

This is the Special Mid-Month Newsletter that I always knew would come eventually, but personally was one that I really dreaded...

Sqd Ldr J R (Jock) Maitland

It is with great regret that we have to announce the passing of Sqn Ldr Jock Maitland DFC MBE. Aged 87, Jock passed away peacefully at 9am on the 16th March. He played a huge part in the History of the most famous of all of the RAF Fighter stations, not only leaving his mark publicly with the Biggin Hill International Air Fair from 1963 until 2010, but also privately with the many people that came into contact with him at Biggin Hill over the past 55 years.

Growing up in Scotland, and attending school near RAF Turnhouse (now Edinburgh International Airport), gave Jock Maitland a life-long love for aeroplanes. From the sidelines he would watch the young men take-off and land in their elegant Hawker Hart and Fury biplanes and realised then that he had to fly.

Jock joined the RAF in 1942, where he flew aircraft types that many of us simply dream about (the Anson, Harvard and Spitfire, to name but a few). At the end of the war he left the RAF but was quickly recalled this time to fly the Meteor and Vampire. Combat missions came when he was posted on exchange to the USAAF flying the F86 Sabre and was posted to Korea, where he was responsible for shooting down a pair of MIG 15's for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. On his return he flew Venoms as a Squadron Leader during the Suez Crisis.

For the second time he left the RAF and set up Maitland Air Charters and Maitland Brewery Air at Croydon airport, but he soon realised that Croydon had no future with the encroachment of housing so with the RAF moving out of Biggin Hill made the move to the airport we now know. He took over the lease of the airport from Surrey & Kent Flying Club, who were initially running it under the name Surrey Aviation.

Many of the clubs also relocated to Biggin but he needed more customers, so in 1963 he staged the Biggin Hill Air Travel Fair in the hope of promoting the fledgling package tour industry, according to Flight International 165,000 people attended, designed as a one off marketing day. It was obvious to Jock it had a future.

Out of the Air Travel Fair came the International Air Fair, Jock built around him a small dedicated team that developed the Air Fair into one of the best in the UK, as you can imagine over a period of 48 years many people were involved as either an employee or volunteer, far too many to mention by name, Jock had time for them all and valued their contribution.

For his achievements in civilian aviation Jock Maitland was awarded the Jeffrey Quill Memorial Medal and the MBE.

Jock was held in high regard and I am sure he will be remembered with fond affection, many of us owe a great deal to Jock for his inspiration, guidance, trust and most of all friendship.

When you next drive on to the airport look left and you will see the sign erected by the airport in Jock's honour "Maitland View" it would be worth taking a moment to think would this road be leading to a housing or industrial estate had it not been for Jock Maitland!!

Details of the funeral will be promulgated in line with the wishes of the family once they are known.

On a very personal note, Jock gave me my very first job in Aviation - working weekends and holidays in the Tower as an assistant - and subsequently as a controller... I owe Jock an incredible amount and will miss him, but never forget him...

John Willis
Biggin Hill Airport User's Database
bigginhillreunited.co.uk