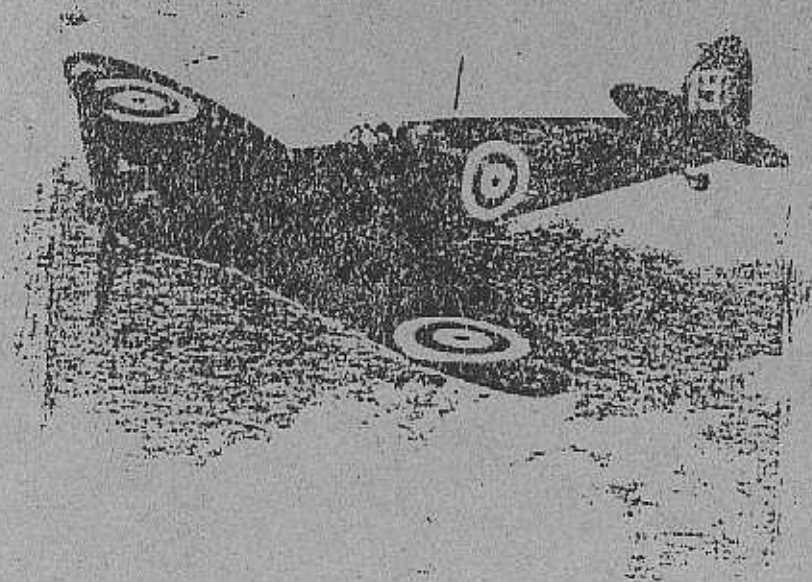


THE SKIES OVER THROOP

1940 - 1950

and beyond.....

By Fred Mayne



## INTRODUCTION

In the following account of 'The Skies Over Throop 1940 - 1950' I have attempted to give as accurately as possible a description of what I saw during those crucial years of our history. I'm sure there are some who read this account will be able to throw light on other events which I either didn't know about or have forgotten. I would like to hear of any mistakes I may have made or of interesting incidents that have eluded me. My memories of wartime air activity (I was at the tender age of 13 at the outbreak) are stored entirely in my head and I have no official records or books to rely upon. However, my aircraft recognition was good and I used to keep records of what I saw but sadly, over the years these have disappeared. Along with a few little personal experiences and anecdotes, what follows, as far as I can remember, is in chronological order but no doubt there are one or two flaws but I hope not of any great importance. My wish is that it will bring back memories to some people especially those who shared my enthusiasm on the subject of aviation at that time. We can still see some of these old planes in museums or at air shows, still flying, but others we will never see again.

## THE SKIES OVER THROOP 1940 - 1950 and beyond...

Until the war started there was relatively little air activity over the skies of Throop. I recall a few biplanes and one particular incident when one forced-landed in the meadows just north of the River Stour not far from Throop Mill. Then in the early 1940's Hurn Airfield was built and a transformation took place with the skies much busier and so it was to be right up to the present time.

The Battle of Britain which raged over Southern England in 1940 did not affect this immediate area to any great degree. We saw plenty of vapour trails curling in all directions at high altitude and one heard occasional bursts of machine gun fire. There were also reports of enemy aircraft being shot down in the locality, and of the loss of one of our own defending fighters from time to time, but to the best of my knowledge nothing within a two or three mile radius of Throop. Perhaps the closest was the unfortunate Spitfire that crashed in the Glenfernass Avenue area. I am not sure but I seem to remember reading that a road in Kinross, Pilot Height Road, was named in memory of the gallant pilot who perished in that particular crash. There was a crashed Dornier Do 17 displayed in Dean Park Cricket Ground around the same time and we all believed it was shot down locally but I have read in a book recently that this one was forced down after hitting barrage balloon cables off Plymouth and crash-landed somewhere between Yelverton and Tavistock in Devon. The book says that it was reassembled and transported to the County Cricket Ground in Bournemouth and then on to Salisbury for 'propaganda and morale boosting purposes'. It certainly attracted large crowds and, without doubt, boosted morale.

Our family smallholding at Muscliff Lane, then No. 47 but now No. 227 was only about a mile as the crow flies from Hurn and its elevated position at the north end of the field afforded a good view over the Stour Valley. Not content with this view I remember on countless occasions literally running to get an even better sighting. The trunk of the tree sloped very conveniently.

The first plane I saw land at Hurn was an Avro Tutor, an old training biplane that was giving way to the Tiger Moth as one of the R.A.F.'s elementary trainers. The airfield's first use as far as I know was as a Royal Air Force Maintenance Unit and a variety of aircraft arrived there at that time. I clearly remember Lockheed Hudsons, Bristol Blenheim, Westland Lysanders, Alcockford Oxfords and Avro Ansons, the last named known throughout the war as 'Faithful Annie' and there were many other different types as well. Shortly afterwards a number of R.A.F. North American Mustangs belonging to an Army Co-operation Squadron arrived. They used to fly very low over the village and were quite noisy with their ratty Allison engine and it wasn't until the type was fitted with a Rolls Royce Packard Merlin that it became one of the best and most successful fighters of the war.

There were more airfields sprouting up all over the place some, I expect, before Hurn. There was Ibsley, Tarrant Rushton, Holmsley South, Stoney Cross, Beaulieu, Poole (flying boats) and the already well-established Somerford over at Christchurch where planes were also being built.

After a while aircraft of the maintenance base at Hurn appeared to be leaving and in their place we began to see Armstrong Whitworth Whitleys. This twin-engined bomber which had been used earlier in the war on bombing raids on the German mainland and coastal targets in German occupied countries was now becoming well known for its leaflet dropping over enemy territory. Whether the Hurn-based Whitleys were ever used for this purpose I don't know but I wouldn't be surprised if they were. Nor would I be surprised if they dropped one or two parachutists over there, but it would appear their main use was to train parachutists, probably the, soon to be famous, 'Red Devils'. It was a very common sight to see anything up to twenty or so Whitleys returning from a dropping exercise in Wiltshire. One could always tell when such an exercise had taken place by the long strips of material dangling from the point from which the parachutists had made their exit. The Whitleys also carried a semi-circular shaped 'ring' wrapped around the rear gun turret area and soon it became clear that this modification was to facilitate the towing of gliders. Airspeed Horse gliders conveniently made just down the road at Christchurch. These were soon to become a very common sight over Throop.

The Whitley, known as the 'Flying Coffin' not, I hope, because of lack of reliability but more likely its slab-sided shape, was easily recognisable from the side view because the front end was always lower than the rear when in 'level' flight. It holds very special memories for me as it was in this type I had my very first flight. It was on March 7th, 1943 at Hurn and the aircraft was indeed towing a Horse glider. We were told afterwards that there had been an air raid alert during the flight but we weren't told about this until after we had landed. Those of us who joined the Air Training Corps were very lucky to have the opportunity to go on these flights. I don't think our parents were very happy about our flying but to their credit they signed forms allowing us to do so without too much fuss. My parents never flew and I don't think they would have done if they were alive today. Anyway, thanks to them and the R.A.F. it was a great thrill to be able to fly over one's own village and home town and to see them from the air for the first time. I shall make a point of having a 50th anniversary flight from Hurn on March 7th 1993.

The War Department had erected large posts in the meadows on the north side of the Stour ostensibly to prevent enemy gliders or other hostile aircraft from landing there. Upon a number of occasions I saw our Horse gliders in trouble, most likely because the towing aircraft had developed a fault. Now this glider was by no means small, in fact it was quite large - a wing span of perhaps 80 or 90 ft. and sometimes had no alternative but to cast-off and put down in the meadows. I remember one incident when one of them hit a small tree on the bank of a stream with its wing and slewed round and ended up with its nose in the stream.

In the meantime Hurn was frequently used to refuel light bombers, Blenheims, North American Mitchells and Douglas Bostons on their way to raid Continental targets. They would link up over our area with escorting Spitfires, most likely from Ibsley. The surviving bombers would return to Hurn to refuel again and then return to their home bases further north. A rare sighting of a Westland Whirlwind was made one day, one could see it had been damaged but it made Hurn safely. It didn't take off again for several weeks. At night Short Stirlings, Avro Lancasters and Handley Page Halifaxes would often come into Hurn perhaps because of damage, shortage of fuel or bad weather conditions at their home bases.

I believe around this time also the airfield was used as a staging post for aircraft flying to the North African war theatre. Vickers Wellingtons and Halifaxes were the types involved. I vividly remember one disastrous night, around midnight, when a Halifax took off fully loaded with fuel

and ammunition. It got as far as Moordown where it plunged into houses somewhere opposite the Hollise Hotel. There was a terrible fire and ammunition was exploding all over the place and one could clearly see this dreadful sight from Throop, a little more than a mile away. Needless to say the crew perished as did the unfortunate occupants of the houses. During daylight hours one often saw a pall of thick black smoke rising from the ground, this usually indicated that one of our locally based planes had crashed, not necessarily due to enemy action.

The Throop area was fairly lucky when talking about hostile activity. Although air raid alerts were frequent I recall only one occasion when enemy bombs fell on Throop, fortunately harmlessly in open fields between Carey's Road and Mill Road.

The last one of the stick of about five scored a direct hit on Mill Road about a quarter of a mile up from Throop Mill. All this happened at about nine o'clock in the evening. I remember I was playing billiards with other lads at the Youth Club in what used to be the Village Hall. We were all seeking the shelter of a substantial billiard table and I vividly remember the glass gas - ahaden rattling violently as each bomb exploded.

Upon another occasion there was a daylight raid and although I cannot recall any bombs being dropped, there was considerable ack - ack gunfire and it became very uncomfortable with a lot of shrapnel falling all over the place through the cloud - covered sky. I think these particular guns were located in a field behind The Vicarage at Holdenhurst. The only other incidents that come to mind concerning this immediate area was a daylight raid by, I think, a Messerschmitt Me 110 on the airfield itself, and the night when the school at Alma Road was hit. It was said by 'people in the know' that 'a land mine dropped by an Italian Bomber' was responsible for the attack. The local connection here was that parts of Throop were showered with examination papers and other school documents, having been carried by the strong south - west winds. No doubt the pupils couldn't believe their luck. The Bournemouth area experienced one or two nasty raids with fairly heavy casualties but compared with some other towns came out of it relatively lightly. People living in Throop could often see the skies lit up in the direction of Southampton whilst it was being blitzed by high - explosive and incendiary bombs. Searchlights, at night, were a common sight.

The longest air raid alert I can recall was on the night of the blitz on Coventry. The warning sirens sounded at about 6 o'clock in the evening and the all clear some twelve hours later. Many of the German bombers which took part passed over our area on their way north to their targets and many returned overhead again when flying back to their bases. In fact some of them were returning shortly after the last ones had passed over going north so there was an almost continuous drone of engines for the full twelve hours. Interspersed with the now familiar purr of the German aircraft engines, one could occasionally hear the more gentle, reassuring purr of the Hercules motors of the Bristol Beaufighter. The legendary R.A.F. night fighter pilot 'Cats Eyes' Cunningham, who later became de Havilland's Chief Test Pilot and test flew the first Comet post-war airliner, shot down a number of enemy aircraft whilst flying the Beaufighter over Southern England and the story was put about that he was so successful because he ate a lot of carrots. This, we were told, gave him excellent eyesight. However it was recently revealed that this fact was a hoax. It had been a story deliberately given out by the Government department responsible, to cover up the fact that Cunningham was using a new top - secret radar device and it was hoped the enemy would believe the carrot story. One or two of the raids didn't go as far as Coventry but circled around this area dropping their bombs on parts of West Hants and East Dorset for whatever reason. We often found strips of metal foil on the ground. This was known as 'window' and was used to disrupt defences' radar signals. We could never be sure whether the pieces we picked up came from friendly or hostile aircraft.

Nowadays there is something similar used to fend off guided anti-aircraft missiles. I think it is called "chaff".

Hurn did not appear to have been put out of action by the raid mentioned earlier as there was no let up in flying activity. The American 9th Air Force had moved in with their cigar-shaped Martin Marauder light-medium bombers and these, probably escorted by the Lockheed Lightnings from Ibsley, were used to carry out raids on targets across the English Channel. With the United States in the war and their Boeing Fortresses and Consolidated Liberators frequent visitors to Hurn in large numbers, the skies of the village were never busier. In addition Hurn-based R.A.F. Coastal Command Wellingtons and Liberators, painted white and carrying four long poles on the top of the fuselage, no doubt something to do with radar, were flying over here daily. Also seen occasionally in the same configuration was the amphibious Consolidated Catalina. Mentioning flying-boats, or perhaps it comes into the seaplane category, how could anyone ever forget the old Supermarine Walrus. It was a biplane with its lower wing placed on or near the top of the fuselage and suspended between them was a rear facing engine which kicked up an awfully loud metallic din as it flew over. It was difficult to imagine it came from the same design stable as the beautifully shaped Spitfire but like one or two other biplanes, the Gloster Gladiator, Fairey Swordfish, Fairey Albacore and successor to the Walrus the Supermarine Sea Otter, contributed much to the war effort.

The glider towing era of the Whitley seemed to be coming to an end as we began to see a new shape in the air. This was an aeroplane that was still on the secret list, but because of our membership in the Air Training Corps and because aeroplane spotting was an important part of training we were allowed to see photographs and three-view silhouettes of most of the planes on that list. This particular type was the Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle, designed and made by the same Company as the Whitley. I don't think it was suitable for its intended role as reconnaissance-bomber so it became successor to the ageing Whitley as a glider tug. Another interesting if not mysterious story surrounded this type of aircraft when at one stage there were some twenty or so stationed at Hurn displaying the Red Star of the Russian Air Force. I don't recall them flying very much over the area until one day they all took off one after the other and flew a single circuit of the airfield before landing again. The next day there was no sign of them so one presumes they went off to Russia. I often wonder, if this was the case, whether any of them are still around today on some remote Russian airfield or perhaps being used as a chicken coop or something like that in Siberia. The Royal Air Force Albemarles finally departed along with their gliders to take part in the recapture of Sicily.

With the invasion by Allied forces now a real possibility and the softening up of German military bases and naval establishments, particularly in France, increasing day by day Hurn began to play an important part in these operations. The R.A.F. 2nd Tactical Air Force arrived with their rocket firing Hawker Tempests and in the next few weeks were very busy striking at the enemy. Their low flying over the local area was thrilling to witness for those of us who enjoyed that sort of thing, but it must have been quite frightening for some people and particularly for the animals. The famous de Havilland Mosquitoes, constructed partly of balsa wood for its lightness, started using Hurn and was seen almost nightly setting off on a southerly course accompanied by the U.S.A.F. twin boom (like the Lightning) Northrop P-61 Black Widow night fighter-bombers, looking very sinister in their all black colour scheme. Little doubt France was their target destination.

As D Day approached the Americans were constructing new temporary airfields on agricultural land between Christchurch and Ringwood. They laid down metal strip runways and perimeter tracks along with an internal road system and put up hundreds of canvas huts and presto a complete airfield was born overnight. The aircraft used by the U.S.A.F. there were the Republic Thunderbolt fighter-bombers and these were often seen from our village on their way to operations in France. A fellow named Tom Curtis, who worked for Jack Roffey Sr., and I used to

go to one of these American airfields to collect food for the pigs from the kitchens located in a small wooded area. One day we had a terrible fright when the .5 machine guns on one of the Thunderbolts, which was parked near the wood and facing it, fired off accidentally and the bullets ripped into the trees just above our heads. It was fortunate that the Thunderbolt's guns were facing up at a slight angle due to the plane having a tall wheel undercarriage. Shortly after D Day the Americans left and the land was restored to farming. I wonder if the farmers were well compensated for the temporary loss of part of their livelihood. What I do know is that there were some very fat and healthy pigs on the Roffey's and Mayne's smallholdings. They loved the American food.

Another new arrival at the local airfield was the Avro York. A number of these transport aircraft, much fatter than its relative the famous Lancaster, were stationed here for some time. Although I was fortunate enough to fly in one I never knew what their role was but I think most likely it was training.

D Day arrived on June 6th, 1944 and to fully appreciate the enormity of the operation one needed to see at first hand the amazing sight in the sky over Throop, full of planes flying in support of the mighty Invasion. Of course what we saw from here was only a part of the whole scenario but nevertheless it was very impressive. All Allied planes were now displaying black and white invasion stripes, a measure taken to help prevent our own forces firing on or at each other, something nowadays we call 'friendly fire'. The Hurn Tempests seemed to be flying lower than ever and on that first day Mr Bob Kentell who lived at Muccleshall Farm reported that one of his horses was so frightened by the noises it bolted into the river.

A number of brave young men from the Throop and Holdenhurst area were serving their country and it was always very sad when news came through that one had been reported missing or taken prisoner or worse still had lost his life. This was, of course, the biggest tragedy of all during the war as far as Throop or any other place was concerned. We should never forget the debt we owe these men for their sacrifices.

It was also a very sad day for the village on or about June 11th, a few days after D Day. Two Mosquito aircraft were flying in line astern from West to East at about 1,500ft. I was harrowing a field with our little New Forest pony named Kit. Suddenly as the planes passed overhead one exploded in mid-air. It was a muffled explosion but loud enough to make Kit rear up and powerful enough for the wreckage to be strewn over a square mile or so. George Halsey, who was working in an adjacent field, joined me in running across some fields to where we thought the main part of the wreckage was. This was a field next to the road about 100 yards from the west side of Vine Cottage. Sadly we came upon the fatally injured observer, a Sgt. Roberts from Canada, with his partially opened parachute beside him. We covered him over with bits of wreckage and then vainly searched for the pilot. Eventually he was found by others, still trapped in his seat, I believe, in the back garden of the cottage about 100 yards up the road occupied at that time by Mr Fred Biles and family. One priceless story came out of this sad event and it concerned a Mr. Phillips who was quite deaf and was standing on a pair of step ladders in his garden cutting a privet hedge. One of the Merlin engines complete with propeller from the ill-fated Mosquito had landed in the garden behind him not more than nine or ten feet away. He assured us he didn't know it had landed there and was very surprised when he looked round and saw it.

In the meantime the Yorks continued to operate from Hurn but the skies were becoming quieter. The airfield was now beginning to house factories in which the Vickers Company were constructing a variant of the Viking called the Varsity. We were soon seeing these making their

post production flights over the village. As the war in Europe was drawing to a close more and more civilian aircraft were using the airfield. A rare sight one day was provided by four or five old Armstrong Whitworth Ensigns, a four-engined passenger plane which was in use before the war I believe with Imperial Airways, British Overseas Airways Corporation's predecessor. They had probably been stuck somewhere in Africa or used in a part of that Continent well away from the war zone until it was safe to bring them home.

Civil flying was very limited during the war and the only visible evidence I can recall was the regular arrival, viewed from a distant Throop, of the Boeing 314a Clipper flying-boat from the U.S.A. operating in and out of Poole. The major British airline B.O.A.C. had been using Dakotas, camouflaged but with civilian markings, operating out of Whitechurch, south of Bristol. Round about the end of the war these were transferred to Hurn and were soon joined by a new fleet of Yorks, their arrival more or less coinciding with the departure of the R.A.F. planes of the same variety. R.A.F. aircraft would still fly in fairly regularly as did a number of their U.S. counterparts, the latter often carrying battle-weary aircrews who were coming to Bournemouth for a relaxing holiday. I remember this well because another local lad, Denis Pulman, and I hitched a ride in a U.S. 8th Air Force Noorduyrn Norseman, a Canadian-built single engined high winged monoplane, which had dropped off holidaying airmen at Hurn. We had no idea how we would get back from Biggin Hill in Kent and when we arrived there we toyed with the idea of going on to Norwich in a Dakota but thought our parents would wonder where we were so we hitched a lift to Waterloo and came back by train.

The ill-fated Avro Tudor arrived in small numbers as did the more successful Handley Page Hermes. Another interesting arrival was an old Dakota which was given a new lease of life by having two Rolls Royce Dart prop-jets fitted to it. Ironically 40 years later there is a company in America doing much the same thing, with different prop-jets, and making the old war horse which, after all first flew in about 1936, a commercial success. Besides running regular services B.O.A.C. opened a maintenance facility at Hurn and I remember part of this involved an Avro Lancaster, a streamlined version of the Lancaster with the gun turrets removed, the nose and tail pointed off and the plane finished in gleaming silver.

There was little military activity now, the war in the Far East was coming to an end but a new era of aviation was emerging and this was the jet age. I believe one or two Gloster Meteors had met with some success in shooting down the dreaded V-1 flying bombs and we had heard the strange sound of jet engines for some months earlier but could only catch a distant glimpse of these new planes. Another different sound which quickly drew our attention skywards was the shrill tones of the prop-jet engine. Soon we would be seeing lots of these overhead because Vickers were about to start building the very successful Viscount which had four Rolls Royce Darts. Over four hundred and fifty of these were built at Hurn for airlines all over the world so we got to know it very well. It is difficult to imagine that this was forty years ago but several of them are still flying in many parts of the world today. At Whitechurch the factory was building a new 'quiet' airliner called the Airspeed Ambassador. British European purchased twenty of them and at the time it was hoped it would become the Dakota replacement but it wasn't to be. Eventually B.E.A. sold some to an Australian airline and others to Dan Air of London.

The presence of civilian planes increased as the post war market for air travel grew. It was always interesting when there was an international conference or a meeting of the world's senior politicians because long range airliners from all over the world, mainly Lockheed Constellations and Douglas D.C. 4a and D.C. 6a would descend on Hurn in large numbers. The Yorks at Hurn were now being replaced by B.O.A.C. with the advent of a new airliner, the Argonaut. This was a Canadian modification of the D.C. 4 Skymaster but fitted with the well proven Rolls Royce Merlin engines. Another new type to arrive here was the prop-jet Bristol Britannia lovingly known as the 'Whispering Giant'. Time passed by and with the opening of Heathrow B.O.A.C. eventually moved all its planes away from Hurn and once again a period of calm prevailed. We didn't see

6

the last of the international air traffic however. With the airport recognised as a fog-free one and 'blind' landing equipment still in the experimental stage it was used as a major diversion facility whenever the London airports were adversely affected by fog.

There were still a few air services originating out of the airport and one that comes readily to mind were the old lumbering Silver City Bristol Freighters which we used to see leaving for the other side of the English Channel, carrying holidaymakers and businessmen and their cars.

de Havilland took over Alrpeed at Christchurch and produced the Sea Vixen, successor to the ill-fated D.H.110 which crashed at the Farnborough Air Show so tragically killing test pilot John Derry and his observer and many spectators. The Sea Vixen became a fairly familiar sight, easily recognisable with its twin-boom fuselage configuration like the wartime Lightnings and Black Widows mentioned earlier. A Sea Vixen can still be seen to this day parked at the roadside at Somerford where it was constructed. Vickers were now involved in a new project at Hurn in response to an Air Ministry specification for what was commonly called the 'V' Bombers. Handley Page produced the Victor, Avro the Vulcan and Vickers came up with the Valiant. I'm not sure whether the Valiant was actually built at Hurn but I know it did a lot of its test flying there. We often saw it overhead but one day it sadly crashed not many miles from here with fatal consequences. However the type did see service in the R.A.F. and a friend who flew it told me recently he found it was a beautiful aeroplane to fly.

Vickers was absorbed into the British Aircraft Corporation and started producing a successful airliner known as the B.A.C. One-Eleven. So now, once again the skies of Throop became quite noisy. A few more jets arrived at Hurn when a Fleet Requirements Unit was established and run by Airwork Ltd. The unit was equipped with various types including English Electric Canberras, Hawker Hunters, Supermarine Scimitars and I believe, at first the piston engine Hawker Sea Fury and its jet successor the Hawker Seahawk. The planes were flown by civilian pilots and crews but bore service markings. I wouldn't begin to pretend to know exactly what their duties were especially since I know one or two of the crews lived in or near Throop. There were and still are various flying schools and clubs keeping the skies fairly busy over the area and the Fleet Requirement Unit is now operated by FR Aviation using, among others, the sleek twin-jet Dassault Falcon. They also fly aircraft for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on Fishery Protection duties.

In conclusion I would like to relate one or two highlights which I consider have caused particular interest to me and, I hope, others too in the post war era. There was the day when Commander Mike Lithgow, a famous Fleet Air Arm pilot, swept low over Throop having just broken the world speed record from Paris to the U.K. in a Supermarine Attacker. Then there was a plane spotter's dream on the occasion when the Hurn to Herne Bay Air Race was held. There were some thirty or so planes, ranging from the little Tiger Moth to the large four-engine Halifax. I remember as a member of the Royal Observer Corps along with my colleagues being roped in, not against my will I hasten to add, to stand on the roof of the Haven Hotel at Sandbanks to make sure that the participating aircraft in the race didn't take a short cut at that particular corner.

The huge Bristol Brabazon, with its eight engines, which was to be the new wonder airliner of the future caught our imagination as the day of its first flight approached. I clearly remember lots of people had their eyes glued to the radio to witness the much publicised event. After all a whole village near Filton in Bristol had been removed so that this monster could take off. With great relief its maiden flight was safely carried out and eventually it appeared over our village after overflying the main runway at Hurn. The runway there was considered too short for it to actually land. It proved to be impractical for commercial use and with the era of prop-jets and



ordinary jets upon us the project was abandoned. No doubt something useful was learnt from it, and at least the airfield was now big enough to accommodate the maiden flight of the Concord which was to take place some years later.

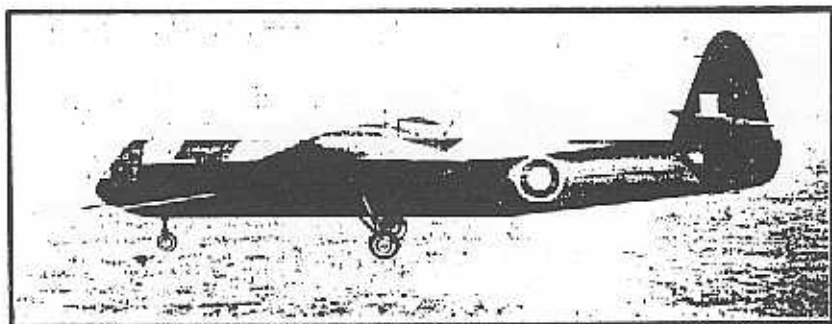
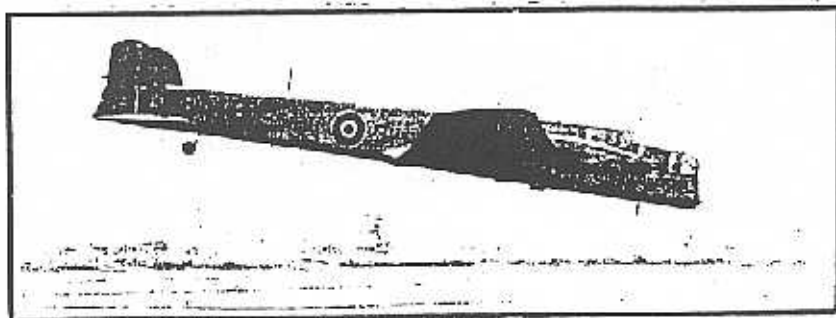
The Red Arrows were now providing a spectacle wherever they went, first with their Golland Gnats and then B.A.C. Hawks, the type they still use today. When seeing them one cannot be anything but impressed by the flying skills of this group. Throop usually gets a very good view with the Red Arrows almost brushing the treetops and at the same time emitting bright red and blue diesel vapour which soon obliterates the landscape. I'm sure this is frightening for some but I think we would feel deprived if they didn't fly over us when in the area.

When air shows are held at Hurn without doubt the noisiest plane is the large triangular winged Vulcan bomber. It is indeed a majestic sight and when it goes into a steep climb, as it does over Throop on occasion, there is nothing to compare with the frightening, awesome power displayed by the Vulcan. It is a plane few of us will ever forget. So noisy, but at the top of the climb, so gentle and quiet. Let us hope that the people who look after it can find the money to keep it flying. It is very much a part of our history, the type having made the historic journey to drop bombs on the Argentinians in the Falkland Islands.

Finally we come to the Concord, which I was lucky enough to see make its maiden flight from Filton around twenty years ago. What a glorious sight it was too on the day it flew low over Throop. Concord is one of those planes that has a certain magic about it. Its sheer elegance ensures that people will always stop and take notice of it whether they are interested in planes or not. What a pity it is so expensive to fly in.

With the airport still quite busy even in a time of recession, with its flying schools, naval and air force and government contracts, servicing oil platforms, holiday traffic, flower imports, aircraft servicing and repairing, restoration of classic and vintage aircraft, which gives us a golden opportunity to sometimes see the older types of plane again and private flying it is likely that the skies over Throop will be hosting many a plane for many a day - and into the next century.

*This account is dedicated to all the men from the villages of Throop and Holdenhurst who gallantly gave their lives during the Second World War so that we may all live in a free country.*



Two of the most familiar sights over Throop during the war were the Whitley parachute dropper and glider tug (above), and the Horsa glider, built at Christchurch, and towed by the Whitley.

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