

Low flying was not without its hazards such as bird strikes although flying with landing lights switched on hopefully gave warning to the locals as damaging strikes were few and far between. However, there are also immovable objects such as oil rigs and the operating height of the aircraft was usually below their deck height which meant any lapse of attention could lead to unplanned urgent flight profiles. Danger areas also held hazards especially near the Royal Navy exercise areas where low flying jets simulated cruise missile attacks. So, careful planning and essential up to date knowledge of live firing and war mission training areas were vital.

As usual Phil provided us with a myriad of entertaining anecdotes to illustrate what must have been a very fascinating period in his flying career and the applause reflected that.

VULCAN TALK

The last flying Vulcan XH558 has had to have some wing leading edge modifications including strengthening to continue to fly safely. Work was made possible by a fund raising scheme 'Operation 2015' and the demanding shaping of the panels was recently completed by Beagle Technology Group in Christchurch. Very careful riveting of the double curvature panels was required to ensure a strong fit. Meanwhile the usual winter maintenance work continues; including fitting a new No. 5 Starboard fuel tank and a series of X-Ray deep NDT inspections. There is an opportunity to attend a talk by Andy Marson and Barry Masefield who both flew as rear crew (navigator and AEO respectively) in Vulcan B2 aircraft during the latter stages of the Cold War. Andy will talk on the development of the Vulcan from its inception to demise from service and how it became more potent as a weapon system during this period. Following a break Barry will brief a typical Cold War mission and finish with how these procedures had to be rapidly changed for the actual operational sorties the aircraft flew in the Black Buck missions. They will be at Bournemouth on Thursday 1st May and tickets are just £10 Location is Wollstonecraft Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth House, 19, Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3LH. Tickets obtainable from the shop on the VTTS web site or call 0845 5046 558.

SHOW US YOUR TAIL

This year will mark to 50th anniversary of display flying by the RAF aerobatic team, the Red Arrows. The team recently unveiled the new commemorative tail design at their base at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire. Due to time and budget constraints, only the tails of the teams Hawk jets have had a decal applied, which shows a modified Union Flag with Hawk jets flying outwards. The display season starts in May, so keep your eyes skywards for a peek. It has been confirmed that the Red Arrows will be displaying on all four days (28th-31st) of the Bournemouth Air Festival in August.



photo © PA

SUNBATHERS

As a young lad, some of my first airshow memories were standing transfixed as a Harrier performed an 'aerial ballet' a few hundred feet up in front of me. Fast forward to 2014 and rows of Harrier airframes now sit out in the scorching Arizona desert minus wings, engines, tailplanes and undercarriage, perched on wooden crates, with their cockpit canopies covered. The majority of the RAF's Harrier fleet were sold off to the US government for a knock down bargain price when the Harriers were retired in 2010. Now used for spares for the US Marine Corps, who still operate Harriers, the photo below, taken at the Davis Montham storage facility, shows eight two seat T10 trainers (top left) and fifty single seat GR7/9 aircraft (count them!). What would Sir Sidney Camm, Ralph Hooper and Sir Stanley Hooker have to say..?



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Any newsletter contributions, ideas or comments to:

Chris Gilbert-Norton, 12 Meadow Close, Burley, Ringwood, Hampshire, BH24 4EJ

Home number: 01425 403547

Mobile number: 07977 721503

E-mail: gilbey66@gmail.com