



**Cornwall Aviation
Heritage Centre**

NEWS

Introduction

Winter 2020

Welcome to the next issue of the CAHC Newsletter, keeping everyone informed of what is going on in and around the Museum, the new arrivals, the ongoing restoration and the continual upkeep of the airframes and of course news worthy to us all.

2020 has been a very difficult year for us (and for nearly everyone in the UK), and with the restrictions that were in place, we think we have done very well indeed in the short space of time that we were open. Ok, the cockpits were unavailable to all, but with the hard work and efforts made by the Staff and our wonderful volunteers, we feel that we have achieved a lot this year. The majority of visitors this year, were newcomers and hopefully when this is all over new and old visitors, will return to see what the Museum really has to offer. Numbers were down from 2019, but we have been busy from the time that we were open, with one day in August becoming our busiest day EVER. Let's have more of those in 2021.

But not all of what we hope to achieve and sustain comes from monies through the doors. We have been awarded Grants from both the Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund to help us keep going and plan for the future, keeping our wonderful staff members employed, who do so much for the Museum. Both grants go to show that CAHC is an important facility within the County and the industry of Aviation Heritage and Education.

Nimrods – Bit like Buses.....

We are soon to be taking delivery of two Nimrod display items. One is the Nimrod Simulator from Kinloss being kindly loaned to us by our good friend Jeremy Britton (who has already lent us the JP Nose and soon to be converted Tornado Avionics Simulator....more of that next time). This will be displayed in the HAS, together with the nose section of the Prototype Nimrod XV148. Originally converted from the last ever Comet built, the prototype first flew on the 23 May 1967 from Broughton to Woodford, flown by Test Pilot John Cunningham. XV148 was the aerodynamic prototype, having what would become Nimrod's customary 'bath-tub bubble' skirt structure of the unpressurised weapons bay and large nose radome, along with modified wing centre section and enlarged air intakes to accommodate the Nimrod's Rolls-Royce Spey 250 engines. It was also fitted with the Nimrod's navigation and attack systems. Nimrod fuselages are 6 feet shorter than a Comet 4C and this alteration reduces the aircraft's directional stability, therefore the dorsal



XV148 awaiting its first flight in 1969. Note the extra windows akin to that of the Comet

fin was enlarged in June 1967. It served all of its life on Trials work at Woodford, then Boscombe Down, Pershore and finally Bedford. Scrapped in 1999, the nose section was restored by Martin Painter who owns it today and as everything lights up will make a wonderful display item, telling the story of the development of this iconic and to us a very local Aeroplane, with Nimrods being based at St. Mawgan from 1969 until 1992. We are incredibly indebted to Martin for allowing us to display XV148 in the Museum. It, along with the Nimrod Simulator should prove interesting to our visitors.

What's a Balliol, I hear you ask?

Word has been made before of this, but what is a Balliol? What did it do? And how is it coming here? Once upon a time.....

Boulton and Paul, better known for the Turret Fighter, the Defiant, in the late 1940s responded to a requirement made by the RAF for a three seat Advanced Trainer to replace the Harvard still in service. Yes, three seats as it was intended that the student in the rear seat would observe the mistakes made by the poor chap up front under instruction. This was quickly shelved and through development it became the world's first aeroplane to be fitted with a single turboprop engine, the Armstrong Whitworth Mamba. Trials weren't exactly successful with the new form of powerplant and with so many surplus Rolls Royce Merlins available, the Balliol entered production with the famous engine fitted, even though all of them had the jet exhaust for the Mamba built into the fuselage. All had folding wings too, not hydraulically controlled but by the Armstrong method of standing on one wing and pulling the other wing up by using a rope!



Sea Balliol WL718 seen here at St. Mawgan 19 September 1959 visiting from Culdrose

196 Balliols were built, together with 30 Sea Balliols, which had a tailhook, strengthened undercarriage and a smaller propeller for use on Aircraft Carriers. Only exports were 12 to Ceylon and the last flying examples in the UK were retired in the 1960s. Local connections were that some were based at Culdrose, St. Merryn and Plymouth. Four survive to this day – a Sea Balliol at Cosford, two in Sri Lanka and the one joining us - WN149. This saw limited use with the Central Flying School at Cranwell in the 1950s and was then sold to a scrap merchant in Manchester. The cockpit section was rescued in 1981 and after a few owners was rebuilt into a complete airframe by the Boulton and Paul Association in Wolverhampton in the original factory where it was first built. A number of spare parts from the stores were used in the recreation as the wings, rear fuselage and engine cowlings are new builds. But then there are probably more original parts in this, than in some Spitfires flying today!



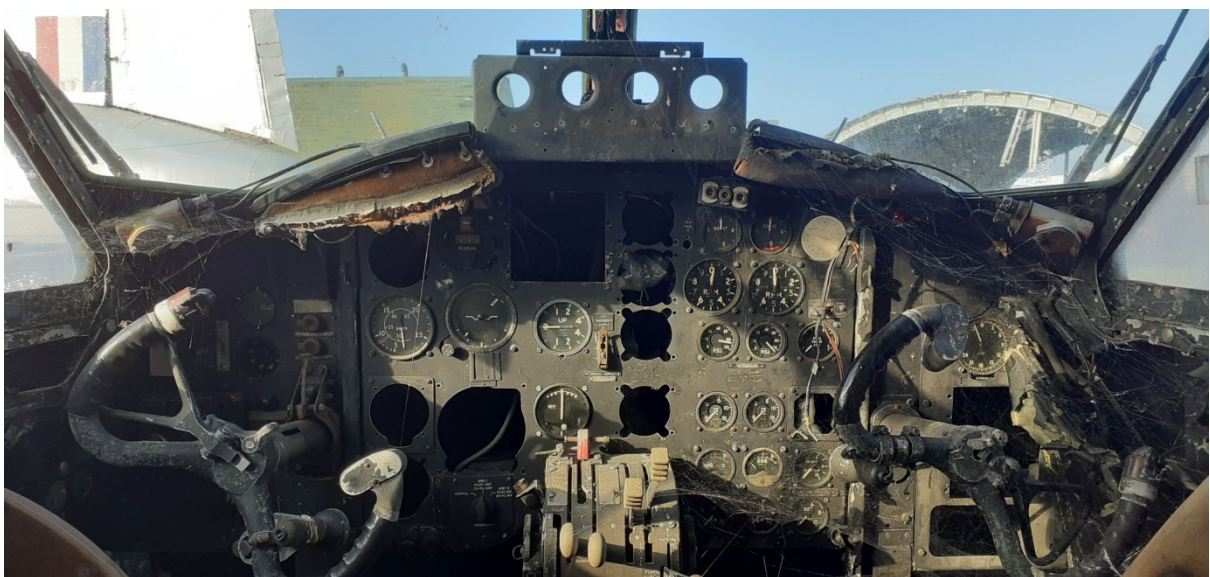
WN149 disassembled at Cosford and awaiting delivery to CAHC

When new owners took over the site at Wolverhampton, the Association had to move and thus having nowhere to display WN149, she was moved into temporary accommodation at Cosford and along we came in 2018. Our Lightning was displayed at the 100th Anniversary Celebrations of the RAF and further along the same line was the Balliol with a little postcard attached to the fuselage, basically saying free to a good home. After an approach by an Eagle-eyed Ian Watkins, CAHC was selected as the best location to rehome her. Work still needed to be carried out on the wings, but now all is all complete and she soon should be on her way down to Cornwall. We look forward to its arrival with great excitement, as it is the most complete RAF Balliol airframe in the world and should prove to be a superb addition.

Restoration News

As in any Museum, a lot goes on behind the scenes, not just in the office and so we have a talent bunch of volunteers who are using their military skills to restore and maintain the aircraft within the Museum. Of course, with the majority of the airframes being outside and so close to the sea, salt is a major problem, but with help from companies such as our neighbours STS Aviation and Trimite, we are constantly working away to preserve what we have for our visitors and for future generations. Trimite, have been and continue to be such wonderful supporters of the Museum, giving us paint and anti-corrosive material for the VC10 and other projects.

On a normal Museum day, you may only meet the staff and what we call the 'Meeter and Greeters', but there is another important team also, the ones that venture out on our closed days, working away on the airframes. They are as important members as anyone else and it is their endeavours that help the Museum being what it is today. We are always looking for new people to join us, and we welcome applications made either in person or by using the form available on the new website.



Something appears to be missing? There is a lot of work to do on the Pembroke

At the moment work has started on the Percival Pembroke, which arrived last December and because of Covid, has been stored next to the Varsity. The seats have been removed for one of our volunteers to get his sewing machine out and start repairing the upholstery and then work can commence in the cockpit. The last occupants, some very large spiders have been found a new home and now we can start removing the dials and controls for cleaning, before putting back into place.

Varsity, lovingly looked after by Mike Hinton, has had new windscreens fitted and the floor under the Pilot's seat has been replaced. A new internal display board is being created to replace the one currently inside.



Mike Hinton, replacing one of the Varsity's main windscreen panels

Anti-Corrosion work has been started on the underside of the VC10, much needed in the climate it lives in and work on this will progress throughout the Winter, restrictions and weather permitting.

And to the HAS. What with the soon to arrive Nimrod sections and the Balliol, we on our last day of opening, started to clear the hangar, removing all of the barriers, the cinema and generally tidying up the area. With careful planning, we will have a new layout, still keeping the one way system, but will sadly have to say goodbye to a few of Ian Pearson's wonderful collection of light aircraft. Although interesting and popular with the visitors, what with the pending arrival of the new exhibits, we simply don't have the space to display all of the smaller items. We thank Ian immensely for being such a good volunteer always explaining to young and old how an aeroplane flies (normally down to money!) and instilling that interest in budding pilots. Its people like him that make the Museum what it is today.

People's Mosquito have very kindly come along and created a wonderful display down the left hand side of the HAS, telling the story of the role that the de Havilland aeroplane played in Cornwall during WW2 primarily from Portreath and Predannack. Doing so it helps to

publicise their Project, in rebuilding a Mosquito to fly again in the UK. Work on the remains of RL279 has already started by RetroTec and it is planned for the aircraft to fly again in 5 years time. It's a superb display and well worth a read.

Other displays and exhibitions are currently being organised and researched by the Volunteers, all concerning the history of aviation in Cornwall. Don't want dwell too much on these watch this space, as otherwise won't have anything to put into the next Newsletter!

We leave you with an interesting photo from one of those projects, the one being centred on the Cornwall Aviation Company owned by one Percival Phillips of Trewoon near St. Austell, whose Company literally gave 1000s of people their first experience of flight in the 1920s, all over the UK. Here is one of his machines at what is believed to be somewhere near Newquay in 1925. Some were modified to carry up to 5 passengers. Judging by the size of the fellow on the right, he made up for the other two. I bet there was no weight and balance checks in those days. An interesting photo, for what should prove when completed to be an interesting and educational display.



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