



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



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AIRFIELD PERSONALITIES



Tony Crook:
Pilot, Racing Driver, Luxury Car Manufacturer.

Motor Racing is full of characters and Tony Crook was no exception with his beautifully cultured accent. Tony was an RAF pilot in World War II.

He began Motor Racing at the first post-war motor race in England at a former RAF bomber base called Gransden Lodge in the summer of 1946, when he drove a pre-war BMW 328.

In the years that followed he raced with much success on the British scene, notably with a 2.9 litre Alfa Romeo and later with Frazer-Nash machinery.

During this time he established a chain of garages, called Anthony Crook Motors, which acted as agents for various sporting car companies.

Tony raced in two, British GP's

in 1952 and 1953. The first race saw him in his Frazer-Nash and the second was in his Cooper-Alta.



Tony Crook GP Motor Racing Driver from 1946 -1953.



When Tony stopped racing, he built up his car business and

became a dealer for Bristol Cars, which had grown out of the Bristol Aeroplane Company, one of Britains most famous aviation companies.



This company had acquired the rights to most of the BMW engines and began producing luxury cars in 1947.

In 1960 the Bristol aeroplane Company was nationalised and became part of what is now British Aerospace. Bristol's owner Sir George White bought the Bristol car division with Tony Crook as his partner.

This relationship was a great success with the two men working together throughout the 1960's.

In 1969 Mr White was badly injured in a car crash and eventually sold out to Tony Crook in 1973.

It was around this time that the editor of the Bugle would meet Tony who had a Rallye Minerva and would fly regularly to Bristol Filton to visit the factory nearby where these famous hand built cars were produced.



The editor is pictured at the Bristol Car Company on a secret visit with Tony pictured also with this original Bristol car (pure luxury car) and still going strong.



Tony Crook, poses with his first Bristol car.

These cars are hand made by a team of very skilled technicians, panel beaters and technical drawing draughtsmen and form makers.



Producing a wooden mock up of a forthcoming model to understand where various components within the structure would be placed and checked for feasibility and finally a complete wooden shell for shaping the aluminum body parts.



A car is born in complete secrecy.

The stock of spare panels was quite impressive – each car produced had

a backup of many spare body parts all labeled and carefully racked.

Tony owned two Rallye Minerva aircraft which he would fly regularly to Bristol Filton.



Some of the best, well known owners of Bristol Cars were Richard Branson, Tina Turner and Bono and Liam Gallagher from Oasis.

When the editor became aware of the Bristol cars for the first time he was struck by the similarity of the early BMW's.



From this point the similarity ended because these cars were of a very prestigious nature with some unique features, e.g. where to put the battery and spare wheel with easy access.



How simple is this, accessible, clean, no need to forage in the boot

for the spare wheel buried under your baggage.



The interior of these luxury vehicles was equally elegant with wood venire paneling and simple understandable switches without fumbling visually trying to identify an appropriate switch.

The engines of these cars were large producing huge amounts of BHP were detuned for added reliability. However, customers usually demanded more power.



The leather interior was of the highest quality thick leather hides available, were everlasting.

As lasting, as all the paper work, generated over time at the Filton office.



Tony would suddenly produce a small notebook from his pocket and write something of importance to be dealt with later.

If someone was asked to produce evidence of a current project, they would seemingly scroll down a pile

of carefully balanced paperwork in a towering pillar and extract from the middle of the pile, the said document relating to the question.

When you are surrounded by this human attribute, who needs a computer. Bristol produced hand made panels for these quality cars.

There was only one outlet for these luxury vehicles which was from his



only showroom in High Street, Kensington, London.

The Bristol cars were not available for journalists or TV car experts to drive beyond the normal pleasure associated with a luxury vehicle thereby preserving the elegance of these hand made vehicles.



The above picture was taken at the Bristol Filton works with the Bristol Jet Fighter in the background showing the range of cars produced here over the years.



The editor at lunch recently in London with Tony Crook and his secretary Anne-Marie an elegant French Lady who joined the firm

years ago as a temp at the Motor Show at Earls Court and has remained with the company ever since.



NICE WEATHER IS COMING:

Cherry Blossom, a welcome sight after all the incessant rain which never seemed to end a welcome relief after all the rain we have experienced over the last few weeks, well months of almost continuous rain with fields that are waterlogged to the very top of hills – how is this possible.

I thought water flowed down hill not to the top of a hill.

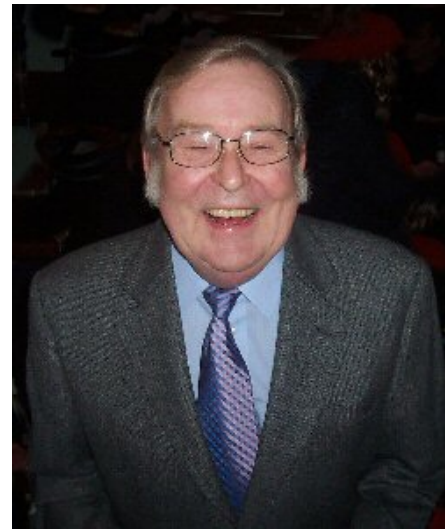
Whilst the cherry blossom seems to bring happiness it is not everlasting like the Samurai

The unbelievable amounts of water has destroyed many road surfaces around Biggin Hill, and wherever you drive more time is spent concentrating avoiding large holes than vehicles approaching in a similar weaving pattern from the opposite direction doing the same, dodging wicked deep holes.

Many people have damaged wheels as a result, only to find that many modern cars – do not have a spare wheel..! A foam pack and small electric pump which will only cope with a small puncture, like a small nail, not serious damage – these cars do not even have a jack..!! If you manage to borrow a wheel to get out of trouble, don't forget to borrow a jack – and a spanner, because without a jack the manufacturer seems to think you won't need a spanner.

The complimentary tool kit doesn't exist anymore, the only thing is the empty space for the original spare wheel that all cars once had...!!!

DAVID MATHEWS DIES



David a well respected member of the Biggin Hill Social Club passed away on the 31st March.

Dave was always available at our many BBQ's as head chef from dawn to dusk at many of the Air Shows keeping members refreshed during the hectic weekend of festivities.

David formerly ran a car accessory business for many years. He later moved to Biggin Hill when he became a painter decorator. With his brushes and ladders and rolls of paper he would always pass by Pilots Pals at the end of his working day.

Hardly a speck of paint on his clothes, things won't be the same without him around.