

Thanks to all for another successful season



In this our final newsletter of the year, as well as the regular plaudits to the restorers so active in Building 16, I would like to mention all the behind-scenes work that goes on. From the gardening and tidy-up work by the Eastham volunteers whose weekly visits we all look forward to, to our maintenance crew who beaver away making doors, building walls and any other task that gets put their way. A special mention by name to Bob who keeps our grass and verges in pristine order and has recently started on trimming back the vegetation on our new piece of ground. There is also the Griffin Trust, WARS, EPMBC, the bus owners and drivers who run the shuttle-buses, and Ken who manages the Print Museum and edits this newsletter – thank you all for making Hooton the great place that it is.

—Graham Sparkes, Chair, Hooton Park Trust

A note from the Editor: The annual Wirral Transport Show is the last major event being held at Hooton Park this year, and is the first time it is being held here. The show has for many years been held in Birkenhead, but circumstances have encouraged the organisers to hold it at HP this year. Hooton Park does offer many advantages for those who have an affinity for heritage transport, and the event promises to make a great day out for all, and a fitting close to what has been a very busy and successful season.

Hooton Park Hangars – a brief introduction

The Hooton Park Hangars site is managed by The Hooton Park Trust (HPT), which was formed in 2000 with the aim of creating a Trust to oversee and manage the restoration of the remaining WWI hangars on the former RAF airfield at Hooton Park, Cheshire. The long-term aim is to provide a multifunctional site, as well as restoring the buildings and the site itself as valuable historic artefacts in their own right. The buildings will then provide the perfect environment for the projects and initiatives that are planned.

Much still remains of the Hooton Park airfield and its buildings. Three original, Belfast-trussed, hangars dominate the landscape, surrounded by the original access roads, taxiways and numerous outbuildings and offices, all steeped in the colourful history of this one-time Royal Air Force airbase.

Some of the runway also exists. All manner of aircraft types have operated from this aerodrome, for example Austers of the Army Air Training Corps, Supermarine Spitfires of 610 Sqn, and, during the postwar years, classic jets such as Gloster Meteors, De Havilland Vampires, Venoms and much more.

The site, as well as being of interest in its own right, is also home to many organisations, details of which will be found in the panel on the back page.

Special Autumn Transport Show edition

The 201 Bus Group

Visitors and volunteers at Hooton Park will be readily familiar with two very attractive local buses – Wallasey Corporation Atlantean No. 1, and Birkenhead Corporation No. 10. Both buses are managed and run by the long-standing 201 Bus Group.

The society was formed in 1979 by Tom Langhorn, who was an inspector based in Wallasey Corporation's Seaview Road bus depot. The members at the time were mainly bus and railway workers, whose aim was to preserve and run the very first Atlantean off the production line in 1958 – Wallasey Corporation No. 1, registration FHF 451, which was exhibited at the Earls Court Motor Show of that year. It was used on regular routes in Wallasey until it was withdrawn in 1977. At the time, it was owned by Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive, as they had taken over operation of all transport in Merseyside in 1971. The bus passed into preservation in 1979 and has been cared for and run frequently ever since then by the 201 Group.

The next vehicle to join the Group was former Birkenhead Corporation No. 10 (FBG 910), which was built in January 1958. This is a Leyland Titan PD2 which was based at the Laird Street depot and survived as a training vehicle after its withdrawal in 1974. The Group acquired the bus in 1982, and have run and displayed it on many occasions.

The third bus is a 1984 Leyland Atlantean (B926 KWM). This was the last registered 'short chassis' to be produced, and was built for MPTE. It worked out of Litherland, Walton and Green Lane, Liverpool, until it was transferred to Birkenhead in 1991. The Group bought the bus from Arriva in 2001, and this vehicle has also been continuously rallied. —John Nolan



A recent addition to the aviation museum

Hoverfly KK995, USAF serial 43-46558, returned to Hooton Park on 19th June 2025, 81 years after the airframe first arrived at Hooton Park in December 1944. Assembled and test-flown by Martin Hearn Ltd No.7 Aircraft Assembly Unit. Air tested at Hooton Park on 17th January 1945. Initially to RAF Andover for evaluation, returning



to Hooton Park on 6th February 1945 following closure of training at Andover.

To No.48 Maintenance Unit at High Erccall for storage on 13th February 1945. Back to Martin Hearn for modifications on 18th October 1945, completed 12th November 1946. KK995 passed through various units until struck off charge on 15th November 1948. Parts were used to repair Hoverflies KK987 and KL110. Remaining parts to the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield.

The RAFM list KL995 as KL110 as this was a substantially more complete airframe also at Cranfield which was accepted by RAFM in May 1966. KL110 arrived at Hooton Park on 5th February 1945 and was assembled and test-flown at Martin Hearn's.

Both airframes ended up at Cranfield and parts were interchanged or mixed, hence the confusion as to the actual airframe that is now preserved – not that it matters to us, as both airframes have that initial link to Hooton Park. —Graham Sparkes

An exciting new acquisition for The Griffin Trust



As mentioned in the previous newsletter, we have now taken a new Bedford into our collection. It is a 1955 Bedford A2 with a Carmichael-bodied fire tender – one of only four made. It came complete with all accessories, right down to some uniforms, boots and helmets.

The original Coventry Climax-powered mobile water pump, yet to be examined in any detail, is still on board, along with a trailer-towed one with a Morris engine – in need of quite a bit of refurbishing. The fire engine is in much better condition and will only need TLC – albeit quite a lot!

We hope to have the engine ready for next year's season.

—Mike Foulkes



Farewell to an old friend...



At the age of 84 and some 54 years after retiring and 29 years with me, my 1939 Bedford fish and chip saloon left Hooton Park for pastures new on Wednesday 30th April. She was going to live near Wolverhampton with a man who intended to refurbish her to useable condition.

After spending a lot of time (and cash), on Sunday 21st September he served sixty invited guests with fish and chips fried in beef dripping from the refurbished coal-fired range which was deemed a great success. She is now being advertised as available for functions and, who knows, perhaps one day she may come back to an event at Hooton as a working van.

—Eddie Doig

Recent progress in The Aeroplane Collection



Vampire

The two ejection seats have been installed in the cockpit. The metal parts of the canopy have been painted matt black on the inside, and the perspex panels have been worked on the remove scratches. The canopy is now ready to go back on the aircraft. A very effective LED light has been fitted in the cockpit, which shines downwards over the instruments to really highlight them and the rest of the cockpit equipment.

The last major repair to the wooden fuselage has been completed. This was a difficult job because the fuselage curves in two directions at 90 degrees at the point where the repair was carried out.

All the engine cowls have been fitted, a job which took a surprisingly long time to complete because nothing fitted . . . considerable filing was required to make them fit. We are short of a few latch covers, but hope to find at least some of them at an aero jumble. Before the last cowl was fitted, a replacement jet exhaust pipe was installed. This exhaust pipe was made and donated to TAC by a generous benefactor. We do have a genuine de Havilland jet exhaust pipe, but it is fitted to the engine, which is displayed separately from the aircraft, and the replacement makes the aircraft look complete.

The two hinged gun-bay doors have been fitted and the interior of the gun bay painted.

The fairings that cover the joint between the main wings and the fuselage have been fitted. As usual, it was not an easy job because many of the holes in the fairings didn't line up with the anchor nuts in the wings. It seems that de Havilland allowed its fitters some latitude in where they fixed the anchor nuts when the wing was manufactured.

An aileron has been fitted to each of the wings. Although the ailerons are free to move, stops have been fitted to prevent possible damage to inquisitive visitors' fingers!

The pilot's access ladder has been stripped of paint and repainted, and it looks very good.

The nose undercarriage compartment has been painted, as has the undercarriage leg itself.

The aircraft is now near to the time when fabric covering will be started.



Vampire nose leg demonstration rig

The pump has been fitted to the rig along with some of the rigid hydraulic piping. The reversing valve and the reservoir for the hydraulic fluid have also been fitted. Once the remaining rigid hydraulic pipes and the flexible pipes to the jack have been fitted the rig will be ready for testing.



Parker

Rob has been making an engine cowl for the Parker out of 1mm thick aluminium sheet.

The cowling front and sides are complete and fitted, with just the protective film to be removed.

The top of the cowl remains to be made, along with an engine air intake.



Percival Proctor RM169

The centre section underside has now been fabric covered and turned back over.

Everything was ready for undercarriage and fuselage fitting to the wing box, slightly delayed by the lifting frame certification renewal.

All went well with the fuselage multi-stage lift onto the waiting wing box. This had to be done in two stages, first from the rear and then from the front of cockpit, finally slotting into place in about six hours.

The leading-edge ribs have been fitted and the ply has now been completed on the starboard side of the wing box.

The Proctor rudder, which was rather battered and bent, with a few parts missing, has been rebuilt and fabric covered and test fitted with new hinge mounts made by a teenage Ian!

Just the rudder edge reinforcing to do with a strip of fabric and the tunnel completing to cover the rudder trim tab actuation arm.

Steve Poole has been finishing the wings and we are nearly ready to start the main covering job.



Auster

After many weeks of sourcing fixings and parts preparation, huge visible progress has been made by Dave Nigel and Peter on GP – rarely all there on the same days. The engine was also rebuilt and installed and then duly hidden by the cowlings! The side cowling can be removed on Open Days to show the engine.

Now on the home stretch ready for the fuselage and fin to be covered . . . the fuselage to be rubbed down . . . primed and painted . . . Jon has been a great help with advice and finding parts from his many contacts – thanks to all those who have commented on the progress.

Annual Bus Running Day

The annual Bus Running Day held at Hooton Park on Sunday 10th August was deemed to have been another very successful day.

The sun shone from a cloudless sky, the visitors enjoyed riding the various routes around the Wirral, and the buses looked their resplendent best in the sunshine.

Grateful thanks to all who contributed in any and every way to the day's success!

—Andy Hamer



Photo: Dylan Waldron.

Cymru Coastliner 60 event

Sunday 7th September 2025 saw an event take place to mark the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary since the commencement of Crosville's Cymru Coastliner service. In all, seven vehicles ran along the original route, four of which operated from our very own Hooton Hangars base, with two others provided by our Crosville vehicle owner friends; and another was a last-minute addition from the Manchester area. The route followed was as sympathetic to the original as possible, with understandable slight variances due to highway changes, severe speed calming and inconsiderately parked cars.

Most buses turned at Llandudno, but there were two workings that took passengers the length of the route to Caernarfon, now a four-hour journey from Chester.

Passengers came from far and wide – some just reliving their days of travelling on the long-distance service, some having driven the service; and for some it was a chance to experience what had gone before, the service ceasing in 1995.

Sincere thanks to all those who took part, driving/conducting on the day, and all the background preparations that went on behind the scenes too with vehicles, event programme sponsorship and production, and organisation of the event itself.

A full-colour, 24-page event programme was produced, copies of which are still available. Please contact Andy Hamer at cymrucoastliner60@gmail.com if you would like a copy. A small donation towards the continued restoration of vehicles in the collection would be appreciated.

—Andy Hamer

Photo credits: Opposite, top to bottom: Dylan Waldron (x2); Terry Morris. Below: Andy Hamer, Steve Graham.

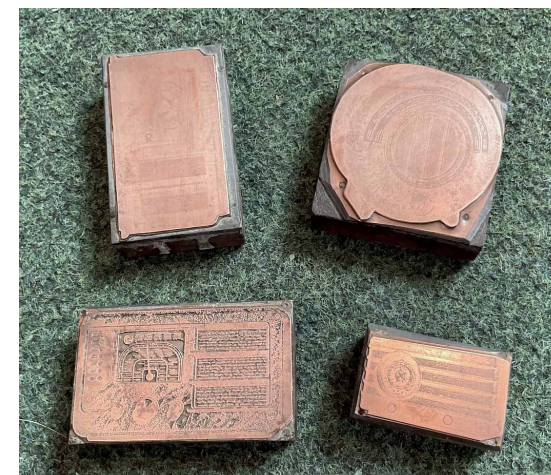


Exciting donations to the Museum of Printing

The Museum of Printing at Hooton Park has had a busy and successful season, with many hundreds of visitors attending demonstrations on the regular monthly Open Days, as well as putting on special demonstrations for small groups throughout the year.

Particularly exciting have been donations of two collections of printing blocks – these are rare survivals of artefacts which were once commonplace in the industry.

The first collection was donated by Keith Baynton, and consists of several dozen copper halftone blocks depicting trolleybuses from Bournemouth. The blocks were used to print the 1969 Souvenir Brochure, and are in excellent



condition and print extremely well today, despite their age.

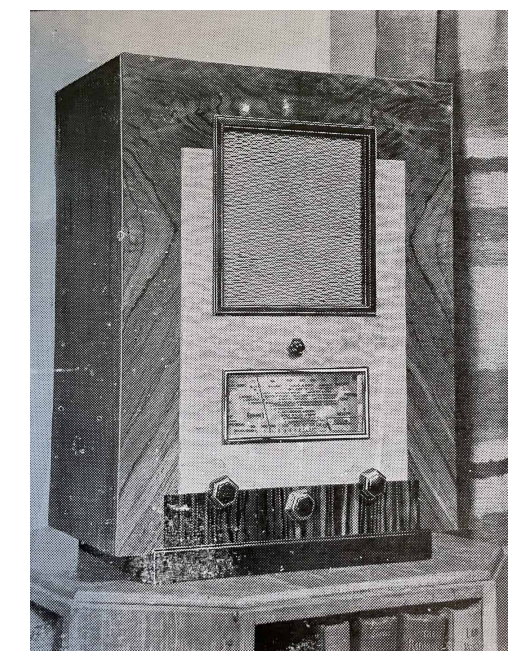
The second collection is a mix of blocks depicting photos of old valve radios and radio press adverts. These were collected by Jeff Challinor of the Wirral Amateur Radio Society at Hooton Park, who acquired them over forty years ago from a radio shop on New Chester Road, Rock Ferry, called R.L.G. Radio.

The blocks, though dirty and in cosmetically poor condition, have cleaned up well, and most print perfectly.

The two collections, which have been proofed on the museum's Victorian hand-presses, will be carefully stored and used in the Museum of Printing.

Thanks go to both Keith and Jeff for, firstly, having the foresight to save and store these rare items of printing history; and then for having the goodwill to donate them to Hooton Park's Museum of Printing.

—Ken Burnley



Chester tram work update

Since our last report we have finished the top deck seats and they are all screwed down – just leaving aligning the movable seat back. The legs on one side are longer than the other! This is to allow for the camber of the roof (which allows drainage). These have taken nearly a year to make from raw materials (wood, steel, fasteners etc.).

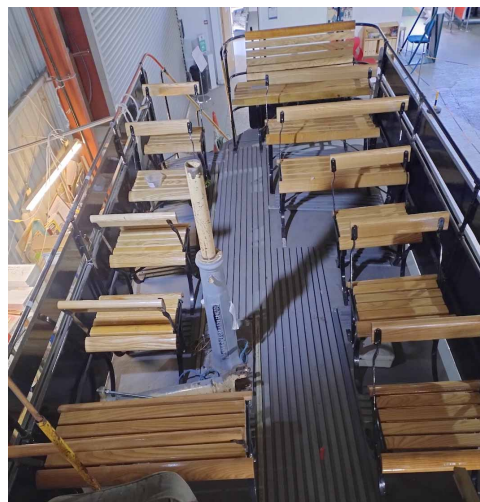
Work is now proceeding on the two destination boxes which sit on the ends of the top deck.

In the long term we are in negotiation with another museum for the acquisition of truck (steel underframe and wheels), but our biggest difficulty is that we are about £6,000 short on estimate for engineering work on this job.

Curtains have been ordered – costing £500! Once this is done, the tram will be more or less finished and will be a superb exhibit at Hooton.

Grateful thanks to the team of volunteers and to all who contribute in any way to the tram's restoration.

—Rob Jones



Douglas Bay Manx horse-drawn tram

Work is progressing well on Douglas Bay horse tram No. 47, where a new running-board has just been bolted in place. The board, along which (in pre-health & safety days) conductors used to walk, precariously collecting fares and issuing tickets, measures more than 22 feet long.

The boards run along both sides of the cross-bench tram, but when No. 47 was shipped from the Isle of Man to the mainland a few years ago, only one was in place.

The Merseyside Tramway Preservation Society acquired No. 47 along with another Douglas horse tram – No. 11 from 1886 – as both vehicles had originally been constructed in Birkenhead. The two tramcars had been stored out in the open for many years, and were the worse for wear, as well as having been cannibalised for spare parts to help keep the remaining operational Douglas horse cars in service.

Work has yet to begin on restoring No. 11. The vehicle is currently used to store spare tram seats, timber, and nuts and bolts etc.

—Terry Martin



Royal visits to Hooton Park



Left to right: George Dason, Col. Jarrot, unknown, Sir F. Bowring, HRH the Prince of Wales, Lord Davenport

Merseyside 3008 Fleetline

Merseyside 3008, the sole surviving Daimler Fleetline of the fifty bought in 1972/1973, has had a little bit of attention – a sort-out inside to see what seat cushions and frames were already in the bus and what might be needed.

The front number and destination box and the rear number one were fitted just to free up space, and a Wirral Division destination blind was fitted.

It shows Seaview Road as 3008, although spending all its Merseyside life allocated to Laird Street, Birkenhead (although a few early ones were at New Ferry garage briefly). Fleetlines were seen on Seaview Road services due to bus exchanges between 1973 and 1986.

In the weeks preceding deregulation and the closure of the Seaview Road depot from 26th October 1986, Fleetlines were transferred to Seaview Road from Laird Street as Merseybus didn't want these buses and were to be stored at this location.

Far superior Atlanteans 'went the other way' and this saw Fleetlines being used on Seaview Road routes until the end. The 3008 holds the honour of being the last bus booked out at 09.27 on board number 232. There would not be another.

There is still a lot to be done on 3008, but much has been happening behind the scenes – the bus's time is approaching.

—Terry Morris



On 1st August 1929, the Prince of Wales landed at Hooton Park on his way to Arrowe Park and the World Scout Jamboree.

This was not to be the only occasion that the Prince visited Hooton Park. On the 9th of June 1932, when Speke Airport was being developed and facilities were gradually being installed, the Prince of Wales arranged to stop at Speke to refuel while on route to Northern Ireland. Liverpool Corporation arranged a full civic reception, complete with Lord Mayor and band to greet the Prince on landing. The Prince duly arrived and was received by the Lord Mayor. On enquiring as to where the refuelling facilities were, embarrassed officials discovered that nobody had arranged for the aircraft to be refuelled. Subsequently the aircraft had to fly across the Mersey to Hooton Park to refuel.

—Colin Schroeder

Keeping Hooton Park looking neat and trim



Many visitors have, this summer, remarked on how attractive the grounds have looked. This is thanks to a number of volunteers, including folk from the Eastham Day Care Centre who work on the site every Wednesday, and to Bob Seaman who also tends the grounds regularly throughout the year. Grateful thanks to these, and others, who work so hard to help keep the site looking so attractive.

Wirral Amateur Radio Society G3NWR



Back in October 1936, it all began around a kitchen table, where a bunch of curious young lads were fascinated by the world of radio. It felt like magic to listen to someone chatting away in London while sitting 200 miles away! But of course it wasn't magic: it was the dawn of radio science. Since those early days with spark-gap receivers, we've come a long way to the advanced technology we enjoy today.

As we look ahead to 2026, we're excited to celebrate our 90th anniversary as a members' society. It is incredible to think about how far we've come since that first meeting in 1936. The advancements in technology have surpassed anything we could have imagined back in the early 1900s.

Now, with the nights getting longer, we're kicking off our winter programme, which includes training for the Radio Transmitting Licence. We'll start with the Foundation level, move on to Intermediate, and then to Full, opening up the fascinating world of radio communications for you.

Self-training is a big part of this hobby, allowing you to explore new challenges. Here at the club, we offer support across various disciplines to help you reach your personal goals. Construction is a major aspect of the hobby, and our workshop is here to lend a hand and get you started.

We invite you to join us at one of our events in 2026 as we celebrate 90 amazing years together!

A full list of contacts for the Trust and for the specialist groups operating within the site can be found on the back page.

Volunteers are always welcomed to help with the many and varied tasks at the Hooton Park site. Please email us in the first instance, or make yourself known to members of the Hooton Park community.

Hooton's wildlife

We've not had many opportunities to capture Hooton Park's wildlife over recent months: we have had sightings of the regulars – crows, buzzards, kestrels – but they are never still long enough to get recorded. Rabbits almost seem to stop and pose, they are so used to the place. Earlier in the year I did manage to catch the Red-legged Partridge's chased along the road from the gate across the car park and finally down the north side of Hangar 16 where this shot was taken before it disappeared in the wilding area.

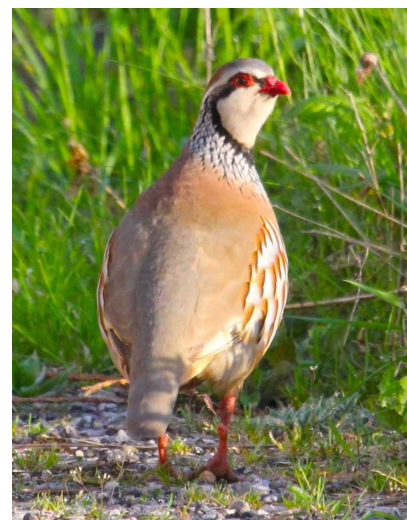
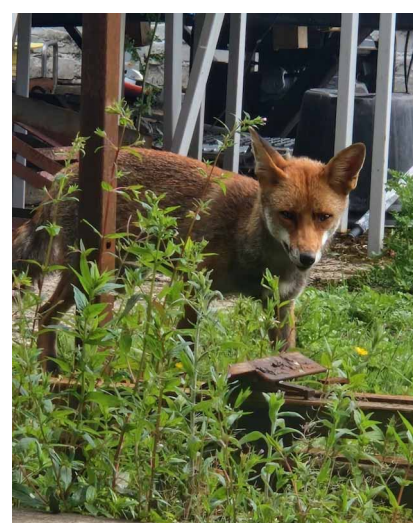


Photo: Graham Sparkes.



Taken Saturday 14th February 2025 by Toni Owens.

No. 663 (AOP) Squadron at Hooton Park, 1949 to 1957: Part 3

Auster AOP.6 TW576 hits power cable on 3rd February 1952

The squadron suffered a few accidents. This plane flew into high-tension cables.

Auster T.7 WE588 in take-off accident on 11th April 1954

This plane was involved in a take-off accident six miles south-east of Chester when it hit a fence after a precautionary landing.

Auster T.7 WE541 in a fatal crash Barston on 26th June 1954

The plane, of No. 1954 Flight, stalled at low altitude during a low-flying exercise. It hit the ground at Barston six miles west of Coventry killing R. D. Harrison of the Royal Artillery. The aircraft, which had been delivered in April 1950, was struck off charge as being beyond repair.

Auster AOP.6 TW539 involved in incident at Whitchurch on 3rd April 1955

This plane was involved in a Category 5(c) accident near Whitchurch.

Auster AOP.6 VF554 forced down near Llanfairfechan on 31st October 1956

This plane, flown by Captain Huw Morris, had been spotting during the day for an Army exercise involving the Third Cheshire Regiment. After the exercise two Army cadets were reported missing, overdue on a mountain exercise. Captain Morris started to look for them. After flying over the Aber Falls the pilot saw the cadets coming down the side of the mountain. He radioed back to report that he had seen them and was told to return to base.

He was now around Llwytmor and Bera Mawr, four miles south of Llanfairfechan. As he attempted to turn and climb, he found that the small light aircraft was being held down in an air pocket, and rather than hit the rocks he attempted to land beside the stream. Unfortunately it was very marshy, and the moment the wheels touched they dug in and the aircraft flipped over onto its back. The first on the scene were a party of three men and a lady from Llandudno who had been above the Aber Falls picnicking and had been watching the Army exercise and the plane circling for most of the day. When the plane last flew over it did not

reappear as normal and they guessed it must have crashed. Leaving their belongings, they climbed up over the ridge, where they found the aircraft on its back, with petrol spilt everywhere. They extracted the pilot, whose only injuries were a broken ankle and some small facial cuts. The lady, realising she could be of no further assistance, ran down to the bottom of the Falls and caught up with the Army party who were packing up ready to leave. After explaining and pinpointing the spot on the map, a detail set off up the mountain and returned with the pilot on a stretcher. The remaining wreckage is the engine and seating assembly either side of the stream at the point of impact.

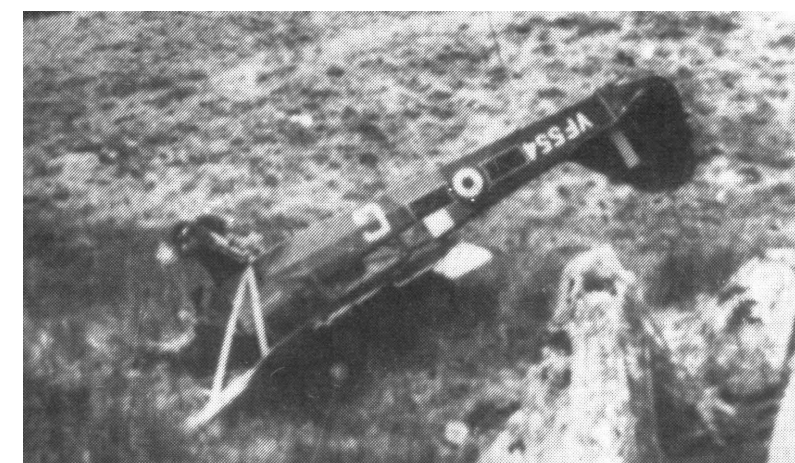
Fatal crash to Auster VF546 near Nantwich on 6th January 1957

Unfortunately, the worst accident occurred when Captain Pollit and Pilot Officer Sitlower were killed when the wing of their Auster AOP.6 fell off, causing the aircraft to crash at Dorfold Farm, 1.5 miles west-southwest of Nantwich.

—Colin Schroeder



Auster T.7 WE541 fatal crash Barston.



Auster VF554 on its back near Llanfairfechan

Chipmunk WG477: two into one does go!



My new project is proving to be an interesting challenge: TAC have a truncated Chipmunk tandem cockpit section in Hangar 16, together with its canopy which are both in need of complete refurbishment before hopefully becoming another interactive museum exhibit. Unfortunately, when the cockpit canopy was slid completely open, it became apparent that, due to the overhang, the aft end needed a further section of fuselage to provide the necessary support. Fortunately, TAC just happened to have an appropriate spare Chipmunk rear fuselage section in hut 28, and it was decided that if the two were mated together, this would provide the required solution.

As a first step, the instrument panels were reinstated into both Chipmunk cockpits which have themselves been tidied up, and then work started on joining the two fuselage sections – see the ‘before and after’ photos below.

Although both sections are from Chipmunks, they are of different ages; but in the event they mated together remarkably well. The final union is achieved by joining the two sections with an aluminium strap riveted in place. However, the fuselage is not only oval, but is also tapered – so the straps are not simple straight parallel strips. Diligent use of templates eventually resulted in arriving at the required strap shape. I will be using four strap sections to simplify installation, but even with the first two initial sections just partly rivetted in place, the results are encouraging.

—Paul Gilling



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