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The Member's Section

Photographers Section
2nd November 18:00 till late
Halloween Party – live music, hot food and gin tasting (fancy dress welcome)

10th November 11:00
Remembrance Service – visitors welcome

29th November 19:30
GASCo Safety Evening – 'Perception vs Reality - Recognising Hazardous Attitudes'

7th December 19:00
Christmas Party at the York Marriott Hotel – guests welcome
The Real Aeroplane Club invites you to a

HALLOWEEN PARTY

EAT, DRINK & BE SPOOK

Beer & Wine Available for £1.50

02 NOVEMBER

Pie & Peas, Jacket Potatoes & Soup available from the cafe

Fancy Dress welcome

Live music by Harry Collins - Swing Vocalis
GASCo Presents... 2019

SAFETY EVENING

BRIGHTON AIRFIELD

THURSDAY 28th NOVEMBER 2019, 1930 hrs

THE REAL AEROPLANE CLUB, BRIGHTON AIRFIELD
SANDS LANE, BRIGHTON, SELBY, N. YORKSHIRE YO8 6DS

Contact CHARLES SUNTER: 07903 112 542 or e-mail chairmainrealaero@outlook.com

Perception
.v.
Reality

-recognizing hazardous attitudes

Saving lives in GENERAL AVIATION

www.gasco.org.uk
Breighton Airfield

Christmas Party

Saturday 7th December 2019
York Marriott Hotel
- Tadcaster Road, York YO25 1QQ -

3 Course Festive Dinner
Private Function Room with Bar and DJ

The Marriott have authorised a late bar and music licence until 1am
PLUS a 10% reduction on bar drinks

- £31.95 per person -
(£3 supplement for Beef and £1 supplement for Prawn Cocktail)
Payable to Rachael (rachelreaero@outlook.com)

Limited rooms held for our party available at discounted rate of
£109 for a double room (single occupancy) and £129 (2 people sharing)
with FREE entry to the spa (other rates available for singles and twins).
The cut-off date for this discount rate and booking is Friday 25th October.
(Room booking link available from Rachael.)

www.realaero.com
The editor of this esteemed organ asked me to put pen to paper on how I started flying or “meet the member”. Until now I have avoided it as I always thought of it as writing your own obituary.

Well, not to poke fate with a sharp stick, here goes...

There I was in 1970...in the back of a Hercules RAF transporter sat on canvas seating with no seat belts, sat alongside my mates. This was the first time I experienced flying in the Air Cadets. We were running around in the back so much the pilot must be sick of having to re-trim the aircraft as the weight shifted, that he open the back door at around 5000'; that made us sit down and stay down in quick order. Imagine that now?

My flights of fancy did not start with the air cadets flying, but with space flight back in the 1960’s. One of my heros was Yuri Gagarin as the first man into space. I followed space flight right through to the shuttle flights. The other influence happened, usually around 10pm at night. It started with a low rumble, which caught my attention. Running outside or pulling back my bedroom curtains reviled a huge dark triangle shape in the sky, usually around 300’. My parent’s house was on the regular route for the 1960’s cold war vehicle the “Vulcan”. How could such a massive thing stay in the sky?

At 13 years of age and looking for ways to keep off the streets and getting into trouble I found out about the Air Training Corps. I was issued a very hairy RAF uniform and made to do drill. My first annual camp was the same year, where I flew in the Hercules C130. This was my first holiday without my family and it felt great to have the freedom, and be with my mates.

I stayed in the Air cadets for 28 years, climbing though the ranks of Cadet Warrant Officer and ultimately a commissioned officer on an Air Cadet Volunteer Gliding School. Flying many RAF aircraft and shooting some serious weapons were common place, unlike today’s Cadets. Looking in my 3822 (a Cadets log book), I amassed over 90 hours in the back of a Chipmunk at 9 AEF based RAF Church Fenton. They knew me so well I was allowed to carrying out all the flying including aerobatics with the exception of take off and landing.

The biggest opportunity came at 17 when my squadron CO of the time was a gliding instructor on 643 VGS based at RAF Hemswell in Lincolnshire. Before then I plodded along, but thought if you don’t ask, you never get. So, “Sir” can I do a gliding course? The response surprised me, “yes, be at the Ferrybridge A1 at 8am on Saturday and I’ll give you a lift”. The next sentence was “for the one and only time, next time you have to thumb your way there and back”. What do you mean “thumb Sir”?

Being a young lad who had very little experience of the outside world, you soon get to know your fellow man cadging a lift every weekend from Ferrybridge to Hemswell and over winter. You also meet some interesting folk.

I started in November 1973 to learn to fly in a Kirby Cadet MKIII. A tandem 2 seater training glider built in the 1950’s and the back bone of the VGS training of young men such as myself. As we all know winter can be challenging and progress was slow, but after 39 launched, with an average flight per launch of 3 to 4 minutes I went solo’s. Three flights on my own. Looking back it felt the most natural thing to do and a fantastic feeling for a 17 year old.

Air cadet Mark III

Talk about being in the right place at the right time. The staff cadets at the time were all sacked for taking a RAF Landrover off camp to the local pub, provided the opportunity to join as a staff cadet. Sounds great, but what that means is you drive the winch and Landrover all weekend with, if time allows 2 or 3 flights at the end of the weekend. It was hard work, and progress was slow, but finally I achieved my advanced gliding certificate, passenger carrying rating and finally a C cat gliding instructor while still a cadet.
I once was “grounded” for high jinks one drunken evening for 3 months; so I’m not telling what happened! I thought “bugger this” and joined Wolds Gliding club and invested my time in civilian gliding. This allowed me to gain my Silver C gliding certificate which required flights of 5 hours, a gain of height and a cross country of 50 kms. The latter was all I needed to complete the qualification. Pocklington to Doncaster airfield in a straight line, not really know where I was going but I got there. This was a significant certificate for me as I had always hankered towards a PPL and it gave me some credits off my training.

My time on the gliding school was one of the greatest times of my life. I eventually gained my B cat instructor rating (alowed to send second solo’s and manage the airfield as the “duty dog”, and finally gaining a RAP A2* rating, the highest instructor rating which allowed you to send first solo’s. A huge responsibility sending a 16 year old solo, even before he’d learnt to drive. I still have lifelong friends (who went on to fly fast jets, helicopters or commercial pilots) from my time at the school and we meet up every 2 years at Burn Gliding club.

So, Silver C in my pocket, it was now “how do I fund my PPL”? My other career, the one that paid me a salary, I trained as an industrial chemist and worked for a lubricants company as a development chemist. Sounds grand, but essentially it means I had to develop new lubricants for specific applications such a rolling oil and metal cutting. I left this company in 1983 to work as an analyst for a glass company. After 12 months (almost to the week) I was made redundant. Bingo, redundo money……

A quick phone call to Sherburn and booked on to a course. Remember the Silver C? Well this allowed me to complete my PPL in 10 hours compared to 45 hours. I had time on my hands, out of work so I opted to do it in a week, well 4 days. By the end of an exhausting week, mentally and physically I had a PPL licence.

I found with a family to run as well as working, gliding and now power flying time was very limited. Most would have giving up something, but my solution was to leave the air cadet VGS (after 26 years) and take up civilian gliding club where I could fly the tow plane and keep my hours building on gliders and powered. I then became a full cat instructor (ultimately CFI) at Kirton Lindsey gliding club and tug pilot.

A little bit about my gliding experiences before we move on. I have over 6000 launches and 600 hours in gliders. I have logged over 90 glider types in my 7 logged books. These range from 1940’s gliders such as an Eon Baby to the modern high performance glassfibre machines such as a Discuss. I owned a share in a SHK glider which is a single seater high performance wooden glider capable of flying cross country.

Towing gliders is a fantastic experience and essential you know about gliding so you can take the following glider to the right pocket of raising air. Towing at various gliding competitions is good as you wait around until the first glider launches and the then whole grid needs to go; boom, it’s all hell let loose and you can launch 40 gliders with 3 tow planes in 20 minutes.

Time for another change due to family pressures of sharing my time. I found a share in an Evans VP1 based at Brighton and decided to cut down my commitment and gave up, reluctantly gliding. It was very time consuming and did not allow time to myself to do some solo stuff.

As they say the rest is history, as I have now been at Brighton coming up to 20 years and the majority of you guys know me. I have over 60 fixed wing aircraft under my belt, including a trip with the Red Arrows with one of my VGS mates who was the “Syncro Pair” leader at the time. I now own and fly on of the nicest aircraft I have flown, the Piper Vagabond PA15. It ticks all the boxes, vintage, tailwheel and perfect for touring, though I am open to offers to fly other aircraft.

In that time I have flown all the company aircraft and met some great people in one of the best flying clubs in the UK. To fly the company aircraft has been a privilege and a lifelong ambition to fly aircraft as the Aerocna and Arrow Active. And, where else would I get to see Vulcan practising its display? It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up and made me feel like a child again.
Close to Home

I want you to imagine you’re a navigator with the RAF; you’ve been on Halifax bombers from a rough, quickly cobbled-together airbase called Breighton in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It’s 1943 and all over the world, every country is fighting – they’ve been fighting for five long years now. You were thirty years old when this all kicked off; with a promising career in finance, joining the forces was like going back to school for you. Already an old git by their standards, the younger chaps tease you as ‘pop’, the oldest.

It’s early August and it’s been a hot summer. The prefabricated concrete dorm you call home is stifling through the day, it stinks with the sweat of your roommates and those awful thin translucent orange curtains do nothing to keep out the sunlight – but in spite of it, you try hard to sleep; you need it, your body clock’s shot to pieces. This good weather means hard work – it means long hours and careful planning, no talk of respite.

Tonight’s raid has been bloody awful. Your wheels left the westerly runway at 21:32 last night to join the rest of the herd. 653 British aircraft, Lancasters, Stirlings and Halifaxes from all over England, heading for Germany, Nuremberg.

You reflect how nervous you were when the target was revealed yesterday evening – rightly so. Although you don’t know it, you’ve lost 24 aircraft during this raid – that’s 76 lads dead, 42 now being rounded up as prisoners. A total of 118 blokes not coming home.

But you’re lucky – you know you are. Coned by lights, you were in the thick of it too. Glittering flak tracers momentarily lighting up your small armoured workstation, lads around you tense with nervous excitement, babbling out calls. Unlike many other kids though, you’ve got off lightly. Tight formation and efficient teamwork has kept you alive – tonight.

It’s been nearly nine hours of noise, stink, lamplight, vibration and strained nerves. With the rising sun sometime around four-thirty this morning, your nerves began to ease – it’s now a quarter to six, the sun’s well up in the sky and you’ve crossed the coast of England. You allow your mind to wonder – the interrogation shed, the next few hours of crowds reliving the raid; deaths, personal victories, tall tales – all absorbed by interested officers before you can finally climb into bed. You relax further as you see the reassuringly familiar silhouette of Lincoln Cathedral, sticking up defiantly atop the high ground surrounding the town – as it has done for centuries – you call out to Jack in the drivers' seat; ten minutes. ‘Cheers pop’ he replies.
You're flying a northerly heading at about three thousand feet as you pass Blythe and Scunthorpe. You see the brown streak of the Humber ahead, Breighton's a little way off, slightly to the west but still invisible in the morning haze. For you it means the end of one long show – it means sitting dumb now until you feel the relief of those big wheels taking your weight.

You know this area like the back of your hand – there's no risk of you cocking things up anymore so you shuffle forward to see the long shadows of the early morning sun against the summer fields. It's a rewarding sight.

Trent Falls, last turning point. You squint into the distance – there's Holme on Spalding Moor. You trace the horizon slowly to port.

There it is. You call it out but Jack's got it now – he's seen the cross-hairs of Breightons' runway intersections, your job's done and he begins a descending turn to the right onto a wide left-hand downwind for the westerly runway.

The flight engineer removes his intercom, twists his head to look up at Jack between the rudder pedals and shouts something inaudible. The pilot nods in understanding before fixing his gaze on the cross of those intersecting runways – that cross represents home, safety.

He's looking focused now – occasionally talking into his mask to the ground controller. Must be quite a strain on him – you think to yourself – after such a long night to still have to concentrate so hard.

As Jack pulls the aircraft around the base leg, you're still up high – looks like you'll be doing another circuit; some other Halifax crew on a priority no doubt. Maybe a wounded – perhaps a fuel emergency.

You pass over the Derwent as you turn crosswind – a little glimmer in an otherwise dark pencil-line shrouded in greenery. You clamber into the elliptical nose blister again, resting on your belly. Straining your head to the left you see the westerly runway, a few more aircraft now slowly moving to their dispersals, noses in the air, one behind the other. Crews inside, huddled in the fuselage, cracking nervous jokes, desperate for their first cigarette – or morphine.

As Jack starts another left turn to enter the downwind leg, you become aware the aircraft's slipping out of balance – this sensation's coupled with a notable reduction in engine noise and vibration. One of the great Bristol Hercules radials on the port side, closest to you is winding down. Jack featheres the prop as he watches it through the cockpit window.

Again you fly through at high-level, watching through the blister as a Halifax decelerates and slowly taxis off the runway directly underneath you. Another priority. It'll be us next.
You turn uncomfortably on your pedestal to look at Jack – he’s concentrating hard now. You decide not to ask.

He levels the aircraft on the crosswind leg. The flight engineer scrambles up to him, sweating. This time you hear the exchange – but you didn’t need to. You hear it as the outer starboard engine starts to quieten, followed almost immediately by the inboard and then the outer port.

Suddenly it all starts to get claustrophobic. You begin to sweat. You feel the aircraft decelerate. You feel the pedestal you’re still lying on start to sink.

For hours, background noise has been drowned out by the job at hand – now, no more jobs to think about, just smooth sailing and the sound of rushing air.

You lurch on your pedestal as Jack swings the bomber hard to port. ‘CROSSWIND LADS’ he yells, his voice louder than the kids now scrambling to get into position, then ‘BRACE’! He’s making for the northerly runway, cutting across the circuit pattern.

Mouth open, lips dry and eyes wide, you glare ahead through the perspex at the crews safely on the tarmac about a mile away. It’s obvious. You’re too far out.

You see the horizon line drop through the blister as Jack tries to play fate – altitude for airspeed. Already you hear the sound of lift begin to quieten – it all sounds so safe – but you know it’s not. The runway drunkenly dawdles in front of you as you slow down further.

You watch Wressle Castle drift slowly past your left side, almost level with you. You try to force yourself into position.

You don’t need any visual reference, you can feel it. Frozen, your mind’s eye maps your trajectory. There’ll be no ground-effect to cushion this one. You stare stupidly at sun-lit fields as the horizon waves lazily to port then wildly to starboard. The whole machine drops its heavy wing. You grasp the pedestal, trying to cling on to it as heavy equipment falls around you. You’re suddenly aware of your weight.

Through the perspex, you catch a momentary glimpse of August poppies as your back is broken by the metal desk you’ve spent all night working at.
The summer of 1997 saw the arrival of the Spitfire Mk.XI, an unarmed photo reconnaissance version in a PR blue colour scheme.

Also around this time the Harvard arrived, joining a privately owned one which lived in Hangar 6.

In early October the Buchon arrived from Duxford for rebuild and later in the year the Hurricane flew in to take up residency. Over the winter it was transformed from wearing a camouflage scheme to an all black night fighter.

The club membership numbers started to increase dramatically with the pull of the warbirds and I first met Kate when she visited from Barton in her Nipper, which in those days had a face!

In April 1998 we held an Open Day and officially rolled out the Spitfire and Hurricane, now known as "The Black and Blue Pair", they were now available for airshow work usually flown by Taff Smith and Brian Brown.
Breighton - The Warbird Years (1997 - 2002)

An article by Andy Wood

The two T.6's were flying at this time and the photo shows a young Alastair Newall in G-TSIX, whilst on the same sortie I photographed club member Martin Beesley in his new Extra 200 D-EVNO.

The year was uneventful but an interesting approach and overshoot occurred at the August Fly-in when a DC.6 of Air Atlantique paid us a visit on route back to its base at Coventry following a trip to Europe.

In early 1999 we had some new arrivals when Tony acquired two Nanchang CJ.6A's which had operated with the People's Liberation Army Air Force of China.

One month later at the Vintage Piper Aircraft Club Fly-in tragedy struck when Newby clipped the power lines that at that time crossed the 11 threshold, taking his wing off. I was one of the first on the scene and it was not a good sight, the local York newspaper had a different view and went with the headline "Comic in stitches after aircraft crash"...The rest of then in May we imported the first Ryan PT.22, seen in the photo flown by Taff with engineer Harry Sawdon (who has sadly just left us), from France, this was subsequently sold to Pete Rice and remained based.

Photographed around this time was a rather smart blue Enstrom 480 owned by Steve Atherton, who at this point had still to discover the delights of the Gazelle.
Breighton - The Warbird Years (1997 - 2002)

An article by Andy Wood

During the Summer we held an Airshow and one of the star acts involved Newby making an announcement over the PA system that a Robin Reliant was blocking the crash gate and would the owner please move it immediately. After a couple of further requests, with no one coming forward, it was picked up by Peter Scott in his Jet Ranger and dumped on the north side from several hundred feet....at this point the "owner" came running and shouting from the crowd in a fit of hysteria upon which Newby pulled a gun and shot him! I'm sure this would not be allowed in today's Health and Safety conscious times!

In early 2000 the Spitfire moved in to the workshop to be repainted pink, to a lot of peoples horror, but this was a genuine wartime colour scheme when flying PR missions in the early morning and late evening light. A further import by Taff this year was a Lycoming engined Jungmann from Germany, this was soon placed on the UK register and bought by Martin Beesley.

In the spring Martin acquired a Cessna 310 G-IMLI and entered it in an epic flight in a London to Sydney Air Race.

Early the following year we had an At Home Day to allow viewing of the progress on the Buchon rebuild but there was still a long way to go.
For a couple of days in July the airfield was taken over by Mitsubishi Cars who held a corporate event on site for which we had the Utterly Butterly Stearman team providing numerous rides, and some very impressive cars.

One last aerial photo of the old Breighton was taken and in the spring of 2002 work started on the 250 metre runway extension.

Moving in to another summer the Fokker DR.1 Triplane arrived, then in an overall black scheme and work continued apace on the Buchon....the next issue will continue the warbird theme with the arrival of the P.51 Mustang and the Buchon flying following completion.

As summer drew to a close the Spitfire was dismantled to be taken to Florida, followed by the Harvard, which I helped to shrink wrap!
Baxby (Husthwaite), between Easingwold and Bagby airfield, is essentially a microlight strip and flying school. David & Elaine Smith established the facility in 1986. It has a well-established clubhouse and café. The runways are 04/22 420m, 14/32 310m & 18/36 350m. A 33kv power line crosses runway 04/22 near the end of 04. Light aircraft such as Jodels and Piper Cubs should have no problems using runway 22 and I have used 04, under the wires, without problem.

The nearby Baxby Manor “Hideaway” offers Camping, Wooden Cabins, Eco Pods and Hobbit Huts. Perhaps a Brighton Fly-away Weekend?

David often arranges fly-ins using temporary arrangements with farmers: I have listed two of these a little further down the listing.

North of Bagby airfield is Felixkirk where I first landed in 2004. This strip was then operated by John Whiting of Sport Air UK Ltd. This company was an agent for Rans microlight aircraft and the current models at that time were Rans S5 and Rans S6. The strip is orientated 01/19 and is 500m long. The same 33kv power lines present at Baxby run almost parallel to the runway and have to be overflown: the village of Felixkirk, to the east, must not be overflown.

Fadmoor is within the North Yorks National Park. This results in some restrictions by the authorities. No Sunday flying is allowed and ‘Agricultural Business Only’ at other times. Hence a landing involves buying some pork produce. The owner/operator is Peter Johnson. The field is situated on the brow of a hill so unless there is a favourable fresh/strong wind, landing is uphill and take-off is often downhill. Runways are 14/32 (570m) and 02/20 (950m). PPR essential. Peter owns or owned a Socata Rallye registered G PI GS.

Newton-on-Rawcliffe is also within the National Park. The runway is North/South with a pronounced downslope when landing at the southern end. The owner is Gordon Holmes, horse trainer. This strip is by invitation only: horse training and occasional sheep grazing accompanied with an electric fence.

At the times when I have used the strip there were two Murphy Renegade Spirit biplanes in residence.

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway runs close by.

I once landed at a strip, near Kirkbymoorside, owned by Slingsby Aviation Ltd. I was shown around the works and witnessed part of the manufacturing process of a composite wing. They made Slingsby Firefly composite aircraft at that time. The strip I used was little more than a grass field with trees at either end. The company later created a 735 metre grass runway 04/22. The company is now known as Marshall Aerospace and make composite aviation components. I last heard that the runway has been ploughed-up and no longer shows on Google Earth.

I visited, on at least two occasions, a strip running along one side of the Croft Racing Circuit. The strip was sometimes called Croft and Neasham at other times. The strip still appears on Google Earth but I have been unable to find any evidence of present operation. Perhaps it was, or is, only used on a temporary basis. The racing circuit is upon the former RAF Croft (Neasham) airfield.

One sunny day in September 1990, David Hardaker and I departed Breighton, en route to a temporary strip, at Ellingthorpe Farm, near Boroughbridge. Just south of Wetherby, near Boston Spa, we saw an impromptu meeting of microlights. A low pass created welcoming hand waving so we landed. The A1 road was being upgraded at the time and the embankments are readily visible on the enclosed photograph.

After an hour or so we returned to our aircraft and began to backtrack prior to take-off. Unfortunately, as we passed the Bio-Grass-Cutting-Device i.e. a small flock of sheep, we startled two lambs. These lambs succeeded in having their heads stuck in the mesh of a fence. So, engines shut down, lambs rescued followed by the resumed flight towards Boroughbridge.
The Ellingthorpe Farm temporary strip was just across the river Ure. Two welcoming frame tents had been pitched and a number of aircraft had already landed. We knew several of the pilots and spent quite some time before departing for the return to Breighton.

Just north of Elvington is the strip, owned by Chris Gowthorpe, named Gypsy Wood. Based here is Geoff Cline’s Piper Cub, GFUZZ. The strip is aligned roughly north/south so winds tend to be across the runway. A small wood, with tall trees, lies to the immediate west and may cause wind shear and turbulence. I always treated Gypsy Wood as a ‘by invitation strip’.

Further north are three strips I visited from time to time. The first of these is Newby Wiske near Northallerton. The owner, Brian Shaw, flew a Squarecraft SA102-5 Cavalier. A flock of geese populated this strip during the times I visited. Fortunately the geese seemed to know how to respond to a low slow pass over the field. Unfortunately, geese do not clean-up after themselves so spats were essential on low-winged aircraft and an asset on others.

Next I refer to Yearby. This strip is near Redcar and very close to Durham/Tees Airspace. The strip is aligned 06/24 and 635m in length. A 32kv power line is on the approach to runway 24. Barry Smith used to operate his Acro Engines (Volkswagen conversions) and Airframes from here.

Last of the three is Moorholme Meadows, SSW of Skinningrove near Saltburn, and is located on a farm owned by Peter Wood. The strip is 500ft AMSL, 350m long and orientated 02/20. The upslope on runway 20 is listed as 3’ (1 in 20 or 5%). At the times I used this strip, the tops of the high trees, at threshold 20, had been cut to form a ‘channel’ to land over: should that read through? Although I have used the present tense to describe this strip, there is some doubt that it still exists.

Finally I refer to Thornborough Henges situated north of Ripon - Could this site be a disused Bronze Age strip with two, perhaps three, V.T.O.L pads? Who knows?
Always eagerly anticipated, our visit to the Real Aeroplane Company for our painting/sketching day was no exception.

I arrived at the airfield expecting to be the first there, but was greeted by John and Jane Hunter who had left their home in Swaledale very early to avoid anticipated (no existent!) traffic. It was great to see them - it's been a while.

We were soon a good number (these days) of members and guests, twelve in total. The atmosphere at Brighton Airfield - always laid-back and welcoming - was enhanced by near perfect weather. The warm/hot day and blue skies meant most of the subjects chosen were out of the hangars.

As usual, there were some aircraft gems coming and going (including a Bell 47G : G-MASH!) and with some surprising additions to the collection of aircraft. One welcome newcomer being the Beech H-18 (tricycle undercarriage).

After an initial gathering at the clubhouse for the almost obligatory bacon ‘sarnie’ we began our day more formally in one of the hangars with Flying Fleas, Active Arrow etc for company.

As some needed to leave early, it was agreed to convene at lunchtime to go over any work brought along for comment etc. Tasks for the day included 10 minute sketches and longer pieces of work - prizes for each category.

One of the ‘problems’ with our meetings is that we see each other infrequently (not many can travel the long distances) so when we see fellow members it takes a while to catch up! Well, that’s MY excuse - as all too soon it was time for the lunch time review of work! Several of us had brought work...

Roger Brown had a piece for advice/confirmation of his new format/subject matter. This shows a combination of his strengths/interests, showing the HP 42 Hannibal over St Paul’s cathedral - not surprising as Roger was an architect!. The stunning piece is a pen and ink/watercolour wash - lovely treatment and technique.

John Hunter brought a recently completed commission, a multi-scene celebration of First of the Few film, for an exacting customer. A beautiful set of drawings with superb portraits of actors/characters. Great to see the piece and hear the story behind it. Thanks John!
Some time ago, on one of my working trips to Anchorage, I got talking to the guys at the Commemorative Air Force Alaska Wing about the possibility of flying in one of their aircraft. On my visit to their hangar I met one of the pilots who fly for them, Burke Mees, who mentioned that he also flew a Grumman Goose for the owner and was able to conduct instructional flights.

It seemed like too good an opportunity to miss, so I promised myself that come another trip to Anchorage when the weather was good, I’d get it organised with Burke to take a flight. The stars aligned with my July roster and plans were made. I was operating a flight in from Tokyo that landed at 0430 Anchorage time so Burke arranged to pick me up at the hotel at 0845 to go to the hangar at Lake Hood. That timing worked perfectly for me as my body clock was still on UK time, any later in the day and I’d be wanting to sleep. The weather was perfect, little wind and unusually warm as Anchorage was experiencing a heat wave with temperatures predicted in the low 30’s. The only issue was poor visibility due to a large number of forest fires in the area.

The Grumman G-21 was conceived by the Grumman Co of New York as an eight seat commuter aircraft for businessmen in the Long Island area. With its first flight in 1937, it became Grumman’s first monoplane, its first twin-engined aircraft and its first aircraft to enter commercial airline service. During WW2 it served various roles with allied armed forces, including the RAF, who used it for air-sea rescue and called it the Goose. The Goose that I was going to fly, N703, had been delivered to the US Marine Corp as BU 37828 in 1944, serving at several naval air stations including Annapolis, Point Magu and Santa Barbara. It was deemed surplus to requirements in the 1960’s, and like many others was handed on to a government service. Aircraft were civilian registered according to their service allocation, so US Fish and Wildlife Department aircraft became N700 series and coastguard aircraft became N800 series. N703 served with the Fish and Wildlife Department in Alaska and was then sold to a private owner in 1974. It lay dormant on the shore of Lake Spenard for many years and Burke tells me that several of the leading lights in Anchorage aviation remember playing in and around it as children. Fortunately it was brought back to life in the early 1990’s by John Fletcher and a nearly two year restoration commenced with the plan to return the aircraft as close to its original condition as possible. It flew again in 1996 and has been a familiar sight in the Anchorage area ever since, possibly the most original ex military Goose in existence.

Burke had sent me a good set of notes on the aircraft by email so I was aware of some of the issues that would come with the aircraft, the primary one being the need to adjust my land aircraft pilot ideas about what constitutes a safe landing gear position on approach! Landing an amphibious aircraft on water with the gear down is a risk that needs to be countered on every approach a mistake is disastrous. Float planes tend to flip over, which is bad enough, but with the Goose the nose section would bend upwards, causing a hull breach just ahead of the cockpit which would scoup water in and sink the aircraft in a very short space of time! The potential for error was not helped by the original cockpit design, which followed the land aircraft convention of the landing gear lights for down being green (up was blue). In Alaska many of the Amphibs have had those green lights replaced with red ones, as the norm is to land on water, but the Goose also has port holes which allow the pilot to see the position of the opposite side gear from his/her seat, whilst on his/her own side it is simply a matter of looking out and down from the side cockpit window.

Burke’s policy for mitigating this particular error was to conduct the landing checklist three times, each time at a cue that must occur on every flight. The first one at the time of the first power reduction from cruise power, the second when the flaps were extended, on approach and a final time when the propellers were moved forward into fine pitch. Each time he checked the gear he would also look out of the front of the aircraft and consciously relate the gear position to the surface that he saw – up for water, down for a runway.

Another potential issue that I hadn’t considered was that Amphib hulls and floats are not 100% watertight, so need a way of letting out any water that had gathered during the flight. To this end, screw thread plugs are fitted along the length of the hull and floats. These are removed at the end of a day’s flying to allow any accumulation of water to drain away. All well and good until one forgets to put the plugs back in before flight! So some Goose pilots keep these plugs in a drawstring bag which is then hung from the throttles so that refitting then before flight can’t be missed. Burke collects them in a tin, which he then places inside the entrance door to the aircraft – a simple but effective defence against the error.
So at the aircraft I refitted the drain plugs whilst Burke moved the other resident, a Cessna 185 on floats, out of the hangar with a contraption that would not have looked out of place in a Mad Max film. It was basically the front end of a pickup truck (the backend had been completely removed so that the cab was open at the back!). To the front of this two wheeled cab had been welded two wheeled beams, which would be driven between the floats and then raised hydraulically underneath the inter float struts to lift and manoeuvre the float plane. I’d not seen one before but they are apparently common around float planes. Moving the Goose proved just as easy, as Burke had a tracked remote control tug which slid under and lifted the tailwheel. It frankly didn’t look powerful enough for the job, but looks can be deceptive and the Goose was soon out in the open and ready for the walk around. Starting at the door we checked the tailwheel to ensure that the springs which centre the tailwheel were attached – the tailwheel is retractable and a non centred tailwheel would bind in the wheel well when the gear was raised. Then a good look at the tailplane as this can take a beating from spray in rough water conditions as well as the occasional smack from a wave in really bad conditions. As is common with many aircraft of the era, the movable surfaces are fabric covered. Next we had a good look at the landing gear, especially the brake lines as these can get caught and damaged during retraction if they are not properly secured. With its free castoring tailwheel, the Goose is a tricky enough customer on land when the brakes are functioning – without a brake it’s a runway excursion waiting to happen! Burke says that he would rather have an engine fire on the Goose than a brake failure, which speaks volumes of the peril of a damaged brake line. Having checked the rest of the aircraft at ground level it was now time to climb up on the wing via the door and a couple of grab handles onto an obvious and effective non slip walkway. Being on top of the wing was the only way to check the engine oil and to refuel. Sitting there between the cowlings of the R985’s we topped the tanks off to their capacity of 220 gallons, which gave us four hours flight time with 20 gallons in reserve. The Pratt and Whitney R985 Wasp junior is a smaller version of P&W’s first radial, the R1340. It’s a robust engine and I am familiar with it from my time flying a Winjeel in Australia and from the Broussard at Breighton. The original Gooses were fitted with big, two bladed, non feathering Hamilton Standard propellers, but most were later fitted as N703 is, with fully feathering Hartzell three blades props.

With our duties atop the wing complete I made my way inside to open the fuel drain valves on Burke’s command so that he could check for the presence of water in the fuel. It was then time for Burke to close up the door and join me in the cockpit to review some of the systems on show prior to start. There is a entrance to step through from the cabin to the cockpit and on that bulkhead, behind the pilots seats, are most of the controls for the fuel system. Each tank feeds to a single tank selector valve, the important thing to note here is that whatever selection is made feeds both engines. So if the selector is left on a single tank it is possible to starve both engines of fuel with plenty of fuel left in the other tank - and the Goose has the gliding properties of a brick outhouse! There are occasionally good reasons to have the selector to a single tank, when refuelling or when one wing is required to be higher than the other in a beach or dock parking situation, but for flying the logical selection is ‘both’(tanks). From the selector fuel is routed via a wobble pump (for engine priming) after which the line splits into two to feed the respective engines via shutoff valves and engine driven pumps. To allow for a single pump failure there is a cross feed line and valve which inter connects downstream of the pumps so that one pump can provide pressure to both carburettors. As for reading the quantity of fuel, each tank feeds a glass sight tube, one on each side of the cockpit, on the bulkhead behind the pilots. A simple and effective system, but one which has been known to soak the pilot with fuel if the glass breaks as any tank contents above the level of the breakage will flow through the breach! If that happens, there is a shut off valve at the bottom of the sight glass to close off the flow from the tank, but it must be remembered that the gauge is now stuck and will continue to indicate the amount of fuel in that tank at the time the valve was closed. One last line on the bulkhead is a vacuum line for the gyro instruments, provided by engine driven vacuum pumps. There is a separate vacuum system, supplied by the carburettor venturis, which drives the flaps!

Having reviewed the fuel system we got on with the business of starting the engines as we would have some more time to chat whilst the engines were warming. Battery switches (in the door entrance) on and the magneto isolator button (overhead panel) pushed in. The engines needed to be primed, so six strokes on the wobble pump behind my head whilst operating the priming switch on the overhead panel before...
Goosed!

An article by Nick Lee

switching attention to the start switch (one switch but controlled by another which selects the engine to be started) and the magnetos. To guard against hydraulic lock the start switch is operated first through six blades before selecting the magneto – the starter motor has a clutch which disengages the starter if any resistance is felt. With the throttle cracked open the tiniest amount the engine bubbles into life as soon as the magnetos are switched on, so it’s time to select the starter to the other engine and repeat the process. Oil pressure checked and then sit back and wait for the oil temp to get to 40 degrees.

Burke used that time to talk about taxiing as I was the only one with any brakes! As previously mentioned, the tailwheel is free to castor, so taxiing is a combination of rudder, followed by brake, followed by differential power if necessary to keep the Goose from going anywhere it wanted to! The tendency with newbies like me is to forget to reduce power on one of the engines before increasing power on the other to start a turn, which results in ever increasing power being used against the brakes. My first challenge was going to be getting out onto the taxiway between the C185 on one side and the neighbours hangar wall on the other. With the engine, the auxiliary fuel tank and the float in the way, it was difficult to judge from the cockpit where exactly the wing tip was, but Burke assured me that we had plenty of room so, with the engines warmed we were off and we crawled out onto the taxiway and weaved our way over to the engine run up area. The cylinder head temps were by now at the required 100 degrees so we carried out the standard checks on the mags and props and then it was time to head out onto the water. Burke directed me to the ramp and in we went. Once assured that there was clear water under the wheels (the linkages can be damaged if the gear is raised whilst still in contact with the lake bed) I cranked the gear up whilst trying to keep us going in a straight line with rudder, aileron and differential power! The gear can be raised electrically, but this is only done after a runway takeoff to ensure that no underwater debris fouls the gear retraction as any resistance would be felt whilst cranking manually. To crank the gear it is necessary to first lift a pawl on the lower back bulkhead, then check that the pin that goes through the ratchet mechanism (again on the back bulkhead) is pointing towards the left seat pilot, thus ensuring that the gearbox is engaged for retraction and finally wind that handle until resistance is felt. A quick check both sides that the wheels are snug in their wells and the job is complete. It seems to take forever when the aircraft is weaving across Lake Hood, but soon enough I was able to give my full concentration to our direction keeping at which point I realised that I was still on the brakes trying to slow the Goose down! Luckily for me the wind was light so in maintaining the taxi lane at Lake Hood whilst travelling downwind the Goose was only marginally unstable.

Without the brakes the only way to change or maintain direction if the rudder wasn’t doing the job was a quick burst of opposite engine power. Burke left me to it until we were nearing the end of the lake and then took control to demo the first take off. We’d previously talked it through and Burke’s method is slightly different from some who fly the Goose in an attempt to minimise the damage that the water spray does to the props. I was amazed to learn that the water spray can damage the props in the same way as stones can, and that this damage needed to be dressed out frequently to prevent it from necessitating an early prop change.

Burke’s take off method goes like this: control wheel held right back and full right aileron to counter the swing from the engines. The trim is set for flight and the elevator is heavy, so this requires wrapping the left forearm around the control wheel! Then up to 30” manifold pressure on the throttles, keep the nose up, keep the nose up and then slowly allow the nose to drop as the Goose rises up on the step, all the while keeping straight with rudder and levelling the wings as they start to want to fly. Once on the step, reach across from the throttles to flip the flaps down to 30 degrees and then back to the throttles to advance them all the way to take off power of 36.5”. It’s a little more complicated than simply whacking the power up to max, but if it saves the props from some unnecessary damage I’m all for it. As the Goose accelerates on the step you can feel when it’s ready to fly. A couple of skips and we’re airborne, at which point hold the aircraft to allow it to accelerate in ground effect and raise the flaps before transitioning to the climb attitude and setting 30” and 2000 rpm. If you’ve done it right you find when you take your first look at the airspeed it will be at 90 kts.

Lake Hood is right next to Anchorage International and the departure heading west on the water lane takes us straight towards runway 15/33. It was not in use as summer repairs were being carried out but we still eased into a right turn to parallel it on our way out to the training area.

The airspace is busy – not only from Anchorage International and Lake Hood (which also has a north/south hard runway),
but Merrill Field, which is a large general aviation airfield on the eastern outskirts of Anchorage, and Elmendorf Air Base, a couple of miles to the north of downtown, which houses F-22's, AWAC's, KC135 tankers and Hercules. This is all deconflicted by the use of transit lanes and height bands, so when Burke gave me control at about 400' he directed me to maintain a heading to keep us in our lane northbound and to level at 900' to deconflict us from any inbound traffic to Merrill and Elmendorf.

I settled the Goose level at 900' with 27“ and 1800 rpm and I found it to be a little heavy but stable and the elevator trimmer (a winder at the front right side of my seat) to be very effective. The view out of the front is good, not so the view out of the side. Once clear of the inbound lanes we turned west to get into an area where there is a large lake and some clear airspace above. Before starting on landings Burke had me climb to 2000’ and carry out some steep turns and stalls, both clean and with flap. The Goose is benign in the stall, there's plenty of warning and then the nose just nods forward. There was a slight wing drop with the clean stall, but I think that it was more a case of me not having the aircraft properly balanced than any tendency of the aircraft as, with a bit more attention, the stall with flap was straight ahead.

Burke then had me set up for the first approach to the lake before taking control for the demo. Power back (first check of the gear position) to reduce the speed to 90-100kts and adjusts necessary to point just beyond the trees at the near end of the lake. Flap to 30 degrees (second check of gear position) and props fully forward (third check of gear position). Then we were over the water and Burke adopted the landing attitude and used power to control the rate of descent as the Goose started to run out of airspeed. I've done a couple of float plane training flights and the plane is pretty much the same. Once on the water Burke taught me how to taxi the Goose on the step by keeping the power up to maintain 50 kts and using rudder, aileron and power to manoeuvre the aircraft. It was quite an exercise in co-ordination and Burke had to help out a couple of times when I wasn't keeping up with the aircrafts wanderings.

Then it was time for my first attempt at takeoff. Burke talked me through the procedure again and off we went. I must say that it went rather well, there was the initial physical effort of holding the control column back whilst getting the aircraft up on the step but, once there, it seemed quite stable directionally and I could feel the slight acceleration when the Goose made the transition from waterborne to airborne. By the time I had cleaned up, set the power and established the climb I was about 10kts fast, but apart from that, not bad for a first attempt.

Around the pattern at 600' we went and I set up for my first landing, remembering to check the gear with the reduction of power, then with flap and finally with props fully forward. I aimed just beyond the shoreline of the lake, made sure that the speed stayed at 90kts, established the landing attitude and waited for the Goose to settle back on the lake. A slight increase in power, cushioned the touchdown and we were down. Burke had me keep the power up to maintain 50kts and then back up to full power for the touch and go. Another pattern and touchdown, but this time we slowed to a stop, the Goose wallowing as we came down off the step – it was time for lunch! Having stopped the engines, we went through the cabin, opened the door and took the cool box out up onto the wing where we drifted whilst we ate our lunch. Not another soul was in sight as we sat up there for about 20 mins in the middle of a lake in Alaska – surreal!

Back in our seats, we wanted to start both engines with as little gap as possible otherwise we’d end up going around in a circle! So this time we primed both engines prior to start and quickly switched the start switch control as soon as the left engine had fired. We taxied back to the downwind end of the lake and conducted another take off before turning towards Anchorage to get back to Lake Hood. We maintained 1200’ until in sight of Lake Hood and then commenced our let down. This approach required a bit more concentration and precision as I had to carry out a curved approach onto Lake Hood to line up with the narrow landing lane. It must have been quite a lift for the folks who live on that side of the lake as the Goose swooped down as I tried to ensure that I put the aircraft down as close to the edge of the lake as possible. The touchdown was in the right place, maybe it could have been a little smoother but I was happy enough with it. Then the small matter of trying to keep the thing heading towards the ramp whilst winding the gear down and we were back on terra firma. We weaved and waddled back to the hangar and I shut down.

All in all, a great way to spend a few hours learning new skills. Once it’s flying it’s stable and straightforward but like many vintage aircraft the Goose has it’s idiosyncrasies with most of the difficulties occur maneuvering on land or on water. I can only imagine what it is like trying to keep it going where you want to go in a strong wind and choppy seas. But it was kept operating in Alaska for many years for it’s abilities in those conditions. The guys at goose hangar.com have done a wonderful job in restoring this warbird and keeping it flying to be seen by the public and experienced by aspiring multi engined seaplane pilots such as myself.
Concrete, Grass and a Little History

Bassingbourn, USAAF Station 121 - 52°05’54.00”N, 0°0 3’35.00”W

If the name RAF Bassingbourn and the 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy) isn’t familiar to you, then perhaps the name of an aircraft that was based there is – the B-17F Fortress “Memphis Belle”.

However, the history of the airfield goes back to the late 1930’s, being built between 1937 and 1939. It was built on low-lying, boggy ground to the North of Royston. It was typical of the period with four C-Type hangars built in a crescent along the South East edge of the airfield, with the technical and administration buildings close by. While there were some concrete barracks and Nissen huts, most of the airfield buildings were brick built and centrally heated! The runways were originally grass and the first aircraft to operate there were Blenheims which often produced a water splash upon landing. Heavier bombers started tearing up the waterlogged surface. No.35, 98, 104, 108 and 215 Squadrons of the Royal Air Force occupied Bassingbourn for the early years of the war.

On April 5th 1940, the airfield was attacked by a single German aircraft which dropped bombs damaging the direction finding equipment and W/T huts. The airfield was attacked again in August 1940 where a single bomb hit a barrack block, killing 11 and injuring 15. In May 1942, aircraft from Bassingbourn took part in the RAF’s first 1000 bomber raid on Cologne.
Concrete runways were laid down by W & C French Ltd during 1941-42, and then in August ’42, the runways were extended, bringing it to Class ‘A’ standard. The dispersals were increased to 49 hardstandings, including several on an extension across the old A14 road and along the avenue leading to Wimpole Hall to the North.

The first American units arrived at the base in October 1942 with the ground personnel of a B-26 Marauder Group. They had only recently arrived in England, but spent just a few days at Bassingbourn before moving on. The base wasn’t empty for long before the next unit moved in on October 14th by the 91st Bombardment Group of the U.S. 8th Air Force.
The 91st arrived bringing thirty-two Boeing B-17F Fortresses, having had to move out of Kimbolton airfield where the runways were in need of both repairs and extending.

The Americans were very short of support personnel in the early stages of their build up in the UK and so the airfield remained under RAF administration until April 1943. The 91st BG began operations on November 7th 1942, and were one of the first four U.S. heavy bomber groups to go into action. Their first eight months of operations were concentrated against U-Boat pens in France and construction yards in Germany. Airfields, industrial targets and marshalling yards were secondary targets.

The airfield was visited by General Eisenhower on April 11th 1944. He was on a fact finding mission at several USAAF airfields. The mess officer gave a somewhat rose-tinted version of life at the base. The general’s aide was later given a more accurate description of conditions and poor, often cold food. Eisenhower later returned to the base to dedicate a B-17 named after him. The Fortress named “General Ike”, was dedicated with a bottle of Mississippi river water.

In 1943, the ‘Movies’ came to Bassingbourn as William Wyler and his film crew made the documentary “Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress”. A number of US bombers were heading towards completing their 25 mission tour. The “Memphis Belle” was considered to be likely to get there first, but the love interest between Bob Morgan and Margaret Polk probably tipped the balance to
create the most interest back home. In the end, the 303\textsuperscript{rd} Bomb Group B-17 “Hell’s Angels”, was the first to reach 25 missions almost a full week before the “Belle”.

In addition to the “Memphis Belle” and “General Ike”, there were several other famous B-17’s from the 91\textsuperscript{st} BG. These included “Stage Door Canteen” christened with champagne while Vivian Leigh and Sir Lawrence Olivier were in attendance, and “Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby”, a B-17 that survived the war after being interned in Sweden and is now restored with the USAF Museum. The 91\textsuperscript{st} BG remained there for the rest of the war, flying 340 missions. 197 B-17’s failed to return to Bassingbourn, the highest loss of any Bomb Group, though they had been one of the longest serving Groups.

The RAF returned to Bassingbourn at the end of the war and the base was used by Transport Command. Yorks, Lancasters and Dakotas from the base were involved with the Berlin Airlift in the late 40’s. The USAF rotated deployments in the late 40’s and 1950’s, operating B-29’s and B-50’s.

English Electric Canberras arrived in 1952 to create the world’s first jet bomber conversion unit. Canberras operated for 17 years, but on August 29\textsuperscript{th} 1969, the last RAF commanding officer handed the station over to the British Army, the airfield becoming Bassingbourn Barracks. During the 1970’s much of the concrete runways and perimeter tracks were removed, leaving shorter stretches for light military aircraft.

A tower museum opened in 1974 showing the history of the airfield. The museum has been closed recently but is due to reopen in 2019.

https://www.towermuseumbassingbourn.com/

Bibliography - Airfield history via the Roger Freeman/After The Battle books and Wiki.
The Flyball Competition is open to all aircraft and organised by the Airfield Operators Group. Each participating airfield has a box of balls numbered from 50 to 5.

Starting from your chosen participating airfield at 10:00 you visit as many airfields as possible, collect the highest number of balls available at each and finish at Popham before 16:00. The final list of airfields is available a week before the event.

Starting at an outlying airfield should be an advantage, ideally with a circular route to the finish, the first stops giving the highest points.

For me this was:
- Old Buckenham
- Duxford
- North Weald
- Rochester
- Maypole
- Goodwood
- Popham

The day is basic flight planning, route, PPR, fuel management and finding where the box of balls are located.

The first stop at Duxford gave a 50 ball but took 50 minutes, all the others were quicker. Maypole took some finding, it's a lovely small strip and appears to have a pub behind the hangar and deserves a camping trip to investigate!

Duxford to North Weald was a dogleg through the 'Stanstead Gap', this is a lot of Stanstead and not much Gap! Not the most comfortable place to be with a high workload.

Leaving North Weald, the London airspace is left behind except for some of Gatwick above on the leg to Goodwood. I had an option to visit Sandown after Goodwood if there was enough time, but there wasn’t so it was onward to Popham, landing 15 minutes before the closing time. Overnight at Popham and home the next day.

A satisfying weekends flying, look out for the next one and give it a go!
It is with great sadness we announce the passing of our beloved friend Harry Sawdon.

Harry passed away on Friday 4th October in hospital after a short illness.

Many of you will know Harry from his time at the airfield, where he was an integral part of the team that repaired and maintained the company aircraft through the superb Spitfire years. To give you a little background, Harry first visited the airfield when his wife, Madge, heard an advert on the radio, asking for volunteers. Having time on his hands following his recent retirement from British Aerospace Brough in 1992, he popped along to the airfield and was met by Chris Turner. Chris set to and gave Harry some tasks to demonstrate his engineering capability and this is where his Breighton journey began. Having 40 years’ service at British Aerospace as an aircraft fitter, Harry worked on many aircraft types, including the Beverley, Buccaneer and Phantom to name a few. His knowledge and expertise was priceless and so was entrusted to work closely on the Spitfire, Hurricane and of course the Buchon project, amongst many more.

One of the more precious memories he liked to share was one which involved moving the Spitfire from the UK to Florida. Harry helped dismantle and ship the aircraft, then flew out with Taff, Browny and Bob Mitchell to rebuild it (see photo). Harry had some wonderful years with Taff, Browny and the guys back in the day – not forgetting the trips to “Czech with the lads” (see photo).

Over the years Harry had many apprentices and was pivotal in their early years within aviation. As a true reflection of his kind nature, his apprentices stayed in contact, some living as far as Australia.

I’m sure Harry’s friends will know him best for his quick thinking witty sense of humour. His ability to crack a joke whilst keeping a straight face was pulled off with such prowess! As a friend to everyone who knew him, Harry would want you to crack some jokes and celebrate his life. The funeral service has yet to be arranged and we will make an announcement via the website and Facebook page as soon as we have the details.
Members Section

Photography Corner

Photos courtesy of Jez Poller & Paul May