



# ROYAL AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY

Prestwick

April  
2011

## Branch Newsletter

### *Editorial*

Another lecture season has sneaked past without me noticing it. They are definitely getting shorter.

But what a peak was achieved with the McIntyre lecture in March! In all my time with the Branch, I cannot recall a larger audience for a lecture, and what a lecture it was. I have included a photographic record of the event elsewhere in the newsletter, but it is worth noting that we did quite a few things differently this year. We had no choice but to schedule this particular meeting away from its usual January date. In addition, a first for the Branch, the lecture was recorded by students from the University of the West of Scotland - our thanks to them. Hopefully a recorded memento of the event will be available soon. Thanks are especially due to the RAeS President, Air Vice Marshal David Couzens for taking the time to come and visit us, but "there would be no show without Punch" and we have to recognise the immense achievement of Captain Eric Brown in being able to deliver such a piece well into his nineties. Eric, we salute you.



It is a good indication that the pot of newsletter contributions is running dry when the Editor himself puts pen to paper. I hope you enjoy my tale of an interesting trip in an interesting aeroplane, and that it prompts you to document some of your memories during the close season. I can never have too much material. Also this month, "Rambler" returns with some spiritual ramblings inspired by the well known French aviator and author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

I have also included an up to date events and visits calendar in this edition, but please check with the organisers before setting out. Additional opportunities are sure to materialise during the close season so please keep an eye on the Branch web-site for the most up to date information.

April is, of course traditionally the month that we hold the AGM and make our usual forlorn appeal for volunteers to stand for membership of the Committee. One day we will actually get one. If you fancy breaking our duck, please contact a Committee member. We will endeavour to get through the AGM business as quickly as possible, before passing over to John Hopkins to inform us about his pet subject - "Where should we put the engines?"

Have a great summer.

Dave

## ***The Fantastic Four in Rutland***

**Dave Lacey**

For nearly 20 years I was a great fan of the International Air Tattoo, only missing the 1976 show in the period between 1975 and 1993. They were held at RAF Greenham Common until 1983 and moved west to RAF Fairford thereafter. I stopped going after the 1993 show for a number of reasons and I have only been to one since. Due to reconstruction work at Fairford, the show moved to RAF Cottesmore in Rutland for the 2000 event. This unusual location got my attention, and I decided to attend.

It was not only the location that attracted me. International Air Tattoo always managed to draw unusual aircraft from around the globe, and this year was no exception. Headlining was the long list of disarmament monitoring aircraft, particularly those from eastern Europe. Also on the list was a Douglas DC-4 from South Africa - interesting certainly but not spectacular.

Arriving at Cottesmore on Saturday 22nd July emphasised the site's space limitations compared to Fairford. Aircraft were squeezed into every conceivable nook and cranny! One of the first aircraft to fly on the day was the DC-4. I had expected a mighty radial rumble as it became airborne, but the noise was disappointing. Somewhat bizarrely she then went on to play the role of a German bomber in a Battle of Britain tableau. Classic airliner she might have been, but so far she had failed to impress. Then I noticed a slip of paper inside the programme, an opportunity to fly in her on Monday morning. She suddenly became much more interesting again! We made our way to the appropriate agency on the airfield and booked two seats.



*ZS-AUB during her unexpected lay-over at RAF Wittering*

Aficionados of International Air Tattoo will know that arrivals and departure days - the Thursday/Friday before the show and the Monday after - are viewed by many as being as much an air show as the Saturday and Sunday, although now the viewing was less costly and took place from outside the fence! This would be my first ever such event. First question - how do you gain access to an active military airfield, surrounded by hundreds of keen spotters, claiming to be in possession of tickets for a flight in a DC-4? The answer is with great difficulty, but along with about 20 others we managed it. Incredibly, after an hour or so we found ourselves on a bus crossing a very busy Cottesmore to our DC-4, ZS-AUB.

Everyone got aboard and she started up. The airfield itself was the aeronautical equivalent of an air show car park, where everybody is trying to get out at once - I recall a Dutch Chinook with rotors turning when we arrived still rooted firmly to its spot when we left on the DC-4! We must have had a slot booked, because we taxied without delay and took the runway ahead of a magnificent and soon to retire French Air Force Mirage IV strategic bomber turned reconnaissance aircraft.

Getting airborne from Cottesmore's north-easterly runway, we flew a right hand circuit around the south of the airfield past RAF North Luffenham to take us away from the hectic departure traffic to the east, before heading north and taking in many ex-Bomber Command airfields as we cruised majestically along at no more than 2000 feet above the flat Lincolnshire countryside. We passed the air traffic control radar at Claxby before reaching the Humber and retracing our steps back towards chaotic Cottesmore.

After about four turns around the hold at North Luffenham, it was clear that this trip was taking far longer than the 30 minutes allocated and, as much to save fuel as anything we diverted into nearby RAF Wittering. Once parked on stand, we had to await the deployment of the tail support before we could escape from our seats and leave the aircraft. For the next 45 minutes or so, we had the pleasure of watching the based Harriers at play before boarding once more for the quick hop back to a much quieter Cottesmore.

As we took our leave of the DC-4 and Cottesmore, there was still plenty of ongoing departure action. On reaching the car, two Italian Air Force Starfighters got airborne and headed off towards the east and into retirement. A fitting end to an enjoyable and action packed day.

## **Aviation Events, 2011**

*Ray Draper*

Please check with the organisers before setting out.

21/22 May	Large Model Aircraft Show	Castle Kennedy airfield	<a href="http://www.largemodelassociation.com/">http://www.largemodelassociation.com/</a>
22 May	Spring Air Show	IWM Duxford	<a href="http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/">http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/</a>
12 June	Air Show	RAF Cosford	<a href="http://www.cosfordairshow.co.uk/">http://www.cosfordairshow.co.uk/</a>
18 June	Castle Kennedy Fly-in	Castle Kennedy airfield	<a href="http://www.castlekennedyairfield.co.uk/">http://www.castlekennedyairfield.co.uk/</a>
24-26 June	Paris Air Show	Le Bourget, Paris	
26 June	Kirkbride Open Day	Kirkbride, Cumbria	
2/3 July	Air Show	RAF Waddington	<a href="http://www.waddingtonairshow.co.uk/">http://www.waddingtonairshow.co.uk/</a>
9 July	Air Day 2011	RNAS Yeovilton	<a href="http://www.yeoviltonairday.co.uk/">http://www.yeoviltonairday.co.uk/</a>
9/10 July	Flying Legends	IWM Duxford	<a href="http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/">http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/</a>
16/17 July	RIAT	RAF Fairford	<a href="http://www.airtattoo.com/airshow">http://www.airtattoo.com/airshow</a>
23 & 24 July	Windermere Air Festival	Lake Windemere	<a href="http://www.windermereairshow.co.uk/">http://www.windermereairshow.co.uk/</a>
30 July	East Fortune Air Show	East Fortune	<a href="http://www.nms.ac.uk/">http://www.nms.ac.uk/</a>
3/4 Sep	Air Show	IWM Duxford	<a href="http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/">http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/</a>
10 Sep	Leuchars Air Show	RAF Leuchars, Fife	<a href="http://www.airshow.co.uk/">http://www.airshow.co.uk/</a>
16 Oct	Autumn Air Show	IWM Duxford	<a href="http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/">http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/</a>

**Check out the Branch web-site for details of more events!**

*Additional copies of this edition, plus a full archive can be down-loaded from [www.raesprestwick.org.uk](http://www.raesprestwick.org.uk)*

# A Different View of Things

## "Rambler"

Sometimes we have experiences that expand and change our usual view of the world. Just think about this. It is normal for us to be enclosed in a kind of cocoon, with something above our heads, or at least something at a higher level. When we are in a building, a car or an aircraft we are enclosed by the ceiling or the cabin. Out of doors there could be buildings, trees, mountains, clouds and, if nothing else, blue sky, but always some earth feature at a higher level or directly above us.

A good number of years ago I set off on a late summer's afternoon to spend the night on top of a hill near the Dee valley in Aberdeenshire. I reached the top in good time to watch the sun go down and darkness slowly descend. As hills in this area go my hill was not particularly high, though higher than everything else for many miles around. There were high mountains further away, which gradually blended into shadows in the remote distance and finally disappeared into what was becoming a dark moonless night. It is a feature of the Cairngorm area that the night air can be very clear, particularly in winter but also at other times of the year. And this was a very clear night. As the glow of the sun faded and the distant mountains and nearer hills disappeared so stars began to fill the sky until it was almost as if the whole cosmos was laid out before me on a perfectly black sky. And then the realisation came that I in my sleeping bag was on the very outside of the spinning ball that we call Earth and that there was nothing between me and the depths of space. There was no roof above me, no tree, cloud or blue sky. There was nothing between me and the abyss, though reason said that gravity would keep me attached to my hill.



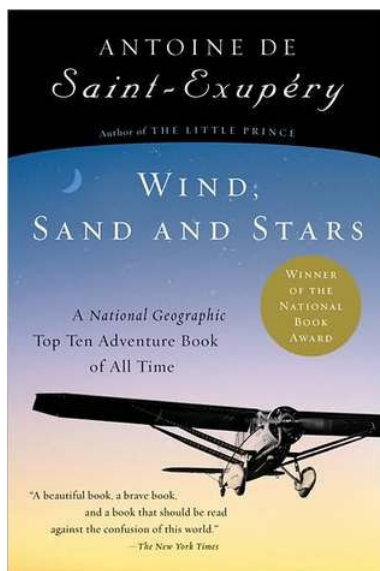
Years later I was reading one of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's stories and came across a description of a similar experience. Saint-Exupéry is highly regarded as a master of aviation writing. His "Flight to Arras" is a classic description of the shambles and collapse of the French forces before the German onslaught in 1940. "Wind, Sand and Stars" is from an earlier period when France still had its North African colonies, with aircraft being used on mail runs across the Sahara. From time to time a machine would be forced down, and it is one of these events that Saint-Exupéry describes in "Wind, Sand and Stars".

"Again I had been forced down, and until day dawned I was helpless. Hillocks of sand offered up their luminous slopes to the moon, and blocks of shadow rose up to share the sands with the light. Over the deserted work-yard of darkness and moonray there reigned a peace as of work suspended and a silence like a trap, in which I fell asleep.

When I opened my eyes I saw nothing but the pool of nocturnal sky, for I was lying on my back with outstretched arms, face to face with that hatchery of stars. Only half awake, still unaware that those depths were sky, having no roof between those depths and me, no branches to screen them, no root to cling to, I was seized with vertigo and felt myself as if flung forth and plunging downward like a diver.

But I did not fall. From nape to heel I discovered myself bound to earth -----".

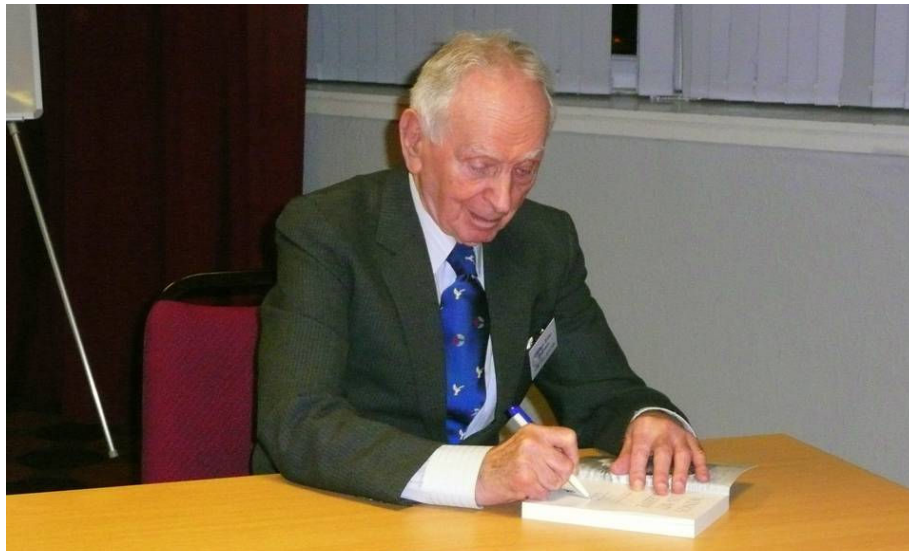
He was, of course, bound to earth by gravitation, something we deal with in every moment of our lives and something we take very much for granted. But just for a few seconds, Saint-Exupéry had lost the assurance of gravity and the "roof" over his head.



After a successful career, though not without crashes, as a commercial pilot in Africa and South America prior to the second World War, Saint-Exupéry joined the French Air Force at the outbreak and flew reconnaissance missions until the French armistice with Germany. Following a spell in the United States he joined the Free French Forces to fight with the Allies in a Mediterranean-based squadron flying P-38 Lightnings. Now well over 40 years of age, much older than his compatriots and suffering pain due to injuries in his earlier career, he was sent to collect information on German troop movements in and around the Rhone valley. From this mission he did not return. His fate remained a mystery until 1998 when an identity bracelet was brought to the surface by a fisherman in an area south of Marseille.

The high regard with which he is held in France is shown by the variety of honours in his memory, such as the 50 franc note that was in circulation until the introduction of the Euro. But it will be by his writing that he will be most remembered. He had a very distinctive style that evoked the periods and events he described in a way that no other aviation writer achieved.





## ***The David Fowler McIntyre Memorial Dinner and Lecture 2011***

### **Pictures by Stephen Kunz**

On Monday 21st March 2011, the Branch hosted the annual D F McIntyre Memorial Dinner and Lecture. The Dinner was held at the Parkstone Hotel, Prestwick immediately prior to the lecture, which was held in the Aviator Suite within the terminal building at Prestwick Airport. Our lecturer this year was renowned naval test pilot Captain Eric "Winkle" Brown - seen in the heading picture signing one of his books after his fascinating talk "The Post War search for Germany's Technological Secrets".

Our guest list this year was as follows:

Captain Eric "Winkle" Brown

Mrs Jean Brown

Air Vice Marshal David Couzens

Dougal McIntyre

Janet McIntyre

Lieutenant Commander Roger Springer

Ed Cunningham

Wing Commander John Dickson

Shoda Professor Roderick Galbraith

Mike Laing

Ian McMahon

Phiroze Mehta

John Scott

Nick Sibley

Liz Kennedy

Squadron Leader Brian Wilson

Cameron Winton

President, Royal Aeronautical Society

HMS Gannet SAR Flight

Prestwick Aircraft Maintenance

Commanding Officer, RAF Prestwick

University of Glasgow

GE Caledonian

Head of Aerospace, Defence and Marine, Scottish Enterprise

IMechE, West of Scotland

Member of the Scottish Parliament

BAE Systems

Campus Director, Ayr Campus, UWS

Glasgow and West of Scotland Wing, Air Training Corps

Woodward Aircraft Controls

Below, from left - Dougal McIntyre, Captain Eric Brown, AVM David Couzens, Professor Dugald Cameron, Mrs Jean Brown, Len Houston

