

Kyrle Probus Club members enjoyed a vividly realistic account of air operations in Afghanistan, at their meeting on Thursday 21 June.

Former RAF Wing Commander Paul Morris flew 150 missions in a VC10 aircraft in support of ground forces during the Middle East conflict.

The members were also told that Paul notched up 850 hours in a Nimrod and a Victor bomber aircraft as a flight engineer and later as a navigator with the coalition forces.

“I am very proud to have served with the allied services, especially the army,” he said.

A dramatic video underlined that the Afghanistan combat zones were “no place for faint hearts. You can’t afford to put a foot wrong because of the active insurgents”

He dismissed a claim by the Taliban that they were responsible for a Nimrod crash as false; a circuit failure was the reason for the tragedy, in which Paul lost a friend among those who crewed the aircraft.

He outlined the crucial roles played by a series of fighter and reconnaissance planes, including the Tornado fighter used for close air support; the Tristar; the Hercules ‘a real workhorse used for carrying cargo and air dropping supplies’; the Chinook helicopter and the much-missed Harrier.

“It was a sad day when the Harrier went out of service,” said Paul. “Because of cost-saving cuts we went eight years with no maritime cover, when we had to rely on the French!”

The biggest worry for aircrew over Afghanistan was not the Taliban attacks but the danger of collision and near-misses with other aircraft when radio communications were cut off by insurgency ‘barrage jamming’.

A seven-minute video of a typical mission showing the skilled air-to-air refuelling at high speed over barren desert and rugged mountain ranges ended the talk on an exciting note.