

Hi everyone

Welcome to the Biggin Hill Users Database October Newsletter....

JB's October edition of the Biggin Hill Airport "BUGLE" is also now available online on the Social Club's website at <http://www.bigginhillclub.co.uk> ***As always it is NOT included here - to view it, once in the Bugle section, via the link on the homepage, click on the appropriate month's link.*** As always, please keep those stories coming in for inclusion in future issues. (JB's direct email address is johnbryan13@sky.com, or you can send items directly to me to pass on: john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk)

EMAIL ADDRESSES

Welcome to the new Database members who may be receiving this regular Newsletter for the first time. A full and current list of member names can be seen at <http://www.bigginhillreunited.co.uk> Please remember to tell us if you change your email address. If you know others who are not members but are eligible to join (ie. if they currently fly from the airport, or work there, or ever have done so) please let me know or tell them about us – it is, of course, free.

SEPTEMBER WEATHER

After a good summer, September was expected to be great for flying, but has been quite disappointing in some ways in the end. Instead of the Indian Summer we were told to expect, there were several weeks of poor visibility at the start of each day, and although it usually improved enough to enable some private flying and training, it was not the best end to the summer.

Let's all hope for a mild and more forgiving Autumn and Winter to allow the clubs and Biggin based businesses to prosper towards the close of 2014.

CANADIAN LANCASTER (VeRA)

At the time of writing this, we have just heard that the Canadian Wartime Heritage Museum's Lancaster, VeRA, has arrived safely back at its home base at Hamilton International Airport in Ontario, Canada, after its long flight across the North Atlantic.

I'm sure all the aviation community would like to express our thanks for their UK tour alongside the BBMF's "Thumper" across the UK since early August. A real, once in a lifetime event. (Thanks also to the BBMF who came to the rescue when VeRA had an engine failure mid-tour, and returned the aircraft to service in double quick time)

AIRMANSHIP POINTERS AT BIGGIN

As mentioned in previous Newsletters, there have been a few issues identified by the Airport's Safety Management System (SMS) since its inception that are potentially dangerous, but easily solved.

Runway incursions feature heavily in reports, and these centre around three main points at Biggin;

- 1) Holding point Delta 3 (and to a much lesser extent, Alpha 3),
- 2) The runway crossing point in the centre of runway 11/29 – holding points Alpha 4, Juliet 2, and Lima 2,
- 3) Exiting runway 21 after landing.

Particularly in the case of the first two, the main issue seems to be that that some pilots are getting a specific clearance, and reading it back correctly, but then often doing something different.

As an example, a typical clearance when taxiing out from the South side will be either “taxi Alpha 3 for 21, cross 29 on reaching” OR “taxi Alpha 3 for 21, hold before crossing 29” – two very different clearances. When reading it here, it seems pretty clear and unambiguous but, in reality the number of aircraft that have received the second clearance and yet still enter runway 29 without asking for clearance past holds Juliet 2 or Lima 2 are alarming, and these incursions have lead to some potentially serious situations. (If you get there and have forgotten whether you are cleared to cross – hold and ask again. No one can criticise you if you err on the side of safety)

In the case of the third point, aircraft of all sizes commonly receive a clearance after landing on 21 to “proceed to the end and vacate at Juliet 1” which they read back correctly. Why is it then that so many of these aircraft vacate onto Runway 11 without clearance? Air Traffic stress that this is not just small aircraft, but several larger types too.

I know many of you do this, but they request that you listen carefully to the clearance you receive, write it down, read it back, and then follow what you have written down.

Without teaching you to suck eggs, as the saying goes – we should all treat all runways as active at all times, and only enter or cross them with a prior clearance, and never cross a holding point unless previously cleared to do so (clearance to Alpha 1 of course does carry with it clearance to proceed through Alpha 3 and Alpha 2 along the taxiway for the purpose of reaching Alpha 1, but not to enter or cross the runway at any point). Safe Flying...

THE 98 BUMP REUNION

Actually the start of the BigginHillReunited Database back in 1998, the ‘98 Bump Reunion’ was organised to bring together some of the wonderful people that formed the Biggin Hill Airport community in the 60’s and 70’s after the closure of Croydon Airport and the move across to Biggin.

Around a months full time work with some Police forces and various airline pension funds etc. tracing the many people who had by then moved on, successfully brought together many old friends. A video of the event was made and sold to help pay for the day, and I think it is about time to release that for public viewing now via Youtube. You will see many of our old friends who have since passed on..... Quite emotional viewing for some.

For those who have not already seen this via the BigginHillReunited group page on Facebook, to view it, go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qmkgLdCn_0

More reminiscing video’s to follow in the future.....

BIGGIN HILL AIRFIELD: BEYOND THE BUMP – BOOK 1

Old Biggin Hill’ite, Joe Merchant, former owner of the wonderful Pilots Pals Club at Biggin that is missed by so many airport users has finally released his long awaited autobiography entitled: Biggin Hill Airfield: Beyond the Bump 1

For sale as a paperback directly from Amazon, it is described as “Part one of the story of what happened at Royal Air Force Station Biggin Hill during its final days as an operational fighter station, the proceeding years back to the early 50’s and the post military era. This historical Battle of Britain fighter station survived where many other were decommissioned to make room for redevelopment. The closure of London’s Croydon Airport gave birth to a new generation of both private and commercial pilots on this hallowed ground and created a unique training and social environment that flourished for many years. This publication seeks to record some of the people

and their aircraft that facilitated this transition together with a celebration of the success of one individual who turned his dreams into reality. Part two, to be published 2015, completes the story of one aviation enthusiast and private pilot.”

Definitely one to read – full of memories for the old Biggin Hill’ites, and for the newer ones an insight into how it used to be..

Book One has 247 pages with 182 black and white images. R.P. £9.95 plus P&P

To order your copy, go to: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/0992962609>

Well done Joe...

STOP PRESS – now about to release on the Kindle & at Waterstones, & other bookstores

NEWS FROM AROUND THE CLUBS & BUSINESSES

If you would like me to include your business in the Newsletter, either on a regular basis, or just occasionally, please drop me an email with your contact details and I'll be in touch directly. (John Willis - john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk)

FALCON FLIGHT ACADEMY (inc EFG) & FALCON FLIGHT SERVICES

Hi from the Falcon Camp!

September has been a mixed month with some low cloud and misty mornings but still some splendid flying days.

We have now started taking bookings for night and IMC ratings so get your flights in with us. As the nights draw in please don't forget that flying at night is a splendid time to get in the air!

So, ongoing projects are: Various light GA aircraft, a C182 coming as regular maintenance and of course our great Garmin 430 equipped Seneca and Arrow ready for Private hire and Commercial training.

Apart from that, we have plenty of gift vouchers for that special Christmas present. Roger P. is conducting RT Exams and all the gang here are ready to cater for all your aviation needs!

Until the next time.

Fly safe, stay straight & level, stay blessed.

Anoop Singh Bamrah

[Before you get to the section by Will Curtis that follows, I felt perhaps a short introduction would be advisable.

Firstly, although this is quite political in many ways, the situation described could well happen if the airport doesn't take steps to counter it now, and if it does that will probably affect virtually everyone who reads this Newsletter. The subject matter is something that Will and I have discussed at length, and I am very concerned about potential effects on me personally, both as a local resident, and also as a Biggin Hill Airport user for the last 54 years.

Will has shared with me some of his plans for light aviation at Biggin's East Camp and I am sure we will all see more details of these in the next few months – it is my belief that he is very keen on

maintaining a strong and viable light GA presence at the airport, as well as developing the executive jet facilities, as these will all help to counter the threat from commuter and feeder airlines that want to move into here, contrary to the airport's own plans.

We discussed whether I thought this Newsletter was the right place to make these comments, but I genuinely felt that it is better for people involved with the airport to know Will's concerns and thoughts, so that we can form our own conclusions. Hence the lengthy submission from Will is included here in its entirety..... Ed]

MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE OFFICE OF WILL CURTIS

Many of you will have read in the newspapers about the Government appointed Airports Commission, whose job it is to inform Government on where best to add much runway capacity in the South East of England. Essentially, the Airports Commission was born of a Coalition government disagreement on the future of airports in the UK. The Conservatives wanted to push ahead but the Liberal Democrats believe that we should not build any new airport capacity at all. This is, of course, an argument that has been rumbling on, in various forms, since the 1970s. But today things are becoming more serious. Sir Howard Davies, Chairman of the Airports Commission, says that even were the next parliament to decide as soon as it convenes where to build a new runway, no new runway capacity can actually be delivered before 2027 at the very earliest and more likely not before 2030. The Airports Commission Discussion Paper 07 looks at how Government might deliver a fast track solution to airport capacity problems and the Commission puts forward the use of a Development Consent Order (DCO) as being one potential method. The Airports Commission goes on to explain what a DCO is:

"A DCO (Development Consent Order) is issued by the Secretary of State and can cover a number of consents including planning permission, modification of regulations or planning conditions, temporary or permanent diversion of highways or creating the power to compulsorily acquire land required for the development."

So in other words, if you want to fast track any infrastructure project, issue a DCO. As the Airports Commission points out, this circumvents all local planning regulations, all public opinion, all normal reasonable process and just about every other right you might currently believe that you enjoy as a property owner! It's all very continental (think long straight railways in France for instance!).

The Airports Commission also talks about the role of regional airports around London and the South East in taking some of the strain as smaller types of air traffic begin to be squeezed out of major hub airports. The two types of traffic that the Commission believes will need to find a new home are Business and General Aviation and Regional Airline services which use smaller types such as turbo prop and small regional jets. This is actually already happening - we have recently been approached by and turned down applications from, two regional airlines who wished to operate flights from Biggin Hill. We explained that this is not what we do and is not in our business plan either. Both said that they would speak to Government about what they perceived to be a restriction in their ability to access a key strategic asset. Whilst that won't change anything in the short term it could well influence policy in longer term at central government level.

Business and General Aviation is already effectively excluded from Heathrow and Gatwick due to Tactical Runway Slot Availability (TRSA) - a system whereby non-scheduled traffic will be issued a slot on a purely tactical basis as opposed to in advance, which makes planning any sensible timetable quite impossible. Years ago, when London Heathrow introduced TRSA, I was a captain on a Hawker 125-800 and we were detailed to collect the (then) Chairman of BT, Sir Ian Valence, from Heathrow. Departure was scheduled for 0915 and we had our doors closed by 0855. We finally got airborne at 1445! TRSA doesn't work for Business Aviation.

The Airports Commission envisages that Luton and Stansted will begin to come under serious strain from 2020 onwards. We can expect these airports (which have both recently announced massive expansion plans with major low cost carriers) to introduce TRSA as they approach around 80% of maximum capacity. This is because, in order to leverage the last 20% of capacity, they must use a coordinated approach to runway slots, stands, ramp space and airport services. At this point, Business and General Aviation will need to find new home in the London area and I would see one option to be Biggin Hill. The problem is how to make us as attractive as say Farnborough or Oxford who are also competing for this business. Cranfield are also entering the market, Lydd have done their best and North Weald are looking closely at their options. So we have competition for the Business Aviation market.

Some of you may, perhaps understandably, feel that you would prefer that Biggin Hill does not significantly increase its Business Aviation traffic and in some ways I can understand this since Business Aviation has placed some minor constraints on Light Aviation. It has also, of course, paid for the airfield improvements - but you know all this so I am not going to labour the point. My concern is completely different. My concern is that we are currently an underused but key strategic and also a publicly owned asset. We currently operate, on average, only one take off and one landing per hour (excluding light aircraft of course). This lays us open to all kinds of potential action by Government who have policies on how underused public assets should be treated (normally sold off for redevelopment!).

The Airports Commission predicts that there is likely to be a significant gap between runway capacity at existing London airports running out and new airport runway capacity becoming available.

The Airports Commission has recommended strategies to deal with this capacity shortfall. One strategy is the Reliever Airport concept whereby smaller airports are brought in to play as satellites to the larger airports. A good example might be RAF Northolt as a satellite to Heathrow. These two airports are close to each other and one can see how a short connecting road service could allow regional services to connect to the hub without using the valuable runway capacity at that hub which would be needed for larger aircraft types. But how is that relevant to us?

Let's take a trip forward in time.

It is the year 2019 and a Labour government have been elected to power but now they have an immediate problem. Due to years of prevarication by successive Governments, the wheels are well and truly coming off the air travel industry. Holiday makers are regularly delayed for hours on end and big business is complaining about the cost of this systemic inefficiency. Something must be done and quick. A new satellite airport must be created to take the load off the major airports. But where?

There is only one underused runway in Greater London.

One can perhaps picture the Prime Minister saying to his Chancellor: "It's got to be Biggin Hill - it's two and a half miles from the M25, it's inside Greater London, it's a Conservative Council, a Conservative MP - it's a no brainer - a quick M25 spur and bosh, job done! What's not to like?"

And if you think my imagination is running away from me then consider this - last month the Transport Select Committee announced an inquiry into the current use of small regional airports in the South East. The last time that Government took as much interest in Biggin Hill was during the summer of 1939, as the Battle of Britain raged in the skies over Kent and Sussex. Having now read literally thousands of pages of Government reports, I can tell you that things are definitely on the move. Drastic problems beget drastic solutions and with an M25 spur attached to the nascent Westerham M25 Interchange which was designed in the 1980s but never actually built) we are just a 20 minute road journey from Gatwick - a perfect Gatwick satellite.

As many of you know, I live in Biggin Hill so this is not a future that I am keen to risk. It would decimate our local community, make our lives unbearable and undermine our property values. I think we all support our airport in the form that it takes today. It provides a sense of local pride and a source of local employment too. I want to protect our airport from any significant change in traffic mix and to simply do a little more of what we already do today. I want to encourage new maintenance companies to set up shop here, just as I did with Rizon and encourage aircraft owners to base their aircraft with us. If we can cement solid commercial foundations in Business and General Aviation and develop the infrastructure to properly support it, Government will more than likely leave us alone and look for other solutions, not least because the owners of large business jets are pretty influential, and government tends to try to keep them on side as far as possible (even if their public rhetoric is different).

In the coming weeks we will share with you a simple business plan to achieve the aims I have set out here. I hope that you will all feel able to show your support through the public consultation that will inform any decision as to how we might proceed or indeed whether this is a strategy that the local community supports. Personally, I believe that it is the best strategy for Biggin Hill and for Bromley, so I will be selling it as hard as I can. It allows us to continue very much as we do today with a mix of Business and General/Light Aviation whilst affording us the revenues we must generate if we are to demonstrate that we are not grossly underusing a strategic and publicly owned asset as might perhaps be argued today. Certainly to do nothing will only leave us open to possible sequestration by a future Government.

If anyone doubts this, I would suggest that they look at what has just happened at RAF Northolt. The traffic levels have doubled in two months following a ministerial decision and now consist of 90% civil flights. The consultation with the local community over this important and fundamental change of use lasted just 1 hour. Not a misprint it lasted just one hour opening at 0900 and closing at 1000 on the same day. Government and the MOD simply ignored all known planning constraints, civil airport regulations, safety standards etc and effectively turned RAF Northolt into a civil aerodrome overnight. Our entire sector of the aviation industry has been objecting to this unfair process for the past 12 months and frankly, we may as well fire peas at a battle ship for all the good it does. We have been rebuffed, ignored and rejected. In the end, we have been forced to apply for a judicial review.

We like to believe that we live in a democracy, but in reality national politicians believe that they know what is best for us little people and they will impose it on us whether we like it or not if it suits them to do so. It is the way that Europe works - democracy is not part of their way of doing business. The Airports Commission Interim Report and the TSC Inquiry are perhaps "gypsies warnings" that we would be ill advised to ignore. Our proposals, which as well as creating many new jobs and securing the future commercial viability of the airport, provide some mitigation to this threat will be published shortly and I hope you will all feel able to support it."

Best regards
Will Curtis
MD – Biggin Hill Airport Ltd

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT SOCIAL CLUB

Thank you to all those who continue to support the club, it is much appreciated. Full details can be found at www.bigginhillclub.co.uk When sending anything to us by post, please remember to use the new address on the site...

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 intended!). Thanks to everyone for sending their contributions....)

QUOTE.....

In church a lady was heard to say a prayer. It was so sweet and sincere that I just had to share it with you:-

"Dear Lord, This has been a tough two or three years.

You have taken my favourite actor, Patrick Swayze.

My favourite pop singer, Michael Jackson.

My favourite Blues Singer, Amy Winehouse.

My favourite actress, Elizabeth Taylor.

My favourite football manager, Bobby Robson.

My favourite golfer, Seve Ballesteros,

My favourite singer, Whitney Houston

and now my favourite actor, Robin Williams.

I just wanted you to know that my favourite politicians are:

Alec Salmond, Tony Blair, John Prescott, Ed Balls, Gordon Brown, Harriet Harman, Nick Clegg, David Cameron, and Ed Miliband (in no particular order)

Amen

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

The wife & I decided to take an organised trip to Afghanistan to see for ourselves what the place was like.

It didn't start well when the train we were travelling on, broke down a few miles North of the capital.

What a third world shithole! Streets full of angry bearded types glaring at us, and the Mrs stood out in her sundress as all other women had head to toe burkas. We are so dead I thought.

Anyway, Dave the organiser suddenly remembered that Finsbury Park had a tube station, so we were able to get safely to Kings Cross & on to Kabul from Heathrow.

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A fighter airfield somewhere in England in WW2 (it could have been Biggin)!

It had been 'Harry Clampers' for days. Low cloud, pouring with rain, mud everywhere and no flying; even the birds were walking. The chaps were getting really brassed-off. Morale was at an all-time low. The CO (Commanding Officer) realised that something had to be done to cheer the lads up so he approached Flying Officer Kite from admin and asked him to gather the chaps together in 'A' Hangar and give them a lively cheerful lecture.

'But sir, I'm not a flying type so what subject should I choose'?

'Anything you like Kite as long as it cheers them up, they're really down in the dumps'

So he thought about it for a minute and decided to give them a lecture on sex. It went down extremely well and he was given a standing ovation afterwards.

When he arrived back at the married quarters his wife asked him what he did today. He said...

'I gave all the chaps a lecture to cheer them up and it went down very well'.

'What was the lecture about?' she asked.

'He said 'Oh err um flying'... he stumbled.

'But you don't know anything about flying, you're an admin type'.

'Well you know how it is, one picks up bits and pieces from chats in the officer's mess and I just enlarged on it a bit and turned it into a lecture... Anyway the lads seem to like it'.

Next morning turned out bright and sunny and everywhere was a hive of activity with aircraft engines being run-up ready for take-off before roaring off into the wild blue yonder. Spirits were high again.

Whilst Mrs Kite was cycling round the perimeter track on her way to the coffee morning meeting with the other officers wives, she came across the CO cycling from the opposite direction. They stopped and had a short chat.

'Morning Mrs Kite - wonderful lecture your husband gave yesterday. The lads really enjoyed it'.

'Yes' she said 'I don't understand it. He's only been up twice - first time he was sick and second time he fell out!'

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Stanley died in a fire and his body was burned pretty badly. The morgue needed someone to identify the body, so they sent for his two best deer hunting friends, Cooter and Gomer. The three men had always hunted and fished together and were long time members of a hunt camp.

Cooter arrived first, and when the mortician pulled back the sheet, Cooter said, 'Yup, his face is burned up pretty bad. You better roll him over.'

The mortician rolled him over and Cooter said, 'Nope, ain't Stanley .'

The mortician thought this was rather strange, So he brought Gomer in to confirm the identity of the body. Gomer looked at the body and said, 'Yup, he's pretty well burnt up, Roll him over.'

The mortician rolled him over and Gomer said, 'No, it ain't Stanley .'

The mortician asked, 'How can you tell?'

Gomer said, 'Well, Stanley had two ass-holes.'

'What! He had two ass-holes?' asked the mortician.

'Yup, we never seen 'em, but everybody used to say: 'There's Stanley with them two ass-holes.'

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Blonde and her Jaguar

Carolyn, a very rich blonde, buys a new automatic Jaguar XKR Sports car.

She drives the car perfectly well during the day, but at night, the car just won't go at all.

After trying to drive the car at night for a week (but without any luck), she furiously calls the Jaguar dealer, and they send out a technician to her.

The technician examines the car and finds nothing wrong with it. So he turns to the blonde and asks: "Ma'am, are you sure you are using the right gears?"

Full of anger, the blonde replies: "You nut, you idiot, how on earth you could ask such a question? I'm not stupid you know! Of course I am using the right gears; I use "D" during the day and "N" at night ."

.....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"...))