



# BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

*News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005*



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

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## HALCYON DAYS AT BRANDS



It was still early in 1956 since my arrival in England and I have found out, how to get to Brands Hatch, it was quite simple.

Take the Underground to Victoria catch a Green Line Bus 410 outside the station. This was a very good service, right to the front gate. The Green Line bus route circled the outskirts of Central London.

Train services were quite good also and not expensive as the economy was still suffering from the effect of WWII which finished just ten years ago and damaged buildings were evident, air raid shelters were everywhere, most occupied by Taxi Ranks, some were simply Tea Bars 2p for a cup of tea and 3p a cup for coffee and a savaloy in a roll 4p.

I continued attending races at Brands Hatch which was rather different than the picture above, somewhat dull looking in 1956.

I started following Cross Country and sending picture to Motor Cycle News and they responded by offering me race meetings to cover for offering me selected race

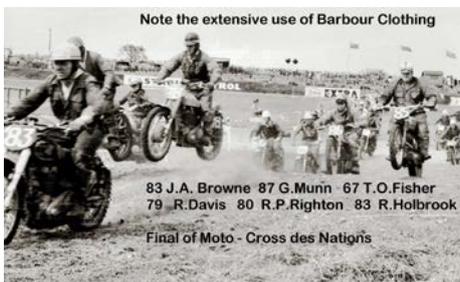
meetings to attend and publish my pictures.

## MOTO CROSS DES NACIONS

1957 would be held at Brands Hatch for the World Title.



Having followed several Xcountry meetings around the Southern Counties, these Championship races and riders were fearless so much faster than anything I had previously witnessed, these people would fly from one jumped to the next missing some completely.



They spent half their race in the air and bouncing back up again as soon as they hit the ground.

## ALBERT PARK MELBOURNE

It was a hot day in 1955 I had been to Melbourne and was returning to the bush at Mirimbah 150 miles away, when I spotted a sign which said 'MOTOR RACES' today, I turned off the road and entered the

Park and found a good looking spot leaning my BMW R50 against a tree. Noticing I had parked near the start / finish. Couldn't be better nothing preventing me from this upfront viewing spot, There were no barriers, other than several trees lining the general route of the track. Just a well defined bitumen road going around the park

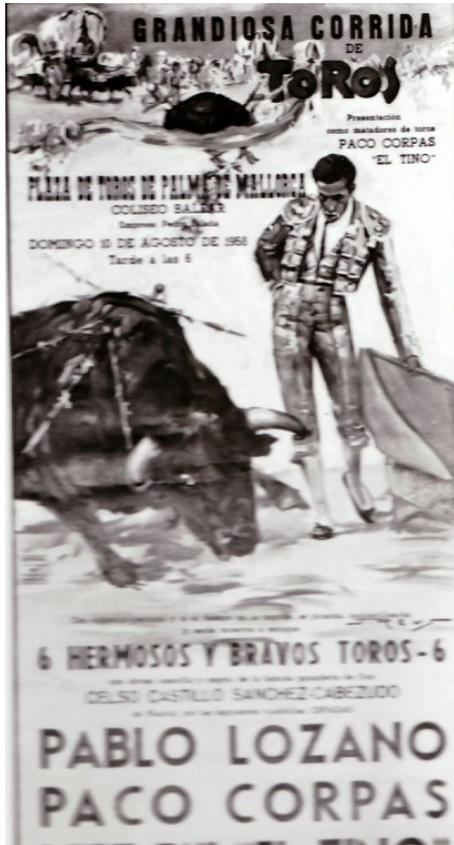
Ah! Here come the cars, they line up behind some white lines across the track, a man appears with a flag held high, their engines roar creating a thick blue haze, the man drops the flag, the tyres screech loudly from the spinning wheels sending bits of grass and grit into the air and disappear from sight in a cloud of dust! They are gone!! !! **Hellfire, this is dangerous !!!**



A moment back in history, Jack Brabham the days winner with his son. The speed these people drove around this park was unbelievable, they spent most of their time going sideways around all the corners in these midget cars!

Little did I know I would be introduced to Jack some time later and would remain friends from that moment on

## 1956 PALMA MALLORCA



I teamed up with two mates from our lodgings and flew out to Spain which was very cheap at this time.



JB, topping up his suntan.



We had a look around the Palma Cathedral which was very impressive. Later in the afternoon we decided to attend the Bull fight.

Whilst it is some what spectacular it is totally unfair for the poor animal which is injured by the Picadors on horse back prior to the actual killing.

This was our one and only visit to a bull fight. I went for a swim at Palma Nova a nice deserted beach. Today it is built up beyond recognition.



We then decided to look for some girls. Must get dressed first.



We found Peggy and Anette at Belver Castle, never saw them again, don't know why. Because it is still 1956, the holiday was good.

## 1957 GOLDEN JUBILEE TT

Having survived my first winter in the UK, the summer is here again and I am heading for the Isle of Man and the famous TT Motor Cycle Races around the Islands twisting roads just wide enough for motor cycles, without a sidecar.



The race is underway and everyone is listening for the first sound of an engine, because this year we have multi cylinder engines. The Gilera 500cc 4 cylinder above was ridden by Bob McIntyre and he was the first person to break the 100 mph lap from a standing start, the sound of the engine had a terrific sound.

The next multi engine to come toward our viewing spot, on top of a stone wall was a high pitch howl being the Moto Guzzi with a V8 500cc engine ridden by Dickie Dale.

You could hear this howling noise in the distance, but couldn't see anything, then suddenly there was a "Wow !!" which was a blur, as the sound dissipated rapidly leaving you with no lasting visual memory of what had just passed by.



These V8 engines were discussed in the mid 50's being the dream of Giulio Cesare Carlono the top man at Moto Guzzi.. They set about designing a unit that would hopefully beat the 4 cylinders being produced by other Racing Motor Cycles manufacturers.

These V8 were 30mm x 30mm square, subject to lack of detail which is probably still secret.



John Surtees, 2<sup>nd</sup> place Gilera IOM 1957 Bob McIntyre, Gilera 1<sup>st</sup> place, Ken Campbell V8 Moto Guzzi 3<sup>rd</sup> and Dickie Dale V8 Moto Guzzi 4<sup>th</sup> place.

## MOTO GUZZI V8 ENGINES



Imagine trying to change a spark plug in a hurry during a race.

Despite their complicity and confined space these engines could achieve 170 mph even in these days producing 75 bhp. Today's machines are capable of 180 mph plus and 150 bhp with turbo charges to boot.

There are still some of these v8 bikes around (60 years old) and still running, whereas the riders of these fabulous machines are fading at a similar rate. Moto Guzzi pulled out racing by the 1960's.

The rising cost of producing these machines at £360,000, so far, was unable to keep up with the current speed of the bike at 170 mph which was quite incredible for its time.

60 years on since the 100 lap of the Isle of Man, the lap speed is 133+ the machines today basically super road bikes, tuned to the ultimate and super tyres which are much wider and super sticky, allowing incredible lean angles in turns.

In the old days there was an expression 'ear 'oling' around the corner, which is more the fact today, because their ear is nearer the ground, as seen from the mini picture cams mounted on the bikes, they don't appear to fall off, but you become aware from being close to the ground, the camera, has merged with the ground, the rider has slid out of frame!

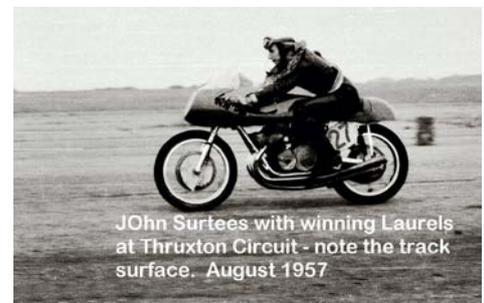
## THRUXTON AERODROME

It is August 1957 was littered by some abandoned DH Mosquito Bombers. The first time I saw one of these for real was in 1948, 9 years ago at Western Junction aerodrome in Tasmania, following an engine failure on very short finals, it sank into a railway cutting, which preceded the runway threshold, leaving the undercarriage in the railway cutting as it slid the remaining few yards through the boundary fence. I had my share of souvenirs, being close by when this happened, it made a lot of dust and not much noise from what I remember.



Two Mosquito Fighter Bombers stand alone at Thruxton Aerodrome. August 1957.

I am here for some motor cycle racing day out, these aircraft weren't too far from the actual track, cordoned off by binder twine



John Surtees with winning Laurels at Thruxton Circuit - note the track surface. August 1957

John Surtees was the winner again for today on his MV Augusta 500cc 4 cylinder. The track was protected from spectator intrusion by the odd 44 gallon drums joined together by some twine here and there for safety ?? Whilst the IOM had a well defined track edge built from earth and stone !! **Solid**

## FARNBOROUGH 1957



Royal Navy Anchor Formation Farnborough Air Show 1957

This was a good air show, probably the best there is with plenty of things to see outdoor and indoors. Above is a formation of Royal Navy Gannets with their Anchor formation. I hadn't realised at this moment in time, I would attend many airshows at Farnborough over the coming years in the Aerospatiale chalet who produced various aircraft in their factory at Tarbes, in the Pyrenees. This factory had a special canteen for directors, visitors, pilots seating up to 35 people, very exclusive.

Years later it was replaced by a much larger restaurant, and a new directors private area, one of the waitresses fancied me thinking I was a military gentleman, because everyone would greet me when I arrived and re-arrange a place for me with various people.

## RAF STATION BIGGIN HILL



1958 I found my way to Biggin Hill RAF station for the Battle of Briton Air Show with 3 of Britain's Nuclear Bombers, up close, no entry free, from top to bottom the Vulcan Bomber, Handley Page Victor Bomber and the Vickers Valiant Nuclear Bombers.

There weren't too many people and there wasn't the threat of security, it was good to be able to get close to these amazing aircraft and actually touch them. Brilliant.!



September 1958 Britons top Defence Bombers fly in formation overhead Biggin Hill, what a sight!

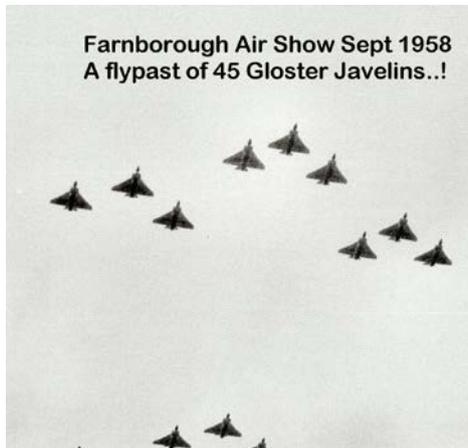
We did also have the Lightning Fighter which was kept at readiness in a heated hangar and a pilot strapped in to go. Quite often they would be scrambled to intercept the Russian Bear spy planes.



Exciting interesting days with a famous B29 Bomber, of the USAF, the type that dropped the Atomic bombs on Japan in 1945, just 13 years before.

The B29 is acting as a refuelling aircraft for two Super Sabre 100s and a B66 Bomber all from the USAF.

## RETURN TO FARNBOROUGH 1958, Another good show for sure.



The Royal Navy put on another good display with a flypast of 45 Javelin aircraft, just imagine the fuel consumption.

We probably had some fuel reserves having won WWII. Just 13 years hence.

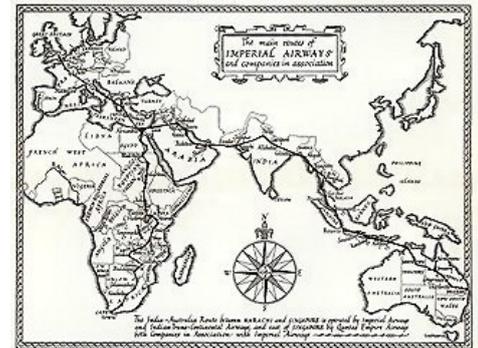
Despite my early wanderings over the last two years I still hadn't been to Croydon Airport which was under threat of closure according to the newspapers.



A pioneering airfield of the thirties

only 30 minutes from Central London in these days of open country and few cars. How convenient was this for flying to Le Touquet, Abbeville, or even Paris.

There were several pioneering flights from this airfield with their equally famous Men and Women pioneer pilots would follow these routes, to Karachi, Delhi, Japan Australia, Cairo to Capetown.



In the years since these routes were proven for the day, JB would cover all these and many more, during his pioneering flying years.

## TOWER BRIDGE & DOCKS



Easter 1958 JB stands on London Bridge, with Tower Bridge and the dock cranes either side of the Thames when ships came under Tower Bridge to discharge their cargo with these cranes

About this time the dockers were demanding better pay and pilfering rights, which they thought was fair game, dropping the odd pallet of cargo being off loaded.

The Shipping Companies began producing huge container ships and moved the docks to Rotterdam for transferring containers direct to large continental, sealed road units, so no more accidental pilfering.