



NEWSLETTER

March 2018 www.olddux.org Compiled by ALAN GARNER



The Special Year

This is a special year in more ways than one, first it's the centenary year of the Royal Air Force, one hundred years that we have been a part of. It is also the year for the Old Dux Association to come together at the official Annual Dinner in person or in thought for the last time. The RAF Centenary Silver Proof Five Pound Coin shown above says it all. Three aircraft specially selected to demonstrate the developments of the RAF over the last 100 years. The Sopwith Camel, Supermarine Spitfire and Lockheed Lightning II.

The Sopwith Camel

The Sopwith Camel was a British First World War single-seat biplane fighter aircraft introduced on the Western Front in 1917. It was developed by the Sopwith Aviation Company as a successor to the earlier Sopwith Pup and became one of the most iconic fighter aircraft of the First World War.

The Camel's predecessor, the Sopwith Pup, was no longer competitive against newer German fighters such as the Albatros D.III; consequently the Camel was developed specifically to replace the Pup.

Early in its development, the new aircraft was simply referred to as the "Big Pup". A metal fairing over the gun breeches, intended to protect the guns from freezing at altitude, created a "hump" that led pilots to call the aircraft "Camel". However, the aircraft was never officially designated with this name.

By the time that production came to an end, approximately 5,490 Camels of all types had been built.

Major William Barker's Sopwith Camel (serial no. B6313, the aircraft in which he scored the majority of his victories) was used to shoot down 46 aircraft and balloons from September 1917 to September 1918 in 404 operational flying hours, more than any other single RAF fighter.

Supermarine Spitfire

The Supermarine Spitfire served in every theatre of world war II and was produced in more variants than any other British aircraft.

By war's end the Spitfire had been produced in more than 20 fighter versions, powered by Merlin engines of up to 1,760 horsepower. In late 1943 Spitfires powered by Rolls-Royce Griffon engines developing as much as 2,050 horsepower began to enter service.

When production ceased in 1947, 20,334 Spitfires of all versions had been produced, most being equipped with the merlin engine, leaving 2,053 of them with the Griffon-powered versions.

When you see a Spitfire, do you also think of the unsung Hurricane, (they were credited with shooting down more than 1,500 Luftwaffe aircraft in the critical first year of the war, a total barely exceeded by all other British aircraft combined) also, a thought for all those aircrews, both past and future from all nationalities? We will not see the next hundred years, we can only hope that those that do, make it, to celebrate peace.

The MOD has taken delivery of Lockheed Martin F-35B Joint Strike Fighters

The UK has taken delivery of 9 Lightning aircraft to date which together with a number of RAF personnel are stationed in the USA. The first aircraft are expected to arrive at Marham in mid-2018, destined to operate from established land bases and the new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers and to be known as the Lightning II. The Lightning II is a fifth-generation short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) multi-role aircraft.

In mid-2018, 617 (Dambusters) Squadron will reform and will be the first RAF Squadron to be equipped with the Lightning II aircraft. The Squadron will return to the UK towards the end of the summer and will be based at RAF Marham in Norfolk. The Operational Conversion Unit will remain in the USA until 2019 when it will then return to the UK and join 617 Squadron at RAF Marham. In 2023 the second squadron, No. 809 Naval Air Squadron will also form at the station. At least two further operational squadrons are expected to be established, one for each service, all of which are expected to be based at Marham. The RAF announced on 5 July 2017 that No. 207 Squadron will be the Operational Conversion Unit for the Lightning II.

The next hundred years begins...

Our Last Dinner Saturday May 12th 2018

Stan Dell

Red Lion Whittlesford, SATURDAY 12th MAY 6.30 FOR 7.30 PM

The cost of the weekend is reasonable, dinner is £29.50 pp including wine. As usual we have arranged a special rate for accommodation at £56 for a single and £66 for a double/twin room, at either the Red Lion or the Holiday Inn Express. The Holiday Inn has ground floor rooms and a lift to all floors. All rooms are en-suite with complimentary tea and coffee facilities. The price includes a self-service breakfast with scrambled egg, sausages and plenty of toast, juices, tea and coffee. You are responsible for booking your own room, the telephone number is 01223 497070. Please state that it is an Old Dux Association booking and ask them to confirm that the rate is £56/£66 and if you are not given one, please ask for a confirmation number.

We are not restricted to members, so bring your family, friends and as some do, your carer. The evening is not really suitable for children. The hotel has ground floor rooms and a lift.

The Booking Form is attached to this News Letter.

From indications already received we are expecting a cracking turnout. So please help Kerris and Stan by getting your applications in early. You will not be risking anything by applying today. Dinner cheques are not cashed until a couple of days before the dinner, and your hotel is on a free cancellation basis until a couple of days before the event. So, you will not lose out financially unless you cannot make it at the very last minute.

However, this is going to be a busy and varied night, the organisation is complex, we have table plans to make to suit you, we have menus to plan for the Red Lion, and then we have to match those to the tables. Apart from this we have offered to work with you individually and match your special needs/ requirements and we are pleased to do this. So please order early to give us a chance to get it right for YOU. We need your earliest cooperation to get as much planning complete as early as possible. We know it will change through unforeseen circumstances, but the earlier we get the structure the easier it becomes. We want to make it enjoyable for all, so please, please, book early. Today would be better. If you have doubts or worries that are holding you back just contact Stan on Tel. 01494 863428 or email janstandell1@btinternet.com. We can sort it out!

The hotel has no other significant events on that night, but it is a target accommodation for local weddings and events, so don't leave booking to chance. When you book please ensure that they understand that it is an **Old Dux booking** to get the correct rate.

Finally, when you have posted your application form, either telephone or e mail Stan to let him know to expect your booking. If it gets lost in the post and we don't know about it, it is almost a lost cause on the night. But if we are expecting it and it doesn't turn up, we can check it out with you ahead of the day.

It will be a great week end, we are all looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible. Don't forget, there are no strangers, we are united by our love of RAF Duxford.

All the details of the dinner are on the Dinner Application Form at the end of this News Letter. So PLEASE book your room if you need accommodation and send in your completed Dinner Application form NOW. The wine on the tables is paid for from the proceeds of the raffle; please can we ask you to provide the raffle prizes.

With our best wishes, Kerris and Stan on behalf of the Old Dux Committee.

The Last AGM

On Sunday the 13th May the AGM will start at 1pm sharp in the usual room in the Airspace building. Don't forget to indicate on the Dinner Booking form if you are planning to attend. Remember, for the AGM, enter through the guardroom gate, report to the security kiosk then turn left and drive just beyond the Bailey bridge road which is to your left and park on the grass on your left. For anyone attending Sunday only, please still use the dinner booking form where appropriate.

A word From Last Year

4094569 Cpl (Acting Paid) Peter Gibbard

Dear Friends, firstly, if you were at the Dinner and or the AGM last year, my thanks and gratitude for making it a great occasion. Also, my apologies if I disappeared without saying farewell and thank you. Secondly, for those of you unable to be there, be sure you were in our thoughts. Every time I don the Blazer, I remember, and remind others of the time Alex pushed me in a wheelchair around Duxford. The chair wore a hole in my blazer that is there to this day! Similarly, I have to remind people of the trips on the back of "George" Hearn's Motorbike. He took me home to Watford, door to door. I still owe him for the petrol! Another memory of a more general nature concerned the T.V. Room above the NAAFI. Always in complete darkness, until the "Duty Corporal" came to close it at the end of the evening. The decent ones (like me) always gave plenty of warning before switching the lights on. Oh well happy days, best regards to all....

The Emperor Of Ethiopia Visits Duxford

by Peter F Rogers

This photograph was taken by the Station Photographer on the occasion of the visit to Duxford by HRH Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, on 10th October 1954. It was later published in "Flypast", October 2016 edition, and is shown here by courtesy of Key Publishing. The two on the Emperor's left are Charles Maughan, OC 65 Sqn, and Jack Garden, OC 64 Sqn. Behind Jack Garden is, Gp. Cpt. James Rankin the Station Commander; to his right is Air Marshal Sir Dermot Boyle, CinC Fighter Command. The figure standing to attention in the left foreground is Tony "Pots" Chambers of 64 Sqn who later lost his life flying a Kuwaiti Air Force Hunter over the Gulf.



For me, the Emperor's visit was not one of my finer moments. When I joined 64 Sqn in March 1954 I knew that, once I had been declared "operational" I would certainly get lumbered with a secondary duty, the bane of every young pilot's life. To pre-empt the event, I volunteered to write the monthly Form 540 – the "Operational Record". It was a doddle – at the end of the month add up the flying hours, chuck in a few words about exercise flying, postings etc, get it typed, stick it under the Boss's nose, job done. Unfortunately, there was no law against holding more than one secondary duty. I was therefore dismayed when Boss Garden informed me that I was to be Messing Officer for the Officer's Mess. What had I done wrong to deserve this? I was only slightly mollified by the Boss saying he wanted somebody who could do the job properly.

Messing Officer was the worst of all secondary duties. You were constantly the butt of everybody's ill-humour; the so-called Messing "Suggestion" book always contained a long litany of complaints which had to be answered: "my egg was hard boiled", "the coffee was cold this morning", "why do we always have to have dabs for lunch on Fridays", and so on *ad nauseam*. I particularly hated the routine pantry stock check. I would kick the door to give the cockroaches time to scarp – but I never saw one; the kitchen was always kept scrupulously clean.

When it was announced that the Emperor Haile Selassie would have lunch in the Mess I knew I would end up as pig-in-the-middle – and so it came to pass. I think it was the PMC who wrote the seating plan: top table for the Brass, lesser minions down the two legs and the *hoi polloi* at the ends – 64 on one leg and 65 on the other. The Command Caterers took it upon themselves to decide on the menu but, to the fury of our Flt Sgt chef, they kept changing it. Eventually they settled on roast turkey and the rest of the stuff which went with it. Turkey at that time was a bit of a luxury. I don't think I had ever eaten it – and I didn't on this occasion. A couple of days before the event, crates of the Air Ministry Silver Plate arrived. This slightly battered survival of pre-war years was for the top table only; it had to be checked and signed for – by me of course. At the last minute the Command Accountants authorised the provision of cognac and cigars on a sale or return basis. The cognac came from the bar stock but I got the cigars from Bacons. Bacons, situated on the corner of the Market Square and Rose Crescent in Cambridge is, alas, no more. It was very much an up-market tobacconist where you were served with old fashioned courtesy. An aroma of mahogany, sandalwood and expensive tobacco greeted you on entry but it was not the sort of place you'd nip into for a packet of fags.

Come the day, I had briefed the staff to recover the cognac and cigars as soon as the top table had left. I had elected to hang loose rather than join the lunch party - but as it was clear that I was getting in people's way in the kitchen, I stayed in the ante room and toyed with a crossword. Two of the Emperor's bodyguard guarded the door – magnificent fellows with spear, lion skin cape and elaborate bonnets they appeared at least eight feet tall. For a moment, I thought I ought to be sociable and chat to them but the sight of those spears put me off.

As soon as the dining room door opened I legged it through the kitchen into the dining room in an attempt to secure, at least, the cigars. Too late – the *hoi polloi* had pounced and already the cognac was being necked at an alarming rate and a blue-grey haze of expensive tobacco smoke was beginning to drift across the room. Later that afternoon I was dismayed to learn that a fork from the Air Ministry silver plate was missing.

Cont. on page 4

It was a couple of days before the brown stuff hit the fan. An irate civilian from Air Ministry regarded the loss of that fork to be a crime comparable to stealing the Crown Jewels. I was to report on how (my) negligence had allowed this loss to occur. A Board of Inquiry seemed likely and the way the man spoke a court martial might ensue. Next, the Command Accountants were crawling all over my back demanding to know how I had neglected to safeguard the unbelievably expensive cigars which, now they told me, were only meant to be for show. It sounded to me as though a stoppage of pay would be the least I could suffer. But then, after a couple of days with my back to the wall, it all went very quiet and I suspect the Station Commander had stepped in to sheath the Sword of Damocles poised above my head.

Ah well, I thought, there might be a hint of silver lining to this cloud. After all this trouble there is no way that I could continue as Messing Officer. Wrong. It was many months before I handed over to some poor soul from 65 Sqn. And I never did get to see, let alone meet, the Emperor.

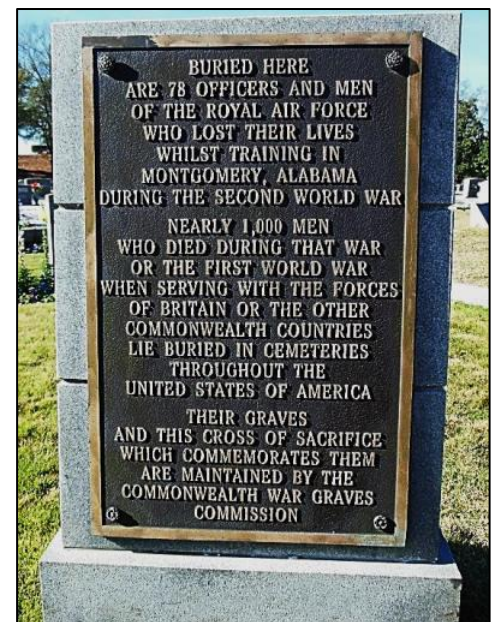
Commonwealth War Grave In North America

Peter F Rogers

I was very pleased to see Jan & Stan Dell's piece on the Madingley Cemetery in the September Newsletter. Many years ago, I took a group of visitors from the Pentagon to see it. I thought it might be appropriate to follow the Dells' with a few words about the largest Commonwealth War Grave in North America. It is embedded in the Municipal Cemetery of Montgomery, Alabama and, when I knew it, contained the graves of 55 RAF and 5 French servicemen killed while undergoing training at American bases in the south east of the country during the Second World War. Tragically, seven of those interred died on one night in May 1972 as a result of a disastrously incorrect weather forecast.

In 1980-83 I was on an exchange posting with the USAF and served as a member of the teaching faculty of the USAF Air University located at Montgomery. As the senior British officer on the base I was, de facto, the guardian of the Cemetery during my tenure. I alternated with the French Consul in New Orleans in arranging Remembrance Day events.

The Cemetery was, nominally, tended by a local man under contract but he was not always up to the task. The day before one Remembrance Day, two of us cut the grass and tended the graves ourselves. I played host once to a retired Canadian Army major who was the Commonwealth War Graves Commission representative from Ottawa. In addition to negotiating a new care contract he experimented with a chemical cleaner to take out the green stain running below the bronze sword on the memorial cross but it was only partially effective. I was very impressed with the work that he and his colleagues did in North America on behalf of the Commission.



The Remembrance Day service at the Cemetery was always very well attended not only by official service and civilian representatives but by many of the local people. On one occasion we were joined by a bewildered group who had come on a pilgrimage to the singer, Hank Williams, whose hideous marble memorial stood next to our plot.

Now, 34 years on, I see from recent photographs on the web that the site has been enlarged to include the graves of 78 RAF servicemen and 20 Frenchmen and that a memorial plaque has been erected. This, I would imagine has been the result of consolidated smaller War Graves in North America into one site. It looks, too, as though the Hank Williams monstrosity has been moved elsewhere.

I have lost contact with my Montgomery friends but the web photographs show that the graves are as well-kept as ever and I don't doubt that the Remembrance Day service continues to be held every year. <https://www.tracesofwar.com/sights/8275/Commonwealth-War-Graves-Montgomery.htm>

Gone But Not Forgotten R.I.P.

Keith Appleyard Signals-Radio Section 1957-60, d. 10th Sept. 2017.

Val Hodgkinson (twin brother of Wilf) d. 26th Dec. 2017. Val was station adjutant at Duxford.

Alan Goodchild EPAS 1951-52, d. 25th January 2018.

The Happiest Of Landings

Larry Cross

I joined the R.A.F. in January 1952 and after completing my Trade Training as Eng/Mech (T) at R.A.F. St Athan I was posted to 65 Sqn. R.A.F. Duxford in May 1952.

On my first day on the squadron I was paired with Tom Greaves a regular who had seen service in the Sudan and who was posted to Duxford from R.A.F. Linton - on - Ouse, as was 64 & 65 Sqn. en- masse in 1951. The routine was easy going and I remember Tom saying, "you won't find an easier or better station or C.O. than what we have here!" How true that turned out to be. I had signed on for three years and look back on that time as being a new and exciting experience, indeed, considering that I had met Doreen there, the girl I was to marry, as the jewel in the crown.

Shortly after we were married in 1955 Tom was demobbed from Duxford and had obtained a position with Armstrong Whitworth Coventry, as my parents now had a spare bedroom they agreed to take Tom in as a paying guest, a most satisfactory arrangement for all. The years flew by, as they do, during which time we had raised three wonderful sons, John, Martin and Russell.

It was on the 9th November 1995 that tragedy struck, when Martin was involved in a R.T.A. whilst out riding his motorbike, and it was only due to the prompt attention he received from the emergency services that he survived. Sadly, he remained in a coma for three months which meant weekly vigils by his bedside until he passed away in February 1996 without regaining consciousness. In the aftermath, the weeks passed by slowly, my health suffered and my spirit was low, somehow Doreen found the strength to cope much better than I. She knew I needed to be rescued from my existence. Hoping that Tom still lived in Coventry she decided to call him and explain the situation. During Doreen's conversation with Tom I returned unexpectedly early from town, quick thinker that she is Doreen greeted me with, "you'll never guess who's on the phone!" the rest as they say is history. Tom was already a member of the Old Dux, although he always secretly disliked the title, however, after all the info that he had given me, Doreen and I booked a trip to the Red Lion one Sunday and arrived to find Tom at breakfast seated with friends, we learned later that they were Bob Hope and Taff Wilkins. Tom stayed over Sunday evening chatting about our Duxford days, what else? On arriving home, the next day we took the first steps and wrote off for an application form to join.

We shall always remember our first official dinner in the officer's mess, it was October and well attended, as they all were there, we were seated with no less than five good friends from the squadron and their wives, how often does that happen on the first visit? The trip to the meeting on Sunday was quite magical, to see the Guardroom, S.H.Q. and the hangars as we passed, all looking as we had remembered them. It was in May 2005 when we were at Duxford again for the meeting, seeing people who were much more familiar to us now. As usual it was quite jovial with a happy buzz in the air until the meeting started. Allan McRae made his usual appeal for a volunteer to lighten his load, after all he had been Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor for some years now. I had always considered Pete Gibbard as a friend so I was surprised when he called out my name, under Allan's fixed gaze, how could I refuse, regardless of the fact that he was ex 64. In a trice I became the new Newsletter Editor, a post I held for 10 years of the 21 years as a member, and shortly afterwards the Old Dux Web Master.

There was no coercion needed when I asked Alan Garner to take on the Newsletter in spite of him being a fairly new member. I had gleaned a little background on Alan and thought he would be great in the job, and so it was. He has done a really magnificent job, as with everything he was tasked to do within the committee. During my time as editor I met and made many friends and was privileged to be part of their lives through the stories and anecdotes submitted. Through our close association with the staff of the I.W.M. which blossomed into something special as the years rolled by, I also discovered a lot of the history of Duxford and of the people who had manned the squadrons that lived, fought and died there. I will never forget and will always be grateful to have experienced the camaraderie that prevailed not only within the squadrons but also within our unique association which I hope will continue if only in our hearts and minds, long after May 14th 2018. I still consider that through my dearest wife, it was finding the Old Dux Association that brought me back from the brink. Doreen and I have visited Duxford more than forty times over the years and for us it has never lost its magic, it must be the spirit of the place.

As the officer's car drove slowly through married quarters one evening, a voice was heard coming through an open window - 'Quick! Emily, lose the whip and get your clothes on, it's the padre.'

Whenever I'm sad, you're there. Whenever I'm having problems you are there. Whenever my life seems out of control, you are there. Let's face it, you're always there. You're just bad luck.

Failure! I don't fail. I succeed in finding out what does not work.

I meant to behave but there were too many other options.

I licked it, so it's mine.

I like chocolate: only too much is enough.

Of course, size matters... Nobody wants a small cup of coffee.

That Wedding

If you recall back in December, Sarah and Daniel (Mr. & Mrs. Francis) were marred! I mean married and wedding photos, courtesy of our own Jan Dell (those Dells always get the best invites) were promised.



The Wedding Cake



The Lovely Wedding Dress



The Happy Couple

They certainly are the happy couple, just take a look at Sarah's elegant fascinator in her hair and her beautiful necklace. (Don't mention the short waistcoat!)

We'd all love to kiss the bride but most of us are not tall enough, Stan tried outside Ely Cathedral but didn't quite make it.

We all know who will be kissing all the ladies at the annual dinner as usual, it's our own long serving chairman Bob, he will need his chair for Sarah.

The dinner weekend brings to a close the Old Dux Association, so we wish all the best of times to our Sarah and Dan.

She said, 'Always believe something wonderful is going to happen. Even with all the ups and downs, never take a day for granted. Smile, cherish the little things and remember to hug the ones' you really love. I may not be wonder woman, but I can do things that make you wonder. Now get off me, I want to watch the tele.'

Well I've finally reached the wonder years. Wonder where I left the car? Wonder where I left my phone? Wonder where my glasses are? Wonder what I came upstairs for? Wonder where I left the wife? Wonder what day it is? Wonder if I've booked the dinner? Better get my finger out!...Sooner rather than later.