



NEWSLETTER

Is this the last Newsletter?

Note from our Chairman

As the last of our comprehensive Newsletters, our thanks go out to Graham Laurie for producing such an excellent publication over the years. We are hoping for a replacement editor so a volunteer would be most welcome.

I also hope our revised constitution will ensure the continued health of the Chiltern ACA and I welcome our new members, not least Ron Hodge, both an RAF and a naval aviator, who has already regaled us with his experiences.

We also thank the Bomber Command Association for the legacy of £1,000 which we will spend wisely, recognising that the BCA, the ACA and the Air Gunners Association were closely linked through the comradeship of the bomber crews.

Let us in the Chiltern ACA now go forward together in friendship.

Message from the Editor

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

What does this mean? Simply put if nobody volunteers to take over this will be the last Newsletter published by Chiltern ACA. Those members on Email have already had some 3 weeks notice but as yet nobody has been forth-

coming. It is not surprising as Chiltern ACA suffers like so many other societies and Association and that is lack of volunteers to take on Committee roles.

So I am simply asking one or perhaps two of you to come forward. It does not have to continue in it's present 8 page format and I will willingly help the new Editor settle in. So please think hard, can you help. If you would like to know more before committing to anything, please get in touch. But before I go a really BIG 'Thank You' to Stuart McKay for all his hard work, printing and posting - what a star!

Graham

February Meeting

Ron Hedge regaled us with stories from his wartime career starting in 1942. He joined the RAF did grading near Birmingham, then moved to Canada for flying training. On return to UK he could not get a place on a fighter squadron but the Royal Navy came to his aid. They wanted some young pilots, so not only did he go forward to fly Supermarine Seafire's but was commissioned in the process. His change of service meant a whole new vocabulary, 'going ashore' rather than leaving the station etc. etc. He finished his training at Yeovilton and was posted to the Far East but as he said just as they were leaving harbour in Columbo, the USA dropped the atomic bomb!

Of all the aircraft he flew it was the Seafire that he enjoyed most and he claims after a few practices he found landing on the carrier easy. Our President Geoff was most impressed and the two 'Fighter Boys' enjoyed swapping tales, before and after the talk



Remember 18th March 2020

Film Show - "The RAF in the past"
compiled by Des Richard

Meet @ Greenacres 1030 for 1100

Dennis Swains RIP

Dennis Swains regaled us twice 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 did go 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!

His time in movements at Abingdon was fascinating. Coffee smuggling to Germany from Abingdon with a Dakota smelling like a modern day Costa Coffee!

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!

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, for your two talks, you set a high standard and you will be sadly missed.

Our condolences to the family.

**The memorial service for Dennis
is at
Limes Ave Baptist Church Aylesbury
HP21 7HE
on
10 March at 2 pm.**

High Speed Jumbo

British Airways flight BA112 has broken the record for the fastest-ever subsonic flight between New York and London, reaching a top speed of more than 800mph. The Boeing 747 G-CIVP aircraft flew overnight on 8/9 Feb 20 and reached its destination in four hours and 56 minutes, as Storm Ciara sped towards the United Kingdom. This was a 22 year old airframe with just over 102,500 flying hours

The flight was riding a much stronger than usual jet stream, with winds over 200 mph propelling the aircraft, The supercharged jet stream is also responsible for powering Storm Ciara, which brought damaging wind gusts and massive waves to the UK, Ireland and other parts of Northern Europe that weekend.

The plane landed at Heathrow airport at 4:43 a.m., almost two hours earlier than scheduled. Its top speed during the flight was 825mph, according to Flightradar24, an online flight-tracking service.

Although the BA plane was clocked apparently going faster than the speed of sound -- 767 mph -- it would not have breached the sound barrier because it was being pushed by the air around it. Even when traveling at more than 800mph, the 747 was traveling much slower than the speed of sound relative to the air around it. A spokesperson for BA said: "We always prioritise safety over speed records, but our highly trained pilots made the most of the conditions to get customers back to London well ahead of time."



Not everything went as smoothly, here is an Emirates A380 landing, yes landing at LHR in Storm Dennis!

SR-71 Blackbird Breakup at Mach 3.2
Another great flying story.
By Bill Weaver

Ed: *I thank Des Richard for forwarding this amazing story which is concluded here.*

Extracting myself from the parachute harness, I discovered the source of those flapping-strap noises heard on the way down. My seat belt and shoulder harness were still draped around me, attached and latched. The lap belt had been shredded on each side of my hips, where the straps had fed through knurled adjustment rollers. The shoulder harness had shredded in a similar manner across my back. The ejection seat had never left the airplane; I had been ripped out of it by the extreme forces, seat belt and shoulder harness still fastened.

I also noted that one of the two lines that supplied oxygen to my pressure suit had come loose, and the other was barely hanging on. If that second line had become detached at high altitude, the deflated pressure suit wouldn't have provided any protection. I knew an oxygen supply was critical for breathing and suit-pressurization, but didn't appreciate how much physical protection an inflated pressure suit could provide. That the suit could withstand forces sufficient to disintegrate an airplane and shred heavy nylon seat belts, yet leave me with only a few bruises and minor whiplash was impressive. I truly appreciated having my own little escape capsule.

After helping me with the chute, Mitchell said he'd check on Jim. He climbed into his helicopter, flew a short distance away, and returned about 10 min. later with devastating news: Jim was dead. Apparently, he had suffered a broken neck during the aircraft's disintegration and was killed instantly. Mitchell said his ranch foreman would soon arrive to watch over Jim's body until the authorities arrived. I asked to see Jim and, after verifying there was nothing more that could be done, agreed to let Mitchell fly me to the Tucumcari hospital, about 60 mi. to the south.

I have vivid memories of that helicopter flight, as well. I didn't know much about rotorcraft, but I knew a lot about "red lines," and Mitchell kept the airspeed at or above red line all the way. The little helicopter vibrated and shook a lot more than I thought it should have. I tried to reassure the cowboy-pilot I was feeling OK; there was no need to rush. But since he'd notified the hospital staff that we were inbound, he insisted we get there as soon as possible. I couldn't help but think how ironic it would be to have survived one disaster

only to be done in by the helicopter that had come to my rescue.

However, we made it to the hospital safely—and quickly. Soon, I was able to contact Lockheed's flight test office at Edwards. The test team there had been notified initially about the loss of radio and radar contact, then told the aircraft had been lost. They also knew what our flight conditions had been at the time, and assumed no one could have survived. I briefly explained what had happened, describing in fairly accurate detail the flight conditions prior to breakup.

The next day, our flight profile was duplicated on the SR-71 flight simulator at Beale AFB, Calif. The outcome was identical. Steps were immediately taken to prevent a recurrence of our accident. Testing at a CG aft of normal limits was discontinued, and trim-drag issues were subsequently resolved via aerodynamic means. The inlet control system was continuously improved and, with subsequent development of the Digital Automatic Flight and Inlet Control System, inlet unstarts became rare.

Investigation of our accident revealed that the nose section of the aircraft had broken off aft of the rear cockpit and crashed about 10 mi. from the main wreckage. Parts were scattered over an area approximately 15 mi. long and 10 mi. wide. Extremely high air loads and g-forces, both positive and negative, had literally ripped Jim and me from the airplane. Unbelievably good luck is the only explanation for my escaping relatively unscathed from that disintegrating aircraft.



The Flying Suit that saved Bill's Life

CHILTERN AIRCREW ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2020

Two weeks after the accident, I was back in an SR-71, flying the first sortie on a brand-new bird at Lockheed's Palmdale, Calif., assembly and test facility. It was my first flight since the accident, so a flight test engineer in the back seat was probably a little apprehensive about my state of mind and confidence. As we roared down the runway and lifted off, I heard an anxious voice over the intercom. "Bill! Bill! Are you there?"

"Yeah, George. What's the matter?"

"Thank God! I thought you might have left." The rear cockpit of the SR-71 has no forward visibility—only a small window on each side—and George couldn't see me. A big red light on the master-warning panel in the rear cockpit had illuminated just as we rotated, stating, "Pilot Ejected." Fortunately, the cause was a misadjusted microswitch, not my departure!

Ed: *What a story and it shows the dedication of the Test Pilot's of that era. Our thanks to another Test Pilot, our own Des Richard for the story*

Bill Weaver Lockheed Test Pilot

Bill flight tested all models of the Mach-2 F-104 Starfighter and the entire family of Mach 3+ Blackbirds--the A-12, YF-12 and SR-71.

He subsequently was assigned to Lockheed's L-1011 (Tri Star) project as an engineering test pilot, became the company's chief pilot, and retired as Division Manager of Commercial Flying Operations.



He later flew Orbital Sciences Corp.'s L-1011, which has been modified to carry a Pegasus satellite-launch vehicle (AW&ST Aug. 25, 2003, p. 56). An FAA Designated Engi-

neering Representative Flight Test Pilot, he's also involved in various aircraft-modification projects, conducting certification flight tests.



Bill Weaver in 2014 (age 85) photographed at home surrounded by memorabilia of his flying career that could so easily ended on 25 January 1966



Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead Rotary Clubs are arranging a coach (sponsored by Barnett's Coaches) to the National Memorial Arboretum on 2nd June for military veterans resident in Dacorum. If the coach is not full at a charge of £10, carers may also travel. Folded-scooters and wheelchairs are ok or can be ordered at NMA.

Reservations preferably by email to Des Knowles (des-knowles97@gmail.com) or telephone 01442 388586

Chiltern Aircrew Association
Revenue Account from 1st January 2019 - 31st December 2019

| Expenditure | £ | £ | Income | £ | £ |
|--|----------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Administration | | | | | |
| Committee Expenses (Includes newsletter) | 112.25 | | Subscriptions | 270.00 | |
| Speaker Expenses | 150.00 | | Raffle (Net Proceeds) | 315.86 | |
| Donations | 75.00 | | Donations | 10.00 | |
| Memberships | 36.00 | | Interest Income | 1.11 | |
| Accountancy | 100.00 | | | | |
| | | 473.25 | | | 696.97 |
| Entertainment | | | | | |
| Guests Event May 19 | 570.00 | | Guests Event May 19 | 430.00 | |
| Xmas Dinner Dec 19 | 1,260.00 | | Xmas Dinner Dec 19 | 1,040.00 | |
| Outings | 582.50 | | | | |
| | | 2,402.50 | | | 1,470.00 |
| Total Costs | | 2,875.75 | Total Income | | 2,066.97 |
| Excess of Income Over Expenditure | | (808.84) | | | |
| Assets at 1st January 2019 | | 3,209.17 | | | |
| Excess of Income Over Expenditure | | (808.84) | | | |
| Assets at 31st December 2019 | | 2,400.33 | | | |
| Current Account | 1,846.61 | | | | |
| Savings Account | 553.72 | | | | |
| Cash in Hand | | 2,400.33 | | | |

We certify that the above accounts are correct and properly reflect transactions in the year ended 31st December 2019

Signed

Accountant



Mr E J Wootton MAAT

Hon. Treasurer

Mr R J Finn

Dated

4th February 2020

Programme 2020

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

18 Mar The RAF in the past - Film Show-Des Richard
15 Apr I flew about learning from that-Mark Gilson
20 May Buffet Lunch

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

Your 2020 Committee

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Chairman

See front page

Welfare

I am away in Madera, escaping the weather and I hope the Coronavirus. Will be back in time to attend Dennis Swain's Memorial Service.

David

Secretary/Editor

My last note as "Editor" but not before a big thank you to all those members that have helped with articles (you know who you are) and also to those friends outside of the Chiltern Aircrew Association who have also contributed. I particularly wish to thank Tony Brown and Alistair MacPherson (my Northern Reps) for their great help. It has been great fun but I now feel it is time for someone else. Who will that be, well, I am still waiting for a volunteer!

We are planning some visits for this year but they will be in addition to our normal Programme. We hope to visit Duxford, Bentley Priory, BA Museum and Maidenhead Heritage Centre but not necessarily in that order.

Graham

Membership Secretary

To those few outstanding members who have yet to pay your subscriptions, please do so ASAP. We plan to issue a new membership list soon.

Ian

Treasurer

You will see our accounts on Page 5 and my thanks to our auditor for the speedy return. As you will see we are in a healthy position, particularly as subsequently we have banked the £1000 donated by the Bomber Command Association.

President

I am sure all our readers will join with me in thanking Graham for producing such interesting Newsletters over a long period of time. His monthly presentations will be sorely missed by a very wide audience and we are sorry to hear of his resignation as editor but we are delighted to know that he will continue as Secretary of Chiltern ACA.

Well done Graham and best wishes to you and Jo

Geoff