October 2010
7  Pilot Aptitude Assessment  RAF Cranwell
12 3rd Technical and Air Safety Committee Meeting  Cobham House
14 6th General Purposes and Finance Committee Meeting  Cobham House
19 Environment Committee  Cobham House
21 Trophies & Awards Banquet  Guildhall

November 2010
2 4th Education and Training Committee  Cobham House
6 Flyer Show  Sofitel, Heathrow
9 Benevolent Fund Board of Management  Cobham House
11 7th GP & F Committee meeting  Cobham House
11 4th Court Meeting  Cutlers’ Hall
11 Scholarships Presentation  Cutlers’ Hall
12 Silent Change  Guildhall
13 Lord Mayor’s Show
16 Lord Mayor’s Banquet  Guildhall
24 St Cecilia’s Festival  Westminster Abbey

December 2010
2 Pilot Aptitude Assessment  RAF Cranwell
7 4th Technical and Air Safety Committee  Cobham House
10 8th GP & F Committee meeting  Cobham House
10 New Members’ Briefing  Cobham House
10 Guild Carol Service  St Michael’s, Cornhill
12 Silent Change  Guildhall
13 Lord Mayor’s Show
16 Lord Mayor’s Banquet  Guildhall
24 St Cecilia’s Festival  Westminster Abbey

January 2011
4 Guild Opens
11 5th Education and Training Committee  Cobham House
12 Trophies and Awards Committee  Cobham House
18 Benevolent Fund Board of Management  RAF Club
20 9th GP & F Committee Meeting  Cobham House
20 5th Court Meeting  Cutlers’ Hall
20 Court Election Dinner
25 Environment Committee  Cobham House

GUILD VISITS PROGRAMME
13 October  RAF Northolt
18 January  Magic Circle, London
15 February  TAG & AAIB, Farnborough

Please see the Flyers accompanying this and previous editions of Guild News or contact Liveryman David Curgenven at guildevents@dcai.co.uk.

Cover Photo: Warden Air Marshal Cliff Spink helps Past Master Peter Buggé strap into a 2 seat Spitfire at Duxford, watched by Past Master Michael Grayburn who is eagerly awaiting his turn to fly. A full description of this wonderful day out can be found in this issue. Photo courtesy Dacre Watson.
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A STROLL AROUND THE STANDS AT FARNBOROUGH. The Editor writes: Thursday at Farnborough was possibly the wettest day of the week, with heavy downpours in the morning, easing off as the day moved on. Nevertheless, there was ample opportunity to inspect the many and varied aircraft types on show. Not surprisingly, the big boys - A380, A400M, Boeing 777, C117 Globemaster and C130 - dominated the static park. Unfortunately the 787 Dreamliner had already left to return to it’s certification programme in the USA, but not before our Master Elect, Wally Epton, had a close look around it, organised by Assistant Kent Johnson of Boeing. Judging by the smile on his face - see accompanying photo - the Master Elect was much impressed.

Down among the smaller exhibits were some very interesting products, demonstrating the wide diversity of the aerospace industry. Air Tractor Inc, a little known manufacturer of agricultural spraying aircraft, showed its development of the AT-802A, the AT-802U surveillance and strike aircraft. A robust, fixed landing gear tail dragger, powered by a Pratt and Whitney PT6A-67F turbo-prop, it was shown with an impressive array of armament and sensor equipment. To quote the brochure, "The 802U can loiter quietly more than 10 hours while carrying more than a ton of weapons. It commands a level of situational awareness that unmanned aircraft, with ‘soda straw’ sensor views, simply cannot match. It combines an 8000 pound payload and 10 hour ISR mission capability with the flexibility and responsiveness of a manned weapon system - for a fraction of the cost of unmanned aerial vehicle systems.” Equally interesting is the statement "Air Tractor builds aircraft that help pilots walk away from high energy ground impacts.” Sounds perfect for early flying training as well as counter insurgency operations - perhaps the MoD should reconsider it as a Predator alternative!

Agusta Westland showed a wide range of its rotary wing products, including the brand new AW 169 helicopter, painted in the livery of the Somerset Police. Designed to carry out a wide variety of tasks such as Law Enforcement, EMS/SAR, Passenger Transport and Utility, the aircraft was displayed on an impressive stage as the centre piece of the Company’s stand. It was also interesting to see the RNZAF’s new acquisition, the AW 109, which is soon to enter service in both training and attack helicopter roles.

High-quality GA aircraft were represented by Cirrus Aircraft, who had their SR22 and Vision SF50 single-engine aircraft on display. These really are top of the range mini executive transports, with full glass cockpits and impressive nav/com suites, all leather interiors and an excellent finish. The Vision SF50 is powered by a single jet engine mounted on top of the fuselage and exhausting through a V tail empennage. To those who might be concerned about what happens if the single engine fails, both aircraft are fitted with the innovative Cirrus Aircraft Parachute System (CAPS). In the event of engine failure, rather than attempt a forced landing, the pilot simply deploys a parachute which lowers the whole aircraft to the ground, where the crash absorbent seating protects the occupants on landing. Photos of aircraft that had used the system in anger showed remarkably little damage to the airframe.

To those accustomed to making more conventional emergency departures from stricken aircraft, Martin Baker showed its wide range of ejection seats. Their products are being fitted in the F35 Lightning 2, the USAF JPATS training aircraft, the Pakistan Air Force’s JF 17 Thunder, the Indian Air Force ADA Tejas trainer and HAL HJT-36 Sitara trainer, not to mention many other current combat aircraft including the upgrading of the large USAF T-38 Talon fleet of advanced trainers with the US16T seat. The lightest seat on offer was the Mk 15B ultra lightweight escape system which weighs only 37kg but has an operating envelope of 60 - 300kts up to a maximum altitude of 40,000ft. It can be fitted to aircraft such as the Grob G120 piston engine primary trainer, thereby enabling this aircraft to be used for some elements of advanced pilot training that currently require more expensive aircraft such as the T-6 Texan 2, Pilatus PC9 and KT-1. The Grob G120 is the smallest aircraft to be equipped with Martin Baker seats. As ever, the Martin Baker chalet provided outstanding hospitality and an ideal location to view the flying display to this itinerant user of their excellent product (albeit some years ago) for which my grateful thanks.
AIRSHIPS MAKE A COME BACK. Seventy three years after the Hindenburg disaster destroyed the airship industry, the Cardington based firm of Hybrid Air Vehicles and Northrop Grumman have won a £335m order to build three airships equipped with sensors and cameras to provide persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance above Afghanistan. The firms have 18 months to build and test the airships and their onboard systems before handing them over to the US Army. The airships, which will be unmanned, will operate at 20,000ft for up to three weeks at a time. Powered by diesel engines, the airships will generate 40% of their lift aerodynamically. They potentially will offer a cost-efficient alternative to conventional aircraft or UAVs. Inevitably, they have already been christened with a new acronym - LEMV - which stands for Long Endurance Multi Intelligence Vehicle. Hybrid Air Vehicles are also proposing to build a new class of large civil airships using similar technology, as aerial versions of the ever popular cruise liner, offering similar facilities but a cruise speed of about 80kts and an unrivalled view from the height of 2000ft. Apparently some cruise liner companies have already expressed an interest.

GUILD HONORARY CHAPLAIN’S 40 YEARS SERVICE. A special sung Eucharist service to mark the Guild’s Honorary Chaplain the Reverend Peter Mullen’s 40 years service in Holy Orders was held on Tuesday 21st September at the church of St Michael’s Cornhill. Organised by the Worshipful Company of Drapers, representatives of the other Livery Companies that Peter Mullen is associated with also attended. The service was followed by a reception at Drapers’ Hall.

WOMEN IN AVIATION INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL EUROPEAN CONFERENCE. The Women in Aviation International (WAI) Regional European Conference will be held on 5th to 6th November at the Brooklands Aviation Museum. Speakers will include Captain Suzanna Darcy-Henman, world record setter, Gabriella Somerville, Managing Director ConnectJets, Lt Col Jennifer Crossman, USAF KC 135 pilot and Dominique Brown, Chief Operating Officer Quick International Courier. Past Master Captain Mike Bannister will narrate a virtual flight in the British Airways Concorde and a few lucky raffle winners will be given a ride in the Concorde simulator. Flight test development, commercial, military and corporate aviation topics will be on the discussion agenda. For more details register on www.wai.org/10regionaluk.

GUILD LUNCHEON CLUB AND SIR FREDERICK TYMMS LECTURE. The third Guild Luncheon Club event of 2010 and the Sir Frederick Tymms Lecture both took place on 29th September, after this issue of Guild News went to press. Those attending the Luncheon Club were entertained after the meal by Battle of Britain fighter pilot Wing Commander Tom Neil, whose tales of the air fighting 70 years ago over this country thrilled his audience. The Sir Frederick Tymms Lecture was on ’Army Aviation and Attack Helicopter Operations in Afghanistan’ and was given by Colonel Neale Moss and Major David Amlot from the Army Air Corp’s main UK Apache base at Wattisham airfield. Readers will recall the most interesting visit to Wattisham by the Guild in May, hosted by Colonel Moss, described in the August issue of Guild News.

50 YEARS OF GUILD MEMBERSHIP. Congratulations to Captains David Daniel and Graham Rice of the Australian Region, who recently respectively celebrated their 50th and 55th anniversary of membership of the Guild.

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Congratulations to Upper Freeman Captain Steve Noujaim, who, flying his RV7, has broken the London - Cape Town - London record set originally in 1939 by Alex Henshaw. Steve’s time for the round trip was 3 days, 11 hours and 16 minutes, compared to Alex Henshaw’s 4 days, 10 hours and 16 minutes and Chalkie Stobbart’s 3 days, 15 hours and 17 minutes flown in the opposite direction. Steve was welcomed on arrival back at Southend by 2 Spitfires, 13 RVs, a handful of GA aircraft and 100 or so well-wishers, including Past Master Air Commodore Rick Peacock-Edwards. Steve’s one-time healthy lead over the original record was reduced to a nail-biting finish because of frustrations with Algerian, Spanish and French ATC agencies. A full report will appear in the December issue of Guild News.

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The Master Writes
FLIGHT PLAN CLOSED
DR MICHAEL A FOPP

When I was 32 years old I went to work one day and woke up in hospital seriously injured, with a 15 year career I loved at an end. In March last year I went to work and by the end of the day I was in an acute cardiac care unit realising that my life was, once again, never going to be the same. Yet another career, 31 years this time, was also ending. In addition I was told recently that my chance of ever flying an aircraft again had also ended. Depressing, “yes” - end of the world, “no”. There are so many GAPAN members who have passed through the same, or worse, scenario. Losing your ability to pursue a career is devastating, but can be an opportunity to do something new. Losing your medical can mean even more, for the simple reason that, for us all, the very fact of being able to ‘slip those surly bonds’ will no longer be a privilege which will be ours to enjoy. How easy it is to take that privilege for granted - until it is taken away. Only aviators have any inkling of what it is like to climb up there with the birds and spend time, often in glorious solitude, dancing amongst the clouds. Even the challenge of a difficult instrument approach carries with it a sense of accomplishment when safely returned to Earth. But, in my opinion, very little can compare to the sheer delight of climbing into a small aircraft just for the enjoyment of spending some solo time at play with God’s most perfect element - the sky.

All that is over for me now, but I look back on more than 30 years of being able to do something only a small minority of the general public have ever tackled and even fewer understand. Most of you who read this will sympathise and have mixed feelings about my situation; the Guild is so generous of spirit I know that the general feeling will be sympathetic and that many of you will have experienced the disappointment and gloominess I have felt in recent weeks. Some have experienced the disappointment and sympathy and that many of you will sympathise and have mixed feelings with the decision to stop me flying and as an eminent cardiologist pointed out to me “the alternative is much less pleasant, at least you’re here for us to tell you that you cannot fly” - how right he was.

Each of my premature career changes has given me the opportunity to avoid complacency and added that most precious of human traits, optimism. My glass is half full and it is my determined intention to continue filling it to the brim. My year as Master of our Guild has been, thus far, so rewarding for Rosemary and me. Your feedback from our efforts means a great deal to us. I was so privileged to deliver the Cobham Lecture and I believe our Livery Dinner was a truly grand occasion. The IPM, Master Elect and our Wardens, supported by the Learned Clerk and his small team, are moving the Guild forward in accordance with our Strategic Review. Our three expert committees are achieving real and tangible objectives. Their work, with others, on issues such as volcanic ash clouds and inequities relating to taxes on training, show that not only are we relevant, but also well directed. Our influence is gentle, subtle, informed and effective, and our global reach, through our regional committees, is outstanding.

Each Master brings a slightly different approach to his brief year and this is one of the great strengths of the Livery Movement in general. There was a time when we were referred to euphemistically as the ‘Guild of Airline Pilots’ and it would be correct to say that for many years GAPAN was sustained by the generosity of major flag carriers. Those days are long gone, but we can now boast a much more diverse membership and, subsequent elevation to the Court and beyond, by recreational, general aviation, military and airline people. We have had distinguished airmen from the military, airlines, flying training, businessmen, Aldermen and Lord Mayors, and even a Museum Director! We are also set to have our first Lady Master in a few years time, if all goes according to plan. All these factors bode well for a strong and adaptable Guild which is managing its affairs with prudence and flair, and following an agreed strategic plan. GAPAN is the largest Worshipful Company in the City and, from my perspective, the most relevant to the calling we represent. With the summer upon us and the recent launch of the Guild’s second volume of its history covering the period 1965 to 2006 (a fantastic book which I recommend highly), our next major event will be the annual Trophies and Awards Banquet. As always this will be a red-letter day in our annual calendar when we recognise and honour those who fly in such a way as to be exceptional, either through endeavour or sheer bravery. Such is the character of the pilot and navigator. We are people who have chosen to add significant risk to our normal lives, not through recklessness, but through calculated and professional expertise. I may not be able to join you in this endeavour any more, but I’m mighty proud to have been blessed with so many happy years when I had that unique opportunity.

On my badge of office it succinctly boasts “We Fly” which our newly published history informs us was the Guild’s original motto. In my case the flesh has turned out to be weak, but I can assure you the spirit is still strong.
Trophies and Awards 2009-2010

The following are the awards approved by the Court of the Guild for 2009 - 2010. The recipients will be formally presented with their award at the Guild’s Trophies and Awards Banquet to be held at Guildhall, London, on Thursday 21st October.

LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION TO THE AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

The Guild Award of Honour.
Awarded to an individual who has made an outstanding lifetime contribution to aviation.
Sir Maurice Flanagan

FLIGHT TEST

The Derry and Richards Memorial Medal.
Awarded to a test pilot who has made an outstanding contribution in advancing the art and science of aviation.
Graham Tomlinson

TRAINING

The Sir Alan Cobham Memorial Award.
Awarded to the most meritorious student pilot graduating from a college or school of civil or military aviation and nominated by the Principal or Commanding Officer. Particular consideration will be given to the candidate’s progress during the course, including qualities of character, leadership, involvement in sport, recreation and voluntary service, in addition to flying and academic achievement.
Kelly McQuaid

The CFS Guild Trophy
A periodic award to an individual, group or organisation that, in the opinion of the Court of the Guild and with the endorsement of the Central Flying School, has made an outstanding contribution toward the achievement of excellence in the delivery of military flying training or instructional standards.
Squadron Leader Selwyn Williams RAF

The Pike Trophy.
Awarded to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the maintenance of high standards of civil flying instruction and safety, taking into account working conditions and opportunities.
Ian Bain Mackie

The John Landymore Trophy.
Awarded to the outstanding candidate of that year for a Guild PPL Scholarship.
John Randall

FLIGHT OPERATIONS

The Sir Barnes Wallis Medal.
Awarded in recognition of an exceptional and innovative contribution to aviation.
Not Awarded

The Grand Master’s Medal.
Awarded to a pilot under the age of 30 for outstanding achievement and endeavour in any field of flying activity.
Not Awarded

The Master’s Commendation.
Awarded at the discretion of the Master for commendable achievement in any sector of aviation.
Air Cadet Organisation

The Brackley Memorial Trophy.
Awarded to an individual, a complete aircraft crew, or an organisation, for an act or acts of outstanding flying skill, which have contributed to the operational development of air transport or transport aircraft or new techniques in air transport flying.
Not Awarded

The Johnston Memorial Trophy.
Awarded to an individual, a complete aircraft crew, or an organisation, for an outstanding performance of airmanship, for the operation of airborne systems or for the development of air navigation techniques and equipment.
No 51 Squadron RAF

The Guild Sword of Honour.
Awarded for an outstanding contribution to any sector of General Aviation (all elements of Civil Aviation other than Air Transport), whether in the air or on the ground.
Captain Paul Bonhomme

SAFETY AND SURVIVAL

The Sir James Martin Award.
Awarded to an individual, a group, team or organisation, which has made an outstanding, original and practical contribution leading to the safer operation of aircraft or the survival of aircrew or passengers.
David Cockburn

The Cumberbatch Trophy.
Awarded to an individual, a team, group or organisation for an outstanding contribution to air safety, whether by the development of techniques contributing to safer flight, by improvements in ground equipment and services or by improvements in aircraft and component design.
Not Awarded

FOR OUTSTANDING COURAGE OR DEVOTION TO DUTY IN THE AIR

The Grand Master’s Commendation.
Awarded at the discretion of the Grand Master for an act of valour or outstanding services in the air.
Flight Lieutenant A Fortune RAF

The Hugh Gordon-Burke Memorial Award.
Awarded to a member or members of a crew whose outstanding behaviour and action contributed to the saving of their aircraft or passengers.
Flight Lieutenant A Townsend RAF

The Prince Philip Helicopter Rescue Award.
Awarded to an individual member of a helicopter crew, a complete crew or the crews of multiple helicopters, for an act of outstanding courage or devotion to duty in the course of land or sea Search and Rescue operations.
Crew of Rescue 902, Canadian Air Force

The Guild Award for Gallantry.
Awarded to an individual, or crew of an aircraft, in any field of aviation for an outstanding act of gallantry. It is intended that this should be awarded on rare occasions for any act considered worthy of the award as soon as the facts of the event are clear. Awarded at the discretion of the Master and on the advice of the Trophies and Awards Committee.
Not Awarded

GUILD ONLY

The Guild Award of Merit.
Awarded for meritorious service to the Guild.
Captain Ian Frow

REGIONAL AWARDS

The Grand Master’s Australian Medal.
Awarded to an individual, a group or organisation involved in any branch of aviation in the Australian Region or to Australian nationals abroad, who or which has made a meritorious contribution to any aviation activity, either by displaying technical excellence or by the development of a procedure or operational technique of an outstanding nature.
816 Squadron, Royal Australian Navy

The Australian Bi-Centennial Award.
Awarded as an ongoing commemoration of the Australian Bi-Centenary, to recognise an outstanding individual contribution to Australian aviation.
Group Captain Doctor Robert Lee

Jim Cowan Memorial Award.
The recipient will be a young pilot (no specific age limit) who is an Australian citizen or a permanent resident in Australia, holding a civil Commercial Pilot Licence or higher, or military pilot qualification and is engaged in the profession as a pilot in Australia or on temporary posting overseas and has, in the opinion of the Australian Region Trophies and Awards Sub-Committee, with the endorsement of the Guild Trophies and Awards Committee, made an outstanding individual contribution to aviation or whose achievements in aviation are truly noteworthy.
Not Awarded

The Jean Batten Memorial Award.
Awarded in memory of the late Liveryman Miss Jean Batten, to recognise an outstanding individual contribution to New Zealand aviation.
Michael E Murray

AVIATION MEDIA

The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators Award for Aviation Journalism.
Awarded to an individual journalist, publication or organisation for an outstanding contribution to the promotion or public awareness of aviation in general or of any important aspect of aviation activity.
Not Awarded

THE MASTER’S AWARDS

The Master’s Medal.
Awarded to any person in aviation, at any time, for an act or other achievement considered worthy of the Medal, as soon as the facts of the event are clear. This is intended to be an immediate award, made at the discretion of the Master and on the advice of the Trophies and Awards Committee.
Captain M Fairhurst, Senior First Officer J Brown and Captain Stephen Noujaim

Not Awarded
The 75th Anniversary Celebrations of the First Flight of Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd, New Zealand’s First Licensed Airline

CAPTAIN BRYAN WYNESS B.Sc. FRAeS, CHAIRMAN, NEW ZEALAND REGION

“Bryan, are you going down to Haast for the celebrations?”
“What celebrations?”
“The founding of New Zealand’s first licensed airline”
“Hadn’t planned to, but tell me more?”

This conversation took place towards the end of 2009 between the Reverend Richard Waugh and myself over a morning cup of coffee. The Reverend Waugh is New Zealand’s foremost aviation historian and the Honorary Chaplain to the New Zealand Region of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators.

The celebration we were discussing was the 75th Anniversary of the first flight of Captain Bert Mercer’s “Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd.”, New Zealand’s very first licensed airline. The inaugural flight took place on December 18th 1934.

There had been much aviation activity well before this in New Zealand, starting with possible ‘controlled’ flight by Richard Pearce in Timaru. These flights occurred before the Wright Brothers famous first flights in 1903. The Wright Brother’s flights triggered a surge in aviation activity in New Zealand. Of particular note was the sale to the New Zealand Flying School, operated by the iconic Walsh brothers, of the first aircraft designed and constructed by B&W, the company founded by William Boeing and Lt. Conrad Westervelt. These first two Boeing aircraft were designed and built in 1916 and exported to New Zealand soon after and operated off Mission Bay beach in Auckland’s Waitemata harbour.

But back to the 75th Anniversary of Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd. My interest was piqued by Richard Waugh’s enthusiasm for the celebrations being planned at Haast, a tiny township on the west coast of the South Island with a population of 200 within a 50km radius of the Haast village!

Celebrations were also planned at Hokitika, another, but larger, West Coast town some 280km (175miles) north of Haast. These two towns being significant as the start and end point of that first licensed flight. The clinching of my attendance was when the Rev. Waugh said to me “I would like someone (You!) from the New Zealand Region of the Guild to say a few words at the Haast celebratory dinner in Haast on Saturday December 19th”.

“O.K we, (that is my wife and I) will go and by the way I will be delighted to represent the Guild at the celebrations”.

When discussing our attendance at the celebrations the first thing that sprang to mind was how do we get there? Haast was and is one of New Zealand’s remotest towns only being connected by road in the mid 1960’s. That fact also giving a clue as to why Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd., made the first licensed flight to such a remote place rather than between two more populous and less isolated towns. The lack of road access meant that this pioneering air service met the transport demands of the farmers, fisherman, hunters, and promoted tourism to this remote,
The aircraft used for that first flight was a brand new 1934 DH83 De Havilland Fox Moth with the New Zealand registration of ZK-ADI. This aircraft is still in beautiful flying condition today lovingly maintained by Colin Smith and his dedicated team at Mandeville Airport in Southland, New Zealand. Fox Moth ZK-ADI played a major part in the 75th anniversary celebrations.

I have loved aircraft all my life, but I have another love and that is the two wheel motorised transport. Yes, motorcycles! I am very fortunate that my wife, Marion also enjoys touring on our motorcycles and so the mode of transport to Haast for the 75th celebrations was decided. We would ride there (and back) on our Screamin’ Eagle Ultra Classic Electra Glide Harley Davidson. (Doesn’t Harley Davidson have wonderful names for their motor cycles?) The return trip from our home near Auckland is just over 3200km (2000miles).

The West Coast of New Zealand is famous (or notorious) for being deluged year round with copious quantities of rain, annual rainfall averaging 2000mm (80-inches). As a result one has to prepare oneself for a motorcycle trip of this length and into an area of possibly heavy rain with lots of warm, waterproof riding gear! Three days later as we approached Haast from the north the rain came down at a rate of more than 25mm an hour (1inch). This is heavy rain! The Haast locals treat this weather as normal and just get on with life“.

The celebrations on December 18th 2009 were centred at Hokitika which has a airport reads:

**The Bert Mercer Wing**

On 18th December 1934 Captain J.C. (Bert) Mercer, founder and Chief Pilot of Hokitika based Air Travel (NZ) Ltd., commenced the first licensed scheduled air service in New Zealand with de Havilland DH.83 Fox Moth ZK-ADI. This extension to the Hokitika Airport Terminal was opened by Mrs. Marie Lindsay, in recognition of the vision and pioneering aviation work of her father, Captain Bert Mercer and his airline Air Travel (NZ) Ltd.

The celebration dinner on the following day. A slight understatement. He was not quite as surprised as were his parents in Sydney as he had told them earlier in the day, 7th January 1931, that he was flying to Perth on the West Coast of Australia! He had feared that if he had indicated he planned a Trans Tasman flight his parents may have said “I was actually intending to make landfall at Blenheim (a small airport in the north of the South Island, but I got blown off course” Blenheim is some 400km (250miles) to the north! A slight understatement. He was not quite as surprised as were his parents in Sydney as he had told them earlier in the day, 7th January 1931, that he was flying to Perth on the West Coast of Australia! He had feared that if he had indicated he planned a Trans Tasman flight his parents may have seen this beautiful untouched part of New Zealand. Haast and South Westland remain almost as isolated and certainly as untouched as was the case in the 1930’s.

The sight that greeted us as we rode into Haast was amazing. The local airport had been upgraded, the grass mown and an area covered to the snowline, the mountains towering on the skyline with the tallest peak, Aoraki Mt. Cook, at over 12,000ft. Aoraki is the Maori name for Mt. Cook and means ‘cloud piercer’. To the west of the road, the lowland virgin native bush, and stunning coastal views out to the Tasman Sea.

While these celebrations were underway Marion and I were riding south having just disembarked from the ferry at Picton, a beautiful little holiday resort town at the head of the Marlborough Sounds. Our route to Haast from Picton took us through the Marlborough wine country where some of New Zealand’s finest wines are produced. Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc will be known to many readers of the Guild News! The route then passed through farming and coal mining country to the West Coast town of Greymouth, then on down through Hokitika, the last major town on the West Coast. South of Hokitika the next 300km (200miles) of road passes through some of the most magnificent country of New Zealand. To the east of the road, the Southern Alps, bush covered to the snowline, the mountains

Marion Wyness beside the Stan Smith’s newly restored DH83 Fox Moth and between the struts, his magnificent Dragon.

The driving force for this celebration was the Reverend Richard Waugh who in a twist of fate became seriously ill just a few days prior. Fortunately his brother Alex Waugh was able to step into the breach and carry on working with the enthusiastic organising committees at both Hokitika and Haast.

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The sight that greeted us as we rode into Haast was amazing. The local airport had been upgraded, the grass mown and an area had been created using many hundreds of cubic metres of Haast river gravels to enable a large marquee to be erected for the celebration dinner on the following day. A new gravel parking area was also formed for the many aircraft that planned to attend. There was also a food area dedicated to supplying visitors with the local fare of venison and the world famous Haast whitebait patties, along with plenty of hot coffee to keep away the cold. While we were observing all of this we heard the sound, then the appearance out of the clouds, of a beautifully restored Fox Moth and a magnificent De Havilland Dragon, both
aircraft restored and owned by Stan Smith, a retired Air New Zealand Flight Engineer. The aircraft landed in what can best be described as ‘challenging conditions’, and out from the Dragon stepped Stan Smith, and from the Fox Moth, Capt. Bruce Donnelly, a B747 400 Captain and senior management pilot with Air New Zealand.

The celebration at Haast on December 19th 2009 centred around the airport. The small terminal used all those years ago by Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd had been re-painted to coincide with the celebrations and a giant marquee had been erected to provide shelter from the constant heavy rain and was also the venue for the evening celebrations.

The evening dinner was a magnificent affair with some 400 people seated in the marquee where they were treated to a buffet dinner with all the trimmings, including the rain water from the torrential rain flowing through the gravel base of the marquee! During the evening fascinating speeches were made, many by older aviators reminiscing of their times flying on the Wild West Coast of New Zealand in those pioneering days. I was able to bring the Guild’s greeting and congratulations in a brief speech to the gathering. I also recognised the efforts of those pioneering pilots striving to operate safely despite the most difficult conditions of weather and terrain. I brought greetings from the Master, Rear Admiral Colin Cooke-Priest who had asked me to say “The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, a Livery Company of the City of London, had its beginnings in 1929 just a few short years before the formation of Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd. The Guild stood for all the things that this celebration is remembering, Captain Bert Mercer and his dedicated pilots striving for the highest standards in aviation”. Perhaps the last words should be left to the Reverend Richard Waugh quoting his father Brian Waugh who was himself a West Coast Pilot, “The weather was a constant challenge on the South Westland Air Service, and each of the pilots became experienced in reading the conditions’.

Brian Waugh’s log book records for July 1963:

17th July Returned due strong wind
21st July Returned due weather
22nd July Returned due fog

Getting to Haast was sometimes a challenge as it was indeed on the 75th anniversary of that first flight.

Our Honorary Chaplain the Reverend Richard Waugh has written a magnificent book “Hoki to Haast” recording the history of Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd., and other aviation activity on the West Coast of New Zealand. www.nzairlineresearch.co.nz

Postscript:

Marie Lindsay, Capt. Bert Mercer’s daughter who had worked for her father in the 1930’s and who had been so central to these 75th Anniversary celebrations returned to her home in Christchurch, full of joy at being able to attend the celebrations of her father’s pioneering airline Air Travel (N.Z.) Ltd.

She died 5 days later on 24th December 2009 aged 95 years.

Inside the huge marquee for the Celebratory dinner for 400 people. December 19th 2009


Australian Region News

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GUILD’S AUSTRALIAN REGION, CAPTAIN BUCK BROOKSBANK

TELECONFERENCE
We now conduct our monthly Executive Council meetings by teleconference. This is a remarkably cheap method of conducting our meetings as we have members of the Executive in Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide. A two hour teleconference involving ten members costs less than five dollars. For our May teleconference we also included the Master in London & the cost was still less than six dollars. The Education and Training Committee has now started to conduct its meetings by teleconference.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY WORKING GROUP
The Executive Council has established the ACTWG. This working Group will be playing a key role in the work of your Guild in terms of advice to Government & working with CASA and Airservices. There are numerous pilots located at Canberra both civil & military and we look forward to these experienced people working with & supporting the Guild and thus Australian aviation. Mike Cleaver was elected by the ACTWG as its first Chairman. You can contact Mike at ACTWG@gapan.org.au.

ROLE OF WORKING GROUPS
We have a number of State Working Groups whose role is to bring Guild members together to share the enjoyment of flying on social occasions. Also, most importantly, to assist the Guild’s key Committees covering Technical & Air Safety and Education & Training in advice and criticism of the various industry papers being generated by CASA & Government for comment. Members are most welcome to attend the Working Group meetings and put in their advice and comment and raise any issues they would like the Guild to consider.

SCHOLARSHIPS
The Australian Region of the Guild presents a number of scholarships each year. These can be summarized as:
• Guild & Griffith University post graduate degree in Aviation management.
• Four flying scholarships to students from the High school sector where the school’s curriculum involves aviation.
• Two glider flying scholarships to Air Force cadets.

The Education and Training Committee is working on establishing more scholarships as sponsorship funds are identified.

WELFARE
The Guild’s Welfare Officer maintains close support for members who are sick or in need of support. Recently London donated over $2,000 to a pilot whose home and everything was destroyed in the Victorian Bush fires and whose wife became very sick indeed.

GUILD AUSTRALIAN REGION GOALS FOR 2010/2011
The May Meeting of Executive Council confirmed the following goals for the Australian Region for the period to March 2011. These goals are:
• Positively influence Government and its agencies in relation to aviation matters.
• Grow the membership across all sectors.
• Establish an ACT Working Group and conduct re-activating the NSW & Vic Working Groups.
• Investigate forming a WA Working Group.
• Positively influence pilot & instructor training.
• Consolidate administrative & financial systems.
• Distribute a minimum of 4 Australian Newsletters to members during 2010.
• Work more closely with airline management & Universities.
• Work on establishing more scholarships. The Executive Council will review progress to meet these goals on a quarterly basis.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING MATTERS

THREAT AND ERROR MANAGEMENT
Deputy Regional Chairman, Sue Ball met with CASA officers during May to discuss the TEM Facilitator Guide distribution. It is hoped that CASA will assist after the implementation of Class D and the associated training programme. A Guild member who works at ATSB now has easy access to the manuals and has received the copies of the DVDs.

CLASS D AIRSPACE FOR GAAP’s
The Guild wrote to John McCormick, Director, Air Safety, CASA in late January expressing concern that the Guild had not been able to find a published Safety Case on the proposed changes. In addition a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) did not appear to have been conducted. A letter was subsequently sent to the Minister covering the similar topics but to date no replies have been received. Guild members attended the Class D workshops held by CASA during May in Parafield, Moorabbin, Bankstown and Archerfield.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING TELECONFERENCE
The ETC held its first teleconference on 21 May 2010. Four members joined in lively discussion covering a variety of subjects. Topics included the Guild/Griffith Univ Aviation Management Scholarship and other scholarships. The Committee agreed that the Guild in Australia should promote scholarships to aspiring pilots at varying stages of their flying experience/career. Guild members with ideas for funding such scholarships should contact Sue Ball at training@gapan.org.au. The committee also discussed Instructor training issues and proposed BOM changes to TAFs.

TECHNICAL AND AIR SAFETY MATTERS
The T&AS Committee has been reviewing a number of matters that CASA and Airservices Australia have proposed and made substantive comments to a number of them. These include the carriage of fuel on Flights to a Remote Island, the carriage and Use of Radio and Circuit Procedures at, or in the Vicinity of, Non-towered Aerodromes, and Class D Airspace for GAAP’s as noted above.

The Guild is very active in the various consultation processes in addition to the extensive work in responding to Government proposals such as the White Paper (238 page document outlining Government aviation policy covering all sectors) and the proposed changes in a continual stream of CASA NPRM’s (Notice of Proposed Rule Making), and other regulatory proposals, airport and airspace procedures.

As reported in the last newsletter the Guild has a representative on the CASA Part 91 Committee, the CASA Part 175 drafting Committee, ASTRA and the CASA Standards Consultative Committee.

Any Member who would like to make an input to any of the work of the Education and Training Committee or the Technical and Air Safety Committee should contact the relevant Chairman at training@gapan.org.au or airsafety@gapan.org.au.

GUILD MEMBER RECEIVES HONOUR
Guild Member Captain Warwick Tainton was awarded the OAM in this year’s Queen’s Birthday Honours List. This was in recognition in part for the excellent work Warwick has performed over many years in developing the Qantas museum at Longreach.

Captain Tainton also received the 2009 “Master’s Australian Award” from the Master in Brisbane in November last.

MASTERS AUSTRALIAN VISIT 2010
The Master and his wife Rosemary will visit Australia in November. At the present time his itinerary is as follows:

An interesting program of visits in each State/Territory is being planned.

AUSTRALIAN REGION CONTACTS
Our office Administrator is Mrs. Rosemary Watson who is based in Sydney. The Guild office is at 41 Fiona Road, Beecroft NSW 2119. Mail should be sent to PO Box A2270, Sydney South, NSW 1235 and will be forwarded to Rosemary.

The office phone number is (02) 9980 2873, or e-mail admin@gapan.org.au. All the Executive members can be contacted via the Sydney Office.

The Guild Australian Region website is www.gapan.org.au.
Guild Visit to London City Airport

UPPER FREEMAN CAPTAIN ALEX FISHER

If you had to choose an airport location to minimise complaints from the local populace, you probably wouldn’t think of placing it in the middle of a large city, surrounded by housing, some of it yards from the boundary. But that is exactly what London city airport has done and it enjoys a rate of complaint of less than 1 per 1000 movements, considerably less than its grown up neighbours at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. London City defies convention in so many ways, but its acceptance by East Londoners is surely its most remarkable feature. Stuart Innes, the Secretary of the London City Airport Consultative Committee who played host to some 20 Guild Members in August is very conscious of the fact, the result of decades of hard work, and ‘total honesty’. Stuart, who traces his involvement with LCY back to the time it was still a doodle on Mowlem’s drawing pad, lists the many initiatives that have produced this outcome. Full time 24/7 telephone hotlines (they even receive complaints relating to Heathrow and Luton traffic when their airport isn’t operating), restrictive operating hours (no movements 2230 - 0630 Monday to Friday nor Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings), the most generous domestic sound proofing scheme of all UK airports and of course restricted aircraft types and operations.

The Royal Docks from the west in 1949

Construction started in 1986, and, astonishingly, the airport was open for business the next year. It turned out to be cheaper to build over the old dry dock rather than fill it in, so it seems there is water under a large part of the aircraft parking area. In the beginning, surface access was dreadful; then the Jubilee Line reached Canning Town (with a shuttle bus connection) and now the Docklands Light Railway extends to Woolwich Arsenal with a station alongside the airport’s terminal. The airport must now be the most accessible in the country; from a dealing desk in Docklands to airstside in 15 minutes is doable. More than half the passengers now arrive by the DLR, there are no acres of car parks that are a feature of most other UK airports.

The airport was originally designed around the DH Dash 7; if it had been limited to that, it would have shut by now, as that unique STOL type is not only out of production it is practically out of regular airline service too. Fortunately permission to accept the BAe 146/RJ was granted in 1992 and this had the effect not only of extending the use to an in-production type but also one which could reach many more European cities in an attractive 90 minutes; most western European capitals are now served from LCY. More recently the airport’s reach has been spectacularly extended to New York thanks to the innovative BA A318 twice daily executive service to JFK. Due to WAT limits ex LCY, the aircraft has to refuel at Shannon, but the stop is put to good use, passengers can clear US customs and immigration there, drastically cutting down the queue time at JFK. Eastbound the service is non-stop. The 146/RJ, which is itself now out of production and recently the Embraer 170/190 has gained LCY certification, and will probably be the main type in the future. Looking further ahead the Bombardier C Series should be able to reach the Middle East non-stop from LCY, who said progress in aviation is dead? To make these operations practical, the original 1000m runway was extended in 1992 following another rigorous planning enquiry which imposed yet more tough requirements. Stuart regards these with equanimity, as essential to keep the local community’s acceptance, without which life could have become impossible for the fledgling operation. Further construction in 2003 of the holding loop at the threshold of 27 increased the capacity of the single runway. The peaky nature of the schedule (morning and evening rush hours with relatively little in between) means the annual movement rate is 75 000. A parallel taxiway wouldn’t improve these figures on its own though, because of the lack of parking space.

As it is, operators have to stick to a smart 30 minute turnaround at peak times to achieve the target capacity. The current annual rate is however double that assumed in the original 1983 enquiry, a measure of how successful LCY now is.

Steve Anderson, LCY’s Tower chief, briefed us on the unique operational features of the airport. Special pilot training and qualification is required, and checked, even for the business jets, a function carried out by the Jet Centre. The A318s have a unique Steep Approach FCS mode which deploys partial airbrake on approach to enable the 5.5 degree slope, and amended flare cues. The E170/190s have also modified control software. The airport has ILS at both ends, un categorised because of the steep slope. Landing minima are high, DH upwards of 350ft with RVR 1100m depending on the direction. The principal cause of Go-Arounds, however, is tailwinds. The Steep approach (lowered from the initial 7.5 degrees suitable only for the Dash 7) was designed to accommodate the planned East London River Crossing bridge. This hasn’t happened, and in the current climate probably won’t, but the approaches will stay steep for noise reasons. To the West, the environment is to say the least, obstacle rich, but the old Millenium Mills building, not Canary Wharf, is the dominant obstacle.

All departures are to the North, not because of Heathrow traffic, but for reasons of noise over Greenwich and because departures can follow the River Lea northwards for a while. Some of the SIDs pass over the 2012 Olympic site in Stratford. Temporary modification to
The flight paths may be necessary over the Olympic period. LCY now boasts a fully electronic Tower - only the fifth airport in this country to have this. The airport is also now wired for datalink. The ground controller has to be slicker than slick given the lack of space on the manoeuvring area, and the backtracks required for every movement. Most of the stands are self parking with no tractors in or out.

The briefing over, there was a necessarily brief visit to the Terminal, which is undergoing renovation. Sadly this restricts catering facilities, so the group repaired for lunch to the London Regatta Centre the other side of the Dock with a panoramic view of the airport. Our thanks to our hosts, Stuart Innes and Steve Anderson, and to Arthur Thorning for organising it all.

WINDSOR CASTLE - Evensong and Reception

ASSISTANT SQUADRON LEADER CHRIS FORD

On perhaps the hottest day of the summer and very shortly after the Guild Ladies visit to Windsor, 40 Guild Members assembled at King Henry VIII Gate of Windsor Castle to await entry to St George’s Chapel. We were there, as the Guests of the Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle Air Marshal Ian Macfadyen and his wife Sally, to attend Evensong and a reception afterwards.

On entry to St George’s Chapel the guests were shown to seating in the choir stalls. There in the cool of the splendid church and surrounded by almost 700 years of history, with the banners of the present Knights of the Garter above and the stall plates of all previous Knights behind the seats it was possible to reflect on tradition that is truly English. The 12 Lay Clerks of St George’s Choir beautifully sang the Service in countertenor, tenor and bass. The readings were taken from Psalms 7 & 8.

After the Service the guests were invited to Ian and Sally’s residence in ‘Norman Tower’ for a Champagne and Canapés reception. With all the guests suitably equipped with glasses of Champagne and enjoying the sun in the magnificent garden, Ian welcomed us all to Windsor and explained his role in The Castle and his responsibilities on behalf of HM The Queen. He described the day to day life in a Royal palace and lightened it with stories of strange phone calls to Mr. Tower. Mr. Norman Tower made by cold callers. The guests were at liberty to stroll the beautiful garden and chat in this most spectacular setting.

As the Reception party in the Governor’s Norman Tower residence broke up at about 7.30 pm, 30 of us set off down the hill for dinner. With Ian and Sally Macfadyen as our guests we regrouped in the private and, thankfully, air conditioned, dining room at La Taverna where dinner, with plenty of wine! was served. In response to a few words of thanks from IPM Colin Cooke-Priest the Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle, indicated that the Guild would always be welcome guests so, perhaps, we can look forward to another delightful evening in time to come. 
Suitably refreshed (it was a very hot day) we its beautiful gardens.

Our visit with a drinks reception on the terrace, overlooking much of the Castle and its beautiful gardens.

Suitably refreshed (it was a very hot day) we had lunch and were then briefed by Ian, the Governor of the Castle, on the history of the Norman Tower which dated from the 14th century and how the Castle had developed over time. We then split into two groups, one guided by Ian to see those areas of the Castle not generally open to the public, including the awe-inspiring kitchens. Sally took the other group around the most gardens where we saw gardeners having to almost abseil down the steep sides while weeding.

It was a glorious day - a day when we enjoyed good wine, food and each other’s company.

Once in a while there is a perfect day and the Ladies Visit to Windsor Castle in June was just that. The sun shone and the sky was a brilliant blue. Thanks to the kind hospitality of Ian and Sally Macfadyen, we were able to meet in the Norman Tower where we started our visit with a drinks reception on the terrace, overlooking much of the Castle and its beautiful gardens.

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Launch of Shuttle Flight STS 132

LIVERYMAN CAPTAIN STEVE GREEN

I suppose that for many of my generation space travel has an especially romantic appeal. As a boy Dan Dare was a part of everyone’s comic inventory and the Cold War space race had all the ingredients to fuel one’s dreams and, for a very small minority, ambitions.

For my part it all fell firmly in the dream department. Unlike some of my fast jet colleagues who made it to the fringes of space in their Lightnings and Phantoms or BA crews who achieved it in shirt sleeve comfort in Concorde, I was never to go that high or fast. But the achievement of NASA in producing the awe inspiring Shuttle with its associated waves of success and tragedy will, I am sure, stand the test of time as the iconic heavier than air achievement of the last century.

As reality took over from my dreams it became apparent that watching a launch might be one way to accommodate both and it appeared this may happen when the Guild announced a visit in April 2007 to the Kennedy Space Centre (KSC) for the launch of STS 123. Sadly, just weeks before the visit, the launch was delayed due to technical issues with the external fuel tank (it had not arrived from the sub-contractor!). Of course by then most of us had made travel plans and in any event a tour of the KSC was planned so the visit for the majority went ahead. And most impressive it was, as you can read if so interested in the August 2007 edition of Guild News. That visit was led by Past Master Rick Peacock-Edwards and all who made it had close up and personal viewings of shuttle craft, rockets, payload assemblies, launch pads, landing strips (all 15000’ of it) and even a simulated shuttle launch.

Our US host was Liverman George English, veteran of a career at NASA involved in the Gemini, Apollo and Shuttle programmes. He made sure we knew we would always be welcome to return and that if we did, and a launch was scheduled, he would get us a seat to watch. As I monitored the ever decreasing number of scheduled shuttle launches wind down, I was also watching the air miles notch up and, to cut a long story short, was able thanks entirely to the efforts of George to secure a place at KSC to watch the launch of Shuttle Mission 132.

This launch was notable for several reasons:

- It was to be the last launch of the Shuttle Atlantis
- Atlantis has made 32 total launches of which 25 have been to the International Space Station (ISS)
- It was the first shuttle to dock with a Russian MIR space craft
- It was to be the last launch but 2 of the entire programme and opportunities to watch from KSC were virtually zero
- A UK Astronaut was one of the Mission Specialists
- The President’s Medal of Office of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) was part of the payload!

For the launch to occur a multitude of variables have to be right. Technology, supply chains, sub-contracted auxiliaries (for e.g. the solid booster rockets), ISS orbit patterns, weather, payload and crew must all converge perfectly for the launch to go. Most of these had been taken care of by the morning of 14 May, 2010. My air-miles had got me to Orlando with BA, and as I met up with George at his house in Cocoa Beach the weather was looking good with a 70% chance of launching. Wind appeared to be the biggest factor here but my main worry was the cloud. I did want to see it all and NASA will not launch through overcast.

On arrival at KSC things had if anything improved slightly and thanks to George I was ushered into the VIP Pre-Launch Briefing held 3 floors up in NASA’s HQ opposite the huge Vehicle Assembly Building. Atlantis had left this some days previously and been transported at 1 mile per hour to the launch pad some 2 miles distant.

We all enjoyed an excellent briefing which was hosted by NASA’s female Deputy Director Lori Garver. We were addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, in excellent English, and then by the Head of the Russian Manned Flight Programme. Both men appeared to have been active with the KGB in past lives and this paved the way for several ‘cold war’ based examples of the long and enduring spirit of US/USSR co-operation! This was for me one of the highlights of the event, and something I could never have foreseen with even the wildest of imaginations when, 40 years earlier, I was embarking on my training as a Vulcan Pilot and the limit of my Russian knowledge was Dr Zhivago and a War Plan!

A 3 mission Shuttle veteran and Commander, Col Scott Altman, then briefed us all on this launch and what it would accomplish. Again he was able to deliver it with subtle humour recording a history of his joint activity with the Russians ranging from exchanging photo shots with the Soviet pilots he intercepted in his US Navy F14 to active work and joint training with Russian astronauts on recent space programmes and missions. Perhaps some of his most fascinating words, for me at least, were when he narrated how Shuttle landings are simulated in the atmosphere. A Gulfstream 2 is flown to altitude with the shuttle pilot sitting on the flight deck. Shuttle pilots are only qualified to land not take off, so a qualified Gulfstream pilot must do the take off and climb. He then levels at 33,000’, hands control to the astronaut, engages full reverse on both engines and invites the astronaut to ‘dead stick’ the landing! With full reverse the Gulfstream comes down much like the shuttle!

And so we drew closer to launch. By now the chances had risen to 90% and lift off was just under an hour away. The launch sequence progresses through a series of time based windows each being reached, ideally, some

Atlantis stands ready to launch

Pre-launch briefing by NASA Deputy Director

LIVERYMAN CAPTAIN STEVE GREEN

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time before that window equals the actual time left to launch. For example the 3 hour window may be reached some 5 hours before lift off. So for the next 2 hours all that happens is the clock counts down. At 3 hours to launch events move to the next window, which again should be reached with time to spare. Eventually it is just a few minutes to launch. We are able to watch from a balcony high above the ground. Now everything must run down together without hitch. Seconds before lift off ignition is inevitable and so the last 10 second countdown commences. It is broadcast over the PA system but by launch minus 5 everybody is chanting -five, -four, -three, -two (lots of steam from the launch pad as water is released to dampen the noise of the rockets) -one, -ignition, -lift off (lots of fire from the rockets) and commencement of the launch. Now for the first time the tremendous roar of noise reaches us and nothing but it can be heard as Atlantis heads up perfectly vertically into the clear blue sky.

The sight transfixes me but I have to operate the camera (NASA’s pre-launch advice is don’t bother as their web cams give better pictures. True. But this is a once in a lifetime event for me...I have to catch it on MY camera!). Soon after launch the shuttle rolls around presenting us with a view of just the booster rockets and all that is now visible is a speck in the sky, the iridescent flame of the rockets, and a huge white contrail.

Then the whole assembly tilts as its trajectory is adjusted to head for its rendezvous with the ISS. The noise gently subsides and the solid boosters detach (this is only visible on the large monitor screens). These will be recovered about 100 miles out in the Atlantic and re-used. But the few tragedies of the Shuttle programme are all still so vivid that the launch is not considered successful until this point is passed. The big orange fuel tank on which the shuttle sits will separate some time later and land in the Indian Ocean, but is unrecoverable. At KSC we are left watching the contrail dissipate whilst eagles, undisturbed by man’s spectacular activity and to whom the whole aviation thing is less novel, enjoy effortless flight in the afternoon thermals.

And after that it is all, as they say, downhill! We eat beans and corn bread (a NASA post launch tradition) and then are carefully and in descending order of seniority ushered to our transport. There is opportunity to mix and socialise with politicians, astronauts, NASA Directors and others and then we join the very much down to earth procession of traffic back, in my case, to Cocoa Beach and thence Orlando. By this time, just a couple of hours after launch, many tonnes of 20th century high technology, its crew of 8, one of whom is British, and the RAeS President’s medal are orbiting in space and preparing for the next key event, docking with the ISS.

My host George English (L) talks to Senator Bill Nelson

STS 132 lifts off
Spitfire Impressions
PAST MASTER CAPTAIN PETER BUGGÉ

As any Past Master will tell you ones Year is an amazing time and it seemed to me the only way to complete such a Year would be to fulfill a boyhood dream and fly in a Spitfire. Thanks to Warden Cliff Spink that has now happened and I can consider my Year complete!

Cliff flies for the Aircraft Restoration Company at Duxford and he was able to show four of us round the Company’s premises and see the work the 15 full-time engineers are doing there, then get each of us airborne for a brief flight in the ex Irish Air Corps T9 two seat Spitfire G-CCCA. So it was that Past Master Michael Grayburn and his son-in-law Steve, Assistant Dacre Watson and I met Cliff at Duxford on a warm, fine July morning. The work the Aircraft Restoration Company is doing is extraordinary, building and restoring historic aircraft sometimes almost from nothing, even making parts on site when necessary. There was an air of professionalism and efficiency about the place and the staff were most welcoming, happily tolerating our peering and questioning. But our main interest, of course, was in the two-seat Spitfire parked outside in which we would soon be getting airborne. After Cliff’s wonderful article in the last issue of Guild News on flying the Spitfire I will do no more than give some brief impressions of my thirty minute flight in this iconic aircraft.

Perhaps the Spitfire, rather than the Hurricane, is at the forefront of our thoughts when considering the part these aircraft played in the Second World War because of that wonderfully graceful shape, eyecatching and romantic even at close quarters on the ground. As I walked around it before climbing into the rear seat I was surprised that it looks so good from any angle; even the second, rather ungainly, canopy fails to detract significantly from the overall elegance of the aircraft.

Before climbing on board Cliff gave a comprehensive briefing on the aircraft systems, the basic settings for operating and flying the aircraft, and emergency procedures including the use of the parachute on which I sat. The rear cockpit is not as small as I expected, having just a little more space than I remember in a Chipmunk and I had the impression almost of comfort and of quite conveniently placed controls. Perhaps because I was brought up on tailwheel aircraft the tail-down attitude was immediately ‘right’ and the way Cliff swung the nose to see ahead during the subsequent taxing took me back to Hamble in the early 1960s! Many of the instruments, gauges and switches were familiar from those days, and from aircraft like the Comet 4b, odd little things that make one feel at home in a new environment.

The engine took some seconds turning on the starter before it fired although the rotation of the propeller was interrupted more than once, shaking the whole aircraft, when, as Cliff later explained, a cylinder fired on the booster coil rather than the magnetos. Then the Merlin was away and immediately throttled to 1000 rpm at which speed it was fairly smooth and not too noisy. After engine run-up, which was noisy, and pre-takeoff checks we lined up on the grass strip and were airborne from a run a little longer than I expected, doubtless the result of using less than the normal boost to conserve engine life, Cliff appearing to use quite modest amounts of rudder to keep straight. Rate of climb was a little under two thousand feet per minute as we cleared the circuit to the north and we levelled off beneath some scattered cloud that occasionally gave a little turbulence. Then the moment arrived when I was given control; initially I did nothing beyond flying straight and level, feeling for stability, trying the sensitive trimmer which fell immediately to hand low on the left cockpit wall. Then a level turn or two, noting how the nose tracked the horizon effortlessly and, at least with the bank angle I was using, little drop of the nose in the turn. Although very stable the aircraft responded to the faintest pressure on the controls and instantly gave exactly the required result; perhaps this combination of stability and sensitivity is why the Spitfire is always described as so wonderful to fly. A look at the rate of roll from a turn one way to a turn the other was followed by a 360 degree roll flown by Cliff which reminded me that I am unused to such manoeuvres and that they are best left to those with younger stomachs!

Then back to the circuit and a low pass parallel with the runway, pulling up gently round to position downwind for a low circuit to keep clear of other traffic, a simple but elegant manoeuvre that looks so good from the ground. A curved approach appeared easier than I had expected and though I’m sure this was Cliff’s skill more than anything perhaps it also demonstrated the relative simplicity of the aircraft, its plentiful power and excellent handling qualities. All the way round the final turn the perspective looked felt right until Cliff levelled the wings, flared, held off a moment, then let the aircraft settle down onto the grass. We taxied in past a Trident outside the museum (more nostalgia!) to park at ARC and shut down the Merlin.

Dacre Watson flew next and carried out a few aerobatics that resulted in a phone call of appreciation to ARC from a gentleman living nearby who had been delighted to watch the proceedings over his house! All four of us are in Cliff’s debt for arranging the day and our thanks also go to The Aircraft Restoration Company.
It Pays To Keep Your Eyes Open

LIVERYMAN CAPTAIN JOHN L. COX, DFC, FRAeS

W/C Spry’s fine article on the VC10 navigational incident off Greenland (in August 2010 issue) gave me a sense of déjà vu! Back in 1960 I was the co-pilot on a BOAC Britannia for a planned flight of London-Manchester-Prestwick-Montreal. The forecast for the North Atlantic leg showed continuous cloud and strong headwinds at our usual cruising altitude of around 20,000 feet. The Captain decided that we would fly at 6000 feet, which seemed to give the best fuel consumption and should keep us clear of icing. The specialist Navigator had recently been dropped and now one of the three pilots did the navigation. After leaving Prestwick, and getting settled in the cruise, the Captain announced that he would do the navigation. He said: ‘I need some practice’. (Later we realised how right he was!) So he moved back to the navigator’s position and the other First Officer joined me at the front. Our planned route was to pass below the Southern tip of Greenland, keeping over the ocean. At that time the map of Greenland just showed the coastal regions; the rest, all mountains, was marked: ‘Not surveyed, heights unknown!’ It was generally thought that the mountains went up to 12,000 feet. It was a very dark night and we were in cloud most of the time. We were both staring through the windscreen, trying to see if any ice was building up. Suddenly there was a brief gap in the clouds and we could see that we were crossing a white line which could only be a line of surf! We both shouted: ‘We are crossing the coast!’ The other First Officer jumped back to the navigation table and said: ‘I’ll take over the navigating’, while I said: ‘I’m turning South’. The Captain returned to his seat, saying nothing, but he must have been as shaken as we were. Now back in cloud there was nothing to see. After some time my colleague managed to get a fix and steered us safely to our destination. Navigation was very difficult over the ocean, out of range of all NDBs. One had to use the stars (impossible that night) or rely on Loran signals - a long range system which could be quite accurate but it was all too easy to confuse the ground return wave with the sky wave reflected from the ionosphere. This would produce a completely different reading. We eventually reached Montreal safely. At no time, in the air or on the ground, did the Captain make any comment on this incident. Alas, it was long before the days of CHIRP.

TECHNICAL AND AIR SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

PAST MASTER CAPTAIN CHRIS HODGKINSON, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

ATSOCAS SERVICE REQUIRED

There is a belief that some pilots are only asking for a Basic service when ideally they would wish to have a Traffic or Deconfliction service, but suspect they would not be given what they would like to have. Advice from the CHIRP GATCO nominee is ALWAYS request the level of service you require and when the desired service level cannot be supplied.

EASA LICENCES

All members are reminded that those holding UK licences may well find it difficult/impossible to exchange them for EASA licences when they become mandatory under EU-FCL. It is therefore recommended that all pilots obtain JAA licences, which WILL be exchangeable, as soon as possible. The official EASA advice is that licences issued in accordance with JAA requirements and procedures will become EASA licences. They will be replaced with EASA licences when they expire (at 5 years) or if they need to be reprinted to make a change. Licences not issued in accordance with JAA requirements and procedures will be subject to conversion terms set out in the new EASA-FCL legislation, which is expected to include a time limit after which national licences will not be valid for the piloting of EASA aircraft types.

FAA REQUIRES AIRCRAFT REGISTRATION RENEWALS

The FAA will now require re-registration of all civil aircraft over the next three years and renewal every three years after that. A final rule published this week establishes specific expiration dates over a three-year period for all aircraft registered before Oct. 1, 2010, and requires re-registration of those aircraft according to a specific schedule. A fee of $5 will be collected for each registration and each renewal. Red arrows Temporary Restricted Airspace

While the number of infringements of The Reds Restricted Airspace are down this year, there have been three which could easily have been avoided. Put the AIS Freephone number 0500 354 802 in your mobile and call it every time you are about to fly and avoid the possibility of a fine of several thousand pounds.

FLIGHT TIME LIMITATIONS

The Guild has a nominee on the CAA’s Fixed Wing Advisory Group (FWAG) who wishes to step down. The FWAG meets 3 times a year for the morning at Aviation House and provides independent advice on Commercial Aviation Flight Time Limitations. Thus an interest in and working knowledge of CAP 371 and EASA Sub Part Q would be of benefit. Those interested in this position should e-mail the Guild office.

We would fly at 6000 feet .... clear of icing.
Recognising the eightieth anniversary of the crash of the R101 airship on 5 October 1930, a major setback for the Guild in its early days, it is timely to review that event and also celebrate the epic first double crossing of the Atlantic by its predecessor the R34.

R34

By the end of the First World War aeronautics had made great strides, albeit it was still an adventurous and experimental era. The quest to conquer the Atlantic Ocean beckoned, spurred on by a prize of £10,000 offered by Lord Northcliffe, owner of the Daily Mail newspaper. Air Commodore Edward Maitland, Director of Airships at the Air Ministry, decided that the new R34 airship, only recently completed in March 1919, should attempt the flight. Preparations were made at East Fortune Air Station, Scotland, where the R34 was based. However, they were ‘pipped at the post’ by Alcock and Brown who left St John’s, Newfoundland on 15 June 1919 in a Vickers Vimy bomber and landed in a bog in Ireland sixteen and a half hours later, after an epic flight.

Nonetheless Maitland felt his airship could also cross the Atlantic and in better style. Thus on 2 July 1919 the R34 took off from East Fortune with Maitland on board and Major Herbert Scott in command. Shortly after takeoff they had to climb over high ground and exceeded the design pressure height and had to vent some hydrogen, thus becoming over weight for the remainder of the journey, which was flown at a positive body angle of attack to provide compensating aerodynamic lift. To conserve fuel Scott used only three of his four engines for most of the trip. They were also dogged by unfavourable winds and had to deviate to avoid thunderstorms. Fortunately the winds became more favourable near their destination, Roosevelt Field, Long Island, which they reached with only two hours fuel remaining after a flight of 108 hours.

The return journey, with more favourable winds, took 75 hours, despite one unserviceable engine. This historic return crossing of the Atlantic is commemorated by a plaque at the Scottish National Museum of Flight at East Fortune, East Lothian - a museum which now houses Concorde G-BOAA and an impressive collection of other aircraft and aviation memorabilia. Finally, it is sad to record that Air Commodore Maitland lost his life when a successor airship, the R38, suffered structural failure over the River Humber on 23 August 1921.

R101

The history of the Guild for the years 1929-1964 (by Liveryman David B Brown) records: ‘...in many respects the young Guild could be said to be flourishing in 1930. But in the autumn, with the disaster which befell H M Airship R.101 at Beauvais on October 5th, the situation underwent a tragic transformation, with the loss of the Master, Sir Sefton Brancker, the Deputy Master, Squadron Leader Johnston, a member of the Court, N G Atherstone and an Honorary Member, M A Giblett, who [all] died in the flames.’ Sir Sefton Brancker was the Director of Civil Aviation, Squadron Leader Ernest Johnston was the navigator and Major Scott was the Commodore in overall charge on the fateful voyage.

The history of the R101 and its final flight are well recorded elsewhere, not least in Sir Peter Masefield’s ‘To Ride the Storm’; this note does not attempt to analyse the exact causes of the accident which are still subject to some speculation. In summary this aircraft was rushed into service before it had been thoroughly tested and various technical problems resolved. It was overweight from the beginning, not least due to the sponsoring Government insistence that diesel engines be used (Vickers, who built the contemporary the R100 ignored this directive and used lighter petrol engines, although the R100 was still heavier than specification, albeit less so than the R101). The tragic loss of Air Commodore Maitland and others in the R38 in 1921 had left a considerable gap in airship experience in
Britain in the 1920s.

The Secretary of State for Air, Lord Thomson, was the principal passenger on the fateful flight to India via Egypt. Christopher Birdwood Thomson was a friend of the then Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald, and had been a strong supporter of the civil airship initiative to provide improved communication links within the Empire. This had resulted in the construction of the two large airships, each of some five million cubic feet volume. Thomson had been born in Bombay in 1875 and was considering a request to become the next Viceroy of India. He was keen to be in Karachi without delay. Thus a dangerous case of 'get-there-itis' developed and any doubts about the operational and technical practicalities were sidelined.

So at 6.36 pm on 4 October 1930 the R101 slipped the mast at the Cardington Airship Station, near Bedford. The flight was hindered by adverse winds from the start and then ran into heavy weather as they began to cross France. As the aircraft passed over Beauvais, northwest of Paris, it was losing height and crashed into the ground by the small village of Allonne, southeast of the city, just after 2am on 5 October. The aircraft was consumed by fire; there were six survivors but the remaining 48 people on board died in the fire. No civil disaster since the loss of the Titanic had so shocked the British public - many thousands filed slowly past the forty eight flag-draped coffins that lay in state in Westminster Hall on 10 October. The remains, unidentifiable because of the intensity of the fire, were laid to rest in a common grave in the churchyard at Cardington. The partly burned RAF ensign which flew from the R 101’s tail was recovered and makes a poignant memorial in St Mary’s Church, Cardington. A large stone memorial was erected near the crash site. It has been relocated after road improvements and now stands by Junction 14 on the A16 autoroute where it crosses the N1, southeast of Beauvais, near Allonne.
Cliff Spink is entitled to a full measure of fighter pilot swagger, having risen from Halton apprentice to Air Marshal via the Hunter, Lightning, Phantom and Tornado. With hundreds more hours on exotic aircraft like the Hurricane, Spitfire, Mustang, Corsair, Wildcat, Bf 109 and F-86 he stands at the pinnacle of his profession and might easily adopt the hard-to-be-humble demeanour that affects some who have achieved so much. But Air Marshal Clifford Rodney Spink CB CBE FCMI FRAeS RAF Rtd carries no such burden. He is not given to immodesty and decries it in others, and he is an indefatigable champion of all aviators down to the meanest PPL and the weekend microlight jockey. He is active on behalf of AOPA, GAPAN and countless other groups engaged in the promotion of aviation, and he retains a wide-eyed delight in flying aeroplanes of any sort. His political skills, sharpened by years at the top of the RAF, give him insights which are invaluable in the uphill battles we must fight. The going may be hard, but life is easier when we’ve got Cliff Spink on our side.

There’s no room in aviation for arrogance, he says. “Because I fly old planes, I meet a lot of veterans - people who did extraordinary things, in a hostile environment, and they are all very modest. If you ever feel a bit bumptious, think of these people, whose stature is all the greater for their modesty. The really solid chaps, the absolutely professional aviators, don’t use their experience like a mallet.”

Cliff’s 6,500 flying hours include almost 1,400 on the Lightning and about the same on the Phantom, and his total continues to rise on some of the most beautiful and expensive historic warbirds imaginable. ‘Active retirement’ doesn’t quite cover it for Cliff Spink. He is President of the Historic Aircraft Association, President of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Association and President of the Royal Observer Corps Association. He is a Liveryman and Warden to the Court of the Guild and a member of AOPA. He flies in the RAF reserve, holds a display authorisation for jet and piston aircraft and is a Display Authorisation Evaluator for the CAA. He’s Managing Director of Spitfire Ltd, which operates a small fleet of vintage aircraft, Director of an international security consultancy, guest lecturer on aviation safety, acts as an expert witness, he’s a partner in a small firm of Swiss watchmakers and in his spare time he has a wife, a family, a house and a garden to look after. There is not enough room here to cover half of what Cliff Spink does and has done, but in a brief conversation at Duxford we covered some of the salient points.

It is Cliff’s good fortune to work from a glass-fronted office at the Aircraft Restoration Company on the end of the runway at Duxford, from which he gets a world-beating view of every aircraft that comes and goes at that historic heaven. Even after 45 years as a pilot Cliff, a remarkably youthful-looking 64, still allows his gaze to wander to whatever flying thing is passing his window. In the hangar stands a Mk XVI Spitfire which carries his initials CRS - not at his instigation, but on the wishes of the owner, an indulgence which has cost Cliff many beers. His concerns range from the difficulties of enthusing young people about flying to the run-down of our armed forces and the burden of unthinking regulation under which we operate. If you want to help general aviation to thrive, he says, joining AOPA is a good start.

“It is essential in aviation that we work within the proper framework, whether that be the checklist for the aircraft, the rules of the airfield, or the ANO,” he says. “But within that, people feel they have to write a rule to ‘protect’ individuals or aircraft operations, and some of these rules are badly thought through and are not always written with the right level of consultation with industry, and sometimes that consultation is after the fact. We need to be embedded in that process to give a level of objectivity to regulation. AOPA is an essential organisation that can, as a group, fight the corner of the general aviation pilot. Without that voice we are not going to get anywhere. AOPA’s roots are in aviation, and
far from banner-waving, they are thinking through in a professional and objective way the concerns that aviators have.”

Cliff’s career has been a succession of high points ever since he forsook the farm with a yen to fly the Meteors, Vampires and Mosquitos he saw flying overhead as he hoed weeds in vast fields on the North Downs in Kent. As an ATC cadet he had his first experience flight in a Chipmunk from RAF West Malling at the age of 13; it was everything he hoped it would be. He left school at 16, too young to follow his chosen path of deck officer cadet on a Shell tanker, and was taken on as an apprentice electrical engineer at the No 1 Technical Training School at RAF Halton.

“I’ve always had admiration for such schools and for the apprentice tradition which we quite foolishly abandoned,” he says. “They provided levels of discipline and skill, a depth of understanding and a work ethic which is invaluable - the diminution of apprentice schemes is probably one of the biggest errors we have made nationally.”

At the end of his apprenticeship the Commandant, the Battle of Britain ace Al Deere, called him in. “We don’t think you’re going to be much good as an engineer so we’re sending you to be a pilot,” he was told. At 19, Cliff found himself at Cranwell sitting in a Jet Provost. “We were becoming an all-jet air force and it was reasoned that we should train on jets from the outset,” Cliff says. “I went solo in ten hours and loved every minute of the course. That’s not to say I didn’t experience personal hurdles - I found instrument flying difficult until I flew with a Shackleton pilot who corrected my scan, and once the penny had dropped I had no more trouble.”

Streamed onto fast jets, Cliff applied to go to a University Air Squadron between courses. “There was an element of leg-pulling about us not being real pilots because we couldn’t fly the Chipmunk,” he says, “so I went up to RAF Ouston outside Newcastle to get checked out on it. And this was one of the best moves I made in my career, because whenever there was a gap between courses I could do some flying somewhere, towing gliders, giving air experience flights, where others had to put up with ground jobs, and my wider experience stood me in good stead.”

After the Gnat at RAF Valley Cliff aspired to Hunters - and the Hunter OCU was in his words ‘magical’ - but was assigned to Lightnings. “It really was a rocket ship,” he says. “You were constantly watching weather, fuel, operating the weapons systems, you had to do it all. Low level at night it could really work you very hard, and it caught some people out.”

After the course at 226 OCU at Coltishall Cliff joined 111 Squadron at Wattisham on the Mk 3 Lightning. “We were upset if we didn’t fly four times a day. We were getting 25 to 28 hours a month, good hours with a lot of recoveries. We flew all over Europe against other NATO forces, taking on F104s in Germany, the Mirage in France, F100s in Denmark. I was selected to go on the Intercept Weapons Instructor Course, and life was very good. Then my wife Christine died of cancer; she was 24 years old and I not much older, and that was a very difficult time.”

“I found the RAF to be a hugely caring organisation in the hard times. They thought I needed to be got away and sent me to RAF Akrotiri on Cyprus, where I joined 56 Squadron on the Lightning Mk 6 as a qualified weapons instructor. ‘The Big A’, we called Akrotiri; there was a transport squadron of Hercules and Argosies, two Vulcan squadrons, a helicopter squadron, and 56 Squadron on Lightnings with a Canberra flight, and it was busy. We flew a lot of intercepts against the Russians and the Egyptians; there was great tension between Israel and Egypt, who fought the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the year I arrived, and it was a very important strategic base.

“The troubles in Cyprus were just starting. There was bitter in-fighting between the Greeks, and some dreadful atrocities, and the Turkish communities were very apprehensive. I intercepted the first Turkish aircraft to come over; I was on Battle Flight and the controller warned me of a group of six aircraft coming in from the north. Our rules of engagement were that we should only shoot second, which gives the other fellow the edge, so I was on my guard. As I took off I was heartened to see my flight commander Henry Ploszek running to his aircraft.

“I met the first RF84 Thunderflash coming in over the coast. The pilot, who must have been pretty nervous, gave me all the NATO hand signals and I shadowed him as he flew around the island. I knew he was taking pictures because I could see the camera door open and close, so I had a pretty good idea of what he was interested in. Eventually Henry came alongside and this chap decided he had enough and headed north. I was able to give a pretty comprehensive debrief on what he’d photographed, and four or five
days later the Turks invaded using some of those sites as parachute landing grounds. “Turkey was a vital Cold War ally so we merely intercepted the Turkish planes and flew alongside them. It was an exciting time and we were flying a lot. By the end of 1974 the Green Line had been established, and soon afterwards we were astounded to hear that all squadrons were being recalled to the UK apart from some helicopters. It was such a strategic base, but 1975 was the start of withdrawal from a lot of places overseas.”

Cliff returned to Wattisham with 56 Squadron and in 1976 was promoted to Squadron Leader and told he was going on an exchange tour. “I had visions of going to the States to fly some intriguing aeroplanes,” he says, “but then my posting came through - Sandhurst. I protested that I knew nothing about the infantry and was sent to the School of Infantry at Warminster, and I’m probably the only fighter pilot to have graduated from it. At Sandhurst I taught tactics, map reading, weapons skills and so forth, but my speciality was air power. I also ran the Sandhurst Flying Club and flew Chipmunks with the AEF at Abingdon. Most army officers only did 18 months at the Academy, but I was still there after two and a half years and I was pestering my posting officer to the point of stalking. Finally I got back onto a Hunter refresher, and then I was sent to Coningsby to learn to fly the F4 Phantom.

“The F4 didn’t initially impress me particularly with its cold power performance - it felt stodgy after the Lightning, but it had a second chap in the back and as a warplane it was something to be reckoned with. At the OCU you did two sorties with another pilot, then went out to fly with a navigator. Mine was Willie Felger - a very experienced F4 recce nav - and as we walked out to the aircraft he put his arm around me and said, ‘Spinko, you know bugger-all about Phantoms and I know bugger-all about air defence, so perhaps we’ll survive this sortie.’ I got to really like the Phantom; in reheat it could really go, and for its time and place it was as good a warplane as I ever flew.

“I joined my old squadron, 111, at Leuchars and spent three years as a Flight Commander. It was a great tour with the added bonus of doing long sorties, getting intercepts against Tu-95 Bears far out into the Arctic. You’d get up next to a Bear and there’d be a chap looking out in a leather helmet and it all looked very basic in there, and in fact it turned out that it was basic…”

During the Falklands War Cliff was attending the National Defence College Latimer in Buckinghamshire, where he and his colleagues effectively followed the campaign as part of the course. Then, promoted to Wing Commander, he did three years at Rheindahlen, responsible for air defence matters in West Germany, the Inner German Border and the Berlin Air Corridors. “The intelligence associated with that was fascinating - I can’t talk about it even now,” he says. “I flew the Phantom at Wildenrath, but not enough, and I was getting withdrawal symptoms from flying. After bugging my posting officer I was sent to command 74 Squadron flying F4Js at Wattisham, so I found myself back once again on my old stamping ground. I had a wonderful bunch of pilots and nabs. At one of the NATO meets we won the Silver Tiger trophy, we won gunnery trophies, the Dacre Trophy and I had to do very little with such a wonderfully talented bunch.”

In 1988 Cliff was promoted to Group Captain and posted to the Falklands as Station Commander Mount Pleasant and Deputy Commander British Forces Falkland Islands. By 1990 he was back at Coningsby retraining on the Tornado, but during his course Iraq invaded Kuwait. “The AOC told me I was going as detachment commander to Dhahran in Saudi Arabia - and just after Christmas that is where I found myself. Two weeks later we re-invaded, and that was an exciting three or four months, some of it rather tense. I did fly into Iraq but the AOC got to hear about it and forbade me to cross the border. Dhahran took 11 Scud hits, and those three months seemed as long as a complete tour. I was one of the last to leave, coming back to Teesside having hitched a lift with the RAF Regiment. There was a reception for them and I sneaked out at the back thinking I’d have to find my own way home, but the Battle of Britain Memorial
He became Director General Saudi Armed Forces Project in 1998 and was promoted to post a wonderful international dimension. 

Air Marshal in 2000. He had been asked by the Chief of the Air Staff if he wanted to be qualified. He retired from the RAF in 2003 after more than 40 years service. I view my career in aviation. It has been - and hopefully will continue to be - the most enormous fun, shared with a great bunch of people.

Flight Devon arrived to chauffeur me home; just as we got airborne there was a pop behind me and a glass of champagne was put in my hand; all highly illegal and thoroughly enjoyable."

Commanding Coningsby brought Cliff into closer proximity with the BBMF, and he arranged to fly the Hurricane and Spitfire. "I had a lot of hours on the Chipmunk and they gave me two flights in the Harvard, the OC BBMF Paul Day briefed me on the Hurricane’s systems and away I went. I was terrified lest I damage this priceless piece of aviation heritage - in fact I almost turned back because he hadn’t briefed me about how much noise it makes! Had the ground crew looked askance at it I would have shut down, but it turns out they all do that. The Hurricane is a wonderful aircraft, but the Spitfire is something else, graceful inside and out. Everything feels so well balanced, and it really does fly like it looks."

Flying the Spitfire brought Cliff into contact with Ray Hanna, and he was invited to fly for the Old Flying Machine Company in his spare time. "I flew the Spitfire, Hurricane, Mustang, Corsair, Wildcat, the BF 109 Black Six, I flew the F-86 and I still do; next year I will have to retire from my job in the Reserve and when I sign off I’d like to depart in that aircraft, too old to fly the Tutor but leaving in the Sabre…"

After Coningsby Cliff was promoted to Air Commodore and joined the Royal College of Defence Studies. He then became senior air staff officer at 11 Group, Bentley Priory, and some two years later moved to Northwood as Chief of Staff to 18 Group. Six months later the two Groups were amalgamated and he became the first AOC of 11/18 Group as an Air Vice-Marshal, which he calls "a quite fantastic job... To lead the air defence and maritime forces of the UK was a singular honour, and my NATO 'hat' of Commander Allied Air Forces Eastern Atlantic gave the post a wonderful international dimension."

He became Director General Saudi Armed Forces Project in 1998 and was promoted to Air Marshal in 2000. He had been asked by the Chief of the Air Staff if he wanted to be Air Secretary, but he declined on the grounds that he’d never been a strategic manpower planner and felt that were others better qualified. He retired from the RAF in 2003 after more than 40 years service.

The RAF is in his bones and he feels keenly the pressures upon it. It’s now a shadow of the force he joined in 1963, when it comprised some 150,000 personnel spread across the globe. “Now it’s about 42,000,” he says, “and while the capability of individual airframes is much greater, even the most capable airframe can only be in one place at a time. “We must avoid getting into the situation we were in between the wars when we ran down our capabilities almost to an irrecoverable degree. We cannot now ramp up defence production like we could then. It’s an awfully difficult equation to square - the government has got to shore up the place, because failing to balance the books would mean we’d lose our forces altogether. But it must make sure that the integrity of the system does not fall in pieces, and that we do not lose the vital core competences.

“We live in a geopolitical system that is difficult to predict, and if we again get to the stage of nation against nation - and let’s hope we don’t - we have to be able to back up our political intent. We have to protect our airspace, sea space, land space, and the military must be equipped to do the job. What may make short term financial sense is not attractive when measured against the long-term stakes. I’m concerned at how far they’ve gone already, and it’s posing enormous problems for the Chiefs of Staff. We are reducing our forces to a level inappropriate for our needs, and we are going to have to take risks - but is there any alternative for the government? We will have vulnerabilities in core areas, core skills, but we will have to work with that because we cannot currently do otherwise.”

Has the RAF made a good job of getting where it is today? “Given what was known in the past, what you have today is about the best you could do,” he says. “The crystal ball is cloudy, and long lines of procurement leave you in the dark. Procurement processes have not been good, now or in the past, and you’ve had change upon change upon change. We need change, but it became almost an end in itself - if you weren’t undergoing change you were doing something wrong. Things did not get a chance to develop in an evolutionary way. Some of this was forced on the military and some was our own fault, but it almost confused the internal structure, and it certainly confused industry. There was constant meddling, political, bureaucratic and internal. If I can make an analogy with flying an aircraft, you can make adjustments until the controls are a living blur to try to overcome every little departure, but it might be best to ride with it and just make the big corrections - you’ll get where you want to go much more efficiently.”

Inter-service rivalry exacerbates problems. “The most destructive military man is all dark blue, all light blue or all khaki,” he says. “I see some pretty silly comments from senior officers who’ve lost the overall picture. We need sensible, measured debate, not irrational and damaging internal debate. When I hear people say the RAF should be subsumed into the other services, I say that is rubbish. An independent air force gives us a professional view of air matters; the protection of airspace or the projection of air power is not an adjunct to sea or land imperatives, and to treat it as such is just blindness.”

It’s a long leap down to the concerns of general aviation, but Cliff believes the need for action is equally urgent. “There is insufficient recognition among regulators that we in the industry have the knowledge and the expertise,” he says. “We have enormously well-qualified and experienced individuals in aviation, yet we must go through awful bureaucratic channels which do not add value in terms of safety, or by any other measure. Where the professionalism of an organisation is proven, they should be allowed to get on with it. In engineering, for instance, there are companies that have all the experience, yet they must defer to people who know less than they do - who make stipulations which not only add nothing to safety but make operations difficult, almost impossible, and sometimes arrived at because it’s easier to say ‘no’ than ‘yes’.”

A rather serious finish, but that is not how I view my career in aviation. It has been - and hopefully will continue to be - the most enormous fun, shared with a great bunch of people.