

We met at the Dunnington lay-by on a dull overcast day for our run to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirby. A small but enthusiastic group of three cars, all silver, with one more to join us on the way comprising myself and Ian in my TF, Frank and Lee in their Mazdas and Jim in his red MGB. We duly set off on our journey that would take us over the Humber Bridge and past Humberside Airport. Once we had passed the airport we went along a series of well surfaced minor roads that joined together to take us down to Horncastle. We passed straight through the town and then found a B road and a single track road to take us into East Kirby almost opposite the museum entrance. We soon found the car park and we weren't the only MGs there. An MG3, two TFs and a B were in evidence and there may have been others.

The museum was set up in 1987 by Fred and Harold Panton as a tribute to their brother Christopher who was killed in a raid on Nuremberg on 30/31 March 1944. This raid saw the loss of 108 British aircraft, 655 aircrew killed and 159 taken prisoner. It is also a living memorial to the 55,000 men of Bomber Command who lost their lives during World War Two.

The first exhibit that catches your eye is NX611 "Just Jane", a MkVII Avro Lancaster built at Austin Motors at Longbridge in April 1945. It's size just dominates your view whether it is in the hangar or outside on the apron and when the four Merlin engines are running it overwhelms your hearing. It regularly makes taxi runs giving the opportunity to go for a ride in this historic aircraft. Among the other exhibits are a de Havilland Mosquito, the front fuselage section of an English Electric Canberra bomber complete with cockpit, a number of ground support vehicles and many other items of aviation militaria. Also on display are many items from the Lincolnshire Aircraft Recovery Group who, as their name would indicate, specialise in the recovery and preservation of the remains of crashed aircraft in the Lincolnshire area. They are based at the Heritage Centre.

Many of the building have been renovated and fitted out as they would have been in WW2 when it was an operational airfield. These include a briefing hut, a billet hut a home front exhibition, an escape museum and the control tower. Unfortunately the weather was against us during our visit. The rain started just before the afternoon taxi run and carried on for the rest of our time there and didn't encourage wandering

from building to building and getting soaking wet. The taxi run starts from outside the hangar so we were able to keep dry while they started the engines. First the starboard inner, then the starboard outer, followed by the port inner and then the port outer. Except that the port outer decided not to play ball and wouldn't start. Undeterred the taxi run carried on with its ten passengers on board, three of whom could be seen in the upper gun turret. Out on to the grass airstrip it went where it taxied up and down for a while before returning to the apron in front of the hangar. It was then towed backwards into the hangar where its passengers had a few photo opportunities.

There is also a Naafi and shop on site. We visited the Naafi on our arrival because it was about that sort of time and the food was varied, plentiful and reasonably priced. Prior to our departure we visited again when apple pie and custard, among other things, was available so why not have some additional sustenance before our journey home. And what do you think, a few miles down the road there was no rain and it didn't look as if there had been any. So after another enjoyable day out everyone arrived home safe and sound.