

"We're All Right, Jacks!"



The Women's Junior Air Corps / Girls' Venture Corps & their aircraft, 1939-80

British Women Pilots' Association Archivist and former Girls' Venture Corps (GVC) Officer **BEVERLEY HARRISON** pays tribute to the Women's Junior Air Corps (WJAC from 1964), originally established in 1939 to provide opportunities for airminded girls and young women to get involved in aviation — and still the only British youth organisation ever to operate its own aircraft

IMAGINE A GROUP of excited teenage girls waiting at an airfield for a celebrity, looking to the skies, hoping to be first to spot a particular aircraft. They are with their leaders, and all mostly dressed in the same uniform. The aircraft arrives overhead, lands and is taxied in by its pilot, who is wearing the same uniform as these aviation-minded girls. This is their aircraft, owned by them as members of the Women's Junior Air Corps (WJAC), nicknamed the "Jacks". The waiting girls are WJAC Flying Club members, hoping to be taken on perhaps their first ever flight.

Such a scene has occurred frequently in the UK from the 1940s through to today, thanks to an initiative put in place to illustrate to young women that flying was for them as well as the boys, by offering them an opportunity to fly and giving them encouragement to apply their efforts towards their own aviation involvement.



Women's Junior Air Corps pilot Mavis Harriott (right) poses with a "Jack" cadet beside Auster J/5R Alpine G-APCX Grey Dove IV before an air-experience flight in the 1960s. Mavis was also a WRAF Volunteer Reserve pilot and in 1953 was one of three female pilots selected to form a de Havilland Chipmunk formation aerobatic team for a display at White Waltham — the first and only display team of women pilots to be formed by the RAF.

PHOTOGRAPHS VIA AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED