



January 2002

This Month's meeting

The dreaded AGM is with us once more. Although the Chairman gives you a chance at each meeting to voice your opinions many of you seem to lose your voices at this point! This is the principal opportunity in the year for the **members** to state clearly what they want from **their Club** together with the chance to make changes to the Committee and get support for policy changes. Nothing is laid down in tablets of stone and it is **your** Club. We have 60+ members (that refers to numbers not ages!) but at present the responsibility for everything that happens (or does not happen) rests with a very small number of people. What can you contribute in terms of time, organisation, or ideas for the benefit of the whole Club? Don't be shy, put yourself forward to join the Committee and get the Club, events and topics that you want. As with all things not everything is achievable at once but the new Committee will no doubt do their best to come up with the goods!

The Club accounts for the past year are included with the newsletter. Please

bring your copy to the meeting and feel free to quiz the Treasurer on any of the items - I'm sure he has an answer for everything! Having mentioned the Treasurer, our present incumbent, Ges Hatchett, has indicated that he will not be seeking re-election so we will be looking for a successor.

Last Month's Meeting

Judging by the attendance the Christmas Party last month appears to have met with general approval. A quick count indicated that there were some 27 Club members present plus guests which brought the total attendance up to 60. Perhaps for some, the music was too loud and it certainly stopped any meaningful conversation and socialising which was a pity as our Club thrives on the interaction of members and their experiences. However, in terms of a Club event, it can

be deemed a success. Let us know your reaction at the AGM.

My first 200 hours of Microlight Flying

by Bill Keel-Stocker

Life begins at 40 and I had contemplated the feasibility of learning to fly for some time before this. I had even visited Staverton to investigate the cost of GA flying. Somewhere along the way microlight flying was mentioned and I had intended arranging a pleasure flight but had never got around to it.

Nearing my 40th birthday I wished I had arranged something special. Unbeknown to me my wife, Dawn, had continued making enquiries and had arranged a

microlight experience flight with David Young at Long Newton as my birthday present. Was I surprised!!!

I had my first experience of microlight flying in the weightshift G-MWUY with David Young on 23rd July 1994. After a short flight with me in the back seat we landed back at Long Newton and I was allowed to fly from the front seat for the second half of the flight. It was obviously very different from anything else I had experienced. The only comment I can remember



Chris Ball's latest project - the Eurostar

relating to that flight was from a bystander saying to David "You were close to stalling on take-off". This, I later learned, was a result of my not bringing the bar back to gain airspeed after rotating - all recorded on video. I went away with mixed thoughts - it was good, it was cramped, it was real flying and David Young was a real inspiration!

Some days later on 29th July my father-in-law saw a flexwing microlight advertised for sale in the car section of The Citizen. I left it for a few weeks but then felt curious as to what was actually available. As the plane had only flown 27 hours I started to take more than a passing interest. I made contact with the advertiser, John W.Hodgson who gave me an insight into microlight flying, his own experiences, details of the SVMC and, of course, the name of John Hamer (JH) as the man to contact.

After speaking to JH on the telephone many times I went to visit him. I was made very welcome and educated in the art of microlight flying. At the end of August I then arranged to collect G-MWVE from a secret location at Whitminster and took it to JH's for him to inspect and hopefully fly. Unfortunately the tensioning tool was not with the aircraft so we were unable to rig it. As we sat down on the bank in the sunshine JH looked through the plane's history and suggested that if it rigged OK then it should fly OK. We ran the engine up and I subsequently returned it to Whitminster.

Still very unsure of what to do I decided to leave it to fate. JH rang me on 30th August in the evening and invited me to come to his house to have a local flight to Over and back. This brought back memories of the original flight in July and probably spurred me on to enquire again about G-MWVE and during October I had further talks with John Hodgson who had not been able to sell the plane. After much debate and deliberation and further conversations with JH, I made an offer lower than the asking price to suit my own budget. After making the offer I began to become enthusiastic, so much so that I could not wait for a reply. A few days later I rang John Hodgson who said he would like me to have the plane and accepted my offer. On disclosing the purchase price to JH he suggested I had been lucky, had an absolute steal and I ought to be in Leyhill prison! Being a law-abiding citizen I could not think what he meant. I collected the plane from Whitminster on 12th November 1994 – it was raining, how unusual!

The following week John Hodgson and I went to Long Newnton to collect the tensioning tool and batten profile from David Young who was quick to point out to me that I had purchased an illegal wing. I found out later that it only needed a minor mod which involved changing the leading edge cross boom bolts.

The pressure was now on to learn how to fly this machine. I went along to SVMC meetings at Hartpur where I met and talked microlights with many helpful people. From there it was necessary to join groundschool with Bill Austin and then to decide where I might learn to fly. The options were Shobdon, Swindon (Redlands) or Long Marston. I eventually chose to fly with James Cairns-Terry and Tony Blackwell at Long Marston.

On 14th April 1995 after the mod to the wing had been done, I arranged for the aircraft to be rigged, inspected and test flown for the Permit to Fly. JH carried out the inspection, James converted the XL to single seat configuration, carried out the test flight and landed at Over. This was a memorable event for me which I videoed. I then followed by car to Over where I had the first brief flight as passenger in my own plane.

My first lesson was with James on 30th April 1995 logged as "PUT, Pegasus Q, G-MYBZ one hour". I did a further 3 hours 25 minutes and then had my first 50 minutes flight in my own plane G-MWVE on 20th May 1995. During my time at Long Marston I made a special friend in Russell Church. We helped each other

through the training as we worked towards our GFT's. Now he's a friend for life!

Training continued with my first solo of 15 minutes after 20 hours 5 minutes on 18th August 1995. The two qualifying cross-countries followed on 26th and 28th October 1995 – the first to Enstone via Stow-on-the-Wold and the second to Defford and back via Droitwich. This second cross country was the day when arriving overhead at Defford I saw that there was a GA upside down on the runway at the intersection by the hangars. Being non-radio I landed beyond the GA and took off away from it. I finally took and passed my GFT on 27th February 1996 after 19 hours solo and 31 hours 55 minutes dual and only just before my ground exams expired!

I made my first flight as a qualified pilot from Over on 11th April 1996 and took my wife Dawn for a 25 minute flight as my first passenger on 12th May 1996. On 4th May 1996 I made my first landing at my own strip at Norton but continued to be based at Over for the rest of the summer and autumn. I continued flying and reached my 100 hours on 17th October 1996.

Just over 18 months later on 27th May 1998 I was back in "training mode" again, this time with Graham Slater at Clench Common undertaking three-axis conversion on a Thruster T600N. Some 17 hours 30 minutes flying time later, including one hour solo, on 18th August 1998 I took and passed the ACS test. My thanks to Graham for his patience and help in getting both myself and Russell through the conversion.

The magic 200 hours was achieved on 27th August 2001 while at 2000 feet above Over.

For those interested in statistics my 201 hours 30 minutes at the time of writing comprise:-

G-MYBZ Pegasus Q 3 hours 25 minutes

G-MYHR AX3 15 minutes,

G-MYWD T600N 17 hours 30 minutes,

G-MWVE Pegasus XL 180 hours 20 minutes.

I have used 1550 litres of fuel (including 220 litres of unleaded), 31 litres of 2 stroke oil and averaged 8.62 litres an hour – including and despite a considerable amount of taxiing at Long Marston.

I trailered, rigged and de-rigged all through my training, was semi-rigged at Over for 6 months and then went back to de-rigged until May of 2001 when I returned to semi-rigged luxury at my own strip. During all my solo flying I have carried Ken Cole's ballast – thanks Ken. Places visited have included Defford, Long Marston, Hawling, Hay-on-Wye, Pound Green, Dean Magna, Arlingham, and JH's at Hartpur. I was also part of the SVMC team which came third at the Avon Team Trophy competition.

Incidents along the way have been few but include a forced landing on take-off from Long Marston with Tony Blackwell requiring a decoke of the engine, landing in a strong cross-wind at Defford and deciding to trailer home, a passenger's scarf going into the air intake resulting in an engine re-build and two near misses one on landing at Over and the other taking off into sun at Defford.

I currently fly from my own strip at Norton within the Gloucester ATZ with its own mown grass runway 333

metres long and 5 metres wide and have spent more time mowing the strip (120 hours in 6 years) than flying from it and getting fuel consumption of 3 litres an hour from the mower (rather better than the 8 litres an hour from the XL!)

It has been an absolute privilege to fly and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to experience real flying and freedom

Finally my thanks to Bill Austin and Jenny Lyons for getting me through the radio course and exam, to all at Long Marston especially James, Tony and Clive for their support on those "bad" days, to John Hamer and Andrew John for all their encouragement and to all at Over particularly Robbie, Ken, Budge and Dave.

(What a good article to start the year with. Hopefully it will encourage others in the Club to share their own personal achievements – however modest they may seem. Ed)

Quote of the month

"The exhilaration of flying is too keen, the pleasure too great, for it to be neglected as a sport" – Orville Wright

Safety

Winter brings its own challenges to flyers. Recent weather has seen temperatures tumble and heavy frost has been commonplace. Frost is nice to look at but a potential killer if it is on your wing. Although it appears to be no more than "the icing on the cake" it has the ability to destroy the lift properties of the wing resulting in a swift and sometimes uncontrollable return to earth. The same applies to a covering of snow. Remember the accident report of the pilot who knew that there was a light covering of snow on one side of his wing but thought that it would blow off as he accelerated – it didn't! One wing lifted, the other didn't and the aircraft cartwheeled. Be aware, too, of low temperatures and high relative moisture content in the air which could result in carb icing. One person on the e-group flying a 912 had engine failure twice in circuit caused by carb icing. Mainair two-strokes are less likely to suffer due to the heated air from the engine being vented to the atmosphere over the carburettor(s). Having said all this, the cold, relatively dry air of winter gives superior engine and wing performance. Take care and enjoy your flying!

Internet

Members with Internet access might like to look at www.microlight.flyer.co.uk and click on the "Waypoints" menu item. There you will find a list of waypoints for airfields and strips by County with additional information about the location. The waypoints are given in degrees, minutes and seconds which is a pity as most GPS units use hundredths these days. However, it could be a very useful database when planning a trip.

Jim Pearce, whose Xair was stolen and later recovered from France, is leaving with other pilots for Australia within the next few weeks. He and his friends intend flying around Australia in their flexwings and, so

that you can follow their progress have set up a web site at www.aroundoz.com. A similar expedition was undertaken last year by an Xair pilot and his family.

Quiet weekends!

There is a rumour that French authorities are considering curtailing GA activities in France at weekends. The proposals, made by the Conseil National du Bruit (National Noise Council), are that French Aeroclubs would not be allowed to fly between 1100 and 1500 on Saturdays and Sundays. A similar ban is in place in Germany and, considering the percentage of flying carried out through French aeroclubs, a similar move in France would effectively ground VFR flying for that period.

Dates for your diary

7th-13th April 2002 – Sun 'n Fun at Lakeland, Florida. Early booking is advised if your accommodation is to be within easy reach of the airfield.

4th-5th May 2002 – Popham Trade Fair and Fly-In.

4th-5th May 2002 Fly In to the Irish Parachute Club – Clonbullogue, Co Offaly, Ireland. Further details from the microlight e-group on Yahoo.

21st-23rd June 2002 - PFA Rally, Cranfield.

28th-30th June 2002 – Isle of Wight Fly-In – last year's Spamfield repeated with the local Council sponsoring it to the tune of £5000!

23rd-29th July 2002 – Oshkosh.

For Sale/Wanted



Hangarage

available for fixed & fully/semi rigged flexwing microlights.

For more

information phone 01793 791014 or e-mail microlights@redlands67.freemove.co.uk

Hangarage, semi-rigged available at Defford now - £30 per month. Contact Mike Porter – 01386 750179.

Wanted – good 582 crankcase halves. Phone Adrian Lloyd 01885 482504

Wanted - Have you outgrown your mobile phone, moved on to a newer version and still have your old one? Bill and Barbara are looking for a basic, simple phone if you would like to dispose of (or even sell!) your old one. (It has to be working, of course!) If you know where there might be one contact us on 01242 515064.



Severn Valley Microlight Club 2001 Accounts

Income

	(2001)	(2000)	(1999)	(1998)	(1997)
Subscriptions	£ 885.00	£ 1,010.00	£ 875.00	£ 920.00	£ 1,130.00
Raffle Profits	£ 40.93	£ 153.51	£ 182.77	£ 188.01	£ 213.12
G School Subs	£ 25.00	£ 125.00	£ 75.00	£ 75.00	£ 100.00
B/Soc interest	£ 31.26	£ 15.39	£ 66.48	£ 53.96	£ 42.18
G School Fees					£ 380.00
Sundry		£ 5.00		£ 10.00	
BMAA Members				£ 6.00	£ 6.00
Radio Course					£ 66.50
Excess Expend	£ 891.89		£ 62.84	£ 147.56	
	£1,874.08	£1,308.90	£1,187.09	£1,400.53	£1,937.80

Expenditure

	(2001)	(2000)	(1999)	(1998)	(1997)
Aircscrew Costs	£ 354.00	£ 352.68	£ 350.81	£ 415.24	£ 326.75
Speakers Costs	£ 30.00	£ 45.00	£ 15.00	£ 10.00	£ 5.00
Hall Hire	£ 440.00	£ 480.00	£ 423.00	£ 411.25	£ 317.25
BBQ Exps	£ 140.00		£ 91.20	£ 75.00	£ 190.00
Christmas Party	£ 750.00	£ 60.00	£ 250.00	£ 300.00	£ 325.00
2000 Party	£ 92.80				
Sundry	£ 26.43		£ 57.08	£ 35.96	
Signwriting	£ 15.85				
Donations	£ 25.00				
Euro Champs				£ 50.00	£ 100.00
Equip. Repair		£ 12.48			£ 25.00
G/School Wings		£ 17.00			£ 36.00
G/School Exps		£ 150.00		£ 103.08	£ 290.50
Excess Income		£ 162.96			£ 72.30
	£1,874.08	£1,308.90	£1,187.09	£1,400.53	£1,937.80

Current Holdings

Building Soc	£2,332.39	£3,171.13	£3,040.74	£3,126.26	£3,116.70
Petty Cash	£ 42.10	£ 95.25	£ 62.68	£ 40.00	£ 197.12
	£2,374.49	£3,266.38	£3,103.42	£3,166.26	£3,313.82
Bal brought fwd		£3,266.38	£3,103.42	£3,166.26	£3,313.82
B/Soc Shares	-£ 891.89	£ 162.96	-£ 62.84	-£ 147.56	£ 72.30
Excess Inc/Exp					
	£2,374.49	£3,266.38	£3,103.42	£3,166.26	£3,313.82



January 2002
February

This month's speaker

We have something special this month. Ron Foster will be giving a talk entitled "SOS from Mount Kinibalu". You may recall that two years ago a party of soldiers set out to climb Mount Kinibalu and ended up getting lost and splitting into two groups – Ron was the leader of the expedition. This will be a talk to remember, bring a friend. Please try to be there so that the talk can begin at 8.00pm in order to give our speaker plenty of time to tell his story and to allow for questions and chat afterwards.

AGM CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2001

For many last year will be a year to forget, what with the horrors of FMD and continuous winter flooding. All private flying was banned and further discouraged until mid summer. September 11th turned into a nightmare which no one will ever forget, nor fully comprehend. Gradually we have returned to an uneasy normality, fearful still of a repetition of events but hoping that good will prevail over evil.

On the brighter side, our club members have subsequently made the most of their chances to fly. Inevitably there were many cancellations, the Round Britain Rally and most of the National competitions were cancelled, yet Popham was 'on' and Cranfield was 'off'. Once back in the air again, in late summer, there were a whole series of excursions. The Spamfield fly-in at Bembridge, IOW, which attracted a huge number of aircraft and Hugh Thompson's last fly-in at Milsom attended by over 90 machines, proving just how popular this site has become. Later, a tour around the White horses of Wiltshire was followed by many other venues notably Defford, South Cerney and Lyneham.

In Canada, Brian Milton aboard his Atlantic Flyer did his best to outwit the authorities in Newfoundland but came to grief on takeoff on his planned Trans-Atlantic attempt flying a 912 Blade fitted with the largest fuel tank ever fitted to a trike. I too was guilty of Blade bashing when I failed to clear a fence on takeoff in Wales, hurting my pride and my pocket but fortunately not my passenger.

Aircscrew. Our monthly newsletter proved just how valuable recorded information can be in keeping us all

informed and interested during difficult times. Serialised articles are a new and popular feature, particularly Ed Wells's Canadian Saga, Chris Ball's account of his Haggisfield trip, Myron Burak's adventure to and from Popham, and Barbara Austin's description of the Bognor Birdmen and their attempts at remaining airborne for more than a few seconds, very entertaining! During mid summer Bill 'emigrated' to Devon but kept in touch via the Internet and still produced the Aircscrew on time, before returning tanned and none the worse for wear! The latest development into colour is both attractive and interesting as

JH is now printing the monthly issue at home on his own PC. Many thanks to you both.

Monthly Meetings

Two meetings during the year were cancelled due to FMD. Our thanks to all the speakers and to Rob Keene for making the arrangements.

Training

Bill has not been very busy as you will read in his report.

Finance

Ges has kept the books and run the



Ed Wells is present with his trophy by Andrew John

Raffle with great skill but failed to make a profit this year! This was due to subsidising the Christmas Party and reducing subscriptions. Nevertheless Club funds remain well in the black and subs will stay at £15 for 2002 (£20 for families). Excellent value for money. Many thanks to Ges who now wishes to stand down as Treasurer after six years in the post.

Safety

Ed Wells had an engine out situation to deal with over France and survived. I had my Welsh mishap. There were other minor incidents but fortunately nothing serious.

Competitions

Due to FMD, competitive flying was seriously restricted last year and largely discounted. However our local competition at Over in July was great fun on a perfect evening with Jim Taylor winning by a margin of six seconds.

The Poser Trophy was awarded to Ed Wells for his grit and determination when faced with a forced landing in France and his skill in repairing his engine and subsequently making a safe return journey to England. Congratulations!

The Spitfire Award is awarded to the person considered to have made a significant impact on the club and its membership. Wishing this year's presentation to be a complete surprise, the Committee used John Hamer's absence from the January Committee meeting to agree unanimously that this award to him was long overdue. John has, over the years, given so much of his time and skill to help others, encouraging and helping so many who could have easily given up in their early training days or building project. He has given countless passenger flights, annual checks, engine courses, home built inspections, and answered a constant barrage of questions covering all matters aeronautical, not forgetting his long Secretaryship of the SVMC; all have been handled in his own inimitable style. Thank you John.

Kit Building

'Xairitis' is slowing down but nationally they lead the way with the number of kits sold.

Within the club several members have been seduced by the curves and graces of other SLA (Microlight) kit aircraft, placing their orders and finding it hard not to spend every available spare moment gradually, and in some cases speedily, assembling their kits.

Chris Ball has his Eurostar well on the way to first inspection (as seen on the front of *Aircrew* last month). Trevor Cale's C42 Icarus has growing pains in Herefordshire and rumour has it that dreams are enveloping Ken Cole pending the arrival of his Sky Ranger kit. Air Creation's Kiss has made a great impression and could well be in the skies over Gloucestershire before too long. As the new models are certificated the kit market is really opening up to be the big growth area in microlight flying for the near future.

Social

Rob Keene, with the aid of Sue, organised several very successful events last year starting with a Winter Feast at Ashleworth in February, then the Over Evening in July and ending with the very popular Christmas Party in December. This has been one of our best years socially for a long time and it has been made more worthwhile by the support we have had from the membership.

Committee

Once again we have done our best this year to provide a programme hopefully to suit everyone under particularly difficult conditions. My thanks to my fellow committee members and all of you who supported what we arranged.

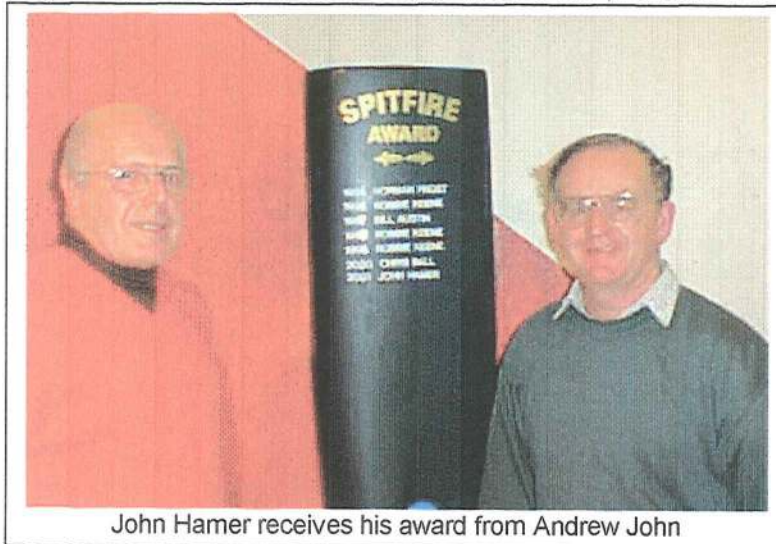
The Editor and his wife go “walkabout”

The Editor is moving house but it is not quite as simple as that. From 4th March Bill and Barbara don't actually have anywhere to go and will temporarily be homeless in terms of a fixed base. Bill will not have any easily accessible Internet connection after about 27th March. As a back-up any articles for publication should be sent to JH.

However, by hook or by crook, efforts will be made to ensure that you receive your Airscrew on time but please make allowances for any hiccups that might happen!

Quote of the Month

"The airplane is just a bunch of sticks and wires and cloth, a tool for learning about the sky and



John Hamer receives his award from Andrew John

about what kind of person I am, when I fly. An airplane stands for freedom, for joy, for the power to understand and to demonstrate that understanding. Those things aren't destructible" Richard Bach

A fright around Scotland or Haggisfield 2001 - A

personal view by Chris Ball (but with input from others)
(You will remember the story so far – the bad weather,
low flying over the sea, the blonde taxi driver and the
IFR (I Follow Roads) flying etc., plus other details from
Robbie's talk – now read the remainder of the saga.
Ed)

Episode 3 – Dinner with the Haggisfield Bunch and the fantastic Friday flights

Our hosts from the North Connel flying club had organised dinner and drinks at the local Hotel, where the smart money had booked rooms (read Eddie, Steve, Graham, Merv etc) and only a 100 yards or so from the B & B of the normal mortals like Robbie, G.E., Ian and me. As we were all rather happy to be in Oban at all the alcohol ran freely and seemed not to touch the sides on the way down. After all too short a session we were called to the dining room where a wonderful banquet was laid, good company assembled, and plenty of wine flowed. The real thrill for us was that just before dinner was served, Jim, Pat and Paul arrived having spent an enjoyable afternoon in the coffee shop of Skipness Castle before a pleasant evening flight up to North Connel. A lesson there somewhere do I hear Bill Austin saying? A wonderful evening ensued with much aircraft/flying/weather banter being exchanged. After dinner we adjourned to the bar to eye up the local talent and admire the live musicians. Eventually our gang were rounded up and embarked on the half mile walk back to our digs climbing up and down curbs, over walls (as these short cuts tend to do). An enjoyable end to an interesting day.

It had been arranged over dinner that the following day was a "free" day to explore the area but with the opportunity to meet for lunch at the Glenforsa Hotel which is just beside the runway of Mull's delightful Glenforsa airfield. The faster craft decided on a trip to the Outer Hebrides, while we four decided on a tour around Mull and a look at Iona. After a slow start, a good Mrs Strachan breakfast (and a very nice looking woman our B & B landlady was too) and a leisurely refuelling, we set off just before noon and spent 75 minutes flying in superb weather around and over Mull until we got to Iona which looked beautiful. As those of you who attended his talk will have seen from Robbie's photos, the water was as blue as anything seen in the tropics. With this in mind Robbie made low passes over each



Near Gigha on Haggisfield '01

secluded beach in the hope of spotting young ladies in bikinis – or better, but no luck. Iona was breathtaking – quite isolated, tiny, no roads to speak of, accessed only by boat and with the beautiful Abbey for which it is best known. Moored in the sound between Mull and Iona was a motor yacht of multimillionaire proportions. It had a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter parked on the rear deck which should give some idea of its size. After circling this boat in awe, we turned and flew back over the water to Mull in calm and clear weather and landed at Glenforsa in time for lunch finding three or four aircraft including Steve, Eddie and Graham already parked.

Before long the whole gang had arrived and we enjoyed a simple but pleasant lunch – while the skies opened and rain bucketed down. After about 40 mins it stopped just as abruptly and we were able to walk over to the airfield "office" (a small caravan), check in and pay the modest landing fee. We left at 3 pm and flew the 40 nm to Jura, choosing a route over the Gravellachs and Scarba to reduce the sea crossing to glideable 5 nm chunks, should it become necessary (which thankfully it didn't – God bless Adrian's Castrol TTS). Jura's strip is grass and right alongside a beautiful beach of silver sand. We stretched our legs, met an Englishman named Simon who confounded me by not only knowing where my small local village of Hawling was, but also visits there each winter to go shooting. He invited us to attend the Celidh in the local village hall the following evening – we had to decline as we intended flying home that day, but passed the word on to Gordon and Jane who went in our place.

After a short stay we departed for Islay 17 nm to the South West.

On arrival, we found an enormous airfield, freshly tarmaced, well manicured, with friendly operators, an £11 landing fee – but worth every penny – and an amazing array of rescue and fire equipment, including two Gloster Saro fire engines with dashboards made by Ground

Effect's company, a low ground pressure 6 wheeled rescue vehicle for marsh recovery and a tracked tractor towing an impressive inshore rescue boat. You may remember it was at Islay that Prince Charles landed an HS 125 "whisper jet" with the wind a dozen or so years ago and went off the end of the runway. Islay Malt whiskey

revenues mean he could do it again in much more safety these days.

Asking for fuel, we were told that Mogas was available at the local garage and then I was provided with a fireman, Jerry cans and a vehicle to drive me to the garage to fill up the cans while Robbie, Ian and GE went into the "departure lounge" and ordered coffee. My fireman insisted on doing all the fetching and carrying, even

pouring the fuel into the aircraft and refused any financial recompense. We were shown around the emergency equipment and the tower and made feel very welcome. Eventually we were asked would we like to move our aircraft as the daily passenger flight would be arriving soon and it might blow our aircraft away as it turned to park for disembarkation. We took this as our sign to move on and loaded up, started up and flew almost due East – in stunningly calm, clear and sunny weather – another 17 nm to Gigha involving a 10 nm sea crossing.

Arriving at Gigha we quickly spotted and landed on the deserted grass strip – most of which we discovered was exceedingly wet and boggy. But what a gorgeous place. We parked, skipped across the fence and down to the beach whereupon Robbie stripped off and went for a swim, I went for a half hearted paddle while Ian and GE laughed and took compromising photos!

After what was for me a difficult take off (the Shadow's small wheels don't like soft ground) we steered 010 on a 75 min flight, mostly along the coast back to North Connell (Oban). We landed at 2040 hrs to end a day of delightful flying in superb weather and magnificent scenery – such a contrast to the previous day. The evening was spent tracking down the usual suspects in a restaurant in Oban and enjoying a good meal and some welcome beer and wine. The evening had one more interesting experience in store – the taxi driver who took us back to the North Connell at the end of the evening. His name was Ivan, he was Russian, had defected from Russia to Scotland about 15 years ago and loved being a taxi driver in the Capitalist West.

We planned to make the return trip in the one day and also wanted to identify and photograph the site of Robbie's Thursday afternoon unplanned landing as well as the whirlpool in the sound to the North of Jura created by changing tides sweeping through a narrow channel. The latter was visible but less impressive than we had anticipated – perhaps we got the tides wrong. Robbie's

"airport" was still there and was testimony to how useful all those competition short landings are at honing one's skills. Very well done Rob.

We had left Oban at 0915 in a bit of a rush after fuelling and many goodbyes. In our eagerness to beat what looked like incoming weather we did the unforgivable, forgetting to sign out and pay our North Connel landing fees. We e-mailed our apologies the following day and sent cheques – but we were not the flavour of the month with the airfield manager. We flew to Carlisle in moderate weather, broken cloud most of the way, flying over Bute, across the Firth of Clyde, north of Prestwick and across the high ground again towards Dumfries. Then on towards Carlisle in deteriorating weather including occasional rain and thunderstorms to be skirted around. We reached Carlisle at 1200 hrs, in time for lunch, fuel and a stretch of the legs – especially Ian who had endured 2hrs 45 mins in the back seat of the Shadow. As we readied to depart for Ince Blundell (where once again John North had kindly made fuel available) we spotted the Eurostar and the two Rans, (Eddie, Steve and Graham) parked with the Graham's "bonnet" open. His engine had developed a serious rattle a few miles out of Carlisle – they had limped in and Eddie's examination revealed that a pushrod had managed to escape from its rocker arm. They were to fly no further that day and we reluctantly left them behind.

Leaving Carlisle at 1315 with persistent cloud now abounding, we proved we had learned something on our way to Oban by agreeing that instead of flying over the Lake District, we would fly the coastal route around the lakes – via Workington, Whitehaven, Sellafield and Barrow before crossing Morecambe Bay, passing Blackpool, over the Ribble estuary, Southport, past Woodvale with its many parked helicopters and on to Ince arriving at 1515.

We relaxed a bit, shared Ince's tea and biscuits, then fuelled up before proceeding at 1610 on the last leg of our respective journeys – Robbie and GE to Over, Ian and me to Oxleaze. The weather was now pretty miserable with a plethora of rainstorms so we decided to fly along the North coast of the Wirral, rather than down the Mersey, giving us more chance of weather related diversions. The remaining journey was uneventful, but fairly miserable – it was wet, bumpy, we were cold and flying into a headwind most of the way. We kept in occasional radio contact with Robbie for the first 40 mins or so as we crept nearer to home (and wishing we had a heater). After what seemed an eternity we reached within sight of home and in the remote expectation that Liz might have the hand held transceiver switched on, called "G-MWON turning finals for Oxleaze International" !!. Imagine my surprise to get a return call from Eddie who was within minutes of landing at his own strip "Thornbury International". It made me wonder – we last saw him up to his armpits in a Jabiru engine in Carlisle – he must have far superior speed and range – hmm – I wonder if I could get a Eurostar into my strip – must invite Eddie for lunch to find out.

So we arrived home, cold tired, but elated. After putting the trusty Shadow to bed we recounted and reviewed our experiences and concluded there were some observations and lessons learned. This was an amazing trip, microlighting really is fun, can be dangerous, and a wonderful group of people do it who are all very good company. I want to sign up for the Jim Pearce school of very good judgement before my next long distance trip

(and I want a plane as fast as Eddie's with the landing roll of Robbie's)

Finally, I gather the first episode of this account caused some concern that we were seeking to glorify "bold" flying. With respect, this is an incorrect assumption. I believe the four of us are reasonably normal, reasonably intelligent and usually sensible people. However, we do share a passion for flying and we have all got beyond being satisfied with just patrolling our home environs. Most of you will have already been there!. What this story has tried to be is an honest account of what we did, the problems we encountered, and by inference, how we should and could have avoided them (as Jim did by missing the Thursday afternoon weather – and as more experienced pilots than me would not have got caught out by an inaccurate altimeter reading).

So, you will all have your own opinions, but hopefully, some of you may also learn from our mistakes. We have and we had a heck of a good time learning !!!.

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Upgrade Time - or not...

Is anyone in the club aware of or interested in buying Ed and Pete's Mainair Flash1 G-MNJU. Very tidy machine – no vices and faster than an XL. Its running a 447 Rotax and has a long range tank – in total it has done less than 250 hours (Airframe and Engine). Not sure on a sensible price and any offers will at this stage only be an indication of what we can afford to spend on upgrade. It can come complete with a new test, trailer, spare prop, wing bag and two helmets if required. Don't be shy – just start talking.

Ring Ed on 01452830951 (email: ed.wells@icl.com <<mailto:ed.wells@icl.com>>) or Pete on 01594562545 (email: sales@folkdean.co.uk <<mailto:sales@folkdean.co.uk>>) evenings.

Hangarage, semi-rigged available at Defford now – £30 per month. Contact Mike Porter – 01386 750179.

Wanted – good 582 crankcase halves. Phone Adrian Lloyd 01885 482504





March 2002

This month's speaker

Terry Francis of Reality Aircraft will be visiting the Club this month to tell us all about building the Easy Raider. The aircraft gained its Permit to Fly last year and several examples are now under construction in the country. The first Jabiru powered version has been completed and is currently waiting for the weather to be test flown.

As Terry has a long way to come (and go back), the start will be at 8.00pm prompt. Please be there on time.

Up with the Lark in his Kiss – well not yet

by Myron Burak

Many of you will have heard of the Kiss that Colin Lark and myself are building (have now built). In true home built fashion I thought I'd benefit you all with my detailed log.

Time spent – loads

Bits missing – quite a few

Instructions – completely meaningless for days, then the fog gradually lifted

Cock ups – several, but nothing serious

Arguments – several, but nothing serious

Labelling of parts – guesswork at times

Assistance from importer – vaguely interested to indifferent

Satisfaction – immeasurable

Seriously though, the build was incredibly enjoyable, and I cannot wait to fly this beautiful thing we have created. The engineering is very impressive for a microlight, just about everything is very well designed, and looks good. The build is actually quite logical, albeit that the logic may elude you for some time. The instructions were mostly pretty good, but did tend to peter out at times. The two most memorable bits were (1) getting the trike out of Colin's workshop which we did by taking off one wheel which then gave about 1 thou of an inch to spare – after we both said it would just about go out



The Easy Raider – the subject of this month's talk

the door without this and (2) sitting on the trailer at the top of the airfield running it in, listening to that fantastic roar, realising that everything worked!!!! I wish the importer had been as helpful as JH, who dropped everything to come and check its progress and advise. Many thanks. Now all we have to do is wait about FOUR WEEKS for the BMAA to process the paperwork. Ah well, I suppose we can polish the pod some more.

Another MiniMax

Another aircraft completion this month is Dave Steade's MiniMax. This has taken Dave over two years to complete and was given its final inspection last week by our own resident MiniMax expert JH. The certificate to test the aircraft is expected from the PFA in the next day or so. However Dave won't be able to fly it just yet as he's not qualified. Dave is one of those unfortunate people who have been caught in the licence change that no longer allows GpA pilots to automatically fly microlights. Dave learnt on microlights progressing from an Alpha to a Shadow before going GpA. Unfortunately he hasn't flown microlights in the last couple of years so can't claim grandfather rights. He therefore has to go and take lessons and a GFT. Unfortunately in this

weather, he's not having much luck getting any flying in at Shobdon. Dave's is also off to Sun and Fun at the beginning of April so we can see that first flight being delayed for so time – still what's a few weeks in a couple of years.

Assuming Dave's flies reasonably soon, his will be the fiftieth MiniMax to fly in the UK. There are already five others flying in Gloucestershire, with five more in the build, so the type is becoming quite common.

Quote of the Month

"Airspeed is cash in hand, altitude is money in the bank; without either you're broke!"

Review of Icarus progress

by Trevor Cale

Some Sundays ago, on one of those perfect flying days of crystal blue skies, nil winds and warm temperatures, a load of cardboard boxes, spars and pre-formed parts arrived by trailer at Harwicke Farm, home of Graham and Judy Pritchard. Here at last, were the bits to produce a gleaming new Ikarus C42, the new baby of the author. The pain of handing over a very large cheque was somewhat mollified by the prospect of many happy hours of flying to come, having personally suffered severe withdrawal symptoms for the past 12 months.

Within a week, Graham had the fuselage, most of the wings, rudder and fin built and standing proudly on its three wheels. A week later and the 912 was fitted and the instruments in place. Oh the advantage of having an experienced kit builder on hand! More especially, as Teutonic efficiency has not extended to the C42 kit, none of the individual parts are named or numbered; so Graham has had

to do a jigsaw puzzle, linked to the series of drawings and photos in the build manual, and he's still ended up with bits yet to find a home! Several parts are also missing and frantic calls to Flybuyultralights are in progress. Even so, it is a beautiful kit, very well made indeed and lauded by Eddie Clapham on his first inspection. Barrie Baynes of Flybuyultralights has been extremely helpful and is embarrassed by the shortcomings in the kit, the Germans having assured him that, from now on,

they'll double check the kits and number all the parts.

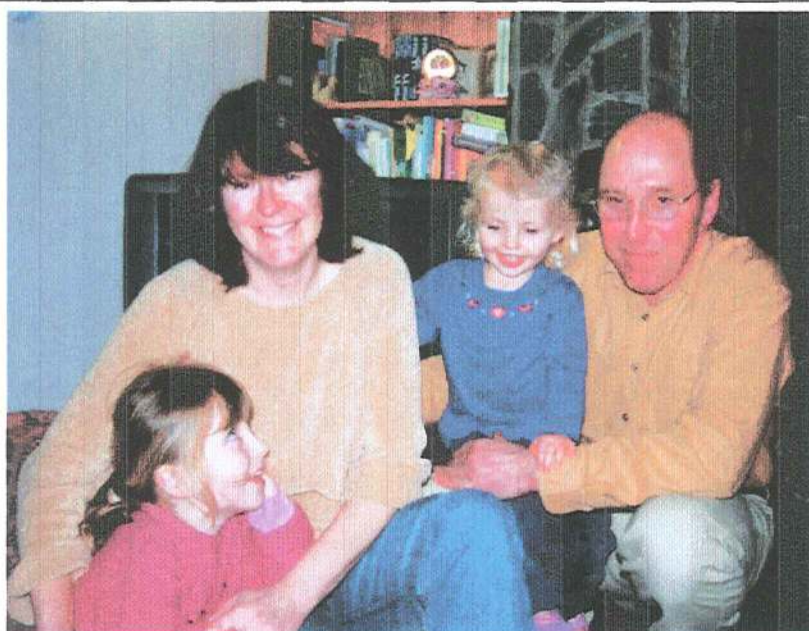
When 'it' (what do I call 'it' - C42 as a name is hardly inspirational?) is ready to take off into the wild blue yonder, I then have to learn to fly once again. A slightly nervy prospect, as all my experience is solely on flex wings and only a one week, three axis conversion course in my log book. One hour's instruction is included in the package, but that's up near Northampton. I (and 'it') have to get there somehow! I shall doubtless be calling on some kind 3 axis soul in the Club to give me the benefit of their flying skills - any offers? You'll have a bright blue feather cushion to sit on!

Member's News

At the time of writing our member Dave Read is in hospital following a road accident of which he was the innocent victim. We understand that one of his ankles ended up being trapped and that has necessitated the use of some pins and a metal plate to put it back together again. Hopefully he will be out of hospital by the time that this newsletter is published. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Former Members' News

Robbie & Sue Keene were in the Isle of Man in February and there they met Liz & Hugh Bethune. These two were both members of the Club in the late eighties, indeed they met through the club and subsequently got married, and moved to the Isle of Man where they set up in pig farming and are now producing much of the pork that the 75,000 people there need. They now have two children, Voirey and Affrica. They extend a welcome to anyone visiting the island.



The Bethunes

Canning Closure

It is with sadness that we have to report the closure of one of the club's favourite watering holes, the Canning Arms in Hartpury. For the past ten years or so the club's committee has met there on the first Wednesday

night in the month and enjoyed the Ashton's hospitality as well as their chips! The landlord, John

The Committee aren't homeless and have moved to JH's portakin at Catsbury. The beer, being canned, may not be as good but at the last meeting, chips were served as usual and as a special treat there was even cocktail sausages and sausage rolls to feast on, while discussing the state of the nation and microlighting. All club members are welcome to come to these informal meetings. Indeed with the evenings getting lighter, you can even fly in.

at Messier-Dowty near Staverton

The programme

19:15 Enter buildings for introduction and company slides (approx half an hour)

19:45 – Walk about to include Military & Commuter machining, followed by Assembly, then Airbus machining and Airbus Assembly (approx one hour).
20:45 / 21:00 – tour ends, depart to Farmers Club...

A list of names is not absolutely essential but this seems to be the best way of managing the planning and security access required to get us in. Therefore a form will be provided at the Farmers Club meeting in March for people to declare an interest.

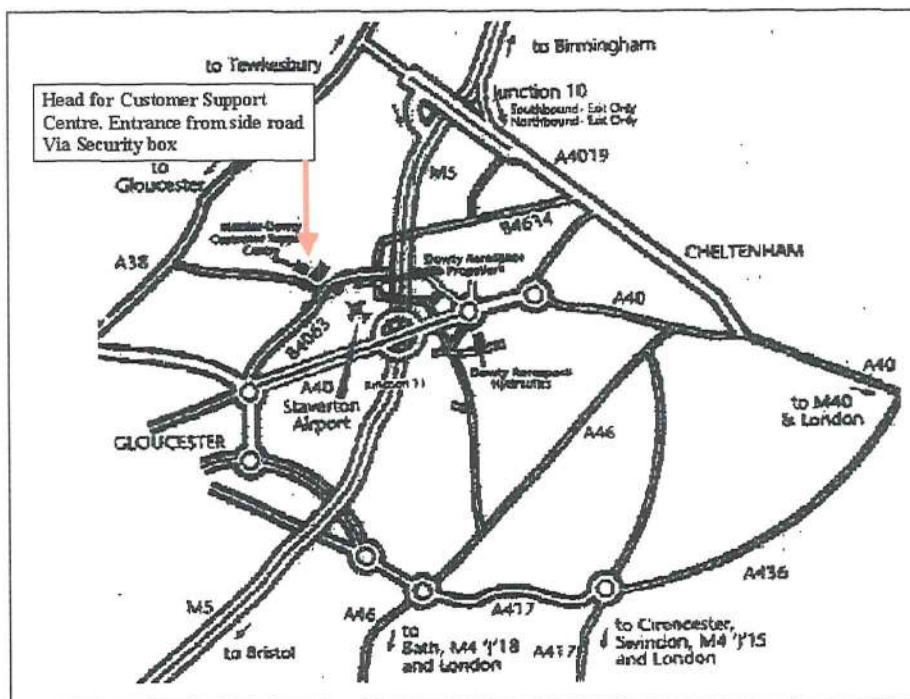
Anyone unable to register during the March meeting in person can ring Ed Wells on 07867 822063 and he will add your name to the list.

The Editor has moved house but it at present is in temporary accommodation. He can be reached on 07790 553861, but regrettably not by e-mail. Until he finds a permanent place to plug in his computer, please send any articles or contributions for publication to JH (hamerj@ukonline.co.uk)

Membership subscriptions renewals for 2002 have been slow in coming in and at the time of printing stand at 36, just over half last year's subscription. The most interesting thing on the returns is that most people own an aircraft and some two, thus the average aircraft ownership stands at over 100%. Those that haven't renewed to date are being reminded that this is the last newsletter you will be getting. Those of you that have renewed and don't get the next newsletter, let JH know. The treasurer and the secretary aren't always reading off the same hymn sheet – or however they keep track of who's done what, paid what and when.

JH reports that his strip at Hartpury is now back in use having been waterlogged for the past month or so. In addition the sheep have also been moved. He also advises that he can now offer first aid to anyone that has an incident there, now that both his wife, Penny and daughter, Laura, have completed a first aid course. Although neither are looking for someone to practice their new skills on, it should be pointed out that should Penny's first aid fail, she is qualified to administer the last rites and indeed bury you (albeit down the road). All in a day work, I suppose, for the resident curate!

Some of you may have seen in Microflight Flying that a MiniMax G-OJLH has been registered to JH. This in fact is not a new aircraft, but JH taking advantage of the personalised registration that the CAA offers, and re-registering G-MYAW. Many you may have noticed the absence over the past three months of the little red aeroplane. Well it has been in for a re-cover and repaint – as well as the addition of the personalisation of the registration. The colour scheme is just the same though, so other than being shinier you won't notice the difference. It has also been re-engined with a new Rotax 447



CDI which replaces his points ignition 447 which has

given good service over the years – it never stopped!

He reports that it is interesting flying the aircraft again. Although he hasn't really changed anything, he says it just doesn't feel quite the same. One thing he has changed is the cushions, from foam to Dynafoam, the new energy absorbent foam being recommended for crash protection. There is basically no 'bounce' in this material thus reducing the damage to the spine in a vertical deceleration. Perhaps this is reducing JH's 'seat of the pants' feel and hence the difference?

It was in 1991 that JH first commenced building the aircraft and it is nine years ago at the end of this month when it first leapt into the air at Long Marston. We're pleased to report that it is once again back in the air.

Dates for your diary

The Buckingham Microlight Club have advised us that their annual fly in will be at Oakley Airfield, nr Oxford. Further detail & PPR from Peter Woodliffe-Thomas 01844 213881 or peter.w-t@tinyworld.co.uk. Following the cancellation of last years event due to F&M etc it is hoped to make this years event twice the size and twice as much fun !

Summer time begins later than usual this year, on Sunday 31st March. So although we'll lose an hour of sleep that day, we'll gain an extra hour at the other end for flying.

For Sale/Wanted

Upgrade Time - or not...

Is anyone in the club aware of or interested in buying Ed and Pete's Mainair Flash1 G-MNJU. Very tidy machine - no vices and faster than an XL. Its running a 447 Rotax and has a long range tank - in total it has done less than 250 hours (Airframe and Engine). Not sure on a sensible price and any offers will at this stage only be an indication of what we can afford to spend on upgrade. It can come complete with a new test, trailer, spare prop, wing bag and two helmets if required. Don't be shy - just start talking. Ring Ed on 01452830951 (email: ed.wells@icl.com <<mailto:ed.wells@icl.com>>) or Pete on 01594562545 (email: sales@folkdean.co.uk <<mailto:sales@folkdean.co.uk>>) evenings.



JH's MiniMax

Hangarage available for fixed & fully/semi rigged flexwing microlights.

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MICROLIGHT CLUB

Hangarage, semi-rigged available at Defford now - £30 per month. Contact Mike Porter - 01386 750179.

Wanted - good 582 crankcase halves. Phone Adrian Lloyd 01885 482504





April 2002

This month's meeting

This month's meeting is a tour of the Airbus landing Gear production facility at Messier-Dowty near Staverton

You are requested to assemble at **19.00hrs** at Messier-Dowty main car park off Down Hatherly road. Please be on time. For security reasons, the company need to know who is coming, so if you wish to attend and haven't already booked your place, please ring Ed Wells on 07867 822063

Take off

We are pleased to report that Colin Lark and Myron Burak's Kiss has now taken to the air. Paul Dewhurst did the initial flight test at Sandhurst, and since then Colin & Myron have been clocking up the hours.

On 8th April, Trevor Cale's C42 also took to the air at Hardwicke in the hands of Graham Pritchard. Over the next two days the aircraft has completed its flight test programme and now awaiting the issue of its Permit to Fly, before it's transfer to Defford. Trevor is delighted with his new aircraft, which he says is vice less, and looks forward to flying around the UK & Europe. His first planned trip though is to Popham at the beginning of next month.

Also during the month, Dave Steade's MiniMax has been issued with its permission to test fly, but Dave has taken himself off to Sun and Fun in Florida so the initial flight will have to wait that bit longer – after several years in the build another week is not that much of a delay.

We are also told that Chris Ball's Eurostar will shortly be ready to take to the air over Gloucestershire.

Paul Underwood will also be appearing in a different aircraft for he has upgraded to a 582 Quantum. His Mercury is now up for sale.

SVMC Membership

As the newsletter goes to print, the membership stands at 58, and they own or have a share in, 60 aircraft either completed or under construction. Thus the average club ownership is over 100%. More interestingly, flexwing ownership has fallen to 50%, proving three axis is becoming more popular.



Paul Dewhurst landing Colin Lark & Myron Burak's aircraft after it's first flight

Wednesday Night is Club Night

Now that the nights have lengthened, it has been decided to try the very successful format that was achieved several years ago of having a club 'event' every Wednesday night. So here is the programme:-

Wed 17th April – Visit Messier Dowty

Wed 24th April- Fly In at Hawling – contact John Davies 01451 850214

Wed 1st May – Fly In / Committee meeting at Hartpury – contact John Hamer 01452 700314

Wed 8th May – Fly In at Teddington Hands – contact Gary Ball - 07836217404

Kitfox to Easter Island

By Brian Finch

Freshwater Fruit Farm (FFF) on the Western fringes of the Isle of Wight is where Julia and I spent the Easter Holiday. We have flown to the Island a few times but normally return the next or same day, which leaves little time to do the touristy things that "normal" folk do. The main problem encountered from the normal airfields available e.g. Sandown and Bembridge, is access to local amenities.

During the 2000 Round Britain Rally FFF displayed a marker for identification and points scoring in the middle of their strip. This was news to me as I hadn't realised a strip was located there. So a couple of years later the Little Grey Cells started to stir and persuaded me to investigate further, no mention of the strip on the maps or the various strip guides bore fruit, and so to the internet.

A search of "Freshwater" accommodation found "Freshwater Fruit Farm", the Proprietors name, John Craddock, telephone No and aerial view of the site, complete with 3 Caravans and Airstrip.

A telephone call to John one evening confirmed we had the right place and booked our Caravan from Good Friday until Easter Monday. This also gave us the opportunity of quizzing him about the strip that turns out

to be 250m long with a 12ft hedge at the northern end and 3ft high at the southern end. We were to call him the day before to confirm our arrival when he would erect the windsock and mow the strip.

Now the Kitfox is very well known for its STOL performance – in the hands of the right pilot – but 250m? This was becoming more of a test than an idle flight to the Island.

So with ballast aboard (Julia and 50litres of fuel) Defford became our Test Centre with suitably placed markers to assess our performance. I haven't flown so many circuits since my training days; to the West, to the East, full flap, half flap, 60mph, 55mph, 50mph.

Finally, half flap for take off and landing with an approach speed of 50mph gave us a take off roll of 150m and a full stop in less than 180m – cracked it!

Good Friday dawned, Bredon Hill's outline could be spotted from Defford but where were the Malverns ?. Still we were not scheduled to leave until 2pm and the light southerly should clear things up nicely.

After inspecting Julia's bag, I persuaded her that only one change of Jeans were required as we had to get out of the strip as well as landing!

3:30pm we finally lined up at Defford and climbed into the haze to 3000ft deciding the Viz was not getting any better, although fit for purpose. A call to Gloucester brought the normal uninterested response, changing to Lynham after crossing the ridge. They cleared us through the zone at 3k but requested we gave a wide berth to South Cemey as they were dropping 'boxes'. It was a bit tedious going off track, but necessary.

Regaining our track, we changed to Solent after a brief visit to 129.825, which was very quiet considering it, was a bank holiday. Solent queried our transit height of 2500ft between Southampton and Boummouth, reminding me their zone starts at 2000ft – oops.

A usual result of dropping 1000ft is an increase in air speed as the wind drops but we found the wind increased, which could of course been a result of coastal breezes.

Coasting out over the Solent always gives a bit of a thrill as the Island comes into view with a great view of Yarmouth harbour.

Our GPS shows 5 miles to run as we drop to 1000ft and fly right of track to spot Freshwater Fruit Farm on our Left. Yes, there's the caravan and there's the Strip. As we descended downwind it became apparent we had to approach over a small conifer

forest one field away from the threshold.....

By the time we cleared the forest we were too high over the hedge leaving us little of the 250m to land on. As I applied full power for a go around I began to wonder at my sanity and all the accident reports one reads in flight safety bulletin. The co-pilot was very quiet as the second approach required a low pass over the trees, a quick sideslip to lose height and a firm



The accommodation



The strip at Freshwater Fruit Farm

landing in about 150m, as witnessed by John and several of his holidaymakers. "You look a bit red" Julia remarked. Actually I felt a bit white!

It wasn't that bad really, its just that the "under the nose" viz from Bumble on approach is not very good – my excuse!

We were shown to our accommodation for the next few days which included all the mod cons including a shower, colour TV, even tea bags, sugar and milk for our first cup of tea!

The two mile walk Friday evening into Freshwater would have been all the more rewarding had we booked a table first – "sorry sir, fully booked" came the familiar reply. So off to the Fish and Chip shop we went, after all, it was Good Friday!

The £4.00 taxi back to the 'van was worth every penny, we slept well. Saturday mornings walk along the footpath between the fields was glorious, we made the bus stop in time to find they were running 25 minutes late due to the volume of passengers. We bought our 2 day Rover tickets at £10.60 each with which we could tour the Island using any of the Buses or Trains, which we did – Alum bay, Needles Park, Yarmouth, Newport, Cowes, Ryde, Ventnor, Shanklin and Sandown.

Monday came too quickly as we packed our things away for our return trip. Before saying our goodbyes, one of our fellow inmates' lad was busting to have a go in the Kitfox. He was about 15 and around 12st, perfect ballast to test the take-off performance. Up in about 150m and 100ft over the far fence. A quick tour around the Needles had to be abandoned due to low coastal mist/cloud, which caused a little concern that the strip would disappear below it. Another approach over the trees and a short landing proves it's all in the mind! Jonathon's Dad promised to e-mail us a shot of us behind the hedge on approach, which I will include if it ever arrives!

The flight back to Long Marston was uneventful if not fast with a 30mph tailwind, completing the journey in only 50 mins!

We had a great time and the accommodation was superb, an Ideal way for Club members to spend a weeks holiday with a chance to Bus, Train or Fly themselves around this great little Island. Please contact me for further details of Freshwater Fruit Farm, John will be pleased to see you.

The 'Nationals' come to Gloucestershire

Steve Slade has written to say that the first round of this year's Nationals will be held on 27/28th April at Kemble. As it is the first round of the season the tasks will not be too difficult, but are still designed to make you think and build an understanding of your machine and your navigational abilities. Also, as it is so early in the year, Saturday evening will be spent in the local skittle alley, where hot food can be pre-booked. Currently there is likely to be a choice of chilli, curry or cottage pie at a cost of £5.50. Entry fee for the competition will be the standard £20 which will include all landing fees at Kemble (normally £5 per landing). Any "novices" will be given additional briefings, and experienced competitors will be available to give

assistance in the planning aspects of the tasks. Camping facilities are available on site, or there are local B&B's if you require them. So come on, get some practice in before Spamfield. Don't be surprised to see some similarity between at least one of the tasks at Kemble and at Spamfield!

If you would like to enter, please contact Steve asap (tel no 07803014929 or email steve@slades.freemove.co.uk) but at least one week beforehand, as he needs to order colour photocopies, etc. If you would like to join the skittles/food, he will need to know your food choice as well. The pub needs two days notice so a go/no-go decision will be made on the evening of Thursday 25th April. Fingers crossed for good weather!

Maps

Now that the flying season has arrived, members are reminded that they should check that their maps are current. To help you, the latest editions are listed here.

The Official UK CAA VFR Charts

www.caa.co.uk/dap

Publication dates are subject to change

Visit the VFR charts 'updates' page via www.caa.co.uk/dap this site lists the latest amendments to each chart since its publication date and is updated every AIRAC Cycle

Aeronautical Charts - ICAO 1:500,000 scale		
Chart Name	Current edition	Next edition
Scotland	Ed 21 - 27 Dec 01	Ed 22 - 12 Jun 03
N. England & N. Ireland	Ed 24 - 17 May 01	Ed 25 - 16 May 02
S. England & Wales	Ed 28 - 21 Mar 02	Ed 29 - 20 Mar 03

Aeronautical Charts - 1:250,000 scale		
Chart Name	Current edition	Next edition
N. Scotland West	Ed 2 - 30 Nov 00	Ed 3 - 05 Sep 02
N. Scotland East	Ed 2 - 02 Nov 00	Ed 3 - 08 Aug 02
N. Ireland	Ed 2 - 09 Aug 01	Ed 3 - 07 Aug 03
The Borders	Ed 3 - 12 Jul 01	Ed 4 - 10 Jul 03
Central England & Wales	Ed 4 - 19 Apr 01	Ed 5 - 20 Feb 03
England East	Ed 4 - 21 Feb 02	Ed 5 - 04 Sep 03
West & South Wales	Ed 2 - 13 Jul 00	Ed 3 - 11 Jul 02
England South	Ed 5 - 22 Feb 01	Ed 6 - 18 Apr 02

Charts available from CAA Chart Sales 0161 499 0013 and the usual Stockists and Flying Clubs - see 'stockists' page for full details

Dates for your diary

The Microlight Trade Fair at Popham on 4th & 5th May is widely regarded as the 'seasons' opening event and is well worth attending either on foot or by air.

The Wye Valley Flyers have extended an open invitation to their fly in at Broadmeadow Farm on Saturday 1st June (The bad weather alternative is 2nd Jun). The field is very 'sensitive' so please make sure that you are aware of their circuit procedure. Contact is Russell Hayward 01432278016/ 07887986179

Fly in Long Marston – 2nd & 3rd June

The Round Britain Rally is scheduled to start at Barton on 6th June and finish on 8th. Entry forms can be found in MF and the closing date is 25th May

The PFA Rally at Cranfield will once again take place on 21st/ 23rd June after missing last year because of being cancelled due to foot & mouth.

This year's 'Spamfield' Fly at Bembridge on the Isle of Wight is planned for 29th & 30th June. Over 300 microlights have indicated that they will attend

The Buckingham Microlight Club have advised us that their annual fly in will be at Oakley Airfield, nr Oxford on 28th July. Further detail & PPR from Peter Woodliffe-Thomas 01844 213881 or peter.w-t@tinyworld.co.uk. Following the cancellation of last years event due to F&M etc it is hoped to make this years event twice the size and twice as much fun !

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Good Home Wanted

Mainair Mercury 503 G-MYOF. Warp drive prop, Long Range tank, Aluminium sprayed exhaust, VSI. Blue pod, Blue & white wing. 335 hours since registered in Dec '93. Regularly used & well administered. Selling due to upgrade & will be sold with new permit. Hangared part-rigged near Gloucester. Ideal first aircraft & a good example of the type. £5100. Tel: Paul on 0118-934-4087(Hm) 07785-533048(Mob)

Hangarage available for fixed & fully/semi rigged flexwing microlights.

For more information phone 01793 791014 or e-mail microlights@redlands67.freemove.co.uk

Hangarage, semi-rigged available at Defford now - £30 per month. Contact Mike Porter – 01386 750179.

Wanted – good 582 crankcase halves. Phone Adrian Lloyd 01885 482504



A Happy Trevor Cale and his new aircraft



May 2002

This month's meeting

This month's meeting is a talk by Darren Lewington from Gloucestershire Air Traffic Control. The talk will take place at Staverton and members are asked to assemble at the Staverton Flying School at 19.00hrs. Please don't be late.

Take off

We are pleased to report that there is another addition to the Club's flying fleet. On Tuesday 23rd April, Dave Steade took his recently finished MiniMax for it's first flight at Defford. Congratulations Dave. His experiences over the five years of building are detailed later in this newsletter.

Wednesday Night is Club Night

After a successful start, the Wednesday night programme continues as follows:-

- Wed 15th May – Talk by Gloucestershire ATC Wed 22nd
- Wed 22nd May - Fly In at Bob Hinds' at Newnham
01594516320
- Wed 29th May - Fly In Only on Bredon Hill Gallops -
Andrew John 07770210642
- Wed 5th June - Fly In / Committee meeting at Hartpury
– John Hamer 01452 700314
- Wed 12th June – Fly In Defford Brian Finch
01386751195

Fly In report

On Wednesday 24th April, we had our first Wednesday night event, and the weather could not have been better. John Davis had mowed his strip to perfection in anticipation and he couldn't have been disappointed with the use it got. All three runways were used by the fourteen visiting aircraft. Indeed the main one was used in both directions, despite a very definite wind! Our thanks go to Sue & John for hosting the event and supplying the drinks and food.

The following Wednesday, the weather wasn't so kind, for the event at JH's strip at Hartpury. Nevertheless Bob

Hinds made it in by air and many others came by road to enjoy the chat and food.

Last Wednesday night saw another successful event when nine aircraft gathered at Gary Ball's strip at Teddington Hands, which is conveniently located across the road from the pub.



A happy Dave Steade after his first flight

Logbooks

Perhaps a gentle reminder is not amiss at this time that log books have to be stamped with a Certificate of Experience every 13 months. Talking to members it is obvious that last year's foot and mouth crisis has

resulted in pilots not realising that their log book was "out of date" i.e. 13 months had elapsed but there was no stamp in the book. This is not crucial unless you are one of the pilots whose annual hours are relatively low. It is possible, in that case, to be faced with having to do a flight with an instructor to revalidate the Certificate of Experience. Check your logbook now and, if necessary, see Bill Austin at the next Club meeting - complete with prize for the raffle as payment

The World Championships

Robbie Keene who is organising the flying at next year's Championships, has just confirmed that the venue will be Long Marston. Agreement has now been reached with the owners to hold the event the last two weeks in August 2003, i.e. 16th – 30th August. Robbie will be looking for help over this period, so if you fancy lending a hand, please let him know. As a precursor to the event, it is planned to hold an event on 7th September 2002, details will follow in due course.

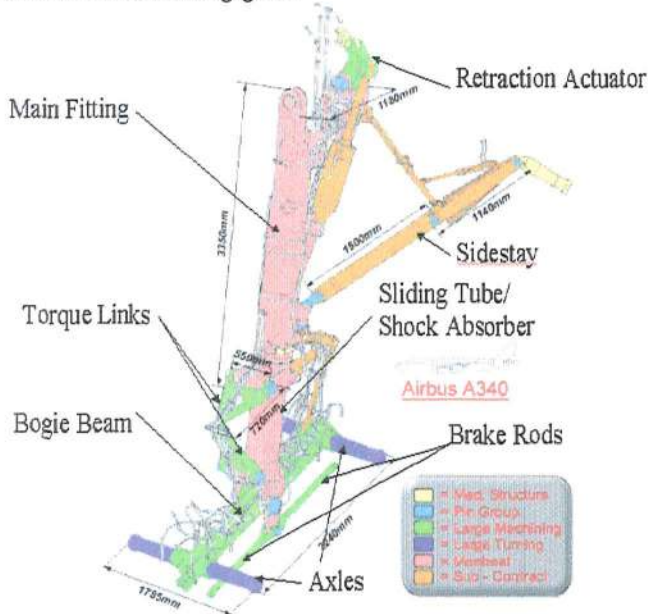
Messier-Dowty Tour

By Ed Wells

The two-hour tour I had planned with my Messier-Dowty mate Andy turned into a rare treat, which overshot the schedule by nearly an hour. Not a problem, as Andy says, ***"It was a good night. Great to take interested groups around rather than bored bankers or critical customers"***.

On the night I had a credible 31 on my sign-on list, 4 had to cancel due to work commitments and 6 didn't show. Still 21 was a good turn out considering the relatively early evening start. So for the benefit of those that couldn't join us here is a brief glimpse into what we learnt and what we saw during the evening.

Oh, and in case I get carried away with newly acquired information this diagram shows the main components of a A340 main landing gear.



19:15 The evening started with tea, coffee and a brief presentation on Messier-Dowty and the volumes of landing gear it has out in the field - which equates to over 30,000 landings per day! We then talked through the today's production lines serving new generation aircraft. Andy showed us graphic illustrations of what landing gears are expected to survive when he produced pictures of an Air Transat Airbus, which was forced to glide 80 miles without fuel and slap a landing into the American military airbase on the Azores. The tyres had all blown on impact and the wheels and landing gear were ground all to hell before it stopped. No one was hurt but the airline then had an ultimatum from the military – ***'shift it in 24 hours or we bulldozer it off the runway'***. And that's what Andy has

to get organised with his 90 plus Airbus production team – fast production or sourcing components, loading chartered Hercules transports and getting fitting crews anywhere in the world to get planes airborne again. In this case they shipped some temporary replacement parts out (bogey beams, axels, brakes and wheels I think), fitted them, flew the plane back to France for a proper maintenance overhaul.

So how does a 1-ton gear take well over 250 tons of abuse?

In a nutshell – traditional engineering to unbelievably high standards. I say traditional because the aerospace industry is very slow at adopting new technologies into production because of the time it takes to prove new technologies and gain approvals from the aviation authorities. So companies like Messier-Dowty continue to push the limits of normal engineering practice to reduce weight and add strength to everything they do. These days aluminium and sometimes titanium castings have been replaced with high-grade forged steel, which by the end of its treatments, is both lighter and stronger than traditional materials.

It takes 9 weeks approximately from raw metal to final landing gear assembly, clearly a non-trivial process –

We put on our protective glasses and entered the factory to find out more...

We started on the small stuff by viewing various brake linkages and ancillary components being machined. New generation ceramic/carbide micro grain cutters with different coating have now relegated cooling suds to the very final machining processes. This made the tour much cleaner than I was expecting – in fact the factory was immaculate (in a factory sort of a way!). The most awesome milling machine was *'roughing out'* six main fittings in one continuous production cycle. Each is



produced from 1 ton of high grade forged solid steel (£11,000 each). The six headed machine (£6 million investment) works for 72 hours roughing out one side - then another 64 hours for the other side. By the time each of the six main fittings are 'roughed out' 25% of the metal has gone – I guess that makes over £16,500 in swarf for each run! The ceramic cutting heads (£5 to £27

each) are replaced regularly depending on the 'feel' of the metal – if anything goes wrong all six units and the production schedule are scrap. Last time this happened was three years ago apparently - and everyone suffered the pain of that production failure!

Making them shiny – making them hard...

19:50 We followed the components through metal profiling, polishing, shot peening, plating etc. But the best bit by far was hardening. Andy had geared up a quench run for us for 20:00. The machining continuously builds up stresses in the metal, which must be restored back to its maximum strength prior to finishing. A huge gas kiln is used to heat the component to 870°C at which point off comes the lid and an automated lifting arm pulls the red-hot items out and moves them quickly to be quenched in a huge pool of oil for 15 to 30 minutes. Very skilled and very very spectacular - too fast into the oil or entry at the wrong angle and the component will distort and be useless.

We saw the final machining of these hardened components then moved through into Airbus final assembly. Another theatrical display – this time liquid nitrogen was being used to take bushes down to minus 190oC ready for dropping into the various gear components which were being pre heated in an oven to 150oC for aluminium and 100oC for steel.

And finally onto final assembly.

We were lucky that delays in production had stopped the scheduled shipment of two complete landing gears. The final assembly shop was more like an operating theatre than a factory - every single item is accompanied by reams of paperwork which is compiled into a complete gear document over four inches thick. We saw rams being activated and every detail of every unit being painstakingly assembled to standards that I still find hard to believe. Corrosion is the main enemy when the gear is in service so every joint is smeared with sealing compound. Nuts, lock wire, you name it -all sealed – must be an absolute nightmare when it does need to come apart. It was now approaching 22:00 and I realised we had overrun by nearly an hour – we mustered the members (sounds disgusting) and returned to the customer centre prior to a quick pint back at the Farmers Club. Excellent...

Summary

No words can do this credit to be honest and I've missed out lots for this brief report. One thing I'm now much more aware of is the incredible engineering heritage in aerospace we have in our local area. From the factories that have gone like the Gloster Aircraft Company to those that remain, Smiths and Messier- Dowty. I sincerely hope that the traditions of this particular manufacturing industry never leave this area or this country. Where aviation is concerned getting it right matters – and Messier-Dowty continue to push the boundaries of engineering excellence to ensure that ***"landing more than 250 tons at 160mph feels like landing a feather"***.

Another Homebuilder

At the recent club gathering at Catsbury, the Chairman revealed that he had joined the ranks of the homebuilders and rolled out his project. He has undertaken to build a HiMax, the high winged version of the MiniMax. As you will see from the photograph he has had a helping hand in getting started as he has acquired a MiniMax airframe which he intends to convert with the help of JH.



Andrew with his new project

My MiniMax

By Dave Steade

G-CBIN 5 years on

I really could not believe it myself, but looking back through the records I see I started my MiniMax in February 1997. However, I am pleased

to say that on Tuesday 23rd April 2002 carried out the first flight of 20 minutes, which I wish I could tell you more about, but it was really just a blur.

I originally started the project when I joined the MiniMax club and saw an advertisement for a secondhand and kit in early 1997. I had already bought a set of plans but this seemed like a good offer and solved the problem of all the material sourcing. From March 1997 until about the middle of 1998 I worked fairly consistently on the project probably spending 15-20 hours per week eventually completing the airframe and having it signed off by John Hamer ready for covering.

Unfortunately, this is where everything started to slow down as now I had sold my share in the aircraft I had been flying and ended up with nothing to fly so I looked around for a replacement aircraft, eventually deciding on a Kitfox which was a type I had owned a few years previously. Eventually I identified an aircraft in late 1998 that, although obviously needing some repairs and a little attention, appeared to be quite a good buy. However, upon getting the Kitfox back to my workshop I realised this was about the worst bargain I had ever bought and what I imagined was going to be four or five weeks of refurbishment, turned out to be 6 months plus. Unfortunately, in the meantime of course, the MiniMax was relegated to the spare bedroom and I finally got the Kitfox flying in June 1999.

I then needed a rest from aircraft building and repairing and decided I would do some flying for a change. This all proceeded okay until the beginning of 2000 when in anticipation of restarting the MiniMax project I decided an extension to the garage would be in order. Well- like all projects - even the extension to the garage got a little out of hand and this was not completed until April 2001. After another short rest to recuperate from the exertions of garage building I finally got the MiniMax

airframe back out of the spare bedroom and got my brain into gear about completing this project. As you have probably seen from previous articles in the newsletter, it was now summer so I erected a tarpaulin tent in the garden as a temporary spray booth and proceeded through the covering, painting, control fitting, instrument installation, engine installation etc etc etc until early this year when I seemed to have an aircraft that was almost ready to fly. Certainly, whoever said "once you think you have finished you are about 50% complete" - was exactly right. Following a few more enforced delays whilst I went on holiday and did a few more non aircraft jobs that had joined the backlog queue, the aircraft was totally ready to fly and John Hamer flew over to my home strip on the evening of the 23rd April to give me my flight release certificate. Having read one or two articles on test flying and also received the pre-flight briefing from John, I taxied out to 27 at Defford and carried out my pre-flight checks having made a decision not to try and do "bunny hops" I opened the throttle and the aircraft was airborne in about 70 metres and climbed out steadily.

This is the time where I would like to go into raptures about how beautiful it was to fly, the harmonised controls, the effortless cruise etc, but - unfortunately - all I can remember from the first 20 minutes was being quite worried that I would have an engine failure and that my first landing be an emergency one. I was also concentrating on keeping more or less over the strip so as to have somewhere to land if things suddenly became desperate. Then finally, I brought the aeroplane in for my first landing which, thankfully, was reasonably smooth. I now have the rest of the test flight programme to carry out which, having now cleared the backlog of non aviation projects, I hope to shortly get to in earnest. In the meantime I would just like to express the now customary thanks to John for the MiniMax club, the magazine and his frequent telephone advice as well as acting as my inspector during the whole process.

Dates for your diary

The 8th Annual Taildragger fly-in is being held at Leicester airport on Sat 7 Sun 25th/ 26th May.. All welcome - no landing fees for tail draggers and PFA members. A/G radio 122.125, non radio welcome but phone 0116 2592360 first.

The Wye Valley Flyers have extended an open invitation to their fly in at Broadmeadow Farm on Saturday 1st June (The bad weather alternative is 2nd Jun). The field is very 'sensitive' so please make sure that you are aware of their circuit procedure. Contact is Russell Hayward 01432278016/ 07887986179

Fly in Long Marston - 2nd & 3rd June

The Round Britain Rally is scheduled to start at Barton on 6th June and finish on 8th. Entry forms can be found in MF and the closing date is 25th May

POPHAM Sunday 5th May 2002

By Andrew John

All we heard on arrival was "...you should have been here yesterday!" When apparently over 400 microlight had arrived taking up all the available parking space that Popham can offer, somewhat of a record. However Ges Hatchett and I had taken one hour fifteen minutes to negotiate the tarmac approach from Gloucestershire and arrived fresh and bushy tailed ready to enjoy the annual 'feast' of all that is new and irresistible at the annual Microlight gathering in the depths of Hampshire.

We chose to walk the 'line' downhill, starting with some very tired looking Thrusters, being used for 'experience' flights. But, before long the latest hardware became visible, lining up their attributes for all to admire and drool over. There were :-

The Foxbat, Easy Raider, Sky Raider, Icarus, Eurostar, X-Air, Kiss, Technam Echo, Thruster Sprint, MiniMax, FLPG's, Raven, Quantum, Blade, C42 etc etc.. The best line up I have ever seen.

Overhead, joining the circuit in a continuous stream were dozens of aircraft, both microlights and GA, the latter, as usual, inevitably bunching up and having to pull away for yet another go-around! Conditions were very blustery and there was the occasional pilot who found his experience stretched to the limit as he tried to fly through the threshold turbulence created by the trees on final approach. There was also the daunting experience of landing for the first time in front of a large number of critical spectators! Sadly one such aviator came to grief at the moment of touch down but fortunately both occupants walked away without serious injury.

Talking to various manufacturers I was left in no doubt that business was booming and cheap money was fuelling the lengthening order books, which must be good for everyone, if for no other reason than the aircraft of today will become available as very attractive secondhand buys in five to ten years time.

However, as we sought the comfort of the car for our return journey, we had to admit that three axis aircraft had now taken the lead, as demonstrated typically by our own club member Trevor Cale who had flown his new C42 Icarus in for the day on his first solo flight away from his Defford base.

To sum up, Popham was the same as ever, very cold and very blustery, but with a compulsive glimpse at the latest in our flying world. For example, did you see the second hand BMW engine conversion unit, and hear it running? No! You missed something very special.

On a sad note there were several incidents involving outlandings during the two days and hopefully, apart from pride and pockets, no serious injuries were sustained.

As we cruised homewards, Ges and I admitted that there are some days when the car is still the best option - whimps did I hear you mutter?!



June 2002

This month's meeting

This month's meeting will be the annual Treasure Hunt and BBQ to be held at Over. The Treasure Hunt will take about an hour, and pilots are requested to be at Over by 1800hrs for a briefing.

Wednesday Night is Club Night

The Wednesday night programme is follows:-

Wed 19th June – Treasure Hunt & BBQ – Over Farm

Robbie Keene 07831237353

Wed 26th June - Fly In at Bob Hinds' at Newnham
01594516320

Wed 1st July - . Fly In / Committee meeting at
Hartpury – John Hamer 01452 700314

Wed 10th July - Fly In Only on Bredon Hill Gallops -
Andrew John 07770210642

Wed 17th July .. Club meeting – Gloucestershire Club

Fly In report

Recent Wednesday nights seem to have attracted poor weather, with Newnham, Bredon and Hartpury being washed out, though a few souls turned up by road at Catsbury to eat the sausages and chips. The last fly in of the period, at Defford, was only a slightly different story with one member, Mark Taylor braving the windy conditions. Several others, though, came by road to enjoy the BBQ put on by Brain Finch & Trevor Cale. Many thanks.

Smoke on – go

By Robbie Keene

On the 30th May, my son Rees and I were privileged to be invited to join the members of the British Microlight team on a flying visit to Scampton (Lincolnshire), the current home of the Red Arrows. The trip had been organised by SVMC club member Squadron Leader Richard Rawes, who as many of you will know has been a member of the British Team for about 10 years.



Richard Rawes with one of the Reds

The plan was to fly in early at about 8.30am in time to be present at the pre display briefing of the Reds and then watch them perform their 2002 routine. Afterwards we would then again listen to the debriefing.

The week prior had seen some very unsettled weather and so until the day, it was looking doubtful as to whether a flying visit would be on. However, the day before it seemed that there would be a moderate south-westerly to push us quickly there and that it would then calm down somewhat to give us a lesser wind to return into, so a go decision was made and flying machines were fuelled up ready for an after work flight to Lincoln on the 29th May.

The 29th dawned fairly windy but with fewer showers than forecasted. The wind was definitely in the right direction, at least for the outward trip! At about 5.45 pm, Richard, in his Chaser and Rees and I in the Raven were kitted up ready, laden with fuel, tents and sleeping bags. As soon as we climbed out from Over we turned and whistled towards Long Marston, reaching there in just over 20 minutes. We then identified Jeremy Hucker and Pat Nicholls on 129.825 following us up from Broadmeadow, about 20 minutes behinds us. It was a very clear evening and easy to navigate towards the masts at Rugby, then the tall mast at Melton Mowbray came into view. In 90 minutes we were overhead Waddington with a large E-3D Sentry AWAC executing touch and goes beneath us! A few minutes later we were overhead Wickenby, There we descended to a warm welcome by Malcolm Howland, the QFI of Flight 365.

Up went the tents and then Malcolm shoved us into his car and took us up to the local for a couple of pints and a good Lincolnshire steak. Jeremy, Pat and Chris Saysall then joined us, followed shortly by Neil & Eileen King who were unable to fly across the Pennines, so drove over in their pick-up. The rest of the gang were set to fly up in the morning.

Thursday morning dawned dull but fairly calm. Eddie Clapham and Nigel Beale arrived first followed by Simon Baker, Keith Ingham, R.M.H, then Chief Negal and his

wife Wacky. Malcolm did us proud with a good cooked breakfast in the clubhouse and we were soon preparing for the 10 minute flight into the RAF base at Scampton. There was no conflicting traffic at 8.45am, so the arrival of a gaggle of 10 microlights proved no problem to them. We were flagged straight into an enormous hangar where the 10 planes still seemed to take hardly any room.

A minibus then ferried us off to the main HQ for coffee and an introduction by the attractive team manager, Squadron Leader Lyn Johnson.

We were soon into a very intense pre flight briefing that started exactly on time to the second. The talk was largely about the various display moves and the language was pretty hard to follow, but the impressive thing to me was that various members of the team had their part to play in certain parts of the briefing, they seemed to be working as a single body even in the briefing; perfect teamwork. The final statement made by Spike, the team leader, after a quick glance at his wrist watch, was that first take off would be at 10:18:29; in 12 minutes!!! A hasty exit ensued, and the jet engines were soon whining.

The subsequent display was spectacular and several new moves had been added since I last saw them perform, including the Jubilee Split. Some of the high level manoeuvres were not possible due to the relatively low cloud base, but nevertheless it was a good show. The debriefing, however was fairly critical about some of the moves that to us, looked fine.

We then had a tour around the hangar where the planes are maintained and had a thorough look around a stripped Hawk, including its comparatively small engine. It didn't seem possible to me that this single engine of about 6ft long by 2ft in diameter could push 5 tons of metal and fuel in any direction that the pilot wished it to!

It was then back to the HQ for sandwiches with the pilots and

some fascinating stories of their adventures around the globe.

I had a conversation with Miles Garland, one of the synchro pair, who was very interested in microlights as a possible way to get to work every day! (His journey by car was an arduous one along minor roads and took him nearly an hour each way.)

It was now time to think about heading home, so the minibus once again collected us and dropped us back to our aircraft's hangar.

Before taxiing to the runway, the tower permitted a few of us to have a photo shoot in front of one of the Arrows. This went well until a strong gust front, preceding a big storm, got under the wing of Pat Nicholl's Chaser, and flipped it over, narrowly missing the Hawk. Poor Pat then had a major mission on his hands to get his bent plane back to Herefordshire.

Richard and I were able to quickly taxi back to the hangar and wait for the storm to pass before venturing into the sky for the long 3.1/2 hour flight home into a 20 knot headwind. We needed to stop at Leicester for fuel, but finally made it home by about 7.30pm.

A very memorable trip, and thanks must go to Richard for organising it, as well as Malcolm Howland for looking after us so well at Wickenby.

Party at Over

In aid of the British Microlight Team and it's efforts to compete in the European Championships in Hungary in July, a Tramps' party (or RMH look alike if you like!!) is to be held at Over on Saturday 22nd June. There will be a Pig Roast (Gloucester Old Spot)!! and dancing to the music of "Broadstreet."

Camping is also available, with a cooked breakfast in the morning.

Tickets available from Rob Keene at Over for a modest £5.00 each 07831 237353 or E Mail at rob@overfarm.freemove.co.uk

Should be a great night so BE THERE!!

Another aircraft takes to the skies

Our congratulations go to Chris Ball, whose recently completed Eurostar took to the skies on Sunday 26th May. All the testing was completed that day, and Chris had hoped to get the Permit to Fly back in time for the Round Britain Rally. In the event this was not to be – which is probably just as well in view of the weather experienced during that event.



Chris Ball's Eurostar

Dates for your diary

The PFA Rally at Cranfield will once again take place on 21st/23rd June after missing last year because of being cancelled due to foot & mouth.

This year's 'Spamfield' Fly at Sandown on the Isle of Wight is planned for 29th & 30th June. Over 500 microlights have indicated that they will attend. For further information and to 'book in' see www.wightparty.org

There is a fly in at Moccas on 13th/14th July

The Buckingham Microlight Club have advised us that their annual fly in will be at Oakley Airfield, nr Oxford on 28th July. Further detail & PPR from Peter Woodliffe-

Thomas 01844 213881 or peter.w-t@tinyworld.co.uk.. Following the cancellation of last years event due to F&M etc it is hoped to make this years event twice the size and twice as much fun !

A trip too far?... Possibly

By John Davis

For a long time, I have harboured a wish to fly my 503 Alpha to Caernarfon – firstly to visit the hay dealer who buys all my hay - his farm is next door to the airfield- and secondly this was one of the longer trips I did with my father in his Cessna 172. And also I was aware that dad has never really accepted my flexwing as a proper aeroplane, so I wanted to show I could take on 'proper' trips.

Those of you that attended the last meeting in the control tower at Staverton , will remember what a great flying evening it was with infinite visibility . I could have gone that day but had wanted to go to the meeting. Looking out of the tower I thought, I will try tomorrow.

So while you all adjourned to Jenny's bar, I rushed off and filled my jerry cans full of fuel.

By late next morning I get rigged after all the necessary family and farm duties. I'm ready to go, complete with up to date ½ mil map, radio and GPS.

The weather information indicated a helpful slight south easterly, though the actual indicated it not being so light as the aircraft was rocking about a bit on the ground.

Anyway I headed off and everything was fine. I even call Staverton and get crystal clear reply. It shocked me just how clear, but I passed my stuttering message. The controller was very patient. Soon I'm covering Herefordshire but am not so happy with my ½ mil map. I am used to more detail and I'm also aware the wind is quite strong aloft and I'm experiencing quite a lot of drift. Then the first stumble, Shobdon has not arrived under the nose. Then a second stumble, the GPS is talking rubbish. However I've tuned to Shobdon and I'm flying my usual I follow roads & railways ok. I then add a new qualification – I.F.B.- I follow Bolkows. You see I'd heard him call Shobdon to say he's inbound from roughly my position. It turns out, I'm only 2 miles from Shobdon but I couldn't see it. I then set course for my second turn point, Welshpool, this I found much more easily.

After this I set course for Barmouth on the Welsh coast from where I plan to fly up the coast to Caernarfon. I chose this course to avoid flying over Snowdon. Simple I thought but even so I'm going over fairly mountainous terrain and things began getting quite rough.

I finally get to the coast and turned north – big shock – pilot not thinking too well .. yes the helpful south easterly is now a strong wind, is coming over through, and around the mountains. This is as rough as I've known it. I couldn't climb much higher because of the cloud and also the possibility of getting involved in the traffic from Valley. So I fight my way up to Portmadog. using all my not inconsiderable weight to move the bar and hold the aircraft level. I have to admit I was a little frightened. Finally I broke through to the coast again and Caernarfon was in sight. I call them and grunt my message, as I have to work hard keeping the aircraft on an even keel. I'm cleared to join the circuit downwind. I do so, wrestle it

around and make a passable landing. The satisfaction is enormous. I get instructions to taxi to the flying club and shut down after 3 ¼ hours airborne.

My friends come and have lunch with me in the airport cafe.

Quite soon I feel I should be heading back. There is still a light breeze – lighter than when I landed but it looks very little with the standard GA airfield extra heavy windsock. I fuel up, and check the weather. It seems wind is dropping, so I decide to depart. I quite soon realise someone is lying. Its still rough and I fight my way to Barmouth - after a brief experiment flying over the sea to avoid the rotor – I didn't like the experience.

Anyway, I turn in land and start to climb in an attempt to get out of the rough air. Finally I succeed at 5000ft, but progress against the wind is painfully slow. I was banking on the wind dropping – but it didn't really happen! – so I change my plan and decide to miss out Welshpool and head straight for Shobdon.

All seems ok according to my vague map. I am grinding past wind farms but few other landmarks. Then I check with GPS, wind now is so strong – airspeed says 50 mph, GPS says 19mph!

My next problem is that I'm going to struggle for time (daylight) and possibly fuel. So I'm keeping an eye on fuel in front tank. I reason that I can get another 5 mins before changing as the level shows 5 litres. I keep watching, then after 4 mins a big shock ! The engine starts coughing. I change tanks immediately, but too late. I'm now a glider. I calmly swear and quietly check fuel tap, check ignition. Foot off throttle and pull the starting handle - nothing. 12 more pulls – still nothing. By this time I'm getting warm. Then next pull – it coughed. Another pull - fantastic – I'm a powered aircraft again.

This all took a little time. I was below 3000 ft and I had ceased navigating. I had lost the few landmarks and now it is getting more cloudy and darker - and oh yes the GPS had packed up. The gloom was gathering in all respects. I had a fair idea where I was within say 5 miles, so I grind on. Endless rocks and bracken pass underneath then I'm sure I recognise a tree plantation. I think it is near Shobdon, so I head towards it. There is a clearing on the far side – joy of joys- a runway – it' is SHOBDON. I make several calls but no reply, so I glide in. Squeak, squeak on the tarmac marks another passable landing. It's 8.45 and I'm going no further.

I've never been to Shobdon before, but I already like the place. Several people are sat outside the clubhouse. I apologise for dropping in like this. The one chap speaks and says cheerily, glad to see you, have you a problem? I say yes but only between my ears. He says 'we all have those, but you're perfectly safe now'

I explain where I was trying to get home to but the wind was too strong. I'm told its no problem to stay the night and to de-rig in front of the clubhouse. I ring Sue to tell her of my problems. She then rings around and rings back to say Bill & Barbara Austin are coming to rescue me. Sure enough, Bill is on the mobile to say the 'aviator in distress' rescue vehicle is on the way.

If you're going to make an outlanding, Shobdon would take some beating. My thanks go to every one there and to Bill & Barbara.

Of course I took great joy in telling my father how far I'd flown etc all the way to Caernarfon and nearly back. He was quite shocked but I'm sure he thought I should have been in a Cessna. Strange how things work out, my father died a week later, so I've lost a good friend and someone to whom I can boast to.

The Merrie Monthe of Maye!

By Bill Austin

Despite the fact that we are fast approaching the longest day of the year the weather at times has been more winter than spring or summer. May will certainly be remembered by two members as an exciting time to fly. The first member, flying a three-axis aircraft, departed his home airfield early one morning bound for the May Mecca of all microlighters Popham. As the flight progressed the cloud base lowered slowly while the terrain gradually climbed up to meet it. Finally our pilot entered cloud and thought that he would try to climb through it but this was not possible. Time to descend but where and into what? Coming out of the cloud over a field of rape it was evident that this was a hole and that the surrounding countryside was being slowly enveloped in cloud. Put it down; was the decision. This was accomplished successfully but the front wheel caught a rut and the aircraft inverted. Fortunately there were no injuries to pilot or passenger apart from being soaked with petrol leaking from the fuel tanks. Recovery of plane and occupants was courtesy of another Club member. Another member who flew to Popham the following day in a flexwing commented that conditions were such that he wrestled with the aircraft most of the way especially on landing at Popham.

Our second member took advantage of a day's good weather to fly off to North Wales. He did all the correct things in his flight planning including getting the best weather forecast that was available to him. Before setting out on the return journey he asked for weather information only to be told that nothing was known about en route conditions but as it was obviously calm at the airfield there should be no problems. Left with no alternative our member took off for an easy flight home. However, and here is one of the advantages of using a GPS as a back-up, at times his groundspeed dropped to 17 miles an hour and at other times with the bar fully in an airspeed of 60mph resulted in a groundspeed of only 30mph. A quick calculation revealed that arrival at his home strip would need a night rating so a diversion was called for. Flight planning had programmed this into the route and Shobdon was selected. A successful landing was made and recovery of the pilot effected by road that night. The following day the aircraft was retrieved by road & another good decision; as the weather started promisingly but rain came in all too soon and the wind again made its presence felt. What safety lessons are there to be learned from these two incidents? Firstly, don't take on Mother Nature as she will nearly always win especially with microlight aircraft. Secondly, avoid cloud like the plague. It is totally disorientating within seconds and don't try to climb through it in the hope of coming out on top; the top is indeterminate. If you did pop out on top you could then be flying illegally as you may be; out of

sight of the surface; (remember your Air Law?). Thirdly, be aware of pressonitis; and don't be ashamed to turn back immediately conditions deteriorate or you, as P1, become unhappy with the situation. Better to fly again another day than be a statistic of cumulus-granitus! Fourthly, don't neglect pre-flight planning including possible diversion airfields. It saves a lot of hassle and distraction in the air at a phase of the flight when you least need it. Fifthly, using the information provided by the GPS and combining it with your flight plan enables you to make a wise decision in good time and hopefully ensures a safe arrival back on terra firma. Fly safely and plan wisely

Castrol Aviation A545 LA

By Myron Burak

Some of you will have heard of the above product. It is now available through Watts Truck Centre, Mercia Rd, Gloucester, tel 01452 508700 (ask for Nick Millin, he looks after lube sales). The cost from them will be around £75 for 12 by 1 ltr bottles. It will take about a week to get it in. The specification sheet text is copied below. As most know I work for Castrol, and would much rather use this than TTS, mainly because it is lower ash (less carbon deposits) and is dyed blue.

AVIATION A545 LA

Castrol Aviation A545 LA is a fully synthetic, high performance two stroke lubricant. Originally specifically formulated for use in the Hewland three cylinder power unit, this lubricant is eminently suitable for two stroke engines fitted to Microlight and other light aircraft. It is designed for both oil injection and pre-mix lubrication and is approved by the CAA.

Castrol Aviation A545 LA is formulated with selected synthetic base stocks which provide superior lubricity and cleaner burning than that which can be obtained with conventional mineral based oils. It contains modern additives to control engine cleanliness, high temperature ring sticking and plug fouling.

Castrol Aviation A545 LA is readily miscible with fuel, whether of aviation or motor car quality. The product also contains a blue dye marker to verify the lubricant's inclusion in the fuel for pre-mix applications. The stability of the lubricant in these fuels has been evaluated and no lubricant drop out may be experienced over storage periods of up to six months.

The determination of the correct fuel/oil ratio is laid down by the engine manufacturers and should be checked before mixing. As an indication the Hewland intended ratio is 40: 1 and for the Rotax two stroke aircraft engines the ratio is 50: 1.

Castrol Aviation A545 LA is available in 1 litre plastic bottles packed in cartons of 12.

For Sale -Good Home Wanted

Mainair Mercury 503 G-MYOF. Warp drive prop, Long Range tank, Aluminium sprayed exhaust, VSI. Blue pod, Blue & white wing. 335 hours since registered in Dec '93. Regularly used & well administered. Selling due to upgrade & will be sold with new permit. Hangared part-rigged near Gloucester. Ideal first aircraft & a good example of the type. £4,800. Tel: Paul on 0118-934-4087(Hm) 07785-533048(Mob)



July 2002

This month's meeting

This month's meeting will be a talk from Mr Lewer from the local Skyframe Museum. The talk will commence at 17.30pm at the Gloucestershire Club, so please be on time.

In his father's slipstream

We are pleased to announce that Robbie's son Rees, who is just seventeen, has now gone solo. The event took place at Long Marston under the watchful eye of Simon Baker. Well done Rees.

Fly In report

The annual BBQ and aerial 'Treasure Hunt' was held at Over. Seven aircraft took part, and at the end of the day the team of Ed Wells & Pete Smith won from Jim Taylor. Paul Underwood & Barbara Austin came in third. Our thanks go to Robbie & Sue for putting on the event.

The weather hasn't been that conducive to flying on many evenings recently, and it was touch and go whether Bob Hind's BBQ at Newnham would take place. The windy conditions seem to be deterring everyone, and only Andrew John seemed bold enough to brave the elements. However at 8 o'clock, the sky became full with aerial activity with a further three flexwings and four fixed arrivals, including two visitors from Eastbach.

The following Wednesday night, once again saw the 'circus' move to Hartpury, and once again the conditions weren't conducive to fly, but a number did arrive by road to drink the beer, chips and sausages.

There was no opportunity to go by road to the next Wednesday gathering on the gallops on the top of Bredon Hill – it was strictly aerial transport only. The blustery and showery conditions also made this event a bit 'iffy', but in the end four members braved the elements. Our thanks go to Andrew & Roz for supplying the refreshments.

Watch where you go

The International Air tattoo is once again being held at Fairford. The show itself is to be held on Sat/Sun 20/21st July. As there will be a lot of heavy metal

flying around, be advised that there are severe airspace restrictions around the area, not only for the event, but the run up to the show ie from the 17th until the departure on 22nd July. Special procedures are in force for Kemble over this period. Full details can be found in Notams.

Following Sept 11th various temporary

airspace restriction were placed around nuclear power stations. In our area this amounted to a 2nm radius up to 2000ft around both Berkley and Oldbury power stations. These restrictions are now to be made permanent from 25th July.

The Party's over at Over

There was a party at Over, in aid of the British Microlight Team and it's efforts to compete in the European Championships in Hungary this month. The Tramps' party attracted 120 people and there were still 30 there for breakfast the following day. £875 was raised for the British team



Rees and Robbie

Wednesday Night is Club Night

The Wednesday night programme is follows:--

Wed 17th July – Meeting Gloucestershire Club

Wed 24th July - Fly In at Eastbach Farm Mark Taylor 07768746055

Wed 31st July - Fly In at Aylescraft farm, Newent Bruce Fowler 07973 683551/01531 820249

Wed 7th August Fly In / Committee meeting at Hartpury – John Hamer 01452 700314

Wed 14th August. Fly In Defford - Brian Finch 07775 794426

Please check with the organiser before setting out to any of the fly ins

Dates for your diary

The Midland Microlight Club are holding a Mid-Summer Fly in and Dance at Sittles farm (N52.42.58 W001.42.83) on 20th/21st July. Attractions include camping, food, bar, live entertainment and much more. Contact Dave Ross 01543 277916/275756 or 07850721908. All info on www.sittles.co.uk

The Buckingham Microlight Club have advised us that their annual fly in will be at Oakley Airfield, nr Oxford on 28th July. Further detail & PPR from Peter Woodliffe-Thomas 01844 213881 or peter.w-t@tinyworld.co.uk. Following the cancellation of last year's event due to F&M etc it is hoped to make this years event twice the size and twice as much fun!

Kemble Fly in 27th/28th July

There will be a Thruster and Microlight Fly in at Wing Farm near Warminster in Wiltshire on 3rd/4th August. All micros and Gyros are welcome. There will be a BBQ on the go and there is also a great pub just down the road for those of you who wish to stay over night. They have toilet facilities with hot and cold running water and a great little caravan for making coffee and the likes. Fuel is also available. The airstrip at Wing Farm can be found at 51°10'N 02°12' and runs 27- 09 and is 500 metres long by 20 wide, with clear approaches all circuits to the North please. The approach to 27 will bring you in over the owners bungalow and adjacent to some tall trees, and the strip rises gently, but the approach for 09 is clear and passes between to houses to a down slope runway. Last year they had 48 aircraft in on the Sunday and 8 on the Sat, lets see if they can beat that this year. For more info and a briefing please ring Mark Jones: home 01373 865135 / 01373 301102 or Mobile 07763 483415. E-mail Flytst@aol.com.

There is a fly in and motorcycle rally at Caenarfon on 10/11th August – £5 landing fee will entitle you to multiple take offs and landings during the weekend. There is an aviation Museum and BBQ on Saturday evening. PPR required on 08707541500

Spamfield and beyond

By Paul Underwood

It was to be the flying event of the year. A whole week of flying with the Isle of Wight Spamfield event, on the Saturday, followed by a flying tour down to & around the Loire valley for the remainder of the week. I'd been planning the trip for months, sorting out charts, paperwork, planning the route, charging batteries, dusting off the tent etc etc. This would be the first major trip in my recently acquired Quantum 582 and it was going to be a good one!

Up at dawn on the Saturday, I loaded up the car with all the gear & headed off to Over farm. Arriving at about 7am, with no sign of life at the hangar, the Quantum was taken out, rigged & the last minute tasks attended to. The rucksack & tent were secured on the back seat, a 10 litre fuel can for pre-mixing + the trike cover were wedged under the rear seat, 8 litres of 2 stroke oil in 8 one litre bottles were spirited away in various nooks & crannies, along with the fuel funnel. Tools, the gas stove and food were stashed in the storage boxes under the front seat. With a full tank of fuel, it was heavy, but amazingly still legal!

Ed Wells & son, who had planned to come down to the IOW for the Spamfield event, but no further, soon arrived & having finished loading our gear into both aircraft we were ready to go.

Our route down to the IOW would take us over Redlands and into Popham initially. From Popham, we would route to the east of the Southampton zone, transiting at low level to our first waypoint Glidden farm. We would then turn towards Lee-on-Solent and, once clear of the Southampton TMA, climb to around 3000ft for the hop across the Solent & subsequent descent into Sandown.

Engine starts at Over were at 0820. With a nice tailwind component and a steady airspeed of around 45-50mph, we were making good time over the ground. Despite losing visual and radio contact with one another shortly after Painswick, we managed to regroup at Redlands and stay 'in formation' for the remainder of the flight. Following Ed in over the marker for 26 (a bit too close as I was very glad he quickly pulled off the runway!) we both landed at Popham at 0935.

A few microlights were already on the ground on our arrival and there seemed to be a steady flow of machines in & out of the airfield, all of who appeared to be en-route to Sandown. A quick calculation showed that we both had more than adequate fuel to continue to the IOW without needing to top up, so a quick cup of tea & a slice of Popham cake set us up for the next leg.

Departing on 26, we made a left turn after takeoff to intercept our southerly track. After an uneventful, if slightly choppy routing underneath the Southampton TMA, we climbed to just over 3000ft ready to route over the Solent. With high broken cloud & clear skies, the view out to sea & over the island was quite magnificent. Changing frequency to Sandown, it was clear that it was busy, obtaining joining instructions merely by listening to other transmissions; we entered

a cruise descent some five miles from the destination, already in sight of numerous flexwing sails on the ground.

Joining overhead, it was obvious that hundreds of machines had already arrived. On landing, we were marshalled up to the east on of the runway & directed into a particularly rough field for parking. A bit of moving around positioned both Ed & myself so that we could easily get out of the field the following morning without being blocked in by other machines. The Spamfield event itself, although quite impressive in terms of numbers, was probably a victim of its own success. Around 390 microlights arrived on the Saturday and neither the catering nor bar could cope with this number of hungry & thirsty microlighters. Ed & myself decided to write-off the meal tickets and headed off for a fish & chip dinner someway down the road from the airfield.

was aware that I had to descend to remain clear of Gatwick airspace, so I dropped down to 1300ft, just skirting the base of the murky cloud.

As the cloud continued to lower and the ground continues to rise I became increasingly uncomfortable with the conditions. This, coupled with the fact that I couldn't hear any usual chit-chat on the microlight frequency, indicating others were airborne, led me to decide to land to wait for it to improve. A quick glance at the chart showed no airfields in the immediate vicinity. However, hitting the nearest waypoint button on the GPS showed a microlight strip about 2 miles to the south. A quick right turn had me setting off towards it. The distance to run on the GPS continued to count down, but I simply couldn't spot the strip. Finally the GPS announced, 'you're here' and looking straight down I could make out the outline of an old strip through the tall crop of corn that



Sandown – with over 300 microlights

The forecast for the following day wasn't too promising. So it was early to bed in the evening, ready for another early start.

Up at 5am, the airfield was already frantic with activity. Packing all the gear away, Ed was one of the first off the ground & headed northward towards some grim looking weather, along with dozens of other aircraft. Having left a note for others I was planning to meet up with at Headcorn, I was off the ground at 0650. My planned route was to head out northeast over the Solent, transiting overhead the disused airfield Tangmere, just adjacent to Goodwood. From here I would route direct to Headcorn underneath Gatwick's airspace. Climbing out of Sandown, I climbed through the low broken cloud &, at 3500ft had a very smooth flight over the Solent & on to Tangmere. As my journey continued, I

now grew in its place!

Time to invoke plan B. I'd find any suitable field and land in it! At around 500ft agl, I routed towards Burgess Hill and spotted a large playing field with adjacent cricket pitch. All nicely into wind & not a soul in sight. Setting up the approach, I came in low over the trees with a bit of extra speed in hand, flared over the playing field, touched down & rolled to a halt, pulling up just outside the cricket pavilion. Switching the engine off exactly 1 hour after starting it at Sandown, I was greeted with the peace & quiet of a Sunday morning.

Looking at the low cloud, I decided to wait it out for a while and cook up some breakfast. Someone had kindly left out some tables and chairs at the pavilion, so pulling out the gas stove, I brewed up a cup of tea & cooked up some porridge.

I had a few strange looks from passer-by's & those out walking dogs. But despite me wandering around in a fluorescent flying suit, with lifejacket & a strange aircraft parked outside their cricket pavilion, no-one was concerned enough to enquire what I was doing. Eventually, after about half-an-hour I heard the clear drone of a few Rotax engines in the distance and, with the cloud lifting, I finished off breakfast, packed up & got ready to depart.

Backtracking to the far end of the playing field, I was able to take off directly into wind & climbed to join the 3 RANSS all also on their way to Headcorn. The cloud had lifted enough to give about 1000ft over the ground &, whilst carefully remaining underneath Gatwick's TMA, the remainder of the journey to Headcorn was uneventful, taking just 40 minutes from engine on to engine off.

Arriving at Headcorn gave the opportunity to firstly fuel up. The airfield owner Jamie, one of the most helpful people I have ever met in aviation, lent me his car so that I could drive myself & two other pilots to the nearest garage to fill up our tins with MOGAS. A couple of trips had our tanks up to the filler caps again. Jamie also arranged all the flight plans & I was scheduled to cross with 6 other aircraft. A quick chat between us all enabled us to agree the route, the radio & what to do if it all went wrong! To take advantage of the tailwind, instead of crossing at Folkstone, we would route direct from Headcorn across to Cap-Gris-Nez. From here we would route underneath Le Touquet's airspace to the BNE beacon & then direct to Abbeville. Waiting for the flight plans to come active presented the opportunity for a well needed shower!

Airborne at 1310, lifejackets on, radios checked, everything else double-checked, we set-off towards the channel. Climbing to 3000ft gave a fantastic view over the coast. France was clear to see & numerous ships from small yachts to large tankers could be seen routing along this busy shipping lane. Loosely grouped together we descended to 1500ft close to the French coastline as the cloud over land was building. Relieved to be over land again, we were getting a very rough ride at low altitude with turbulence from the brisk breeze and woods nearby. Finally, the lead radio aircraft obtained clearance for us to transit through Le Touquet's airspace along the coast & we retracted our steps, regrouped & headed directly south along the coastline in much smoother air.

It was a fantastic view, travelling at low altitude, in a group of aircraft, along the beaches & resorts of Northern France. All too soon we reached the Somme & turned eastwards tracking the fast flowing river towards Abbeville.

As usual, Abbeville radio was unmanned & an overhead join was carried out by the first arriving aircraft to establish the best runway to use. Joining downwind for the hard runway, I followed the first aircraft in & was surprised at how bad the condition of the runway was. Plants were growing all over it &

after landing at 1505 and parking up, my Quantum had the look of a hanging basket.

In all, 20 aircraft arrived on the Sunday. The weather continued to deteriorate as the evening closed in, with the wind building and the rain falling. I gratefully accepted the offer of a spare bed in one of the hotel rooms & whilst we all enjoying a great tasting and great value meal in the restaurant, we looked nervously at the weather, hoping it would clear up for our trip south tomorrow....

to be continued

Tribal membership

By Bill Austin

When embarking on a cross country flight we all do our pre-flight planning with meticulous care (I hope!). That takes care of the navigation side of things so let's kick the tyres, light the fires; and go. Wrong! Most of us today carry a radio (of the aircraft type) and will use it from time to time - preferably not just to talk our friends in an accompanying aircraft. (An illegal practice as there is no air-to-air frequency provision in the radio spectrum for us). As part of your pre-flight check you should make sure that your radio is actually working. This means both on receive and transmit. Recently a couple of Club members found out that although it was possible to hear the ground station, the ground station could not hear them, but this was late in the flight approaching the destination. Up to this point only a listening watch had been kept. The PIC reacted with shock and disbelief. Some nifty cockpit swapping of cables solved the problem of transmission but resulted in communication with P2 being lost. All ended well. This situation could have been avoided if an early radio check had been made before takeoff with another aircraft on the airfield or, if there was nobody there, with the first airfield encountered after takeoff. Remember your first efforts on the radio course? XX Approach this is G-ABCD for radio check on 123.45; (Your very first words with the headset on with the PTT held down and after a long pause!) Imagine what would have happened in the above situation had there been an emergency; the radio would have been useless and a drama could have turned into a crisis. As part of your pre-flight checks be sure to include the radio on both transmit and receive. So, I hear you ask, where does the title of this piece come in? Well, when you speak to an airfield you should be able to tell them your position, after all it is part of the standard call. Before you push the button and speak have your call prepared. Otherwise you qualify for membership of the Helawi tribe. Members of this tribe are forever heard saying; Where the hellarewe? Happy flying!

For Sale -Good Home Wanted

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August 2002

Fly In report

The first Wednesday night fly in of the past month which was held at Eastbach Farm was well attended with seven members flying in to enjoy the hospitality of the residents. Our thanks go to Mark Taylor for organising the event, the refreshments and the residents.

The next fly in was scheduled to be at Aylescraft farm, at Newent. Unfortunately this had to be cancelled due to the ground conditions being unfavourable. Basically part of the silage field that we had intended to use was far rougher than anticipated and could have caused problems to those with less than a sturdy undercarriage. An alternative venue was arranged but was not utilised due to bad weather.

Inclement weather, in the form of a heavy downpour also precluded anyone flying into Hartpury, though six people came by road to enjoy the food and drink provided in the 'hut'.

The last Wednesday fly in at Defford was an outstanding success with over 20 visitors, and 14 aircraft! The first arrival was at 6:00. This was John Davidson in his Xair, and the last to go was Dave Watson at 20:20 ish. Our thank go to Brian Finch for arranging the event and cooking the BBQ.

Incidentally our clear leader in the competition of who has attended most fly ins is Bob Hinds. By our reckoning he has flown into every event that has been held and certainly on more than one occasion he has been the only one to fly in. Well done Bob. Must be in line for a prize?

Wednesday Night is Club Night

The Wednesday night fly in programme has this year suffered badly from the vagaries of the weather and the management have been trying to find out why. It has been discovered that him upstairs gets an unsolicited copy of this newsletter and hence why his friends wind & rain so frequently seem to turn up on Wednesday nights. It has thus been decided to try a different tack. The venue for the coming month's meetings are not going to be formally published, but will be notified by e-mail to members. Those who haven't got e-mail should either contact someone who has or alternatively ring JH on 01452 700314. We are trusting that him upstairs has not got round to installing the new fangled technology – we'll just have to wait & see!

Don't forget that the next meeting (21st Aug will be at the Gloucestershire and is unlikely to be rained off! – But don't count on it!



Defford Fly In – 14th August 2002

Are you getting the message?

With the advent of e-mail, the club has been advising members though this medium about fly ins etc. It has been observed that not everyone is getting the message; so if you haven't been getting the news please e-mail JH at hamerjl@ukonlin.co.uk and you will be put on the distribution list.

Dates for your diary

24th/25th August Round of the nationals at Shotteswell

6th/7th Sept – Fly in to Weston Zoyland. Camping etc available but please note there is no flying out of the airfield on Sundays.

Spamfield and beyond

PART 2

By Paul Underwood

Just to recap, I'd arrived in Abbeville in my 582 Quantum after spending the previous night at the Spamfield event at Sandown. Everything was in place to continue down to the Loire valley for a whole week of flying, before returning home. Arriving at Abbeville, late on Sunday, the rain had soon set in & I retired to bed hoping that the weather wouldn't deteriorate further.

Alas, this was not to be the case. I awoke on Monday morning to the depressing sound of lashing rain & strong winds. Peering out from behind the curtain there would clearly be no flying for quite a while. All the aircraft were thankfully still standing, but we being jostled around by the strong winds & soaked through by the intermittent but torrential showers.

All the flyers that had arrived the previous day slowly accumulated in the hotel bar for breakfast.

Everyone was introduced & I discovered that we had flyers that had come from Somerset, Birmingham, Cheshire, Bedfordshire and various fields north of London.

The aircraft varied from fixed wing RANS (of various flavours), a Kitfox, a PA28 (somehow with us) and flexwings including Quantums, Blades, Mercurys, Pegasus Qs & a Hornet.

Like most others, I quickly set about securing my aircraft better than it currently was. The previous night, I had left it rigged & the wingtip held down with a single corkscrew tiedown. With a bit of help & careful timing, I lowered the

wing onto the basebar, secured it to the ground with three tie downs & placed the cover (which thankfully I brought at the last minute) over the trike to prevent it filling up with rain water!

In the meantime, others had phoned back to the UK to find out what the weather forecast had to say (there's nowhere to get weather info at Abbeville that we could find). The news wasn't good. The current strong winds & rain showers would continue for several days.

To cut a long story, and a long few days, short. It did rain & blow a gale through Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday. On Tuesday, the forecast gave a glimmer of hope for Thursday, with an anticipated brief break in the weather until it turned nasty again on Friday. By this point, it was clear that all plans of flying down to the Loire valley were off. It was now simply a case of getting home at the earliest opportunity.

Amazingly, a few intrepid flyers did set off between the odd break in the showers & did actually make it to the Loire valley, hopping from strip to strip & dodging the worst of the weather. Fortunately for them, they had two weeks to play with, whereas the majority of us only had one!

Wednesday came & the forecast still said Thursday would be good to go, but don't bother on Friday. So the return flight was planned. Thirteen (just what we needed) aircraft were heading home on the Thursday. We would get up just before dawn & pack what remained to be packed into the aircraft to depart as early as possible. The aircraft were grouped into three groups of similar performance machines &, through Jamie at Headcorn, I raised three flight plans

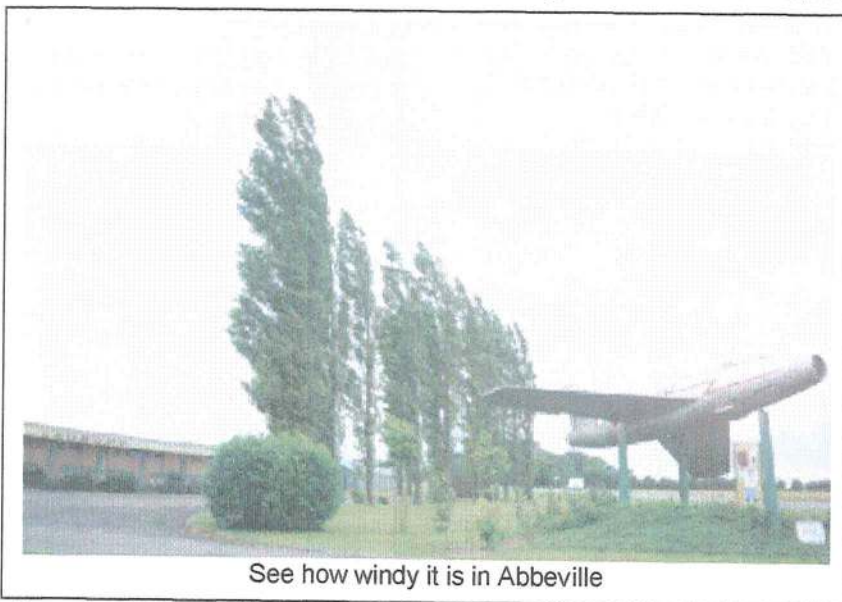
for the following morning.

Everyone in each group was given copies of the details of the aircraft in their group, the radio frequency they would use to talk to one another & allocated a leader for the flight (who would be responsible for the flight plan).

During the remainder of the day, people bailed water (literally by

the bucket full) out of their trikes, started wet engines to dry them off & fuelled up ready to go.

The route was agreed back to Headcorn. It would be north from Abbeville, underneath Le Touquet airspace (the UK chart says its base is 1500ft, however, the French chart says 1000ft!) to approximately the BNE beacon. It would then be a left turn & direct to Cap Griz Nez. From here, across



See how windy it is in Abbeville

the narrowest part of the channel to Folkestone & then, left again, & direct to Headcorn. After that, no-one was too concerned, the most important priority was to get back on English soil.

After very little sleep, in the caravan which the local microlight school let 9 of us sleep in, I awoke at 4am feeling unusually cold. Half dozing I suddenly realised, it must be clear skies! Sure enough, stepping out of the caravan, with the sun still below the horizon, the skies were finally clear & the wind had dropped.

The airfield was soon a hive of activity with those with tents packing them away, aircraft being rigged, rubbish being thrown away &, just as day broke, group 1, the slowest of the aircraft, were ready to go. I called Lille on my mobile, opened their flight plan & waved the four of them off.

My group was next in line. Waiting impatiently for the 912 machines to warm up, we were finally ready to go. With very little breeze, there was no ceremony on taxiing to the runway, backtracking, turning around, departing & turning back towards the coast. It was simply on to the

taxiway, give it the whole right foot & leaping into the air, off I went. I lost touch with my group almost straight away and, although I could hear them on the radio for a few minutes, they were a few miles behind & I soon lost touch. I resigned myself that it would be impractical to try and regroup over the middle of the French countryside & elected instead to consolidate at Cap Griz Nez instead.

Heading north towards the BNE beacon, the weather gradually got worse, the cloud thickened & lowered. At about 500ft over the ground I flew the 30 nautical miles alone, at low level, over a foreign country, in less-than-favourable weather. It was not very comfortable.

To reassure me slightly, about 10 miles before the beacon, I passed the slower group on my left by a couple of miles & I

switched to their frequency. Roughly grouped together, they were occasionally chatting away on the radio to check their positions.

Now clear of Le Touquets airspace I turned left and headed towards Cap Griz Nez. The cloud base was unnervingly low, but with regular holes through it I chose to climb up & above it. Applying full power, I climbed steadily to 3500ft & popped out of the top, well mostly. Although clear of most of the cloud, it was very hazy &

the cloud tops seemed to be rising in front of me. Still climbing, it was very hard to accurately judge the distance of the cloud ahead in the haze. Looking down, I realised with some alarm, that the holes in the cloud I had seen below me a few miles back, were not there anymore! So here I was, now at 4500ft in hazy cloud & out of sight of the ground. Being above the clouds didn't seem a smart place to be anymore so my options seemed to be to either carry on & chance it, or backtrack to where the cloud was broken. I decided to continue for a few more minutes. If I couldn't find a way down, I would then turn around (downwind) a beat a hasty retreat.

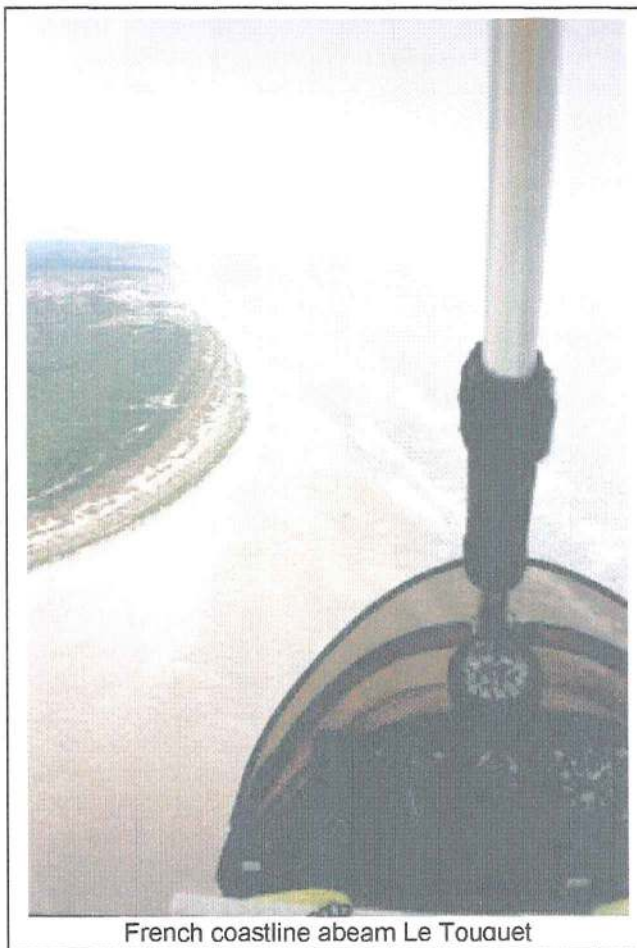
After a couple of very long minutes, I spotted the ground through a rather deep & narrow hole through the cloud. This seemed to be my only way down.

A quick spiral dive to the tops of the cloud & then it was weaving between them to try and navigate my way down. After descending most the way through, there were a few seconds of almost whiteout and then I popped out of the base of the cloud, very relieved.

With about 10nm to Cap Griz Nez I finally heard my group on the radio. I called back, advising that I would slow down & orbit around Cap Griz Nez until they caught up. Approaching the coast the skies began to brighten, and when finally overhead Cap Griz Nez, the skies over the channel could be seen, thankfully, to be almost entirely clear.

After 5 minutes the rest of my group caught up, checking everyone was clear to go, we left the French coast, climbed up into the clear skies & set out over the busy channel towards England. Levelling off at 3500ft, I relaxed back & started to actually enjoy the flight.

The view at this altitude at this time of day was quite stunning. The sun was slightly above the horizon on my right hand side & the sunshine was gleaming



French coastline abeam Le Touquet

off the gentle waves far below. The aircraft in my group, off to my right, were silhouetted against the hazy sky. Looking below, the wakes from the large container ships could be seen for miles. To my left, the sun picked out the other aircraft in my group, both of which shone brightly in the sunshine. Looking over my shoulder, about a mile behind through the haze I could see the four aircraft from the slower group directly behind us. In all, a magical sight.

With a strong breeze over the channel, I checked the GPS against the fuel computer & decided to cut the corner off the last two legs. Although it would leave me over the water for longer, I decided this would be a better option than arriving at Headcorn with marginal fuel. So with 7 miles to go till landfall, one other from my group + myself pressed the GOTO button on our respective GPSs & headed straight towards Headcorn.

There was a great sense of relief onboard, & words of relief on the radio from all, when we finally crossed the English coastline. Still miles from my destination at Over, I still felt as if I was practically home.

Headcorn came into view as expected & it was a straight in approach, behind the 912 Quantum in front, to land at Headcorn at last. We were the first to arrive. Amazingly, all the other aircraft that had left Abbeville arrived at Headcorn within the next 15 minutes. Indeed, one aircraft had to go-around as the circuit was so busy.

With little time to spare, we waited the frustrating half-hour for the fuel pumps to open, closed the respective flight plans, ate whatever came to hand for breakfast & paid our landing fees. Finally fuelling up, all aircraft were ready to go, with no intention of hanging around.

The route home for me would be from Headcorn, underneath Gatwick's TMA, going overhead Jackrells Farm & Colemore Common. It would then be straight into Popham for more fuel. From Popham, it would be simply up to Redlands & then direct to Over. With others heading the same way for part of their journey, I left Headcorn accompanied by a Pegasus Q & a 912 Quantum.

By this time the wind had started to pick up. Flying against a head wind, at low level underneath Gatwick airspace, the turbulence from the woods and hills below was hard work. The journey was largely uneventful, but frustratingly slow & hard work. Clearing the lowest portion of Gatwick's TMA, we climbed an extra 1000ft & benefited from a slightly smoother ride.

Joining overhead at Popham, we descended in the circuit for 26 and touched down after another long 2+ hour flight. Using the opportunity to grab a cup of tea & a slice of cake, a few more microlights who had left Abbeville with us earlier in the day, also stopped off on their way further west.

A quick top up of the fuel & I decided to fly the last flight from Popham to Over unaccompanied. Until fairly recently, I've felt that a trip to/from Popham was a long flight & a big day out. On this occasion though, it seemed merely like a quick hop across the countryside.

The wind had definitely started to pick up from the west. On this flight though, it was mostly a crosswind. Not bothering to call them up, I listened in to Lyneham to hear what their traffic was doing. Passing overhead Membury at 2300ft, I climbed all the way to 7500ft. Calling Brize for a flight information service, I had to confirm my height & aircraft type a couple of times. I guess they don't expect too many microlights at this level. Brize soon suggested I call someone else & passing over South Cerney, starting a cruise decent, I dialled up Kemble to see what it was like on the ground. Hearing an aircraft on final at Kemble, the controller reported that the surface wind was 25knots from the

west! This really caught my attention. With the strip at Over running North-South, a crosswind of this magnitude was bad, very bad. Passing over the escarpment towards Gloucester, I changed frequency to Staverton & likewise, they were reporting 20knots on the ground from the west.

Having travelled all this way, I did not want to stuff my aircraft into the ground just 100 yards from the hangar. Checking the fuel situation, I had enough to either divert to Gloucester or Kemble (Just as well I topped up at Popham), who both had into-wind runways. Nevertheless, I chose to continue to Over to see what it was like for real before I took either of these options.

On a descending approach towards the Over circuit from the south, I could clearly see the windsock being blown sideways. It seemed strong, but not too bad. Passing over the dual carriageway at 500ft, I checked it again, judged the drift & it seemed manageable. Keeping the circuit nice & tight, to avoid any turbulence from the wood, I made a sweeping descending turn from downwind, direct onto final. All seemed well & after a brief flare, the wheels were on the ground. Taxiing to the end of the strip, I turned in front of the hangar, switched the engine off & sat for a few minutes just listening to the silence feeling both relieved to be back & absolutely exhausted.

Having left Abbeville at 4:30am (UK time), I had arrived back at Over at just before 2pm.

A quick call to Dave, who had helpfully provided weather info during the week, had him down at the field & helping me to put the aircraft away. Loading all my gear into the car & lowering the hangar shutters, the flight was finally finished.

This return flight from France was the longest days flying that I had ever had, covering some 222 nautical miles. Like many flights & planned trips, the Loire valley tour hadn't turned out quite as was originally planned. Nevertheless, it was exciting, sometimes worrying, and all had had an adventure.

The Editor has landed

Bill & Barbara Austin have now moved into their new home and currently still unpacking. They however invite you to come and find them first by air. (You can't land though) They won't spell out their address, but rather they have provided some clues to make it more interesting. They are, that their new home is within 8-10 miles by road from Defford. And they have a Gloucestershire postcode. Should you wish to try your hand at this aerial treasure hunt, give them a ring on 01 684833484 first (another clue!) and if they are at home they will put out a red marker on the hedge at the bottom of their garden. They add "please don't cause any annoyance to our neighbours – we still have to live with them" – another clue! i.e. they have neighbours, so aren't an isolated property! You should note that with aid of the above clues only, your stand in editor was able to fly straight there, but would add they are two miles nearer Defford airfield than they think they are!



September 2002

Fly In report

The first Wednesday night fly In of the past month was held at Oxleaze, Hawling courtesy of Chris Ball. 12 aircraft flew and as many others came by road to enjoy an excellent evening. Our sincere thanks go to Chris and his wife for putting on the event.

Monthly Meetings

Although the Wednesday evening fly in programme has now concluded for the season, there are still the monthly meetings to attend. The programme is as follows:-

18th Sept – Brain Finch on his trip to the north of Scotland



The fly in at Oxleaze – 28th August

The next fly in at Hartpury wasn't as well attended, but a dozen people turned up to consume the drink and food provided in the 'hut'.

The last Wednesday fly in at Over was held on a perfect evening and attracted seven aircraft and a considerable number of foot followers. We are indebted to Jim Taylor for organising the copious refreshments.

The latter fly in was the last in the season, which, when you look at the statistics, must be considered highly successful. There have been thirteen Wednesday's in the programme, and despite the weather, ten of them have gone ahead – though a couple had very limited attendances due to gusty conditions and thus were rescheduled. Eight different venues were also used. There can't be many clubs in the country that can boast this number of sites.

Incidentally our clear leader in the competition of who has attended most fly ins is Bob Hinds. By our reckoning he has attended every event. Well done Bob.

16th Oct – Jim Pearce on his round Australia trip

20th Nov – TBD

18th Dec – Christmas party.

The venue is the Gloucestershire club as usual.

In addition there are 'committee' meetings on the first Wednesday evening of each month in the 'hut' at Hartpury. All are welcome as this has developed more into a social rather than a formal committee meeting.

Go West Young Man!

By Brian Finch

Well, North West to be precise (and not that young!), Oban in Scotland in particular. Ever since Robbie Keene's talk on the Haggisfield trip last year, I felt Scotland's Western Isles deserved a place in my log book.

I noticed a Fly-in to Glenforsa on the Isle of Mull was scheduled to take place the week prior to the Jubilee at the end of May/ Beginning of June, and that kind Mr. Blair had given us all an extra days holiday to make a four day weekend, Ideal.

As we all know, Flying hinges around time, resources and weather, pity Tony let us down on the latter. After

studying the forecast for days in advance the old North/South divide is also true of the weather and our plans had to be put on the backburner.

We met Steve Slade at the Broadmeadow fly-in this summer who was drumming up support for another Haggisfield. The embers started to glow and out came the plans.

Broadly speaking, the idea was to fly up to Oban, spend a day flying around the Islands and flying back the next day, 3 days in all, which fitted nicely around the August Bank Holiday 24/25/26 August. Haggisfield was to be the following weekend – lets look at the weather again. The long range forecast for the Bank Holiday was good for Scotland and middling for the Central area. OK, we've got the time and the weather, the Tax bill will have to wait, thanks Tony!

Planning the route, I realised an essential chart was missing, Sheet 3 – Scotland and Northern Ireland. A trip to Digital Media in Cheltenham soon put this to rights.

Bumble has long legs, so en-route stops were only optional. The route up was to be through the Low Level corridor between Manchester and Liverpool, Tarn Farm, near Morecombe Bay, through, over or around the Lake district to Kirkbride, just East of Prestwick and West of Glasgow, Over the the Isle of Bute and on to Oban. The same plan would do for the return Journey to keep it simple (just press "invert plan" on the GPS!)

Things started to look interesting after Prestwick, mountains and water, and lots of it. As Julia is a non-swimmer, I felt it best to borrow a couple of Life Jackets, just in case.....

Departure day came with a waving cold front moving west to east with isolated showers forecast south of Manchester, no problem.....

We took off at midday, by the time we were at Droitwich these "isolated" showers looked more like a rain forest as we diverted west and east of track. We had to transit the low level corridor at below 1250ft (OK, not above 1250ft) as we could only get to 1500ft to maintain VFR this was not a problem. As we approached the corridor, we were forced down to 900ft and pretty poor viz as the Manchester controller acknowledged our call and advised us other traffic could be using the corridor not under his control – great!

Its good having an extra pair of eyes in these situations, as Julia was looking for other traffic, I was looking for a suitable field – we were now down to less than 600ft in worsening visibility over largely populated areas. I started a mental plan of either Camping over at Tarn Farm or returning home defeated. As we neared the end of the corridor, thing began to brighten and by Blackpool, we were back to 1500ft and no rain.

We arrived at Tarn Farm in a stiff westerly but decided to opt for the extra 100meters of the North/South Strip (400m). The guys at Tarn were very friendly and offered us refreshment and the all important visit to the Loo while we contemplated our next move.

Over the Lakes was clearly out, as was the M6 corridor through Shap (1500ft). The weather was rapidly clearing from the West and the coastal route around Seascale was Hobsons Choice. A quick call to Kirkbride confirmed good weather there, so off we go again. This time, into wind from 27, with lift-off halfway along its 300m length.

This is the first time we've flown the western side of the Lake District as it's a long way around with Power Stations and Danger areas to miss. We were not disappointed with the view of several lakes as we bumbled our way to Kirkbride.

The visibility got better as we travelled North and Kirkbride was basking in sunshine with a huge Shower over the Solway Firth, although we landed in a light Northerly on the Massive 1280m 28 runway at 17:45. It was clear we were not going to make Oban by 18:00 so quick call for weather and to check it was OK to arrive after hours put our minds at rest.

It was 18:30 by the time we donned our life jackets and headed off over the Solway Firth, the towering shower still there and on track, but we still had 2 hours to run, so run we did!

Once past the weather, the cloud lifted over Dumfries and allowed us to fly straight over the Mountains to leave Prestwick on the West talking a Jet in from 5000ft above our heads, we were hoping to see it land but it never broke cloud while we were around.

Just West of Glasgow, we crossed the Firth of Clyde to Bute where it was obvious that a high level crossing over the Mountains was out due to a 1500ft cloud base, and lowering.....

We hopped from Island to Island looking for a way through, flying by eye rather than GPS or planned route. Scottish information repeatedly asked for position reports, probably wondering what we were about. We continued North and West, up Loch Fyne and found a way to the Sound of Jura via Lochgilphead. All this hopping had me twitching, Bumbles legs were getting shorter all the time, but I could still see fuel swishing around the bottom of the tank sight levels. This is where I wouldn't trust any form of gauge, I know I've got 20 mins when the fuel disappears. From here, we hugged the coast around to Oban then onto North Connell and landed straight in on 02 over Loch Etive at 20:15, with 15 mins of daylight and as many litres of Fuel.

To be continued.....

Brian has some excellent photographs of his trip that he will be showing at the forthcoming meeting on Wednesday 18th Sept. - be there.

Your help needed

Incidentally the brevity of the current newsletter reflects the fact the Editor is still unpacking, and the deputy has been on his travels, but more to the point, there has been a lack of contributions from you this month. Your club expects you to contribute. No contribution – no newsletter.



October 2002

Monthly Meetings

The speaker at this month's meeting on Wednesday 23rd October is Jim Pearce. He will be talking about his adventures while flying around Australia in a Mainair Blade.

Fly In - Lusgate

By Robbie Keene

In early July this year, Vincent, the son of a French farming family, came to work on the farm for 10 days. I had collected him by car from Bristol airport on a wet and miserable day, but when it came to his day of leaving it was a cracking day. Annoyed that it was a very flyable Sunday and it was my duty to return him to Bristol, it suddenly

occurred to me that it *might* be possible to fly him there in my Raven to catch his Paris bound flight.

A quick call to Lusgate confirmed that they would accept microlights with radio but the landing fees were £25, ouch!

The next mission was to strap his large hold all under the seat! It protruded about a foot either side but seemed secure enough. We were soon following the Severn southwards and after a few minutes had the bridges in sight.

After speaking to Filton they soon passed us onto Lusgate approach who insisted that we orbited at Portishead. We went round and round and round again, getting giddy, looking at nothing but muddy water! This went on for about 15 minutes, before they let us into their airspace.

After about 10 minutes of flying we were asked to join downwind, which seemed easy enough, but then, when we were halfway down the downwind leg we were asked to again orbit at 800 ft, over the car park!! This was such a bizarre feeling as we had a grandstand view of about 10 airlines, coming and going, literally from 400 yards away!

Finally after about 20 minutes of doing circles we were cleared to land after two helicopters!

As we called finals another airline had pulled up on the holding point; this really gave me a buzz to know that he was waiting for us!!!

A short taxi took us to the small aircraft park and we were given another frequency to call and ask for parking assistance! A young and friendly guy came out with chocks and when he heard

we were a bit tight on time, due to the orbiting we had to perform, he produced a minibus to carry us to the terminal to check in!

I was relieved when Vincent had checked in OK, after which I made my way back to pay my landing fees. After a couple of other minor charges and then of course tax, the bill was about £35!! I

coughed; he apologised;



Lusgate as seen from Robbie's Raven

and said that until 2 years ago it would have been £5.

I was soon strapping myself back into the trike and was sent to the holding point ahead of me, about 1/3 the way up the runway. By coincidence, the Paris flight we had connected with, pulled out onto the runway, but had not yet had his flight plan cleared, so while he waited, I was given clearance to take off ahead of him!

At about 500ft, I was told to turn an immediate right and looked back to see the French bound plane about to rotate!

The journey home was great but uneventful, ending an exciting mission; expensive, but worth it!

Go West Young Man!

Part 2 – by Brian Finch

With the sun falling over the Island of Mull, we hurriedly tied down and unpacked Bumble – a phone call to the Hotel confirmed our booking and our worst fears, Dinner finished at 9, it was now 8:30!

A sprint along O2 with a left exit across a playing field, through a housing estate and we're there. The Sea Trout was well worth the effort!

Sunday morning breakfast (full Scottish, of course) was served at 9:00am which resulted in a later than planned arrival at the airfield.

As Bumble was a bit dry, we gave her a treat of 60 litres of Avgas to see us through the day on our tour of the Islands.

The airfield Manager, Paul Keagan looked over our plan and advised against ringing on a Sunday for PPR to the private fields and that we would need Crown indemnity to visit the others as they were closed. We were to learn Broadford (Isle of Skye) and Plockton, a little further north, were holding a Highland Strut Fly-in – so back to the drawing board.

It was a glorious day with a little Cumulus covering the highest peaks as we looked north towards Skye. We felt rather self-conscious while fitting our life jackets, as they were the first we had seen during the several arrivals and departures at Oban. Still, better safe than sorry, maybe the Scots have taken a few lessons from the Salmon!

Checks complete, we taxied to 20 hold and waited our opportunity for departure, soon climbing out over the Loch while heading towards a small island before gaining a bit of confidence to fly down the middle of the Loch (well, a bit to one side really).

It's a pity we couldn't climb above 2000ft and fly across the Mountains, instead, we navigated through the passes using IFR (I Follow Roads), which must be *modus operandi* for these parts. The view while navigating this area is absolutely astounding from 2000ft, while a creepy feeling of insecurity is ever-present as we pass by the giant cloud clad silent monsters of granite.

Back into the open, we follow the coast with Skye spread out ahead. It took us few minutes to spot Broadford Airstrip just to the East of the town. Scottish FIR supplied us with the unmanned Frequency in use for the Fly-in, which was shared with Plockton.

A blind call downwind over the Atlantic before turning right base for final to 25, I'm getting used to this over water flying! Quite a collection of aircraft was assembled around the hangar, the only building in sight, including a Shadow and a couple of Flexwings which we observed leaving Oban earlier. I would think this is a fairly desolate place in winter. A stone mounted plaque proudly announces that the Royal Engineers constructed the strip in the 60's, this was to be repeated at Plockton and Glenforsa. Our boys were busy during the Cold War!

A chat with a Grunman AA5 pilot resulted in a quick turnaround to Plockton, where the refreshments and BBQ could be enjoyed for the dual landing fee of £5.00.

En-route to Plockton, we passed the recently constructed Toll bridge which connected Skye with the mainland. Before this, a quite expensive Ferry was the only means of visiting the Island by road.

Plockton, at 80ft with a Tarmac runway flanked by grass verges, appeared far more inviting than Broadford, although the approach to 20 over a small coppice concentrated the mind on the job in hand. There were a few more aircraft here, including a couple we recognised from Broadford – maybe it was the BBQ!

We were soon relieved of our fiver by the man with the clipboard who requested our Home Base location, to learn we were front runners for a prize for the most meritorious (longest) flight had there been one! One guy had travelled 4 hrs by road from Glasgow to get there, which put our 4 1/2 hr flight the previous day from Defford into perspective.

Fuelled and watered (the crew!), we were soon on our way to the Island of Mull for Glenforsa where we hoped to dine at the Hotel just off the strip. By now the sky had cleared to gin blue with only the lightest whisper of cloud, so at last, a flight across the Mountains!

A paradigm shift occurred while crossing these rather large rocks; wondering whether I could make it to the coast in the event of an engine failure! We soon crossed the last of the high ground, a mere 1800ft, descending over the Sound of Mull to join

downwind for Glenforsa runway 25. At last, a grass strip, 730m long and 18m wide, approaching over the blue, Caribbean like Sound.

This was indeed paradise as we taxied along the flat, green baize towards the parking area, joining a Beech and Piper Arrow.

Off to the caravan to book in and pay the inevitable landing fee by placing 3 coins of the Realm into an envelope, posting it through a slot into a cupboard.

I couldn't resist the temptation to try the cupboard door, yes it was open! I wondered at the idea of all this procedure when a tin would have sufficed.

The Swedish style Hotel, yards from the strip, was very busy with walkers and apologized profusely as they were unable to cater for our dining needs. A plate of spaghetti was offered but we felt the Hotel at Oban had more to offer.

Monday mornings view from the Hotel extended all the way to the waters edge, about 200 yds. Now we know what Scotch Mist looks like! This was a bit worrying as we had about 400miles of aviation in front of us today. Still, a good breakfast followed by a walk to the airfield and it should all clear up.

Not a chance, 11:30 saw the first arrival through a 300ft cloudbase, not something I would chance with all the high ground surrounding the strip. I was told that GPS is good at this sort of thing.....

By 13:00 the bottoms were at a respectable 1200ft and with Paul's help, sorted out a route to start our journey home. "Turn left past a big white Hotel, then follow the canal through the pass, you can't miss it".

Well, we missed the Hotel but found the canal, it all looked vaguely familiar. We decided it was the same route followed North on Saturday in the gloom of the evening. By now, we were at 1500ft and in the clear. A PA28 en-route to Oban in the same area advised Scottish FIS they were returning to Glasgow due to worsening viz. I wanted to call "its OK" but resisted the temptation.

Scottish past us to Prestwick, who were interested in our routing as they were recovering a 757. We planned to pass to the Northeast towards Cumnock, following the railway through the valley to Dumfries, which they were happy with. As we passed abeam, the 757 broke cloud on short finals – its good to talk!

We both enjoyed the flight through the valley, chasing the railway as it twisted and turned (and disappeared!) on its way to Dumfries, pity there wasn't a train to chase. The sky had cleared by this time with cloud at about 3000ft and blue skies ahead. As we passed between Lockerbie and Dumfries, we reflected on the tragedy of 1986 and how unlucky the town was, surrounded by miles of open country.

Not long before we were crossing the Solway Firth again and talking to Kirkbride. The weather now was CAVOK, not a cloud in sight, with the Lake District sprouting up to the South. A coffee and chat at Kirkbride confirmed it might be our only chance for a while to go OVER the Lakes. We took our chance, and what a sight it was. Over Derwent, Keswick and Windermere at 3000ft, the Malverns will never seem the same again!

Blackpool approach handed us over to Manchester for the low level transit, we picked up a bit of speed in our slow descent to 1000ft, which made up for losing a good tailwind enjoyed since Oban. The Visibility decreased further south and just north of Birmingham we were down to 1000ft again. We decided we probably wouldn't have planned to go to Scotland, had this been our departure day.

Familiar landmarks passed us by as we made our way to Long Marston for a well-earned cup of tea!

4 1/2 hours to get there, 3 hours there and 3 1/2 hours back, not bad for a weekend.



November 2002

This Month's Meeting

This month's talk will be given by Brian Finch and will relate to his adventures flying to the north of Scotland earlier this year. You may have read about his expedition in previous newsletters, but as they say, now is the opportunity to see the film. Basically, he will be showing a photographic record of his escapade, and having already seen the preview the pictures are outstanding. This meeting is at usually time & venue, i.e. 20.00 hrs on Wednesday 20th November at the Gloucestershire Club

The Christmas Dinner

It's the big bash of the year - the Christmas Party! You should by this time have received details of the menus on offer and hopefully made your selection. If you have not then Club night this month (November) is the very last opportunity to book your places and your meal. Please note that places are limited and are on a first come, first served basis, so don't leave your booking until the meeting ie last minute. If you haven't received details and a menu, please contact Robbie Keene, (07831 237353) immediately. This year, in order to keep costs down and to allow everyone to indulge in their own brand of poison it has been decided not to provide free wine for each table but you will be able to buy drinks and bottles of wine from the bar on the night. There will also be music for dancing. Last year's event was a great success, so let's make this one even better.

Telford

It's that time of year again. A journey up the M5 to Telford for the annual Trade Show and BMAA AGM over the weekend of 30th November/ 1st December. Will there be any new developments or aircraft to be seen? There are certainly some nice aircraft out there - albeit mainly 3-axis, foreign in origin, which fall into the microlight category - but at what price? With all the reports of job losses in the press and on television one can but wonder who has the cash or the credit rating to be able to afford one of these "hotships". A redundancy payment might be nice but at the same time money (or even the sale of a Monet!) is still needed to live, let alone fly your aeroplane after you have bought/built it! Having said that you can still buy microlights for £29.99 according to an advertisement in the Times. However, don't get too excited as all you will get is a string of tiny Christmas lights - but it's nice to dream!. The BMAA AGM is at 1300hrs on the Sunday.

Incidentally, don't forget to take your BMAA membership card with you, as this will save you £3 on the entry fee to the show (£2 with the discount).

PFA Rally 2003

Members might already have read that the Rally will not be at Cranfield next year but at Kemble. This was an enforced, last minute change as Cranfield has brought forward plans to build on part of the site that the Rally occupies. The deal with Kemble is, hopefully, for at least five years which will make it convenient for us all to attend and give us no excuse for not flying there - now there's a challenging cross-country flight for you! Having said that, it is a fair bet that you will be directed around the county to get into the circuit. When it was held at Wroughton, roughly 30 miles away from us in a direct line, there was nearly a 20-mile detour via Membury to get into the circuit pattern.

Anyone who has not been to the Rally before should take the opportunity to see the largest gathering of aircraft in Europe, as well as lots of stands exhibiting and demonstrating all things aviation. It is an "Aladdin's cave" of everything aeronautical. You will get a reminder nearer the time, but for those of you that want to book your summer hols now, keep mid July free!

Progress Report

As you all know, Trevor Cale suffered a stroke while on a trip to Germany with his C42 this summer. After a period in hospital there, he was repatriated to England. You will be pleased to learn that he is making good progress, and although still in hospital, is improving steadily. He had a few hours "home leave" last weekend including a quick call to Defford where Dave Steade brought smiles to his face with a low pass in his MiniMax.

On the build

We are pleased to report that Ken Cole is building again. He's not quite sure why, for as he says, he's got a couple of perfectly good aircraft to fly. Anyway, he has just taken delivery of a Skyranger kit and currently is busy trying to make space to build it. The fuselage is to be built in his shed on the side of his house where he has previously built his MW6s. Currently he is sorting out the pieces and trying to understand the manual and part numbering system. He reckons it will probably take him about four month's to build - so by our reckoning it should be ready in time for Popham. Some one else who is hoping to have his aircraft ready for Popham is our chairman, Andrew John. His HiMax is back on JH's workbench, and due to the inclement weather is currently making rapid progress. The airframe is virtually complete with the last major job being to offer up the wings to the fuselage. Hopefully, and weather permitting this will

occur in the next week or so. It will then really be just a job of covering, painting and dropping the engine in! It may sound an optimistic schedule, but as JH reflects, when he built his original MiniMax, it was in similar state at this time of year and subsequently flew at Popham. Indeed last year, he took 'AW off line just before Christmas, stripped it completely, re-engined it and recovered it. It was back flying by 1st March as G-OJLH. (Certainly he did that.) You should note that to achieve this programme JH's Christmas was cancelled, so, by the way Andrew, your Christmas has also been cancelled – your working – it's official – just look on the workshop notice board!

Safety

There has not been very much written in Aircrew recently on the subject of safety. It would be wrong, though, to think that we are all paragons of virtue and are doing everything correctly. The recent spell of wet weather brings to mind the factors affecting aircraft performance particularly soft ground and wet, longish grass. Wet grass on takeoff retards the aircraft and if it is long, also the effect is even more marked. The length required to achieve rotation speed for takeoff will be greater while the effect on landing will be to lessen the braking effect and extend the landing run. Add to this the general condition of the ground which will inevitably be soft and you have all the ingredients for a less than safe experience! These factors are crucial to safe flight but more so if the strip you are using is not one of the longest this side of Fairford. So, on the next fine, flyable day, walk the full length of the runway and take note of a) the condition of the surface; b) the length of the grass; c) the wind direction since with reduced tyre adhesion on landing and less braking effect available you could end up disappearing sideways off the runway or even demolishing the hedge at the end. The best decision might be to give the aircraft a good inspection particularly looking for intruders such as mice and birds, polish it and go home to fly again (safely) another day.

No Go Areas

The recent issue of Microlight Flying provided details of a microlight pilot who was prosecuted by the CAA for infringing the restricted airspace that was implemented post Sept 11 around Heysham nuclear power station. Members are reminded that similar restrictions have been imposed around our local nuclear power station sites of Oldbury and Berkley. The limits being 2 mile radius and 2000ft.

Looking Back

By Andrew John

Reading my flying log in which I describe my flights in more detail I have reminded myself of some of the more memorable occasions whilst flying since last winter.

Starting on New Years Day looking down on a snow capped Bredon Hill covered with walkers working off their Christmas excesses! I was warmly welcomed at Hartpury with Mince pies and at Over with Turkey soup, returning home to de-rig under a rising full moon. By contrast my next flight was in Spain in March near Seville at a Microlight flying school run by Sigi Rickter

where I flew an Air Creation flexwing of minimalist design around a lengthy circuit, slow and draughty but fun. He has a superb set up there, tarmac strip and excellent facilities, plus a very warm and friendly welcome.

Easter Saturday at 0900 hrs found JH and myself above the Severn near Minsterworth awaiting the arrival of the Severn Bore which had attracted thousands of people together with their vehicles clogging the roads below. No other aerial observers arrived, obviously too early in the morning for them which left the sky clear for ourselves. However it turned out to be a poor bore but well worth the effort for us!

The evening of the 23rd April found me along with 16 other aircraft enjoying the luxury of landing on John Davis's superb airfield where one is spoilt for choice of runway! A great evening. On the 1st June with clear visibility I headed west and eventually landed at Broadmeadow farm where they were hosting a very popular fly-in attended by well over 45 aircraft in perfect conditions. This strip and the welcome that Russ and his friends provide is superb and has now become one of my compulsory stop overs if I am in the area. Returned home, still in daylight and whisked my 91 year old mother from her gardening, close by, and took her for a twenty minute flight which she really enjoyed (6th time!). Late July, and harvest was about to begin but not before a flight to Over which included a test flight in George Cole's Blade 462 which is identical in specification to mine yet, according to JH, flies much more crisply! Some twenty minutes proved that this was correct and I found his a delightful machine to handle, perplexed at the difference I have since done a bit of tweeking here and there and found that mine has improved considerably!

Harvest almost over, I managed to make Rob Keene's Fly in and BBQ that, as usual, was on a glorious evening and very well attended. Then my last flight so far this year was on 6th October, a long cross country flight to Hay and return to Broadmeadow farm for a cuppa which I much appreciated. My homeward track led me over Fownhope in the evening sunlight with the Wye River below like a mirror with no wind to ruffle the water. By sheer chance I happened to be looking in the right direction when my eye caught the silver-gold sliver of light reflected by the scales of a Salmon leaping clear of the water some 1000 feet below. For me this was the climax of 13 years flying over the Wye. I had spent my earlier years fishing the middle Wye near Hay when fish were in relative abundance, but sadly not so today. I had therefore been searching in vain, until now, for another glimpse of this elusive fish. So below me, leaving only the tell tale concentric rings on the calm surface, my solo salmon returned to its own unique environment while I continued homewards in mine, utterly content.

Great eyesight to see a fish from a 1000ft or perhaps the altimeter was not reading correctly!- Ed

Monthly Meeting programme

20th Nov – Brian Finch – Expedition – Go North

18th Dec – Christmas Party

15th Jan – AGM



December 2002

The Christmas Dinner

This month's meeting is the annual party at the usual venue –the Gloucestershire Club. 7.30pm for 8.00pm. A bar will be available in the room and bottles of wine will be available for those who wish to celebrate in style. After the meal, Ian Oliver will provide entertainment and music for dancing.

Telford 2002

By Andrew John

First impressions at the **International Airports Exhibition** were of space, acres of it, created by both fewer stands and the use of a third 'hall'. However the Sunday crowd was enthusiastic as ever, myself included, but maybe disappointed to find very little that had not been seen before. The marriage of Mainair with Pegasus has survived their nuptials and it was interesting to find the combined staff playing with each other's toys quite happily!! We wish them well in the future.

This annual event now has everything for everybody interested in low cost, seat of the pants flying, within the rules of PPL aviation. Over the last twenty years microlight aviation has grown faster and attracted more enthusiasts than any other type of flying.

However the storm clouds are gathering and we need to be aware that the privileges that we have enjoyed in the past are not necessarily to continue.

Over to the BMAA AGM at 1pm, timed to attract those dedicated to support all those who have the movement close their hearts.

BMAA Annual General meeting.

Sadly our president Ann Welch was unable to be present, due to ill health, to give her annual address to her dedicated aviators. However in her absence her address was read out and emphasized how much our movement had influenced recent changes in European aviation law and its application. In her opinion there is no better way into private aviation than through microlighting as supervised by the BMAA.

The Chairman, Geoff Weighell, reported a steady decline in membership, which he would like to see, reversed with the help of everyone encouraging new members. Delays in the technical office had now been largely resolved, thanks mainly to the new appointment of Jonathan Viner as Airworthiness Engineer to assist Guy Gratton. Geoff has also carried out extensive reviews of procedures within the BMAA office including the handling of complaints and scrutinizing current thinking over new projects. He referred to the introduction of the NPPL and both the problems and

advantages that it will bring with it. The BMAA is in good shape but could do with increased support from the membership.

Treasurer John Rose presented the accounts, which showed a small loss due mainly to increased insurance premium, up some 40%, to cover the BMAA's liabilities. Wages were also up and net membership had not increased significantly.

Chief Executive Chris Finnigan reported a membership of 4106 and made an appeal for subscriptions to be paid by Direct Debit in order to save costs. He also encouraged the use of the BMAA's website which was being updated, and a good medium for advertising aircraft etc. He has been able to negotiate a reduced annual subscription (by £9) for Today's Pilot magazine in conjunction with BMAA sub renewal. An RAF Training Scholarship scheme is currently being tendered for by Microlight flying schools which is a real foot in the door for ab initio training. It looks as if transponders are to become mandatory by 2008 under European legislation, posing a serious problem to microlights in their present form, size, weight, power etc. He reminded us also of the World Championships to be held at Long Marston in August 2003, for which enthusiastic assistance will be needed.

Chief Technical Officer Guy Gratton produced figures that showed a marked improvement in turnaround time on applications made to his department. Some 43 homebuilts have been completed with the X-Air by far and away the most popular. Two new Types have been approved, the Sky Ranger and X-Air Falcon. 24 Major mods and 20 minor mods have also been passed. Test flying is going well but there is a shortage of test pilots pilots. A proposal concerning the hiring of microlights has been submitted to the CAA, with type approval and solo occupancy issues for discussion.

Ray Wilkinson's report on Safety and Inspections sadly confirmed a single fatality and 47 accidents of which 8 were classified with serious injury, with the remainder with significant damage to the a/c but with the occupant(s) unharmed. Misjudgements and engine failure for a variety of reasons including running out of fuel were the main causes. There are currently 160 inspectors with 5 under training.

Trophies were then awarded to those who had made the effort to attend the AGM in order to receive them, principally the Steve Hunt Memorial Trophy to Jim Pearce for his epic trip around Australia, and the John Hudson trophy to the Round Britain Winners - our intrepid neighbours Graham Pritchard and Merv Middleton. The list of awards is long and of great credit to all who achieved so much during the year.

The Chairman had just announced AOB when, on cue, the Tannoy announced an emergency requiring all to leave the building!! Half an hour later, seriously chilled we all trooped back in again to quickly complete the meeting. Or so we thought! The reason for the record turnout at a BMAA AGM soon became clear. We had a revolt on our hands as the jungle drums had brought tribesmen from far and near to argue the case for deregulating single seater microlight aircraft. Discussions with the CAA have been entered into as per Council agreement but ground to a halt despite the CAA's unusual interest, largely, it was stated, because of the Chief Technical Officer's refusal to back the proposal on the grounds of safety implications. The arguments were put over, initially, in a very balanced and controlled manner but inevitably steam began to rise and various members of Council including the Chairman were needed eventually to quell the uprising. Agreeing finally to make sure that discussions with the CAA would continue with a greater priority and that the CTO would take note of the feeling of the meeting, and not veto the proposal as he seems to have done in the past. Finally a date for next years AGM was agreed once someone with a 2003 diary could be found. The show is scheduled for 6th/7th December again at Telford. Members then dispersed muttering.....!

Telford Report Another view

By JH

As those that went to the show discovered, there wasn't a MiniMax stand there. It is the first time in ten years I haven't been able to get a place for nothing – must be slipping. The cost of hiring space is extortionate and out of the realms of a non-commercial organisation such as the MiniMax Club. Indeed the cost obviously influenced the number of stands for there were certainly less than usual and many had reduced the space taken up. Was there anything new to see? Well no, not really. The only new aircraft was the Pegasus Quik on the Mainair/Pegasus stand. This is the first flexwing designed to make use of the new section S issue 2 regulations and features a very small wing, which gives it its high speed (and name). Interestingly following the sale of the controlling interest in Mainair to Keith Duckworth, who also owns Pegasus, the new aircraft is to be manufactured in Rochdale along with Mainair's other existing products.

Did I see anything interesting? Yes. There was a demonstration being given of a computerised navigation system. Basically the 1/2 mil charts had been put on computer and this allowed you to plot your course and get GPS way points etc. This could be downloaded into a handheld PC and mounted in your aircraft. Connected to your GPS it would give you a moving map display. Not revolutionary, except a click of a button and the 1/4 mil charts were brought up of the point you were looking at. Another click and you went down to the OS map scale 50,000:1. The final click brought you to an aerial photograph of the site. As the demonstrator was focusing on the Severn Bridge, I asked him to move 20 miles north. Lo and behold, up came an aerial photograph of my place. I pointed to my field. He quickly ran the cursor around it and

announced it was a 15.3 acre field. Not bad for a quick calculation – it's 15.2! The system would thus allow you to view the exact field you might fly into on some distant cross country and measure the exact length available. Now you could really be certain that the friend who says I have got a suitable field behind my house that you can land in, is really telling the truth!

Did I buy anything interesting? What I did find was a stall selling batteries and I found they reconditioned ICOM battery packs. I gave them an old one I had had in a draw for a number of years to see what they could do with it. I had heard ICOM would charge £50/60 for this service. The day after Telford, I got a phone call from them to say they had looked at my unit, it was badly corroded and would need some work. More expense I thought – wrong - they could do the whole job for £29.50 inc postage. The unit was back with me two days later. The name of the company – Strikalite – 01543 683122 (www.strikalite.co.uk)

Those that went to the AGM might have found it interesting, but only at the end! I had heard that there could be a particular interesting item to be brought up in any other business – indeed it might result in a vote of no confidence/ a breakaway movement/ a coup. Intrigued, I therefore attended and sat through the usual reports etc. eagerly waiting the trouble ahead. Eventually the point in the agenda arrived. The chairman then announced "Any other business". Even before anyone could say anything, let alone draw their swords, the alarm went off to clear the building. What perfect timing! It was a fire in a disabled toilet. Although the fire was malicious, we were reassured it wasn't not an attempt by the BMAA council to divert attention and re-group their forces!

When the meeting reconvened, a little depleted in numbers, we found out what it was all about. In brief there is a movement to deregulate single seat microlights, and the outcome was an undertaking to take up the BMAA council policy of looking into it. The move apparently has the backing of the CAA and would remove a lot of the bureaucracy of clearing a single seat microlight through section S. What is in it for us? Well dependent on how far de-regulation goes, it could mean that we would be relatively free to do what we like ie build and modify our single seat aircraft – with the minimal of paperwork - provided we keep under 300 kgs. This shouldn't be a problem – a MiniMax at present weighs in at just over 250kgs. I should add this is still in the conceptual stage, but if successful could lead to introduction into the UK of many US designs.

GetMet

By Brian (Bumble) Finch

I find one of the most useful (and most used) sites on the Web are the various Weather Sites. The leader of the pack, with free access to most information is our very own UK Met Office. It appears many of the other sites available use their information in one way or another. Another useful site is the Jodrell Bank range of radio telescopes. Defford Dishes are a part of the "Bank" of telescopes, which are often used to navigate to Croft Farm from Over and beyond! So what has this

got to do with weather? Well, each of these banks of dishes, scattered all over the country, have an associated web page dedicated to them which reports, among other things, Wind Speed, Wind Direction, Dry/Wet temperatures and rainfall. All this data is updated every 30 seconds and its free! You need to point your mouse at: www.jb.man.ac.uk/vibi/inter/deff.html don't forget to make this one of your "Favourites" because you won't find this copy of airscrew when you need it!

So, back to the Met Office, who can be found at: www.metoffice.com/aviation/index.html (remember "Favourites")

You will need to register, there is no cost involved unless you decide to upgrade to the subscription service at about a £1 a week.

Once registered, they will email you a password to go with the username you chose before you can log-on.

After pressing the "Launch" button you will see a page of options – I have listed the few I use below which I find the most useful:

Form 215 (Weather)

This gives a graphical view of the UK broken up into "Zones". These zones are normally formed by the various "fronts" active and small arrows indicate speed and direction. Below the graphic, tables give details of weather that can be expected in any particular zone, i.e. visibility, cloud base, precipitation. These are issued several times a day and are pretty accurate.

Form 214 (Wind)

The sister chart to 215 is again, a graphical view of the UK with boxes full of numbers scattered along the Long/Lat lines. The boxes show the wind speed (knots), direction and temperature for the indicated level. A rule of thumb for ground level data is half the wind speed backed by 30deg. Again, these are issued several times a day.

OK, so what is the weather at say, Sandown, for our trip to the Isle of Wight we are always planning?

This is where the TAFs and METARS come in. Strategically placed airfields across the UK (and Europe) send Actual Reports and Airfield Forecasts every couple of hours to the Met Office for us to read. The problem is, these are textual and use codes, which are not always obvious, help is offered on the same page – TAF and METAR guide. Its well worth getting to grips with these as they will give you surface wind speed and direction, cloud base, visibility, precipitation and temperatures. All useful stuff.

Airmet

Is a forecast broken into geographical area's (midlands, south etc) and is written in "English" so easy to understand, but not so detailed.

The "48 hour synoptic forecast" is very useful. This shows an animated graphic of the Isobaric system over the next couple of days which enables you to see the isobars squeezed between fronts or the Low chasing the High away and the movement of the various fronts, which all gives a good indication of the weather we are about to get.

Three Day Planner

One of the most useful forecasts, which give a good account of tomorrow's weather with a good indication

of the following two. I have often used this to plan a trip the next day, its pretty good, but you have to pay for this one!

There are loads of other charts and radar images to be accessed, log on and experiment.

I hope this article inspires you to take a look at what is on offer. For those members still without the internet, you still have time to put a PC on your Xmas list!

Low flying rule reform

By Bill Austin

The CAA could change the rules on low flying. It has just announced a two-stage consultation process on Rule 5 because it believes that a) the Rule isn't written clearly enough, causing confusion among pilots, and b) the UK should consider whether or not to switch to the ICAO definition of low flying. The CAA says it is faced with three choices: - do nothing; - re-write Rule 5 so that it is ICAO compliant, or - (the favoured option), re-write Rule 5 so it is more easily understood, and align it more closely to the ICAO requirements while retaining some of the UKs existing differences. The CAA has made its preference quite clear. Once it has taken into account feedback from this initial consultation, if this third option is determined as the way forward, SRG will re-write Rule 5 and then consult on the actual wording. You have until January 17 to make your comments on this known.

Airstrips - 'A threat'

By Bill Austin

According to a report by Lord Carlisle smaller airports and farm strips pose a potential threat to national security by providing an easy point of entry for terrorists wishing to transport material into the UK. Apparently Lord Carlisle was told that the 'lack of information was the soft underbelly of port policing'. In his report he writes 'I have been told that the expansion and development of the filing of informative flight plans would improve the situation' The fact that aeroplanes can land in any suitable field, that helicopters can land in any suitable clearing and that boats have more than enough coastline to choose from seems to have been left out of the report.

Euro insurance requirements

By Bill Austin

News of draft EU legislation to make it mandatory for all aeroplanes (except microlights and sailplanes) to carry £68 (yup that's 'million') worth of third party insurance does seem somewhat excessive to say the least. AOPA UK did a little research and they suggest that the premium for such insurance would be somewhere in the region of £7500 pa for a C172, plus of course an extra few hundred per passenger seat. AOPA are monitoring the situation and would like to hear your views on the above. Anyone thinking of going GA?

Fly – Ins

Catsbury /Hartpury – Boxing day

If you survive Christmas, and are seeking to venture out the day after, why not drop into Catsbury at Hartpury around lunchtime. If you can't fly in or it's not suitable, then drive in. Andrew has promised to be on hand to show you his latest creation – it won't be ready to fly but is getting there. See you all there. If you intend flying in, it is suggested you check with JH before hand to check the runway is clear – there may still be reindeer blocking it!

Teddington Hands – New Year's Day

To mark the arrival of another year and hopefully a good flying one at that, it is intended to hold a fly-in to Gary Ball's field at Teddington Hands. The plan is to arrive around lunchtime for a bite in the adjacent pub. Even if the weather is not flyable, it is suggested that we all meet at the pub at least to talk about what would have happened if it were flyable and what we hope to do in the coming year! So either way – see you there.

In memoriam

By Andrew John

Ann Welch, the president of the BMAA, died on Thursday 5th December aged 85, having flown 150 types of aircraft during 50 years of legendary piloting. She will be missed particularly for the work she put into successfully championing the cause of all private flying, particularly latterly when she promoted microlighting tirelessly. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.

Monthly Meeting programme

18th Dec – Christmas Party

15th Jan – AGM

19th Feb – Chris Ball – Building his Eurostar

Beware of Your Inspector – even at Christmas!

Contribution by Ed Wells

It was time for Father Christmas's annual certificate of airworthiness inspection on the sleigh. The inspector arrived as arranged and walked round prodding and poking as he went. Every now and again he would scribble notes down on his clipboard. Eventually he satisfied himself that all was well and started to question Santa on the rules of air traffic control and emergency procedures. Satisfied that the old man was up to speed on the theoretical he instructed him to run through pre-flight checks and prepare to take off. As he settled himself down next to the examiner Santa couldn't help but notice the chap had taken a double barrelled shotgun from his case and was loading it. "What on earth is that for?" he asked. "Well I should not really tell you as it supposed to be a surprise, but we are going to be testing your reactions to an engine failure on take off."

*Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year*