

East Staffs Flying Club



Newsletter

September/October 2009

Chairman's Report

A special thanks to the contributors for some excellent articles this month. If you have a story to share please make sure that you send it to Alison (contact details at end of this newsletter).

As a result of the ESFC Fly-In & Display held on 8th August ESFC managed to donate £2,500.00 to the County Air Ambulance, so a very big thank you to all those who helped with the preparation and on the day itself. Also thanks go to Tatenhill Aviation for their support on the day and their contribution from the proceeds of the raffle and auction.

For those who have read the recent AAIB report on the tragic accident that occurred near Stafford at the beginning of this year, it would seem that the accident appears to have been as a result of a loss of control while the pilot was attempting an aerobatic manoeuvre, and not as a result of a mechanical failure in the aircraft. All aircraft have limitations on their capability and we should all be aware of these in those aircraft we fly. In case you are not aware it is possible to do the AOPA aerobatics course (8 hours) at Tatenhill (see John Calverley for further details).

Finally, we are looking to have a presentation by the Air Ambulance at the next ESFC social on Thursday 29th October, so put this date in your diary for what should be a very interesting talk.

Mike Tidmarsh

Recent Achievements

Leigh Pomlett passed his PPL Skills Test on Friday the 31st of July. Well done.

Phil Moorcroft passed his IMC Skills Test on Wednesday the 2nd of September.

David Burns passed his PPL Skills Test on Tuesday the 15th of September. David has been training with me fairly intensively over the summer. He was actually ready for his test before he had enough hours to take it, and so we ended up getting him checked out in the Warrior & going on a little adventure to Welshpool to help build his hours. By the end of his test he had exactly forty-five hours. Congratulations.



John Brown flew solo for the first time on Wednesday the 23rd of September. John has been learning to fly with the help of the BDFA and Craig Knott. Well done.

After a very busy and successful summer I'm now in a position to be able to take on new students. Therefore if you fancy either IMC training, Partner's training, brushing up on the use of VOR / ADF/ DME, getting checked out on the PA28s / Robin, gaining experience of landing on grass runways, flying your "one hour with an instructor", or simply doing a bit of refresher training to boost your confidence then I would be delighted to hear from you. I can also provide ground school if you're struggling with any of the written exams.

Overhead Departures

I've just been thinking about overhead departures. In some cases they are a good idea, but in others they are potentially dangerous and a very inefficient way of departing an airfield.

Good Idea:

Leaving Leicester to fly directly back to Tatenhill. By climbing into the overhead you should have gained sufficient altitude to fly over Leicester City safely. The alternative is to climb out over the centre of Leicester City. By doing this you would almost certainly be breaking the "glide clear" rule.

Bad Idea:

Leaving Tatenhill on a busy Sunday afternoon. By climbing into the overhead you increase your chances of conflicting with aircraft that are joining overhead. Plus, if for example, you're departing the area to the west after taking off on runway 26 then the last thing that you want to be doing is turning out to the east as you climb (you're going the wrong way / this costs you more money!). It's generally a good idea to depart an airfield using a Set Heading Point (SHP). At Tatenhill good SHPs are Blithfield Reservoir, Uttoxeter, Barton-under-Needwood and Church Broughton. Using a SHP also gives you time to reach your chosen altitude and settle down before commencing a navigation route.

Martin Handley.



My Checkout in the Robin DR400 and finally - a flight

to.... WEST WALES! By Pippa Dobson

On Monday 20th July, I arrived bright and early at the airfield, ready and raring for my checkout in the Robin DR400/160 with Martin. The external checks appeared easy enough, since these did not overly differ from other aircraft I was familiar with but the internal checks posed a slight, temporary problem, as I attempted to familiarise myself with the rather different layout. Note to self - and any other potential Robin flyers - the Robin has 3 fuel tanks! Fuel monitoring is, therefore, crucial to ensure that the tanks are kept in balance, and it is recommended to devise your own system for monitoring fuel usage.

Fortunately, the engine started straight away, and, after conducting final checks, we lined up ready for take off. It was quite a novelty to be in an aircraft that basically took off by itself, and required minimal input or effort, smoothly taking off under its own steam! Although take off speed was about the same as I was used to in the Cessnas and PA28s, the best angle of climb speed was slightly higher at 75-80kts, and with a lower nose attitude than I was accustomed to in the Cessna 152.

After departing to the West, and conducting a HASELL check, I practiced a stall. With a stall warning system in full working order, and a very responsive aircraft, it was simple enough to recover. Following this, we made our way back to the airfield for some circuits. Future Robin pilots take note - beware of hitting your co-pilot when putting on flap! Not that I did that, of course..... Well, not too often!

I found that using a stick instead of a yoke made the approach much smoother, allowing for much more subtle corrections (apologies to all those already very familiar with this phenomenon - but it is still quite a novelty for me!). Out of all the aircraft I have flown, I found this one by far the easiest to land, even if I did have a tendency to favour the left hand side of the centre line! My one bane though - taxiing! That requires a lot more practice on my part! But, on the plus side, we managed a thorough runway inspection as a bonus as I attempted to taxi in a straight line!

Once checked out to Martin's satisfaction, and since John had now arrived at the airfield, we refuelled ready for our next adventure - West Wales! Attempt number 3 (at least!).



John flew the outbound leg of our trip, giving me some more time for learning through observation since I was still very new to the aircraft. Weather conditions were perhaps some of the best I have ever flown in, rivalled only by the day of our trip to Sandown on the Isle of Wight, almost exactly a year ago to the day, coincidentally also in the Robin, but before I was checked out on the aircraft...a sign perhaps? We reached 4000ft quickly and easily - any extra height we could muster would most certainly be a bonus when attempting to go over the Welsh mountains. Due to light showers, and in danger of penetrating the cloud base, we made a number of in-flight diversions (a common feature of many of our flights, so it seems!), so we were grateful for the extra height we had gained, which came in very handy in dodging both the clouds and the mountains! As we neared the point at which we had to previously admit defeat and chose a different destination (memorably taking us all the way to Cambridge - just a small change but an interesting experience, I have to admit!) we continued flying with bated breath. But this day, the weather was on our side, and we were able, happily, to continue our trip. Fortunately too, we didn't need to go too far off course, and were able to resume our original track once clear of the mountains and the cloud. Once Aberystwyth came into view, we practically followed the coast on to Aberporth West Wales. The airfield was not at all busy, so we had a straight join onto final.

I have never been to such a quiet airfield! There was no-one there but us! Admittedly, it was a Monday and, I have been told, a notoriously 'dead day'. After booking in, and helping ourselves to tea and coffee in their lounge area, we decided to extend the trip and head on to Caernarfon, as it was such a beautiful day. We again took to the skies, this time with me in command. On this leg of the flight, I demonstrated a perfect example of Poor Man's IFR - I may not have been Following a Road, Railway or River, but I certainly followed the coast - all the way to Caernarfon! Even using this system, however, I did have to be aware we were flying close to a live danger area, and also the laser site at Aberystwyth itself, ensuring I kept the coastline on my left all the time to avoid entering the active area.

The views on this leg were absolutely amazing! Breathtaking! We had the Welsh mountains to the right, the coastline and an incredibly blue sea to the left, the mountains of the Llyn Peninsular in front and clear blue skies above us. Approaching Caernarfon airfield, we were informed it was a right hand circuit. A very conveniently situated caravan site acted as the perfect VRP and provided me with a clear marker with which to line up for the centre line. We landed in one piece! My landings are improving, even if I say so myself (but I think John will agree!) and I even successfully mastered taxiing the Robin this time! The landings are down to "Aiming Point and Speed" on the approach. Do that right and your landings do tend to be good ones!



Caernarfon was much busier than Aberporth, practically buzzing by comparison and the backdrop was fantastic! The whole of Snowdonia was in bright sunlight with Snowdon itself clearly visible. I'm told it is usually shrouded in cloud. We took a bite of lunch here (again highly recommended!) before setting off on the last leg, our journey 'home', aiming to follow the Menai Straits before cutting back over land to Tatenhill. The weather remained on our side, and the views were just as stunning as before, if not more so at this time of day - we were being far from disappointed in our expectations for this flight.

I was appointed navigator and chief photographer for this leg, and John pilot in command. After a slight mishap, in which we ever so slightly overshot the entrance to the Menai Straits...(!), we trailed the coastline past Caernarfon town (the castle was outstanding), over the Menai bridge, past Bangor, towards the Great Orme, Llandudno and Colwyn Bay before turning inland on track for Tatenhill.

Having spotted what we believed to be Whitchurch, we set up the VOR and DME using Shawbury, and sure enough after a few moments of settling down, our beliefs about our present position were confirmed. Since it was such a gloriously sunny day, navigating wasn't at all problematic, and visibility was superb, but nevertheless it's always a good idea to double check and practice and it can prove to be very useful if you get caught out in the clag!

Seeing Stoke-on-Trent appear on the horizon marked our 'home straight', and in no time at all we found ourselves overhead Blithfield, preparing for our rejoin. All ran smoothly and as expected, and we were once again with our feet firmly back on the ground. Despite this, I think it's safe to say, I was still clearly on Cloud Nine!

To sum up: finally managing to find the weather to allow a successful navigation to West Wales, and, furthermore, to extend our trip on to Caernarfon even though it wasn't part of the original plan, mark this flight out as one that will remain with me for the rest of my flying days!



The Western entrance to the Menai Straits



Fly-out to Alderney 20th June 2009

June, glorious June.

Just the time of year to embark on a fly-out you might think. After the incessant rain and gloomy skies so common to England from July through to May, THE Saturday morning dawned... cloudy!! Arriving at Tatenhill at 0900, even the semi optimistic weather forecast according to John Mc didn't really uplift the spirits. Crews for this sortie were to be Peter Ward and Angus Stewart in G-TALH, Dave & Hilary Disney and Graham Jefferson in G-ASOK, and Jon Faulkner, Brian Waters and Di Hunter in G-TALE.

The Archer was duly checked out and moved for re-fuelling, the first challenge of the day being to get Rogers' attention! Preparations completed, flight plan filed ready for activation, ELB to hand and with the crew attractively attired in life vests, G-TALE lifted off runway 26 at 1030 with Jon in the left hand seat.

The outbound route was Ha'penny Green, Gloucester and Colerne, eventually crossing the coast somewhere near Lullworth Cove, then direct to Alderney. Overhead Blythfield, the cloud base was 2500', so Jon opted to try and get above it. This failed so we descended to 2000' and stayed there for the rest of the flight. The route down the country was completed uneventfully, with requests and responses for "Basic Service" starting to sound flow competently. The weather remained cloudy, with only the occasional shaft of sunlight breaking through. However, by the time the South coast was approaching, the cloud had started to thin out.

Flight over the Channel was nice although the view forward was a bit hazy. We were picked up by Jersey Radar then handed off to Guernsey ATC, who kept their watchful eyes on us until we were established on final for 23L whereupon we were handed off the Alderney ATC for the "Cleared to Land" instruction. At 800 metres TORA, this runway was adequate to take the Archer and its slim line crew - it just looked short!!

Once safely on the ground, refuelling was undertaken at a very attractive Channel Islands price!! G-TALH had already landed, and we all watched as G-ASOK made its usual graceful landing. Once our little group had gathered, a short debate ensued and a walk to the one and only town in



Alderney was decided upon. We all made our way through what passes for Immigration Control, Customs and Security at Alderney and out thenceforth into the island proper.

Alderney has the narrow, granite edged roads that are a feature of all the Channel Islands. The squawking of innumerable seagulls and the lowing of cattle enhanced the pastoral nature of the area, to which the rumbling of assorted stomachs did not seem out of place! The walk into St Anns was very pleasant and largely downhill. The town has a lot of French influence in its architecture, and the cobbled streets made the passage of vehicles somewhat noisy! The road we took meandered around, keeping to its generally downhill course. It finally ended at the "Anchor" - a pub built almost on the shore. Suitably armed with refreshing drinks, and food orders placed, our little group settled down outside to take in the local ambience. Unfortunately for Di, her share of the ambience materialised as a deposit made by a passing seagull!!! As we sat there, it was hard not to notice the extensive concrete legacy of the occupation of the island during WW2.

Fed, watered and rested we made our return journey back to Alderney airport. All uphill!!! Warm and glowing, our arrival at the airport was made in brilliant sunshine in a cloudless sky. We filled out and filed our return Flight plan, being advised that it would take up to an hour to process. Once all the aircraft checks were complete we were able to grab a little sunbathing whilst we were waiting.

By 1700, we were able to commence our departure, Brian in the left hand seat. We took off over the sea, selecting a North Easterly heading for the short trip back over the Channel. The air was so smooth! As we flew we were entertained by the antics of a Guernsey ATC who used the most outrageous accent on the radio! We were instructed to maintain 1000' - there was no cloud, an incredibly blue sky and only a breath of wind. It was beautiful. The Archer droned on, its crew ogling toy ships on a wave free ocean. In a very short time, we were approaching the English coast. Goodbye Guernsey ATC and goodbye smooth! As we progressed inland, cloud cover increased with some mean looking clumps threatening our progress. There was quite a lot of aerial activity and a good lookout had to be maintained as we made our way northwards. We were able to avoid all the spots of dodgy weather and we arrived back at Tatenhill at 1930. It was a great day out.



OTHER EVENTS

Thursday 29th October

'OPERATING THE MIDLANDS AIR AMBULANCE'

A talk by the County Air Ambulance on it's operation and also an introduction to our local crew.

Followed by

MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP

A talk on the aviation aspects of this very worthwhile charity and the difficult circumstances they operate within in some very remote regions around the globe.

Thursday 26th November

TBC

The above socials will take place at the Albion, Shobnall Road, Burton on Trent.

Starting at 7.30pm.

NEWSLETTER

If you have any articles for the newsletter or comments on the format, please contact Alison at alie_todd@yahoo.co.uk.

NEXT MEDICAL DUE?

As a reminder Dr Hill, our local AME, continues to give a discretionary £5 discount on aviation medical examinations to East Staffs Flying club members. To receive the discount you must show your current ESFC membership card at the time of your medical.

Contact details for Dr Hill are as follows:

Dr J D Hill AME
Burton upon Trent
01283 730201