



# BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT SOCIAL CLUB LTD

In Ass. with BigginHillReunited.co.uk

ISSUE No. 37

[www.bigginhillclub.co.uk](http://www.bigginhillclub.co.uk)

1<sup>st</sup> March 2008

## SHORT LANDING FOR 777

Imagine this – “Can you take the first right after landing” – “Roger”



Some very lucky people walked away from this shortfall in aviation at Heathrow recently. There is some very interesting reading available on this one. Which will make you wonder, as to who, or what, has control of your destiny.

## THE FIRST AIRSHOW 1963



How many pilots from Biggin Hill remember this first Air Show and the collection of aircraft displayed along the runway 29 / 11. From this humble beginning many Air Shows would follow, with most of us attending like a religious pilgrimage to watch the show, and the long evenings spent in the many bars on the airfield after the Air Show. In these early beginnings, aircraft would arrive on a Wednesday, with some good pre-show flying on Thursday, with a very good press day on Friday,

prior, to the Saturday and Sunday. Monday was another day with aircraft departing back to their bases with a beat up of the airfield as they left – adding yet another good day at the airfield. Sadly though, these halcyon days of cavalier flying have gone forever, the support from the Armed Services becoming more restrictive, and of course the current trend in this country toward Health and Safety has led to further restrictions, on air shows, but not on immigration. Our spirits aren't dampened and we look forward to the next Air Show at Biggin Hill.

## WHEN I LEARNED TO FLY

Things were very different, we were keen and would attend the airfield in all weathers just to be near an aeroplane and other aviation minded people. The aircraft weren't the most comfortable. Your desire to fly was strong enough to overlook comfort.



Some aircraft had enclosed cabins,



giving some additional pilot comfort and a little warmth. The open cockpit gave a wonderful unrestricted view and you became aware of the force of the airflow if you tried to stick your head out from the protective Perspex screen. Considering the antiquity of some of these aircraft, they were the *'bees knees'* in those days and flew very well. Some were better balanced than others, but were quite enjoyable to fly. Nowadays the modern light aircraft is akin to a car, in that the pilot and other occupants are totally enclosed, it has cabin heating and is relatively quiet within.

The modern horizontally opposed engines are of a better design than their older counterpart without the oil loss of the inverted engines fitted to the older aircraft. Tiger Moths etc, The range of the modern light aircraft is considerably more than the older aircraft (*which had only a couple of hours endurance*), this now varies between 600 nm to 1500nm with speeds up 180 kts, with an endurance of 8hr 20min, not bad eh? Also the modern day navigation systems such as GPS, makes looking over the side into the buffeting wind to follow your track much simpler. *Be ready with your old fashion flight log when this modern gear fails.* Be aware of your position at all times. Flying is about travel, the light aircraft offers far better travel services than the moder jet airliner. Over the first 500 miles you can beat the airliner in terms of overhaul travel time from home to departure from your airfield.

Beyond 500 miles, you will lose ground to the jet airliner, but you still have the freedom to fly when you want with far more enjoyment.

## SIMPLY START UP AND GO



As demonstrated by David Hume in his Miles Vega Gull aircraft as he taxi's out for a flight to Shoreham on the South Coast.



Nestled within the hangar like a Robins nest, more classic aircraft await their turn to get airborne.



A Dornier stands poised for flight.



These classic aircraft are often seen around the airfields of Europe following the many flying rallies and air shows during the summer

months. Le Touquet in France. being the favourite for Sunday lunch for the past 48 years. Just 30 minutes away, or 77 nautical miles.

## WHEN THE WEATHER'S BAD

The airfield can be a lot of fun even the deep snows of 1964 which grounded the aircraft, but not the spirit of the aviation fraternity – There was of course plenty of spirit waiting in the bars at the end of the days activities playing in the snow.



L to R, Bill Hearnden, Rex Nichols and the late Brian Bennett all original EFG members. Rex of course celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday last year with a surprise party at the old Pilots Pals Bar. Many pilots gained their flying licence through the efforts of Rex who was a flying instructor and CAA Examiner.



How deep was the snow, seen here with Brian Bennett and Gwen having a snow fight at Biggin Hill. We never had this amount of snow again until 1986 when the snow was blown off the airfield by a north easterly wind during the night, blocking the road past the airfield up to the top of the lamp posts. There were no cars driving around Biggin Hill, it was so quiet, people were walking on the deep snow talking to each other. A JCB digger sent to clear the road became buried and wasn't found until 3 days later. Two hangars suffered collapse and frantic owners were trying to extract their

aircraft from within or being crushed further. They had little hope of rescuing their beloved planes as the snow varied in depth from 3 feet and 6 feet outside the doors. The best they could do was to prop the collapsed roof with building props. It was several days before rescues were completed. Getting to the airfield was another problem for a few days with people having to walk through deep snow. You found muscles in your legs that never existed before this time. Where did these muscles suddenly come from and why do they make my legs ache so much. Why do we have snow? Ask the weatherman and he will give you a totally incoherent reason for snow.

## A PUB WITH A WARM FIRE

**The Old Jail**, Jail Lane, Biggin Hill, Westerham, Kent TN16 3AX This public house has stood here since the 1800's. It is reputed to have been a holding jail for prisoners en route to Dover and perhaps a Penal Colony overseas.



## THE EDITORS IMPRESSION

Of one of the fireplaces within, is a vision the Editor saw as the sun streamed through the window in the late afternoon following a blow out lunch and some artistic adjustment to the image obtained.



The Restaurant at The Old Jail is open everyday and extremely

popular. It is essential to book in advance to avoid disappointment telephone, 01959 572979 to reserve your table.



**ST GEORGES PRESS RELEASE**  
Fighter Pilots of RAF Biggin Hill were perhaps best known for the vital part they played in the successful outcome of the Battle of Britain during the Second World War. It is probably also true to say that Pubs in the local area also played their part in providing excellent hospitality and refreshments during those troubled times. The fighter pilots of RAF Biggin Hill have long since gone but their tradition and memory remains in many a corner of a local bar. Kath Preston, landlady of The White Hart, Brasted during the war and for some years after, clearly had such a sense of history in preserving the names of those pilots chalked on a blackboard screen after a particularly boisterous night in the bar. A copy of this screen together with many photographs of the pilots at the time, remain at The White Hart to this day. All these memories and tributes come into focus at St Georges Royal Air Force Chapel of Remembrance which is on the A233 alongside the airfield and is open every day between 11 am and 4 pm with curators in attendance to tell you something of the history of this unique and poignant place. A full colour booklet is available at the Chapel priced £4 or £5 by post with cheques made payable to 'Friends of St George's Chapel' Contact Geoff Greensmith at 01689 821789 (9 am- 5.30pm) or the Chapel on 01959 570353 between (11 am – 4pm)

### **RED ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY**

This unique tale is provided by our effervescent roving reporter Derek

Clauson during one of his many walking expeditions around the many footpaths of Kent. Spotting this very early arrival he got his camera out and took this picture of a butterfly amongst the foliage.



Unfortunately the butterfly is hard to spot, so we have produced a better image for our many readers.



Perhaps now you can detect it in the picture above (not easy). The Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) is a migrant, coming to Northern Ireland from Southern Europe and North Africa from May onwards. This year is exceptional as it was February when this one was sighted. It is amazing these small creatures can travel so far by riding on the hot air currents. Does this mean global warming is really coming sooner than we think? The pundits may be correct in their predictions. The early arrivals though lay eggs and the nearly black caterpillars are about 35mm in length with yellow spots along their sides, and have hairy spines. These develop over the summer and pupate to produce a later generation in the autumn, proving that life goes 'full circle'.

### **SOUTH CAMP CINEMA**

Only a few may remember this essential part of wartime Biggin Hill's entertainment was the Station Cinema. This was a large asbestos clad metal framed building approximately midway to

the left of what is now Wireless Way on Biggin Hill's Industrial Estate. The Cinema was probably purpose built, with a stage and screen at one end, and a fire proof projection room at the other. The interior was furnished with several hundred army issue fold up chairs and a single pot bellied coke stove to optimistically heat the interior! Around the upper walls were a series of larger than life Walt Disney characters, painted presumably by Free French Airmen, as alongside the signature was proudly displayed the Cross of Lorraine, the emblem of those gallant squadrons. On Wednesday nights the cinema always showed a double feature, a B film probably featuring Ronald Reagan! Epics such as Casablanca in full colour, Sinbad, featuring Sabu the Elephant Boy. A wonderful piece of animation at the time complete with flying carpets and flying horses! To make sure you returned the following week, there were also cliff hanging serials. The Winners of the West, with Goodies wearing white hats and the Baddies dressed in black, so you always knew exactly where you were. Another series was Buck Rogers and the revolt of the Zuggs. Both serials ending each week on a dramatic high point, so that you just had to return to see what would happen. Continuity sometimes left something to be desired, as one week in the Revolt of the Zuggs, which was a science fiction drama, our hero clearly jumped from the top of a skyscraper without his anti gravity belt, which surely would have meant certain doom, only for the belt to be in position the following week on the run up to the dramatic moment. The American soldiers in the cinema at the time, exploded with rage, stamped their feet and shone their army issue torches in the air much to the delight of this ten year old boy who was privileged to be in that 1944 audience. Nothing remains today of the cinema at South Camp.

## A PPL FLIES IN A C17A GLOBEMASTER

An article by Biggin Hill Airport regular user, Peter Adams, Lord of Abbots-Hay



*(edited and shortened version of the original article that appeared in the February 2008 Edition of the Guild news - GAPAN Magazine)*

Following publication of an article in the Aircraft Owners and Pilots' Association magazine about a tanking sortie in the VC10, I was contacted by Group Captain (now Air Commodore) Ian Elliott, OC RAF Brize Norton, who wondered if I would like to try out the Boeing C17A Globemaster. My answer was a big "yes please".

In due course, I was contacted by Flight Lieutenant J J Jackson of No. 99 Squadron, who met us at the Station security gate with our pass. We then had a brisk 30-minute flight briefing before walking out to the huge and awesome looking C17A. Once boarded, I was introduced to Squadron Leader Keith Hewitt and Flight Lieutenant Rich Gibb, our two pilots for the day. A 2-3 hour local training sortie was planned with Keith in the left-hand seat as the instructor captain and Rich, another 99 Squadron captain, carrying out most of the initial aircraft handling from the right-hand seat.

After taking off from Brize Norton, we climbed out through a 600 ft base to level out on top at 2,500ft.

After making a turning descent through the clag we established ourselves on the Instrument Landing System (ILS) glide slope at 170 kts on a 3° angle of descent. The approach was flown mainly on autopilot at 130 kts with Rich taking over manually for a perfect 'touch and go'. Then followed a hand-flown ILS approach with a go around just below the cloud base of 700 ft. After the go around, we climbed to 28,000 ft and Keith set us up for a rapid descent to be flown by Rich.

At 28,000 ft the engines were set to idle and then all four engines were put into idle reverse (yes reverse) thrust. Then, with the nose pitched down at up to 20° below the horizon, we made a descent at initially 12,000 ft per minute then 15,000 ft per minute back to an altitude of 2,500 ft.

Then followed another ILS with Keith taking over control for the touch and go, and a visual circuit leading to a full flap 5° approach angle with another touch and go.

Next came a climb to over-fly RAF Fairford before establishing ourselves on long final approach at 340 kts for an "initials" join for a "run-in-and-break".

Keith made the break at 1,000ft and rolled us into a steep climbing left turn pulling

+ 2g. (Perhaps, at this time, I should remind the reader that we are not flying a fighter but a 174 ft long Globemaster.)

We then (for the grand finale) set up for the final visual circuit for a short field 5° assault-landing into a practice strip which is painted on Brize Norton's 10,000 ft runway and is only 90 ft wide and 3,000 ft

long. I am used to making short field landings in my PA28 or Cessna 172, however it is something else when you are flying in a Globemaster which can do this with an all up weight of up to 502,000 lbs.

Our touch down flown by Rich was almost (if not) perfect. We taxied over toward bay 35 and Keith asked our two Air Loadmasters to open up the rear door and ramp in order for him to put the engines in reverse thrust for the aircraft to back up for 150 yards.

Final shutdown followed after 2 hours 20 minutes of the most stimulating of flying. As I listened to the four great Pratt & Whitney engines winding down, I once again wondered at the sheer professionalism of the two pilots.

Before leaving the aircraft I was able to explore the vast cavern of storage which will take a variety of cargoes, including the Chinook helicopter, Tornado fighters or even a Challenger tank. It apparently takes only one



Loadmaster to handle the on-load of the interior.

My impression of the Globemaster is that the aircraft is up to any task worldwide. It takes up where the faithful old (or new) Hercules leaves off. Also, with the fighter-style control stick and glass instruments together with a "heads up" display it is clearly a joy to fly.