

No 74 (F) Tiger Squadron Association

Tiger News No 26

Compiled by Bob Cossey

Huge thanks are due to Iain 'Buster' Walsh for the tremendous amount of work he has put into getting our new web site up and running. The end result as I think you will agree is first class. It's been a time of intensive activity and quite where he found that time I think even Iain is unsure! Added to that, in the middle of it all Iain and his wife Kate discovered that they were to be proud parents of twins, due in November. Congratulations to you both from all of us!

See us on the Internet at www.74squadron.org.uk

Association President AVM B L Robinson FRAeS FCMI RAF Ret'd

Association Chairman Dave Roome OBE

Association Treasurer Sqn Ldr Iain Walsh

Association Secretary Bob Cossey

In Memoriam

Sad news indeed for this issue concerns the deaths of six Tigers.

Merv Paine was with the Squadron at Wattisham under Dick Northcote's command and he was involved with the Tiger Trails, in which F4Js were ferried across the Atlantic from San Diego prior to their entering RAF service with 74. Selwyn Rodda writes: 'the tragedy of Merv's death is made more acute by the fact that he had just retired and with his wife Jacki had a wonderful house in France with a great life to look forward to. France is where Jacki intends to stay.' We send our commiserations to her.

As we do to **Gp Capt Arthur 'Trog' Bennett's** family. Trog died in April having been ill for some time with Parkinson's disease. He was of great assistance to me when I was writing *Tigers* and was able to produce a wealth of stories and anecdotes (as well as many a cogent fact) out of the hat when I pressed him! Trog was with the Squadron at the time it was flying Hunters from Horsham St Faith and Coltishall and in fact took up Commanding Officer's duties in the month between Chris Curtis leaving and Peter Carr

arriving. Trog was with the Tigers on detachment in Cyprus and then, once back in the UK, was able to take advantage of an offer to fly a Vampire of the visiting Valley AFS. In return the Valley instructors were allowed to fly the Squadron's Hunter F6s. Trog recalled: `We set up a briefing system for each of our pilots to fly a Vampire and the three Valley instructors to fly a Hunter. There were fortunately no mishaps but several of our people who had previously not flown the single seat Vampire (including our USAF Flight Commander Jack Martin) were caught out by the massive nose up trim change which occurred when flaps were lowered for landing. In fact Jack crossed the threshold so high he had to go around again. This was only one aspect of the first generation jets which we accepted as a matter of course in those days.` Trog Bennett was a real gentleman who will be sorely missed.

Tom Rowland who featured photographically in the last *Tiger News* passed away on 16th May. Tom had been bravely fighting illness for some time. I was privileged to meet him at Wattisham in the early 90s at one of the Squadron Open Days. Tom too was a fund of information, in his case about the Tigers in pre-war days. His friend, Gp Capt Edgar Glennie Carr (who also featured in that photo in *Tiger News* 25) wrote at the time of Tom's death: `It was in the mid Thirties that Tom and I first served together in 74. He went on to become both Adjutant and a Flight Commander and subsequently commanded other units of the RAF. He was a conscientious and caring officer. He was shot down and seriously wounded but returned to operational flying and other appointments, eventually retiring at the end of the war, to become an admired and respected farmer in Sussex. In our early days flying was a thrilling but still somewhat risky pastime and in fact from 1939 it became positively dangerous - thus we were no strangers to death and one traditional attitude was that grief was a personal matter and life had to be got on with. So it is now. I am sure that at this time those Celestial Pubs I like to imagine are full of our old friends are welcoming Tom as a customer!"

Sadly, those Celestial Pubs will also be welcoming **Gp Capt Edgar Glennie Carr** himself for since writing these words he too has passed away. Edgar Glennie Carr was the Tiger who had joined the Squadron earlier than any other of our members - on 21st February 1936 to be exact. Prior to this he had been attached to 74 as part of a `pilot's pool` in Malta. Brookie Brookes was CO at the time and Edgar remembered him as a exceptional leader who was entirely responsible for the `spirit` of 74 as it existed after its reformation. Prior to Tom Rowland taking the job, Edgar was the Squadron Adjutant. He had trained as a cadet at RAAF Point Cook in Australia before being commissioned in the RAF as a Pilot Officer in February 1935. He served until August 1946, retiring as a Group Captain. In between his was a very interesting career - 24 Sqn Hendon, 56 Sqn North Weald, Pilot's Pool Malta, 74 Sqn Malta and Hornchurch, No 1 CACU at Gosport with Coastal Command and then on to command 273 and 100 Squadrons in Ceylon and Singapore before returning to the UK and 82 Sqn. Subsequently Edgar served at the Air Ministry and in India.

Sqn Ldr Jim Cooksey died on July 12th aged 88. Jim is a former Tiger's CO having been promoted and given command of the Squadron at Colerne on 27th January 1946. He oversaw the move to Horsham St Faith in August of that year and then steered the Tigers

through an awful winter of heavy rain and prolonged snow which brought much of the Eastern Counties to a grinding halt. It was into Spring before flying could resume at anything like its expected tempo. Jim retired from the RAF on 22nd April 1947, handing over 74 to Sqn Ldr Bob Baelz when he did so, and joined Gloster as a test pilot. In April 1950, flying a standard Meteor F8 (VZ496) he captured the world 1,000km closed circuit air speed record which he held for six years. He went on to fly a total of 2,200hrs on Meteors adding to the 2,700hrs he had on other types during the Second World War, before (he joined the RAF in 1936) and after.

H M Stephen, who died on August 20th aged 85, will forever be associated with the Tigers' exploits during the Battle of Britain alongside Sailor Malan, John Mungo Park and other famous names of that era. After his Royal Air Force career he went on to become managing director of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* and it is appropriate therefore that we turn to the obituary in the former for an appreciation of his life. Harbourne Mackay Stephen, the son of a banker, was born at Eglin on April 18th 1916. He was educated at Shrewsbury but at the age of 15 he left school to join Allied Newspapers as a copy boy before moving to the advertising staff of the London Evening Standard in 1936. He learned to fly at White Waltham and such was his natural aptitude that he made his first solo flight after only nine hours dual instruction. In 1936 HM joined the RAFVR and was already commissioned by the outbreak of war when he was initially sent to 605 Sqn. However he soon left to join 74 with whom he went into action during the evacuation at Dunkirk. He shot down his first aircraft on July 28th 1940 and within the next fourteen days he shot down eleven more. His tally of eight victories in one day came on August 11th when he destroyed three Bf109s and two Bf110s and claimed a probable 110 and damaged two others. He was awarded the DFC. In November he and Mungo Park shared the shooting down of Biggin Hill's 600th Luftwaffe aircraft. In December he was given the first ever immediate award in the field - a DSO for his 'exceptional courage and skill'. At Christmas of that year he received an unexpected card from Lord Beaverbrook and a cheque for £100. HM was subsequently posted to Turnhouse as CFI but soon volunteered for service in the Far East. While waiting to travel he served at Farnborough, test piloting various new aircraft coming off the line. It was during this period that his friendship with Lord Beaverbrook developed and later led to his being chosen as one of his management trainees. In 1942 HM led 234 Sqn to Burma but at HQ 234 Group he found that there were actually very few aeroplanes to fly out there. He and two engineers collected parts and rebuilt a number of aircraft with HM personally test flying them as he felt it was too dangerous to ask anyone else to do the job. In June 1942, having been promoted to Wing Commander, he was sent to Jessore and in October of the same year commanded 166 Fighter Wing in Chittagong where the army was attempting to stop the Japanese advance into India. In 1943 he joined Lord Mountbatten at HQ 224 Group based at Kandy in Ceylon. At the war's end HM joined Express Newspapers. By 1958 he was general manager of the Sunday Express and Sunday Graphic. In 1960 he joined the Sunday Times: it was his idea to launch a colour supplement which became the Sunday Times magazine. He moved to the Telegraph in 1963 and held the post of managing director until 1986. His special interests of travel and exploration led to the Daily Telegraph backing the 1968 Blue Nile Expedition and more recently he arranged backing for Operations Drake and Raleigh following which Raleigh

International was founded - of which HM was a trustee. He was awarded the CBE in 1985. He leaves a wife, Erica, and two children.

Membership Matters

We warmly welcome **Dick Northcote**, who was Boss of the Squadron when it reformed on the F4J and who was responsible for getting the aircraft across the Atlantic from San Diego as well as setting up the infrastructure of the reconstituted Tigers at Wattisham.

Another new member to the Association is **Alexander Davidson**. He was with the Tigers from January 1940 to November 1943 and as a WOM (Wireless Operator Mechanic) progressed through the ranks from AC2 to Sergeant during his time with 74. Dave recalls the night in June 1940 when Sailor Malan took off and shot down two bombers when the Squadron was at Rochford. "What a character!" recalls Dave.

Congratulations are in order on **Rod Arthur's** marriage to Annette.

News In Brief

President **Boz Robinson** tells me he is South Africa bound! Having been part of a small team (including Dave Roome) ferrying Hunters down to a private collector, Mike Beachy Head in the Cape, Boz was promptly offered a job when he got there flying the Hunter with also a chance of the Buccaneer. 'It took me,' he says, 'about ten seconds to make my mind up to accept!' Good luck Boz - who will be moving down south around the time you read these words. See the story of the ferry flight (Hunters to South Africa) as told by Boz and Dave Roome later in this issue.

It's always good to see former Tigers moving on in their chosen careers. **Gp Capt Martin Routledge** who was with 74 at Wattisham has just been posted to RAF Leuchars as Station Commander. Another former Phantom Tiger, **Gp Capt Dai Whittingham**, is already Station CO at Waddington.

I am often contacted by individuals and companies and asked to pass on bits of information to members. For this issue we have **Island Aviation** who operate aerial tours over Battle of Britain bases. These take place from either Rochester or Manston and overfly Eastchurch, Leysdown, Reculver, Manston itself, Dover, Capel le Ferne, Hawkinge, Lympne, Great Chart and Detling. The flight, in a Cessna 172, lasts about 70 minutes. The price of £159 pp (or £135 pp for a party of three) includes a presentation, flight briefing, the flight itself, a post flight briefing, a certificate and refreshments. For a flight only the cost is £99 pp. Island Aviation can be contacted for further details on 01795 881183.

This, as I am sure you are all very well aware by now, is the year of the Hawker Hunter! To mark the 50th Anniversary of this fine aeroplane Ray Deacon has written his own tribute - **Hawker Hunter, Fifty Golden Years**. The 112 page book containing 150 colour and black and white photos includes first flight details, delivery details,

construction numbers, units served on, conversion dates, withdrawal dates, current owners and liveries. To order this book at £14.95 plus £2.50 p&p send your cheque and details to Wingman Aviation, 11 Baugh Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 5ED - or E mail to WINGMAN AVIATION@aol.com.

The Pentland Press have recently published **The Vulcan B Mk 2 from a Different Angle** by Craig Bulman. Whilst not strictly within the purview of a Fighter Squadron Association it's certainly worth a read! It tells the Vulcan story from its early stages of development up to its retirement by sequencing in chronological order the aircraft as they were allocated to the various Bomber Wings at their various stations. In doing so the book provides us with a means of identifying individual aircraft or production batches by describing original features and modifications. Each feature is accompanied by photos. Aimed at both the historian and the enthusiast it is a book for all who are interested in detail. And it includes information about all the preserved Vulcans today, XH588 included. If all goes according to plan there is every chance that we will be seeing her in the air again within the next year or two - and be able to enjoy that distinctive Vulcan howl as she climbs away. The book is available from all good bookshops or from The Pentland Press, 1 Hutton Close, South Church, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 6XG - Tel No 01388 77655 or E Mail sales.ordering@pentland.press.co.uk. It is priced at £19.99.

Tigers! - another couple of copies of *Tigers* have come into my possession - if anybody is interested in them perhaps you would like to give me a ring or send an E Mail.

74's Photo Ship

Ian Cadwallader was interested in Alan Colman's remarks in the last *Tiger News* about the photos taken of the aerobatic team. Ian seems to recall they were in fact taken by John Whitehead who had to stand in for the newspaper photographer who became very airsick! There was also an occasion when a Meteor NF14 was used as a photo ship - that must have been when shots were taken later in 1956 for that year's Christmas card. Ian recalls that on that particular sortie he was flying the F8 being photographed. Incidentally, in the next issue of *Tiger News* we will feature some splendid photographs of 74 at Horsham from Ian's own collection. We will have Ian's albums at Stratford next year for you all to see - and hopefully for Ian to be able to show you in person!

From Doug Tidy....

Ten little fighter boys take off in line.
One was in coarse pitch, then there were nine.
Nine little fighter boys climbing through the gate
Ones petrol wasn't on, then there were eight.
Eight little fighter boys scrambling up to heaven,
One weaver didn't, then there were seven.
Seven little fighter boys up to all the tricks,
One had a hangover so then there were six.

Six little fighter boys milling over Hythe,
Ones pressure wasn't up, then there were five.
Five little fighter boys over France's shore,
One flew reciprocal, then there were four.
Four little fighter boys joining in the spree,
Ones gunsight wasn't on, then there were three.
Three little fighter boys high up in the blue,
Ones rubber pipe was loose, then there were two.
Two little fighter boys homing out the sun,
Flew straight and level, then there was one.
One little fighter boy happy to be home,
Beat up on dispersal, then there were none.
Ten little Spitfires nothing have achieved,
So AOC at Group is very, very peeved.
Fifty thousand smackers thrown down the drain,
`Cos ten silly bastards didn't use their brains.....

Doug asks - do you remember that one? He found it in the January 1942 issue of Tee Emm. Doug, by the way, has not been too well of late but once more has bounced back to his usual indefatigable self - especially when it comes to things to do with the Tigers!

Photos Please!

Ken Moore is putting together a combined photo of all the aircraft he has flown in operationally whilst in the RAF and is looking for an airborne shot of a black tailed Phantom F4J (not an FGR2!) flying from right to left above cloud to add to a Sentry, Shackleton and Tornado F3 he already has.

Black Bunny Phantom

Michael Davey is the owner of the nose section of one of the most famous Phantoms of all by virtue of its operation by the US Navy's VX-4 in the very distinctive all black scheme with Playboy logo which earned it the Black Bunny sobriquet. Subsequently retired to Davis Monthan, it was one of the F4Js selected for operation by 74 with whom it acquired the serial ZE352/G. The photo below shows the section as it now is at the North West Aviation Heritage Museum at Hooton Park.

Michael writes: `the cockpit was moved into our hangar today (12th August) after having the rear face `cleaned up` - it was delivered from the scrap yard fresh from being very crudely dismembered from the rest of the airframe and required considerable cutting and trimming before being brought inside. I have been a regular advertiser in Flypast magazine looking for parts for the F4J (UK) Phantom. I will be advertising again soon asking for 74 Sqn US flight gear as worn by the J crews before the aircraft were anglicised with British seats. We have one such seat fully restored to exhibition standard at Hooton and parts for another. These will be fitted to ZE352 when she is restored.`

The particular question to be asked of all you Phantom Tigers, some of whom I know flew ZE352, is whether you can help Michael in his quest for any of the hard to find artefacts he is looking for: whether you would be happy to spend a few moments to relate any stories or anecdotes involving the Js and ZE352 in particular: or finally whether you have any photos of her.

Michael can be contacted at 4 Lions Head Close, Oxton, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH43 6XB: or by telephone or on Tel No 0151 652 4834.

Where Are They Now?

What happened to the rest of the F4J(UK)`s when they were retired from service? **Graham Clarke** has provided information on some of them.

ZE350/T	- not known
ZE351/I	- not known
ZE352/G	- now, as we have just seen, at Hooton Park.
ZE353/E	- was flown to Manston for fire training
ZE354/R	- was flown to Coningsby for fire training
ZE355/S	- was cut up and transferred to the Pendyn Firing Range
ZE356/Q	- was flown to Waddington for fire training
ZE357/N	- not known
ZE358/H	- crashed in North Wales August 1987.
ZE359/J	- is at the Imperial War Museum Duxford but has been returned to its BuAer No (155529) and is displayed in USMC markings.
ZE360/O	- was flown to Manston for fire training
ZE362/V	- was cut up and transferred to the Pendyn Firing Range
ZE363/W	- was flown to Laarbruch for Battle Damage Repair training
ZE364/Z	- was flown to Coltishall for fire training.

Some of the airframes may have now moved on from these locations. Can anybody update the above?

Paddy Dalzell

Paddy Dalzell, a quiet and unassuming Irishman, was with the Squadron in 1944 and 1945. On June 10th 1944 his aircraft was hit by flak west of Caen. He was at 600ft at the time and decided to crash land rather than bale out at such a low height. He was in fact able to glide over the Allied lines and came down near to the first landing strip constructed after D Day. The CO of the Spitfire squadron which had made this strip their temporary home was fighter ace Johnny Johnson and Paddy stayed with him for two days before getting a lift on an LST back to England. Paddy - a Sgt Pilot at this time - then went back onto operations, moving with the Squadron through various airfields in France and the Netherlands. It was at Courtrai that his exploits came to the attention of Winston Churchill himself who felt Paddy should be commissioned. Indeed he personally arranged for that to happen and Paddy was actually commissioned in the field on 4th

November 1944 - a rare happening indeed. Paddy's operational tour with 74 finished whilst the squadron was at Droppe and he was posted to 57 OTU at Hawarden where he instructed on Spitfires.

When Paddy had joined the RAF at the war's outbreak he left a job as civil servant in Belfast and on demobilisation he had to return to his old post (there was, incidentally, no conscription in Northern Ireland). However, it was not long before he had a change of heart and he rejoined the RAF (after four years of trying) but he was not allowed back in on a commissioned basis. He was however assured that if he returned as a Sergeant Pilot, on the successful completion of an instructor's course he would be recommissioned within six months. He did and he was! For the next five years he instructed on Meteors and then Harvards and Piston Provosts before being posted to the overseas ferry squadron at Benson to fly Vampires, Meteors, Jet Provosts, Javelins, Hunters and Canberras. As an example of what this involved, Paddy delivered 21 of 250 Hunters to India. He was next posted to 85 Squadron as a QFI on Canberras until, after 22 years, he retired from the RAF for a second time. Within twelve months he had joined Airwork at Hurn and once again became a QFI on Canberras as well as Meteors. The company relocated to Yeovilton and under contract to the Royal Navy Paddy towed targets with Canberras for the next nine years in the UK and in Malta, Cyprus, Iran and Malaya. At 55 he had to cease flying for the Navy so went to Middle Wallop and instructed on Chipmunks for the Army for the subsequent eight years. He finished his career at Llanbedr controlling Jindiviks (as did another Association member Derek Morris although Paddy does not recall Derek as he, Paddy, was there somewhat later). A long and fascinating CV indeed!

New Zealand's Tiger's Head 'Presentation'

I've had an enquiry from Flight Sergeant Don Sims who writes:

`I am from the Royal New Zealand Air Force base at Ohakea. Residing in our Warrant Officer's and SNCO's Mess is a mounted Tiger's head (see the photo below). The wooden shield that the head is mounted on has a plaque stating `Presented by 74 Squadron RAF.` I am told that it wasn't quite `presented` and was in fact `acquired` in Singapore in 1970 by members of our own 14 Sqn! It has been resident in our Mess since then. Our Mess has recently had the head fully restored and wishes now to accurately document its history and display this alongside the head. Are you able to help with any detail?

I believe it is the original head, possibly shot in the 1930s. I have been told that when `found` in Singapore it was in the hands of the NCO ground crew, the Officers having replaced it with a new one some time previously. Apparently its condition at the time was very poor and it required major restoration before going up in the Ohakea Sergeants Mess.

If you can help with any information it would be greatly appreciated. Would there be any photos of the head when owned by 74?



The Cadets and 74

When **Derek Morris** was last at Stratford upon Avon he took a photograph of what is now Marks and Spencer but what was once a hotel: he showed the photo to a good friend of his - **Alex Coltart** - who recalled being billeted there in 1943 whilst waiting for his pilot's course to begin. One thing led to another and recollections of visits to 74 Sqn as a cadet emerged.

Alex became air-minded in the 1930s when he lived by a golf course in Ireland where his father was the professional. Aircraft from Aldergrove were often flying over and occasionally beating up the golfers! When the family moved to Morden on the outbreak of war, Alex joined the Air Defence Cadet Corps at Kingston upon Thames. The ADCC was the forerunner of the Air Training Corps which was formed in 1941. Alex's cadet unit had as its highly enthusiastic CO a World War I pilot, one Chalky White who was also the local coal merchant (a black and white issue if ever there was one!). Chalky had served in 74 during that war and was keen to get the cadets involved with the Tigers when he learned that they had been moved to his nearest aerodrome, Biggin Hill. After making contact, Chalky loaded his coal lorry with a dozen or more cadets and drove them across. They were shown around the Squadron and Sailor Malan gave them a talk and showed them combat cine films. Subsequently the cadets regularly went to Biggin Hill at weekends, staying overnight on the camp. They were made welcome and were able to help out by fetching and carrying ammunition and ground equipment. Alex particularly remembers polishing the pilots' canopies with Brasso!

Most weekends the boys were under the control of Sqn Ldr de la Court, the Biggin Hill Intelligence Officer, who used to hurtle around the station on his motorbike and sidecar. The Spitfires at the time were doing daylight sweeps over France and the cadets attended briefings and debriefings for these as well as being around when the aircraft departed and returned. They even had the occasionally flight in a Radar Calibration Flight Blenheim which was based there.

Alex went on to become a commissioned pilot himself in the RAF.

Hunters to South Africa

*Back in April of this year, Chairman **Dave Roome** was asked if he would be interested in flying a Hunter to South Africa. Although the flight didn't actually materialise until June,*

*eventually it turned out to be three Hunters and President **Boz Robinson** was one of the other pilots. However, all did not go according to plan as Dave recalls.....*

We were to take a two-seat Hunter T8 and T7 and a single seat GA11, all of which had been based at Exeter - so we all met up at Exeter Airport on Saturday June 16th. I was to lead in the T8 with Andy Cubin as No 2 in the T7 and Boz No 3 in the GA11. The route was to be:

Day One	Exeter to Genoa
Day Two	Genoa to Iraklion Iraklion to Luxor
Day Three	Luxor to Djibouti Djibouti to Nairobi
Day Four	Nairobi to Lilongwe Lilongwe to Johannesburg
Day Five	Johannesburg to Capetown

It seemed straightforward with the first day a simple, single leg. All three aircraft started up and we checked in ready to go and taxied out. `You can't go as a formation of three because you're not military pilots` was the first fly in the ointment. It didn't matter that we used to be military pilots and, thinking that the difficulties were probably caused by French ATC (they cause most of the difficulties I've ever experienced!), I set off alone (and unafraid) across Europe. In fact the problems were of English origin and after Boz had shouted down the phone at London Military controllers he and Andy Cubin followed on an hour or so later.

After a very pleasant evening in a very nice hotel in Genoa, things seemed to be on the up. Little did we know.....

On start up the following morning Andy Cubin`s aircraft showed a constant Fuel Low Pressure Warning Light. This indicates (usually) a double booster pump failure, but with both pumps working he decided to taxi. However, as the light stayed on during take off he aborted, fearing restricted power with a heavy aircraft. After discussion between the three crews (with the other two already airborne) Andy took off and ignored the light (which again stayed on).

Then came another ATC problem. `Are you military because only military can fly formation.....?`

`Of course we are.`

There were no further problems as we flew down the west coast of Italy on a pleasant June morning. This leg was Genoa-Iraklion (Crete) but we weren't to see Crete that day as Athens turned us away from Greek airspace thinking we were military aircraft with no diplomatic clearance! The fact that we were flying 45 year old jets and had a letter of

agreement between the British Embassy in Athens and Athens ATC carried no weight and we had to divert back to Italy, landing at Brindisi on the heel of the country.

It took twenty four hours to clear up the misunderstanding and we finally took off for Iraklion the next morning. The approach into that airport was a little fraught with some very large thunderstorms in our way, but for experienced formation pilots it caused only a minor problem. A larger problem were the ground staff at Iraklion who couldn't provide any oxygen for the aircraft. In the end, in an attempt to recover our schedule, we took off a couple of hours later for Luxor in Egypt. A quiet and uneventful leg followed and we arrived in Luxor late in the afternoon to be met by the characteristic heat of that country. We decided that it would be better to refuel the aircraft the next morning rather than lose fuel in venting overnight. This was particularly important as the next leg to Djibouti was over 1,000nm and very close to the maximum range of the aircraft in that tank fit. A very pleasant evening in the Old Winter Palace Hotel on the banks of the Nile followed.

The next day it all went very wrong.

Refuelling was carried out and we filed our flight plan but Andy's aircraft refused to start. The Hunters were still using the cartridge starter (many today are modified with a much better and more reliable electric start) so I ended up by unstrapping from my aircraft, changing the cartridge for Andy and then (once the cartridge had fired) running back, strapping in and `scrambling` so that we could all go together! We taxied out but Andy, who was going to lead this particular leg, suffered a brake failure as he started his take off roll and left the runway! He had to shut down and drifted to a halt in the hard sand, fortunately with no damage. Boz and I taxied back in and we all set to to recover the T7. Working on the pan in temperatures well in excess of 50 degrees C was no fun but eventually the fix was pronounced good and we all tried to start again. This time Andy's aircraft proved to be even more recalcitrant and it wouldn't start even with me underneath changing cartridges. Andy now judged his aircraft to be fully unserviceable and, as he flies for Virgin and had to be on duty in 48 hours, he elected to bale out and catch a Britannia Airways flight back to the UK.

Boz and I re-filed the flight plan, started up and taxied out once more. In the maximum heat of the day sitting at the holding point awaiting clearance was not good and this was exacerbated by the announcement from ATC that `the Base Commander says you came as a three ship, you must leave as a three ship!` I pointed out that Luxor already had one Hunter stuck there and if they didn't let we two go they'd have two more. All to no avail!

This was now becoming a farce. It could be several days before ground crew arrived from Capetown and so my ground engineer Rob and I, both of us having engagements in the UK in the next five days, hitched a lift on the same flight as Andy Cubin, reached Manchester at 2245 that night, hired a car and drove back home to Gloucestershire. Boz elected to stay on and had another five days in Luxor before he finally got away. Even then the story was a convoluted one. Boz has all the details.....

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.....After the other guys baled out at Luxor (writes Boz) I had a tough time sipping beers by the pool for a couple of days until Mike Beachy Head and Ian Pringle arrived - whereupon we set about doing the local sights such as the Valley of the Kings. It was immensely hot and there are very few tourists at that time of year. We had endless negotiations with the handling agent because the Egyptian Air Force suspected something was afoot after Dave and Andy had left in something of a hurry. They had also confiscated Rob's video camera and found shots of radar masts on it! It had been sent to Cairo for security vetting and I made many calls to the Embassy there trying to unravel the situation which was actually preventing our departure. After a very frustrating couple of days we got up at the crack of dawn and snailpaced our way through all security (Moslem extremists shoot people in this region) to reach (at last) the three aircraft we were due to take to Nairobi that day. Then we noticed that Dave's aircraft, the T8, had sprung a huge fuel leak from the port internal wing tank - so that was that! Barry Pover was left to sort out the crock and Mike and Ian got into the T7 and we fired off towards Djibouti, the planned first stop. It quickly became clear that Mike and Ian were not impressed by the performance of the T7 and I found myself back at a very low power setting waiting for them to catch up! Halfway along the 1,076nm leg the T7 was well short of the necessary fuel so I took us both into Asmara in Eritrea where we started the routine which became habitual wherever we went - explaining long and loud that `no we were not military aircraft and we had no intention of bombing the President's palace!` Money sometimes changed hands and we often had to wait hours to be examined by the local air force security people. At all our many stops, however, we were able to persuade everyone to look upon us in a friendly way and thereby oil the wheels for the later transit of the sick aircraft languishing at Luxor - but in some cases it took half a day or more! I took a philosophical approach to it all and kept cool and smiling because after all what we were doing was a jolly sight more interesting than mowing the lawn! And how many guys get to have the privilege of doing something like this just before becoming an OAP? In fact Mike BH gave a birthday party at his place in Capetown for my 65th on 2nd July.

Just before noon we left Asmara with many friendly waves from our new found friends and headed out over the Red Sea as briefed to avoid the missile threat which we had been warned of. It was only a short leg to Djibouti and we taxied in to find we had landed in the hottest sauna in the world - the temperature was over 46 degrees on the pan and I was seriously

concerned for Mike who stayed out in the heat for nearly an hour doing the refuelling and cartridge changes. I was fortunate to be inside arguing the toss about diplomatic clearance, filing the next flight plan and putting the route into the hand held GPS I used to fly all the legs from Luxor to Capetown. With a hand held VOR as well there were some moments when I ran out of hands! However the GA11 is a very stable old lady and could be flown with the knees.....

When we got to the holding point for take off at Djibouti ATC requested our diplomatic clearance number. I told them it was in my bag behind me and I'd pass it once airborne. Needless to say the bag was actually in the radio bay and only accessible from outside - but we did get our take off clearance and off we went, only to have complete `radio

failure` immediately afterwards which lasted until we had crossed Ethiopia and reached Kenyan airspace. By that time Mike BH was desperately low on fuel and I very nearly sent him into a 1400m murrum strip until a mental calculation told me that he might just get to Nairobi with 800lbs left. In the event, after a PAN call and a straight in approach to Nairobi he landed with about that amount. Then began the long interrogation about why `military` aircraft had come unheralded, without diplomatic clearance and short of fuel! I was just about under arrest because the Kenyan ATC also thought we were intent on bombing the President's palace! Eventually everything was sorted and we spent a memorable night at the Norfolk Hotel. By now we had completed all the critically long legs and so decided on a later start the next day. Just as well as it turned out for it took the Kenyan Air Force until lunchtime to clear us to go after inspecting our bombs (long range tanks!) and guns to make sure we had no ammo in them. In fifty year old aircraft?

I had decided to lead Mike from the No 2 slot to avoid him having to throttle bash and we took off to climb out directly over Kilimanjaro and then spent a delightful trip down to Lilongwe in Malawi. Here the two South Africans did the refuelling while I carried out the now familiar routine of apologising for arriving without diplomatic clearance (which of course was never necessary as we were civil aircraft) and paying fees and flight planning. The policeman in Malawi was very firm but polite and gave me a long hand-written brief on how to go about getting BAe to clear my next flight down in the T8 still languishing at Luxor. Sadly I didn't have the chance to meet him again because when Barry Pover eventually got there and found the aircraft still full of fuel because the Egyptians could not defuel it, he lit the engine and the starter breech blew up! As I write he is there again taking it to bits....

Next day we routed via Maputo to cut down the leg distance and after a three hour battle to convince the Air Force we were not military, had not tried to bomb yet another President's palace, had not overflowed restricted areas, had not needed diplomatic clearance etc etc we finally got away to Bloemfontein, overflying Swaziland in the early afternoon. It was such a relief to hear a competent controller when we crossed into South Africa. The rest of the trip went without any hitches except at Bloemfontein itself where I was trapped in the airport by security who did not believe I was flying the Hunter!

When we got to Mike's beautiful facility at Capetown, after some low formation flypasts there was a wonderful welcoming party. I felt a great sense of relief that the GA11 had served me so perfectly all the way from Exeter. It was also good to be offered by Mike a job of flying his Hunters and Buccaneers over the winter.....

[Squadron Reunion 2002](#)

Included with this *Tiger News* are details and a booking form for next years` Reunion to be held over the weekend of March 1st - 3rd 2002. I look forward to hearing from everybody!