

The Northern Arrow Story

“Northern Arrow” was designed in 1936 to compete in contemporary 4 oz Wakefield competitions by Mr. I. W. Hall of Northern Heights Model Flying Club. It was not published at the time. The following year, the weight rule changed to 8 oz and the model was forgotten. Time moved on, war broke out and international competitions ceased.

However, F/F demand was still there. Premier Kits obtained details of the plane from Mr. Hall and marketed a kit for sale in 1941, advertised freely in the model press. Problem was, the draughtsman (Mr. J. Calderbank) copied the wing chord incorrectly and made it 4.75" instead of 5". The rib outline on the plan measured 5". People bought the kit and flew the plane. End of story, or so it seemed. Except, time moves on again. 40 years later, in the early '80's, Fred Chapman built a replica from the original negative blueprint.

Of course it was not a “Wakefield” anymore, because the wing area was now approx 181 sq inches - too low to meet the rules of 190 to 210. Fred persisted and Mike Kemp then decreed, unilaterally, that it was a Wakefield and could be flown in Sam35 competitions. Rules were amended accordingly. His reasoning? "There were so few British wakes of the era we could not afford to lose one". And why not? Bravo! After all, Mike was the centre of the known universe for British rubber flyers and what he said was Gospel.

In the meantime I built the red one seen here and still alive today but with black fuselage. Fred Chapman and I were hardly going to complain, were we? As far as we knew there were no others around. Yet again, time moved on, Fred won the 1934-84 50th Memorial 4 oz Wakefield competition at Warwick Racecourse. What a star? Now a full decade onward to 1995 and Andrew Longhurst, new “Rubber Column” guru for Sam35, questions the voracity of N.A.



Incensed, I re-compile my dossier and consult Dave Baker at one of his Friday Soiree's. He picks up the phone and calls Bob Copland (ex Northern Heights President etc.) and asks Bob if he remembers Mr. Hall and the N.A. Bob says he “remembers him well, Mr. Hall never flew anything other than Wakefields, except some indoor dabbling”.

So there you have it. Northern Arrow was and is a true 4 oz Wakefield but in 1941 when redrafted by a junior draughtsman for Premier Kits it got a bit smaller. And today, only in England could the rule makers allow an undersize model to compete as if it were bigger.

Thus, the story is complete. Currently, there are a few N.A.'s around (I now have two). John Wingate has a stormer that places regularly in our competitions and league and I've seen some others needing a bit more urgency. They are all very pretty and they love trees.

Below is the letter that was published in Sam35Speaks setting out my case for this model qualifying as a 4oz Wakefield?

Dear Andy, Re: - Northern Arrow eligibility as a 4oz Wakefield - March '95 S.S.

I have a copy of the original Premier blueprint of N.A. showing that the rib outline (positioned on top of the fuselage) has a wing chord of 5", as compared to the wing planform measured at 4.75". I believe that a mistake occurred when the draughtsman for Premier Kits (Mr. J. Calderbank) drew up the plans from Mr. I. W. Hall's original working drawings or sketches and created an erroneous wing planform!

The error was perpetuated by Mr. Lawrence Sparey when he transcribed details from the Premier plan to his drawings used in the book "Models for Flying" by Sparey and Rippon. Using your figure of 181 square inches and recalculating for 5" chord gives a wing area of 190.5 square inches.

Furthermore it was the late Fred Chapman's contemporaneous belief that the N.A. was indeed a 4oz Wake and I remember many exploratory discussions with him since 1986 regarding the design, it's possible history, and our theory that in all probability the N.A. was caught in an unfortunate time warp as follows:-

- * N.A. designed and flown as 4oz wake by Mr. Hall in 1936.
- * Plans surfaced and drawn/kitted by Premier in 1940/41.
- * Models for Flying published with redrawn plan (post) 1941.

There is further circumstantial evidence that supports Fred's and my theory:-

- * Mr. Hall was a Northern Heights MFC member, as was Mr. Bob Copland.
- * The design bears more than a passing resemblance to Bob's 1936 classic design.
- * Many constant chord designs of the period carried similar dimensions:-

* Copland '36 Wake	5" chord	40.5" span
* Jeffery '36 Moffet	5" chord	41.5" span
* Lanzo duplex	5" chord	41.5" span
* Verdier '36 Wake	5" chord	40.0" span
* Ying '35 Wake	5" chord	40.0" span

So they were all at it, with their 5" chords, 40" spans and parallel planforms; including, I submit, their contemporary, Mr. Ivor W. Hall.

Expressed in the vernacular: If it looks like a chicken, behaves like a chicken and sounds like a chicken, then it ain't a turkey. IT'S A CHICKEN!

The Northern Arrow, looks like a 4oz wake, behaves like a 4oz wake and, on the evidence of the 5" rib was (I believe) designed as a 4oz wake. QED! Unfortunately Messer's Calderbank and Sparey erroneously created something different! Based on the above it would be wrong to de-classify the Northern Arrow as a Sam35 approved 4oz Wakefield without further research, wouldn't it? I wonder if there is any additional information available which would contribute to the resolution of this mystery?

Regards etc.

P.S. David Baker has since spoken to Bob Copland of Northern Heights MFC and he remembers Mr. Hall very well indeed and stated that he flew only Wakefields.

So there you have it, the story of how "Northern Arrow", designed and forgotten in 1936, was commercially resurrected with dimensional errors yet survives today to qualify for Sam35 Vintage Wakefield competitions despite its undersize wing.

Ramon

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