



September 2001

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It's been a while since our last newsletter, but now that summer holidays have taken place and things are starting to return relatively to normal, we have a chance to pick up the keyboard once more...

This month's meeting: 13th September 2001

A day in the life of PFA Engineering - Ken Craigie

We are fortunate this month to have Ken Craigie, the PFA's Chief Inspector, coming to talk to us on matters dear to many of our hearts - the pit falls of building a plane! He will also be showing some interesting slides and will generally be giving advice on aircraft maintenance. This guarantees to be a very interesting and informative evening so let's ensure he will have a good audience.

Next month's meeting: 11th October 2001

The A G M

The business side of this will be kept as brief as possible but we do need to find a new coordinator. Ed Hicks, who is currently in the USA photographing RV's, has done a wonderful job as coordinator for the past 2 years and now feels it is time for him to move on and for new blood to take the leading role. At present we do not have any nominations, so if you feel at all inclined, please consider putting your name forward. Remember that you will have the support of a good team of willing helpers, so the work-load will not be too heavy! We just need someone to pull it all together...

Sad News

We have just heard the sad news that Peter Metherral passed away in August after fighting cancer for some months. Pete was a faithful member and supporter of the Bristol Strut, and through his connections as SATCO with Air Traffic Control at Filton, he initiated our series of Young Eagle events, and enabled them to run so successfully.

Those of us who fly regularly in the local area will already have missed Pete's reassuring voice on the radio, and our thoughts are with his colleagues in the tower and also with his wife at this sad time.

Summer visit to the Hicks'

No, you didn't miss this, unfortunately things were so busy that the meeting to see the progress of G-BZRV was never arranged. You will probably have read their most recent update in the latest Popular Flying, so it needn't be repeated here. Suffice it to say the lads are steaming ahead with the building and are now concentrating on the control panel. Ed is hoping to arrange a Strut visit soon, though, hopefully in the Autumn.

Thoughts from our Treasurer

Gordon has been busy lately preparing a new database of the Brissle Membership. His intention is to collect details like those members who fly and those who would like to, what aeroplanes are owned by members who do, as well as contact numbers and e-mail addresses. Apparently there are 52 members paid-up at the moment, including several family memberships. Gordon reports that our bank balance is very healthy, and he will be making suggestions at the AGM in October as to how we should spend some of it. One thought that comes to mind is to maybe purchase life-jackets or safety equipment which a Strut member could sign out when flying abroad. Any other ideas of your own will be considered when you come to the meeting!

News from our neighbours

Extracted from the Wessex Strut Newsletter.

Since our last newsletter in June, we learned that Anthea Beck had suffered a double engine failure with her Partenavia P68 in the Utttoxeter area when routing from Paris to Merseyside on June 3rd. The ensuing forced landing resulted in many broken bones, and

bruised passengers, but subsequent reports are that she and her passengers, all family members, are making excellent progress, and she's looking forward to attending the VAC event at Henstridge in September. On behalf of all in Bristol Strut we send Anthea our best wishes, and hope she and her family can make a full and rapid recovery.

The fly-out to Haverfordwest planned for May13th turned out to be once again marred by bad weather. Only four aircraft managed to make it, and although the invitation had been extended to Bristol Strutters, none took up the challenge.

Things to do in September:			
16th Sept	Popham	Luscombe & Gyro fly-in	01256 397733
16th Sept	Watchford Farm	Devon Strut fly-in	01823 601268
22nd Sept	Henstridge	Vintage fly-in	01963 364231
23rd Sept	Shipdham	Harvest fly-in	01365 820709
29th Sept	Shoreham	Aero Mart	01424 440644
30th Sept	Popham	Aero Jumble & fly-in	01256 397733

As usual, always check before setting out.

News from the Web.

Our website hosts at Flyer Internet publish frequent news items of an aeronautical nature. This week we gleaned the following snippets:

NASA flies solar wing

NASA's solar powered Helios (basically a solar wing 247 feet across) made a record breaking flight earlier this week when it took nearly seven and a half hours to climb to 96,500ft. The flight was controlled from the ground, by 'pilots' sat behind PCs in a van near the departure runway.

The 1557lb aircraft is powered by two engines - each of 14hp - which effectively gain fuel as they climb.

Makes you think, doesn't it?

JAR states now number ten

The number of country states signed up to the JAR has risen to ten with the addition of Spain, Belgium and Finland. They join the seven already in the club: UK, Denmark, Iceland, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Netherlands.

Don't get confused, though - there are actually 30 states signed up to JAA (the Authority), but only ten have implemented the regulations (JAR). The rest are simply enjoying the chance to vote on our aviation futures.

Make a note if you're a British PPL abroad - this gives an even wider choice of instructors for revalidation. Pity the poor souls who now have to understand the JAR revalidation requirements in Finnish...

Finding the runway debris

British scientists are reported to be working on a new technology which will help to identify debris on a runway. The system is based on an advanced radar technique which will allow potential hazards to be detected from 1km away.

The system has been developed by a commercial offshoot of DERA, and although its development isn't directly linked with the Concorde crash last year, it's that sort of disaster that it may help to minimise.

And Finally..

We are grateful to Malcolm Carlisle for sending in the following nostalgia, describing his early days in the aircraft industry. The article is long enough for two issues, so part 2 will follow next month. Thanks Malcolm!

Bye for now

Ian & Mary





Life in the Swinging 30s and 40s

Described by Malcolm Carlisle - Part 1.

In 1935 I entered the employment of Airwork Ltd at Heston Airport and was assigned to the ground staff of their Sales Department. Mr Colin Hunter informed me that he was the Chief Engineer and as there would be only the two of us, he thereby appointed me Deputy Chief Engineer, a grand title for a fifteen year old.

My first essential task was to learn how to start the motley array of aircraft housed in the hangar by hand swinging the propellers. As time progressed I became familiar with a number of different types of engine and found the easiest to swing were the Gipsy Ones, Twos, Threes and Majors, even the Gipsy Six presented no difficulty although the thin trailing edge of the metal propellers persuaded me to wear a glove. Anyone requiring exercise should volunteer to start a DH 86, if there is one handy: Of the four Sixes you can be sure one will give you trouble! These engines were left hand tractors, but the engine of the Cirrus Moth was of right hand rotation and as I found it awkward using my left hand, I stood behind the prop to swing the motor.

I am not altogether certain, but I believe it was the Spartan Cruiser which had me puzzled as to how the high mounted central engine could be started. The propeller of the Gipsy III or Major seemed well out of arm's reach, however, with the arrival of the crew the starting procedure was revealed: the engineer carried a pole with a leather loop at the end, an obvious device which I ought to have thought of, but it did pose another question of what would happen if the engine

backfired? One thing was for sure: the engineer would have a long walk to retrieve his pole, unless he failed to let go.

The Pobjoy in the BA Swallow was just the right height for me. Staring the radial in the tiny low slung Comper Swift, one bowed deeply. Taxiing the Swift I found to be an undignified procedure for in order to see where you were going you either stood up to look over the engine or leant far over the side to peer under the wing. One pilot had the right idea for he walked alongside his Swift with a hand on the throttle and his forearm tucked into the cockpit: all it took was a nudge from his hip or pull with the arm to keep him on course. Little did I realize that several years later I would be walking Tiger Moths in this fashion, particularly on concrete when a stiff breeze on your tail would push you off course, and wing handlers were never around when needed.

My flying hours as a passenger were mounting up nicely, of course. I attributed this to my charming personality but eventually the bitter truth came out and it can be summed up in one word, ballast! To probably misquote the words of one witty person, no pilot wants to touch down three or four times before landing, and with my extra weight this embarrassment was minimized.

A Moth to be delivered to Shanklin airfield, I.O.W required the company of a second aircraft



Special technique for swinging the high-mounted centre engine of a Spartan Cruiser.

to bring the pilot back home and this machine was a Stinson Reliant. I was taken along to fold and house the Moth. On arrival we found the airfield dotted with grazing sheep and the pilots had a high old time swooping low to shepherd the flock into a corner to make space for a landing.

Returning home we overflowed a large country house where there appeared to be a form of pageantry taking place. Mark Lacayo was at the controls and he took the Stinson down for a closer look and those beautiful costumed people looked up and waved. But there was nothing friendly about their manner for they were shaking clenched fists at us. I had a sneaking suspicion the pilots knew they were creating havoc with a film set, and the sound of a Stinson's engine could not have been too familiar in Tudor times.

It cannot have fallen to many people to witness the unprofessional conduct of one Gipsy Moth! Walking across the tarmac my route was taking me past this parked aircraft, but when only a few yards away I was taken aback to see the propeller spin round three or four revolutions just on its own accord! Consulting my Seniors, this odd behaviour was attributed to the fact that the Moth had been standing for many hours in the blazing hot sun, and the expansion of air within the cylinders was of sufficient force to move the pistons. They praised the engine for having such perfect fitting valve seats and piston rings. Now just who did they think they were fooling with that unlikely tale, for it was so obviously the ghost of a departed engineer who did not believe that anyone was looking.



Sorry, but I now have this urge for some name dropping, for instance my conversation with Nevil Shute Norway, a brilliant aircraft designer and engineer, but known world wide as the famous author Nevil Shute. Mr Shute approached me in a friendly manner and, pointing to his Airspeed Courier, he said 'Give us a push Lad'. Of course I was only too pleased to have a chat so my reply was 'Yes Sir'. Well I say that was a conversation, and I stick to it.

When Miss Amy Johnson hired a Leopard Moth from the Company, my talk with this famous aviator was of a more technical nature, and I was encouraged to open the dialogue with a few well chosen words: 'Brakes on, petrol on, throttle closed, switches off'. Miss Johnson agreed with me on these matters, and with run up checks completed, I received a smile and wave. Well at least I had the privilege of joining the Honourable Corps of Propeller Swingers to Amy Johnson, so there!

Mr Stephen Appleby at this time was a leading pioneer of the British Pou du Ciel craze and held the Permit to Fly No 1 for the machine he built. As a personal friend of my Chief he was a frequent visitor to the hangar and never failed to pass a few words with the Lad. He was also considerate enough to visit me in hospital after an angry Dragon had slapped me across the hand.

The Head of the Sales Dept. was called Bats Page, possibly because he was superior in night flying or more likely a more flamboyant pilot than most. Summoning me to his office I was handed a wrapped aircraft Log Book and instructed to travel to London and personally to present it to the Earl of Kashmir, who was staying at the prodigious Dorchester Hotel. Tidying myself up I journeyed to the City and walking straight past the busy porters, I entered the sumptuous foyer and headed for the reception desk. To the elegant gentleman behind the counter I made my request to see the Earl of Kashmir and that is as far as I got, for I was suddenly flanked by two liveried flunkies who linked their arms with mine and I was actually raised off the floor. In line abreast we wheeled gracefully to port and through a gap in a cloud we descended to lower regions and landed at a place called Parcels Office. I suppose it was not really on that a



Leopard Moth G-ACKM, "The Leicestershire Fox III" has a tiny fox mascot mounted on the top cowling, just forward of the windscreen.

sixteen year old delivery lad would be permitted an audience with his Lordship. I came to the conclusion that pilots have a wicked sense of humour.

In 1938 I was transferred to the ground staff of the Flying School with their Avro Cadets, a Leopard Moth and later a Moth Minor. When cross country flights were scheduled my colleague Douglas Bianchi and I were flown to Denham airfield in Leopard Moth G-ACKM to receive and turn around the intrepid aviators of the future.

Compared with Heston Airport, Denham was postage stamp in size and we watched many a frightening approach and landing as pilots just managed to squeeze themselves in, and yet I can only recall one slight mishap when two titled ladies dropped their Cadet heavily enough to cause damage. Maybe it was a three point landing but to commence it from some twelve feet up was too much for the undercarriage. One of their ladyships on surveying the damage enquired, 'Why should that happen with a perfectly normal landing?' A shrug from Douglas indicated that the aeroplane was entirely to blame.

Denham airfield was (and still is) privately owned and the owner must surely have been one of the first Green people. His concern for the environment gave pilots and engineers a need to be watchful in their work.

Our orders were explicit, for when flooding the carburetor a drip tray was to be placed underneath the engine to prevent petrol from killing off the grass. Also, when running up, the tailplane was not to be close to or pointed in the direction of trees as the slipstream could cause damage to the foliage. He regularly patrolled the airfield armed with marker flags and these were located near skylarks' nests as a warning to keep clear. Four years later I was to return to an enlarged Denham with 'F' Flight, an extension of 21 EFTS Booker.

In September 1939, Civil Aviation came to an end for the duration of the war. Airwork Ltd, with their considerable experience of aerodrome management plus a large staff of engineers was immediately assigned the care and maintenance of several R.A.F Flying Schools, thereby releasing airmen for operational duties.

Continued next month

© Article and illustrations: The de Havilland Moth Club Limited.

By November 1932 Smiths Industries had installed a 16ft diameter, illuminated clock at elegant Heston. The anonymous Puss Moth is timeless.





Acknowledgement: The above article was first published in 'The Moth', the magazine of The de Havilland Moth Club Limited.

***** Don't forget that all newsletter contributions (big or small) are gratefully received. *****

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Last month's Newsletter

Click [HERE](#) to open the June "Strutter".

[Top...](#)