



The Dunford Flying Machine[®]

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Stick and stringbag

THE DAY Concorde was being spruced up for its first fare-paying passenger flight, the culmination of 14 years and £100 million spent on development, Don Dunford was out on an Oxfordshire hillside putting his Dunford Flying Machine through its paces.

The Dunford Flying Machine is far from a supersonic triumph, but it is an impressive piece of aeronautical wizardry with cotton and sticks. It took nearly as long as Concorde to perfect but was developed on a somewhat smaller budget.

Such is Dunford's confidence in his machine that he permitted me to fly it in a Force 8 gale. Force 8 being what it is I felt marginally more elongated at day's end than at the beginning, a phenomenon which in no way tempers my conviction that this summer every dad will want one of these remarkable devices.

Its appeal is that you really fly it, albeit from the ground. The unimaginative might dismiss it as just another kite, but what a kite! It takes off in a vertical climb at 50ft. a second, dives at 60 mph, flies in horizontal or vertical plane, hovers and swoops, performs figures of eight and a host of other aerobatics?

It can be flown with such precision using its two control lines that you can, after a little practice, almost flick a fly from a horse's rump at 50 paces. Such is its speed and manoeuvrability that scavenging gulls have made off in frenzied disarray after meeting up with it.

Inventive small boys, who make up much of the clientele of Dunford's model shop in Cowley, have already developed their own brand of competitive

fun and games with the flying machines. One lad trails balloons behind his while another, flying his machine with a sharp point to its nose, attempts to pop them in a mid-air game of target tag.

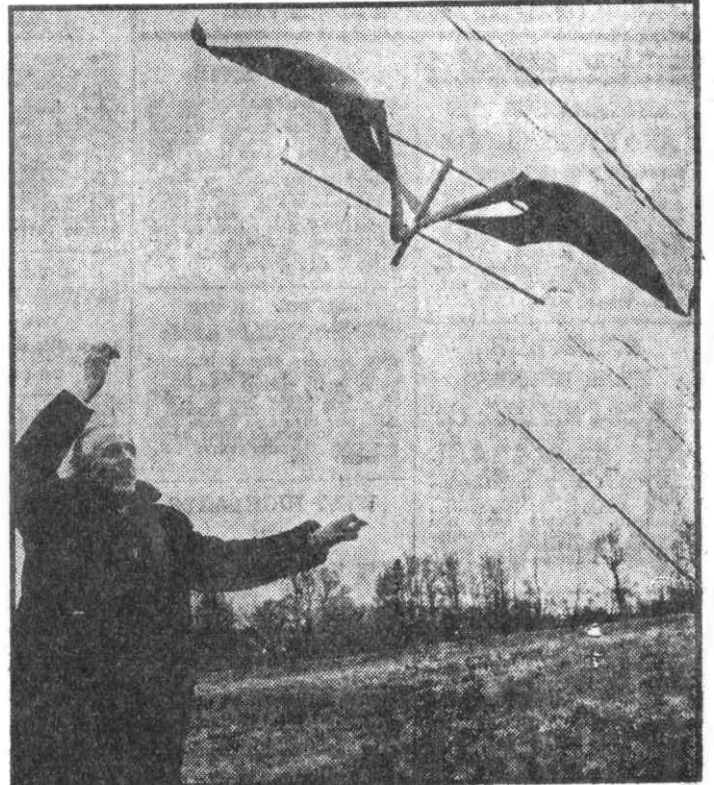
Dunford, an aeronautical engineering officer who retired from the RAF a few years ago, started thinking about his new flying machine during a family holiday. The kite he bought his son required much running about and he didn't rate the design. He reckoned he was not much of an aeronautical engineer if he could not do better. It took him several years longer than he thought it would—and it made his wife into a kite widow. But at least there is the satisfaction of seeing it presented at the Brighton Toy Fair later this month.

His machine owes much to the basic principles of bird flight. "From the outset I aimed at something like a bird with a piece of string on each foot to control it," says Dunford. It also had to be simple and easily repaired with inexpensive materials from any do-it-yourself shop.

Above all he was anxious to build something which would inculcate in people a sense of what it was like to fly an aeroplane—even if they were doing it sitting in a deckchair on the beach. In that he has convincingly succeeded and larded it with a lot of fun.

Philip Clarke

Peter Dunne



Don Dunford and his aerobatic flying machine