Whatever you do, don’t breathe out together

THERE are moments in a pilot’s life we never forget. The first time I took the controls, did a gentle turn to the left, and realised that they worked exactly as Biggles had described.

And of course the first solo, when you sit at the end of the runway, look across at the empty right-hand seat, and nervously open the throttle. Then passing your GST, feeling that at last you’ve achieved your childhood ambition of learning to fly.

And now, to that pantheon of personal highlights, I add my first flight after the last lockdown, in our syndicate Foxbat.

I was as nervous as a cat at a dog convention, not just because it was the first time I’d flown since the end of November, but because Ken, the Supreme Being of Fixed-Wing Microlighting at Newtownards International Airport, doesn’t suffer flying fools gladly. But it couldn’t have gone better, with two tidy circuits and a PPL.

“I’m very impressed by your flying skills, Lofty,” said Ken, which coming from Ken means a lot.

I drove home as happy as a dog at a cat convention, and had several glasses of wine to celebrate.

As opposed to the several glasses of wine I normally have, that is.

To celebrate, a few days later I headed off to St Angelo on the shores of Lough Erne in G-CEZE, aka Cheez, our new syndicate Skyranger, with newish syndicate member Graham Mounsey, former BA Training Captain and all-round good bloke, if slightly bonkers. Which is all of us, now that I think of it.

Being a proper pilot, he phoned up the night before the flight to check what weight I was so he could work out the amount of fuel we needed.

“You’re very wise to ask, since with two large blokes and a reasonable amount of fuel, all heavier microights are a bit, er, full fat,” I said.

“It’s only a problem except when you crash, in which case you have to drag the body of your P2 into the hedge and when the cops arrive, claim you’ve never seen him before, and say you hit him on roundout.”

“We’ll be okay as long as we take deep breaths. When you breathe out you get heavier, which is why you sink in the swimming pool when you breathe out,” he said.

As I said, slightly bonkers. And a good thing too.

Geoff Hill
ghillster@gmail.com
GREAT to be back in the air, isn’t it? It shows in the sheer exuberance of some of the 12 photos we’ve got in the competition postbag this month, which we have no doubt will be doubled and more over the summer. And you don’t get much more exuberant than green, white and pink, the colours of the wing that Tim Jerry flies. A worthy winner, we think.

First  Tim Jerry, “Orwell bridge” (above right)
Tim over the Orwell Bridge near Ipswich, which was named after the river which flows beneath it rather than George. If only it had been built two years later than 1982. “I fly out of Great Oakley near Harwich, Essex, an excellent airfield and easy to find with the coast and Stour and Orwell estuaries nearby,” said Tim.

Second  Steve Grimshaw, “Winter wonderland” (immediate right)
“Taken in April over the Pennines near the very appropriately named Winter Hill. Great to get back flying again, despite the unusually cold conditions,” said Steve.

Third  Michael Stalker, “Glencoe” (far right)
Michael heading home to Strathaven after a bimble to Plockton, with the customary visits to Glencoe and Ben Lomond en route.

Fourth  Giles Fowler, “Ladybower” (page 3)
Giles over the Ladybower reservoir in the Upper Derwent Valley in Derbyshire. You might recognise him from his YouTube videos of his PeaBee adventures, which are a frequent hit in eMF.

Fifth Geoffrey Coan, “Sandy” (above)
Geoffrey’s Quantum 912 at Sandy airfield at the end of a splendid day’s flying.
YES, yes, we know you’re all keen to get your sweaty paws on the new 600kg microlights, but all things come to those who sit and wait while drinking tea and eating Hobnobs in the clubhouse.

Anyway, although the full-fat flagships were supposed to be given the green light by the start of May, it’ll now be June at the earliest, according to BMAA CE Geoff Weighell. And since part of his name is weigh, he should know.

“Licence requirements, airworthiness requirements and manufacturing requirements are all well on the way to completion,” he said.

“There will be a substantial Question and Answer resource for members, as well as a publication giving the background of how we have arrived at final decisions and actions. These will be published ahead of the final implementation date. The hoped-for launch date was the start of May this year, but this has now slipped back and we expect that it will not happen until June at the earliest.

“This is disappointing and later than we hoped for, but better to get everything right from the start than get it wrong.”

The good news, though, is that as well as the UK’s 600kg machine specs being allied to the German and Czech ones, the BMAA is talking to manufacturers in the rest of the world to do the same, so that the import and export of 600kg types will be relatively seamless.

In other words, lots of new toys to play with.

Part of the expected differences training requirements for pilots wanting to fly 600kg microlights, meanwhile, will be to able demonstrate that they can calculate the position of the centre of gravity of their aircraft before each flight.

“Currently, aircraft approved to Section S cannot go outside the safe CofG range if loaded within placarded limits. It is likely that some 600kg fixed-wing types will not meet that requirement, and so calculation will be needed,” said Geoff.

“Mark Bailey, our Airworthiness Approval Engineer, has produced an excellent instructional video explaining how to make the CofG calculation, using a SkyRanger as an example.”

To see the video, google “BMAA Centre of Gravity Calculation Guide.” The YouTube link should pop up at the top of the list.
Indian crisis hits P&M parts

With Albatross in lockdown due to the surge of Covid-19 in India, UK importer GS Aviation has struggled to get parts for P&M aircraft into this country.

“We have a shipment of airframe tube and parts at Heathrow now awaiting release. This I hope includes GT450 front leading-edge tubes,” Graham Slater told customers in early May.

“Once we have them at Clench, we can inspect and let all customers know that they are available for collection. We will not ship tubing in the UK, as they are very liable to damage.

“I appreciate your patience on the issue of these parts, as it has been an ongoing issue for months trying to get them to the UK.

“It is my hope that once we get over the Covid problems that supply of parts will become smoother.

“We are still waiting for our QuikR demo trike to arrive, due to a limited number of flights from India.”

Keep it simple, stupid

THAT was the overwhelming response from the almost 1000 people who responded the CAA’s survey on general aviation.

The survey was aimed at understanding:

• How the CAA could help the GA community and its associated businesses and industries flourish after leaving EASA.

• The specific priorities of the GA community.

• How the CAA could engage with and work more efficiently, constructively...

More than 30 years flying experience; instructor since 2002

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and collaboratively with GA communities. The top three priorities from those who responded were:

- Simplification and rationalisation of GA flight crew licensing and flying training. Suggestions ranged from removing the range of licences and replacing them with one simple licence and a number of ratings, to changing the examination requirements for those training to become flying instructors.
- Protection and development of GA airfields. Many respondents were understandably concerned about the loss of airfields.
- Simplification and rationalisation of airworthiness and maintenance regulations.

Offering more proportionate regulation of GA medical requirements.

- Offering greater delegation to GA associations.

The CAA will now work on a plan to put the above in place. The Department for Transport has already published its roadmap for the future of GA at gov.uk/government/publications/general-aviation-roadmap.

Insurance: get a rebate

If like all of us you were grounded during lockdown, you should be able to get a rebate from your insurance company – but you’ll have to ask for it.

Following requests from some members, Geoff Weighell contacted two insurance brokers to ask if they offer any premium reduction to reflect the fact that for many weeks during the past year aircraft could not be used, and as a result created no flying risks.

“The response from both brokers is that some insurers are prepared to offer a rebate at the end of the policy term at renewal,” he said.

“They both suggest that when it comes to renewal, you ask for the rebate; it’s unlikely that you will automatically be offered it, and hopefully your insurer will be one of those who give it.

“This option is unlikely to be written into your policy, but the Financial Conduct Authority guidance for insurers is to treat policyholders fairly, and so that could lead to a rebate.”

CAA combines GA and drone teams

THE CAA General Aviation Unit (GAU) and Remotely Piloted Aircraft System Unit (RPAS) are to become one team.

Sophie O’Sullivan, the current interim head of the GAU and head of RPAS, will be the permanent head of the combined unit.

“Bringing the teams together over the past six months has shown there are many internal similarities on how the units run, and huge benefits for the external communities in working collaboratively on shared challenges,” she said.

“Those include the ability to collectively work together on airspace integration.”

The CAA said “This organisational change does not impact our management of airspace, nor does it impact our central services desk that process your applications.”

“How we make decisions within each team will not change, how we work with Government will not change, there is to be no change in any amount of resource assigned to technical work and any independence will not be lost.”

Duxford flings open its doors

THE fabulous Imperial War Museum at Duxford dusted off the cobwebs, oiled the locks and flung open its doors on 19 May.

All hangars and indoor exhibitions are now open to visitors, and tickets are on sale for Flying Days which will be taking place from May through to the autumn.

A new addition to the IWM Duxford calendar, Flying Days are themed events with flying displays over the airfield and entertaining activities on the ground.

On Sunday 6 June, a celebration of D-Day will see vintage ground activities and living history groups bring the 1940s to life with the chance for visitors to learn more about that remarkable seaborne invasion, with vintage aircraft, including Spitfires and Thunderbolts, taking to the skies over the former RAF base.

IWM Air Show Event Manager Phil Hood said: “Our new series of Flying Days will continue right through to the autumn, each one of which has been themed to ensure no two events are the same.”

“We also can’t wait to unveil the plans for our two summer airshows, which although they may feel slightly different to the norm, will entail hours of incredible entertainment in the skies.”

The Summer Air Show is 24-25 July, and the Battle of Britain Air Show 18-19 September.

Admission prices are adult £28.50, child £14.25 and concessions £22.

For details, visit iwm.org.uk

Also now open again is the RAF Museum at Cosford, rafmuseum.org.uk/cosford.

Wings Awards: do your bit

THE BMAA Wings award scheme has been running for almost three years, with several happy members getting their Bronze, Silver, Gold and Diamond awards.

But it’s become a victim of its own success, according to Geoff Weighell.

“The scheme was originally set up by the BMAA staff and is now managed in-house as time permits. We have reached a point where there is really not enough staff time to develop the scheme, add new achievements and develop new courses,” he said.

“In response to several comments from members, we believe the way ahead is to create a voluntary BMAA-Wings Team to take over the development of the scheme to help it grow and become more successful.”

“We already have a couple of volunteers; if you would like to be part of the team, please let us know by completing the form on the BMAA website’s Volunteers and Roles page.”

Don’t go out with a bang

Or if you do, don’t take a paramedic with you.

As you may remember, after AAIB concerns about the potential danger to emergency services and first responders from non-deployed ballistic parachutes in crashed aircraft, the CAA insists that

D>
We can usually secure standard rates with life insurance.

Without specialist advice microlight pilots can often face significant premium increases when applying.

Aero grounded

AERO, Europe’s biggest General Aviation show, has been cancelled for 2021 because of Coronavirus travel restrictions.

After being cancelled last year, the 2021 show in Friedrichshafen was originally planned for 27-30 April, then moved back to 14-17 July, but now it won’t happen at all.

Aero chief Roland Boich said: “It is with a heavy heart that we have made this decision.

“The current pandemic situation does not allow us to hold a trade show at the moment.”

The 2022 show is planned for 27-30 April. Details will be at aero-expo.com.

Willie soars to success

EAST of Scotland Microlights CFI Gordon Douglas has discovered a sure fire cure for indigestion – just take a Rennie.

In this case, Scottish Lib Dem leader Willie Rennie, who visited East Fortune during a whistle stop tour from the south of Scotland to the Highlands just before the Scottish Parliament elections.

And his flight with Gordon in the school’s GT450 worked a treat, since the next day he doubled his majority in North East Fife.

Cornwall clampdown

FLYING in the whole of Cornwall is being restricted during the G7 conference, 11-13 June.

If you’re planning to fly there during that period, keep an eye on Notams.

Every cloud and all that

CRAIG Richardson, the mastermind behind the aviation site Touchdown Radio, which has monthly competitions to win prizes such as a £250 flight training voucher or a tank of fuel, has now launched the Cumulus Club as a networking site for GA, including microlighting.

“Craig added our banner to his website, which gets circulated on his website pages approximately 700 times a day,” said BMAA Marketing & Promotions Coordinator Amanda Lord.

He also offered an early sign-up promotion to anyone who was a BMAA member of 30% off if they advertised on the website.

“Amy BMAA member can take advantage of free signup as a partner on the Cumulus Club website and offer any services or products. Here you can offer your own discounts on landing fees, trial flights, T-shirts, a cup of tea... whatever you want to.

“Craig and his team do not take any kickbacks, commissions etc. Any BMAA partnering companies take 100% of what they are able to sell direct to the Cumulus Club members, and in addition they also give the partners selected free advertising on Touchdown Radio when we advertise the Cumulus Club.

Aircraft fitted with them should have a placard saying so. It’s now extended that to SSDRs, so if you’ve got one with a parachute, get a placard from the BMAA Tech Office.

“Interestingly, on the website, they’re listed under BMAA collectable!” said Chief Inspector Rob Mott.

Well, naturally. Morey: everything that comes out of the tech office is collectable.

Coronafriendly congratulations from Capt Braders for Craig Fairman after Craig’s first solo at Dairy House Farm; and a very happy Simon Allerton after his first solo in the C42
Dandown has been a revelation,” said Dan.

“With over 700 pizzas served to pilots in just 10 days, I’ve been forced to install two more pizza ovens in time for Spam-fest and the summer.”

“It’s a good thing 600kg is on the way, as pilots will likely be filling more than just their fuel tanks on future visits to the isle of Wight, the BMAA’s new open air canteen,” said MF’s Brendan Digney.

Pipistrel goes heavy

SLOVENIAN microlight manufacturer Pipistrel has signed a deal with China’s SF Express, Amazilia Aerospace, will produce three of its new hybrid VTOL drones.

The Munich-based subsidiary of SF Express, Amazilia Aerospace, will produce the digital flight control system for the drone, which will be designed and manufactured by Pipistrel for deliveries to remote and isolated areas.

The aircraft will be able to lift more than 300kg of cargo in a 2.3m³ space over a range of 310 miles with cruising altitudes up to 19,700ft and VTOL capability up to 8200ft.

Powered by eight rotors, it can operate even if two stop working.

World champs off again

THE 17th World Microlight Championships, which were planned for Hosin Airport in the Czech Republic for 7-14 August, have been cancelled and postponed to 2022 because of the Coronavirus.

The 2020 event at Hosin had suffered the same fate.

And lo and behold, Motty has made the vision of the FAI.”

The fourth FAI World Paramotor Slalom Championships in Nove Mlyní, also in the Czech Republic, have also been cancelled for the same reason, with no date yet for the 2022 event.

Next stop for Icarus: Lasham

LASHAM has been confirmed as the location for the HPA Icarus Cup for human-powered aircraft from 24 July to 1 August.

Anyone keen on volunteering as a marshal can contact Tony Prentice at tony.prentice1@btinternet.com.

Open comps now part of Wings Awards

MF DEPUTY Editor Norman Burr is in a genius – and that’s official.

“Why doesn’t entry into an Open Series round count towards a Wings Award?” he wrote to BMAA Chief Inspector Rob Mott, who invented the awards.

“Everyone accepts that competition flying improves skills, which is what the scheme is all about, and those involved in competition are always looking for ways to encourage new blood.”

And lo and behold, Motty has made it come to pass. Check it out by going to bmaa.org and searching for Wings scheme is all about, and those involved in flying improves skills, which is what the competition are always looking for ways to encourage new blood.”

French flights glitch

PLANNING to fly to France before the end of June? You’ll need to obtain a permit, says Geoff Wightell.

“The previous agreement was terminated at the start of 2021. The French authorities are planning to reinstate it by the end of June, as explained below, but until that time all visiting microlights not covered by the amateur-built permit must obtain an individual permit, which is the same as a French visitor to the UK must do,” he said.

Geoff clarified the issue after a query by member Donald Walker, who said: “If anyone needs permission before the exemption is granted, the details can be found under “Validation of a foreign worthiness document” at ecologie.gouv.fr found under “Validation of a foreign worthiness document.”

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A fond farewell

Peter Balmer pays tribute to his friend John Robinson, who has died aged 76

It’s not easy, but it nearly happened as we found ourselves completely lost somewhere in Southern England while bantling the elements on Day One of the 2000 Round Britain Rally. I blamed John’s nappy navigation, and he blamed my total incompetence in following his directions.

After circling around for a good half hour, our only option was to land in a farmer’s field and ask the farmer’s wife who answered the door where the heck we were.

Twenty minutes later we were safely landed at Old Sarum airfield, having lost hundreds of points in the rally for being a late arrival, but laughing all the way to our overnight digs in town.

One of the many great things about John was that no matter what the disagreement and the shooting involved, it was never serious and laughter was never far behind.

He had absolutely no side to him, as we say up north, and while he could be annoyed by petty bureaucracy, pompous nobodies or the various manifestations of the “fun police”, there was never any malice behind it, and he just got on with life in his own way.

He was born into farming in Westmorland, and although he later built up a successful agricultural supply company serving all parts of the UK, he remained grounded in the traditions of rural life.

I am sure much could be written about his exploits in establishing the company, travelling the world seeking business opportunities, and his respected place in the farming community which I once witnessed as his guest at the famous Westmorland Show. However, it is John’s flying life, which he valued so highly, that is the main subject here.

He learned to fly flexwing in the late Nineties with the very capable and experienced Barry Kirkland at Tarn Farm, since renamed Rossall Field.

It was a lively place, with the legend Tony Wells instructing fixed-wing all hours and providing light relief. Although John switched to fixed-wing in the late Nineties, he still had a barkering for the joys of wind in the face, aching limbs and frozen extremities.

He was a good pilot, and had to be, as he soon created a landing hold at his home in Old Hunton near Kendal surrounded by drumlins, with a shortish runway and overhead cables at each end. It was a challenge we all enjoyed, with the knowledge that if you could get in there you could get in anywhere.

It was not long before John threw himself into Bay Flying Club activities with typical enthusiasm and energy. Through his farming contacts he organised many out-of-the ordinary flying trips using farmers’ fields, which we meticulously checked in advance.

Our guiding principle then was that these were open to all club members, and we would often have as many as a dozen aircraft and crew taking part.

These flying adventures included trips to car hillclimb events, a hairy landing by the lighthouse atop the cliffs at St Bees Head, a clandestine landing at the back entrance to the famous Carl Steam Fair, and many more.

The Cream Cake Challenge, which ran for a number of years, resulted from a deal John made with some canny Yorkshire farmers near the Durham Tees Valley CTR. The deal was, they had to provide us a barbecue with steak sausages in return for a full day of local flights for all the family.

While organising these events, John also made time to devise other interesting aerial activities. Flying treasure hunts involved him researching notable ground features or placing granite marker classes all around Cambria and north Lancashire. So many pilots keening our over their trikes or peering down through side windows while circling overhead made for great fun.

He also helped with Sky Watch activities, memorably providing aerial cover for the Great North Swim on Lake Windermere, a whole weekend of one-hour shifts, circling at 800ft above the lake, watching for struggling swimmers in conjunction with the Red Cross safety launch. It was a serious job taken seriously, but with John involved, a lot of laughs too.

John was Chairman of the Bay Flying Club at Rossall in the early Nineties, and his business acumen and farming knowledge came to the fore, dealing with some of the financial issues of the club as well as helping to improve the airfield.

At the same time, he continued to develop his own airfield at Blease Hall, extending the main runway to a more comfortable length and dropping the overhead cables on the southern approach. He always had a happy band of tenant flyers, including brother Steve, and kept good relations with all his neighbours even when hosting a rock festival run by his younger daughter, with visiting aircraft adding to the spectacle.

It was in his character to get on with everybody, and he had good flying friends from Bleace Hall, Moss Edge Farm and Rosshall, as well as further afield.

With this group, he took part in a number of expeditions to Europe, including not one but two Dam Buster tours, re-enacting, in a politically correct way of course, the attacks on the Eder, Mohne and Sorpe dams.

He also supported local events such as the Lancashire Landing beach party, raising funds for the Fusiliers Aid charity, and fly-ins at the Fledgling Care Valley airfield. At the latter, we hosted very poorly children and their carers from a local children’s hospice. Typically, John was first in line for the tricky task of getting Will Hayes, a severely disabled lad, safely into the air. We made Will an honorary member of Bay Flying Club, and try to get him in the air every now and then.

So it’s farewell to John, who will be remembered with fondness by so many flyers and others who had the good fortune to meet him.

His sense of fun, which was always on show, belied a more serious, caring nature and above all a strong moral compass.

He left behind his lovely wife Jean, who cared so well for him, particularly as his health sadly declined, his two daughters, for whom he was always there in support, and three beloved grandchildren.

A few months ago, John told me with a smile how at a funeral he had attended, a farmer friend had said to him: “They’re ev’em from our pen now, John!” They’ve taken one of the best.

Blue skies on your final journey, Captain Robinson.

John getting severely disabled Will Hayes ready for first flight

Cheers! At Bad Neuenahr airfield after the Dam Busters flight, with John third from right in the blue cap
AGM POSTSCRIPT

Not entitled to waste my time

When given a slot to make a point, that is all anyone should take, and in this case the five minutes he was allotted should have been just that, plus 30 seconds leeway. I come from the hard school of RAF Squadrons where briefings and presentations were critiqued mercilessly; lives might depend on the briefing and bad ones would not be tolerated.

At the NATO Tactical Leadership Programme, a briefing overrunning its allotted time could result in the presenter being physically "hoofed" off the stage – harsh, maybe, but it certainly concentrated attention on timekeeping.

Even in civilian life, I’ve known job interviews terminated when the candidate overran the allotted time for their portfolio presentation, and a pitch for business closed for the same reason.

Overrunning presentations is disrespectful to the audience, sending the message that the presenter’s time is more valuable than the audience’s.

Kind regards, and keep up the good work.

Terry Cook

Gwyn Carwardine replies: The subject could not properly be dealt with within the arbitrary five minutes allocated, and the chairman, Rob Hughes, used his discretion to ensure a fair hearing and rights of reply. Thank you, Rob.

It is disappointing that Terry was moved to write 400+ words about the length of the presentation but not its essence; that the CAA, which states is “poor and sometimes harsh,” is permitted to operate as the school bully without challenge.

Terry does, ironically, demonstrate one of the problems I see with the CAA; it is disproportionately staffed by ex-RAF members who believe that the civilian world would be better if only it could be governed more like the armed forces, and without pesky civil rights.

Gwyn Carwardine

Formation Boeings

DEAR EDITOR

People often ask how close to another aircraft commercial airliners are allowed to fly.

Well, I came across this picture recently when I was reorganising the photo files which I originally took in 2004 from the cockpit of a British Airways Boeing 777 on our way to Dubai.

We were slowly creeping up on another company B777 around 2000ft lower at standard Airways vertical separation – but it looked awfully close to me!

The pilots had a brief chat to each other on the company frequency, then slowly overhauled the other Boeing and went on our way. The photo is pretty much how it looked from the cockpit.

So if you see two contrails that look to be almost in formation with each other – that’s because they are!

On a separate note, here’s another pic I took in 1997 at Larnaca Airport in Cyprus. Clearly the airline owners, when choosing their name, forget to take into account the British sense of irony.

It’s also a somewhat dodgy-looking contraption was capable of such a journey. I think that’s because they are!

Kind regards, and keep up the good work.

Geoff Hall

Adventures with Martin

DEAR EDITOR

Nice work on getting Martin Ferid to join the ranks of intrepid storytelling touring aviators. Goodness knows how many packets of Hobnobs that must have taken!

I have always enjoyed reading about Martin’s interesting and well-written adventures in the LAA’s magazine, and remember well sharing a flight with him from Blighty to a vintage fly-in in northern Italy in my CTSW.

In truth, I believe it was Martin’s first long-distance excursion in a microlight and at first, I’m sure I detected a slight apprehension as to whether one of these contraptions was capable of such a journey.

Our journey took us via France, Germany and through Austria into Italy, where we flew through stunning Alpine valleys using the GAFOR tour system. We also visited Venice’s Venezia/Lido Art Deco airport situated on the eastern side of the lagoon where we spent a couple of relaxing days sampling the local cuisine and wine.

Top A Boeing 777 in formation with Geoff Hall on the way to Dubai, and (below) the winner of the most interesting name for an airline goes to...

Maybe Martin could publish the dates in advance that he intends to fly to various locations/trendy rendezvous points as I’m sure many pilots would like to join him and other flyers on these fun trips?

And as it seems that Sandown is looking more like Bembridge every day, we all might end up at the same airfield?

Paul Mahony

P.s., many thanks, and good to hear – Ed.

Wighting the wrongs 1

DEAR EDITOR

The photo of Sandown Airport you published in May MF is actually of Bembridge.

Although most pilots will find this funny, as we are extremely well known, some newly qualified pilots might find this confusing. I have already had to explain this to four people who have not flown into us before and called me this morning to clarify.

Also, Martin Ferid’s statement in the article that myself and Dave Broom purchased the airport is incorrect. I took over the leasehold interest in 2016, and Dave Broom came on board as manager. Dave decided he wanted to go off and do something else a few months later.

We welcome Martin’s article and understand the huge amount of time it takes to write these up, but it’s really important that articles are factually accurate and do not confuse pilots. Not doing so will dilute the value of the publication.

Regards,

Dan Subhani

DEAR EDITOR

Our journey took us via France, Germany and through Austria into Italy, where we flew through stunning Alpine valleys using the GAFOR tour system. We also visited Venice’s Venezia/Lido Art Deco airport situated on the eastern side of the lagoon where we spent a couple of relaxing days sampling the local cuisine and wine.

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Maybe Martin could publish the dates in advance that he intends to fly to various locations/trendy rendezvous points as I’m sure many pilots would like to join him and other flyers on these fun trips?

And as it seems that Sandown is looking more like Bembridge every day, we all might end up at the same airfield?

Paul Mahony

P.s., many thanks, and good to hear – Ed.

Wighting the wrongs 1

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Although most pilots will find this funny, as we are extremely well known, some newly qualified pilots might find this confusing. I have already had to explain this to four people who have not flown into us before and called me this morning to clarify.

Also, Martin Ferid’s statement in the article that myself and Dave Broom purchased the airport is incorrect. I took over the leasehold interest in 2016, and Dave Broom came on board as manager. Dave decided he wanted to go off and do something else a few months later.

We welcome Martin’s article and understand the huge amount of time it takes to write these up, but it’s really important that articles are factually accurate and do not confuse pilots. Not doing so will dilute the value of the publication.

Regards,

Dan Subhani

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never to assume anything, and assumed it was Sandown. I should have remembered that Sandown is a hard runway.

I called Dan Subhani to apologise, since he’d had a lot of comments from pilots about the whole incident on Facebook, and he said at least it was good to see that so many pilots knew where they were going. Good thing he’s got a sense of humour – Ed.

Martin adds: “Apologies. The photos were together in an Isle of Wight folder. If it happens again, I’d sack the new boy. I’ll name them in future.”

(Almost all) the truth about Dave

DEAR EDITOR

By all means include some humour in your esteemed journal, but do not debase the magazine with content in the Dazzling Dave In the cockpit feature like “… disturbingly well endowed…” Women want him.

In fact the whole of that small paragraph is tasteless, slightly smutty, in my humble opinion, and detracts from the overall narrative. Pilot magazine would never publish anything like that.

I’m far from being a prude and have a good sense of humour. Others could well be offended, and we need to be careful in this silly period of ultra-PC.

Yours sincerely, Anon

(otherwise I’m going to get a right ribbing from my flying mates)

Dave Unwin adds: All right, here’s the truth of it.

Was I really a gold prospector in the Australian Outback? YES. Did I really run an orphanage in my spare time? NO.

Am I really a great philanthropist? Well, I was a trustee of a national UK charity for several years.

Did I really dine at Buckingham Palace? YES (indoors, not a garden party). Was the TV channel “Dave” really named after me? NO. Did I really save a seal pup from drowning? NO – it was an adorably well-endowed… Women want him.

I thought Dave’s answers throughout were really funny, for example his answer to What do you think of MF magazine? Never heard of it. Anyway, sorry you felt it was out of place – Ed.

The May issue was great reading as always, but time to get the wet lettuce out of the oven. Steve, indeed it was. Several readers spotted this on Facebook, and he said at least it was good to see that so many pilots knew where they were going. Good thing he’s got a sense of humour – Ed.

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Three of the best

The latest from the BMAA Wings Awards by Rob Mott

April & May Roll of Honour

MANY congratulations to Mikey McMahon and Rupert Gladstone for achieving their bronze wings, and a special mention to Paul Dickinson for achieving his silver wings and Strip Skills BMAA Flight Diploma. Well done to you all!

A grand day out

It’s that man Mikey McMahon again, this time in the spotlight for his fantastic Everything Aviation podcast.

In the latest one, Mikey talks about his adventure to the Top Gear test track in Dunsfold as part of his Bronze BMAA Wings Award. It’s definitely worth a listen, and not just to see whether he and flying buddy Rob Squire bumped into the Stig or not. You can also check out Mikey’s YouTube channel showing the video of the whole trip, and his words and pics on a grand day out will be in July MF.

So well done, Mikey. We look forward to seeing you go for your silver award!

Wing Tipz

Version 3 of the Skyway Code has recently been launched, and some of the updates include:

- The UK’s departure from the EU, and guidance on the associated changes;
- Updates to all aeronautical information, including radio frequencies and frequency monitoring codes;
- Radiotelephony exchanges updated to reflect latest CAP 413 guidance;
- Enhanced guidance for the use of moving map devices and avoiding airspace infringements;
- Introduction to electronic conspicuity updated to reflect recent developments;
- Introduction to unmanned aerial systems added;
- Description of “Just Culture” for GA added.

New course providers

We’ve recently had a surge in flight schools offering the courses for both Strip Skills and Circuit Matters BMAA Flight Diplomas:

- TwoTwo Fly, Kent & Cambridge; twottowyfly.co.uk
- V1 Flight, Oxford; v1flight.com
- Mainair Flying School, Manchester; mainairflyingschool.co.uk
- Flight Sport Aviation, East Sussex; flightsportaviation.com
- London Airsports Centre, East London; londonairsports.com
- HadAir, Wolverhampton; hadair.co.uk

If you’re interested in becoming a course provider, please email wings@bmaa.org.

MICROQUIZ answers

1c 315kg.
2b 51% of the aircraft.
3c 90 days.
4a Two years.
5b A balloon has right of way over an airship.

Behind the spinner, something lurked

A C42 owner had a nasty surprise when checked his propeller hub, says Rob Mott

THE BMAA Technical Office has revised an older Service Bulletin on KievProp propellers. Remembering that these principles apply to all similar products and propellers, let us run through the issue found.

100-hour check

During routine maintenance, a C42 owner removed the spinner to be confronted with a cracked propeller hub. This was a recently purchased low-hours aircraft, and the first routine maintenance inspection. Looking at the photo, you will clearly see that the hub is not serviceable and has now been replaced.

Cause?

Unfortunately, we are unable to establish the exact cause. There are two theories for this example, and probably the truth is a mixture of these:

- Incorrectly torqued hub bolts.
- Freeze and thaw action.

A third scenario would be where a propeller has been damaged with the engine running, causing a shock load in the hub which has later led to stress cracking corrosion. In this case, the logbook does not say that the propeller blades have been changed at any point in the past.

Action


Our advice is that all operators of all KievProp propellers should be aware of these potential damage types when inspecting the propeller and hub structure. Propeller blade inspection should form part of the normal preflight inspection. Hub inspection should be part of the aircraft’s routine maintenance. If any blades or the hub require replacement, a second duplicate inspection must be performed by a qualified person – that is, someone the owner considers to have sufficient knowledge and experience to inspect work done against a published requirement.

Stress corrosion was the cause of cracking on this KievProp hub, seen here from the inside.

Above

Mikey McMahon with the first BMAA Bronze Wings for Flight Sport Aviation at Deansland

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Stress corrosion was the cause of cracking on this KievProp hub, seen here from the inside.

The cracks here and in the photograph overleaf were found on a C42 and Eurostar, both using KievProp propellers. Remove your spinner and check the hub for cracks. Other types such as Neuform props have displayed similar issues previously.
Get those spinners off

The tech office has also seen this issue with Neuform propellers, so this advice to remove spinners to check for cracks generally extends to all ground-adjustable propellers.

Weight & balance

Finally, the tech office’s very own Mark Bailey has produced a very helpful video explaining the principles of how to calculate an aircraft’s centre of gravity, which will become necessary when we move to 600kg in any case, since the CoG of the heavier aircraft can be moved beyond safe limits.

Topics include defining terms, explaining the principle of moments, and finding information on aircraft data sheets. The video ends by working through a practical example on a fixed-wing microlight.

Check it out on the BMAA YouTube Channel, British Microlighting – BMAA.

FIRSTLY, let me say that I consider myself to be an idiot. Somehow I’ve managed to reach 48 years old without too many people seeming to notice, although I’m sure one or two suspect.

Let me give you an example. One weekend, I was working on the Skyranger that I was building.

A lot of it was assembling parts from diagrams, like self-assembly furniture, but a lot of it (as I was discovering) was trimming parts to suit and getting them to fit. Which is not my strong suit. Which was exactly what I was struggling with.

You see, part of the aluminium firewall came up towards the cowling, but needed to curve at the same time. And the aluminium sheet came as a rectangular piece. I stood looking at it, thinking I had absolutely no idea how to get this to fit!

Rewind a year or so, and I was the proud owner of a Blade which I enjoyed flying, but I was toying with the idea of building a Skyranger. Apparently Skyrangers are relatively easy to build, with no special skills required! (Good job, in my case).

Even so, I was looking one over and thinking to myself that there was no way I could build a plane. I then went for a spin in one with Flylight at Popham, and that just raised other doubts about whether I’d be able to fly one.

So faced with doubts about whether I could build one, and if I did manage to build one, whether I could fly it, I did what any idiot would do and ordered a kit.

Someone said to me one day: “How on earth did you know where to start?” and I replied that I just started at p1 in the manual and went from there.

Even so, when I started the build, I was actually not 100% sure that I could do it. I have a little engineering experience, but not much, and very little DIY ability or experience. I’ve put a few shelves up and done a bit of tiling, but it all involved no enjoyment and a lot of swearing!

I have found that I have a lot of patience, though, so if I don’t understand something I can leave it and come back later. Which is a good thing, since I don’t understand things straight away where other people might. I have to keep looking at something repeatedly before it penetrates my skull and I begin to understand.

So back to the firewall! I stared at it a lot, over several weekends if I remember correctly, and I took my time. I nibbled a bit off it here, a bit off it there, and (very) slowly it got there.

My name is Marc, and I am an idiot

There. Having got his confession out of the way, Marc Dawson set to building a Skyranger

Overall, I hugely enjoyed the build. Some parts of it were delightful, like making the instrument cutouts in the panel, and some parts I haven’t enjoyed, like the cowling and firewall.

It’s given me much greater confidence in myself, and at times I’ve surprised myself by working out how to do things and by the quality of the job I’ve achieved. I’ve looked at some parts of it and thought to myself “I’m so pleased with that, it looks like someone else has done it!”

Now I have a plane that I know inside out, which will give me confidence when preflighting, since I’ll know what everything should look like. If I’d just bought one, I would have felt in the dark about how everything works and fits together.

She recently passed the final inspection and is now awaiting test flying. I’m having conversion lessons in a Skyranger, and while I’m not there yet, I feel confident that it’s only a matter of time.

So to anyone thinking of building a plane or pushing themselves in any other way, I encourage you to try it. You may well surprise yourself, like I did.
To err is human – but to have air is divine

AIRSPACE ALERTS

WITH £130M worth of Government cash up for drone development, a huge number of operators are applying for TDAs, TMSs and other airspace change proposals (ACPs).

Many of them are claiming that they need drones to deliver urgent Covid and other medical supplies, even though the Coronavirus crisis is waning, but a disturbing number, such as the student doctors behind a company called Apian, have no flying background and no knowledge whatsoever of how their plans will affect general aviation.

The CAA, of course, is supposed to be the gatekeeper for these applications, but there are so many that the BMAA has appointed an Airspace Team to spotlight the ones which could cause an unnecessary threat to our flying.

So from now on, MF will have an Airspace Alerts section, with Paul Kiddell and Adrian Whitmarsh reporting on threats and what we can do about them.

Oop North: Paul Kiddell

Firstly, I’d like to say that it’s a pleasure to contribute to the recently formed BMAA Airspace Team. The aim is to safeguard members’ access to airspace by doing our level best to respond to ACPs and ensure that drone TDAs and other airspace changes are both proportionate (something we have a good chance of influencing) and justified (somewhat harder!)

I will provide a brief monthly update of the latest drone plans that may impact members flying from the Midlands northwards, while Adrian will focus on the south. There are a huge number of ACPs in progress and the situation is very fast moving, but here are several key ones in the north, so at least give you a flavour of the diverse nature of what’s occurring! As always, check the Notams for the very latest.

Skyports ACP-2020-055 West Coast of Scotland

Let’s start with some good news. This TDA, from Lochgilphead north to Oban, covered the traditional GA route to Glensanda, Oban and the Islands. As reported in May MF, there was a NOTAM extending this TDA to 29 June but this has now been dropped and Skyports ceased operations on Friday 30 April, just in time for friends and I to fly the West Coast and into Glencorsa unmolested. Skyports may yet re-attack with the similar ACP-2020-099 that was initially knocked-back by the CAA, so we are monitoring closely.

MOD ACP-2020-100 MQ-9B Sky Guardian Operations from Waddington and Lossiemouth

During the summer, General Dynamics will be demonstrating the MQ-9B prototype to the RAF, operating out of Waddington and Lossiemouth.

The RAF intends to field two squadrons of the 79ft-span turboprop MQ-9B drones in the future, based at RAF Waddington, so it was really important to get the airspace design right, as it would most likely set a precedent for the future.

This was the first BMAA coordinated group response, and along with other stakeholders, we succeeded in significantly reducing the excessive 10 x 18nm TDA to match the current MATZ. 5nm radius lateral dimensions (though it will still extend vertically to FL100 to allow the drones to climb to join upper airspace).

The RAF will provide a Danger Area Crossing Service (DACS) throughout the NOTAM’d TDA activation times.

This significant amendment shows that a considered response can certainly influence the design – in this case, the reduction in size removed several strips from the TDAs, allowing continued unfettered access for local flyers and aircraft in transit.

Flylogix ACP-2020-106 Hatton airstrip south of Peterhead to North Sea Oil Rigs

Flylogix is contracted to conduct methane emission surveys on oilfields east of Aberdeen.

Each survey consists of a fixed-wing unmanned aircraft flying out from Hatton, circling the oil rigs to take methane readings, and then returning. To conduct this activity, the drone operates at 800ft over the sea, and this activity has resulted in a weekend TDAs running from Hatton out into the North Sea, 5nm radius TDA centred on Goodwood aerodrome to develop this TDA to 29 June but this has now been dropped and Skyports ceased operations on Friday 30 April, just in time for friends and I to fly the West Coast and into Glencorsa unmolested. Skyports may yet re-attack with the similar ACP-2020-099 that was initially knocked-back by the CAA, so we are monitoring closely.

Thorney Island, the home of a thriving microlight club. A drone TDA was routed through its overhead (photo: Chris Pyle)

Dahn Sarf: Adrian Whitmarsh

It’s continued to be a busy time for the airspace watch team here in the south, with several new ACPs for drone TDAs popping up or being monitored. Here is what we currently have.

Goodwood, Sussex

A 5nm radius TDA centred on Goodwood aerodrome to develop technology for drones operating Beyond Visual Line Of Sight (BVLOS) to detect other transponder or ADS-B Out transmitting aircraft.

To be activated by Notam from 8 April to 23 September during hours of 6-9am and 7-9pm weekdays, but could be weekends and public holidays if needed.

This was approved by the CAA, despite our serious concerns about the pinch points created along the coast.

At the time of writing in early May, we have yet to see any Notam activating this TDA. The stated plan is subsequently to apply for a TMZ to demonstrate the technology.

However, Goodwood Innovation Centre’s stated business plan is to create a BVLOS testing and training facility there. With its current planned technology, this would involve a permanent TMZ! So we are watching out for the TMZ application.

So far this is the only drone TDA that I have seen that even attempts to develop technology towards integration, albeit only for those other aircraft carrying specified equipment.

Thorney Island, West Sussex

This ACP is to create a narrow TDA to operate drones flying directly between hospitals in Portsmouth and Newport, Isle of
Wight. The stated requirement was to transport chemotherapy drugs (but it turns out other items are also to be carried) manufactured in Portsmouth to speed up the NHS supply chain during the Covid pandemic. While the plan is to fly these drones only up to 400ft above ground or sea level, the issue for us is that the drones will operate from Thorney Island aerodrome, where the 21-strong microlight club operates. Initially, the TDA was routed through its overhead.

A pilot’s perspective

Doug King

10.00am – 10.30am

Doug King sold microlights in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific before moving to the UK

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Favourite book? When the Lions Feasts.

Favourite film? The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

Favourite country? South Africa as it was, Northern Ireland now.

Which two people have been most important in your life so far?
Three – my children Bradley, Leeanne and Sam.

I began flying in the Rhodesian Air Force during the civil war, obtained my GA licence in South Africa, then got involved in microlight and light sport aircraft there.

I became an agent for Aeroprakt of Ukraine in 2003, at first in South Africa, then in Australia with a great friend, ex-RAF pilot Peter Hadlow, with the current Australian agent, then New Zealand and the southern Pacific island countries of Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and New Caledonia.

Selling aircraft as a job has many perks and obvious job satisfaction, while earning money.

I moved again in 2019 to the Isle of Wight. The stated requirement of the Thorney Island ACP was to transport chemotherapy drugs, to speed up the NHS supply chain during the Covid pandemic. As it turns out other items are also to be carried: manufactured in Portsmouth to speed up the NHS supply chain during the Covid pandemic, when traditional transport links have supposedly been disrupted.

While the plan is to fly these drones only up to 400ft above ground or sea level, the issue for us is that the drones will operate from Thorney Island aerodrome, where the 21-strong microlight club operates. Initially, the TDA was routed through its overhead.

If it needs to “demonstrate” in the Channel, then why can’t it use the existing TDAs there that the MOD/HMRC/Coast Guard are using and which have been extended until 30 June?

Bicester, Oxfordshire

Even Network Rail has a drone department! This is another recent request for a small, low-level (up to 400ft) TDA along the rail line between Bicester (where the drone would operate from) and Milton Keynes to carry out track surveys.

Geoff Weighell has asked Network Rail to liaise with the private airstrip at Botolph Claydon and the microlight training school at Marsh Gibbon, both of which are close to the planned route.

This illustrates the sort of uses we can expect to increase all over Britain. Seemingly all other ACPs for drone ops in the South are still “in process”, which we are monitoring. The current active TDAs, including those for drone ops, are listed on the NATS website, nat-s.uk.
**Describe yourself in five words.**

Passionate, daring, reliable, naughty and excitable.

**Vices and virtues?**

Willingness to help people. Living with integrity and honesty.

**When were you happiest?**

In my early life in Rhodesia, my country of birth.

**Saddest?**

Having to leave Africa, an amazing continent, with a rhythm underfoot, wild open spaces, wildlife, sun and great weather, but also danger and unpredictability.

**Any regrets?**

None.

**What would be your perfect life?**

My life at present, flying and selling aircraft.

**Glass half full or half empty?**

Half full.

**Other hobbies?**

Woodwork, gardening, and discovering.

**Who would you come back as in another lifetime?**

Myself.

**Who would you invite to your ideal dinner party?**

Natural, positive and balanced people.

Sum up your lesson for life in a sentence.

Live each day positively, honestly, and like it’s my last day on earth.

**Earliest memory of flying?**

I began hang gliding, then progressed.

**How long have you been in the BMAA?**

Just 18 months.

**Why microlights?**

I had my GA PPL, but microlights and light sport aircraft are easier in all respects and less expensive.

**What do you fly?**

Vixen and Foxbat.

**How many hours P1?**

A total of 400 in microlights.

**Which do you prefer, flexwing or three-axis?**

Three-axis. I did some unpowered hang gliding, but your undercarriage is your legs, and if you don’t get it right you have a nasty face-first landing.

**Aviation highlights?**

Flying in the South Pacific islands was a wonderful experience: crystal clear water, pristine reefs and island-hopping.

In New Zealand, flying in the beautiful South Island and over the snow-capped mountains was challenging but exhilarating. Recreational flying in NZ is very popular, with hundreds of pilots of all descriptions connecting on weekends at fly-ins for barbecues and swapping stories and experiences.

**Worst moments?**

 Forced to fly on instruments for 15 minutes in nil visibility.

**Have you ever crashed?**

Yes, in New Zealand. It was a tale of five errors.

While giving a barbecue for the resident pilots at a little one-way grass airstrip south of Auckland which I flew into frequently, a friend who was a pilot wanted a flight in my aircraft.

**Best aircraft you’ve flown?**

A32LS Vixen. I love the Foxbat, but I love the Vixen more because it does all that the Foxbat does but has a 1kt slower stall speed than the Foxbat of 27kt and can fly 20kt faster, burning less fuel, around 13l/hr. Awesome, and smooth, safe handling.

**Worst?**

Thruster. It’s a great little aircraft, but I consider it to be a microlight in the true sense of the word: rag and tube, no heater, draggy, outdated, and I have been spoilt flying Foxbat and Vixens.

**Things that flying’s taught you?**

How blessed I am.

**Vices and virtues?**

Passionate, daring, reliable, naughty and excitable.

**Earliest memory of flying?**

In 1974 in the Rhodesian Air Force; I joined on the technical side, as I didn’t have O-Level maths, but later managed to get flying.

**My fifth mistake, that caused the right wing to stall, and we impacted the ground heavily.**

Thankfully the other pilot was not injured badly, but I suffered broken ribs and sternum and found my left foot severed at the ankle, looking lonely beside me still in my shoe.

**My thought at the time was that from now on I would from only need one shoe, but thank God, a magician of a surgeon refined my foot after nine operations.**

**The lessons learned were, don’t fly if you don’t feel 100%, and never use ailerons at low speed.**

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**Things that flying’s taught you?**

How blessed I am.

**What do you think of MF?**

Great.

**Favourite airfield in the UK, and why?**

Newtownards, because it’s the only airfield I know so far.

**Favourite country visited in a microlight?**

None visited, but flown in New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, South Africa, Fiji and Zimbabwe.

**Dream aircraft, money no object?**

Stearmann biplane.

**Future flying plans?**

Flying in Ireland.

**Tell us a surprising fact about yourself.**

I lost my left foot in that aircraft accident, but a clever, talented surgeon replaced it.

**What things that flying’s taught you?**

How blessed I am.

**Vices and virtues?**

Passionate, daring, reliable, naughty and excitable.

**Earliest memory of flying?**

In 1974 in the Rhodesian Air Force; I joined on the technical side, as I didn’t have O-Level maths, but later managed to get flying.

**My fifth mistake, that caused the right wing to stall, and we impacted the ground heavily.**

Thankfully the other pilot was not injured badly, but I suffered broken ribs and sternum and found my left foot severed at the ankle, looking lonely beside me still in my shoe.

**My thought at the time was that from now on I would from only need one shoe, but thank God, a magician of a surgeon refined my foot after nine operations.**

**The lessons learned were, don’t fly if you don’t feel 100%, and never use ailerons at low speed.**

**Best aircraft you’ve flown?**

A32LS Vixen. I love the Foxbat, but I love the Vixen more because it does all that the Foxbat does but has a 1kt slower stall speed than the Foxbat of 27kt and can fly 20kt faster, burning less fuel, around 13l/hr. Awesome, and smooth, safe handling.

**Worst?**

Thruster. It’s a great little aircraft, but I consider it to be a microlight in the true sense of the word: rag and tube, no heater, draggy, outdated, and I have been spoilt flying Foxbat and Vixens.

**Things that flying’s taught you?**

How blessed I am.

**What do you think of MF?**

Great.

**Favourite airfield in the UK, and why?**

Newtownards, because it’s the only airfield I know so far.

**Favourite country visited in a microlight?**

None visited, but flown in New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, South Africa, Fiji and Zimbabwe.

**Dream aircraft, money no object?**

Stearmann biplane.

**Future flying plans?**

Flying in Ireland.

**Tell us a surprising fact about yourself.**

I lost my left foot in that aircraft accident, but a clever, talented surgeon replaced it.

**Yahoo!**
The new Flylight Bivvy Bee SSDR is such a great combination of fun and payload that it’ll make you fly from A to B via C, D and E, says Steve Uzochukwu.

The BivvyBee is based on the well-proven Fox 13TL wing built by Aeros to Flylight requirements. It’s made of 7075 aluminium, with the main sail in the transparent Dimension Polyant ODL (One Design Laminate) with Technora in warp and weft, and Black Technora as a cross-ply.

The very low stretch on this fabric ensures it will keep its shape and thus the characteristics of your sail shouldn’t change significantly with time. The sailcloth is in the pictures is the optional semi-transparent Ultraventure Black Technora, which will add to the £12,572.40 base price.

The wing is mostly single surface, with 30% dou-ble surface to the rear of the leading edge. There is no kingpost, and the wing is braced below by struts which replace the wing wires in tension and the upper wing in compression via the base bar. There are wires in the struts as back up, but they are hidden from view.

The trike is from the well known Dragon series. It is based on the non-retractable undercarriage version, with the Care-air Black Bull engine. The front wheel is faired in towards the rear, and the rear wheels pic-tured are the optional larger size.

The trike is designed for all pilots wanting an easy to fly and store SSDR with elegance in its simplicity. It extends its appeal over previous models by being able to accommodate the heavier pilot or a higher payload, and offers more storage than previous trikes in the Dragon range.

Storage is cleverly incorporated into areas like the options for the headrest and top storage on the pylons, front strut junction, and in the areas inside the skirt around the tank.

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The wing has 15 battens in total, and a small insert for the sail in one panel near the tip, to prevent panel flutter. This makes for very simple set up and break down, but the picture is further simplified because the wing can be partially derrigged on the trike, leading to a very small hangar footprint with minimal time to get to fully rigged.

The chore of having to lift the wing up on the pylons is also banished to memory. The struts play a part in this, as the leading edges hinge backwards after five of the curved battens and two straight ones are removed.

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bladed propeller. The engine is free air-cooled (no forced cooling via a dedicated fan like the Thor 200, for example) but has ducting to enhance the effects of the propeller over the cooling fins.

When the engine is fitted with the electric-start option, it charges a battery via a regulator/rectifier which will give the option of 12V, if needed to run equipment like a radio or instruments that require power.

The fuel capacity is 23 litres, which with a half-hour reserve means you have over 200 miles of flying in still air from full. Lubrication is via a premix of fuel and oil at 40:1. The Vittorazi Moster 185 is an alternative engine choice.

The cockpit fairing (with a windscreen in the option list) is very effective, and directs the main force of the airstream over your head and shoulders, but still gives a sensation of passing through the air with airspeed sensed intuitively. It’s a bit like the difference between a naked motorcycle and the same with a fairing.

Instruments

The BivvyBee has that useful trick that some strutted wings can pull off, namely that there’s no need to take the wing off the trike before stowing.

First, the pylon is dropped to allow the base bar to sit on two small lugs at the very front of the seat, selected bar ends removed. Next, the wings are folded back until the leading edges touch. Finally the sail is fuelled away and the wing bag zipped on.

You are now ready to wheel the aircraft into your storage. I say “your storage”, because with such a small footprint, the hangarage requirements drop off the scale.

The flying

I flew twice at Sywell on Easter Saturday in very strong conditions, then once on the last day of April. Both days had significant vertical development, but the first was also with a north-easterly breeze at 10-13mph.

I flew with a Garmin 96-GPS, a Flymaster GPS-LS paragliding VSI and altimeter combined, and an e-reader running some moving-map software.

The angle of climb in that fresher breeze was very good, but conditions didn’t allow for the 1000ft timed climb, so we’ve used the manufacturer figures. On all three flights, the climb was very sprightly and reassuring. I’d used up only 60% of the payload, so he designs for this, knowing you can add whatever you want within the SSDR regime.

Conclusion

The BivvyBee is a blank canvas for these. As it’s an SSDR, you specify your own, either from Flylight or as a DIY effort. The pods that hang-glider pilots use requires an adaptor.

The quoted figure is 900ft/min with a 90kg pilot, and the furthest forward was used for the review flights. There is an electric trimmer option, with a moving hang point, so all the flying was done with fixed trim.

You’re closer to the ground than a permit two-seater, but the trike is very stable both while taxiing and in the ground run. It stops smartly on the foot-brake, which holds well for engine test runs.

The smaller two-strokes on this sort of trike only have one mag, so mag checks are redundant. If the engine is running, the mag is working, but you need to check that the short to stop the engine is in place when you need to switch off.

You need to keep on top of “wing down” into stronger winds when running, and “bar out” with tailwinds.

The larger rear wheels fitted did a good job of soaking up a couple of rough areas while taxiing on the grass.

With the Black Bull’s high power, the ground run is very short and is ended by just a small push forward on the bar. The climb rate picks up quickly, and in the fresh breeze of the first couple of flights it became necessary to back off the power above 1000ft to avoid conflicting with crosswind traffic on the climbout.

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I’d used up only 60% of the payload, so the output from the engine would give generous performance even with a much higher takeoff weight. The quoted figure is 900ft/min with a 90kg pilot, and this is definitely on the mark.

As I said, the two Easter flights were in strong air, and while I was putting the BivvyBee through its paces, the air was doing the same to us both.
At the other end of the speed range, the bar can be pulled in all the way to your stomach and the BivvyBee picks up speed smartly and flies straight, with no hint of any sort of wandering. This is quite a feat for a flexwing; those that have sharp handling sometimes pitch Roll at higher speeds, or achieve the sharp handling via noticeable anhedral, so tend to be a bit nervous.

The BivvyBee has the best of both worlds, which is a nod to excellent design. Wings with appreciable anhedral tend to need constant input, whereas the BivvyBee will fly hands and is stable even when the bank angle is set.

It doesn’t have a sharp break stall, there’s a mush and a large reduction in roll response with the bar on the front strut. The benign behaviour is one of the reasons why an ASI isn’t needed. As with all very low-inertia aircraft, wind gradient needs to be respected, but a first landing through a strong wind gradient resulted in an arrival where a lot of pitch had to be used for a light landing.

A very slight increase in speed, on the other hand, made for easy last-minute inputs to get the ideal landing even in a crosswind.

In terms of takeoff and landing in general, you’ll get into and out of places you didn’t think possible, and farm strips which service fixed-wing aircraft will be enormous size-wise. If you’re concerned about rougher surfaces, specify the larger rear wheel option.

The same is true of hangarage semi rigged – it can fit in almost any corner of a farm building, and you’re not lifting a wing onto a trike anymore. There’s a small push from the dropped position up to flying position, but the days of taking the wing off or lifting it back on, trying to locate locking mechanisms and fix the front strut in place, are gone.

The wing is in a bag and the sail is not exposed, and you don’t have to carry a bagged wing around. We first flew the Fox 13TL for the FoxCub review back in 2015, and since then it’s had a number of refinements, including the option of ODL 4.5 cloth to replace Dacron if you want it, which really makes a big difference to overall looks.

The feedback can be used to make small inputs early on in lift or bumps. This allows you to make use of the handling to prevent deviation rather than trying to correct it after a strong thermal has knocked you off course. In the really strong stuff, you have to make larger control movements, but for turns in anything else, small movements get an instant response.

The step change from the #66kg two-seater DeltaJet 505 Stingray, which I’d flown earlier, to an SSDR with a much smaller wing loading, was noticeable, but the BivvyBee has the handling to deal with this sort of wildness, and actually benefits, even in the strongest of air, from a light grip on the control bar, so the feedback can be used to make small inputs early on in lift or bumps.

The lovely handling, and the confidence that the engine’s high power means that when you’re flying straight and level, the throttle is quite some way back and the engine note is a deeper sound, not like the higher pitched note you normally get from two-stroke of this size.

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On the flight at the end of April, it was interesting to see just how long it would take for the wing to deviate from a straight and level course with the bar untouched, and results were impressive, even with the bumps taken into account.

Slow flying is nice, but roll response drops off as you get within touching distance of the front strut.

FLIGHT TEST

The BivvyBee continues back in that genre that the FoxCub defined, namely affordable aviation in terms of strip requirements, costs of fuel, oil and maintenance, and minimal legal requirements.

It continues with Ben’s philosophy of pursuing the enjoyment of flying, rather than cutting it short by getting from A to B in the shortest time.

Now it adds touring to the remit, and more lifting power for the heavier pilot or payload. However you come into the flexwing SSDR category, this aircraft is set to right up there in your test flight and potential purchase list.
“WELCOME to the dark side” is a phrase I’ve heard a lot lately, usually reserved for flying pilots converting to three-axis as a surge of UK microlight pilots sway towards the windless, warm comfort of enclosed cockpits, higher groundspeeds and less dependence on perfect weather.

However, in my case it was the opposite: having instructed for over 20 years on three-axis aircraft, primarily on Booms, I’m more used to wearing shorts and T-shirts, and taking off from the warm, crystal clear waters of Asia.

I operate a fleet of Super Drifter 912S US Experimental aircraft in Indonesia and recently the Philippines, offering tourist flights and seaplane conversion training for pilots – a far cry from the chilly skies of the UK, although I still hold a current UK PPL.

After I met Reg Barber, the CFI of Hunsdon Microlight Club, when he visited the Philippines, we swapped details and I promised one day we would meet up.

Sadly, last year I lost both of my parents to cancer, and returning to the UK to take care of everything, I contacted Reg and we discussed doing my flexwing conversion course.

It was always something I’d wanted to do but had not had the opportunity in Asia. Moreover, having to deal with the loss of my parents, I welcomed the distraction.

Instructor John Holme was appointed to handle my conversion training, and we wasted no time in getting airborne in the club’s trusted Quantum 912. I was quite impressed at how quick our new favourite toy.

As back pressure and power in a three-axis would be a real issue for a landing.

Once you overcome the mental part and become at one with the aircraft, you do experience that “Eureka!” moment when instinct plays a stronger part instead of having to think about it.

That voice in your head saying: “C’mon Stu, push is up, pull is down” starts to fade, and you actually get the aircraft to do what you want it to do.

It’s like taming a wild horse: when you start, it bolts and bucks and you wonder if it’s ever going to be a graceful beast who listens to you and does exactly what you command.

Well, the answer is yes: eventually she starts to perform dressage in the sky, and it’s all your doing.

We went on to cover all the syllabus – increased angle turns, engine failures, stalls and so on – all so much easier when you have fundamental control over the aircraft and your confidence builds.

Nearing completion of my conversion training and handing the circuit, fine-tuning those landings, I scoured the pages of Afors and found myself a little curious doing my conversion course.

As the training progressed and the preflight briefs were explained, putting them into practice became enjoyable as we embarked on each phase of the conversion.

As we progressed to approaches and landings, I still got a bit of discomfort from using my imaginary rudder pedals, albeit they weren’t doing much.

Keeping her straight and lined up with a slight crosswind required power and some pretty hefty back pressure, which also took a lot of getting used to, as back pressure and power in a three-axis would be a real issue for a landing.

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As we went into lockdown, with my own fleet of planes in Asia confined to the hangar as well, I set about using the time and opportunity to completely overhaul my Quantum, now sporting my trademark yellow livery to match my Super Drifters.

With upgraded avionics, a fully serviced engine and a good cleanup, she’s ready to be shipped to Asia for open cockpit flying at its best.

My only regret is that I didn’t do this years ago, but better late than never. I’d like to thank CFI Reg Barber, John and all the boys and girls at Hunsdon.

Not to mention my parents, who’d always supported my aviation achievements, particularly my dear mum, who pushed me and relentlessly encouraged me to do my conversion even during her darkest times of treatment.

It’s been an amazing experience, and I’d highly recommend going over to the dark side. It’s never too late!
Never give up

The incredible and inspiring story of the unstoppable Claire Lomas

I was given a black flying suit when I bought the microlight, and one of the delegates approached me after my presentation. He had some lessons in a flexwing microlight which he clearly enjoyed, and he suggested it as something I could possibly do. I had considered flying in the first year after the injury, but I wasn’t in a position to be able to buy a microlight back then – and to be able to have lessons regularly, buying one seemed to be the best option.

Around this time, I had just been the guest speaker at an event, and one of the delegates approached me after my presentation. He and his brother had a yearly goll-day fundraiser with their friends, and he wanted me involved in that.

It was one of the most crazy and fun days to be part of, but not only did they raise a substantial amount for Nicholls Spinal Injury Foundation by holding an auction, they also insisted on helping me achieve my latest goal – so unbelievably, they bought me a block of lessons and included all the exams. I certainly owe them a first class flight!

Without any hesitation, I got in touch with Dave Lord at Wannafly, and he helped me find a Quik 912S which he then adapted so I could fly and learn with them at Sywell. Sometimes I feel like I need a third hand, but it all works brilliantly.

I was given a black flying suit when I bought the microlight, and I am always looking for ways of raising money for Nicholls Spinal Injury Foundation, so I came up with the idea of trying to cover the suit with logos/names for a donation of £100.

So far, I have raised over £6000 thanks to so many generous people and companies supporting me. My aim is to reach £10,000 by the time I pass the GST.

Once I have my licence, my intention is to come up with ways of using it to help others, and encouraging people not to let any obstacles stop them from setting goals and achieving them.

Covid-19 has meant my training has had some long breaks, but I have used some of that time to get my written exams done. I just had to the navigation exam left, which I intend to do soon.

The reason I started fundraising was because there were many times I felt genuinely lucky. When I was in hospital there were many people with neck injuries who didn’t have use of their arms, and some were even on a ventilator to breathe. Many couldn’t wipe their own tears away and relied on 24-hour care.

I have found everyone so encouraging at Sywell, and both Simon and Dave looked really chuffed to see me reach this milestone, since after all, it was down to their hard work.

I can’t wait to progress further, meet more people in the world of aviation, raise more vital funds for charity and fly to different airfields for lunch.

I truly can’t believe that one day, hopefully, I will be able to say I am a pilot. Walking is overrated – let’s fly!

If you are able to help Claire with your name or a logo on her suit, email claireschallenge@gmail.com. She is also looking for auction prizes, as she would love to celebrate gaining her NPPL by raising some money for NSIF. Her website is claireschallenge.co.uk.

I knew I needed to do what I could to help the groundbreaking research in spinal injury repair, so that one day paralysis will not be a life sentence, and it can be reversed.

As well as raising money, I love setting goals and being out of my comfort zone; after all, before my accident I spent much of my time evening, which is a sport that certainly gets the adrenaline flowing.

Being paralysed does mean that two thirds of my body doesn’t work, but I am the same person and still had many of the desires I had before the accident. Although my injury meant the premature closure of many chapters, it was also the start of even more, and they have been so exciting.

The challenge of becoming a pilot came about after a chat in the pub with Ed Coats, the doctor who delivered my second daughter.

Ed, who was not only a doctor but an adventurer and a speaker too, had become a friend. He was showing me photos of when he had some lessons in a flexwing microlight which he clearly enjoyed, and he suggested it as something I could possibly do.

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Rise of an armchair pilot

Gary Loughran’s flight sim hobby produced real dividends when he took to the air for real

I first began my make-believe flying career on a supercharged Spectrum 128K and a simple keyboard in the early Nineties. I recall a game called F-16 Combat Pilot.

At 12 years old, I thought I was the real deal as I pretended to be my hero Maverick from Top Gun. The controls were as clumsy as hell, but I didn’t let that put me off. The graphics were so realistic on my primitive simulation, I knew that I wanted to be a real pilot.

As the years progressed, so did the technology, at an alarming rate. I had a library of all the popular simulations, including all the Microsoft Flight Simulators and all the versions of X-Plane.

One thing that has been consistent in my armchair career, though, is the fact that you always needed a beefy computer to run them at acceptable frame rates. “Lag” is not the friend of any flight simmer.

At that point in my life, being a pilot seemed too far out of reach, and I would have never thought that some day I would be in a real aircraft as pilot in command, but this was the next best thing, and I spent as many hours as I could on it.

Through the years more ancillaries became available, like joysticks, throttles and rudder pedals, and I always had to have the best kit available. Being an armchair pilot seems somewhat acceptable for a teenager, but as you get older and accumulate distractions such as girlfriends and wives, life becomes more complicated. You get called a child and are sent on many occasions, and they nearly make you feel guilty. I tried to explain so many times the difference between computer gaming and using a simulator, but it always fell on deaf ears.

I then got lumbered with chores to prevent me from spending cherished hours in my home cockpit. That was the point where I began to wear the trousers and create my gaming/simulator room, although my better half is still the boss on occasions.

After many years of being in the armchair, I finally took my first lesson, in a Cessna 172. And then I discovered Ken Crompton’s Northern Ireland Microlights school at Newtownards.

I was surprised how similar the experience was to being in the Microsoft FSX Simulator, the only difference was that there was real feel to the controls.

I got told off a few times for looking at the instruments too long, apparently a common fault for “simmers” learning to fly.

To be honest, flying a modern simulator is harder than the real thing. I think it’s something to do with the feel and feedback on the controls in a real plane. It’s also a hell of a lot harder trying to make a controlled turn and having only 1020 x 1080 pixels as a view.

One of the great bonuses of being in a make-believe simulator, of course, is that you can respawn and start again after you crash. It’s also great that you do not have to fill out a lengthy AAB and insurance statement. I know too well the stress of that, after my unintentional crash through a hedge in real life in August 2020 after an engine failure and forced landing around the high ground, we both landed safely and went on to do the real flight the next day.

My goodness, it was the same experience as the simulator, the only addition in the real-life experience being a bottom-clenched concerned feeling over real water and a heavy liferaft on my knee. The only thing that was missing in the simulator was the feedback and the feel of the controls.

I know that technology will progress and will probably head toward virtual reality, but the simulations we have available now are useful for future and current pilots.

They should not be underestimated

Gary’s YouTube channel is WeePilot.
**FROM THE CE’S DESK**

**Enough to make you sick**

The CAA’s new medical declaration system is a mess, says Geoff Weighell

IT’s great to see that our microlight pilot members are back in the air after the enforced grounding of Covid restrictions, and that to date very few seem to have fallen foul of skill-fade related incidents.

We would like to think that the effort we put in to alert pilots to the dangerous potential was received and understood, and that it has in some way helped keep them safe.

However, not all is well. The CAA has introduced a new database system for handling pilots’ medical records.

Since its introduction at the start of April, it has proved virtually impossible for our members to obtain or renew a Pilot Medical Declaration (PMD), so even after the lockdown was lifted in March, some of our members remain grounded.

There seem to be two main problems. To use the new system, one has to register, and this is taking up to 10 working days to achieve.

Although the CAA says that it sent an notice to pilots three months in advance, it turns out that the list of people notified didn’t include any pilot holding a PMD, so that instead of preparing people in advance it helped cause the logjam. At least one of our members was told was his fault for not registering ahead of time, despite the obvious issue of not being told.

The second problem is the recording of the document, which gives an end date as the start date or previous expiry date, so it is a validity of at best one day.

We are told that the CAA is “working hard” to solve the IT problems. It’s a shame that it didn’t thoroughly test the system first, alert all who would be affected, and find an interim measure to allow our members back into the air.

**Wings scheme**

Taking on board the comments received that our Wings scheme needs some attention, I have asked that any members who are interested in helping out to let me know, so that we can improve the scheme.

If you are one such member, please let me know using the form on our website. Search “Rules” and a page will appear named “Volunteers and Roles”. The form is hosted on that page.

600kg latest

We had hoped that 600kg microlights would be here with us as I write in early May. It’s taking a little longer than hoped to get the work done, but it is being done, and hopefully not long after you get this magazine, 600kg will be a reality.

**Infringements**

You may read elsewhere differing opinions on the way that pilots are treated following an alleged airspace infringement.

Sadly, much of the opinion is based upon ignorance, coupled with a refusal to think otherwise.

The reality is that although in some instances it appears to be heavy-handed, the CAA’s investigation process looks for causes and tries to address them by education.

There are some interesting documents which are worth a read to get the true picture. Use Google to find CAP1404, CAP1455 and CAIP-276.

You can also read why pilots have infringed in the Airspace Infringement Causal Factor Report 2019 (Google it). Reading this report might help you to prepare better and avoid being an infringer yourself.

**Safe flying.**

**AGM REPORT**

**Sting in the tail**

Norman Burr reports on the BMAA’s second online Annual General Meeting

IN recent years my AGM reports have tended to get shorter, as members find ways to express themselves between meetings and the AGMs become largely formal affairs.

This year, however, was quite different. Maybe Covid has got everyone asking questions of themselves, and their association. Whatever the reason, the 60-80 folk who logged on to attend the AGM, asked a lot of questions, and seemed to want to know the answers.

**General discussion**

Members’ questions came in thick and fast.

Jeremy Hoyland asked whether we were willing to talk about a merger to the LAA again, to which the answer was yes, but the initiative would have to come from it, since it was the one which had twice broken off negotiations.

Harry Cook wanted to know why he couldn’t swap the regulation of his aircraft from LAA to BMAA. Rob Mott replied that there had been two associations had a gentleman’s agreement not to poach each other’s machines, though there had been a few exceptions.

**COUNCIL AIRWAYS**

**Big stick, small reward**

A proportionate approach to infringements will work best, says Rob Hughes

OUR 2021 AGM included a discussion on how the CAA handles airspace infringements, adding to similar coverage recently in other flying publications.

No one denies the real possibility of an infringement having serious and significant consequences, but it’s the CAA’s approach that is the spotlight.

Of course, flagrant and deliberate incursions deserve a tough reprimand, but slightly slipping the corner of a zone should become a learning exercise for pilots as the CAA intervenes to reduce the likelihood of a repeat event.

Well, that pretty much is the approach, despite the CAA doing its best to fool us into thinking otherwise.

The CAA uses what it calls “Just Culture” to determine its level of action, and of the 626 Mandatory Occurrence Reports in 2020, almost 75% resulted in no action or a letter being sent to the pilot. Of the rest, most were required to take further training or attend a Zoom awareness course, run by GASCo. There was only one proposal to remove a licence.

This sounds fair, doesn’t it? Then why are forums and letter pages filling with pilots threatening to render their transponders unserviceable, you may ask.

We help our members with the infringement process, and our CE sits on the Airspace Infringement Working Group. Using this direct contact, we are engaging with the CAA to change its message: from the text of the first warning – er, advisory – letter, to clearly explaining the process by which a decision is made, and, importantly, how a pilot has the right to appeal that decision.

We all want to play our part to ensure safe airspace; the CAA needs to take a long, hard look at its approach to prove to be the most successful – a big stick or an attractive further education system with clear benefits so that we become better pilots.

Less traffic warden and more the friendly marshal helping you off the runway, please.
Deddicated

Laurie Hurman asked why MP arrived in a plastic bag rather than something degradable. The answer is that the printer is currently only set up for plastic, though this may change in the meantime. It’s OK to put the poly bag in the recycling.

Tami Carr asked about the future of the Wings scheme which, though successful, needed development. Geoff Weighell was quick to agree: volunteers are being sought and there is a forum on bmaa.org for those interested to complete.

Several members raised a lively discussion about instructor ratings. Paul Dickenson and Andrew Fell believed an ‘AFI light’ for student pilots needed a BMAA standard. For experienced flexwing pilots to help sub-70 newbies, Spencer Harvey added, that flexwing instructors found it difficult to make a living by just teaching.

Geoff Weighell mentioned that he had raised this with the CAA some years ago and was told to contact the BMAA, which he did, but had little response.

During discussion about instructor ratings, Paul Dickenson challenged Geoff on the CAA’s approach to the Wings scheme. Geoff reiterated the need to develop the Wings scheme which, though successful, needed development.

Geoff Weighell added that he had been made to attract sub-70 pilots into membership. Tim Burrow replied that Wings & Wheels had worked well at St Michaels for several years, and also hosted paramotor pilots.

Finally in the general discussion, Joan Walsh raised the rather complex point about illegal flexibility, and pointed out that the basic AFI rating had been proved to work well.

Yours truly chipped in at this point and opined that dispensing with a central physical headquarters at all, would be a huge mistake; over time it would lead to loss of continuity if there were too many sub-70 pilots at once. Geoff agreed to discuss it after the meeting.

Remote voting

Geoff Weighell announced the results of the remote voting to approve the 2019-20 accounts (223 for, 2 against, 1 abstention), reappoint the auditors (417, 6, 3) and opinion that it was not well explained in CAP1404, though it is not well explained in the relevant statute.

The frustrating thing, from the point of view of this observer, is the Gwyn procedure was not appropriate for such a small club. The CAA did agree to work with Deddington on the problem, though the potential for co-operation should not be limited, given the diversity of views.

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CONTRIBUTING TO MF

Yes please! MF is a magazine for and largely by BMAA members, so the editor welcomes written and photographic contributions. In fact, if he didn't get any, he'd be out of a job! But before writing please take a look at the contributions’ guidelines on bmaa.org/files/writing_for_mf.pdf.

Photos Always use your camera’s highest settings. Email the editor only the original image file as downloaded from the camera, ideally as a jpg. It should be at least 1MB. No jpg files please. Also, if you wish to enter the photo competition, please read the rules on microflightflying.org.uk/photo-competition-rules.

Deadline for editorial MF is published at the beginning of each month. Deadline is the third day of the preceding month. Urgent items can be published in MF’s associated online newsletter, eMF, see below.

HOW TO GET MF

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Photos Always use your camera’s highest settings. Email the editor only the original image file as downloaded from the camera, ideally as a jpg. It should be at least 1MB. No jpg files please. Also, if you wish to enter the photo competition, please read the rules on microflightflying.org.uk/photo-competition-rules.

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