

“Come fly with me”



A photograph taken from the perspective of someone inside a biplane. The top wing is visible at the top of the frame, and two red struts support it. The background shows a green airfield, a paved area with a white cylinder and an orange cone, and a range of blue mountains under a blue sky with white clouds. A small green sign is visible on the left edge.

By Kevin Weldon

VH-WEF

Stampe SV-4B Series

No .1040. Built 1947

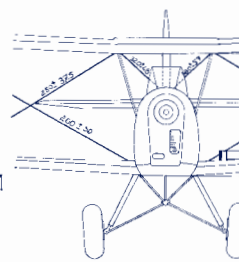
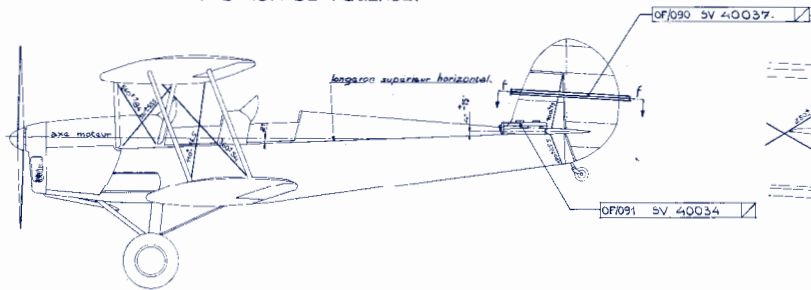




VH-WEF

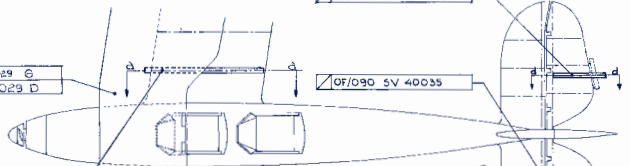


POSITION DE RÉGLAGE.

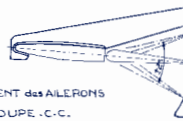
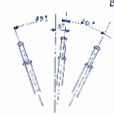


BATTEMENT DU FILETIER DE
COUPE d.d.

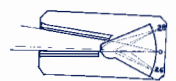
OF/090 SV 4043E.



BATTEMENT des STABILIS
COUPE q.q.



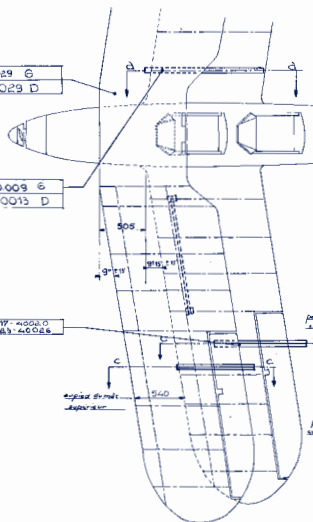
COUPE c.c.c.



COUPE f.f.

PLAN CENTRAL

OF/092 SV 40009 G
OF/092 SV 40013 D

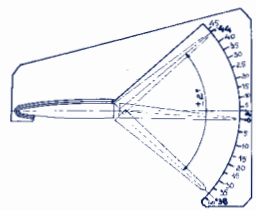


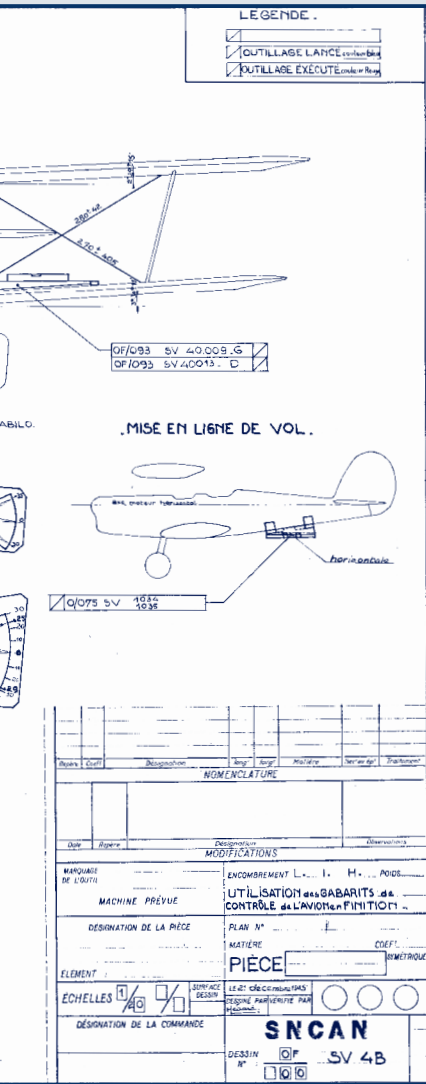
INCIDENCE AILE SUPÉRIEURE

INCIDENCE AILE INFÉRIEURE

parallèle au longeron supérieur passager

parallèle au longeron supérieur fuselage





DESIGNER: Count Stampe, Belgium 1939.

MANUFACTURE: Stampe et Renaud and later Stampe et Vertongen, Belgium

AIRFRAME: Diagonally wire braced spruce wooden structure, two seater in tandem. Fully-castoring tail-wheel, main wheel brakes, four ailerons.

ENGINE: Gypsy Major 10-1, 140 h.p. with inverted fuel system, 2 mins. max inverted.

LIMITS: +6; -4. AUW 1,700lb. Empty weight 1,200 lbs.

DIMENSIONS:

- Wing span 25 ft 3 ins
- Length 22 ft 4 ins
- Height 8 ft 2 ins

PERFORMANCE:

- VNE 148 kts, 2,675 rpm
- Cruising speed 95 kts, 22,250 rpm
- Max cruising speed 106 kts, 2,400 rpm
- Climbing speed 56 kts, 2,100 rpm
- Approach speed 53 kts,
- Stalling speed 38 kts up
- Max rate of climb to 1,150 fpm
- Ceiling 17,000 ft
- Range 215 n.m.

Between 1923 and 1940, Stampe en Vertongen built several aircraft types, first known as RSV and later SV. The SV-4 was their most successful design and widely acclaimed for its aerobatic qualities. Before World War II, about 100 of this type were built in Antwerp. After the war, about 1000 more were made under license in France.

This Stampe (VH-WEF) is No 1040 and was manufactured by Sterlier Industriel de l' Air at Maison Blanche, Algiers in 1947 as an SV4C with Renault 4PO1 engine.

It was flown by the French Air Force in Algeria and later at Casablanca in Morocco and was placed onto the French Civil Register in February 111958 as F- BBN with 847 airframe hours.

It then operated in the south of France in the Marseilles district at CCCuers, Fayenoe and Le Castelet until 1964 when it changed ownership and location to Bondues airport Lille.

In 1966 it was purchased with several other Stampes and placed on the British Civil Register as G-AVCO by the Tiger Club who converted it to an SV4B after fitting a Gypsy Major 10-1 engine.

It was severely damaged on a landing at the Tiger Club airfield, Redhill, Surrey in 1968 and Rollason Aircraft and Engines Ltd., a subsidiary of the Tiger Club, completely rebuilt the aircraft, finally completing the task in May, 1973 as the last aircraft to be built at the famous Croydon Airport.

The aircraft arrived in Australia in January, 1976 and was later purchased by Kevin Weldon in 1987 from Dave Freeman who was an ex air-force pilot who flew helicopters in Vietnam.



Jean Stampe, King Albert I
and Maurice Vertongen
Pic: Courtesy Stampe en
Vertongen museum





I'm now towards the end of my ninetieth year, and I've been reflecting a fair bit ... that during your life you do some things that, at the time, might seem small - not particularly fulfilling, not even something that gives a really sense of achievement. But when you look back on some of these adventures, you realise what a unique time it was ... the romance of that experience dawns on you and at the same time the realisation that these moments are so fleeting - passing as quickly as a breath of wind.

These are magic moments ... like the feeling you get when you look out from a mountain top and down into the valley and the shadows are disappearing as the sun is setting beyond, just before the darkness closes in and saying to yourself, *"This is the end of the day, what does tomorrow bring?"*

One of these experiences, that is now so clear in my mind, was in my Stampe, a beautiful bi-plane, built in Belgium in 1947.

When Covid lock-down was announced three years ago I found myself unable to return to Sydney. I was 87 and alone in my hut in Luskintyre on a private airfield in the Hunter Valley. At that age, it's easy to think that people see you as irrelevant - and it's easy to lose confidence in your abilities - I never wanted to become the "old bloke in the corner dribbling".

So there I was in the Hunter Valley standing next to the hanger. I slid open the doors and there she was, my beautiful, red and yellow





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Jayco
PANDA
TRAILERS

VH-AMPF



WIND

WORKS

W. G. ...
ELECTRICITY

44

Stampe. I thought to myself how lovely she was as I wiped her down and I said to her, *“I think I’m going to take you for a fly”*

Then I started to ponder ... *“How am I going to push it out from the other aircraft in the hanger and then out onto the grass? Who is going to turn the propeller for me ?*

There wasn’t anyone around on the airfield at that time and starting up the Stampe, which weighs about 700 kilos, is normally a procedure for two people.

I said quietly to myself, *“I reckon you could start her up on your own Kev. Now come on Kev, give it a go”*

I gently moved a few planes in the hangar bit by bit, so I could turn the tail of the Stampe around to face the large doors, then I lifted up the tail a little and slowly walked backwards and “Bingo!”, I managed to pull her all the way out to the grass and around to face the airfield.

We don’t have radios or control towers because it’s a private airfield with a lovely old wooden lookout tower and clubhouse and huts and hangers and old planes on the property. It has a beautiful grass runway that feels like you’re landing on a big bowling green.

I rehearsed my single pilot starting procedure called the pre-flight checks. They’re all laid down for you, in the right order, like a checklist, which you have to embed in your memory from the start.



FUEL TANK CAPACITY 10-1IMP GALL
QUICK READING W/SEA AREA FLIGHT
SUBSTATION... 30MIN!

OPPEY MAJOR 10-1
MAX RPM for not more than 5 MIN...2500
MAX CONTINUOUS RPM...2300
NORMAL CRUISE RPM...2000
MIN OIL PRESSURE...35Psi
NORMAL OIL PRESSURE...40-45Psi
START ENGINE ON B/R SWITCH ONLY
THE ENGINE ON BOTH WAGS BEFORE
TAKEOFF!



Part No.	Rev No.
1000	2300/0018
10	10
10	10
10	10
10	10
10	10



STAMP	REV
SMALL SPEED	41 816
CLIMB SPEED	88 816
CRUISE SPEED	100 816
MAX SPEED	110 816
MAX RPM	110 816
MAX OIL PRESSURE	40 816
MAX FUEL PRESSURE	10 816



Some people find these checks tiresome but I love them – to me it's exciting, taking the time to appreciate my Stampe in this way.

1. Make sure chocks under front wheels
2. Check switches in front and back cockpit are off
3. Fuel on ready to do fuel drain so fuel in cylinders for starting
4. Check throttle is closed off past idle
5. Undo left side engine cowl
6. Prime carburettor until fuel drips on grass under engine
7. Make sure engine canopy is closed and locked
8. Turn propeller clockwise 8 times
9. Set throttle just a little open
10. Turn on front switch then rear switch double check chocks are under wheels
11. Check throttle is set to start not full or open
- 12 Grab tip of prop swing down towards ground clockwise moving backwards at the same time

“BINGO!”, she started. I gently pulled the power right back to idle and pulled the chocks out and hopped in.

As I was taxiing down to take off, I gave it some throttle and tested the switches to check they were both working and there wasn't any

traffic around. You can never take this for granted - the other blokes that share the airfield at Luskintyre can, on a whim, come out for a fly or out of nowhere, come in to land.

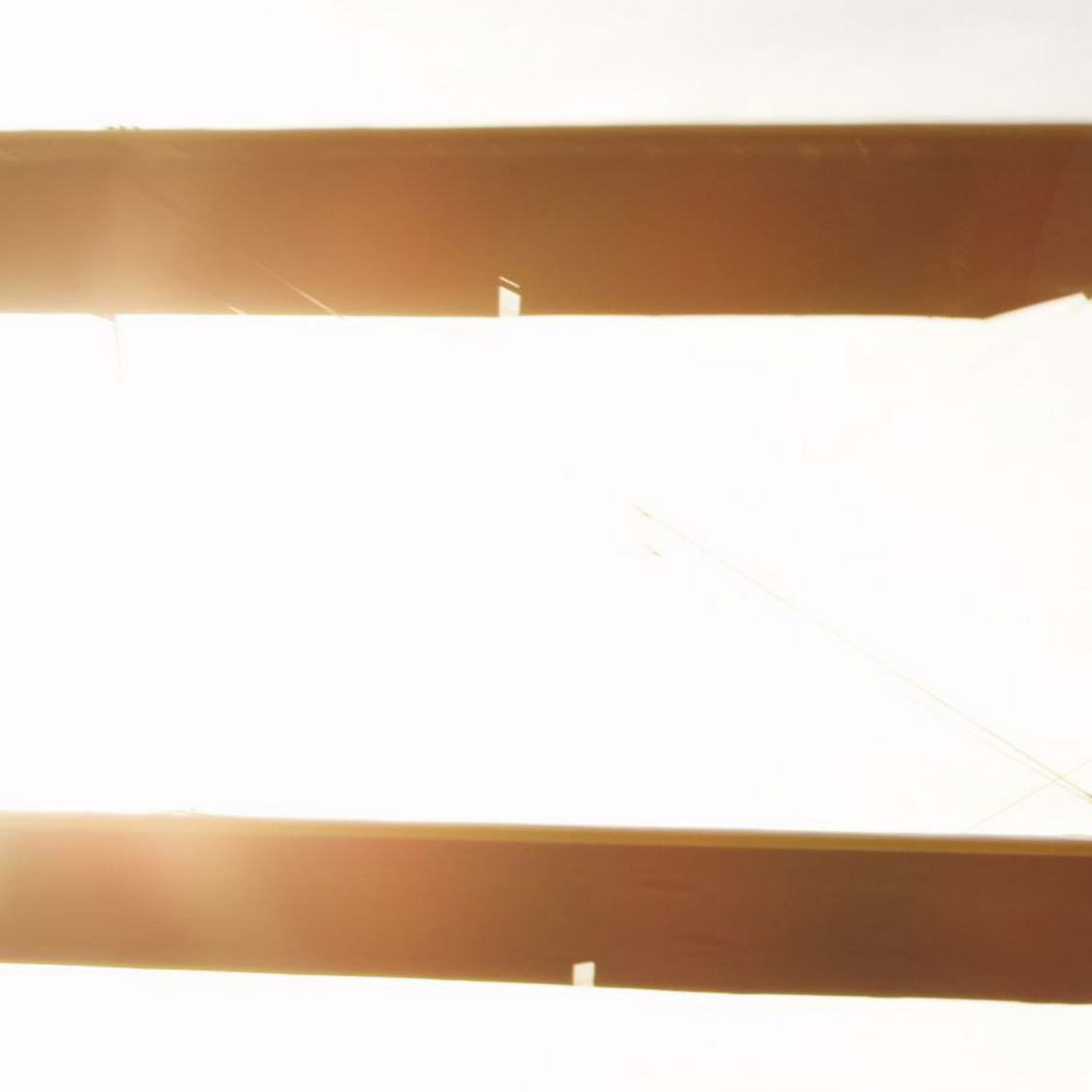
When I reached the end of the runway, I looked across to the right to the mountains in the distance, and they were turning purple - the whole environment turned purple as though a purple light had been switched on just for me. I looked out across the scene in front of me and thought, "*Wow, how good is that?.*" I wanted to shout out and say, "*Everybody, look at what I'm looking at!*". I gave it full throttle, and off I went - she just lifted off beautifully. It takes a while to climb up, so you make it a gentle climb.

The wonderful thing about the Stampe is that you're in a beautiful open cockpit with your goggles on and the air in your face and just the stick and the throttle. Those simple elements of flying and you're in control of everything, it's such freedom.

It's similar to the feeling I used to get when I took up board riding as a young man on the Gold Coast. I became fanatical about it - I'd be out all day from six in the morning till six at night in the dark. I'd ride all day long, up and down, out and back. I'd catch a beautiful wave to shore and it was the same sort of exhilarating feeling of being in the open air and FREE.

And here I was, the whole valley opened up for me with purples that changed to oranges as I climbed up and up and up and up.









As I flew higher and higher all the colours kept changing, giving me a new experience of the sunset as I flew into each height ... it was like flying through like rainbow stripes over the mountains.

As the sun began to set over to the west, the bright lights came on and kept joining new lights as I spiraled up and up. I could see the reflection of the sky in Hunter River like a mirror as it flowed up through to Scone.

It was magic. Finally I reached 3,500 feet, and I looked around me, and I thought “Wow” and I shouted at the top of my voice, “*You beauty, you bloody beauty,*”

I pulled it up and I did a steep turn and I dropped the power, pulled the power and dived down, and I pulled out a hundred and five, and did a loop following the nose of the aircraft. Right around above my head. And then as the land came into view again I came down to a nice little loop. I wasn't a great aerobatic sportsman at all, but when I did a loop, they were nice.

Then I did a slow roll to the right, pulled out of that and did a slow roll to the left, and then another loop, and then I did another steep wing over and all the time there was all this magic going on all around me.

I felt a part of Country. You know, you feel part of country. It's a very Aboriginal word, but you do feel part of Country.

I wanted to just scream out to the world, *“Have a look at this, here I am this old man and I’m getting so much enjoyment”*

It made me feel like I still had some relevance because no one can feel more relevant than when they do something in your older age that’s meaningful to younger people too.

In other words, we dismiss people as they get older because we know the problems they’re going through, and somehow we feel, *“Well, they’ve had their run”*, but that’s not how we should be thinking because they still have the opportunity for magic moments and they have all these amazing memories to draw on.

I’d flown over this valley many, many times but it’s only in these later years as I was heading towards challenges in the medical side of things that I suddenly realised how much I took for granted – flying in my beautiful bi-plane and doing simple aerobatics with so much freedom - as easily as I breathed in and out.

I didn’t realise how precious these experiences were until those last years of my flying, then you really appreciate what you’d been doing all these years. Just the memory of that flight in my Stampe still makes me smile inside. Reminds me of a piece from a book I read by Richard Bach where he observes *‘take a pilot in his very favourite airplane and immerse him in his very favourite conditions: meadows with trees planted; mountains to conquer; alone in the sunset clouds. Rarely, very rarely. And then only if you watch very closely you may see him smile.’*







Phil Unicom, won the 1992 Australian Aerobatics Championship, Sportsman Category, as well as the overall highest percentage scorer of the competition in the Stampe VHF. These photographs by Dave Mottram show him performing aerobatics in the 2015 Airshow.





“I bought a Tiger Moth (AQJ) from Ray Windred in 1984 before I bought the Stampe and I had so many adventures in it - I once shipped it to France in 1992 and flew it across the English Channel into Woburn Abby to join a huge gathering of De Havilland antique aircraft.

I joined the group in Luskintyre in 1984 and it was pure freedom to fly there and to have the camaraderie of people that loved the same sort of plane. It was just heaven, just heaven.”

Frank Williams, Alan Wilson and Kevin Weldon



Vale Kevin Weldon 14.12.33 – 9.11.23 Design/production Cecille Weldon Email cecille@weldonco.com.au
Images Cecille Weldon, Harold Weldon, Michael Young, Dave Mottram, Gourmet Traveller