

# COSMO DEMONSTRATION TEAM 1954 - 1963



Stan Robinson

*Stan Robinson winds back the clock over 50 years to his days as a COSMO member at Danson Park in south east London.*



The COSMO Team circa 1961

L to R kneeling: Fred Andrews with his Frog 2.49 powered FW 190, John Wellbelove with Stan's Mercury Monarch, Stan Robinson with his Spitfire XIV.  
L to R standing: Roy Memmot, Aubrey Tick with his Oliver powered 'Zephyr', Chris Hutton, Dave Carter, Steve Carter, Chris Wadlow with his Rivers powered O/D combat model

COSMO was originally founded as a boy's hobby club run by Mr Crick – we were never allowed to mention his Christian name and it was either Mr or more often Sir! (later we discovered it was Alec).

The club was founded around 1950 with council support and the emphasis was on woodworking skills with approximately 50 members making everything at weekly meetings from 'hobby's', fretwork ply stage coaches, static 'Victory's' with full rigging, working RTP race cars, model boats and flying model aircraft. Alec built wonderful 3ft scale working tugboats etc.

Alec found himself stuck for a name for his group of enthusiasts, but thought that as they were a pretty 'cosmopolitan' lot, why not call them 'COSMO'. So that was the name that stuck

It was very much like a 4<sup>th</sup> form woodwork class but very well run and organised. The boys ranged in age from 10 years upwards. I have discovered that we have several ex COSMO boys within the CLAPA ranks, so I thought that 50 years on, the following account might be of interest.

My best mate, Fred Andrews, persuaded me to join COSMO in 1954 to help boost the Danson Park C/L flying side. I was then 18 and joined Fred, then 29, who was famous for his adventures in his P/R Mosquito versus a German ME262 over the 'Alps'. This is featured in the book 'Mosquito' at the De Havilland museum where his widow Ruth was a guest of honour at this year's reunion. Two promising teenagers were Ron James and Vic Eastwood. Then 25-year-old Don Hooper joined us later.

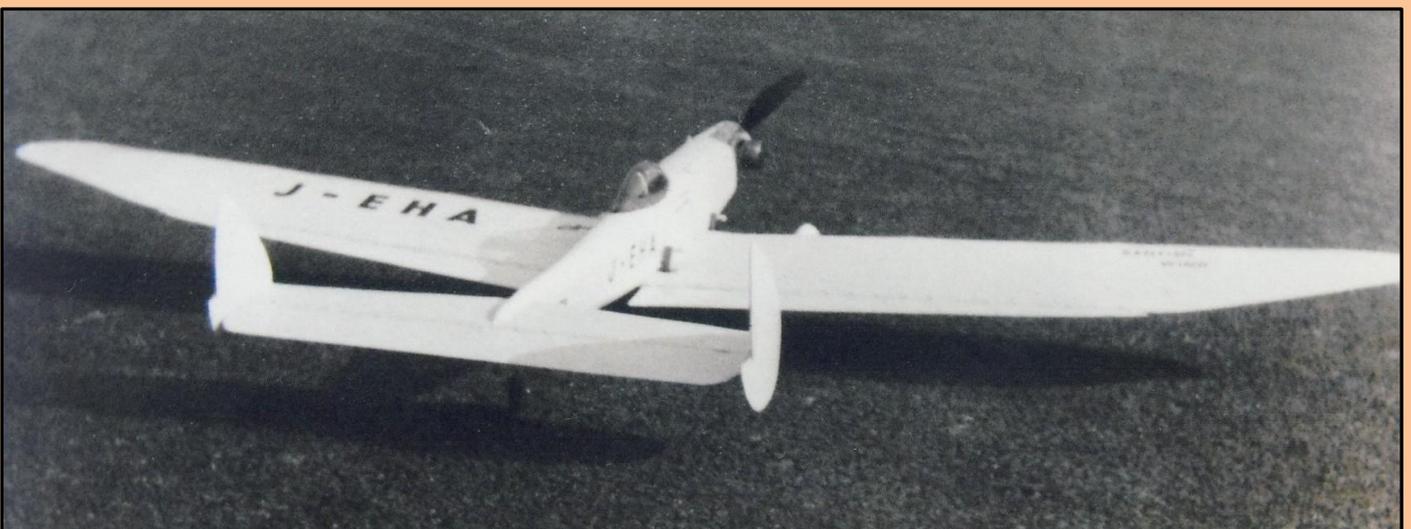


Danson Park in the 1960s

L to R: Aubrey Tick, Stan Robinson and Chris Wadlow (all holding their Kentish Wind 2 models)

At the time I was seriously into Class 'A' Team Racing, Aerobatics and probably most significant very successful in Combat with my SR Special 'Zephyr' (published in 1956) and adopted as a standard 'club build'. We made metal templates, the boys mass produced ribs etc and we taught them to fly combat. The 'Zephyr' was I believe the first combat model to use an Oliver in 1954. We were proud to have started a COSMO tradition in combat that continues to this day.

Also at the time I was doing individual displays with my original 'Kentish Wind' (*photo below*) and taking part in several joint club displays, the most memorable of which was the 'Blue Circle' at Gravesend, memorable because we actually got 11 models up in one circle! This ranged from John's ED 'Bee-Bug' on 20ft lines to Tony Harding's Elfin twin stunter on 70ft lines. Somewhere in the mix was European Champ Henry Stouff with 'Blue Pants' and yours truly with my 'Zephyr'. The clubs involved were Gravesend, Dartford, Sidcup and North Kent Nomads, plus of course Henry from Holland who flew solo Aerobatics.



Stan's original 'Kentish Wind' built in 1952 and as used in demos. Powered originally by a PB Amco 3.5cc, but after several derivatives, finally fitted with a 5cc SR special.

Each year at our Hurst Place headquarters at Bexley in Kent we had an exhibition of the boys work and gave an hour's C/L display on 15ft lines, yes 15ft, between the trees, 70mph Team Racing, full combat, balloon bursting and aerobatics – phew, hard work but great fun! Don Hooper did a wonderful commentary on the PA system which was greatly appreciated by the large crowds that always attended. I believe that this display ran on for many years after I left.

At the end of 1957 I followed Don and Fred and joined the RAF, and during my time managed to win many trophies in Fighter Command and RAF Champs, including the 1959 Aerobatics Cup using 'Kentish Wind' No 2.

On my return we founded the COSMO 'Demonstration Team' and started serious practice and Team selection. Fred and I flew at the Wembley Stadium display in front of 70,000 fans (possibly more) and in stark contrast, we all went on to do the poorly attended SMAE RAF Kenley display.

When planning a public demonstration it is important to see it from a spectator's point of view. We decided on 3 events making up 30 minutes. Team Race was boring (except for the competitors), normal combat with the lads looked good until we tried and got about 2 minutes! We needed 7 or 8. Fred and I often had to fly because our more experienced 'boys' couldn't make Saturdays. We worked out a carefully choreographed display using longer streamers and did lots of little cuts using Fred's profile FW190 and my Spitfire XIV. So the programme was finally.....

(1) 'Combat' – The dreaded FW190 creeping low over England for 1½ minutes. The Spitfires is scrambled to intercept, and after a non-stop 5 minutes or so dogfight the FW engine stops and it does a simulated crash landing, leaving the Spit 1½ minutes for a solo victory aerobatics. Don gave a very dramatic commentary on the P/A and we usually got cheers and applause. The FW accidentally sometimes won and we got boos but still a round of applause thanks to Don's natural commentating talent.

(2) Balloon bursting of 20 or so balloons on 3ft sticks – we used four 'Zephyrs' or Mercury 'Toreadors' by the boys, 4 pilots and pit crews plus spare models. No level flight busting was allowed. Amazing as most of the boys were still at school!

(3) Full schedule Aerobatics – 'Kentish Wind II' by myself or Tubby Southern (a wonderful pilot) with a maximum of one level lap in continuous aerobatics that was very popular with the crowd. Throughout all these events Don chatted away. It was great publicity for our sport and we often picked up new members

There were two extra items on the programme, time and space permitting.

(4) A very large exact scale P51 'Mustang' which had throttle, retracts and flaps – wonderful for very realistic touch and go's. I flew it on 75ft lines with double handle and 4 lines. It could be looped, but I could only just hold on to it and I'm a big lad. I still don't know to this day who the owner was, he would just appear at Danson Park and ask me to fly it! He was around 40 and a club member. The P51 was around 7/8ft span and had an 18cc engine if I remember correctly.

(5) Our masterpiece (or so we thought) was 4 'Zephyrs' flown by two pilots which comprised a very pre-Red Arrows synchronised Aerobatic and totally original over/under head-on pass with two upright and two inverted. This event involved 12 people to get started, i.e. 4 pilots and 8 crew

Tubby and I flew and were totally exhausted after the flight. Unfortunately, the public completely missed the point so we only did one display, although a couple of ex-members reminded me recently just how much they enjoyed our practice sessions at Danson Park.

We averaged about around 6 displays each year taking in N/W Kent and Surrey. Bear in mind that we either cycled or went by public transport. We charged expenses and got all our shows by recommendation.

Also at this exciting period of time, Ron James put his camera skills to good use and recorded the full SMAE Aerobatic schedule on 8mm cine film (no video cameras in those days!). It took many days and many flights, but we managed it in the end.



Stan's 'Zenith' 100mph plus Team Race model

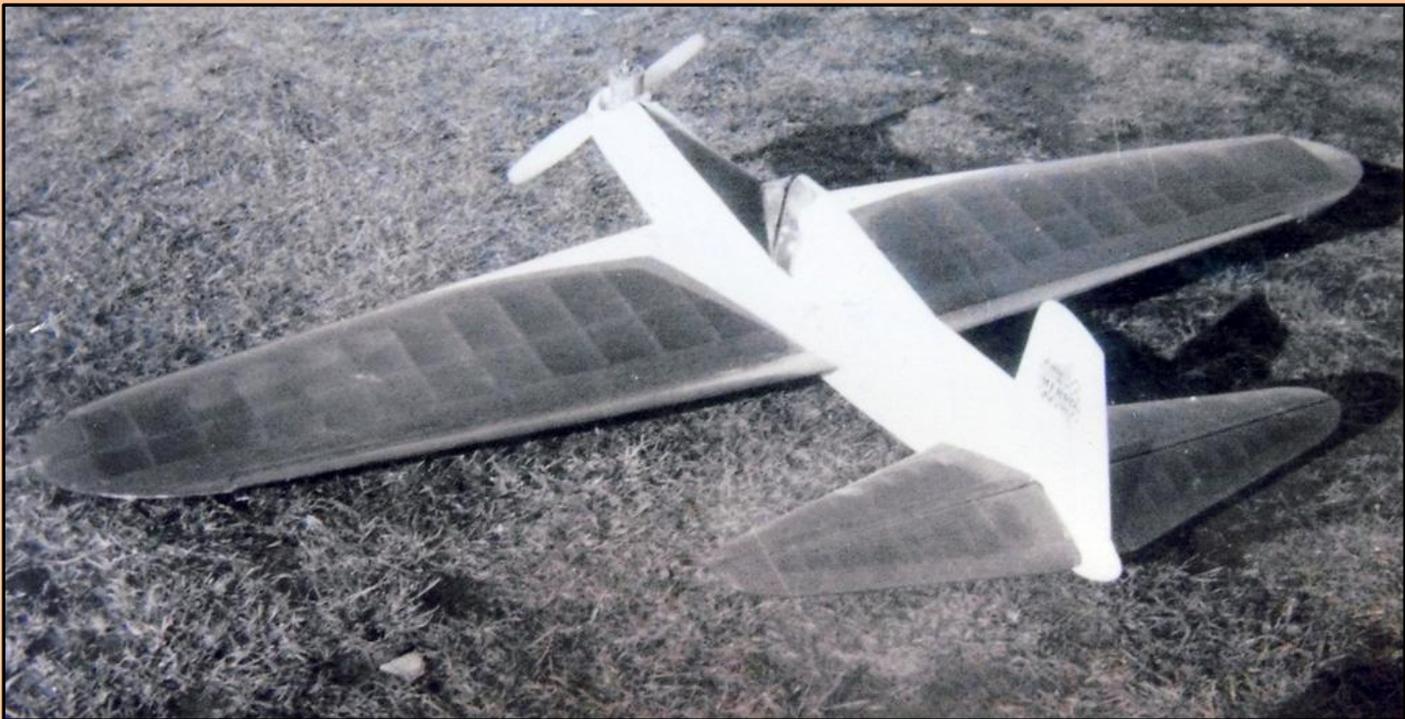
Ron tells me the film still exists, so perhaps one day we can transfer it to DVD. It was certainly the most exacting flying I've ever done as each sequence had to blend into the next.

We even had music and commentary by Don Hooper on a reel to reel tape recorder. Anyone ever remember seeing this film at club nights?

Another Ron/Stan story was with Ron's special Oliver carb on my Mk III works tuned Oliver fitted in my lightweight 'Zenith' Class A Team racer (*photo at left*) which hit 100mph plus in 1956. Sadly the acceleration was so great we couldn't maintain fuel flow (no pressurised tanks in those days) so I think our best effort was just 10 laps. Ron later went on to greater things in Team Race.

Initially we had a very well practiced and reliable team, but as the lads got older silly pastimes took precedence like taking a floozy to the Saturday afternoon pictures, playing in skiffle groups, dabbling with motorcycles etc. So with most of the older lads having to work all day on Saturdays things got difficult when trying to put a team together. In those days us 'oldies' only worked Saturday mornings, so it fell too much on our shoulders.

Anyway, things gradually faded away as we each developed other interests. In my final display, everything went wrong – transport, late start, unhelpful organiser etc. The flying was ok until I was doing the inverted flight in Aerobatics with my Merco 35 powered 'Coy-Kat' (*photo below*) when I hit a steel post which had been driven in for the next event whilst I was airborne. I've never seen so many bits, but I managed to keep my cool until I got the teams expenses, then I blew my top!



'Coy Kat' built by Aubrey Tick and acquired by Stan Robinson (RIP !)

One famous and very interested occasional visitor was Ted Heath (yes, our former PM) who was often at Hurst Place as the local MP. One night, learning that flying sites were getting difficult to find, said to Fred and Don that he could probably get us Biggin Hill! And he meant it as well, but it was too far for our club, especially by bike or if trying to use irregular public transport. He was a really nice fellow and not your usual politician.

So where are we all now? Tubby and Don are enjoying their retirement having completely dropped out of aeromodelling, as did most of the other regulars. Ron however went on to become a very successful full-time professional model maker and still flies C/L and R/C in Kent. Vic Eastwood went on to become a world-famous scrambles rider. Fred I'm afraid is no longer with us. Recently we called on Ruth his wife and I had the very moving experience of standing in his perfectly preserved workshop handling his still ready to fly Team Race and Combat model, including the FW190. I'm in touch with Ron and Don and have just heard that Vic Eastwood was recently spotted in the Dartford model shop and I've been told that he is still flying model aircraft in Kent.

As most of you have gathered I've rejoined the fold (CLAPA) after a 45 year break and it's good to be back. Most ex COSMO members that I've met so far within the CLAPA ranks were all 10 years younger than me and it would be really good if they could put pen to paper and continue the story. How about it lads? I expect after all these years that I've got something wrong, so don't hesitate to write in.



Stan's current LA 46 powered 'Kentish Wind' – built in 2006

Also, my apologies to modellers who took part all those years ago who have not been mentioned. Perhaps this epistle will tempt you to get your pen out? (*or better still your typewriter.....Ed*).