



Below: Alan Hindle, of Johannesburg, specialises in painting early-model aircraft.



World Airnews April 1975

Alan Munro Hindle

20th October 1923 - 28th January 1996

Pilot - Tiger Moth Owner - Aviation Artist - Story Teller Extra-ordinaire!

Respected member of the Johannesburg Light Plane Club.

Alan Hindle had a passion for aviation but his deep and abiding interest was in vintage aircraft especially the British built aircraft of the period from World War 1 the 1920s and 1930s until the end of World War 2.

The paintings presented today depict a cross section of his favourite aeroplanes from this period but he was no less skilled when painting more modern aircraft of the post war period.

The JLPC wishes to thank the owners of these treasured works of art for allowing us to display them today. This exhibition is a fitting tribute to a man who did much to keep the spirit of the Johannesburg Light Plane Club alive and record the history of the club in words and paintings.

The history of the club as recorded by Alan Hindle is to be found elsewhere in the clubhouse.

I wish to thank the members of Alan's family who generously allowed me access to his sketches and photos and gave me some insight into a man who I knew only as a friend. I also wish to say a special thanks to Don Lucas and Courtney Watson for their support displaying these paintings.

I hope you will enjoy this exhibition as much as I have enjoyed meeting many wonderful people and being able to renew past friendships!

Noel Otten

1st June 2014



Alan Hindle in his Tiger Moth ZS-DNP

Introduction

The following article appeared in one of the 1975 editions of 'The Piper Pilot' magazine which was published by PLACO (Pty) Ltd., the South African agents for Piper Aircraft Some of the comments are by one of the most influential personalities in the post war era of South African aviation Mr. Pieter van der Woude.

The painting and the artist!

Had Alan Hindle, a Johannesburg diamond cutter, not picked up a magazine in a waiting-room 10 years ago, his painting of a Piper J-3 Cub would probably not have appeared on the back cover of this issue of Piper Pilot.

In the waiting-room magazine Alan read of the famed crossing of the Atlantic by Alcock and Brown in a Vickers Vimy.

He was so impressed by the story that he decided to capture the event on canvas - quite a change from the landscape and seascape paintings he had done up to that time.

He worked virtually non-stop on the painting, and presented it to the Johannesburg Light Plane Club, where it still hangs today.

This marked the end of Alan's landscape painting days. Commissions for paintings of aircraft started pouring in, and he has been hard pressed to keep up with the orders he receives. Many of the commissions come from overseas clubs and collectors.

So far, Alan has completed some 40 paintings, each of which takes about three weeks of evening work.

He is so determined to feature every minute detail of his subject that at times he uses an eyeglass and a brush with only three hairs. Some of his detail can only be seen by examining the final work with a magnifying glass.

The Piper J-3 Cub ZS-AVA which Alan Hindle painted specially for the back cover of this issue of Piper Pilot, was one of the first of these 65 hp aircraft to be imported into South Africa.

Mr. Pieter van der Woude, who was managing director of the Pretoria Light Aircraft Company at the time, visited the Piper factory in the United States just after the war, and signed an order for 132 Cubs.

The aircraft were shipped in crates and a team of 18 engineers and assistants operated a highly efficient assembly line at the company's premises in Pretoria.

In the meantime, the company's management team was hard at work establishing flying training schools in all parts of Africa. All told, 28 of these schools were set up from Zanzibar to Cape Town, and Luanda to Beira.

The Piper Cubs were sold chiefly to these training schools and flying clubs - the price of each was £562 - ... (R 1 134,-), as there were not all that many licensed private pilots at the time.

According to Mr. van der Woude, there are still some 40 of the original batch of 132 Piper Cubs flying in Southern Africa.

"Their value is increasing rather like that of fine old motor cars," Mr. van der Woude said.

The Piper Pilot - 1975

The Intriguing Story of the Painting ... 'The Point of No Return'

by Noel Otten

The story of the first ever aviation painting by Alan Hindle, 'The Point of No Return', does not end with its presentation to the JLPC in 1963!

The painting depicts, with dramatic effect, the flight by Alcock and Brown on 14th June 1919 across the North Atlantic in a Vickers Vimy. It hung in a prominent place above the fireplace in the JLPC clubhouse for 20 years.

(The photo right shows the wedding reception of Mrs. Cecelia Pestana on 14 September 1964 in the JLPC Clubhouse. The AH painting TPNR is clearly seen above the fireplace. One of the paintings being exhibited today is here courtesy of Mrs. Pestana)



When the club departed the 'old' Baragwanath Airfield in 1983 the committee had to find alternative accommodation for its many heirlooms and artifacts. The new site at Syferfontein had no facilities other than hangars and a rudimentary clubhouse structure. Various committee members took the club's trophies, photos and artifacts to their own homes for safe keeping. When an inventory was made a year or so later it was realised that some items did not make the journey to a safe location. The 'PONR' was one such item. Brian Zeederberg told me of this at the time. I was upset at this loss but put it out of my mind as I had other issues to deal with.

At the time of the club's relocation I had already dropped out of aviation and played no part in the moving of the club to the new site.

Wind the clock forward 26 years to 2009 I was again active in aviation, thanks to one of my daughters having chosen an aviation career, and had become active once again in the building and restoration of aircraft. I renewed my membership of JLPC and after Brian Zeederberg emigrated to Australia I took over the chairmanship of the club. We had re-opened the investigation into the disappearance of the club's heirlooms some years before and had recovered some trophies and mugs but there was no sign of the Alan Hindle painting.

I also renewed my membership of the Experimental Aircraft Association and one evening in 2009 I attended an EAA talk-show at Rand Airport. As I walked into the auditorium I saw the painting 'PONR' on a chair at the front of the hall with a '**for sale**' sign on it. I approached the 'owner' and questioned him about the painting. He informed me that he was emigrating and that he had decided to sell the painting. When I told him that the painting actually belonged to the JLPC and that it went 'missing' during the move some **26** years before he became quite incensed and proclaimed quite loudly that he was "not a thief" and had paid **R 5 000,-** for it But would not tell me from whom he had acquired it. He assured me he could show 'proof-of-payment'. He wanted **R 8 000,-** for the painting.

I said to him ... ***"I'll make a deal with you!"*** My offer was R 5 000,- for the painting, which I would pay the following day; and the painting ... ***"goes home with me that same evening and in return I don't take the matter any further!"*** He accepted my offer!

So! 'The Point Of No Return' now hangs in my home but the club now knows where it is!

Fast Forward once more to **July 2010** and the story continues About the time I bought PONR I wrote an article about Alan Hindle for the aviation website '**AVCOM**'. Alan and I go back a long ways Another story in its own right Throughout the 1970s Alan and I shared many flights and stories. Occasionally I would be invited to dine with Alan and his wife Leslie and I had the opportunity to see some of his paintings whilst still 'works-in-progress'. A second article followed in 2012 to which I had quite an unexpected response.

I was contacted by two of Alan's daughters, Jenny and (stepdaughter) Vivica. At that time, they informed me that two of Alan's sisters, Joan and Peggy, were still alive and were then in their early 90s! Jenny told me that she had been telling her children about Alan and how she wished she had one of his paintings to show them. This sparked the idea to arrange an exhibition of Alan's art And that is how this exhibition project got started.

Well, with all the good intentions I had the project did not get airborne life got in the way. I wrote another article requesting people who had an AH painting to get in touch with me. But very little happened until October 2013.

Quite literally 'out-of-the-blue' I received an e-mail from a lady who told me she had 'GOOGLED' the name Alan Hindle and my article came up. She had an AH painting. She described the painting to me and my interest was immediately aroused. I asked if I could see it. We arranged a meeting and a few days later Frank Persson, his wife Jane and I visited with Mrs. Cecelia Pestana. When we walked into her lounge the painting was propped up against a chair and was covered up. We exchanged a few pleasantries and then she removed the cover.

To say I was blown away is an understatement. I had by that time acquired a fairly good knowledge of Alan's paintings After all, I had watched him at work on some of them But this one I had absolutely no prior knowledge of! It was a complementary painting to the PONR!!!! The PONR depicts the aircraft over a very stormy sea and it is flying away from the viewer! This newer painting, (1973), is the same scene but from a front-on view And, to my mind ... it is stunning!!!

This 'find' spurred me on to getting an exhibition organised ASAP. Slowly but surely the wheels have been turning. In early April of this year the committee agreed to organise celebrations to commemorate the 95th anniversary of the establishment of Baragwanath asan airfield and the 86th anniversary of the founding of the JLPC and a focal point of the celebrations would be an art exhibition featuring the works of Alan Hindle.

I contacted Cecelia shortly before she left to settle in Cape Town. She was absolutely ecstatic that at last her painting would be seen by more people than just her family and friends and, she reminded me ***"The painting is not for sale!"*** But I have asked that I should be given the right of 'first refusal' if she ever changes her mind. With the wheels now turning rapidly I renewed my contact with Alan's family and all those people who owned paintings by Alan.

Regrettably, two of the paintings I was offered were far too large to transport safely or cheaply. One is in Vancouver, Canada, and the other in Hermanus. Prints of the paintings are the best we can offer today!

There was still one big surprise in store for me!

Len Richardson, Alan's nephew, made available to me all of the sketches, notes, photos and press clippings that belonged to Alan. Going through these I found that there is at least one other painting depicting the epic flight of Jack Alcock and Brown but who has it and where it is remains a mystery!



I leave it up to you to appraise the works of Alan M. Hindle!

Noel Otten

1st June 2014.

PS: The flight of Alcock and Brown was filled with drama, danger and heroic acts. And sadly, it was overshadowed by the flight of Charles Lindburgh. Alcock and Brown made this flight fully 8 years before Lindburgh in a far more primitive aeroplane. Some months ago a friend of mine, Jan Jefferiss, sent me two photos he took some 25 years ago. They show the place where Alcock and Brown landed at Clifden on the west coast of Ireland at the end of their epic flight. Not exactly the smooth landing spot Lindburgh enjoyed!



The paintings on exhibit represent some of the very best work produced by Alan Hindle. But Alan's artistic origins go back to World WAR 2 when he served in the Imperial Light Horse Regiment (Tanks) in the Western Desert and later in Italy. Alan sketched battle scenes as well as some light-hearted impressions of life behind the lines. He was wounded twice and some of his sketches depict the goings-on in a field hospital.

The paintings on display

- 1) **'The Point of No Return'** (1963 version) Alan's first attempt to capture this epic event on canvas and also his very first 'aviation themed' painting. This painting was presented to the JLPC and it was the 'centrepiece' in the clubhouse for 20 years. Although one may argue that the accuracy of line and form of the aircraft is wanting there is no doubt that Alan has captured the drama of the occasion. The force of the storm is tangible and the skill and bravery of the pilots is undeniable.



- 2) **'The Point of No Return'** (1973 version - in private collection.) shows clearly his passion for this flight by Alcock and Brown and also the improvement in his artistic technique. None of the 'drama' associated with this epic flight has been lost, but now Alan has done 'justice' to the subject matter ... The Vickers Vimy aeroplane. It is superbly captured in this painting.



- 3) **'The 3 Spitfire Formation'** (in private collection.) A very forceful scene featuring 3 'Griffon' engined Spitfires.

Note:- The original of this painting was very kindly offered to JLPC for this exhibition but the painting is large ... 1500 mm square and the cost of transporting it to Baragwanath from its home in the Cape proved to be beyond what our piggy bank could survive.



- 4) **'2 Spitfires Breaking Left Over Tower Bridge, London, September 1940'**. (in private collection.) The detail in this photo is accurate. Every building and street is as it was on the day. One of my favourite paintings by Alan.



- 5) **'Spitfire Mark 9'** (in private collection.) The aircraft detail in this painting is simply breath taking. In order to paint 'fine' details Alan used a brush with just 2 or 3 bristles of hair and a jewellers magnifying eyepiece.



- 6) **'Spitfire Wing-over Manoeuvre'** (in private collection.) The grace and presence of one of the most beautiful aircraft ever built are captured to perfection in this painting.



- 7) **'Spitfire Head-on'** (in private collection.) Arguably the most dramatic of all the Spitfire paintings. This painting was used as the cover sheet for the 1990 calendar that featured the works of Alan Hindle.



- 8) **'3 Bristol Bulldogs In Formation'** (in private collection.) This aircraft represented the last of the breed of the bi-plane type front-line fighter used by the RAF. A brute of an aeroplane, already out-dated by the time it entered service.



- 9) **'Tiger Moth ZS-CTN'** (in private collection.) This painting shows the Moth owned by Mr. Ted Phelps. The aircraft was destroyed in a hangar fire in 1987.

Note:- This painting is 'For Sale'.



- 10) **'Tiger Moth - Military version'** (in private collection.) This painting shows the 'Moth as it appeared when in Military service in the latter part of WW2.

Note:- This painting is 'For Sale'.



- 11) **'Tiger Moth - Military version'** (in private collection.) This painting shows the 'Moth as it appeared when in Military service in the latter part of WW2.



- 12) **'Tiger Moth -ZS-FZF'** (in private collection.) This painting is a typical example of standard of 'commissioned' work Alan did for owners of aircraft. He painted many different types from antiques and home-builts to the most modern commercial aircraft.



- 13) **'Tiger Moth - ZS-BXA'** (in private collection.) The original of this painting resides in Vancouver, Canada. It was originally one of the club's training fleet but was later acquired by member Mr. Bill Teague who took it to Canada where it was restored.



- 14) **'Be 2'** (in private collection.) This painting shows a **WW 1 Be 2** in the colours of the Royal Flying Corp, **(RFC)** forerunner of the RAF..



- 15) **'Gloucester Gladiators Airborne off an Aircraft Carrier'** (in private collection.) The original of this painting is just 'postcard' size.



Alan's War Time Sketches



