

# Jack Meaden - The Flying Years

The following article is written partly to celebrate Jack's own flying career and the role that he played in post-war civil aviation and partly in the hope of rekindling something of the flavour of club flying in that period. It is based on his pilot's log books, kindly loaned by his son Rex, and on various histories of Staverton operators which he kept on file. With over 130 aircraft in the logs some selection is necessary, but the first mention of any particular registration is indicated in bold type.

**Right:** Jack Meaden with the Gloucester Flying Club's green and cream Tiger Moth G-ADIH (fitted with Queen Bee fuel tank), probably in 1948. The boy in the rear cockpit and 'Moirá' in the front are otherwise unidentified. (JM Collection)



## Part One

After leaving the FAA Jack began flying training with the Wiltshire School of Flying at High Post (Salisbury) on 6.7.46 in Auster 1 **G-AHKO**. First solo came on 3.8.46 after 9 hours tuition, followed by the use of other Auster 1s **G-AHAF**, **G-AHKN**, **G-AHUG** and J/1 **G-AGVP**, Tiger Moth **G-AHXO** at Cambridge and Magister **G-AHKP**. His PPL No.25519 was issued on 25.10.46 and RAeC Aviator's Certificate No.22007 on 28.10.46.

**1947:** Still at High Post but increasingly flying at Thruxton and occasionally at Eastleigh. His last flight with the Wiltshire School was in G-AHKO on 6.7.47, by which time Tiger Moths **G-AHZH** and **G-AINX** had also been flown. Having failed the medical for a commercial licence, on his move to Gloucestershire Jack joined the only club then operating at Staverton, the Gloucester Flying Club. The Club had bought Tiger Moth **G-ADIH** from the Air Ministry after acquiring it unofficially as 3654M from No.2006 ATC Sqn in Cheltenham, made it airworthy, painted it green and cream and named it "Dinah" on the starboard cowling. His first flight with the GFC in G-ADIH was on 27.7.47, later transferring to Magister "Dora" **G-AJDR** similarly green and cream, in which he soloed on 7.9.47.

**1948** Flying in G-AJDR continued but on 5.2.48 Murray Chown, who ran Gloucester Aviation Services, flew JM up to Lichfield in his Cessna C-34 Airmaster G-AEAI to collect Magister R1819 (to be **G-AKMR**) which he ferried to Staverton on a Permit. Jack was rapidly building hours and instructing experience, mainly in 'JDR, including a forced landing 21.2.48 at Staverton when magneto failure occurred, fortunately close to the field. Familiarisation flights followed in Auster 5 **G-AKMB** and Chrislea Super Ace **G-AKFD** with its universal wheel control and tricycle undercarriage which visited on 15.5.48. Tiger Moth 'DIH and Auster 5 **G-AKMC** were flown frequently from May, the latter participating in a height judging competition at a Staverton display 3.7.48.

The Gloucester Flying Club closed down in mid-1948 but from late July to October Jack kept GFC members flying by hiring Inter-City Air Services aircraft from Hereford at weekends. Intensive usage was achieved - on 25.7.48 logging 9 hrs 50 min in J/1 **G-AIRB** and on 19.8.48 a further 8 hrs 45 min in J/4 **G-AIPL**, later using their J/1 **G-AGTT** several times. Twin experience began on 29.7.48 in Gemini **G-AJKR**. The Magister G-AJDR was delivered to Elstree 13.7.48, while test flights were made in P2428 (**G-AKMS**) on 30.10.48 and in P6344 (**G-AKMM**) on 31.10.48, delivering the latter to Croydon on 6.11.48. Three new types were added before the year end, Plus C **G-AFUA** from 29.8, Proctor III **G-AKWE** from 4.11 and GAL Cygnet **G-AGBN** from 19.12. By the end of 1948 Jack had 269 hrs as P1 logged.

**1949** saw the Rotol Flying Club established with its first aircraft, Taylorcraft A **G-AFJO**, which Jack first flew on 23.1.49. Auster 1 **G-AHAD** was borrowed 26-27.3.49 for a trip home to Southampton. On 16.4.49 Jack delivered Tiger Moth **G-AHRR** from Hereford to Staverton and then used it for aerotows with Gloucester Gliding Club's Eon



**Above:** Former Gloucester Flying Club Magister G-AJDR had changed owners and colours by the time this photo was taken during the sixties. (JM Collection)

**Below:** Auster 5 G-AKMB was sold to Sweden as SE-BUR in 1952 but crashed there in March 1961. (C Holland via JM Collection)



**Above:** Super Ace G-AKFD at Staverton 15.5.48 as part of a tour of clubs to test pilot reaction to the aircraft and its unusual control system. (Jack Meaden)

Olympia BGA.515 and for aerobatic experience. The availability of gliders led to winch-launched flights for Jack in the Olympia and in T.7 Cadet BGA.429. Proctor II **G-AIEG** was delivered from Hereford 17.4.49 and J/1 **G-AIPW** was used for aerotows in June and July.

Familiarisation flights in Murray Chown's Rapide **G-AKOV** and later in **G-AKRO** helped to build multi-engine experience. In July Jack handled

**Right:** The Rotol Flying Club's first aircraft, Taylorcraft A G-AFJO, was used by Reid & Sigrist for a time during the war in civil marks. It was joined at Staverton in the 1950s by the Cotswold Aero Club's Plus D G-AIXA, visible beyond it. (Jack Meaden)

**Below:** Inter-City Air Services' all-yellow Tiger Moth G-AHRR from Hereford was used as a glider tug at Staverton in 1949.

(Ray Tallett via JM Collection)



the CoFA test flying for civilianised Magister **G-AKMU** which was then borrowed from owner Chris de Vere for ex-GFC members to use. On 10.7.49 Jack was re-acquainted with the GAL Cygnet, this time as **G-AGAX**, which on 12.7 he flew Staverton - Elmdon (to collect owner L Scorch) - Lymgne - Toussus; then 14.7 Toussus - Dijon - Lyon.Bron; 16.7 Lyon - Nevers - Toussus and 17.7 Toussus - Lymgne - Kidlington. Quite an epic for a first trip abroad! He also delivered 'GAX to Western Airways at Weston on 5.9.49 and took their Proctor 5 **G-AHBH** in the other direction on 17.9.49.

**1950** Local flying continued, mainly in 'FJO but also in Austers 'HAD, 'IPW, Rapide 'KRO and Proctor 'KWE. Night flying, in 'IPW, and instrument flying, in 'KWE, began and a night rating was awarded 10.11.50. Auster 1s **G-AIXA** and G-AHAD and Auster 5 **G-AIPN** featured between May and July while 'FJO was on CoFA renewal; on its return a Staverton - St Mawgan - Roborough - Exeter - Staverton circuit 14-14.8.50 made a change from locals. Tiger Moth **G-ADOK** was flown for 3 hours in November and at the end of the year Jack's P1 time totalled 510 hours.

**1951** featured a number of ferry flights. Proctor 1 **G-AHEV** was flown from Peterborough to Staverton 1.4.51 for a local owner and Viv Bellamy's Rapide **G-AIYP** (operated by Murray Chown Aviation) to Perranporth 1.7.51 and back 6.7.51. Auster J/4 **G-AIJM** was used for a photo sortie to Hurn and back on 12.5.51. On 22.9.51 he flew Rapide 'IYP empty to Jersey in order for it to provide the return passenger service to Staverton for Murray Chown Aviation - a service taken over by Cambrian Airways in 1952.

Having joined the RAFVR, Jack's service flying commenced with Tiger Moth **DE715** at No.12 RFS at Filton on 15.7.51. Other examples of the same type included **N6914**, **R4776**, **T8259**, **DE352**, **DE402**, **DE528**, **DE565** and **NL913**. Chipmunk **WD307** was a new mount on 6.10.51, followed by **WB670** which was also the last service aircraft flown with a Filton - Boston - Cranfield - Filton on 28.5.52. RAFVR flying added some 50 hours to his experience.

In **1952** Piper J-3 Cub **G-AFFJ** was new on 2.2.52, as was Proctor 3 **G-AKXK** used for a return flight to Brough on 12.4.52. Night navigation

**Right:** Dragon Rapide G-AIYP and Proctor 5 G-AHBH, believed to be at Perranporth in 1951 while operated by Murray Chown Aviation. (JM Collection)



**Above:** Auster J/1 which was used by the Cheltenham Aero Club and at times was also utilised for aero-tows. (JM Collection)

**Below:** Chris de Vere's Magister G-AKMU in Post Office red with white trim, a colour scheme which JM helped to apply when the aircraft was civilianised in 1949. (JM Collection)



**Above:** GAL Cygnet G-AGAX which performed a 'Tour de France' in July 1949, seen in wartime civil markings. (via JM Collection)

in 'IYP and 'KXK featured in May. On 15.6.52 the Log Book entry reads "Taylorcraft A G-AFJO - Staverton (local) dep 0815 arr 0820 Crashed, aircraft written off".

Jack was scheduled to demonstrate the Taylorcraft at the RAeS Garden Party at White Waltham the following day and for 3 weeks had been practising a brief routine that ended in a fast low downwind run, stall turn and landing. Entering the stall turn the engine appeared to lose power, 'FJO stalled and spun in, nose and port wing first. Unconscious for five days and hospitalised for months, Jack did not fly again until 16.11.52 and his serious leg injuries contributed to his reduced mobility in his later years.

**1953** Meanwhile the Rotol Flying Club had obtained a replacement in J/1 **G-AHCL** which Jack flew locally frequently. Several times Miles Monarch **G-AFJU**, presented by locally-based Smith's Instruments Ltd



**Left:** The Cotswold Aero Club's Taylorcraft Plus D G-AIXA being readied for flight. This was the Club's only aircraft post-war and was little flown until Manager and CFI Jack Bennett took advantage of Recreational Flying training schemes to enroll Smiths Instruments employees for subsidised flying in the early 1950s. (JM Collection)

**Below:** The Rotol Flying Club's second aircraft Autocrat G-AHCL seen earlier, in 1950. (JM Collection)

to the Cotswold Aero Club in 1955, featured from June onwards; with solo aerobatics in Gipsy Moth **G-ABJJ** 2.7.53; an introduction to the Cheltenham club's J/5 Aiglet Trainer **G-AMTR** on 19.7.53 and a session in Gemini **G-AIRS** at Southend on 30.9.53.

**1954** Regular flying in 'HCL', 'FJU' and J/1 **G-AGYT** continued, with 'GYT' being briefly returned to Cambrian at Rhoose on 15.5.54. New entries were Cotswold Aero Club Tiger Moth **G-ANER** 27.5.54 and Messenger 4A **G-ALAP** 29.7.54, the latter used for a day trip to Sandown and for ferrying a delivery pilot to Rearsby. P2 time in the Varsity **WL674** operated by Rotol was obtained during test flights from Moreton Valence on 22 and 25.3.54, followed by work on the Eland-powered prototype **VX835** at Luton on 8/9.10.54.

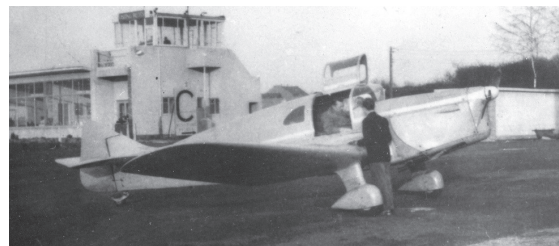
**1955** Locals, cross-country and navigation training for club members dominated the year with 'FJU', 'GYT', 'HCL' and 'IXA' all regularly used. Personal visits to Eastleigh, Sandown and Thruxton were mixed with trips to the National Air Races at Whitchurch 11.6.55 in 'FJU' and the King's Cup at Coventry 20.8.55 in 'HCL'. In addition the Monarch was flown Staverton - Eastleigh - Le Touquet - Poitiers - Bordeaux/Yvrac on 8-9.7.55 and return 11.7.75. This year 73 hrs in 'FJU' and 135 hrs in various Autocrats brought Jack's total P1 hours up to 904.

**1956** and the usual pattern endured; 'HCL', 'IPW', 'FJU' and 'NER' being flown frequently and 'IXA' and 'LAP' less often. While visiting Eastleigh in 'NER' on 1.4.56 the opportunity was taken to fly the Hornet Moth **G-ADKC** for a half hour. On 21.5.56 'HCL' went to Yeaddon and back and later Jack took in several open days, Cranfield 9.6.56 in 'FJU', Leicester East 10.6.56 and Elstree 23.6.56 in 'HCL', followed by a trip to Blackpool on 21.7.56, returning 23.7.56. By 13.7.56 he had reached the 1,000 hrs mark as P1.

**1957** was perhaps notable for the number of new destinations visited. Chivenor was added 24.3.57 on a Puffin Aero Club visit, and Portsmouth 13.4.57 where the landing fee was noted in the log at 10/-(50p), obviously considered inflationary! At this time Jack's regular visits to Eastleigh necessitated landing at Thruxton to get Special VFR clearance into the control zone. Similar clearance was required to Croydon, where he visited Vendair 6.5.57 in 'LAP' and a Czech Aerobatic Display on 14.7.57 in 'HCL'. Auster 5 **G-AKXR** was used 7.5 to 30.5.57 while 'HCL' was at Rearsby and **G-ANHW** was flown on 28.8.57. Denham was added 1.6.57, Crosland Moor 29.6.57 and Burnaston 21.7.57 for a Derby Aero Club open day. A trip to Portsmouth 3.6.57 required a return at 10,000 ft due to haze up to 9,000 ft en route.

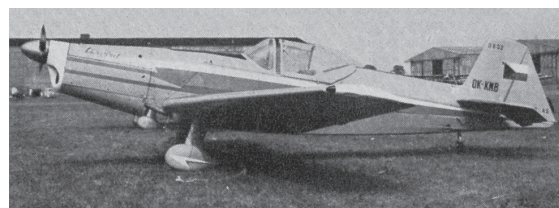
**1958** began with wintry weather! Returning in 'HCL' from Luton Aero Club on 11.1.58 snow storms were encountered. On 21.1.58 snow on the ground at Staverton meant a 20-minute warm-up prior to a local flight. Auster 5 'KXR' was again used for most of March while 'HCL' was on CofA. Taking a passenger to Croydon 22.3.58 it was necessary to land at Fair Oaks at 1330 to await a London Zone slot time ETA of 1410, actually taking off at 1350 and arriving 1415; and the whole process being repeated one week later. Interesting late summer trips in 'HCL' included a lunch patrol and air display at Kidlington 31.8, to Exeter 7.9, Plymouth 14.9 and Denham 22.9 for a MTCA radio licence - from which he returned through thunderstorms with a 1,000 ft cloudbase. Staverton to Newcastle 30.9, on to Turnhouse 1.10, back to Newcastle 3.10 and to Staverton next day, this last being a 3hr 55min flight in 'HCL' with 25-30 knot headwinds and icing.

Several more visits to Fair Oaks were made in October and November. On 8.11.58 he noted Fair Oaks "Aerodrome bogged, footpath take-off" - what would Health & Safety say today? On 9.11.58 instead of flying 'HCL' Jack made his first parachute jump from it, at 1,500 ft. On 14.12



**Above:** Monarch G-AFJU was Staverton-based with F R Milsom 3.53, S Smith & Sons 7.54 and the Cotswold Aero Club 3.55. The Cotswold Club shared their CFI Jack Bennett and their aircraft with Rotol FC members: Jack Meaden is seen here in the cockpit. (JM Collection)

**Below:** Messenger G-ALAP was also Staverton-based, with L Hudson, flown frequently by JM but seen here at Lymyne 19.8.60. (JM Colln.)



**Above:** Zlin 226A Akrobat OK-KMB was one of three which almost certainly took part in the display at Croydon visited by Jack on 14.7.57. Together with OK-KMA and -KMD it had taken part in the Lockheed Aerobatic Trophy event held with the King's Cup during that same weekend. It was their first visit to the UK. (via JM Collection)

an attempt to land Tiger Moth 'NER' at Portsmouth with the airfield partially obscured by fog (it had been completely closed the day before) resulted in the loss of the port undercarriage leg when the retaining bolts sheared on impact with a boundary marker that had been moved to avoid waterlogged ground. That earned a trip home as a passenger with L R Snook in his Gemini 8 G-AKFX. The repaired Tiger Moth was collected on 21.12. By the end of 1958 Jack had 1268 hrs as P1 and 67 hrs as P2 in his log.

**To be concluded . . .**