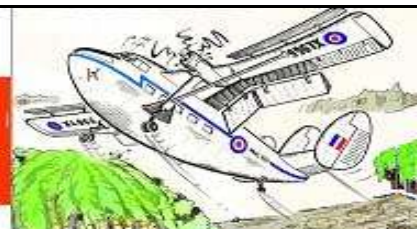


Scottish Aviation TWIN PIONEER



Newsletter Number Thirty Two April 2010

In this Issue

- 'There's still fun in flying' but in brass monkey weather?
- What is the mystery at the Al Mahatta Museum or is there a simple answer?



Two Alvises under each wing

Tony Hannam

The last time we saw four Alvis engines under the wing of an aircraft was when the prototype Handley Page Herald took to the air. However, here is a far more majestic scene, this great shot was taken by Tony Hannam in May 2009 in the late afternoon when Tony and David MacDonald paid a visit to VH-AIS after the Australian National Alvis Rally involving 38 cars in Toowoomba. Under the starboard wing is David's 1937 Alvis Speed 25 (six cylinder) and under the port wing is Tony's 1936 Firebird Tourer (four cylinder). Tony's car has been in his family since new – what an achievement!

There has been quite a gap between this edition and the last – all but a year. The time has been spent on other projects and collecting a few more Twin Pin stories for our enjoyment. The story of the fin, rudder and servo tab assembly at Al Mahatta may be too much at the Anorak end of the spectrum for some but there is nothing like a good 'counting the rivets' yarn. The people involved have had fun.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter another intriguing story is promised. In the next issue, the ditching of G-APLN, (see Newsletter Number Three July 2004) off the Moroccan coast will be told by the pilot-in-command, Captain Ron Williams. Another pilot-in-command, Captain David Baker, will describe, first hand, the demise of one of Borneo Airways' Twin Pioneers in a future Newsletter. David is still flying professionally in the US – powering Gulfstream Vs around the skies. We have a few stories and adventures to which we can look forward.

In the meantime, it is good to be back – enjoy!

This Newsletter has no other purpose than to provide a bit of nostalgic fun for a few people who believe that the Twin Pioneer, in some way, had an involvement in their lives. It is published in a liberated way by Ron Tannock in New Zealand.
Contact him at r.tannock@xtra.co.nz

Research, good fortune and coincidence link three Twin Pioneer stories together.

Something to complement Les Palmer's story of ditching off the coast of Morocco in G-APLN

For those of us of a certain age, the 50s and 60s decades of the twentieth century were the heydays of the British aircraft industry. The disaster known as Duncan Sandys' White Paper was just beginning to affect industry but for those of us building, maintaining, repairing or flying the aeroplanes of the day, these were exciting times, at least, on the hangar floor, on the ramp or on the flightdeck.



John and Pamela Wilder at home

In the golden years of the 50s and 60s, the Board Room antics of aeroplane and engine manufacturers and airlines were known only to us through our weekly fix of 'The Plane Makers'. Watching John Wilder (Patrick Wymark) strategize and deal to the opposition, political or industrial, was excitement indeed! Add the lovely Pamela Wilder (Barbara Murray) to the storyline and it was just sublime!

In real life, there must have been a great deal of activity in the Board Rooms of the independent carriers and operators if the resulting mergers and acquisitions were anything to go by. In July 1960, British United Airways was formed in by the amalgamation of the Airwork group of companies and Hunting-Clan. The components of the BUA group were many; add the associated companies to the mix, it becomes almost bewildering. Companies within the large groupings, such as BUA, exchanged aeroplanes, pilots and maintenance people across subsidiary and associate companies around the world.

The story that follows is an example of this practice. First, a bit of background. The Glasgow Herald carried the announcement of the sale of two Twin Pioneers to Fison-Airwork on 17 November 1957. G-APLN (c/n 526) and G-APLM (c/n 523) were delivered to Fison- Airwork on 28 June 1958 and 22 August 1958 respectively. Fison- Airwork, itself a combination of Airwork and Fison Pest Control, became Airwork (Helicopters) later becoming Bristow Helicopters, a part of the British United grouping. Some sources reported 'LN being reregistered as VR-NDN on 2 November 1960 and the 'reggie-spotters' 'bible' of the time, Air Pictorial, reported in its February 1961 edition, that the aeroplane had been sold in Nigeria. However, in its next issue it reported that VR-NDN was still owned by Airwork. It is probable that the aeroplane was reregistered in Nigeria around the time of independence, October 1960, then when the British colonial prefix of 'VR' was dropped, the aeroplane became 5N-ABR. Air Pictorial reported in its 20 August 1961 edition that it had been 'spotted' at Redhill in transit to Prestwick for 'overhaul'. In September 1961, Air Pictorial reported that 'BR had been 'delivered' to the Nigerian Air Force or, possibly, the Nigerian Police Air Wing. At an unspecified date, it was 'withdrawn from service and stored'. The inference from these records is that Bristow no longer required 'BR. Air Pictorial reported, in its February 1963 issue, that 5N-ABR had been 'ferried from Redhill to Prestwick on 13 December for overhaul and that it had left Prestwick for Southend on 1 January. UK CAA records confirm the 'LN was back on the British register as from 31 December 1962, still as a Series 1 aeroplane. It seems that a maintenance visit to Prestwick was in preparation for a demonstration to French interests in Senegal.

Les Palmer told us of ending up in the 'oggin' in 'LN, near a place called Chepbeica, in the company of British United pilots, Captain Ron Williams, and First Officer Medina, after navigation problems caused a ditching beside a fishing boat. (see Twin Pioneer Newsletter Number Three July 2004). Sadly, Les died a few years ago but Ron Williams is still with us and has written a book on his life as an airline pilot. Ron has kindly granted permission to the Twin Pioneer Newsletter to publish extracts from his book relating to the Twin Pin. Ron's story of the demise of G-APLN will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter. It is fascinating reading. In the meantime, here is a story that appeared in Flight International in January 1963 telling of the positioning flight from Prestwick to Southend.

Glasgow Herald 17 November, 1957

TWIN PIONEER AIRCRAFT FOR OIL WORK

Fison-Airwork, Ltd., have placed an order with Scottish Aviation for the early delivery of two Twin Pioneer aircraft.

These short take-off and landing aircraft will be used to develop the work that Fison-Airwork have been doing during the past four years for the Shell-B.P. Petroleum Development Company in Nigeria. They are at present operating a fleet of Whirlwind helicopters there, carrying engineers, drilling-rig crews, and their tools, equipment, and materials over the swamps and jungles of the Niger delta, where surface transport is slow and often impossible, between the drilling rigs and the Shell-B.P. headquarters.

IDEAL CHOICE

Because of the increasing intensity of oil exploration work in Nigeria it has been found necessary to add to the Fison-Airwork fleet aircraft of greater capacity than the Whirlwinds, and in the delta territory, where natural landing sites are not readily available, the performance of the Twin Pioneer is regarded as making it the ideal choice.

Fison-Airwork expect to take delivery of the new aircraft early in the new year and will fly them immediately to Nigeria.

Fully Tropicalized for Winter Flying ...

Passing thoughts on a Delivery Trip from Freezing Prestwick to Frozen Southend

KEITH SISSONS



G-APLN (c/n 526) in SAL's corporate livery 1958

Quentin Wilson

One night the other week, seated, comfortably in the rear of a Boeing 707 at 32,000ft on my way from London to Prestwick, I was thumbing through the latest *Flight International*. Having declined yet another cup of coffee, I reflected as the stewardess took my meal tray on how flying had changed in the past 20 years or so. From my vantage-point the cabin of the 707 looked more like the Mersey Tunnel than the inside of a vehicle speeding across the winter skies above the weather at nearly the speed of sound. I thought, as many must have done, 'This is the way to travel—and all for three guineas!' I turned a page and saw N. J. Capper's article "There's still Fun in Flying," about a Twin Pioneer flight from Prestwick to Philadelphia. I started to read but didn't get very far; we were already on the approach to snow-covered Prestwick.

On arrival my colleague and I checked with Met for our proposed ferry flight, next day, in another Twin Pioneer—not to Philadelphia but to Redhill. The cold easterly airstream bringing havoc to surface travel and delays in air schedules would continue to bring snow in the south, severe icing in cloud and the risk of freezing rain. It was already New Year's Eve and time for bed, so we ordered a forecast, wondering if the forecaster's pessimism would prove justified by daylight.

A visit to the Met office a few hours later gave no

comfort. Our aircraft had no de-icing equipment and, with freezing rain still forecast, the chances of reaching Gatwick or Southend were little better than remote (Redhill was in deep snow and unfit to land on). However, the prospect of celebrating Hogmanay in Scotland was not to be spurned and there was little point in attempting to reach the Midlands, where all the airfields had low cloud or very high winds, poor runway conditions or combinations of all three.

Winds on the Nose

Next day, having celebrated Hogmanay satisfactorily, we bade the forecaster a Happy New Year and proceeded to examine his chart. Warmer air which had started to creep across Southern England was now receding, and there was a risk of freezing rain. Winds were on the nose at 45kt at 2,000ft but only averaging 25-30kt at 7,000ft. Main cloud was strato-cumulus base 2,000 – 3,000ft, tops 6,000ft with alto-stratus/atlo-cumulus above. Low stratus was forecast in the south, Sigmet reports gave severe turbulence and severe icing *en route*. The chances of an improvement in the foreseeable future were unlikely.

To fly below cloud out to sea around the Cumbrian mountains with a 60kt ground speed would entail a refuelling stop in the Midlands, preferably at Birmingham, but with the risk of running into very low cloud and severe rime ice.

Flying above cloud on airways we would be clear of ice and able to make Southend direct. We would have to leave airways at Lichfield as we had no VOR receiver and would try to remain on top to Southend if able to get permission from London to cross Red 1 at Matching. We had no fan-marker receiver, so would have to use a radial from Stansted NDB. If not cleared for this we would have to descend in the FIR hoping to be able to remain below cloud for the rest of the way. If not, we would have to divert to Birmingham or Manchester, where the winds had dropped. At Southend during descent we should not pick up a lot of ice; the main inconvenience would be windscreen icing. Therefore we would take a bottle of de-icing fluid and a rag to assist the windscreen wipers.

At Prestwick AIC we enquired whether Scottish and Preston airways would be co-operative and let us on A1 without a fan-marker receiver or VOR. After all, there were no fan markers or VORs between Prestwick and Lichfield. Airways agreed, but we would have to check with London FIS after Lichfield regarding crossing Red 1.

At 6,500ft we broke into sunshine, the layer of stratocumulus looking remarkably like the snow-covered earth we had just left. The little rime we had collected in the thin layer of cloud was of no consequence and the air was smooth. From the sun's rays emanated a warmth more psychological than physical: our fully tropicalized and unheated aeroplane seemed a flying sieve, through which the draughts penetrated our sweaters, flying suits, Irvin jackets and several pairs of socks. We bunged up a leaking ventilator with newspaper and settled down for a cold three and a half hour flight. Our forecast had apparently been a good one; we were between layers and the wind was even a little less than expected.

At Lichfield we left A1, setting course for Stansted NDB. The sky ahead appeared clear at our level and with the better winds we decided to forgo the comforts of warmer air lower down but with the attendant risk of icing in low cloud farther on. London Information were helpful, and Airways agreed to let us cross Red 1 at our level at Braintree. We asked for clearance through Stansted NDB as we had no room for Stansted's frequency in our ten-channel set. London (which seemed rather busy, there appearing to be more aircraft crossing airways than flying on them) helpfully agreed to contact Stansted. Eventually Stansted's approval came through and we crossed Red 1 on time.

We called Southend, requesting if possible a fast descent and a radar approach to reduce our time in ice-bearing cloud; but, of course, we had only one Southend frequency in this sparsely equipped aeroplane. Southend, always co-operative, agreed, although we could have managed on the NDB alone, orbiting below cloud to clear the windscreen if necessary.

Thanks to ATC

As we let down, Southend talking us on to a long final and the windscreen wipers fighting a losing battle with the ice, an intermittent tapping on the fuselage

informed us that the propellers disapproved of the stuff and were slinging it off in contempt. We levelled at 1,000ft and asked Southend where to orbit if we overshot. A glimpse of the snow-covered ground appeared through the side window—we were through. The wipers swish-swashed, seemingly getting nowhere: my colleague, bottle of de-icing fluid at the ready, gazed hopefully forward. We were cold enough already and none too keen at the prospect of cleaning the windscreen manually; but gradually the ice cleared and the approach lights appeared ahead. At one mile we could see enough and we landed on the snow-covered runway. Taxiing in, I thought Southend Airport, with its untidy piles of cleared snow, sanded taxiways, muffled ground staff and two Caribous parked in front of the tower, looked more like an airfield in Canada than one in Essex.

As we trudged through the crisp snow across the apron, I thought of our uneventful trip, which had gone according to plan largely through co-operation from the ground. Many brickbats are thrown at ATC; but on New Year's Day, 1963, I had a few bouquets to hand out. Had it not been for this co-operation we might have been delayed in Scotland for days. From weather reports the next day, giving freezing drizzle once more, this would almost certainly have been the case.

As I entered the BUA crew-room, flying jacket in hand, still feeling very cold and obviously looking it, a colleague remarked: 'You really look as if you have been Pioneering. I paused for a moment, thinking of the large jets scorching through the skies all over the world and of our own hour's flight to Prestwick at 32,000ft in perfect comfort two days earlier. Capp's article came to mind and I said, 'You know, there's still fun in flying—if you like that sort of thing!'



Trainspotter's
Corner
by
Anorak

- The references to Air Pictorial are made possible by Captain John Gabriel, formerly of Thai International and Air New Zealand.

John donated about four years of the magazine, the late 50s and early 60s, no less, to the Newsletter office some years back. John is one of the few people in this part of the world to have 'banged out' of a Vampire.

- Keith Sissons starts his story of the ferry from Prestwick to Southend by saying that he was 'seated, comfortably in the rear of a Boeing 707'... In this day and age, 'sitting comfortably' down the back of any airliner is something else that's gone forever.
- The article by Noel Capper, mentioned by Keith Sissons in his story, appeared in Twin Pioneer Newsletter Number Six October 2004. Since Capp's story of the ferry flight in G-AOER was published, Andrew McClymont has forwarded some photographs taken by Keith Trow, an SAL test pilot, who was acting as navigator on the delivery. These were supplied by Keith Trow, pilot Keith's grandson. Look for them next time!

'Plain or fluted' is one thing but masquerading under another 'rego' is confusing!

In the last issue of the Newsletter, it was revealed that a fin being displayed at the Al Mahatta Museum in Sharjah as being from G-APLW may not be the 'pukka' item. The Editor brings you the latest.

There has been a great deal of research since the discovery. Laurence Garey, Oxford scholar, brain researcher and aviation historian in Switzerland has researched the matter for some time; Ian Brown, museum curator at The National Museum of Flight, East Fortune, Scotland, Ian Adams, formerly of the Production Drawing Office at Scottish Aviation, Prestwick and yours truly, the inveterate old 'reggie' spotter have become involved recently.



The starboard fin at Al Mahatta Museum in Sharjah

The first step in the search for the truth was a visit to the Individual Aeroplane History File to confirm 'LW's fate. It seems that the aeroplane stalled at about 70ft and landed too heavily while on short finals into Limbang in Sarawak whilst on a Malaysian-Singapore airlines'



scheduled flight. There is a hint of damage to the bottom edge of the fin in question but an examination in the original photograph is inconclusive. Background information on the accident and a series of photographs was kindly provided by Stewart John, formerly Engineering Director of Cathay Pacific and a Past President of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

So what is a Twin Pin fin doing in Sharjah? The Twin Pioneer was no stranger to that part of the world. 152 Squadron was very active in Oman in 1959-60. There is some great video from John 'Jebel' James on YouTube. It tells the story of one of his flights from Sharjah to Firq to ferry building materials from Firq to Saiq to build a fort. Saiq is on a plateau on the Jebel Akhdar range at about 6,000ft asl. *PPPruNe* website relates the story that after a certain number of round trips from Firq to Saiq a tie was conferred on the crew with Firq-Saiq embossed in Arabic. If you 'google' <Firq Saiq Twin Pioneers> you'll get enough 'gen' to keep you interested for hours. The aforesaid Laurence Garey has much about the aviation side of the 'troubles' in Oman in the late 50s and 60s. A number of Twin Pin ended their days in this part of the world with many of 152 squadron's aircraft being broken up at RAF Muharraq, Bahrain in 1967.

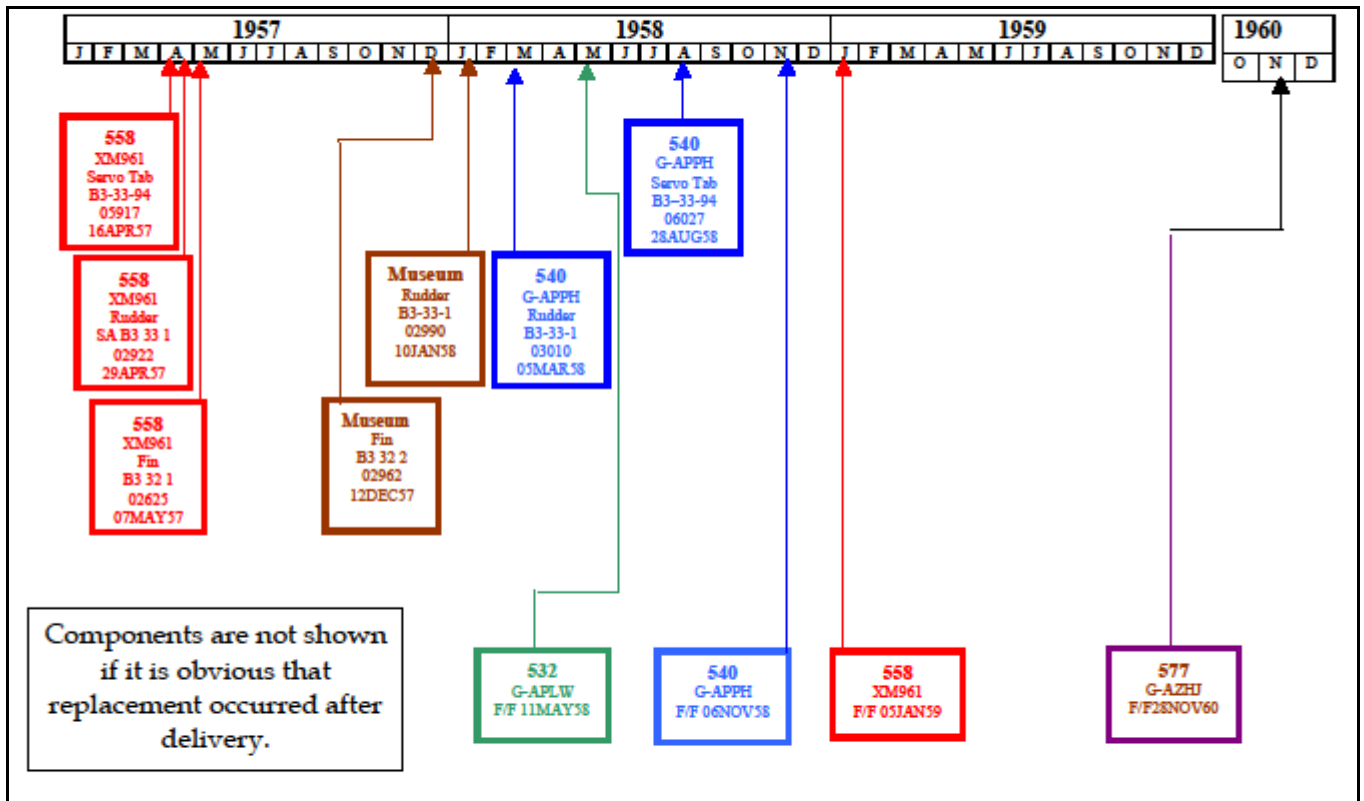
Readers will recall that there are two parts to the mystery. When Juanita Franzi was preparing the artwork for the Twin Pioneer Data Base in *Aeroplane* magazine she asked about the tabs on the outer fins. (Vertical stabilizers for our US readers—we have three—both fins and readers). An answer was provided to Juanita although I don't think we had it with her before her deadline.

The Twin Pioneer had a fluted trim tab on the centre rudder in the beginning. As a result of higher than acceptable 'stick loads', geared or servo tabs were introduced on the outer rudders to reduce the hinge moment thereby reducing the rudder foot pedal force. In the first instance, the servo tabs were simple tabs with flat skins and flush rivets. Later, a fluted skin tab was introduced as a modification to improve structural and aerodynamic efficiency— although the effect is likely to have been minimal with no economic benefit. Photographic evidence indicates that all Series 3 aircraft had fluted tabs, however, Series 1 aircraft retroactively modified to Series 3 often retained the original plain tabs.



The servo tab, left, is RMAF FM1001, a 1958 Series 1 delivery modified to Series 3 performance levels by the RMAF but without changing the plain tabs. FM1064, right, is a 1961 delivery built to Series 3 standard.

Twin Pioneer Fin Assembly Part Number and Aeroplane First Flight Chronology



Returning now to the origin of the Al Mahatta fin. Laurence recorded the part and serial numbers from the stainless steel plates attached to each component i. e. fin, servo tab and rudder. Next was the search for similar data from other extant Twin Pins. Ian Brown kindly supplied the numbers from c/n 558 G-BBVF at East Fortune, I recorded the numbers on c/n 540 VH-AIS near Brisbane, approaching very gingerly – cautious of the giant beasts they call spiders in Queensland, and Ian Adams collected the necessary data from the plates of c/n 528 XL993 at Cosford.

The data has been plotted against aircraft and, as may be seen above, against aircraft components against time. Sadly, at least to these eyes, nothing stands out as a compelling relationship. Those of us who worked at Prestwick can now reflect and confirm that SAL did not work on the ‘just in time’ production concept. The fin, rudder and servo tab were cleared by Inspection during April and May 1957 but the aeroplane they were allocated, c/n 558, East Fortune, did not fly until 5 January 1959 – 608 days later. In the case of c/n 540, VH-AIS near Brisbane, the shortest lead time was 77 days. The fin and rudder located at Al Mahatta were cleared during December 1957 and January 1958 respectively. If the parts were from G-APLW which flew first on 11 May 1958, the time between clearance and flight would have been 121 days. Laurence has informed me that Martin Slater at Air Atlantique is clear that the assembly at Al Mahatta is from c/n 577 XP295 currently stored at Coventry as G-AZHJ. Calculating the elapsed time between Inspection clearance and first flight gives a period of 1,053 days – two years and 10 months. Even for SAL, this is an abnormally long period.

We have established the mystery surrounding the ‘fluted or plain’ servo tabs. Martin Slater has said that the fin, rudder and servo tab at Al Mahatta is ex G-AZHJ. I believe he should know as the remainder of the aeroplane is at Coventry. The collation of the data from Laurence Garey, Ian Brown, Ian Adams and the writer has been analysed this way and that but it has not revealed a ‘Eureka!’ moment. For those of those of you still reading and whose eyes have not glazed over may well be asking the question – ‘... and the point is?’

There are two next steps, viz -

- a – ask Martin Slater to provide the data from stainless steel plates on the starboard fin, rudder and servo tab from c/n G-AZHJ, and
- b – ask Laurence Garey to minutely inspect the fin at Al Mahatta for any traces of the red paint that may have been missed during the removal of the Flight One livery.

It must be accepted that Martin Slater would know if the Al Mahatta display originated from ‘HJ’. The question still remains, that is ‘Why ship a fin, rudder and servo tab assembly from Coventry to Sharjah?’

Postscript: The article above ended with the question – “Is there a link between Coventry and Sharjah? A last minute ‘google’ search may have gone just a little way to answering! Martin Slater’s biography appears in the pages of the Historic Aircraft Aviation Association’s web site. This reveals that Martin spent time with Aerogulf Services in Dubai which is just down the road from Sharjah.