

# Severn Valley Microlight Club

## AIRSCREW

April 2004

### This month's meeting

This month we have a talk by Malcolm Clifford on the stories behind his collection of Medals dating from the Boer War. Malcolm has also said that if members have medals which they would like to know more about and bring them along then he will do his best to fill in the background. We aim to start at 8.15pm.

### Another Award for the World Champion

News has just come in that Richard Rawes has received the Combined Services Sports Personality of the Year 2003 award. Congratulations to Richard from all SVMC members

### Microlight Trade Fair

In less than two weeks Popham will be the venue for the opening microlight event of the season – the Trade Fair. This is your chance to see the latest hardware in action and buy all those things you need for the coming months of flying – don't miss it!

### A Ferry Pilot's Tale by Adrian Lloyd

#### Part Two

*(Our two pilots, having had a late start due to bad visibility and delays getting away on the return trip from Kirby, are now on their way back to Shobdon)*

As I climb higher it becomes apparent we have a little headwind but a touch over 75mph on the ASI gives 60kts on the GPS. I relax – just a little! I sort out maps and put on the kneepad. I keep the Course Direction

Indicator on the GPS bang in line with the cursor. The weather and visibility is superb but what is going on Manchester way?

By the time the Manchester corridor is close a number of things are now apparent. The visibility is not as good as it was, the headwind has increased and to maintain the 60kts groundspeed I am pushing JUD to 85mph. Descending to go through the corridor the GPS still shows us right on track. Brian is still behind. I can't find the strobe switch – it's hidden behind my GPS unit securely taped to the instrument panel. There is no one else around to see.



Eventually Ashcroft at the Southern end of the corridor flashes by to one side. I say flashes by for we are at 800 feet and going hell for leather. The visibility now is not good and it is clear that fog is forming. I communicate tensely with Brian. He is not

going to follow his path to Defford. He will follow to Milson as time is against him even with his faster Kitfox.

Ahead a thickening patch of fog looms. Seven hundred feet now and we keep contact with the ground. The fog thins and I climb a little. The GPS now decides to take a rest and all information disappears! Ahem!!! Ten seconds or so and it comes on line again only to take another rest a few seconds later – the screen kindly informing me that it needs altitude. Hold on mate, it's me who needs the altitude! It decides to relent and comes on line again. Meanwhile Brian has climbed to 1000 feet. "It's lovely and clear up here," he says, "but there's a fog bank ahead, I cannot see the ground and I've lost sight of you!" He informs me he is descending and I tell him that I'm going to look for a field as it's now very gloomy. At this point I see a little hill ahead with trees on it and the tree tops are in the fog! The altimeter now reads 600 feet. Suddenly, almost out of the corner of my eye and down through the fully glazed door of JUD, I see tarmac, a big strip of it, plus a big orange windsock and a big set of numbers – **10**. To hell with a field! I call up Brian and say "I'm going in but don't know where!" "It's Ternhill", he says. His GPS is like watching television – everything is marked and it's in glorious technicolour! Mine is just numbers!! I crank JUD around eager not to lose the **10** tarmac with the wind straight down it. She touches down smoothly and I roll towards the intersection. Brian tells me he is landing on another piece of tarmac but not mine! Suddenly I see him flashing in the gloom on my left. He touches down and we taxi to meet at the intersection.

We taxi interminably, it seems, and push up by the control tower in the lee of a large hangar. Switches off and silence descends. Opening the door I am struck by the silence, the dampness, the razor wire and complete desertion. Brian and I chat. The far side of Ternhill has now disappeared into the lowering fog and our watches say just before 4.00pm with just 30nm to go to Milson. The delay at Kirby had cost us dear.



***Two Foxes gone to ground***

Brian gets busy on his mobile and I wander along the fencing. Suddenly a guard and a very loud Bonzo appear on the other side of the wire. We exchange pleasantries! I am informed that if I proceed along the fencing eventually we will reach a barrier that is locked but we can duck under it and report to the security post.

I wander back to Brian. He is now standing in the middle of the large apron busy filming and slowly turning around to get a panoramic view of our predicament. "For God's sake Brian – we are on an MOD establishment, unannounced, uninvited, a guard is around, you'll get us arrested!"



***"You'll get us arrested!"***

Brian continues filming unperturbed! The guard re-appears and we are firmly but politely told to get going to the security post. On arrival at the security post, a teenager (I must be getting older – it's not long since I

gave up teaching teenagers!) steps out, automatic weapon at the ready. Behind him a security guard follows. We explain the situation. "Nothing to do with us, mate. That side of the fence is RAF, we're Army!" We are directed to report to the guardroom where we see a sign that proclaims that a "Bikini Alert" is on! More teenagers and more automatic weapons. Again we explain. "We'll ring RAF Shawbury", they say. "We have no keys for anything – nothing to do with us". Brian and I chat, discussing the flight, the delay and what's happening. Time passes. I ask one teenager if the weapon he carries is loaded with ammunition. He replies with an emphatic "Yes"!

Half an hour or so later an RAF chap arrives. He is duty SATCO for RAF Shawbury. Basically he explains that Shawbury is closed, no one has keys, so definitely no hangarage in the one hangar on the airfield. We ask about flying out in the morning. "No problem", he says, "but we won't be able to provide you with ATC, QFE, QNH or weather!" We assure him that these are but minor inconveniences to us and he bids us farewell!

We arrange to be picked up by Chris Jones, Milson airstrip owner who will bring all the tie down gear with him. Time goes by. No cups of tea or seats offered – the Army are a hard lot!

Eventually Chris arrives and we trudge to the aircraft accompanied by an armed teenager! The guardhouse did tell us that no vehicles could get into the airfield as all the perimeter gates are locked.

Back at Milson I pick up my car and ferry Brian back to Defford. It's late – it's been a long day!

*(To be continued next month)*

### **Wednesday Fly-ins**

The regular Wednesday evening fly-ins will start on 28<sup>th</sup> April with the first one being at Hawling courtesy of John and Sue Davis (Tel:01451 850214). The venue for the **first Wednesday in each month** will be Hartpury to coincide with the monthly Committee meeting. The fly-in on 12<sup>th</sup> May will be at Bob Hinds' strip at Newnham

(Tel:01594 516320). Contact the member hosting the fly-in to confirm that it is on if the weather appears marginal

### **Ninth World Championships** by Richard Rawes

*(Having seen the opening ceremony and flown two tasks Day Two dawns)*

#### Racing Butterflies

Thankfully, day two, dawned significantly brighter than the previous day. Thankfully, because the task had us flying into the Welsh borders where I have been known to become lost. Task 5, a ground speed leg over approximately 30 miles was preceded by a meandering route outlining the shape of a butterfly. Along the ground speed leg, markers had to be spotted and marked on our charts. The accuracy for plotting in this and all other tasks being +/- 2 mm, outside of which either no points were scored or penalty points were applied to prevent guessing. Along the butterfly, a number of photographs had to be spotted along with a final marker. This final marker, depending upon the numeral observed, determined a track line that required plotting to lead us to another out-landing field. For this task, we were advised of an approximate distance to be flown around the whole route, so if all was well, it was possible to estimate along the plotted track line where the landing field should be. Just to keep the pressure on, an overall task time limit was also applied.

Like previous tasks, Task 5 was immediately followed by a landing task, this one being another 6 metre deck. the field we landed in was just another cropped field in the Monmouthshire countryside. Never before had it been used as an airfield and, as such, no clues to its location were available on our charts. This common thread began to sink home as we, the British Team, were constantly trying to outwit Robbie by using our local knowledge to second guess where we might land - but to no avail.

With all the competitors in the field, either by successfully navigating, or by using the envelope, the briefing for task 7 was given. This was a multi-element task requiring knowledge of the aircraft's short field take-

off and landing performance with a pure race being thrown in to boot. We were required to line up for take-off as close as possible to a tape placed one metre high directly on our take-off path; this tape represented a hedge in a short field. The aircraft taking off closest to and successfully clearing the tape won that element. A race along a 10-mile leg was then followed by a short landing across a tape. The race proved particularly revealing for me as never before had my aircraft flown so fast. The engine work carried out previously had obviously also increased its power output. An overall task win was gained by flying the fastest in class, averaging 75 mph from take-off to landing, landing and stopping shortest in 26.2 meters and taking off second shortest in 60 metres.

I was now beginning to secure a position at the top of my class, but then things started to go wrong. The final task of the day, the 'Steeplechase', involved planning a route around as many of the turn-points identified on our briefing sheet as possible. Proof of circumnavigating the turnpoints was by identifying churches from photographs provided before take-off. Three of the churches were compulsory and predicted times to these had to be calculated and submitted prior to take-off. The crew flying to the highest number of churches in the allotted time with the most accurate achievement of predicted times won the event. Predicting 14 out of the 16 churches available, the first, to the North of Abergavenny was located with ease; the next church, immediately to the South of Abergavenny was another matter. As this was one of the compulsory gates, I was determined to locate it, but in doing so lost track of the time it was taking. Eventually, I over flew a church that I was unable to positively identify and 5 minutes later than my predicted time. I now needed to re-plan my route as to achieve my next overhead time slot, I would need to drop at least one turn point.

Flying as fast as I could, I struck a route directly for the next timed church. Tracking overhead the Black Mountains, I relied for

most of the time on dead reckoning for navigation. Eventually, more navigable features came into view, as did the second timed church. Inevitably, I was running late, the question was by how much. The answer soon became apparent; 20 seconds late at the turn point awarded me some credits, but not many.

For the most part, the remainder of the task proved straightforward. Indeed I was beginning to gain on myself to such an extent that it might have been possible to fly to a previously un-planned church. However, with the 20 minutes in hand, I estimated that 25 minutes would be required to get me to the last timed church. I elected not to take the risk and slowed down for a final and hopefully more accurate run-in to the third church. Alas, this was not to be. Holding-off about 2 miles short, my final run-in was left too late. What was I playing at? Being late at this turn point was inexcusable and not the way to win a championship. Somewhat dismayed I returned to Long Marston to complete a routine landing within the 100m deck. Day 2 over, and with no official results posted yet, it was difficult to determine how I was doing overall.



### Day 3

Planned to enable the Organisation to catch up with itself, there was only one task planned for this day; a limited fuel endurance task with a speed element to test the pilot's knowledge of the 2 most opposite ends of the aircraft's performance spectrum.

Starting with an exercise to prove that aircraft fuel tanks had been emptied, under the watchful eye of Eddie Clapham, pre-measured fuel - in the single seat class 8 kgs - was transferred into the aircraft. The task started with an open window to enable crews to determine the best time to take-off in order to enjoy the strongest thermals for the duration element. Confined to a limited area for the duration element, the skies were, for a number of hours, teaming with microlights from all four classes competing for the strongest lift. This was certainly an exciting task that brought aircraft into very close proximity; the highest state of situational awareness was certainly required.

During the duration element, a point in time had to be determined from which part 2 of this task had to be flown on the remaining fuel. Part 2 was a simple race around 3 turn points with markers at each turn point to be identified to prove that they had been flown around. It was going reasonably well for me up to the second turn point marker which had been located in the corner of a small grass airstrip, only readily visible if flown directly on to. I thought I had flown directly to the point, but the last 2 miles as I ran-in proved otherwise. Now 'lost', I had to find this marker to gain any points for the speed element of the task. Eventually, I did find it and proceeded to the finish via the third and final turn point. Instead of being one of the fastest aircraft in the field, this result placed me well down into mid-field.

I had to shape up if I was to recover lost ground!

*(To be continued next month)*

### **Safety**

Our pilot was on final to land from the North when the engine suddenly cut. A successful landing was made. Once on the ground the engine started without any problem but, as a precaution, the carburettor was taken apart and cleaned. The engine was then re-started and ground run without any further signs of a problem. The decision was to take it up for a flight and see if all was well.

All went well flying for 45 minutes over Defford, Upton, Ledbury and back towards Sandhurst but then the engine cut again without warning and a landing was made without further excitement. At this point the hint was taken and it was decided to trailer back to base. Eventually the problem was found. The breather pipe on the fuel tank had a kink in it and at certain throttle settings did not allow enough air into the tank so that a vacuum was created causing fuel starvation. Make a point of checking the fuel lines and breather pipe regularly particularly if you de-rig the aircraft regularly it is easy to put a kink in a pipe which passes unnoticed unless your pre-flight next time is thorough.

### **Quote of the Month**

It is hard enough for anyone to map out a course of action and stick to it, particularly in the face of the desires of one's friends; but it is doubly hard for an aviator to stay on the ground waiting for just the right moment to go into the air.

— *Glenn Curtiss, 1909.*

### **New Charts**

New editions of the half and quarter mil charts covering South England and Wales and England South Editions 30 and 8 respectively are due for publication on 15<sup>th</sup> April. The quarter mil chart for England West and South Wales Edition 4 is due to be published on 8<sup>th</sup> July

### **Internet**

The CAA have published the "VFR Guide" as a PDF document on their site [www.caa.co.uk/dap/dapcharts/default.asb?page=>](http://www.caa.co.uk/dap/dapcharts/default.asb?page=>). It does not appear available for downloading at present.

### **Fly-ins**

The regular Wednesday fly-ins are starting this month. The weather is a governing factor and those members on the internet will benefit from e-mail details at the last moment. For those not on the internet every effort will be made to have a contact

telephone number available for last minute information.

### **Safer Crossings** by Brian (Bumble) Finch

After watching a coastguard SAR Helicopter trying to find one of their colleagues in the sea just off the coast of Cornwall, it made me realise just how vulnerable we are when crossing the Channel. They had planted him in the sea just off the coast and then flew 2 miles away to demonstrate how difficult it is to find someone in the water. As it is only your head showing, it's like trying to find a beach ball. Even so, they were proud of their 78% success rate.

I didn't particularly like these odds (22% unsuccessful!) and so decided to invest in a EPIRB - Emergency Position Indicator Radio Beacon. This is a bouyant and waterproof gadget that looks a bit like a yellow Icom radio with only one switch. When you activate in an emergency, it transmits a distress signal for up to 24 Hrs. This signal is picked up by satellite and helps SAR pinpoint your position. Needless to say, you should already have alerted the SAR with your MAYDAY call. If you would like to improve your odds of rescue, see my ad opposite.

### **Paper aeroplane?**

One of our members striving, as we all do, to keep up with the paperwork requirements of flying got his inspector on the job of the annual "kick the tyres" exercise, handed over the requisite coin of the realm and sent everything off to the BMAA. Phew, job done for another year and all that summer in front of him – lucky pilot! But all was not quite as it seemed.

Our friends at the GPO in Oxford decided to call a strike unknown to our member. When the permit did not come back with the usual speed he phoned the BMAA to enquire what was wrong. Nothing, they assured him. The permit was "in the post" but stuck in a sorting office in Oxford! "So, I'm OK to fly then?" he commented. "Oh no you're not" they replied, "You cannot fly until you have the permit in your hand."

Bearing in mind that the BMAA has delegated authority from the CAA to issue

permits on its behalf and has confirmed that they have sent the permit, it seems to make an ass of the law to require the document to be delivered before it is valid! It might be months before the strike is settled so is it fair and reasonable to expect a pilot to remain firmly on the ground while all around are enjoying themselves? Equally, I doubt very much that he/she would be able to claim a rebate on the unused part of the permit if it did not arrive for 3 months!!

### **Charity benefits from sale**

Members will recall that Richard Webb had a flying suit for sale at the last meeting. He is pleased to report that it was sold for £40 and the money was donated as requested by the seller to the Retts Syndrome charity.

### **For Sale**

MiniB 300 ILS locator beacon. Transmits 121.5 and Satellite. Help Search and Rescue find you! Essential part of any water crossing. Normal price £150 - only 5 units left at £95. Call Brian (Bumble) Finch 01386 751195 for further details.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**The following events are published in good faith and taken from a general list of fly-ins. Please check before setting off that the event is actually taking place.**

**24<sup>th</sup> April** First Round of the Nationals at Shobdon

**1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> May** Popham Microlight Fair

**8<sup>th</sup> May** Xair fly-in at Duxford

**8<sup>th</sup> May** Open Day at Old Sarum

**9<sup>th</sup> May** Fly-in at Old Sarum

**15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May** Northampton Microlight Club Fly-in, Kimbolton

**3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July** Wye Valley Fliers fly-in at Broadmeadow Farm

**9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> July** PFA Rally Kemble Airfield

**10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> July** "Wings and Wheels", Fish Meadow, Upton-on-Severn. Includes a Microlight Fly-in PPR only. Contact Aerolite on 07770 680195

**Bill Austin (Editor)**

**01684 833484**

**[bill@austin65.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:bill@austin65.freeserve.co.uk)**