

Hi everyone

Welcome to the April 2011 Biggin Hill Users Database Newsletter. The April edition of the Biggin Hill Airport "BUGLE" by John Bryan is also available for viewing/downloading on the Social Club's website at <http://www.bigginhillclub.co.uk>

As always, please keep those stories coming in for inclusion in future issues. (JB's direct email address is johnbryan@jbplstd.demon.co.uk, or you can send items directly to me to pass on).

EMAIL ADDRESS UPDATES AND ADDITIONS

Thanks to those who have sent amended email addresses, and suggested new members, and of course, welcome also to those that have recently added their names to the database.... For current member names see <http://www.bigginhillreunited.co.uk> and go to the link to the database membership..

DAN GRAHAM

We have just been informed belatedly of the death of Dan Graham in 2009. He will have been known to many Biggin Hill'ites over the years, and was a particularly good friend of Joe Merchant, who recently heard of Dan's death from a family member.

After leaving the R.A.F. in 1946, Dan became a sales rep for Singer sewing machines. He found very little satisfaction from this job, but was able to make many contacts in the city of London, where he became very adept in the ways of finance. In less than ten years he had made his name involving himself in many major building projects in London and overseas. (his last was apparently one of the grandest hotels in Palma, Majorca).

But, back in 1995, Dan purchased the West Camp from the M.o.D, with plans for a working museum. But he became frustrated with the lack of Bromley Council's co-operation and understanding of the importance of history and the need to commemorate Biggin Hill's part in it, and abandoned the project. Dan also became so frustrated with the airport management, he actually closed the western taxiway (now known as "the hotel taxiway") for a period, as that formed a part of the West Camp that he owned. In 1998, Dan sold his interests at Biggin Hill to Bernie Ecclestone, of Formula One fame.

Dan then moved to Guernsey, having purchased one of the largest private estates on the island, which became his final home, where he maintained his financial interests dealing solely in stocks and shares.

He leaves a son, Daniel, and daughter Claire.

THE AIRPORT & THE OLYMPICS

On 21st March, Bromley Council completely rejected the airport's request for a variation of the operating lease to amend (during the period of the 2012 Olympics only) the airport's operating hours and to remove the restriction preventing aircraft to carry passengers individually purchasing a seat using the airport.

Clearly, the airport, like any other business in the area, simply sought to take commercial advantage of the once in a lifetime event that is the Olympics. It was an appropriate request and most airport users actually believe it should have been granted, even if they didn't say so to the Council. The period of the Olympics will inevitably be restrictive to GA traffic, with or without the airport's request for the variation, so it is unlikely that the Council's refusal to allow the variation will benefit airport users in any way.

Unfortunately it seems the Council took more notice of the anti-airport lobby, with their scare mongering and lies about hundreds of Jumbo jets queuing up to land at Biggin, rather than the facts. As is always the case, more people put pen to paper to object to the plans, than those doing so in support, and this rejection was the result. (apparently for the consultation set up by the Council, more than 2,000 responses received opposed the plan, with just 112 in favour! – where were all the airport users responses?)

WELCOME TO THE NEW AIRPORT BOSS

The Airport's new Managing Director, Jenny Munro, has now taken over, and we all wish her well. Such a shame that one of her first acts was to have to defend the airport's Olympics plans proposals following the Council's refusal (see above)

As for the outgoing person, Peter Lonergan, the less said, the better.

Just coming in as we go to press (30/3/11)

QUOTE...

NEW VENUE ANNOUNCED FOR BUSINESS AIRCRAFT EUROPE 2011 CONFERENCE

London Biggin Hill Airport, which was voted Best UK Business Airport 2010 by the BBGA, is the new venue for MIU's Business Aircraft Europe expo, on September 14 and 15 2011. Fractional Life is a media partner for the event, which was previously due to be held at London Oxford airport.

BAE will expand on the Light Jets Europe and Very Light Jets conferences which have been run successfully by MIU for the past five years. The new event will comprise an expo of 30+ stands, a static display and a conference, all together under one roof. There will be a party on the evening of the first day to which all participants are invited.

BAE will be an essential event for OEMs and operators of all types and size of business aircraft and helicopter as well as equipment suppliers, flight planners, FBO and MRO facilities and all those providing product and services to the business and private aviation sectors. Taking place ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games, BAE will also attract charter operators and companies looking to benefit from the influx of HNWIs and other potential business aircraft users.

www.miuevents.com

.....END QUOTE

Quote Source...

http://www.fractionallife.com/news_new_venue_announced_for_business_aircraft_europe_2011_conference1418.asp

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT SOCIAL CLUB

Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership. Existing members who have yet to renew can do so by simply sending in their fee with a self addressed stamped envelope – no new form is required, and no photo (unless you want to use a different one for the new card of course!) Full details on the club website at www.bigginhillclub.co.uk

Applications from new potential members should follow the instructions on the website.

That's it again for this month...

John Willis - Biggin Hill Airport Users Database

(And Finally:

Following the terrible disasters in Japan, the following letter was written by a Delta Airlines captain who found himself en-route across the Pacific to Tokyo just as the country was shutting down as a result of the earthquake and sunami... It has been extensively published across the internet on many websites, so I am hoping it is a genuine account... For those of us who fly, we can only sympathise with his (and all similarly affected airline crews) situations at that time, and reflect how relieved we are that we have not been caught up in something so dramatic...

QUOTE.....

I'm currently still in one piece, writing from my room in the Narita crew hotel.

It's 8am. This is my inaugural trans-pacific trip as a brand new, recently checked out, international 767 Captain and it has been interesting, to say the least, so far. I've crossed the Atlantic three times so far so the ocean crossing procedures were familiar.

By the way, stunning scenery flying over the Aleutian Islands. Everything was going fine until 100 miles out from Tokyo and in the descent for arrival.

The first indication of any trouble was that Japan air traffic control started putting everyone into holding patterns. At first we thought it was usual congestion on arrival. Then we got a company data link message advising about the earthquake, followed by another stating Narita airport was temporarily closed for inspection and expected to open shortly (the company is always so positive).

From our perspective things were obviously looking a little different. The Japanese controller's anxiety level seemed quite high and he said expect "indefinite" holding time. No one would commit to a time frame on that so I got my copilot and relief pilot busy looking at divert stations and our fuel situation, which, after an ocean crossing is typically low.

It wasn't long, maybe ten minutes, before the first pilots started requesting diversions to other airports. Air Canada, American, United, etc. all reporting minimal fuel situations. I still had enough fuel for 1.5 to 2.0 hours of holding. Needless to say, the divers started complicating the situation.

Japan air traffic control then announced Narita was closed indefinitely due to damage. Planes immediately started requesting arrivals into Haneada, near Tokyo, a half dozen JAL and western planes got clearance in that direction but then ATC announced Haneada had just closed. Uh oh! Now instead of just holding, we all had to start looking at more distant alternatives like Osaka, or Nagoya.

One bad thing about a large airliner is that you can't just be-pop into any little airport. We generally need lots of runway. With more planes piling in from both east and west, all needing a place to land and several now fuel critical ATC was getting over-whelmed. In the scramble, and without waiting for my fuel to get critical, I got my flight a clearance to head for Nagoya, fuel situation still okay. So far so good. A few minutes into heading that way, I was "ordered" by ATC to reverse course. Nagoya was saturated with traffic and unable to handle more planes (read- airport full). Ditto for Osaka.

With that statement, my situation went instantly from fuel okay, to fuel minimal considering we might have to divert a much farther distance. Multiply my situation by a dozen other aircraft all in the same boat, all making demands requests and threats to ATC for clearances somewhere. Air Canada and then someone else went to "emergency" fuel situation. Planes started to heading for air force bases. The nearest to Tokyo was Yokota AFB. I threw my hat in the ring for that initially. The answer - Yokota closed! no more space.

By now it was a three ring circus in the cockpit, my copilot on the radios, me flying and making decisions and the relief copilot buried in the air charts trying to figure out where to go that was within range while data link messages were flying back and forth between us and company dispatch in Atlanta. I picked Misawa AFB at the north end of Honshu island. We could get there with minimal fuel remaining. ATC was happy to get rid of us so we cleared out of the maelstrom of the Tokyo region. We heard ATC try to send planes toward Sendai, a small regional airport on the coast which was later the one I think that got flooded by a tsunami.

Atlanta dispatch then sent us a message asking if we could continue to Chitose airport on the Island of Hokkaido, north of Honshu. Other Delta planes were heading that way. More scrambling in the cockpit - check weather, check charts, check fuel, okay. We could still make it and not be going into a fuel critical situation ... if we had no other fuel delays.

As we approached Misawa we got clearance to continue to Chitose. Critical decision thought process. Let's see - trying to help company - plane overflies perfectly good divert airport for one farther away...wonder how that will look in the safety report, if anything goes wrong.

Suddenly ATC comes up and gives us a vector to a fix well short of Chitose and tells us to standby for holding instructions. Nightmare realized. Situation rapidly deteriorating. After initially holding near Tokyo, starting a divert to Nagoya, reversing course back to Tokyo then to re-diverting north toward Misawa, all that happy fuel reserve that I had was vaporizing fast. My subsequent conversation, paraphrased of course....., went something like this:

"Sapparo Control - Delta XX requesting immediate clearance direct to Chitose, minimum fuel, unable hold."

"Negative Ghost-Rider, the Pattern is full" <<< top gun quote <<<

"Sapparo Control - make that - Delta XX declaring emergency, low fuel, proceeding direct Chitose"

"Roger Delta XX, understood, you are cleared direct to Chitose, contact Chitose approach....etc...."

Enough was enough, I had decided to preempt actually running critically low on fuel while in another indefinite holding pattern, especially after bypassing Misawa, and played my last ace...declaring an emergency. The problem with that is now I have a bit of company paperwork to do but what the heck.

As it was - landed Chitose, safe, with at least 30 minutes of fuel remaining before reaching a "true" fuel emergency situation. That's always a good feeling, being safe. They taxied us off to some remote parking area where we shut down and watched a half dozen or more other airplanes come streaming in. In the end, Delta had two 747s, my 767 and another 767 and a 777 all on the ramp at Chitose. We saw two American airlines planes, a United and two Air Canada as well. Not to mention several extra Al Nippon and Japan Air Lines planes.

Post-script - 9 hours later, Japan air lines finally got around to getting a boarding ladder to the plane where we were able to get off and clear customs. - that however, is another interesting story.

By the way - while writing this - I have felt four additional tremors that shook the hotel slightly - all in 45 minutes.

.....UNQUOTE

If anyone else has good examples of, for example: - Governmental stupidity and removal of the population's right to live a normal life, or simply any unusual and interesting stories or anecdotes that you feel may interest our readers, please email them to me as a possible inclusion in a monthly "and Finally"...))