



No 206 Squadron Association

Newsletter December 2023



President: Group Captain Steve Austin MA, BEng, RAF

Chairman: Squadron Leader Bill Bird MBE, MBA, MA, FRAeS, CITP, RAF(Ret'd)

Life Vice President: Air Commodore Bob Joseph CBE BSc RAF (Ret'd)

Life Vice President: Mrs Marie Emmerson

Life Vice President: Air Commodore Steve Skinner BSc RAF (Ret'd)

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Chairman's Words

I haven't written here since November last year – my heart attack in May didn't help! – but back then I opened saying that we'd had another successful November lunch. Well, as you'll see from Andy's piece, I think we had an even better one this year, mainly due to Brian Wood's excellent and moving talk. We had 34 attendees which was actually 4 more than last year. Regarding our event scheduled for 10 – 12 May, we've struggled a little with the timing as there are a couple of competing events – but in the end we decided to stick with 'Plan A'. Please put this in your diaries – more information will be sent out before the end of the year. We have booked the same hotel again, in Faringdon, and hope to have some Squadron involvement.

Along with my fellow committee members, and our President emeritus Steve Skinner, I've been thinking quite a bit about our Association demographic, and the part that the Squadron plays in the Association.

Many of us have done our share of worrying, struggling and cajoling on this front, but right now, I believe that we have an excellent and thriving Association. Anyone observing our lunch the other week would have had to come to the same conclusion. My observations are:

We have a great membership which, though finely aged, is enthusiastic and friendly.

We have two great annual events which are well supported.

We have the principal obligation to recognize and remember departed Squadron colleagues, and we discharge this responsibility well.

We are very fortunate to have Steve and Beefy on our committee – I'm not sure how they fit it in with their busy careers, but I'm very glad that they do.

We struggle to involve active Squadron members. However, thanks to Steve, we maintain excellent links with 206, and the Squadron is always very welcoming when we approach them.

We are 'Maritime heavy' but I think the 'T & E generation' will slowly swell our ranks – just not next week!

So, we will continue to try to secure more Squadron interaction – but this is not an existential issue.

I'd like to close with a couple of book recommendations.

The first is (naturally) Brian Wood's 'Double Crossed', which some of you picked up at the Lunch. It's an excellent read and for those of you who couldn't make the talk, it gives a good feel for what he went through.

That got me thinking about another book I read some time ago, when the Company I was leading started doing airworthiness certification. It's 'The Crash of Nimrod XV230: A Victim's Perspective', by Trish Knight, the mother of Ben Knight who was one of those who lost their lives in the 2006 Afghanistan incident. It's a somewhat sobering read, but at least now can be seen in the light of a hugely improved airworthiness regime in the RAF – to which 206 now makes a major contribution.

Both books are on Amazon. Hope to see many of you in May.

Bill Bird

Obituary: Flight Lieutenant 'Jack' Frost DFC (July 28 1919,-June 12 2023)

Veteran of RAF Coastal Command who nursed his stricken Liberator bomber to a successful crash-landing

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JACK FROST, who has died aged 103, served as a pilot in Coastal Command, which fought the air war over the sea, from the first to the last day of the Second World War. He flew throughout the Battle of the Atlantic and in support of Russian convoys.

On November 15 1944, Frost and his crew took off from Leuchars in Fife in their four-engine Liberator of 206 Squadron to patrol off the coast of Norway. Flying close to Bergen, his heavy bomber was attacked by three Messerschmitt Bf 110 long-range fighters and very badly damaged.

An air gunner was killed and another severely wounded. One of the Liberator's engines was put out of action, the hydraulic system was rendered useless and the intercommunication between the crew was made unserviceable. This made taking evasive action particularly difficult, but Frost maintained control.

When one of the attacking fighters was severely damaged, the engagement was finally broken off after nearly an hour of combat. Despite flying on three engines, losing fuel, and with extreme damage to the aircraft's control surfaces, Frost managed to nurse the crippled bomber to Sumburgh in the Shetlands, where, unable to lower the undercarriage, he made a crash landing.

Frost was awarded an immediate DFC and two of his crew were awarded the DFM. The shared experience forged a strong bond between the surviving crew members and, after returning to their own countries, they all held [November 15](#) as a special date and sought to contact each other in memory of their Sumburgh "arrival".

Marshal John Gibson Frost, always called Jack, was born in Brixton on July 28 1919 and educated at what is now Haberdashers' Hatcham College in New Cross. Following the death of his father in 1933, he declined a sixth-form place and started work as a clerk with the Eagle Star Insurance Company, continuing his education at night school. To supplement his income he joined the Territorial Army, but in 1938 he was allowed to transfer to the RAF Volunteer Reserve, where he started training to be a pilot.

Mobilised as the war started, he completed his flying training and was posted to fly the Anson with 608 Squadron based near Middlesbrough, known as the "Kipper Patrol" and mainly employed on shipping patrols over the North Sea. During a transit flight from Wick, Frost's Anson was forced to ditch in the sea. He was picked up by the destroyer Electra as the only survivor.

Having recovered from his injuries, he re-joined 608, now flying the American-built Lockheed Hudsons on anti-shiping tasks off Norway. In early 1942, on promotion to warrant officer, he was posted to 53 Squadron at North Coates in Lincolnshire, also flying Hudsons.

He led anti-shiping sorties on "Rover" patrols against enemy convoys off Heligoland and participated in an abortive strike against the battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau after their dash from Brest through the English Channel.

When 53 Squadron was taken “out of line” due to excessive losses in April 1942, Frost was posted to a unit training aircrew for Coastal Command – sometimes known as the “Cinderella Command”, since Bomber and Fighter Command attracted more attention.

Frost then became a pilot instructor on Wellingtons, using the powerful “Leigh Light” searchlight which was mounted on the wing and used to illuminate surfaced U-boats.

Requesting a return to operational flying, in August 1943 he was dispatched via the RMS Queen Mary to Oakes Field, Nassau, in the Bahamas, to train on the Liberator. Returning with his constituted crew, he joined [206 Squadron at St Eval](#) in Cornwall, flying anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay.

In the build-up to D-Day, he flew over the Southwest Approaches during the highly successful Operation Cork, which sealed the Channel from enemy naval activity that could have menaced the huge armada heading for Normandy. In July, 206 Squadron moved to Leuchars, where the anti-submarine war continued; Frost attacked U-299, inflicting minor damage. A few days later, he had his encounter with the enemy fighters off the Norwegian coast.

After the armistice, Frost flew several patrols rounding up surrendering U-boats, one of which had to be “persuaded” with the help of a depth charge and a few rounds of cannon fire. At the end of hostilities, 206 Squadron Liberators were converted for passenger duties. Operating from Oakington near Cambridge, Frost flew long hauls to RAF Mauripur, near Karachi, to collect personnel returning from the Far East.

After the war, he continued to fly with the RAF Reserve and attended Birkbeck, University of London, gaining an honours degree in geography and then a Master’s. He held several posts in education, eventually becoming vice principal of Newbury College of Further Education.

Frost was a founder member of the 206 Squadron Association and he supported the organisation, attending events until his health began to fail. He was awarded the Air Efficiency Award with Clasp and received the Russian Federation’s 50th Anniversary of the Great Patriotic War medal for his support of the Arctic convoys.

Jack Frost is survived by Kyllikki, his Finnish wife of 58 years, and their two daughters.

Paul Warraner

The Ballad that follows was forwarded by Derek Straw, in memory of Jack Frost.

**Ballad of D-Dog – Liberator Mk VI EW288/ D 206 Squadron/ –
Crashed Sumburgh 15 Nov 1944 – Captain: Flt Lt Jack Frost DFC**

At the southernmost tip of the Shetland Isle, where the runways intersect,
Is a small triangular patch of turf where once D-Dog lay, wrecked.
A hollow small still tells a tale, a tale of derring-do,
A tale of a skipper who scorned defeat: of his beholden crew.

Young were our limbs and bright our eyes, those fifty years ago
When flew we into combat 'gainst a far superior foe.
He fought us, struck us, shook us. He killed and wounded crew.
Then, hurt, exhausted, left for dead our tattered helpless few.

For dead the foe had left us, our wallowing flight observed,
Rudder tattered, an engine stilled, our silent guns discerned.
He'd seen the fires when cannon struck; he knew our fuel was low.
And the hungry North Sea waited but a hundred feet below.

The hungry North Sea waited. He left us to our fate.
He felt no shame in flying home to chaperone his mate.
He knew that we were written off. He knew his job was done.
And our odds against survival were a million to one.

But One was there. The Skipper who, by Herculean power,
Had thrown D-Dog around the sky for well nigh on an hour,
Frustrating many a fierce attack by his evasive skill.
Now summoned up concealed reserves of steely, armoured will -

The will with which he'd fought the fight, had found the strength to fly
That stricken ship above that sea as shot and shell flashed by:
The will that gave him giant's strength as shot and shell crashed home
Into his ship, into his men, above that roaring foam.

The will that overcame each mortal blow that struck to kill:
The will that found the wherewithal to keep him airborne still:
The will that spawned incision, to infuse his crisp commands
For action, by his crew, to meet survival's harsh demands:

The will which galvanised his crew to fight as men inspired.
For Merv at last to wound the foe - who readily retired!
The will which fed his men new hope when all seemed lost and dark:
The will which, for our succour, was to be the vital spark -

He summoned up that armoured will. He nursed his stricken plane
To turn reluctantly for home above that raging main.
He made for nearest landfall, without landing gear or brakes,
To cheat old Father Neptune by the venture he now takes.

He nursed that sinking aircraft, whilst Eric risked his all
To lighten load by lev'ring bombs through barely open door.
And slowly sinks the aircraft, and nearer draws the foam,
As he fights to keep it flying and to guide it nearer home.

At the southernmost tip of the Shetland Isle, where the runways intersect,
Is a small triangular patch of turf where once D-Dog lay, wrecked.
It died there, smashed, to save the nine their skipper did not fail.
With the hollow small, which it dug for its grave, the witness to this tale.

From Canada's plains to New Zealand's isles this glorious tale is told.
From Northumbria's hills to Australia's shore rings the story of the bold.
When the now-old crew, pass a winter's night, by the firelight's flickering sheen,
They think of the courage of Skipper Jack: and a boy who is still nineteen.

Author unknown?

Dedicated to 'Jack' Frost DFC RIP



SEEDCORN CONCEPT

dcorn (defn.): 1) Good quality seeds that are reserved for planting 2) People or things that will develop to become useful or successful in the future.

Set against the strict fiscal constraint under which the Strategic Defence and Security Review was constructed, the Nimrod MRA4 was 12 years late and massively over budget. As we all know, the programme was cancelled.

CAS spoke one month after SDSR; he was very clear that “the capability would have to be regenerated at some stage in the future” and “that key to any regeneration would be the retention of the skillset”.

Staff work within MOD and Air Command started immediately after SDSR to look at how the RAF could retain the maritime skillset, and from this the Seedcorn initiative was born.

In actual fact....the then Air Commodore Jerry Kessel was the “Senior Responsible Owner” for, amongst other things, the UK MPA MoD equipment programme. He was on the golf course with his US equivalent, Admiral Bill Moran; *this* is how Seedcorn came about. The two 1 Stars had been informing the whole MPA debate. For that, I’m eternally thankful.

So, Back in 2012, 10 families made their way over to NAS Jacksonville in Florida, USA for a 3 year tour, which became a 5 year tour, which became an 8 year tour....!

Before SDSR 2010, the RAF had 7 maritime exchange postings: 3 in the USA, 1 in Canada, 2 in Australia, and 1 in New Zealand. Six were in flying roles and one of the US billets was an Ops role with synergies to the UK’s nuclear deterrent.

These exchanges continued and were morphed into the Seedcorn construct. But here’s the important bit: these posts were augmented by 34 new non-reciprocal exchange posts:

20 x USA (P-8A) – 11 x VP-30 P-8A OCU, and 9 x VX-1 P-8A OEU

6 x Canada (CP-140, Blk3)

6 x New Zealand (P-3K2)

2 x Australia (AP3)



Here’s the American bit of “Seedcorn”:

Up at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland, the VX-1 folks (a WSO Flt Cdr, 2 pilots, 1 WSO, 3 WSOp (EW) and 2 WSOp (Aco)) enjoyed a well-founded reputation as operators and aviators. The guys there were used on other projects, such as BAMS-D (Global Hawk) and various flight test activity.

However, us at NAS Jacksonville were more used in the OCU instructor role; VP-30, the “OCU”, is called the FRS, the Fleet Replacement Squadron. We arrived, and after a short while, the US Navy realized that we were fairly well qualified, MPA-wise, so we were quickly utilized to good effect! We undertook their CFS-like course to allow us all to fly as bona-fide instructors. Also, a few of the RAF personnel were embedded with the MPWRS (Maritime Patrol Weapons and Reconnaissance School), getting involved in all things tactical.

We won the Fleet Challenge (think Aird Whyte/Fincastle competition) in 2014

A USN P-8A crewed by Seedcorn....viewed from a periscope
.... We're dropping buoys on a friendly.



Seedcorn personnel, in a USN jet, over the Queen Elizabeth.

It was announced in 2015 by David Cameron's government, that the MoD would purchase 9 P-8A Poseidon aircraft, and base them at RAF Lossiemouth. From that moment on, us Seedcorners at NAS Jax worked on developing a course to take all trades (pilot, TACCO, ACO and EW) from the VP-30 "safe to operate" up to Limited Combat Ready (LCR), to satisfy the demands the new RAF OCU had. The first few crews were then trained, starting in 2019 at NAS Jacksonville, and the RAF Seedcorn staff then finished that LCR training in-country, moving to the UK to complete their Post-Graduate Training, and graduating the trainees as LCR, to feed the front-line. The Jax footprint was bolstered by two extra pilot instructors and a TACCO; we numbered 14 in all.



Me chasing a USN P-3 during the Jax Air Show.!

We had a ball. Not only was our primary duty to teach the US Navy aircrew, but we taught our recently arrived Australian, then Norwegian colleagues. We were involved in Fleet Projects, Air to Air refueling courses and teaching, and I was lucky enough to display the P-8A at the annual Jacksonville Air Show for 3 years. The whole project culminated in us bringing the first RAF Poseidon back to Kinloss Barracks (ironically back to Kinloss, as the runway at RAF Lossiemouth was being re-surfaced!!) on the 4th of February 2020.



Bringing ZP801, The Pride of Moray, home

Now, at RAF Lossiemouth we have a fair few crews trained up, undertaking daily ASW, ASuW and now long range SAR. CXX and 201 are the frontline squadrons, and within the last month, 42 (Torpedo Bomber) Sqn stood up as the Poseidon OCU. It's a great place to live and work, and I feel Seedcorn has been a big part of it all. It's been quite a ride.

Mark Faulds, 4 Nov 23

Autumn Lunch Report

Once more the Farmers' Club in Whitehall Court in London hosted our annual Autumn lunch on Friday 3 November. Before the meal we listened to a moving and humbling presentation by Colour Sergeant Brian Wood MC relating to his service in Iraq, and specifically to the "Danny Boy" battle, the subsequent false accusations of war crimes and his battle with mental health problems resulting both from PTSD and from the five year battle to rebut the specious accusations at the public enquiry into events.

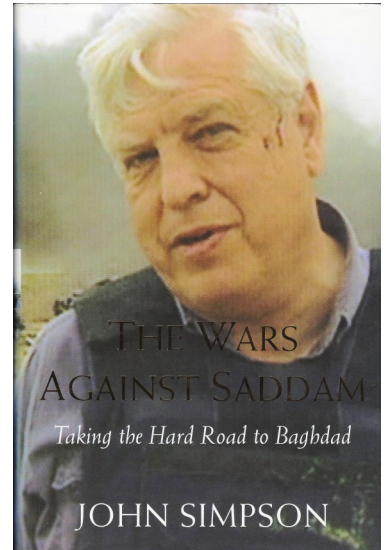


He also spoke of his efforts to raise sponsorship funds for those suffering similar mental stresses, by running 25 marathons in 25 days, hopeful of raising around £10,000; he actually raised £120,000. He also brought with him copies of his book, "Double Crossed" published by Penguin, several copies of which were purchased by members. That book subsequently became a Sunday Times best seller, and was made into a BBC TV drama called "Danny Boy". After listening to the presentation, about thirty members and their partners and guests enjoyed the excellent meal produced by the Farmers' Club kitchens and some fine wine.

Andy Collins

Book Review: The Wars Against Saddam - John Simpson

The face of John Simpson will be very familiar to those whose choice of news programme is the BBC. For 50 years or more he has sought out the trouble spots and conflicts of the World, collecting an enviable number of news reports and not a few injuries. This book, written in 2003 shortly after the end of the second Gulf War, begins with a background to the first Gulf war and all the ensuing events. Therein, perhaps, lies my only adverse comment on this otherwise excellent work. The first 40 pages deal with the character of Iraq in general and Saddam Husein in particular in a rather rambling manner. We jump, in short mini-chapters, between Simpson's attempts to get a visa to enter Baghdad, the character of Saddam's daughter, the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II, Tiglath Pileser, Hammurabi and others, and the British Mandate. These topics are doubtless relevant to the events of 1990 to 2003, but rather more time than might be required is spent on them. Probably the TV journalist in the author was thinking more in terms of a documentary than a literary production. However, the reader who perseveres beyond page 40 will be well rewarded with an account of Simpson's travels that encompasses all the major events of both wars and which gives clear and informed commentary on them.



By page 6 of the book, Simpson makes reference to a tragic incident where “friendly” fire from an American aircraft causes injury to himself and brings death to members of his crew. More than 300 pages later we get to read of the disaster and the events leading up to it. In the intervening pages the author makes many unfavourable (to the US forces) comparisons between the discipline and professionalism of the UK forces and that of the forces of the Americans. His thesis is that, to the US forces, the protection of their own safety takes priority over the risk of death or injury to innocent bystanders. This certainly seems to be borne out by the events he describes so graphically.

Throughout the duration of the two wars against Iraq, Simpson manages to get himself and his team into the most newsworthy, but also most dangerous, locations, usually by legitimate means but on some occasions simply by going there. He calls in many favours from Arab friends, and persuades many less friendly officials to grant him visas, for instance into Baghdad as Gulf War 2 is about to start. He records his friendship with the Afghan interpreters and the cameramen who accompany him on his many risky forays into battle zones. He gives his views on the journalistic integrity of the rival news teams; clearly a fan of CNN International, but less so of Fox News. He records in graphic detail the hazards and privations of living for long periods in a warzone. But most of all he chronicles what really happened in the battles and skirmishes to which he was either a witness, or of which he received accounts immediately after the event. Those accounts often differ significantly from the “official” version, but Simpson's accounts are often the more credible.

This book makes compelling reading. The short (often just a couple of pages) mini-chapters and the descriptive style make it very easy to read “just one more item”, and end up late into the night still wanting to know more. Its four hundred plus pages come with an adequate, though far from comprehensive, index of about 20 pages. That, and the absence of a Contents, make it difficult to use this publication as a work of reference, but it is nonetheless a good ripping yarn! I, as is my custom, picked the book up for £1 at a charity book-stall. Those less fortunate can get it in hardcover from Amazon for about £10.

Andy Collins

206 Test & Evaluation Sqn – Association Report

When I last wrote to you all, we were under the new leadership of King Charles. I can report that the leadership closer to home has also changed, with Wg Cdr Woolven handing over 206 Sqn to Wg Cdr Marc ‘Dutch’ Holland. Our new boss is no stranger to T&E as he served as an exec on 206 Sqn in his role as an EP previously. Having graduated as a TP from ETPS on the 2021 course, he now takes command of a unit which is at a very high tempo of trials delivery.



Wg Cdr Woolven (Left) Hands Over Command of 206 Sqn to Wg Cdr Holland.

Departing the Sqn:

Wg Cdr Aidy Woolven has handed the Sqn over and departed for a role in the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) program. FCAS is a proposed Gen 6 aircraft still in the design process destined to take over from Typhoon. This role keeps Aidy in the Developmental T&E world.

Sqn Ldr Ed Eldred departs to join the Defence Science & Technology Laboratory (dstl) as a military advisor. He has served on the Sqn as a C-130J Evaluator Pilot (EP) which gave him an intro to the world of Test. He clearly liked it as he was a successful applicant to ETPS which he completed and returned to the Sqn as an A400M TP.

New Arrivals:

Wg Cdr Dutch Holland returns to us as our new Boss. He has a rich heritage of Air Mobility operations with tours on the C-130J and the C17. He is also an experienced T&E practitioner dating back to the days of the Hercules Operational Evaluation Unit which pre-dated 206 Sqn.

Flt Lt Gav Fryer was previously on 206 as a Voyager EP. He returns to us fresh from graduating from his TP course at ETPS and is already getting his teeth in to Voyager trials work.

Mr Marco Dranginis is a QinetiQ (QQ) Trials Management Officer. He joins us to give us a permanent QQ footprint for assistance when we run ATEC Trials in partnership with QQ.

Promotion:

Flt Lt Tom Chatterton has been at the forefront of the Flight Test Engineer's section on 206 since his arrival. He quickly demonstrated his professionalism in the Test arena and has been rewarded with promotion. He will

not stray far from home as he leaves us to join the Test and Evaluation Centre (TEC) on promotion to Sqdn Ldr where he will be responsible for co-ordinating flight trials across the ASWC on all manned platforms.

C-130J. That's it folks! Albert has retired and the last 2 frames were finally delivered to Marshall of Cambridge for sale during the last week of June. The RAF is now without a C-130 in its inventory for the first time since 1967. The last role performed was as a stage at the Hercules Hangar Bash. A most excellent evening – even if my memory of it is a little blurry!



The Main Stage at the Hercules Hangar Bash.

C17. The C17 has been very busy with FL flying and has been heavily tasked in support of operations in Ukraine and now Gaza. This has meant that there has been little opportunity for any trials work so our resident C17 TP has had to muck in with operational flying. On the plus side he has managed to renew his instructor rating.

Voyager. Like the C17, Voyager has seen a huge FL demand due to operational tasking. The team are currently working hard on the Simulator assessment. Although not the most exciting trials work, the assessment of simulators by T&E personnel informs the FL on exactly what the simulator can – and often more importantly – can't be used for when training crew members. This vital task is completed on all platforms to allow conversion units to write a syllabus which gives training value when utilising 'synthetic' training devices.

ISTAR. Very soon to be a thing of the past for 206 Sqn. 56 Sqn at RAF Waddington were previously the ISTAR Mission Systems T&E Sqn. They were responsible for the test of new equipment to be installed to aid ISTAR aircraft deliver in their role. Now the Sqn is standing up as a full T&E Sqn and will also be responsible for the end-to-end testing of all ISTAR platforms. They have already been poaching TPs and FTEs from us in readiness to undertake this role. This year's ETPS graduates will include ISTAR pilots as new TPs to complete the handover of ISTAR T&E to 56 Sqn.

A400M. Lots of exciting trials have been in progress this summer and autumn. The big events were completion of the Modular Maritime Platform (MMP), Medium Stressed Platform (MSP) and further Low-Level Parachutist (LLP) trials. MMP is a boat airdrop platform which is gravity despatched. This is now complete and was handed over to the FL as a new capability for them to maintain. MSP was completed as the first extracted load trial. This is where the airdrop load is pulled out of the cargo bay by an extractor parachute so it exits the aircraft quickly for heavier loads. Along side all of the cutting edge stuff, the routine of Retrofit carries on with crews regularly operating with Airbus Defence & Space (AD&S) in Spain to test new build standards of aircraft as they are subjected to upgrades during their service life. With 4 TPs, 4 EPs and 4 Air Load Masters full time on the A400M, we are still finding it very busy keeping up with the demand for trials work.



ZM421 Acceptance. In my last article, I wrote about bringing ZM421 back from Spain. A number of you have asked for more information on the process of accepting a new aircraft into RAF Service. It was a great honour to be part of the team. As one of the squadrons more senior (in age only) members, this was probably the last time I would have an opportunity like this.

New aircraft are built at the Final Assembly Line (FAL) in Seville. Components are delivered from all of the consortium partners for assembly at the FAL. An enormous hangar houses the FAL. There is a docking station at one end where a Beluga delivers the oversize components, and a new aircraft is wheeled out of the other end.

The delivery and acceptance was a very busy 10 days. The aircraft goes through a vigorous Customer Acceptance Manual (CAM) process. The brand-new aircraft is initially test flown for its first ever sortie by a dedicated crew of AD&S test professionals. They conduct initial flights to check the airworthiness of the aircraft. Once that is done, and the airframe is considered ready, the CAM process begins.

A 206 Sqn Pilot, Load Master and FTE join the AD&S team in Seville for the CAM testing. The shiny new aircraft had only just rolled off the production line at the FAL in Seville and completed 2 flights when we joined them. The 206 Team are then integral in all aspects of testing the new airframe to ensure it functions correctly in all aspects before the UK MOD will take ownership. The testing for us involved a thorough systems test on the ground ensuring all aspects of avionics and systems worked as advertised. Next was engine ground runs. This was only the 5th time each engine had been started. It provided an opportunity to test more systems such as the hydraulics and therefore the flying control system. During our ground testing, the aircraft next to us was a brand-new aircraft just out of the FAL destined for the German Air Force. They started the engines for the very first time which was a spectacle for us to watch as all off the protective oils and greases were burned off. The AD&S team had not briefed us on this happening and took great delight in our reactions!

All seemed to run on rails for us with a very well-behaved new aircraft. The highlight was the initial flight – only the 3rd ever flight for this aircraft and flown under a Spanish registration before the transfer of ownership to the MOD. During this flight we were able to do many things not normally achievable under our rules such as checking low speed protections and fly-by-wire regression into backup modes while airborne. The CAM document is about 400 pages and goes into rigorous test regimes to conclusively prove all elements of the aircraft are functional in normal or backup modes.

It was an exhausting time but thoroughly rewarding. The CAM process – while being a well-trodden path for all A400M customers – is a great opportunity to fly an aircraft to the edges of its performance envelope. We still get to do a version of this with the Retrofit program, but nothing will ever be better than that new aircraft smell!!

Nihil Nos Effugit. Dunc Wright – 206 Sqn Association Liaison.

The Indian Air Force Museum, New Delhi

After leaving the RAF at 38, I was fortunate to find a job in civil aviation flying freighters that took me to parts of the planet I had never envisaged visiting! I felt it was my duty to take advantage of the opportunities this sometimes offered, and visit some aircraft museums that are slightly off the beaten track.

The first of these is the subject of this review, The **Indian Air Force Museum, Palam**, which is located at the Palam Air Force Station in New Delhi, India. If your travels should take you to India, and you have a layover at the Indira Gandhi international Airport, the museum is very close by on what was the original base that now forms part of the very large modern airport. If staying in New Delhi, depending on traffic conditions it can take 30-45 minutes to travel out to the museum; my only advice would be to not follow my example of using a Tuk-tuk to get there – a truly scary experience. The museum is managed by AVM Vikram Singh, a second generation test pilot, historian, and author of war books.

Admission to the museum does not break the bank, 20 rupees, however overseas visitors must bring their passport to be allowed in – be warned. The Museum is centred on hangars that formed part of the Palam Air Base and the entrance features an indoor display gallery that contains historic photographs, memorabilia, uniforms and personal weapons of the Indian Air Force from its inception in 1932. It should come as no surprise to the historians amongst you that the role of the IAF in the 1971 war with Pakistan features quite prominently. There is a heroes gallery of pilots who gave their lives in the conflict (quite a large number), and outside there are the remnants of Pakistan Air Force aircraft that were shot down during the conflict.



The gallery leads to a hangar exhibiting small aircraft and Air Force inventory including anti-aircraft guns, vehicles and ordnance. There are clear labels in front of most exhibits, although those who wish for a bit more detail or background will I am afraid be disappointed. The aircraft collection is quite varied, as is the condition that they have been preserved in – at some point there must have been a surplus of silver paint to be used up at the end of a financial year. Highlights of the indoor aircraft for me were the Westland Wapiti bi-plane, a well-cared for Westland Lysander and a very nice Mk XVIII Supermarine Spitfire. The tail section of a Sukhoi SU-7 that lost a rather large chunk of the rudder to Pakistani anti-aircraft fire, but was successfully recovered to base, was quite memorable too!

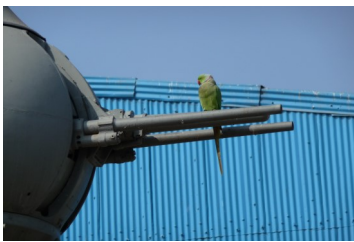


Larger aircraft are exhibited outside the hangar. There one notices the distinct transition away from Western designed aircraft, the most modern of which were the Hawker Hunter and HS748, towards the products of the former Soviet Union. Stand out items include an example of the Mikoyan Mig-25, and most other earlier Mig designs. A couple of larger aircraft are also to be found, including a Consolidated B-24 Liberator that has suffered at the hands of the silver paint surplus! The outdoor gallery also contains several war trophies, from the afore mentioned conflict with Pakistan, radar equipment and captured enemy vehicles.



The Indian Air Force retains a small collection of flyable retired aircraft, and these can sometimes be seen on the surrounding aircraft pans outside the museum area.

In conclusion, the Indian Air Force Museum is well worth a slight detour should you find yourself in New Delhi. Like many things in India, it has a unique style and feel. Don't forget lots of water, late Autumn or early spring offer considerably more pleasant temperatures to visit.



IAF Museum: H4F8+JM4, Palam, New Delhi, Delhi 110010, India

Open Wed-Sunday 10.00 – 17.00

Keith Girdwood

Future Events:

Association Reunion 10-12 May 2024

Sudbury Hotel, Faringdon, Oxfordshire.

See attached calling notice for more details.

Tail End Charlie.....

It only remains for me as Secretary to hope the latest Newsletter finds you all in good health, and issue my familiar plea for any budding article writers out there to be fearless in coming forward!

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and hope you all have a Happy and Prosperous 2024.

Keith Girdwood.