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Editorial Extract

## A Rare Treasure

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Spitfire Mk.XVI

### Eastern Front Mud-Mover

Stukas suppressing  
the Soviets

### Staring Down the Bear

Canberra 'nav' in  
Cold War Germany

Flying  
the **Harvard**  
High Powered  
**Learning**

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# High-Powered Learning

A new venture based at White Waltham airfield now offers Harvard pilot training and enthusiast experience flights. **Darren Harbar** met the men behind the operation and went air-to-air with the historic type

There are several places across the UK where you can fly in a Harvard, but few are located as close to London as the latest enterprise that has 'spread its wings' at Berkshire's White Waltham airfield. As one of the largest grass strips in Europe, Waltham boasts a special wartime history. Appropriately, the Harvard in this feature has a genuine wartime pedigree, too. Owned by James Brown of Oxfordshire-based Hurricane Heritage ([www.hurricaneheritage.com](http://www.hurricaneheritage.com)), FES11 is operated

to the 1,030hp (768kW) Hurricane Mk.I is precisely what the Harvard was designed for and, although its wartime logbooks have long since vanished, many pilots would have flown the airframe for exactly that purpose after it entered service in 1942. There's now the new opportunity for anyone to experience flying in this classic machine – and for qualified pilots to train on the powerful type.

**Historic ground**  
Situated just west of London,

by the war ministry early in World War Two to become the headquarters for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). Famously, this organisation was responsible for more than 300,000 aircraft

movements; delivering and relocating fighters, bombers and transport aircraft to allow the squadrons to concentrate on operations. After the end of hostilities, the airfield became the base of the Fairey Aviation Company and, for most of the post-war years, it has been home to the West London Aero Club (WLAC). Many of the original wartime buildings still survive, including the WLAC clubhouse that offers the perfect pre and post-flight relaxation facility for those wishing to partake in this new flight opportunity.

Airframe FES11 was built in 1942 as a North American AT-16 Harvard Mk.IIb, by Noorduyn in Montreal, Quebec, and was originally allocated the USAAF serial 42-0208. However, rather than going into US service, it was delivered new to the Royal Canadian Air Force on October 13, 1942 and served with 6 Service Flying Training School at Dunnville, Ontario, for the duration of the war training RAF aircrew. So there's a real thrill in now being able to fly the machine from a genuine

**LEFT** The smart scheme chosen for the Harvard represents its life in Canada during the 1940s where it was used for RAF pilot training.

**BELOW LEFT** With a huge 600hp engine, the Harvard is an ideal platform for learning and managing 'big-piston mentality'.

alongside his Hawker Hurricane Mk.I R4118. Having been based at White Waltham for several years, the Harvard was used by James during conversion training to fly his fighter, a role for which it was perfectly suited. In many ways, James' conversion from the 600hp (447kW) advanced trainer

White Waltham is an ideal location for the Harvard. With a huge expanse of grass, its three runways mean there's rarely an issue with crosswinds. Although the Waltham zone intersects with the Heathrow Terminal Manoeuvring Area, the airspace to the west of the airfield allows ample space for the Harvard to flex its wings. The aerodrome's history is remarkable and so relevant to classic aircraft operation. Having been built to house the de Havilland School of Flying in 1935, Waltham was requisitioned



wartime airfield. In 1947, it was sold to the Swedish Air Force and used as an instructional airframe for many years, initially based at Stockholm Bromma Airport, before moving to Stockholm Arlanda from 1975 for approximately 12 years. The trainer was then sold to a Swedish private collection, where it was restored to airworthy condition and allocated the civilian registration SE-BII. The aircraft remained in that country until 2015 wearing a pseudo US military scheme with invasion stripes.

Piper Cub before progressing to the Chipmunk with Peter Tuplin as my instructor. I flew around 25 hours on the 'Chippie', with Peter being perfect to convert me to the Harvard – with the Hurricane in mind – as he's got plenty of big-piston experience himself on the Spitfire and Mustang. Despite Peter's great and at times very patient instruction, it still took quite a while for me to get rid of that Cessna 182 mindset."

While the Harvard has not only acted as a trainer to fly his Hurricane, it also gives him

James has obviously gained a great deal from owning the Harvard, finding this ideal training aid a joy to fly. He therefore wanted to give others the chance to appreciate its delights. This led him to join forces with Peter Tuplin and aerobatic pilot Mike Collett (not the former Air Atlantique owner of the same name), to offer others the chance to fly the Harvard. Mike already provides flight training and experiences with his Ultimate Aerobatics business at White Waltham. So he was perfectly placed, with existing administration and logistics skills, to operate the Harvard on a similar basis.

#### Two streams

Peter also has form in offering warbird encounters when he had his own Harvard, in which he gained some 600 hours, so the pair seemed spot on for James. Ultimate Aerobatics will provide two very different opportunities for potential customers. The wider audience will enjoy air experience flights, allowing enthusiasts to get a real sense of flying in a powerful World War Two-era piston-engined aircraft. Flights will start from £385



RIGHT The Harvard's cockpit is a perfect classroom for those wishing to progress onto warbirds, as it shares much of the same instrumentation and controls.

RIGHT Retractable undercarriage and staged flaps give students a feel for more complex flight management when it comes to take-offs and landings.

when it was acquired by Hurricane Heritage and flown to Old Warden in Bedfordshire. Following extensive maintenance and the application of an appropriate wartime scheme, the aircraft now represents a Harvard provided to the RAF under the wartime lend-lease agreement with the US and is registered G-CIUW.

#### Perfect classroom

James had originally purchased the Harvard as a trainer for himself, to accrue hours on a high-powered taildragger with retractable undercarriage. It would be the perfect route to soloing on the Hurricane he'd bought just a few months before. Having flown the fighter for the first time in November 2018, James has continued to utilise the trainer to maintain his hours and familiarisation: "The reason I bought the Harvard was to put the hours on," he explained. "Not only to transition to the Hurricane, but also for me to then maintain currency for the Hurricane, going forward. My tailwheel training was initially on a



something to build hours in a more powerful warbird type. In addition, it's an appropriate way to make the transition from one type to another, as it helps him 'get into the zone' before stepping back into the Hurricane. James told *FlyPast*: "When I fly the Hurricane, I take the Harvard from White Waltham up to Duxford where I keep the fighter. This gives me a 40-minute warm-up to get into that big-piston mindset and restore the muscle memory of handling the aircraft. That's not its only advantage of course, as it's also a great aeroplane and fun to fly, plus it's aerobatic – although I keep things simple on that front. The Harvard really has become my default aeroplane."

for 20 minutes, with longer sessions available for a commensurate rate. For pilots, there's a more intensive chance to master the Harvard. This isn't something open to all, as Mike explained the criteria: "We will select our candidates for training very carefully. Students will need a practical amount of tailwheel time, on something like a Chipmunk or Pitts. Otherwise the transition would be [lengthy], and that's not fair on the customers who'd be setting themselves up for a very hard journey." There is a route for those who do not have any tailwheel experience, though, as Peter Tuplin has his own Chipmunk (WD292), at White Waltham and this can provide initial tailwheel sessions



### "The Harvard is the gateway to the holy grail of big-piston aircraft"

for those keen on that route. Mike also operates a Pitts S-2A as part of Ultimate Aerobatics, so pilots can gain experience on that type if required. The plan is for Peter and Mike to offer training at the right pace, and therefore not rush through the students. There will be a comprehensive plan of clear objectives, with detailed briefings, allowing trainees to better absorb the information. Reflecting on his own

tuition, James commented: "My own training was very interesting, and it can be hard work. An important lesson was not to try and do too much in a day. We've therefore agreed to pace the training carefully, so students have the ability to properly assimilate each lesson." The aim with the training packages will be to take someone to a competent standard on the Harvard, but students will stop short of going solo. As Mike stated: "It's about sharing this wonderful and historic aircraft with members of the public. Sharing our passion and flying from this amazing and close-knit community airfield."

James knows all too well what it's like to desire the opportunity to fly in

a World War Two aircraft. He's been very fortunate to own, and be the custodian of, one of the most historic Hawker Hurricanes still flying. His view has always been to share that machine with the enthusiasts – and with the Harvard he's further enhancing that ethos. "It opens the doors to higher-powered warbird flying," he said. "The Harvard is the gateway to the holy grail of big-piston aircraft. It's an aircraft you always respect and with which you never get complacent. The aeroplane was designed to teach pilots, and it's the right thing for it to be doing now." **FP**

For full details on flight experiences and training visit: [www.ultimateaerobatics.co.uk](http://www.ultimateaerobatics.co.uk)

ABOVE Peeling away from the camera aircraft, FES11 displays energetic performance that can be experienced by enthusiasts and seasoned pilots alike.



Photography: Darran Harbar



# Fly a Genuine WWII Harvard

Warbird experience flights and training at the beautiful and historic White Waltham airfield



Flights from  
**£385**

Whether you're an enthusiast who wants to fly in a genuine WWII icon, or an experienced pilot with a dream to qualify on the Harvard, we have a range of packages to suit you.

This newly restored Harvard and our team of highly qualified instructors are based at White Waltham: a historic wartime airfield just west of London.

White Waltham boasts a fully licensed bar and restaurant, making it a perfect location for the whole family to enjoy a great day out.

**For more information, contact:**

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