



# NEWSLETTER

September 2016 [www.olddux.org](http://www.olddux.org) Compiled by Alan Garner



## Dear Members

This is our 21<sup>st</sup> year of The Old Dux Association, who would have thought it from those early beginnings so long ago. Of course, some of our early members that have journeyed on to new pastures are looking down upon us now and will be pleased to see that we are still going strong, yes stronger than ever.

I am always surprised by the way the public and the IWM see us. At the last air show a chap approached our recruiting table and without a word proceeded to empty his pockets of small change to make a donation, later another walking by said 'thank you for what you did.' Often we do not see ourselves as others see us. Of course, father time is playing his part and one day we will be no more. So, for just a moment, feel proud for what you did.

Do you also remember what happened 100 years ago on the 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 1916, when as part of the Royal Flying Corps, 64 Squadron was formed at Sedgford and 65 Squadron was formed at Wyton? Now within the ranks of The Old Dux Association we are the final remnant of those one hundred years.

So why not checkout our web site; address above, and visit the message board and photo galleries that Larry Cross has diligently put together. And why not also post a message and join the regular crew. Members can Log in by using the name **exdux** and pass word **guardroom**. Enjoy and have your say.

There's free access to the next air show if you can volunteer to help on the recruitment desk for a few hours. Just call Stan Dell on 01494 863428 for details. It's going to be an extra special weekend, just ask Stan why.

## New Members

From the recent Flying Legends Air Show we have gained Ken Bassett 1952-6 a 64 Sqn Pilot, Peter Gipson 65 Sqn Eng. Mech; plus, four associate members; Brian Peart, Joan Mason, Andrew Mason and Ian Sims.

## Autumn meeting

Our next meeting will be on **2nd Oct at 1300hrs** in the Airspace hanger - learning Space Room 1. We look forward to seeing as many as possible attending the meeting. A Control tower guided tour is scheduled.

For those members planning to be at the meeting please inform Bob Hope of your Car Reg. and number of passengers A.S.A.P and no later than **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September**. Tel. Bob on 01554 890 520 or email [sl542@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sl542@hotmail.co.uk) (that's sl542....not s1).

As before, entry through the guardroom gate and collect your pass, then turn left and drive just beyond the Bailey bridge road which is to your left and park on the grass on the left. Then walk on to Airspace hangar 1. As always we would like to thank Kay Cooper (IWM) for her continued help in providing these facilities for us. For members wishing hotel accommodation, Stan has secured rooms at the same rate as for the last Dinner, namely £56 for a single and £66 for a double. Will you please ensure when booking to state Old Dux Association and confirm that they are charging you the correct amount. There are no large functions to date, but as usual it is worth mentioning that this is a popular venue now. In other words, remember to book early.

## Remembrance Sunday

The ceremony will be held **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Nov.** at 1300 hrs in the Airspace hangar - Conservation Hall. The public gain free entry to IWM Duxford on this Sunday, therefore because of heavy traffic it is advisable to arrive early. Lucy the Events Officer at IWM requires the number attending two weeks before to arrange reserved seating, therefore members intending to be with us on Remembrance Sunday for the laying of The Old Dux Wreath please let Kerris know by **30<sup>th</sup> Oct**. Tel. 01590 645 495 or email [kadenley@btinternet.com](mailto:kadenley@btinternet.com)

## Gone but not forgotten R.I.P.

Those who have gone on their final posting are: **Barrie Tams** Air Wireless 1958-59 d March. **Bob Way** 64 Sqn Founder member. **Glen Bartle** Inst Mech. 1952-54. d 6<sup>th</sup> June.

**Molly**, wife of Norman Buss died in June, her funeral was on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July at Poole Crematorium.

The committee on behalf of all our members send their condolences to all concerned.

## June newsletter correction

An error was made on page one of the June newsletter which mentions a quote made by Bob Hope which should have been attributed to Mike Jenkins, concerning Sir Richard's arrival at RAF Duxford in 1959. Apologies.

## A Well Deserved Tribute

By Bob Hope

In this issue of Our Newsletter I would like to acknowledge the work that one of our founding couples of ex RAF Duxford personnel did for us in getting the Old Dux Association off the ground. They are Jenny and Allan McRae; with the spotlight falling onto Allan. Who was not only a founding Member, but a multi-tasking Committee Member from day one.

For those members who do not already know, Allan is currently undergoing treatment for throat cancer. I know you will all join me in wishing Allan a good recovery.

On trying to get an RAF Duxford Reunion started; Jim Lynn, Jim Garlinge and myself advertised in various publications and on TV Teletext. Allan & Jen had seen our burst in the Air Force News back in 1994, after being given a Heads-Up by Ann and Trevor Brinkley who were also an ex RAF Duxford couple and close friends. The following is a copy of that first contact that Jim Garlinge received from Allan & Jen.

21st September 1994

Dear Jim,

*We saw the advert in the Air Force News and think a reunion of the old Duxford crowd is a great idea. We are, Allan 'Mac' McRae, airframe fitter, ASF and 64 Squadron, 1956 - 1960, and Jenny nee Adams, Signals Section, 1954 - 1958. We often wonder what has happened to many of our old friends and hope you get a good response.*

*The Sunday Express has a reunion spot on its letter page, have you thought of trying to get it in there? it might reach a few more people. We only knew of this one through being tipped off by Ann and Trevor Brinkley, as we do not get Air Force News often.*

*Hope to hear from you soon,*

*Allan & Jenny McRae*

The following in Allan's own words is how he sees his role in the Old Dux Association over our 21 years. He told me that he was not in the habit of "blowing his own trumpet" and that I should amend it as I see fit.

I see no reason why I would need to change it, other than to add it was Ian Swindale who put us onto a lapel badge manufacturer; that I dealt with and paid for the first batch of badges (as a promotion trinket for our company at that time.) There are other hidden things that Allan did, and that he continues to do for us all. One that springs to mind is the manufacturing of the ODA Recruiting Table.

So on behalf of us all in the Old Dux Association I thank you and wish you all the best and hope that you do get your voice back. (Not bad for an ex Cpl Airframe Fitter in RAF Duxford ASF.)

## Allan's Own Words

In the early days of the association it became clear that if the numbers applying for membership were to increase then a degree of organisation would be needed, so the first committee was born.

Members were Bob Hope, Chairman. Jim Garlinge, Vice chairman (South). Jim Lynn, Vice chairman (North). Allan McRae, Secretary, & shortly afterwards, Treasurer & Newsletter editor. Mainly because I had better computing equipment!

A level of subscriptions was decided on and the name "The Old Dux Association" was formally adopted. A provisional arrangement to have two meetings per year to be held at Duxford was decided. We were fortunate to come to the attention of Steve Woolford of the museum staff who supported our aims and who eventually would become our first honorary member.

My particular contribution to the early stage was to suggest the title of the association and because I am a fan of corporate identity I decided that such an identity applied to the association would ensure that we would gain recognition as a professional organisation, and am pleased to say that over time this has proved to be true. I designed the duck badge as a pun on the name Dux, and arranged the production of the lapel badge, designed the layout of our tie, with a choice of two colours, together with a silk headscarf for the ladies, various items of stationery, including a compliments slip, certificates, and a standard letterhead.

I also undertook the organisation and planning of the annual dinner, held in various venues, including up to the time of its closure, the old officers' mess. All attendees had their own place card with a design of the duck in various configurations, a practice that was to continue for all subsequent dinners. Another twist on the dinner theme was that I never revealed the choice of menu until the last minute!

On behalf of the association I wrote to Her Majesty the Queen sending our loyal wishes on the occasion of her Diamond anniversary. About this time, I 'upgraded' the badge to bring its appearance more in line with a coat of arms, (can't remember when I added the motto.) I put forward the idea of a plaque placed within the National arboretum commemorating all those who had served at Duxford.

Most of the time when I was a member of the committee I just did the job and whatever that entailed, and behind the scenes I was always ably supported by my wife Jen who also managed to sell raffle tickets at the annual dinner. It wasn't until my health began to falter that I began the process of 'unloading' my three responsibilities on to other willing volunteers to carry on serving the Old Dux and its members who I am glad to say are doing a grand job.



## A Brief History of the Officers' Mess Duxford

Many recognise the Duxford campus as the finest example of and best preserved World War one airfield in Britain, a reputation enhanced by the almost complete group of hangars and other buildings, both technical and domestic. The site is so important that it is universally listed grade two.

The suitability of Duxford as a potential flying field was recognised in 1912 and construction started in 1917 as a training depot station. The first trainees, including Americans, arriving in March 1918. Duxford was just one of 63 training depot stations, which were usually built in pairs, Fowlmere being paired with Duxford. With the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918, Duxford was first retained as a flying training school and then in 1923 as a fighter station with No. 19 squadron, which remained until replacement by the American Eagle squadron in August 1941.

The growing significance of Duxford resulted in an extensive modernisation planned initially in 1931, culminating in the building of station headquarters and the guardroom on the south camp followed by domestic quarters and the officers' mess on the north side.

In 1934, the architect A Bulloch FRIBA being seconded to the Air Ministry as the Chief Architectural Adviser of the new RAF expansion programme. One of the department's briefs was to look at all aspects of officers' accommodation and recreational facilities. Although a number of RAF stations had benefitted from a new mess between the war years Duxford had not, and had to rely on its original WW1 mess. The new plan had to make a choice of a particular size of mess and quarters depending on the number of single officers, and the types of aircraft that were to be based there, such as fighter or bomber. Another source of enquiry was how many sergeant pilots there were likely to be, as this would in turn reflect on the number of officers there would be on a station. The Duxford design accommodated 35 officers in the mess but with sufficient accommodation for 24 single officers.

The first architectural plan is dated January 1935, but an amendment written in ink dated July 1935 by the supervising engineer shows the authority to reposition the new mess by six feet further north. This was to provide a three feet clearance of the existing mess to allow it to continue to function until the new one was completed.

Architecture at the time was heavily influenced by the neo Georgian style and internally by the Fine Arts Commission. The overall building was of red brick in flemish bond and the roof a steel structure overlaid with pan tiles and distinctive paired chimneys. The building as with all of this

era faced south. Internally the principal rooms are of double height with an elegant but restrained detailing. The overall design was based on the H plan layout specifically to ensure an efficient access through the building. It was also designed to reflect the principles of dispersal established by Trenchard in the early nineteen twenties, whereby the central dining area and recreational facilities are separated from the accommodation wings by lengths of corridors to mitigate the effects of bomb damage. The design also usually incorporated an underground shelter. This was not included in the Duxford design as it was judged that there was already sufficient security provided by existing shelters within the immediate area.

Examination of the layout reveals all the facilities reminiscent of an old country house, which on consideration reflects the status of the officer class in the early nineteen hundreds. These include such facilities as servants' quarters, waiters' day room, mess waiters' bedroom, mess man's flat, card and writing room, billiard room, anteroom as well as various other domestic rooms, scullery, larders, wine store and pantries together with various kitchens and crockery stores etc.

It is also worth noting that the actual mess and officers' recreational areas represented less than twenty per cent of the ground floor space, the remainder being allocated to services to support the officers. When the sleeping accommodation is taken into account the support services increase to around ninety per cent of the whole building.

Single officers were located on the first floor flanking the east and west sides of the building. The west wing accommodated 14 officers' bedrooms and the east slept ten. Although the wings were of equal length the difference is accounted for because more senior officers (flight lieutenant and above) had a sitting room which had the benefit of a coal fire and a radiator, all other bedrooms had just a radiator. Bathrooms and lavatories were situated along the corridor. In addition to this, further accommodation was built in the form of two timber huts in 1939, and at the same time a permanent extension to the west wing was made to accommodate a further eight bedrooms. We were at war!

Throughout the ensuing period, a number of organic changes took place, always with the purpose of increasing accommodation, both sleeping and recreational. In 1943, a Nissan hut annexe was built onto the mess room for the USAAF, which remained until 1955, when a major reorganisation of the building occurred to allow for additions to the central mess block.

To affect this, USAAF temporary mess extension and other temporary structures within and around were demolished to allow the main mess room to be extended by 44 feet; the mess capacity had now increased to 125.

During this remodelling the front elevations were extended by approximately fifteen feet on each side. That on the west was for a new ladies' room and on the east to allow an extension to the ante-room. The equality of the extensions maintained the symmetry of the frontage, whereas the original frontage was of red brick flemish bond the extension was completed in concrete hued brick and cement work. Attention to this irregularity has been carefully concealed by the use of vine and creepers growing up the wall. Extra staff facilities were also added in this period in the form of a four bay Uni-Seco hut built to the rear of the mess block and attached to the kitchen, to provide changing rooms for staff and extra storage space.

In more recent times, certainly post RAF occupancy, all of the central area, with its slab roof and massive chimneys has been removed. This includes toilets, bar, lounge, wash up, kitchen corridor, beer store and mess staff rooms. The effect of this was to create a vast unsightly central yard, the intention of this demolition was never clear, but it was certainly a project abandoned. The remaining part of the central area, the mess president's office and mess man's living room, was converted to enlarge the male and female toilets and the scullery became an open plan room that since the period of construction has never been used. All of the other out buildings of the RAF period, except the squash court and another nearby, were demolished.

It is on record that in 1989 planning permission was granted and actioned for a change of use for the building to become a Conference and Management Training Centre with overnight residential accommodation and associated parking. In 1992 a further permission was granted to extend the building to provide additional overnight accommodation together with a private health and fitness club, this included proposals for new floor space to be built in the central courtyard area, including an additional dining room, gymnasium, kitchen and swimming pool. The latter permissions were granted but never implemented.

Of interest to the history of the Old Dux Association, we held the first of nine Annual Dinners in the Mess, the first in September 1996 was in the Ante Room. As the attendance grew the following eight were held in the main Mess until the building changed hands and we were forced to move on. A further application was submitted in 2003 to convert and extend the building to a 110-

bedroom hotel. The application was approved in 2004 but not implemented. Since its last use as a Conference Centre and until its conversion to the Officers Mess Business Centre, the building was used by the IWM for storage.

As recently witnessed by some members of the Old Dux Association, the mess has now been restored to its original configuration and decor, within the limits of what was left of the early structure and the requirements of its new function. It is indeed fortunate that neither the Management Conference Centre nor the potential hotel ever fulfilled their ambition to complete their projects, both of which would have entailed the virtual destruction of this historic building. These unfulfilled aspirations have left behind, with the exception of the gutted central area, a structure much as it was. The building with its original bedrooms, recreation rooms and the mess when combined with a similar colour scheme and original signage still feels authentic. The only significant change is that the central area is now a large light airy welcoming space with a reception desk and cafeteria, (which is open to the public) a modern welcome to a historic setting.

Externally there appears to have been little change but in order to accommodate the extra cars the lawns around the perimeter have been pushed back by about five feet, leaving a balanced and apparently unaltered turning circle. The mature trees and lawns create a pastoral welcome to a sympathetic restoration that pleases ex RAF residents and historians alike. A memorial to all those who served, never to return, a heritage that complements all that is being achieved by the Imperial War Museum.



This photo takes us on a trip down memory lane to those many Annual Dinners enjoyed by old friends from the dinners held in the days of the Officers' Mess, see how young they all are as they pose for their photo. We now enjoy our dinners at The Red Lion, where now we are not so young anymore.

## Larry's been Busy

Larry Cross

Alan's opening paragraph in this latest Newsletter said it all about our association's history since its inception in 1995. Over the years the I.W.M. and the Old Dux have grown together in stature, only in number are we know slowly diminishing.

It was May when I was asked by Esther Blaine, I.W.M. Publicity Manager to assemble 4/5 willing members to be interviewed for an item in the Fly-past Magazine no less. The call was for people qualified to work on Meteor Mk8's and someone from Air Traffic Control, if possible. Well it was possible; the other consideration was to find people living as close to Duxford as possible so as to ease the cost of travel. The date set for the interviews was May 27th to coincide with the Spring Air Show, being able to enjoy the Air Show was a bonus. Les Millgate (Pilot), Peter Gibbard, (Armourer) Peter Gornall (Air Traffic Control) and myself (Eng Mech) all graciously agreed to support the cause and on the day met at the recruitment stand. As expected we met up with the team of the day, Stan & Jan Dell, Alan Garner, and Gil Harding.

We were interviewed by Steve Beebee from Fly-past Magazine and were assembled at the rear of the s/board wing of the Hunter aircraft. It was all very informal and Steve, a super bloke, knew his stuff and after scribbling away for half an hour, reckoned he'd got what he wanted for the item which I now believe will be in the October Flypast Magazine issued in September. Whilst we were still talking between ourselves a member of staff came around with a gentleman who was assisting on another stand at the show and happened to tell her that he too had served at Duxford. After a few polite enquiries we then introduced him to the recruitment team.... he didn't stand a chance, but what a find Peter Gipson turned out to be.

Round two came when Esther asked if I could assemble a team to be interviewed for Aeroplane Magazine, veterans experienced with the workings of the Javelin and Hunter aircraft. Again that meant searching for likely lads in the locale and I came up trumps with Anthony (Tod) Slaughter, Peter Clay and Alan Garner. Anthony, and Peter both Javelin men from 64 Sqn and Alan from 65 Sqn. Sir Richard Johns was also interviewed, giving a valuable insight as a pilot flying the Javelin and what life as a pilot was like at R.A.F. Duxford in the fifties. The interviews were published in the August edition of Aeroplane with a special issue on Fighter Command and a seven-page item on 'Duxford's Final Days.'

Round three came shortly after that with a request from Esther for 4/5 Old Dux members to be interviewed for a four pager to be included in the September Air Show's Souvenir Programme. Once

again Peter Gibbard, Tod Slaughter, Peter Gipson, Les Millgate and David Brown stepped into the breach. The interviews were held in S.H.Q. on the 27<sup>th</sup> July by Miranda Wallace from I.W.M London.

Further to, Esther had more ideas as a follow up to this by asking for six of our members on both days of the September (Meet the Fighters) Air Show to form a panel for a Q & A forum in front of Mixed Press and the general public. A report on this will be featured in our next newsletter.

This recent activity by the I.W.M. involving our association and the way those members involved responded to the call was nothing less than magnificent, giving of their time and at no small cost. The committee and membership as a whole, give their heartfelt thanks for what they have done for the prestige of our unique association.

## Car Stickers and Security

For those who display the ODA car sticker. It has occurred to your committee to consider the wisdom of showing our connection with the RAF in this way, due to recent happenings perpetrated against our military personnel. Are we wise to display our stickers? We believe we may become targets for those radicalised terrorist types who are known to often work alone. None of us want to be faced with damaged vehicles or worse, after all our safety and that of our families is paramount. Your committee have chosen to remove these stickers from their cars and recommends to all, to do the same.



## Who Loves Pancakes?

A mother took her little Tommy to school and then went straight off to the doctor. 'Doctor' she said. 'My little Tommy has a very tiny weeny penis and I'm worried,' 'There is nothing to worry about' he said, 'Just give him pancakes.'

Next morning Tommy was first down to breakfast and on the table was a large pile of pancakes. 'Wow Mum' Tommy said, 'I love pancakes.' She said 'You can only have two, leave the rest for your father...

If I'm ever on life support, unplug me...Then plug me in again, see if that works...

At our age 'getting lucky' means walking into a room and remembering what we came in for...

Norway-man: A Gordie expressing disbelief...

## The Back Nine

Ian Swindale

I first started reading this communication and was reading fast until I reached the third sentence. I stopped and started over reading slower and thinking about every word. This article is very thought provoking. Makes you stop and think. Read Slowly.

### And Then It Is Winter

You know ... time has a way of moving quickly and catching you unaware of the passing years. It seems just yesterday that I was young, just married and embarking on my new life with my mate. Yet in a way, it seems like eons ago, and I wonder where all the years went. I know that I lived them all. I have glimpses of how it was back then and of all my hopes and dreams.

But, here it is... the back nine of my life and it catches me by surprise...How did I get here so fast? Where did the years go and where did my youth go? I remember well seeing older people through the years and thinking that those older people were years away from me and that I was only on the first hole and the back nine was so far off that I could not fathom it or imagine fully what it would be like.

But, here it is...my friends are retired and getting grey...they move slower and I see in myself, an older person now. Some are in better and some worse shape than me...but, I see the great change...Not like the ones that I remember who were young and vibrant...but, like me, their age is beginning to show and now 'we' are those older folks that we used to see and never thought we'd become.

Each day now, I find that just getting a shower is a real target for the day! And taking a nap is not a treat anymore... it's mandatory! Because if I don't, using my own free will... I just fall asleep where I sit!

And so...now I enter into this new season of my life unprepared for all the aches and pains and the loss of strength and ability to go and do things that I wish I had done but never did!! But, at least I know, that though I'm on the back nine, and I'm not sure how long it will last. This I know, that when it's over on this earth...it's over. A new adventure will begin! Yes, I have regrets. There are things I wish I hadn't done...things I should have done, but indeed, there are many things I'm happy to have done. It's all in a lifetime.

So, if you're not on the back nine yet...let me remind you, that it will be here faster than you think. So, whatever you would like to accomplish in your life please do it quickly! Don't put things off too long!! Life goes by quickly. So, do what you can today, as you can never be sure whether you're on the back nine or not!

You have no promise that you will see all the seasons of your life....so, live for today and say all the things that you want your loved ones to remember...and hope that they appreciate and love you for all the things that you have done for them in all the years past!!

'Life' is a gift to you. The way you live your life is your gift to those who come after. Make it a fantastic one. Live it well! Enjoy today! Do something fun! Be happy! Have a great day! Remember 'It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.'

### Lastly Consider This:

Your kids are becoming you.....but your grandchildren are perfect!!

Going out is good... Coming home is better!!

You forget names... But it's OK because some people forgot they even knew you!!

You realize you're never going to be really good at anything like golf.

The things you used to care to do, you aren't as interested in anymore, but you really don't care that you aren't as interested.

You sleep better on a lounge chair with the TV 'ON' than in bed. It's called 'pre-sleep.'

You miss the days when everything worked with just an 'ON' and 'OFF' switch.

You tend to use more 4 letter words ...'what?' ... 'when?' ...???

You notice everything they sell in stores is 'sleeveless!!'

What used to be freckles are now liver spots.

Everybody whispers.

You have 3 sizes of clothes in your wardrobe. 2 of which you will never wear.

But Old is good in some things: Old Songs, Old movies, and best of all, OLD FRIENDS!!

Stay well, 'Old Friend!' Pass this on to other 'Old Friends!' and let them laugh in Agreement!!

It's not what you gather, but what you scatter that tells what kind of life you have lived.

Today is the oldest you've ever been; Yet the youngest you'll ever be, so enjoy this day while it lasts.

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This worked for me. My doctor said that in order to have inner peace in our lives, we should always finish things that we start. Since we all could use more calm in our lives, I looked around to find things I'd started and hadn't finished. I finished a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of chardonnay, a bottle of Baileys, and a box of chocolates. You have no idea how fabulous I feel right now. Tell this to all your friends who need inner peace. An telum u luvum.