

ROBIN FLYING GROUP NEWS

Christmas 2015

Our 11th year has proved a momentous and fascinating one. We have almost certainly enjoyed our best aircraft line-up, our greatest number of members and some of our most enjoyable flying and fly-outs.

The success of this is due, in no small part, to the way that the training element has integrated seamlessly with our other flying. The over-riding objective from the outset was that it must have no negative impact on our existing members and their flying. Lyn has remained extremely conscious of this and I can think of no other instructor who would have fitted in so well with all members and made such a positive contribution in so many ways.

MEMBERS

Our membership has continued to grow with both PPLs and ab-initio SPLs joining in the past few months. All have found us through personal recommendation or via the internet, where our profile seems to be growing.

Five members (Tim Vaines, Kane Rich, Safeen Kay, Matt Stones and David Morris) have now gained their PPLs since the last newsletter, with another three (Adam Kuzniar, Jeremy Ockleton and Taylor Ellard) close to the finish and now only awaiting the decent weather vital to their three-landing cross-country flights.

Several others are not far behind and, with around 20 students, Lyn would have been kept extremely busy were it not for the terrible weather. I think that over one three week period she did less flying than she normally does in a single day!

Three of our younger pilots (Kevin Baker, Tom Cruciani and Laurence Malyon) have secured their first professional flying jobs this year. I understand that they were glad to be able to quote their RFG experience in interview, particularly the Malta expedition. Ironically, Tom has ended up working in Malta (for an up-market executive jet operation).

Meanwhile Pete Clark-Lewis has formalised his mentoring talents to good effect, qualifying as an Assistant Flying Instructor.

AIRCRAFT

G-BGWC sold quickly in May and now enjoys the luxury of a heated hangar on a farm strip near Rutland Water!

Knowing that G-CCZX would be stuck in France for re-covering for several months, we sought another 4 seater to fill the gap temporarily. We saw a very nice 180 Regent on our fly-out to Aero Expo in May and ended up buying her. With ILS, ADF, DME and Mode S transponder G-FCSP has proved highly capable and excellent for IMC flying.

Continuing on the IMC theme, we set up a modest flight simulator installation in the caravan. Though "cobbled together" from Microsoft FSX supported by a number of add-ons generously loaned by members, it is actually very helpful and was immediately used by Lyn to help in IMC training. Having proved the concept, we have now converted the forest of wires into something a bit more presentable!

CCZX has returned to us just in time for Christmas, so FCSP was put on the market, sold almost instantly and was collected on Wednesday.

Meanwhile we have been working hard to elevate G-GORA to as high a standard inside as achieved outside in our pre-Malta works. I'll leave it to you to judge the quality of the outcome, but GORA is now our obvious aircraft for IMC training/renewals, boasting ILS, DME, ADF etc.

Sadly, we are forced to accept that G-IGLZ, as the most valuable aircraft in the fleet and operating at a substantial hourly loss (which might be why we have not been encouraging everyone to fly her more!), is too expensive a luxury for us to keep, so she will be put on the market in the New Year.

FLY-OUTS

Malta was inevitably going to be a hard act to follow, but had only involved a few participants, while a much wider range of members have been enthusiastic for more modest expeditions.

Two days/one night away make for a particularly practical/affordable fly-out to France and we have enjoyed several of these this year. With Lyn participating and giving students some very useful lessons, plus a taste of what flying will have to offer once they qualify, the door to flying in France has been thrown open wider.

We have had one cancellation, the odd postponement, one minor (and as it turned out very enjoyable) diversion and then there was last fly-out of 2015.....

18/19 December not an ideal time of year for reliable weather, perhaps, but simple plan: collect CCZX from Le Mans, followed by a night in Dinan with some shopping the next day to take advantage of an empty plane.

FCSP, OYIO and CEKO arrived at Cherbourg under a 500ft cloudbase, which lifted slightly while we had lunch. We had to take a slightly circuitous route to Le Mans to avoid high ground - arriving too late to get safely to Dinan after taking over ZX. No problem, much better forecast for tomorrow and Le Mans an interesting place to stay.

The next day dawned grey and miserable, with the forecasters keeping putting back the clearance. Determined not to lose the shopping opportunity, Laurence proposed that we all should adjourn to a supermarket, so OYIO and CCZX were loaded with French produce – mainly liquid.

When it became obvious that VFR flight would be impossible that day, the instrument-rated Kevin and Laurence, plus Alex Bowen, departed in OYIO and CCZX through the cloud into sunshine on top and after a brief stop at Dinard for Customs/fuel got to Exeter a few minutes before the airport closed.

Tony Giblett, Lyn and I returned to the hotel, enjoyed some refreshment and a good meal and awaited tomorrow's "good weather". Tomorrow actually dawned even worse, with no prospect of flying at all, so after a two-and-a-half-hour breakfast the three of us went off to the Le Mans 24hr Race Museum which proved surprisingly interesting and particularly nostalgic for me.

Waking to the same weather next morning and needing to get home that day to fly to Tenerife, Tony decided that the prudent option was to catch a train to Paris then Flybe to Exeter. Lyn and I went to the airport in the fog but this time it cleared much quicker than forecast so we were able to get away in FCSP and CEKO and head for Cherbourg.

Approaching Cherbourg I was able to bring forward our onward flight plans to Exeter on the radio and we looked set to get home just before the really foul weather arrived. Sadly, Customs did for that - delaying us until it was inevitable that the weather would have deteriorated at EGTE by the time we got there.

Lyn and I therefore pooled our resources in FCSP, leaving poor CEKO behind, and had a deceptively benign Channel crossing to within about 20 miles of Exeter, where we were forced into very wet and bumpy cloud for the rest of the journey arriving safely by ILS down to minima.

We had to follow a Dash 8 asking ATC for vectors around bits of bad weather visible on its radar, which proved to have been carrying Tony who then arrived at the caravan a few minutes after us.

In all it had been a most interesting and, as it turned out, enjoyable fly-out for all, with a number of difficult decisions to make on information of limited precision/accuracy without compromising safety at any stage.

Last Sunday we flew the shortest ever RFG trip to France, to repatriate CEKO. We left EGTE at 0915 and I was back in the caravan drinking a cup of tea at 1200!

All the Robins are now back home and operational and EGTE closes only for Christmas Day so we wish you enjoyable flying thereafter and in 2016!

*With best wishes,
Dermot and Debbie*