



New Forest Aviation Group.

website: www.nfagroup.tk

Chairman: Steve Robson
Vice Chairman: Chris Gilbert-Norton
Hon. Treasurer: Roy Arnold
Hon. Secretary: Fred Hambly
Hinton Villa, Fathersfield, Brockenhurst, SO42 7TH Tel: 01590 622681
E-mail: fredhambly@tiscali.co.uk
Speaker Secretary: Steve Robson Tel: 01202 300763 E-mail: stephen.robson10@btopenworld.com
Additional Committee: Phillip Arnold, Fred Hambly, Monty Ward,

Newsletter No. 185, November 2013

2013 TALKS

November 8th – "The Supersonic Adventure" by Colin Hobbs

December – No meeting

10th January 2014 - 'Enigma and its coding' by Alan Watson

14th February 2014 'Aerial Surveillance - Part 2' by Phil Nelson

14th March 2014 - AGM and 'The UK Nuclear Test Programme' by Tom Kelly

Our speaker for October was Air Cdre Philip Wilkinson, CVO, FRAeS, RAF (Rtd) who had acted as advisor in the making of a film 'Hurricanes to Murmansk'.



Following a short introduction Philip showed the film which opened with the auction of a set of medals earned by Wg Cr Henry Ramsbottom-Isherwood. The medals included the Order of Lenin, only awarded to foreigners who had rendered outstanding services to the state. He had commanded 151 Wing formed at short notice from two squadrons, 81 and 134 with the vital task of providing air cover for the hard pressed Soviet forces in the Kola peninsula. They were also the forerunners of further aircraft deliveries so had a big training role to show the Soviets how to assemble and operate Hurricanes as well as to work in a coordinated air command environment.



Whilst some crated Hurricanes were landed at Archangel and then flown to Vaenga most of 151Wing, Hurricane IIBs, flew in from the aircraft carrier Argus to land at the airfield during September 1941. Servicing crew, support staff and equipment had arrived previously from a convoy vessel and made basic preparations at the airfield. Once the aircraft had been serviced and local area familiarisation flights made the Hurricanes were flown in support of troops and as bomber escorts in the defence of Murmansk. In a month of operations before winter closed in, 151 had 16 confirmed kills of Me109s and Ju88s with minimal losses (one pilot lost in combat on the first day, and two groundcrew sadly taken up while on the tail of a scrambling aircraft, which crashed – the pilot badly injured but surviving) and created an environment wherein the Soviet troops could operate effectively. Before the Wing left in December Soviet pilots and engineers had been trained and were operating Hurricanes in Soviet markings. Many problems had been overcome such as using locally available lower octane fuel, which meant that the Merlin engines could cut out under certain conditions. One of the squadron engineers was aware that adding tin to the fuel could sort out the problem and this proved to be the case. (The same technique can be used to protect the engines of classic cars from lead free petrol). The Wing was fortunate to be able to return to England by convoy without further loss. Approximately 3000 Hurricanes were delivered to the Soviet Union through the war, along with vast quantities of USA lend lease equipment including aircraft.



The film ended showing various commemorations held in England and Russia but at the time the film was made a medal to recognise the Arctic Convoys had not been struck. The reprehensible action of successive UK governments in not recognising the actions of those service personnel involved was in distinct contrast with the honour and appreciation that have been accorded to our veterans by Soviet civilians and military. At last recognition has been made with the support of David Cameron by the first issue of the Arctic Star in March 2013 for people who served North of the Arctic – thus including the RAF at Murmansk. Four 151 Wing veterans were among the first batch of 40 servicemen to receive their Arctic Star medals from the PM in Downing Street and are –

L to R - Vic Bashford, corporal electrician, Eric Carter, Sgt pilot, Tim Elkington, Pilot Officer pilot and Battle of Britain veteran, Peter Knapton, Sgt pilot.

