

Auster

QUARTERLY



THE AUSTER STORY
SHOBDON REPORT
TAYLORCRAFT D-1

VOLUME 1
NUMBER 3

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QUARTERLY

Volume 1 Number 3

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Editor : Michael Draper

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

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Front cover : 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.

Back cover : The final AOP.9 and the last fixed-wing aeroplane built at Leicester for the Army was XS238.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to function properly next year, Auster Quarterly has been forced to slightly re-adjust its thinking habits. Primarily it has become increasingly obvious to us that due to some problems beyond our control, only three issues will appear in 1975. The fourth issue will appear early next year, as the first of four to be published in 1976. In order to save any confusion therefore, existing subscriptions will still cover for the first four issues, but to new subscribers and non-members we regret that we are forced to increase the cover price, mainly attributable to the massive rise in postal charges.

This, together with the loss of two good friends makes rather a sad close to Auster Quarterly's first year, but with our initial problems over (we hope), and with a new address, (q.v.) we are all set for '76. As a foretaste of things to come as it were, we can announce a feature on the D5 Husky with assistance from Ron Neal who virtually built most of them, and from Trevor Howard who test-flew them. Tony Young has supplied details of his epic flight from Teheran to UK aboard Husky 'VSR, while some truly magnificent photographic material is being unearthed by Peter Stoddart at Leicester Museum of Technology. There is also a move by the Auster Pilot Club to hold an 'Auster Day' at Old Warden next year, and a more ambitious plan is an attempt to re-open Rearsby for a day. If only

Finally, in closing 1975 your editor would like to wish all readers a merry Christmas, and to pass on grateful thanks to all who have written in to us this year.

OBITUARY

It is with the deepest regret that we have to record the death of Malcolm Sketchley. Mal was a keen Auster enthusiast having built up a considerable photographic library of the type, while another of his interests was his fine model collection, numbering over a thousand. Serving in the R.A.F. for many years as a Senior Aircraftsman, he worked as a radar mechanic until returning to civilian life in 1963. In the early 1950's he took part in a dramatic rescue of survivors from an airliner which had been shot down in Communist waters, in the Far East. A man of many interests in aviation, Mal often turned his hand to other things. In his spare time, he was an auxillary coastguard, while in the Far East he had been a disc jockey and was a regular announcer on a 'Top of the Pops' programme run by the Australian Forces radio station. Back in the U.K., Mal furthered his interest in Austers by acquiring the "Setty Murder" Autocrat for preservation, and in saving the prototype AOP.9 when he became a founder member of the South Wales H.A.P.S. These two Austers serve as a fitting tribute to Mal's tremendous enthusiasm towards his first love in aeroplanes. Forty-two year old Mal leaves a wife, Margaret, and two teenage daughters.

We are also saddened to learn of the sudden death of one of the Auster Pilot Club's leading members, Des Brompton. Des had been ill last year but had recovered sufficiently to come to Shobdon in June, and to win a prize for coming the furthest by road. One of the first members to join the A.P.C. and a source of encouragement to all in those early days, Des completely organised the First Annual Fly-In at Grindale Field in June 1974, and later became secretary of the Grindale Flying Group using J/1 G-AHHH. Des Brompton, like Mal Sketchley cannot be replaced, and will be sadly missed by us all.



A suitably inscribed "The Last J/1N" G-AZIH made its first flight at Lee-On-Solent on January 19th, 1975.



The one-time Auster J/5R demonstrator still flies regularly from Nairobi and is seen here in this photograph taken by our photographer Peter Cooper earlier this year.

The Auster Story

From Taylorcraft To Beagle

PART 3 - TOWARDS THE FIFTIES

By 1946 the wheel had turned a complete circle, from the pre-war civil Model C through the successful series of wartime military Austers to the civil J/1 Autocrat, based on the Auster AOP.5.

As briefly mentioned on page 37 there was a move to recreate a 'postwar Model C' for the Autocrat had almost twice the power of the 1939 Model C. The unique "Sharp's Special" had already provided the Rearsby design team with valuable experience, and had a considerable influence on the forthcoming J/2 and J/3 designs. So too did three ex-R.A.F. Auster 1s converted at Rearsby during April and May 1946 and fitted experimentally with 55 hp Lycoming O-145-A2 engines. (The three aircraft involved were registered G-AHCR, G-AHGV, and G-AHGX.

Soon after completing tests with G-AGPS work began on the J/2 Arrow which, although similar to the former was basically a scaled-down Autocrat, and powered by a 75 hp Continental flat-four engine. The first true prototype J/2 flew at Rearsby on July 16th. 1946 under Class B registration Z-1, by Auster's Chief Test Pilot, George Snarey. Although the J/2 was put into production shortly afterwards, it was not to enjoy the long production run expected of its sister aircraft, the J/1 Autocrat. Unfortunately at the time the British Government was struggling to repair the country's economy following almost six years of war, and had therefore implemented severe restrictions on items imported from the U.S.A., including of course the Continental engine installed in the new J/2 Arrow. On the other hand, if imported items were re-exported then the import restrictions did not apply, so the Continental-powered Arrow was put into limited production with 95 per cent earmarked for export.

Certainly the J/2 had been aimed at producing a 'postwar Model C' but an attempt to get closer still to the original Taylorcraft design was made by fitting a smaller and lighter 65 hp Continental flat-four engine into a standard J/2 airframe to create the J/3, and which was unofficially named the Atom. Gordon ("Dusty") Miller flew the prototype, G-AHSY on its first flight at Rearsby on September 6th. 1946. Outwardly the J/3 was near-identical to the J/2, the only noticeable difference was that the latter was fitted with a tail-wheel whilst the J/3 relied on the once-standard tail skid. Although a promising design and certainly not unattractive, the J/3 proved to be hopelessly underpowered, and eventually the prototype was dismantled at Rearsby and later rebuilt as a standard J/4, as was a second J/3 G-AJXY.

Known as the Archer, the J/4 was initially intended to defeat the stringent import restrictions, and was essentially a J/2 airframe fitted with the British 90 hp Blackburn Cirrus Minor 1 engine. The most obvious distinguishing feature between the J/1 and the J/4 is the latter's cabin having the 'shaped' rear side windows as opposed to the more normal 'cut-out' panels. Likewise the J/4 had a solid-looking roof containing cut-out panels for upward vision, whereas the Autocrat featured the large perspex blister roof. The other difference was of course the aircraft price; the J/4, when new, was only £975, some three hundred pounds less than the Autocrat. Placed into production alongside the J/1 and J/2, the J/4 promised to be a popular and successful aeroplane but somehow it failed to enjoy the success of the three-seat J/1, and in fact most of the twenty-seven production J/4s found their way to overseas buyers.



The 75 hp Continental C-75-12 is well noticeable in the J/2 Arrow. G-AJAM spent many years in the London area, and is seen here at Elstree, during 1959.



The Cirrus Minor-powered J/4 G-AIPH serves as an interesting comparison with the J/2, primarily at the 'front end'. Robin Walker took this photograph of 'PH' at Speke on August 28th. 1958.

So the J/1 Autocrat emerged as Auster's most successful civil design, built to mid-wife a generation of postwar pilots. Symbolic of this important role that the Autocrat was to acclaim, the prototype, G-AFWN, had made the first post-war charter flight on January 1st, 1946 by airlifting a token consignment of spares from Cardiff to Filton for Cambrian Airways Ltd.

One other significant event took place during 1946, that being the retirement from test-flying by Mr. Edwards. His replacement as Chief Test Pilot was Flt. Lt. George N. Snarey, AFC., who had before the war been second test pilot at Westland Aircraft Ltd., and later during the war years was engaged in production and test-flying for Vickers-Armstrong Ltd., at their Supermarine Works at Southampton. George Snarey was only to hold his position at Austers for two years, until 1948 when he was succeeded by Randal Porteous who later became universally-known for his well-timed and masterly demonstrations at many flying displays during the fifties.

With the Autocrat in production alongside three other types, including the military AOP.6 (Model K) which had succeeded the ubiquitous Auster AOP.5, the Rearsby company looked towards 1947 with every hope of continued success. But events were beginning to indicate otherwise. Many postwar flying clubs had by now acquired their new aircraft, and demand accordingly began to level off. Furthermore many Air Forces had begun to offload large quantities of surplus aeroplanes, and not only did this cause some stagnation in the production of new civil products, it also meant drastic cuts in military aircraft still outstanding from wartime orders. Continued production seemed doubtful under these conditions, and the additional problems associated with the country's serious shortage of fuel led to power cuts becoming an everyday occurrence. During January 1947, the Rearsby factory was subjected to a long power failure, but even after power was restored, the Company was not without its disasters.

During the night of Sunday, March 16th. Rearsby was struck by heavy gales that caused alarmingly widespread damage. At the time the Company had a large number of aeroplanes picketed out around the airfield, many of which were uprooted by the strong winds. In all, some seventy-two aeroplanes were damaged, and several were completely destroyed, including the unique "Sharp's Special" G-AGPS which had since its test-flying days been used by the Auster Flying Club.



The J/1 Autocrat G-AGXP spent virtually its entire life at Ipswich, where it was photographed by Robin Walker on July 2nd, 1960. In the right-hand seat is Mr. Ward, well-known instructor with the East Anglian Flying Services with whom your editor made several flights over the picturesque River Orwell during this period.

By the summer of 1947, the situation regarding the demand for light aircraft had stabilised at an all-time low, necessitating a reduction in Auster's workforce to little over two hundred employees, compared to a peak of some 1,600 three years previously. Fortunately, Austers still had a small contract for AOP.6s to complete, and it was undoubtedly this that helped to keep the workforce occupied, especially as production of the Autocrat, Arrow, and J/4 Archer was maintained at a very slow rate. By the end of the year, the company had rationalised its workforce in only two factories, the main works and offices at Rearsby, and in the original No. 7 Works at Syston.

The make-or-break situation that faced the light aircraft industry at this time indeed had far-reaching effects. Miles and de Havilland had undoubtedly been the country's leading light aircraft manufacturers before the war, and had prospered through large wartime contracts. De Havilland had since abandoned this market when the lure of military contracts and larger projects proved more inviting, and perhaps more profitable. Miles, on the other hand continued production of light aircraft after the war, but were clearly over-ambitious as each design seemed to grow in size, and it appeared that for every production aircraft built, a new prototype was hard on its heels. The severe winter that hit hard at Austers had a far worse effect upon the Miles company. As temperatures dropped to a point where even glue refused to set in time, the Woodley production line was soon dealt with a final destructive blow. The company that had become so brilliant in its inventiveness found itself bankrupt, and soon bought up by Handley-Page who had other plans for the famous Woodley factory.

Percival Aircraft Ltd., the only other serious constructor of light aeroplanes had entered postwar years with the Mk. 5 and last variant of the famous Proctor. But in time the type gave way on the production line to the Prentice, a large all-metal trainer for the R.A.F., and in doing so the Company quietly abandoned civil aircraft production.

So, as Austers cut back to survive the period, it did so to emerge as the only manufacturer of light aeroplanes in post-war Britain.

Series production of the basic J/1 Autocrat can be said to have virtually ceased during July 1947 after over four hundred had been built, although over the next few years airframes originally laid down during the peak of production were gradually completed to bring the final total to around 420.



Two newly-completed AOP.6's at Rearsby seen prior to their delivery; TW524 to the R.A.F. and 16678 to the Royal Canadian Air Force. Note '524s all-silver finish and lack of anti-dazzle patch. (Flight)

The Design Office had, since the beginning of the year been working on a suitable Autocrat replacement, and in true Auster tradition, the new aeroplane closely resembled the well-proven J/1 formula. Essentially, Austers were motivated by the fact that there was a strong potential market for its aeroplanes in Australia although that country too had suffered similar economic problems that had beset Britain. So much so that Australian import regulations demanded that only airframes could be shipped, whereupon Austers supplied to their agents, Kingsford Smith Aviation, an initial batch of around thirty Autocrat frames to be fitted by Australian-built de Havilland Gipsy Major 1 engines.

Styled as the J/5, the 'Australian Autocrat' differed from the original J/1 in having a sloping engine bulkhead, and a stronger undercarriage. The prototype, actually styled J/5A (G-AJER) was in fact converted early in 1947 from an uncompleted J/1 frame, before series production commenced during the following August. Built with what was later referred to as 'the small fin and rudder' the entire J/5 production run was for overseas customers, although some were registered in this country for delivery purposes. Like the J/1, the J/5 Autocrat was fitted with three-seats, but a four-seat version was marketed in Australia as the J/5 Adventurer, differing only in having a 'blistered' rear cabin roof to give increased head room.

Four more designs were initiated during 1947, three of which — the J/6, J/7 and A3 — were abandoned at an early stage. The first two, as their designations imply were simply variations of the Model J, but the Model A3 departed from the traditional Auster theme. Designed by the newly-appointed Chief Designer, Mr. R.E. Bird, the A3 was a two-seat, low-wing monoplane. But this, like the previous low-wing design, the Model L, never reached beyond the design and mock-up stage.

The fourth and final new civil design conceived in 1947 was the Model P. Again based along traditional lines, the Avis, as it was soon to be named incorporated many features that had been built into the military AOP.6. Designed from the outset as a four-seater with four separate entry doors, the Avis was powered by a 145 hp Gipsy Major 10-3 engine, and demonstrated at the 1947 S.B.A.C. Display at Radlett, where the much slimmer and rounder rear fuselage and underslung flaps were especially apparent. However, flight trials were somewhat lengthy resulting in necessary modifications to the rear cabin area, and which delayed its C. of A. until March 1948. But by now some doubt was being expressed as to the measure of success that the Company could expect with the Avis; doubts that subsequently influenced the decision to shelve the design and to dismantle the sole prototype, G-AJXW.

Shortly after the demise of the Avis, it became clear that the Army was displaying some interest into the possibilities of operating a light aircraft capable of transporting a standard Army field stretcher and attendant, and so the Avis was briefly revived. From the remains of 'JXW, Austers assembled what was termed as the Mk. 2 Avis, being essentially the same basic aeroplane but with a large entry hatch on the starboard side of the fuselage aft of the wing root, for the stretcher. However, success also by-passed the Mk. 2 for while on a local flight from Rearsby during August 1950, the prototype lost its propeller and was written-off in the subsequent forced-landing at Queenborough. Thereupon Army interest waned, and the design finally abandoned.

Despite the lack of interest towards the Avis, two other designs for the Army displayed every indication of achieving production status. The first had occupied the Design Office for some considerable time, and was known as the Model M. By far the largest aeroplane designed by the Company, it was to meet the requirements of the Air Ministry specification A2/45. Far removed from Auster's traditional appearance, it can be said that its only association with previous models was the fact that it had a high-wing layout. Curiously, the un-named A2/45 project resembled the German Fieslerstorch, once the Auster's direct opposite number over the battlefields of Europe and North Africa, although less remarkable was the fact that for some time previously a captured Storch had been kept at Rearsby for examination and evaluation. Two prototypes were ordered for testing at the A. & A.E.E. at Boscombe Down, the first of which, VL522 was powered by a 160 hp Gipsy Major 31, and known as the Model M. A second prototype, VL523 was fitted with the larger 250 hp Gipsy Queen 32, to become the Model N, to be evaluated against the Company's main rival from Heston Aircraft Ltd., the Heston JC.6, VL529. In the event neither design was developed beyond the prototype stage, mainly due to the 1948 Economy Axe, and ultimately the AOP.6 replacement required by the Army was met by a later variant of Auster based around the Blackburn Bombadier engine.

In the meantime attention was being directed towards another military Auster. One week prior to the first flight of the prototype Model M, on April 20th. 1948 the first Model Q took to the air. More readily referred to as the Auster T.7, the new version was simply, as its designation implies, a dual-control trainer equivalent of the AOP.6.

The Auster AOP.6 had by this time been in Army service for several years, its rugged construction ideally suited for service in such diverse theatres as Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. Indeed the Auster 6 appeared well fitted for the struggle in Palestine and many operated under worse conditions than did their predecessors during World War II, but to many far-sighted officers it was becoming clear that future AOP duties could be more effectively undertaken by the use of helicopters. During 1944 an early Sikorsky design had successfully been used in support of Chindit operations in Burma.



One of seven J/1B Aiglets used in the Sudan during 1950 for crop-spraying, G-AJYT spent its entire life engaged in this manner until a crash near Skegness in July 1963. 'YT is seen here at Boston on July 4th. 1960 during a break in spraying operations.
(Robin A. Walker)

Austers enjoyed some renewed interest and success with the J/5B Autocar, primarily due to the choice of engine. F-OAOX (c/n 3056) is one of a number sold to French Colonial buyers. The revised cabin roof contours are especially apparent in this view.



In order to evaluate helicopters for Army purposes, a Flight of 657 Squadron was re-equipped with Sikorsky R4B (and later R6B) helicopters. Re-named Hoverfly 1 and 2 respectively, the helicopters made history on September 1st. 1947 when the first Air OP 'shoot' was conducted over Salisbury Plain, almost eight years since the initial trials with the Taylorcraft Model D. The Flight was disbanded before the end of the year, after its helicopters had shown some considerable signs of wear and tear, but the idea of promoting the use of helicopters for A.O.P. work had gained sufficient support that it was only a matter of time before fixed-wing aeroplanes were moreorless declared surplus to Army requirements.

Nevertheless, Austers continued development believing, quite rightly at the time, that there was still a demand for its fixed-wing products. Model numbers A4, A5, and A8 were each allotted to new A.O.P. designs, and all reportedly to have been low-wing versions, but none were developed to prototype stage. Neither was a two-seat civil trainer, known as the Model A6, nor an ambitious twin-engined aeroplane, the Model A7. The last-mentioned was designed as a result of Australian interest in such a proposal to construct a twin-engined touring aircraft with 'pusher' engines, but although a fuselage mock-up was built at Rearsby, work was later abandoned.

With the country's economic situation such as it was in 1948, Austers elected to postpone any experimental work relating to entirely new designs. Instead, the company turned to the original stalwart of post-war Austers, the J/1 Autocrat, and studied the possibilities of updating it. One modification introduced in 1949 was the fitting of a rear bench-type seat into a standard J/1, mainly for joy-riding purposes, giving rise to the type J/1A. The first of a small number of such conversions appeared during November 1949, but in the event most reverted to the normal three-seat configuration.

On the other hand, R.E. Bird's design, the J/5B represented an important step in the logical development of the J-series. Experience gained from the ill-fated Avis had provided a useful lever in what was to become the well-known Autocar, and yet again based along traditional Auster lines, the J/5B became the forerunner of another family of sub-types, as illustrated on page 49.

The same engine that had powered the Auster 3 and the Australian J/5 Adventurer, the 130 hp Gipsy Major 1 was selected for the J/5B, but revised contours provided a domed rear cabin roof by the addition of wooden frames over the standard steel tubular framework. Fuel tanks, like the J/5 were incorporated in the wing roots, but to counter-balance the larger 'front end' an enlarged fin and horn-balanced rudder was fitted. The prototype J/5B, G-AJYK flew during August 1949 just in time for the S.B.A.C. display, and the first of eighty production examples, G-AJYM was delivered to Mr. Roy Mitchell of Mitchell Engineering Ltd., Peterborough on December 31st.

In the J/5B Autocar, Auster Aircraft enjoyed some renewed interest and success, primarily due to the choice of engine. Because of the obvious popularity of the Gipsy Major, especially overseas, the Company viewed the possibility of fusing the qualities of the J/5B with the Gipsy-powered Autocrat. An uncompleted Autocrat airframe (c/n 2634) that had been in storage for several years was modified with the J/5B-type enlarged fin and rudder. With the Gipsy Major 1 engine, the new version became the J/1B Aiglet and production totalled eighty-six aircraft, the majority of which were exported, as was the original J/5, to Australia for assembly by Kingsford Smith, Auster's distributor in that country.

At the same time that the Aiglet entered production, the Company re-engined several Lycoming-Auster 5s with Gipsy Major engines to become the Auster 5D. These too had the enlarged vertical tail surfaces of the Aiglet, which of course it closely resembled, differing only in cabin details, i.e., windscreen and rear glazed area. (Curiously, the first Model 5D, G-AJYU, was converted from AOP.5 TW453 c/n 1793, and allotted a new c/n 2666, which fell within a batch reserved for new J/1Bs.)

Another civilian-converted Auster AOP.5 appeared in 1950 as the sole Auster 5C. Taylorcraft had produced the Mk. 5, TJ187 back in 1945 as a 'one-off' communications hack with a Gipsy Major 1 engine. Later, during 1949 Austers had sold the aeroplane to Group Captain A.H. Wheeler, who civilianised it at R.A.E. Farnborough as G-ALKI, for the following year's King's Cup Race. Wheeler managed to gain third place at Wolverhampton with this unique aeroplane, obtaining an average speed of 132.5 mph.

With air-racing in mind, Austers decided to produce its own special mount for the Daily Express South Coast Air Race on September 16th. 1950. Officially, the aircraft, designated J/5E Autocar arose from a power problem experienced during crop-dusting operations with the J/5B in high temperature and tropical areas.

The requirement for increased power was met by installing a 155 hp Blackburn Cirrus Major 3 engine in place of the normal Gipsy Major 1, although the experimental J/5E also had its wing-span reduced from the standard 36 feet to 30 ft. 5 in, and various other refinements, such as a neat undercarriage fairing added to the appearance of the aircraft. Randal Porteous, who flew the J/5E in the South Coast Air Race described the occasion in his amusing article, Auster Anthology (Flight International June 13th. 1974) He claims — "It did about 165 mph and I remember clearly the startled faces of the pilots of various Proctors, Geminis and the like which I passed with ease somewhere near Littlehampton in an air race which started at Bournemouth. Alas, the thrust-race-housing bolts took a dislike to these un-Auster-like capers and the J/5E ended its brief but glorious dash by the skin of its tyres on Lypne airfield in a cloud of very expensive blue smoke, having frightened me quite badly below the level of Beachy Head."

Declined of any success of the day, the J/5E was taken back to Rearsby where it was quietly abandoned and withdrawn from use the following year, but not completely forgotten. The crop-dusting problem was still very apparent, and so the Cirrus Major engine was installed into the basic J/5B Autocar to become the J/5G Cirrus Autocar, and which was first flown in July 1951. Production of the J/5G eventually accounted for some ninety-four aircraft, and all but a handful for overseas buyers.



Discovered too late for inclusion in the first issue, is this interesting view of the Model C fitted with skis during January 1940. The obvious crudity of their construction illustrates the fact that they were designed (sic.) made and tested in less than twenty-four hours. (The Mal Sketchley Collection)



DH.82A Tiger Moth BD170 being readied for flight-test at Rearsby on April 17th. 1941. A. L. Wykes flew '170 himself on this occasion and appears to have taken this photograph before doing so. It has been kindly loaned to us by the Leicester Museum of Technology, and forms part of the Wykes Collection.

I.A.P.C. Fly-In

Shobdon June 14-15th 1975

The Second Annual International Auster Pilot Club Fly-In was staged at Shobdon, Herefordshire over the weekend June 14/15th., and by all accounts the event was an overwhelming success, with around forty Austers of various types on the airfield.

The week preceding the Fly-In was typical of this year's summer, with unusually high temperatures, and with a high pressure area centred over the country. Then with just a few days to go, the high pressure region gradually began to shift, and the weekend forecasted unsettled weather. But when Saturday dawned, it did so with a glorious blue sky and exceptionally good visibility. Just the sort of weather, in fact, that determines success to any flying event.

When I.A.P.C. Secretary, Jim Sime flew into Shobdon aboard his newly-acquired Auster 5, G-ANFU, expecting to be the first arrival, he found that two members had arrived from Denmark during the previous evening. They were Vagn Stevnhoved aboard J/1 Autocrat OY-DNO and Jons Mikkelson in J/2 Arrow OY-ABY, thus adding a much welcomed international flavour to the setting. Then throughout Saturday Austers were filtered into a crowded circuit by a magnificently-organised Air Traffic Control, which also had the added responsibility for the safety of normal club flying, and local parachute jumping.

Parked four abreast, the Auster zone spread across the entire airfield control area and clubhouse, and as well as the two Danish examples, the park was full of particularly interesting variants, notably the renowned Groves-Hammond J/1N G-AZIH, Tony Jesson's Auster 5 G-ALFA - recently rebuilt at a cost of several thousand pounds, Peter Woodman's Alpha G-AHCK resplendent in a striking red and blue scheme, and another recent rebuild *par excellence* Auster 5 G-APBE, the interior of which created considerable interest.

One of the first events staged during the Saturday afternoon was a spot-landing exercise, participants competing for the Brigadier Peter Mead trophy. The briefing involved pilots to turn right immediately after take-off to climb to 800 feet, then turning back towards the runway, cut throttles over the hangar to glide through 270 degrees and touch down on a line of flour laid across the main runway. Each pilot was designated an observer, and your editor was much-honoured to fly alongside John Webster aboard his J/5V G-APUW. With Major Somerton-Rayner unfortunately absent, the field was wide open, and the trophy went, quite rightly to Rupert Hibberd in his J/1N Alpha G-AJAC.

A navigational competition over the local countryside was ably won by Tony Jesson (G-ALFA), who also virtually tied for the Concours d'Elegance. However, the judges, deciding that there had to be an outright winner awarded the cup to Messrs. Hayne and Cuttell for their superb J/1 G-AHAY. Full details of awards appear in the Auster Pilot Club newsletter.

In all, some forty Austers were at Shobdon over the weekend, and the following selection of photographs were kindly taken for us by John Webster.



Tony Jesson, on the right, receives the Navigation Competition Cup and ten gallons of fuel.



Second in the Competition was John Webster who is seen receiving a veritable supply of Champagne, courtesy of Bulmers.



Jim Alexander gives a sobering glance as he receives his 'trophy' for travelling the furthest — from Inverness aboard G-AGVG.

The Terrier 1 G-ARUI was restored to the register on May 16th. to A. Macfarlane of Tamworth, Staffs., after a substantial rebuild. This fine view by Peter J. Cooper was taken shortly afterwards at Sywell.



Sharing the honours with Jim Alexander is the J/1 Autocrat G-AGVG, inbound from Inverness.



Jons Mikkelson flew J/2 OY-ABY from Denmark to Shobdon in just eleven hours to claim joint honours for travelling the furthest. Jons also gives us the opportunity to compare his J/2 with 'JAM on page 61. The wheel-fairings are noteworthy.



Vagn Stevnhoved takes a well-deserved rest beside his modified J/1 Autocrat OY-DNO. Shobdon marked Vagn's second appearance at Auster Pilot Club rallies — he flew in to Bridlington last year — and we look forward to his next promised visit in 1976.



Rearsby 1946? Not quite, but in its near-identical factory finish, J/1 G-AHAY was well worthy of the Concours d'Elegance award.



Maurice Kirk's newly-acquired Auster 5 F-BGXG has since been re-registered G-BDFX, and is fairly representative of the influx of French-registered light aeroplanes, including Austers, over the last few years.



The Leicester Museum J/1 hybrid was, as usual a most welcome visitor, complete with its own display equipment. Its appearance at Shobdon was particularly noteworthy as it was joined by the first production J/1 seen below.



Based at Shobdon for some considerable time now, the first production J/1 is still flown regularly. Moves are now being made to put her back to the exact original condition, as portrayed by 'GOH. In December 'GTO celebrates exactly thirty years of flying (see page 37).



Rupert Hibberd's J/1N Alpha, G-AJAC became the spot-landing winner for the Peter Mead trophy, and is seen here immediately after the event.



In its most striking colour scheme, the Auster 5 G-ALBK made one of its rare appearances at Shobdon. In this view the characteristic flat windscreen of the Mk.5 can be compared to that of the J/1 above.



Alistair Mathie keeps his J/1N Alpha at Brawdy where he is normally known to fly Hunters, at a slightly higher speed than 'IGF can muster. Noisier, and considerably slower, she still gives hours of pleasure, reports her proud owner.



The final Terrier 2, G-AYDX flew in to Shobdon, sporting a simple but attractive light blue scheme. 'YDX was one of two Terriers rescued when the Beagle line at Rearsby closed down.

TAYLORCRAFT MODEL D/1

Individual Service Histories - 2

- 189 LB330 Delivered to 47 MU and stored there until released for 43 OTU on 19/2/43. On 5/2/44, it was flown to 20 MU, and next reported at 40 MU on 31/10/44. Shortly afterwards, on 11/12/44 LB330 was allocated to 24 Group Communications Flight, with whom it remained until returning to 20 MU on 5/2/46. A month later, on 4/3/46 '330 was transferred to 5 MU for disposal, and sold to the Edinburgh Flying Club on 8/7/46, and civilianised G-AHSL.
- 190 LB331 The only recorded details relating to LB331 are that it was in North Africa on 30/11/43, and struck off charge during a census on 31/8/44.
- 191 LB332 Delivered to 43 OTU where it remained for most of the war, until allotted to Andover Station Flight on 15/3/45. On 7/6/45, LB332 jumped chocks while being started-up at Lee-on-Solent, and crashed into a RNAS Barracuda. The Auster 1 was duly struck off charge on the 14th.
- 192 LB333 Delivered to 43 OTU on 18/10/42 where it remained until transferred to 3 T.E.U. at Aston Down on 21/9/44. LB333's final demise is unrecorded apart from being struck off charge on 5/7/45.
- 193 LB334 Delivered to 43 OTU on 26/10/42, but sustained damage on 1/12/42 when a pupil landed in a field highly unsuitable as a practice landing ground, and collided with a hedge. It was returned to Rearsby for repairs on 7/12/42, after which it was delivered to 657 Squadron on 26/2/43. However, on 7/4/43, while picketed at Westley, Bury St. Edmunds, a packing case was blown into LB334 during a gale. Again the aircraft was returned to Rearsby for repairs, on 11/4/43, until 14/6/43 when delivered to 20 MU. On 3/8/43 it was released for HQ. TAF Communications Flight at Hartford Bridge until passed to 83 Group on 21/2/44. On 7/6/44 LB334 was returned to 20 MU and stored there until released for the RAF Staff College on 5/2/45. Finally, '334 was flown to 5 MU on 23/5/46 for disposal and sold to the West Suffolk Aero Club on 31/5/46 and civilianised as G-AHUA.
- 194 LB335 Initially '335 was put into storage at Rearsby on 29/10/42, but after only a month was delivered to 654 Squadron on 20/11/42. After a brief period at 47 MU, it was allotted to 656 Squadron on 23/3/43, but transferred to 43 OTU on 7/4/43. On 5/2/44, LB335 was flown to 20 MU for long-term storage until released for 501 Squadron on 16/3/45. On 26/4/45 it was allotted to 126 Squadron, but when arriving at Bentwaters the same day, '335 tipped onto its nose after hitting a tree stump while taxiing across a grass area. Initially damage was restricted to Cat.AC, but after return to Rearsby on May 10th. it was re-categorised E on the 29th and struck off charge on 14/6/45.
- 195 LB336 Stored at Rearsby with LB335 on 24/10/42 until released to 651 Squadron on 19/11/42. Flown to 47 MU on 11/12/42 for packaging before conveyed to Glasgow docks on 15/12/42, and shipped to North Africa aboard SS 'H-102'. Presumed to have been lost in the fighting across the desert, LB336 was officially struck off charge during the census on 1/1/47.

- 196 LB337 Delivered to 654 Squadron on 26/10/42, but transferred to 652 Squadron on 8/12/42. On 5/4/43 it was allocated to 656 Squadron, but three days later was taken on charge by 43 OTU, where it remained until flown to 20 MU on 5/2/44 for storage. On 14/1/45 LB337 was released for 33 P.D.C. at RAF Hornchurch, but later sustained damage during a forced-landing close to Barton & Walton Railway Station, Staffs. on 15/12/45, after apparent engine trouble. LB337 tipped onto its nose while taxiing downwind. On 16/6/46, it was flown to 5 MU for disposal, and sold to the University Aero Club on 10/5/46, and civilianised as G-AIUU.
- 197 LB338 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 4/11/42, and flown to 47 MU for packaging on 12/12/42. On 21/1/43 it was conveyed to Glasgow docks and shipped to North Africa aboard SS 'J-77'. Its arrival at Algiers is recorded as 18/2/43, but no further details are known apart from the official entry, struck off charge during April 1945.
- 198 LB339 Stored at Rearsby with LB335 on 29/10/42, until released for 652 Squadron on 4/12/42. Flown to 47 MU on 12/12/42 for packaging, and shipped to North Africa on 10/3/43 aboard SS 'J-98'. No further records are held, apart from being officially struck off charge on 1/1/47.
- 199 LB340 Stored at Rearsby with LB335 on 30/10/42, until released for 652 Squadron on 12/12/42. On 23/2/43, it was transferred to 655 Squadron and shortly afterwards on 7/4/43 to 657 Squadron. A move to RAF Dunsfold took place on 10/5/43 where LB340 was used by both 400 and 430 Squadrons. However, only five days after its arrival at Dunsfold a 430 Squadron pilot was taxiing '340 along the grass beside the runway to avoid damaging the tail-skid, but unfortunately the starboard wheel fell into a hole, causing the aircraft to tip onto its nose! During January 1944, LB340 suffered another accident causing its removal to Rearsby for repairs on the 25th, after which it was delivered to 20 MU for storage on 21/6/44. Finally, on 11/1/46 LB340 was sold to Taylorcraft and civilianised as G-AHAH.
- 200 LB341 Stored at Rearsby with LB335 on 30/10/42 until released for 652 Squadron on 6/12/42. On 12/12/42, it was flown to 47 MU for packaging, but orders for shipment were cancelled, and instead '341 was issued to 656 Squadron on 20/3/43. LB341 later operated with 309 and 315 Squadrons until issued to 6 MU on 21/3/46. Shortly afterwards, it was transferred to 5 MU on 16/4/46 for disposal, being sold to the West Suffolk Aero Club on 10/5/46, and civilianised as G-AHNG.
- 201 LB342 Placed into storage at Rearsby on 30/10/42, with LB335 etc. until flown to 47 MU on 24/12/42. On 18/2/43, '342 was released for 43 OTU. On 30/3/43 it sustained damage at Southmoor, Berkshire when after landing, a wheel entered a furrow causing the aircraft to slew into wind and thus be turned over onto its back. Following repairs, LB342 was delivered to 20 MU on 30/5/43, until 3/8/43 when released for RAF Hartford Bridge, and later allotted to 83 Group on 19/2/44. Official records indicate that '342 was returned to 20 MU on 15/3/44, and possibly used by 43 OTU from 12/9/44. Whatever the case, '342 was flown to 5 MU on 20/3/46 for disposal, and sold to the Midland Aero Club on 16th. April and civilianised as G-AHVS.
- 202 LB343 Placed into storage at Rearsby on 31/10/42, with LB335 etc., until released for 654 Squadron on 13/12/42. On 23/12/42, it was passed to 47 MU but allotted to 43 OTU on 18/2/43, and damaged shortly afterwards under odd circumstances, on June 21st. It appears that a rather inexperienced pilot became lost between Sommerford Common and Webbs Wood, in Wiltshire, and during vain attempts to map-read, lost his map over the side. After circling to watch the map land in a hayfield, the pilot then landed '343 in order to retrieve it. Unfortunately when it came to take-off, the grass proved to be too long, and the aircraft failed to become airborne, sustaining damage during the attempt! However, on July 3rd. '343 was back in service until 28/12/43 when it was transferred to 20 MU for storage. On 19/10/44 it was released for F.P.O. Langley, but was returned to the MU on November 14th. Several more moves took place, on 14/3/45, to Odiham Station Flight; to RAF Hunsdon on 5/4/45, and back to 20 MU on 5/4/45. On 14/1/46 LB343 was sold back to Taylorcraft where it was civilianised as G-AHAI.
- 203 LB344 Placed into storage at Rearsby with LB335 etc., until released for 653 Squadron on 17/12/42. During the night of Jan. 31st/Feb. 1st 1943, it sustained damage at Penthurst when it was uprooted by galeforce winds and blown over. On the 3rd. it was returned

- 203 cont. to Rearsby for repair, after which it was delivered to 657 Squadron on 27/2/43, but transferred to 20 MU on 6/5/43. A period was spent with 60 OTU between 8/9/44 and 28/7/45 when returned to 20 MU. Eventually, on 15/1/46, LB344 was sold to Taylorcraft and civilianised as EI-ACJ.
- 204 LB345 Delivered to 20 MU on 20/12/42 after a short period of storage at Rearsby. On 31/12/42, it was issued to 655 Squadron, but transferred to 657 Squadron on 3/4/43. Within a month, on 1/5/43, it was flown back to 20 MU for long-term storage. Finally, on 18/1/46, LB345 was sold to Taylorcraft and civilianised as G-AHGY.
- 205 LB346 Placed into storage at Rearsby with LB335 etc. until delivered to 20 MU on 22/12/43, it was released for 654 Squadron, but sustained severe damage at Southam on 31/1/43 when during a severe gale, it uprooted its pickets. On 11th. February, LB346 was declared a write-off and struck off charge.
- 206 LB347 Placed into storage at Rearsby with LB335 etc., until delivered to 20 MU on 22/12/42. On 31/12/42 '347 was released for 655 Squadron, but transferred to 657 Squadron on 7/4/43. On 'May 1st. it was returned to 20 MU and with LB345 was stored there for the duration of the war. Finally, on 17/1/46, '347 was sold to Taylorcraft and civilianised as G-AHCG.
- 207 LB348 Placed into storage at Rearsby with LB335 etc., until delivered to 654 Squadron on 20/12/42. On 1/3/43 it was re-allotted to 656 Squadron, but flown to 20 MU on 29/4/43, until released to 22 EFTS on May 25th. Shortly afterwards, on 20/6/43, LB348 was written-off at Cambridge when a pilot landed out of wind, and drifting badly. As the runway approached, the port wing dropped, but although the pupil tried to correct, the aircraft crashed onto the runway.
- 208 LB349 Placed into storage at Rearsby with LB335 etc., until delivered to 654 Squadron on 20/12/42, transferring to 653 Squadron shortly afterwards. On 26/4/43, it was allotted to 43 OTU, but sustained Cat.B damage at 'Practice Field No. 31' in Wiltshire on 13/9/43, when during a landing in a field, the pilot failed to control the descent and struck the top of a boundary fence. Conveyed to Rearsby for repairs it was later delivered to 20 MU on 12/12/43, for storage. On 23/6/44, '349 was released for 83 Group Communications Squadron and based at RAF Hawkinge. However, on 7/11/44, it made a heavy landing at B.56 Airfield (Brussels), causing the undercarriage to collapse. The damaged aircraft was returned to Taylorcraft for repairs on 29/12/44, which were completed on 14/3/45. Three days later, it was delivered to 602 Squadron. The squadron was disbanded at Coltishall on May 15th. and two days afterwards LB349 was allotted to RAF Bentwaters. Eventually, on 19/3/46, it was flown to 5 MU for disposal, and sold to the Luton Flying Club on 30/4/46 and civilianised as G-AHNZ.
- 209 LB350 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 15/11/42, and later flown to 47 MU on 12/12/42 for packaging and shipment. Conveyed to Glasgow docks on 21/1/43, '350 was shipped to North Africa aboard SS. 'J-77', arriving on February 18th. LB350 was then allotted to 651 Squadron and was in use with 'A' Flight when it crashed on 15/11/43, probably near Capello, in southern Italy. Declared a write-off, it was replaced by AOP.3 MZ115.
- 210 LB351 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 15/11/42, and later flown to 47 MU on 12/12/42 for packaging and shipment. '351 was shipped out to North Africa aboard SS. 'J-98', arriving on 10/3/43. No further records are available, and it is presumed to have been lost during the Allied advance, being officially struck off charge at the census on 1/1/47.
- 211 LB352 Placed into storage at Rearsby immediately after its completion, and was not allocated until 3/3/43, when delivered to 657 Squadron. Shortly afterwards, on 1/5/43, '352 was flown to 20 MU for storage, and remained there until sold to Taylorcraft on 18/1/46, and later civilianised as G-AHCR.
- 212 LB365 Delivered to 652 Squadron on 27/11/42, but flown to 47 MU on 12/12/42 for packaging and shipment. LB365 was conveyed to Birkenhead docks on 30/1/43, and shipped to North Africa aboard SS. 'J-78', departing the UK on February 1st. After arriving in North Africa on February 18th. '365 appears to have kept in reserve until flown up to join 'C' Flight of 651 Squadron at ALG Spinazzola on 30/9/43. It was later transferred to 'HQ' Flight but sustained slight damage during a forced-landing at Marrone on 12/11/43. No further records are available, and it is presumed to have been lost in Italy, being officially struck off charge during April 1945.

- 213 LB366 After initial storage at Rearsby, '366 was delivered to 20 MU on 22/12/42, before allotment to 43 OTU on 3/1/43. It sustained Cat.B damage on 14/12/43, necessitating a return to Rearsby for repairs on 20/12/43. These completed '366 was flown down to 20 MU on 15/2/44, and allotted to the RAF College at Gerrards Cross on April 12th. On July 13th. it passed to 83 Group Communications Squadron for several months until 8/9/44 when transferred to Middle Wallop Station Flight. On the 17th. LB366 was damaged during a forced-landing in the grounds of Springfield House, Stockbridge after a failure of aileron controls. The aircraft turned over immediately after landing. Again returned to Taylorcraft on the 26th. for repairs, '366 was later delivered to White Waltham TT Comm. Flight on 18/11/44, where it remained for almost a year, until 6/11/45 when transferred to the T.T.C.Comm. Flight at Wyton. Eventually, LB366 was flown to 20 MU on 28/2/46, and on to 5 MU on 27/3/46 for disposal. On 10/7/46, it was sold to the Edinburgh Flying Club, and civilianised as G-AHSK.
- 214 LB367 After initial storage at Rearsby, '367 was delivered to 20 MU on 31/12/42, and allotted to 655 Squadron on 11/1/43. Three days later, it sustained damage while on a local reconnaissance flight over Wiltshire, after overturning during a forced-landing in a field. Following repairs, LB367 was delivered to 657 Squadron on 3/4/43, but transferred to 20 MU on 1/5/43 for long-term storage. Eventually, on 18/1/46, it was sold to Taylorcraft and civilianised as G-AHGZ.
- 215 LB368 After initial storage at Rearsby, '368 was delivered to 20 MU on 23/12/42, for allotment to 654 Squadron on 31/1/43. Shortly afterwards it was written-off on February 10th, believed near Thornham village, Norfolk. The pilot was banking around a depression at the time, and did not realise he was approaching high ground. Flying so low and in a steep turn, the port wing struck the ground, causing the aircraft to crash.
- 216 LB369 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 9/1/43, but transferred to 657 Squadron on 7/4/43. Shortly afterwards, '369 was allotted to 20 MU for display at an Army exhibition at Birmingham on 12/3/44. Eventually, on 2/3/45 it was released for 1 Squadron, but a year later, on 18/3/46 was despatched to 5 MU for disposal. On the 3rd. May, LB369 was sold to the Lancashire Aero Club, to whom it was registered as G-AHHY.
- 217 LB370 Placed in storage at Rearsby until 19/2/43 when it was delivered to 656 Squadron. On 29/4/43 it was despatched to 20 MU for long-term storage not seeing the light of day until 2/1/45 when released for R.A.F. Biggin Hill. On 8/11/45 '370 was allotted to 247 Squadron until 20/3/46 when flown to 5 MU for disposal. On April 16th. it was sold to the Household Flying Club and civilianised as G-AHSG.
- 218 LB371 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 4/1/43, but transferred for a brief period to 657 Squadron on 3/4/43. On May 1st. '371 was flown to 20 MU where it was stored throughout the war, and finally sold to Taylorcraft on 18/4/46 where it was civilianised as 00-ABI.
- 219 LB372 Very little is known about LB372 apart from the fact that it was transferred to the Admiralty on 9/1/43 for use by Reid & Sigrist. It is known to have been taken on charge at RNAS Stretton during August 1953, and finally struck off charge on 22/9/53.
- 220 LB373 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 14/1/43, until transferred to 657 Squadron on 7/4/43. On 6/5/43 it was despatched to 20 MU where it remained until 10/9/44 when released for 12 Group Communications Flight. '373 was allotted to 122 Squadron on 3/5/45 for 'hack' duties until 1/4/46 when flown to 5 MU for disposal. Sold to the Bristol & Wessex Aero Club on 17/7/46, LB373 was later civilianised as G-AHWK.
- 221 LB374 Delivered to 654 Squadron on 4/12/42 and flown to 47 MU for packaging on 23/12/42. However, it was not shipped abroad and instead released for 652 Squadron on 8/2/43, passing to 656 Squadron on 23/3/43, and shortly afterwards to 43 OTU on 7/4/43. On May 18th. of that year LB374 was badly damaged when a pupil carried out several unauthorised dummy runs in a field at Wimborne St. Giles, Dorset. When a gust of wind hit the aircraft during a run, the pupil's experience proved insufficient to avert a stall which in turn caused it to crash. Conveyed to Rearsby for repairs, '374 was delivered to 20 MU on 17/8/43 where it remained until 17/1/46 when sold back to Taylorcraft for conversion to G-AHAJ.

- 222 LB375 Delivered to 653 Squadron on 5/12/42 until transferred to 43 OTU on 20/3/43. On 15/11/43, '375 was despatched to 20 MU where on the 30th. it was found to have suffered some considerable damage. Consequently, on 8/1/44 it was conveyed back to Rearsby for repairs, after which it was returned to 20 MU on 1/3/44. On 6/3/45 it was released for 451 Squadron, although it seems to have also been used by 164 Squadron around this period. Finally, it was flown to 5 MU for disposal on 28/3/46 from where it was sold to the Royal Flying Club on 11/6/46 and civilianised as Gahgw.
- 223 LB376 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 15/1/43, passing to 657 Squadron on 3/4/43. On May 1st. '376 was despatched to 20 MU for re-allotment to 22 EFTS at Cambridge on 25/5/43, where it remained until its return to 20 MU on 5/8/44. On 16/5/45, it was released for 126 Squadron until early 1946 when flown to 5 MU for disposal, being sold to W.A. Jordan and civilianised as G-AIRE.
- 224 LB377 Due to being damaged at Rearsby, LB377 was not delivered to 656 Squadron until 27/2/43 with whom it remained until 10/5/43 when issued to 430 Squadron at Dunsfold. On 10/4/44, it was allotted to 20 MU for storage, but released for 65 Squadron on 19/4/45. On 1/9/45, '377 suffered slight damage when it forced-landed in a field at Refford, Morayshire. By this time it had been transferred to 122 Squadron, according to Air Ministry accident files. On 19/3/46 it was flown to 5 MU for disposal, being sold to the Leicester Aero Club on 7/4/46 and registered G-AHSF.
- 225 LB378 Delivered to 655 Squadron on 16/1/43 and transferred to 657 Squadron on 7/4/43 for a brief period. On 30/4/43, '378 was issued to 20 MU for storage until 16/3/45 when released for 453 Squadron. On June 21st. LB378 was re-allotted to 183 Squadron, but according to official records suffered slight damage on 20/9/45 following a flying accident. On November 8th. it was declared a write-off and duly struck off charge, being sold to the Royal Aero Club on 26/4/46 to whom it was registered as G-AIXB.
- 226 LB379 Stored at Rearsby (with LB335 etc.) until delivered to 656 Squadron on 27/1/43. On 24/5/43, it was despatched to 20 MU for re-issue to RAF Hartford Bridge Communications Flight on 14/8/43. LB379 was returned to 20 MU on 7/5/44 but was found to be damaged and so duly conveyed to Rearsby for repairs. Afterwards, it would appear that '379 was in use as a 'hack' by 20 MU until sold to Taylorcraft on 18/1/46 where it was civilianised as EI-ACN.
- 227 LB380 No information whatsoever is available in Ministry files, apart from the one entry 'Sold to Taylorcraft 22/12/45' LB380 was later converted to Plus D 00-YES.
- 228 LB381 Delivered to 43 OTU on 17/12/42 where it remained until 15/11/43 when issued to 20 MU whereupon it was found to have suffered some damage, necessitating its return to Rearsby on 16/12/43 for repairs. Allocated to 20 MU on 28/1/44, '381 was briefly used by Hartford Bridge Comm. Flight from 5/2/44 until 23/3/44 when returned to 20 MU. On 29/12/44 it was released for 664 Squadron, progressing to 665 Squadron on 1/2/45, and finally to 666 Squadron on 8/3/45. A lengthy period with 43 OTU was spent from 7/6/45 until 7/3/46 when despatched to 5 MU for disposal. On 6/5/46 LB381 was sold to the Wiltshire Flying Club, and civilianised as G-AHKO.
- 229 LB382 Stored at Rearsby until delivered to 20 MU on 20/1/43 for release to 655 Squadron on 3/2/43. Exactly two months later '382 was transferred to 657 Squadron briefly, being returned to 20 MU for storage on 1/5/43. Eventually, on 14/1/46 it was sold back to Taylorcraft and civilianised as G-AHHZ.
- 230 LB383 Stored at Rearsby until delivered to 20 MU on 27/1/43 for release to 653 Squadron on 4/2/43. On 20/3/43 it was transferred to 43 OTU until returned to 20 MU on 5/2/44. On 10/9/44 it was issued to RAF Drem Station Flight until 26/4/45 when re-issued to 19 Squadron. On 6/6/46 it was delivered to Air Training Ltd. at Fairoaks but flown to 5 MU for disposal on July 31st. Finally, LB383 was struck off charge on 10/9/46, and was later civilianised as G-AHWD.
- 231 LB384 Stored at Rearsby until 26/1/43 when delivered to 20 MU for release to 656 Squadron on 3/2/43. On 29/4/43 LB384 was returned to 20 MU for long-term storage, eventually being struck off RAF charge on 6/1/45 as 'transferred to Royal Navy'. According to Navy records, '384 was taken on charge at Ayr on 10/1/45 and struck off charge on 19/12/49.

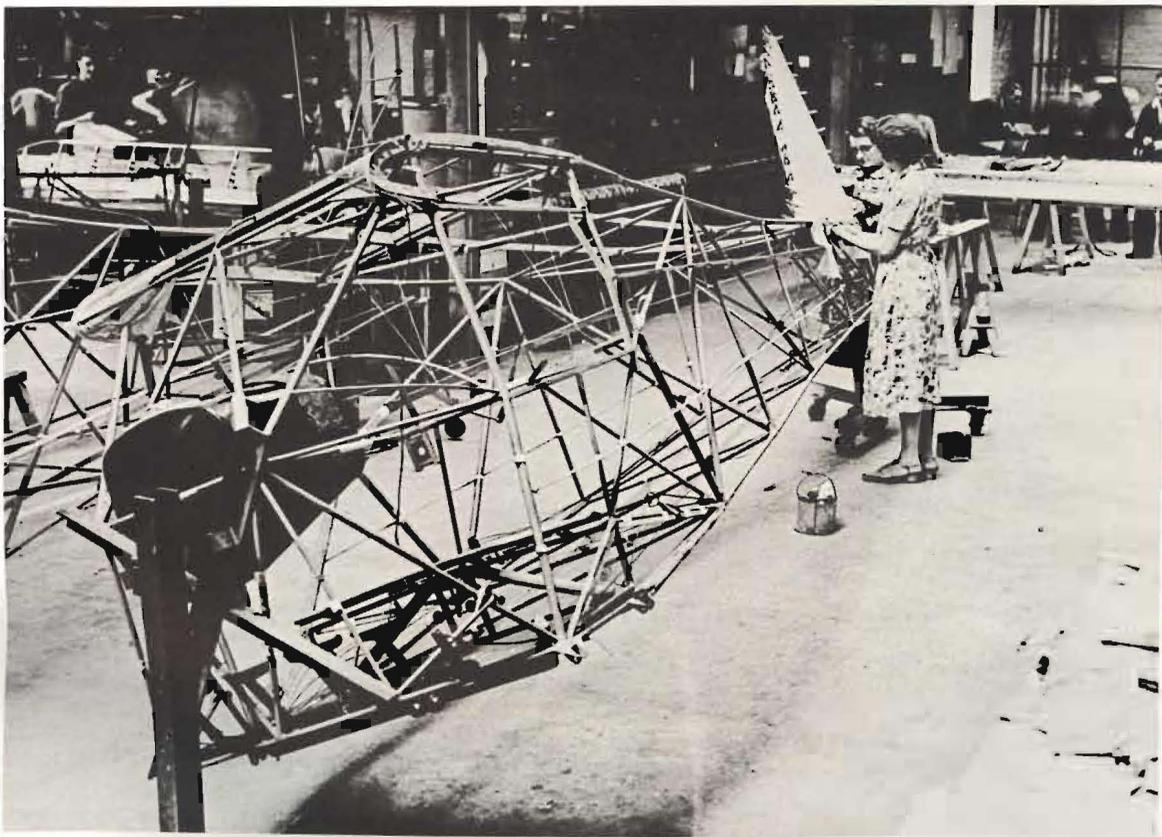
Stored at Rearsby until delivered to 656 Squadron on 16/2/43. On April 6th. '385 suffered damage at Bircotes aerodrome, Nottinghamshire when after landing a sudden gust of wind blew the aircraft onto its back and out of control. The damaged aircraft was conveyed to Rearsby on 12/4/43 for repairs, after which it was flown to 20 MU on 10/6/43 where it remained for the duration of the war. Eventually, on 17/1/46 LB385 was sold to Taylorcraft and civilianised as 00-JAQ.

This completes the listing of Auster 1 service histories, and before passing to the Auster 3, some observations can be made.

Many of the early Mk.1's that were shipped to Africa appear, in the above table, to have been lost without trace. In most cases this is not quite true, but unfortunately close study of daily despatches from squadrons in North Africa reveal such entries as "Captain ----- crashed this morning" or "Captain -----'s Auster was destroyed during the night and a replacement is expected." This therefore poses some considerable problem to a researcher today, for the actual aircraft involved were rarely identified. Some Austers of course were indeed lost without trace, and generally speaking these were struck off charge during the post-war census of R.A.F. aircraft, for example on January 1st. 1947.

While on the subject of missing Austers, in almost all cases those shipped overseas are shown to have arrived at their destination, dates of which have been confirmed. But careful study of Table 3b will show that no date of arrival in North Africa is evident for LB326, LB339 or LB351. It might well be significant that these three Austers were all shipped aboard SS 'J-98', and we wonder if in fact, 'J-98' did arrive in Algiers. Dare we promote the theory that the ship was sunk en route? Further comment welcome.

We also feel that there is more to the two 'naval' Austers, LB372 and LB384. Perhaps our friends at the British Aviation Research Group can throw some light on these unique Auster 1's.



Women were ideally-suited for a variety of work at Taylorcraft during the war, none less than the vital fabric stage, seen here in what is thought to be the rear of Britannia Works. (Leicester Museum of Technology)

AUSTER FORUM

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

Being one of the original members who helped to launch the military side of things, I was naturally most interested in the first part of The Auster Story, and can enlarge on one or two points.

Firstly, in Table 1a (page 8) I refer to the Model C c/n 111 — G—AFUX. The owner, J.W.W. Hurndell was an Army Officer attached to the R.A.F., and stationed at Odiham with 13 Squadron from, I think about the beginning of 1939. He kept his Taylorcraft at Odiham, and also at Longstock, near Stockbridge, Hants. where his parents lived. He used the aircraft quite a bit, and even used to fly to Southern Ireland in it — no radio, just a bicycle tyre. Quite a feat! I was posted from 16 Squadron to 13 Squadron just before war broke out, and went to France with 'A' Flight, and with Hurndell. We used to practice evasive action together in our Lysanders over northern France that winter, until Hurndell was shot down in May 1940, and badly wounded in the head. He never flew again, and I believe died not long ago. A tragedy as he was the most enthusiastic of pilots, and a very good one.

At the foot of page 10 you refer to the fact that in the delivery of 'D' Flight's aeroplanes, one forced-landed "en-route". The facts are that the pilot — a girl whose name I cannot remember — finished up somewhere in South Wales, about forty degrees off course. We sent out a truck and ground party to retrieve the bits, finding that the pilot was only shaken, but then soon discovered that there was more wrong with her than we thought; she was covered in blotches which later turned out to be measles. Incidentally, at this stage in the formation of 'D' Flight, we were based at High Post and used the Flying Club as our offices and stores etc.

While in France (page 11), the reconnaissance of the Saar area of the Maginot Line was in fact carried out in vehicles. As far as I can remember those involved were Lt. Col. Peppe of the R.H.A. Regiment, Major Matthews (A/E Battery), and the C.O. of the L.A.A. Battery, whose name escapes me. Major Matthews, although a First World War pilot never flew any of our aircraft except as passenger.

Your comment that 'D' Flight was dissolved in June 1940 is, according to Ministry files, factually correct, but in actual practice nothing ever happened about it. Bazeley was not the only Commander to turn a blind eye to signals he did not agree with. To keep the record straight the movements of 'D' Flight after its return from France on May 20th 1940 were as follows. Upon arrival at Old Sarum, we were ordered by HQ 22 Group to move to Odiham, but Bazeley maintained that this was of no use as he had to keep close contact with the gunners, and that Larkhill was the place to go. There then followed a period of furious argument during which the R.A.F. was properly more interested in other things. Eventually we were given a home in some huts on the edge of Larkhill camp by the School of Artillery, and took over the ALG on Knighton Down as our airfield. On page 13, it is not factually correct to imply that 'D' Flight had trained the pilots for 651 Squadron at Old Sarum. As I mentioned above, 'D' Flight was still at Larkhill, and the pilots, after training there were sent over to Old Sarum where 651 was formed, simply because we had no room for it at Larkhill.

Finally, the entry concerning ES959 in Table 2d (page 16) is of interest to me in that it refers to the Earl of Cardigan. My parent's home was at High Trees on the western edge of Savernake Forest, and which was a property owned by Cardigan. Two or three fields away was an area used for flying, and before the war was used by a small firm from Hungerford to fly an aeroplane they called the Chiltern. I used to frequently go up and watch this, though I never flew one. The same field I found very useful for visiting my parents when I was at Old Sarum before the war, and at Larkhill later on. I could get a Lysander in there without any great problems. The C.F.S. at Tavon also used the strip as one of their official forced-landing fields when I did my C.F.S. Instructor's course there. It is therefore an interesting connection that Cardigan should go full circle and after the war buy one of our Austers, to use presumably from a field connected with our early endeavours.

Bath,
Somerset.

J.R. Davenport (Wing Commander, Ret'd)

Auster Designations

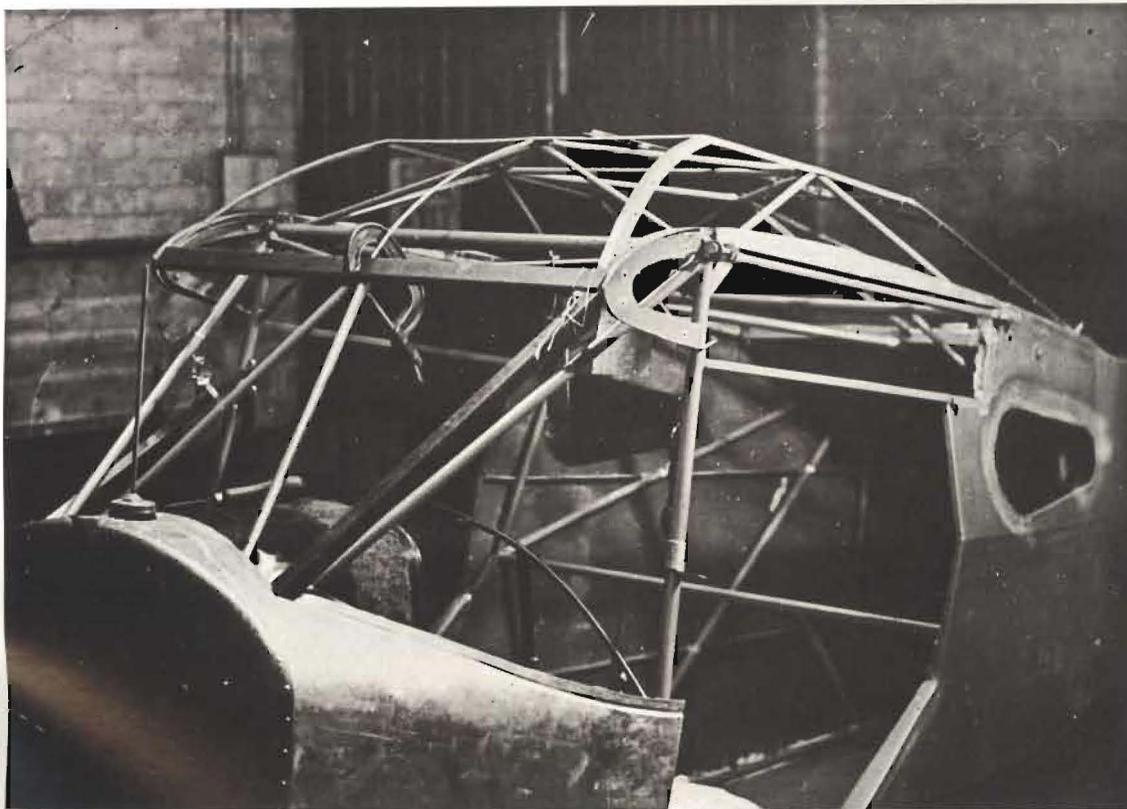
Regarding the explanation to Auster's designation system, on pages 48-50, Ron Neal has raised some interesting points, and has supplied some additional information. Although complete descriptions of each variant are due to be published at a later stage, it has been found necessary to correct some errors that crept into that feature. We thought that at the same time, it may well be of interest to show amendments in Modification Number sequence.

- Mod. No. 3271 J/5T This one-off variant was in fact powered by a 205 hp Continental E-185-10 and used for flight tests prior to the Model C6 Atlantic.
- Mod. No. 3437 J/1U Only the prototype was fitted with the 180 hp Lycoming O-360-A1A. Production aircraft were fitted with the O-360-A2A.
- Mod. No. 3514 J/1W This prototype was powered by a 180 hp Lycoming O-360-A1A, and was designed as a 'De Luxe' version of the J/1U.
- Mod. No. 3553 J/1Y This appears to have been the original designation for early designs that were finalised as the Model D5.

Austers also allocated Mod. numbers to two other approved designs, the J/5X (3552) and the J/5Z (3554), both of which will be fully described in later issues.

Two versions of the large Auster 'A2/45' were built, the Model M with a 160 hp Gipsy Major 31, and the Model N with the more powerful 240 hp Gipsy Queen 34 engine.

Ron Neal has also pointed out one error in Table 2b (page 14). The date of return to 651 Squadron by HL535 should of course read 6th. May 1942.



A good subject for discussion in the Forum is this Company photograph of the raised cockpit experiment discussed on page 10. Yet to be confirmed is the actual identity of the aeroplane involved. Comment?



Terrier 1 G-ARUI was restored to A. Macfarlane of Tamworth, Staffs. on May 16th. following almost two years of non-activity, at Sywell. This photograph by Peter Cooper was taken at Sywell shortly after its restoration.



Also at Sywell are the remains of Beagle Pup 150 SE-FOF (c/n B.022) which suffered an engine-failure on approach to the Sywell PFA Rally on July 4th. this year. Luckily, neither pilot nor passenger were hurt.

(P. J. Cooper)

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