



NEWSLETTER

June 2013

www.olddux.org

Compiled by Larry Cross



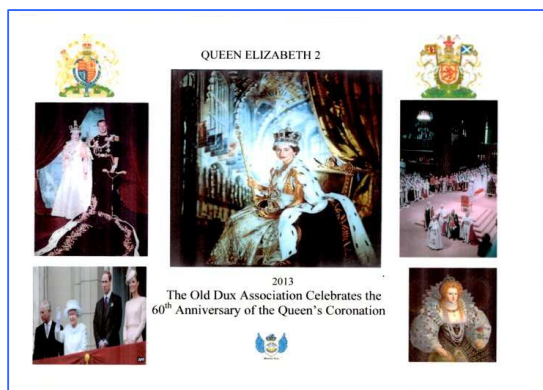
Dear Members

It was good to be back at Duxford once again and the weather was fine and sunny.

Guests were arriving throughout Saturday afternoon, the last being members not staying overnight, arriving at 7.00 for dinner at 8.00.

Eight tables were beautifully laid to seat 64, unfortunately two cancelled at the last minute through illness, another couple had planned to arrive a week later....it happens.

As always Anne had produced a grand display for the place settings, her theme this year was a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II as shown.



A convivial evening was seemingly enjoyed by all. The raffle went well due to the efficiency of the ticket sellers, Jan Dell and Sarah Russell. Carl Warner then jumped in to assist Anne and the girls, doing a splendid job calling out the winning tickets.

Bob Hope called upon Baz Gowling to make the Royal Toast then acknowledged Les Millgate having taken part in the Coronation Fly Past 60yrs ago, led by the Duxford Wing.

Les also mentioned that Carl and Sarah had played a major part in the success of the new Historic Duxford Exhibition, the brainchild of Steve Woolford (Head of Interpretation and Collection), an idea that he has nurtured for some time which only became a reality when funds were eventually made available.

Bob then called upon the room to show their appreciation of Anne's efforts in making the evening such a success, she was then presented with a well earned bouquet and a little extra ..A Royal Whoopee CushionDon't ask !

Last but by no means least – the meal. The only down side to an otherwise excellent weekend was the quality of the food, which to put it mildly, judging by the number of guests who complained to the committee, was very disappointing. We can reveal that the matter was taken up on the night, and followed up by a meeting with Ross the hotel senior manager the following morning.

It has to be said that he was as upset as we were and in his words “took it on the chin”.

He emphasised at our committee meeting that The Red Lion / Holiday Inn want our business, we are valued customers and to this end we were offered a fifty per cent discount by way of apology and assured, that if we return next year, we can be rely on a meal in line with our high expectations. On behalf of us all Bob accepted this gracious offer and the assurances given. It was emphasised that we thought the standard of service throughout our stay from the staff was excellent.

Once the financial settlement has been made Stan will issue cheques to all concerned.

The AGM

The meeting was somewhat delayed over another mix-up with the keys, rocket science it ain't. Should any vacancies arise at the guardroom I know two guys who would be in there like a shot, no names no - but their initials are T.H. and C.D.

Bob called the meeting to order welcoming the 65 members that attended then asked for a minutes silence in memory of those who have gone before.

The committee have now served their term and as is the norm nominations were asked for to form a new committee. A proposal for the present committee to continue was raised and passed and this they agreed to do.

Alan Plowright . A/F Mech 1958 -59 a new member attending for the first time was asked to stand and say a few words about his time at Duxford

We also have a new associate member, not present, but a lady whom many already know, Sarah Russell: and as Bob commented, “we now have someone to switch off the lights”.

Until last April when her contract ended with the IWM Sarah was a member of the staff, she now has a new post as Curator of Royston Museum.

Sunday the 6th is the date decided upon for October Meeting

Members of the committee will be in the Red Lion from 12.00 noon to welcome anyone who would like to lunch/socialize prior to the meeting which will commence at 14.00 hrs in the Air Space hangar Learning space One

Members attending will of course be required to let Bob have their Car Reg.No. And as per usual entrance is through the main guardroom gate.

Tel No.01554890520 e/m sl542@hotmail.co.uk

That's Sierra Lima 542

Not on the agenda was an impromptu 'report' from Nobby Clark of an escapade during his time in Oman 1955-57 involving two fire engines. It all sounded quite serious at the beginning but after ten minutes or so as the story unravelled Nobby had us all in tucks of laughter which added much to the conviviality of the meeting. Must book him again !

Remembrance Day

It was agreed by a show of hands that the association should be represented at the Remembrance Day Service at Duxford in November. The cost and design of the wreath was discussed and Allan McRae has agreed to design and supply a centrepiece for the wreath to include the Old Dux Logo. Colin Denley has also agreed to find a supplier and ascertain the cost. Details will be finalized at the October meeting.

Significant Innovations

Prior to 2005 I had no knowledge of or interest in computers. It was when our youngest was updating his office equipment that he came by one day and plonked a complete set of technology in my lap with the remark, "Here Pop, get stuck into that, you can't do any damage and it will keep you off the streets!" which is exactly what I did, to the extent that neighbours were stopping Doreen in the street and asking if I had left home.

I took over the Newsletter from Allan McRae and my 1st edition came off the press in December 2005. By then I had discovered Google and emails and in 2006 we introduced the web site, now in its seventh year. Thanks to emails it currently saves us £240 p.a. in postage alone. It has also found us new members via the web site but feel that it does not get the traffic it should from the membership, It's still good value at £50.00 p.a.

June 2010 saw the first experimental Newsletter in colour which we have been able to maintain, helped by in house publishing and in 2011 it was decided to cancel the family subscription so that we all pay the same.

These innovations could not be maintained without a regular income ... your subscriptions. Since taking on the responsibility in 2010 the treasurer has done a magnificent job, considering today's economic climate, by insisting and persisting that subscriptions should be paid on time.

Subscriptions

Please help your Treasurer. **It is now over a month since subs were due and sadly 74 members have failed to pay.** Please send your cheque to Stan Dell, 3 John Hampden Way, Prestwood, Bucks. HP16 9DY. ASAP in order that he can complete the accounts. Thanks to all those who have sent cheques, especially those who sent post dated for May 1st. it helps to make the job easier.

John Milne 1920 – 2012

A celebration of the life of John Milne was held at Duxford on Saturday 27th April where John's ashes are scattered in front of the control tower. Approximately a hundred turned out, including friends, relatives and representatives of his various interests, including one of his favourites, The Old Dux Association.

It was a happy gathering with tributes led by Helen and some of his children. It was in turn amusing, poignant, serious, and at times, hilarious. As one who new him well remarked later, John would have been disappointed to have missed it. Coincidentally, or maybe not, the tributes were punctuated by the sound of a Merlin engine being flown at low level throughout the afternoon. A very nice touch was both that Ken Wilkinson DFC, now aged 94 and the last of the 1940 pilots of 19 sqn and Wing Commander Kevin Marsh, the last OC of 19 sqn, (Photo) before it was recently stood down, were both in attendance. It made a happy picture, the first meeting the last. The ODA was both honoured and privileged to be invited to attend by the family.



Historic Duxford As appeared in the RAF News

MAY WE, through your letters page bring to the attention of fellow readers the new 'Historic Duxford Exhibition' at the Imperial War Museum Duxford (formerly RAF Duxford, until 1961). The Old Dux Association were privileged to be invited for a preview of what is in reality a museum within the museum, which portrays the lives of those who lived and served there from its beginning in the early 1920s, through World War I, into peacetime, through its hard-hitting role (RAF and USAF) of World War II and into the Cold War.

The exhibition has many new video recordings of ordinary airmen and airwomen, as well of the aces. It is rich with what was at the time the ordinary memorabilia of daily life as well as iconic objects and photographs, observing daily life in many ways and in great depth.

For those who served there, or elsewhere, it will revive memories, for descendants of those, it will be eye-opening. It is a fascinating observation for students of all ages and at every level, and we recommend a visit. The Old Dux Association are proud to have played a small part in sourcing material for the Imperial War Museum through our membership and our archives. We are delighted with the way that the material has been used to present such an interesting portrayal of how it felt at the time.

The Old Dux Association is open to all who served at Duxford in any capacity. Our 270 members, who range from 1938 to 1961, are always pleased to meet new members and old comrades.

Find us at www.olddux.org

Larry Cross Newsletter and Web Editor

Quotable Quotes

I cook with wine, sometimes I even add it to the food.

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

My definition of an intellectual is someone who can listen to the William Tell Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger.

Mike Davis

Was interviewed by Peter Murton,(Research & Information) on the morning of the AGM re the Station's boxing Fire Team. Peter is interested in Sport at Duxford and is always ready to receive information in the form of photo's, event Programmes, news cuttings and personal reminiscences.

He expects,of course, only to borrow material to make digital scan copies i.e. and does not wish to deprive anyone permanently of precious personal souvenir items. Contact .Peter on 01223-499-355 or e/mail pmurton@iwm.org.uk

Air shows

Flying Legends Sat July 13th. and Sun 14th.
The Duxford Air Show Sat Sept 7th. and Sun 8th.
Autumn Air Show Sun Oct 13th.

Jim Garlinge and the team, namely Les Millgate, John Blake and A Volunteer will be manning the recruitment stand as they did for the Spring Air Show on the 26th when Esther Blaine, Publicity Officer for

the IWM kindly invited one of the team to join the commentary stand to talk about the origins of our association, why we were there and what it was like serving at RAF Duxford in the 1950's
Unfortunately it did not help with the recruitment but this could be blamed on the weather - . It was so good there was hardly any traffic through the hangar.

Historic Duxford

As you know *Historic Duxford* is the new exhibition and historic site trail for families which explores Duxford's time as an RAFairfield from 1918 to 1961. If you are unable to visit Duxford the only other way to get the best out of it is to view it via the internet. It is well worth the effort of visiting you local library and logging on to IWM Duxford. Better still if you have a kindly neighbour, pop round it will interest them too.

Several of our members took part in filmed interviews which are all part of the displays in the Watch Office.

With many things to watch, listen to, have a go at, wear and even smell, *Historic Duxford* paints a vivid picture of daily life at RAF Duxford. Hear and see fascinating personal stories told by the men and women who worked and lived at RAF Duxford, in sound and film.

See the Watch Office, the forerunner to the Control Tower, as it might have been during the late 1930s.

Complementing the *Historic Duxford* exhibition is a heritage trail around the historic site with eight interactive posts. Each post features audio memories from veterans who worked at RAF Duxford. Pick up an activity sheet from the exhibition to complete as you follow the trail.

Discover Duxford's own story – its eventful past and fascinating people.

Entry to *Historic Duxford* is included in admission to IWM Duxford.

Wing Commander George 'Grumpy' Unwin was one of RAF Duxford's most successful fighter pilots. He flew with No. 19 Squadron in the Battle of Britain. George's medals can be seen in the *Historic Duxford* exhibition. Lawrence Casey was an American fighter pilot who flew from RAF Duxford in 1944. He was shot down over France and, with the help of the French Resistance, made his way back to Britain. His A2 flying jacket features in historic Duxford



Les Millgate was a fighter pilot at RAF Duxford in the 1950s. He served two tours with No. 64 Squadron and left RAF Duxford in 1958. On retirement, he returned to IWM Duxford as a volunteer. Les's flying helmet is on display in *Historic Duxford*



Table Placemats

The placemat shown, depicting the squadrons that took part in the Coronation Fly Past is the reverse side of the one on the first page produced by Anne.

It was thought that perhaps members who could not attend the dinner might like a copy as a memento of the Theme and occasion.

These are Laminated and are A4 size (11½ x 8¼) Cost £2 ea .inc postage.

Contact Anne Gange on 01844 352836
annegange@aol.com

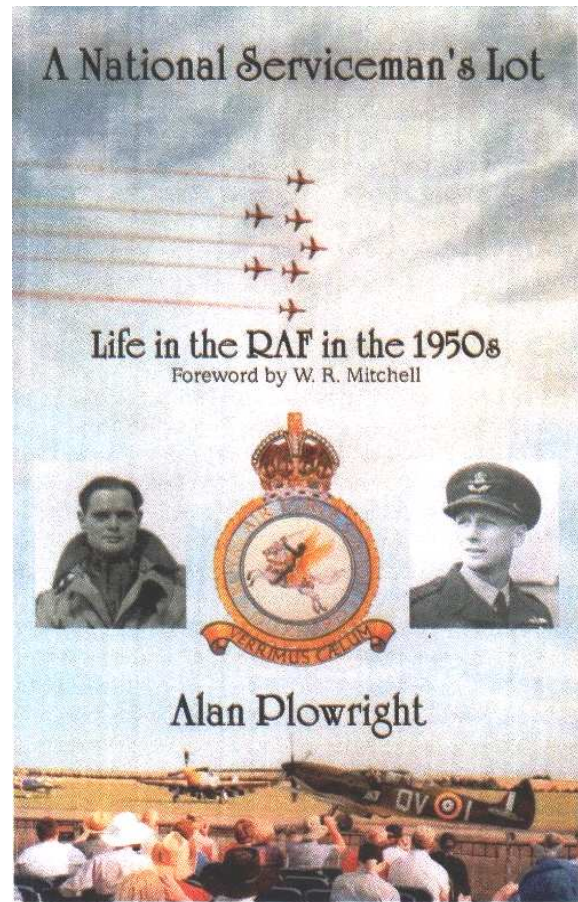
A National Serviceman's Lot.

Life at RAF Duxford in 1958/1959 features prominently in Alan's account of his National Service. He arrived there in February 1958 following seven weeks at RAF Tangmere on the ground crew of 34 Squadron. The Squadron disbanded shortly after his arrival (through no fault of Alan's!) and he was fortunate to transfer to 65 Squadron at Duxford

Life on the squadron was never dull and Alan enjoyed his time working on Hawker Hunters, a first-rate aircraft with swept-back wings and sleek lines. The work was interesting and a bonus was being out on the airfield most of the time. Part of an airframe mechanic's routine was to examine the engine blades for signs of damage, a task I disliked, which involved squirming through the air intakes (openings in the root of the wings) for access to the engine. On one occasion I had squirmed into the claustrophobic confines and was carrying out my inspection when I heard the click of a switch in the cockpit above. Convinced it could be an engine mechanic (fitter) about to switch on the engine for a test, I shot out of the air intake in double-quick time. Today this situation would not occur in view of the strict Health and Safety procedures.

Another memory concerns an American pilot who was attached to our squadron for a period and was very keen to impress. On returning from an air-firing exercise sortie, he virtually jumped from the cockpit shouting, 'I got four! I got four!' meaning he would be credited with shooting down four aircraft and was thrilled to have done so. If he expected a rapturous response from the ground crew he was sadly disappointed for he was greeted with complete indifference. On another occasion I had the task of 'seeing off' (strapping a wonderful American character into the cockpit of his aircraft). This pilot had been diverted overnight to Duxford and was leaving the following morning. He had headed to his aircraft swiftly, carrying a bulging travelling bag and with a cigar stub (unlit, thankfully,) clamped between his teeth. RAF pilots wore pressure suits and helmets, but this chap had neither. He clambered into the cockpit, stuck the travelling bag between his feet and emitted the immortal words, 'Let's get to goddam hell outa' here!' He revved up the aircraft's engine as I removed the steps hurriedly and he shot away as though chased by the hounds of hell! The Black Arrows (the forerunners of today's Red Arrows aerobatic team) visited Duxford and it was quite an honour to meet the pilots and 'see them off.' That year the team had increased to nine and, during their display at Farnborough Air Show they performed 'loop and roll' in a formation of twenty-two Hunters, which is a long-standing record. At the time of that particular Air Show in September 1958 Duxford was visited by three Hunter Squadrons in order to practice for a flypast at Farnborough commemorating the anniversary of the Battle of Britain and they spent nearly a week practicing formation flying before the display on the Saturday. As the pilots from these squadrons were unused to Duxford airfield, there was frequent over-shooting of the runway when aircraft returned from practice. This caused great annoyance to the farmer into whose field the aircraft trundled. Unfortunately, these blemishes were nothing compared to the disaster that occurred near the end of the week, when one of the visiting aircraft crashed on take-off and ploughed into his field. Some of the ground crews, including me, were quickly ordered to search for debris from the stricken aircraft and it was a very disconsolate group of airmen who trudged around the field on a gruesome search.

During my time at Duxford I went on various detachments to other airfields, including Nicosia in Cyprus. It was during the period when EOKA (a terrorist organisation, headed by Colonel Grivas) was active and many British servicemen had been attacked or murdered in the unsettled political climate intensified by the Greek Cypriots' desire for Enosis (union with Greece). 65 Squadron was supposedly on standby in Cyprus for three months, but we were ordered to return home after one week. Having enjoyed a splendid outward flight in a sparkling deHavilland Comet Mark 2, we were looking forward to the return journey. As we waited in the airport building for our flight, another Comet was being loaded with our luggage and during this activity there was an explosion aboard the aircraft, which blew a hole in the fuselage. Luckily for us the bomb had activated before we got on board, but if it had not, I dreaded to think of the consequences. We had to be content with a return journey in an old Handley Page Hastings, which had the compensation of a stop-over in Malta.



The book is available from Alan Plowright, at £10.99 inc P.&P.

45, Moorfield Drive
Baildon, Shipley,
West Yorks BD17 6LL

Telephone 01274 598290

Margaret (Peggy) Snashall

Excerpts from her Diary by Larry Cross.

I first met Margaret in 2007 through Len Thorne who, you may remember, was part of the Air Fighting Development Unit at RAF Duxford 1941 – 43. As was Margaret.

Len was convalescing at Princess Marina House, Rustington which is fairly close to where Margaret lived but was unable to visit her so asked me to 'be a good scout' and pay her a visit as she was housebound.

Margaret Snashall was born in 1922 and had ambitions to join the Airforce but at 17½ was too young so decided to try the Women's Land Army. After a year on the farm on the outskirts of Royston, she was sent to Suffolk cutting down trees for the Forestry Commission.

That came to an end when her father wrote to the authorities to say that she had joined the Women's Land Army without his permission, thereby giving her the chance to join the W.A.A.F in 1941.

Peggy received her basic training at RAF Innsworth and afterwards posted to RAF Duxford and in those early days of the war many WAAF's received on the job training depending on their trade.

She was billeted in a house in the village of Thriplow sharing an attic room with three other girls.

Peggy was assigned to the AFDU as orderly room secretary and later as secretary to the C.O then W/Co. Vasse, and after W/Co. I.R.Campbell Orde, a post she held for four years loving every minute of it.

Pilots were sent there for respite after long periods on ops. and were employed testing new aircraft as they came into service and evaluating captured enemy aircraft.

Margaret remembers bombs being dropped on the flare path, there was no runway then, and two Czech airmen on 310 sqn.were killed.

Dates from her diary:

June 1941	301 Sqn went - 56Sqn came in
July " "	New WAAF officer cancelled drill and allowed shirt sleeve order as weather very hot
" "	W/Co R Stanford Tuck arrived as C/O Flying.
" "	Messerschmitt 109 arrived
August	Junkers 88 arrived
October	Flying officer Skalski (Polish) crashed and was killed in Me109



Margaret was promoted to Corporal in 1942 and her pay rose to 3 shillings and 8 pence per day, paid fortnightly.

Work started at 08.00.- 17.00 hrs and was often required to return after tea to complete any unfinished work, and on one occasion worked until 21.00 hrs to finish a report on Mk XII Spitfire having to run off 300 copies the first spitfire to be powered by the Griffon engine to go into service.

Peggy and her friends were eventually moved from their billet in Thriplow to the Vicarage in Chesterton which was all very nice but hated having to cut through the churchyard after dark !

March 1943 saw the AFDU and NAFDU moved to Wittering. The C/O was very strict but the food was marvellous. They were allocated a house in married quarters where there was a fireplace in one room but not sufficient coal for it to be lit more than once a week. Peggy still wonders how they survived the cold weather and remembers waking up one morning with snow on her bed which had filtered through an ill fitting window.

More dates from her diary.

April 1943 S/Leader McLachlan back with us.

May 16th. My 21st. Birthday, received 21 bumps from some of the pilots ! Later S/L McLachlan gave a wonderful display of aerobatics in the Mustang.

June 29th. S/L McLachlan and S/L A.G. Page were 'out' his morning, later heard they had shot down six enemy aircraft and was privileged to see the combat film.

July 18th. These two brave pilots repeated the exercise, S/L Page returned but S/L McLachlan was shot down over Dieppe, was captured and died of his wounds. S/L McLachlan who flew with an artificial arm lost his left arm in the battle over Malta in 1940.

October 24th. Heard the crash in the camp cinema, a Wellington bomber crashed coming in to land: One of our brave girls managed to pull out the rear gunner .I recall she was a telephonist and was reprimanded for leaving her post.

Volunteered for O/Seas but was turned down as I am the only daughter with a brother already serving O/seas. (See Footnote)

June 6th. 1944 Everyone in a good mood, our troops have landed in Northern France and the Channel Islands July 20th offered a trip in the Boston and accepted – not very well afterwards.

August 3rd. A drunken American got into the house and attacked one of the girls. All very nervous for a while.

October 13th. Offered a lift in the Boston by 'Wimpy Wade' Left Wittering at 13.45 arrived at Northolt at 14.10 He left me at the end of the runway and was in trouble with Air Traffic Control

Continued over

On 27th. of February 1945 the AFDU moved to Tangmere and after tea on that day we walked to Halnaker, a distance of about 1½ miles to where we were billeted and went straight to bed. Some time later we were moved to the Vicarage in Oving.

May 8th. V.E.Day I was at home on leave.

May 14th. Hundreds of repatriated British P.O.W's. were flown in from Europe and many of the girls helped to compile details.

In June 1945 the work mainly consisted of typing out recommendations for awards for the pilots.

When these were completed Margaret went to collect her clothing coupons – a real treat as they were the first she had ever had.

On a day off in July, Margaret and three friends were cycling to Bracklesham Bay and went through some very slow traffic lights on red on the outskirts of Chichester. They were stopped by a policeman and as a result were each fined ten shillings.

On 12th. August V.J.Day was imminent and then on 14th.August 1945 at midnight, peace was declared.

On 25th work commenced destroying old files in the office in readiness for the move to West Raynham in Norfolk, which took place on 1st. October. None of the girls were very happy at the prospect of their dispersal and what the future might hold.

Margaret recalls being very distressed after reading in a newspaper on 6th October of the dreadful murder of Joyce Bock and her baby at her home in Castleton, Derbyshire. Margaret shared a room with Joyce at Chesterton whilst stationed at Duxford; she married Laddie a Czech airman.

Peggy notes: Not much work this month and on 13th. November our new C/O arrived – W/Co R.P.Beamont, she remembers him being quite amused at the mouse which used to sit under her chair.

S/Leader 'Wimpey' Wade offered Peggy a job as his secretary when he is demobbed which she accepted.

He has taken a position with the magazine 'The Aeroplane. In the meantime' Peggy applied to BOAC on 26th November but never received a reply

.On the 14th January 1946 Margaret was demobbed bringing to an end a very happy and exciting part of her life and one she will always cherish.

Margaret is still housebound and in continuing poor health after a botched hip operation, but the spirit she has shown through the years keeps her going.

Footnote Gordon Snashall was an accomplished violinist and during his service in W.W.II saw action as a Gunner Surveyor in the Royal Artillery. He became a member of E.N.S.A. meeting up with Spike Milligan in North Africa and played in a quintet with Spike and Harry Secombe. Spike describes their meeting in his book, 'MONTY His Part in My Victory.'" During the interval a human being dressed up as a gunner approached me, "You don't know me from Adam" he said. I told him he must be better dressed. The stranger was Gunner Snashall(Snatch) from the 8th.Survey Regiment, he said he played violin and could he sit in on the next session. It turned out that he was great, a real good Jazz violin player.

After the war Gordon switched to an electric viola and prior to his death in 1995 Spike Milligan graciously went to see him in hospital.

My inconclusive travel plans for 2013 by Ian Swindale

I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone, you have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there.

I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends, family, and work.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump there and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also recently been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.

I have been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older. One of my favorite places to be, is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart!

At my age I need all the stimulation I can get!

I may have been in Continent, but I don't remember what country I was in. It's an age thing. They tell me it is very wet and damp there.

