

DEAR IAC

I was interested to see the photos of our newly aquired Auster 1 LB264 in the February 2003 issue of IAC News. Herewith what I have been able to find out so far about her history from logbooks, RAF movement cards, and various secondary sources which may be of interest to your readers. If anyone can add to, or correct these details, I would be most pleased to hear from them.

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Royal Air Force Museum  
**HENDON**



1942	Built by Taylorcraft Aeroplanes (England) Ltd, Leics. (Constructor's number 134) to Contract No. 1995 as the second of 100 Taylorcraft Auster A.O.P. Mk. I aircraft delivered between May and December 1942 Serial nos. range LB263- LB395. Militarised version of Taylorcraft Plus D, intended for artillery spotting work. Built at Syston and assembled at Rearsby.	13 Jan 47	Registered as G-AIXA
		Jan/Feb 47	Given complete overhaul
22 May 42	First flight; pilot A.L.Wykes.	20 Feb 47	First civilian certificate of airworthiness issued.
25 May 42	Flown by A.L. Wykes to the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment, Boscombe Down, for acceptance trials, where it operated together with the first production aircraft, LB263. LB264 had experimental split trailing edge flaps fitted, and was flown to assess suitability for ship duties. It was considered that at 1,400lb a take-off run of 80ft would be possible into a 15 knot wind, and a similar landing run achieved with an arrestor hook. It returned to Rearsby on several occasions and was used for a combination of manufacturer's and service introduction tests and trials	25 Feb 47	First recorded civilian flight, for 20 minutes.
25 Sep 42	Flown by pilots of No.653 Squadron, both from Rearsby and their base at Penshurst, Kent.	18 May 51	Aircraft damaged in taxiing accident; repaired within a few days.
Feb/Mar 43	Used for camouflage tests at Rearsby, known as 'Mirror Tests'.	1958	Registered to the Sherwood Flying Club Ltd, Tollerton, Notts.
8 May 43	No. 20 Maintenance Unit, Aston Down, Glos.	1964	By this date, the aircraft was at Tollerton Airport, Notts, owned by N.Gisby as part of the Maid Marion Flying Group.
25 May 43	No. 1. Elementary Flying Training School, Holwell Hyde Relief Landing Ground, near Hatfield, Herts.(renamed Panshangar on 13 September 1943). The unit flew Tiger Moths, but used LB264 as a 'hack'.	9 Oct 69	Last flight for nearly three years; engine regularly ground run, however. Flying hours to date 5,575.15
23 Jun 43	Slightly damaged when during a start-up it moved forward and hit a post due to the pupil not being fully conversant with the cockpit lay out; repaired on site by unit.	23 Jun 72	Aircraft flown again - 15 minute test flight.
15 Dec 43	No. 22 E.F.T.S, Caxton Gibbet, Cambridge for training Auster A.O.P pilots.	1972	Ownership passed to Peter. J. Anderson, flying from the RAF College, Cranwell, Lincs.
5 Aug 44	To No. 20 Maintenance Unit, Aston Down for storage.	1983	Registered to Peter and Jacky Stevens, operating from Cranwell by 1986.
15 Jul 45	Repaired by Armstrong Whitworth.25 Apr 46 No.5 MU, RAF Kemble, Glos, from where a number of impressed and other light aircraft were sold by public tender for civilian use in the immediate post-war period. A total of 58 Auster I aircraft were converted post-war to Taylorcraft Plus D standard.	1986	Sold to Alan. A and Maureen. J. Copse, Rutland.
24 May 46	Sold to Cotswold Aero Club Ltd, with 328 hours 40 minutes flying time recorded; still registered with them March 1955. Struck off RAF charge the following day.	Acquired by Geoffrey Brown of Peterborough. Photos in various civil colour schemes - IAC News February 2003	
		2000	Restored in Loughborough, Leics from May of that year by Mr. Brown and repainted in original 1942 camouflage and markings. Photo -Flypast October 2000 p.95. Colour photo flying after restoration completed; Flypast December 2002 p.6.23 Oct 02
			Final flight, one hour 5 minutes, to RAF Museum Cosford, Salop, following its purchase by the RAF Museum as the oldest surviving Auster 1; CoA expired the same day. Total final flying hours 6,224.45.
		13 Dec 02	Registration cancelled by Civil Aviation Authority.
		TEXT ANDREW SIMPSON	RAF MUSEUM 2003

wonder how people could eke out a living in this wilderness of sand, with only the palm fringed Nile as their main means of life support. From my height of fifteen hundred feet I could see the small dhows with their strange sails, peculiar to all Arab boats and the white galobias of the fellahin, as they went about their daily chores. I wondered if this quiet, gentle way of life would suit me. My mind went back to my Warwick Lodge farming days and the peace of the countryside, the peaceful solitude when I used to walk the decks on the Strathaird on a tropical night. How I would lean over the side looking at the phosphorous tipped waves breaking and flashing as the ship ploughed on, wondering where I was going and what I was seeking. I knew looking back on it, that I had never found it. I have never really known what I was looking for. It may have only been a way of escape from the restless urge which had plagued me for as long as I could remember. I don't suppose I shall ever know, the nearest I can get to it is that I am happiest when I am somewhere completely quiet, miles from anywhere and anybody. I need no plush villas or swimming pools. A good clean shack with a straw roof suits me fine, as long as there is either a bay or a lake nearby where I can do some swimming. I once lived like this for months, calling at a small village store once a week for supplies, which I carried 'home' in the back of an old ex-Post Office van I had as transport. Nothing around me but the country at the back and the river at the front, no noise and no people, only seabirds, curlew and my dog. But that's another story and no one has ever known about it, not even my family!

Alec drew alongside and wagging his wings, pointed ahead and down to the right. There among all the sand was a long black strip, shimmering in the heat, it was Asyut runway. I closed the throttle and the change in the engine note brought Cyril back to life. Looking round he asked,

"Where are we?"

"Egypt." I answered, sarcastically.

The hole in his face opened and the one shining tooth came out. Cyril was laughing, I thought he looked hideous.

"Why don't you get that bloody thing pulled out?" I shouted above the engine noise.

"I like it." was his laconic answer.

"Well, I don't. Every time you open your mouth and that bleeding thing flashes in the sunlight and I get a glimpse

of it I think it's a 109 coming in, it's positively disturbing."

Cyril laughed like a drain. By this time I was on the approach. Christ, it was hot! Alec was down and taxiing in, but as I came over the boundary I had very little flap down and almost half throttle on, but the heat from that damned runway was almost preventing me from getting down. I had to virtually force it right on to the ground before easing off the throttle. After I had taxied in I undid my straps, jumped out and very nearly jumped back in again. I'd never experienced heat like that before. Jumping out of that aircraft was just like jumping into a red hot oven, I took off the engine cowling and then headed for the one and only building. Outside were two things, one a short, ugly, little arab wearing sunglasses and a tin hat with the word 'FIRE' painted on it and the other was a Coke machine. It's amazing it doesn't matter what part of the world you are in, no matter whether it is Iceland or the Persian Gulf, you will always find a Coke stand or a VW agent! When I got inside Alec was arranging for some fuel.

"Christ Almighty, is it always as hot as this, Alec?"

"Oh no, it gets up around the 120s in the summer months!"

"Well, what the bloody hell is this, the depths of winter?"

"It gets hotter." was his distant reply, as he checked fuel papers and loads, then turning to me he said,

"In Khartoum it gets up to 130 in the shade." and then, with a menacing look added, "And there's no shade."

"Oh my gawd!" was all I could reply.

Within half an hour we were airborne again. Oh, what a relief to get up to 4,000 feet and feel some air coming in through those windows. Two hours later we were descending towards Luxor. We had done over five hours flying now and I was more than glad when we touched down on the red, dusty runway. I gently turned off the end and taxied onto the apron. On getting out I noticed that, although it was evening and very nearly dark, it was still very warm and oppressive, but what a quiet place, there was very little sound of any sort except the padding up and down of the 'fellahin' who worked in the airport offices. All our log books and papers were stamped and away we went to some hotel in Luxor itself. It appeared we were the only guests as the huge dining room was completely empty. It was a vast room in a sort of sculptured, white Baroque with