

## The British Boxcar

Many readers will have come across the only British-registered C-119, G-BLSW, which resided at North Weald for some time. Thanks to Bernard Martin and other contributors to AB-IX, we can include a brief history of this particular aircraft. Originally ordered from Fairchild, Hagerstown under USAF Contract No: AC19200, originally issued on 4th March, 1948 this airframe comes from an MDAP-supplied batch of 78 C-119Fs for Belgium. Allocated USAF Serial 51-2700, it was delivered to Brussels-Melsbroek and taken on charge by the Belgian AF on 28th October, 1952 where it was allocated to 15 Wing/20 Sqn with the Belgian AF serial CP-9 and Radio callsign OTCAI (which was worn on the aircraft as an apparent civil registration as OT-CAI).

It went to storage in 1955 with total time of 408 hrs and, as part of the MDAP arrangements, it was officially returned to the USAF on 12th September, 1955. It formed one of a batch reallocated to Spain and was delivered to Madrid-Getafe in 2nd March, 1956. However, in the event, Spain did not accept the aircraft and they were flown out to the USAF base at Chateauroux between April and August, 1956. It was then moved back to Melsbroek for

storage and outright purchase by the Belgian Government.

It was upgraded to C-119G standard by SABENA and taken on charge by the Belgian Air Force on 21st May, 1959 where it continued to use the serial CP-9 and callsign OTCAI with 15 Wing/20 Sqn. By March, 1960 its total time had reached 422 hours. CP-9 was used in Congo operations during July, 1960 and, while taxiing at Melsbroek on 25th May, 1967 it struck CP-46, 3 which had been incorrectly parked, and required a wing replacement. In November, 1972 it went to Koksijde for storage with total hours of 3865.50, following which it was formally struck off charge in January, 1975 and sold to International Engine Parts.

In 1981, it was registered in Equatorial Guinea as 3C-ABA with BATA International for potential use for cargo operations and restored to airworthiness with parts from CP11/OTCAK (c/n 10685). It was flown to Manston on 9th April, 1981 where it was stored until it was re-registered G-BLSW on

28th December, 1984 to Aces High Ltd.

After restoration to airworthiness it was test-flown at Manston by Dizzy Addicott & Peter Hoar and a further air test on 12th April, 1985 included a low pass over the Fair Oaks HQ of Aces High. A sale was proposed to Consolidated Aviation Enterprises causing its cancellation on 4th October, 1985 and re-registration as N2700 to John P Downey of Vermont, but it remained at Manston. It was ferried to North Weald in March, 1987 for storage with Aces High (whose operations had moved from Fair Oaks).

The aircraft was offered for sale from 1989 and noted engineless at North Weald in May, 1990. The American markings were cancelled in April, 1991 as "Destroyed" and it was scrapped on site, starting in the last week of April, 1984. The nose/cabin section was acquired by the Wings Museum at Redhill in September, 2007 and placed in storage in the South Godstone area pending re-establishment of the museum elsewhere in Surrey.

On the right is the C-119 while sitting at Manston wearing its 3C-ABA markings and, below, later at North Weald in poor condition but painted with both G-BLSW and N2700 (RWS).

