



Woking and District Aircrew Association www.aircrew.org.uk/woking **Newsletter**

12 February 2021

Editorial

Another month. A continuing lockdown. But at last vaccines are widely available with the promise of a relaxation of constraints at some indeterminate point in the future.

Given the uncertainties, I grabbed a special offer from Zoom for a year's subscription for the price we would normally pay for 7 months via monthly payments - a saving of nearly £69. Let's hope we can have real meetings before this runs out.

Getting copy for this newsletter continues to be a challenge. Bill Bawden has been a regular contributor and Nick Glover has come up trumps again this time. Grateful thanks to both.

What has everyone been doing during the lockdowns? Surely some of you have been doing something that would interest other members. What have you found to relieve the boredom? Where have you found interesting new walks? What great books have you been reading? What material have you found interesting on the web, including YouTube? What web sites have allowed you to enjoy free concerts? Which museums offer a virtual tour? Please have a think and let's hear from more of you!

David Jackson



A reminder of better times. The June 2002 meeting in the Fair Oaks clubhouse before the room was cut in half.

**ACAW Zoom Meeting
1400 Tuesday 16 February**

Click [HERE](#) to join

Recent RAF Happenings

Joint Exercise with France

With the objective of developing cross-FIR border co-ordination, Eurofighter Typhoon FGR4 aircraft of No 3 Squadron from RAF Coningsby have linked up with French Air Force Dassault Rafale and Mirage fighters to intercept a simulated non-NATO military aircraft entering UK airspace.

And with Qatar

Further afield, six Typhoons from No 12 Squadron, also based at Coningsby, have taken part in air-to-air and air-to-surface exercises and dogfighting scenarios with aircraft of the Qatari Emiri Air Force over Doha during Exercise Epic Skies IV.

Wedgetail Arrives in UK

The first Boeing Wedgetail AEW1 airborne early warning surveillance aircraft destined for the RAF has arrived at Birmingham Airport for conversion and fitting by STS Aviation Services. It, and the other aircraft to follow, will equip No 8 Squadron at RAF Lossiemouth from 2023. However, these airframes are not new but from second-hand civilian Boeing 737 passenger aircraft returned to and stripped down to bare metal by Boeing before being flown to UK.

Large Scale Helicopter Exercise

The recent Exercise Wessex Storm involved RAF Boeing CH-47 Chinook, Airbus Puma HC2 helicopters and Airbus A400M transport aircraft, together with Army Air Corps Wildcat and Apache helicopters, in transporting the British Army 2 PARA Battlegroup and US and French paratroops, in a major exercise on Salisbury Plain.

Chinook Ops in Mali

An RAF Chinook has delivered heavy equipment to extend French and Malian forces' operational range as part of Op Barkhane, the French counter insurgency operation in the West African Sahel region.

The recent operation saw a Chinook of 1310 Flight lift a large Air-portable Fuel Container to a Forward Operating Base to enable ground and air reces to operate at a greater distance from Gao.

National Aerospace Library on YouTube

The National Aerospace Library, based at Farnborough in one of the historic RAE buildings, has started a YouTube channel of historic aviation films. You can find them by putting "YouTube" in your search engine and then search in YouTube for "National Aerospace Library".

The direct link is:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCvOINKE_4cR6oBMKv_8wNKA/playlists

The Aerospace Library's web site is also worth a look:

www.aerosociety.com/news-expertise/national-aerospace-library

RAF Odiham Runway Resurfacing

During the work more than 8500 tonnes of asphalt will be removed and replaced, resulting in more than a 1000 vehicles movements.

The base is home to three squadrons of RAF Chinook helicopters. The huge transport helicopter is the workhorse of the RAF carrying military personnel and equipment into battle fields and supply bases. The Chinook force is also used for civilian emergencies and at least one helicopter is always on 24/7 stand-by to help.

The Chinook force will continue to operate while the work takes place on the runway, it's expected to be completed by the Spring.

source: planetradio.co.uk

Unmanned Ops over UK

This summer personnel at RAF Waddington will receive a glimpse of the future when a SkyGuardian aircraft, a pre-production example of the new Protector Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS), will operate from the Lincolnshire station from next July.



The UK has ordered the first three Protector RG Mk 1 systems (three aircraft, three ground control stations and supporting equipment) as the first phase of the acquisition, with the additional 13 aircraft, four ground control stations and support equipment expected this year.

Operating in the UK will assist in the development of the revolutionary Detect and Avoid technology which will permit Protector to fly in all UK airspace safely. It will also allow the RAF to refine the requirements needed to fully integrate Protector operations into Waddington where the RPAS will operate alongside the based fixed wing aircraft.

5th Poseidon Delivered

The Royal Air Force (RAF) has now received five of nine Boeing P-8A Poseidon MRA1 maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) following the arrival of the fifth example at RAF Lossiemouth in Moray, Scotland, on February 2.

The aircraft – serial ZP805 (c/n 65754, line number 8257), named 'Fulmar' – departed Boeing Field near Seattle, Washington, on February 1 and arrived at the Scottish base after an eight-hour overnight delivery flight. According to the RAF, this marks the first time that a Poseidon MRA1 has been delivered to RAF Lossiemouth straight from the factory, without having to stop along the way.



This aircraft has been named 'Fulmar' after the sea-based bird of the same name and to pay homage to RAF Lossiemouth's naval past, as the station itself was called HMS Fulmar between 1946 and 1972.

source: www.key.aero

The aircraft at Waddington this summer will be operated by the manufacturer, General Atomics-Aeronautical Systems. Known as SkyGuardian, it will participate in Joint Warrior, a multi-national large-scale military exercise in addition to undertaking a series of

capability demonstrations to partners and allies. Protector is an advanced, medium altitude long endurance (MALE) RPAS procured to replace the RAF's Reaper. It will bring enhanced armed Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capability, including extended range, increased payload and planned integration of UK weapons.

It will be the first RPAS to be designed, built and Certified against stringent NATO and UK Safety Certification standards equivalent to manned aircraft.

source: www.raf.mod.uk

Flying Visit to East Kirkby

Nick Glover describes a visit he organised for one of our members

ACA member Don Stebbings had completed RAF pilot training in the USA, but returned home too late in WW2 to be required for operational flying. In the hope of continuing to fly he opted for a Flight Engineers course on Lancasters at RAF St Athan.

On hearing this from Don, I wondered if he'd be interested in visiting the airfield at East Kirkby where two brothers, Fred and Harold Panton had created the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre.



Don in the cockpit

One very important aspect of the Centre is to restore a Lancaster to flying condition. The project is privately funded, and a major way to finance it is to do the heavy restoration work during the winter months, and to exhibit the aeroplane during the summer season. Throughout the summer, exhibition dates are published when they run the engines and taxi the Lancaster around the airfield, so the public can get a close up experience of an iconic aeroplane.

Don didn't need to be asked twice, and so it was on the 8th August 2019 we launched from Blackbushe in a Piper Warrior G-BCIR. This aeroplane is operated by the flying charity Aerobility, and I asked Aerobility pilot Wayne Ryding to fly us. Wayne had recently gained his PPL and a trip like this would certainly stretch his experience.

It was a glorious day, and the flight was smooth and uneventful. The interesting part of operating to East Kirkby is the approach and landing. The landing area is a small part of the old RAF airfield, most of which is now disused. There is no control tower and no ATC. There is no marked runway, and landing is effected on the longest piece of grass available, which also happens to be bordered by a line of quite tall trees. Pilot intentions are announced by way of traffic calls on the general SafetyCom frequency 135.475 VHF.

The airfield is situated beneath the MATZ stub of RAF Coningsby, which is the airfield on constant standby for QRA (as well as the home of the BBMF). This means that the circuit at East Kirkby has to be

flown below 500 ft agl, making things even more challenging for finding the grass strip behind the trees. Wayne certainly increased his experience that day, and made a good job of it.



Don with pilot Wayne Ryding

We parked at the edge of the field and took a short walk to the museum, which is very well presented, with many interesting aeroplanes and artefacts on display. Information on the centre is available on their website www.lincsaviation.co.uk, and I would recommend a visit.



Aerobility's Piper Warrior G-BCIR at East Kirkby

The highlight of the day however, was the starting up of 4 Merlins, and then the Lancaster "Just Jane" began to taxi around the airfield. An experience that would have been common 70 years ago was a rare thing now, and people had come from all over the country to be thrilled by it. I think Don found himself back in 1945 for a while.

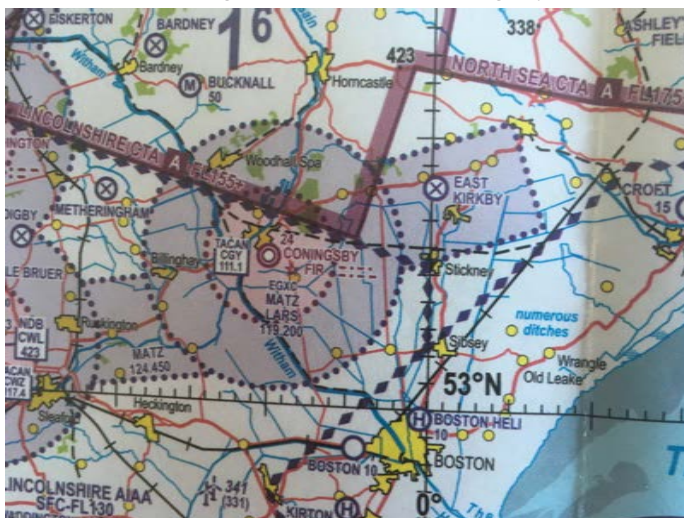
After lunch we had a look around the museum, including the original control tower, which was full of exhibits. Outside they had preserved the original

windsock mast which has a neat hole from a cannon shell fired by a strafing German.



Lancaster NX611 'Just Jane'

At 1500 it was time to return. Don sat in the front seat with Wayne. I'm sure had Wayne gone to sleep, Don's training would have kicked in – he would probably have landed straight ahead into Coningsby.



With two stages of flap we cleared the trees comfortably, and relaxed into a smooth one hour flight home. Many thanks to Wayne and to Don for a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

by Nick Glover with thanks to Don and Wayne for permission to use the photographs.

Aircraft Maintenance Engineers' "gripe sheets"



Pilots have to learn that vague language in a defect report will probably result, as in the following cases, in an appropriate response.

Pilot report: Something loose in cockpit.

Engineer response: Something tightened in cockpit.

Pilot report: Left inside main tyre almost needs replacing.

Engineer response: Almost replaced left inside main tyre.

Pilot report: Autopilot tends to drop a wing when fuel imbalance reaches 500lbs.

Engineer response: Flight manual limits maximum fuel imbalance to 300lbs.

Pilot report: Unfamiliar noise coming from No 2 engine.

Engineer response: Engine run for three hours. Noise now familiar.

Pilot report: Mouse in cockpit.

Engineer response: Cat installed.

Pilot report: Target radar hums.

Engineer response: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

Pilot report: Number three engine missing

Engineer response: Engine found on starboard wing after brief search..

Pilot report: Pilot's clock inoperative.

Engineer response: Wound clock.

Pilot report: Aircraft handles funny.

Engineer response: Aircraft told to straighten up, fly right and be serious.

ACAW Members Learn About Flying Boats

by Stuart Holmes, later Vice Chairman of the Woking branch, who sadly passed away in 2018.

At their November 2002 meeting, members of the Woking branch of the Aircrew Association were given a “horse’s mouth” briefing by one of their own members, Stuart Holmes, on the use of Sunderland Flying Boats in the Far East during World War 2.



Sunderland Take Off

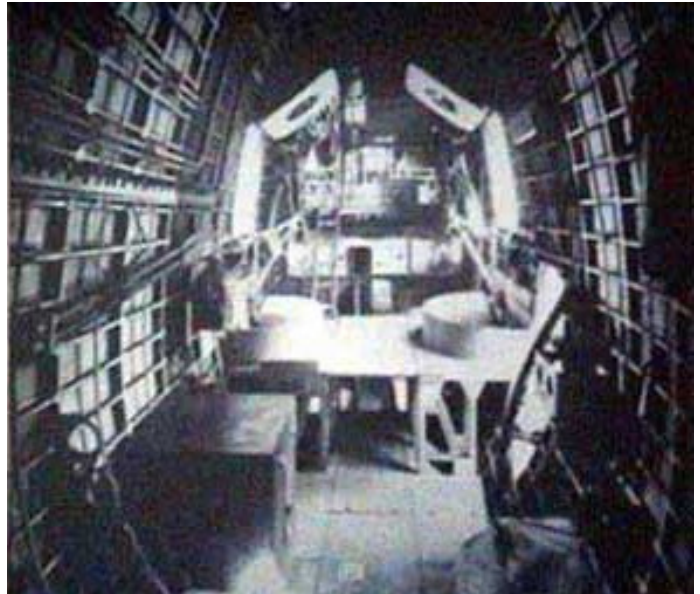
Stuart trained in Rhodesia, and then flew Sunderlands in the Far East. He started by pointing out that most members of the Aircrew Association would have gained their experience in “effeminate” land-based aircraft with hard standings to taxi onto, and braked wheels to help you park them there! By contrast, he considered flying boats to be real men’s aircraft - which behaved like any other when you got them into the air - but presented real challenges in manoeuvring on the water and mooring - indeed no less than 4 out of the total of 49 pages of Pilot’s Notes needed to specify the entire operation of the aircraft, its fuel, oil, hydraulic, flying control and safety systems etc. were addressed solely to these aspects of handling it on the water.



Sunderland Flight Deck

And although the crews were sustained by fresh food prepared and cooked in the galley, they suffered many disadvantages compared to their land-based colleagues - especially having to undertake pre-flight inspections about 20 or 30 feet above a cold ocean;

and when, after a 15 hour flight, half the crew had to stay on board to refuel and re-oil the aircraft!



Sunderland Interior

One of the problems faced by pilots was the impossibility of judging height over smooth water by night - the principal technique was to decrease speed to 83 Knots and descend at 200 feet per minute until shouts from below confirmed that you had actually settled on the water, which often could not be detected from the cockpit!



Changing a Plug on the Water

After this fascinating tour on Sunderlands, Stuart enjoyed a most varied career, including instructing on Vampires, test flying at Farnborough after completing the Empire Test Pilot School course, as well as staff appointments at the Ministry of Defence and, finally, seven years with the Civil Aviation Authority. The Aircrew Association is very lucky to count such experienced airmen amongst its members.