

July 2025 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

Buccaneer at Tatenhill



Chairmans Chat

I'm happy to say that the last couple of Croft Farm BBQ events have been a big success, the weather played ball, so we had a good crowd of kids and adults enjoying the countryside environment. The food and wine flowing for big people and juice and water for the little ones. With the theme of the events being to encourage the younger generation into flying hobbies, we are seeing a gradual rise in numbers from a variety of directions, so hopefully we can continue the growth. It is important that we direct our efforts to promote the health and interests of our Light Aircraft Association. No doubt having to adapt our approach as we do so.

I would like to offer a BIG "thank you" to all those prepared to turn up and help out with the setting up of the evenings, lovely ladies who produce delicious salads and cake too! We love to have you on the team!

For our June event we had three aircraft fly in from Middlezoy, Somerset. An Isaacs Fury / a Vintage Auster and the SE5a, so plenty to whet the appetite. The superb weather made it all possible and I'm told that the return flight to home base was just a joy to fly, one of those evenings you remember forever.

The July 8th event is shaping up to be a fun one too! More kids, more visitors – bring your friends along of course, they are always welcome. PLEASE book in for the BBQ in ADVANCE!!!!

We need to know numbers for the catering (deadline to book MONDAY 7th July)

NO BOOK – NO COOK

£6.50 per head / kids eat FREE. Contact Mike: info@carouselgolfing.com to book.

See you there.

Blue Skies – Mike

The last meeting

Thirty-seven members and guests, including 3 of our founder members, enjoyed a lovely evening of sunshine, fun and food at Croft Farm, where we had 3 scale replica aircraft to look over: two SE5as and an Isaacs Fury. I arrived just in time to see another visitor – an Auster- departing to fly back to MiddleZoy whence the Fury and one of the SE5s had also come.

Mike Waldron worked a minor miracle on the BBQ machine to feed us all, supplemented by an excellent salad provided by Anne Houlihan, lovely tomatoes provided by Rick Holt, and two sorts of cake baked by Avril Badham. Many thanks to all four.



About 8-9 youngsters were with us, and derived a lot of fun flying a variety of chuck gliders and eating burgers, chipolatas, strawberries and cream.

We were delighted to welcome back David Joyce and partner Rebecca from Trump's America, and look forward to seeing them again before they head back later in the year.

All-in-all a most successful Strut meeting.

The Wit & Wisdom of Aviation

Qantas Engineering Reports

Alleged reports filed by Qantas Airline Pilots and the Engineering Responses.

Pilot: Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick.

Engineer: That's what they're for.

Quote of the Month

Of course I talk to myself: Sometimes I need expert advice.



Caption competition



Jeremy demonstrates the other way of checking propellor ground clearance.

Flying, Cycling and Climbing

You may recall in the past, I have reported on ascents of hills defined as Marylins that are near to airfields. Well, it turns out that there are quite a few of these within a reasonable cycling distance of airports and so I set about mapping routes from those airfields to the hills of interest with a view to ascending them.

So it was, on sunny Thursday morning, having done the various engine and aircraft checks, I taxied down to Charlie One ready for take-off from 09 at Gloucestershire and

thirty five minutes later I landed at Welshpool. It is a lovely flight up, firstly over the Malverns and quickly into Shropshire, passing nearby Shobdon airfield and the Long Mynd gliding site, being sure to give the latter a wide berth as I know from personal experience that they use a winch launch to get the gliders airborne. Having a disagreement with a winch cable will not end well, ever.

Welshpool is an Air-Ground station so, unlike Gloucestershire where you are told what to do, A/G is pretty much the opposite. As 04 was in use, I elected to join downwind after overflying Welshpool town which is just on the edge of the ATZ, then slightly North, then West of Powis Castle which has an overflying restriction. Welshpools' circuit is quite high, being 1,500' QFE so requires a considerable amount of height loss to land, which must be done from just after turning Base as the hills on the downwind leg are almost 1,000'. Flying a slippery Europa presents its own set of challenges slowing down whilst losing height but as I approached the threshold, I was just under 70 knots - ideal for a touchdown at 55 knots. One benefit of 04 is that one can roll all the way to parking so touching down can be left to about half way along the 1,000 metre runway with plenty of braking distance available and so it was that I rolled into the parking area with little use of the brakes.



Parked up, the bike came out, unfolded and I set off for Stingwern Hill, some 12km distant. The first section is along the busy A483 for a few miles before turning towards Berriew. It had been easy pedalling on good flat roads but beyond Berriew, the gradient changed dramatically and I found myself struggling up the very steep hill in the lowest possible gear, even with the electric assistance on full power. I finally reached the high

point of the road, padlocked my bike to a fence, and walked the final ten minutes or so to the summit of Stingwern Hill, my 228th Marilyn. I was presented with an excellent view over the Shropshire countryside, making the effort well worthwhile.

Pausing long enough to catch my breath and take a few photos, I headed back down, jumped on the bike and made my way slowly back down the hill. It would have been a quick roll down, but a Brompton bike is incredibly twitchy and unstable at speed with its tiny 16" wheels, plus the road was littered with potholes. Hit one of those and I'd be picking gravel out of my face for days! Back on flatter ground I made better progress and was soon back at the airport for a well-deserved lunch. The cafe at Welshpool is excellent

with a good range of food, freshly cooked and quick to arrive. On a nice day, sitting on the terrace watching the aircraft movements is just perfect.

Gloucestershire airport has a new 'slot' system for booking out and back in, and whilst waiting for my lunch, I realised I had more than enough time to spare for a direct flight back. I opened my iPad and loaded up Sky Demon. A few minutes later and I'd planned a route back that would take longer but be an excellent way of returning.



I finished up, refuelled, it being considerably cheaper than Gloucestershire, paid my bill, then set off. My route took me more or less due South to Builth Wells, gaining a Basic Service from London Information. That part of Wales doesn't really fall into any airspace responsibility, too far from Valley or Shawbury and probably no benefit in using Cardiff. London Information were helpful as always, warning me that D203 was active. This is a danger area North West of Sennybridge and used by them for training and sometimes Missile firing. I was aware of it and had planned to route to the East anyway, but it was nice to know that London Information were looking out for me. As it was such a glorious day, my plan was to head for the Brecon Beacons and Pen-y-Fan specifically which I overflew at 4,000'. That is plenty high enough as it is the highest point around at a shade over 2,900'.

From there, it was an almost 50 mile straight in to 09. This is by far my favourite way of approaching and landing at Gloucester. I normally check the ATIS and call them around May Hill, which is an excellent and very obvious waypoint at about 10 miles distant. To my joy, I got a 'straight in' onto 09 and enjoyed watching the runway grow as I approached. There was a significant cross wind so my approach was crabbed, straightening up just after crossing the threshold and allowing the plane to float to mid-way before touching down and rolling to exit at Alpha Two just one hour after leaving Welshpool.

A superb day out, excellent weather, excellent flights, good landings, good lunch and another hill bagged. What's not to love?

Old Warden visit

On Wednesday 21st May a select group of 20 members of the Vintage Aircraft Club were allowed the privilege of a conducted tour of the Shuttleworth Collection's holy of holies, its restoration workshop, guided by non-other than the Collection's Chief Engineer, John Munn. Four of those lucky few were members of the Gloster Strut; namely, Tim Badham, Arthur Mason, Mike Waldron and Harry Hopkins.

At the entrance, a couple of volunteer engineers were completing the final touches to an ex-BEA de Havilland Rapide which, despite having just had a centre-section spar renewal, looked as though it had just been wheeled out of the Hatfield factory. Further in, we saw a Sopwith Tri-plane, followed by a Hawker Tomtit with an engine cylinder missing, pending a repair. Nearby, was a Hawker Fury the Kestrel engine of which was also awaiting spares; its recently recovered wings were awaiting the painting of the aircraft's registration markings. Also close by, an Armstrong-Siddeley Genet engine was part way through a rebuild, and parts of another were laid out awaiting assembly. Further in the cylinder block of an RR Merlin was receiving attention.



If I had a better memory, I'd be able to tell you of the difficulties they have in finding spares and/or a having new parts made. Some parts are readily available but none of them are inexpensive.

We left the workshops highly impressed by the work being done there and grateful that there are still engineers capable of such intricate and demanding work.

Harry Hopkins

Dates for your diary

Kr2 World tour Tour, Wellesbourne Airport Cafe 8th and 9th July

<https://forums.flyer.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=66&t=137018>

12/07/2025 Sleapkosh

Sleapkosh at Sleep. 12-13th. PPR Required.

12/07/2025 Vintage Aerobatics

Brighton Vintage Aerobatic competition and summer BBQ. PPR required

18/07/2025 RIAT

18-20th July at Fairford. Royal International Air Tattoo.

Downloads from the CAA and others

LAA Stuff

They have been very quiet this month, so nothing to report.

Insight

The April edition of AIRPROX INSIGHT looks at an event involving a Cessna 152 and a Robin DR400 in the visual circuit at Stapleford.

(<https://www.airproxboard.org.uk/media/iifjpn04/april-2025.pdf>)

The article highlights the importance of conforming to the pattern of traffic already formed in a visual circuit, and what can go wrong if a pilot flies a significantly different ground track to the pilot(s) of the aircraft ahead. It also discusses possible options for pilots who find themselves 'out of position' in the circuit, including asking on the radio for clarification of the positions of circuit traffic, or repositioning for another join.

CAA Stuff

CHIRP General Aviation FEEDBACK Edition 104

The May 2025 edition of CHIRP General Aviation FEEDBACK (<https://chirp.co.uk/aviation/safety-resources/general-aviation/>) focuses on managing attention under pressure, emphasising both the benefits and risks of task fixation and distraction. Reports include accounts of a flap oversight during touch-and-go, near runway incursion and parachute malfunction, showcasing human factors like distraction, communication and decision-making. We have a thought-provoking "I learned about ..." tale of poltergeist instructors – do you know who's actually flying your aircraft?! In order to bring you these key aviation safety insights we rely on your reports. Whatever the incident or experience, please share with CHIRP, in complete confidence, at their website. (<https://chirp.co.uk/aviation/>)

Gloucestershire Airport

Firstly, I am pleased to advise that there have been no Airprox events in the ATZ since the 2nd of January. Ultimately, that was the main aim of the introduction of the traffic management spreadsheet. Thank you for your help and patience. When the Traffic Management Spreadsheet was introduced on the 14th of February of this year, we advised that it would be reviewed at some point. We have recently undertaken an ATC Safety Survey regarding Traffic Management, and we have also hosted the CAA Inspectorate for a safety assurance meeting. The survey and meeting (and no Airprox

events in the ATZ!) have prompted a review with the following changes being made to AAN 25 – 1018 and AAN 25 – 1020:

- A second Runway VFR Circuit column will be added to the spreadsheet. By default, the cells in this column will be greyed out but will be made available on a tactical basis by the Senior Controller on Duty (SCOD) on any given day.
- There will be no restriction to VFR departures. Another “Departure” column will be added to the “Runway VFR Movement” section of the spreadsheet. If more than 3 VFR departures slot bookings are made in any 15-minute period, then the callsigns of those additional aircraft will be added to existing departure cells.
- The maximum number of VFR helicopter circuits will increase from 1 to 2.
- One helicopter will be permitted to operate in Heli Training Area North and one in Heli Training Area Southwest in each 15-minute period.
- Cross runway circuits may be allowed at the behest of the duty ATCOs and SCOD.
- Helicopter circuits will be tactically permitted on the runway in use (including cross runway operations).
- No restriction on helicopters being limited to HTA SW if helicopter circuits are taking place.
- Instrument training approaches may be booked up to two weeks in advance. Please note that a review has also been held into the possibility of international VFR and IFR arrivals not requiring slots on the spreadsheet, but the decision has been made not to change existing arrangements at the moment. This will be given further consideration at future review. Throughout these Volume of Traffic Management procedures ATC shall retain the right to amend or cancel any bookings on a tactical basis for safety reasons. I thank you for your continued support and assure you that further reviews will take place when appropriate. Please contact me if you want to discuss any of these points or anything ATC safety related.

Thank you

Christopher Brian Manager of Air Traffic Services (MATS)

A second message from Chris (sent on 20th June)

Good afternoon

I hope you are all enjoying flying in this fine weather!!

I thought I'd give you a brief update about Air Traffic Control at the Airport. Air Traffic Control Officer (ATCO) numbers have improved greatly since summer 2024. Without

wanting to add too much extra pressure on to the Trainees who have pending Unit Endorsements ("Validation Boards", attended by the CAA), if all goes well, we will have ten "valid" ATCOs by the end of September. Of those, six will be valid in both Aerodrome (Tower) and Approach. Our succession plan is working, and we strive to have all ATCOs holding both ratings (Aerodrome and Approach) by the end of 2027. This has taken a huge amount of effort by all ATC staff. I think we should be truly grateful to the incredible team of Instructors, Trainees and ATCOs whose hard work has helped us bounce back in such a relatively short space of time.

I am very pleased to say that we have new Air Traffic Services Assistants starting very soon too. These new starters are required as some of our existing ATSA team have made very successful progress in their own careers. One of our ATSAs is about to leave to be a Lighting Panel Operator at Gatwick and one is now training as an ATCO. Their progress is testament to the immense amount of ATC experience they gain as ATSAs at Gloucestershire and to the challenging and safety critical role of the ATSA. Good luck in your careers! I am also delighted to say that we will have a new Air Traffic Engineer starting this Monday to work alongside our Senior Air Traffic Engineer. All of this good news is most gratifying as all recruitment in ATC in recent months (or even years) has been particularly challenging. Competing in a global ATC employment market, and indeed a domestic market against companies such as NATS, is difficult and positive changes we have made have certainly helped attract our new staff.

I know that we have also faced numerous challenges with equipment over the last few months. I must admit that we have had our fair share of bad luck as some equipment outages have been the result of aircraft accidents. Most importantly no one was seriously injured but a couple of accidents left us without key aids, most recently the ILS. It is very difficult to just purchase and plug-in new localiser antennae especially with manufacturing lead times and insurance companies to consider but we hope it will be replaced in September.

Some of you may know that we are still trying to repair the Radar. I have received some negative feedback from some operators about this and I have to say that leaves me a little perplexed. Sourcing parts and repairing a seventy year old marine radar is not easy. Our SATE is probably amongst the best qualified people in the country to address the faults but, almost inevitably, the repair process has consistently presented more problems that need addressing.

Just yesterday we were advised that a part that we ordered several months ago from a company in The Netherlands is finally ready for dispatch. We will continue with best endeavours but I simply cannot give you a firm date for serviceability. Having said that ATC is coping incredibly well dealing with busy traffic levels without the radar spinning. Again, I think we all have reason to be grateful to this young team of people moving the amount of traffic that they do without all of the tools that they require or deserve.

Finally, and whilst I am talking about traffic levels, I would like to let you know that yesterday there were 391 movements at the Airport. That 391 is the number that will be submitted to the CAA for statistical purposes but does not include go-arounds. If we were to include go-arounds (and for safety reasons I have to consider them as they take just as much ATC workload as movements touching the runway) then there were 412 movements. Of that 391 there were 67 movements between 09:00z and 10:00z. Between 09:00z and 17:00z we averaged 45 movements per hour. During those hours there was a great deal of time spent training ATCOs in both the Tower and Approach positions. This adds enormously to the challenges faced working these amounts of traffic. All without the ATM! All within the parameters of the traffic management spreadsheet.

The amount of skill, application, patience, calmness, adaptability, perseverance and dedication to allow for that from the ATC team is truly amazing and I want to personally thank them. I cannot always guarantee that we will be able to accommodate these sorts of numbers as there are many variables involved. However, I still think we should all be impressed. I have worked in various ATC roles for 31 years and I can honestly say that this is the most remarkable team of ATC staff that I have ever worked with. I know there are sometimes delays, there can even be errors, but we are always learning and supporting each other, and I know the team are very grateful for your continued support.

I will always endeavour to help if you have any further questions.

Thank you and best regards

Chris

Coming next month

Look out for the July Newsletter where we begin the three-part serialisation of 'Hunt for a Thunder Chicken', an excellent short story by our very own Noel Baker.

The next meeting

The July Strut meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th July at Croft Farm, Defford.

The speaker is yet to be finalised but as always, we can promise you an interesting and entertaining evening.