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Brissle Strutter



Newsletter of the LAA Bristol Strut

FEBRUARY 2024

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Message from the Chair

Dear Strut members,

It was great to catch up with a number of you earlier this month - even if we did end up in a somewhat smaller room than usual! We thoroughly enjoyed looking at the pictures and video that people had brought along relating to their airborne adventures last year, and listening to plans for the coming year. Between us there had been some remarkable adventures, and everyone was keen to expand their horizons again this coming year - which would be great to see.

Next month we have our first formal presentation of the year with a briefing from our local Border Force team, and with people starting to look to foreign adventures again, this will be a really timely opportunity to check your understanding of the current rules and regulation. And whilst we've got a pretty full Strut diary over the first half of the year (see page 2) if you've got any ideas of people (or subjects) that you'd really like to see invited or covered later on in the year do let us know - and don't forget to put the dates we've already got in your diaries, and invite your friends along! As ever - don't forget that you can see what's on not only at the Strut website (<https://bristolstrut.uk>), but also on our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=bristol%20strut>).

Finally - can I just introduce our newest member - Karl Bradford. Karl is a BMAA member who attended the GASCo Safety Evening last year - and it's a delight to have him on board - so do introduce yourself to him at the next Strut evening!

Blue skies,

Neville



This month's meeting

On Tuesday 6th February we will be hosting a presentation from two Field Intelligence Officers from the Border Force Intelligence Directorate. They will be briefing on the risks and threats within General Aviation from a Border Force perspective, including demonstrating how these threats are very real. The 'Submit a General Aviation Report' (sGAR) and Certificate of Agreement (COA) processes/details will be explained, and there will also be an opportunity for questions and answers. 19:30 Room 4 BAWA, as usual.

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Last month's meeting

We started the year by gathering to discuss our flying activities in 2023. Weather had played a large part, affecting various scheduled events and the usability of some grass strips. Fortunately for those of us at Garston Farm, ground conditions prevented operation on only 3-4 days during the year. However some events were unaffected, and the Popham Grass Roots rally had 2 good days out of 3.

There were first visits to quite a few airfields, but David certainly topped the list with his tour of the Baltic states –see below.

Neville outlined plans for the year, including the possibility of the very first Bristol Strut fly-in – certainly in this century! And the schedule is:

- 6 Feb – Border Force – Field Intelligence Office Briefing
- 5 Mar – David White – Foreign Adventures
- 16 Mar – SkyDemon briefing by Rob Hart from the Sky Demon team
- 2 Apr – CAA – Airspace Infringement
- TBD May – first Fly-Out (Jet Age Museum, Staverton)
- 4 Jun – Strut Social Evening
- 8/9 Jun – Strut Fly-In!
- TBD Jul – second Fly-Out (location TBD)
- 6/7 Jul – Strut Fly-In (weather reserve)
- 3 Sep – AGM
- 1 Oct – TBD
- 19 Oct (provisional) – Annual Skittle Match vs BAC
- 5 Nov – TBD
- 3 Dec – Strut Christmas Meal

Baltic tour – David Chambers

Last spring my wife and I enjoyed a two-week tour of Scandinavia and the Baltic countries.

I share a TB20 (250hp SEP with retractable gear and variable pitch prop). The good weather meant that all of the flights were flown VFR. Although I do have a full Instrument Rating I didn't need to use it, but it was handy to have that option in reserve.

All of the countries we visited are in the Schengen agreement, so we only needed to clear immigration and customs when arriving and departing continental Europe. We landed first at Texel, a small island in northwest Netherlands, where the immigration staff came over from the mainland especially to inspect and stamp our passports. After an overnight stop at Wilhelmshaven we flew north to Aalborg at the top of Denmark. This large regional airport had an absolutely massive GA parking area, and unlike others of similar size were quite happy for us to walk across the tarmac to the terminal building.

Plans to visit Oslo were foiled by heavy rain and low cloud, and at short notice, I decided to head east to Visby in Sweden, a historic tourist city. I did notice there were several NOTAMs warning of danger areas, but hoped I could obtain a crossing clearance. I quickly found out this was the largest NATO air exercise in the region for decades so that wouldn't be possible, and flew instead to our planned diversion at Växjö. ATC were very proactive to ensure I knew about the restrictions including a phone call from the Swedish planning office who adjusted my flight plan and also a radio message after departure ensuring I would keep clear.



Next day we stopped at Västerås to the north where we visited the city centre for lunch, then flew east to Turku, the old capital of Finland on the south west corner. I hadn't realised that Finnish territory extended so close to Sweden, or that there were so many small islands between the two countries. It didn't feel like we were out of glide range much at all. The weather forecast was correct and we met a bank of fairly dark and threatening clouds as we crossed the coastline. I managed to keep below the cloudbase of around 1200 feet and land in a very gusty crosswind. After parking up, it was really very easy to walk out through the GA gate and straight onto a bus that took us into town. It was only then that we realised that we had crossed into another timezone and had "lost" an hour, now in Eastern European Time.



Västerås

Next day we flew a short hop south to Tartu in Estonia, about 30 miles east of the Russian border, as landing charges at the capital Tallinn were prohibitive. The tower at Tartu is remotely controlled from Tallinn, and provides a FISO service. Danger Areas and controlled airspace made this flight look difficult, but I seemed to be almost the only aircraft on the Tallinn information frequency. We were met on landing by an enthusiastic GA pilot I had "met" on an aviation forum. We spent a few days in Tartu (the academic centre of the country and at one time the European leader in astronomy) and in Tallinn, which I strongly recommend for a city break.



Tallinn

It was less than an hour to fly to Riga in Latvia. Again the national airport is prohibitively expensive and unsuitable for GA, so I picked Spilve. My initial impression of Riga wasn't quite as favourable as Tallinn but there was certainly plenty to see and we enjoyed our hotel.

Next another short (1 hour) flight into Lithuania, and yet again we avoided the expensive capital airport and landed at Kaunas, the second and university city. This was another great place to visit and soak up the atmosphere. We made good use of BOLT taxis throughout the Baltic states. This is the local version of Uber, low cost, efficient and also offers bikes, scooters and takeaway food delivery.

Our return was through the gap between Kaliningrad and Belarus to Poland. The weather was perfect VFR which was good because danger areas at the border extend upwards to 4,300 feet. We landed at Bydgoszcz, a regional airport on our route. This was a really great surprise, a lovely city to visit and explore. We stayed in an excellent hotel and dined out at remarkably low cost.



Old customs houses, Lübeck

Our last stop was in Lübeck, another European City of Culture and popular tourist destination. There is lots to see and do here, with many historic buildings that have been restored. Prices noticeably increase as you head west from Poland to Germany!

The last day of the trip comprised a lunch stop at Groningen, where we were fully inspected, first by two customs officers and then by two immigration staff who stamped our passports. Fuel is expensive there so we did well to fill up in Poland. It's one of four Dutch airports that makes a navigation charge for VFR flights, so you can expect a bill from Eurocontrol.

Advance planning and flexibility to adapt to changing conditions are very important for tours like these. I'd also recommend allowing plenty of downtime for sightseeing and contingency for delays. Don't try to pack too much in, especially where one pilot is doing all the flying and research.

Although an extensive trip like this isn't feasible for everyone, I'd encourage you to make a longer trip or two this year and stretch your legs (or wings) to go a bit further afield.

Read the full trip report online here

<https://www.flyerdauiduk.com/2023/04/29/baltic-tour-1-of-10-texel-and-wilhelmshaven/>

Information from the CAA and elsewhere

The money is still there, but time is running out: the DfT-funded Electronic Conspicuity rebate scheme application window closes on 31 March 2024. [The scheme](#) aims to improve airspace safety by encouraging the adoption of EC devices that enhance situational awareness for pilots. Eligible applicants still have an opportunity to claim a 50% rebate on the purchase cost of an EC device, up to a maximum of £250.

There was a recent Astral Aviation seminar on engine failure after takeoff; if you missed it, it's available [here](#).

The CAA is hosting virtual workshops in February to discuss Electronic Conspicuity (EC) device use. The sessions will look at how EC is used to detect airborne threats and how decisions are made to avoid airborne collisions. They are looking for volunteers who are operationally qualified users from the following categories:

- Specific and Certified Category RPAS Operators
- Air Traffic Service Controllers
- Commercial fixed and rotary wing flight crews
- GA fixed and rotary wing flight crews
- GA crews not routinely in receipt of air traffic services during flight, e.g., gliding, paragliding, hang gliding, ballooning

Participants cannot have any connection to an EC manufacturer. If you are interested in attending a workshop please email your name, contact details and which of the categories you fall under to: ec@caa.co.uk

The [December edition of INSIGHT](#) looks at an Airprox involving a formation of Hawks and a model jet aircraft. The article highlights the fact that not all model aircraft flying sites are published in the UK AIP and, those that are, do not necessarily describe the size of model that could be encountered nor the heights to which they are authorised to operate. Furthermore, none of these model aircraft flying sites are marked on the CAA VFR aeronautical charts!

The next AIRAC update is on February 22nd; don't forget to keep your electronic databases current.

Where to go in February

Light Aviation vouchers: Nothing this month

Flyer vouchers: Henstridge; Leicester; Perth; Rufforth East

On Tuesday 13th February, Bristol Aero Talks will have a visit from Ian Whittle, son of the man who has the best claim to have invented the jet engine. This will be a rare opportunity to hear the 'inside story' of the man and his team who can be confidently considered to have changed the world. The talk will be held at 7:15 pm in the John James Theatre, Aerospace Bristol.

Further information on this talk will be sent out as soon as I receive it.

Puzzle Picture

What's going on here?

Answers to newsletter@bristolstrut.uk



Popham airfield

Arguably UK's top recreational and sporting airfield, it is threatened by Basingstoke Borough Council's housing plans. There is significant discussion on the Flyer Forum [here](#), and I particularly draw your attention to arguments at messages #1194270, 1994304, 1994422, 1995286, 1995452, 1995539. The opportunity to comment on the current plans is mentioned in #2006091. It is noteworthy that the plans nowhere mention that Popham is an active airfield. While the National Planning Policy Framework is referenced, I see no mention of NPPF para 110f which recognises the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields. As well as the threat to airfield operation, one wonders about the wisdom of planning for 3000 houses in 'Popham Garden Village', a round trip of 15 miles from any significant shopping facilities!

Please provide your comments on this proposal to Basingstoke by 4 March as detailed [here](#).

Tailpiece



Any landing you can walk away from is
a good one!