

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

PERCIVAL MEW GULL G-AEXF (REPLICA)

MUSEUM ACCESSION NO. X004-6131

- 5-9 Feb 39 Percival E.2H Mew Gull G-AEXF (c/n E.22) flown solo by Alex Henshaw from Gravesend to Capetown and return via the Sahara, in a record-breaking, and still unbeaten, elapsed time of 4 days 10 hours 20 minutes-the longest-standing long distance flying record of all time. Having flown the 1936-built aircraft since May 1937, and winning the King's Cup Air Race in July 1938, he sold the aircraft to a French owner in July 1939.
- July 2005 Construction of full-sized static replica of this aircraft, in its modified Cape-Flight condition, underway by Hawker Restorations (Tony Ditheridge/AJD Engineering), Sudbury, Suffolk to represent the aircraft as it was for the 1939 Cape Flight. Fitted with reconditioned D.H Gipsy Six series II engine, built to the correct drawings and virtual flying standard and using the rebuilt original G-AEXF as a pattern. Basic spruce structure fuselage completed first with wings also completed by August 2005. Project funded by the late Alex Henshaw and managed by the RAF Museum, where the replica is displayed, at Hendon. Photos of wings and fuselage under construction, November 2005; Flypast January 2006 p.4; Other photos - Aeroplane April 2008 p.39. Further detailed work on fuselage undertaken at the Northhill home of Chris Morris from early 2007. Fitting out of the cockpit was completed by April 2008.
- Incorporates some original components from G-AEXF, including cockpit instruments such as the original P.4A compass, tyres and the oil tank.
- 7 Apr 2008 Delivered to RAFM Hendon and assembled over the following three days. Photo at official handover ceremony, 17 April 2008 – Flypast June 2008 p.15; Aeroplane June 2008 p.7.
- 1 May 2008 Suspended from roof of Milestones building.

The original, and much rebuilt, Henshaw Mew Gull G-AEXF survives, still airworthy, with the Real Aeroplane Company at Brighton Aerodrome, East Yorkshire. This is the only survivor of the six examples of the type built.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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