February 2011

1 5th Technical and Air Safety Committee  Cobham House
10 10th GP & F Committee Meeting  Cobham House
16 Guild Luncheon Club  RAF Club
23 Combined Courts Lunch  Guildhall Club Room
24 Pilot Aptitude Assessment  RAF Cranwell

March 2011

8 6th Education and Training Committee  Cobham House
10 11th GP & F Committee Meeting  Cobham House
10 6th Court Meeting  Cutlers’ Hall
15 Environment Committee Meeting  Cobham House
16 Annual Guild Service  St Michael’s Cornhill
16 AGM, Installation and Supper  Merchant Taylors’ Hall
31 Lord Mayor’s Dinner for Masters  Mansion House

April 2011

1 United Guilds Service  St Paul’s Cathedral
1 Lunch with Fan Makers’ Company  Skinners’ Hall
7 Assistants Dinner  Cutlers’ Hall
10 Guild Flying Club AGM/Lunch  White Waltham
12 Benevolent Fund Board of Management Meeting  Cobham House
12 1st Technical and Air Safety Committee Meeting  Cobham House
14 1st GP & F Committee Meeting  Cobham House
14 Pilot Aptitude Assessment  RAF Cranwell
21 Guild Luncheon Club  RAF Club
21 Cobham Lecture  Royal Aeronautical Society
thc Flyer Show  Sofitel, Heathrow

May 2011

10 1st Education and Training Committee Meeting  Cobham House
12 2nd GP & F Committee Meeting  Cobham House
12 1st Court Meeting  Cutlers’ Hall
26 Livery Dinner  Drapers’ Hall

GUILD VISITS PROGRAMME

15 February  TAG & AAIL, Farnborough
24 February  RAF Lyneham
9 April  Retrotec Ltd, Wheel Farm Business Park
4 May  RAF Odiham
11 May  RNLI Waterloo Bridge

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

Cover Photo: Master Elect Wally Epton and Hawker Beechcraft demonstration pilot Scott Schramm settle themselves into the cockpit of the Hawker 4000 business jet prior to a demonstration flight in this brand new and very impressive aircraft. The Master Elect’s report on his experience appears in this issue. Photo courtesy Hawker Beechcraft.
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VAT ON TRAINING

Liveryman Peter Moxham reports that progress on this contentious issue is very slow. Despite the industry perspective that something has to be done, the Government and various Ministers along with most MPs do not want to grasp this nettle. An Industry Working Group has been set up but there is little prospect of an early solution. One way of dealing with the issue would be in the form of apprenticeships, for which the MPL is ideally suited, or with a tax scheme which allows students to set against the cost of training once they are gainfully employed with a UK-registered employer. The support of the airlines will be needed to achieve this, as at present the only airline willing to support this is FlyBe. With VAT now at 20% the costs of training are going beyond reasonability and the numbers of students now able to finance their training is at an all time low.

INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL PILOT TRAINING GROUP (IPPTG)

As Europe has centralised the regulation of Flight Operations and Flight Crew Licensing under EASA it has become more and more obvious that Industry has needed to become less insular and more focused in the defence of the values that it has sought to establish since 1948.

In order to be recognised in the various European forums it is now very important to be able to ensure that the professional pilot training industry could speak with one voice and debate from a position of strength the many issues that we see now and will occur over the coming years.

After some two years as a very loose group it was necessary to formalise the arrangements in place and this occurred at the European Aviation Training Symposium (EATS) held in Istanbul in November 2010. EATS is the largest forum for professional pilot training in Europe with over 500 delegates from all corners of Europe and the world, thus we had a very large gathering to address with regard to the need for action. No person in this industry believes that EASA has got everything right but uncoordinated responses were failing to make any progress. Our ‘loose group’ had consisted of eight of Europe’s largest ab-initio training organisations from six different countries. This is an insufficient spread to convince the European Commission of our representation of the training industry, yet it had achieved a deal of respect from both the Commission of the training industry, yet it had achieved a deal of respect from both the Commission and from EASA and therefore achieved some measure of success.

At the end of 2010 IPPTG had attained a membership of some 70 professional pilot training members. There was a great need for such representation, not only amongst the ab-initio training fraternity but to encompass the Type-rating training organisations and airline training departments all of whom have the same objectives - high training standards controlled by regulations that were practical and sought to achieve the best and safest standards possible.

IPPTG is now recognised by the European Commission, EASA, the European Parliamentary Aviation Group and ICAO - all of whom seek to influence our industry. Already almost every major Type-Rating Organisation is a member with only one organisation remaining debating the subject. This area of training has also seen the major US and Canadian companies join the Group.

The airline training departments are an interesting case. Their representation in Europe has been fragmented with AEA looking after the old ‘Legacy’ airlines and other associations looking after some others, but the greater majority are not represented at all. Airlines such as FlyBe in the UK and Air Berlin in Germany had been unable to influence or affect decisions made in Cologne and Brussels but are now able to raise issues through IPPTG and hopefully achieve common ground with those who seek to regulate the industry.

IPPTG is only concerned with matters FCL, although parts of the proposed EASA Flight Operations requirements regarding Pilot re-training and testing are covered by the Group.

With some 18 countries represented amongst our membership we hope that IPPTG will grow and help other organisations whose primary business is the training and testing of professional pilots to ensure that regulation aids both professionalism and safety in the industry.

IPPTG is administered from the BBGA offices in the UK and functions by electronic communication. It has one annual gathering which is coincidental with EATS. It is non-profit making with all fees used to meet the costs of frequent meetings in Cologne and Brussels as well as elsewhere when required.

BRITISH WAR VETERANS IN BAHRAIN

Three war veterans from the Royal Chelsea Hospital were flown out to Bahrain courtesy of Gulf Air to attend the Remembrance Day Service at the English Cemetery in Manama. Geoffrey Crowther, James McGovern and William Eggleton laid wreaths to honour victims of both World Wars. Representatives of all three British Services and the US 6th Fleet were in attendance. Liveryman Yvonne Trueman laid a wreath on behalf of the Guild.

LORD MAYOR’S SHOW

Three Guild Members, Assistant Chris Ford, Wardens Dorothy Pooley and Tudor Owen, represented the Guild at the Lord Mayor’s Show in November. They are shown fully clothed and about to take part in the Procession, thankful for once for the warmth of their Livery robes in the cold weather.
ANIMALS AND ARMED FORCES
The life and times of Liveryman David Shepherd CBE.

David used reference materials from a number of sources including visits to Warminster. He never looked back.

It is with great regret that the death has been announced of Group Captain John Tritton, who joined the Guild in 1981. After leaving school John Tritton had a long and distinguished career as a fighter pilot in the RAF. After flying training in 1950-1952 he flew Meteor fighter reconnaissance aircraft and night fighters at Kabrit in the Canal Zone, Egypt. On returning to the UK he flew the Javelin all-weather fighter on the first squadron to be equipped with this complex aircraft.Posted on exchange duty to the USAF, he flew the Convair F102 Delta Dart interceptor from 1958 to 1960. After promotion to Squadron Leader he became involved in testing the Lightning, continuing his experience with this charismatic aircraft during a series of associated staff appointments, which included a tour as Senior Officer Air Defence in the 5-Nation Integrated Air Defence System, RAAB Butterworth, Malaysia. He retired from the RAF in 1987 in the rank of Group Captain, following his final appointment as Deputy Inspector of Flight Safety (RAF).

After joining the Guild John was clothed as a Liveryman in 1986 and was appointed Technical Director in 1987. He assumed the mantle of Learned Clerk in 1988, an appointment he held with great distinction until 1995. On his retirement, the Master, Captain Geoffrey Fowkes, wrote in Guild News "John Tritton has made an enormous contribution to the status, reputation and efficiency of the Guild. The Court, all the Masters he has served and every member are most indebted to him and appreciative of his efforts. His wide experience and knowledge has helped to guide and influence our activities in flying, education, training, air safety and all areas of civil and military operations. He has also helped to enhance our reputation by establishing himself as a respected authority on aviation safety matters on TV, radio and in the printed media. We wish John a long and happy retirement."

When John was appointed as Learned Clerk there was much in the Guild that needed close attention. Numbers on the rolls were falling, finances were stretched, and to many the main goal was of owning our own home. Some were even questioning if the Guild was relevant in the last quarter of the 20th century. It would have been easy to become despondent without John’s determination and drive. Quietly, and often out of sight, he greatly supported Masters and the Court in moulding and implementing strategies. These strategies were essential to put our Company on the right track to become a very relevant 21st century aviation and City of London organisation. To say that the Guild would have failed without John is probably an exaggeration - but not much of one! The Guild owes him that legacy - but much more besides.

John’s membership of the Guild soon saw him join the Guild’s Masonic Lodge, Per Caelum, where he rapidly climbed the ladder to a very successful year as Worshipful Master and then for many years as the Director Ceremonies, a position he truly loved. John was an all round aviator, a dedicated City man, devoted to his wife Shirley and his family and extraordinarily proud of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators. Those that knew him well, especially the Masters that he guided, supported and cared for, are honoured and blessed to have known him and to have been able to call him 'friend'.

John’s funeral took place on 6th December in Colchester. Attendees included 2 Past Masters of the Guild, (David Maulever and Brian Pickard), and 7 other Past Masters of Per Caelum, (John Mason, Robin Sherwin Smith, David Williamson, Peter Horton, Robin Keegan, Colin Tittmus and Alfie Holmes).
The Master Writes
DR MICHAEL A FOPP

Firstly, a very happy New Year to you all, coupled with the hope of good health and safe flying. I was warned that my year as Master would pass very quickly, but 2010 now seems something of a blur for Rosemary and me. A blur in every respect except one - the realisation that our Guild, and working Livery Companies in general, are about continuity and stability. This is why we had been around so long and still attract a high quality and expanding membership base in the modern world.

Our tour of the Regional Committees, of which I write in my report this issue, has shown me not only the strength of the Guild internationally, but also the huge respect we enjoy within our ‘industry’. Whilst this respect is something to be proud of, it would be wrong to take it for granted. There are many examples of professions losing the respect they have built up over generations - often through no fault of their own; teachers, solicitors and bankers all spring to mind currently. I believe the Guild is not only here to promote aviation safety, but also has a duty to preserve the esteem in which the profession of air crew is held by the general public. If we do not do this, who will? There are very sound reasons for raising this matter with a new year upon us. In the coming few years we shall see the long-term results of the changes in air transport operations brought about by the widespread introduction of budget carriers around the world. The effects of the recession on the established flag carriers and full-service operators will also become apparent. All this presents a possible spectre of a lowering of safety standards to ensure, not only the freedom of travel enjoyed by a much more diverse public, but also the economic survival of companies already on the brink of financial meltdown. During my visit to New Zealand I was never far away from the subject of the 1979 Mount Erebus tragedy. He had proved that the flight crew were not, in any way, at fault and cleared their names; it cost him his career, but in the true spirit of the Guild, he preserved their reputations and in doing so the respect of the public for pilots in New Zealand. If we, as I believe, are heading for a squeeze, there is an almost inevitable conclusion to be drawn. There will be an increasing number of incidents and the possibility of a decline in the enviable safety record built up by the air transport industry in the past few decades.

Who can draw attention to these issues without risking the accusation of being alarmist, or the suspicion of being meddlesome in the affairs of regulators, commercial companies and the military? If governments cannot (and generally their reactive nature means that they will say little until a finger points directly at them) only those directly involved and uniquely knowledgeable can - the pilots. My tour also taught me the lovely Chinese proverb “the wise man never breaks his rice bowl”. Can we expect a pilot, making his living in supporting his family, to risk everything by drawing attention to intangible issues? Can we leave it to the pilots’ trades unions to warn of what the future may hold? I am sure they will, but their advice will inevitably be turned against them because of their industrial negotiating remit being their primary aim.

The Guild must retain the esteem and respect of the public for the profession of the pilot. To do this we must continue to make our concerns known and to articulate them eloquently and quietly to all who will listen. During my year as Master I have tried to do this on your behalf and I am conscious that I have followed so many distinguished Past Masters who have successfully championed our calling for over 85 years. The Guild must retain the esteem and respect of the public for the profession of the pilot. To do this we must continue to make our concerns known and to articulate them eloquently and quietly to all who will listen. During my year as Master I have tried to do this on your behalf and I am conscious that I have followed so many distinguished Past Masters who have successfully championed our calling for over 85 years. As I come to the end of my year I am confident that the eminent and hugely experienced Masters already lined up to follow me will carry forward our special role in aviation and ensure the honourable reputation of aircrew, built up over generations, is maintained and nurtured.
Each year the Master reports back on his tour of the Regional Committees and Working Groups. Each year the tour includes business, social, formal and informal occasions which bind the Guild together around the world. This year is no exception, but what follows is a much condensed recap of a wonderful experience for Rosemary and me, made possible by some lovely and extraordinary people. The abiding memories will be the superb locations and the friendships made. The tour started earlier than usual with a solo visit in August to the newly-formed Canadian Regional Committee in British Columbia. The venue was the Abbotsford Air Show and I arranged to arrive in style in "Grumpy", a World War II B25 Mitchell bomber owned by a good friend in Seattle. The weather was extraordinarily hot with bushfires and sunburn a major factor, but the show was brilliant. During the two days of the show I was fortunate to meet not only the officers of the Guild in Canada, but also a number of members - all of whom advised me that the Regional Committee should not confine itself just to Canada, but should also include the United States of America. Thus my advice to the Court, upon my return, has created the North American Regional Committee and long may it flourish and grow.

A mere two days after the Trophies & Awards Banquet at Guildhall we were off, with a night stop on 23 October in Los Angeles to meditate the jetlag of travelling from the UK to New Zealand, our first port of call. We arrived in Auckland to be met by the officers of the Guild and we felt at home for our first visit to the North Island. Official duties included the presentation of affiliation certificates to both 485 and Flying Training Wings (soon to be re-named 486 Wing) of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, the Jean Batten Memorial to Michael Murray and the Master's Regional Award to Capt Thomas Bland. A Court meeting followed by an excellent New Zealand Annual Guild Dinner and a visit to Wellington enabled me to accompany the Chairman and key committee members to meet with the Associate Minister for Transport and the Director of the CAA and some of his staff. The Cobham Lecture was delivered twice and a reception for Wellington-based members also held. The social activities were typically rich in friendship and aeronautical kinship with visits to see historic collections and even renewing my own piloting skills during a scenic flight around Auckland.

We left New Zealand feeling that the membership was in good heart and the Guild was held in high esteem wherever we went.

The flight with Qantas from Auckland to Brisbane was a long one for a little Boeing 737 and we experienced a rare phenomenon in airline flying; we were handed a personal DVD player and a collection of DVDs! This might seem a treat, but in an aircraft as small as a 737 on a five-hour flight, a device the size and weight of a small briefcase in your lap is a mixed blessing.

On arrival in Brisbane we were met and hosted by both the Chairman of the Region and the Chairman of the Queensland Working Group.

The highlight of our Brisbane visit was undoubtedly flying in a de Havilland Dragon with three Tiger Moths on each wing (one of which had Rosemary trying her hand at formation flying whilst waving madly!). From Brisbane we travelled to Canberra for a series of very important meetings and a visit, behind-the-scenes, to the Australian War Memorial - in my opinion the best of its kind in the world. Canberra only occupied a few days, but they were busy and crammed with important meetings, of which more later.

On to Sydney to visit the Naval Air Station Nowra to present an award to No 816 Squadron Royal Australian Navy. A day sailing up Pittwater provided us both with a well earned rest and memories which will remain for a long time. All too soon we dashed off to Melbourne and met with local members of the Victoria Working Group for an informal dinner followed by a long day trip to Wangaratta to visit an historic aircraft and a lively elderly aviatrix. A morning at the Royal Australian Air Force Museum, Point Cook was followed by us winging our way to Adelaide, my father’s home town.
The South Australian Working Group is vibrant and lively which is evident in the wide variety of things I was shown. A briefing by Flight Training Adelaide reminded me of our Guild visit to Flight Training Europe Jerez earlier in the year, and the University of South Australia’s graduate program in aeronautics up to a Commercial/IR must be something we should try to emulate in the UK. A day of gliding aerobatics was another highlight of the trip and has given me hope that I may take to the air as a pilot once again soon. The South Australia Working Group Annual Dinner gave me the opportunity to present the Master’s Trophy to the immediate past Chairman, John Whittington and update members on our meetings in Canberra. All too soon we left for Perth and a few days break and then on to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was a revelation as we had not been there for about 15 years and much had changed. It was a ten-day period packed with visits made so special by the hospitality of the members in that lovely place. I was privileged to present scholarships and the Master’s Regional Trophy to Capt Brian Greeves. Cathay Pacific hosted the Cobham Lecture and some serious food was consumed.

It would be very easy to regale you with the minute detail of our long and enjoyable journey by chronicling every event and naming every person involved. However I am sure that the many individuals, who were so kind and thoughtful to us, and who worked so hard to ensure our time was well spent, will not mind if I concentrate not on the detail, but on the purpose and achievements of this year’s tour.

I see the Master’s tour as a means of uniting the Regional Committees both internationally and within their own countries. It has traditionally been the focal point of the year in the Regions, when everyone makes an effort to concentrate resources into the work of the Guild. This is why it is so important - the Master (and his lady) are not the focus of attention; the focus of attention is the Guild and its work. In my view the Master’s role is to express that work and reinforce the efforts made specifically by the Regional Committees. This is what Rosemary and I have tried to do this year and I will conclude with some examples.

In New Zealand I had the great pleasure of visiting Captain Gordon Vette and his lovely wife Charmaine. Gordon, a very distinguished ex-Air New Zealand pilot, has been helped by the Guild Benevolent Fund following a serious illness. It was a pure delight to talk to them both and see the affection in which they are held by the “Guild family” in New Zealand, coupled with the very positive contribution the fund has made to ensuring their quality of life.

In the company of the Regional Chairman and members of his committee, I met the Director of the New Zealand CAA and the Associate Minister for Transport during a brief stop-over in Wellington en route to RNZAF Base Ohakea.

In Australia, again with the Regional Chairman and key members, I met with the Director of Airservices (the equivalent of NATS), the Australian Transport Safety Board, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and a senior official in the Aviation Department of the Department of Transport.

In Hong Kong I visited the Directors of the Government Flying Service (after a fantastic aerial tour of the city and its surrounding territories), the Hong Kong Observatory, Cathay Pacific Airways, and the Civil Aviation Department, with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Region.

At all these meetings I stressed the importance of the Guild in promoting and nurturing aviation safety. I discussed a variety of issues and concerns, many of which are regularly tabled at the Education and Training Committee and Technical and Air Safety Committee meetings in the UK and the Regions. However, I concentrated mainly on issues upon which I had been briefed or researched relating to the specifics of the countries I was in. I was very pleased at the outcomes, for all the officials and ministers we met were open and supportive in their responses to our concerns. Most importantly I sought their willingness to place key members of their respective staffs onto the expert committees in each region. I am delighted to report that they all readily agreed to this and the Chairmen of each Regional Committee have already followed these meetings up with formal invitations.

In each country I also met with senior officers from their respective air arms and was hugely impressed by the high regard in which the Guild is held by the military. More importantly they, too, agreed that closer co-operation was in the best interests of everyone.

I presented the Cobham Lecture seven times to over 1000 people and flew in 14 airliners, 1 executive jet, 3 historic aircraft, 3 light aircraft, 2 helicopters, 1 glider and sailed in a very beautiful catamaran. We spent 76 hours on scheduled flights (without losing our luggage!) and the equivalent of three and a half days in airports. Including Canada we stayed in 16 hotels and one gorgeous private home. I even rode a horse again after 30 years, and survived!

Thank you so much to all the people who went out of their way to make our tour a success it was. We started out with a daunting programme, but they - by their kindness and consideration - made it a trip we will remember for the rest of our lives.

Visiting Capt Gordon Vette with New Zealand Committee members. L-R Charmaine Vette, The Master, Bryan Wyness (Chairman), Marion Wyness, Allan Boyce, Gordon Vette, Lyn Boyce.
GUILD SCHOLARSHIPS
The Guild, assisted by its generous sponsors, has conducted its annual scholarships programme for many years, encouraging and supporting a large number of enthusiastic, competent and worthy individuals into flying (with PPL scholarships) or furthering a flying career opportunity (with FIR scholarships). The cost of these scholarships has inevitably risen over the past few years and the Guild is very conscious of the immense generosity of its current and former sponsors - and of the increasing financial commitment that sponsorship requires in a difficult financial climate. The current cost for a scholarship is between £7,500 and £9,000, dependent on the prior flying experience of the individuals concerned, but the value to the individual winners of each scholarship is, of course, much more. All scholarships on offer by the Guild are ‘full scholarships’ - ie they are intended to fund all training required up to issue of a licence or rating on completion of the flying course. Some are funded directly by the Guild and/or its charities and some by external sponsors - but all are administered totally by the Guild, from advertising to selection of scholars and flying schools, to monitoring of progress throughout training - so sponsorship carries no onerous commitments on the part of the sponsor to selection or other administrative efforts.
As the Guild is now entering the scholarship ‘season’, we need to assess and confirm the number of scholarships on offer for 2011. Any members who may know individuals, or organisations, that might wish to help with the scholarships programme by funding a scholarship, please contact the Clerk with details - gapan@gapan.org or 020 7404 4032. The scholarships programme forms a very valuable and significant part of the Guild’s work and it’s important that we maintain and increase (if possible) the number, and types, of scholarships on offer each year. The Guild is committed to acknowledging the generosity of its scholarship sponsors where it can. Appropriate attribution for all sponsorship will be made on the website, in Guild News and at other opportunities that the Guild may have to highlight the individuals and organisations that assist financially in this much appreciated work of the Guild.

Gazette
APPROVED BY THE COURT ON 20th JANUARY 2011

ADMISSIONS
As Upper Freeman
As Upper Freeman
Adrian Garth BEASANT (HK)
Trefor BENYON
Christopher Colin BURKE (HK)
Captain Thomas Robert CHESTER CD (NA)
Marcus John COOK
Christian Lars Eric van COOLWIJK (HK)
Flight Lieutenant Neil COTTLE
Mervyn John COUNTER
James Edward CRABBE
Rodney Darren DINGWELL (HK)
Captain David John JOSLYN (HK)
Roger George HAYES
Jeremy Reid KINDER
Michael LAVELLE (NA)
Captain Robin LLOYD
Jean - Claude PIERI (NA)
Captain Stephen Antony REYNOLDS (HK)
Captain Patrick Walter ROOFE (OS)

As Associate
Graham John DAIVISON (GYM)
James HEPNAR (GYM)
Chi Man Cyrus WONG (HK)

RE-INSTATEMENT
As Upper Freeman
Commander Michael John NORMAN

ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE COURT
20 January 2011

REGRADE
To Livery
Michael O’DONOGHUE

To Upper Freeman
Eleanor Ann IVORY
Brett Francis LEYSHON (AUS)

DECEASED
George Gilbert MONEY (OS)
Group Captain John TRITTON
Group Captain Geoffrey WOMERSLEY

FORFEIT ALL BENEFITS
Kathryn O’CONNELL

As Freeman
Daniel Charles FRANCIS (GYM)
Delwar KANG
Gabriella SOMERVILLE
Wayne Morgan WILLIAMS (NA)

RESIGNATIONS
Rodney William ADAM (HK)
Michael Keith BARSHAM
David Richard BOLSOVER
Ian Robert BROWN (AUS)
Bryan Edward John CARPENTER (AUS)
Patrick John CLARKE
Terry Bruce GADENNE (AUS)
Richard Gerald Frederick GEARY (AUS)
Peter William GROWDER (AUS)
David LEWIS
Peter Thomas LONGE (AUS)
Steven MARTIN (AUS)
Stewart Linton McEWAN
Lester John McGrath (AUS)
Frank Hamilton ROACH (NZ)
Nicholas Peter RHODES (HK)
David Alastair VOY
Tania Lorraine WOODBURY (NZ)
Peter John Walter WORDSWORTH (AUS)

Clerk’s column
PAUL TACON Learned Clerk
Kipling’s exhortations to ‘Keep your head’ and ‘Trust yourself’ are rarely better personified than in Sally Patchett (93), one of Canada’s early female pilots and a respected member of the Guild (North America). In the 1950’s she was a young woman doing a man’s job, ferrying supplies between Vancouver and Quesnel in a small aircraft across British Columbia’s mountains and wilderness, winter and summer. Today, Sally confides that the secret to success is to “Check everything yourself” but when the unexpected happens, stay calm, figure it out and rely on your training to meet the challenge.

Sally was the third of four daughters born to an Ohio couple who had settled and cleared a quarter-section farm in St. Paul AB, 150 km northeast of Edmonton. Growing up on a farm, Sally learned how to ride at the age of four and later regularly rode into town to collect the mail. As a teenager, she could “double-clutch any farm truck” and such coordination, along with her practical nature, independence and strong work ethic served her well in the challenging years to come.

When visiting her sister in Oliver BC, Sally met Donald Patchett at a dance and they married during the war. Don had already worked in aviation and he eventually obtained his flying licence and encouraged his wife to do the same. Sally earned her wings at Langley’s Skyways in 1952 from Ed Batchelor and the Department of Transport awarded her Certificate 42979. Since the Patchett family owned a logging operation and a lumber mill in the city of Quesnel, Don and Sally were kept busy and if needed, would fly supplies in their 1947 Piper Clipper CF-GNF.

Once when Sally was preparing the aircraft for a trip, her twelve year-old niece, Valerie, started to pick blueberries from the nearby bushes. Sally warned Val that where there are berries, there are bears and this was well illustrated with a U-turn after takeoff, followed by a low-and-over and the sight of several startled bears.

On another trip with Val, the aircraft was caught in extreme turbulence and subsiding air and while Sally was ‘keeping her head’ and scanning for a place to crash-land, Val thought everything was fine, judging from her aunt’s calm demeanour. Sally successfully flew the Clipper out of the subsidence and continued to Quesnel “in the smoothest air you ever felt.”

When the ceilings are low, much of the 450 km route between Vancouver and Quesnel has to be flown in the Fraser Canyon and due to a fuel problem, Sally was once faced with the choice between ditching in the river or attempting a forced landing on the rock strewn riverbank. Fortunately, she was able to overcome the problem and restore power, none too soon.

While ferrying a Skyways aircraft across the prairies, adversity did strike and Don and Sally were forced down by a thunderstorm and subsequently spent a week in the Swift Current SK hospital. “If you fall off a horse, you get right back up” notes Sally, just before admitting that they flew themselves home to British Columbia.

Sally’s world was forever changed however in July 1958 when Don was killed in poor weather on a flight through the Fraser Canyon. “At that point” she confides “I knew my first responsibility was to raise our daughter, Kea” and to that end, she only flew for recreation afterwards, finally hanging up her headset in 1986.

Today’s female pilots are mostly found cruising the stratosphere in shirt-sleeves, not side-slipping into short strips but Sally is very proud indeed of her modern sister Ninety-Niners. While the nature of the job may have changed over six decades, the personal qualities of a good pilot have not. Sally reminds the younger generation to enjoy those takeoffs into the dawn sky that is “God’s world” then adds a bit of light-hearted, eternal advice to all pilots “If it’s broken, get it fixed!” Apart from her obvious interest in flying matters, Sally today is an avid reader on topics such as astronomy and sociology and everything in between.

“My parents were very proud of me” Sally remembers with fondness and that is exactly as it should be. As a young woman, Sally Patchett was a trailblazer and her accomplishments are today widely respected and part of the lore of flying in Western Canada. As for flying and life in general, Sally beams a smile and concludes “It’s just been great. Wonderful!”
Australia Region News

COMMITTEE SECRETARY CAPTAIN
SANDY HOWARD

Few will remember Tom Thumb Lagoon as a sailing playground for Bass and Flinders journeys of exploration around Australia, but it was watching aeroplanes from the vantage point of his family’s veranda which excited Sandy Howard’s interest in aviation. Currently our Region’s Honorary Secretary, Sandy retired from Qantas in 2008 after flying 19,600 hours for the airline in a career of 40 years and one day. As a graduate of No.3 Cadet Pilot’s Course in 1965, Sandy went straight from school to aviation, but not before commencing “lessons” at the age of 10 taken each year during summer holidays at Port Macquarie on the mid-north coast of NSW.

March 1968 saw Sandy leave Australia for an 18-month secondment to Territory Airlines in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea doing charter work in Cessna’s, predominantly the C206. Returning to Qantas in late 1968, a hiatus in training and National Service commitments meant not checking out to line training on the B707 until July 1970. The training trip was supposed to be a “normal” London return of 13 sectors over 10 days, but a turn-around in Bahrain led to 19 sectors over 2 weeks.

6 years later saw progression to the Boeing 747 and the stint as a “one-type wonder” began with the remainder of his 32 years on the various variations of the type culminating in the final 10 years on the B747-400.

Promoted to F/O in 1980, command was gained in January 1987 with promotion to Senior Check Captain (IRE/ TRE for our Northern cousins) until conversion to the B747-400 in 1998. However while attempts to provide a lure to return to simulating failed, line training followed by check & training duties continuing from 1999 almost to retirement, with a couple of years as Training Standardisation Coordinator thrown in for good measure!

While pursuing a professional career in jets, Sandy always retained an interest in recreational GA flying. The retribution of so many colleagues in 1971 sparked part-time parachute dropping for a few years as a backup.

A big change came in 1996 when after walking out of a shift in the simulator, he went over to have a look at the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society’s [HARS] recently arrived Lockheed 1049F/C-121C Super Constellation. Sitting through an engine run, he was hooked and following an extensive apprenticeship, completed a command endorsement in February 1998. Nevertheless, the “day job” in HARS became operational manager of the Hawker de Havilland [now Boeing] fleet of DH-82A Tiger Moth and DHA3 Drover Mk2, thus, till recently, being the only pilot who flew the top and bottom ends of the HARS collection! With 21,750 hours in the logbook and still counting, the new plastic eye allowing a Class 1 Medical, and a multi-engine Command Instrument Rating, the sky is still the limit!

Otherwise, Sandy and his wife of 38 years, Marj, can be found on their catamaran “Crew Rest” cruising the picturesque waters of Broken Bay and its environs.

VISIT TO LONDON AND THE TROPHIES AND AWARDS DINNER 2010
From Deputy Chairman Sue Ball

Background. During a relaxed conversation between myself, Buck Brooksbank, Immediate Past Master, Rick Peacock-Edwards and his wife Tina while attending the Safeskies Conference in October 2009, the topic of the T&A dinner came up. It was at that time Buck suggested that he and I should attend in 2010 in our capacities as Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Australian Region respectively. Several phone calls and emails later it was agreed that we would go, with Buck very generously paying my airfare and attendance at the dinner. (Please note that Buck and Sue have not used any Guild funds for this visit.)

The Journey to London. We were lucky that Qantas had a special fare deal for travel to the UK at the time we needed to go so we were able to have our first experience of economy travel on the A380. Buck set off from Brisbane to Singapore. I left Adelaide for Melbourne and joined the A380 flight there, travelling via Singapore where I met up with Buck for the onward flight to London. We were very fortunate to have three seats between the two of us. I was looking forward to curling up across two seats for a sleep. Not really possible on the A380 as the arm rests between seats only lift up about 2/3rd the way. (I guess Qantas planned on filling all seats!) Needless to say the A380 is very quiet and the seats themselves are comfortable. The cabin crew gave us excellent service with a smile. It all helped to make our flight as comfortable as possible.

On arrival in London we took Sandy Howard’s advice and bought “Oyster Cards” for travel on London transport, including the Underground. Our first journey was for the tube from Heathrow to Lancaster Gate. That proved to be more of a challenge than expected as there had been failures on two lines that morning leading to significant delays and waiting around on stations as we changed lines. Just a note that the Underground system had failures every day we were in London and the daily newspaper comments included “Underground goes into meltdown”.

Needless to say we were looking forward to checking in to our rooms at the hotel so we could have hot showers. Unfortunately, the boiler at the hotel had broken and their temporary fix was only providing tepid water to the bathrooms and no central heating. Nothing could be done with the water temperature so we just had to survive the showers but the excellent hotel staff hired stand-alone heaters for guests to use as needed.

Visit to RAF Museum, Hendon. On a cold and sunny Wednesday we visited the RAF Museum at Hendon. Daytime maximum temperature reached a high of 9 deg C after a 2 deg start. The Master had asked Keith Ifould to assist with our visit so on our arrival we were greeted by the Publicity Officer and given our passes plus a folder of information about the museum. We toured all the hangars starting in the Graham White factory where the oldest aircraft in the collection live including the Vickers Vimy, SE5a and the Bristol Monoplane. The “Milestones of Flight” building has a superb wall with a History of Aviation timeline showing significant events each year from 1903. My favourite aircraft was the Vulcan in the Bomber Hall as this is the aircraft that started my passion for aviation. The various displays are all very well presented and we finished in the Battle of Britain Hall where it was good to see visiting schoolchildren touring the exhibit - with their cardboard “gasmask” boxes over their shoulders. It was definitely worth the visit and an easy place to get to via the Underground and about a 10 to 15 minute walk. We finished off the day with Buck taking me to the RAF Club for dinner. A full RAF day!
Visit to the Guild office at Cobham House. On Thursday morning we visited Cobham House to meet Paul Tacon the Clerk and Pat and Ruth so they could put faces to the names they see on emails. It was time very well spent as Ruth showed me the membership database and we discussed how the Australian Region could make the best use of the information available. It was very generous of them to give us their time on the day when they were preparing for the dinner at the Guildhall. The visit gave us some idea of the detailed planning and logistics involved in organising the T&A dinner for 580 guests.

The Trophies and Awards Dinner Our time at the Guildhall began with the 5pm Court meeting for clothing 14 new Liverymen. The Court meeting was held in the Crypt on the lower level of the Guildhall. Then it was back upstairs to the Reception with time to meet friends, old and new. It was lovely to renew acquaintances with past Masters and their wives. I was very pleased to meet Warden Dorothy Pooley who is currently the Chairman of the Education and Training Committee in UK. We just had time for a quick conversation about our respective scholarship programmes when we were summoned to dinner in the beautiful dining hall. It is a stunning, historic room and it looked superb with all the tables set for 580 diners. We enjoyed an excellent three-course meal before formalities for the awards began with the Loving Cup ceremony followed by toasts to the Queen, Royal Family, the Lord Mayor (in attendance) and the City of London Corporation. It was good to be sitting with Trevor Jensen who made sure that the Loving Cups were handled correctly as they passed down our table.

As the citations for all the awards are read out, it really brings home the amazing skills and talents that we have in our chosen field of aviation. With Group Captain Rob Lee sitting opposite I was able to have a good look at the Australian Bi-Centennial Award he received.

When all the awards had been presented and the final toast to the Guild complete, those who wanted a final drink could return to the Reception room for a “Stirrup Cup” to complete a very memorable evening.

Trevor Jensen and his wife offered us a lift back to our hotel so we skipped the last drink to enable Trevor to get away as he had an early departure to return to Dublin the following morning.

The Journey home. On Friday morning Buck and I went our separate ways to visit friends. Buck to Henley-on-Thames and me to a cold and wet Cheshire.

We met again at Heathrow on Saturday evening for our long haul back home. The A380 flight back to Singapore was virtually full and we discovered just how difficult it is to get in and out of the seats when those in front are in the reclined position – the difficulty increased by the arm rests that do not go all the way up! Thank goodness for great cabin staff and for the very good entertainment system.

At Singapore Buck departed first on his flight to Brisbane and then I took a direct flight to Adelaide. This was on an A330. Perhaps best not to dwell on the uncomfortable seat and consequent lack of sleep! Back in Adelaide the sun was shining on a very pleasant spring day, the roses and native frangipani trees in full bloom – a good welcome home after a wonderful experience at the T&A dinner. Many thanks to our Chairman, Buck for taking me along as his guest.

MASTER ELECT WALLY EPTON

During Farnborough International 2010 last July the Master, myself and the Learned Clerk were guests of Hawker Beechcraft (HBC) to view their latest business jets and enjoy the Air Show from the vantage of the HBC flight line VIP chalet. During the lunch conversation it was mentioned that I had been a member of the Pilot Consultative Committee during the development of the Hawker Horizon that had since evolved into the Hawker 4000 which HBC had on display at the Show. My involvement with the Horizon Consultative Committee about 8 years ago was because of the extensive Hawker experience I had accrued on all the variants of the HS125 design from Series 1 to the current Hawker 900XP that I fly regularly.

This association with the HS125 began at RAF Finningley when I commanded the Dominie navigator training squadron and continued after I left the RAF and moved into business aviation. Flying Hawkers for the next 25 years almost continuously for various companies, and with many hours on type probably qualified me for membership of the Consultative Committee that helped to modify the design of this mid-sized business jet.

At Farnborough the President of HBC in Europe/Mid-East/Africa, Sean McKeough considered that my involvement over some 4 years had earned me a flight at the controls of their latest Hawker, and this was duly arranged. On July 30th Freeman Peter Dobson and myself flew to Chester/Hawarden airport in Peter’s very fine PA32 Piper Lance where we were met by HBC demonstration pilot Scott Schramm for a full review of Hawker 4000, N3197H. As I hold current FAA ATP as well as JAA ATP Scott invited me to fly left-seat for the demo.

Readers may know that Hawarden has been the manufacturing base for HS125’s from the beginning, and today the Hawker -750XP and -900XP fuselages, wings and tail empennage units are built there before being shipped to Hawker Beechcraft in Wichita for final assembly. The further development of the HS125 series beyond the -800XP is probably the main reason why the Chester based production company was sold to the USA, because the HS125 had reached a point in evolution where major investment was needed to develop a new wing and more aerodynamically efficient aeroplane. British Aerospace decided not to pursue this, and the company was sold “across the
on the MFD the avionics suite will be and display of Jeppesen electronic charts and systems monitoring displays as well as.

The Hawker Horizon was the Raytheon project launched a decade ago to take the HS125/Hawker series into the super mid-sized business jet field with an all-new technologically advanced wing and a larger fuselage of almost entirely composite material construction. The Horizon became the Hawker-4000 and although various components are manufactured around the world, the fuselage is fabricated at Wichita where they have sufficiently large enough autoclaves for the carbon fibre honeycomb shell fabrication process. Completion of the aeroplane is accomplished at Little Rock in Arkansas.

Powered by Pratt & Whitney PW308A high bypass turbfans, the Hawker 4000 is capable of cruise speeds up to M0.84 and has a max range of 3280nm with NBAA IFR reserves. It’s noticeably bigger than the earlier HS125s with a wingspan of 61ft 9in and an overall length of 69ft 6in compared with say the -900XP wingspan of 54ft 4in and length of 51ft 2in. The new wing design is built in Japan by Fuji industries. (The current HS125 wing is an original de Havilland design from the 1950’s.) The moderate sweep of the supercritical wing with aft-loaded airflow on the Hawker-4000 offers improved high speed characteristics for much better cruise and range performance over the 900XP.

Scott began the flight in the traditional manner with a detailed walk-around inspection to let me become familiar with how quick and relatively easy it was. The APU was started on returning to the cockpit and the systems set up with the FMS programmed with our planned triangular cross-country airways flight from Hawarden to Belfast across the Irish Sea and back via Prestwick all entered into the MCDU. The checklist was straightforward and Scott Schramm des-selected APU bleed air from the twin air packs before starting the first engine. Earlier Hawkers rely on battery starts and were independent of outside assistance so if the Hawker 4000 does not have bleed air available, then it’s a no-go situation. The FADEC ensured safe engine starts with a single button press for each start.

Settled into the left seat I found everything easily to hand and quickly adapted to the Honeywell Cursor Control Device (CCD similar to the Boeing 777 version) which is very intuitive. This allows easy selection of systems monitoring displays as well as checklists on the EICAS, and with an upgrade coming for WAAS LPV approaches, RNP 0.3 procedure capability and display of Jeppesen electronic charts on the MFD the avionics suite will be greatly enhanced. Radio tuning on the PFD using the CCD was a dream. After start Scott took care of the checklist and switched on the environmental systems which can be used from taxi and take-off unlike the earlier Hawkers that need all bleed air off in order to produce full thrust for take-off.

N3917H was comparatively light at a weight around 32,000lbs and taxiing required little use of throttles. The nose wheel steer-by-wire was smooth and positive and the brake-by-wire system seemed to operate with little effort. Cleaning up the aircraft, Scott engaged the yaw damper and then let me fly manually gradually accelerating in the climb to 280 kts above FL100. Carrying out steep turns and general manoeuvring in the climb allowed me to get a good feel of the aircraft’s harmonised and well-balanced mechanical flight controls. It was quickly apparent that the fine traditions of Hawker aircraft for ease of handling and stability had been retained with that direct feel to the elevator and ailerons such that I rapidly felt very comfortable with its flying qualities. There was not time nor air space to stall the aircraft but along the airways we were able to investigate high and low speed handling together with use of the speed brakes, and flap settings thus preparing me for the descent, initial approach and ILS that we were going to carry out on our return to Hawarden. Scott also let me throttle back the port engine for a while to get a feel for the aircraft flying asymmetric which was really a non-event because of the hydraulically-operated rudder control.

Meanwhile in the back, Freeman Peter Dobson was enjoying the smoothness and quietness of the cabin and said afterwards that there was so little change in noise at the high and low speed ranges of our flight, that he needed to check the airshow back to appreciate what was happening! Seating layout in N3917H was the standard double club four arrangement and Peter had fun exploring the side tracking and reclining controls located in the armrest of his seat. The cabin is spacious at 867 cu ft with headroom of 6ft giving a very airy, light and comfortable feel. Together with the wardrobe closets, private lavatory and the forward large galley, the aeroplane provides a standard of comfort one expects for a longer range business jet. Both Peter and I thought it was fantastic!

The flight was all too soon coming to an end as Scott set me up for an auto-ILS approach at Hawarden. We were radar vectored into the pattern and Scott worked through the simple checklist on the MFD to configure the Hawker 4000 for landing. The auto-throttles were very smooth in operation and speed control was fairly precise at 124kts for the approach. I disengaged both auto-throttle and the autopilot to cross the Hawarden airfield boundary slowing to Vref, and in a light crosswind closed the throttles to idle. With little input from me to the pitch attitude the long-travel main landing gear absorbed my touchdown. Using the thrust reversers and the powerful carbon brakes to slow the aircraft gently we stopped in about 2500ft of runway, and then with a back track to the taxiway we departed from, we were very soon parked at the HBC Centre with a thoroughly enjoyable flight all too soon over. I wanted a lot more of the same but that only comes with an initial training course and a discerning owner who chooses to buy a Hawker 4000 and might ask me to fly it, so for the meanwhile its back to the -900XP with pleasing thoughts of the newest Hawker stored in my memory bank. ✈️
Arguably the most beautiful biplanes ever built were the classic silver Hawker biplanes. The “family” of biplanes started in 1928 with the first flight of the Hawker Hart which was destined to be the new day bomber for the RAF. The Hart’s aesthetic lines were due to the new Rolls Royce Kestrel liquid-cooled V12 engine. The Hart’s introduction into the RAF had created a situation where a day bomber was faster than fighters in service at the time.

The “family” included the Audax which was created as an Army co-operation aircraft and the need for a Hart type by the Royal Navy led to the Osprey. The Hawker Hind was developed to replace the Hart. The next inevitable stage was to develop a single seat fighter. This led to the Hawker Fury, the first aircraft in RAF service to exceed 200mph and the Naval single seat fighter, the Nimrod.

All that have seen the very rare surviving examples of the Hawker biplanes in the air have remarked about how distinctively beautiful they are. Whilst they have striking looks their sound is striking too. At over 21 litres the Rolls Royce Kestrel is only 6 litres smaller than the Merlin and sounds quite similar to it. It is strange to hear the noise one expects from a Spitfire only to see a sleek biplane, so different to anything else in the historic aviation and air display world today.

The new generation of airworthy Hawker biplanes; Nimrod 1 and II, soon to be joined by the Fury, would not be flying today without the massive efforts of Guy Black and Retrotec, (formerly Aero Vintage). Guy has resurrected many of the Hawker engineering techniques that have disappeared over the years. When he first became involved with the Hawker types, the world’s only flying example was the Shuttleworth Collection’s ex Afghanistan Air Force Hawker Hind.

The most significant of the engineering problems resolved by Aero Vintage related to the wing spars. The Hawker biplane uses a complex dumb-bell shape steel spar, conceived by Roland Henry Chapman in 1926, and later patented by Sidney Camm for Hawkers in 1929. This spar is made up of two flanged polygonal booms, folded from high tensile steel strip, riveted to an inter-connected flange.

The solving of the spar manufacturing problem is giving a new lease of life to a new generation of Hawker aeroplanes, not only the biplanes but also in enabling the restoration of a new generation of Hawker Hurricanes.

As Royal Air Force and Royal Navy resources were spread far and wide, the repair of a welded fuselage type structure would not be possible in many Empire countries in the field. However, as the Hawkers were a cluster of tubes held together by stainless steel plates, spacers, bolts and tubed rivets, if spares were held they could be fitted in place and welding was not required. With no welded joints, there cannot be any movement between parts and hence the use of so many components to stabilise and strengthen each joint. However, the complex manufacture enabled simple maintenance in the field or on board ship.

Nimrod - Royal Navy Fighter

To the casual observer the Hawker biplanes “all look the same”. Although the Nimrod looks similar to a Fury, the former has maritime additions such as flotation bags, hoisting gear, spare detachable wings, arrester gear and a strengthened fuselage to withstand the stress of catapult launches. The Nimrod II has a swept back top wing, enlarged tail and a 600hp Kestrel
MK V and with a maximum take off weight of 4,050lbs it is about 500lbs heavier than the Fury and has a wingspan 3ft greater than the RAF fighter.

K3661, manufacturer serial 41H.59890, was completed on 5th September 1934. On 1st January 1935 it was placed in storage at Cardington and then on 7th October 1936 went to the packing depot at RAF Sealand. It was issued to 802 Flight in the Mediterranean on 23rd October 1936 with the side code number 562 and it served from 1936 to June 1938 when it suffered two landing accidents. It was placed on Admiralty charge on 23rd May 1939 and then sent to Lee on Solent in December 1939.

In 1972 the Nimrod was discovered on a rubbish dump in Ashford, Kent, more or less complete but well corroded. Guy Black acquired the fuselage in August 1991.

The restoration of K3661 commenced in 1992 and after years of painstaking work including reverse engineering K3661, now registered G-BURZ, made its first post-restoration flight in November 2006.

Flying the Nimrod II
First Impressions
Just looking at the aeroplane as you walk out to it generates thoughts of RAF Hendon Air Days and Royal Navy Reviews of the 1930’s. One is immediately struck by its sheer beauty from any angle and it makes you feel as if you should be dressed in all-whites to fly it. It looks the predecessor to the Hurricane from every angle, just look at it and imagine it without its top wing. When parked on the line for an airshow next to a Hurri it is even more evident.

Sitting in the cockpit is a bit like looking out of a trench with its being very narrow at the shoulders, although there is plenty of room inside but if the weather is overcast it can be quite dark in there. It is not just the outside view of the aeroplane which sets the mind back to halcyon days of flight; the cockpit with its dials, brass fittings and Vickers S gun breeches is equally evocative.

Ready to Start
For a Spitfire it can need three hands for the pilot to start, the Nimrod can take four! It has three means of starting; a gas start system, by using a Hucks Starter vehicle, or by two groundcrew winding starter handles.

The fuel system is a main tank of 46 gals with 2 x 16 gall wing tanks for a total of 78 gals of fuel. Main Tank ON/OFF fuel cock ON. Reach up to the upper wing and pull the T handle of the Port wing tank outwards and thus ON, Starboard wing tank T handle is left in OFF as a reserve. Head back into the cockpit and working by my usual left-to-right; Throttle - Closed, Mixture control RICH (Fully back), All Magneto - there are Main and Hand Starting Magneto - OFF.

Now ready to use the complicated gas start system. The system works by means of compressed air and vapourized fuel turning the engine on start up. Mags OFF, Gas Starter Master Cock - a tap on the cockpit floor - OFF. I call “ready to gas prime” and the drain cock of the starter vaporizer is opened by one of the groundcrew whilst I unscrew the plunger of the gas start which looks like a second primer above the main fuel priming pump. The gas start primer pump is operated about 10-15 times - or as long as it keeps squeaking - until fuel flows from the vaporizer drain cock, the crew signal me and close the drain cock and I lock the gas start priming pump in the cockpit.

Next the engine is fuel primed with 5 or 6 “good strokes” i.e. with pressure. The Gas Starter Master Cock down on the cockpit floor is turned ON. Call the crew “Clear”. I raise my right hand and signal winding and “Contact”. Switch on and operate the hand starting starter magneto switch, then furiously wind the handle of the hand starting magneto and then depress the Gas Starter Press Cock on the cockpit floor with my right heel. As soon as the engine fires the main magneto’s are switched ON and the hand starting magneto OFF, the Gas Starter Master Cock is then closed. As a coordination exercise it is like putting your head and rubbing your stomach whilst still needing your third arm to scratch your back. That’s all there is to it!

The alternative starting methods can be just as daunting initially. Seeing a Model T Ford based Hucks Starter vehicle pull up in front of your propeller and connecting up to it is an alien experience for those of us who try to keep everything away from our propeller arcs although the Hucks is chocked so that it cannot go forward into the propeller. There is also the option of having the groundcrew hand winding the propeller. This is by means of two starting handles connecting each side of the Kestrel engine. However this is used only as a final back-up option.

What a sound! I initially warm up at 600rpm and check the oil pressure is rising. Open the throttle gradually between 1000-1200 rpm taking care not to long idle. It is necessary to avoid running the Kestrel at gear or crankshaft “periods” of 820, 1080 RPM and about 1200 RPM. With the oil temp at 15ºC and water temp at 60ºC I check the magneto’s for a slight drop and then check the slow running. I open the radiator shutters, verified open to the tail and I am ready for takeoff.

Signal chocks away and taxi out, check the brakes; left, right and both. K3661 has a pneumatic differential brake system fitted which helps considerably with the need to suit modern airfields and hard runways and gives good confidence in the aeroplane. The brakes are activated by using the converted gun triggers on the stick. Weaving to look ahead either side of the nose with rudder and the occasional hand-nudge of brake I taxi up to the Duxford hold.

Checks before Take Off
Brakes on and engine check at 1400 rpm. The usual TFMPPFFGGHH before take off whilst keeping a close eye on the temperatures. It’s a biplane with the unique need in the display world today to watch coolant temperatures although it does hold its temperature well whilst on the ground with its radiator set permanently in the propwash.

T - Stabiliser Trim in Take Off position - 4 degrees down, Throttle Friction - tight, Mixture Full RICH, Mags already checked, Fuel ON main and Port Wing tank, Rad Flap - Open, Gauges, Gyros, Harness and Hatches.

With pre-takeoff checks complete, taxi out
and line up, look ahead, taking care to check the sight picture off to the sides of the long V12-filled nose in preparation for any swing. Open the throttle smoothly whilst anticipating the swing, being careful not to open the throttle too quickly. The crescendo of noise which characterises a liquid-cooled V-12 such as the Merlin is taken to a whole new deafening level with the open cockpit of the Nimrod, at over 21 litres the very rare Rolls-Royce Kestrel up front is only 6 litres smaller than a Merlin. From stick back at the start of the run relax and feel the force on the elevators, the tail gently comes up; the swing is held well by the rudder very similar to the feel of the Hurricane and on the elevators, the tail gently comes up; the swing is held well by the rudder very similar to the feel of the Hurricane and then maintain a slightly tail-down attitude, base of the exhaust stacks on the horizon. Taking the boost up to +2.5lbs (+6 maximum) feels sufficient. With 600+ horsepower up front the 4,000 lb Nimrod goes off like the proverbial cork in a bottle in just a few seconds, it takes much longer to describe than it takes to do!

Once airborne check the engine temperatures; maximum oil temp (90º C) and the max coolant temp are all well within limits and get the boost back to +1.5lbs, there is a 5 min limit of +1.5 lbs boost with throttle at the gate.

The climb attitude normally looks very flat from the ground but gives at rate of climb of 2000ft/min. Throttling back to normal cruise at -1.5lbs boost the airspeed settles at 140mph and head to the north not feel a very comfortable experience. It normal cruise at -1.5lbs boost with throttle at the gate and keep a touch of power on at 75mph, if the power is cut too soon the nose will settle at 2900rpm and I keep well within these numbers throughout. I am often told by visitors to Duxford that they look up to expect a Spitfire diving in to the overhead only to be surprised to see the beautiful silver biplane - to quote Flying Legends commentator Bernard Chabbert - “snarling”.

I complete my last pass at 100ft and then pull up and turn to wash the speed off climbing into the downwind, this keeps the Nimrod II tight in to the circuit. BUMPFHH; Brakes OFF and check air supply pressure sufficient, Undercarriage is already down of course - don’t assume check as you could be in a Hurri next time! Mixture Fully RICH, Prop is fixed of course, Fuel ON, Harness and Hatches, Power back and trim to get the speed at the end of the downwind leg to 80mph. Abeam the runway threshold start the curved approach a la Spitfire to Duxford’s grass runway 24.

Keep the curve approach going and the Kestrel prefers a smidgen of power. I straighten up at 30ft and into the flare still keeping a touch of power on at 75mph, if the power is cut too soon the nose will drop - just as with the Hurricane. Flare and fly on, wing down into wind, into a gentle tail-down wheeler, cut the power and keep the tail off of the runway for as long as is possible with progressive forward stick until the tail drops, then stick hard back and keep it straight, fingers ready on the brakes. The nose wants to go left or right seemingly without reason and it is a matter of anticipating the swing with the quite excellent differential brakes. Keep it straight and then stop and clear to the right, stick hard back. Stop and vacate the runway.

Check the temperatures - all OK - and taxi back carefully keeping an eye on the t’s and p’s. Back to the Nimrod’s slot on the flightline with HAC crew guiding me in, just in front of Duxford Tower. Pull in and then I go into the shutdown checks. Idle rpm, Magneto dead cut check, Mags and fuel off and the Kestrel stops. Brakes off and then depress the Gas Starter Press Cock with my heel to confirm it is not live. All done. Wonderful. Flying the Nimrod, an aeroplane extinct until Retrotec’s incredible efforts in recent years, is such a privilege and my thanks to Historic Aircraft Collection Principals Angus Spencer-Nairn and Guy and Janice Black for giving me the opportunity to fly this beauty. Having seen the aeroplane through various stages of its resurrection over the years, I appreciate more than most what a truly incredible job it was to get the Nimrod back in the air again after so long an absence. Flying it solo is a joy, displaying it - priceless.

The most beautiful biplane ever to fly? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder except that in the case of the Hawker biplanes it is in the eye and the ear. Watch and listen to these silver marvels - and then tell me they aren’t!

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### HAWKER NIMROD II

- **Length:** 26ft 5in (8.09m)
- **Wingspan:** 33ft 6in (10.23m)
- **Height:** 9ft 8in (3.00m)
- **Wing area:** 300ft (27.96m²)
- **Max Take off Weight:** 4,050lb (1,841kg)
- **Powerplant:** 1 Rolls Royce Kestrel V inline piston engine, 680hp
- **Endurance:** 2 hours
- **Maximum Speed:** 168knots (194mph, 311 km/h)
- **Service ceiling:** 28,000ft (8,535m)
- **4 x 20lb (9kg) bombs on underwing racks**
At a time when we are consigning our Harriers to history it’s worth recalling that in the 1950s, when the Harrier was conceived, Britain had a phenomenally successful fighter aircraft industry, that it sold hundreds of military aircraft to dozens of countries, and that scores of British companies employing tens of thousands of people in high-technology fields prospered on the back of military aircraft exports.

Prominent among exporters was Hawker which made three of the best jets of the time, the Hunter, Harrier and the Hawk, all of which were widely exported and bought even by the United States in preference to home-grown aircraft. One man who was intimately involved with the development of all three was Hawker test pilot Duncan Simpson, long retired but keenly aware that working ourselves into a position where we have aircraft carriers with no aircraft is not a brilliant idea.

Duncan, latterly Hawker’s Chief Test Pilot, is not one to make political statements in public on defence matters but he clearly shares the bafflement of the Harrier Force at its demise. Tall and distinguished at 83, he speaks in quiet, hoarse tones - the legacy of a post-ejection operation for a broken neck - and he picks his words carefully when discussing defence cuts. “I thought that the Harrier would survive,” he says. “I went up to Wittering for the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Harrier Force; they’d just come back from Afghanistan and they are intensely proud of the job they had done there with the Mk 9, which is a very well-equipped and able aeroplane. I thought they were relatively safe because they are fully developed, at a fraction of the cost of some of the collaborative programs."

“When I went down to Bristol to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Rolls-Royce Bristol and a first of the Pegasus engine hovers, they were devastated at the news that the Harrier was to be discontinued.”

Ironically the Harrier was a response to a piece of civil service thinking every bit as questionable as the current one - the infamous 1957 White Paper which foresaw the end of the manned fighter. Duncan recalls: “Sir Sydney Camm (Hawker’s Chief Designer, responsible for aircraft as diverse as the Hart, the Hurricane and the Harrier), sat back in his chair and said, ’Look, this White Paper is doom to the industry if we’re not careful, and for the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy too because it doesn’t see a future for manned aircraft… we at Hawkers have got to do something fairly drastic.’ So he wrote Sir Stanley Hooker (Bristol Aero Engines Chief Engineer) a letter of which I still have a copy. Sydney didn’t write letters very often. It started off in the usual way:

“Dear Hooker. I hear you are looking at VSTOL. What are you doing? Come and see me.’

“Second paragraph: ‘I don’t want another flying test bed. I’m not having it.’

“Third paragraph: ‘I don’t like the Rolls-Royce Derby solution. Signed, S Camm.’ (Rolls-Royce was working on a fighter with eight lifting engines.)

“So Stanley Hooker went up to see him, and they got on well. Stanley was a great personality, and so was Sydney. Ralph Hooper of Hawkers was brought in and instructed to wrap an airframe around a vectored thrust engine and the aircraft was built and flown within 18 months - the P1127.”

The story of the development of the P1127 into the Kestrel and the Harrier has been well and often told, but the Ministry of Aviation soon took an interest in what Hawkers and Bristol were up to, eventually ordering two P1127s for research and four more for development. Significant support came from the Americans through the Mutual Weapons Development Programme. Five more prototypes were built between 1961 and 1964 and finally three nations, the USA, Britain and Germany, jointly ordered nine aircraft - by then named the Kestrel - for evaluation by a Tripartite Squadron, and Duncan Simpson was given the job of training the pilots. “The Kestrel was a
super platform because it was a fairly straightforward development of the P1127 prototypes - in fact the sixth prototype was virtually the same as the Kestrel in planform," he says. "The evaluation programme started on time and it finished on time, and the Americans thought so much of it that they took six aeroplanes back to the United States. The next milestone was the purchase by the US Marine Corps, who came across to fly it in 1968 after the Farnborough show. At the same time the RAF was selecting four pilots to form the Harrier Conversion Team. They flew five hours each on the aeroplane, covering everything the Harrier could do, then flew the aircraft up to Wittering and that was the start of the Royal Air Force Operational Conversion Unit. And it all came out of Sydney Camm’s determination that something drastic had to be done to save the manned fixed-wing fighter for the services. He had to cancel two Mach 2 projects, the P1121 prototype and the P1129, because he realised they wouldn't survive."

Duncan Simpson’s family were medical men for four generations, tramping the Scottish highland tracks with their bags and performing rudimentary surgery in remote crofts. His father Bertie Soutar Simpson was the first general surgeon to be appointed in Sutherland; today an air ambulance can deliver any sufferer in his vast beat to hospital in minutes. But there was a black sheep; Duncan’s maternal uncle Duncan Menzies had joined the Royal Air Force in the 1920s and later joined Faireys as chief test pilot at Ringway. He did the first flight of the Fulmar and saw it into service. To his young nephew’s mind this was better than cutting up crofters; in fact Duncan had thought of little else but aviation since his grandfather had taken him to see Alan Cobham’s Flying Circus at Tain near Inverness in 1934. But when his time came it was 1945 and the RAF had a surfeit of pilots, so young Duncan won a place at the de Havilland Aeronautical Technical School at Hatfield. What he learned there formed the cornerstone of his career as a test pilot. At de Havilland, you started at the beginning - Duncan’s first job was to build his own toolbox. He spent a year in the school workshops, some of it working on the Wright Flyer replica project for the Science Museum, for which he constructed wing ribs. “Three years later I was present when the finished product was handed over to the Museum,” he says. "It was the only occasion on which I met Sir Geoffrey.”

It was an extraordinary time to be at de Havilland; the company was producing and designing a vast range of aircraft, military and civil, piston and jet, and with the world’s first jet-powered airliner, the DH106 Comet, coming to the prototype stage. Duncan moved from the workshops into the Experimental Department, working on the tailless DH108, the Ghost Vampire and late developments of the Mosquito and the Hornet. He completed the four-year Aircraft Design Course, which led to an Associate Fellowship of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and won the prize for the best final year apprentice. As a de Havilland student he could have learned to fly at the subsidised rate of 30/- an hour (£1.50). "I was not going to waste my time doing that,” he says. "I wanted to be taught to fly by the RAF, which is the best way of doing it.” At the end of his apprenticeship the RAF duly sent him to No 6 Flying Training School at Tern Hill, and Duncan took to flying like a swallow. He learned the basics on the Percival Prentice then flew 100 hours on the Harvard before being selected for training as a fighter pilot. At Middleton St George he learned to fly the Meteor, then went to Stradishall to be taught how to fight in it. He was sent to 222 (Natal) Squadron flying the Meteor 8 at Leuchars. “It was a marvellous tour. We flew over the North Sea on patrols, high-altitude interceptions, low level through the Scottish mountains. I flew seven days a week - I used to fly targets for the Auxiliaries, fly the ATF cadets in Tiger Moths, anything to get flying. I flew 1,000 hours on that tour, most of them on Meteors.”

He suffered a bird strike which shattered the aircraft’s canopy and drove the bullet-proof windscreen back into the cockpit; he managed to land back at Leuchars, freezing cold and covered in fragments of herring gull but otherwise unharmed. Duncan was never sold on some of the RAF’s training requirements for the Meteor. “A lot of aircraft and pilots were being lost to accidents through questionable training procedures,” he says, “in particular during asymmetric training. To train people for emergencies at slow speeds on one engine in the Meteor was quite a demanding process. A lot of people came un stuck, but in fact they were very reliable engines and things rarely went wrong with them in the real world.

“Another thing was the absence of navigation aids. You had people in Scotland running into mountains because they didn’t know where they were. Here they were flying a high performance aeroplane, and our let-down if we lost our radio was to fly out over the North Sea, turn inbound and hope you turned the right way when you got to the coast. I tried very hard to improve things when I got to Hawkers. I got TACAN installed in the Harrier to update the first-generation
Duncan closes in close to the camera aircraft in the Harrier T2

inertial navigation system, but I had to battle the Air Ministry to do it.”

Duncan’s aim was to get onto the Air Fighting Development Squadron at RAF West Raynham, where new fighters were evaluated. After two years with 222 Squadron he saw his chance. “I told my Wing Commander at Leuchars that the aircraft which is going to succeed. The Hunter 9 and 10 probably became the best fighters of the late 50s and early 60s, and they could hold their own with anything.

“We were like a squadron with six different types of aircraft. It was a wonderful job, there’s no doubt about it.”

And then he left the RAF. “Neville Duke rang up one day in 1954 and said he urgently needed a test pilot at Hawkers, and the RAF didn’t want to release anyone who was on a permanent commission. So I took the job.”

Hawkers were busy. Duncan began production test flying on the Hunter, but gradually he became involved in development work. Two years into the job Duncan married his wife Pat and settled down to raise a family; later they moved into a rambling mansion near Guildford in which they still live.

In 1954 his world was populated by men whose names are near-mythical today. Sir Sydney Camm, the self-taught son of a carpenter, had to deal with government, and his aircraft engine by training, and he’s dead set on joining you’. Bird-Wilson sent for me and I got down to West Raynham in a snowstorm and saw this little man covered in medal ribbons sitting behind his desk. He told me that it was most irregular, and I’d have to go back to my squadron and see what happened. I was posted there within three weeks, and Bird-Wilson became a long-time friend, until he died.

“There were just eight pilots in the Air Fighting Development Squadron, and the attraction was flying new aeroplanes - the Hunter, the Swift, the F6E Sabre; it was the time of the introduction of the transonic fighter. We had the Swift Mk 1, the Hunter Mk 1 with the Avon and the Hunter Mk 2 with the Sapphire. We got the Venom, which I had worked on in the Aerodynamics Department at Hatfield, which was known as the ‘thin wing Vampire’ to try to get it flying at higher Mach numbers.

“When I was asked which aircraft I wanted to specialise in I had no hesitation in choosing the Hunter. It just looked right. I’d seen Neville Duke flying the P1067 prototype at Farnborough and I said to myself, that’s the aircraft which is going to succeed. The Hunter 9 and 10 probably became the best fighters of the late 50s and early 60s, and they could hold their own with anything.

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In 1954 his world was populated by men whose names are near-mythical today. Sir Sydney Camm, the self-taught son of a carpenter, had to deal with government, and it didn’t sit well with him. “He used to call it ‘the Misery of Defence’,” says Duncan. “He used to come down to sit with us in the pilots’ office at Dunsfold. He was always interested to know what our views were, and of course we used to go up and see him at Kingston.”

Initial test flying on the P1127 was done by Bill Bedford and Hugh Merewether, and Duncan was the third pilot to fly it. “I had listened a lot, and I’m a good watcher, and I transitioned onto the aircraft largely by listening to Hugh,” he says. “Out of my own experience I did the training for the Tripartite Squadron and wrote the syllabus for the RAF pilots on the Harrier in the days before there was a two-seater.”

The two-seat Harrier almost ended his career on his first flight in it. “Hugh was going to the 1969 Paris Air Show with the single-seater, and he asked me to come down from Wittering to continue the prototype testing. Eight minutes after takeoff I had just started a 450 kt flutter clearance run and I had a complete engine failure at 3,000 feet. I was 12 miles from Boscombe Down and turned towards it, raising the nose to reduce speed to 260 kt, which was the engine relight speed. I was halfway through my second attempted relight when I realised I wouldn’t make it to Boscombe, so I tried to put it on the bridge and fell the dregue deploy as I saw the sky between my feet. The aircraft landed with wheels and flaps down, but I wasn’t in it. It was full of fuel and caught fire. I was sitting in the ejector seat just above the firewall and was blown away from it by the wind. I landed 100 yards away in a certain amount of pain because I’d broken my neck on the canopy on the way out, but Boscombe had a helicopter and a doctor on scene within 20 minutes.”

A month later surgeons performed a bone graft on Duncan’s neck, requiring entry from the front. This affected his voice, which remains hoarse to this day. Two months after the incident he was out of hospital and five months later he’d regained his medical and was once again flying the Hunter. Within eight months he was back in the Harrier. The instrumentation and the photographic evidence from the crashed aircraft showed that Duncan had been faced with a complete fuel system failure. The knives on the ejector seat had failed to shatter the T2’s canopy, so Miniature Detonation Cord was quickly introduced to Harrier and other canopies. Duncan was told by the surgeons that the anterior bone graft had actually strengthened his neck so he didn’t really fear the possibility of another ejection - although luckily, he didn’t have to make one.

“There were one or two Hunter incidents which we were lucky to get away with,” he says, “but by and large it was a trouble-free flying career. I had one incident in 1962 when I was flying the last production Sea Fury. At 2,000 feet I pulled up into a loop, held the aircraft inverted at 5,000 feet and started a slow roll. To my horror the ailerons jammed and the slow rolls continued while going downhill. By 4,000 feet I was beginning to run out of ideas, but I remembered some stick jams with the Hunter’s Fairøy powered controls. We would apply more stick to increase the roll rate, upon which a pawl dropped into a slot and cleared the jam. Though it was hardly relevant in this case it was the only option left to me, and as I did this the jam cleared. I missed the South Downs by 500
Like the Harrier, the Hawk was begun with Company enterprise, rather than chasing a government specification. “We knew that the Gnat would not last more than about 10 years because it wasn’t ideal for training people to handle the big fighters,” Duncan says. “We thought about redesigning the Hunter with a side-by-side advanced training cockpit, but in the end we ended up building a new aeroplane, which was the P1182. Following Sir Sydney’s doctrine of not sitting back and waiting for the ‘Misery of Defence’, we started on it. We had all the people who developed the Hunter and the Harrier, and the ex-Folland people and we did it in record time.

“The Hawk was delivered to Boscombe Down two years after first flight, which was remarkable. It went to the Air Force up at Valley two months later. Here we are 36 years on and 24 of them on the line at Valley, training pilots, and the new Hawk going into service next year with the advanced weapons systems.

“With project pilots Andy Jones and Jim Hawkins I saw the Hawk off the drawing board, right the way through the design, manufacture, down to Dunsfold, then the first flight. We had 10 days to go before the Farnborough show and I took it there on its tenth flight. It was a sound design from the start, although we had to do some refinement work on the wing to improve the stalling characteristics, with vortex generators and fences, and leading edge splitters to provide buffet warning. We built four aeroplanes and we asked Boscombe to come and fly them with us, to shorten the time for clearance, and that was successful.

“The Hawk was classified as a subsonic advanced trainer, but we soon realised that it was going to go faster than was specified. We got to a 25° dive and it was up over Mach .9. I was talking to the Chief Designer and said, by the way, next flight we could be going transonic. There was a loud silence on the other end of the telephone. Then he said, ‘But we have no clearance’. To which I replied, ‘Well, get it, and quickly.’ In the end it went supersonic rather easily and we achieved Mach 1.18. It’s become a student exercise to go supersonic now, although it’s academic. Same with the Hunter - transonic, but very seldom used.”

Duncan became Hawkers’ Chief Test Pilot in 1970 and joined the local Board. He says: “At Hawkers the Chief Test Pilot - and this goes back to Neville Duke, and George Bulman, who was a director of the Company during the war years - always had direct access to the Chairman, the Managing Director, and the General Manager.”

Duncan retired from test flying at 50 and was made responsible at Hawkers for looking after the Hawk and the Harrier in service. Then he was offered the job of Deputy Director of the Society of British Aerospace Companies, which he did for 15 years while continuing to fly aircraft like the Lysander and the Hurricane for the Strathallan Collection. Honours have come his way; the Queens Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air, awarded following the Harrier T2 ejection, the OBE in 1973, GAPAN’s Derry and Richards Medal, the Royal Aeronautical Society’s Alston medal, he is a Fellow of the RAeS, of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots and of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, Chairman of the Historic Aircraft Association, President of the de Havilland Technical School Association, and he was Master of the Guild in 2002.

Does the Harrier story offer any clues as to how we might handle the current predicament? We live in a very different world, one in which no corporation could embark on a costly and risky private venture in the defence field. We have no Camm, and we have no Hooker. Hawker’s Kingston factory is now a housing estate. Weybridge is a housing estate, Hatfield is a housing estate, Dunsfold is where they film Top Gear. Says Duncan: “It’s beyond me to comment on how we’ve managed to arrive where we are, but having grown up in the industry I feel very strongly about it. The Hawk was the last project done at Kingston, and it was delivered on cost and on time. There are certain hard-core bits of British industry which continue to go right, and the fact that the Hawk and the Harrier are still in service after 40 years is testimony to that.”

Celebrating one million Hawk hours at Valley
A NEW AVIATION HERO
STEVE NOUJAIM’S CAPE CHALLENGE:
A SUCCESSFUL MISSION TO BREAK ALEX HENSHAW’S 71 YEAR OLD LONDON – CAPE TOWN – LONDON RECORD

Background
Alex Henshaw was a Golden Age Record Breaker. In 1938 he won the Kings Cup Air Race flying a highly modified Percival Mew Gull, setting the fastest ever time. After the race he decided to concentrate on the World Solo Record from London to Capetown and back again.

In February 1939 he set off in the specially prepared Mew Gull on what still stands today as one of the greatest flights of all time, navigating by stopwatch and compass, and operating a demanding aeroplane, he flew into unknown and unprepared strips. Despite the almost insurmountable difficulties Alex smashed the existing records so convincingly that they have stood for over 70 years.

Henshaw endured incredible physical discomfort because of the cramped cockpit and because of sickness and fatigue. The flight stands as a testament to the halcyon days of British Sport Aviation.

Following his amazing achievement Alex Henshaw laid down a challenge: for someone to fly from London to Capetown and back in less time than he did it, in a 200hp single-engine propeller driven aircraft, solo, and by whatever means, a challenge that has motivated and inspired Steve Noujaim, an Upper Freeman of the Guild, since the 1980s and which, since the Millennium, drove his determination to have an attempt at the record.

The Years of Preparation
It was in 2001 that Steve and his wife, Anna, decided to build an aeroplane to attempt the challenge flight. Together, they built an RV7, registration G-11XF (the XF to match the registration of Alex Henshaw’s Mew Gull aircraft), which, on completion, Steve appropriately named ‘Anna’. It took 8 years, and thousands of hours of long, hard toil, winter and summer, to finally complete the build and start the detailed preparation for the record attempt.

Steve himself has had a very distinguished career in aviation and has in excess of 10,000 flying hours and over 40 different types in his log book. He was a fighter pilot in the RAF for 16 years, predominantly flying the Phantom. Currently an Airbus A340 Captain with Virgin, he is also a well known pilot in general aviation and at air displays. Aircraft that he has flown include the Spitfire, P51 Mustang, Lightning, Phantom, Hawk and through to larger aircraft such as the Airbus A340 and Boeing 747.

In his preparation for the record breaking attempt Steve met and corresponded with Alex Henshaw who gave full support to Steve’s plans. Unfortunately, Alex died, aged 94, in 2007 with his record intact at that stage; he would have been proud to see the attempts on his record that were to follow; first, in 2009, by Captain ‘Chalkie’ Stobbart who, although the record was never ratified as a new London - Capetown - London record because it was flown in the opposite direction (it was ratified as new world record for Capetown - London - Capetown), nevertheless, broke Alex’s round trip time of 4 days 10 hours and 16 minutes by almost 19 hours (with a time of 3 days 15 hours 17 minutes). Chalkie’s single leg times were, however, ratified as new world records; he was acclaimed by the Guild with the award of the Masters Medal. Alex’s round trip record was still there to be broken but Steve’s challenge had now become even greater.

His preparation for the flight was meticulous throughout, from the preparation of the aircraft, the flight planning, the liaison with the many authorities, putting a team together to help manage the attempt to the obtaining and involvement of sponsors; no stone was left unturned and, the mark of a true professional, he was not going to cut corners with his preparation. Steve had originally hoped to make his attempt at the record during the 70th anniversary year but the preparation was not complete (new long range fuel tanks had to be fitted) and the attempt was ultimately delayed from Oct 09 to Apr 10 and then to Sep 10. On 7 Jul 10, in his final preparation for the flight, Steve unofficially broke the Land’s End to John O’Groats speed record for his class, flying the route in 2 hours, 39 minutes and 38 seconds; he and his aircraft were now ready, his time had come.

The Flight
Steve took off from Southend at dawn on 31 Aug on the southbound leg of his record attempt and with only two en route stops - at Tamanrasset in Southern Algeria and Brazzaville in Congo - Steve flew 3 legs of 10 hours, beating Alex Henshaw’s time by 4 hours and 17 minutes and Chalkie Stobbart’s time by 1 hour and 9 minutes. Resting in Capetown for only 11 hours and 30 minutes, he flew the return journey in 36 hours and 34 minutes, beating Henshaw by 3 hours and 2 minutes and Stobbart by just 1 minute. His crowning achievement, the round trip London - Capetown - London, set a new world record of 3 days, 11 hours and 16 minutes, beating Henshaw’s challenge by 23 hours and Stobbart’s 2009 time by 4 hours and 1 minute, a truly remarkable achievement.

However, the record is but one aspect, what it does not show are the real experiences from such a flight.

I was at Southend on the afternoon of 3 Sep 10 to welcome Steve back to the UK and, together with many other supporters, in particular from the Air Squadron, to acclaim him as a new entrant into the folklore of aviation. I will never forget his arrival, with a flying acknowledgement to those present and the very healthy sound of the engine on his RV7. He stood up in the cockpit, looking a lot fresher than I expected, and his first comment (that I recall) to the assembled crowd was ‘I have never been so (blank) scared in my life’. Further dialogue gave an indication of what he meant: the traumatic experiences and dangers faced: the most violent storms over Central Africa and bad weather, long dark nights, no radio contact with anyone for hours on end, flying over deserts, the constant thoughts about what would happen if the engine quit, the sleep deprivation. This was indeed a remarkable achievement, and it is finally worth adding that, but for frustrating delays over North Africa, Spain and France, caused by Air Traffic Control, he would have broken both the round trip and Northbound Leg records by far greater margins Well done, Steve, and congratulations on the award of The Masters Medal.
A n autumnal morning in mid September found 41 GAPAN Members Holoday to Wiltshire ready for a day at MOD Boscombe Down at the invitation of Gp Capt Mike Quigley, Air Warfare Centre Chief Engineer, and courtesy of the Site Operators Qinetiq and the senior military officers based there. Our official host for the day was Upper Frenza, Mario Carretta OBE RN, Officer i/c the Rotary Wing Test and Evaluation Squadron (RWTES), who had been obliged to delegate our welcome briefing to Cdr Jerry Boddington RN, Cdr Flying for the RWTES, on account of a last minute call to the US for some urgent trials flying to check out a new rotor blade design which is likely to improve the hot and high payload of the Sea King Mk 4 from 1 passenger to 12. Such is the importance of keeping aware of every opportunity to enhance the capability of in-service military aircraft being press to perform beyond what the MOD originally envisaged.

Proceedings got under way with an excellent briefing by Bob Burrows of QinetiQ on the Long Term Partnering Agreement (LTPA) under which many of the Test and Evaluation activities formerly carried out under the auspices of DERA have been transferred to its successor Qinetiq in what was portrayed as a win-win for both Qinetiq and MOD. It turned out that Bob Burrows was formerly Commanding Officer of 815 Squadron RN in the days when Cdr Boddington was a relatively new arrival. The day continued to be dominated by Navy fliers - not an AAC pilot in sight (although I had realised from a personal visit earlier in the year that they do make up an important part of the flying team) and just one encounter with the RAF element of the tri-service set up.

Ownership of everything at Boscombe Down and indeed many other properties also within the scope of the LTPA - remains with the MOD, who retain primacy for use of all the facilities at all sites leaving Qinetiq the opportunity to sell spare capacity to outside customers. The LTPA is now in the eighth year of its 25 year (renewable) term and approaching its second quinquennial formal review. With a price tag of £5.61bn over the full 25 years, it’s clearly a major initiative in securing military test and evaluation (T & E) on a secure footing. We were assured that, as well as built in “continuous improvement in efficiency” clauses, opportunities for profit by Qinetiq were proportional to the risk involved in delivering performance on a fixed price basis with investment in facility renewal catered for. Boscombe Down’s main runway, which we were told was amongst the longest and the widest in the UK, had apparently just been resurfaced. There was no obvious evidence of extravagance - one of the two site minibuses provided for our transport was a fairly new one but the other was very obviously not! Next we had a brief preview of the plan for the rest of the day from Cdr Boddington, who also reminded us of the balance between actual test flying and the concomitant paperwork that the prevailing ratio was about 1:200. We learned that the focus of 'Test and Evaluation' was moving towards ‘Evaluation’ - effectively the work which typically comes along as the capability of in-service aircraft types is progressively enhanced, both in operational role and weapons systems. We were also told of the recent move of fast jet T & E north to Cottesmore, which had reduced the base noise levels somewhat.

This overview was followed by Lt Cdr Mark Swindells, a three year veteran of the RWTES currently serving as Test Pilot, who gave us an entertaining presentation on the principles and (rotary) practice of T & E, including a fascinating overview - illustrated with video - of how the operational envelope for an on-ship helicopter is established by RWTES, in this case a Merlin operating from Type 45 destroyer. This involved carrying out 600 deck landings, including at night and in extremely bad weather, in the space of three weeks. We also learned that when offered the choice of the US or France to do his Test Pilot training, he’d opted for the additional challenge of French naval aviation (as a French! He explained the civil/military teamwork involved in using Qinetiq’s ‘Trials Officers’ to oversee and support projects and mentioned the imminent completion of the Chinnok Mark 3 programme and its analogue reversion ‘Avionic Upgrade’ programme - the best way to get these helicopters into the theatre quickly after a well publicised procurement debacle dating back many years. Other current projects included Merlin capability enhancement, new Lynx armament for both the Army and Navy and the Sea King ASW upgrade.

Then, after brief mention of the imminent arrival of UAVs (aka UASs or RPVs) at Boscombe and a short discussion on the consequent additions to the local tally of designated Danger Areas to facilitate their transit to and from the Salisbury Plain Training Area, it was off to see some of the impressive ground evaluation facilities on site - all operated by civilians, albeit a workforce which clearly included many ex-military personnel. Next we split into two groups and visited in turn the Radio Frequency Generator (RFG) compound and the NVG evaluation building. At the RFG compound, we were just able to complete our briefing before the various transmitters (HF, MF, VHF and UHF covering the full range from 5 Mhz to 348 Ghz with four units) were activated for a test sequence on an already-positioned helicopter. The arrival of the electronic age in both weaponry and aircraft control systems has clearly brought an ever more complex need for validation. At the NVG building, we were given a demonstration of how night light levels could be precisely controlled to allow evaluation of NVGs for various applications. We were all able to try the current NVG kit out and those of us who had used earlier models in the past were already suitably impressed at their latest capability before being advised that an even better model was ‘just around the corner’. An excellent lunch in the Mess was followed by two more visits in sub groups. After a briefing from Maj Mark Robinson, the web master, we were able to closely inspect a selection of ‘their’ helicopters in the hangar including the Merlin and the Lynx. At the ‘Environmental Chamber’, we were told that it had been a fixed facility since 1992, before which each test had involved building around the test object! We learned that the main ‘room’ (hangar-sized) could be controlled to +/−70°C and inside we could see a cold-soak test in progress on a large civilian truck at what we think we were told was -56°C, a reminder that commercial use of all these specialized facilities can be offered by Qinetiq once MOD requirements have been met. In fact the RFG Compound activation which we had witnessed earlier was also ‘commercial’ - a visiting Westland Aircraft test crew had boarded their secured helicopter to carry out several hours of ground systems-resilience testing.

Next, we were briefed on the activities of the Heavy Aircraft Test Squadron (HATS) by Sqn Ldr Colin Froule who brought back memories for some with references to their still-in-service BAC One Eleven and Avro Andover and described how Squadron pilots participate in evaluation of current in-service types like the Tristar for extended capability and envelope extension as well as ensuring that they routinely have pilots current on all heavy types - including Air tanker’s Airbus A330-200s in their FSTA role as introduction teams. As with the rotary team, de-risking projects relating to both weaponry and aircraft capability figured heavily, the squadron having a strong interest in electronic warfare (both offensive and defensive).

Finally it was off to the iconic ETPS for a full brief by Lt Cdr Tim Eldridge RN, currently serving as the Senior Tutor (Rotary Wing). We were reminded that it is one of only four such establishments anywhere worldwide - the others are at Istres, Edwards AFB (USA) and Patuxent River (USN). The demanding selection process and the extremely intensive 6 days-a-week, 11-month course were stressed and we learnt that you or your employer needs to find around £700K for the privilege. The School - which it seems has kept the name ETPS as an unbreakable trading identity despite the potential connotations of ‘Empire’ in the modern world - has an impressive array of aircraft which students may use. They include Augusta 109, Harford, Hawk and Alphajet and many others leased in as required, such as Eurocopter, PZL and many others. Aircraft included some of the most advanced types like the Extra 300. It was of course explained to us that training to test was no more dominated by the time spent actually flying than in the T & E work which may follow. Requirements for successful graduation from each course include a ‘Preview Stage’ in which each student gets 10 hours flying on an aircraft type and then, following a 10 day report writing interval which should produce a 250 page / 50,000 word Report, is expected to deliver a half hour presentation based on it followed by a further half hour of questions. These days, only about 30% of ‘customers’ for each course come from the UK military, the rest are from all over the world.

And that brought us to the end of a full and fascinating day. The Leader of our Party, and the only one of us who had himself qualified as a test pilot, the multi-talented Professor Mike Bagshaw, thanked our hosts and it was time to deposit our security passes in the box at the compound gate and set off home. Unfortunately no pictures were taken - Qinetiq operate a blanket ban on cameras - but if you didn’t manage to get on this visit, it seems quite possible that there will be another one before too long which might allow you to see it all for yourself!
Flying Scholarships for the Disabled, my story

STEVE MITCHELL

As a general rule I do not do “Political Correctness”. Whichever terms you choose, be they physically challenged or ‘has mobility issues’; once the dressing has been taken away, I am disabled like it or lump it!

My life had been very full and active; physicality had never been an issue, until my motorcycle accident in 2005. From that very moment, my life went “on hold.” All I had taken for granted, some quirk of fate had gone, literally overnight! My job, my lifestyle; everything was now totally different. Almost all movement, including the very simplest of tasks, now required twice the effort and twice the concentration. I sank into a deep depression!

Tablets and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy returned a “kind of” normality to the daily routine and I was now outside the loop of my friends and my interests. I questioned which was worse being dead or being left alive in this state?

Looking for alternatives I began to concentrate my interest on a hobby I had done as a child. That of building and flying model aircraft. One of the nurses my wife works with has a son Lee Pirie, who has been disabled from birth. I had met him on a couple of occasions, socially, but as he was considerably younger than me, we had only begun an acquaintance. Through some quirk of fate he heard I had gone back into aero modelling. He too had only begun an acquaintance. Through

Within a very short period of time, possibly only a couple of days, Sue Whitby was back in touch saying I had passed my tests and been chosen for a flying scholarship. I was “over the moon.” Lee had been chosen for one as well.

A morning was arranged at RAF Fairford, to allow the successful students to meet their flying instructors. There were a number of tables laid out with the location of the flying school and the names of the students attending them. I saw a gent speaking to Sue at a table marked Filton Airport. This guy must be my tutor I thought: not at all what I had imagined! On arrival at the table I was introduced to a man I now know to be John Griffin. It transpired he is the Chief Flying Instructor (CFI) for the Bristol Aero Club based at Filton airport. Gosh! I thought. They’ve really brought out the big guns for me! I felt quite honoured! The conversation opened and we immediately found we had an interest in the Royal Air Force and a slightly jaundiced sense of humour in common. The day could only go on from there.

A cup of tea made me feel the whole experience! Good indeed!

On the morning of Tuesday 1st June 2010 and away down to Bristol I went. Just for a change, the sat-nav worked well and I soon found the B&B where I was to stay for my month-long training. Sue Whitby and FSD had done a fabulous job in finding the digs as they were absolutely superb. I was billeted with a fellow student Colin in what was, to all intents and purposes, a self contained flat with 2 en-suite bedrooms and a dining/studying area. How brilliant! The owners of the B&B Pauline and Mike together with their staff were as friendly and personable as it is possible to be. Nothing was too much effort for them.

The following morning Colin and I drove the mile or so to the Airport where The Bristol Aero Club is based. John’s personality was what I came to know well; his usual, jovial, warm and friendly self immediately making us feel right at home.

The Bristol Aero Club is based at Filton airport. The morning of Tuesday 1st June 2010 truly vanished!

A cup of tea made me feel the whole experience was going from strength to strength. After introductions John told us the club owned 2 Piper Warrior 2’s and that he had chosen the one with the larger engine as it would benefit us more. That morning we both had our first flight; essentially passengers as we scoped around the local area of the Severn Estuary and slightly up into Wales. A lovely experience which made life feel Very Good indeed!

The John Griffin I came to know is a very mild mannered man and when speaking about his exploits and own qualifications he is almost humble. Make no mistake though, he certainly knows his own mind and his massive wealth of experience shines out of him like a beacon! At no time did I ever see him come close to losing his temper even though my ineptitude must have stretched every sinew of his patience. He always maintained a calm, collected and reassuring presence, even when the aeroplane was being made to do things that it was probably not designed to do! Everyone I came into contact with from the club was friendly and helpful. At no time did I appear to be looked down upon
or made to feel like an outsider. John said that being in the world of aviation is a great leveller. No matter what experience, degree of wealth or ability anyone holds, the interest in aviation is all that matters. Thus far, I have found that to be very true.

John also has his own beliefs when it comes to his teaching. On the second day he taxied out onto the runway, to the point where the take-off run begins. Without fuss or preamble John simply said “You have control….. come on, what are we waiting for?” Throttle hard forward, bit of right rudder to offset the engine torque and the speed steadily increased. “Rotate about 80°” I could not believe what I was hearing and moreover, what I was doing. John had been so calm and matter of fact with his instructions; that without question, I was doing exactly what I had been told to do. Before I knew it, the aircraft had left the ground and was climbing eagerly into the sky, blissfully unaware of the buffoon ground and was climbing eagerly into the sky, blissfully unaware of the buffoon 

ground and was climbing eagerly into the sky, blissfully unaware of the buffoon. As the adrenalin and endorphins drained away, it felt as though they were taking with them all my bones; leaving behind nothing but a jellified mass. Conversation seemed difficult and incoherent but the joy and relief I felt was beyond comprehension.

What I consider to be an epic journey began when I first spoke to Sue Whitby on the telephone. The middle section comprised of meeting a thoroughly wonderful group of people who’s selfless, compassionate and caring ways rekindled my faith in humanity. My journey concluded when I landed, having completed my first solo flight.

“THANK YOU FSD AND THANK YOU TO ALL THE KIND PEOPLE IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO MEET”

Guild Visit to RAF Northolt

PAST MASTER ATHUR THORNING

A party of 24 Guild members reported promptly at 09.00 hours at the Guardroom for this comprehensive tour of RAF Northolt, organised by Assistant Squadron Leader Chris Ford. The first element of the programme was a briefing by the Station Commander, Group Captain Tom Barrett OBE ADC MA RAF. Group Captain Barrett proudly described the many units now resident at Northolt, several having been moved from other RAF and MoD sites now closed; there are many new buildings within the perimeter of the base to house these organisations. He described it as ‘an upbeat, very modern station’ living up to its motto ‘Ready to Carry or to Fight’. The mission is: ‘To provide a strategic military airbase from which to conduct and sustain communications fleet operations and wider UK defence missions.’

RAF Northolt, which is in the suburbs of West London about 5 miles north of Heathrow, was opened in 1915 and is the PPL was soon laid to rest and my realisation of what had been said became complete. I found this person to be an absolute treasure! My first visit to Filton filled me with emotions from fear, through trepidation to absolute awe. It was a truly magnificent experience and in truth one which I shall take to my grave for all manner of reasons. By the time of my second visit to Filton, my fears had all gone. I had only one goal. “TO GO SOLO.” To that end, I worked at both my study and the flying. I passed my Air Law Exam with a mark of 83%. The 4th day came and we were flying circuits. I called finals to the control tower for another “touch and go”. I was acknowledged and given clearance. As we touched down John said “I have control” and asked for permission to exit the runway at taxiway C. We did just that. I immediately thought “Oh heck what have I done now?” John was given clearance to continue on taxiway C and not to Apron 2 where we usually left the aircraft. This was all getting very odd! As we pulled up on taxiway C near the control tower John unbuckled his harness and began getting ready to leave the aeroplane.

As he was doing so he just happened to mention, “I think you are ready for your first solo. Just do exactly what you have been doing and you will be okay.”

AND WITH THAT, HE WAS GONE!!!

Well I couldn’t back out now! I remembered a phrase used on a public information programme during the Second World War, “Keep Calm and Carry On” so that is what I did. I flew my first solo and landed the aeroplane in a manner not to feel embarrassed about. As I taxied to exit the runway I was congratulated by the staff in the Control Tower. I felt a hundred feet tall. I returned to Apron 2 where John was waiting for me. I stopped the engine; he came over and snapped a photograph of the now exhausted but jubilant figure at the controls.

As the adrenalin and endorphins drained away, it felt as though they were taking with them all my bones; leaving behind nothing but a jellified mass. Conversation seemed difficult and incoherent but the joy and relief I felt was beyond comprehension.

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RAF’s longest continually operational airbase. It is also the last operational Battle of Britain station. Post World War Two the aerodrome served for a time as London’s Airport. Group Captain Barrett went on to list the numerous units on the base, some of which we were to visit during the day: 32 (The Royal) Squadron, 600(City of London) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force, The Queen’s Colour Squadron, The British Forces Post Office (BFPO), No 1 Aeronautical Information Documents Unit
(AIDU), including the Naval Aeronautical Information Unit, the Service Prosecuting Authority, 621 Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Regiment of the Royal Logistics Corps, the Military Aviation Authority, The Air Historical Branch, The MoD Police HQ and, last but not least with an eye to future volunteers, the HQ for London and the South East Region of the Air Training Corps. Approximately 2,000 people work at Northolt of whom over 1,000 are serving RAF personnel. Finally, Group Captain Barrett recommended our visit to the historic building which once contained the Z Sector, 11 Group, control room in the Battle of Britain, now under restoration and a proud part of Northolt history.

Our first stop was to witness a demonstration by 621 EOD, ably explained by Major Bill Stables and Sgt Smith. A remotely controlled robot vehicle, tracked but known as ‘the wheelbarrow’, was offloaded from a well equipped EOD truck - it then sped off to investigate a suspicious car (which had already been greatly distressed in previous training episodes), forced open the car boot and made safe a ‘bomb’ therein. It is reassuring to know that such equipment, and the expertise which goes with it, is available for the safety of the public. The Squadron also deals with a wide variety of unexploded ordnance of varying age and origins.

We then moved to that most valuable unit for all serving personnel, the BFPO. The CO of BFPO, Brigadier Beattie, explained that BFPO moved from its previous home at Mill Hill three years ago and the opportunity was taken to provide a purpose built facility incorporating as much automation as possible with consequent reduction in staffing numbers. Office supervisor, Andy Wright, then took us on a brief tour - he stressed the close links with the Royal Mail and we saw the carousel which sorts parcels (many from internet suppliers these days) and the high speed letter sorting machines. But there is still some manual intervention required. All items are X-Rayed and can be tracked and traced.

Next stop was 32 (The Royal) Squadron where we were welcomed by Squadron Leader Andy Missen, flight commander and acting CO while his boss was on a course - this was something of a family occasion since his mother, Guild Member Janet Missen, was on the visit. Flight Lieutenant Luke Vardy, a co-pilot on the HS125 fleet, gave a briefing on the squadron. 32 Squadron has a history dating from 1916 and flew Hurricanes in the Battle of Britain, albeit with heavy losses, moving on to Spitfires in the Mediterranean theatre and operating Canberra bombers post war. In 1995 it merged with The Queen’s Flight. The principal role now is operational combat support, consisting mainly of transport for senior commanders and sometimes for essential spares - at least two aircraft are usually based in the Gulf. It also has a VIP transport role but this is secondary to operational requirements.

32 Squadron is divided into three flights and we were privileged to visit the hangars and inspect the aircraft at close quarters. ‘A’ Flight operates 2 Bae 146 aircraft, each crewed by two pilots, two stewards and one ground engineer. ‘B’ Flight has three Augusta Westland 109 helicopters, with a single pilot and up to six passengers. ‘C’ Flight has six HS125-700, each crewed by two pilots and a steward and carrying up to seven passengers. These are venerable aircraft but some have been upgraded to the latest in glass cockpit technology. One of the 125s has been named ‘Queen Alexandra’ in honour of the 125th anniversary of the Soldiers, Sailors and Air Forces Association (SSAFA). The fixed wing aircraft are equipped with LAIRCM - Large Aircraft Infra-Red Countermeasures - which offer some protection against heat seeking missiles by aiming a laser at the missile seeker. Servicing is provided by SERCO (for fixed wing) and Agusta Westland.

Then came lunch in the historic 1928-era
Officers Mess followed by another bus ride, this time to No1 AIDU. The provision of charts and associated aeronautical information was put on an organised basis (from ad hoc origins) in 1949 and 1 AIDU was formed in 1953. Squadron Leader Nick Benson provided a short presentation on the unit, which has 86 RAF personnel, including 74 Air Cartographers, and 55 civilian staff. The output is in paper or, increasingly, digital form. Production of en route charts and approach procedures form much of the work, as well as safeguarding studies for MoD airfields. No 1 AIDU do not produce charts for the whole world, concentrating on the areas most important for UK operations, but worldwide information is available from a variety of sources.

This was followed by a move to a briefing on the recently formed Military Aviation Authority (MAA) by Air Commodore Tony Barmby, Head of the Operations Group of MAA. The MAA also has a Technical Group and a Military Accident Investigation Branch. The MAA has been formed in the light of the Nimrod Crash Review by Charles Haddon-Cave QC which was critical of the leadership across the MoD and its commitment to safety and airworthiness. Accordingly the MAA is tasked to set up a world-class safety regulatory process, with separate, independent lines of reporting and the aim of developing a safety conscious approach to regulations. Many ‘work-streams’ have been identified as the way to implement this initiative. Of particular note is the establishment of ‘Duty Holders’ - senior personnel who bear legal responsibility for the safe and airworthy operation of aircraft.

We then had a briefing by John Craig of the UK Airprox Board (UKAB), on which GAPAN has long had a presence. The role of UKAB is to establish the facts relating to close aerial encounters (near misses) and determine the causes but not to apportion blame. The incidents may be reported by pilots or air traffic controllers, but not the general public. Incidents are classified as representing ‘actual risk of collision’, ‘safety not assured’ or ‘no risk’. Where improvements to training or procedures can be recommended these are taken up with the appropriate authorities.

Our final visit of this long day was perhaps the most fascinating - the relatively inconspicuous ‘Building 27’, long in decay, was once very important to the air defence of the country, having housed the Control Room for Z Sector of 11 Group, directing the Northolt Squadrons in the Battle of Britain and also aircraft from Hendon. A dedicated team led by Squadron Leader Mike Greene, Mr Phil Dawe and Mr Dave Thomas are busy restoring it, as accurately as possible, to its historic condition; importantly this is in effect a self-funded venture and it is noticeable that the Station generates the monies required by various means including Photo-shoots (where interested aircraft enthusiasts - ‘spotters’ - give donations), filming, and also from generous donations including colleagues from other Worshipful Companies. The aim is to have the work finished by 2015, the 100th anniversary of RAF Northolt. Recently, the building was named the ‘Sir Keith Park Building’. Sir Keith Park, a New Zealander, was the Commander of 11 Group defending the southeast corner of England in the epic battle - it was recently dedicated by AVM G B Lintott ONZM, FRAeS, Chief of the Air Force, RNZAF. Interestingly the Station Commander also has the Bunker under his command; this crucial element of the Battle of Britain is also available for visits which could be included as future GAPAN visit. Again monies for this venture are gained through donations through the Friends of the Bunker whose Patron is HRH Prince Michael of Kent and President Air Chief Marshal Dalton, current Chief of the Air Staff. The Station Commander and his team are keenly aware that these two iconic elements of the Battle of Britain Chain of Command were effectively the crucible of Battle, as well as the skies over the South-East of England.

The Guild is indebted to Chris Ford for his very hard work putting this visit together and patiently shepherding us around over a long day.

Past Master Arthur Thorning surveys the scene in 32 Squadron’s hangar
THE MAGIC OF THE GUILD
The reasons why all private pilots should seek the strength and support of GAPAN

DAN TYE
REPRODUCED FROM PILOT MAGAZINE WITH KIND PERMISSION.

“So is it fair to say that the Guild is a bit like Hogwarts for pilots?” I ask Steve Bridgewater as we dart between busy London workers in our dinner jackets. We’re on our way to the Guildhall, for GAPAN’s annual Trophies and Awards Banquet. As a newbie to a Guild event I can’t help but feel completely unprepared.

Hogwarts, of course, is the fictional name of the school of wizards in the Harry Potter books, and as Steve describes what a Freeman is, how today they clothed the new Liverymen and who the current Master of the Guild is, it leaves me with a wizard-like feeling of protocol and mysticism…and complete bewilderment too. This is probably the very reason why so many pilots don’t join GAPAN; they simply don’t understand how it works or what membership entails. Or, more likely, they’re put off by a perceived ‘pomp and circumstance’ or an assumed ‘elitist’ attitude. If that’s you, then I hope this re-collection of my attendance at October’s banquet may excite you. If you brush your assumptions aside (with a wizard’s wand perhaps) then you too could become part of the biggest group of like-minded pilots you’re likely to ever meet.

It’s by sheer coincidence that I’ve met up with Steve, who has been a member of the Guild for three years. Without him and his narrative in my ear as the evening progressed, I wouldn’t have truly understood the way things work. We passed though the main entrance of the Guildhall, a grand stone structure and one of the few buildings to survive the great fire of London. Inside it has all the feel and majesty of a large castle; an ideal venue for the Guild’s dinner. The Great Hall, where we will dine, is the third largest in England where royalty and state visitors have been entertained down the centuries. The next day I read his biography. Turns out he built a Lancair over an eight year period in his spare time. Before becoming the Master of the Guild he was the Director General of the RAF Museum’s three sites for 22 years. I could go on listing all the great work he has done for aviation but one thing becomes clear; all members of the Guild have given so much of their lives to aviation in one form or another.

I move on further into the reception room, a sea of pilots with their wives, husbands, girlfriends, boyfriends, families and friends. Here we’re free to mooch around whilst Tom spent a day at Brize Norton watching Typhoon jets do air-to-air refueling from a VC10. Both belong to the Gapan Young Members (GYM) which is a way of joining the Guild if you are under 35. Young members are treated as Associate members and pay only £37 per year until they are 35-years-old. Kat Hodge, a 34-year-old Boeing 757 pilot is currently the Chairman. She did her PPL at East Midlands Flying School in 1999 thanks to a GAPAN PPL Scholarship which was sponsored by Breitling. She couldn’t attend the dinner but I chased her up by telephone.

I told her how I was surprised by just how many young pilots were looked after by the Guild and she said that it’s what the Guild does best. “The networking possibilities and the opportunity to do new types of flying are unrivalled,” she said. “We’re talking about real money-can’t-buy experiences. As well as all the trips, there’s always someone who works in the area you’re interested in that you can talk to,” she explains. “It means you can find out what flying careers are truly like and keep ahead of the latest developments and rumours. Also, if you have medical problems, the Guild has several Honorary Medical Advisers who can give you confidential advice on how to move forward.”

Back to the dinner and Sebastian is looking resplendent in a long blue fur-trimmed robe signifying that he has gone from being a Freeman to a Liveryman. I congratulate him but at the time not really knowing what Liveryman status means. It’s only after doing some personal research after the dinner that I fully understand the significance. In short, GAPAN is one of many Livery Companies, which had their origins in this country before 1066. These were similar to the fraternities and mysteries (from the Latin “misterium” meaning “professional skill”) that flourished throughout Europe. These ‘Guilds’ originally controlled the provision of services and trading of goods within the City, but it’s actually the welfare of its members, both materially and spiritually, which has always been the prime concern. It’s clear that this continues to this day. In
medieval times, “livery” meant the the clothing, food and drink provided to officers and retainers of great households. Eventually, the term came to represent clothing and badges, symbols of privilege, which distinguished a member of one Guild from another, hence the guilds became known as “Livery Companies”. On ceremonial occasions today in the City, the Guild members on parade still wear their Company Livery and this is why, at the dinner, Sebastian and others were wearing theirs.

We are called through for dinner and the main dining hall is awe-inspiring. Statuettes of past leaders such as Wellington and Nelson look down over the many tables and the coats of arms of the various Liverymen hang up high on the walls. I’m seated next to Celia Turner, GAPAN’S PR Officer and Captain James Liebers, who today became a Master Air Pilot. Opposite me though is another Captain and his wife, except he’s better known for his flying in the Red Bull Air Race series; Paul Bonhomme. He is joined by his wife Laura, who now takes care of the day to day running of the Old Flying Machine Company at Duxford.

The wine starts flowing and dinner itself was a Crayfish and Watercress Terrine to start followed by a Fillet of Beef Wellington and then a Pavlova of Tropical Fairtrade Fruits for dessert. Music was played throughout by The Brass Quintet of the Band of the Honourable Artillery Company. A fun part of the dinner was the ‘Ceremony of the Loving Cup’ which involves everyone taking it in turns to lift the lid in turns to stand as a group of three. One lifts the lid of the cup, one drinks the wine and one guards the drinker’s back; a fun tradition.

Most importantly, the prime reason for the banquet is for presenting the Guild’s Trophies and Awards. For half an hour, the stories of why these individuals have received them were narrated to the 600 diners in the hall. Each and every story made the listener pause, and appropriate that we should be dining under a statuette of Nelson. As he said in his speech, “It is said that there are no longer any more heroes. Well, after hearing the tales tonight, it’s clear, for example, why Paul Bonhomme was presented with the ‘Guild Sword of Honour’.

Many of the other pilots, like Paul, were equally modest about their achievements. After the awards, Dr Fopp, the Master, made his speech where he focused on two private pilots, Roddy Blois and Bill Hall who were awarded Master Air Pilot’s and Navigator’s Certificates. Rarely do private pilots get them because a great deal of research is required to confirm the type of flying and hours necessary to qualify. Dr Fopp said, “In these cases both are private pilots who have done extraordinary things. Roddy is a precision pilot and Bill is an exceptional pilot and navigator. Both have flown around the world a few times and both have flown difficult and long flights - always in single engined light aircraft.”

His speech was followed by The Lord Mayor, Nick Anstee, making his, who pointed out that it was also Trafalgar night and under a statuette of Nelson. As he said in his speech, “It is said that there are no longer any more heroes. Well, after hearing the tales tonight, it’s clear, the age of heroes is far from over.”

Despite the heroics and the well known aviators present at the dinner, the one thing I took away is that all pilots, including private pilots, will be welcomed into the Guild. Just as in those medieval times, when the Guilds were a way to pass down knowledge and to help each other in the chosen crafts, those same principles remain and in some ways more than ever before. Today’s world has all manner of political, environmental, military and financial challenges and being connected with others is crucial to helping us find direction and sense.

Flying, for me, will always be the most exciting pursuit that anyone of us can care to do for either a living or a pastime. Sharing that with others is the true magic of the Guild.

Dan is the former deputy editor of Pilot and Editor of Go Flying! magazines. He now writes freelance and runs a new online magazine called Adventure 52. He has a degree in Aeronautics & Astronautics from Southampton University, trained as a pilot in the RAF and then went on to hour build for a commercial licence in New Zealand. He started writing about aviation in 2005.