



# BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS  
ISSUE No. 49

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT SOCIAL CLUB LTD  
[www.bigginhillclub.co.uk](http://www.bigginhillclub.co.uk)

In Ass. with BigginHillReunited.co.uk  
1<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2009

## NAMING OF MAITLAND VIEW



Squadron Leader Jock Maitland MBE – ‘**Mr Biggin Hill**’, was honoured for his long term achievements at the airfield since 1959, by a ceremony on the main entrance way to the new club buildings of **Cabair & EFG** flight schools on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009. As of this day it is known as ‘**Maitland View**’. Jock was the only British Pilot to have shot down two Mig’s during the Korean conflict whilst flying F86 Sabre jets during an exchange posting with the USAF. He was awarded the American equivalent of the DFC for skill and bravery. His RAF career lasted for 15 years. He too, saw action in the Suez campaign flying Vampire and Venom fighters. After leaving the RAF in 1959 he came to Biggin Hill. He started the first of the Biggin Hill Air Fairs in 1963. 40 years later in 2003, Jock was awarded the Jeffrey Quill Medal by

the Air League in recognition of a lifetime’s work promoting air-mindedness. This day, would be another ‘grand occasion’ in Jock’s life. Andrew Walters with the first



Air Traffic logbook in hand, presented to the airport by Jock. Andrew praised Jock for his tenacity and perseverance for supporting the cause of aviation since he arrived on the airfield in 1959. It wouldn’t have been Biggin Hill without Jock Maitland.



The Lady Mayoress, Councillor Denise Reddin, officially cut the ribbon, thereby opening this

entrance to the newly sited flying clubs.



Sqd Ldr Jock Maitland and the Lady Mayoress pictured by the new road sign to Maitland View.

## THE SUEZ CRISIS OF 1956

Following the revelations of the life and times of JB and a chance meeting with Anthony Eden in 1948, (*and later the Suez crisis created by A. Eden PM 1956*), JB was approaching the Canal with some intrepidity as to whether this ocean journey would have to sail



around the Cape of Good Hope of South Africa. (Fortunately the crisis ended) Unbeknown at this time, a British Soldier (*who would become a friend 52 years hence*) was sailing through the Mediterranean toward the other end of the Canal on a rusting ship from Liverpool with vital supplies for the British army carrying guns,

trucks, ammunition, of the wrong calibre, for the guns they carried. He, had already, lost the spring from the firing mechanism of his 76 Sten Gun. (*A court martial offence...!!*)

The outcome of this story, is that, as the Suez crisis ended, JB's ship sailed through the Canal as the picture above shows, (*taken from the 'Crows Nest' by JB.*) The unknown soldier at this time was continuing his mission toward the Canal from the Med'. Soon he began to observe ships laden with military equipment steaming at high speed in the opposite direction (*toward the straits of Gibraltar*). His ship pressed on regardless. As always in a crisis, there is often a lack of communication, due mainly to the fact that equipment (*like radio's etc;*) were probably packed on another vessel, and no one knew how, or had the authority to use them anyway. Searching our archives we found a picture of this unknown soldier, whose identity, we're unable to reveal, as the loss of 'the spring' a vital piece of military equipment is still under investigation. He is currently living in a 'safe house'. If you are Somewhat, sceptical of these tales, look this up on the Internet. <Thank you Anthony Eden> it makes excellent reading.



These tales have little to do with Biggin Hill Airfield, but it is interesting to note the RAF at this time was about to desert Biggin, with the abandonment of 600 & 615 squadrons in 1957 – it would be two years before it was revived

for flying activities following the closure of Croydon Airport and the transfer of Commercial Airlines to Heathrow. Destiny draws certain people together, **for what reason, we know not ..!**

### WOT, WINTER WEATHER



This tranquil scene was spotted in the woods not too far from Biggin Hill following all the recent rain and flooding we had experienced. In a few weeks it will deteriorate into a mere puddle in the woods, losing its reflective qualities.

They said it would snow and snow it did, take a gander at these pictures taken locally around Biggin Hill.

### A HEAVENLY SNOWSTORM

The forecasters got it right for once just as the editor was about to dine outdoors – he lost his plated dinner.



The snow continued to fall during the Sunday evening creating chaos in the morning. Cars abandoned, no kids being ferried to school in those huge 4X4's that seem to be a



must for blocking our streets, when delivering and collecting their little darlings from school, parking across zebra crossings, double yellow lines, on the pavement, across private driveways.

Spectacularly, the roads were void of these vehicles, the next day, making it a glorious day for the professional drivers. Brilliant ...!! During the editor's school days, some children arrived by horseback and as they dismounted, the horse was given a pat on the rump and it would walk home. We are talking miles here, not metres, what is wrong with children walking a few hundred yards to their home at the end of school. (The children who arrived by horse, would walk home, just like the horse that had delivered them to school, that very day).

### AIRFIELD PERSONALITIES



Gordon Franks – A quiet jovial person (a contradiction in terms). Gordon is far from quiet, was a boisterous member of the bar after a days flying. He joined the RAF for a short period, and after leaving the services, Gordon joined 'Huntings' at Elstree aerodrome doing aerial photography around 1962. This company would move to Leavesden aerodrome along with Gordon. He subsequently joined another company called Aircruise, also doing aerial photography, operating a Cessna 337, a Cessna 310 and a Cessna 172. Some time around 1970 Gordon appeared at Biggin Hill like a Geni from the lamp, renting some offices for his aerial photography work adjacent to a newly formed flying club on the airfield called '**Sportair**' which began operations with the Fournier RF4 and RF5 aircraft, powered

with VW engines. These were cheap to operate and the club managed by Brian Stevens and Neil Jensen at this time, expanded rapidly, overtaking Gordon's premises. Gordon would join Sportair, gaining his Instructors Rating in 1971 and took the opportunity during this time to marry Diana, Brian's sister, thereby ensuring his future position within this club (*the scoundrel*). However, Gordon continued with his flying, obtaining his Commercial Licence and Instrument Rating. He was planning to take up a job flying DC3's for Intra Airways at Jersey. In the interim he would meet Bob Graves of Micro Consultants, who owned an Aero Commander Twin (500S). Bob needed a pilot to help and offered Gordon a job for 3 months pending his departure for Jersey. He would be persuaded by Bob to remain with his company. This began a flying career spanning 24 years. The company eventually became Quantel. Gordon flew Bob's Siai Marchetti and of course the company's Citation II and finally the Citation VI.



A slimmish, bearded GSF with his lovely wife, Diana, at Wichita Falls collecting a new Citation. He retired from this company in 2000. The story doesn't end here, as some previous history has yet to be divulged. (Editors privilege).

**The Hangar Door..!** This short story was the result of a certain person, who shall be known journalistically as Richard, who lost control of his car and crashed

into the hangar door, forcing it off the runner. Gordon took control of the situation and using the errant driver's vehicle, drove it into the hangar and proceeded to ram the door until it was returned to the appropriate runner *Touché..! Atterissage Force ..!!* Once again it's Gordon to the rescue following the engine failure of an Instructor colleague during an instructional lesson. Gordon with a Mechanic duly arrived at the field. The problem was rectified as Gordon skilfully paced the field, then said to the pilot, "You put it in here, you get it out". Such was his



confidence in the skills of his colleague and his (*Gordon's*) short paces, a successful take-off was achieved. It would be some time before Gordon made it back to the bar with the mechanic for the celebrations.



Our aged photographer captured a unique picture in July 1981 of a bearded GF, and Cobby, a much Moustacheo'd friend, as they ponder the feasibility of solar powered flight with squinted eyes. This unique aircraft was designed



for an attempt at crossing the English Channel by solar power alone – but the lack of sunshine,

dulled the proceedings. It remained grounded.

Whilst making an approach at night in marginal conditions for 21 in the days of VOR let downs GF requested for lights to be dimmed when the runway came in sight. 'Runway in sight' was called, controller reaches for dimmer switch catching the off switch in the process as the aircraft is flaring, a voice broke the immediate darkness with 'Aah'..!! followed by a safe landing. Same controller, reports of VFR conditions with GF joining the circuit in the Citation II number 9 in traffic, behind Rallyes, Cherokees, Cessna's, and 'finally', making a greaser landing on 29 grass. These really, **'were the days'** of skilful flying techniques. Imagine the backlash of doing this today, and for the air traffic controller in the hot seat.

Having retired from flying at the age of 60, Gordon was already involved with the Air Fair safety committee for Jock Maitland and was a member of the official Consultative Committee along with a number of Councillors from Bromley. Gordon was also an enthusiastic motorcyclist, spotted yet again by our ageing photographer in July 1989 at the huge 'Classic Motor Cycle' event



held at Brands Hatch Circuit over a 3 day period with many classic motorcycles on display including John Surtees large collection of classic racing bikes. Gordon was one of the organisers, seen above with John, the only person to claim the World Championship titles for Motor Cycles and GP cars. This Classic Motorcycle gathering, brought many enthusiastic 'oldies' out of the woodwork including

many tattooed bikers of yester' year. Gordon, is seen here, with



Derek Minter (the 'King of Brands') and John, chatting about the days achievements. Rifling through some old photo's reveals some of Gordon's automotive skills, astride a hairy looking bike



at Salzburg, Austria, 1987 he also competed in Hill Climbing events and had some sea faring adventures



as well – imagine coming face to face with this sea faring Pirate on the open seas around the British coastline. However, the editor has known Gordon for nigh-on 40 years and finds it hard to remember all his activities in order, although

Gordon was very visible, there was the other side some of us didn't see



Gordon seen is seen here with Ernie Hoblyn in the Penny Tri-Plane at the Biggin Air Show of 1997, then he appears at the Goodwood Festival of Speed on an



MV Augusta motorcycle, whilst the bike is streamlined the riders leathers appear a little 'Michelin'. Somewhere during this portrayal, Gordon won the Kings Cup Air Race at Shoreham Airfield on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1985. Although a well known event, it almost disappeared into obscurity from 1968 onward, because after this date, foreign built aircraft were allowed to enter, and it is like someone 'got the hump' and the results weren't updated. However, we at the Bugle can confirm that Gordon did win, as seen here at the race end, climbing out of the Siai Marchetti with Bob Graves and gesticulating – 'did we win' ??



Gordon is seen grasping (snatching) the Cup that was presented by Prince Andrew some weeks later at the Royal Aero Club awards ceremony, held at the RAF Museum Hendon. (clearly fearing someone else may try to claim this much coveted prize!)



Drinking out of cup (below) was at dinner held on race weekend, with Gordon later carried down the beach for a celebratory dip in full DJ..



Now well and truly retired after a very full life, albeit his dulcet tones still heard as the voice of ATC at Headcorn on occasion, and still managing to get the odd flight with friends. Gordon, (who is not too well these days and mainly confined to home), loves to hear from his old (not too old) aviation and motor sport friends and colleagues. One classic picture is his great friend John Surtees delivering his repaired Matchless



motorcycle directly to his bedroom window, earlier this week – (Unfortunately the unprepared photographer failed to get John framed correctly as he arrived.)

**Airfield Personalities** – is the brain child of JB, your profile has been observed, and noted over the past 40 years, beware..!