



NEWSLETTER

December 2017

www.olddux.org

Compiled by Alan Garner



Dear Members,

Are you sitting down? There is much to tell you in this newsletter. But before we begin your committee wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous and happy new year.

Recent Autumn Meeting October 8th

Committee

The meeting started well, but sadly we had no new members to announce but we did have two very old ones back in our midst after such a long time absent; Jim Garlinge and Don Chappell. They were made very welcome indeed. Then Chairman Bob read from a list of apologies sent in by absentees; Peter Howells, Jenny McRae, Del Gates, John & Elaine Le Masurier, Bill & Thelma Venables, Eric & Greta Percival plus David & Janet Brown. Then a reminder was given for our next and last formal dinner, please note the 12th May 2018 for your diaries. It will be a dinner to remember!!

Daniel Francis (ex IWM) now with the Royal British Legion and fiancé of our own Sarah Russell, presented us with a slide show explaining the amazing range of services provided by the Legion, giving lifelong support for the Armed Forces community – those serving men and women, veterans, and their families.

See following link: <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

Many of the ODA members that have had the pleasure of meeting Sarah will further be pleased to know just how lucky Daniel is, for on the first of this month of December at Ely Cathedral they will be married. Many Congratulations. Your orders if you are willing to accept them are; To live long and prosper.

Then Followed this Important Notice

The Committee gave notice at a Special General Meeting of The Old Dux Association duly convened and held in the IWM Duxford, Air Space Hangar meeting room on Sunday the 8th October 2017 at 1330 hrs. to confirm their recommendation for the winding up of The Association. Those members present were called upon to agree that the organisation should close, and that the committee be instructed to proceed with the closing of the organisation in a proper manner, including the disposal of any surplus funds. The final date for closure will be at the May dinner and AGM in 2018, fittingly the Centennial Year of the Royal Air Force.

All annual subscriptions have now ceased and those members who have been using the banking Direct Debit method of payment are requested to now cancel those arrangements. Our treasurer confirmed that the financial status of the Association was in good order and that any remaining expected expenses will be met and that the final monies will be donated to the Duxford museum.

A great sadness was evident from the members present as will be felt by all members reading this for the first time. Derek Parks asked the question that was and would be on every body's lips; Derek said, "Why are we closing the Association?" Our chairman asked Larry if he would like to respond. Larry stood up and read from the committee's pre-prepared answer, knowing that this question would be asked. Larry continued:

'Due to the increasing age of our membership, with its associated health and mobility problems, plus in many cases long travel distances and increasing costs etc. members are finding it increasingly more difficult to be actively involved in Association events. Your Committee Members are not without experience of these same problems and understand them, but it is after much thought and with regret that we feel it's now time to issue the afore mentioned notice.'

There were moments of silence all around the room as the full impact of closure sunk in. Then Bob Scott rose to his feet and expressed his appreciation for all past and present committee members for their fine service to the Association over so many years, this receiving much approval from the floor. Thank you, Bob.

Then finally, someone at the back raised both arms high to get the attention of the Chairman and asked to speak. Bob said, "Please stand" and she did, it was Sarah. Among floods of tears and with great emotional feeling she managed to say how she felt about the demise of the old dux association and how she holds us close to her heart. Sarah's outpouring of love for the old dux brought many to tears, as her words conveyed what all of us were feeling..... In years past we had adopted Sarah into the association as we have others, and we are so glad that we did. And now, Sarah and Dan being newly married, must look forward to the future along with our nod of approval and not look back, well only occasionally, perhaps.

P.S. Look out for the March 2018 newsletter, there could be some wedding photos coming our way.

The Informal Dinner

Ed

Many came that Saturday evening to the Red Lion at Whittlesford and what an evening it was. Nineteen in all sat down to a marvellous meal. A truly enjoyable time was had by all. Were you there? It was held on the Saturday of our Autumn ODA weekend. We all arrived in the bar between 6 and 7 pm for drinks and much chatting before moving into the set-aside area specially prepared for us and so nicely laid out it was too.

The Red Lion staff did us proud in every way even though they were also very busy accommodating a large wedding party in another area of the pub. Many of us remarked and agreed that the food was the best we have ever had at the Red Lion over all the years we've been going there.

Of course, we must congratulate Stan for organising everything so well, as he does with everything Red Lion. Stan even brought out the Red Lion's new young chef at the end of the meal, so we could rightly shower him with much deserved praise in the presence of his manager Sue. The bar has now truly been raised higher, which means that we can all look forward to a fine meal for our last formal dinner in May next year.



Norman Buss with carer Graham, talking with Peter and Bob.



Bob, Kay and Larry. Drinks in the bar.



Our own snug dining area.



Larry, Bob, Janet and David



Kay with Kerris and Colin



Bob with Esther and Stan.



Larry's gone to the loo,
Hello, the olives have gone!



Pat, Bob and Esther.



Gordon, Anthea, Alan and Jan.

A wonderful evening of good food and wine along with a lovely crowd of people, what could be better than that? Even the wine was mysteriously provided at no cost to ourselves or the ODA but by the sleight of hand of our chief organiser, Stan. He did explain to me how, but all I remember is that it was something only Stan could achieve. It was an evening to remember..... Don't mention the olives.

By the way, these informal evenings have not come to an end. There will be more occasions to meet up as old friends. Together, we will find a way to make this happen for those who can and wish to join us.

In Memory of the Boy Who Wanted to Fly and the Man That Did

A Cast-iron stomach?

Reprint from Feb 2012 newsletter

By Les Millgate

I don't know the date, I can't find it in my Logbook, but the memory of it is still vivid.

Sitting in the 64 Sqn. Crew Room, someone answered the phone, and called me over – “You can probably help.” “I'm the Station Barber,” explained the voice, “and I'm ringing to see if there's any chance of a flight.” So, I told him he was in luck – I was waiting to do an air test on our two-seater Mark 7 Meteor, and if he could get to the Sqn. in 15 minutes, he could come along for the ride.

When he turned up, in reply to my questions, he told me he'd never flown before, and he would “love to do aerobatics.” A bit of a quandary, this, because obviously a ‘virgin’ flyer might not take too well to aeros, so I explained I'd take it easy initially, and we'd see how it went. I made sure he was suitably equipped with the necessary in case it didn't go too well, dolled him up in a spare flying suit, found him a helmet, and out we went to the flight line.



Chatting away, he was a pleasant young lad, and was actually a barber in civvy life, and in a rare display of common-sense the RAF had given him this job for his National Service – and, yes, he was passionate about wanting to do aeros. At the aircraft I briefed him about the parachute (no bang seat in the 7!), a general briefing about the a/c, what we were going to do – and off we went.

He seemed quite happy, so I first tried a gentle Barrel Roll, positive G all the way round – “That was lovely, Sir, what was that called?” came from the back seat. Told him what it was called, decided he was OK with gentle aeros, so next did a loop, pulling minimum G – heard “That was lovely, Sir, what was that called?” again. Good, he was not feeling queasy, was enjoying it.

So – Slow Roll, same reaction, then a four-point Hesitation Roll, each time getting the same delighted reaction from the back. A Stall Turn to the left went well, and was received with the by now usual reaction – my passenger was thoroughly enjoying his first flight.

I knew this aircraft well: being the Sqn. Instrument Rating Examiner, I flew it frequently, annually renewing the pilots' Instrument Flying Ratings, so I knew the aircraft was somehow bent, and would not Stall Turn to the right.

Plenty of time to spare still, so I thought I would really try to get it to go to the right. Climbed up to 20,000 feet, accelerated in a shallow dive, pulled up into a vertical climb, and as the speed was dropping towards zero, hard right rudder, full throttle left engine, throttled back the right engine, and waited. So, did the aircraft.

By now we were stationary, hanging vertically in the air, nose pointing slightly right, but resolutely refusing to rotate further. The aircraft juddered, fell onto its back, and went into an inverted spin. My first thought was “Goodness me!”, or words to that effect. Second thought was “We've just been told not to spin the Meteor”. Third thought was “Certainly not an inverted spin.” I don't know if I was uttering soothing words to my passenger – if I was saying anything at all: just working hard to stop spinning. Whatever it was I did – I still don't know – it was successful: we came out of the inverted spin, but promptly flipped into a “normal” spin, right way up.

Now it was the standard spin recovery: stick hard forward, opposite rudder from spin direction, and Lo! and behold, ended up diving away, pulling out at about 10,000 feet. I was about to ask how my passenger was, when I heard – yes – “That was lovely, Sir, what was that called?” Don't know what I answered: I should have replied “A complete cock-up” - we just flew back to Duxford, me still sweating slightly, trembling at the knees.

On the ground, my cast-iron stomached passenger was profusely grateful for his first flight – with aerobatics – and went off to do his hair-cutting. I had a strong coffee in the crew room!

Les Millgate a True Gentleman

Ed

Many would love to fly, others can only wonder what it would be like to handle the controls of an aircraft. But, how many have imagined that the pilot of the aircraft that has taken them so many times to different parts of the world, to holidays abroad, to visiting far away friend and relatives or on business trips, that the captain up front whom we rarely see, could have been an ex RAF fighter pilot named Les Millgate? Holding in his hands the responsibility for the safety of his crew and hundreds of passengers during so many journeys.

Sitting next to Les at the ODA's recruitment desk at a previous year's air show, I asked him 'what was his favourite aircraft that he had ever flown?' Straight away he said, "Boeing 747, a beautiful aircraft to fly." I quietly thought of the 1000's of people that he had looked after to deliver them safely to their destinations.

I next met Les last December when he and I plus four others were invited by Esther to give filmed interviews at Duxford for the IWM. <http://olddux.org/filmed-interviews.html> Afterwards, Esther was to provide lunch in the Officers Mess café. Les, looking rather frail, politely declined, and chose to leave early to go home. Saying goodbye as he struggled to rise from his chair then unsteadily walking towards the exit, I offered to escort him to the car park, but being Les, he said that he would be alright and I was not to bother. We all watched him slowly make his way to the door. That was the last time I saw him.

In early August this year, Stan paid a visit to see how Les was getting on. Les's request to Stan was to keep the recruitment table going, to tell the public about us, how we served at RAF Duxford and to tell our stories. Should the IWM allow us to do so, we could rename the table; 'Veterans of Duxford,' perhaps.

Can you imagine that after only four days in the nursing home, Les, being Les, decided this was not for him? That it was not in his nature to be a burden to anyone? That he closed his eyes, offered up a smile, climbed into his 64 Sqn. bent Mk 7 Meteor to seek the freedom of the skies once more until his fuel ran out?

Our dear friend Leslie William Millgate, passed away on the 8th of September 2017. On Friday 22nd of September Les was cremated at Cambridge City Crematorium. Both the Imperial War Museum and the Old Dux Association was well represented.

Following the service all were invited to The Bees in the Wall public house, Whittlesford. Les leaves his wife Dorothy and his two sons Peter and Paul. He also leaves all of us, who feel it was a privilege to have known him.

R.I.P.

Sometimes the words left unsaid, are the loudest in the hearts of others.

Connie Raison (Nee Campbell) 65 Sqn. Stores, d. 13th June 2016.

Mike Hocking 64 Sqn. Pilot 1956-58, d. early September 2017.

Roy Briggs Associate member, d. October 2017.

Ray Barnett Telephonist, d. 12th November 2017.

Les Millgate 64 Sqn. Pilot 1952-55 & 1956-58, a true gentleman.



Remembrance Sunday 12th November

Many members of the Old Dux Association with their guests attended the Remembrance Service at IWM Duxford. The high-light for the ODA was when Kerris Denley who not only provided the wreath together with Colin, but accepted the privilege of laying the wreath on behalf of the ODA.

The Kohima Epitaph (Homage paid to many who gave their lives for us.)

The Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (Kios) (586 – 468 BC) who, after the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, wrote as a memorial to the valiant defenders;

'O stranger, go home and tell the Spartans that we lie here in obedience to their orders.'

The sentiment in the Kohima epitaph is certainly Spartan in tone and the writers were influenced by their classical education. The first of them was written by the Greek scholar J. M. Edmonds (1875 – 1958) for a graveyard in France, circa 1916 during the First World War, which reads;

'When you go home tell them of us, and say 'For your to-morrows these gave their to-day.'

The Kohima Epitaph is the epitaph carved on the Memorial of the 2nd British Division in the cemetery of Kohima (North-East India) and was unveiled at Kohima in November 1944.

The author was Major John Etry-Leal, the G.S.O. II of the 2nd Division. He also was a classical scholar and had almost remembered what J.M. Edmonds had written before... His version was read by Billy Bentley of the Burma Star Association.

When You Go Home Tell Them Of Us And Say,

'For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our today.'



Photo credit Jan Dell

James Archibald Findlay MacLachlan (Nickname "One-Armed Mac")

Submitted by Larry Cross

DSO, DFC & Two Bars (b.1 April 1919 – 31 July 1943) was a Royal Air Force fighter pilot and flying ace of the Second World War. MacLachlan was credited with 16 German and Italian aircraft shot down in approximately 250 missions—7 were at night of which two were achieved over Malta in 1941 and 5 over France in 1942.

MacLachlan joined the RAF aged 17 in March 1937. He progressed quickly through flight training and was granted a commission as acting pilot officer on 3 May 1937. The Battle of France began in May 1940, he was serving with No. 88 Squadron flying the Fairey Battle light bomber he was credited with two enemy aircraft. His low-level flying did not impress his observer, Sergeant Hardy, who told a member of the squadron: "I don't want to be killed by that f*****g MacLachlan – I'm going to get recrewed"—the C.O. approved his request.

Surviving the battle MacLachlan transferred to fighter pilot school in the summer 1940. During the Battle of Britain he served with No. 73 Sqn. and No. 145 Sqn. achieving a probable victory during the battle.

In late 1940 he transferred to Malta and joined No. 261 Squadron and by February 1941 he had achieved eight victories (two at night) and was awarded a Bar to his DFC. MacLachlan was wounded in action on 16 February 1941. His arm was so severely damaged it was amputated below the elbow, but he returned to operations in November 1941 with a specially adapted artificial limb. Needing a rest he was posted to the Air Fighting Development Unit at RAF Duxford August 1942. MacLachlan flew as often as he could regardless of the activity. In October 1942 he received notice that he had been selected as an RAF representative to tour the United States lecturing British and American trainee's in United States Army Air Force facilities.

After the Battle of Britain Duxford also became the home of several specialist units, among them the A.F.D.U. & N.F.D.U. Newly acquired Airacobras were posted to Duxford for trials. One of these was No. 601 Squadron, the only RAF squadron to be equipped with the unusual American Bell Airacobra. The Hawker Typhoon was also developed into a formidable low-level and ground attack fighter and in 1942 the first Typhoon Wing was formed here. The first Wing operation - an offensive sweep over Northern France - took place on 20th June 1942.

Through the autumn and early part of '42 the RAF had to take quite a beating and losses of good and experienced pilots mounted. We were desperate to get our hands on a M.E.190 for examination and evaluation, many wild schemes were suggested including one by a well-known test pilot who volunteered to be dropped on a French Luftwaffe base to steal one. Then came a bit of luck, a young German pilot made the classical error of flying "red on black" and instead of arriving back in France found himself in South Wales, landing at Pembrey. His aircraft was intact and after being given technical examination at Farnborough, was handed over to AFDU for comparative testing.

MacLachlan returned from America March 1943 and rejoined the AFDU which had now relocated to Wittering. In April he began trials in the P-51 Mustang, he selected FD442 which became his personal mount.

MacLachlan was not content in his position and pestered his superiors for an operational posting after weeks of practicing air combat with RAF Army Cooperation Command. Reluctantly, AOC Fighter Command, Trafford Leigh-Mallory gave him permission to carry out 'Ranger' operations over occupied France. Since his return MacLachlan had been devising tactics for long-range penetrations into enemy airspace, where Allied fighter aircraft had not operated before in daylight. He proposed to get through the *Luftwaffe* defence belt at low-altitude and consequently trained in low-level navigation by spending hours flying around England at tree-top height. With this in mind, he flew a sortie on the 8th June 1943. The poor weather combined with the sighting of two Fw-190s near Le Tréport forced him to turn for home. The rear-ward vision of the P-51B was limited. Flying alone where enemy aircraft could approach unseen was courting disaster and MacLachlan decided he needed assistance.



Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Page had just arrived at the ADFU. He had been a fighter pilot but was shot down and badly burned on 12th August 1940 during the Battle of Britain. Page was also keen on vengeance and met MacLachlan in the Mess, suggesting a two-fighter patrol. He said that he wanted one German fighter for each of the 15 hospital operations he had endured since 1940. The two pilots began to practice together in two Mustangs. The operation was flown on 29th June 1943 and they took off from RAF Lympne. Page later recalled, "Fine bloody pair we are, going off to tackle the enemy with only one good hand between us!" As the two P-51s crossed over the Seine and reached Rambouillet, they sighted a formation of enemy aircraft. Brief bursts of machine gun fire dispatched four Focke-Wulf 56 trainers, two falling to MacLachlan.

Continued on Page 6.

Cont. from Page 5. They continued their hunt and flying near Bretigny spotted two Ju-88 night fighters or bombers coming into land. MacLachlan destroyed the first and shared the second with Page. The Mustangs retreated when the airfield defences retaliated with gunfire. MacLachlan and Page returned at 1,000 feet and crossed the coast south-west of [Dieppe](#) and crossed between [Brighton](#) and [Newhaven](#).

On 18 July 1943 these two brave pilots repeated the exercise, S/L Page returned but S/L MacLachlan's Mustang was probably hit by ground gunfire and downed over Dieppe, Page had noticed MacLachlan's Mustang suddenly pull up sharply from their tree-top height, by about 1,000 feet. The Mustang then headed towards a small field. MacLachlan touched down three-quarters of the way across and the Mustang ploughed into an orchard at the field's edge which ripped off the wings. Page orbited the crash site several times and considered landing to rescue him but the space was too confined. Page dived at the wreck and took gun-camera footage but could see no signs of life then headed home.

On 30th July S/L MacLachlan was awarded a second Bar to his DFC while S/L Page received his DFC. MacLachlan had been critically injured, the Germans took him prisoner and treated him in a Field Hospital at [Pont-l'Évêque](#). MacLachlan lingered for 13 days before succumbing to his wounds on 31st July 1943. He was buried at Pont-l'Évêque Communal Cemetery, he was just 24 years old. See the full story here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_MacLachlan

The June 2013 Newsletter featured WAAF Sergeant Peggy Snashall, whom I met through Len Thorne a fellow member and who joined the AFDU as a Flt/Sgt in 1942. His item appeared in June 2011 Newsletter. Peggy was very much to the fore of the AFDU's activities and responsible for typing up the reports of the AFDU's findings. Below are entries from her diary.

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

June 29th. S/L MacLachlan 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 MacLachlan was shot down over Dieppe, was captured and died of his wounds. S/L MacLachlan who flew with an artificial arm lost his left arm in the battle over Malta in 1940. R.I.P. James x

Our Last Weekend Together 12th/13th May 2018

Stan Dell

It has become shorthand to refer to our weekend together as The Dinner. In fact, it is much more than that. Many of us gather in The Red Lion on the Saturday afternoon for a good old chin wag, maybe a spot of lunch or a cup of tea.....maybe something stronger, but mostly to meet up with like-minded members to meet new people and have a good old natter. Following that, most retire to their rooms for a rest before meeting in the bar at around 6.30pm for a pre-dinner drink. We usually have dinner at around 7.30pm this is not a posh affair, just a reunion of old friends. All we ask is that the men wear a jacket and tie, apart from that it is a very relaxed weekend.

On Sunday, following a relaxed buffet breakfast, you are free to visit the museum, free being the operative word, we will have your car registration number which entitles you with your named passengers to enter through the old Guardroom and park up as directed. The time is yours until we meet in Air Space at 1pm for the AGM which usually lasts for about 90 mins. Then the Museum is available to you until it closes. We do not expect your relatives and friends to attend the AGM unless they wish to.

Of course, as you are aware, this will be our last Weekend and Dinner together before we disband on the Sunday. We intend to make it even more special than it usually is with entertainment and other surprises, including the best and shortest raffle in our 23-year history.

All this information is aimed at all of you who have never got around to joining us. It really is your last opportunity. We know that some are put off because they don't recognise anyone whom they served with, but honestly, we have no strangers, we are all ex Duxford and have a lot in common so be assured that you will very soon feel part of it all again.

The cost of the weekend is reasonable, the hotel is £56 for a single and £66 for a double occupancy including breakfast. The dinner is £29.50 per head including wine and we do cater for special diets and religious requirements. We are not restricted to members, so bring your family, friends and as some do, your carers. The evening is not really suitable for children. The hotel has ground floor rooms and a lift.

Having read all this, if you have any doubts about anything that might prevent you from joining us please contact either Kerris or Stan, we will be happy to help and advise. Kerris Denley (Secretary) 01590 645495 kadenley@btinternet.com or Stan Dell (Treasurer) 01494 863428 janstandell1@btinternet.com.

The dinner application form will be attached to the next News Letter in March.

Again, the committee wish you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you in May 2018. 6