

WYE VALLEY FLYERS NEWSLETTER JULY 04

Incorporating Broadmeadow Flying Club

Editor: Merv Middleton e-mail merv@middletons.flyer.co.uk

6th Edition

Editorial Comment Speaking for my self I have had an excellent 2 months of flying, a quick log book check shows 31 hours for May and 30 hours for June. I only hope July continues in the same vein. The Spamfield IOW Fly-in was poorly attended by Club members probably due to the bad weather; I flew in on the Friday night to complete the Fly UK Rally of visiting John O'Groats and Lands End (might tell the story next month). The only other Club flying visitor I am aware of was Spence and Val who made a weekend of it, although John H was seen departing south on the Sunday... Shame about the weather which undermined Russell's admirable efforts in driving over with BBQ, tents etc lets hope the PFA Rally Kemble is good weather, speaking of which I will place copies of the yellow AIC (mandatory to be possession) in the BFC cabin.



Above: Poole harbour and the Solent from 3500ft en-route direct from Lands End to Spamfield, late evening with a 20mph tail wind.

Blois Part 2 By Spencer was going to go here but it has yet to be produced... Suggest you hound him when you next see him otherwise we are in danger of having done the 2004 trip whilst still waiting for the 2003 story...

Just before Bill went flying the other day I was winding him up over telling the story of his recent dramas. Thinking nothing more of it I jumped on the tractor and started cutting the airfield grass, Graham and Judy flew in and I was aware of the Chevron with Bill circling around. Never occurred to me Bill wanted to land, I waited for him to make his approach and would have pulled over – honest. He in turned circled and cursed! Once landed he

was firmly convinced it was punishment for not putting pen to paper – it obviously worked as he went home and wrote! Titled; Merv get off my back and the tractor off the runway!

Dramas in a Chevron By Bill Fletcher

Well here we are Pilling near Fleetwood rather than Kirkbride to do some Chevron conversion training, Ian Hogg having been deposed from his excellent training field by a new owner who wants helicopters not microlights. First problem is getting Chevron to accept it's wings which it's reluctant to do, five helpers and an hour later we discover a cable and plug from a redundant strobe system are trapped in the mating joints. Hey presto the bits fix together we can fly. Ah! We are too heavy from grass and the field is not licensed for training so off with my bucket and spade to the beach whilst Ian flies to meet me. All strapped in it goes well with some landings, keeping clear of the cars and van stranded in the soft sand from ill conceived forays onto the beach with an incoming tide. The flight completed with a nice landing back at the field, in compliance with planning requirements. Off to the chip shop for sustenance whilst Ian instructs another delinquent and I rest. Then as the evening draws to a still conclusion Ian and I repeat the program. A slight delay whilst I wait patiently on the beach, the battery is flat on the Chevron but Ian manages to jump start it from his car. All is well but now the sun is low over the beach and I find it increasingly difficult to judge undulations on the beach and movement of cloud over it and the tide is coming in. So to call things to an enjoyable conclusion we decide to fly along the sea wall around the headland and down the inlet and back to base. Specially designed I suspect to get me to fly over water. I can smell fuel, no you cant, yes I can, so can I, the props stopped. Down we go for an emergency landing on a now foreshortened beach. Ian exits the plane, "switch on fuel pump", fuel is pouring from the cowling. On my plane the engine cover is secured with twist fastenings, Ian's has Philips head screws, a bit of head scratching from Ian as I consider the probability of outrunning the advancing tide. We are in luck Ian has the fuel tester onboard with screwdriver end. The cowling is swiftly removed and the source of the leak, disconnected fuel pipe, identified. Two minutes and the pipe is reconnected. Will it start, not at the field it wouldn't, and we hadn't charged the battery, as Ian has no charger on his plane. The power is with us and as the sea moves swiftly to engulf us we are

off. A reviewed flight plan has us transiting immediately inland with Ian pointing out our proposed landing site. Those wisps of cloud are very low. "Do a descending left hand and line up with the runway". First stage flaps, note the wires at the end of the runway, which a previous chevron had visited on its way to the hereafter land. The farmer has also been busy today making pretty patterns in the fields. He has got a good two-foot ridge over his spuds at ninety degrees to our passage. I cant see can you? Blasted condensation, it's on the outside. Take off some power, keep straight, not that much, I've not taken any more off, it's gone quiet again. Best gliding speed is 39-40 Knots we are doing 41. Ian looks out one side and me the other, he's in control!! Now, can we make it over the wires? We can't see to go under, I call out the speed, Ian keeps us flying and thanks to the chevrons gliding abilities gets us down in one piece. A quick examination shows the carb to be well iced up. Time to put the plane to bed and for me to enjoy a leisurely three and a half hour drive to arrive home approaching one AM with two emergency landings in a day.

ROUND SCOTLAND AIR RALLY 28 – 30 MAY 04

Following the demise of the Round Britain Microlight Rally the organisers of the Perth Airport Open Day, in conjunction with the Scottish Aeroclub decided to hold a Round Scotland Microlight Rally to be conducted on similar lines but with the introduction of a handicap system for the 4 stroke machines. Originally Graham and I decided to team up and compete in his Eurostar as we used mine for the Round Britain Rally, events conspired against Graham and he contracted a stomach bug and was bed bound (I also hear he was pretty unbearable, especially when we rang back and said the weather was great – lies!). So I decided to try it solo in my Eurostar.

In the end Eddie Clapham and Bill Moody flew over to Broadmeadow, and along with Brian and myself, three Eurostars headed North on Thursday 27th May. Initially the visibility was poor but rapidly cleared as we approached the Manchester low level corridor, which we transited in bouncy thermic conditions. Climbing up slowly to 4500ft we passed over the Lake District overhead Windermere and Ulswater, watching a glider struggle for lift well below, then direct to Cumbernauld slipping between and under Edinburgh and Glasgow Airspace before the right turn and straight too Perth. We landed in a stiff SE wind and glorious sunshine after a flight off 3hrs 31 mins and 36 litres of fuel – average IAS of 90mph. Tent pitched, pub meal and an early night completed the day's activity and as good a days flying you could wish for.

The Rally started on the morning of the 28th May and ended at Perth on the afternoon of the 29th May with the overnight stop either in Oban or back in Perth. Registration was at 0800 (aircraft documents, licence and £500,000 insurance), no information was released until the 0900 briefing when a package of airfields to visit, ground markers, timed gate and take off and landing in a 100metre box was revealed. Many of the airfields were private strips not marked on the map, small in size and difficult to find or at the other end of the scale like Benbecula or Stornaway. Each worth differing points, generally higher as you went more out into the wilderness!



Cullins of Skye en-route to Rum – West coast of Scotland

Frantic map plotting (must thank Jan Hucker for his guidance) soon identified most of the airfields and markers, with a large number in close proximity to Perth, about 50 miles radius which definitely favoured the Flexwings and local knowledge. The weather forecast was pretty grim with a static low situated across central Scotland and an occluded front moving in from the West. Visibility was generally poor and forecast to deteriorate later with rain and increasing wind from the South – you could say typically Scottish!

With such a poor forecast and never having competed solo before, (GPS banned) I had decided to grab as many of the local fields in the East where the visibility was best and stay within striking distance of Perth to avoid disqualification if unable to make the right stop. Plus I had vague memories of many of the airfields having East / West aligned runways which in an increasing Southerly wind would become difficult later. This I concluded meant a quick start, fly fast and keep my return options open. My route planning hastily completed, basically joining up all the airfields and markers, annotating the points available, quick measurement of distance and rough bearings and out to the plane, start up, departure info and taxi.

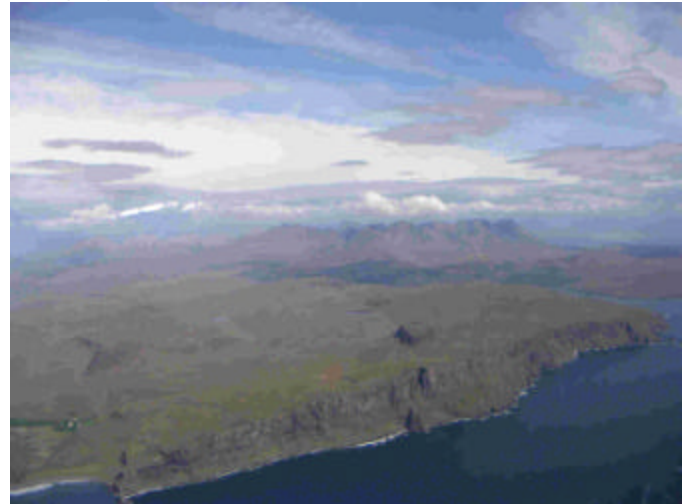
First the 100 metre box departure with penalty points, I was second away, full power, brakes off, drop the flaps and flying in 73 metres. First time I had attempted it, better than many of the flex wings and only afterwards did I realise bonus points for getting away under 100m. I headed South to Fife, 250 points and was booking in within 20mins and in rapid succession Kingsmuir 300 points (parachute club), over the water to East Fortune 400 points (Aviation Museum), Winfield 300 points (old fighter base), and Charterhall 300 points within 90 mins. By now the wind was blowing 15mph from the South and turbulent, I could hear flexwings doing go arounds on the radio, vindicating my rapid departure decision, and passed the weather conditions back to them.

In poor visibility and rain I headed West to a ground marker worth 800 points in the middle of nowhere – literally, high in the foot hills of central Southern Scotland, took 40 mins getting there having to circle around black thunderous clouds before finally finding a cloth panel in a field. With no way through the mountains to the West and Castle Kennedy I headed to the low ground North towards Glasgow and the glider field of Strathaven 450 points. I circled several times and made low passes before deciding where the runway was and even once landed failed to identify clearly if any existed! Long grass, gorse, rutted, etc made it the worst field if I have landed in to date, apologies to any reader who knows otherwise but it certainly confused me! I sat for 20 mins waiting for the torrential rain to move on, re-drawing the previous marker from its childish scrawl; it never did stop, so I got soaking anyway!

Quick phone call to Cumbernauld 250 points on the mobile confirmed it was open in marginal conditions but OK for a microlight... So 15 mins flying saw me slip around Glasgow and past Motherwell (more rain and cloud) and 30 litres of fuel in Cumbernauld. Listening to Perth Radio I realised conditions were worse there and a landing was out of the question for a few hours, so with nothing to loose I decided to head North and East and weave between the worse of the weather, and attempt to claim a few more airfields and markers on a opportune basis. Over the next few hours I managed to claim 2 more markers 250 points each, Crieff 300 points and numerous attempts at getting up the A9 towards Feshiebridge but thwarted by turbulence and cloud. I spent 40 mins looking for Finavon 350 points, in the Southern Cairngorms never did find it but was positive I was at the correct Lat and Long given. At the end of the Rally I discovered the co-ordinates were wrong and numerous pilots had spent ages circling the same piece of real estate – feel quite sorry for the poor farmer, ho hum.

By now the day was getting on I could hear aircraft calling Montrose 400 points, so I decided to move over the hills Eastwards to the coast. My ground speed was poor and with some quick time and distance I worked out I had a 25mph headwind at 2000ft running along the base of dark angry clouds, when several aircraft aborted I began to have second thoughts but nothing-ventured etc. Montrose was in the clear with a 15 mph wind not quite at right angles but no turbulence and a really long smooth grass runway, once landed the owner came over and I felt quite guilty turning down his offer of food and drink. Time was getting late and I had to be back in Perth by 1900hrs, this man had spent the whole day sat in rain and wind waiting for a few pilots to call in, that is true dedication and commitment. He even had petrol available, so with 40 litres loaded a high speed dash saw me in Perth after 30 mins landing with 10 mins to spare – the 100m box had been abandoned due to weather conditions, so all my worries and feeble practice attempts through out the day were all in vain!

That night we jumped into a taxi and visited Perth, had an excellent meal; full roast dinner from the carvery followed by the essential beer and a walk through the town centre. Back to the airfield and an early night, whilst trying to ignore the dark clouds hanging over our heads.



Skye – returning from Benbecula 4000ft and 25mph head wind.

I was up early Saturday morning and had the plane cleaned and checked long before the departure time of 0900hrs, all the time ignoring the mist, approaching drizzle and low cloud base, at least the wind was light! Departure time came and went with me sitting in my plane, engine warmed pondering where and when to go, most of the competitors were sat around and were clearly not intent on leaving. My options were limited almost everything to the South and East was in the bag already, direct North into the high mountains was not worth considering, so it was either ENE to the coast and out to the Orkneys and attempt the

coastal airfields en-route, the weather this way was forecast to be wind and rain. Or find a way through the rain and cloud out to the West and do the Hebrides where it was due to clear first but be very windy.

When Eddie announced he was going NE, I took off and departed to the West (just to be different and spread the Eurostars around!). Next followed an hour and a half of testing conditions, constant probing and circling, increasing heavy rain, and being pushed lower and lower, trapped over Loch Lomond for 20 mins and finally with great relief transiting the Firth of Clyde watching the bulk of Bute appear shrouded in cloud. Then as if by magic, a sudden flash of lights as the airfield lighting came on making identification easy, I was flying very slow with the flaps down all ready so simply lowered the nose and within seconds was on the ground and 400 points. No sooner done than the lights clicked off and the clouds descended, I climbed out of the plane, got drenched and walked over to the small wooden hut and thanked the 2 men inside for the lights. Back came the reply, "who are you, where have you come from!" Turned out they had not even heard me land, the lights came on totally by coincidence, the fuse had blown the previous day and been repaired, and they were testing it!

I sat in the cabin for 40 mins debating what to do next, gradually there was an improvement in visibility out came the mobile and a quick call to the SATCO on Benbecula, who informed me the cloud base was 3000ft plus and the sun was breaking through. When the 2 men said Eddie had departed in similar conditions the previous day I felt obliged to move on! Nothing like peer pressure! Within 25 mins I was in Gigha 400 points having passed over the Cambletown peninsula and rapidly breaking up clouds, 20 mins later on Islay 450 points and now committed. With a quick flight up to Oban, 400 points, over the Jura islands and 34 litres of mogas (yes Oban now has petrol on site), John Borrell came out with a welcome cup of tea and bacon sandwich – what a star. John is a member of the microlight club and the main man in the annual Haggisfield Fly-In, Eurostar owner and all round great character.

20 mins later I was on Glenforsa, Mull and 450 points having had 2 attempts to land, lots of turbulence and sink on final and a vicious cross wind. By now I was well clear of the cloud and in glorious sunshine, the mainland was obliterated by black angry clouds and I was feeling a lot happier – not smug, as at the back of my mind was the distant thought of having to get back to Perth that night... Taking off and heading for the South end of the Inner Hebrides I soon identified the wind was SSE at

20mph plus but was not too concerned as all my next fields had multiple runways. Tiree was next and 800 points, yippee big points, totally deserted not a soul around but the booking in sheets pinned on the Control Tower door, this was my fastest turn round, back in the air in under 2 mins.

Next on the agenda was Barra, 1000 points on the South end of the Outer Hebrides and 40 miles over the water; visibility was poor with a haze so the Island was not visible until quite late on. I spent anxious moments working out my drift not wishing to go straight out into the Atlantic! The previous wind observations proved correct and Barra appeared out of the haze dead ahead, quite a surreal airfield, all on hard packed sand, no markings, just choose your line, water on the left yards away and sand dunes to the right. Met by a lady in pristine BA uniform complete with high heels, who informed me the manager had gone home but I was expected, and she would stamp my sheet. My one main regret is in my hurry I failed to capture it on camera, but hey an excuse to go back!

Benbecula was next, along the Island chain for 23 mins (and further away from Perth) landing in 25mph winds with stronger gusts – thanks for the multiple runways. My biggest score of the day 1850 points, but a long way to come for 3 mins on the ground and 100miles into wind to get back to Oban for fuel, the airport manager having agreed to stay open if required – another star. With time now looking tight I abandoned plans to do Plockton and Broadford on Skye and straight line it 65 miles over water. 1 hr and 18 mins at max continuous, into wind at 4000ft saw me arrive at Oban, which I knew to be on radio but whilst I was receiving, I was not transmitting – deep gloom. I landed non-radio on a water logged runway and proceeded to check out the radio; switched headsets, transmit button, antenna but no obvious fault was identifiable. Time was getting on, I quickly called Perth Airport and asked for a non-radio join and was refused due to the ongoing Air Show (Perth was NOTAM at the time) and their operating restrictions. Out came Paul the airfield operator with John (previously mentioned) and in minutes the loan of a handheld radio, GA headset adaptor, and half metre whip antenna was arranged, as I refuelled with 36 litres of mogas. Where else could a stranger turn up and get such assistance in such a swift and trusting manner, without it all my flying over the 2 days would have been for nothing. Suffice to say, Oban will get my vote for the field of the year competition.

Following a quick radio check I was airborne and climbing over the mountains heading East for Perth, the cloudbase was at 3000ft and breaking up although there were numerous rain squalls around,

at least the wind was decreasing as I moved East. As the mountain tops went up to 4000ft I weaved my way through the valleys at speed doing time and distance sums in my head, map reading, observing, flying the plane and been bounced around by rotor. I landed in Perth after 59 mins with 15 mins to spare, the improvised radio having worked a treat, phew! I closed down the engine, went and booked in, claiming my 300 points for Perth. Minutes later Eddie and Bill landed, cutting it even finer having spent the day in the far North of Scotland and the Orkneys.

In the evening I sank a few beers (well lots actually) in the beer tent, enjoyed the hog roast and the company of Brian, and the Shobdon boys – Colin Laskey, Phil Whitmore to name a few and avoided being dragged on to the dance floor by Jane, Gordon Yule's wife who was performing well with the encouragement of the local folk music group. The next morning after the awards ceremony Brian and I flew over to Oban to return the borrowed radio equipment, (loose connection in the Intercom plug was the problem – must have been all the shaking around!). Whilst Eddie and Bill headed home down the East coast, we left Oban in a rain storm (yes it was raining again) and headed down the West coast flying direct to Broadmeadow in 3 hrs 59mins with the aid of a tail wind component the last hundred miles.

So ended a fantastic 4 day trip, 21hrs 15mins of flying, every weather condition imaginable, friendly hospitable people, and well organised. Yes it was stressful at times, and arguably pushing my luck, but it was my choice – the beauty of flying, lots of map study and planning paid dividends and a good dose of luck! The handicap system proved itself with many of the flexwings and 2 stroke machines doing very well, flexwing 4 strokes having 10% of total marks removed and 3-axis 4 strokes 20%. The Eurostar proved a very capable and competitive machine, fast, economical, forgiving, stable and strong. Flying fast in poor visibility whilst map reading being made easier by the superb visibility and draught free cockpit, the engine never missed a beat (thank god!), used no oil and within half an hour of landing the airframe had cleaned up well, probably due to the fact it was constantly being cleaned in the rain!

Oh yes, by good fortune I won – first in class (solo 3 axis) and first overall, with Eddie and Bill first in class (dual 3 axis) and second overall. Anyone on for next year?

Aviators Digest – Titbits Keep in the back of your minds the restricted airspace around Farnborough for the Air Show, quite a lengthy period 12 – 26 July

04. It is a very large NOTAM almost reaching Popham to the west.

The plans for our flight to Portugal to visit Castelo Branco and the European Microlight Championship are firming up. At this time we have Spence and Val in the Quik, John H plus one in the Skyranger, Eddie Clapham, Judy and Graham, Brian C and Merv in 4 Eurostars. Going for a 10 day period starting 23 July of about 2750 miles with the intention of returning up the east side of France and possibly over Mont Blanc...

Late news The BFC / WVF Fly-In was postponed from the Saturday to the Sunday 04 July 04 at the last minute by strong winds. Conditions improved as the day went on but I suspect many of our potential visitors were unaware of the change. Plus the Sunday saw several other Fly-Ins not least the annual visit to Lundy, (almost abandoned ship my self and went to Lundy – but resisted). In the end we had 31 visiting aircraft of quite a variety and a fairly successful day. John H and myself were kept busy flying visitors and guests around; I flew 5hrs 5mins in the end. Russ was unbearable on the Saturday but once the aircraft started to arrive he relaxed and was in his element – we all owe him our thanks for his efforts. This also applies to all the wife's and girls who gave their time and prepared food.

Social Fixtures Until the autumn WVF and BFC Club members meet at Broadmeadow Airfield on the first Thursday of every month about 2000hours. Any like-minded aviators, are welcome to drive or fly, why not socialize and join us for a drink?

Comment Grateful if anyone out there can put pen to paper, stories, snippets anything. Be aware I will probably do a couple of more newsletters but if I get no more contributions will terminate – it is a real pain having to hassle people; and is boring writing up things I have done. Give me a call or e-mail.

Regards Merv.