



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



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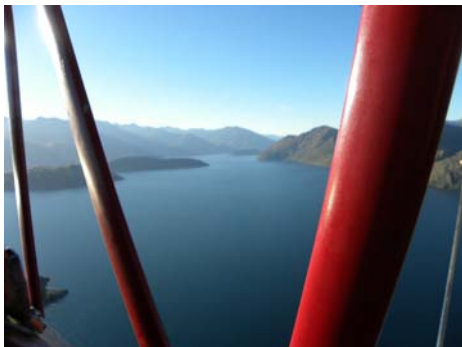
In Ass. with BigginHillReunited.co.uk
1st JULY 2012

GIL BEN ARI NEW ZEALAND



Gil sends some pictures of his recent holiday in NZ at a place called Wanaka. Unfortunately he missed the 'Wings over Wanaka' annual air show by a week. Consequently, there were no warbird aircraft to be seen. We put this down to bad flight planning.

However he decided to do some local flying around this picturesque area of the South Island.



Flying over nearby Lake Wanaka which is 900 ft amsl in a well preserved Tiger Moth. Next picture is on final approach to Wanaka, which can be seen to the

right of the nose on the approach.



Note also, the crystal clear weather found in this part of the world. Occasionally they do have bad weather, and then it is bad.



A little history of this Tiger Moth ZK-ALJ or NZ676-83499. Previously 15770 was built at Cowley in the UK and assembled in New Zealand.

She was shipped to New Zealand on the "Opawa" and entered service at Rongatai, Wellington on the 14th January 1941.

In 1942 ALJ served with No1 EFTS (Elementary Flight Training School) at Taleri, Dunedin training pilots for WW2.

By January 1944 ALJ was with the No2 EFTS based at Ashburton until the end of its life with the RNZAF where she trained over a 100 pilots.

On the 21st December 1946, ALJ entered the New Zealand Civil

Register and was sold to South Canterbury Aero Club. It was converted to the canopy version prior to 1949.

The club used ALJ on rabbit poisoning operations until it was sold to Mr H. Mayhead Ltd of Waioira in 1964. It was then sold to Mr Dunn, Silverdale, then to Mr I. Bennie of Auckland on the 12th August 1968.

On the 3rd of December 1970 it was sold to Mr L.E.Harris and Sons from Napier and rebuilt at Matamata in 1971.

In March of 1985 it was sold to Mr W.Harris of Napier and then to Mr P.Harris on the 12th of April 1988.

ALJ was rebuilt again in 1994 and sold to Kapiti Island Air, Raumati Beach. On the 15th August 1994 she was operated by the Kapiti Districts Aero Club based at Paraparaumu for about 10 years.

During this time ALJ took part in the Millenium Vintage Air Rally from North Cape to Bluff between the 9th and 18th February 2000. She is currently airworthy and operated by Classic Flights, Lake Wanaka, New Zealand.

Here end'eth this up to the moment chequered account of ZK-ALJ.

Meanwhile Gil and his wife drove along the West Coast, Seal Colony, Fox and Franz Joseph Glacier, where his wife had payback with a Heli-Flight up this Glacier with snowfield landing and a walk to take some pictures. GBA.

D-DAY NORMANDY, FRANCE

This dramatic picture of a DC3 was taken at Cherbourg during a re-enactment of the D-Day landings.

This aircraft dropped 40 paratroops during the weekend.

The USAF dropped some 400 para's during the weekend into a wind blowing 25 knots – they ended up with a few injuries with troops scattered a long way from the intended drop zone.

QUEENS DIAMOND JUBILEE

Many people turned out for this event, the highlight being the 1,000 boat parade on the river Thames. This was spoiled a little by the rain, but didn't seem to deter many, except the editor of the Bugle viewing all from his TV with a stack of beer at arm's length.

TATSFIELD PRESENTATION



The Tatsfield Horticultural Society have excelled themselves with this wonderful flower bed celebrating the 'Queens Diamond Jubilee'

2012 OLYMPIC DISPLAY



Another wonderful presentation is outside the 'Old Bakery' depicting the 2012 Olympic Games.

These two wonderful displays, were planned and designed by the 'Tatsfield in Bloom Committee'.

All of the athletic structures on the Bakery Green were created and made by artists and craftsmen in the village – all done voluntarily.



The carpet bed on the corner of Westmore Green was grown for the 'Tatsfield in Bloom Committee' by a specialist firm in Cornwall. Wow..!

The amount of effort to produce the end product is very impressive and should be congratulated for the effort of all the volunteers.

Tatsfield has been selected to compete in the Large Villages category of 'Britain in Bloom' this year (2012) when they will be up against the best villages in the UK. Tatsfield village is just up the road from Biggin Hill and well worth a visit to understand the effort of these dedicated artistic villagers.

AIRFIELD PERSONALITIES



JOHN BLAKE: DIES.

John Blake was a Guild of Aviation Artist, Raconteur, Historian and Air Show Commentator.

He began his adult life at about the same time as the Second World war was also started. He originally wished to enter the Royal Air Force (his Father having been in the Royal Flying Corps), but was turned down at this point there were no vacancies!!

He therefore joined the Irish Guards as a subaltern and hence commenced his own type of war, causing chaos, blowing up bridges and for a short time owning an Me 109, which he subsequently blew up with spectacular results in case the original owner re-appeared.

He was heavily involved with the 'Micks' (Irish Guards) in Operation Market Garden after his landing in Normandy on the beaches.

John had an individual style of service life. On entering Brussels the local community were found to be 'acquiring' back from the recently departed Germans, supplies from the Palais de Justice.

Order had to be maintained and John, as part of the Regimental Pioneer Platoon (things that go bang) put up notice to say that the Palais was mined and all should keep clear.

It was not until several months later, when he was back in England recovering from being hit by an unfriendly German shell, just outside Arnhem, and attending a refresher course about defusing

bombs that he remembered that he had forgotten to take the sign down. His memory was jogged by the instructor complaining about so many false 'beware of mines' signs'.

It was while completing his recovery that he and his Sergeant were on a range investigating the results of hand grenades on different types of rock, that the Sergeant dropped a live grenade. John, without much thought, picked the grenade up to get rid of it and it exploded taking his right hand with it and causing multiple injuries to the rest of him.

After the war, and patched up as well as could be done, he attended the Glasgow School of Art where, having to change hands, he trained as an artist. This was a skill he was to use until very recently and which led to him becoming a Fellow of the Guild of Aviation Artists and a former Chairman of that Guild. He found employment with the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom as their librarian. This suited him down to the ground, as his other love is Naval, Army and Air Force history. He had the run of the Library at the Royale Aeronautical Society and was paid to do this.

It was during this time he was asked to commentate at a little airshow. This was the start of a long and distinguished career as the leading airshow commentator this country has 'heard'. Airshows up and down the country, in the sixties, seventies, eighties and into the nineties had the good fortune to have such a historian and raconteur entreating their audience with such knowledge and skill. There will never be a replacement as a commentator for John, and I write that as his successor as Chief Commentator at Farnborough. My commenting colleagues at airshows have a lot to thank John for as he set the bar and standard that we try to emulate.

John was a founder member of the Tiger Club, but due to his loss of a hand (which he never thought of as any type of disability) was not able to get his Private Pilots Licence until the CAA relaxed their rules and looked at individual cases on their own merit. John became a stalwart of the British Aerobatic Association and an International Aerobatic Judge and was the Contest Director for the World Aerobatic Championships held in Hullavington in 1970.

The stories surrounding John, from falling down a nunnery staircase with an armed Rocket Propelled Grenade (this one did not go off); to meeting aviation greats like Uri Gagarin; to towing the Admiral commanding the Royal Yacht Britannia across the forecourt at Buckingham Palace; are all true.

John was a man who would always put himself out to help others and use himself as a stepping stone to develop someone's career.

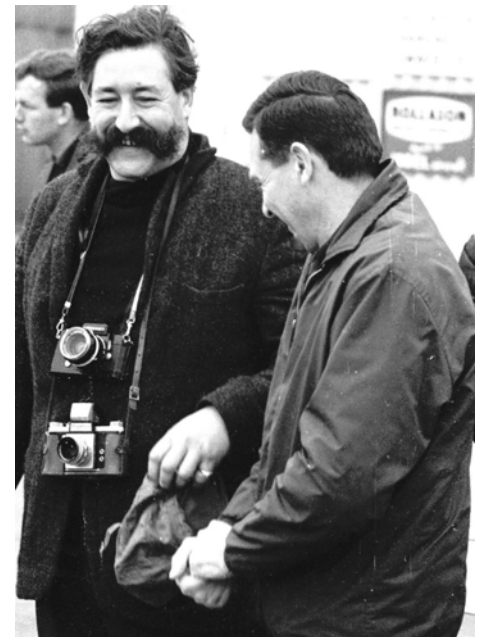
Stratton Richey



AVIATION CARICATEUR.....!!

Wherever he went he carried a clipboard and felt pen and would make many sketches of aircraft with a human element drawn in. He was also a very talented artist.

If you were in a restaurant with him minus his trusty clipboard he would produce a felt tip pen and promptly start sketching on the table cloth. Much, to the astonishment of the waiters.



Redhill 1967 sharing a joke about a hat with the late George Stewart, note hat in hand, now on head...!!



1977 Biggin Hill Air Show John interviews Miss Susan Sagers about her Percival Prentice.

Next John appears at Bournemouth Air Show of 1977 riding on the wing of Neil Williams Spitfire as ground crew often did whilst these aircraft were being manoeuvred on

the ground as forward visibility was almost nil – so a look out was very helpful.



John Blake was a true character of characters, his never ending wit was an asset to his many air show commentaries. He was never short of a story or a good joke.

I remember one air show at Shoreham-by-Sea with a tethered balloon flight as the wind was blowing from the land (not favourable for a balloon display) so it was tethered to a Ford Transit van and promptly inflated. All was good until the Pilot gave it another squirt of hot gas, whereupon it now started to tow the van forward with the driver desperately trying to stop the van heading for a very large drainage ditch about ten feet deep. John burst out laughing whilst commentating on the inevitable outcome when the driver and van became half submerged. I think he continued to laugh for the rest of the afternoon. The crowd certainly enjoyed this hilarious moment.

Editor:

INCREDIBLE MODELLING..!

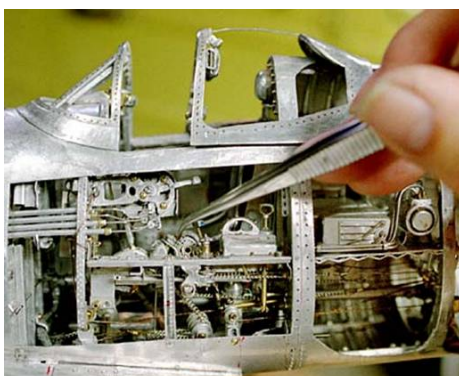


Mr Young Park - Hawaii resident

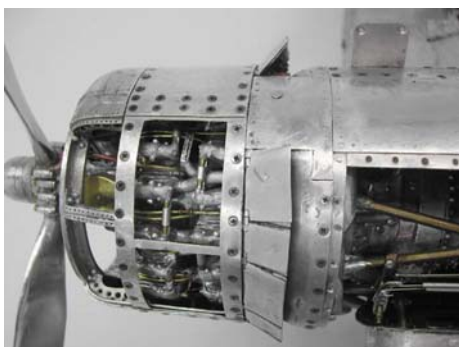
shows amazing modelling skills produced in his busy workshop.



It is hard to imagine the painstaking care and detail to accurate reproduction.



Note the actual scale by the tweezers being used and fingers.



Corsair cowling detail with working gill flaps. All panels are hand beaten stretching the aluminium and reducing thickness.

This article was sent in by one of the Bugle readers.



Ammunition belt with miniature bullets.



Skilful panel beating of the wing root.



Showing a wooden mould for beating the air in-take fitted below the Mustang fuselage.



It's hard to imagine his patience and time taken to build such a model. The realistic price tag must be very expensive – bearing in mind the many hours he puts into his model making.

ANOTHER REAL STORY...!!

A dedicated man for posterity

David Cundall, 62, has spent £130,000 (\$200,000) of his money, visited Burma 12 times, persuaded its secretive regime to trust him, and all the time sought testimony from a dwindling band of Far East veterans in order to locate the Spitfires.

April 16, 2012 - A British farmer announced over the weekend that he has located a dozen or more Supermarine Spitfires buried in their shipping crates beneath Myanmar (Burma) since 1945. David Cundall, 62, told *The Telegraph* that he confirmed through radar imaging technology at least 12 and as many as 20 crated aircraft are buried some 40 feet underground. In February he saw the crates after sinking a camera through a borehole, and they appear to be in good condition.

His 15-year quest included 12 trips to Myanmar and more than £130,000 out of pocket as he searched for the airplanes. "It took me more than 15 years but I finally found them," Cundall told *The Telegraph*. "Spitfires are beautiful aeroplanes and should not be rotting away in a foreign land. They saved our neck in the Battle of Britain and they should be preserved."

Cundall said he first learned of the buried treasures in 1996 from a friend who had spoken with American construction battalion soldiers, who said, "We've done some pretty silly things in our time, but the silliest was burying Spitfires." That started Cundall's quest that included contacting Burma Campaign veterans and persuading the Myanmar government to locate the Spitfires.

He eventually met one eyewitness who drew maps and an outline of where the planes were buried and

took him to the scene. "We realised that we were not searching deep enough as they had filled in all of these bomb craters which were 20 feet deep to start with," Cundall told *pressdisplay.com*. "I hired another machine that went down to 40 feet and after going back surveying the land many times, I found them."

The airplanes were shipped from the factory to the Burmese RAF base near the end of World War II, but were deemed surplus to requirements. Plus they were land-based planes and lacked the range for the "island-hopping" missions, as opposed to the carrier-based Seafires. Commanders ordered that the 12 Spitfires be buried while they were still in their transport crates to make sure they didn't fall into enemy hands.

About two weeks later, the United States dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, leading to the Japanese surrender in September. The Spitfires remaining underground ever since.

"They were waxed, wrapped in greased paper, and their joints tarred," Cundall said, they will be in near perfect condition." It is also possible that in December 1945 eight more Spitfires were buried along with the original 12 for a potential 20 crated, pristine fighters.

A thread discussing the announced finding in the [EAA Forums](#) concurs to their likely preservation. Well-known Spitfire owner and pilot Bill Greenwood, EAA 198472/Warbirds of America 3339, posted:

"Just a guess, but those most likely are Mk XIVs, or Mk XVIs. If not then some foreign ones were a rarer Mk VIIIs. If they were new and crated when buried they were probably preserved in cosmoline (a rust preventative), maybe even

wrapped in a oil type wax paper that I have seen some Merlin parts in; and they might be well preserved. At the least they would probably be great static museum displays, and some parts useable in any event. I'd like to have one ..."

"Can you imagine the market value of a brand factory new Spitfire, complete with all military parts (radio, guns, etc.), fresh factory Rolls engine, if they were found and had not deteriorated at all?"



We don't know how these two aircraft managed to get to the centre of Rangoon (now called Yangon).



a country that has never fully recovered from WWII.

STEEL HOUSE IS NO MORE:



This unique building was a feature of the Ideal Homes Exhibition at Olympia in 1965 with its leaning walls. It was designed by Edward (Ted) Drewery and re-erected at Biggin Hill Airport and used for many years as the headquarters for the air shows for the next 45 years.

The 19th June 2012 saw the arrival of a van with the name of the demolition company, a very large dustbin (extra large skip) and an even larger demon like digger, demolition tool, come bulldozer. This was a 'doomsday' moment.

In no time at all what had been a feature on the airfield for 47 years vanished in a few swift ripping moments of torture and the building was no more.

Not even a cloud of dust..!!!



There it was gone, never likely to arise from the ashes like a great phoenix, not even the foundations on which it stood. The only thing left standing is the security fence