



# BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005

CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

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## 'PILOTS PAL' MEMBER DIES



**SINUL BRAMBHATT:** Sadly passed away on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April. Sinul was a very cheerful and likeable character with a wonderful sense of humour. He was one of the many exiles from Tanzania. He settled in Biggin Hill and was a regular visitor to the airfield. He had a repertoire of jokes that he would recite at the drop of a hat.

## ICELANDIC VOLCANO DUST



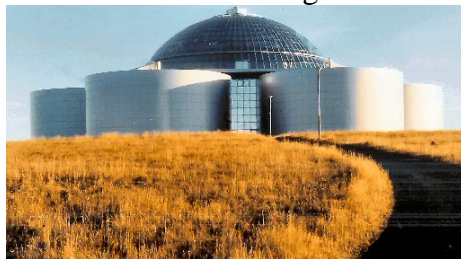
Whilst Eyjafjallajokull volcano continues to create chaos to our aviation industry far worse than any bad weather system, this country itself is starkly beautiful and well worth a visit if you have never been. The Icelanders rely on the volcanic activity beneath their feet by utilising the vast amount of natural heat to heat many buildings around their country.

Whilst it may appear that the authorities reacted quickly with safety being a priority for high flying jet aircraft and indeed their passengers, no one seemed to have a plan to get passengers into Europe where other alternative transport systems were readily available, train/ship/car/ to ease the plight of those stranded.

Iceland meantime is still a place to visit. Many a pilot from Biggin Hill has passed through its portals via Reykjavik airport (the Biggin Hill of Iceland). Top left corner of



this picture near trees where the old meteorological office stood, now stands the Perlan, a conference centre with a revolving restaurant



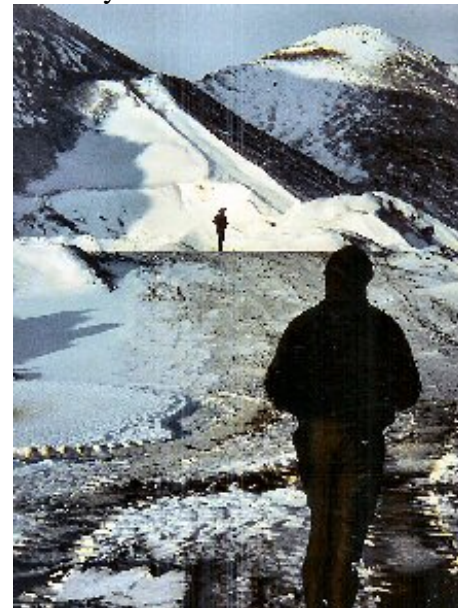
on the top, is but a short walk from the airport. Be prepared for an expensive bill after your meal, but a wonderful view. Revolving one revolution per hour.



The approach to Akureyri on the north coast of Iceland shows the black volcanic soil a feature of the coastline for this country. This airport was developed in 1955 as a gravel strip, converted to a tarmac surface in 1967 – it is in the estuary of the river Eyjafjardara. Today it has a large terminal building with the runway lengthened to 7,874ft with an ILS being added to accommodate diversions from Keflavik when required.

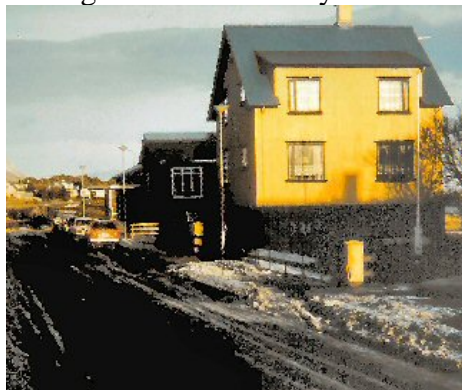


Central Iceland is fairly rugged and not easy to cross in winter. As this



picture shows – the road ends blocked by snow which has slid down the hill. These two People from India had never seen snow.

Many houses in Iceland have bright colours which add contrast to the low light of a winters day.



### VOLCANIC FAMILY RESCUE

During a short four day break to stay with relatives in Valencia, Spain, for John Willis's Sister in Law, Elena with her husband Nick and seven year old son Samuel, the Icelandic volcano eruption closed all European airspace. Flying to Elena is not one of her strongest desires and she has always, flatly refused to go anywhere near a light aircraft. They tried to get home to UK for several days – trying to hire cars, book ferries, or trains, eventually managing to get to Barcelona, and finally securing rare places on a train to Paris. Government advice kept changing, telling people first to, and then not to, go to Calais, but to find their way to other French ports. It was also clear from reports that the onward journey from Paris to one of these other ports could be a further nightmare, as well as inflated costs.

Elena plucked up courage that she never expected to find, and decided to bite the bullet and give a light aircraft a chance..!



The family is pictured after their arrival at Biggin Hill having been collected at Toussus Le Noble, Paris, by brother in law John in his

Twin Commanche G-LARE, landing at Biggin just four and a half hours after their train arrived in central Paris. 'Home at last'. Her verdict on light aircraft? Elena said, "It's great to be home, and it's definitely not as scary as a big plane – you may have just converted me!"

*Editors comment – aeroplanes are perfectly safe, it's the people within which make them scary...!!*

### REVOLUTIONARY HOTEL

This unique "Hotelicopter" development was sent to the Bugle by an avid reader. Believe this if you can, the throbbing vibration of the rotors lulling you to sleep or adding to the sensual pleasures of an in-flight all over body massage.



There appears to be eight engines to power this 18 roomed flying hotel with mini bar – internet café.



The interior is something special, the price per room – or flight..???

The Bugle is hoping to have a representative on the inaugural flight to be taken soon. If you think flying is scary, consider being aloft in this huge monster. The interior is pure luxury which



makes flying not only comfortable

but safe, lots of padding if you are involved in a crash.

We think going to the moon may be a more viable option. Once a space vehicle gets airborne and gets up to a good speed it kind of glides to its destination, thousands of miles, albeit rather expensive. This monster hotelicopter won't cover anything like the mileage. Our accountancy office ran out of paper trying to calculate the cost for flying around the world just once in this machine.

If this venture fails, how about we make a bid for it and turn it into an airfield bar – running the engines and turning the rotors once a month to give it some genuine feel with glasses rattling on the shelves and beer slopping out of the glasses.

### AIRFIELD PERSONALITIES



#### ELLARD JOHN GRUBB:

Known affectionately as 'Otto', Ellard was an unsung hero of World War II, his well preserved story begins here. After leaving Chislehurst Road School, Orpington in 1935, Ellard joined the Royal Artillery at the age of 15 as a bugler. He was a bugler in the Boy's Brigade Company attached to the Orpington Baptist Church. Originally stationed at Woolwich in peace-time, he was sent to Aden with his battery for two years. After returning to England he went to Malta for a year.

At the outbreak of war he was sent back to England and crossed to

France in 1940, his battery being engaged in some of the heavy fighting in Belgium and France. He succeeded in being evacuated through Dunkirk to England and in the following year went overseas to South Africa, East Africa, West Africa and other places including, Madagascar, after which he went to again to Aden with his battery, a Heavy Anti Aircraft Battery.

He was in the battles in Egypt, Lybia, (including Benghazi) and finished in Alexandria.

When Greece was attacked the A.A. Battery was ordered to help the New Zealand and Australian Troops, and it was in Greece that Ellard fell into the hands of the German Paratroopers just six weeks after he had arrived in Greece.

There were 63 German divisions fighting 3 divisions of British and Colonial troops and they simply couldn't hold out against them.

He was captured on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1941. The Germans were massing against Russia and he was taken to Corinth, thence to Salonica, where he was put on a train with other prisoners for Germany.

On the way, near Belgrade, he made his first escape by smashing a window of the railway wagon and jumped out. Badly damaging his face as he fell from the train. He managed to work his way into the German side of Serbia.

He was given away by a Croat and promptly re-arrested again.

In the cell next to Ellard was a Nazi pilot officer waiting to be taken to Germany on a charge of desertion.

He was later placed in the prisoner of war camp at Stalag XXVIIIb, in Austria. The Germans put him in an office and he made yet another escape for freedom. He would subsequently be arrested again,

dressed as an Austrian farmer, on a cycle. The Germans then decided to send him Stalag III d, in Austria also, and from here he was sent to Wolfsberg Kärnten, from where he escaped again, this time wearing a Nazi Hitler Youth uniform under a

French Army Uniform, and was on his way to an aerodrome when the police arrested him. They sent him under escort to near the Swiss frontier for three weeks. Then he was interrogated. Returning from the interrogation he escaped again and this time worked his way to Belgium.

There he met some Belgian Patriots of whom he spoke highly for assisting the Allied Armies and the splendid way they had concealed him from the Germans. These people, he reported, could not do enough for him and he paid a high tribute to them.

He saw the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Corps of the American troops who entered Belgium and received his first American cigarette. He was then taken to Brussels for the air trip to England.

He spoke of the German bread of those days saying it was dreadful, it consisted of flour, crushed horse chestnuts and potatoes. The ordinary Germans on the whole treated him fairly well. They had not much food themselves.

After one escape near Christmas he spent 16 hours in a little shed in snowy weather, and was nearly frozen to death, eating snow to stave off the hunger. His object at this time was to get into an aerodrome that was full of heavy German planes.

He succeeded in getting in and was arrested by a sentry in one of the planes. The Germans didn't give him much food after this excursion. But they did not send out any planes for a week until they were well inspected, because they thought he had tampered with them.

Referring to his experiences in Belgium, Ellard actually lived next door to a Nazi SS Colonel. He often spoke to him and this officer would give him the keys to his house to mind until he returned.

He was never suspected. The Belgian Patriots did their work well. They had arranged for Ellard to work in a German aircraft

factory. He of course never did a days work in it, but he had the Junkers badge on the lapel of his coat and it was sufficient for the police. A badge he treasured, which he brought back to England.

As reported in the *Kentish Times* 1945  
"ORPINGTON SOLDIER RETURNS

One of the happiest mothers in Orpington this week, is Mrs Grubb of 40 Perryhill Road for to her surprise on Saturday morning, her son Ellard John Grubb, of the Royal Artillery who had been a prisoner of war for the past four years in German hands walked into his home.

He had been flown in an American Flying Fortress from Belgium.

Five times he escaped from German Concentration camps and military guards, and on the fifth time he was lucky. Not a bad record for a young man of only 24 years of age and the completion of nine years in the Royal Artillery.

Now he intends, if possible to join the Airborne Troops, whose work appeals to him."

Fortunately 'Otto' spoke fluent German which was a credit to his ability and disguise.

Following his return to civilization Ellard married an Austrian girl, the marriage lasted six years and they had a son, Stephan. His wife



returned to Austria with their son whom Ellard last saw in 1961. The editor knew 'Otto' personally for 38 years and whilst he spoke about World War III and the dreaded 'Hun' he never spoke about his own bitter experiences throughout his life. He was extremely intelligent and was able to converse on subjects from Greek Mythology to Space technology with uncanny accuracy.

He was avoided by those who didn't know him initially because thinking he was rather strange because he would take his pint of Guinness and sit at a table in the airfield bar/s and start talking to invisible friends, and enemies in a loud voice, sometimes these fictitious discussions, or meetings, would become quite heated, only taking a break to top up his Guinness before continuing his meeting.

In all the years I knew Otto, he never spoke of his marriage or any domestic problems he may have had. He was always polite to everyone, even when he was well under the weather. (plastered). Catch him sober, he was interesting to talk to with a day to day knowledge of the latest political or topical event of the day – one never really appreciates such a person as this, until it is too late. Ed.

Joe Merchant, who ran the Pilots Pals Bar, which Otto frequented almost on a daily basis, had known Otto since their early cadet days with the Royal Artillery's 615 squadron 48 years ago. "The number of people who said he will be missed is amazing. It is hard to believe he was here as usual Monday evening, funny as ever and he was taken from us the next day. Unbelievable, with so much life left in him, he had done so much during his life and was a credit to the nation." (JM).

Otto was a special character who never offended anyone, nor did he use bad language in public, he was

a true patriot of the civilised world, dignity and the British Empire, he didn't tolerate fools nor ethnic dissidents, particularly those responsible for the September 11<sup>th</sup> atrocity of the twin towers in New York. His colourful language following this atrocity was a revelation in itself, filled with hatred for these degenerates who claim to live in our civilised world, resolving themselves from involvement through prayer.

Another mystery involving Otto has only recently come to light, following his wartime escapes. After he was repatriated, his younger sister Margaret remembers a couple of men in bowler hats coming to the house to interview Otto – he subsequently was invited to MI9 headquarters, where he was obviously questioned about his war time activities.

Nothing more was spoken about this clandestine meeting until recently (2010). Otto's nephew has been researching his military life and found to his amazement Otto had been awarded the Military Medal, not by the services, but secretly issued by MI5.

We believe this was even unknown to Ellard - after all he went through, how ironic is that..!



Ellard John Grubb, one of the last pictures taken of him during an evening amongst his many friends. Otto's adventures ended suddenly at the age of 81

28<sup>th</sup> May 1920 - 26<sup>th</sup> March 2002



This magnificent wreath was arranged in memory of Otto, for he certainly loved his pint, (several) pints of Guinness with Brandy chasers right up to the last moment, nothing being left to chance.

Ellard's funeral was on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2002, his ashes were scattered on the airfield and a Rose was planted outside the club in his memory.

When the Pilots Pals Bar was demolished the Rose bush was expertly removed to a members garden for safe keeping for the memory of 'Otto'



Somewhere, out there is a memory!

