



Woking and District Aircrew Association

www.aircrew.org.uk/woking

Newsletter

11 December 2020

Editorial

This should have been a joyous time in the build-up towards Christmas, but it was not to be.

We have just heard that our genial past President, Tom Bennett, has passed away at home. A tribute follows on page 2.

And our much-anticipated Christmas Lunch was all set up and ready to go when the dreaded COVID prompted a return to Tiered restrictions that were stricter than before and precluded mixed gatherings. With great regret the event had to be cancelled with only just over a week to go.

With luck (don't we just need some nowadays!) we will see the lifting of restrictions some time in the New Year, at which point we will organise a celebration lunch with, we hope, much more relaxed constraints.

In the meantime, we will continue our monthly Zoom meetings which you all are cordially invited to attend.

Due to a clash of commitments, the upcoming December Zoom meeting has been rescheduled to a day later than normal - 2pm on Wednesday 16 December. A clickable link to join the meeting is in the box at the end of this column.

Newsletters will also continue with the aim of keeping everyone in touch. For this edition grateful thanks are due to Nick Glover and Philip Riley for their contributions. I know it is a fairly worn record by now, but please take time out over Christmas/New Year to write something for the January edition. Without articles there will be no newsletters.

Finally, I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and COVID-free New Year.

David Jackson

ACAW Zoom Meeting
1400 December 16th

Note change of date from the 15th.

Click **HERE** to join

Latest RAF News

RAF deploy British UN Force to Mali

RAF aircraft are deploying British Army personnel from RAF Brize Norton to join the UN Mission in Mali.

The advanced party led by Lieutenant Colonel Tom Robinson, the Commanding Officer of the Light Dragoons, flew out to Mali on board a LXX Squadron A400M Atlas transport aircraft last week. The main contingent followed on 3rd December on board another Atlas, which after a refuelling stop at Gibraltar flew into Gao Mali. The full deployment is planned to be completed by early next week.

New Image of Future Tempest Fighter

"Tempest is one of the UK's most ambitious technological endeavours and designed to deliver a highly advanced, adaptable combat air system to come into service from the mid-2030s. This next generation combat aircraft, which forms part of a wider combat air system, will exploit new technologies as they evolve to respond to the changing nature of the battlespace, addressing increasingly high-tech and complex threats and conflict."



Source and more information:

[https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/
new-image-of-new-british-fighter-jet/](https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/new-image-of-new-british-fighter-jet/)

Air Commodore T A (Tom) Bennett CBE RAF

past President of Woking Aircrew Association

1928 - 10 December 2020

With great sadness we report the death on 10 December of our past president, Tom Bennett. Our condolences and great sympathies go to Tatiana and their family.

In tribute to a fine pilot and officer, here is a transcript of a story he told on video for the electronic version of the Woking Book *Upside Down Nothing on the Clock*.



Back in the early 50s I was a Hastings captain on 511 Squadron at Lyneham. I and my crew were to fly a lightly-loaded Hastings from Changi back to Lyneham – a five-day schedule that would get us back in time for Christmas and the parties in the officers' and sergeants' messes.

The first two legs from Changi to Negombo on Ceylon and from there to Mauripur at Karachi went very nicely, but unfortunately on landing at Karachi we found a problem with the aeroplane and the engineers took 24 hours to fix it.

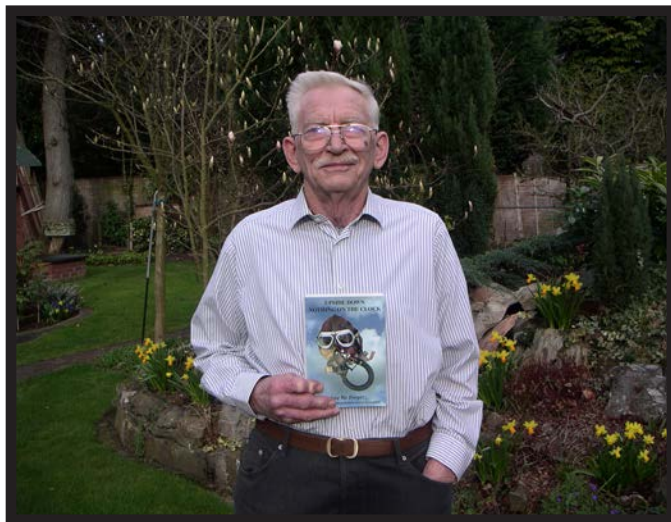
That evening, over a few drinks mulling over our misfortune, someone thought that, because the aircraft was lightly laden, we could carry much more fuel than we could normally have done and do high-speed cruises instead of economic cruises thereby cramming two flying legs into one day. This was duly achieved and the flight to Habbanya went very quickly and nicely and on touchdown we set about getting ourselves a quick turnaround. I went to Air Traffic and filed a flight plan, the navigator checked the met, the flight engineer did the turnaround inspection and the co-pilot went into the transit aircraft servicing flight and asked them to refuel us to full tanks please.

We re-assembled at the aircraft, started her up, and were airborne again within 40 minutes. Unfortunately, just as we got to the top of climb, the

flight engineer reported complete loss of oil pressure on one of the engines. That put paid to our scheme. The engine was feathered and we turned back towards Habbanya.

Half way round the turn he was on the intercom again – a second one had lost its oil pressure. So we feathered that and faced a two-engine slide back down the slope we'd climbed up.

Before we reached the end of the turn there were fluctuations in the oil pressure of a third engine. Well, the aircraft was not going to fly very comfortably on one so I started up the first two and left all four on a very low power setting that was enough to reduce our rate of descent and provide us with a safe landing back at Habbanya. We taxied in, handed the aircraft over to the engineers, and went up to the mess to drown our sorrows at having lost the Christmas festivities back home.



After a short time the engineers telephoned and told us what they had discovered. It turned out that the airman who had done the refuelling was not very familiar with the Hastings and, being told to fill all tanks, he did exactly that. Fourteen fuel tanks, four oil tanks and three de-icer tanks all topped up with aviation gasoline. No wonder the engines didn't like the lubricants they were being offered!

So we never made it back for Christmas, but we did have a good New Year.

A Veteran Visit to Waddington

Nick Glover tells the story of a memorable day out for 3 ACA Woking Veterans of WWII

One day in early summer of 2018 I was chatting to some ACA members when one of them, Fred Hooker, expressed a wish to visit the new International Bomber Command Centre at Lincoln. These chaps are no longer in the flush of youth, and a round trip from Woking to Lincoln in a day would be out of the question. I got to thinking that a day trip by aeroplane was perfectly feasible, and a quick look at a map showed a dearth of suitable civil airfields in the area, but a perfect airfield a mile along the road in the shape of RAF Waddington.

The IBCC was opened in April 2018 as a world class facility to commemorate, and tell the stories of members of Bomber Command in World War Two. The centre includes a memorial spire, a peace garden and the Chadwick Centre, which tells the story of Bomber Command through galleries and interactive exhibits. There is much more to the centre, and a great deal of interesting information can be found by visiting the website www.internationalbcc.co.uk.

My initial call for permission was to RAF Waddington OPS, who presented a number of obstacles to private aeroplanes operating to RAF airfields. I then wrote a letter to the Station Commander, and although I received no direct reply, things began to happen. (I discovered later that timely help came from Group Captain Lizzy Nichols at RAF High Wycombe – many thanks to her).

All obstacles evaporated, and RAF Waddington did our aircrew proud.

Wednesday, 8th August 2018 dawned bright and clear with light winds, perfect for our trip.



Gathered at Blackbushe were myself, my trusty co-pilot Claire Tonkinson, (veteran of several ACA trips including Project Propeller), Fred Hooker, Bill Moore,

and Stan Instone, all three veterans of RAF Bomber Command in WW2.

Don Stebbings had been due to be with us, but transport problems meant he couldn't get there in time. The subsequent trip we did with Don will make an interesting story in itself.

We departed Blackbushe in a Piper Cherokee 6 seater G-CHFK, kindly provided by Aerobility (disabled flying charity) at 0955, landing at RAF Waddington at 1115 after a comfortable, smooth flight. En route we obtained a radar service from RAF Wittering, routing through their overhead. Both Bill and Stan had been stationed there at some time, so I told the controller we were carrying RAF VIPs and I remarked that they were pleased to see the airfield being kept in such good order.



I flew, whilst Claire did radio and navigation. She had no experience of flying into a military airfield, and was a little disconcerted at some of the terms and procedures. About ten miles out she asked Approach for the airfield information, and was promptly given the UHF frequency for the ATIS. This military controller probably wasn't used to civilians, however, we deduced we were to use Runway 20 and joined left hand downwind without difficulty. Claire coped well, and we had a smooth arrival.

We parked at the Flying Club, and were met by Squadron Leader Mark Concarr, RAF photographer, members of the RAF Flying Club, and our own escort from the RAF Regiment.

After a grand welcome, and tea, we climbed into the transport, which along with our escort was to be ours for the day, and set off for the Centre.

After a short drive we arrived at the IBCC to be met by Nicky Barr the Centre Chief Executive, who made us all very welcome, particularly Fred, Bill and Stan who were the real VIPs.

Nicky took a lot of trouble to show the veterans around the centre and spent much time with each individual, looking into their personal stories. Fred had flown with 102 Squadron in 1944, operating the Halifax Mark 111. He was shot down on his third trip and taken prisoner. Nicky had done some research and provided Fred with some information from her records. Interestingly, Fred was able to correct some of the information the centre held regarding his crew.



At about 1300 we sat down to an enjoyable and leisurely lunch, laid on by Nicky and the Centre.

After lunch there was plenty of time to look at the exhibits, visit the memorial spire and the peace garden with its wonderful views over Lincoln and the cathedral.

Transport picked us up at 1530 for the short drive to Waddington, and delivered us directly to the aeroplane. We departed at 1620, with Claire flying us home. Takeoff was from RW20 and we departed the zone straight ahead, receiving a radar service from Waddington Approach until changing to Wittering.

We landed at Blackbushe at 1745 after a most excellent day.

I'd like to extend our thanks to RAF Waddington, and to Nicky Barr and all the staff at the IBCC for their warmth and hospitality, and for helping to make the day possible.



Sadly Fred, Bill and Stan are no longer with us, but I'm left with the feeling that I'm very glad we made the trip when it was still possible.

After the trip, Nick received the following email from OC Logs Sqn at Waddington:

Nick,

It was nice to meet you today and I hope that your guests had an enjoyable experience visiting the IBCC. I'm sorry I couldn't join you and hope that the old boys looked after Steve and didn't lead him down too many bad paths! I'd also like to thank you for what you do with the Vets, it's an amazing thing that I know they appreciate and it means something to those of us who have or currently serve that our brethren are being looked after.

Best wishes,

Sqn Ldr Mark Concarr | OC Logs Sqn | Royal Air Force Waddington | Lincolnshire, LN5 9NB



Christmas lunch 2017 in happier times

Chinook – 40th Anniversary

With thanks to Philip Riley for permission to include this article

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On 20th November 2020 RAF Odiham celebrated the 40th anniversary of the arrival of the first Chinook helicopter to enter RAF service. As local residents will know, the Chinook is still a very familiar sight in the skies above Odiham and it is likely to remain with us for many years to come. The Chinook has a remarkable service record and is one of the few aircraft, originally developed in the early 1960s, which remains not only in front line service today but also in production at Boeing's factory in Philadelphia; the aircraft is named after the Chinook people who lived in the Pacific Northwest of the United States.

The UK ordered its first Chinooks in 1967 to replace the Bristol Belvedere twin-rotor helicopter which was also based at Odiham. However, that order was cancelled and it was not until 1978 that the Ministry of Defence placed a further order for 30 Chinooks which initially equipped 18(B) Squadron. These aircraft replaced the venerable Westland Wessex which had been the mainstay of the RAF's troop-carrying helicopter fleet since entering service (also with No. 18(B) Squadron) in 1964.

In order to train the Chinook crews, an Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) was established at Odiham and an extensive building programme was undertaken to accommodate the new helicopters. At the same time a Chinook Servicing School was organised to train the engineers who were to service and repair the aircraft. Soon after its arrival, the first real test for the Chinook took place in April 1982 when 4 helicopters were embarked on the ill-fated freighter, the Atlantic Conveyor, as part of the Falkland Islands Task Force. Close to the islands, the Task Force was intercepted by Argentine Air Force fighter-bombers which launched Exocet sea-skimming missiles at several ships including the Atlantic Conveyor. This resulted in the sinking of the Atlantic Conveyor and the loss of 3 Chinooks. However, a fourth Chinook, coded BN (and now universally known as Bravo November), was in the air at the time of the attack and survived, later landing on the aircraft carrier HMS Hermes. It is a tribute to the soundness and integrity of the Chinook that this aircraft remains in service at Odiham today,

nearly 40 years after it miraculously escaped the attack on the Task Force.

The main role of the Chinook is as a battlefield transport. It can carry up to 55 fully-equipped troops or a variety of loads needed to support a ground operation including foodstuffs and ammunition. It has a wide loading door located in the rear of the fuselage and it is equipped with 3 external cargo hooks to carry underslung loads which include field guns, military vehicles and containers. The aircraft normally has a crew of 4 which comprises two pilots and two loadmasters. Defensive armament can be fitted and this includes two machine guns positioned in the forward doors. The aircraft also has a comprehensive defensive aids capability which includes systems to counter-act heat seeking missiles and devices to warn of a missile attack. There are 3 Chinook squadrons at RAF Odiham (Nos 7, 18(B) and 27). A detachment of Chinooks is based at RAF Benson in Oxfordshire where some of the training (including instruction on flight simulators) is undertaken. In terms of the command structure, the Chinook units are part of the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron (JHSS) which is a combined force of helicopters operated by the RAF and the British Army.



The original Chinooks were supplied to the US Army in the 1960s and many saw service during the Viet Nam War. The basic configuration of the aircraft is little different from the early models. The aircraft has two gas turbine engines mounted on each side of the rear pylon and connected to the rotors by drive shafts. The rotors are counter-rotating which eliminates

the need for an anti-torque vertical rotor allowing all the power to be used for lift and thrust. However, although the Chinooks currently at RAF Odiham superficially resemble the earlier aircraft that date back to the 1970/80s, they are substantially different in many respects. In particular the dials and gauges which were generally found in most aircraft cockpits of that era have now been replaced by multi-function displays (the so-called digital glass cockpit). This enables the crew to access a vastly increased amount of information simply at the press of a button. It also ensures that essential information is always available whereas data that is not always needed is only shown when required. Another important innovation has been the adoption of systems which enable the aircraft to be kept at a pre-determined altitude and devices which allow the pilot to land the aircraft automatically in conditions of reduced (or even zero) visibility. The introduction of some of these systems has been prioritised as a result of operations in desert conditions where landings are extremely hazardous due to the dust clouds caused by the downwash from the rotors. Similar factors also affect operations in snow conditions. The ability to operate at night has also been significantly enhanced by the adoption of night vision goggles which make it possible to operate in reduced lighting conditions.



It is not unusual to see on our television screens Chinooks performing humanitarian operations. Under the National Resilience commitment, Chinooks are always on stand-by at Odiham to respond to a wide

range of emergencies. Many people will remember the impressive task undertaken by Odiham's Chinooks last year in securing the dam at the Toddbrook Reservoir in Whaley Bridge. Last year Chinooks also provided support to the water authority on the Fens to prevent serious flooding of local communities. During the Corona pandemic Chinooks have been supporting the emergency services and the NHS by transporting patients, equipment and personnel.



Throughout its long period of service at RAF Odiham the Chinook has been involved in many overseas operations. These have included Operation Desert Shield in Kuwait and Iraq and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Chinooks were used for relief work in northern Pakistan following an earthquake in Kashmir, in Cyprus to evacuate British citizens from conflict in the Lebanon and in Sierra Leone where Chinooks supported local forces in restoring stability. Most recently Chinooks have been operating in Mali, West Africa, working with French forces in counter-terrorism operations. It is an immense credit to the men and women at RAF Odiham that they are prepared, at a moments notice, to move their helicopters and equipment to any corner of the world where their unique capabilities can save lives and secure communities. We are extremely fortunate to have them, and their magnificent Chinook helicopters, as our neighbours.

*Philip Riley
November 2020*



Maybe another boat trip on the Basingstoke Canal in 2021? This was July 2013.