



# HELIPAD

by John Heaton

WOBURN ABBEY, or more pedantically the helicopter fly-in that takes place there each year, is generally considered to be the BRCHA's annual jamboree and this year's event held on July 18 was probably the best attended so far. At 11am I counted over 100 models on the flight line and the flying took the traditional format with scale, novelty and expert competitions running throughout the day, although there was plenty of opportunities for impromptu demonstration and practice flights.

As always at these events, there were too many models and just too much going on for anyone to cover every individual entry, but some of the highlights were as follows. Kenny Binks left his British Aerobatic Champion hat at home to enter the Expert event after only twelve weeks experience flying a Hirobo *Falcon 707*. Although he

didn't reach a very high placing in the results, it was very apparent that if he leaves the *Pacemaker* alone for a little more practice with the *707* he will be well to the fore with the choppers as well as the aerobatics. Anyway, Ken, welcome to the rotary club, so to speak.

Several models really sprang out of the crowd, one of these being Chris Jenkin's petrol engine Hirobo *Bell 47G*. Finished in American MASH markings complete with external stretchers and horribly mangled Action Man, the *47G* flew as good as it looked. Another American military machine came from Graham Swan, this being the considerably more aggressive Lockheed *Cheyenne*. Historically, this was the first helicopter ever designed specifically as a 'gunship', and the model certainly looks terrifying with its two chin turrets and wing-

mounted rocket launchers. With the notable exception of the extra tail propeller (which pushed the prototype to 255mph) most of the model's bits and pieces operated like the prototypes. The various hatches and doors to the two highly detailed cockpits can be opened, the stalky main undercarriage retracts, the flaps on the stub wings operate and it looks like the rocket launching tubes are intended to apparently fire rockets. A very impressive looking model based on Schluter *Star Ranger* mechanics.

All in all this was an excellent rally which really deserves to be repeated and should have a far higher proportion of spectators. Considering the excellent facilities with bars, snack bars and toilets plus of course the Abbey itself and the Safari Park, the BRCHA Woburn Abbey fly-in can really be regarded as the cue for a family day out. Results are as follows:

#### Concours

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1. J. Wells  | <i>Augusta 109</i> (Hirobo mech.)             |
| 2. G. Swan   | Lockheed <i>Cheyenne</i><br>(Schluter mechs.) |
| 3. J. Barrow | <i>Gazelle SA 341</i> (Hirobo mechs.)         |

#### Novelty

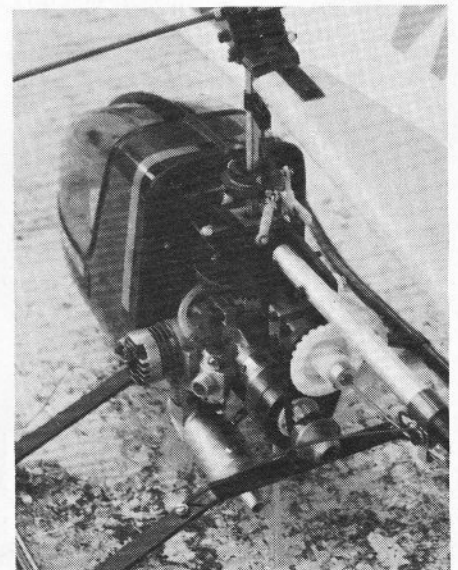
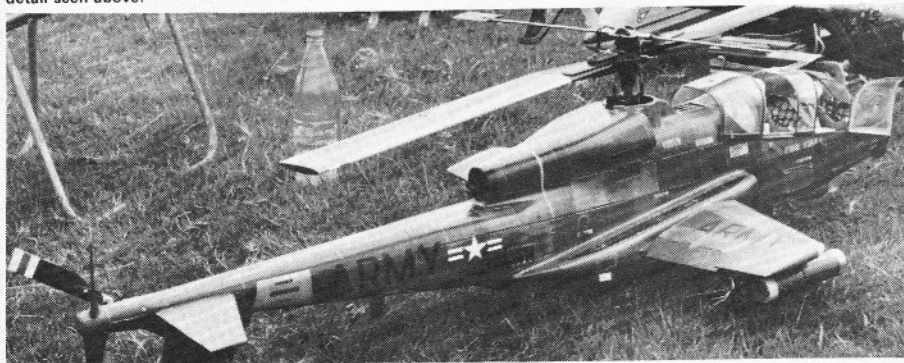
1. Alan Parris
2. D. Nieman
3. L. Mount

#### Expert

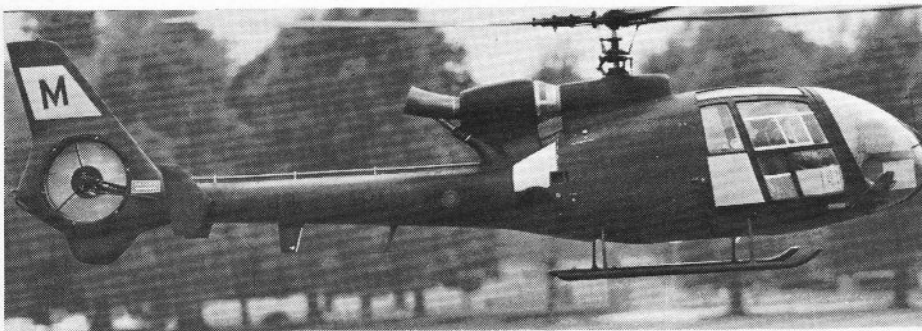
1. D. Nieman
2. G. Richardson
3. J. Heaton



Graham Swan's superb Lockheed *Cheyenne* entered in the Concours has a wealth of cockpit detail seen above.



Below: shot of the mechanics of the GMP *Cricket*. Note those double ended ball linkages and stator cone.



Ken Binks 'goes chopper' in the Expert event. Top left: J. Barrow's *Gazelle* SA341. Left: the limbo tape goes for a chop — note tail tangles on the *Bell*.

**It's not cricket**

The GMP *Cricket* is the brainchild of British expatriate John Gorham, who moved to America and subsequently formed Gorham Model Products. Although the *Cricket* is not generally available in the UK it is nonetheless an interesting little .20 powered sports/trainer. As one would suspect with an American kit, it is well presented with considerable documentation and a goodly amount of sales patter.

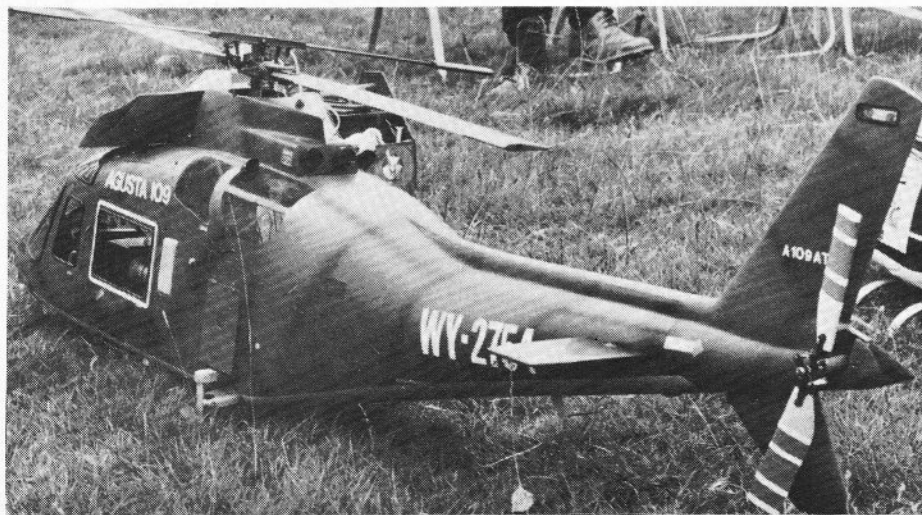
Assembly was quite straightforward thanks to the good prefabrication. The overall layout is similar to the *Lark* although it is slightly smaller and rather better engineered with a good number of ball races. A Schluter style unit is employed, i.e. a one-piece solid clutch with bend-out pads and a cork lined bell. Engine starting is facilitated by a conveniently placed cone and tail drive is via a wire shaft to a Hirobo tail rotor gearbox. The motor chosen for this particular example was an HGK 21, which fitted in quite easily thanks to the universal motor mount. One of the

systems that has obviously received a lot of thought and incorporates a lot of care is the swash plate. It employs some very nice double ended ball joints and an 'O'-ring device in the swash plate itself, and the entire assembly is remarkably free of play.

Frankly speaking, had I not been initially 'wowed' by the high pressure sales pitch I would have found the *Cricket* to be adequate but otherwise unremarkable. In view of all the claims however, the whole thing was an anticlimax and I was quite disappointed. If forced to make comparisons I would say its flying qualities were better than those of a *Helibaby* or *Zenith* but not up to the standard of a *Lark* or Graupner *Bell 47*.

Some of the 'blurb' comments are real gems. For example, "The model needs nose ballast because it was designed to have a dummy pilot." (?!!). Also "The *Cricket* is the World's best selling small helicopter" and

J. Well's *Augusta 109* fitted with retracting landing gear, caught in operation on the right.



"the best flying small helicopter" are somewhat questionable. Instructions also explain how the machine was designed to have a curious mix of metric and imperial measurements for the components.

I cannot dispute the machine's durability, for the test *Cricket* was subsequently flown by Andy Hunt, one of my new-found colleagues who thought that helicopters looked easy to fly and is slowly learning that, like most things, you have to learn to walk before you can run. During his tuition with the *Cricket* there were several 'arrivals' but the machine suffered only minor damage. Nothing much went wrong although minor problems included snapping the piano wire teeter restrainer and tail drive.

I must admit to being fairly disappointed with the *Cricket*, and although Southern Helicopters had considered importing the kit, once freight costs and import duties had been taken into account the *Cricket* would cost about the same as a *Baron 20*, a model with which it just cannot compare.

