

AOPA UK

A red and silver Bristell aircraft is shown in a steep climb, banking sharply to the left. The aircraft is a high-wing, pusher-propeller design. The background is a scenic view of rolling green hills and a small village under a clear blue sky.

Sky-high comfort

The Bristell is fast, comfortable and made from the best materials available. It comes in any configuration you could want...

THE AOPA COMMUNITY

The AOPA team is here to keep you flying – find out how inside

SWEDISH HEROES

Henry Simpson meets the Swedish Air Force Historic Flight team

ZERO ZERO THIRTY

Getting lost isn't a bad thing – it happens! Nick Wilcock explains...



WORDS David Rawlings IMAGES Bristell

Doing it your way

When you can't find an aircraft you want, build your own.
That's what Milan Bříšťela did when he designed the Bristell



The Czech Republic is not short on aircraft manufacturers. Back under Soviet rule, a large part of the USSR's aircraft companies were based in what was then called Czechoslovakia. When the Iron Curtain fell, the designers, engineers, manufacturing facilities and everything else in between stayed, and a plethora of small, independent companies began to pop up around the country, producing GA aircraft.

Milan Bříšťela studied aircraft construction at the Military Technical Academy in Brno. After he graduated in 1983 he went straight into the aviation sector. Bříšťela began in LET company, working in the aircraft fatigue analysis department. The nine years spent between LET company and fatigue tests at the Aeronautical Institut in Prague (VZLU) was a key period for his future design

work. His designs are created using experience from the fatigue analysis and tests results. After years spent in several aircraft companies as chief designer and chief of manufacturing, Bříšťela decided to open his own company, and in 2009 BRM Aero began and the Bristell was born.

AOPA went to visit Farry Sayyah, the UK distributor for Bristell, in the countryside on the outskirts of Guildford to look over the Bristell. "In aviation if you have one design that is successful then you stand still and everybody else will take over, but Bristell aren't standing still," said Farry when we first met. And he has a point – in a very short term Bristell has developed and produced several versions. There are already the tri-gear, the retractable, and the tail dragger models – and now the company is working on a 750kg night VFR version, designed for schools and training. It will be a lot beefier

"Bristell has developed and produced several versions. There are already the tri-gear, the retractable, and the tail dragger models"

and stronger and be able take the punishment dished out by ham-fisted students. "You can use the current model, but the 750 is much better and it's almost ready. They're just finishing the paper work. The design and build is done and they're just getting the approvals, which can take forever!" Farry said. "Bristell is also planning to bring out a four-seat version – so Milan and his company aren't standing still," he added.

THE LOOK

The Bristell is striking on the apron in the winter sun and as Farry is quick to show me, it's just as pretty under the cowl as it is on the outside, mainly thanks to a Rotax 912 under it. "The Bristell is quite beautiful, it's strong and it really ticks all the boxes. Whenever you're buying an aircraft you make a wish list. And this one ticks everything apart from it's not a four-seater. It's very pretty, it's very light," said Farry.



To keep moving forward, Milan developed several models of his aircraft, including the retractable undercarriage

With a 46" wide cabin there's plenty of room



ABOUT MILAN BRISTELA - OWNER

Milan Bříšťela is the founder and CEO of BRM Aero. He has had an illustrious career in aviation. He graduated in aircraft construction and aircraft producing on the Military Technical Academy in Brno, Czech Republic and has worked in aviation since 1983. Milan founded BRM in 2009 with a goal to develop the best aircraft in the world in its category.

The development and production of the first aeroplane began in rented space together with his son Martin, who is an integral part of the company today. After the successful certification of the first Bristell prototype "OK QAR 24" he has developed a network of global distributors. The company began selling the first version of the fixed-gear aircraft, the Bristell Classic,

in 2011. In 2012, Milan developed a retractable gear aircraft, and in the following year produced the Bristell TDO, with its spur gear. The growing production was moved to its own facilities after five years. Production capacity was more than doubled over the next two years. Today, the company manufactures two planes every week.





Bristell's state-of-the-art facility now boasts more than 50 employees across the company

It's all aluminium, with a composite rudder, cowlings and fairings. Unlike many other manufacturers, everything here has been designed for aviation. It's an incredible piece of kit. And when flying with the standard 100hp Rotax 912ULS, figures show that the aircraft will get about 14l an hour on economy cruise and you have near enough seven hours' duration. "There are also 20kgs worth of luggage in each wing and 15kg behind the passengers. That's seven hours of travel at 110kts, which is incredible. You can do 125kts, but you'll get less than seven hours," explained Farry. "We flew one from Germany, near Munich to Red Hill in five hours and five minutes, which isn't bad going for a light aircraft," he added.

The Bristell Farry showed me around was blessed with leather seats and tinted glass. The leather seats are stunning and when the cockpit is opened you can

smell the richness, and the luxuriousness of the Bristell is clear to see. It's also very comfortable "It's two inches wider than the Cirrus, and I've had a guy in there looking to buy, and he was 7'2". There was at least five inches above his head, so it's roomy," said Farry.

CHOICES, CHOICES, CHOICES

There are lots of options when it comes to buying a Bristell; you can have a turbocharged version from the factory, or choose from unlimited avionics, fixtures and fittings options. "You can have Garmin or Dynon, and you can have it with or without autopilot. The sky's the limit. This aircraft has more instruments in it than a 747. It's a lot more technical and refined," explained Farry.

If you're feeling adventurous and want to build your own, Bristell offers a quick-build version of the aircraft. The factory states that it takes 370 hours to build. The kit comes

"You can have Garmin or Dynon, and you can have it with or without autopilot. The sky's the limit"

with a near-complete fuselage, complete wings, and complete controls. The fuselage has some temporary rivets in, as does the wing. Currently there are 32 flying in the UK and there are another five or six currently being built.

FLYING

As Farry showed me around the Bristell, it was clear that with a waterlogged taxiway we weren't going to be able to take it flying, so I had to take the man's word for it. "It's a dream to fly. It's very hands off," explained Farry. "It's not a workman's aircraft – you don't have to work at it. And without autopilot you can trim it and just let it go. It will just sit there.

"And when you step out of it, even after you've been in it for five hours, it doesn't feel like you've been beaten up. The seats are very comfortable and you have all the luxury you need. It's also very benign, it stalls at 30kts, which you can land in 50 metres. I can get

OPPOSITE: The Bristell is offered in three styles and any colour of your choice – the options are endless



The trail dragger is a very popular option in mainland Europe



airborne in about 20 metres – and that's on grass. They get airborne very easily thanks to their variable pitch prop. 30kts and you're airborne. They're very simple to fly you have electric aileron and elevator trim and they're on both control sticks, and you don't need to spin any wheels."

"They get airborne very easily thanks to their variable pitch prop – 30 kts and you're airborne"

WHO BUYS THE BRISTELL

It seems as if the Bristell is an all-inclusive aircraft and suitable for everyone, "We have a lot of retired people, farmers, rock stars – I shan't name names – and film stars. All types of different people purchase a Bristell. But I would say that 40% of them are either retired or commercial pilots and they want a toy, mainly for touring. It's the perfect touring vehicle – you can actually take more luggage on this than you can on a commercial aircraft – and on top of that the wing storage can hold 12 bottles of wine, I've tested that myself," joked Farry. And at just £99,000 for the base model, you get a lot of tourer for your money. ■



It's an easy to fly hands-off aeroplane and very comfortable, even on long cross-country trips



Currently There are three engine options for the Bristell, all of which are based on the Rotax 912

TECH SPEC BRISTELL

DIMENSIONS & WEIGHT

Wingspan 26.8ft/8.13m
Length 21.16ft/6.45m
Height 7.48ft/2.28m
Cabin width 4.2ft/1.3m
Empty weight 320kg

MTOW 600kg

Useful load 280kg

Fuel Tank Capacity 120l

Luggage compartment 15kg

Wing luggage compartment 2x20kg

Load Factors +4/-2g

PERFORMANCE

Stall Speed (with flaps) 28kts

Stall speed (without flaps) 43kts

Max Cruise Speed 155kts

Powerplant options Rotax 912, 914 and 915 iS





BRISTELL



WELCOME TO BRISTELL FAMILY



8 years on the market

300 produced airplanes



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