Articles Wanted...

All members are invited to write a piece for the newsletter including:

- 'Meet the Member…'
- 'I got into Flying…'
- General Aviation

Please email rachelrealaero@outlook.com
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Events 2019

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'Time Target' - An Archaeological Adventure by Tom Hope

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'Airstrips and Small Airfields of Yorkshire, Past and Present (Part 2: West Yorkshire)' - an article by Darrell Aldersea

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The Member's Section

From the Chair
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<tr>
<td>3rd &amp; 4th August</td>
<td>Aerobatic Training Camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>14th April @ 10:00</td>
<td>Duty Manager and Fire Training. Open to all members. Members only.</td>
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<td>21st April</td>
<td>Club Fly-out to Sywell: Museum Opening (PPR in advance)</td>
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<td>27th &amp; 28th April</td>
<td>Mclean Aerobatic Trophy. Organised and run by the BAA.</td>
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<td>6th May</td>
<td>Club Fly-out to East Kirby: Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre Fly-in (PPR in advance)</td>
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<td>11th &amp; 12th May</td>
<td>Wingwalking - organised by Wingwalking Displays</td>
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<td>29th May @ 19:30</td>
<td>GASCO Extra: Airspace Infringement Awareness (LAA Vale of Strut)</td>
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<td>1st &amp; 2nd June</td>
<td>Wingwalking. Organised by Wingwalking Displays.</td>
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<td>22nd &amp; 23rd June</td>
<td>Wingwalking. Organised by Wingwalking Displays.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29th &amp; 30th June</td>
<td>VAC 55th Birthday Celebration. Organised by the VAC. Fly-in. Visitors welcome.</td>
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<td>6th &amp; 7th July</td>
<td>Wingwalking - organised by Wingwalking Displays)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20th &amp; 21st July</td>
<td>Hangar Bash. Fly-in. The BIG 30th birthday celebration, 4th International Bucker Fest, Hangar Party, food, drink &amp; live music... and lots lots more... the evening event is ticket only. Visitors welcome.</td>
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## Events 2019

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>24th August</td>
<td>Visit by the Guild of Aviation Artists.</td>
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<td>25th August 18:30</td>
<td>Summer BBQ. Fly-in. This a planned event and is in addition to the ad-hoc (BYO) BBQs we will be having throughout summer. This is not a BYO food event but feel free to BYO alcohol. Visitors welcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30th August</td>
<td>Club Fly-out to the LAA Rally, Sywell (PPR in advance)</td>
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<td>1st September</td>
<td>Visit from the Morris Minor Club. Organised by RACo</td>
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<td>Wingwalking (organised by Wingwalking Displays)</td>
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<td>5th &amp; 6th October</td>
<td>Wingwalking (organised by Wingwalking Displays)</td>
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<td>6th October 12:00</td>
<td>Visit from the Veteran Car Club of GB with pre 1919 cars.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd November 19:00</td>
<td>Halloween not Bonfire Party. The café will be open and bring your own alcohol - with live music. Visitors welcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th November 11:00</td>
<td>Remembrance Service. Fly-in. Visitors welcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th December 19:00</td>
<td>Christmas Party @ the York Marriot (prebooking is required) Guests welcome.</td>
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How i got into flying...
An article by Jon Stanley, Sikorsky S-92 Pilot, Humberside Search & Rescue Base

Until I was around 8 years old, I hadn’t even thought about being interested in aircraft and flying. Dinosaurs - yes, but flying - no. I can’t really remember how my focus changed, but change it certainly did: I became utterly obsessed by aircraft. I built models, read books, collected magazines and probably became a playground aviation bore.

In the early 1980s my family moved to South Africa, so I gained my first experience of flight in a Boeing 747. Mirages, Impalas and Dakotas were commonplace, which lent an exotic tint to my obsession, and it was during this formative phase that I started seriously to consider a future aviation career. Being a pilot actually ‘in charge’ of an aircraft seemed to be a pretty cool job, especially doing unusual things in exciting military machines instead of flying in straight lines in an airliner.

at the end of 1985 I found out that there was an air cadet squadron in my town, so I decided to give it a go. This was undoubtedly the catalyst for my future career, as over the next 4 years I attended camps at Coltishall (Jaguars), Wyton (Canberras, Nimrods), Kinloss (Nimrods) and Akrotiri (allsorts...), and I flew in many different aircraft including the Chipmunk, VC-10, Nimrod and Wessex. I also soloed in a Slingsby Venture motor glider, flew into Heathrow in the cockpit jump seat of a DC-9 and ‘helped’ to refuel a Canberra and re-arm a Phantom, all of which were amazing adventures for a teenage me. They also made me appreciate, in my subsequent career, how influential such experiences can be for young people when those who ‘do’ make the effort to accommodate those who ‘want to’.

A few months after returning to the UK
In 1988 I attended a schools’ armed forces careers day at Leconfield where, to my astonishment, I was lucky enough to get a short flight in a ‘Junglie’ Sea King Mk 4. Around this time I also watched a careers video at the air cadet squadron which showcased the role of a support helicopter pilot in the RAF and, for the first time, I started to take a genuine interest in the idea of being a helicopter pilot. After all, there’s a lot to be said for stopping and then landing! I briefly considered other non-aviation career possibilities but quickly decided quite firmly that I wanted to be a professional pilot – nothing else would do.

I saw two options for a flying career: airlines and the RAF. (Royal Navy pilots spent too much time on ships, and the army simply didn’t interest me.) Being young and naive my priorities were variety, interest and an early pay packet, rather than planning for long-term stability and prospects. I considered the British Airways cadetship scheme that existed in the late 1980s, but I wasn’t too thrilled about the idea of flying an airliner so I focussed my efforts on RAF selection and sponsorship. I do occasionally wonder where I might be now if I had chosen differently!

Trips to the Leeds RAF Careers Information Office, and obsessive scrutiny of my ‘RAF Pilot/Nav’ glossy brochure (mainly the ‘Pilot’ bit, obviously), led to an application for a Sixth Form Scholarship following which I underwent the full selection process for pilot, navigator, fighter controller and air traffic controller at RAF Biggin Hill. To my astonishment I was successful in all aspects and was awarded the scholarship. The Sixth Form Scholarship included a 30 hour Flying Scholarship, of which 10 hours were solo, which I undertook on the Cessna 150 at Skegness in the summer of 1989. Happy days indeed.
How I got into flying...

An article by Jon Stanley, Sikorsky S-92 Pilot, Humberside Search & Rescue Base

Under the terms of the Scholarship I could join the RAF straight from school or proceed to higher education with no further commitment to the RAF. I didn’t really feel mature enough to start RAF training at 18 years old, so elected to study for a degree before I joined. I applied for an RAF University Cadetship and was again summoned to Biggin Hill to repeat the selection process that I had undertaken two years previously. Again I successfully passed all the tests for pilot/nav/FC/ATC but was awarded a Bursary which, although significantly less valuable than a Cadetship, entitled me to membership of a University Air Squadron and subsequent entry into the RAF for pilot training.

I started my degree in late 1990 and spent the next three years being baffled by engineering equations, flying Bulldogs and drinking rather more than was sometimes good for me. I upgraded to a Cadetship for my final year, which removed the student financial pressures, and I also got to explore a Lancaster, fly a Chipmunk again, be winched from a liferaft to a yellow Sea King and fly a Hawker Hunter hands-on at low level in the Highlands. Memories, memories...

By the time I completed my degree in summer 1993 and started Initial Officer Training at Cranwell later that year I had decided on my career target: to become a Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter pilot on the iconic yellow Sea King, helping people in distress instead of dropping bombs. I subsequently flew the Firefly, Tucano, Gazelle and Griffin through RAF pilot training before, luckily, qualifying on the Sea King HAR3 on which I eventually amassed 2100 flying hours.

Red Arrows Support, Windermere, 1997

Flight Commander, RAF Valley, 2006
A staff tour (ie desk job) finished my RAF commitment, by which time the RAF’s priorities and those of my family had diverged so, having gained my commercial license, I took the plunge into civilian life. I flew the MD902 Explorer for 4 years for Humberside Police before joining Bristow Helicopters in 2013 to fly the Sikorsky S-92, and I have been a SAR aircraft commander working for Bristow at Humberside airport since early 2015.

One key lesson that I learned from my formative years is that any support or encouragement given to those aspiring to an aviation career will be remembered by them for the rest of their lives, and might even be the catalyst for them to realise their ambitions. Being approachable, friendly and encouraging, always remembering how it felt when I still wanted what I have since achieved, might just make a difference and is my way of saluting all the people who helped me along the way.
A few years ago the Real Aeroplane Club received an email from an elderly chap who’d had a relative based at Breighton during the war. John Killingback was retracing the steps of his uncle and wanted to visit – find out what remained. I was privileged to have the opportunity of meeting John and his wife and be their guide.

We explored the history of the station together and most of the villagers were more than happy to grant us access to their yards and storehouses, left over from the war. For John this experience was awesome – and for me, having done it a few times already for visitors in the past – it was nice to see him so made-up.

We parted and a week later I received an email from him with photographs of his uncle. Attached to the same email was a letter; this letter was a rolling one, written at No.2 Sgts Mess, RAF Breighton and dated 1944 from a boy to his mother; it illuminated the last few months of mid-upper gunner Sgt Killingbacks’ life. He was killed in action just six days after the last entry.

For years, I’d found the history of the Halifax, Breighton, the war fascinating – but this letter turned me cold. All of a sudden, the Halifax wasn’t some mythical, golden object to be worshipped like a holy flip-flop; it was a tool, designed for a horrible purpose.

Our recently refurbished memorial is centred on this letter as, for me; it resembles the real act of remembrance. It’s ugly, private and extremely necessary.

Some time ago, I was given a copy of the airfield layout – not just the technical sites but the living accommodation also. Now, there are two different types of RAF airfields: the archaic, mock-Georgian style Cranwell-esque ones (built in the early days of the RAF to look as established as the Army and the Navy) and the flat-pack, quick build ones like Breighton.

Wimpey construction built Breighton in 1942 – that’s the Wimpey construction still in business to this day. Unlike stations such as Linton and Leeming, Breighton’s accommodation sites were spread out. With six individual, self-sustaining settlements, if the station were bombed, it’s unlikely to take everyone with it.
Six years ago I visited the Station Sick Quarters – opposite the entrance to the Ferry pub – and was lucky enough to be invited to explore. It was a time capsule. The sickly-green painted plaster peeling on the walls, the light fittings, curtains, graffiti and even medical cabinets still in position in the corridor. It’s lucky I did this – since then, it’s been demolished.
Our clubhouse is the remains of the station’s ‘Gas Defence Centre’; a building erected specifically for the storage and maintenance of equipment to combat poison gas attacks.

Adjacent to our clubhouse (now Ian Ross’ rear workshop) was the lubricant and inflammables store.

Behind, you’ll no doubt have seen the derelict old huts; these were the squadron flight offices – crews would’ve been channelled through here after the briefing and before being driven to the dispersals their aircraft.

Further behind these offices, John Thompsons’ workshop was the main stores, armory and workshops. Interestingly, you’ll find a large brick structure outside the front entrance; this was the loading platform.
Further into Breighton, behind the technical site, you’ll find various structures still standing. The village was divided into a number of accommodation and communal sites.
Site Nos. 4, 5 and 6 has been completely demolished but can occasionally be seen in crop-marks in the summer however parts of the No.2 communal site do still remain:

Feel free to come by and visit our memorial; if you’ve a spare poppy lying around, we’d be grateful to place it there.

In my very first article, I wrote about flying in terms of the perspective shift, the appreciation of that and why history works so well with it. They both serve to widen our perspective and that’s healthy.

With time now gradually wearing down what little remains of this costly chapter in our history, remembrance is all the more important – especially at home. To remember is to respect, to respect is to empathise and to empathise is to lend perspective.
I first flew into Breighton in September 1982 when the airfield was operated by Hornet Aviation. We used to take aircraft across from Grindale for maintenance by Dave Fenton, the owner at that time. There was no grass runway in those days, all activity taking place on the original perimeter track, long before it was straightened out and resurfaced, which always made the arrivals and departures interesting! On a visit in 1985 I noted G-TAFF had arrived for final assembly whilst also under construction was Dave’s Andreasson BA.4B G-BEBS, one of two underway on site.

The Real Aeroplane Company was formed in 1989 by Taff to operate the airfield and the Club was formed early the next year. At this time there was only the Workshop Hangar and Hangar 2 and initially a small cadre of enthusiastic vintage aircraft owners were invited to move in.

By early 1992 the Magister had arrived and was having a comprehensive rebuild after acquisition from the Newark Air Museum where it had resided underneath the Vulcan! It was around this time that Taff had Jungmeister G-TAFI and Extra 230 G-TAFO in his fleet. As the year came to a close, plans were afoot to hold a Festival of Aviation to take place in July 1993.
For this special weekend we leased the field to the north of the runway and used this for parking visiting aircraft, to set up a camp site and for public viewing with access gained from the entrance near to the wartime T2 hangar. A short cross runway was also put in place running from the “28” threshold and this was used by the Barnstormers and also formed the display line. This was my first weekend helping out at an event and I was put on refuelling duties using a mobile bowser that we drove around to whoever required fuel. There were many highlights including Russian aerobatic champion Nicolay Timofeev leaving us in awe of his routine in the Sukhoi 26 and the visit of Beech 18 “Southern Comfort” which was the largest aircraft I had seen at Breighton at that time.
In 1994 we held several very successful Fly-Ins, one of which attracted 150 visiting aircraft and as can be seen from the photos the airfield was packed out with aircraft on every spare piece of grass. One interesting event was the assembly of three Flying Fleas, the Claybourne Flea, the Ward Flea and the one owned by Dave Allan. There was even an attempt made to hop one down the runway but this was not successful – thankfully.
An interesting project that was considered at this time was a Miles Master rebuild and some wing sets and cockpit parts duly arrived but there was no fuselage, and ultimately it was too daunting a project and the parts all moved on to the Museum of Berkshire aviation at Woodley in due course.

We also hosted the British Aerobatic Association for a competition weekend and this is still a tradition today with their first competition of the year at Breighton later this month.

By the end of 1994 there was a change in the air, Breighton was soon to see its first jet powered visitors and residents and in part two we will look at the Jet Years moving through until 1997 and the start of another new era – Warbirds.
In 2003 the Real Aeroplane Company were invited to Reno Stead Airport, Nevada, USA to take part in their 40th Anniversary National Championship Air Races.

The plan was for Taff Smith to fly Mew Gull G-AEXF around the pylons with a host of replica racers based in the 'States. The field would include very precise facsimilie of the DH 88 Comet 'Grosvenor House', the ‘Super Solution’ racer, Lawrence Brown’s ‘Miss Los Angeles’, Howard DGA-6 ‘Mr Mulligan’, the ‘Mystery Ship’ racer, one of the Gee Bee racers and the Laird Turner LTR-14 ‘Meteor’. For reasons unknown (but most likely political), and much to our disappointment, only the LTR-14 turned up for the event, somewhat lame given that ‘XF had been shipped across the Atlantic and railroaded across North America to take part.

Whilst the RAC team had been at Reno all week, my wife and I planned to attend the races for just 2 days. On the first of these we sat in the grandstand with a crowd of crazy flag-waving, horn-honking racing evangelists wearing orange and known as 'Section 3'. We learned that the group had been established years ago by a small group of ex-ANG pilots who'd attended the races out of sheer curiosity but had enjoyed it so much that they hadn't missed a year since! The ranks had swelled to the extent that they now had their own grandstand.

The LTR-14 was a real beauty though, flown alongside Taff in the Mew by the legendary Skip Holm, an ex-Vietnam F-4 jock, Skunk Works test pilot and the eventual 2003 Unlimited Gold Champion in modified P-51 'Dago Red', both pilots entering into the spirit of the event, keeping it tight and turning spectacularly steep around the pylons.
It was from our seats in Section 3 that we first saw the Mew Gull. It was a bizarre experience to say the least, 'XF operating from a concrete runway in the brown/beige desert, a million times removed from the lush greenery of rural Yorkshire! Naturally our new found friends in Section 3 had turned this exhibition race into some sort of colonial war, but we also overheard a number of them namechecking the 'awesome' Alex Henshaw and the Cape runs too, a decent proportion scoring 'XF 7's and 8's out of 10 as it was towed back to the pits!

Later that day we bumped into none other than Brian Brown. Again, a very surreal experience hearing his voice amongst all those droll American accents! As always, 'Mr Fixit' suggested we meet him by the participants entrance early next morning and he'd sort us out with some participant car parking and airside passes.

Next morning Brian turned up as pre-arranged. A shifty glance over each shoulder and without removing his wraparound Raybans, he produced the passes from inside his Real Aeroplane Club fleece, told us where to park and then led us airside. In no time at all we found ourselves standing on Reno's enormous ramp with Taff, 'XF and a small entourage waiting for the Golden Age Racers slot which, by now, had been reduced to just 'XF! Above our heads Skip Holm was demonstrating a privately owned SAAB Draken, hence him not taking part in today's 'race' with Taff and 'XF.
'Reno'... An article by Dav Butler

Once the Draken was back on the ground it was our turn to wave a flag for ol' Blighty. Taff climbed into 'XF, started-up with Brian's help, and in no time at all was being wing-walked down to the start line adjacent the iconic Reno finish post from where Brian pointed it in the right direction for Taff who, of course, had limited forward visibility until the tail skid lifted-off the runway. As the saying goes, "fly fast and turn left", and this is pretty much what Taff did for 8 laps, 'XF looked very much at home in the circuit and sounded superb.

Once safely down 'XF was hitched-up to a pick-up and towed back towards the pits with us, the Breighton posse, sat in the back of the open air truck. As Section 3 drifted into view I removed the orange Section 3 teeshirt I'd bought earlier from my camera bag and waved it at the stands thus ensuring scores of 8, 9, and even a 10 or two, not to mention plenty of hearty whoopin' – a proud moment indeed!

'XF behaved faultlessly, lapping at an average speed of around 200mph which was comparable to the Formula 1 Silver race speeds being achieved in 2003, and barely using a drop of oil during the entire week. Not a bad show at all for a 70 year old design with an unmodified Gipsy Queen up front!
Due to the Pennine Hills and urbanisation, West Yorkshire does not have as many strips as North Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. Also, as I will only refer to those I have visited, the total listed is five only.

The furthest west, in this list, is Oxenhope (N53 48.92 W001 55.89), some 4nm SSW of Keighley and is owned by Rodney Heaton of Hawksbridge farm. The strip is notable for being 1150 ft. AMSL. The main runway is 29/11 and of 460m in length. It has a pronounced downslope for the first 120m of 29. Runway 24/06 has several, quite pronounced, undulations. Easily seen landmarks are the windfarm just 2nm southwards and a large caravan park to the immediate north: quite close to the runways. The Worth Valley Railway and Howarth are reasonably close.

Birds Edge farm strip is just west/south/west of Denby Dale with its listed viaduct. David Mallinson owns this strip and David Hardaker based his Jodel GBK1R in the hangar for several years. The strip is inclined upwards to the west with some cross- sloping midway. A row of high trees along the western horizon may cause wind curling with strong westerly breezes.

Malcolm Silversides, strawberry farmer, owned Home Farm and the associated airstrip. The farm is near Scholes and the A64 with the city of Leeds not far away.

The strip was orientated approximately 23/05. A row of tall poplar trees was at the threshold of 05: side slipping over these had to be followed with a burst of power to land on the sharp upslope of the runway. The runway was fairly short so the strongly downward sloping 23 was rarely used. This strip no longer exists!

Malcolm owned a rather unusual Aviasud Mistral Biplane Microlight. These aircraft had forward-swept wings and the lower wings were all-moving to act as large ailerons. A Frenchman, Nicholas Hulot, flew one of these to the North Pole in May 1987.
The village of Fitzwilliam is situated about 5nm SE of Wakefield. Close to this village, Ray Holt purchased Kinsley Carr Farm and created an airstrip. Ray Holt was well known by Sherburn Aeroclub and pilots at Brighton Airfield. On the weekend of 11th and 12th August 1990, Ray arranged a camping fly-in and BBQ. As far as I remember Tony Smith, Alan Horsefall, David Hardaker and myself attended from Brighton. There were, of course, pilots from other airfields. Ray went on to create some ponds for wild life and established a Koi Carp Farm. Eventually Ray sold the farm to live elsewhere and the strip disappeared.

South of Pontefract, near the village of Thorpe Audlin, is an airstrip named Walton Wood. This was formerly owned by Peter Scott. Peter was a frequent visitor to Brighton and took part in several of the events. He owned a Jet Ranger helicopter and a Cessna 310 twin. At one Brighton event, he dropped a Reliant Robin from his helicopter and Brian Newbold engineered a supporting drama. Peter emigrated to America and set up a Seaplane Training School. The new owner of the strip ran a helicopter business from the strip and light aircraft activity dwindled.

During Peter’s ownership, a very interesting aircraft was based on the field. This aircraft, GAPRR, was a Super Aero Ae-45S with two Walter Minor inverted engines. This type of aircraft was manufactured in Czechoslovakia: 228 were built between 1954 and 1959. For the purposes of a film, this aircraft was painted to look like a Heinkel 111 medium bomber. Afterwards the new white and red paintwork looked very impressive.

I first visited the strip in May 1988 when the PFA Swordfish Strut, based at Sherburn, organised a fly-in and BBQ. The strip is still shown on Google Earth. It is close to a section of the A639 marked Roman Ridge: part of the former Roman Road from London to York.
"A quick introduction is in order since I am not known to the members in general and I am only a museum member of The Real Aeroplane Club. My name is John Malcolm and I am a retired Air Traffic Service Assistant Grade 2 and for most of my 37 years and 50 days penal servitude with NATS I spent this at ScoATCC, Prestwick Scotland. My duties included being a flight progress board assistant rotating round the various sectors, flight data assistant inputting flight plans to the system and finally assisting the RAF with Air Defence Notification information"

My topic is, to use the generic term, Aircraft "Spotters" and trying to understand them as I am regarded as being one of them, although I prefer the term Aviation Enthusiast. All pastimes have the same problems; there is always that small minority who are never happy with their lot and making it known loud and clear to all and sundry. In the years that I have been involved being an enthusiast I feel that I have seen and heard enough from both sides to make informed comment. With this subject it has over the years been divided into various groups, each proclaiming that theirs is the best, it happens everywhere. So lets start with (try and hold back the laughter) the dot spotters, only interested in high level flights, information gained from these new computer programes giving real time information. Number crunchers, yes anorak on, radio, binoculars and notebook in hand to write down everything. Airliners only, Military only both self explanatory or just business jets, There maybe one or two other categories that I have missed as I have not come across them in my travels as situations do evolve. Now to those who participate in this subject they do come from all walks of life, like myself Air Traffic Control, Judges, Policemen, postal workers, railway workers etc yet they all behave in different ways so we should not tar them all with the same brush as it is only the couple of idiots who spoil it all for everyone. Just take authorities who now use terrorism to move us on not realising that we could be an asset by keeping an eye out for anything suspicious and we would gladly help so long as we can have access to an area that is advantageous to our needs.
Both sides have those who can cause friction take the situation I was involved in some years ago at the air show in Perth. I had just finished photographing subjects that were easily accessible when I noticed a group that were sectioned off so I went over and was advised that you get in if accompanied by a club member at which a club member offered to go with me and during a conversation I was asked what my employment was to which when told my companion who then said I did not need him just continue on by myself. Less than five minutes had passed when this bellicose voice blared out "Who are you with" to which my companion came over and declared himself. This pompous ass then asked why was on my own when it was agreed that everyone should be accompanied but trying to give the explanation that I was ATC was not good enough because the loud retort was (and it could be heard miles away) "I COULD NOT CARE IF HE IS THE KING OF SCOTLAND" he should be escorted. He actually made more of a fool of himself as I could see most members round about were trying to contain themselves, there is no need for that kind of attitude.

On the other side I was at Glasgow one day using as most guys did Emergency gate three, this was tolerated providing you did not park your or in anyway block the gate. This day I got into conversation with two others whom I assumed were regulars as time went on one of them admitted he had used wire cutters to enlarge a hole in the fence so that he could get better access for his camera. If I could have proved without doubt that he had done this I would have reported him to the police for vandalism, it is this type who ruin it for everyone.

This really is a brief snippet of situations that I have come across in nearly 20 years of following this pastime and so much has changed however it is terrorism that has near enough destroyed a pastime which I thoroughly enjoy I do not wish to upset anyone just pitch my seat and point my camera and enjoy the action.

If anyone feels that they would like to pass comment on what I have tried to convey I would only be too glad to hear from you my e-mail address is: johnmalcolmuk@gmail.com
Concrete, Grass and a Little History

Attlebridge, USAAF Station 120 - 52°41'31.00"N, 1° 6'48.00"E

Attlebridge, a few miles North West of Norwich, was an early war station, built for RAF No.2 Group flying light bombers. It was completed in 1942 and used by No.88 Squadron RAF from August 1941 to September 1942 flying Blenheims and Douglas Bostons.

It was assigned to the US Army Air Forces for use by the 8th Air Force as a heavy bomber base. This meant that the original RAF specifications for the airfield layout needed to be upgraded.

Most between the wars and early wartime RAF airfields had thirty six frying pan type dispersals for aircraft, either 125 or 150 feet diameter. To upgrade the airfield to Class ‘A’ standard for the US heavy bombers, fifty dispersals was standard. This airfield was in the US 2nd Air Division area who would be operating the B-24 Liberator. Unlike conventional bombers of the time, the B-24 wasn’t a taildragger, and was steered by a nose wheel which could only turn 30 degrees either side of centre. As a result, pan type dispersals were difficult to use for B-24’s.

Instead, the loop type of dispersal was used, where a pair opposite to each other would allow a B-24 to make a 180 degree turn. As bomber numbers increased in the US groups, it was common to park two bombers onto one loop. They could be used as a single loop, in pairs, fours or eight, depending on the local geography.

The runway length was also increased to the class ‘A’ standard of 1400 yards for the secondary runways and 2000 yards for the main runway, with the perimeter tracks extended to the new
ends of the runways. The airfield plan shows the revised airfield layout showing runway extensions and some of the original dispersals built over.

This dispersal became bomb dump entrance.

The first American units at Attlebridge were the 319th Bomb Group flying B-26 Marauder medium bombers. They arrived in October 1942. The airfield was a satellite station for Horsham St Faith (Norwich airport), where the Group HQ and some of the personnel were stationed.

The former pan dispersal and bomb dump.

The B-26’s moved out in November and the 2nd Bomb Wing moved in with a training unit flying a few B-24’s. No.320 (Dutch) Squadron flew Mitchells there from March 1943 to February 1944 and then the following month, the 466th Bomb Group brought their B-24’s, the first USAAF heavy bomber unit to move in.

Approaching the South Westerly runway. Many turkey houses can be seen around the airfield.

Attlebridge was sold between 1959 and 1962 and was chosen for extensive poultry farming. Rows of turkey houses are spread out along the runways, perimeter tracks and dispersals to reduce the chance of infection spreading from one house to the next.
During the USAAF upgrade, the tracks at the North East corner of the airfield, leading to two of the frying pan dispersals, became roads into the bomb dump. One turkey house was built along this track. The double track roads of the bomb dump can be seen in the aerial image. Triangle mounds of earth would span the roads like rungs of a ladder forming blast walls, with the bombs stored in the gaps between.

The secondary runway extension, looking North West, 'though the perimeter track has now gone.

Two turkey houses are built on the perimeter track which runs parallel to the NE-SW secondary runway. They can be seen from the nearby road.

Looking North West along the secondary runway from the reinstated road. This turkey house, seen in the late 1980's was demolished by the time of the 1999 fly-over.

The perimeter tracks to the South East end of the secondary runway were pulled up to allow reclaiming of the farm land and easier farming of the fields. The main technical site was in the wood to the West. It was common to use existing woods to give some camouflage to the buildings. Around this area, there are still several loop hardstandings which survive.

The main runway looking East, which lost a few hundred feet of length after the war.

Some of the original pan dispersals, from the pre-expansion period of the airfield, survive around the technical site along with some loop dispersals. The following picture shows final approach on the secondary runway, heading South East. It shows where some of the original dispersals, and
their entrance tracks, were built over to form the new perimeter track when the main runway was extended to the West. Part of that track has since been removed again, leaving a gap in line with the end of the runway.

Looking South East along the secondary runway.

About half of the main runway extension was removed long after the airfield closed. Since the airfield was sold off over a period of time, it is likely this area is owned by a different person to the main airfield, and as a result, had the concrete removed and was returned to farm land.

On finals for the North East secondary runway. The technical site was in the woods to the left.

The last image is the NE-SW secondary runway, looking North East, with the technical site on the left. While it is no longer an active airfield, the usefulness of the runways for the turkey houses resulted in a fairly well preserved airfield, easily spotted from several miles away.

Bibliography - Airfield history via the Roger Freeman/After The Battle books, other Roger Freeman 8th Air Force books and Wiki. B-17 pictures © Simon Morris.
Kate Howe's Skydive

Can you help Kate reach her target? Please dig deep - this is for a fantastic cause.

I'm sure all you of must know by now that Kate Howe (with the Bumble Bee Nipper!) is doing a Tandem Skydive on the 19th May 2019. Kate is a long-standing member and one of our few female pilots at Breighton and she is doing this to raise money for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance.

Sadly, Kate's niece Jess was killed in a tragic accident on the 16th December 2018; the Air Ambulance attended but were not able to resuscitate her. Kate would like to raise as much as she can to help them save other lives.

You can help Kate Howe raise money for this great cause by donating directly to their fundraising page which is given in the covering email.

JustGiving sends your donation straight to Yorkshire Air Ambulance Charity and automatically reclaimed Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer, so your donation is worth even more.

Thank you for your support!
'Caption Competition'

Please send your entries to rachelrealaero@outlook.com. The winner will receive a £10 Marks & Spencer Voucher (answer will be revealed in June's newsletter)
Member's Section

Photography Corner
From the Chair

To say it's only April it has been a busy year thus far; with 2 talks, a member's social evening, the AGM, a visit from the Guild of Aviation Artists and the first of two first aid training courses. Not to mention a revamp of the Club House.

A list of future events and activities is on the Club House noticeboard, on the website, Facebook and in this newsletter. This list does get updated and so please do keep checking it.

The Duty Manager and the Fire training will be on the 14th April. All existing Duty Managers are requested to attend and anyone that would like to become a Duty Manager and/or have hands on fire training is also most welcome. Also, there is one space left on the second first aid training course, which will be held on the 21st June.

In addition to events at the airfield, the events list also now includes Club fly-outs. It's not exhaustive and if you wish to suggest or organise a fly-out please do so. If you are a non-flying member and wish to fly-out to an event please don't be reluctant to ask one of the flying members for a lift, or to ask if the Broussard is going. Of course, there's no guarantee of a lift but if you do get one it would likely be on a fuel share basis.

Back at base, the toilet and shower block will soon be reopened. I am currently organising for this to be prepared for service following its winter layup. An update will be on the Club noticeboard and on Facebook.

You will all know or have at least realised that the airfield operates on a day VFR basis, or in plain speak does not operate at night or in poor weather conditions. The exception to this are the Police and Yorkshire Air Ambulance helicopters together with some private helicopters. The airfield does not have the infrastructure for night time fixed wing activity, nor do we wish to annoy our village neighbours whilst they are settling down for the night. This activity is not permitted and should be reported.

Club House developments are nearly complete. I know that the new furniture isn’t to everyone's taste but then neither was the old. I hope you will agree we now have a more sociable, presentable and flexible Crew Room which can seat more people and host talks and social evenings more readily. The next phase is to change the dining furniture in the conservatory and this is imminent. Again, the goal is to increase seating and flexibility.

Once the conservatory furniture is in place, we will turn our attention to having a small display cabinet for the Club Shop.

These works have been a group effort and I wish to thank the following for their assistance:

- Tom for the museum,
- Mike for the IT,
- All those who help with cleaning and re hanging the picture (so many of you)
- And those I refer to as the ‘team’; Rachael and Andy.

I think that’s enough from me for this issue; Spring is here, go out there and; fly, take photos, drink tea and coffee and enjoy the wonderful airfield we are members of.

Charles