

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

FAIRCHILD ARGUS II G -AIZE
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 73/A/1097

- Jun 43 Manufactured at its Hagerstown factory by Fairchild Engine & Airplane Corporation as a UC-61A Forwarder. (Fairchild 24W-41A - RAF Argus 2). Constructor's number 565. Engine - 165-h.p Warner Super Scarab radial. 512 of this model were built, of which the USAAF retained 148 for its own use, others going to Britain on Lend-Lease where they were mainly used by the Air Transport Auxiliary for ferry pilot duties, in addition to extensive RAF use in the Middle East and India.
- 22 Jun 43 Delivered to United States Army Air Force as 43-14601 to order No.AC-28355 at a cost of \$10,611.
- 29 Jun 43 Shipped to the United Kingdom via Brooklyn, New York to where it was delivered 'by Land'.
- It is likely that during the war years the aircraft was used as a hack aircraft by the US 8th Air Force and rendered surplus at the end of the war.
- 18 Dec 46 Registered as G-AIZE.
- Jun 47 Overhauled (including Warner Super Scarab engine) and civilianised by London Aero & Motor Services at Elstree Aerodrome, Herts. Total flying hours at this time 76.55.
- 6 Jun 47 To British civil register as G-AIZE. One of 54 war surplus Argus aircraft flown post war as British registered civil aeroplanes.
- 17 Jun 47 Registered to Van Leer Auto Diecastings Ltd as G-AIZE. This company were based in Welwyn Garden City, Herts.
Made its first civilian flight that day from Lympe to Le Touquet Paris, France flown by its new owner, W. Van Leer. Mr Van Leer flew the aircraft regularly from Lympe, Elstree, Luton, Hanworth and Redhill aerodromes, amongst others, on trips to Paris and even Zurich until making his last flight in the aircraft 19 Feb 1948.
- Aug 48 Following a period of occasional use, passed to B.R. Companion of London and flown from Denham and Lympe to France (Nice) and Italy following overhaul at Elstree which culminated in a 35 minute test flight 23 Aug 48.
- 5 Sep 48 Force landed in field at Fiumicino 'owing to darkness and lack of fuel'- undercarriage and prop damaged, pilot and navigator unhurt.

- 24 Mar 49 First test flight following repairs, from Venice.
- 12 May 49 Last flight by B.R.Companion, from Padua to Milan.
- c. Nov 50 Sold to Robert Jones of Hayes, Middx and flown back to the UK by him from Dijon, France 31Jan - 1Feb 1951 to Croydon and on to Denham 7 Feb 51, then stored.
- Jun/July 50 Flown by L.Senok. on pleasure flights to France and Germany.
- c.Feb 51 To American civil register as N9996F.
- Jun 53 After further period of disuse passed to Heathrow based Capt.R.A.Young, Jnr of Pan American Airways; Ferried from Croydon to Heathrow 1 Jun 53 for periodic inspection and flown from Blackbushe airfield from 1 Aug 53 until 9 June 1961 when Young flew the aircraft to White Waltham. Saw only occasional use from 1956, on UK flights only. As of 10 Jun 53 total flying hours were 247.55.
- 20 Aug 55 Photographed at Baginton Airfield, Coventry in silver and blue colour scheme with the name 'Young IV'
- 5- Made a brief appearance in the film 'The Glenn Miller Story' starring James Stuart - he is shown boarding the aircraft to join the band in France in 1944, but never arrived, with G-AIZE being painted in USAAF colours for the filming.
- Jul 58 Overhauled by Eagle Aircraft Services at Blackbushe.
- Nov 60 Stripped and refabricked by Eagle Aviation.
- Engine overhauled by Hants & Sussex Aviation 1961; After a period of disuse the aircraft was dismantled for storage at White Waltham and crated ready for despatch to America.
- Jun 61 Received dismantled by Personal Plane Services at White Waltham; checked and re-assembled.
- Mar 63 Purchased from Doug Bianchi of Personal Plane Services by Roy Mills.
- 24 May 63 Ferried from White Waltham to Denham, Middx. Flying hours at this time 296.15.
- Jul 63 Overhauled by Marshall Dunn Aero Services at Denham.
- 7 Aug 63 New British Certificate of Airworthiness issued again as G-AIZE. Colour scheme still overall silver with Royal-Blue nose and trim.
- 29 Sep 63 Flying Hours 313.25.

- 23 Nov 63 Flown by Mr. G. Mc William who recalled in a 1998 letter that he ‘...wasn’t too impressed with the aircraft’s performance and found it a bit of a brute to handle...particularly the landing, which had to be a powered “wheels -on” affair ...a three-point landing being out of the question...’-at least on a hard runway, but O.K on grass, hence the fitting of an anti-shimmy tyre, commented Roy Mills in 1999.
- 64 Featured in an episode of the late Michael Bentine’s BBC TV comedy programme ‘It’s a Square World’. This episode featured a ‘no frills, but plenty of thrills’ airline run on a shoestring and starring Bentine and Clive Dunn as the entire staff. Filming took a day at Elstree Aerodrome, Herts. Photos – ‘Elstree Aerodrome-The Past In Pictures’ (Riding/Peerless, 2004) pp.170-171.
- 64 Landed heavily at Elstree, its usual base, ripping off the undercarriage and damaging the propeller, fortunately with no injuries.
- 65 Featured in an episode of the ITV programme ‘Moonraker’.
- 65 Photographed at Coventry Airport. Photo - Pilot Feb.98 p.27.
- 1 May 66 Last flight - 40 minutes. Final flying hours 472.25.
- 6 Aug 66 Certificate of Airworthiness expired.
- Stored at Roy Mills’ workshop at Hanwell for planned recovering complete and with engine inhibited.
- Feb 73 Purchased with spares by the RAFM from its owner, Roy. W. Mills.’Journey Logbooks’ to RAFM Archives ref. B1715-B1717. (In 1965 Mr Mills had already donated Miles Magister T9708 to the Air Historical Branch. This aircraft is now awaiting restoration at Cardington following several years on display in Manchester.)
- 6 Mar 73 Withdrawn from use.
- 6 Apr 73 Registration cancelled.
- 73 To RAFM store at RAF Henlow, Beds.
- To Aerospace Museum, Cosford, Salop for storage. Photo - Wrecks & Relics 13th Edition p.183.
- 21 Oct 97 To Rochester Airport, Kent for restoration by the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Ltd over a two-year period. Photos departing Cosford - Aircraft Illustrated Dec 1997; Flypast Jan 1998 p.9. Stripping of airframe underway by Dec 1997.

Missing parts were sourced or copies made and the whole of the cockpit interior totally rebuilt by some 30 volunteers involved in the project. The aircraft was restored to military configuration in SEAC markings with the serial FS628.

The original FS628 was one of 161 Argus II aircraft delivered to the RAF Mar 43 - Feb 44; it served in the Far East and returned to the United States 27 March 1947.

Photo of restored engine and cockpit - Flypast Oct 1998 p.23.

2 Jun 99 Delivered to RAF Museum Cosford by road prior to formal handover ceremony on 5 June and display at the Museum. Photos - RAF Cosford 99 Air Show Guide p.17; Flypast August 1999 p.7 and April 2000 p.107; Aeroplane August 1999 p.6; Wrecks and Relics 17th Edition (colour); Flypast October 2006 p.57.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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