

NEWSLETTER

October 2010

www.olddux.org

Compiled by Larry Cross



Dear Members,

As you all will have read in the August publication, the meeting planned for the 26th was unavoidably cancelled. We were therefore denied our usual visit to the airfield but the fact that the weather was abysmal to say the least, helped to ease the disappointment. However, not to be outdone I attended the last Airshow of the season on the 10th October and joined Jim Garlinge, Les Millgate and John Blake on the Recruitment Stand in hangar 4. The day was off to a great start with clear blue skies and sunshine welcoming the thousands of families arriving to enjoy the show. The band of the Parachute Regiment playing some stirring stuff added a festal air prior to the commencement of flying.

We didn't recruit any new members on the day but we were visited by Chris Cousins from Chelmsford and Dixie Lee (now an ex member)

The Annual Dinner on September 25th, marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, was attended by 56 guests and was deemed by all to have been a huge success.

Guests were greeted by Anne, Les and Ann Brinkley handing out replica Ration Books containing the menu and 'Postings' to their table! Each table was named after a fighter station of 11 Group and beautifully laid out with placemats depicting the aircraft that flew from them. The table centres contained the RAF Ensign, Union Jack and small banner denoting the RAF station.



A warm welcome was also given to a very brave lady who attended the dinner, Kate Poole and who sent the following message a few days afterwards.

I should like to say a big thank you to all the Old Dux who sent words and cards of sympathy to me and my family when George died.

There were many friends from both the Old Dux and old R.A.F. friends who we have stayed in touch with over the years, who came to Oxford for his funeral. It was more than good to see them. George would have been proud.

Many thanks from,

Kate Poole and family.



George's funeral took place at Oxford Crematorium on 28th September. The O.D.A. was represented by Allan & Jennie McRae, Anne & Les Gange, Stan Dell, Pat & Brian Ashcroft and Bob & Bobbie Hope.

Sunday Buffet

There were 32 guests present for the Buffet Lunch on Sunday at the Red Lion and Sophie did us proud with a nicely balanced menu of which there was plenty of everything! Sophie even accommodated Martine and Gordon Kennard when it was discovered that they are both vegan. It was gratifying to see that they had made the effort to attend whilst over here from Greece visiting family and friends. Bob later received a note from John & Lucy Roger, "Dear Bob; just a short note to express our thoughts on what was a tremendous weekend. Please pass on our thanks to the committee especially Anne & Allan. The dinner setting was superb. We both thought Sunday's buffet ended up being very successful with everyone mixing with everyone. It was a job well done Thank you."



During the evening Anne was presented with Wine & Roses in recognition of the hard work and creativeness that made the dinner such a success.

Our grateful thanks must also go to Anne's husband Les, Ann Brinkley and Jennie McRae for handling the raffle so well and Allan McRae for his help with the menu.

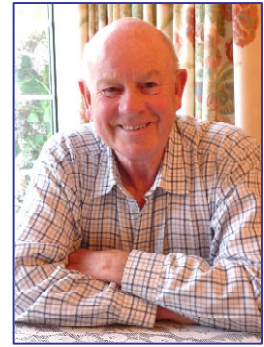
A warm welcome was given to Malcolm Niblett over from Canada visiting relatives in London.

I spoke to Malcolm on Skype a few days later and quote, "Back home safe and sound, and brim full of memories. I had a great time. The dinner, the company, the recall of long forgotten events: at times embarrassing - at times hilarious!! all made for a wonderful evening and weekend. The photo looks so professional - but oh! the ravages of time!!"

The committee are pleased to announce that Stan Dell will be taking on the task as Association Treasurer w.e. from 1st November. Stan joined us in 2006.

Over to you StanDuring my time at Duxford 1958 - 61 I served as a General Mech on 65Sqn. I visited Duxford for several years without being aware of the Old Dux Association. I had been a member of Friends of Duxford but it was not what I wanted, all very pleasant but none of the old camaraderie. Meeting and talking with Jim Garlinge told me that I had found home again with the Old Dux Association.

It would be too generous on my behalf to say that I volunteered or offered my services, it was only when our secretary removed her foot from my throat that I realised "how much I wanted the job!" Please be gentle with me by paying up on time, and I will help you all by asking Larry to publish a voucher to accompany your payment each spring. I look forward to putting back some of what the ODA has given me and to give the association the same high standard of service that George and Kate Poole did for so many years. Stan.



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A New Monument and memorial garden honouring the Royal Anglian Regiment and East Anglian Regiments has been opened by the I.W.M. Duxford. It is located behind and to the right of the American Hangar. A service will be held there on Remembrance Sunday 14th. November. Admission to the Airfield will be completely free on that day.

EJECTION SEAT INCIDENT (June Edition)

In discussion with Norman Buss about the incident he told me, "At that time I was a Cpl A/F Fitter on 65 Sqn. and remember the incident well." He went on to explain that the drogue was situated on the port side of the aircraft, yet all the damage was to the stbd side of the fuselage and engine nacelle, caused by the metal end of the drogue cable thrashing about in the slipstream. The hood was shattered but still in place and when eventually the seat was removed a 2BA spanner was found on the floor of the cockpit which had prevented the seat from bottoming to display the red safety marker, which would have indicated that the seat was locked in place. The rigger responsible was fortunate in as much as the Technical Officer i/c at that time was Sqn/L Richard Johns and in his view there was certain considerations to be made. The loophole was that the rigger's trade officially was 'Composite' not Metal or Flying Boats and technically mis-employed, therefore escaping any repercussions. The pilot, a S.N.C.O. with obvious nerves of steel did a brilliant job bringing the Meteor back to base, being very much aware that the seat was 'live' and could have fired at any time.

Peter would like to hear from anyone who remembers the incident, especially if they can name the pilot.

Tel.No. 01908 39315

L.C.

Appeal

Bob was recently asked by Peter Murton who is Steve Woolford's deputy, regarding acquisitions into the local Duxford archive, for the loan of a negative taken by Jim Garlinge. The resulting print (below) shows all the detail that was on the negative as opposed to the original print. i.e.

64 Sqn original hangar and Bob would be pleased to hear from anyone who can identify the building to the left and perhaps furnish any details. Bob sees this as an opportunity to have any B&W or Colour negatives that might be hiding and forgotten in albums etc. printed up and left to posterity.

Peter went on to say, "I'm pleased to learn that your photo collection is earmarked to pass to us at some future date, to ensure its long-term preservation. In case Steve hasn't made this clear, the collection will actually go to the main Photo Archive, based at the original IWM London but we will keep copies on site for working ref. & potential display. Indeed, we might wish to use some of the Assoc. photo's for display in the 'Historic Duxford' exhibition now being planned & prepared for the Watch Office. This is a big project because we're going to use the whole building for displays of the usual mix of physical items, illustrated graphics & a-v presentations. Consequently, Steve will almost certainly ask to arrange a specific review & selection session, although that will probably be next year rather than this year.



While the C-5 was turning over its engines, a female crewman gave the G.I.'s on board the usual information regarding seat belts, emergency exits, etc. Finally, she said, 'Now sit back and enjoy your trip while your captain, Judith Campbell, and crew take you safely to Afghanistan'. An old M/Sgt. sitting in the eighth row thought to himself.....'Did I hear her right? Is the captain a woman?'

When the attendant came by he said 'Did I understand you right? Is the captain a woman?'

'Correct!' said the attendant, 'this entire crew is female.' 'My God,' he said, 'I wish I had two double scotch and sodas I don't know what to think with only women up there in the cockpit.'

'That's another thing, Sergeant,' said the crew member, 'We No Longer Call It The Cockpit'

'It's The Box Office.'

(submitted by Ron Stern)

REMINISCENCES OF AN RAF NATIONAL SERVICEMAN —
SAC 2551798 HARRY ATKINSON
RAF DUXFORD 1952 AND 1953

I was invited for National Service in December 1951 just as I became 18 years of age. I chose the RAF because my father, Aircraftman 1222084, had served during World War II claiming to have been an engine fitter on Horsa Gliders, a trade category which we kids could never understand. Perhaps that was my first introduction to RAF humour. Also my mother said the Army uniform would not match my blue eyes, obviously the deciding factor in my choice!

I received the call-up papers in January 1952 for a joining date on 20 February, but as the papers appeared to be in the name of King George VI, who died on 6 February 1952, I decided that unless Queen Elizabeth sent a further letter, I need not turn up as requested. I was soon advised that this ploy would not work.

I duly arrived at RAF Padgate and learned how to wear ill-fitting uniform, stamp my boot brushes with my service number, to catch those cubes of margarine in a large water container and to wash my mug and irons in a bath of dirty water used by everyone else on leaving the mess hall. (I still use the brushes). After two weeks of induction we were all transported by rail and 3-tonners to RAF Hednesford which in early March was bleak to say the least. Six weeks of square bashing was quite an experience for 18 year olds, many of whom had never left the comfort of home before. Mixing with men of similar age, and some older, from all areas of the UK and of varied backgrounds, trades and classes, was an excellent experience. It was invaluable for character building, learning about discipline, self-reliance and self-preservation. The square bashing period and, later, the whole RAF experience, proved to be a vital part of future personal strength, although few of us recognized it at the time and certainly not me. Oh that such experience could be reintroduced nowadays — in whatever form — to solve the problems of youth.

During the square bashing period we were asked to choose a trade within the RAF and, like many others, I chose aircrew, air traffic control, armourer, MT mechanic etc. and was told that I would be a Clerk Progress and would be sent to RAF Credenhill at Hereford for Trade Training. Having worked in my father's grocers business this was obvious RAF logic and I duly completed the Hereford course becoming a wonderful two fingers typist (one on each hand). This has, however, proved useful throughout my subsequent working life.

A familiar sequence of circumstances then followed at Hereford when I was invited to elect a place to serve for the main portion of my National Service. I chose Rhodesia, Hong Kong and Canada — all then available — and was told that I would be posted to Cambridge to RAF Duxford, a place I had never heard of at that time. More RAF logic. I started with disappointment but this turned into pleasure and satisfaction even to this day when I can visit the site, now the Imperial War Museum, and relive memories, unlike many ex-RAF who have found their former stations closed down and long gone.

So I arrived at RAF Duxford in May 1952 and was allocated work in Technical Wing in the Tech. Library. So much for being a Clerk Progress. I worked with Corporal BUXTON, SAC Norman BUSS and AC Denis JENNINGS from Hackney Wick. The job involved making amendments to Technical Books, but we had a grandstand view of the airfield and all flying activities. There were many visiting aircraft to Duxford in those days. The small office which housed the Tech. Library is still there at the end of Tech. Wing Block and is probably still the nearest building to the existing Flying Control Tower. S/Leader JOHNS was second in command of Tech. Wing and when I managed to get a Cup Final ticket Blackpool V. Bolton on 2 May 1953 he insisted on seeing the ticket before allowing a pass to leave camp. I still have the ticket and the pass, signed by the Technical Adjutant Pilot Officer Niblett, authorising me to leave at 0915 hours on 2 May. Some of my work involved collecting flying hours put in by the squadrons (64 and 65, of course) from the Flying Control Tower and delivering details to the workshops and to Station Headquarters. Why, I do not know, although probably to make me feel important, it was said that it was necessary to record the times of each part of each aircraft. That baffled me but I thought the F700 and other records would have sufficed.

For those duties I acquired a rather large bike with a wooden box on the back. Only the Tech. Wing could come up with something so grand and spectacular. I fell off the bike once finished up in Sick Bay with a twisted neck. That skive didn't last long. What happened to the top-secret records from the bike box, I wondered? Other highlights of our working day involved the arrival of the NAAFI van and the purchase of one of those pyramids of cake covered in a red sticky jam covered with coconut. What bliss! Equally enjoyable at NAAFI time was getting a close up view to "big Sally" who I admired always from afar as a starry-eyed 18 yr old.

On 18 March 1953 we had a visit to the station of Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia which was marred by the collision of two of our Meteor 8s over the far right of the airfield, which resulted in the deaths of two aircrew and the loss of the aircraft. I remember some of us being allocated to picket duties guarding the crash site pending an enquiry.

This was a terribly sad event which I witnessed and it had an impact on all of us

. I remember Marshal Tito watching the display from the balcony of the Flying Control Tower and when the collision took place and the aircraft went down he held a long and very exaggerated salute in honour of the two pilots. There were two very distinct clouds of black smoke to be seen.

Early in May 1953 Flt/Lt. Dow came to the Tech library to borrow a technical book and we heard that he had the book with him when he and his aircraft were lost.

Having dealt with him personally this hit me hard. I notice that he is listed on the roll of honour for 15 May together with the loss of S/L Bourne

In April 1953 I went with P/O Niblett to 11 Group HQ at Hillingdon — something to do with Technical Books — but the thing which sticks in my mind is that he travelled first class on the train and I travelled third class. The great leveller came when we had to travel together on the London Underground. It all sounds ridiculous now. I recall that the W/Co (Tech) wanted a written report on our day out, but can't remember any detail other than his name might have been BALMAIN.

I have a note that on 22 April 1953 we received a new addition to 65 Squadron — a new Meteor Mk8 WK 970 — and was present when it was checked on arrival, but I don't know why.

Continued over.....

We also had at least one Mosquito aircraft, which seemed to be used for meteorological flights prior to squadron flying and we had a Tiger Moth! used by pilots for fun on non-flying days. I remember seeing it tip up on its nose after a rather clumsy landing on grass and there was a big flap on to get it repaired before the Wing Commander (Flying) found out. I think he was Wing Commander Wallace, an ex-Battle of Britain pilot who held many decorations and looked very impressive on ceremonial occasions. He was quite a tall man with a long loping stride.

I recall that in January 1953 Group Captain BATESON handed over to Group Captain RANKIN as the CO at RAF Duxford. I think that Warrant Officer FIELD was one of the senior staff in the Technical Wing.

How many remember doing the week-long fire picquet duties on the Station? This involved living in the fire picquet billet for a week and working 2 hours on and 2 hours off through the night. A skill I learned was how to fry an egg on a shovel over a coke brazier using a dab of margarine and transferring the delightful result on to thick slices of cookhouse bread (all provided).

A week I will never forget was in February 1953 when the east coast suffered the worst flooding in years and many of us were sent from RAF Duxford to help. I spent a week filling and placing sandbags as part of the sea defences at Bradwell - on - Sea and regard it as one of the hardest weeks spent in any part of my life. We camped out in a school hall — no shaving or washing and worked all daylight hours, plus some under floodlights. I remember a visit from a then Member of Parliament from a constituency in Essex! who is long deceased! who had a certain reputation and was on the look-out for a nice young airman to comfort him in his obvious distress. Imagine the queues to get a bath when we all returned to Duxford in those nice comfortable 3-ton trucks!

Who will ever forget arriving at Whittlesford Station on the train from Liverpool Street at 4.45 am and then walking back to camp for an hour in bed before wakey-wakey, a working day and a Monday bull night to follow? Was the 48-hour pass worth it? The cry of "Whittlesford, Whittlesford" from the station porter rings in my ears now after all this time in the early days at Duxford I was being paid on £1.4s.0d per week net and surprisingly we still managed to get into Cambridge at weekends, having a meal in the market square at an underground café and visiting the Regal Cinema in the evening, returning on the camp bus. It didn't leave much for the rest of the week or to save for the long weekends each month. We played a lot of cards in the billets, however, for fairly small stakes of course, usually three card brag. We also seemed to spend a bit of time at the Brewery Tap public house at Whittlesford.

Some of the names I remember from Duxford days were Cpt. ELMS and Airman Terry STEVENS! Keith TROTT, Lofty JENNINGS Jock ROSS, Bill DONNETT, Barry TOWNSEND, Barry HOBSON, Frank BRIGGS and Airmen POPE and BRADSHAW. Where are they all now I wonder?

All good things come to an end and much to my surprise and totally in keeping with RAF postings logic I was posted to RAF LEEMING, a Meteor NF11 flying station in North Yorkshire towards the end of 1953 with only weeks to serve. It was a big blow, I didn't want to leave Duxford, but I made some good new friends there and it was nearer to home in Blackpool. Yes, I did take the bike with me and put it to good use.

As part of the rehabilitation effort for National Servicemen looking for a career on demob the RAF organised visits to our station. One of these was a Police demonstration consisting of a splendidly turned out Police motorcyclist with a large chromium-plated Triumph. This took my fancy and I duly joined the Police as constable in Blackpool in early 1954

I served for 30yrs holding every rank in the CID from Detective Constable to Detective Chief Superintendent and ending as Assistant Chief Constable in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary in Bristol.

I never did ride a motorcycle! Perhaps I should have been "Snowdrop".

The experiences and lessons learned as a young man at RAF Duxford in 1952 and 1953 have always been valuable and have very fond memories of the time and place.

One day, a man came home and was greeted by his wife dressed in a very Sexy nightie. 'Tie me up,' she purred, 'and you can do anything you want.'So he tied her up and went golfing!

A woman came home, screeching her car into the driveway, and ran into the house. She slammed the door and shouted at the top of her lungs, 'Honey, pack your bags. I won the lottery!' The husband said, 'Oh my God! what should I pack ?' 'Don't care..... just GO!

Marriage is a relationship in which one person is always right, and the other is a husband.

A Polish immigrant went to the DMV to apply for a driver's license. First, of course, he had to take an eye sight test The optician showed him a card with the letters 'C Z W I X N O S T A C Z.' 'Can you read this?' the optician asked..... 'Read it?'. 'I know the guy.'

Mother Superior called all the nuns together and said to them, 'I must tell you all something. We have a case of gonorrhoea in the convent.' 'Thank God,' said an elderly nun at the back.... 'I'm so tired of Chardonnay !



(Submitted by John Porter)