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Two great pieces of news this week - one bad one!

In this newsletter edition:-

- Fuselage Plywood Arrives -
- Shell Completion Campaign Settled - **RIAT 2026 CANCELLED**
- Mosquito Video Theatre - My Life as an Aircraft Engineer -
- Official TPM Merchandise -

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Fuselage Plywood Arrives!

We are delighted to report that the fuselage plywood delivery arrived at Retrotec on Wednesday and was instantly checked over before being placed into the climate controlled storage room.

All is reported to be satisfactory and to the aero-grade specification.

This now allows the team to be assembled and final tasks to be started before the fuselage lamination can begin.

We will of course have full details right here in these newsletters so do open every week and please tell your family, friends and work colleagues about the exciting few months ahead.

They could well wish to have a copy of this newsletter themselves.



The first batch of plywood comes off the van at the Mosquito workshop in East Sussex.

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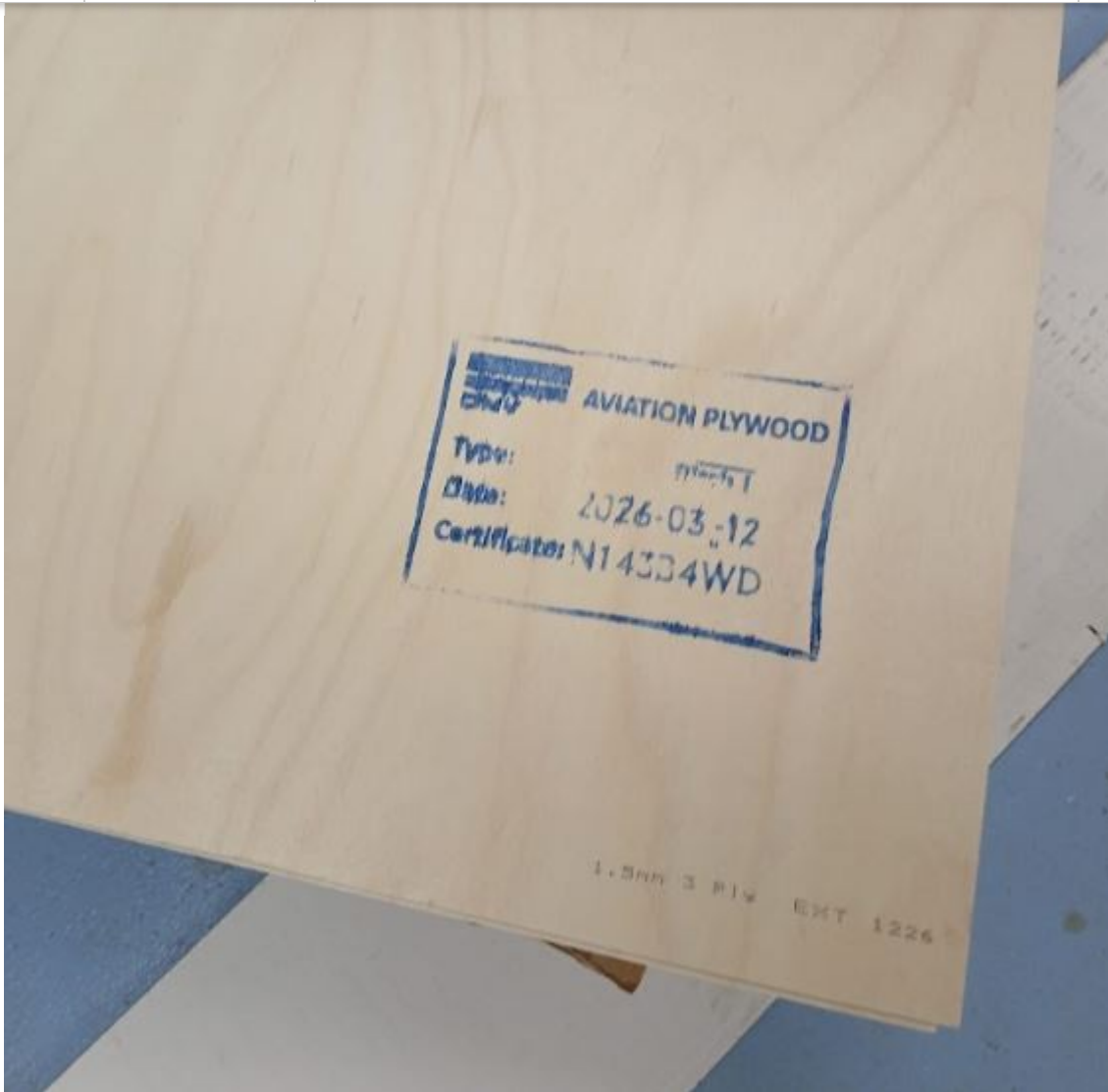
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Each sheet is stamped with a production date for tracability and standards compliance.

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The considerable consignment of specialist plywood sheeting that will now allow us to commence fuselage shell construction within the coming weeks.

Shell Completion Campaign Settled!

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We are delighted to report that a kind reader has made a considerable donation that has now cleared the outstanding balance within our '4 Engineers' Campaign.

We will now close off the Shell Completion Campaign this weekend as several people had already expressed interest in supporting this endeavour.

Our huge thanks go to Martin Cookson for his very generous donation.

Of course, we must stress the need for ongoing fundraising as we will always put funds towards other parts of the build. This single donation has certainly given the build a huge boost.

GIFT ANYTHING FROM £5 to £50 HERE

GIFT £100 OR MORE BY CLICKING HERE

Thank you for everything you can gift. It is very much appreciated.

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Just as we were closing off the editorial for this newsletter - news broke that RIAT 2026 has sadly been cancelled.

Given the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, this news was not wholly unexpected. Sadly, it cancels what is usually a great weekend for us in terms of talking to the public and in receiving good income from merchandise sales and donations. We will now be looking to see where else we can send resources.

Watch this space for further details.

[YOU CAN READ THE FULL RIAT PRESS RELEASE HERE](#)

Mosquito Video Theatre

The Advantages of Wood in World War II Aircraft Design

This video gives an excellent overview of how De Havilland thought ahead and developed the Mosquito, despite industry scepticism that wood was already an outdated technology.



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A serialised extract from an article originally published in **Pylon 2021** - the in-house magazine of [the de Havilland Aeronautical Technical School Association](#).

We thank them for their support in providing such great historical content.

Written by JOHN LIDINGTON (DHE Stag Lane 1944-48)

In 1944 I started my apprenticeship at Salisbury Hall, going through the various workshop stages and factory units and eventually concluding my training at the London Aeroplane Club at Panshanger Airfield Services, repairing light aircraft. I became an Aircraft Engineer after passing the examination for the 'A' licence.

Without further ado I commenced my working life in the commercial world of aviation in Dorset, servicing Avro Lancastrian aircraft of F.R. Aviation. Their role at the time was flying on the Berlin airlift transporting fuel to the German public in West Berlin.

At the end of the contract I was made redundant so job seeking was the thing to which I turned my attention. Eventually I found a job with the DH Service Department at Leavesden Airport, working on several DH aircraft under major repair. During that time I was seconded to a working party to salvage the Comet 1 that had crashed at Rome Ciampino Airport.

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Comet 1A G-ALYZ crashed on takeoff at Ciampino on 26th October 1952. Photo via John Lidington.

After completing this tour and returning to Leavesden Airport my attention was drawn to the work situation and my future wife who worked in the offices. It was at that time whilst looking through Flight International magazine that I noticed an advert for aircraft engineers in the Channel Islands to work on their DH 114 Heron aircraft. I applied to join them and was accepted. In April 1956 I joined the company in Jersey, flying from Croydon Airport. After adapting to the new surroundings I commenced my relationship with the company known as Jersey Airlines.

With their permission I returned to the UK to be married and then stayed for many years servicing the Herons and doing minor and major inspections, which included major repairs. During this time I increased my licence coverage to cover the Heron Series 1 & 2 and on successfully passing the examinations the company kindly asked me if I would become an Inspector, which I accepted, then later on I became a Section Inspector. My new wife adapted to her successful role of supporting me in our new surroundings.

During this time, we were faced with further aircraft types which came in for maintenance, i.e. the Handley Page Dart Herald, Douglas DC3/C47 Dakota and Vickers Viscount. All the Heron aircraft were later sold off as the company preferred longer haul routes. Unfortunately, in 1968 industrial action by the pilots was upon us which eventually made quite a large number of staff redundant, so job searching was on the cards again.

As aviation employment in the Channel Islands was very limited at the time my thoughts turned to the next move, i.e. to help the finances side, property upkeep and of course keeping my wife happy with living standards. Anyway,

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Within Jersey, due to tourism the hire car industry was in great demand at the time, so I was employed in car maintenance activities. As luck would have it I was approached by my ex-Chief Engineer about taking an engineering crew to the south of France to help French engineers maintain their Herald fleet of aircraft. As we were experienced on the type my wife and I discussed this situation and it was agreed that I would go.



*HPR.7 Herald 201 of Jersey Airlines on final approach to Manchester Airport in August 1962.
(Wikipedia Commons)*

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a representative of Europe Aero Services who briefed us with the maintenance situation. After looking at the aircraft situation it was decided to get started and after reviewing the maintenance schedules of Handley Page and the necessary logbook entries on work carried out by the previous owner, I was charged to oversee the tasks. Neither of us spoke French, but we worked well under the circumstances. Working in France meant being in contact with Bureau Veritas (the French airworthiness authority) and the work progressed favourably until the aircraft which was first worked on was complete.

Following successful ground running tests, compass swing, servicing and air tests all went to plan and flying started by the company. During our stay there we were allowed time to go home for a few days which we enjoyed. On a lighter note, being all away from home the Company invited my wife and the families of the engineers to holiday in France. Whilst away, one or two further issues arose on the aircraft which put more pressure on our being there, e.g. unscheduled engine changes etc. This caused a major issue as the company didn't have the resources to keep the aircraft flying, so it meant a lot of major work had to be carried out. This meant changes of schedule for our engineers who were to stay a little longer than first envisaged.



[CLICK HERE FOR A GREAT FEATURE ON HANDLEY PAGE](#)

The Herald aircraft they were flying at the time needed a maintenance check according to the schedule.

The company asked us if we would stay a little longer to carry out this work, which we did. A major inspection required mandatory work to be carried out, which was completed and was done as best as possible. The aircraft was serviceable and was put back on to the schedule. They flew from Perpignon to Paris. So at last we returned home to Jersey, but my journey was interrupted by an unscheduled operation because one of the aircraft suffered major damage to the front pressure bulkhead.

This meant the aircraft had to be flown to HP Radlett after a temporary repair. This was devastating news for the Company because it took the aircraft out of service for a while.

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countryside: the mountains and sea all were beautiful to see. As we were finishing our tour of France the next step was to return to Jersey and take stock of the situation, as during the time we were working in France salaries and wages were paid, plus our board and lodgings in a hotel and restaurant, so finance-wise, I was not embarrassed.

John's story continues next week....

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