE700 was involved in an accident at Islay on a trip which originated at Aberdeen. The nosewheel ran off the end of the runway and sunk in a peat bog. I was the Captain and was blamed for the accident, however, The Prince of Wales insisted I continue as his personal pilot. On the morning of the day the Board of Inquiry findings were announced in the House of Commons, The Prince of Wales announced he was no longer going to fly himself. The Queen's Flight had known this for six months but it meant he took all the publicity away from me and as I always say, that is a measure of the man.

In the early months of 1995 every member of the Royal Family visited RAF Benson to bid farewell to The Queen's Flight and on 31 March 1995 the unit was disbanded.

### No 32 (The Royal) Squadron

On the 1st April 1995 No 32 Squadron was renamed No 32 (The Royal) Squadron and the three BAe 146 aircraft and two Wessex Helicopters formerly with The Queen's Flight joined the fleet of six Bae 125s already stationed at Northolt. The first Royal Flight that day was with The Duke of York ironically from Benson

The big change was of course civilian engineering as only a few of the TQF engineers left the RAF to join the company with the engineering contract at Northolt. The first year of operation was difficult as the engineers began to get to grips with the new aircraft. Slowly but surely things improved, helped in some way by Ex British Aerospace staff at Hatfield who did not wish to re locate to Manchester.

In November 1996 after a proving flight in the September, The Prince of Wales flew to the former Russian States Two BAe 146s were used from 4 – 12 November in a most successful tour. Yet again the recce flight had been essential.

Probably the flight that gained No 32 (The Royal) Squadron most press coverage was on 31 August 1997 when I flew The Prince of Wales back from Paris with the body of The Princess of Wales. On the departure of ZE 702 that morning 48 personnel were working at RAF Northolt. On the return at 1900 hours there were at least 400 press assembled plus TV and radio coverage across the world. The trip worked out well and it showed the Royal Air Force and particularly RAF Northolt and 32 (The Royal) Squadron at its best.



ZE702 at NHT on 31 August 1997

The amount of Royal Flying was beginning to decline and Ministerial and Military tasking was taking its place. I retired in December 2000 after 36 years service of which 20 years involving Royal Flying. People often ask 'don't you get bored flying up and back to Aberdeen?'. The reply is simply 'No, not when you have to arrive in + or - 5 seconds! The BAe 146 was my workhorse and what a wonderful aircraft it was.

The BAe 146 continued in service until this year but as I mentioned above the amount of Royal Flying decreased. Much of this was to do with the costings that MOD applied to the 146 operations, resulting in the Royal Households chartering civil aircraft at a cheaper rate. This continued with virtually the only Royal Flights by the RAF being in the A330 Voyagers from Brize Norton who carry out the long range trips such as the recent visit to the Caribbean by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

## CHILTERN AIRCREW ASSOCIATION

One change came in the mid 2000s when the famous red, white and blue colour scheme was removed for security reasons, wanting to make the aircraft look more like a normal airliner. Simply Security overtaking Flight Safety and the old very visible colour scheme.



*The 32 (TR) Sqn colour scheme*

Purchased as a pair of ex-TNT 146-200QC aircraft in 2012, the C.Mk 3s entered service in 2013 after modifications for RAF service. They have made a considerable contribution to tactical airlift capability, taking on missions that might otherwise have taken larger aircraft off their primary tasking. The aircraft were given the registrations ZE707 and ZE708. Both aircraft were painted in the standard grey colour scheme as used with the Airbus A330 Voyager. This gave the aircraft a dual role of passenger and freight, together with additional roles including aeromedical evacuation. These two aircraft were thus a very practical addition to the 146 fleet. However one had only been in Afghanistan for a few days when it was struck by a large hail storm and required ferrying back to UK for repairs.



*BAe146 C Mk3*

## APRIL 2022

Along came COVID in 2020 and in just two months the two Mk.3 aircraft operated by 32 (The Royal) Squadron at RAF Northolt have been adapted to transport critically ill patients and RAF medical staff for the first time.

Finally came retirement, but before the final flight of ZE700 to The South Wales Aviation Museum, No 32(The Royal) Squadron held a "Sunset Ceremony" in the aircrafts honour.



*The Sunset Ceremony*

I thought I had served a long time on the BAe146 with nearly 15 years but TQF was represented on the final flight by the Crew Chief, Barry Kelly who was on TQF when the 146 was delivered and transferred to SERCO when the Flight was disbanded and retired after the delivery flight. Barry really was with the 146 for its whole RAF service, quite an achievement.

## The Last Day



*Northolt Fire Section give homage on departure*



**Programme 2022**

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

- Apr 20 John Waller - Jimmy Edwards AFC
- May 18 Mark Ponting
- June 15 \*Brooklands Visit
- July 20 \*Buffet Lunch
- Aug 17 Talk
- Sep 21 Andover Trio
- Oct 19 \*Duxford Visit
- Nov 18 Talk
- Dec 14 \*Xmas Lunch (week early)

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

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*ZE700 lands at St Athan*



*OC32(TR) Sqn, Wg Cdr Delia Chadwick and AOC Wales (centre). Crew Chief Barry Kelly (extreme right)*

**The End**

Well, there we are and I do not apologise for my last edition being total nostalgia for me but I will finish with my favourite picture of the BAe 146 at my favourite Airfield, Chitral in the Hindu Kush, Pakistan. **Graham**

