



MEET THE MEMBERS

This month we meet aerobatic enthusiast Corinne Dennis

Current job/past career?
I am a cycle clothing designer and distributor, helping people to enjoy their sport in greater comfort.

What sparked your interest in aviation?
My older brother was always into aeroplanes and eventually joined the RAF (although I actually learned to fly before he did), so there were always books and Airfix kits hanging around our childhood home. I clearly remember as a child lying on the lawn staring up at the sky and thinking I would like to live up there amongst the clouds...

Much later in life a girlfriend rang me up and said, "I've thought of something brilliant we can do – lets learn to fly!" We had pretty much run out of other ways of getting into trouble at that point, and it brought back those childhood memories.

What aircraft, where and when was your first flight?

I had my first lesson at Full Sutton Airfield on my 39th birthday, and then flew twice

a week for the next few months and completed my course in 35 hours. There was no previous history of flying in the family other than brother Ben having had a few rides in JPs. I'd had no previous flights before my first lesson.

What types of aircraft have you flown?
Not many really; I learned in a PA-28, tried a C150 and then started aerobatics in a Robin 2160 and continued in the delightful Cap10B funded by a 10-hour scholarship from Diana Britten. I then bought a ¼ share in a Pitts S-1S, which was fab to fly, and a little beyond my landing capabilities at the time; unfortunately I did bend it... When I bought the lovely Extra 230 I vowed never to fly a Pitts again – now I am building one!

Do you have a favourite and worst type?
In my limited experience to date the Extra is a sheer delight; well-balanced and extremely well-mannered. Changing from the Pitts was like climbing out of a powerful go-kart and getting into a more powerful Mercedes. I

suppose the 150 and the PA-28 were the least fun, but that wasn't their fault.

Do you currently have an aeroplane?
I'm not flying at present as I am concentrating on building *Sunshine*, my single-seat Pitts. I bought him half built with some known, and many unknown, existing problems, anticipating a complete 'un-build' and re-start.

Since dismantling it, I stripped the powder coat from the fuselage and etch primed and painted it, constructed all new cockpit and engine panels, installed the fuel system, built the canopy and have now covered all the fabric areas.

The engine is now installed and I am currently embarking upon the wiring, having previously done the LAA Electrics Course. I hope to have him flying next year, but as I have no 'previous' at this game I may be way out in my aspirations.

What is your best aviation moment?
Probably getting my first ever medal

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for aerobatics – a Silver in the Standard Aero's Nationals in my first Pitts. I had been struggling for weeks after buying it, and then had two coaching sessions with Gerald Cooper who continued as my coach for the next few years. He took me from hopeless to a medal in a few short, fun-filled flights.

Do you have other non-aviation hobbies/interests?

Yes, a fair few including cycling, running, triathlon, walking, skiing, diving, motor biking, cooking, eating and drinking – and I've just started caving and exploring disused Cornish mines.

Who are your aviation heroes?

Diana Britten, who is the only British female pilot who has competed past Advanced level, and the ATA Spitfire Women of WWII, for obvious reasons.

Any 'hairy' moments and lessons learnt?

Hmmm, too many weather-related nasties transiting to and from competitions. The worst I can recall was returning to Yorkshire from a successful contest at Duxford, and departing in glorious sunshine. I omitted to get the en route wx, and didn't even process the news from my husband who was up at Donnington in a cloudburst.

I flew into it somewhere near Barkston Heath, having become too overloaded to speak to the relevant frequency, so couldn't easily get help. I grovelled my way up the A1 from Peterborough with both hands frozen on the stick, paralysed with fear. At least I had the presence of mind to wind the prop back, which did save it from damage. I had hardly ever flown in heavy rain before and just didn't know what to expect. The plane didn't fall out of the sky, and I managed to stay above ground level, and after what seemed like eternity a streak of light appeared through the black, and I knew I might not die. Never have the power stations on Yorkshire looked so welcoming.

Lessons learned? Always check the wx, turn back if its crap, if you don't and do get in the mire, LAND if you overfly a perfectly good airfield, even if it is military (actually that should be 'as early as possible') and lastly if you do get into trouble, talk to D&D.

An earlier 'look over the edge' was finding myself at the top of a vertical climb in the Extra with a completely jammed elevator. I managed to get the aircraft pointing at the ground, not knowing whether I was going to be able to pull out of the dive. I did, obviously, but the 10 minute flight back to landing became more and more frightening, not knowing if or when it would jam again.

The landing, following a Pan call, was thankfully uneventful. I returned the aircraft straight to its hanger and started taking the back end apart. The battery box of a noise cancelling headset was lodged in the very end of the fuselage. A lucky escape... lesson learned, be careful who you share an aircraft with!

What's on your aircraft wish list – to fly or own?

Mainly to fly the one I am building. And maybe build a two-seater next.

Any advice for fellow pilots?

Enjoy every day as it comes, we don't know how many we have been allocated. ■

FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FUTURE

By Philip Hall



Unless you have spent the past few weeks walking around with your eyes closed, you will doubtless be aware that the festive season is once again almost upon us. In the tradition of shameless plugs, it is not too late to buy your loved ones a little something from the LAA shop and if you are lucky, we may still have a Rally t-shirt in your size.

I hope that the whole of the GA community has received an early Christmas present with the announcement of a new GA unit at the CAA and a promise of reducing bureaucracy through the Government's Red Tape Challenge; these are exciting times! It will be sometime before we are able to measure the success of these initiatives, but I certainly welcome any carefully considered changes which promise to improve the prospects for GA here in the UK.

On a slightly different scale we have also had some excitement here at Turweston with the completion of a simple IT project, 'My Aircraft Data'. This addition to the member portal has been designed to give you better access to the data we have on both your aircraft and the status of applications such as modifications. The system is now available when you log into your account on the LAA website and we will be publishing more detail in the next issue of *Light Aviation*.

Whilst the only things certain in life are death and taxes, it is fair to say that inflation is pretty hard to dodge too. Along with all the other economic pressures, the New Year will bring an increase in the fees the Association has to pay to the CAA. The original increases proposed by the CAA would have equated to a week's holiday in Torremolinos for each and

every LAA aircraft owner, but it is the hard work of our own team – Graham Newby and James Tannock along with Geoff Weighall at the BMAA – that has helped to reduce these fees to a more sensible level. As we enter budget season, the finance team have to try and steer the Association in a prudent fiscal direction and balance the coming year's books and, whilst the numbers have not yet been finalised, some of our own fees and charges will inevitably have to rise.

I have to admit if someone had asked me a year ago what the Armstrong-Isaacs Foundation was, I probably would have guessed at an academic body pursuing further research into the effects of gravity or some

other physical phenomenon we have yet to fully understand. So it was a privilege to be invited to assist in the interviews of several young hopefuls who have applied for this year's flying scholarship awards. The candidates presented a very high standard, each having a slightly different motivation for wanting the award and ultimately what they would do with the new

found freedom of their own pilot's licence. As the saying goes, "You shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers," and it is all too easy to consider the teenagers of today as being in some way less socially minded or more self-obsessed than previous generations. The level and nature of voluntary activities performed by our applicants, all aged between 16 and 21, suggests that idea couldn't be further from the truth and, as an association that heavily relies on volunteers, we should take comfort in the fact that the spirit of volunteering still endures.

As the year draws to a close I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year. ■

