

# Auster B5 AOP Mk9 -XR244 (G-CICR)



## The Auster AOP Mk9 in Army Service

The Auster Air Observation Post (AOP) Mk9 prototype first flew on 19th March 1954 and entered service in February 1955. Its construction is mainly steel tube covered in doped Irish linen. It was equipped with a more powerful engine, larger wings and flaps and a strengthened undercarriage. All of which improved the AOP9's take-off and landing performance over the AOP6. The extended cabin enabled the aircraft to be operated in AOP, Command and Control, light transport and liaison roles. An aft observer facing either forward or rearwards could also be carried. A total of 182 AOP9s were built.

The aircraft were operated by the British Army of the Rhine in Germany and saw active service during the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s and Aden in the early 1960s

The Historic Army Aircraft Flight's (HAAF) AOP Mk9 XR244 arrived at Middle Wallop in 1961 to serve as a training aircraft and has remained there ever since. In her later years XR244 trained pilots in the art of Forward Air Control (FAC) and Artillery OP work, and in readiness for the Beaver AL1.

The AOP9 stalls at approx 48 Knots (Kts) without flap, 40 kts full flap, giving a very short take-off and landing capability. It is ideal for slow speed flight, so difficult to target by an aircraft with a higher stalling speed and larger turning circle.

- **Construction Number:** B5/10/181.
- **Army Role-** Three-seat Airborne Observation Post (AOP).
- **Engine Manufacturer and Model:** Blackburn Cirrus Bombardier 702 4-Cyl Inverted Mk208 (180bhp)
- **Span:** 36' 5" (11.12m) Length: 23'8" (7.25m)
- **Speed:** Cruise 110mph, Max 120mph.
- **Ceiling:** 10,000ft
- **Range:** 360 miles (4hrs)
- **All Up Weight:** 2550lbs (1157kg)

## **AIRCRAFT HISTORICAL TIMELINE**

2/11/1961 – Built at Rearsby, Leicestershire Contract No. KC/N/058/CB 5(c) and made its first flight on

10/1/1962 piloted by H.T.Howard.

1/2/1962 – Delivered to the Army Air Corps 9AAC) Middle Wallop by AAC pilot Weston (name given in Rearsby Control tower log).

18/6/1964 - Returned to Rearsby for UHF radio modifications. Radio test flight 9/7/1964 at Rearsby by H.T.Howard. Delivered 10-7-64 to Middle Wallop by AAC pilot Burman and re-allotted to AAC Centre, Middle Wallop and used by the Fixed Wing Flight. On unknown date designated as FAC trainer along with XP242.

6/1971 - XR244 was entered by Fixed Wing Flight for Daily Express Air Race as Racing No.186 and fitted with spats.

11/9/1981 – Transferred to the Museum of Army Flying Historic Flt Middle Wallop.

12/11/2013 – Struck Off Charge (SOC), the Ministry of Defence (MoD) stated that it would no longer sanction the costs involved in keeping the aircraft on the ‘Military Register’ so the aircraft had to be civil registered and maintained by an appropriate organisation with the correct civilian certification, registered G-CICR Ministry of Defence, Army Historic Flight, Middle Wallop and remained painted XR244.

18/3/2015 – Registered to the Historic Aircraft Flight Trust, HQ AAC Middle Wallop.

26/6/2015 – Permit to Fly issued with the HAAF.

## **OTHER AIRWORTHY AOP.9 (1 May 2024)**

**WZ662 / G-BKVK** - Antony Charles Whitehead, Rossendale.

**WZ706 / G-BURR** - Neil Andrew Whatling, Corby.

**XP241 / G-CEHR** – Hamish Bichan, / Charles Wheeldon, Peterborough.

**XR241 / G-AXRR** - Colin John Salter, Chard. Painted Yellow.