



March 2026



BRA award: tell us your nominations.
Looks likely the CAA will mandate EC.
Notable characters: Tony Unwin.
Emergency Landing.



Your Committee:

Chairman:

Kai Barnett

Membership Secretary:

Lawrence Spiller

Treasurer:

Rupert Stanley

Safety And Training:

Clive Rose

Events Coordinator:

Steve Paffett

Web Design / IT:

David Reeve

Secretary:

John Truman

Member:

Allan Mackey

Editor:

Chris Rose

Contact:

Post:

British Rotorcraft Association
1 Focal Point
Lacerta Court
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 1FJ

Phone:

01462 683344

Email:

[membership@
britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk](mailto:membership@britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk)

Web:

britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk

Cover photo credit: Pauli Murphy - Hayo Harmens landing G-GTFB at Stoke Golding, Warwickshire. Pauli says "Hayo spent his previous 37 years flying Learjet and GulfStream corporate aircraft before gaining his PPL(G) with me at Caernarfon Airport. Hayo taught me x100 more than I could teach him!"

Welcome

Welcome to the March BRA magazine. In this month's magazine:

We announce the BRA award for outstanding achievement in, or contribution to, the UK gyro community. We need your nominations!

A few months ago we mentioned that the CAA were consulting on Electronic Conspicuity. Well, they have now published their response.

In what I hope will be the start of a series of articles on some of the more notable members of our gyro community, Tony Unwin tells us about his amazing gyro history.

Member John Gledhill kindly provides us with his account of an emergency landing.

Clive Rose follows on from John Gledhill's submission with his own words of wisdom conjured up by John's experience.

Finally, we've nearly run out of your gyro photos for the front cover, so please keep sending them in! And, if you have your own gyro related story you'd like to share, then please let us have those too.

Until next month, safe flying,

Chris Rose

ed@britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk

BRA award for outstanding achievement in, or contribution to, the UK gyro community

By Chris Rose, Editor

The BRA thought it would be nice to issue awards to people who, as the title above implies, have done amazing gyro related things. There are some notable people out there who deserve recognition, and whilst we have our own ideas, we'd also like to hear your nominations.

We will consider diverse reasons, for example but not limited to:

- promoting the sport in the UK
- gyro flying exploits
- technical developments
- safety

When you nominate someone, please can you also give a brief explanation why.

Please can we have your submissions by the 1st May 2026, with the aim of making an announcement in the June magazine.

Your nominations can be emailed to:
nominations@britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk

.....

CAA Electronic Conspicuity consultation response

By Chris Rose, Editor

A few months ago we mentioned that the CAA were consulting on Electronic Conspicuity. Well, they have now published their response. You can find this here:

<https://www.caa.co.uk/data-and-publications/publications/documents/content/cap3217/>

Flyer Magazine did an excellent piece on this on their YouTube channel which you can find here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62RG2DNFafU>

The takeaway seems to be that the CAA will likely mandate ADS-B, and this seems to be driven by the increasing use of beyond visual line of sight drones. Drones are unable to visually "see" other aircraft, so perhaps ADS-B "OUT" will be mandated, and ADS-B "IN" will be at the pilot's discretion. And when things become clearer we'll obviously report back.

.....

Notable characters from the gyro community: Tony Unwin (Part 1)

By Tony Unwin, Member

Note from Chris Rose, editor:

Back at the BRA fly-in at Sherburn In Elmet last year, I found myself talking to Tony Unwin. We started discussing his time flying in New Zealand and this led on to me asking him about his gyro history. As he spoke, I was thinking his story would make an interesting article for the BRA magazine, so at the start of this year I asked if we could publish something. I was expecting to write it, but Tony generously gave up his time and wrote it for me. It's been split into two parts, this being the first, and the second part will be in April's magazine. I'm sure you'll agree that it makes a fascinating read, and a great start to some future articles on notable people. Take it away Tony...

Hi, I have been asked to write about taking an agency for Autogyro to New Zealand as a retirement hobby and how amazing that was. First let me tell you how I got there, which to me is even more amazing.

I was born during the Battle of Britain and pilots were true heroes, Mother thought I should become one but I failed! OK, I passed the RAF aptitude selection test at 16 years but a lack of education and maturity found me to be an ex-serviceman before I was 18 yrs. Having tasted aviation I was hooked and joined the local T.A. Parachute Regiment who gave me airtime under a canopy and even paid me a little. More airtime came with the start of civilian free fall and Sport Parachuting. A concept later taken up by the Army and Airforce but at this time it was a "wayout" adventure for young blood pre Woodstock!



OK, moving on I found myself jumping out of a Tiger Moth in Norfolk and when the wind got too strong for the canopies I was using I was persuaded to try flying instead. Well, free-fall had taught me some aerodynamics and I was soon the proud owner of a private pilot's license with privileges to enjoy. This rapidly included dropping parachutists, a night rating,

towing gliders and collecting about 100 different types of piston engine aircraft in my logbook.

Somewhere in this mix was an Air Command autogiro, introduced into the UK by Peter Davis who was building kits and demonstrating to potential buyers at Coventry Airport. My previous aversion to Rotary aviation was swept away by a circuit around the peri-track a couple of feet off the ground on the equivalent of a park bench. Weighing little with plenty of two-stroke power the "bench" leapt into the air and danced the sky superbly. To my concern I did manage some pilot induced oscillation which turned out to be the Achilles' heel of this design. The loss of a number of single-seat Air Commands and pilots soon saw the type grounded! A fire had been lit and I was now following gyro developments both here and abroad. I visited a small club in Yorkshire where Dave Beavers' father was training pilots on homemade single seat gyros of Bensen design. It was here that I met Phil Barlow, an engineer with a workshop near Warrington. Phil introduced me to Victorio Magni's designs and together we flew to Milan to see the first modern looking gyro complete with a glass-fiber body-shell the VPM16. I agreed to buy a kit and Phil took on an agency and agreed to build my aircraft from the factory kit. A first for the UK!



Fortunately one of the few words I could spell was computer so some money was available.

Skydiving displays, gliding, flying night and day was so much better than the day job that my new wife agreed to keep me while I did a conversion course for a Commercial Pilot's License. A year or so later I held a CPL and Instrument Rating perfectly timed to hit a recession (circa 1972). With no commercial experience and no money left I was pleased to accept a flying job paying commission on results. I was given a Cessna 172 and Leica camera, 10 X 36shot rolls of film and a map. Taking off after the morning shadows faded, I was sent to an area to then mark my route on the map as I flew a minimum legal height, taking pictures of houses at just the right angle to look attractive. Challenging work with the window open for clarity and changing film with no autopilot and a gale around the neck. Pay came once a team of keen young students had to interpret the map, identified the house and then sell the picture to the owner. It worked very well for me and my only worry was losing my new license for low flying!



To be continued next month...

Emergency Landing

By John Gledhill, Member



16th December 2018

A typical grey December day with light winds and cloud at about 2000'. I'd been for a local flight in my Magni M16C 914 with the log book recording a total of 1hr 5mins of flight. The aircraft had not had any recorded maintenance in the previous 90 days but had been sitting in the hangar since 26th October. The local flight over Oxfordshire was uneventful and I decided to complete a couple of touch-and-gos on my return to the airfield. Touching down on runway 15 I brought the gyro to a stop with the stick fully back, applied full throttle with boost and took off. Watching the airspeed indicator pass 65mph I pulled back and began the climb-out. As I passed 300' the engine surged suddenly and the gyro yawed uncomfortably before settling. A second surge and the gyro yawed again.

Now, there's something about an uncommanded yaw in an aeroplane that focuses the sphincter. With the best part of the runway behind me and only 300' of air under the keel, training kicked in. Chopping the power and pointing the aircraft straight ahead into wind, I set up for a forced landing. The airfield I was operating from was unmanned and there was no one else around. I didn't even get a "mayday" out - I just flew the gyro, rounded out about 3 feet above the ploughed field at the end of the runway and plopped down. One bunny hop and that was it. Stick forward, rotor brake on, magnetos and fuel pumps off and a deafening silence.

There was no damage to the aircraft though the spats were rather full of mud when Crusher (who arrived with impeccable timing) and I managed to drag her back to the runway.

Subsequent investigations failed to identify a definitive cause though I found a few references to leaky gaskets causing similar behaviour in other 914 engines possibly caused by over tightened float bowl nuts. The log book says the fuel system was drained and filters changed, floats removed and weighed and all the fuel replaced. Thankfully the symptoms never returned and the aircraft has been flying beautifully ever since.

I've revisited the scenario a few times in my head since that day. I am sure that the training I was given and the pre-flight mantra I'd been using from the outset of my training led to the positive outcome. "My wheels are aligned, my compass is reading 15. If I'm not airborne by the second rabbit hole I will abort. In the event of an emergency I will be landing straight ahead."

Ideally, rubber-side down.

.....

Rubber side down

By Clive Rose, BRA Safety And Training

Thank you, John, for your excellent report about your Emergency Landing after an unexpected engine problem.

When I wrote recently about Going Around, I hope I said every landing is a Go-Around unless all the stars align. In a similar vein, every Take-Off should be an Abort, unless all the stars align.

John had no indication of an issue until he was 300 feet up and beyond the end of what was the shorter of the two runways at Chiltern Park. He made exactly the right decision, effectively to reject the take-off from 300 feet and to land ahead.

You must have heard “there are no prizes for runway left behind you”? And “there are no prizes for fuel left in the bowser” (unless you’re on fire, obv’s!)? On every take-off we should be able to judge roughly where we’ll get airborne. Once airborne, we should be able to judge where we’ll have achieved climb-out speed. This gives us two chances to reject the take-off, to land ahead and to work out why the aircraft didn’t perform as expected.

Did we misjudge the length of the runway? Did we miscalculate our take-off weight? Is it hotter today than forecast? Did we fail to achieve the right rotor speed before starting our take-off run? Were we distracted during the rotor-speed build-up and fail to apply full power? Why is the aircraft not performing as expected? All of these questions are much better answered while we’re on the ground, than struggling to clear trees at the end of the runway.

As ever, rejecting a take-off is something we probably haven’t practiced since we were trained. Your Instructor may have called the

practice runs Low Hops when they were teaching you to take off. Get the aircraft airborne and, before you reach climb-out speed, reduce power, maintain your height just above the runway and land ahead.

Practicing and mastering a safe Low Hop ensures you have the muscle memory safely to abort/reject your take-off. You should have time during the Air Speed Build-up to glance at the instruments to verify you’ve applied Take-Off Power and your speed is building. If either is not happening, land ahead.

And just like John, keep it Rubber Side Down.

Upcoming events:

You can find the BRA calendar which details all our events, and many others you might be interested on our website. You can find it in the [Events](#) section of our website. Click on the Events Calendar button.

If you have any events you'd like added to our calendar, then please feel free to send an email to: events@britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk

Keep checking back as we'll soon be adding new official BRA events for 2026!

Record-Breaker 2026

13th June, 2026, Old Warden

Get this date in your diary now for the 2026 gyro record-breaker where we attempt to beat our previous record.

We hope the Aston Martin owners club will be in attendance, the connection being James Bond and Little Nellie. Last time I think we had 300 Astons show up. We are also working on having some of Ken Wallis's other gyros on show.

More details to come.



For Sale:

Got a gyro to sell? Or maybe a gyro related item? Please contact:

events@britishrotorcraftassociation.co.uk

They will put your items on the BRA website For Sale area until you tell us it's sold. It will also appear in this magazine for one issue.

Advertise your gyro or gyro related stuff for sale here for free!