

## The Story Behind the Photograph -6



*Prototype Clutton Tabenor FRED 2 G-ASZY*

It is the summer of 1970 and after spending a couple of sessions working for Doug Bianchi at Personal Plane Services at Booker, we (myself and twin brother Jim) had got to know Alan Chalkley and had joined the Vintage Aircraft Club.

We persuaded our father that it would be a good idea if he came and camped with us at the VAC summer camp at The Oaks strip on The Long Mountain, near Welshpool. Having no other means of transport, we were mightily relieved when he agreed that a break would do him good and that we could extend our trip with a few days in Wales.

The Oaks strip was being run by Claud Millington and was used for Tiger Moth instruction by the Montgomeryshire Ultralight Flying Group. This hilltop strip offered magnificent scenery and a skill-challenging operating environment. Apart from being somewhat short, the strip (to quote the report in Vintage News) 'slopes up towards the west and south, making take-off and landing very interesting, particularly as, from the air, the field appears to slope the opposite way!' With high temperatures and little wind down the runway (albeit a fair amount across) the strip required good short field technique.

Despite initially murky and then hot and hazy conditions, a number of aircraft flew in including Alan Chalkley with Cub G-ASPS and the Comper Swift G-ACTF flown, I think, by Bill Woodhams. My photographs also show a Turbulent, the locally-based Tiger Moth, a Hornet Moth and the bright red Clutton FRED G-ASZY, which arrived on the Sunday morning.

As non-flying visitors, we were made to feel very welcome at the club barbecue, although I do recall the camping facilities as being at the distinctly Spartan end of the spectrum.

When the FRED came to leave, it leapt into the air with an initially impressive climb gradient, transitioning into a drifting, sinking descent over the Tiger Moth and then (just) over the fence at the end of the runway. It disappeared into the valley south of the airfield, in which it could be heard for some time thermal hunting, before emerging above the level of the hill tops and setting course for home.

The Comper Swift had more power to weight ratio and was less troubled. This aircraft, with its geared Pobjoy engine and large slow turning propeller makes a very distinctive sound that brings an instantly vintage air to any gathering. It was an unexpected delight to see such a rare aircraft in this beautiful rural environment.



*Comper Swift G-ACTF airborne at The Oaks*



*Alan Chalkley's Cub G-ASPS – author's father to the right of the aircraft*