

Old Timers

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Aero Legends' Spitfire gets airborne

At 8.15am on Saturday 11 March 2017 at a misty Duxford Airfield, Spitfire NH341 took to the air for the first time since 2 July 1944, having just completed a three-year reconstruction at Spitfire specialists Historic Flying Ltd (HFL). Pilot John Romain reported that the aeroplane had flown well, but the initial test flight had to be curtailed due to a problem with the carburettor on its Packard Merlin 266 engine.

Built at Castle Bromwich as an LF IXe, NH341 was delivered to the RAF in April 1944 but served with No 411 'Grizzly Bear' Squadron RCAF. It was flying south-east of Caen three months later when it was shot down by Luftwaffe fighters. The pilot, Warrant Officer James 'Jimmy' Jeffrey, successfully bailed out and evaded capture. The remains of NH341 were excavated and placed in a museum display at Bayeux in 1996 and at Courseulles-sur-Mer in 2003. Acquired by Keith Perkins/Aero Legends in

2011, it was registered as G-CICK in June 2014 and moved to HFL at Duxford on 23 July 2014. The owner decided to have the Spitfire configured as a T9 two-seat trainer variant from the start of its rebuild. Completion was advanced enough for engine runs to commence in December 2016 and then final fitting out of systems and manufacture of panel work was undertaken. Aircraft Restoration Company engineer Col Pope carried out detailed research enabling the aircraft to be

finished in the original scheme it wore when flown by its regular pilot Flight Lieutenant 'Bruce' Whiteford. It once again carries the name of his wife, Elizabeth on the port side engine cowling and her nickname 'Eo' on the starboard side of the fuel tank cover, just as it did in 1944. When test flying has been completed, NH341 will be flown from Aero Legends' operating bases at Headcorn and Sywell where flight experience packages will be available to the public.

www.aerolegends.co.uk
Report & photos: Col Pope

NH341 makes a misty early morning departure from Duxford, with John Romain at the controls





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A Sea Harrier 'flies' again

There was an unexpected event at Filton on Wednesday 8 March 2017 when Sea Harrier FA2 ZD610 'took to the air' from the apron behind the Brabazon Hangar, where it has been stored, 'flew' across the airfield and made a vertical 'landing' alongside the new Aerospace Bristol hangars. No, not a secret restoration to airworthiness by Bristol Aero Collection Trust's (BACT) volunteers but the RAF providing lift courtesy of a Chinook HC4. The heavylift helicopter came from No 27 Sqn at RAF Odiham, with ground support from the RAF Joint Air Delivery Test and Evaluation Unit (JADTEU) at Brize Norton.

The issue faced by BACT was that the Sea Harrier, located south of the railway line that crosses the airfield, needed to be moved to the new museum on the north side. With no road bridge wide enough for the aircraft to be towed across, the assistance of the RAF was sought. This came by way of a training exercise which Wg Cdr Steve Bell from Odiham described as a "complex and challenging operation for which the unique qualities of the Chinook were ideally suited".

ZD610 was built at Dunsfold as a Sea Harrier FRS1 in 1985 having its first flight on 5 November. It was handed over to the Royal Navy on 11 December that year. Eleven



ZD610 'flies' again, courtesy of RAF Chinook HC4...

years later after service mainly with 899 Naval Air Squadron it became the 27th FRS1 to be converted at Dunsfold to a Sea Harrier FA2. Serving with the three squadrons based at RNAS Yeovilton, ZD610 ended its service with 800 Naval Air Squadron and

took part in the Sea Harrier's final flypast on 31 March 2004. After retirement it went back to Dunsfold for static display until put up for sale by the MoD in 2012. Purchased by the Cold War Jets Collection it arrived at Bruntingthorpe on 2 May 2012. ZD610 was subsequently transported to Filton on loan to the BACT where it has been prepared for display. The Sea Harrier and its Bristol-designed and built Pegasus engine will go on display in the 100-year-old Grade II listed hangar which forms an integral part of Aerospace Bristol.

A couple of weeks later on 23 March, another twin-rotor helicopter, the prototype Bristol 173 XF785/G-ALBN, wended its way across Filton airfield from the Brabazon hangar to Aerospace Bristol. Sadly this was not in the air but all wrapped up on the back of a transporter. Aerospace Bristol is due to open this summer. For further info, see: www.aerospacebristol.org



...while Bristol 173 G-ALBN travelled by less exotic means

PHOTO: AEROSPACE BRISTOL

Hurricanes galore

The long awaited post-restoration first flight of Hugh Taylor's Hurricane I P3717/G-HITT took place at Turweston on 21 March 2017. The pilot was Stu Goldspink. Last flown in the UK in 1941 it went to Russia from where it was recovered and brought back to England in October 1990. Restoration commenced before it passed to Hawker Restorations at Milden, Suffolk in 2001. Fourteen years later it was moved by road to Turweston for completion. It is reported that it will go to Old Warden where it will join Hurricane I R4118/G-HUPW and Sea Hurricane Z7015 this summer before it leaves for the Collings



Stu Goldspink brings Hurricane I P3717 in for a perfect three-point landing

Foundation in Florida. Another Hurricane I, P2902, which has long been under restoration, is expected to fly this year. Shot down by Bf109s on 31 May 1940 it crash-landed on the beach at Dunkirk. Excavated from the

sand in 1989 by the local aero club, its wings were stolen before the remains could be put into a safe store. Purchased by Rick Roberts, it was registered as G-ROBT in September 1994 and joined the queue for

PHOTO: ROGER SYRATT

rebuild at Hawker Restorations at Milden. The fuselage had been completed by May 2016 when ownership transferred to Graham Peacock's Anglia Aircraft Restorations, who are manufacturing new wings for it.

Shot down at East Sutton, Kent during the Battle of Britain, our third Hurricane I, V7497 was unearthed in the 1980s and passed to Hawker Restorations for potential rebuild. Registered in April 2002 as G-HRLI it emerged from the hangar at Milden on 23 March and taken by road to Elmsett, Suffolk where it will be completed and flown.

Like the Spitfire, the worldwide fleet of airworthy Hurricanes continues to grow.

Night Fright en route to the UK

Back in April 2014 we reported in 'Old Timers' that pilot Charlie Walker and his father Philip, who owns the Membury estate and Walker Logistics, had purchased Douglas C-47A N308SF in Arkansas and planned to restore it and bring it back to the UK. The aircraft turned out to have been former USAAF Skytrain 42-100521 named *Night Fright* and had been flown by the 436th Troop Carrier Group from Membury Airfield dropping paratroopers at the start of Operation Neptune in the early hours of 6 June 1944. After returning from Normandy it had joined a force of fifty C-47s towing troop-carrying Horsa gliders that evening on the *Elmira* mission to a landing zone near Sainte-Mère-Église. *Night Fright* returned to Membury with over 100 bullet holes and was grounded for repairs.

Since the purchase of the aircraft in November 2012 the project has progressed through a three-stage process: paperwork, mechanical work and finally restoring the aircraft's original features. The first of these took a long time and is still ongoing but after a thorough survey and short test flight the C-47 was ferried from Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, to Glen and Frank Moss of Shell Creek Aviation at Punta Gorda, Florida, so maintenance could commence. Fast forward to mid-February 2017 when the well-known C-47 specialists Edwards Brothers Aviation arrived from London to



D Day veteran troop carrier *Night Fright* being dismantled at Punta Gorda by Edwards Brothers Aviation

dismantle *Night Fright* and prepare it for the road journey to Brunswick, Georgia for onward shipment to the UK. The fuselage, now on board the *Wallenius Tysla*, sailed from Brunswick on 29 March and is due at Southampton on 17 April. It was followed a week later by the remainder of the aircraft in three large containers, all of which will be transported by road to Air Atlantique at Coventry. Here, Ben Cox will head the team to restore the C-47A to its 1944

USAAF troop-carrier configuration, ready to lead a D-Day 75th anniversary flypast over Normandy in June 2019. It is hoped that *Night Fright* will be based at Membury, where there are plans to have a Troop Carrier Museum, and it will be displayed by Charlie Walker and Andrew Dixon at events around the UK and Europe marking the anniversaries of the final year of WWII.

Report & photo: Membury Airfield Memorial Flight

Rare UK warbirds sold

The sole airworthy examples of the Gloster Meteor T7 and post-war RAF Avro Anson T21 navigation trainer, both previously part of the Classic Air Force (CAF) fleet at

Coventry, have been sold. Anson G-VROE/WD413 was registered to Glenn James on 21 March 2017 and was delivered to its new base at Sleep four days later.

WD413 was constructed in 1950 as an Anson T21 navigation trainer and was initially operated by the RAF at Hamble. After conversion for passenger transport as a C21 it served with RAF Communications

Flights at Booker and Bovingdon. By the mid-1960s it was grounded for use as an instructional airframe at Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. Declared surplus the Anson was sold to Gordon Fraser who registered it as G-BFIR in December 1977 and lovingly restored it to flight. Air Atlantique acquired this rare aircraft in March 1998 for the Classic Flight (later rebranded Classic Air Force). It made an epic journey to Bahrain in 2000 to participate in Gulf Air's 50th anniversary celebrations, masquerading as an Anson once flown by Gulf Aviation. After return to the UK it was repainted in its

current RAF trainer colours. Although BAE System's Avro C19 Sers 2 G-AHKX is airworthy at Old Warden it is a civilian transport version purchased by Smiths Aircraft Instruments in 1946. The only other military Anson still flying is the very different WWII era Mk I ZK-RRA at Omaka, New Zealand.

A very significant loss to the British aviation scene is the sale to the USA of Meteor T7 G-BWMF/WA591 which has been a star attraction at British airshows in recent years. Although it has been for sale for a couple of years, in that time, according to the vendors, 'no credible offers or



Sole airworthy post-war Anson T21 G-VROE

De Havilland Grand Champions

The Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia (AAAA) National Fly-in at Echuca, Vic in March was a great success, with well over 100 vintage aircraft visiting, of which vintage de Havilland types dominated. Awarded Antique Grand Champion was Flying Doctor Service-painted DH83 Fox Moth VH-UVL owned by Roy Fox and newly restored by Luskintyre Aircraft Restorations in New South Wales. 'UVL was based on one of the new fuselages built in New Zealand in the early '90s and originally flown some fifteen years ago. Also present was last year's Grand Champion, DH60M Gipsy Moth VH-UOI, another Luskintyre restoration. Flown all the way from Boonah, Queensland by British pilot Paul Gliddon (more usually associated with his Yorkshire-based, Hornet and Tiger Moth and Aeronca C3) was DH85 Leopard Moth VH-UUL, that was exported to Australia in 1935. Australia's oldest registered aircraft, 1925-built DH60 Moth VH-UAE, the 12th DH60 built and the second oldest survivor

after G-EBLV at Old Warden was flown in by David and Carolyn Salter from northern New South Wales. In addition there were around fifteen Tiger Moths and seven Chipmunks contributing to the DH presence. Austers are still very popular in Australia and were the most numerous type after the Tiger Moth, with Auster J1B Aiglet VH-KAZ one of the highlights. Needless to say there was a good mix of other vintage types including the rare CAC Ceres VH-SSY (an agricultural aircraft based on the CAC Wirraway trainer/attack aircraft), Winjeels, CT4s, Cessna 120/140 and 195s and a couple of Luscombes. AAAA National Fly-in 2018 will be held at Echuca on 16-18 March. **Report & photos: Nigel Hitchman**

- 1** Fox Moth VH-UVL, this year's Antique Grand Champion
- 2** 1925 DH60 Moth VH-UAE with Gipsy Moth VH-UOI
- 3** British pilot Paul Gliddon in his Leopard Moth VH-UUL
- 4** VH-UAE, the world's second-oldest airworthy DH60
- 5** Auster J1B Aiglet VH-KAZ & **6** CAC Ceres VH-SSY agricultural aircraft based on the Wirraway trainer



viable expressions of interest were received from within the UK'. It will be joining the growing fleet of the World Heritage Air Museum (WHAM) in Detroit. In mid-March the museum announced: "One of our benefactors just acquired this amazing T7 Gloster Meteor and will be bringing her Stateside as soon as possible. She is the second oldest flying jet in the world, and the oldest flying jet trainer."

WHAM is a 'non-profit flying jet warbird museum...that aims to rescue Cold War era jets, bring them to flight status, and use them to inspire the youth of America at airshows in the

Midwest'. WHAM's large fleet already includes examples of the HA-200 Saeta, Magister, Vampire, MiG-15, MiG-17, Delfin, Aero L-39 and Temco Super Pinto.

Meteor T7 WA591 was built at Hucclecote in 1949 and served as a pilot trainer at various bases including Stradishall, Driffild, Fingleton and the College of Air Warfare at Manby. It became a ground instruction



airframe at St Athan but ended its military service as gate guardian of RAF Woodvale. WA591 was rescued for preservation in 1995 by Meteor Flight who spent many years in cramped

conditions at Yatesbury restoring it. The aircraft took to the skies again at Kemble in 2011 and subsequently joined the CAF fleet at Coventry. **Report: Tim Badham**

News update: it was revealed on 4 April, just as this edition went to press, that WHAM Director, Marty Tibbitts had not only purchased the Meteor T7 but also the airworthy ex-CAF Meteor NF11 WM167 and the Venom FB50s WK436 and WR470 at Coventry.

Getting up close

The 'War in the Air' hangar at RAF Museum Cosford is taking on a new look with the arrival of so many new aircraft from the London site. The first to arrive, the Messerschmitt Bf109G-2 which is displayed in the hangar, sits alongside the Focke-Wulf Fw190A-8, confronting their RAF adversaries – a Spitfire I and Hurricane IIc. With re-assembly of the Junkers Ju88R-1 nearly finished at the end of March, the Gladiator was also being put back together nearby. It will be joined by the Defiant after Easter, but the Lysander will not appear for a while as it is receiving some minor repair work to its fragile linen covering in the museum's Conservation Centre. In the adjacent Hangar 1, Tiger Moth T6296 is now on display alongside a Chipmunk and Bulldog, demonstrating the progression in RAF training aircraft.

The Luftwaffe fighter duo (Bf109G and Fw190A) have been announced as highlights at the forthcoming 'Open Cockpits Evening' taking place at the museum in the evenings (6-9pm) of 19-20 May 2017. With just 300 tickets per evening organisers are anticipating the event will be very popular with enthusiasts eager to get a look into the cockpits of these WWII aircraft. In addition, a range of transports (Hercules, Devon and Pembroke), combat



RAF Museum Cosford will be offering ticket holders the chance to view Messerschmitt Bf109G-2 'Black 6's' cockpit...



...as well as that of the Fw190A-8, on 19-20 May

jets (Harrier GR9A and F-111F) and unique research airframes (Hunting H126, Meteor F8 Prone Position and Bristol Type 188) will be open on the night for close viewing. Tickets can be purchased through the

museum's website (see below) and cost £12.50 per person including parking. There is a minimum height restriction of 3' 6".

As well as the Lysander receiving attention in the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre, work continues on the LVG C.VI and Wellington restorations, and the Hampden 'rebuild'. There is a procession of aircraft passing through with former Red Arrows Gnat T1 XR977 being refurbished in April prior to moving to Hendon, and queued up outside were the Omani Hunter FR10 and the Spitfire and Hurricane replicas, the Merlin-engined pair waiting to be re-painted before they are returned to London.

www.rafmuseum.org/cosford



Left: Hunting H126 research aircraft

Right: due to be moved to Hendon after refurbishment, Red Arrows Gnat T1 XR977



Left: Meteor F8 prone position test aircraft

Right: Omani Hunter FR10 and Hendon's GRP 'gate guardian' Spitfire & Hurricane



Classic Cessnas at Kemble

Steven Moth brought two more classic American aircraft to the UK recently, adding to the trio of vintage Stinson Reliants imported by his company Spirit in the Sky since 2015. Cessna 195 N1581D and Cessna 170 N4063V were unloaded from a container at Cotswold-Kemble Airport on 16 March 2017 and were quickly re-

assembled. The 1952-built Turbo Cessna 195 (c/n 7864) is unusual in having a powerful 350hp Jacobs R-755S radial engine and a castoring/swivelling crosswind landing gear. It was last registered to Wayne Langham on 27 December 2013 before purchase by Spirit in the Sky Inc on 10 February 2017. The

neat Cessna 170 N4063V c/n 18395 was built in 1948 as a standard model with a 145hp Continental O145-2. Owned by David Raynor, it was last flown at Annapolis, MD on 28 January 2017 and has 2,550hr total time. Both aircraft are currently for sale at Kemble. Contact steven@spiritinthesky.co.uk for further information.



Cessna 195 N1581D boasts a 350hp Jacobs R-755S and crosswind landing gear



Built in 1948, Cessna 170 N4063V is a standard model but comparatively rare in the UK

Vintage season ahead

With the 2017 fly-in and airshow season underway there are already welcome signs that more pre-1967 classic and vintage aircraft will be out and about this year, provided the weather is kind. On St George's Day (23 April) the LAA Wessex Strut is holding its 40th Anniversary Fly-in at Henstridge, Somerset. Including the first 'Meet the LAA Day' this year will make this event a focus for homebuilts, vintage and veteran aircraft, particularly from the south and west of England. Visit www.wessexstrut.org.uk for details.

The Radial and Trainer Fly-in is moving from Sywell to Wolverhampton Halfpenny Green this year over the weekend 29-30 April where it will be extended to make it into a family wings and wheels style event under the title Radials Trainers & Transport 2017. The organisers make it clear that it is not a flying display but a 'themed fly-in with an eclectic mix of ground exhibits and attractions'. The owners of a very impressive list of aircraft (including numerous Yaks, Harvards, Reliants, Beech 18s, Stearmans, Austers, Bulldogs and Pups) have indicated their intentions (subject to the weather) to fly in. Admission for pedestrians is just £5. Further details see www.halfpennygreenevents.co.uk



Tom Leaver's Travel Air will be at the Henstridge fly-in on 23 April

Some of the above aircraft are expected to attend the Vintage Aircraft Club's Spring Fly-in at Turweston on Saturday 29 April. Full details of the VAC's 2017 calendar of events see www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk

Shuttleworth's 2017 flying days at Old Warden get under way with the Season Premiere on 7 May, the first item of which will be a tribute to Alex Henshaw and his record breaking Mew Gull. The full line-up of participants, that includes the repaired Sopwith Triplane that was back in the air on 13 March 2017 following its accident in June 2014, can be seen at www.shuttleworth.org/events/seasonpremiere.

A week later on Sunday 14 May the ever popular Abingdon Air & Country Show is taking place. Visitors will find that the showground has been switched to the east side of the former RAF airfield so the flying will take place to the west and away from the built-up area. Once again Neil Porter and his team have pulled in some fascinating aircraft including the CAC Boomerang replica for its UK airshow debut, P-51, T-28, BBMF and hopefully the Sea Vixen. Full details at www.abingdonairandcountry.co.uk