



# BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

*News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005*



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

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## OUR DH CHIPMUNK STORY

*By Joanna Willis and Steve Monk*

Steve and I have, ever since we first got together back in 2010, always dreamed of owning an aircraft together. Over many years we've been looking into lots of different types and getting feedback from various friends who have owned these aircraft types. We have also been very privileged to have the opportunity to fly, not only my father's PA28-180, but also some beautiful vintage aircraft owned by various friends of ours.

When a very good friend, Peter Greenyer, bought his gorgeous and unique Dragonfly the first thought that came into our heads was "wouldn't a Chipmunk look beautiful on her wing, - two De Havilland's flying together!"

Following this comment, we then started to look more into ownership of one and struggled to find anyone that had a bad word to say about them. The more research we did the more we realised that this was definitely the right aircraft for us. It covered all of our needs and was a beautiful machine to fly, but not too complicated, having been used as an initial trainer by the military, (this was especially important for me as I had never actually flown a tailwheel type before, just been lucky enough to fly with friends in their aircraft). Further things that convinced us that this was meant to be was that my Dad used to instruct on them when Surrey & Kent operated them in the 60's and



70's. Steve, having been heavily involved with the air cadets at an early age, was also disappointed that they had stopped using the Chipmunk for their air experience flights by that time. He always felt that he'd missed out on an opportunity to fly a very graceful and beautiful trainer. Also, when we looked closer into it, not only was it the first ever Airfix model I'd made as a child, but also it featured in my first ever modelling photo shoot with Pilots Pals and again in one of the first ever

photo's I had taken when I became involved with helicopters at a very young age.



Recently we were lucky enough to be kindly offered the opportunity to position the lovely little piper cub from Shipping & Airlines at Biggin Hill to Prestwick in Scotland, and return, for an airshow that was

arranged via the extremely talented Dan Griffith. Unfortunately, I was unable to make the outbound flight due to work commitments so Steve, along with other members from Shipping & Airlines, made the trip without me.



Due to inclement weather on the day whilst en-route, there was a delay in one of the departures. Therefore it was decided that the cub would only go as far as Blackpool on the Friday, and then spend the night there in a hangar (where she was safe from the elements). If the weather passed through as forecast, Steve would then continue the rest of the journey, otherwise she would live safely in the hangar until it was good enough for her to be flown home again.

Luckily, as forecast, the weather was beautiful and Steve was able to continue the journey, flying over the very picturesque views of the Lake & Peak Districts, to a little airport called Kirkbride up on the river by Carlisle. It was arranged that Steve would stop there for fuel. Steve mentioned it was a lovely little airfield that made him feel very welcome and the owner/operator even came out and fuelled him personally. They got chatting about how lovely the aircraft was and whether Steve flew any other rare vintage types. Steve mentioned that it was his dream, to own a chipmunk. Unbelievably the airport owner smiled and said. "Ooh I know a friend who's selling one - hang on

one minute"... He then very kindly put Steve and the owner in contact to discuss it further. After Steve arrived safely at Prestwick in time to put the aircraft in the static park, he called me and said, "You know that Chipmunk we've been talking about and thinking of buying in a few years time? - well I might have found us a good one already!" He then told me the story of the flight up.



*(High ground for the little Cub)*



Due to his work commitments, Steve needed to return to Biggin on a commercial flight late that afternoon, so unfortunately he was unable to stay there and enjoy the airshow. But at least it meant that we were both able to fly up on another commercial flight when I finished work on the Sunday evening. I obviously jumped at the opportunity to share such an

amazing and unique experience of doing the return flight with him.



We arrived very late that evening to Prestwick, having flown up to Glasgow then got a taxi to the hotel, arriving just before midnight. So just time to grab one quick beer and get some well needed rest before our early start the next day.

We woke up that morning to absolutely glorious sunshine, with a nice gentle but strong enough tail wind for our return flight. We were very eager to get on our way as soon as we could.

We were very well looked after by the kind and helpful ground crews at Prestwick, who provided us with the executive lounge to finalise our flight plan route. We joined the military crews that had also been based there for the weekend and they were all amazed by the vintage aircraft that we were about to fly home. This was mainly as they could not believe that we were about to fly for 7 hours, when most of them were in aircraft that flew at 300-400kts. They would all be home in their bases before we even left the Scottish border!

Having first been offered the full length of the runway we eventually got airborne from an intersection, which for us was the same as the entire length of Biggin's runway. We climbed out over the bay and along the coast, with a forecast of

favourable tailwinds and a nice high cloud base on our flight plan route, which would allow us to fly over the high ground and make it directly to Blackpool on leg one.

Unfortunately, due to the fast changing weather that often occurs over the Scottish Highlands, the cloud base lowered far quicker and earlier than forecast. We therefore elected to play safe and follow the coast until clear of most of the cloud layer to the south of the highlands. Clearly we were not remotely equipped for flight in IMC, so it was not worth risking running into bad weather and then needing to turn around, which would have also added extra time to our trip.

Once south of the main part of the Scottish Highlands, the cloud dispersed to 'few' in the area and we were able to continue on a more direct track towards Blackpool.

Flying over these highlands of Scotland made me realise just how important it is that your flight plans are correctly submitted. It brings a whole new meaning to sparsely populated areas where we sometimes didn't see a single house for up to 10-15mins at a time, which even at 45kts is a long distance. We decided sensibly to play it safe and, because of the longer routing due to weather, diverted into Carlisle for fuel before continuing onwards to Blackpool. While we were there we got the opportunity to see the Chipmunk in the flesh (although from a distance as, like all respectful pilots, we wouldn't dream of touching someone else's aircraft without their permission).

Having actually seen the aircraft, and seeing how well looked after she was, we knew that it was meant to be! After a quick fuel and toilet stop, we then continued on the most scenic part of the trip, flying over the beautifully stunning Lake & Peak Districts, before landing safely at Blackpool.

Another quick fuel and toilet stop, we then continued on route to Northampton Sywell via the Manchester VFR corridor. This was very interesting listening to the extremely busy Manchester ATC, who were also very helpful and appeared grateful for the courtesy call to them when passing through the corridor. We also spoke to Coventry on the way past, who were also very helpful. Unbeknown to me at the time, we were actually speaking to an old college chum of mine who now works there. That leg of the flight felt rather long compared to the previous legs, so we were in serious need of a cup of tea and a slightly longer break by the time we got to Sywell. It was very nice to catch up with another old friend of ours there over a cuppa before starting the final leg home.

Then came the final leg from Sywell to Biggin. We were very lucky to have great visibility, which meant that, whilst passing just to the north of the city zone, we could clearly see most of the sights of London. It was also nice hearing the familiar voices of Farnborough LARS as we got closer to our home base. We even had a quote from a pilot on frequency when they realised the "epic" as they recalled the journey we had just done! We eventually landed back at Biggin Hill to a lovely welcome from the Heritage hangar based there, (who also have their own cub), and taxied back in towards the hangar at Shipping & Airlines, where the lovely lady lives. Wow! what an adventure! Following 7 hours of flying, we were relieved to be back home safely without any issues and in time for a well needed beer!

We were very lucky to have been given such a privilege of flying this beautiful historic aircraft for this adventure. The trip also confirmed to us how much we both wanted to own our own aircraft to continue to experience such adventures together.

Several weeks later, after final negotiations, we became the very proud owners of the stunning, previously military operated, DHC-1 Chipmunk registered G-BWNT, which was completely original and, as expected, in very good, looked after, condition. You will hopefully be able to see her in person on static display at various air shows in the future, and we look forward to a lifetime of enjoyment in her!



We will also be donating experience flights to the Biggin Hill Air Training Corps 2427 Squadron next year and I believe they are very keen to use these flights as an opportunity to encourage their air cadets to get involved in activities, with the top 3 achievers being put forward to us to come for an experience flight. We thought this would be a nice gesture to give back something to the aviation industry.

We've both been lucky enough to get involved in aviation from a very young age, and it will be great to give today's young people the opportunity that is less easy for them to obtain nowadays.

We would just like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made it possible for us to purchase our fantastic machine - Special thanks must go to Peter Greenyer and everyone at Shipping & Airlines, and also those at the

Heritage hangar for all of their encouragement. It was these people that gave us the opportunity in the first place to fly their beautiful vintage machines, which introduced us to a love for tailwheel vintage aircraft.

Thank you, safe flying to you all.

Joanna / Steve



My Dad seems to have got himself in the pictures (story) somehow, but it seems only fair as he had instructed on the Chipmunk in the old days of Surrey & Kent training Air Cadets back in the 60's & 70's





**THEY FOLLOWED A 'VISION'**

Claiming it came from above, without any form of navigational aids, maps or flight logs, only their *'blind faith'* in navigational skills from the heavens above, even tracking the stars (*in daylight*) no restricted CTZ's or PPR's to these special envoys of god!

This story (above) arrived on the Bugle's front desk. We are not sure if they achieved their goal!



**THE 'CROWN INN' KESTON**



**FALCON FLYING SERVICES**

Held their Annual Party here on the 27 November 2015, which is under new management of Michelle and Oral as their hosts for the evening.



Falcon & EFG guests, enjoying the great food and company.

**FALCON STAFF CAN ADAPT**

To all sizes of aircraft nothing is too much or too little. the company has been established at Biggin Hill for 37 years. (1978)

**EFG 'ANNUAL DINNER'**

Was also held at the Crown Inn, on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015. Flying club members enjoying their Xmas Roast Dinner



**SULTRY EASTERN EYES**  
from Falcon's propeller division.

