



A Canadian Gem

contributed by Frank Parker

WHEN considering the deHavilland Beaver it is useful to start with its country of origin, Canada. While not wishing to upset any Canucks in the audience, after years of long haul flying from Los Angeles to Europe, my impression of Canada is one of wilderness. Forget the postcards, 150 kilometers north of the USA border lies a land of lakes, bogs and tundra. Hudson Bay, blue in the atlas is actually white for at least nine months of the year - it's frozen solid.

My brief experience of travel in this land during the summer, is of mosquitoes that could give a small helicopter a run for its money.

The Beaver is born

No surprise then that after WW II when deHavilland considered a project aircraft to develop, they arrived at the rugged utilitarian transport aircraft we know as the Beaver. The aircraft's genesis was twofold; a replacement for the pre-war aircraft serving the utility role and to fill the capacity of the winding-down wartime production juggernaut. Design requirements called for an aircraft able to operate in remote areas on wheels, floats and skis, and able to carry a good payload and outsize cargo.

These requirements drove the design to the boxy fuselage, large doors, including one each side for the crew, large wing with extensive flaps and solid construction. The original design concept was to use an English engine (deHavilland Canada was under the control of the 'mother company', deHavilland England) however, the availability of more powerful war surplus Pratt and Whitney R985 Wasp Junior engines proved the icing on the cake to achieve the aircrafts excellent STOL (short take off and landing) performance.

While these STOL features make it slow

by some contemporary standards, it was remarked at the time that it only needed to 'beat a dogsled' to win the race.

The Company designation is DHC-2. All DHC aircraft of the era were named



ZK-CKH at Ardmore, awaiting its first flight with a new coat of paint.

after indigenous animals and the Beaver's 'stable' mates include the Chipmunk, Otter, Caribou and Buffalo. After a slow start to sales the 'Beaver' became a stalwart of the GA scene throughout the western world and was well represented in New Zealand in the agricultural and utility roles. Indeed the subject of these articles was imported to New Zealand for use as a top dresser.

The Story of ZK-CKH

ZK-CKH began life in 1948 - its history a story in its own right. It is marked as

C/N 25 (container number 25?). As an early, if not the first export of its type, it was delivered to South Africa as ZS-DCG for Tank Aircraft Pty Ltd on 17 November 1948 - that's over 60 years ago! In the 1960's it was on the English register as G-ARTR operating in Libya in the petroleum industry. Subsequently in 1964 the aircraft was brought to New Zealand as a rebuild project, becoming ZK-CKH.

In New Zealand the aircraft was operated in top-dressing roles by; Air Services Wairarapa, J.D. Menary (ASTA Co-Op, Kaikohe), and James Aviation.

In 1986 CKH was acquired by a NZ Warbirds group (Ed Doherty, B. Coulter, I. Reynolds) and painted in the livery of NZ 6001, the aircraft that supported Sir Edmund Hillary's trans Antarctic Expedition in 1957.

The original NZ 6001 aircraft was purchased by the citizens of Auckland and presented to the Ross Sea Committee in 1956 for use during the 1957-58 International Geophysical Year which saw the establishment of Scott Base, and the Trans Antarctic Expedition of Dr. Vivian Fuchs and Sir Edmund Hillary.

The aircraft was used for the transportation of personnel, dog teams, and supplies to establish depots for the tractor train traversing parties, and for reconnaissance flights. In his book 'View from the Summit' Sir Edmund Hillary speaks of investigating the Skelton Glacier to find a route onto the Polar Plateau; "I did a marvelous flight with John Claydon across the Ross Ice Shelf, up the great trench of the lower Skelton Glacier, over the broad crevassed snowfields at the glacier head, and out onto the wide snowy desert of the plateau itself..." The Beaver later operated around the clock in temperatures of -35c stocking the Plateau



All markings were hand painted for authenticity.

Depot for the journey.

Following a 'season' at the 'Ice' NZ 6001 returned to New Zealand for major maintenance before a further mission to Antarctica. On this occasion the registration had changed to NZ 6010 after discovering that 6001 had been allocated to the RNZAF's sole Gloster Meteor aircraft a decade earlier.

This season was not to be so productive and following a crash while 'descending through cloud in the Mt Hope area' the aircraft was written off. The crew, Squadron Leader Jeffs and Flight Lieutenant Rule were forced to 'camp' in the wreckage for six days awaiting rescue.

And so back to CKH. After 20 plus years of Syndicate operation she was showing her age. Over the past ten months the aircraft has had a complete strip and repaint. As with any 60 year old, remove the make-up and there is sure to be a few blemishes requiring attention. So it was with CKH and syndicate member Graeme Woods has put in many hours attending to corrosion and other maintenance issues.

With ZK-CKH refurbished to prime condition including superb new paint and detailing work, the Syndicate members are looking forward to showing her on the Airshow Circuit throughout the coming summer months.

The author gratefully acknowledges NZWA Archives in preparing this article.

Reflecting the Past

When Paul McSweeney at Airspray Ardmore needed the markings on ZK-CKH to be hand painted, he called Neil Richardson at Reflect Icon Signs. Neil has more than 20 years experience in the sign industry and is one of only a few around who still has the skill to undertake traditional hand painted aircraft signage work.

Hand Painted Signs

Neil, who has worked with some of the top sign writing companies in New Zealand and in the UK, got involved in the Beaver project in December 2008. Prior

to its repaint, adhesive transfers had been used for the existing scheme and while that looked the part from a distance, it unnecessarily compromised the authenticity of the work at any close inspection.

The first step was to work with Paul to establish the correct sizes, colours and locations of all the aircraft markings. Neil says; "I have done a lot of sign writing where I had to reproduce something but this was the first traditional hand-painted sign writing on an aircraft that I have been asked to complete. Back in the days when I learned my trade all signs were done by brush. Now here was someone wanting the signs on a plane hand painted to look original and I thought that was really neat."

History is something Neil thinks is very special and to contribute to restoring a piece of history for people to enjoy gives

him a great sense of pride.

Paul says he is also very pleased with the result. "To me it adds a degree of authenticity that you don't get from vinyl or from spraying which is what it was all about with this aircraft. Some people look at it

and say 'you can see the brush marks' but to me that's the whole idea of it," Paul says. "We have been able to work together with Neil, explain what we want, and come up with solutions which have been great for us and our customers."



More examples of Neil's work can be found on this recently completed Kittyhawk.

Other Capabilities

Reflect Icon Signs don't only undertake traditional sign writing work on aircraft. They can also produce computer-generated graphics for plane markings, registration numbers and certification labels. If the markings need to be sprayed, Reflect Icon Signs can construct adhesive masks.

Building signage is another area of their work and the Warbirds hangar and Airspray Ardmore are examples of this. 3D and illuminated signs, vehicle graphics and imaging, honours boards with gold leaf, event signage and more are all within their capability. A nationwide service is available.



Capabilities also extend to illuminated building signs.

For more information

Neil's motto is: "Reflecting the brilliance of your brand". Contact Neil on 021 905 102, 09 296 0221. E: neil@reflecticon.co.nz

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