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AIR YORKSHIRE

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COMMITTEE REPORT

The Air Yorkshire Group committee consists of Dave Allan, John Allen, Ian Barber, Andy Barker, Steve Langfield, Dave Senior, and Len Spice. Any ideas, suggestions, or complaints regarding the AYG should be submitted to one of these people for discussion at one of the monthly committee meetings. Class A and Class B members will have received their membership cards with this magazine issue, and wherever possible the membership number should be used in correspondence to the group.

GRAND RAFFLE

Tickets can still be obtained at 5p each from the Hon Treasurer at the Air Yorkshire meetings. First prize is a six volume set of the History of World War Two (worth about £20), and the second prize is four BARG monographs on the Beverley, TSR2, Meteor TT20, and Javelin 7, 8, and 9.

COACH TRIPS

The venues and dates for this year's programme are currently being worked on, and further details will appear in future magazines. AYG members will be able to obtain coach seats at a reduced price - another advantage for being an A or B member!

MEETINGS

The next gathering occurs at the Yorkshire Aeroplane Club at the Leeds/Bradford Airport on February 2nd at 1500 hours (courtesy of the club directors), and will feature another very popular quiz organised by Dave Senior and John Allen. All members are invited.

AV ADS

PRESTWICK AIR LETTER is published monthly by the Prestwick Airport Aviation Group and features full details of all aeronautical activities at Prestwick including Bulldog and Jetstream production, plus occasional articles, reports etc. Send £1.00 for a year's subscription, or for a free sample copy contact:- Mr K Thom, 27 Bellevue Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, KA9 1NJ.

Complete AIR PICTORIALS for sale, mint condition bound sets 1962 to 1973. Offers to S.A.Langfield, 67 Orchard Grove, Idle, Bradford, BD10 9DT.

NEXT PRESS DATE FOR AIR YORKSHIRE IS FEBRUARY 8TH

Tribute to the Rapide

Charles Shea-Simonds

No aeroplane has given such service to sport parachuting and in doing so created such affection. Between 1934 and 1946 some 727 de Havilland Rapides were produced. In 1958 there were 75 on the British register, but now there are only half a dozen still airworthy. Had it not been for it's involvement with sport parachuting it is very likely that the Rapide's life would have been shorter still; what executive wants to fly around in a fabric covered aeroplane with a speed of a Cessna 172, powered by outdated engines that are almost impossible to replace? About 20 different Rapides have been regularly used for sport parachuting apart from 2 Dragons (the Dragon Rapide's predecessor). Why the Rapide's suitability for parachuting? Can you find an alternative that can lift 9 jumpers to 12,000 feet for a fuel consumption of about 20 gallons per hour - especially when the capital outlay involved in the early 60's would be about £2,000 for a respectable example? She had an easy exit for students. As a relative work platform four jumpers hanging on outside the door for a fast exit is not an uncommon sight! Yet it was the role that designers never even considered!

The first Rapide that seems to have been used regularly for parachuting was G-AJHP which belonged to GQ Parachuting. In 1954 she was loaned by Sir Raymond Quiller for the training of the British Parachute Team. This must have been the only Rapide equipped with Decca, and a number of drops were done blind, with spotting done by the pilot using his navigational system! The aircraft went out to St Yan, France and was used during the 2nd World Parachuting Championships, where Great Britain finished 5th out of six nations competing.

The db Dragon was a smaller aircraft and powered by two Gipsy Majors rated at 130 hp. Her all up weight was 4,200 lb compared to the Rapide's 5,500 lb, the latter being dragged along by two 204 hp Gipsy Queen III engines. One survivor of the breed remains in the country - G-ACIT (built in 1933). This historic aircraft was originally purchased by Captain E. Fresson for Highland Air Services (later Scottish Airways), and was used in the early 30's for much of the pioneering flying involved in his opening of routes in Scotland, the Orkneys and the Shetlands. She was used frequently for parachuting and is now kept at Southend in flying condition. Built a year later was G-ADDI, another Dragon and operated in the 60's for pleasure flying and parachuting by Chrisair, a splendid operation, consisting of Chris Roberts and his glamorous wife Clair, who is also a first class pilot. Chris Roberts working all one Friday night at Sywell in 1966 removing a Gipsy Major from an Auster and installing it in the Dragon so we could use it for a display at the Derby Show the following day is well remembered! G-ADDI was sold in an airworthy condition to the USA only a couple of years ago.

The oldest Rapide regularly used for parachuting was G-AEML built at Hatfield in 1936. Based at Coventry, Fanshanger and Denham, she was used frequently for displays and it is at Coventry that she now rests in a part rebuilt state. It is hoped that she will stretch her wings again in 1975.

G-AGJG is a typical example of a Rapide built as a Domine by the Brush Coachworks Company in Loughborough in early 1941. She served as X 7344 until 1943 when she obtained a CofA with Scottish Airways. After working subsequently for BEA, Adie Aviation, Mediterranean Air Services, Island Air Services and Swansea Airways Ltd., she finally came to Thruxton in 1962 having been bought by Gerry Dommett. From then on she has been almost constantly used as a parachute platform. She ended her days at Halfpenny Green in November 1974 when the CofA expired and the current owners, Aerial Enterprises Ltd., decided a further CofA too expensive. Still airworthy at the time of writing her future looks grim: thirty year old wood and fabric aircraft left out in the open don't last long. Yet here is an aeroplane that at the 1974 British RW Nationals was out-climbing the Red Devil's Islander to 8,500 feet, both aircraft with eight jumpers aboard! The following story may illustrate why Rapide's provoke such affection. "It was the last lift of the day. I had just refuelled 'JG' with probably more fuel than usual as we were planning an early start the following morning. On running up the engines, I got 2,100 rpm on the port engine, but only 1,950 on the starboard. I put this down to a frantically popping exhaust gasket and started the take off. A quick check on the elevator trim, OK. The tail rose sluggishly and the airspeed with it. I passed the point of no return. The trees at the end of two-eight were getting closer - alarmingly! I eased back on the yoke

