

AOPA UK

October/November 2024

Now the best 150 on Earth *P.28*

Challenged by supply chain problems and back-to-back engine rebuilds, this COVID-19 pandemic project started with just a bright red carpet and then transformed into one of the best



HANGARCHAT

AOPA UK visits the exceptionally welcoming Lapwing Flying Group at Denham *P.24*

MIKE MILLER-SMITH

The News Team talk to the CEO of Aerobility about the amazing work of the organisation *P.14*

LITTLE NELLIE

David Hastings on his adventures in Ken Wallis' machine

P.36

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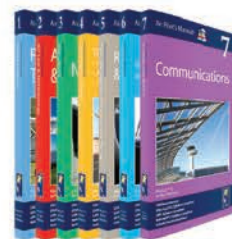
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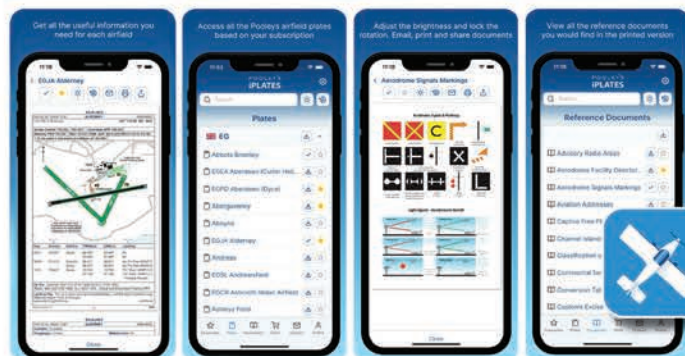
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NO MATTER WHAT WE FLY, THERE NEEDS TO BE AIRSPACE FOR ALL

AS THE SKIES get busier we need to ensure that there is space for all, whilst there is also proper control and accountability for everyone in the air. With eVOTLs on the rise and the increasing popularity of drones there are more and more unmanned vehicles hoping to enter the air space.

AOPA's CEO Martin Robinson explains this in his article (page 6-7) and talks about what AOPA, the government and other organisations are doing to ensure everyone not only has their say, but will keep the skies safe for all of those who use it.

This issue of the magazine has a certain retro feel, mainly thanks due to our cover story and the feature – both fantastic reads thanks to David Tulis and David Hastings. The cover story (page 28-35) which came courtesy of *AOPA Pilot* and features Kevin Coughlin and his ambitious adventure as he set out to restore a Cessna 150. He came close to bankruptcy and divorce bringing his classic aircraft back to life. I think you'll agree that Kevin should be

extremely proud of the two engine rebuilds, and the rest he has achieved with this restoration.

Regular contributor and AOPA member David Hastings is back with a fantastic story recounting the time he met Wing Commander Ken Wallis and was invited to fly his world-famous autogyro, known as Little Nellie and the one that appeared in the James Bond Thriller *You Only Live Twice*.

Elsewhere in this issue we sat down with Mike Miller-Smith MBE to discuss how the charity he represents – Aerobility – encourages disabled people to get in the skies and achieve the dream of getting their PPLs. Aerobility has taken more than 10,000 people

flying, many of whom have gone on to become pilots. It's a fascinating story and if you can support this great cause in any way, find out more information from Mike's interview on page 14.

And that's what as aviation fans we should be doing – trying to get as many people flying as possible. ■

"I think you'll agree that Kevin should be extremely proud of the two engine rebuilds, and the rest he has achieved with this restoration"



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Material for consideration for the August/September issue should be received no later than 01 November 2024

CONTENTS

OCT/NOV 2024

03

ED'S COMMENT Although the nights are drawing in and VFR hours are dropping, Editor David Rawlings wants more people flying and won't accept any excuses!

06

AOPA AFFAIRS There's a new government in town and what are their plans with aviation, in particular, the GA community? CEO Martin Robinson looks through the facts

08

NEWS All the latest news from the General Aviation world that's important to you. Including safety measures from the CAA, new schools opening and closing and more...

14

THE INTERVIEW One person expanding boundaries is Mike Miller-Smith, CEO of Aerobility. He explains how the charity has flown more than 10,000 disabled people

17

UP FRONT – MAINTENANCE Licensed Engineer Michael Powell is back with part 14 of his series on what you can do to your aircraft. This time, looking for problems

18

UP FRONT – SUPPORTING PILOTS The best way for us to support pilots is through our memberships. Here Martin Robinson explains benefits for AOPA members



20

UP FRONT – BOOK REVIEW Two reviews on books all about adventure; the first is *Solo 2 Darwin* by Amanda Harrison and the second is *The African Robin* by Martin Leusby

22

UP FRONT – AWARDS Several awards have been handed out by AOPA recently – here are the winners making a difference to the General Aviation community

24

UP FRONT – HANGAR CHAT David Rawlings heads off to Denham Aerodrome to meet the members of the Lapwing Flying Group, a club that has been operating for over 60 years

28

COVER STORY Could this be the world's best example of a Cessna 150? We certainly think it makes a great case, thanks to the hard work of owner Kevin Coughlin

36

AOPA FEATURE When you are invited to fly an autogyro by Wing Commander Ken Wallis, you're going to jump at the chance, and that's exactly what David Hastings did

43

CLASSIFIEDS A one-stop shop if you're looking for a Licensed Engineer, parts for your aircraft, or even a new aircraft. AOPA's classifieds section has it all.

36



28



12



21



14



FACTS ARE THERE EVEN IF THEY ARE IGNORED

AOPA CEO Martin Robinson brings you the latest from what is going on behind closed doors in the world of aviation, and what's being ignored...

THE NEW Government has been in place for a while now, with an election promise of “innovation and growth”.

We have already noticed a change in the DfT and at this point I have no idea what the future engagement might look like, however I have heard that the Aviation Minister, Mike Kane has given his full support to the airspace modernisation plans. This will remain a focus of AOPA's work as we try to maintain our freedom to fly. A future challenge for GA will be the digitisation of air traffic management systems with air ground integration and seamless airspace operations. This is happening across Europe and here in the UK.

Thousands of man-hours globally are being invested in addressing future air vehicles (unmanned), airspace and integration with manned aviation.

The future of air vehicles, particularly in the context of Urban Air Mobility (UAM), is a topic of growing interest, because of the potential to revolutionise transportation within congested urban environments. Joby announced recently that it plans to start air taxi operations very soon in the UAE and I am sure they will want to start in the UK as well.

However, a paper produced by Delft University suggested that between the US, UK, and Germany, \$461 billion is lost on GDP every year to traffic congestion, due to population growth. Companies that are developing Electric Vertical Take-off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft that promise to offer faster, quieter, and more environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional helicopters and ground-based transport. But, as promising as these technologies are, several significant challenges and uncertainties remain, particularly around economics, certification, and infrastructure.

The idea behind eVTOLs and similar vehicles is to provide quick, on-demand urban transport, reducing travel times within cities and between city centres

and suburbs or airports. However, the economic viability of such services is contingent on several factors, including the cost per seat mile, fare structures, and overall demand.

eVTOLs like the Archer Midnight, has a list price of \$5 million, face stiff competition from traditional helicopters, such as the Airbus H125, which is priced significantly lower at around \$2.9 million. Although eVTOLs are promoted as being cheaper to operate due to their electric propulsion systems, their direct operating costs are likely to be similar to those of conventionally powered aircraft. This is because maintenance, insurance, pilot costs and other operating expenses will not differ drastically. Therefore, to achieve competitive pricing or “Uber-level” fares, eVTOLs must operate at exceedingly high utilisation rates with consistently full passenger loads.

The profitability of eVTOL services will depend heavily on how many passengers can be transported at what price. Suppose the cost per 20-minute flight is set at £100 per passenger. In that case, the operator needs to ensure that there is sufficient demand to keep flights full, operating multiple trips per day, every day of the week. This model would require an in-depth understanding of potential passenger numbers, their willingness to pay and the frequency with which they would choose this mode of transport over existing alternatives.

Another significant challenge is certification and safety regulations. eVTOLs represent a new category of aircraft, and as such, they must undergo rigorous testing and certification processes to ensure they meet safety standards equivalent to those of traditional aircraft. The process is complicated by the fact that eVTOLs often incorporate innovative technologies, such as distributed electric propulsion, which have not yet been widely certified.

Furthermore, public acceptance of eVTOLs will depend heavily on their

perceived safety. Incidents involving eVTOLs, especially during the initial stages of adoption, could severely hinder the market by reducing consumer confidence. Therefore, eVTOL companies must not only achieve certification but also demonstrate their safety through a strong operational track record. Which is why modern air transport is successful.

The success of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) also hinges on the development of adequate infrastructure. Vertiports, the specialised landing and take-off facilities for eVTOLs, need to be integrated into urban environments, which presents significant logistical challenges. Land acquisition, planning regulations and integration with existing transport systems are complex and time-consuming processes.

Given the complexities surrounding the development, certification, and deployment of eVTOLs and UAV systems for widespread commercial operations extend into the late 2030s is my honest opinion and beyond.

Manufacturing skills and workforce is the biggest hurdle to overcome. Scaling production of eVTOLs requires advanced manufacturing capabilities and a skilled workforce, which might take longer to develop, particularly for high-volume production. The aerospace industry faces a skills gap, especially in modern technologies such as electric propulsion and advanced avionics. Training and recruitment efforts will be essential but time-consuming. It is likely then that existing airframe manufacturers will be the ones to eventually produce these aircraft at some future point.

The high initial costs of eVTOLs seems prohibitive, for example Lilium in Germany will have had 100 million euros of German Government investment, but the company is spending 30 million euros per month (as has been reported in the press), add to this, infrastructure investment which could slow down widespread adoption.

ROLL-OUT PHASING

PHASE 1

Use from November 2023

Use from February 2024

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Saudi Arabia	Kuwait
Oman	UAE

PHASE 2

Apply from November 2024

Use from 8 February 2025

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Brunei	Guatemala
Israel	Guyana
Macao (SAR)	Mexico
Malaysia	Nicaragua
Maldives	Panama
Taiwan	Paraguay
	Peru
OCEANIA	St Kitts & Nevis
Kiribati	St Lucia
Marshall Islands	St Vincent &
Federated States	Grenadines
of Micronesia	The Bahamas
Nauru	Trinidad & Tobago
Palau	Uruguay
Papua New Guinea	
Samoa	AFRICA
Solomon Islands	Botswana
Tonga	Mauritius
Tuvalu	Seychelles
AMERICAS	B5JSSK
Antigua & Barbuda	Australia
Argentina	Canada
Barbados	Hong Kong (SAR)
Belize	Japan
Brail	New Zealand
Chile	South Korea
Colombia	Singapore
Costa Rica	USA

PHASE 3

Apply from 5 March 2025

Use from 2 April 2025

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Andorra	Lithuania
Austria	Luxembourg
Belgium	Malta
Bulgaria	Monaco
Croatia	Netherlands
Cyprus	Norway
Czechia	Poland
Denmark	Portugal
Estonia	Romania
Finland	San Marino
France	Slovakia
Germany	Slovenia
Greece	Spain
Hungary	Sweden
Iceland	Switzerland
Italy	Vatican City
Latvia	

In summary, while the time frame is feasible, challenges in manufacturing, costs and skilled labour could delay widespread eVTOL deployment.

EUROPEAN TRAVEL INFORMATION AND AUTHORISATION SYSTEM (ETIAS)

Travelling to Europe from November 2024 will require British passport holders to be fingerprinted along with facial biometrics on entry to the EU and Schengen region.

From May 2025 (TBC), the ETIAS permit is due to be available online with a 6-month transition where ETIAS is optional.

From November 2025 (TBC) the 6-month transition ends – if you try to enter the EU without an ETIAS you will be allowed a onetime pass (OTP).

From May 2026 (TBC) the OTP grace period ends, and all British Passport Holders must have an ETIAS.

The UK is rolling out its own requirements. When flying with passengers, as the pilot of the aircraft, you will need to be aware of the requirements (see diagram, left) and check which passports your passengers are travelling on.

We are receiving reports from pilots about problems with eGAR and Border Force. There is a meeting with the Home Office and Border Force where I have the subject on the agenda for discussion because there are problems.

The text below was taken from a report from IAOPA's Frank Hoffman who has been attending an ICAO Conference: "Eventually ICAO develops Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) which find their way into national legal instruments. The purpose of ICAO is to enable global aviation which it does through its treaty with participating States, therefore there is an obligation on those States to comply with the SARPs (filing a difference is possible but is not meant to be permanent). Since leaving EASA, IACO plays a significant role for the UK as a contracting State. The UK has also committed to not "gold plating" ICAO Standards and to remove it where there is evidence of such.

Over 200 papers are scheduled to be presented and centre largely on evolving aircraft technology, operations efficiency, cyber security, and states' preparations for ICAO's 42nd Assembly in 2025. The papers have been grouped into batches of related topics and presented to about 1,200 delegates in four sessions per day.

Although all topics have an ultimate effect on GA, some topics are of direct consequence. One such important topic was presented by Saudi Arabia: it has asked that the lower-class G airspace, below 1,000ft, be redesigned and layered. Several countries spoke against doing so. The US, Australia, France, among others, opposed the proposal, stating that they wished to retain the integration of operations in all airspace. Fortunately for GA, the summary stated that the committee favoured an integrated airspace solution.

Because some papers are advocating for better safety data and for better exchange of data, States have asked ICAO to find ways to gather safety data and to distribute more data. Again, fortunately for GA, one influential State reminded the committee that GA should not be included in the need to collect data, stating that it is not feasible.

Other concerns expressed relate to radio frequency spectrum. It was pointed out that aviation's claim or holding its traditional spectrum, assigned as it is currently, for navigation and communication safety, is no longer tenable.

Back to airspace, I attended the NAT's session in respect of the Open-Air proposal. This is about the future of the lower airspace, the operations in it and the safe management of those flights. As UTM (Unmanned Traffic Management) technology is likely to be the surveillance solution of choice for drones. The basic idea from NATS is to provide a system that licenses UTM service providers within an ECO system that coordinates all the flights. There is still a lot of discussion to be had but it may not all be bad as we seek better access to airspace and improved safety for GA. This will not be a countrywide system but where it exists, we need to make sure that GA can still operate. NATS have already stated that they have no plans to charge GA, but a future system could see some GA aerodromes providing UTM services. So, there might be some opportunities here for GA to explore as we seek trade-offs. ■



M Robinson

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AOPA NEWS

Bristol Airport is losing one of the country's oldest flying clubs



FLYING SCHOOLS

BRISTOL AND WESSEX AEROPLANE CLUB TO CLOSE AFTER NEARLY 100 YEARS OF OPERATION

After 97 years of teaching pilots, the current owner has decided to close its doors

THE HISTORIC Bristol and Wessex Aeroplane Club and flying school at Bristol Airport is to close its doors after nearly a century.

The club has been training pilots since it was established in Filton in 1927. It also offers aircraft hire and taster lessons for aviation enthusiasts. The club has been owned by Royal Navy veteran Barry Bailey since 2009.

The former seaman has

taught hundreds of people to fly aeroplanes over the last 15 years.

Bristol Airport said the club was closing because the multi-engine aircraft instructor had decided to “concentrate on his other business interests”.

The flight school will operate until the end of February 2025, after which time the nearest flight training centres will be at Gloucestershire Airport, Cotswold Airport and

Dunkeswell Aerodrome in Devon.

When asked what will happen to the club building, which contains a café and flight simulator, Bristol Airport said it had “no further information at this point” about its future use.

Rupert Lawrie, commercial director of Bristol Airport, said: “Having Bristol and Wessex Aeroplane Club here at Bristol Airport has been a real string to our bow. I’ve personally enjoyed

looking out the window and watching all of the various aircraft over the years. We wish Barry ever success in the future.”

Mr Bailey said he had recently been splitting his time between Bristol and London, and “the time was right” to focus on his business interests in the capital. “I’ve truly had so much fun and look back with very fond memories of helping all of our former students,” he said. ■

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CAA REMINDS DRONE USERS OF NEW AIRSPACE NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

THE UK Civil Aviation Authority is reminding drone users about the availability of its new airspace notification system for making notifications of flight and drone activities. These can then be reviewed and made available through aeronautical information for stakeholders across aviation, from recreational pilots and kite fliers, to airports and commercial entities.

The CAA's system for airspace notifications – the Airspace Co-ordination Obstacle Management Service (ACOMS) – has been designed to provide simpler, faster and more accurate processing.

Since being rolled-out to drone users in June this year, the regulator has processed more than 900 remotely piloted aircraft systems activities on ACOMS from 351 sponsors.



Drone users will have to notify the CAA of their plans to fly

The system increases the capacity of requests, helping support the growing number of drone users at a time when demand for access to airspace is increasing.

Jon Round, Head of Airspace, Aerodromes and Air Traffic Management at the CAA said: "Our roll out of the ACOMS system provides drone users with a tailored service to make

airspace notifications. Accessibility has been a key focus, and it is now easier to raise new notifications of the activities they want to undertake. Our skies have never been in so much demand and ACOMS enables us to support the increasing need for safe access to airspace, and progress with the modernisation of our airspace." ■

Elon Musk to sue FAA

The FAA announced it has proposed fining SpaceX \$633,000 for allegedly failing to adhere to licensing requirements. Elon Musk responded on X that he plans to push back in court.

First G400 Sold

Gulfstream announced the first sale of its new G400 to German-based DC Aviation for charter. The announcement was made during a ceremony at Gulfstream's base in Farnborough.

Checked vapes issue

The Tobacco Reporter posted this week that battery thermal-runaway incidents on aircraft reached a five-year high in 2023, with e-cigarettes topping the list of causes.

GABRIÉL SET TO FLY AGAIN

BLACKSHAPE is pleased to announce that EASA has lifted the grounding order on the Gabriél aircraft.

The lifting of the grounding order follows an exhaustive and thorough investigation into the incident involving a Gabriél aircraft in Malaysia in February 2024. EASA's findings confirm that the accident was not due to any design or manufacturing defect in the Gabriél. Blackshape worked closely with



The Gabriél aircraft is back in the air again after a grounding

EASA, providing all necessary support and data throughout the investigation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the events.

The lifting of the

grounding order by EASA underscores the inherent safety and robustness of the aircraft.

Niccolò Chierroni, CEO of Blackshape, said: "Blackshape is always committed to advancing aviation safety and delivering the highest quality aircraft to our customers. We are certain that the Gabriél fleet will continue to set benchmarks for performance and reliability in the aviation industry." ■



CAA MANDATES CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IN PISTON ENGINE AIRCRAFT

Active carbon monoxide detectors will be mandatory in most piston engine aircraft from January 2025, the CAA has decreed in a Safety Directive

THE CAA is mandating the use of active carbon monoxide detectors in certain light aircraft following accidents linked to the gas.

The regulator published a safety directive for pilots and owners of piston engine aircraft, increasing safety for both pilots and passengers who may be unaware of the risks associated with carbon monoxide poisoning.

A 2020 Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) review of accidents since 2000 identified two fatal accidents, each with two fatalities, and fifteen other events where carbon monoxide may have been a factor.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a heightened risk to pilots and passengers of piston engine aircraft, as the colourless, odourless gas can seep into the cockpit and cause incapacitation with little or no warning.

The new rules will be effective from January 2025.

Hannah Foscett, Interim Head of General Aviation at the CAA, said: "While many general aviation pilots are aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide exposure, the same cannot be said for their passengers."

"Carbon monoxide exposure has been linked to fatal accidents and it is vital that extra measures are put in place to save lives.

"These devices are designed to detect the presence of the gas and alert the pilot to potential danger"

"These new rules will make recreational flying safer for pilots and passengers."

To make it as easy as possible for pilots to make the change, regulations allow for both industry-standard and commercial off-the-shelf active carbon monoxide detectors.

These devices are designed

to detect the presence of the gas and alert the pilot to potential danger. Detectors can either meet recognised aviation standards (for example ETSO-2C48a) or be commercially available detectors not specifically designed and certified for use in aircraft.

Although measures are primarily aimed at certain aircraft to improve passenger safety, it is recommended that all pilots operating piston engine aircraft consider flying with an active carbon monoxide detector. Pilots are encouraged to take proactive measures for both their own safety and that of their passengers. ■



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SUPERSONIC FLIGHT

XB-1 SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES SECOND TEST FLIGHT

The Supersonic aircraft has taken to the skies for the second time



FOLLOWING XB-1'S first flight in March, the completion of the Overture Superfactory in June, and significant advancements across Overture and Symphony programmes in July, August proved to be another month of significant programme progress. XB-1 successfully flew for the second time in Mojave, California, piloted by Chief Test Pilot Tristan "Geppetto" Brandenburg, who also flew the chase aircraft in the XB-1's

first flight. The company continues to target year-end for its first supersonic flight. It also marked the anniversary of Boom's agreement with American Airlines. All of this as it continues to move forward with Symphony testing and look forward to Overture's passenger's experience, which it will start to share soon.

The landing gear was retracted and extended in flight for the first time. The XB-1 team also assessed

"The XB-1 team also assessed aircraft handling qualities, and demonstrated a new stability augmentation system"

aircraft handling qualities, and demonstrated a new stability augmentation system, or roll damper.

Following its historic first flight back in March 2024, XB-1 continues to progress through its flight test programme, targeting supersonic flight by the end

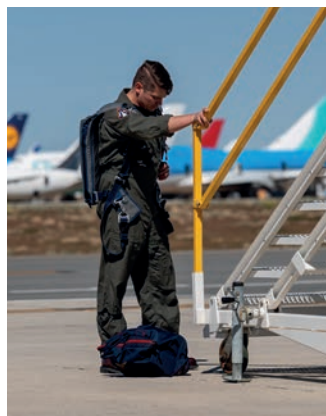
of the year.

The XB-1 programme is planning to bring back supersonic flight to the civil market and is providing the foundation for the design and development of Overture, Boom's supersonic airliner, while establishing a safety-first culture.

"XB-1 had a fantastic second flight this morning. Initial results indicate we've successfully resolved the findings from Flight One and are excited to continue flight testing on the path to supersonic flight," said Blake Scholl, founder and CEO of Boom Supersonic, before adding: "I am very proud of the team. Today's flight is another big step toward the return of supersonic passenger travel." ■



The second flight of the supersonic XB-1 was a huge success for the pilot and company



Test pilot Tristan "Geppetto" Brandenburg

PLANS TO LEASE HAVERFORDWEST COME UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

THE backing by senior councillors of plans to lease Haverfordwest's council-run airport, which had a £119,000 deficit last year, is to come under the spotlight today. Back in May, members of



Pembrokeshire County Council's Cabinet supported the leasing of Withybush Airport as part of plans to make the facility cost-neutral to the authority.

Last year, Pembrokeshire County

Council's Cabinet, members heard how the financial position at the council-supported Haverfordwest/Withybush airport deteriorated in 22/23, with an out-turn position for 22/23 of £238,000. That loss has been reduced to £119,000 for 23/24 "following a review of the operations of the airport." ■

NEW FLIGHT SCHOOL OPENS AT THRUXTON

THRUXTON AIRFIELD is now home to a new flying school and club, bringing fresh opportunities for aspiring pilots and aviation enthusiasts in the area. It is a shot in the arm for flight schools with others closing around the country.

The school, named Kurusha – derived from the Swahili word for "to fly" – officially opened its doors in the first week of August.

The launch marks the revival of flight training at Thruxton, which has been dormant since November 2023 when the previous school, Vantage Aviation, ceased operations.

Kurusha, led by Captain Nick Gribble, aims to create a more accessible and community-focused environment for flight training.

Unlike its predecessor, which primarily focused on commercial pilot training, Kurusha is offering private pilot training with a strong



Thruxton Airfield has been lacking a flight school since November 2023, but Kurusha has opened its doors for new pilots

emphasis on cultivating a club-like atmosphere.

"We're not running it to make a big profit but just to have a flying school at Thruxton," said Capt Gribble, who is also the chief instructor and owner of the school.

"It's got the same instructors and examiners as before, but we're trying to make it more friendly and focused on general aviation."

He added that the school

is looking to provide quality training while fostering a sense of community among local pilots.

Kurusha's mission is clear: to offer a welcoming space where both seasoned pilots and newcomers can learn, share experiences, and enjoy the art of flying.

For now, Kurusha is operating with a single Piper PA-28, which is ideal for the type of training the school aims to provide. ■

Garmin in Hall Of Fame

Garmin co-founders Dr. Min Kao and the late Gary Burrell were inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame (NAHF) at the 60th annual ceremony held Sept. 14, 2024.

AOPA US on landing fees

AOPA US is urging the FAA to intervene on behalf of general aviation pilots and block the use of FAA-mandated ADS-B data by third parties to assess fees based on aircraft movements due to privacy concerns.

Army Officer bins Apache

An US Army investigation found an F-35 pilot with no previous experience in the type was at the controls of an Apache attack helicopter when it crashed at a base in Utah.

Mike Miller-Smith MBE

The CEO of Aerobility on what the organisation does to make flying accessible to all



Mike Miller-Smith MBE

From a young age Mike dreamed of being a professional pilot, after losing his strength he was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy. But his diagnosis didn't stop him; after a career in the pharmaceutical and IT industries, holding senior marketing and management positions in global companies, Mike is now Chief Executive of Aerobility and they have flown more than 10,000 people.

”

Q How did you get bitten by the flying bug?

A There was a model flying field near my house as a teen. I wandered over, got involved and started flying model aeroplanes. That was one of my first exposures to aviation. At school I joined the Combined Cadet Force and got involved with the RAF Cadets. I had my first flight in a Chipmunk with I was around 13 years old.

When I was 15, I went to Lasham Gliding Club and they had a scheme for young people to learn to glide cheaply. I went solo on my 16th birthday and did lots of gliding, became an instructor and was on the British junior gliding team. When I went to university, I got my PPL by working at the airfield and was paid in flying hours. After I graduated university, I started commercial flight training. I was most of the way through the process when I started to experience muscle weakness which was eventually diagnosed as Muscular Dystrophy and I had to stop the goal of commercial aviation, but I kept flying gliders and light aircraft.

Q Did you feel flying was closed off once you received your diagnosis?

A I was isolated and drifted away. But in *Pilot* magazine I read an article about an organisation called the British Disabled Flying Club and they had just been donated some ex-Jordanian Air Force Bulldogs. They were looking for volunteers to help with fundraising or the engineering and refurbishing of these

aircraft so I offered to help and the rest is history. I got involved with the first Bulldog project. It was really an experiment to see if a group of disabled people could operate an aeroplane. Shortly afterwards we changed the name to Aerobility and we've grown from that.

Q How did your role progress with the organisation?

A I was a volunteer for a number of years and the team asked me if I'd step up and become the CEO of the charity. Previous to that I had been working in the pharmaceutical and IT industries in marketing and the skills I learned there have helped me in running Aerobility.

Q What Challenges have you and Aerobility faced?

A Initially it was one of perception. 20 years ago, it wasn't common to see a disabled person flying an aeroplane or known how to get a medical to actually realise they could fly. But the biggest challenge is always financial. We've been lucky to have great support from the aviation industry, particularly the GA community and private individuals who have seen the benefits and helped us grow the organisation. A lot of things have changed. It's not uncommon to see a disabled person sat on the wing of an aeroplane and putting their wheelchair or their crutches into the aircraft, or seeing them climb out after just flying solo as Pilot In Command of the aeroplane.

Q How many disabled pilots has Aerobility helped?

A We support around 1,000 pilots a year, post COVID it's taken time to build back up again. Last year we introduced 291 disabled people into the skies for the first time, some of those wanted to experience flight, but many of those have carried on and started learning to fly. We also offer around 30 scholarships every year as well to help people get on their way. In 2021, we celebrated our 10,000th person we took to the skies.

Q Have you faced any challenges when it comes to adapting aircraft?

A I have to say the CAA have been very good with flying and adaptations, they often try to find a way to say 'yes', rather than to say 'no'. But one of the biggest challenges is the cost. It's now in excess of £50,000 to alter an aircraft, so it's not cheap.

Q What is Aerobility's fleet?

A We have three PA28s, we have a Tecnam a Grob 109 motogliders. We've just built a Zenair CH750. It was disabled people building an aeroplane for other disabled people. And we are shortly to have a Cherokee Six.

Q How can people donate to Aerobility?

A If they visit the website, aerobility.com there is a big donate button on the home screen, they can donate there. And there are tickets still available for the Aviator's Ball as well. ■

An Aerobility instructor and future pilot at the charity's Aspiring Pilot Day



Aerobility offers scholarships to pilots with disabilities





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Welcome to the UP FRONT section of the magazine. Bringing you help, advice, and other insights from the world of AOPA, in an honest and 'up front' way to help you stay flying. Something to say? Please contact us at editor@aopa.co.uk

WORDS Martin Robinson IMAGES Various

SUPPORTING PILOTS THROUGH MEMBERSHIP

AOPA has always worked hard to help its members in many ways. Martin Robinson explains how we help you to keep flying

RECENTLY, WE have noticed an increase in requests for assistance from pilots who are not members of AOPA. While we are dedicated to supporting the pilot community, we have seen a trend where individuals join temporarily to resolve an issue and then cancel their membership once the matter is settled. In some cases, members even seek help on behalf of non-members, or prospective members who ask if we would offer a refund if we cannot assist.

We are committed to helping our members, but often, help is sought at an extremely late stage, such as after court dates have already been set, leaving us with limited ability to influence the outcome. For us to provide effective support, it is crucial that we receive all relevant details as early as possible.

At AOPA, we stand by our members in their times of need because it is their ongoing support that enables us to continue our work for the pilot community. Going forward, we may consider charging a premium for assistance to those who were not members prior to their issue arising. Becoming a member is a small price to pay for peace of mind, and we encourage pilots to join to



Sir Stephen Hillier was able to go flying at the members' day at Old Warden

“We stand by our members in their times of need because it is their ongoing support that enables us to continue our work for the pilot community”

benefit from our full range of services and support.

One such supporting event was the members' day at Old Warden. It was a pleasure to have been joined by Sir Stephen Hillier who shared with us the CAA focus in the coming years. He quoted the phrase “Protecting People, Enabling Aerospace” which is broad in application but equally applies to GA. Sir Stephen responded to a number of questions which included one in respect of supporting GA- at this point I pointed out that the DfT has responsibility for growth. However, this needs to be

considered alongside issues such as carbon and noise, which GA will need to tackle in the years ahead.

Sir Stephen continued speaking to members over a sandwich. He sees the importance and value of engagement and we thank him for giving up his Saturday to meet AOPA members. After lunch Sir Stephen flew in one of the Cambridge Flying Group's, Tiger Moths and our thanks go to Dodge Bailey and Mike Derrett. Overall, the event was a success even though the weather delayed play. We plan to make this an annual event for members. ■

WORDS Michael Powell IMAGES Various

TAKING A GOOD LOOK

For the latest instalment of what you can and can't do to your aircraft, Licensed Engineer **Michael Powell** takes a hands off approach

I NOTE that my previous 13 or so articles call for largely 'hands-on' activity on the part of owners and operators. 'getting your hands dirty' as they say.

This article is a bit more philosophical - more to do with state of mind and using your eyes.

There has been a significant reduction in light aircraft flight hours. If this is true there may be several factors involved in this information including increases in fuel cost, hangarage fees, general maintenance, insurance fees, and so on.

All this may result in the aircraft being thoroughly looked at less often and less time being spent checking the general condition of the aircraft, literally looking for defects and general deterioration. General deterioration starts from when

the aircraft leaves the factory and never stops, calling for regular attention if the aircraft is not to end up as a pile of corrosion on the hanger floor.

Before the next flight consider the following:

Carefully and slowly inspect every square metre of metal skin (of metal aircraft) concentrating on the rivet heads and looking for signs of movement – often shown by grey/black residue around the head of the rivet. Particularly around stress points e.g. where the wing is attached to the fuselage, undercarriage attachments, flap and aileron hinge attachments, etc. This may require removal of inspection panels. If you find anything that gives cause for concern then call in the resident Licensed Engineer. (and put the kettle on).

My last article (13) considered the results of a

“looking for signs of movement – often shown by grey/black residue around the head of the rivet.”

heavy landing, or a series of heavy landings – worth reading again.

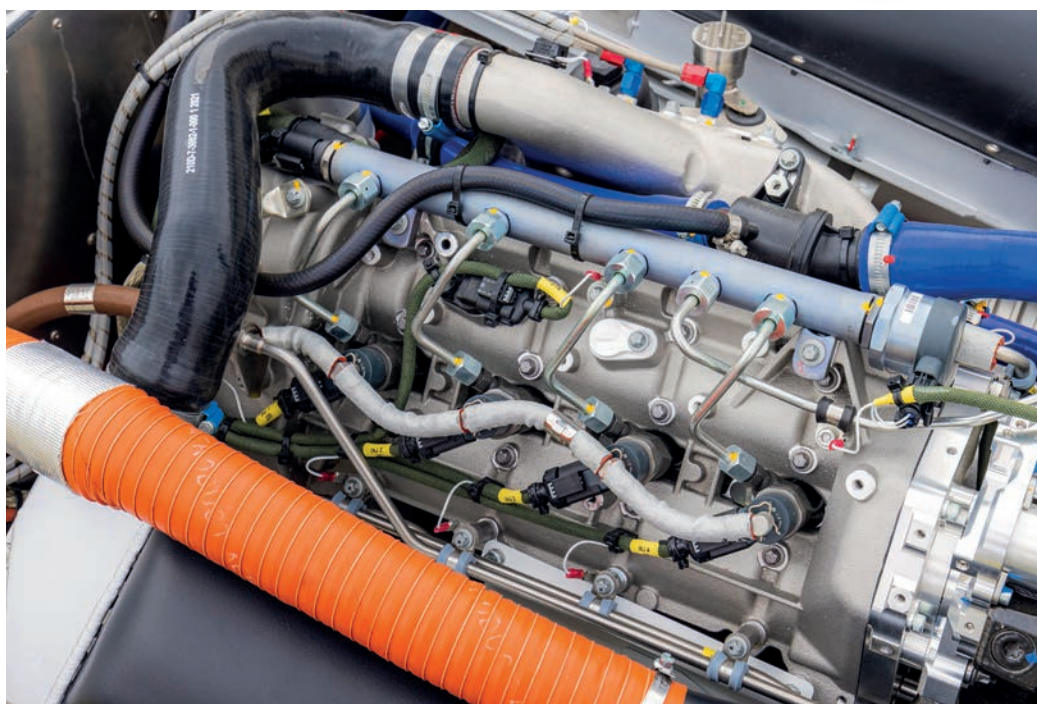
In the case of fabric aircraft look for ripples in the fabric, particularly around undercarriage and wing attachment points.

Cable tensions vary a little with the seasons. Stretching in the summer (even our UK summer!) and shortening in the winter. It is sensible to know that all cables are within spec as given in the aircraft Data Sheet. You will need to borrow a tensiometer. Your friendly Engineer will show you how to use it.

A fairly common defect is leakage around the exhaust manifold down-pipe flanges. The point at which the downpipe is attached to the exhaust manifold. Take a good look using a good torch and look for grey/white residue. Any signs of leakage should be reported to the Licensed Engineer and the engine should not be run until the leakage is dealt with. Failure to stamp on this swiftly will lead to erosion of the manifold flange and ultimately to replacement of the cylinder head. Not cheap!

This is a good time to take a thorough look at all the oil and fuel hoses looking for signs of leakage and wear and tear.

Magneto p-leads are well worth a good look. These are relatively light gauge screened cables terminated at each magneto and stop the magneto from working when the cockpit switch is in the OFF position. A faulty p-lead is potentially dangerous as the engine may fire if the propellor is moved (even



You can tell a lot about your aircraft just by looking in the engine bay



Check the rivets to see if there's any movement

no more than an inch or so) and this usually results in the propeller rotating backwards fast enough to cause considerable, and painful, damage to the unsuspecting pilot/operator. The rotating propeller is more than capable of breaking your arm.

Propeller attachment bolts should be checked periodically and this is usually done at the annual or 100 hour check. Loose bolts, or bolts not tensioned correctly can cause a serious problem, particularly in the case of wooden props. Bolts torqued to less than specified can allow the propeller hub to be subject to impact damage originating from the engine. In the case of wooden props the repeated 'hammer blows' will generate sufficient heat to cause the hub to catch fire. Probably best to get your Licensed Engineer to get his torque wrench out. In practice wooden props should be checked during the summer and again in the winter. Again, probably best to get your Licensed Engineer to do this.

You may not spend much time in the air at night but all navigation lights must work regardless and are simple to check. If any bulbs are replaced then this should be recorded in the airframe log-book. Record the bulb part number for the benefit of the next owner or operator. On the subject of night flying,

I can recommend getting a night rating. Flying on a moonlit night is magical and, in many cases, makes navigation easier because all the landmarks which may be hard to see during the daytime are lit up for you.

Seat rails are another item which may be checked relatively simply. These usually consist of aluminium alloy rails with holes drilled in them to accommodate a locking pin operated by a lever located at the front of the seat. The holes wear with time and eventually become oval allowing the locking pin to be ejected whereupon the seat heads for the rear of the cabin as the aircraft accelerates in the opposite direction. This happened in a pilot in the US flying a Cessna and the consequent legal battle nearly put Cessna out of business.

Your aircraft is a complex collection of controls, fuel storage, instruments, levers, pulleys, wheels and suffers considerable stresses and loads both on the ground and in the air. It is well worth while spending some time having a good look around, as suggested above, as the bare minimum before taking to the sky again.

If you find anything that causes you concern, call your friendly Licensed Engineer, put the kettle on and get the biscuits out. ■



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FOLLOWING AMY JOHNSON

Amanda Harrison wanted to fly solo to Darwin, but with a pioneer spirit, this is her adventure as she takes a Tiger Moth around the globe

A DREAM, fifteen years in the making, became reality when Amanda Harrison left Biggin Hill on 11th May 2019 to fly to Australia, recreating the journey made by Amy Johnson on 30th May 1930. Her factual account in *Solo 2 Darwin* documents a personal adventure, which received wide press and TV coverage, but no full sponsorship or commercial support, making her personal mission even more remarkable.

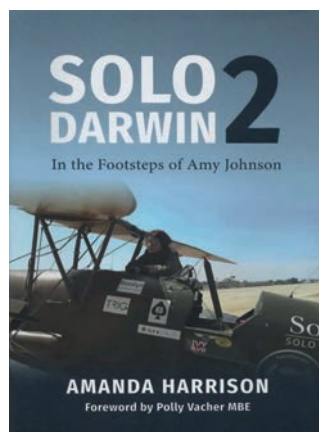
It was whilst learning to fly that Amanda researched the early flying pioneers and lit her passion for flying vintage Tiger Moths. Despite the personal difficulties of dyslexia and having major surgery for breast cancer just 18 months before her attempt, she embraced the challenge to re-create Johnson's journey by purchasing G-AXAN a 77yr old vintage Tiger Moth, built in 1942, and

reconfigured the front cockpit to accommodate an additional fuel tank.

Amy Johnson's historic flight took place 94 years ago, but her 20-day flight didn't have to accommodate the geo-political issues which curtailed Amanda Harrison's attempt to replicate Johnson's journey. Missile firing between Syria and Cyprus, a no-fly zone between Pakistan and India, American and Iranian tensions in the Persian Gulf and the Saudia Arabia war with Yemen all contributed to the curtailment of Amanda's long-held dream.

The planning of Harrison's personal adventure was grounded in her personal belief that 'an ordinary person can accomplish extraordinary things. If you believe, truly amazing things can happen'.

As a commercial pilot and lover of vintage aircraft, Amanda's childhood was strongly influenced by her father, an engineer, whose



“As a commercial pilot and lover of vintage aircraft, Amanda’s childhood was strongly influenced by her father”

practicality and morale boosting were greatly missed as she faced a series of problems, a bird strike, two partial engine failures and ‘bureaucracy reaching dizzying heights of ridiculousness.’ However, most landings on-route ‘thrust her into the limelight of a hero’s welcome’ where she faced a barrage of questions, but she also received warm hospitality from strangers.

The diary entries included in the book display little drama but encouraging humour, despite facing many challenging issues, from the worst weather in fifty years, money worries and her emergency landing in Rhodes, her sheer courage and determination to overcome difficulties provide the essence of her inspirational motto, ‘you are allowed to give in, but never give up.’

Accepting that her adventure had come to an end in Beirut, meant dismantling



WORDS Mike Derrett
MAGES Amanda Harrison

her Tiger Moth ready for shipping and she felt 'forlorn' watching the container leave. Travelling back to Gatwick, she admitted that she 'felt immense failure and there is no fight left in me,' but her resilience is captured in her statement 'Solo 2 Darwin is on pause, but not over.'

Back in the UK, with a broken aircraft, a broken toe, and her broken morale, she embarked on a mechanics course, training to become a fully-fledged engineer like her father and indeed her heroine Amy Johnson. Despite travelling 2,500 nautical miles, spending 14 hours in total flying over the Mediterranean, through mountain ranges and enduring terrible visibility, Harrison is determined to try again. *Solo 2 Darwin* is an account which will inspire others to make their own dreams a reality. ■

Where Amazon
Price £20

WORDS Tina Crow **MAGES** Martin Leusby

GO ON HOLIDAY, SEE PLANE, BUY PLANE, GO ON EPIC ADVENTURE

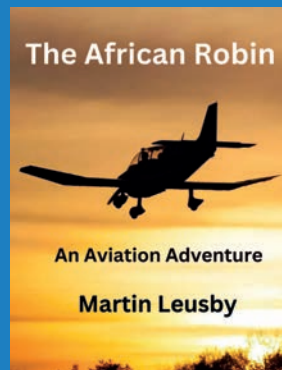
Martin Leusby's romp about bringing back a DR400 from Africa to the UK is well worth a read says Tina Crow

WITH TWO well-received books already under Martin Leusby's belt, I jumped at the chance to read his latest book *The African Robin – An Aviation Adventure* when it appeared on my desk.

Martin Leusby is an experienced pilot and has been involved in many aspects of flying throughout his career: from sporting aviation to flying on behalf of the Emergency Services. This book, however, brings out an even more adventurous side of the author and takes the reader with him on a trip that few private pilots would dare to take on.

Martin's adventure begins in Mabula Game Park, South Africa where a chance purchase of some South African aircraft magazines, and with a quick look at the classified sections, leads him to spot something a little out of the ordinary. A Robin DR400-180 at a price which seemed almost too good to be true. This sets off a chain of events that will keep both aviation enthusiasts and adventure seekers enthralled.

Martin has a great ability to set the scene for each



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Leusby is a PPLer with over 3,000 hours. He has competed in sporting aviation and represented his country, and now flies on behalf of the Emergency Services - unusual on a PPL. Martin has written articles for aviation magazines including such as *Pilot*, *Flyer* and *AOPA*, and during the pandemic penned his first novella *The Airborne Ghost*. Following good reviews, he then penned a memoir of his lifetime interest in aviation and almost forty years of private flying. The book became *Pilots Progress - The Highs and Lows of a single-engine flyer*.

stage of the Robin's journey back to the UK. The book offers a great balance between factual information regarding the incredible amount of knowledge and logistics involved in flying an aircraft across many different countries, as well as the high-level technical elements that are required to safely fly such long distances. There are also some more personal details that may help answer some questions that any reader might have!

Martin has done an excellent job in producing a must-read book for anyone thinking of taking on a solo, long-distance, cross-country flight. It shows that a combination of who you know and what you know is invaluable when taking on such a unique challenge, with a little bit of luck thrown in as well!

So, if you fancy reading a book which will take you on a fascinating tour of airfields and routes from South Africa, across Europe and to the UK, with highs, lows and a big twist, do not hesitate to read Martin's newest book. ■

Where Amazon
Price From £3.99

WORDS Malcolm Bird IMAGES Various (for illustration purposes only)

AWARD SEASON

AOPA has been handing out very prestigious awards to clubs and organisations who deserve recognition

THE FIRST award handed out was the **Lennox-Boyd Award to the AAIB (Air Accidents Investigation Branch).**

The prestigious Lennox-Boyd Trophy is awarded to a person, club, group or organisation that has contributed significantly to the furtherance of general aviation, flight training, piloting standards or safety.

Martin Robinson, CEO of the AOPA said: "The quality of the reporting I feel is exceptional and we are delighted to present our most prestigious award to the AAIB in recognition of their work and the safety recommendations that undoubtedly saves lives."

Crispin Orr, Chief Inspector of Air Accidents said: "We are deeply honoured that our ongoing commitment to aviation safety has been recognised with

the presentation of this prestigious award. The acknowledgement of our work has been received by AAIB staff with great pride and humility."

The Trophy was presented by Chairman of the CAA Sir Stephen Hillier GCB CBE DFC to Senior Inspector of Air Accidents Bob Vickery at a ceremony at Old Warden on Saturday 7 September 2024.

The trophy is a cup in a special presentation box that was originally given to the Association of British Aero Clubs by the late Rt Hon Alan Lennox-Boyd PC CH MP in 1953. Alan Tindal Lennox Boyd, 1st Viscount of Merton was Minister for Transport and Civil Aviation under Winston Churchill (1952-1954) and donated the Trophy to award at various times subject to there being a worthy nomination.

"Sherburn Aero Club is a relaxed, friendly aerodrome which is popular with visitors, club members and local residents"



AERODROME OF THE YEAR AWARD

AOPA is delighted to announce that Sherburn Aero Club has won the 2024 AOPA Aerodrome of the Year Award.

The award was presented by the Chairman of the UK Civil Aviation Authority, Sir Stephen Hillier at the members' fly-in which took place at Old Warden Aerodrome on Saturday 7th September.

AOPA said in a statement: "Sherburn Aero Club is a relaxed, friendly aerodrome which is popular with visitors, club members and local residents.

"The airfield has well maintained grass and hard runways, an RNP approach for use by any qualified pilots, a relaxed attitude to PPR, a great cafe and modern clubhouse with disabled facilities. Pilots receive a friendly welcome; the staff work hard to connect with their local communities and schools and run charitable events for excellent causes.

"Sherburn Aero Club is everything a good British aero club should be: accessible, friendly and affordable. It is a real asset to the local area and the wider General Aviation community."

This is a fantastic achievement for the club and in a statement said: "...one which we are very proud of. We would like to thank the Flight Desk, Ground Crew, Flying Schools, Digbys Cafe and all our members for their hard work and commitment to the Club." ■

www.sherburnaeroclub.com



Sherburn Aero Club wins AOPA's aerodrome of the year



The prestigious Lennox-Boyd award handed to the AAIB for their fantastic work

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 - Navigational skills, new/current radio navigation aids • Airmanship •
 - Weather related topics, methods of distribution • Human factors •
 - Additional topics selected by the competent authority •



For further details contact the AOPA office on **020 7834 5631** or email **mandy@aopa.co.uk**.
You can also register for the seminar online at **www.aopa.co.uk**

WORDS David Rawlings
IMAGES Various

COSY CLUB INSIDE A HUGE AERODROME

The Lapwing Flying Group is a small fish inside a massive pond, but they're one of the eldest clubs based at Denham Aerodrome

DENHAM AERODROME is an impressive site and is able to trace its heritage back to the birth of flight. The history books state a gas balloon was launched on the site by the Royal Engineers in 1885 and there has been aviation on the site ever since.

I went along to Denham to meet members of the Lapwing Flying Group which had been based at the airfield for 59 years – and counting. Lapwing is a small group of 12 aviators who have all worked in the aviation industry.

I met Martin Bowley and Richard Smith, who are the secretary and chairman of the club respectively. Both were keen to show me Denham and how their club sits in with the airfield.

Martin joined Lapwing in 1976 and Richard in 1979 when they both worked for the British Airports Authority (BAA).

Martin explained the history of Lapwing over a cup of tea in their cosy clubhouse. "We're pretty small fry compared to others on this airfield, but we've been here a long time," he explained. "Lapwing began in 1965 as part of the social club side of the British Airports Authority.

Like all nationalised industries the BAA had a huge social side. There was a golf club, football club, film club and then a flying club. There was a huge clubhouse at Heathrow."

The club began thanks to Frank Quick, who was the Operations Manager at Stansted in 1965. Frank was also a pilot and no-nonsense instructor. He set up the club with a number of BAA employees. "We started at Denham as it was close to Heathrow and our first clubhouse was a cricket pavilion," said Martin. "It was rescued from a cricket club and rebuilt on the aerodrome. We had it for years, but it was knocked down and replaced with new hangars, but it all started with a cricket pavilion and Beagle Terrier."

The airfield is owned by Bickertons and there were rules for the group, which they stick to to this day. "The only stipulation to join the group is that you had to have worked in the aviation industry," said Richard. "So, if you worked for BAA or in maintenance, or for Air Traffic Control you can join. The club was set up originally offer people a level of airmanship and for them to understand the industry they worked in

THE ESSENTIALS DENHAM AERODROME

DETAILS

A: Denham Aerodrome
Denham, Bucks, UB9 5DN
T: 01895 832161
W: www.egld.com

JOINING PROCEDURES

There is no overhead join. Aircraft must be at or below 1000' QNH (750' QFE) in the Denham Local Flying Area (LFA) (i.e. the part of the ATZ in the London CTR). Circuit altitude 1000' QNH (750' QFE). Rwy 24 right hand circuit. Rwy 06 left hand circuit. Rwy 12/30 variable circuit. Pilots must not compromise safety to fly the small circuit described in these procedures, and should fly a larger circuit if it is necessary to maintain safe separation.

away listen out for other aircraft joining or already in the circuit. If the circuit is busy, delay joining the circuit descend to circuit altitude 1,000' QNH (750' QFE) and reduce speed for the circuit (if necessary) before reaching the VRP. Arrival runway 24: report at Maple Cross VRP, fly the base leg over the lakes unless safe separation requires otherwise. Arrival runway 06: report at St Giles VRP, fly the base leg to the east of the A413 to avoid Gerrards Cross unless safe separation requires otherwise at the VRP look out for aircraft downwind and give way - aircraft in the circuit have priority. Give way so aircraft on downwind can turn base in the normal position: either reduce speed; or fly a larger circuit and maintain circuit altitude until it is safe to fit in. Do not orbit in the circuit.

TO JOIN THE CIRCUIT AND LAND

Establish radio contact with Denham Radio on 130.730 MHz at 10 nm or 5 mins





more. Some members only went solo, others got their PPL and some went on to become captains on the airlines."

Both Richard and Martin joined the club when they worked for BAA in the 1970s. "I joined the club after working for a year at BAA," said Martin. "I learned there was a flying club and that they offered scholarships. They would subsidise you £3 an hour for flying at £12 an hour, so I applied to join the scholarship scheme and they put around 12 a year through."

Richard added: "I was one of the last to get financial support before it all went. I started in 1979 and at one point the membership was around 40-odd. The club

"I started in 1979 and at one point the membership was around 40-odd. The club aircraft was flying all day on a Saturday and Sunday"

aircraft was flying all day on a Saturday and Sunday."

"We also lost contact with BAA, because it was privatised and the airports got sold off," said Martin. "So our links disappeared, but we continue as Lapwing and run it ourselves. Our CFI lost his instructor rating in the pandemic, so we've lost our ability to teach and at the moment we are just group of PPL holders with an aircraft."

The group had to move when the aerodrome wanted to build some new hangars. The cricket pavilion was torn down, but there is a 1940s blister hangar where a room had become available.

Even the club's little hangar has an interesting history. In the 1970s it was owned

by United Biscuits and their chairman at the time had an aeroplane as an executive run-around and they used it as their base – it's also partly how the aerodrome got its concrete runway. When United Biscuits upgraded to a King Air they needed a runway they could use all year, and they contributed.

As BAA disappeared, club membership has shrunk. "We are naturally dwindling as a club due to our members getting older and the fact that due to the contract we have with Denham, we can only recruit those who work in aviation," said Martin.

Although it's not all gloomy, "We had one new member join last year who works as a Gulfstream engineer in

“The group has had a few aircraft over the years. The original Terrier went down in the channel, it had to be ditched with CFI Frank Quick on board”



Farnborough. He was learning to fly, before we lost our instructor and then came back after he got his PPL. If we could find five more like that, we'll be fine," joked Martin.

The group has had a few aircraft over the years. The original Terrier went down in the channel, it had to be ditched with CFI Frank Quick on board (nobody was harmed), then a Beagle Pup and a Socata Rallye, before getting a Piper Warrior. Our original Warrior we lost with a forced landing here and now we have G-JAMP, which we've had for 20-odd years."

The club has looked after the aircraft, giving it a paint job whilst the interior has been completed overhauled. So for a 1970s aircraft, it look great. It's got steam gauges, but everyone flies with a tablet now and as Martin said: "We learnt to fly a long time ago, we don't need a glass

cockpit."

FLYING AT DENHAM

Denham is inside the Heathrow zone, which can put a lot of potential visitors off, but Martin and Richard say that it shouldn't stop anyone visiting as the café is worth visiting (and it scores highly on TripAdvisor as well). "We have a very strict circuit, and when we fly to other airfields people ask us where we've come from, when we tell them Denham, they often say oh I won't go near there, but as long as we stick to the circuit it's fine. Some people can find our tight circuit intimidating if they're used to nice big circuits, but it's no problem," said Martin.

"I'd recommend people come to Denham," said Richard. "I can see from the outside someone might look at it and not want to come, but if you read the airfield website beforehand and

"We learnt to fly a long time ago, we don't need a glass cockpit"

check the reporting points, it's not that hard, you just need to think about it before you get here. And as most people fly with tablets, you can put your reporting points in. It's not intimidating.

"Before you leave though, you'll want to check that the café – The Crew Room – is open, which is most days (currently closed Mondays). When Martin and I fly, we go somewhere, have a cup of tea, fly somewhere else for lunch, fly somewhere else for another cup of tea and then fly home. The other day we went somewhere and we hadn't checked when the café was open and when we got there the café was only open on weekends – very poor prep on Martin's part – he got a telling off. There was a coffee machine and Twix."

More on Lapwing can be found here: www.lapwingflyinggroup.co.uk ■



Richard (l) and Martin outside Lapwing's clubhouse



The Cosy clubhouse inside the blister hangar



The club will celebrate its 60th anniversary next year

The finished article,
Kevin's stunning
Cessna 150



WORDS & IMAGES David Tulis Courtesy of AOPA Pilot

Now the best 150 on Earth

Challenged by supply chain problems and back-to-back engine rebuilds, this COVID-19 pandemic project started with a bright red carpet



NEW YORKER Kevin Coughlin was inspired to earn his private pilot certificate shortly after watching Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger's heroic saving of US Airways Flight 1549 when it ditched in the Hudson River in January 2009. The professional photographer purchased a well-worn aeroplane in 2009

for \$18,000 (£13,650). He reasoned that he could save a few bucks during flight training by owning his own aircraft.

However, when he bought the aircraft, he neglected to tell his wife, Joelle, about the purchase. Coughlin said: "she blew a gasket," after finding out by reading the N number on a crumpled piece of paper stuffed into a jeans pocket.

Although she eventually warmed to the idea, the purchase has sometimes led to financial friction.

Nonetheless, the 150G became a platform for future aerial photo assignments, including a remarkable aerial shot of the 2015 World Series ("Behind the Photo," May 2016 AOPA Pilot) with a company he formed called All Island Aerial LLC. Coughlin logged about 95 percent of his 900 hours flying N8361J throughout the Northeast, with occasional forays farther away including landing on the ice runway at Alton Bay, New Hampshire, which he described as "very challenging" in a Cessna 150. But, except for an engine rebuild in 2013, the aircraft had seen only marginal improvements since.

Then in 2019, Coughlin's long-time mechanic and good friend Roberto Ruiz suggested he consider replacing the frayed tan and oil-stained carpet on the aircraft, which

Coughlin had affectionately named Juliet. Flaking and fading paint, vinyl seats long past their prime, and ancient avionics were all a part of the aging aircraft. But finances were tight, and the timing wasn't right.

TRAGEDY HITS HOME

During the height of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, Coughlin nearly gave up trying to maintain flying status for his beloved 150 as the red-and-white two-seater seemed to encounter setback after setback beginning with an annual inspection. The aircraft's Continental O-200A engine seized up during routine maintenance when the oil pressure relief valve failed while on the ground at Coughlin's home base of Republic Airport in Farmingdale, New York (FRG).

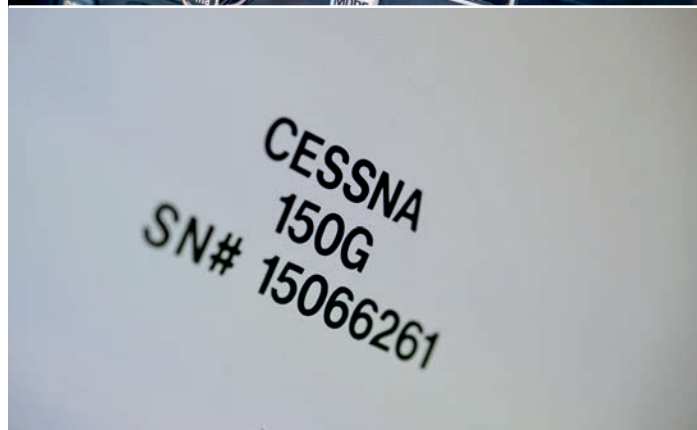
The previous day included a 400-mile round trip flight with his nephew from Farmingdale to Albany with no hint of

"The aircraft's Continental O-200A engine seized up during routine maintenance when the oil pressure relief valve failed while on the ground"

trouble. "I thank my blessings it happened on the ground and not in the air," said Coughlin.

Now in need of a second engine rebuild within 10 years, Coughlin was disheartened. Mandatory workplace shutdowns, labour shortages, and parts scarcity affected nearly every facet of life. Aviation manufacturers, repair facilities, and other businesses saw their operations grind to a halt during much of 2020 and part of 2021. Adding to his woes, Coughlin learned that engine parts suppliers and crankcase inspectors were working with very limited staff or were completely closed, adding to months of delays while he awaited the return of the little Cessna's heart—its engine.

As the world came to grips with the new reality of masking mandates, tests, vaccines, and other health precautions, Coughlin's A&P Ruiz contracted COVID-19 and died. The 70-year-old local resource



1. The original radio and information has remained in the aircraft
2. The original serial number of the C150
3. Kevin in what is now his pride and joy – and we can see why

FAST FACTS**100**

ENGINE HORSEPOWER

102

CRUISE SPEED (KIAS)

670

CLIMB RATE (FPM)

The restoration cost
close to £50,000, but
it looks worth every
penny

Originally, Kevin wasn't going to restore the seats, but looking at these, he's glad he did

was a constant fixture in and around the flight schools populating the airfield and a close friend to scores of aviators, including Coughlin.

"I was devastated," Coughlin said. He again considered throwing in the towel, especially when a close friend of Ruiz's, an A&P who had previously worked on N8361J and who had pledged to finish the job, was too distraught to take up where Ruiz had left off.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

After Ruiz's death, Coughlin said he struggled to continue refurbishing the aeroplane and even contemplated selling it as a parts bin special. "I was still paying rent on a tiedown spot I couldn't use. My crankcase, crankshaft, and cylinders were in separate inspection and overhaul shops across the country. I'd invested \$29,000 (£22,000) on this engine rebuild and I'm not a rich guy, either. My salary isn't enough to sustain an aeroplane,

house payments, utility bills, food, insurance, and other expenses," he said. Deep down, Coughlin never gave up on completing the project, although pressure was building at home – and from his accountant – to sell the aircraft piece by piece.

Gibson Aviation in El Reno, Oklahoma, overhauled the aeroplane's Superior-branded Millennium cylinders, but it took seven months to complete the process. Coughlin was left with an aircraft engine in various stages of completion and no resources to finish the rebuild and reinstallation.

In the middle of a pandemic one pilot put everything on the line – including his marriage – to restore his beloved 1967 Cessna 150G. He paid for repairs and upgrades bit-by-bit through numerous freelance photography, drone, and aerial jobs. He rarely turned down photo missions to help make ends meet, sometimes

"With the engine finally ready to be bolted on, Coughlin still needed to find a shop to install it and conduct the long overdue annual inspection"

working up to 80 hours a week between his then-day job as a photographer for the state of New York, and his contract photography.

Numerous dead ends took Coughlin's search from New York to the Midwest and beyond, until he found Continental engine specialist John DiLavore of Mutual Aircraft Services – in his backyard – at Brookhaven Airport (HWV) in Shirley, New York, about 25 miles away. The experienced engine builder assembled the powerplant from assorted boxes that Coughlin carted in and had the aeroplane ready for pickup in June 2021.

STILL A WAY TO GO

With the engine finally ready to be bolted on, Coughlin still needed to find a shop to install it and conduct the long overdue annual inspection. West Harrison, New York's Heavy Metal Air mechanic and IA Alex Duran had known



1. There are some modern avionics, but the cockpit remains mainly original
2. The paint and interior match once again
3. The 150 draws attention everywhere it goes

Ruiz, had some familiarity with Coughlin's treasured Juliet, and finished the process.

By August 2021 Coughlin was finally back in the air, but that's when other things "began to go south" on the Cessna 150, he said.

Avionics that had been cutting edge during the Nixon administration began to fail, so he replaced them with a Garmin GTR 225 communication radio, a Garmin GTX 327 digital transponder, and an ADS-B-compliant skyBeacon wing tip strobe to navigate New York's tricky Class B airspace.

The tried-and-true yoke-mounted Garmin handheld GPSMAP 396 with its built-in Jeppesen database and optional satellite weather was relocated to an AirGizmos bracket near the centre radio stack.

Comfortable but well-worn grey vinyl-and-fabric seats and the frayed floorboard lining of the cosy cockpit still bothered him. Remembering Ruiz, he finally swapped out the flooring

for a plush deep red carpet from SCS Interiors. Custom burgundy and tan leather seats sourced from Mac's Airplane Covers completed the interior and closed out 2021.

DESPERATE MAKEOVER

For the first time since he purchased the aeroplane in 2009, Coughlin was flying behind a reliable engine, new avionics, and with a comfortable interior. And he could finally fly to a January 2022 aircraft repainting appointment that he had made with Ed's Aircraft Refinishing at Brookhaven Airport two years prior. Appointments were hard to get because the paint shop is recognised as one of the best in the region. A Matterhorn white base coat now anchors the 1967 Cessna 150's coral-red metallic lettering and striping. It's finished with a gold-dust metallic 3D accent. Coughlin complimented owner Ed Yezarski's personal service for the "new, exciting, and jaw-dropping" design scheme.

"For the first time since he purchased the aeroplane in 2009, Coughlin was flying behind a reliable engine, new avionics, and with a comfortable interior"

"This aeroplane needed a desperate makeover," said Coughlin. "I knew it was going to be costly and that I was going to hit a lot of hurdles along the way. However, I had no idea what I was in for."

The repairs and upgrades added up and put an unexpected strain on Coughlin's bank account and on his marriage to Joelle. "But now she really likes traveling with me in it to Cape May, Block Island, or Martha's Vineyard when conditions are right," he said. The value of single-engine training aircraft rose significantly during Coughlin's downtime. The aircraft is now valued at about \$63,000 (£47,700) – which is in line with the price of similarly equipped Cessna 150G models listed for sale online. "I think this is the best Cessna 150 on Earth right now, but, of course, I'm biased," Coughlin said. His plans now include a bucket list flight with Joelle, from Long Island, New York, south along the Eastern Seaboard to Key West, Florida. ■

TECH SPEC Cessna C150G

ENGINE

Manufacturer: Continental Motor
Model: O-200-A
Horsepower: 100 HP
Overhaul (HT): 1,800 hours
Years before overhaul: 12

PERFORMANCE

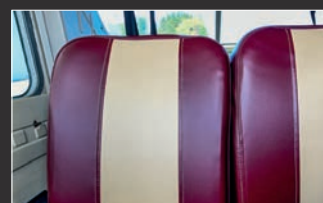
Best Cruise Speed: 102 KIAS

Best Range: 303 NM
Fuel Burn @ 75%: 6.5 GPH
Stall Speed: 43 KIAS
Rate of Climb: 675 FPM
Ceiling: 12,650 FT
Take Off Distance: 735 FT
Landing Distance: 445 FT
Take Off Distance over 50ft obstacle: 1,375 FT

Landing Distance over 50ft obstacle: 1,075 FT

WEIGHTS

Gross Weight: 1,600 LBS
Empty Weight: 970 LBS
Useful Load: 630 LBS
Fuel Capacity: 26 GAL
Long Range Tanks: 38 GAL



It was a long process
for Kevin to get the
aircraft the way he
wanted





Wing
commander
Ken Wallis with
his autogyros
at the Norfolk
& Norwich Aero
club

WORDS & IMAGES David Hastings

THE AMAZING WING COMMANDER WALLIS AND HIS AUTOGYRO

If offered the chance to fly Little Nellie with the inventor there, you're not going to say no. That's how **David Hastings** flew the famous autogyro in 1965

KEN WALLIS was a retired wartime RAF bomber pilot and a trained engineer, who lived at Reymerton Hall quite near to us at Swanton Morley and was famous for the wonderful fleet of Wallis Autogyros that he had designed and built. He had carried out trials for a military use and then decided to explore the possibility of civilian pilots enjoying his creation.

In early 1965 he brought two of them over to the Norfolk & Norwich Aero Club and the Club Directors and members were deeply interested. And so, it was agreed that trials would be carried out. Here Ken hit a snag, as the Board of Trade, which in those days administered flying, insisted that only pilots trained on a tail wheel aeroplane would be allowed to fly it. This was nonsense and would obviously prevent the aircraft being widely used, as by that time most students were learning

on the modern tricycle nosewheel aeroplanes. After a long discussion it was agreed that Ken could hold a trial using two pilots, one trained on a tail wheel aircraft and the other on a nosewheel type. My best man John Wilkins, who had learnt on Tigers, was chosen and to my great surprise I was asked if I would be the other pilot having learnt on the Rallye.

This was of course long before the days when Ken Wallis had a two seat version, which meant that your first solo was exactly that!

We had a very full and detailed series of lectures and briefings on every aspect of autogyro flying and then Ken said that John would solo on the following Saturday, and I would go the next weekend. So on July 3rd 1965 I sat in with John on his pre-flight briefing, quite relaxed, as I knew I had another week before my turn would come.

We found that we had two problems. The first was that the engine, a single magneto McCulloch, was a pusher and

the prop was about three inches from the rudder, which made the rudder pedals much more sensitive than we had ever experienced before. Secondly, Ken never having had other pilots fly his autogyro, had set the brakes up to hold full power which meant that as you opened the throttle to full power, you automatically released the brakes and everything happened in a blur.

John strapped in and started up, with Ken kneeling beside him until he was happy with everything, then he stepped away and John vanished in a series of wild swings. We had been briefed to climb straight ahead to 300 feet, complete a left hand circuit, approach to about 50 feet, overshoot and land on the second approach. John landed and then to my horror Ken said, "OK David, strap in – you might as well solo today as well". I tried to explain that perhaps I had not listened to John's briefing as carefully as I should, but all to no avail and soon I was kitted up with helmet and goggles



and strapped in with Ken beside me. The Wallis had a unique advantage over other autogyros as you had the ability to spin up the main rotor with a flexible drive from the engine, which gave it a very short take-off.

TAKING OFF

Ken stepped away, I applied full power and the brakes came off and like John I had absolutely no idea as to how I reached the first 200 feet. You suddenly realised that you were airborne and in those days we did not have the nose cone – that came a little while later in the James Bond Film *You Only Live Twice*, so all you could see up front were two shaking feet on the rudder pedals, the tuft of wool as the turn and slip indicator, basic instruments between your knees and the thought of “how do I ever get this back down?” However, after the first turn downwind you began to realise just what a wonderful experience this was, no wings,

no aircraft fuselage, just you flying like a bird. The landing was not too difficult and we then settled into a regular routine of flying this wonderful little autogyro. Eventually the time came to allow us out of the circuit and we were told to fly down the main road to Lenwade and back. We were amazed to see the effect we had on the cars below. Later still we were allowed to go out to the coast and Ken warned us that the larger seagulls might play with us, which we both thought was just a joke, but on one glorious evening it happened.

I was flying at about 2,000 feet near Wells Harbour just enjoying myself when to my surprise a large seagull formed to port.

I could not believe it. He eyed me up and down and then decided to show this human a thing or two. He closed his wings and dropped.

However on the Wallis, if you closed the throttle you could also descend rapidly. The gull

“Another trick was that in any wind at all, you could make the Wallis almost hover, which annoyed the courting couples in the woods beside our airfield, as we looked down on them!”

seemed surprised and decided to do the next trick which was to climb rapidly. Again the Wallis when given full power, would go up like a lift and I stayed with him. We turned and swung together for over ten minutes and I could just not believe it.

Then he decided enough was enough and pulled his final stunt. He closed his wings and rolled inverted and I could not match that!

Another trick was that in any wind at all, you could make the Wallis almost hover, which annoyed the courting couples in the woods beside our airfield, as we looked down on them!

DISPLAYING NELLIE

Another very exciting memory was when Ken was displaying at the Annual Battle of Britain Air Show at RAF Coltishall and I was asked to fly the club reserve autogyro for static display. I arrived early on the Saturday morning to find a very strong wind blowing at



1. James Bond took Little Nellie over Blofeld's volcano base
2. She was named Little Nellie after the British singer and actress Nellie Wallace, similar to Ken's surname of Wallis
3. "When I landed Cubby Broccoli said, 'Yes we shall want it in Japan in six weeks' time,'" Wallis said



David Hastings
with Wing
Commander
Wallis at the
Aero Club Ball
with the James
Bond autogyro



Author about to get airborne in Wallis with the nose cone fitted

Swanton Morley and phoned Peter Mallender to ask what I should do. "Haven't you left yet?" was his comment and when I asked how to stop the rotor blades flapping before spinning up, he told me to start up inside the hangar, get the blades rotating so that the wind would not affect the rotor disc and then taxi out and "get going as you are late".

I did as I was told and it worked, but having got airborne I thought I had better check what would happen if I had an engine failure en-route and so selected the centre of the airfield as my landing spot. Good job that I checked the result of flying in a strong wind, as I would have landed way downwind and outside the airfield. So I took great care all the way to RAF Coltishall to have a suitable field selected. On arrival in front of the assembling crowds, I had the embarrassment of not getting the autogyro to settle. Ken Wallis gave a great performance to the large crowd

and after the display, John Wilkins flew the autogyro back through a terrible rainstorm which was also quite fun.

The trials continued, we gained our treasured "Witch on a Broomstick badge" and were the envy of the other Club pilots. A high speed fly-past in front of the Clubhouse and pull-up before landing became the normal thing - gee were we lucky. We also took the Wallis over to Cambridge to have a smart nose cone and tiny windscreen fitted ready for the Bond Film. Then it was agreed that the trials could be enlarged to allow other pilots to fly and this is where the problems began.

For some pilots they regarded the Wallis as a safe toy on which you could do nothing wrong, but they found out to their cost that if you were foolish with it, it would bite hard, just like any other aircraft. No one was ever badly hurt, but we bent two autogyros as well as our pride.

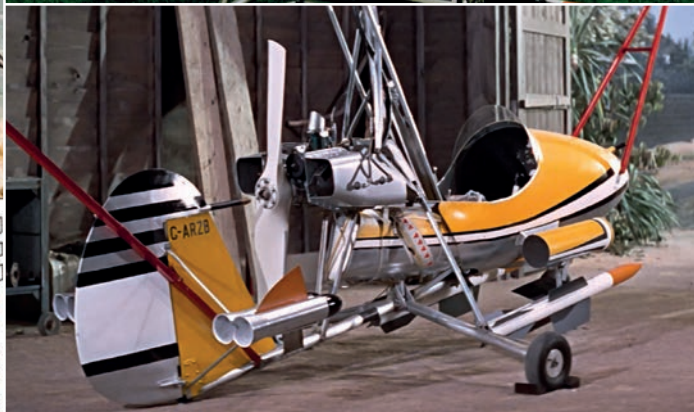
Then came the terrible

"For some pilots they regarded the Wallis as a toy on which you could do nothing wrong, but they found out to their cost that if you were foolish with it, it would bite hard"

accident at the International Farnborough Air Show, when the famous test pilot Peewee Judge was demonstrating the Wallis, did a fast pass and then pulled up and pushed over just too hard.

The rotors hit the rudder and broke up, killing Peewee. Ken was horrified and decided that his idea of Club flying would not proceed any further and the trials ended. We also thought about all our own flypasts and pull ups in front of the Clubhouse at Swanton Morley! Ken however continued to fly his fleet until he sadly died and of course flew "Little Nellie" in the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice*. We proudly displayed "Little Nellie" at the Annual Aero Club Ball held in the Norwood Rooms at Norwich.

Flying his wonderful autogyro was like drinking champagne and my log book entries will always remind me just how lucky I was to be one of Wing Commander Wallis' two trial pilots. ■



1. The James Bond poster with the now iconic autogyro front and centre
2. Ken Wallis in the version that appeared in the film that is on static display at Wallis & Son Land Rover showrooms
3. Little Nellie ready for her silver screen debut



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