

Werrington Park Model Aero Club Inc.

# NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2009

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Main article this quarter is more of Cecil Lewis's recollections of his WW1 experiences, this one on the SE5a and I have to admit to choosing this chapter of his book for personal reasons. I recently bought the Model Tech SE5A. This model is an ARF and the box art on mine shows it and describes it as such but inside is a bare uncovered airframe, an ARC, which is great because the ARF version is covered in a glossy solar film as ARF model Warbirds often are. Why I don't know because it can ruin an otherwise excellent scale Warbird. So when I get going on this one I can cover it in more appropriate matt colours.

Thanks to all the people who contributed to this edition but especially to Brian Draper for his article on WW2 photo reconnaissance and Dave Lewis for a great many of the photos in Club news. Please keep on sending me stuff, it makes my job a lot easier if I don't have to make it all up myself. See you at the field with a TX in your hand.

Dave Middleton

## NEXT MEETING

A General Meeting will be held on  
Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009  
starting at 7.30pm.

The meeting will be held at the  
**Dave Lewis House,**

BYO Grog – Sausage Sizzle Supplied!

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# *Farewell to wings*

*Cecil Lewis*

*S.E.5*

**W**hen I left the testing squadron at Martlesham in the spring of 1917, it was to be posted to No 56 Squadron then forming at London Colney. The squadron was to be equipped with the latest product of the R.A.F\* Farnborough, the S.E.5.

The S.E.5 had already been chosen to equip a complete fighting squadron for combat overseas without ever coming to the testing squadron at all! There must have been some smart lobbying going on behind the scenes. Rumour said it was the finest scout ever built and that 'Boom' Trenchard was relying on it to regain the supremacy of the skies from Richthofen and his famous 'circus' of red Albatroses. But when we started ferrying these new



machines back from Farnborough to London Colney we were soon a bit gloomy. The S.E.5 was not a sweet aeroplane to fly and the machine gun mountings filled us with foreboding. Why the S.E.5 was not fitted with two Vickers guns firing through the propeller, nobody knows. In fact it had only one so fitted. The second gun was a Lewis, mounted above the upper plane so that its fire was clear of the propeller. This gun carried a double drum with 100 rounds of ammunition in it. When the drum was empty it had to be reloaded from spare drums down beside the pilot's seat in the cockpit. The reloading was the snag.

The gun was mounted on a quadrant, the lower end of which was secured to the 'greenhouse' (of which more later). When his ammunition was exhausted the pilot released a catch and taking hold of a handle at the back of the gun pulled it down the quadrant. This was not difficult as the wind pressure helped the gun to slide down. When it was right down the muzzle pointed straight up at the sky and the drum was within easy reach, but as the machine was travelling at about 100mph, as soon as the pilot put his hand into the grip on top of the drum and released it, it flew back into his face like a soup plate in a gale. Having got the empty drum safely into the rack, he had then to select a full one and get this out into the gale and back onto the gun. This was quite bad enough in the middle of a dogfight when there were other things to think about, but the gun was no use until it had been pushed back up the quadrant and locked into position on the top plane. This last effort often proved impossible. The quadrant mounting was of machined aluminium and in spite of greasing it and doing everything possible to make the slide work easily; it often resisted all the attempts of the pilot to go back up the curve. From all this technicality you can see, I hope, that this was a typical factory invention which could never have been devised by any pilot who had been in a dogfight.

But this, after all, only added to the pilots difficulties in combat. There was another general hazard built into the S.E.5. This was the famous 'greenhouse'. At the lower end of the gun quadrant right in front of the pilot's nose was a sort of inverted celluloid coal scuttle. It was supposed to be a windscreen and pointing ahead through the middle of it (and anchored to the top of the fuselage) was a long black tube, an Aldis telescopic sight. Need less to say the

sheets of celluloid of which this 'greenhouse' was made were difficult to see through and subject to all kinds of distortion. In addition we knew that any small oil leak could mist up the whole thing and make it pretty well impossible to see forward at all. Finally the aluminium frame of the 'greenhouse' had a rough blunt metal edge within a few inches of our faces. In a crash this would cut us up nicely.

There was nothing to be done about the guns. We had to accept the armament provided and do the best we could with it, but we all struck at the 'greenhouse' and immediately started to make modifications. We finished up with a small triplex adjustable windscreen (such as you see on racing cars) with a hole through the middle for the Aldis sight. This was sufficient to protect our faces from the cold and hardly interfered with the forward view at all. When we arrived in France the whole squadron was out of action for a fortnight until these modifications were finished.

All the same the S.E.5 was a sturdy, well built job. When we left for France it was fitted with a 150hp Hispano-Suiza engine. With this engine its performance was about equal to the German Albatroses, against which it was matched. But later that year a high compression engine of 180hp came out and this was followed by one of 250hp made under licence at Wolseleys. Although the bigger engine was a bit heavier, the performance was greatly improved and the ceiling higher, a thing of paramount importance in a scrap. By the autumn of 1917 the S.E.5 was a formidable opponent for any German fighter.

In every other respect the machine was quite normal in its handling. It could be dived to terminal velocity without breaking up. It had no vices and would spin left or right without being difficult to pull out, as some other aircraft were. It was easy to land and had a broad, strong undercarriage. If only it had had a more efficient armament it could not have been bettered.

A fighting scout is an invitation to pilots to try their hand at aerobatics and it is interesting, in retrospect to see how all the aerobatics of the First World War were, in fact, limited by the safety belt the pilot wore. This consisted of an 8 inch canvas band which was secured round the waist with a quick release clasp. There were no shoulder straps and, of course, no parachute. In such aerobatics as an 'Immelmann' turn, a loop or a flick roll the centrifugal force kept the pilot in his seat. The spectacular part of First World War aerobatics really lay in the fact that they were performed very near the ground. Dangerously so, many pilots were killed through making mistakes that they had no room to get out of. The slow roll, the roll off the top and inverted flying, any of which manoeuvres First World War pilots were capable of doing, were all unheard of because no pilot could 'hang on his straps'. He had no straps to hang on.

This is not a book about the fighting exploits of 56 Squadron and the remarkable record they established during the summer of 1917, flying the S.E.5 against an enemy which certainly at that time was always superior in numbers. It was during these months that the first elementary rules of fighting in formation began to be worked out, though there was no radio telephone and everything had to be done by signs. Still, 1917 remains the year when the dogfight began to be part of the war and aerial supremacy an important part of the overall picture.

The S.E.5 was probably the first fighting aircraft to be produced which was reliable enough and steady enough to stand up to the rough and tumble of 30 or 40 aircraft milling around trying to shoot each other down. In such conditions pilots do not think much about 'handling'. They are pretty rough on the controls. Slammed into a dive, yanked into climb, pulled hard around in a split-arse turn, the aircraft structure had to stand up to enormous and sudden strains. The S.E.5 came through this ordeal triumphantly and justified the belief of the top brass that it would give the allies the supremacy of the air that year. It did.

\*R.A.F in this case refers to 'Royal Aircraft Factory'. At that time the British flying service itself was called the R.F.C (Royal Flying Corp).

## WW2 Photo Reconnaissance

Before the Second World War long range photographic reconnaissance was not considered to be a priority by the RAF, which relied on Bristol Blenheims to carry out photo-reconnaissance as a secondary task. Short range photo-reconnaissance was left to the Army Cooperation Command's , Westland Lysanders. Neither aircraft had the speed or altitude performance to avoid enemy fighters, and their light armament meant that expecting them to fight their way through to a target to take photographs was a forlorn hope. Both aircraft types took heavy casualties when faced with modern fighters and A.A fire.

Shortly before the Second World War started, Flg. Off. Maurice Longbottom submitted a paper to the Air Ministry in which he proposed that the RAF equip itself with small, unarmed aircraft which, stripped of unnecessary weight and equipped with cameras and extra fuel, could rely on high speed, a fast climb and high altitude to avoid enemy defences. He was thinking primarily about the Spitfire which, he argued, was the ideal aircraft for the role. Although his idea was received with interest, it was shelved because there were not yet enough Spitfires available to allow any to be diverted from equipping Fighter Command.

When early operations proved the vulnerability of the Blenheims and Lysanders, in October 1939 the Australian Sidney Cotton, Acting Wing Commander of the newly formed and highly secret "Heston Flight", met with Air Chief Marshall Dowding, AOC of Fighter Command and persuaded him to release two Spitfires to his unit. Cotton had already proved Longbottom's theory to be right in practice by using a modified Lockheed Electra on clandestine photo-recon missions over Germany.

The two Spitfires were "Cottonised" by removing the radio, stripping out the armament, and adding downward-facing F.24 5" focal-length cameras to replace the inner-wing guns. All panel lines and the gun-ports were filled in with plaster of Paris and a special light "Camoutint Green" was applied to the aircraft which was then polished. Thus modified, the Spitfire was capable of reaching over 390 mph.

Flying PR missions was not an easy occupation. Spitfire pilots often flew missions lasting seven hours or more; the cramped cockpit was uncomfortable, although the introduction of heating and, later in the war, pressurization, relieved some of the discomfort .A PR Spitfire pilot had to be a good navigator, usually relying on dead reckoning. Once over the target to be photographed, a precise course and altitude was set and maintained. Even a small deviation from straight and level flight could mean that the cameras would miss a small target by hundreds of yards.

Several different paint schemes were used by the early photo-recon Spitfires until an overall "PRU Blue" was adopted for the majority of PR aircraft from late 1941.

Low level ("Dicing ") missions were usually flown under low cloud, with the pilot constantly on the lookout for enemy fighters and flak positions. These missions were much more dangerous than the high-altitude missions.

At high speed and low altitude there was little time to aim the oblique camera: a tiny black + on the side of the canopy was lined up with a small black stripe painted on the aileron and, as the aircraft flew by the target, the pilot had to estimate when to start taking photographs. The only way to successfully take pictures and survive was to take the defences by surprise. Spitfires engaged in low-altitude "dicing" missions were often painted in either overall white or in a very pale "Camoutint Pink", which was an ideal colour against cloud cover.



Whilst watching a show on you tube there was mention of a 'PINK SPITFIRE'. My research led me to WIKIPEDIA where I have extracted excerpts for this newsletter. I hope that you enjoy the above article and photos. Brian Draper.

# CLUB NEWS

## MANY HANDS MAKE FLIGHT WORK

At the last 2mtr Thermal Glider Millennium Cup Challenge to be held at Werrington last January, I purchased a Saggitta 2mtr glider kit from Brian Draper.

Never having any experience in anyway shape or form of ever building a glider from scratch, so to speak, decided with some help from Brian Draper and David Middleton to get up the courage to give it a go.

I purchased a pin board big enough to fit my table, some pins; a couple of different types of balsa glue and other various bits and pieces which I thought may be needed. I set this up inside my flat so that I could work on it whenever I had a bit of spare time.

I then asked Dave, where do you start? Body, Wings, Tail, (elevator) Rudder, where? The body was to be first, base, sides and inner ribs, oh yeah but where does it go and which way up? Even though I had the plans staring me right in the face, had some idea, however once things are glued, that's it, Dave was really good, came over showed me where things went and then set about the challenge. No sooner had Dave left, what was next? Rang Dave asked if he'd come over once again? "what, have you finished already" was he's response; this was virtually how things progressed right through the whole project, no sooner had I been shown how to do something, and it was done, Dave said that he was very impressed not only with the quick construction, however only having to be shown once how to do something then setting about and doing it. I had some trouble with getting the elevator to throw properly, however, after some fiddling about Dave and I managed to sort it out.

The next job was, shaping and sanding which went quiet smoothly. Next was the covering and deciding on what colours to go with, I was feeling in some what a Goth mood, so decided on Black for the body, bright yellow for the canopy and clear yellow for the main wings and tail with some black trim, again rang and asked Dave, seeing though he worked down south so to speak, he said that he would gladly purchase it for me on his way home, from Kellets Hobbies, as they seemed to have the biggest range of coverings.

Not having a covering iron I went too and fro from either Dave's or Brian's place to get some of the covering done and to see mainly how it was done, Once having an understanding of how it worked and managing to borrow Brians Iron, I set about getting this part of the project finished.

It was great to see after all the effort in the construction that it was nearing completion, the radio gear fitted like a glove, a few adjustments here and there, tow hook and other bits and pieces, yeah, looked very impressive, Just take a look at the photo and I was impressed, that with some help was able to "get it together", isn't that how it works?



With thanks to Dave Middleton and Brian Draper.... GARY VISSER

# CLUB NEWS CONT

Avian Howard's P47 Thunderbolt flying at Mulgoa. Avian says; Kit is a Hangar 9. This has been designed to be powered by a 26cc gas engine. Wingspan is 206cms, length 180cms, weighs in at 9kg. I have modified it to suit a 50cc DL50 gas engine, you can never have enough power. I have also added a K&S 1060 exhaust canister for power & to reduce noise, sounds good as well. The retracts are custom made Robarts, air up and down. All moving surfaces are powered by Hitec servos.

Power is thru a SmartFly power system with an optic ignition cut out, 2 x 2000mh batteries.



The finish has been changed from a high gloss finish to a more scale dull flat finish by painting the surfaces with a flat clear paint.



Neil Shackelton's Extra 330. Neil says; Built from a CMPRO ARF kit, 56 inch wingspan, OS 55ax engine with a Bisson pitts style muffler, radio is JR 2610, 6 channel, flown 6 times, flies well if CG is kept forward



John Charubin's Hanger 9 XT60, Span 1.8m, Powered by OS91 4stroke, Spectrum 2.4gig DM8



## CLUB NEWS CONT

My Model Tech Dragon Lady on the day of its first flight on Sunday 19/7. Wingspan 1680mm, weight 4.8kg powered by OS 91fx 2 stroke turning a 16x6 prop. Radio is 2.4gig Spectrum DX7, 5 digital servos. Model is an ARC (almost ready to cover). Covering is all Solarfilm, Aluminum overlaid with red trim and black serials. Cowling and wheel spats were sprayed red.



Dave Lewis has recently branched out into helicopter flying and with a little help and tuition along the way from Dave Newman, Avian Howard and John Cherubin has been making steady and solid progress in the art of flying these aerial food blenders. Pictures show Dave's two helicopters a Thunder Tiger Mini Titan and a Thunder Tiger Raptor 50 and Dave with Dave Newman practicing formation flying at Mulgoa.



On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May the club together with SSME had a stand at the Koi Show at the Fairfield Showground. This was organized and run by Brian & Lyn Draper on behalf of both clubs. Other WPMAC members present were Neil Shakleton, Gary Visser and me. All of us bought along some of our aircraft and all together they made a very good display. We were eying up the empty racecourse right alongside with the thought of putting on a limited flying display next year.



## CLUB NEWS CONT



John Vines is selling all his gear as he has had to stop flying due to health problems. Photo shows John in his 'shed'. Everything must go including Tiger 40L ARF low wing \$25, Tiger 40H ARF high wing OS46 \$80, Hussler Trainer \$40, Red Zephyr with OS54 and radio \$200, Cloud Dancer low wing RTF \$200, Cessna182 RTF \$200, Dragon Lady with 54 F\S \$200, GMS2000 2 stroke new \$150, Enya 30ss used/old \$25 and much more. John lives in Graystones so if you can get over there he would be pleased to see you. Make him an offer on something. His number is 9636 7595. I bought an SE5A and a Fascination from him.

All photos in 'club news' by Dave Lewis excepting of course the one he is in, don't know who took that, and the ones of Gary, John and the Koi show which were taken by me.

Congratulations to Gary Visser who recently passed his Bronze Wings test at Mulgoa. He now joins a fairly small group of pilots who have successfully completed their Bronze Wings at the fairly difficult Mulgoa field.

From Dave Lewis this fairly interesting site, well worth a look if you have access to the web.  
<http://www.grubby-fingers-aircraft-illustration.com/index.html>

**STOP PRESS.** At time of going to print, so to speak, it looks like the club is going to get a new flying site with a much longer runway within a stones throw of our existing Mulgoa strip, still on the same property, which is exciting news indeed. More on that next quarter.

Quote of the quarter; "I have been underestimated most of my life" Nathan Rees (Premier of NSW). Haven't we all Nathan.

And there's nothing like an Irish joke to finish. This one from Bob Hutchison.

John O'Reilly hoisted his beer and said, "Here's to spending the rest of me life! between the legs of me wife!"

That won him the top prize at the pub for the best toast of the night!

He went home and told his wife, Mary, "I won the prize for the Best toast of the night"

She said, "Aye, did ye now. And what was your toast?"

John said, "Here's to spending the rest of me life, sitting in church beside me wife."

"Oh, that is very nice indeed, John!" Mary said.

The next day, Mary ran into one of John's drinking buddies on the street corner.

The man chuckled leeringly and said, "John won the prize the other night at the pub with a toast about you, Mary."

She said, "Aye, he told me, and I was a bit surprised myself. You know, he's only been there twice in the last four years. Once he fell asleep, and the other time I had to pull him by the ears to make him come."