

Hi everyone

Welcome to the March 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.

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 where you can find and draw it down for yourself!)

FEBRUARY WEATHER

February's weather has not been that great, but in fairness, that's not too much of a surprise.

Whilst there have been a few quite nice days, there have been quite a large proportion of days when light aircraft training has been difficult, mainly due to significantly strong winds with high crosswinds, as well as periods of poor visibility and low cloud bases.

But we are now into March, and hope that the weather will start to improve, and not long now until the clock changes will enhance the available time for day flying training. Roll on Spring and Summer!

HARRY HARRIS

Many of you that are followers of the BigginHillReunited Facebook Group will be aware that some time ago we published a statement that our old friend and Biggin Hill'ite, Harry (Laurie) Harris, had passed away – the information came from a posting on Harry's own Facebook profile by family members. Shortly after, that profile entry was removed, and none of the family would respond to requests for confirmation of Harry's passing. As a result of that, our Facebook posting was removed to avoid any family upset of concerns.

Just recently however after making many attempts to contact family and friends, I received a response from a close family friend of Harry's wife, Tuk, who confirmed to me that Harry sadly did pass away on 25th December after a period of illness. The response explained that Harry had wanted no fuss at all, which is why the posting had been removed from his Facebook profile, and the family had a private cremation ceremony in Oxford. The family are of course aware of Harry's past involvement with Biggin Hill, as well as a lifetime of aviation involvement, and has asked me to notify his old friends of his passing.

For those of you that are old Biggin Hill'ites too, you will probably know that Harry was the CFI of Vendair Flying Club in the 60's. (I personally remember as a young member of Experimental Flying Group meeting him when he and Charles Vaughn did their Instructor Rating courses with Rex Nicholls)

In addition to much instructing, Harry went on to do much ferry flying, including taking a DH Rapide down to South Africa and back with the family of Don Parker who ran Pitts Cottage in Westerham back in those days.

After many years involvement with light aviation at Biggin, and substantial ferry flying with Don Bullock, Harry ended up as a pilot in the far east working for Malaysian Airways, before returning eventually with his wife Tuk to the west country of the UK, where he was instructing until a few years back at Perranporth.

A wonderful man and with many aviation friends around the world as well as from the old days at Biggin Hill.

His name has now been added to the Roll of Honour at www.bigginhillreunited.co.uk

You really will be missed Harry – Rest in Peace

PS. Our late friend JB produced the Biggin Hill “Bugle” for many years, which can be found online at www.bigginhillclub.co.uk – the back issues right back to Day one are viewable and downloadable, but the ones that include stories written by Harry himself are October, November, and December 2012 issues, but there may well be others of course....

ALOUETTE FLYING CLUB

By the time you read this, it will be March 1st at least, and the longest running flying club at Biggin Hill, Alouette, will have ceased operations for ever.

It is a sad loss, but a necessary one as the UK’s difficult economic situation has hit many families hard and with the high costs of living, like fuel and home heating, as well as increasing food costs, families have had to tighten their purse strings, which has meant that many have simply stopped regular flying, including PPL training.

The club, which was started in 1959 by Don Perch, has had periods of very high membership numbers and lots of flying, but in recent times these numbers have unfortunately reduced quite dramatically. The club Committee has done the honourable thing, and ceased operations whilst it is still financially OK, before the current and approaching economic situation caused it fall into insolvency and therefore become bankrupt, which would not have been an acceptable situation.

Congratulations to all the club’s current Committee for all the effort and time they have put into keeping the club going as the original Committee were determined to close the club around three years or so ago.....

So the end of an era! The club Chairman’s final entry in the Newsletter is shown below.....

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

The various Airport developments/improvements are still progressing very well.....

The “Landings Hotel” is now completed and has had some “soft” openings for future clients recently, and then the formal public opening is now planned for 6th March. It looks very smart and with all the surrounding areas having the gardens completed, it will certainly look very impressive from the road.

Taxiway “Bravo” joining the “Foxtrot” taxiway to the current “Alpha” and “Charlie” taxiway is now well underway. A big job, but looking as if it will definitely improve access for the airport’s much larger corporate jets to taxi safely to Runway 21, without having to use the current, much narrower, “Alpha” taxiway.

The airport has been massively smartened up, with all the buildings and hangars and the perimeter road looking so much better than they were in the past

(The airport has asked us all to adhere to the roadway speed limits so that adding speed bumps can be avoided.)

Biggin Hill Airport now looks so very special and the major restructuring has almost certainly ensured that our wonderful ex-Battle of Britain airfield is likely to always remain operational into the long term.

The airport management has indicated that they still support General Aviation aircraft operations at Biggin, but clearly the airport will never be the cheapest place to operate from. What we do need to do

though is to make sure we all continue to follow the various noise routings and avoid the NSA's, which is something the airport management has accepted that based aircraft do always strive to do.

MARCH BIGGIN HILL POSTED FUEL PRICES

The "posted" Biggin Hill Airport fuel prices, excluding VAT, for the calendar month of March 2023 are:

£1:92.5 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)

£0:90.3 per litre for Jet A1 (or £1:55.5 per litre for "Sustainable Aviation Fuel"!))

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).

NEWS FROM AROUND THE CLUBS, BUSINESSES & OTHER AIRPORT USERS

If you would like me to include your business or personal comments in the Newsletter, either on a regular basis, or just occasionally, please drop me an email with your contact details and the requested contribution and I will try to include it in the next Newsletter. I will acknowledge anything sent to me for inclusion. (Please email: John Willis at john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk)

ALOUETTE FLYING CLUB

And so the sun has set on Alouette Flying Club. The longest continuously operational flying club at Biggin Hill has finally shut its doors after 64 long and glorious years. The next available membership number is F1779, which means that 1778 people have committed meaningful aviation with Alouette in the past six decades. That does not include the countless thousands who have flown as smiling passengers or experienced the joy of aviating on a trial flight. Not bad going, really.

The past few weeks have been something of a whirlwind but I want to thank everybody who attended the closing party (or was it a wake?) last Saturday. It was actually rather moving to see the clubhouse filled one last time with thirsty pilots all sharing war stories and reminiscing on days gone by. On Wednesday evening I chaired the final Alouette committee meeting and we were joined by the daughters of Don Perch, the founder of Alouette. They came with notes and log books from Don's flying days which made for fascinating reading, and did nothing to sate the feeling that I have expressed before, that I was born several decades too late.

I was not fortunate enough to ever meet Don but I've often gazed at his portrait in the clubhouse and wondered what he would make of our handling of the club. It was reassuring to hear from his daughters that they believe he would have approved. They left with the portrait and a lot of Don's material from the office, and I believe intend to compile a book on him and Alouette, which I think will make for fascinating reading.

On a practical note, I would just like to address some of the questions and suspicions I have been asked regarding the closure of the club and its 'assets'. The simple truth is, the club doesn't really have assets. Much of the material in the clubhouse is either on loan, and has been returned to its rightful owners, or simply worthless. I'm all for sentimentality but having spent the past two days sorting out the paperwork I did wonder why former committees felt the need to hold on to financial records and meeting minutes from 1978!

Financially the club is set to close with a small deficit. So that nobody is left out of pocket, one of the directors of the club has very kindly agreed to settle that final bill in exchange for the Alouette prop. I stress that this amount is more than the prop is actually worth, so this extremely kind gesture seemed very reasonable to the committee. We felt that better than asking for donations from either current flying members, who have spent an awful lot of money on flying already, or past members who have not been actively involved with Alouette for many years.

Anything vaguely flying related such as life jackets, books and the computer etc has been donated to an air cadet group, and if by some belated Christmas miracle there is any cash remaining it will be donated to Aerobility, in keeping with the club constitution. Any other bits without a home have been donated to the committee in thanks for their hard work. I trust this is transparent enough - we really have nothing to hide.

At the risk of this sounding like an acceptance speech at an award ceremony, I do have several thank-yous to make. Firstly to all those members who founded and ran Alouette for so many years. It would be wrong of me to name anybody individually, because inevitably I would miss many, but for you all to have kept the club going for so long is a feat of endurance. I would like to thank the committee who were in place when I stumbled into Alouette in 2019. Were it not for the enthusiasm of Bruno Bruniges, Alan Powell, Paul Hawkins et al and their support in the new committee, we would never have deigned to take it on.

I want also to thank the airport management and specifically David Winstanley, who has always made time to meet and chat with me and really has tried very hard to help us keep Alouette alive. I received a charming letter from the airport chairman, Andrew Walters, who expressed his sadness at the departure of Alouette and informed me that in 1978 it was predicted that flying clubs at Biggin Hill would be gone in a couple of years. I think for Alouette to thrive and survive for another 45 years is a remarkable achievement and a testament to all those involved in its long history.

The two outstandingly unsung heroes of Alouette today are Graham Dewey, who has run both websites and the entire backroom tech setup for many years, and Russ Dennis, who has served as the public face of Alouette, making bookings and dealing with enquiries for a very long time. As for the current cohort: John Willis not only taught me to fly but has been an excellent Head of Training and instructor for his many students. Noel Baker has kept a sharp eye on all things safety related and been a wonderful link with the past - many times he has shared examples of how problems were dealt with to guide us today. Phil Hobson (proudly the only recipient of the Don Perch award) and his wife Barbara dug us out of an enormous paperwork hole that we had been unknowingly left in - it is no exaggeration to say that without them the club simply would not have survived the last two years. Paul Johnson not only came in to share the financial burden with me of owning and operating an aeroplane but has also manfully completed so many unnoticed jobs in the clubhouse. I feel a little like the violinists on the Titanic but gentlemen, it has been a privilege aviating with you.

For my part, I never expected to find myself as chairman of a flying club. After buying an aeroplane with the sole purpose of keeping Alouette alive and faced with closure two years ago it felt only right to roll up my sleeves and give it a go. To say I have enjoyed every second would be a lie. At times it has been downright miserable. Past chairmen have expressed to me how lonely the role can be, but heavy is the head that wears the crown. The long days and sleepless nights have been many, and as with all those who have served on the Alouette committee, all that time, energy, money and emotion has been given voluntarily. Would I do it again? No. Do I regret it? No. Alouette has been a fundamental part of both my flying career and my life for the past four years, and it has been an honour to do my best. Will I miss it? Yes.

The immense lifespan of Alouette is indicative of both the majesty of flight and the willingness of like-

minded individuals to get involved with a cause. But times change and all things must pass.

With a heavy heart and for the final time, I wish you all happy flying.

Stuart Taylor-Kean
Chairman
Alouette Flying Club

MONTHLY NEWS FROM THE CEO'S OFFICE

February has been a solid month for the Airport that has seen traffic levels slightly up on 2022 but still well above pre pandemic levels. The Airport remains busy and has managed to consolidate performance in this last quarter of this financial year. Notwithstanding the continuing economic uncertainty, rising cost of living and a challenging job market, recruitment and retention have been positive and staffing levels have stabilised across all departments. Clarity regarding the 23/24 budget, confirmation of our capital development priorities and completion of the construction of the Hotel remain priorities for the Airport.

In terms of development, the Airport is delighted to confirm that Practical Completion was achieved on 13th February and the soft opening has been extremely successful. The Hotel will formally open on 6th March. The Airport continues to enhance the entrance to Churchill Way with the completion of the landscaping around the hotel and the Strongest Link statue. The Airport continues to engage with Mr Ecclestone regarding options for the development of West Camp. This remains an important strategic objective but will require detailed engagement with Heritage England and the LBB. The Airport continues to see a strong demand for additional hangars and is meeting this demand through emerging contractual discussions. Works to complete the new Bravo taxiway proceed at pace and the taxiway is targeted for completion towards the end of this summer. Finally, the Airport has completed its investment in its existing fuel farm with the inclusion of an additional 85k litre tank together with a driver-controlled delivery system and new filtration unit.

The Airport's new Hub training facility was formally opened on 16th Feb and this coincided with a very successful careers day that attracted well over 120 potential future aviation employees. This remains a short-term solution to address the more strategic need for an Aviation Training College. Discussions continue with training providers to seek their interest in a long-term solution. The training facility is on target to open on 16th February.

The Airport has held very constructive discussions with NATS, ACOG and the CAA, regarding a new ACP for an IFR approach to 03. Further engagement with London City Airport and NATS has resulted in both parties being content with the Airport's proposal for the 21 RNAV overlay.

Finally, I would once again like to thank the Airport community for its continued support in adhering to the Airport's Noise Abatement procedures and in helping the Airport to continue to act as a good neighbour.

Thank you

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 at john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk)

DATABASE EMAIL ADDRESSES

A constantly updated list of database members can be seen at <http://www.bigginhillreunited.co.uk>
Please remember to let me know if your email address is changed. 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 for this month.

Enjoy your flying - Please stay well and stay safe.....

Best wishes

John Willis - Biggin Hill Airport Users Database

And Finally: As usual, 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!).
- a few relatively amusing short stories....

I would normally thank everyone for sending their contributions for this section, but this time I didn't get any, so I had to depend on online joke sites. To avoid me running out of jokes, please keep them coming by email to john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk

QUOTE.....

A teacher is teaching a class and she sees that Johnny isn't paying attention, so she asks him, "If there are three ducks sitting on a fence, and you shoot one, how many are left?"

Johnny says, "None."

The teacher asks, "Why?"

Johnny says, "Because the shot scared them all off."

The teacher says, "No, two, but I like how you're thinking."

Johnny then asks the teacher, "If you see three women walking out of an ice cream parlour, one is licking her ice cream, one is sucking her ice cream, and one is biting her ice cream, which one is married?"

The teacher says, "The one sucking her ice cream."

Johnny says, "No, the one with the wedding ring, but I like how you're thinking!"

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A blonde, a redhead, and a brunette were all lost in the desert. They found a lamp and rubbed it. A genie popped out and granted them each one wish.

The redhead wished to be back home. Poof! She was back home.

The brunette wished to be at home with her family. Poof! She was back home with her family.

The blonde said, "Awwww, I wish my friends were here."

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Wife: "How would you describe me?"

Husband: "ABCDEFGHGIJK."

Wife: "What does that mean?"

Husband: "Adorable, beautiful, cute, delightful, elegant, fashionable, gorgeous, and hot."

Wife: "Aw, thank you, but what about IJK?"

Husband: "I'm just kidding!"

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A lady goes to the doctor and complains that her husband is losing interest in sex.

The doctor gives her a pill, but warns her that it's still experimental. He tells her to slip it into his mashed potatoes at dinner, so that night, she does just that.

About a week later, she's back at the doctor, where she says, "Doc, the pill worked great! I put it in the potatoes like you said! It wasn't five minutes later that he jumped up, raked all the food and dishes onto the floor, grabbed me, ripped all my clothes off, and ravaged me right there on the table!"

The doctor says, "I'm sorry, we didn't realize the pill was that strong! The foundation will be glad to pay for any damages."

"Nah," she says, "that's okay. We're never going back to that restaurant anyway."

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A boy is selling fish on a corner. To get his customers' attention, he is yelling, "Dam fish for sale! Get your dam fish here!"

A pastor hears this and asks, "Why are you calling them 'dam fish.'"

The boy responds, "Because I caught these fish at the local dam."

The pastor buys a couple of fish, takes them home to his wife, and asks her to cook the dam fish.

The wife responds surprised, "I didn't know it was acceptable for a preacher to speak that way."

He explains to her why they are dam fish.

Later at the dinner table, he asks his son to pass the dam fish.

He responds, "That's the spirit, Dad! Now pass the f*cking potatoes!"

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine, they laid down for the night, and went to sleep.

Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?"

Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies, and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?"

Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke. "It tells me that someone has stolen our tent."

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A man joins a soccer team and his new teammates inform him, "At your first team dinner as the new guy, you will have to give us a talk about sex."

The evening arrives and he gives a detailed, humorous account of his sex life. When he got home, his wife asked how the evening went and not wanting to lie, but also not wanting to explain exactly what happened, he said, "Oh, I had to make a talk about yachting,"

His wife thought this a little peculiar but said nothing more and went to sleep.

The next day she bumped into one of his new teammates at the supermarket and asked, "I heard my husband had to make a speech last night. How did it go?"

His mate said smiling, 'Oh, it was excellent! Your husband is clearly very experienced!.'

The wife looked confused and replied to his mate, "Strange, he has only done it twice and the second time he was sick."

.....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"...)