



The 'Aviation Tales' Newsletter: October 2025.

The month of October has been:

Yes, it's official, we are now into "daylight saving" and I look forward the Spring and Summer days ahead. This will be something to look forward too after changeable weather we have been experiencing!



Photo courtesy of Keith Morris.

Ensure that you always take off into the wind!

The other local news of concern is the ending of Sounds Air services using the Pilatus Pc12-45 aircraft.

The end of September ushered in the final day of Pilatus PC12-45 operations for Sounds Air with the aircraft operating out of Paraparaumu airport. I'm sure this service will be sadly missed.



Thanks to: Stu B.

Recent Aviation News

This news item certainly caught my attention recently as Air New Zealand presented their new maintenance hangar for all to experience.



This impressive structure is the largest single-span arch aircraft hangar made from timber in the Southern Hemisphere. The statistics are impressive with 10,000 square metres of floor space. The hangar is 35 metres high and almost 100 metres wide!

Air New Zealand said that space meant it could house a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and two Airbus A320 or A321s at the same time.



Air New Zealand management have said that Hangar 4 connects with Hangar 3 next door through shared workshops and tool stores which will boost efficiency across its maintenance requirements and was designed to serve the airline for the next 50 years

The restoration of Fairey Swordfish 'W5856'



The 'Navy Wings' engineering team has kicked off this season with meticulous attention to maintaining the Fairey Swordfish W5856 in an airworthy condition.

How this restoration began.

W5856 has a rich and varied history.

This iconic aircraft first flew during Trafalgar Day, 21 October 1941.

This aircraft was one of the "Blackfish" Swordfish models built by Blackburn Aircraft at Sherburn-in-Elmet.

Delivered to 82 MU in Lichfield on 20 October 1941, she was then transported to Gibraltar to serve with the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet.

During the winter of 1942-43, W5856 returned to Fairey's Stockport factory for refurbishment and was subsequently used for advanced training and trial flights.

By 1944, she had been transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy, where she continued her training role before being stored after World War II.

Post-war, the Swordfish passed into civilian hands, including an ambitious farmer who intended to convert her into a crop sprayer.

Thankfully, Sir William Roberts acquired her and transported her to Scotland during 1977 to be part of his Strathallan Collection.

Unfortunately, the aircraft arrived in poor condition, suffering from significant corrosion issues.

Forward to 1990 when British Aerospace purchased W5856 and undertook an extensive restoration to bring her back to a state airworthiness.



After a successful test flight at Brough in May 1993, the aircraft was gifted to the Royal Navy Historic Flight.

Three years later, the City of Leeds adopted W5856 as a tribute to local companies that manufactured Swordfish components during World War II.

The city's coat of arms and name now grace the aircraft's port side near the pilot's cockpit.

Grounded in 2003 due to corrosion in her wing spars, W5856's future appeared uncertain.

However, BAE Systems came to the rescue, constructing a new set of wings that were delivered during 2012.

With the support of a major grant from the Peter Harrison Heritage Foundation, the aircraft was restored to full flying condition.



This Swordfish aircraft rejoined the display circuit in 2015, sporting a livery representing Swordfish of 820 Naval Air Squadron during the legendary 1941 attack on the German battleship Bismarck.

Strange but true aircraft that graced our skies in years gone by:

The Tarrant Tabor.



The sole Tarrant Tabor, serial number F1765.

The Tabor was the first and only aircraft design produced by W.G Tarrant Ltd, a well-known property developer and building contractor from Byfleet in Surrey, UK.

This business had been subcontracted to build aircraft components during the First World War.

During late 1917 Tarrant Ltd assembled a design team, led by Walter Barling, hired from the Royal Aircraft Factory and Marcel Lobelle, hired from Martinsyde, to design a very large long-range heavy bomber, capable of bombing Berlin!

The Tabor was originally planned as a biplane powered by four 600 hp Siddeley Tiger engines.

Delays in development of the engines, however, meant they would be unavailable in time. This change resulted in the aircraft being redesigned to use six 450 hp Napier Lion engines giving a similar power/weight ratio. This change required a third, upper wing to be added!

Four engines were mounted in push pull configuration pairs between the lower and middle wings with the other two mounted in tractor configuration between the middle and upper wings and directly above the lower pairs. Ailerons were fitted only within the middle wing!

The Tabor's maiden flight was from the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough on 26 May 1919.

Wheeled out at daybreak the Tabor, with two pilots and two mechanics on board was taxied around the landing field in a "mile-wide circle" using only the four lower engines.

Satisfied with the behaviour of the aircraft, the crew decided to take-off.

Sadly, when the top two engines were started and brought up to full power, the aircraft pitched forward, burying the nose into the ground resulting in injuries to all on board.

Tailpiece



Swordfish 'W5856'

Yes, it has been quite a tale this month!

- Do you have any interesting aviation topics you would like mentioned in future newsletter edition?
- Have any of the articles you have read in this newsletter edition require further explanation?

This month's motivational statement:

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that an aircraft takes off against the wind, not with it!”

Henry Ford.

The 'Aviation Tales' newsletter is produced monthly

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