

Auster

QUARTERLY



**1587 Flight
Escape in the Desert**

VOLUME 1
NUMBER 6

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Auster

QUARTERLY

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Contents

Talking of Austers	Page 142
Gallery	Page 143
1587 (Air O.P.) Refresher Flight	Page 144
Captain Peter Mackley	Page 149
News in Brief	Page 153
Taylorcraft Model E (Auster AOP.3)	Page 158
Auster Forum	Page 163
Cooper's Query Corner	Page 168

Front Cover Auster AOP.5 TJ373 (c/n 1439) is poised beautifully above the clouds for the official photographer. It is in views such as this that the Auster looks its best and here, seen in full 43 OTU markings complete with code 'BD-C' one can almost hear the Lycoming and smell that characteristic fragrance that comes always into an Auster cockpit. Subsequently TJ373 became Vendair's G-APJX. (Crown copyright).

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Talking of Austers

It would seem that in producing the history of 651 Squadron in AQ4, we have whetted the appetites of many of our readers, and so with this in mind, we present in AQ6 a second unit history, but with a difference. It is the brief, but illuminating story of one 1587 Air O.P. Refresher Flight.

This Flight typifies in many ways, the problems that were faced by many second-line units that operated in the Far East during the last war; problems that even affected the senior 656 Squadron in its advance through Burma. Logistics and climate were the two prime factors that made life for the aviator somewhat frustrating, and which also had equally disastrous effects on the actual aircraft themselves. It was the Far East theatre that confirmed the Auster AOP.3 as having one serious shortfall, that being its unsuitability in the communications role, although many reports made by Flight Commanders displayed a preference for the AOP.3 over its Lycoming-powered successor, the AOP.4 in view of the former's better short take-off capability.

With regard to 1587 Flight, we have purposely presented the story in note form, instead of turning it into a full-length feature.

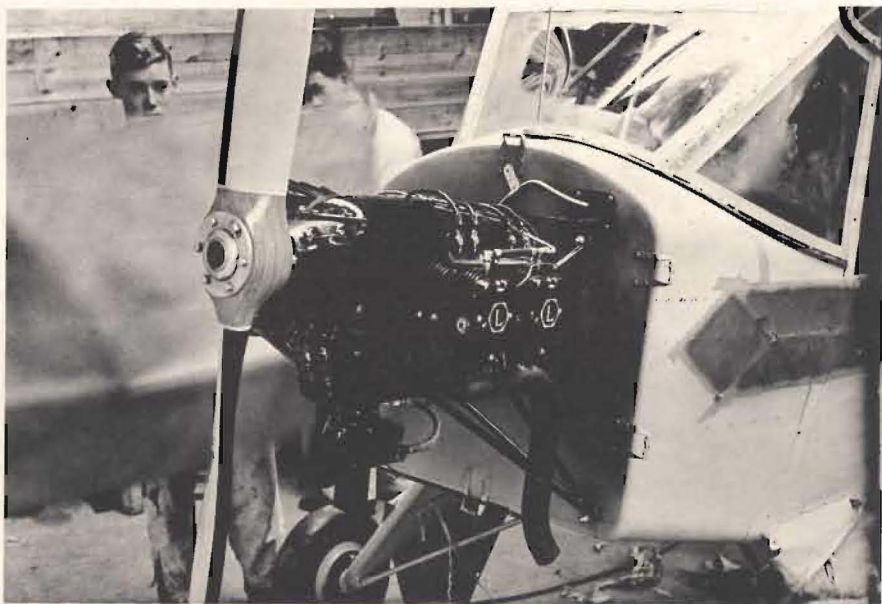
Looking forward into 1977 we are delighted to hear of the forthcoming Auster day at Popham on August 14th. Popham airfield lies beside the A30 at the western approaches to the M3 motorway in Hampshire, and we are informed by the organisers that a full day's events are planned which includes the inauguration of The David Miller Trophy. So as they say in all the best circles, "Your presence is required on August 14th."

Of equal attraction is the Middle Wallop 'Open Day' a week beforehand, on August 6th. when the last two Auster AOP.9s in Army service are due to be displayed. Retained in immaculate condition and still used regularly, these two aircraft are fast outliving the Sioux helicopter which was purchased in large quantities in order to supersede the fixed-wing Auster. It is also anticipated that Mike Somerton-Rayner's Auster 5 G-ANIJ/TJ672 will be flying for Wallop, complete in full battledress.



'Throttle back, flaps down, brakes off, mixture rich' one can almost feel the bounces. We must, however, point out that this view is not of Popham strip, but was taken from the cockpit of an AOP.6 on finals to Sumpitan strip, in Northern Malaya, a strip that by all accounts would make the most qualified of Austerists wince. 656 Squadron have operated from forward strips like this one almost continually since the Second World War, and have only been based in this country for a brief working-up period during 1943. Still operating in the Far East, 656 Squadron is due to return to English soil when 664 Squadron will be renumbered 656 at Farnborough, Hants. later this year.

Gallery



Flight's photographer captured the interest of one young onlooker when he took this fine view of the Lycoming O-145-A2 engine fitted to a late production Model C, nearing completion at Britannia Works, Thurmaston. The lower view shows Model C G-AFVU (c/n 116) in what later became a traditional Auster pose. Of note is the tail skid and the transparent areas in the cockpit roof. This flying shot was probably taken at Ratcliffe for these two views form part of a sequence taken during Flight's visit to Taylorcraft during July 1939. (Flight 17567S/17566S)



Gallery

1587 (Air O.P.)

Refresher Flight

Deolali, India 1944/5

Regular viewers to the BBC series 'It Ain't Half Hot Mum' will undoubtedly be well versed with the hilarious life of Michael Bates and Windsor Davies and Company at Deolali Camp, in wartime India. Curiously life in India at that time has always been characterised in this manner and portrayed as something of a farce, though in reality, to many who served there, India presented itself as a tense prelude to the real struggle further east. Nevertheless actual reports that originate from wartime units tend to suggest that the BBC have based their series as a rather more accurate portrayal than one imagines.

Deolali — pronounced 'Doe-lally' — and situated about 100 miles north-east of Bombay, is therefore probably best remembered for two reasons. Firstly, as we have already mentioned, for current television comedy series, but Deolali's main claim to fame is what some veterans of India recall as the dreaded 'Deolali Tap.' This apparently dangerous and reportedly incurable mental state was likely to develop amongst troops who passed through the Deolali transit camp while awaiting passage back to England. Straight from the fighting areas and eager to get home, these troops often had to wait for weeks and sometimes months prior to sailing, and in the extreme temperatures found in this particular part of India, there was little else to relieve the sheer boredom of waiting than drink or gamble or roast under the constant sun. Thus one's mind was exposed to three prime factors that gave rise to Deolali Tap.

However, there was a serious side of Army life at Deolali, in the shape of one second-line Auster unit known as 1587 Air O.P. Refresher Flight, and which existed for some fourteen months during 1944/5 though little has ever, it seems, been published about it. In fact the only published reference to the existence of 1587 Flight that we have unearthed appears within the book 'Unarmed Into Battle' when in relating to the problems experienced by 656 Squadron in Burma quotes:

"The final main problem was how to cope with the quantity of work. Single-handed, 656 Squadron had to fulfil all the demands of the 14th. Army, which meant that frequently one pilot had to be responsible for all the demands of a division, as each Flight was normally allotted to a Corps. As regards the supply of pilots, it had been decided that Royal Artillery Officers in India should be trained in that Country and then sent on to 656 Squadron. In fact two small courses were so trained before it was decided that the better plan was to send out trained pilots from the U.K. These began to arrive at the end of 1944, being first sent to Deolali where they underwent a refresher course before being sent into action".

So 1587 Flight was formed at Deolali on October 16th. 1944 as part of 227 Group RAF, with a complement of RAF ground crews and Army pilots for Air O.P. training. The Flight's first Commanding Officer was Captain Trevor Jones, R.A., and initially three Auster AOP.3s (MT452, NJ813, and NJ905) were taken onto charge, the first of which arrived at Deolali on November 2nd. 1944. On an Indian Airfield chart dated November 1945 Deolali is shown as a Fair Weather Landing Ground, while a similar 'satellite' strip was used at Vada, approximately midway between Bombay and Deolali, where the Flight co-operated with the Artillery Jungle Training Camp, and where Air O.P. pilots could undergo a final and crucial part of pre-operational training.

when as a result of an undershoot at Vada strip, the fuselage was badly bent, and the stern post completely broken off. Fortunately the pilot stepped out, white 'neath his tan, but unhurt.'

June 1945

'The pupils have by now become locally known as "The Pranger's Union" which may explain the non-arrival of new replacement aircraft. One new Auster has, we understand, started out to us but we have since learnt that it crashed at Dharampur whilst en route. In the meantime our grounded Auster, NJ813, has been flown out for its major inspection.

As regards our training programme strong winds, together with a continuously clouded sky has made night flying impossible this month, while equally affected is our daytime flying, now restricted as a result of our actual landing ground cracking up badly due to the very nature of the soil here.'

July 1945

As we discussed earlier the attrition rate of Austers at Deolali was comparatively high for a number of reasons, but since the manufacturers had stepped up production of the AOP.5 so deliveries of new Austers to India had similarly increased, which in turn allowed the front-line units to release their surplus AOP.3s. Two replacement Mk.3s were therefore allocated to 1587 Flight during July 1945 from the 226 Group pool. One Auster was located at Allahabad — some 500 miles to the north-east — while the other was awaiting ferry from Jodhpur, though at the time it was impossible to fly the aircraft down to Deolali owing to all the airfields en route being completely flooded by the Monsoons, and temporarily out of use.

'When the Auster from Allahabad arrived later in the month, training of the current course was able to start, as far as the flying side was concerned. However some new vehicles are still essential for conducting 'shoots', collecting stores, and for visiting the Artillery Jungle Training Camp at Vada. If our one and only vehicle breaks down, we've had it !'

Apart from the obviously serious lack of vehicles, various improvements were gradually taking shape, and by the end of July a new hangar had been completed at the landing-ground, although there still seemed to be no sign of work commencing on repairs to the badly cracked landing area.

Finally, on July 25th. 1945 Captain Jones departed Deolali on being posted to the senior 656 Squadron, and on the same date Captain R.D. Henshaw, R.A. succeeded him as Commanding Officer of 1587 Flight.

August 1945

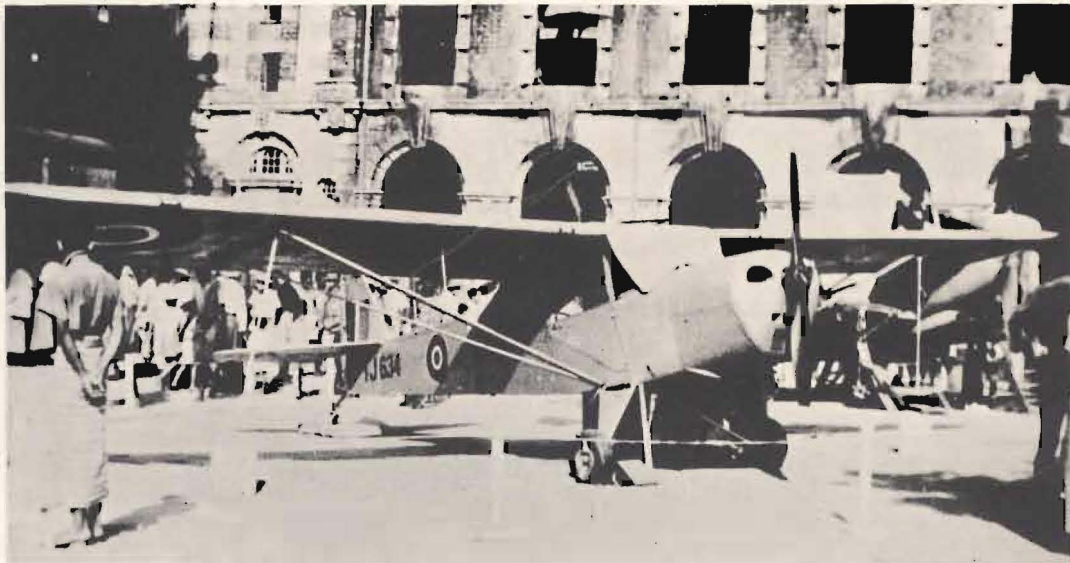
'At last new vehicles have arrived at Deolali, and also we now have two Auster AOP.3s fully serviceable. However our third Auster 3 is still grounded at Jodhpur owing to the Monsoons.'

Despite the cessation of hostilities in the Far East, the likelihood of there being isolated areas of resistance existing was ever-apparent, and this together with a continual need for trained pilots, meant that training was to continue, or at least for the time being.

September 1945

Indicative of the increase in the Auster AOP.5 delivery rate to the Far East was the release from 12 C.M.U. at Santa Cruz of three new Mk.5s for 1587 Flight. These effectively replaced the Flight's three infirmed AOP.3s, two of which were ferried to Santa Cruz at the same time. The Flight's third Auster 3 remained at Deolali owing to the unavailability of sufficient spares needed to prepare it for the ferry flight.

The Auster AOP.5 represented a great improvement in both realibility and in being able to successfully encompass the communications role, factors that were considered to be of paramount importance in post-war Asia. Thus for 1587 Flight the ability to train its pupils on that mark of Auster as used by the operational squadrons effectively increased the possibilities of producing highly-proficient pilots.



During our research into 1587 AOP Flight, we have been unable to unearth any photographs of Austers operated by that unit, a fact that sadly reflects widely throughout wartime units based in South-East Asia. But aviation research is generally based on sheer patience, and the belief that 'something will turn up' often rings true, for wartime photographs are often discovered in the most unlikely of places. None, it would appear, more unlikely than the Wantage branch of the National Westminster Bank Ltd., from where Manager John Rowland kindly sent us these two prints.

The Auster AOP.5 was one of the few types that escaped large peacetime cancellations against orders placed during the war, and TJ634 was one of the first AOP.5s to be produced after the war in Europe had ended. Built in June 1945, it was taken to Glasgow docks on 24/7/45 for shipment to Calcutta, where it arrived during the following September. Officially taken on to ACSEA charge on 30/5/46 exact details of its initial allocation are unknown, until it was transferred to Seletar on 24/6/48 for 656 Squadron, although it could well have been used by that squadron before that date. Although not visible in this view, behind TJ634 is parked a Spitfire Mk.14 coded 'MS-J' identifying it as being with 273 Squadron, a unit that operated into Siam and for a while was based at Saigon, before disbanding during January 1946.

The second photograph loaned to us by John Rowland shows a pair of Fairchild Argus Mk.111s, several hundred of which were supplied under the Lend-Lease arrangement and which supplemented the Auster in the light communications role. HB672 (in the foreground) and KK383 (to the right) were both shipped direct from the USA to Karachi during June and August 1944 respectively. This view shows that the Argus — like the Auster — operated in both silver and camouflaged finish. However, it is interesting to note that whilst the Argus appears to carry the special two-colour roundel and fin-flash that was occasionally used by the South-East Asia Command, the Auster retains the standard C1-type roundel and three-colour fin flash.

Furthermore it became known during September that plans had finally been made for the extending of the Deolali strip, and that a permanent concreted landing area was to be constructed after all.

October 1945

'Four Austers are currently on strength, though this figure includes one AOP.3 that is still grounded at Deolali due to a lack of sufficient spares still unavailable. Of the two AOP.3s despatched to Santa Cruz during September, we hear that one is still parked there and awaiting onward ferrying to Calcutta, owing to nobody in the ferry squadron having plucked up enough courage to fly it yet.'

With the decision to re-surface the landing area already taken it came as no surprise to learn that some seven hundred tons of cement was offloaded at the local railway station during October, although it began to appear that 1587 Flight was not to benefit from any improved conditions for rumours were now rife throughout the unit of a pending disbandment. Nevertheless towards the end of October and throughout November the supply situation improved considerably with both engine and airframe spares beginning to arrive in quantity. But eventually the rumours became fact when 1587 Flight learnt that on December 31st. 1945 disbandment would take place, on which date the final course of five pupils were to be transferred to 'A' Flight of 659 Squadron which had arrived in India on November 4th. and had settled into Dhubalia shortly afterwards.

Over the past fourteen months and despite the setbacks associated with the climate and the frequent non-availability of aircraft and spares, together with the almost bizarre situations in which the Flight found itself in, some thirty-one pupils did manage to successfully pass through the course, and who were subsequently posted on to 656 Squadron many for the final stages of the war in Burma. Since November 1944 a grand total of 1630.25 flying hours had been logged, with almost 650 of these hours flown during the final three months.

Conclusion

Unfortunately these monthly reports do not refer to identities of individual aircraft attached to 1587 Flight subsequent to the original allocation of three Auster AOP.3s (MT452, NJ813, and NJ905), and so the unit's AOP.5s cannot positively be identified by this source. However Captain Henshaw's final report makes mention of a Captain Walton of 656 Squadron, who paid a short visit to Deolali from November 15th. to 23rd. 1945, while posted to the nearby transit camp and awaiting repatriation to England. Consultation with Captain R.I. Walton's flying logbooks for that period record that he did in fact make several local flights from Deolali as follows: 16/11/45 TJ578, 17/11/45 TJ584, 20/11/45 TJ580 and NJ872. With the exception of the last-mentioned all are Auster AOP.5s and we can only assume these aircraft to be those collected from 12 C.M.U. during September 1945. Similarly we suspect that NJ872, an Auster AOP.3 is that mentioned in the July 1945 report, and that the aircraft stranded at Jodhpur did not, in fact, ever arrive at Deolali, though we must impress that for the present this remains unconfirmed.

Several years after the demise of 1587 Flight the Indian Air Force formed its own Air O.P. component when officers from 659 Squadron, RAF. formed the nucleus of No.1 (Independent) Air O.P. Flight at Lahore on August 15th. 1947, and using ex-RAF Auster AOP.4/5/6s. A second unit, No.2 Air O.P. Flight was formed at Deolali on November 1st. 1947, and finally on June 1st. 1958 the Indian Air Force re-activated its original British connections by reforming 659 Air O.P. Squadron again at Deolali, though whether this squadron actually used the same strip as occupied by 1587 Flight remains unclear. Nevertheless, as far as Air O.P. is concerned, Deolali can justifiably claim its place in Auster history — divorced from the BBC's Royal Artillery Concert Party or indeed the delights of 'Deolali Tap'

Acknowledgments

Finally we are grateful to Lt. Col. L.L.S. Williams, R.A. (Ret'd) of the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wailop in affording us full access to official documents, and to Mr. E.H. Turner of the Ministry of Defence (Air Historical Branch) for his unrelenting patience in assisting us with our constant pursual of detailed wartime records. Ray Sturtivant and Geoff Cruikshank of the British Aviation Research Group have assisted with background information, and to Ted Albrow of Conde-Naste Publications for his delightful reminiscences of Deolali Tap, we are extremely grateful.

Capt. Peter Mackley

— describes an incident in the desert —

Still with the last war very much in mind, though in a different part of the world, the Auster AOP.1 was responsible for, if nothing else, allowing 651 Squadron's early pilots to embark upon a new theme of aerial combat, from which was perfected the art of efficient airborne observation. Accordingly there are many stories that have emerged from that squadron's advance across North Africa that tell of both aeroplanes and pilots being pushed to beyond their respective operating limits. Curiously no legendary heroes emerged from the Air O.P. squadrons as is the case with the Battle of Britain or the Pathfinder Force, etc. who perhaps were in an ideal position to have the fullest of attention focussed upon them. Paradoxically the Air O.P. pilots faced the same dangers and often operated in far worse conditions for in many cases their enemy was well-hidden on the ground, and in any case were unarmed should an attack take place. There are many stalwarts in the Army Air Corps today who believe the wartime Auster pilot to be the true aviator for he relied on his wit, guts, skill and very much on luck during a routine mission.

It is with these four factors in mind therefore that we feel that students of Auster history would be as keen to learn, as we were, of at least one action in North Africa involving a pilot of 651 Squadron, Captain P.D. Mackley, R.A. The incident took place during April 1943, at a time when the German High Command was becoming fully aware of the squadron's role and ability to direct allied guns with a fair degree of accuracy, and also at a crucial stage in the German offensive. The Luftwaffe had, of course, been successful in destroying one or two Austers though evidence suggests that the enemy believed these aircraft to be on routine communications/liason missions, and hopefully ferrying high-ranking officers around the battlefield. However, during this period the Auster's true purpose had undoubtedly been realised for Fiesler Storches were beginning to appear over Allied sectors in the same manner that Austers circled close to the German lines. Thus with this in mind, it seems that for but a brief period Captain Mackley was a valuable prize to German intelligence, though as a result of his subsequent actions little (if any) information was gained by the enemy.

Captain Mackley most certainly enjoyed a distinguished, though tragically brief service career, being part of No.8 Air O.P. course with 'D' Flight at Old Sarum in 1942. Selected for 651 Squadron Mackley was later promoted to the rank of Major and awarded the D.F.C., and later received the Polish Cross of Valour. On December 2nd. 1944 he succeeded Major Oldham as Commanding Officer of 655 Squadron in Italy, but was tragically killed only nine days afterwards when his Auster crashed near Marradi whilst returning from visiting squadron Flights at Castel del Rio.

Curiously, as far as we can ascertain, details of the event have never been previously published, and in an effort to maintain an accurate record we have decided to reproduce his report of the incident exactly as Captain Mackley compiled it immediately after the events took place.

Appendix 'B' to 651 Squadron Operational Record

Operations by 'B' Flight

Report compiled by Captain P.D. Mackley, R.A.

April 28th. 1943

At approximately 1800 hours I was ordered to fly Lieut. English R.E., to see the damage, if any, to the centre span of the bridge across the Medjerda at Bdj Toum. I flew low between the banks of the river until the bridge came into view, and after Lieut. English reported that he had seen enough, I went into a steep turn to the right to return to our lines. Whilst in the turn, I heard a loud and long burst of machine gun fire, found that I could not come out of the turn, and hit the ground with the starboard wingtip. I suspect that a lucky bullet must have hit one of the control cables, or that a cable broke.

I pushed Lieut. English, who was temporarily knocked out, out of the aircraft, and ran round to the port side of the fuselage, then set fire to the aircraft with a match. Owing to the necessity for speed, I unfortunately forgot that my Verey pistol was still in the cockpit. I crawled along to Lieut. English to see how badly hurt he was, for there seemed to be a lot of firing going on around us. The next minute a party of Germans came up to us and led us to the shelter of a building, where they administered first aid. On the way I looked round to see the aircraft, and to my relief it was burning well. At dusk we were taken by ambulance to an M.D.S., and after taking our ranks, names numbers, and dates of birth, we were removed to an operating room. I was given an anaesthetic, my lower lip was sewn up, and I remember nothing more until I woke up the next morning in a barn that was being used as a ward.

April 29th. 1943

Lieut. English was lying next to me. He had been cut under one eye, but the eye itself was undamaged, one forearm was in a splint, and one leg was painning him. I had a bad headache, and my mouth was rather sore, but otherwise I was alright. After a doctor's inspection I was taken away, and I never saw Lieut. English again.

I was blindfolded, and my escort led me to Tunis, hitch-hiking to a Prisoner-of-War camp which, in happier times, had been a school. It was occupied entirely by American troops. I should estimate that there was approximately 80 there, including five officers. The camp was well run, but the food was poor. Whilst I was there the menu was: Breakfast - Ersatz coffe and a piece of black bread; Lunch - Vegetable stew and a piece of bread; Tea - Coffee and bread. The Red Cross, I was told, came occasionally and provided suppers of macaroni and red wine. Straw, of doubtful cleanliness, was supplied for sleeping on in the classrooms.

April 30th. 1943

At lunchtime, a German major and corporal of the G.A.F. came to fetch me to a villa, which was a branch of the Dulagluft in Germany. Both could speak perfect English and did their best to set me at ease. The major extolled the virtues of the Dulagluft and said that the Air Force were always made comfortable.

I was given a room to myself with bed and blankets, and I could use the bathroom at will.

All my personal belongings, consisting of cigarette case, matches, A.B. 439 and field dressing, were taken away. The corporal asked me to state on my honour as a British Officer that I had no papers or other articles on me, so that he need not search me. Fortunately I was able to do this. He appeared to know all about having the trick of having compasses concealed in buttons.

Later in the afternoon I was invited to join the major and his satellites in a drinking party. The corporal said that they were all pretty well drunk already, and as I was the only prisoner they would like me to join them. I could not make up my mind whether they were trying to prove to me that the German was not a savage, or whether they were intending to use the old and obvious trick of making the victim drunk and then wheedling the information out of him. I was well prepared for the latter.

At the party there were the German major, the corporal whom I have mentioned previously, and who had been born and spent most of his life in Australia, a flight sergeant who had spent all of his life in the States, and one other who could not speak English.

A glass of champagne was immediately poured out for me, and I was told to make myself at home. I explained that I would only be able to have one glass as I was not feeling well after my crash. The flight sergeant immediately assured me that drink was the best cure. They told me that I would be most comfortable in Germany, and that I should be taken there either by sea or air, but that there would be some delay owing to the force of circumstances. The major said, "You probably know Captain Bishop. He was with us in this camp and is now in Germany".

The major was then called to the telephone, and had to leave in a hurry, so I made my excuses and left the party too.

My food throughout my stay there was the same as that of my gaolers. It did not vary much from day to day, the usual menu being:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Breakfast. | 2 slices of black bread, thickly spread with jam.
Ersatz coffee. |
| Lunch. | Vegetable stew with an occasional piece of meat. |
| Supper. | 2 slices of bread with sardines, tinned meat or jam spread on top.
Ersatz coffee. |

If I wanted any more I could usually have it. As soon as it began to get dark, I had to go to bed, my trousers and boots being removed by the guard after I had taken them off.

May 1st. 1943

Sitting and thinking and looking through the bars of my window, I saw three separate Fieseler Storches. Several air raid warnings, but no raids.

May 2nd. 1943

The corporal asked me if I would like to share a room with an American sergeant of the U.S.A. Air Force. I refused, as the temptation to talk would be so great.

May 3rd. 1943

About 1600 hours I heard a large number of Me.109s flying overhead and counted 14 or 15. A few minutes later three Me.323s came down and put in at El Ouina. An hour or so later the Australian corporal came in and told me to get ready to move away that evening. He became conversational and told me that the major had departed for Italy, leaving him in charge. He seemed to be rather depressed.

Four Americans — two officers and two sergeants — and myself were taken by truck to the aerodrome (I learned subsequently that it was El Ouina.). Our escort consisted of two soldiers who were going back on the same plane as ourselves. We were left on the side of the aerodrome, and were subsequently joined by a sentry armed with a rifle. Unfortunately one of our escorts could understand English, so it was impossible to organise attempts to escape amongst ourselves.

One of the Americans was wounded, so the odds would have been heavily overweighted against us anyhow. At about 1600 hours (!) the Ju.52s began to come in — just as we were beginning to think that the Beaufighters had got them. About twenty Germans and ourselves got on board. We started the take off run, and half-way along the pilot cut the throttles and taxied to one side. The aircraft could not get off the ground ! Four americans and one Englishman were loud in their scorn, and never in history have five happier P.O.W.'s returned to their prison.

May 4th. 1943

I managed to share the same room as the two American officers. Unfortunately I cannot remember their names. We slept all the morning, and in the afternoon we held an escape conference. One American still had a compass on him; the other had a flying map of Tunis — Tebourba which had been overlooked during the personal search ! We each studied the map in turn, and realised that we had attempted to take off from El Ouina. The previous day we had been told by the corporal that Bizerta was being evacuated. We came to the conclusion that the main German resistance would be across the Tebourba neck and so decided to make for Bizerta, find a boat, and go by sea to our own lines. We did not know how we were going to manage for food and water. We intended to break away from our guards after overpowering them.

At 1800 hours, we were again taken to the aerodrome and driven straight to the aircraft. When it began to get dark, the engines were started and we were ordered to get on board. The Germans got on first, one escort stood by the door, the other turned his back and ran about ten yards away to get something that he had left there. I said, "Come on, let's go" to one of the American officers (for we were the last in the queue) and off we dashed to the other side of the aircraft behind the tail unit, and made for the main road as fast as we could. As we ran we heard shouts and shots but I think we were lost in the darkness. I took cover in a pile of crashed Ju.52s on the harbour side of the road, and eventually stopped and lay down in an excavation to recover my breath. I could hear more shots, and running along the road I wondered how the Yank was getting along. I began to feel a bit exposed, so I returned and crawled back into the Ju.52s and hid myself in the fuselage of one of them. Shortly afterwards, a search party came along tapping on the machines and shouting "Hands Up, Englander ! Come out." I stayed still and they passed me by. I decided to stay there that night and next day until all the fuss died down.

May 5th. 1943

Incarcerated in my fuselage. About thirty yards away, I could see an airman stripping one of the machines. When it was fully dark I crawled out and walked along the side of the main road towards Tunis. There was an air-raid on at the time, and most of the Bosche must have been sheltering in the trenches. When I passed the aerodrome, I turned north-west, and carried on across country making for the gun flashes.

May 6th. 1943

Ate half of my piece of bread and laid up in a corn field all day. Moved out that evening and passed through Ariana and then through some olive groves. Clouds obscured the stars, so I had difficulty in finding my way, except by the gun flashes.

May 7th. 1943

I laid up in another cornfield at dawn. Fortunately it rained, so I absorbed the moisture like blotting paper.

During the day I heard lots of explosions round about and I could see buildings burning, so I supposed that the Bosche were destroying equipment and that the end was near. I felt very thirsty!

In the evening, I went up to an Arab who was cutting the corn in the field in which I was laying, and asked him to take me to a French family. I explained that I did not want to meet any Bosche, and that the French, British, and Americans would soon have beaten the Germans. We clapped each other on the back, shook hands innumerable times, calling each other "Camerade". He took me into the village of Mutuelleville, missed two parties of marching Germans by disappearing up a side alley, and eventually I was taken to an Inspector of the Police, M. Emile Lacroix at Mutuelleville.

He told me that the British were in Tunis, said that I could stay the night with him, and that he would take me into Tunis in the morning. I was bathed, feasted, and made a great fuss of by Mme. Lacroix and her neighbours.

May 8th. 1943

The American Vice Consul and Major Minnards, R.E., of 'S' Force were fetched by Mme. Macroix from Tunis. They took me to 'S' Force H.Q., and we had a triumphal ride through the town, the populace cheering us, throwing flowers and giving victory signs. They took certain particulars from me at 'S' Force H.Q., and I then made my own way back to 78 Div, H.Q. by hitch-hiking.

I was taken to 5 Corps H.Q., where I met the C.C.R.A. and the Squadron Commander. I was taken from there to 651 Squadron H.Q. where I spent the night.

In the report two abbreviations are made, and which might need some explanation, though we can only assume that an M.D.S. is a reference to a German Medical Dressing Station. However we can confirm that an A.B. 439 is a soldier's pocket book, which is carried at all times, and contains full details of rank and service record etc. As it did not include a photograph it was not considered to be solely for identificational purposes.



Isn't she an absolute beauty! Photographs of Auster 1s in their operational environment are extremely scarce, and so we were more than pleased to receive this shot of LB365 flying over the North African desert, for it is interesting in several ways. Firstly she does not carry any form of code letters, such that were later applied to 651 Squadron's aircraft in Italy — see page 98. Secondly LB365 appears to retain the standard R.A.F. green/earth camouflage scheme which we are led to understand was the normal practice within this squadron, although we believe aircraft of 654 Squadron to have been in a lighter shade of camouflage while operating with the 8th Army.

An interesting comparison can be made between LB365 and LB282, seen on page 24. The view of '365 appears to reveal fuselage roundels of A1-type which were generally phased out during 1942, while the underwing roundel is of the standard red and blue B-type. The earlier Auster 1, LB282 carried C1-type fuselage roundels that were introduced in 1942 and used for the remainder of the war.

News In Brief

During 1976 numerous Austers changed ownership, and details relating to transfers of registration are as follows:

G-AGTP	J/1N(S) Alpha	1823	15.12.76	J.T. Wallis t/a Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club, Whatfield
G-AGYH	J/1N Alpha	1989	23. 4. 76	G.E. Twyman & P.J. Rae
G-AHAM	J/1 Autocrat	1885	16. 8. 76	J.N. Redvers-Higgins, Headcorn
G-AHAU	J/1 Autocrat	1850	3.5.76	B.J.W. Foley
G-AHHN	J/1 Autocrat	2017	26. 8. 76	A.A. Alderdice
G-AHLK	Auster 3	700	16. 3. 76	F.A. Bucknall, Leicester East
G-AHLK	Auster 3	700	23. 9. 76	A.A. Bucknall, Leicester East
G-AIFZ	J/1N Alpha	2182	19. 8. 76	J.J. Young, Seething/Ludham
G-AIZU	J/1 Autocrat	2228	29.12.76	T.A. Collins & A.H.R. Stansfield.
G-AIZY	J/1 Autocrat	2233	16. 3. 76	B.J. Richards, Bodmin
G-AJAS	J/1N Alpha	2319	17. 5. 76	C.J. Baker, Sturgate
G-AJDW	J/1 Autocrat	2320	11. 6. 76	F. & H. (Aircraft) Ltd. Sibson
G-AJIU	J/1 Autocrat	2338	26. 1. 76	C.H.A. Bott, Benington strip.
G-AJIY	J/1 Autocrat	2342	15. 7. 76	A.P. Howells, Rhoose
G-AJPZ	J/1 Autocrat	2348	30. 7. 76	F.A. Pyle, Thrupton
G-AJRB	J/1 Autocrat	2350	14. 4. 76	T. Booth
G-AJRH	J/1N Alpha	2606	22. 3. 76	N.H. Ponsford, Wigan
G-AJUL	J/1N Alpha	2624	6. 4. 76	L.A. Brome, Martlesham Heath
G-AKWS	Auster 5	1237	26. 1. 76	T.S. Frank t/a Missionary Aviation Fellowship
G-AKWS	Auster 5	1237	17.11.76	G.M. New, Saling.
G-AKXP	Auster 5	1017	4.10.76	F.E. Telling
G-AOBV	J/5P Autocar	3171	9. 8. 76	P.E. Champney, Benington strip.
G-AOFJ	Auster 5	3401	26. 2. 76	Miss M.R. Innocent, Scone
G-AOHZ	J/5P Autocar	3252	22.10.76	M.R. Gibbons & G.W. Brown, Blackbushe
G-APAF	Auster 5	3404	22.10.76	J.L. Brewer & R.P. Potgeiter, Lee-On-Solent.
G-APKN	J/1N Alpha	3387	20. 8. 76	C.R. Marfleet
G-APRF	Auster 5	3412	13. 4. 76	P. Elliott, H.J. Rowleron, C.A. Fox, G.B. Jackson, & K.A. Agate, Biggin Hill
G-APTR	J/1N Alpha	3392	17.12.76	C.J. & D.J. Baker, Sturgate
G-AREI	Auster 3	518	12. 8. 76	R. Alliker, A.J. Garrard, & R.S. Clarke
G-ARLG	D4/108	3606	13. 6. 76	W.R. Dryden
G-AROJ	A.109 Airedale	B508	27. 2. 76	D.J. Shaw
G-ARSL	A.61 Terrier 1	2539	31. 3. 76	C.W. Thomas
G-ARUG	J/5G Autocar	3272	17.11.76	N.P. Biggs
G-ASAI	A.109 Airedale	B516	31. 8. 76	A.C. Watt, Islay
G-ASBU	A.61 Terrier 2	B613	16.11.76	G. Strathdee, Inverness
G-ASMZ	A.61 Terrier 2	B629	26. 5. 76	M.A. Gale, RNAS Yeovilton
G-ASNC	D5/180 Husky	3678	9. 7. 76	S.P. Connatty & D.B. Winstanley
G-ATAW	A.109 Airedale	B541	6. 1. 76	B.J. Evans

With regard to the above transfers, the J/1N **G AJRH** was acquired by Nigel Ponsford on 23/11/75, and was put into storage at Wigan in preparation for a complete rebuild. C.J. Baker's J/1N **G AJAS** is similarly in a dismantled state pending a C. of A. renewal at Leicester East, while in the meantime Mr. Baker bought another J/1N, **G APTR** during August 1976. Previously located at Tollerton, 'PTR' was flown to Leicester for its C. of A. renewal before flying to its new base at Sturgate. Also under Mr. Baker's charge are two dismantled Auster 5s, one of which is the **5D G ANHX**, which was at one time owned by Ron Neal who intended to utilise the tail surfaces in the rebuild of his J/1U **G-APMH**, but for the fact that authentic J/1U items were located elsewhere. The second Auster 5 was rescued from long-term storage at Hemswell, and before that at Portsmouth, and inspection of plates suggests that it might well be the long-defunct **G ANIA**.

Two Austers restored to the register during 1976 were **J/1 G-AJEI** and **6A G-ARHM**. The former is another example from Skegness Air Taxi Service Ltd. at Wyberton, and was restored to them on 3/5/76, whilst the Tugmaster, having been withdrawn from use since 16/6/75 was restored to D. Hollowell, R.C. Wharmby, and P.H. Hollowell on 27/9/76.

On the debit side, two Austers were lost during 1976 in tragic circumstances; David Miller's **J/1 Autocrat G-AJRK** at Shorwell, Isle of Wight on 22/5/76 and Tony Chaplin's **J/5B Autocar G-AJYO**, which crashed after hitting power cables near Sheraton, Hartlepool on 21/4/76 whilst the owner was making a return flight from Sunderland to Swanton Morley in marginal weather conditions. The fates of David Miller's other two Austers have been sealed with the wrecked **J/1N G-AHAT** being moved to Taunton by Maurice Kirk, while the **Auster 5 G-APTU** was purchased by Capt. Terry Prowse, owner of the hotel at which it was stored, on 26/9/76. Its Certificate of Registration expired on 18/4/75 and 'PTU' was officially withdrawn from use on 26/3/76, but the intentions of its new owner are quite clearly aimed at eventual restoration.

Up in Scotland George Strathdee actually acquired **Terrier G-ASBU** on 15/9/76 but decided to keep it at Inverness for the winter so that plans to open a strip close to his home at Dundee can fully materialise. Another Scottish Terrier 2, **G-ASDK**, has changed hands, and was towed by road by its new owners, Bill and Wendy Hill, from Galashiels to Terrington St. Clement, King's Lynn on 28/11/76 and is now undergoing a complete rebuild.

Also on the move southwards is the **Auster 5D G-ALYG** which, after a lengthy sojourn at Irby-on-Humber, has been bought by Roy Pullen and Rex Coates, and who towed it by road to Hampton, Middlesex on 11/9/76. When rebuilt we wonder if it will follow the Miles M.18 G-AHKY and fly out of Heathrow.

While on the topic of Auster rebuilds, we are pleased to report that Ron Neal's **J/1U G-APMH** progresses slowly at Leicester East, while over at Nottingham, A.J. Brown continues restoring his **J/1N G-ARRL**, though his other Alpha, **G-ARUY**, is currently airworthy and flying. Trevor Howe, owner of another **J/1N G-APIK**, has salvaged the airframe of **Auster 6A G-ARRX** which has stood in a farmyard for some three years since its previous owner, P. Georgiodes, was killed during the civil war in Cyprus. We understand that a rebuild is definitely on ... From Noel Barker we learn that he and friends are progressing well with the complete rebuild of **Auster 5 G-AKXP** at a location in Telegraph Lane, Claygate, Surrey, whilst down in Southampton Alan and Jim Stone have rescued the first **Terrier 1 G-ARLH (EI-AMB)** and restoration is well under way. Still in the south, Brian Rhodes is fully occupied with rebuilding his **Terrier 2 G-ASAX**, near Redhill.

Photographed by P.H.T. Green, **Auster 5D G-ALYG** (c/n 835) has had a chequered career, most of which has been spent on the ground. When this view was taken at Irby during November 1972, it appeared to be still in sound condition, apart from some obvious attention to its undercarriage bungees being needed. Now we can look forward to seeing more of 'LYG' in the air once again.





Long-time resident of Croydon and later of Biggin Hill, the Auster 5 G-AKXP is now being completely rebuilt in Claygate, Surrey. This view, taken by Keith Palmer, shows 'KXP' at Biggin Hill on March 27th, 1965.

Maurice Kirk's **Auster 6A G-ARGI** was delivered to new owners at the Heathfield Game Park just prior to Easter 1976 as a ground exhibit, and is destined never to fly again in view of its outdoor location. In the opposite direction, Maurice has acquired the **J/4 G-AIJM** which was flown from Blandford to Taunton on 11/2/77 in typical Kirk tradition — via Doncaster! In the meantime we understand that Maurice has an urgent requirement for a Gipsy prop and a Lycoming prop which should enable G-AHAT and Auster 5 G-BDFX to get back in the air. (Telephone — Taunton 3932.)

Our good friend Alistair Mathie has completed his tour on Hunters at Brawdy, and is now on a two-year stint with the Escadron de Chasse 1/11 at Toul/Rossieres, flying French Air Force Jaguars. Accordingly his **J/1N G-AIGF** has crossed the Channel and is now kept at Port St. Vincent, just south of Nancy.

Blackbushe is quietly increasing its Auster population with the arrival of **J/5P G-AOHZ**, now operated by the Blackbushe Aero Club, and the well-known **J/1 Autocrat G-AHAY** has been brought by Bill Ogle to whom it was delivered in from Cheltenham on 31/1/77. Bill Fisher's Mk.11 **G-ASCC** still resides at Blackbushe, but his Sibson-based **J/1 G-AJDW** progressed to Deelen, in Holland, where it acted as a support aircraft during the making of "A Bridge Too Far". The main star of the film is Stichting Vliegsport's Auster 3 **PH-NGK** which was specially camouflaged and repainted as **RT607**, complete with full invasion markings.

A welcome import was the **J/2 Arrow F-BFUV** brought from France by W.J. & Mrs. M.D. Horler, to whom it was registered **G-BEAH** on 28/6/76

Finally, in our report on the Winter Gales we tracked the movements of **Auster 5 G-ANFU** from Kirmington to Leicester. The remains, less engine, progressed further southwards to Thrupton on 10/2/77 where Major Somerton-Rayner needs spares for the final restoration of **Auster 5 G-ANIJ**, which is now fully camouflaged and carries the serial **TJ672**.

In compiling this feature we would like to extend our thanks to Air-Britain, to Ron Neal, and all the owners of those aircraft that we have mentioned.

The January 1976 Gales

As winter is with us once again we are reminded of the disastrous period of January 1st/2nd, 1976 when gales swept the country and caused havoc amongst Britain's Auster population. A full report was edged out of our journal at the time due to space being at such a premium, but it now seems fitting to look back twelve months and trace those aircraft that suffered damage as a result.

Beginning on the east coast, at Hull/Paull the **J/1 Autocrat G-AGVG** was blown onto its back and written-off, having been re-registered to T.F. McDonald only two days previously, on December 31st., although it had in fact been sold by Jim Alexander some while previously. Insurance claim settled, the remains of 'GVG' were later acquired by the Leicestershire Museum and conveyed by road to Leicester East on March 12th, 1976 to provide the Museum with an urgently needed replacement engine for the Autocrat G-AGOH.

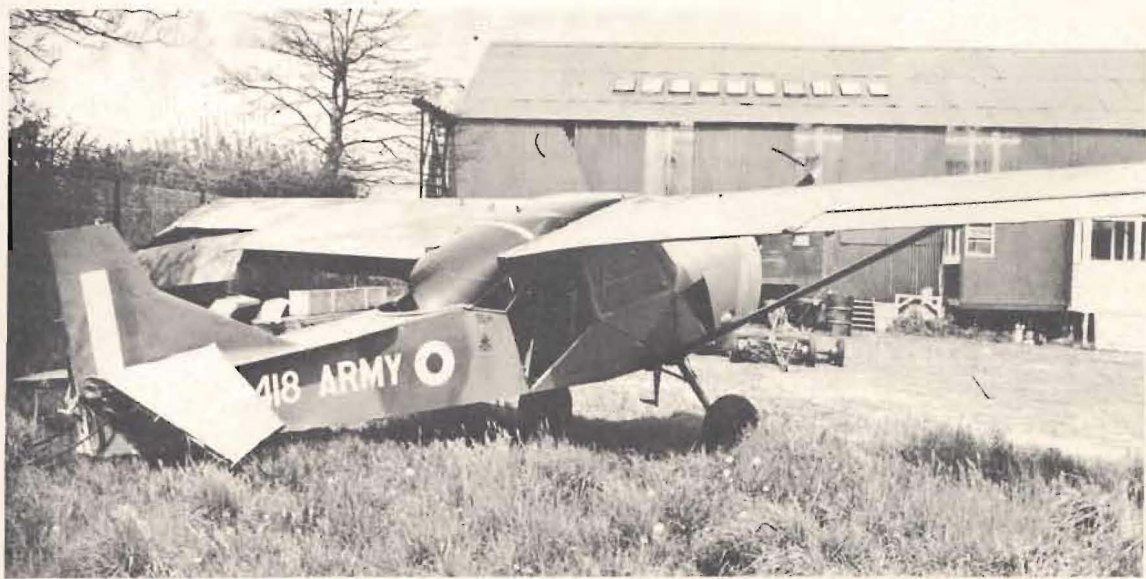
Across the Humber the **Auster 5 G-ANFU**, owned jointly by David Gray and Jim Sime (Secretary and Treasurer of the Auster Pilot Club respectively) was written-off at Kirmington, after only a short life as the I.A.P.C. Flagship. Collected from Staverton by Jim Sime on June 14th, 1975, it was flown up to Shobdon by Jim for the annual A.P.C. Fly-In, and remained there for its C. of A. renewal. On August 28th, 'NFU' was ferried from Shobdon to Irby-on-Humber and later, on September 7th, onward to its new base at Kirmington. Subsequently declared a write-off as a result of the high winds, the wreckage of 'NFU' was later acquired by Tony Jesson so as to provide a spare engine for his Auster 5, G-ALFA, and was taken by road from Kirmington to Leicester East, on March 21st. (G-ANFU was not immediately replaced by Jim Sime owing to a general lack of suitable aircraft being available, but we now understand that one has been located, to be ready for delivery during 1977.)

Over at Netherthorpe, **Terrier 2 G-ASYN** was blown into a parked caravan during the gale, and caught fire in the process. The badly burnt remains were afterwards acquired by F & H (Aircraft) Ltd. and taken to Sibson, but subsequently, on May 27th, 'SYN' was moved once again to Southend, having been bought by the Rochford Hundred Flying Group who see it as a source of spares for their Terrier G-ASAK.

The much-travelled **Auster 3 G-ATAX** was picketed out beside the control tower at Barton, Manchester, against which it was hurled by winds recorded at over 70 mph. Fortunately repairs were able to be effected locally, and 'TAX' was only grounded for a matter of weeks as was the **J/1N Alpha G-APIK**, up at North Allerton.

At Enstone, Oxon, strong winds completely uprooted the main hangar, and in doing so caused the destruction of **J/1N Alpha G-AGVF**, and seriously damaged **Terrier 2 G-ASCH**, though the latter was subsequently repaired and returned to glider-towing duties with the Enstone Eagles Gliding Club.

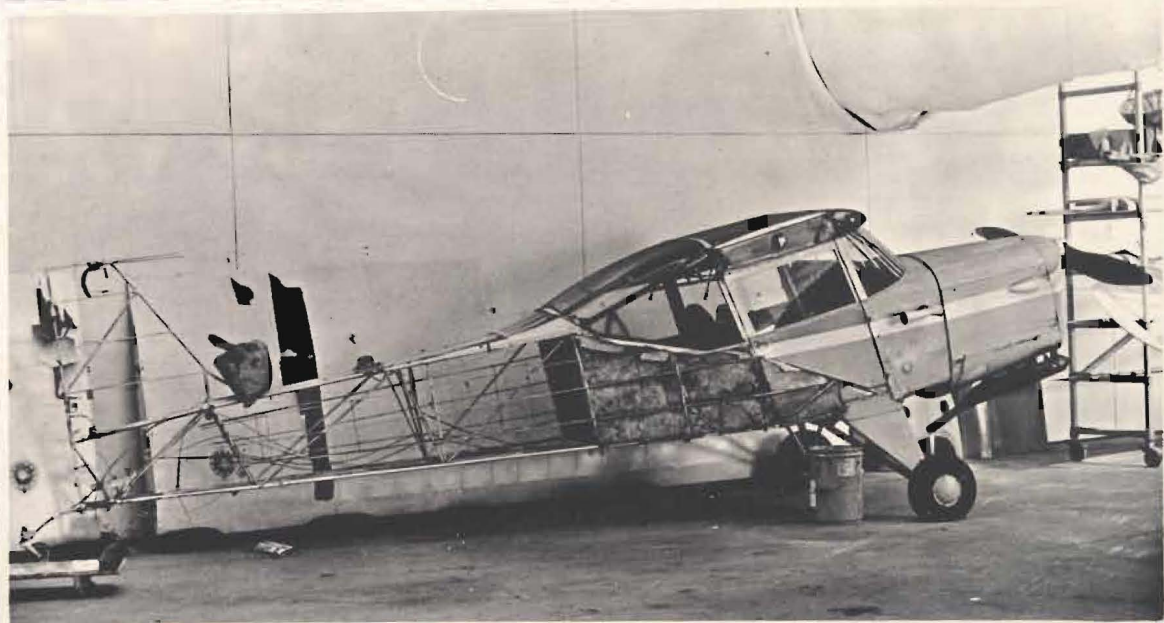
Just north of Newbury, at Shawdene strip, the **J/1N Alpha G-AJUO** was torn from its pickets and blown into an adjacent field, causing irreparable damage to both fuselage and wings, while over at Thrupton the permanently-grounded **AOP.9 XK418** was hurled several hundred yards across the airfield, causing damage, mainly to the fin and wings. Perhaps some justification, therefore, can be afforded to the Army for replacing the Mk.9's fabric surfaces with sheet metal, though when Major Mike Somerton-Rayner has completed the conversion of Auster 5D G-ANIJ, he hopes to restore XK418 to its natural state, for its return to the Army Air Corps for static display purposes.



Judging by the number of readers who are currently rebuilding Austers — details of which are given earlier — there seems to be an endless supply of defunct airframes lurking up and down the country. However, consider the case of Brooklands Aviation's J/1 G-AIBR.

On September 5th, 1970 its pilot found himself unable to fix an accurate position and thus made a precautionary landing at what later turned out to be Gamston Aerodrome in Nottinghamshire. The landing area was littered with concrete boulders etc., and while taxiing clear the mainwheels struck a boulder, causing the aircraft to tip onto its nose. The pilot was able to climb out uninjured, but immediately after doing so a gust of wind caught the upturned aircraft and completely turned it over.

G-AIBR was then taken back, by road, to its base at Sywell where this photograph was taken a few days afterwards, but as a result of that accident, it was considered as being damaged beyond repair, and duly cancelled. From the photograph it appears that the fin and rudder sustained most of the damage and that the task of restoring 'IBR back to airworthy condition would not present such insurmountable problems to render it out of the question. That was 1970; today the whole concept of accident damage is viewed upon with a much different attitude, almost to the point that a damaged Auster had become a valuable asset. So will 'IBR re-appear in the near future? It was last heard of high in the rafters of Brooklands' hangar at Sywell during late 1974. Meanwhile at the time of its accident, G-AIBR had accrued a total airframe hours of 6,893, which makes us consider the question of the most-flown Auster



Another Peter Cooper shot shows the much-modified J/1N Alpha G-AIBW in a strictly non-flying attitude at Squires Gate, on August 18th, 1976.

Taylorcraft Model E

Auster A.O.P.3 Individual Service Histories (3)

- 294 MZ169 Delivered to 20 Mu on 20/3/43 for release to 655 Squadron on the 26th. To 662 Squadron on 13/8/43, until 11/11/43 when it was transferred to 43 OTU. On 21/5/44 '169 was issued to RAF Northolt, but was returned to 20 MU on 29/1/46. On 9/4/47 it was taken to 47 MU for packaging, prior to shipment to the Royal Hellenic Air Force, and shipped ex-Cairn Ryan on 5/5/47, arriving at Piraeus on 22/5/47. See also page 167
- 295 MZ170 Delivered to 20MU on 20/3/43 for release to 655 Squadron on the 26th. On 13/8/43 it was transferred to 662 Squadron, until 15/4/44 when it was re-allotted to 150 Airfield (thought to be Hurn). However an accident on 6/7/44 caused some damage when during a ferry flight, its pilot (making his first solo !) stalled during take-off after striking a soft patch of ground and swung onto the tarmac runway. The extent of damage is not known, but on 2/8/44 MZ170 was declared Cat. B and despatched to Taylorcraft on the 3rd. for repairs which were completed on 8/9/44. On 5/12/44 MZ170 was sold to the Netherlands Air Force, and coded 'O', though later serialled R-12. Eventually it was civilianised as PH-NGI.
- 296 MZ171 Delivered to 47 MU on 23/3/43 for packaging and shipment to North Africa aboard SS 'J-118'. On 20/3/44 '171 sustained Cat.3 damage, and was presumably written-off as a result.
- 297 MZ172 Delivered to 47 MU on 23/3/43 for packaging and shipment to North Africa with MZ171. No further details are known apart from being struck off charge on 21/1/45.
- 298 MZ173 Delivered to 47 MU on 23/3/43 for packaging and shipment to North Africa aboard SS 'H-227' possibly departing UK on 3/5/43. No further details are known apart from being struck off charge on 29/1/45.
- 299 MZ174 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 3/4/43 until transferred to 653 Squadron on 27/8/43, but due to a heavy landing near Three Chimneys, Kent on 7/9/43 the undercarriage collapsed, causing Cat.B damage. Following repairs at the manufacturers MZ174 was flown to 20 MU on 6/11/43 for release to 658 Squadron on 29/1/44. Another accident necessitated its removal again to Leicester for repairs, and again it was flown down to 20 MU on 3/6/44, but transferred to 47 MU on July 17th. having been sold to the R.A.A.F. Departing Liverpool on 24/7/44 aboard SS 'Samanco' MZ174 arrived at Melbourne on 7/9/44 and later serialled A11-8.
- 300 MZ175 Delivered to 47 MU on 23/3/43 for packaging and shipment to Algiers with MZ173. No further details are known apart from being struck off charge during February 1945.
- 301 MZ176 Delivered to 47 MU on 19/3/43 for packaging and shipment to Algiers with MZ171. No further details are known apart from being struck off charge during the census on 1/1/47.
- 302 MZ177 Delivered to 47 MU on 27/3/43 for packaging and shipment to Algiers aboard SS 'J-121' possibly department UK on 2/5/43. In North Africa '177 was used by 651 Squadron 'C' Flight, but on 12/9/43 Captain Magrath struck a jeep during take-off at Vibo Valentia, Italy whereupon the Auster was written-off. Officially MZ177 was struck off charge during the census on 1/1/47.
- 303 MZ178 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 22/3/43, until transferred to 43 OTU on 3/11/43. A flying accident caused its removal to Taylorcraft for repairs on 5/6/44, after which it was delivered to 22 EFTS on 17/9/44. Several minor accidents followed until 3/4/46 when '178 was ferried to 20 MU. On 23/9/46 it was sold to the R. Neth. A.F. and shipped ex-UK via Dagenhaam on 21/10/46, probably being diverted to Indonesia for No.6 ARVA (See MZ125). See page 167

- 304 MZ179 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 31/3/43, but transferred to 662 Squadron on 2/10/43. On 13/4/44 it passed to 652 Squadron and on 20/6/44 to 53 Group Comm. Squadron, probably via 20 MU. On 28/9/44 MZ179 was issued to 1316 Flight (Allied Flight/B Flight) of the Metropolitan Communications Squadron. It was in fact used by the Netherlands Department of Naval Affairs until sold to the R.Neth.A.F. on 15/5/46, and coded 'M'. Later it received the Dutch serial R-10 until civilianised as PH-NGL.
- 305 MZ180 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/4/43 until transferred to 306 Squadron (probably at Heston) on 7/3/44. On 15/6/44 '180 was allotted to 131 Wing, but was written-off on 12/9/44 at Tidworth Barracks, Hants. when an 84 G.S.U. ferry-pilot made a precautionary landing in poor visibility with the A.S.I. unserviceable. On landing the aircraft struck partly-hidden vehicles, attempted to take-off again, but struck another vehicle and overturned.
- 306 MZ181 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 403 Squadron on 15/3/44. An accident caused its removal to Taylorcraft for repairs on 28/6/44, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 29/8/44 for re-sale to the R.A.A.F. Conveyed to 222 MU on 28/9/44 for packaging, '181 departed Liverpool Docks aboard SS 'Clan Urquhart' on 23/11/44, arriving at Sydney on 2/1/45, after which it was re-serialised A11-23.
- 307 MZ182 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 30/3/43, until transferred to 83 Group Comm. Flt. on 25/2/44. An accident caused its removal to Taylorcraft for repairs on 16/6/44 after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 9/9/44 for re-sale to the R.A.A.F. Via 222 MU, MZ182 was shipped to Sydney with MZ181, and later received the serial A11-24.
- 308 MZ183 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 3/4/43, until transferred to 83 Group Comm. Flt. on 25/2/44. Its return to Taylorcraft on 20/3/44 for overhaul and repair preceded its delivery to 20 MU on 7/5/44 from where it was sold to the R.A.A.F. Via 47 MU, on 19/7/44, '183 was shipped to Melbourne aboard SS 'Samanco' with MZ122 etc. and was later allotted the serial A11-9.
- 309 MZ184 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 4/4/43 until transferred to 421 Squadron RCAF on 3/3/44. On 13/6/44 it was returned to Taylorcraft for overhaul and repair after which it was ferried to 22 EFTS on 26/8/44. Later on 17/1/45 while parked out at Cambridge it was struck by Tiger Moth T7462 during its landing. Although declared Cat.B and taken to Leicester for repairs, MZ184 was re-cat. E and struck off charge on 7/3/45.
- 310 MZ185 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 4/4/43 and transferred to 84 Group Comm. Flt. on 25/2/44. On 6/10/44 '185 was declared Cat.AC. but later, on 23/10/44 was declared 'missing' and written-off!
- 311 MZ186 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 2/4/43 with whom it remained until 3/11/43 when transferred to 43 OTU. On 26/4/44 during a local flight over Wiltshire '186 collided with a tall tree and subsequently destroyed when it dived into the ground. See also page 167
- 312 MZ187 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 2/4/43, but transferred to 662 Squadron on 13/8/43. On 11/11/43 it was re-allocated to 43OTU but as a result of later sustaining damage was conveyed to the makers for repair on 5/6/44, upon the completion of which it was ferried to 22 EFTS on 29/7/44. Several minor incidents followed until it was flown to 5MU on 21/5/46 probably for use as a 'hack'. Another flying accident occurred on 23/10/46 necessitating its return to Leicester for repairs. Eventually, on 16/1/47 it was despatched to 20 MU, but transferred to 47 MU on 23/1/47 having been sold to the Royal Hellenic Air Force. On 9/3/47 it was shipped out ex-Liverpool docks with MZ133 etc. aboard SS 'Preston'.
- 313 MZ188 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 2/4/43, until transferred to 43 OTU on 3/11/43. A flying accident on 29/2/44 caused its removal to Taylorcraft on 7/3/44 for repairs, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 7/5/44. Sold to the R.A.A.F. '188 was issued to 47 MU for packaging on 18/7/44 and shipped ex-Liverpool on 30/7/44, arriving in Melbourne on 7/9/44 probably aboard SS 'Samanco' with MZ122 etc. Later it received the serial A11-10. See page 167
- 314 MZ189 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 2/4/43, until transferred to 662 Squadron on 13/8/43. 11/4/44 '189 was issued to 441 Squadron RCAF, and later on 26/8/44 to 141 Wing. On 16/11/44 '189 was issued to 43 OTU but suffered an undercarriage collapse at Andover on 2/1/45 following a heavy landing. Repaired and back on unit strength, MZ189 was later ferried to 20 MU on 14/2/46 for sale to the R.Neth.A.F. Via 47 MU on 24/10/46, '189 was shipped ex-UK on 28/10/46 through Dagenham docks, probably for use in Indonesia with No.6 ARVA (see MZ125). See also page 167
- 315 MZ190 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 2/4/43, but was written-off on the 17th. when its pilot attempted a landing in a small field in hilly country at Tarring Neville, Sussex. The aircraft hit a fence, causing it to overturn.

- 316 MZ191 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 3/4/43, but sustained Cat.B damage on 23/7/43 when it stalled during a climb-out from a valley near Senny Bridge, Brecon and struck a bank. As a result it was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 5/11/43. On 10/1/44 it was transferred to 47 MU for packaging prior to shipment to Hackle aboard SS 'Fort La Raisca'(?), departing ex-UK on 7/2/44, and arriving in Hackle on March 8th. No further details are known apart from being struck off charge during the census of 1/1/47.
- 317 MZ192 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 3/4/43, but transferred to 662 Squadron on 13/8/43. On 11/11/43 it was re-issued to 43 OTU with whom it remained until 14/2/46 when ferried to 20 MU. Sold to the R.Neth.A.F. on 17/10/46, '192 was conveyed to Dagenham docks on 28/1/47 and shipped out aboard a Dutch naval vessel. It is known that MZ192 was re-serialised R80 and used by No.6 ARVA in Indonesia, and at one time carried the name 'Air Devel', but its fate remains unknown.
- 318 MZ193 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 662 Squadron on 13/8/43. On 11/11/43 it was re-issued to 43 OTU, but was written-off after a pilotless take-off on 13/8/44. Beforehand the engine had been running while the aircraft was unattended, and subsequent ly it moved forward, took-off, stalled and dived into the ground, catching fire as it did so.
- 319 MZ194 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 662 Squadron on 13/8/43. On 12/4/44 it was re-issued to 443 Squadron RCAF, but after a short spell with 83 Group Servicing Unit (from 15/6/44) it was ferried to 20 MU on 3/7/44. Issued to RAF Leeming on 5/12/44, '194 was returned to 20 MU on 26/3/45. From here it was returned to Taylorcraft for a major inspection and overhaul, after which it was flown back to 20 MU on 13/9/45 for storage. Eventually MZ194 was sold to the R.Neth.A.F. and via 47 MU was taken to Dagenham for shipment aboard a Dutch naval vessel on 21/1/47, and was probably used in Indonesia. (See MZ125 etc.)
- 320 MZ195 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 662 Squadron on 13/8/43. On 13/4/44 it spent a short spell with 652 Squadron until 23/5/44 when issued to 439 Squadron RCAF. From 3/9/44 '195 was allotted to 2nd. TAF Comm. Squadron until 29/11/44 when it was ferried to 20 MU. Following an overhaul at the manufacturers, MZ195 was conveyed to Liverpool docks on 3/4/45 via 222 MU having been sold to the R.A.A.F. Shipped out on 26/4/45 aboard SS 'Trojan Star', it arrived at Sydney on 10/6/45 and was later allotted the serial A11-38, eventually being civilianised as VH-RCT.
- 321 MZ196 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43, until 15/6/44 when issued to 317 (Polish) Squadron. After a short spell with 84 Group Servicing Unit (from 3/8/44) it was ferried to 20 MU on 15/9/44 for disposal. (Air Ministry records at this stage are slightly confusing, for MZ196 is then recorded as being sold to the R.Neth.A.F. on 12/1/45, but written-off on 6/12 — either 1944 or 1945. There have been no reports of its operation with the Dutch Air Force, but other sources suggest that it was civilianised in India as VT-CGF — comments welcome.)
- 322 MZ197 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. During early 1944 '197 was issued to 181 Squadron, but on April 4th. was damaged at Merston airfield, Surrey when with a non-flying officer in the cockpit, the pilot swung the prop, where upon the aircraft moved forward and into a boundary hedge. Returned to Taylorcraft for repairs on the 14th. MZ197 was ferried later to 20 MU on 17/6/44. On 19/7/44 it was passed to 47 MU for packaging, prior to shipment to the R.A.A.F. From Liverpool docks '197 was shipped aboard SS 'Samanco' with MZ122 etc. and later received the serial A11-11.
- 323 MZ198 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 4/4/43, and later transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. MZ198 is shown as being written-off on 23/2/44 following a flying accident, although 660 Squadron records do not show it, suggesting that it had since passed to another unit before its accident.
- 324 MZ212 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 4/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. On 8/6/44 '212 was issued to 331 Squadron, a Norwegian Spitfire unit and part of 132 Wing, but shortly afterwards was taken back to the manufacturers for repair/overhaul. Repairs having been completed, '212 was picketed out at Rearsby, when it was struck by AOP.5 RT526 being taxied by an A.T.A. pilot. Eventually on 15/10/44 it was repaired and delivered to 20 MU, but transferred to 222 MU on 9/12/44 having been sold to the R.A.A.F. Via Glasgow docks it was shipped to Australia on 27/12/44, arriving at Sydney on 17/2/45, after which it received the serial A11-25. (The ground collision at Rearsby occurred on 31/8/44)

- 325 MZ213 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 10/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. On 28/4/44 it was issued to the Polish squadron, 317, but sustained damage (Cat.A) the same day. Returned to Taylorcraft for repair, '213 was later ferried to 20 MU on 21/6/44, passing to 47 MU on 20/7/44 for packaging and shipment to Australia. Via Liverpool docks MZ213 was shipped aboard SS 'Samanco' (with MZ122 etc) and later received the serial A11-12.
- 326 MZ214 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 10/4/43 but sustained Cat.B damage on 30/5/43 at Park Farm, Stapleford Tawney when after a stall at six feet the under-carriage collapsed during a heavy landing. On 5/6/43 it was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs, but was back on squadron strength on the 22nd. On 21/10/43 it was ferried to 20 MU for release to 43 OTU on 26/4/44. Another accident occurred on 21/5/44 when after hitting a bump during a take-off at Oatlands Hill, Wilts. the aircraft side-slipped into the ground, necessitating its return to Rearsby for repairs on the 24th. Later, on 8/7/44 '214 was ferried to 20 MU for release to 22 EFTS on 20/7/44 until returned to 20 MU (believed to be on 1/9/45). On 19/9/46 MZ214 was sold to the R.Neth.A.F. and shipped ex-Dagenham on 21/10/46 to Indonesia aboard a Dutch naval vessel. With No.6 A.R.V.A. it received the code letter 'O' but its fate remains unknown.
- 327 MZ215 Delivered to 20 MU on 13/4/43 for issue to 657 Squadron on 10/5/43. On 5/9/43 it was transferred to 661 Squadron but was declared Cat.B on 14/9/44 probably as a result of a flying accident. Repairs do not appear to have been considered worthwhile, for MZ215 was struck off charge on 28/12/44.
- 328 MZ216 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 15/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. '216 was issued to 310 Squadron (134 Wing) but was returned to Rearsby for overhaul/repair on 31/7/44, completion of which it was ferried to 20 MU on 12/9/44. On 11/12/44 it was sold to the R.Neth.A.F. and allotted the code letter 'C' with No.6 (Dutch) Squadron. Later it was re-serialled R-3 but its fate remains unrecorded.
- 329 MZ217 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 17/4/43, but was damaged at Stapleford Tawney on 14/6/43 when it moved forward into a fence while unattended. Returned to Taylorcraft for repairs on 1/7/43, '217 was later ferried to 20 MU on 14/9/43 but transferred to 47 MU on 8/10/43 for packaging prior to shipment to India. Aboard SS 'Fort Simpson' '217 departed the UK on 14/11/43, arriving in Bombay on 31/12/43, and possibly used by 656 Squadron in India. Eventually, on 31/10/46 MZ217 was sold privately in India for civilianisation, but does not appear to have been registered unless it has connections with VT-CGF (MZ196) or VT-CIU, both of which remain to be positively identified.
- 330 MZ218 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 11/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. On 8/6/44, it was issued to Free French 341 Squadron (145 Wing) until transferred to 135 Wing on 31/8/44. On 7/9/44, '218 was issued to 4 Squadron, until returned to Taylorcraft on 9/1/45 for overhaul/repairs. Ferried to 20 MU on 8/4/45 it was later issued to 222 MU on 17/6/45 after sale to the R.A.A.F. On 4/8/45 the airframe was shipped ex-Swansea docks aboard the 'Tai Pingyang' arriving in Sydney on 9/9/45, after which it received the serial A11-42, and subsequently civilianised as VH-WAJ.
- 331 - Not built. Probably used as a 'spare' fuselage.
- 332 MZ219 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 11/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. Following a spell of being grounded, it was returned to Taylorcraft on 24/7/45 for a major inspection, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 27/2/46. On 23/9/46 MZ219 was sold to the R.Neth.A.F. and via 47 MU was shipped ex-Dagenham on 21/10/46, later being operated in Indonesia with the serial R-64.
- 333 MZ220 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 15/4/43, but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. On 13/9/44 it was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 30/11/44. Sold to the R.A.A.F. MZ220 was conveyed to 222 MU for packaging on 1/1/45 and shipped ex-Liverpool docks on 28/1/45 aboard SS 'Port Chambers'. After its arrival in Sydney on 29/3/45 '220 received the serial A11-27. and was finally civilianised as VH-BCK.
- 334 MZ221 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 12/4/43 but transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. On 8/6/44 it was issued to 312 Squadron (134 Wing). until 11/7/44 when transferred to 74 Squadron. Following a minor flying accident the same day, it was returned to 312 Squadron on 9/8/44 until 28/9/44 when issued to 345 Squadron (141 Wing), passing to 340 Squadron on 9/11/44. On 15/2/45 '221 was issued to 341 Squadron and on 22/3/45 to 329 Squadron, with whom it remained until 20/3/46 when it was ferried to 20 MU. On 22/8/46 MZ221 was declared Cat.B and was taken to the manufacturers for repairs, after which it returned to 20 MU on 28/10/46 from where it was sold to the Royal Hellenic Air Force. Via 47 MU on 24/12/46 for packaging, '221 was shipped ex-Cardiff docks on 21/1/47 aboard SS 'Glenwood' (with MZ160 etc.) arriving at Piraeus on 8/2/47. Its fate remains unknown.

- 335 MZ222 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 13/4/43, but was written off on the 30th. at Great Waltham, Essex after attempting to land in a field too small for an Auster. It seems that repairs were considered for on 14/5/43 '222 was returned to Rearsby, but was finally struck off charge on 26/5/43.
- 336 MZ223 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 14/4/43, but was transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. Damaged on 18/5/44, '223 was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs on 7/6/44, until allotted to 22 EFTS on 21/7/44, and coded "B". Subsequently on 3/4/46, it was ferried to 20 MU and remained in storage until sold to the R.Neth.A.F. on 27/9/46 and shipped out ex-Dagenham on 21/10/46 aboard a Dutch Navy Ship.
- 337 MZ224 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 14/4/43 but was transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. Damaged during March 1944, '224 was returned to Taylorcraft and later ferried to 20 MU on 26/5/44, for release to 22 EFTS on 20/7/44 and later coded "C". On 3/4/46 it was returned to 20 MU for storage, eventually being sold to the R.Neth. A.F. on 7/10/46 and shipped ex-Dagenham on the 21st. Shipped to Indonesia, MZ224 was re-serialised R-63 and operated with No. 6 ARVA but its fate remains unknown.
- 338 MZ225 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 14/4/43, but was transferred to 660 Squadron on 15/8/43. On 3/11/43 Lt.B.E. Pursall, RA., was taking part in low-flying practice, when the aircraft struck some trees at Middleton, Hants. and crashed into the River Test. No serious injuries were caused, but MZ225 was written-off as a result.
- 339 MZ226 Delivered to 657 Squadron on 16/4/43, until transferred to 661 Squadron on 5/9/43. On 13/3/44 '226 was allotted to 349 Squadron, but was damaged in a flying accident on 27/8/44. Eventually, on 19/9/44 it was conveyed to Taylorcraft for repairs, before being ferried to 20 MU on 15/10/44 for release to 22 EFTS on 2/11/44. On 29/7/45, MZ226 was returned to 20 MU but its subsequent history is a little vague, for on 29/8/45 it was recorded with the Vickers Civilian Repair Depot at High Post, Wilts. but not struck off charge until 1/11/46 as Cat.E.2.
- 340 MZ227 Delivered to 657 Squadron on 14/4/43, but transferred to 661 Squadron on 5/9/43. On 30/12/43, it was issued to 38 Group Comm. Flight until transferred to 122 Squadron on 5/3/44. A move to 22 EFTS took place on 5/1/45, where it remained until ferried to 5 MU on 21/5/46, and possibly used as a 'hack'. On 23/10/46 '227 was declared Cat.B and returned to Taylorcraft on 28/11/46 for repairs before being re-issued to 20 MU on 16/1/47. Immediately sold to the R. Hellenic A.F. '227 was transferred to 47 MU on the 23rd. and taken to Liverpool docks on 20/2/47 for onward shipment to Piraeus aboard the SS 'Preston' (with MZ133 etc.)
- 341 MZ228 Delivered to 657 Squadron on -/4/43, but transferred to 661 Squadron on 5/9/43. On 12/12/43 it was issued to 84 Group Comm. Flt. but damaged in a flying accident on 8/5/44. After repairs it was issued to 164 Squadron (136 Wing), probably at Thorney Island. On 11/8/44 it was transferred to 85 Group Comm. Sq. at recorded at RAF Heston on 9/9/44. On the 13th. until October 23rd. it was undergoing repairs, after which it was issued to 20 MU on 5/12/44. However, on 2/1/45 '228 was conveyed to 222 MU, and then to Liverpool docks on 11th for shipment to Sydney aboard the SS 'Port Chalmers' (with MZ220). In R.A.A.F. service MZ228 was re-serialised A11-28.
- 342 MZ229 Delivered to 657 Squadron on 16/4/43, but transferred to 661 Squadron on 5/9/43. On 22/6/44 '229 was issued to 133 Wing, until 9/8/45 when re-issued to 43 OTU. On 20/8/45 '229 was declared Cat.B and returned to Taylorcraft for repair on 3/10/45 after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 11/4/46. Sold to the R.Neth.A.F. on 20/9/46, it was taken to Dagenham for shipment on 21/10/46, but no further details are known.
- 343 MZ230 Delivered to 657 Squadron on 17/4/43 but transferred to 661 Squadron on 5/9/43. On 13/3/44 it was issued to 222 Squadron (135 Wing) but suffered damage on 14/6/44, Back on squadron strength on 27/7/44, '230 was later transferred to 322 Squadron at Biggin Hill on 10/9/44. Returned to Taylorcraft for repairs on 20/2/45, '230 was afterwards issued to 20 MU on 11/5/45 but transferred to 222MU on 25/6/45 having been sold to the R.A.A.F. Shipped ex-Swansea on 4/8/45 aboard the SS 'Tai Pingyang' (with MZ218) and subsequently became A11-43.

Auster Forum

Royal Navy Austers

We never imagined for one moment that our piece on page 110 would be the last on what has become a most fascinating topic on Naval Austers. Nor do we believe the following to be the final word, but sufficient new information has come to hand that possibly warrants an update at this stage. For the record this supplements previously published information on pages 80 and 110.

After completing its short spell of trials at Ayr with 730 Squadron Auster 1 LB384 was issued to HMS 'Pretoria Castle' for ferry duties, thus becoming a *true* Naval Auster, for 'Pretoria Castle' had been retained by the Navy as a trials carrier, for which the resident unit was 778B Squadron, the Service Trials Unit. When 778B Squadron was disbanded, LB384 is presumed to have passed on to the parent unit, 778 Squadron which may well explain its residency at Ford from at least November 1945 until February 1948. Its exact useage at Ford remains unclear for the present, though Mike Burrow, of Yeovilton, suggests that it may well have replaced Beech Traveller FT491 as the squadron's 'hack'.

We can also expand our notes on the AOP.5s. Firstly from our own records it appears that prior to becoming such, each of the Naval 5's (TJ651, 688 and 704) had an almost inactive life with the R.A.F. They were each built just before the war in the Far East ended, and were taken onto R.A.F. charge at 222 MU High Ercall on July 2nd., July 24th. and August 1st. 1945 respectively. Almost immediately they were shipped out together to the Far East, probably as replacements for 656 Squadron, but by the time that they arrived and were taken onto ACSEA (Allied Command South-East Asia) charge — on October 11th. 1945 — Japanese forces had capitulated.

Whether or not these Austers were then allotted to units is not known, though in the light of no official information to hand, we tend to think that they were probably placed into long-term storage pending the gradual rundown of Allied forces. Subsequently all three were transferred to the Fleet Air Arm during October 1946, on the dates shown on page 110, although they were not officially struck off R.A.F. charge until November 11th.

A.S. Willis, of Connamble, N.S.W. Australia, has delved into his own logbooks to find that he regularly flew two of these AOP.5s — TJ651 and TJ704 — during the period February 12th. to November 22nd. 1947. Both Austers were then on the strength of 791 Squadron, a Fleet Requirement Unit, until that squadron disbanded on June 16th. 1947. Thereafter '651 and '704 were handed over to the Sembawang Station Flight, until their return to the U.K. probably during 1948.

Commander J.E. Farrand writes to us from Weybridge with regard to TJ688. He writes,

"I was a Sub-Lieutenant (A) RNVR and a pilot with 1832 Squadron, based at Culham. During the summer of 1952 I was recalled for full-time training, it being a University vacation, and was sent to join 738 Squadron at Culdrose for a Weapons and Deck Landing course of some six weeks duration. When the idea of deck-landing demonstration was first mooted, I was asked if 1832 Squadron might lend its Auster, and I volunteered to ferry it from Culham to Culdrose for the purpose. On the Friday afternoon before the weekend preceding the Navy Day display, I was flown from Culdrose to Culham aboard a Sea Fury T.20, and on the following day, never having flown an Auster before, I did the usual first solo, second solo, and five hours qualifying time to permit me to ferry the aircraft away with a passenger. On the Sunday I took off for Henstridge in the morning where we fuelled and lunched, but were delayed in taking off for Culdrose until about 1700 hours due to the difficulties in starting the brute ... When we finally arrived at Culdrose dusk was gathering, fog had descended over south-west England, Culdrose was the only airfield open (and that not for long) and there was considerable anxiety on the ground for this slow — 65 knots whatever the Pilot's Notes said) — aircraft without radio and last heard of over Somerset. We eventually landed at Culdrose between a Shackleton and a Canberra, making the runway a very interesting place for a minute or two.

TJ688's last flight took place the following day. Lieutenant Peter Cort, RN., took off for a rehearsal for the forthcoming Navy Day display, at which he intended to demonstrate the origin of deck-landing by alighting on a Queen Mary low-loader rolling along the runway. Culdrose's Commander (Air), Freddie Stovin-Bradford (now



These two views show the Naval Auster 5 TJ704.

The top view shows the aircraft just after it was taken onto R.N. charge, when it carried C1-type roundels and standard wartime fin-flash — identical, in fact, to TJ634. The view was undoubtedly taken at Sembawang, and is supplied to us by Peter Arnold of the B.A.R.G. (Dare we consider the vertical black line beneath the forward side window to be a figure 1)

The lower view of TJ704, kindly loaned to us by Mike Burrow, of the Yeovilton FAA Museum was taken at Stretton, and probably during 1950. By this time '704 had received the post-war D-type roundel and had lost its fin-flash, a standard Naval practice after 1948. Accordingly the legend 'Royal Navy' was also applied above the serial on the rear fuselage.

said to be keeping a pub in Australia), drove the Queen Mary. The initial landing was successful, but Freddie then applied the brakes and the Auster took off again. Lacking even minimal airspeed, it landed a few yards away on one wingtip."

The damage sustained during this accident appears to have been fairly substantial, for the aircraft was subsequently struck off charge and scrapped.

Doug Rough, of the British Aviation Research Group tells us that the Culdrose Air Day was held on Thursday, July 25th. 1952, so that we must assume — until confirmation is available — that TJ688 crashed on Monday July 22nd. 1952.

651 Squadron

Major H.B. Warburton, who figures so prominently in the history of Army aviation has found time to search through his own log-books, and has kindly provided us with the following notes pertaining to the early operations of 651 Squadron with the Auster 1.

It appears that after landing at Algiers during November 1942, several Auster 1s were immediately interchanged between the Squadron's Flights as, of course, one would fully expect. However, for the sake of pure authenticity we must amend one date, for Major Warburton was the pilot of LB275 — mentioned on page 94 — which was actually on the strength of 'B' Flight at Algiers, and test-flown on November 17th. The ferry flight from Didjelli to Bone was actually made on the 21st., and '275 was later flown into the operational area on the 26th.

Another Auster 1 was ferried from Algiers to the front by Major Warburton on January 15th. 1943, when he flew LB284 up to the Squadron H.Q. at Souk El Arba. In fact 'C' Flight had just arrived in North Africa from England, and Major Warburton had returned to Algiers for the purpose of leading that Flight up and into Tunisia. From February 1943 until the end of the North African campaign in July 1943, LB267 (of 'C' Flight) became Major Warburton's personal aircraft, whilst another 'personalised' Auster 1 and flown throughout this period was LB338, by Captain James McGrath, the first Army pilot to be awarded the D.F.C. in World War II.

It appears that we have accounted for — though not identified — every Auster 1 lost by 651 Squadron in the Desert; two destroyed by enemy aircraft and one, flown by Capt. Peter Mackley, shot down by enemy groundfire. It is now known that one other Auster 1 was destroyed on its landing-ground by enemy shell fire. When 651 Squadron moved out from Sousse prior to the invasion of Sicily, Major Warburton stayed behind with the Squadron's rear party with one Auster 1 that had to be disposed of locally. He recalls that it was eventually despatched to a Maintenance Unit at Carthage aboard a Queen Mary low-loader, as it was minus a propellor and no replacement spares were available at the time. Otherwise the remainder of 651's Auster 1s made the crossing to Sicily.

Major Warburton spent a period from August to October 1943 in a local hospital, but on rejoining his squadron at Termoli, in Italy, he discovered that only a handful of Auster 1s remained active, and even those were only used for communications duties from the squadron H.Q. Among those still surviving were LB336, LB365, and LB338 which he last flew on February 22nd. 1944.

As we mentioned on page 96, 651 Squadron steadily re-equipped with Auster AOP.3s, but Major Warburton recalls that this type initially caused various problems. It seems that few pilots had ever actually used flaps, and conversion from the flapless Auster 1 had to be carried out on the spot, though all who progressed to the Mk.3 found flaps to be "a good piece of kit". Major Warburton continues:

"We did however suffer a lot of broken props as initially the AOP.3 was nose heavy and the prop ground clearance small. The Centre of Gravity was improved by fitting 9 lbs. of lead over the stern post and the only thing then not liked about the AOP.3 was its very short endurance, about 1 ½ hours. Several pilots made forced landings out of fuel when over enthusiastic about their task of spotting and not watching the clock, the very elementary fuel gauge adding to the problem."

"Air O.P. Flights normally worked from a Flight landing ground, but could operate as individual sections. A section comprised of a pilot (Captain R.A.), an Engine Fitter L.A.C., R.A.F., a Rigger L.A.C., R.A.F., a Driver Operator (radio operator), a Gunner R.A., and a Driver Batman Gunner R.A. The section vehicle was a 3-tonner four wheel drive TCV — which acted as our home — a motor cycle, and an Auster. Captain Magrath and I worked as two independent sections with the artillery of the French 19 Corps, and aircraft were flown on an individual and not a pool basis."

We are indeed indebted to Major Warburton for this information, but must point out that during his tour in the desert, he did, in fact, hold the rank of Captain.

Taylorcraft Model D/1 Amendments (Auster AOP.1)

With the assistance of several ex-651 Squadron pilots, and some further delving into Ministry of Defence files, some additional information has been unearthed concerning the early operations of that squadron, and of its Model D/1s (AOP.1).

On page 94 we described the arrival of 651 Squadron at Algiers during November 1942. Of those aircraft shipped, LB280 suffered most of the damage encountered en route, and in view of 651's need to reach the fighting zone with no loss of valuable time, this Auster was cannabilised at Husein Dey airfield, on November 19th. to allow maximum aircraft serviceability. It was then 'porteed' aboard a 3-ton lorry from Algiers to Oued Zarga — a distance of some 500 miles — where it was later repaired and assembled.

Some amplification of the facts surrounding Captain Newton's crash on November 28th. 1942 (page 95) is necessary.

At 0900 hours, Captains Newton and Billingham took off from Oued Zarga for the landing-ground at J6444. Over the landing-ground, the two aircraft were intercepted by four Me109s, and Captain Newton's Auster was hit as it landed. However, he managed to jump clear unhurt, but the Luftwaffe made two more runs shooting at the aircraft until it caught fire and was burnt out. Captain Billingham managed to taxi his Auster to safety and was not attacked, but did damage the propellor when the mainwheels fell into a hole. Further delving has revealed that Captain Newton's aircraft was LB273, and this therefore amends our vague reference on page 41.

Another Auster AOP.1, at present unidentified, was lost on December 6th. 1942, when Captain P.J. Wells, on a routine flight from Sedjenanen to Oued Zarga with Auster spares, was killed as a result of direct enemy action. After the wreckage had been discovered two days later, it became clear that two Me109s had shadowed the Auster and chased it off its route and into hilly country, where Captain Wells received a direct hit, and undoubtedly he was killed instantaneously. The Auster entered a dive and crashed near Khanguet Kef Tout, some three miles from his original route.

Other amendments are:

T9120	110	Following the accident on 22/8/43, it was conveyed to Rearsby on the 25th. by which time the prototype had amassed some 950 hours.
LB277	148	actually departed Old Sarum on 1/12/43 for Taylorcraft and was accompanied by LB311 c/n 170 (q.v.)
LB294	165	departed 43 OTU on 2/8/44 on return to Taylorcraft for Cat.B repairs, as did LB312 (171) and LB332 (191).
LB296	166	was despatched from Old Sarum to 20 MU on 7/8/44 having been declared surplus to 43 OTU's requirements.
LB298	168	The accident on 21/6/43 occurred just after taking off from a small field, and resulted in Cat.B damage. It was replaced by NX539 on 28/6/43.
LB314	173	Following the accident on 9/7/43, LB314 was despatched from Old Sarum by road on the 15th. for Taylorcraft.
LB349	208	was conveyed to Taylorcraft for repairs on 20/9/43.

Ray Sturtivant of the British Aviation Research Group has been able to provide some further details on those Auster 1s operated by the A.O.P. Flight of 22 Elementary Flying Training School. LB264 was coded "D2"; LB316 "B2"; LB318 "A2"; and LB321 "E2".

While in use with the R.A.F. Staff College Flight during 1944/5 LB334 carried the code letters "TBR-M". Another code known to be carried on an Auster 1 is the single letter "J", applied to LB379, although with which unit is not known at this stage.

LB373 is recorded as being coded "YT" — letters which properly belong to 65 Squadron. However just after D-Day 65 Squadron and 122 Squadron were part of 122 Wing, within 83 Group, and during May 1945 both squadrons were based at Andrews Field, so that it appears quite likely that LB373 was in fact used by both squadrons, and later acquired the letters of 65 Squadron.

Finally, our supposition that LB375 was allocated to 164 Squadron is confirmed by Ray Sturtivant who reveals that it was coded "FJ" at Turnhouse just after the war — code and location being applicable to 164 Squadron.

Gradually we are solving the fates of these Auster AOP.1s, for it is now known that Major Neathercoat, Commanding Officer of 651 Squadron, visited 144 Maintenance Unit on September 10th. 1943 to arrange the disposal of seven of his squadron's Auster 1s. These aircraft were grounded at Scordia, in Sicily, at the time where the squadron H.Q., 'A' Flight, and 'B' Flight were located. Six of these aircraft were despatched the following day, while the seventh was returned shortly afterwards.

Finally, we are somewhat bewildered to read of several reports in official files telling of American armoured units in North Africa firing at 651 Squadron's Auster AOP 1s in the belief that the Auster was a Ju-87 Stuka "because it had its wheels down." Fortunately at this early stage of the war, American anti-aircraft gunners had not yet mastered the art of actually hitting an aircraft, and so 651 Squadron suffered no losses as a result.

Taylorcraft Model E Amendments (Auster AOP.3)

Many service Austers underwent various unusual roles, and similarly in many cases they were written-off in rather curious circumstances, but to strike off charge an aircraft as a result of an accident, before that accident took place is perhaps even beyond the realms of credibility. In reality, such an event never took place, and so on page 105 the date of MZ118's accident in Italy should read **October 18th. 1944.**

While on this topic, our individual histories of AOP.3s have been type-set well in advance of publication, and subsequent pursual of 43 OTU records has revealed the following new information which relates to this issue.

MZ169	294	Although allotted to RAF Northolt on 21/5/44, it was not actually flown there until the 26th. after which it was used by the Station Flight.
MZ178	303	Again 43 OTU records show that it actually arrived at Old Sarum, from Taylorcraft on 15/11/43. We have found no evidence to support our theory of a flying accident in 1944, but alternative records show that both MZ178 and MZ187 (q.v.) were collected from Oatlands Hill on 24/5/44 by 50 MU for onward conveyance to Taylorcraft. MZ187 is later shown as being received by the makers on 5/6/44.
MZ186	311	The accident occurred at Wylie during a routine navigation and concealed landing practice. It was while performing the latter that the starboard wing struck a 70-foot poplar tree during a steep turn. Tragically, the pilot, Lieut. M.R.Kitchin died of his wounds later in hospital.
MZ188	313	The accident on 29/2/44 is interesting. Capt. Chadwick of 43 OTU made a heavy landing in a field away from base, causing the port undercarriage to fail. As very little damage had occurred, the aircraft was towed by road back to Oatlands Hill for repairs, but en route an American armoured car collided with it, and in doing so virtually destroyed '188. However, the remains were suitably untangled later by Taylorcraft's repair department.
MZ189	314	was, in fact, not received by 43 OTU from 141 Wing until 25/11/44 when it was flown into Oatlands Hill in company with NJ756.
MZ214	326	The accident at Oatlands Hill occurred on May 19th. after which it was collected by 50 MU on the 23rd. for an overnight journey to Taylorcraft for repairs.

To avoid any confusion with regard to the location of 43 OTU, it must be pointed out that when 1424 Flight was re-styled 43 OTU, the unit was based at Larkhill. On November 19th. 1942 the OTU moved to Old Sarum where it remained until February 17th. 1944 when a further move was made to Oatlands Hill. Later in that year, on August 10th. 43 OTU took up residence at RAF. Andover where it stayed until its post-war move to Middle Wallop.

Mr. B.W. Moores of Worcester Park has raised an interesting point concerning the actual designations of early A.O.P. variants, and wonders why the Model E became the AOP.3 whilst the Model F became the AOP.2 instead of being allocated in what otherwise appears to be a normal sequence. Well, in short we do not know, quoting only from previously published works and authentic M.O.D. sources, and having no wish or reason to challenge these sources continue to perpetrate these previously acknowledged designations. Despite this we do admit to having come across the AOP.3 as being referred to as the Model F in some Company papers, including the house journal, Auster News. However in the light of other information available we believe these references to be erroneous — unless somebody can prove otherwise.

Further to this we have recently unearthed a most interesting document in official archives; that being the minutes taken at an Air O.P. meeting held at the War Office on October 8th. 1942. One item taken from this document quotes that "production of the Auster AOP.1 aircraft should reach 85 by the end of 1942" and that "three Lycoming engines are already now in the U.K. and a production rate of fifty AOP.2s per month is envisaged as from April 1943, until the present order for 750 is completed." As recorded on page 34 the mid-Atlantic situation and American demands for Lycoming priority precluded bulk deliveries of engines for the AOP.2. However, the figures quoted are interesting.

Our inclusion of the photograph showing the raised cockpit experiment (on page 83) has prompted several ex-Auster employees to cast their memories back, and it appears that the aircraft involved was, after all, the Model D G-AGDB. If that is the case, isn't that rear side window somewhat unusual. What is more we now hear that an AOP.3 was fitted with a similar modification. Any thoughts on this one ?

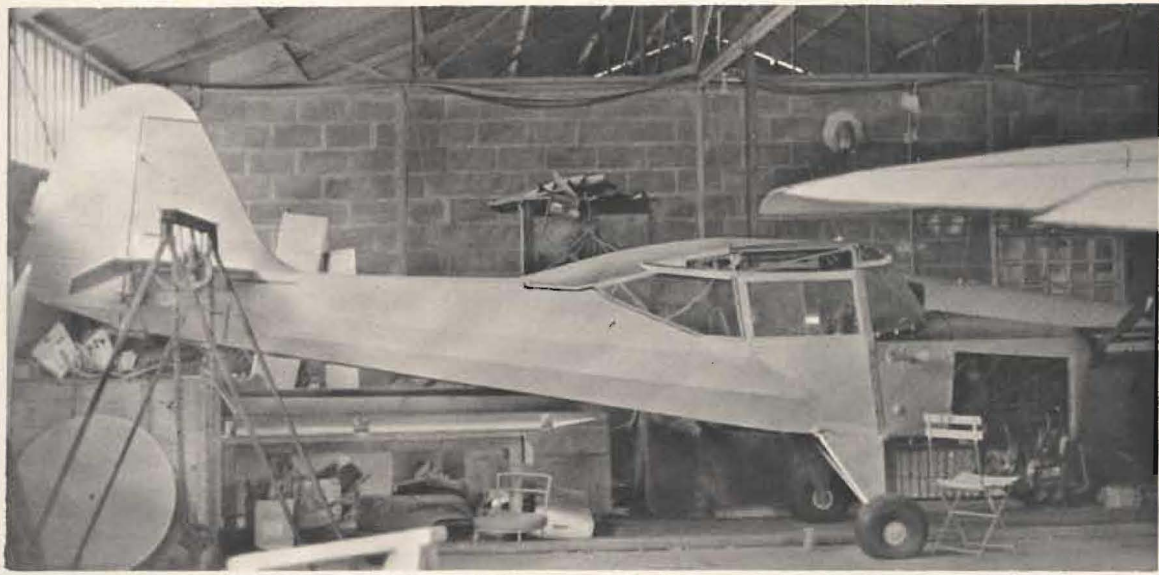
The photograph of a ski-equipped Model C on page 67 has evoked interest from Mr. Moores, who points out that *two* foot rests are clearly in evidence. An interesting point is therefore raised as to whether the Model C was in fact built with a port door, though certainly the prototype, G-AFNW, was only fitted with a starboard door as can be seen in our photo-spread on pages 6 and 7. Perhaps somebody can further enlighten us on this one.

Cooper's Query Corner

Our roving photographer, Peter J. Cooper is rarely unable to identify an unmarked aircraft, but this Auster — photographed at Perpignan on November 14th. 1975, — has him baffled.

Indeed this Auster carries no markings whatsoever apart from the legend 'Auster 5D' on its rudder, and so we request some assistance from any French readers. Quite clearly there appear to be some aspects of this aircraft which has us unable to accept it as being a genuine Mark 5D. We agree that the engine is a Gipsy, and that the fin and rudder are of the enlarged style, so indeed fitted to this particular mark. However the cabin's glazed areas are interesting for although the roof is extended rearwards, the side panels have in this instance been partially fabricated. Similarly the front windscreen is rounded, unlike the 5D's characteristic flat perspex screen.

Should any readers be therefore tempted to journey to Perpignan to identify this Auster then we hope that the chair — strategically placed for puzzled enthusiasts to ponder from — still remains, as we hope so does the aircraft. Furthermore we shall be more than happy to publish his findings.



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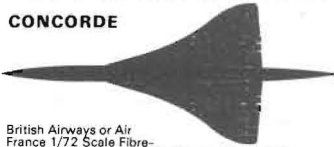
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