

## DHC-1 Chipmunk and Grandfather's Axe.



RAC of NSW Chipmunks over training ground at Milperra some time in the 1960s I think.

I've always had a soft spot for the DHC-1 Chipmunk.

I was a first or maybe a second year apprentice ground engineer with QANTAS 50 odd years ago and always wanted to fly. Two guys in our year group already had their private pilots licence so took me over to Bankstown to the now defunct Royal Aero Club of NSW to learn to fly...We learnt on Piper Tri Pacers and.., you guessed it , Chipmunks.

I remember that as a first year apprentice I was paid £5/12/6 per week, flying lessons were £4/17/6 per hour! This was a bit of a challenge..

To cut a long story short I never did get my PPL, even with a bit of help from my Dad I just couldn't stretch the money far enough but I did do several hours in Tri Pacers and Chipmunks.

The Chipmunk was the favourite of all us QANTAS boy Spitfire pilots....

Fast forward 40 years to when I came across an old Aeromodeller plan for a then gigantic 82" Chipmunk. I was hooked with the detail on this plan and so began the first build of my Chipmunk.

I wanted to finish the plane in the old RAC of NSW colour scheme but couldn't find any pictures to re-enforce my hazy memory of the details. All I could remember was that they had a black or navy nose, the fuselage and wings were silver and that they had the club emblem on the side. Not good enough for a scale model.

Coincidentally, I found the picture of the RAC Chippies on page 1 when Googleing "Chipmunks" just recently...Murphy rules..

The fall back colour scheme was of an English Chippie flown privately by aviation artist. Michael Turner registered G-BCXN as below. I thought it looked pretty good and had a lot of marking that I could replicate with water slide decals







The plane took me about 10 months to make and it finished up at 6.8kgs. It had Custom Retracts oleo legs and an inverted Thunder Tiger .91 four stroke as the power source.

I had used a couple of Thunder Tiger two strokes and found them to be beautiful motors and that encouraged me to buy their four stroke, big mistake.....I found the TT.91FS a bugger of an engine. Even with on board glow it ran so inconsistently. I ran it on the ground for hours trying to get it right but never succeeded to get a reliable motor out of it. I should have bitten the bullet there and then and replaced it. How many of our prangs are related to motor issues? I reckon 8 out of 10 wouldn't be far from the mark.

Col and I had been invited out to the old UMAC flying field for a scale day and so we took the Chippie out there for its maiden flight. I don't know what it is but I always seem to finish a scale model just before a scale flying day.

From memory the day was a bit chaotic with a heap of planes in the air at the same time flying all over the place without a thought to a circuit.. We prepared the Chippie and cautiously ventured into the melee. The plane flew quite well with minimum trim needed so we flew a few laps until I could hear that bloody motor sagging so prepared to land. The approach was long and straight forward so I set the plane up for a shallow approach, all was in order when suddenly the plane somersaulted out of the air, braking the fuselage in half and smashing the wing. I couldn't believe my eyes, the thing was 6 foot off the ground!! The locals all rushed over to take pictures of the wreck and then told me that I had joined the barbed wire fence club, very funny, ha bloody ha...!!! They had a barbed wire fence at right angles to their strip across the approach .It was the only fence in a bloody big paddock...

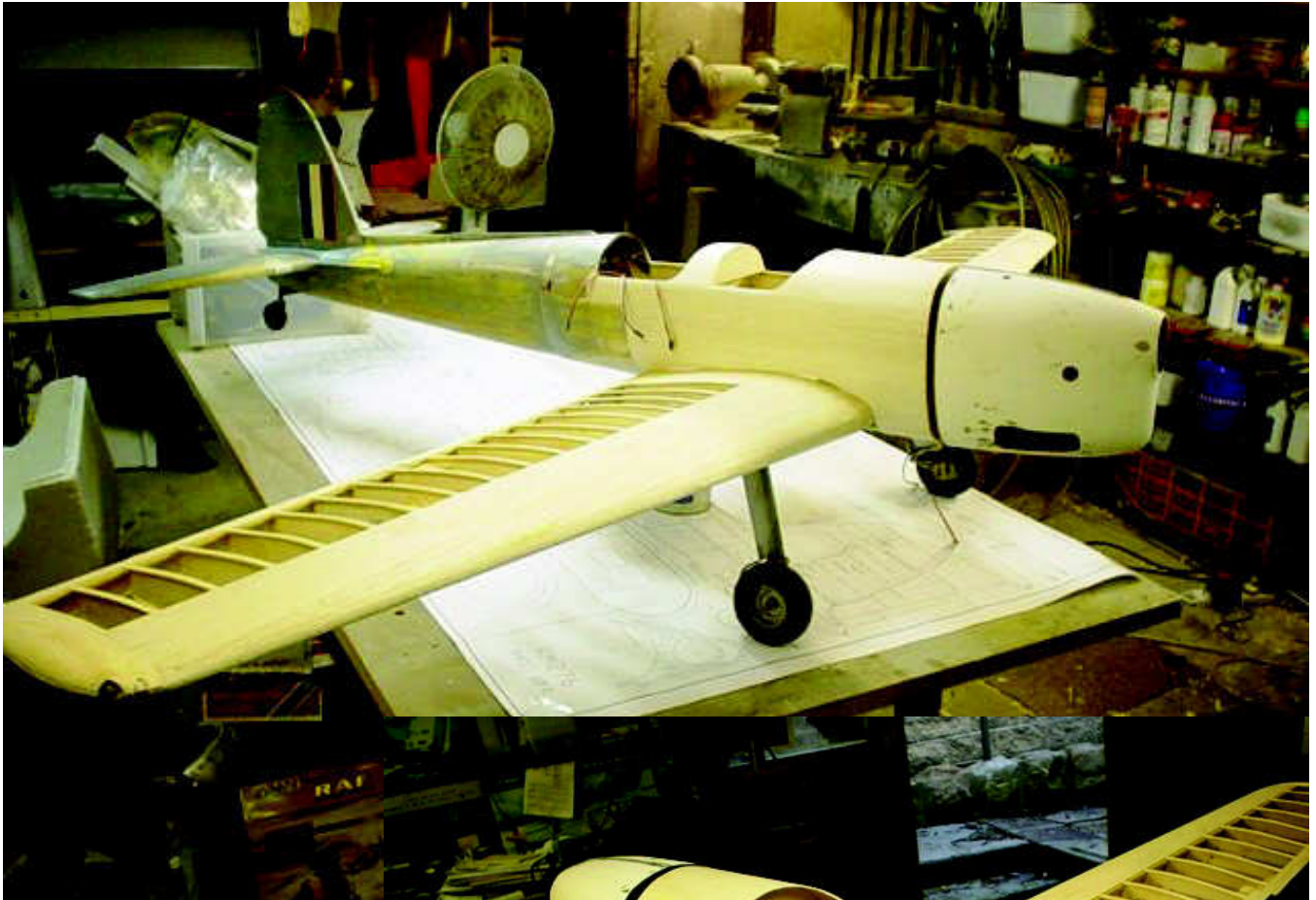
I collected all the bits and put them in a corner of the workshop for a rainy day.



Some months later when I had cooled down a bit I started a rebuild. I got rid of the TT.91FS and substituted a Saito .82 and finished it all off in the same colour scheme. The picture above is at one of our scale days some years ago. Note Peter Gow's immaculate AT6 in the background



I flew the plane for a few years after the rebuild. It was a bit boring but the new motor ran flawlessly and it was pretty to see it put-putting by. I had dual rates set up on it and used the low rates to take off and land in conjunction with the flaps. After take off I would flick it into high rates for general flying around and for scale aerobatics..One particular day, not concentrating, I attempted a barrel roll with low rates still selected and consequently ran out of elevator crashing over the Eastern end of the field and once again breaking the fuselage in two pieces and smashing the wings. This time the damage was a bit more comprehensive so it remained in the corner of the workshop for much longer..



The second rainy day finally came and I started another rebuild. A new nose was grafted on to the old rear fuselage with internal skin doublers and the wings were repaired again..







The repairs went well, primer, panel lines and rivets were applied again and I re-decorated the plane in the same old scheme.



My main love in aero modelling is heavy metal WWII warbirds. I usually take a year or so to build one, they're about the 100" span and weigh around 14kg. They are always a challenge to fly properly and maiden flights have a large pucker factor. Most of my flying is done with sports/aerobatic type models with light wing loadings and a certain resistance to stalling but several times a year I dust off a warbird to fly that has very different flying characteristics and this is where the Chipmunk is a great help. The Chippie is a not so demanding version of the warbird to fly. Funny that, it could be that it **was** a primary trainer..... It has a moderate wing loading, flaps and will stall if the speed is allowed to fall off. I have set it up so all switches and controls on my transmitter are the same as on all my warbirds. The Chippie doesn't have retracts but all my warbirds and the Chippie have right rudder offset to counteract take off swing on the retract switch so essentially all transmitter functions are identical for all planes. It is really good to take her for a couple of flights a week or so before flying the warbird to get your head in the right place and I guess that's one of the main reasons I keep rebuilding her.

So what do we get out of all this you may ask? Not a helluva lot but a love for the type and a suggestion that if you have a prang, and we all do, you always, always collect all the bits no matter how small from the crash site. It is usually a lot easier to rebuild and repair than to make a new one and secondly, leave the bits in the corner of the workshop until you cool down before you make an assessment.

Over the years she's been around the old girl has put on a bit of weight and is a bit loose in the back end which is getting worse. The elevator slop is such that a smooth approach and flair to land is next to impossible. Must fix that one day..

Cheers  
Stan