



AALOSG Newsletter No: 4 July 04

AALO Supporters' Group Newsletter **26/7/04**

Introduction

Welcome to the second AALO supporter's newsletter of 2004. I hope you enjoyed the last bumper newsletter as it contained an exhaustive update on the progress of the XS422 restoration project. Apologies for the extended gap since the last newsletter went out but it was decided that we would wait until there were sufficient items of news/interest to divulge!

The AALOSG has had an encouraging start with the first Lightning run event of the year at Bruntingthorpe on May 2nd, which was well attended. Again, much interest was shown in the project and this time we were able to offer for sale a variety of merchandise to tempt money out of people's pockets and into our needy cash box. The picture below shows Nic Holman, Clive Richardson, Ralph O'Neill and Susan 'on duty' on the AALOSG stand - just to make sure that getting away from us was not going to be easy! As you can see the weather was kind to us also - where are your hats, chaps?



We also attended the Lightning 50th Anniversary bash at Bruntingthorpe on July 11th. We managed to raise even more funds on this occasion, despite the fact that BAe decided to host their event at Duxford instead of Bruntingthorpe. Phil Wallis' 1/100 scale Revell Lightning models sold well, especially as no else was selling them and they are, of course, now a collector's item.

An interesting fact (for some) is that they fit nicely inside a Firestreak's nose cone glazing.

The container for shipping the next consignment of spares to the US arrived at Bruntingthorpe in May and is being slowly filled with goodies. This will be shipped to the US in September.

Nic Holman, the AALOSG President, has the following message:

'Another interesting and successful few months have passed in the restoration of XS422, with many volunteers and team members working hard around the world to get XS422 back in to the air.

In New Zealand, Glen Turner's restoration of '422's two ejector seats continues to make progress. I am sure you will appreciate that this is a complex and important task and Glen says that it is still on schedule. In Grimsby, Geoff Commins, Dennis Watts and Les Overton have continued to move forwards the restoration of the reheat pipes. One of them is now close to completion.



Geoff and Dennis testing a reheat pipe
(above)

Andrew Brodie was at Stennis for a week in March to catch up on progress in the US. During his visit, he had a couple of meetings with our volunteers at Stennis, as well as cultivating potential new team members and PR contacts.

In Sweden, Jon Roth, one of the charter members of the group, has been hard at work on a document outlining the project which will be made available to serious potential investors to help boost the funds needed for the final stages of restoration.

Here in the UK, Nick Woodhouse has been generously dipping into his pocket again and

we now have two aluminium, A-frame ladders for Stennis to go with the next container load. In particular, this will make access to '422's wings easier and safer.

Nick was also instrumental in a major hit on the spares sorting during the last week of April. Staying locally, together with occasional visitors such as Ray Whiteley (who, apparently, camped out among the snakes in the yard) and Jon Roth, he was able to sort a huge number of spares which are all now boxed up for Stennis and catalogued. Nick's sorted spares lists went off to Geoff Commins to be added to the main AAALO database and already Geoff has entered 25% of the sorted spares. Nick has also installed a strip light in the white trailer, which can run off a generator, and will be very useful during the long autumn and winter months.

Another recent addition to the white trailer is a brand new workbench. At 8ft long and strong as an ox the bench was kindly donated and installed by Clive Richardson. Clive, already a keen member of the AALOSG, travelled up to Bruntingthorpe on May 16th with Phil Kingsbury and me to assemble, on site, the parts he had made in his workshop. Five hours later, after a lot of sweat and a few choice words, the bench was finished. This is a big asset to the project as it means smaller components can be restored in the UK before going to Stennis, where, up to now, they have traditionally been restored. All that is left to do is to give it a lick of paint, add a vice and make a shadowboard for securing the tools. The new bench and its creator are featured below:



With this in mind, if anyone would like to make a special donation to the project to purchase a selection of necessary tools then please drop me an e-mail (nholman@globalnet.co.uk).

The AALOSG continues to grow and with a wider selection of merchandise now available we are raising good money for the project. The recent open day in early May and the Lightning's 50th anniversary celebration, entitled 'Flash of Silver', at Bruntingthorpe were a great success, as well as an enjoyable opportunity to meet many of you face to face. We managed to raise a total of over £350 on the two events, which was an excellent start to this year's fundraising.

We continue through the summer with a very positive attitude and a few bonuses. Jon Roth has kindly offered to fund a large banner for us to use at the shows we attend and we will, hopefully, take delivery of that at some point this summer. Also, Mick Jennings, who owns two Lightning cockpits, is talking to Max about repainting his T-bird in '422's colours, although with work commitments this may not now happen this year. This would be a big boost to public awareness and means that a number of the SG execs could attend airshows around the country where we don't have a stand and piggy back Mick's stand to hand out AALOSG flyers, enrol members and generally promote the restoration.

One attraction that we did manage to have on display at the 'Flash of Silver' event was the Lightning D-door painted with the eye-catching AAALO logo. This was Nic Holman's idea and after some weeks of toil in Phil Kingsbury's garden shed it emerged as shown below. All the effort seemed worthwhile as it seemed to work quite well in announcing who we were - a bit difficult to miss, really!



Also, it was good to see Milton and Dave from Gatwick Aviation Museum (GAM) who paid the AALOSG stand a visit. They have a lot of work ahead of them getting their ex-Saudi F53 airframe (ZF579) fitted

out with working Avons, but they certainly seem determined to have a go!

Finally, a number of you have recently or are shortly approaching your membership renewal date and I hope we can still count on your valued support. In advance, I'd like to thank you for supporting the AALOSG this year with your memberships and I hope that when you receive your renewal letter from Charles Scott (AALOSG secretary) you will join us for another year.

If you have any friends or family who you think might be interested in becoming a supporter, get them to e-mail me at the address above or use the form at the back of the newsletter.

On a downbeat note, Geoff Commins our propulsion system expert had been taken ill earlier in the year necessitating a spell in Grimsby Hospital. He paid us a visit at Bruntingthorpe earlier this month and seemed in good spirits. I am sure that you will all join with me in wishing him a full and speedy recovery.

AALOSG Status Update

Web Site News

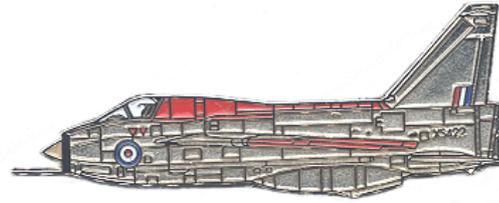
The AALO website has recently been updated and can be found at:

www.lightningusa.org

A second website (lightning422supporters.co.uk) dedicated to the AALO Supporter's Group is being launched at long last. This website will compliment the existing AALO site, while the Supporter's Group site will carry more AALOSG current news reports and information, including previous newsletters so that new members can read about our earlier Supporter's Group achievements.

Other Interest

On the merchandising front we now have metal '422 pin badges for sale. These are £2.50 for members (£3.50 including P&P). They are going fast!



Upcoming Events

September 5th, Bruntingthorpe: Their first air show for a few years.

Phil Kingsbury

Lightning - the Best!

As promised in the last newsletter we thought it would be interesting to include the recollections of Allan 'Woody' Wood when he worked with XS422 at Boscombe Down in the 1980s. He was also lucky enough to get a trip on her. So here is Woody's personal account of a flight in XS422 when she was still faithfully serving the Empire Test Pilot's School (ETPS) at Boscombe Down, Wiltshire.

Allan started working at Boscombe Down in 1968, the same year that the ETPS moved there from Farnborough. After a couple of years he became interested in the history of the ETPS and became an unofficial, un-paid archivist. He has been doing this ever since. This role enabled him to 'rub shoulders' with the many of the ETPS graduates and often rewarded with the occasional flight.

Woody says that he painted the red areas with which we are now familiar and remembers well '422 being dismantled. At one time the fin was also red but the paint kept peeling back from the fin's leading edge. Because of the hectic flying programme there was insufficient downtime available to remedy the problem so '422's fin was stripped of its red paint scheme to sport the natural aluminium finish.

While at ETPS, Allan made many friends, not least the Commanding Officer at the time, Wing Commander Robin Hargreaves.

Imagine Woody's surprise when, one day, he offered Woody the chance of a ride in '422's second seat. This all seemed rather unbelievable as Woody knew that you had to have experience in an ejector seat, and so he underwent a quick safety equipment course,. This was followed by a flight in a Jet Provost (XS230) and then in a Hunter T7 (XL612). Having completed the necessary fast jet familiarization, Woody had a bit of a wait before the arrival of the actual day, when he often considered that this was all too good to be true! At length, the Principal Tutor (Fixed Wing), one Sqn Ldr Mike Brooke, announced that the weather 'upstairs' was good and that not only would it be a good day for a flight but that it would also be possible to go supersonic.

It was 25th April 1983 and Woody was instructed to gather his kit and report to the flight line at the agreed time. Sqn Ldr Brooke also suggested that Woody do the flight without a G-suit, as long as he remembered to carry out certain actions when the forces were apparent. This he did without any problems. After walking around the aircraft to carry out the external, pre-flight safety checks, it was time for Woody to climb the starboard cockpit access ladder and strap in (here he was ably-assisted by Peter Huffham, one of '422's crew). Once suitably strapped-in, Sqn Ldr Brooke started the many pre-flight checks. He also went through the escape procedure should the unthinkable happen! Also 'hitching a lift' on this flight were 1,000 first-day covers for the RAF Museum, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the ETPS, which meant that Woody also received one of these as he was the Project Officer for that issue!

It was now time to close the canopy and obtain clearance to taxi after, of course, starting those two mighty, Rolls-Royce Avons! They taxied the whole length of the aircraft parking area and then held for final checks before lining up on Boscombe Down's long runway. Woody remembers: 'It seemed ages before final clearance for take-off was given by ATC, but it was certainly worth waiting for as Mike 'opened up the taps' and '422 rocketed down the runway. The acceleration was 'out of this world' and as soon as we 'unstuck', the undercarriage was retracted to keep things clean and the speed up because as soon as the perimeter of the airfield was cleared Mike pointed this lovely silver and red bird vertically and we continued vertically up

to 30,000 feet – effortless and no G-suit! We rolled out at the top and headed towards the rendezvous point for the supersonic run'. Woody also says that 'the Lightning is such a fine piece of kit and really flies like a knife through butter – so smooth!'

The supersonic run was timed in and Woody could hear it all in his headset and said that 'apart from a very slight shudder you would never have known that you had gone supersonic, but the speed was quite apparent when you saw how fast the clouds below us appeared to be moving'.

After deceleration, they found themselves somewhere over the North Sea and off the Kent coast and turned for home having, of course, burnt a fair bit of fuel. After a while they were on the approach to Boscombe but Sqn Ldr Brooke requested permission to 'beat up' the airfield, which they did. Having touched the mains wheels on the runway there was enough fuel to do a very fast, tight circuit and land – Woody remembers that one making his head feel heavy! They lined up for finals and once down Woody was allowed the privilege of deploying the brake chute – the lever being on his side of the cockpit (starboard). And so ended a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience he never thought would happen.

Flight Statistics:

Take-off at 10.11am. Land at 10.38am - Flight time of 27 minutes.

Max speed reached 1,005 MPH.

It is planned that the next newsletter will contain a 'potted history' of the ETPS, again to be reproduced by kind permission of Woody.

The following photograph of XS422 being prepared for flight at Boscombe is supplied courtesy of Fred Martin (RZF Digital Imaging & Publishing Ltd). The photo was taken on the 21st September 1985 and is a rare archive shot of '422 with *in situ* crew access ladders.



Please enrol me as an AALO Supporter's Group member as follows:

1 year @ £20 ()

Lifetime @ £150 ()

Please complete the following information in block capitals:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Tel. no.: _____

Send your application to:

AALOSG Secretary, Greenways, Vicarage Lane, Hordle, Lymington, Hants, S041 0HS.