



NEWSLETTER

Compiled by A. McRae

Summer 2001

May Meeting

Over a 120 members and guests came to the meeting and as in previous years the weather was perfect, how do we arrange that? - don't ask!

The downside to the weather situation was that it made our meeting room was almost unbearably hot and stuffy. Owing to the increased popularity of Duxford as a venue for meetings it gets harder to pick and choose the room as we did when we first started meeting at Duxford, so our normal large room was unavailable. Our apologies to those who were affected by the heat.

In spite of that several new members were introduced, each gave a short résumé of their time at Duxford and the years that followed. Mention must be made of Jim & Jennie Whiteley who came over from Canada. Thanks also to Baz Gowling for giving us an explanation of 'Plating'.

October Dinner

We have now received the latest price list from the Officers Mess and as predicted the cost of the dinner has been increased. The price for the four course menu for our dinner on the 20th October will be £28.50, but as in previous years (This our 6th) members, if they so wish, can make arrangements to pay by instalments. Whatever payment method is adopted we will require a deposit of £10 per person. Unfortunately this is not returnable as we have to pay up front when we make the booking to the Mess.

Reunion

Bob Hope is trying to arrange a 50th anniversary reunion of 233 Operational Conversion Unit that was based at Pembrey. The Officer Commanding RAF Pembrey Sands has offered his help and there is a possibility that members of 20 (Reserve) Sqdn, the successor to 233 OCU may also attend.

Bob has been in touch with several ex-Pembreyians and also former local civilian workers. No firm

date or time has been fixed but anyone interested should get in touch with Bob.

Museum

I recently visited a small museum called 'Carpetbagger & Northants Aviation Museums' situated near Harrington just next to the A14 west of Kettering. The Museum is dedicated to the 801st US Eighth Air Force Group who were codenamed Carpetbaggers because of their secret missions to parachute people and equipment into occupied Europe during WW2. Run by a small team of enthusiasts it is worth a look if you are ever in the area.

Duxford Additions

There were several changes and additions in the museum to view once the meeting was over and pride of place amongst these was the Lockheed Blackbird. This unique aircraft, the details of which for many years were kept secret, is now on open display in No.1 hanger. The aircraft which was donated by the USAF will eventually be relocated to the American part of the museum. Needless to say the adjoining shop had a large collection of Blackbird memorabilia and books on display ready to tempt the enthusiast. Two other front line USAF fighters have also been shipped over from the states and are currently being assembled and prepared for display.

Directory

Several additions and amendments to the membership directory appear overleaf, please make the necessary corrections. With the new additions the number of members now stands at 210. How many of this number will come to the dinner?

One red-faced admission, I put my own phone number down incorrectly! Is that what is known as a 'senior moment'?

Fast in - Fast out.

During the 1950's at Duxford, No's 64 and 65 Squadrons were flying Meteor MK 8 gas turbine powered aircraft. The twin engine air intakes on these aircraft were just wide enough for a man to enter when carrying out inspections.

However, during the on going development of the Meteor the intakes were enlarged to permit greater airflow to the engines, this also meant easier access for inspections.

One particular day there was a great deal of flying taking place and the servicing personnel were hard at work refuelling, checking and marshalling the aircraft. Meantime other aircraft were taxiing away from the flight line heading towards the runway. Because if this the mechanics had to be wary of being caught by the jet blasts with the distinct possibility of being bowled over.

On that day I was an Engine Sergeant on 64 Sqdn. and had gone into the airman's crewroom to check to see how the operations were progressing. Three or four mechanics were there with one of them looking decidedly 'seedy'. So I asked if he felt unwell, this remark made the others laugh so I asked what was amiss. After I had persisted in questioning the hapless airman he confessed that he had suffered a dreadful fright.

It was then I noticed that his hands were shaking so I sent him down to the flight office and asked one of his mates to fetch him a cup of tea. He then explained the reason for the scare he had experienced.

"I was seeing my kite off Sarge" he mumbled "and I knew the pilot was in a hurry to get airborne. My mate was on the port side unplugging the trolleyacc. and I was on the other side removing the nose wheel chock. To avoid the jet blast I jumped into the intake of the aircraft parked along side. It was then I realised that the engine was running and the aircraft was starting to move. I was out of that intake so fast that greased lightening would not have caught me. I won't do that again, and can I go now, I think I have wet my pants".

Needless to say, all ground crew were assembled and read the riot act and dire consequences were heaped on their heads if ever such an incident happened again.

When I left this assembly and returned to the hanger,

the funny side of the incident struck me and, I must admit, I had a good laugh at the unfortunate mechanic's expense.

Submitted by Terry Crowley

Ag Pilot Magazine

Baz Gowling has sent in a photocopy of an article from the 'AG Pilot' written by Tam Syme who was a flight commander on 65 Sqdn. flying Hunters. The article relates the story of Tex Rankin a famous American aviator spanning the years 1919-1947. The Duxford connection? Tex had a daughter Carolyn, who is the wife of Col Jack Doerty. Jack Doerty (then Captain) who was on a USAF exchange posting. Jack also served as a flight commander with 65 Sqdn alongside Tam & Baz at the time of the Air race and the presentation of the Queens colours to 64 & 65 Sqdns.

Sporty Dux

Regular readers of the newsletter will know that the Duk often attempts to play an active part in any prominent sporting event. Coincidentally this urge to achieve sporting prowess always seems to surface at the same time a newsletter is due, this seems to guarantee a degree of free publicity.

This photo was taken during his preparation for Wimbledon Tennis Championships and he was overheard to say "I'm ready for Wimbledon, so who is this Hen-man anyway?"

