



NEWSLETTER

September 2017

www.olddux.org

Compiled by Alan Garner



Dear Members,

Yet again exciting things have been happening, so sit back with a glass of something warming and enjoy.

DX17

On arriving at Duxford, Anthea and I met Stan Dell in the Officers Mess car park where we were gifted with a rather large frozen trout, a good start for what turned out to be a wonderful day. The day was 15th June 2017, we had responded to the invitation from The Imperial War Museum to the opening of DX17. We took refreshments in the café where we were joined by Kerris and Colin Denley but were sadly without Jan Dell, Les and Dot Millgate, as Les and Jan were unwell. This made our small group even smaller. At the agreed time, we all drove over the A505 entering through the guardroom staff entrance and parked up between hangars 4 and 5.



The DX17 venue was setup on the far side of hangar 4 under a very large temporary canvas marquee. As we arrived Pamela Linden (IWM London) proceeded to ply us with yellow stickers which turned out to identify us as part of the first group for entry into the darkened tent. About 50 or more people were present for the opening which began with Diane Lees the Director General of the IWM who took the stand outside the marquee and welcomed everyone. She explained the importance of the DX17 project and gave praise by giving compliments to various IWM staff, in particular was Alicia Gurney (Head of Master Planning and Engagement) who played a major role in the project. Diane Lees then introduced Nick Ryan who created the sound sculpture, which was to recognise and celebrate the centenary of Duxford as a station; 1917 to 2017. He explained in great detail what it was all about

and gave credit to his many colleagues for their assistance in creating the sculpture. Then His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent gave a short address before declaring the DX17 project open, then proceeded to cut an imaginary ribbon with his fingers which brought a smile to everyone's face.

HRH The Duke of Kent has been President of the Board of Trustees for Imperial War Museums since 1974.



Picture by Jan Dell on a subsequent visit

We were provided with high quality headsets together with a cup device wired to the headsets. After some instructions, we entered the darkened marquee to find an eerie mist pervading the darkness. Then subtle lights came on. It was like walking under the fuselage underbelly of a large futuristic aircraft which displayed many small beams of light plus many lit-up portholes. We placed the cup devices under the mini search lights or near the lit-up portholes and found our headsets come to life with words being spoken from each point of light of past airmen describing their experiences. There were 100 voices available to listen to, one for every year of the centenary, plus appropriate background sounds of aircraft. A truly mystical and high-tech experience. I could not get to every point of light in time allowed and so missed those of the ODA who were featured. Esther Blaine told me afterwards that both Stan, myself and other Old Dux members were there somewhere. I did go again at the July Air Show, where I was on duty on the ODA recruitment desk.

Afterwards, we were treated to a fine lunch in the newly modernised workshop café, courtesy of the IWM. Finally, we left Stan to deal with the follow-up press meeting (who better), then took a slow walk around the concourse with Kerris and Colin enjoying the sunny weather before heading home. Unfortunately, DX17 will be taken down this month of September, even though Stan tried his best to get an extension into October.

Filmed Interviews last December Follow-up

Esther Blaine and Larry Cross got together early last December, remember? Esther wanted to organise filmed interviews with six of our members, with Larry as the recruiting officer. Well, we now have them on the Old Dux web site. So why not check out our web site; address above, and take a look at the interviews. And visit the message board and photo galleries. Then why not also post a message and join the regular crew. Members can Log in by using the user name **exdux** and pass word **guardroom**. Enjoy and have some fun.

Battle of Britain Air Show 23rd – 24th September

Ed.

Advance ticket-only event. Book before Sunday 10 September 2017 and save with Early Bird prices – book online. Early Bird offer is applied at booking only to tickets included in the special promotion. Go here: http://www.iwm.org.uk/airshowpromo/?source=airshows&utm_source=IWM&utm_campaign=380ed84331-2017_7_26_BOB_Dunkirk&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f618c86a94-380ed84331-106063441&mc_cid=380ed84331&mc_eid=00e6386855

The **Bristol Blenheim** will be flying at the air show, and is a truly unique aircraft. At the start of the Second World War the RAF had more of this type than any other aircraft, and this is now the only remaining airworthy Blenheim left in the world, and well worth seeing it perform in the air.

There's free access and parking to this next air show if you can volunteer to help on the recruitment desk for a few hours. Although we will not be recruiting. We will be enjoying speaking with the many visitors that come by who always are fascinated with the many experiences we can share with them. We start at 9.45am and finish around 2pm in time for the air show. Why not volunteer if you can and enjoy the whole day. Just call Stan Dell on 01494 863428 for details. It's going to be an extra special weekend, See DX17 before it goes.

Just a Reminder

Stan Dell

To remind you that our half yearly meeting will take place over the weekend of **October 7th/ 8th this year**. For those who want to stay over at the Red Lion/Holiday Inn, we have secured a room rate of £56 single or £66 double including breakfast. When booking please state Old Dux booking and make sure they don't send you off to Central Booking who know nothing about this. On the evening before, Saturday 7th it is usual for an increasing number of us to gather in the bar in the Red Lion at around 6 pm and have an informal meal from the restaurant menu at about 7 pm. There is no need to book the meal, but it is helpful if you let me know that you are coming because we can sort out a suitable table. All are very welcome, and more the merrier! The phone number to book your room is 01223 497070. If you want to let us know that you will be joining us for our informal meal please call Stan on 01494 863428 or mail on janstandell@btinternet.com

The meeting itself will take place on Sunday in the usual room in Airspace at 1 pm prompt. There will be a talk given by Daniel Francis of the Royal British Legion, telling of the fine work they do for ex-service personnel. Those who are 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 **29th September**. Tel. Bob on 01554 890 520 or email sl542@hotmail.co.uk (that's sl542..not sl.)

Entry to the airfield is through the guardroom gate to collect passes, 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 like to thank Kay Cooper (IWM) for her continued help in providing these facilities for us.

Last Annual Dinner

Stan Dell

The details of our LAST ANNUAL DINNER on **Saturday May 12th 2018** are being worked on now and when our negotiations with the Red Lion/Holiday Inn have been concluded we will advise details in the March 2018 News Letter. In the meantime, you have the date. It is your last chance to attend and it's the Centenary of The Royal Air Force, so please make it good for everyone by attending for your first time if you haven't been before, coming again if you haven't for a long time and of course it will be good to see all you regulars again. This time however, why not bring your children or grandchildren, give them a nice night out, then the following morning after breakfast, a tour of Duxford to show them where you served. We will make sure that you all feel welcome. The hotel has a lift and also ground floor rooms and we will ensure that if you have any special needs, we will be able to help.

Remembrance Sunday

Kerris Denley

The ceremony will be held **Sunday 12th Nov.** at 1300 hrs. in the Airspace hangar - Conservation Hall. This will be followed at 1400 hrs. with the poppy drop over the airfield. The public gain free entry to IWM Duxford on this Sunday, therefore because of heavy traffic it is advisable to arrive early. Lucy Cengiz Events Officer at IWM requires the numbers 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 Association wreath, please let Kerris know by **28th Oct.** Tel. 01590 645 495 or email kadenley@btinternet.com

Gone but not forgotten R.I.P.

Gone on their final postings are: **Buzz Robinson** Air radio 1956-58. Founder Member. Passed away in January.
Ken Birks Fire Section 1946-52 no further details.

19 Squadron's Last of the Few

Ken Wilkinson DFC, RAF Spitfire pilot, died on Monday 31st July. One of the last survivors of "The Few" and the last of 19 Sqn. He was 99. Born in 1918, Ken Wilkinson flew his Spitfire during the 1940 air battle between Britain and its allies against Nazi Germany. Of 19 Sqn. based at RAF Fowlmere, Ken remarked 'that it was a pretty basic place and we had to go to RAF Duxford for a proper bath'!

The Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial

Jan & Stan Dell

The Cemetery and Memorial is a manifestation of the American peoples' tribute to their fallen heroes. From every aspect, it is visually commanding and for many it brings home for the first time a huge sense of the American sacrifice during World War II.

The Cambridge American Cemetery honours the service and sacrifice of Americans who served overseas, particularly in the United Kingdom. Britain served as an advanced base for Americans preparing to assist in the liberation alongside British and other Allies. The Cemetery and Memorial honours more than 8500 Americans who died in operations based out of the UK. These include those who battled to secure the Atlantic, those who fought in the skies and those who participated in the invasion of the Normandy Beaches and throughout Europe.

This is the only WW II American Cemetery in the UK. The 30.5-acre site was donated by the University of Cambridge and a grateful government authorised the use of the land as a burial ground in perpetuity without charge or taxation. The site which is on the slope of a north facing hill, is an approximate triangle with a seventy-two-foot flag pole at its apex. Two malls which frame the grave plots extend from the flag pole. The Great Mall stretches eastward from the flag pole to the Memorial Building at the opposite end. Flanking the south side of the Great Mall is the Wall of the Missing, adjacent to this are The Reflecting Pools. Looking from the Memorial, the flag pole at the other end is perfectly captured in the mirror of the pools. The West Mall runs northward from the flag pole to the cemetery's lower entrance. The triangle is completed at its base by the Madingley Road.

The gravestones are laid out in concentric rows between the Malls, starting narrowly at the top of the hill by the flag pole, and extending in length as they come down the widening triangle to the base. There are eight rows of gravestones totalling 3,812, of these 80 are marked by Stars of David for the Jewish faith and 24 of unknown name or faith who like all the others, are marked with the Latin Cross. All of these white marble headstones have the backs inscribed with the service number of the decedents. The front bears the name, rank, US State of birth and the date of their passing. As in all American Battle Monument Commission Cemeteries the burials are not separated by rank, officers and enlisted personnel are interred side by side.

The Wall of the Missing is 472 feet in length and made of Portland Stone. On the wall are recorded the names and particulars of 5127 personnel listed as Missing in Action, Lost or Buried at Sea. They come from every State of the Union and the District of Columbia. Bronze rosettes beside a name indicate those whose remains have subsequently been recovered and identified. Four statues, a Soldier, Airman, Sailor and Coast Guardsman stand guard over The Wall of the Missing.

The Cemetery commemorates one Medal of Honour recipient and three sets of brothers. Leon R Vance jr. is the Medal of Honour recipient. His commendation states that he displayed conspicuous gallantry on June 5th 1944 as command pilot of a heavy bomb group on a mission to destroy German coastal positions in France. He was wounded but survived. Tragically, Lt Col Vance's air evacuation plane bound for home in the US disappeared without trace on July 26th 1944.

Of the three sets of brothers, five of their names are inscribed on The Wall of the Missing, the sixth is buried in the Cemetery. Joseph P Kennedy jr. brother of the late President John F. Kennedy, Glen Miller (listed as Alton G) Major US Army Air Services and the crew of the USS Rieben Jones, the first American warship lost in the Battle of the Atlantic, are all recorded here.

Picture by Jan Dell



Another impressive building is The Memorial. The whole design, inside and out, is a carefully crafted intertwined arrangement of symbols to those who fought as well as those who were lost. To interpret and fully appreciate the fullest extent of this complex tribute it is best visited with a guide, although a great deal of information can be absorbed without one, as The Memorial incorporates the widest sphere of the American involvement in the European War. Above the entrance are the words GRANT UNTO THEM O LORD ETERNAL REST while below the bronze rope railing on the north face balcony, it states IN GRATEFUL TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICE AND IN PROUD MEMORY OF THEIR VALOR. Within The Memorial is a small devotional chapel, a quiet peaceful place in which to gather the many thoughts, emotions and experiences captured throughout your visit.

Many visitors who wander along The Wall and then onto the lawns among the gravestones, are at first intrigued by who these people were, and many admit to a compulsion to read every name on the wall and to visit every headstone. They explain they feel that not to, is to respect some and not the others who also gave their lives. Quite often a pebble will be found balanced on a Star of David head stone, this is a Jewish way of letting others know that a grave has been visited. Many graves still receive flowers from the US and several hundred Americans still visit every year.

Intriguingly, there were about 40 Americans who served with the RAF, 8 of them Battle of Britain pilots who were Killed in Action but not buried at Cambridge. This is because for technical legal reasons they could not serve as Americans while America was not formally at war. This meant that to fight for the British, Americans had to forfeit their nationality and if they were killed could not be buried in the American Cemetery or recognised on The Wall. That all changed when America entered the war on the 19th December 1941. The remains of those who served as such are buried at Brookwood the American WW I Cemetery 28 miles SW of London. An apparent contradiction of this is that you will find a cross bearing the name Warren D Pearl with the rank of Flying Officer Royal Air Force. A possible explanation for this apparent anomaly is that Pearl was born in UK and then soon after was moved to the USA where he lived until returning to join the RAF. It is possible that he retained both US and British citizenship. Another possibility is that as he was killed on March 23rd 1943, just 16 months after the Americans entered the war, he may have been in a transitional gap between the changeover from RAF to USA. As the USAF was stationed at Duxford from 1943 to 45 it is probable the records will reveal that US airmen from Duxford are also buried or recorded here.

The concept of the Cambridge American Cemetery must have evolved very quickly after peace was declared, up until that time Americans were interred in temporary graves in Cambridge, Brookwood and Northern Ireland. Commencing in 1949 the remains were gradually brought to and stored at Cambridge where they were buried in their final resting place, culminating in the Dedication and opening of the cemetery to the public on July 16th 1956. As this was taking place just a few miles away from Duxford when many of our current Old Dux Association members were stationed there, it is a matter of speculation how many of us were aware of this significant and beautiful tribute to our allies.

Just recently, on Memorial Day, the staff of the cemetery dressed just over a half of all the graves and names on The Wall with photographs of the deceased, it was a wonderful gesture which translated graves into real people with faces and wives and families. Approximately three thousand people attended and the interest generated more photographs which will be displayed at a future event.

Just across from the flag pole is The Visitor Centre which opened in 2014 where you can explore events relating to individuals who are memorialised here through a permanent exhibition. The Centre which is free and open to the public will hold your attention for approximately an hour of exploration. It contains many artefacts and individual histories, all relating to those interred or remembered in the cemetery. It is difficult to make a judgement on whether to visit the Centre at the beginning or end of your visit. Most go to the centre first and then return after touring the site as it seems to round off the total experience. Another reason for returning is to meet the knowledgeable staff. Both Tracy Haylock and Suzie Harrison were extremely helpful in producing material both printed and oral for this article, and they are keen to help visitors appreciate the meaning and value of this tribute.

Finally, every part of this memorial faces the 72-foot flag pole bearing the Stars and Stripes. The flag is raised at 9 am each morning and lowered at "taps" at 4 pm, a duty that is carried out by the permanent cemetery staff. While this is doubtless considered an honour, it is worth recalling that the flag pole is on the top of a north facing hill and raising and lowering a very large flag is probably at times a memorable experience!

Apart from honouring the dead, our allies, many not much more than boys, who came to support us in our hour of need, and lost their young lives, the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial is a place of interest, history and beauty. Many who visit, return, each visit a different experience.

After the Victory in Europe in a broadcast to the nation, PM Winston Churchill said "I shall make it clear at this moment that we never failed to recognise the immense superiority of the power used by the United States in the rescue of France and the defeat of Germany"

Cambridge American Cemetery Telephone: 01954 210350 e-mail: cambridge@abmc.gov

Madingley Road, Coton, Cambridge, CB23 7PH, off Junction 13 M11

Open 9 am - 5 pm daily except December 25th and January 1st.

Refreshments at Coton Garden Centre, Turn left out of Car Park, 1 mile.

<https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/cambridge-american-cemetery#.WYNL4YWcFaQ>

World War II Aircraft Grounded

Ed.

More than half of the air worthy world war II aircraft flown by the RAF are grounded as of August last. This is because of a fault highlighted during a routine inspection of the Merlin engine belonging to one of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) Hurricanes, which indicated a safety issue.

The BBMF's Lancaster bomber, four Spitfires and two Hurricanes, which we all know are all powered by the famous Merlin engines will not be flying until they have been checked for airworthiness.

The official statement issued on 17th August this year stated: [Twitter page:- RAF BBMF @RAFBBMF Aug 17](#)
A routine inspection has highlighted a fault with one of the Merlin engines in a Hurricane aircraft. We are currently investigating the fault and as a precaution, flying Merlin engine powered aircraft has been paused. We are still operating Griffon & Gypsy powered aircraft, including Spitfires and Chipmunks. We realise the disappointment this will be to our many supporters; however, safety remains our paramount concern.

This has caused the cancellation of various flying displays; however, the September Air Show at Duxford will still feature the Bristol Blenheim, powered by its two Bristol Mercury XV radial engines; something to look forward to.

The Bristol Blenheim is operated by the Aircraft Restoration Co. at Duxford and a superb job they've done too.

They report; The Mercury engines were overhauled in house being stripped down to their component parts and checked for wear and damage and reassembled. All ancillary items such as magnetos, carburettors, pumps and the many items that make up the engines were examined and checked for airworthiness before being fitted. After 11 years of painstaking work, on the 20th November 2014 Chief Pilot John Romain and James Gilmour as Flight Engineer took Blenheim MkI(f) on its maiden flight at Duxford for a successful 26-minute test flight, following some minor adjustments a further two test flights were carried out. [Actually, its maiden flight must have been in 1934 when it was first manufactured. Ed.]

The Blenheim received its full Permit to fly at the end of 2014, enabling the aircraft to be ready for the 2015 season. You can see it at the Battle of Britain Air Show in its 23 Squadron RAF colour scheme. See page 2.

Encouragement Goes a Long Way

Ray Lawrence MBE Ex 65 Sqn 1956-58

I spent ten years on Fighter Command and then transferred to Rotary and spent my final years as unit test pilot and enjoyed every minute of that new role. One particular incident still gives me great satisfaction. During test flying I was usually accompanied by one of the lads from the hangar. When the testing was over I would encourage them to try some 'hands on' whilst returning to base.

One young Corporal was very keen and intimated that he would really have loved a flying career, but thought it not possible. He was flying the Gazelle as well as any student I had had before so I advised him to go to Cranwell, bite his lip whilst suffering the hassle, and then erupt into the real Royal Air Force, and flying training.

A few years later, my youngest son was a Tornado man at Lossie and was approached by a pilot from the other Tornado squadron "Is Ray Lawrence your dad"? Yes, it was the same guy! I still get a warm glow of satisfaction to think that a few casual words of encouragement made such a difference to his future.

Note. Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), what does it mean?

Awarded for an outstanding achievement or service to the community. This will have had a long-term, significant impact and stand out as an example to others.

Slower Older Smarter

The C-130 was lumbering along when a cocky F-16 flashed by. The jet jockey decided to show off. The fighter pilot told the C-130 pilot, 'watch this!' and promptly went into a barrel roll followed by a steep climb. He then finished with a sonic boom as he broke the sound barrier. The F-16 pilot asked the C-130 pilot what he thought of that. The C-130 pilot said, 'That was impressive, but watch this!'

The C-130 droned along for about 5 minutes and then the C-130 pilot came back on and said: 'What did you think of that?' Puzzled, the F-16 pilot asked, 'What the heck did you do?' The C-130 pilot chuckled. 'I stood up, stretched my legs, walked to the back, took a leak, then got a cup of coffee and a sandwich. When you are young and foolish - being flash may seem great! When you get older and smarter - comfort and dull is not such a bad thing! Us oldies understand this, it's called S.O.S. - Slower, Older, Smarter....'

Three Girls Named Smith

The year is 1952, were you there and do you remember these three girls named Smith, they are not related? Here they are sleeved rolled up ready for another hard days' work, pulling one of those heavy battery trucks under the tail of a 64 Sqn. Gloster Meteor at RAF Duxford. From left to right we have LAC Edna Smith aged 19 from Stroud near Gloucester then Jean Smith 19 from Nottingham and SAC Josephine Smith 22 from Battersea. Thinking back to those days, do you recognise the tall brunette on the right? Yes, it's our own Jose Warwick (nee Smith) electrical mechanic 64 Sqn.

Members of the Women's Royal Airforce (WRAF) have graced the many RAF bases around the globe, undertaking vital and challenging roles alongside the men.

The Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF)

The Women's Royal Air Force was the women's branch of the Royal Airforce. It existed in two separate incarnations, from 1918 to 1920 and from 1949 to 1994.

The first Women's Royal Air Force was an auxiliary organization of the Royal Air Force which was founded in 1918. The original intent of the WRAF was to provide female mechanics in order to free up men for service in World War 1. However, the organization saw huge enrollment, with women volunteering for positions as drivers and mechanics and filling other wartime needs. This first WRAF was disbanded in 1920. The last veteran from this era was for a while thought to be Gladys Powers, who died in 2008, but Florence Green, who died in February 2012, was subsequently found to be the last-known surviving WRAF veteran.

On 1 February 1949, the name was revived when the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, which had been founded in 1939, was renamed the Women's Royal Air Force. The WRAF and the RAF grew closer over the following decades, with increasing numbers of trades opened to women.

On 1 April 1994, the WRAF formally merged with the RAF, marking the full integration of women into the air force. In 45 years women had progressed from a temporary wartime support role to become full members of the world's oldest independent air force.

Women of the ATA

Women of the Air Transport Auxiliary made a significant contribution to the outcome of the second world war.

Instrument flying was not taught, but the service would have ground to a halt, according to Giles Whittell in his book *Spitfire Women of World War II* (2007), if pilots had not broken rules forbidding them to fly in bad weather.

The ATA, with headquarters at White Waltham in Berkshire, had by the end of the war delivered 308,567 aircraft, including 57,286 Spitfires, 29,401 Hurricanes, and 9,805 Lancasters.

One example was Maureen Dunlop who mastered the controls of 28 different single engine and 10 multiengine aircraft types, which also included the Hawker Typhoon, Hawker Tempest, Avro Anson, Mustang, Bristol Blenheim and Vickers Wellington.

Women had to have a minimum of 500 hours' solo flying before joining the ATA, twice as much as the 250 hours originally laid down in September 1939 for the first members, all men.

164 female members of the wartime Air Transport Auxiliary doing their duty of transporting aircraft between factories and military airfields and of which one in ten pilots of both men and women lost their lives, shows how skilled and brave they had to be. The women pilots shared equally in the losses – many having to call the "Mayfair 120" search, rescue and salvage number after crashing, or never being heard from again.

Editors thanks to all those members and I do include 64 Sqn. who have so generously contributed.

