‘Aviation Tales’ Newsletter: May 2025.

With thanks: Ōtaki Promotions Group.

Couldn’t resist this evocative image taken during the recent Otaki kite festival.

The month of April has been:

Well! It certainly was the start of Autumn. Variously wet, windy, cloudy, and yet still mild.

I did enjoy my ferry crossings during my South Island trip though the 4-to-5-meter swell on the return trip made the journey ‘interesting.’

Recent Aviation Events:

Sadly, the ‘Classic Fighters’ Omaka Airshow that was organised for Easter 2025 was cancelled due to the severe weather forecast for much of the Easter weekend show.

I took this photo while visiting the Omaka airfield just prior to the Easter weekend and thought it summed up the situation quite well 😟

Aircraft Restoration News:

The restoration of Mosquito aircraft: HR339 by the Ferrymead Aeronautical Society.

The ex-RNZAF Mosquito aircraft that remained at Woodbourne after WW2, were re-tendered and NZ2328 was eventually acquired by Mr Jas Clarke of Oamaru.

The wings of the aircraft were sawn off and burnt, and the fuselage was towed behind a tractor from Woodbourne to Mr Clark's farm at Maheno, a distance of 570km!

The fuselage of NZ2328 then lay under a 'hedge' on the Clarke property until 1972, when it was acquired by the Ferrymead Aeronautical Society along with the fin, rudder and propellors, all of which were moved to Christchurch and eventually to the Ferrymead Heritage Park.

This historic aircraft is well on the way to being restored using the wings from aircraft HR339.

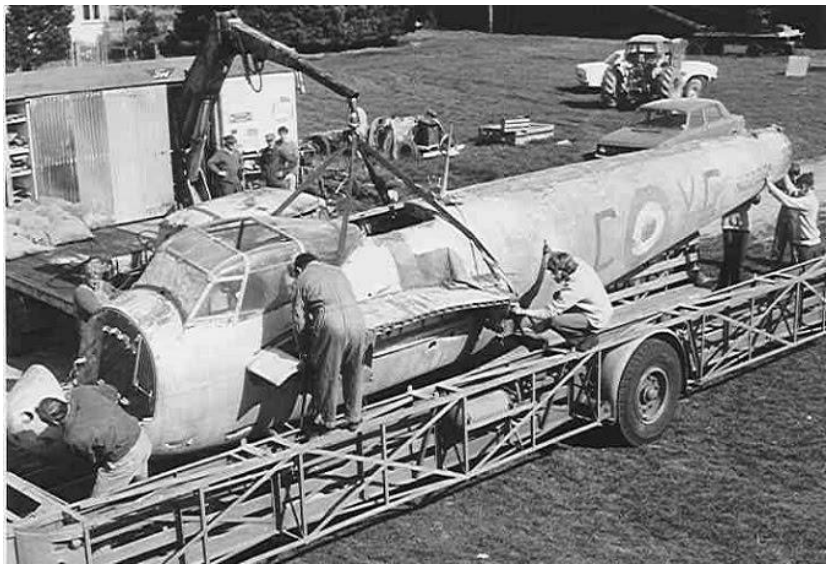

Photo courtesy of Mr Denys Jones.

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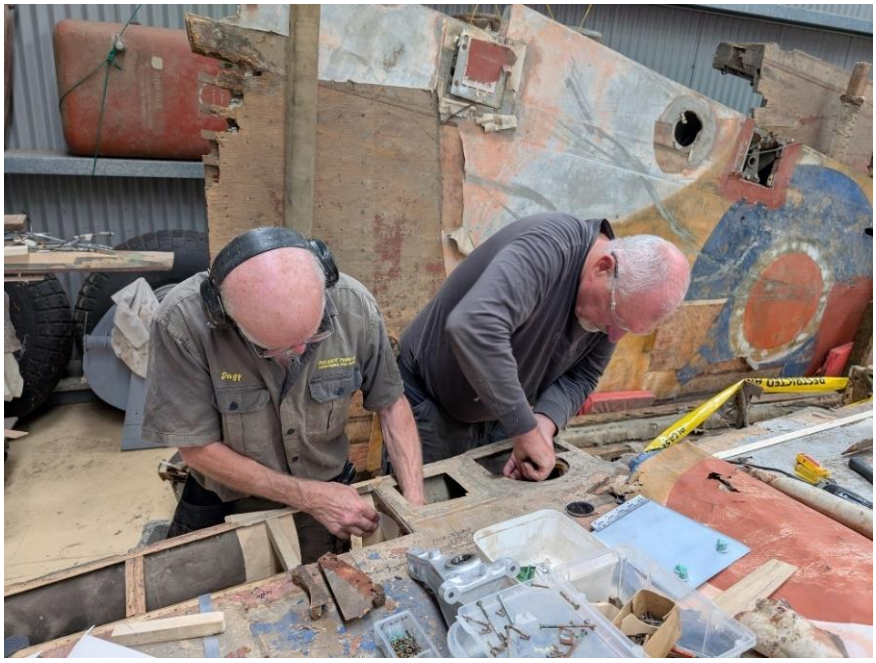
NZ2328 "As Found" on Mr Clarke's property during the early seventies.



Two of the restoration team volunteers hard at work recently on the trailing edge of the starboard wing.

Photo courtesy of Mr Alex Liggett

The rear fuselage with the repaired area completed, all parts reinstalled, and the fabric replaced.

Just an example of the amazing wood work that has been accomplished and there is still quite a way to go!

This long-term restoration project is certainly a credit to all the members of the Ferrymead team and the workmanship achieved will ensure that Mosquito DR339 will become a much-valued addition to their aeronautical collection in the future.

The centre instrument panel is in, again temporarily, while the plumbing for the oxygen regulator is organised.

An overall view of recent progress. 😊

“The Society is entirely funded by donations from the public, and by fundraising efforts such as raffles. Your donation will help to defray operating expenses such as electricity bills and building insurance and maintenance.

Not only will this ensure that these aeronautical treasures are preserved for posterity, but it will free up our limited funds for ongoing restoration projects such as the F-27 Friendship, Mosquito and Hiller FH1100 helicopter.”

Aviation Personalities:

Sir Stanley Hooker

Sir Stanley George Hooker, FRS, DPhil, BSc, FRAeS, MIMechE, FAAAS, was a mathematician and jet engine engineer, first at Rolls-Royce where he worked on the earliest designs such as the Welland and Derwent jet engines and later at Bristol Aero Engines where he helped bring the troubled Proteus turboprop, and Olympus turbojet to market. He then designed the famous Pegasus vectored thrust turbofan used in the Hawker Siddeley Harrier. Later in his career, he saved the promising RB.211 large fan engine from being a disaster for Rolls Royce!

During late 1937 while working at the Admiralty, he applied for a job at Rolls-Royce, and after being interviewed by Ernest Hives, started there in January 1938.

Stanley Hooker was permitted to study anything that caught his fancy, and soon moved into the supercharger design department, where he started researching the superchargers used on the Merlin engine and calculated that big improvements could be made to their efficiency.

His recommendations were put into the production line for newer versions, notably the Merlin 45, improving its power by approximately 30%, and then designing the two-stage-supercharged Merlin 61 being fitted into the Spitfire Mk IX. The Merlin 61 powered Spitfire arrived in time to give the desperately needed advantage in rate of climb and service ceiling over the Luftwaffe Focke-Wulf Fw190.

During 1940 Hooker was introduced to Sir Frank Whittle, who was setting up production of his first practical jet engine, the W.2. During 1941 the Air Ministry had offered contracts to Rover to start production, but Whittle was growing increasingly frustrated with their inability to deliver various parts to start testing the new engine.

Hooker was excited, and in turn brought Rolls-Royce chairman, Ernest Hives to visit Rover's factory in Barnoldswick. While there, Frank Whittle mentioned his frustrations, and Hives told Whittle to send him the plans for the engine. Soon, Derby engine and supercharger factories were supplying the needed jet engine parts.

Messers Wilks and Hives eventually agreed that Rover would take over production of the Rolls-Royce Meteor tank engine factory in Nottingham and Rolls-Royce would take over the jet engine factory in Barnoldswick.

Stanley Hooker soon found himself as chief engineer of the new factory, delivering the W.2 engine as the Rolls Royce ‘Welland’.

The ‘Welland’ went on to power the earliest models of the Gloster Meteor, and a development of the Welland known as the ‘Derwent’ powered the vast majority of the later model Meteors.

During January 1949, Hooker then went to work at the Bristol engine company.

He immediately started work on sorting out the various problems of Bristol’s turboprop design, the Proteus which was intended to power a number of Bristol aircraft designs, including the Britannia. The task of rectifying the many faults of the Proteus was immense, but most were solved.

Stanley Hooker also worked on finishing the Bristol Olympus engine, developing later versions that would be used on the Avro Vulcan and Concorde a further development for the eventually cancelled TSR2. In conjunction with the engine designer Gordon Lewis, extensive work produced a suitable VTOL engine by using the recently designed ‘Orpheus’ engine as the core of a new turbofan design, where the fan discharged compressed air through a pair of thrust vectoring nozzles near the front of the engine, whilst the exhaust gases discharged through a pair of thrust vectoring nozzles at the rear.

The resulting engine was called the Pegasus, that led ultimately to the Hawker Siddeley Harrier aircraft

During the late 1950s, the Air Ministry forced through a series of mergers in the aerospace field that left only two airframe companies and two engine companies. Bristol was merged with Armstrong Siddeley to become Bristol Siddeley while most other remaining engine companies merged with Rolls-Royce.

During 1970, Stanley retired fully and was upset that after almost 30 years in the industry, he had never become a director of engine development.

However, during February 1971, Rolls-Royce was driven into receivership by its hugely expensive RB.211 project. Just prior to the bankruptcy, at the end of 1970, the company agreed that Stanley Hooker should come out of retirement (again) and go to Rolls-Royce to survey the situation. There he was made responsible for the technical supervision of the four gas turbine divisions and then led a Rolls-Royce effort to improve both power and fuel consumption of the RB.211engine. As technical director, he provided the expertise, drive and energy to lead and inspire the team, including hiring back old colleagues, to rectify the problems and soon the RB.211 was in production and working well.

Stanley Hooker was knighted during 1974 for his engine development work.

Tail Piece:

It certainly is an on-going ‘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:

"I’ve never known an industry that can get into people’s blood the way aviation does.”

Robert Six.

The ‘Aviation Tales’ newsletter is produced monthly.

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