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ICARUS NEWSLETTER Autumn 2022
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We send our condolences to the families of the following absent friends:

Frank Dell
Mike Maybey
Mike Ward

Moose Davies
Geoff Northmore

David Holloway
John Spicer
David Wissett

It was good to receive a response from **Peter Morgan** in relation to both my Blackbushe piece and John Mimpress's message, in the last edition of the newsletter. He states "Your piece about Blackbushe takes me back a very long way. In May 1957 I was a cadet at Sandhurst. On the evening of 1st May I was riding my 1936 BSA Empire Star motorbike near the Academy and trying to keep up with another cadet who had better headlights than me. Entering a bend rather too fast I crossed the centreline and hit some railings, landed in the middle of the road, and was lucky not to be run over by some more cadets in a rather elderly Austin seven who were following. After some comings and goings I ended up, quite late at night, in the large Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot. I was parked on a stretcher-trolley and assumed that I was not seriously hurt and hoped to be attended to quite quickly. Sadly this did not happen as the whole place suddenly came to life with people in white coats rushing everywhere. I was put to one side, very understandably, as the casualties started to arrive from Blackbushe. It was an awful sight as Viking G-AJBO had just crashed and burned.

Your last remark that there was one survivor is not correct from my memory. My recollection is that he was an RASC Officer who died about three weeks later as a result suffering sixty degree burns in the crash. Not a very nice event.

Meanwhile, from your Newsletter I should like to say 'Hi' to two of those you mention. One is John Mimpriss who was, I seem to recall, on the same 'Pre-Command Course' and command on the 'Whispering Warehouse' (Cargo Vanguard). The other is Adrian South also of the Vanguard and later of the B1-11 in Birmingham, which is where I was able to remain until retiring at the end of 1991.

Regarding Tridents, I was at Duxford in 2019 for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. Quite something to watch 19 Dakotas take off for Normandy; one of which was carrying a 100 year old Parachute Regiment soldier who was making his first jump since Normandy on D-Day. Also on permanent display there is Trident 2 G-AVFB. It is in good condition and the flight deck looks as though one could just get in and start it. I looked it up to find that I had last flown it Nicosia - LHR on 12th August 1971. That was with, as I have always thought, the nicest Captain of all those many I flew with in nine years on the Trident, Peter Middleton.

Of course that was long before he knew that he was going to be grandfather to the next but one Queen!

Sadly, as I live on the corner of Worcestershire, Shropshire and Herefordshire, attending any of the Icarus meetings is rather unlikely, so the newsletters are very welcome, please keep it up.

Thanks Peter.

For those of you that don't receive electronic Icarus announcements:-

From **Jim Passmore** 4th June 2022 - I heard a couple of days ago from **Martin Philpott**, confirmed yesterday by **Lloyd Cromwell-Griffiths**, that **Frank Dell** had died in Sydney where he had been living for a number of years. He was born in 1923 and I presume he was the last of the BA WW 2 veterans, particularly as **David Holloway** died at 98 a month ago. He flew Mosquito's and was shot down in 1944. The Dutch resistance looked him after until he was liberated by the British army in March 1945. He remained in touch with the people who helped him for many years.

After the war he flew with BEA/Cyprus Airways until he returned to BEA in 1954 and flew Viscounts, Vikings and Tridents. He was very much involved with the Papa-India enquiry and the work towards Cat 2/Cat 3 operations. He retired in 1976 as, I think, Chief Technical Pilot. He was Flight Manager Tridents when I, and 8 other ex-Hamble Second Officers, joined his fleet in 1964. He was a very good Flt Manager very easy to talk to, even as a new Second Officer. Well-liked and well respected, he was a true gentleman; a lovely man.

His aviation background was well known in Sydney and to celebrate the Qantas centenary he was photographed on the A380 flight deck, a visit which he clearly enjoyed. His wife, Isabel, died about 10 years ago and a few years ago he moved into a care home. I rang him there one day and after a minute or so of 'Jim who?' we had a good reminisce, his mind and his memory still very sharp.

Thanks Jim.

From **Alan Murgatroyd**: Thank you for an interesting Spring Newsletter, and the comments about Croydon Airport stirred a few memories! I wish I was able to visit the museum, but have no idea when I might be in London again, if ever. At age 87 international travel is not fun.

I joined BOAC in March 1958. Following National Service with the RAF I rather liked this flying business, and instead of returning to my previous life I applied for a Permanent Commission, but unfortunately (fortunately in retrospect?) the then Defence Minister, Duncan Sandys, had decided that the next war would not be fought by men flying aeroplanes, but by rockets, and he considered that the RAF didn't need any more National Service pilots to stay on.

Accordingly I was not only refused further RAF service but he also closed down the Auxiliary Air Force, in which I was initially expecting to serve as a "weekend pilot" for the next five years, so that option to continue flying was closed as well.

Around this time BALPA had come to an agreement with BOAC to have three pilots on every flight deck, i.e. the start of the Second Officer position, but BOAC decided that this role would be combined with the navigator and as they didn't want to retrain the "older" navigators to be pilots, many of whom who were approaching retirement age anyway, they employed younger pilots whom they then trained as navigators. This was the start of the PIN (Pilots Initial Navigation) courses. PIN has a different meaning these days!

My application was accepted subject to gaining a CPL, but not necessarily with the Instrument Rating, and my RAF experience enabled me to gain a CPL shortly after completing my two years RAF service, and start my airline career.

BOAC initially trained me for the Instrument Rating with exercises in the Link Trainer and the Stratocruiser simulator with subsequent flying in the then de Havilland Dove fleet that was maintained for airborne navigation training, and finally having an Instrument Rating attached to my CPL I was assigned to a PIN course. This consisted of nearly 9 months classroom work, but when flying experience was scheduled the Dove Fleet had been retired and my first airborne lessons were conducted on the Stratocruiser flying West African routes.

I eventually obtained my Navigators Licence and was employed on the Britannia 312, but still only as a navigator. Although holding the rank of Second Officer I didn't use my flying licence, or pilot skills, until joining the 707 Fleet in mid-1961. Even then I was initially sent as a navigator to Hawaii for three months, operating the Pacific sectors of the then Round the World Service between Los Angeles and Tokyo. Life was hard!!

Returning to UK I was sent to Shannon to complete the 707-436 type rating conversion, and after that, now promoted to F/O I operated as either co-pilot or navigator for the next 12 years prior to gaining a Command, during which time I became a navigation instructor myself, and well remember the early Hamble cadets joining BOAC, some of whom started life on the 707 as PIN navigators. I regret that no names come to mind.

Why Croydon? During our time solely in the Nav. seat we were nevertheless expected to maintain our pilot licences current, which required a minimum of 6 hours and 6 landings every 6 months, and not having any BOAC type rating attached to our licences, BOAC positioned a fleet of Chipmunk aircraft at Croydon, with the Airways Aero Association, a flying training organisation with which they had some partnership, or maybe totally owned, I can't recall the detail now, but when Croydon closed they moved to White Waltham, and eventually became the Airways Flying Club based at Booker with Joan Hughes, as you mentioned. We were allowed to turn up at Croydon at any time we were off duty between flights, and fly the Chipmunks around Southern England, and BOAC paid for the minimum 6 hours every 6 months. We could also rent a Chipmunk at any time beyond this minimum, but at our own cost of course. This happened very rarely! We would fly solo, or occasionally two of us would join forces to enjoy a day out, but one flight from Croydon will forever stick in my mind.

I offered to take what I then regarded as my Aged Aunt flying one day and having driven to Croydon from her home in Chingford, near Epping Forest, I suggested having lunch at Sandown on the Isle of Wight. The flight over was uneventful and my Aunt enjoyed the passing scenery and, after lunch, it soon became time to depart. I don't recall having to refuel, but seated and strapped Auntie in the back seat and completed the external checks, and then climbing into the front seat and finishing the checklists the time came to engage the engine starter. These Chipmunks were fitted with a Coffman Cartridge Starter, each cartridge providing only one starting cycle of course, and a magazine of 6 cartridges was available, but I don't think that they were necessarily refilled every time the aircraft was prepared for flight, after all, most times the engine was not going to be stopped again during the planned flight and if necessary refills were immediately to hand at the Croydon base anyway, and I have no idea if I knew, or even checked, how many remained when I took over the aircraft for my earlier departure. What I soon learned was that I had only 3 available at Sandown, and used them all up without achieving a successful start - what to do now?

I noticed a maintenance base not far away, so walked over and asked an engineer if he could come over and give me a hand start to the prop, to which he agreed, but not for a while as he had to finish the job in hand but, with the afternoon drawing to a close and the need to get back to Croydon before dark, I went back to the Chipmunk, re-primed the engine, pulled the prop through a few times then climbed in and firmly set the parking brake and, after that, approached the rear cockpit. Engaged the ignition switches and then cracked the throttle a

little and asked Aged Aunt to place her hand on it, with the instructions that when the engine started she must PULL this lever BACK as soon as possible! I returned to the front of the aircraft, placed my feet firmly into the grass, reached for the top of the prop and pulled it sharply down. The engine roared into life and Aged Aunt obediently pulled the throttle to idle. I ran back to the front cockpit and regained control, subsequently completing the flight back to Croydon without further incident. I still have nightmares of Aged Aunt at the controls of a rogue Chipmunk careering across the grass at Sandown!

Thanks for the memories. Alan Murgatroyd, Kerikeri, NZ.

And thanks to you too, Alan!

From **John Russell**: I well remember an Aer Lingus Despatcher at Dublin, coming in the flight deck and asking what fuel we wanted. The skipper said: "We sent a message before departure from London and told you on the way in on the Company frequency, so why do you want to know again?" With complete sincerity and without any hint of humour, he replied: "Captain, we like it in triplicate, in order to avoid duplication." A logic we could not fault!!

Similarly **Captain John Mason**, Training Manager on the TriStar at LGW, was met by Choppra, a well-known Airtours ground engineer (a wily Indian gentleman, sadly no longer with us) to discuss an item in the Tech Log. John asked Choppra's assistant, another well-known English engineer, for his additional opinion to which Choppra added "There you are captain, at least you now have it in black and white!"

Ken Wakefield died earlier this year and was listed in the Absent Friends section of the last newsletter. **Clive Catherall**, a valued member of our committee, found the following piece relating to Ken in the March edition of "Light Aviation" magazine:

"In 1944, when the American Army based Piper L-4 Cub aeroplanes at RAF Chedworth near Cheltenham it had a huge influence on a West Country lad. "One day I will own one of those, he pledged." This marked the beginning of Ken's association with the Piper Cub and other US liaison aircraft and, 38 years later, he achieved that ambition owning one of the L-4s that arrived in Britain back in 1944. Along the way Ken had gained his PPL and soon became a Dakota co-pilot flying for a charter company, flying from Europe to South Africa. In 1953, Cardiff-based Cambrian Air Services was looking to employ two additional pilots and one of the vacancies was for a DC-3 co-pilot. Ken's Dakota experience obviously paid-off, as the only other DC-3 rated pilot in the Company was its managing director!

Ken went on to fly the Viscount and BAC1-11, eventually morphing into BA and retiring from the TriStar after a 27-year flying career. Ken was a member of the RAeS and a holder of the GAPAN (now Hon Air Pilots) master pilot award. He devoted much of his spare time researching and writing books on WW2 American liaison aircraft, becoming a world expert on the subject. Anyone contemplating restoring a Cub aeroplane was wise to begin by reading Ken's books on the subject and he was always happy to offer advice. With extreme kindness, he encouraged many pilots and through meticulous research connected families of veterans with the past. We have lost a true gentleman and godfather to the L-birds."

A fine testimonial.



Flights to Remember... (or forget!):-

This time the **Handley Page Hermes** is featured, the first British built post-war pressurised aircraft which enjoyed a less than sparkling career with BOAC and subsequently with several British charter airlines. When the marque of an aeroplane type is followed by Mk1 to Mk IV, and even Mk IVa, it is a clear sign that production has been far from straightforward and such was the case with the Hermes. The early history of the type goes back to October 1944 when Handley Page based at Radlett in Hertfordshire announced plans for the HP68 Hermes 1, a tail-wheeled four-engined pressurised aeroplane, similar to the HP67 Hastings which was being built for the RAF in unpressurised form. Unfortunately the prototype G-AGSS stalled after its first take-off from Radlett, killing the two occupants on board. Having returned to the drawing board the second aircraft (with a tail-wheel) was designed and flew as the HP74 Hermes II

Following further redesign work, production examples became the nose-wheeled version IV with an estimated performance (never attained!) of 300mph and a range of 4360 miles. BOAC ordered 25 in 1947 and the first production aircraft flew in 1948 but progress was slow due to weight problems. Acceptance trials were flown in 1950 as a result of which the engines were changed to Hercules 773s, the version being renamed the Hermes IVa.

The first five aeroplanes were delivered in 1950 but two, damaged in training, were returned to Radlett for repairs. Finally an unrestricted CofA was granted and the first of the fleet was christened by the Minister of Civil Aviation at Heathrow, by pouring South African wine from a silver tankard over its nose!

The first BOAC service was operated on 6th August 1950 to Accra via Tripoli, Kano and Lagos. Passengers liked the spaciousness of the two cabins, each having 20 seats, four-abreast, with roomy toilet suites. Although achieving a fairly reliable service, modifications were found to be necessary to the first five aircraft. Used on African services the Hermes became known as the Hermite, her might go and her might not!

Apart from the well-known loss of G-ALDN, which had to crash land in West Africa following fuel exhaustion as a result of a navigational error, several other incidents were experienced. These included an undercarriage leg collapse at Kano, several engine shutdowns and a double engine failure, necessitating an emergency landing at Lagos in 1951.

A more serious incident was when a port-inner propellor broke away in flight, puncturing the fuselage and injuring the co-pilot, followed by an emergency landing at Tripoli.

Misfortune again struck the fleet when a fatigue inspection mandated a programme of spar modifications beyond 7000 hours, following which BOAC chose to commence withdrawal of the type. After a relatively short period of BOAC service, negotiations began for the sale of the aircraft to various charter airlines. There was a brief return to BOAC service for some of the type in 1952 when the Comet 1s were grounded, operating tourist class services to East Africa in 56 seat configuration, but this was short lived when the last of the fleet were replaced in 1954, following the acquisition of further Constellations and Argonauts.

Hermes aircraft continued to fly for the likes of Air Links, Britavia, Silver City, Skyways and Falcon Airways, mainly based at Blackbushe, Stansted and Southend etc. The last civil Hermes passenger flight took place on 13th December 1964 (G-ALDA) and the aeroplane was scrapped during 1965 at Southend. The second prototype (a tail-wheeled version) continued flying with military markings for radar research and development purposes until 1969, when it was also dismantled at RAF Pershore, Worcestershire. The Hermes looked good, but it was a pity it belied its appearance. The only surviving example of the type is a fuselage that was used by BCAL at Gatwick for cabin crew training, which now resides in the British civil aircraft collection at Duxford.

From an acquaintance of **Jim Fomes**:- I've been watching the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on TV, Particularly the RAF flypast, still wonderful but only 70 aircraft? Years ago, we did it with many more than that. Looking through my old logbook, I notice that in April of 1954 I made several flights from Linton-on-Ouse to RAF Station North Luffenham; the home of No 1 Fighter Wing of the RCAF; who were also equipped with F-86 Sabres. It brought back memories of the huge Balbos we did together over Buckingham Palace to welcome the Queen home from her Commonwealth Tour in the Royal Yacht Britannia. I was on 92 Squadron on the Linton Wing, which was the first wing in the Royal Air Force to receive F86 Sabres. For these really big shows, we flew to North Luffenham and joined up with No 1 Wing of the RCAF. We would fly down to 'Luff' in the morning; have lunch and then the two wings would take off en-masse to join the fly past. The formation normally consisted of 'boxes' of four aircraft in V formation. This large mass of aircraft would fly at relatively low level out over the Thames estuary, where it would join the rest of the participating aircraft.

Normally, the weather was clear, but the visibility usually poor; the brownish grey of the sky merging with brownish grey of the sea, leaving us without much of a visual horizon reference. Timing was critical in these events because the organizers wanted to ensure that a steady procession of aircraft passed over the balcony at Buck House where Her Majesty and the royal party were watching the review. Complicating the matter was that the slower aircraft flew past first, followed by progressively faster and faster types until the jet fighters brought up the rear. This invariably led to a chaotic situation over the back yard of the palace, where everyone caught up everyone else. Formations of Chipmunks, Lancasters, Mosquitoes and every other type in the inventory, mixing it up, wheeling this way and that, to avoid each other. A flying circus that would have scared Manfred von Richthofen as it did me.

The run-in over the palace started at a checkpoint on the River Thames, called Galleon's Reach. In order to be in the correct sequence and at the right spacing, it was essential to pass Galleons at an exact time. Thanks to their zeal, our wing and squadron leaders were not going to be late...which usually meant that they were early. There is nothing worse than leading a large formation of aircraft and having 20 or 30 seconds time on your hands prior getting to an important checkpoint. Often some very fancy flying is necessary to get back on time, particularly for pilots flying on the inside of the formation turns. Nothing is guaranteed to

work up a sweat quicker, than being on the inside of a turn in a large formation when the leader decides to do a steep 360 degree turn (usually at Idle RPM) to kill off a few seconds of surplus time. I can assure you some creative flying techniques came out trying to overcome these situations such as wheels down, flaps down, speed brakes out, opposite rudder (to fly sideways a bit) usually at maximum power to prevent falling out of the sky. All this, with no visual horizon and usually radio silence. You need to have been there, to know what I am talking about. We did two or three practice runs before the final show.

The flying was a bit 'hairy' but we had a lot of fun. The Canadian guys at North Luff generously allowed us to use their commissary and I can tell you that several large crocks of whiskey, vodka, gin etc. found their way back to Linton. These exercises lead to a few exchange mess dinners which themselves were not without notoriety. What wonderful days they were when we had hundreds of good planes and lots of flying time for everyone.

I was not new to this type of exercise. I had participated in a similar fly-past celebrating the Queen's Coronation. At that time I was flying Vampires, with 67 Squadron based at Gutersloh in West Germany. For this review, four wings of Vampires from Gutersloh, Celle, Wunsdorf, and Fassberg, each comprising of three squadrons of 24 aircraft took part. We climbed out over Holland in loose formation, coasted in over the Thames estuary where we tightened up to close formation and joined the other aircraft in the procession. Over Galleon's Reach once again and on to the palace. The plan was for us to recover to one of the fighter bases in southern England, refuel, have lunch, and then repeat the exercise once more but this time recovering back at our home bases in Germany.

On one practice fly-past things went as usual, after extricating ourselves from the melee behind Buck House we split off and each wing headed to its designated recovery base, which in our case was Biggin Hill. Because we were all a bit tight on fuel, the technique was for the wing to 'stream' as it approached the field and join the circuit directly on the downwind leg. In those days, we only had four channel VHF radio sets; just one of the channels was dedicated to General Aerodrome Control. Our wing leader gave the order for the wing to stream for landing as we approach Biggin Hill. We dropped back to leave about 100 yards spacing between us. Then he called us over to the Aerodrome Control frequency; immediately we heard "Mayday Mayday Mayday... Pan Pan Pan" from a lady pilot who was obviously in some sort of distress. After listening for a second, it appeared she was flying a Chipmunk training plane, didn't know exactly where she was and was just about out of fuel. Our wing leader was trying to contact Biggin Hill control tower to tell them that he had 60 Vampires and was approaching the downwind leg of their circuit for landing, and that we were all short of fuel.

However, the girl in distress was blocking the whole frequency. Biggin Hill was getting closer and closer, and still our leader could not get a word in to tell the control tower and get landing clearance for his big formation. Finally, the wing leader pressed his radio transmit button and said. "Madam, this is Wing Commander Mike Le Bas. Put that aeroplane down in the first decent field you see, and get off this bloody radio." Silence followed immediately, just in sufficient time for Mike to tell the control tower that he was joining the circuit on the downwind leg with 60 aircraft for landing.

I was sitting on the downwind leg, 100 yard behind the plane in front of me, I'd completed my landing vital actions checks, and looked down at the airfield. What do you think I saw? A stationary Chipmunk, right in the middle of the duty runway! By this time our leader was on final approach, some of us were too pressed for fuel to make a 'go around'. At the very last moment, a vehicle raced across the airfield to the runway, and two guys scrambled out, grabbed the little Chippy by its tail, and hauled it clear just seconds before Mike's wheels kissed the tarmac.

Finally, from **Paul Costerton**:- There appears to be a lack of knowledge about extending the Hotlines staff travel option beyond any ex BA employee Staff Travel cut off date – I recently posted the notice below which, it occurs to me, might be worth adding to your next newsletter for those not members of IcarusBA!

“.....Many of you may be aware of this already but, if not, I would like to draw to your attention that, after your accrued Staff Travel privileges have 'timed out' after your length of retirement exceeds your time of active service, you can continue to access Hotline tickets in the future by simply joining BA Clubs (*if you are not already a member - current subscription £50pa*). You can accomplish this by following the online procedure on the BA Clubs website to sign up to retain access to Hotline tickets!.....”

Click the link below for more details :

<https://hotline-baclubs.co.uk/>

We're happy to announce that **Martin Chalk** has recently joined Icarus

And the committee look forward to welcoming you all to the Autumn Meeting at:

Royal Ascot Golf Club

SL5 7LJ, 01344 625175

Thursday October 13th 2022 at 1930.

The Club is situated just off the A330 Winkfield Road, to the east of the Racecourse.

Should you not be able to attend this time, make a note in your diary that the next function will be at Ascot on Thursday April 13th 2023.

Best Regards,

Steve Wand, on behalf of the Icarus Committee.