

Tales from an Airfield



Written by George Walker

Illustrated by Keith Woodcock

www.talesfromanairfield.com

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For Jeremy

An uncomplaining, sometimes critical, but ultimately appreciative listener, alter-ego of Jeremy the Stearman, inventor of the mysterious aeroplane in the last chapter of the second book, and first benchmark reviewer for Tales From An Airfield.

Thanks to.....

Jacqueline, who somehow puts up with my myriad adventures and schemes, unfailingly positive even in the face of total disaster (like losing a prop at Manston).....

The rest of the family (Jenny, Fenwick, Robin and David) for encouraging me.

Dieter, who eventually managed to teach me to fly.

Now I know why Archie enjoys himself so much.....

Preface (For the Older Reader)



This book is for all of you who, like me, love anything to do with aeroplanes and airfields, enjoying the easy camaraderie that still exists between those who choose to defy gravity for the sheer fun of it.

Thankfully, there are still some who think that a life without the odd risk is no life at all. They like nothing better than to dart – aimlessly or with great purpose - about the sky, trusting their fragile existence to all kinds of exotic machinery that probably shouldn't be floating on air at all. They derive great joy from the intense feeling of freedom that flying bestows on them, and, despite the nagging beaurocracy that surrounds just about any endeavour these days, just get out there and do it.

Having determined to be an intrepid aviator since I could crane my neck to the sky, I was always disappointed not to have been a professional pilot. In a way though, I now have the best of all worlds,

because flying comes as a late addition to a very happy life.

Encouraged by my wonderful wife and children I learned to fly myself, and started wasting as much time as possible hanging round planes and airfields (particularly at Goodwood, where there are more boys toys than you can shake a broken con-rod at). I am now happily besotted by just about anything that has any connection to flying, even if the trajectory is merely ballistic and ends in abject failure like the Frog Avengers of my dim and distant childhood.

Because I think about planes so much, I first thought of Archie when pondering the fact that there were no stories for children about aeroplanes that made much sense or held the attention. I realised that they (the aeroplane characters) were all rather anodyne and far too smart, never getting into any real trouble at all. What kind of fun is that? I decided we needed a plane who was naughty but kind, daring but careful, and ultimately likable.

I wrote most of the stories very quickly, ostensibly for my youngest son Jeremy (because I couldn't really admit they were for me, which of course they were). More by luck than judgement, most people who read the stories rather liked them, which was very dangerous, because it encouraged me to publish them. So here they are; the first Tales From

An Airfield. I hope you and your children enjoy them as much as I do.

As far as the stories themselves go, I make no apologies for the word usage – I appreciate that some of it may seem rather dated (for example, camaraderie), but we have a wonderful language that is woefully under-utilised. I reserve the right to make as much use of it as I can! There is a glossary-cum-dictionary for the aviation terms and some of the more unusual words.

Just a comment about the illustrations. I have always been faintly disparaging about the way that aeroplanes are drawn in children's books and cartoons; to me, they always look like flying fish. I was determined that the characters in Tales From An Airfield would be faithful representations of the originals. After all, these are real aeroplanes!

After a couple of false starts, and with the benefit of some artistic design and a few great ideas for the faces from my son Fenwick, I was fortunate enough to meet Keith Woodcock, the highly respected aviation and motoring artist.

Keith's representations of Archie and his friends have managed to capture the various characters perfectly, retaining just the right balance of technical realism so as not to offend the aviators among you. Archie is indeed a DC3, right down to the undercarriage and engines, and all the rest of

Archie's friends are a known and recognisable type.
Thanks Keith!

Of course there is a nod in the direction of a certain steam engine – how could there not be? However, I hope that there is enough new in the stories about Archie and his friends to escape an accusation of plagiarism, and I trust the reader will accept that there isn't that much new under the sun. They're just for fun, so as you introduce yourselves and your children to Archie's world, I hope you get as much pleasure out of the stories as I certainly do – and if it encourages anyone to investigate the delights of flight, then we'll all be the better for it.

May all your landings be good ones!

George Walker

Introduction

(For the Younger Reader)



I don't know about you, but I've always been really interested in aeroplanes. How do they fly? What keeps them up there? How do they work?

Now I'm older, I understand a few more things about them, and that's made me even more interested. So I spend a lot of time messing about with aeroplanes, and visiting airfields, and because it's so much fun, I thought it would be good to write some stories about all the amazing aeroplanes I see.

However, it wouldn't be very interesting if I just told you what aeroplanes do in a normal sort of way, so I invented Archie and his friends. Archie is a very experienced aeroplane who does lots of exciting things, but still gets into some silly scrapes. However, he tries very hard to do his job properly, keeping his passengers comfortable and happy, and

he looks after his aeroplane friends like a good friend should.

While the stories about Archie are meant to be fun for you all, I thought you also might like to know something about how aeroplanes work, so I've allowed Archie to sometimes tell you about what he has to do to actually fly, and how one or two of his mechanical bits work. Because of that, some of the words might be new to you, so I've made a sort of dictionary where you can look them up if you're stuck.

In the stories, you'll also meet Archie's friends; Whampum the Seminole, who always seems to have one engine that's broken, so he ends up flying round in circles, and Cynthia, the very snooty Cessna, who's unbearably rude. Then there's Jenny, a very refined and polite old aviatrix, Jeremy the Stearman, Robinson the helicopter, and all Archie's jet friends as well - I hope you like them!

So here are some stories for you, all about Archie the Aeroplane and his many friends at the Airfield. I hope you enjoy them – I certainly enjoyed writing them!

George Walker

A Flying Dictionary

When you read this book, you may come across words you haven't seen before. This part of the book works like a dictionary – if you don't understand a word or expression in the book, just look it up here!

A

Aileron – an aileron is a section of wing that is moved in order to turn an aeroplane left or right.

Air Traffic Control – Aeroplanes need to be told where to go and what to do so they don't bump into each other. Air Traffic Controllers are specially trained people who use radios to talk to the aeroplanes to tell them what to do.

Apron – not something your Mum or Dad wear in the kitchen to stop them getting dirty when they are cooking, but a piece of ground, usually concrete or tarmac, where aeroplanes park near the Terminal.

Aviator and Aviatrix - an Aviator is somebody who flies aeroplanes, like a pilot, but the word really means that they are a bit more daring than your average jumbo pilot, and go off exploring things about aeroplanes that most pilots wouldn't get to do or see. An Aviatrix is a daring lady pilot!

C

Camaraderie – a special sort of friendliness between a group of people who are doing things together – a bit like the way people in a cricket team get on well together when they are trying to win the cup.

Control Tower - the place where the Air Traffic Controllers work, and where their radios are kept.

E

Elevator – a section of the tail that makes the aeroplane go up or down.

F

Flap – Nothing to do with a bird! A flap on an aeroplane is a section of wing that can be moved down to increase lift, and if moved far enough, also slows the aeroplane down, like a brake on a car.

Fuselage – the body of an aeroplane.

Fin – the bit of the tailplane that sticks up at the back of an aeroplane.

H

Hangar – a big building like a garage, where aeroplanes are parked to keep them sheltered when they aren't flying.

P

Port & Starboard - When you hear Archie or his friends talking about Port and Starboard, they aren't talking about ships in a port by the sea, or stars painted on a plank of wood. Port means the left hand side of an aeroplane, and starboard means the right hand side of the aeroplane. But does that mean the left and right side when you are looking at Archie, or when you are looking out of the cockpit?

Here's an easy way to remember. Put your arms out like an aeroplane's wings, and look forward as if you are flying over Archie's airfield. Now look out the left hand side – that's port. Now look out the right – that's starboard.

R

Renovate – to make something like new again. When old aeroplanes are cleaned and repaired so they can fly again, they are said to have been renovated.

Rudder – a section of an aeroplane's tail, that helps the aeroplane turn.

Runway – the grass or tarmac that an aeroplane uses to either take off or land on.

S

Sideslip – when the pilot wants to slow down quickly, he may use the rudder and ailerons to turn the plane so it looks like it's flying sideways. The wind then slows the aeroplane down by blowing on the fuselage. It looks like a lot of fun, and some pilots do it just to show off.

T

Terminal – a building where the passengers can wait for an aeroplane, or rest when they get off after a long journey.

U

Undercarriage – the wheels and axles that the aeroplane taxis and stands on. Some aeroplanes have a fixed undercarriage, that doesn't move, and some have retractable undercarriages, that fold up into the wing when they take off.

W

Weight and Balance – Aeroplanes need to be very carefully weighed so that they can safely take off and land. If they are too heavy, the runway might not be long enough for them to get up enough speed to take off, or their wheels might not be strong enough. If the balance all goes wrong, and all the weight is in the nose, they may end up pointing down when they should be pointing up, or if the weight is in the tail, pointing up when they should be pointing down. Neither of which is much good if you are trying to fly straight!

Now download and read the first story in the **Tales From An Airfield** Series, or listen to the Audio Book.

Happy Landings!

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