



‘Aviation Tales’ Newsletter: June 2025.



Help Wanted!

This remarkably accurate rendition of what looks like an early ‘Spitfire’ was spotted recently just off the main road into Carterton, while I was over in the Wairarapa.

A “Chocolate” treat is awaiting anyone with any knowledge of this ‘labour of love.’



The month of June has been:

A pleasant surprise so far with a beautiful warm and sunny day here for the Monday of King’s Birthday weekend. I just hope it lasts. 😊

Recent Aviation Events:



Recently, United Airlines have announced an investment in blended wing body (BWB) aircraft start-up company, JetZero.

This company is creating an aircraft design that has the potential to deliver jet fuel efficiency and a greatly enhanced customer experience.

The investment includes a path to order up to 100 airplanes and an option for an additional 100 of the type.

The conditional purchase agreement is based on JetZero achieving development milestones, including flight of a full-scale demonstrator during 2027 and among other conditions, including that the aircraft meet United's safety, business and operating requirements.

JetZero's innovative design reduces drag and produces lift across the entire wingspan, which could lead to as much as 50% reduction in fuel burn per passenger mile compared to a similar sized aircraft.

This new technology could potentially help United lower its carbon emissions while reducing the cost of operations.

In 2023, the U.S. Air Force announced a \$235 million contract to JetZero to fast-track the development of JetZero's full scale demonstrator.

The JetZero Z4 airplane is designed to accommodate 250 passengers and fly on conventional jet fuel, with propulsion systems able to utilize sustainable aviation fuel blends.

"If successful, JetZero has the potential to evolve our core mainline business by developing aircraft with a bigger, more comfortable cabin experience for our customers while increasing fuel efficiency across our network," said Andrew Chang, head of United Airlines Ventures (UAV).

"United Airlines Ventures, was created to support our efforts to find innovative companies that can enhance the customer travel experience and help the airline lower its carbon footprint, and we believe JetZero reflects that philosophy."

JetZero is focused on one key technology, the airframe, that enables us to address all of the barriers to growth. This programme is the only one in development today that promises efficiency and an elevated customer experience.”

Both the airplane’s shape, and the way JetZero plans to enter the plane into service, address industry several “pain points.”

The design contributes to a more efficient operation due to its shape and the higher altitude at which it will fly.

For instance, a flight from New York/Newark to Palma de Mallorca, Spain would use up to 45 percent less fuel compared to the twin-aisle aircraft that operate that route today.

The airplane also is expected to integrate readily into today’s airport infrastructure, requiring no new accommodations for jet bridges, runways or taxiways.

The aircraft design has the potential to also offer improvements to the passenger experience like flexible seating options, larger seats across all classes, and dedicated overhead bin space for each seat.



Additionally, the design streamlines the boarding process with a main boarding door that is wider than that of a comparably sized aircraft, leading to multiple aisles and passenger cabin bays for more efficient passenger distribution.

It may further enhance accessibility by featuring wider aisles and handicap-accessible lavatories, creating a comfortable travel environment for all passengers and flight crew.



An early cockpit presentation from JetZero.

Aircraft Restoration News:



With thanks to 'alanh'

The Wairarapa Flying Tigers have started on the restoration to airworthiness of ZK-BLK and the team are presently working on the fuselage structure and components.



The fuselage structure was taken back to 'basics' and the control box has been overhauled and is now back in place. (see below)



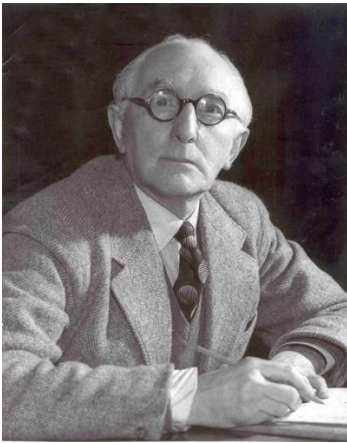
As of mid-May, progress on BLK has continued with the turtle decks fitted, control runs rigged, and seats trial fitted.



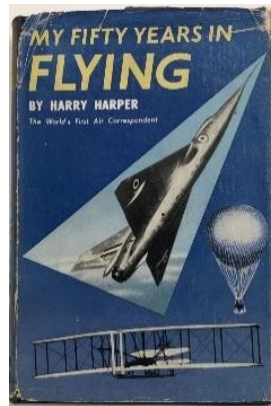
The seat trial fit took a lot of work to try to ensure that the supporting woodwork doesn't get damaged when entering and exiting the cockpits.

Aviation Personalities:

Mr Harry Harper (The world's first air reporter.)



Harry Harper was the world's first flying reporter, an aviation journalist from the earliest days of flying to the beginning of the jet age and his memoirs recall famous names and notable events from the pioneering days of powered flight.



Harry was the son of journalist and author Henry G Harper and if I tell you that the latter often wrote under the pseudonym of 'GG' you might just guess what his favourite subject was.

“GG” wrote a number of books about riding and horses and edited ‘The Old Surrey Fox Hounds’ by Humphrey R Taylor of Cheam.

This interesting gentleman was no stranger to country pursuits. He was born in 1851 in the hamlet of Hatherton, Cheshire, near Nantwich; the family lived at Hatherton Hall, where his father, also Henry, farmed over 120 acres.

During 1879 Henry married Miriam Josephine Timms from Ramsbury, Wiltshire, the daughter of a schoolmaster turned clerk; the Timms family had also moved to London.

Henry and Miriam’s first child, Harry, was born in Herne Hill in 1880 and a second son, Massie (named after Henry’s brother), arrived in Epsom in 1889. By 1901 they had moved to Folkestone.

However, the lure of Epsom (or, the local horse racing scene) proved too strong, and the family returned, settling at Heathfield in College Road, followed by a move to Westfield in Bridge Road, where they were living in 1911.

Meanwhile Harry, who seems to have lived in Epsom and surrounds for virtually all of his adult life, followed in father's footsteps and became a journalist, but he was interested in winged transport rather than the four-legged variety.

There was a new passion for flight around that time and Lord Northcliffe, owner of the Daily Mail, recognised the importance of flying, appointed Harry Harper as the paper's first Air Correspondent in 1906.

"Flight" was an exciting, and very dangerous pastime back in 1906.

Harry began his career by writing about hot-air balloons and then the aerial endeavours of Paris-based Brazilian Alberto Santos-Dumont, but by 1914 he knew enough about the subject to co-author a book called 'Learning to Fly' with celebrated the well-known British aviator Claude Grahame-White.

Even though Bleriot successfully crossed the Channel in 1909 (Harry was there to see it), those early aircraft were not to be trifled with, and pioneer Hubert Latham came a considerable cropper at Brooklands in 1911, as this picture shows.



Harry Harper witnessed this crash and wrote:

"Latham threw his machine about in the air in a way that made fellow airmen gasp. They had never seen anything like it before. But in making one final manoeuvre he misjudged by a matter of inches his height above a shed. One of his wing-tips just touched the roof. Instantly there came a devastating crash. A huge cloud of dust arose. And then the monoplane could be seen hanging "a mass of wreckage" on the top of the roof. It seemed almost certain that Latham must have been killed. The impact had appeared so tremendous and the crash so complete. But suddenly, amid the drifting dust clouds, a slight, dapper figure could be seen disengaging itself from the battered fuselage and lowering itself deftly to an undamaged part of the roof. Then out came that inevitable cigarette case, and Latham sat there smoking till someone arrived with a ladder."

World War 1 was well reported by Harry, and he summed it all up quite succinctly by commenting that it was not useful to talk about the number of machines and fliers lost during World War 1, since this takes no account of the damage and casualties that they inflicted on the ground, nor the value of the reconnaissance they carried out.

But aviation casualties were however very heavy. Concluding that the age life expectancy of a pilot was just 11 days!

During World War 1 Harry Harper was aeronautical secretary and consultant to Lord Northcliffe (an influential man, as he owned both The Times and The Daily Mail) and technical secretary of the Civil Aerial Transport Committee.

Harry's career is summarised by his obituary in 'The Times', which appeared on 7 June 1960.

Obituary

MR. H. HARPER

EARLY AVIATION REPORTING

Mr. Harry Harper, one of the first air correspondents to serve the press, died in hospital at Epsom yesterday at the age of 81.

Harper was firmly inclined to the view that he was the first of that corps of specialists but claims like those of the late Major C. C. Turner and Colonel Harry Delacombe would have to be weighed before he could be allowed full seniority. He was undoubtedly in the new profession at an early stage, early enough to have close associations with all the British and French pioneers.

Perhaps not the most glowing of tributes to a man who spent his adult life reporting on the evolution of flight and I daresay it would have been somewhat different if Harry had worked for a more notable newspaper such as: 'The Times'!

Tail Piece:

The easily identified “Antionette Monoplane.”



The 1911 version. Quite some tail!

Do you have any interesting aviation topics you would like to have researched for a future newsletter edition?

- **Do any of the articles you have read in this newsletter edition require further explanation?**

Please get in touch.

This month's motivational statement:

"If you're ever faced with a forced landing, fly the thing as far into the crash as possible "

Bob Hoover.

The 'Aviation Tales' newsletter is produced monthly.

For further information, or my other services.

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