

## Self-styled 'Bird in a Biplane' stripped of prestigious flying award over allegations she wasn't flying solo during her epic trips

- Tracey Curtis-Taylor was given the prize for navigational and flying skill
- She flew from Cape Town to Britain last year - supposedly on her own
- Allegations have emerged that she had a co-pilot on many of her trips
- It is the first time the Bill Woodhams Trophy has been rescinded

By [Paddy Dinham For Mailonline](#)

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**Tracey Curtis-Taylor has been stripped of a prestigious flying award following claims she wasn't flying solo**

The self-styled 'Bird in a Biplane' Tracey Curtis-Taylor has been stripped of a prestigious flying award following claims she wasn't flying solo.

The decision by The Light Aircraft Association came amid allegations she had a co-pilot on her epic flights.

It plunges her career flying vintage planes around the globe into a tail spin and will cause huge embarrassment to the personal friend of Prince Michael of Kent.

The respected Light Aircraft Association has rescinded its coveted Bill Woodhams Trophy which it awarded to her in 2015 for flying from Cape Town to Britain.

It was awarded to her for navigational and flying skill.

**It is thought to be the first time such an award has been rescinded.**

She was unceremoniously stripped of the trophy at an angry meeting at which LAA members claimed she had misled the public over her exploits.

Members of the LAA voted to rescind the trophy at its Annual General Meeting at Sywell Aerodrome in Northamptonshire on Saturday.

An overwhelming majority of 123 members voted for her to be stripped with just 65 in favour of her keeping the trophy.

Curtis-Taylor, 54, who attended the AGM in a bid to head off the motion, has been mired in controversy after flight instructor Ewald Gritsch revealed he occupied the forward cockpit of her vintage bi-plane for most of the legs of her famous journeys.



**She was awarded the coveted Bill Woodhams Trophy which it awarded to her in 2015 for flying from Cape Town to Britain (she is pictured here embarking on a flight to Australia)**



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Her former logistics manager Sam Rutherford also said Curtis-Taylor had been guilty of embellishing the truth and had only flown four of the 36 legs from Cape Town to Goodwood solo.

Veteran member of the Light Aircraft Association Barry Tempest, who proposed her award be withdrawn in the light of the revelations, said: "I am delighted the award has been rescinded and her name will removed from the annals of the Light Aircraft Association.

"I have the greatest of respect for women pilots but I think Tracey Curtis-Taylor has not done a lot the further their case.

"I think she is a boastful lady who needs bringing down a peg or two.

"She made these claims about flying solo, or at least that is what we were lead to believe, and now it has come out that they were not that at all. Far from it.

"I believe the integrity of the LAA has been restored."



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On the surface the former waitress's trips in her 1942 Boeing Stearman mirrored some of history's greatest exploits by solo female flyers.

The trip from Cape Town to Goodwood, West Sussex was first completed solo by Lady Mary Heath in 1928.



Curtis-Taylor completed the 36-leg, 10,000-mile-flight in 2013 and in 2015 received the award from the Light Aircraft Association for the feat.

Mr Gritsch was also on board for parts of her trip from Farnborough to Sydney, where she arrived in January after a flight covering 23 countries in 50 legs, recreating the 1930 journey of the intrepid Amy Johnson.

When she crashed in Arizona earlier this year (2016) on the third leg of her round-the-world flights Austrian co-pilot Gritsch was seen scrambling from the wreckage and his presence triggered a storm of outrage on respected flight forums Flyer and Pprune.

More details emerged about Curtis-Taylor's vintage plane being equipped with GPS navigational equipment and the presence a support plane.



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She faced more awkward questions about why Gritsch appears to have been edited out of a BBC documentary about her first big flight from Cape Town to Goodwood.

The Light Aircraft Association said it would respect the vote of its members.

In recent months Curtis-Taylor has sought to defuse the growing controversy by stating that she never claimed to be flying solo.

But he claims fell on deaf ears at Saturday's meeting and the the vote seems certain trigger new scrutiny of her other exploits.

The Honourable Company of Air Pilots also awarded her its Master's Medal for 2016 for the flight but it is understood there has also been concern within its circles about her claims.

LAA Chief executive officer Steve Slater said: "This issue has divided opinion but it is not for me to decide.

"I am happy the members feel able to air their views and it's down to the members to decide.

"The award was made in good faith but in the light of what has emerged since we made the award it is fair to say maybe we would have made a different decision."

Tracey Curtis-Taylor was unavailable for comment.

Extracted from:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3864984/Self-styled-Bird-Biplane-stripped-prestigious-flying-award-allegations-wasn-t-flying-solo-epic-trips.html>

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