



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



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THE ROYAL WEDDING STEALS THE SHOW AT END OF APRIL. AHEAD OF BIN LADEN



I say dad, her mum's got a nice pyer of lygs, ankles a bit boney. Keerful Cherles, Cammie's in ear shot and your muvver certainly doesn't want annuver devause in the family for sure...!

ANNUAL MAYDAY MAYHEM

If these people (persons) are all Airline Captains at this Mayday Parade in Karachi, your next holiday flight to Pakistan could be a little tricky. It is probably just as well they have computer controlled aircraft, therefore as a passenger, you would not be aware of any



problems that may be in the two very front seats behind the wrap around front window.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

A similar parade was held in Trafalgar Square – Monday 2nd May 2011 - we don't know if Nelson would have approved or

even understand this multi cultural event around the base of his monument.



If you can't read the words on these banners, don't worry, as they are all in Russian.

OSAMA BIN LADEN DEAD



Many notable faces are in this TV screening of the apparent demise of Osama Bin Laden – see how many people you can identify. It is quite spooky when your identity check is complete.

VFR FLIGHT AT GRIMSVÖTN

Spectacular and awe inspiring knowing that one could be engulfed in a second as you are drawn to the grandeur and power of a volcanic eruption – it causes chaos to the airline industry but not to this small aircraft as it flies past



taking some wonderful dramatic scenes – Iceland has a dramatic landscape with a multitude of colours on the land and above, at moments like this. Believe it or not they were experiencing snow showers on the east coast whilst fire and brimstone was erupting on the southeast corner of the country. Truly a magnificent scenario of events, displayed all at once.

AIRFIELD PERSONALITIES



JOHN DODD: His visionary reflections of life are as infectious as is the image of his son Paul (seen to John's left).

He is one of Biggin Hill airfield's true characters. Indeed any airfield that he happens to be near.

(This series is aimed at people who fly or live on an airfield or nearby with a keen interest in aviation and other like people – pilots)

John Dodd's or JD (but 'Doddsy' to most), would be the centre of attention from the moment he arrived on the airfield. With an infectious laugh, which demanded intoxicating attention of how something should, or could, be repaired, rebuilt or modified, and how it could be achieved, a man of infinite destiny.

He would then load his Apache aircraft with his wife and all his kids, buckets and spades, a gearbox, Snap-On Tools and head south to the warmer climes – Spain.

He was not only a good pilot and husband but a highly skilled technician of Automatic Gear Boxes, which in those far off days nobody dared open for fear of the little cogs falling out.

Dodd's idea of fixing one of these things was to stand it atop a 44 gallon oil drum, as it was just the right height to work on. How simple is that? 45 years ago.

JD had a keen interest in a variety of cars during his career, the main one being 'The Beast' in which the editor had a demonstration ride at

the airfield one day. First impressions were that it didn't have a proper floor (*a little bit open*) and when the engine fired up the cacophony of noise inside was absolutely incredible. When you hear a Spitfire in the air it is a lovely soft sound. In the cockpit, it is a noise similar to that of a Sherman Tank powered by a Wrights Cyclone Radial aero engine (which the editor has driven a few times) This engine also has an incredible clattering noise within, but the same outside as a Spitfire purring, as the airflow deadens the clattering of the gears and tappets.

Many people around Biggin Hill have memories of this famous, and massive, car and fathers have shown their children pictures of it. They in turn have grown up with some memories of 'the Beast', and in turn are pasting notes on the internet asking who remembers such a vehicle. Yes - this beast is still in existence.



Sadly though, this vehicle, complete with a Rolls Royce Grill and the 'Spirit of Ecstasy' emblem, upset Rolls Royce a little bit and they promptly took JD to court.

He drove this car to the Law Courts amid a blaze of publicity causing so much congestion in the Strand, he was asked to leave it at home and appear again the next day.

There were a couple of classic cartoons in two of the national news papers at the time, with JD filling up with petrol at a service station with the car vibrating furiously and the attendant saying "Can you turn her off Guv, she is gaining on me"

(These cartoons follow further on in this article. Simply classic for the time in April 1981!)

The next day, JD arrived at court, this time on horse back – brilliant! The publicity, whilst good, didn't help, and he lost the case. The vehicle, although not a true Rolls Royce production model, the engine was, (*so to speak*) and obtaining a proper RR Radiator Grill with the 'Spirit of Ecstasy' atop was achieved in good spirit whether or not it upset RR a little.

It was reputed that the court case came about because of a Ferrari owner flying down the Autobahn somewhere in Germany at 150 mph, when he was overtaken by a Rolls Royce which was considerably faster!

Recognising the RR Grill & Mascot he promptly phoned Rolls Royce and asked if he could buy one. They weren't best pleased as they did not have a Sports Model such as this.

They could have made a fortune..!

BILL WEBB 2003 MEMORIAL



Pilots Pals Bar brought together many old airfield friends for this final farewell to Sq Ldr "Bill" Webb, including JD with 'The Pig' (Roy Saunders), and 'Bone' (Dave Merritt). All of these folks are 'Airfield Personalities with their individual tales of days gone by, including all drunken evenings that followed a day on the airfield.

Having diversified somewhat we return to the main story - 'The Beast'-which is still a very powerful gas-guzzling vehicle.

It looks like any other Sporty Estate car with normal looking wheels and tyres, none of yer flash low profile tyre'd wheels that go flat at the first pot hole encountered on a short shopping spree. Mind

THE BEAST, as it is today (the car, not JD!)



you, having driven this thing to the shop, there is no money left to spend.

The engine is a 27,000cc which created a small problem with the DVLA when applying for a normal car tax. Their forms didn't calculate for such an engine capacity, nor have enough of the appropriate little boxes. They returned the form to JD saying he had made a mistake, because he had written outside the boxes.

Following a phone call to DVLA explaining their lack of boxes for engine capacity it was duly agreed that the capacity was correct and their form inadequate.

They subsequently agreed and the vehicle is taxed accordingly as a...



Rolls Royce, legally roadworthy with a UK MOT certificate. He regularly sends a copy of the tax disc to the Chairman of Rolls Royce..!



This is what you see under the bonnet, spark plugs, wires and exhaust pipes.



A very impressive vehicle, on the roads around Marbella, Spain.



An earlier composite picture with a legal number plate and Tax Disc displayed in the left corner of the Windscreen. This vehicle has featured in the BBC's Jeremy Clarkson Motor programme and German TV shows, including some Spanish films. We never saw the actual driver, but we knew who it was - JD. Can you imagine letting some actor have a go to impress his co-star.



This is what a Spitfire engine (a Rolls Royce Merlin) actually looks

like, and it is hard to imagine the true size – probably some six or so feet long.

The engine weighs a hefty 1400 lbs plus - without the addition of the automatic gearbox and other ancillaries.

The whole finished vehicle is 18ft long – a really true - “Beast”! No wonder Rolls Royce were scared of it.....

HORSEBACK TO COURT

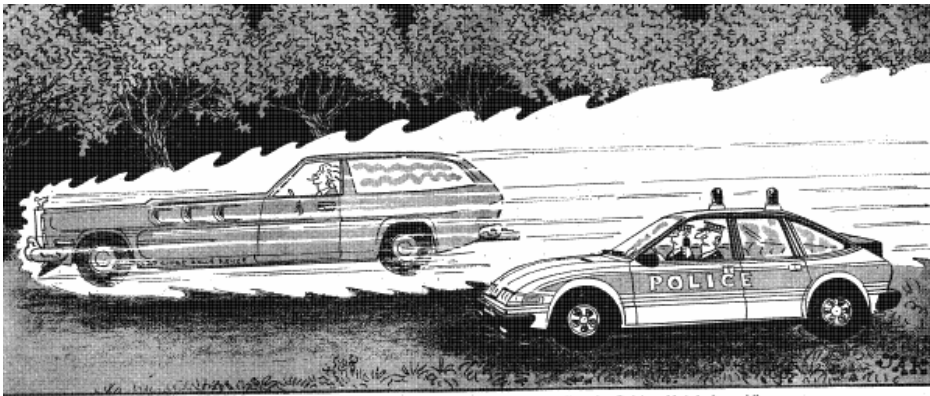


With his daughters, Suzanne in light coat and Anna with stable handlers they all arrive in style for the court hearing, who else would do this, only John Dodd.

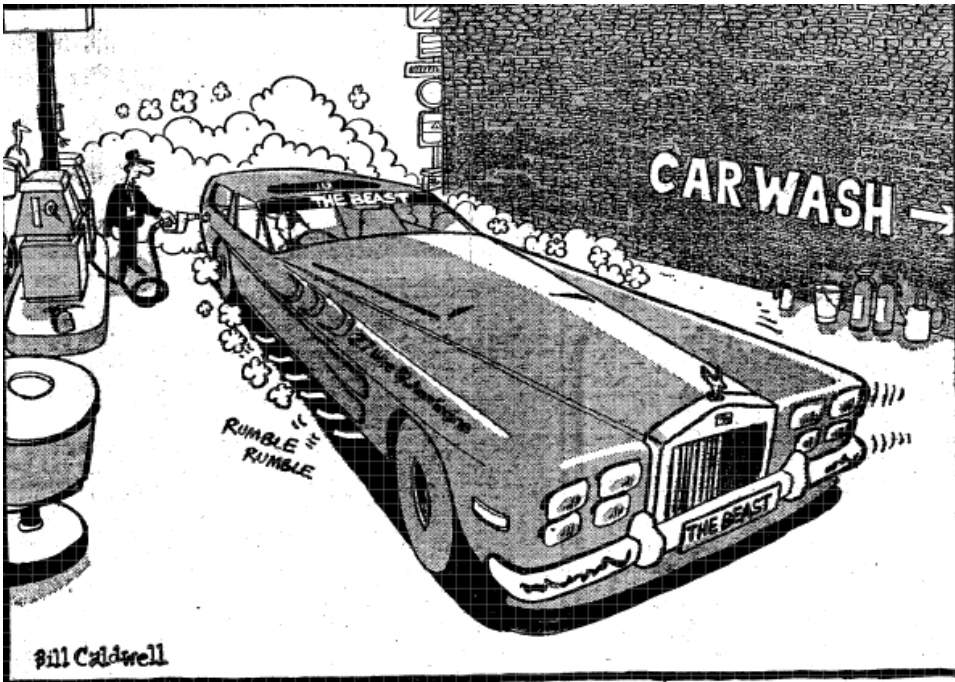
John Dodd still runs a successful Automatic Transmission business in Marbella, Spain



As we said earlier, in the old days at Biggin Hill, John would rebuild an automatic gear box using a 44 gallon drum as a work bench. (*Health & Safety please note – Ed!*) His spotlessly clean workshop has plenty of these drums, he also claims to have the cleanest toilets in the business. He says his twenty year old workshop has room for seventy cars



“Well, it's either The Beast or the space shuttle is landing in Colney Hatch Lane!”



“Could you switch her off, sir? She's gaining on me.”



John has a website which is good for a look see at:-

www.automaticgearboxspain.com

it has some interesting pictures including newspaper clippings of those far of exciting days and videos.



JD, Salvador, Momo, Bobby, Eduardo and Sergio.

ANOTHER HUGE VEHICLE



This huge Merlin engine car belonged to Paul Jameson, photographed by the editor at Shobdon Air Show in 1977.

John Dodd supplied the two rear axles and the two hydramatics. These were mounted one above the other and JD had plenty of these off the shelf genuine Rolls and Bentley parts. Paul Jameson did his own engineering and these parts just dropped in place.

We are not the best because we are the biggest – we are the biggest because we are the best.