



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

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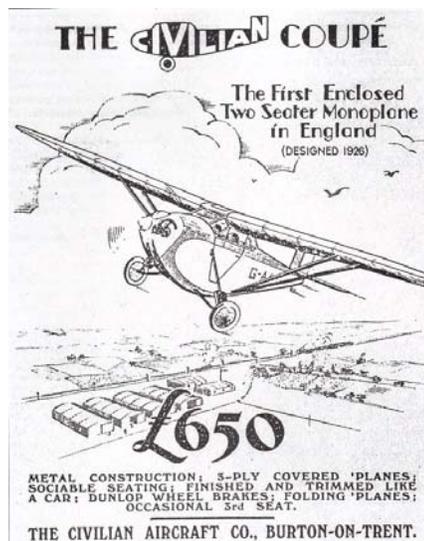
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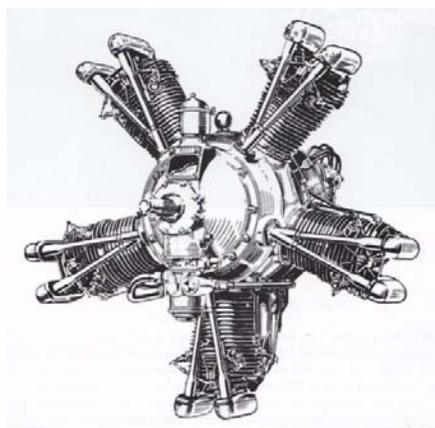
1st August 2011

STILL FLYING - 80 YEARS ON

This remarkable aircraft celebrated its 80th Birthday at Biggin Hill at Shipping & Airlines hangar on the 17th July 2011.



It is quite amazing that this aircraft was designed in 1926 as an enclosed two seat monoplane fitted with an Armstrong Siddeley five cylinder engine producing 110 HP.



The cylinders can be seen protruding into the airstream for cooling efficiency.



This lovable aircraft would be christened affectionately as 'Bunty' by the original owner many years hence. *(Maybe it is time to have the name emblazoned on the cowling).*

The only major change to this original aircraft are the wheels as the original Dunlop wheels had eroded away over the long years in storage. It now sports a couple of motor cycle wheels with brakes.

This aircraft was built by the Civilian Aircraft Company at Hedon, near Hull in Yorkshire, construction number 3 of the five Coupe's that were flown.

A Certificate of Registration No 3271 was issued on the 23rd June 1931. Her first maiden flight took place on the 18th July 1931 & Certificate of Airworthiness No 3199 issued 10th September 1933. The top of the fuselage lifted off to

reveal a luggage compartment able to accommodate a suit or other weekend clothing which emerged wrinkle free after flight.

BUNTY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

Dawn arrived with somewhat unsettled weather and heavy sporadic rain showers a wonderful cold buffet laid out in the hangar on a long table with hot drinks available inside the hangar at a second location

This was the occasion of 'Bunty's' 80th Birthday from the first Certificate of Airworthiness.



Bunty gets a pat on the nose from two elegant aviation enthusiasts, Kay Elliott and Pamela Elles after the vintage aircraft flying display between the showers.



Just on 100 people attended this grand affair (*the editor became confused when he counted as far as 96 and lost count*). Nevertheless a very good turn out with an excellent flying display attended by four other vintage 'plane friends' of Bunty, featuring a DH Hornet Moth, a Miles Messenger a Travelair and Piper Cub.



BUNTY'S TRAVELS IN TIME

Places visited between 18th July 1931 & 21st February 1937 included:

Heston, Digby, Henlow, Northolt, Cardiff, Whitchurch, Staglane, Yeadon, Waddington, Filton, Woodley, Tollerton, Sywell, Colchester, Brooklands, Reading, High Post, Christchurch, Southampton, Netheravon, Farnborough, Hanworth, Bracknell, Lympne, Brussels, Aachen, Wiesbaden, Penshurst, St Ingelbert, Le Bourget, Eperney, Orly, Berck, Rotterdam, Le Zoute, Croydon, Dieppe, Bristol, Pendine Sands, Castlebromwich & Carmarthen.

Her last flight being from Pendine Sands where she lived in a garage with 'Babs' the famous racing car, Owned by the late J.G. Parry-



Thomas, who was killed at Pendine Sands trying to beat the Land Speed Record in 1927

Bunty's last flight being from Pendine Sands to Cardiff on the 21st February 1937 where with a total time of 130 hours 50 minutes it was discovered that the bottom cylinder head had hydrauliced.

She was dismantled and stored in a warehouse behind the Waverly Stores, Lammas Street, Carmarthen

She lived in this Warehouse for 38 years before being purchased at Auction by Philip Mann (then owner of Shipping & Airlines Ltd at Biggin Hill) who had her rebuilt to flying condition, taking to the air again in 1983.



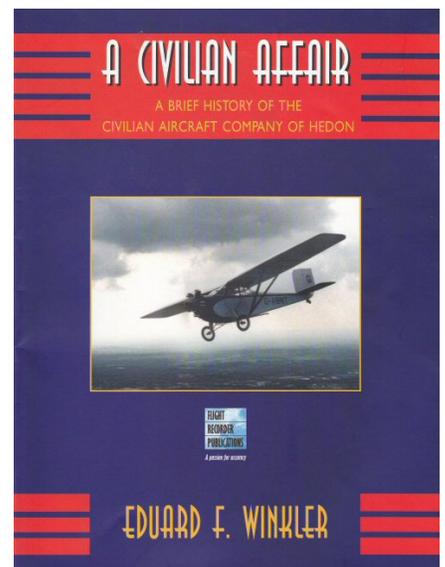
She was flown very occasionally around the Biggin Hill area until 6th August 1995 when she made her first away landing in 58 years dropping in at Old Warden for 30 minutes to collect fuel before returning to Biggin Hill.

In September 1995 she flew into Brooklands again, being awarded the Concourse-de-Elegance prize, a lovely Rose Bowl presented by John 'Cats Eyes' Cunningham and Raymond Baxter.

Major fly-ins at the De Havilland Moth club rally at Woburn Abbey, the Vintage Aircraft fly-in & Great Vintage Flying Weekend at Abingdon, Kemble & Keevil & last year at a 30's themed tea party at Tisted. At the G-VFWE event in 2004 she was awarded the First prize Cup's for The Oldest Aircraft & the Best Other British (manufacture). She was also runner up for the Best pre-war aircraft.

She has also visited North Weald, Rochester, White Waltham, Blackbushe, Kenley, Headcorn, Laddingford, Oaksley Park, Old Hay, Goodwood, Little Gransden, Leigh Farm (Penshurst), Dunsfold, Duxford, Turweston, Woodchurch, Le Touquet (France October 2003), & a low approach along Gatwick's runway in April 2010.

Her Total flight time is still only 217 hours.



There has also been a very interesting book written about 'NT' & her sisters called 'A Civilian Affair' by Edward F. Winkler 0-9545605-0-7 & she flew back to Ottringham (near Hedon) via Fenland in July 2003 for the book launch.

A flight to Kenley in 2005 saw the high wing monoplane providing a natural shelter from the heavy rain.



Early 'Bunty' owner Glyn Rhys (left) and friend kitted out for flying with proper clothes. After all it was a modern flying machine with a comfortable enclosed cabin. No heating system but comfortable nonetheless.

With a luxurious Instrument Panel.

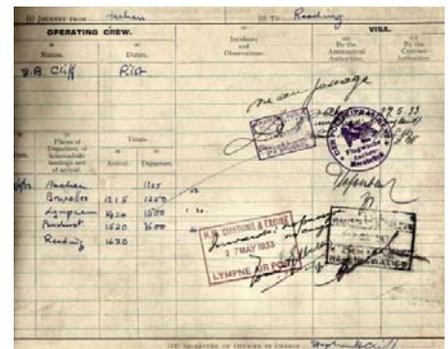


Including a proper compass and a small map drawer says it all. The front seats being staggered for additional elbow room.

By 13 September 1932, the C of A records show, that it was in the ownership of E.G. Downes-Martin of Christchurch, Hants. On the 10 February 1933 it passed to S.B. Cliff, then based at Philips & Powis Aircraft at Woodley, near Reading, and later at the former Bristol civil aerodrome, Whitchurch.

S.B. Cliff flew G-ABNT abroad as recorded in the Coupe's *Carnet de Passages en Douanes* to Belgium, to the aerodrome of Saint-Ingelvert in France and Aachen (Aix la Chapelle) in Germany.

These were flights flown in 1933 as Hitler came to power in Germany.



Extract from: A Civilian Affair G-ABNT, works number 0.2.3. was built at Hedon and registered to the Civilian Aircraft Co. Ltd., in June 1931. The Certificate of Airworthiness, no 3199, was issued on the 10 September 1931.

This notes that the first recorded owner is Henlys Ltd, based at Heston Aerodrome in Middlesex.

This may be linked with the hard times which were beginning to afflict the Civilian Company.

Nine days later in the Heston – Cardiff race, Flt Lt Bowling could only manage a tenth place, the aircraft staggering along at 89 mph.

On the 21 May 1932 carrying the number 17, it was entered in the *Morning Post Air Race* at Heston, but it was a non-starter.

It was then used as a demonstrator for a while.

At about this time a certain Glyn Rhys from Carmarthen in Wales, was keen on flying but as he assisted his father in a grocery store at Waverly, for his keep and what amounted to pocket money, he could not afford to buy a 'plane.

He had a flair for window dressing and as a result of display competitions won sufficient money to enable him to start on a course of flying lessons at Cardiff Aero Club, where he asked for a demonstration of the Civilian Coupé.



Whilst the above is not very legible it is a copy of a Certificate of Airworthiness issued in August 1931.



Dennis Rhys, his surviving younger brother informed the author that the prototype, G-AILL, was brought to Pendine for a demonstration flight, but Glyn didn't like it: the engine leaked oil, the aircraft looked rough and it also took ages to take off. But later a demonstration of the more

powerful Mk II G-ABNT by S.G. Cliff at the Pendine beach, was more to his liking.

Before the year was out, on the 26 October 1933, G-ABNT was acquired by Glyn at a cost of £300 who soon nicknamed it 'Bunty'. The aircraft was then based at Cardiff.

Unfortunately, Glyn Rhys was still learning to fly and even when he gained his 'A' licence to fly in the bi- plane Moths (by De Havilland) he was still grounded as far as his own machine was concerned. The accepted wisdom of the time was that the Coupé was considered to be too advanced for a beginner no intermediate type trainer was available.

Rhys, with the impatience of youth, could not wait to gain the freedom of the skies in his own aircraft, so he took a chance one day when his Instructor was away from Cardiff aerodrome, at Pengam Moors.

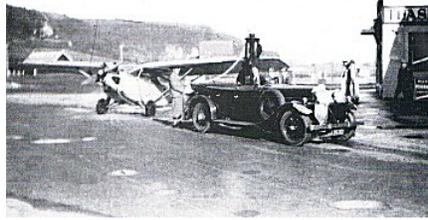
He taxied up the runway and his Coupé took to the air, much to the alarm of the fire and ambulance men. He recalled later.

"I did however manage to land safely and much to my surprise I was congratulated and ordered to go round again, which I did, but then the Instructor returned he was not pleased."

From then on Glyn was allowed to fly the 'plane and on gaining his pilot's licence he flew Bunty at Cardiff. Soon tiring of Carmarthen to Cardiff, however, he flew on his first cross-country trip Cardiff to Pendine, where he planned to keep it. There he arranged to keep the machine in the garage of the Beach Hotel, as the wings could be folded.

So for some years Bunty became a permanent resident at Pendine Sands, the seven-mile long beach was his airstrip and the aircraft's

20 gallon tank was filled up at the local 'Avola' Garage pump with Shell-Mex petrol.



The engine ran surprisingly well on this rather low octane fuel, which cost about 35 pence a gallon, in present day money about 15 pence, recalled Dennis Rhys, who had many tales of adventures he and his brother Glyn had when flying from Pendine.

On one occasion they took Bunty to Hedon to obtain a Certificate of Airworthiness. This was done by Withernsea-based Vincent Lockey, who held an Air Ministry Ground Engineer's licence enabling him to work on several different types of aircraft and engines, including the Coupé.

As he also held a pilot's licence he saw both sides of the aircraft, one of only two or three people in the country who had this qualification.

When the Civilian Aircraft Company was bankrupted, Lockey bought all the unfinished and finished parts of the Coupés at the auction. Glyn and Dennis bought spare wings, tailplanes, fuselage and front end etc from him; in fact almost enough to make another aircraft*

Lockey also supplied Joe Gilmore in Ireland with a wing and a fuselage as noted in the description of G-AAIL. But back to Bunty.

At one time they were having a race between their Roesch-Talbot convertible and Bunty when the aircraft flew so low that it dented the car's hood irons.

On another occasion, after meeting heavy weather, they arrived late at

Pendine beach to find the tide was in and as their fuel was low, they were obliged to ditch the machine in the shallows.

"It was a Sunday evening and almost dark, and local folk came out of the chapel in bowler hats and dressed in 'Sunday best' and carried G-ABNT out of the water. They managed to rescue the 'plane, with Glyn and I still in it, by wading into the sea, in some cases up to their chests, with no damage to the 'plane.

The propeller, however, was damaged, but Bunty did not suffer any ill-effects from immersion in the sea.

Another fine Sunday we churned Bunty up towards 'Heaven'.

(I do not know if Glyn ever prayed but I did very much so always!). Glyn said to me 'I feel groggy', and so did I. That was over my home town of Carmarthen. We did not realize we needed oxygen but I am told that we recovered!

"One foul Sunday morning, Glyn took off from Pendine when the tide was in, the birds were walking and the south-east wind was coming directly from the sea. We pushed Bunty back to the sand dunes and with about four people holding the wing struts on each side, Glyn, with the engine flat-out but with the brakes on signaled to let go but as he was on the left side of the cabin, the folk on the right side did not see the signal. Bunty went off like a scalded cat in a severe curve and over the water, just inches above the waves."

In 1937 Glyn Rhys had to go to London for a student course in Harrod's store. He later returned to Pendine, intending to fly Bunty back to Heston to start the 'Harrods Flying Club'. He made an attempt to return to fly back to London, but when filling up at Cardiff, the chief engineer spotted an oil leak and said that the fault should be

investigated.

Glyn recalled the flight in the aircraft's log book for 21 February 1937.

“Perfect weather with a tail-wind of about 25 mph at 2,000 feet. Ran motor at 1800 revs., I found it steady and oil pressure constant at 55”

The aircraft returned to Carmarthen and with the coming of World War II it remained grounded. In the middle of 1939 Glyn sold a complete front structure and engine mounting to Joe Gilmore to restore his aircraft after a crash, but then the war started and Gilmore never paid up. G-ABNT was dismantled and stored in the attic behind the family store in Carmarthen in 1939. Postwar, pressure of business kept Rhys too busy to restore the aircraft. When the designer inspected it in 1961, he found that the plywood covering and glued joints were as good as ever. Eventually, in 1978, on Glyn's retirement, the aircraft was sold by auction to a new owner who wished to restore it to flying condition, Glyn Rhys later recalled of flying in the thirties:

(Following the auction of the family store along with Bunty on his retirement:)

“I was head over heels in love with it – I still am – I believe it is an interesting example of the enterprise of that era. Had the Hull company not faded away, I think the Coupé could have become the man in the street's aeroplane. It was lovely to fly with no vices. I have many happy memories and I am very sorry to see it go.

Final note: In June 1987, more than fifty years after they first acquired their beloved aircraft, Glyn and Dennis Rhys, travelled to Biggin Hill, by bus, to view the newly born machine.

An example of what was once the leading edge of aircraft designs.



A flock of aircraft, with the Coupé, the DH Hornet Moth and the ever colourful Tavelair.

BILL WUNDERLICH PARTY

Bill quietly studies a magnificent rose growing on the boundary of Biggin Hill Aerodrome.



After some change of plan initially set to take place at the 'Crown' from the Monday to the Tuesday a last minute Email from the organizer Singh Bamrah the venue changed yet again to the 'Kings Arms' this spontaneous rendezvous finalized and was attended by some 30 pilots and others, to attend Bill's 79th Birthday.



Bill has owned various aircraft during his 40 years on the airfield,

He is also a Licenced Aircraft Engineer. He bears the name of the Wunderlich TV valves of days gone by. *(a vacuum tube-who can remember these old glass valves?)*



BETTY PORTER (FLAIRAVIA)



Betty, wife of David Porter (*who owned Flairavia Flying Club*) sadly passed away on the 10th July 2011.

Betty and David were very well known around Biggin Hill for many years. David and Betty moved to the North East near Darlington some years ago.

Unconfirmed: to be announced; Memorial Service in the Biggin Hill area for those who wish to pay their respects to this wonderful lady.