



# BIGGIN HILL BUGLE

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH PILOTS PALS  
1<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2007

## PILOTS PALS CLUB TO CLOSE ON 31<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2007

It has come as a shock to us all that our club – Pilots Pals – is to close on 31<sup>st</sup> August after some 20 years. Announced on 10<sup>th</sup> July, in spite of massive efforts, particularly over the last year, by Joe merchant, Jill, and the rest of the Committee, attendance at the club is still dramatically down. The conversion to membership only has shown that people want to have the club (570 members currently!), but they simply do not use it enough to keep it financially viable. In fact, Joe assures us that, although the club is better today than for many years, had it not been for the membership funds generated, the Club would have been forced to close in the Spring of this year. The next quarter's rent is due on 1<sup>st</sup> September and there are simply not the funds to meet that commitment without a cash injection from Joe personally.



We all know that Joe's health has been badly affected by this and other factors, and now, just as he looks towards potential retirement with wife Val in Spain, he is faced with having to sign a personal financial guarantee for 22 years, if the club is to be permitted to occupy the new premises planned for later in 2008 as a part of the airport South Camp development. With takings regularly not covering day to day costs, and his need to retire, none of us can blame Joe for feeling the time has come to throw in the towel.

Your Committee has not given up, of course, and work will continue in the background to secure a way forward for our club. This is dependent upon assistance from the airport to allow the Club – the only remaining social focus point on Biggin Hill Airport – to take over the premises originally allocated to Joe personally, and at an affordable rent. We all appreciate that the airport is changing, and we all realise things cannot return to how they were 20 or 25 years ago, but we do beg the airport authority to recognise the need for aviation people, both private pilots, owners, airport workers, and airport supporters, to have a place where they can socialise with like people. Many of their own staff have grown up on the airport over the years, and it is the ability to socialise with friends and colleagues away from the “non-flying” elements, that have kept them here at Biggin Hill.

If the airport authority can help us, then we believe there are ways that it may be possible for this last social venue to be maintained. It will need funding, and possibly sponsorship from organisations on the airport, which we can seek if there is a potential future – but it also needs the help of the membership – your support, not in just joining is required – those who live locally need to support the club on a day to day basis as well. It cannot operate if the bar is empty much of the time.

So – the end of an era? Or the start of a new one? Time will tell.....

In the meantime, all at the Bugle, and I am sure we are speaking on behalf of the whole membership, would like to thank Joe for all his efforts on our behalf for all these past years – without you Joe, Biggin Hill's social scene would have died many years ago, and many of our lives would have been the worse for that loss. But you have done all you can, and now you should relax and enjoy your retirement in Spain. Others will take over the mantle and try to keep your ideas alive. Thanks for everything - and do come and see us whenever you can.

## WOMEN IN BLACK SERIES



The sweet and innocent appearance of Maxine graces August issue of the Bugle. Her grammar may be coy, but her mathematical additions during a round at the bar are always correct to the last penny.

## THE SPIRIT OF SUMMER

Comes to Tatsfield, with a new display on their local green.



It consists of coloured stones and miniature plants. Worth visiting. It amazes the staff at the Bugle that these displays are safe from graffiti, or destruction. If builders put up a pleasant wooden screen which is painted to blend in or hide an untidy short term environment, some illiterate yob will '*tag it*' with his illegible signature, that only they understand. Perhaps their brains are immune to normal artistic designs and only see a blank wall as a challenge. It's a bit like a pilot who see's a blue sky. It becomes a challenge. Particularly, in the UK and Europe, where the meteorological conditions are often, miserable and dull. Aerosols are expensive. Save your money, *learn to fly*. It

could go much further, with a possible future career in aviation as an airline pilot. *Hey, just a minute, I'm flying away on holiday tomorrow!!!*

## 'LAST PUFF PARTY NIGHT'



The picture above depicts the last puff (30<sup>th</sup> June 2007) before the *national no smoking ban* comes into force the following day.

## THE BAR IS SMOKELESS

Whilst the bar was quiet today, it was very pleasant to go home not smelling of smoke. There was only one descanter encountered out of all the smokers. Whilst others in fact, seemed to enjoy not smoking. The only thing that remains, as a bad memory of those smoke filled days at the bar was the nicotine stained walls and light fittings. Quite a lot of the staining has been scrubbed off the walls and fittings by willing hands since, making the place very much brighter. Congratulations to all the smokers who refrained from smoking on this, their first devastating day of their life. It is interesting to note that some visitors from the USA were in the bar on this day. They said that no smoking in bars and restaurants has been in force for over many years in the States and it is great. *So get used to it, it is here to stay.*

## CLASSIC FISHING STORY

Believe this if you must. Derek Clauson, a part time fisherman at Keston Ponds, not only loses his float and catch, but his fishing rod, with reel and line. Dragged into the depths of the water, by a huge monster fish, according to Derek. Bearing in mind the water is only a

couple of feet deep, Derek was prepared to swim out after his cherished rod and line.

We at the bar could not stop laughing at this tail of woe. Derek sends some pictures of the monsters of these depths and his array of fishing tackle lost forever.



No wonder Derek looks surprised, with fish this large living in the shallows of Keston Ponds. One would be well advised, to keep couple of metres away from the waters edge, where such monsters lurk in these shallow waters. We at the Bugle believe it was a '*Great White*' that took his cherished 12 ft two piece rod and reel. Derek says he will have to travel to Hastings to buy another one.

## KEVIN'S LONELY BIRTHDAY



Kevin Hitch celebrates a quiet moment at the bar for his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday, today 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007.

## THE GREAT WHITE AWNING

This did us proud at the Air Show. It was destined for one more great event. **July 8 Bar-B-Q 2007.**

Alas the high wind in the early hours of July 6, 2007 wrecked it a little, so the Bar-B-Q was held in the open. Whilst the attendance was poor, the weather was kind.

## RACIAL HARMONY OFFICER



Sheihk Ahmed Bacon Rash Branch in pensive mood following the rejection of a member to buy him another drink, after his stories of untold wealth. His position as *Racial Harmony Officer* is looking somewhat insecure following his untimely hypocritical views expressed verbally over a couple of beers at the Pilots Pals recently.

## BUGLE CRAP REPORT

This unique photographic report was gathered by one of our very astute field reporters which provides a little humour.



The wording reads '*Caution*' vehicle may be Transporting Political Promises. The number plate (Californian) reads POOPMPR – this report has nothing to do with our normal satire levied against our members. However our new Prime Minister's name, **Brown** is synonymous.

## PILOTS PALS, IS IT THE END

I remember the time when we had

bars next door to each other. Yes I remember two that I visited regularly, and often, well into the



early mornings. (*That was before I got married*). It was a great shock to the Editor as well as many members today (10<sup>th</sup> July) to learn that the closure of Pilots Pals Bar could be the end of the road for the wonderful social life that has existed at Biggin Hill for the last 43 years. The Editor has spent as many years at the airfield as an Instructor and Socialite over countless cups of coffee and tall flying stories. One poignant story recalled, is that of a group of blind children being shown around the aircraft on the apron at Biggin Hill some 30 years ago. Following their finger touching experience around various aircraft they entered 'Mary Dillows' restaurant very excited at their adventure on the airfield. **One little boy had felt his way around an 'E Type Jaguar'** belonging to a kind of rich *Pilot Chappie* type called Clive, who owned a big house with an electrically heated outdoor swimming pool. Can you imagine what it cost to heat, even in those far off days. What's more, this *Pilot Chappie* couldn't even swim. Now, that is the definition of a snob. Sorry, we have got a little off track here, regarding the little boy's experience, he remarked to someone, **'I have never seen an 'E Type Jaguar before.'** Are the airfield management blind to the fact that people who learn to fly and become pilots are the future, and possibly their future income. The little boy probably had no future and realised that his touching of an aircraft and of the

'E' Type Jaguar was a gift that he has never forgotten, and probably still remembers Biggin Hill airfield to this day. Unfortunately life moves on and people forget the little boy. The editor has spent many years associated with Biggin Hill and its environment and sent many people on their first solo flight, along with many other well known instructors. Many have passed by the way into that big airfield in the sky. Gradually, our numbers have diminished. The new generation of people learning to fly, are presented with a different outlook. **Today's Flying Clubs**, have no **Social Atmosphere**, at the end of the lesson. There is no encouragement to stay at the airfield, or have the possibility, to make the acquaintance of a future fellow pilot over a drink. The closing of Pilots Pals Bar on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007, will mark the **end of an era** at Biggin Hill, that had a unique social history, which will be lost in time, **like the little blind boy**. This also destroys a unique bond between the many people (*pilots and others interested in aviation, one way or another*) that have met, and remained loyal to the Pilots Pals Bar over the past 15 years, where it has stood in its present position. **Where do we go from here?** We are socially devastated. Our future is vital for the future of people who have a dream of flying or those that enjoy the experience of just chilling out in an enjoyable aviation environment overlooking the airfield, rather than the abusive language of a drunken *yob* expounding on about his prowess to his mates and his conquests.

## JOE MERCHANT ESQUIRE

Joe, our beloved hero along with the lovely Jill Minter has been our inspiration for the last 15 years running the Pilots Pals Bar. We have enjoyed many a good time with a lot of banter amongst other members. Joe learnt to fly in 1962 at Surrey & Kent Flying Club and



later joining 600 Squadron flying Chipmunks. He has been associated with the airfield ever since. He has, during his years at Biggin Hill been, a staunch supporter, for the heritage of Biggin Hill. Whilst we have enjoyed the past years, it is sad to see them being discarded, simply for the fact, that *a social life on the airfield appears to be totally unacceptable*, even a café that served the community well was destroyed, driving more people away from the airfield and possibly the village, where parking is somewhat restrictive. The 'Bugle' also owes its inspiration to Joe following an article in the local press. It grew out of some discarded journalism and now touches many points around the world. Without the nucleus of the Pilots Pals, it may be a struggle to keep the Bugle up to speed. However we are not closing down, the Bugle will continue to be published. We may produce a slightly different perspective, but guarantee you the reader, will feel that you are still very close to Biggin Hill. For those of you, that are not literate with the Internet, or those that only subscribe to the tried and tested Basildon Bond. There is an alternative that is so simple. ***The Internet Café.*** You only need to search out

< <http://www.pilotspals.co.uk> >  
The world becomes your oyster and the Bugle pages are there for the reading thereof. A new edition

is published on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. (Subject, to any technical hitches). The Bugle welcomes any stories from days gone by, no matter how they are written. Our publishing department and proof readers will readjust your story to sound like it really happened. Even though, it is just a distant memory, which has faded with time. Our photographic department can bathe it in a solution that will reveal even invisible ink.

## REHABILITATION COURSE

The editor has been introduced to a severe course of rehabilitation by his wife. She feels that his many years of isolation within the confines of the Pilots Pals Bar may have alienated him from the outside world. She says the shock of closure has left him distraught and insecure, wandering around in a daze and mumbling. A day shopping at IKEA didn't help. All the arrows painted on the floor, left him totally bewildered and confused. He was returned to the bar by his wife fearing the worst. Perhaps a little more time and a different approach to the rehabilitation therapy for a life outside the Pilots Pals Bar, could be found on the Internet. The result was, a form of '*Reverse Psychology*,' with the wife accompanying the distraught husband to the bar. This had the reverse effect. She was transported back home, and the husband remained until the late evening. He arrived home with a bottle of Champagne and all was forgiven.

## THE EDITORS BIRTHDAY

The editor was treated to a long weekend in Rome, where the wife



deliberately tried to walk his legs off and threatened to throw him to the Lions, if he didn't keep up.

Luckily, for the editor, the place where they used to throw Christians to the lions in Rome was in a state of disrepair. We came to an alternative agreement to have several cold beers and a blow out lunch nearby for my 74<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## FAILED VISIT TO SEE POPE



Whilst in Rome, the editor decided to visit the Vatican, in the hope of gaining an audience with the Pope in the hope of getting a blessing for the Pilots Pals Bar. Unfortunately, because of the high temperature 34C and rising, the editor arrived in shorts and was promptly rejected on the grounds of being improperly dressed. *The Pope wears a dress..?*

## A FINAL FAREWELL PARTY

Make a note in your diary for this final bash (**25<sup>th</sup> August 2007**) to say farewell to Joe as he '*glides into retirement.*' There will be a reception in the afternoon from 1600 – 1800 hours for those members that are unable to remain for the evening party which will follow on well into the late hours, or when the beer runs out.



There will be no after show party, so make a point of attending. Certain items adorning the bar will be carefully stored for the future. Other items may be sold. Hopefully in the not too distant future we will rise from the ashes like a Phoenix. The Bugle will remain in production to keep you up to speed. Call the editor today! [johnbryan@jbpltstd.demon.co.uk](mailto:johnbryan@jbpltstd.demon.co.uk)