

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

AVRO 504K `E449'/ 9205M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 74/A/26

As now displayed at Hendon this is a composite aircraft comprising the fuselage of Avro 504K G-EBJE and the wings of Avro 548A G-EBKN.

Avro 504K G-EBJE (Contractors Number 927)

- 1920? Aircraft Disposal Co, Croydon. RAF Serial not recorded. Constructor's number 927.
- Jul 24 Built from spares and registered as G-EBJE to Geoffrey Victor Peck, Dulwich; in 1925 Peck was one of a consortium who formed Southern Counties Aviation Co (Ltd), initially based at Port Meadow, Oxford; They moved to Brooklands Aerodrome from October 1924. In 1925 the company operated joy rides in the Isle of Wight.
- 11 Oct 24 Crashed at Belper, Derbyshire, but repaired.
- 21 Jan 26 Granted CoA with Southern Counties Aviation Co (Ltd)
- Jan 26 Sold to well known racing driver John R Cobb and based at Brooklands.
- 2 Aug 26 To Frederick G Miles, Shoreham, Sussex - later the founder of Miles Aircraft Ltd. Purchased for £300.00 to replace the previous Avro 504, which had crashed, with Miles' Company, Southern Aircraft Ltd, Shoreham. Flown to Shoreham the same day by Miles, who made a further five flights in it before nightfall.
- 22 Oct 26 Flown by Miles from Shoreham to Croydon, a one-hour flight, and on to Netheravon (1hr 40mins) and back to Shoreham (1 hr 35 mins).
- 16 Jul 28 Transferred to Southern Aircraft Ltd, Shoreham. Used to give five-shilling joy rides and flying instruction around the Sussex area, flown mostly by Miles' business partner, Cecil Lawrence 'Pash' Pashley. Fitted with 110hp Le Rhone engine. Photos with 'Fritz (or Felix) the Cat' insignia below (port and starboard cockpits) Aeroplane Monthly Oct 79 p.516; Aeroplane Monthly Jun 91 p.345; Miles Aircraft – The Early Years (Amos) pp. 18, 31, 38. This insignia was only carried for a short time before being removed to avoid being sued by the copyright owners.

See RAFM photo collection P3054, showing `JE nosed over in a field wearing `Southern Aircraft Ltd, Shoreham on Sea' titles below the cockpit on the starboard side of the fuselage. Photo is undated.

- 16 Apr 30 Force landed at Shoreham through fuel starvation on its first flight of 1930.
- 16 Oct 30 Photographed on this date - Aeroplane Monthly Apr 80 p.217.
- 29 Sep 34 C of A lapsed and withdrawn from use.
- Dec 34 Cancelled from register.

Avro 548A G-EBKN

- 31 Jan 18 Ordered from Harland and Wolff, Belfast as Avro 504K E449, part of a batch of 300 aircraft, serials E301-E600, built to contract AS.4291.
- 22 Mar 19 Delivered to RAF by this date.
- 1920 To Aircraft Disposal Co Ltd, at Croydon by this date. For photo of stored fuselage, see Aeroplane Monthly May 1978 p.247 taken at Croydon in 1920.
- Dec 24 Registered G-EBKN to Aircraft Disposal Co Ltd, Croydon.

In 1925, Major F B Halford of the Aircraft Disposal Co, modernised the air-cooled 80hp Renault V8 engine by fitting redesigned cylinder heads and valve gear which raised the power output to 120hp. This engine - the `Airdisco' was fitted into a surplus 504K airframe - the former E449 - and fitted with a 4-blade prop, creating the prototype Avro 548A, nicknamed 'Slummicky Anne'. Three other 548As were built/converted, the Airdisco engine giving greatly improved all-round performance over a standard 504K. Photos: Aeroplane Monthly Oct 79 p.519; Air Britain Digest No.1 1989 p.16; Air Pictorial March 2001 p.224; Lost Aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis) p.20.

- 17 Apr 25 Granted CoA.
- 03 Jul 25 Entered in Kings' Cup Air Race by Lt Col J Barrett Lennard, and piloted by Mr H H Perry, Aircraft Disposal Co Director and test pilot respectively; retired at Luton - the race being held in poor weather conditions, having started at Croydon.
- 29 Jun 28 Withdrawn from use, still owned by Air Disposals Company and stored at Croydon.
- 1929 Purchased by F.G. Miles
- 6 Feb 30 Sold to Anthony Graham (Graham) Head, Shoreham for £100 - hangared and maintained on his behalf by the Miles Company.

It is recorded that the occupant of the front cockpit could stand up, lean forward and make in-flight adjustments to the carburettors of the uncowed engine.

When purchased the aircraft was fitted with the only Mk.II Airdisco V8 engine (160hp) built - letter from G Head, Aeroplane Monthly Apr 80 p.215. Photo at Shoreham in 1930 – Miles Aircraft – The Early Years (Amos) p.33.

- 22 Apr 30 Typical day of joy-riding at Roedean School, Sussex. Flown by Head for 30 minutes and took about £2 in fares (Amos).
- 17 Jul 30 Force-landed by Graham Head in field SW of Shoreham aerodrome with engine running badly. Last recorded flight.
- 6 Nov 30 Head requested Miles to de-rig the aircraft.
- Dec 32 Registration cancelled

At some time the wings of `BKN became stored with the fuselage and engine of `BJE, on a small farm, before being rescued in the mid/late 1930s by Mr Richard Grainger Jeune Nash, becoming part of his vintage aircraft collection.

- Dec 53 Nash Collection, including the 504/548A components, acquired by the Royal Aeronautical Society.
- 1958/59 Parts stored at RAF Hendon with other Nash Collection aircraft; moved by 71 MU to Heathrow November 1959.
- Sep 60 Stored in BEA maintenance hanger, Heathrow Airport. At this time, `BJE had the legend `S.A.L.201` below the tail and the name `Sliminky Ann` on the tail.
- 1962 Stored at RAF Upavon.
- Mar 63 Fuselage of `BJE and wings of `BKN loaned to the newly formed RAF Museum and sent to RAF Abingdon for `reassembly' into a single aircraft, though in a poor state, extensive corrosion had been caused to `BJE by discharge of a fire extinguisher behind the engine, and the whole structure riddled with dry rot and woodworm, so with an Air Historical Branch budget of £50 Abingdon rebuilt the aircraft with new materials using originals as patterns or where still sound. Ash longerons, bracing wires and some spars replaced with new wood acquired from Elliots of Newbury. The Le Rhone engine of `BJE was in a poor condition so a 130hp Clerget 9B was substituted, s/n 2622/39946 (See Record of work at Abingdon - DoRIS Ref.B3241, also Aircraft Servicing Form B3368). An original tail skid and carburettor came from Maurice Gardner, a former `504 owner/pilot; Much of the restoration was done on a voluntary basis from August 1963 by three RAF Technicians, W/O C.A.L. Williams BEM and C/T A.L. Walters restoring the airframe and C/T

Waitzer the engine.

Photos during restoration; Royal Air Force News w/e 27th March 1965; Air Clues December 1966 p.105; Lost Aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis) p.20.

- Jun 66 Restoration completed.
- 01 Jun 66 &
15 Jun 66 Engine runs carried out.
- 24 Jun 66 Single c. 20-minute low-level flight (contrary to Nash's wishes that none of his aircraft be flown). Pilot was the RAF Abingdon Station Commander, Group Captain L.G.P. (Bob) Martin, who in a 2010 letter recalled that he flew the aircraft up to around 300 feet and circled within the airfield perimeter in case of forced landing. HQ Transport Command rapidly issued instructions that the aircraft was not to fly again.
- Sep 67 Still at RAF Abingdon. Colour photo- Lost Aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis)
- Apr/May 68 Moved from Abingdon to RAF Henlow by No.71 MU Bicester. Stripped down, recovered and repainted at Henlow, where then stored.
- May 69 Displayed at Biggin Hill Air Fair (Photo: Air Pictorial July 1969).
- 23 Aug 69 Displayed at International Air Day at RAF Chivenor. Photo being loaded/unloaded into an RAF Shorts Belfast freighter at Chivenor – Air Clues December 1971 p.111.
- 8-13 Jun 70 Displayed at RAF Cranwell anniversary celebrations.
- C. Nov 71 To Hendon for display at RAF Museum. Photos - Airfix Magazine Mar 85 p.265; Air Pictorial March 2001 p.224.
- Jun 87 Loaned to RAF Scampton for display, then returned to Hendon where it has been displayed ever since.
- Mar 92 Purchased, together with rest of Nash Collection by MOD from Royal Aeronautical Society.
- 19 Jul 93 Allotted RAF Maintenance serial 9205M.
- 19 Feb 03 Moved into rebuilt Grahame White Hangar at Hendon. Photo displayed there – Royal Air Force Celebrating 90 Years p.125.
- Sep 04 Gifted to the RAFM by the MoD along with the rest of the former Nash Collection.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON

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