

April 2026 Newsletter

Welcome to The Gloster Strut Newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading it. Please send any contributions, letters and comments to editor@glosterstrut.co.uk directly.

Photo of the Month

Bill Perrins piloting a Spitfire on a Goodwood Fly By



Chairmans Chat

Well, here we go again, Spring is just around the corner, blue skies have returned to tempt us aloft (as they said in the good old days). I can't believe that we are already at the end of our winter programme April 14th at The Victory Club and have a list of visiting aircraft lined up for our summer parties at Croft nearly full!

At our Strut committee meeting last week we welcomed Tim Lawrence (Treasurer) and Jeremy Liber (Events / speaker organiser). Please contact Jeremy if you have suggestions for new speakers or aircraft to entertain the members.

Of course the BIG event for this summer is the 80th anniversary of our PFA/ LAA, the date has been set for SATURDAY JUNE 27th, planning has started for this event, the theme of course, will be to outline the progress made by our homebuilding members over the eight decades. Thinking back, who remembers Freds, Luton Minors, Taylor Monoplanes and little Jodels? Now outnumbered by RV's and the super smooth kit builds, we will have something for everybody I hope!

As always, we will have **KID'S CORNER** with a variety models to build and fly, small aircraft engines to run and colouring books for the scribblers!! FREE of CHARGE BBQ and DRINKS should keep them happy. We must not forget the pilots of tomorrow!!

Other activities will be added as we approach the date and any suggestion most welcome, let's have YOUR ideas.

Enjoy the blue stuff, fly safe.

Mike.

The last meeting

Our speaker last month, Kev Noble, had followed the classic RAF training of today - Beagle Bulldog at Bristol University Air Squadron, Jet Provost at Church Fenton and Hawk at Valley - following which he was selected to fly the Jaguar, initially in the ground attack role, but later reconnaissance. After just a few trips in a 2-seater trainer version he was airborne for the first time in a single-seater. There's a world of difference between flying a clean Jaguar than one carrying a war load of bombs and drop tanks. Fortunately, its Ardour engines were equipped with reheat. Kev explained one of the aircraft's traps for the unwary: if speed is allowed to drop, and the angle of attack increased to produce the required lift at the lower speed, induced drag on its relatively small wing increases and it takes a considerable height loss to recover the lost speed. 10,000 feet was quoted!



He served in RAF Germany where the role was all at low level. Kev's explanation of the complications of an operational sortie showed just what a handful it was.

Even with an INS driven moving map, with the aircraft moving at about 8 miles a minute, there was little time to acquire a target, set up the necessary launching parameters in time to aim

and release the weapon. He served in both the nuclear and conventional bombing roles.

Once the Jaguar had been phased out of service, he converted to the Tornado where he now had the assistance of a navigator and the benefit of laser-guided bombs. However, it was at a time when one a/c illuminated the target for another carrying the bombs.

However, the bomber still had to be very accurate in order that it could pick up the reflected laser beam and hit the target. Once released from the bomber, the bombs are following a classical ballistic trajectory. If the bomb's receiver picked the reflected laser to early, it's controls would attempt to steer it directly at the target but those controls had insufficient authority to convert a ballistic bomb into a flying machine; hence the designator a/c had to delay illumination until late in the bombs flight. Kev had a video of an actual operational attack in which the bomber's 2 guided bombs were successfully steered onto 2 adjacent targets, one with a spectacular result.

Kev gave us a fascinating glimpse into the high workload of the Gulf-war generation of a Tornado crew.

Quote of the Month

"Sometimes, flying feels too God-like to be attained by man. Sometimes, the world from above seems too beautiful, too wonderful, too distant for human eyes to see." – Charles A. Lindbergh

Notable Aviation Events from history

April 1st 1875: Early aviation enthusiast Roger Wilco makes the first attempt at flying by duck taping bird feathers to his arms and leaping off the roof of his house. Luckily his wife Mrs Juliet Wilco broke his fall whilst hanging out the washing. In a TV interview Mrs Wilco stated that she regretted taking out a subscription to the Netflix Nature channel as Roger got many of his hair-brained schemes from documentaries aired.

April 4, 1965: First air-to-air combat loss for the U.S. in the Vietnam War, losing two F-105s.

April 5, 1937: First flight of the Aero L-29 "Delfin" in Czechoslovakia.

April 5, 1937: Douglas Aircraft Company took over Northrop.

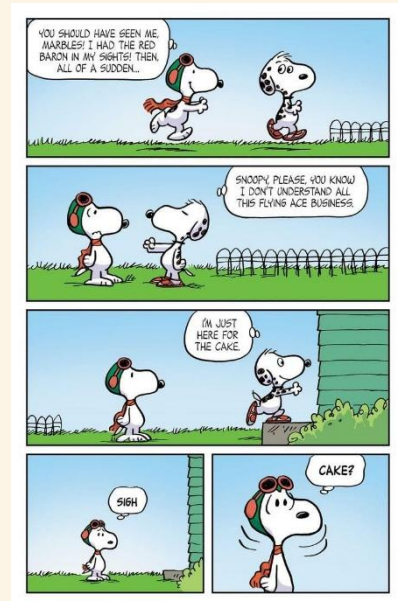
April 11, 1996: Seven-year-old pilot trainee Jessica Dubroff died in a crash.

April 17–20, 2024: AERO Friedrichshafen, a leading general aviation trade show, held in Germany.

April 24–25, 1993: Indian Army commandos stormed a hijacked Boeing 737.

April 25, 1958: Flying Ace and all round good guy, Mick Peakman was born in Birmingham.

April 26: World Pilots' Day (since 2014).



The Bomb: 1975 by Chris Harrison. A true story!

Part 1

About an hour into the flight from Belfast, Northern Ireland, and cruising at 25,000 feet and 280 mph, the Viscount four-engine turboprop airliner with the call sign Midland 850, with seventy-five comfortable passengers on board, well fed on a lunchtime meal of poached salmon and complimentary drinks, had just passed the Daventry navigation

beacon on course for London's Heathrow Airport, with clear blue skies above with a few trails of high cirrus and some contrails from jets high above transiting long range. The colours of the countryside below, with the mid-summer afternoon sun, brightly illuminated the patchwork of fields spread out below us with bright greens and yellows. The captain and I had just finished a cup of coffee and were completely at ease, as this was just another routine milk run. We had flown this route countless times and knew it inside out, from Belfast down to London. Every pilot in the company was equally familiar with the journey, having completed it on many previous occasions. However, this was the first time that John, the captain, and I were paired together on this particular flight. Because we were both so comfortable with the route, we worked seamlessly in each other's company, relaxed yet focused, confident in our shared knowledge and experience. We were passively listening to the constant radio chatter between aircraft and ground control when we heard "London, Midland 850," through our headphones.

"Midland 850, go ahead, London," I replied.

"London Midland 850, please contact your company on their frequency on your second radio. They have a message for you."

"Midland 850 London, wilco, thank you," I responded.

The captain and I looked at each other quizzically.

"That's most unusual," he remarked.

"Okay, give them a call, and I'll monitor the London frequency, but I can almost guarantee it's a change of schedule for us yet again. Those folks in crewing have no idea how that really messes up our family life."

"Midland operations, good afternoon, this is Midland 850. London has just advised us you have a message for us."

"Midland 850, that's correct. There's no easy way to tell you this but we have just received a call from the station manager in Belfast saying the IRA have placed a bomb on board your aeroplane. We have no idea what sort of device it is or where it is. We are trying to find out as much as we can. We are in constant contact with the police in Belfast and air traffic control and if we get any information we will call you back immediately. As and when you make a decision please let us know, and all our thoughts are with you, good luck."

"You are joking, aren't you?" I responded with a slightly higher pitch to my voice than I intended.

"Sorry Chris," he replied, "that's not something we would joke about."

"Well, thanks, Operations. I guess that's really going to spoil our day! But at least you didn't change our schedule, did you? Okay, we'll get back to you."

The captain had also been listening in to the conversation with operations. We looked at each other across the cockpit for what seemed like minutes but was in reality only a few

seconds as we tried to take in what we had been told and what the implications were. Could this be a hoax? Possibly, yes. Please, please, yes. In view of the recent shootings and bombings of town centres, hotels, buses, cars and trucks in Northern Ireland by the IRA, and their threats to bomb an airliner, this could be real. If so, we had to deal with it, as no one else could help us up here. 'God, I don't want to die,' I thought. At thirty-two years old, I'm too young. What would happen to my family and how would my wife and seven-year-old son bury me? There wouldn't be anything left of me. Would my life insurance cover their needs? This isn't how it is supposed to be. I knew in the Air Force there was always a chance that I could kick the bucket and I was happy to accept that risk then, but now in civilian life it was supposed to be safe. What kind of bomb could it be and where could it have been placed?

"Let's call the number one up here," said the captain, "and brief her on what we had just heard, then the cabin attendants can start a search in the overhead bins, below the seats, and in the toilets."

Kelly, the number one cabin attendant, came into the cockpit. "Hello, chaps. Is it another coffee?" she said with a slight smile on her face.

"I'm afraid not," replied John, and as he began to brief her on our situation, her smile faded from her face, and I could see a moment of sheer terror reflected in her eyes as she understood and interpreted the implications of what she had just heard.

"Oh my God, are we going to die?" she uttered in panic.

"Not if we have anything to do with it," replied the captain. "It may well be a hoax, but we can't take any chances. What we need you and the other cabin attendants to do now is search through the cabin thoroughly. Don't forget to check the toilets and waste bins, the galleys and overhead lockers. I'll make an announcement to the passengers saying something to the effect that a previous passenger had left some very important medication on the last flight and we need to try and find it. What we don't need is a cabin full of panicking passengers. We need you to act as though nothing out of the ordinary is happening and put on a brave face. You can do that, can't you?"

She nodded with a forced smile playing around her lips.

"Let us know immediately if you find something suspicious, okay?"

"Okay, Captain, for sure, but let's all pray it's a hoax." She turned round and left the cockpit. "John, I'll try and get a direct routing to London and ask for a descent as well while you talk to the passengers," I said. "They will certainly oblige when they know what our situation is."

Oh heck! The realisation began to settle over me that the bomb might be triggered by a change in pressure as we descended or even set on a timer that could detonate at any moment. The baggage compartments were inaccessible from inside the aircraft, which meant that if a device had been placed in the hold, we would not be able to reach it until after landing, assuming, of course, that it had not exploded before then.

The cockpit door opened and Kelly put her head in and said, “We haven’t found anything in the cabin; that’s a relief, isn’t it, Captain?” Little did she realise it could be a device in the hold. Better not to let her know – what good would her knowing do apart from putting fear firmly back in her head?

We had no real option but to commence our descent; lingering at altitude indefinitely was impossible, and we needed to be on the ground as quickly as possible in case the device was timed to detonate. It was a genuine Hobson’s choice, leaving us with no margin for error. The easy camaraderie that had previously existed in the cockpit had completely vanished. Every fibre of our attention was consumed by the situation at hand, and silence hung heavily as we each wrestled with our own thoughts. Air Traffic Control had provided descent clearance and issued the necessary turns to place us on a heading for the final approach to the easterly left-hand runway, approaching from the Staines Reservoir, and every decision had to be measured with painstaking care.

Part two next month. Do they find the bomb, do they all survive, do they crash land?

Dates for your diary

18/04/26 Sleep

Vintage Piper Aircraft Fly in (PPR required)

25/04/2026 Jet Age Museum

85th Anniversary of the birth of the Jet age

Meteor Business Park, Cheltenham.

On Saturday 25th April the Museum will be celebrating the birth of the Jet Age with guest speakers Ian Whittle, our Museum Patron (son of Sir Frank and former RAF and commercial jet pilot) and Vince Hargreaves (retired RAF fast jet pilot) presenting talks starting at:

10.30am – Vince Hargreaves : From Steel to the Stars - From humble beginnings as a sheet metal worker to flying fast jets.

11.45am – Ian Whittle: The Development of the Whittle Engine.



JET AGE MUSEUM

PROUDLY PRESENTS

85TH ANNIVERSARY OF BIRTH OF THE JET AGE

SATURDAY 25TH APRIL 2026 FROM 10 AM TO 4 PM

We are celebrating.....

The first flight of the Gloster E28/39 aircraft powered by Sir Frank Whittle's pioneering jet engine at the Gloster Aircraft Company's airfield near Gloucester in 1941.

We will be joined by speakers Ian Whittle, our Museum Patron and by Flt Lt (Retd) Vince Hargreaves RAF

10.30am – Vince Hargreaves : From Steel to the Stars - From humble beginnings as a sheet metal worker to flying fast jets

11.45am – Ian Whittle: The Development of the Whittle Engine

1.30pm – Vince Hargreaves: Mayday! - Saving a Hawk fast jet trainer after engine failure over the Irish Sea

Meteor Business Park
Cheltenham Road East
Gloucester GL2 9QL
Tel 01452 260078
www.jetagemuseum.org

NO ADMISSION CHARGE

WE THRIVE ON DONATIONS

1.30pm – Vince Hargreaves: Mayday! - Saving a Hawk fast jet trainer after engine failure over the Irish Sea.

We hope you will be able to join us.

02-03/05/26 Popham

Microlight Trade fair

09/05/26 Goodwood

Vintage Piper Aircraft Fly In (PPR required)

10/05/26 Old Warden

Shuttleworth Season Premiere (PPR required)

04-06/09/2026 LAA Rally

Taking place at Leicester Airport



Corfu Flier

One of our newest members is lucky enough to live in a country that most of us would only visit on a holiday. Konstantinos Katomeris lives on the island of Corfu, located to the West of Greece and Albania in the Ionian Sea.

On the island he designed and built an ultralight aircraft, not surprisingly, with all that sea around, it is amphibian so just as happy landing on water as it is on dry land (Something we could have all benefitted from over the last few months!), although he tells us that flying from water is going to be difficult to fly legally because there is a requirement to have a registered water runway for seaplanes - a few years before they could have accepted a flight plan and a call to coast guard for the time and place of water landings so it was easier to fly seaplanes.



It is called a TRITON and is a single seater aircraft, powered by a ROTAX 503 engine. It has a cruise speed of 60mph. It was self-designed, self-built using wood-ply, foam, fiberglass, inox aluminium tubes and is fabric covered. It took nearly 9 years in a very small room to build with primitive tools and non-aviation materials, It was then driven 400km to Florina to test fly it because there was an isolated airfield with a long grass runway.

So far it has been flown for 15 hours testing only and for safety speed during the first tests (and

fear of stalling) it took 120-150 meters to lift off and less to land. It definitely it can be flown slower. The range is unknown, but in a 20 litre tank in a Rotax 503, it could be 1.5 hours @ 100 km/h

At the moment, testing is very limited and restricted to very early morning flights with no crowd, having informed the relevant authorities to allow the testing to take place.

It is currently not certified. Greece does not yet have a flying club so someone can design and built an ultralight aircraft like SSSR UK has now. There is a specification for experimental aircraft ONLY for PPL. The plan, once a suitable parachute has been located is to apply for a registration in the Italian Aeroclub. It may also be possible to look for registration in France or the UK.

We wish Konstantinos all the very best in his endeavours and look forward to the day we may find ourselves on Corfu, looking up to see Triton flying overhead. I'm sure he would be delighted to show us his aircraft, but being single seater of course, you'd have to enjoy a flight from the ground!

Downloads from the CAA and others

GASCo

After sixty years working for General Aviation, GASCo, the General Aviation Safety Council wound up their operations at the end of March this year.

CAA Stuff

CHIRP General Aviation FEEDBACK Edition 107

The March 2026 edition of [CHIRP](#) General Aviation FEEDBACK 107, Airspace – An emergent issue for GA involving drones, introduces to the wider GA community a growing issue regarding drones and safety of flight in class G airspace.

Reports cover the poor airmanship of a student pilot, close proximity of paraglider and light aircraft inflight, GPS jamming due to military exercises, and need for good communications during joint parachuting, gliding and GA airfield operations.

Together with human factors insights, this edition highlights the benefits of learning from experience and sharing knowledge with those less experienced. Whatever your story, please share it confidentially with CHIRP.

Electronic Conspicuity Technical ConOps consultation response published.

The CAA has published its response to the consultation on the Electronic Conspicuity Technical Concept of Operations (ConOps).

The document summarises feedback received and explains how responses will inform future work on Electronic Conspicuity.

Read [CAP3217 Electronic Conspicuity](#) – Initial Technical Concept of Operations: Consultation Response Document.

In parallel, the CAA is progressing work on the potential implementation of a UK wide Electronic Conspicuity mandate. A public consultation on the mandate is planned to launch during March.

REMINDER: Aerobatics and Loss of Control Awareness

With the General Aviation (GA) flying season getting underway as the weather improves, and following a recent tragic accident report involving an aerobatic flight, the CAA reminds pilots and training organisations of the available safety material for aerobatic flying in light aircraft.

[Safety Sense Leaflet 19: Aerobatics | UK Civil Aviation Authority](#)

[Loss of Control – Stall and Spin Awareness - YouTube](#)

This and more GA safety material can be found at [Safety Topics | UK Civil Aviation Authority](#)

AA Schemes of Charges 2026-27

The CAA has published its response to the 26/27 statutory charging consultation and charging documents.

These changes allow the CAA to continue delivering high-quality services and strengthen the areas that matter most: safety, consumer protection, digital modernisation and future-focused regulation. We have heard stakeholder feedback requesting that we continue to improve transparency.

In 26/27, we will publish our first Value & Impact Report, giving stakeholders a clearer picture of service performance and value for money. We appreciate all feedback received from stakeholders which has been instrumental in shaping our decisions.

Read the [Consultation Response Document](#) and [Official Series 5 \(ORS5\) Charging documents](#).

The new charges are effective from 1 April 2026.

Gloucestershire airport

From the BBC - so it must be true!

It is "very difficult" to say whether the sale of an airport will actually go through after months of negotiations, a council figure says.

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and Gloucester City Council (GCC) chiefs have been in negotiations with Horizon Group, the preferred buyer of Gloucestershire Airport, for more than eight months.

The completion of the sale of the 375-acre site has faced delays and Andy Hearne, GCC's head of place, said the council is "feeling pretty let down".

Jeremy Hilton, leader of GCC, said options for a plan B are available but "nothing has been worked out" as focus is on concluding the sale.



The site of the airport at Staverton includes two thriving business parks and planning consent for an additional 30,000 square metres of business space, the Local Democracy Reporting Service reports.

Hearne told GCC councillors at the overview and scrutiny committee meeting on Monday night officers had been trying to conclude the sale but they can only do so much.

"Any sale process has got its risks," Hearne said.

"If you ask me if I'm confident, again it is very difficult for me to say. The time lag, the extensions, etc.

"Obviously, we are all feeling pretty let down by the extensions that have taken place so I can't sit here and tell you one way or the other."

Frustration.

Anne Radley, Liberal Democrat councillor for Elmbridge, asked if there was a plan B, in case the sale did not go through.

In response, Hilton said while he did not know what the alternative might be, there was "a lot of speculation in the press" which was "not at all accurate", although he did not specify what was incorrect.

Hearne said he recognised the frustration in the room and said any sale was "very difficult".

"The team we are working with are consistently devoted to making sure that all decisions are completely scrutinised to make sure the decisions made are right for the area, the public," he added.

And more breaking news...

Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council have issued the following statement concerning the sale of Gloucestershire Airport.

Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council as joint shareholders have today confirmed that they have been unable to reach an agreement with Horizon Aero Group on the sale of Gloucestershire Airport.

The councils are disappointed that they were unable to accept the terms from Horizon Aero Group, which had moved significantly away from the original bid prospectus, and recognise that this news will be disappointing for many people who had hoped for immediate certainty about the future of the site.

The councils will continue to maintain close contact with operators and tenants to provide reassurance and keep them updated as work continues on alternative options.

During an extended period of negotiations and due diligence, as joint owners, both councils worked extensively to support the proposed sale, with the clear objective of securing the best possible long term outcome for residents, local businesses and the wider regional economy.

Councillor Rowena Hay, leader at Cheltenham Borough Council said: "It is our duty to deliver best value on the sale of the airport and of course after a long period of due diligence, we are disappointed that we couldn't reach an agreement to deliver that and proceed with the sale to Horizon Aero Group.

We fully appreciate the concern this will cause, particularly for those employed at the airport who will have worked hard to support the sale process. As we move forward, we are committed to continued engagement with staff, operators, tenants and key stakeholders to discuss the future and reach a positive outcome for Gloucestershire Airport.

The leader of Gloucester City Council, Councillor Jeremy Hilton, said: "This news is clearly disappointing as the combination of a clear commitment to flying by Horizon, and the continued operation of aviation based businesses, would have provided a strong future for the site. I fully recognise that people hold different views about the potential uses of the site, but our responsibility is to take a measured, evidence-based approach that leads to the right outcome for the long term."

General User Liability Linking Into Britains Lower (Airspace) Environment

New guidelines in the form of a six point plan have been issued for General Aviation in the UK. Chief Operating Officer Loof Lirpa, originally from Finland stated that the guidelines had worked remarkably well in his home country and the release of these guidelines on April 1st in the UK is a particularly exciting time.

1. Analysis of plans and planning has revealed that the majority fail on first contact with a threat, so it is recommended to perform no pre-flight planning to avoid disappointment.
2. If you find yourself entering controlled airspace without permission, simply turn off your Electronic Conspicuity (EC) Device and your Transponder. Air Traffic Controllers have a high workload on a normal day as it is, dealing with infringements only increases that workload, leading to additional stress that they simply don't need. When exiting the airspace, turn the devices back on again and continue your flight.

3. If you do not have any Instrument rating and you wish to see what it is like to fly in cloud, again simply turn off the EC device and Transponder. It is highly unlikely you will encounter any other aircraft and so will be free to practise in peace.

4. Fed up of being placed 'Number 2' in an ATZ for landing? Carry a bag full of shredded baco-foil and brown sauce. When entering the ATZ in sight of the control tower, contact them complaining of engine trouble, open a window and empty the contents. The Controllers will then almost certainly make you Number One and clear the runway thereby save you hanging about.

5. Fatigue is often a problem for pilots. If you are feeling tired, simply turn on the auto pilot and take a nap.

6. Pilot distraction is a major cause of accidents. If you can hear a noise that sounds like something is loose, ignore it. It will probably fall off on its own and can then be easily identified.

Tail piece

On the right is a Messerschmitt BF-109E, powered by original Daimler Benz V12 engine taxiing at the Hahnweide show.



The next meeting

The April Strut meeting will be held on Tuesday 14th April at the Victory Club in Cheltenham. The speaker will be Dave White, who will be giving us a talk entitled 'GA Flying Overseas: April 2026 Edition' which, by no coincidence whatsoever is just in time for the summer flying season.