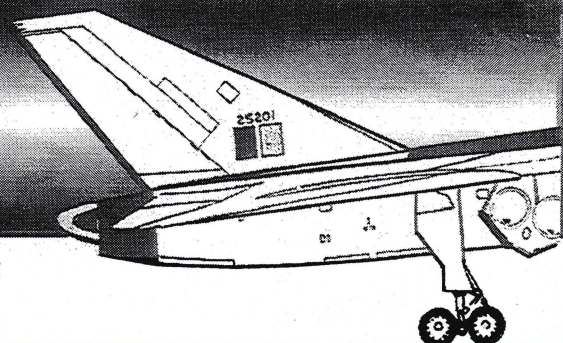


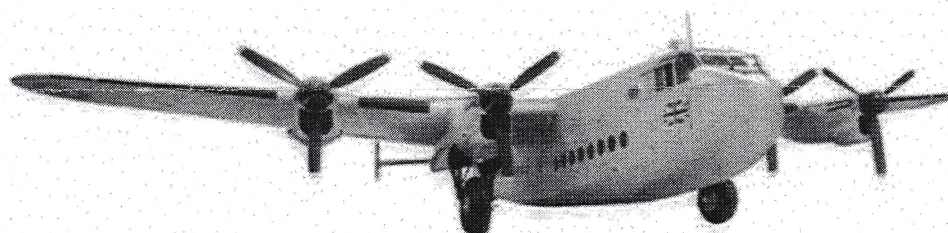
Pre-Flight



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The York

by
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So hectic was the period of the build of the Jetliner and the CF-100 Canuck that the opportunity for a bit of exercise was practically nonexistent. Eating lunch, attending to matters of a personal nature left precious little time for deep-knee bends and the like. A brisk walk was the ticket with the time remaining before the siren blew to commence the afternoon work. Generally, a trot alongside the fence of the third bay to its front, then back inside, a quick check to see how the production line was progressing, and back to the Design Office was the order of the day.

This day a strange airplane "greased-in"... a beautiful landing for such a large aircraft. Instead of turning and taxiing to the airport terminal, it turned left, proceeded through the rolling gate, rumbled northward along the perimeter of the fence and came to a halt a considerable distance from the Flight Test Hangar. I noted its square, corners-rounded fuselage, its use of the Lancaster wings and Merlin engines (no mistaking the sound of those), its use of the Lane's tailplane, fin, rudder and elevators although, I noticed a third fin had been added in line with the fuselage. This was some kind of a hybrid machine.

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From the President

Happy New Year from myself and the members of the AHFC Board of Directors.

This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Avro Arrow's first flight on March 25, 1958. We, who were there that day, will always remember what a great achievement for Canada it was.

I worked all night in Experimental Flight Test on pre-flight snags, so that the Arrow would be ready. Along with some fellow workers, we clocked out and hung around until the flight.

Frank

The York, cont'd

While the fuselage looked peculiar, being so square, (having become so accustomed to the more circular configuration of the Jetliner and the Canuck), I nevertheless felt it perfect for the transport of goods and people. The window-seat passenger would, upon rising, not be compelled to list heavily to port or starboard to avoid striking his or her head on those luggage racks situated as they are in modern airliners. Some designer had his head on straight, I thought. No question about that.

Returning to the D.O., all thoughts of this strange airplane were put aside and work began again on the CF-100 Canuck. At that time the Canuck was one of the most heavily-armed aircraft in the world and one with which our benevolent government desperately wished to arm its Royal Canadian Air Force, feelings being what they were between the Free World and the Soviet Union.

However, the fickle finger of fate again led me smack into a situation over which I had little or no control. A visit to the Flight Test became necessary for whatever cockarnammie reason. A quick trot over and a circuitous route back led to my passing this strange airplane, and lo and behold there was Tommy Carroll, my Irish friend - the premier gate guard in my opinion, complete with a rusty double-barreled shotgun. Yes, a shotgun! "What ho! Tommy boy ... ppprrrrresent arms."

Tom, ever the one to engage in a bit of frivolity, snapped to attention and did a passable attempt at placing that ancient blunderbuss in the proper position as dictated by the warlords in Ottawa. We passed the time of day quite comfortably. Yes. He had been given the boring task of protecting this aircraft from idle hands and prying eyes. A passel of the brass and the newspaper lads would be along shortly to inspect it, after they had been wine and dined. No. Entrance to the aircraft was forbidden. Anyone attempting entry would have his ass shot off.

I had a good look inside this York, as Tommy called it. The cockpit layout was obviously borrowed from the Lanc, but that fuselage? It was gorgeous. So much room. Modern day ads by airlines zero in on the ample legroom provided for the comfort of their passengers. Every passenger needs ample legroom. Who wants to sit hour after hour with their knees tucked into their chest. With this aircraft, there would be legroom for the tallest person.



The York, *cont'd.*

The stewardess could stroll down the wide aisle and escape the clutching hands of amorous passengers. The design of this aircraft was very well thought out. If Trans-Canada Airlines, who had turned down our Jetliner, still had the dumb idea of going with prop jobs, this was the aircraft to buy. Stepping out, I commented on how smart Tommy looked, uniform pressed, gleaming white shirt, black tie, shoes shined; a role model for all guards. I left him walking up and down in the hot sunshine, "wishing to hell he had a shot of Bushmills."

My concentration on the job at hand being shattered, a slight detour, to re-acquaint myself with some wartime shop workers, seemed the thing to do. These old friends were now busily engaged in the production of various sections of the CF-100. It would only take a few minutes. The D.O. wouldn't come to a crashing halt without me, spin a few tales of the Lysander days, the Anson, the build of the Lancaster and its wings, the Harvard wings. Wartime stuff.



I glanced back, waved good-bye to Tommy watching from across the tarmac, entered familiar territory ... and all the ghosts of the past came rushing back. I could see little Toby fetching newly-cooked rivets, one-eyed John, black patch over the eye, looking every bit his part as the Marlboro Man. Doug Booth, that goddamned Mac McCrimmon, coffee cup in hand glaring from behind his piled-up books, Thomas, Dudley Do-Good, George the muffler man and Calvin the chipmunk spinning his wheels. I had to shake my head. It never pays to go back. It can never be the same.

However, Huck was there. Harley Ballantyne was one of the best. I hadn't seen Huck since the Lancaster wing days just before I was turfed out and sent to Tool Inspection. We settled in for a short gab. All was well with him and his wife fine, kids fine; life was good, rolling along on even keel.

"By the way," said Huck. "I have something that belongs to you." Reaching into his toolbox, he produced an object wrapped in an oily rag. I examined it curiously, a rivet snap, its business end bent and ground off in a certain spot to allow for a better entry into god-hard-to-reach places. Bright and shiny, not a pick of rust on its surface it lay in that oily rag, an all too familiar object from long ago.

"When the war ended," continued Huck, "the riveters were the first to get the boot. You remember Mickey, that girl riveter that was on your case so often? Well, she asked me, if I ever saw you again, to give you this snap and thank you for the loan of it."

Memories came flooding back. Of course. Now I remembered. I had loaned that snap, my snap, to Mickey before I got the boot out of the Lane wings, courtesy of Mad Max.

"C'mon Huck, she never said that, Right?"

"Well, no, not quite in those terms. In actual fact, she said, (ed note: unable to print her comment.)."

A warm wave of nostalgia washed over me. I could plainly see that mahogany-coloured hair and those magnificent green eyes. What a team we would have made! Mick had remembered, and had said good-bye in her usual inimitable manner. I was lost in thought for the moment. The door crashed open and in came an agitated looking man, a very agitated Tommy. No longer his cheerful self he practically ran over to us. He was in such a state, it was difficult to make him out, so thick was that Irish accent.

"Tom, slow down. What's the matter?"

"I need help. I shot the York."

We burst out laughing.

"I'm not joking. I did, I did. I shot that goddamn airplane."

Tommy was really upset. We realized this was no joke.

"What happened Tommy?"

"You know I got a bad arm. I shifted that goddamn shotgun. It slipped, I tried to grab it and caught my finger in the trigger and it went off and blew a hole in the side of that f---n' airplane. Now all those people are coming to see it and I'll get fired for sure, and me and the wife with a baby on the way."

All this spoken in the thickest Irish accent, I'd ever heard. I had a momentary vision of a wartime aircraft, a Spitfire or a Hurricane, taking a hit, the canopy sliding back, the pilot going over the side, a billow of silk and the aircraft beginning its long plunge to Mother Earth, trailing a plume of black smoke.

But here? An airplane sitting on our tarmac in the bright sunshine suffering a hit from a rusty old shotgun? Hollywood could use a plot like that. I had difficulty suppressing a smile. A glance at Tommy dispelled all thoughts of levity. He was a very worried boy.

"Simmer down, Tom. We'll have a look. See what we can do."

Tommy had spared no details. There was the rusty old gun lying on the concrete the smell of gunpowder lingering in the air. I was, in spite of the levity of the situation, somewhat concerned. The reputation of the company, already shaky where the press was concerned, would be jeopardized by this incident if allowed to make the newspapers. I could see the headlines.



The York, cont'd

"Avro's York shot down in flames."

"York transport hits the deck."

"Armed guard shoots York transport."

The scribes would have a field day over this one. They would give their usual lurid description of the downing of the York. There would be "touched-up" pictures of the York, a smoking ruin lying on the tarmac. Maybe a cartoon of Tommy showing him, teeth a-gleam, triumphantly waving his shotgun aloft.

That could not be allowed to happen. Avro's reputation was at stake.

A twelve-gauge shotgun makes a hell of a hole in most things, especially at close range, and indeed such was the case. The gleaming side of the York had a good-sized gaping irregular shaped hole, but by great good fortune, it was between formers and stringers. There was chance; a slim chance that a fix was possible before the brass came to inspect the machine. But, it would have to be done as expeditiously as possible and by people who know what they were doing.

Huck was the best. I knew that. But my sojourn in His Majesty's Navy had done nothing to keep my skills intact. But what the hell! A buddy was in trouble. Give it a good shot.

There is something pleasant about working with a person, be they male or female, who knows what they are doing. Instinctively each knows what is required to make a fix, what tools are needed. Each person acts almost as one, never getting in the way, no words spoken, none are necessary. We were a smooth, well-oiled machine.

We returned, pushing a cart loaded with snips, air drills, long lengths of air hose, a rivet gun, bucking bar. All the tools required to do the job, and set to work.

"Tom, any idea when the brass are coming?" I queried.

"Mike said they'd be along about 2.00 p.m." I glanced at my watch ... wheeoo ... we'd better get our ass in gear.

"Keep people away Tom, and get marching, like nothing happened."

Standing back, we assessed the damage. I measured the required patch and took off for the sheet metal shop and over the mild protests of the foreman, cut metal to size and rolled a slight curve in the bottom portion, Tommy's blast having landed on the bottom curved shoulder. Rivets were freely given by the Heat Treat. It does pay to know the people in charge of these departments. On the dead run, patch and rivets clutched to hand, I returned to the scene of the crime!!!

Huck was one hell of a worker. Rivets had been drilled out ... His snips had made short work of the damaged area. We were ready.

Tommy would stroll by and in a funereal voice intone the time.

"Twenty minutes to go ... eighteen minutes to go ... twelve minutes to go ... hurry up for chrissake." Just what we needed ... an Irish time clock. I wasn't worried. Time means nothing to brass hats. Get their snoots into food and booze and they tend to lose all track of time. We'd make it.

The patch fitted perfectly, aided by a few taps with a mallet. Huck bucked, (now there's a play on words.) I handled the riveting gun. It felt great to be back in harness. Old Harry Bodiam would have been proud. A skill never deserts a person. It's like riding a bicycle or sex. You never forget how.

The patch was completed and the tools were placed on the cart, the interior of the York was cleaned, the exterior polished with Tommy's handkerchief and rolling away with his heartfelt thanks ringing in our ears the brass and newsmen made their appearance strolling across the tarmac toward the York.

The reputation of the company was saved. Our contribution remained a secret-until now. It was never mentioned by the participants in that little caper. Certainly not by Tommy Carroll, whose wife subsequently bore him a boy child in Ireland, wishing to have her child born on the "ould" sod.

Huckleberry Ballantyne? Not that boy. A closed mouth never got anyone into trouble.



Members Matter

As Membership Secretary, I wish each and every one a happy and prosperous 2008. May we continue to grow and complete planned objectives of our Foundation for 2008. To those members that have responded to the Renewal/Donation Form 2008, I say a special thank you, as this makes my job of processing a bit easier. For the members inquiring, I have processed the 2007 tax receipts, which are enclosed with this newsletter. I will have left for Florida by the time you receive this issue of Pre-Flight. Membership cards and gifts requested will be fully processed on my return from Florida on April 1st. If you have any questions, please give the President a call at 905-624-4909. Once again, a big "Thank you!" for your response, patience and especially your understanding of the lengthy time it takes for all the processing.

Nich

Nicholas Doran, Membership