



NEWSLETTER

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Compiled by A. McRae

Spring 2001

Hello Again

In my area the first day of spring was marked by a heavy fall of snow, but in spite of that we are looking forward to the first meeting of the year which is to be held on Sunday 13th May. The change from the original date was forced upon us by the I.W.M. who have another event earmarked for that day. Traditionally we enjoy fine weather at our May meeting so I hope the 'white stuff' will have disappeared by then.

Membership Directory

This year's reprint of the directory is attached so check your entry and please report any errors.

There have been quite a few amendments, some minor, post code changes etc, but mostly new arrivals and resignations. As before all updates for the remainder of the year will appear in the newsletters.

Duxford Events

We can now confirm the dates for the flying events to be held at Duxford this year.

May 6th May Air Show*
July 7th/8th Flying Legends Air Show
September 8th/9th Duxford 2001 Air Show*

*On these days a Meteor and a Hunter have been scheduled to appear.

Internet

We have registered a web address for two years so that we can (eventually) get our own web page on-line. The address will be;

www.oldduxassociation.org.uk

So far I have managed a simple looking layout and am now trying to spice it up a bit to make it a bit more interesting. I am know there are programmes available to do web page design, but I am taking the opportunity to learn HTML coding at the same time, hence the lack of speed in getting the final version completed.

E-mail Address

Whilst on the internet subject would you please note our new E-mail address.

old-dux@aymakprojects.org.uk

copy this on to the address book of your preferred browser and remove the old one.

Meetings Procedure.

Procedures are like the old SSO's, to be read then forgotten, but as we have several new members I am repeating them once again.

At least **two weeks** before the date of the meeting contact Bob Hope (or any committee member) and give the following details: Registration and make of vehicle; driver and all passengers names.

From these a list is compiled and passed to Duxford security which then allows entry through the main guardroom gate (not the public entrance) and then on to our designated car parking area.

We also use the list to check that all people on the list, including passengers, pay the attendance fee of £2.50 imposed on us by the IWM. This is instead of and not additional to the public entrance charge, so you can see what a bargain you are getting, so do come along, it's a good day out.

Annual Dinner

Although some time away make a note in your diaries of the date, October 20th. We anticipate a small increase in the cost but don't let this deter you. Our aim this year is to reach the target of 100 members and guests. Further details and a confirmation of the cost will be given at the May meeting and in the next newsletter.

ECNALUBMA

A rescue vehicle that can only be seen in your rear view mirror.

Memories?

Remember when hippies meant big in the hips,
And a trip involved travel in cars, planes and ships?
When pot was a vessel for cooking things in,
And hooked was what my grandmothers rug may have been?
When fix was a verb that meant to mend or repair,
And to be-in meant merely to exist somewhere?
When neat meant well organised, tidy and clean,
And grass was ground cover, normally green?
When groovy meant furrowed, with channels and hollows,
And birds were winged creatures, like robins and swallows?
When fuzz was a substance, real fluffy, like lint,
And bread came from bakeries, and not from the mint?
When roll meant a bun, and rock was a stone,
And hang-up was something you did with a phone?
Its groovy man, groovy, but English it's not,
Methinks our language is going to pot!

Ode to a Spell Checker.

Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea

Eye strike a quay and type a word
And weight four it to say
Weather eye am wrong or write
It shows me strait a weigh

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can putt the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong

Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer tolled me sew!

and finally

A man rushed into his doctor's office and shouted, "Doctor! I think I'm shrinking!"

The doctor calmly responded, "Now settle down. you'll just have to be a little patient."

Air Race Story Part 4

It was of no surprise to me to learn of my Station Commanders determination to be present with his wife at this festive occasion. He had fought in and survived the Battle of Britain and had been awarded the D.F.C. and bar before being shot down over France in October 1941. After we had worked closely together at Duxford for many months I persuaded him, over a few drinks, to tell me of his experience as a prisoner-of-war in Germany. Reluctantly, he recounted to me a most remarkable event which, to my knowledge, has not been recorded. Although annoyed at having been caught he was glad to be alive, but knew he had a duty to get back into the war.

His plan was simply to break out of the camp with the aim of stealing a Messerschmitt 109 fighter and flying it back to England! His audacious concept was readily endorsed by the Escape Committee and soon put into action. This article is not the appropriate place to expand on his daring exploit but suffice to say that Norman Ryder got within 100 yards of an unattended ME 109, which he had covertly observed being prepared for take-off, before he was recaptured. So with these thoughts in mind it was not widely extravagant for me to understand that it would take more than a sore leg to stop him attending the festivities that were to be held that night at Marble Arch.

By the time these exciting events were reaching a dramatic conclusion I had been ordered back to Duxford to oversee our part in the annual Fighter Command Air Defence exercise. It had been made abundantly clear by my Air Officer Commanding that although he was delighted with our success in the race, my duties were now elsewhere. Naturally, the AOC made no apology when he said to me "You can stop enjoying yourself at Biggin Hill and get back to Duxford immediately and do some real work, like defending the country!" So whilst catching up on my job I was resigned to following the final phases of the race via TV and the Daily Mail.

The presentation ceremony was performed by Lord Rothermere and attended by many important dignitaries including the Air Minister and our CAS Sir Dermot Boyle. Although all photographs featured the first three winners, it was most appropriate that Miss Winifred Willis also be included. She was a member of the British European Airline team, which received the £1000 prize for originality. Additionally there were ten consolation prizes of £100 one of which went to Billy Butlin.

There were many amusing incidents during and after our successful struggle, but perhaps one of the most enigmatic episodes happened after Charles Maughan received his cheque for £5,000-worth approximately £70,000 in 1988. (*When this story was written, Ed.*) With the cheque in one hand and the magnificent victor's trophy firmly grasped in his other hand he eventually retreated from the array of photographers cameras only to be intercepted by the Chief of Air Staff who took possession of the cheque and said "Well done Maughan", or words to that effect. Of course, Charles was dumbfounded, as we all knew that this money would be donated to a worthy cause. Also, he had been looking forward to impressing his bank manager while this princely sum languished in his account before he wrote another cheque in favour of the designated charity. As the reader will know this expensive piece of paper could not be of any use to Sir Dermot and it was evident that, quite rightly, the Daily Mail would not alter the cheque.

It was some two or three weeks later at Duxford when Norman Ryder pointed to the same cheque laying on his desk and said "Dick, what are we going to do about it?" To me it was spontaneous humour and a case of "I told you so". The maddening part of this farce was that the interest on the money was wasted. Will we ever know how this unnecessary impasse was resolved? However despite this unfortunate incident, the Royal Air Force was cock-a-hoop about winning first and third places, but cheerless at being given such a fright by the dynamic civilian team who were only 57 seconds behind us.

My story would not be complete however, until I clear my conscience by relating how inside knowledge helped me to conspire with my mother-in-law, Mrs Iris Rostron, to win a very generous prize from the Daily Mail. The result was that Iris and her husband spent a luxurious eight-day holiday in France sampling the best champagne. The lucky break occurred when the newspaper offered an open competition to readers some days after the race had started. The simple rules required entrants to forecast two features regarding the event. Firstly, they had to draw on a outline map, shown in the newspaper, the route taken by the eventual winner. Secondly, they were required to compose a telegram to the winner comprising of nine words exactly. These words could be in any order but the initial letter of each word had to be taken from the nine characters that made D-A-I-L-Y M-A-I-L.

Iris Rostron who was a devoted Daily Mail subscriber, was soon on the telephone asking if I was going to try and qualify for the chance of the champagne holiday. Although it was thoughtful of mother-in-law to ask, I explained that for me to enter would be somewhat infra-dig. However, I encouraged her to try and suggested that with the letters available she should send the telegram to Maughan as the first letter of his name was the only choice of any other possible winner. Also I mentioned that it was very important for Charles Maughan to succeed as my bank manager was aware of the large amount of cash placed on him through my bookie's account! With only a few days left for Iris to meet the deadline we eventually decided that the telegram should read:

LONG LIVE MAUGHAN DEDICATED AVIATORS APPLAUD YOUR INCREDIBLE IMPETUS.

Immediately after Charles was declared the outright winner I rang my mother-in-law at her home and suggested she should stay near to the telephone as I would be disappointed if a chap from the Daily Mail did not ring her within a day or so. Sure enough, a gentleman from the newspaper was quickly in touch and arranged to visit Iris in her house to present the BEA tickets and all the paraphernalia necessary for her and her husband Fred to enjoy a holiday of a life time. In the meantime Joan and I, together with the Duxford fighter pilots, revelled throughout the night at our Summer ball.

So, as predicted the Daily Mail Bleriot Anniversary Race of 1959 provided a golden opportunity for our youthful and intrepid airmen to vindicate themselves. Their spirit and initiative proved to the 'old dogs' of the war that they could play a decisive role in helping the Royal Air Force to win.

Undoubtedly my story line will ruffle someone's feathers and even cause fits of petulance. If this is so I apologise and allege old age, together with a lapse of memory. Come what may I am possessed with a fervent desire to tell my light-hearted reminiscence before it is too late. This humorous yarn would not have been possible without the kind permission of Mr. Paul Dacre, the editor of the Daily Mail and the invaluable assistance of a section of his staff at Northcliffe House in Kensington. These charming young ladies were willingly instrumental in providing me with numerous copies of archive treasures from the relevant Daily Mail issues of 1959. Also, for affording me the opportunity of portraying a fraction of this remarkable chapter in the history of aviation.

Our exciting scramble to victory fascinated the imagination of the people of this country and the rest of the world. Furthermore, Royal Air Force Duxford was provided with the opportunity to test our young pilots under pressure and appreciate the exemplary professionalism of those essential celebrities – our ground crews.

My thanks once again to Dick Leggett for the use of his story. Unfortunately I was unable to reproduce the photographs that accompanied the article, but it still makes good reading.