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Dates for the Diary		2012		
June				
16-17th	Vintage Parasol Weekend	Pietenpol Club and VAC	Bicester	
30th	International Rally	VAC	Bembridge	
July				
1st	International Rally	VAC	Bembridge	
August				
4th-5th	Stoke Golding Stake Out	SG	Stoke Golding	
11th-12th	International Luscombe Rally	Luscombe	Oaksey Park	
18th-19th	International Moth Rally	dHMC	Belvoir Castle	
18th-19th	Sywell Airshow and Vintage Fly-In	Sywell	Sywell	
31st	LAA Rally	LAA	Sywell	
September				
1st - 2nd	LAA Rally	LAA	Sywell	
October				
6th / 7th	MEMBERS	ONLY	EVENT	
13th	VAC AGM	VAC	Bicester	
28th	All Hallows Rally	VAC	Leicester	
Dates for the Diary		2013		
January				
20th	Snowball Social	VAC	Sywell	
February				
10th	Valentine Social	VAC	TBA	
March				
9th	Annual Dinner	VAC	Littlebury, Bicester	
	Spring Rally	Turweston	VAC	
April				
13th	Daffodil Rally	VAC	Fenland	
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Vintage and Classic

www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk Issue 38 Summer 2012



The Journal of the Vintage Aircraft Club

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<p><i>The aim of the Vintage Aircraft Club is to provide a focal body for owners, pilots and enthusiasts of vintage and classic light aircraft by arranging fly-ins and other events for the benefit of its members.</i></p> <p><i>The Vintage Aircraft Club is affiliated to the Light Aircraft Association and supports the General Aviation Awareness Council.</i></p> <p><i>Vintage and Classic is the quarterly newsletter of the Vintage Aircraft Club and as such is a privately produced magazine. The views contained within its pages do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor or the Vintage Aircraft Club. The magazine is free to members, but £5.00 when purchased separately.</i></p>		

Vintage & Classic

Summer 2012

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Chairman's Notes

One recent comment summed it up perfectly. "If this drought goes on much longer, I'll have to buy some new wellies!"

Hopefully, by the time you read this, the winds will have dropped, the rain ceased and the sun will be shining - and we can enjoy some great summer fly-ins. Not least, our weekend at Bembridge, Isle of Wight on 30th June, 1st July.

Sadly as you'll read further on, Jean and I will arrive courtesy of Red Funnel Ferries rather than by red Topsy Trainer. I hope you'll find my words on a forced landing after an in-flight crankshaft failure, of interest.

Initially I was reluctant to write the article, but Paul Loveday prevailed. His thoughts rightly were, that if my experiences can help anyone else in a similar predicament, it will be well worthwhile.

Another positive thing to come from the incident is how our community pulls together. From Arthur Mason and the Bicester 'field party' that helped recover the aeroplane, to Matt Boddington and David Beale for their engineering support and the dozens of others who offered assistance - a big THANK YOU.

Perhaps the most amazing call of all came from Peter Wright, Chairman of the UK Pietenpol Club. He asked, "While the Topsy is hors de combat", would I like to fly an Air Camper? You can imagine the answer!

As a result, I am deeply honoured to have become the recipient of the inaugural John Morris Bursary, allowing me to become a temporary shareholder in Pietenpol Air Camper G-OHAL.

The story began in the late 1990s, when Hal Danby began building the aircraft to Bernard Pietenpol's 1930s design. The construction was then taken over by Shuttleworth Collection and VAC event stalwart John Morris, who from 2007 flew the aircraft from Old Warden.

When sadly, failing health forced John to give up open-cockpit flying, he elected to pass the operation of the aircraft to the UK Pietenpol Club who currently syndicate the aircraft to nine of its members, all of whom are

Pietenpol builders. The tenth share, which has been given by John to the UK Pietenpol Club and is held in Trust by the Chairman, will each year be offered to a suitable recipient, who pays a proportion of running and insurance costs in return for being allowed to fly the aeroplane.

I am deeply honoured to be the first such recipient and looking forward to getting to know G-OHAL. In the future I hope I can reciprocate by offering both UK Pietenpol Club and VAC members some further flying experience in both G-OHAL and later, a rejuvenated Topsy. Meanwhile, if you can think of a worthy recipient to take over next year, let me know and I'll pass the message on!

Returning to Club matters, we have been busy trying to get our message that vintage flying is fun, out to a wider aviation audience. A new leaflet and display stand in the Light Aircraft Association marquee at the Aero Expo event at Sywell certainly attracted plenty of attention and hopefully, new members.

Recruiting new members is a pressing challenge for the coming year. Sadly the current financial recession and dare I admit it, the steadily rising age of many members, means in recent years that our membership has gently declined.

While it is easy to say glibly "we need to recruit new blood", frankly the new blood these days will be anyone under 50! I hope therefore that we can adopt a two-pronged strategy in the coming months.

The first is to organise some new events that might appeal to members who have recently retired from active flying, keeping them and their expertise, in the loop. If you have any ideas, don't hesitate to drop me a line or give me a call.

In addition, can I appeal to all of us, to make sure we spread our message and our passion for vintage aeroplanes to those around us? After all, it seems selfish not to let others share our fun!

HAPPY LANDINGS!

Steve

From the Hangar-Troll

On the rear cover of the magazine you will find the dates of our events for the remainder of 2012 and the first four months of 2013. We have termed the first two events as being 'Social' which will hopefully encourage you the membership to come by road when the weather makes it unsafe to fly there.

It is hoped that we will have another event on the

Isle of Wight around the end of June / beginning of July, as well as a visit to the northern parts of the country.

October 27th will be the date of the All Hallows fly-in and of course the AGM will also be held in October.

Paul Loveday



Members Notices

Bembridge Fly-In

The planning for this event is now in the final stages. If you are going to attend and have not yet notified the editor please do so in order that the people booking in at the airfield charge you the reduced landing fee. You will also require your current VAC membership card, which by the time you receive this will have been issued. Also do ensure that you are aware of the circuit and landing instructions for the airfield. If you are not sure please check the Vectis Gliding Club website. Unfortunately as things stand at the present I shall be unable to make the event, but to those who do have a really great time.

Paul Loveday

Tatenhill Fly-In

The East Staffs Flying Club are holding a Fly-In on Saturday 14th July at Tatenhill Airfield (EGBM). In addition to the Asphalt runways the airfield has an East / West (26 / 08) grass strip. For details telephone 01283 575283.

Vic Holiday

Abbots Bromley

Member Vaughan Meers would like fellow members to fly in to the Wings and Wheels event at Abbots Bromley (Yeatsall Farm) on Monday 27th August. (Bank Holiday).

Vaughan Meers

Vintage or Classic

There is no universal definition of what constitutes a Vintage or a Classic aircraft. The VAC has always used the following criteria. A Vintage Aircraft is one either designed or had its first flight was over 40 ears prior to the current date. A Clas-sic Aircraft is one either designed or had its first flight was over 25 years prior to the current date.

New Members.

We welcome the following new members to the Vintage Aircraft Club.

S. Beaty	Finedon	M. Burlock	Newbury
B. Hunt	Hemel Hempstead	T. Kinnaird	Beaconsfield
T. Palmer	Colchester	D. Tole	Coventry
	M. Vaisey		Hemel Hempstead

We also welcome the following members who have re-joined the Vintage Aircraft Club.

N. Hitchman	Brackley	A. Rae	High Wycombe
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Cover Picture:- .Clutton FRED Series III G-BMSL on finals at Turweston VAC Spring Meeting
Photo:- Tom Cole

Spring Meeting - Turweston 25th March 2012

At long last this VAC event was blessed with exceptionally fine weather for the time of the year resulting in a varied turnout of over 80 aircraft.

At the start of the day there was a bank of fog over to the east resulting in one aircraft coming in on divert as Cranfield was fog bound. As a result the early arrivals were arriving from other points of the compass.

It was good to find that there were a number of club members and the marshalling team already on the airfield when I arrived, all having arrived by road.

The first of 35 airborne VAC member to arrive was Nigel Hitchman in his Van's RV-6, in from Hinton-in-the-Hedges closely followed by Graham Churchill with Sandy Fage and Dave Norris in the Cessna 182 from the old VAC base at Finnere.



The day saw a varied selection of Piper aircraft ranging from the J-3C Cub through various examples of the PA-17, PA-20, PA-22 up to the PA-28 Cherokee.



The de Havilland stable was also well represented, from the DH.60 Moth flown by Stuart Beaty and the DH.85 Leopard Moth of Ron Gammons, a DH 87 Hornet Moth, and a couple of Tiger Moths to complete the scene.

Amongst those creating the most attention during the day were the Clutton Fred, and the Phoenix Currie Wot, both arriving from Winwick.



The day also saw varied examples of aircraft with military marks from the W.W.2 era including the previously mentioned Hornet Moth arriving from Hullavington. On the other side so to speak saw the arrival of the Nord 1002 Pingouin from White Waltham painted as an Me.108 Taufin.



A morning arrival was the Slepcev Storch scale replica of the Fieseler Storch, which unfortunately departed before the arrival of Peter Holloway in his Fiesler Storch. Hopefully we will be able to get both of these aircraft together on another occasion.



As can be seen overleaf our Chairman Steve Slater took the advantage of the flight back to Old Warden when the aircraft departed. His return flight back to Turweston by helicopter being completed in a much quicker time.



Two examples of the Pietenpol Air Camper arrived together from their Thatcham base.



Each of these aeroplanes having different power plants giving entirely different contours to the shape of the front of the fuselage.



Another aeroplane creating a great deal of interest was the Crofton Auster V J/1A Special. This machine being built from an Auster frame that was used as an engine test bed.



At Turweston it was also possible to present Alan Gray with the Alan Clewley Trophy for his unstinting support of VAC events.

Some of you may have noticed an attractive young lady who with VAC member David Jackson was to be seen being photographed alongside some of the vintage types present on the airfield. I thought that such photographs would be an ideal end to this report.

Report Paul Loveday
Photographs Paul Loveday, Stuart MacConnacher, and David Jackson.



Daffodil Rally - Fenland

Once again the VAC Daffodil Rally and Fly-in at Fenland was a first rate event with an excellent turnout of visiting aircraft and club members. The staff at Fenland being their friendly and most efficient selves. As is customary we were able to distribute bunches of daffodils to those visiting pilots that wanted them. As usual the restaurant at Fenland was providing meals and snacks of the highest standard, and at times it seemed as though it was standing room only.

The first aircraft on the day to arrive was the Clutton FRED of VAC member Tim Darters, doing so before any other club member. We arrived fairly soon after him and Carol set up the booking point whilst Lydia and I sorted out the other things that needed doing.



There was a lull between Tim's arrival and that of the Auster of the Auster Club Chairman, Peter Gill, the aircraft resplendent in its Royal Canadian Air Force colour scheme. Following his arrival we settled down to a fairly regular flow of arrivals. These included another Auster variant this time in the colours of the Royal Australian Navy, providing schemes from both hemispheres.



Two other Austers visited, those of Rob Stobo from Stonesfield and Alan Gray from Witchford. This was its first VAC event since it had been grounded for engine maintenance.

We were both kept quite busy at times and our thanks go to all the visiting pilots for their patience and co-operation whilst we endeavoured at the busier times to find a suitable parking spot.

Other notable visiting aircraft included the DH.83 Fox Moth flown by Stuart Beaty arriving from Sibson, this aircraft soon being surrounded by a group of admirers.



Adding to the military types was the Fokker S-11 Instructor in the colours of the Netherlands Marines



A type not often seen is the Gardan GY-20 Minicab and it was a pleasure to see one of this type arrive on the day.



The day was another successful one for which the weather held off until the afternoon when rain clouds could be seen gathering in the distance. Most visiting aircraft taking the opportunity to leave before it arrived.

Our thanks go to Fenland for their assistance and providing the daffodils, and we can look forward to 2013.

Report and Photographs Paul Loveday

THERE WAS I WITH NOTHING ON THE CLOCK.....

Well it happened. I suffered one of those sudden silences that they talk about in the text books, when a broken crankshaft necessitated parking my Topsy Trainer G-AISA in a suitable piece of pasture.

I hasten to add that initially I was a bit reluctant to write this. I am well aware that among the talent pool that exists within the Vintage Aircraft Club, there are plenty of more skilled hands who have successfully pulled off forced landings in far more arduous circumstances than I.

Paul Loveday, editor of Vintage and Classic, had other ideas. He reckoned there would be lessons to be learned from the experience. OK then, so there was I.....

.....Enjoying a pleasant summer's evening aloft and heading back to Bicester, about 40 minutes into a planned hour-long local flight. I'd (thankfully) just cleared the Chilterns ridge and was at about 1,500 feet on the QNH, therefore about 1,200 feet over the Vale of Aylesbury when I got the first hint of a problem.

Lesson number one. How often have you found a small town on your course and thought "yeah, a thousand feet will be plenty to glide clear?"

Well both I and the residents of Princes Risborough can be pretty thankful that I had decided to pass abeam. Had I not elected to fly around the edge of the town, I reckon the Topsy and I might have found ourselves in a little bit of a predicament!

There is also a general wisdom that most piston engines, particularly traditional designs, will give you lots of warning before they progressively fail. Don't bet on it.

I reckon I had five to ten seconds of a slightly unnatural 'feeling' of something wrong. Then there were four or five hammer-blows of heavy vibration and the engine seized.

My first thought as I looked at the (very) stationary propeller-tip ahead of me was "This is for real then". By then I was already passing through 1,000 feet. Lesson 2: Things happen very quickly!

I guess that planning a circuit is fine if an emergency happens at a higher level. However I knew I was already pretty well nose on into any wind and frankly, any field



more than half a mile away or more than 30 degrees off the nose would have been out of the question.

I know I lose about 650 feet in a gliding 180-degree turn, so anything other than some S-turns to position me on a base leg was out of the question.

Another lesson. It is easy to think that the flat Vale of Aylesbury is one big forced

landing area. Actually when it comes to putting the theory into practice, the options are a bit more limited.

I rapidly applied the Five Ss: Surface, Size, Shape, Surroundings and Slope, to three potential fields within comfortable gliding distance. The first I rejected because it had standing crop, almost certain to turn the aircraft over.

The second had a couple of trees on the approach and looked newly planted. I rejected this too as the surface again looked unfriendly.

The third field was smaller than the other two, but had a clear approach over a low hedge and a good grass surface, plus a road and some bungalows along one side, so help might be forthcoming if the worst happened. It was not so much I chose the field, it chose me!

By this time, as far as I can remember I was flying the aeroplane by feel and instinct, with only the very briefest of glances at the airspeed. Obviously an open cockpit helps, but another lesson, how well do you really know your aeroplane?

I have not flown a huge number of hours in the Topsy, maybe 150 hours over a five year period, but on many of those flights I have practiced manoeuvring at low speeds, side-slipping and glide approaches. That, along with the Topsy's responsive handling and a healthy dose of luck, found me sitting in the last 100 yards of a 350 yard meadow, I guess less than a minute after the emergency began.

Looking back, I consider myself very lucky. I did some things that could have been supremely dangerous. For a start, I committed the sin, not uncommon I understand in novice glider pilots when landing out, of getting too close and too high in relation to the selected field.

That necessitated some increasingly desperate S-turning and side-slipping in the final stages of the approach, which could easily have made me a stall/spin statistic. Knowing

my aeroplane helped, but maybe the luck of a fool played a part too.

So saying, a little bit of surplus airspeed or height is far better than the other alternative, right down to the landing. Compared with a conventional approach with idle power, the aircraft needed a significant flare to arrest the sink. With a low inertia or high drag aeroplane, it is very easy to lose that ability to arrest the descent.

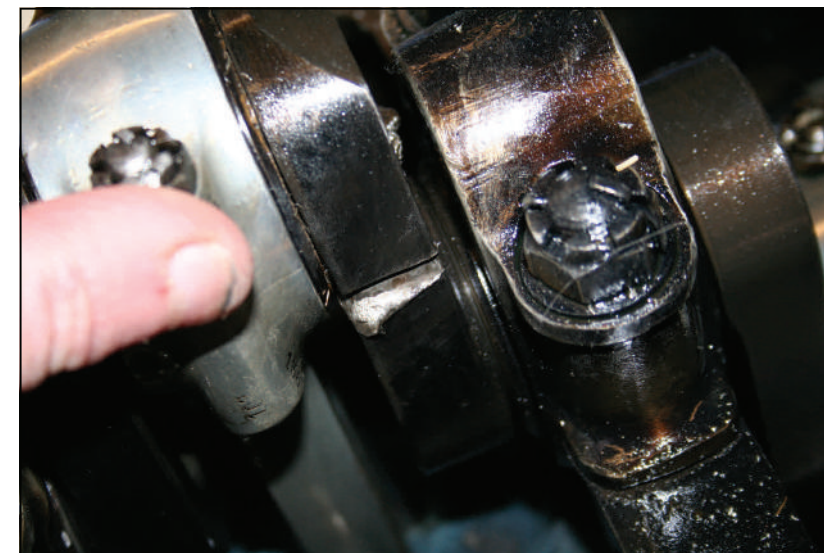
I was also well aware that even if I landed long, I wasn't just committed to running in a straight line. I landed slightly offset down the length of the field, with the idea of turning away from the far hedge to extend the run into an L-shape.

What I hadn't appreciated from the air though was the direction I turned across was in fact slightly downhill. Luckily I came to a stop anyway!

Also, I have to admit, that although I tightened my belts and turned off the switches, I didn't get to turn off the fuel tap until after I came to a halt. Had it all gone wrong, that could have produced a very different outcome. My excuse is I was too busy flying the aeroplane at the time!

I have also been asked about a 'Mayday' call. Well I was non-radio, so I didn't have the option, but even if I had, I think it would have been a dangerous distraction.

Sadly a recent AAIB report highlighted exactly this, with a fatal stall/spin following engine failure, as the pilot was intent on transmitting his 'Mayday'. Trust me, there is nothing anyone on the ground can do to help if you have a low-level engine failure, fly the darned aeroplane! My final lesson learned, is that an "off piste" landing



The Topsy is now on the mend back at Bicester, where we are repairing some fabric and ply fairings which were damaged while removing the one-piece wing, which itself posed an interesting 31-foot transportation challenge.

Fortunately my spares stock has gleaned a rare, spare, Walter Mikron crankshaft and crankcase, which thanks to the engineering skills of David Beale will form the basis of the engine rebuild. Meanwhile the investigation continues into the cause of the crank failure, just eight years after it was crack-tested and inspected during a previous overhaul.

The Topsy I hope will be back in the air before the end of the summer and meanwhile, I hope my recollections might just help anyone else in the same predicament!

Steve Slater



shows who your friends are. I owe a big thank you for the help of Terry, Roger and Dave from Bicester Gliding Centre and VAC stalwart Arthur Mason in helping dismantle and recover the aeroplane from the field by road.

Abingdon Air & Country Show 2012

Where does the time go? Is it really 12 months ago I was writing about Abingdon and their show that raises money for the local Air Ambulance?

This year the issues with Defence Estates and usage restrictions were sorted in plenty of time to enable a clear run up to the event and even the weather looked like it may play ball and allow some decent aviating.

Friday morning and your friendly orange clad marshalling started to arrive and started to set up "home" for the weekend. Armed with our list of participants and the research sheets we were soon ready to start to mark up the parking areas. It is at this point Neil, our friend and organiser, hands us an amended sheet. On it is listed G-PBYA Catalina... "Hold on" we think, "that is 'new'". We asked "Is she landing on or just displaying or what?" and get the reply "I will find out and let you know tomorrow." Hummmm helpful. We set out marking out the parking. It turns out she was booked as the C-47 "Drag 'em oot" was having her ticket done on the Friday and had cancelled just in case and so, because of the cancellation of Shuttleworth, Neil was able to book the Catalina. We parked up the early arrivals roughly for the day but not where they would be going just in case we would have to re think it all on Saturday. Fortuitous as it appeared.



Saturday morning and we get the news that the Cat will be in early and landing on, [ah...] and want to be able to open up to the public [crud...!]. Out came the internet phones and iPad and more research and some more rejigging of the parking. At this time we also get the comment "Drag 'em oot" is now coming as they have un-cancelled... Thanks to the great co-operation of the crews we managed to rejig and move aircraft into their new spots. Abingdon however was an International show once again this year with the RNeth.AF sending a PC-7 which contrasted well with the Tucano and we parked them side by side. The most impressive bit was the line up in the "box" where we had the Dutch PC-7, Tucano, RAF static Tutor and Bronco lined up tightly and all we put into place "live" in that order which is not how they were lined up!

Sunday dawned and we all got out into place and awaited the aircraft arriving. Sure enough quickly they did and aircraft were parked in the GA park, the helicopters on the 'dog leg' and the display aircraft in their allocated spots. At this point I would like to say that our plans and

everything worked out a treat as the Cat fitted into her spot brilliantly with no trouble at all and we even got thanked and praised on our effort and accommodating her in such a spot. The aircraft continued to arrive and yes the GA park was a little untidy by our standards but this was due to making allowances for wash off of the display aircraft and what we had to try and fit in a small space. We got there though. We love the challenge!

I will admit fitting the Mustang in the space allocated to it between the already parked Fennec and Hurricane did worry me a little despite knowing that there was plenty of space as we had checked and measured and lined the other two up... It fitted like a glove – just as it should have.



Display time came around but before this the Army Lynx did a display practice with 80% of its sequence flown. This was allowed as they only have 5 displays this year and they wanted to practice in front of a crowd to get used to the experience. This could be the last year of watching the Lynx back flips and inverted flying as the Mk.7 is due to be replaced by the Mk.9 with the wheels and the new 'Wildcat' and certainly the Mk.9 is not able to do it due to the wheel undercarriage. Anyway the Air Ambulance flew past a couple of times to show support for the event which is a major fund raiser for the service. Then the displays started in earnest.

Sadly the display schemed RAF Hawk was still in the paint shop so the crowd had to do with the standard black scheme but the display was really good with some new manoeuvres and that show off the aircraft really well. The Hawk was the only jet in the programme but not the only RAF participation.



The Tutor and Tucano are regular Abbo participants and the Jubilee schemed Tucano was shown off very well with

all sides being displayed. The Tutor display was as good as ever and how sometimes it kept flying was beyond belief.



New RAF participation was the King Air – this was shown off very well and it is an unusual sight to see being flown with such vigour.



The heavier aircraft were limited to the C-47, Catalina and slightly lighter Anson as the RAF heavy fly-pasts had to be cancelled due to operational requirements. The Catalina was a popular item and the initial tail chase Anson/C-47 display before the solos was certainly a new and enjoyable experience. (I missed most of this as I was inside the cat having a nose when they were displaying... Oh well)



Warbird time was the BBMF Spitfire XIX (not operating from Abbo sadly) and Alistair Kay flying the OFMC's P-51 Mustang. The locally based Mk. I Hurricane of Peter Vacher also displayed and operated out of Abingdon and it was great to get so close to such a wonderful example. The Fennec was due to display but sadly went tech (good job we had parked him on the right spot on the Saturday).

These types lead nicely on to the Bucker Pair of Bestmann

(actually a licence built version) and Jungmeister. Another unusual pairing but both so well displayed and a welcome addition to proceedings. Making a return 'home' was the Whitney Straight from Turweston flown again respectfully and yet engagingly by Jez. The Whitney was originally here in military service as part of RAF Abingdon's station flight.

Making their debuts at Abingdon were firstly the Trig Pair, a pair of S-1 Pitts – flown tightly in formation and individually, bringing back memories of airshows of years gone when the Pitts was a regular display act. Who remembers the Rothman's foursome and Team Vixen pair too?



The other act debuting here were the Breitling Wing Walkers with a pair of Stearman aircraft and the associated ladies atop. So you can see it was a varied display (if a little chilly).

The fly-in aircraft were also varied with a trio of Luscombes, a smattering of Jodels, a couple of Austers, a Bulldog and a couple of Chipmunks. The arrival and presence of the Key Publications' BEAGLE 206 was welcome and so nice to see this rare type out and about. It was good to see various VAC aircraft and members on the day and hope to see many again next year.



The date is set for 2013, Sunday 5th May and although the total for 2012 has yet to be announced so far the show has raised over £22,500 since 2007 for the Air Ambulance and £14,000 for a local hospice before that and year on year the show has grown and it is hard to believe that the first event was little more than a few stalls, car boot and 2 microlights and a Chipmunk... It is now International and has great support from the Services.

Report by G. Loveday

Straight & Level Aircraft Engineering

Fabric covering
Airframe ~ repair to full restoration
Engine ~ freshen up to full overhaul
Sensible rates ~ attention to detail

Miles McCallum in Somerset
01460 281129 milesm@avnet.co.uk



In a previous issue there was an article on the Piper Twin Comanche G-ATMT which is based at Turweston. In the article reference was made to its service with the RAF. Pictures of the aircraft in its military guise are few and far between. Reproduced here is a picture of the aircraft whilst in military marks. Our thanks go to Key Publishing and Peter Seymour to allow its reproduction here.

NORMAN'S CHALLENGE



Norman 2012 with Hurricane. - I want everyone to know I am not as old as the aeroplane

Many VAC members know Norman Smith, a regular at Club events either on one of his collection of ancient and interesting powered bicycles or even, on an equally regular basis, Shank's Pony.

Certainly anyone who has spent any time at Norman's home base of Bicester aerodrome will have been regaled with his call of "Come on you lot, let's get fit to fly!", before he sets off on another of his three-mile walking laps of the airfield perimeter track.

To call Norman an inveterate walker is something of an understatement. It all started 17 years ago when Norman was into his fourth decade and 16,500th hour as a commercial pilot, flying and gliding instructor, in a career of adventurous flying which had taken him to some of the most obscure locations in the world.

"I was looking out of the cockpit one day when I noticed all these wonderful footpaths criss-crossing beautiful English countryside below me and thought I'd love to find out more" says Norman. "When I got to 15,000 successful landings and still had the same number as take-offs, I reckoned it was time to walk away from flying and explore the paths from the ground."

Walk away, Norman certainly did. After those years of walking, he is about to come up to the 50,000 mile mark, having worn out about 20 pairs of boots in the process. Dividing the cost of his boots by the mileage (you obviously have time to do this while walking), Norman has worked his costs out at about 2 pence per mile!

The flying career that Norman walked away from was every bit as esoteric as his current pastime. As a crop-sprayer, Norman logged several thousand hours at VERY low level in aircraft such as the Piper Pawnee Pilatus PC6 Porter and the big radial-engined beasts such as the Rockwell Thrush Commander.



Norman and Thrush Commander, Khartoum 1974

The big Rockwell had one significant flaw, Norman remembers: "Too blooming tall.... Wouldn't fit under the power cables!"

Along with many top-dressing pilots of the era, Norman was one of the "snow birds" who flew south each winter, to work in North Africa and the Sudan, spraying insecticides on the crops of cotton and wheat.

So conversant with ultra-low flying the pilots became, it was not too unusual to see a Thrush or Pawnee "water skiing", running the main wheels along the canals, or even the mighty River Nile. "It was a good way of washing the aeroplane" was Norman's excuse. Although a common, if not entirely politically correct refrain of the era was "If Jesus Christ could walk on water, then so can ag-pilots, out of our way!"



Norman and Pilatus, Libyan desert 1991. DC3 crew, not so lucky, decided to brake at the top of sand dune.

After that, it was probably light relief to fly charters for oil companies in a Pilatus Porter, to unprepared strips among the shifting sand-dunes of the Libyan Sahara. All in the days before GPS navigation of course!

Oh yes, Norman has the odd flying tale to tell, and we may persuade him to tell more if we join him on a unique walk on Remembrance Day, Sunday 11th November.

Norman will be setting off from Bicester to take a 26 mile, marathon-length tour of graveyards in the vicinity, which contain a total of 100 RAF war graves from the era. The walk will also take in the Remembrance Day Ceremony at RAF Upper Heyford.

Norman has challenged as many fellow aviators as possible join him. I certainly will be one, any other takers? If so drop me a line at ss@kingpinmedia.co.uk

"The walk will be under Eskimo Rules" says Norman. "Anyone falling behind will be left for the polar bears".

He also suggests walking at "light infantry pace", 140 steps per minute, but knowing Norman, he's (hopefully) joking. More practically, he recommends carrying food for three stops and kit appropriate to the weather, after all we are talking autumnal Oxfordshire here, not the Okavango!

"All it takes is a stout heart and a pair of stout shoes" says Norman. "So what are you waiting for, let's get fit to fly!"

Book Review

Top Secret Boeing

By Bob Shaw

There can't be many of us who, at some point, have not stood on a crumbling piece of concrete that once formed part of a wartime airfield, looked at the derelict buildings and wondered "What went on here all those years ago?" In recent years we have been able to turn to a number of publications dealing with some airfield and unit histories to answer that question but, up until now, there has been very little published on the workings of the Telecommunications Flying Unit (TFU) which operated aircraft on behalf of the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE).

Top Secret Boeing is an extremely well researched and written story of an elderly American airliner, a Boeing 247-D, that came as a gift to Britain early on in the last War to serve in the RAF as DZ203 with TFU in radar research and subsequently achieved the World's first automatic orbit, approach and blind landing.

TFU was one of the most important and secret units in Britain during the Second World War.

From May 1942 it was based at Defford airfield in Worcestershire, a dozen miles from the TRE's radar laboratories and workshops at Malvern. With some of the most eminent and brilliant scientists of the day and, with the urgency of war, we can follow the development of ideas from laboratory work bench to test flying and ultimate production. We learn the trials and tribulations of developing an effective Airborne Interception radar package for night fighters, how the introduction of the snorkel on U-boats created an urgent need for an effective detection radar (having already developed an Air to Surface Vessel radar system) and latterly the auto-landing system.

The testing of all these products involved "The Boeing", as DZ203 was affectionately known, and Bob Shaw has meticulously researched not only official records but the log books of many of the crew who were involved with the

aircraft. This produces an extremely readable account of what was required and occurred in developing these systems – often with great urgency and limited facilities.

The author paints a vivid picture of the way the scientists had to struggle with delicate equipment and consequent frustration. We learn that it was not just problems with various technical components, including magnets, protectors, potentiometers, and valves - simple things like petrol driven APU sets which supplied the power for the radar in the Boeing were the cause of 50% of the failures recorded. We also get a taste of the variety of aircraft and staff that were employed in testing and developing the equipment – at its peak there were over two thousand military and civilian personnel at Defford.

It is perhaps ironic that despite the most scrupulous research, the exact circumstances surrounding the Boeing's end vary.

Well illustrated and clearly captioned the reader is left with a great deal to reflect upon having a greater awareness of the achievements of the Boeing and the men and women of RAF Defford and TRE Malvern. Next time you heat up your meal in the microwave or are about to land at an airport think of that placid Boeing - and smile.

Stephen Reglar

Details

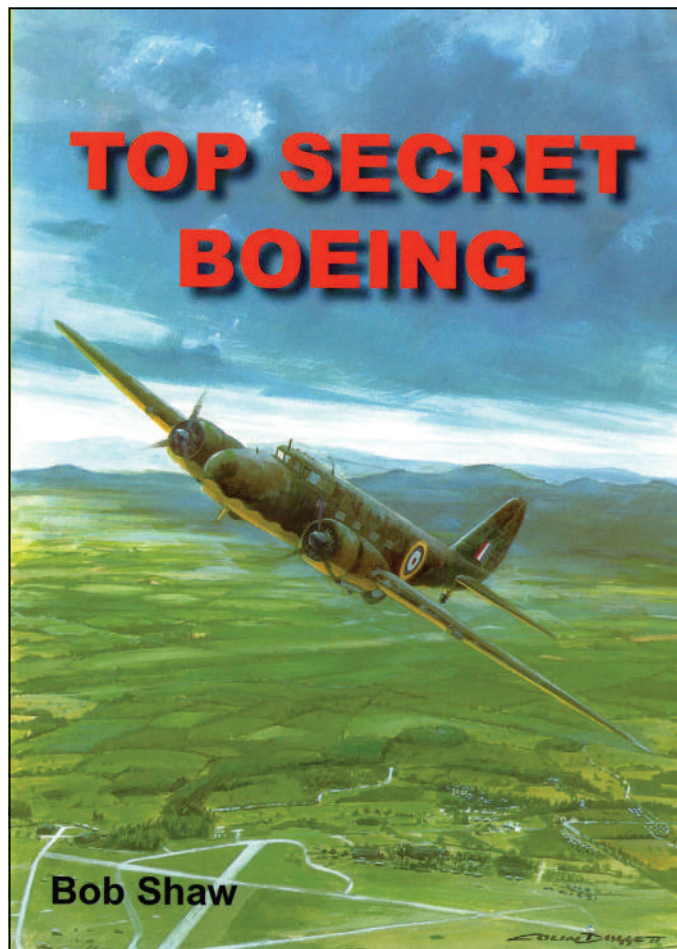
ISBN 978-0-9547045-1-3

A5 size, card covers: 210x150x14mm, weight 455g.

216 pages with Index, End Notes and References.

90 plus illustrations, many not previously published.

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BIGGLES BIPLANE CELEBRATES CENTENARIES



who was able to record the first arrival of the type on Farnborough's hallowed ground in over 90 years!

The BE was part of another party when on May 12th, it lined up alongside the Tornado GR4s of No. II (AC) Squadron to celebrate "Shiny Two's" 100th birthday at Marham. For the Squadron members and their families the BE gave a chance to see the type with which

the squadron began, for Steve and Matt., they had an even bigger surprise.

One of the squadron Tornados, ZA398, was given a special livery to celebrate the Centenary, and painted on the tail was their first type; the BE-2. What a privilege to be able to line the two up side-by-side for a photo call!

Steve Slater - Matthew Boddington

It's been a busy few weeks for the Biggles Biplane BE-2c replica. On Thursday 12th April the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust marked the 100th Anniversary of the creation of the Royal Flying Corps. Farnborough was not only its first headquarters, but also the location of the Royal Aircraft Factory where the original BE2 was designed. Steve Slater and Matt Boddington were proud to be invited along, despite the challenge of fitting a 100 year old design into the jet traffic at one of Britain's busiest business airports!

Steve ended up heading in by road, to set up the ground handling rig to allow the brakeless BE-2 to be manoeuvred into place in front of Farnborough's famous Black Sheds. Meanwhile Matthew Boddington was accompanied in the BE by ace photographer Andy Smith,



What's in a Name?

As usual the Abingdon Air Fayre produced its fair share of interesting aircraft both visiting and / or displaying. One such aircraft was a Bücker Bü 181 Bestmann - or was it?



It was in fact an Egyptian built version of this versatile aircraft and was a Heliopolis Aircraft Works Gomhouria (translated - Republic) 181 Mk.6. The aircraft c/n 183 registration G-TPWX was painted in a World War II Luftwaffe colour scheme as TP+WX.

The original Bü. 181 was first flown in 1939 and it became the Luftwaffe primary training aircraft, and also used for communications work and glider towing. The demand for the aircraft was such that it was also built by Fokker in Holland, as either A or D models and in Sweden for use by that country's air arm.

Just prior to the end of the war production was started at the Zlin factory in Czechoslovakia where it was produced for both military and civil use. The civilian version being the Zlin 281 or 381. This Egyptian version was built under

a licence granted by Czechoslovakia with production starting during the 1950s.

The aircraft was originally powered by a 105 hp 4 cylinder Hirth 500 or 540 engine, but versions were also produced with 105 hp Walter Minor, or Continental C-145 engine. The aircraft at Abingdon was an example of the last production version from the Egyptian works and was filled with a Continental O-300-A.

Paul Loveday



Two of our marshalling team at Abingdon. - The phrase 'singing from the same hymn sheet springs to mind!!'

I LEARNED ABOUT LEARNING TO FLY FROM THAT! (Pt.2)



"Ah" he replied, "You'll be Rob Thomasson with AMYD then." So news travels fast in the Auster club! It also turned out he had owned several and learned to fly on them.

Around June of 2009 year I got my aircraft up and running and off we went. However about 40 minutes later the oil pressure went down and despite several people saying it would be the oil pressure relief valve it turned out to be bearing failure. The instructor was flying her at the time and he did a great job of getting her back home which saved me a load of grief.

I ended up having to put a new crank in as the old one was beyond limits. This is where the real fun started. As AMY (After her registration) is on a permit I legally fitted this myself. However the instructor wasn't happy so I now ended up having a 70 mile drive instead of a 6 mile drive to my local strip to learn but I don't give up easily. The people there were pleasant and helpful but had no idea how to upgrade a PPL (M) to an NPPL and I had to download the course notes for them. With something like 700 hours I didn't find the tasks hard and the slow flying and instrument appreciation bit I knocked off in well under the stated time. However on a later trip the CFI told me I would have to do the remaining parts of the course as they were on the syllabus. (He'd finally found it!) I was also informed by him that nobody ever did get a licence on the minimum hours. Well I went solo on 4 hours 30 minutes, got my PPL, my AFI rating, my Bronze C, and Silver C on the legal min, oh and finally got my microlight test pilot rating on 1/3 of the hours anyone else had ever done it so I have to say I disagree there. So I did my 40 minutes in foggles to comply with the regs and a further hour at 60 kts which taught that rules are rules and the flying came second.

"AMY" was about ready to fly by now so I decided to finish off on my own aircraft. The monsoon arrived and it rained and rained. By the end of November it turned out to be the wettest winter ever, Cumbria sank and was never seen again. I was watching the News one night and after an article on the floods they showed one on a Nuclear Submarine which confused me for a minute. I thought if

they needed a sub in the town then things must be pretty bad!

At the end of March it stopped raining and I began to hope that I might see Amy in the air again. Well my friend from Booker turned up and off we went. The first flight went well apart from the P12 compass giving him grey hairs. He was gone for ages but I needed the stress anyway. He did a beautiful landing and we went to celebrate at the local hostelry. The only faults were a slight problem with the fuel cock and a slight left hand turn which was pretty pleasing.

However two days later I was given notice to quit by the strip owner. The reason given was they wanted to let a family friend have the hanger space. Well after 18 months on site and taking her 100 miles to pick up their aircraft the week before I thought I was one, but I guess not. I spent 2 days on the phone trying to find a place to put Amy and finally ended up putting her on a grass strip 2 miles away. Peter from the Auster club was kind enough to lend me some covers for her and a mate from work offered to pick them up from Derby which has at least restored my faith in human nature a little. Moving her was fun. In the end a friend spent half a day driving to do it for me bless him. One get out plan was to drive the 70 miles to the other airfield and fly back in the Cub with my instructor to the farm strip. He would then fly to my new strip and I'd pick him up having flown Amy as my first solo on type. Fortunately we didn't need this in the end.

By the end of 2010 I was now at the stage of having 9 hours on the Cub and had a permit to fly on my Auster. As she was now based where there's a training school I thought I'd get one of the instructors to teach me to fly on her. Being sole owner allows this; it's one of the few upsides of paying all the bills! I went to the CFI and asked him about tail wheel training. He suggested one instructor who was quite enthusiastic at first and asked for the POH. After a week I got a text back saying he wasn't prepared to fly it "due to its maintenance history." Well unless he'd been prizing the covers off when I wasn't there he'd never seen the engine, the logbook, or spoken to the engine builder (me). I was a little aggrieved to say the least. So we ended up with the situation of instructors who were starving, me with money and wanting to fly and them refusing to fly me. Fortunately Tony from the Auster club was prepared to come and fly it despite having to drive from Nottingham to do it.

My first flight on type went pretty well but I'm such a big guy it was difficult to know whether to fly her left hand on stick or right as either way is a bit cramped. As she has the wide cockpit the others must be very tight indeed! (Being 6 feet 5 might be one part of the problem ;-). If a wonderful bloke called James hadn't flown me for 2 hours above cloud the next week I'd have given up at this point. He was full of enthusiasm and drove a total of 5 hours to teach me which I have to say was bloody marvellous. Sadly his instructor ticket expired at this point and he had the same

problems getting his rating back as I was having getting mine. Roy from the club offered to fly with me and we went up to Beccles as a cross country. Amy behaved herself and I enjoyed every minute. I promised not to mention the take off so I haven't ;-) I did however offer to buy him a pair of boots with G and L on them. Due to the rotation of the engine Amy swings the other way to a Lycoming powered Auster.

A week or so later I met a wonderful bloke called Harry at my local strip who announced he was an instructor and would help me out. A couple of days later he turned up where Amy was based and off we went. He was great and apart from some well timed comments left me to get on with it. The wind was 12kts at 90 degrees across the runway but I had no qualms he could take over if it got out of hand. I did touch and goes, go arounds and had a great time. As I forced some money into his hand in the café afterwards he announced he could now put an Auster in his log book. I said "surely you mean a J5 in your book?" "No," he replied. "I've never flown an Auster in my life but was pretty sure you could!" So there we are the one person who'd never flown an Auster before turned out to be great!

A few weeks later I flew up to Clacton to get all my paperwork signed up to find they'd lost my aircraft technical paper! Ho hum, but redoing it wasn't too difficult. I managed to pass my radio exam without difficulty and was all set up for my GFT. However my examiner announced he wanted me to demonstrate wheeler landings but I then found neither of my available instructors could do them, never mind teach them. A few solo goes proved scary so I asked for an instructor who

could do them. A few days later the suggested one said he was too busy and as my examiner had just failed his medical all bets were off anyway. So I contacted the flying school at North Weald who have done loads of PPL upgrades and off I went to use their Cessna 172 to get my licence to fly an Auster.

I passed my GFT and navex becoming one of the few people ever to be signed off for nose wheel differences. The next hurdle was when it turned out my PPL D had lost its certificate of experience in the intervening time so I had to go and fly a CTSW to get my NPPL. This done and off we went. However when I tried to get training on Aerobatics I was back to the same old story. People made up rules, suggested I went on aerobatic courses and one instructor said come back when I had 200 hours on type. Well I'll be 60 by then at any sensible rate of useage. Another one told me categorically that once aircraft went on a permit they had to be fully aerobatic or non aerobatic despite her permit having a list of approved aeros printed on it in black and white.

So I found an instructor at Rochester who actually thought learning in the aircraft I was going to use was a good idea and we booked a day the following week to practice. Well despite the above it all went smoothly and we had a brilliant time without ever exceeding 3.5G. I arranged to do some more the following week and went home happy.

Rob Thomasson

Historic Aeroplane Preserved

Towards the end of the 50's the late John Taylor designed and built the first JT.1 Monoplane. The wooden aircraft was designed for the home builder and it found popularity both here in the UK and overseas. The aircraft registered G-APRT c/n PFA 537 powered by a 36 h.p. Aeronca J.A.P J-99 engine first flew on 4th July 1959 from White Waltham.



It was rebuilt in 1966 and fitted with a 40 h.p. Ardern 4CO2 engine, and a revised canopy. The aircraft subsequently passed into the ownership of VAC member Richard Keech who flew the aircraft on a number of

occasions including attending the VAC meeting at Turweston on 17th October 2006, where it became a centre of attraction.

Richard has now donated this historic prototype aeroplane to the Newark Air Museum where it will be displayed as a fitting tribute to its designer.

Although the aircraft may well never fly again its continued existence will show what can be achieved here in this country and may encourage others in the future to design and build their own aeroplanes.

Paul Loveday

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All enquiries re membership should be sent to the Membership Secretary, 16, Norton Crescent, Towcester, Northants NN12 6DN

Printed by Gemini Press, 6-8, Whittons Lane, Towcester, NN12 6YZ