



# NEWSLETTER

## Look for details of London visit - P8

### Apology

#### From the Editor:

For those of you who receive this missive by email you can ignore the apology, as I spotted the mistake just before I hit 'send'. Alas the copy that is always sent earlier to Stuart McKay for printing still had August 2015 on it. Stuart being his ever efficient self had printed and posted them before the error came to light. My apologies but I have double checked and this one certainly says October 2015!

### September Meeting

Some of you with very long memories may have heard this presentation before but it was years ago at the old RAFA HQ in Hemel and contained 70 35mm slides. This was an up to date digital version with twice as many slides in the Powerpoint Presentation and took twice as long. It was pleasing that for the second month running our sound system worked with the lapel microphone which meant even the 'Haddenham Mob' at the back could hear!

Graham Laurie covered the history of Royal Flying from the First World War until the present day. The Prince of Wales/King Edward VIII bought a number of deHavilland aircraft from the Gipsy Moth to the Dragon Rapide, the latter being the first aircraft to fly a British Monarch in 1936. After the Second World War the King's Flight was equipped with Vickers Vikings, as were BEA. The Vikings were in service until 1958 before being sold on the civilian market. It was amazing that we had a pilot in the audience, Phil Bowles who had flown all 3 aircraft when a First Officer with Tradair.

The talk continued to the present day, where most flights are completed by chartered civilian aircraft. This together with some insights into the operation of the Andover and BAe146 completed a packed presentation. Dave Bray gave a vote of thanks, having served as a Navigator on The Queen's Flight (his story is on P4 ).



*Seen at Woburn, Stuart McKay's Tiger Moth and MG and the story!*

- Mar 72 Tiger Moth 86311 F-BGJE (1943) purchased in Biarritz, France
- Jul 72 Tiger Moth 86311 registered G-AZZZ to Stuart McKay
- Feb 73 MGB GT MYT 365L registered to Stuart McKay
- Feb 75 Founding of dh Moth Club
- Aug 80 1st Woburn Abbey Moth Rally. Logistical support provided by MGB GT MYT 365L
- Aug 99 1st Woburn Rally attended by Tiger Moth G-AZZZ
- Aug 15 1st Woburn Moth Rally attended by G-AZZZ and MYT 365L together (plus of course their owner)



Remember 21st October 2015

“Flying the Canberra”

Danny Bonwit

Greenacres 10.30 for 11.00am

## Malcolm Cloult's Story Part 8

**Ed:** *We were promised an explanation of the Dakota Rope Trick, so strap in and enjoy!*

### **Dakota rope trick:**

Snatching a van-sized object off the ground with an aircraft flying at over 100 mph may seem fairly dramatic, but that is just what transport crews were trained to do. The specially adapted Dakota aircraft was flown down, and it snatched, or 'Picked Up', a stationary Waco Hadrian Glider. The acceleration of the glider from rest to over 100 mph in some 5 seconds, seemed quite impressive, particularly when inside the Hadrian, but less spectacular compared with catapult launchings on aircraft carriers. The important fact in this seemingly rather violent and hazardous procedure was that a direct snatch was not involved. This would have broken the two rope each time. The secret, perhaps a sort of conjuring trick, was that the 'Pick Up' hook underneath the Dakota had the length of an attached tow rope wound round a drum in the aircraft. When the hook engaged the loop on the Hadrian glider, for a brief moment the rope ran free. Then the drum was progressively braked until in some 5 seconds the glider had accelerated and become airborne in a normal tow situation behind the 'Tug' aircraft. This was a precision operation. – A rope loop attached to the glider was suspended between two collapsible posts, like goal posts, ahead of the glider. The 'Pick Up' Dakota had to make a low, very accurate approach at partial throttle. At the precise moment when the aircraft's nose passed over the loop, in coordinated movements the throttles were opened fully and the aircraft pulled up into a maximum steep climb with every rivet vibrating under the strain. In that 'Moment of Truth' it became clear if the hook had successfully engaged. This was, perhaps, a lesser known feat to add to the wide-ranging capabilities - 'a Dakota Rope Trick'! If the hook did fail to engage the glider's loop there was quite an anti-climax, as can be imagined. The Dakota climbed up and away, impressively, on full throttle, the Hadrian remaining motionless, waiting patiently, or otherwise, for the tug aircraft to fly another circuit and come in for a second attempt at the 'Rope Trick'.

The technique was carried out with, medium and heavily loaded Naco Hadrian gliders, and was intended to be used in areas too small or unsuitable for normal towed launching such as jungle clearings."

I can add little to that account, just that I never had to try it "for real but in practice I never missed. It was an exciting change from normal training. wonder if any aircraft but a Transport Command Dakota could have done this ?

Not all my time in Burma was work, though even that I enjoyed. There were occasional flights to Calcutta that I engineered by volunteering my crew to run the Senior NCOs' Dry Goods Mess . That required flying in to Dum Dum Airport and cadging some form of transport into the centre. Some memories include the symphony orchestra and hearing for the first time some famous piano concertos, with a meal afterwards in a restaurant opposite to the music hall. It did a super apple pie and cream.

I wonder how many people know that the Japanese bombed Calcutta? Their whole objective in invading Burma was to get through to India. (See "India under threat" in The Forgotten Airforce. ) In his book Henry Probert reminds us that since 1937 Burma (population 17 million) had been separated politically from India, though still using the Rupee as its currency. It printed its own notes, but retailers in the Countries I visited preferred the Indian notes. Today the Burmese Government has gone further in breaking relationships with Britain, as I discovered when I revisited Akyab (now Sittwe) and Rangoon (now Yangon) in February 2014. At least by then they had removed the restriction on tourism, but didn't make it easy by its currency exchange regulations. For instance I had to pay their internal airline in US dollars.

They now drive on the right, but have no left-hand-drive vehicles. Therefore buses drop off their passengers into the flow of traffic! It's amusing that Yangon Airport is still designated RGN by the airlines, and Sittwe as AKY!

About Calcutta Henry Probert wrote that it was not until Spitfires could be spared from Europe to protect Calcutta that the Japanese began to lose their highly skilled and experienced Zero pilots in large numbers. However, in December 1942 serious damage was inflicted by successive raids on our shipping in harbour. They didn't try to repeat the operation.

Back on the ground the Japanese had been left finally in control of not just Akyab but also the area to the north as far as the important East-West road across the Mayu hills. It was now the work of Transport Command to supply our ground troops, and the task fell initially to the Dakotas of 31 Squadron, for 62 Squadron had been fully committed to the support of 81 Division in the Kaladan Valley. It was not long before the enemy were in retreat. The Dakotas showed a remarkable ability to take punishment, one in particular with a feathered port engine made enough height to stagger over the Chin hills able to drop the remainder of its load. I myself have seen one coming into land, and going round again on one engine.

What else can I recall about 62 Squadron? Warrant Officers (as I was one) and Commissioned officers served the men on Christmas Day, and on occasion doubled as the Duty Officer for the day. It was the men's right to complaint if meals were not to their satisfaction, and it was the D.O's job to check at meal times. I did go through the fruitless motions of applying for a commission, and also of re-training on four-engine aircraft, but I was getting too near the end of my service. (A commission would have made a great deal of difference to my demobilisation gratuity.)

### Post War Flying

With the aid of my savings and demob gratuity I was able to start up and partly furnish a home for my new bride. It was a small bungalow in the village of Langley Vale, that was on the side of the hill on which the Epsom race course was situated. The Government assisted with a mortgage and by controlling the price of new homes. In view of the desperate housing shortage to say that we were fortunate is an understatement, and it came about from a heart-rending advertisement I put in (I think) the Surrey Comet. A builder, about to retire after erecting a pair of bungalows, answered my plea.

After some months of marriage in our new home Lily saw how unsettled I was, and suggested I re-enlisted for five years in the RAF Reserve in order to fly at week-ends and holiday times. What a great idea! (Flying is still in my blood, and I dream often of being at the controls again.) It would also help our first child. In the Reserve one was unable to keep his former rank, so I became a Sergeant again, diminishing finances, but of course still wearing my "Wings".

So it was back to the little Tiger Moths! But of course it was fun. One Sunday, flying from Fair Oaks near Woking, I flew over our home. Lily almost had the baby on the spot when I practised some aerobatics, particularly a spin!

My daily long journey to work to the City of London came to an end when I was promoted to a position in Cambridge, so then I began flying from Marshall's airfield, this time in the newest trainer the Chipmunk, which had an enclosed canopy and cartridge starter (no more propeller-spinning). It was great, flying at Her Majesty's expense! Air Cadets came sometimes with us for flying experience.

Towards the end of my five years RAF contract, Britain was having trouble in the Suez, and there seemed a serious possibility of being called back into active service. This decided me not to sign on a for

another period, especially as I now had a family and good job. Besides, jet aircraft were now coming into use, and I didn't feel up to learning "new tricks".

### Australian News

I must tell you of the old DC3 used as part of the BIG "M" restaurant in Midland, a town a few miles East of Perth (well, there can be none West!). Sadly (for me and probably for many other enthusiasts) it was removed a few years ago. The cockpit, with its controls intact, could be viewed through a glass screen. I recall proudly showing it to a Grandson on one of his parents' visits when I lived in the area. After marrying Helen, I had moved there from England to Gooseberry Hill, a bush area sixteen miles from Perth. Bush fires were never far away.



*Now that is a 'Big Mac'!*



*Alas, not a 'hostess' in sight*

**Ed:** Next month we will conclude Malcolm's exploits with the trip he did to Burma and Singapore in February 2014. I cannot thank Malcolm enough for sending me his memoirs to enable us to share the 'highs' and 'lows' of his service career. It is an example I would like you all to follow. It may not seem much to you, but there is a readership out there that would love to hear it all

### Know David Bray

I joined the RAF the day after playing rugby for my school, Milford Haven Grammar School, in February 1964. I reported to RAF South Cerney near Cirencester and failed my first exam, I had two black eyes resulting from the game of rugby and had to see a doctor before attestation could be completed, one day later than the other Course members!

Training at this Initial Training School included square bashing, classroom studies and the outdoor exercises. Memorable were the ones on or in the nearby flooded gravel pits. Building rafts is not one of my attributes. Graduation occurred in May 1964 and I became an Acting Pilot Officer ready for my first posting.

After well-earned leave at my family home in Milford Haven I caught the night sleeper to London and then a further train to RAF Dishforth, a holding unit in those days. We had to report by 2pm and the group would then be allocated duties, I declared my interest in sailing and was duly told to report to the RAF Sailing Club at Hamble, after collecting sailing kit from home. A return to London and then the night sleeper back to Milford Haven resulted in a telling off by my father for running away from the RAF – I had been away from home 36 hours on my first posting!

Hamble was magical, 2 other holding officers and I lived on boats and in the Clubhouse during that summer, spending many an hour on the high seas. We visited the Channel Islands, Cherbourg and other French ports. A highlight was one of the yachts I was crewing lost its mast in a severe storm off St Catherines Point, Isle Of Wight. A large Cunard Liner looming out of the mist to report our demise was wonderful and we were soon under tow from the Yarmouth Lifeboat.

Reality came next, in September 1964, and I reported to 7 FTS RAF Church Fenton to commence pilot training on the Jet Provost. Thoroughly enjoyable, but it all came to an end after falling out of 3 stall turns on a check ride with the Wing Commander Flying!!! Going Solo for the first time was a life time memory, whilst other reminiscences include the sea survival exercises at Mountbatten and Bridlington. The exercises on the York Moors brought further memories of foreign gentlemen getting taxi rides to our destinations – I wondered how they beat us! Oh, I forgot to mention that in the room opposite mine lived none other than Graham Laurie!

After reassessment at Biggin Hill, Navigator training was offered. Therefore, I reported to RAF Hullavington in June 1965 for initial nav training, flying Varsity and Valetta

aircraft. Pilot training held me in very good stead and I was fortunate to thoroughly enjoy and succeed with that training. One Saturday morning parade, produced an announcement from the Station Commander that he wished to stop the rumours that Hullavington would close – weeks later the Nav School was moved to RAF Gaydon! After winning the prizes at Initial Nav School, advanced training commenced at RAF Stradishall, where my training continued on the Varsity. Again the pilot training was a great background and led to gaining Nav wings and more prizes in May 1966.

The Andover OCU beckoned and commenced in June 1966 on number 1 Course at RAF Abingdon. The smell of a brand new aircraft, particularly on low level exercises caused me airsickness problems that took some time to clear. Perhaps it was the news that a posting to No.52 Sqn at RAF Seletar in Singapore ensured I was fully fit for future flying!! Oh yes Graham Laurie was also there on 2 Course!



No 52 Sqn Andover at Seletar

The posting to the Far East was wonderful as the squadron had a reign of terror that stretched from Nepal, Thailand and Hong Kong in the North, to Brunei, Philippines and Labuan to the East and Indonesia and Australia to the South. When Hercules crews boasted of their ability to fly directly to Darwin from Singapore our claim of having to night stop in Bali on the way took some beating!



Fg Off D Bray GD/N steps aboard the rear entrance to a No 52 Sqn Andover C Mk I at Seletar, Singapore in 1967.

**Ed:** There will be more of Dave's career next month.

### Spitfires and Hurricanes at Goodwood

Graham Laurie reports:



On 15 September, whilst the Battle of Britain Service was being held in London a flypast was organised from Goodwood Aerodrome.

The airfield was created on land that formed part of the Goodwood Estate, home to the Dukes of Richmond for over 300 years, and was donated by the 9th Duke - the renowned amateur racer and aircraft engineer Freddie March - to assist the War effort. Known as RAF Westhampnett, this satellite station was active from July 1940 to May 1946 as a Battle of Britain station, and home to 43, 129, 145, 602 and 610 Squadrons, operating Hawker Hurricanes, P-51 Mustangs, and Supermarine Spitfires.

Flying training began at Goodwood early in 1940 when young pilots were taught operational flying techniques in their Hurricanes and Spitfires. It was also from RAF Westhampnett that the first operational sorties by the Fighter Groups of the US 8th Air Force flew in combat with the allies, one of the first sorties being the infamous Dieppe raid. The charismatic Douglas Bader flew his last wartime flight from Westhampnett during which he had to abandon his stricken Spitfire over Northern France. Today a full-size bronze statue stands as a tribute to Bader at Goodwood.

After the war, the airfield's perimeter road was converted into a racing circuit, which was opened in September 1948 by Freddie March to host Britain's very first post-

War motor race at a permanent venue as the spiritual successor to Brooklands.

I was proud to be one of the 38,000 allowed into Goodwood on 15 Sep 15 to view the departure of these historic Battle of Britain aircraft for the various flypasts planned for Southern England. The weather at Goodwood improved during the morning and at the proposed take-off time 12 Noon there was blue sky, but alas a 2 hour delay was announced as some of the en-route weather was still to improve. The Met Office was proved correct and at exactly 2pm we saw the first batch of aircraft taxi out and take off.



Each group of aircraft then flew over the aerodrome in formation before departing for their particular route.



Various Marks of Spitfire, Hurricane and a lone or should I say the lone Blenheim took to the skies. There was just one small hiccup (apart from the non arrival of HRH Prince Henry's aircraft) when one Spitfire was just about to rotate when the engine made, what can only be described as 'one hell of a noise'! It braked and returned to

dispersal. Ten minutes later much to the surprise of most of the spectators it taxied out and departed, to join up with his formation.



*The Blenheim prepares for take-off*

It really was a pleasure to attend and see nearly 40 veteran aircraft depart. As we left to return home we realised we had witnessed something that will never be seen again.

**Other Celebrations**

On the 8 Sep 15, the RAF Benevolent Fund hosted the RAFBF Battle of Britain 75th Anniversary Brompton Bicycle Challenge from Paris to London. This special event was to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and to recognise the impact that the Spitfire's revolutionary British engineering had on the Battle of Britain, by cycling the route from Paris to London on cutting edge British cycling technology: the Brompton bicycle. Each rider pledged to obtain at least £1000 sponsorship. The ride was completed on Saturday 12 Sep 15 with a ride down The Mall, finishing at Wellington Barracks. The event has so far raised in excess of £50,000.



*52 Bromptons on The Mall*

A flypast and thanksgiving service at Westminster Abbey attended by the Prince of Wales marked the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. As they say in the 'better' newspapers, Geoff Hulett was in attendance.

Spitfires and Hurricanes flew over London to honour the pilots and aircrew who took part in the World War Two battle.



Veterans and dignitaries watched as the RAF Regiment Band filed past Church House in Westminster. More than 544 RAF personnel were killed during the 1940 campaign Prince Charles also attended a reception for veterans and their families.

Veterans gathered in the RAF Chapel at the Abbey and a wreath was laid on behalf of "The Few" - the term for the airmen, which comes from Sir Winston Churchill's phrase: "Never, in the field of human conflict, was so much owed by so many to so few." Prince Charles, who is patron of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association, also laid a wreath on the memorial stone to Sir Winston, handed to him by the late prime minister's grandson Sir Nicholas Soames.



*HRH The Prince of Wales lays the wreath*

**Ed:** *With so few of the veterans still with us it was certainly the last major celebration that will be held with any of the aircrew and groundcrew in attendance. It was pleasing to see coverage of the groundcrew, as they did so much work in difficult conditions, to allow the 'Few' to operate serviceable aircraft.*

**Aircrew Lunch  
The Black Horse, Abingdon**

26 aircrew and ladies joined together for lunch on Friday 25th September at the usual venue of the Black Horse, Gozzards Ford, Abingdon.



*Members of Oxford and Chiltern ACA swap stories*

The Black Horse is under the new management of Dawn Neil, so it was not long before she realised what the day was all about! We must say Dawn and her staff entered into the spirit, looking after us royally.



*Memories of 1967 at Abingdon as former 46 Sqn members (L to R) Mark Gilson, Graham Laurie, Ian Mason and Mac Sibbald swap stories of flying the Andover C Mk I.*

Just so their is no excuse, we will meet again on Friday 30th September 2016 at the same venue, so why not get together with some old flying mates and make a date for lunch - we can guarantee that the 'hangar doors' will be open!

**Tom Payne remembers**

In 1951 as an active Member of RAFVR, I flew most week-ends out of Panshanger, 18 such Pilots (see photo below) were recalled for 3 months to RAF Lichfield from all parts of U.K.

Labelled Number 104 FRS our course started on 5 Dec 51 with some 25 hours flying Airspeed Oxfords - most of the time Instrument flying with another RAFVR Pilot as second Pilot and look out. Our Instructors were RAFVR Pilots but they were recalled for 18 months.

All the Pilots had of course ex-multi-engined flying experience - except one short legged type who had experience ONLY as second dickie on Catalina's. The reason for recall was an insufficient number of Pilots capable of instrument/night flying. The Catalina pilot with instructor and wireless operator, returning from night cross country, called up for QFF - QFE pressure readings. Pilot entered wrong one on altimeter - after calling "Downwind" no further calls were made - until the instructor rang in on land line - they were in a farmyard on downwind leg. Only injury W/op broke a finger, The Engineering Officer was very happy as he now had a full set of spares less propellers for A Wellington.

The 'senior' pilot was F/Lt. Bill Reid V.C. - great chap, was a Member of Chiltern later, In January 1952 we converted to Wellington's - old ones being got rid of from Training Schools who were flying Varsity's and other more modern types. Now re-numbered as 'F' Flight No: 3 Squadron - 104 FRS. Some 66 Hours flying, including Night flight cross Countries and lots of instrument flying we obtained our "Instrument Rating" - Depending on Total of previous Instrument flying one was awarded a "WHITE" - GREEN" - or MASTER GREEN" rating - I understand that in the latter rating there were less than 100 in the whole RAF/RAFVR. 3 Mar 52 we all departed back to Civilian life - despite several attempts made to get us back into RAF !!



## Programme 2015

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

21 Oct Flying Canberra's - Danny Bonwit  
18 Nov Raid on St Nazaire - Nick Beattie  
16 Dec Christmas Lunch\*

## Your Committee

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## Welfare

My 2 usual spies, Ron Doble and Tom Payne, have not come up with too many 'ills' this month, which is good. It was great to see Guy Buckingham at the meeting after a fall some weeks previously.

Whilst Tom's back, after being treated by a Swedish Masseur?, seems ok. It was also good to see Gerry Sealy-Bell back at our meeting after undercarriage strengthening. I have been unable to contact 3 ladies Joan Myall, Joan Golby and Norma Hagan - if anyone could give me their contact details I'd be grateful?

**David**

**Ed:** *It was also good to see David there and there are strong rumours he will be at the next 3 meetings - a record?*

## Membership Secretary

I will be with a number of Chiltern Members attending the official opening of The International Bomber Command Centre In Lincoln on 2 Oct 15. A full report will be included in next month's Newsletter.

You will see that the Christmas Lunch will be held at Greenacres on Wednesday 16th December. The cost of the ticket will remain at £20 and tickets will be available at the October meeting, so for those attending please remember your cheque book or cash. A form will appear in the November issue for those unable to get to the Canberra talk this month.

**Gerry**

## Secretary/Editor

We have joined as members of the 'Community Action Dacorum' and this hopefully will lead to us having access to a minibus to take a party to London to visit The Bomber Command Memorial, The RAF Club and The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. The bus will pick up from Greenacres and return there, we estimate there will be room for about 16 people. The date will hopefully be announced at the October Meeting.

**Graham**

## Programme Secretary

We are well on the way to filling next year's programme but I am always looking for additional speakers. If either you or someone you know does presentations that might be of interest to us, please do ask them and pass on their details to me.

**Bill**