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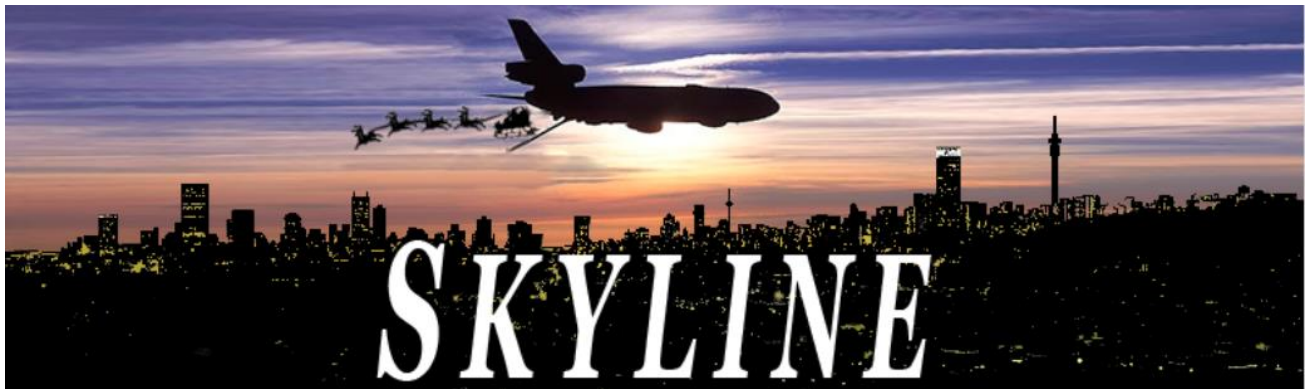
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SAAFA - JOHANNESBURG
END NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2017



By Stefaan Bouwer

REPORT ON THE LEGENDS AIR SHOW 2017

I was very lucky to attend the Legends Air Show that was held at Duxford near Cambridge in the UK on the 8th and 9th of July. Contrary to the few previous few years that I went this is the first time that I never got wet or even saw rain during the duration of the Air Show. As usual, mornings are for visiting the stands and the vendors. The show then starts about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The show for the 2 days is identical but on Sunday the Red Arrows performed for us a half an hour before the show started.

Having a media pass I was allowed to go onto the flight line early in the morning where all the aircraft, which are due to fly on that day, are normally on display. I only photographed the ones that had the covers over their cockpits removed hoping that I would get some of them later.



I am also including a shot of a young lass who was modelling for us with a P-40F and standing in front of the Corsair.



This is just to warm up the hearts of some of our senior members a little bit.

The re-enactors were again standing in front of the aircraft and posing for us. It is quite nice that when they see we are photographing them they start posing for us. The only thing that irked me a little bit, which also limited some of my showing you photographs, is where the American Pilots and Crews are standing in front of the British Planes, so I will try and show you British with British and American with American. They make up quite nice scenes and Period photographs.





The show on Sunday started with a display by the Red Arrows as mentioned before but this was very disappointing and created a lot of criticism from the public. It is probably in view of the Hunter crash at Shoreham that they have now been delegated to have a display on the far edge of the runway on the right hand side as you look north. It was lucky that on Sunday I stood on the northern side, but a mile further down the line where the rest of the media were, they complained that they could not see anything. I am including a few photographs of them but they are so far away that the quality is not what I would like to have seen.



The next was a formation of 9 Spitfires that first flew as a formation and also allowing us to hear those beautiful Merlin engines vibrating the ground around us.



After the 9 ship Spitfire formation, it was as usual as the previously shows a Spitfire chase.





No aerobatics but very much on the same trend of our Tora Tora we see at our Air Shows where the Spitfires are flying up and down the flight line in figures of 8 or wide turns just to show off the lines one after the other. I tried to find a place where you can get more than one Spitfire in the view and that is included for you but on the whole, you have to keep concentrating here to catch every Spitfire as it comes past. One of the most impressive was Spitfire R SM845 in all over Silver livery.



There were 2 two seater Spitfires, the Grace Spitfire OU-V –



and another one that was in the more original shaped canopy.



The Grace Spitfire is a much more aerodynamic canopy that was a different design. There was a Mk IX Spitfire RR232 named Exeter, (ex-SAAF) and



one of my favourites, a Sea Fire Mk III 11F with N on the fin in the SEAC colour scheme.



One of the most popular Spitfires was JE-J a Mk XIV with a Gripen engine.



This is a real brute with that engine.

The next formation display was called the Classic Formation which was a Swiss Air DC-3 and 2 Beechcraft 18's that did a few fly pasts and then breaking away.



The Dakota performed a single display and the Beechcraft flew past a few times but not really displaying individually. Again, I tried to get these photographs where there is some interaction between the two as they broke up, each did its own display and then they formed up on the DC's 3 again.



The next formation and the biggest one that we saw was the Blenheim Mk I that was in formation with 5 Hurricanes and 3 Spitfires. This was the first time since after the 2nd World War that anybody has ever managed to get 5 Hurricanes in the air together in formation.



It made a beautiful sight. Also, the Merlin engines of the Hurricanes are a little bit quieter than those of the Spitfires. It was remarked on by the commentators which I did not know, that the Hurricane had baffles on the inside of the exhaust stubs making the sound a little bit quieter. On single displays, I am including one photograph of a Harvard that was flying around for flipping just because of the colour scheme and not normally seen in South Africa.



Let's get to the more individual displays. A B-17 was escorted at first by 3 Mustangs i.e. GA-S DC-Y and a blue nosed silver Mustang HD-N. The drab and yellow and the silver and blue Mustang peeled off and then GA-V escorted Sally B up and down the flight line in close formation which always makes for beautiful photographs.



As usual Sally B ended her display with a smoking engine coming past with a very sad slow song over the intercom system. One of them that I am including is a P-51D GA-S which represents 112 RAF Squadron. This is in a colour scheme that will be familiar with some of the South Africans as there were quite a few South Africans that flew in 112 RAF Squadron,



and I am sure they will even have flown AGAS, although not the same serial number.

The Spitfire display was followed by a Naval Fighter display that consisted of a Corsair (TFC), a Bearcat (TFC) and a Hawker Fury which was restored by the Anglia Aircraft Restorations Company and featured in prototype colour scheme. This Fury was obtained from Iraq after the Iraqi War and restored and is different than the Sea Fury which had a grey livery that we saw previously.



About midway it was a Luftwaffe North African Campaign Aircraft formation which consisted of a Buchon, 'Red 8' which is in the colours of Werner Shroer in desert colours.



This is a representation of that well known splotchy brown 109 overflying the desert that we see in the books. Only that was an 'E' version and this Buchon must be one of the 'G' versions later on. What is interesting with this aircraft belonging to the ARCO Company is that the pilot had it painted like it was weathered and had being used for a while. This gives it a really dirty, messed up, very unique colour scheme which was remarked on by all the media that was around me at the time that we took the photographs. A close-up photo of this is included for you.



The Jungmann with Anne Walker as a pilot was supposed to go up with them but she did not end up in the formation and did a solo display before the Buchon and the P-40F started chasing each other up and down the flight line,



ending up with the P-40F shooting down the Buchon. It started to make smoke and came down the runway smoking.



The Brits of course were not going to be outdone and they also entered a Battle of Britain formation which was, as mentioned before, the first time that we had all those Hurricanes in the air.

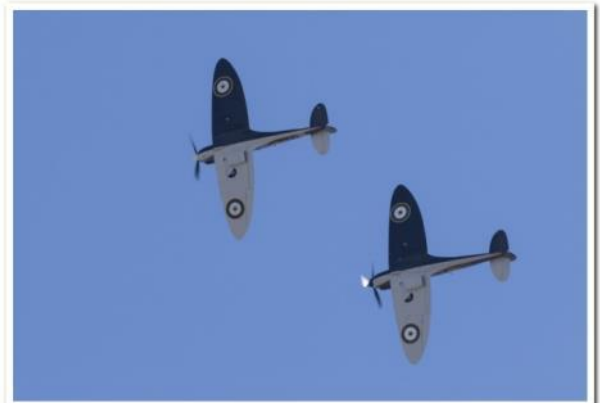
There was supposed to be a Gladiator and a BF-109E flying but both those aircraft hit snags and then went US to my great disappointment, as to date I have never seen a 109 with a Daimler Benz being flown. This would have been the first time. This is the third time that I went to Duxford in the hope of finding 109's specifically and then not having seen one.



Quite a large formation, which then broke up with the Spitfire Mk 1s XR-D and LC performing a dual display which was beautiful, - close up and neat showing off the Spitfire lines.



Both these Spitfires had their undersides in half white half black which is quite impressive when they are above you.



The Hurricanes on the other hand, performed the same chase as the Spitfires in the Tora Tora style which was a new one for me at Duxford.



In previous years it was never done in this fashion. Other Hurricanes displayed i.e. UPW, and 7L which is a Sea Hurricane,



and then SW-P which for a while had a problem with an undercarriage but then managed to get it up.



Of course, one of the highlights for me was the Blenheim Mk I.



I am sure many of you will be aware of the Blenheim Mk V that was restored in England a few years ago and one month after it became airborne it had a crash-landing. It was re-restored and it flew again for the first time last year. Quite a nice impressive aircraft that has relevance to the SAAF in the fact that we had one here for evaluation which we used in South Africa and up in East Africa. The SAAF then decided not to have it. The Hurricanes ended up combining for a four ship fly past.

One of the highlights in Duxford is a show called the Horseman which consists of 3 P-51 Mustangs. There was great hype about the Berlin Express which is a Mk III Mustang that was flown all the way from America over to Duxford. It was going to fly as one of the flying Horseman but when it started the Mustang display and came down its first pass there was a massive explosion of its canopy right in front of the crowd. Nick Gray, the son of

Steven Gray who owns the Fighter Collection was flying and he was heard to quote afterwards, "he came down at speed, heard a loud bang and found out he was flying a convertible". He immediately aborted the display and landed, which then of course lead to the cancellation of the Horseman display on Saturday.



On Sunday they roped in GA-V and then performed the very tight, neat flying Horsemen display consisting of 3 Mustangs.



Of course, there had to be a civilian old timer formation and this was the Air Racing formation that consisted of a de Havilland Comet,



a Mew Gull,



a Mystery Ship and a Cosmic Wind small aircraft. They took off, started a formation flying line astern and continued doing a few circles around the flight line up and down from left to right without changing the formation at any time. This of course led to it being very difficult to get photos of them because I either saw them from behind or from the front with their undersides towards me. I only really saw the Comet side on as it went the furthest past me before it banked to the left. The other aircraft banked before they came to me so I could only really show you the lines of the Comet, and some side views once they passed.

There was supposed to be 2 Dakotas doing a formation right afterwards but the one was US so the only Dakota show that we saw was the Norwegian one that I have seen at previous air shows. Its silver colours makes for beautiful light if one can get it right.



The final small display was again a Naval Aviation display with a PBV-1 (Catalina) and a FM-2 Wildcat from TFC. The Catalina belongs to the Plane Sailing Limited Company.

The Catalina performed some circles in the background



while the Wildcat flew up and down in front of it in the opposite direction therefore giving us views of both aircraft during the same time.



This was while all the aircraft were taking off for the Bulbo Formation at the end. Bulbo followed which is the finale where it is supposed to be all the aircraft that took part in the displays but this time there were many left behind.

It was only the Spitfires, the Mustangs, Naval Fighters and the Battle of Britain display that participated. Many of the civilian aircraft also did not take part in the finale. While they set up, the Jokers flew for us and those were first the Bearcat,



and after the Bulbo fly past on Saturday and on Sunday the Fury,



and the Spitfire Mk I. The Bulbo came back past in its big formation, not amenable to photographs because it is so big but I am including one just to show you the formation itself.



I am including one of the different groups that perform in the breaks, which is about the only thing that is photographic.



The Mustangs broke in one of the first sections and it was during this part that "Miss Velma" had its crash as many of you may be aware of. I am including the photographs on its way down. It came across the runway while they were flying and apparently the pilot saw he was not going to make the turn as he was really coming in slow and his engine was not making a noise when it came over me. I photographed it just before it disappeared behind the hanger and then it did a very successful crash-landing between the 2 highways outside Duxford with no injury to the pilot.



It is unfortunate that right at the end of the show something like that had to happen as otherwise apart from the damaged canopy it was a faultless exercise.

This was my 4th Legend Show. I must say it will stay on my bucket list to see it again. For anybody who likes the old aircraft this is definitely a must. It is not a RIAT or an Oshkosh where the modern aircraft are. They are after all the legends of aviation that are being displayed and this is the only show where you are going to get so many similar aircraft in the air. This is where you get some idea of how noisy it was to be near those Merlins when these aircraft were all operational.

