



Scottish Airsports Club Special Xmas Edition

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Forthcoming Events

25th December - Christmas

Always a great day to go flying, try out that new glider that Santa squeezed down the chimney, and avoid those annoying relatives.

10th January - AGM

6.30pm at Al's house in Bridge of Allan, to be followed by a curry. Please try to attend if you can - we've got lots of important things to discuss both for aerotow and field members.

5th - 12th February - Annual Lads Trip to Lanzarote

It looks like being a special holiday this year with 12 pilots from the UK and another 10 from Iceland. Since Yours Truly is going (it'll be the first time I've ever flown off a hill), you can expect a full report on my return.

Hangar Update

The hangar really is finished now and at last has all the necessary approval and rubber stamps. It's even got posh toilets with hot water! These photos were taken just before it was completed. Now that it's open for business, I'm sure it will quickly fill with microlights and other aircraft. That's a bit of a shame really - it would be a great place for a game of badminton, or perhaps some indoor bowling. Oh well...



Flight Report

The date: 11th October 2003.
The weather: Fabulous for powered flying (i.e. light winds and smooth air).
The pilots: Alan Huntly (Discovery/Doodlebug)
Scott McMeekin (Discovery/Mosquito)
Allan Phillips (Amour/Booster)
The mission: To fly non-stop to Sydney Australia via the Wallace Monument and the Ochils

OK, so it was an ambitious plan, but we had backup in the shape a support aircraft to help us on the way. Richard Cook had flown in earlier that day in a Tiger Cub (I think - some sort of light aircraft anyway with RAF markings) and decided to accompany us on our epic journey.

Having filled my 5 litre tank to the brim in preparation for the trip, I was first to take off quickly followed by Al and Scott. The wind was very light but we all managed to take off easily enough and I was soon leading our intrepid trio of adventurers towards the Southern Hemisphere. Richard took off soon after with a friend of Al's aboard as passenger, and he soon caught us up. His problem was then, of course, to fly slowly enough to keep with us without plummeting out of the sky. In a true spirit of non-cooperation we stuck to a leisurely 28 mph or so.

As usual I flew higher than Scott and Al, simply because I'm always paranoid that the engine's about to stop/sieze/disintegrate. On a trip like this you know there are going to be plenty of incidents to tell the grand children should you make it back, and we weren't going to be disappointed. We had barely got to Bridge of Allan (i.e. about 1/200,000th of the way) when I heard a bang/crack sound and thought "Oh shit! What's broken?" I held my breath expecting to give in to the theory of gravity at any second, when there was another bang/crack. Thankfully the glider was still flying so I looked elsewhere for the source of the noise, and then noticed I was directly above some clay pidgeon shooters! Thankfully they didn't give up aiming for the hopelessly small and quick clay disks and try a somewhat larger, slower target instead!

Not long after that, before we had even reached the Wallace Monument, we suffered our first major set back. Richard in the support plane give up trying to fly at our speed and buggered off back to Thornhill. We were now on our own and any hope of in-flight refuelling had now disappeared. If we were going to make Sydney, we'd need to find plenty of lift to make the fuel last. On a smooth October afternoon, with no more than 5mph drift it wasn't looking good.

At last the milestone of the Wallace Monument arrived. We were now about 1/199999th of the way there and there was still hope that we'd make it. However as I looked round for the others, I realised I was on my own. I tried to contact them on the radio before realising I'd forgotten to bring it. So much for all the minutes of planning and preparation. At this point I made the selfless decision to fly round the monument and head back to Thornhill. I knew that Scott and Al would have a better chance of making it to Sydney without me. Anyway, I'd been flying for almost 30 minutes by now and was getting tired and hungry.

On the way back, I flew over Craigforth where I work and thought how much better it was to be up here looking into the office rather than stuck in the office looking up at the sky. Also I reckoned the roof was just about big enough to land on, on a day with a decent breeze in the right direction. Now that would be an impressive way to arrive at work...

Meanwhile Scott and Al were over the Ochils and watching the paraglider pilots sitting forlornly on the top of Myerton waiting for the wind to pick up, the thermals to start, or the pigs to take off. Scott and Al got as far as Castle Campbell (not quite Sydney, but a valiant attempt) before deciding that not even Scott's 10 litres of fuel were going to last the journey to Sydney. As they headed back over Myerton, the pigs were still safely in their fields and so the paraglider pilots were now lobbing themselves off the hill for a 3 minute top-to-bottom flight with multiple collapses on the way.

Things went even more pear shaped as it now started to rain. Since the rain was coming from the West, I reached it first and was a bit concerned since I'd heard stories about how a wet wing increases your stall speed. With such a light breeze I was afraid the landing might prove painful/worth watching. I contemplated landing out, but decided to pull the bar in and increase the throttle, hoping to get back to Thornhill before it got too wet. Al and Scott also soon encountered the rain. Scott decided to push on for Thornhill while Al decided that since he was so near his home he would land.

Al is lucky enough to have a home that is surrounded by large fields, so he often takes off and lands in those fields. However, seeing his wife watching in the back garden he decided to ignore the **LARGE** fields and show off his expert airmanship by landing in his small back garden, a stunt he'd never attempted before. Let's just say he didn't quite make it. Still at least he had a use for those 2 spare uprights which had been gathering dust for so long!

In the end Scott and I both landed uneventfully at Thornhill despite the rain and vowed to make another attempt at Sydney next year. If we get just a little more luck next time round I reckon we should make it, especially with a bigger fuel tank...



Al on his way to Sydney

Grant Application Update

The Lottery Grant application is moving again now that the Scottish Sports Council have some more money to give away. We'll be aiming to get our Summary Application in before the end of the year, and if the Summary Application is successful, we then have to submit a Full Application. Since fewer people now play the Lottery, there's not as much money to give out, but hopefully we'll get enough for some substantial improvements at the airfield. Come along to the A.G.M. to hear how things are progressing.

Telford Report

For the second year running I went to the International Airsports Exhibition at Telford. It was well attended with plenty of interesting stuff to see and buy. I was hoping to buy the snazzy new 4flight helmet from Icaro, but when I tried it on it made my glasses steam up! What hope would I have on a cold winter's day? There weren't many hang gliders on display, although Airways had one of the new U2 gliders hanging from the ceiling. This glider is similar to the Moyes Litesport in that it has topless-style dive struts, but still has a king post. This means it's the same sort of weight as a king post glider, but without the luff lines and so higher performance. Certainly the U2 has been getting a lot of rave reviews. The only other glider at the show was Johnny Carr's impressive looking Airbourne C2. For a rather biased review of this glider from someone who's never even flown it, look no further than issue 7 of the club newsletter.

Sperwill who specialise in all sorts of footlaunched aviation were at the show again. They had various paramotor and powered hangglider power units on display. I've entrusted them with my Booster power unit (since this is now out of production) for a service and upgrade. When I get it back I'll report on what they've done to it.

On the microlight front there was the usual selection of Pegasus/Mainair and fancy fixed wing aircraft. I was also talking to the manufacturer of the Kiss range of microlights, imported by Ben Ashman's LightFlight operation. Unfortunately from the Aerotow club's point of view, none of these machines are certified as tugs. However it was interesting to hear that they are planning to get the new version of the Fun 18 through Section S certification, and possibly through tug certification as well. The Fun 18 is ideal for towing because it's fairly powerful, but has a big slow wing, and an uncertified older version of this is being used by another aerotow club (shhhh) . Unfortunately the whole certification process will probably take at least a year.

Also of interest on the microlight front was a single seater Chaser with an empty weight of below the magic 100kg. The hope is that microlights of this weight will soon be de-regulated and so you won't need all the costs/hassle of annual permits, etc for a microlight like this. I just remember how long it took for the 450kg legislation to go through, so don't hold your breath!

Unfortunately I didn't take any pictures, so here are a couple of photos from last year's show.



A slightly cheaper version of the Quick (not for sale!)



Avian's new Cheetah 150

South African Microlight Safari

Also at the Telford show were Ballito Microlight Adventures who offer "adventure flights comprising 5 or 6 day packages to some of the most spectacular scenery in South Africa. If anyone wants more information, I've got leaflets and a CD with a promotional Powerpoint presentation which is well worth watching so just give me a shout if you want to borrow it. The only catch is that a UK microlight licence isn't recognised in South Africa, so you have to have an instructor in the back of your microlight. You are, however, free to do all the flying as long as you don't scare the instructor too much!

Happy Christmas and Good Flying in the New Year!

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