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Friday 26th December 2025

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### We hope you had a GREAT Christmas Day!

This festive newsletter includes a quiz and some fascinating articles for your reading enjoyment, especially if you are chilling for an hour between parties!

Why not spread some Christmas cheer and send this newsletter on to someone you know - a relative or close friend? **Forward on with a covering greeting!**

**Our regular newsletters continue next Friday.**



### My three Uncles...

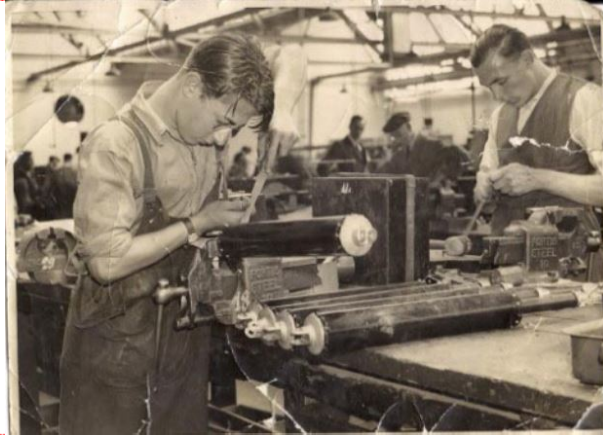
**Concluding our short series of memories from the Mosquito Prototype's Maiden Flight in late November 1940**

#### Unsung Heroes - Part 3 of 3

Roger Coasby tells us about his third Uncle, one of three De Havilland workers in his family that would inspire him to follow in their footsteps to a career in aviation engineering.

*(Read earlier issues from the link at the top left of your browser window).*

**Dick Whittingham**



*Dick as an apprentice in the machine shop at de Havilland, Hatfield.*

Richard 'Dick' Whittingham started a five year apprenticeship with De Havilland at the age of 15 in 1935.

He did not make a very auspicious start, because he wasn't shown which part of the factory he was about to start in. By the time he had found the fitting shop where he had to see a Mr. Kelley, it was not eight o'clock, **it was about ten past!**

When he told him who he was Kelley said, "There was a job here for you at eight o'clock but there isn't one now." And he just went back into his office, Dick walked away back down the passage absolutely shattered and completely distraught not knowing what to do. When he had walked about fifty yards he shouted after Dick, "Come on, I'll give you one more chance."

He had only been taught woodwork at school and immediately Dick started work at De Havilland's he was given metalwork to do. No instructions, he just had to watch what everyone else was doing and try to pick it up as he went along.

He eventually left the fitting shop because apprentices were moved around in the factory to give as much experience as possible. Dick spent the next twelve months making tools and working with the toolmakers in the tool making department and then he moved to a shop called the 94 shop, which was making the DH94 which was a two seat moth minor and it was made almost entirely by boys.

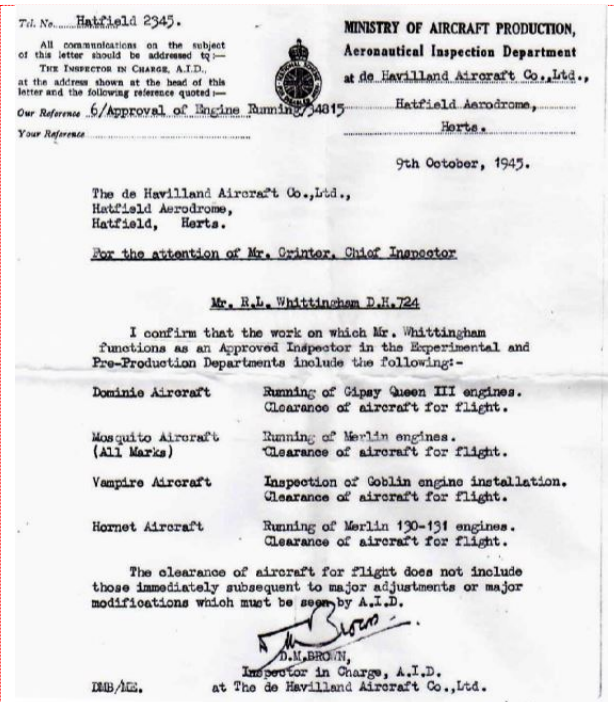


*Dick aged about 20 on his trusty motorbike.*

They had started to build Mosquitos with a production line set up in the erecting shop and he was working on that, installing flying controls together with a mate and the two of them used to do one aircraft a day and then the whole line moved up once per day.

He then became an inspector and he hadn't been an inspector in the erecting shop for very long when he had a real stroke of luck. He was transferred to the experimental flight test department as an inspector.

He was working initially on the Mosquito bomber and fighter prototypes. That's the one that's at Salisbury Hall on display at the moment. They were undergoing a full flight test programme. He had to inspect them, run the engines and sign them out for flight each day. He used to taxi them as well. He also had the opportunity to fly in them occasionally, particularly at the weekends when things were quieter.



*Dick's approval letter to become a pre-flight Inspector.*

By this time, Dick was fortunate enough to occasionally get flights in the Mosquito with either Geoffrey de Havilland, or his brother John, who was more about Dick's age. Dick had an interesting flight with Geoffrey one day in one of the prototype Mosquito's.

They took off and flew over Hatfield Park and he circled around there for a bit and he said "Can you see anybody yet?"; after that, Dick looked over his shoulder and said "There's a Spitfire catching us up." So he said "Right" and he opened the throttles wide and made off in the direction of Hertford. After a bit he said "Is he still with us?"; and it was obvious to Dick that this was a bit of a set up between the two pilots that they were having a race, and after about five minutes there was absolutely nothing between this latest Spitfire and this old prototype Mosquito.

When Geoffrey saw that he wasn't going to get away from the Spitfire, he pulled what was called the tit. It was the emergency boost over-ride toggle in the instrument panel. It was wire locked to stop the pilot from doing it and you could only be allowed to use it for a few seconds. Anyway, when he pulled this out, they absolutely shot away from this Spitfire.

After landing, this other pilot turned out to be Flt. Lt. Hartnell, who was the chief test pilot at the time of DH Propellers over the other side of the aerodrome, and he came over. He said, "I know what you did," he said "you pulled the tit didn't you?" Geoffrey said, "How could I? I had an inspector with me - he would never have allowed that." Dick just kept quiet; but it was just interesting to see the difference between the performance of the two aircraft at that time.



In 1942 Dick was married to my mother's sister, Vera. They first met at the De Havilland Hatfield Site; hence my connection to him.

The prototype Mosquito fighter serial W4052, had a hard life including a lot of flying and a couple of wheels-up landings. One day a pilot said to Dick he had noticed one of the engines flopping up and down in flight. So, they jacked it up and took the weight off the engine and checked that it was fully bolted to the spar. Everything seemed secure, which Dick told him.

About a week later, another pilot said to Dick "That engines still going up and

down, you know" When Dick looked disbelieving he said, "Well, come on I'll show you what I mean." Dick got in and he took it up and after going along in straight and level flight for a bit he set up a porpoising motion, just pushing the stick forward and back really quite gently. Then he said, "Look out at the starboard wing at the engine." Dick looked out and said "Nothing wrong with it." He then said now look at the port one." The front of the engine seemed to be going up and down about 8 or 9 inches. Dick was absolutely horrified and then realized what had happened.

It wasn't that the engine wasn't securely bolted to the wing, it was the fact that the wooden structure of the wing was starting to come apart internally. After we landed he refused to sign it out any more. That's the last he saw of the poor old fighter prototype.

In late 1943 the first prototype W4050 was coming to the end of its development career. Dick retained his wartime diaries which recorded by serial number every individual aircraft he had inspected and worked on. He indicated that the last flight of W4050 took place around December 1943. His diary entry for 7 January reads "spent most of the day compiling a list of non standard parts and doing a general survey prior to the aircraft being scrapped." Clearly scrapping never took place and that Mosquito now holds pride of place in the de Havilland Aircraft Museum, where it was first manufactured all those years ago

After this, the priority for Dick changed and he was to concentrate more on the Spider Crab (later called the Vampire). At the end of working at De Havilland, since joining as an apprentice he finished his career as a senior production engineer supervising wing construction for the BAE (DH) 146 in the USA.



### Our '4 Engineers' Appeal continues...

Can you help us with a donation today?



**Can we build up to our funding target by the end of February?**  
In the New Year, we need to contract four quality aircraft engineers to bolster the Retrotec workforce for a period of 4 months.



Donate For 1 Engineer



Donate For 2 Engineers



Donate For 3 Engineers



Donate For 4 Engineers

[DISCOVER MORE & SUPPORT OUR '4 ENGINEERS' APPEAL HERE](#)

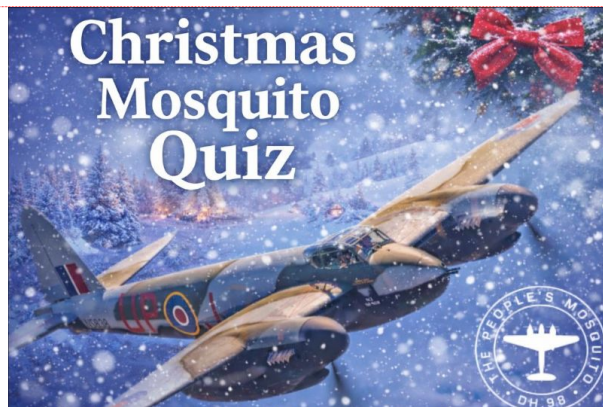
Thank you for any consideration you can gift. Very much appreciated.



### Mosquito Video Theatre

*The Stockholm Express...*

Enjoy this video with superb period footage.  
(Hint: It actually includes answers to some of the quiz questions...)



Purely for your holiday season fun, see how many of the following 25 questions you can answer. The answers will be in next week's newsletter.

1. What was the most famous nickname given to the De Havilland Mosquito?
2. Which legendary Rolls-Royce V12 engines typically powered the Mosquito?
3. True or False: The Mosquito was originally designed as an unarmed fast bomber.
4. Where was the first Mosquito prototype designed and built in secret?
5. Which specific wood was used for the aircraft's box spars?
6. In which three countries was the Mosquito manufactured during WWII?
7. What was the calibre of the "Tsetse" anti-shipping gun fitted to the FB.XVIII variant?
8. Who was the chief designer of the Mosquito at De Havilland?
9. In what month and year did the Mosquito prototype (W4050) make its first flight?
10. How many crew members typically operated a standard Mosquito?
11. What was the primary defense of the early bomber variants?
12. Which famous physicist was smuggled out of Sweden in a Mosquito's bomb bay?
13. What colour was the Mosquito prototype painted during its test flights to indicate its secret status?
14. Approximately how many Mosquitos were produced in total across all variants? (*..to the nearest 100*)
15. Which specialised weapon was a smaller version of the "Upkeep" bouncing bomb designed for the Mosquito?
16. Which RAF unit first operated the Mosquito in a photographic reconnaissance role?
17. The Mosquito set a record for the most combat missions by an Allied bomber. How many sorties did "F for Freddie" complete?
18. Which 1944 mission involved Mosquitos bombing a prison in France to facilitate an escape?
19. Mosquitos famously disrupted a 10th-anniversary Nazi rally in 1943 by knocking out a broadcasting station. In which city did this occur?
20. Which airline operated unarmed Mosquitos to ferry cargo and VIPs to neutral Sweden during the war?
21. In what year did the RAF fly its final Mosquito combat mission during Operation Firedog?
22. Where can the original Mosquito prototype (W4050) be seen on display today?
23. In what year was the last De Havilland Mosquito built in the UK?

- 24. The factory that built it is now part of which Aerospace company?
- 25. In which English county is 'The People's Mosquito' being built?

- Good Luck -

*Do pass on to fellow Aviation enthusiasts and compare your scores!*



## Treat yourself to Mosquito Artwork

We have a huge range of Aviation prints available from leading aviation artists.

This week is the perfect time to treat yourself to that long awaited artwork to enhance your home, office or works reception. Browse the range in our webstore from the link.

**SEE OUR MOSQUITO ARTWORKS HERE**



**See you next week. Have a great New Year's Eve!**

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