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Contrails

Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

CAvSoc

Cold War Bomber Pilot

For our September talk we welcomed back Phil Nelson to share his experiences as a Vulcan bomber pilot. Whilst 'languishing' in a role, albeit as CFI, teaching members of Southampton University Air Squadron of providing air experience to cadets and University Air Squadrons at Hamble, based alongside the civilian training school - College of Air Training, his posting arrived summoning him to fly Vulcans as a Direct Entry Captain. To do this he would need multi engine refresher training to move from the single piston engined Chipmunk to the four jet engines, and a tad more power in the Vulcan. The available aircraft, Jetstream, were grounded so he

suggested that his training could be made at the College of Air Training at



Hamble alongside BA trainees. Their Beech Baron aircraft were suitable to cover the necessary curriculum and in due course Phil found himself on 9 Squadron at RAF Waddington. The Avro company solution to a 1946 specification was the Vulcan with an unusual concept in that it relied on a huge relatively simple delta wing to provide the contrasting needs of slow landing speed with high performance at altitude. Without flaps and a tendency for brakes to burn out if abused, correct settings for landing speed, attitude (with CofG trim) and use of brake parachute was essential. The cockpit was cramped, having been designed for single seat operation but with two pilots there were some compromises such as nose wheel steering only on the captain's side. Once a crew was allocated they stayed together to learn their duties, target and Russian defences. The techniques for a hi-lo-hi profile followed by a free fall delivery were learnt along with the concept of a 200 mile out GoNoGo line which was not to be crossed without a special code word. Once given there would be no recall and crews had to return or disperse as best they could to a Western European Diversion airfield. Operational, along with escape and evasion, training took place at Goose Bay where realistic flying profiles and Winter Survival Techniques were put into practise. Overall it was a tough regime for an unenviable but crucial task. Phil and his crew were chosen to be the Vulcan air display team which meant very intense training by a Qualified Flying Instructor and approval by an Air Rank Officer before being allowed out on the air display circuit. An almost silent start was achieved from be-

hind the crowd line, by throttling back and using the inertia of the aircraft to sweep across, enter a vertical climb and then open up the four mighty Olympus engines to best effect. Displays took Phil to many locations here and overseas but operational training also included the famous Red Flag exercise based at Nellis, USAF Airfield on the edge of Area 51, not far from Las Vegas. Here the element of realism took the form of typical anti aircraft facilities, including fighter aircraft, representing known Russian abilities and tactics all played out low above the desert floor. With its large wing and low wing loading the Vulcan could out manoeuvre fighters and using ground masking techniques through the mountains and hills prevented ground based radars achieving lock ons. The anticipated shoot downs of Vulcans did not happen and one of the only aircraft (apart from Buccaneer) to achieve a 'clean sweep' thus confounding the critics. To complete his talk we were led through a typical flight pattern which would start 3hours before take off, perhaps at 5am, to learn met conditions, navigation planning and mission purpose briefing. A high protein meal would be consumed before being transported out to the aircraft. For longer missions packed meals were taken on board but with limited facilities it was not glamorous. With anecdotes and videos we were all treated to an insight of what at the time was a very shadowy existence with the veil beginning to lift long after the Royal Navy took over the deterrent role.

Friends of the New Forest Airfields (FONFA)



FONFA is a charity established by a group of aviation enthusiasts, veterans, authors and historians in the New Forest area. FONFA and its museum relocated into a refurbished former RAF Sopley building which opened to the public on 29May2016.



A memorial to the twelve airfields of the New Forest and all those who participated in their activities was created at Holmsley South and the two minute silence will be commemorated there on the 11th and 13th of November. An educational programme helps students of all ages and backgrounds to understand the twelve airfields. FONFA now seeks new members (£5 pa) which gives free access to the museum which is well worth

a visit. Opening is reduced during winter months but see the website at <fonfasite.wordpress.com> for opening hours and further info. They would also welcome people to volunteer to help with opening days of the museum.

Meetings - at Druitt Hall commencing 8pm

Wed 04Jan 2017 - tbd Wed 01Mar - tbd