‘Aviation Tales’ Newsletter: September 2025

The month of September has been:

Well, so far, we have had an: excellent / windy / wet / sunny but positive start to our Kapiti Coast Springtime.

Recent Aviation Events:

A USAF C-5M Super Galaxy aircraft lands at Whenuapai.

A USAF C-5M Super Galaxy landed at RNZAF Base Whenuapai during Wednesday evening, August 20, to deliver the first set of components for the new C-130J Hercules simulator that the Royal New Zealand Air Force are soon to bring into service.

This massive aircraft is one of the largest military planes in the world and marks the first time a USAF C-5 has landed at this base in over 40 years.

The simulator will be used to train flight and ground crews for the RNZAF's new C-130J aircraft.

“This is a really exciting time for the New Zealand Defence Force because the flight simulator is a critical tool that will provide pilot training, loadmaster systems training and engine ground run training, as well as procedural and mission systems training,”

Commented, Air Component Commander Air Commodore Andy Scott.

“It will also play a large role in ensuring our fleet is interoperable and our crews will be able to work alongside our international partners.

"Simulators improve crew preparedness and free up the aircraft for operations.

They reduce maintenance and flight time on actual aircraft, saving money, time plus reducing risk."

And what is all the fuss about?

The new C130 J simulator components ready for unloading.

Aircraft Restoration News:

The aviation world has welcomed a third Curtiss SB2C-1A Helldiver to the skies.

National Museum of World War II Aviation's Curtiss SB2C-1A Helldiver Flies After 45 Years.

Recovered from Lake Washington and meticulously restored, BuNo 75552 made its public flying debut recently, telling a powerful story of wartime service, loss, and revival.

This aircraft was meticulously restored by 'WestPac Restorations' and is owned by Jim Slattery and operated by the National Museum of World War II Aviation.

And, safely back on the runway!

The aircraft underwent successful taxi tests and weight-and-balance checks, paving the way for its first flight certification.

Later the same day, officials from the 'FAA' were present to witness the initial flight.

“Today, this stunning aircraft completed its first post-restoration flight, making it the third Helldiver to soar again, following the other restorations by the Commemorative Air Force’s and Fagen Fighters”.

The Helldiver at the National Museum of World War II Aviation is painted in the tri-color scheme used by U.S. Navy aircraft starting in 1943, with paint provided by Consolidated Aircraft Coatings.

BuNo 75552 was brought into service in 1944 as part of the U.S. Navy’s fleet of dive bombers. After being commissioned into service, this particular Helldiver was initially assigned to Naval Air Station (NAS) Alameda in California from June to October 1944. Shortly thereafter, it was transferred to NAS Seattle.

However, the aircraft’s operational life was brief. On January 31, 1945, just months after its assignment to NAS Seattle, Bu. 75552 was officially stricken from the Navy’s active roster and subsequently dumped into Lake Washington, Seattle.

The exact date and circumstances of its sinking remain somewhat unclear, but this was not an uncommon fate for aircraft no longer deemed necessary for the war effort.

For decades, BuNo 75552 lay undisturbed in the depths of Lake Washington.

It wasn’t until the 1980s that Recovery Services Ltd, based in Bellevue, WA, undertook the challenging task of retrieving the aircraft.

After its recovery, Bu. 75552 changed hands a few times!

The aircraft was eventually moved to ‘WestPac Restorations and completed in Colorado.

Congratulations on an amazing restoration.

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

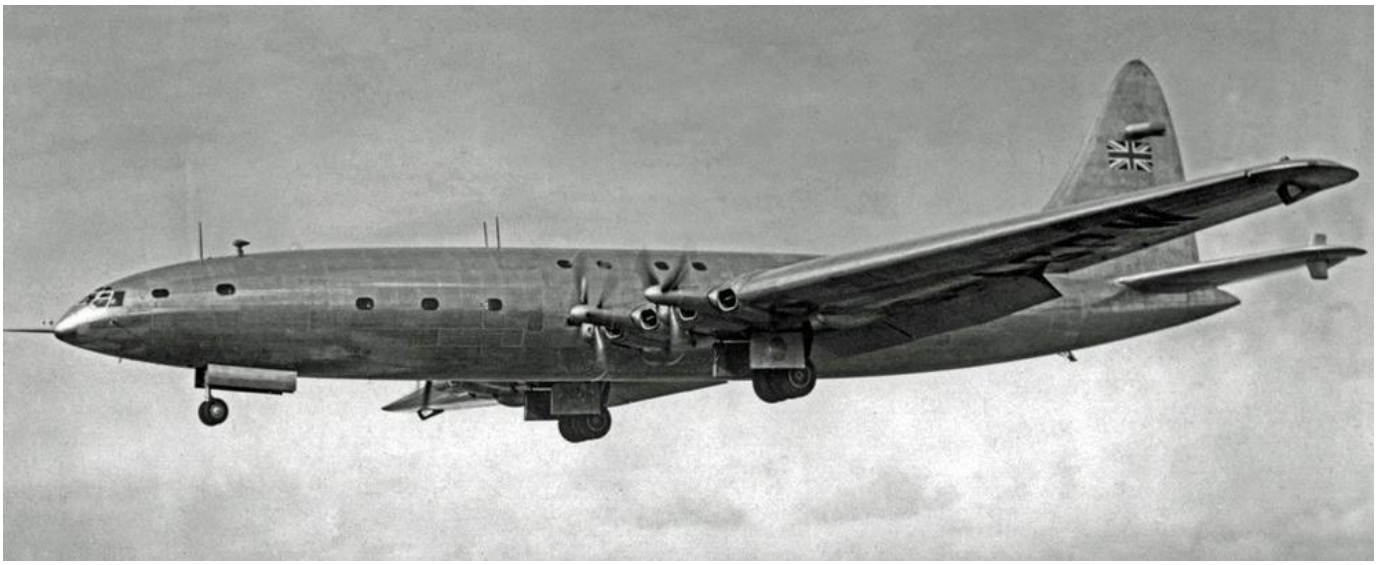
The Bristol Brabazon.

This was a huge airliner built by the Bristol Aeroplane Company during 1949 to fly many passengers on the transatlantic routes from England to the United States.

The plane was delivered in 1949, only to prove a complete commercial failure when airlines felt the plane was too large and expensive to be of use to them.

Although sized larger than a Boeing 747, it could only carry 60 to 80 passengers.

In the end only one example would be built, which, sadly, was later broken up in 1953 for scrap, along with an uncompleted second fuselage.



She was shown to the public at Farnborough in 1950 and performed a dramatic flyby during the performance.

The Mk.1 was certainly a big aeroplane for the times.

The post-WW2II Bristol "Brabazon" was a product of the work of the 1943 ‘Commission’ and stemmed directly from the Bristol Aircraft Company's wartime bomber design.

Led by statesman and British aviation pioneer Lord Brabazon, the "Brabazon Committee" met to begin mapping the post-war civil aviation environment.

The British aviation industry all but ceased during the conflict to focus on fighters and bombers, which left the civilian transport industry in limbo for some time.

The Bristol company received funding for two airworthy prototypes under its proposal.

The requirement calls for a transatlantic airliner to transport large numbers of passengers from UK airports to major cities on the US east coast.

Power came from eight Bristol Centaurus 18-cylinder radial engines, driving pairs of eight counter-rotating propeller units mounted on the wing leading edge nacelles.

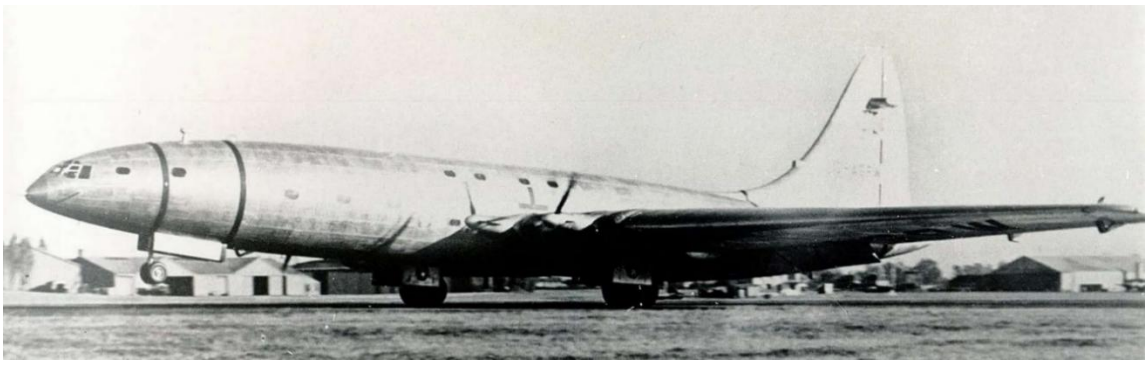
Inside, the fuselage can accommodate up to 100 passengers, within large seating areas to cinemas, restaurants and full berths.

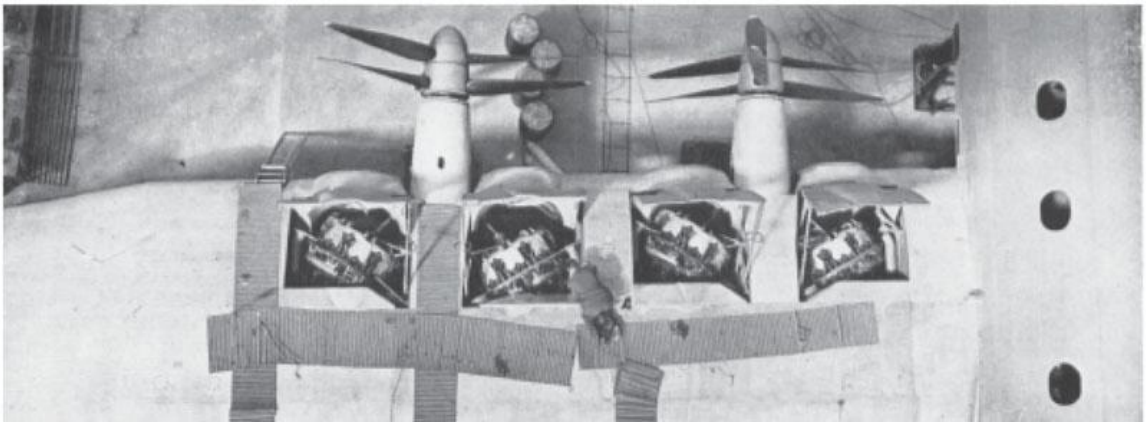
Special skin technology was used to control the weight of the aircraft, and motor-assisted control surfaces are standard the latter making the Brabazon the first aircraft ever to feature a fully motor-assisted control system.

To accommodate this giant aircraft, a special hangar was built, and the required runway had been lengthened to provide the facilities needed for this much larger aircraft.

The Mk I tested her engines during December 1948 and made her maiden flight on September 4, 1949.

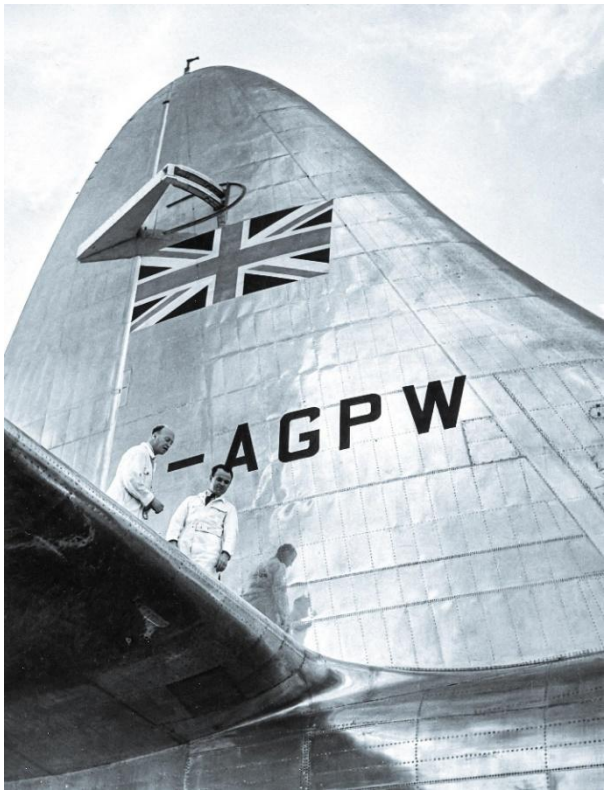
Amazing and Dramatic from any angle!





Four engines and two sets of contra-rotating propellers on each wing makes for a lot of moving parts!!

Tail Piece:



How do we get down?

➢ **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:

"Both optimists and pessimists contribute to society. The optimist invents the aeroplane, the pessimist, the parachute!"

Stephen Coonts.

The 'Aviation Tales' newsletter is produced monthly.

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