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ICARUS NEWSLETTER Spring 2022  
Website <http://www.icarusba.org.uk>

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

<b>Jim Browne</b>	<b>Peter Chatfield</b>	<b>Alan Cottle</b>	<b>John Davys</b>
<b>Ian Frow</b>	<b>Chris Lankey</b>		<b>John Morton</b>
<b>Dave Powell</b>	<b>Frank Sealey</b>	<b>Ken Wakefield</b>	<b>Hedley Young</b>

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It was good to receive a piece from an old friend from LGW days, **John Mimpress**. He wrote: "Hello Steve - I remember being P2, with you in command of our Airtours B707 in the late 1970s when on take off from Bangor, Maine we experienced a heavy airframe vibration. Having discarded nose wheel shimmy, we identified that it was engine related from vibration through the offending engine's throttle, despite no indication on the instruments.

Having shut down the offending power plant, I handled the aircraft and continued on our route towards Los Angeles whilst you and P3 looked at the various options, mindful of the fact that there was a spare Conway engine, kept at LAX. The upshot was that we had an interesting 3-engine step climb and reroute over the Rockies to ensure that we were never over terrain higher than our 2-engine ceiling. When ensconced in our hotel, at the ensuing crew get together, you galvanised our cabin crew by expressing your theories on the merits and de-merits of various bodily experiences (*A sad indictment of my life up until then!*).

Remembering our happy Airtours days, I recall being advised by Paddy Mockler, as I was imminently leaving for my command course, on how to keep one's copilot awake at night. According to him it was simple, give him the take off and when he asked for wheels up, lean across and kiss him gently on his left cheek!

I left BA in early 1983 to join the CAA but continued to fly on the BA 737 and later B777. I re-joined BA in a management role in 1997. In March 1999 **Mike Bull, Terry Buckland** and myself were the three Captains operating a Royal flight, London to Argentina, Uruguay and then down to the Falklands in a B777.

We operated back to LHR non-stop (without in-flight refuelling!) from Mount Pleasant in about fifteen and a half hours - which was a first. So you can imagine my surprise to read last year that a recent Airtanker crew claimed that its non-stop flight in an A330 from Mount Pleasant to Brize Norton was a first and a new record! They were only 20 years behind BA! Mind you, being ex Navy, I would say that!

Anyway, it was pleasant to read the last Icarus newsletter and I enjoy hearing about previous acquaintances. I'm now settled in N Devon so I doubt that I'd make any of the meetings at Ascot - especially as it is a destination at maximum range for my electric car!

Kind Regards, John Mimpress."

*Thanks for this John, Steve.*

At around the same time, I received some nostalgia from **Alex Fisher**, as follows:

“In the Autumn 2021 newsletter there is an anecdote from **Jim Passmore** referring to an item of yours which mentioned Joan Hughes. Anyway, hoping this doesn’t duplicate something already said, here is one of my recollections of the lady. As many will know, Joan instructed at the Airways Flying Club at Booker where she ran the assistant Flying Instructors course. I did one of these in the 70s because a Popular Flying Association group of which I was a member had built a Piel Emeraude, a pretty side-by-side two seater, and I was the only one with a licence. It seemed only right to try to teach the others to fly.

The AFI course was run in pairs, I was teamed with **David Mauleverer**. Joan was a pretty tough taskmistress, and you couldn’t get away with sloppy flying or sloppy patter. But what I recall most is her sitting down to discuss issues with us, saying she liked to hear young people’s views, on, say, Fire in the Air. After we had said our bit, a sort of dreamy look came into her eyes and she would squash us with ‘Ah, the last time I had an engine fire was in a Stirling’ and you quietly wondered how on earth such a diminutive creature could even reach the rudder pedals, let alone apply enough force to keep it straight. I can only assume the ATA usually flew the things at light weight.

I did pass the rating and of the three group members I tried to teach, two got PPLs and the other got as far as solo X-Country before we agreed pilot nav was a step too far for him!

The Emeraude G-BCCR flew happily for 40 years before someone wrecked its u/c at Leicester some time ago and it was decided it couldn’t be repaired. Poetic justice in a way, as I had originally acquired the u/c legs from a French wreck that someone had managed to turn upside down without breaking them.

Another memory concerns her role in the Magnificent Men film. The film company built a replica Santos Dumont Demoiselle to feature in the production, but despite having far more horsepower than the original, it just wouldn’t get off the ground. (back in the day the nominal power was feeble, but the large slow revving prop had high propulsive efficiency). Then someone remembered that the original pilot, M Dumont, was a very small man, so perhaps a 50kg pilot would do the trick. Step forward Joan, hair suitably restrained, to star in the role.”

*Thanks Alex. I was fortunate to have been taught by this fine lady whilst completing a PPL on the Tiger Moth at White Waltham in 1960. She loved flying – and her small dog, which spent most days asleep on the rear seat of her car, outside the West London Aero Clubhouse. Steve.*

### **Flights to Remember – or Forget!**

Not so much a flight this time, but an Aerodrome. When driving on the A30 between Camberley and Hartley Witney, you will have seen a truncated airfield on the north side of the road, populated by mainly small aircraft and business jets/helicopters. In its heyday after the war, Blackbushe was a major aerodrome, with plenty of transport aircraft visible on the apron, at the terminal on the north side of the A30 and outside the hangars, across the road to the south. The Corporations at the time were using Northolt and the embryonic Heathrow, although BEA and BOAC aircraft could sometimes be seen at Blackbushe, as it had a good weather record and was used as a convenient London diversion option. BEA used the place as a base training site, although BOAC preferred to use Hurn. The main airlines based at the place were non-scheduled operators like Eagle, Britavia, Airwork and Independent, who flew many trooping charters and inclusive tour holiday flights. Dakotas, Vikings, Hermes and DC-4 types were prevalent and sometimes Britannias, Comets and DC-7Cs on diversion. There was a choice of three runways, with an ILS on the longer R/W 26. Sadly there were several accidents, the major three being a Viscount, a Hermes and a Viking:

G-AMOM, a BEA Viscount 700, arrived on 20th January 1956 to carry out some base flying. On one of the take offs, just after rotation, the training captain in the left hand seat intended to fail number 4 engine but inadvertently shut off the number 3 engine HP cock and throttled back number 4. The aeroplane veered to the right and cartwheeled into the ground. The 5 flight crew on board escaped with minor injuries but the aircraft was damaged beyond repair.

G-ALDJ, a Britavia Hermes, was flying from Tripoli on the night of 5<sup>th</sup> November 1956 carrying the families of military personnel, returning after the Suez crisis. The crew had been on duty for 30 hours with 10 hours rest in inadequate accommodation at Idris. On an ILS approach to R/W 08 with poor visibility, the aircraft descended below the glidepath and struck trees 3600 feet short of the threshold. It came to rest 3000 feet further on. 3 of the 7 crew (including the two pilots) and 4 of the passengers died and the aircraft was destroyed.

G-AJBO, an Eagle Airways Viking, was operating a trooping flight on the night of 1<sup>st</sup> May 1957 to Tripoli when, a couple of minutes after take off, the captain radioed that the port engine had failed and that he was flying a left hand circuit to re-land. After turning onto final approach the aircraft was low and slow and crashed inverted into a wooded copse near the A30, a mile short of the runway. One passenger survived amongst the 5 crew and 30 military personnel.

On 31<sup>st</sup> May 1960 Blackbushe Airport was closed, and all of the infrastructure, fixtures, and fittings were auctioned off. Parts of the runways were dug up. The airport remained closed until 6 October 1962 when it was formally reopened as a general aviation field.

The photograph below shows a chartered BA HS748 disgorging some aviation enthusiasts prior to a Blackbushe airshow in the 1980s. If the flight crew involved happen to read this and can notify me, I'll mention them in the next newsletter.



Now a piece kindly sent to me by **Hector McLean** – his memory of George C Webb. The CFI, College of Air Training, Hamble: In July 1962 I took part in the selection procedure which required applicants trying for a place as a student at the College, who had little or no flying experience, to undergo three days of flying instruction in a Chipmunk, with a remarkable instructor named "Tubby" Fieldhouse. (I had never previously been near an aircraft as I came from a very small Hebridean island).

On the fourth day I was introduced to the CFI George Webb who gave me a briefing and with me doing nothing, he started our Chipmunk, taxied out and lined it up on the southerly runway. His voice came through the very unfamiliar earphones saying "Now Mr Maclean, I want you to fly me a standard left hand circuit and land." I flew the circuit and landed and, as we came to a stop, the voice said, "I have control, your flying is OK and now we seem to have quite a lot of spare time. Is there anything about flying that I can demonstrate for you?" I knew at the very least that hesitation and negativity during an interview, do not go down well but I knew little about flying apart from the Biggles adventure stuff. In a broad Hebridean twang I replied "Well Sir, before this week I had never been near an aeroplane but I have heard about aerobatics" "Very well" he said but he did not taxi back to the threshold...

Instead we made our way back to the small piece of concrete around which the aircraft were parked for the mornings flying. At 10.30, it was completely vacant. He lined the aeroplane at the north west end pointing towards the south east, selected flap and opened the throttle fully with brakes on. Brakes released, we shot across the concrete and at the far end, he banged the tailwheel on the concrete and we climbed away past the main admin building down to our right. We flew past the Fawley refinery with its flare burning and went over the Isle of Wight.

George Webb then performed a full repertoire of positive G aerobatics during which he quietly spoke to me, explaining what he was doing, and occasionally inviting a reply. It is fair to say that what he heard must have sounded like a haggis being strangled! We then flew back towards Hamble and, if RT was employed, I knew nothing about it as I did not know an Angel from an Alpha or a Queen from a Quebec! He didn't line up on the runway but lined up the approach on the tiny strip of concrete whence we had departed. I remember not being able to see it because the nose was quite high and the engine was making a lot of noise. Nothing changed until there was a bump and some heavy braking followed. He stopped the engine and we got out.

After a very brief conversation we shook hands and I wandered back for my suitcase to head of back by rail to the Hebrides, thinking "that was nice."

Throughout my two year course at Hamble I never once flew with George Webb again, but I did after I qualified. On the 2nd April 1965, during my Base Training course on the BEA Vickers Vanguard, I was picked up from my hotel in Malta and taken to Luqa Airfield where the training was taking place. To my great surprise the senior base training Captain Ron Gillman was accompanied by the same George Webb, who sat on the fourth seat in the flight deck throughout the session. At the end of my two hours, Ron Gillman turned round and said "Right George, it's your turn now." There followed a circuit that was light years more accurate than either the other trainee or myself had produced. I never met George Webb again but the impression he left and the example he set remains with me today.

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In days of old, following the start of the BEA Airtours Comet operation at Gatwick in 1970, many of us who had acquired a post-flight thirst, dropped in at the Aero Club on the southern perimeter road on the way home. This was a private club, run by a Dan Air Ambassador skipper Vic Townsend and his wife Chris, so partaking of a drink in uniform was de rigeur, as practised by the other imbibing pilots from Dan Air, Laker, BUA/Caledonian etc.

A name that frequently came up in conversation was that of Yvonne Pope, unique as the only commercial jet pilot, who was on the Dan Air Comet. She came to mind again recently following her death and you might well have seen her obituary, although she was latterly known as Yvonne Sintes.

In case you missed the obituary, she was born in South Africa on 05/09/1930 and eventually moved to London in 1948 with her father. Fascinated by aeroplanes, she joined BOAC at the end of the 1940s as a stewardess. On a trip back from Rio the captain, Leslie Gosling, invited her to the flight deck for landing and encouraged her to take flying lessons at the Airways Aero Club. This she did and obtained her PPL in July 1952, subsequently marrying her instructor Eric Pope.

They had two sons, although Eric died shortly after the birth of the second son and widowed, with two children to raise, Yvonne found a job as a flying instructor at Exeter. This was followed by training and working as an air traffic controller after which she struck gold when employed in a flying job on the DC-3 as a second officer in July 1965. The Comet then gave her jet experience and she eventually achieved command on Dan Air's BAC 1-11 fleet.

On holiday in Menorca in 1966, she struck up a friendship with a waiter called Miguel Sintes and they married in 1970. They retired to Menorca in 1980 but, when Miguel died in 1999, she returned to the UK. Her death was recorded as 16/08/2021.



A photograph of Yvonne Pope, credited to Flemming Christensen. She is standing outside a DC-3 at Billund Airport, Denmark, ready for a load of live chicks for the UK, in the 1960s!

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I spent an interesting couple of hours last November at the Croydon Airport Visitor Centre, which is situated in the old airport terminal building on the Purley Way (A23). My wife was keen to go there as she landed at Croydon as a child on a DC-3 repatriation flight from Czechoslovakia, following the Communist take over in 1948.

The museum is well worth a visit and contains many items of memorabilia, models and old films. There is also an excellent CGI DVD showing, which describes a passenger's journey through the terminal and out onto the tarmac, to board an appropriate inter-war years aeroplane.

On a plinth, outside the terminal, is a DH Heron, which is painted up to represent the final Morton Air Services departure to Rotterdam on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1959, after which the airfield closed for good. The last departure was appropriately flown by a Captain Last!

The tour around the place is guided by a volunteer who, in our case, was a current BA Airbus Captain, and he provided a very knowledgeable and stimulating delivery.

The museum only opens once a month on the first Sunday of the month and one's visit needs to be booked on-line, when a timeslot can be selected between 10am and 3pm. The next few dates are 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> July. There's a suggested donation of £6 to cover the museum's running costs. Well worth it.

## Croydon Airport Visitor Centre Needs YOU!

For more details e-mail [info@historiccroydonairport.org.uk](mailto:info@historiccroydonairport.org.uk)



- Keep the memory of London Croydon Airport alive.
- Join our friendly Volunteer team.
- Get involved at our public Open Days or in our Archive.
- Various roles to suit all interests.
- No specialist skills required- just enjoy meeting people.
- Training provided.



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From **Keith Lakin**, following a visit to the De Havilland Museum.

**“Calling all ex-Trident pilots!”**



Following her last flight from ABZ – LHR on 24/10/81, Trident 2 G-AVFN was ignominiously robbed for spares, as the photo shows, after thirteen years of service with BEA and BA. Fox Hotel was the last Trident to be delivered from Hatfield in BEA’s ‘Red Square’ colour scheme (on 17/7/68) and went to complete 27,444 hours and 15,509 landings

In May ’82 she was dismantled and on June 13 1982 her forward fuselage arrived at the Mosquito Aircraft Museum, now the excellent de Havilland Aircraft Museum near London Colney, a couple of miles SW of her Hatfield birth place. Since then she has been open to the public. Les Rawlins and Kevin Bowen are the latest volunteers to be caring for her and their astonishing enthusiasm is being directed to keeping Fox Hotel as original as possible. They are using much of their own personal collection together with items salvaged from G-AVFE, which was being scrapped in Belfast.

Les is proud to have de Havilland in his blood! Both his grandfather and father were DH engineers building Tridents at stages in their careers. His father later joined BEA as an engineer in the ‘Heavy Gang’, and was part of the team that rebuilt Cyprus Airways Trident 2 5B-DAA following a landing accident at Nicosia. DAA later moved into BEA service operating as G-AZXM. Kevin is also highly qualified to be involved with FH, having worked for BA for 30 years, being involved in the restoration of Trident 3B G-AWZK, as well as running the Heathrow Trident Collection.

The team is hoping to bring Fox Hotel back to her former glory, by concentrating on re-lighting the flight deck panels, replacing the milky rear cabin windows, and repainting the exterior where needed. Another aspect of the project is to discover the operational history of G-AVFN and the recently acquired Trident 3B G-AWZP, in the form of the logbook entries of the pilots who flew them. If you would like to contribute then please send details of dates, sectors, times and crew to Les Rawlins at: [kar.lesrr@sky.com](mailto:kar.lesrr@sky.com) Any unwanted memorabilia or photographs from Trident days would also be most welcome, as would anyone willing to be a volunteer. Check out: [www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk](http://www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk) While you’re there, relive flying school days by having a live session in their operational Link Trainer!

## **Icarus Lunch.**

The committee hosted a very pleasant members' lunch at the RAF Club in Piccadilly on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018. With this in mind, we have decided to repeat the function on Thursday June 9<sup>th</sup> 2022 to again reward the loyal members who attend our six-monthly meetings at Ascot. The final details will be promulgated at the April 21st meeting at RAGC, and members intending to come to the lunch will be expected to confirm their attendance by pre-paying on the night at Ascot.

Alternatively, if you prefer, Jim Fomes has agreed to be the conduit, so regular meeting attendees can contact him in advance of the meeting to book and arrange payment jim.fomes@onetel.net The menu will be ham hock terrine, breast of chicken and summer pudding (with a vegetarian alternative) at a cost of £30pp.

There will be a cash bar starting at 1200hrs for aperitifs, and to order personal libations to accompany the meal, which will be served from 1300hrs. The Club have a strict dress code of jacket and tie (hopefully your Icarus tie, if you can find it!).

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We've had some recent joiners:

So welcome to Icarus **Adrian South, Nigel Jones and Peter Long**

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

**Royal Ascot Golf Club**

**SL5 7LJ, 01344 625175**

**Thursday April 21<sup>st</sup> at 19.30**

(Please note that this is the third Thursday in April 2022, not the traditional second, to avoid a clash with Good Friday.)

**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 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

Best Regards,

Steve Wand, on behalf of the Icarus Committee.