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Brissle Strutter

Newsletter of the LAA Bristol Strut

NOVEMBER 2025



Message from the Chair

Dear Strut Member,

I think October was a mixed month for many of us, but there have been some definite flying windows in between the rain, and I hope you were able to make the most of them! Our winter season of talks kicked off with a great presentation by Dave Woolcock MBE, Chair of the Air Cadet Historic Flight – which is reported later on in the newsletter. We also enjoyed our seasonal skittles match against BAC, and although our numbers were somewhat depleted by illness and absence, we did manage a much closer match- losing by only 3 points! On this trajectory next year could be the year...

Our November presentation is by Phil Hall, who is responsible for Certification and Compliance on the Skyfly Axe project. For those who may not be aware, this is an eVTOL aircraft which is definitely 'off' the drawing board, having made the first airfield to airfield flight in Europe by such an aircraft! It has also subsequently been displayed at Oshkosh. This promises to be a fascinating evening so do come along – and tell your flying friends and colleagues who might be interested – see the poster and details in the newsletter. Looking into December, the Willy Wicket has been booked for our Christmas meal and quiz on Tuesday 2nd December, so please make sure that date is in your diary. I'm just waiting for confirmation of the menu and will then email out with details of how to secure your place.

Looking at what else is going on that might be of interest to members – I don't know how many of you currently avail yourselves of the Met Office aviation services for GA pilots, but they are introducing a new service and there is currently an opportunity to be involved in beta testing. MAVIS is the acronym – standing for Met Office Aeronautical Visualisation Service – which will bring together four products: Aviation Briefing Service, Network Weather Resilience, Helibrief and Open Runway into one user-friendly service, enabling access to meteorological information such as METARS, TAFs and charts, as well as weather map layers. You can sign up to get access at mavis.metoffice.gov.uk and then look at the features available, and provide feedback (constructive of course). Another area to bring to your attention is that the CAA has now published a General Aviation Strategy – I haven't read it yet, but will do so before the next newsletter and provide a synopsis. At first glance it is aimed at reducing the regulatory burden on the GA sector (always a good thing) – but doesn't seem to include the importance of maintaining our airfields – which with Popham back in the news as under threat (see page 3) does seem to be a bit of an oversight to say the least.

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Message from the Chair (continued)

Finally – having mentioned my Tiger Moth flying earlier on in the year, I am delighted to be able to report that I went solo at the beginning of October thanks to the great team at the Cambridge Flying Group. I also had the surreal experience of flying over a disused RAF airfield (RAF Tempsford), where my grandfather had served during the Second World War, in an aircraft that had actually been in service with the RAF at the time!

As ever - stay safe and fly when you can!

Best wishes,

Neville

This month's meeting

We are back in BAWA Room 4 on Thursday November 20 to hear from Phil Hall, SkyFly certification/compliance lead, about SkyFly's Axe VCA - Vertically Capable Aircraft. Phil is also an LAA inspector in our area. Avoiding some of the mechanical complexity of some other eVTOL projects, it is capable of STOL as well as a glide/power off landing. A hybrid motor for extended range is an option. Come and learn about this innovative vehicle, which was displayed at this year's Oshkosh. See and make use of the poster at page 5!



Last month's meetings

Dave Woolcock MBE of the Air Cadet Historic Flight introduced us to the history of the Flight and its activities. For its 60th anniversary celebration, No. 621 Volunteer Gliding Squadron at Hullavington borrowed from Dorset GC the Sedburgh in which the then Prince Andrew went solo as a cadet. The GC then offered to sell the glider rather than have it returned, and so originated the formation of a group amongst current and past members of the VGC and other interested individuals, with the aim of preserving and operating former ATC gliders from the wooden era.



Now based at Nympsfield in association with the Bristol and Gloucestershire Gliding Club, renamed as the ACHF and with charitable status, their aim is to secure the long term future of this collection, preserve the heritage of the Air Cadet movement in an active flying environment and use this to educate and inform the public. The next major step is to seek external funding to establish a permanent "home" where the collection can be made more available to the wider public to view for historic & educational purposes as well as being restored, maintained and flown by Members. For more details see [here](#).

A good half of attendees started their flying careers with Air Cadet gliding, so we were reminded of the joys of the broad-winged Sedburgh and the more brick-like Cadet 3!

Our second meeting of the month was our skittles match at BAWA against Bristol Aero Club. We maintained our unbroken record since April 2008 of — losing! But this time by a mere three points. There were some absences amongst our team (including the editor) so that may be a partial explanation for the improvement. Neville returned the skittles trophy to BAC team captain John Ferguson, and BAWA provided an excellent finger buffet as usual.



Popham Airfield under renewed threat

Flyer News recently contained the following: *The threat to Popham Airfield has stepped up with the local council now planning to build a total of 4,250 houses plus infrastructure including a school and solar farm on the site to be called Popham Garden Village. It comes after Basingstoke and Deane District Council was told by the government to increase the number of houses it needs to build. As a result, the council is updating its local plan.*

Worse, to justify building a new town on the airfield, the council now claims 'Popham Airfield is not a significant part of the national network of general aviation airfields'.

That view is rejected by the Strategic Aerodrome Network which places the well-established Popham Airfield in Category A for 'its geographical, aeronautical, recreational, emergency services and social value'.

Pilots and others who use and appreciate all that Popham Airfield has to offer are urged to contact one or all the councillors involved (see the [Popham Airfield Matters](#) website) to make sure they are aware of Popham Airfield's value and importance to GA.

In its latest report ([available here](#)), Basingstoke and Deane Council says, "Whilst the Airfield makes a contribution to aviation in the wider area, it is not considered that it is such a significant part of the national network of general aviation airfields that its loss should be resisted. The loss of employment and community and sporting events associated with the Airfield are recognised but are not considered significant enough to justify the prevention of the loss of the Airfield: these uses are expected to relocate elsewhere."

Popham probably has the greatest number of based light aircraft of any airfield in the south, indeed in the UK, which makes a nonsense of the Council's view of its significance. The level of aircraft is high because of the loss of other facilities in the south, so the idea of relocating as an option is equally ridiculous. You are encouraged to support Popham now as indicated above, and again when the Public consultation period is announced.

Information from the CAA and elsewhere

From the Submit a GAR Team: We're making changes to the way that you sign in to Submit a General Aviation Report (GAR). Beginning on 31 October, you'll only be able to sign in to Submit a GAR using GOV.UK One Login. You should use the same email address to create your GOV.UK One Login that you use for your Submit a GAR account. This is so you keep the existing information in your account. The switch to GOV.UK One Login allows you to sign in to some government services using the same email address and password. In the future you'll be able to use your GOV.UK One Login to access all services on GOV.UK. If you have any problems signing in, you can contact the GOV.UK One Login team for support. Support is available Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm UK time by phone and webchat at: <https://home.account.gov.uk/contact-gov-uk-one-login>

The CAA has issued [CAP3181 NPPL Interim Document](#) setting out the requirements and syllabus for student pilots, pilots, instructors, examiners and training organisations to follow for the issue of a NPPL(A). A more detailed CAP will be released by the end of 2025.

The CAA has also just issued its new [General Aviation strategy](#), setting out its vision for "a safe, innovative, and sustainable general aviation sector that thrives within a proportionate and supportive regulatory environment." More on this next month.

You're unlikely to have one, but [here's a reminder](#) from the CAA that halon-based handheld fire extinguishers must be removed from aircraft by the end of this year.

Lastly the CAA has initiated a [review \(CAP3096\) of Letters of Agreement](#) (LoAs) concerning controlled airspace, particularly where LoAs have led to non-compliant airspace designs in order to allow certain aircraft access to CAS. The document lists the LoAs of concern and offers guidance on action needed and the process by which these arrangements can be made compliant. Local examples include the Bath Gap, Mendip GC and Ubley hang gliding/paragliding. Watch out for changes in due course.

The next AIRAC update is on November 27th: don't forget to keep your electronic databases current.

Puzzle Picture

No offers last month for this curiosity, even from those eagle-eyed people at the Wessex Strut: It's the 5-seat Vega Aircraft Corp (a subsidiary of Lockheed) Starliner feeder airliner prototype of 1939, with two Menasco engines coupled together to drive a single propeller through over-running clutches. If one engine were to fail, the other would be unaffected and continue to power the constant-speed propeller, the propeller's pitch changing to compensate for the decrease in power. This arrangement offered twin-engine reliability without the drag of a conventional twin-engine installation or the asymmetric thrust during an engine failure. It was found to be too small for airline use and was discontinued.



So for this month, something a little easier: identify this Permit type. Answers to the Editor.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic licence; registration erased.

Where to go in November

Events are sparse—well, it is November!

2 November—Pumpkin fly-in, Fenland

5 November—Bonfire Night, Sleep: members and fly-ins only.

But there are still the landing vouchers:

Flyer: Wolverhampton, Eshott, Dunkeswell, Easter

Light Aviation: Manchester Barton

Tailpiece

VMC into IMC will get you at this time of the year — be careful and stay safe.





Light Aircraft Association



BRISTOL STRUT



The SkyFly Axe

vertically capable aircraft

Phil Hall

**LAA Inspector
and Certification/
Compliance lead,
SkyFly team**



**7.30pm, Thursday 20 October, Room 4 (rear car park)
BAWA Club, 589 Southmead Rd, Filton BS34 7RG**

Visitors welcomed, please contact Neville Parton

chairman@bristolstrut.uk or 07825 138077