

UPDATE

CONTROL COLUMN 2012

THE E-MAGAZINE OF THE AEROPLANE COLLECTION

1962 - 2012 50 YEARS OF AVIATION PRESERVATION IN THE NORTHWEST
NUMBER 1 SUMMER 2012



Members of the Northern Aircraft Preservation Society (NAPS) - 50 years on at the Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester (MOSI) with the first aeroplane saved Avro Avian G-EBZM. The occasion was to celebrate the 50th Anniversary presented by The Aeroplane Collection (TAC) some of whose members are also pictured. NAPS became TAC in 1972.

Picture by Alan Bishop & Steve Hague (BAPC Chairman)

www.theaeroplanecollection.org



WHAT'S ON & WERE

Meetings are held at the Arts Centre,
Frodsham, Cheshire on a Monday evening
each month, 1900 (7:00pm)

Next meetings

24th September 2012

8th & 9th September	English Heritage Open weekend at Hooton Park weekend
8th & 9th September	Southport Airshow weekend
22nd & 23rd September	Birkenhead Show, Birkenhead Park weekend
24th September 6th October	Committee Meeting BAPC Stopping The Rot Conference at the Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester contact the TAC Secretary for details.
29th October	Committee Meeting
26th November	Committee Meeting
10th December	Social Evening & slide show at Castle Park Arts Centre, Frodsham.

Hooton Park at Ellesmere Port on the Wirral,
junction 6 on the M53 and follow the Hooton
Park Trust sign.

Contact the Secretary Dave Arkle for details on
work days.

EDITORIAL

This is my first attempt at producing an e-magazine to rival 'Control Column'. It will only work with your help send in articles for publication. At first it will be published four times a year. Articles can be any length and not necessarily about preservation or the north west, but must be aviation related.

WHO'S WHO AT TAC



JOHN DAVIDSON

TRUSTEE & MAGAZINE EDITOR

WHO'S WHO AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

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What's in the Collection now

1. Aircraft

G-EBZM	Avro 594 Avian IIIA c/n R3/CN/160, built 1928. Exhibited at Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester.
G-ADAH	de Havilland D.H.89A Dragon Rapide c/n 6278, built 1935. Exhibited at Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester.
G-AJEB	Auster J.1N Alpha c/n 2325, built 1947. Exhibited at Hooton Park.
G-APUD	Benson B.7M (Modified), built by K. H. Wallis as KHW.1 in 1959. Exhibited at Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester.
BAPC.6	Roe Triplane I static replica, built at Woodford circa 1953. On indefinite loan from the Shuttleworth Collection. Exhibited at Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester.
BAPC.12	Mignet HM.14 Pou du Ciel built 1936 by S.O. Whiteley of Rishworth. Exhibited at Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester.
G-AFIU	Parker CA.4 Parasol. Under restoration by TAC at Hooton Park.
G-AHUI	Miles Messenger Mk.2A under restoration at Hooton Park. Includes parts from G-AILL, G-AJFF, G-AKDF, G-ALUG, EI-AGB.
G-AKHZ	Miles Gemini Mk.1A under restoration at Hooton Park. Includes parts from G-AKGD.
BAPC.204	McBroom Hang Glider, Stored at RAF Millom Museum.
G-MJUJ	Dragon Srs.150 Microlight, stored at Hooton Park
G-MMAI	Dragon Srs.150 Microlight, stored at Hooton Park
BMU/BGA1085	Slingsby T.21B Sedburgh marked Spruce Goose stored at Hooton Park
G-ALPU/BGA0473	Slingsby T8 Tutor, stored at Hooton Park for member Jon Howard
XD624	de Havilland DH.115 Vampire T.11 under restoration at Hooton Park Fairey Gannet cockpit section under restoration at Hooton Park

2 Engines

Description of Engine	Location
A.D.C. Cirrus Hermes	Solway Aviation Museum
Alvis Leonides Major	Hooton Park Trust on display in Hut 27
Alvis Leonides 155 Major	Solway Aviation Museum
Alvis Leonides ex Percival Provost	Hooton Park Hut 28 14.01.2012 (under restoration)
Anzani 6 cylinder Radial	Royal Air Force Museum Cosford on display
Armstrong Siddeley Single Mamba with prop	Midland Air Museum on display
Bristol Pegasus	Solway Aviation Museum believed no longer on site
Continental A-40	Hooton Park on display in Hut 27
De Havilland Ghost 50 Mk1	Caernarfon Air World (request for removal)
De Havilland Gipsy Six ex Vega Gull G-AHET	Hooton Park Hut 28
De Havilland Gipsy Major	Hooton Park under restoration in Annex
De Havilland Gipsy Queen	Hooton Park Trust on display in Hut 27
De Havilland Gipsy Queen (sectioned)	Solway Aviation Museum
De Havilland Gyron Junior	Hooton Park awaiting onward loan
Druine VW Conversion	Solway Aviation Museum
Amstron Siddeley Sapphire	Hooton Park awaiting onward loan
Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp (sectioned)	Solway Aviation Museum
Rolls Royce Astouste (Trident APU)	Midland Air Museum in store
Rolls Royce Dart Mk.510 C/W Prop	North East Aircraft Museum
Rolls Royce Derwent 5 Sectioned	Hooton Park on display in Hut 27
Rolls Royce Nene 101 ex Sea Hawk WV825	Hooton Park on display in Hut 27
Rolls Royce Spey	Royal Air Force Museum Cosford on display
Rolls Royce Tiara	Aeropark Volunteers Association (East Midlands) on display
Rolls Royce Avon ex Comet 2 G-AMXC/XK659	Hooton Park in storage in Hut 29
Rover W2B23	Royal Air Force Museum Cosford on display
Rover W2B26	Midland Air Museum on display

Landican Liberator Crash

By Colin Schroeder
Chairman - The Aeroplane Collection

Introduction

At 3:40pm on Wednesday 18th October 1944, Merseyside's worst ever air crash occurred at Landican on the outskirts of Birkenhead. A B-24 Liberator disintegrated in mid-air, scattering wreckage across farmland and killing all 24 on board. The cause of the crash is still a mystery to this day.

The aircraft serial number 42-50347, was a B-24H-model built at Consolidated Aircraft's Fort Worth Plant, Texas in 1942. Its individual letter code was 'F' and it was assigned to the 703rd Bomb Squadron, 445th Bomb Group at Tibenham in Norfolk.



B-24 Liberator similar to 42-50347

It was evidently a veteran of many combat missions and was still finished in original olive drab with grey undersides, whereas most of its contemporaries were by now in natural metal finish. With 645½ flying hours it was probable classified in the official terminology as 'war weary' and used for transport and other general duties.

On the fateful day it was returning to Tibenham with the crews of three other B-24s which had been ferried to Greencastle in Northern Ireland from Tibenham for overhaul or storage. Ralph Stimmel, who was test pilot for the 445th Bomb Group, had flown the aircraft to Greencastle. He handed the aircraft to William Driscall as he was to pick up a new plane for the group, as group test pilot he flew their new aircraft first.

The flight plan gave a flight time of two hours with fuel for seven hours endurance. The flight was to be made at 2,000 feet crossing the coast at Rhyl, 40 minutes after take off. The actual time of departure was 2:55pm.

Accident Report

The USAAF Accident Report of the 11th November 1944, which runs to 18 pages, takes up the narrative as the B-24 flies over the Wirral Peninsula: The aircraft was flying through squally weather with fairly low ceilings. Numerous witnesses had their attention attracted to the aircraft because of an explosion they heard and/or because of an unusual sound from the engines. They saw the aircraft come apart in mid-air apparently from an explosion, the cause of which is undetermined. The wreckage came down in Landican, mainly in two fields, known locally as 'The Seven Oaks' farmed by Alexander Duncan and 'Top sheep field' farmed by Kirk Okell. The crash had brought down power lines blacking out Barnston

It was evident from the location of the main body of wreckage and from the absence of skid marks that the aircraft had disintegrated before crashing. There was no evidence of fire in any portion of the wreckage except the wing centre section with the engines, which was consumed when the fuel tanks exploded. This section fell apart from the other wreckage. Lack of burns on all the bodies indicates that there was no fire in the fuselage before the plane disintegrated. Small pieces of wreckage from the initial explosion were scattered as far as three miles from the main wreckage, an oxygen bottle was reported in Victoria Mount, Oxtou.

One of the first on the scene was Mr J.R. Humphrey's, who had been enjoying a cup of tea with his father. When he arrived at the crash site he found one young man Clesen H. Tenney still alive with his parachute partly open. Unfortunately, he died a few minutes later. The bodies of the airmen were found in and around the aircraft wreckage. Some bodies had hit the ground with such force, that they were badly disfigured and left small craters. Surprisingly the pilot and co-pilot looked as if they were asleep in the cockpit with no marks on them. As people arrived at the site the rain continued and it started to get dark. The police arrived and began to turn people away. Eight bodies were found in the nose section and four in the main portion of the rear fuselage, the remainder being in the immediate vicinity of the fuselage, with two bodies found in a field some distance away. None of the occupants attempted to make parachute jumps. Inspector Noble of the Birkenhead Police stated that only two bodies had chutes on. It believed that the occupants were wearing harnesses but were not able to attach the packs in time to jump, since the plane appeared to be flying at about 1,000 feet. Ambulances tried to reach the site via the Landican to Storeton Lane but got dogged down. Mr Duncan from 'Home Farm' sent his tractor to tow the vehicles out. It was suggested that they use the Storeton Station approach using the lane parallel to the railway line.

Landican Liberator Crash Continued

The bodies were taken to the US-Army's 157th General hospital at Clatterbridge in a fleet of US and Civil Defence ambulances (This hospital had been taken over by the Americans in expectation of heavy Normandy invasion casualties which would have been flown direct from the battle front to Hooton Park). Eventually all bodies were buried with full military honours at the American military cemetery Madingley, Cambridgeshire. To-day only four remain, the rest have been reburied in America. All the engineering and historical record of the aircraft were sent to the 3rd Strategic Air Depot. (An organisation at RAF Watton in Norfolk specialising in B-24 maintenance) Previous examination of these records did not disclose any mechanical defects, gas leaks, electrical troubles or records of battle damage, which might indicate possible causes for an explosion or structural failure. The number four engine had just been changed and the pilot who slow-timed the engine reported it to be in excellent mechanical condition.

Weather conditions

During the accident investigation, the Station Weather Office at Burtonwood provided a weather report for 1500-1600 Double Summer Time in the Birkenhead area as follows:

'Polar trough passed through during the period with strong gusty winds and light continuous rain. Ceiling lowered to 800-1200 feet in rain with tops of cumulus above 10,000 feet 8/10-10/10. Visibility was 4-8 miles lowering to 2 miles in industrial areas. Freezing level was 4000-4500 feet with medium icing in cumulus above that elevation. The air was unstable and rough but no lightning was reported in the area during the period'.

The last remark does not accord with a mention in a contemporary Birkenhead News of two road menders sheltering from a thunderstorm in Landican Lane. Just to the North at Oxtan, however, another witness gave the weather as *'stormy with cloud base 600 feet and raining heavily'*. Maybe these are localised thundershowers.

Accident Report Eyewitnesses Statements

The accident report contains a number of differing eyewitness accounts of the crash.

- One of the nearest to the crash was a lady who lived in Prenton Dell Road, half a mile to the east: 'About 3:45pm I was in the upstairs back bedroom of my house, which looks out towards Landican. I heard an aeroplane making a zooming noise close by and saw an aeroplane flying at an ordinary height towards Storeton village. When the plane got into line almost between Storeton and Landican village it turned to the right very suddenly.

I had the bedroom window open by this time, but I did not hear the sound of the engine. Almost immediately I heard a noise similar to an engine back firing. At the same time the plane seemed to hover in the air and immediately the wings fell apart from the plane together with numerous objects. The body of the plane at once fell flat to the ground and then there was a terrific explosion which sent up thick black clouds of smoke and flames'.

- Nearby, but further south was an army officer at the Stanley Avenue anti-aircraft site. 'I was playing football in a field at the AA site when I heard the sound of a plane as if diving. I looked up and saw what I took at first to be a twin-engine fighter. It was coming straight down, but not on fire, as if dive-bombing the site for practice. It was then that I saw bits coming away from it, and I realised it was a plane obviously in trouble. I watched it come falling down, heard the explosion, and saw flames as it hit the ground several fields away. I looked for chutes but saw none'.
- An artillery officer on duty in a control room at an unspecified location, possibly the AA site at Holm Lane Prenton. 'I heard almost overhead an explosion similar to a shell burst, and the sound of an aircraft as in a dive. I immediately left the Control Room to ascertain what the trouble was, and on my way out a further explosion took place. I saw the plane, which was traveling in a westerly direction, and pieces were breaking away. The plane was flying at a height of approximately 1,000 feet and was roughly 300 yards away from me when I saw it. The most part of the starboard wing and also part of the port wing was broken. The fuselage appeared to be broken just behind the trailing edge of the wing'.

'It was impossible in the short space of time to identify the aircraft, except that its tail was similar in design to that of a Liberator. A limited amount of smoke was coming from the aircraft and the cause of it appeared to be the engines, only two of which could be clearly identified. The plane dived to the ground veering slightly to port all the time. Just before it hit the ground a further explosion seemed to take place. This was not absolutely certain as the distance involved was then some 1,500 yards from my position of observation and this explosion may have taken place as the aircraft hit the ground'.

To be continued in the next issue of Liverpool Road News.

NEWS FROM HUT 28

Airframe restoration work is not carried out in Hut 28 at the moment only aero engine restoration.

Hut 28 is due to be cleared in the not to distant future to replace the roof making it water tight, after which the following projects will be moved in, the Parker CA4, Messenger, Gemini and Vampire.



No further progress on the **De-Havilland Gipsy Major** engine, awaiting availability of parts.

The **Alvis Leonides** engine, Stewart Turner continues to make progress on stripping, cleaning & painting the engine.



The **Continental A - 40** engine, has been partial stripped, cleaned & repainting has commenced, hopefully will be back in one piece for the weekend.



Parker CA.4 G-AFIU, the tank cowling has now been fitted, the tyres re-inflated & the undercarriage refitted.

Last Thursday 9th August was wheeled into Hut 27 for display at this coming Saturday's BAPC meeting, the tail feathers have been repaired by Jon Howard & we will endeavour to fit them for Saturday.

NEWS FROM HUT 28 Continued

Fairey Gannet project

Will be used as a Cockpit Section and travelling exhibit. Cutting it down was the only option it would have been to big/tall for this purpose. The next move will be to get it into HUT 28 for restoration.



Before the cut at Caemarfon



After the cut at Hooton Park



The De Havilland Vampire project is awaiting the removal of the stub wings and on the completion of HUT 28 will be moved in for restoration.