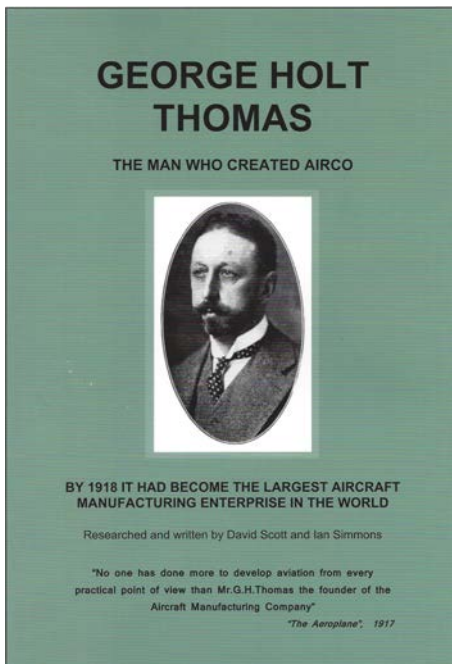




NEWSLETTER

October Meeting George Holt Thomas



The presentation by Dave Scott told us the story of this gentleman who had such a big influence in early aviation in Britain. In fact as we learnt it was not just early aviation, as Geoffrey de Havilland had been his chief designer for Airco and when the company folded, a loan from Holt Thomas to Geoffrey helped him set up the deHavilland Aircraft Company.

The main base for the Airco Company was Hendon Aerodrome and during WWI it was the largest producer of aeroplanes for the services some 30% of

the allied fleet. Yet we do not know of the name Holt Thomas as he was not an attention seeker but worked tirelessly to improve the aircraft.

Sadly after the war there was a natural drop in orders for military aircraft and the company ceased trading in the latter part of 1919, having been taken over by the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA) for a small sum.

David and Ian Simmons have just written a book on George Holt Thomas who was summed up in "The Aeroplane" in 1917 as: "No one has done more to develop aviation from every practical point of view than Mr G H Thomas the founder of the Aircraft Manufacturing Company". You may order the book can be bought at Wycombe Museum or direct from David at 21, Ellsworth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP11 2TU. Price £10 + £3 post and packing. Cheque payable to D.Scott.. Proceeds from this book and their other publication "High Wycombe's Contribution to Aviation" go to The Thames Valley Air Ambulance

November Meeting Weds 21 Nov 18

We welcome our member Stuart McKay to talk to us on the history of Stag Lane Aerodrome. There is probably nobody better qualified to talk on the subject of Stag Lane or anything connected with the aircraft and those who flew from the airfield. I am sure we are in for a very interesting and entertaining presentation.

Please do try and attend to listen to this wonderful supporter of the Chiltern Aircrew Association as well as being Secretary of the deHavilland Moth Club.



Remember 21st November 2018

'Stag Lane Aerodrome 1917-1934'

Stuart McKay

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 but even time for a joy ride on 8th but another engine failure on 22nd. Less enemy flying action already.

JULY 1918

6	DH	152 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Cappy Village & Aerodrome. Dickson leading. Capt Bridge came with me to test a new camera. A very bad raid indeed. Ninety- nine % of the bombs fell short. About eight hit the village. Anti-aircraft fire fairly heavy & accurate. A very fine escort was provided by 84 Squadron (SE 5s). No Huns in sight.
7	DH4	37 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Bray station & Sidings. Leading. Fifteen minutes after leaving the ground my left hand exhaust pipe blew off so I was forced to fall out & return home. Landed with all bombs.
7	DH4	136 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Cappy Village. Leading. Had great difficulty in finding my way as the clouds were very thick. No results observed & no Huns sighted. Anti aircraft very light indeed.
8	DH4	111 mins (PI)	Attempted Bombing Raid on Ron Flaque Dump. Leading. I was unable to find my way on account of very thick cloud which completely covered Hunland. So after circling around for half an hour I washed it out. 2nd Lt Tunstall flying with Lt Furge dropped his bombs this side. Everbody else brought their's home.
8	DH4	30 mins (PI)	Local. Flying Lt Col Taylor & Young, a joy ride.
14	DH4	35 mins (PI)	Local. Engine test. OK.
16	DH4	136 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Rosieres Railway Station & Dump. Dickson leading. Clouds caused a lot of trouble. I obtained five direct hits out of eight bombs & started a fire. AA very light & inaccurate. No EA.
16	DH4	124 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Froissy Dump. Dickson leading. About seven explosions observed on the dump. AA very heavy & accurate indeed. No EA.
17	DH4	133 mins (PI)	Attempted Bombing Raid on Orniécourt Dump. Me leading. Thick clouds covered the whole sky, so after trying for 35 minutes to find the way, I gave the lead over to Dickson who after trying for a further 30 minutes, washed it out. Landed with all bombs.
17	DH4	43 mins (PI)	Bombing Raid on Rosieres Station & Dump. After going for about 20 minutes, my oil pressure gave out, so I was forced to make a hurried return home without crossing the lines.

18	DH4	131 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Bray Railway Station & Sidings. Dickson leading. Very heavy clouds obscured results. AA light but accurate.
18	DH4	15 mins (P1)	Local. Flying machine back from field when Lt Danger had landed it with imaginary engine trouble.
19	DH4	165 mins (P1)	Attempted Bombing Raid on Orniecourt Dump. Dickson leading. Washed out by the leader without crossing the lines. Landed with all bombs.
20	DH4	143 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Oriecourt Dump. Dickson leading. Results fair. I obtained five direct hits on the target. AA fire very heavy & accurate. No EA seen. A very strong westerly wind blowing which made it very difficult.
22	DH4	140 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Orniecoint Dump. Elliott leading. Not very good results. I obtained three direct hits and there were about four others. No EA. AA very heavy & accurate.
22	DH4	113 mins (P1)	Bombing Raid on Trones Wood Dump. Dickson leading. Both my bombs fell short. Five or six direct hits obtained. No EA. AA very heavy & accurate.
22	DH4	45 mins (P1)	Engine Test (unsatisfactory). Engine stopped dead at 10000ft. Pulled off a very good forced landing in a cornfield with no engine.



As we approach Remembrance Sunday here is Amersham's fitting tribute to our WWI flying heroes.

'Jim' Mason

Seven Boys and Nancy Part 3

Study of the photographs revealed that, although the propeller blades of numbers two, three and four engines were broken away at the hubs, those of number one propeller were buckled but still attached to their hub and unfeathered. This combination would indicate that number one engine was not delivering power and the propeller was wind-milling, causing drag, whilst the other three were still at high power.

In another photograph lies a second clue. I had managed to clean up and enlarge an image of the shattered remains of the pilot's 'blind flying panel' which shows what appears to be a fragment of the 'attitude indicator'.

To fly at night or in cloud the pilot has before him a 'blind flying panel'. This panel normally consists of six instruments including one called the 'attitude indicator' or 'artificial horizon'. This instrument, as the name suggests, gives the pilot a visual indication of the attitude of the aeroplane, vitally important when he has no external clues as to the attitude of the aeroplane such as when flying in cloud, fog or on a moonless night. Both the pilot and his flight engineer would monitor the instrument for the correct indications before take off. Taking off in fog, at night, the pilot would be paying close attention to both the artificial horizon and the compass as, once airborne, he can no longer trust his balance organs to give him correct sensory inputs

Logic suggests, from the impact photographs, that it should indicate the aeroplane was in a descending left turn, slightly nose down and left wing down attitude but no, from what little one could see, it was indicating quite the opposite, a climbing right turn. So, was the pilot now suffering a second failure, the failure of some of his blind flying instruments? Were they, as we say today, being nibbled to death by ducks?

Fully loaded with bombs and fuel, barely at flying speed, with no outside visibility and the undercarriage still retracting, number one engine fails catastrophically, the cockpit warning activates and the aircraft lurches to the left. The pilot instinctively looks left to no.1 engine. Seeing nothing, he looks back towards the artificial horizon noting, in his peripheral vision, the flight engineer already operating the no.1 fire and feathering buttons so he closes the no.1 throttle. These are the instinctive actions they have talked through many, many times and practiced many times.

His sensory organs are of no use to him now as he can see nothing outside the cockpit and his balance organs have lost whatever frame of reference they once had. He now concentrates on the attitude indicator and does he see, as the photographic evidence suggests, a climbing right turn when he wants to be in a wings level attitude to gain the safety speed of 130mph and then the climb speed of 140mph? If so he will instinctively lower the left wing and nose, thereby making the real situation worse. The first and only indication of what is about to happen comes with the second violent lurch to the left as the port wingtip digs in.

His consciousness is just beginning to register the worsening situation when it is all over.

I know the above is only conjecture but it seemed so reasonable that I contact 'Uncle Bill', a retired senior officer I knew from my service days who, I also knew, had the ear of the upper levels of the current RAF hierarchy. We met in the RAF Club in London on a sunny spring day and, over lunch, I related the story, omitting of course, the spectral involvement, saying that I had come across this incident whilst researching a later, post war, Waterbeach accident.

We pored over the photographs, discussed the possible actions leading up to the final crash and also discussed the Board and its findings. We were both aware of the unwritten code that unless it can be conclusively proven that 'pilot error' was to blame, that caveat is not applied. I also reminded him of a quote regarding accident investigators from one of the best, if not the best, books on aviation, 'Fate is the Hunter' by Earnest K. Gann.

"They must never, for fear of official ridicule, admit other to themselves, which they all do, that some totally unrecognisable genie has once again unbuttoned his pants and urinated on the pillar of science".

"Would it be possible" I asked "to reconvene the Board after all these years and reverse the findings?"

After a moments thought he replied "Leave it with me but don't hold your breath".

Now all I could do was to wait as spring moved into summer, summer into autumn then, finally, the phone rang. It was 'Uncle Bill'. He told me it had been agreed to re-convene the Board and could I present myself at the MoD for the hearing? At the appointed time and place I duly presented my evidence and theories, was questioned at length, thanked for my efforts and asked to wait outside.

After some hours I was recalled to the chamber, thanked once again then informed that the Board had decided the original Board's findings and verdict had been in error and therefore the verdict of 'Pilot Error' was to be struck down and replaced by one of 'engine and instrument failure leading to disorientation, loss of control and destruction of the aircraft and loss of crew'. After I had thanked the Board Members for their time and for their verdict. 'Uncle Bill' gently steered me out of the MoD building and into the RAF Club for a well earned couple of beers before I wended my weary way home.

Once again it was a typical fenland November evening and again there was no movement in the air to disturb the thickening fog. As the memories of the last two years filled my mind it was a case of "Damn the food, a bottle of single malt will do"

As before, that would have to wait as I was again securing the Abbey and farmland museum after the days activities. I had locked the Abbey and was walking across the grass to the cottage when, from my right, I heard once again the increasingly loud and familiar sound of Rolls Royce Merlin engines. "Bugger" I thought "here we go again".

As before, the noise faded through the fog and then came that sound of a muffled explosion. "Oh no, not again" I said to myself but this time I just stood and waited. Sure enough, the fog swirled imperceptibly and, slowly, there appeared the crew, only now there was colour. Washed out and faded, true, but colour nonetheless. The blue of the uniforms, the yellow of the Mae West's, the browns of the flying suits and the colours of the rank and flying badges were in stark contrast to the flat grey of the fog. The faces too had changed, no longer white and grim they were softened and with a faint colour.

As before the captain stepped forward and I could see a glint in his eyes and the beginnings of a smile around his mouth. Then that Aussi voice, deep inside me, spoke again "Thank you, thanks' mate for righting the wrong. We can rest now, we can go to that Elysian airfield where the sun shines, the aeroplanes are serviceable and it's always someone-else's round. Thanks mate" and, as he stepped back to be with his crew, already beginning to fade, the voice spoke once more, "She did it, you know, mate, 'Nancy' did it" was all it said and then they were gone.

Open mouthed I stood there, my mind a maelstrom of thoughts. Wild thoughts, unbelievable thoughts that

slowly began to coalesce into one, totally fantastic thought. "She did it, you know, mate, Nancy did it." Of course she did, of course she did, it all makes sense now.

Apart from the ferry crew she had only ever known these men, her boys, her seven precious boys.

Night after night she had taken them to the inferno over Germany, Italy and Occupied Europe.

Night after night she had taken them and brought them back, safe and unscathed.

And now they were going to leave her.

Leave her for good.

She had always known this day would come so, deep inside, somewhere in the most inaccessible of wiring looms and circuits, something stirred.

Although they did not know it, the crew were doomed from the moment they peed on the tail wheel, climbed the ladder, through the door and into their seats. When she failed the number one engine the crew would react as they had rehearsed so many times, but to no avail.

She had failed the feathering mechanism on number 1 propeller.

She then failed the attitude indicator.

No matter what they did, she would always be one step ahead of them and the outcome would be the same.

She was not going to let her boys leave her.

As this sunk in I realised that it was something I could never make public, never publish for, if I did, I would lose what small reputation I still had so the story would go the grave with me, seven young men and a Lancaster called 'Nancy'.

The End

Ed: *Our thanks to Smiley Mildwater for allowing us to publish this short -sh story he wrote earlier in the year. We have invited Smiley and his wife to the Christmas Dinner so we look forward to meeting them. Our thanks also to Tom Payne who sent it to me, always one to keep an eye out for useful copy and after a quick email Smiley confirmed we could publish it*

Tales from the Tower

**by
Tony Brown MBE**

I am very confident that no one would believe this story so I am just writing it to amuse myself. Or am I?

Many years ago there was a very popular television programme which starred Benny Hill. He played numerous characters, one who was called Fred Scuttle. He wore a beret and raincoat rather like Michael Crawford and always started his act with "Good evening viewers".

In the old days there were dozens of light aircraft at Manchester and they all fitted in with the scheduled aircraft and were no trouble to anyone. That is except one very pleasant pilot who never ever accepted that flying wasn't for him. He was however very polite and friendly and always said "Good Morning Manchester". and he talked just like Benny Hill.

The trouble was he kept on saying it at the beginning of all subsequent transmissions. He got into so many scrapes that controllers soon referred to him as Fred Scuttle and that was quickly shortened to Fred. His proper call sign was only used in a serious event which was actually a frequent occurrence. When a light aircraft departed from Manchester the tower controller would normally keep it on the tower frequency. There was no requirement for approach to know. Well theoretically!!! The brief intercom call we all dreaded was "Fred's airborne". This could only mean that eventually someone was going to be very busy getting Fred out of trouble. This intercom call resulted in controllers asking for a days leave or going off sick. A complete breakdown was a normal occurrence.

It was a beautiful Saturday evening. Clear skies and unlimited visibility. The approach controllers were at peace with the world.

A/C "Good evening Manchester". "This is GABCD"
ATC "Pass your message GCD"

A/C "Good evening Manchester. GCD is returning from Coventry. We have the arrival ATIS Bravo and request clearance to the field"

ATC Roger GCD you are cleared to the field special VFR not above 1500 feet QNH. Squawk 1234. Fred repeats the clearance back and immediately says. "Good evening sir I have the field in sight"

I am a little surprised at this as I can't see him on radar nor his squawk.

ATC "confirm you have the field in sight Fred"

A/C. "Yes sir good evening"

A quick chat to the tower on intercom asking them not to let any aircraft go anywhere as Fred is on the loose. Tower says they have no outbounds and we agree we will keep Fred on my frequency and the tower controller tells me Fred is cleared to land.

I still can't see Fred anywhere and neither can the tower

ATC. "Fred can you definitely see the approach lights?"

A/C "Yes Sir good evening. I am on finals. Are the VASI's switched on? I can't see the VASI's. I make a quick check with the tower.

ATC "The tower says they are definitely on and you are cleared to land. The surface wind is 230 degrees 3knots

Fred reads the clearance back and it all goes very quiet,

A/C. "Good evening Manchester. This GABCD. I made a slight mistake there Sir. Good evening. I lined up with all the lights at Crewe marshaling yards. I nearly landed on a freight train" !!!!!!!



Crewe Marshaling Yards

Manchester R/W 06



"Fred Skuttle as portrayed by Benny Hill.

Is he in the uniform of a commissionaire or a Virgin Airways captain?



Chiltern ACA
Christmas Lunch
Green Acres Tavern,
Leys Road, Bennetts End,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire, HP3 9LZ

Wednesday 12th December 2018
1200 Noon for 1230

Traditional Christmas fare including 1st drink and wine at the table

Please reserve me tickets for the Christmas Lunch @ £ 20 per person
Widows @ £ 10 per person

Name

Address

.....

Postcode Tel No

Name of Guests

.....

Special Dietary Requirements

I enclose Cheque for £ payable to 'The Chiltern Aircrew Association'
or by BACS: I M Mason 09-01-28 41009326. Please email me to confirm you have
made a BACS payment and I will email your tickets by return

Please Post together with a stamped addressed envelope to:

Ian Mason
65, Sunnycroft,
Downley,
High Wycombe HP13 5UR

Closing date: 4 Dec 18

Programme 2018/9

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

2018

21 Nov 'Stag Lane Aerodrome 1917-1934' -
Stuart McKay

12 Dec Christmas Lunch* 12 Noon

2019

16 Jan AGM

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Welfare

It was encouraging to see the ladies present at our last meeting and as we have an excellent speaker in Stuart McKay at our next meeting, please do come along.

David

Secretary/Editor

Sadly I will not be able to attend the November meeting but hope to see you all along with Jo at the Christmas Lunch. Please do support Ian Mason and get your ticket requests early by post or email/BACS

Graham

Speaker Secretary

I am doing well with next years programme but as ever if you have any ideas please do get in touch.

Bill

Membership Secretary

As you will see elsewhere (P7) I have the tickets for the Christmas Lunch. I would just like to reiterate that if you send a cheque you also include a stamped addressed envelope for me return your tickets. If however you go the electronic route and pay by BACS please email me and I will email you a scanned version of your tickets. Remember of course the Raffle is free as the ticket price includes your raffle ticket.

Ian

Treasurer

Thanks to your super support of our monthly raffle, I am glad to report funds are in good spirits and thus talking of drink we will again be subsidising the Christmas Lunch and providing your first drink from the bar, together with a bottle of red and white wine on each table

Rod

President

My last message apparently fell on deaf ears so please put those hearing aids in and your best glasses on. It would be jolly nice to have a volunteer Chairman to assist our hard working committee. See you at the Xmas Lunch

Geoff