

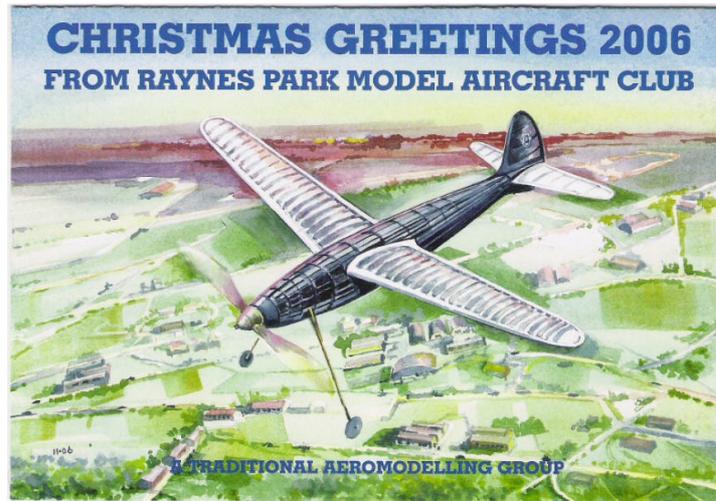
Sticks and Tissue No 1 December 2006

This is the first newsletter, hopefully of many, aimed mainly at vintage aeromodelling with the bias being towards R/C. The idea came following the 2006 R/C vintage season's last event in the South that being at Cocklebarrow. At that time there was no central reference for the Tomboy 3's competition so no one actually had a focal point to look up the rules, events, hints and times for the year. This newsletter was supposed to be that reference point to be updated as and when and issued to the Tomboy competitors with perhaps three or four a year, consisting of a couple of pages each. Copies mainly to be sent by email with a very limited number by snail mail. The limit on the latter due to time and expense. There is no intention, as has been suggested, of competing with SAM speaks that plainly would be ridiculous, but may for many if successful, complement that publication. It will not be strictly vintage and will include modern aeromodelling elements although they have to be sympathetic to the vintage spirit e.g. no ARTF's, helicopters, fun flyers, jets and so on. At the end of the day it will only succeed or fail based on the amount of interest shown by similar minded Aeromodellers. I do not have a website for the newsletter however it will be posted on other peoples websites starting with the Raynes Park MAC by courtesy of Alan Holmes. I would of course ask if anyone can write an article, send in photos etc please contact me or just email. james.i-parry@tiscali.co.uk 01202 625825 We'll just see how it goes.

Thanks in no particular order go to Tony Tomlin, Mike Cummings, David Kinsella, Alan Jupp, Dave Day, and Alan Holmes

SAM 35 Yearbook

I notice in SAM Speaks that No 14 is now out and can be obtained for the small sum of £7.00 inc P +P from Ron Knight at 14a Enmore Gardens, London SW14 8RF.

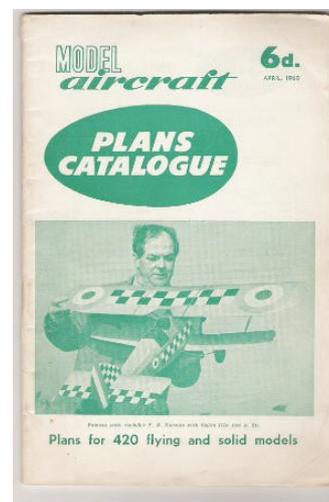
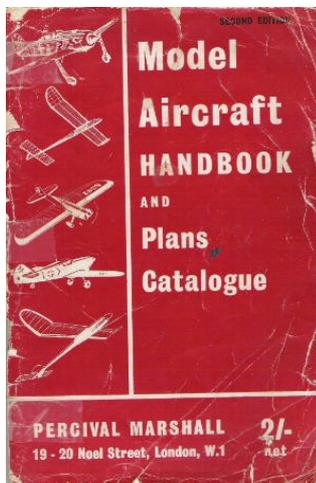
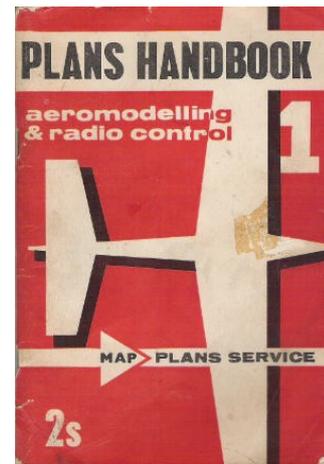


Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without Mike Cumming's card. So here it is for everyone's delight. Mike also drew/adapted the logo at the top of this newsletter.

Handbooks

I remember when quite young looking at the various aeromodelling plans handbooks and wondering if I would ever make the more exotic models, as they seemed at that time, which in turn amounted to anything F/F powered by something other than a Mills 75, Dart or Merlin and whether another attempt at more than a KK Champ was likely to bear fruit in C/L, R/C was not for mere mortals. Many happy hours were spent reading, re reading and gazing at the available plans and how to columns. In fact even now one particular handbook evokes strong memories and of course the original was chucked out along with those early days of model flying as other interests evolved! So to find a copy of that particular handbook and look at it again was quite something.

On a visit to Wallington, in the course of work, I called in to see Alan Jupp my mentor for all things free flight including just about every plan and publication and fact ever, a walking encyclopaedia on the hobby. I borrowed from him a few old handbooks and to my great delight included the copy I had long ago relinquished. (orange and black checked). So in order to jolt a few memories from others I scanned the covers for all to see and remember, mind you you've got to be getting on to remember them.



One of the handbooks, Model Aircraft, has a picture of P E Norman on the cover holding his Siskin 111A model, which he designed for Aeromodeller. This had pendulum controls for rudder and elevator and powered by an Elfin loaded with a 10x6 propeller. Now Alan has many of the P E Norman models and associated articles e.g. Camel, Gamecock, Mew Gull to mention but a few so in addition to the handbook covers I've included a photo of Alan holding that original Siskin. It still flies on the odd occasion although it was "Overhauled" recently, 1977 to be precise. Interestingly Alan was approached by a chap when flying the model who explained that he used to fly Siskins and the model was extremely accurate in its flight performance.



A happy Alan with P E Norman's Siskin 111A

Tomboy Three's

There are always interpretations of rules by competitors in competitions, which give way to whispers and nods. Whilst the Tomboy 3's competition is relatively free of this curse, but not entirely, and given that 2007 is likely to see a big increase in the numbers of those competing I thought it would be timely to reprint the rules as appeared in SAM Speaks June 2004 written by David Boddington and notes by the now deceased Michael Barton.

1. Model. The model shall be a standard Vic Smeed Tomboy design with the 36" span wing and small tailplane. Modifications to allow the inclusion of a R/C rudder and elevator are acceptable but no other major diversion to the design and construction.
2. Engine. A Mills 0.75cc to be used either original, Irvine or other replica but must be fitted with the standard fuel bowl of 3cc capacity. No other tank to be used. Any propeller may be fitted or fuel used.
3. Radio. Minimum two functions for rudder and elevator, motor control or fuel cut off are optional.
4. Flying. A minimum number of rounds will be flown each with a max allocated however the number of rounds and time of the max to be decided by the event CD on the day. Hand launching is permitted. If more than one competitor has a full score of maximums the winner will be decided by an unlimited fly off.

There is no mention of covering material but to date it has to be sympathetic with the original e.g. no obvious plastic like solarfilm although tissue look alikes, litespan, are acceptable.

To give an idea of the sort of times that are competitive set out below are the results, first three only, of the Cocklebarrow and Ripe (Eastbourne club) events. These are not the maximum potential times, as the last one up tends to land as soon as they have won. On many occasions models have been deliberately landed when still going up in a thermal.

Ripe 17.9.06
 1st Tom Airey 9 minutes 48 seconds
 2nd Tony Tomlin 6 Minutes 40 seconds
 3rd Steven Powell 6 minutes 1 sec

Cocklebarrow 11.6.06
 1st Tom Airey 8 minutes 24 secs
 2nd Paul Howkins 4 minutes 29 secs
 3rd Colin Shepherd 4 minutes 27 secs



Stephen Powell about to launch his Tomboy at Ripe 17.9.06

Tomboy Three at Cocklebarrow Farm (June meeting) by Tony Tomlin

The Cocklebarrow Farm vintage meeting on 11th June, always a very well attended vintage fly-in, this year included [with the kind cooperation of Paul and Val Howkins] a Tomboy 3s competition. The event was organised by Tony Tomlin with James Parry on the watches.

Although the entry was relatively modest the interest the comp. generated was considerable. Rules are as detailed by David Boddington in SAM 35 Speaks, Wireless World column, September 2004. Basically the model should be a 36" Vic Smeed Tomboy powered with any type of mills .75 with its integral 3cc tank. The comp. requires 3 flights, the best two counting, a Max time [decided on the day] and a requirement for the model to be down before max. time + 2 minutes.

The weather on the day was mainly sunny but with at times a gusty wind. The max was set at 4 minutes, which proved to be popular with all.

The Tomboy of Mervyn Tilbury spiralled in due to a possible battery failure with minor damage [whilst at a height that would have been an easy max!] all the other made the fly off.

This was very well attended as the five contenders started their mills each topping up their tanks and making the final tweaks [in my case a tweak to lean!] until all were running.

James Parry gave the count down and on the word go the air was alive with Tomboys all very close and climbing away. All the models seemed evenly matched apart from my model which was returning to earth with the engine stopped. The others soon gained height the winner of the recent St Albans meeting Stephen Powell being the lowest with his compression screw backing off.

Paul Howkins was enjoying the benefit of his hand carved prop with a longer engine run than most. Tom Airey was the lucky man who had found lift as the others steadily descended. Tom finally landing at 8min 24secs, The result for second and third being close with a delighted Paul Howkins on 4min 29secs just 2 seconds ahead of 3rd place man Colin Shepherd. Stephen Powell was down in 4min 1sec which considering his lack of climb was a credible performance.

Val Howkins presented the awards closing what was for all a very pleasant day.

Is This The Secret Of Success With Your Irvine Mills ? by Tony Tomlin

Over the last 18 months or so I have been involved in the Tomboy 3s series of competitions originally formulated by David Boddington. As most of you will be aware this calls for a 36" Vic Smeed Tomboy powered by a Mills .75 of any type fitted with its standard tank and of course 2 channel R/C. As the aim of the events is to climb as high as possible [hopefully leading to a long overall duration] we all look for that little tweak that will give you the edge over the others.

After building [you hope] the perfect model we require a Mills that will run forever or at least two plus minutes on its 3cc tank. It does appear that the genuine Mills has the ability to turn a large prop with good fuel consumption. Unfortunately this is not an advantage when penetration is required in the windy conditions we have experienced at most meetings. Most original Mills seem to use the Master 8X4 turning over at 6500-6800 r.p.m. with varying degrees of success. The Indian Mills are

sometimes on par with the original Mills but some are dreadful, drinking up fuel at an alarming rate! The engine I have been using recently is the later Irvine Mills [this has a heavier balanced crank than the first engines produced]. This engine normally is faster revving than the original English Mills and I use props from 7X3 up to 7X5 [8X3 Master are good but difficult to find]. My particular engine was bought through Ebay and was described as “used in the Aeromodeller magazine tests around 1990”. It cost £62.00, which was cheap at today’s Ebay prices for Mills. When first run it was to say the least disappointing. Running slow fine, but unable to rev, a quick strip down and yes you’ve guessed it, the piston crown cutaway at the back should be at the front! Soon assembled correctly and its holding around 7800 on a 7x5. Then into the model and flight tests. Guess what? Hopeless. Halfway through the tank it seems to be seizing. Every thing checked, piston fit etc, more running in, but no improvement. Then my good friend and winner of most of the Tomboy events Tom Airey pointed out that this engine had approx 20 thou sub piston induction. Looking at my other Mills most have no sub piston induction or only a thou or two. After Tom’s comments I made up a shim to sit below the cylinder flange, effectively lifting the cylinder up off the crankcase by 17thou. All back together, into the model and performance totally transformed, engine holding constant revs throughout the tank with 2minutes 30seconds + for 3cc of fuel. The reason for this improvement must I assume be caused by reducing the air entering the crankcase at T.D.C. Before, and its only a guess, perhaps the amount of air entering the crankcase was at max. revs causing a weak mixture. Incidentally the fuel I used was a 50/50 mix of Model Technics D1000 and D2000. What are your thoughts?

Tomboys over Cocklebarrow!! (October meeting) by Tony Tomlin

The third and last Cocklebarrow farm R/C vintage meeting of 2006 took place at this favourite venue on 8.10.06. ably organised by Paul and Val Howkins. As always it was well supported with 42 fliers signed in and a healthy total of 80 models. Weather wise the morning was sunny with a light breeze, as often happens, this changed as the day progressed leading to windy conditions in the afternoon which kept many models grounded.

Models ranged from Ken Swailes triple size Southerner [which after a vote from all present was awarded the prize for the best model of the meeting]. All the popular vintage designs were there with Junior Sixties being the most numerous of the medium size models. The Lanzo Bomber of Ray Haywood looked nice and a couple of Phil Smith designs, a Mini Concord and a Robot flew. The Robot flown by Tony Overton. The more unorthodox models seen included a Manx Monarch complete with a vintage E.D clockwork escapement on the rudder from Bob Stanley and a Bucks Duck flown by Tom Airey.



Also incorporated in this meeting was a competition for the Vic Smeed Tomboy, in this instance run by David Boddington. This followed the simple format of a 36" Tomboy two channel with a Mills .75 with its integral 3cc tank, a qualifying flight of 4 minutes and a mass fly off. All models have to land back in the take off field. Over the last year six of these comps. have been held each one showing an increasing level of participation. This event had 12 entries with 10 making the fly off. New fliers at this event were Derek Giles with his son both using the exquisite Mills replicas built by Derek. James Parry from Wimborne Dorset and George Ford from the local C.R.C.S club. The fliers were given 1min.30secs to start their engines and then a countdown from 10 to zero. As David Boddington shouted "Go" the air was alive with Tomboys climbing away unfortunately this coincided with very gusty conditions. Tom Airey elected to fly low and penetrated well. Others followed but had climbed into the stronger wind and forward motion was slow. After 2 mins some of the models were now gliding and the lower ones made it back to the strip. These were the lucky ones.

The "High Fliers" who were all facing into to the wind but drifting back had with the exception of Tom Airey no chance of making it back to the strip!! In the end Stephan Powell Colin Shepard and the writer had a long walk to retrieve and were disqualified, leaving Tom Airey the Worthy Winner with 9min.29sec. Paul Howkins was second with Mervyn Tilbury third.

David Boddington presented the prizes and certificates and all agreed the competition had been a great success. Next year it is intended to run more of these very popular events.

Every year the obituaries seem to be more common and 2006 is no exception. One of the aeronautical losses was Raymond Baxter and here is an obituary written by David Kinsella

Remembering Raymond by David Kinsella

The German V2 rocket was supersonic and brilliant. Worthy of Verne or Wells, it and Von Braun were behind the mighty Saturn 5 that put America on the moon in 1969. But in 1945 the V2 was a war machine.

Enter Raymond Frederick Baxter and the fighter boys of 602 squadron on Mk 16 Spitfires, their mission in March that year a flat out attack on the Shell-Mex building in Holland that housed V1 and V2 H.Q. With throttles at "Buster" (Max power), in a shallow dive for extra speed, wingtip to wing tip, bombs falling and cannons blazing, Raymond and chums charged the windows of the great building. The horrified within reached for fresh trousers.....

Raymond Baxter (1922 – 2006) joined the Royal Air Force at 18, trained as a pilot in Canada and the USA, and for the rest of his time richly enjoyed high adventure and stylish living. He was everywhere and anywhere; helming boats and Allards, broadcasting from Germany, appearing in Billy Smart's circus, starring in This is Your Life, flying Harrier fighters and lots more. Becoming a London Freeman, running Tomorrow's World on TV, the same too with Time machine, movie parts in The Green Helmet, Grand Prix and The Fast Lady, numerous Farnborough, the V2 raid painted by Michael Turner.

His motor yacht L'Orage with red steady-sail supported Little Ship Dunkirk trips. He was at Le Mans in 1955 when the Levegh disaster cancelled a certain win by Sir Stirling Moss, he being miles ahead in the magnificent 300SLR ("he is truly a living legend" said Baxter of Moss).

From his days as a fighter pilot with top button undone and an MG sports car registration MG2473, Raymond's fun with competition machinery saw him share a Lisbon Rally with Godfrey Imhof, run fast laps with Sydney in the J2 at Le Mans, secure class wins in the Monte and RAC and storm up Prescott in the V8 Fairley Special. Often he shared with Peter Harper and appeared with Jack

Brabham, yet Imhof's fireworks at the wheel is what he remembered most (part Swiss, with one blue eye and one brown, with a Russian wife, Imhof had a thing about 5, hence HLP 5, JGU 5, JUC 5, KLD 5, and other registrations including the J2 based coupe LXN 5).

General LeMay, met at the Embassy in Grosvenor Square, was another Allard man well remembered. Sadly, illness prevented an AOC Dinner date one year.

Tall and patrician, flying kit, clown's outfit, black tie, white tie Ascot full fig a challenge to Brummell himself, Raymond's home was a fine Queen Anne house set in 32 Buckingham acres, in later years a more modest abode in Henley. Blessed with a wonderful voice, he believed in the importance of style, once observing that he could never work with a boss who rode to office on a bike! I last heard from Raymond Baxter in April. He was commentating at Goodwood this summer and died on Battle of Britain Day.

Models under construction

Here is a photo of Ted Tomlin's David Boddington designed Expo 80, not vintage but in the spirit of. No doubt this will soon be seen buzzing around at Exeter racecourse.

It is 80" span, powered by an SC61 and covered in Blue/vintage solartex



Vintage/Post vintage kit suppliers



Belair have for a few years now supplied various kits of vintage origins. At the moment I'm just finishing a Viking I bought from them a few months ago. A lot of the kits are for electric power although some are IC, however there is no problem with converting to IC. The Viking was electric but when I phoned up and explained I'd be converting to IC they knocked up all the parts, laser cut, for the conversion! The model has gone together really well but it would be un natural not to make any changes, those that I've made based on little experience being changing the tailplane so that it can be held on by elastic bands not fixed. Why did I do that well being clumsy a fixed tailplane in

the back of a car with other models seems to directly result in said tailplane detaching itself anyway so I feel I've saved it the bother. The other alteration being to the under carriage. My Simplex was, well still, just about is, a great model with one exception the undercart. The number of times it bent, being of a single 8swg wire, out of shape preventing anything other than a hand launch was so annoying I put a ply plate on the bottom of the fuselage and in a most non vintage alteration made up a two legged undercarriage held on by saddle clamps. I don't think anyone at any of the events I've been to have mentioned it and this change has made life a lot easier. So in a similar manner I attended to the Viking under carriage. How nice the kit is when making the wings, each rib is identical and the spars fit perfectly. I don't miss cutting out ribs or formers. So pleased I am with the kit I'll be after a couple more next year.

Their telephone number is 08452606677 or take a look at the website www.belairmodels.com



Belair Simplex



Belair Thermic 50" glider



Belair Senior playboy

After writing this I found the website content to have changed with no sign of vintage R/C models, so I contacted Belair and this was the reply - "Sorry about the lack of vintage kits. We are still producing the kits, but are currently reorganising the site."

REPLIKIT

Soon after Steve and Mike Brannan started up Replikit I noticed their offerings, on eBay, and wrote an article for the Raynes Park MAC newsletter, following on from this Mike Brannan supplied some kits for sampling and comments and even sponsored, by the supply of a kit a Dolphin competition. The kits were made and feedback given to Mike along with the completed Veron Wagtail, which Ted Horne built. Anyway since those seemingly long ago times (June – August 2005) the Replikit company has grown and grown. The kits now are laser cut and every week there seems to be more available. Many model shops stock the products and they are always seen at events such as Old Warden SAM35 events and many more working and talking away enthusiastically about their goods. Anyway it seems that things have snowballed apart from a hiccup which the website details, a copy is set out below. Anyway they have such a momentum that I'm certain this will be only a very minor setback. WWW.replikit.com

KEIL KRAFT AND VERON PRODUCTION DENIED (Taken from the Replikit website)

The big news of course is that Amerang who own the copyright on the Keil Kraft and Veron brand names and plans have chosen not to renew the temporary permission agreement we had to produce the kits, which expired on 15th September 2006.

We have according to their wishes now removed most if not all of the kits falling under that heading. We were negotiating a 12-month licence agreement and that will not now happen.

Tough but not fatal, and although we have taken a couple of hits below the water line, we are still able to move ahead in a positive way and have quite a few projects which may have to be brought forward a little sooner than planned. We have always aimed to bring the builders back to the work table and we will achieve that aim, it will just take a few months longer. Thanks for your support.

Update on production

Although we are still hopeful of coming to an agreement with AMERANG who say they are the copyright holders of all old Keil Kraft and Veron designs, we cannot stand still in our efforts to

bring back the classic style.

We believe that the hobby should not be denied the opportunity to build and fly these old classics and we intend to continue to produce old designs, which are no longer available in kit form. These will be produced under the name of REPLIKIT or REPLIKIT CLASSICS The laser cut component parts contained in our kits are the result of our own design and the files are our copyright. We will continue to include a very well detailed construction plan. However, although the heritage of the model will be recognised, it will not include any reference to it's previous history and it is not inferred or intended to be any other than a REPLIKIT or REPLIKIT CLASSIC product. We do need to change in many ways ... and change we will.

We will begin to re-populate our pages with available kits and the true supporters of our hobby will make up their own minds on how REPLIKIT will proceed from here.



Replikit at Old Warden 14 May 2006

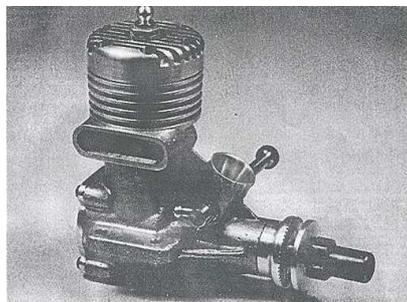


Replikit's Mike holding Ted Horne's Wagtail at Middle Wallop 28 August 2005

Unfortunately as regards Mike and Steve Brannan due, as I understand from the modelling press, to the problems with Amerang they have decided to cease production themselves and the business is being continued by Green Air Design. I'm sure all would like to thank Steve and Mike for bringing back those models that we all made in the past and hopefully can do so into the future.

Dave Day has a wonderful website full of information, www.iroquois.free-online.co.uk and it is with thanks to him that he has allowed me to lift this history of MERCO engines written by Bill Morley.

MERCO engines – The early years By Bill Morley
Originally published in 'Model Engine World', October 2002.



Ron Checkfield's prototype Merco 35. (All illustrations kindly supplied by Bill Morley.)

The origin of Merco Engines was as a direct result of the superb exhibition of CIL aerobatic flying, put on by Bob Palmer at Woburn when he and Howard Bonner visited this country in 1957. I was bowled over by this wonderful display, which included manoeuvres such as square inside and

outside loops, triangles and square eights, none of which had previously been seen in Britain. Palmer was using his Mk.1 Thunderbird powered by a Veco 35 Series II, and it planted in my mind the thought that maybe there was a niche for the production of this type of motor in this country. Bear in mind that at that time currency restrictions were very strictly enforced and the importation of goods from the USA was nigh on impossible.

Over the next few months the idea grew and in mid-1958 I decided to give it a go. I was no engineer and had no experience in the design of model engines but I had been in the model trade for eight years, chiefly as manager of Henry J Nicholls's shop at 308 Holloway Road, North London and also as sales rep for Alan Hales Ltd. During this time I had developed a large number of contacts and sources.

Enter Ron Checksfield. I'd known Ron for eleven or twelve years and had had a lot of dealings with him in his tuning of team racing engines and we had become good friends. Now, let me state that without Ron the Merco project would never have got off the ground. Sure I had the knowledge of, and the contacts in the model trade, but without Ron's genius all this would have counted for nothing. Similarly, Ron would have needed a contribution like mine to realise the project, but a good number of other people could have provided this. Ron's abilities were essential and unique. However, I have to say that, along with self-interest, there was a fair degree of altruism on my part in recruiting Ron.



Pattern of Merco transfer as supplied with each engine during Bill Morley's time with the company.

At around thirty years of age, Ron had never had a job. His mother had died when he was quite young, his father had a responsible job and younger brother George was married and had his own place. As a result Ron looked after the home while his father went out to work. Checksfield Snr. had a somewhat unusual job; he was Head Stableman at Whitbread's Brewery in East London, in charge of the teams of show horses and drays, which were used for publicity, attending fairs, shows and exhibitions all over Southern England. The teams of great Shire horses and gaily decorated wagons complete with loads of large barrels were a very impressive sight.

My view was that Ron needed to be brought out into the world of work. He had his own well equipped workshop in a room of the house and he was a brilliant self-taught engineer, at least as good as most professional toolmakers. However, his father was pretty advanced in years and I believe was actually past retiring age. He wasn't going to be around for ever and this would leave Ron in a difficult situation for earning a living - very few employers were going to take on somebody who had no work experience whatever. Ron would probably have been forced into some menial job and this would have been a sinful waste of his considerable talents. So it seemed to me that here was an opportunity to get him out of the house and into a suitable occupation while Checksfield pere was still around. The upshot was that I went round to Ron's place and put the scheme to him. Although a very calm individual, he was very enthusiastic and agreed to join at once. From now on Ron enters more and more into the picture. Over the next months a lot of

preoperational activity went on. The engine had to be designed and a prototype produced and tested. Premises had to be found, machinery to be bought and installed. Drawings to be prepared, contracted-out parts to be laid on. During this time Dennis Allen of AM Engines, who was a friend but had no official connection with the project, helped greatly. He put me in touch with the manufacturers of pressure die-castings and also those of alloy forgings (conrods). He introduced me to father and son Stan and Maurice Hayer who had an engineering firm in Balfour Mews, Lower Edmonton with vacant premises above. Here Dennis had produced his AM engines some years previously. One advantage of locating there was the ability to have parts such as crankshafts, cylinders and pistons produced downstairs by Balfour Engineering, a most convenient arrangement.



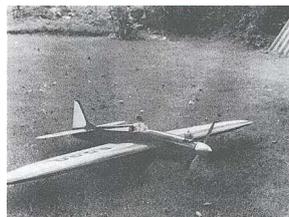
Ron Checksfield testing one of his tuned McCoy's at Wanstead Flats in the 1950s.

The Merco 29/35

Ron produced first-rate working drawings of every part of the engine, to be passed on to manufacturers of contracted-out parts. His multi-view drawings of the pressure die-cast crankcase, cylinder head and rear cover were truly works of art; the dimensions of everything were there. Nothing was left to chance, there was no possibility of error.

I had some clients in Shepherd's Bush who produced high quality sand castings of model railway parts. I arranged with them to make aluminium castings of the crankcase for the prototype engine from Ron's immaculate (what else) wooden pattern. I had two made in case of accidents - I needn't have worried. Ron made what remains the finest stunt engine of all I have ever used. I often wonder what became of it.

I installed it into a Veco Thunderbird, which was built for the 1958 Nationals on a typically tight schedule. On the morning of the Gold Trophy I arrived at Waterbeach airfield with the model never having been flown owing to it only having been finished the night before. A couple of test flights showed the engine to be steady as a rock and with plenty of power. In the Gold Trophy it performed faultlessly, enabling me to come 2nd, only three points behind winner Pete Ridgway. Naturally, Ron and I were delighted. The engine had been a joint design from discussions where I made known to Ron, the requirements for a stunt engine as opposed to the flat-out quest for sheer power predominant in his work on team race and speed motors. Then I left the arcane (to me) stuff like port timings, compression ratio, etc. to him.



"Pretty rosey shot (on a Box Brownie) of my 1958 Thunderbird equipped with Merco 35 that I flew in that year's Gold Trophy."

After that, it was back to preparation. I bought a new Myford cylindrical grinder, a four jawed independent chuck and dial gauge, a Delapena honing machine, pillar drill, lathe etc. and we got them installed in the workshop. Also to be organised were box design and purchase; advertising; design, compilation and printing of instruction leaflets; waterslide logo transfers and many other details. Meanwhile, Ron designed and made all the tooling required, which was plenty. Also an ingenious test rig for giving the engines their first run, complete with electric starter.

Eventually, at the start of 1959, we got into production. Of course, we had some problems early on, but we soon settled down into a routine. After instruction from Ron I took over operating the grinder, a fine machine enabling me quickly to become accomplished in grinding crankshaft journals and crankpins as well as cylinders and pistons. Initially Ron did all the honing but, after a short while, I shared this with him, honing, pistons into cylinders and crankshafts into main bearings. Both honing and grinding were pleasant, interesting jobs, requiring a good degree of skill. The one job I disliked was the scheduled clean-out of the grinder's slurry tank; this was a dirty, messy and smelly business and I hated it.

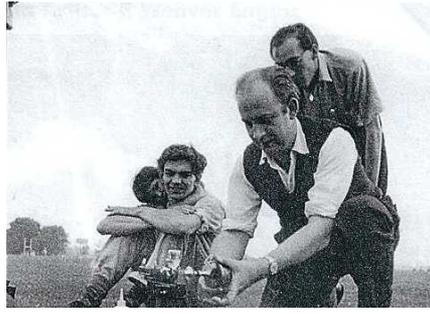
Soon, we saw that R/C was the growing market and that we would have to produce a special RIC version of the 35. So Ron came up with conversion incorporating a throttle which in one leap set the standard for all subsequent R/C throttles with its clever adjustable air bleed, much copied over the years.

In view of my 7 years' management of 308 Holloway Road I had given distribution of the engines to Henry Nicholls's wholesale division, Mercury Models, and they did a fine, professional job on our behalf. However, after about 3 years I reviewed things and realised that, although we'd made a lot of engines, we hadn't made any money and things were getting pretty desperate. In fact, we were going down the tubes and three months of low sales would sink us - I stood to lose everything financially. The firm had been undercapitalised from the outset and we had no reserve of cash to enable us to ride out a bad spell. The trouble was that by now currency restrictions had eased and model goods were arriving from America in ever-increasing quantities, thereby diluting our market. Then the clincher arrived with the offer of a job with the Keil Kraft organisation and this made up my mind - the firm had to go on the market. I laid it all out to Ron and I'm happy to say he raised no objections, understanding fully the position I was in.

The Merco 49/61

There was, however, one final hand to play. I had been giving thought for some months past to making a super, state of the art R/C engine and it seemed to me that the production of such a motor would make our firm seem highly desirable to a prospective buyer.

It was apparent that the current trend in R/C was towards bigger motors - the engine of choice at that time was the K&B 45, which was nothing more than a bored-out 35. As a result it suffered badly from vibration. Ron and I reckoned we could vastly improve on it. I had been thinking about this for some time and my concept was to eliminate vibration, as far as possible. This would require a sturdily built motor with a heavy bottom end as a stiff platform for the reciprocating mass, which would have to be light. So the crankshaft would be supported by ball races and the piston would be aluminium for lightness and therefore ringed. I did consider rear disc valve induction for a while but decided on front rotary valve as being the more convenient for mounting in an aircraft. The massive construction would lend itself to a 49 sized engine, which could be enlarged later on to a 61 without encountering vibration problems.



Standing behind Ron is Ivor Roffey, West Essex club speed and team race flier. The engine was probably prepared for him.

I put the proposed specification to Ron and said that, if he approved, he could let rip on the rest of the design and by incorporating his famous throttle it should be a winner. Ron replied that he'd see to it that it would be the best R/C engine in the world, which, when it finally appeared, it was.

Things moved on apace; Ron produced drawings and a wooden pattern from which castings were obtained, piston rings were sourced from Hepworth & Grandage (Hepolite) and bronze-bushed conrods from our forgings suppliers. Ron made 3 prototypes, all of which started literally first flick. Dennis Allen helped speed things up by making the three crankshafts for these engines from drawings supplied by Ron.

Once again, Ron's engine set the standard for all R/C motors from then on - even today's Schneurle ported examples still follow the same basic pattern. One of the prototypes went to Frank Vandenberg. After he had mounted it into his model Ron, Dennis Allen and I went over to Frank's flying field for a demonstration - very impressive. When it was over Frank anxiously enquired, "You're not going to take it away from me now, are you?". We didn't and he went on to win a lot of contests with it.

The Merco 49/61 was to be our last hurrah as a team. Word was out that the business was for sale. Ken Bedford of Eta Instruments was reportedly very keen, but my prime objective was to see that Ron came out of the sale still with a job. He couldn't have commuted from Stepney daily to Watford on his moped, whereas he could do so to Allen Engineering at Upper Edmonton. Dennis was keen to have Ron (and who could blame him?) so the decision was made for me. Ron joined AM/Merco and stayed there from 1961, moving to medical instrument makers Ferrari's Engineering when they bought out AM/Merco some years later. He stayed with Ferrari's when they in turn sold the model engine side to Forest Engineering, until his eventual retirement.

Looking back, I am proud to have started Merco; the engines won a lot of contests including Bob Gialdini's 1963 victory in the U.S. Nationals Open Stunt using a Merco 35 so far as I am aware, still the only British engine to have won this event. I am open to correction if I'm in error here. I also recall Ron turning up at the 1960 British Nationals with a Merco 35 powered Nobler sporting a Checksfield made silencer nearly a foot long. I had several flights with this model and it went through the current schedule with no trouble. Ron Moulton later said in an Aeromodeller editorial that, "You couldn't hear it at all 120 yards downwind." once again Ron C. was years ahead of everybody else.

So, although I started it, only one man was the real genius behind Merco engines - Ron Checksfield, bless him. I couldn't have done it without him. Bill Morley - Ongar, July 2002

The above article involves the West Essex club which from what I've read dominated C/L speed in the fifties and it was with great pleasure that on Saturday 2 December whilst going waterplane flying mainly as an observer, but the odd flight as well, with Tony Tomlin at Stubbers Lake, Essex I met Ken Marsh. He is still very much active in aeromodelling and a very pleasant person to chat to and have a pint with after the flying. Apparently this is now a practice that has become a ritual for the Waterbabies Club!

Control line plans

If you are interested in the above there is a website which you may find of interest, www.controllineplans.com It has a good selection and although US based does advertise many UK plans.

Batteries - Strikalite

Having taken the plunge and started to build, well got the plan out, a Tomboy I had to decide how to best equip it for lightness. I sent off for some Nimh 4.8v packs rated 180, 220 and 350 from one supplier and on receipt charged at 15 mah the first two and 30mah the last for the appropriate time and the results, following several charges and then onto the Mainlink analyser, were awful. Maximum being 140, 167, 287 respectively. I then bought a pack of 400 mah batteries from another company and déjà vu the same maximum being 287 mah, although I did pass on to Tony and he got 300 mah after repeated cycling. You know what it's like coughing up £40, wasting ages charging etc and not in the end getting what you want, I looked on the internet and found another battery supplier. Whilst they do R/C stuff their main market being amateur radio type applications. Anyway I bought four packs of 4.8v 300mah rated nimh, passed one on to Tony and guess what 340mah and 350 mah after cycling and charging. I didn't weigh them but Tony said they were about 17 grammes. They proved to be so good I've ordered some more. Oh and how much, well I sent off for another order of six packs, mixture of flat and square, with a Hitec connectors wrapped in heat shrink with 150mm leads worked out at an average £7.27 per pack including postage! They can knock up just about anything required so it's worth giving them a ring. They don't advertise for aeromodelling customers as they feel it is bit of a competitive/cut throat market and they easily sell their products elsewhere but I reckon if their range is as good as those I've bought they are well worth buying from even if occasionally it works out a few pence more although in this instance they were cheaper. The nice thing is that their stock is new so the batteries haven't been sitting around for a few years. I don't know if that makes any difference, perhaps someone could let us know with an article? Please. Contact details below as taken from the website.

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Pathe news

What a treasure trove for us modellers with an eye on the old times. Thanks to Alan Holmes I've been to the Pathe news website www.itnsource.com and searched for anything aeromodelling, all I can say there is hours and hours worth of fantastic stuff going back nearly a hundred years. I can't even hint at the amount, which is archived there it's just so much. Anyway some of the aeromodelling clips can be viewed as a preview, using Windows media player, presumably other programmes will work along with Linux derivatives. The preview is poor quality and has preview written across it but if it is something you really want then you can pay for it, not cheap, and have the full version in excellent quality downloaded to your PC. If there is something you are particularly interested in then it is well worth the expense. It's a shame BMFA haven't latched on and made a DVD to sell, under licence to ITN. Mind you the cynical comments I've had are along the lines of "It would not fit into the BMFA's own designated remit of ARTF's, R/C and electric only". Comments to me so they can be included in the next newsletter.

R/C vintage events known so far for 2007 in the South (more details to follow in the new year)

12/13 May	Tomboy 3's (Not vintage but included due to T3's comp)	Old Warden
20 May <u>TBC</u>	R/C vintage	Cashmoor Wimborne MAC
2 June	R/C vintage	St. Albans
10 June	R/C vintage	Ripe Eastbourne club
17 June	R/C vintage	Cocklebarrow
23/24 June	SAM35 gala	Old Warden
8 July	R/C vintage	Keevel Warminster MAC
12 August	R/C vintage	Cocklebarrow
10 September	R/C vintage	Ripe
7 October	R/C vintage	Cocklebarrow

As far as I know the Tomboy three's competition will be flown at all events. There is usually an event at Baldock, North London Club, but I don't at present have a date.

Photos

When I go flying I nearly always take the digital camera, and take loads of photos. Every thousand or so I manage to fluke one which I really like. So to finish off here are some of them. Please send through to me any of your cherished photos so I can make a "gallery" each newsletter.





Electric R/C

Personally I've had absolutely no interest in electric flight whatsoever be it F/F, C/L, R/C. Probably this is due to ignorance or maybe tight fisted or both, don't know? What I do know is that it is something that cannot be ignored, every year the numbers of models increase at events to the detriment of IC. I was prompted into thinking over the subject by two happenings in one day. (Doesn't often happen). The first was last Sunday afternoon at my flying site, Wimborne MAC, Cashmoor field, when Mike Seale produced an electric glider to fly. Mike is seriously into electric and being a GB team member knows more than most people. The model, not one of his current (Sorry) competition ones, so well down on performance, was awesome (sorry I can't think of an appropriate adjective). A blip of power for 5 seconds and it was almost OOS, far greater speed going up than any IC model I've seen, so what on earth do the others do? The second was whilst watching the news mention was made of a new Lotus, electric powered, that again had stunning performance. These two things combined with the current light power packs and all round greater performance compared to say five years ago is such that this form of power is now definitely of age and can more than hold its own with IC. There are of course pros and cons however the ins and outs I just don't have a clue about. The challenge is would someone please write an article comparing IC and electric and later article with technical info and how R/C vintage modellers can benefit. I know a few do already but it is not widespread.

I hope you have enjoyed this first letter, which is I know is bit of a mixture, but I'm hoping many of you will send me articles etc to make it a special informal read where views can be aired, discussions entered into, information dispersed and so on.

Anyone with advice, no matter how critical, on this and future newsletters please let me have it. I will include any article even if I do not necessarily agree with it, but taking into account libel/slander laws!