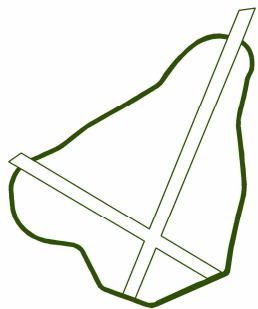


# NEWSLETTER

## Kenley Airfield Friends Group



[www.kafg.org.uk](http://www.kafg.org.uk)

### Newsletter No 6 August 2011

Welcome to our latest newsletter which we hope will make interesting reading.

Members will have received my report for the Annual General Meeting; that is still pretty much up to date. The meeting itself was well attended and the talk and presentation given by David Keen of the RAF Museum, Hendon was particularly well received.

As a result of this we are to take a different direction by hiring a coach to take a party there in September. Cost is less than £20.00 including lunch; full details appear on page 5.

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Commons Superintendent, Bob Warnock, was able to tell us more about the addition to the Heritage Trail and the proposed location of two further boards.

Bob made a further interesting announcement. As we know all the blast pens, including those across Hayes Lane on Dolan's land are scheduled monuments. English Heritage (EH) is becoming increasingly concerned about the level of deterioration in them that seems to have accelerated after the last two hard winters. As Bob rightly pointed out these defensive structures didn't really have any life value when they were built in 1938/39, however they stand today in various degrees of repair with some having been modified, generally the centre spine of the E shape is not there for instance. EH in general does not do restoration work; it usually concentrates on conservation and preservation. EH is very keen to make a bid for Heritage lottery funding to obtain at least £50,000 to carry out the restoration. We are very proud to have been asked to join the team that will make this bid; it is of course written into our constitution that we should join such programmes. We welcome member Scott Lester to join Mike and I on this bid team.

The Fun Day was a good day for us; we spoke to many people and as a result gained quite a lot of new members. The subscription was reduced by the AGM from £5.00 per head to £5.00 per household. Renewals are now due but when you send it please indicate the members of your home that you wish us to include. Our membership listing is confidential to us and it will be shared with no one. We do however; need this detail because our member numbers are our strength. If any of the new members who joined since the AGM would like a copy of The Chairman's Report to the AGM please request it from the Secretary.

*Chris Baguley*



On a glorious Sunday afternoon, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight arrived to deliver their annual visit. Brought forward for various reasons from the Hardest Day anniversary. Attendance for this free five-minute show was the best ever and what a spectacular display it

was; the Lancaster, Hurricane and Spitfire didn't break formation during the four passes over the Tribute as that wonderful sound was enhanced by the sun glistening on the fabric of those wonderful craft.

It was unfortunate that Mike Street who organises this treat for us could not be there, so he asked me to make the final preparations. Wg Cdr Paul Godfrey who flew the Hurricane rang me that morning to say that the Hurricane and Spitfire would make their usual low pass; it was disappointing then that they didn't do so; apparently there were timetabling restrictions over Biggin Hill.

BBMF do not charge us for these annual flypasts because we are a Battle of Britain Station. Soon after I got home the phone rang, it was Sqn Ldr Duncan Mason the Spitfire pilot, asking how our 'event' went to which I was able to respond with a string of laudatory comments. It was nice to have follow-up but he continued with the real reason for his call. He and other members of BBMF are to complete a cross-country bike ride from Lowestoft to St David's Head in West Wales, 400 miles in four days. It is a sponsorship run with a team from the Red Arrows to the benefit of the Royal Air Forces



Association who do so much, quite quietly, for our boys and girls as well as for the more elderly folk.

Now there is a way in which we can show our appreciation of these wonderful free shows. Donations can be made through [http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/400\\_in\\_4](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/400_in_4).

There is the problem of those who want to donate but don't have Internet access. In this case please forward a cheque made out to Chris Baguley and I will make the payment for you. I can't do this through the KAFG account because the Gift Aid benefit of 28p in the pound will be lost. My address is 5 Broad Oak, 1 Cullisden Road, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5LR.

*Chris Baguley*

### **AIR TRAINING CADETS**

The ATC impressed us with a very smart march on and march off before and after the flypast. They also were very helpful at the Fun Day in their usual most respectful and polite manner.



Contrary to most opinion however, the cadets have no funding from the RAF; they are similar to the scouts and have to self-fund everything that can't be met from cadet subscriptions. They are off to their annual summer camp in their aging X-Registration minibus which could be its last journey. Due to its age it will not pass the Low Emission criteria that it has to meet by next year. Modification of the vehicle is ruled out, as it will cost much more than its value. The cadets now have a race against time to fundraise to buy a relatively younger bus as a replacement by next March. They are doing well with a lucrative car boot sale recently and a planned balloon race (Details to follow on that). If you wish to help with a donation please send a cheque made out to "450sqn ATC", please indicate if Gift Aid can be claimed, send it to the address above and we will pass it to their Treasurer.

We are organising a coach outing to the Museum on Thursday 22nd September 2011. We have hired a 46 seater coach. The total cost is **£19.90** per head and includes the following:

A two-hour guided tour of the museum in groups of 12.

A two-course lunch. (Subject to 20+ people requesting it)

Free time to explore the museum at will.

If lunch is not required the cost is **£11.50** per head. If you wish to bring a packed lunch there is an outside picnic area.

**Lunch Menu:**

Glass of Fruit Juice

Roast Chicken Pie & Seasonal Veg.

or Beef Lasagne & Salad

or Fish Pie & Seasonal Veg.

(A Vegetarian option will be available from the hot plate).

Either Fruit Salad or a hot pudding

Please indicate your main course choice when booking, but note that the discounting restricts us to a choice of two of the above so the least chosen item will have to be discarded and an adjustment of choice made.

**Times:** Depart Kenley Airfield Portcullis Club  
9am for 9.30 latest.

Return: Depart Hendon 4pm.

**Parking:** Portcullis Club field behind a locked gate. Note however that The Portcullis Club will not accept any liability.

**Payment:** Please send your cheque made payable to KAFG to Chris Baguley at the address shown on Page 4 as soon as possible so that the coach and guides can be secured.



Please note that, if during events at the memorial, vehicle access onto the airfield is required for the transport of aged or disabled visitors, please contact Sqn Ldr Keith Chandler, OC 615VGS on 07764578781 who will arrange for an escort vehicle to guide you on the "air-side" of the barriers away from the pedestrians.

Irrespective of whether you have an escort vehicle or not, you should also be aware that most domestic car insurance specifically excludes their use on airfields, consequently if you do have an accident of any sort whilst on the airfield it is most likely that you will not be covered and the consequences could be devastating especially if they involve personal injury claims.

Sqn Ldr Keith Chandler RAFVR(T)  
Officer Commanding 615 Volunteer Gliding Squadron

**CHARTWELL CONCERTS**

Members may wish to know of these concerts taking place in the beautifully manicured gardens of Chartwell House on 3rd and 4th September. Atmospheric Chartwell will be brought to life by "A Musical Salute to the Royal Air Force" in a patriotic celebration.

Special guests Stacey Solomon, Fiona Howell, the RAF presentation team and the Spitfires Choir will join the Central Band of the Royal Air Force for this twilight concert. The music will be supported by displays of historic and modern aircraft, special effects and archive and modern film footage. Men and women of today's RAF will join in a celebration of their current service culminating in an uplifting, patriotic finale.

The charity chosen is the RAF Association Wings appeal and tickets, costing £33.00 plus a £2.00 booking fee per order, can be obtained by visiting [synergieventsuk.com/tickets](http://synergieventsuk.com/tickets) or by calling 01698 300 005 Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm. Gates open at 3.30pm and the show starts at 6.15pm.

Bryan Prosper's school boy memories....

"I recall as if it were yesterday looking skyward from my elegant Dunkley pram located in our garden in Warlingham, watching with great fascination aeroplanes of silver wing and colourful grandeur, purring like kittens as they passed over



me, the year was 1926. They were Armstrong Whitworth Siskin 3a's of No 32 Squadron and Gloster Gamecocks of No 23 Squadron. Turning on a left-hand circuit into a downward leg positioning for landing on the North-South grass

strip.

My parents would take me to watch the flying from the edge of Hayes Lane near hangar 3a/b and next to the trees. The size of the planes and their vivid markings were most impressive to a boy of three.

Then a new aeroplane arrived, all steel construction, very fast, it was the Bristol Bulldog with its 440HP Jupiter VII, nine cylinder radial engine. No 3 Squadron with its green band markings was the first to operate these Mk2's followed by 17 Squadron whose zigzag markings were a sight to behold to any schoolboy. The Mk2 was modified to Mk2a in 1933 from tail skid to tail wheel and brakes. A Huck engine starter used to start the aeroplane was found at Kenley after WW2 and is now at the RAF Museum, Hendon.



Tuesdays and Thursdays were the best days to watch the flying and from spring to late July the squadrons would rehearse for the Hendon Air Pageant and latterly the Empire

Air Days. Take offs were most impressive to me in the 1930s, always in formation and with the cut dry grass streaming from the tail skids or wheels of the nine aircraft, the noise of those Jupiters at full throttle rings in my ears



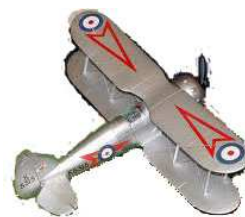
to this day. The thick black rocker grease would splash down on washing lines on Caterham on the Hill according to the Caterham Weekly Press.

No 3 Squadron's set attraction was formation aerobatics with red, white and blue smoke with a finale of the Prince of Wales feathers. No 17 Squadron carried out air drill in close formation with a hair raising finale of all nine aircraft in line astern at 3,000 ft peeling off and diving near vertical to the aerodrome then bursting out for a stream landing.

One of my first visits was in 1930, mother took me to watch the flying only to find no aircraft and all but one of the hangar doors closed. A great disappointment turned out to be a memorable visit. At the hangar with the open door mother asked the lady in charge of the seven girls who were busy stitching fabric to a main plane if I could look around. Imagine my delight at not only being allowed inside the massive hangar but being let loose to inspect the brand new Bristol Bulldogs parked inside it.

The Defence of London annual exercise was also a major attraction to the locals, seeing searchlights and sound detectors in use was very interesting, this was in the mid 1930s.

Then with another change of aircraft more interest for us came in the Gloster Gauntlet of No's 46 and 17 Squadrons. I recall walking along Hayes Lane towards Golf Road where 17 Squadron's Gauntlets were dispersed. All the ground crew were wearing gas masks; a Sergeant pulled off his gas mask and





shouted at my father "Put that cigarette out"!

With so much flying, accidents were inevitable and mostly fatal. Some I witnessed and others have graphic accounts of. For example, a farm labourer sitting on top of his haycart was proceeding along Hayes Lane when a Gamecock, coming in to land took his head off with the wheel axle. Three Bulldogs were at the top of a tight loop over Farthing Downs when the two side aircraft collided with the centre one. A Bulldog landing into the sun, on a snow covered aerodrome landed on top of another Bulldog about to take off. One pilot killed. A Bulldog and a de-Havilland Puss Moth from Croydon collided over the aerodrome, the Croydon pilot was killed. Perhaps the most dangerous was the night flying with only goose neck flares on the Aerodrome, navigation and identification lights on the aircraft, there were many collisions locally and after one night 17 Squadron lost five Gauntlets on landing. I recall pulling a stringer section out of the mud at Hayes Lane. I still have it today complete with mud.

Fog in Croydon sometimes diverted the great airliners to Kenley and much excitement for us boys. Imperial Airways – the great HP42, Air Force JU52 and KLM and Swiss Air DC2's would line up next to No. 3 Squadron.

About twice a year Kenley was host to a show of aircraft and flying displays for VIP's and overseas visitors. I would head off on my bicycle with many others, and, with great excitement to see the new types, the great Vickers Vimy bombers, the Handley-Page Heyfords, the Hawker Fury aerobatic team to name but a few.

Of my visits to Kenley the most exciting adventure was the Empire Air Day, most notably visiting the hangars, workshops, a Gauntlet on the gun butts, in fact the entire station with visiting aircraft and a flying display, good weather brought some ten thousand people to the aerodrome annually.

Before concluding I must mention the 1935 Empire Day. A

Bulldog 11a of 17F Squadron had just completed a demonstration of 5 spins, it regained height and did it again but kept on spinning ending with a loud crunch into Kenley Common. The pilot walked away from it. On our way home, via Hayes Lane and Golf Road, my family went to visit the crash site. Some of the aircraft had already disappeared, my uncle said to me "I suppose you won't go home until you have a piece of it". He then proceeded with his penknife to cut me off some fabric from the port main plan tip which I still have to this day.

My last pre-war visit to Kenley had rather a sad ending, it was a Thursday afternoon in March 1938. We were all waiting the return of No 3 Squadron from formation air drill with their very new Hawker Hurricanes. At about 4pm, back they came, my first glimpse of this now famous aircraft.



They were Mk1, all fabric covered with pitch propellers. They peeled off for a stream landing coming in from the south over the old Hayes Lane onto the grass. One of the last to land stalled and dropped the port main plane diving vertically into the wood just behind the end house of the married quarters. The pilot died later that day.

Today I stand looking over Kenley aerodrome across this famous field, all is very quiet but for the swish of a glider, the song of the skylark or the call of a crow. With Hilltop and Kenley Common covered with seasonal and colourful plant life replacing the barbed wire and wooden dispersal huts.

I consider myself very privileged. With sharp hearing and keen eye I see seventy-four years of aviation history unfold before me, today and everyday."

This article was included in the Souvenir Programme for the Tribute Unveiling 19th August 2000

Membership subscriptions are now due as our year runs from July to June. The subscription fee has now changed to £5.00 per household per year with an option to include a donation if you wish.

If you have not sent me your subs recently or renewed at the AGM or Fun Day please use the form on page 12 but remember to add names of all household members. Also please include a telephone or mobile number so that we can contact you at short notice if needs must.

37 new members have joined our group this year since March or at the AGM and Fun Day.

It is always good to welcome new members so please can you share this newsletter with friends, family and work colleagues to spread the word.

Lesley West

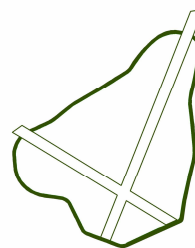
## **THE HARDEST DAY**

Thursday 18th, 1pm to 3pm. "The hardest day" at Kenley Common. On this day, 71 years ago, Kenley was one of the fighter airfields attacked during the Battle of Britain. Hear about the airfield's history from Andrew.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL and for details of the meeting point ring 01372 279083.

## **CONTACT US**

Chris Baguley	Chair	<a href="mailto:chairman@kafg.org.uk">chairman@kafg.org.uk</a>
Mike Simpson	Secretary	<a href="mailto:secretary@kafg.org.uk">secretary@kafg.org.uk</a> or telephone 01883 - 627438
Carole Streeter	Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer@kafg.org.uk">treasurer@kafg.org.uk</a>
Lesley West	Membership Secretary & Newsletter	<a href="mailto:membership@kafg.org.uk">membership@kafg.org.uk</a>
Andy Spencer-Jones	Webmaster	<a href="mailto:webmaster@kafg.org.uk">webmaster@kafg.org.uk</a>



# **Kenley Airfield Friends Group**

## **Membership Renewal**

### **Subscription for year July 2011—June 2012**

I/We wish to subscribe to a Single Household Membership of £5.00

I/We enclose a further donation of £.....

#### Add all Household Members

Name 1

Name 2

Name 3

Name 4

Name 5

Name 6

Address

Telephone:

Mobile

Email

I/We would like to be part of a committee or as a volunteer helper.

Please make cheques payable to KAFG and return to:- Lesley West, KAFG Membership Sec., 5 Hillhurst Gardens, Caterham, CR3 5HX