



Tom Jones 1926 – 2011

Tom was a very significant factor in the Museum, a local man. He worked at Handley Page (Reading) and C.F.Taylor Wokingham. He had travelled on the Royal Tour of the Handley Page Herald 'Whiskey Alpha' with the Duke of Edinburgh and when 'WA' was being restored at Woodley Tom was instrumental in obtaining the necessary parts and artifacts, having a detailed knowledge of the aircraft. Tom was an accomplished sportsman, especially a cricket fast bowler, for many years playing for Hurst. Tom had been ill for a long time. His widow, Dorothy, is anxious to maintain the family relationship with the Museum.

John Bold 1934 – 2011

John died unexpectedly, his funeral was very well attended. John had been invaluable in the early days of the Museum, taking over as building manager, his career as an electrical engineer with the CEGB playing a useful part in that role. John had been the holder of a PPL and was a native of Portsmouth. He was active in the then Royal Berkshire Aviation Society organising visits to many locations, Aviation Museums and airfields, near and far. John had lived in Woodley for many years and leaves a widow, Daphne and two daughters who shared his interest in aviation.

Engineering Report

(Geoff Etridge)

Miles Student: The men working on this were repairing the elevator for the wing. They had to start the manufacture of the flaps which were missing, having been lost whilst the rest of the aeroplane was stored.

Westland Scout Helicopter: The rotor head had been repositioned. Work was continuing on the cockpit – there was still plenty to do.

Martinet Engine – Two of the men were removing components from the Bristol Mercury (which was scrap outside the hangar) to fit onto the engine.

Bleriot The wing structure had been varnished ready for the fabric to be fitted and the fuselage framework had been built. The many bracing wires were now being put in.

Westland Scout Helicopter: The rotor head had been repositioned. Work was continuing on the cockpit – there was still plenty to do.

Mini-Link: The rewiring was going well and nearly everything was working properly.

Shop & Social

(Margaret Etridge)

The Skittles Evening had gone well and everyone had enjoyed it. The Christmas Dinner would be held on 14th January at Lands End.

The sale of cakes in the shop was going well. The stock of toys was gradually going down but would not be replenished until the beginning of next season.

October Meeting

(John Wood)

The part played by the Historic Aircraft Association (HAA) in private civil aviation was outlined by the organisation's Treasurer, Ken Peters.

Ken recalled that his interest in aircraft had started during WW2 when he lived in an area where there were many R.A.F airfields. He grew up with the daily background of Lancasters and other types flying overhead.

"I wanted to be an RAF pilot but poor eyesight prevented that", he said.

Many years later – in 1981 – he bought his own Tiger Moth.

Aircraft were (and are) part of our national heritage, and there was (and is) a responsibility to preserve them in flying condition, Ken said.

This view was shared by those who joined the Historic Aircraft Association on its foundation in 1979. Among the membership were test pilots and the owners of historic aircraft who had a wide experience and were well regarded by the aviation community as trusted advisers who respected sensible rules for those who flew historic aeroplanes.

In its early years, the HAA had considerable influence on the conduct of air displays. These responsibilities are now with the air-show organisers and regulatory organisations. The HAA, however, continues to have a voice, providing advice to safeguard the disciplined and careful flying of historic machines at public displays.

Ken said that the number of airworthy historic aeroplanes continues to grow and Britain now has more historic aircraft than the rest of Europe put together.

Despite some accidents, air safety has improved significantly in the decades since the HAA was created. Safety has always been a high priority in the HAA and, in addition to its involvement in flying safety at public events, the Association also combines a safety symposium with every annual meeting.

The HAA Council comprised former senior RAF officers, test pilots and other specialists, each expert on one or more aspects of historic aviation and aircraft. The aims of the Council are to promote and protect the interests of its members and of the country's wider historic, heritage, vintage and veteran aircraft community

All 150 members of the HAA share a passion for old aeroplanes and all were enthusiasts, Ken told us.



November Meeting

(John Wood)

According to the saying, everybody is "famous for fifteen minutes". Some, however, are famous for a lot longer but eventually are overtaken by events that leave them once famous and now forgotten.

Such was the case with brother and sister Luis and Ruth Fontes who in the mid 1930s became well known as air-race pilots and enjoyed a well-to-do lifestyle that enabled them to buy aircraft that were specifically built for each of them to fly in the 1935 King's Cup air race.

Their stories have been researched by Jean Fostekew who told us about some of their exploits.



The pair lived at Caversham and their aircraft were specially designed and built by Miles at Woodley. Their Miles Hawk Speed Sixes were two of only three built and featured wide-track undercarriages, flaps and increased dihedral. Each was powered by a six-cylinder de Havilland Gipsy engine, an engine that was also used in the Percival Vega Gull in which Beryl Markham flew from Abingdon, Oxfordshire to Cape Breton

Island, Nova Scotia in 21 hours in September 1936.

Despite a number of successes by Miles machines in the 1935 race, Luis' machine, **G-ADGP**, and Ruth's **G-ADOD** were unplaced. Luis had to retire after making a forced landing near Durham while Ruth flew past the wrong side of a turning point. She finished the race without knowing that her oversight had led to elimination.

The following year, '**OD**' was again entered in the King's Cup race but this time Tommy Rose was at the controls and achieved second place at 184 m.p.h.

Later the same year, Ruth's aircraft took part in the England to Johannesburg Race, with Flt. Lt. A. E. Clouston as pilot. The Speed Six force landed at Gwelo in Southern Rhodesia and was written off.

In addition to air racing, Luis was also a keen sporting motorist. In 1936 his first motor racing success was as a virtually unknown competitor at Brooklands when, driving a 2.3 litre Monza Alfa that had belonged to John Cobb, he won a trophy race at a whisker short of 87 m.p.h. Jean said that he selected number **13** as his race number and painted the car green – both actions considered to be very unlucky in racing circles.

However his success led to an appearance at Le Mans where he co-drove a 4.5 litre Lagonda to victory, despite having suffered gear-box trouble that forced the car to limp across the finishing line. The Le Mans Lagonda ('**BPK 202**') survives in the Dutch National Automobile Museum at Raamsdonksveer.

In October 1935, Luis was involved in a serious road accident when, driving in Warwickshire he killed a motor cyclist in a head-on collision. Charged with causing death by dangerous driving and manslaughter, he was sentenced to three years penal servitude and was banned from driving for ten years after his release. Part of his defence had been that before the accident, he had drunk too much. His pilot's licence and motor racing licence were withdrawn but following his release from prison, his aviator's certificate was restored and he resumed flying.

At the controls of his Hawk Speed Six, he came 13th in the 1938 King's Cup race

The Speed Six was offered for sale in May the following year but failed to find a buyer – unsurprising with the war imminent and aircraft likely to be impressed into RAF service.

Luis flew '**GP**' a matter of weeks before the outbreak of war and then stored it in a garage at his London flat. He joined the Air Transport Auxiliary and in 1940 was killed when the Wellington he was delivering to Llandow suffered an engine failure and crashed.

Sister Ruth did not attract the fame – or notoriety - of Luis but following first-hand experience in the 1935 Kings Cup event, resorted to flying in low-profile events. Even so, she was mentioned in the press as a "well-known woman pilot".

She married a doctor in 1936 and had two children, one still-born. Although her Speed Six '**OD**' had been written off, she was recorded as being the owner of Miles Hawk Major **G-ACXT** from 1934. This aircraft was impressed into RAF service in January 1941.

Ruth, whose family life appears to have taken over from her aviation interests, died in 1969.

December Meeting

(John Wood)

The title of Colin Couston's talk – "***Flying and Crashing in Papua New Guinea***" - seemed, at first, quite whimsical. But as his presentation began, the picture of a twin-engined passenger aircraft that crashed, killing 28 of the 32 people on board made us aware of the grim reality of air travel in a big country where beautiful terrain poses a constant threat to pilots and passengers.

Colin spent some of his 42 years as a pilot flying a variety of types from his base in Papua New Guinea.

New Guinea in the Pacific north of Australia is the world's second largest island and is divided into two halves. The western half comprises two Indonesian provinces: Papua and West Papua. The eastern half forms the mainland of Papua New Guinea, an independent country.

The whole country is dominated by high mountains. The massive Central Range virtually separates the north from the south. The absence of any proper roads means that people and freight have to be transported over the mountains by air.

Such a system is vital in a country where the economy largely depends on the trade in agricultural produce whether it be vegetable or animal.

Papua New Guinea has a variety of aircraft serving international as well as domestic destinations. They include the A310 Airbus, Boeing 707, Douglas DC3 and Fokker 100.

But settlements in high mountains are served by aircraft whose crews have to face perhaps the greatest hazards.

The whole of the Central Range is so rugged and unforgiving that, as Colin explained, it never failed to make a pilot feel nervous and he would always be keeping a sharp look-out for a suitable place to land, should it be necessary.

There were no traditional airfields in the mountains but communities were provided with airstrips visited by aircraft such as the Britten Norman Islander – “the workhorse of Papua New Guinea”, Colin said – and a variety of Cessna types and helicopters.

Some strips were built on ridges where the surrounding ground on either side fell away sharply. Others terminated in a sheer drop – a challenge when taking off or landing – while some were found on sharply-rising ground where a landing aircraft did not pause after landing but maintained momentum in order to reach the parking area.

Each strip offered its own problems. Approaches were tricky. Colin observed: “When you were committed to an approach with nowhere else to go, if you got it wrong, you crashed.”

An experienced pilot, John Close, prepared a series of hand-drawn maps showing the approach to some 50 strips and indicating topographical hazards and so forth. The information was found to be so valuable that the collection was produced as a booklet that found favour with many pilots.

Even after coping with the strips, pilots had to deal with the vagaries of the general terrain. The valley floors could be deceptive, with “the ground rising faster than you can” said Colin. The weather too, had to be considered. It created daily conditions when flying was safe in the morning but not in the afternoon due to cloud formation.

Colin spoke of a group of “very religious” who flew suitable families to villages where they would translate the Bible into the local language – of which there were some 700.

Returning to the hazards of flying in the country, Colin outlined an aircraft accident in which ten people were killed when the machine flew into a mountain side.

He described another accident in which, happily, no one was hurt. A friend was at the controls of a Cessna 180 owned by Colin when the machine left a narrow airstrip and nosed over in rough ground. An examination showed that there was some damage but the engine was in good order and the Cessna was worth salvaging. The insurance company accepted Colin’s offer of \$US1,500 to “buy back” the wreck.



Then, with the help of some friends who included engineers, the machine was dismantled and dragged overland to a river and eventually packed into a 20-foot-long container and sent to the U.K. There, Colin undertook a restoration that produced an immaculate aircraft registered G-BTSM. This was eventually sold and is now flying in New Zealand.

Our thanks to Colin for an illuminating talk about some brave flying in a beautiful but sometimes hostile country.

His praised his fellow flyers, saying: “If it were not for them, people and goods would never reach their destinations.”

Dates for your Diary

January, 2012

8 Croydon Airport Hotel – Aviation & Airline Collectors Fair.

10-20 (1910) The Los Angeles International Air Meet, the first major airshow in the United States, is held at Dominguez Field. Glenn Curtis, Clifford Harmon, and Charles Hamilton compete in this festival.

11 WLAC - Biggles biplane - restoring and flying the 1914 BE-2 replica (Steve Slater).

14 MBA Christmas Dinner

23 WLAC Douglas Cairns is a pilot with diabetes who will be talking about his flight in his Piper Apache to the North Pole.

30 (1948): Orville Wright died.

February

5 Old Sarum – Vintage Sunday

7 MBA Lecture: John Downey - The Vickers Vimy

8 WLAC The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (Ian Smith OC BBMF).

20 WLAC Memories of Brooklands

22 Brooklands – The QF32 Engine Failure (Capt Richard de Crespigny)*

March

4 Old Sarum – Vintage Sunday

6 MBA Lecture – tba

7 WLAC 55 years of flying fun (Clive Rustin)

11 Old Warden – Scale model exhibition

April

3 MBA Lecture – tba

4 WLAC The European Space Agency (Kate Adamson)

** Talks are arranged by/for The Royal Aeronautical Society Weybridge Branch*



Notes on the Eon Primary Glider and its Restoration.

(Chris Maitland)

Many of the ribs of the Eon Primary were found to have suffered breakage of the lower members just forward of the trailing edge, both in service and since repaired and in storage. This must have been caused by tension in the covering of cotton fabric coated with a shrinking dope which put the already curved lower members under compression. It is surprising that the ply reinforcement of the lower member was not continued further rearwards to join up with the ply that joins upper and lower members at the trailing edge.



The outer plywood web of spars is at 45 degrees to the length of the spar. The primary purpose of the web in an I-beam is to prevent the upper and lower members moving endways relative to one another, so the web is stressed in shear. A strain in shear can be resolved to extension along diagonal and compression along the other so the plywood is best employed with its fibres in these directions.



A highly-cambered wing-form that this glider has is appropriate to provide sufficient lift at a low airspeed. Under these conditions the lifting force is generally between 25% and 30 % of the way back from the leading edge. At a higher speed or in a dive this moves rearwards giving the wings a nose-down twisting force. This two-spar structure is fairly typical of light-weight wooden aircraft including traditional biplanes, though when the upper and lower wings are generously braced they form a box-girder. Monoplanes with cantilever wings often have plywood covering at least forward of the rear spar, this provides all the stiffness needed, effectively uniting the two spars into a single box-spar. This structure was widely employed in such examples as the Miles Magister and the Mosquito.

The above is not, I hasten to point out, ours!

Wing Structure Replica

When the wings of the glider had been stripped of covering and their inner structure repaired, it seemed a pity to have to cover it again. Yet, without the support of the covering, the ribs are very fragile, so they were covered as you see. Therefore this replica has been built to illustrate the details of the structure and show how the different parts work to provide strength with lightness. It comprises a structural unit which is repeated five times in each wing, with some variation

Materials

Timber parts are to correct size but the original Sitka Spruce (selected for straight grain and specified density) has been replaced by a harder and heavier softwood.

Plywood parts are birch 3-ply of various thicknesses. The 'biscuits' that reinforce the joints in the ribs and the covering for the leading edge are correctly 1/32 inches (0.8 mm). Heavier ply parts are approximately correct.

Volunteers to staff the museum

There are still vacancies on the list of people to staff the museum on (Winter) Sundays and (Summer) Saturdays and Sundays – and help on Wednesdays would be appreciated too! The more volunteers there are the easier it becomes, both to work out a rota and for the volunteers on the days when they are 'on duty'.

News

The donations bomb was opened in October and £422.68 was recovered from it. This made a total to date of £1,982.30. Brian Lloyd has said that he no longer wished to be involved with the Museum due to other commitments. Major Douglas Goddard and Graham Henderson are both seriously ill and we send our best wishes to them and their families.

The amalgamation with former Royal Berkshire Aviation Society is working smoothly and it has been decided not to make any changes to the names of the resultant organisation.

Two new volunteers have come forward – one is ex-RAF and the other an accountant. Mr Ben Perry was proving a keen volunteer, but, unfortunately due to external factors Mrs Marie Foster is no longer able to volunteer.

It has been agreed that opening times and fees for 2012 will remain the same as this year except for group visits which would be £3 per head.

Correspondence

Hi there,

Have just seen your museum video on the web and thoroughly enjoyed it. I have also checked it out on Google Maps and note that there have been many changes since I was last there in 1960. I was 12 years old then and used to ride my bicycle from Wokingham to the old Aerodrome.

I spent many happy days investigating the old buildings that were known as WD property back then. On one occasion, whilst exploring a building cellar, we found what I learnt later to be a Very pistol and some cartridges. I had great fun firing the flares and was genuinely surprised when the the local rescue fire brigade turned up. Actually the fact that we discovered unused ordnance diffused the whole affair and we ended up on their good side. This was in the runway perimeter buildings and there also some air raid shelters. Whatever happened to the old Aerodrome?

I was very young then and can only remember accessing it via High hedgerowed country lanes.

Best regards,

Geoff Webb

SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

Jean's Blasts from the Past No. 3

From a letter to Monty Cook from the redoubtable Bert Clarke: -“ [regarding Lindbergh] I will not, Monty , spend 8 pages to explain to you - but-briefly- that trip to Germany was late July 1936. Yes, it was true he was loaned the Whitney Straight G-AECT but the Mohawk was designed by that date. *On page 2,669 of my History*, I relate that Lindbergh visited the aerodrome on Wednesday 6th May 1936.....then *on pages 2692-5* I relate to Lindbergh making a return visit to the Aerodrome on the 16th May”

Louis Bleriot

Bleriot's early designs included flapping wings, biplanes, canards, which all resulted in significant crashes. He was noted for his “courageous impatience”. His later successful designs were used by the R.F.C in WW1, pilots being told to ram any Zeppelins with their tiny unarmed fragile craft.

Gift Aid Scheme

As many of you know if you pay income tax and/or Capital Gains Tax and fill out a Gift Aid Form the Museum can claim an additional 28% (possibly 25% now, these things change, but still worth getting!) of your donations and/or subscriptions.

You are only required to fill out a Gift Aid Form once for us – but it is *imperative* that if your Gift Aid circumstances change you let us know as soon as possible.

Editorial

(Keith Freeman)

As the deadline for producing this newsletter approaches (rapidly!) I've realised the plan to issue them in January, April, July and October has a distinct disadvantage. This time of the year (late December) offices and other places tend to close down – and this applies to where I run the Newsletter off – between Christmas Eve and the day after New Year's Day. Or, next year, the day after that, New Year's Day falling on a Sunday.

I'm therefore going to suggest the due dates are changed (again, I know) to March, June, September and December. I hope the various contributors will take note – and the March issue will only have two meetings to report. Naturally the treasurer will immediately spot that this means an extra issue in 2012... but I hope he won't be too upset with me!

Tail End Charlie

Mobile (AL) Approach: "Aircraft calling Mobile, say again."

Delta Flight: "Delta 1234, out of 14 for ten."

Mobile: "... That's a real bad radio; sounds like an old T-37 in my ear."

Delta: "Roger that."

[brief pause]

Delta: "How's this one?"

Mobile: "Better. Still a lot of whining in the background."

Delta: "That's just the flight attendants."

Just maybe this is what the flight attendants were talking about:

"We were running the bar service on the Sydney route when a charming but slightly dodderly older gentleman asked how he could order another G&T," says Lou, from Qantas. "I pointed at the call button on his arm rest – I wouldn't do it for everybody, to be honest – and told him he simply needed to push it. Sure enough, 15 minutes later, his light went on. When I got there he was holding his glass underneath the arm rest and stabbing the button repeatedly, while shaking his head and muttering that it didn't work. Bless him."

Contacts

Chairman & Curator Ken Fostekew - ken@clarkscomputers.co.uk

Treasurer: Alan Foskett

Engineering: Geoff Etridge - geoff.etrudge@live.co.uk

Newsletter Editor: Keith Freeman - musberksav@gmail.com 0119 9666142

Museum Manning: Jean & Ken Fostekew – ken@clarkscomputers.co.uk

Membership: Keith Freeman – museumberksav@gmail.com

Published by *The Museum of Berkshire Aviation, Mohawk Way, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire, RG5 4UEWeb*

Site: <http://home.comcast.net/~aero51/html/index.htm>

Museum of Berkshire Aviation Newsletter – January, 2012