

It is known that 'no plan survives the first contact with the enemy', in this case serviceability as the lead Vulcan could not pressurise the cockpit so Martin Withers with the second Vulcan took over. Details of the mission are well recorded in other places such as the book 'Vulcan 607' but Barry was responsible for flying out to rendezvous and meet the returning Vulcan all in radio silence. A Nimrod with its Searchwater radar enabled a text book meet and refuel. (The Handley Page Victor K2, XH672, used by Barry on the singleton recovery flight is on display at RAF Cosford).

Three of the Victors returned to Ascension with very low fuel meaning they could only attempt one landing and they had to land one after the other without back tracking the runway so that if the last aircraft failed to stop it would collide with the others. Neither could brake parachutes be deployed by the first tow aircraft as there would not be enough time to clear them from the runway. Fortunately all went well.

As in the famous Dam Buster raid, the operation was contentious in its success but the important aspect was the strategic effect of Argentinian holding back fighters for homeland defence as much as the actual damage to the runway.

Barry provided us with a fascinating evening complete with the dramatic anecdotes that are rarely heard about shown by the strong applause at the end of the evening.

### **VULCAN AT WELLESBOURNE MOUNTFORD by Steve Robson**

With last year of the flying Vulcan and it being based far away at Doncaster I was pleased to be able to visit another Vulcan which is in 'fast taxi' condition. It is based at Wellesbourne near Stratford on Avon which is ideal for the family going to get Shakespeare culture while the less cultured can fill their boots looking around a Vulcan and afterwards enjoying refreshments at the airfield cafe to watch general flying. Avro Vulcan XM655 is looked

after by 655 Maintenance and Preservation Society (655MaPS) which is a volunteer organisation whose enthusiasts give up their time to perform the maintenance for regular power up of aircraft systems, and ground runs with the occasional fund raising fast taxi runs and formal photo shoots. I was able to gain access to the pan and view XM655 mid week and take the photo shown.

Everything is looked after to a very high standard and the 655MaPS appears well run and organised. XM 655 was third from last of the Vulcan bombers produced and was delivered in late 1964, and has the most powerful of the engine marks (Bristol Olympus 301s). There is a small museum



A Wings and Wheels event on 21<sup>st</sup> June saw XH558 overflying XM655 along with a display by the Rolls-Royce Spitfire. The airfield has a thriving flying club with aviation and a helicopter business but the owners of the land are looking to sell for housing development which would be a great shame. The airfield was known as Wellesbourne Mountford when it was created in 1941 as a base for 22 OTU to train pilots, navigators, wireless operators and gunners and operating Wellingtons. The airfield was sold back to the original land owners in 1964. A wartime underground bunker, only open Sundays and Bank Holidays, serves as a museum with several aircraft (above ground) including a Vampire T11, a Sea Vixen nose, a Percival Provost and a Yak 52.

**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**