



Frequently Asked Questions

How many Sopwith planes were built?

Originally, Sopwith and its approved contractors produced over:

- 5,466 Strutters
- 1,847 Pups
- 152 Triplanes
- 5,407 Camels

The original Sopwith designs are well balanced and structurally sound. KipAero has built one Strutter and has produced parts and tooling to build many more.

How many Sopwith planes are still flying?

There are a few Strutters in museums, but there is only one original currently flying.

There is one other Strutter, assembled from a KipAero kit that is currently flying. It is the first built to the original Sopwith factory drawings in over 100 years.

There are eight (8) known original Camel survivors most are in museums.

There are a small number of accurate reproductions flying in the hands of individual collectors.

So why Sopwith?

Sopwith Aircraft are well engineered and known to have good flying characteristics.

Besides having name recognition, they are structurally sound; a two-seater was produced with dual controls suitable for training, and the models we offer share many metal fittings and common parts.

What's the difference between your kit and Aerodrome's replica kits?

Flying an authentic reproduction or a plane that looks like a Sopwith?



Which would you fly? An aeroplane that has proven track record (5,466 previously built) verse 50 or 60 replicas that are one-of-a-kind experimental aircraft?

Investment – Sopwith kit, powerplant, covering, and instruments ~ \$250,000. When you go to sell, you can sell it for \$250K.

A replica might end up costing \$120K. When you go to sell it you may get 10–15K.

Would you rather drive an authentic Austin Healey or a kit car made of fiberglass with a VW engine that looks like an Austin Healey?

If you truly want the authentic experience of flying a Great War aeroplane, then you need to fly an authentic reproduction with period correct rotary engine.

Are they aerobatic?

In their time, Sopwith aeroplanes were considered fully capable of stunts (aerobatics), which were frequently performed in combat.

Harry Hawker, Sopwith Chief Test Pilot, in the first flight of the Triplane, did three consecutive loops before continuing the flight test.

At the time, loops were still a novelty and rarely performed.

What kind of covering do you use?

Originally, Irish linen was used for the outer covering. Linen meeting the original British Standard 9BSF1 specification is still available from Belgium manufacturers.

Today, there are also several FAA approved synthetic coverings.

Are original type engines available?

Yes, new production Gnome Monosoupape rotary engines are available that fit a wide variety of Great War aeroplanes including Sopwith.

How does the engine work?

The propeller is fixed to the crankcase and they spin around the stationary crankshaft.



Guidelines for TBOs (Time-Between-Overhauls) have not yet been established for the new production Gnome Monosoupape rotary engine.

During the Great War, most aeroplanes were lost in operations before requiring engine replacement.

What about castor oil ingestion?

Castor oil and exhaust exit underneath the aircraft.

Castor oil source?

Castor oil is available in 1 or 5 gallon containers and 30 or 55 gallon drums. KipAero is a dealer for Benol castor oil.

What type of fuel?

Automotive or aviation fuel is far superior to what was available during WWI.

Where are they made?

The Sopwith Aeroplanes and kits are made in Dallas, Texas by KipAero; the Gnome rotary engines are produced in Blenheim, New Zealand by Classic Aero Machining Service.

What changes from original?

We follow the specifications on the original Sopwith drawings.

What's changed is the quality and consistency of raw materials – steel, wire, turnbuckles, fuel, metals used for engine production, etc.

Most of our metal fittings are laser cut to exact specifications. In 1915, all the metal fittings were cut by hand.

How long to build a Strutter?



Approximately 2,000 man hours are required to assemble a Stutter or Triplane kit; 1,500 hours to assemble a Pup or Camel (depending on kit, configuration and covering material).

Isn't it difficult to fly a rotary engined aircraft due to the gyroscopic effects?

Gyroscopic effects are actually less than rumored and are similar to the “P” effect noticed with higher horsepower propeller driven aircraft.

How frequently do you tighten turnbuckles?

Exterior wires and turnbuckles should be checked during every pre-flight inspection.

Is it LSA? (Light Sport Aircraft)

The Pup, Triplane, and Camel fall within LSA guidelines. The 1 ½ Strutter does not.

Do you have plans to introduce other aeroplanes like the Avro 504, SE-5, Fokker, Nieuport or JN?

Not at this time.

Cost for an unassembled Sopwith (in kit form)?

The kits range from the Sopwith Pup of \$95,615 to the Sopwith Triplane of \$121,660. The Vintage Aero Enthusiasts supply their own power plant, instrumentation, flying wires, and fabric covering according to their preference. No welding is required to assemble kit – it’s like a giant erector set.

Cost for a fully assembled Sopwith?

Estimate between \$250,000 – \$380,000 depending on aircraft and flight specifications you choose.



How fast, high, and endurance?

Sopwith Model	Speed	Maximum Ceiling	Flight Endurance	Fuel Capacity
Pup	106 mph	17,500 - 21,000	1¾ to 3 hours	19 ¼ gallons
1½ Strutter	97-103 mph	14,500 - 19,000	3¾ - 4¼ hours	40 gallons
Triplane	112-120 mph	20,000 - 22,000	2 to 2½ hours	20 gallons
Camel F1	101-113 mph	19,700 - 24,000	2 to 2½ hours	37 gallons

What is a Bessonneau?

A Bessonneau is a temporary canvas and timber aircraft structure used by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) during World War I (WWI, or the 'Great War'). Many Bessonneau hangars were also subsequently used by the fledgling Royal Air Force (RAF) as temporary structures until more permanent facilities could be built; one such location was RAF Cleave in Cornwall.

After World War I, Bessonneau hangars were often used for cheap and portable storage for civilian aircraft, and the newly-formed Royal Air Force continued to employ these hangars into World War II, later designating them 'Aircraft Hangar (Type H)'.

After World War II, British military use of Bessonneau hangars continued for the purpose of storing powered aircraft and gliders operated by the Air Training Corps ('Air Cadets'), until about 1990, and the last spare parts were disposed of by RAF Stafford circa 1988.