

Ridgeway Repeater Group

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Newsletter

February 2015

The Lancaster Experience by Rob G4XUT

Unless you are connected with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight or something similar it is difficult to get up close, touch and actually go on board a Lancaster Bomber. But on 1st & 2nd June 2014 Fran (my XYL) and I did just that. We first went to the BBMF hanger at RAF Conningsby in Lincolnshire where we did the hanger tour. We were very fortunate to see the BBMF Lancaster PA474 doing a few circuits of the airfield, and 4 Spitfires running up their engines outside of the hanger. Back inside the hanger we were able to see the Dakota C-47, two Hurricane Mk11C and two DH Chipmunks. We were told that "it was a good job you came today as tomorrow they are off to the D day beaches and there won't be much here!" Their museum was next to be visited which was interesting and completed our first day. Next day, bright and early after a hearty breakfast, we made our way to the Lincolnshire Aviation Museum at East Kirkby. Having booked this visit one year earlier we didn't want to be late. The museum was opened in July 1988 at the original home of 57 and 630 squadrons. The owners are two brothers, Fred and Harold Panton and it stands as a memorial to the 47,345 Bomber Command men who never returned home from wartime operations and this included the Panton's own brother Christopher who was killed in active service. The star of the show is the B Mk11 Avro Lancaster NX611, named Just Jane on one side and City of Sheffield on the other, which came to the airfield in 1987. She was built in Longbridge, Birmingham in 1945 and was part of the RAF tiger force in the Far East and then, being surplus to requirements, was put into storage in 1952. She was purchased by the French government and painted blue for maritime patrol. Thereafter she was used for air sea rescue and cartography based in New Caledonia in the Pacific. In 1964 she was flown to Sydney for an overhaul before being flown back to Biggin Hill in 1965. In 1972 she was put up for auction in Blackpool. Sold privately to Lord Lilford and she stood as Gate Guardian at RAF Scampton. In 1983 she was purchased by Fred and Harold and moved finally in 1987 to a purpose built hanger at East Kirkby, having completed the agreed 10 years gate duty at RAF Scampton. Now to the experience – after another mug of tea we were off to the briefing held in an ops hut and given all the info about our "bombing run" by the ops team and our pilot, who used to fly Nimrods for a living until his retirement from the RAF. Of course all the health and safety mandatory instructions were given to us, Some of these being "mind your heads" inside the aircraft! Our group of 8 were then given our positions on the aircraft which we would be in for the Taxi Run. Climbing up the rear side steps I was in the Mid Gunner position and Fran in the rear Gunner position. (cont'd on pages 2,3 & 4)

The Lancaster Experience by Rob G4XUT

(continued)

The first thing that stuck me was that to get to the front of the aircraft you have to climb over a central beam which is about 3 ft high and about the same width, minding your head of course. There are many other obstructions and how you get to the upper gunners position one can only guess and needs a smaller frame than me! It made you aware of the cramped & cold conditions experienced when in flight and how vulnerable the aircrews were in combat. So to the Taxi Run, we took our positions and one by one the 4 Merlin engines were started up and given their final checks. By this time the vibration was noticeable but not too noisy. Chocks away then and we taxied out from the parking area and encouraged by the waving crowd of children from the local school. Most of the original wartime concrete runways have gone and are now partly covered with a chicken farm, – we felt sure our pilot would avoid it! Taxiing to the end of the grass runway and lining up for “take off”, the engines were put full throttle and off we went. As Fran was at the rear gunner’s position and nearest the ground the speed was very apparent. All too quickly the engines were throttled back and we bumped our way back to the parking area outside of the hanger. The experience was nearly over. But firstly we were able to move around the aircraft to try the other positions, take photos and chat to the pilot and crew. We exited the plane in awe of what the crews went through in WW2. After lunch in the NAAFI we went outside to see the next taxi run at close quarters followed by visits to the control tower which houses a very good museum, the chapel and the hanger which has a collection of mainly 1940 relics, crashed aircraft parts and airfield vehicles. In another part of the museum there is a nice collection of radio equipment from WW2 which has been set up with help from the Lincolnshire Shortwave Club GB2CWP (the initials of Christopher Witton Pantou) which is a permanent special event station. The station is situated in the Radio Museum at the Centre where present day equipment stands side by side with a T1154 transmitter and R1155 receiver of the type used in aircraft during the Second World War. The T1154 has been modified with a crystal VFO to make it more stable and is able to be used on 3 frequencies on the CW section of the 40 metre band when conditions allow. Here are some photos of Rob in the radio operator’s position on NX611 (note the Morse Key!), both of us with “Just Jane” in the hanger and the airborne radio equipment exhibition. So, a well worthwhile visit even if you are not able to do the complete taxi run. As a final, final, as they say – we were told that they hope to get Just Jane flying within about two years if all goes well.

The website for the centre is www.lincsaviation.co.uk

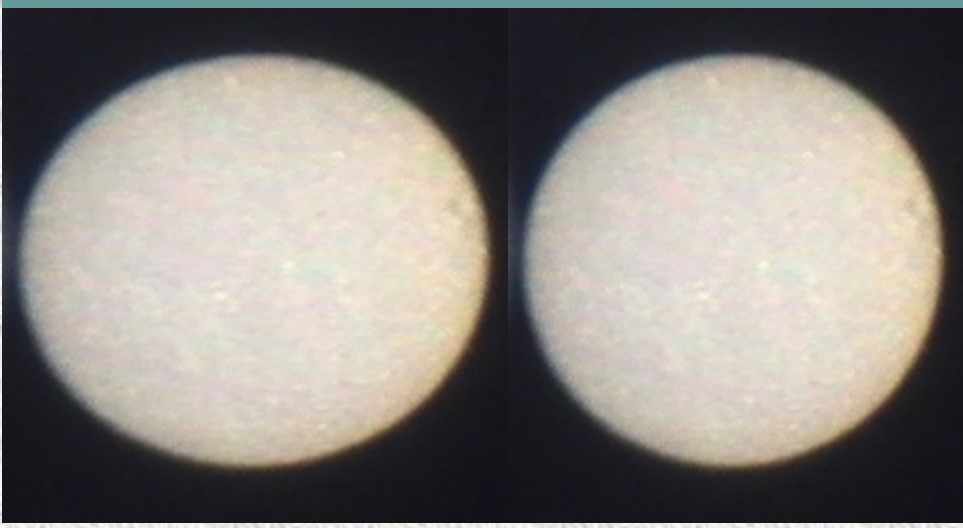
(Photos on the following pages)





An Experiment in Capturing Sunspots by M6CUE

Back in October last year, I was in qso with Richard G4MUF, when he suggested an experiment with binoculars to capture an image of a sunspot. So I went outside armed with said binoculars, camera tripod, video camera & a piece of black coated card. The resultant captures are below, not the best quality I know, but if you look carefully, you will see the sunspot as a grey blob somewhere between 2 o'clock & 3 o'clock, just inside the sun's picture. Still, the experiment was worth



it, as it was the first time I had tried such a thing, I think I'll put it down as an unqualified success. I'll try again this summer, if we get one, to try to achieve better results.

The future of TD by Andy G6REG

The future Your chance to comment...

GB3TD - Wide-split, Dual-mode analogue / digital - what next?

The repeater group have been wrestling with a number of problems and potential enhancements with GB3TD over the past few years.

We have a first class site but do suffer some local (off-site) interference caused by an as yet unidentified digital pulse transmission at certain times of the day.

We are also a key UHF repeater on the M4 corridor and much further afield.

Our two neighbouring repeater groups in Bristol and Reading are opting for Dual-mode DMR based on the professional TDMA standard (Mototrbo) but still retaining a conventional analogue option. TDMA DMR would offer us two digital frequencies running simultaneously (well almost! - different time-slots), with one possibly used for local working and the second for interlinking to other repeaters or/and Echolink.

We are also considering moving to wide-split (7.6MHz) operation which would increase the receive coverage reducing current combining losses (swapping cavities for a diplexer) and move our output frequency away from the current localised digital interference. We may also have the option of unattended Echolink similar to some wide-split UHF repeaters.

We would welcome any comments from users or interested parties as to their thoughts on both options or any experiences you may have.

Any thoughts/comments on the above item can be posted on the website, by clicking "no comments" below Andy's blog, write a comment & click "post"

I had a good morning at the Harwell/Didcot Rally on February 8th, Ken GINCG very kindly offered to take me, & I enjoyed it immensely, bought one or two bits & bobs including some more books. I met quite a lot of the regular attendees, including Rob G4XUT, Bill MOTDW, Norman MOJEC, Richard G3ZGC & a few including Dave 2EORNM that I'd not put a face to their callsign until now. So all in all a good time was had by all & lots of pennies well spent, looking forward to the next rally, which is at Wildherne (see page 6 for details).

Neil M6CUE

Starting on Wednesday, March 18th there will be a "Natter Night Net" on GB3TD for one hour starting at 20.00z . It is hoped that it will generate some traffic on the repeater, anyone interested just call in. The Event Day has yet to be finalised, but a "radio walk" along a now disused railway line has been suggested, also a BBQ, any other thoughts/suggestions would be appreciated, also ideas on a date/dates would be appreciated.

Neil M6CUE



Dates for your diary



RADIO & COMPUTER BOOT SALES 2015

**SUNDAY 19th APRIL and
SUNDAY 13th SEPTEMBER**

SELLERS 9am - BUYERS 10am

FREE RAFFLE for Baofeng UV-5R

Organised by The Andover Radio Amateur Club
For further details please e-mail arac@arac.org.uk

CLUB WEBSITE - www.arac.org.uk

Tables in the Hall £10

£8 per Boot and £2 Buyers

Postcode for your Satnav - SP11 0JE