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Brissle Strutter



Newsletter of the LAA Bristol Strut

DECEMBER 2025

Message from the Chair

Dear Strut Member,

Well November has definitely seen some wintry weather arriving – although preceded by huge amounts of rain. I had expected a number of grass airfields to be adversely affected, but haven't seen any notices of closure yet – perhaps that's linked to hosepipe bans that are still in force! There have been a few fine flying days, which I hope you've been able to make the most of – Trevor and I enjoyed a trip East to White Waltham a couple of weeks ago, which was very welcoming (albeit with a busy circuit) and even had an open fire burning in the food and drink area (apparently you can't call it a crew-room as that's military).

For those who missed it – we had a most interesting presentation by Phil Hall last month, who was until very recently responsible for Certification and Compliance on the Skyfly Axe project. The aircraft itself is particularly aimed at the private pilot market, being launched in this country as a homebuild kit (and one of our members has put his name down for a kit), but with the ability to take off and land both conventionally and vertically. Once in conventional (wing-borne) flight it is possible to glide the aircraft in the event of a major engine malfunction or running out of power, and in rotor-borne flight all of the hard work of translating pitch, roll and yaw demands into changes in individual rotor speeds is carried out automatically by a highly sophisticated flight management system – which is probably why the CAA has agreed that it can be flown by PPL(A) holders after differences training – so no PPL(H) required! It was also particularly heartening to see so many visitors along for the talk.

This month's event is the Christmas meal and Quiz, which takes place at the Willy Wicket on Tuesday 2nd December. We are a little down on numbers this year with many of our regulars unable to attend, but 12 of us will be enjoying their festive fare. If anyone does still want to join us I'm sure we can fit a couple more in – but please do let me know asap.

Last month I mentioned the Met Office Aeronautical Visualisation Service (MAVIS) which will bring together 4 products: Aviation Briefing Service, Network Weather Resilience, Helibrief and Open Runway into 1 user-friendly service. I've been having a play with that over the last few weeks, and it does provide some really interesting features such as a 'playable' forecast of surface visibility, cloud cover

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Message from the Chair (continued)

and cloudbase, as well as precipitation, temperatures and wind. Again I would encourage you to have a look as I think it provides a useful adjunct to the F214/F215/GAMETs in a more visual form – and they are still keen to get feedback as it is in the development phase.

As I won't see many of you again until the New Year, I'll close by wishing you all a most enjoyable Christmas and a very Happy New Year – and I'll finish with a seasonal joke...

Santa Claus, like all pilots, gets regular visits from the CAA (Christmas Aviation Authority), and it was shortly before Christmas when the CAA-authorized examiner arrived for his annual check-ride.

In preparation, Santa had the elves wash the sled and bathe all the reindeer. Santa got his logbook out and made sure all his paperwork was in order.

The examiner walked slowly around the sled. He checked the reindeer harnesses, the landing gear, and Rudolph's nose. He painstakingly reviewed Santa's weight and balance calculations for the sled's enormous representative payload. Finally, they were ready for the check-ride. Santa got in, fastened his seatbelt and shoulder harness, and checked the compass. Then the examiner hopped in carrying, to Santa's surprise, a shotgun.

"What's that for?" asked Santa incredulously.

The examiner winked and said, "I'm not supposed to tell you this, but as part of the test, you're gonna lose an engine on take-off."

Best wishes,

Neville

This month's meeting

Enjoy the Christmas Meal & Quiz, 19:00hr, 2nd December, at the Willy Wicket, Wick Wick Close, Emersons Green, Bristol BS36 1DP.

Last month's meeting

A very interesting presentation from Phil Hall on the SkyFly Axe, which he describes as 'setting the foundation for a new age' of light aviation. Neville has given some details of his presentation on Page 1, but to add some more detail Phil described Axe as an 'eVTOL capable aeroplane'. The VTOL capability is energy-intensive, but Axe offers also the flexibility of a short take-off, partially rotor-borne, partially wing-borne, freeing more energy for range. Phil described the relatively problem-free development so far; vertical performance and conventional flight regimes have already been demonstrated, and testing of the rotor-borne to wing-borne transition has now been moved to the US for weather conditions more conducive to development. There are many improvements in the pipeline, eg battery technology development, and Axe is better placed than some other configurations to take advantage of these. Applications include military and civilian support roles. I'll not provide numbers here; look at skyfly.aero and other sources for rapidly-changing positions.



Information from the CAA and elsewhere

The UK Airprox Board's [October 'Insight'](#) is well worth reading for the account of an encounter between a Wildcat helicopter and a glider close to Nympsfield. The [November edition of CHIRP](#) is also available and is a good read as usual.

[CAA ORS4 No. 1639](#) presents an exemption relating to the issue of class ratings for the NPPL(A).

The Gloster Gladiator which Strut members saw under restoration three years ago flew from Kemble last month—in a Royal Norwegian Air Force C130!

Threat to Popham Airfield: last month I commented on a report from Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan playing down the strategic importance of Popham. The consultation for the revised Local Plan commenced today, and at a quick glance it doesn't repeat the statements but seems to avoid any significant mention of the airfield other than putting it off for later consideration! Perhaps you can find something more concrete.

I am separately sending a copy of the Consultation letter to Strut members; it contains all the necessary links to the Plan and the consultation process. Now is the time to comment—even if you commented on the previous version.

The next AIRAC update is on December 25th: something to do while recovering from Christmas lunch.

Puzzle Picture

Last month: the FRED - First Runabout Experimental Design by Eric Clutton. Correct answers from Chris W and Alan G, who writes "I knew him slightly when I flew model airplanes as a kid in Stoke on Trent and saw him flying around in the first one".



And for this month, Pitts owner Alan offers us a biplane which is not a Pitts!



Where to go in December

Events are sparse—well, it is December! But a full list of vouchers from

Flyer: Caernarfon, Tibenham, Barton, Yatesbury, Sandown (50%)

Also *Light Aviation*: Brighton

6 December: Christmas Fly-in, Compton Abbas

Tailpiece

You can track Santa with Flight Radar 24 this Christmas [here](#).

