



NEWSLETTER



Genius Loc

September 2008

Compiled by Larry Cross

www.olddux.org

Dear Members, I trust that you are all as well as you can be, making the best of things with regard to both the current climate and the political one, the way our generation always seem to do. We could win Gold for Britain in that regard! And didn't our athletes do well in Beijing, giving the whole nation something to cheer about at last!

Looking ahead to our meeting on Sunday

12th. October, I refer to S.R.O's wot states:

All members attending must inform Bob Hope of their car Reg.No. and occupants therein. Contact No. 01554 890520 A.S.A.P. please. The I.W.M. demand this information on behalf of 'Elf & Safety'... the comic group that wields all the power but lack the nous!

The meeting will commence at 13.00hrs in the AeroSpace hangar - Room 3.

Treasurer George Poole would prefer to be contacted by e/m on georgeathome@talktalk.net as an easier and more direct way of dealing with subscription queries. Non Surfers Tel.No. 01869243887

Post Card Appeal At the May meeting Jenny McRae made an appeal for old postcards of all kinds in support of Mission Aviation Fellowship who operate in remote parts of the world, Jenny will pass them on to Kevin Crook who explained that they rely on funding from all sources and a small part from recycling. So please have a rummage through your drawers and old chocolate boxes then send them to Jenny at 23, Gallery Close, Southfields, Northants NN3 5NT.. better still bring them along to the meeting.

There are moves afoot regarding how to commemorate the centenary of Louis Bleriot's historic flight across the English Channel and 65Sqn's involvement 50 yrs ago (next year) in winning the Daily Mail's London to Paris air race for the R.A.F. Steve Woolford is hoping to pop in to the meeting on behalf of the I.W.M. We do of course have members who were actually involved and feel it could be another great opportunity for the I.W.M and the Old Dux to further it's cause re- publicity & membership.

Feedback – Essex Floods.(Spring Newsletter)

Bill Lancaster, reminded me that he was one of my companions on that trip to Bradwell Bay and had only good things to say about the food we received, so it must have been good. Mind you, Bill could eat for England...and still can! Babs Chapman, or Goldsmith as she was then, (Inst.64 Sqn) writes,"A few of us airwomen went to a refuge centre somewhere around Cambridge to sort out clothes for the flood victims and there something happened that will always stand out in my mind

The Queen mother was visiting the centre that day and there were three of us girls working together when one pointed out that the Queen mother was approaching the aisle we were about to go down, we rushed to the next one but she had changed her direction and started up the one we were in. We had set off running and didn't see her until the last minute, nearly knocking her over. She was very good about it and stopped to chat. She was so tiny, I was only 5ft 2in, but could look down on her, I will never forget that incident.

More Flooding, .. but at Duxford during the September Airshow. Jim Garlinge, attempting to enter hangar 4 to set up the display, found himself locked out until the water could be dispersed. Unfortunately the display items which had been previously placed on the floor got a soaking, so a complete revamp will be now be necessary before the season starts next year.

To that end we would be grateful for items/ prints of aircraft etc. relevant to our history that can be used in the display.

Steve Sanders writes: Further to 'Mobile Phones' in the June edition. "You may like to know that if you dial: 2,4,6,8 from the mobile, hold this near a speaker when music is playing, it will listen to the music then ring off. About 15 seconds later, you will receive a message giving you the title of the music being played! Try it!

Operation Grapple

One of our more recent members Chris Baughan served at Duxford in 1952 - 53 as a Ground Photographer AC2. He has stayed in touch and has recently sent me this interesting insight as to what happened to him after demobilisation, unfortunately he now relies on a constant supply of oxygen for his very existence.

"After leaving the RAF my career took me up in the air in an array of airplanes, including the Hunter with the Red Arrows, the Valiant (Christmas Island) and Concorde (on a Press flight before going into service). I was picked for Operation Grapple by the firm I was doing so much work for, Marcus Cooper Limited (Ex RAF he had excellent contacts with the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Information)

He knew I had been filming for ACE Films Ltd on the building of Dounreay and Calder Hall, also at most of the AWRE establishments. (Atomic Weapons Research Establishment).

So I was known, and the quality of my work was known."

160 Wing R.A.F. c/o British Forces Post Office 170. Wednesday June 19th 1957

Dear Mother and Dad,

I am sitting on the deck of HMS NARVIK. The time is three o'clock in the afternoon, the day that Great Britain exploded, what I would guess, was the largest H-Bomb the world has known. - Previous explosions have been reported as being the largest by the press, but I'd say that today's really was the largest.

I was on HMS WARRIOR for the first, but because of my position while filming I did not see anything but the flash until three minutes after the burst. I then saw the cloud already in that familiar mushroom shape, but because I had work to do I saw it only through the viewfinder of the camera. The blast we felt from that explosion was negligible, and the 'bang' to our ears was nothing more than a 'crump'. The stem of that cloud was dispersed by the wind fairly quickly.

The second H-Bomb which was claimed in the press to be the largest ever, I did not see, nor hear. We were on Christmas Island. - From the photographs I saw of the second bomb (which was not released to the press), I could see it was a good deal larger than the first.

The third and last in the series, was exploded today, and this I saw in its entirety for we now have only one camera and Leo operated it.

On each ship in the active area the whole ship's company hear the 'count down' From this point I think you would get a clearer picture if I recounted from a few seconds before the burst.

I, with Harvey Harrison and Leo Waller, are positioned on a high boat deck above the main deck of the ship looking straight ahead we see the bow of the ship, and just below us the ship's company in anti-flash protective clothing, who are assembling on the deck to observe the burst. The Valiant with its escort, has already made two 'dummy' runs, and from their vapour trails in the sky we see the rough position of the intended burst, just to our right.

The vapour trails suddenly swerve to the left as the airplane releases the weapon and makes its evasive maneuver, which we have seen happen on each 'dummy' run. The burst itself will take place well in our view.

The picture we intend to take begins seven seconds before the burst, after which we turn from the ship's company to see the cloud itself, see the cloud develop into that well known mushroom.

My part in this task is to crouch by the camera already set upon the ship's company directly in front of us, wait until I hear the burst is taking place in seven seconds, then switch on the camera. Seven seconds later the burst will take place and a further ten seconds will elapse before anyone can turn round and see the sight. At this point the ship's company will begin to turn, and at this point Leo will come from behind the bulkhead which protects him from the direct glare, and take over control of the camera. He will follow their movement round and turn skyward, there to see whatever sight meets his lens. Therefore my job is a simple one.

After the last 'dummy' run I watched the path of the Valiant from their vapour trails."

Chris keeps up with events via the internet and although the spot where he lives has no 'mobile' reception he has bought a Nokia N95 and equipped it with 8 GB of memory (I can do 'movie' as well as stills) - the results have been astounding with one of his dogs "Glen" in particular. "I have been able to enlarge it to A4 and it is brilliant. A most suitable bit of kit which fits my physical attributes!

Were any of our members there too? - please write in and let me know. L.C.



As there will be many members who do not have access to the internet and have not seen the Summer edition of Legion Magazine I publish here their spread celebrating the 90th anniversary of the RAF and of RAF Duxford as it appeared.

90 GLORIOUS YEARS

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

WHAT MAKES VETERANS KEEP IN TOUCH AFTER HALF A CENTURY OR MORE ?
WELL WITH THE RAF AND ITS BASE AT DUXFORD BOTH CELEBRATING
90 GLORIOUS YEARS IN 2008 STEVE SMETHURST MET UP WITH SOME OF THE OLD DUX
TO FIND OUT. PORTRAITS BY BRIAN HARRIS

You might have your family, your neighbours or your old work mates to meet up with, or a British Legion bar where you can enjoy a pint and a bit of banter with the boys who used to be with the other Services - but, sometimes, it's just nice to meet up with the people who are the same age as you, and who've been through the same experiences. That's what the founders of the Old Dux Association thought. Founded in 1995, the Association meets twice a year in May and October at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) at Duxford, near Cambridge. All ranks and trades are welcome. Its aim is a simple one - to reunite old friends who have lost touch over the years.

So, to mark the 90th anniversary of the RAF, and also the 90th anniversary of RAF Duxford, in 2008, Legion magazine invited some of its members to the Battle of Britain hanger at the Cambridgeshire Museum. The six veterans we gathered served at Duxford in the 1950s - the time of the cold war, the Berlin Airlift, the Suez Crisis and the Korean War. It was a time when World War II was still fresh in people's minds and there were still shortages and there was little money to go around.

Les Millgate, formerly of 64 Squadron, was stationed at Duxford in two stints between 1952 and 1958, where he flew Meteor jet fighters. He learned about the organisation through a driver for his local Volvo garage. "Once I came along to a meeting," he recalls, "there were so many people I hadn't seen for probably 40 years."

Doreen Cross, one of several WRAFs in the Old Dux, tells a similar tale. She recalls the first time she and her husband Larry (a former engine mechanic) attended a meeting. "We turned up at the Red Lion pub, where they'd all stayed the previous night. I knew the first four people I saw at the breakfast table when we walked in. After four decades, that's quite emotional.

One of the co-founders of the Dux is Jim Garlinge. The former engine fitter had lost touch with one of his best friends from the 50s, 'Bob' Hope, so when he heard from him after 25 years, they got to wondering what had happened to their other old mates. Jim takes up the story... "Bob asked me about old so and so, and then another old mate and another. Then he got talking about other associations people had set up and looked to recruit members. He asked me if I was keen - and I was. We thought we'd have a go. The Old Dux now have more than 300 members. And they're still attracting new blood. Jim recalls that even last year, when manning a stand last May in Duxford's Battle of Britain hanger, a man came up to him. "I just looked at him and said: 'Tom Jones'. He looked at me and went 'Jim Garlinge'. I hadn't seen him since 1959. But he'd heard about the organisation, so thought he'd come along." "We make a lot of effort to find people," recalls Jim. "Bit it has been a long hard struggle at times, you could go weeks and months without finding anyone and then you'd pick up a scent of someone." Building up the membership took adverts in Legion, airforce magazines, on radio programmes and on Ceefax. Another founder member, Don Chappel, a former airframe mechanic, even scoured electoral roles. Don says it's easy to explain why the Dux is so important to its members: "It's the camaraderie and the nostalgia. All the people are from my generation. When you leave these camp gates, you go to mix with all generations.



Les Millgate

There's a different balance out there - what's good for one isn't necessarily good for another. I was born in 1935 and there's been a lot of changes since then in terms of what's acceptable what's not. The reason I look forward to these occasions is because everyone speaks my language."

You remember the good times

The allure for the Old Dux has been aided by the fact that Duxford seems to have been a particularly happy station during the 1950s – the period the bulk of members are drawn from. Doreen's husband Larry concedes that it helps that "as time goes by, you only remember the good times." But even so, they were good times. "I was drafted straight here from trade training and didn't realise what a good station it was until other people would come in and tell you. Then you'd realise how special it was." He says that a lot was down to the attitude of the officers who ran the place - mostly Battle of Britain pilots and had a lot of war experience. "They knew there was more to service life than being bulled up to the eyeballs and marching - and absolutely strict discipline - they realised it wasn't necessary." Les agrees: "This was a happy station. I don't think I've ever heard anyone say anything else about Duxford - and it wasn't always to do with the station commander. I can remember one in particular that I didn't like, and I don't think anyone else did either, but it was still a very happy station."

Among the memories these particular veterans share are the afternoons in Bet's Café, sports days on Wednesday afternoons, drinks in the Naafi and card schools in the billet. On rare occasions there might also be the odd dance arranged by the WRAFs.

"You could go into the Naafi, and never having spoken to someone before, could sit down next to them and strike up a conversation. It was a really friendly atmosphere all the time. Never any back-biting or trouble," says Doreen.



"You'd hear from other people they weren't happy at other stations, but they all liked it here. It was a completely relaxed atmosphere - all the time." "You have to remember that TV was still in its infancy," says Jim. "So we had the radio. We used to follow traditional jazz and radio programmes like the Goon Show. If anyone had similar interests, you'd naturally stick together and go around with each other."

Then there were the big events that all the veterans remember, like the visits by Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie or the Yugoslav leader Josip Tito. There were exchange visits with American servicemen – all driving expensive cars and looking a million dollars, to the extent that few British RAF men could distinguish who to salute and who not to. In the end, they invariably saluted everyone American. They all remember too the exercises the squadrons used to go on too, such as Fabulous, which meant dawn til dusk flying. Some of the crews were also seconded to the Essex floods in 1953, when they spent several nights bunking down in church halls while they filled sandbags to stop the encroaching tides. Perhaps these things stick in the mind because there was no war for Duxford crews to display their bravery. The Korean War was ruled out for them when RAF leaders saw how the Australians fared in their Meteor 8s (the planes at Duxford at the time) against the North Korean Mig fighters. "They were shot out of the sky," says Les who says that they all volunteered to a man to serve there despite the poor odds of surviving. "The Aussies ended up using Meteors as ground-attack aircraft, rather than fighters," he recalls.

There were other dangers too. "I'd only been here a matter of weeks when a young RAF corporal was killed on his motorbike," says Doreen. "That was my first service funeral. We got dressed up in all our best blues. All lined up outside - I found that very sad. There were also two RAF police corporals drowned in the river. I had to get in

touch with the families - that kind of job always seemed to fall to me." Another death occurred when there was an accident in a hangar. "If you look closely, you can still see a black cross painted on the ground to mark the tragedy as a member of ground crew, having gone up, came down. They could be damned dangerous things if they hadn't been made safe," remembers Les. Mention of rivalries brings the Dux out of their brief melancholy. "There was a fierce rivalry between the two squadrons - 64 and 65. Not that we really had any problems with the other squadron. Although we never used to mix, even in the Naafi. We used to nod to acquaintances. We were kept separate, not sure whether by accident or design," says Larry.

There's a rivalry even today. When they meet up there's always a lot of 'Mickey-taking'. New members are asked by chairman 'Bob' to stand up and introduce themselves - boos and cheers will invariably come in equal measure. Another rivalry was between air crew and ground crew, "for their bizarre ways of going on. All their high-jinks..." says engine fitter Jim. "We were about as low as you could get in the Air Force - being in the technical trades. We used to call them all sorts of names. But at the same time, you had to keep in mind that they were the people who would have to do it if the time came. And some of them did..." Jim also highlights an often overlooked aspect of being in the technical trades - the stress of knowing that if an engine failed after you'd worked on it, a pilot could lose his life.

"You had to go out to see the pilot off," recalls air-frame mechanic Don. "He'd say: 'Have you done all your checks, airman?' Then he'd shake all the ailerons and look at the undercarriage. As he got in, you'd go up the steps and strap him in. You had to stay on the airfield until he came back. There'd be you, an engine mechanic and an instrument mechanic. You'd hear the engines roar off and 25 minutes later, he'd come back. If it over-ran you'd be concerned, but invariably it was fine."

Thousands of aircraft

The veterans of Duxford say they try to keep up to date with developments in the RAF as best they can. "I keep up with the hardware," says Jim. "There are much fewer aircraft now... the Hercules, the new Euro Fighter, the typhoon and the tornado. Back in the 50s there were thousands of aircraft and hundreds of bases scattered around."



Former Duxford navigator Wilf Hodgkinson, whose twin brother Val was station adjutant, says that one good thing now is that there is a better understanding between the services than there was in his time. "After I left Duxford, I was staff officer in Gibraltar - the only RAF staff officer among all the Navy officers. But I understood their job, they understood ours. In my early years in the RAF the other services were regarded, by and large, as the enemy. "There was very little interservice co-operation. I think it changed with the Falklands, it was a turning point in the Services. The forces were getting thin, even by that stage and it wouldn't have worked without more co-operation, and I think it's improved even more since then." To emphasise his point of interservice friendship, he says: "You must mention that I'm a member of the Kimbolton British Legion. Otherwise I'll be in all sorts of bother."

However, while it might seem that all is rosy in the Old Dux garden - there is a big shadow hanging over them. "Sadly, we're now getting into attrition rates. Recruitment can't keep up with the people dying. You've got to understand that when our generation passes on there won't be anyone to pick it up. We lost 10 members last year who died," says Jim. "And we only recruited five new ones. Sometimes, you get members you don't know by sight, and sometimes you don't even know them by name. But they were still there at the relevant period, and that's what matters. The people we know are from a band of time. The pilots from the war are almost all gone now. We're realistic about it - within a few years, there won't be any Association. We'll all be gone. There's no replacing us. We've made arrangements with the people at Duxford, they're going to take all our assets, such as they are, photographs and memorabilia, and hopefully it will become part of the history of the Royal Air Force." For the foreseeable future though, the members of the Old Dux intend to live life to the full. Les acts as an official Duxford guide, Doreen has had books published, Larry runs the Old Dux website and newsletter while others help track down new members or organise social events. Other Old Dux members have been interviewed for the museum archives. "My wife says to me that they were the happiest days of my life," says Les. "And I think she's right. I'd have paid the RAF - what a life! There was good cheap beer in the mess too!"

Don't worry it's not contagious

A man goes to the doctors feeling a bit off colour. His GP checks him over and says, "Sorry, ...it's bad news I'm afraid you have Yellow24, a really nasty virus. It's called Yellow24 because it turns your blood yellow and you usually only have days to live. There's no known cure so just go home and enjoy the time you have left."



He staggers home to his wife and breaks the news. Distraught, but not too distraught! she asks him to go to the bingo with her that evening as he's never been with her before. They arrive at the bingo and with his first card he gets four corners and wins £35. Then, with the same card, he gets a line and wins £320. He then gets the full house and wins £1000. The National Grid comes up and he wins that too getting £380,000 !

The bingo caller gets him up on stage and says, "Man, I've been here 20 years and I've never seen anyone win four corners, a line, the full house and the national grid on the same card. You must be the luckiest man on Earth!" "Lucky?" he screamed. "Lucky?... I'll have you know I've got Yellow24."

"Christchurch," says the bingo caller. "You've won the bloody raffle as well!!

Don't be too afraid of getting old, it has its advantages.



75 year old, Roger married Jenny, a lovely 35 year old.

Jenny decides that after their wedding she and Roger should have separate bedrooms, because she is concerned that her new but aged husband may overexert himself if they spend the entire night together. After the wedding festivities Jenny prepares herself for bed and the expected knock' on the door. Sure enough the knock comes, the door opens and there is Roger, her 75 year old groom, ready for action.

All goes well, Roger takes leave of his bride, and she prepares to go to sleep. After a few minutes, Jenny hears another knock on her bedroom door, and it's Roger. Again he is ready for more 'action'. Somewhat surprised, Jenny consents and when the newly weds are done, Roger kisses his bride, bids her a fond good night and leaves.

She is set to go to sleep again, but, you guessed it - Roger is back again, rapping on the door, and is as fresh as a 25-year-old, ready for more 'action'. Once more they enjoy each other, but as Roger gets set to leave his young bride says to him, 'I am really impressed that at your age you can perform so well and so often. I have been with guys less than a third of your age who were only good for once'.

Roger, somewhat embarrassed, turns to Jenny and says: 'You mean I've been here already?'