

Newsletter



July 2007

Compiled by Larry Cross

Dear Members, this years AGM was convened in the new AirSpace facility as arranged by the I.W.M. What wasn't made clear was that our entry would be through the Public Entrance and not via the Guardroom gate as per norm. We were therefore obliged to U-turn and retrace our 'steps'- down to the M11 roundabout and back up. The fastest lap was completed by Ian Swindale in his Fiat Panda in 92.7secs.

Prior to that of course was the dinner at the Heydon Grange Golf & Country Club. The tables were very well laid out and presented to accommodate the 72 guests and overall, deemed to be a success. As always, we owe a debt of gratitude to Allan & Jennie McRae for their efforts in securing the venue, organizing seating arrangements, printing placecards and of course the raffle. Our thanks must also go to Ann Brinkley & Jennie, who every year without fail and with consummate ease, relieve us of our loose change in exchange for small pieces of coloured paper. Last but by no means least, on behalf of the committee, I thank all those members that so generously donated raffle prizes.



Seated facing. Mavis Baker chats with Tony Harbour, his wife Michelee to his left

The AGM was convened, as previously mentioned, in the very new Marshall Auditorium, part of the new AirSpace facility. Whether this will be a permanent arrangement remains to be seen.

The meeting was opened by our chairman Bob Hope, who was completely un-phased by his vast surroundings, complete with tiered seating, air-conditioning, projection room, giant drop down screen and media gadgets. Apologies were conveyed from members unable to attend.

It was decided by the members attending that the next meeting would be on **21st October 2007** and that the **2008 May** annual dinner would be held once again at the Heydon Grange Golf & Country Club.

The Committee was unanimously re-elected for a further term.

Reminder. Please send ALL cheques / payments to the treasurer **George Poole** and NOT to **Allan McRae**.

Reminder II Members wishing to attend the Oct. meeting **MUST** submit their Car Reg No. and number of passengers to Bob Hope in good time.

New Members We welcomed three new members, BobCarter.64Sqn Radio Sect.(Living in Spain)
Mark Cann who was at Duxford 1952 & 1957. - John Rule Medic 1958.

Mission Aviation Fellowship The presentation and slide show on Flying for Life proved to be a huge success. The talk delivered by Kevin Crook, a personable and friendly young man who was accompanied by his wife and children, made the talk both interesting and illuminating. The fellowship provides both physical and spiritual care to the most needy in extremely remote places. My wife Doreen agreed to receive the free quarterly magazine and purchased their book, 'Hope Has Wings' which tells the full story of M A F

Aeroplane Monthly do a feature called High Society in which they revue various societies and associations. Their previous visit to Duxford under that guise was in May 1959. We were asked to participate again so Allan McRae compiled the article and organised the photographs., - that was in May I am pleased to relate that it was included in their August edition, and it turned out to be a very nice full page spread, complete with our smart new Logo.

The **AirSpace Supporters** opening event took place at Duxford on June 30th. and the committee were invited to attend on your behalf. The show started at 1:30pm. with an air display by the legendary Spitfire. The unveiling ceremony of Skywall followed at 2:15pm. The welcoming address was given by Steven Woolford, AirSpace Director, followed by Mr. R. Ashton. Director of I.W.M. who described events from its inception to the present day, and thanked us all for our contributions, adding that without which, the funding shortfall for AirSpace. could not have been met. Mr Michael Marshall.CBE.DL.chairman of Marshall of Cambridge then went on to stress the links forged over the years with Duxford and Marshalls and then officially unveiled Skywall.

For our donation we received a certificate of thanks from the AirSpace and "Old Dux Association" listed on Skywall, where it will remain for posterity thanks to those members who donated. We should feel justly proud. A Brass Ensemble from the RAF Central Band added a nice flourish to the occasion.



George.Poole Larry Cross Bob Hope Jim Garlinge Allan McRae

Between events, the committee felt that a working lunch would be appropriate, and judging from the sausage, chips and beans on the table one would think that we were back in the NAAFI. However, from that, it was decided that as a result of several whacky applications to Allan McRae for associate membership, amendments to the constitution will now apply.

Non service personnel who worked at Duxford can be admitted as Associate Members.

Personnel who do not meet the criteria above but have attributes that support the aims of the Old Dux may apply for Associate Membership subject to final approval by the committee.

Wives /Partners of deceased members would be offered free Hon.Life Membership if they so wished.

Further discussion on vets bills, herbal tea, and fishcakes ensued - but you don't want to go there !



THE MERCENARY

By Pete Clay

When I left the RAF I took my Civil Aircraft Engineers Licences and went to work in Rhodesia for Air Rhodesia. However as I am sure you are all aware Mr Mugabe took over and the UK government sold us down the river and we became Zimbabwe. Like many of our friends my family and I stayed on in the hope that having seen the rot in all the other "independent African nations" our new leader just might have enough sense to not take their paths to self-destruction. As history has proven this was a forlorn hope to say the least. After a couple of years I and every other white aircraft engineer were thrown in jail as some aircraft were blown up down in Thornhill, the fact that we lived 500ks away in Salisbury made no difference. To cut a long story short this was the end of Zimbabwe as far as I was concerned and so I put out the word through the aircraft world in Africa that I was in the market for another job.

The outcome of this a year later was that I had a phone call from an old RAF mate who had his own aircraft business in Nairobi, I flew up to see him and he told me of a job he had the chance of getting the contract for in Mogadishu the capital of Somalia. The government of Somali had been given 11 Hunters by the United Arab Emirates along with 52 containers of spares but as they had no idea what to do with them they needed a team to operate them for them. We flew up to Mogadishu and had a look at what was involved and of all the jobs I have done in my life this was at first glance the most daunting. Anyway I went back down to Zimbabwe and a friend and I put together a team of 6 ex Rhodesian Air Force guys and our selves, we went up to Mogadishu for a month and got 4 of the aircraft flying for them. We took our own pilot with us of course to fly them. Through this success we were awarded the contract to operate these aircraft for the Somali government.

I was offered the post of Chief Engineer operating a squadron of Hunter FR76A fighter aircraft for the Somali Air Force; it was a bit different from being a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force I must say. Needless to say I took the post and held it for almost 3 years and that's how I became a mercenary and was well paid to fight someone else's war. The war we were fighting was against the Ethiopians over the Ogaden desert region and it was quite an active war.

I had a crew of 14 working for me and this included our nurse/mess manager and a store man. I was responsible to the Air Force General and the President for the day-to-day operation of the squadron aircraft, ground equipment, vehicles, water supplies and electrical power generation from our own generators. We had to keep 2 aircraft fully armed up on permanent standby at all times as we never knew when the Ethiopians were going to come over and do a strafing run over our airfield. This only actually happened three times and each time we were ready for them so they caused very little damage and only killed about 12 or 15 goats and a couple of Somalis in all. The airfield that we operated from was out in the bush 250 kilometres from the capital Mogadishu at a small town called Baidoa, to drive from Baidoa to Mogadishu used to take 5 to 6 hours in the dry but in the rainy season it could take as long as 12 to 14 hours. All the vehicles we operated whether Russian, French or English were 4 x 4 or 6 x 6 as there was nothing else that could stand up to the terrain for any length of time. Once the President came to pay us a visit and though he started the journey in his smart State Limousine he actually arrived in the back of a Toyota pick-up much to his chagrin and dismay, we all had very great difficulty in suppressing our laughter and mirth at such a pony and dog show.

This was a very interesting time in my life as I was living in a world that had ceased to exist at the turn of the century, Lawrence of Arabia would have felt right at home. Our accommodation was in the President's Summer Palace; this does conjure up magnificent pictures in one's imagination. However it was not as you are probably imagining, as some Italians with local labour built it and if you have ever been to Italy then you will be aware of the state of their building abilities. The Italians were of course the colonising power as Somalia was Italian Somali Land in the past. The main foreign language was Italian and at times doing anything was quite an achievement, as we had to communicate in Somali-Arabic-Italian-English.

Cont. over

THE MERCENARY

Fortunately the crew I had were all used to this sort of thing as I had put together a mixed bunch of Rhodesians, South Africans, Kenyans and ex-pat Brits. We all got along well together with just the odd bit of friction at times, as in any outfit. As I have tried to show, the job was anything but routine and anything could crop up out of the blue. To give a couple of examples; our own aircraft were Hunter fighters and we also had 6 Britten Normand Islanders Mk I transports, imagine our surprise when one day half of the anti-aircraft guns around the camp opened fire and into land comes a little SIAI-Marchetti SF 260 it comes to a stop and out pops an Air Force Colonel who wants to use the toilet. When the rains were over all the Somali Air Force guards were busy planting maize, suddenly there is the bang of an AK 47 going off, one of the guards was digging with the butt of his rifle and had a round up the spout but had not put the safety catch on so killed himself. Never a dull moment in Baidoa Somalia.

I could carry on for hours, in fact probably write a book about my time in Somalia, but you would get bored I am sure. The main reason for writing this piece was just to show that all mercenaries are not as portrayed in books and films such as The Wild Geese, some of them are like me, people you know and are sat next to at the Old Dux meetings. I would like to say in closing that apart from the many memories I have brought out of Somalia with me. the finest thing of all is my lovely Finnish wife Soili who has been on to me for ages to write this.

Into a Belfast pub comes Paddy Murphy,
looking like he'd just been run over by a train.
His arm is in a sling, his nose is broken,
his face is cut and bruised and he's walking
with a limp.

"What th.. happened to you?" asks Sean, the
bartender. " Jamie O'Connor and me had a
fight," says Paddy. ... "That little shite,
O'Conner," says Sean, "He couldn't do that to
you, he must have had something in his hand."
"That he did," says Paddy, "a shovel is what he
had, and a terrible lickin' he gave me with it."
"Well," says Sean, "you should have defended
yourself, didn't you have something in your
hand?"That I did," said Paddy.

"Mrs. O'Conner's left breast, and a thing of
beauty it was, but useless in a fight."

Submitted by Bob Scott

Makes you think.

Why do we press harder on a remote control
when we know the batteries are getting weak?
Why does someone believe you when you say
there are four billion stars in the sky , but check
when you say the paint is wet?
Why do they use sterilized needles for death by
lethal injection?
Why does Superman stop bullets with his chest,

but ducks when you throw a revolver at him?

Why do Kamikaze pilots wear helmets?

Whose idea was it to put an "S" in the word
"lisp"?

Why is it that no matter what colour bubble
bath you use the bubbles are always white?

Is there ever a day that mattresses are not on
sale?

Why is it that no plastic bag will open from the
end that you first try?

Why do women keep running over a string a
dozen times with their vacuum cleaner, then
reach down, pick it up, examine it, then put it
down to give the vacuum one more chance?

Ian Swindale has come up with some answers
to Pete Gibbard's query Re – funny phonetics

'Ay- for `orse; Beef or mutton; C for
swimming'; D for ential; E for brick;
F fervesence;Gee for a drink; H before beauty:
Ivor notion; J fa orange
Kaffir Abdullah; L for leather;
M fa sis; N fra dig; O for the rainbow;
Peas for dinner; Q for everything;
R for Askey; S ter Williams; T for aching;
U fer Me; V fer La France; (W..?) X for
breakfast; Y for husband; Z for breeze.

For Dot Dawes Terry Crowley, colleague and lifelong friend of the late Alan Dawes recently came across this item which had been among his papers for some considerable time
More observations Re - The Visit of Haile Selassie to R.A.F. Duxford in 1954.

My Recollections & Thoughts

by Alan Dawes.) Cpl/Elec 65Sqn/ASF

A display, including Meteor a/c servicing and its components was arranged in the ASF hangar. All sections were detailed to show their respective items.

The Electrical 'stall' was set up by Flt./ Sgt. Mc.Kenzie and myself and we both stood by the exhibits during the ASF visit. The items included a selection of 'downward ident light' coloured glasses which we endeavoured to show in the order of the Ethiopian flag colours. (we never did know if we got it right or not!)

We were also responsible for the 'turnover run' of a Derwent Engine and a start panel was manufactured to reproduce a normal start cycle (less ignition & fuel facilities of course) which ran for 30secs, with the efficient clunk of the Rotax relays operating, as the cycle went through the different stages.

On the morning visit (which appeared to be a dummy run and was without the Royal Presence) all went well and everyone seemed very impressed with the coloured ribbons streaming out of the jet pipe stub during the engine run.

However.....the afternoon visit 'proper' was a slightly different story.

On his walk through, Haile Selassie was invited by W/Cmr Balmain to press the start button on the panel. His Highness duly obliged and he pressed the push switch.

Now as I remember him, Haile Selassie was a tiny frightened looking man and he then jumped back startled, almost leaping into the arms of his Aide de Camp, as the Derwent slowly wound up, accompanied by the resounding 'clunk' of the stage relays. Also, because of his stature, the Emperor failed to see over the engine mounted on its stand, that his country's colours were streaming out of the back end, so really the whole thing was about as impressive as a lead balloon.

As the party departed through the hangar doors, Chiefy McKenzie and myself turned and looked at each other, he grinned as only a Scotsman can and I began to laugh uncontrollably.

Thank goodness we were now out of sight and earshot, or we could have ended up in the Tower of London.

The other thing that comes to mind of the visit was told to our group by Sqn/Ldr Johns (Tech Adj.) whilst waiting for the party to arrive at the hangar for the afternoon inspection.

Lunch had been taken in the Officers Mess and etiquette had been maintained up to fine mess standards, as you would expect for a V.I.P. visit. For dessert, apricot halves were served, and as Haile Selassie tackled his apricots with fork & spoon, one suddenly got beyond his control, shot off his dish and flew across the table. Immediately he was surrounded by his closest diners who were all trying to recover it. It was also noticed that one of his party was also trying, without success, to copy what had happened to the unfortunate Emperor and so illustrate that it was the 'done thing' with apricots back in Addis Ababa.

As a Post Script to the visit, it was decided to keep the engine and starting circuit as an added attraction on a subsequent B of B open day to the public, and with a collection box suitably placed, raised money for the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund.

P.P.S. The electrical starter motor is not designed for sustained running and consequently burnt out easily. It turned out to be a popular attraction and at least three starter motors were changed that afternoon - a good job that it wasn't in today's cost effective climate or questions would have been raised in the house.!

Signed ... 'Amen'

Alan Dawes

Annual Dinner at the Heydon Grange Golf & Country Club

More pictures can be seen on the Website



L to R Ian Swindale, Greta Percival, Eric Percival Peter Clay

L to R Mrs Gowling, Nigel Pickersgill, Veronica Pickersgill
Jean Rogers, Peter Rogers



Recently spotted by Anthony 'Tod' Slaughter in the CAMBRIDGE EVENING NEWS
In a column entitled "Looking Back" From the news of May 1957.

When the last train from London arrived at Whittlesford airmen rushed out of the station to get on to a Premier Travel bus. The top and bottom decks rapidly filled up. The people were standing up the stairs and on the platform. When it was stopped by the police there were 76 men and one woman on board.

The conductor said that he hadn't wanted to leave them behind at that time of night..... The company, driver and conductor were fined £1.Anyone remember this ?Please get in touch.(with L.C.)

Subject: Inner peace

I am passing this on to you because it definitely worked for me and we all could use more calm in our lives. By following the simple advice heard on a Medical TV show, I have finally found inner peace.

A Doctor proclaimed the way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you have started.

So I looked round my house to see things I started and hadn't finished, and before leaving the house this morning, I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of Chardonnay, a bottle of Baileys, a bottle of Kehuha, a packet of Pringles, the remainder of a bottle of Prozac and Valium the rest of the cheesecake, and a box of chocolates. !.....You have no idea how good I feel !.

Ian Swindale

*Go pin your medals on; be proud they're yours to wear,
pull your shoulders back a bit and let the youngsters stare.*

They are yours by right of war. By service to the crown.

They are symbols that you did not let your side down.

Wear them proudly on your chest And let all who will deride.

They are yours by right of war, So carry them with pride. Submitted by Roy Wickes