DO YOU LIKE ARMAGNAC?

Obviously, it is not a liquor we are speaking about, but a type of plane christened with the name of the French province "Armagnac"! Indeed, it was the practice in France after WWII to name its civil aircraft (up through the 1950s) after French provinces, for example: Languedoc, Bretagne, and Armagnac.

The SE 2010 Armagnac ("SE "for" Society of Aeronautical Engineering Southeast ") was a long-range airliner that first flew in 1949. At the time, the Armagnac was one of the largest civil aircraft ever built with a wingspan of almost 50 meters and weight over 77 tons. The prototype, one of only nine Armagnac built and the focus of this article, crashed in Toulouse in June 1950.

Though technically quite successful, the Armagnac was a commercial failure because some of its features, which reflected prewar thinking (such as providing extra space for sleeping compartments), were not economically valid in the 1950s.

For more information about the Armagnac, please refer to: (1) the excellent work of Laurent Gruz "SE 2010 Armagnac, the forgotten giant"( [www.aerobiblio.com](http://www.aerobiblio.com)) or (2) press articles of the 50s about the Armagnac ([www.petit-fichier.fr/2012/02/28/armagnac/](http://www.petit-fichier.fr/2012/02/28/armagnac/)).

Now, back to "our" Armagnac, the prototype, registered F-WAVA and its story.

On June 30, 1950, shortly after takeoff from St. Martin du Touch runway (today Blagnac airport in Toulouse), with two famous pilots on board, Leopold Nadot and Pierre Galy, the leading edge separates from the plane's wing, which affects flight control  immediately . Still, the pilots manage to return to the vicinity of the emergency runway, but thereafter the plane becomes impossible to control. It contacts the ground outside of the runway - the landing gear is torn off and the aircraft spins, coming to rest on fire.

Despite the dexterity of the pilots, two crew members are killed (by sheer bad luck: an electric pole/tower in the path of the plane cuts the cabin in two) and a ground worker who had come to help is killed by a truck. A naive pastel, found in the attic of a former employee who actually saw the accident, describes the scene, you can see it in the narration of the pilot.

More than sixty years later, nothing remains of the accident. Fields and countryside have been transformed into a huge assembly line by the Airbus company where Airbus aircraft and ATR turboprops are now built. Even a monument in memory of the victims, set up at the roadside in the 50s, has disappeared!

But one day, going through the book mentioned above, I discover an aerial photo of the prototype after the accident. This photo shows that the aircraft fell at a place where private persons live today.

I immediately get in contact with the owners of this property: with kindness and spontaneity, they let me enter their garden and they allow me to search for possible relics that may remain after the tragedy that occurred there 63 years ago.

At first glance, one cannot imagine that a plane crashed and burned here with loss of life. However, a few minutes of research confirm the validity of our probe - various small remains of the aircraft appear! A washer, fragments of pipes, a part still showing its red paint, a structural part with rivets, fragments of the outer surface ("skin") of the aircraft that are twisted and crushed, a strange pipe that turns out to be the valve of the inner tube of the tire (look at the cap that you can unscrew, you have the same on your bike), and bits of aluminum slag because the fire was very violent which caused the metal to melt.

We have just found the only existing parts of Armagnac that remain: unfortunately, the last aircraft of this type was scrapped in Bordeaux Merignac in 1975. These little tiny parts of metal are all that remains of an important page of the French aircraft history, which carried a lot of hope immediately after WWII. (Definitely, France is struggling to keep the memories of the past: where are our Potez 63, Léo45 or Bloch 210 gone ?).

These remains are now exhibited at the air museum in Toulouse, "Aeroscopia" which opened a few months ago, and you can see them there now, with a model, pictures, plans etc.

Later on, I discover that the sons of the Armagnac's pilots Pierre Nadot and Leopold Galy, namely Claude Nadot and Jean Jacques Galy, live in the area. I contact them and find out, remarkably, that both have been involved in aeronautics. Jean-Jacques Galy, a doctor, is now managing a famous aircraft race “rallye Air Aventures” going on the tracks of the famous Aeropostale. Claude Nadot has been working in the Aerospatiale group, and he has always been flying. I am warmly received by both men. They accept with emotion fragments of the plane that was piloted by their fathers.

And you know what? The Armagnac was manufactured in the same assembly line where the ATR Aircraft is now assembled; ATR is a company in which Claude Nadot, the son of Pierre Nadot, worked; ATR is the company where I am now working; and ATR’s address today is current address is... 1 Allée Pierre Nadot!

As a conclusion, the circle of the history of the  Armagnac  is complete.

To know more about Aircraft Archeology, you can visit our website: “http.// [www.aerocherche.fr”](http://www.aerocherche.fr)

[Gilles.collaveri@outlook.fr](mailto:Gilles.collaveri@outlook.fr)

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