

Frank Zaic's "New Yorker IV" 8 oz Wakefield - Circa 1937/1938

May the Gods forgive me but this was probably my worst ever Wakefield? However, it atoned for it's failings with a spectacular exit.

One really ought not to be too critical of a model that won the 1938 Stout Trophy including a flight of 17 mins 6.2 secs, but to quote Frank Zaic himself, ""It is about time!" was all I could say when the New Yorker IV caught a thermal over Wayne County Airport during the 1938 Nationals". His choice of words indicates that success was somewhat overdue. The following dates are a little hazy but I think I built my version around 1979 and flew it at Biggleswade thereafter. That venue ceased to be available around mid 1981, so it was about that time.



The plan, or rather, copies of the original "Model Airplane News" article, was booted from the back of David Baker's car at that hallowed venue and I was impressed by its looks, the write up of the original model and its success. It was also the first plan that I drew up for my own use. Originally, the décor was red and black but she lasted long enough to be re-covered in the trim seen above. The model used a veritable forest of balsa and I seem to remember, although the fuselage plan called for 5/32" square members, I may well have used soft 3/16" for the frame. My wood selection practice was dominated by the fact I mostly flew Power models. It might have come out a tad heavy!

It was a dog, although I did have one "perfect" flight with it on the Isle of Sheppey when it thermalled away at bungalow height for about four minutes (can you imagine the difficulty that thermal must have had to produce such a long flight at such a low altitude?). Another "Trash Mover"? All this was "early doors" for my rubber-flying experiences, and only my second Wakefield, the first being a KK Gypsy. Even so this airplane never did anything. Yes, it was heavy and yes, I was a novice; but that black FAI rubber (seen above) had plenty of initial energy and I had graduated to a blast tube so I was getting some decent torque on the motors, but it still never did anything. However it had a certain charm and it did not have any aerodynamic vices either, apart from being unable to perform, that is! Just the job for venues like Old Warden where long flights only get you into trouble anyway. As far as competitions were concerned, I had not reached that stage of my career. In fact I recall a discussion with a competitive minded Samlander about the ROG requirement and I was shocked, because I thought the wheels were there solely to stop the propeller getting broken upon landing.

So what happened? Well I gave up rubber flying as a direct result of this failure and concentrated on Power for a few years. However, in 1984 SAM 35 decided to hold a 50th anniversary celebration of the 1934 Wakefield trophy at Warwick Racecourse and on the

same venue. I kid you not! Warwick, 50 years on, right on the edge of the town and guess which way the wind was blowing?

Excuse me whilst I digress! Mention of the wind blowing towards Warwick town reminds me that three models simultaneously over-flew the grandstand and landed in the same street just outside the Racecourse. I was fetchermiting, and along with two other flyers, we went in pursuit and tracked down two of them quite soon. The third was eventually seen in an apple tree in the back gardens of a long row of terraced houses and there seemed no way through.

Apologetically, we knocked on the appropriate door and explained the problem to the very elderly lady of the house. It was lunchtime and, completely unfazed, she not only invited us through her time-warped house to recover the missing airplane and provided a clothes-line prop for us to winkle the model free, but was reluctant about our departure, offering the three of us a full roast beef Sunday lunch. All this time her equally elderly husband snoozed in his armchair, oblivious of the unexpected visitors and potential lunchtime guests. Because the competition was in rounds and time was short, we declined this most unusual offer and politely excused ourselves. I think the bottom line was that this dear couple had spent their Sunday lunchtimes in exactly the same way (her cooking, him sleeping) since time immemorial and us three complete strangers turning up, looking for a model plane, probably made the old lady's day. On reflection, I wish I had stayed for lunch.

So, at this Warwick meeting, but not in competition (my KK Gypsy did the honors for that) I flew the re-covered New Yorker IV. It flew a little better but still did nothing special. Around that period I happened to be at one of David Baker's carpet crushing soirees in Muswell Hill when I met Danny Shields for the first time. Chat turned to my unsuccessful efforts with New Yorker IV and Danny surprised me thus. He claimed to be at Wayne County that day when it lifted the Stout Trophy for Frank Zaic and he concurred, the model really was a hound and the "Trash Mover" (his words) that caught Frank's model that day "would have lifted a Sherman Tank".

Danny went even farther! He reckoned the model never performed properly either before or since. Harsh words indeed, but Danny was never short of an opinion or two. So from his personal observation, here was some sort of confirmation that the model was an under-achiever. And all that time, I thought it was me!



Well, time moved on and I returned to Rubber flying with Warring's "Voodoo" and "Zombie" and all was well with the world. Yet something was still amiss! This clunker was taking up valuable space in my house and was as much use as a chocolate fire guard.

It had to go and I resolved it should go in style. I hatched a cunning plan and took one of my better motors, fully wound, rigged up a bunch of DT fuse with a few short tails strapped to the front of the fuselage and in my local meadow, lit the fuses and launched it into the best bit of air I could detect. Given a good bung, it mooched around for about 40 seconds getting up to about 150 feet before the whole kit'n'kaboodle went up in flames. It was a wonderful episode carried out in complete solitude with no photographic record. A fitting end to a complete duffer. The model that is, not me!

Now, all these years later, the vexing unanswered questions. Was I wrong to make this sacrificial pyre? Should I have made more effort? Was Danny telling the truth? Was this really a fitting end for a replica of such fame? Who knows? Perhaps the most telling comment about this design is that, in England, I have never seen nor heard of another one, which probably means that, on this side of the pond, nobody ever fancied it. Either that, or no-one had a big enough budget for the balsa, which makes this sad little story completely unique.

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