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ICARUS NEWSLETTER Spring 2024
Website <http://www.icarusba.org.uk>

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

Dick Baldwin
Paul Harrison

Chris Claxton
Rory O'Callaghan
Pete Tiner

Phil Farrands
Dave Pascall
Willy Weber

From **Ian King** (ex B777, Rtd): Following on from **Dacre's** article in the last newsletter, I thought I'd write an update on my own experience of prostate cancer, which started in May 2017. I had a routine blood test which showed a slightly elevated PSA reading. I'm fortunate to have a very proactive GP and a chain of events was put in place, ending with a radical prostatectomy. My prostate, infected with a very aggressive cancer, was removed and the surgeon made the decision to also remove some adjacent tissue and lymph nodes.

The follow up was positive, no sign of any further disease and I was told that I was 'cancer free'. The usual post op series of blood tests showed that my PSA was undetectable. After 3 years, however, a very small PSA reading was detected. The initial thought was that it was a lab error, but this reading was similar for the next 2 blood tests. I was referred for a PSMAPet scan. This scan is very specific and only identifies PSA cells, so the results were disturbing! The cancer had returned and although relatively mild in the prostate bed, it had settled in my femur, with what was described as 'intense avidity'.

I was then handed over to an oncology consultant and a whole new course of treatment was started. A short burst of chemotherapy was followed by a 2-pronged attack of hormone tablets and hormone injections. After a short course of radiotherapy and continued hormone treatment, my monthly blood tests showed a good reaction to the treatment and the tumours were decreasing. I continued with the medication and hormone injections. A recent PSMA Pet scan revealed that there is thankfully, no obvious signs of cancer at the present time. Although this is very positive news, the treatment is to be continued, at least for the moment, to ensure that there is no further reoccurrence. My important message is that, if you have had successful treatment for this cancer, please be aware that it might just be dormant and could reappear at a time when you least expect it, so do continue with regular PSA tests. I know of a couple of friends who have been in this position, and the outcome has not been as positive as mine. I echo Dacre's comment regarding Bupa. I have been very well supported throughout the last 6 years and would encourage those who have this insurance to try to stay with it. My experience has been very positive, and reassuring. *Thanks Ian, very informative!*



You may remember in the Spring 2023 newsletter a reference by **Mike Bennison** to a project to return a Vickers Viking airframe to Blackbushe Airfield for restoration. Mike has a keen interest in the aircraft, G-AGRW “Vagabond”, which he used to fly in the 1960s, when it was operated by Autair. For many years it has been used as a restaurant near Vienna Airport, but it has now been transported by three HGVs to Blackbushe where it can be worked under cover by the Blackbushe Heritage Trust and eventually displayed as a historical piece of aeronautical memorabilia.

The Viking was developed after the war from the Wellington Bomber and first flew in June 1945. 163 of the type were built and were used by BEA in the late 1940s and early 1950s until superseded by the Viscount. Examples were also operated by various other airlines including several British Independent Airlines. Variants of the type were built for the RAF as the Valetta and the Varsity.

Flights to Remember... (or forget!)

From **Steve Wand**: As a small boy in the 1940s my ambition was to be an engine driver on the railways but I was advised by my father that my great uncle had made a name for himself as a driver by demolishing the level crossing gates in the centre of Lincoln, when he had relied on some duff-gen from his fireman, that the signals were all clear. Not wanting to enter a profession where the family name had already been sullied, I decided to set my sights lower and aimed to become an airline pilot! Two occurrences then enhanced that ambition, firstly annual visits to Farnborough Air Shows but secondly a sneak preview of three British flying boat behemoths that were being constructed at East Cowes, on the Isle of Wight. I was on holiday there in 1950 with my parents when my father managed to blag a look into the hangar for the two of us where construction was taking place, which left a lasting impression on me to this day. So not so much an operational incident this time, more a look at a fanciful British aeroplane project which was overtaken by progress in the industry and quickly became an anachronism. It did however provide some much-needed employment for the Isle of Wight area after the War.

The featured offering therefore is the **Saunders-Roe Princess Flying Boat** project of the 1940s and 1950s. The original aim of the venture was to topple the supremacy of the ocean liners and their dominance of the lucrative transatlantic market. The plans were a collaboration between the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and BOAC, who were at the time still operating flying boat services from Southampton and were therefore a potential operator of the Princesses. The task can be compared to that of completing a large machine like the B747, although it had to be achieved by a relatively small company without the benefit of proven technology for propulsion and control.

Construction of the three airframes authorised by the MoS began in 1948 at the Columbine Hangar on the River Medina (now known as Venture Quays, fronted by a very large Union flag!) and the first aircraft was made ready to fly on August 22nd 1952. Delays had been encountered due to delays in supplying the Bristol Proteus engines, which were arranged as two coupled pairs on each side inboard and a single engine each side outboard, making a total of ten engines.

Test pilot Geoffrey Tyson spent about thirty minutes taxiing G-ALUN around the Solent before taking up a position off Stoke Bay Gosport, with about seventeen miles of clear water ahead in a south westerly direction and ideal weather conditions. The Princess got airborne and flew for thirty-five minutes, after which Tyson said that he was very pleased with the way that the aircraft handled, both on the water and in the air and that there were no major snags. A further 46 flights took place between the maiden flight and May 27th 1954, when the last flight was operated, including an appearance at the 1952 Farnborough Air Show.

By this time, civil flying boat operations were confined to Aquila Airways, and BOAC were no longer interested in the project, so the project was inevitably cancelled by the MoS.

G-ALUN was cocooned and taken across the Medina to West Cowes where it was parked on-shore virtually opposite its birthplace. Meanwhile, the second and third Princesses, registered G-ALUO and G-ALUP, never proceeded beyond the basic airframe stage and were similarly cocooned for storage, arriving under tow at Calshot Spit in February and April 1953.

Those of you, who like me, were at Hamble in the 1960s will probably remember the fins of the two hulls towering majestically above Southampton Water at the time. Various propositions were put forward to use the three airframes but, after being decocooned in May 1966 in anticipation of a sale to AeroSpacelines in the USA, it was found that severe corrosion had taken place despite the protective coatings and the sale fell through.

The two hulls at Calshot were dismantled and scrapped in 1967 and on 12th April that year, G-ALUN was towed from Cowes along Southampton Water to a scrapyard at Woolston where it was beached. The yard used the flight deck as an office and the fuselage as a workshop, until it was finally broken up a couple of years later. There are a couple of related videos available on YouTube.



The construction hangar.



The first completed fuselage is extracted.



G-ALUN in flight.



G-ALUN laid up at West Cowes.



The Princess's flight deck.



G-ALUN in the breaker's yard, Woolston.

From Steve Wand: On 1st and 2nd October 2023, the 58th and final annual reunion of the remnants of Hamble Course 621 took place at an Hotel at Moreton-in-Marsh in the Cotswolds.



The event has continued annually since 1966, apart from a break caused by the pandemic. The venues have tended to be in Central England due to the geographical spread of the attendees, between Glasgow in the north to Reigate in the south. It has however been decided to terminate the tradition, whilst we can all walk unaided! The photograph left shows from left to right: Dave Debell, Dave Pascall, Terry Malone, Pete Adlington, Steve Wand, David Lilley and our wives.

David Debell and Terry Malone left Hamble and pursued alternative professions but have pleasingly continued to join us at the annual event.



Jerry Page, who many of you will know from previous fleets and with whom I enjoyed some trips on the Gatwick TriStar, has his 2004 CD album available to purchase online. It is called Postcard from Australia and is now available on the internet on most platforms. It includes the song he wrote for Mike Austin, Time and Tide and eleven more of his songs.

As you know, the six-monthly members meetings at various previous venues and now at Ascot are “stag” events and, in response to an enquiry last time, we intend to generally maintain the status quo. However, it is obviously desirable for wives/partners to attend in a carer capacity (as was the case with the late **Colin Wright**) or if the lady of the partnership is the main car driver, especially at night. We would not wish a partner to kick their heels for a couple of hours in the locality, whilst their spouse attends the meeting so, for goodness sake, if that is the case, bring them in with you! In addition, we will hopefully find some women attending our meetings when female retiring pilots from the Airline get around to joining Icarus and come along.

On another administrative matter, we still currently send out 70 hard copy newsletters in the post every six months, which costs almost £100 a time from precious Icarus funds. It seems inconceivable in the 21st century that some of the recipients do not have a facility to receive the newsletters electronically. With that in mind and to filter out preventable expense, this will be the last **general mailing**. If you have received this copy in the Mail therefore and definitely need your mailings to continue, you should write to the chairman at 6, Knightwood Close, Reigate, RH2 8BE requesting that we continue to send you a hard copy, otherwise the supply will end and this posting will be your last.

Alternatively, you can send us your email address and it will be added to our database, which lists the >90% of the membership who download the newsletters from our website.

Thank you for your understanding.

We welcome to Icarus: **Kevin Cooper**

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

Royal Ascot Golf Club

SL5 7LJ, 01344 625175

Thursday April 11th 2024 at 1930.

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

The Spring meeting clashes with the chairman's 50th wedding anniversary and, as he would like to stay married, the meeting will be hosted by our esteemed Treasurer, **Steve Leniston**.

If you plan to attend and wish to partake in a meal beforehand, please advise **Clive Catherall** to be added to the list. clivecatherall@hotmail.com

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 October 10th 2024.

Best Regards,

Steve Wand, on behalf of the Icarus Committee.