



AIRWORLD (UK) - BRITAIN, EUROPE AND BEYOND

Pete and Ann Smoothy have been supplying LAA members with parts and equipment for many years. Neil Wilson drops in for a coffee and a chat

“ always seem to have been in the right place at the right time,” explained Pete Smoothy, adding, “If I was a dog I would be named Lucky.” Based in Winslow and

Hinton-in-the Hedges, Pete and his wife Ann have operated Airworld (UK) since 1994, although as he went on to describe, his entry into the world of aircraft parts supply came about almost by accident.

Pete’s interest in things mechanical started as a young man, flying control line models at his local Abingdon Model Flying Club. In fact, aeromodelling soon became a total obsession for him, to the point where most weekends would find him at one competition or another.

From radio control aerobatics, Pete was later introduced to RC pylon racing which quickly became

his forte, seeing him competing all over the UK and Europe. In 1979 he won the French/Swiss meeting at Lyon, the following year he took the Ambiorix Trophy, and then for four consecutive years, 1981-1984, he won the Dutch International Pylon Racing Event at

Heemskirk. Eventually in 1985, he won the European Championship event at Melnik in Czechoslovakia.

Away from aviation, Pete started his professional career with The Post Office as a telephone engineer, carrying out his apprenticeship at the famous Bletchley Park, and later becoming an engineering instructor. It was about this time he discovered music and girls, although not necessarily in that order, and met future wife, Ann.

Coincidentally, this being a World Cup year, Pete and Ann got married in July 1966, but not on any old Saturday – on World Cup Final day when England were playing West Germany!

“We never thought England would



Peter in those early model flying days...



(Above) Pete's Robin DR400 on the apron at Gibraltar

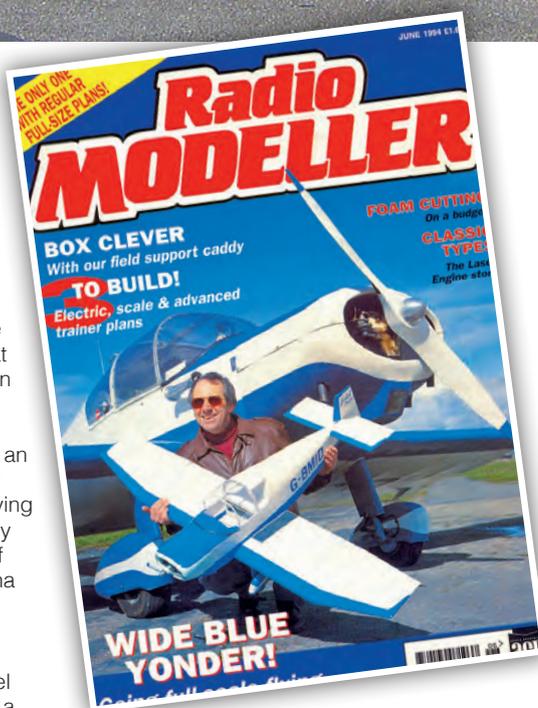
(Left) Peter and Ann Smoothy, partners in life and in the Airworld UK office.

make it to the final when we booked it," he recalls, adding that needless to say quite a few people 'went missing' after the church ceremony but it was certainly a double celebration later that evening at the reception. "Our wedding night was spent at a small hotel in central London, and London certainly knows how to celebrate!"

Ultimately Pete decided he would like to extend himself beyond model flying and at an air show at Cranfield wandered into the old caravan that was the HQ for the Osprey Flying Club. There he met owner and CFI Mick Dry and just a few months later, with the help of the two instructors and a rather tired Cessna 150, Pete had a shiny new PPL.

Of course having a new PPL is one thing, having an aeroplane to fly is another.

However, on a day out, by road, to a Jodel fly-in at Popham in 1986, Pete learned that a little Jodel D112, owned by John Newbold, was for sale. With encouragement from Chris and Mavis Parker of the Jodel Club, Pete



On the cover of *Radio Modeller* in 1994 with his full size and scaled Jodel D120.

ended up buying G-AZFF, and John bravely converted Pete onto type with many circuits at Enstone. "For me, landing a wood and fabric aircraft, with a tiny tailwheel was a new experience and John did a cracking job. From then on, I was a confirmed Jodel fan."

While Ann had not been overwhelmingly enthusiastic about riding in this "funny little aeroplane with bent wings", one calm summer's evening, with gin clear visibility Pete took Ann for a flight round the local area. "I flew it like a 747 and that gave Ann the confidence to go on to enjoy thousands of hours of flying." Since then they have travelled together all over Europe and North Africa.

In 1994 Pete was offered, and took, early retirement from BT. At only 49 years of age he was kicking his heels a bit and almost by chance he was able to turn his hobby into a small business. Owning an older aeroplane like a Jodel you do tend to source a few bits and pieces for spares, and when

MEET THE MEMBERS

friend, and then fellow Jodel owner, Ken Jarman needed engine parts, Pete found them in the USA for him.

The next request was for an Evra propeller. He located the French manufacturer and decided to order five, drove over to France to collect them and became the UK Evra agent into the bargain. Thus, Airworld (UK) was born.

Pete decided that supplying all things Jodel seemed a good idea, and coincidentally Rollason Aircraft and Engines was being wound up at about the same time, so Pete bought up all the remaining Jodel and Condor parts, some of which are interchangeable.

With the old Rollason stock secured, Pete then wrote letters (in French) to all of the French suppliers that he could find. Now Airworld (UK) holds comprehensive stocks of parts for most Jodel and wooden Robin models.

Ever keen to expand its stock, Pete and Ann were always on the lookout for new products to launch into the UK. As a result Airworld now supplies stall warning systems, strobes, wind driven alternators and the complete range of B&C lightweight starters and alternators.

Airworld is also a supplier of Total and Shell oils, which can be delivered direct to your door, carriage paid. It also supplies a wide range of universal aircraft and engine parts, as well as the specialist Jodel and Robin components. As an Aircraft Spruce agent, it can also supply almost anything from that company's extensive catalogue.

A particularly relevant service Pete is able to offer is supplying bespoke wiring

harnesses for customers who buy Trig radios and transponders from Airworld. He sends out an easy to fill out form for the customer to note component positions, wire lengths etc. and then supplies, for no additional cost, a purpose-made loom for the unit, which makes installation so much easier.

Over the years Pete has also gathered, and invented, a number of special tools that he rents out to owners. One that is in demand quite regularly is a Jodel leg 'dresser', which reforms the teardrop-shaped outer legs of many Jodel undercarriages, taking up slack and truing up the undercarriage tracking.

A BETTER WIDGET

Having heard many tales of woe about corrosion in aircraft engines that are left unused for long periods, particularly through the British winter, Pete took a closer look at the engine-saver products that are available through Aircraft Spruce. As effective as they undoubtedly are, Pete, a self-confessed gadget freak, decided he could make a 'better widget' so an 'engine-saver Airworld style' was, with a little help from the late Brian Lamb, designed and built in Pete's workshop. For many years now, it has pumped super-dry, highly-filtered air through the engine in Pete's Robin while it resides in Pete's hanger. Super-dry, filtered air means no moisture and no corrosion.

One thing Pete has not done is let running the business interfere with his passion for flying. In 1989 he decided to sell 'FF and with the help of friends Dave Sentence and Geoff

Grumble, and LAA inspector Bevis Griffiths, stripped down and refurbished his new aeroplane. Thus, Jodel D.120 G-BMID took on a new lease of life. Then in 1998, Pete bought Robin G-BSYU. When I visited Pete's hanger at Hinton-in-the-Hedges he showed me a map of all the places that they have visited in all three aeroplanes, from the top of Norway in the north to Cyprus in the south, Romania in the east and into Africa to Casablanca and Marrakech in Morocco.

Ann helps with the navigation, "And very good she is too," says Pete. I asked what his best flying memory was and Pete recalls landing at Gibraltar. "When you fly round that rock onto final you see before you the largest patch of concrete you may ever see in your life."

He also enjoys taking his grandchildren flying. With his son-in-law owning a motor glider, it allows them to team up and visit somewhere in their two aircraft together with the children. Pete now has almost 3,000 hours total, practically all in Jodels and the Robin.

Providing anything from a transponder to a litre of oil, there is no doubt that Pete and Ann have worked hard to make Airworld (UK) a success, much to the benefit of many LAA members for whom sourcing specialist parts for long out of production aeroplanes can be a problem. It is an excellent example of how the industry throws up small, enthusiastic businesses whose owners go the extra mile for the customer. Well done Pete and Ann. May your success and enjoyment in sport and recreational aviation continue for many years to come. www.shop.airworlduk.com ■

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