

# Auster

QUARTERLY



THE AUSTER STORY  
SHOREHAM RALLY REPORT  
ONE MAN'S AEROPLANE

VOLUME 1  
NUMBER 1

50p

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# Auster

QUARTERLY

Volume 1 Number 1

Spring 1975

Editor : Michael Draper, 35, Eight Acres, Romsey, Hants. SO5 8BP

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**Front cover :** The Leicester Museum of Technology's flying exhibit, Autocrat G-AGOH served as the original Cirrus Minor 2 engine test-bed for the J/1 series.

(P. J. Cooper)

**Back cover :** G-ASEG, one of two Auster 6A's converted by Airgeeners Ltd. at Staverton, photographed shortly after completion. (M. I. Draper Collection)

**Editorial note :** *Much of the information published in the tables forming part of the Auster Story has previously been published in Impressments Log by Peter W. Moss published by Air Britain. Due acknowledgement should therefore be given to this excellent publication, while at the same time the Editor has been granted permission to research into Air Ministry files held by the Air Historical Branch relating to the Impressment of early Taylorcraft aeroplanes.*

Auster Quarterly is published in co-operation with the International Auster Pilot Club during February, May, August and November. The subscription rate for the four issues of 1975 is £2.20 post-paid, cheques or money orders being payable to Auster Quarterly. The editor will be pleased to receive any articles or photographs intended for publication, but only if a stamped addressed envelop is supplied, can these be returned.

Neither the Editor nor the International Auster Pilot Club necessarily agrees with opinions expressed by contributors. Printed by Hadfield Print Services, Ltd., 43 Pikes Lane, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8Ed.



## Introduction

Believed to be the first time that a regular magazine has been devoted to one single manufacturer, Auster Quarterly is published primarily for two reasons. Firstly the immediate success of the Auster Pilot Club has illustrated the tremendous enthusiasm that exists for the venerable Auster, and secondly that the Company's postwar history spans a period of British aviation that is surprisingly not often put into print.

It has often been said that 'some people swear by Austers, others swear at them'. Now, in the 1970s, the Auster has become a highly-desired aeroplane by those who have become flying enthusiasts. Furthermore, the excellent work by Peter Stoddart and his team at the Leicester Museum of Technology serves an indication of the interest now being bestowed upon the former Leicester company. We would like to express our gratitude to the Museum for the kind assistance given in preparing this first issue, and also to Tom Pearce, curator of the Museum of Army Aviation at Middle Wallop.

Auster Quarterly is not a news magazine as such, but merely an opportunity to discuss in great detail the success of the basic Auster, and of the man who pioneered that success, Mr. A. L. Wykes. To the historian, and his insatiable appetite for detail, we delve deeply into the case history of each aeroplane built, and to the owner and enthusiast we present a balance of topical features. From the outset, there is a wealth of information to draw from, for since the original Model C of 1939, the Auster has undergone continuous metamorphosis during the years before the Company was acquired by Beagle in the early sixties. Yet there is no doubt of the close relationship between say, the Beagle Terrier and the original wartime Auster in terms of design and construction.

For the sake of simplicity we have treated military and civil Austers as 'different' aeroplanes, although many service Austers were of course civilianised after the war. With this in mind therefore, we have elected to present details of civilianised Model C/2s and Ds in a later issue. While this system differs from the norm, we feel that in time, it should make the presentation easier as a source of reference.

Forthcoming topics are due to include histories of the squadrons which operated Austers during the war, and later in Palestine, Korea, Malaya, and Indonesia. Design and performance details of each type will be presented, and comparison scale drawings are now being prepared for early inclusion. The regular 'One Man's Auster' shall continue to feature the individual aeroplanes of A.P.C. members, and every attempt will be made to portray all aspects of the Auster's life.

Readers may care to note that whilst Auster Quarterly is not an Auster Pilot Club publication, it is produced under close co-operation with the Club, and any enquiries relating to the A.P.C. should be directed to the Club Secretary.

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# The Auster Story

*From Taylorcraft To Beagle*

PART 1 - TAYLORCRAFT 1938-1942.

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*A. L. Wykes, founder of Taylorcraft photographed at Rearsby shortly before his tragic death on May 14th. 1944* *(Flight)*

The return to peace following the end of World War I meant a return to civilian life for many young men trained to be airmen in the new Royal Flying Corps.

For most of these men flying had become a new and real experience, for they were virtually pioneers of their generation. For the majority, peace meant embarking upon a new career outside aviation, and for one 19-year old airman, this was no exception.

Alfred Launcelot Wykes, born on April 29th. 1899, had joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1918 and soon given the rank of Flying Officer. Upon demobilisation a year later, his total flying experience had amounted to 300 hours, of which fifty were by night.

Within a year of leaving the R.F.C. Alfred Wykes joined forces with a Mr. Frank Bates to form Crowthers Ltd. of Thurmaston, Leicester, for the manufacture of textile machinery. The company also produced Cable insulating machines with some marked success, but the young Wykes, soon to be known simply as 'A-L' was still keen to fly and, although this humble beginning showed no hint of any connection with aviation, Crowthers were much later to play a key role in the formation of one of this Country's leading manufacturers of light aeroplanes.

As a refugee from aviation, 'A-L's' desire to fly again was not realised until August 1936 when, on the 12th., he made a local flight from Leicester in a DH.60G Moth (G-ACBX), under the guidance of a Flt.Lt.R.L. Bateman. After only 4.35 hours, he soloed in another Moth (DH.60M G-ABTF) on the 25th, and on September 17th. he was issued P.P.L. No.14438.

Alexander Wykes's keenness to fly became more evident when he joined one of the local flying clubs that was to become a major influence in his decision to enter light aeroplane construction.

The Flying Club that Wykes joined was the forerunner of the well-known County Flying Club, whose origins date from October 1935. On the 24th of that month, in a Leicester hotel, a meeting was held of local flying enthusiasts who had responded to a newspaper announcement inviting the formation of a Flying Club, with the added intention of building their own Flying Flea. From that meeting, the Flying Pou Club was born and forty founder members were enrolled.

Construction of the aeroplane began immediately in a local tannery, whilst a flying-ground was prepared at Melton Mowbray. Later, when the Government imposed its ban on the use of Flying Fleas bringing an end to a famous era of light aviation, the Club was forced to find new equipment and consequently acquired the use of a Kronfield Drone and a Kronfield Trainer. But it was soon realised that these aeroplanes needed a much larger airfield to operate from and so, during 1937, the Club acquired the rights to use some land adjoining Gaddesby Lane, in Rearsby, just north-east of Leicester. The owner of the land, Mr. (later Sir) Lindsay Everard, was subsequently appointed President of the Club when its title was changed to the County Flying Club.

During the course of constructing the new Rearsby airfield the Club moved temporarily to Ratcliffe, taking with it the hangar from Melton Mowbray. A small shed was built at Ratcliffe, to form a much-needed clubroom. The Club also increased its fleet at this time with the purchase of three Taylor Cubs and from then on, with an ever-increasing membership, the Club prospered.

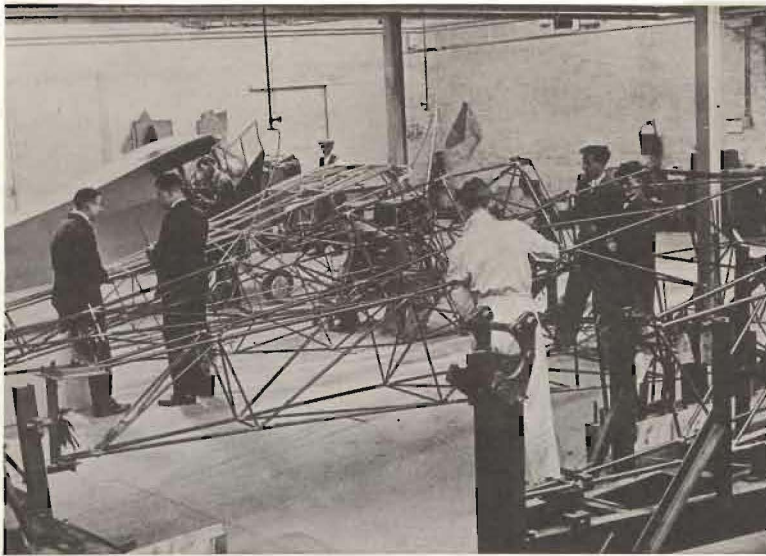
On July 23rd. 1938 work at Rearsby was completed and the official opening of the new airfield took place. Later in the year, the County Flying Club took part in a Government scheme to train pilots which enabled the purchase of further aeroplanes.

Initially, an American Taylorcraft Model A was purchased and it was this aeroplane (G-AFJW) that created a great deal of interest amongst the Club's members. Indeed, Alexander Wykes was so impressed with the new aeroplane that he immediately flew out to America with a view to arranging licence manufacture in this country.

Much later, looking back, some of the men that had been close to Wykes agreed that it was an utterly foolhardy decision to enter aircraft production with no experience, but that only a man with determination and the complete confidence, such as Wykes had, could succeed. As it turned out, it was because of these two factors, together with a fair amount of luck, that the venture was successful.

From the American company, 'A-L' duly obtained the manufacturing and marketing rights. He also purchased fifty Lycoming O-145-A2 engines and acquired complete details of the various materials required. These he sent back to his uncle, Percy Wykes, in Leicester, together with urgent instructions to buy all the necessary equipment.

The new company of Taylorcraft Aeroplanes (England) Ltd. was registered as a private Company on November 21st. 1938, with a nominal capital of £15,000. As 'A-L' was still in America at the time, the signatories on these early mandates were those of Frank Bates, acting Managing-Director in his partner's absence, and Percy Wykes, who was the other original Director. Even at this early stage the Company had appointed a distributor. Prentice Air Services, of Ipswich was made sole concessionaire to act as a distributor for South-East England. Mr. Prentice foresaw sales of fifty aircraft per year.



*Taylorcraft Model C  
airframes under  
construction at Britannia  
Works, Thurmaston.  
(Leicester Museum of  
Technology)*

Apart from the acquisition of materials, there was an obvious need to recruit new employees who knew something about the building of aeroplanes. One of the first of the new employees taken on was Herbert Thompson, who was simply transferred from Wykes' other Company, Crowthers Ltd. Thompson was allotted the formidable task of constructing the jigs for the new Taylorcraft. Jack Hunter came from Reid & Sigrest as Works Manager, but only under the condition that his previous colleague, Kenneth Sharp, came as his Foreman. Both men spent a lengthy career with Taylorcraft, and later with Austers. Ken Sharp, who joined Taylorcraft on January 2nd. 1939, immediately started work with the others "in the shed behind Crowthers."

Another long-timer and well-known Auster personality who joined the Company at the beginning was Albert Codling, previously a ground engineer for Sir Lindsay Everard and loaned to the County Flying Club. It was a logical step for him to join Taylorcraft as Chief Inspector but curiously, as war approached, Albert Codling was called up for R.A.F. duties. His position was temporarily absorbed by Jack Hunter.

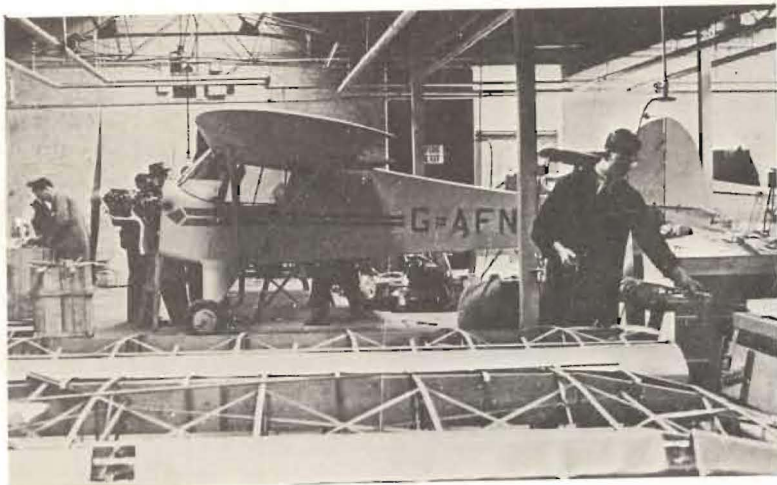
What Ken Sharp described as 'the shed' was simply the rear part of Crowther's Britannia Works, in Thurmaston, rented by Taylorcraft for the nominal sum of £120 per annum. When Taylorcraft was founded, the main floor area which formed a centre isle through the shed, had not yet been concreted, it being merely earth. On both sides of this centre isle were stored osiers, stacked against the walls, while the isle itself was used by horse and dreys passing from Crowther's factory through large double-doors at each end. The newly-recruited team's first task was to clear the entire floor area, instal electrical power and then work through the long list of deficiencies.

When 'A-L' returned from America, he insisted that the shed, by now designated the Production Shop, be completely painted in aluminium paint. This preparatory work involved long hours of hard toil late into the cold January nights. However it did have its brighter moments as, when painting the hot-water pipes high up in the roof, Herbert Thompson became caught up on the pipes that he had just finished painting. As he tried desperately to extricate himself from the maze of wet pipes, his ladder slipped and fell away. As he screamed for assistance, his colleagues on the ground fell about laughing at the unbelievable sight of Thompson hanging by his elbows, thinking it to be some sort of tomfoolery!

From this simple beginning it was difficult to imagine mass-production of aeroplanes within a few years.

It was decided to build the Taylorcraft Model B, or Taylorcraft 50 as it was more generally known, rather than the Model A, as imported by the County Flying Club. Furthermore, it was agreed that the new aeroplane was to have incorporated many refinements and alterations, mainly to meet the stringent British metal requirements. These included the replacement of American 22-ton standard steel tubing with British tubing which had an unwelded tensile strength of 45 tons although, after welding, this figure was reduced to about 28 tons.

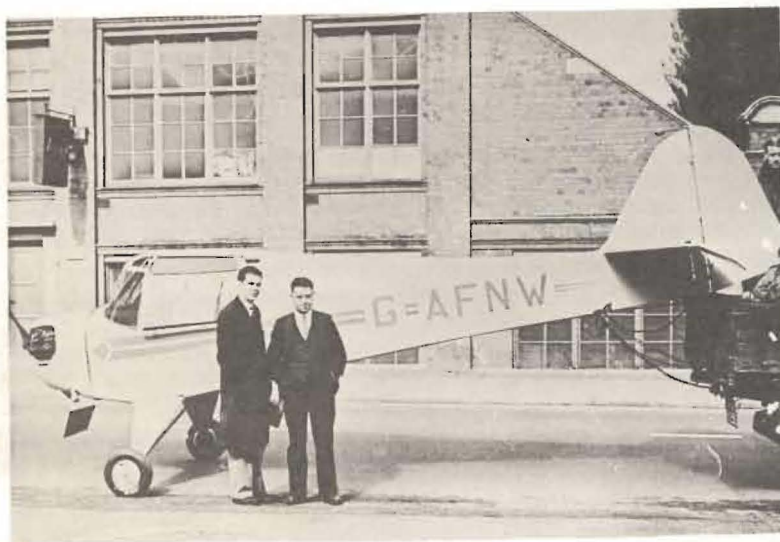
Manufacture started in the rear of Britannia Works towards the end of February 1939 with the Model C, as it had now become known. When the American parent Company introduced their own Model C, the British aeroplane became the Model'Plus' C.



*The prototype Model C (G-AFNW) ready for roll-out. Note the spare fuselage in the rafters — a practice maintained by Beagle Aircraft some 25 years later. (Leicester Museum of Technology)*



*G-AFNW being towed out of the main gates at Britannia Works in April 1939. (Leicester Museum of Technology)*



*..... Outside Britannia Works. (Leicester Museum of Technology)*

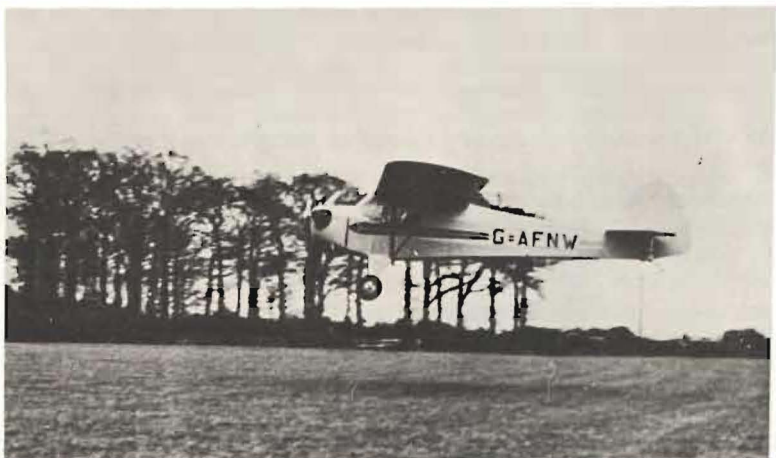




*An interesting view showing the clean features of the nose. The undercarriage is also noteworthy.*



*Next stop Ratcliffe ! All aircraft produced by Taylorcraft at Thurmaston were towed to Ratcliffe in this manner for erection and flight.  
(Leicester Museum of Technology)*



*G-AFNW landing at Ratcliffe after its successful first flight on May 3rd. 1939.  
(Leicester Museum of Technology)*

The first British-built example, G-AFNW, was completed on April 24th. and taken by road to Sir Lindsay Everard's aerodrome at Ratcliffe where, after assembly, it made its first flight on May 3rd. with Mr. G.Wynne-Eaton at the controls. After landing successfully, 'A-L' then climbed aboard and, with Uncle Percy as passenger, took off and promptly looped it. Later, 'FNW' was sold and delivered to the County Flying Club at Rearsby.

Production at Thurmaston was soon built up to about one aeroplane per week. All of the test flying was carried out at Ratcliffe by both the Company test-pilot, Albert Coltman, and the ground engineer Albert Codling.

**Table 1a Production of Taylorcraft Model Plus C**

| c/n | Reg'n  | C.of A. issue | Operator  |
|-----|--------|---------------|---|
| 100 | G-AFNW | 9/5/39        | County Flying Club, Rearsby.  |
| 101 | G-AFTT | 16/5/39       | West Suffolk Aero Club, Bury St. Edmunds.                                 |
| 102 | G-AFTN | 17/5/39       | Wiltshire School of Flying, High Post.                                    |
| 103 | G-AFTO | 22/5/39       | Coventry (civil) Aviation, Whitley.                                       |
| 104 | G-AFTP | 26/5/39       | West Suffolk Aero Club, Bury St. Edmunds.                                 |
| 105 | G-AFTY | 7/6/39        | Wiltshire School of Flying, High Post.                                    |
| 106 | G-AFTZ | 15/6/39       | West Suffolk Aero Club; to Luton Flying Club 8/39.                        |
| 107 | G-AFUA | 20/6/39       | Malling Aviation Ltd. West Malling; to A. Harrison, Castle Bromwich 7/39. |
| 108 | G-AFUB | 24/6/39       | Coventry (Civil) Aviation, Whitley.                                       |
| 109 | G-AFUD | 29/6/39       | Luton Flying Club.  |
| 111 | G-AFUX | 30/6/39       | J.W.W. Hurdell, Odiham.   |
| 112 | G-AFUY | 5/7/39        | S. Lawrence, Alfreton, Derbyshire.  |
| 113 | G-AFUZ | 10/7/39       | County Flying Club, Rearsby.  |
| 114 | G-AFVA | 13/7/39       | Grimsby Aviation Ltd., Waltham.   |
| 115 | G-AFVB | 14/7/39       | Luton Flying Club.  |
| 116 | G-AFVU | 22/7/39       | Romford Flying Club, Maylands.  |
| 117 | G-AFVW | 22/7/39       | Coventry (Civil) Aviation, Whitley.                                       |
| 118 | G-AFVX | 1/8/39        | K.E. Milland & Partner.   |
| 119 | G-AFVY | 4/8/39        | Derby Aero Club, Burnaston.   |
| 120 | G-AFVZ | 5/8/39        | Derby Aero Club, Burnaston.   |
| 121 | G-AFWK | 22/8/39       | W.G. Turnbull, Rearsby.   |
| 122 | G-AFWL | 31/8/39       | Taylorcraft Aeroplanes (England) Ltd.                                     |
| 123 | G-AFWM | 25/8/39       | County Flying Club, Rearsby.  |

The Model C was powered by the 55hp Lycoming O-145-A2, but Taylorcraft decided during the early stages of production to introduce the more powerful 90hp Blackburn Cirrus Minor 1 Engine into the basic Model C airframe. Together with other small modifications, the more powerful aeroplane was designated the Model Plus D, but the restless political situation in Europe during the Summer of 1939 caused some doubt as to whether the Company should continue development. In August 1939, Taylorcraft made the agonising decision to run down production but to complete the airframes currently under construction. Four more aeroplanes were completed and delivered (c/ns 119, 120, 121 and 123) before war was declared on September 3rd. Immediately, a complete Government ban on private and club flying and, likewise, the manufacture of civil aeroplanes was implemented. The prototype Model D has just been completed and had received its C.of A. just four days beforehand and, apart from this aircraft (c/n 124, G-AFWN), the only other completed aircraft at Ratcliffe was the Model C 'FWL' which was retained as a Company 'hack'.

A number of uncompleted airframes (c/ns 125 to 130) were then stored high up in the rafters at Britannia Works and, except for a few for the Army, there was to be no full-scale production for nearly two years.

## 2.... The Army.

It is difficult to define the actual ancestry of Army aviation for part of its origins can be found during the First World War. Kite balloons, moored to the ground three or four miles behind their respective trenches, were found to provide a reasonably efficient airborne observation post. An earlier scheme, from which stems the concept of modern Army aviation, is that of the Artillery Reconnaissance Aeroplane, first used in Tripoli during the campaign fought between Italy and Turkey in 1911.

By 1916 the aeroplane had become a recognised vehicle from which artillery fire of World War I could be observed and surprisingly, the performance of this aeroplane, in terms of size, all-up weight and horsepower,

differed little from the Austers of World War II. Both operated normally within a speed range of between 40 and 90 mph. and at relatively low altitude. Early attempts to relay information from pilot to gunner were by means of a one-way w/t from air to ground, who could reply by a system of ground signals, using white ground strips. This entire procedure, although slow and in its infancy, was adequate for the trench warfare of the period.

Between the wars, the development of aviation is well known and the increased size and weight of the all-purpose aeroplane, such as the Audax with which the Army Co-operation Squadrons were equipped, led equally to an increased top speed and consequently a higher stalling speed. In short, the development had overtaken the basic requirement of airborne observation, for by now the aeroplane was at risk to interception by hostile fighters, not being able to fly evasively at below the fighter's critical stalling speed, nor were they fast enough to escape by speed alone. Only just before the Second World War did an aircraft exist that barely approached the necessary qualities, in the shape of the Westland Lysander. With extensive use of high-lift devices, the Lysander had a wide speed range and a short take-off and landing run. Its pilot and gunner also had a good view but it was a heavy aeroplane and not very manoeuvrable. When, eventually, the Lysander went into action, it suffered such losses that the R.A.F. was forced to withdraw it from battle.

From mid-1938 the War Office began putting forward the Army's views of Airborne Observation Posts (known initially as Forward Observation Post). It seemed that an obvious need existed to review the entire A.O.P. operation but the Air Ministry felt that with the existing tense European situation such as it was, that it was an undesirable time to introduce radical changes to equipment and tactics. The War Office, however, persisted and in December 1938 the Air Ministry finally relented. It was agreed that Air O.P. trials could take place "as a matter of arrangement between the Air Officer Commanding 22 (Army Co-operation) Group and the Commandant, School of Artillery, Larkhill."

The original concept was to allow a gunner to pilot himself in a light aeroplane whilst observing the fire of guns under his command, the plan originating from members of the Royal Artillery Flying Club. This Club consisted of Gunner officers who, since its formation in November 1934, had learnt to fly in light aeroplanes and autogiros at their own expense.

President of the Club was Brigadier H. R. S. Massey, who was Brigadier, Royal Artillery, Southern Command, and the Secretary was Captain H. C. Bazeley R.A., and it was these two officers who were largely responsible for formulating the plan of using unarmed light aircraft for Air O.P. purposes.

Bazeley, together with two other Gunners — Captain Fielden and Captain Davenport — were seconded to the Royal Air Force during December 1938, and detailed to carry out the Larkhill trials. An instructor in gunnery, Major A. K. Mathews, who had himself been a pilot in the First World War, was appointed to supervise the trials.

Initial results were encouraging but the R.A.F. was still unconvinced, and further trials with the Audax and Lysander took place during February 1939. The fact that these two types were both too fast and too heavy was only too evident, and so a third scheme was arranged using autogiros and lighter aeroplanes.

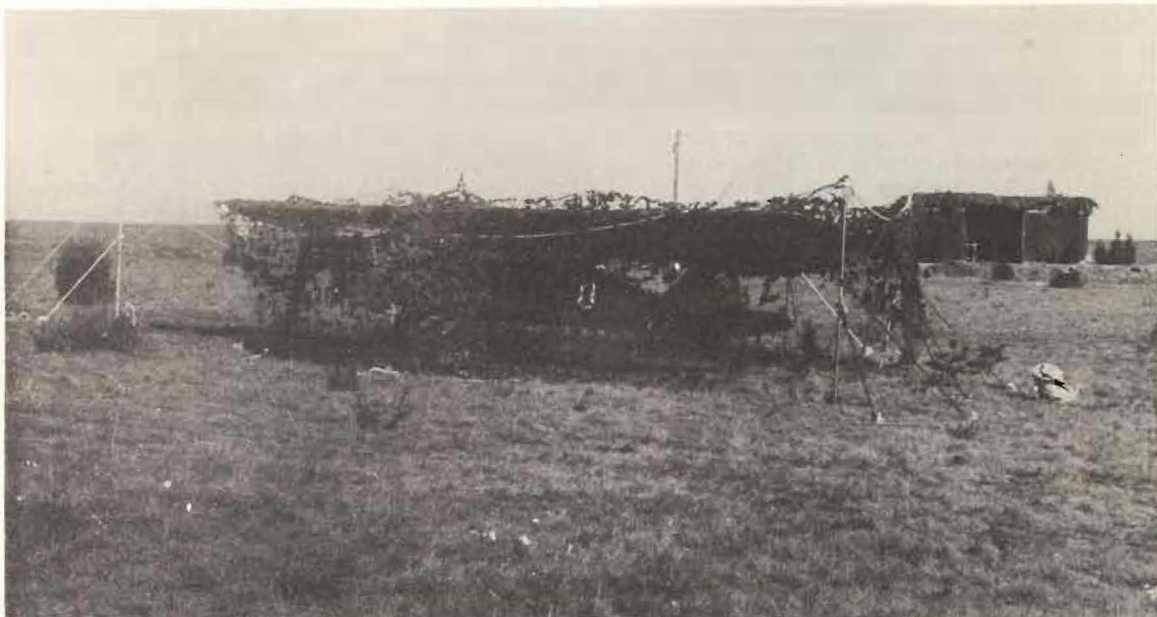
Of the few types of suitable aeroplanes in production at the time, the Army elected to view each in order to select the ideal Air O.P., but naturally no true Air O.P. aeroplane existed. However, the young Taylorcraft company was fully aware of the Larkhill trials and was in the process of putting forward its own product for Army inspection.

At the personal invitation of A. L. Wykes, Captain Bazeley and several other R.A.F. and Army officers involved in the Air O.P. trials, travelled to Leicester on Friday 20th October 1939 to fly the Taylorcraft Model C and the new Model D. All who flew it expressed a great deal of interest in the Model D (G-AFWN), and immediately afterwards 22 Group requested War Office permission to purchase one aeroplane for testing at Old Sarum. The cost was estimated at £650 which included numerous small changes to transparent openings to provide an improved vision to the rear. The request was granted.

One factor in Taylorcraft's favour was the fact that the Model D was fully jigged and tooled for production, and fully certified so that five aeroplanes could be produced immediately and could very quickly build up to fifteen aeroplanes per week. One Model D (c/n 124) had been completed, and it was this aircraft that had been tested by Bazeley while it was in use as a Company 'hack', but Taylorcraft had allotted the eleventh fuselage (c/n 110) to serve as a 'military prototype' in the hope that the Army wanted one!

Wykes had promised Bazeley a new Model D within a week, complete with the necessary modifications, and accordingly the Company completed one of the stored airframes (c/n 128) and had it flown to Old Sarum on October 26th., on loan until the true Army example (c/n 110) could be completed.

Shortly afterwards, on December 13th, the loaned Model D since registered G-AFZJ took part in an interesting dog-fight with a Spitfire, within an area of 16 miles by 6 miles over Salisbury Plain. These mock attacks, designed to ascertain the vulnerability of the Taylorcraft, showed that even without prior warning, the light aeroplane had quite a good chance of evading a hostile fighter.



*One of 'D' Flight's Model Ds photographed during camouflage experiments at Somme-Sous aerodrome.  
(Museum of Army Aviation)*

In the meantime Captain Bazeley's team at the School of Army Co-operation continued its quest for suitable aeroplanes and made arrangements for the completion of the Comper Scamp and the G.A.L. 33 Cagnet. The latter had been involved in numerous delivery delays, so that early comparison tests could not be carried out. The Comper Scamp was a two-seat version of the Comper Fly which had also been considered but ruled out by the fact that if radio equipment was installed, the extra weight would have impeded its take-off performance. The Alpin A-1 Mk.2 monoplane (G-AFGB) was flown to Old Sarum on December 11th for trials and eight days later Taylorcraft's military Model D was delivered, complete with the serial T9120.

The main concern at Taylorcraft was the fact that the workforce was virtually idle for, if the Army trials were successful, Wykes knew that there would be some considerable delay before any orders were forthcoming. But with no work, and almost no money, 'A-L' continually assured his employees that "they will want our aeroplanes, you'll see", and in the early weeks of the war, the Company urgently sought work of any nature to keep itself solvent. Consequently a contract was obtained for the Standard Motor Company for the manufacture of seats for Airspeed Oxford trainers, and later 'A-L' won a further contract for the building of fins for the Hawker Hurricane.

The Army trials at Old Sarum had shown that the Model D proved the nearest to Bazeley's requirements, and the Company was duly requested to supply a further three aircraft and as a result c/ns 126 and 127 were completed as G-AFZH and G-AFZI respectively. The third aircraft was c/n 128 G-AFZJ which had been returned to Taylorcraft on January 27th, following the arrival at Old Sarum of the prototype T9120.

On February 1st, 1940, the School of Army-Co-operation formed 'D' Flight specifically for the purpose of conducting the Old Sarum trials, with Captain Bazeley as the unit's Commanding Officer. Other officers were Capt. E. D. Joyce, Capt. R.J. R. Davenport R.A., and F/O Inglefield RAF. One early decision taken was the official change of title from Forward Observation Post (F.O.P.) to Airborne Observation Post (A.O.P.).

Tests continued with some degree of success, but the main fault that dogged the Model D was its lack of all-round visibility. After consulting Taylorcraft it was suggested by 'A-L' that by raising the pilot's seat by some four inches, and the centre section by a slightly higher amount, this would bring the eye level to the upper surface of the wing. A parking brake, however, was seen to be of prime importance, as was the use of Triplex windscreens.

'D' Flight's three Model Ds were flown from Rearsby to Old Sarum on February 5th, although it is reported that the third aircraft (128) forced-landed en route and actually arrived shortly afterwards. The G.A.L. 33 Cagnet arrived at Old Sarum on the same day for comparison tests, but one other aircraft tested by the Flight and which showed some promise was a single Stinson 105, X1050, arriving some weeks later than the Taylorcraft, but the Army, quite rightly as it turned out, envisaged delivery problems with the American aircraft.

It was at this time that the War Office agreed that any further trials should be conducted against a 'real' enemy, and tests were therefore arranged to be carried out in France with the A/E Battery R.H.A. and the 1st. Light A.A. Battery R.A. The Stinson and three Model Ds were flown to Hawkinge on April 17th. to wait clearance before flying out across the Channel. Two days later, the formation flew out to Arras, via Cape Gris Nez, and until the 28th. training took place at Martinpuich (Bapaume) where the A/E Battery was billeted.

From the 1st. May until the 10th. flying took place at Mailly Practice Camp, and during this period, 'D' Flight camped at Somme-Sous aerodrome. The main result of these flights was that Pilot and Observer should be one and the same person, while performance figures for the Taylorcraft were as follows :

|                                    |                              |        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|
| Total load                         | Pilot and passenger, R/T Set | 360lb. |
| Take-off run                       | 195 yards                    |        |
| Landing-run (over 30ft. obstacle)  | 200 yards.                   |        |
| Climb to 1000 feet                 | 2min. 30 secs.               |        |
| Dive from 1000 ft. to ground level | 19 seconds.                  |        |

After Captain Bazeley had taken the decision to fly each aircraft operationally without an observer, he and Major Matthews flew two Model Ds up to Saar on May 9th. in order to make a preliminary reconnaissance along the German front-line. But events overtook them.

During the early hours of May 10th. the German Army launched its major offensive that was later to result in the Dunkirk evacuations. Because of the rapid advances made by the enemy, it was decided that the situation was far too dangerous to begin evaluating new methods of warfare. Consequently 'D' Flight was withdrawn on May 20th. and returned to Old Sarum. The Flight as such was then dissolved in June, and the Model Ds returned to Leicester.

The French Government had shown keen interest in developing its own A.O.P. scheme and was also interested in the Taylorcraft, to the extent of sending representatives to England to inspect the aircraft. The day before the party's arrival found Ratcliffe airfield covered with the deepest snowfall of the 1939/40 winter, and 'A-L', who was in London awaiting the French, was informed by his company that any flying from the airfield was impossible. At once, he ordered that skis should be fitted to one of the Model Cs (presumably c/n 122 G-AFWL), and amazingly by the time the party arrived on the following day, skis had been designed, made and fitted. As it turned out, this was the first time that an aeroplane had flown with skis in this country, and the information gained from this experiment proved extremely useful later in the war. The French Count had been suitably impressed, but appears to have been also concerned with the lack of all-round visibility, for he is on record as suggesting that by cutting an opening in the roof of the cockpit, this would allow the observer to 'pop' his head out to observe hostile aircraft! However before any orders could be placed, by the French Government, the Country capitulated.

Although 'D' Flight had been disbanded in June 1940, the Flight was reformed the following month under the direct command of HQ 22 Group R.A.F., and immediately the first two young gunner officers, Major R. W. V. Nethercoat R.A., and Major R. R. Cobleby R.A. arrived at Old Sarum. During September, five more volunteers arrived to join the Flight after initial training with the R.A.F., and all these men were later to command A.O.P. Squadrons.

Of the Taylorcraft Model D aircraft originally tested by 'D' Flight, all but T9120 had been on loan from the manufacturer, but during August 1940, the Air Ministry requisitioned four Model Ds held at Leicester; c/n 126 and 127 under contract no. B72508/40 to become W5740 and W5741, and c/n 131 and 125 under contract no. B103819/40 to become X7533 and X7534. (c/n 131 is believed to have been a reconstruction of Model C c/n 122 which had been dismantled on May 29th.)

While 'D' Flight had been in France, the Officers involved were of the opinion of fully investigating the Stinson aircraft, and it appears that the War Office was similarly in favour of the American aircraft, for in July 1940, an order for one hundred Stinson Vigilants had been placed. This order arose from a War Office meeting held on June 5th. in order to finally satisfy the Army's requirements. At the same meeting it was elected that further trials involving the Taylorcraft Model D were 'not worthwhile'.

During the summer of 1940, with little prospect of supplying further aircraft, Taylorcraft was asked to undertake the repair of aircraft parts and after an agreement was reached, the Company became a Civilian Repair Unit. At last the Leicester company had the opportunity to take an essential hand in the war effort and to prove its worth. Shortly afterwards Frank Bates was instrumental in gaining a contract for the repair of damaged Tiger Moths, and very soon damaged aircraft began to arrive in embarrassingly large numbers. To make space for this new work all the Model D jigs were dumped in a shed behind the main factory entrance, just before the first Tiger arrived on September 11th. After repairs, it was test-flown on November 11th, exactly seven weeks and five days later, which was considered locally to be a fine achievement considering the 'green' labour and the wartime shortage of spare parts. The latter was a major problem for the difficulties involved in obtaining materials, supplies, equipment and the training of labour were immense. But one achievement believed not to

have been done before was the complete assembly of aircraft, including the installation of engines, by female labour alone, but eventually the girls were given a production line on one side of the factory, and the men the other. A healthy rivalry soon sprang up, and the girls quickly became experts at their job. So much so that by January 1944, the whole Thurmaston factory was 'manned' by girls.

Tiger Moths were repaired at both Britannia Works, Thurmaston and in an empty barn at Syston, but with the obvious need for extra floorspace, came an equal need for re-organising the growing Taylorcraft complex. The main textile machinery factory of Crowthers Ltd. at Britannia Works was designated No.1 Works, and became the main machine shop; the buildings at the rear, in which the Model C and D had been built, became No.2 Works for Tiger Moth re-assembly. No.3 Works was a factory acquired in Victoria Street for welding and detail-fitting.

Just prior to the first Tiger Moth being repaired, 'A-L' called a management meeting and posed a question to Ken Sharp. Given men and drawings etc. could he repair Hurricanes damaged during the Battle of Britain? Jack Hunter, it is reported, turned to his Managing-Director and insisted "You've got some hope!" But before the men could decide, two almost-wrecked Hurricanes arrived at the factory gate. Within hours the Company applied for extra floorspace, and acquired a sheet-metal shop at Mountsorrel (No.4 Works). The workshop of En-Tout-Cas Ltd. at Syston (who had previously carried out the work of levelling and draining Rearsby airfield) became No.5 Works, while Rearsby itself became No.6 Works. As a temporary means, the County Flying Club hangar at Rearsby was used for Hurricane repair, but it was only large enough for one aeroplane. A new hangar was then built at Rearsby, and it was this hangar that many years later became Beagle's main production shop. The airfield was also extended southwards to cater for the longer take-off run required by the Hurricane.

Rearsby was at this time still owned by Sir Lindsay Everard, but Taylorcraft subsequently purchased the land and let it to the Air Ministry. In turn the Company rented it back from the Ministry. When Hurricane repair work was re-organised in the new buildings, the Model D jigs and tools were moved from Thurmaston to Rearsby and laid out in the old County Flying Club hangar.

When, during mid-1941, an Air Ministry official visited Taylorcraft to see if the Company had any civil aeroplanes in storage worthy of impressment for communications duties etc., 'A-L' showed him all the Model D jigs, to the obvious delight of the visitor. As the difference between the Model C and Model D was structurally marginal, the Company was asked to trace and obtain as many of the pre-war Model Cs as it could, service and repaint them, and deliver them to the R.A.F. Apart from two that had been destroyed (c/n 166 G-AFVU in a crash at Maylands aerodrome on 26th August 1939, and had been burnt there during the night of 6/7th February 1940; and c/n 122 G-AFWL which had been dismantled by the manufacturers), only one escaped impressment. This was c/n 107 G-AFUA which, for the duration of the war, was stored by its owner at Dunton Hall, near Castle Bromwich. The two West Suffolk Aero Club Model Cs (G-AFTT and G-AFTP) were also impressed by HQ 41 Group, but found to be unfit for R.A.F. use and struck off charge on December 1st 1941.

*Model D W5741 was one of three built by Taylorcraft for loan to the Army, and later impressed.  
(Flight 18639S)*



**Table 2a Impressionment of Taylorcraft Model Plus C**

| Serial | c/n | Date of Impressionment | Identity |
|--------|-----|------------------------|----------|
| ES956  | 100 | 31/ 7/41               | G-AFNW   |
| ES957  | 112 | 31/ 7/41               | G-AFUY   |
| ES958  | 121 | 31/ 7/41               | G-AFWK   |
| ES959  | 123 | 31/ 7/41               | G-AFWM   |
| ES960  | 113 | 31/ 7/41               | G-AFUZ   |
| HH982  | 114 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFVA   |
| HH983  | 120 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFVZ   |
| HH984  | 119 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFVY   |
| HH985  | 115 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFVB   |
| HH986  | 109 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFUD   |
| HH987  | 106 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFTZ   |
| HH988  | 111 | 31/ 8/41               | G-AFUX   |
| HL532  | 117 | 30/ 9/41               | G-AFVW   |
| HL533  | 103 | 30/ 9/41               | G-AFTO   |
| HL534  | 108 | 30/ 9/41               | G-AFUB   |
| HL535  | 102 | 30/ 9/41               | G-AFTN   |
| HL536  | 105 | 30/ 9/41               | G-AFTY   |
| HM501  | 118 | 31/10/41               | G-AFVX   |

The impressed Model Cs were all earmarked for delivery to Old Sarum where 'D' Flight had by now trained a sufficient number of pilots to form full squadron status. Thus, on August 1st 1941, 'D' Flight personnel formed the nucleus of 651 Squadron, under the command of Sqn. Ldr. E. D. Joyce. However 'D' Flight remained in existence, and was re-numbered 1424 Flight at Larkhill on October 1st., eventually becoming known as 43 Operational Training Unit, on October 1st. 1942.

In the meantime, Taylorcraft completed the last Model D airframe (c/n 132 G-AGDB) during mid-1941 with various modifications that included a raised perspex roof to give a better view above the wings. On September 7th 'GDB joined the impressed Model Cs with 651 Squadron, but although the modification was not made standard to other aircraft, it was decided to re-engine the Model Cs with the more powerful Cirrus Minor 1 which powered the Model D.

The first two Model Cs were flown back to Rearsby on November 7th for conversion and as three aircraft had been written-off in accidents, the last of fourteen conversions returned to the squadron on June 28th. 1942. Although the increased power brought the aircraft virtually up to Model D standard, the converted aircraft were know as Model C/2.

*The reason for positioning Model C G-AFUY on drums is not clear. This photograph was taken during August 1941 immediately after its impressionment. (Leicester Museum of Technology)*



**Table 2b Conversions of Model C to Model C/2**

| Serial | c/n | Date to Rearsby | Date of return to 651 Squadron |
|--------|-----|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| ES956  | 100 | 7/11/41         | 23/ 2/42                       |
| HH987  | 106 | 7/11/41         | 23/ 2/42                       |
| ES958  | 121 | 23/ 2/42        | 18/ 4/42                       |
| HL532  | 117 | 23/ 2/42        | 13/ 3/42                       |
| HH982  | 114 | 28/ 2/42        | 17/ 3/42                       |
| HL536  | 105 | 13/ 3/42        | 2/ 4/42                        |
| HH984  | 119 | 1/ 4/42         | 29/ 4/42                       |
| HH986  | 109 | 1/ 4/42         | 29/ 4/42                       |
| HL535  | 102 | 18/ 4/42        | 6/ 4/42                        |
| ES959  | 123 | 22/ 4/42        | 18/ 5/42                       |
| HH985  | 115 | 26/ 4/42        | 3/ 6/42                        |
| HM501  | 118 | 6/ 5/42         | 13/ 6/42                       |
| HH988  | 111 | 8/ 5/42         | 28/ 6/42                       |
| HL533  | 103 | 8/ 5/42         | 26/ 6/42                       |

One of the Model Cs (HH985) was flown to Rearsby from the R.A.E. at Farnborough where it had been on detachment since September 18th. 1941 for experimental wireless trials. One of the problems encountered during the early A.O.P. exercises was the ability of the 'enemy' to listen in to pilot-to-gunner transmissions, and the aircraft was used at Farnborough in an effort to seek an effective wireless screening device. After its conversion to Model C/2 standard, '985 was returned to 651 Squadron at Old Sarum.

With the squadron working up to operational status, but still using its impressed Model Cs, there was increasing anxiety concerning the delivery of the one hundred Stinson Vigilants, ordered almost eighteen months previously. Equipped with its motley selection of impressed Model Cs, aircraft which had been designed to act as temporary equipment until the arrival of American aircraft, the Army began pressing for its new aeroplanes. It was a well-known fact that because allied shipping across the Atlantic faced the increasing hazard of Germany's U-Boats, the safe arrival of American aircraft could not be fully guaranteed. Furthermore the Government argued that the long delay was attributed to a general lack of shipping space, which sounded incredible to the Army when considering that sufficient new aircraft were arriving for the A.T.A. As a result of this, and due to the Army becoming desperate for a true A.O.P. aeroplane, Taylorcraft was awarded Contract No.1995 for one hundred Model D/1 as an insurance against the non-arrival of American aircraft. The new Taylorcraft was to be named the Auster AOP.1.

As it happened, the American aircraft did begin to arrive, but not without incident. The first batch of thirteen Stinsons were shipped across to England during February 1942, but five of them (BZ101, 102, 103, 106 and 110) had been damaged beyond repair owing to their being stowed beneath 300 tons of cheese which had shifted



*HH985 photographed at Rearsby in June 1942 immediately after conversion to Model C/2*

*(M. I. Draper Collection)*



during the rough passage. The true facts appear to have been shadowed at the time with reports that they had inadvertently been dropped by crane whilst being unloaded. In the event, 37 Maintenance Unit at Burtonwood were only able to complete the assembly of five aircraft, whereupon the remaining aircraft of this order were cancelled. Whatever the case the few that had survived were flown down to 651 Squadron and although they had superior flying characteristics than the Model D, they proved to be too large for the Army's requirements. After a short period, the Vigilants were transferred to 1424 Flight for training purposes.

**Table 2C Production & Individual History of Model D**

| c/n | Serial | History  |
|-----|--------|--|
| 124 | G-AFWN | Built prior to ban on production, and issued C.ofA. on 31/8/39. Retained by Taylorcraft as 'hack' but crashed during 1942. The damaged airframe was stored at Rearsby until 1945 when it was rebuilt as the prototype J/1 Autocrat.  |
| 125 | G-AFWO | Completed during 1940 and issued C.ofA. 17/7/40. Impressed as X7534 12/8/40 and used by 'D' Flight until it suffered an engine failure at Dragon Hill, Caterick on 31/12/40. It was taken to Rearsby for repair on 9/1/41, and later returned to Larkhill. X7534 was loaned to 651 Squadron between 19/9/41 and 18/10/41, by which time 'D' Flight had been renamed 1424 Flight. On 12/2/42, it suffered an undercarriage failure while landing at Larkhill, and was collected, less engine, by Taylorcraft on the 21st. X7534 was returned to 1424 Flight on 27/3/42, but had to return to Rearsby as Cat.B on 18/5/42. Following further repairs, it was ferried to 5MU at Kemble on 25/7/42 where it was stored for the remainder of the war. Eventually, it was sold to Aircraft (Hereford) Ltd. on 19/9/46, and restored to the register by them as G-AFWO on 13/12/46. |



*A post-war view of G-AFWO. In 1963 it was fitted with a Cirrus Minor 2A engine, but crashed on 29th May 1963. (M. I. Draper Collection)*

|     |        |   |
|-----|--------|---|
| 126 | G-AFZH | Completed early 1940 and loaned to the School of Army Co-operation as described in the main text. After 'D' Flight was dissolved in June 1940, 'FZH was returned to Rearsby and issued C.ofA. on 15/7/40. After impressment as W5740 on 1/8/40, it was again used by 'D' Flight, but loaned to 651 Squadron between 19/9/41 and 22/10/41. W5740 remained with the Flight after it had been renamed 1424 Flight, and later 43 OTU, until 6/5/43 when it was allotted to 83 Group Comm. Flight at Redhill. From 18/8/43, it was based at RAF Hawkinge, but on 9/9/43 was returned to Taylorcraft as Cat.B. Shortly after repairs, on 12/12/43 it was ferried to 5 mu Kemble for storage until the end of the war when it was sold to Newman Aircraft Ltd. at Panshangar. It was restored to the register by them on 5/3/46 as G-AHEI. |
| 127 | G-AFZI | Completed early 1940 and loaned to the School of Army Co-operation as described in the main text. After 'D' Flight was dissolved in June 1940, 'FZI was returned to Rearsby and issued C.ofA. on 15/7/40. After impressment as W5741 on 1/8/40, it was again used by 'D' Flight, but loaned to 651 Squadron on 19/9/41. After overturning in a small field at Kings Walden Park, near Kempton, Herts. on 2/10/41, W5741 was taken to Rearsby for repair on 7/10/41. W5741 was considered by pilots of 1424 Flight to have dangerous flying characteristics, and when it was collected from Rearsby on 15/11/41,   |

the pilot was forced to land at Chisledon en route. Delivery was finally made on the 17th, but prior to the above accident, W5741 had crashed on 31/10/40, and 23/2/41, and later on 7/8/42 and 29/12/42. Eventually, it was taken to Rearsby on 12/5/43 for a major inspection, and the trouble appears to have been rectified. W5741 was then ferried to 5 MU Kemble on 18/9/43 for storage, but released for the Bomber Command Comm. Flight at Halton on 11/8/44. On 6/4/45, it was flown back to Kemble for disposal, and in the following December was sold to J. J. Curtis and restored to the register by him on 29/1/46 as G-AFZL.

- |     |        |  |
|-----|--------|--|
| 128 | G-AFZJ | Completed late 1939 and loaned to the School of Army Co-operation until the arrival of T9120. It was again loaned to the Army upon the formation of 'D' Flight, but operated with the official identity '128'. After the Flight was dissolved in June 1940, 'FZJ' was returned to Rearsby and issued C.ofA. on 18/7/40. It was then used as a development aircraft for A.O.P. duties, by the makers, but was withdrawn from use when its C.ofA. expired on 17/7/41. It is believed that 'FZJ' was then rebuilt as a Model D/1 and delivered to the RAF as LB310. |
| 129 | G-AFZK | Never completed and reduced to spares.   |
| 130 | G-AFZL | Never completed and reduced to spares.   |
| 131 | G-AGBF | Completed mid-1940 and impressed on 9/8/40 as X7533 for use by 'D' Flight at Larkhill. During an AOP exercise with the 19th Field Regiment, R.A., X7533 suffered an engine failure, and forced-landed at Alford, Lincs. on 17/1/41, running into a ditch. The wreckage was taken to Rearsby on the 27th. but was struck off charge on 4/2/41 as Cat.E1.  |
| 132 | G-AGDB | Completed mid-1941 with various modifications as described in the main text. After being used as a development aircraft by the makers, it was converted to Model D/1 LB267 during early 1942, and allotted the c/n 137.  |

**Table 2d Subsequent History of Impressed Model C and C/2.**

| Serial | History  |
|--------|--|
| ES956  | After its return from Rearsby following conversion to Model C/2, ES956 was used by 'B' Flight of 651 Squadron. On 14/3/42, it crashed at Garth, near Bulth Wells, Wales, while taking part in an exercise with 76 Medium Regiment at Charborough. The pilot was killed, and the wreckage of the aircraft was taken to No.1 M.P.R.D. (Metal Produce and Recovery Depot) at Cowley.  |
| ES957  | Had only a short military life, as a few months after its impressment, '957 crashed on 9/12/41, after it turned too steeply, stalled from 100 ft. and spun into the ground at West Down Plantation, Tilshead, Wilts.   |
| ES958  | After delivery to Old Sarum as a converted Model C/2, '958 was soon returned to Rearsby as Cat.B on 10/7/42. Following repairs it was flown to 1424 Flight on 22/8/42, which became 43 OTU on 1/10/42. Following a flying accident on 13/2/43, ES958 was struck off charge as Cat.E on 28/2/43.  |
| ES959  | After conversion to Model C/2, it was returned to Rearsby for repairs on 25/6/42. On 2/9/43, '959 was allotted to 654 Squadron at Old Sarum. Two months later, on 16/11/42, it was transferred to 43 OTU, but later returned to Rearsby on 23/2/43 for repairs, following a minor accident. On 13/4/43, it was ferried to 5 MU Kemble, but was returned again to Rearsby on 31/12/43. After a short period with the makers, '959 was issued to RAF Abingden on 28/1/44 where it was used by 10 OTU. Eventually, it was flown to 20 MU at Aston Down on 29/11/45, and later to 5 MU on 2/3/46 for disposal. From here it was sold to Major, The Earl of Cardigan, and restored to the register by him on 20/5/46 as G-AFWM. |
| ES960  | In use with 651 Squadron after its impressment, but crashed on 29/9/41 when it hit high-tension cables at Alswick Hall, Buntingford, and crashed out of control while taking part in a 'Bumper' exercise.  |
| HH982  | Transferred from 651 to 653 Squadron on 19/8/42, and then temporarily loaned to 654 Squadron between 2/9/42 and 6/10/42. On 27/7/43, it was flown to Rearsby for a major inspection, and later ferried to 5 MU on 2/10/43. '982 was released for No.2 Group Comm. Flight (probably at Huntingdon) on 12/12/43 and was painted with   |

invasion markings for liaison flights between England and France during 1944/45. On 23/4/45, '982 was returned to 5 MU for disposal, and sold to the Wiltshire School of Flying in December 1945, to whom it was restored to the register as G-AHAE on 28/1/46.

- HH983 In use with 651 Squadron after its impressment until 11/11/41 when during a recce flight for suitable landing grounds, it flew into a hillside at Mersey Down, Newport, Isle of Wight. '983 was struck off charge on 3/12/41 at Cat.E1.
- HH984 Shortly after returning to 651 Squadron as a converted Model C/2, '984 caught fire in the air, and forced-landed at Old Sarum on 17/5/42. The aircraft was burnt out, and struck off charge as Cat.E2 the following day.
- HH985 After conversion to Model C/2 and return to 651 Squadron, a minor flying accident took place on 28/6/42, causing its removal to Rearsby for repairs. '985 was then ferried to 653 Squadron at Farnborough on 12/8/42, but shortly afterwards, on 2/9/42 was transferred to 652 Squadron. As a result of a flying accident on 25/2/43, it was struck off charge as Cat.E on the 28th.
- HH986 After returning to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, '986 was transferred to 653 Squadron on 19/8/42, and later to 43 OTU on 8/12/42. On 21/5/43, it was returned to Rearsby, and later ferried to 5 MU on 7/9/43 for long-term storage. However, on 30/10/43, it is believed to have been released for English-Electric, returning to 5 MU on 17/12/44. Finally, '986 was sold to the Oxford Flying Club on 19/1/46, and restored to the register as G-AHBO on 13/2/46.
- HH987 Following its return to 651 Squadron as a converted Model C/2, it was conveyed back to Rearsby on 22/6/42 for repairs. It was then ferried to 653 Squadron on 19/8/42, but loaned to 652 Squadron between 2/9/42 and 6/10/42. On 31/12/42, 652 Squadron moved to Dumfries, and '987 joined them until 23/2/43, when it was transferred to 43 OTU at Old Sarum. On 15/3/43, it was returned to Rearsby for repairs, on completion of which it was ferried to 5 MU on 11/6/43. Later '987 was released to Vickers-Armstrong's Civilian Repair Depot for communications duties. Eventually, it was sold to Vickers in early 1946, and restored to the register by them on 1/5/46 as G-AHLJ.
- HH988 After its return to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, it was transferred to 652 Squadron on 21/9/42. On 7/10/42, '988 stalled and crashed at RAF Westley. The wreckage was later taken to Rearsby where it was struck off charge as Cat.E1 on 15/10/42.
- HL532 After its return to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, it was transferred to 652 Squadron on 18/8/42. Following another transfer to 43 OTU on 8/11/42, '532 was struck off charge on 28/1/43 as Cat.E1, believed to have been as a result of a flying accident on 21/1/43.
- HL533 After its return to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, it was transferred to 654 Squadron on 2/9/42, and later to 43 OTU on 3/11/42. On 23/11/42, '533 crashed, killing its pilot, Lt. Llewilyn, after a total of 422.45 flying hours.
- HL534 While in use with 651 Squadron it crashed at Frome on 13/7/42, while being flown by a Capt. C. Carmichael. Following repairs at Rearsby, '534 was ferried to 5 MU on 5/9/42, and released to 43 OTU the following month. A year later, on 11/9/43, it was returned to MU for storage, where it remained until late 1945, when it was sold to Messrs. Brockhouse Ltd. '534 was restored to the register on 23/1/46 by J. L. Brockhouse as G-AFUB. (Note that until its repairs at Rearsby, HL534 flew with the incorrect serial HH534.)
- HL535 After its return to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, it was transferred to 652 Squadron on 19/8/42. On 15/3/43, it was allotted to 43 OTU with whom it remained until 27/5/44 when it was flown to 5 mu Kemble for storage and disposal. During December 1945, '535 was sold to B. Arden of Exeter and restored to the register by him on 30/5/46 as G-AFTN.
- HL536 After its return to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, '536 was used by 'C' Flt. of that Squadron, until 3/5/42 when it was burnt out at Lydd, due to a Very pistol being discharged in the cockpit.
- HM501 After its return to 651 Squadron as a Model C/2, '501 was transferred to 654 Squadron on 2/9/42. Later it was allotted to 43 OTU as an instructional airframe, and allotted the serial 3775M on 28/5/43.

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# THE INTERNATIONAL AUSTER PILOT CLUB

*by The Secretary*

The International Auster Pilot Club is a new form of association in the aviation world aimed at the common interests of pilots and non-pilots, of Auster owners and users, and of aircraft preservationists and historians. Membership is open to all who support our aim of keeping Austers flying. The annual subscription is a nominal £1.00 (50p for Junior members under 16 years of age). Among the wide variety of people to be found among our members are Airline, Commercial and Private Pilots and at least one fighter ace of the Battle of Britain. There is also a sprinkling of engineers, writers on aviation, historians and aircraft enthusiasts of all kinds. At our Fly-in events it has become evident that while the pilots and ex-pilots among our members are able to retail stories

*An early view of the parking area at Shoreham taken from the runway approach.*

*(P. J. Cooper)*



based on practical experience, it is more often than not the non-pilot enthusiast who is more knowledgeable about Auster variants, engines and modifications. This mixture of enthusiasts with different backgrounds has created at our social evenings the most interesting and friendly atmosphere I have encountered anywhere.

The Auster Pilot Club was formally started at a meeting at R.A.F. Hemswell, home of the Lincoln Aero Club, on the 18th of November, 1973. A dozen people were invited to attend but somehow the news spread and over forty people crushed into the small room in one of the hangers. Outside some 15 aircraft, mostly Austers were parked, and this despite strong winds which prevented flying north of the Humber. The Auster Pilot Club was well and truly launched. By the end of the first year the membership had grown to take in fifteen countries from Norway to Australia. Our first overseas branch was formed in the Irish Republic with fifty solo Auster Pilot members.

The idea for the club came in a letter to Flight in August 1973 deploring the general neglect of the Auster which, because of the large numbers produced and the considerable number still flying, had ceased to be noticed, much as one ceases to notice lamp posts in the street, because they are always there. But like lampposts in the street we would sorely miss them when they were gone. Only then were we likely to wake up to the fact that we had witnessed not only the loss of a type of aircraft but the passing of an era. In the immediate post war period the Auster, both ex-Army and newly produced for the growing civilian market, dominated the training scene in Britain. There were, in August 1973, two hundred and forty three Austers on the British Register but not all of these would have been in flying condition. These were the last of the thousands which had been produced. The Auster was in decline to the point where a change of engine could cost considerably more than buying another machine. One of the first letters I received about the formation of the Auster Pilot Club was from an Airline pilot who called the Auster "the last of the real aeroplanes". Another spoke of the "thrill of grass airfields, . . . the roar of the Gypsy Major engines (on the J.1N. variant) like ghosts from the early 1930's, . . . the smell of hot oil and the pleasure of a neat three point landing in an aircraft not noted for its easy handling characteristics but one which is infinitely forgiving, graceful and gentle". We felt that the Auster must not die, that we must retain this piece of living history while its numbers were still large enough to make it possible. To do this we needed to make people look with a fresh eye at Austers, we needed enthusiasm and, above all, we needed practical measures to make it possible for Auster owners to keep their aircraft airworthy at a reasonable cost. Among these practical steps were the creation of a Spares Secretary (David Pratt) who would locate and bring to the notice of interested members spare parts, airframes and complete machines for sale. A special insurance scheme for members was initiated which made it cheaper in many cases for a member to insure his Auster than his mini. A Training Representative (Mike Stapp) was appointed to create training notes for Austers, to negotiate with statutory bodies about training and to encourage training on Austers. An enamel wings badge was created for pilots who had flown solo on an Auster with the aim of encouraging conversion to the type. A Newsletter Editor was appointed (Bill Harrison . . . now Mike Draper). It was agreed to publish a list of airfields and landing strips available to Austers, a project on which we are still working. During the first year of operation the Auster Pilot Club held five Fly-ins, the first at Shoreham, our main Annual Fly-in and A.G.M. at Grindale Field near Bridlington, one at Netherthorpe, one at Shobdon and one in the Irish Republic. Some forty aircraft arrived at Grindale Field despite marginal visibility during the early part of the first day and windy conditions on the second. Twenty seven of these were Austers, two having flown all the way from Denmark and one of these two being non-radio! The pilot of a private aircraft which happened to fly over Bridlington that week-end gasped with astonishment as he saw rows of Austers parked together on the airfield. From the ground they were even more impressive for gone was the old tired and tatty image. These were all shining and cared for. The Auster which won the Concours d'elegance, Auster V G-AOVW flown by B. Marriott, was one of the nicest looking aircraft I have seen anywhere. Also on the field was G-AHCN ("Charlie November"), a J.1.N. well known in the Lincs and Yorks area where it has flown for many years, and the Auster which inspired the formation of the Auster Pilot Club.

Although to many people the year 1974 was a year of disaster with the fuel crisis, inflation and rising prices, for the Auster Pilot Club it was the year of the Auster with a tremendous upsurge in interest, in rebuilding and in preservation. While he looked forward with high hopes there is one black cloud on the horizon, the increased cost of fuel which is placing private flying in Austers beyond the means of many owners. The average Auster owner is not a millionaire with a yacht in the Mediterranean. He is more likely to be a plumber in Sheffield. We desperately need a fuel tax concession from the government if we are to succeed in our aim of keeping Austers flying and preserving in a meaningful way a living piece of our aviation history.

JIM SIME,  
Secretary  
Auster Pilot Club,  
39 Abbey Park Road,  
Grimsby DN32 0HS

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# I.A.P.C. Fly-In

Shoreham April 21 1974

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The first International Auster Pilot Fly-In took place at Shoreham, on Sunday 21st. April 1974 and to all intents proved a great success. Not only were twenty-three Austers present, but the weather provided us with one of the sunniest days of the year. Essentially the meeting was designed to launch the Club operationally and for owners and members to get together. The Shoreham Airport Manager, Ben Gunn has had long affection for Austers, and this became evident by the friendliness and co-operation given to the Club and pilots, many of which were flying non-radio aircraft. It seemed that suddenly and without warning the circuit was full of Austers, reminding us of a breakfast patrol in the early fifties.

The main control and reporting point was situated in a marquee kindly loaned for the occasion by the Popular Flying Association, and in the south-west corner of the airfield aeroplanes ranging from a 1943 Auster 3 to Major Somerton-Rayner's much-modified AOP.9 were lined in preparation for the day's events, arranged by Laurie Mansfield and Dave Pratt.

A navigation exercise over the local downs was won by John Webster, and a 'shortest take-off competition' was commendably taken by Dave Pratt in his excellently-restored J/1N Alpha, which was airborne after 259 feet. (The official take-off run for the type is 450 feet!) The Concours d'Elegance trophy was awarded by Ben Gunn to John Webster's immaculate and unique J/5V G-APUW, which was also the overall Rally winner, and a picture of John receiving a well-earned tankard appears elsewhere in this issue. A spot-landing competition was

*John Webster's immaculate J/5V G-APUW won sufficient points to become overall Rally winner.*

*(via D. J. Pratt)*



won by Major Somerton-Rayner in his AOP.9 when he displayed all of his previous Army training and experience by completely erasing the 'spot'.

A planned fly-past by visiting Austers was not wholly successful, but apart from this the entire event was highly rated by those who attended, and also provided Shoreham Airport with its busiest Sunday ever.

*Participants at Shoreham Fly-In*

|        |                |                    |                                    |
|--------|----------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| G-AIGU | J/1N Alpha     | D. J. Pratt        | Shoreham                           |
| G-APOA | J/1N Alpha     | B. Rhodes          | Redhill                            |
| G-AHSP | J/1 Autocrat   | C. S. Frost        | Southend                           |
| G-AHLK | Auster 3       | H. Polhill         | Rochester                          |
| G-AJRK | J/1 Autocrat   | D. W. Miller       | Thrupton                           |
| G-AJJO | J1N Alpha      | M. Simmonds        | Newbury                            |
| G-AJYO | J/5B Autocar   | T. L. Brayne       | Little Snoring                     |
| G-APUW | J/5V-160       | J. P. Webster      | Coventry                           |
| G-AHST | J/1N Alpha     | P. Lewis           | Henstridge                         |
| G-AJUD | J1 Autocrat    | R. J. Keyte        | Newbury                            |
| G-ASAK | A.61 Terrier 2 | A. J. Jackson      | Southend                           |
| G-AIPR | J/4 Archer     | R. W. Mills        | Wycombe Air Park                   |
| G-AXUJ | J/1 Autocrat   | R. G. Earp         | Sibson                             |
| G-ASAN | A.61 Terrier 2 | M. Harper          | Kidlington                         |
| G-AGOH | J/1 Autocrat   | P. R. Goodwin      | Leicester East                     |
| G-AJUL | J/1N Alpha     | D. Hollowell       | Sywell                             |
| G-AVHT | AOP.9          | M. Somerton-Rayner | Middle Wallop                      |
| G-ASDL | A.61 Terrier 2 | C. Mason           | Wycombe Air Park                   |
| G-AHAU | J1 Autocrat    | A. H. C. Farrell   | Panshangar                         |
| G-AHAT | J/1N Alpha     | J. D. Clarke       | Old Sarum                          |
| G-AMZI | J/5F Aiglet    | J. F. Moore        | Biggin Hill                        |
| G-AMZU | J/5F Aiglet    | A. J. Deacon       | White Waltham                      |
| G-AGLK | Auster 5D      |                    | taxied from hanger late afternoon. |



*Laurie Mansfield congratulates John Webster and hands over the tankard award. (via D. J. Pratt)*



*Oldest arrival was Auster 3  
G-AHLK complete with  
Auster Pilot Club insignia  
on the rudder  
(P. J. Cooper)*



*Well-known Wiltshire car  
specialist David Miller flew  
in aboard his J/1 G-AJRK.  
(P. J. Cooper)*



*J/5F Aiglet Trainer G-AMZI  
was flown in from Biggin  
Hill  
(P. J. Cooper)*





*Owned by a Norfolk group of members is the immaculate J/5B G-AJYO. (P. J. Cooper)*



*Newly-overhauled J/4 Archer G-AIPR arrived from Wycombe Air Park. (P. J. Cooper)*



*Terrier 2 G-ASAK was flown in from Southend by renowned historian A. J. Jackson (P. J. Cooper)*

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# ONE MAN'S AEROPLANE

G-AHUG    PLUS D    c/n. 153    R.L.Venning

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LB282 was the twentieth Auster 1 for the R.A.F., off the Syston production line, and delivered to 20 Maintenance Unit at Aston Down on August 16th 1942. Unlike most of the initial deliveries to the Services, '282 was not shipped out to North Africa for 651 Squadron; instead it was issued to 653 Squadron at Farnborough, Hants. on the 26th.

On March 20th. 1943, '282 was transferred to 43 Operational Training Unit at Old Sarum and used for training A.O.P. pilots prior to their allotment to operational Squadrons. Shortly afterwards, on July 14th., '282 was declared Cat.B. following a flying accident, and conveyed to Rearsby for repairs. When it was re-delivered to Aston Down on October 22nd. LB282 was placed in storage, for by this time the operational squadrons had begun receiving later marks of Austers, and the training units had been allotted the displaced earlier marks.



*Auster AOP.1 LB282 poses at Rearsby shortly after its completion*

*(A. J. Jackson)*



*When G-AHUG was civilianised it was finished in a dark red and blue scheme as seen here at High Post in 1946  
(Aeroplane)*

Eventually, on September 10th. 1944, '282 was issued to the Turnhouse Station Flight for communications work until April 25th. 1946, when it was flown to 5 Maintenance Unit at Kemble for disposal.

Originally, '282 was earmarked for sale to Cunliffe-Owen but, instead, was purchased by the Royal Artillery Aero Club Ltd. at High Post on May 9th, and registered to them on June 5th, as G-AHUG. The newly-civilianised Taylorcraft Plus D received its first C.ofA. (number 7925) on July 6th. The Royal Artillery Aero Club moved its base to Thruxton during 1947 and it was here, on May 29th. 1948 that HUG was involved in a strange accident. After completing a local flight, it landed on top of the unique prototype military Taylorcraft (since civilianised as G-AHAF). Although both aeroplanes were seriously damaged, 'HUG was rebuilt by using the wreck of 'HAF for spares. The rebuild complete, 'HUG was sold later in the year to J. Gordon, who kept her at Prestwick. In July 1949, she was sold locally to G. F. K. Donaldson. George Donaldson operated 'HUG on a public transport C.ofA. when he moved the aircraft south to Stansted in 1951. Donaldson flew 'HUG in several air races of the period, and it was entered in the abortive Hatfield King's Cup Air Race, on June 23rd. 1951.

In May 1952, 'HUG was sold to Feltrex Ltd. at Elstree, but just over a year later, in July 1953, she was replaced by J/1 Autocrat G-AJUR, and sold to Polythene Ltd. at Croydon.

The well-known Nightscale family next acquired 'HUG during October 1954, and for many years Nightscale Aircraft Services kept her at Denham, although for the first eighteen months or so, the Club was based at Woodley, until that airfield closed down. (In January 1957 a nominal change of ownership took place when 'HUG was transferred to Miss M. Nightscale).

G-AHUG's last flight from Denham was made on November 6th 1960, when she was flown to Fairoaks for a C.ofA. renewal by Universal Flying Services. Repainted in a green and yellow scheme, it was at the same time bought by B. P. Irish and W. K. Boxall, to whom 'HUG was re-registered in May 1961. During March 1962, she passed to Aubrey W. Offen who, four months later, sold her to his colleague, T. E. Coupland.

Shortly afterwards when A. V. M. Donald Bennett purchased and re-opened Blackbushe, 'HUG was moved over from Fairoaks, and it was from here that Reg Venning first flew in her, on March 31st. 1963. 'HUG was bought by Reg during the following month.

Reg had started a PPL course on Austers but was interrupted when the Flying Club closed down, and



*Grp. Capt. G. F. Donaldson flew 'HUG in several air races of the period. It was also entered for the abortive King's Cup Race at Hatfield on 23rd. June 1951.  
(A. J. Jackson)*

although only a few hours remained on the aircraft's C.ofA. they were sufficient to allow Reg to gain his full licence. Immediately afterwards 'HUG was dismantled at Blackbushe, and taken to Reg's garage and workshop in Upper Elms Road, Aldershot.

With the assistance of some friends, notably the locally well-known Bill Townsend and Rex Coates, "Old Hug" as the Plus D was now affectionately known was rebuilt for C.ofA. renewal. Being one of the original members of the Three Counties Aero Club, Reg and his red and white Plus D became a regular sight at Blackbushe for many years.

After a local flight on October 15th 1967, 'HUG was again dismantled and towed back to Aldershot for C.ofA. renewal. Six months later, on April 21st 1968, the fuselage was taken to Blackbushe resplendent in a smart green/white/black scheme; the wings arrived the next day, and 'Old Hug' was back in the air on the 25th.

Reg admits that the aircraft was somewhat neglected afterwards, for he had by now purchased and become deeply involved in the rebuilding of the local A.T.C. Tiger Moth back to flying condition as G-AXBW. The Tiger is currently kept by Reg at the nearby Tongham strip, and its space in his Aldershot garage has been taken by the Plus D, itself now undergoing a slow and arduous restoration. Its last flight was made at Blackbushe on July 12th. 1969 This rebuild is understandably the most important, for 'HUG is now the second oldest Plus D in the Country.

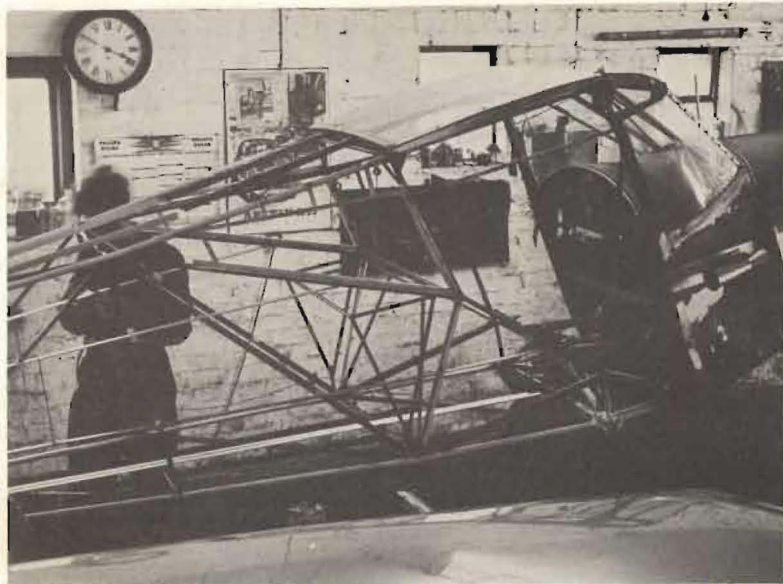
Says Reg, "I've always really wanted a Tiger, but the Taylorcraft is *the* pilot's aeroplane". For the only man in the country who currently owns both he must be right, and we look forward to seeing G-AHUG flying for the 1976 season.



*G-AHUG photographed at Denham during its lengthy association with the Nightscale family.  
(A. J. Jackson)*



*Still retaining the 'Nightscale flash', G-AHUG is seen here at Blackbushe during April 1963 in a green and yellow scheme.  
(P. J. Marson)*



*Reg Venning at work on the fuselage during the 1963 rebuild at his Aldershot garage. (via R. L. Venning)*



*The striking maroon and white scheme was applied from 1963 to 1967. (A. J. Jackson)*



*Temporarily engineless, 'HUG is seen behind the main hangar at Blackbushe on 17th February 1969 (M. I. Draper)*

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# A PERMANENT CENTRE

## FOR RECORDING AUSTER HISTORY

PETER STODDART

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For those people who may not be aware of it such a centre already exists, fittingly located in the home county of the Auster, at The Museum of Technology, Corporation Road, Leicester, LE4 5PX. This museum houses the part of the collections of Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service that record the history of the main industries of the City and County including the nationally important concern of Taylorcraft / Auster / Beagle of Thurmaston and Rearsby. The first Auster in the museum's collection, the engine installation prototype J/1 G-AGOH of 1945, was purchased in 1969. She is important as the link between the wartime Auster spotters and the equally successful post-war range of civil types. 'OH is an airworthy working exhibit, as many will have seen at A.P.C. and other rallies, and is also museum workhorse for archaeological, historical and natural science air observation and photography. She is piloted by A.P.C. member Philip Goodwin who has 1600 hours in his log. After flying training on Tiger Moths at Cambridge in 1940 he progressed through Ansons, Whitleys, Wellingtons and Lancasters to P.O.W. camp in Germany after being shot down in the Nuremberg raid 30th/31st March 1944. After the war he began his long association with Austers in G-AGTS at Roborough on 23rd September 1946.

The museum now has a second aircraft, Auster AOP 9 XP280 which is on static display in the gallery at Corporation Road to represent a much later stage in design evolution. The ultimate aim is to have a representative range of the main variations with at least one aircraft airworthy, possibly at a more spacious base in the county eventually.

However, the aircraft are only one side of the history, for documents and small exhibits are equally important. Through contact with former employees and directors of the firm and R. D. Wykes, the son of its founder, we have already collected a very useful nucleus of material which is contributing to the Auster history herein but we were unfortunately too late in the field to save manufacturer's records. This is where Auster enthusiasts can help. The museum needs all the company drawings, photographs, publications and other material that can be obtained to make a full record available through the proper archive facilities of the Records Service of Leicestershire Museums. It is always preferable if such material can be donated but should people wish to deposit personal collections on loan or loan material for copying, this is acceptable.

The success of this side of our collections depends on how much company material has been saved by individuals so please get in touch with me if you can help swell our files. On the aircraft side our main aim at present is to obtain a Taylorcraft Model C2 with an Auster III and Agricola secondary possibilities. Current local government financial stringency means these could not be displayed or made airworthy at present, but would be long-term restoration projects in the museum, where re-building costs could be spread over a period. So if you know of an airframe lying in a corner we would be pleased to hear about it.

(Peter Stoddart pursues the Auster project as a special research interest outside his normal post in the Education Section of Leicestershire Museums. As he is fully committed there during working hours much of the effort has to be put in in his own time. Therefore he asks that should letters not be answered by return, correspondents will understand that delay does not mean lack of interest! He is at present available by phone during office hours on Leicester 61610. Ed.

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