



Woking and District Aircrew Association

www.aircrew.org.uk/woking

Newsletter

15 January 2021

Happy 2022



Editorial

Some members were kind enough not to cancel their membership standing order for this year despite it having been decided that we would not charge subs for 2021 in view of the effect of COVID on our activities. As advised in the last newsletter, these new payments (totalling £125) have been gratefully accepted as donations to ACAW funds.

The latest lockdown constraints and projected duration make it most unlikely that physical meetings will be able to restart any time soon. In an attempt to fill a little of that gap, monthly Zoom meetings will continue for now and newsletters will continue to rely on contributions from members. At the risk of repeating myself, please do help by sending me items for the newsletter. Any subject that might interest our members will be welcome, especially if accompanied by illustrations/pictures. But be aware that the newsletters end up on the on the main ACA web site, so keep that in mind when offering content.

David Jackson

**ACAW Zoom Meeting
1400 Tuesday January 19th**

Click **HERE** to join

Recent RAF News

UK/US Joint Carrier Exercise

A recent eight-day exercise was conducted in the North Sea by the Royal Navy's new Carrier Strike Group during which fifteen Lockheed Martin F-35B Lightnings were flown aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth.

F-35Bs of the United States Marine Corps VMFA-211 had earlier flown to RAF Marham to integrate with No 617 Squadron before aircraft from both units, ten from the USMC and five from the RAF, deployed to the carrier for a series of exercises that included weapons drops on Garvie Island in the Cape Wrath Training Area off the north-west coast of Scotland. The integration of the three services was described as "seamless" and the 29 pilots involved and all other personnel gained valuable experience from this joint operation.

The Bears Return

Two RAF Eurofighter Typhoons from RAF Lossiemouth were again scrambled to intercept and shadow a pair of Russian Tupolev Tu-142 ("Bear") maritime patrol aircraft flying close to UK airspace over the North Sea. These continued incursions represent a potential hazard to other air traffic because the Russians do not always report their presence.

38 Group Disbanded

On 31st December 2020 the Royal Air Force marked the end of yet another chapter in the rich and diverse history of Number 38 Group with its disbandment. Originally formed mid-way through the Second World War as part of Fighter Command, the Group's motto is 'Par Nobile Fratrum', or 'A Noble Pair of Brothers', reflecting the interoperability between the newly formed Group and Airborne forces that endured throughout its early years.

Its numerous operations included supporting the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War on Operation OVERLORD with the airdrop of some 24,000 troops and equipment into German occupied Western Europe. In 1948 the Group was heavily involved in the Berlin Airlift with its Blackburn Beverley and Handley Page aircraft.

How The Channel Tunnel Was Built

Given the prominence of the Channel Tunnel in recent Brexit news, it seems appropriate to recall the lecture by Colin Kirkland, a leading light in the design and building of the tunnel, that Woking ACA enjoyed in April 2004.

Members of the Aircrew Association were given a wonderful insight at their April Meeting on the building of the Channel Tunnel by Colin Kirkland OBE FREng FICE, a resident of Guildford, who has now retired from the Management Board of Civil Engineering Consultants Halcrow after 40 years with the Company; and who was appointed Technical Director of Eurotunnel in 1985, responsible for the construction of the Chunnel until its completion in 1991.



Colin Kirkland

Before Margaret Thatcher and Francois Mitterand agreed in 1985 that a tunnel could be built, there was a long history of proposals dating back to 1802 which had always been thwarted by concerns regarding Defence of the Realm. In 1881 a Col. Beaumont was actually commissioned to build about 2000 yards of experimental tunnel on the English side, and a similar experiment on the French side - but defence concerns prevented further progress. (Col. Beaumont's original tunnel was encountered when work finally began.)

The route of the tunnel is not a straight line, because geographically, there is an 80 metre cliff on the English side, and geologically, they needed to keep the tunnel in a layer of chalk marl to minimise leakage and drainage problems. In addition to the curving route thus determined, there are two low points, with a rise in the middle of the Channel.

Actually there are three tunnels - two railway tunnels 8 metres in diameter, and one central 5 metre tunnel to provide an emergency evacuation route, and to supply fresh air to the train tunnels. (This central tunnel was actually driven first, in case there were geological problems.) It is connected to the main tunnels at 375 metre intervals to assist passenger

evacuation. The railway tunnels are also connected by 2 metre diameter cross tunnels, to dissipate the pressure caused by speeding trains.

During the construction there were up to 1,500 men working underground 24 hours a day, moving chalk out of the tunnels at the rate of 2,400 tons per hour every 24 hours. On the English side, environmental concerns about the disposal of this chalk caused them to have to spend an unscheduled £44 Million to build a sea wall to stop the chalk falling into the sea.

The main tunnels were dug by laser-guided machines costing £16M each, with two crossover tunnels, at the 'third points' under the channel. These are the largest underwater caverns in the world in soft rock. To ensure the unbroken supply and quality of the concrete tunnel linings, the company had to build its own factories to produce them. They designed to progress the tunnels at the rate of 250 metres per week, but the actual record was 428m. As Project Director, he was responsible for signing off £90M every month, at the rate of £3M per day! The original planned timescale envisaged a construction period of 8½ years - but they paid additional money to the contractors to reduce this to 7 years.

Still, 13 years later, Colin admits to a feeling of frisson every time he sees a Eurostar train passing, which reflects his immense satisfaction of helping to turn a dream into a practical reality. He is still happy to give talks to interested groups, for a contribution to his favourite charity, the Guildford Cathedral, of which he is now Chief Steward, and the first lay member of the Cathedral Chapter, to which he was elected in 2002.

On Line Events

Wednesday 20th January Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) Solent Lecture

Transforming Test and Evaluation Training by Simon Tate – Director Operations, Air and Space and Paul Shakespeare - Head of Flight Operations & Chief Test Pilot QinetiQ. To address the challenges of customer financial and time pressures, after 75 years of training Test Pilots and Flight Test Engineers, ETPS underwent a major transformation to ensure it stayed at the forefront of Test and Evaluation training.

Online 18:15 for 18:30 Start.
<https://www.solent-raes.org.uk/lectures>

Thursday 21st January RAeS Webinar

RAeS Inaugural Mary Jackson Named Lecture by Dr Moogega Cooper, the Planetary Protection Lead for the Europa Lander concept at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. The M2020 Mission is designed to investigate the habitability of Mars and will conduct assessments towards future human exploration of Mars. The project will also cache samples for possible return to Earth by a future mission.

Online 17:00-18:00 GMT
<https://www.aerosociety.com/events-calendar/raes-inaugural-mary-jackson-named-lecture/>

ACA Learns the Truth about Dresden

In these times of much-reduced membership, and with contact further reduced by the current "lock-down", it is inevitable for one to look with nostalgia to the time when the meeting room at Fair Oaks was crowded with ACA members to hear a talk on an aviation-related subject. This is a report written by the Branch PRO, the late Sir Paul Holden, on one such evening in October 2005.

One of their own members, Roy Pullan, gave a talk to the last meeting of the Woking branch of the Aircrew Association on the subject of "The Bombing of Dresden in February 1945". He related the sequence of events from the decision to make the attack, to its aftermath, using information that has become available about Dresden since the unification of Germany. The object of the talk was to review those events as dispassionately as possible, and to separate fact from myth.



Roy Pullan

Dresden was not quite the city that was portrayed by Josef Goebbels. The illusion of Dresden as a city of no strategic importance to the German war machine had been created - an idyllic backwater nestling on the Elbe, far removed from the demands of war, in a country involved in a total war. The reality was somewhat different

The Germans' own Dresden Year Book of 1942 stated that those knowing Dresden only for its unique architecture, and immortal monuments, would rightly be very surprised at the extensive and versatile industrial city that made Dresden one of the foremost industrial locations of the Reich. Dresden was the largest garrison town in Germany, and was also a very large and important railway junction vital to reinforcing the Russian front. Prior to the war Dresden was better known to the outside world for its Meissen porcelain and its Baroque architectural legacy. This was to play an important part in the post war myths that this was a city of no military or industrial importance.

The 1944 Handbook of the German Army Weapons Command stated that Dresden contained 127 factories manufacturing military equipment, weapons and munitions. This number related to the larger factories; it did not include smaller suppliers or workshops. By far the largest was the firm of Zeiss-Ikon, which employed 14,000 workers.

Without question, the attack on Dresden caused enormous damage and very heavy casualties. The total number of dead would eventually total between 25,000 and 35,000, confirmed by the "Final report of the Higher Police and SS Führer for the Upper Elbe" making it second only to Hamburg in July 1943, when 46,000 people died in the firestorm. It was the reports by the German Propaganda Ministry to the Swedish and Swiss newspapers that commenced the creation

of the Dresden myth. Figures in the foreign press increased with wild abandon, despite reliable figures now reaching Berlin. An interim report from the authorities in Dresden gave a revised total of the dead as 20,204. The Propaganda Ministry ensured that these appeared in public as 202,040 by the simple expedient of multiplying by 10. The predicted total of 25,000 appeared as 250,000.

The destruction of Dresden was one more ghastly event in an apparently endless series of ghastly events in which thousands were dying daily. If the facts regarding industrial activity had been revealed at the time, and if the shameless exploitation of the number of the city's dead had not occurred, then perhaps the myths surrounding Dresden would not have resonated for the last 60 years, and much less vilification might have been heaped upon Sir Arthur Harris and Bomber Command.

Present day critics far removed in time and distance from the realities of war can summon up righteous indignation and condemnation, but one needs to judge this event from the viewpoint of those engaged in the war, not with the benefit of hindsight, and with the comforting knowledge of never knowing the emotion and fears of that time.

Germany and the Germans followed a dark and terrible path in the 1930's and 40's for which they and millions of others paid a terrible price. From the depth of feeling that Dresden has aroused, it is doubtful if agreement will ever be reached between those who think that it was morally wrong and those who feel that Dresden, in the circumstances of that war, was a legitimate target. But it is fervently to be hoped that whatever view is held, all are of one mind - NEVER AGAIN!

Branch Chairman Eric Smith GM heartily agreed with that sentiment, and moved a vote of thanks for an excellent piece of research, and a most informative presentation.

He also presented Branch Member Ernie Taylor of Goldsworth Park, Woking, with a Presidential Commendation for outstanding services to the Association over many years.



Ernie Taylor

TAILPIECE

An airline introduced a special package for business men – “Buy your ticket, get your wife’s ticket free”.

It was a great success and afterwards the airline sent letters to all the wives asking how they enjoyed the trip.

All the replies received were the same ... “What trip?

---oOo---

Couple in their nineties are both having problems remembering things. During a check-up, the doctor tells them that they’re physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember ..

Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair ‘Want anything while I’m in the kitchen?’ he asks.

‘Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?’

‘Sure.’

‘Don’t you think you should write it down so you can remember it?’ she asks

‘No, I can remember it.’

‘Well, I’d like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down, so as not to forget it?’

He says, ‘I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries.’

‘I’d also like whipped cream. I’m certain you’ll forget that, write it down?’ she asks.

Irritated, he says, ‘I don’t need to write it down, I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream - I got it, for goodness sake!’

Then he toddles into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, the old man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment.

‘Where’s my toast?’

---oOo---

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple’s house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen.

The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, ‘ Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great I would recommend it very highly.’

The other man said, ‘What is the name of the restaurant?’

The first man thought and thought and finally said, ‘What’s the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know, the one that’s red and has thorns.’

‘Do you mean a rose?’

‘Yes, that’s the one,’ replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, ‘Rose, what’s the name of that restaurant we went to last night?’

---oOo---

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn’t need my help to leave the hospital.

After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator. On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him.

‘I don’t know,’ he said. ‘She’s still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown.’

---oOo---

A little old man shuffled slowly into an ice cream parlour and pulled himself slowly, painfully, up onto a stool...

After catching his breath, he ordered a banana split.

The waitress asked kindly, ‘Crushed nuts?’

‘No,’ he replied, ‘Arthritis.’

---oOo---

Moe, an 82 year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical.

A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm.

A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, ‘You’re really doing great, aren’t you?’

Morris replied, ‘Just doing what you said, Doc: ‘Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.’

The doctor said, ‘I didn’t say that.. I said, ‘You’ve got a heart murmur; be careful.’