

Gavin Brown and Classic Flying Collection

The Sandstone Heritage Trust has many skills in the agricultural machinery, military and 2ft narrow gauge steam areas in particular. However one of the highlights of many of our events are the aircraft operated by Classic Flying Collection which is the brainchild of Gavin Brown and is based at Springs Airfield. Flying is a very specialised business. Flying very old aircraft requires even more skill, care and attention. Gavin and his team of experienced pilots, many of whom do aerobatics as well, enjoy their time at Sandstone. The genuine grass runway, the beautiful mountain scenery and the lack of air traffic all contributes to something that, for a pilot, is both enjoyable and relaxing.



A Tiger Moth from Classic Flying Collection. Picture by David Benn



A Chipmunk trainer from Classic Flying Collection. Picture by David Benn



An ex SAAF Harvard from the Harvard Club of South Africa rests before its next flight as Sandstone's steam train rolls past. Picture by Jean Dulez



Eugene Couzyn's ex French Military Alouette is always a favourite. Picture by David Benn.

The pilots are always amongst the most sociable people who come to Sandstone and they make many friends during their stay. As far as the public are concerned a flight in a Harvard or a Tiger Moth can be a once in a life time experience and there is no better group of people to discuss these matters with than Gavin and his team. Apart from aircraft Gavin often brings his beautifully restored Royal Air Force Land Rover, his Jeep and a Daimler Ferret scout car which originated from the Sandstone Heritage Trust.

A visit to their premises at Springs airfield is a fascinating experience. While the premises are full of aircraft bits and pieces as well as complete flying machines, the work done there encompasses other

aspects of preservation. With ace technician, Jacques Ritchie, as our guide, just stepping through the door revealed two vintage motorcycles under restoration, an Ariel Arrow 250 two stroke twin from the 1950's, one of the first pressed steel frames used in motorcycle construction and a 1938 Coventry Eagle.



Ariel Arrow



1938 Coventry Eagle

With so many different planes under restoration Jacques Ritchie has a tool kit that also takes one back in time, from Whitworth spanners used on the Tiger Moth and Chipmunk, to AF spec tools used on the Cessna and a Metric set for the Aero 45 under restoration. Plenty of juggling going on each day!

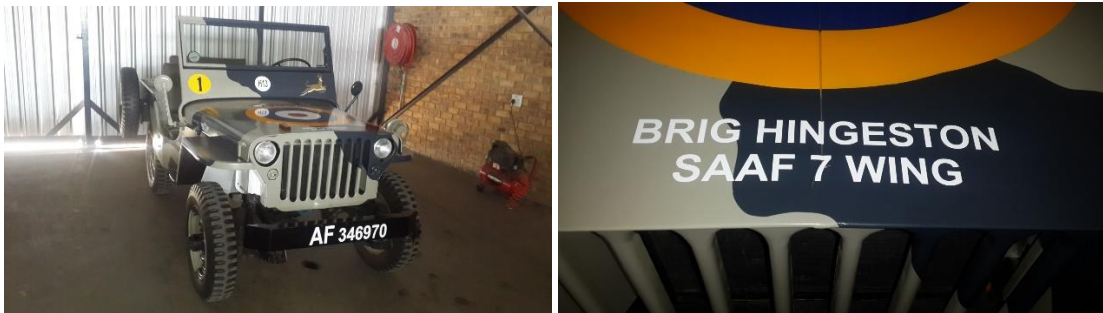


A serious tool kit!

Of course vehicles were needed to move around on airfields and in another hangar we find the Series 2A Land Rover mentioned earlier built up from two derelict vehicles. This unit is painted in the colours of RAF 26 Squadron which was a recon unit with South African pilots in WW2.



Alongside is a WW2 Jeep restored in SAAF Air Wing colours of the RAF as used in Italy. This particular vehicle being displayed as the personal Jeep of Brigadier Hingeston who was actually the co-pilot of the Mosquito aircraft displayed in the South African National War Museum in Johannesburg.



So when you see the Tiger Moths, Chipmunks and Harvard's taking to the skies at Sandstone just remember there is a lot more going on behind the scenes where these magnificent machines were brought back to life.



"Fly me to the moon". Picture by Keith Wetmore.