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
Events Update 2018

'Meet the Member' - an article by Mike Verier

'Time Target' - An Archaeological Adventure by Tom Hope

'I got into Flying...' - an article by Jack Bradley

'Into the Mosaic of History...' - an article by Jon Stanley

Membership Update - by Andy Wood

From the Chair
Events 2018

The Real Aeroplane Club's next event for 2018 takes place on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd September - The Helicopter Fly-in including a presentation by Jon Stanley (Search & Rescue Team) on the Saturday afternoon and, as usual, is open to all aircraft types.

Our café will be open with a selection of meals and refreshments on offer during the day and hot food is available on the evening. If you would like to make a weekend of it we can help organise accommodation and transport.

The aerodrome itself is 5.5 nm north-east of Selby, North Yorkshire. Further details here - http://realaero.com/air.htm

16 Sep - Wingwalking (Wingwalk Displays) - also the North of England Classic & Pre-War Automobiles Motoring Classic Car Rally

22 / 23 Sep - Helicopter Fly-In (featuring a presentation on the 22nd by Jon Stanley, Search And Rescue S-92 pilot, for Bristow Helicopters Ltd)

03 Nov - Halloween Party at the Clubhouse

01 Dec - Christmas Party at York Marriott (the booking list is now up on the club events board, if you would like the hotel booking link sending please email: rachelrealaero@outlook.com)

All of our members and family are most welcome and encouraged at all of our events - including the Christmas Party! (Please note the wingwalking days and helicopter flight days are listed on the website - http://www.realaero.com/bugle.htm). We’d love to see you there and hope you are able to join us - thank you for your continued support

If you have any enquiries regarding the events please email: rachelrealaero@outlook.com
The Real Aeroplane Club presents a weekend of rotor-centric action!

HELICOPTER FLY-IN* BREIGHTON AERODROME 22nd and 23rd September 2018
*Fly-in open to ALL AIRCRAFT - fixed wing and helicopters

SAR S-92 PILOT
SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

Saturday 22nd: Presentation
Special guest Jon Stanley will give a presentation about his career as a SAR S-92 pilot for Bristows and his life as a coastguard. The talk will take place at 1500, a meal (curry/chilli) and drinks provided in crewroom at 1800.
Please book/PPR via email before 14th September to chairmanrealaero@outlook.com - for further info and to arrange hotel accommodation & taxi (if required) please email rachelrealaero@outlook.com

Sunday 23rd:
Helicopter Fly-in*

All aircraft welcome • Refreshments available • No landing fees
www.realaero.com facebook.com/realaero

Images: Steve Blee and HM Coastguard/Bristow Helicopters Ltd
The Real Aeroplane Club Invites you to our...

HALLOWEEN PARTY

NOVEMBER 3rd

18:00 till LATE - $5.95 for pie & peas (inc. veggie option), desserts also available

BRIGHTON CLUB HOUSE

EAT, DRINK & BE SPOOKY!

* MUSIC
* Fancy Dress Welcome
* Bring your own Drinks

Please email rachelrealaero@outlook.com to book your place
Meet the Member...
An article by Mike Verier

I got lots of stick for this ‘Author Pic’ (they made me do it) at the time, but take solace that Tom Cruise’s ‘Maverick’ character was clearly based on the image.....

ON MEMBERSHIP AND MEMORIES...

Aviation has been part of my life for literally as long as I can remember, my childhood home being under the approach to what was then the USAF base at Northolt. I was the small boy peering through Manston’s hedge at the B-17s they got (just about) flying for Steve McQueen’s ‘The War Lover’ and the Air Cadet who can claim to have worked on Spitfires and Messerschmitts during the making of ‘Battle of Britain’.

Despite the ATC bringing me my gliding wings and a great deal of Chipmunk time I was to discover that you needed rather more academic prowess than I could muster for Her Majesty to trust you with one of her aircraft. The need to earn a living eventually took me off in another career direction but the damage was done, I was hooked.

My holidays and spare time still frequently featured aviation, I got to write magazine articles which generated ‘PRESS’ passes for airshows and financed my first camera. Eventually I even overcame Catch 22 (“you can’t be an author unless you’ve been published”) writing whole books. This huge privilege has meant working with all the Armed Forces of both the UK and the US over the years – Navy, Army, Air Force and Marines - whilst never having to salute anybody.

Speaking as an ex-pat Southerner the other great privilege I have is living here. Now retired from business (allegedly at least) I get weekends and can spend more time with aircraft. Nowadays however we are called ‘MEDIA’ and herded into pens to briefly glimpse aircraft that are all grey, look the same, and post-Shoreham, a long way away.

Discovering Breighton was a revelation, once again I was a small boy (albeit cleverly disguised as an old grey bloke) looking over the fence at real aircraft. Once or twice kind folks offered to take me in and see things at closer quarters and inevitably I became a member so that I could go more often. The friendliness and relaxed atmosphere are infectious, the food wonderful and the constant presence of living, breathing aircraft right next to you is a joy. Moreover many of the aircraft are literally unique – fascinating, photogenic, and most definitely not grey.

Thank you Breighton long may you continue – I hope you’ll allow me to join again next year!
As you’re no doubt aware, the recent heatwave has caused a craze amongst those who fly. All through the summer, sites dating back thousands of years have briefly revealed themselves in the form of crop-marks – we’ve even been credited by Lincolnshire Council with the discovery of our second prehistoric settlement!

While there’s no doubt this has been one of the best summers since 1974 for aerial archaeology, the idea isn’t new – and as we’re well into the harvest and it’s soon to be autumn, it’s important to remember this hobby isn’t just limited to crops.

Here’s a little write-up I thought you might find interesting from a recent flight to somewhere slightly different:

**The Human Birdfeeder – Skyburials at Seahenge**

Rewind four thousand years and there’s some very weird stuff’s going on in Britain. Let’s just get this into context – this is way before the Norman invasion, this is way before the Vikings, way before the Saxons, the Romans, even the Celts; when you find yourself in 800BC – that’s eight hundred years before the birth of Christ – go back another thousand years.

You find yourself in Norfolk at Holme-next-the-Sea. It’s the Bronze Age and it’s a very different place to what you or I would recognise. It’s a boggy salt marsh, you’re up to your knees in peaty water and you’re surrounded by tall reeds.

Through a small gap, you see a small, roughly-clad group of hippies in animal skins. They’ve built something in timber. A large, high-walled circular enclosure surrounds a massive, inverted, sprawling tree-stump. It’s been uprooted, turned upside-down and pushed deep into the marsh in the centre of this installation. There’s also a foul smell in the air…
It’s a massive, human bird−feeder − an offering to the sky. A sky−burial. When grandad dies, he’s laid out naked on the stump in the centre. The high timber walls keep out the low−level animals and critters while allowing birds easy access to the meat.

Four thousand years later and recent storm surges have disturbed the Norfolk sands. These foundations have again been exposed by the disappearing peat−bog. Unfortunately it’s this same peat−bog which preserved these remains for so long.

In 1998, a local beach−comber stumbled across a Bronze Age axe−head in the sand and silt. Intrigued, he returned many times to the area − it was only a matter of time before the tree−stump re−appeared and, being upside−down; it presented more questions than answers. As you can imagine, it drew a significant crowd of archaeologists.

Much controversy surrounds the installation. Once the true significance (and age) of the site became apparent, English Heritage took the decision to fully excavate the site for preservation and further study.

Uprooting and relocating a site every bit as significant as Stonehenge was never going to go down well with the local hippies and many protested to its’ disturbance. Nevertheless, the whole structure was taken−up and put under preservation measures by the Mary Rose Trust in Portsmouth.

If this doesn’t sit well with you (as it doesn’t with me, personally), don’t worry − you can still see a replica. Close to where it was discovered, this absolute abortion was thrown together. In place of a structure which survived four thousand years, deeply embedded in the landscape and of a significance rivalling that of Stonehenge, this skid−stain was built. Ten years on and looking more like a designated dog−poo zone, it’s falling apart.

“They took all the trees
And put ‘em in a tree museum
And they charged the people
A dollar and a half just to see ‘em”
I’d just like to start by saying how pleased I was to be asked to write this article. My story may not be a long one, but it has been filled with amazing experiences.

So, how did I get into flying? As a young boy, I used to pester my parents (some things never change) to take me to airshows to watch the flying activity. Unfortunately my memories of some of what I now realise are my favourite aircraft are gone. After a brief period of an interest in cars, in 2013 my focus returned to aviation. The triggering event was a flight on Flybe’s Embraer 175 G-FBJB (not that I knew this at the time, describing it as a ‘big jet’) in 2012. Just under a year later, in April 2013, I went for my first flight in a light aircraft; a PA-28 from Leeds-Bradford. Back then I only flew once every other month (when it wasn’t cloudy or raining).

Fast forward to May 2015, and my first visit to Brighton. I recall being amazed at the variety and quantity of aircraft present. So impressed was I that I decided to return for the 2nd International Bucker Fest in July 2015. There I purchased a strip of raffle tickets and to my amazement and delight I found that I had won a flight in Bucker Jungmann G-ТАFF. After attempt one was unfortunately cancelled due to the inclement British summer weather I took off (well, Alan did) on what was to be one of those flights that will never be forgotten.

In the December of that year, my instructor at Leeds-Bradford left and so I found myself in a position where I was able to move to learning at Brighton with York Flying School, being taught by the excellent Ed Wood. This proved to be the best move I was to make as the atmosphere and quality of the lessons is far superior at Brighton.

By the start of October 2016, I was ready for my first solo, which was planned for the date of my 16th birthday. Despite the season and thus the expectation of poor weather, the stars aligned and I took off solo for the first time on my 16th birthday.

Just over a year later, I completed my skills test (this was delayed due to the weather) and felt a bit lost as to what to do with myself now I had my licence. Fortunately for me, Ray did know what to do with me, and started me on tailwheel flying. This is something for which I am truly thankful as he trained me for, and arranged, my tailwheel conversion. On top of this, he still asks me to fly with him regularly, which I always enjoy!

Two major events happened for me in May of this year. Firstly, I completed my 100th hour of flight and secondly I was greatly honoured to be asked to fly the aircraft of the collection. This came as a great surprise to me and has undoubtedly been the most amazing flying yet.

Before concluding, I would like to extend thanks to many people. Firstly, to Ed Wood and Mickey Kaye of York Flying School for teaching me to fly. Secondly, to Ray Newall for giving me a vast amount of experience in PA-12 G-BSYG. Finally, to Rob Fleming, Tony Smith, Alan Marsland and all the other company pilots for allowing me to fly the collection aeroplanes and passing their knowledge on to me. Thank you everyone.

In conclusion, my flying career is tiny compared to many people at Brighton, but I hope you found it at least a little interesting and I would like to thank you for reading it.
Central Gunnery School

In the early part of the 1950’s, RAF Leconfield in the East Riding of Yorkshire was the home of the RAF’s Central Gunnery School (CGS). The primary role of the CGS was to teach all aspects of gunnery and rocketry, mostly to jet pilots using aircraft such as the De Havilland Vampire and Gloster Meteor. One section of the CGS, however, was concerned with the delivery of ‘free gunnery’ training (in other words, firing from gun turrets) to aircrew destined for the early Avro Shackletons of Coastal Command and was, by 1953, equipped with the Avro Lincoln bomber.

As well as their routine duties of air gunner training, the CGS’s Avro Lincolns had another regular task which required them to carry out regular fighter affiliation exercises in Western Europe under the codename BARRAGE.

Avro Lincoln RE417 ‘B’ of the Central Gunnery School in flight over East Yorkshire.

Manned by CGS staff crews, but often with senior course students aboard to gain experience of ‘operational conditions’, Lincolns on these exercises would usually fly one long sortie from Leconfield to Northern France, then turn north to head up the ‘friendly’ side of the East Germany / West Germany border, then onward to the Netherlands before returning to Leconfield. As each Lincoln proceeded, it would be used as a target for practice interceptions by various western fighter squadrons.

Flying the Route

On 12 March 1953, a pair of Lincolns of A Flt, 3 Sqn CGS, was detailed to carry out a BARRAGE sortie. The two aircraft, RF503 ‘H’ and RF531 ‘C’, were to take off five minutes apart and follow the route Leconfield – Amiens – Saarbrücken – Hildesheim – Hamburg – Munster – Rotterdam - Leconfield at 20,000ft (6,000m). Interceptions were expected by RAF, French, Dutch and USAF fighters along the way. The first aircraft, RF503 ‘H’, piloted by Flt Sgt England, took off at 09:00; the route was flown according to plan and by the time it reached the West German border it had been subjected to several practice intercepts.

Avro Lincoln RF503 ‘H’.

Part-way along the Saarbrucken to Hildesheim leg, however, at 22,000ft and subsequently reported as ‘well inside’ West Germany near the town of Kassel, two silver swept-wing jets appeared on the left-hand side of the Lincoln.

The mid-upper gunner, Flt Lt (now Gp Capt ret’d) Frank Doran, initially assumed that the aircraft were USAF North American F-86 Sabres but, as they drew closer and he noticed the
high-mounted tailplanes and red star markings, he realised that the aircraft were actually Soviet MiG-15 fighters. As Frank later related:

“The two MiGs arrived from the port quarter low and on first sight I thought we had more Sabres to look at. They formatted for a few moments on the port beam before peeling off and making separate high quarter attacks – probably six in all – by which time we had, of course, gently turned west, suspecting that we were not where we should have been. Both myself and the tail gunner tracked their every movement and filmed their activity.”

Soon afterwards the MiGs flew away, leaving the somewhat shaken crew of RF503 to continue the exercise and return to Leconfield. Frank offered an interesting, and possibly revealing, explanation for why RF503 became the subject of the MiG pilots’ aggressive behaviour:

“It is doubtful whether ‘H’ was in West Germany when ‘attacked’ by the MiGs. As far as I can remember, we had offset our northerly heading to adjust for a forecast easterly wind which was probably not there. Furthermore, the two MiGs were with us for some time. I don’t think they would have kept us company for so long – it seemed like three or four minutes – had we been over West Germany in the first place.”

So, although the crew would have flown a heading corrected for a forecast easterly wind to maintain track over West Germany, if the wind was actually lighter than forecast the Lincoln might well have drifted right of track and unintentionally crossed the border into East German airspace before being intercepted.

**Shootdown**

Aboard RF531, however, events unfolded rather differently. Taking off at 09:05 and flown by Flt Sgt TJ Dunnell, the aircraft initially followed the intended route. The Lincoln would normally be flown by only one pilot, but on this occasion Dunnell was assisted by Sqn Ldr HJ Fitz, who had taken command of the unit only 3 days previously and wished to gain experience of its tasks, and Sgt GB Long who appears to have flown on the sortie to gain the ‘operational’ experience mentioned earlier. Also aboard RF531 were Flt Lt SV ‘Vic’ Wyles (gunner officer) and Sgts Ronald Stevens (navigator), WR Mason (air engineer) and KJ Jones (air gunner).

*Sgt Ron Stevens, the navigator aboard RF531. (Anne Fothergill)*
Upon reaching Saarbrücken, things began to go wrong. The subsequent RAF report states that the Lincoln apparently overshoot the turning point before setting a more north-northeastern course for Hildesheim, near Hannover, resulting in the aircraft being off track by about 40 miles (64km).

Lincoln RF531 ‘C’ taxying at Leconfield.

Frank Doran’s comment about the incorrectly forecast wind probably reveals the explanation for this: if the navigator was relying on dead-reckoning calculations using a stronger easterly wind than was actually present, with the aircraft heading just south of east the actual groundspeed would have been greater than calculated and the turning point would have been overflown. On turning north-north-east for Hildesheim, even without correcting for the spurious wind, the Lincoln would have crossed the East German border after some 45 to 50 minutes. If the Lincoln was above cloud the navigator, Ron Stevens, would have been unable to fix his position visually or to determine drift and groundspeed (and hence true wind velocity). It must also be assumed that he was unable to fix his position using radio aids.

Early in the afternoon, in the vicinity of the 20-mile wide Hamburg to Berlin air corridor, RF531 was attacked by MiG-15s. (The RAF report stated that the attack took place at approximately 13:20 while the Soviets put the time more specifically at 13:26 GMT.) Witnesses reported that, at the time of the attack, RF531 was heading in a south-westerly direction. The fact that the witnesses could see the aircraft means that the Lincoln’s crew must have been able to see the ground; this, combined with its proximity to the border, suggests that the crew had realised their error and were heading for friendly territory.

Members of the British Army’s 8th King’s Royal Irish Hussars, equipped with Centurion tanks and Daimler scout cars, were on exercise near the border to the east of their Luneburg base and witnessed the Lincoln’s last moments. Bob Wood was the Regimental Intelligence Sergeant and was part of the Command Vehicle crew on the exercise. His recollection of the incident was clear:

Suddenly those on the stationary command vehicle heard the sound of cannon/machine gun fire overhead and all dismounted to find the cause; I was slow getting out as I was at the front of the vehicle. I can remember seeing a MiG-15 Russian fighter at about 15 to 20,000 feet and heard it firing, but never saw the Lincoln. The wireless net became alive with reports of the Lincoln apparently over the Russian zone being shot down by three MiGs.

The MiG-15s continued to fire on the bomber after it had crossed the border into West Germany. The fall of shot of the MiGs’ 30mm cannon shells was clearly visible to witnesses on the ground, before the Lincoln’s starboard wing was set ablaze and the aircraft broke up. Despite having crossed the border, the main part of the fuselage subsequently fell just inside East Germany on the Soviet-controlled side of the River Elbe and the remainder came to rest on the West German side. Bob Wood continued:
I started to keep a log of the events and timings and at this stage we saw a parachute descending...he was in the air for approximately 12 to 13 minutes. This gave time for members of the exercise to be at the landing area. The parachutist made a very heavy landing approximately 400-500 yards from Regimental HQ. The medical officer was quickly on the scene; the report from the landing area said the parachutist was a Flt Lt Wilde [sic] who baled out from the rear gunner’s turret. He was semi-conscious and shocked, asking “Was it a Sabre?”

Although Bob Wood did not see any other parachutes descending from the stricken Lincoln, and none were reported on the 8th Hussars’ radio net, a contemporary newspaper report claimed that three crewmen had been seen to parachute from the stricken bomber. The parachute of one opened but was damaged (witnesses reported it as having large holes); he fell very fast and was reportedly found in a ditch by a German civilian who took him to hospital. Sadly, however, he had died as the result of gunshot wounds to the shoulder and injuries sustained on impact with the ground. The damage to the parachute canopy was reported to have been caused by cannon fire, and it was later rumoured – probably inevitably – that the parachuting airman had been fired on by one of the MiGs. This is, however, impossible to verify; the damage and injury could have occurred when the airman was still inside the stricken bomber while it was under attack. It seems unlikely that three of the crew could escape by parachute but not survive the descent, so perhaps the newspaper report should be treated with caution.

He had no open wounds but was suffering from severe shock and the effects of a very heavy landing. I can clearly remember our complete shock in Regimental Headquarters in Luneburg the next morning when we learned the airman had died in the night. We were unaware that he was in such a serious medical condition.

The Aftermath

The bodies of the crew members who had gone down with the fuselage in East Germany were subsequently returned to British forces by the Soviet authorities, and during Prime Minister’s Questions on 17 March 1953 Winston Churchill confirmed the loss of all seven men to the House of Commons.

Needless to say, the incident had immediate political ramifications. The Soviet Commander-in-Chief in East Germany, General Chuikov, quickly issued a statement justifying the shootdown. He claimed that RF531 had been legitimately intercepted after an unauthorised overflight of East Germany and that the MiG pilots had acted in self-defence after they were fired on by the Lincoln’s crew. Nine empty 20mm shell cases from the Lincoln’s mid-upper turret were produced as proof to back up the Soviets’ argument.

As Churchill had already assured the Commons that no hostile action had been carried out by the Lincoln’s crew, the Leconfield Station Commander, Gp Capt ‘Tubby’ Mermagen, was summoned by the Prime Minister to answer some very pointed questions. After his visit it was rumoured at Leconfield that he had been greeted by Churchill with the question: “So, Group Captain, why have you seen fit to make me a liar?”
The Analysis

So, what really happened? An RAF Board of Inquiry found that the crew had made a navigational error resulting in overflight of East Germany some 40 miles behind the border for 72 minutes before being intercepted and shot down by the Soviet fighters just over West Germany. The bulk of the wreckage, however, landed in pinewoods near Highway 5 between Hamburg and Berlin, in the vicinity of Boizenburg in East Germany.

But what of the empty shell cases from the mid-upper turret, produced by the Soviets as evidence that the MiGs had been fired upon? RF531 carried two 0.50in Browning machine guns in the tail turret and two 20mm Hispano cannons in the mid-upper turret. Nose turret guns were not fitted, as was commonly the case on CGS Lincolns. The Hispanos in the Bristol B17 mid-upper turret were each fitted with a cylindrical Belt Feed Mechanism, or BFM, which allowed the belted ammunition to feed into the cannon breeches and without which the cannons could not be fired. The empty shell cases were jettisoned into canvas bags, one for each cannon, beneath the gunner’s seat.

After RF531’s guns had been returned to the RAF, examination showed that the Hispano BFMs were not present and that none of the guns had been fired since their last cleaning. On a more sinister note, of the two gun cine cameras found in the wreckage, one was irrecoverably damaged and the film of the other had been removed before British forces were granted access to the impact site.

What is the explanation? Ronald Ayton was a National Serviceman who served as a turret armourer on A Fit, 3 Sqn CGS at Leconfield, where his job was to service the Hispanos and Brownings fitted to the Lincolns, including those of RF531 prior to its departure on the day in question. He clearly remembered the details of this task:

“\textit{The 20mm mid-upper turret took 250 rounds per gun, with another 12 to 15 rounds in the BFMs which were placed on top of the open breeches – the guns could not be fired without them. The 20mm was never very popular with armourers; it was always having stoppages. The 0.5s rarely had any.}"

\textit{If an aircraft came back [from a training flight] and the 20mm had only fired a few rounds it wasn’t worth emptying the bags, so at any one time there could be 6 to 10 empty cases in each bag. The 20mm breech blocks were cocked by compressed air. The armourer would always top up the air cylinder in the turret, and would also leave a compressed air bottle nearby for the gunner to top up if needed.}"

Bristol B17 turret training rig with twin 20mm Hispano cannons at Leconfield. One of the canvas ‘empties’ bags can be seen below the gunner’s seat.
Whenever we were told that a plane was going on a trip such as a BARRAGE exercise – we were never told where – it would be given a daily inspection and all ammo was removed; even the compressed air bottles were taken out. All that would have been left in the shot-down aircraft would have been the empty 20mm shells, 6 to 10 empties per bag – if that, because with uneven stoppages the guns rarely fired an equal number of rounds.”

If the Lincoln's gunners could not fire their weapons, and presuming no blatant ill-intent on the part of the Soviet pilots, what might have led the MiG pilots to believe that they were being fired upon? Perhaps part of the answer lies with the gun cine cameras found in the wreckage.

The removal of the film from one of the cameras implies that the Soviets believed it would contain evidence both of the attack and whether or not the Lincoln’s crew members fired their guns. The MiG pilots’ aggression is very likely, therefore, to have been captured on this film, along with clear evidence of the absence of return fire from the Lincoln.

To obtain this evidence the gun cameras, and hence the turret guns, would have been aimed at the MiGs. If so, the MiG pilots are likely to have seen this, and a similar sequence of events must have taken place in the earlier interception of RF503. On the second occasion, however, the deep territorial incursion by RF531 may in itself have been construed as threatening by the Soviets, and the possibility of reflected sunlight flashing on a turret, guns or gunsight being mistaken by the MiG pilots for the turret guns being fired cannot be discounted.

In addition, the relationship between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union at that time was extremely tense. The Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, had died a week earlier on 5 March 1953, and the shooting down of a USAF Republic F84G Thunderjet over Czechoslovakia two days previously had only served to increase that tension. It is therefore possible that the Soviet pilots genuinely believed that they were being fired upon after legitimately intercepting the Lincoln, though 65 years of hindsight proves that they were wrong and suggests that the subsequent shootdown was unnecessary.

There is one slight twist to this sad story. In spite of the standard procedure of disarming any Lincoln flying on a BARRAGE sortie, RF531 ‘H’ was armed. Although he could not remember why this was the case, Frank Doran described how an even more
serious incident was narrowly averted following RF503’s interception by the Soviet aircraft: “Our tail gunner suggested having a pot at the MiGs but was hastily dissuaded by myself and the pilot!”

Had the gunners fired on the MiGs, the almost-inevitable result would have been the shooting down of RF503. The subsequent claim of self-defence by the Soviets would have been valid, and live ammunition as well as empty cases would have been found in the wreckage. With this precedent, the subsequent demise of RF531 ‘C’ would also have been virtually guaranteed and the overall political implications and embarrassment would have been enormous.

**The Cost**

The bodies of the seven crew members were returned to the UK soon after the shootdown. Flt Sgt Dunnell and Sgt Long were buried at churches in their home towns (Dunnell at Wymondham in Norfolk and Long at Aspley, near Nottingham), and the funeral of Fitz, Wyles, Mason, Jones and Stevens took place at St Catherine’s church, Leconfield, one week after the incident on 19 March 1953. The coffins containing their bodies were borne on trailers towed by RAF trucks, with RAF personnel lining the route between the RAF station and the village church.

**The graveside scene at Leconfield, 19 March 1953. (Anne Fothergill)**

A party of RAF engineers was eventually allowed across the border to salvage the wreckage that had fallen in East Germany; the Wing Commander in charge of this group retained a piston head from one of RF531’s Merlin engines and subsequently had it converted into an ashtray. It is now in the possession of the author and is very faintly inscribed with the date and circumstances:

*Lincoln RF531*

*Shot down 12 March 1953*

*Salvaged 18-3-53*

*At Boizenburg*

Houses have now been built on the fields surrounding St Catherine’s church, but the churchyard is still a peaceful and contemplative place. The title of this article is taken from the moving epitaph on the gravestone of Sgt Ron Stevens, which perfectly summarises the human aspect of this story: ‘A treasured husband / into the mosaic of history / I lay this priceless one.’

**Jonathan Stanley**

The following people gave invaluable assistance in the research for this article: Gp Capt (ret’d) Frank Doran; Flt Lt Mary Hudson, MOD Air Historical Branch; Ronald Ayton; Robert Wood; Anne Fothergill; Sid Johnstone; Frank Flood.
Membership Update
By Andy Wood

As we have reached late summer, I thought it was time that I gave an update on the Membership numbers. We are now running at 466 active members which is slightly higher than our best ever membership high point a couple of years ago. This is excellent news as we have achieved this before our expected influx of new members that the increased hangarage space is going to bring in. Despite this total there are 72 members who were active last year and have not rejoined – it’s not too late – their membership cards are ready and waiting!

The current totals are: –
Full Flying 152
Associate Flying 89
Museum 203
Honorary 22
TOTAL 466

Andy (Membership Secretary and Treasurer)
'From the Chair'...

Written by Charles Sunter

Ok so I won’t be the only one wondering how we got to September so swiftly, and I know some of you were wondering what happened to August’s newsletter! Well, a combination of a lack of spare time and a lack of articles lead us to decide that the newsletter should take a ‘summer holiday’.

I can’t stress enough how important it is to receive articles for inclusion; they don’t have to be war and peace or perfectly written. I know myself only too well how challenging it can be at times to sit down and draft something. I am supposed to have submitted a piece on the recent trip to Skive in Denmark, but alas, you’ll have to wait until the next issue.

So, please help Rachael keep the newsletter going and send her a paragraph or two about; your flying, your Breighton/ aviation experience or passion or on any other relevant topic. If you would like to submit a piece and are unsure of it’s relevance then just ask, rachelreaaero@outlook.com

A little bit of housekeeping:

It has been noted that occasionally the fire truck is left outside on a night. If you are the last to leave the airfield on an evening please note that the fire truck lives in hangar 2, and can be left unlocked, with the key in the centre console. Last to leave is also responsible for ensuring all hangars, the club house and entry gate are all locked and secure. If you are in any doubt about what to do when last to leave please ask.

A little airmanship:

Whilst preparing this piece I received a phone call from Burn Gliding Club. They are experiencing a large number of GA overflights, one of which in particular nearly collided with the winch cable. Burn at not pointing the finger at any airfield in particular and are taking a positive approach to resolving the problem through working with neighbouring airfields and education. More to come on this in due course and in the meantime, please give them a wide birth.

It has been an excellent summer but don’t look back, we still have plenty to look forward to in 2018:

- The helicopter fly in with a talk from Search and Rescue Pilot Jon Stanley
- The annual Big Band Night at Bubwith leisure centre
- Halloween Party in the Club House with music, food and gin tasting
- Radio Operators Certificate of Competency course (ground to air radio licence – fully booked)
- The Beer Festival again at Bubwith Leisure Centre
- The Christmas Party – York Marriott Hotel, 1st December 2018

Blue Skies

Charles

PS. Please note I have a new email address, specifically for Club matters:
chairmanreaaero@outlook.com