



AALOSG Newsletter No. 7 Feb 06

AALO Supporters' Group Newsletter **20/2/06**

Nic Holman (Pres.) Phil Kingsbury Clive Richardson Charles Scott
Max Waldron (Founder Member)

Dear friends and supporters of the return to flight of XS422. A few months have passed since we were last in touch but as we head into 2006 I'm delighted to report a good year passed and a great year to come. You will certainly be seeing great project progress this year.

I hope you enjoyed and were enthused by the extra newsletter we sent you in September last year. I'm grateful to Chief Engineer, Phil Wallis, for taking the time to put that together. For the long time members, it shows how well things are progressing and, for the more recent members, it hopefully gives a good overview of the project you've kindly chosen to support.

This first newsletter of 2006 is naturally a little different to previous January newsletters as to all intents and purposes there was no November trip to work on XS422, but more of that later. Instead, a team, headed up by Phil Wallis has headed out to Stennis this February, and may still, indeed, still be out there as you read this.

As I am also on the trip doing my usual filming duties, I will put out a report on the trip on our return in early March.

I very much hope you enjoy the following.

Nic Holman

SG President

After the Hurricane...

Hurricane Katrina hit coastal Mississippi and New Orleans in the closing days of August 2005. The enormous devastation it brought is still difficult to comprehend but very evident to see. The website of the Sun Herald newspaper in Gulfport MS is very worth a look for it's images of the devastation and archive of the Hurricane and photos from the months following the event.

With the main UK engineers' visit on the table as normal for November just 2 months later, as well as a number of flights already booked, the AALO execs had no choice but to postpone the visit until some sort of recovery was evident in Mississippi.

We have a lot of friends locally who, once e-mail was restored, were able to start feeding us information on the situation stateside. It is largely thanks to them that we have been able to organise the current February trip.



Here is a recent photo of the inside of the hangar at Stennis.

Although the major team was pulled in November our team members from the Gatwick Air Museum (GAM), Milton Roach & Dave Tylee, were in America on business and decided to drive down to Stennis to continue work on XS422. A sterling effort considering the conditions they found upon arrival. Despite having to sleep in the hangar they managed to put in a full week's work on the hot air systems, which will dovetail neatly into what the team hopes to achieve on this trip.

Their photos on the right show a little more of the conditions at Stennis. Bear in mind the airport is a good 20 km inland and, while it didn't suffer the storm surge that swamped so many of the houses along the coast, it still endured the brunt of the Category 4 winds.

It was through great fortune that the project Hangar, i.e. XS422's home, proved its hurricane rating and was largely undamaged. As other hangars on the airfield didn't fair so well, XS422 is now sharing her lodgings with many of the other residents of Stennis. *The main hangar, pictured here, is apparently condemned and shows the true force of the winds that passed through.*



It will be interesting to see how things are this February.

February Visit 2006

It is a natural transition, then, to bring you up to speed on the team's goals and set up for the current trip.

A small but dedicated team covering all aircraft trades will be making the trip and, as well as Phil, Max, Andrew, Big O, Geoff, Milton and Dave, our US-resident, ex-RAF electrician, Simon Johnson, will be making a visit from his home in Chicago.

Phil Wallis' objectives for the team are to continue to work up the systems on XS422, with the cockpit being the main thrust of the work, along with trying to complete the assembly and locking of the No 1 and No 2 engine bays. The goal here being to get them in a condition so that barring functional and leak checks they are ready for engines to be fitted.

Hopefully, Simon will be refitting the electrical wiring terminal blocks that John and Bo removed from the cockpit floor in June, which should allow further progress to be made in the cockpit.

I will give a fuller report of what has been achieved on our return, as well as how the area is coping after the hurricane for those of you who are interested.

Footnote to the Current Engineering trip.

For all the obvious reasons this trip will be our most expensive one to date and that is with the team all having to share rooms. The team are staying in the only hotel within about 50 miles of Stennis that are able to take paying guests - and they are charging the team well for that pleasure.

On top of that the team are a little further from the airport than normal so there are extra fuel costs. That's all before they get a chance to work on the aircraft.

If you would like to, retrospectively, make a donation towards this trip and see yourself publicly thanked for doing so in a future newsletter, please drop me an e-mail and I'll supply you with details: nholman@globalnet.co.uk

Other News ...

Refurbishment of the Reheat Pipes

Great news from Stallingborough (in the principality of Grimsby) where Geoff Commins, John Watson and Les Overton have been working like slaves to refurbish the primary Reheat Pipes for XS422 – we can report mission accomplished.

A great goal achieved this, not least for the 3 amigos who have worked long and hard to get the pipes back up to spec.

As the photos show, Geoff and Ray Whitely have now transported the completed pipes to Bruntingthorpe, where they await shipment to Mississippi. Not an easy job considering the size of the pipes and the limited handling equipment.

Once the pipes had been extricated from the rear of a 20ft container full of lorry parts at Stallingborough, a container sitting on top of another it should also be added, the trip down to Bruntingthorpe a week later was supposed to have been a breeze...

Due to our small footprint at Bruntingthorpe the drop off turned out to be no less trouble free.

The pipes, each 10ft long, had to be lifted over the long interpipe stored there, and then turned 180 degrees in a very limited space.

I suspect that both gents will not mind me mentioning that they are not two of our youngest team members, so the operation to move the pipes is to be all the more commended.

At a later date our reserve reheat pipes will also go up to the boys for some TLC...



Spares Sorting ... Major news!

Following one of two working weekends at Bruntingthorpe last year I received the following e-mail from the Chief Engineer, which I'm sure he won't mind me passing on in full. This surely is an amazing milestone and a great achievement.

“AALO NEWSFLASH...

6 YEARS OF SORTING LIGHTNING SPARES ENDED TODAY AT BRUNTINGTHORPE!

OVER TWENTY THOUSAND LINE ITEMS ARE NOW INVENTORIED AND PACKED.

This task started in 1999 when AALO took delivery of nearly half a hangar's worth of RAF war reserve spares and the 'Junk' from the end of the Saudi Lightning Contract with BAE.

Thousand's of man (and woman!) hours have been spent on this task; consolidating them down first by category (pipelines, Structure, electrical, etc.) and then by part number (EF3-11-1234).

AALO can now proudly announce it has the most complete Lightning spares inventory in the world and when '422 requires a part we can confirm whether it is held in stock and identify its location in seconds.

Thank you go to all who have helped out over the years, with a special thanks to the following:

GEOFF COMMINS - Geoff had the thankless task of setting up the database and typing in the 20,000 part numbers, Sect/Ref location - this has taken over 600 man-hours alone.

Dave & Lesley Blissett, Ray Whitely, Nic Woodhouse, Nic Holman & Darren Swinn.

Now this phase is complete it will enable team members to concentrate on the refurbishment tasks.

Altogether, a very productive weekend and a watershed for AALO UK activities.

Phil”

Lightning Simulator Cockpit

In recent months Phil Wallis has been offered and accepted a Lightning Simulator cockpit. Due to be scrapped, Phil has rescued it for the use of the Supporters' Group at future events. The Gatwick Aviation Museum have kindly offered to find temporary lodgings for 'XS422jr', and it is there that my trusty right-hand men, Phil Kingsbury & Clive Richardson have agreed to take on the small matter of getting it 'airworthy'.

We'll include some pictures in a later newsletter although hopefully you'll come and see it at one of our shows later this year.

Thunder City

While our team are busying themselves to get XS422 up and running a brief 'hats off' to Mike Beachy Head and his Thunder City team for continuing their great work to keep the memory of the Lightning alive.

As you may have read recently, the team's latest venture has been to create an all Africa speed-to-altitude record. The two attempts were a real treat for those who made it to the



Overburg and Ysterplaat airshows in SA at the tail end of last year.

Our propulsions 'guru', Geoff Commins, was directly involved in the attempts and there is a great account and photos in both the current Flypast and Aircraft Illustrated.

Our photo on the previous shows the Thunder City F6 Lightning, ZU-BEW (formerly XR773), on takeoff. I would like to have credited the photographer if only I knew who it was. Feel free to step forward and be recognised.

The Supporters' Group In 2006

Like any good organisation we are learning from our successes as well as from our lesser experiences and our plans for 2006 are very much shaped by this. Primarily, our number one goal remains unchanged, namely to raise funds and the public profile of the restoration. As the "where are we now" document, which was forwarded to you from our chief Engineer, Phil Wallis, in late September last year testifies, we are in a very good situation regards the actual restoration. Financially and quite simply, the more money we can raise, the quicker we will see power on.

Charles, Clive, Phil and I have decided this year to concentrate on the bigger air shows, the two day events, in an effort to give the project exposure to a wider audience. We will probably also be limiting our show appearances to no more than 10 shows. As we cover these shows on a voluntary basis and at our own expense we want to get as much bang for our buck.

At the moment we intend to be returning to Waddington in the summer as well, we hope, Biggin Hill, and Kemble. We'd love to do one of the Duxford shows but that will require a little more negotiation.

Our other angle this year is to try and get a little more merchandise together with the emphasis on 'interesting and quality'. We hope to include a polo shirt in the extended repertoire and will let you know what is available in a future or extra newsletter.

I'd like to thank you once again for continuing to support the restoration of XS422 through your membership. Predominantly through the memberships in the past year we've raised sufficient monies to contribute £1000 towards the upcoming visit by the UK engineering team to work on XS422.

This is approximately a fifth of the trip budget and a valuable contribution.

With a good summer and an increase in memberships we hope to do the same in November.

Membership News

One of the things to come out of our quarterly execs meeting at the tail end of last year was the fact that memberships currently run from all sorts of starting dates, a bit of a headache for our membership secretary. Consequently, we felt it would be easier for you and, certainly easier for us, if we settled on two annual membership break points.

From now on memberships will either run from Feb to Feb or July to July.

Both new and existing memberships will be rounded up or down to fall into these years.

We will be as fair as possible with this process and I estimate 90% of you will gain a month or two.

Postscript.

As a postscript, here is an aerial shot clearly showing the current sad state of Binbrook airfield (looking south west). Here lie the remains of a great deal of RAF



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history and for many, no doubt, memories disappearing into the fields of Lincolnshire ...

With the National Heritage secretary finally starting to acknowledge the importance of historic, former military bases it's a shame that some of these stations are beyond restoration.

Finally, the newsletter is primarily for us to share with you the progress in XS422's restoration. However, it is also a great place for you to share your experiences of Lightnings, whether you're a former pilot or engineer, or just an enthusiast.

If you'd like to submit anything for inclusion you can do so at the email address below. I'll then forward it to our editor Phil Kingsbury.

These newsletters are gradually forming an archive of the project on the SG website so we would value any of your experiences you wish to share with us.

Many thanks and best regards,

Nic Holman (Pres) and the SG team.

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