

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SOPWITH 1½ STRUTTER (REPLICA) G-B1DW/ A8226'
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 81/A/212

- 1977 Construction, expected initially to take 18 months, commenced by the late Vivian H 'Viv' Bellamy and a team of 6 craftsmen at Western Airways, Land's End Aerodrome, St Just, Cornwall; constructor's number WA/5 for Western Aircraft. Built to original drawings to the order of Leisure Sport Ltd at Thorpe Park, Surrey who at that time needed a two-seat aircraft for airshow work and to train pilots in rotary-engined flying, but following policy changes at Thorpe Park the airframe, minus engine was purchased by the RAF Museum early in 1981 - when Leisure Sport decided against expanding their collection they offered to sell the aircraft to the RAFM.
- 1980 Completed with temporary non-authentic cotton covering and an original Clerget rotary engine. Marked as RFC aircraft '9382', an early Sopwith built aircraft.
- 24 Sep 80 Registration G-B1DW issued.
- c. Sep 80 Made two short flights piloted by Viv Bellamy, the first a simple circuit of Land's End Aerodrome. At this time a replica aircraft had to be flown to be accepted. One of the flights carried flown postal covers as fund raisers for the RAF Museum along with RAFM Curator the late Tony Harold. After these two flights the aircraft was grounded. Colour photos at Land's End; Aeroplane Monthly May 82 p.245; FlyPast Jul-Aug 81. Photo in flight, Aircraft Illustrated March 82 p.128.
- 29 Dec 80 Test permit expired.
- c. Jan 81 By road to RC&RC Cardington, Beds where the structure was scrutinised using original blue prints from BAe Kingston-Brough to ensure authenticity. The cotton fabric covering was removed and replaced by authentic Irish Linen. The work was undertaken by Bill Sayer and team and a RAF Museum collection rotary engine (130hp Clerget 9B, accession number 72/E/519) was installed. Vickers and Lewis guns purchased with the airframe were part original and part reproduction. Photo of stripped fuselage at Cardington - FlyPast Sep/Oct 81 p.57. The recovered aircraft was given new markings, those of A8226, a Ruston-Proctor built Fighter/Scout of No.45 Squadron RFC which flew the type between October 1916 and September 1917 on the Weston Front; it was shot down 27 May 1917 by Max Muller of Jasta 28, crashing behind German lines near Ypres, killing the crew, pilot C Flight Commander Capt L W McArthur and observer 2/Lt A S Carey.

- Aug 81 Preparation work completed. Photos of completed aircraft at Cardington
- Aeroplane Monthly March 82 p.118; Aircraft Illustrated March 82 p.128
& 132; Aviation News 9-22 Oct 1981 p.6.

- 18 Aug 82 Installed at the Royal Air Force Museum Hendon. Photo newly installed
- Aeroplane Monthly Nov 82 p.575. Delivery photo: Aviation News 24
Sep - 7 Oct 1982 p.3.

- 4 Feb 87 Registration cancelled by CAA.

- 15 Sep 94 Moved to upper gallery for display in WW1 section

- Sep 02 Dismantled due to gallery re-arrangement and moved to Bomber
Command Hall. Photos; Aviation News November 2002 p.831;
Wingspan International 14 p.8.

- Feb 03 Moved to reconstructed Grahame White Factory. Photos; Flypast April
2003 p.16.

There are just four genuine 1 ½ Strutters preserved at Le Bourget, La Ferte Alais, and Brussels, with another , possibly French built, formerly with Kermit Weekes in Florida; this was acquired from near Buenos Aires, Argentina (photos – Aeroplane March 2010 p.111); it passed to The Vintage Aviator, New Zealand in 2011.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON