

# Meet the members



The weather was grim but the company more than made up for it as members gathered at Duxford for the annual AOPA Bonus Day. While some 60 aircraft were booked in, the appalling late September weather meant that in the event only 13 made it on the day, and most had to leave early to stay ahead of a front which brought gales and flooding to much of northern Britain.

The majority of members chose to drive in instead, and almost 100 pilots descended on the Marshall Auditorium at the Imperial War Museum to hear AOPA speakers expound on the issues facing general aviation today, and answer questions. AOPA Vice President Cliff Spink was followed by AOPA Chief Executive Martin Robinson, Board Member Nick Wilcock and European lobbyist Lutz Dommel, and the sessions were introduced by AOPA Chairman George Done.

Outside the auditorium there was a chance to chat to the speakers over a spot of lunch or to have your particular queries settled by the relevant expert. There were also guided tours of the museum, surely one of the finest in the world.

Martin Robinson believes the event has become a valuable addition to the AOPA calendar and one which should be held every year. "It's helpful for us to meet members in a group and hear their concerns, as opposed to what we think their concerns are," he said. "Members obviously feel there is value in the day because we're getting more people coming to each Bonus Day. This year we had a fantastic turnout, especially when you consider how awful the weather was.

"We have a lot of people to thank for making the day a success – our speakers, obviously, but behind the scenes Mick Elborn, Chris Royle, Mandy Nelson, and particularly Alan Evans at Duxford for making the event possible. I look forward to a bigger and better AOPA Bonus Day next year."

## A life on the edge

The keynote speaker for the day was Cliff Spink, an indefatigable champion of general aviation whose flying career has taken him from RAF Halton apprentice to Air Marshal via the Hunter, Lightning, Phantom and Tornado, and who has hundreds of hours on exotic aircraft like the Hurricane, Spitfire, Mustang, Corsair, Wildcat, Bf 109 and F-86.

George Done introduced him as Air Marshal Clifford Rodney Spink CB CBE FCM1 FRAeS RAF Rtd, Master of the Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators, President of the Historic Aircraft Association and AOPA Vice President. Cliff, who now flies a Cirrus SR22 on the N-register – an aircraft he says he gets as much enjoyment from as any he has flown – gave members a brief run-down of his flying experiences interspersed with comments on the lessons he had learned from them.

Cliff started by stressing the importance of catching them young. "The ATC did so much for me," he said. "The most important single thing we have to do is capture the youngsters. I got my personal love of aviation from being around the farm in Kent with the early Meteors going over in the 1950s. Frequently we'd have the target-towing slings that dropped off, and it was a great excitement when I found one of those, full of bullet holes. But I spent so much time reading about aeroplanes that the headmaster told me: 'It's you or me, Spink – and it ain't going to be me.' So I left school and found myself at Halton, where I was quickly disabused by the RAF of the entrenched notion that I knew it all."

Persisting with requests to be considered for pilot training, Cliff went through all the aptitude tests and was called into the office of the Commandant, the famous wartime Spitfire ace Al Deere. 'We don't think you'll



**Top: despite the weather almost 100 members travelled to Duxford for the AOPA Bonus Day  
Above: a Junkers Ju-52 provides a backdrop for some good advice on the Duxford fence**

make much of an engineer, Spink, so we're sending you for pilot training,' Deere said. "I don't profess to be a good engineer – in fact I was an electrician at Halton – but it gave me an insight into what makes an aeroplane tick," Cliff said. "Getting to know an aircraft is a decided advantage for a pilot, as is getting to know the people who work on it."

Cliff went to Cranwell for ab initio



**Left: Cliff (with crisps) enjoys a display pilots' lunch with Al Walker at Lydd in 2007**  
**Below: Lightning – "the finest rocket ship a young man could want to fly"**  
**Bottom: Cliff Spink shows photographs of his Spitfire in formation with the Vulcan**

aeroplanes I've every flown," Cliff said. "The first aeroplane you really had to operate, gunnery, combat, bombs, rocketry, you really had to operate it. We used to fire three-inch rockets off the rails and we'd go to the range at Pembrey for firing practice followed by a 6g recovery. I came down in the dive and fired, one rocket went off, but the other hung up. The technique was to let go the trigger, but I forgot, and the rocket disappeared off into the Bristol Channel... somewhere there's a poor Welsh fisherman..."

Posted to Lightnings, Cliff went through Coltishall. "That was an intimidating aeroplane," he said. "It seemed enormous, with a big ladder to get up into it. I call it the finest rocket ship any young man could wish to fly. With just



two missiles and nothing else it was under-armed but it was probably the best captain-maker. I was still young and very foolish, but the Lightning hard-wired me for the idea that when things are not going well in the air, make a decision and stick to it. With the short endurance of the Lightning, you didn't have time to think out the 100 percent solution to your problem. So do it, get on with it, and don't change your mind unless

training on the Jet Provost. "I was lucky with this plane," he said. "Those first 100 – 200 hours, wherever you do them... the integrity of that training is so important. That hard-wires you for the rest of your career. As we've seen with recent loss of control accidents in commercial aviation, if the basics are neglected, the worst can happen. I'm a firm advocate of that hard-wiring early on, and I bang on about it a bit."

Cliff told amusing stories about brushes with authority, including a celebrated occasion when he and two other students decided to do some illegal formation flying. After practising a break, one of the students saw two other JPs and formed on them; unfortunately they were flown by two CFS examiners who were surprised to find themselves a threesome; there was hell to pay.

Once he'd got his Wings Cliff, with 170 hours, went on to the Gnat. "This was a very demanding aeroplane, agile, with great performance, and I remember thinking it was going to be make or break for me. I flew with an instructor, John McWilliam, who was a very keen low level aerobatic pilot. I've seen many a Welsh dry stone wall go past my canopy, thinking I was never going to be able to do this..."

"I nearly caught my first cold – one of several – when Valley clamped in and I was diverted to Ballykelly. I didn't know where that was, the weather was getting worse, the rain was pouring down and Pilot Officer Spink was thinking, this is not very good. I got a very friendly controller

and was vectored onto final approach, saw the strip, touched down, pulled the chute, and a combination of crosswind and chute sent me nearly off the runway. My heart rate was off the clock. I shut down the engine and just sat there, until an old veteran leaning into the cockpit, switched the battery off, made my seat safe and said, "You need a drink, young man..."

On to the Hunter. "One of the nicest



absolutely necessary. You'll find it probably was the best decision anyway."

Cliff spoke about a double engine failure in a Lightning – he did the fastest-ever double relight – and a bizarre occasion when a colleague dumped his ventral tank twice in different emergencies, only for it to fall into the same old lady's orchard. Pilots often competed to see how high they could get the Lightning. It was forbidden to go above 56,000 feet because of issues with oxygen and pressure clothing. "But we were foolish young men," he said. "I got scared at 64,000 feet, where the sky goes midnight blue. But lots of my chums flew a lot higher.



"We spent a lot of time plugged in to the tanker, and it took some discipline to sit patiently with fuel dwindling while others took their turn. One day a Mk 1 came up, desperate to get to the front of the queue, so we let him in... nobody said anything, but he tried two or three times to plug into the tanker, then realised he didn't have a fuel probe and peeled off quick. Maybe we should have told him earlier."

Cliff was in Cyprus for the Turkish invasion in 1974. "I intercepted the first Turkish aircraft to come over," he said. "I was on Battle Flight and the controller warned me of a group of six aircraft coming in from the north. Our rules of engagement were that we should only shoot second, which gives the other fellow the edge, so I was on my guard. As I took off I was heartened to see my flight commander Henry Ploszek running to his aircraft.

**It was so hot I slid the canopy back, and that was the last I saw of my paperwork, charts and everything**

"I met the first RF84 Thunderbolt coming in over the coast. The pilot, who must have been pretty nervous, gave me all the NATO hand signals and I shadowed him as he flew around the island. I knew he was taking pictures because I could see the camera door open and close, so I had a good idea of what he was interested in. Eventually Henry came alongside and this chap decided he had enough and headed north. I was able to give a pretty comprehensive debrief on what he'd photographed, and four or five days later the Turks invaded using some of those sites as parachute landing grounds.

"Several years passed, and Group Captain Spink is at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) where pilots are talking about aeroplanes we've flown, and it became clear that the Turkish Colonel opposite me had been the pilot of that RF84 on that day."

Cliff went on to the Phantom F4. "It was a bit disappointing at first," he said. "In cold power it had a lot of installed thrust but you needed reheat to get it. The big intakes for the Spey engine made it a bit ponderous, but it went a long way and in

reheat it had more power than the American Phantom. We learned to love it – it was a real warplane, with eight missiles, a gun and a lot of fuel. In the Phantom cockpit you did 'challenge and response' checks. I was going down the taxiway at Leuchars and my mind was on other things while my Nav, David Jones, was giving me the challenge and response. Halfway down, Dave said, 'Okay Spinko, let's do the checks again from the top.' Why, I wanted to know. 'I was watching you, and your head never moved,' he said. And he was right – I was just 'doing the checks', going through the motions.

"Fatigue can also catch you out. When I had 700 hours on the Phantom I was landing at Leuchars after a long sortie, and my hand went to where the chute was – in the Lightning!"

Cliff later commanded a Tornado Wing in the first Gulf War, then when he became station commander at Coningsby, home of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, he flew his first historic aircraft. He already had some 500 hours on Chipmunks and was familiar with the Harvard. After a comprehensive briefing from Sqn Ldr Paul Day he taxied out for his first flight in the Hurricane. "One can be intimidated by the value of these precious aeroplanes," he said. "There was so much noise I thought something must be wrong and I was waiting for the thumbs down from the ground crew, but they were all smiles and

thumbs up – everything was normal. It's certainly the noisiest and hottest aeroplane I've flown. I quickly learned always to have things tied down. It was so hot I slid the canopy back, and that was the last I saw of my paperwork, charts and everything.

"The Hurricane is quite slow and spongy, a good gun platform and it turns very tight. The Spitfire is really an energetic aeroplane to fly and teaches people speed control on finals. If you're 10 knots fast on the approach you really give yourself problems. People often ask me which of all the aeroplanes I've flown I consider the best, and I have to say that, if Himself says I've only got one more flight, it would have to be in a Spitfire."

There followed a brief Q and A session in which Cliff was asked whether, given his comments on hard-wiring good practice into students at an early stage, commercial qualifications were valued more highly than experience in regulating flight instructors. "We're losing a huge pool of experience, I believe," he said. "Trying to ally instruction to a commercial licence has never made great sense. You have to look behind the licence... there's a lot to be said for having something more practical, but that said, there are a lot of greybeards out there who have the right tickets, too." ■

## A licence to explain

Thank heavens for Nick Wilcock. He has a rare talent for reading *and understanding* the torrent of verbiage that pours daily from EASA and the CAA – documents that cause ordinary mortals to run away screaming with their hands over their ears. Not only that, but he can assimilate it and mentally cross-reference the data to the point where he is telling EASA where today's regulations are utterly incompatible with the ones they published yesterday. Nick gave a slick presentation on the state of GA regulation and fielded questions with an aplomb that left members mightily impressed by his grasp of the labyrinthine complexities of EASA rulemaking.

Nick, a former RAF VC-10 instructor, has held instrument qualifications since 1971 and has also worked as a civilian instructor and examiner. He addressed the situation surrounding the IMC rating, which he said was invented 40 years ago



**Above: members had several grand's worth of free consultancy advice from AOPA's Nick Wilcock**

by AOPA and was enshrined in the ANO. It removed the restrictions to VFR imposed on unrated pilots and was found to be a safe and reasonable response to a genuine need. When the Joint Aviation Authorities came along at the turn of the 21st century they allowed the IMC rating to continue under a regulation which effectively said a pilot "may fly under IFR



**Above: Nick Wilcock provides licensing advice to an AOPA member**

provided he held a qualification appropriate to what he was doing”, provided that the qualification was restricted to his own country.

EASA, however, in Rule FCL600 ‘IR general’ took this concession away. It took no account of the meteorological differences across Europe or the different requirements for coping with them. EASA realised the British were rebelling, so FCL008 was formed – a working group to look at the question of instrument qualifications.

EASA also decided there should be ‘EASA’ and ‘non-EASA’ aircraft, operating under different rules. Non-EASA, or ‘Annex 2’ aircraft, included microlights, homebuilts, ex-military aircraft and those that had been out of production for 35 years. These you can carry on flying on a CAA licence, as now – and the CAA, being sensible, has decreed that you can also fly them on an EASA licence. For all other aircraft you will have to have an EASA licence by April 2014, although you would have another year if flying within the more restricted scope of the LAPL. The seemingly arbitrary nature of the split between EASA and non-EASA aircraft is illustrated by the fact that the Bulldog sits in one camp, while its near-identical twin the Beagle Pup sits in the other.

Because of the fuss that’s been kicked up, it’s been agreed that pre-April 2014 IMC rating privileges will be grandfathered onto EASA licences as the IR (Restricted). Nick said: “Get your IMC rating before that date because that is the only absolute guarantee we have of continuation. The further future of the IMC rating is being debated by FCL008. But we are

determined to win, as are the CAA.”

Nick explained the FCL008-proposed En Route IFR rating, which would allow instrument flight on airways but not instrument approaches. This would require the student to do about 60 percent of the theoretical knowledge for the full IR, with 150 questions in seven exam subjects, and there would be a skills test. There’s also a separate, simpler qualification for cloud flying in sailplanes.

“EASA has not found an acceptable solution for the continuation of the IMC rating,” Nick said. “This is something we insist on. There were 1556 responses to the FCL008 proposals and they are still ploughing through them. EASA’s draft opinion on FCL008 was supposed to come out in the last quarter of 2012 but the Comment Response Document hasn’t even been issued yet. We say they should basically adopt the JAR wording, which allows a national variation as long as the pilot is suitably qualified. We are simply asking that EASA shows some flexibility to allow for different climate conditions; this will help to meet the needs of other nations, not just the UK.”

There were many questions from the floor which indicated a general level of bafflement with EASA and all its works. Afterwards AOPA Board member Chris Royle remarked that members had had several grand’s worth of free consultancy advice from Nick Wilcock and we were lucky to have him to mind the store. Hear, hear. ■

## The struggle to make a difference

In the Chief Executive’s report, Martin Robinson said there was ‘good news, and not so good news’ – and he started on the positive side. He and IAOPA’s new lobbyist Lutz Dommel had met with the Polish MEP who is *rapporteur* (person responsible) for ground handling on the Transport Committee. “We wanted to make sure the provision for self-handling didn’t fall out of the rule-making process,” Martin said. “We formulated some words, and I’m pleased to say our words have been in their decision-making process. They state that while handling may be mandatory, self-handling must be allowed for all aircraft at airports with less than five million passengers. We have more work to do on this front, but we have raised the matter in such a way that it is now recognised by those responsible as an issue that needs to be pushed.



**Lutz Dommel sets up his slideshow with help from Martin Robinson**

“Another issue with which Lutz is involved is the extension of the ICAO accelerate-stop requirement to private aircraft under EASA Ops. AOPA Germany has calculated that this means light twins will be unable to use some 900 European airfields from which they have operated safely for decades. This is now back with EASA and they are looking again at their Ops stuff, and we’ve been briefing MEPs to keep the issue in the forefront of their minds.”

Martin covered the deliberations of the EASA Board of Management, reported elsewhere in these pages, and said that before 2013 EASA should publish internal guidance material which must reflect the concerns of industry. There had to be an explicit requirement to do proper regulatory impact assessments, and the watchword should be “only regulate where you need to, and off the back of genuine data.”

“The problem with EASA is that under

the Basic Regulation, which is the European Commission's scoping document setting out its responsibilities, they must aim to achieve 'a high uniform level of safety', and that is such an imprecise requirement that it could mean anything. As I have repeatedly asked, what is this 'high uniform level of safety'? How do they know they haven't achieved it already? We have to get changes to the Basic Regulation if anything is to be done to turn EASA around.

"While the Management Board has made it clear that there's something amiss with EASA, the trick will be getting EASA to change. Neither the Management Board nor the Parliament really manage or control EASA. A lot of work is needed to try to get the Agency fit for purpose."

Martin also covered briefly the situation with SESAR, particularly the requirement for all aircraft to equip with 8.33 radios, which is

still on the cards. "Fuel cost keeps rising, and we think that avgas has about ten years of useful life left. Lots of work is going on on unleaded fuel and some airfields have started stocking it, but for a lot of the more powerful aircraft out there, the loss of avgas will be serious.

"Another piece of good news is that EASA is reviewing its fees and charges, and we have put down a marker to ensure they didn't start increasing their fees to GA. As a result they have decided there are no plans to increase charges to GA, other than perhaps a small €5 increase on STCs.

"We have been working with GAMA and the EBAA, initiating a campaign called 'GA Connecting Europe'. Freedom of travel within Europe is close to MEPs' hearts, and we will be explaining to them the benefits. GA is an integral part of the transport system. Hundreds of thousands



**Left: former GASCo Chairman Gerald Hackemer (left) with AOPA Chairman George Done**

of people rely on GA for their livelihoods – engineers, aerodromes, ancillary services, we want the politicians to understand that whenever EASA brings forward unnecessary regulation, it breaks another pilot's back. When we lose somebody from flying, there's a job somewhere in the system that goes. Viability of aerodromes is reduced, the price of fuel rises, manufacturers have smaller customer bases. We point out that the total annual avgas use in the UK is equivalent to what a single busy London petrol station would sell in three and a half hours. Next year

**Below: Neil Monks with the Dove he flew in when it was the CAA's ILS calibration aircraft**



MEPs will begin the task of getting themselves re-elected, and we want some binding promises."

During the Q and A Martin warned of the upcoming requirement for registered facilities to become Authorised Training Organisations. These would have to be audited regularly by the CAA, at significant cost, and every course they offered would also require a costly audit. There would be a burdensome increase in bureaucracy which would tip some flying clubs over the edge at this time of recession. And yet there was absolutely no need for change – no shortcomings had been identified in the current system. "We are pressing for this to be a change in name only," Martin said. "The requirements would remain identical and no extra work or cost would be involved. We have been asked to identify 'quick wins' in the regulator process, and that is one of them." ■



## What do you want for a lousy £106 billion?

The Duxford AOPA Bonus Day afforded members the opportunity to get their first look at Lutz Dommel, who is IAOPA's

lobbyist in Brussels, and who as well as having worked for many years in the European Parliament is a general aviation



pilot who keeps an Emeraude in the Belgian capital.

Explaining his background and role, he said he had been working in Brussels since 2000, advising companies, organisations and even government departments how to get things done on a European level. Europe was making itself ever more important, he said. "The German Federal Ministry of Justice calculated that after the Lisbon Treaty of 2010, 84 percent of all German laws and regulations stemmed from EU activities. Two percent came from other international obligations, and only 14 percent are true German laws.

"In the UK the equivalent would be 50 to 75 percent – higher in the field of transport.

"The cost of EU regulation is £106.2

**Left: the big figure – Brussels lobbyist Lutz Dommel sets out the cost of European legislation**

billion a year. Some people benefit, like car makers who pay and get something back, but in GA, we have been on the paying side of the business for more than 10 years. Unfortunately there are no accurate figures available.”

The EU, he said, had come up with a more simplified procedure of how regulation is made after 2010; he then showed a chart of the ‘simplified procedure’, which looked like a madwoman’s knitting. It was essential, he said, to know where in the process you were, and which players you had to talk to now – and it was often far from obvious.

The three political players in Brussels are the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, and the European Parliament. The EC drafts legislative proposals and executes them. “Many call it undemocratic to have the same body preparing and legislating,” Lutz said. “The Council of Ministers meets in Brussels but comprises representatives of the 27 member states and must be lobbied in those member states. The European Parliament is the only democratic unit of the EU. They meet in Brussels, and four days a month in Strasbourg, a bizarre shift which costs €200 million a year and is apparently pointless.

“Before the Lisbon Treaty the Parliament had no power – it simply talked. That has changed, and since Lisbon, the influence



**Above: AOPA's Mandy Nelson manned the registration desk**

of the Parliament is getting greater. The UK has 72 of 754 members of the Parliament, and of the 47 members of the Transport Committee the UK has five.”

“When we think about aviation, we think freedom, innovation, jobs, safety, reliability,” Lutz went on. “When a politician thinks about aviation, he thinks about noise, pollution, Heathrow, BA, 911 and accidents. We have to achieve a greater awareness in Brussels in order to bring these two pictures closer together.

“We take a three-pillars approach. First, we monitor the process... where are our issues right now? Where can we come in, to whom must we talk, where can we change things and where would we be wasting resources. Secondly, we have to

network – tour the bars and the coffee shops talking to MEPs, and equally importantly, talking to their staffs and the people who arrange their agendas. This process has begun... a few weeks ago I organised a fly-in with a DA40 and a small group of politicians and their staff. We had 30 people, and it was very effective in showing them how GA works.

“The third pillar is know-how. You can’t just go with a list of complaints, you have to be deeply into the detail, be prepared for concerns about noise, safety, and everything else. And keep it simple. Usually we have two pages for the MEPs’ helpers and one page for the MEP – and it’s not easy to encapsulate EASA Ops in one page.”

Martin Robinson concluded by saying: “Lutz has been a real find for IAOPA in Europe – he’s a nice guy and he’s incredibly knowledgeable about the Parliament and well-known in it. I was astounded to see all the people that shook hands with him. None of our appointments have been in MEPs’ offices – they’re all in informal surroundings, where the real work gets done. Everyone here is contributing financially to this vital work, and we need more pilots to do so. If you can persuade a new member to join, we’ll all be better off.” Lutz Dommel has a website – [www.lutzdommel.com](http://www.lutzdommel.com) ■

## Benefits of AOPA Membership

*As an AOPA member you are entitled to make use of any or all of the benefits listed here. You may find some will save you money, and at the same time you will be helping your Association*



### The AOPA Aircrew card

With the ever increasing requirement to produce photo identification, the AOPA air crew card is a valuable asset as it shows your photo as well as your pilot's licence number and AOPA membership number. The AOPA air crew card is also extremely useful in negotiating discounts in the UK and throughout the world. Let us know how your air crew card has benefited you.

### HRS

Save on hotel accommodation - free online booking with immediate confirmation at more than 250,00 hotels worldwide. Type the following into your browser you will be directed to the AOPA UK/ HRS hotel booking website: <http://www.hrs.com/web3/?clientId=ZW5fX2FvcGFbnRlcm5hdGlvbmFs,0&currencyISO=ROJQ,0> You can also book over the phone by calling the HRS 24/7 reservation and support centre on: 0208 846 0691. Quote your AOPA UK HRS customer number: 1018822004. If you have any questions about HRS and the service in general, please email: [servicedeskuk@hrs.com](mailto:servicedeskuk@hrs.com) (please do not use this address to make bookings or cancellations)

### HMCA - Hospital and Medical Care Association

Specialises in providing medical and financial benefits for membership groups in the UK. For more information on the services available to AOPA members go to [www.hmca.co.uk/aopa.htm](http://www.hmca.co.uk/aopa.htm)

### Discounted fuel in Jersey and Guernsey

AOPA members benefit from a 5% discount when purchasing fuel from Fuel Supplies CI Limited. You must be a current member of AOPA and be ready to show your AOPA membership card.

### AOPA Lottery Club

The AOPA Lottery is an additional revenue stream for AOPA to fund the work we do on behalf of all of our members. 50% of the funds collected are used to distribute as prizes and 50% to the fighting fund. If you would like to offer additional support by joining the lottery club please email [accounts@aopa.co.uk](mailto:accounts@aopa.co.uk) for a registration form. Please note the you MUST be an AOPA member to participate in the Lottery.

### Medical Advice

Free initial aviation related medical advice. Email your query to [info@aopa.co.uk](mailto:info@aopa.co.uk) and mark your email for the attention of Dr Ian Perry.

# BOOK Reviews

## Airborne

by Neil Williams

Illustrated by Lynn Williams  
Crecy Publishing £10.95

Books that still move me as they did when I first read them include *Tom Sawyer*, *Cider with Rosie* and *1984*. Aviation titles in this category include *Fate is the Hunter* and *The Right Stuff*. One other is the subject of this review, *Airborne* by Neil Williams.

The hardback version of this book was originally published in 1977 but has long been out of print. Now Crecy publishing, in conjunction with Neil's brother Lynn and the Neil Williams estate, has re-released the book in paperback format. Three new chapters and lots of photos from Neil's collection have been added. The original was illustrated exclusively by Lynn Williams' (Neil's brother) beautiful line drawings, so it's good to see that most of these have been included in this new edition.

Neil was an RAF pilot, trained in Canada, and was latterly a graduate of the ETPS at Farnborough. He turned his hands to flying a wide variety of aircraft ranging from the Shuttleworth Collection's aircraft, WWII warbirds (single and multi engine) to fast jets. He was a gifted aerobatic pilot, and was British Aerobatic Champion no fewer than 13 times.

But Neil also had the gift of words and writes beautifully and evocatively of his experiences in flying this wide spectrum of aircraft types. He describes flying a particular type, or recounts some aviation escapade in each chapter. When put together as here, it records the career of a very gifted pilot and writer.

Most dramatic is Neil's account of the day when failure of the main spar of the Zlin Trener he was flying caused the starboard wing to fail in an upward direction.

He tells this story in a wonderful

understated laconic style. For example, at one point he writes "dihedral was by now noticeably increasing..." He goes on to describe the whole eight minute (the limit of the Zlin's inverted fuel system) flight, during which time he had to fight down panic, and plan his actions. He decided that he would remain inverted and roll erect at the last moment before setting the aircraft down on the grass at Hullavington.

But he was back flying later that day, performing aerobatics to express his joy and thanks at surviving what could have been a fatal accident. Zlin later sent him a telegram that said "Sorry, congratulations, thanks". For this action, Neil was awarded

the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Services in the Air. Many younger people express disbelief when they hear of this incident. Buy this book and read about it at first hand.

Sadly Neil, his wife and two other crew members lost their lives in 1977 when a CASA 2 111 (a Spanish built Heinkel 111) that Neil was ferrying from Spain to the UK hit a cloud covered mountain.

I cannot recommend this book too highly. It represents excellent value for money, and if you

are anything like me it will evoke a smile, awe and a huge amount of respect for one of the UK's most gifted but sadly missed pilots. – *Chris Royle*

## Red Arrows in Camera

By Keith Wilson

Haynes, £25

A worthy addition to the canon of Red Arrows literature, Keith Wilson's compilation presents a close-up view of every aspect of the team's operations and is graced with some truly memorable photographs. Author Wilson is himself an excellent photographer who has flown with the Red Arrows (and has often provided photographs for this magazine) and furnishes many great pictures of the Arrows, and I'm sure he won't mind me saying that the highlights of the book are some extraordinary shots by E.J.



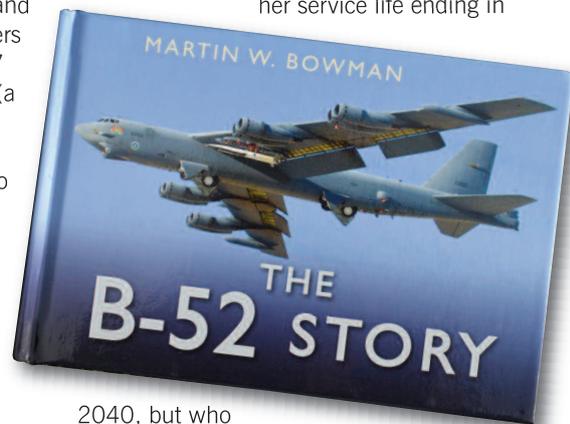
Van Koningsveld, who was clearly given open access to the team and flew with Red 10 on several occasions to capture images from breathtaking attitudes. The text is clear and informative, the topics covered are comprehensive and the book is well worth the money. The Arrows have suffered more than their share of tragedies in recent times and this unashamed encomium is timely. A share of the purchase price goes to the RAF Benevolent Fund. – *Pat Malone*

## The B52 Story

Martin Bowman

The History Press

I've always had a special interest in the B-52 as we're exactly the same age – she flew for the first time three days before I was born, and the way things are going she'll long outlast me; this book postulates her service life ending in



2040, but who knows, there may be life extensions after that. She could even be the first aircraft to spend a century in service.

The 'Aluminum Overcast' was designed for Cold War duty – a one-way trip to Russia, Slim Pickens style – and the original plan was to raze 70 Soviet cities with 133 atomic bombs in a single strike. For almost ten years a force of armed B-52s was kept airborne around the clock in case the Russians should strike America's airfields first. And of course the B-52 figured prominently in the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, when it looked likely that the world was going to end at teatime – tell that to t'young folk today...

B-52s later popped up in Vietnam, in

Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Serbia... a force of seven aircraft left Barksdale AFB in Louisiana, bombed Iraq and got home in over 35 hours – compare that with Black Buck's 15 hour round trip.

This is one of those pocket-sized hardcover books – Bowman has several out, on the Hunter, Lightning and so on. The first third covers a specific segment of its Vietnam history, and while there's a lot of interesting stuff

in the remainder there's not enough to my mind about what it was like to fly. Other than saying its pilots found it less sprightly than the B-47 Canberra (understandably) the book is more about what it did than what it was. – *Pat Malone*

## Quicklook at Flying

By Paul Smiddy

Available from [www.quicklookbooks.com](http://www.quicklookbooks.com)  
Glossy paperback, 92 pp  
Quicklook Books, £7.99

'Know the basics in 90 minutes,' the sub-heading to this book says, and that's not far from the truth. A complete novice, or an EASA rulemaker, would be able to grasp the rudiments of the amorphous and complicated aviation business in the time it takes to leaf through these pages. I've never seen a book that attempts to cover every aspect of the industry in this way; there's a bit of potted history, from 1709 to the present, a succinct chapter on how aircraft fly, including helicopters, gliders, gyros... then there's an explanation of civil and military aviation, manufacturing, the airline industry, the air traffic control system

– a pretty ambitious canvas. Then we move into flying an aircraft, from ab initio to an airline job. There's useful stuff here – the author warns of the pitfalls and doesn't gild the lily.

A couple of niggles... the author starts the 'your first flight' section with the intimation that you're absolutely going to lose your breakfast, which in my experience as an instructor is absolutely not the case. And he subdivides general aviation into 'business aviation' and 'light aviation' which to my mind is a dangerous game – light aviation, the author says, includes pleasure flying and pilot training... well, I have a light aircraft and I fly for business, and the growing trend of splitting 'business aviation' off from 'general aviation', apart from being hopelessly inexact, is going to hurt us one day.

But all in all, a worthy effort. The language is simple and direct, jargon is absent and there are mercifully few acronyms. – *Pat Malone*



## Out of the Blue

'The sometimes scary and often funny world of flying in the Royal Air Force - as told by some of those who were there'

Compiled and edited by Ian Cowie, Dim Jones and Chris Long

Published by Halldale Media Group. Only obtainable online from <http://halldale.com/shop/out-blue>  
Softback 246 pages  
147mm x 210mm  
Price £7.99 All proceeds go jointly to Help for Heroes and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund

This book is a gem!

There are 90 stories here, many told for the first time, written by retired and serving RAF personnel. Many of the accounts are set in the tense Cold War period, but all are told with humour and in many cases with masterly understatement. This is a

book that one could pick up and read a story or two, but you can't, because every one is so good you don't want to put it down.

For example, you'll find first hand accounts from the pilot of the Hunter that was flown through Tower Bridge in April 1968 in protest at both defence budget cuts and the RAF's 50th anniversary seemingly being ignored by politicians at Westminster.

And what about a few unintended circuits in a runaway Lightning... the story's here, told by the engineer who was at the controls. Those of you who were at Duxford recently would have seen this very Lightning (XM135) in the

Airspace hangar.

And why did a Hunter end up in Tintagel High Street? A small blob of grease was the reason it seems... but read on and enjoy!

Buy it! The money goes to two very deserving charities and it will make a perfect Christmas stocking filler. – *Chris Royle*

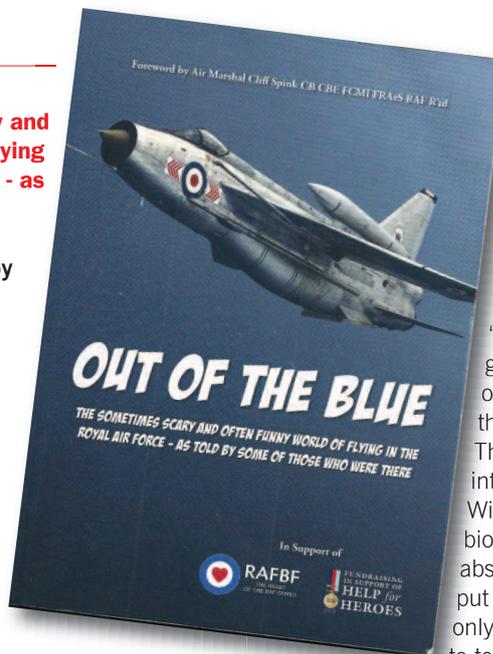
## From Seafire to DC-10

A lifetime of flight

By Ronald Williams

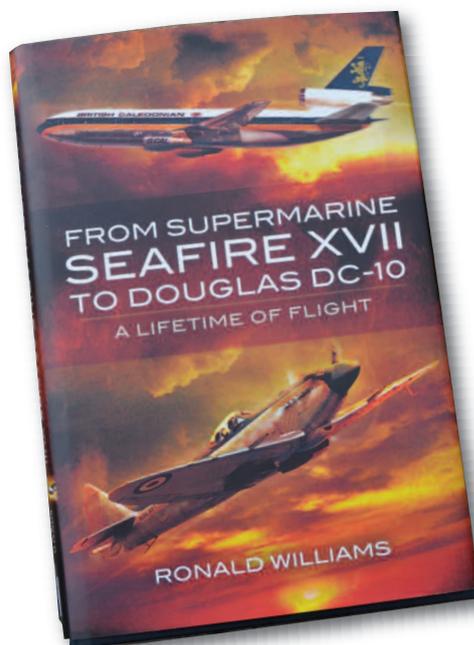
Pen & Sword, £19.99

I must confess my heart quails when I get a book like this; some hoary old aviator with a bar-emptying fund of there-I-was



stories commits his memoirs to paper, usually at the instigation of his grandchildren – my advice is, 'Don't do it, grandad! Think of all the trees that will die...' Then I got stuck into Ronald Williams' biography and I absolutely couldn't put it down. Not only has he a story to tell, but glory be,

he can write! More than that, he puts in all the good stuff, the mistakes he got away with, the mistakes he didn't get away with... whether it be dragging the tail of his inverted Seafire through a wheatfield at 480 kt, losing his captain's stripe after ditching a Twin Pin or getting kicked out of Cathay for being "untrainable" on the Conair 880, he adopts the warts-and-all approach. While his failures make the better stories, he was clearly an above average pilot with a good head on his shoulders and put in ten years in the left seat of BCal 707s before winding up as a Captain on DC-10s. Williams' zest for life shines through the text; the lifestyle enjoyed by airline captains of the sixties and seventies may be a distant memory but he lived it to the full. The book's got a few of the usual Pen-and-Swordisms – proof-reader's suggestions left in the text and so forth – and Williams goes off on a bit of a rant now and then, but all in all it's a worthy effort and a good investment for the bookshelf. – *Pat Malone* ■



# The end of a long line



*Made for the military but happy in civilian life, flying the Miles M38 Messenger was a hands-on business, says David Ogilvy*

**Above: Messenger 2A G-AIEK, modified by Jim Buckingham to represent Monty's wartime Messenger RG333, which he and Chris Fielder flew on the airshow circuit**  
**Right: with fine pitch prop the M38 could take-off like a Storch; one prototype appears also to have leading-edge slats**

The last in the long line of single-engine low wing monoplanes created by the Miles family, the M38 Messenger was intended as an Air Observation Post, but after many disagreements in military and ministry circles the type entered service as a communications machine. Following a first flight on 12th September 1942, only three months from the start of the idea, just 23 were produced for the RAF, but at the war's end its suitability as a tourer for the private market became very clear; 21 of the Service batch survived and were released in 1948. Before then, though, Messengers had earned their fuel and oil by providing 'field' transport for Service chiefs, including Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder and Field Marshal Lord Montgomery. It was claimed that with a fine pitch propeller the short take-off and landing performance was as good as that

of the famous German Fieseler Storch. For its military role, the Messenger was built to be robust, requiring only casual maintenance from relatively unskilled labour, with a single strut undercarriage to withstand heavy landings; whilst this aim may have been achieved in the early days, more recent civil experience has shown that access to some critical parts of the airframe is difficult. As with all Miles designs of the time, the structure was all wood, but with plastic bonded ply skin.

The military Messenger was powered by the 140hp Gipsy Major 1D, but when the type entered production for its civilian role this was replaced by the 155hp Blackburn Cirrus Major. A total run of 81 machines included 58 for home users, with the last to leave the line in January 1948. The airframes were built at Newtownards in Northern Ireland, but flown to the makers' home at Woodley for final painting.

As had been expected, the M38 proved popular for touring as, with 18 gallons in each wing root, it can carry four average people and provide a range of 450 miles. If luggage is carried, though, either fuel must be reduced or a seat left empty. The maximum weight for service and civil versions is identical at 2400 lbs.

In its post-war role the M38 has performed well and served a variety of private and commercial interests. For several years one example, G-AKKG, was to be seen at almost every aviation event, flown by larger than life Vivian Varcoe who was in charge of Shell's aviation operations. Other airframes were used as test-beds for the Blackburn Bombardier and Praga E engines, while another crossed the finishing line first to win the 1954 King's Cup Air Race. Perhaps the most significant experience in the type's history was when a propeller blade broke

away causing the engine to fall off, yet by crowding the rear-seat occupants forward over the instrument panel, the pilot made a successful forced landing.

I had the good fortune to carry out a few hours of twin-conversion instructing on the Messenger's younger sibling the M65 Gemini, so when I had the opportunity to climb aboard the earlier machine I was pleased to do so. The specimen concerned was an ex-military example, known in its civilian form as the Mark 4A, powered by a Gipsy Major 10 of 145hp instead of the original Major 1D. The Messenger has

typical Miles auxiliary aerofoil flaps protruding behind the wing trailing edge; access to the cockpit is by a step on each side, then up to a walkway on each wing root, with essential handholds on both sides of the fuselage. As with many light aircraft of the era, getting in is not the easiest of tasks.

Once aboard, I found the cockpit to be comfortably spacious and the only adverse comment that I have heard is that the leg room is insufficient for a very tall person. The kit includes a Kigass primer, a large low-geared trim wheel on the left and an



All BVM photos via Philip Jarrett

equally low-geared wheel between the seats to work the flaps; these can be drooped to 30°, with a position marker protruding through the top of the port wing. The Bendix cable-operated brakes are mastered by a fly-off lever on the left, with the rudder pedals providing helpful differential action. There is a large and very useful cubby hole for maps et al to the right of the instrument panel, which on both military and civil variants is of the standard RAF layout.

For a taildragger the view for taxiing is good, helped by a large wrap-around windscreen, but the rudder has less effect than I would choose and there is a strong weathercock tendency: this must be due largely to the machine's triple fin design, which becomes more beneficial in the air.

On take-off there is relatively little swing except where affected by a crosswind, when the weathercock tendency comes back into play. The get-away is quite good, but the 4A has a Hoffman propeller of coarser design than when in Service use, as the very short-field ability of the military machine has given way to a more usefully improved cruise performance. The resulting rate of climb remains very acceptable at about 740 feet-per-minute.

In level flight the M38 has light – but not very effective – ailerons and this quality is retained even at higher speeds. Using a comfortable 1950 rpm for the cruise generates about 103mph and an



increase in power to 2050 adds about 10. The three rudders remain relatively ineffective and accurate flying in all but the calmest conditions requires full-time control inputs. Today many pilots would not like this, but as an old fogey who puts *flying* the machine at the head of the list I have no criticism!

Although I have not needed to operate the Messenger in conditions of poor visibility, it can potter along happily at about 65mph with 10 degrees of flap and

reasonable conditions and I finished the flight with a general feeling of satisfaction.

Today eight Messengers remain on the home register and five are airworthy. Of these, G-AKIN warrants a special mention, as it has been based at Sywell almost since new in 1947 and is owned by a Trust that exists solely and deservedly to protect its future as a living flying machine. I hope that this is not the only example of the type that will be with us in the years ahead. ■



Peter R March



Engine test beds – Blackburn Bombardier (above) and Praga-engined version (below)

1800 rpm. Taking it further down the scale, slight buffet begins at just over 50 mph and the published clean stall occurs at a reduction of a further 12. The break-away behaviour is benign.

The flaps can be extended to 30° and when these are lowered the ailerons droop in useful sympathy. Even in this condition the angle of descent is not as steep as might be expected, but the rudders are not sufficiently powerful to provide effective side-slipping in compensation. An initial approach at 65 reducing to 55 over the fence makes realistic sense, but those with expertise on the type claim that the final figure can be reduced to 40 for getting into a really short field, which was essential in the machine's days on military service. However, out of respect for someone else's aeroplane and my lack of time on the type, I avoided putting this to the test.

The hold-off angle to achieve a three-point touch-down is quite large, but this is to be expected with a machine intended for short-field operation. There is no problem in keeping straight when able to land into wind, but the weather-cocking tendency calls for active use of the differential braking when not so fortunate. However, it remains fully controllable in all



Peter R March

**Above: Messenger will potter along happily at 65mph with 10 degrees of flap**  
**Top right: cockpit may be a little tight for a long-legged pilot**  
**Above right: weather-cocking tendency calls for judicious use of differential braking**  
**Right: Messenger G-AKIN has been based at Sywell since 1947**

