

EDITORIAL

The last meeting before writing this was the AGM and our chairman, Martyn Cook was able to give a very upbeat account of another successful year. At a time when so many clubs and societies are having great difficulty maintaining members and suffering falling attendances at their meetings we seem to soldier on from strength to strength! We must be getting something right!

Another MHAS success story is, of course the Control Tower Museum. So much hard work by the dedicated team of volunteers to continue to improve the way that the exhibits are presented.

We look forward to another Open Day in September and very much hope that as many of our friends across the Atlantic will be able to come and to enjoy our hospitality.

So many fascinating and extraordinary stories to come out of WW2 and even now, so many years later, they are still coming to light. This newsletter contains several such stories which I trust you will enjoy reading.

Thank you to those folks who have sent contributions in. Keep 'em rolling in!

ED

We would like to welcome the following members who have joined since we last included a list in the September 2003 "Runway 22".

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| R&M Carpenter | David Moore | Tony Crunden |
| Lewis Robinson | A Clifton | Brian Gray |
| Tony Colbourn | P Stonebridge | Jack Homer |
| Ian White | F Sykes | David Lewin |
| D Woodward | Robert Cowen | Nick Hayward |
| M Earrey | N Makin | Guy Vincent |
| N Makin | | |

Inevitably we will have missed some names and with apologies for that we welcome you all!

RAF MARTLESHAM HEATH – OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK 1940

Our Museum Archivist, Alan Smith has sent me the first of what will probably be an ongoing inclusion into the newsletter. The Operations Record Book was the official diary of events at RAF Martlesham during WW2 and this is the first extract to be included.

“Exactly half a minute before the siren was sounded, the Aerodrome was attacked by approximately 12 Ju 87s and Me 110 (Jaguar) Dive Bombers. It is stated that there was an above guard of about 20 Me 109s.

The attack was divided into two - the Ju 87s concentrating on the uncompleted Signals Station two miles to the West of the aerodrome, and the Jaguars dealing with the aerodrome.

Large bombs were dropped - estimated at 500 lb each - and in addition a - considerable number of incendiary bombs were dropped. The Signal Station suffered no damage other than shattered windows and a burst water tank. The bombs aimed at the aerodrome were widely dispersed although they were dropped in pairs.

Two craters on the aerodrome were filled in by 1900 hrs. Two fell in the main camp road wrecking the Guard Room, Coppersmiths Shop, Joiners Shop and burst the water main. Two shattered almost every pane of glass in the Officers' Mess and severely damaged all the roofing. Doors and window frames suffered very considerable damage. The Vegetable garden was partly smothered in debris - much to the distress of S/Ldr Brice. The Refrigerator Plant was wrecked.

A visiting Fairey Battle, carrying 1,000 lbs of bombs and parked on the tarmac close to the Watch Office was set on fire (presumably by machine gun fire) and blew up. The explosion did far more material damage than the enemy bombs.

Two hangars were rendered completely u/s and the Watch Office (Control Tower), and Night Flying Equipment Sheds were blown to bits. The remainder of the bombs landed in heath land and did no damage.

The attack started at approximately 1510 hrs and lasted about 5 minutes. There were seven casualties, but only two were serious, and there were no fatalities.

Although the aerodrome was taken completely by surprise, the quick action of personnel in using make-shift shelter such as slit trenches in addition to the normal shelters, undoubtedly saved loss of life and large numbers of injured.

The height from which the attack was made will never be proved, but the Hispano gunners claimed that the aircraft were too high and the Bofors

Its that time of year again folks. Have you renewed your membership subscription? Still only £6

Remember – our financial year runs from 30th March to 1st April

blamed the smoke. There was no panic although naturally everyone was badly scared.

17 August 1940

The Red warning was given at approximately noon, resulting in an incredibly rapid performance by all personnel. It is quite clear that a very valuable lesson in taking cover had been learned from Thursday's raid. Two more Reds during the night, but no attacks in the district

MUSEUM JOTTINGS – AIR MARSHALL “BOMBER” HARRIS.

A member has recently donated an item to the Museum which shows Air Marshall Harris, C in C Bomber Command, in a different light to that which he is usually portrayed.

In early 1943 a young lad, living in Lincolnshire and surrounded by bomber bases, together with his older brother and a friend, decided to raise some money towards the war effort by saving their chocolate ration (2 ounces per week in those days) and raffle it off around the village at 3 pence per ticket. They raised the sum of £1.

They then sent a postal order to 'Bomber' Harris with the request that the money be put towards the cost of a rubber dinghy for one of the bombers.

After an interval, they all received two official letters each, one from Harris and one from Sir Stafford Cripps. These were personal letters thanking them, Harris also enclosed a signed photograph with his letter and these items are now in the Museum.

It is regretted that the letter from Sir Stafford Cripps is missing, but a local newspaper report says he signed his in red ink (does this indicate his political leanings or did he always use red ink?)

Harris's letter is dated February 1943 and it is revealing that in spite of his being heavily involved in developing the bomber offensive and all that it entailed, he could find time to write personally to the three boys to thank them, saying he had passed the postal order on to the Minister of Aircraft Production (Sir Stafford), “as he buys all the things Bomber Command need.”

As a tailpiece to the story, the winner of the raffle also had a heart of gold as they gave the chocolate bars back to the three boys.

Story donated by our Museum Archivist, Alan Smith.

AN OBITUARY – JACKIE MOGGRIDGE (1922 –2004).

One of the distinguished women ferry pilots during WW2, Jackie Moggridge flew no less than 63 aircraft types and delivered 1500 aircraft from factory to squadron during WW2. She became an airline pilot after the war and also flew jet aircraft as an officer in the Women's Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Jackie Moggridge, whose maiden name was Sorour, learned to fly in her native South Africa, where she lied about her age and was flying solo by the age of 16.

By 1939 she was in England training for her B licence. She was denied her wish to become a ferry pilot in the newly formed Air Transport Auxiliary. The pilots doing this job were all men who were too old or unfit for active service. It was joked that ATA stood for “Ancient, Tattered Airmen!”.

The still very young Jackie was a Radar Operator during the Battle of Britain. However, the ban on women as pilots was relaxed as the pressures of war grew and she was able to transfer to the ATA. Just one of many, often quite glamorous and personable young women who were to fill that roll. The German Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebels sneered that the British were being forced to draft “perverted” women to help fight the war!

Jackie Moggridge first came to my notice when I read the little book “2nd TAF Spitfire, which was the story of ML407, a Mk IX Spitfire which first saw service just before D Day in 1944 and went on to be restored by the late husband of Caroline Grace, It is now based at Duxford and as many will know, is now flown by Caroline, who has herself spoken to us at one of our monthly meetings.

Jackie Moggridge's log revealed that it was she who delivered ML407 to the first of the six squadrons that this aircraft served with. It was this report from her log that I found so incredible and I have taken the following description in the book, of a day in her life, word for word. Somehow it seems such a fitting epitaph to the life of Jackie Moggridge, nee Sorour.

First Officer Jackie Sorour was in fine spirit. *“The morning foretold a lovely day as I set off on my bicycle from my billet in Hamble village, in my dark blue uniform jacket and trousers with gold 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 had collected my five "chits", authorizing 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 or 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 ration 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 the fuselage or tail, with a note telling the finder to keep the chocolate, but please deliver the letter to Reggie Moggridge!

The order of delivery that day ran: By car to Portsmouth; Airspeed Oxford R6350 from Portsmouth to White Waltham; Hawker Typhoon R8878 White Waltham to Eastleigh; Spitfire XIV NH 692 from Eastleigh to Lyneham; Spitfire IX ML407 Lyneham to Selsey; by car back to Hamble; Supermarine Walrus W3062 Hamble to Wroughton and finally back to Hamble again flying the Fairchild taxi aircraft. I only counted actual airborne time, (i.e. take-off to touch-down), so my flying time of 3 hours 20 minutes seems short."

What a girl! And what a diverse selection of aeroplanes to nonchalantly get in and fly one after the other. She must certainly have been a "natural" pilot.

In 1945 she married Lieut. Colonel Reginald Moggridge and tried to settle down as a wife and mother, but rejoined the WRAF Volunteer Reserve in the 50's to convert to Meteor and Vampire jets. When the RAFVR closed down she spent some time ferrying ex RAF Spitfires from Cyprus to Rangoon for the Burmese Air Force.

In 1957 she joined Channel Airways as an airline pilot. She was always amused when passengers took her for an airhostess as she left the aeroplane! Jackie Moggridge eventually gave up airline work after the birth of her second daughter in 1961.

Jackie Moggridge died in January this year at her home in Somerset, aged 81.

Alan Powell

60th ANNIVERSARY OF "OPERATION JERICHO" – THE AMIENS RAID.

On Sunday 22nd February I was in Amiens with the only Typhoon escort pilot, Frank Wheeler, attending the 60th and final official reunion of the raid on the prison at Amiens on the 18th February 1944.

On that day in 1944 Mosquitoes from 487 (NZ) Squadron 464 (Australia) Squadron with 21 Squadron in reserve attacked the walls of Amiens prison to free members of the Resistance movement held there, some of whom may have had vital knowledge of the possible landing areas for the invasion of France.

Two Squadrons of Typhoons were acting as escort - 174 Squadron and another, which was held up by bad weather.

The Reunion was attended by many representatives of resistance groups with their banners as well as members of the Mosquito Association, the RAFA, civic dignitaries, the French Army, a civilian band and many members of the public. The parade was held at the prison wall where the breach was made by bombs from the Mosquitoes which had approached from less than 20ft! dropping 11 sec. delayed fused bombs.

The raid was led by Gp. Capt P.Pickard DSO and two bars DFC with Fit. Lt.A Broadley DSO DFC DFM as his observer. They were both killed, when shot down by a lone FW190 as they circled the area after they had bombed, to check if a breach had been made and to call in the reserves if necessary.

Wreaths were laid on their graves in the nearby St. Pierre Cemetery after the main ceremony. It was impressive that so many people turned out in bitterly cold weather and the road was closed off at both ends so that the ceremony could proceed without disturbance by motor cars.

Everybody then moved to the Centre De Ville where there was a reception and refreshments. It was, altogether, a very Impressive and moving occasion.

L Boulton.

Leslie and Betty Boulton are moving to Scotland. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing them every happiness for the future. Leslie was a committee member and Membership Secretary and a constant willing helper. He has been a member for many years and this must be testament to the enjoyment this has afforded him. He will continue his membership and therefore keep in touch with us. ED.

IT'S TRUE – THE PLACE REALLY IS HAUNTED

The little piece I wrote about ghosts at Martlesham seems to have struck a chord! Terry Crisp writes from Skipton in Yorkshire and is one of our “long distance” members. He was stationed at Martlesham in 1951 and was on duty in the sick quarters in the early hours of the morning when someone, who was obviously wearing heavy boots, walked through. The ghostly visitor was not seen but the swing doors were opened and the stranger, whoever he was, disappeared without trace! Terry signs his letter “spooky regards”. And spooks to you, Terry!

Another far-flung member is John McCulloch from way up there in Renfrewshire. He tells me that he was in Air Traffic whilst here from 1952 to '54. They were required to do guard duty in the control tower. It was very eerie out there on your own and one lad in particular would do anything to avoid his stint, even offering 2/6d to anyone who would stand in for him! Apparently the story about Dobbs that was going round was that he was the last man in England to be hanged for sheep stealing – and of course, his ghost wandered about the Heath at night. Well, it would, wouldn't it?

Thanks to Terry and John for those letters. Anyone else got anything to add?

ED

OPERATION APHRODITE

At our meeting in January our member Tony Errington was due to give us a talk, but unfortunately had 'flu at the time so we had to make our own entertainment! In the event and thanks once again to Gordon Kinsey and no little help from the audience, our evening turned out to be another interesting one after all!

One of the items discussed was “Operation Aphrodite”. Under an American plan, which was approved by Major General James Doolittle in June 1944, “war weary” B.17's were to be packed with explosives and dispatched by radio control to targets mainly in France.

Each pilotless bomber was fitted with a radio-controlled flight system known as Double-Azon. A television camera was placed on the flight deck so that an image of the main instrument panel could be sent back to a controlling aircraft. A second TV camera was installed inside the Plexiglas nose, which gave a television monitor in the controlling aircraft a view of the ground so that the robot machine could be directed on to the target.

A volunteer two-man crew would get the aircraft off the ground and fly it up to an operational altitude of 2000 feet, point the aircraft in the general direction of the target, arm the explosives for an on-impact detonation, hand over control to the director aircraft that was flying above at 20,000 feet and then parachute to safety while still over England. The canopy was removed from each aircraft, creating an open cockpit so that the two-man crew could exit the plane with minimum delay once they had completed their tasks. The controlling B-17 would then direct the “flying bomb” to the target area over the Continent and lock its controls into a crash course on to the target before turning to escape.

Fersfield near Diss was chosen as the main base for the operation and the first mission took place on August 4th 1944. Two mother-ships and two “drones”, as they were called, headed for a V1 site in the Pas De Calais. One of the Drones went out of control and crashed on the Sudbourne estate near Orford. The crater, I believe, is now a small lake! One of the crewmen bailed out but the body of the other one was never found.

The second Drone reached the target area but missed by 500ft. due to cloud cover. The second attempt fared no better as one of the Drones had a control malfunction and was downed by enemy flak. The second drone missed the target by 500 yards.

On August 6th another attempt was made by two mother ships and two drones. The crews parachuted to safety but within minutes one of the drones went out of control and crashed into the sea. The other one developed a mind of its own and began to circle Ipswich before finally heading out to sea. This was shot down by a Mustang from Martlesham. How it was shot down without blowing the P51 clean out of the sky is not known!

Operations were then suspended whilst investigations into the cause of the failures took place. It was decided that the radio control equipment was to blame and another type of radio guidance system was installed.

Other attempts were then made against targets including Hanover but they all failed, either to reach the target or were shot down by flak.

Aphrodite had been a costly failure which had been more dangerous to the crews than anyone else and the plan was eventually abandoned. The radio control equipment available at that time was probably not sophisticated enough.

Incidentally, many readers will be aware that Joseph Kennedy junior, the older brother of JFK, lost his life when the drone he was piloting exploded over Blythburgh before he was able to bale out.

It has been reported that the war weary bomber on this occasion was a Navy *PB4Y-1*, (naval version of the B24 *Liberator*). However, Joseph Kennedy had been a pilot of a *PB4Y-1* on anti-submarine sorties around Britain and this is probably the cause of the confusion. His last fateful flight was almost certainly in one of the B17's. These B17's were packed with Torpex, a new British explosive and the one that killed Kennedy jun. had the doubtful distinction of being probably the largest explosion over Great Britain during WW2.

Joseph Kennedy was the son of Joseph Kennedy senior who was appointed ambassador to Great Britain by President Roosevelt in 1938. Joseph Kennedy sen. forecast that Great Britain would last only six weeks before they would be defeated by Germany. Shades of his Irish/catholic lineage perhaps? !

Alan Powell

LET'S LIGHTEN IT UP A BIT!

An Irishman walks into a bar in Dublin, orders 3 pints of Guinness and sits in the back of the bar drinking a sip out of each one in turn.

When he finishes them he goes back to the bar and orders 3 more. The barman says to him "you know a pint goes flat soon after I pour it, so it would taste better if you bought one at a time." The Irishman replies "well you see I have two brothers, one is in America, the other in Australia and I'm in Dublin. When we all left home, we promised that we'd drink this way to remember the days we drank together. So I drink one for each o' me brothers and one for meself."

The barman admits that this is a nice custom, and leaves it at that. The Irishman becomes a regular and always drinks the same way. One day, he comes in and only orders two pints. All the other regulars notice and fall silent.

When he comes back to the bar for the second round, the barman says "I don't want to intrude on your grief, but I want to offer my condolences on your loss."

The Irishman looks puzzled for a moment. Then a light dawns in his eye and he laughs 'Oh no, everybody is just fine.' "It's just that me wife had us join the

Mormon church, and they don't allow drinking, so I had to quit. Hasn't affected me brothers though".

ED

THE BIGGEST ASPIDISTRA IN THE WORLD

The use of propaganda is recognized as a powerful psychological weapon in times of war. The British had been particularly successful in undermining the morale of the Germans during WW1 and Hitler made reference to this in Mein Kampf. Perhaps that was the reason that Joseph Goebels was appointed Minister of Information soon after the rise of the Third Reich.

Germany was quick off the mark at the outbreak of WW2 and three propaganda stations that purported to be British began broadcasting to England. This use of propaganda is called "Black propaganda" and was the type that the British had used to great effect in the Great War. "White" propaganda is that which makes no attempt to conceal its origins and the use of aircraft to distribute leaflets over enemy territory is an example of this.

However there is another aspect of "black" deception and that is by the use of printed matter. The Germans wanted to undermine the pound sterling, which would have had serious consequences for the British economy. A call for volunteers amongst the Jews incarcerated in concentration camps was made and a number of Jewish ex-printers volunteered in the hope of escaping extinction. They were so successful that the Bank of England were unable to tell the difference between their counterfeits and the genuine pound sterling. These were never widely distributed and I do not know the reason why. The British dropped forged ration cards over Germany and these caused not inconsiderable disruption of scarce food supplies.

Sefton Delmer, whose parents were Australian, had spent his childhood in Berlin and could speak German as a second tongue. Towards the end of 1941 he was to become the head of an organization called, The Political Warfare Executive, (PWE).

Meanwhile, over in the United States, RCA had built a very powerful transmitter, which, due to its very power, had been refused a license to transmit. It had been produced for an order from station WJZ in New Jersey but it far exceeded the 50kw maximum allowed for commercial radio stations in the US.

This transmitter was purchased by the British at a cost of £165000, which, incidentally seems to me to have been an enormous sum for the time and for a

transmitter, which, to all intents and purposes had little practical use for the purpose for which it had been intended, due to its enormous power.

However, the British had it shipped over to England and it was given the code name “Aspidistra”. Why Aspidistra? – Who remembers the Gracie Fields song, “The Biggest Aspidistra in the World”? – Now you know why!

With an output of 500kw it was by far the most powerful medium wave transmitter in Europe. It was installed in an underground bunker in Sussex and the output was increased to 600kw before it came into use. It was rapidly tuneable over the whole range of the medium waveband. A very sophisticated capability for its day and no British transmitter came near to it.

First used by the BBC on 8th November 1942. It broadcast pre-recorded speeches by President Roosevelt and General Eisenhower when the American landings in North Africa were taking place. It remained in use by the BBC to reinforce its European services until later the following year, when it was taken over by the Political Warfare Executive. It was time to employ this powerful weapon in the role for which it had first been envisaged. Black propaganda.

Two “black” radio stations had been planned. The first of these two stations was called *Deutsche Kurzwellensender Atlantik*. This was mainly aimed at the German maritime service. The other station was known as *Soldatensender Calais* and directed at the army and Luftwaffe. They initially broadcast on the short wave band using spare BBC transmitters, but on the run up to Operation Overlord, (D Day), Aspidistra took over to broadcast the programme on the medium wave and was the one that was aimed at the German army and Luftwaffe.

Churchill had taken a personal interest in our nefarious operations and a studio was built to facilitate the expanding exercise! This had several high-grade private wires to the likes of Reuters and also to the POW interrogation centres at Latimer and Wilton Park. Much use was made of information provided by POW’s, either unwittingly by them, or by bugging their holding cells.

These stations purported to be official forces programmes and played popular music and news stories designed to undermine morale. They played American jazz with a German flavour and records of the latest German hits were specially flown in by *Mosquito from neutral Stockholm. Marlene Dietrich was duped into making recordings in German in belief they were for use on a

German broadcast of “The Voice of America!” Several more highly ingenious ploys were used to dupe the German listeners.

Sefton Delmer was amazed that so many Germans believed the programmes to be authentic. A POW reported that a sergeant had been piping it to the recreational huts of the German equivalent of the NAAFI because he thought the music was so good, until he was reprimanded by an officer for entertaining the troops with an enemy station!

In the bulletins between the music there were subtle reports of increasing crime waves, unsolved murders, Nazi Party officials being allowed to move away from bomber targets and people smuggling money to safe bank accounts in Switzerland. When it was learned that people were being evacuated during allied bombing raids it was broadcast that epidemics of Cholera and Typhoid had broken out. All were stories aimed at undermining the morale of servicemen and causing them to be fearful for the safety of their loved-ones at home.

Both stations continued transmitting until the very end of the war and they were “on the air” virtually 24 hours a day. In fact the whole British propaganda machine employed thousands of staff by the end of hostilities.

At the end of 1943 “Aspidistra” was also being used to interfere with the German ground control transmissions to the Luftwaffe night fighters when RAF raids were taking place. It was given the name of “Operation Dartboard”. Incoming RAF bombers would, of course, be plotted and Luftwaffe night fighters were scrambled to vector over an area controlled by a radio beacon to await directional instructions.

Luftwaffe Ground Control exercised strict radio silence during this stage and it was suspected that coded instructions to the pilots were concealed in German medium wave broadcasts that the pilots were able to listen to. For example, a waltz might signify Munich as the target or perhaps jazz would indicate Berlin.

“Aspidistra” was far more powerful than the German transmitters and could easily overwhelm the German station. Pilots were often unaware that they were being duped and a popular trick was to broadcast a recording of a musical instruction that had been made the previous night. On one occasion when the RAF were targeting Ludwigshafen a voice instructed all night fighters to land because of imminent fog! The transmitter site in Sussex was never attacked, which seems surprising since it must have been relatively simple to obtain a

“fix” on the signal and anyway, three 350ft high masts advertised the presence of the station. A small mobile transmitter acting as a relay was transmitting from the top of the cliffs near Dover and this was done to lay a false trail, but it is difficult to believe that this would have fooled a determined assault.

I recalled that I had heard of a very powerful BBC transmitter being used in what I like to think was the ultimate hoax and after obtaining a copy of a Bletchley Park report entitled, “Black Propaganda”, I now have the details. It was indeed the ultimate hoax and was code-named, “Big Bertha”.

Whenever a RAF bombing raid was taking place within about a 50-mile radius of the target the local regional transmission of the national domestic radio service would go off the air. This was so that the bombers could not use the signal to “home in” on the area.

The RAF targeted Cologne on the night of the 24th March, 1945. It was therefore known that the Cologne transmitter would go off the air. The German broadcasts were being received in England on two frequencies. One of these was the Cologne frequency. As soon as Cologne went off the air “Aspidistra” automatically switched on and relayed the programme from the other region. The break in transmission was only 6 milliseconds and the unsuspecting German listeners were therefore unaware that their programme was now being beamed from England.

It continued broadcasting for a time and then the announcer, (who had been chosen because of his ability to mimic the genuine German announcer), cut in to issue dire warnings. People were told to leave their homes immediately and take only bare essentials with them. Men were told to report for duty immediately in readiness to defend their city against the approaching enemy.

As can be imagined, the whole thing descended into farce, with the official German transmitter cutting in to warn the listeners that they were being duped by the enemy and our announcer breaking in to tell them that indeed they were the official German programme.

In the last months of the war Aspidistra was employed on 10 further occasions for the “Big Bertha” hoax and reports captured at the end of the war confirmed that it had been completely successful and had indeed caused panic and confusion among the population and caused roads to become blocked. On mature reflection so many years later it seems to have been a cruel trick to play on the civilian population. But then, I suppose it was no less horrific than

the saturation bombing of German cities or the use by the Germans of the indiscriminate V1’s and V2’s. To misquote Air Marshall “Bomber” Harris, they had “sowed the wind and consequently reaped the whirlwind.”

“Aspidistra” was used for many years in the post war period by the BBC in its World Service broadcasts to the European zone.

Inevitably in such a small article I have “skated over” the fascinating and sometimes even hilarious story of the British use of Black Propaganda in WW2. Post war analysis revealed that it had achieved considerable success and it has since been proved as a model for other countries to emulate.

Much of the information was gleaned from mostly anonymous sources on the World Wide Web, but Sefton Delmer wrote a book entitled “Black Boomerang” which is available from the public library for anyone interested in looking further into the subject.

**British Overseas Airways Corporation, (BOAC), had replaced Imperial Airways in 1939. During WW2 they flew on several routes with a variety of aircraft. All of them with civilian markings and sporting the “Speedbird” logo. De Havilland Mosquito’s flew regularly between neutral Stockholm, in Sweden carrying vital cargo in the converted bomb bay.*

Alan Powell

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Our January meeting and we found ourselves with no speaker! It had previously been advertised that we were to have a talk by someone who took part in the hazardous Peenemunde raid. This was a raid by a large force of Lancaster bombers on the secret Nazi development site for the V1 and V2 missiles. However, Mr. Alan Bryant, who was due to give the talk, was unable to be present. Our own member, Tony Errington had stepped in to fill the gap but the flu bug caught up with him and we were therefore left to our own devices!

All was not lost! Another of our members, Cliff Caley, gave a brief talk about a raid on the Baltic port of Stettin. This was in the same area as Peenemunde and involved a flight time in the region of eight hours. Cliff was a Flight Engineer on Lancaster’s and his account of this and other raids far into Germany and Poland was listened to by an audience who appreciated the immense danger of those long distance sorties.

Gordon Kinsey raised some more topics which ranged from the deployment of “war weary” B17’s as radio controlled flying bombs, to radar and heavy gun sites in this area.

The February meeting featured a talk by Mr Jeff Errington of “Diveline” Ipswich Ltd. Jeff spoke of many dives he has done on the underwater sites of crashed aircraft, including a description of the recovery of the Harrier that crashed during the Lowestoft Air show.

He spoke of the remains of a Hastings aircraft that crashed many years ago in the Maldives. Amazingly a member of the audience had been a passenger on that aircraft and was able to relate the story of his escape from death. All the passengers and crew escaped unharmed after the Hastings missed the runway in a torrential tropical storm and came down in the sea.

Our speaker for the March meeting was Flight Lieutenant Charlie Brown who, as well as being a flying instructor at RAF Cranwell, is also the principal pilot for the Historic Aircraft Collection, which is based at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Charlie Brown was accompanied by Mr Howard Cook, who is a civilian pilot who flies with the Historic Aircraft Collection.

The audience numbered approximately 140 and the subject of the illustrated talk was the merits and demerits of the Spitfire versus the ME109. Both our guests have considerable experience flying these historic aircraft.

After the break Charlie Brown showed a video of both aircraft types flying at Duxford.

The April meeting is the occasion of our AGM and a surprisingly large audience were present to hear our chairman, Martyn Cook give another upbeat account of a successful year.

After the break the annual “Holly Hall” photographic competition which is organised by Don Kitt, took place. This was one by Mike Crowley with a stunning shot of nine English Electric Lightnings. The runner up was Alan Powell.

ED

LETTER SPOT

The following letter from a Mr H Giles, who is chairman of the RAFA in Melbourne, Australia

Dear Sir,

Having seen a mention of RAF Martlesham Heath Aviation Society in the magazine, “Flypast”, I cannot resist but write to you of my last active service duties with the Royal Air Force. This was with the Blind Landing Experimental Unit, based at Martlesham Heath.

I was stationed there for just over two years in the early 50’s. We were flying DH Mosquitoes at the time and performing low level blind landings at Woodbridge.,(the WW2 Sutton Heath emergency landing strip – ED), with the assistance of Pye equipment.

I was seconded from the A and AEE at Boscombe Down and we were controlled by civilian “boffins”, who I might add, preferred us to fly in the most atrocious weather in order to put the equipment and the flying crews to the ultimate test!

THE BOMBERS

Whenever I see them ride on high
Gleaming and proud in the morning sky
Or lying awake in bed at night
I hear them pass on their outward flight
I feel the mass of metal and guns
Delicate instruments, deadweight tons
Awkward, slow, bomb racks full
Straining away from downward pull
Straining away from home and base
And try to see the pilot's face
I imagine a boy who's just left school
On whose quick-learned skill and courage cool
Depend the lives of the men in his crew
And success of the job they have to do.
And something happens to me inside
That is deeper than grief, greater than pride
And though there is nothing I can say
I always look up as they go their way
And care and pray for every one,
And steel my heart to say,
”Thy will be done”

SARAH CHURCHILL (Daughter of Winston)

