

July 1996



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# NEWSLETTER

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## NO DUX IN THE OLYMPICS!

As you read this the 1996 Olympics will be well under way in Atlanta, and you may have noticed that nobody from the association qualified for any of the events. Are the events getting tougher or are we not as fit as we once were?, who knows, anyway there is always the Centennial Olympics in 2000 to look forward to.

### Dinner.

Preparations for the dinner are well under way, the deposit has been paid, the ante room booked, and to date 46 will be attending. The final cost will be £23 per person for the 4 course menu and all names and monies must be in by the 12th of September. This is the date fixed by the Officers mess after which they will not accept any further additions.

Would all those who owe a balance and those who have yet to pay please forward your cheques direct to the treasurer (me) and not to Bob as it said on the booking form.

### Subs.

The response to the appeal for subs has been extremely disappointing. As people join at various times throughout the year keeping tabs on who owes what and when is difficult and time consuming and we rely on members to pay when due with out resorting to "chase-ups"

As the membership increases (which it still is) the situation will not get any better. If anyone has any ideas for improving or changing the current system I would be pleased to hear about it.

### Reunion Appeal.

Ex apprentice Mr Vic Merrill has asked via this newsletter if any one was in, or knows some one who was in, the 57th entry at RAF Halton as he is trying to organise a reunion. Vic can be contacted direct on 01753-651820.

### Badges.

The coloured enamel badge featuring our Dux logo is now available. At a cost of £3 this represents a real bargain for this unique and much sought after item, so hurry before they are all sold out. If you do want one (or more) can you please deal with Bob direct as he has personally paid the badge makers for the total amount and is now seeking reimbursement!.

### Gliding.

Our thanks to Bob Way for submitting this months contribution reminiscing about the early days of the gliding club at Duxford.

### Diary.

Just a reminder of the important dates for your diaries;

- 12th Sept. final call for the dinner.
- 21st Sept, The Dinner.
- 22nd Sept, Meeting at Duxford

## GLIDING AT DUXFORD

by  
Bob Way  
(Ex 64 Squadron)

Gliding operations started at RAF Duxford in 1957. The name chosen for the club was 'The East Anglian Gliding Club'. The fleet consisted of a Kirkby T31 (a two seat training aircraft also known as the tandem Tutor), a Tutor (single seat basic glider), an Eon Baby (single seat intermediate sailplane), an Olympia 2B (a more advanced single seat sailplane) and eventually a Slingsby T21 Sedburgh (a side-side two seat trainer). To launch the gliders we also had the ubiquitous 'Wild' balloon winch.

Prior to the launch of the 'East Anglian Gliding Club' several prospective members went down to RAF Andover to view their operation and to scrounge a couple of launches in their gliders. Those that went were Fl Lt John Ansley, Fl Lt 'Binny' Barnes and myself all from 64 Squadron. We all got airborne and also got a little instruction on winch driving.

There was a lot of work to be done to get the club going and in the fullness of time the ranks swelled and it was all systems go. One member of note was Fg Off John Delafield (later Gp Cpt OC RAF Newton) from 65 Squadron. He went on to greater things in the gliding world owning his own glider almost from the beginning. I remember him because he let me fly his private glider which was a Kite II. We acquired an old Fordson tractor for cable retrieving and later we managed to go really up market with the purchase of a Ferguson tractor for the same duty. Several other 64 Squadron members joined, but their names escape me now, as well as others from the station.

As was to be expected the aircrew were the first instructors but eventually non aircrew were sent on instructor courses which were initially held at RAF Newton under the auspices of the Air Cadets. This proved to be quite successful as a stop-gap but eventually instructors were trained with the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association.

In an effort to build up more members (more members = more money) a number of civilians were invited to join. This increased membership but unfortunately they also disrupted the flying because they appeared to be more interested in socialising than in the basic reason for the club i.e. flying.

We had one or two accidents which should not have happened. One of these severely damaged the Eon Baby. This left us short of an intermediate sailplane and consequently no stepping stone between the Tutor and the Olympia. I think the pilot, a civilian, sustained two broken legs. Another accident resulted in the T21 being damaged in a heavy landing incident where the right hand seat broke causing the passenger to drop through the bottom of the aircraft with his nether regions being very close to the grass. The next part of this saga reminds me of the Air Clues articles 'I Learned About Flying From That'. Station Workshops were persuaded to repair the T21 by replacing the bottom plywood panel. This was carried out by a service qualified Aircraft Carpenter and as far as I recall he made a good job of it. However, we were unable to immediately acquire a replacement seat so it was suggested that a repair would be in order as an interim measure to enable us to continue flying training. All appeared to be satisfactory and the aircraft was put to work again. Lots of useful flying was carried out until one day someone indulged in a few aerobatics. One of the manoeuvres was a loop which turned out to be rather tight and at the point of highest 'G' force the repaired seat gave way again. The result was the same as before except now they were inverted with the aforesaid nether regions pointing skywards. The unfortunate thing was that the person in the right hand seat was the captain. Fortunately the passenger was able to fly and got the aircraft down without further damage.



I mentioned earlier that we had acquired a Ferguson tractor for cable retrieving. This took a lot of finance to keep going and was probably the major money gobbler. As I'm sure many of you will recall, this type of tractor ran on paraffin having been started and warmed up first on petrol. Well we had jet aircraft on the unit that also ran on paraffin and MT, usually had a lot of the stuff hanging around that was unsuitable for aviation use. Well waste not - want not we arranged with MT, servicing to leave a 45 gallon drum of this contaminated fuel in an area where we could quietly dispose of it for them. This arrangement went well until a drum of AVPIN was left in the same area. A couple of civilians were dispatched to collect the contraband AVTUR and of course collected the wrong drum. Its very difficult to switch off an engine running on AVPIN.

On a couple of occasions we were allowed the use of the Station Chipmunk for aero-towing the gliders instead of the normal winch launch. On these occasions it was flown by suitably qualified squadron pilots. Unfortunately one of the pilots had at one time been employed on target towing, or so it appeared, because he employed the same take off technique. This presented the glider pilot with the plan view of a Chipmunk climbing away which meant he had to look a bit smart to keep in position.

My last glider flight at Duxford was in January 1960. I don't think we established any astounding records or for that matter anything of note. Readers may, however, have some other tales to tell about the goings on at the gliding club and will probably remember names of buddies long forgotten by me. A line or two to Allan could put us all in the picture about this addictive sport.

I enjoyed my time with the club but I left Duxford in 1961 to go to Lynham to work on the 'Big' stuff. I do not remember if the gliding club was still in existence at that time.