

No 74 (F) Tiger Squadron Association

Tiger News No 29

Compiled by Bob Cossey

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

Your Contributions

It is a continuing feature of Tiger News that we include items of Members news. This also encompasses, of course, stories and anecdotes which you may wish to share with us. I know from personal experience that you all have a wealth of these!

I look forward to hearing from you. I may not be able to include all of them immediately but rest assured they will find a place in time.....

Membership Matters

We welcome **Debbie Lewis** as an Associate Member. Her father, Association Member Richard, flew Meteors at Horsham St Faith with 74 and actively supports the Association as does Debbie - you will recall her as the young lady who comes and collects your signatures at each Reunion!

Wg Cdr Phil Leadbetter

Alex Davidson

Sqn Ldr Sean O'Brien

Chris Horn

We have another new Associate Member in **Roy Smith**. Roy is a good friend of John Freeborn and has a particular interest in 74 during the Battle of Britain.

A Tiger's Tale by Bob Cossey

Enclosed with this newsletter is information about a new book detailing the wartime career of our very own John Freeborn.

A Tiger's Tale has a Foreword by Cliff Spink and was launched at the Biggin Hill Air Show with John and Bob Cossey in attendance, together with Association members Geoffrey Burge, John Gill, Derek Morris, Arthur Smith, Fred Waters and Eden Webster - a real gathering of wartime Tigers! I am delighted to say that a lot of interest was shown in the book and a lot of people wanted to talk to John. Book signings will also take place at Duxford in July (at the Flying Legends airshow) and John has several other venues lined up for the year as well, to which he has been invited by the likes of the Battle of Britain Historical Society and the Aircrew Association.

Ray Racy

Ray Racy wrote in the last issue of *Tiger News* about his time with 74 at the end of the war - and about his experience with the pressurised Spitfire VII (with 154 Squadron) of which only 140 were produced. Ray has always remembered the time he flew this particular mark and has put pen to paper to share that experience with us.....

Spitfire VII

Take off's at six o'clock.
Pull on your flying suit and fur lined boots,
Helmet, gloves and intercom.
Strap on that clumsy `chute beneath your bum
And stomp across the grass to your machine
Haunches down, your Merlin sniffs the air
Like an expectant hound about to spring,
Flashing a glint of mischief and of menace.
She can be skittish and with wicked glee
Take to the sky and spit you out in spite.
Step up and climb aboard. Snap on the straps,
Check the controls and start her up.
Trim, mixture, pitch: fuel, flaps and revs.
All's well. It's time to taxi out.
The runway lies in wait.
Turn into wind
Full revs and let her go.
A rumble and a roar.
The ground falls back,
Wheels up
And level out at angels eight.
A patchwork quilt below.
Blue space among gigantic whorls of white.

This is a flier's paradise
Where he can roll and loop and dive
And pull intensive G in dizzy turns
And sail above the cloudbanks out of sight.
Those metal plates beneath our feet,
A thousand horses plus in the nacelle
Are all that separate us from the earth,
Unreal device to sling a man aloft.
Increase the revs and climb
To forty thousand feet.
It's lonely there, and cold.
Poised in this empty space
There's nothing here but sky
Above, around, below.
Earth is a flimsy dream,
A foreign shore that we no longer know.
In air so thin
The tapered wingtips wallow in the void.
It's time to raise the nose,
Flick over,
Throttle back, adjust the trim
And watch the needle sweep
Four-fifty on the clock.
As earth comes up
We hold her in the dive
And hope the wings won't crease.
Two thousand feet -
Time now to ease her out
And return her to the leash.
In level flight we set a course for base,
Regain the field and gently float her down.
Reality returns as we touch ground.
Boundless space intoxicates the mind.
Detached from scrutiny and mundane woes
We ride the skies in spirited delight
And purge the costive soul in powered flight.

Congratulations

Air Marshal Cliff Spink has been made a Companion, Order of the Bath (CB), an award announced in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in June. From all of us in the 74(F) Tiger Squadron Association, hearty congratulations.

Finca Los Tigres

Have a look at www.fincalostigres.com and discover a potential holiday idea for next year!

One Liners

Member Derek Morris has sent me the Royal Air Force Target Rifle Club *Behind the Oddbin* booklet, produced to support their 2002 tour to South Africa. It contains some amusing aviation related stories and one liners which I will be pleased to use from time to time in "Tiger News". For starters....

Little Billy and his dad were down at the airport watching planes taking off and landing. Little Billy looks up to his dad and says: `Dad, when I grow up I want to be a pilot`. His dad looks down at him and says: `You can't do both son!`

*

Santa Claus, like all pilots, gets regular visits from the Civil Aviation Authority and it was shortly before Christmas when the CAA examiner arrived. In preparation, Santa had the elves wash the sled and bathe all the reindeer Santa got his logbook out and made sure all his paperwork was in order.

The examiner walked slowly round the sled. He checked the reindeer harnesses, the landing gear and Rudolf's nose. He painstakingly reviewed Santa's weight and balance calculations for the sled's enormous payload. Finally they were ready for the check ride. Santa got in and fastened his seatbelt and shoulder harness and checked his compass. Then the examiner hopped in carrying, to Santa's surprise, a shotgun.

`What's that for?` asked Santa incredulously.

The examiner winked and said `I'm not supposed to tell you this but you're going to lose an engine on take off!`

Lightnings on QRA

Something which many of us would like to see again I'm sure! And soon you can. The Lightning Preservation Group (LPG) at Bruntingfield have for the past fourteen years had a pair of Lightning F6s in fast taxable condition and when they are run up they attract large crowds totally addicted to these unique aircraft. Bruntingthorpe have been fortunate in acquiring the former RAF Wattisham QRA shed which is currently at the Leicestershire airfield in dismantled form. After six years they have finally been granted planning permission for the re-erection of the hangar. Problem is this will cost around £50,000 to do and so an appeal is being launched to raise the money.

Anyone wishing to support this should make their cheque out to `The LPG` and send it to 2 Springhill, Little Staughton, Bedfordshire, MK44 2BS. If you donate £50 or more your name will be recorded and displayed in the hangar.

Check out www.lightnings.org.uk for further information.

Vulcan to the Sky

Also at Bruntingfield is Vulcan XH558 which, as many of you know, is also the subject of a concerted fund raising appeal to get her into the air again. The objective is to fly her in 2003 when the centenary of the first powered flight is celebrated. A cool £1,000,000+ is needed - a third of this has been raised already - so once again any donations to Vulcan to the Sky, PO Box 3240, Wimborne, BH21 4ZZ, would be very welcome. An application has been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund and if they decide that they can help it would make all the difference.

Check out www.tvoc.co.uk or www.vulcantothesky.com to learn more.

Dave Roome - Aviation Award Nomination

On May 21st at the RAF Club our Chairman Dave Roome was nominated for a Civil Aviation Authority bravery award following a problem whilst with a student in one of Delta Jets` Hunters on a training sortie. In Dave's own words here is what happened.....

The weather on 16th August 2001 was ideal for teaching aeros and circuits, puffy Cu and good vis with a breeze of 15 knots straight down Kemble`s Runway 27. I was teaching a relatively new member of one of the syndicates operating Hunters from Kemble: this individual, who had come to us with about 300 hours of light piston time had now flown five trips and this would be another tick on the way to his first solo. We got airborne and worked our way out to the north, just to the north of Cheltenham and southeast of Malvern, and I got him into the swing of things with a couple of max rate turns and an accelerated stall, also called a stall in manoeuvre. As we had only started with 3,200lbs of internal fuel, we rapidly progressed to some aerobatics and his first loop was reasonable, though a little crooked and lacking a little in initial pull.

`Look, you need to get it to the buffer nibble as you enter,` said I, going on to talk of how to maintain wings level during the pull up. `Let me show you once more: I have control` and I smoothly took the power back up to the front stop as I pulled into the loop. Now, at the top of most loops, with the speed down to around 160 knots at the apex, power can be reduced - to idle if necessary - depending on what is planned to follow that manoeuvre. As we went through the inverted, I pulled back the throttle and was somewhat surprised that nothing happened! The RPM stayed up at 8,000 with the throttle at idle! The loop rapidly turned into a roll off the top and we started to examine the problem. It was very simple. It didn't matter what position the throttle was in, the engine was delivering virtually full power. I didn't want to play with this too much without the security of a runway underneath me for fear that, if I managed to reduce power, the reduction might be

to idle and the engine might decide to sulk at THAT end of the range. That would be a whole different ball game.

So we went back to Kemble which I knew had fifteen knots down the runway and at 6,000ft long was suitable even for a forced landing should it become necessary. A PAN call to London Centre woke them up and ensured a smooth run, though the myriad of gliders up from places like Nympsfield and Aston Down might have wondered about this blur doing 500 knots or so and every now and again carrying out a couple of 7g turns to get the speed down to manageable figures!

In the Kemble overhead I tried all sorts of things to regain throttle control, but to no avail. I was aware of a similar incident which had happened to a Boscombe Down Hunter a few years ago: they had arrived at the threshold (of a 10,500ft runway) going like a train and finished up ejecting. I was then on the Flying Training staff of RAF Personnel and Training Command and wrote a very critical letter having read the Boscombe Down `whitewash` of the pilot, who had signally failed to control what I had perceived to be a minor problem (especially when he had 80kms visibility, 1 okta of cloud at 25,000ft (honest) and 10kts down the aforesaid huge runway). Instead of admitting that the incident could have been handled better, there was all sorts of guff about `aileron upfloat when going into manual making control difficult` etc etc. He had almost certainly misread his RPM gauge as well, thinking that he had only 6,000RPM when he had, in fact, 7,000 - an important difference as anyone familiar with the Hunter will know. The loss of the aircraft following the double ejection was bad, but the fact that the crew had been put into a most dangerous position, ejecting close to the seat limits, was not even addressed.

Anyway, having pulled maximum G in level turns until I got the speed down to 250 knots and got the gear down, followed by further pulling until, at below 200 knots, I could select full flap, I found that I could control the aircraft reasonably well, turning hard whenever the speed started to run away. I elected to attempt to fly the aircraft to a position on finals where I could stopcock the engine on the HP cock and glide the aircraft in from there - and that is what I did. The engine was closed down at about 300ft and about one mile out, just rolling out of a very tight finals` turn and the last bit was very straight forward. The threshold was crossed at about 150 knots and with the brake chute deployed on touchdown the aircraft didn't even make the other end of the runway before drifting to a halt. We were towed in and beers were produced!

For the technical amongst you, the connection from throttle connection to engine had separated at the engine and, under the influence of gravity, the operating rod had dropped, increasing RPM. Had I held the aircraft inverted the RPM would have presumably decayed to idle, but that would have been a most interesting finals turn!

Congratulations to Dave on a fine piece of airmanship.

What was that Spitfire IX?

I have had an enquiry from Bertrand Hugot of 16 Rue de la Gare, 21470 Brazy en Plaine, France. Bertrand is interested in the time that 74 flew with the Free French 341 Squadron at Duerne in 1944/45. It appears that from time to time the French flew the Tigers` aircraft. So, for example, on 4th December 1944 Mailfert flew 4D-W on a dive bombing sortie: on the same day Maynard flew 4D-V on a squadron formation practice: on 5th December, Maynard again flew 4D-V, this time on a fighter sweep: on Christmas Day Dabos had 4D-A on bomber escort and on New Year`s Eve Guinamard flew 4D-S on a fighter sweep.

It seems that 341 were short of aircraft for they used 74`s quite regularly and indeed 329`s, the other component of the Wing with which all three squadrons were flying. Did the Tigers fly, in return, in Free French aircraft when they were available? Very rarely member Hugh Murland tells me. His log books don't record his having done so personally.

Talk of log books leads me on to Bertrand`s query. All the French log books he has consulted only record the individual Spitfires` code letters - not serials - and it is the code letter/serial tie up he is interested in. Hugh recorded only code letters himself but there may be somebody out there who can help Bertrand with his quest. My own records show 4D-V as being PL454 and 4D-W as NH609. What we are trying to establish is the serial of 4D-A and 4D-S.

If you can help please let me know.