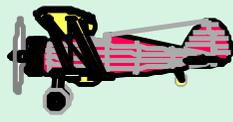




WHAT'S ON



VICKY HALL - PROGRAM SECRETARY

- 5 September 97'.....'Art & Aviation' - Geoff Pleasance
- 3 October 97'.....'Never a Doodle' - Jim Double
- 7 November 97'.....'Royal Naval Air Service' - Brad King
- 9 November 97'.....'MHAS Remembrance Service - 3.00pm'
- 5 December 97'.....'Christmas Social'

Newsletter Contributions

If you have an article or a story you would like to share with the other members of the Society then please send it to me....

Alan Powell - Newsletter Editor
 16 Warren Lane
 Martlesham Heath
 Ipswich IP5 7SH

Tel: Ipswich
 622458

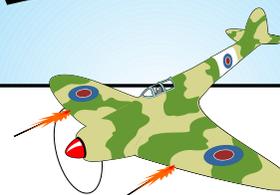
Committee Contacts

Chairman	Martyn Cook	(01394) 671210
Vice Chairman	Bob Dunnett	(01473) 624510
Secretary	Alan Powell	(01473) 622458
Treasurer	Russell Bailey	(01473) 715938
Program Sec.	Vicky Hall	(01473) 720004
Membership Sec.	Jack & Jean Sweetman	(01473) 723349
Rag Trade	David Bloomfield	(01473) 686204
Catering	Ethel & Roy Gammage	(01473) 623420
Photography	Don Kitt	(01473) 742332
Museum Adviser	Tony Errington	(01473) 741574

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Volume 1 No.3



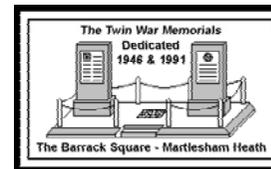
September 1997

Martlesham Heath Aviation Society

NEWSLETTER



RAF MARTLESHAM HEATH



MARTLESHAM HEATH AVIATION SOCIETY



356TH FIGHTER GROUP

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EDITORIAL

Alan Powell - Newsletter Editor

Hallo! once again to our friends, both at home and overseas.

In this edition of your newsletter is a piece by Mike Yannell.

Col. Michael P Yannell clearly treasures his memories of England. It is not difficult to imagine the culture shock which the Americans must have experienced on their arrival in blacked-out, war weary, austerity Britain. It is therefore gratifying to know that their enduring memories of this Country are so warm. Those of us who attended the 1995 Reunion of the 356th. Group in Canton were told that our Registration fees had been paid in advance by Mike Yannell.. It would be great if we could entertain you over here Mike but I understand that health reasons may not allow this.

An article by our member, Ivan Smith, on aircraft restoration in Florida continues our American theme, Thank you for that Ivan.

We always welcome contributions from anyone with something interesting to put down on paper for the benefit of the rest of us!

We look forward to some more interesting speakers at our monthly meetings and once again thank Vicky for her efforts. The Society has now purchased a lapel mike with a transmitter and receiver which plugs into the amplification system in the Community hall. It is a simple solution and will hopefully result in everyone being able to hear all that is said.

COMMENTS OF A FIGHTER PILOT STATIONED AT MARTLESHAM HEATH, ENGLAND September 1944 to December 1945

On an early morning in September 1944, I was on the Queen Mary (Troop ship) - still and quiet, wet and foggy. Certainly this isn't Sunny

BOOKS & VIDEO'S FOR LOAN

CONTACT ALAN POWELL

Book Section

BOMBER COMMAND - Air Ministry Account of Bomber Command's offensive - September 1939 to July 1941

MISSING IN ACTION - H Phillip Causer - 356th F.G. 360 Sqd

MALTA - Story of the Defences of Malta

TARGET BERLIN - Mission 6th March 1944 - USAAF

RAF STRADISHALL - 1938 to 1970

MOSQUITO - Definitive history of the Mosquito

MOST SECRET WAR - Prof. R V Jones - British Scientific 1939-1945

ACES & WINGMEN - USAAF Personnel - by Danny Morris

FIGHTER - Battle of Britain - Intro. by A J P Taylor

WING LEADER - Group Captain Johnnie Johnson

TEST PILOT - Neville Duke

FLY FOR YOUR LIFE - Story of Wg.Cdr. Stanford Tuck

Video Section

PERFECT LADY - 'Going Solo' - Carolyn Grace

BEAUFIGHTERS IN THE DESERT - by Jack Grimwood

FLY 50 GLORIOUS YEARS - RAF aircraft ww2 to 1990

"wings". In 1954 she was recruited to fly Spitfires to Burma for the Burmese Air Force, by then she was also flying jet fighters.

I am indebted to Hugh Smallwood from whose book, 2nd. TAF Spitfire, this was taken.

FROM THE CHAIR

The Chairman

Sadley we have to report the sad loss of Stuart Goy who died on June 13. Stuart was a shy quiet person and a regular attendee at our monthly meetings. For those of you who are able to attend our meetings will remember Stuart being behind his video camera recording the meetings. The tapes were then loaned to members who wished to see perhaps a speaker that they had missed. It was an invaluable service to those who through sickness were unable to attend. A letter of sympathy was sent on behalf of the Society to Stuarts wife and a number of members attended his funeral.

You will note that in the 'What's On' column that MHAS will be holding their Remembrance Service at 3.00pm on Sunday 9 November on the Barrack Square. All letters to the regular and the not so regular groups have been posted.

On the 5 December we will be holding our Christmas Social/Dance and Buffet. Tickets for this are now available from Russell Bailey so don't be disappointed get yours tickets early.

Italy where in 1943, I flew eighty missions dive bombing and strafing the Panzer Divisions. I was first to reach this goal. I wanted to stay but they tied me up and shipped me home I was supposed to return to my group - the 86th Fighter Bomber Group in Italy! Now then, it did not rain in North Africa or in Sicily and it was 5 months before we saw rain just after the Salerno invasion - it rained for 3 weeks. I guess Headquarters thought I was dehydrated after my Mediterranean tour and England seemed like good recovery territory.

I processed in at Air Force Headquarters in Pinecastle and was nicely assigned to the 360 Fighter Squadron 356th. Fighter Group at Martlesham Heath.

My Squadron, billet was at a wonderful place, Playford Hall. What a dramatic change from the folding cot, mosquito net, and shovel of the North African, Sicily, Italy experience. I loved Playford. We turned the Great Room into a Great Lounge, forty easy chairs, bar with beer cooler, a parachute canopy, and ceiling to floor drapes on windows. We were thirty pilots, eight ground officers, and our great golden retriever, 'Don'. The number varied from time to time. What a good fraternity.

The Airfield and Installation at Martlesham Heath was first class. Our Headquarters, and the 359th. Squadron were stationed on the field. The 361st. Squadron was at Kesgrave, another wonderful home.

Flying from this area was always exciting and take-offs were usually in solid overcast and join up at 20,000 feet. We were primarily escorts for the Bombers but very often involved in strafing ground targets after safely escorting the Bombers. After the bombs were dropped and the German Fighters left, we returned to Martlesham Heath and prepared ourselves to descend through the solid overcast, a process that was again led by the Squadron Leader. It was very exciting to see Martlesham Heath when penetrating the constantly low ceilings. On occasion's in very bad visibility, we landed at Woodbridge, a great last choice. On another memorable occasion our last choice was Paris. The weather cleared four days later and we returned to Martlesham Heath and went to rest camp. I can't say enough about the wonderful,

friendly and caring people in the Martlesham Heath area. They were great friends. I remember many pleasant late afternoons at the Black Tiles and Mrs. Stovold. I confess now to trading a couple of gallons of gasoline for a pleasant dinner. God Bless her!

To close, I must say I loved being in England, I loved Playford Hall. I loved the combat flying and looked forward to the next tour (in Burma). On V.J. Day, I remember standing by my P-Si "Audrey 5," trying to control the tears. This was the end of a chapter in life I shall never forget and yes, I miss the combat!.

Col Michael P. Yannell

HAWKINGE AND DOVER

By Alan Powell

There was a good turn out for our visit, on the 21st. July, to the "Battle of Britain", museum at Hawkinge and afterwards to the wartime secret tunnels under Dover Castle.

The morning was at first cloudy and cool but by the time we arrived at Hawkinge it was sunny and warm. The museum is the biggest collection of "Battle of Britain", artefacts in one place and also owes much to the film, "Battle of Britain", as there are several mock-up's and models from that film.

Afterwards we drove up to the cliffs overlooking Folkestone to view the "Battle of Britain", Memorial. "Hellfire corner", looked peaceful in the summer sunshine. The sea was competing with the sky for the intensity of the blue. I looked up. There were no dog fights. Turning away from the cliffs and walking to the Memorial I was reminded that there is nothing romantic about war.

Then on to the wartime tunnels under Dover castle. The guided tour included sound effects and even the smell of antiseptic in the field hospital! Less than two thirds of the tunnels are open to the public and our tour, which lasted 55 minutes, included only a part of those.

"The morning foretold a lovely day as I set off from my billet in Hamble village, in my dark blue uniform jacket and trousers with gold rank braid and wings. I would try to cycle the circular mile to the airfield entrance without using the handlebars and head for the ATA mess, waving merrily to the guard on the gates as I sailed past him".

The plan for the day's collection and delivery of aircraft had come in overnight, and our Captain had sorted out the most economical way to save time and fuel. I collected my five 'chits', authorising me to fly five different aircraft from 'somewhere to somewhere'.

As we could not use the radio, navigation was always by VFR, (visual flying rules), and at our discretion, in fog or cloud. In the UK fog and cloud invariably proved a problem and we lost a number of ferry pilots due to bad weather.

I also collected my 2oz. bar of chocolate which was given to us as often we flew all day without lunch. That day I tied up my chocolate ration with a letter to my future fiancée who was in the Army at Aylesbury. Flying low over the Army Camp in the Oxford, with flaps and undercarriage down I dropped the parcel from the flight deck window, hoping it wouldn't hit fuselage or tail. With a note telling the finder to keep the chocolate but please deliver the letter to Reg Moggridge.

The order of deliveries that day ran, Airspeed Oxford, R6350 from Portsmouth to White Waltham, Hawker Typhoon R8878 White Waltham to Eastleigh, Spitfire XIV NH692 Eastleigh to Lyneham, Spitfire IX ML407 Lyneham to Selsey, back to Hamble by car, Supermarine Walrus W3062 Hamble to Wroughton and finally back to Hamble again, flying the Fairchild 'taxi' aircraft".

I am not doubting the authenticity of this excerpt but I find it scarcely credible that pilots such as this remarkable young woman would have the natural ability to fly 'planes' of such diversity one after another and with little more than a road map and knowledge of the railway network to rely on.!

In November 1945 Jackie Moggridge, as she was then, left the ATA only to join the WRAF Reserve in 1948 , where she won full RAF

We have been fortunate to have hosted many interesting speakers at our monthly meetings. I particularly recall the visit of Carolyn Grace, whose husband Nick had restored a Spitfire and who had since tragically been killed in a road accident.

It is the recollection of one particular section of the book, "2nd TAF Spitfire", that Carolyn had brought with her that prompts me to write a few words about it.

The book was the story of Spitfire ML407. The aircraft, a Mk. 9 was completed in April 1944 and, incidentally, when test flown cost the Government, £11 10s 0d this for a test flight of 40 minutes, including a maximum throttle climb to 18,000ft. a full powerdive and a minimum of three take-off's and landings!

However, that is by the way and the point of my article is to highlight the work of the Air Transport Auxiliary, who were, of course, involved in ferrying ML407 to the first of it's many and varied squadrons. The young woman ferry pilot who made the delivery was First Officer Jackie Sorour. It is worth noting that Ms. Sorour would have been 22 in 1944 and the following excerpt from her diary reads as follows.



JACKIE SOROUR ABOUT TO DELIVER A SPITFIRE

And so back to the coach and in the words of Stan, our driver, "another day that I really enjoyed with you lot". Thanks once again to Russell Bailey for the all the work he puts into our jaunts.

AVIATION IN FLORIDA

By Ivan Smith

My first aviation experience (apart from the 8hr journey across the Atlantic in an air conditioned pressurised tube) was a visit to, 'The Flying Tigers War Birds Restoration Museum' founded by Tom Riley. It is often referred to locally as "Bomber Town" and certainly lives up to its name, when you learn it has restored to flying condition, nine B25 Mitchell's, four B24 Liberators and is currently working on its fourth B17.

The hangers and museum are situated in a corner of Kissimmee Municipal Airport about 10 miles from the main tourist area of Orlando.

First impressions show few signs of what's in store for the visitor, as some areas resemble a breakers yard. These are soon forgotten as you enter a wooden building crammed with aircraft parts, photos, relics from World War Two and various aviation memorabilia.

Its here you pay the entrance fee, \$6.00 (plus local tax at 6%, this takes a little getting used to, as many of you who visited America will recall, all prices shown are less tax) and begin your guided tour. First aircraft encountered was the main section of a restored fuselage from a 1944 F4U-4 Corsair, unpainted showing every detail of the renovated outer skin with its flush riveting. Further on standing on a jig was the completed main spar, its unmistakable gull wing shape showing every detail of the intricate workmanship, rebuilt to zero time standard. The spar has taken one man, working full time, five months to restore. The specialist who carried out this work is only 26 years old, but has 10 years experience, having worked on Corsair airframes since leaving school. worked on Corsair airframes since leaving school.

Many aircraft being repaired or restored were privately owned or from other museums, including a pair of Harvard wings, damaged in a

ground loop, another Harvard almost complete with just the outer skin to go on, two Grumman Avengers, two P38 Lightning's both damaged, but they hope to restore one to flying condition using both airframes and two B17 Flying Fortresses. There were also aircraft suspended from the roof, including a 1938 Aeronca C3, a 1928 Fairchild KR21 and a 1938 Piper J-3 Cub.

Parts are renovated and repaired where possible, including the outer skins, each rivet having to be carefully removed so as not to open up or damage the original holes, a laborious and time consuming task. When no alternative (usually due to corrosion) parts are manufactured on site, we were told to within a tolerance of one thousandths of an inch. America is still very much Imperial, with measurements in feet and inches, gallons at the pumps and pounds and ounces in the stores, alas now only memories to us in the UK. There are currently six full time engineers, with others available if required. Among other skills shown was the forming of Plexiglas for canopies, gun turrets and screens, quite a difficult and skilled process. They have recently rebuilt and glazed a TBM Avenger gun turret for Duxford, no doubt destined for the newly opened American museum. Among the aircraft waiting for repair was a B17 which had been damaged flying backwards for a quarter of a mile, clearing a fence in the process, courtesy of Hurricane Andrew, which struck Florida in 1992. This aircraft is owned by Kermit Weeks and suffered this damage at his museum.

It was interesting having seen a B17 wing stripped of its outer skin to see where much of its strength was derived, the whole wing being covered with a corrugated surface prior to the outer skin going on. It reminded me in appearance of the outer skin of a JU 52. Also to add strength and rigidity, the wing rib support tubes, which were ¼ of an inch diameter, were filled with wood! But the ailerons were still fabric covered, common practice among aircraft of this era.

“What's this I can see languishing in the corner covered in dust, a Spitfire”? Alas no, only a wooden replica, in fact one used in the making of the film Battle Of Britain, with a four bladed prop 727? Amazing where some relics end up.

As well as proper aeroplanes, they also had some jet aircraft, (sorry Gordon) a 1960 Douglas A4 Skyhawk ex US Navy. An unusual feature of these aircraft was the control column, which could be extended to increase mechanical advantage to retain manual control in the advent of hydraulic failure. We were advised they had a further 5 of these aircraft available for sale, as when purchased were sold in a lot of ten. They also had a Mig MF, little is known about this aircraft as it was purchased under somewhat unusual circumstances, the previous owner was forced to sell after neighbours complained it was an eyesore and was not in keeping with the area! Not surprising considering it was parked in his front driveway. The museum is restoring the Mig to static display only, as although the aircraft can be purchased at a reasonable cost, the complex starter system is very expensive, much more than the aircraft. Next was an ex Swiss Airforce Vampire DH100 now in private hands. Apparently the owner traded in his Tiger Moth for this aircraft, which he used to fly most weekends. Now due to the high running cost of the Vampire, only flies three to four times a year. I think I know which I would rather own.

Most of the aircraft regularly flown are parked outside on the ramp (“excuse the Americanism”) which you are free to wander round and take pictures. They included 2 T6's, Stearman PT17, a 1938 Waco YMF5 (this aircraft is used for pleasure flights, leather helmet and goggles being provided for an authentic open cockpit flying experience). Plus many more privately owned aircraft, including a BA26 Invader which was abandoned by its owner seven years ago and becomes the property of the museum this year.

I really enjoyed my visit. It was a real pleasure having an engineering background to be able to see and touch the aircraft in their raw state. This I found to be one of the main attractions of this working museum. You were able to walk round anywhere and get working on the airframes and engines, no ropes, barriers or don't touch signs plastered every where. I would certainly recommend a visit should you ever go to Florida. Over to you Russell. My next visit was to Kermit Weeks Fantasy Of flight. More of this some other time.

AIR TRANSPORT AUXILIARY
By Alan Powell