

Hi everyone

Welcome to the April 2025 Newsletter for the Biggin Hill Airport Users Database. Welcome also to any new Database members who may be receiving this regular Newsletter for the first time.

As usual, you are reminded that for Database subscribing members, even if your Newsletter doesn't arrive by email at the beginning of the month, you can always view it online, as well as any back copies of this Newsletter by visiting the club website at www.bigginhillclub.co.uk

(If you have not received your copy within 24 hours of the beginning of the month, please check the club website above so you can find and draw it down for yourself!)

I'm so sorry that there's not that many sections from me, as I've been away for a major part of the month of March. Hopefully this will not upset all the group's members.....

MARCH WEATHER

The weather at Biggin during the month of March has apparently been significantly better than many of the previous months, which is a great improvement for us all.

At last, as a result of the improvements in weather, the clubs, and of course, private owners, have started serious amounts of flying again at last. Let's hope that these improvements will now continue from now on through these summer months.

Do now take full advantage of these weather improvements for renewing your ability after the winter break in being able to keep in practice.....

JOE MERCHANT

Many of you who are Biggin Hill Reunited group members in Facebook, will have read the notification I posted about the sad loss of Joe Merchant who passed away on 7th March.

A very sad loss to so many of us who regularly used Joe's excellent bars with our airport colleagues....

The following additional personal newsletter entry was sent to me for inclusion in this Newsletter by Joe's son, Gary.....

"Unfortunately, my father, Joe Merchant, passed away peacefully in his sleep on the night of the 6th March at his home in Spain, after spending the day with friends.

He had been unwell for the past year having been diagnosed with COPD.

My Dad will be well known for running the Swordfish bar in the late 1970s and early 80s with my Mum Jan.

He later started Circuit Publications and commissioned many paintings of historical aviation moments selling them as prints, one being the first flight of the E2839 the first jet aircraft. This painting was launched at a lunch at RAF Hendon with Sir Frank Whittle in attendance. I was given the day off school and had a memorable conversation with Sir Frank who signed my first logbook, also signed by the chief test pilot, Michael Daunt. This may have some bearing on what I do today!

He then went on to start Pilots Pals, the famous aviation calendar, my Dad's aviation version of the Pirelli Calendar. At one time he claimed to have sold at least one calendar to every country in the world! With his association with 56F RAF Sqd he managed to access many frontline RAF aircraft for the calendars, can't see that happening today!

He also ran a pilot's shop in the old Steel House between Avtech and Shipping and Airlines, latterly from the Old Armoury.

Being a rather social and Jolly chap who loved nothing more than getting a really good piss up going, he agreed to start another bar in 1993 in the Civilair building, this had wonderful views over the airfield and on to London, a great place for barbecues and drinks.

This was a big success run with the help of manager Jill and all the lovely staff. With his second wife Valerie, round the corner running the operations desk at the Civilair Flying Club.

As many will remember, this was a fantastic merry place for all to enjoy. Air shows were a particular treat, although there were some dark days with the loss of some good friends.

The bar, officially Pilots Pals bar, but affectionately known as Joe's Bar gave many people a social place on Biggin Hill to meet new friends and make contacts, I for one got my first commercial flying job via a bar meeting! I also met my wife Nicky, an ATCO at Biggin, in the bar.

As the 2000s went on the Airport were modernising and developing the South camp into a corporate aviation centre, the bar and associated buildings were to be demolished and make way for a large hangar, which is on the site today.

Fortunately, this coincided with my father's retirement age, so he decided to move south and find the sun! In 2007 with Valerie, they moved to the lovely Spanish village of Moraira, where he wrote and self-published two books, Biggin Hill Airfield, Beyond the Bump one and two, about his time at Biggin Hill.

This all started in 1954 when as an ATC cadet he was sent to RAF Biggin Hill for a summer camp.

This set in motion a chain of events that shaped the rest of his life. He was incredibly proud that Joe's bar cemented so many lifelong friendships and associations, indeed many of my very close friends today I met in the bar.

Due to the custom in Spain, he was cremated almost immediately. So unfortunately, there will be no funeral, he didn't like them anyway, however I will be arranging a service and one last party for him at Biggin Hill which I am arranging. A date will be published soon."

R. I. P. Joe Merchant, and thank you for all you did for the airport users for many years...

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT

Lots of building work going on now:

In the field east of the Bombardier huge hangar just over the road to the Falcon maintenance hangar and several aircraft hangars, and of course the Heritage Hangar, there is a massive special maintenance and supply services who are preparing the eventual resurfacing of runway 21/03 soon as previously advised will be happening...

Additionally, there is an additional new Hangar currently being constructed by Bombardier as a state-of-the-art paint facility. The building will be large and will be constructed in between their own current hangar, and the old Fairflight hangar and the adjacent airport's "hub" building.

So, the airport's facilities are clearly expanding quite dramatically...

As described last month, it is anticipated that in some time after formal acceptance, the new instrument approach on runway 03 will become formally available to attempt to remove the need for aircraft, including quite large incoming jets, to come down the current ILS and then do a relatively low circling manoeuvre round to 03.

This should hopefully remove the concern that many local residents have, especially those on the north side of the main runway, who are unhappy with the noise of such low flying aircraft circling for 03 after coming down the 21 ILS currently.

The airport is also planning to formally introduce a new Instrument Runway Visual Range (IRVR) system, and therefore also a 24-hour automated METAR reporting. That should be a tremendous improvement for us all.....

So lots of significant improvements at Biggin Hill coming up.....

Our Airport's CEO, David Winstanley, will include his regular monthly section, which is present towards the end of this newsletter, in order to keep us fully up to date with any airport plans that may affect us.....

THANKS TO ALL WHO KINDLY HELPED BY SENDING ME JOKES FOR USE HERE

As I said last month, it was getting to be difficult to think of jokes I could add to the Newsletter's end section every month as the Newsletter has been running since late 1998.

Clearly for me it had been difficult to think what to include each month, so thank you all who've sent some jokes to me this month. Please do keep them coming (ideally just texts, not graphics please!)....

APRIL BIGGIN HILL POSTED FUEL PRICES

The "posted" Biggin Hill Airport fuel prices, excluding VAT and the Jet A1 price also excludes the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Levy, for the calendar month of April 2025 are:

£1:65.70 per litre for 100LL Avgas if supplied from the Fuel Bowser
(if uplifted using fuel account card Only from the Self-Refuel pumps = minus 5p per litre –
and an additional 1p per litre off if also paid by Direct Debit)

£0:82.30 per litre for Jet A1

(As we explained for a couple of months, the government has mandated that all JetA1 fuel be sold with a 2% blend of Sustainable Aviation Fuel. This mandate, which is applicable to all UK airports, is intended to secure and grow UK SAF demand, support the growth of the SAF industry, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions of aviation fuels in the UK.

Due to the additional cost of introducing more expensive SAF into JetA1 fuel, as dictated by this compulsory government initiative, the airport has introduced the SAF levy on JetA1 sales since the beginning of this year. To aid clarity and transparency, they have included this to be displayed as a separate line on the invoices.)

SPECIAL NOTES: Users are advised that **credit and debit cards can no longer be used at the self-refuel pumps.** If you use self-refuelling, you will need your airport H-TEC fuel account card with you when you go there. (if you haven't got one with you, you will have to go over to the Main Terminal apron to uplift fuel from the bowsers instead).

FALCON / EFG

Hi guys and gals - Your favourite Falcon Family here!

Brighter skies, more flying and warmer days, what more could you ask for eh!?

Ah, the Falcon PA28R Piper Arrow is now online. Brand new interior, 3 blade prop, fabulous paint and avionics to boast, she is a great machine to tour around in.

As we all dust our cobwebs off, do have a skills flight with one of the instructors at EFG. Skill fade happens to the best of us!!

The hangar has done a cracking job with a few projects over the winter, so make sure you book in early for your next check....

Anyway, back to the cockpit before it rains!

Be blessed, fly safe, stay clear of the TMA!

Best Regards
Singh, Shonu, Anoop and your Falcon Family

MONTHLY NEWS FROM THE CEO'S OFFICE

March has been a relatively solid month for the Airport, and we are looking forward to a pickup in traffic over the half term period. This has ensured the Airport has finished the financial year well and ensured performance over the past 12 months has remained well ahead of budget. That said, overall movements have been lower than forecast but this is due primarily to weather, although the later part of March turned very favourable. This is

against a backdrop of Global business aviation flight activity being down 1.1% March 2025 vs March 2024.

Our continued commitment to improve infrastructure continues and as previously mentioned in last month's update, the runway resurfacing, including centreline, edge and lead on/off lighting will start in April and the construction of Bombardier's state-of-the-art paint facility has already started. The new Instrument Runway Visual Range (IRVR) system is now operational, and we are looking forward to the introduction of 24-hour automated METAR reporting by the end of April. Unfortunately, we are having to wait for the Met Office to cross check their observations against our reported data. To keep fully up to date on these projects, please keep an eye on our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

The Airport remains on track to achieve carbon neutral status by 2029 and we continue to build on the success of achieving our Carbon Reduction Level 2 Accreditation with the Airport Carbon Accreditation. Our newly formed Environmental Oversight Committee goes from strength to strength and the Airport is now looking at a concept to generate hydrogen on demand for potential heating solutions.

As previously mentioned, our on-site training and events centre, The Hub, continues to be utilised by local businesses and organisations. The space offers several rooms that can be tailored to suit any purpose, including meetings, events, team building and training courses.

The Airport continues to explore how to enhance its engagement with the GA flying community and the newly formed Private Pilots Group (PPG) appears to be gaining positive momentum. The Airport believes the PPG remains a logical replacement for the Light Aviation Steering Group and further demonstrate the Airport's continued commitment to the GA community.

The Airport intends to hold a GA Pre-season Symposium at the Hub on Wednesday 9th April at 6pm. The symposium will cover a range of topics which will include an ATC Update, Safety Issues, Noise Action Plan, Noise & Track Keeping System, the role of SANARB and networking. Further details will be published shortly.

The Airport is delighted with the continued success of the Airport Residents Noise Action Forum (ARNAF) in ensuring the Airport listens to the concerns of residents and, critically, brings together residents and the flying community. The work focused on the Keston NSA continues and I am grateful to the GA community for its support in this work.

Kind regards
David Winstanley

ROLL OF HONOUR

Thank you to members that continue to provide us with additional names of old Biggin Hill'ites who we had missed. The Roll of Honour can be seen on the website at www.bigginhillreunited.co.uk

(Anyone who flew from, or worked, or even socialised regularly at the airport since it became a civilian base in 1959/60 and who has passed away, should ideally be included on there. If you know of someone whose name belongs on the Roll, please email me with their names, and details to: john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk)

DATABASE EMAIL ADDRESSES

A constantly updated full list of database members is always viewable online on the main website at: www.bigginhillreunited.co.uk

Please remember to let me know if your email address is changed. Also, if you know others who are not on the list but are eligible to join (i.e. if they currently fly from the airport, or work there, or ever have done so in the past) please let me know or tell them about us – Database membership is, of course, free.

That's it again for this month. Do continue to enjoy your flying (and we now do at last finally get mainly decent weather!)

Please do all stay well and stay safe.....

John Willis
Biggin Hill Airport Users Database

And Finally: As usual, here follows a few amusing stories that, according to the many comments I receive about this section, is very popular amongst the membership. (As always, no offence to anyone is ever intended!).....

I would like to thank everyone who occasionally does send their help for this section. To avoid me running out of jokes (which keeps happening), please keep them coming regularly by email to: john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk

QUOTE.....

Learn Chinese in 5 minutes - (Must Read Out Loud)

- 1) That's Not Right.....Sun Ting Wong
- 2) Are You Harboursing a fugitive.....Hu Yu Hai Ding
- 3) See Me ASAP.....Kum Hia
- 4) Stupid Man.....Dum Fuk
- 5) Small Horse.....Tai Ni Po Ni
- 6) Did You Go To The Beach.....Wai Yu So Tan
- 7) I Bumped The Coffee Table.....Ai Bang Mai Fa Kin Ni
- 8) I Think You Need a Face Lift.....Chin Tu Fat
- 9) It's Very Dark In Here.....Wai So Dim
- 10) I Thought You Were On a Diet.....Wai Yu Mun Ching

- 11) This Is a Tow Away Zone.....No Pa King
 - 12) Our Meeting Is Scheduled For Next Week.....Wai Yu Kum Nao
 - 13) Staying Out Of Sight.....Lei Ying Lo
 - 14) He's Cleaning His Automobile.....Wa Shing Ka
 - 15) Your Body Odor Is Offensive.....Yu Stin Ki Pu
 - 16) Great.....Fa Kin Su Pah
-UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Did you know that there's not a single canary on the Canary Isles. Same thing with the Virgin Islands.....not a single canary there either.

I renewed my car insurance on the phone this morning and mentioned to the lady that I have a dog. She replied, 'do you want to insure him too'.

I replied, 'no, he doesn't drive'

Two ladies cycling side by side down a cobbled street.

Lady 1: "I've never come this way before".

Lady 2: "Me neither; it must be the cobbles".

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A man is on his deathbed, and he asks his wife, "Martha, soon I will be gone forever, and there's something I have to know. In all these 50 years of marriage, have you ever been unfaithful to me?"

Martha replied, "Well, Henry, I have to be honest with you. Yes, I've been unfaithful to you three times during these 50 years, but always for a good reason."

Henry was obviously hurt by his wife's confession, but said, "I never suspected. Can you tell me what you mean by 'good reasons?'"

Martha said, "The first time was shortly after we were married, and we were about to lose our little house because we couldn't pay the mortgage. Do you remember that one evening I went to see the banker, and the next day he notified you that the loan would be extended?"

Henry recalled the visit to the banker and said, "I can forgive you for that. You saved our home, but what about the second time?"

Martha asked, "And do you remember when you were so sick, but we didn't have the money to pay for the heart surgery you needed? Well, I went to see your doctor one night and, if you recall, he did the surgery at no charge."

"I recall that," said Henry. "And you did it to save my life, so of course I can forgive you for that. Now tell me about the third time."

"Alright," Martha said. "Do you remember when you ran for president of your golf club, and you needed 73 more votes?"

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

The other day I was having making love to this married woman when her husband came home early.

She told me I'd have to use the back door and said I'd have to be quick.

On reflection I should have just left, but it's not every day you get an offer like that.

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A family is having dinner at the table one evening when the son asks the father, "Dad, how many different kinds of breasts are there?"

The father is a little taken aback, but he ponders for a moment before answering, "Well my son, a woman goes through three phases in life. In her 20s, her breasts are like melons, round and firm. In her 30s and 40s, they become like pears – still nice but hanging a bit. But after 50, her breasts become like onions."

The son is confused and asks, "Onions?"

The father replies, "Yes – you see them, and they make you cry."

The wife and daughter are really annoyed by what their father has said, so the daughter asks, "Mom, how many different kinds of willies are there?"

The mother smiles and says, "Well honey, a man also goes through three phases in life too. In his 20s, his willy is like an oak tree, mighty, strong and hard. In his 30s and 40s, it becomes more like a birch – flexible but reliable. But after 50, it's like a Christmas tree."

The daughter laughs and asks, "A Christmas tree?"

The mother replies, "Yes, dear. Dead from the root up and the balls are just for decoration."

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

One day, a little boy and a little girl are fighting about the differences between the sexes, and which one is better.

After much arguing to and fro, the boy drops his pants and says, "Here's something I have that you'll never have."

The little girl is annoyed and upset by this, as what the boy says is obviously true. So she runs home to her mom, crying.

A short time later, she comes running back with a smile on her face. She goes to the boy, drops her pants and says, "My Mommy says that with one of these, I can have as many of those as I want!"

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A woman walks into a pharmacy one day and says to the pharmacist, "I'd like a poison that'll kill my husband but make it look like he died of natural causes."

The pharmacist says, "Ma'am, not only can I not do that for you, I'm going to have to call the police and report you."

The woman takes out something out of her pocket and hands it to him. He looks at it and sees that it's a picture of her husband making love to the pharmacist's wife.

The pharmacist says, "Oh, you should have told me you had a prescription."

.....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 funny, unusual and interesting stories or anecdotes that you feel may interest or amuse our readers, please email them to me as a possible inclusion in a monthly "and Finally"...))