

# *Vintage & Classic*

The Journal of the Vintage Aircraft Club



# The VAC Committee

VAC Honorary President - D F Ogilvy OBE FRAeS

## VAC Committee

**Chair** Anne Hughes

01280 847014 email bronygraig12@hotmail.com

**Vice Chair and Secretary** Steve Slater

01494 786382 email steve.slater@laa.co.uk

**Treasurer** Peter Wright

07966 451763 email goffa47@gmail.com

**Membership Secretary** Stephanie Giles

01789 470061 email captainswall@btinternet.com

**Events** Anne Hughes as above

**Magazine Editor** Tim Badham

email tim.badham@btinternet.com

**Safety Officer** Trevor Jarvis

email trevjarvis@btinternet.com

**Liaison** John Broad

email john.broad85@talktalk.net

**Trophy Steward** Rob Stobo

01993 891226 email robstobo@stonesfield.f9.co.uk

**Webmaster** Mark Fotherby

email mark@thirdrocksystems.co.uk

**Merchandise** Cathy Silk

email silktigermoth@hotmail.com

## General Data Protection Regulation

In accordance with the new EU directive concerning Data Protection, the VAC committee have put together the VAC policy and set up a sub-committee to ensure all updates are made at regular intervals. We are enclosing a copy of the document with the magazine and you will also find it on our website.

## Aim of the VAC

The aim of the Vintage Aircraft Club is to provide a focal body for owners, pilots and enthusiasts of vintage and classic aircraft by arranging fly-ins and other events for the benefit of its members. The Vintage Aircraft Club is affiliated to the Light Aircraft Association and supports the General Aviation Awareness Council.

## Disclaimer

"Vintage and Classic" is the quarterly journal of the Vintage Aircraft Club and as such is a privately produced magazine. The views



Sandy Fage enjoying a ride in Graham Churchill's Bull Nose Morris

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.

## New members

We welcome the following aboard!

Details from Stephanie Wall (Membership Secretary)

- Craig Morris from Hoveton
- Trevor Tonkinson from Wolverhampton
- Croydon Parry from Clapham
- Richard Maxted from York
- Alina Sweitochowska from Sywell
- Lionel Moon from Esher
- Christopher Coomer from Marlow
- Charles Sunter from Driffild
- Emma Carter and Tim Cooper of Batchmore
- Tony Palmer of Hailsham
- Max Tams of Christchurch

## Contents

From the Editor	4
VAC Dinner and Awards	5
VAC Events (Turweston, Fenland, Duxford)	8
The Fimmere Years	10
New airshow venue	14
Breighton gets Topsy	16
Love affair with a Swallow	18
A Swift excursion	20
To Czech Republic and back by Belfair	22
New bank account details	24
'Airymouse' returns to the skies	25
Book Reviews	26
Dates for the Diary 2018/2019	28

Cover photo: Miles Falcon G-AEEG owned by VAC award-winner Shipping & Airlines. Tim Badham

# Chairman's letter

In the last eight months we have seen changes on the committee as we said goodbye to Paul Loveday in March. Paul held the roles of Magazine Editor and Membership Officer for many years. Many thanks to Tim Badham who has stepped up to take on the role as the editor of Vintage and Classic and congratulations on preparing this, his first issue, for print. As you will also know by now, Stephanie Giles has been tirelessly checking your payments and all our paid-up members should now have a shiny new membership card in their pockets!

Sandy Fage has also decided, after 24 years of fulfilling the roles of Club Secretary and Treasurer, that it is time to hand over to someone else and we are really pleased to tell you that Peter Wright has stepped forward as our new treasurer and is bringing all his accounting skills to the club. As you will read, this involves work in setting up a new way forward for the club to operate as a club, rather than a limited company. I am very grateful to Peter for all the work he has put in already to make the club work for you!

Steve Slater remains as Vice Chair but is also taking over from Sandy as Club Secretary. The multiple skills Steve has to offer in this respect will be more than appreciated in the organisation of the club and at committee meetings. Thank you, Steve!



VAC Committee, Sandy & Graham's dinner

Looking back through the club magazines in our archive, I found several photos of Sandy from the Fimmere Years. A photo of the Bull Nose Morris featured in one with Sandy and Graham Churchill 'about to take a spin around the airfield!' Graham also held several committee positions over many years including that of Vice Chairman. Sandy has been an active club member and was involved with the restoration of the VAC's airfield control caravan which was in use from 1986. Sandy will be missed as she hangs up her committee hat and it is time to thank her for all the work she has put in to keeping the club going over the years.

You will read about our events in the magazine and we are now planning, not only for the autumn and winter social events, but also for next year when the VAC celebrates 55 years from those early VAG days. Please make sure you get all the latest updates through our e-mail Newsletter. We are adding a little flavour to the AGM in October, not only with cake, but also by celebrating the RAF 100 by inviting all of you who have aircraft in

military colours to join us for the day. I'm sure many of you will be pleased to hear that we have booked the 2019 Dinner and Awards evening at Shuttleworth House again after the success of this year's weekend at Old Warden.

More recently we were invited to participate in AeroExpo at Wycombe Air Park. We displayed the VAC banners in Hall A along with our leaflets and information board and had many very interesting conversations with passers by. We would like to welcome those of you who decided to take out VAC membership at AeroExpo. A good decision and welcome to the club!

The VAC is now regularly featured in various publications, including the RAeC quarterly newsletter, Pilot magazine and Flyer. I am also pleased to tell you that, on your behalf, I have written to support the All Part Parliamentary Group by writing to raise our concerns regarding proposed airspace changes and to support the APPG in drawing attention to the continued use of MOD airfields for GA.

As the Summer continues I look forward to meeting up with you wherever we gather and hearing news of your aircraft, sharing memories of those early VAC days and hearing what you feel would be good social and flying events for the club.

Happy landings!  
Anne Hughes

# From the Editor

When I first joined the V.A.C. back in the mid-1970s I could never have imagined how the Club would blossom and that nearly forty-five years later would still be thriving. This is the result of much hard work by many people over the years. One who deserves special praise is Paul Loveday, who has been involved in so many aspects, including Committee member, Membership Secretary, Marshaller in Chief and magazine Editor. Paul has decided to retire from some of those roles and so it is that I

Paul Loveday



offered to take over as Editor of "Vintage & Classic". Thankfully Paul has agreed to continue with his reviews of aviation books. Paul is a hard act to follow as Editor and I have a steep learning curve, but I am sure you will all help me move

forwards by offering up interesting input for future editions. I see the magazine in some ways as the "glue" which helps bind the membership together by sharing news and stories about the Club and of the vintage scene. It can also be a tool to encourage newcomers to join in the fun.

I hope you like the new layout and enjoy this my first edition. Copy for inclusion in next edition should reach the Editor by 2nd September.

**Tim Badham**  
tim.badham@btinternet.com

Andy Wood



## VAC Dinner and Awards

Anne Hughes

The splendid surroundings of Shuttleworth House at Old Warden certainly made a very special occasion for the VAC a memorable one. The magnificent setting of the Saloon with chandeliers and antique paintings framing the beautifully laid tables, was only upstaged by the excellent welcome and service we received.

Roger "Dodge" Bailey and his wife Dee were our guests of honour as Dodge was later to deliver a fascinating speech on the life of Richard Shuttleworth. Following his speech "Dodge" presented the VAC Awards to those award winners who were able to attend the evening, including Paul Morton,

Anne Hughes



Full sized Camel wouldn't fit in the dining room!

Michael Miklos and the Real Aeroplane Company from Brighton. There was also an award for the Shuttleworth Collection's Sopwith Camel which was received by Bob Richardson and "Dodge" on behalf of the Collection. We are grateful to "Dodge" for arranging for a model of the Camel to be on display in the entrance hall of the house. The evening concluded with a Raffle organised by Geraldine

O'Meara with some very fine prizes including theatre tickets and a year's VAC membership! Into the envelopes, which were used to collect monetary contributions for the raffle, guests generously deposited a total of £507.05. We would like to thank everyone for their whole-hearted support and the artistic skills of those who decorated their envelopes too! Many guests decided to overnight at the house and in the adjacent Garden Suite. We awoke to an atmospheric scene of gentle mist creeping across the gardens towards the house, daffodils dancing in a gentle breeze and with the sound of sheep and lambs calling across the fields. Magic? Of course it was!!

**SHUTTLEWORTH**  
Registered Charity No. 307534

Shuttleworth is home to The Collection of historic aircraft, vintage vehicles, 19th-Century Swiss Garden, and period House.

Scan the QR code to watch a short introduction to The Collection by Dan Snow.

History & Heritage at [www.shuttleworth.org](http://www.shuttleworth.org)

Shuttleworth, Old Warden, Bedfordshire, SG18 9EP. Email: [enquiries@shuttleworth.org](mailto:enquiries@shuttleworth.org) call 01767 627927

Visiting Shuttleworth by aircraft is easy - we have a grass airfield, no landing fees, and are currently installing pay-as-you-go fuel pumps. Fly-ins welcome and airfield information for pilots can be found on our website at: [www.shuttleworth.org/airfield-info](http://www.shuttleworth.org/airfield-info)

Shuttleworth is open daily (except Christmas and Boxing Day). There's an on-site restaurant, gift shop & Visitor Centre, free parking, and a Play Area for children that is also disabled friendly. Events run throughout the year including airshows, outdoor theatre, music and engineering open workshops. We also host weddings, specialist and Black tie events at The House.

Having breakfasted we were then treated to an in depth talk around the Camel by Bob and "Dodge" who explained the process of the build and a first hand account from "Dodge" of what it must have been like for the young pilots to fly the aircraft under fire in World War 1. Outside then to hear David Bremner talk about "Grandad's" Bristol Scout and for a few volunteers to try their hand at swinging the prop. We were then treated to the sounds and smells of the engine run of that beautiful machine! A moment too to reflect again on those brave young men who lost their lives over France and Belgium in similar machines. These events don't take place without the input of hard-working committee members over the months preceding the day. In this respect we are indebted to Peter and Christine Wright and the huge amount of time they put in to organising the bookings and timetable for the dinner, ensuring that the evening ran smoothly. Thanks too to Rob Stobo, our Trophy Steward and Steve Slater for advice and support for the evening as well as the vote of thanks. We are grateful to Geraldine O'Meara who took over from Barbara Rose to organise the raffle. The staff at Shuttleworth House couldn't have done more to make our evening and overnight stay more comfortable and, as this was our first venture to a new venue for the Dinner and Awards in over 30 years, I think many would feel a return visit next year would be very popular!

Anne Hughes



Awards day entertainment Scout style!

Anne Hughes



VAC hear about the Camel

## VAC Awards

### Graham England Trophy

For a young person's involvement in aviation. For enthusiasm in being a VAC member, his wonderful photography and recently gaining his PPL - Michael Miklos

### VAC Photography Shield

For aeronautical photography. For his regular contribution to "Vintage & Classic" and wonderful photographs - Paul Morton

### Desmond Penrose Silver Salver

Awarded at the Committee's discretion for the vintage aeroplane of the year. For their restoration to flying condition of the Sopwith Camel - The Shuttleworth Collection

### VAC Group Trophy – Auster Joystick

To the flying group showing noteworthy achievement - The Real Aeroplane Company

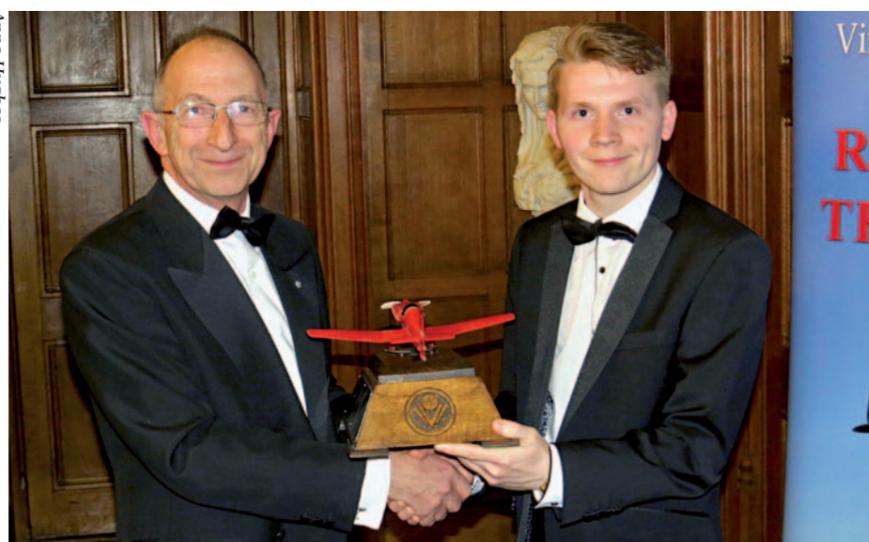
### George Davidson Cup

To a VAC pilot or member for

Anne Hughes



Anne Hughes



Anne Hughes



outstanding achievement or contribution to vintage light aviation. - Peter Greenyer and Tony Habgood of Shipping and Airlines

### Dennis Fry Cup

VAC pilot for consistently good airmanship. For display in his Auster AOP6 - Kevin Hale

Anne Hughes



Tony Habgood and Peter Greenyer for Shipping and Airlines

### Allen Clewley Trophy – Avro Plaque

For noteworthy and regular VAC support and attendance at many of the VAC rallies. For her wonderful support with the sales stall at VAC events, raising an extraordinary amount of money for Club funds - Vron Tanner

### Tony Harold Memorial Trophy – Picture

For aero artistic / literary ability. For work as Editor of the "Flyer Magazine" - Ed Hicks

### Ernie Lingard Trophy

To a VAC committee member for particular service or contribution to the Club. For his tireless work editing the VAC magazine, as membership secretary and for booking aircraft in and out of VAC meetings - Paul Loveday

### John Edwards Trophy – Comper Swift Model

For noteworthy contributions to airfield organisation or flight safety. For his work as Air Traffic Controller at various air shows including Abingdon and Old Warden - Steve Le Vien

### Pietenpol Prop

For continuous engineering support. As restorer / owner of many Austers, Luton Minors + other rarities at Eggesford - Richard Webber ■

## “I learnt about flying from that...”

The VAC's informal safety forum took place at LAA HQ at Turweston at the end of March. This event was chaired by Air Vice Marshal Lindsay Irvine who, through a series of topic headings such as navigation, passenger distractions, engine failure in flight, weather related incidents, 'showing off!' and 'who is in control?' encouraged members to “spill the beans” about any episodes they had been involved in and discuss what the particular event had taught them about flying. So keen were members to share their experiences, including Sir John Allison's tales from RAF days and Steve Slater's forced landing in his Topsy Trainer, that we soon ran out of time. We look forward to repeating the forum at the end of the year and giving more members the opportunity to share their stories.

## VAC Daffodil Fly-In at Fenland

After a slow start, owing to misty conditions, a variety of aircraft from the Czechoslovakian Sokol, Chilton, Europa, several RV's and Microlights, Pitts, Condor Piper Cub and a glider with a Pawnee tow-plane, arrived throughout the afternoon. David Beale kindly moved his beautiful Mew Gull

Michael Miklos



Shipping & Airlines brought their Hornet and Dragonfly to the early season lunch at Sywell

Anne Hughes



Vron finally catches up with her award, at Turweston

from the hangar to the grass so the Gull didn't miss out on all the fun! Over thirty aircraft in total, to the spotters' delight, with pilots heading for refreshments in the café, a ticket on the Fenland Aviation Museum's tombola and a bunch of daffodils for every pilot to take home. Thank you to all at Fenland and our marshals, Linda and Martin, for hosting the day and parking the aircraft. The event is always a 'curtain-raiser' for the VAC flying season and a great opportunity for club members to meet up.

## Spring (not a fly-in) at Turweston and VAC Nostalgia Day

It seemed like a good idea to plan a really interesting ground event to support the first planned fly-in of the year. It was! A few wet days resulted in a saturated airfield and Turweston Flight Centre cancelled the fly-in. However, in the warmth of the LAA HQ's Members' Lounge, and with the kettle boiling, we were ready to welcome VAC

Anne Hughes



Nostalgia beats the weather at Turweston

Anne Hughes



Eagle eyes look out for VAC arrivals

members by road to our exhibition of over fifty years of VAC events. Supporting this was a superb exhibition of aviation archive material brought in by Richard Chancellor (&Son!) and Cathy Silk and Vron Tanner arrived with a selection of VAC merchandise. We then took the opportunity of belatedly presenting Vron with the VAC's Alan Tewley Trophy for all the hard work she puts in to supporting the VAC.

In the mean time Steve Slater organised a film show of VAC fly-ins from the 70's and 80's which revived many memories. In a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere we enjoyed the memorabilia which arrived for the day. Arthur Mason provided a selection of "Vintage News"

and his original collection of Jo Jurd's cartoons. A further generous contribution of magazines was made by Colin Thomas and we were thrilled to meet up with Alan Harfield, the VAC's Safety Officer from 1983-91. Alan brought a plaque he had been awarded by the VAC for his work on the committee along with early magazines and found himself featured on the movie!. Barbara Rose and Colin Hughes had previously donated a collection of PFA mugs which were on display in the Members' Lounge. Time passed all too quickly and many members enjoyed a meal in the Flight Deck Café as well as our light refreshments. Alan Turney also welcomed visitors to the hangar, including nine year old Haydon Chancellor

who climbed into the Sokol with a very big smile on his face! It goes without saying that these social activities are all important to us as a club and hopefully we will see some aeroplanes too next time! Thank you to everyone who made this another memorable day.

## Duxford Bonus Day

On what has become another annual event for the VAC we were pleased to see VAC members travel to Duxford by road and air at the beginning of June to share the day with us. Andy Butterworth and Peter Wright sat at the seat of custom in the Pilots' Lounge in the Control Tower which we shared with Classic Wings. This meant that the stunning two seat Spitfire was just below us on the airfield and the sound of the Merlin engine temporarily caused conversations to cease! It is fairly normal for this VAC event to be a little challenging for air arrivals, but, as the weather improved, the early arrivals became spotters in the Control Tower for "Is that another VAC aircraft?!" Among others we welcomed the Dragonfly from Biggin Hill, Dave Dash's L4 Cub, Mike Vaisy's C-180, the Beech from Popham and Mark Miller's lovely Hornet Moth from Audley End.

As always the day passed all too quickly and thanks are due to all at Duxford who worked to make this an enjoyable day for the VAC.

What is there not to like about a day out at one of Britain's finest Air Museums?! ■

# The Finmere years

## A formative era for the Vintage Aircraft Club

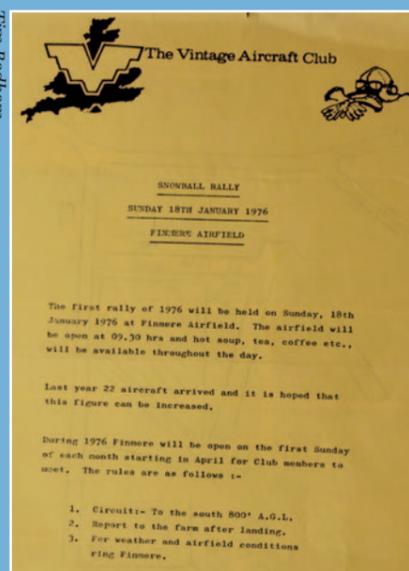
A chequered Control Caravan stands on the airfield perimeter. Inside an observer, with an Aldiss signalling lamp, scans the sky for new arrivals. Nearby a hard runway, with several aircraft parked alongside its edge, stretches into the distance. Beside one of the airfield hangars a crowd of aircrew, clad in leather jackets, warm themselves up drinking mugs of tea. The scene is the WWII bomber base at Finmere ... yet this is the mid-1980s! These are members of the Vintage Aircraft Club, holding one of their fly-ins at their Club "base"! The VAC was closely associated with Finmere for almost thirty years from the early 1970s. The place-name was even incorporated into the embroidered Club badge. Those "Finmere years" are now but a fond memory, but it was a formative period for the Club

(prior to 1974 having been the Vintage Aircraft Group). So we now take a look back at how the VAC came to use Finmere and what made this such a special time and place.

### Farmers reactivate WWII Airfield

Constructed in 1941, RAF Finmere had three hard runways set in a pattern radiating from the north-west corner of the site. Throughout WWII it was a hive of activity with operational training of new bomber crews and preparation of ferry crews to deliver aircraft to other theatres of the conflict. The types flown here included Blenheims, Bostons, Mitchells and lastly large numbers of Mosquito. After hostilities ended the area reverted to agricultural use. The control tower succumbed to dereliction, but one remaining hangar was

Tim Badham

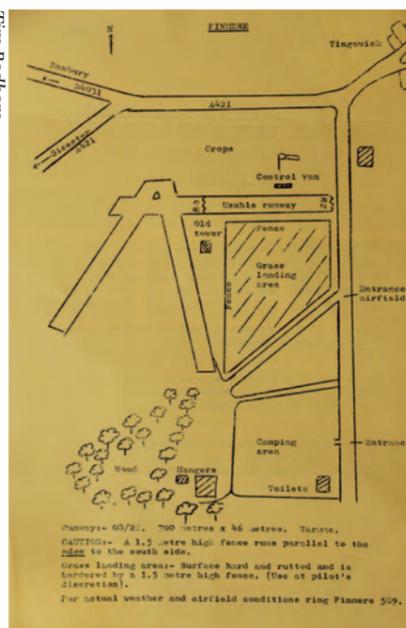


adapted into a mill used by Midland Shires Farmers. This though wasn't the end of flying here. Large sections of the airfield, including part of one runway, were bought by farmer Bill Knapton. He and his wife Pru set up home in "Aerodrome Farm" on the perimeter of the site. Bill was an avid flyer having

Dave Hudson



Tim Badham



Tim Badham



a stable base for activities where members from all over the country could meet and the Club went from strength to strength. A small barn was used to house a few resident aircraft and another housed Bill's own aeroplane. By 1975 Bill owned Super Cub G-APZK. He obtained this from his friend Jack Benson who took on Bill's old Cub G-AIIH in exchange. One of the interesting aircraft kept at Finmere was Moth G-ABAG. Found languishing in a Scottish barn, it was roaded to Finmere by Douglas Hull in 1974 for restoration. The Moth was later flown by Douglas at some meetings. Later it was stored at Finmere with wings folded, until passed to Shuttleworth after Douglas passed away.

### VAC takes root

During most VAC meetings at Finmere, resident aircraft were pushed out of the hangar to make room for trestle tables replete with refreshments and tea urns. Bales of hay were put into use as seating and pin-boards were propped up to display Club notices, photographs and news of projects. On the day of each fly-in essential facilities were set out, including a signals square, windsock, control van and safety equipment. Cones and rope were used to define pedestrian and vehicle parking zones. This was done by an ad hoc group of members - mostly non-pilots who enjoyed being able to contribute in this way. Many tasks were mundane but the upside was the chance to sometimes be invited to fly as a passenger in an interesting old aeroplane. Before being allowed to help out with aeroplanes volunteers had to receive coaching. So instruction days were set up dealing with aircraft ground handling, marshalling, strapping in, prop swinging and emergency procedures.

Maurice Brett takes another member for a ride in the Jackaroo

Dave Hudson



In those days, before the web, email and social media, news about planned events was shared by duplicated sheets sent by post. In the 1970s, Club membership stood at about 170 people and a typical meeting might involve only about 20 aeroplanes. A welcoming and informal atmosphere pervaded those gatherings.

If needed Bill used to mow additional runways on a couple of fields provided they weren't in use for livestock. It was common to see visiting aeroplanes parked adjacent to the hard runway while others were in the adjacent fields.

Part of the old WWII airfield outside of Bill's domain began to be used as a Sunday Market. When this was in progress pilots were instructed to avoid overflying that area. The market was popular, especially with families of personnel from Upper Heyford. One USAF pilot who noticed the VAC activity at Finmere was Chet Parham who became a member. He owned an Aeronca which he had air-freighted to the U.K. When Chet returned Stateside his Aeronca was bought by local farmer David Harper. After registering it as G-BFAF he based it at Finmere. David became Rally Secretary, and later Chairman. Over the years he generously gave flight experiences to dozens of members.

Some other pilots were particularly notable for encouraging interest in old aeroplanes and taking enthusiasts aloft. It's impossible to list them all but Maurice Brett in particular

Dave Hudson



Colin Mason about to board his Beagle Terrier

Dave Hudson



deserves mention. Whenever he brought Jackaroo G-AOIR to events at Finmere, or other venues such as Boston, he would make a constant stream of flights, often well into the evening, sharing his love of flying with thrilled passengers. During 1973 Arthur Mason was visiting the Sunday Market and noticed Auster G-AMTM (then owned by Rob Stobo and Allan Clewley) and other aircraft active at the other end of Finmere. He strolled over and was invited to become involved, so began to come to fly-ins. After helping out one day he was amazed when asked: "Have you had your

flight today?" Soon he was aloft in Alan Chalkley's Cub G-ASPS. Arthur subsequently learnt to fly, built his own Pietenpol, later served on the Committee, including stints as Social Secretary, and remains an active member.

Alan Chalkley is a former fighter pilot and airline captain. As well as the Cub he also owned Comper Swift G-ACTF and was very actively involved with the VAC for many years. In a recent edition of "Light Aviation" he revealed his favourite recreational aviation moments were: "during VAC Summer Camps when ... we'd give enthusiastic youngsters

flights in the Cub...".

A holiday caravan was bought and set up by the hangars for use as a "clubhouse". It was common to come across fascinating characters while sitting in there. For example, one day the pilot of a visiting Airedale was inside chatting about MoGas trials. It transpired that this was the renowned Dick Stratton ... once Chief Engineer on the mighty SARO Princess flying boat!

## Events galore

The environment at Finmere was especially family friendly. Some activities were introduced to help encourage non-fliers to enjoy the day. There was a challenge introduced inviting onlookers to gauge the speed and height of a fly-by with a bottle of wine as a prize.

Camping events were held at Whitsun and in the Summer. They often included impromptu entertainment and story-telling well into the night. As well as Finmere, many camps were also held at Long Mountain (Welshpool) and also at Boston, where founder VAC member Ernie Lingard kept

his Topsy Trainer G-AFVN.

The VAC calendar evolved into a regular series of annual happenings more than half hosted at Finmere. For hardy souls the first in the annual calendar was the Snowball Rally in January, followed by the Valentine Rally the next month, then other themed gatherings through the year - apart from periods of the year when farming tasks took priority. In Spring the Daffodil Rally included an Easter Bonnet competition!

"Breakfast patrols" were organised, with free food offered to pilots who managed to get within one mile of the field without being identified from patrolling based aircraft. The "Gemini Patrol" enabled photographer members and pilots the chance to organise air to air sessions. The results were then put on show at later meetings or entered into the Club's photographic competition.

Piloting skills were put to the test with eagerly contested timed circuits and spot-landing competitions. Sometimes these were hosted at other airfields during away days at such places as Shotteswell and Old

Warden. Fly-outs were also enjoyed to strips such as Colin Mason's Marsh Farm at Kimble. Several members kept their aircraft there, including Alan Hartfield who owned Dart Kitten G-AEXT. As a result of invitations to the VAC, members also ventured further afield to many locations, including events at Duxford when it was rather lower key than today. One day a few members brought along old tractors and a couple of vintage cars to Finmere instead of their aircraft. This evolved into an annual Vintage Car Day with charity stalls, steam engines, a wide variety of vintage and military vehicles plus lots of interesting aircraft. As a climax a selection of cars was paraded on the runway while a formation of aircraft overflew. When Arthur Mason became Social Secretary he recognised a need for evening social gatherings for members and partners. "Noggin and Natter" sessions in local pubs proved very popular. From this spawned film nights, plus an annual Club dinner and awards night, a tradition continued to this day.

Mike Stow flew some exotic types into Finmere including his Provost



Dave Hudson

As some members worked in the military, road visits came about to places such as the RAF Museum workshops then at Cardington, guided tours and steak dinners at USAF Upper Heyford to look over their F-111 operations and a tour of RAF Halton to hear about the trades taught there. It was from Halton that the VAC obtained a proper runway-control caravan to replace a battered old vehicle that had previously been used by the club as a control centre. This ex-military control caravan was towed to Finmere where it was restored by volunteers to its former glory. In 1986 it was put to use and served the Club well for many years, until eventually being relocated to Popham.

In the 1970s/80s there were fewer clubs dedicated solely to specific types of aircraft and so the inclusive VAC events always attracted a wide variety of interesting aircraft. Restorers and importers of classics took opportunity to debut their latest projects at Finmere. Once the Sopwith Tabloid replica built by Don Cashmore and now in the RAF Museum made a very rare visit. On another occasion Cliff Lovell brought in the Metal Moth which later became a movie star in "Out of Africa". Patrick Lindsay brought in his Fiesler Storch and Mike Stow flew in the rare Viima. Cathy Silk sometimes arrived in a Ryan PT-22. European member Emil Rollins even flew his Aeronca Chief from Switzerland to attend some events. A few VAC members were involved with the World of

Dave Hudson



*This Jungmeister and Viima pair visited between display and filming commitments*

Tim Badham



*Stalwart visitors in the early 1970s. The Taylorcraft was owned by VAC Chair Carl Butler.*

display flying. Tony Harold who was also a VAC Chairman, used to display replica WWI aircraft at air-shows. He usually came to Finmere in well known Tiger Moth G-ANFM. He frequently demonstrated aerobatics over the field much to the delight of onlookers. In his day job Tony was a fine art expert with the RAF Museum and was a brilliant painter himself. Another VAC character with artistic skill was Jo Jurd, a cartoonist whose amusing depictions of members' antics always went down well in the Club magazine. The range of talent amongst the membership

was incredible. John Stainer, once Club Chairman, who owned a much travelled Cessna 140 and played with Acker Bilk's Jazz Band! As word spread about the friendly VAC events, far larger numbers of visitors began to visit. They became so popular that by 1983 one gathering attracted 230 aircraft. It was inevitable that the relaxed charm of earlier times had to give way to more stringent controls and formal organisation. So it was that a regular team of marshallers was formed and led by Paul Loveday and assistance

sometimes also offered by members of his ATC unit.

## End of an era

Sadly Bill passed away in 1993 but his widow Pru generously allowed the VAC to continue using Finmere. So why is the VAC no longer at Finmere? In 1998 a bye-pass around the nearby village of Tingwick was opened, unfortunately encroaching on the field next to the runway and this also made access by road to the airfield more difficult. Sadly in 2001 Pru also passed away. The land went into new ownership and so the VAC began instead to use Turweston. Perhaps we look back on that era with rose tinted spectacles, but those frequent relaxed gatherings involving so many people devoted to having fun with old aeroplanes were rather special. The Club had so many interesting characters, hard working officials and volunteers during those years that it would be impossible to mention all of them or do justice to their contributions in a piece such as this. Hopefully we can redress that in future by featuring some of the personalities involved and also take a look at activities held away from Finmere in that period. Suffice to say, were it not for the enthusiasm and encouragement shown back then the VAC would never have developed into what it is today. The Editor would like to thank all those who helped with the preparation of these Finmere reminiscences, especially: Arthur Mason, David Phillips, Alf Jenks and Paul Singleton. ■

Michael Miklos



*Two of the Stampe Formation Team taxi across Hagley Hall's turf*

## New air-show venue proves a success

**W**e have become used to hearing about restrictions and costs reducing the number of air-show venues in the UK over the past few years. It was reassuring then to hear that a completely new event, the Midlands Air Festival, was planned for this year to be held in the grounds of historic Ragley Hall near Alcester in Warwickshire. Good news for fans of vintage and classic aircraft was that the show would include an interesting mix of aircraft including light aircraft plus warbirds such as the Thunderbolt and Catalina. The venue was set up to enable the public to enjoy a three day event in May. Fortunately the weather gods were in a good mood and the show was well received. Most display aircraft flew from nearby airfields such as Coventry, but the organisers even created a short landing strip in the grounds enabling a few of the display aircraft and some static exhibits to fly in.

Michael Miklos



*Bob Grimstead with his display mount the Fournier RF-4D*

This is believed to be the first time aeroplanes have landed here.

Not content with just daytime activity one evening offered aerobatic aircraft kitted out with computer-controlled lights and pyrotechnics and this was followed by a night-glow by tethered hot air balloons! Amongst the most colourful display items at the event were the Turbulent team and the Stampe Formation Display team from Headcorn. Well known display pilot and retired BA Captain, Bob Grimstead, brought in his classic 1968-built Fournier RF-4D. He can be seen boarding his steed in one of Michael's photo. Let's hope this Festival becomes a regular feature. ■



The Topsy arrives



Ken Large and Nick Lee with the Kings Cup winners

# Brighton gets Topsy!

## A new addition arrives to join the airfield's amazing collection of classic aircraft



**T**ipsy Junior G-AMVP has been delivered from Bembridge via Sywell to Brighton - hopefully the pilot has now thawed out! This joins the amazing collection of classics based at this delightful North Yorkshire airfield, home of the Real Aeroplane Company (who were amongst the winners at this years VAC awards ceremony). The Junior is a diminutive all wood single seater designed by E.O.Tips and constructed in Belgium by Avions Fairey during the 1940s. Only two were completed. In 1952 G-AMVP was placed on the British register when the type was being promoted in the U.K. by the Fairey Aviation Co. This aeroplane's most unusual moment came in 1957 when their chief test pilot Peter Twiss landed the Junior on the deck of the aircraft carrier "Ark Royal"! Other recent arrivals at Brighton have included



a Super Cruiser and DH.60G Gipsy Moth G-AAHI. The busy diary of events here always attracts interesting visiting aircraft. A Focke-Wulf Fw44 Stieglitz now based at Bagby recently made an appearance, as did a pair of aircraft which won the Kings Cup Air Race in successive years. 1953 winner Chipmunk G-AKDN joined 1954 winner

Messenger G-AKBO here for a photo shoot. Brighton goes from strength to strength and construction of additional hangarage proceeds apace. Andy Wood, who took our Brighton pictures, explained that these hangars will be used by private owners of classic / vintage / home-build type aircraft. We await further news with interest. ■



Tim Badham

# Love affair with a Swallow

## How a rare 1930s monoplane, which had a most unusual role during World War II, became a cherished survivor now kept at Shobdon, Herefordshire. Dave Edwards

### How it all began

I first came across BA Swallow L25c G-AFGD, in 1981 when I was a spotty little instructor at the Herefordshire Aero Club at Shobdon Airfield. Always attracted to anything old with an engine, this old bus drew me in like a magnet and I was soon pestering the owners/restorers for the story behind an aircraft I had barely heard of. Turns out she had quite a story to tell.

Built in 1937 by British Aircraft at Hanworth Aerodrome (London Air Park), she was the 69th machine off the production line and had a Pobjoy Cataract seven cylinder radial engine fitted (you could also specify an inline Blackburn Cirrus). Sold new to the Cardiff Aero Club, then at

Pengam Moor airfield, she was painted in their colours of red fuselage with white wings, which are the colours she carries today. By 1939 she was based at Witney Airfield near Oxford, where notable pilots such as Mary Ellis flew her in the training role, indeed Mary, who remembers the aircraft with affection, had her last flight in peacetime in 'GD on the day before war broke out.

### Swallow shows the way

There the story of 'GD might have ended, like so many other private aeroplanes of wooden construction, doomed to rot as 'instructional airframes', used for the vital task of training aircraft engineers, but

fortunately that was not the case here. Winston Churchill was very concerned that the Germans knew how to tow gliders with aircraft and we didn't, so he ordered that glider pilots and instructors be trained as a priority, in order to build up a large airborne force as quickly as possible. This was not feasible at the time, because we had hardly any two seat gliders. The powers that be, not wishing to incur the wrath of the great man, decided that the Swallow, with it's 42'8" wingspan, would make a good alternative, so five Swallows, including 'GD, were impressed into service, sent to Farnborough, where their props were removed, hooks attached to their leading edges and they were towed aloft behind time

Tim Badham



Geoff Jones via Dave Edwards



The Swallow emerges at Heavitree after years of storage.

expired Whitley bombers. Having figured out the basics, a Central Landing Ground was set up at RAF Ringway, home of the Central Parachute School, where 'GD, by now BK897, did stirring work for the war effort. Though a good idea in theory to have all airborne training at one site, in practice the two forms of delivering troops into battle didn't really mix, so an alternative sight was found at Haddenham (RAF Thame), near Aylesbury. We believe 'GD was the only Swallow to be sent here, because by now Hotspur gliders were coming on line. Haddenham was only just big enough for them, but training continued until the first, purpose built glider training field was opened, at Shobdon! Sadly, 'GD was disposed of,

surplus to requirements, a couple of months before the move to Shobdon took place. She then languished in a barn on an old airfield outside Exeter, until acquired by "the Swallow boys", John, Charlie and Alf, in 1974, still painted in what remained of the camouflage and RAF roundels applied during the war.

### A bright new future dawns

Over the next six years the team made a fantastic job of restoring 'GD to her former glory, and being Welsh, had no hesitation in putting her back into Cardiff Aero Club colours. The shake-down flights at Shobdon from 1981 went well, John was the pilot, Charlie the

Tim Badham



engine man and Alf was airframe. They were good enough to take many people flying, including Lady Treharne, who learnt to fly in 'GD at Cardiff in 1938, Bill "Dambuster" Townsend, the Skipper of 'O' Orange, the last Lanc back from the dams raid, and me. I loved the old thing, so much so, that when John sadly died in 1998, the family kindly let me buy his share.

It was a similar outcome when Charlie and Alf departed this mortal coil, the families were very supportive and come regularly to see 'GD.

I've been very lucky in building up a team of enthusiasts who come every Saturday to work on 'GD, basically I break it and they mend it. They have no faith in pilots at all, while it's on the ground it's their aeroplane, but as soon as they let go of the wing, they can mutter all they like, but then it's mine.

We are hopefully coming to the end of various major works which have taken longer than we would have liked, but we have two other old birds to look after as well. I was putting a last coat of paint on a wing joint cover today and that should be one of the final jobs before we get a permit to test, then at last the old thing can once more take to the skies where she belongs. ■

Swift departing to Hinton



# A Swift excursion

It is quite some achievement to produce a perfect replica of an iconic 1930s aircraft, but to do so single handedly is a labour of love. On June 22nd the unique sound of a Pobjoy Cataract radial over Turweston attracted attention. To the delight of everyone there, this heralded the arrival of Comper Swift G-ECTF. This was its first trip away from its base at nearby Hinton-in-the Hedges. It had been flown over by its owner Phil Cozens who spent 17 years building this incredible aircraft. The engine is an original, once fitted to Swift G-ABUU and prior to that fitted to a B.A. Swallow. The aircraft has a new Hercules propeller but Phil constructed everything else, even the exhaust system. The original CLA.7 Swift high performance single-seater design was conceived and built

Tim Badham



Swift Replica G-ECTF at Turweston

by a company set up by Nicholas Comper at Hooton Park. 41 were constructed during a 4 year period from 1930 and many of these saw use abroad. The airframe is compact with a wingspan of 24ft and the wings can be folded. The Pobjoy engines fitted to most Swifts were also produced at Hooton Park.

The type was involved in a long distance flights and air racing – indeed some examples were still being raced in the early 1960s! Several originals survive including examples in Argentina, Australia and Spain. A handful of originals also remain in the U.K. most in store, but the sole airworthy example of those is G-ACTF,

Tim Badham



Former VAC Committee member Alan Chalkley flying his Swift during a VAC event in June 1982

Tim Badham



The wing fold seen here on the Brighton replica Swift

Tim Badham



Snug cockpit!

Tim Badham



Pobjoy Cataract III powerplant

once owned by V.A.C. stalwart Alan Chalkley but now with the Shuttleworth Trust.

Tim Badham



Owner / builder Phil Cozens

Tim Badham



The structure includes a surprising amount of complex metalwork. This is Swift VH-UVC when being restored in New Zealand.

additional research and work had to be done by each of the builders to overcome missing data.

The Swift makes an impressive sight in the air – when it was first flown with a Pobjoy powerplant in the 1930s its performance neared that of some contemporary fighters! We are very fortunate to be able to witness one original and the two stunning replicas flying in the UK. Maybe one day all three might be seen at the same event – wouldn't that be something? ■

A beautiful blue coloured replica is also airworthy at Brighton – built by the late John Greenland. Many years after the Comper company went out of business an incomplete set of plans was discovered in someone's loft. This discovery helped enable the creation of the two replicas mentioned, but much

# To Czech Republic and back by Belfair!

Part 1



David Beale shares his experience of visiting the Czech Republic in his Topsy Belfair G-APIE. Based on the pre-war Topsy B, this cabin monoplane is one of a handful of Belfairs completed in the 1950s. Three British examples were active then, novelly sporting “culinary” registrations G-APIE, ‘POD and ‘OXO!

## The trip is hatched

A couple of years ago I started to exchange e-mails and met Jan Kárník from Czech Republic over Walter Mikron engines, spares and possible future development of the Mk3 engine. My interest is mainly the Mk2 as fitted to my Topsy Belfair and Topsy Trainers several of which I have overhauled and brought back to virtual zero time, though the stock of recoverable parts is getting much reduced. Earlier last year he invited me to come over and so was hatched the plan to fly my Topsy G-APIE and the 1938 Walter Mikron back

to the country of its manufacture for the first time since it was shipped to Fairy Aviation in Belgium.

Like Martin Ferrid, who writes in the LAA magazine encouraging people to fly to Europe, I am not new to crossing La Manche at the Pas de Calais and have flown in Europe virtually every year for past 20 or so since I have owned the Belfair, but I have learnt that planning a trip with tight time limits has a high probability of not going to plan as the weather rarely plays fair. Jan suggested a weekend at the beginning of August to coincide with the “Secret Airshow” at his local

airfield. So that was the target date now to find out who would like to come so I circulated friends who have joined me on my jaunts in the past to see if there was any interest. Quite a few said yes but gradually they fell by the wayside as other commitments and unserviceability of plane or crew forced them to drop out.

The plan was to be flexible on departure and return dates to maximise the weather windows and to allow us to explore some of Germany and France on the way which is fine for those of us who are retired but not so for Martin who had work



commitments. The plan was to leave any time from the Tuesday to the Thursday to get to Pilsen/Line for the Saturday airshow. The formation was to be three planes. Edmund Comber in his Jabiru that had just been fitted with a new engine as his original had reached TBO leaving him only a couple of weeks to bed it in and clock up 20 or so hours before the trip. Not a hardship as the plane had been out of the air for best part of a year so he had some flying to catch up with. Martin Ferrid had problems with his engine in his Sport Cruiser so he planned to come in the ever faithful Jodel. My mount was my Topsy which was running well but might soon be needing a top end overhaul due to slightly increasing oil consumption, though still well within specification (though despite the heat on trip it was fine so still on my to do list).

## We're off

The week before we started looking at the weather trying to decide on which day to leave but each day the forecasts changed until finally on Monday it looked like we had a window of opportunity on Wednesday,

though unfortunately Martin had to work and could not leave until Thursday so would catch us up. A final check on Wednesday and Edmund and I agreed we would need a reasonably early start on Wednesday to get into France before the weather sweeping east along the south coast would stop us. Edmund called me at 7:30 at his strip to make sure I was ready to go at mine and we agreed to meet overhead Witchford at 8:15, flight-plan activated we formed up in loose formation and headed off for Earls Colne in better than expected weather, cleared through Southend with Edmund doing the radio and using his newly fitted Mode S transponder. Routing via Sheerness we set course across Kent direct to Calais. We had agreed an 85-90kt cruise but not to form up as a battle pair in tight formation as keeping in formation in bumpy conditions is hard enough to do with two identical aircraft and even harder with planes having very different wing loadings and power. In thermals the Topsy soars and it is easy to add 5-10 kts on the cruise surfing the thermals so keeping pace with the higher wing loading and

more powerful Jabiru, with its new engine, but it is easy to hit sink and when trying to climb the gap opens up. With no “chat” frequency it is easy to lose sight of each other but no problem as often we fly with others and much wider performance differences, each at their own chosen height and speeds to meet up at the designated airfield at about the same time. Little planes, especially a small white one might only be a few miles apart but are hard if not impossible to see when going same direction at same height. None of us are in a race and it usually works out we arrive nicely spaced for landing.

## France

Calais was deserted and no ATC so we had to practice our French blind calls. Landing in turn after 1hr 50 we closed flight plans by phoning as were not sure the Sky Demon app would do so in time to stop the authorities starting over due action, especially as the Sky Demon flight plan assumes take off and set course, not as I always do climb over head set engine to cruise and then set course so adding 10 mins to the start and overhead joins circuits and landing adding 5-10 mins at the end taking us close to the time limits. Must suggest to Sky Demon a change as tweaking the speed to compensate is not ideal. Landing fees and fuel paid which seemed to take the lady on the desk an age we decided to skip coffee and head off to our next stop of Reims as we could see the forecast rain and clag approaching fast. Luckily GAPIE started first blade with a luke-warm engine and we were off in an increasing wind that was

straight down the runway. Many years previously we had both called into Calais to clear customs and refuel home bound when GAPIE was caught by the 30kt wind as we tried to leave and tipped on her nose destroying the unique Fairy Reid prop and Edmund had to ferry me home hopefully my lesson learned and a reason many like the wheel at the front. She now has a Newton copy of the original Horden Richmond prop that works well but it is not as efficient as the very thin section Fairy Reid losing 5kt on speed and 100 ft/min climb but I cannot complain at performance that 50bhp at take-off and climb gives and a 90kt cruise on 13l/hr even fully loaded. This time we headed on course and keeping each other in sight met a few spots of rain that continued until just past Laon when we broke out into perfect flying weather. What has happened to the past

glories of many of the French airfields. We landed 2 hrs later in time for lunch at Reims but found restaurant closed up and the place nearly abandoned. Luckily the club room was open and Edmund had packed some sandwiches for us to share whilst I had snack bars for similar eventualities destined to be used on way home. Just after 14:00 local the firemen/re-fueller and taker of landing fees arrived with a smile and in short time had us topped up and relieved us of payment and on our way to a planned over-night stop at Sedan (Douzy) 45 mins away. One rule I made to myself when touring in Europe is if there is fuel available and room in the tank top up even if it will only take a few litres as often there is self-service fuel but only if you have a French Air-Total card. Why Total cannot accept credit or debit cards beats me and my attempts at obtaining an Air-Total

card have always hit a brick wall with no French bank account or address. Luckily there were some people working in one of the hangers and in my school boy French I managed to ask if they could serve us fuel for cash. Topped up we asked where to tie down, they pointed at the grass opposite the pump and offered to take us the short hop to the local hotel when we were ready. The place was nearly empty but we were soon settled in and off for a well-earned beer across the square, having decided to book dinner in the hotel. This was not the luxury of Sedan Castle from a previous visit but clean, low cost and 10 minutes stroll the following day back to the planes.

*Part 2 will in the next issue will see David into Germany and onwards.*

Steve Slater

# 'Airymouse' returns to the skies

Steve Slater



*First sortie sorted!*

'Airymouse', the Currie Wot built in 1957 for the Hampshire Aeroplane Club by Joe Currie and John Isaacs, and the subject of the book of the same name, made its return to the skies at the end of March in the hands of LAA test pilot Jez Cooke. In addition to his experience as a test and display pilot, Jez was a perfect choice. It had been reading Harald Penrose's book at the age of eleven that triggered his passion for flying and vintage aircraft.

Airymouse's new owner Steve Slater acquired the aircraft at the end of 2017, after it had been in storage for more than four years. Steve, with fellow VAC members Alan Turney and Arthur Mason recovered the aircraft to Turweston where it was returned to flyable

condition. Steve was delighted to report that Jez returned with his preconceptions of the aircraft undimmed, to such an extent that the initial flight test

was rapidly followed by two others the same day and Steve is now enjoying summer flying with the aircraft from its new home at Bicester. ■

Steve Slater



*Arthur and Alan dismantle in the dust!*

## VAC New Bank Account – Important News for You

We are re-organising our banking arrangements to make things easier for you. We are no longer using the account set up for Vintage Aircraft Club Ltd and from 1st July 2018 you will need to advise your bank if you pay by Standing Order for your membership and cancel the present arrangement with that account. We are enclosing a form for you in this magazine, there is also one on our website or you can use the following bank details to set up your standing order to ensure your membership renewals:

**Bank: Lloyds Bank plc, Ashford (309028) Branch**

**Account name: Vintage Aircraft Club**

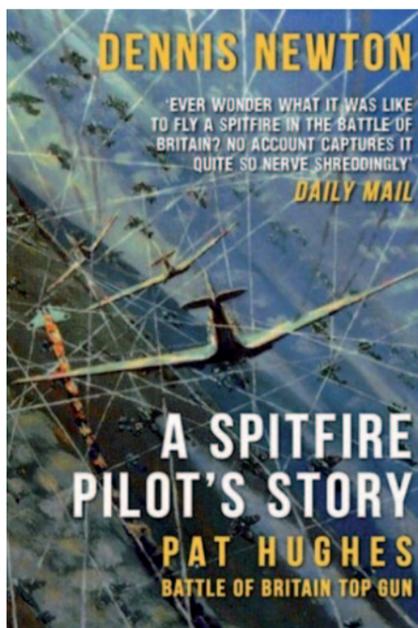
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Membership fees are £25.00 and due on 1st April each year.

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**Published by Amberley Books**  
**ISBN 978-1-4456-7149-9**  
**Author Dennis Newton**  
**Soft Back Price £16.99**

For anyone who is interested in the role of the RAF in the second world war and especially in the Battle of Britain this book is a must.

This is the life story of one of the few who lost his life during the battle having become one of the top scoring aces of the time. In doing so it reveals the conditions new recruits had to face.

This book also provides an insight into the recruitment of pilots from the British Dominions such as Australia from where Pat Hughes travelled to the UK and transferred into the RAF. The methods used to recruit these men, and the resultant political wrangling between the relevant governments.

It describes the highs and lows of the battles, the struggle to prepare for the approaching war with the lack of both aeroplanes and pilots. The formation of squadrons and their distribution around the country is also covered.

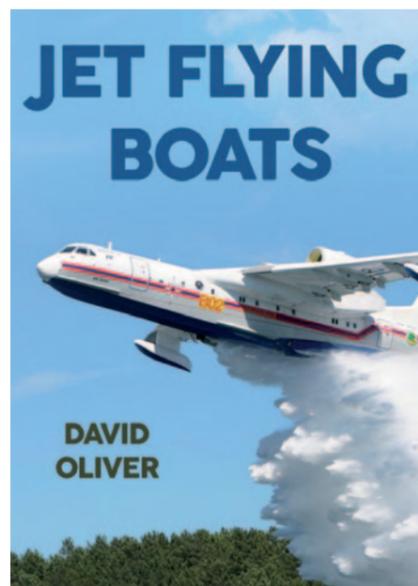
The book contains many first-hand accounts of the battles fought in the skies over England and the stories of the battle concluding with the death of Hughes. There were many versions of how he met his death and the examination of the circumstances result in what is believed to be the correct one.

The chapter entitled 'Afterwards' makes for interesting reading describing the events following the notification of his death to his family back in Australia. Something this reviewer has not come across before.

The book is well illustrated with both photographs in black and white and colour and some line drawings.

A first-rate book concerning one of the less well-known aces of the Battle of Britain, which brings home what it must have been like for those young men at that time.

*Paul Loveday*



**Published by Amberley Books**  
**ISBN 978-1-4456-4613-8**  
**Author David Oliver**  
**Soft Back Price £14.99**

Flying boats were once seen to be the answer to providing air travel without the need for fixed runways, something that after WW 2 progress overtook, and their use declined.

The development of these aircraft was in the main left to the military, the UK only producing one military type from Saunders Roe which was not a successful venture.

The United States and the Soviet Union military providing the thrust of development for these craft, using pure jet engines. Subsequently the use of turboprop engines became the dominating engine type in certain roles.

This book gives an insight into the reasons for flying boats from the end of the war.

Reference is also made to those

designs that never left the designer's drawing board. The subsequent development for both civilian and military use is covered along with an assessment of what could be the future of the aircraft. The development of the extremely capable fire-fighting is also covered.

The book is well written covering as it does a branch of aviation not generally covered. It is well illustrated with photographs, both in black and white and colour including some of the latest types.

*Paul Loveday*



**Published by Amberley Books**  
**ISBN 978-1-4456-5041-8**  
**Author David Oliver**  
**Soft Back £14.99**

This book covers the Harrier from its inception as the 1127 and then Kestrel up to its final versions of GR.9A for the RAF and AV-8B for the US Marine Corps.

Being the first VTOL aircraft it's development from tethered flight, from control in the hover in the prototype to what was required for fully

controlled flight in the latest versions is explained throughout the book. As are the reasons for the two-seat trainer for the RAF and RN. The employment in its original role in Germany during the cold war to that of the Harrier and Sea Harrier in conflict from its little-known use in Belize through to the action in The Falklands, and its use in the desert is covered with some first-hand accounts included.

The development of the aircraft in conjunction with Mc Donnell Douglas resulting in what was basically a new aircraft shows just how

technology increased its capability. The use of the aircraft by the US Marine Corps up to the present day, along with the sales to Spain, India, and Italy.

The withdrawal in 2011, some would say, far too early, in preparation for the F.35B Lightning has meant that a modified Harrier T.4 has been used in trials to improve that aircraft's stability.

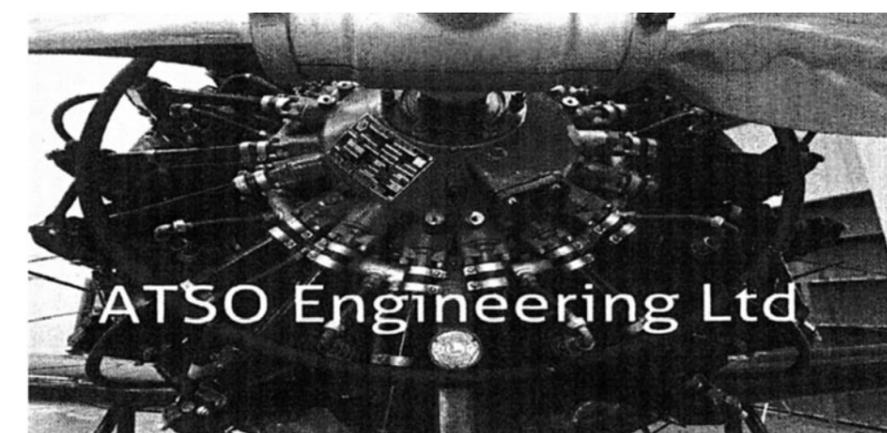
The history of the aircraft is extremely well covered, and the text is accompanied by an excellent series of photographs portraying the aircraft in all its roles.

*Paul Loveday*




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# Dates for the diary 2018 / 2019

## 2018

Saturday 8th September – Autumn Fly-In at Turweston Aerodrome with VAC ground event.

Sunday 9th September - VAC invited to Rougham Airfield for RCTAM 26th anniversary

Saturday 13th October – VAC AGM at Wellesbourne. Refreshments. To celebrate RAF 100 we are inviting all VAC aircraft in military colours to join us.

Sunday 28th October – VAC All Hallows Fly-In at Turweston Aerodrome. With ground event: spooky stories, flying superstitions and airfield ghostly encounters!.

November (TBA) – VAC visit to Uxbridge Bunker.

December (TBA) – VAC Safety Day - “I learnt about flying from that...” Part 2. LAA HQ at Turweston.

## 2019

Wednesday 16th January – VAC Poetry and Nostalgia Evening – White Waltham

February – VAC Early Spring Lunch – Sywell

Saturday 2nd March – VAC visit to RAF Signals Station – Henlow

Saturday 6th April – VAC Dinner and Awards Evening at Shuttleworth (more details later)

Saturday 13th April – VAC Daffodil Fly-in – Fenland

Further details about the Club, contacts and events can be found on the Vintage Aircraft Club website [www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk](http://www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk)

### Vintage Aircraft Club

c/o Light Aircraft Association

Turweston Aerodrome, near Brackley, Northants., NN13 5YD

*Nord at Bicester scramble*

Michael Mirkles

