

The Elevator



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The Fly by Wire Newsletter of the Lancashire Aero Club

www.lancaeroclub.co.uk

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Chairman's chat

Over the past few months the committee have been asking if there is anyone who would like to take on the job as an Editor for the newsletter. As you may have gathered no one has taken up the challenge, so far. As someone who has actually done the job I know how difficult it can be to get various people to write something for a newsletter so I do understand the reluctance to come forward. As a temporary measure Chris Barham is going to collate various bits together and see where we can go from here.

After three months the new committee are now getting to grips with the matters which are always coming up before a committee. As there are so many new members it takes time to acquaint them with the issues requiring attention, however they are now working as a unit and we can expect to see the results in the not too distant future.

There are two features of next year, 2012, the first being the Lancs Aero Clubs ninetieth birthday and the second, and by far the most important, is the ninetieth birthday of Tom Dugdale our President. As the year progresses we shall have various events to celebrate the year so keep an eye on the web site or the newsletter for these events.

Quite recently we were handed a list of questions, some of them for the Forum in November and some of them subsequently. Even though I had thought these were answered at the Forum we have still put full and frank

Inside this issue:

Aviation news	2
Blackbird revealed!	3
Scholarship progress	6
RT and English	6
What lies below?	7
HSE Dir. 1109	9
Kate's Kitten	10
Aircraft for sale	12
..and finally	14

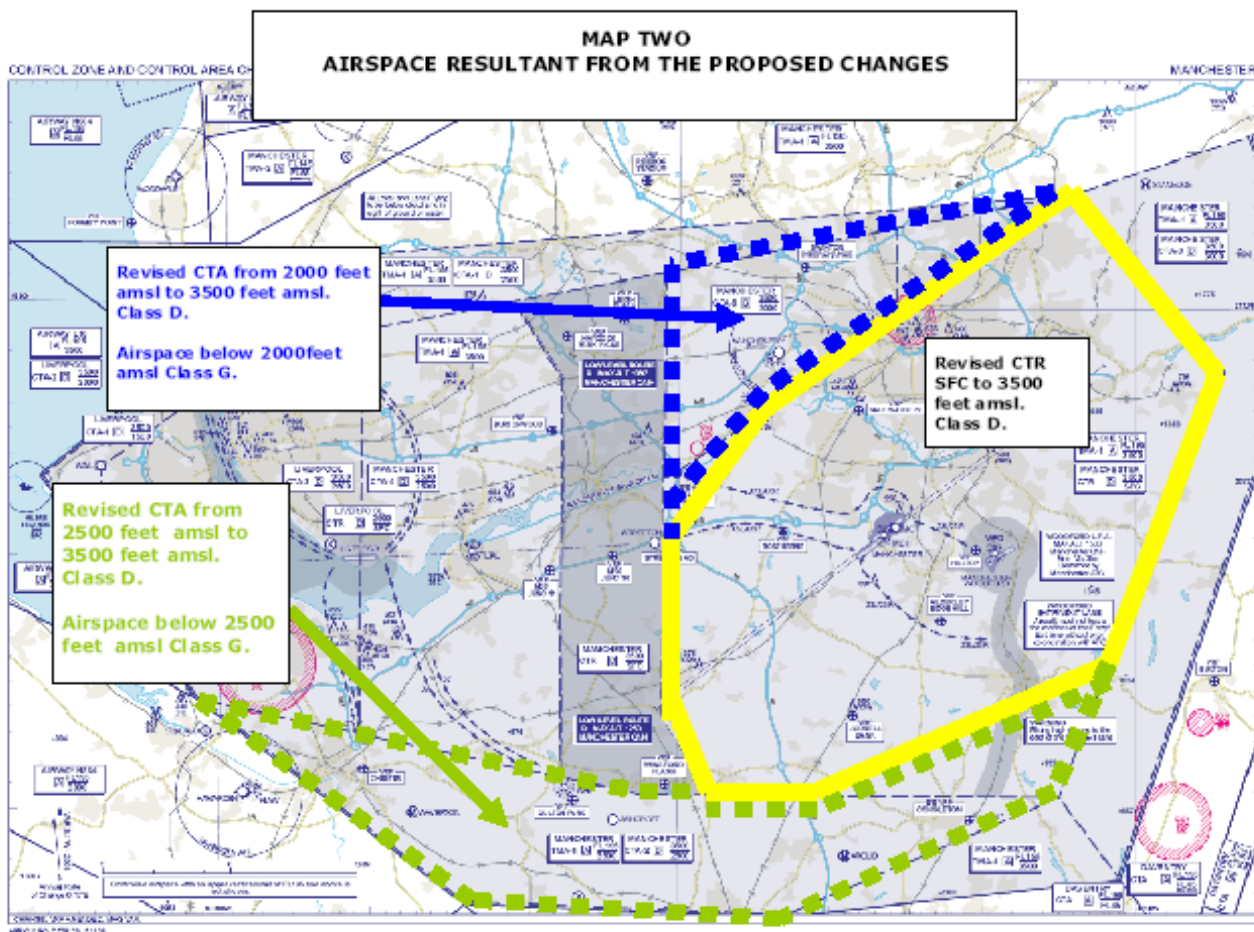
answers against each question for your information.

In conclusion I wish you all a merry Christmas and a very happy New Year,
Cliff Mort.

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Aviation news for our area

The long-awaited upgrade to local airspace is about to be completed. Starting in March 2012 large areas of the CTR will be returned to Class G. The most relevant part to us is the north-east corner of the LLR, which will move from Thelwall to Stretton. This gives us an early turn to Barton which avoids having to overfly the SE corner of Warrington. The ceiling of the LLR also rises to 1300 ft QNH. Other changes are to the east of Barton, where a large triangular piece is freed up on the way to Rochdale, and around Macclesfield. The NATS proposal is shown here.



You can get the full details from the LAC website.

Bye Bye Blackbird—the SR71 story

This account of flying the wonderful SR71 written by an anonymous pilot has been around for a time but bears repeating—it's one of a collection of fascinating tales on the website of the National Air and Space Intelligence Center Alumni Association at www.nasicaa.org, It's well worth a look. Thanks to Floyd Latimer for pointing us to it.

“In April 1986, following an attack on American soldiers in a Berlin disco, President Reagan ordered the bombing of Muammar Qaddafi's terrorist camps in Libya . My duty was to fly over Libya, and take photographs recording the damage our F-111's had inflicted. Qaddafi had established a 'line of death,' a territorial marking across the Gulf of Sidra, swearing to shoot down any intruder, that crossed the boundary.



On the morning of April 15, I rocketed past the line at 2,125 mph. I was piloting the SR-71 spy plane, the world's fastest jet, accompanied by a Marine Major (Walt), the aircraft's reconnaissance systems officer (RSO). We had crossed into Libya, and were approaching our final turn over the bleak desert landscape, when Walt informed me, that he was receiving missile launch signals. I quickly increased our speed, calculating the time it would take for the weapons, most

likely SA-2 and SA-4 surface-to-air missiles, capable of Mach 5 - to reach our altitude. I estimated, that we could beat the rocket-powered missiles to the turn, and stayed our course, betting our lives on the plane's performance. After several agonizingly long seconds, we made the turn and blasted toward the Mediterranean .. 'You might want to pull it back,' Walt suggested. It was then that I noticed I still had the throttles full forward. The plane was flying a mile every 1.6 seconds, well above our Mach 3.2 limit. It was the fastest we would ever fly. I pulled the throttles to idle, just south of Sicily, but we still overran the refueling tanker, awaiting us over Gibraltar..

Scores of significant aircraft have been produced, in the 100 years of flight, following the achievements of the Wright brothers, which we celebrate in December. Aircraft such as the Boeing 707, the F-86 Sabre Jet, and the P-51 Mustang, are among the important machines, that have flown our skies. But the SR-71, also known as the Blackbird, stands alone as a significant contributor to Cold War victory, and as the fastest plane ever, and only 93 Air Force pilots, ever steered the 'sled,' as we called our aircraft.



The SR-71, was the brainchild of Kelly Johnson, the famed Lockheed designer, who created the P-38, the F-104 Starfighter, and the U-2. After the Soviets shot down Gary Powers U-2 in 1960, Johnson began to develop an aircraft, that would fly three miles higher, and five times faster, than the spy plane, and still be capable of photographing your

license plate. However, flying at 2,000 mph would create intense heat on the aircraft's skin. Lockheed engineers used a titanium alloy, to construct more than 90 percent of the SR-71, creating special tools, and manufacturing procedures to hand-build each of the 40 planes.. Special heat-resistant fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluids, that would function at 85,000 feet, and higher also had to be developed.

In 1962, the first Blackbird successfully flew, and in 1966, the same year I graduated from high school, the Air Force began flying operational SR-71 missions. I came to the program in 1983, with a sterling record and a recommendation from my commander, completing the weeklong



interview, and meeting Walt, my partner for the next four years. He would ride four feet behind me, working all the cameras, radios, and electronic jamming equipment. I joked, that if we were ever captured, he was the spy, and I was just the driver. He told me to keep the pointy end forward. We trained for a year, flying out of Beale AFB in California, Kadena Airbase in Okinawa, and RAF Mildenhall in England . On a typical training mission, we would take off near Sacramento, refuel over Nevada, accelerate into Montana, obtain a high Mach speed over Colorado,

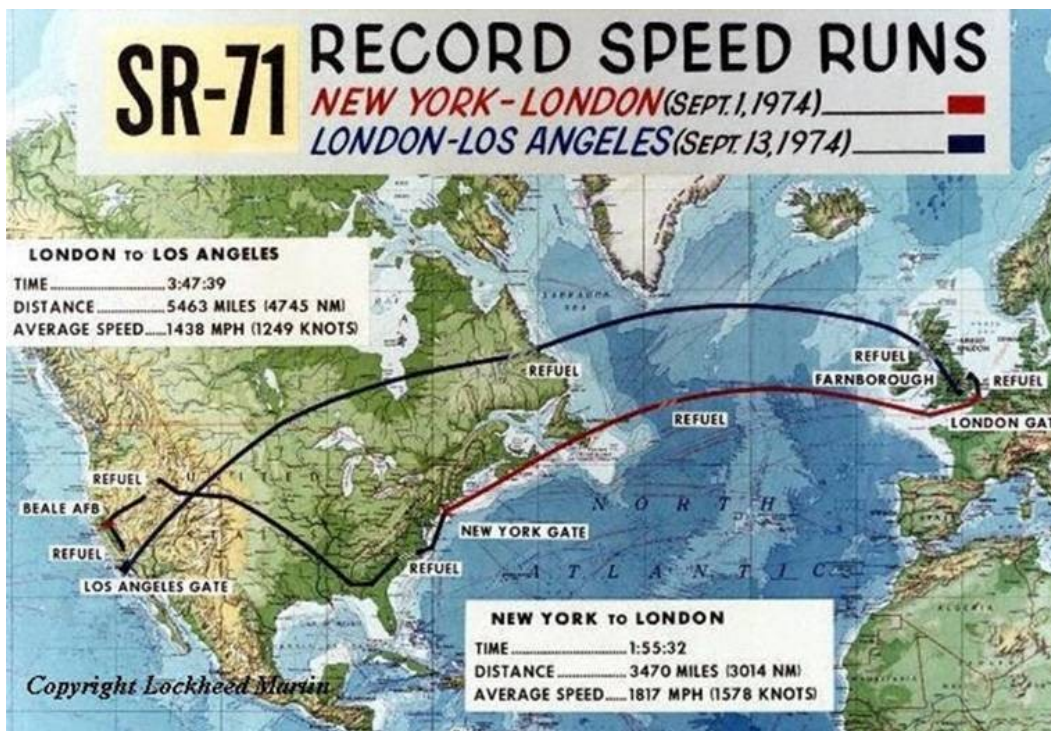
turn right over New Mexico, speed across the Los Angeles Basin, run up the West Coast, turn right at Seattle, then return to Beale. Total flight time:- Two Hours and Forty Minutes. One day, high above Arizona, we were monitoring the radio traffic, of all the mortal airplanes below us. First, a Cessna pilot asked the air traffic controllers to check his ground speed. 'Ninety knots,' ATC replied. A Bonanza soon made the same request. 'One-twenty on the ground,' was the reply. To our surprise, a navy F-18 came over the radio, with a ground speed check. I knew exactly what he was doing. Of course, he had a ground speed indicator in his cockpit, but he wanted to let all the bug-smashers in the valley, know what real speed was, 'Dusty 52, we show you at 620 on the ground,' ATC responded. The situation was too ripe. I heard the click of Walt's mike button in the rear seat. In his most innocent voice, Walt startled the controller by asking for a ground speed check from 81,000 feet, clearly above controlled airspace. In a cool, professional voice, the controller replied, 'Aspen 20, I show you at 1,982 knots on the ground.' We did not hear another transmission on that frequency, all the way to the coast.

The Blackbird always showed us something new, each aircraft possessing its own unique personality. In time, we realized we were flying a national treasure. When we taxied out of our revetments for take-off, people took notice. Traffic congregated near the airfield fences, because everyone wanted to see, and hear the mighty SR-71. You could not be a part of this program, and not come to love the airplane. Slowly, she revealed her secrets to us, as we earned her trust..

One moonless night, while flying a routine training mission over the Pacific, I wondered what the sky would look like from 84,000 feet, if the cockpit lighting were dark. While heading home on a straight course, I slowly turned down all of the lighting, reducing the glare and revealing the night sky. Within seconds, I turned the lights back up, fearful that the jet would know, and somehow punish me. But my desire to see the sky, overruled my caution, I dimmed the lighting again. To my amazement, I saw a bright light outside my window. As my eyes adjusted to the view, I real-

ized that the brilliance was the broad expanse of the Milky Way, now a gleaming stripe across the sky. Where dark spaces in the sky, had usually existed, there were now dense clusters, of sparkling stars. Shooting Stars, flashed across the canvas every few seconds. It was like a fireworks display with no sound. I knew I had to get my eyes back on the instruments, and reluctantly, I brought my attention back inside. To my surprise, with the cockpit lighting still off, I could see every gauge, lit by starlight. In the plane's mirrors, I could see the eerie shine of my gold space-suit, incandescently illuminated, in a celestial glow. I stole one last glance out the window. Despite our speed, we seemed still before the heavens, humbled in the radiance of a much greater power. For those few moments, I felt a part of something far more significant, than anything we were doing in the plane. The sharp sound of Walt's voice on the radio, brought me back to the tasks at hand, as I prepared for our descent.

The SR-71 was an expensive aircraft to operate. The most significant cost was tanker support, and in 1990, confronted with budget cutbacks, the Air Force retired the SR-71. The SR-71 served six presidents, protecting America for a quarter of a century. Un-be-known to most of the country, the plane flew over North Vietnam, Red China, North Korea, the Middle East, South Africa, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, Libya, and the Falkland Islands .On a weekly basis, the SR-71, kept watch over every Soviet Nuclear Submarine, and Mobile Missile Site, and all of their troop movements. It was a key factor in winning the Cold War. I am proud to say, I flew about 500 hours in this aircraft. I knew her well. She gave way to no plane, proudly dragging her Sonic Boom through enemy backyards, with great impunity. She defeated every missile, outran every MiG, and always brought us home. In the first 100 years of manned flight, no aircraft was more remarkable. The Blackbird had outrun nearly 4,000 missiles, not once taking a scratch from enemy fire. On her final flight, the Blackbird, destined for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, sped from Los Angeles to Washington in 64 Minutes, averaging 2,145 mph, and setting four speed records.”



Do you have something you'd like to see in print? (Keep it clean!). We'd like to hear from you. Send it to elevator@lancaeroclub.co.uk.

The Tom Dugdale Flying Scholarship

Of the seventeen qualified applications received, six candidates were chosen for interview on December 15th and duly turned up at Barton on a cold and wet evening. The subcommittee comprising Eric Isaac, Firas Bakir and Harry Jones talked to each of them for about twenty minutes in order to narrow the field to three. These three will now be asked to carry out a flight test with Martin Rushbrooke to find out who has the most aptitude for the training we are offering. The financial aspects of the programme are to be discussed by the committee due to the involvement of a donor aircraft and other practical matters.

Can you speak English (legally)?

Take a look at your PPL (if it's not fallen apart yet!). In box 13 it should say "Language Proficiency: English". If not you're in deep trouble. Even if it does you still could be.

Three years ago it became mandatory for all pilots to have a basic working knowledge of the English language at at least level 4 out of 6. Level 6 signifies a native English speaker and, crucially, needs no further testing. As a stop-gap the CAA re-issued all PPLs with the level 4 endorsement. Level 4 needs to be retested every three years, in fact all level 4s would become void last winter if the CAA hadn't extended them for another year, to March 2010. No valid level 4 or above, no valid RT licence, potentially prosecution and no insurance in the event of an incident. Of course if you don't use the radio then you're ok, but there can't be many in that category. The killer is that it doesn't tell you on your licence at what level you are registered. According to the CAA person I spoke to today most pilots think "English" in box 13 means level 6. It doesn't. **Check now if you're not sure you have a level 6 sign-off.** You can get more information on the CAA website.

Next April all JAA licences are set to be converted automatically to EASA "lifetime" licences. It's obviously well worth getting your registered language proficiency sorted out before this happens, to avoid any Euro-complications.

Your editor writes:

"A couple of nights ago, I was out for a few drinks with some friends and had a few too many beers and some rather nice claret. Knowing full well I may have been slightly over the limit, I did something I've never done before - I took a bus home. I arrived home safely and without incident, which was a real surprise, as I have never driven a bus before and am not sure where I got this one. "



BOOK REVIEW: ECHOES IN THE AIR

by JACK CURRIE

The world of aviation has produced an amazing collection of ghostly tales, supernatural events, and unexplained happenings: phantom aircrew and spectral aircraft on long-deserted airfields; prophetic warnings from beyond the grave; relentless spirits apparently drawn back to the places of their death. Now, for the first time, renowned aviation author Jack Currie examines these stories and legends objectively and in detail. "Echoes in the Air" is also illustrated with historical material and specially commissioned photos of some of the haunted airfields.

Squadron leader Jack Currie joined the RAF at the outbreak of war in 1939, trained in the U.S., and completed his first tour (30 missions) as a bomber pilot on Lancasters. He later flew as an instructor in Halifax bombers, trained to fly gliders, and ended the war flying Mosquitoes with the Pathfinder force. He was awarded the DFC in 1944 and retired from the RAF thirty years later. Jack Currie died in 1996; Echoes in the Air is his final work.

(recommended as a cracking read by Kate Howe)

WHAT LIES BELOW?

By Roger Wareing

A TrimTab from February 1997 reports that Barton is the burial site of several Spitfires. Previously there have been rumours that P-51 Mustangs were interred here; and other accounts mention Fairey Battles rusting below the turf. Even earlier it was claimed that Avro 504s, Avians and Tutors were buried at Barton. What is the truth about this subterranean aviation museum? Is it worthy of attention from flying archaeologists?

A few years ago I rejoiced in the title of LAC Public Relations Manager. I met many people who gave their recollections of Barton during its early years. One person in particular was a man from Warrington, who worked at Barton during the 30s and 40s; he learned to fly and gained his pilot wings in 1938. During the time he worked on the aerodrome, many aircraft were repaired following structural damage, and others had to be dismantled. In the process, many parts were retained for later use as spares; other bits being sold for scrap. This still left a number of bits and pieces which were of no value whatsoever. The policy adopted was to periodically dig a hole and dump this debris into it.

No whole aircraft or substantial part of an aircraft was ever buried under Barton Moss. Sketch maps of these sites, together with other airfield diagrams and archive material, disappeared during structural alterations to the Control Tower. Does anyone today know where these bits of paper might be? Possibly in someone's attic. The wet boggy nature of Barton Aerodrome has always been a problem. In the early 1930s attempts to improve matters were made, and two steam agricultural traction engines were engaged in drainage work. Following a period of particularly heavy rain, one of these machines was found to have settled into the bog during the weekend. Attempts on the Monday to extricate it proved of no avail. Fearing the same fate might befall the second traction engine, work was abandoned. Everything that could be removed from the stricken engine was salvaged, and the remains slowly sank into the bog. The site of entombment

is known, having been located more recently by people with metal detectors. Some people believe that a railway was built to serve Barton Aerodrome. Indeed at one time a "station" did exist, but this was no more than two platforms, with shelters, known as Barton Halt. This facility was provided by the railway company following requests from residents of a small hamlet which once existed to the north of the airfield. All traces had disappeared well before the airfield was opened for flying. The haunting of Barton Aerodrome has not been a topic of conversation for some years. The last reported sighting of the spectre was ten years ago. Maybe there are two ghosts; one who haunts the control tower, and the other Pemberton Hangar. Apparently one ghost appears in WWII style flying clothing, while the other wears the much older white flying overall issued to Auxiliary Air Force pilots (and favoured by some civilian pilots). Nobody seems to know who these ghosts are. So despite the myths and legends, it seems there are no buried treasures under Barton, and the only place you are guaranteed of seeing spirits is in the Club-house bar.

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The LAC Christmas caption competition



What is Cliff saying here?

Free mince pie for the best entry received by next issue!

One for the mathematicians
amongst our members...



Health and Safety Directive no. 1109

All employees planning to dash through the snow in a one horse open sleigh, going over the fields and laughing all the way are advised that a Risk Assessment will be required addressing the safety of an open sleigh for members of the public. This assessment must also consider whether it is appropriate to use only one horse for such a venture, particularly where there are multiple passengers. Please note that permission must also be obtained in writing from landowners before their fields may be entered. To avoid offending those not participating in celebrations, we would request that laughter is moderate only and not loud enough to be considered a noise nuisance.

Benches, stools and orthopaedic chairs are now available for collection by any shepherds planning or required to watch their flocks at night. While provision has also been made for remote monitoring of flocks by CCTV cameras from a centrally heated shepherd observation hut, all users of this facility are reminded that an emergency response plan must be submitted to account for known risks to the flocks. The angel of the lord is additionally reminded that, prior to shining his/her glory all around, s/he must confirm that all shepherds are wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment to account for the harmful effects of UVA, UVB and the overwhelming effects of Glory.

Following last year's well publicised case, everyone is advised that Equal Opportunities legislation prohibits any comment with regard to the redness of any part of Mr. R. Reindeer. Further to this, exclusion of Mr Reindeer from reindeer games will be considered discriminatory and disciplinary action will be taken against those found guilty of this offence.

While it is acknowledged that gift bearing is a common practice in various parts of the world, particularly the Orient, everyone is reminded that the bearing of gifts is subject to Hospitality Guidelines and all gifts must be registered. This applies regardless of the individual, even royal personages. It is particularly noted that direct gifts of currency or gold are specifically precluded, while caution is advised regarding other common gifts such as aromatic resins that may evoke allergic reactions.

Finally, in the recent case of the infant found tucked up in a manger without any crib for a bed, Social Services have been advised and will be arriving shortly.

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Kate Howe has a seasonal tale to tell:

“I started having flying lessons in 1989 and recall going to the airfield one Friday night on my way home from work. It was Winter and the night was drawing in. Those were the days before we had a security presence on the field and the place was completely deserted, dark and silent. As so often happens at that time of year, the field was covered in a low, soft, swirling mist; only the tops of the aircraft could be seen as they sat silently on the damp grass. It was eerie yet fascinating, so I decided to walk up to the top of the Tower for a better view.

As I reached the first floor viewing area, I was overcome by a complete sense of foreboding and fear. I suddenly felt an overwhelming feeling that I was not alone. I turned on my heel and ran down the stairs, away from the Tower and into the safety of my car. To this day, I have no desire to be alone in the Tower.”

Kate's Kitten

Kate Howe took delivery in November of a superb little aircraft that is decidedly special, in fact it's unique. It's the only one of four ever made to be still flying in the UK. It's a low-wing mono-plane called a Dart Kitten, built in 1937 by Dart Aircraft at Dunstable in Bedfordshire. Three were made here and one was home-constructed in New Guinea in the sixties, was flying in Australia but has recently been destroyed in a crash.

Sadly the other three have all been lost in accidents but G-AEXT is still in marvellous condition. Powered by a 36hp Aeronca-J.A.P engine, it's a taildragger with fixed undercarriage and a tailskid. She cruises at 65 mph. XT's famous pilots include Alan Hartfield, Geoffrey Allington and both Geoffrey and John de Havilland. She's been rebuilt twice, once after the war and again after a crash in 1964. Now she's in Kate's care she'll be based at Brighton.



Photos c/o Stephen Blee



She was flown up from Buckinghamshire by Cliff Whitwell, here seen getting a quick peep. Kate says "She was an absolute delight to fly... I think my smile says it all". You can see more pictures of this unique aircraft on the website in the Gallery section.

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A priest dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a guy who's dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans. Saint Peter addresses this cool guy, 'Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?' The guy replies, 'I'm Jack, retired airline pilot from Houston.' Saint Peter consults his list. He smiles and says to the pilot, 'Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom.' The pilot goes into Heaven with his robe and staff.

Next, it's the priest's turn. He stands erect and booms out, 'I am Father Bob, pastor of Saint Mary's for the last 43 years.' Saint Peter consults his list. He says to the priest, 'Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom. 'Just a minute,' says the good father. 'That man was a pilot and he gets a silken robe and golden staff and I get only cotton and wood. How can this be?' 'Up here - we go by results,' says Saint Peter. 'When you preached - people slept. When he flew, people prayed.'

(Blame Cliff Whitwell for that one!)

Accident report



Mr S Clause (Flight # Reindeer 1) was flying without a flight plan, did not activate the lead reindeers transponder, failed to communicate with the tower, and was most probably distracted by the blonde in the tower. Capt Chip on my Shoulder Clause (no relation) was on short final and was equally distracted by the same reason. A contributory factor was that the left front reindeer was on heat and the right front reindeer did not notice that the transponder was not on, nor maintain an adequate look out in a congested area.

CONCLUSION

Lack of situational awareness by all concerned .



For Sale - Steen Skybolt G-SKIE - Half share available

Aircraft based at Barton [Manchester City Airport] EGCB. Originally built in New Zealand [reg: ZK-DEN] in 1989 and imported to UK in 1999. G-SKIE is fully aerobatic with a 200 HP engine [LYCOMING IO-360-A1B6 angle valve] with an inverted oil system. Recent new oil hoses fitted. It has a full one piece canopy for extra comfort. Monthly standing order of £150 covering running costs [hangarage, insurance & permit]. Transponder and radio fitted. Excellent availability all year round! Reason for sale, purchasing other aircraft.



Permitted until: 14th April 2012, airframe: 283 hours, engine: 2223 hours. Max aerobatic weight 1650lbs
Max touring weight 1800lbs. Priced at £18,500 for a 50% share. Contact: Cliff Whitwell on 07939 067637 for more details.

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Zero-equity share in G-BLTM



A zero-equity share is available in this delightful 2 seater which has been based at Barton for the past 15 years. It is hangared, flown regularly and has good availability. Costs: £90 a month, £60 per tacho hour wet.
Contact: Stuart Sawle (group treasurer): 01706 362 121 or 01706 358 139
or Louis Blanchet (group instructor): 07775 996 7190

Cessna 150L G-PLAN shares



Shares for sale in the very friendly 20 member G-PLAN group. Availability is good. The aircraft had a respray and renewed upholstery not too long ago so is in excellent condition. The aircraft has an ADF, VOR, Mode C and a group portable GPS. Has been regularly maintained. The group finances are in a good state including engine fund. Costs are monthly £45, hourly (wet) £60 and shares are on special offer at the moment for £1000. An excellent first aircraft but NO hours builders though! For more information about joining contact Cyril Jones via email: jjcj@tiscali.co.uk or telephone: (01625) 876849

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Citabria share for sale, £1500



HP is a striking and capable aircraft which will give a great introduction to aerobatics and farm strips whilst still being an excellent tourer. She is a very rewarding and fun aircraft to fly. This is a 'tame' taildragger that is ideal for the recently converted pilot. For further information contact John Coxon - 07821 158622 Or Peter Hothersall – 07756 168068 Web page with comprehensive details [here](#).

More shares for sale on the website...

...and finally...

Please welcome these late arrivals at the LAC Christmas Eve Ball:

Mr and Mrs O'Wright and their son Michael

Mr and Mrs Vator and their youngest daughter Ellie

Mr and Mrs Stick and their outgoing granddaughter Joy

Mrs Personic and her flighty daughter Sue

Mr Proach and his German cousin Loewe

Mr Speedprop and his elderly mother Constance

Cousins Ray Darr and Mr G P Ess

Mr and Mrs Titch and their youngest son, Taylor

Mr and Mrs Stu Rich and their father Mick

Mr and Mrs Onboth and their exuberant daughter Mags

All the way from France, the de Loops and their grandson Lou

Mr and Mrs Doubt and their only son Roger N

From Ireland, the O'Heaters and their son Pete

Mr and Mrs Kee and their lively daughter Cherry

Mr and Mrs Eagle and their youngest boy, Christian

Miss T Weather and her partner I.M Cee.

From Germany, Herr Chex and his daughter Freda

Robin Banks and Heidi Loot, celebrating their sons' birthdays; Robin's sons are 22.

(Thank you Joe Dell and Tommy Hawke for the revised guest list).

A Merry Christmas to all our members, and a Happy New Year!