



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

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NEW BUGLE COMMENTS

Many appreciative messages have been received regarding our new image. The plan is to continue with this new image, with some of our own comments and others.

CLOSE FORMATION IS BEST



I am sure they are touching, what do you think? I must admit they certainly look extremely close.

ALMOST AS CLOSE AS US



Gordon Franks and 'Cobby' Moore study this concept of flying by the Antarctic Survey Aircraft.

FORMATION TO EXTREME



Not the result of any bad flying practice, but the aftermath of the 1987 Hurricane that swept through Biggin Hill on its way from Bognor Regis towards Southend.



Mark Palmer, Richard Chippendale Gary Duncan, and (the late) Mitch Parsons. The wind was still blowing at 47 knots the next morning. Gary spent the night in the woods at Titsey Hill on his way to the airfield at 2am, to see if his aircraft was OK. A tree had fallen in front and one behind and he was trapped for a very long time.

The editor had flown into Southend the night before and became stranded. The wind reached 104kts at Southend around 0430am. It was quite an exciting night outside. The roaring noise made by the wind was something to be heard...! 21 aircraft were damaged at Biggin and a similar amount at Shoreham. Many caravans from around the country were simply smashed to pieces. One person at Snetterton Motor Race Circuit was asleep in his caravan and woke up outside on the grass during its disintegration as it rolled across the field. Even his clothes were scattered to the wind. Some people, slept through this incredible storm, waking up to find no telephone, no electricity.

THE OLD AIRFIELD CAFÉ In years gone by the Old Airfield Café attracted people from film stars, to rock stars, grand prix divers, motor cycle champions, even royalty on occasions, but the best characters of all would be

'The weekend flyers' - These expert flyers would flock to the 'airfield café' where they would discuss the performance of their aircraft which would be better than their rivals, although they owned the same make and model, each was faster, had more range and performance, yet none of them were capable of extracting the maximum performance of their aircraft, because none were capable of flying in a straight line for more than five minutes in any direction. Their arrival at destination, would be an epic disorientated affair...! BUT, they had an uncanny ability to arrive at the 'airfield café' a split second before the last person to enter. This person would of course **be in the chair** for buying the current round of tea and coffee. If you casually approached the café at this moment in time there wouldn't be a sole to be seen for a 1,000 metres, **you are about to be encumbered** buying a very large round of beverages, for all and sundry. It seems **these are the in crowd...!** The tables were end to end and the stories blended into the slops on the table and always the demand for a top up from those who entered. If the weather was a bit gloomy, they would sit and discuss their '**Instrument Rating**' abilities, and procedural dexterity. (*must get one of those instrument thingamy's*). However, it isn't long before you are invited by one these '**Pilot Chappies**', who has befriended you, for a flight in his aircraft. The flight will be totally unforgettable, and leave you puzzled as to how these 'Pilot

Chappies' survived so long. Furthermore, they don't seem to have had any formal instrument training. This doesn't matter, because they own their own aircraft, and can practice on their own at anytime for free...! Without these characters in aviation, there would be no stories.

ATTERISSAGE FORCÉ

John Quayle, ex Biggin Hill ATC was flying his Rallye 180 over Normandy, south of Cherbourg recently, when according to him, *'the rumbling stopped'*. A small field appeared, larger than life. A successful forced landing ensued. The cause of the failure was an exhaust valve disintegrating.



John said, after landing, he looked up and saw a huge *'wooden cross'* thinking he had a divine message warning him not to fly single engine aircraft. He had landed in the grounds of the *Trappist Monks*, who uttered not a single word.



John and his wife Annette (also a former ATC at Biggin Hill) moved to Alderney several years ago, and have recently moved to live in

France where they own Kennels and run a Pet Transport Service. Some locals appeared within minutes, yet the local Gendarmerie who were just three minutes away, took twenty minutes to arrive. If anyone would like to contact John and Annette their Email is < john@caravelle.gg >

ST GEORGES RAF CHAPEL



Main Road, Biggin Hill, Kent. UK The original Station Church was established in a hut on the south side of the airfield in 1943 to commemorate the Battle of Britain (1940), but was completely destroyed by fire in 1946. the Chaplain at the time the, Reverend. C. King then had the idea of building a permanent Memorial Chapel and he became the driving force behind an official appeal launched to raise the necessary money. The late Sir Winston Churchill, in a commendation of the appeal "towards the noble endeavour to create a permanent shrine of remembrance", continued with these words – "My personal association with Biggin Hill during the Battle of Britain lives in my mind. As a nation we have short memories and it as well that memorials such as this should bring to our remembrance the cost of our victory in the days when one of our fighter pilots had to be worth ten. They died without seeing the reward of their efforts; we live to hold their reward inviolate and unfading". By the subscription of parents, relatives and friends of the aircrew who had died, and with a generous grant from the Air Ministry, building of the new Chapel began and the foundation stone was laid by Air Chief Marshall Lord Dowding

(Commander in Chief, Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain). It was dedicated on the 10th November 1951 by the Lord Bishop of Rochester. It is sincerely hoped that you will not only find this Chapel of interest, but as you go on your way, you will treasure the freedom that was won at such cost and be inspired to a firmer belief in God. The Chapel is open 7 days a week from 11am – 4pm. Membership to support the Chapel is £5 and can be sent to Friends, Treasurer, St Georges Chapel, Main Road, Biggin Hill, Westerham, Kent. TN16 3EJ Visiting this Chapel is well worth the effort and the interior is a must. Support St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance.

SLAC MEMBER PASSES ON

Derek Suter (Del) passed away recently he was aged 80. Del as he was known flew with South London Aero Club for many years. Del and his wife Audrey ran a bar on the airfield for some time, before opening a café in the small shopping precinct in the village.

XL2 LIBERTY FLYING GROUP



This small flying group is looking for new members – The aircraft is based at Biggin Hill and hangared at Tropair. This is a state of the art two seat aircraft fitted with Garmin 530, Mode S Transponder, DME, 2nd Nav/Com – FADEC – 6.US gal/hr. 120 kias No capital required, just £1,000 initial joining fee and regular fixed charge £145/month £35 per/hr wet. FAA licence required for flight outside UK as aircraft is on US Register. Ideal candidate will have 200 hrs +

Contact Bill Roberts for further details < weroberts2@aol.com >



The very tidy cockpit of the Liberty

OUR JANUARY WEATHER

The recent inclement, depressing rain and other words of expression has caused much local flooding.

Our roving reporter sends in this early morning scene of the Darent River at Shoreham, Kent (well, it is a real river now), before, it had always been a trickle, but having burst its banks laps at the front door of these houses. There is a lot to be said for living at Biggin Hill.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BIGGIN

The land on which Royal Air Force Station Biggin Hill stood was first used as an airfield in 1916 when wireless experimentation, which led to the development of Radar Direction Finding, was carried out. The first fighter aircraft – a detached flight from 39 Squadron flying BE 2E's and BE 12's arrived in December 1917 and operated against the Gotha bombers attacking London. Experimental radio and radar work continued after the First World War with redevelopment and expansion of the airfield and its associated buildings commencing in midsummer 1929. When the station reopened in September 1932, No's 23 and 32 Squadrons moved flying, Bulldogs and

Hawker Demons. In 1936 Biggin Hill was amongst the airfields surrounding London which were earmarked for expansion to provide a defensive ring around the capital, and the first Hurricane was delivered to 32 Squadron in September 1938. On the eve of the outbreak of war, the Hurricanes of 32 and 79 Squadrons were joined by the Blenheims of 601 Squadron, and in early 1940, the first short concrete runway was laid. Biggin Hill Squadrons were involved in providing air cover for the Dunkirk evacuation in May 1940, and, between August 1940, and the end of that year, 7 Squadrons from the airfield were involved in the Battle of Britain, destroying, by the end of 1940, some 600 enemy aircraft. The airfield continued its defense of London throughout the war and at one time or another, more than 50 Squadrons flew and fought, in the Biggin Hill Sector, accounting for 1400 enemy aircraft destroyed. It became for a short time, a Barrage Balloon Centre defending London against V1 flying bombs. The last operational missions flown before peace returned, were concerned with the transportation of penicillin to Poland.

Two Reserve squadrons formed at Biggin Hill in 1946 joined by a Regular squadron, No 41 in 1951. This squadron, eventually equipped with Hawker Hunter jet fighters, was the last to operate from Biggin Hill, disbanding in early 1959. Later that year, the Ground Officers' Selection Centre moved in and the Aircrew Selection Centre joined it in 1962. In 1964, the Cranwell Selection Board also took up residence and the resulting amalgamation produced the Officers' and Aircrew Selection Centre through which virtually all candidates for RAF commissioned service and for airmen aircrew duties passed. In August 1992 OASC moved to Cranwell and RAF Biggin Hill closed October that year. No RAF aircraft are

based at Biggin Hill. The airfield is now a civil airport. Visitors occasionally ask about a museum or a war cemetery which they believe to be at RAF Biggin Hill. *Neither exists.*

LOCAL MUSEUM INTEREST



The nearest attempt at a museum for the memory of Biggin Hill was in a small room of 'Scrambles Café' which sadly is no more. The



Café was sadly demolished soon after along with the contents and somewhere to have a great all day breakfast with inspiring menu names such as *Spitfire*, *Hurricane*, *Canberra*, *Vulcan*, and other names filling your plate to the edge. This



was a last ditch colour scheme to draw attention to a heritage centre. Now this doesn't exist anymore...!