

Peter Terry

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‘I grew up in Shipston-on-Stour and joined the RAF in 1947 on leaving school. After initial training I found myself at RAF Abingdon in Air Traffic Control. This was the heyday of RAF Transport Command, with Yorks and Dakotas flying all over the world in support of British interests. Without doubt our finest hour at Abingdon was the Berlin airlift when the West broke the Russian blockade and kept the city alive through a bitter winter by ferrying tons of food, coal and clothing.

I gained my wings in 1950 and, after a short spell with Fighter Command, carried out a multi-engine conversion on Wellingtons before being posted to Bomber Command to fly Boeing B29s - the Boeing Superfortress - on loan from the USAF to fill the heavy bomber gap before the arrival of our own V-Bombers. These massive aircraft were very luxurious, built as they were for long range operations over the Pacific. They had pressurization, good heating, cooking facilities and hydraulic brakes. Our own equipment had pneumatics which could give up the ghost when pushed!

The B29s were returned to the USAF in March 1953 and this signaled the end of my airborne comforts when I joined 100 Squadron in Lincolnshire, flying Avro-Lincolns, big brother of the Lancaster, for a command at the tender age of 24. Most of the flying was routine, apart from a spell in Egypt protecting the Suez Canal. This was followed by a further conversion onto Vickers Varsities and a posting as an Instrument Rating Examiner at No 2 Air Navigation School, Thorney Island.

After eight years flying I was advised that further service career advancement would require a term of ground duties. Preferring flying, and with civilian posts available, I studied for my Airline Transport Pilot's Licence and became one of the very few pilots in the RAF with the highest level of civilian qualification, endorsed for the Vickers Viking aircraft.

Leaving the RAF in 1957 I joined Silver City Airways (became British United) and flew with them until being grounded in 1964 with a heart problem. My wife Bette and I moved to The Plough House in Deddington in 1966 when I joined CSE Aviation at Kidlington Airport. Initially I was a Flight Simulator Instructor then a Department Manager involved in the selling and installation of flight simulators throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East until retiring at the end of 1992. Meanwhile Bette taught several generations of Deddington children at the Primary School.’

Editor's note: In retirement Peter's considerable skills as a model maker and cartographer were called upon by The Deddington Map Group to hand draw coloured scale maps of the village for a Millennium project; copies of these hang beneath the Town Hall. This remarkable achievement took almost four years to complete.