



Royal Puss Moth G-ABBS (2020), represented on a pre-war postcard discovered at a collector's fair in the West Country in 2015. The cloud of black exhaust smoke trailing behind the aircraft, together with the general scene, is a figment of the artist's imagination. (Via Dave Welch)

It was probably optimistic to believe that customers would opt for the all-freighter specification at the expense of role-flexibility, and so it proved to be. During the summer of 1931 four Puss Moths in standard configuration were delivered to the Aerial Transport Company of Siam to be based in Bangkok: HS-PAA (2171), HS-PAB (2175), HS-PAC (2179) and HS-PAD (2180). In a publicity announcement at the end of the year it was claimed that during August, September and October 1931, the four aircraft collectively had carried 3,300 tons of mail, 520 tons of cargo and 22 passengers in the course of uninterrupted operations covering 13,000 miles.

Royal Patronage

In June 1930 it was announced that the de Havilland Aircraft Company had received a prestigious order from HRH The Prince of Wales. The new Puss Moth, No 2020, 'with special appointments', was registered G-ABBS on 4th July to the Prince's personal pilot, Flt Lt Edward 'Mouse' Fielden RAF,

acting as nominee. Details of the aircraft were widely circulated: she was to be painted in the maroon and dark blue colours of the Household Brigade, seats would be upholstered in red leather with a larger than usual rear seat which could be removed altogether when necessary and replaced by two smaller units, and the rear cabin was to be supplied with an enlarged fresh air vent and a hat rack. The aircraft would be equipped with Dunlop low pressure wheels and tyres, leading edge slots and full dual control. Fuel tanks of 35 gals capacity were to be installed which otherwise was described as 'to all intents and purposes, perfectly standard'.

G-ABBS qualified for her C of A on 28th July 1930 and was well used during that summer before it was announced that early the following year, together with his brother, Prince George, the Prince of Wales would be travelling to South America for a three-month tour concluding in Buenos Aires where he would open the British Empire Trade Exhibition, and would be taking a



The Puss Moth could be fitted with a throttle control, stick and rudder pedals for operation by the occupant of the rear seat. The pedals were situated under the front seat and the rear control column could be easily disconnected and stowed alongside the control box at floor level. (Simon Clay)

Puss Moth with him. It was the cue to commission a brand-new machine.

The royal swansong for G-ABBS occurred on 16th January 1931 after Fielden had air tested the aeroplane in the morning. At five minutes past one o'clock in the afternoon he took off from Hendon carrying the two Princes as passengers and 2 hrs 10 mins later landed at Le Bourget Airport, Paris, from where the royal party made their way to Spain to embark on the SS *Oropesa* to sail to Bermuda, a pause on their journey to South America.

During the afternoon following his arrival in France, Fielden demonstrated the aeroplane to Captain Willie Coppens from the Belgian Embassy and returned to England the next day with Lady Thelma Furness, the Prince of Wales' mistress, who was travelling to Heston. G-ABBS was delivered from Hendon to Stag Lane after a 10 mins trip on 19th January when Edward Fielden logged that his flight had been achieved at 3,000 ft between the two airfields which were in very close proximity and noted finally: 'handed aircraft over to DH.'

Following her return to Stag Lane, G-ABBS was almost immediately sold to the British High Commissioner for Iraq, Sir Francis Humphrys, and flown to Baghdad by Fg Off John Hawtry RAF, leaving Croydon on 31st March 1931. She was sold locally in February 1933 and took up the markings YI-ABB in May 1935, owned and



Royal Puss Moth G-ABBS (2020), was fitted with a single passenger seat in the rear of the cabin and a pilot's seat with a wide, flat, back support. Standard production aircraft, in which the pilot's seat had a rounded back, was criticised for being too narrow, partly the result of having to leave leg room for access to the rear passenger compartment.

(de Havilland Aircraft Company)



After persuading the Foglia family and an embarrassed Milan Museum that I-FOGL (2114), should be restored to her former glory, the very original aircraft was delivered to Tim Williams' workshop at Hungerford in England in 2012. (Tim Williams)



Maintaining as much original material as practicable, I-FOGL (2114), and her Gipsy III engine, was carefully dismantled and with meticulous care restored in the unique de Havilland style. On 13th September 2018, her engine was run for only the second time since 1936. (Tim Williams)



Left: Looking exactly as she did when awaiting delivery from Stag Lane in the early summer of 1931, the authentically restored I-FOGL (2114), at Folly Farm, Hungerford, in September 2018, after an intensive programme which had lasted for six years. (Adrian M Balch)

Below left: Restored to full airworthy standards, it was agreed by the Foggia family that I-FOGL (2114), could be fast-taxed within the confines of Folly Farm, Hungerford, before her return to Milan in the autumn of 2018. (Via Tim Williams)

Below: I-FOGL (2114), was erected in Milan in October 2018 by Tim Williams and Henry Labouchere and formerly unveiled to the public on 3rd November, an airworthy machine on permanent static display in the Main Hall of Milan's Museum of Science and Technology. (Via Tim Williams)



when last flown. There the aeroplane hung for 25 years until a structural report on the roof of the museum building suggested that it would be wise to take her down. I-FOGL was dismantled and removed to a store in the Northern suburbs of Milan where she remained, unattended, and subsequently endured several unsympathetic changes of location. Occasionally, the aircraft was partly exposed to the elements and, left in an insecure position, was vandalised and any easily removable parts were stolen, including the whole instrument panel. In a very

dilapidated condition and after family protests, she was moved to secure storage at the military base in Gallarate.

Aware of the situation, English Puss Moth owner Tim Williams expressed an interest in saving the aircraft, but his direct approach to the museum was rebuffed and he appealed to the Foglia family who were heavily critical of the museum which had clearly failed in its obligation to maintain their bequest. The museum was persuaded, and the family agreed, that Tim Williams could undertake a complete airworthy

restoration to her original build specification at his workshop in England to which, in June 2012, the deeply dishevelled I-FOGL was delivered.

Although she would not be allowed to fly, the Puss Moth was to be rebuilt to airworthy standards and with great care to maintain as much of her Stag Lane originality as possible. Following erection at Folly Farm, Hungerford, on 13th September 2018, the overhauled Gipsy III engine fired on the second swing of the propeller and the aeroplane was briefly taxied. On 4th



Left: The last Puss Moth to be assembled by the de Havilland Aircraft of Canada at Downsview was DHC 225, registered CF-AVC on 4th April 1935 and sold in May. Not until late in 1953 was the aircraft sold again, and then several times more, but following a short period of activity she was stored in 1958 pending overhaul which was never completed. Sold to England and delivered to Durley in August 2003 for restoration by Aero Antiques, she was appropriately registered G-FAVC in November. (Michael Souch)

Below left: G-FAVC (DHC 225), the last Puss Moth to be assembled in Canada, was restored to airworthiness by Aero Antiques at Durley where she completed a first post-restoration flight in the hands of Francis Donaldson on 2nd June 2011. (Peter Lovegrove)



appropriately registered G-FAVC to Richard Seeley in November but was sold to Peter Lovegrove of Liddell Aircraft in October 2006 and, following a complete overhaul, reflighted from Durley on 2nd June 2011. After a season based at Hurn Airport, Bournemouth, Peter Lovegrove decided that rightly, the aircraft should be returned to her spiritual home in Canada and she was sold to the Reynolds Foundation at Wetaskiwin, Alberta, in March 2013. Packed into a container at Hurn on 13th May, and shipped from the Seaforth Container Terminal on Merseyside, the aeroplane was almost immediately put on display in the Reynolds Museum at Wetaskiwin in July, with a promise that like most of the aircraft in the Collection, she would be maintained in an airworthy condition.



Above: Having rescued Puss Moth DHC 225 from stagnation and seen her returned to a concours condition in England, owner Peter Lovegrove decided her rightful home was in Canada and, consequently, in March 2013 negotiations were concluded for her sale to the Reynolds Foundation in Alberta. Dismantled at Hurn Airport, Bournemouth, on 13th May 2013, the aircraft was loaded into a container ready for return shipment to Canada. (Peter Lovegrove)

Above right: The business department of G-FAVC (DHC 225), displaying a customised instrument panel. The pedestal-mounted bowl compass has been moved left, the throttle controls boxed, and the control column fitted with a spade grip. The conveniently available lower part of the panel has been utilised to house an avionics package, an almost essential element in the modern environment for safe operation of an aircraft of any vintage. (Peter Lovegrove)

Right: Puss Moth DHC 225, still wearing her British registration, on display at the Reynolds Foundation at Wetaskiwin, Alberta, on 21st June 2013. Although part of a static exhibition, the owners have promised to maintain the aircraft in an airworthy condition. (Byron Reynolds)



G-ACFF (4060) was used by a number of British domestic airlines between 1933 and 1940 when she was impressed into RAF service. Seen here at Croydon Airport, the aircraft was built to the production standard with steel interplane struts and a single footstep at the bottom longeron on the port side of the fuselage. The open cockpit was furnished with a rounded windscreen and sliding windows fitted in the cabin doors. G-ACFF was certainly in the minority when fitted with 'DH' embossed hubcaps on the main wheels. (Richard T Riding Collection/TAH Archive)

upholstered in blue leather, contrasting with the upper walls and headlining which were in grey. A luggage shelf was positioned on the rear bulkhead. The single seat could be replaced by another double unit but, customers were warned that the alteration entailed a reduction in width of the other main seat and should be considered only when journey times were short. The fact was not lost on a strand of potential customers that, subject to a reduced fuel load and cabin floor strengthening, a financially beneficial fourth passenger could be accommodated, albeit in less than ideal circumstances, as operators had been forewarned.

When the Fox Moth was introduced into Australia in August 1932, the Civil Aviation Branch (CAB), advised that in their opinion, the cabin was not big enough to accommodate more than three passengers, a ruling that was strictly enforced. Not until after the end of the Second World War was the restriction reviewed by the new Department of Civil Aviation (DCA), who permitted Fox Moths operating under Australian certification rules in New Guinea to carry four native passengers, assumed to be of small stature, providing each was furnished with a seat belt.

The Sales Department's brochures were packed with relevant facts:



What was referred to as a 'split instrument panel' is well illustrated by that currently fitted to the Canadian-built ZK-APT (FM48), with port and starboard groups separated by a round observation panel allowing direct visual communication between the pilot and the cabin. (John King)



A more conventional pack is carried by the one-time Prince of Wales' aircraft G-ACDD (4033), now resident in Canada as C-FYPM. The observation panel is provided with a glass door that can be closed and the instrument choice is customised. Note the control column has a spade grip. The apparatus lying fore and aft between the centre section struts and flush to the top decking is an optional system to provide fresh air to the cabin, the intensity of flow controlled by the occupants. (Blake Reid)



The instrument panel for G-ACEJ (4069) would have been assembled during restoration between 1986 and 1994 only after meticulous research to determine the exact type of instruments and their layout when the aircraft was delivered to the Scottish Motor Traction Company in June 1933. Note the Huson bowl compass on the shelf at bottom right and the temporary fixing of the deviation card. (Blake Reid)



To satisfy the need for replacement fuselages for Fox Moth restoration projects in the mid-1970s, Myles Robertson and Stan Smith laid down five new fuselages and two additional 'kits' at Dairy Flat Airfield, Auckland. (Myles Robertson)



Stan Smith's blister hangar workshop at Dairy Flat Airfield with the fuselage of ZK-APT (FM48) at upper left, ZK-AQM (FM50) at upper right and the fuselage of DH.84 Dragon ZK-AXI on trestles in the foreground. (Ian Oliver)

Island. The aeroplane was returned to Omapa for her annual inspection before taking up permanent residence at Kaipara Flats.

The consortium constructing the mix of British and Canadian specification fuselages at Dairy Flat broke up after the early death of Myles Robertson, and the structures were dispersed. In addition to Stan Smith's fuselage scheduled for ZK-APT (FM48) and a 'spare' which later became the kernel of Jim Lawson's ZK-ARQ (FM53), another was sold to England with the remains of ZK-AQM (FM50) now airworthy as Steve Jones' G-ECDF. The fourth fuselage was bought by the Croydon Aircraft Company and incorporated into the reconstruction of ZK-AQB (FM49), and the fifth was commissioned by Ian Gemmel intended for ZK-AEK (4033) but remains unused, stored in the roof of the hangar at Dairy Flat. With additional spares the structure had been sold to John Brough who also purchased Jim Lawson's ZK-ARQ project, whose present state is unknown.

Two further Fox Moth fuselage 'kits' were prepared under the management of Myles Robertson who had developed a system of steaming fuselage longerons into shape and realised that to bulk manufacture a batch of spares difficult to produce as single items would be a valuable asset for future projects.

Long after the two kits were created at Dairy Flat, both were exported to Australia, one to Murwillumbah to assist with the restoration of one time agriculturist VH-UUS (4044), and the other to Shepparton, Victoria, for incorporation into Ken Orrman's VH-UVL (4015), now with Roy Fox at Bankstown.

The last two new-build DH.83C Fox Moths on the line at Downsview in 1948 were FM53 and FM54. FM53 was scheduled for delivery to the de Havilland



Stan Smith photographed during test flight No 4 in his restored Fox Moth ZK-APT (FM48), in what were described as noticeably calm conditions over the Hauraki Gulf, north of Auckland, in June 2009. (John King)

Aircraft Company in Wellington, New Zealand, for whom the registration ZK ARQ was allocated, but neither aircraft was ever completed and the components from FM53 at least were sold locally to Leavens Bros as a consignment of spares.

At Manurewa near Auckland in 1984, Jim Lawson began work on a Fox Moth

project and aware of the situation, requested permission from authorities in Canada and New Zealand to identify her as FM53, a proposal that was willingly accepted by all parties. A new fuselage from the consortium stock at Dairy Flat was allocated to the project which also took up the still available letters, ZK-ARQ.



On 22nd June 2015, in the summer rain, Cliff Lovell and Martin Honeychurch loaded the fuselage of the immaculately restored ZK-AGM (4085) into a box-van at Hungerford for the journey to Rendcomb Airfield where the aircraft was to be assembled, inspected and cleared for a first flight. (Mark Miller)