



Former Chairman Darren Fern

Darren quits the hot seat

By **Pat Malone**

Club Chairman Darren Fern has resigned the Chair in frustration and despair over the latest move to block his attempts to haul the Club's proceedings into the 21st century. His resignation is a severe blow to the Club, coming as it does after he had steered us through the worst crisis in our history – one which could have spelt the end of Cornwall Flying Club had it not been adroitly handled.

For Darren, the final straw was a challenge, backed by legal advice, demanding that the Club's Articles of Association be adhered to in every particular. This came despite the fact that the last AGM voted to completely rewrite the Articles – which date from 1990 and were described as out-of-date and not fit for purpose – to make them fit for the modern world. The old Articles predate the internet, and the challenge could have had the effect of making it impossible to use the online voting system Ballotbin for the Board

election. It also meant half the Board had to resign – but the timing of the challenge, six days before the AGM, meant that none could stand for re-election because the Articles impose a timetable that could not have been met. Thus the Board election would have involved a narrower selection of candidates, elected by the participants at the AGM, and the majority of members who could not attend would be disenfranchised unless they found a proxy. Darren was determined that everyone's vote should count, and his last act was to postpone the AGM to November 12th in order to establish the legal position of the online ballot. He had been on the point of resigning earlier, but was persuaded to stay by Board members who said the complaints and challenges he faced came from a tiny number of individuals who did not represent the vast majority of the membership. His first duty after rethinking his threat to quit was to deal with a complaint about Roger Davis's project to free the main hangar

doors. The complainant had found bits of metal under the doors, and after getting the Airfield Manager to sweep them up, he made an official complaint to the Board asking why no Risk Assessment had been carried out before work started, and why electro-magnetic equipment had not been obtained to clear up. Darren was in the process of responding when the new challenge came in.

When it did, Darren threw in the towel, saying he had hoped common sense would prevail but it was clear he was mistaken. He considered his position untenable, and resigned the Chair with immediate effect. He said: "I don't see what their point is. I thought perhaps it's personal antipathy to me, and if I removed myself from the equation, the Club could move on."

Darren will be standing for re-election to the Board in order to help with the rewriting of the Articles of Association.

For reasons unknown, the complainants seemed determined to oppose an electronic vote. They had previously claimed Darren could not be trusted to run a fair ballot. In response he engaged our accountants, Bennett Jones, to run the election, but the complainants claimed this was impossible as they would be acting as proxies, and one person could carry only one proxy. I was elected Chairman at a special Board meeting three days after Darren's resignation, and my first action was to establish from the compliance authorities at Companies House that electronic voting is legal. At

the 2017 AGM, the Club voted unanimously to adopt electronic voting, and to have it written into the Articles, but because of the crisis that erupted last autumn, this was not physically done. Companies House, however, ruled that the motion adopted at the 2017 AGM, which expressly stated that electronic voting be written into the Articles, became *ipso facto* part of the Articles, even though the Articles document has yet to be changed.

So these Board elections will be by Ballotbin, and you will get nominations via email. The process will be run by Bennett Jones, who are not acting as proxies. All other business will be conducted according to the strict legalistic interpretation of the Articles now demanded. After the AGM, we can begin rewriting the Articles to get them out of the dark ages, something that should have been done decades ago. Ironically, my reading-in to the Club's documentation shows that we're finally in a truly positive situation; our finances are sorted out, we have the most professional management we've ever had, we're reaping the benefits of the tortured 172 saga that Darren untangled, we've had an excellent summer and we have a fantastic platform on which to build. After the AGM, a sub-committee will be formed to rewrite the Articles, and members with experience of corporate governance, law, or business administration are invited to lend a hand; please contact the Airfield Manager.

Radio rebate: 'no dice'

In the last newsletter we revealed that Airfield Manager Jay Gates's recalculation of the fee we pay the CAA for our radio licence showed that they were demanding £3,150 more than we should be paying. The CAA eventually agreed, and substituted a correct invoice for £200. But Jay had also calculated that for at least three years we have been invoiced for far more than we should have been, and have overpaid by something like £5,400, which the CAA was refusing to give back. Our Chairman Darren Fern wrote to North Cornwall MP Scott Mann, who is a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation (APPG). The MP contacted the Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg and asked Grant Shapps MP, Chairman of the APPG, to intercede with the CAA. The response came so quickly that it was clear they'd gone straight into action. We were contacted the following day by Tony Rapson, Head of the CAA's General Aviation Department, who asked for full details. Some 24 hours later he came back to us having received a report from the Radio Licensing Department. The news was not good. The

fees had been calculated on the basis of data given to the CAA by ourselves; the area of airspace we claimed to control, while far larger than we in fact do, was not big enough to excite doubt at the CAA; and the Authority was acting as an agent for Ofcom, which had taken our money. There was no mechanism by which Ofcom could return money to the CAA.

While accepting that the mistake was ours, Darren Fern had pointed out that the fee calculation tool on the CAA website was needlessly complicated. Given that we had incontrovertibly overpaid, and that £5,700 was small beer for Ofcom but a huge sum for a small airfield, we were due a refund.

No dice. We then had to decide how far to push it. The mistake was our own, and pressing the point with Ofcom would require the backing of the MP and the APPG, who knew we were on thin ice. The likelihood that Ofcom would stonewall the issue, and that ultimately we stood little chance of getting our money back, made us think it was not a good idea to expend the goodwill of our friends in Westminster on what was probably a lost cause. Management time and effort would be soaked up on something that might drag on interminably. So we decided reluctantly to lick our wounds and let the matter lie. Pat Malone, who had by then taken over as Chairman, wrote to the MP and to Grant Shapps to thank them for their help, saying they

had won for us a rapid response, a fair hearing at a decision-making level at the CAA, and a quick resolution. While the result was not in our favour, their intercession had short-circuited what would otherwise have been a lengthy and trying process. Later he said: "We just have to be thankful that the Airfield Manager's diligence has saved us £3,150 this year, and every year going forward."

Come to the AGM

The Annual General Meeting of Cornwall Flying Club will be held on Monday November 12th, starting at 19:30 hrs. Notice and agenda will be sent to all members by email. Bar and Diner 31 will be open – best to book with Carol if you want to have dinner.



Pot of gold out there...

Storm Callum, and other visitors...

By **Jay Gates**

If nothing else, September confirmed that summer was officially over and October, without doubt, confirmed that autumn has officially arrived. September gave us our first extended period of no flying due to poor weather – we were prevented from flying for seven days in the month. Despite this we ended September with a pleasing total of 815 movements and dispensed a total of 7,700 litres of avgas. This is a healthy increase over September 2017. As October draws to a close, we have seen the expected drop-off in movements and fuel sales due to weather, seasonal variations and the end of the holiday season. That said, we are still ahead of where we were in October 2017 when we had 360 movements and dispensed 3,100 litres of avgas. Up to October 28th we recorded 546 movements, and so far we have dispensed just under 5,000 litres of fuel. With no events or special fly-in occasions booked for October, we had no 'continuously busy' days, and our busiest day – October 7th – logged a modest 58 movements. Happily, these figures continue the upward trend that keeps us ahead in terms of a month

by month, and an annual, comparison between 2017 and 2018.

With weather playing such a decisive role in aviation we are always looking over our shoulder to see what is coming, and so far October has not disappointed. We have lost even more days to poor weather. We are very lucky at Bodmin to have an official Met Office Automatic Weather Reporting Station located on the field. The station forms part of the global weather network monitored by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), an agency of the United Nations. To the WMO it is known officially as 'Weather Station 3823', but to the Met Office it is identified as 'Cardinham'. It comprises an array of 22 calibrated, scientific, meteorological recording instruments which continually record a vast variety of weather data and transmit it in real time to the forecasters at Met Office HQ in Exeter. This information is utilised for national TV and radio weather forecasts, and we made the national TV news on October 12th as a result of the passing of our fourth storm of the season, namely Storm Callum. The evening ITV weather report gave

out regional maximum wind speeds recorded as Callum passed by, and there in the South West region broadcast list, for the nation to see, was 'Cardinham' with a maximum recorded wind gust of 61 knots. Naturally, there was no flying at Bodmin that day, and I can happily report that both of our windsocks came



Ben Argent in the Bristell

through their field test with 'flying colours'... no pun intended! Despite the weather the club Flight Training Programme continued, with more good hours run up by the club aircraft, and a total of 112 hours were flown in September. This is another impressive total, compared to September 2017 when only 61 hours were flown. Our team of Introductory Flight pilots completed 36 flights in September, which again meant many folk leaving Bodmin happy and with fabulous memories. These pilots are a good bunch, and their flexibility is both magnificent and heart-warming. As always, we are still on the lookout for more volunteers to join the Introductory Flight team, so if you are interested, please do get in touch.

It is always nice to welcome back old CFC members to Bodmin. One of our regular visitors is Ben Argent, an ex-CFC member (and also of the Penguin Group) now based out of Wadswick Farm airfield in Wiltshire, who arrived in his magnificent 2016 built Bristell NG5, of which there are only 32 registered in the UK. Bodmin continues to attract visitors from all over the country, and October brought aircraft in from as far away as Sherburn-in-Elmet and Crosland Moor in Yorkshire. As always, aircraft arriving from new destinations we have not previously recorded are always particularly interesting, and October included South Lonwood Farm in Hampshire. which is the home

of just four vintage aircraft. Even one of our own aircraft got in on the act when G-BYNK, being flown by Jon Newman, arrived back from a visit to Easton Maudit airfield in Northamptonshire. Apparently the village after which this airfield is named has a minor claim to fame, as it is also where the late character actor Derek Nimmo resided. For those who have never heard of him, there is always Google! Rotary visitors continue to visit Bodmin and we have previously reported the arrival for training of the Search and Rescue (SAR) AW139 helicopter of the Newquay based Cobham Aviation Academy. While the SAR helicopter continues to visit us for training purposes, we are now also being visited by components of their new fleet of Airbus AS350 Squirrel helicopters which require circuit training for pilots that is not available at Newquay. We have now had three visits in October from the Squirrels, with their 'Hornet' callsign. Long may this new relationship between Cobham and Bodmin continue. Last newsletter we reported on our receiving a magnificent gift from the Aircrew of 849 NAS based at RNAS

Culdrose. The signed, and framed, print of one of their Sea King ASaC.7 helicopters is simply superb and will join



Sandy shows off our gift from 849 Squadron

the previously gifted signed, and framed, prints of the RN Lynx helicopters and the superb RAF Hawk of the Red Arrows on the clubhouse lounge wall.

Work around the airfield continues apace. Roger Davis finished off balancing the main hangar doors, plus adding the new rubber end stops. They now 'float' beautifully and

one man can now easily push all four doors at the same time. Roger also continued with the never-ending sealing of the hangar roof whenever leaks make themselves known. He recently sealed over half a dozen leaks, but water is still getting in, albeit in fewer places. Roger's work continues. The hangar CCTV system, another of Roger's installations, is also going to be upgraded shortly with an extended memory that goes way beyond its current four-day maximum memory. Not satisfied with all this work, Roger also repaired the broken fibreglass panel on top of the tower and erected the secondary VHF radio antenna on the tower roof, complete with cable runs down into the tower. The antenna cable was connected to our new VHF Ground Base Station radio unit, also fitted by Roger. This latter piece of equipment was needed for the requirement of 'Bodmin Radio' having to change over to the new frequency.

The new antenna and base station were installed to comply with CAA insistence that we change to an 8.33 kHz frequency. As we shared our old 25 kHz frequency with Compton Abbas and Sywell, the CAA demanded a change, and we were advised that as of September 30th we would be losing 122.7 and adopting 120.33. Of course, it was not only Compton Abbas and Sywell that shared the frequency, as we the Frenchmen of Brest often cut in on the old frequency. Has the change removed the Frenchmen from our airwaves? No. We are now receiving reports of an as yet unknown French station which also uses 120.33 and who are cutting in on our transmissions.

The requirements set out by the CAA and Ofcom to provide them with both operational and safety assurance regarding the changeover were quite onerous and required a lot of work. Luckily we were assisted in this by John Wood, Chairman of Perranporth Flying Club, as they had already been through the CAA process. John's guidance helped us to get through the process a lot quicker and resulted in the CAA requiring only one minor change to our combined Safety Assurance documents and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment matrix. The safety assurance included having to research, locate, log and contact over 300 stakeholders located throughout the South West region who would require advanced notice of the change of our radio frequency. The list included the majority of airfield owners and airport operators throughout Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, all ATC and LARS units (civil and military) in the region, all emergency services operators, national aviation agencies, flying schools, flying clubs, flying organisations, flying groups and

other interested parties where knowledge of the change was considered necessary. This was done, including countdown warnings of the change. On October 1st we made the change, with no problems.



New sign above the Clubhouse door

During October we had only four erroneous calls to 122.7, and three of these were from a training establishment who had been contacted as an interested stakeholder!

Readers will recall a few newsletters back that Nick Sharrett had produced a magnificent new steel sign of the Cornwall Flying Club badge. On October 19th this new sign was finally erected above the clubhouse door, and it looks magnificent. The old CFC sign has been taken away by Howard Fawkes and will be sandblasted back to bare metal, treated and repainted. It will then be returned to the airfield and remounted on the other side of the Tower, alongside the 'C' reporting sign. In its new location it will be seen by every aircraft that taxis past the tower and by every pilot who parks his aircraft in the grass parking area and is coming into the tower to pay his landing fee.

We are pleased to report that Carol is now fully recovered from her medical issues of last month and her health is pretty much back to normal. The approach of winter means that fewer visitors arrive at the airfield during the week, so Diner 31 is going to open only on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of each week through the winter, starting from the 1st November. However, Carol will still provide catering on any day for planned special occasion that call for it – Aeroclub talks, meetings or special visits. Special visits also include vehicle owner clubs, and thanks to Lloyd Edwards we had a visit from the Cornwall branch of the combined Lotus and Caterham 7 Owners Club – see Lloyd's article in this newsletter. The American Street Car owners continue to visit us once a month, and their late

October breakfast meet produced over 20 vehicles and almost 50 participants. Naturally, Carol and Steve were run off their feet, but cope they did and a very successful meet was reported by the organisers Keith and Dotty Elderkin of Cardinham. This is just the kind of event that will help sustain Carol through the quieter winter period. Lastly, and with both the approach of Remembrance Sunday and the 100th anniversary of the end to the Great War in 1918, I am pleased to inform our members that Perranporth Flying Club has sent us an open invitation, which is for all CFC members, to attend a service of re-dedication of the memorial to all those who served at RAF Perranporth. The service will be held on Saturday November 10th at 10:30 at the Central Tower on the airfield. It will include the unveiling of a replica Spitfire propeller and a Poppy Mosaic of Remembrance marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Air Force. The organisers have asked that anyone who wishes to attend to dress for the Cornish hilltops, and anyone wishing to wear uniform with medals will be especially welcome. Light refreshments will be provided. If you wish to attend this service please RSVP to Sara by email to perranporthflyingclubvolunteer@gmail.com with your name and with any questions that you may have. It sounds like a wonderful affair and it would be nice if Cornwall Flying Club is well represented on the day.



Two new pilots reach their goals

As a Registered Training Facility (RTF) – better known as a Flying School in old money – Cornwall Flying Club has been doing extremely well in producing new pilots over the last year. October was no different, and on the 14th Dekker Vermeulen passed his NPPL (A) GST on the C-152 G-CEYH with Terry Earl as his examiner. Congratulations to Dekker, who adds this qualification to the NPPL (M) licence that he achieved after completing his microlight training with Gary Perry earlier in the year on the Ikarus C42. CFI Bruce Abbott and instructors Rod Bellamy and Nick Chittenden all had a hand in Dekker's achievement. Dekker now plans to add a taildragger rating to his qualifications. Earlier in the month Gary Perry recorded another success, with Leith Whittington passing his NPPL (M) GST with Lothar Berger on the C42. Hearty congratulations to Leith, too. Our pictures show (**top right**) Dekker Vermeulen getting a congratulatory handshake from Terry Earl after his successful GST, and (**right**) Leith Whittington is congratulated by his examiner Lothar Berger.



Putting out the welcome mat



One for the album – their cars and our planes

By **Lloyd Edwards**

I was chatting to Jay in the Tower about the image of the club and the airfield in the region, and brainstorming about inviting other clubs and interested people to the airfield. It's good PR, and helps the cafe tick over with more mouths to feed. A positive experience is often shared by word of mouth. and we can get introductory bookings. I said I'd "have a go at energising Cornwall 7's". This is the Caterham 7 group, famed for driving Colin Chapman's classic sports car. These cars do fly, albeit six inches off the ground! (See the small print on the number plate opposite). I suppose what is tricky here is asking one and all to be agreeable to having new folk poke around our hangars and airfield. It comes down to a balance of bringing in footfall, with the bonus of advertising and slight income. So with safety and protecting our interests in mind as well as making a welcome experience, we forged ahead. It's always a team effort. Dennis, the main 7 man, visited the airfield and was patient enough to wait while I did two introductory flights. I took the liberty of escorting him over to see Corinne with her gleaming aeroplane – surely seeing this lady with her wonderful Pitts was going to help win him over to bring the group up to our humble airfield, I thought. It worked! He agreed to bring the cars up in a few weeks and meet us all. I promised a hangar

tour and a look at the Tower, followed by a roast dinner at Diner 31.

Now the Cornwall 7 group are used to eating Sunday roast at very good venues. They enjoy a Sunday morning coffee, followed by a 'blat' on a given route and finished off with a roast dinner. I was nervous we were going to get the experience right. Were we good enough? Some of this is self-doubt, of course. I decided to stop over-thinking and just be kind to them when they came.

On the day, Richard Saw coned off the parking area for them, adding a small paper sign, clipped up saying



“Welcome 7’s”. I did not ask for this – it was the team thing working. Nice touch, and a good start. They arrived along with many other flyers from other airfields as the weather was CAVOK. Now what’s hard about running the cafe is getting the numbers for catering right. The sum total for Steve and Lesley rose to 32! That’s a lot to feed for two bods in a small kitchen. Although the catering was stretched, the team battled through and all was won. The fruit strudel stretched to the max, and the drinks flowed.

Dennis wanted a shot of the cars with an aeroplane in it. This is good news as it will reach the regional magazine with many readers – the Cornwall 7’s are connected to the Devon group, with some 70 members, which could help footfall later.

I found myself meeting and greeting, organising the group into smaller groups to see the Tower, advising on facilities, offering drinks, and then the meal table for the group was taken by another group, and poor old Steve was run ragged in the kitchen. I drafted in my son Harry to help out with the cafe and I pitched in with the tour of the hangars. Rod made a point of saying hello to the group which was great. Moving the tour forward meant the café tables were freed up, although we ended up squashing most of the 7’s onto one small table for the main meal. The 7’s seemed to find everything congenial – the smiles seemed genuine, and all was well. It goes to show that if you’re kind and mean well, things can not necessarily be perfect with hosting, but the customer will still enjoy it. People are people, and respond to kindness.

My next concern was the Tower was very busy, and Richard did not need cars on the airfield. After a brief, we decided to do the photo shoot later in the day, and with me in a high vis vest using the ground radio, ‘Mobile1’ my callsign. The photo-shoot went well – mission accomplished.

I must have lost a stone running round wearing many hats on the day; it certainly made Richard laugh. It did make me appreciate the work that Pete White and others do in hosting groups. One has to give of oneself and have a keen eye for safety. Peter Gibbs came up trumps, allowing me to take the group right up to his newly-built aeroplane and photograph the cars by it. Trust indeed, considering the years it has taken him to build, let alone the effort in working for the funds to realise his dream.

So as they left, I saluted each driver – being silly, as you do, but as the last car disappeared I did think how great it was that everyone was so welcoming. Wasn’t it great that there is that trust, and we can share to our mutual benefit. Wasn’t it good that we could work as a team. It was an insight for me into what others do for the club, too.

I did note one lady in a Caterham 7 wearing WWII sheepskin flying coat. Good on her, I say. We have had great feedback with lots of thanks. They liked visiting a different venue, and found it all most interesting.



Graham Andrew (left) with Pete White

Living life on the edge

By **Pat Malone**

If you missed former Rolls Royce chief test pilot Graham Andrew’s talk at our October Aeroclub evening, you missed a rare treat – he’s flown everything from TSR2 to Concorde, he’s had 27 engine failures and one hairy ejection, and he has 178 types in his log book. He’s also gloriously politically incorrect and full of humour, and he tells his most exciting stories in an understated way which emphasises their extraordinary nature.

Given his trade, technical glitches have been a feature his life, but one of the few he’s not been able to overcome struck just as he prepared to deliver his talk – and it was that bane of modern life, the computer failure. It left him without the ability to project images of the extraordinary range of aircraft he has flown, but he nonetheless captivated his audience.

As a test pilot with the RAF, Rolls Royce and Short Brothers he has vivid memories of many pioneering aviation firsts, but his proudest moment came when, at the age of four, he shot down a German bomber with a wooden gun. It happened, he explained, on the night of November 14, 1941, during the infamous Luftwaffe raid on Coventry which devastated the city and killed more than 500 people. A resident of nearby Birmingham, he was being whisked to an air raid shelter under a stairwell when he looked out to see three searchlights coning on a bomber. He raised his wooden weapon to the skies, and presto! The bomber’s wing folded up and it plummeted to the ground. “Got it! Got it!” he exclaimed. A boy with such an exceptional talent was

always fated to go into military aviation, and his determination to do so was cemented when he watched Lockheed P-38s based at Elmdon playfully bounce Spitfires being test-flown from the Supermarine factory at Castle Bromwich. He joined the RAF section of the Combined Cadet Force at his school, King Edward's in Birmingham, and was a



Vampire T11 – no good if you can't swim

pilot by the age of 17, having cycled to lessons in a Tiger Moth after school. Sent to Cranwell, he studied at the same time as our own Sam Lucas, who went on to fly the English Electric Lightning. First, he had to learn celestial navigation. "I was confused to find, on taking my first star shot, that I was in the middle of the North Sea, despite being to my certain knowledge surrounded by grass on all sides," he said.

By the time he had finished a course on the Piston Provost his class had been whittled down from 79 students to 31, and they moved on to the de Havilland Vampire, which Graham characterised as a great trainer, his first single seater, in which he graduated to jet formation flying. In the course of his career he's survived 27 engine failures, but only once did he have recourse to the product of Messrs Martin and Baker, and that was very early on while flying from Cranwell in a Vampire T11 doing high-level aeros. "Three quarters of the way through a slow roll it snapped into a spin, and nothing I could do would stop it. Halfway to the ground, the instructor shouted: 'Eject!'

'Pardon?' I said.

"But I soon woke up and took the necessary action. The seat separated and I floated down, watching my instructor as he overtook me – he was rather heavier than I was. I realised to my dismay that I was

heading straight for the River Trent, and I can't swim. I tugged at the shrouds and saw that I was now heading for some high-tension cables. I landed between the cables and the river, and as I lay on my back I remember thinking that two years before, at about this time, I would have been cycling to school." The cause was a broken control wire.

In 1957 a film was made at Cranwell called *High Flight*, with RAF cadets as extras; in one scene of a marching column, the cadet who snaps 'Eyes right!' is Graham Andrew. The cadets were paid, he said, a fabulous £8 10s a day. He remembered the film's star, Ray Milland, needing 14 takes to get his speech to the cadets right, which didn't impress anyone. Another star, Anthony Newley, boasted in the pub that one day he was going to be a pop star. How they laughed! But of course, Newley became exactly that in the late 'fifties.

At RAF Brassingbourne in Hertfordshire Graham transitioned onto the photo-reconnaissance Canberra and manipulated a posting to Cyprus into one to Germany, where it was common to fly "not above" 200 feet, which was "really exciting". Every month a squadron pilot had to create a war exercise, and when Graham's turn came he

contrived a war game titled 'The Cornish are Revolting' – deemed 'harsh but fair' by a member of the audience – in which a Cornish army was moving on Devon and targets for reconnaissance needed to be identified. In those days pilots were invited to identify distant places they'd like to visit, and these 'Lone Rangers' would treat the flights as navigation exercises. Graham chose Nairobi, which was then reachable in two hops,



TSR2 – a necessary cancellation?

staging at El Adem in Libya. "You just drew a line on a map and flew along it," he says. "Air traffic control was non-existent, especially when you got up to 48,000 feet." Graham transferred to Little Rissington and later to Cranwell as an instructor on Chipmunks, and in 1965 he went to the Empire Test Pilots School at Farnborough. On graduation he was sent as a project pilot to BAC's TSR2 programme, which was so controversially

cancelled in 1965. "Perhaps the cancellation was necessary," Graham says. "Britain still had a major hangover of wartime debt – the country had effectively been bankrupt."

Apart from the TSR2 he flew all the aircraft that 'A' Flight of the ETPS had in its inventory, which covered virtually everything on the books including the P1127 and the Kestrel, Jet Provost, Gnat, Lightnings and Hunters. At the same time he was an examiner on Tiger Moths at Compton Abbas, and one weekend was asked for a flypast 'in something exciting'. As it happened he had a training flight in a Lightning the following day, during which it was later alleged he flew around the spire of Salisbury Cathedral at 600 knots then flew over Compton Abbas cutting the daisies before pulling 4G and zooming up to 30,000 feet, turning off his

transponder as he went. You could get away with that sort of thing then.

His was a big RAF with lots of aeroplanes. He flew trials on the Shorts Belfast assessing the head-up display, and on the Shackleton to appraise buoy-dropping techniques. Afterwards they would always fly home via the pretty route, and usually so low that you had to pull up before you could bank.

He was one of three pilots engaged in

'Operation Summer Sky', a top-secret programme to investigate the effect of sonic booms during the development of Concorde. The plan was to 'drop a bang' over three sites, one over Blandford Forum, one over Bristol, and the third over London. The Lightning at 43,000 feet and 1.4 Mach would produce the same overpressure as Concorde at 60,000 feet, and Graham got the London flight. "Monday's flight was cancelled because it coincided with the Queen's Garden Party," he says. "Next day I lined up over France, under orders to drop a bang over Big Ben at noon. I accelerated and crossed the coast as briefed, creating a rolling boom that hit Big Ben right on schedule. For all the secrecy, next day the *Evening Standard* carried the headline 'Avengers over London!' They had discovered that one of the three test pilots was Hugh Rigg, whose sister Diana was an actress in a popular TV series called *The Avengers*, and wrongly concluded that he had been the culprit."

Graham was promoted to a desk job which required him to go round the aircraft industry assessing procedures for test flying, and while he had no teeth and could only recommend, it meant he knew where all the test pilots jobs were. Rolls-Royce needed help with the Spey engine for the Phantom and the Jaguar, and he wanted to join them; an RR manager was persuaded to write to the RAF to the effect that

Graham's release was "in the national interest," and he was allowed to go. 18 months later Rolls-Royce went bankrupt, which was partly a device to address chronic overmanning issues which couldn't otherwise be tackled.

While working with BAC at Filton Graham recommended to management that the airfield, which benefitted from particularly good ground transport, should be opened up to commercial traffic. The BAC managers, whom Graham described as "aristos who knew nothing about flying," laughed the idea off. Filton is now derelict, and destined to be a housing estate. He was made Chief Test Pilot for Rolls Royce in 1976 and flew everything from the Harrier to the Phantom and Concorde, including helicopters, the HS125, Argosy, Navajo, Heron and trainers like the Aermacchi

339. But when business was slack and the testing work ran down, he took voluntary redundancy with the intention of becoming a science teacher.

Unfortunately, since he didn't have a degree he was deemed unqualified to teach, which must rank as one of the most stupid decisions our educators have ever made.

Microlights were just coming in, and Bristol University had built a two-seater on which

Graham did the test-flying. He became Chairman of the Airworthiness Section of the new BMAA and flew for BAC as a freelance test pilot on the 125 and Navajo before being approached by Shorts to work for them. "The paperwork took eight months to complete," he said. "At one point I gave up and joined the CAA, but when the papers came through I moved to Belfast. Two weeks later Shorts landed the Tucano contract. "I'd done the JP5 assessment at Boscombe Down and I'd flown the Spitfire IIb, and the performance of the Tucano was about the same. But the fatigue life of the Tucano was 6,000 hours compared to 150 on the Spitfire. Similarly, the Garrett engine in the Tucano had an overhaul time of 6,000 hours, while that of the Merlin was 150 hours.

"Flying the Tucano made you feel like you just had to *attack* somebody. I was doing a flutter test off Rathlin Island and had to dive to hold the speed for one minute, and there was a Cessna 172 right in my sights. So I did a barrel roll around him. He reported a near miss and I was called in by the Wing Commander at Aldergrove for a chat, hat off and no cup of tea. Luckily I got away with 'don't do it again'."

In 1990 the government sold Shorts to Bombardier for what Graham said was a ridiculously low price of £30 million. "I tried to put together a management buy-out because Shorts had a lot of missiles, a lot of aero



English Electric Frightening – supersonic capers

structures and they were starting to build a commuter jet which ultimately became the Bombardier CRJ. But we couldn't put the investors in place in time."

Graham then became a CAA examiner in Bristol, during which time he built on an already impressive tally of types flown – so far he has 178 – and in 1995 he was invited by the Americans to do the test flying on 28 Shorts C-23 Sherpas they had ordered for the Air National Guard; the job stretched over three years and gave him a lasting respect for the FAA's positive and co-operative approach to flying. As an example, only one test pilot was required on the programme, where the CAA would have insisted on two.

Graham's proudest relic of his association with aircraft – which he was wearing at Bodmin – was his Spitfire Fund badge, given to him during the war for his tireless efforts, walking around Birmingham pushing a pram to collect aluminium. Stopping only, of course, to point his wooden gun at German bombers.

The best ever?

Graham was asked which of the 178 types he has flown stand out as his favourites. His answer:

1. **The Spitfire.** Peerless. "We had one as a company hack and I flew up to Leuchars to investigate a turbine blade failure. When I landed nobody wanted to talk about turbine blades, all they were interested in was the Spitfire."

Harrier GR1: 0-100 in 2.6 seconds



2. **The Harrier.** "Unforgettable for its unique abilities. Nought to 100 knots in 2.6 seconds. We flew ten hours in a helicopter before strapping in. It felt like a slightly heavy Hunter in the cruise, but the conversion to vertical flight was edgy. It had fuel enough for ten minutes hovering, and a radio man in a truck counted you down. With 90 seconds left you had to get it on the ground, and his voice got increasingly shrill as time ticked away."

3. **The Lightning.** "We'd pop down to Chivenor and stooge around until some Hunters came up, then we'd beat them up mercilessly."

Aeroclub evenings

By **Pete White**

Our next Aeroclub speaker, on **Wednesday November 28th**, will be Steve Slater, Chief Executive of the Light Aircraft Association.

Steve has had a fascinating career – as a TV commentator working for Singapore-based Star Sports he was 'the voice of Formula One' across the Far East, and he was part of the team that created the Singapore Grand Prix. He's been a passionate



aviator from the age of 14, when he used to haunt the hangars at Teesside Airport; he has built several aircraft, owns and flies a Piper Cub and is co-owner (and co-restorer) of the famous 'Biggles Biplane', the replica 1914 Be-2c built for a film in the 1960s, then later crashed, lost, found again, and returned to the skies.

His talk will encompass his varied and interesting life in the world of aviation, especially vintage and classic flying, all of which is under the banner of the Light Aircraft Association.

Being a member of the LAA brings a host of aeronautical advantages to pilots and enthusiasts, whether you yearn to build your own flying machine, fly a vintage tail-dragger, tour Europe or just potter around on a summer's evening. Regional LAA Clubs (Struts) offer more than just a meeting of like minded souls – they are invariably a fountain of aviation knowledge and a source of skills and parts. Please do come along to see how the LAA can help you improve *your* flying skills and offer you ways of fulfilling *your* dreams. Steve will be speaking on November 28th – his talk starts at 19.30. Dinner will be available from 18:00, but please book meals in advance – call Jay on 01208 821419.

***Sunday December 2nd** marks the start of our Seasonal Dining Programme – you will also be able to partake of our Club's Christmas meals on **Sunday December 9th** and **Sunday December 16th**.

*On **Wednesday December 12th** our speaker will be the writer Graham Hurley, whose specialist subject

will be the Grace Spitfire. Graham, author of many works of fiction, is also a TV producer who filmed the seabed wrecks of the Titanic and the Bismarck with Robert Ballard, and produced the ITV account of



Richard Branson's Transatlantic balloon flight. Bodmin Airfield is of course also the meeting place for the New Cornwall Strut and will hold meetings throughout the year on the last Wednesday of the month. All CFC members are welcome to attend, and vice-versa – Strut members are welcome to come along to the CFC Aeroclub evening meetings. All I ask is please can you contact me so we have an idea of numbers for the catering etc. The numbers are 01752 406660 and 07805 805679.

2019 takes shape

Next year's events list is filling up – if you've already got your 2019 diary, note the following:

May 4th (Sat). LADIES DAY FLY-IN A day when we encourage ladies to fly-in, drive in, cycle in, walk in or what ever mode of transport suits you and enjoy the ambience of our little airfield nestled on the side of Bodmin Moor.

May 18th (Sat) RIN TOP NAV Competition--- Come and join us at this prestigious navigation event which is open to pilots of all ages. Loads of fun using just the basic skills we were all taught when in training. 2018 saw 10 crews taking part so come along and grow that number!

June 29th (Sat) Theatre Night! To celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the 1st non-stop Atlantic crossing by Alcock and Browns in June 1919. We have invited The Foundry Group, a superb national touring company, with their '*The Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*' to Bodmin Airfield for just the one night so book your seat soon! Food and a Bar will be available.

July 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th & 11th Wing Walking at Bodmin. After the very successful wing walking events in 2017 and 2018 we are back to give you the chance of a lifetime to soar above Cornwall on the wing of a Boeing Stearman Biplane. This is becoming very popular, especially for charities, and we already have over 75 people booked so please use the contact details below if you want to join us and have a go...

July 20th (Sat) 'Meet the LAA' at Bodmin's Action Stations. For our annual Action Stations event we have invited military aircraft, military vehicles and re-enactors to join us to celebrate the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the Normandy landings. Plus a big bonus, an opportunity to **Meet the LAA**, the UK's largest aircraft association, who will be there to wave the flag and chat to you about the **Light Aircraft Association**.



August 4th (Sun) LUNDY ISLAND FLY-OUT The annual '*Lundy Sunday*' event is well supported by our local flyers as well as pilots from around the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands. **PPR is essential from Pete White 01752 406660 or 07805 805679.**

September 7th The 2019 Cornwall Strut Fly-in. The first Cornwall Strut fly-in, in 2018, was a great success and we once again invite all to join us including classic and vintage vehicles.

TMT Nostalgic Flight Tiger Moths will be in action in 2019 and the dates will be released as soon as they available.

All are welcome – and remember we have the *Diner 31* cafe available for food and beverages.

Full details available from Pete White – Events Director, AERoclub & Events Organiser
01752 406660 - 07805 805679
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