



The Fox Moth was the immediate successor to the DH82 Tiger Moth and built mainly from Tiger components, so you may ask why it is so different. The new wider fuselage provides the answer, for this accommodates five people – four in a neat but rather tight enclosed cabin ahead of the pilot's open cockpit. This meant that, unlike its many siblings, it was largely commercial in intent, but it had a very varied and successful career.

The prototype, G-ABUO, flew from Stag Lane early in 1932 and subsequently 98 examples were built there. Surprisingly the design, slightly modified, came to light again as late as 1946, when de Havilland of Canada produced and sold a further

52. In its heyday of the 30s, the Fox became known to many members of the public as it was a key mover in the world of local pleasure flights, with one operating from Croydon for seven years with Surrey Flying Services and two at Southport providing a similar service from Birkdale Sands. Apart from a break in the war, one of the latter, G-ACEJ, performed this task from 1937 until 1967, when it retired from commercial activity to join the fleet of the Tiger Club.

This was not all. Perhaps unbelievably for the modern mind, single-engine aeroplanes were permitted on scheduled services: Scottish Air Ferries operated Foxes on routes from Renfrew (Glasgow) to and from remote islands. Other Foxes

flew between Croydon, Portsmouth, Christchurch, Exeter and Plymouth. What a slur it is on aviation today to admit that Exeter is the only one of the five airports that remains in use. For six years in the 30s two Foxes operated the schedule between Portsmouth and Ryde so, as with the Scottish routes, clearly there was no ban on water crossings. Over much the same period Hillman Airways used three DH83s on the Clacton-Maylands-Ramsgate schedule. Again, of these, only Clacton survives. What has happened to civil aviation?

There is yet more to come. As contrasts between the various roles in which the type served, Imperial Airways used Foxes for air mail services, five served as

A very different Moth

A commercial proposition from more enlightened times flown by **David Ogilvy**



Peter R March

Above: the author had the good fortune to fly G-ACEJ when it was owned by Tony Haig-Thomas
Right: two views of the Fox Moth prototype at Martlesham Heath for tests



All BMW photos via Philip Jarrett

navigation trainers with the Brazilian navy and one, G-ACDD, was modified with wheel spats and a coupé top for the then Prince of Wales. There was also a floatplane version.

Last, but by no means the least, the DH83 achieved an outstanding success in the sporting field in its first year of life, when Wally Hope baffled the handicappers in the 1932 King's Cup Air Race. The much-modified machine, on which the standard drag-producing fuel tank was removed from between the top wings and the petrol was carried in the spacious cabin, with a sliding cockpit canopy and other refinements, romped around the course at an amazing 124mph.



I could go on, but I hope that I have provided sufficient insight into an unusual aeroplane that has served in a very wide range of roles. Certainly the fuselage is its unique feature, for the thought of the pilot

sitting behind the passengers offers the first surprise, with the snug cabin seating four – pairs facing each other fore-and-aft – all behind a hard-working but willing Gipsy Major 1 of 130hp.

I have had the good fortune to fly the long-lived G-ACEJ on a couple of occasions, when it was one of Tony Haig-Thomas' broad but short-lived collection of Motherapy. My initial impression concerned the position of the pilot's cockpit, which seemed strange with such a substantial portion of the aeroplane in front. Clearly this made the view ahead for taxiing very restricted, but once on the take-off run with the tail aloft all was well. My first flight was a lightweight solo affair, but even then the acceleration seemed more laid back than that of the Tiger Moth; once in the air, though, the downward view was greatly enhanced; this might not have any great safety value, but could be helpful when looking at objects on the ground.

On the level, the DH83 performed well, cruising at 96mph, which beat the best examples of its immediate predecessor. General handling was unexceptional, but wholly appropriate to a machine with productive commercial intent. The stall was tame and easily recoverable with only a minimum of height loss.

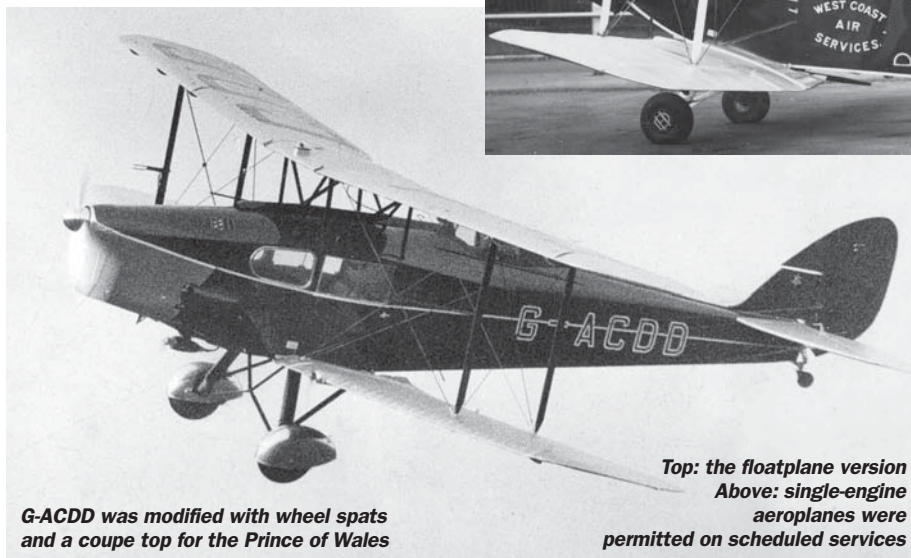
Although capable of carrying four passengers, the Fox could do this and remain within its permitted weight only

with less than half fuel aboard. At this load the climb rate is quoted at only 490 feet per minute, which understandably is almost 200 fpm below that for the Tiger, but as the maxima are 2070 and 1825 lbs. respectfully, this is far from surprising.

On my second flight I had two other people on board, but the cabin is so well

placed in relation to the centre of gravity that, whether light or loaded, there is relatively little difference in the required trim settings. I refrained from flying at full throttle for long enough to record an unchallengeable top speed, but the book figure is 113mph (4 more than the Tiger) which, considering the wider fuselage, is very creditable; however this reveals the extent of the modifications that must have been needed for Mr Hope to attain 124 in the 1932 King's Cup.

Today our home register shows five DH83s, two of which are 83Cs from the post-war batch built in Canada; three of the survivors have the added 15hp



G-ACDD was modified with wheel spats and a coupe top for the Prince of Wales

**Top: the floatplane version
Above: single-engine
aeroplanes were
permitted on scheduled services**

provided by high-compression Gipsy Major ICs. In general assessment the Fox Moth was the result of a stroke of genius by its designer A E Hagg, who successfully created a very efficient five-seat machine of clearly commercial significance, all behind the economy (and reliability) of an engine used mainly on elementary trainers. Without doubt, the DH83 deservedly became more widely known than its production numbers might suggest, for it had a varied working life that was unique in its field. ■

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