



Scottish Airsports Club

Latest News

Issue 13, April 2004



Contents

Forthcoming Events
Page 1

XL shares available
Page 1

Spotted in the hangar
Page 3

1st XCs of the Season
Page 1

Flytec 5030 review
Page 2

Lanzarote Adventure
Page 3

Forthcoming Events

April/May

Thermals! Lots of them! Bad news for microlight pilots, but good news for hang glider pilots! Avoid them or hunt them out as you choose.

1st UK Cross Country Flights of the Season.

It's only mid April, and already we've had three XC flights from Thornhill. I started things off gently at the end of February with a modest 1.2km flight to the far end of the long runway. So maybe it was just a misjudged landing, but it's going in my task book anyway. Then in March in far from ideal conditions, Andy got away and flew the first proper XC of the season as far as Blair Drummond.

Ken got the best flight so far on Easter Sunday when he landed on the far side of the M9 near Stirling Castle. This is right next to the notorious Raploch area of Stirling, and an ideal place to land if you fancy swapping your glider for some substances which just make you think you're flying. This was Ken's second flight of the day, and his first flight ever with his fancy new winglets. However, as the tug pilot who dropped him off in the perfect part of the sky, I claim at least 75% of the glory. And no I didn't tow him 3/4 of the way there.

Pegasus XL shares available

If anyone is interested, we are offering shares in the Pegasus XL on the condition that it can only be flown when not required by the aerotow club. Once we get the 912, this shouldn't be too much of a restriction. Costs have not yet been finalised, but will partly depend on the number of people interested. If you are interested, then please let me know, either by e-mail at allan@allanphillips.co.uk or phone me on 01786 842030.

Flytec 5030 Review

The 5030 is the top-of-the-range Flight Computer (it's far too sophisticated to be called a vario) from Flytec and is in fact the same instrument as the Brauniger Compeo, but re-badged. I got my hands on one for £799 from Skyview Systems (www.pilotdiscounts.co.uk) recently, so I thought I'd let you all know what I think.

First of all, what does it do? It has three basic functions: your normal vario stuff, your normal GPS stuff (16 channel receiver), and also your normal airspeed indicator stuff. The magic comes from the fact that the 5030 does all of this in a single instrument, and so can use all this information together to give the pilot a lot of useful information that you wouldn't get from three separate units. For example, any old GPS will tell you what direction to fly in to reach your next waypoint. However, the 5030 will also tell you what speed to fly at, and what your altitude above the waypoint will be when you get there. If it's negative you'd better hope you find some lift on the way! If you're thermalling too fast or too slow for optimum climb rate it will tell you.

Two of the best things about it are:

- 1) It will show you what the wind direction is, so you can make sure you land into wind at the end of your XC flight, even if it's swung round and there are no visual indicators, and
 - 2) If you lose a thermal it will show you what direction and how far to fly to get back to it.
- Too bad it won't tell you where your next thermal is coming from!

There are over 18 different user-selectable fields to display in addition to the basics of altitude and vertical speed. However accessing all this info is made easy by the fact that you can choose 7 different items on each of three screens. It's then easy to switch between these 3 screens in flight, to get whatever info you need.

Does it work? I think it does - the first day I used it I got the longest flight of anyone that day. I'd like to claim that this was nothing to do with the 5030 and just due to my incredible flying skills. I could then go on about how I often observe buzzards stuck on the ground jealously watching me circle upwards in the lightest of thermals. But it would all be a lie. The fact was that I stayed up longer than I would have been able to previously because when I lost the thermal, the 5030 really did manage to guide me back to it. Mind you, it's just as well at that price! Also, it's only slightly bigger and heavier than a normal vario, far less bulky than having a vario/GPS/windspeed meter combination, plus there's only one battery to charge which lasts a very impressive 25 hours per charge.

Bad points? Only two minor ones so far. First of all, the Flight Analysis page gives you various statistics of the flight. However the max climb and max sink rate are instantaneous rather than damped values and so can be unrealistically high. Secondly I believe the GPS antenna can have problems picking up satellites if you mount the unit on its side on the upright rather than on the base bar. I certainly had no problem picking up 8 or more satellites with it mounted on the base bar near the corner bracket and tilted towards me.

All in all I think it's an excellent instrument and much better than having 2 or 3 separate instruments. If anyone wants a demo or a shot, just let me know.



With the Flytec 5030, you'll have no trouble locating the perfect parking spot in the hangar.

Spotted in the Hangar

There is some serious hardware gathering in the hangar, as you'll see in the pictures below.



A lovely Ikarus C42



The new aerotow tug, just about capable of towing up Big Al plus lightweight passenger on the dual Discovery glider.

Lanzarote Adventure by Andy McLaughlin

I thought I would try and write an article for our newsletter about a flight Donald MacKenzie (Donny Uprights to his mates) and I had on our recent trip to Lanzarote. The last time I tried writing anything I sent a five page article to wings and they printed one paragraph, so I hope to see a bit more of this in the news letter. [Happy to oblige! - Ed]

As usual we'd had a great holiday in Lanzarotte, most of the flying had been on Macher near Porta Del Carmen. On the last day Donny Uprights and myself decided we would take off from Macher, gain some height and see if we could get onto the next hill on the westerly side of the hill, and if successful try for the next one and so on. I personally thought it was another of daft Donny's ideas, but what the heck I am going to go down at some point anyway, might as well give it a go.

We had no real plan, (usual Donny stuff) but we had the radios so we could keep in touch and make decisions in the air, our usual seat of the pants stuff. We carried out radio checks on the ground, everything was working fine, no problem, so off we went. I went first followed by Donny. Of course as per usual as soon as we were in the air we could not hear each other so we had gone from seat of the pants stuff to really seat of the pants stuff now. Anyway I decided to just stay higher than Donny and as soon as he went for it off I would follow. As it happened I had gained some good height quickly and decided I was going for it. So off I shot reaching the next hill about three Ks away very quickly and with no real loss of height. I looked behind me and Donny was on his way.

The hill was small so I as soon as I topped out I was off to the next one, as there would not have been enough room for two gliders. The next hill was further away and much smaller - 300 or 400 feet at most. I arrived at about the 50 foot mark but the mixture of strong wind and thermals meant within a couple of beats I had topped out again. Yes you guessed it, that pest Uprights was on his way, so, as there was hardly enough room for one glider on this hill I decided to go for it again.

The next hill (I use the term loosely - bump in the ground would be more accurate) was actually a mini extinct volcano about 100 feet high. [Too bad it was extinct - an eruption might have kicked off a nice wee thermal - Ed] The volcano cone was not complete as at one side part of it had been washed away. It was difficult to know where was the best place to be, and I found myself worryingly low inside the volcano on a couple of occasions. I also worried a couple of kestrels who did not feel brave enough (and I don't blame them) to stay around me. I finally worked what I thought was enough height and before Donny arrived I set off for the next ridge. Old uprights soon followed while I probed the lift on the ridge for the best route to the next hill.

This proved to be the easiest part of the flight and we quickly gained height and covered ground. I made the final jump too low and had another couple of scary moments thinking I was going down with nowhere to land, but luck was on my

side and I managed to soar up the hill and topped out just in time to meet Donny. We were above the inversion and the end of the island was now in sight with the sun glistening on the Atlantic. With no where left to go we headed off towards the sea. I was following Donny by now and we were heading downwind of the last hill. Unbeknown to us we had made a huge mistake and even the 800' to 1000' per min down on our variors did not prepare us for what was about to happen.

Donny had left the hill before me and I could see he was setting up his approach for the only landing place for miles, a large football field cut out of the side of the mountain terraces amongst all the lava fields. We had loads of height and the landing should have presented no problem. Wrong! As I watched Donny turn towards the field he seemed to stop and landed well short in amongst the lava boulders. I thought "Excellent! He has misjudged it, what a xxxxxxxx! I could not wait to get down and give him a good slagging.

I had even more height than he did so I went slightly further down wind before turning to land. I was preparing to begin my "S" turn approach, when Woww!!!!!!! I had stopped in fact I was drifting backwards. Things started to happen very quickly now, particularly my descent. I had the bar in as hard as I could and was still going backwards increasingly quickly. I realised I was going to be well short of the football field and well behind Donny since my king posted glider did not cut through the air quite as well as Donny's. Surely things could not get worse. Wrong again! I was now going backwards downhill over terraced fields full of lava boulders.

The ground was now rising very quickly and I just held the bar in and hoped I would land somewhere soft. Sadly I landed in amongst the boulders. The wind was so strong I could not get the glider turned out of wind. I struggled for a long time before finally unclipping and getting to the front of the glider. I had twisted my ankle and it was all very hard work. Luckily the glider was in one piece except for one tip batten.

Although the landing was a nightmare (the wind where we landed being much stronger than on top of the hill we had taken off from), and the distance covered was nothing to write home about it was a great flight which I will repeat again if I can. It was a great week, the best of the six or seven I have been on. This was down to Lanzarote itself, the fantastic weather and great craic with a great bunch of guys (even you Timmy).

The one lesson learned was never follow Donny Uprights. Oh and don't bend over to pick up the soap in front of Rob the Sailor.

See you all next year somewhere.

Andy

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