

Heroes and Heroines

“Lily” was amongst the last *private* cars to be made by the **Rootes Group** due to the need for war production. By 1939 their expertise as a car and truck maker was successfully harnessed for the mass production of aircraft and aero engines.

In early 1937 Liverpool Council leased part of the Speke Estate to the Air Ministry to erect a **Shadow Scheme** factory site, its function being to assemble military aircraft, especially bombers. It was to be run by **Rootes Securities**. During the first months of the war, Speke produced one in every five bombers built in Britain. Then in 1939 Rootes built another Shadow plant at Ryton, Coventry to produce aircraft and aero engines in addition to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

It is said that senior Luftwaffe officials were invited to inspect this type of facility in Birmingham and Coventry before the outbreak of hostilities!!

Between the war years Rootes built around 4,500 bombers **which needed pilots**.

The Air Transport Auxiliary

The **ATA** began as an idea of Gerard d'Erlanger, a director of British Airways in 1938. He foresaw the problems of the inevitable war such as the suspension of overseas routes, impounding of civil aircraft, professional and amateur aircrew grounded and the absorption of some civil flyers into the RAF.

Many experienced fliers had caught the flying bug in the 20's and 30s, but there was no plan for those aviators who were not able to join the Air Forces. Gerard believed there would be a demand for these pilots' services and proposed to the “Top Brass” the creation of a group of civil flyers for non combative flying roles in the service of their country. Starting with 100 applicants he was given the job to enrol flyers with the right set of skills and experience into this new scheme.

Their job was the delivery of aircraft from factories to the RAF and Royal Navy squadrons and the delivery of supplies. They were exempt from wartime service due to health, age and gender, but they gained a reputation for being able to take:-

“Anything To Anywhere”

Men and Women flew, the latter, being limited at first to non operational aircraft.

1st Jan 1940 the "First Eight" women were officially accepted into service.

Each had over 600 hrs flying time and were rated Flying Instructors.

As the war heightened, restrictions were gradually relaxed and almost everyone who qualified in one aircraft of a Type could then fly any aircraft of that Type.

Our Model pays homage to the **Heroic ATA** and **Joan Hughes**. With 4 yrs a flying instructor at 21 yrs old when she joined, she retired in 1985 with; an **MBE**, 11,800 private, service, test and film work hours in her logbook. She died age 74 in 1992