

COMET CRUNCH

AN UNFORTUNATE LANDING ACCIDENT HAS CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO ONE OF BRITAIN'S MOST HISTORIC AIRCRAFT. AMERICAN READERS CAN ASSIST IN RETURNING THE COMET TO THE SKY

BY MYLES RYLAND



De Havilland company logo.



The Comet's nose and engines dig into the Shuttleworth grass runway after its flying display on 15 August. Britain had been experiencing an unusual long-term heat wave and the grass runway at Old Warden had become extremely hard and some pilots have speculated this fact could have influenced the aircraft's bouncing.

On 15 August, thousands of British spectators were watching the fabulous flying display of vintage aircraft at Old Warden Aerodrome — the home of the Shuttleworth Collection. The theme of the event was the “Flying Proms.” While vintage aircraft flew overhead, they would be accompanied by orchestral music. The event is

extremely popular and 2026 was a sell-out. The flying would take place during the late afternoon/early evening and would conclude with a fireworks display. While overhead, the aircraft would be accompanied by classic themes performed by the 50-piece National Symphony Orchestra.

One of the most popular aircraft at

the Shuttleworth is the de Havilland Comet racer. Finished in a bright red scheme, spectators thrilled to the combined sounds of the Gipsy engines and orchestral music. After completing its dazzling flying display, the Comet came into land and that is when the unthinkable happened. But first, let's examine this important flying machine.

During the early 1930s, the British aeronautical industry was in peak form with huge variety of military and civilian aircraft being built for home and abroad. During 1933, the Australian confectionary manufacturer Macpherson Robertson decided to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the State of Victoria in 1934 with an air race from Britain to

Australia — at best, a very exacting event. Britain achieved international success with the Supermarine S.6B floatplane racer winning the Schneider Trophy but that nation's aeronautical industry did not have an aircraft capable of successfully competing in the grueling event.

That is when Geoffrey de Havilland determined the race

should be won by a British aircraft. However, de Havilland, as an astute businessman, knew the cost of creating such a machine would be high and there would be little to no chance of a lengthy production run for such an aircraft so he decided to finance the project purely for national prestige and any resulting research benefits. De Havilland with design