# UPDATE

## CONTROL COLUMN 2013

THE E-MAGAZINE OF THE AEROPLANE COLLECTION

1962 - 2012 50 YEARS OF AVIATION PRESERVATION IN THE NORTHWEST

NUMBER 4 ISSUE 3 2013


## IN THIS ISSUE



**www.theaeroplanecollection.org**

# HUT 28 PROGRESS

Work on the roof is almost finishes with just a few roofing bolts still to fit. Future work:

1. Outside Painting.
2. New windows.
3. Floor repairs.
4. Main door repairs.
5. Painting the Portocabin.
6. Moving archive into the Portocabin.

## HELP - HELP - HELP - HELP

More articles required for this magazine to survive, I am struggling now, you lot out there must have stories to tell, so come on tell them.

Finding stories to tell is not easy for a specialist magazine about aeroplanes, maybe I should use other subjects as well. What are members interests,please tell me. Boats, Planes, Trains. My interests include the above plus architecture, transport in general.


## Meetings and Events

**Trustees Meetings at**
**Castle Park Arts Centre**
**off Fountain Lane**
**Frodsham, Cheshire**
**Last Monday each month**

**Hooton Park**
**Open days**
**Last Sunday each month**
**1:00pm till 3:00pm**

**Social Evenings**
**At Frodsham**
**4 times a year**
**Check with the Secretary**
**For dates**

**Saturday Work Parties**
**At Hooton Park**
**17 August 2013**

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## Bill Dutton RAF (Retd)
## Concluding Article

At the same time I found my engines revs dropping off and adjusted my throttle opening accordingly. This seemed to do the trick for a short time until once again my revs started falling off. Again, an adjustment to the throttle and we were back to normal. This was the old trouble, as I looked ahead I could see that we were in for more than the usual amount – I had flown into a valley with no opening at the other end! Like a inverted letter 'U' the hills stretched out on either side and in front of me, and I had to fly straight ahead as there was not room to do the steepest of turns back the way I had come. I was already nearing full throttle and it was quite obvious that my rate of climb was nothing like what it should have been to get me over the hill at the far end. However, my worries did not seem to have been communicated to my two colleagues who were happily peering out – the offer in the seat next to me to the starboard side and his colleague in the 'dicky' seat behind out under the port wing, at the same time checking their position on their very large unwieldy maps. Still the revs fell off; still I opened the throttle – and all the timer the hill came nearer. By now I was on full throttle and it would appear I was just going to hold my own or we should just hit the top of the hill. Looking back I think I must have closed my eyes in those last few seconds. We cleared the boulders on the top of the hill by two or three feet and shot out over the other side, much to my immense relief – only to find my two officers congratulating me on my skill and judgement in clearing it by such a small margin!

His was not the only trouble because, having got to full throttle, the engine then apparently cleared itself and, before we knew it, the airscrew was tearing itself out of the engine and I had to throttle back immediately to low revs to prevent losing the

As we were using Auster V's on flights up to five hours at a time this whole business could be exceedingly disconcerting – particularly as one might be flying up from Kasfareet or Fayid on the long journey over the Sinai desert when it was necessary anyway to get up to 5,000 feet to have enough fuel to make Palestine in one hop. I don't think the trouble was ever solved but we did find a remedy. By using ordinary M.T. fuel of a much lower octane, the little Lycoming engine behaved itself in the air perfectly. But woe betide you if you stopped your engine at some little airstrip in the Transjordan desert and then tried to start again, in the heat of the day. I remember well, occasions when my passenger and myself spend anything up two hours wearily swinging the airscrew without a sign of life. Then up with the engine covers, out with plugs, clean them, replace them and start all over again. This little engine had an uncanny of starting on the final swing before you gave up to wait for an aircraft to find you, with a fitter to take the thing to pieces.

However, I mustn't be too unfair the little Auster. Once this problem was solved she was a very delightful aircraft for the type of communication duties that we were carrying out. You could take her anywhere, land on an airstrip, field, road or desert, without any difficulty. She had good endurance – if you my didn't mind flying at 85 knots for hours on end. She was easily serviced, and view from the cabin on both sides, below and above was quite remarkable for a high wing aircraft. I was thankful for this on an occasion when I happened to land back at Lydda during the time that the Sixth Airborne Division were carrying out glider exercises. A Halifax had just taken off towing a Horsa, and had climbed to a position immediately above the airfield prior to setting course. At that moment the towline broke and my view through the roof of the Auster I had just landed was of an enormous glider with 90 deg flap heading straight for the middle of my head! Ground loops were never things to be taken lightly, but on this occasion I did a voluntary one just in time to see the glider flatten out at the last moment and make an excellent forced landing on the runway where I had been taxiing a few moment before.

Once we had got over the difficulties of petrol in the Auster V, I can honestly say that these robust little aircraft never gave us one minute's trouble in hundreds of hours flying, and I am quite sure that the sympathetic looks of many a pilot flying much larger aircraft would have changed had they had the same opportunity.

P.S.
Since writing this article it has been suggested – probably correctly – that the engine problem was caused by carburettor icing, which is not only confined to cold air conditions. This would explain the gradual fall-off of power until eventually the weight of the ice caused it to break away – thereby resulting in a surge back to full throttle power. Whether or not the use of M.T. fuel was a contributory factor to the cure can only be surmised, but we had no further trouble after the change.

## *Northwest airship raid that never was*

## By Colin Schroeder - Chairman TAC

On January 31st, nine German airships left their bases at Friedrichshaven and Lowenthal in Germany. Usually, they would creep across the North Sea under cover of darkness to haphazardly bomb the south coast of England. This time their orders were to fly across the entire breadth of England and bomb Liverpool, which until then, had been considered well beyond the range of the raiders. The audacity of the raid would show the British that nowhere would be safe from aerial attack.

Kapitänleutnant Max Dietrich, commanding L.21, was the first to cross the North Sea, passing over the Norfolk coast at 5:50pm in the evening. Inland, mist and fog were already forming around the heavily populated areas, making ground observation difficult. Not far away, was L13, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Mathy who had already bombed London, the previous year.

Dietrich, using a combination of calculation and observation whenever the clouds provided a gap through which he could see, plotted his progress across the country. Increasing his speed, he left L.13 behind. He saw the lights of a city below him. A calculation measuring airspeed against time told him that this was Manchester. He saw likely targets but decided not to drop any bombs, saving them and the surprise they would cause, for Liverpool.

At 8:50pm looking down from the gondola, Dietrich could no longer see any lights or ground features at all, and concluded that he was out over the Irish Sea, slightly to the North of Liverpool. He turned south, flying down the coast, looking for his target. Shortly, he saw it, twinkling, below were the lights of a large town. Towards the south, separated by an area of darkness, was another, smaller town. Dietrich concluded that he was over Liverpool with Birkenhead being the other town. He ordered action stations and began his approach. He steered out to sea and came in to attack from the south, flying over Birkenhead, crossing the Mersey and onto Liverpool itself. The incendiary and high explosive bombs were readied for release. There had been no attempt at all to interfere with their progress across Britain. They had the skies all to themselves.

At 9pm, the people of Liverpool were out and about, and there must have been many on that Monday evening. They heard no droning engines to make them look upwards. Anyone who did look up saw no threatening, silvery cigar-shaped airship about to bomb them. There was no fear, there was no panic, and there was no danger. Above all, there was no Zeppelin.

Dietrich's calculations had been wrong. When he thought he had passed over Manchester, it was in fact Derby, which passed below in the mist. When he thought he had crossed the coast and passed on over the Irish Sea, he had been flying over the sparsely populated and unlit areas of North Shropshire and Eastern Wales. He was 75 miles to the Southeast. His *'Birkenhead'* was Tipton, then a small industrial town in the middle of the industrial West Midlands. His dark, featureless *'Mersey'* was an area of industrial wasteland and collieries known as Lea Brook. And his jewel, his *'Liverpool'* was Wednesbury, which unfortunately received the surprise.

Flight Magazine published on the 3rd of February an officially announcements issued by the War Office on what was known as Raid XI7 summarised below.

*'A Zeppelin raid by six or seven airships took place last night': 'Bombs were dropped in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire, the number being estimated at 220. Except in one part of Staffordshire, the material damage was not considerable, and in no case was any military damage caused. No further casualties have been reported, and the figures remain as 54 killed, 67 injured'*.

The magazine also published the German version

*'On the night of January 31st one of our naval airship squadrons dropped large quantities of explosives and incendiary bombs on the docks, harbour, and factories in and near Liverpool, on Birkenhead iron foundries and smelting furnaces, on Manchester factories, on smelting furnaces at Nottingham and Sheffield, and the great industrial works on the Humber and near Great Yarmouth. Everywhere marked effects were observed in gigantic explosions, and serious conflagrations. On the Humber a battery was also silenced. Our airships were heavily fired on from all directions, there were not hits, and safely returned.'*

On the 2nd March Flight magazine published a further War Office update along with an increase in the number of casualties and bombs dropped. It also included the following German version from the notorious Wolff Bureau circulated to the German press.

'*From authoritative quarters we learn the following facts about the results of the air attack on the night of January 31st. The main objects of the attack were the docks and the port and factory areas. The effect of the bombs was good; during the return voyage of the airships an enormous fire was still visible at a great distance. A number of bridges and harbour areas were so severely damaged that it is for the present no longer possible to use them. It is said that a number of ships in the Mersey were badly damaged—among others a cruiser lying below Birkenhead and a transport ship of the Leyland Line. Stables containing 200*

*horses were destroyed by fire, and it is said that the horses and the Canadian troops guarding them were killed. Great damage was done at Birkenhead, Garston, and Bootle. The Booth Line and Yeoward Line have been severely injured by the partial destruction of the docks. Three ships suffered great injury. The neighbouring dry docks and engine works, as well as the Birkenhead Dry Dock, Engine and Boiler Works, were completely destroyed. In all, more than 800 houses were destroyed by bombs or fire. At the mouth of the Mersey (in Bootle) a powder factory was completely destroyed. At Crewe, southeast of Liverpool, the railways were greatly damaged, so that traffic with London was interrupted. At this point military encampments also are said to have been set on fire'.*

L21 was to return and actually find the northwest on the 25th September 1916, but this time under the command of Oberleutnant Kurt Frankenburg. The airship dropped its bombs in the Rossendale Valley and around Bolton. Many of the bombs did not explode, but those that did, killed 13 and injured nine.

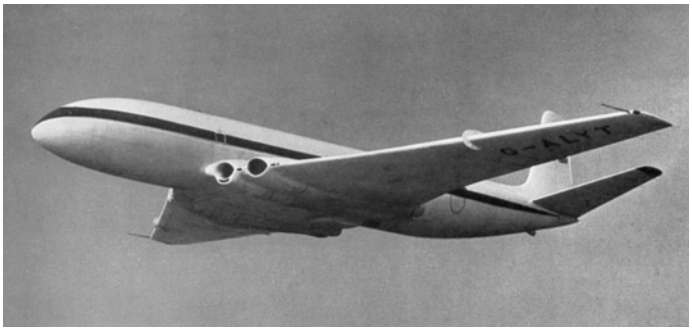
L21 was shot down on November 28th off Lowestoft with the loss of all on board.

**A map of the "raid that never was" on 31st January 1916 auctioned in ebay recently**

## The Halton Comet by Dennis Stead

In the L.R.N. No. 88 Issue 1 2013 I described my visit to the Trenchard Museum at R.A.F. Halton to return my old service cap. In early March this year I received a parcel, it was in the form of a cardboard tube. When I removed the end cap of the tube I was able to withdraw a rolled up piece of paper. I was delighted to find when I unrolled the paper that it was a copy of a painting. It depicted a DeHavilland Comet aircraft landing on the grass airfield at R.A.F. Halton and the artist was Brian Payne. The accompanying letter stated "I thought you would like it as a memento of your time here as you were involved in the event". I remember quite well the event as I was one of the R.A.F. Policemen given the task of closing the road between the villages of Weston Turville and Halton. I often though was members of the general public would have thought being stopped by a military policeman on a public highway.

I framed the print and hung it the wall up above the television set. In time I began to think that I would like to know more about the aircraft. So I started searching on the internet and found that the aircraft was the sixth Comet produced. Throughout it manufacture it was known by the Constructors Number 6006 and was destined for the Ministry of Supply to do test work on the new Rolls Royce Avon engines which were to power the Comet Mark 2`s. It was classed as the prototype Comet Mark. 2 and was dubbed as 2X. It made its maiden flight on 16th. February 1952 and carried the registration G-ALYT. During its test life it was based at the DeHavilland airfield at Hadfield in Hertfordshire. It did venture to Khartoum to carry out tropical trials. The final test was with to fly with a water spraying rig fitted in front of the Starboard (left hand) outboard engine intake to assess the de-icing capabilities. In 1954 the aircraft was withdrawn from use by the DeHavilland Company and it is not clear what happened to the aircraft over the next few years. It made the short flight from Hatfield to Halton on 28th. May 1959, with John "Cats Eyes" Cunningham at the control, flew to R.A.F. Halton and landed on the grass airfield. It was to serve as an instructional airframe with No. 1 School of Technical Training with the pseudo 7610M. In 1967 its usefulness was over and it was broken up for scrap.



## Easter 1920 – Bidston Aerodrome opened

By Colin Schroeder
Chairman - The Aeroplane Collection

Great Northern Aerial Company of Liverpool acquired 35 acres of land near Bidston railway station in September 1919 for an aerodrome to be used as headquarters for their proposed services linking numerous cities around the country to *'health & leisure'* resorts. During the 1920 Easter holiday, between Wednesday 31st March and Saturday 10th April, they organised an Aerial Gala, to mark the opening of the aerodrome, it would then close until Whitson, then reopen and continue throughout the summer. Admission to the Gala was 1/- (5p), with a three-penny tax. Unfortunately they had not managed to put the finishing touches to the aerodrome before it was opened three hangars had almost been completed. It was intended that the field would become permanent, and eventual be properly levelled and made dry.

Great things were being promised with the establishment of the aerodrome. Flights to London, departing Bidston at 8:45am and arriving at the London aerodrome of Cricklewood at 10:45am, this would allow *'almost a full day of business'*. The return journey it was suggested could be made on the same day. This service was to link up with the London to Paris flight. This started from Cricklewood at 11:30am and cost about £15. Enquires had been received from various interested parties. One Liverpool business man, wanted to book four trips each week to London at £15 15s a journey, and a prominent medical man enquired as to the possibility of undertaking long trips at short notice for urgent consultations or operations.

For the Gala, it was intended to get about twenty aircraft to the aerodrome, but the weather interfered with the arrival of a number of aircraft from Blackpool and London. The weather not only restricted flights but also decreased the attendance. How popular the Gala might have been, is shown by the fact that on the Good Friday when the weather cleared up, 800 people paid for admission and 51 passengers were carried on short trips.

A full programme had been planned including *'long flights'*, with Blackpool as a favoured destination at five guineas (£5.25) single and seven guineas (£7.35) return. Guinea (£1.05) flights over the River Mersey would be available, and for those not minded to venture so far afield, the thrills and sensation of flight would be provided by short *'flips'*. There were also free flights to holders of lucky numbered admission tickets purchased in advanced.

Flying was of course the chief attraction, but to give the aerodrome the character of a pleasure haunt, there were refreshments, dancing and music by the military band of the Comrades of the Great War, all held in a large pavilion which had been erected.

At the opening ceremony, Mr J.J. Beasley, the chairman of the Great Northern Aerial Company, said that the company was trying to create popular interest in flying, and had established a number of aerodromes throughout the country. They were conscious of the tremendous sacrifice, which the flying man had made for their country during the Great War. He sincerely hoped that the Government would back up the efforts of the civilian flying companies. He asked the Mayor of Birkenhead, Alderman J.H. McGaul to open the aerodrome.

Alderman McGaul wished the company every success and having expressed his, admiration for the airman went on to say. *"I feel that for certain purposes considering the great unrest and turmoil throughout the country, that aviation is going to be our salvation. If we can come to a place of this description when transport has been stopped between here, London, and Paris* (There had been a good deal of industrial unrest with a recent rail strike)*. If wires have been cut, and means of communication are at the mercy of agitators who care not for the good of their country but only for themselves. If we can come to loyal citizens at a place like this and book a passage for a certain place, flying will have done a wonderful service on behalf of the rest of the Empire".* He welcomed the construction of the aerodrome, because of its proximity to the borough over which he presided and said he was sorry that their friends in Wallasey had prevented them from including the aerodrome grounds in Birkenhead's expansion scheme. He went on to say that "*The Government was perhaps not behaving as well as it might towards aviation, and it behoved those interested to create such a feeling in the whole country that the value of aviation would become apparent to every man in the street. If they did that, they would be doing a great service, not only to aviation, but also to the nation. They would be doing something for England as well as for themselves*".

Mr J.S. Bumphrey of the International Aviation Company in responding to a toast to the pilots described the obstacles placed by the Air Ministry in the way of civilians who wished to purchase aircraft. He had set out to purchase one with his naval gratuity. It took him six weeks to buy it and three months to obtain delivery. The Air Ministry had refused to loan an aircraft to an aero club, but he had seen 500 machines being broken up at Aintree.

Following the speeches, William Nichole attempted a flight, but days of continuous rain, and a very heavy thunderstorm on the previous night, had made the ground so sodden, that, although the aircraft could have taken off, it was considered advisable, not to risk the possibility of a bad landing. Conditions did improve the next day to allow flying to commence.

# DUXFORD 2012

## By John Stanley

## Member of the Friends of MOSI