

Hi everyone

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Welcome to the January 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!)

DECEMBER WEATHER

Well, what can I say - The December weather was consistently rubbish for light aircraft training flying! Rain, low cloud, and strong gusty wind conditions! But I guess it has at least refilled all the reservoirs and enabled the hosepipe bans to be removed.

But, as a result of the dramatically inclement weather, most of the grass airfields in the south of the UK (for example, Headcorn, Redhill, Rochester, Sandown, and many others) remained pretty waterlogged and unusable for much of the time. So here's hoping 2023 will improve a bit before we all forget how to fly.....

There is not much more I can say about the weather is there!!!

WHAT A TERRIBLE COUPLE OF MONTHS!

The last couple of months have turned out to be an awful period for the loss of so many of our old aviation friends.....

DAVID PORTER

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of a well-known early Biggin Hill'ite, David Porter, on the evening of 20th December just prior to Christmas. David was 90 years old back in March 2022. (Some 10 years or so ago David unfortunately lost his lovely wife, Betty, who was well known to most of the old Biggin Hill'ites.)

He was linked to the airfield when he served in the RAF post-war in their Photographic Reconnaissance where he trained as a photographer, but then, after several unrelated careers he was able to fulfil a lifetime dream of opening his own flying club – and Flairavia Flying Club was then born!

As a result, David is known to so many of us oldies at the airfield as the owner of one of the best-known flying clubs in the 60's, which started life with various aircraft including Bolkow Junior's, Cessna 150's, plus Champion 7FC Tri-Traveller basic trainers. He employed John George as the Chief Flying Instructor (who eventually went on as an airline pilot with Caledonian Airways), and a few other freelance instructors like Ian Dalziel, David Quirk, and quite a few others.

He is remembered for being cross with the incredible snow coverage in 1963, when no flying could take place at Biggin for some considerable time. But David, being David, actually had some snow skis designed and fitted to the Tri-Traveller, made from iron fittings around the three wheels and plywood skis, also held at the right angles with bungee cords, the aircraft was successfully test flown by John George. Unfortunately, after just a few more flights, the nose ski broke and the aircraft was slightly damaged! But this was so typical of David, trying not to be defeated by something as simple as snow covered runways!

A few years later he gave our friend Tony Machin a job getting aircraft in and out of the hangar and helping with refuelling and other admin jobs, and eventually actually sponsored Tony to become a flying instructor before he went on to become an airline pilot, which had always been his aim in life...

Many other people became student pilots and gained their PPL's with the club, including his daughter, Elizabeth's, future husband, Stuart Patterson, and lots of others.

David ran the club for many years, becoming one of the most successful and long running clubs at Biggin Hill, with a very strong social scene and a club bar used by many of us on an almost nightly basis.

He was also famous for the Loftleider Trophy that was presented to winner of the annual longest day flying competitions, as well as the amazing annual Dinner Dances at the Grasshopper pub and function rooms, and subsequently the Cherry Lodge Golf Club, all attended by many members and associates plus their families, and some quite well known celebrities, such as Michael Aspel (who did a guest spot with me on my disco when I was providing the music for the function).

He was also well known as the person who saved a Stanier Black 5 steam railway locomotive from the scrap heap, using his determination and various skills to restore her to her former glory. He then also obtained permission for her to be re-named "RAF Biggin Hill" at a special ceremony at Bridgnorth (which was attended by the then current Commanding Officer at RAF Biggin Hill).

He eventually moved to the North-East of England to be close to his daughter, Elizabeth, who was then living in Darlington. But, even from there he always maintained his links with Biggin Hill and his old friends there. After his move to the North-East he continued to enjoy all things aviation related, including the Sunderland and Teesside airshows.

David is out-survived by his two daughters, Elizabeth and Kim, and his son, Charles. His name has been added to the Biggin Hill Reunited online Roll of Honour

R.I.P. David - you will be sadly missed by all your old aviation friends – thank you for all you did for us all in those quite difficult early times.

GRAHAM POWELL

It is with tremendous sadness that I notify you all of the passing of Biggin Hill'ite, Graham Powell. Graham was renowned as an absolute gentleman and was always very helpful to everyone he came into contact with.

He was one of the owners of a TB20 that was kept at Shipping and Airlines, and he served on several Airport Committees including the SANARB.

He had shared his time with us all at SANARB on the Thursday in late November and was also seen flying the TB20 that week. Shortly after returning with a friend in his car from a flight safety meeting near Chichester on the 29th November he seemingly suffered from a heart attack, and passed away.

His family have organised a funeral service to which all his friends and colleagues are invited on 9th January at 10:00 at the Bluebell Cemetery (Old London Rd, Halstead, Sevenoaks TN14 7AE) followed at 13:00 by a Reception at the Aperfield Inn (311 Main Rd, Biggin Hill, Westerham TN16 2HN)

Our friend Graham's name has been added to the Biggin Hill Reunited "Roll of Honour"

R.I.P. Graham you will always be remembered by all your aviation friends

JOHN DODD

In early December this year we received notification from the family that their father, John Dodd had sadly passed away.

John - Doddsy to all his mates – was a very popular and hardworking Biggin Hill'ite in the 60's and 70's. He ran a business called Automatic Transmission Overhauls, and was a total specialist on automatic gearboxes, something that was very rare in those days with few people who could repair them.

Most of us will remember him and his Merlin powered Rolls Royce (known as "the Beast") that used to do test drives down the runway at Biggin, and give loads of us rides in the amazing vehicle. The Beast was based on a conversion of a real Rolls Royce but was dramatically modified to take the RR Merlin engine, but otherwise was a road licenced car.

Rolls Royce were not very happy with Doddsy and demanded the removal of the RR Flying Lady statuette on the top of the radiator. After very public exchanges and much TV publicity basically aimed, not at Doddsy, but at Rolls Royce, the Statuette was eventually removed.

A very active pilot, Doddsy bought the ex-Automobile Association Piper Apache (G-APZE), and flew that all around Europe, frequently full of automatic gearboxes that he had repaired and returned to the owner for refitting...

After originally residing in South London, Doddsy took the whole family out to Spain where he lived until his recent passing...

Our sincere condolences to all his family

Rest in Peace John - we will never forget you – your name has been added to the BigginHillReunited online Roll of Honour

BOB DENWOOD

As many of you will recall, last month we notified you of the sad loss of old Biggin Hill'ite and veteran, Bob Denwood.

His daughter, Carolynne, has now informed us of the details of the Memorial Service that has been arranged for his many aviation friends and family.

The service will be held on Monday 30th January 2023 at 14:00 at the RAF St George's Chapel at Biggin Hill, and that will be followed by a Reception at the Nightingale Café in the attached Biggin Hill Memorial Museum.

(For those of you using a GPS to locate the destination, both are located at 16 Main Road, Biggin Hill, Leaves Green, TN16 3EG)

To help forward planning of numbers attending, please RSVP to Carolynne Cox at her email address cec53@live.co.uk or text/call her at 07802 724417

Anyone wishing to donate funds in memory of Bob please make your payments to the RAF Benevolent Fund

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

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

The “Landings Hotel” is now showing serious signs that it will be completed as planned by early to mid-January, so I’m guessing we may expect to see it officially opened later the same month.

The building of a new taxiway joining the Foxtrot taxiway, (the old runway 11/29 adjacent to junction “Alpha 4”), and the actual Alpha taxiway (close to the “Charlie” runup area) is now well underway. This new taxiway is to enable the airport’s much larger corporate jets to taxi safely to Runway 21, rather than using the current much narrower Alpha taxiway.

The airport is looking much improved now following all the building work and road resurfacing, all of which is likely to support the long-term existence of this entire site as an airport. (in spite of some of the opposition from the posh areas predominantly to the north of us, which seem to be populated by lots of property developers). I can’t think why they would want it to close!

In spite of all the increased corporate jet traffic their support of the airport has definitely ensured the ongoing operation into the future as an airport, which was previously quite uncertain with just General Aviation aircraft, whose financial structures left the future far less certain than it is nowadays. Although this is all good for an overall sustainable future, and the airport doing its best to support GA activities and training where possible, clearly the airports costs make it considerably more difficult to envisage significant GA operations surviving here in the long-term.....

CROYDON AIRPORT AVIATION COLLECTORS FAIR

A final quick reminder about the annual Croydon Airport Aviation (Military, Aviation, and Model) Collectors Fair, which opens on Sunday the 8th January 2023, starting at 10.30am, at the former Croydon Airport Hotel, (next door to Airport House), which is now actually known as the Hallmark Hotel, Purley Way, Croydon Surrey CR9 4LT

Entry fee for adults is £4, but children under age 10 are free. Free car parking available too.

JANUARY BIGGIN HILL POSTED FUEL PRICES

The “posted” Biggin Hill Airport fuel prices, excluding VAT, for the calendar month of January 2023 are:

£1:79 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)

£0:93.7 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

I hope you are all nicely stuffed with Christmas pudding and pigs in blankets, and on behalf of all at Alouette I wish you and your families a very happy new year.

Last week the Alouette committee announced that after many long years, we are closing down. What follows is the announcement in full that I made to the membership - it feels only right to share it with you all too. However, since declaring our intention to close, I have been made aware of a couple of rumours that I wish to quell now. Firstly, Alouette is not broke. We categorically have not run out of money. As is explained below, the decision to close has been taken now precisely because we still have some money, we just have an exceedingly slim chance of making enough money to survive another year.

Secondly, the airport management have been extremely supportive of Alouette for a long time and have absolutely nothing to do with the decision to close. We have not been priced out or told to leave, as has been suggested. Alouette has maintained a good working relationship with the airport and our departure has absolutely nothing to do with them or their actions. In fact, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all the airport management for their continued help over the past few years.

If you do have any questions or thoughts or ideas or anything, can I please urge you to get in touch with me or someone else who knows the truth of what is going on, rather than taking to social media to spout things that are plainly false.

So, without further ado:

It is with much sadness but perhaps some inevitability that I write to tell you all that the committee has reached the decision that we are left with no choice but to close Alouette Flying Club. We have given notice on our building and will be vacating on the last day of February 2023.

Rest assured that all trial lessons and outstanding payments for five-hour packs will either be honoured or repaid. We will contact everybody who still has valid purchases with us and explain the situation and their choices. There will also be a closing party, we are currently looking at Saturday 18th Feb, at which the entire contents of the bar will need to be drunk.

As has been pointed out relentlessly to me by former members, the portrait of Don Perch and the new award we arranged in his name last year are to be returned, and I have made arrangements for that with his family.

This has been an extremely hard choice to make by people who have given so much to keep our doors open, but the simple truth is that those doors have become increasingly expensive and fewer people walk through them. The model of Alouette - member-led and volunteer-run - no longer fits in a world where instantaneous Instagram hits are king. The abject lack of involvement from members at social evenings and the AGM proves that. Folk are very happy to pay good money to go flying, less so to run the Hoover round when they're done.

Externally the pressures are huge. Unless you are a billionaire or living in a cave (or both) you won't have failed to notice that absolutely everything now costs a fortune. Inflation is rampant and the price of fuel is eye-watering; COVID was a sizeable nail in our coffin, particularly for the bar coffers at social evenings, and General Aviation in this country is in a pretty terminal decline. The entire aviation industry needs young blood but the young either a) can't afford it because they would rather strive for that most unattainable millennial goal and buy a house or b) think that private flying is a stain on humanity akin to turning a polar bear into a breakfast cereal and that, instead, all those who derive enjoyment from any sort of combustion engine should be forced into rags and a miserable plant-based existence.

Internally the pressures are just as large. As a snapshot, Alouette needs to make £30,000 per year, just to survive. We currently earn around £30 per hour flown. It doesn't take Rachel Riley to work out that we need both to put the rates up to ridiculous prices and increase the amount of flying we do by a long way. Whilst on paper this is feasible, in reality it is not. Flying has always been an expensive hobby and Biggin Hill has certainly placed itself at the top end of the market. Whilst there are many benefits to flying from Biggin, the simple fact remains that to complete a PPL with us costs nearly twice as much as at competitor airfields, and that has shown in the dwindling number of members who join and train not just with Alouette, but with other schools on the airfield.

We have survived this long because firstly our costs used to be significantly lower, meaning we made more from each hour flown and, secondly, each year we make a surplus in July - October and that sees us through the lean winter months. This year was the first year we have not. Due largely to a deeply unfortunate and largely unavoidable instructor shortage, coupled with a lack of PPL hire flying, we did not make that crucial surplus.

On a personal note, I have worn many hats in my time with Alouette. From my Homburg of learning to fly, to my Stetson of aircraft ownership, and the Pith Hat of chairmanship, it has been quite the experience. Like so many of us I was entranced by the history and the ideal of Alouette and I couldn't quite believe why it wasn't working when I arrived three years ago and why nobody else wanted to be involved. In the short time I have been with Alouette I pulled together the most astoundingly passionate people I have ever known, and we all gave ourselves willingly for the cause. I really did not want to be the last name in a long line of people who have sacrificed time, money, and energy for Alouette. More than anything I want to be able to pass it on to someone else, in a better state than it was passed to me. But there comes a time when blind optimism simply isn't enough anymore. It is extremely important to me and the rest of the committee that the closure of Alouette is done properly and honourably, which is why we are doing it now rather than limp on until we run out of money entirely at some point mid-spring.

If you have any questions or thoughts on any of this, do please get in touch with me at chairman@flyalouette.com. It is unlikely we will hold socials in January/February as nobody comes to them anyway, but more details will follow on the Viking burial party on Feb 18th.

Yours with a heavy heart,

Stuart Taylor-Kean
Chairman - Alouette Flying Club

MONTHLY NEWS FROM THE CEO'S OFFICE

As this 2022 draws to close, we can reflect on a very successful year for the Airport that has seen a rapid bounce back from COVID and record traffic movements over the summer period. The fact that this has been achieved against a backdrop of uncertain and challenging economic pressures is all the more impressive. We have seen the new Bombardier hangar completed and brought into operation, significant infrastructure developments across the Airport site and the majority of the construction of our new Hotel complete. By any measure, a successful year.

As we look towards the new year, the development across the Airport site continues at pace. The construction of the Hotel is progressing extremely well and practical completion is on target for early 2023 with a formal opening shortly thereafter. Recruitment across several areas is complete with hotel employees already working within departments across the Airport company to understand every element of business aviation and the industry they have joined. The Airport continues to engage with Mr Ecclestone regarding options for the development of West Camp. The Airport has completed the road and footpath resurfacing from the roundabout to Wireless Way, leaving the area for the new Gatehouse and the cul-de-sac to Hangar 170, the only outstanding works to complete the overall project. The resurfacing of Alpha taxiway is complete, and the grounds works for the new taxiway Bravo are well advanced.

The work to change the old JOTA building into a multiuser training facility is progressing at pace. This short-term solution to address the more strategic need for an Aviation Training College is already attracting significant interest and the intention is that Airport based, and external, training providers will be able to hire the facility. The facility is due for completion in Feb 2023.

Disappointingly, we were informed very late this month that the CAA have rejected the Airport's Airspace Change Proposal to introduce an RNAV approach to runway 03. Whilst the Airport hopes to engage with the CAA in the new year regarding their decision, it is nevertheless extremely frustrating.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the aviation community once again for its support in adhering to the Airport's noise abatement procedures and ensuring the Airport remains a good neighbour.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and I trust and hope you get to celebrate with your loved ones.

Thank you
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.

And all that remains is for me to wish you all a very Happy and hopefully prosperous New Year

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....

Thanks to everyone for sending their contributions to this section. To avoid me running out of them, please keep them coming by email to john@bigginhillreunited.co.uk

QUOTE.....

A man was caught in a flood. Two men came by in a boat to rescue him, but he waved them away shouting, "no the lord will save me"

One hour later another boat came along, but again he the man said, "the lord will save me"

Eventually, a helicopter arrived but the man insisted, "the lord will save me".

Unfortunately the man drowned and at the gates of heaven he asked St Peter, "Why Didn't The Lord Save Me"?

St Peter replied..... "for crying out loud he sent two boats and a helicopter, what more do you want?!!!

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Oldies quickies.....

The ability to speak several languages is an asset, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in any language is priceless.

Be decisive. Right or wrong, make a decision. The road is paved with flat squirrels who couldn't make a decision.

Happiness is not having to set the alarm clock.

When I get a headache I take two aspirin and keep away from children just like the bottle says.

Just once, I want the prompt for username and password to say, "Close enough."

Becoming an adult is the dumbest thing I've ever done.

If you see me talking to myself, just move along. I'm self-employed. We're having a meeting.

"Your call is very important to us. Please enjoy this 40-minute flute solo".

Does anyone else have a plastic bag full of plastic bags or is it just me?

I hate it when I can't figure out how to operate the iPad and my tech support guy is asleep. He's 5 and it's past his bedtime.

Today's 3-year-olds can switch on laptops and open their favourite apps. When I was 3, I ate mud.

Tip for a successful marriage: Don't ask your wife when dinner will be ready while she's mowing the lawn.

So, you drive across town to a gym to walk on a treadmill?

I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes five years in a row.

I decided to stop calling the bathroom "John" and renamed it the "Jim". I feel so much better saying I went to the Jim this morning. Old age is coming at a really bad time.

If God wanted me to touch my toes, He would've put them on my knees.

Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.

Why do I have to press one for English when you're just going to transfer me to someone I can't understand anyway?

Now, I'm wondering . . . did I send this to you, did you send it to me or have I only sent one copy?

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

The Commandments for Seniors.....

You don't need anger management. You need people to stop pissing you off.

Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.

"On time" is - when you get there.

Even duct tape can't fix stupid - but it sure does muffle the sound.

It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free...and three sizes smaller.

Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.

"One for the road" means peeing before you leave the house.

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

When Old Jake returned to the doctor, he was given a bottle of medicine.

"This is potent stuff," said the doctor, "don't take it every day. Take it tomorrow then skip a day, then take it the next day and skip another day and so on."

A month later the doctor saw Jake's wife in the street and enquired how he was.

"Oh, he's dead," she said

"The medicine wasn't that strong," said the doctor.

"No," said the wife, "it was all that skipping".

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

Apparently the average person has sex 89 times a year.....

This is going to be one hell of a last few days of 2022!!

.....UNQUOTE

QUOTE.....

A family's driving behind a garbage truck when a dildo flies out and thumps against the windshield.

Embarrassed, and trying to spare her young son's innocence, the mother turns around and says, "Don't worry, dear. That was just an insect."

"Wow," the boy replies. "I'm surprised it could get off the ground with a cock like that!"

.....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"...)