

UPDATE

CONTROL COLUMN 2013

THE E-MAGAZINE OF THE AEROPLANE COLLECTION

1962 - 2012 50 YEARS OF AVIATION PRESERVATION IN THE NORTHWEST
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Some Coincidences

By Bob Pick - Friends of MOSI

Some of the aircraft in the Museum's Air and Space Gallery are on long term loan from The Aeroplane Collection, and when they decided to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their beginnings, they chose MOSI as the place to have it. I have known members of TAC almost as long as I have been a Friend of MOSI, and before that, the Manchester Air and Space Museum. So I applied to attend their meeting and was welcomed.

One of the first people I saw was Paul Connatty. I had not seen him since I was flying as a private pilot at the Lancashire Aero Club, at Barton, and had no idea that he had also been one of their members. After appropriate reminiscences, he asked me if I remembered an Instructor named Ed Pape. I said I did (and that Ed had come from Lincolnshire, and that his grandmother had been a friend of a friend of my mother). At that time Paul was flying a Citabria, a two-seat, high-wing tailwheel aircraft, and Ed was not checked-out on the type. He asked Paul to check him out on it, because the LAC did not at that time have any tailwheel aircraft in the fleet. Paul did, and Ed was then checked out officially by the LAC Chief Flying Instructor, Don Graham.

Neither Paul nor I knew then that Ed was also an Officer with a Cadet Force squadron, but some time after his checking out with Paul, he had gone with his cadets to RAF 8 Squadron at Lossiemouth, where they had been given flights in a Shackleton. As an officer, Ed had been offered the No.2 seat on the flight deck, and, knowing that Ed was a civilian instructor, the captain asked if he was current on tailwheel aircraft, Ed said he was, and was told: "You have control".

Ed told Paul about this, but sometime later he said to him: "You know that Shackleton I flew at Lossiemouth, it is now in the Museum in Manchester!".



EXPERIMENTAL PROTOTYPE

WOOD MAN-POWERED ROTARY ORNITHOPTER

By Nick Forder - Curator - Transport at MOSI

Benjamin Graham Wood was born in Huddersfield in 1883, and became one of many engineers whose interest in aeronautics followed Louis Bleriot's flight across the English Channel in 1909. Wood joined, and later organised, classes in aeronautics at the Regent Street Polytechnic leading to the construction of a Wright type glider. He learned to fly on a Henri Farman biplane at the Hewlett and Blondeau School at Brooklands, and in January 1912 gained Royal Aero Club Certificate 171.

Wood became very interested in the potential of rotary winged flight, together with the application of the principles of bird flight to successful aviation. He became involved with the experimental work of Joseph Weiss and, in 1912, piloted a glider of Weiss's design.

In the 1960s the Kremer Prize was offered for successful man-powered flight. This inspired Wood, who was then living in Bowden (Manchester) to develop a new design. Unfortunately he died before it was completed, and the unfinished ornithopter was donated to the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester in 1985. It is registered as BAPC 182.

The Ornithopter is in store awaiting restoration.

WHO'S WHO AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

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HIKON AIRFIELD

STAFFORDSHIRE

Air and Ground Aviation have a base there where they part out military aircraft for spares. Beware if you visit they don't allow photography but this can easily be achieved from the railway bridge that overlooks the site. Aircraft at present when TAC visited were Lockheed Hercules, Westland Sea Kings and Westland Lynx.



Boeing 787 Dreamliner visiting Manchester recently is set to become a common sight.

Picture by Nik French

Landican Liberator CrashCont'd

By Colin Schroeder

Chairman - The Aeroplane Collection

Other Witness Statements

- Doug Darroch was another witness. *'I was working at the top of Oxtan Road. Birkenhead, when I heard the familiar sound of a B-24. I remember that the engines were revving like hell when suddenly there was an explosion and seconds later the sound of wreckage hitting the ground. On that day there had been no thunderstorms or lightning and only very light rain. Sometime later a B-26 Marauder flew very low and directly overhead the point that I later ascertained was the B-24 crash site.'*

'I resolved to go and have a look at the site and arriving at the Woodchurch railway bridge, I attempted to walk along the track towards Barnston. Wreckage recovery was in progress under arc-lights. A man coming in the opposite direction told me I was wasting my time going any further as the place was swarming with RAF police (Some from RAF West Kirby) and American servicemen from Arrowe Park. So I gave up but tried again the following night and did not see anyone. First, I examined the wreckage of the four engines and wing section and recovered a 3-foot long deflated weather balloon, a 0.5 inch gun sight and a rocker arm from one of the engines. I walked into an adjoining field and saw the tail unit I walked about 200 yards further along the footpath towards Landican and found the nose section.'

'At the time of the crash my friend Teddy Bradley was standing outside the Co-op laundry on Woodchurch Road (Now the Asda supermarket) waiting for a friend. He recalls seeing the aircraft coming down from the direction of Upton, flying low and following the railway line. His recollection was that the aircraft just disintegrated and he did not remember any explosion. He and his friend ran across the fields and saw bodies everywhere. They reached the forward nose section of the aircraft in which there were seven or eight men crouched as if asleep. All were dead but did not appear to have suffered any injuries or burns.'

Bruce Tasker on the afternoon the tragedy occurred was in the Wirral Grammar School yard leaving for home together with five others. *'The weather was rainy with lowering clouds. Being used to Liberators coming and going, we did not look up until we heard a dull boom, and saw a ball of smoke in the sky over the Storeton area, with bits and pieces of aircraft fluttering to the ground.'*

'As curious schoolboys we peddled to Landican Lane, negotiating the rough terrain, eventually coming upon bits of metal strewn everywhere, with an engine burning in a field on one side of the lane, and the white tail fins in a field on the other. Stopping at the railway bridge we could see an entire gun turret lying to our right and parties of soldiers in football kit carrying stretchers looking for remains and placing them in a line under parachutes for concealment. Several bodies were half embedded in the soft soil, having clearly fallen from a height. We left the scene quite soberly.'

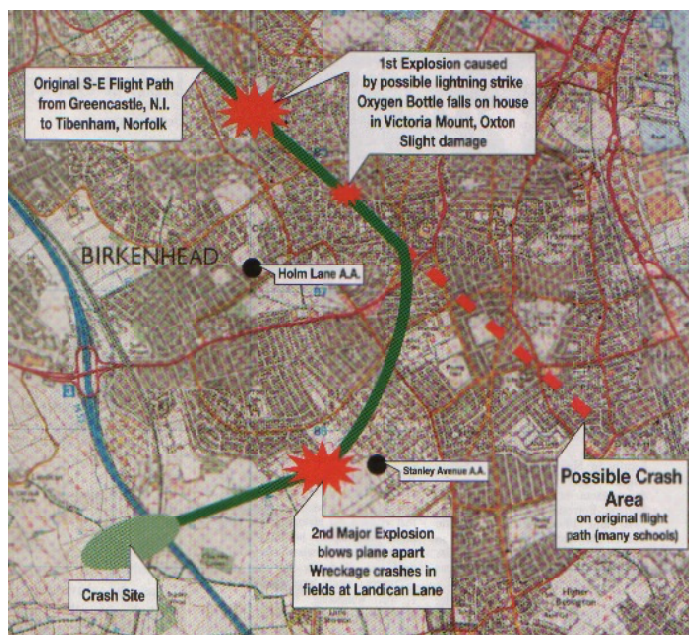
'Several days later the police visited our school and others in the area warning against possessing live ammunition. Apparently, every single dangerous round of half inch calibre ammunition had been removed from the gun turret, and it was believed that schoolchildren were responsible.'

- Eileen Roberts and her brother heard about the crash when they were coming out of school and decided, along with a few friends, to go and have a look at it. *'On arriving at the scene we were stopped by men in uniform guarding the site. Not to be outdone, we walked into the adjoining field where my brother spotted an orange we didn't get many of them in war-time so he picked it up. But then he threw it down again right away. The orange was tightly held in a human hand! At that moment one of the guards came over and told us to 'Get off home or else!' We needed no second telling. It was two very subdued little children who trudged home. When we did get home it was to find our mother in a panic looking for us. No, we didn't get counselling, but I got a severe telling off, a smacked bottom and sent straight to bed, after all I was 10 years old and should have known better'* Her brother still remembers the orange, we were not traumatised, after all, this was wartime and dreadful things happen in wars.



Landican Liberator Crash Continued

- John Thurlow of Greasby recalls that he was playing rugby at Noctorum when he and his friends saw the crash. They cycled to Landican and picked up quite an amount of ammunition. John and his mates saw part of the bomb hoist in a pit. They waded in and dragged a five-foot length of aluminum channel bar out, then waited for dark. Under the cover of darkness, the lads carried their 'souvenirs' across the fields and through Arrowe Park to a friend's house in Brookdale Avenue South, Greasby. The lads began disarming machine-gun bullets by levering the percussion caps out with a screwdriver. One of the caps exploded and shot a lad in the leg. One thing led to another and the next day police toured the schools warning children that it was an offence to keep 'souvenirs' from the crash. Guns and a large amount of ammunition were handed in by people of all ages. The father of John's mate eventually hack sawed sections off the channel bar and used them as gutter brackets for his shed, which may still be standing in Greasby.



Unofficial Theories

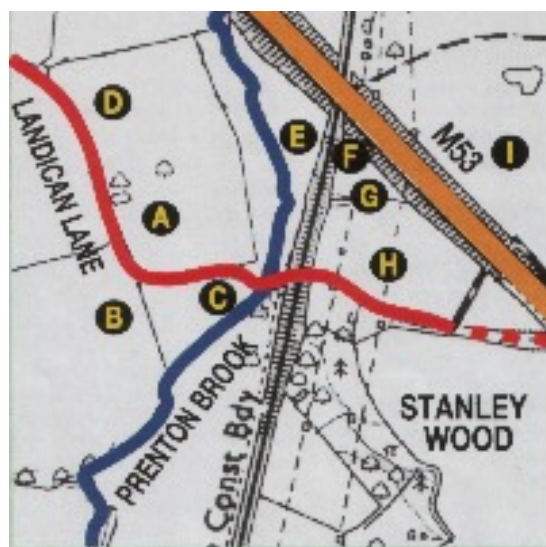
Ralph Stimmel, who died in 1998, was the pilot on the outward leg, and had been very uneasy about this aircraft prior to going to Greencastle because of the strong gasoline odours. The leak was not found. He cautioned in his inimitable manner that everyone should not even think of lighting a cigarette. He passed this warning to the pilot taking the aircraft back to Tibenham. It would be difficult in preventing 24 American airmen from smoking on a two hour routine flight, especially when 19 of them were idle passengers!

On reading a copy of the Accident Report Ralph Stimmel commented. 'That it confirms my belief that the plane exploded in flight. The item that bothers me most is the statement that the plane had no gas leaks. It most certainly did I am afraid that the investigating body put a bit of spin on the report'.

The fuel leakage problem, or rather the indication of leakage due to the presence of gasoline odours, was well known on the Liberator. When Liberators were parked on the tarmac, the bomb doors were often left slightly open to allow fuel fumes to be dispersed. The fuel transfer system was mounted on the forward bulkhead of the bomb bay along with the air heating system and main electrical switchgear, which would occasionally spark. It was known that quite a few Liberators just disappeared or blew up in mid-air. It is suggested that some B-24

groups of the 8th Air Force actually disconnected the heating system completely due to doubts over the safety of this system. One experienced RAF Liberator pilot mentions that the smell of gasoline being so strong during a transatlantic ferry flight that he refused to allow the radio and radar to be switched on, although subsequently no fault was found.

The evidence for a mid-air break-up is that the aircraft separated into the major assemblies joined together on the production line. The plan of wreckage distribution shows a linear trail in the direction of flight of about 1,800 feet with the nose and flight deck at the end of the wreckage trail. Parts of the vertical stabilisers and the elevators were at the beginning of the trail. The engines and wing centre-section burned out.



- A Engines & centre wing section
- B Nose & Flight Deck C Main Fuselage & Bomb Bay
- D Right Wing E Elevator F Rear Fuselage
- G Bomb Bay Door H Left Wing I Vertical Stabilizers

To be continued in the next issue

NEWS FROM HUT 28

The workshop has had a clearout, the two Microlights have gone to a new home . The roof is still a problem , we are waiting for more quotes from Contractors.



The Fairey Gannet cockpit above has now been cut and installed in the workshop for restoration.



All other project has stopped to concentrate on the Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire above, to remove its PINK colour and replace it with a more appropriate colour.



GIPSY SIX awaiting its turn in the workshop

THE EDITOR FLIES THE HUEY WELL AS A PASSENGER



WESHAM

Dave Arkle, Lloyd Robinson and I visited Wesham near Blackpool to view the Helicopters - Huey, Loach and a Wasp. We all received a raffle ticket on arrival. The reception with free tea & coffee and talk about the Helicopters, the pilot Neil Airey was very interesting to talk to and agreed we could visit Lakes Lightnings in the New Year. The Editor drew the winning number for a flight on the Huey. Noisy as usual and vibrates at low rotor RPM but well worth the £5 entrance ticket..



THE EDITOR GOES WALKABOUT

PICTURES PAST AND PRESENT



Westland Lysander & North American B25 Mitchell at Duxford 1994



Norman NDN-6 Fieldmaster at Sandown IOW & Percival Sea Prince T1 at Bournemouth



MIG 15 RAF Museum Cosford & BAC Jet Provost T4 at Metherringham, Lincs both 2012