

## MEET THE MEMBERS



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Our Meet the Members subject this month is LAA Inspector **Miles McCallum**, well-known for both his mechanical and journalistic skills.

### **H**ello Malcolm, how would you describe your career to date?

I'm now an aircraft engineer and restorer but previously I've been a motorcycle courier and mechanic, racing motorcycle mechanic (national and international teams, Isle of Man TT etc) motorcycle and aviation journalist... and a whole load of other things besides.

### **What started your interest in aviation?**

My father was an airline pilot and retired with about 33,000 hours, so it's probably in the blood. That only engendered an interest in aviation rather than flying, which was clearly beyond my means.

### **Your first flight. What, where and when?**

What really kicked me off was a friend taking me for a flight in an Auster J1N in 1982 out of Elstree, and I subsequently flew with him for about 30 hours.

The real start was after being headhunted for a yacht refit in California repairing the hull (Claire Francis' Swan 65 round the world racer ADC Acutrac). I earned enough to learn to fly at Santa Paula in 1987.

### **How many types and hours do you have?**

It's a difficult one, that – around 800 hours, and about 50 types – more interesting (from my point of view anyway) is nine prototype aircraft, including a Horten Flying wing (the PUL-10).

### **Do you have a favourite and worst type flown?**

Worst type – a Kitfox 4. Horrible... no yaw stability and unpleasant ailerons. Favourite one depends on the mission, but they are all compromises. Luscombes for sheer ability, there's nothing better in a howling crosswind but the vision out isn't all that good. Waco UPF-7 for a gentleman's Sunday afternoon aerobatics, but they're difficult to three-point. Pitts Specials for being a hooligan. Early Austers for the satisfaction of getting it right (occasionally), if you don't mind taking your time to go anywhere.

### **Do you currently own an aeroplane(s)?**

I have an Aeronca 100 (bathtub) under restoration. They're an absolute hoot to fly (slowly); vintage charm, delightful handling, and spare change operating costs.

### **What's your most memorable aviation moment?**

Most memorable was a day's flying in a Thurston Teal (flying boat) doing touch and goes on various lakes and reservoirs in Wales – what fantastic fun! Quite demanding, but fascinating, especially doing restricted area (circular) take-offs.

### **Have you learnt from any 'hairy' aviation moments?**

A few, most of which I got away with and only one where I came close to killing myself.

Smacking a propeller on landing (without realising it) I started a go around, lost vision due the vibration, ended up in buffet at 50ft, got into PIO, and when I got the aeroplane on the runway had to ground-loop it between two parked aircraft to prevent it from piling into a very solid obstruction at the end of the runway. For lessons learned, see advice!

### **Who are your aviation heroes?**

Bob Hoover (who I have been fortunate to meet) – self-effacing and without doubt the finest pilot I have ever seen fly. He comes as close to flying like a bird as is possible.

### **How about an aircraft wish list?**

A flight in an RV-8 persuaded me to buy a lottery ticket (to no avail) but if I did win, a Sikorsky S38 flying boat would be on the shopping list. A Waco Taperwing, a Fleet 16B, a... (you get the picture; there's a round engine biplane theme here).

### **Do you have any non-aviation interests?**

Vintage racing motorcycles – I regret selling my 1937 cammy Norton, but a friend lets me loose on any of his Velocettes I care to ride; the current favourite is a 1929 KTT that came fourth in the 1930 TT.

### **Any advice for fellow pilots?**

My close call with disaster reinforced Bob Hoover's advice – always fly the aeroplane as far through the crash as you can! ■