



# NEWSLETTER

## Visit to deHavilland Museum in September (P7)

### June Meeting

Our speaker for a second time was our very own Dennis Swains, talking about his time in the RAF both in the latter part of the war and for two years after. It proved to be fascinating as we were regaled for an hour, without slides, but by someone who could tell a tale perfectly. He explained how he trained to be an air gunner, firstly on some ageing Wellingtons, previously operated by a Polish Squadron and with much of the instrument panel adorned with Polish names! He was operating from RAF Abingdon and its satellite airfield at Stanton Harcourt.



RAF Stanton Harcourt

From here it was off to RAF Lindholme near Doncaster for his HCU on Lancasters, where his crew was joined

by a Flight Engineer and a mid upper gunner. Just after VE Day he thought he was off to the Far East but VJ Day followed and he immediately thought of demob, but in fact he re-mustered in Air Movements and served for two more years. There were fascinating stories throughout the talk, mules being bred by the Royal Army Veterinary Service for duty in the Far East and left to roam at Doncaster Airport, with the odd Lancaster flypast causing a stampede! Coffee smuggling to Germany from Abingdon with a Dakota smelling like a modern day Costa Coffee!

It all goes to show that there are plenty of tales out there to interest us all and perhaps some other members could do the same. Thank you so much Dennis.

### July Meeting

We change tack for July and have a fascinating presentation on Shackleton's Endurance Expedition from John Dudenay. He has 50 years of professional experience and a lifelong passion in matters relating to the Antarctic. He joined the British Antarctic Survey in 1966 as an ionospheric physicist and wintered at Faraday (now Vernadsky) Base on the Antarctic Peninsula in 1967 and 1968 (base commander in 1968). He then worked for BAS in a variety of roles: research scientist in the field of ionosphere/magnetosphere physics, research leader, science manager, head of science division and finally (until retirement in early 2006), as Deputy Director. He has visited Antarctica numerous times throughout his career and continues now in retirement.



**Remember 17th July 2019**

**A new slant on Shackleton's  
Endurance Expedition**

**John Dudenay**

**Greenacres 1030 for 1100**



**Dakotas at Duxford by Roger Almond**

In preparation for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day, the largest collection of WWII transport aircraft since the Berlin Airlift assembled at Duxford in preparation for flying on to Normandy. The aircraft came from around the world including Scandinavia, The Netherlands, Europe, Canada and the USA. The US and Canadian aircraft followed the wartime route across the 'pond' via Goose Bay - Labrador, Narsarsuaq (Blue West One) - Greenland, Reykjavik – Iceland and Prestwick to get to Duxford, a journey that took 12 days for the aircraft from California.

was built as a DC-3 for Eastern Airlines and was the 119th aircraft to roll off the production line and has accumulated over 91000 hours since and sets a new world record every time it takes off and adds more hours. The designation C-53 denotes that it was a civilian aircraft with a less strong floor than the far more numerous C-47 cargo aircraft.

An Li-2, the Russian copy of the Dakota and believed to be the only specimen still flying came from Hungary.

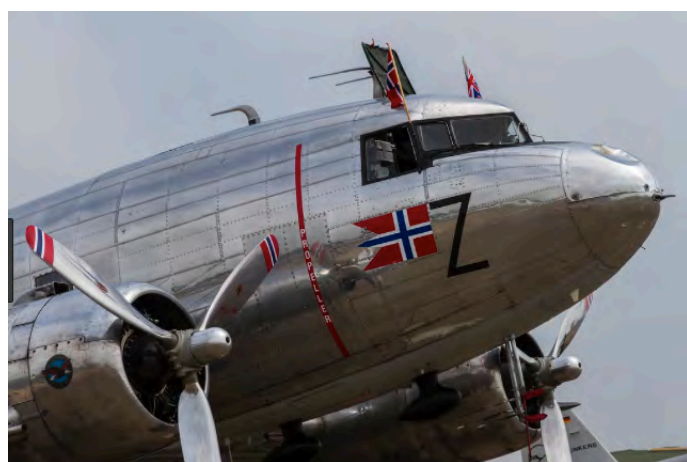


C47



Li-2

One of the C47's had made three flights to Normandy on June 6th, 1944.



C53



*Parachutists board at Duxford*

Amongst the over 30 variants there were several aircraft of special interest including the oldest C53 still flying. It

Unfortunately, the weather was not kind on Tuesday and although five aircraft took off with about 150 paratroopers in WWII gear, the wind was over 12 knots and too strong for a safe jump with the old round parachutes.

**Things can change for the worst  
in a few seconds**

We all know that Nepal is an inhospitable place at times but at the Lukla (Tenzing - Hillary) Airport on 14th April 2019 it only took a few seconds for a disaster to hit, sadly costing three lives.

Lukla, a small town at the foot of Mount Everest. The infamous airport, the gateway to Everest and yes without any doubt, an extremely small and busy airport, it is consistently named the world's most dangerous airport. You might be wondering why it is among the most dangerous airports and still busy airport. That is because Lukla is the only starting point to Mount Everest.

Lakla's runway is 527 m (1,729 ft) × 30 m (98 ft) with an 11.7% gradient. The airport's elevation is 9,334 ft (2,845 m). The airport is used for passenger flights and for transporting most of the building materials and cargo to Lukla and other towns and villages to the north of Lukla, as there is no road to this region.

Landing is on RW 06 and uphill, whilst take off is on RW 24 and downhill.

The runway which is supposed to be crucial for passage but is also used by pedestrians to cross through either side of the runway. There would be at least 50 flights or more per day in Lukla Airport. There are no air navigation or radar system; but just radio communication for landing and take-offs.



So what happened on that fateful April morning?



*A Let L410 takes off just 8 secs after the helicopter lands on the helipad.*



*As the rotor slow, the passengers start to disembark (30 secs after landing)*

Whilst this is happening another Summit Air L 410 is lining up on RW 24, ready for departure to Ramechhap. It commences its take off roll and just 6 secs later it left RW 24 on the starboard side and hit the helicopter.



*The Let L410 leaving the runway*

The total time from the helicopter landing to the Let colliding with it was 51 secs. As you can see a second helicopter was on the ramp, as well as a large num-



-ber of people. A second later they were all caught up in this spectacular accident.

We await the full accident report, once the necessary investigation is complete. It may seem odd that so many people were on the apron but they may not all have been there working, as it would appear the aprons and runway were used as a thoroughfare by the local inhabitants

At the moment there are no indications of an engine failure, it would appear to be loss of control during the take off roll, certainly the aircraft ran up to full power on the brakes, as the short runway would dictate.

Sadly the First Officer and two people on the ground lost their lives, but many others came close. The Cockpit Voice Recorder and Flight Data Recorder were analysed and first reports suggest that the First Officer was handling the aircraft. He had 18 months experience and did not hold the qualification to carry out take offs from Lukla.



The safety record in Nepal is not good but one must realise that weather has played a big factor in many of the recent accidents, although it is unlikely it was a factor here

### **Dangerous or Exciting Airfields?**

Now I am sure many of you will have flown into airfields or landing strips which have proved challenging. The press might call them dangerous but aviators probably think otherwise. How about letting me know of your stories approaching such airfields?

My favourite is Chitral in the Hindu Kush in Pakistan, very close to the Afghan border.



*First - Find the Airfield?*

More details on this in the August issue (if you are old enough to remember 'Spot the Ball' you might get it.)

## The Boeing 737 MAX Fiasco



To date I have refrained from commenting on the Boeing 737 MAX problems after the two well publicised crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia but it has brought into focus two serious problems. Firstly the ever increasing computerisation of aircraft systems and secondly how new versions of well proven aircraft are certified by the authorities, in this case the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA).

We all remember back to our early training and later as we converted on to other types, the stall training we received in the RAF. Stalling a larger aircraft (in my case the BAe146) yes was different from training aircraft but the basic lessons were the same. Yes on larger aircraft we had 'stick pushers', which only operated if you ignored the stall warning horn. Now it appears we need computer systems to warn us and take over the stall recovery? Do we, or is it a case computer experts have developed a system, because they can, rather than because it is needed? Is pilot training around the world that poor, obviously the powers that be at Boeing believe it is!

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has identified a new risk that Boeing Co must address on its 737 MAX before the grounded jet can return to service, the agency said recently. The risk was apparently discovered during a simulator test and it is not yet clear if the issue can be addressed with a software upgrade or will require a more complex hardware fix, sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The FAA did not elaborate on the latest setback for Boeing, which has been working to get its best-selling aircraft back in the air following a worldwide grounding in March in the wake of the two deadly crashes.

The new issue means Boeing will not conduct a certification test flight until at least July 8 in a best-case scenario, the sources said, but one source cautioned it

could face further delays beyond that. The FAA will spend at least two to three weeks reviewing the results before deciding whether to return the plane to service, the people said.

Last month, FAA representatives told members of the aviation industry that approval of the 737 MAX jets could happen as early as late June.

The world's largest planemaker has been working on the upgrade for a stall-prevention system known as MCAS since a Lion Air crash in Indonesia in October, when pilots were believed to have lost a tug of war with software that repeatedly pushed the nose down.

A second deadly crash in March in Ethiopia also involved MCAS. The two accidents killed a total of 346 people.

Boeing said that the FAA has asked it to address through software changes a specific flight condition not covered in the company's already-unveiled software changes. Boeing also said it agreed with the FAA's decision and request, and was working on a fix to address the problem.

"Boeing will not offer the 737 MAX for certification by the FAA until we have satisfied all requirements for certification of the MAX and its safe return to service,"

Boeing's aircraft are being subjected to intense scrutiny and testing designed to catch flaws even after a years-long certification process.

An FAA test pilot during a simulator test recently was running scenarios seeking to intentionally activate the MCAS stall-prevention system. During one activation it took an extended period to recover the stabilizer trim system that is used to control the aircraft, the people said. It was not clear if the situation that resulted in an uncommanded dive can be addressed with a software update or if it is a microprocessor issue that will require a hardware replacement.

The FAA says that it continues "to evaluate Boeing's software modification to the MCAS and we are still developing necessary training requirements. We also are responding to recommendations received from the Technical Advisory Board. The TAB is an independent review panel we have asked to review our work regarding 737 Max return to service."

One thing for sure it will cost Boeing a fortune!



This year's event took place with its usual flair and copious food. The hangar looked quite full even though I was told that some flights from the North had been cancelled because of the forecast of thunderstorms up there later in the day. Unfortunately we were without 2 of our regulars, Geoff and Roy, due to health problems but Rod, Sandy, Chris and I did make it.

I set off from White Waltham with Tom McCormack, with whom I have travelled at least 3 times now. For me the day was a trip down Memory Lane because we flew first to Sywell near Northampton, where according to my log book I did my first solo landing-away cross-country on September 25th 1952 in a Chipmunk from Booker. I remember the day well because taxi-ing-in I needed lots of revs to get rudder control to counter the very strong cross wind, so much so that the tail lifted much to the surprise of a UT pilot with only 60 hours (a significant proportion of my entire flying career Graham would say!).

From Sywell we made our way with our 2 new passengers to Baginton for another trip down Memory Lane because I worked on the construction of the runways back in the late 1950's.

We were entertained as usual by a singer who proved that she could not only sing the old wartime hits but also dance with various members of her audience at the same time. Outside the hangar there were some interesting museum pieces to inspect. I was reminded how narrow the Dakota is inside as a passenger plane. Alongside was a Shackleton still with its amazing array

of radar and radio gear. A former colleague who flew them only ever admitted to its maritime patrol role but it looked to me that the equipment was capable of much more than that. Lastly there was a Nimrod, the Shackleton replacement which unfortunately was not open for inspection. Sitting on the ground it looked an ugly aircraft and the mere sight of it could probably strike fear into a potential enemy.



The day was crowned by the appearance of a Spitfire which buzzed us a number of times at low level before heading back home. Seeing it at almost 90 degree bank just 100 feet or so above you was quite stirring.



Overall it was a most enjoyable day and I am sad that Geoff and Roy didn't make it. On behalf of us all I would like to thank Graham Cowie and his band of enthusiastic volunteers and a personal thank-you to my pilot Tom.

**Bill George**



**Visit to de Havilland Aircraft Museum**

We are planning the visit to The de Havilland Museum instead of our regular meeting on Wednesday 18 September. We plan to meet at Greenacres for lunch at 12 Noon and plan to leave for the Museum at 1315. We hope to run the visit by giving lifts there and back, so we are keen to know whether or not you plan to attend? Please let Graham Laurie know if you are coming (details on Page 8).



There is a charge for entry but we are hoping to waive this by using our funds to subsidise or even pay the full amount. The party can consist of up to 20 people, so please get your names into Graham as it will be first come, first served.

**Aircrew Lunch  
Friday 27 September 2019**

We plan to run another "Aircrew Lunch" at The Black Horse, Faringdon Road, Gozards Ford, Abingdon OX13 6JH. Full details will appear in next month's Newsletter but please make a note in your diaries. This was for many years, for those of you with long memories the "ACA Quad Lunch" when Chiltern, Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Branches joined together. It has now developed, with the demise of other branches, into a very friendly get together, with ex aircrew and their partners from around the local area. Having said that, it is also a great way of thanking friends or introducing them to our motley band! Look out for the menu form in the August Newsletter.

**Graham**

**Programme 2019**

- Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (\*)
- 17 Jul A new slant on Shackleton's Endurance Expedition - John Dudenay
  - 21 Aug Luftwaffe in WW2 - Ian Thomson
  - 18 Sep Visit to deHavilland Museum \* 12 Noon @ Greenacres
  - 16 Oct The Tragically Short War of a Topping Fellow - David Hearn
  - 20 Nov Visit TBA\*
  - 18 Dec Christmas Lunch\*

**Your 2019 Committee**

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**Welfare**

I have just returned from 5 days in Normandy where visits to Omaha Beach and associated museums took place. To revisit the D Day landing sights is forever nostalgic and to share it with hundreds of visitors was amazing - particularly gratifying were the number of school parties

Geoff Hulett is home from his Bedford hospitalisation, unable to drive and not fit at the moment to get his daily paper! His family are visiting frequently and he will make every effort to attend our meetings.

Des Richard is improving all the time after his knee operation and has every intention to attend the next meeting

Ron Doble appears quite weak and says he is 'So So' - we wish him well

**Mavis Dyson** has died just a few days short of her 93rd birthday. Her funeral will take place at Watermead Crematorium HP19 0FY at 1230 on Monday 15 July 2019

**David**

**Secretary/Editor**

Glad to hear that Des and Geoff are on the mend. We also send Best Wishes to Tom Payne who always keeps in touch.

**Graham**

**President**

Pleased to be home to a semi independent life but not forgetting those who cared for me over the past few weeks. Amazing people. Sadly I was not fit enough to join PP and so I was glad to have the video from Graham Cowie. Currently banned from driving until 25 August, when I have a session at Moorfields, creates a problem getting to Greenacres, which Harold and myself are trying to solve.

Look forward to seeing you ere long

**Geoff**