

Aviation Group News



By Chris Maybury
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With little specific news to report about SIG activity at this time, here is a small piece of "padding" relating to aviation safety which may be of interest or amuse some of the Membership.

The recent Commemorative Flypass by the Battle of Britain Flight, following the tragic loss of our beloved Queen Mother, reminded me of some information I have on file. These historic aircraft still have to undergo stringent inspections to enable certification of their airworthiness before they are allowed to fly.

The following Mandatory Permit Directive was issued by the United Kingdom CAA in 1998.

"Quote"

MPD: 1998-008

Subject: Undercarriage selection control unit.

Applicability: Vickers Supermarine Spitfire and Seafire aeroplanes of all marks.

Reason: The cause of a recent wheels up landing by a Spitfire was found to be a jammed selection lever. Other aeroplanes were inspected and found to be in a similar condition such that potential for a jam existed. There is a 3/8 inch aluminium cube electrical cable guide block inside at the top of the undercarriage selection control unit, attached to the

inside of the control unit by a 6 BA bolt. On some aeroplanes, where wiring has been re-worked using modern materials, this guide block is not used. If the guide block is unused and becomes loose it may become detached from its intended location and fall into the travel channel of the lever. If this occurs, it may prevent undercarriage down selection.

Compliance: Before further flight, from the effective date of this MPD and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 12 months, inspect to ensure that the 3/8 inch aluminium cube electrical cable guide block inside at the top of the undercarriage selection control is firmly attached. If the guide block is not required it may be removed and replaced with an appropriate self locking nut and washer, in which case the 12 month repetitive inspection need not be undertaken. On two-seat aeroplanes, actions must address both undercarriage selection control units.

Record actions taken in the aeroplane log book.

This MPD becomes effective on 1 May, 1998.

"Unquote"

All you guys out there who always aspired to pilot a real Spitfire, take note. It is good to know that a very high level of dedication to safety is keeping these old machines flying.

FIRST AFRICAN IN SPACE



At the other end of the aviation scale you might have heard the name Mark Shuttleworth recently. Mark is an African entrepreneur with a deep interest in technology. This passion led him to Star City, Russia, where he was trained for his flight to the International Space Station in April 2002.

He funds HBD, a venture-capital company based in South Africa, and TSF, a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the quality of education in Africa. He currently lives in London when not "on assignment", and spends much time travelling in search of new opportunities in global technology.

Mark was born in the dusty gold-mining town of Welkom in South Africa, and grew up in Cape Town. His fascination with technology started at a tender age when he discovered computer games, and not too much has changed in that respect. His interest in science covers an eclectic selection of disciplines, in particular particle physics, software engineering, digital media and biotechnology. While studying towards a Business Science (Finance) degree at the University of Cape Town (UCT), he first encountered the Internet, and quickly became fascinated with the changes it would bring in business and society.

In 1995, his final year at UCT, Mark founded Thawte Consulting, as an Internet consulting business. The focus of the company quickly shifted to Internet security for electronic commerce. Thawte (www.thawte.com) became the first company to produce a full-security e-commerce web server that

was commercially available outside the United States. This brought Thawte to the world of public key infrastructure, which is the basis for all encrypted and authenticated Internet transactions. By the time it was acquired by VeriSign in the USA, Thawte had become the fastest-growing Internet Certificate Authority, and was the leading Certificate Authority outside of the US. Since the heady days of 1999, Mark has formed a new project team called HBD (www.hbdvc.com). The name is a reference to the phrase "Here Be Dragons", which was used to describe uncharted territory on early maps. HBD is a venture-capital company seeking to invest in innovative technology companies that are based in South Africa but that have the potential to serve a global marketplace. As well as funding HBD, he also serves as a non-executive director of the company.

He has created a non-profit organisation that supports innovation in education in Africa. The Shuttleworth Foundation (www.tsf.org.za) seeks to fund projects that demonstrate a significantly better approach to some aspect of the education system and hopes to improve both the quality and the reach of education in Africa.

Mark believes that developing countries need to find their own voice in the digital era. To this end, he also funds and serves on the board of bridges.org (www.bridges.org) - an international non-profit organisation that seeks to address digital divide issues both through grass-roots work and high-level policy dialogue.