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ICARUS NEWSLETTER Spring 2019  
[Website http://www.icarusba.org.uk](http://www.icarusba.org.uk)

We send our condolences to the families of the following absent friends:

**John Anker**  
**Dave Davies**  
**Peter Ford**  
**Nick Jones**  
**Terry Morgan**  
**Andy Potter**  
**Nick Synott**  
**Barry Whitehead**

**Haydn Crawshaw**  
**Roger Dunning**  
**Ian Fullalove**  
**Dave Leney**  
**Roger Neaves**  
**Andy Pyne**  
**Mike Tarry**

**Doug Croll**  
**Doug Evans**  
**John Holmes**  
**John Mason**  
**Tim Parrott**  
**Mike Robb**  
**Bill Thomson**  
**John Wright**

**Peter Ford** was a valued member of the Icarus committee for many years, as was **John Wright** who represented the BHX base, when we had one.

**Admin note:** When advising Alan or myself of a colleague's passing, you might like to include a photograph taken during the pilot's career. We'll do our best to collate them for the newsletter.

I'm sure there will be many happy memories generated after seeing the sad list of our 'Absent Friends' and perhaps you will allow me to share one I have of **Doug Croll**.

It was February 1980 and our TriStar with scores of musicians was heading for Barcelona, which was hosting an International Music Festival. After his usual weather and ETA cabin address, Doug welcomed the ninety odd members of the London Symphony Orchestra, with news that we were 'drumming' along at 450mph at 28,000' having been 'horned' out of our usually higher level. Always a bit of a 'fiddle' on this sector he explained, but he didn't want to 'harp' on about it...

At this point the CSD burst in with the comment 'I don't know who writes your stuff, but it's not the LSO but the Royal Philharmonic!'

After a moment Doug picked up the mike again and calmly apologised for his earlier mistake and said how proud we were to be flying the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and he wished them well in Barcelona.

Immediately, a sheepish CSD returned to the flight deck admitting that he'd got it wrong. They were actually the London Philharmonia Orchestra.

Doug had the perfect way out of this escalating embarrassment by getting back on the PA to announce that they were in fact none other than Gerry and the Pacemakers!

Later in the flight we had a visitor. The general manager of the orchestra came in to say how much he'd enjoyed the captain's entertaining 'instrumental' references and could he say a few words on the PA. He did so, stressing that he was the manager of the London Philharmonia Orchestra, and how proud they all were to be flying Pan American.

*KL*

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**Update:** Re Vanguard Flight Controls. In the last edition of the newsletter I published an article relating to a control problem during a Vanguard flight, which I was unable to assign to an author, as my filing system was found to be wanting! I am happy to put the record straight, as I now know that the article had been sent to me by **Chris Knowles**.

**Nostalgia.** Thanks to **Phil Hogge** for this account about one of his more-memorable Lima stop-overs.

It was March on a Lima slip, the end of the rainy season and thunderstorms had washed away part of the track. The trains weren't running, so our first idea of taking a ride 15,000ft up into the Andes to Ticlio was off. What else could we do? We had arrived early in the morning before dawn and now, after a short sleep, wanted to find another adventure to fill our two days off. Our captain was all for a quiet time in the hotel, as was the flight engineer. So Ian, the other co-pilot, and I were the only ones who were ready for some excitement. We soon discovered that the town office of Trans-Peruana, a local airline, was near our hotel. What about a quick flight over the mountains instead, we thought? Yes, they had regular flights to Pucallpa and Iquitos on the other side of the Andes, seats were available and yes, there was a flight next day which left early in the morning. We paid our money and were delighted to discover the aircraft would be an old Lockheed Constellation. As children of the jet-age, neither of us had travelled on such a venerable airliner before.

Next day, at the airport, we met the crew and asked if we could ride in the cockpit. The captain said we were welcome, but there was only one spare jump seat. Ian and I drew lots. I won the outbound leg and he the return. For people who are not aviation enthusiasts, the Lockheed Constellation is a 1940s design powered by four Wright Cyclone radial piston engines. It has a distinctive curved fuselage, three tail fins and a high stalky undercarriage. As we walked out across the tarmac I couldn't help observing the rather dilapidated appearance of this shapely beast – the red and white paintwork was bright enough, but the wings could have done with a polish, and dripping oil and blackened exhaust stains on the engine cowlings gave rise to some second thoughts. Was it really wise to trust our lives to this rosy airline's ancient aircraft across the high Andes? The crew told us it had once belonged to BOAC. I thought of the countless flights it must have done to and fro across the Atlantic and out to the Far East – this was living history. We climbed aboard and I made my way forward to the cockpit. My first impression was how cramped and higgledy-piggledy it all was. There were the usual seats for the captain, co-pilot and flight engineer and a rather rickety jump seat that I eyed apprehensively. The view from the cockpit windows was limited to say the least. Then the start checks began. This was mainly a flight engineer affair. Along the bottom of his panel below the main engine instruments were a bank of levers and switches – throttles, mixture, superchargers, propeller controls, oil coolers, cowls, etc. and a bunch of other things I had long forgotten about.



Much juggling went on, starter motors ground and whirred, the captain reached up to the magneto switches in the roof panel above his head, and the aircraft shuddered as each engine hiccupped into life. The number two on the left side was reluctant to start and needed several attempts before it staggered into action pouring out clouds of blue-grey smoke which billowed past the cockpit windows. The whole aircraft came alive with many different vibrations and noises – so unlike the smooth quietness of the VC10 that I was used to. This was a real man's aeroplane. We ran up the engines, checked the magnetos, taxied out and swung onto the runway. After a brief pause, the captain opened the throttles and, amidst more roaring and shaking, we accelerated down the runway and into the sky. We circled a couple of times to gain altitude and then set course towards the mountains, still partly wreathed in cloud. And this was where I really started to have some doubts. We weaved between towering cumulus clouds, pushed through layers of stratus before bursting out into the clear with mountains filling the sky on either side. Ahead lay a saddle between snow covered peaks. And – I kid you not – the only map I could see was an ESSO road map on the captain's lap. However, the crew seemed confident. We passed low over the saddle, the ground began to fall away and the long descent started down the other side towards a widening expanse of green.

Our first stop was the small town of Pucallpa. The runway was surrounded by beaten earth, grass, forest and green fields. I saw a few goats and donkeys rather too close for comfort as we taxied in towards the small terminal building. We stopped and were immediately surrounded by a great commotion of people. Sun-browned Quechua women in tall bowler hats and voluminous skirts climbed aboard with overflowing baskets of produce. There seemed no room for everyone to sit, but sit they did. Then we were off again for the next leg to Iquitos. As we turned onto the runway, a jeep ran down its length to clear away peasants, animals and chickens before we roared off into the sky again.

The next part of the flight was over what I can only describe as an interminable sea of parsley stretching from horizon to horizon – the jungle was vast. Iquitos is an improbable but fairly sizeable town set on the headwaters of the Amazon. It can be reached only by river or air, there are no roads to the outside world. As we had four hours or so before the return flight, the co-pilot and flight engineer suggested hiring a taxi to show us around. There were spacious streets and handsome Spanish colonial style buildings, but what impressed me most was the Amazon. A wide expanse of milky chocolate brown stretching out towards a thin green line of vegetation two miles away in the far distance on the other side. It was hard to believe that this water had over 2000 miles to flow before it reached the Atlantic Ocean on the other side of the continent.

When we climbed back aboard the aircraft, Ian sat in the cockpit and I took a seat at the rear of the cabin. Motley groups of passengers began to board from the rear door, mainly peasant men and women, not a European face among them. The engines started, the aircraft shook, we taxied out, took off and headed back towards Pucallpa. I gazed out of the window at the interminable jungle below and at the sinuous brown snake of the mighty Amazon until we climbed up through some cloud. The seat belt signs were switched off and I sat back to enjoy the remainder of the flight back to Lima. What sweet nostalgia!

*Thanks Phil. A great story*

### **Flights to Remember... (or forget!) A tale of two Varsities.**



The Vickers Varsity was a twin-engined communications/nav trainer/multi-engine trainer built exclusively for the RAF and varied from its predecessors, the Viking and Valetta, in that it had a tricycle undercarriage, rather than a tail wheel. Production totalled 163, mainly built at Hurn and, whilst generally carrying RAF registrations, a couple of aircraft were eventually civilianised from WF415 and WF387 to G-APAZ and G-ARFP and loaned to Smiths Industries for research purposes. Smiths were located in Cheltenham and based the 2 aeroplanes at Staverton Airport nearby.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1963, G-APAZ was being used to upgrade a Smith's test pilot from copilot qualification on the Varsity to pilot-in-command status. The weather was good and the intention was for the u/t pilot Kelvin Thomas to occupy the LHS and the PIC Russell Palmer to sit in the RHS. The flight plan involved a take off from Staverton, a 2 engine circuit and touch and go, before setting course for nearby RAF Pershore where a single engine approach and landing was to be completed. After taxiing back to the take off position, the aeroplane would depart on two engines and return to Staverton, where a single engine approach and overshoot was to be followed by a circuit and two engine full stop landing.

All went well until after the overshoot with the port engine propeller feathered when, at a distance of around 3 miles away from Staverton and at about 700 feet the aircraft began to turn starboard and lose height. An R/T call to Staverton said "Mayday, total engine failure, we are going down on the outskirts of Gloucester". Unable to stay airborne, the aircraft lost height and hit the gable end of a house at 189 Tuffley Avenue, demolishing the nose and cockpit and killing both pilots. The wings were torn off and the engines ended up in adjacent gardens. Miraculously three women in the house escaped without injury.

The wreckage was removed by an RAF salvage team next day and an investigation undertaken by the AAIB. It transpired that the fuel supply to the starboard engine had inadvertently been shut off by one of the pilots during the restart of the port engine. The subsequent report by the AAIB recommended that engine power should be reduced to idle power during training flights, rather than actually feathering the propeller.

G-APAZ was replaced by a HS748 G-ASJT to continue Smith's autoland research, although the Company closed down their aviation activity at the end of the 1970s and the 748 was transferred to the RAF, finally ending its days as an instructional airframe at Robin Hood Airfield, Doncaster. The other Varsity continued with Smiths and ended up at the RN Fire Training facility, Predannack, Cornwall.



Unfortunately there was another fatal accident to a civilianised Varsity G-BDFT (although it still carried its former registration WJ 897) which had been operated in military service until 1975, when it was bought by a group that became known as the Leicester Aircraft Preservation Group. The aircraft was kept at RAF Syerston but, on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1984, it was travelling via EMA to Liverpool to appear in an airshow, carrying 2 crew and 11 members of the LAPG. During the transit to Liverpool it developed engine problems, stalling and crashing near Uttoxeter, killing 11 of those on board. 3 survived who were seated in the rear of the aeroplane.

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### **People news.**

From **Alan Murgatroyd**, a sprightly 84, ex-BOAC captain who lives down under in NZ:-  
Thank you for the August Newsletter. I thoroughly enjoyed Phil Hogg's account of flying in Africa and I guess many of us have African stories to tell; perhaps I can be permitted to relate one? This was my very first trip in BOAC as a trainee Navigator on Stratocrusier G-ANUC "Clio" (my logbook reminds me) on 30th Dec. 1958 over 60 years ago. This followed 10

months schooling at Cranebank to gain the issue of a Flt Nav licence. One of the more challenging subjects for me had been the introduction to Aircraft Magnetism, which had been explained by imagining the aircraft loaded for-and-aft with "soft iron rods" and the effect these would have on the compass systems.

On the Rome-Tripoli sector my Nav mentor, Jack Dilley, suggested that I practice for the next sector over the Sahara by using the sextant over Europe, calculating and shooting a few sunshots which could also be used as practice compass checks. My first effort indicated that the compasses appeared to be off my calculated heading and I was told in no uncertain terms that I was obviously doing something



wrong and to try again. I did this two or three times, with apparently equally erroneous results. By now Jack was wondering what he had let himself in for, volunteering to be a Nav Instructor and being saddled with this idiot!

The pilots were showing some signs of puzzlement too, comparing my apparent true heading with the variation on their chart and with the results that they were seeing in front of them, albeit that they were "beacon crawling" and not actually dependent upon my non-existent navigation skills. Eventually Jack told me step aside and he calculated and shot his own sun reading, which also resulted in a crazy result. By now it was obvious that something was not right, but we landed at Tripoli alright and Jack and the Captain advised the ground engineers that there appeared to be some problem with the compass systems and to investigate as best they could. Jack came back from walking around the aircraft and said ... "the hold is full of soft iron rods"!

It appeared that we had a cargo of reinforcing rods destined for a building project in Lagos. The Captain ordered them unloaded, against the objection of the airline's local agent, who asked how he was supposed to get them to Nigeria? "I don't care" said the Captain, "you can hire a camel train for all I care. They're not coming with me tonight."

From then on my sextant handling improved and, although I had been taken on as a pilot I'm now glad that I had the navigating experience, especially later navigating over the North Pole. People look for the men in white coats when I say that I used to navigate a 707 with a sextant and one of my microlight pilot students recently asked me "What's a sextant?" as he tore his eyes away from his iPhone.

Now - two books to recommend to you, particularly if you like a bit of nostalgia.

They are written by our colleagues, **Denis Wood** and **Bill Innes**:-



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We have a new retiree, **Captain Julie Levy**, who retired on 31<sup>st</sup> December from the B767 Fleet. Hopefully she'll be able to attend our Spring meeting at Ascot to be presented with her gift.

The committee look forward to welcoming you all to the Spring Meeting at:

**Royal Ascot Golf Club**

**SL5 7LJ, 01344 625175**

**Thursday April 11<sup>th</sup> 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 an evening meeting at Ascot on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

Best Regards,

Steve Wand, on behalf of the Icarus Committee.



### **Roger Dunning 1940-2018**

I flew with Rog many times. I'll never forget the first occasion during our early days at Hamble: not bothering with wings, but using the humpback bridge at the north end of the airfield, the flight was probably about ten yards. I remember it was maroon, I now know it was a Triumph 500cc twin, and I was the pillion passenger. Early indications of his innate training ability was the bellowed instruction, "Hang On!" as we sped up the bridge! Motor bikes and restoring old cars would become one of his many lifelong passions.

After joining BEA in September 1962 and being posted to Renfrew for a couple of years, we were paired together for Herald Base training. Nearly a decade later on our last flight as co-pilots, a quirk of rostering found us together on that three-engine aircraft. Shortly afterwards we were together again, this time in the Viscount simulator on our Command courses, with base

circuit work at Jersey and Dinard. Then back in Scotland again, but now at Abbotsinch. Some six years later at Manchester Rog was my trainer on a 1-11 flight to a very windy Aldergrove.

Throughout his flying career Rog changed very little. He stood proud, not in an aggressive sense, but especially of his Welsh heritage. A quick sense of humour and always ready to listen; demanding the highest standards of himself, he became an excellent role model for the many pilots who flew with him.

Rog and Margaret (Maggie) married while he was still flying Heralds. Sons Paul, now a BA 777 Captain, and Mark spent their early years in Berkshire before Rog moved his family to Arclid, Cheshire, where he settled for the rest of his life. Life can be, and was cruel: sadly, Maggie was taken far too soon by cancer.

Rog was involved with the Internal German Service for a major part of his career. He met Marlis there when she was flying with Air France from the Berlin base. Marlis became Roger's second wife, and in due course James his third son.

Rog retired in October '94 after 32 years of loyal service to BA (BEA) and spent his time pottering at home, wood turning, enjoying trips out on his motorcycle, and spending time with family and friends.

Rog suffered a stroke one evening at home. Medical attention came quickly and that helped limit his mobility loss. While it was life-changing in practical terms, the same Rog was there with his enthusiasm and determination to get-up-and-go. A few years later the second stroke left Rog with more mobility loss, but still with the usual characteristic determination that he would one day walk again. Marlis, helped by close family, became his full-time carer. She & his beloved sons were with him at the end.

Rest in peace, Rog: I am so lucky that our paths crossed

*Mike Glegg*