



August 2026



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Altiport adventure - Courchevel enfin!
Poland adventure - close your flight plan.
Maintaining an accurate speed.



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Welcome

Welcome to the August BRA magazine.

We start by reminding you of the 2026 BRA Sandown gyro fly-in and camp on the Isle Of Wight. Get you tent packed and spread the word!

Progress is being made on getting the Agron GTL gyro into the UK. Read the latest news and press release.

I interview David Beevers as part of the "Notable Characters From The Gyro Community" series of articles. David recounts his history from teaching himself to fly to becoming a senior gyro examiner.

BRA member, Martyn Love, tells us about his trip to the Courchevel altiport, a white knuckle adventure indeed! I'm always in awe of the adventures Martyn goes on, and this one tops the lot... so far!

Our very own Rupert Stanley, BRA Treasurer, relates his tale of flying to Poland and back in his gyro.

Clive Rose stumbles along behind everyone, on the rocky trail that is this magazine, to tell us this month about maintaining an accurate speed, and a recent gyro accident.

Please continue to send us your gyro related stories, and your photos for the magazine cover page, to my email address below.

Finally, if you're a fully paid up member and you're not getting this magazine we need to know. Also, if you're getting the magazine email, but you can't open the magazine from inside it, we need to know. Over the last few months we've had a couple of reports of people having trouble with both of the above.

Chris Rose

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BRA Sandown fly-in and camp reminder, 5th / 6th September

By Chris Rose, Editor

The BRA fly-in at Sandown on the Isle Of Wight is fast approaching, so we thought we'd remind you about it. It's become a bit of a annual pilgrimage for a lot of us, and it tends to mark the end of the summer flying season and events.

Sandown airfield is a very relaxed and friendly airfield, and the gyros are always given a warm welcome. It has everything you need on site: cafe, camping, toilets, showers, and fuel. In regard to the fuel, I'd check with Sandown before you set off that they haven't run out of it, and top up at Popham or similar if they have.

Camping not your thing? - There's plenty of B&B's locally, and a Premier Inn is a short walk away.

Argon GTL gyro progress for UK approval

By Clive Rose, (not wearing his BRA Safety and Training hat)

About four years ago I met Kris Wronowski, who owns Manufaktura Lotnicza in Poland. He and his team produce composite rotors, a series of small helicopters and the beautiful Argon GTL gyro which some of you may have seen on social feeds.

The GTL is flying all over the world, except the UK. The CAA's BCAR-T regulations are seen as the gold standard for gyro manufacture. BCAR-

T Approval opens the door to UK registration of new gyros.

We're not there yet, but together with a small UK team, Manufaktura Lotnicza has now achieved CAA Factory Approval. The BCAR-T regulations have been used to inform the design and production of the GTL so their hope is that Inspection, Testing and Approval of the aircraft will follow.

We have a Press Release from Argo Aero UK below. Keep 'em peeled.

Argo Aero UK Press Release



Argo Aero is thrilled to announce that Manufaktura Lotnicza - creators of the hand-built Argon GTL gyrocopter in Poland - has officially achieved CAA A8-21 Factory Approval.

This vital milestone confirms that the production facility meets rigorous Civil Aviation Authority standards for quality, safety, and manufacturing compliance.

With factory approval successfully secured, the next definitive step is full BCAR-T Certification of the groundbreaking GTL Gyrocopter, which is currently in progress.

This final approval will clear the way for fully certified, factory-approved Argon GTL to be delivered to UK customers soon.

Designed for comfortable, long-range travel, the "Grand Turismo Long" combines Polish engineering excellence with approved manufacturing standards to set a new benchmark in certified gyroplane touring.

Powered by a Rotax 916iS engine, the Argon GTL features 130-litre fuel tanks providing up to 5 hours of flight and a 1,000 km range (with external tanks).

Measuring 5.54m long and 2.31m wide, its large luggage compartment easily accommodates full-size luggage, golf clubs, skis, surfboards, fishing rods, or a foldable bike.

The fully customisable cockpit features a Garmin G3X suite with autopilot and a constant speed propeller.

For more information, contact sales@argoaero.co.uk

Notable characters from the gyro community: David Beevers

By Chris Rose, Editor

Whilst chatting to people about the early days of gyros in the UK, one name kept popping up - David Beevers. Talking last month to Marc Lhermette, David's name came up again, and that was the thing that convinced me to interview David for this series of articles. Marc had told me that David was one of only two gyro instructors in the UK when he wanted to learn to fly, the other being Dick Smerdon.

I've never met David, but I suspect there's a few of you out there who've been taught by him, or

have had him as your examiner for your GFT. Knowing David was at the top of the tree of instructors / examiners in the UK, I was a little apprehensive, perhaps a little like meeting the company boss! I needn't have worried, David turned out to be a lovely bloke, very approachable, with a soft Yorkshire accent, and I very much enjoyed my time chatting to him.

David's gyro journey started back in 1972, he was working with his father in their tyre business. His father, an ex RAF engineer, had always had an interest in flying and gyroplanes. His father came across a chap, not too far from where they lived, who had a Benson gyro glider which he ended up buying. The two of them got the gyro glider up and running, and set about learning to fly it, the only source of instruction they had was a manual from Benson on how to fly the glider. I asked David if they had any previous flying experience prior to this, he said that they both had conventional glider licenses, but still, to me, the only similarity was the fact that both types of aircraft were towed by a rope! They had the use of the Melbourne disused airfield in Yorkshire, its long tarmac runway being ideal to tow the gyro glider with a car, practicing wheel balancing, then hops, before finally getting up into the air.



David's father, Henry, in a gyro glider at Melbourne.

As a side note, David's view of conventional glider flying was similar to my experience: You would turn up on a Saturday morning and spend the whole day waiting for your turn to go

up, and you needed a crew of helpers around you to man the winch and do the ground handling. The gyro meant you didn't need all of that support, you could turn up and just fly, and that's what David wanted to do.

David and his father flew the glider for a couple of years and in that time they took up lots of people, even having fixed wing guys fly in on a weekend to try the gyro glider, and as David put it, "have a real good weekend".

His father saw an advert for a part finished Benson gyro, with a McCulloch engine, which he bought and finished building. Without a license, and any form of training, they started teaching themselves to fly the Benson, flying within the airfield boundary at Melbourne, again using the Benson manual as their only source of instruction.

Flying a gyro glider being towed behind a car is one thing, but teaching yourself to fly a single seater, with an engine, is on another level. I expressed my amazement to David who said, "You took it steady. But we did it. We did wheel balance and that sort of thing until we could get it airborne. And then we flew it around quite a bit, but the problem with the Benson, with a McCulloch engine, was that it was gonna stop at some point. It was a drone engine, which was designed to fly upfront on a drone at about 140 mile an hour. Well, as you can imagine, putting it behind a gyroplane, flying at 40 miles an hour, the thing just got hotter and hotter and hotter, until eventually it would just seize up. And you'd come down, you'd wait for it to cool off, check the cylinder was all right, and you could go again. I think there was three guys at Melbourne Airfield back then and they were always stopping. They were buggers to fly, but plenty of power. You know, one of them was a 90 horsepower McCulloch, and it only weighed 72 pounds. It went up like mad!"



David in a Benson B8

If you remember from the Marc Lhermette interview, his examiner was Simo Simmons. David and his father knew Simo very well, he had turned up at Melbourne airfield with his Cricket on a trailer and had showed them it flying. They had, as David put it, "a good natter", and shortly after that David's father went out and bought his own Cricket. It wasn't long after this that Simo said they really should get a license sorted out, and he went on to finish off their training and do their GFT. I can't imagine anyone getting away with that today!

Around 1981, Melbourne airfield had started to draw the attention of other gyro owners who wanted to learn how to fly, but it also attracted the attention of the CAA. I'll let David in his own words tell you what happened next, "There were other people who turned up, local people, that managed to get hold of a gyroplane, and I was sort of teaching them how to fly these machines at Melbourne. And one particular day, Simo Simmons arrived on the airfield with a chap from the Civil Aviation Authority. And they said, look, we know that you're doing a little bit of teaching on the quiet, how would you like to be an instructor? So I said, well, I wouldn't mind being an instructor as long I don't have a lot of paperwork to fill in. Little did I know in those days!"



Line up of gyros at Melbourne.

The next visit was from John Kitchen, a pilot for BA, who the CAA had sent to check David's instructor skills. David picked him up from York railway station, "He asked me a load of questions and at that point I was accepted as, well it was to be an AFI, but the Civil Aviation Authority got into it with me and said, seeing as you've already been doing a little bit of training, we'll give you an FI"

I was surprised the CAA didn't come down on David like the proverbial ton of bricks, but David explained that they needed instructors, there only being two of them in the UK. As it was, Simo was semi retired from instructing and John was busy flying jets around the world.



David and some of his early students at Melbourne..

At that time, David couldn't afford a gyro of his own, so he was using his father's Cricket. His father also had an Ekin Airbuggy. The Airbuggy was a Volkswagen engined single seater, built by W. H. Ekin in Northern Ireland. Only six were built, and David and his father were responsible for all six of these being sold. His father eventually sold the Airbuggy and bought another Cricket, and got permission from the

LAA to fit a Rotax engine to it. It was the first Cricket to have a Rotax engine on it.



David in the Ekin Airbuggy.

David taught Jim Montgomery, who went on to design the Merlin gyroplane. He supplied David with a Merlin in kit form, which he built himself, and this was to become the first gyro he owned. "It was a beautiful aircraft, and it's still going to this day".



David flying a Merlin

In 1998 he bought a VPM with an Arrow two stroke engine, which he flew for about 12 years. After the engine failed he fitted a Subaru engine to it. He had to get the alteration past the CAA and Section T tests, a process that took four years. He said, "If I'd known it was going to take that long, I probably wouldn't have done it!". This seems a familiar story even today.

David's approved Subaru engine swap went on to be fitted to another six aircraft.

David had built up a good relationship with Magni, he had done the flight test for the M16 when it came into the UK. He did the same for the M24, and this led to David getting his own M24 in 2010. "I knew Magni very, very, well. I'd been over there many, many, times, and every time they had a new aircraft or a new engine, they would send me a plane ticket over, and I'd go and fly it, and check it out for them. When I had finished the flight testing of the M24, Magni got in touch with me and said, David, at your age, I think you could do with an enclosed machine instead of the open one. And I said, well, yeah, they're very nice, but I can't afford it. Anyway, he came over to UK, we met with my wife, and we had lunch at the airport, and at the end of a meal, I'd got an M24". Apparently, it wasn't a free gift, David still had to pay for it, but at a greatly reduced price.



David with his current M24.

Whilst we were discussing Magni, David mentioned there had been an M14. This was a "one-plus-one", not quite a two seat tandem, a bit like the flex wing microlight where the person in the back "seat" was basically wrapped around the pilot. The flight testing David did led to the decision that it wasn't a good idea. "We decided that really there wasn't enough room for two adults on this to make it comfortable at all." Plus there was a trim problem, it didn't work enough with two

people onboard, so it was made a single seater. It was, as David put it, "a really hot single seater", with its Arrow engine. At some point in its life the next owner replaced the failed Arrow engine with a Rotax 914! At the time, all single seaters had a VNE of 70mph, this was the result of the Glasgow University gyroplane study which showed there were concerns about the thrust line with single seaters. Rather than ground 90% of the single seaters as they wouldn't meet the studies recommendations, the CAA imposed a VNE of 70mph. Anyway, back to the M14, David contacted Chris Taylor, who was a test pilot for the CAA, and together they persuaded the CAA to increase the VNE for the M14 to 100mph.



Magni M14. Photo credit: Derek Heley, ABPic.co.uk

Through the course of the conversation, it turned out that David did the flight test of the Parsons and Air Command gyros when they first came into the country. He also did a lot of testing in RAF 2000s, Merlins, and Crickets. When different rotor blades were looked into for the single seaters, it was David who did the flight testing of these. David taught Chris Taylor, the CAAs go-to gyro test pilot, going on to put him through the instructor's course. David must have impressed Chris with his flying skills as he got an email from Chris and the CAA: "I got an email from Chris Taylor and an email from the Civil Authority, saying that I can test fly any single seater without any advice whatsoever, providing the LAA are quite happy for me to do it."

When the CAA came to formalise the syllabus for the gyroplane PPL, and the GFT, David was one of the people who contributed. "So, there was a meeting at Gatwick, where all instructors were present, and it was asked what should we put in a GFT? And what we've decided to start with was, "David, will you stand up and tell everybody what you do for a GFT and then we'll work around it?" So, I said what I did, and everybody could put their ideas in, what should be done, what shouldn't be done, and we ended up with a written GFT that everybody still follows." Phil Hardwood, who wrote the syllabus, got his instructors rating through David.

We got sidetracked and started talking about gyro training and skills that might have been lost. David said that back in days before factory machines and proper pre-rotators, rotor management on the ground was a key skill. This included spinning the rotors up by hand, and building up the rotor speed by controlled acceleration of the gyro. David said, if you were training you didn't want to stop the rotors on a single seater after you had landed as it was a right pain to get them going again, so you had to learn to keep them going on the ground. David recounted a story where a Cricket had a pre-rotator failure after flying into Melbourne airfield. They parked the VPM in front of the Cricket, hand spun the Cricket's rotor blades as fast as they could, and the VPM set off down the runway with the cricket following. The prop wash from the VPM helped spin the Cricket's rotor blades up to a point where they were fast enough for takeoff, then the VPM pulled to one side allowing the Cricket to continue.

Before we wrapped up the interview, I asked David if he had any interesting stories from his time instructing? He said he'd had an engine failure about 6 miles from Melbourne airfield. Basically, they'd lost a cylinder on the engine and couldn't maintain altitude, so they put the gyro down in a field with what was left of the

engine still running. They tethered the rotor, and drove the gyro out of the field and down the country roads back to the airfield. Luckily the engine, despite loosing a cylinder, pushed them all the way home on their mini road trip.

David had also had a student who was unusually fixated on the rotor RPM gauge for some unknown reason, and was always worried about the rotor speed. It was David's old VPM that the student was flying, so David knew the gyro well, and he knew there was nothing wrong with it. He'd sent the student on a cross country flight to Howden, some 15 miles from Melbourne, a short and easy flight with simple navigation - you just followed the electricity pylons. A couple of hours had passed without the student returning, David was now worried, had something happened to his student? Then a car pulled up, out popped the student, and tells David he had put the gyro down in a field. The student explained he'd been watching the rotor gauge and it kept dropping, and every time it dropped he'd put the nose down a little to speed the gyro up, after doing this repeatedly, and losing more altitude each time, the student wound up in a field. When David went to retrieve the gyro and fly it back to Melbourne it performed perfectly. David managed to persuade the student to give up gyros as they clearly weren't the aircraft type for him.

David got his FE rating in 1992, and SE in 1995, so he's sat right at the top of the gyro examiners tree. He is still doing GFTs, air experience flights, and instructor checks. He has over 2,000 hours instructing on single seat gyros, and 4,000 hours PI.

Altiport adventure - Courchevel enfin!

By Martyn Love, BRA Member

Photo credits: Martyn Love, Steve Hart

The trip to Courchevel had been a long time in the planning. For the last 5 or 6 years Steve and I had been trying to get to at least one of the French Altiports, and Courchevel looked high on the list as the most exciting. It's tucked into the mountains some 6500 feet above sea level with a runway of 500+ metres, but more importantly with an 18.5% gradient. More on that later...

We planned to circumnavigate the whole of France, leaving the UK on June 22nd. The temperature was beginning to rise, and it looked as though the Gods could be smiling down on us for the duration of the entire trip. Little did we know the tsunami of heat waves that were about to be unleashed.



We set off from our home base of Farley Farm, near Winchester, at approx 08:00, and in order to satisfy the tedious Border Force GAR

regulations we flew to our nearest designated Border Force approved airfield at Popham.

We clocked in at the tower and we were told that they had received Steve's flight plan but not mine. They suggested we contacted London Info en route to activate both plans as there was probably just a technical hitch with them. Having called London Info they told us to orbit as we prepared to coast out at Dymchurch, saying there was an issue with my flight plan. After orbiting for 15 minutes they told us to continue en route to Le Touquet as they had told London that they would accept me without the flight plan. On closing the flight plan at Le Touquet it became quite clear why they hadn't got a record of it as I (or SkyDemon) had filed it using my previous aircraft registration details!

We crossed the Channel at about 5000 feet, in clear blue skies, with the French coastline clearly visible. 15 minutes later we were over Cap Gris Nez and letting down to 1500 feet for the approach into Le Touquet. An uneventful flight, but even after many channel crossings it's still difficult to fully quell the rising panic that can arrive at any moment when doing any kind of water crossing.

Refuelled, we set off for Verdun under gin-clear skies and a slight tail wind. 2.5 hours later we arrived at an empty airfield, parked up and got a taxi to our 5 star riverside hotel. We decided to stay here for 2 nights, as it's such a beautiful place to explore, although steeped in it's tragic WW1 history.

1st July saw us set off to Chamberey, stopping en route at Macon to refuel. Most of the airfields in France are large and deserted, sometimes with an active ATC, but more often than not unmanned. This means all calls are air-to-air and in French only. I've got to say that if you don't speak any French at all then it's not a bad idea to have a French language translation sheet for the most common of aviation phrases

to hand in the cockpit. However, being able to speak those phrases is perfect in essence, the real problem arises when someone answers you in French.

The other extremely useful thing to do if you are planning to fly around France, is to get Air Total cards for both UL91 and Avgas, as a huge amount of airfields seem to now have automatic Air Total refuelling stations which are only accessed via these cards. Without them you will be in a world of pain.

Chambrey is a delightful airfield, with Air Total refueling, and a hotel and restaurant directly on the site. We decided not to stay at the hotel on site but instead got a taxi to the town to one there.

We spent the evening over dinner planning and discussing the trip to Courchevel. Having flown it on Steve's flightsim it looked relatively straightforward, but we were concerned about the wind direction and strength, the cloud base and any turbulence. There's also the issue that you have to land uphill on runway 22 and take off downhill on 04. There's not a lot of room for a go around, even in a gyro, so once you're committed to the approach it's basically s**t or bust. Ideally we wanted a slight tail wind on landing which then gave us the much preferred head wind on take off - a head wind on landing was not deemed to be the best as it would have meant a tailwind on take off. We ran through all the possible error/threat scenarios, looked at the weather for the next day, and came to the conclusion that it was now or never.

09.00 the next morning saw us sweating in 35 degrees at Chambrey airfield. We prepped the gyros and refuelled, then with a fair degree of nervousness we set off for Courchevel. We had decided to take the Northerly route, following the valley, river and road, which meant we could cover 3/4 of the trip at a comfortable 1500 feet. After half an hour the mountains

loomed into view, daunting as the valley funnelled us towards them, with the highest peaks rising to well over 9000 feet. We began the climb, it started fairly benignly, but as we cleared 3000 feet the turbulence began. A nauseating, palm sweating half hour white-knuckle ride over deep gorges, ravines and sharp grey pointy rocky outcrops, with the peaks covered in snow. Why the hell were we doing this? It was definitely not a lot of fun, and at one point I wasn't sure I wanted to continue. The turbulence got worse the nearer we got to Courchevel - the Cavalon doesn't seem to have anything like the climb rate of Steve's Magni M24, even with a 915, so I was struggling in the thinning air to climb more than about 400 feet a minute.

The approach and circuit pattern when there is no ATC at Courchevel is different from when ATC is manned. The more tricky approach being when ATC is unmanned - taking a southerly heading at 8000 feet directly overhead the runway and then a large tear-drop loop to eventually arrive on final for 22. At least that should have been how we approached, but I couldn't achieve the correct heading being too low, and I had to dodge left and right to avoid various peaks and construction cranes that were on the airfield.

I radioed to Steve "Where's the runway?" "Right below you to the left". I had been concentrating so hard on flying the aircraft I hadn't looked to the ground. As soon as I saw the runway it all suddenly became a lot easier. I then followed the correct routing for the approach and eventually lined up on final for 22.

From a mile out it all looked quite straightforward - trying my best to ignore the yawning gaping chasm beneath me I just focused on the piano keys, keeping a constant approach, trimmed out and flying at 60-65mph. All looked good, apart from the windsock which was showing a stonking tailwind of about 15 knots. With rising discomfort I tried to settle

the nerves and concentrate on simply flying the aircraft. Still all looked good, the piano keys getting larger and larger in the windscreen. From about 500 metres away it then became apparent of just how steep an uphill gradient it was. Trying to think of the best approach in a tail wind and uphill was clouding my judgement as I came in over the piano keys, and started a very gradual flare. It then became apparent I needed to flare a lot more, to say I banged it down on the runway wouldn't be an understatement - it was a horrible landing, but at least I was down on terra firma and the wheels seem to be still attached.

There was no time to stop, or look at the view, or congratulate myself. As the gyro started to come to a stop I realised I needed to give her a handful of throttle to make it up the slope. I drove her forward uphill onto the flat top, parked up, and then watch Steve's approach. I couldn't see his landing from where I was parked as that part of the runway is completely obscured from view.



The 18.5% runway slope of Courchevel.



Another view of the runway sloping away downhill.



Construction tower crane on the airfield.



A triumphant Martyn at Courchevel.

After we both parked up and shut down, and the whooping and hollering had stopped, I do believe we actually had the briefest of hugs! We'd done it and we were safe and sound - for the time being at least.



Steve Hart posing in front of the two gyros that made the trip.



Martyn in front of the Courchevel control tower.

After a quick wee and a photo opportunity it was time to leave. I had to top up the water level on my gyro which for some inexplicable reason had started to discharge from the overflow tube, which was a bit worrying to say the least.

Lining up at the top of the slope I was presented with only 80m of flat runway before

is disappeared down the mountain side. The 18.5% slope doesn't sound much on paper, but facing it when you're sat at the top makes it feel like the top of a log flume ride. Anyway, I went off first, and spun up to about 280rpm. With wind straight up the runway I gunned it off the top and I was airborne just as the runway disappeared downhill. The gyro leapt into the air as the ground just fell away to the valley floor some several thousand feet below us. I've never done a bungee jump, and nor do I ever want to, but I'm guessing the feeling is not too dissimilar. Steve was airborne in the Magni about halfway along the flat top.

As we continued our return journey back to Chamberey, descending into the valley, I couldn't help but think that the return trip was a lot more comfortable than the trip out.

The problem with the trip now was that anything we did after that would just be fairly mundane, and that did in fact prove to be correct. By now we had both had enough and so decided to plot a route for home.

Everything proceeded without incident, apart from my landing at Saumur with a nose wheel puncture. The aircraft was now stranded on the runway, about 100 metres from the taxiway and another 800 metres from the parking bays. We tried to push her but couldn't keep the nose up and push at the same time. This was coupled with the fact that the temperature was about 40 degrees, and the tarmac was literally melting at 50 degrees.

After a lot of fannying around trying to move her off an active runway, Steve suggested I try to inflate the tyre with his tiny portable compressor, which was no bigger than a mobile phone. The issue was that as I lay on the runway to attach the valve I burnt my arm and shoulder on the melting tarmac, and the harder I struggled to locate the valve the further it retreated inside the tyre. I was trying to lift the wheel off the ground and locate the valve on

my own as Steve was by now incapacitated. It was a bit like trying to lift yourself into the air by pulling on your shoelaces.

In the end we had to give up and just hope no other aircraft were intent on landing. Just then a guy turned up and asked if we needed help. Eventually he managed to tow us to the parking by slipping a skate board under the front wheel. He then said he could fix the puncture, which he did, using my spare inner tube that I had miraculously thought to pack. Within an hour it was all done. I asked him if he could organise a taxi, but he insisted on running us to our hotel. We forced 50 Euros into his hand which he reluctantly accepted. I'd like to think we would reciprocate if we ever find ourselves in similar circumstances with a pilot whose aircraft was U.S.

The return trip back to the UK passed off without any further issues, and saw us return via Le Mans, Le Havre and Le Touquet. A quick flit back across the channel saw us return to Popham for the GAR requirements, a cup of tea and a bun in the cafe.

Then it was the final 10 minute flight back to Farley Farm. All a bit of an anti-climax really - but at least we succeeded in our ambition... enfin!

Welcome to Poland - remember to close your flight plan

By Rupert Stanley, Treasurer

I love touring. I love really going somewhere, seeing different things and exploring. Some years ago I linked up with a group of, mainly microlight, pilots who were initially offering channel crossing experience but also do one

big European tour a year. The objective this year was to fly to Wroclaw in Poland, going out via Luxembourg/Germany and returning by the Baltic/North Sea coast and visiting the Frisian islands. The trip dates were set the previous year at the annual BBQ. A gyrocopter might not be the most practical flying machine (slow, thirsty and lacking load capacity – much like it's owner then), but my Magni M24 is the only powered aircraft I have. My flying speed is compatible with the faster flexwing microlights so we tend to split into groups by flying speed. On this trip there were 9 people in 7 aircraft.

Early start

No plan survives contact with the British weather! Inevitably, the weather prospects for our planned departure weekend looked poor, but there was a window to get ahead of the weather if we left on the Friday. I wasn't quite ready for this, but just about got myself together in time.

Channel crossing and through to Worms

I have done the crossing a few times and it is actually not that complicated. You need to do a UK GAR declaration, file and activate a flight plan and do the customs/immigration form for Calais. A lifejacket/immersion suit is also a sensible precaution. One of the other pilots on the tour lives close to me, so he dropped into my airfield and we made the crossing in close formation which is always reassuring. It always seems windy on the French coast, but one of the delights of Calais, apart from a low landing fee, is that the runway is almost always onto wind, so the 18ish knot headwind was no drama.



Coasting out near Dover

We arrived in Calais for late morning coffee. Some had already arrived and assessed the options which were to try to get well inland ahead of the weather and try to make it to Worms in Germany which critically got us over the hills near the German border which are often low cloud in the mornings. This would need a refuelling stop in France as we had not bought the Belgian permit. Generally refuelling in France is self service with a credit card machine or a machine that takes the Air Total card – getting this card adds so much flexibility. There is generally no need to PPR either. We had read the airfield plate at Charleville that said fuel paid by credit card, but missed the NOTAM that said fuel only for local aircraft (there seemed to be a bit of bother near Iran at the time). Fortunately, the delightful airfield manager realised we would not need very much and allowed us to refuel.

The late afternoon flight was smooth in clear air with excellent viz. Flying through France, I rarely take a radio service, but approaching Luxembourg with its busy airspace, I thought it advisable. The controller knew immediately what we wanted to do and gave us clearance on the first call without the usual faffing about of 'pass your message'.

We landed in Worms at about 18:30 having flown about 450 miles in just over 5 flying hours (yes, there was a tailwind).

Ahead of schedule

This doesn't usually happen in a flying trip, but we were running ahead of schedule, so we did a short hop to Michelstadt and onto Bamberg. For the German airfields, we found it advisable to phone ahead to check whether fuel would be available and obviously to arrange overnight parking if necessary. Michelstadt (UL98) were delightful and very low cost, Bamberg was rather more expensive although visiting the old town in a must - try the smoke beer!



Slight crosswind at Michelstadt



Bamberg

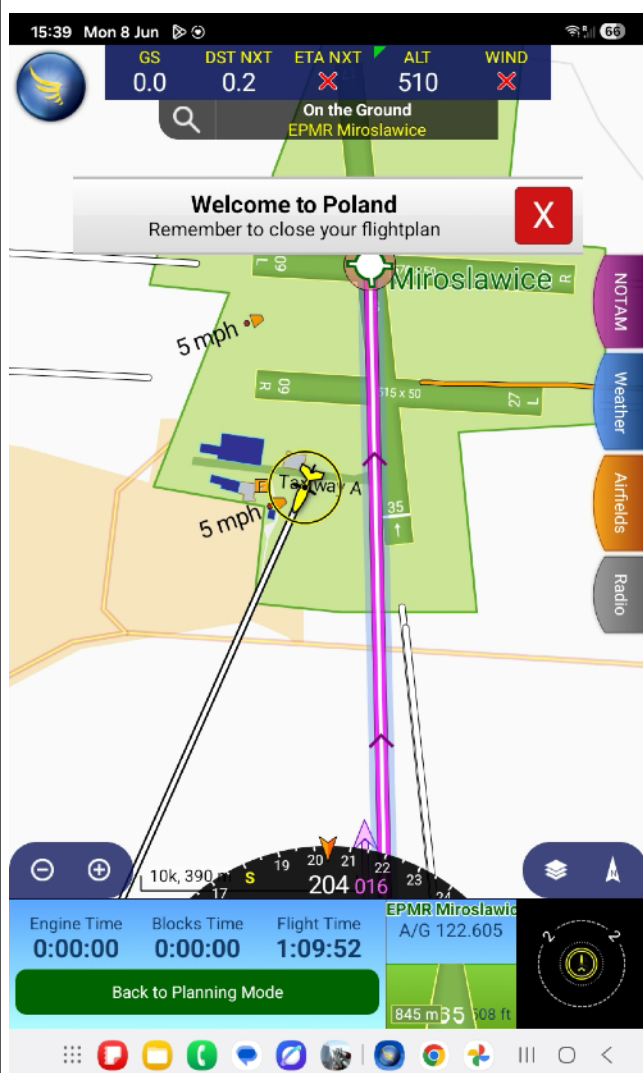


Preparing to depart from Worms

More runways than Heathrow

For the faster aircraft, the flight to Poland was a single hop, but a few of us opted for a refuelling stop in Czechia after phoning ahead - Hodkovice if you are interested, they were very welcoming with UL98 and no landing fees.

Whilst our destination city was Wroclaw, our master planner, Ian, had found a smaller airfield on the outskirts called Miroslawice. Rather like Heathrow, there are two E-W runways, we used 27L, but they have another runway N-S. We were staying two nights, but getting a taxi into the city took a while to organise. The city itself is quite interesting, having been German at the start of WWII but suffered a Russian bombardment, then being part of the modern Polish story. We met lots of people that spoke very good English as they had worked in the UK for a few years before returning home when their economy picked up.



Flying in the rain

To date, the flying had been very easy, lovely sunny days, not too hot and generally with a tailwind, but we all know that cannot last. The outlook for the Dutch coast did not look good so we opted to effectively retrace our route but stop in different places. We also knew that the weather in Germany would be breaking down, initially showers then more substantial rain and low clouds. Two aircraft decided to fly to Berlin and spend a couple of days (which became several) there sightseeing, the rest headed initially to Coburg which has a magnificent castle and interesting old town.



Coburg



Coburg castle

Whilst you can see some showers in the air whilst flying and even use rainfall radar to try to fly around them, there comes a point where

your aircraft is going to receive an unscheduled wash. I had been told in my training that this was not good for composite rotors as the leading edge can pit from the impacts, so I have added some prop tape many years ago. After this trip, it does look like it has been shot and so now needs replacing. The Magni Bendix system is susceptible to getting rain in the top and then not engaging when you need it. I have built a supplementary rain cover which I was thankful for as there were further very heavy showers after we had landed and parked outside. The next morning, before even taxiing to the runway, I tested the pre-rotation and, as feared, it did not engage. I carry the special grease and a few tools, so borrowed the ladder at refuelling, dropped the Bendix and regreased it. Takes about 20 minutes and a small amount of swearing, then it span up fine. We did get caught in a shower on climb out, but it was fine for the remainder of the trip.



Regreasing the bendix

You are not permitted to land here

We wanted to get into France before the German weather deteriorated, so the destination of Colmar was chosen. Amazing old town centre, worth a Google if nothing else. I was flying in loose formation with two 3 axis microlights and we were dodging showers. Approaching the border and the Karlsruhe Strasbourg area with some busy airspace and

steep hills on the German side, I became concerned with some larger rain cells that looked to be getting trapped by those hills so opted to go solo and fly to the west of Strasbourg. Weather wise, this worked well and there was a clear corridor free of controlled airspace, what I had not realised from my in flight re routing was the high hills on that route. It was windy, so there was some turbulence over the tops. Given my subsequent experience, I really wished I had talked to Strasbourg to ask for a transit.



Let's avoid that rain shower

*Strasbourg*

Colmar were quiet on the radio, so after the usual radio calls, I requested a long final approach from about 5 miles out which was accepted. I had just knocked off the power for the final descent when they called me to confirm aircraft type, once I confirmed I was a gyrocopter they announced that I was not permitted to land! Now a few hundred feet AGL, I replied that I was low on fuel and had no alternate airfield planned. After a pause they said I was cleared to land. The short version is that when the plate shows a 3 axis microlight, that does not mean gyros are permitted (too slow in the circuit they later explained), there are 6 ULM categories in France.

*Colmar**Colmar old town*

Time to break some records

The group were keen to stay in Colmar for two nights but I had worked out that it might just be possible to get back to the UK for the BRA record breaker fly-in to Old Warden. Some years ago, I would never have had the confidence to set off on such a trip on my own, but with the experience of a few of these trips it really didn't seem that daunting. The forecast was poor for the morning but improving later. After monitoring METARs I set off and had a good initial run but could see that conditions north east of Strasbourg were not improving, so this time I called them up and asked for a transit which was granted and they were very friendly on the radio. All was good until approaching the hills to the west of Strasbourg

where the cloud base was uncomfortably low. After struggling, I diverted to Sarre Union airfield to wait for the conditions to improve. I was there for nearly 3 hours watching the trees and the METAR at Metz until I was satisfied it was safe to move on, but it was now just before 6pm and I needed fuel as there was none at Sarre Union. I dropped into a deserted Doncourt for fuel using my Total card, then immediately off again. The flying was wonderful in smooth evening air and ever improving visibility. Some of the group had talked about Sedan Douzy being a good airfield with accommodation within walking distance. Despite Booking.com only showing accommodation a few miles away in Sedan itself, time was getting on and I needed some food, so dropped in just before 8pm, much to the surprise of the ULM club who were having a hanger party & BBQ to which I was invited to join. That was one of those spontaneous unexpected fun evenings in warm summer temperatures.

The next morning was clear sunny skies but a bit of a headwind. The ULM club had sold me some petrol so in theory I could have made it to Calais on one hop, but planned in a splash and dash at Cambrai. They turned out to have a locked fuel pump with no obvious self service option. I recalculated the fuel situation and kicked myself as Calais looked easily achievable without triggering the low fuel light so I set off once again. There were lots of timed airspace restrictions around London for the King's birthday so I was waiting for a while, just long enough to meet the trip leader and his wife who had flown up in a single hop from Colmar that morning in their RV.



Calais on the return flight

An uneventful channel crossing and tootle through Southend and round London got me to Old Warden in good time to be counted in the new world record of 88 gyros landing at a UK airfield.





Old Warden

So, is a gyro a good touring aircraft? Not really, but it will do the job. Was it an adventure? Oh yes, yes it was certainly an adventure!

Rubber side down

By Clive Rose, Safety And Training

We've all heard the maxim that gaining your PPL(G) is a licence to learn. Another good one is "you don't know what you don't know" which, despite the entry requirement of 100+ P1 hours post PPL(G), becomes abundantly clear when you enrol on an Instructor Training Course.

Fly a circuit at 70mph! In my sleep. Oh, you mean exactly 70mph? Phil Harwood fixed my appalling effort at accurate speed with a length of detailing tape on the windscreen. I know! I didn't believe it either. But it's true.

In level cruise, we keep the horizon on the same spot/fly splat/scratch on the windscreen to maintain speed. And with experience, we can maintain the horizon even with a clean screen.

But Phil's Horizon Reference Line (HRL) was a game-changer for low hours me and it's something I've plagiarised shamelessly on all of my aircraft ever since. Phil used smoke and

mirrors to position it at the right height on the windscreen. It worked first time. Subsequently, I've stuck a couple of pieces of tape on the dash, got the aircraft flying in the cruise AND IN TRIM! and stuck a short strip over the horizon on the inside of the screen.

Change speed +/- 5mph by moving the horizon ½" above or below the line. 10mph? 1" above or below. And it combines so seamlessly with your Lookout scan you'll find an instrument scan just once every 10 seconds is enough to verify Ts and Ps, power, altitude and direction. To maintain the right heading, of course, you're keeping a distant object on that line.

The workload when you're flying the circuit is high enough without having a senior examiner for ballast who's demanding you maintain speed +/- buggie-all. Set cruise power, horizon on the line. Robert's your mother's brother.

That was going to be my short RSD column for this month. But I heard of another rollover a few days ago so I want briefly to revisit ground handling. I don't know the circumstances of this latest incident, other than the pilot is safe. That's all that matters. The incident will be replayed ad nauseam in their mind and they won't let it happen again.

What follows is not a comment on this incident or the pilot but a rallying call for all of us to practice good Rotor Management at all times...

I see experienced pilots all the time who have allowed their Rotor Management skills to atrophy. We're flying the aircraft all the time the prop or rotors are spinning. And even when the noise and motion have stopped, we need to secure the rotor in a level attitude (rotor brake on, trim pressurised/stick retainer on) preferably with any wind coming from the right of the aircraft.

When we land, there's still loads of energy in the rotors. They think they're still flying.

- Power to idle, Stick forward and in to wind.
- Just those actions should render the aircraft safe to consider vacating the runway.
- Keeping the stick forward and in to wind as you move around the airfield.

In summary: Horizon Reference Line. Park your scepticism and give it a try. And, of course, Stick forward and in to wind! Stay safe. 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.

BRA Sandown, Isle Of Wight fly-in

5th & 6th September

As per tradition, the BRA will be holding their annual fly-in at Sandown on the Isle Of Wight, on the weekend of September 5th and 6th.

Sandown is a fabulous location as I'm sure anyone who'd been will agree, with onsite camping, toilets, showers, cafe, and bar. Dan, the airfield manager, normally plays the perfect host and looks after us really well. So, come along and enjoy the fun!



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!