



Issue 2 - Feb09

Contrails

Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

EVERY PICTURE (OR OBJECT) TELLS A STORY

John Brown introduced the January meeting as a social event where members were invited to bring along an item of interest and to tell a story about it in 5 minutes.

John Brown commenced with a photo and recalled how in 1957 Southend was the first airport to trial a new GEC runway lighting system. John was learning to fly at the time and, with 3 others, he volunteered to hold some photo flood lights in the middle of the runway to illuminate the underside of a Freddie Laker DC4 during take off. John was not amused when the pilot lifted off just in front of the volunteers but the photo did appear prominently in a leading national newspaper.

At the height of the cold war **Steve Robson** was in the RAF at RAE Farnborough developing protective clothing for chemical and biological defence. Urgent trials to evaluate procedures at an RAF station could have been delayed because the gloves for use by aircrew and ground crew had not been delivered. It was realised that washing up gloves were made from a similar material and amused onlookers saw pilots and engineers preparing the aircraft wearing very unwarlike pink and yellow gloves.

Shirley Head had become bored as an office junior in a solicitor's office and subsequently became secretary to the chief draughtsman at the then Airspeed factory for an increased salary of £5 a week. She recalled learning the difference between talk and torque and being asked for sky hooks but one consolation was having a flight during an air test in an Ambassador, albeit sitting on a box as there were no other seats.

As a boy **Ken Haddleton** had lived in the Black Country at a time when surplus aircraft, typically Typhoons, filled a scrapyard near his home. One day the field was empty so he crept in and acquired a piece of instrument panel which was devoid of instruments but carried a plate showing G-AKFF Starflight. He showed the panel and said his research identified that the aircraft had been a Lancasterian used by Flight Refuelling during the Berlin airlift and had completed 449 trips.

Bill Wootton related the first landing of the DH 110 on Ark Royal in 1957. The carrier had had to off-load its normal complement and 56 aircraft were launched in an hour using the aircraft lifts alternately. Whilst the 110 landing went off without a hitch, a following landing by a Scimitar nearly ended in disaster when it hit the round down – edge of the rear deck.



(Prototype 110 on a carrier approach - Ed's collection).

Forthcoming Events for 2009

Wed, 04 Mar, HM Coastguard, SAR operations
Wed, 06 May, AGM & Bournemouth Airport today
Wed, 02 Sep, Strathallan Collection
Wed, 04 Nov, Bizjet Operations

Tangmere Museum Visit !!Change!!

Along with Poole RAFA, Phil Lynes has made provisional arrangements for a mid week coach trip in **MAY** - 0930 Christchurch pick up. He still has places so please let him know if you are interested. Approx £8 + entrance £6 for the over 60s

David Freeman had been an apprentice at deHavilland, Hatfield and showed the audience a plan of Salisbury Hall as it had been at the time of the first prototype Mosquito flights which had to be launched from nearby fields to fly the short hop to Hatfield. He also showed a photo of a hangar full of aircraft including two Comets explaining that they were stored pending the outcome of the Comet disaster inquiry.

Having recently lost his commercial licence on medical grounds **Ernie Ball** decided to take a flight in a T-bird Hawker Hunter based at the Hunter flying Club in Exeter. After the usual briefings, including an ejection seat introduction, Ernie enjoyed 45 mins of flight, most of it hands on. He was a little coy about answering the question 'how much' as he had not dared to tell his wife that.

Neil Bancroft's mother had worked at Airspeed on the Horsa gliders and he described his experience of flying at the ATC622 gliding school based at Mudeford. The old towing winches had already spent long service with the RAF and he recalls that the fuses had been replaced with matches wrapped in foil.

John Levesley described the early days of radar design at Steamer point and Christchurch which had provided sets to plug the gaps in the Chain Home network. Early in WWII the need for Air Control Interception was recognised and an 'AWACS' aircraft developed as early as 1941 using a Wellington with a UHF radar rotating at 25rpm.

During the time the border with Spain was closed **Pat Brown** had served in Gibraltar. RAF aircraft from Brize Norton had to fly the long way around Portugal although British Airways aircraft were allowed to fly via Madrid. Hunters based at Gib always had a good welcome back from their maintenance flights from Chivenor in Devon as the weapons bays were filled with clotted cream.

Delving into his ATC 606Sqn log book **John Head** revealed that he had flown in a Dragon Rapide from Holmsley to Hurn and an Avro York to Lyneham back in March 1944. From Calshot in 1945 he had enjoyed a 35min trip around the IOW in a Sunderland but recalls that a 45min trip in a Dakota was less than comfortable as it only had paratrooper net seats.

When **Prue Ingall** had joined Penny & Giles as a PA, strictly 'non mathematical', data recording was done on stainless steel wire of only 0.005" diameter (a little thicker than a human hair). Prue showed a recording reel which in larger versions could hold 49 miles of wire to give more than 200 hours recording. She was taken aback when a slide rule was presented to her for data analysis.

Working for a telecoms company **Steve Bishop** had been summoned one Friday afternoon to go to Norway "Now". With the flight booked Steve was en route to Heathrow when the tape cassette, vital to a large project, was found to have the wrong data. A courier sent from Rugby with a replacement became lost in London and Steve guided him using a failing mobile and tourist map to arrive in the nick of time.

At the time BAE systems was trying to set up an air defence system in Kazakhstan **Roger Korner** had met MiG28 pilots and through interpreters, or those that spoke English, found them to be remarkably similar to their Western counterparts in attitudes, jokes and aviation interest. Cuban cigars were regularly traded and Roger showed his pride and joy which was a set of MiG 28 pilot's wings.

John Brown's good work in coordinating speakers showed what a fascinating range of experience was held by those normally in the audience. Prue Ingall thanked Pat Brown who had supported the evening marvellously by providing the buffet which attendees had enjoyed in a break part way through the very cold evening.

INVITATION FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE NEW FOREST AIRFIELDS (FONFA)

History with Wings 2009 -Local Aviation History Fair !!CANCELLED!!

~~The Friends of the New Forest Airfields would like to invite you to the fair which will be held at Merryfield Park on Sunday March 29th between 10.30am and 3.30pm. Merryfield Park (formerly RAF Sopley) lies between the villages of Bransgore and Sopley on Derritt Lane, the post code for the sat nav is BH23 8AU. Local direction signs will be in place from Winkton, Sopley and Bransgore. The~~

~~event benefits from lots of covered accommodation as it is held in the former Airmen's mess, NAAFI and camp cinema building at RAF Sopley. It is lit but not heated.~~

~~Potential exhibitors should get in touch without delay to John Levesley.~~

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