



ROBIN: A FRENCH LEGEND

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LEVIATHAN ON THE BEACH!

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Spring 2026



Really Dynamic

With 160hp and a max weight of only 600kg, the WT-9 Dynamic is a true little rocket



The ultimate Dynamic

With sixty per cent more power, the seventh-generation Aerospool WT-9 is truly dynamic and makes an ideal glider tug

Words: Dave Unwin **Photos:** Keith Wilson

As the throttle hits the stop, the acceleration is immediate and irrefutably impressive; within seconds we're off the ground and climbing away at over 1,000 feet per minute... with a sailplane on the back!

While testing a 100hp Aerospool WT-9 Dynamic for *Pilot* in 2018, I said to demo pilot Jonathan May, "I bet if you put a 140hp Rotax 915iS in this thing it'd make an amazing tug!" Well, Aerospool not only saw my bet, they upped the ante by another twenty horsepower with a 160hp 916iS!

I saw the 916-powered Dynamic at last year's LAA Rally and couldn't wait to get my hands on it. Indeed, having been the Tug Master at two different gliding clubs I was more excited about flying this machine than practically every other aircraft I've tested for *Pilot*. Why? Well, over the last 35 years I've logged at least 15,000 tows while flying a lot of different aircraft, including a variety of Auster, C182, Chipmunk, EuroFox, Pawnee, Rallye, Robin and Super Cub tug aircraft. I know a bit about aerotowing gliders, and let me tell you, on a busy day, no aircraft has a harder life than a tug.



PHOTO: AEROSPOOL



Tugs often fly from rough runways and spend around fifty per cent of their lives at full power. Their tails can be yanked around, either deliberately or accidentally, and often log six, seven, or even eight landings an hour (my personal best is twelve). And all the time they're being flown by several different pilots – possibly on the same day, and these individuals can best be described as a 'mixed ability' group.

It's a tough life for any aircraft. Experienced sailplane pilots like to say, 'there's no substitute for span', but for tug pilots, there's no substitute for horsepower. James Watt defined horsepower as work done over time, and in the tug pilot's world the work is to tow the sailplane into the air and the time is the minutes it takes to avoid hitting the trees at the end of the runway. Would the latest version of the WT-9 be as Dynamic as its name suggests? Only one way to find out, tow something with it.

SIGNIFICANT UPGRADES

Of course, I couldn't fly an aerotow during the Rally, but I had a good look round the aircraft at Leicester and was impressed with what I saw. Externally, the latest WT-9 looks essentially the same as previous Dynamics, (if you're unfamiliar with the type, it is a low wing monoplane with side-by-side seating and fitted with a fixed, tricycle undercarriage) with perhaps the biggest giveaway –

apart from the huge '916' stencilled on the cowling – being the oversized exhaust. However, the test aircraft is an NG (Next Generation) aircraft, and is described by Aerospool as the '7th generation' Dynamic, as it features significant upgrades over earlier models. These include a reinforced airframe, a larger tail unit, and an extended nose to accommodate the 160hp Rotax 916iS engine and its cooling systems.

Upgrades over earlier models... include a reinforced airframe, a larger tail unit...

Made mostly of composites, the wings, main spar, fuselage and all other load-bearing structures are constructed using a carbon fibre-reinforced polyester skin/foam core 'sandwich'. The wing uses an MS (I)-0313 aerofoil and has only a small amount of dihedral. It features a gentle taper to new, smaller winglets at the tips. An intriguing aerodynamic anomaly is that the leading edges sport two stall-strip 'Toblerones', one in the usual position near the root and the other just beyond mid span, intended, I am told, to help counter wing drop.

The large, electrically operated slotted flaps have four positions, 'up', 15°, 24° and 35°, and the ailerons are driven by pushrods, with the starboard one featuring an electrically-actuated trim tab. Pitch trim is provided by an electrically actuated spring bias system.

The tailplane, fin and rudder are entirely conventional but larger than on the earlier version of Dynamic. Separate horn-balanced elevators driven by pushrods are carried by the fixed tailplane, while the mildly swept fin carries a horn balanced, cable operated rudder, with the large tail bumper, which also carries the glider tow hook, underneath.

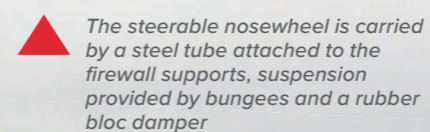
Access to the engine is good. The top cowling is secured by Dzus fasteners and can be removed quite quickly, making it easy to check not only the levels of the oil and coolant, but also to inspect the entire engine installation. In my

opinion, far too many modern aircraft don't provide adequate access to the engine bay, and this can lead to poor pre-flight inspections. As the cylinder heads are liquid-cooled, the hoses of a Rotax certainly warrant regular inspection, and with such easy access there really is no excuse for not performing a full inspection regularly, and, of course, it also makes routine maintenance easier. For the daily inspection, there is a good-sized inspection hatch on the cowling's starboard side through which you can check the coolant levels as well as the oil.

The three-blade, constant speed hydraulically actuated Woodcomp propeller features scimitar-shaped blades. As an option, powerful taxi and landing lights can be built into the bottom half of the cowling. The test aircraft featured some really striking white conspicuity



▲ The mainwheels are mounted on spring legs attached to the fuselage and are fitted with hydraulically operated Beringer disc brakes



▲ The steerable nosewheel is carried by a steel tube attached to the firewall supports, suspension provided by bungees and a rubber bloc damper

▲ In the interest of reducing the noise footprint the new 916iS installation incorporates a massive exhaust muffler



▲ Aerodynamic refinements for the seventh generation Dynamic include new, smaller winglets

lights around the circumference of the engine air inlets.

The undercarriage looks rugged. The steerable nosewheel is carried by a steel tube attached to the firewall supports, with suspension and shock absorption provided by bungees and a rubber damper. The mainwheels are mounted on spring bow legs attached to the fuselage and are fitted with hydraulically operated disc brakes.

The wheels and the brakes are made by Beringer, and are covered by snug-fitting spats. In fact, possibly too snug, as it isn't easy to inspect the tyres, brake pads and discs with the spats in place. For aerotowing purposes, I'd replace the spats with simple deflector plates mounted at 45° behind the wheels.

Directly in front of the cockpit is a frangible composite panel for the egress of the rocket-powered Magnum 601 Emergency Parachute System (EPS), should it ever be required. On this system the parachute is carried in a container attached to a mount between the firewall and instrument panel, with the shroud lines connected to the fuselage structure by two main straps and one stabilising cable. The main straps are fixed to attachment points on the firewall, while the steel cable is embedded in the fuselage shell and attached to the spar carry-through in the fuselage. When the parachute deploys, this cable is pulled out from the fuselage skin. The EPS operating envelope is not below 660ft agl and no faster than 181kt. >>>

Although it is an enjoyable hot ship in its own right, the powerful 916-engined Dynamic is being marketed primarily as a glider tug ▼





SPACIOUS COCKPIT

Access to the cockpit is via the trailing edge of the wing, so it's easier if the flaps are left down. The non-slip wingroot walkways are sensibly sized and the enormous canopy hinges forward, opens wide and is well supported by gas struts. It provides excellent access to the surprisingly spacious cockpit (which has a maximum width of 1.15m) and big, ninety-litre baggage bay behind the seats.

◀ The panel is dominated by a Dynon Skyview directly in front of the command seat

▼ The neat, well laid out and spacious cockpit featured a few too many easily confused T-handles for flight-tester Dave's liking

In my job, I'm always gratified when I fly the latest version of an aircraft I have previously tested and find some of my suggestions have been incorporated. In 2018, I wrote that the WT9's 'tumbler switches look rather flimsy; I'd recommend rocker switches' and 'it could use a concertina-type sunscreen built into the canopy'. The test aircraft had rocker switches, and a concertina-type sunscreen built into the canopy.

I was not surprised that the comfy, slightly reclined, seats remain fixed (this makes them strong and crashworthy, and also helps keep weight down), but did feel like I was sitting quite low in the cockpit and I could've used a Dynafoam cushion to lift me up a few centimetres. The rudder pedals do adjust, but the system incorporates two potential gotchas. Firstly, the pedals can be set asymmetrically, which isn't ideal. Secondly and more pertinently, if the pedals are adjusted while the rudder is deflected it is possible for the pedals to be set neutral when the rudder is not.

Pedals set correctly and harness tight, I familiarise myself with the layout of the instruments and controls. The panel is both deep and wide, but unlike the 100hp Dynamic I flew, which was overloaded with instrumentation, this one is much more logically laid out – and I like it a lot. It is dominated by a Dynon Skyview directly in front of the command seat with the controller for the autopilot, transceiver, transponder and intercom immediately to its right, along with the Flybox controller for the flaps. It also has

Aerospool WT-9 Dynamic

€241,000 exc delivery & VAT

Dimensions

Length	6.72m
Height	2.00m
Wingspan	8.90m
Wing area	10.50sq m

Weights and loadings

Empty weight	371kg
Max takeoff weight	600kg
Useful load	229kg
Wing loading	57.14kg/sq m (11.7 lb/sq ft)
Power loading	5.12kg/kW (8.26 lb/hp)

Fuel capacity	126 lit
Seating	2
Baggage capacity	40kg

Performance

Vne	181kt
Max cruise (TAS)	160kt
Stall (clean)	46kt
Stall (full flap)	37kt
Takeoff to 50ft	185m
Land over 50ft	527m
Climb rate	1,850fpm
Service ceiling	15,000ft
Range	600nm

Engine & Propeller

Rotax 916iS air/liquid-cooled flat-four, producing 160hp (119.31kW) at 5,800rpm driving a Woodcomp composite, three-blade constant speed propeller

Manufacturer

Aerospool s.r.o., Prievidza, Slovakia

UK Agent

LX Aviation, Telephone: 07474 454583, Email: sales@lxaviation.co.uk Web: lxaviation.co.uk

Sample insurance quote

Illustrative yearly premium £1,975 (private flying) Supplied by www.visicover.com Single pilot, UK / EU airspace Visicover Ltd is FCA authorised/regulated



▲ The non-slip wingroot walkways are sensibly sized and the enormous canopy hinges forward, opens wide and is well supported by gas struts



▲ The new 916iS-powered WT-9 tug made easy work of the two-seat SZD-54 Perkoz from Saltby's hard runway

the most comprehensive annunciator panel I've ever seen in an microlight, indeed it wouldn't look out of place in a small bizjet. I also very much approved of the use of colour in the cockpit – even the rocker switches are colour coded.

TOO MANY T-HANDLES?

A sub-panel below the centre of the panel joins the large centre console that extends aft between the seats. It carries the Vernier prop control, a T-handle for the emergency parachute, rotary fuel valve and the tow rope release. I know I keep saying this, but I do think that the colour of the handles for parachute recovery systems should be standardised as black-and-yellow stripes, the same as for other powerful life-saving pyrotechnics, and preferably operated by a hoop, as on an ejection seat. This is particularly pertinent on the Dynamic as the T-handle for the tow rope release is in the same sub-panel.

The throttle and brake levers are both in the centre console, and – somewhat surprisingly, bearing in mind how good most of the ergonomics are – are both topped by black T-handles. To set the parking brake you simply click the lever

into one of two cut-outs, labelled 'park' and 'max'; 'max' is used when starting – and with good reason!

Overall, the cockpit is a fine example of excellent ergonomics, although I would suggest moving the standby ASI and altimeter further up the panel to just below the ELT selector, and would change the Dynon display so that manifold pressure and RPM are next to each other with oil temperature and pressure underneath.

AEROTOW TESTS

By now I was really looking forward to flying it and scheduled a cameraship, pilot and photographer Keith for Sunday afternoon at Fenland. However, to

The colour of the handles of parachute recovery systems should be standardised as black-and-yellow

paraphrase Burns, the best laid plans of mice and tugmen gang aft a-gley, because the one thing I couldn't schedule was the weather, and on Friday evening I learned that the pilots intended to leave early Sunday morning to avoid an incoming storm. My scheme seemed scuppered by some unseasonably inclement weather, but *Pilot* always gets its test, and after some frantic phoning

around, I managed to arrange for Keith and demo pilot Juraj to fly over from Leicester to Saltby early Saturday morning, where I had arranged some gliders to be aerotowed. I then raced to the airfield and commenced a somewhat rushed evaluation.

For the first launch Juraj and I tow a solo pilot in a Perkoz from the grass, and as soon as the throttle hits the stop it's a revelation. What a tug! The combination is airborne after a commendably short ground roll and rockets straight up to 6,000 feet. The descent is easy to manage as the fuel-injected, air and liquid cooled motor makes engine handling relatively simple, although I was somewhat

surprised by the two rotary knobs that control the cowl flaps for the oil cooler and radiator, and couldn't help but feel this could be better handled by installing thermostats in the appropriate circuits.

The next tow is a Puchaz two-seater, and as we now have four pilots in the combination, I decide we'll go from the concrete, just to be safe. As it turns out, I needn't have worried, even though the wind has picked up and there's a blustery crosswind from port generating some curl-over from the

trees south of the runway, it doesn't seem to vex the Dynamic. This tow goes to 2,500ft and then for the next launch we take the Perkoz, two-up to 3,000ft.

GREAT HANDLING AND FIELD OF VIEW

Between each tow (apart from the first one, when I specifically wanted to investigate a speedy descent) I do my best to assess the general handling characteristics, stick-free stability and the various other items typically found on the *Pilot* flight test card, although as you can imagine the process is a little

rushed, due to the time constraints of the aircraft having to be returned to Leicester for the Rally. Nevertheless, I can glean enough information to convince me that this Dynamic handles essentially the same as the other WT-9s that I've flown.

Control around all three axes is both powerful and precise and some steep turns and sharp reversals reveal impressively crisp handling, low breakout forces and negligible adverse yaw. Control harmony is as it should be, with the ailerons being quite light and powerful (reversing a 45° banked turn

took less than two seconds), the elevator is authoritative without being twitchy, and the rudder nicely damped.

A brief appraisal of the stick-free stability reveals the longitudinal stability to be even more positive than in the 100hp version, probably because of the mass damping effect of the slightly heavier engine, although the larger tailplane will also have an influence. It took barely one long wavelength, low amplitude phugoid to return to a trimmed IAS of 100kt from a ten-knot speed displacement. Directional stability was also strong, while laterally it is essentially neutral.



▲ The mildly swept back fin features a large tail bumper, which also carries the glider tow hook underneath

◀ The new model features an extended nose to accommodate the 160hp Rotax 916iS engine and its cooling systems

▼ The tailplane, fin and rudder are entirely conventional but notably larger than on the earlier version of Dynamic



One facet I particularly approve of is that the large bubble canopy provides a fine field of view. This is very important for any light aeroplane but especially for a tug, as on a busy day the sky around an airfield can be literally teeming with gliders, and they all expect the tug to give way! Another feature the sweaty tug pilot will appreciate is that plenty of fresh air is provided by the vents and DV panel scoops. I can guarantee that as much as I approved of the integral concertina sunshade, I had no intention of using it while towing!

Unfortunately, as the Dynamic had to be back at Leicester, I don't get the opportunity to investigate the low-speed end of the flight envelope, but as it handled essentially the same as

its 100hp sibling, I have no grounds to suspect it'd do anything sinister at the stall. As regards changes in trim caused by altering power and flap settings, adjusting the power produced only small changes, but as the flaps are extended or retracted, they're more noticeable, although easily trimmed out.

Another very impressive facet is the

The large bubble canopy provides a fine field of view...

very broad speed range. It's more than fast and powerful enough to tow any high-performance two-seat sailplane up to 850kg, yet can fly slow enough to tow a vintage glider. I'd really need a full day towing an array of gliders to gather proper quantitative data, including timed tows to 4,000ft (for aerobatic

competitions), turnround times and fuel consumption on a typical 2,000ft tow, but from a qualitative perspective I really liked it. Handling in the circuit was as safe and predictable as every other aspect of the Dynamic's characteristics, with slightly stronger speed stability, again because of the heavier engine and larger tailplane.

Because of the crosswind, Juraj recommended only using 'Flap 2', and the slightly

higher approach speed of sixty knots ensured I retained plenty of control authority right into the flare. As I'd suspected, on final it does feel slightly more speed-stable than earlier Dynamic aircraft.

A phone call from UK Agent John Delafield summons Juraj back to



▶ Light responsive controls allow fingertip precision as demonstrator D-MWDY is returned from our assessment at Saltby to the LAA Rally Leicester

▶ The new 916i-powered WT9, seen here with the new retractable-undercarriage WT10, which Pilot hopes to test soon





▲ One of the unusually sharp-edged 'Toberone' stall strips, mounted both mid-span and inboard, near the root

▲ The three-blade constant speed hydraulically actuated Woodcomp propeller features scimitar-shaped blades. The test aircraft had annular conspicuity lights around the circumference of the engine cooling intakes

Leicester as there are potential customers waiting, so while Keith gets into the Dynamic, I jump into the Puchaz with CFI Graham Headey to experience the type from the other end of the rope. For this final test we have four persons on board in the combination, taking off from grass, in a crosswind. The acceleration is excellent, and we still clear the bales at the end of the runway by 400ft! It really is a fab tug and is also an equally impressive tourer.

DYNAMIC NUMBERS

With an empty weight of 371kg and a 600kg MAUW, we have 229kg of useful load. Filling both tanks to the brim would use 91kg of that, but who needs eight hours endurance? My bladder and buttocks certainly don't! A more representative load of half-fuel (45kg) gives 300nm with VFR reserves, and still leaves 180kg.

As for cruise performance, if you use the 'METO' (Maximum Except Take-Off

or maximum continuous) settings of 5,500rpm and 44 inches of manifold pressure at 6,000ft, the POH claims an IAS of 147kt (159kt TAS) for a fuel flow of forty litres per hour. However, nine-series motors always sound a bit too busy at max continuous, and a more sensible setting of 5,000/30 at the same altitude still gives 114/126 while fuel consumption reduces by half! If you're really in a hurry, the POH claims METO at 10,000ft gives a TAS of 173kt.

It really is a hugely impressive aircraft for either towing or touring, and tug pilots all over the country are probably salivating at the prospect of towing with such a fine flying machine. However, as is nearly always the case, the money men usually have the last word, and club

▲ Dave Unwin last tested the WT-9 Dynamic for Pilot back in 2018, and approved of its overall handling

treasurers will be viewing the Dynamic in a slightly less favourable light. You see, in aviation, performance comes at a cost, and with this machine that cost is the purchase price.

At almost £250,000 this is not a cheap aircraft, and unfortunately aircraft insurance is partially predicated on the value of the hull. On the upside, the annual maintenance would be

considerably less than a Robin or Pawnee, because a) it's on a Permit to Fly and b) it's not fifty years old. It also burns a lot less fuel, and that fuel is mogas, not avgas. Anyway, I'm not the Buckminster GC's treasurer, I'm the Chief Tug Pilot, so let's get back into the cockpit and review my conclusions.

As explained earlier, I've flown a lot of different tugs, and while I will always

love the Pawnee and do have a soft spot for Chipmunk Mk.23 *Bumblebunk*, the 916-powered Dynamic might just be the best tug I've ever flown. Both Bristell and Light Wing are building 916-powered tugs, so if you're reading this, Milan at Bristell and Andi at Lightwing, you've got my number. But know one thing: Aerospool has set the bar very high!



It really is a fab tug and is also an equally impressive tourer



▲ Because of the crosswind, only 'Flap 2' was used for landing. The slightly higher approach speed of 60kt ensured the aircraft retained plenty of control authority right into the flare