

# "Clear Prop!" - The Official Newsletter

## of the Shropshire Aero Club



### Christmas 2011

#### SLEAP-AIR TO QUIBERON

We tried to go in 2008, but as ever, Mother Nature had the final word with a band of snow across France. It really was a no brainer but it's amazing how long it takes for a bunch of determined aviators to admit defeat!

Various commitments meant that I had missed the last couple of club fly outs so, when Dave Cooper suggested we have another go at Quiberon, my name was the first on the list. Dave Cooper as ever liaised with the various flyers and found a hotel – The Ibis, that would accept cancellations FOC up to 18:00 hrs on the date of arrival – absolutely ideal for GA touring. The idea was for those that could get away on Friday to do so, returning on Sunday while others would travel down on Saturday returning on Sunday. The weather of course had other ideas! Four aircraft left Sleaf on the Friday, but Saturday departures were all either cancelled or diverted due presumably to the updated crap weather forecast for the return journey on the Sunday.

The most popular route was Sleaf - Cherbourg then Cherbourg - Quiberon. In an attempt to share the flying equally between the three of us, Ray Grimster, Bernard Manton and I in PA28 G-BOYI opted instead for Sleaf-Henstridge, Henstridge-Jersey, and Jersey-Quiberon. It was my first experience of planning a long trip using the Sky Demon software. I can honestly say that it saved hours and hours, and was absolutely fantastic. Not only did it print the PLOG, notams, charts, weather etc, I also used it to file the flight plan the day before departure on the laptop at home. It couldn't have been easier and all worked perfectly.

We all arrived at Sleaf around 9ish on the Friday to collect life jackets, life rafts etc. The weather was a bit murky locally, but quite flyable and forecast to improve rapidly to the south. Dave Cooper, Carol Doyle and George McKenzie set off in SP, Bernard Rhodes and Jack Males in Rockwell Commander G-LITE and Geoff Lewis and partner Ann took Geoff's homebuilt Lancair G-BSRI.

YI got airborne at 10 with Ray Grimster flying the first leg. With IMC for the first 15-20 miles Bernard's NPPL unfortunately relegated him to the back seat. As forecast, the weather rapidly improved to bright if hazy sunshine, but a 30 kt headwind made for very slow progress! I flew the Henstridge - Jersey leg and felt a degree of trepidation when requesting Henstridge to activate the flight plan half expecting the reply "What flight plan?", but sure enough the Sky Demon system had worked without a hitch! We enjoyed magnificent views over Lulworth Cove, Weymouth and Portland Bill as we coasted out with the reassurance of a DACS from Plymouth Military. The overwater stretch was classic "fishbowl" with haze depriving us of any horizon whatsoever. The invaluable IMC rating ensured that the water remained below us and the sky above.

We had booked our weekday PPR slot at the boundary for Jersey Zone as lately required due to their "huge" volume of traffic, and arrived pretty much at the appointed hour. It was however quite apparent from the lengthy silence over the airwaves that busy they were not! In fact it was virtually deserted from the GA and indeed every other point of view! We were declared No 1 with 15 miles still to run. Joining right base for 27 we were asked to fly a wide approach so that they could get a 737 away. I duly complied only to find that they then kept the 737 waiting at the 27 hold while we floated past to a gentle landing having enjoyed a quick tour of the island. No doubt the air in 737 cockpit was rapidly turning blue!

After replenishing tanks of both plane and crew we set off for the short hop to Dinard to clear Customs. The Dinard runways, like many in France are both orientated NW-SE. We would find out later why. Our "quick" trip through Customs proved to be anything but as the wonderful French bureaucracy ground into action. They were far more concerned with security than the carriage of naughty stuff and immediately confiscated my pocket penknife which is a) my constant companion and b) an essential safety aid should the life raft decide to inflate itself while still in the cockpit. It was only returned after lengthy protests/explanations, and after they had escorted us all back to the

plane. My impression of a life raft inflating in a small cockpit did little to reassure them of our sanity!

Quiberon, like most of France, shuts at 17:30 local, but a quick phone call before we left Dinard gave us permission to land and details of runway in use. The flight, direct from Dinard to Quiberon, ably piloted by Ray Grimster, proved uneventful with an excellent service from the various French ATS units who were easy to understand and very helpful. The fact that they were only marginally more busy than Jersey probably helped! We managed to retain a good headwind for the entire journey but we did at least manage to get the groundspeed above 80 kts on this last leg!

Quiberon is located on an isthmus which at one point is just wide enough for the road and railway line. Some 10 miles further out to sea is Belle Isle. The views were stunning as we approached in the late afternoon sunshine. We had been told to join right base for 29. The 30 kt wind was still blowing, but now from a north westerly direction straight down the runway giving rise to some serious turbulence on short final. Ray opted for a flapless approach with plenty of speed to counter any wind shear and put us on the deck quite safely at about 18:20 local (17:20 BST) after a total flight time of 4.5 hours.

The Lancair and Commander were already on the ground but there was no sign of Cooperman and crew in SP. They rolled up about 20 minutes later having enjoyed a lengthy French lunch in Cherbourg. Just a short walk from the airfield the Ibis hotel was excellent with spacious, clean rooms and first class facilities. After a couple of beers we decided to utilise the hotel restaurant for our evening meal and after a couple more beers managed to persuade the hotel staff to make us up a table for 10. The meal was first class and with no flying planned for the Saturday, the vin rouge went down quite nicely.

Saturday dawned (and stayed) grey and windy. We still expected to be joined by one or two intrepid aviators, but not till later in the day. After a quick trip back to the airfield to refuel and tie down, we spent the rest of the day walking around Quiberon which is a bustling seaside mix of holiday makers, small ferry port and fishing harbour. There was a huge Saturday market where you could buy everything from fresh fish to motorbike parts! It

was amazing to see that such a hive of activity in the morning could vanish without trace by 2 in the afternoon.

The day continued grey with increasing wind and heavy showers. We began to think that the Saturday flyers may not be joining us after all. In fact Dave Knight and John Clarke made it as far as Alderney before turning back presumably due to the poor forecast for the return on Sunday.

Saturday's evening meal was taken in a Pizzeria where the food was fantastic. The group had by that time rather carelessly mislaid Bernard and Jack, but we were confident they wouldn't starve!

Sunday dawned sunny but windy. The forecast however was for IFR conditions, strong winds and thunderstorms over the Channel. Not entirely ideal really! Geoff's decision was made for him as his Lancair obviously can't do IMC so he and Ann were able to look forward to another day (at least) in Quiberon. The crews of SP and TE decided to give it a go and set off towards Jersey with the aim of landing there if they could see it! We decided to wait a little. Following their departure we revisited the satellite forecast which had by then improved significantly and predicted that the occluded front would clear the Channel Islands by noon. Ray filed a flight plan to Jersey using the airfield fax machine while I checked YI. The wind was still 30 kts but straight down the runway. We got away at 12:00 local and enjoyed a straightforward flight albeit with a scuddy cloud base at 2200 feet. As we crossed the coast the cloud base dropped a little more so we cruised at 1800 feet across to Jersey with occasional showers and a grandstand view of the breaking swell in the strong winds below. Not a good day to ditch! Jersey was once more very quiet and we were again declared No 1 at 10 miles to run and cleared to land as well! Fortunately the wind was virtually straight down 27 and we arrived with rather more dignity than I was expecting and pulled up to park just as a heavy squall hit. Ray had just left the cabin to see to the fuel bowser as the heavy rain hit us. He was back inside in a nanosecond and can obviously move very quickly for one of such advanced years!

Cooperman and crew were as usual seated in front of a large lunch in the club cafe and we dined on their leftovers! It was apparent that Bernard and Jack had not managed to "see"

Jersey and had instead continued on to Sleaford in one hop.

After filing a flight plan to Henstridge using AFPEX we set off into what was by now our constant companion, the screaming headwind. If dear reader you are puzzled by our apparent love of Henstridge, its role was simply determined by what Ray had put on the GARR forms on the previous Thursday! It's OK, but twice in one weekend is a bit much! The weather was a bit gunky but we remained VFR most of the way back to the south coast. The threat of embedded CB's in the cloud above was sufficient to keep us below the cloud base. Progress was needless to say a little slower than one might wish. Dreams of a 150 kt cruise are particularly attractive when sat in a PA28 fighting a 35kt headwind! Broken cumulus from the coast into the wilder parts of Somerset made for an attractive view but the 35 kt crosswind at Henstridge was not such an attractive proposition (what a shame). We decided instead to divert to Gloucester where we thought they were bound to have a runway pointing in roughly the right direction! It was an inspired choice as not only was the wind at Gloucester a gentle 4kts, but they also waived our landing fee due to the diversion. Must do that more often! We arrived just in time to see the back end of a thunderstorm and the arrival of bright sunshine.

After a quick top up of fuel we set off back to Sleaford and enjoyed a beautiful evening flight in still air over the sunlit countryside arriving at 17:50. John and Tom had kindly kept the pumps (and the till) open especially for us. SP had routed from Jersey to Old Sarum where they presumably had yet another three course meal as they didn't arrive back at Sleaford for another hour or so. TE we were told had arrived safely much earlier and Geoff and Ann were presumably enjoying a peaceful evening in Quiberon. I assume they made it back, but truth be known I've not seen them since!

It turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable trip with some challenging but safe flying, taking one out of the normal comfort zone and widening one's flying experience. Very many thanks to Dave Cooper (alias Cooperman, alias Captain Cake) for making all the arrangements which always take longer than you think. Having been on a number of such fly outs I would recommend them to anyone who fancies getting a little further than Shobden or

Caernarfon! You can do as much or as little flying as you want, and there are always other flyers on hand for a second opinion or a bit of guidance. Where are we going next Dave?

David Hughes

Nathan - As an adjinder to Dave's words - which I would like to be printed as a postscript - I would like to thank all those who made our trip possible, safe and enjoyable.

People such as yourself, for helping with the logistics of it all, Pete Whitehead and his team for providing safe and secure aircraft for safe passage overland and especially over water!, to the club managers and directors for ensuring the club has excellent touring aircraft available, well kitted out for pretty well all conditions and finally, to all those who took part in what was a particularly enjoyable event. The next trip is already on my radar so watch this space as they say!

Cheers,

Dave Cooper



CHECKED THE WEIGHT AND BALANCE CHAPS?

### **BATTLE OF BRITAIN DINNER 2011**

It doesn't seem ten minutes ago since I started to organise last year's Battle of Britain dinner at the Shropshire Aero Club. Now this year's has come round and gone too quickly but here are a few recollections of the night.

Invitations were sent as usual to our close neighbours, RAF Shawbury. By coincidence,

this year, there was a large change of staff which meant that several of the senior officers were new to the station and not one from last year was still in place and could come, this included both the Station Commander and the Commandant of the Helicopter Flying School. Fortunately half a dozen were able to come and from letters received afterwards, they certainly all enjoyed themselves.

In the old wartime tower, still used for air traffic control and lectures, the first floor lounge and dining room was set up in patriotic colours to accommodate fifty of us for a three course meal. Our chef, Kelvin, produced an excellent traditional meal of best British Beef.

Sadly this year, John Trotman DFC and Bar, was unable to join us as he had just been operated on for a new hip and could not manage the stairs. By a curious coincidence, his wife Olwen found herself in the same hospital at the same time as her previously replaced hip came out of joint.

At the end of the meal, the first to speak was a lady called Louise Evans, a club member, who had come dressed in beautifully coloured and embroidered traditional Norwegian costume. She spoke about the tribulations of a people under occupation and illustrated a typical example of Nazi control over every-day life when a law was passed making it a severe offence to choose to stand rather than sit by a German soldier on a bus that was full. Also, many Norwegians would wear a paper clip in their jacket button hole as a sign of defiance. The paper clip had been invented by a Norwegian. This also carried a severe penalty. Brian Beattie spoke next. He flew torpedo bombers during the War and spoke very clearly and strongly, at age ninety, of the continuing need to remember the sacrifice of a generation of wartime dead and wounded.

Allan Scott DFM, also ninety, spoke next about the deprivations endured by himself and everyone else on the island of Malta GC during the Siege. He talked particularly about the hunger (he lost four stone himself) but also about the unbelievable odds against the defending pilots in their constant battles against the Luftwaffe and the Italian airforce who heavily outnumbered them. In that sense, he was able to liken their situation to that of the Battle of Britain pilots in 1940. One ploy they used with some success was for an individual

pilot to refer to himself in the air as a Squadron rather than a solo pilot.

Next to speak was Shropshire's last surviving Battle of Britain pilot, Ron Smyth DFC, also ninety, 111 Squadron. He talked about being sent to a Hurricane squadron and having to admit that he had never flown one. But having never flown one, he soon found himself doing just that and in the most challenging of situations. Later he was posted to a Photo Reconnaissance unit, 541 Squadron where he flew Spitfires, which he loved. He finished his talk by very kindly presenting me with a gift of DVD's in appreciation for having passed, what he had worked out to be, the hundredth lift that I had given him to our monthly RAFA and Air Crew Association meetings. I was very touched and lost for words, it was so unexpected. The DVD's were the complete set of Dad's Army and Riverdance, two of my very favourites!

Now it was my turn to speak so, as usual, I showed the large photograph I keep of Walter Darre shaking hands with Hitler and then read his chilling speech on how the Nazis planned to get rid of the British nation within two generations.

To lift the mood after this, I told a couple of jokes which seemed to go down well. At the end, we toasted Ron Smyth and the Few.

Another very successful Battle of Britain dinner had been concluded but with most staying to chat, a good sign of a good evening - shared by good people.

Roy Dolton  
President, Shropshire Aero Club

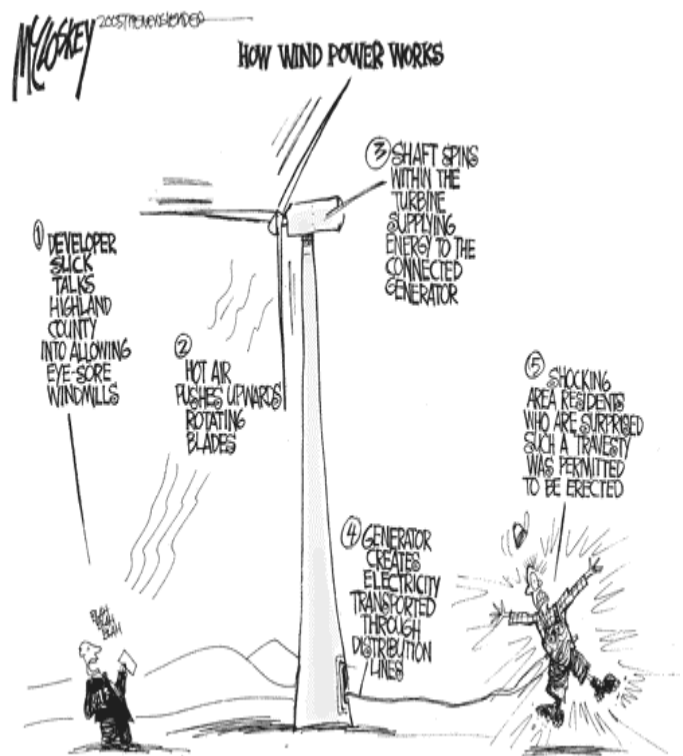
Our thanks to Roy for this succinct record of the 2011 Dinner.

A young pilot, known to me, has recently been awarded the Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air. This unconditional bravery, so much highlighted in the Battle of Britain, still goes on today. I take the liberty of attaching and extract from the Citation for his award.  
Editor

'During the evening of December 21, 2010 a Chinook aircraft commanded by Flight Lieutenant \*\*\*\* was tasked to pick up a Jackal vehicle that had suffered extensive damage from a Command Wire Improvised Explosive Device (IED) strike and was situated in a desert

location. With all unnecessary equipment removed, the vehicle was on the weight limits of the aircraft's performance, which also meant Winn and his crew were only able to attempt the recovery with minimal fuel. Due to the location of the vehicle, three failed attempts at pickup were made, however during the fourth and (owing to lack of fuel) final approach, Winn maintained marginal references for just long enough for the vehicle to be attached. The load was then lifted in heavy brownout, and returned successfully to Bastion. In a second incident on January 12, \*\*\*\* was commanding the aircraft which was tasked to evacuate a seriously injured coalition soldier from the Sangin area. It was quickly apparent that the troops were still in a fierce contact, but due to the severity of the casualty Winn elected to continue with the approach. As soon as he had landed multiple bursts of automatic small arms fire were heard very close to the aircraft. \*\*\*\* however retained a calm, professional attitude and **completed the extraction with extraordinary gallantry and superb leadership.**

Thus it can be seen that the baton of courage and selflessness is passed from generation to generation and is still alive in our beloved country despite the efforts of those who would tell us otherwise.



Thanks to GASIL for the following item.

### Duty of care

We frequently remind pilots of the need to keep passengers and others well away from propellers and rotors, especially if these are already rotating. We would therefore be particularly concerned to find that a person being offered their first flight had been injured by coming into contact with a rotating propeller. An even greater concern would be if the pilot had allowed that person to leave the cockpit while the engine was running. According to the AAIB in its Bulletin 10 of 2011, that is precisely what happened earlier this year.

An essential part of the briefing given to passengers (and early students) is how to leave the aircraft safely. They must know how to unlatch the seat belt, open the door, and leave the vicinity of the aircraft in the opposite direction to the propeller (usually rearwards) whether it is rotating or not. However, even if we have given that briefing, we cannot expect everyone to remember everything they have

been told. It is the duty of the aircraft commander to ensure their passenger's safety, and that means not placing the passenger in a potentially hazardous situation. Safety Sense Leaflet 2 "Care of Passengers", available like all other such leaflets free for download from the CAA's website [www.caa.co.uk/safetysense](http://www.caa.co.uk/safetysense), should be an essential reference document for all pilots carrying passengers.

We do not wish to leave an inexperienced person in charge of an aircraft with the engine running, so if there is a need for someone to leave the aircraft after the engine has started, the engine should be shut down using the Flight Manual technique, and the situation dealt with in a quiet and relaxed manner.



Whoops – No TCAS ??

Thanks to all who have contributed to the safe and efficient running of our club in the last twelve months. Many hours of dedicated work go into the operational side of maintaining and operating an airfield as well as a Club. To Nathan and the Office Squad many thanks for their unfailing politeness and assistance. To Kelvin for good, wholesome food at times suitable to all. To the A/G Operators and Fire Crews a big thank you to all concerned and last but NOT least to our band of Instructors for their patience, skill and unfailing good humour.

We have space for articles from the CFI and the Directors but as nothing is forthcoming we must be assured that we are all doing the necessary all the time!



**Guess the Year? (No prizes for correct answers!!)**

### **Christmas Dinner**

The club lounge was warm and festive, the meal excellent – Kelvin and his team did us proud – and a variety of wine and beer available to complement it. After coffee and mince pies, our CFI Bob Pooler said a few words and included a good supply of jokes, some of which might have been trawled from the Christmas crackers! The floor was then opened to anyone else who wanted to add to the Christmas cheer and John Trotman readily stood up, as did two other guests, both Irish and not known to each other, who kept up a ready supply of jokes and funny stories. Allan Scott was asked to share some of his more sombre moments and told us about his time as a test pilot and of various crashes he experienced during and just after the war. This included one particularly bad one when, during a rather fierce aerobatic manoeuvre at an air show, he pulled the tail off a Tiger Moth. He was left with a badly damaged arm, the loss of his sight for some months and a face that had to be meticulously rebuilt and kept in a 'cage' for a year. He was reassured that the result was far more handsome than the original!

We have the best part of 500 members at the SAC. There were only 30 or so at the dinner. Such events are a great opportunity for members to meet and mix, share flying stories, socialise and relax. Some years ago when the club numbered only 150, the Christmas dinners at the Hawkstone Hotel would see the best part of 120. It would be great to have more members coming along once again and joining in the festivities with like-minded people.

Roy Dolton  
President, Shropshire Aero Club