

Auster

QUARTERLY



THE STORY OF -

651 Squadron

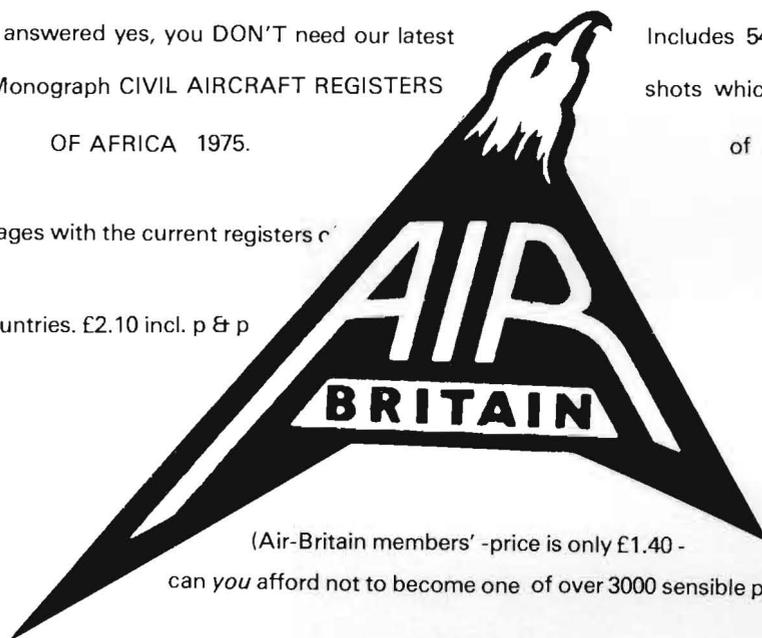
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Auster

QUARTERLY

Volume 1 Number 4

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Editor : Michael Draper

Editorial Office : 40, Turnstone Gardens, Chilworth Park, Lordswood,
Southampton SO1 8EW

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Front cover: One of several preserved Mk.9s, XR241 (alias G-AXRR) flies regularly from Old Warden where it is maintained by the Shuttleworth Trust. This view of XR241 was taken at Old Warden by Peter J. Cooper last year.

Back cover : Beagle A.61 Terrier 2 G-ATDN (c/n B.638) was one of a number of aircraft originally converted by Beagle and stored at Burton-on-the-Wolds for several years. Eventually completed during June 1965, 'TDN was one of the last Terriers built, and was photographed at Elstree by C.E. Cowen on April 7th. 1973.

With issue No.4 we close our first subscription year. Notwithstanding the snags, mainly attributable to Distribution, we feel that there is sufficient reason for continuing our journal, especially as we have implemented an improved distribution service. Also, it is pleasing to see that the Auster is receiving considerable interest, at least in the Aviation press

Within this issue appears the first of an occasional series on Army squadron histories, marking an entry into a field seldom recorded by aviation historians. Although we plan to restrict our entry to the topic of Austers, we highly recommend to devotees of Army aviation the British Aviation Research Group's new-look journal which now features similar unit histories each month. Interested parties should be directed towards Paul Hewins at 8, Nightingale Road, Woodley, Berks, RG5 3LP. Another valuable addition to the growing list of specialist publications is Air-Britain's new Register of Africa, mentioned elsewhere in this issue, a topic which, Auster-wise has been sadly neglected over the years. We do know of a Taylocraft Plus D being resurrected in Rhodesia, if political events do not overtake it, and we hope to feature this one in a future issue. We would welcome news of any other Austers in Africa.

The depth into which Army aviation can be researched is enormous, and one field which intrigues Auster Quarterly is that of unit code letters and individual aircraft markings, an area not often covered in detail, even by using official sources. If any member is prepared to make a study of this, we would be more than pleased to publish his results.

If it appears that we are leaning heavily towards the military use of Austers, then perhaps this is the time to announce that AQ5 will feature the Beagle D5/180 Husky, a type that although produced in relatively small numbers, much has yet to be unearthed. We hope to throw a considerable amount of new light on the Husky, so be sure to renew your subscription now.

In the text of 651 Squadron's history, mention is made of the book 'Unarmed Into Battle'. This was published by Warren & Son Ltd. for the Air O.P. Officers' Association, and written by Major-General H.J. Parham & E.M.G. Belfield. In our view, it is a book well worth re-printing



J/1B Aiglet EI-AMO (c/n 2792) has survived various incidents throughout its life, none less than its return to England from Kenya in 1960 and a subsequent crash at Kilkenny on May 28th. 1968. Complete with inscriptions 'Fly for Fun' and 'The Love Bug' 'AMO' was photographed at Shannon by Peter J. Cooper on 18th. September 1975.



The Terrier 1, G-ARXL was used at Blackbushe by the Three Counties Aero Club during the mid-sixties, and is seen here crossing the threshold to the airport's main 26 Runway.

The final AOP.9 and the last fixed-wing aeroplane built at Leicester for the Army was XS238. For much of its life, XS238 flew with 651 Squadron, the history of which appears on page 93.



The Auster Story

– PART FOUR

Although by 1951 production of military Austers only amounted to a few AOP.6s and T.7s for the R.A.F. there were still areas that necessitated the use of the Auster as an instrument of war. Study of 651 Squadron's history illustrates this point as far as that unit was concerned, while in the Far East, 656 Squadron was involved in a campaign that was to last for more than a decade. This particular squadron had virtually been in action since V-J Day, and for some considerable time after the war operated in the East Indies during the Dutch struggle there. After the squadron had returned to Singapore in 1948, it was involved in the Malayan troubles where it provided continuous assistance to British forces against well trained and organised bandits.

But further north, in Korea trouble was brewing that was to launch America into a war only surpassed by the recent Vietnam debacle. Allied forces were drawn into the Korean War following the formation of the Commonwealth Division in 1951 to which was attached two R.A.F. Air O.P. Flights. The first unit, 1903 Air O.P. Flight had been reformed in July 1948 as part of 656 Squadron until it was given independent status during August 1949 and saw service in Malaya and Hong Kong. From Hong Kong 1903 Light moved up to Korea with its Auster AOP.6s during October 1951.

The other unit to see service in Korea was 1913 Flight, and designated as a Light Liaison Flight, having been formed in June 1951 specifically with this theatre in mind. After a brief period of training and working-up in North Wales, 1913 embarked for Japan towards the end of August. The Flight's Austers were assembled at Iwakuni from where they were flown directly across to the battle zone. These two Flights, 1903 and 1913 gained a fair reputation in Korea for their services to the Commonwealth Division and the American Army against well-camouflaged and extensive communist positions, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Whereas the entry into the Korean War by these two units was significant in itself, one other factor of similar historic importance can be realised at this stage, that being the involvement of the Glider Pilot Regiment. The Regiment had originally been formed in 1941 during a period when the R.A.F. was unable to provide the aircrew to fly the gliders of the airborne forces. Thereupon the Glider Pilot Regiment trained its own men 'from the ranks' as it were, a move that had other obvious advantages at the time. After the war glider training virtually ceased and consequently the Regiment was reduced to only one squadron. But one of the results of the last war was the growing awareness that Austers were often required for tasks other than Air O.P. - communications flights, casualty evacuation, air despatch letter services, etc. - as indeed they had done with some considerable success. Few, if any, of these non-gunnery tasks however required a trained gunner officer, and they simply diverted Air O.P. aircraft and pilots from their primary role and function.

In 1951 the decision was therefore taken to form Light Liaison Flights in much the same manner as the straightforward Air O.P. Flights, but crewed by men from the Glider Pilot Regiment. Thus 1913 Flight, the second such authorised unit to be formed was able to relieve 1903 Flight of almost all non-gunnery sorties in Korea, although in time the Flight was to become involved in counter-bombardment and reconnaissance duties.

The ceasefire in Korea eventually came on July 27th. 1953, the two Auster Flights being the only R.A.F. units to take an active part in that war. But while Auster 6s and 7s battled in the Far East, the main problem facing the Rearsby design team was to produce a successor to these aircraft.

In conjunction with the Army and the Ministry of Supply, Austers interpreted the Army's requirements by producing their private venture Model S. Blackburn & General Aircraft had, by 1950, developed its new and promising Bombadier engine, and when the Auster S took to the air early in 1951 it did so with this engine, and appeared to outwardly resemble a Mk.6 but with a large fin and rudder and large low-pressure mainwheels. For some while previously, Austers had considered the Bombadier for design studies; it had been specified for a two-seat basic training aeroplane project, the Auster A9, to meet Air Ministry specification T16/48. Two other highly-competitive designs had also been submitted by other British companies, the Handley-Page HPR.2 and the Percival P.56, both winning development contracts, while the latter design eventually emerged as the R.A.F.'s Provost basic trainer.

Although the Model S was looked upon as an interim AOP.6 replacement and thus very much a test-bed for various refinements, the Bombadier 702 engine had been flight-tested during 1950 in a standard AOP.6 (VX125), and the Model S (WJ316) simply projected the Company's belief that the engine was the ideal basis for future A.O.P. designs. Accordingly, the Model S became a development and demonstration prototype while the design office continued to develop new designs around the Bombardier engine, one of which, the Model B1 appeared with a mid-wing layout. However, the high-wing concept proved more satisfactory, and in time the Model B5 was selected by the Army as its Mk.6 replacement under the service identity, Auster AOP.9.

Producing new A.O.P. designs for the Army naturally became a major priority, but one other design to meet Army requirements was the Auster Model B3 target drone. Somewhat based on the American OQ-3 drone, the B3 was built, in true Auster tradition with a welded steel tubular frame fuselage, as was the thirty-seven foot long launch ramp which allowed the design to dispense with normal undercarriage. A total of 149 Model B3's was constructed for the British Army.

Another entirely new and novel design aimed to meet other Army demands in 1951 was the large Model B4. As can be seen in the accompanying illustration, the B4 was built with a completely revised fuselage, with large outward-opening doors aft of the cockpit. In fact these doors were removable, allowing for small loads to be air-dropped. However, the sole prototype appeared with an 'ambulance' layout, allowing for two stretchers in bunk fashion, while provision for a third was made alongside the pilot.

The B4 (or Auster Ambulance, as it became generally known) was powered, like the Model S, by the Blackburn Bombadier 702 engine. This feature was not coincidental, for in fact most of the main components were designed to be interchangeable with the Model S, offering favourable maintenance procedures should the Army have bought both types. As it turned out, both aircraft were evaluated at the A.&A.E.E. at Boscombe Down, but neither design reached production status.

Apart from rigorously trying to meet the Army's future needs, Auster's design team under Chief Designer, R.E. Bird, kept pace with the pulse of civil aviation and continued development of previously successful formula of post-war designs. Work began during 1951 on the Company's first fully aerobatic aeroplane which appeared during the May of that year styled, rather curiously, as the J/5F Aiglet Trainer, for although its name suggests an association with the earlier J/1B it was in name only. The J/5F was, like the J/5 series built around the Gipsy Major engine but with a slightly widened fuselage stressed to allow a fully aerobatic capability. In order to improve the rate of roll, shorter span wings, being 32 feet instead of the normal 36 feet, were fitted. The slightly widened fuselage allowed four seats to be installed as standard, so that apart from being an ideal aerobatic trainer, the J/5F promised to be popular as a normal touring aircraft. Towards the end of the year, the J/5F was placed into production with initial deliveries being made during January 1952. Some ninety J/5F's were built taking its production run into mid-1954, many of which were for overseas buyers including a batch of seventeen for the Pakistan Air Force while at home, the Airways Aero Association at Croydon bought five, registered G-AMTA to 'E'. To emphasise the liveliness of the J/5F one example, G-AMOS was used by Tom Hayhow to set up no less than twenty-eight point-to-point records across Europe, until he tragically died from exposure after a forced-landing in the Austrian Alps on April 10th. 1953.

Several versions of the Aiglet Trainer were produced, including the sole J/5K, G-AMMS (c/n 2745). This version was simply a standard J/5F but fitted with a 155hp Cirrus Major 3 engine. Receiving its initial C.of A. in March 1952, 'MMS became famous for several years at many air displays in the hands of Randal Porteous, but despite the regularity of his displays, no further J/5K's were in fact produced.

By 1954 the apparent success of the J/1B Aiglet and J/5G Cirrus Autocar as agricultural aircraft both home and overseas led the Company to view this area as an entirely separate market. Mr. Bird, Auster's Chief Designer flew to New Zealand for discussions with local top-dressing companies in order to meet an obvious need for a purely agricultural aircraft. As a result, after his return to Rearsby, Austers conceived the Model B6, a low-wing design using many standard Auster parts, but with a completely re-designed fuselage, which featured a large hopper tank located between the pilot and a 185hp Continental engine. However, with the B6 design Austers found themselves having to overcome a multitude of problems, none less than the inability to refill the hopper easily, it being situated directly underneath the wing. By returning to the drawing-board, the Design Office came up with the much-modified Model B8 that was to emerge as the ungainly-looking Auster Agricola. The B8 was powered by the large 240hp Continental O-470-B flat-six engine, and the hopper problems were solved by placing it underneath and slightly aft of the pilot. This feature also provided the pilot with a much better view than offered by the projected B6, and so production of the B8 was authorised, a batch of fourteen being laid down for New Zealand.

Various differences were incorporated into Agricolas to meet various customers' requirements; one New Zealand aircraft was fitted with internal spray bars and projecting nozzles, while several others, notably Crop Culture's G-APFZ had external bars. In the event, the B8 was declined of success after only six of the New Zealand order had been built. The remainder of this order was cancelled, as was a proposed B8A variant which was abandoned at an early stage. Two Agricolas that had been laid down for New Zealand were completed for Bookers Sugar Estates Ltd. in British Guiana and for Crop Culture in the U.K., and with that British manufacture of the B8 closed.



Auster AOP.5 TJ366 was used by Taylorcraft to test skis at Rearsby during the winter of 1944/5. This view makes an interesting comparison with an earlier experiment illustrated on page 67 (Taylorcraft Photograph No.1084/32)

Auster AOP.6 A403 was one of four such aircraft operated by the Arab Legion AOP Flight in Jordan. A403 crashed at Amman airfield early in 1950 whilst avoiding Royal Bodyguard horsemen. The incident closely followed the assassination of King Abdullah. (Mal Skerchley Collection)





Auster 5D was originally one of the large batch of Auster 5s converted by R.K. Dundas Ltd. The designation '5D' denotes the replacing of the Lycoming 0-290 by a Gipsy Major 1, of similar power. Since this view of 'NIJ' was taken at Thrupton, it has been acquired by Major M. Somerton-Rayner, in whose hands it is fast reverting to Mk.5 standard (Lycoming engine and small fin/rudder) and with standard camouflage will be presented to the Museum of Army Aviation at Middle Wallop as a flying exhibit. (Peter J. Cooper)

During November 1953 the R.A.F. declared obsolete nearly all of its remaining Mk.5s and these joined the growing number of other surplus aircraft (Tiger Moths, Proctors, etc.) that were being demobbed in large quantities, and finding new owners with Flying Clubs throughout the Country. As 1953 closed, a large batch of thirty-four Lycoming-powered Auster 4s and 5s were purchased from the Ministry by R.K. Dundas Ltd. and which were converted (apart from several exceptions) at the Company's Elstree base, being registered in the range G-ANHL to G-ANIJ. Another Auster 5 was purchased from service stocks by H. Law & Partner and converted at Croydon as G-ANDU, for use by Sky Neon Aviation Co. Ltd. This Auster was fitted with underwing neon lighting for night advertising purposes, and was soon put to work over the Birmingham area, displaying the legend 'Smoke Three Threes'. Such was this conversion that Austers applied to it the designation — Auster 5M, although a similar modification had already been successfully tested by another Auster 5 (G-AJYP) back in 1951/2 without any change of designation

The advantages of operating Gipsy-powered Austers at this time, as opposed to the Cirrus engine were now becoming increasingly clear, mainly attributable to the longer overhaul life of the Gipsy, and the fact that Gipsy engines and spares were more readily available, especially since the R.A.F. had begun to release quantities of Tiger Moths etc. This tempted several operators of Autocrats to consider the possibility of fitting the Gipsy into their aircraft, as indeed had the J/5 been fitted in Australia when the stringent import regulations demanded the installation of locally-built Gipsy engines.

One problem arose when it was realised that in the J/5, the engine was set further back into the forward fuselage, whereas when the Gipsy engine was fitted to a standard J/1, it produced an increase in fuselage length by several inches. Thereupon, in order to offset this without affecting the centre of gravity too much, an enlarged fin and rudder (as fitted to the Aiglet) was found to be necessary. Reference to the Aiglet can be more than a passing one for outwardly, the converted J/1 appeared identical to the J/1B, the prototype of which was itself a converted J/1. In fact minor differences in the fuel system became the sole feature distinguishing the earlier J/1B to what was now termed, the J/1N Alpha. Most of the fifty-odd conversions were carried out by the aircraft owners themselves, but subsequently during 1957 Austers took up the theme by producing factory built J/1Ns, the majority of which were delivered to overseas customers.

In the meantime Austers had produced a new variant for the Services, based on the experience gained from the Model S programme. Conceived and developed almost from scratch, the new Model B5 was to become the last fixed-wing Auster for the Army, under the service designation, Auster AOP.9.

651 squadron

Badge: A seashell fired.

Motto: Dirige (Direct)



Notes regarding A.O.P. Squadrons

The role of those A.O.P. squadrons formed during the last war can at best be summarized by a paragraph taken from the book 'Unarmed Into Battle'.

'The Squadrons themselves had a dual personality. For although officially Royal Air Force units, they were officered almost entirely by the Royal Artillery, all the pilots and many of the men being Gunners. They operated far forward, in the area of the leading Divisions, and often their landing grounds were within enemy gun range. Like all Royal Artillery units, their job was to help provide the fire support for the infantry and armour in the front line, regardless of risk to themselves.'

This then is the basic difference between normal R.A.F. squadrons and those that we are discussing here. The A.O.P. Squadrons were generally divided into 'Flights - ('A', 'B', 'C', etc.) but as each Flight was often attached to a different Artillery unit, they operated from their own landing grounds, sometimes separated by a considerable distance. Therefore when a squadron location is given, it can be interpreted that unless qualified there was based the Squadron H.Q.

In compiling this feature, we should like to express our gratitude to the staff of the Leicester Museum of Technology, and in particular to Peter Stoddart, and to the Air Historical Branch of the Ministry of Defence in providing access to the necessary documents. Also to Major Clifton-Moore of the Museum of Army Aviation in enabling us to research into their records, and for providing us with the accompanying Squadron crest. For the saga of 651's Combined Ops. Flight, we are grateful to Major R.V. Walters of the Air O.P. Association.

Squadron History

To 651 Squadron goes the honour of being the premier Air O.P. Squadron, formed almost thirty-five year ago at Old Sarum, on August 1st. 1941.

Not only was it the R.A.F.'s first Air O.P. squadron and the first of many to see operational service during the war, but it was as a result of the success of this unit that Taylorcraft received the large wartime contracts for Austers throughout and after the war. As a matter of some pride and of course the historic importance of such an occasion, the Army has maintained the number of this squadron almost continuously to the current day.

The initial work-up to squadron status is sufficiently detailed on pages 8-15, describing how, under Sqn. Ldr. E.D. Joyce, 651 Squadron was formed from 'D' Flight with the promise of impressed Taylorcraft Model C's.

Once formed, 651 got down to training for the task that lay ahead, that of training volunteer pilots in the complicated process of efficient Air Observation. Operational status seemed a long way off — not until August 8th, some eight days after the unit's formation did 651 learn that the first batch of impressed Model C's (ES956-960) had arrived at the manufacturer's works at Leicester for overhaul. In fact, the first of these aircraft (ES958) did not arrive at Old Sarum until August 27th, by which time the squadron had already arranged to borrow at least three Piper Cubs (BT440, 441 and DG667) from 'D' Flight.

During September 1941, by which time delivery of new aeroplanes had improved, 651 was put under the command of the G.O.C.11 Corps, for Exercise 'Bumper' which proved, as far as Air O.P. was concerned a success, for it was in reality a testing ground under operational conditions. 'Bumper' proved that the squadron could fulfil its tactical role, and if handled properly could be of great use to the Artillery unit with which it worked. Probably as a result of this exercise alone, the War Office asked the Air Ministry for further squadrons to be formed, although it was only too clear that much improvement to the basic aircraft was considered very necessary.

On October 4th. Major H.C. Bazeley, R.A., the instigator of Air O.P. assumed command of 651 Squadron, and from then on most of the flying involved a series of exercises across the south of England, in other words continuing the work initiated by 'D' Flight, but now as an operational unit.

Because of the obvious problems that beset the impressed Model C's, 651's aircraft were flown back to Taylorcraft for the fitment of more powerful engines (see Table 2b, page 14), but before the last conversion had returned to Old Sarum, so new Auster AOP.1s had begun rolling off the Taylorcraft production line. The first production Auster 1 had been flown down to the nearby A. & A.E.E. at Boscombe Down where on June 1st. several pilots from 651 were given the task of carrying out a 150-hour endurance test on it.

The remainder of the squadron was still heavily engaged on exercises with the Army when the first of a batch of Auster 1s (LB269) was received on July 21st. Over the next few days further deliveries of new aeroplanes were made until on the 31st. 651 moved north to Dumfries for more exercises and manoeuvres. On August 11th. a further move was made to Kildale with the order — 'Prepare for mobilization'.

By this time the squadron had been divided into three individual Flights - 'A', 'B', and 'C' - but a fourth relatively little-known unit was the Combined Operations Flight, commanded by Capt. R.W.V. Nethercoat. It had been decided at an early stage to train a group of Air O.P. pilots in this role for operations from short-deck carriers and landings on 'unsuitable' ground strips, such as beaches etc. The Flight was equipped with a number of Vigilants (including BZ100, 104, 105, 107, 108, HL429, 430, and 432) taken on strength at Old Sarum, and which had accompanied the rest of the squadron to Scotland. When the Auster Flights were transferred to Kildale, the Vigilant Flight moved further north to Ayr, where the crews underwent a course of naval spotting and bombardment at the School of Combined Ops. at Dundonnell.

Shortly after 651's arrival in Scotland, the HQ 1st. Army moved south to London for detailed planning for Operation 'Torch' - the invasion of North Africa. Rumours were, of course, rife throughout the squadron, but with two Flights fully mobilised and the Vigilant crews training in naval bombardment, 651 - quite rightly as it turned out - fully expected to be part of the invasion force. But curiously it now appears that the majority of the planners of Operation 'Torch' were totally ignorant of the squadron's existence, let alone the vital role for which it was formed.

On September 1st. 'B' Flight rejoined the rest of the squadron at Kildale after a short detachment exercise at Grangemouth, to learn that during the following day, its four Austers were to accompany those of 'A' Flight to 47 Maintenance Unit at Sealand for dismantling and packaging, prior to being shipped to North Africa. ('C' Flight was destined to remain in the U.K. for some time yet.)

The squadron personnel embarked at Gourock aboard the *Circassia* on November 1st, while the Auster of 'A' Flight (LB 263, 265, 271, and 275) and 'B' Flight (LB269, 273, 276, and 280) were shipped separately as deck cargo, as shown in Table 3b, page 40 etc. Despite an expected air raid imminent, 651 docked at Algiers on November 12th. after an uneventful voyage, none of the eight aircraft suffering serious damage. One mass balance had been broken off and lost, a few stringers broken, ribs bent, and various aircraft suffered tears in fabric, but this was well within the capability of the squadron's servicing party. Within four days, the first aircraft had been assembled at the local civil flying club's airfield at Hussein Dey, just outside the city, Captain Cavendish taking the honour of making the first squadron flight overseas, when he test-flew LB273 on the 16th. During the following day, Major Bazeley and Captains Nethercoat and Warburton flew three Austers to the squadron's first forward base at Didjelli. For this flight the Austers were escorted by a 225 Squadron Hurricane, but during the approach the wind reached gale force, causing one aircraft (LB275) to be blown onto its wing-tip after landing. Fortunately little damage was sustained. The second leg to Bone was made on the 19th. the three Austers being escorted by two locally-based Spitfires.

The use of fighter escort was considered necessary when making these early flights but not without problems. When the three Austers were ferried up to Bone, their escorts were lost after only thirty minutes, and not seen again. The Auster flight plied on alone, and after landing safely made Bone racecourse their forward base, it having been used as a civilian aerodrome previously.

651's first sight of the enemy came during the early evening of November 21st. in somewhat odd circumstances. At exactly six o'clock, a twin-engined aircraft approached Didjelli airfield with full navigational lights. The pilot requested permission to land, made a circuit, and fired a rather unusual multi-star signal which included the correct colours of the day. What appeared to be a Beaufighter then came in low and unmolested, and suddenly opened up with machine-gun fire. It was then realised that the 'Beaufighter' was in fact a Junkers JU-88, and on being joined by second, flew around the circuit for about thirty minutes machine-gunning and dropping flares, and small incendiary bombs. Although the anti-aircraft guns in the Bone area opened up, the Luftwaffe continued to fly around straffing everything in sight, and setting fire to an ammunition dump. Miraculously, no Austers were damaged, but the incident did serve 651 with a very different and more cunning 'enemy' than experienced during the exercise back in England.

Here then came the Air O.P.'s crews first opportunity to confound their many critics, though to all observers it soon became apparent that the same problems that had been encountered with the Model C and C2 back in England were to hinder the Auster 1 against a real enemy. As 651 went into action with 5 Corps across North-West Africa, the crews flew and fought under conditions that were to prove far worse than those encountered by them or any other squadron in later battles. Enemy opposition was considerable, and so consequently flying was kept to a minimum, with only essential tasks being performed. Nevertheless during the squadron's first thirty-seven sorties (between November 24th. and December 7th. 1942) only one aeroplane was lost. This had occurred on November 28th. when two Auster 1s were being flown by Captains Billingham and Newton to a landing-ground (J6444), while en route to the 9/13th. Medium Battery R.A. and the 132nd. Field Regiment's battle zone. Towards the end of the flight the aircraft were set upon by Luftwaffe Me.109s. Billingham managed to land safely although the Auster's fabric was badly holed, but Newton's aircraft received a direct hit, and crashed in flames.

Back in the U.K. 'C' Flight continued to work up to operational status in order to join the rest of 651, and sailed from Glasgow on December 17th. The Combined Ops. Flight, having completed its course at Dundonnell was flown back to Old Sarum where it was unceremoniously disbanded, its Vigilants passing to 1424 Flight.

Captain Nethercoat, who had originally commanded the Combined Ops. Flight had sailed to Algiers with the squadron back in November, but once the battle had started, he was promoted to the rank of Major, and succeeded Bazeley as 651 Squadron's Commanding Officer on February 2nd. 1943. Bazeley, having witnessed the final part of his struggle to build a viable Air O.P. system then returned to England.

By the beginning of February 1943, by which time 'C' Flight was fully operational, the Squadron's distribution was as follows :

'A' Flight	in support of	46 Division
'B' Flight	in support of	78 Division
'C' Flight	in support of	6th. Armoured Division.

The real threat of enemy aircraft, mentioned earlier, can best be described by reproducing a routine report from one of the Squadron's pilots, Captain F.J. Reynolds. Dated April 26th. 1943, it described an incident involving Auster 1 LB281.

'Flying between Sebket El Kourzia and DJ Kournine at 200 feet, I sighted six Me.109Gs at close range, diving steeply towards my aircraft, having been spotted due to the ground below me being unbroken and empty. Curiously the Germans did not open up with gunfire, perhaps believing my Auster to be taking-off and not yet airborne. They dropped four bombs on my starboard bow and two on the port beam throwing my aircraft onto its side. I took evasive action and hid by taking cover in bomb smoke. The port leading edge of the mainplane was damaged by splinters. During the afternoon I got mixed up with another six Me.109s strafing the gun areas but I think that they were quite as surprised to see me as I was to see them. The most unnerving part of this whole affair was the amount of friendly flak flying about in a most unfriendly manner.'

Despite this threat, Allied forces were able to push the German army eastwards across the desert. In the meantime, 654 Squadron, the second A.O.P. unit to serve overseas had landed at Algiers on March 4th. 1943. Initially, 654 worked alongside 651, in support of the newly-arrived 9th. Corps of the 1st. Army, but was soon transferred to the 8th. Army, moving northwards along the coast towards Enfidaville. By this time new Auster AOP.3s had begun arriving in North Africa in quantity, but it seems doubtful that 651 Squadron received any at this stage, the majority passing directly to 654 Squadron.

North Africa had proved a most arduous and difficult proving ground for the Auster, but observers soon

declare that Air O.P. had become an essential part of modern Artillery. Consequently when the Allies had cleared North Africa of Axis forces and prepared for an assault on Sicily — the first attack on Europe — both 651 and 654 Squadrons were earmarked for the campaign. In actual fact 651 Squadron arrived on Sicily the easy way, with its aircraft dismantled aboard Tank Landing Craft, some nine days after the invasion, on July 18th. 1943. Attached to 13 Corps, the Auster 1s were soon assembled and operational, and Flights moved out to Regiments to take part in the northerly advance through Catania, and along the coast to Mount Etna.

There had by now developed a serious situation with regard to the Squadron's equipment. The long and drawn out desert battle had taken a heavy toll, and the attrition rate of Austers had proven relatively high. Just before the Allied landings in Italy, it was decided to stand down two of 651's Flights in order to re-equip with the Auster AOP.3. On August 20th. four new Mk.3s were transferred from 654's stock to equip 'C' Flight, which together with 'B' Flight was fully equipped with the improved version by September 4th. Only 'A' Flight retained their Auster 1s for the Squadron's crossing of the Straits of Messina to the Italian mainland on the 5th. 'C' Flight took the honour of being the first unit to land in Italy, using Reggio as its forward base. In fact, owing to the capitulation of Italy, only one Flight was required for the crossing, but as German opposition stiffened, so the whole squadron was returned to operational status, 'A' Flight with 78 Division at Termoli on the east coast, and 'C' Flight in the mountains with the Canadians advancing on Campabasso.



An Auster AOP.3 takes off from a strip at Fossacesia, Italy, showing clearly the work carried out by airfield construction teams beforehand. Although the official caption fails to give any further details, we believe it to be one of 651's Austers for no other reason that Fossacesia was used by the squadron as it approached the River Sangro area during late 1943. (Imperial War Museum NA 10024)

Although the fighting in Italy was hard, the threat of enemy air opposition soon almost completely disappeared, and pilots were beginning to find that they were able to fly for long periods without being attacked, and also fly at any height as necessitated by the nature of the country and the depth to which they wanted to see. In some instances 'shoots' were observed from as high as 5000 feet.

By late 1943, 651 Squadron concentrated on the Adriatic coast and took part in the battle of the River Sangro, observing from both sides of the river, in support of 5 Corps. This action took them through the winter of '43, until the main offensive during the following spring.

In the meantime, a third Air O.P. squadron arrived in Italy, that being 657 Squadron, which had followed through from Algiers, and across North-West Africa. The squadron arrived at Naples on February 28th. 1944, where a joint Flight was formed from 651 and 657 Squadrons to be known as 'B' (Composite) Flight.

During May 1944, by which time 651 was in process of re-equipping with the Auster AOP.4, the battle for Cassino started on the other side of the Appenines, and as the 5th. and 8th. Armies broke through towards Rome, so 5 Corps advanced up the Adriatic flank. In June, 2 Polish Corps took over from 5 Corps, and 651 worked with them in the advance to Ancona. Initially the crews suffered obvious language difficulties with the Poles, but with practice, this improved considerably. A greater problem for crews was finding suitable landing grounds in this highly-cultivated area, and this was only solved by attaching two R.E. sections from an Airfield Construction Group to the squadron, with autopatrols and bulldozers. During an advance as many as six landing grounds could be prepared by this unit in any one day.

For the assault on the Gothic Line during August 1944, 651 returned to support 5 Corps, with whom they remained for all the assaults across the innumerable rivers that flow from the Appenines to the Adriatic. By the time winter arrived, the front was along the River Senio, and the squadron based in the Forti Farnza area, the squadron's H.Q. being in Count Ciano's villa near Forti. The winter period was very quiet, most of the tasks being counter-battery and destructive shoots, but in March 1945 the war in Italy livened up. During this period 651's Flights worked with almost every Division as they came in and out of the front line: 78 Division, 56 Division, 4th. 8th. and 10th. Indian Divisions, and previously with the 4th. British and 46 Division. The climax to 651 Squadron's operations came during April with a total of 661 'shoots' involving 1135 hours of operational flying. Counter-battery roles became more important for the attack across the Senio, and for much of the time, all of the squadron's twelve Austers were in the air together, each pilot undertaking two counter-battery 'shoots'. Still a priority, as indeed it always had been in the past, was tank-hunting, which required some co-operation with the R.A.F.

A good example of this co-operation is illustrated by a report, dated April 20th. 1945, when Captain Barrow of 651 squadron spotted a German tank hiding in a farmyard near Portomaggiore. Radioing back to base and giving details of the tank's location, a nearby Spitfire squadron was alerted, who despatched one aircraft. Using the Auster to pinpoint his target, the Spitfire pilot then dived down towards the unsuspecting enemy, released his bombs, and scored a direct hit. Captain Barrow then landed his Auster in the next field, and was told of all the gory details by the Italian farmer, who had watched the whole affair from his slit trench in another nearby field.

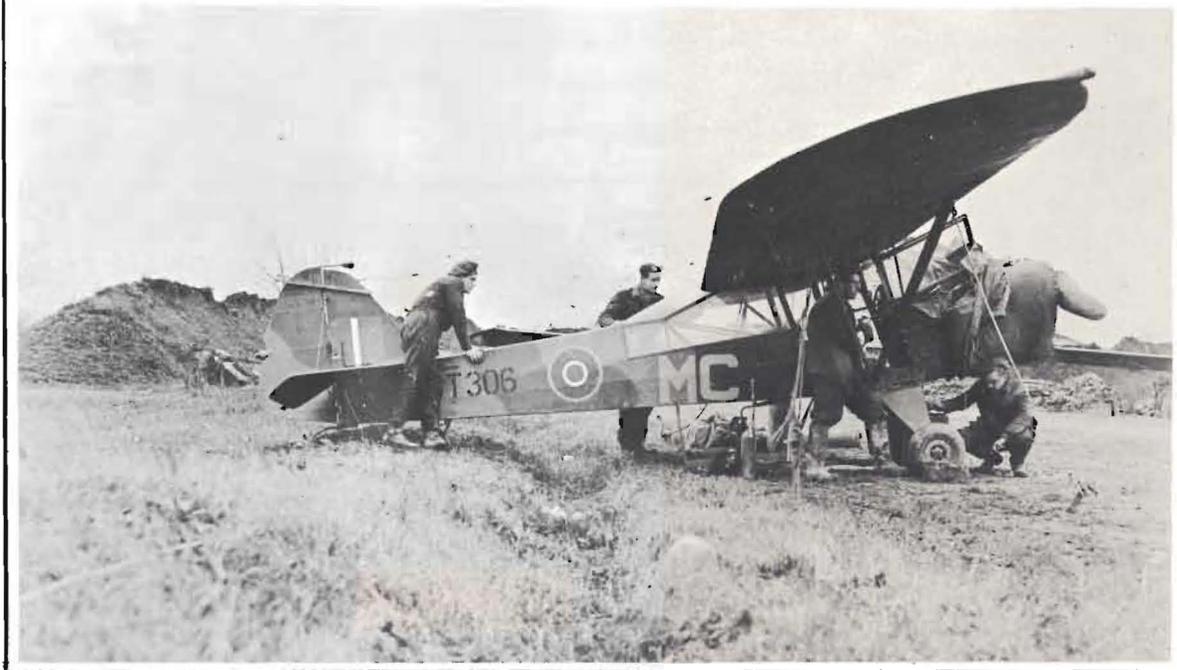
When the Senio was crossed and the thrust along Lake Caniacchio had been completed, two Flights of 651 Squadron were attached to the 6th. Armoured Division, as they broke out towards the River Po. By now the Germans were in full retreat, and 651 spent most of its time searching for opportunity targets, which included numerous tanks, and on one occasion a convoy of two hundred vehicles and groups of troops madly pulling back. As soon as the River Po was crossed, the war was virtually over in Europe. Troops raced for Venice, but the fighting had stopped, and at the beginning of May 1945 651 moved up to Adine, and then as the Armistice was signed, up into Austria and Klagenfurt.

For the squadron's actual arrival at Klagenfurt, we quote from another report prepared by Captain Reynolds:

'During a reconnaissance of the Klagenfurt area in the afternoon of May 8th. I received orders from Major Neathercoat to land in a field near Villach. Major Neathercoat met me here and gave me further orders to proceed to Klagenfurt aerodrome and if it was serviceable (the Royal Engineers were expected to be there) to land. I arrived over Klagenfurt aerodrome, and saw a green Verey light rise from near the control tower. On taxying in I was surprised to see the ground staff was using flags to signal me in. I soon saw that they were Luftwaffe personnel and, presuming them to be acting under orders of the Royal Engineers, I taxied in and switched off. A Lieutenant came up to me as I climbed out of my aircraft. A few minutes conversation showed me that I was the only Englishman on the airfield, and that I had landed amongst the full station personnel armed with all sorts of weapons, and possessing a varied selection of aircraft from FW.190s to Fiesler Storches. I saw that it was up to me to prevent, as best I could, any sabotage to their equipment (as well as any to my aircraft or myself). There followed a rather uncomfortable afternoon and evening bluffing the Station Commandant that I had expected to find things as they were and that my unit was due to arrive at any moment. By dusk my stay was wearing a bit thin when, to my relief, Major Neathercoat appeared in his jeep. He went off to find some infantry to occupy the aerodrome and thirty minutes after dark, they arrived, and I posted them at strategic points with machine-guns covering the hangars and runways.'



These two views illustrate an interesting system of individual coding applied to 651 Squadron's Auster AOP.4s. In the upper view, AOP.4 MT242 is posed by Major Neathercoat over the 8th Army front in Italy, during November 1944. At first we were confused by the code letters 'MA' as these were allocated to 161 (Special Duties) Squadron, but the lower view of AOP.4 MT306 wearing code letters 'MC' suggests a rather unique sequence, although how far it extended to other Austers we do not know. MT306 is seen receiving attention at Count Ciano's villa near Forti during the winter of 1944/5, which suggests that these two aircraft are part of 651 Squadron 'HQ' Flight.



After the war, 651 Squadron found Austria an ideal place to relax. The wooded slopes of the shores of the Worther See proved a well-deserved resting-place, after having been in the front line of fighting since late 1942.

Although by all accounts the war was over in Europe, there was still some considerable tension in the Middle East, and British forces, already exhausted by the war soon found themselves involved in the struggle in Palestine.

651 Squadron were ordered to form a detachment for a tour of duty in Palestine, and so formed 'V' Flight during June 1945. Equipped with four Auster AOP.5s (TJ407, 452, 476 and 486) the Flight departed Klagenfurt on June 11th. and by way of Udine, Rimini (12th), Vasto (13th), Bari (14th), arrived at Taranto on the 15th. with orders to reach the Middle East by the 23rd. The aircraft were then dismantled and shipped to Port Said aboard HMT 'Georgic', arriving on the 21st. Taken to RAF Petah Tiqvo, the Austers were assembled and continued their flight to RAF Ein Shemer where they landed on July 15th. Later as the remainder of the squadron joined the detachment, 651's headquarters was set up at Qastina, but some change of organisation took place at this time. Instead of Air O.P. Squadrons identifying their Flights as 'A', 'B', 'C', etc. these Flights were given almost independent status and allotted numbers in the 19xx series. Hence 651's 'A' and 'B' Flights became known as 1908 and 1909 Flights respectively, which by mid-1947 were based at Ramat David. (The title 'V' Flight had been dropped when the rest of 651 Squadron arrived, and absorbed into 'A' and 'B' Flights.)

During August 1947, two more Flights were sent out to join 651 Squadron, namely 1907 and 1910, although the former was disbanded shortly after its arrival.

The Squadron role in Palestine involved several tasks; passenger-flying, reconnaissance of suspected Terrorist areas, and coastal patrols. Training included deck landings on HMS Ocean, and evasive tactics were practised with co-operation of 32 Squadron RAF Operational 'shoots' were carried out with the 1st. Infantry Division in Transjordan during 1947, and in fact during November 1947 a landing ground was permanently occupied there. By December, 651 became more committed to internal security, patrolling railways, etc. in an effort to curb the large-scale lootings which were continually taking place. As a direct result of one sortie, a party of Jews, dressed as Arabs was captured, and in another instance a large group of Arab train looters was dispersed by a low-flying Auster doing tight circuits around the train.

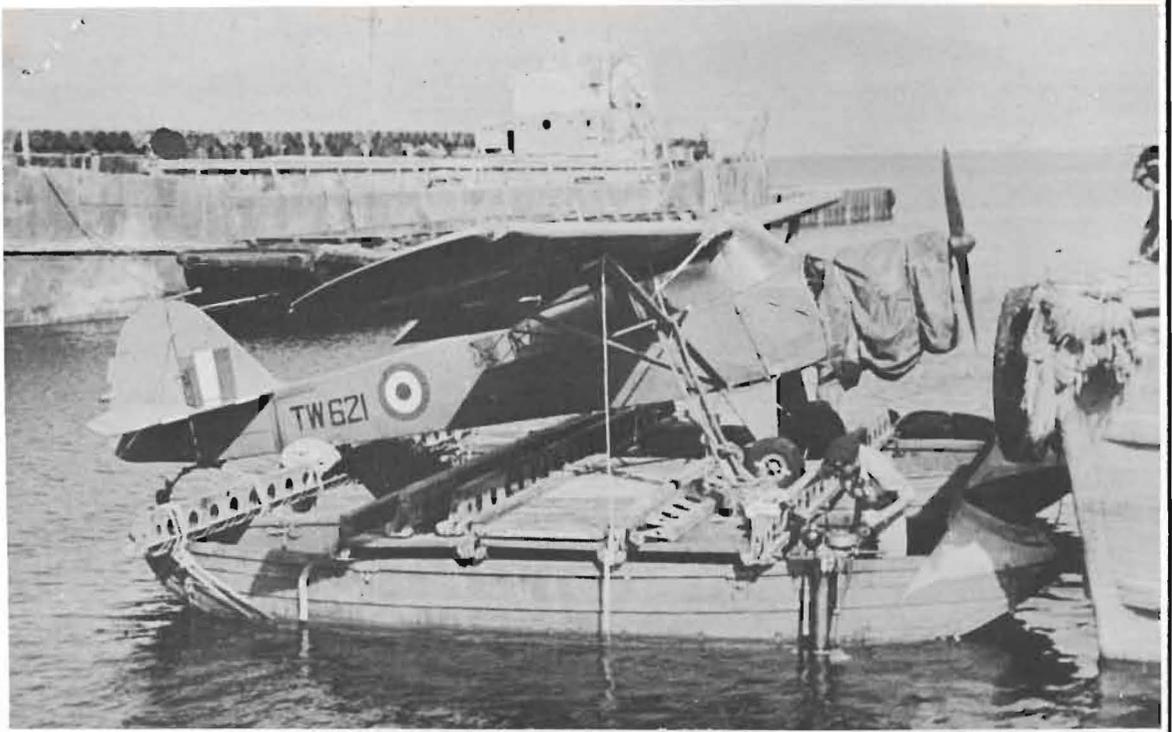
1948 opened in much the same way that 1947 had closed, with 1909 Flight covering the Northern frontier and the Arab mountain strongholds of Jenin and Nablus. One pilot flying to Fayid in the Canal Zone was engaged by an Egyptian fighter near the Palestine border, and yet another pilot was fired at from the rear by an unidentified fighter. The Auster and pilot suffered no damage and, to quote the BBC 'the pilot did not return the fire.'

During February 1948, 651 Squadron started its move towards the north for its forthcoming evacuation by leaving Qastina and re-occupying Petah Tiqva. By May the Austers were grounded owing to the danger of being shot down by Egyptian aircraft, but when the truce came and the State of Israel was proclaimed on May 15th. 1948 orders had already been made for 651 Squadron to quit the Middle East.

Before leaving the area, 651 Squadron provided several of their Auster AOP.6s, which had replaced most of the Mk.5s during 1946/7, for Count Bernadotte's observers of the Truce in Palestine. These aircraft formed the Palestine Truce Observation Flight which remained in the area for some while afterwards.

In July 1948, 651 departed RAF Fayid en route for its new location at RAF Castel Benito (later renamed Castel Idris) with stops at El Adem, Derna, Barce, Benina, Agedabia, Marble Arch, Sirte, and Misurata. By now the squadron began to suffer from two crucial shortages, viz. pilots and aircraft spares. The latter was mainly attributable to the conditions of operating in desert areas; in fact the problems of operating fabric-covered aeroplanes in such conditions was first apparent in 1942 when 651 Squadron first set foot in North Africa. They had still to be overcome, but in the meantime it had become necessary to disband 1909 Flight, in June 1948. However, circumstances demanded continual flying on operational duties, and sometimes for rather bizarre reasons. During the night of February 3rd. 1949, snow with twelve-foot drifts had fallen in the Garian, and over the next few days 651 flew a total of forty hours in locating and rescuing stranded soldiers, mainly from the 52nd. Observation Regiment R.A. Austers also undertook arduous supply-dropping missions to other snow-bound parties in the Tripoli hills.

651 Squadron was by now divided into only two Flights — 1908 and 1910, although the latter was despatched to Asmara during June to support the Infantry Battalions there in filtering out Shifta bandits who were staging a war against the Italian inhabitants of Eritrea. This short detachment was to remain in Eritrea until the end of 1951, while in the meantime 1908 Flight remained in Tunisia until ordered to move across the desert to Hebbaniya, in Iraq in connection with the Persian Oil dispute. The three Austers of 1908 Flight remained in Iraq until October 12th. 1951 when they moved to Egypt in connection with the abrogation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. For the same reasons, the remainder of 651 Squadron flew up from Castel Benito on November 5th. and upon arriving in the Canal Zone gave up its last two Auster AOP.5s for newly-arrived Auster T.7s.



On August 24th, 1954, Captain E.J. Sargent, R.A. of 651 Squadron's HQ Flight was flying AOP.6 TW621 to Amman when it suffered a complete engine failure 4,000 feet over the Gulf of Aqaba. He managed to forced-land on a narrow beach, with cliffs of 2,500 feet running down to the beach. The aircraft was virtually undamaged, but owing to Israeli territory dividing Egypt and Jordan, the only means of evacuation was by floating the Auster on pontoons and towing it fifteen miles up the Gulf of Aqaba where a new engine was fitted, and within a week, flown back to Ismailia. (Museum of Army Aviation)



Towards the end of 1951, 1910 Flight rejoined its squadron from Eritrea, which from its base at Ismailia, in Egypt turned to routine reconnaissance duties throughout the Canal Zone for the next twelve months or so.

By the turn of 1953, 651 Squadron had become firmly established in Egypt; 1908 Flight being unofficially known as the 1 Inf. Div. Flight at RAF Kasfareet, while 1910 Flight was affiliated to 2 A.G.R.A. at the squadron's base at Ismailia.

During August 1953, the Squadron H.Q. and 1910 Flight made the first visit to Cyprus by an Air O.P. unit. By way of Aqaba, Amman, and Beirut, the four Austers and crews settled into temporary quarters at Famagusta for a month of exercises with the 49th. Field Regiment. A return visit to the island was made during September 1954, when the Flight's Auster AOP.6s took part in local Battle of Britain displays.

1955 saw many changes within the squadron, the first of which occurred during May, when 1908 Flight embarked aboard an L.S.T. at Port Said, bound for Tunisia. After five days at sea, the Flight arrived in Tripoli where crews found accommodation far better to that offered on Egyptian soil. During the autumn of 1955, 651 learnt of its impending disbandment, and so it was decided that 1908 Flight, based at Idris, should become an Independent Flight, as from October 7th. with Auster AOP.6s and T.7s. On the same day 651 Squadron as such was formally disbanded, its only remaining Flight - 1910 Flight with Auster AOP.6s - being prepared for a return to the U.K. However, such was the situation in Cyprus that 1910 Flight was also given independent status during November, and remained in the Middle East, with sub-sections based in Nicosia.

In the meantime, a curious turn of events took place. In order to retain the identity of the Army's first Air O.P. squadron, it was decided that although 651 was being disbanded on October 7th. 657 Squadron should be renumbered 651 immediately. Thus 651 Squadron remained in being, although its base and crews changed over night.

Similarly the new 651 Squadron expanded almost overnight. From the defunct 657 Squadron it had inherited 1906 Flight at Middle Wallop, equipped with Sycamore HC.11 helicopters. Two Auster units, 1903 Flight and 1913 Light Liaison Flight returned from active service in Korea during February 1956, and were absorbed into 651 Squadron, the former establishing itself at RAF Detling, while 1913 settled into Middle Wallop. Later, 1903 Flight moved north to Feltwell in Norfolk, but when the Suez crisis worsened both 1903 and 1913 Flights were made Independent and sent out to the Middle East.

September 1st. 1957 was a milestone in Army Aviation, for on that date the Army Air Corps was formed in its own right. The event is certainly well-documented elsewhere, but one change which had its almost immediate effect on the Army squadrons was the dropping of the '19' prefix from Flight numbers. Thus 651's two Flights that had since returned from the Middle East and rejoined the squadron became simply 3 and 13 Flights. (Similarly 1906 Flight became 6 Liaison Flight on September 1st. but was upgraded to Independent status.) Upon its return to the U.K. 3 Flight joined the squadron H.Q. at Feltwell, its previous home, while 13 Liaison Flight took up residence at Aldergrove, in Northern Ireland. By this time it was becoming increasingly obvious that trouble was brewing in Northern Ireland, and when, in February 1958 the Flight moved over to Feltwell, it left behind a detachment of three Auster AOP.6s and crews to operate with the 39th. Infantry Brigade and the R.U.C. in anti-I.R.A. activities. Their main duties involved low-flying patrols and photo-reconnaissance sorties along the border areas. The remainder of 13 Flight returned to Aldergrove during July 1959, still equipped with Auster 6s, until February 1960 when they were supplemented by three new Skeeter helicopters.

Some while previously, in April 1958, 651 Squadron moved south to Debden, from where during May 1959 was formed a new unit, 19 Recce. Flight.

As Middle Wallop was now the home of Army Aviation, it was of little surprise to 651 Squadron to learn that from March 1960, this pleasant Hampshire airfield was to be its new base. Towards the end of that month, the squadron and two of its Flights (3 and 19) settled in. A fourth Flight was formed at Middle Wallop later in the year, when in September, 21 Recce Flight equipped with Auster AOP.9s. Unofficially, the new Flight became known as the Parachute Brigade Flight in view of its pilots being all qualified and regular paratroopers. In support of the 16th. Para Brigade, the Flight left for Sylt shortly afterwards for a series of exercises. During the following year, 21 Flight provided three Auster 9s (XN443, XP278 and XP279) for the 1961 Farnborough display, when six members of the 22nd. S.A.S. Regiment performed a highly accurate and colourful free-drop display. The squadron also displayed a number of Skeeters at Farnborough that year where it became increasingly clear that future Army equipment and tactics would be best served by helicopters.

Just prior to the Farnborough display, 13 Liaison Flight at Aldergrove was retitled 13 Recce Flight on August 12th, by which time 651 was styled as 651 Light Aircraft Squadron; its fixed-wing elements now being totally equipped with Auster AOP.9s.

During the summer of 1962, 3 Flight at Middle Wallop evaluated the small Hughes 269A ultralight helicopter, and later the smaller Beagle WA.116 Gyrocopter, both being indicative of the Army's growing confidence in the use of helicopters. Despite these trials Auster 9s were still very much part of the squadron's strength and achieved high utilization. So much so that on October 1st, 1962, a new Auster Flight was formed at Middle Wallop, being derived from 10 Independent Recce. Flight, long-stationed in Cyprus. The new Flight was given the title 10 Recce. Flight, a far cry from the original 1910 Flight during 651's time in the Middle East.

651 Squadron was by now the Army's largest single aviation unit, and was continually being asked to provide detachments for the many overseas trouble spots of the period. For this reason, 21 Recce Flight was ordered to Cyprus over Christmas 1963 as part of an emergency force on that island. Later, 19 Flight joined 21 Flight and together they operated under the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). In time, the squadron headquarters moved to Cyprus, and remained there until June 1964 when 651 returned to Middle Wallop.

By the mid-1960s Army aviation had embarked upon a considerable reorganisation programme, part of which included the phasing out of Auster and Skeeters, and replacing them with Scout and Sioux helicopters. Thereupon fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters were allocated to such units that needed them, and operating solely in support of one particular unit. For example, 4 Field Regiment R.A. had a requirement for an airborne regimental Flight, and so formed its own 'Air Troop' with a small number of helicopters. Thus the squadrons, as such, were disbanded, but during 1968, by which time many small integrated units had been formed, it had become apparent that there was a need to reform these Flights into some form of aviation Squadrons, mainly to increase control and operational flexibility. The new Squadrons took their identities from their predecessors, and so 651 Aviation Squadron was reformed at Verden, in Germany, and in support of 1 Div. B.A.O.R. In turn, 651 now became part of No.1 Regiment A.A.C. which also included 657 and 658 Squadrons, also in Germany. Essentially, the new 651 Squadron was formed from 26 Flight A.A.C. long-based at Detmold, and the Air Troops of the 4 Field Regiment R.A., 26 Field Regiment R.A. and 1 Divn. Engineers.

That is the situation that faces 651 Squadron today. Its role of Air Observation and communications remains basically little different from that envisaged by Major Bazeley before the last war. Tried and tested at war and in some of the worst operational conditions, 651 Squadron currently equipped with Scout helicopters is now part of an efficient and modern British Army in which tanks play as important key roles as the aircraft that support them in the air.



Not an Auster by any stretch of imagination, but XR942 was one of three Beagle-Wallis WA.116 Autogiros evaluated by 651 Squadron during the Autumn of 1962. Various problems were experienced and the trials were quickly abandoned.

TAYLORCRAFT MODEL E/F

Individual Service Histories -1

As detailed on pages 33-34, both the Model E and F were conceived as Auster 1 replacements, but due to the lack of availability at the time of American engines, the Model E (Auster AOP.3) was selected. Before presenting the Auster AOP.3, the individual histories of the two prototype AOP.2s, MZ105 and MZ110 are listed



The first prototype Auster AOP.2, MZ105 is seen posing for official photographers, and displaying its Lycoming engine. Of interest in this view is the tail-skid and the 'P' marking, signifying a prototype. (Crown Copyright)

Table 4 Production & Service History of Model F (Auster AOP.2)

c/n	Serial	History
238	MZ105	First flew at Rearsby on 30/12/42, and delivered to the A. & A.E.E. for testing on 13/2/43. On 5/4/44 '105 was returned to Rearsby for a major overhaul and repairs to some damage, but in the event it was converted to full AOP.3 standard. Delivered to 20 MU on 18/6/44, MZ105 was later moved to 47 MU on 17/7/44 for shipment to Australia. On July 24th. it was taken to Liverpool docks and shipped out aboard SS 'Samanco' on the 30th. arriving at Melbourne on September 7th. In service with the Royal Australian Air Force, MZ105 was re-serialled A11-1, and eventually civilianised as VH-SNI.
243	MZ110	Second prototype was also flown at the A. & A.E.E. but was damaged at Boscombe Down on 31/3/43 when a gust of wind lifted the tailplane whilst taxi-ing. The aircraft tipped onto its nose, and then overturned. Conveyed to Rearsby for repairs on April 3rd. '110 later returned to Boscombe Down on 30/7/43, but on 7/2/44 was ferried back to the manufacturers for conversion to AOP.3 standard. On 6/4/44, it was delivered to 20 MU for release to 43 OTU on 26/4/44, and was later involved in a slight accident one mile west of Over Wallop when a pupil pilot side slipped at low altitude while receiving instruction in forced-landings. In the crash, the port undercarriage collapsed. Subsequently, on 14/2/46 MZ110 was ferried to 20 MU for disposal, being sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force on 26/9/46. On 21/10/46, it was conveyed to Dagenham for shipment aboard a Dutch naval transport.

Table 5 Production & Service History of Model E (Auster AOP.3)

233	MZ100	Delivered to 20 MU on 21/1/43 before passing to 47 MU on 3/2/43 for packaging and despatch to North Africa. Aboard SS 'H-181' MZ100 left Glasgow docks on the 19th. and arrived at Algiers on March 18th. No further details are recorded apart from being struck off charge during the census of 1/1/47.
234	MZ101	Delivered to 20 MU on 17/1/43 before passing to 47 MU on 3/2/43 for packaging and despatch to North Africa, with MZ100. It was then used by 654 Squadron before crashing on the summit of Mt. Marries about 3,000 yards from San Monrient on 4/11/43.
235	MZ102	Delivered to 20 MU on 17/1/43 before passing to 47 MU on 3/2/43 for shipment to North Africa with MZ100 etc. No further details are recorded apart from being struck off charge during the census of 1/1/47.
236	MZ103	Delivered to 654 Squadron on 24/1/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 26/2/43. On March 23rd. '103 was returned to Taylorcraft for mods. and re-delivered to 20 MU on 21/5/43, for storage. On 25/3/44, MZ103 was taken to 47 MU for packaging and shipment to India. It was despatched aboard SS 'Delius' on 10/4/44, arriving at Bombay on May 17th. '103 was then used by Unit SLAIS (whose meaning is obscure), part of RAF Bengal Group. On 17/10/44, its pilot was baulked during a landing at Random Range Piska by horses running across the strip. Although the pilot opened throttles to take off again he ran into soft ground at the end of the strip causing sufficient damage to declare '103 a write-off. MZ103 was officially struck off charge on 13/12/44.
237	MZ104	Delivered to 654 Squadron on 24/1/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 2/3/43. On March 23rd. '104 was returned to Taylorcraft for mods. and re-delivered to 20 MU on 21/5/43 for storage (with MZ103). On 17/3/44 MZ104 was taken to 47 MU for packaging and shipment to Italy. Aboard SS 'Sampford' '104 left the UK on 2/4/44, arriving at Taranto on the 27th. No further details are recorded, apart from being struck off charge during April 1945.
238	MZ105	was initially built as a Model F (AOP.2) - see table 4.
239	MZ106	Delivered to 654 Squadron on 25/1/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 2/3/43. On March 23rd. '106 was returned to Taylorcraft for mods. and re-delivered to 20 MU on 21/5/43 for storage (with MZ103 etc.) On 18/3/44 MZ106 was taken to 47 MU prior to shipment to Bombay aboard SS 'Delius' (see MZ103). On 19/5/45, while operated by Unit GATU (?), the roof of its shelter pen at Ranchi airfield, Bihar collapsed during a tropical storm of gusts reaching 60/70 mph, causing substantial damage. Whether or not MZ106 was repaired is not known, but in the event it was struck off charge on 11/4/46.

240	MZ107	Delivered to 654 Squadron on 24/1/43, with whom it suffered slight damage on February 17th. Due to a shortage of fuel and bad visibility its pilot was forced to land at Pear Tree Farm at Great Barr, Staffs., sustaining some damage in the attempt. Repairs were completed by the 22nd. when it was returned to its squadron, but only to be transferred to 656 Squadron on May 8th. A move to 660 Squadron took effect from 15/8/43, until 5/3/44 when it passed to 268 Squadron. A flying accident on September 27th. caused its removal to Rearsby for repairs, after which it is thought to have been used by 316 Squadron. Eventually, on 2/3/45, MZ107 was flown to 20 MU for disposal, finally being sold back to Taylorcraft on 18/8/45, for resale to the Royal Netherlands Air Force. '107 operated with No.6 (Dutch) Squadron with the code letter 'H', but still retaining its RAF serial. Later MZ107 was re-serialised R-8, but its subsequent fate is unknown.
241	MZ108	Delivered to 20 MU on 26/1/43, before passing to 47 MU on 3/2/43 for shipment to North Africa aboard SS 'H-181' with MZ100 etc. No further details are recorded apart from being struck off charge on 31/8/44.
242	MZ109	Delivered to 47 MU on 4/2/43 for packaging. Conveyed to Glasgow docks on the next day, '109 was shipped to Algiers aboard SS 'H-181' with MZ100 etc. No further details are recorded apart from being struck off charge during the census on 1/1/47.
243	MZ110	was initially built as a Model F (AOP.2) — see table 4.
244	MZ111	History and dates as MZ109.
245	MZ112	History and dates as MZ109.
246	MZ113	History and dates as MZ109.
247	MZ114	History and dates as MZ109.
248	MZ115	Delivered to 47 MU and shipped to Algiers with MZ100 etc. Is known to have been used by SHQ Flight/651 Squadron until delivered to 'A' Flight/651 Squadron on November 9th. 1943 to replace AOP.1 LB350. No further details are known, until it was struck off charge on 30/5/44.
249	—	Not built. Probably used as a 'spare' fuselage.
250	—	Not built. Probably used as a 'spare' fuselage.
251	MZ116	History and dates as MZ109.
252	MZ117	History and dates as MZ109.
253	MZ118	Delivered to 47 MU and shipped to Algiers with MZ100 etc. No details of operational use are known, apart from its demise, when being operated by the AOP Training Flight on November 18th, 1944 was being flown in the Persano — Ebote area, in Italy by a Lt. G.J. Macphee. Flying at only 100 feet above the ground, MZ118 struck high-tension cables and crashed, killing its pilot. As a result of this crash, '118 was struck off charge on 29/10/44.
254	MZ119	Delivered to 47 MU and shipped to Algiers with MZ100 etc. It was next recorded as being delivered to 'C' Flight/651 Squadron on or about 21/1/44 after an overhaul by SHQ Flight, as a replacement for AOP.3 NX503. Its operational life after this date was short, for it is recorded as being struck off charge at Malta on 1/2/44.
255	MZ120	History and dates as MZ109. (MZ120 is shown in 651 Squadron's records as being received from 117 MU on 28/6/44 and used by 'C' Flt., until transfer to SHQ Flt. on 30/6/44, but by this time the squadron was almost wholly equipped with AOP.4 aircraft and the serial MZ120 could be a mis-type of MT120)
256	MZ121	Delivered to 47 MU on 1/2/43 before being shipped to Algiers with MZ100 etc. No further details are known, apart from being struck off charge by M.A.A.F. (Mediterranean Allied Air Forces) on 29/2/44.
257	MZ122	Delivered to 656 Squadron on 25/2/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 20/3/43. During a ferry flight during April 1944, '122 was forced-landed at Ightam, Kent due to fuel trouble, sustaining substantial damage in the attempt, and causing the aircraft's removal to Taylorcraft for repairs. On 17/6/44, MZ122 was re-delivered to 20 MU, but transferred to 47 MU on 19/7/44 for packaging and shipment to Australia. Conveyed to Liverpool docks on 24/7/44, it was shipped out aboard SS 'Samanco' on the 30th., arriving at Melbourne on September 7th. Sold to the Royal Australian Air Force, MZ122 was re-serialised A11-2, but its eventual fate is unknown.

- 258 MZ123 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 25/2/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 23/3/43. On 10/8/43, MZ123 suffered an undercarriage collapse after a heavy landing in Ayrshire, but was soon back on squadron strength following repairs. It is doubtful if MZ123 went to France with the squadron in June 1944, for on 4/7/44, it was flown to 20 MU for storage. On 24/1/45 it was returned to Taylorcraft for a major inspection, after which was ferried to 222 MU at High Erroll on 2/3/45. Three days later, '123 passed to 20 MU until 27/7/45 when it is reported to have moved to 22 MU at Silloth. Exactly one month later, the airframe was conveyed to Newcastle docks, having been sold to the Royal Australian Air Force. Shipped out aboard SS 'Craugefontein' on September 12th. it arrived at Sydney on November 3rd. and after assembly was allotted the serial A11-56. Its subsequent military history remains unknown at present, but is known as eventually being civilianised as VH-GCV.
- 259 MZ124 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 25/2/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 23/3/43. On 3/6/43, it hit thermal currents on approach to an airstrip at Methven in Perthshire, causing it to crash into a small wood. The wreck was retrieved and thought to be repairable. In the event it seems not to have been repaired but was not struck off charge until 1/6/47.
- 260 MZ125 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 27/2/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 23/3/43. Like MZ123 it is doubtful if '125 went to France, and instead was allotted to 306 Squadron on 25/8/44. On 20/9/45 '125 returned to Taylorcraft for a major inspection, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 1/5/46. On September 23rd. it was sold to Royal Netherlands Air Force, and taken to Dagenham on 21/10/46 for shipment to Holland aboard a Dutch Naval transport. MZ125 was then re-serialised R-70 and is believed to have been shipped to Indonesia for operations with No.6 ARVA. Known to have used the code letter 'J' and the name 'Janus', R-70's fate remains unknown, although none of the Dutch Austers operating in Indonesia seem to have returned to Holland.
- 261 MZ126 Delivered to A. & A.E.E. on 1/3/43 until released for 653 Squadron on 3/5/43. On 25/2/44 '126 was issued to 84 Group Comm. Flt. until returned to Taylorcraft for a major inspection on 22/2/45, possibly as a result of damage received on 18/1/45. Re-delivered to 20 MU on 15/4/45, MZ126 was sold to Royal Netherlands Air Force on 23/9/46, and shipped ex-Dagenham with MZ125. No further details are known.
- 262 MZ127 Delivered to 47 MU on 26/2/43 for shipment to North Africa aboard SS 'J-108'. Shown as leaving the UK on 26/3/43, no further details are known, apart from being struck off charge during September 1944.
- 263 MZ128 Delivered to 47 MU on 27/2/43 for shipment to North Africa aboard SS 'J-108'. MZ128 is known to have operated with 'C' Flt/651 Squadron when on 13/9/43 it crashed on landing while its pilot, a Capt. McNinch was carrying out a recce for suitable landing-grounds at Potenza North, Italy. '128 was written-off and temporarily replaced by AOP.1 LB265.
- 264 MZ129 Delivered to 47 MU and shipped to North Africa with MZ127 etc. aboard SS 'J-108'. During the night of 28/9/43, '129 uprooted its moorings at 'C' Flt/651 Squadron's base at Potenza during a violent storm. It is recorded that "due to the heavy Gipsy engine, aircraft did not blow, but one mainplane was broken-off and wrecked, and the aircraft suffered further damage, although repairable." It is next recorded as being with 'A' Flt/651 Squadron on November 6th., but its eventual fate is unknown, being struck off charge during the census on 1/1/47.
- 265 — Not built. Probably used as a 'spare' fuselage.
- 266 MZ130 Delivered to 47 MU on 28/2/43 for shipment to Algiers aboard SS 'H-205'. Shown as leaving the UK on 25/3/43, no further details are known, apart from being struck off charge on 1/7/43.
- 267 MZ131 Delivered to 47 MU on 28/2/43 for shipment to Algiers aboard SS 'H-205' with MZ130. Later used by the AOP Training Flight when on 20/3/45 a pilot discovered the rudder pedals jammed while landing at Ebote ALG. The pilot was unable to correct a subsequent swing and the ensuing crash led to MZ131 being written-off. Struck off charge on 19/7/45.
- 268 MZ132 Delivered to 47 MU on 28/2/43 for shipment to Algiers aboard SS 'H-205' with MZ130 etc. No further details known, apart from being struck off charge during September 1944.

- 269 MZ133 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/3/43, until transferred to 127 Airfield on 5/3/44. Issued to 2 TAF on 7/9/44, MZ133 was later allotted to 85 Group Comm. Sqdn. on 6/2/45. '133 then appears to have suffered damage, for on 17/9/45, it was salvaged by 49 MU and conveyed to Taylorcraft for repairs on 3/10/45 as Cat.B. On 4/2/46, '133 was despatched to 20 MU and stored until 7/1/47 when taken to 47 MU for shipment to Greece, having been sold to the Royal Hellenic Air Force. On 20/2/47, it was conveyed to Liverpool docks from where it was shipped out on 9/3/47 aboard SS 'Preston', arriving at Piraeus on March 27th. Fate unknown.
- 270 MZ134 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 3/3/43, with whom it remained until 25/2/44 when issued to 84 Group Comm. Flt. On 7/5/44 '134 was landing at Oakwood Landing Strip, in Sussex when the undercarriage struck tree stumps on the edge of the field, causing Cat.B damage. Taken to Leicester on the 12th. for repairs, '134 was later delivered to 20 MU on 30/6/44. On 18/7/44, it was taken to 47 MU, and later to Liverpool docks on 28/7/44 for shipment to Australia aboard SS 'Samanco' with MZ122. Subsequently became A11-4 with the R.A.A.F but its fate remains unknown
- 271 MZ135 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 5/3/43, but was damaged in a forced-landing near Strathavon, Lanarkshire on 19/9/43, when in bad weather, its pilot overshot his field and hit a telegraph pole, and ending up in a hedge. Declared Cat.B, '135 was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs, after which it was flown to 20 MU on 24/12/43. On January 29th. it was issued to 659 Squadron, passing to 2 Squadron on April 18th. for 'hack' duties. After several incidents, '135 was returned again to Taylorcraft for repairs on 1/1/45, before being ferried once again to 20 MU on 26/3/45. On 10/9/45, it was transferred to 47 MU, and the airframe taken to Liverpool docks for shipment to Australia aboard SS 'Empire Clarendon'. Departing Liverpool on 21/11/45, '135 arrived at Sydney on 3/1/46, for service with the R.A.A.F. as A11-54. Eventually, it was civilianised as VH-SNS.
- 272 MZ136 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 4/3/43, until transferred to 84 Group Comm. Flt. on 25/2/44. On 7/6/44, '136 was issued to 193 Squadron, but was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs on August 17th. On 16/9/44 it was ferried to 20 MU for release to 22 EFTS on 2/11/44. Eventually, on 31/8/45 it was returned to 20 MU for storage and disposal. Sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force, MZ136 was taken to 47 MU for packaging, before despatch to Dagenham for shipment to Holland aboard a Dutch naval transport.
- 273 MZ137 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/3/43, with whom it remained until 28/3/44 when allotted to 144 Airfield. On April 14th. '137 was returned to Taylorcraft for sundry repairs after which, on 8/6/44 it was ferried to 20 MU. On 17/7/44, having been sold to the Royal Australian Air Force, it was conveyed to 47 MU for packaging, and later to Liverpool docks on the 24th. for shipment to Melbourne aboard SS 'Samanco' with MZ122 etc. Subsequently MZ137 was re-serialised A11-5 but its fate is unknown.
- 274 MZ138 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 4/3/43, but shortly afterwards, on April 19th suffered an undercarriage collapse four miles east of Lewes, necessitating its removal to Rearsby on the 26th. for repairs. On 31/7/43 '138 was ferried to 20 MU for release to 653 Squadron on 17/10/43. On 21/2/44 it was transferred to 83 Group Comm. Flt. until 20/6/44 when it was returned to 20 MU for storage. On 9/1/45 it was sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force, and issued to No.6 (Dutch) Squadron. Retaining its RAF serial and scheme, it was ferried to Holland during April 1945 where the code letter 'B' was allotted. Subsequently, '138 received its Dutch serial R-2, until it was finally civilianised as PH-POL.
- 275 MZ139 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/3/43, but its life was short-lived. On March 23rd. during a low-flying exercise, '139 flew into the ground about one mile south of Little Hornead, Herts. and was burnt out.
- 276 MZ140 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 3/3/43 with whom it remained until 3/3/44 when transferred to 430 Squadron. Following a return to Rearsby for repairs, '140 was ferried to 20 MU on 1/10/44 for storage. On December 9th. it was sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force (with MZ138 etc.). Initially it was coded 'Q' with No.6 (Dutch) Squadron and later re-serialised R-14, but its eventual fate remains unknown.
- 277 MZ141 Delivered to 652 Squadron 3/3/43, with whom it remained until 8/3/44 when it was issued to 135 Airfield. A flying accident on June 15th. caused its removal to Leicester for repairs on the 30th. after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 1/9/44. On 9/12/44 MZ141 was sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force (with MZ138 etc.). Initially it was coded 'S' with No.6 (Dutch) Squadron and later re-serialised R-16, but its eventual fate remains unknown.

- 278 MZ142 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 4/3/43 until transferred to 440 Squadron (143 Wing) on 8/6/44. On 15/3/45 MZ142 was declared Cat.B damage, but was re-Cat. E on April 28th. and struck off charge
- 279 MZ143 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/3/43 until transferred to 136 Airfield on 2/3/44. On the 15th. '143 was issued to 164 Squadron, and used until flown to 20 MU on 25/9/44. Upon arrival at 20 MU it was found to be in need of repairs and so was conveyed to Taylorcraft on 11/10/44 for a complete overhaul. On December 11th. '143 was returned to 20 MU for later release to Odiham Stn. Flt. on 22/3/45. On 26/6/46, it was ferried back to 20 MU for disposal. Thus on 30/9/46 MZ143 was sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force and conveyed to Dagenham Docks (via 47 MU) for shipment aboard a Dutch naval transport. It is known to have operated with No.6 ARVA in Indonesia with the serial R-56 and carried the name 'Ha Jofele' but its eventual fate is unknown (see MZ125).
- 280 MZ144 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 4/3/43, with whom it remained until 30/3/44 when issued to 83 Group Comm. Flt. A flying accident the same day caused '144s removal to Leicester for repairs on April 4th. after which it was ferried to 20 MU during May. On 17/7/44, MZ144 was ferried to 47 MU having been sold to the Royal Australian Air Force. Taken to Liverpool docks, it was shipped to Melbourne aboard SS 'Samanco' with MZ122 etc. Subsequently MZ144 was re-serialled A11-6 but its fate remains unknown.
- 281 MZ145 Delivered to 20 MU on 11/3/43 and released to 653 Squadron on 2013143. On 18/3/44, it passed to 164 Squadron, and several months later, to 183 Squadron. An accident on 28/7/44 when '145 caught its tail-skid in Summerfield tracking at Bognor, and a flying accident shortly afterwards caused its removal to 20 MU on 16/9/44. On November 2nd. '145 was issued to 22 EFTS with whom it remained until at least 1/9/45, when it was probably returned to 20 MU for storage. On 23/9/46 MZ145 was sold to the Royal Netherlands Air Force, and shipped ex-Dagenham on 21/10/46 with MZ125 etc.
- 282 MZ157 Delivered to 20 MU on 12/3/43 for release to 656 Squadron on the 15th. Damage received on 15/3/44 caused its removal to Leicester for repairs, after which '157 was ferried to 20 MU on 10/5/44. On July 4th. it was conveyed to 47 MU for packaging. From Manchester docks, MZ157 was shipped aboard SS 'Harpalyeus' on the 8th. to Bari where it arrived on 3/11/44. No further details are recorded apart from being struck off charge on 29/11/45. (There is some confusion here, for we believe Bari to be the Italian port, but three months seems a long voyage for this distance).
- 283 MZ158 Delivered to 20 MU on 11/3/43 for release to 656 Squadron on the 15th. Records show that MZ158 moved to 65 Squadron on 2/3/44, until an accident caused its return to the Manufacturers on 16/6/44, after which it was ferried to 20 MU on August 26th. From here it was sold to the R.A.A.F. and despatched to 222 MU at High Erroll for packaging. On the 29th. it was conveyed to Newcastle docks and shipped on October 13th. aboard SS 'Sarpedon'. Following its arrival in Sydney on 1/1/45, MZ158 was re-serialled A11-20 but its fate remains unknown.
- 284 MZ159 Delivered to 20 MU on 11/3/43 for release to 656 Squadron. On 24/6/43, it was transferred to 652 Squadron but was written-off on 20/11/43, when during a ferry flight from Gales to Crosby-on-Eden, '159 suffered possible engine-failure and dived vertically into the ground at Meadow Farm, Cumnock. Total hours were 188.10.
- 285 MZ160 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 11/3/43, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 23/3. On 17/12/43 MZ160 was damaged when its undercarriage collapsed while landing on frozen ground at Dalgross (?). On the 29th it was returned to Rearsby for repairs after which it was ferried to 20 MU on 22/2/44, being released to 38 Group Comm. Flt. on 21/4/44. On 5/1/45 '160 was issued to 22 EFTS where it remained until 24/10/46 when returned to 20 MU for disposal. On 28/12/46 MZ160 was sold to the Royal Hellenic Air Force and shipped ex-Cardiff on 21/1/47, arriving at Pireaus aboard the SS 'Glenwood' on 3/2/47.
- 286 MZ161 Delivered to 656 Squadron on 9/3/43, but was written-off on the 23rd. while taking evasive action from a Mosquito. During a training flight the Auster was being flown low along a valley one mile south-west of Furmeux Pelham, Herts, when the pilot executed a steep turn to avoid the Mosquito and promptly flew into the ground. The aircraft was destroyed by fire.

AUSTER FORUM

Taylorcraft Model D/1 LB310

When researching into aviation history, and especially in detailing one particular type of aircraft, one of the most arduous yet necessary tasks is the compiling of individual aircraft histories, notably those built against military contracts.

There are relatively few sources available for public inspection outside the Ministry of Defence, and even less pertaining to Austers. Those details published in Auster Quarterly are taken directly from various Ministry of Defence files, namely Aircraft Record Cards which detail the basic movements of each aircraft; and Accident Cards which provide the obvious, and also serve as a check on some details provided by the Aircraft Cards. Further delving into Squadron records and daily unit despatches often provide additional information not recorded elsewhere. Contract records also provide details of aircraft delivery against contracts placed with the manufacturer. Thus we have four separate sources for compiling an Auster's individual history, and on the face of it, a highly detailed and accurate record. However, a quick glance through these pages will reveal that much remains unrecorded, and in some cases glaring anomalies exist. None less than the mysterious Auster 1 LB310, which has for a long while resisted identification. When Peter Moss was researching for his renowned Impressments Log, he too found the career of 'LB310' well documented, as we did, and this led to Auster-specialist Norman Ellison to accept a theory that it was built as an 'extra' aircraft (although Rearsby records do not show it), and possibly as a rebuild of Model D G-AFZJ. This theory has been carried forward by Auster Quarterly for want of a more feasible explanation.

Indeed your editor has for a long time been similarly mystified, but recently made another inspection of LB310's pedigree.

Most of the record cards held by the Ministry were naturally hand-written by wartime clerks, some of whose writing left much to be desired. Close scrutiny of LB310 reveals that the clerk responsible for documenting its history styled his (or her) 'eights' to appear as 'ones'. Whereupon, by holding the card at a slight angle, all is revealed! LB310 is no less than LB380, which accounts for the lack of information on the latter. Also confused were the Ministry clerks who re-filed the cards after the war, and who placed it immediately after LB299.

Amendments are therefore in order to pages 40 and 44, and the relevant details given for LB310 should be directed towards page 80. One point does remain unsolved, that being the date of sale back to Taylorcraft, being either December 22nd. 1945 or January 17th. 1946. The latter seems more likely if only on the basis that most of the Auster 1's sold back to Taylorcraft after the war were in fact sold January 1946.

Taylorcraft Model C and C/2 Amendments. (Table 2d - Page 16).

- | | | |
|-------|-----|---|
| ES958 | 121 | Several accidents are now at hand. On 23/2/42, it struck a fence during a cross-wind take-off from a field at Canford Magna, Dorset. This was prior to conversion to Model C/2 when the Model lacked sufficient power for such emergencies. Later, on 3/7/42, '958 landed in a field in Dorset in rain and gusty winds. The brakes failed to hold on wet grass and the aircraft slid into a hedge, necessitating its return to Taylorcraft on 10/7/42. ES958's fate occurred on 13/2/43 when on approach to a landing field over some trees, suffered a wing-drop due to a down draft. The pilot was unable to recover the aircraft as it slipped to starboard and struck the ground, in a most definite non-flying attitude. |
| ES959 | 123 | The reason for returning to Rearsby on 23/2/43 was as a result of an accident on the 17th. when an OTU pilot was practising short landings in various fields close to the Devises Road. The accident occurred when he stalled too high, and in the ensuing heavy landing caused the undercarriage to collapse. Also note that the date 2/9/43 should read 2/9/42. |

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| ES956 | 100 | The failure of the starboard lower external bearing wire under the tailplane suggests that the aircraft broke-up in flight prior to its fatal crash. |
| HH985 | 115 | The accident on 28/6/42 occurred east of Otterburn, in Northumberland when a pilot landed in a rough field. The incident is also reported as taking place on the 29th. The crash on 25/2/43 happened when a pilot allowed his speed to drop too low while on approach to a field, and spun in from thirty feet over the Shrewton to Tilshead road, in Wiltshire. |
| HH988 | 111 | was involved in an almost fatal accident on 7/8/42 when its tail hit high-tension cables during a dummy run over a landing ground in Ayrshire. When the pilot found his aircraft almost uncontrollable, he forced-landed in a field, hitting hay-cocks as he did so, but causing only slight damage. It was returned to Rearsby for repairs on August 24th., but back with the squadron on September 12th. |
| HL532 | 117 | The accident did occur on 21/1/43 ¼ mile south of Steeple Langford, when an OTU pilot mis-judged the height of a hill, and the climbing capability of the aircraft while message dropping from fifty feet. |
| HL533 | 103 | The crash occurred on the Salisbury to Devizes road. |
| HL534 | 108 | The crash on 13/7/42 occurred when the aircraft overshot a landing at Critchill Farm, From. '534 landed in a barley field and overturned. |

Taylorcraft Model D Amendments. (Table 2c - Page 15)

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| W5740 | 126 | An early accident occurred on 27/9/40 while on an AOP exercise at Thornhill Farm, Wilts. During a take-off the tail hit a fence and the aircraft 'pancaked' into an adjacent field. Another incident happened at Larkhill on 27/2/42 when after overshooting it ran over a sunken road on the airfield boundary and wrecked its undercarriage. |
| X7534 | 125 | The accident at Larkhill on 13/2/42 occurred during dual approach and landing practice. After a heavy bounce, the aircraft stalled at twenty feet, and the ensuing landing caused the under carriage to collapse. |

Royal Navy Austers

The Naval Research Section of the British Aviation Research Group has provided us with additional information on the Taylorcraft D/1 LB384 c/n 231.

On January 10th. 1945, LB384 was delivered to 730 Squadron at R.N.A.S. Ayr, and flown by none other than Lt.Cdr. L.A. Cox, RN., currently the curator of the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton. At Ayr, LB384 was used for 'Lilypad' trials, ie., a floating runway made up of oil tanks with planks across them. No more is known until January 1949, when '384 was on the strength of R.N.A.S. Culdrose. By mid-1949, it was placed into storage at R.N.A.S. Abbotsinch where it was later struck off charge on December 19th. 1949.

Apart from the two D/1s (LB372 and LB384), the Navy is known to have had at least three other Austers on charge. All are MK.5s, and this presents an opportune moment to discuss their histories, again as a result of B.A.R.G. research.

- | | |
|-------|--|
| TJ651 | Taken on charge at Sembawang (Singapore) on 30/10/46, but with which unit remains unknown. By January 1949, it had returned to the UK to join LB384 at R.N.A.S. Culdrose. From the beginning of 1950, it served as a 'hack' with Airwork Ltd. at St.Davids/Brawdy, and last reported there on September 1st. 1954. During November 1957, it was civilianised as G-APIC and flown by a Mr. I Aw (see photograph) back to Singapore. Sold locally to a Mrs. B.Baudin and re-registered VR-SED in December 1958, the Auster 5 was later flown over to Australia by Mrs. Baudin where it was re registered, with the minimum of art-work, as VH-SED. |
| TJ688 | was taken on charge at Sembawang on 29/10/46, but like TJ651 details of unit remain unknown. By January 1949 it was in storage at Abbotsinch where it remained until at least July 1950 when it joined 1832 Squadron RNVR at R.N.A.S. Culham. Eventually it was struck off charge there on September 5th. 1952 and scrapped. |
| TJ704 | was taken on charge at Sembawang on 14/10/46 and like TJ688 was in storage at Abbotsinch by January 1949. By the end of 1949, it had joined 1831 Squadron RNVR at Stretton (who presumably also operated D/1 LB372 - Ed.). Finally, TJ704 was struck off charge at Stretton on March 19th. 1954. |

This is surely not the last word on Naval Austers, and we would be interested in any further reports, or indeed additional information to the above.

Taylorcraft Model D/1 Amendments (Table 3b - Page 40)

LB270	140	The Sandfield incident took place on 10/9/42 and not 19/8/42.
LB294	165	has been reported as being with 54 OTU and coded 'ST-W' which may explain the entry 'RAF Millfield'.
LB298	168	The flying accident on 21/6/43 occurred when an inexperienced pilot was taking off from a field of long grass. The aircraft swung violently, and hit a hidden hump, causing the aircraft to come to rest in a nearby sheep-pen.
LB325	184	On 4/10/44 a Spitfire pilot who was unaccustomed to Austers found himself lost as dusk was approaching and was forced to land in a field, causing some damage. This may explain the aircraft's return to Rearsby.
LB381	228	The damage discovered on 15/11/43 could well have been as a result of heavy landing on 1/7/43, after an OTU pilot stalled while overshooting a practice field in Wiltshire.



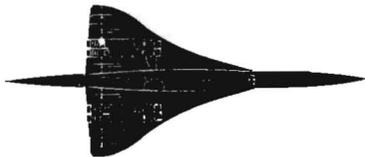
Captain J. Ryder-Ryan awaits instructions for a flight in Tunisia, on April 28th. 1943. No detailed information is available on MZ108, but Captain Ryan is known to have been awarded the D.F.C. after successfully completing a mission over Salerno, after his aircraft had been badly damaged by enemy fire. Considering the location, this makes us wonder if MZ108 belongs to 654 Squadron.

(Imperial War Museum)



The ex-Royal Navy Auster 5 TJ651 was civilianised during late 1957 as G-APIC. Pictured here at Rearsby on December 2nd, 1957 is G-APIC's registered owner, Mr. Ithaw Aw. Even in 1957 the thought of this oriental gentleman flying an Auster 5 to Singapore created sufficient interest for the Company to take this photograph. (Auster Aircraft Ltd., via E.Hall)

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