



SEVERN VALLEY MICROLIGHT CLUB

AIRSCREW

August 2017

Hello again and welcome to the August edition of Airscrew. We have a bumper issue for you this month, with the main feature being a report on the SVMC Expedition to France, penned by my own fair hand. No articles have been received from the membership (yet) so if you have a story to tell then send it to me at trevorjackson087@gmail.com and I will include it in next months' edition of Airscrew.

Trev the Editor

As promised in the July edition of Airscrew, here is the second instalment of the SVMC Summer Expedition to Belgium and France. From the original five aircraft, and then down to three for 'the rehearsal' (actually an aborted attempt due to weather), we were now down to just two. Myself Trev Jackson in my Skyranger G-CCSX and Jon Ingram in his Escapade G-CGNH, with Steve Sykes as navigator (and translator). We decided that as we were 'going continental' we should adopt appropriate names, so I became Pierre, John became Jon Claude and Steve as Marcel. The trip went as follows:

Day 1. Saturday 1st July. Gloucester to Headcorn – Calais – Abbeville.

Under low and broken cloud we set off from Over Farm and Chase respectively. Forming up over Chase we started our first leg of the flight using Popham as our first waypoint. As we progressed, the weather gradually began to improve and after a couple of hours arrived at Headcorn for fuel, food and flight plan filing. The landing fee is now £13:50, which I think is a bit excessive for a microlight, but they have what can be described 'a captive audience', it's either these or Lydd ! They have also 'declined' to pay the CAA fee for the privilege of filing flight plans on customers behalf, so individuals are left to their own devices. Fortunately John, sorry Jon Claude had foreseen this and was familiar with filing a flightplan using Skydemon. This is a new toy for me so I was eager to learn. Confirmation was quickly received, again through Skydemon so we were on our way. It's probably worth mentioning that if you are considering dropping into Headcorn for a tasty and healthy lunch, forget it, all you will get is cholesterol laden junk which passes for food in today's fast food cafeterias. After departure we changed frequency to London information and activated our respective flight plans. Due to the continuing low - ish cloud we could not get much higher than a couple of thousand feet but we could maintain visual contact and VMC minima. As is procedure, we changed frequency mid channel to Lille, although try as I might, I could not establish contact, so I just tucked in closer to Jon Claude and Marcel. On crossing the French coast, we again changed frequency to Calais, where, since the facility has been withdrawn due to reduced Government funding at Abbeville, we would

have to land and go through customs etc. The radio conversation with Calais was, shall we say 'sketchy' and after landing and booking in we found we had been talking to the security bloke. The airport was closed, no staff, no customs, just one security bloke! Who still took the landing fee off us although it was only about five Euros I believe. After that was done we took off for what was a relatively short flight, south to Abbeville where we landed, secured the aircraft, pitched our tents and enjoyed our first (of many) French beers. Then it started to rain. Much has changed since I was last at Abbeville. The whole place has undergone a makeover and it is now very posh and inevitably, the prices have risen also to pay for it! We booked a table and after a freshen up (in the rain) we repaired to the restaurant for dinner. The menu was beef, steak or more beef, with something else I could not pronounce and the waiter could not quite describe. I ordered the indescribable item and was presented with what we in Engleterre might call 'a horses willie'. Keeping a British stiff upper lip I gave it my best shot and after 45 minutes or so I gave up trying to chew my way through this local delicacy.

Day 2. Abbeville to Arras 23 miles – Cambrai- Dieppe (well that was the plan)

The day dawned with more rain and a leaden sky. We discussed options over breakfast in the restaurant, which of course would be dictated by the weather. The forecast predicted a lifting of the cloud base around 3 PM but a 'clag' remaining along the north coast for the rest of the day. So the plan was to get to Arras as soon as the weather improved and then tailor the plan, as and when the weather improved. As 3 PM approached, the cloud did lift a little so all packed up – we departed Abbeville and 22 minutes later were approaching Arras, which seemed to be unexpectedly busy! And no wonder, this was the Arras Roclincourt annual microlight flying club Barbie! We were of course too late for lunch but were made to feel very welcome. In stumbling French we tried to explain what we were doing and would it be possible to get fuel? Nothing was too much trouble and soon we were fuelled up and ready for anything. But what? We had no idea what (if anything) awaited us at Cambrai and Dieppe was likely to be clagged in, so I suggested that if we could get permission, why not just camp at Arras ?? This was agreed and Marcel went off to ask if that would be OK and could we arrange a taxi into town, as food was becoming something a little more urgent. Our hosts said yes it would be no problem to stay over, in fact we could have real beds up in the accommodation block ! Brilliant ! Not only that but one of the flying instructors would run us into town as he was going that way. And so it came about that we arrived in Arras town centre where a rock concert was in full blast, at a pavement restaurant having a great meal and beers !



As the band died down, a drum group started up and performed almost in front of us! As it was getting late it was decided to find a taxi and get back to the airfield, which we duly did, arriving to find a few die hards inviting us for a nightcap. Unfortunately the accommodation block key could not be found but it was arranged for us to occupy the club house offices if we were happy to sleep on the floor. No problem. I was relegated to the upstairs – being a Grandefler (snorer). The next morning our hosts even brought us breakfast in the shape of croissants !

Day3. Monday July 3. Arras Roclincourt – Cambrai – somewhere else.

Looking at the weather forecast we could see that the conditions were looking a lot better down south. So the plan was agreed, over to Cambrai, see what there was to see and then a long leg south around Paris and on to Mantes for fuel and lunch. As expected, there was not much to see at Cambrai, apart from a Spitfire in the hangar !



Spitfire at Cambrai

We couldn't agree on the Mark but my money is on a Mk19. The only other notable feature of Cambrai was the combined military offensive, which had had happened in 1917 and we were just too late. With a freshening wind from the south, we set off for Mantes. An hour and 48 minutes later we approached the Mantes gliding club field. They were quite active so without further ado, we landed and went hunting for food and fuel. Well, there was no food to be had and town was about an hours' walk. Much discussion ensued about fuel as strictly speaking, their fuel stocks were only for club aircraft. However, after some negotiation, we managed to scrounge 30 litres for each aircraft and we were on our way – to Chartres. A very friendly welcome was received and arrangements were made to get us to a hotel in town, where once again we ate dinner 'al fresco', accompanied by several 'Leffe' beers at 10 Euros (about ten quid) a half litre (about a pint !) I will never again complain about the £3:50 a pint in my local pub! Our hotel was very nice but the hot

shower I had looked forward to was somewhat marred by the shower head wandering off to one side every time I needed it on me.



Chartres Cathedral

Day4. Chartes to Blois (lunch) and then on to Samour Skydiving Centre.

Departing Chartres, we overflew the town with its wonderful architecture and meandered down the River Loire, Chateaux spotting on the way. Landing at Blois was uneventful, there was even a Microlight event going on ! I had been to Blois about eight years ago but I didn't recognise a thing, maybe back then we were over the other side from the terminal/restaurant etc. In a lovely airport restaurant we had a great lunch and idly sat about till the thermals died down. Airborne once again we enjoyed a leisurely flight and after an hour and 15 minutes of sightseeing we were approaching Samour airfield. This a heavily wooded area and we were aware that Samour is a very popular skydiving centre, so careful circuit procedure was essential. With Jon Claude leading we joined for a right hand down wind position, with Marcel doing French impressions on the radio. When they were on short final, suddenly parachutes appeared right on their nose, causing Marcel to exclaim something very un-French as they aborted the landing (and so did I), causing us to do a 360 degree turn and try again. Now when I see parachutes I immediately think 'Jump ship', after all, they had to come from somewhere ! But try as I might I could not visually acquire their jump ship. After landing we taxied to the 'airport' side of the airfield and shut down. Within minutes a Pilatus Turbo Porter taxied n and shut down. I have always been fascinated by this aircraft and walked across to have a

closer look. A gangly young man emerged, who it turned out, was called Valentine who was hour building toward his commercial pilot's licence. He offered to show me around the aircraft, as it wouldn't be needed for about an hour or so. Nothing was too much trouble, he explained the handling characteristics, the gotchas and even allowed me to sit in the pilot's seat as he described the rather dated instrument panel. Marcel wandered across and was given the tour also. Valentine asked what our plans were and after explaining that we were en route to La Baule, we were seeking a hotel and food. He asked if we would prefer to stay at the Skydiving centre, which had beds and only cost 10 Euros a night ! Yup, that would do, so he arranged a pickup truck to take us and our kit across the airfield. After meeting some of the centre staff, we were introduced to a French American who organised a car to take us into town for dinner. And so it came about that once again we ended up having a great meal at an alfresco restaurant on a gorgeous warm evening. Our new friend had even arranged a pickup when we had eaten, by way of a quick phone call. After a lovely evening our transport arrived and we were given a lift back to our accommodation, what superb hospitality !



Marcel in the Turbo Pilatus and Valentine the pilot

Day 5. Samour to LaBaule. 126 miles 1 hour 25 minutes.

After a brief cup of coffee in the Skydiving centre, we bade our new friends Adieu and took off for La Baule but not before doing a minor beat up of the club house! Well, it would have been rude to not do at least one. I had loaned Marcel my GoPro camera for this leg and after a little sightseeing as we flew down the Loire, I formatted on their aircraft and Marcel had his first go at air to air filming. The results I will probably show at a Winter club night. Flying in shorts is certainly a novel experience that I have rarely tried in UK skies. It's just never warm enough! Anyway, after skirting a few towns, our master navigator led us into a very blustery LaBaule Aerodrome. Again, a very friendly welcome awaited us at the airport reception and the kind lady even organised a taxi to our hotel in town (booked in advance via Laterooms.com !). This hotel proved to be the most expensive yet, which is

really not that surprising as LaBaule is quite an upmarket resort. Unfortunately I had a wonky shower head in my room – again ! I suggested that rather than go to yet another restaurant for lunch/dinner, why not find a supermarket and buy the makings of a picnic, and eat it on the beach. And so it was that we tucked into cheese, baguette, hams and salami, washed down with copious amounts of wine, amid the sun kissed bodies of the LaBaule sun worshippers on the beach. Well, not quite on the beach, it was too hot so we elected for a shady spot back from the beach. In fact, we probably looked more like haggard Winos than holiday makers.

Day 6. LaBaule to Granville (via Mont St. Michael). 146 miles 1 hour 39 minutes.

After bulking up on a hotel breakfast (which cost extra), we ordered a taxi back to the airport. The weather, however, was not playing ball, with an overcast of no more than 800 feet. We were not the only ones to be held up though and I got into conversation with four Dutch folk who were also doing some touring, somewhat more salubriously though in their Cirrus SR22. They spoke excellent English, which was just as well as my Dutch is a tad rusty. As 1 PM approached, the forecast lifting of the cloud base began to appear and our Dutch friends were off without any more delay. Soon after, we were airborne also and Skydemon-ing our way to Granville. Approaching from the South, we did a tour of the harbour, promontory and beach before joining the circuit to land. Having parked up, our priorities were to book in and then have lunch. No one seemed much interested in our arrival, maybe they were already at lunch. Anyway, we found their delightful café and quenched our raging thirst with a few beers (LaChauffe this time. Actually nicer and a good sight cheaper than Leffe). The lady running the place even asked us to look after the shop while she dashed off to pick her son up from school ! Later, wandering back to the aircraft, we were met with a very excited Airport Official who, with much waving of arms informed us that we were parked across the end of a very active Microlight strip ! No problem Sir, we will move ! It was that easy ! After pitching the tents we decided that it was probably time to mosey along to the nearest town for dinner. Jon Claude led the way as he had been here before. This involved a respectable walk across the airfield and then along the beach, which was very pleasant really as it was so warm and relaxed. Another good meal was had, followed by a reversal of the route to get back to our waiting tents. Once again I was banished out of earshot, or so they thought, being La Grandfler! (the snoring one).



Another airfield, another beer.



Granville beach

Day 7. Granville to Dieppe. (via St Mere Eglise and the Invasion Beaches) 217 miles. 2 hours 42 minutes.

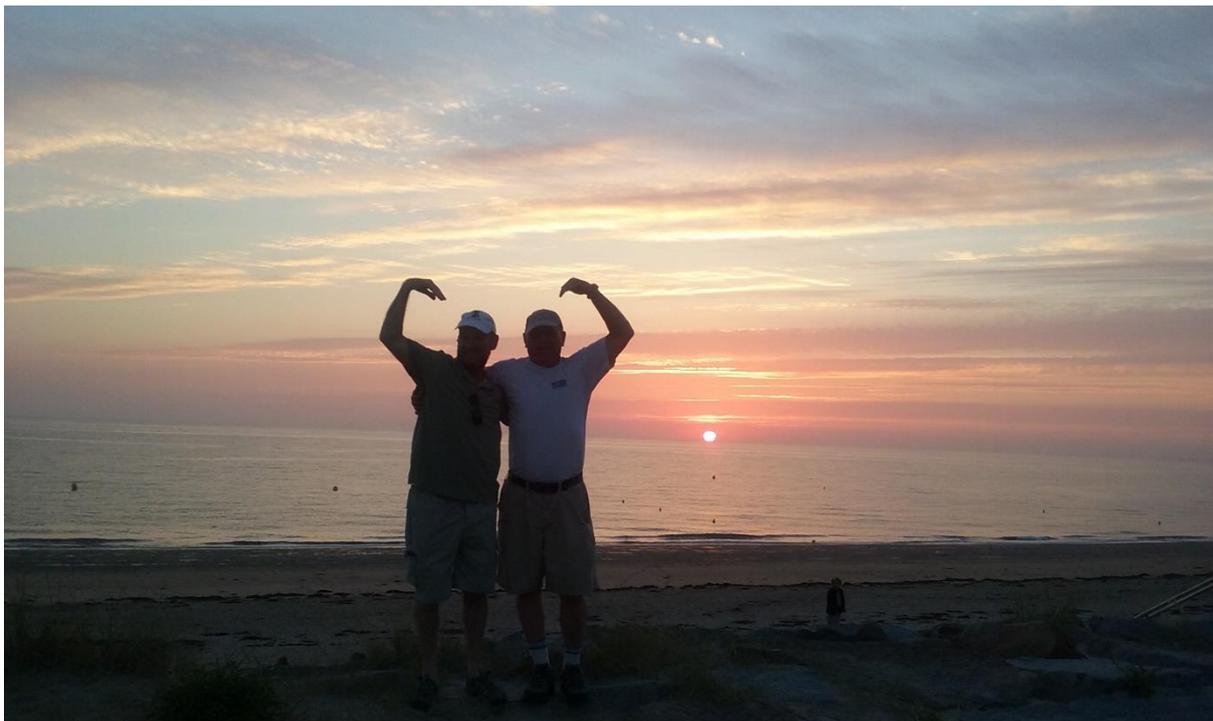
After packing up the tents and breakfasting at the Airport café, we departed Granville on a beautiful sunny morning. On approaching St. Mer Eglise I was looking for the reputed dummy of an American Paratrooper on the roof of one of the major buildings, and sure enough there he was !! Wow. This is based on a true story of the parachute drop during the night of 5/6 June 1944 when a large number of paratroopers were inadvertently dropped in the middle of town and were subsequently machine gunned to death by the German garrison stationed there. One chap played dead as he hung by his parachute from a roof and survived the experience. Hence the dummy on the roof. Turning east we soon reached the strip of sand known as Utah Beach, which actually turned out to be lightly defended back in 1944, unlike the next beach along – Omaha, which was a disaster, as anyone who has seen the film ‘Saving Private Ryan’ will know. Just inland stands the American War Cemetery with its row upon row of white crosses. Very moving. Further along we came upon the British and Canadian beaches, Gold, Juno and Sword as well as the remains of the Mulberry Harbours, which having seen them from the landward side many years ago, seem in far better condition when viewed from the seaward side ! Incredible after all these years. Turning inland, we skirted Deauville’s airspace and a couple of NOTAM’ed danger areas. Having been airborne for two hours I was starting to cramp up a bit, plus my fuel state was becoming a concern. I informed Jon Claude and our Master Navigator shortened our route accordingly. Approaching Dieppe, Marcel made the contact call in his best Franglais, only to be rebuked and told to pass his message in English ! OK, this he did only to be further harangued over point of origin and other minor details. Having landed safely we were directed to park next to a Robinson R44 helicopter, which we both objected to, given the crew were about to depart ! But no, we were to park where we had been told! After shutting down, we both manually pulled our aircraft forward onto the hard standing and held them down until the helicopter had departed, much to the annoyance of the lady in the tower who was screaming down at us. Having re-parked the aircraft, Marcel was elected to go up the tower and face the wrath of the wicked witch of Dieppe. He came back rather shaken, saying our aircraft were now pointing the wrong way, after which it was my turn to face the music. Using a bit of Psychology, I turned on my rarely used charm offensive, matching each rant with a profuse apology and wide smile. When she ran out of puff, I then paid my landing fee and even got her to organise a taxi to our hotel. This hotel was the cheapest we had experienced and guess what? the shower head remained stationary for the whole of my shower!! Happy days !! There followed a gentle stroll to the harbour area for dinner, with a bar with WiFi required en route to file our flight plans and GARs for the following day. Filing these on line is something new to me, having used the old paper/faxing method the last time I toured France. Beers ordered, we got down to the task in hand, with Jon Claude patiently walking me through the process. I was not at all sure about all this and stayed my assault on my beer till it was all done. For those of you who have seen the last part of the movie ‘Ice cold in Alex’ with John Mills licking his lips over a cold beer after having driven across the Libyan desert in a knackered old ambulance, you will have some idea of what happened next ! PING – flight plan and GAR accepted – GULP ! Followed by another lovely meal and more beers – then bed.

Day 8. Granville to Headcorn – then home. 137 miles and 1 hour 47 and 148 miles and 2 hours respectively.

If we had thought our encounter with the unhinged tower lady was over, we were sadly mistaken. Needing fuel, she seized upon a full briefing on how to operate the fuel pump, how to record usage and how to pay for on completion. Just how we toured around France for a week without this knowledge I will just never know. I was first at the pumps and having followed the instructions to the

letter (I could feel the binoculars boring a hole in the back of my head), I pulled SX forward to clear the pumps. Ascending the tower steps felt like ascending a scaffold but once again I greeted her with a wide grin and got out of there ASAP. She did mention that since their customs function had been withdrawn, they didn't get many UK registered aircraft through. Hmmmmm. Then I met the second mad person at Dieppe airport, a guy from the adjacent parachute club who was screaming that I must move SX immediately as there were parachutists descending and would land adjacent to the pumps! I just grinned back and OK no problem, OK no problem. He then invited us over to the club for coffee before we left!

Being back at the north coast, the weather was back to being low scudding cloud as we tracked up to our first turning point – Abbeville, then north to skirt Le Touquet where we attempted to activate our flight plans without success, the controller was just too busy, and he really was as we could hear that he had about six British aircraft inbound to him and he was indeed a busy bunny. We chopped to Lille and they did the business just as we approached the coast at Cap Griz Nez. I would like to say the channel crossing was a pleasant experience but with the low cloud and poor visibility, it was a real bum clencher. And it was so comforting to hear an unruffled English voice from London Information who was monitoring our safe crossing. Going to Headcorn's frequency we could hear how busy they were too, as this was their Annual Open Day! We landed safely with a Spitfire (amongst others) waiting to take off, I've never done that before! On booking in we were told that unless we got out by 14:00 we would be stuck till 17:30 when the flying display was over. A quick glug of tea and we were off! The rest of the return trip was fairly uneventful. Our courses diverted as we passed overhead Clench Common but we kept on the same frequency 'just in case'. After landing at Chase and shutting down, one of the other flyers said 'been anywhere nice', 'Yes' I replied, 'France'!



A picture is worth a thousand words !

Footnote. My thanks to Jon Ingram (Jon Claude) and Steve Sykes (Marcel) for their help and companionship throughout the trip and for making it such a memorable experience. Trev Jackson (Pierre) Skyranger G-CCSX



Fly in Season – And what is Brockengespenst

So it's gone from good to almost non-existent – flying weather that is. I was out and about on Thursday 10th August and on my way home thought that the air was finally OK for flying so I dropped in at Over Farm to see what the wind sock was doing. Myron turned up to fly what, for him, is an annual pilgrimage to the Black Mountains and the ridges he knew well from his hang gliding days. I ended up tagging along and it turned into one of those magical flights you get all too infrequently. As there were no thermals around we spent some time beating mountain ridges looking for lift. When we got bored with that there was some serious cloud forming up around the Brecons so we climbed up to 6500 feet or so to see what the tops looked like. What a treat, dancing on top of the lower ones then finding taller stacks to rotate around. And then Myron said something I didn't understand 'Brockengespenst' (*That's not exactly how Myron said it!*). He said '*look down there*' and we had a perfect silhouette of Juliet Tango on the cloud surrounded by a circular rainbow - magic. All I had was my phone camera to capture this so it's not exactly an award winner! None the less - a Broken Specter from a plane, something I have never seen before, mainly because the climb rate of the Blade would take too long to get that high. It topped off a perfect hour and a half or so flying.



Magic – absolute magic. Get your planes out of the hangars and fly folks It's always good but just occasionally you have these almost biblical moments which wipe all your troubles away and answers the question, why do I fly ?



We found a hole in the cloud over towards Crickhowell and dropped back down and headed home the air was clear and not a cloud in sight. And all this variation in our own back yard...

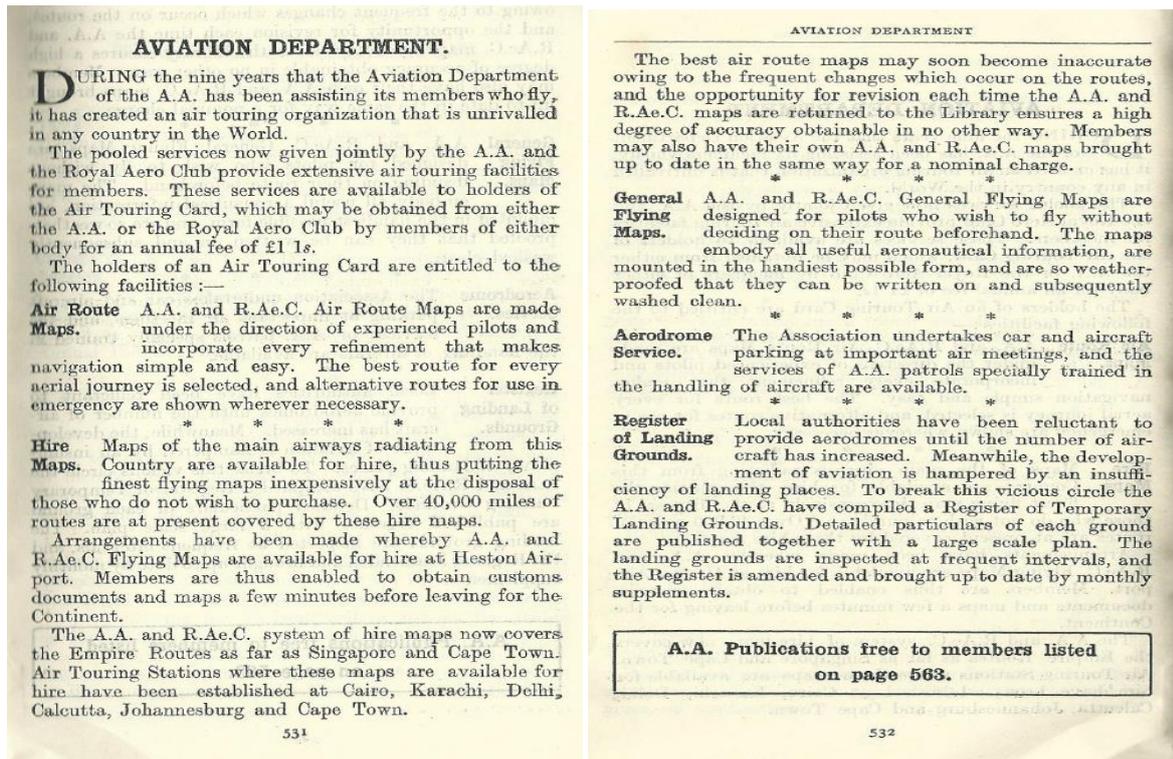


Footnote. I had a flight to do, and Sunday 13th came good so I took a friend's daughter Emelia (16) for her first flight. She was totally unfazed by the experience so I went Flex cloud chasing. Over 6500 feet above the Malvern's and we were both perished – and the layering wasn't brilliant – still we did get there. So you 3-axis flyers with your heaters and enclosed cabins should think yourselves lucky you can go cloud chasing anytime without any side effects. Let's see those special films for the web site please

Not a lot of people know this...

I am in clear up mode at the moment and finding stuff that I didn't know I had, and even less likely to know where it came from. I found a 1937-38 copy of the Automobile Association Handbook which in itself was an interesting retrospective on post war motoring – but guess what...Not only was the AA providing motoring services but because no one else was they teamed up with the Royal Aero Club to provide an Air Touring Card!! Read on and imagine

a world where £1 and 1s would buy you all maps and support you needed to go flying (around £60 to £70 in today's money).



Fairford – What's this then? - Picture 1.

I always know when Fairford is on because of the volume of planes transiting between May Hill and Malvern. In recent years I have been in the habit of riding my motor bike up to Fairford and coming in via Burford to get to the perimeter road where runway 27 starts - then we simply park and watch for free. This year the weather was very good so I thought it was about time I paid the money and went in. So on the Friday I did just that. I will run a few of these photos through my monthly Airscrew article to prepare you all for what will be an Xmas competition.

