

Avoiding that shrinking feeling

Andrew Pearce – Question and answer session

David Thurrowgood: Cellulose nitrate was of course very commonly used in the 20s and earlier in paints and all sorts of things, but in terms of a rare trade it's pretty much died out. Did you have to have cellulose nitrate manufactured or did you purchase it, or how did you go about sourcing it?

Andrew Pearce: It was purchasable. There are some enthusiasts who do still use it on aircraft. It is commercially available as the doping material for doing aircraft fabric surfaces. It's not common to find – there's a lot more difficulty sourcing it than there would be with many other commercial products - but it's gettable.

David Thurrowgood: Good to hear.

Nikki King-Smith: Can you put a fire retardant on it?

Andrew Pearce: I really don't know. I can truthfully say I don't have the foggiest. I think, because you've got a fairly large fabric substrate, and you've got a wooden frame or an aluminium frame underneath - although you could probably put something onto the surface, because you're dealing with paint lacquers and things like that, I'm not sure how effective it would be. And I'm not deep enough involved in the chemistry of it to know whether it could actually be incorporated in the dope itself to prevent any damage occurring. I do know that we've done flammability samples with the dope that we've used and it is flammable. It's not explosively flammable, but certainly once you get it going it does burn.

Chris Knapp: I don't know of any fire retardants that you can put on the fabric, but I do know that we had a company come in putting some fire retardant on some of the display props, that caused damage to steel and aluminium and wood. So we've never tried it on aeroplanes.