

## September 2024 Newsletter

Please send any contributions, letters and comments to [editor@glosterstrut.co.uk](mailto:editor@glosterstrut.co.uk) either directly or via the Contact Us web page.

### Chairmans Chat

I think it was 1979 that the PFA Rally was at Leicester last time around and I can still remember the excitement that it generated for me. Having joined the Association in 1977, I was looking for something to build. Roll on another 45 years and we have returned to Leicester, and yes, the same old feelings come rushing back!

Now the Association has renamed itself as the Light Aircraft Association. Aircraft design has, of course, moved on with the times, so many more kit built aircraft arrive on the scene each year, super sleek they are too. Building your dream machine from plans however, involves many more hours of your labour, therefore this activity is a much longer process to completion, hats off to those who do.

The return to Leicester has been applauded as a resounding success, exhibitors, volunteers, visiting members and the general public all agreeing that it was "good to be back" to the established format that had been running for so many years, so well done all the LAA staff who made it happen!

The stars of the show, in my opinion;

Matt Boddinton's full size replica SE5a (WW1 ) and the vintage Travel Air biplane, a beautiful piece of restoration, just immaculate! I just need to win the lottery.

Hope to see you at our next Strut meeting which is on Tuesday September 10th at The Victory Club, starting at 7.30pm when Dave Haynes will deliver his photo coverage from Leicester, plus you will get an update on the Pietenpol project.

Fly safe, have fun – MIKE

### The Wit & Wisdom of Aviation

Beer was invented to make pilot stories more interesting



## The last meeting

The last meeting took place back at the Victory Club and was a presentation by Laurie Hilditch entitled 'What did you do in the RAF Grandpa?'

Photos from the presentation are shown on the left sidebar, or above if you are using a small screen device such as a phone.

Retired Group Captain Laurie Hilditch gave us a flavour of the life of a 1970s RAF air defence pilot, and what a complex life it was. Having trained on Chipmunk, Jet Provost and the Gnat (all quite small aircraft) he made the giant step up to the front seat of the Phantom F-4K which had an empty weight of 31,000lbs and a max AUW of 56,000 lbs. This UK variant was equipped with two RR Spey afterburning engines each giving a max thrust of over 20,000lbs. It had a Vne of 515 knots and was capable of Mach 1.9. It was cleared to -3/+8.5G. That must be the equivalent of going from an Austin Allegro to a formula one race car.

In the air defence role (the RAF had previously used the Phantom in the ground attack fleet) they carried one 20mm gatling gun with a max rate of fire of 6,000 rounds per minute (although it carried only 1,200 rounds) and a mixture of air-to-air missiles. It was the RAF's first fighter capable of head on interceptions.

The pilot's job involved a whole lot more than flying the beast: he had to master the complexities of its operational performance envelope and, as this was a pre-digital aircraft, this involved not only memorising a massive amount of data, it also required a considerable amount mental gymnastics.

By the conclusion of the talk those present were all mightily impressed that all this was within the compass of one human being.

## In the News



## LAA Wings Award

Mick Peakman starts yet another collection.



Ever since I was a young boy I've been unable to resist collecting stuff. Stamps, coins, cigarette cards (via a friends Dad) in the early days, then as a teenager I wanted to visit every Youth Hostel in the country and collect the stamps in my membership card. During most of my adult life I've been climbing hills and mountains, and about five years ago realised that with some planning, I could climb every single one in England and Wales. Last year I completed the Welsh ones, this year, on a very rainy day in the Lake District I completed the English ones.

Not long after I qualified as a pilot, I bought a share in a microlight. Imagine my delight to discover that the BMAA had an award scheme where one could collect Bronze, Silver, Gold and Diamond 'Wings' for various flying related achievements. This was the perfect

combination: learning stuff, gaining flying experience and qualifications and getting a pin badge for my collection - yes, I also collect pin badges!



The system was relatively straightforward. For the Bronze Award one Safety event has to be attended, plus a 100 mile flight with one land-away. For the Silver, one safety event, a Radio License, one flight skill or education course and a two hundred mile flight with two land-away airfields. For the Gold, a bit more and yet more for the Diamond. I worked my way through them, finally gaining my Gold award in February of this year. That saw the end of it, not because I didn't want the Diamond, but I sold my share in the microlight and bought an LAA category aeroplane instead, thereby self-excluding myself.

Imagine my joy at learning that the LAA has a similar award system! I'm not sure which came first, the LAA or the BMAA but they are both based on very similar achievements. To be fair, whilst the BMAA promotes the Wings awards, the LAA seems to do the exact opposite - try finding any information about it on their website! I had only heard about it because I happened to pick up a brochure from somewhere I can't even remember and when I called the LAA office about it, I spoke to three different people before it was even acknowledged as existing!

Due to some very poor weather this year I only recently completed the requirements for the Bronze Award which, like the BMAA requires a land-away flight, in this case, 200 miles and two land-aways. I chose Manchester Barton via the Low Level corridor, then around the outside of the Manchester CTA to Tatenhill, and finally back to Gloucester, avoiding Birmingham. Additionally, a flying related seminar or training course is required - I did a defensive flying seminar with Astral Aviation, and an Achievement - I gained my Night rating at the end of 2023. I am about to send off the application for the award and hopefully the person who opens the mail is one of the few that actually know it exists and can send me a badge for my collection.



Silver and Gold require more of the same, but the greatest challenge seems to be in gaining information. For instance, one of the activities is 'Complete a LAA World Record'. What that is I have no idea, nor it seems does the LAA website, nor does the

'Eligible Activities' document that I was sent offer any explanation. Worse still, it should be 'an' rather than 'a'! The 'Pilot Qualifications' section is similarly difficult with the majority of options either not relevant to my type of flying or not available to me as an LAPL holder. I can't help thinking that the LAA thought it a great idea in the early days but came to the conclusion that it probably wasn't worth pursuing or no one at the LAA was prepared to become its champion.

If it's something you didn't know about and are interested, send me a message via the Contact Us page, selecting 'General Information' in the Reason box and make the Subject 'LAA Wings' and I'll send you what (limited) information I have.

## **Sales and Wants**

Take a look at the Sales and Wants page of the website and grab yourself a bargain.

<http://glosterstrut.co.uk/sales.php>

## **The next meeting**

As mentioned in the Chairmans Chat, the next meeting will be on Tuesday September 10th at The Victory Club, starting at 7.30pm when Dave Haynes will deliver his photo coverage from Leicester, plus you will get an update on the Pietenpol project.