



Twenty Four

The Magazine of XXIV Squadron Association



Issue 20

2013 is our 98th Anniversary

Summer 2013

98 Years Airborne Edition



Twenty Four is the Newsletter of 24 Squadron RAF Association and issued once a year to all members.

Contributions to Assoc. Sec at :- 15 Birch Grove CHIPPENHAM Wilts SN15 1DD
email: the24secretary@royalairforce.net data or pictures on disc most acceptable.



The Photo Album - Over France



Did they have Cameras in 1916?— A selection of photos taken by Andy Stewart of the replica DH2 flying over the Hawker Memorial at Ligny-Thilloy on the 12 November 2011.

Cover feature is a collage of the various screen shots of the present day aeronautical environment around Brize Norton operating current and future Squadron aircraft.



Contents	Page No
The 2012 Reunion	3
Latest from XXIV	5
Squadron Shop	8
Mailbox	9
Hawker Connections	12
Keeping in Touch	13
XXIV A/C	15
Diary of Nav Pt 15	17
Notice Board	20
Photo Album Pt2	21
Late News	22

Editorial



The months since the October 2012 Reunion have rolled by all too quickly with only our successful Summer Social making the main headline event. With a new OC XXIV in the left hand seat (W/C Doz James) life continues apace at Brize Norton. The work up towards its full role as effectively OCU for old and new aircraft says a great deal about the expertise and professionalism of the crews selected to be part of this special Squadron, which is a mere 98 years old.

With the financial actions resulting from the 2012 AGM being carried out, i.e. the move over to virtually all e-communication within the membership, the Treasurer has posted a healthy 6 monthly statement. The receipt of this Newsletter via your in-box should act as proof of the large savings we have achieved by avoiding printing and postage.

One of the quickest methods of broadcasting news, events gossip is our [Blog Book](#). Use has been made of this medium to post updates between Newsletters, especially for items about XXIV Squadron that appear in the local paper. Do try it out, give it a browse and add your own comments.

Editor

David Burgin

Association President

Air Com Dick Gould

Association Committee

- Keith Chapman - Chairman
- Sam Wright - Dep. Chair
- Roger Hale - Treasurer
- David Burgin - Secretary

Squadron Liaison

W/C Doz James (Dec 12)
F/L Sam Sheppard

The 96th Anniversary Reunion

Reunion Report

for

**Sat 6th Oct 2012 @ RAF
Brize Norton**

Squadron HQ, sit in on various presentations, "fly" the simulator and look over a static C130J on the dispersal.

For all of you not able to attend the Reunion, this article is a belated attempt to give you a bit of a feel of what the day is like.

Brize Norton is growing even larger every year with 1,500 new single accommodation rooms, more married quarters and responsibility for other off site units. It has 7 flying squadrons and typically 7,500 people on the base, which represents about 25% of the whole of the RAF. Seven aircraft types, which include the new tankers will be operating out of the base with the now well out of date VC10 and C130K's going out of service by 2018.

By the time Wing Commander Tim Jones started this his second Association Reunion briefing at Brize, all the Members and Guests had safely arrived, been refreshed in the Officers Mess and put the weighty business of the AGM to one side.

Brize carries out a range of typical airport type duties such as Embarkation and Disembarkation but also military roles like air to air refuelling, aeromedical and repatriation. Occasionally the aeromedical flights over fly from Afghanistan and go direct to Birmingham if the situation warrants it.

The Squadron valued the special relationship with such an active Association as our own and enjoyed the opportunity to link up each year. The liaison team had arranged a coach after lunch for members to visit the

Editor Still Wanted

To allow the current Editor to concentrate on the Association Web Site's development, the job of Newsletter Editor is up for grabs. Ideally suit anyone with reasonable IT skills, e-mail access and keen on Aviation research. You will enjoy this opportunity to give the current Newsletter a make over and reach a readership of 300 members each year.

You would work closely with the Secretary and Web Site Author to ensure a seamless end product. Full details and background from Assoc Sec.



(Continued from page 3)

It should be no surprise that many un established tasks crop up during the year, such as needing personnel to man the Olympic desks and assist with security, but the core business still remains Air Mobility. The Squadron solely use the C130J's at the moment but will be training and flying the A400M in due course.

XXIV are hugely involved and have been out in theatre since 2001 at Kandahar and Camp Bastion with not much scope to operating in other parts of the globe. Since our last Reunion, the Squadron have completed the move from Lyneham, with A Flight moving and commissioning the simulators and B Flight joining everyone one else in the Squadron HQ from the south side of Brize airfield. This has improved both the moral and atmosphere within the building as they now work as a more cohesive force to reckon with.

Some of the events the Squadron has been involved with during the last 12 months include the Hawker Memorial project and inauguration Nov 2011 in close cooperation with the Association, the concurrent 40th Anniversary and wreath laying at Livorno of the Pisa incident. This was reinforced by the dedication of a new roll of honour plaque in the Squadron HQ.



n.b. some 3 months after the wreath laying ceremony, some fishermen recovered the twisted remains of a propeller from XV216 which is being retained as a memorial in Italy. (See article on BLog/Newsletter)

The A400M project moved a stage closer when Squadron personnel were given a familiarisation session with one of the pre production aircraft.

On the social side, a visit to Lords cricket ground for the regular Inter-service 20/20 match proved a satisfying experience as the Army opener was bowled out 1st bowl for a duck and the RAF won comfortably. A visit to the House of Lords is also scheduled, along with a Squadron Mess Dinner.

Operationally the only certainty is that nothing in world politics is certain and the Squadron motto that has been so apt over the decades is "in omnia parati". By the way, that does not translate as "always on para".

The last piece of information to pass on is that Tim's tour of duty during a particularly eventful phase in the Squadron's history would be ending in January 2013 and the new OC XXIV would be Wing Commander Doz James.

After Tim's presentation, everyone adjourned to the dining room for lunch. This was then followed by the rest of the days programme of events, cumulating in the Association hosting the Ladies Guest Night later than evening in the Mess.

In Omnia Parati.



Latest from “The Squadron”

New OC XXIV—December 2012—W/C Doz James.



Wing Commander Doz James is currently Officer Commanding XXIV Squadron, the Hercules Operational Conversion Unit. Educated in SW Wales, he joined the RAF as a direct entrant in 1989. After a lengthy hold at numerous locations including Brize Norton, Brawdy and Cosford, he eventually started his operational career on XXIV Sqn in Jan 1995.

During this tour he flew the last AAR C130 in support of the Falkland Islands and continued to support the UK role until the capability was withdrawn in 1996. Post a successful captains conversion he was sent to 70 Sqn in 1997. During this time, he became the lead Airborne Task Force captain responsible for the planning and delivery of 16 Air Assault Brigade.

He also led the strategic long range parachute insertion of the RAF Regt into Sierra Leone in Jan 2000. In addition, he also captained the crew of the RAF Falcons parachute display team for 3 years. He was promoted into a staff role in Joint Helicopter Command in 2002, before returning to XXIV Sqn as a Flt Cdr on the C130J in 2005.

He held appointments as Flt Cdr Trg, Ops, Tac AT and finally EXO. During this tenure he had numerous operational detachments as both a pilot and a detachment commander in both the Iraq and

Afghanistan theatres. Towards the end of this tour, he was acting CO for approx 4 months, prior to his promotion and new role in the MOD as the Air Staff Strategy COS from Oct 2008.

He was successfully chosen to attend ACSC 14 from Sep 10 to Jul 11, after which he completed a short tour in the Army HQ in Andover, prior to returning back to XXIV Sqn. He is married to Jane with 3 children, Kieran (145), Sian (13) and Ollie (8) and lives near Malmesbury. His interests include keeping fit, rugby coaching at his local club and is a poor DIY enthusiast.



£226 million training facilities announced for new RAF transport planes.

Spotted this headline on the [GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk) site recently and would not be surprised to find that XXIV to be a major player in the training of the Atlas crew. Read on and take a look and see if the article stacks up.

RAF pilots and ground crew who will operate the new A400M Atlas transport aircraft are to benefit from state-of-the-art training facilities thanks to a new multi-million pound contract.



Latest from "The Squadron" cont

(Continued from page 5)

It will house 2 full flight simulators to train RAF pilots, a specialist workstation to train loadmasters, a cockpit simulator to train engineers and a suite of computer-based training equipment.

The facility will allow all personnel who operate, support and maintain the aircraft to train in a replica environment, giving them the best and safest learning experience available.

The 18-year deal with A400M Training Services Ltd - a joint venture between [Airbus Military](#) and [Thales Training and Simulation Ltd](#) - will create and secure up to 300 long-term jobs, principally at RAF Brize Norton, but also at Airbus Military and at Thales UK's facility in Crawley, West Sussex, where the simulators are being built.

The MOD is buying 22 [A400M Atlas](#) transport aircraft to replace the RAF's fleet of [C-130 Hercules](#), with the first aircraft entering service in late 2014.

Able to carry twice as much as the Hercules, the A400M Atlas can transport 32 tonnes of cargo over a range of 4,500 kilometres, providing unprecedented capability to support the UK Armed Forces.

The MOD is also able to announce today that £80 million is being spent on defensive aids for the A400M Atlas.

The contract is for the development, manufacture and installation of the modifications required to the aircraft so that it can operate the large aircraft infrared countermeasures defensive aids system when flying in hostile environments.

Flight Lieutenant Chris Aston, a future A400M Atlas pilot, said:

"The A400M Atlas programme is incredibly exciting and one I'm delighted to be involved

in. These facilities will give both aircrew and ground crew a unique training experience. Having access to flight simulators, a loadmaster workstation trainer and cockpit maintenance operations simulator will ensure that we can get the most out of the aircraft.."

On a recent visit to RAF Brize Norton to inspect an Atlas aircraft, Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology Philip Dunne said:

"Our air and ground crews have always been some of the best trained in the world and the facility at RAF Brize Norton cements that position for the RAF's latest transport aircraft fleet. The blend of real and synthetic training will ensure crews can be 'hands on' with the aircraft throughout their training. The defensive aid suites will provide pilot and crew with an essential defensive capability and peace of mind when operating in hostile environments. Protecting our crews and the aircraft is paramount."

Alongside the [C-17 Globemaster](#) and the new [Voyager](#) aircraft now entering service with the RAF, the A400M Atlas fleet will give the RAF the ability to move people and equipment rapidly around the globe for military and humanitarian operations for decades to come.

Those members of the Association who have strong links with Lyneham, might be interest in this article spotted in the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald dated the 18th Feb 2013.



Latest from “The Squadron” cont

Valedictory Message from ex OC—W/C Tim Jones

It hardly seems right that I am bidding farewell to you as OC 24 Sqn, and yet already two years has passed since I arrived back at Lyneham to take over command of the Squadron we all cherish. In that time, it seems that as much as could possibly change about the Squadron, has changed. Two years ago, 24 Squadron had a mixture of fully operational crews and conversion instructors. Training on the Hercules was split up between a variety of Lyneham's Squadrons and the Brize Norton move seemed months away. Today, the Squadron is fully focussed on training and covers all disciplines, not just those associated with the basic skills. We also provide engineering training not only for the Hercules, but also for the VC-10, the TriStar and the C-17. We have moved our individual Flights not once, but several times over many months and we now inhabit a splendid new Headquarters at RAF Brize Norton – the move is complete.

And yet whilst the Squadron's identity has evolved, there much that has stayed the same. The commitment and dedication of 24 Squadron's personnel is as strong as it has ever been. That the changes of the past two years have occurred during an exceptionally busy period of operations in both Afghanistan and Libya, is a testament to the talent and energy of our people. They have been simply extraordinary, and I sometimes think the RAF is very lucky to be able to count on such a loyal team. I am very proud of everything they have achieved, and my hope is that they feel proud too, because none of what our country's Armed Forces have done over the past two years could have taken place without their contribution.

In the same way, we are very grateful for the enduring support we have received from the Association. It is too easy to take for granted the constant presence of our former Squadron

members, and the last two years has shown I believe just what a strong relationship between us can achieve. The unveiling of the Hawker Memorial in 2011 must surely represent one of the greatest achievements of our joint history. Without the moral, practical and financial support of the Association, that day would simply not have happened in the way it did. I will always treasure my memories of that week, and the Squadron will always be thankful for the part the Association played in making it happen. Likewise, I am delighted that we were able to create a permanent Roll of Honour to the men of XV216. It is a fitting tribute to those who died in that tragic accident, and I was very touched by some of the letters I received following the Service of Dedication at Brize Norton.

Twenty-four Squadron is in very good health. The next two years will, of course, provide more challenges, more frustrations and more excitement. I thank Dick and Jackie, and Keith and Peggy for being great supporters, advisors and friends to Susie and me during this busy time. I thank the Association membership for continuing to give such faithful support, and I look forward to joining your ranks very soon. I thank the current members of 24 Squadron for their extraordinary performance during my tour, and I wish my successor Wg Cdr Doz James the very best of luck as he takes 24 Squadron into the next instalment of its fascinating journey.



Latest from "The Squadron" cont



Items that are available can be purchased via the Squadron at Brize, follow this link <http://the24sec.wordpress.com/2010/11/10/xxiv-squadron-stock-list/>.

If you want a Squadron Association tie in the Zig Zag style, send a cheque for £15 c/o The XXIV Sqn Association Treasurer, 14 Weiss Road, London, SW15 1DH and one will be in the post asap.



SQUADRON GOODIES STOCK LIST

Another little job I promised to do for the Squadron after the Reunion this year was to promote the range of items they have for sale. So below is a list and photo of the goodies that are available and a couple that may need to be ordered rather than in stock.

24 SQUADRON STOCK PRICES 2010

In Stock

- | | |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1. Cummerbund | £25.00 |
| 2. Small A/C Print | £5.00 |
| 3. Large A/C Print | £7.00 |
| 4. Cloth Chevron | £2.50 |
| 5. Cloth Crests | £5.00 |
| 6. Black T-Shirts | £8.00 |
| 7. Sand T-Shirts | £6.50 |
| 8. Bow Tie | £7.00 |
| 9. Tattoo Sheet | £0.20 |

To Order

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 1. Mug | £11.50 |
| 2. Tankard | £20.00 |

To place an order, contact:-

The Adjutant, XXIV Squadron, TMRF, RAF Brize Norton, CARTERTON, OX18 3LX stating item/s and quantity and despatch address. Make cheques payable to "24 Squadron Fund".

Plans for new military base at RAF Lyneham go on show.

Those members of the Association who have strong links with Lyneham, might be interest in this article spotted in the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald dated the 18th Feb 2013.

It shows quite a nostalgic airborne shot of the base and the article goes onto say that the plans will be shown as part of a public exhibition for the proposed development of a Defence College of Technical Training at Lyneham.

Read on by clicking this [link](#).



Mailbox ✉ **Your Letters**

We do seem to have quite a lively bit of snail and e-mail traffic on issues featured in the Newsletter and long may it continue. So for your interest and comments, read on.

Ps - you can also comment on line at the BLog Book.

We still keep in touch with the with the daughter of the late Air Cdre David Hitchins RAAF. The following anecdote was discovered whilst going through some old papers of his and thought we might like to use it.

IT COULDN'T HAPPEN TODAY ! (COULD IT?)

One of our intrepid staff reporters recently unearthed the following true story. It concerns Wing Commander David Hitchins AFC RAAF (later Air Commodore) who was OC XXIV Squadron at RAF Colerne from 1956 to 1958 during the era when XXIV was designated a "Commonwealth Squadron". Sometime after returning to Australia, David Hitchins was lucky enough to have a second flying tour in the rank of wing commander, this time as OC 36 Squadron, a famous Australian Air Force transport outfit.

Close to Christmas 1965, David was captain of a Lockheed Hercules C-130A tasked for a day return flight from an RAAF base in Western Australia to Norfolk Island. The payload was a Fire Truck. At the pre-flight briefing, Wg Cdr Hitchins told his crew to carry an overnight bag on this trip "just in case" as he put it. The aircraft touched down on Norfolk Island at noon, right on schedule. The truck was quickly unloaded and the aircraft was refuelled and readied for the return leg. However, when David was doing his external checks, he found what looked like an oil leak on the number two prop. Jim the air engineer promptly borrowed a ladder and climbed up to take a closer look.

"Looks OK to me, captain, " he reported. "It's clean. No sign of a leak."

"Grrrrrh..." uttered David, grumpily. "I think we'd better have a second opinion."

He then tasked the loadmaster to take a look at the suspect prop. As the ALM was inching along the main plane towards the suspect engine, Jim climbed back up the ladder to take a look from another angle. At this point the ALM whispered, "Jim, it might be just as well to find something wrong, old son."

Jim agreed. He climbed back down and said to Wg Cdr Hitchins, "Sir, I think there could be a slight weep on that prop after all. I've cleaned it for now but perhaps we should leave it awhile and check it in the morning."

"Good man," said the boss. "I thought you would see it my way."

So David sent a "trans-delay" message to base and then hurried off with his crew to a hotel for their un-scheduled night-stop. Within ten minutes of checking in, David was knocking on the doors of the other guys, telling them to get their fingers out and join him on a little trip to the nearest pier. He himself was already kitted out in his fishing gear! When they got down to the jetty, they hired a boat and set off to find some fish. Their luck was in. In only an hour and a half, they caught so many fish that the boat became over-loaded and they had to return to shore. Their catch was at least 200 kg. A few locals helped with the gutting and cleaning before the fish were frozen so that the crew could take them back to the mainland next day.

When they got to the airfield next morning, Jim was proved absolutely right. Miraculously, the prop had stopped leaking overnight. When they landed back at base, Wg Cdr Hitchins de-briefed his crew and complimented them on their fine airmanship, saying to the air engineer and ALM, "Nice bit of work, you two, sorting out that prop - and well done also on that nice bit of fishing!"

Not surprisingly, David Hitchins (who died in January 2011 at the age of 88) was renowned for his passion for fishing as well as for his great charm and flying skills.

PS: The fire truck is still on Norfolk Island although it's now in a museum, not on active duty in a fire station.



RAF Museum Hercules film

We have quite an interesting request that should appeal to a broad number of our members, as it concerns those with a bit of Hercules experience. All the info is below and feel free to contact Ewan direct. He says:-

(Continued on page 10)



Mailbox  Your Letters - cont

(Continued from page 9)

"I am writing to ask if any 24 Squadron Association members might be able to help us.

The RAF Museum has recently accepted a Hercules aircraft into its collections, and we are currently working on new Hercules exhibitions in order to display the aeroplane to best effect.

Part of this project involves the production of a short film about the Hercules in RAF service and we are hoping to contact Hercules air and ground crews who would be prepared to participate in this.

Would any association members be prepared to be interviewed on camera about their Hercules experience, for inclusion in the film? People who have participated in the Falklands War, the Gulf Wars and operations in Afghanistan would be of particular interest but we would be very glad to hear from anybody with operational Hercules experience.

If any of your members would be interested, or if there are any further questions, I can be contacted at ewan.burnet@rafmuseum.org or on 0208 358 4866.


Thank you in advance for your help with this, it is greatly appreciated."

Ewan Burnet Curator of Film and Sound RAF Museum, Hendon.

Help our Historian

Simon Batchelor, our unofficial but dedicated historian is having a renewed burst of enthusiasm for his 24 Squadron research. He has now identified 100 different aircraft types operated, in 137 different marks!!!!

If you or you know of anybody who could tell Simon about, A Flight, B Flight, C Flight, D Flight, E flight during 1940 he would be very grateful. All input or material, via the Sec or add a comment to this post.

Incidentally—Simon will be making a presentation at this years Reunion on October 5th about the impressed aircraft used between 1940 & 1942. It includes Fokkers & Messerschmitts as well as anecdotes about some of the aircraft and how they came to be used. Certainly worth dropping in for that session.



Mailbox ✉ Miscellany



Plans for new military base at RAF Lyneham go on show

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Read on by clicking this link.

http://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/10234266.Plans_for_new_military_base_at_RAF_Lyneham_go_on_show/?ref=rss



Hawker Biography—Reprint

Some news in from F/L Phil Mobbs, the Hawker Memorial Champion -

Tyrrel Hawker's biography of his brother is being re-published this summer, 31 August, by Pen & Sword. (It's been out of print since the 1960s & is quite pricey if you can find a copy.)

The introduction to the new version has been written by a former XXIV Sqn member with a keen interest in Hawker.....

Phil will & get a few copies for people to have a look in time for the Reunion on October 5th at Brize Norton this year.. Very reasonable at £15.99!!



Hawker Memorial Connections

We now have a valid reason to visit France now that we have a lasting memorial in place. Here is an article from Keith Chapman after last years first revisit.

ASSOCIATION VISIT TO LIGNY-THILLOY - SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2012

In line with arrangements expertly planned and coordinated by Wg Cdr Chas Whitaker, twelve Association Members and partners travelled to northern France last weekend to attend the annual Ceremony of Remembrance held in Ligny-Thillooy on Sunday 11 November. The weather was exactly the same as last year. That is to say, cold, dank and grey with mist and low stratus that would once again have thwarted any fly-past by a DH2 had one been planned.

The ceremony began promptly at 11.00 hrs when the Mayor (Monsieur Dominique Deleplace) called upon all present (villagers and British visitors alike) to assemble in front of the village war memorial. After a trumpeter had played the French equivalent of the Last Post, the Mayor read out the customary message from the President of France, followed by a roll-call of all those villagers who had died in the Two World Wars and other conflicts. The Mayor then paid tribute to the Allied Air Forces which had played such an important role in both World Wars, before calling upon our Deputy Chairman Sam Wright (smartly turned out in full Highland regalia) to play a haunting lament on the bagpipes, followed by a rendition of the French national anthem La Marseillaise. Villagers laid bouquets of flowers both on the village War Memorial and on the Hawker Memorial. Finally, our Chairman laid a poppy wreath on the Hawker Memorial. It was clear that the attendance of the XXIV Squadron Association contingent was much appreciated by our French hosts.

After the ceremony, everyone was invited to attend a convivial Vin d'Honneur hosted by the Mayor in the Village Hall, where Sam again impressed everyone with his prowess on the pipes! Later, the Association representatives entertained Monsieur and Madame Deleplace to an informal lunch in a small restaurant called "Le Gourmet" in nearby Bapaume, after which most people adjourned to the Mayor's house for drinks, thus rounding off a truly memorable day. Both the Association contingent and the Mayor expressed the hope that such visits to Ligny-Thillooy for the annual Remembrance Ceremony on 11 November will become a regular event.



Coincidentally, one of intrepid young at heart members, Bill Lowe was on a weeks motor biking holiday touring the Somme area in June 2012 and also paid his respects. The day after he visited Major Hawkers memorial he visited a German war grave site where the Red Baron had been interned. It is believed that this grave was later moved, to Berlin. Many thanks bill for the photo.



Keeping in Touch - Association

RECENT LOSSES

We have been informed of only the following Association member passing away since the last AGM.

Ralph Barker, who has died aged 93, served as a wireless operator and air gunner during the Second World War, surviving many hazardous anti-shipping operations in the Mediterranean theatre; he later became noted for his books about aviation and cricket.

After completing his training in 1941 Barker joined a Beaufort torpedo bomber squadron, flying from Scotland, but was soon posted to the Middle East with Nos 47 and 39 Squadrons. Flying from airfields on Malta and North African desert landing strips, it was the task of these squadrons to sink the Axis ships supplying Rommel's Panzers in the Western Desert. They were highly dangerous missions, and losses among the Beauforts were high. Barker flew on many of these operations, but his career attacking convoys and their powerful escorts was terminated by a crash in which his pilot and navigator were killed. He returned to Britain, ending the war flying transport aircraft.

By the time he retired from the RAF as a flight lieutenant in April 1961, Barker had already begun to establish himself as a serious author on RAF subjects. His first book, published in 1955, was *Down in the Drink*; this was followed by *The Ship Busters* (1957), an authoritative work in which he drew on his own experience of wartime operations. A succession of aviation books followed, among them *The Schneider Trophy* and *Torpedo Bomber*. ([Courtesy Daily Telegraph - June 2011](#))

Graeme Vivian Donald We have just had word that Graeme Vivian Donald (94 years young) passed away peacefully in his sleep on the night of the 16th of April 2013. He was a lifetime member of the RAF club and has attended numerous RAF reunions in Britain, including quite a few XXIV events.

Graeme was a S/L Pilot on retiring, having been awarded the AFC during the period of 1942 – 43 flying Hudson and Dakota aircraft out of Hendon. In June 1943 he took Viscount Trenchard on a 30 airfield tour of North Africa.

Peter Keeble It was a sad day when we learnt from his widow Mary the news about Pete after a long and painful illness. He will be remembered for the cartoons of Fat Albert and for decorating the Officers Mess for the summer Balls.

The service is on Fri 5 Apr nr Lowestoft, where Peter was an enthusiastic coordinator for the Lowestoft Air Show for several years. It is thought his ATC Sqn, where he showed so much enthusiasm to inspire aviation minded cadets will give him a guard of honour. Pete served two tours on XXIV at Lyneham, Nov 68 – Dec 75, Jan 93 – Mar 97.

F/L Geoff Skelton The Association has received the sad news that Geoff Skelton has passed away. Although Geoff was not an Association Member, he was know by many who are. The details below are from his son Andrew.

FLT Lt Geoffrey Skelton, Born 24.04.1943, Died 25.10.2012, Commissioned 23rd March 1967

Geoff flew with No 24 Squadron during the late 60's and into the 70's. He always expressed a love of the time he spent serving and flying and so it is unfortunate that we have only a few details of his service history (Andrew could not find a record of his service number), but remembers many happy stories he recounted of his experiences with the RAF.



Keeping in Touch cont - Association

He passed away peacefully on Thursday the 25th of October 2012, and the service was held at Semington Crematorium, Wiltshire on Friday the 9th of November at 1.45p.m.

p.s. – if you have any anecdotes about Geoff, please leave a comment, as I am sure Andrew and family would love to read about them.

Mrs EA (Betty) Archbell wife of the late Wg/Cdr Tempest Haig (Archie) Archbell DFC, a former OC 24 Squadron in 1944, passed away on the 11th April at her retirement home in Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa.

Betty was a very good friend and supporter of the Association and could always be guaranteed to be in touch a few days before each Reunion for chat, which she continued to do after Archie passed away.

NEW MEMBERS

We can report a total of 3 new recruits who have joined the ranks and they are:-

Last Name	Initials	Mem No	Date on Sqn	Place on Sqn	Trade
Carpenter	David	429	Mar 73—Jun 74	RAF Lyneham	Pilot
Jones	Tim	428	Dec 00—May 02; Feb 11—Dec 12	RAF Lyneham/ Brize	Pilot [ex OC]
LeCount	Ted	430	Sep 74 - Jan 76; Jul 86 - Mar	RAF Lyneham	Air Engineer



Aircraft Operated by XXIV - Full Listing

Simon Batchelor, our XXIV authoritative aircraft historian, has put together a comprehensive history of all the aircraft flown by XXIV. Simon has also assisted us through the year in helping fellow researchers via request on the Internet. The piece below is only an extract with the full article on the Blog Book in due course.

Vickers Wellington 1c

Issue 17 of the 24 Squadron Association Newsletter carries details of the ALDS postal service to Malta which was to be operated after August 1940, when the squadron took over from BOAC who had previously operated the service. The Wellington was the premier Heavy bomber in service at the time with bomber Command, and it is a measure of the importance of the mail service that three new bombers were diverted from that command at such a time in the War.

The 1c versions were followed in service by dedicated transport versions Mk CXVI, and I have seen photographs of these aircraft with dummy gun turrets.

WK Knight who served in the early 40s sent me a letter in 2004 where he related the following anecdote about the aircraft. "The Wellington was in having all the bomb racks and wiring removed, in its place was installed a long cylindrical petrol tank. So maximising its range, to reach Malta. Two K guns were fitted on each side of the fuselage. The day arrived for an Air test, on returning the starboard wingtip had been shot up. I think the officer was a Squadron Leader, how the problem was solved I don't know. Days ran into weeks as F.IIAs (?) hand drilling the rivets to release the damaged brackets & fitting new ones. Returning from the Cookhouse after dinner we found someone had put a few grass turves along the main plane, this caused great laughter but the Flt Sergeant didn't think so, GET THEM OFF QUICK, end of joke."

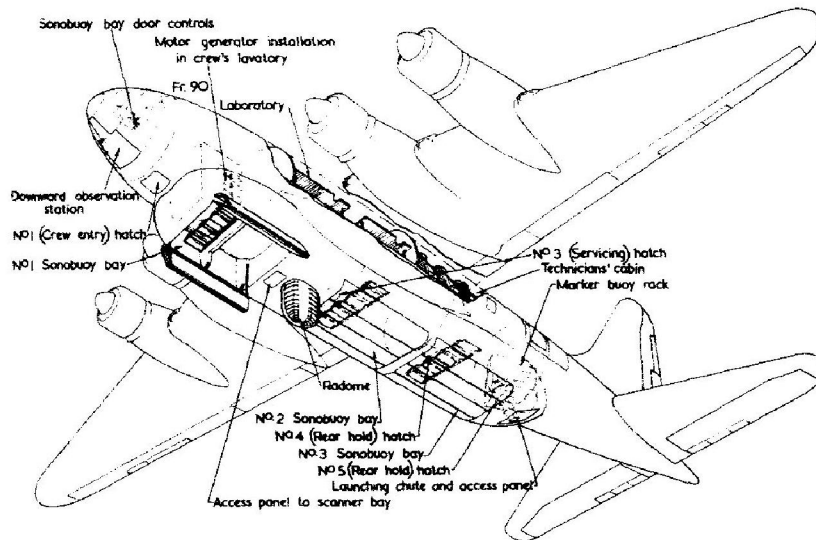
Technical Details Twin engine low wing monoplane Retractable undercarriage
Crew 1 pilot Crew 3/4 3 Passengers Length 64'7" Wingspan 86'2" Max Speed 235mph
Engine 2 no Power Range 2200miles with 1500lb load
Bristol Pegasus XVIII radials 1000hp Ceiling



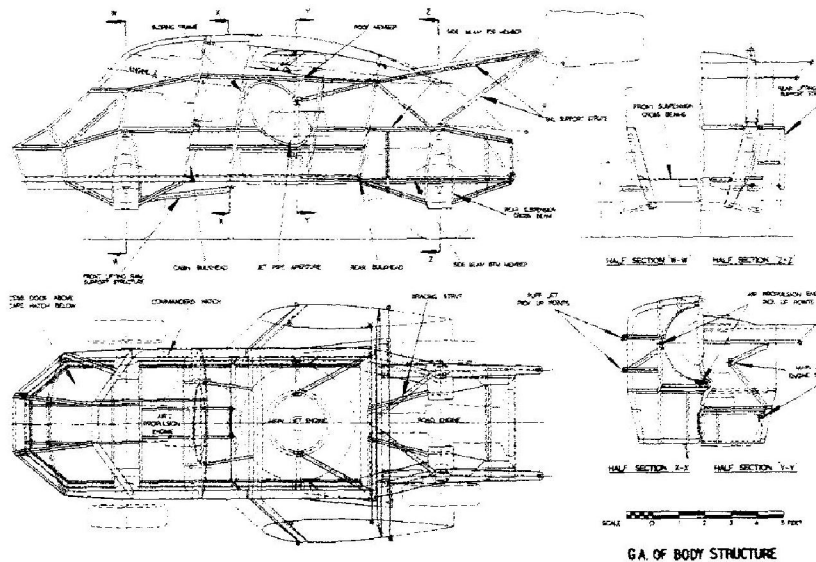
Wellington C Mark I, L4340 'NQ-A' "Duke of Rutland", of No. 24 Squadron RAF on the ground at Hendon, Middlesex. One of a number of passenger transport conversions from bombers, which served with No. 24 Squadron in 1943 and 1944, L4340's front and rear gun-turrets have been replaced with rounded fairings.



Aircraft Operated by XXIV - Hastings Research version



**HASTINGS
SONOBUOY RESEARCH AIRCRAFT**
(RESTRICTED)



HP120 reconnaissance vehicle flying jeep study.

This sketch caught my eye in the December 2012 Issue of The Aerospace Professional magazine showing Hastings Sonobuoy research aircraft WD480 c 1953. The technical supplement [A.P. 2979B Vol 1] that goes with it describes the ground handling, and servicing, electrical/radio/oxygen/hydraulic systems, emergency equipment and exits, loads and other data of a modified Hastings CMk2 used as a flying laboratory.

If you have any information, flew it or anecdotes about this version, do let us know.



Diary of a Navigator - Pt 15



Another instalment from John Mitchell's diary of his VIP flying days with the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill during August 1944.

MOSCOW CONFERENCE Pt 3

I don't know if you remember back to Issue 19 but we did finish on a bit of a cliff hanger. Here is part three to conclude the tale.

The following day we went independently (that is, without the VIPs and entourage - not independently of the KGB) to see 'Swan Lake' - danced by Semenova, with seats in the stalls. To me it was a fairyland for I had never seen classical ballet before and from then on I became 'hooked'. Fortunately for me, 20 years later I was able to enjoy the same dancing and settings.

During one of our many sessions in the Mess of 30 Mission we came across one Bill Laurie, the editor of a local British government newspaper appropriately called 'British Ally'. It was a war-time effort to explain to the Russian man-in-the-street something of the British war effort and how it was aiding their Eastern Front by providing badly needed raw materials, medical supplies, etc - via the Murmansk convoys, not to mention aircraft, trucks and all sorts of ammunition of war. This paper had the blessing of the Soviet government in a limited sort of way and we in our turn, in England, allowed the Soviets to publish a newspaper concerning the magnificent fighting of the Russian soldiers on their front. It is often forgotten that long before the Second Front the Allied Bomber Offensive against the Nazi heartland tied down over one million Germans in their defence of the Reich, with their night fighter force, anti-aircraft and radar defences, not to mention the ARP and civil defence services, all of whom might have been directed to fight elsewhere against the Allies.

But this newspaper had a very small circulation (printed on locally-provided scarce paper).

It was quickly snapped up when it went on sale on the streets - possibly for other uses besides news. It is sad that even now, so little acknowledgement has been made by the Soviet authorities of the efforts and losses of those Allied convoys. Anyhow, Bill Laurie said that he would take us to the equivalent of a Russian pub! What a dismal drinking hole it turned out to be. It was a small smoke-filled room with locals drinking a poor quality of vodka out of sliced-off bottles. No such things as beer mugs or glasses existed in their appalling war-time austerity. We didn't stay long but it was a warm experience.

In 30 Mission we also came across one of the first inklings of the Iron Curtain in action, over the question of exit permits for Russian wives of the UK military personnel who had married locally. Some of the telephone operators in the Military Mission were far from unattractive: I remember one, the blond Natasha, in particular. Later on, when her RAF husband was posted home, she was not allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Mrs Churchill personally pleaded with Molotov (in months to come) but they never relented and one shudders for the fate of those who had become tainted with the Western way of life.

Meanwhile at Moscow Central Airfield, the Khodinka Military Exercise Ground of Czarist times, the Soviet Air Force could not have been more friendly or more helpful. When Jack Payne decided that 'Ascalon' needed a really good clean to get rid of the sands of the Middle East, a squad of Mrs Mops turned up and set to with soap and water. I thought they would flood the bilges! Never had we been so clean before. Incidentally, in this role we saw the first sight of women's equality, for they did all the street cleaning in Moscow.

When it came to the time for refuelling, the Soviet Air Force filtered every drop of 100 octane fuel, which had been especially procured to this airfield which was not accustomed to handling high performance engines such as the Merlin. The filter they used was shammy leather, so one can imagine how long it took to filter some two thousand gallons. There were to be no risks with their guest's aircraft!

The day before our departure, Bill and I were summoned to the Soviet Naval HQ to listen to the route weather forecast and to receive

(Continued on page 18)



route-briefing instructions. We went along with one of the Mission interpreters, Squadron Leader Boris Trapp, son of a White Russian emigre. We asked questions in amplification of the written forecast but got no more than the usual ifs and buts of a long-range weather forecaster. Clearly, they were not going to commit themselves and risk making a mistake for Mr Churchill. However, we would be flying south into better weather so we could afford to be relaxed about it. We were to follow the Dardenelles route outbound as used by the incoming aircraft - other than the tardy 'Ascalon'. This involved staging in the Crimea, at Sarabuz, a naval air station near Simferopol in order to have the cover of darkness during the transit of the Dardenelles. VIP passengers would have supper with the local Admkal and take-off would be timed to fly over Turkish territory in the dark and to be clear of the Dodecanese Islands by dawn, so landing in Cairo after breakfast.

19th October 1944. The two Yorks MW100 and 101 had left Moscow the day before 'Ascalon'. The Liberator 'Commando' left with us, carrying Mr Eden; it was to make a separate itinerary after .; we all reached Cairo. On our departure the PM was seen off by Stalin, as well as Molotov and other dignitaries at the Central airport. This was a very obvious gesture of goodwill. We were airborne in the rain just before midday for the four and a half hour flight to Sarabuz. We climbed straight to 4,000 feet and were able to maintain contact with the ground through broken cloud sufficient, we thought, for identification purposes. The weather improved as we flew south and we had no bother map reading from one town to the next. We were routed over Kaluga, Bryansk, then Kirovograd, over the mighty Dnieper River west of the industrial complex of Dnieperpetrovsk, then bearing slightly SSE we could see the River Dnieper again (near Khakovka) as we let down over the salt marshes of the northern Crimea to Simferopol. No difficulty finding the destination airfield this time, for we had had full briefing on where it lay.

Our VIP party consisted of the PM, Lord Moran, Commander Tommy Thompson, Mr Martin plus Sawyers. The passengers were taken off by the Admiral Commanding and local Soviet dignitaries to a dinner, we were told, of Moscow lavishness. The crew too were also most hospitably entertained in somewhat barren surroundings on the airfield - the ground had been fought over with some savagery, twice. Unfortunately, we had to be most circumspect in our imbibing - but it was the same delicious smoked fish and meats.

We were refuelled again with great care, I should say topped-up, with every drop filtered, in rather slow time. Jack took the precaution of having the undercarriage oleo strut air pressure topped-up but the SNAF compressed air lines did not fit our valves. No problem! The Senior Engineer himself made an adaptor in the workshops on the spot and all was well.

Unfortunately for us, the VIP party returned to the aircraft while the crew were still at supper and the PM found the aircraft guarded only by Russian troops with fixed bayonets. He was not pleased and boded Bill Fraser unmercifully. "Never leave my aircraft unattended. The Cossacks are our friends now - but ...".

19th/20th October 1944. Airborne in the dark we set course at 5,000 feet for the coast of Turkey- in-Europe - at Midye, a leg of just under two hours: we then climbed to 8,000 feet and still on a south-westerly heading continued towards Samothrace. We had a fine view of the lights of Istanbul in the clear night air. Turning south to Khios we flew via Ikara and Kos and then south-eastwards towards the Egyptian coast at Alamein, letting slowly down to 5,000 feet. So into Cairo West after seven hours flying at 7 o'clock in the morning sunshine .

21st October 1944. The PM was not in the best of moods for a morning start. The heat made it worse. He was escorted alone across the tarmac to the aircraft by Sir Miles Lampson (Lord Killearn), the Ambassador - the staff were already aboard, other local dignitaries remained behind. Before he mounted the short steps, he struck the port type of the aircraft (near the door) with his stick, remarking to Jack Payne (always last on board) in no uncertain terms "Y're tyres are flat!". Jack thought it a bad moment to tell him that the York, like Lancasters and Halifaxes, was fitted with low-pressure tyres which could look uncomfortably flat when parked on the ground.

One night only in Cairo and so back to the UK via Naples. The day was heating up by the time we left, just before 1000 local time. Our Merlin engines used to get very hot running on the ground, especially when standing out of wind, so it was necessary to minimize the time spent taxiing. Off across the desert due west to Benghazi, climbing clear of most of the bumps at 6,500 feet. We were flying dead into the westerly wind, as usual, at that height. From Benghazi across the sea, the Straits of Messina and so coastwise to Capri, our usual checkpoint. We landed at tea-time, after a very



smooth passage. Our passengers as before, but including CIGS, plus Miss Marian Holmes, one of the PM's two shorthand-typists who had been on the Moscow trip.

22nd' October 1944. Again, only one night's respite and on home leaving Naples at 1000 for a day flight with a forecasted time of seven and a half hours. Miss Layton came on board in place of Miss Holmes; both very charming ladies well accustomed to the PM's ways - and travelling. Our route was the usual one, along the Italian coast past Anzio to Elba, then to the Isles d'Hyeres, still westwards to Carcassonne and Toulouse. From there our route turned northwards to leave the French coast at Barfleur, and so to Christchurch - this being the new standard route across France for Transport Command aircraft. We maintained sight of the ground all the way to Northolt, landing at 1700 local time, just at sunset: half an hour shorter than we had expected from the unfavourable forecasted winds.

Throughout the period of the Conference, and to meet the PM's requirements on his journey home, that is, from October 9th-25th, the RAF provided a daily high-speed courier service for the diplomatic bags, to Moscow and to Naples. This was operated by No 544 (PR) Squadron at Benson, flying their Mosquito XVI aircraft stripped of all photographic gear and fitted with two drop-tanks for extra fuel. On the Moscow run, the flights were directly 'over the top' on a route over Sylt and Memel. They landed at Ramenskoye on the first sortie (the Russian Boscombe Down), flown by Squadron Leader Frank Dodd, a flight commander. Thereafter they used Vnukovo, nearer to the city centre. Flight times varied between five and a half hours and six and a half hours, depending on the wind. It was a remarkable record of reliability, especially in face of the pretty thin terminal forecasts at the Russian end.

Apart from a mishap at landing at Cairo West on the way out, our trip had gone particularly smoothly. The domestic side had satisfied the Owner and I think we could claim that our all-round performance met with approval. It was to be the PM's last flight in 'Ascalon' for after the shake-up Minute he had addressed to the Ministry of Aircraft production two months earlier, we looked forward to real progress on the Skymaster. Within a week of getting back to home base we flew up to Baginton (Coventry) to see for ourselves and were given a firm date for its first test flight at the hands of Charles Turner-Hughes, the Armstrong Whitworth Chief Test Pilot - on 10th November.

Meanwhile RAF Northolt was hosting a Rus-

sian Dakota - which had brought an official delegation to London, presumably in short stages via the Middle East. There was to be a local air test after maintenance by the RAF, so Dick Legg, the Station Commander, ordained that I should accompany the crew to see that they did not get lost. I note a flight of 30 minutes in my log book on 2nd November - the aircraft, fairly new from Lease-Lend, stank of Russian cigarettes. But I had become used to associating that particular smell of Russian cigarettes, the smell of burnt cardboard from the little tube of a mouthpiece and a very coarse Makhovka tobacco, with everything Russian.



The Author - taken September 2010

Our next instalment will take us to 21st July 1944 and the thrill of taking delivery "The Luxurious Skymaster"



Notice Board

A couple of notices for you to read. The first is the new sponsored charity, CALM, that the Squadron has adopted since the closure of Burton Hill House School. See below for a screen shot from its web site. Its internet address is <http://calmcharity.org> Also we have details about accommodation for the Reunion weekend. You are of course free to select anywhere but the coach will only be picking up from the Burford area.

CALM
Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Movement

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Who is CALM?
CALM charity was originally set up in 1983 by a group of parents who became the first CALM trustees, one of whom designed the original [CALM logo](#). Calm is and always has been run by its parents, patients, their families on a purely voluntary basis, support is also given by medical and other professionals within the community.
Calm charity works largely from within the Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust area. CALM holds no offices and no administrative salaries are taken, keeping running costs to an absolute minimum. This ensures all the money and resources available can go to the families and children who need it most.
Through the strength and support of CALM the children who suffer, together with their brothers, sisters and parents, have become one big family giving support to each other, sharing joys and success together as well as the bad times.

ACCOMMODATION 2013 - BURFORD AREA



Shown is a clip of the many Hotels and Guest Houses in the Burford area from a Google search. The local Visitor Information Centre will also be able to assist if you do not have Internet access.

[Burford Visitor Information Centre](#)

Located in an historic building, once a brewery, Burford VIC is not only an official Enjoy England Partner but holds a Silver award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme: recognition for the excellent service that the centre provides and the efforts that they make to promote sustainable tourism.

Burford VIC, The Brewery, Sheep Street, Burford, Oxon, OX18 4LS
Telephone +44 (0)1993 823558, Fax +44 (0)1993 823590, Email burford.vic@westoxon.gov.uk

NOTE - the coach (a snip at only £6/head) will be picking up guests at the Four Pillars, Witney and Burford hotels, i.e. High Street and Travel Lodge, then Brize.

BOOK DIRECT FOR ALL ACCOMMODATION.



The Photo Album - 2012 Reunion



Looking for "Nessie" in the sim



Club Class upgrade explained



Current Committee; after the shutters come down.

F/L Sam Stafford explains the Planning process.



Late News - Summer Social 2013,



SUMMER SOCIAL - 5th June - The Flowing Well, Sunningwell, Oxon

It was a journey into unknown territory for many of the die-hards and new members who attended this years Summer Social in the rural Oxfordshire village of Sunningwell.

As expected, the weather was at its best as our party of 35 rendezvoused at the home of Dick and Jackie Gould, Association President, for pre lunch drinks. These Summer Social events have gone from strength to strength over the past 10 years and give the whole ethos behind the Association a pleasant mid year boost. With attendance figures at capacity, the traditional group photo session proved a challenge and a certain amount of risk for our regular snapper, John Martin. It was only by making full use of the panoramic feature on the camera to capture us all that saved John from falling into the fish pond.

A slick and well engineered menu card reminder system for our lunch orders worked like clockwork as we left to stroll through the Village to the Flowing Well pub. In no time at all, everyone was settled into our reserved area, with the drinks really "flowing well". While waiting for the kitchen staff to cope with our mass invasion, Sam Wright, Deputy Chairman, did what he does best, played the bag pipes, no, not this time. What he did do was get us in a luncchy mood with a raffle. Lots of donated prizes meant lots of winners and a resulting £100 plus top up to Association funds. Many thanks for that Sam.

If decibels are to be used as a gauge to the success of an event and its accompanying enjoyment levels, we seem to have another hit on our hands. With the afternoon rapidly disappearing and no washing up to do, the buzz and well being should carry over to making the Reunion this coming October (the 98th Anniversary) another great day for the Association.

This write up can only give you a flavour of what the day was like, so make it a priority to pencil in the date in your diary when announced, for June 2014. As a ps - it was with regret that due to operational commitments, Wing Commander Doz James could not make it on this occasion but we did have Fit Lt Phil Whitworth along to bring us up to date on all things XXIV and Brize Norton.

