

# Instructors' awayday

Former VC-10 tanker instructor Nick Wilcock steps back ten years as the Instructor Committee samples his old life



**Left: committee members climb aboard the 'Queen of the Skies at Brize Norton**  
**Above: little and large – PA28 keeps company with Tristar, C-17 and other heavies**  
**Below: Geoffrey and Suzie Boot's Sial Marchetti SF.260W on the ramp at Brize**  
**Bottom: Rolls Royce Conways tight to the fuselage cause few asymmetric problems**



Thanks to the organisational skills of Matt Lane, one of the members of the AOPA Instructor Committee and CFI of the RAF Brize Norton Flying Club, committee members were invited to hold our routine June meeting at RAF Brize Norton. Rather than battling with the joys of the London public transport system to meet in Victoria, we were invited to fly or drive to the RAF's largest aerodrome by kind permission of the Station Commander.

Not only were we to hold our meeting at Brize, we were also invited to visit No. 101 Squadron, the RAF's premier air-to-air refuelling squadron. Matt's 'day job' is as 101's Senior Engineering Officer; he and his team are responsible for

ensuring that the VC10 fleet, the RAF's 'Queens of the Skies', are ready and able to meet whatever challenge should be presented to them.

I met Matt at the Air Terminal and after swapping his executive limousine – or rather, Vauxhall Corsa – for the squadron's minibus, we drove over to the Flying Club's hangar to await the arrival of those members who were flying in. Shortly after a TriStar had taxied out, first to arrive were George Done, Chris Royle and Ian Marshall in a PA28 from White Waltham, followed by Geoffrey and Suzie Boot in their Sial-Marchetti SF.260W and finally Carol Cooper in a Cessna 152 from Andrewsfield. Meanwhile Dorothy Pooley and George Capon had arrived by road and the minibus was sent to collect them, before we all drove over to 101 with Matt playing the role of White Van Man rather than SEngO.

After a short welcome and standard H&S brief, we were each issued with the duty hi-vis vest to walk the 50ft or so to ZA149, one of the squadron's VC10K3 aircraft.

Originally built as a type 1154 Super VC10 for East African Airways and first registered as 5X-UVJ, ZA149 'H' was converted to a type 1164 VC10K Mk 3 along with three sister aircraft and was delivered to 101 in May 1985. Since then the aircraft has participated in every recent conflict; I first flew the aircraft in June 1985 and last flew it in October 2002. Largest and most capable of the RAF's VC10s, the K3 carries around 80 tonnes of fuel and is fitted with three refuelling hoses as well as a probe for receiving fuel in flight from other tankers. And is still one of the most graceful aircraft to be seen in our skies!

Matt's team gave us a detailed tour of ZA149, which was undergoing a routine engine change, before the next item on the agenda which was a session in the VC10K3 flight simulator. So, back into the minibus and after a short journey to the 'ground' side of the aerodrome, we disembarked at the VC10 training centre to be greeted by Flt Lt Nick Millikin, son of the erstwhile Vulcan Display Flight's Paul Millikin. Nick had been a student of mine in 2001; his career not unduly blighted by this experience, he is now one of the last VC10 Qualified Flying Instructors and hopes (and deserves!) in due course to fly the RAF's new tanker, the Airbus A330 Voyager.

As the simulator may only be flown 'on motion' with 7 on board, we split into two parties in order to take turns. I was very pleasantly surprised when Nick invited me to take the captain's seat, scrape off 10 years of rust and teach my fellow IC members to fly an approach each. So we were soon racing down RW26 with Dorothy Pooley at the helm, before taking off and flying to the west. Given the time available and number of members who wanted to fly, we then tear-dropped back

and with judicious use of full spoiler and one eye on the TACAN range and bearing, I positioned us on the approach for RW08. The VC10 is normally flown with both hands on the control column, with the air engineer setting thrust as called by the pilot using percentage RPM as the parameter. Although this technique might seem alien to some, in practice it works well and actively discourages pilots from 'pumping the throttles'. With full flap at the weight we were flying, roughly 83% is needed and a threshold speed of 130 KIAS is used. With the other pilot flying, I acted as subliminal air engineer and controlled the throttles as required to maintain the requisite speed, although little movement was actually needed once the approach attitude had been nailed. After Dorothy had flown the first touch and go, I took control and joined the visual circuit at 170KIAS and 1800 ft QNH with take-off flap and slat extended whilst another lucky pilot took the other seat. We repeated the exercise several times, then it was the turn of the second group. Someone decided that the IC chairman should have a slightly harder time, so Nick failed no.1 engine on him. But so viceless is the VC10 that the asymmetric effect was barely noticeable. After the final touch and go, I was planning to fly a two-engined approach, but unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately?) we ran out of time. All the landings had



privileges, revalidation and renewal requirements will be identical those of the IMC rating. As with everything else affected by EASA, however, things aren't completely straightforward. Even though a JAR-FCL PPL might now be 'deemed' to be a part-FCL PPL, pilots must convert their JAR-FCL PPL/IMC to a lifetime part-FCL PPL/IR(R) before 8 Apr 2014 or they will temporarily lose IMC privileges on EASA aeroplanes after that date until they have done so. The meeting also heard that EASA has yet to release the FCL.008 Comment Response Document; despite 1556 comments, the review team has as yet only held one meeting, so their 'summer 2012' date for the release of the CRD seems perhaps a little optimistic. I advised the meeting that I will be attending the next EASA part-FCL Partnership Group meeting in Cologne at the end of September, so hope to elicit further news if the CRD still remains to be released at that time. AOPA, of course, will continue to press for the issue of new IR(R)s to continue after 8 Apr 2014 as there is absolutely no justifiable safety reason not to do so.

The meeting was also updated with regard to the EASA Aerobatic Rating. Although this will not become compulsory for aerobatics conducted in EASA aeroplanes until 2015, AOPA has been working with the BAeA, BGA, CAA and LAA to achieve a seamless transition from current AOPA / BAeA and BGA aerobatic syllabuses to meet EASA requirements, as well as to confirm 'grandfathering' rights for existing aerobaticists. Although most of our work has been completed, we are currently waiting for the CAA to confirm its acceptance of our proposals.



been safe, and no-one had crashed; indeed Carol's landing would probably have received approval from even the most critical of BOAC's famously demanding 'Atlantic Barons'!

We then went to the Officer's Mess for a quick lunch, before David Cockburn joined us for the meeting proper, held in the 'Ladies Room'. Although it retains this quaint old title from the days before political correctness, the room is nowadays used for committee meetings and the like. It also provides a good spot from which to observe aircraft taking off or landing from the runway a few hundred yards away.

### To business

The meeting agenda included an update on the latest licensing issues, including the delay of EASA part-FCL in the UK until 17 Sep 2012. Both the date of effect of CAP 804 and the introduction of night VFR in the UK have also been delayed until the same date; the meeting was advised that thanks to points raised by AOPA, night VFR will now be less restrictive than had first been proposed and IFR privileges for night-



rated IMC rating holders will continue. Of particular note was the news that pilots who have held IMC privileges before 8 Apr 2014 are to have those privileges 'grandfathered' in part-FCL pilot licences as Instrument Ratings (Restricted), whose

**Top: Nick Wilcock flies back across the years to his previous life as a VC-10 instructor**  
**Above left: Captains Ian Marshall (left) and George Capon on the VC-10's flight deck**  
**Above: Matt Lane shows instructors around the business end of the VC-10 tanker**

The meeting also learned that ORS4 No. 887, the exemption applying to non-NPPL pilots who wish to fly using Medical Declarations, is to be extended to Sep 2013 as ORS4 Nos 912 and 913 for holders of UK pilot licences or JAR-FCL pilot licences respectively. *(Note – since the meeting the CAA has released Information Notice 2012/100, which gives advance notice of the cessation of these exemptions after 30 Sep 2013, except for pilots with UK licences which include SSEA, SLMG or Microlight Class Ratings.)*



On the NPPL front, the committee was advised that the IAA has now accepted the use of the NPPL in the Republic of Ireland, for non-Rol based pilots.

Certain conditions apply to such use, further information may be found on the NPLG Ltd. website <http://www.nationalprivatepilotslicence.co.uk>.

Following the CAA's recent announcement regarding qualifying requirements for instrument instructors, the committee was concerned that suitable requirements should be developed to ensure that the instructional and examining requirements needed to support the IMC rating and IR(R) should be better defined. A paper proposing the creation of an IRI(R) with the same privileges as a current FI without 'no applied instrument' restriction should be created, as well as an IRE(R) who would be an Examiner with IRI(R) privileges. The content of the paper was agreed and will be forwarded to the CAA as a formal AOPA position paper; this



**Above: AOPA Instructors Committee meets in the splendid surroundings of the Brize Officers Mess**

should be non-contentious and we hope that it can be included in CAP 804 shortly.

The meeting also debated the recent GAPAN 'Teaching Navigation' paper and certain recommendations will be made to the Guild's Instructor sub-committee as a result.

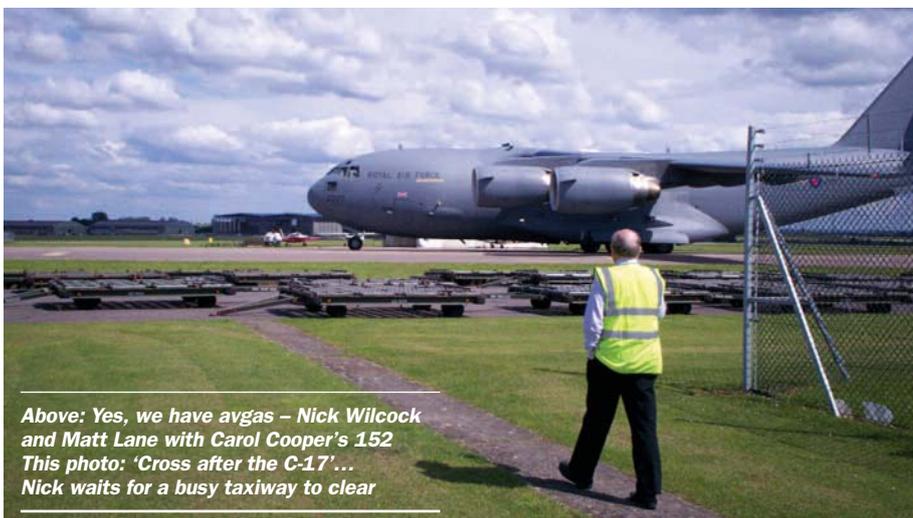
The meeting was advised that, at the recent Aero Expo held at Sywell, Timothy Nathan of the AOPA Members' Working Group and I had discussed with NATS representatives the proposal to harmonise the UK transition altitude. These discussions had centred on the problems which a high TA would cause, particularly to pilots cruising in the lower airways structure and the NATS representatives

had asked us to forward our comments for their review team's attention. We have now done so; in summary we feel that a harmonised TA would be highly desirable, but that it should be as low as feasible, consistent with ICAO policy. Hence we recommend that the TA should be harmonised at 6000 ft, not 18000 ft. This will meet many of the proposal's objectives, but with less need for the radical change in altimetry procedures and associated requirements which would be necessary under the current proposal.

**And finally...**

After agreeing the date for our September meeting, we left the Officers' Mess to return to the Flying Club hangar. RAF Brize Norton is a relatively busy aerodrome by military standards, with a number of visiting military and civil charter types to be seen, as well as the station's resident C-17, C-130, TriStar, VC10 and Voyager aircraft. Hence we had to wait for a C-17 to taxi past before Matt could give our visiting pilots a clear brief on departure procedures, which are rather more complicated than those to which most are accustomed. Geoff and Suzie were the first to leave, followed by Carol and finally the White Waltham trio, who had to wait until an A330 had taken off and C-130 had landed.

Thanks to Matt's efforts and the kind permission of the RAF, this had indeed been a tremendous day for the committee. As one of our members later commented *"Flying is expensive, demanding, and very often frustrating to the point where one considers every now and then chucking in the towel and bowing to EASA and all the rest who seem to make life so difficult. But then along comes a day like Tuesday that revitalises the enjoyment and sweeps away all one's doubts. Great weather, a privileged visit to an active RAF airfield, company of good friends and seeing at first hand the professionalism of the young people in today's RAF. What more can I say?"* ■



**Above: Yes, we have avgas – Nick Wilcock and Matt Lane with Carol Cooper's 152  
This photo: 'Cross after the C-17'...  
Nick waits for a busy taxiway to clear**

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