



NHILL ANSON NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 2. 25-05-2009

Highlights in this newsletter:

- The NAHC obtains an Avro Anson.
- Service history of the Avro.
- Corrections to the last newsletter.
- Start of restoration.

Arrival of the Anson

A casual remark by our president, Don Kube, lamenting the fact that “there used to be several Avro Ansons on properties within the Nhill district and of course they have all disappeared”, brought the reply that the remains of an Avro was lying on a property not too far distant from Nhill. Imagine Don’s surprise and his joy when told that it could be made available to the NAHC.

Much discussion followed and eventually a party of members equipped with a large truck, a utility and tandem trailer, carefully photographed and collected all the various parts that we hope someday will be assembled to give the aged Anson at least some of her former glory.



The restoration will be a huge undertaking that is expected to take years to complete. Assistance from any source will be welcome.

Further information about Avro Ansons

The Avro Anson, built to Air Ministry Specification 18/35, was a British twin-engined, multi-role aircraft that served with the Royal Air Force, Fleet Air Arm and numerous other air forces during the Second World War and afterwards. Avro allotted type number 652A to the aircraft, the first flight of which was on 24 March 1935. Named for British Admiral George Anson (1697-1762), it was originally designed for maritime reconnaissance, but was soon rendered obsolete. However it was rescued from obscurity by its suitability as a multi-engine air-crew trainer, becoming the mainstay of the British Commonwealth Air Training Scheme. By the end of its production life in 1952, the Anson spanned nine variants and a total of 8,138 had been built in Britain by Avro and, from 1941, a further 2,882 by the Canadian Federal Aircraft Ltd, bringing the total to 11,020 aircraft produced, making it the second-most-numerous (after the Vickers Wellington) British multi-engined aircraft of the Second World War. Production of the "Faithful Annie", as the aircraft was widely known, finally ceased in 1952.

The Avro Anson was the Royal Australian Air Force's first retractable undercarriage low wing monoplane, with 1,028 being in service, mainly Mark I. The aircraft was generally powered by two 350 hp (261 kW) Armstrong-Siddeley Cheetah Mk IX seven-cylinder radial engines, although some were powered by the later 395 hp (295 kW) Cheetah Mk XIX engines. A distinctive feature of the Anson I was its landing gear retraction mechanism, which required no less than 140 turns of the hand crank by the pilot. To forgo this laborious process, early model Ansons often made short flights with the landing gear extended, at the expense of 30 mph (50 km/h) of cruise speed. The RAAF operated Ansons until 1955, mainly in a training role, although a number were used for maritime reconnaissance. The Royal Air Force however continued to operate the type for many years, finally retiring it on 28 June 1968.

The available service history on the Nhill Avro Anson is somewhat scant and, like the aircraft itself, is still a work-in-progress. This aircraft, a Mark I powered by two Cheetah Mk IX engines and serialled W2364, was delivered direct from the factory to Australia. It was built by A.V. Roe & Co. Ltd at their Woodford, Cheshire, factory to contract 61695/39 as part of the ninth RAF production batch of Ansons. Some 6,688 examples of this Mark were built.

Although the engines and the gun turret were both 'bought-out' components, they were in fact sourced from other companies within the corporate umbrella. Armstrong-Siddeley and Armstrong-Whitworth – both Coventry, Warwickshire companies – were, along with Avro and a number of other firms, part of the Hawker-Siddeley Group. Indeed, Avro themselves had become part of the Siddeley group in 1928.

'Our' aircraft was taken on charge by 1 Aircraft Depot on 27th July 1941 before being passed to 6 Service Flying Training School on 6th December that year. The Armstrong-Whitworth gun turret was fitted on 19th December 1941 and the aircraft was then passed to 100 Squadron on 4th August 1942. W2364 next served with 64 Squadron,

coded as MK-A, from 28th September 1942. The next operator was Guinea Airways who took over the aircraft on 18th October 1944. The aircraft returned to 6 SFTS on 2nd April 1945 before passing on to the Care & Maintenance Unit at Mallala, South Australia on an unknown date. On 23rd December 1946 the aircraft was taken on charge by the Air & Ground Radio School at Ballarat, Victoria who put the aircraft up for sale on or before 24th April 1953, after some six-and-a-half-years with the School.

Following its sale the aircraft was not placed onto the Australian Civil Aircraft Register and its movements beyond April 1953 are still the subjects of on-going investigation. The National Archives of Australia are assisting us with our research; some information has already been received from them, but at this point it is incomplete and requiring further clarification.

Further information on our Anson in particular, and on the aircraft type in general, will be published in later newsletters. Watch this space...

Chris Weeks

Also I believe the Mk 1 Anson was equipped with an Armstrong-Whitworth gun turret. I am uncertain as to when or on which Mark(s) of Anson the Bristol turret was fitted. Perhaps a reader may enlighten us.

Chris

Restoration of Nhill's Avro Anson is underway



A whole new rear section of fuselage needs to be built. The original steel from this section has been used for farm machinery repairs. Note the two black lengths of tubular steel running to the top left hand edge. This is the start of the new fuselage.



The tail section had been cut in two with an axe many years ago (we are not sure why this was done – perhaps to make it fit on a trailer). Accurate realignment and reconstruction took many hours. The new steel connecting both sections is black. The rudder connects to the right hand side edge of this structure.