

CITIZEN'S PROFILE – PAUL ROSS

On hearing that I was taking over from Keith as Chairman of the Association, many of you may have wondered how I came to have any connection with Silver City. I hope this Profile will go some way to explaining.

I was born in October 1952 in Ilford, Essex and developed a very early interest in anything to do with transport – particularly railways and aviation. Our nearest airfield was at Stapleford and I still remember that the only aircraft that my mother could recognise was a Miles Messenger – which usually appeared over the house while she was preparing the Sunday lunch! I also had my first flight from Stapleford in a Piper Tri-Pacer owned by a family friend.

After attending the local Junior School, I went on to Barking Abbey School where my older brother was also a pupil. Our Headmaster, Mr F C Young DFC, had been a Navigator (I think on Mosquitos) during the war and my Geography master had been an Education Officer at RAF Predannack in Cornwall, so there must have been an aviation atmosphere lurking in the school somewhere.

For many years, our family summer holidays were invariably spent with my great uncle and great aunt who ran a hotel in Folkestone, which was the start of my contact with that part of the world. I was introduced to both the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway and to the sight of DC3s and Freighters flying in and out of Ferryfield. We later had clearer views of both the railway and the aircraft when my great uncle and great aunt retired and moved to Willow Cottage, on the Dymchurch Road just outside New Romney.

On leaving school, I joined London Transport and stayed with LT, London Underground and, finally, Transport for London for the next 36 years until I took early retirement in January 2008. I thoroughly enjoyed myself for pretty much all of that time and was fortunate in being able to move around the organisation so that I got a lot of experience in many different areas. I spent four years working at the Underground's Acton Works between 1984 and 1988. I had gone there on what should have been a short secondment from the Underground's Finance Department but I enjoyed it so much, I asked if I could stay! I made many good friends during that period and was also allowed to 'get my hands dirty' by going out on test trains and spending time in depots.

After a while, I felt like a change and transferred to the Railway Operating Department as a trainee Area Manager. These were the senior uniformed operating officials on shift out on 'the front line'. The training course put you through all the jobs of the people you would be managing, so I learnt how to be a Booking Clerk, a Train Driver – and even how to sweep a platform! When I qualified, I was put on the Central and Bakerloo lines and found that I enjoyed the challenge of trying to keep the railway running and dealing with day-to-day incidents that came in all shapes and sizes – from train and signal failures to tap-dancing buskers on escalators, drunks and (sadly) the occasional suicide. My final job before retirement was liaising between TfL and the mainline Train Operating Companies (both passenger and freight) operating services in the London area.

While all this was going on, I had joined the London Transport Flying Club at Fair Oaks with the aim of learning to fly but I hadn't got very far when it was discovered that I suffered from high blood pressure. It took a while to get this sorted-out with medication and in the meantime, having a growing interest in vintage aircraft, I decided to transfer my allegiance to the Cambridge Flying Group, which operated Tiger Moths. As is often the case, I found it increasingly difficult to devote enough time to make consistent progress with my flying training but although I'm no longer a student there, I still go along every few months to help out on Sundays as one of the 'duty pilots' keeping things in order on the ground. I also fly with friends, one of whom owns his own aircraft, and I take the opportunity to get interesting types in my log book – including Chipmunks, a Harvard and even a two-seat de Havilland Vampire.

As well as being a member of the Cambridge Flying Group, I'm currently Chairman of two registered aviation charities - the Airship Heritage Trust and the de Havilland Educational Trust (which awards bursaries to encourage young pilots and engineers to develop the skills to fly and maintain old aeroplanes) – and Trophies Officer of the de Havilland Moth Club.

I have always maintained an interest in Silver City since my childhood holidays and it was in 2002 that I became aware of the Association through an article in *Aeroplane* magazine about the Bristol Freighter. I contacted Sally who invited me along to that year's Reunion and I joined as Associate Member No.002. Some time later, I was approached by Sally and Keith to see if I would be willing to take over from Keith whenever he decided to step down as Chairman. So that's how I became your new Chairman on 1st January 2012. I look forward to working with Keith and Sally for many years to come to help keep the Silver City name alive.

