

February 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

Angus and Fionas Jabiru with a Collie tied to the back. One way to exercise a dog!



Chairmans Chat

As the Strut starts to plan out our year ahead, I would like to thank all of our team for great work over the years and welcome two new members to our committee, yes, we have Jeremy Liber and Tim Lawrence joining, adding their expertise and experience to help keep the band wagon rolling along on a good heading. Gentlemen, your input will be greatly appreciated, always a positive, new ideas and different points of view. You may remember the that at the AGM, it was a unanimous decision to elect them (or did you blink and miss that bit !), in any case, well done.

2026 is the 80th anniversary of the PFA /LAA and as a lively part of the association (I still think of it as PFA , must be an age thing!!) the Gloster Strut is in the early stages of planning for something rather special for the members, families and friends. Looking at a Saturday during the second half of June to present our “garden party” style event, inviting aircraft to represent each decade of 80 years of homebuilding and beyond, wining and dining in the most pleasant surroundings of our Croft Farm base, as usual, we hope to see our ever expanding kid’s section enjoy the day.

The planning will need a team of helpers of course, this is where you can add to the fun of the fair, setting up, being movers and shakers to get it working like clockwork! Please drop me a mail if you would like to help on the day –

Mike : info@carouselgolfing.com

We will allocate your “fun to do “ job with others.

Now back to the PFA /LAA to raise a glass to congratulate them on making at least half of my life “aviation possible “. Without their supervision throughout building stages,

inspection controls involving the network of inspectors and the issue of permits, we, the average guys and girls could never take to the skies to fulfil lifelong dreams! Thank you LAA, here's to another 80!! The friends you make along the way too, just a great way to go.

Next month at The Victory Club – 7.30pm start.

Bill Perrins will deliver a talk - “From Vulcan to Spitfire and Back” you just can’t have enough of a good thing can you !

Hope to see you there.

Mike.

Don't forget to feed the boyds , they started it!

AGM

The AGM took place at the last meeting (January 13th). It was a long drawn out affair, lasting just shy of five minutes, the crowd was obviously getting restless.

We were told that the Strut finances are in very good shape which means, you will be delighted to hear, there is no increase in subscriptions, although by the time you read this, you will have already been notified and, of course, leapt into action and paid your subs for 2026. Also, we will be donating money to various charities, amounts and destinations to be declared after the next committee meeting.

Thanks were given, and gratefully received for the work done on the Newsletter and, as always, requests for contributions made.

The Chairmans Trophy was awarded to Tim Houlihan, a well-deserved winner, for all of his hard work and dedication over, not only last year, but many years previously.

The Chairmans position, as with all committee positions, was up for re-election. With no opposition, Mike was elected once again for 2026.

One new and significant post change is the election to Honorary President of David Joyce and we welcome him into his new role.

Other slight changes are that Harry is now the Treasurer in addition to Membership Secretary with Bruce Morris moving to Assistant Treasurer.

Mick Peakman remains as Website Manager, Newsletter Editor and Assistant Membership Secretary.

All current committee members continue for another year, in addition, we have two new members; Tim Lawrence and Jeremy Leiber and they were welcomed on board. All committee posts can be seen on the [Committee page](#) of the website.

This year is the 80th year of the LAA (previously known as the PFA) and we are planning celebrations at Croft Farm, with the intention, amongst other things, to have an aircraft representing each decade since the formation.

The last meeting

THE CESSNA L-19 BIRD DOG by SHONA BOWMAN and LAURIE GREGOIRE



In 1947, just 2 years after the end of WWII, the United States Army Air Force separated from the US Army to become the USAF but the Army did not lose interest in Aviation and wanted an Air Observation aircraft to support its operations. However, they were forced to rely on the Air Force to do their procurement. A specification was written and light aircraft manufacturers invited to

enter contenders in a competitive selection process. Cessna won and their entry became the L-19, bearing the name The Bird Dog.

Shona learned to fly while still of school age but had for some reason fallen in love with the Bird Dog. When she later teamed up with aircraft engineer and pilot, Laurie, he said they should get one. They bought, sight unseen, a supposedly airworthy example owned by a Hawaiian gliding club and had it dismantled, loaded into a container and shipped to UK. Although the aircraft had been in use up to their purchase, a close inspection revealed that it was highly corroded and in need of a rebuild. The one redeeming feature was that its Continental O-370 engine (213 hp, since you ask) had enjoyed a recent rebuild and of low hours.

Their talk to our January meeting was a blow-by-blow account of the rebuild process.

Fortunately, the US forces – Army, Marines and Air Force – had bought hundreds of the type, complete with plentiful spares, such that most parts were available, albeit in America and at a price. To say that this was a comprehensive rebuild would be a gross understatement. Several major fuselage parts, one wing spar and many parts of the tail-feathers

required replacement and the wings needed to be re-skinned. The tenacity required was extraordinary, especially as they were both determined to create a 'good-as-new' restoration. Their goal was to have it ready for the 2025 Goodwood Festival of Speed – in the event an extremely close- run thing: they had to have CAA dispensation to take it as it was technically still going through pre-recertification flying. Their efforts, though,



were rewarded when it and they were given the principal award - the Freddie March Spirit of Aviation trophy.

Our thanks to Shona and Laurie for a perfect Strut event.

Subs Reminder

Whilst it is understandable that many of you will have been waiting for your pension payments to arrive, we would appreciate it if you could divert a small amount of that toward the Gloster Strut Subs. At just £10, that's less than £1 per month, or a third of a cup of coffee and much better for you!

You will have received payment instructions a little while ago, but if you have lost them, they were repeated in this months' invitation to read the newsletter.

Phil Mathews

Editor: I called into CAC on the Friday after Phil was taken to hospital on the Monday. Guess who was sat there like nothing had happened! Grounded for a while but still fully active. You can't keep a good man down for long!

The Wit & Wisdom of Aviation

Quote of the Month

When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return – Leonardo DaVinci

Airspeed, altitude and brains.

Two are always needed to successfully complete the flight.



The Newsletter – Some Statistics

As we head into a new year, I thought I'd look back at 2025 from a Newsletter Editors point of view to see what we had achieved, who contributed and how Decembers issue compared with Januaries

With a total of 136 pages during 2025, giving an average of just over 11 Newsletter pages per month, 10 pages being the smallest and a mighty 17 pages being the biggest (November) I feel we did pretty well, especially comparing to some struts that manage 3-4 pages. Unfortunately, other than the stalwarts of Mike Waldron, Harry Hopkins and your Editor, just three Strut members contributed articles during 2025! As I've said in the

past, the Strut Newsletter is for all members and it is only as good as those that contribute. The same rules will apply this year as applied last year which is, no contributions means it will become a 'where I flew my Europa' diary and I'm sure you don't want that every month, so let's have some articles. The Strut has almost 100 members, many of them have dozens of years aviation experience, why not share it?

By the way, the January edition had 11 pages, as did the December edition so if that's not consistent, I don't know what is!

MAVIS : Met Office Aeronautical Visualisation Service

If, like me, you use various weather forecast tools like Windy, BBC weather or the Met Offices Aviation pages for the F214/F215/GAMETs etc then you might be interested in this new product from the Met Office which brings together 4 products: Aviation Briefing Service, Network Weather Resilience, Helibrief and Open Runway into 1 (hopefully) user-friendly service.

Having an account with the Met Office already, I was a little surprised to be told I had to create an account. No matter, a few minutes and it was set up (with the same login parameters as my existing account!)



It's web based and initially presents a map of the UK showing airfields around the country. Clicking on an airfield shows the METAR and TAF information (encoded). METARs are produced by the airfield, presumably by looking out of the window, TAFs are produced by the Met Office. Not all airfields give METAR information and the page shows that.

There is all the usual information available.

F214, the Low Level Spot Wind chart is produced as exactly that which is okay if you know where the information is related to. For instance, it shows 5230N 05W. Now some people might say, 'that's easy, it's Brize Norton (or wherever) and others may have to resort to the paper map to find it. I had hoped that, with modern technology it might be a bit more obvious.

F215, the Low level significant weather chart is also there in an identical form to that which we are used to. We all speak acronyms but, again, in the spirit of moving forward and making things easier, some further interpretation would be helpful so I don't need to think too hard about what ISOL 6 KM RA/RADZ might mean.

The weather forecast looks quite nice and there is a scrollable display that shows the movement of rain, cloud and whatnots, but then again, that is available on the iPhone App so nothing new there except the colours have all changed and where, on the App,

the country is shown in green, the web version shows it as white which initially made me think the entire country was covered with cloud.

Apparently they are interested in feedback, so if you feel like it, check out the site [here](#)

My initial feedback would be....

1. Make the charts more user friendly

2. Make the rain colours the same as the App version.

3. Explain what the dot colours mean on the METAR/TAF page, they seem to be randomly Red, Orange, Green, Grey or Black. Turns out it represents a severity level where Red is severe, Orange is medium and Green is low. Grey dots mean the report is not available and Black means it is not issued (ever). These colours will change depending on the type of report chosen. So, for example, if I select a Site report and see the Gloucester is a Red dot, I can assume that some part of the METAR will be severe e.g. 08020KT (20 Knot wind from 080 direction). I only found that out with a Google search.

4. Make the METAR/TAF data more user friendly. METAR EGNX 131420Z 20012KT 9999 FEW009 08/06 Q1023= is all very well, but Report Time: 13th at 14:20, Wind 200 degrees, 12kts, Visibility > 10km, Few clouds at 900 feet, Temperature 8 degrees, Dewpoint 6 degrees, QNH 1023 is way more helpful.

There are a couple of webinars to introduce this new service. Have a look at the CAA Downloads section for more information and registration links.

From our very own poet; Noel Baker: AIR CANADA FLIGHT AC856

In black mid-Atlantic space;
suspended beneath the stars
on threads of satellite beam;
winking red and green;
A shadow crosses the aurora light.

Conveying creatures beyond price;
anticipation, memories, hopes and fears;
Cradled in sleep,
horizontal in first,
huddled in tourist.
Little black muffs, soundless TV.

Cabin staff, dim-lit, flit from their station
dispensing comforts.
Alert faces ghostly glow by instrument light
reporting the health of the machine's
furthest corners.



Constant rush of sound,
occasional lurch over an unseen trough of air,
flex of wing and nacelle.
Seeming so permanent and rooted,
yet balanced on drag and lift,
propelled by captive fire.

Called a Jumbo.
An intricate construct of creation's
possibilities;
Given form and purpose by the imagination
that eventually yearns for a destination
some call GOD.



Gremlins

An extract of the forthcoming book 'A Flyer in the Ointment' by Chris Harrison about his 55 years in aviation.

The day's flight was scheduled as a straightforward rotation: a departure from Kaohsiung in southern Taiwan bound for Bangkok, a sector of just over three hours, and then a brief one-hour turnaround before returning to Kaohsiung. Altogether, it promised to be an eight-and-a-half-hour duty, the kind of day that looked routine on the schedule and was expected to finish after nightfall. Yet even the simplest of plans in aviation carries its own challenges. Our departure was set for daylight, and Kaohsiung's geography allowed no margin for error. Using the easterly runway, a turn had to be initiated almost immediately after take-off to avoid the mountain range that rose sharply only a short distance beyond the airport. After this turn, we would then head west on a prescribed departure route out to sea and then via airways towards Thailand.

Around ten minutes into the flight, we were warned of a squadron of fighters scheduled to cross our path at the same altitude. From their vantage point, they could clearly see us, as we were directly ahead of them, but from our cockpit, the picture was far less reassuring. Approaching from the side and hidden by the glare of the sun, they were almost impossible to pick out until the very last moments. One after another, six or perhaps seven aircraft flashed across our nose, some slightly above, others diving just beneath us, all at alarmingly close quarters. It was not the sort of traffic one would normally expect to encounter on a civil sector, and the thought was never far away that a single misjudgement could have resulted in a catastrophic mid-air collision. One had to remember that Taiwan was prepared for an invasion by mainland China, and so its military carried out regular practices aggressively, unlike us in the Western world. I had never been so close to an airborne conflict before and found it somewhat unsettling. The remainder of the flight passed without incident, calm and steady, until we approached Kaohsiung once more under the cover of darkness. Whenever conditions

permitted, aircraft would usually land from the seaside, aligning with the eastern runway and following the established instrument approach path, which relied upon distances and altitudes carefully checked against the navigation beacons scattered around the field. By this stage, we had already begun to reduce our speed and were holding at twenty-five hundred feet, preparing to make a precise right-hand turn that would bring us neatly onto the extended centreline of the runway. From there, we would start our measured descent. Yet, just as everything seemed entirely routine, something unexpected occurred. A screen on my instrument panel was showing many radar returns ahead from transponders, and we were approaching them. Could these be fighters like earlier on, and if so, there was a distinct possibility of a collision with disastrous consequences. In growing alarm, we called air traffic control radar, urgently asking if they could identify the approaching traffic. Their reply was unsettling: they could see nothing at all. Under normal circumstances, a transponder return would have clearly displayed the position of other aircraft, together with an indication of whether they were above or below our altitude. Yet in this case, there was only silence on the screen, just the raw radar returns drawing steadily closer, like ghosts drifting toward us. With no reliable way of knowing if they were climbing above or descending beneath our flight path, the terrifying possibility of collision felt imminent. Convinced that a strike was unavoidable, I threw the vast airliner into sharp, evasive manoeuvres, weaving it as best I could through the night sky. Thankfully, we had avoided the returns and potential traffic and disaster and managed to continue to make a normal final approach and landing. Air traffic control couldn't be of any help in deciphering what the radar returns were.

Back at our base in Taipei, still unsettled by the near-miss, I decided to pursue the matter with the navigation department. My questions produced a rather surprising explanation. Kaohsiung, it turned out, is not only a bustling port city but also one of Taiwan's major centres of petrochemical production. The bay is frequently crowded with enormous tanker ships, many of which remain berthed offshore. Each of these vessels is equipped with its own radar transponder, enabling them to identify one another and avoid collisions at sea. Unlike aircraft systems, however, these ship transponders provide no relative height information; after all, everything floats at the same level. From the perspective of our airborne radar, their signals had appeared exactly like those of other aircraft converging on our position.

Knowing this after the fact explained the phantom traffic, yet I could not help thinking how much less stressful the flight would have been had we been briefed about this peculiarity beforehand.

Dates for your diary

20/02/2026 GASCo Safety Evening

Henstridge Airfield. GASCo safety evening.
Check out their [website](#)

21/02/2026 Shuttleworth

Shuttleworth Workshop Open Day - 21/22. No booking required, but PPR for airfield

01/03/26 Swansea Airport

St Davids Day Fly In. PPR required



Notable Aviation Events from history

February 3, 1959: A plane crash near Clear Lake, Iowa, killed musicians Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and "The Big Bopper," an event referred to as "The Day the Music Died".

February 4, 1902: Charles Lindbergh, the renowned American aviator, was born.

February 9, 1969: The Boeing 747 "Jumbo Jet" made its first flight.

February 7, 1958: The Munich air disaster resulted in the crash of a British European Airways aircraft and the deaths of 23 people, including members of the Manchester United football team.

February 13, 1923: Record-breaker Chuck Yeagers birthday.

February 26, 1949: The Boeing B-50 "Superfortress" "Lucky Lady II" completed the first nonstop flight around the world with in-flight refuelling.

Did you know?

We try to include lots of photos in the newsletters. Not all of them have captions, but if you hover your mouse over an image, a caption will pop up with information about the aircraft.

Want to see the picture bigger? Click on any image and it will zoom in before your very eyes. Click it again and it will return to normal size. Now where did I put my glasses.....?

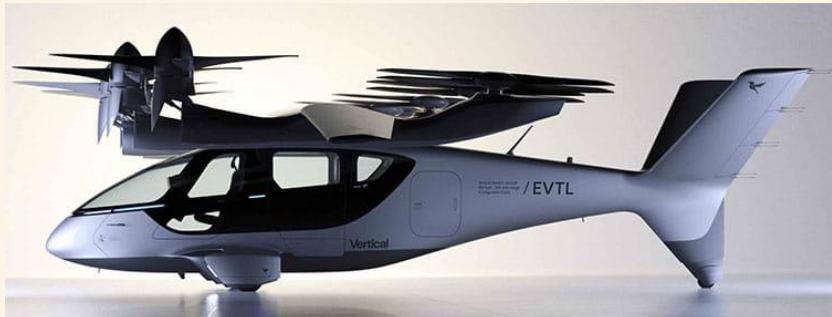
In the News

Your taxi has landed, madam

Valo from Bristol company Vertical Aerospace

Bristol-based Vertical Aerospace hopes to have its VX4 eVTOL taxi, Valo, flying by 2028.

Designed to fly up to 100 miles at up 150mph, it's planned to have up to six seats, with room for six checked bags.



Downloads from the CAA and others

Insight

December's edition of [AIRPROX INSIGHT](#) features an Airprox between a HEMS helicopter and a Socata TB20 about 10 miles south of Leeds/Bradford Airport. The article highlights the importance of allowing plenty of room to manoeuvre for HEMS operations and how positioning one's own aircraft can help alleviate concern. It also offers thoughts on use of available air traffic services to assist in generating plenty of separation from life-saving missions.

CAA Stuff

Consultation: CAP1988 Safety Guidance for Air Rallies, Fly-ins, Air Races/Contests and Charity Events

We have launched a consultation on CAP1988: Safety Guidance for Air Rallies, Fly-ins, Air Races/Contests and Charity Events.

This new non-statutory safety guidance is for participating pilots and Event Organisers (EO) of such general aviation events when they are conducted in accordance with the normal Rules of the Air (unless specifically permitted or exempted) and do not fall into the scope of CAP403 (Flying Displays and Special Events).



The consultation runs from the 12 January to the 16 February 2026.

We invite stakeholders to give us their [views](#).

Consultation responses on proposed ‘Wave 2’ changes to pilot licensing and training simplification.

We have updated the consultation page for proposed changes in Wave 2 of the General Aviation Pilot Licensing and Training Simplification project. The page now includes the Consultation Response Document.

Read the [consultation response document](#).

New Met Office visualisation service

The Met Office is introducing Met Office Aeronautical Visualisation Service (MAVIS®) – the new integrated, regulated aviation weather platform. Legacy Met Office aviation services will retire 24th March 2026.

MAVIS is now operational, providing a single, comprehensive platform for METARs, TAFs, weather charts, and interactive map layers. Aviation Briefing Service, HeliBrief, Network Weather Resilience and OpenRunway users should start engaging with MAVIS to ensure a smooth transition.

To support this transition, the Met Office is hosting webinars on [17 February at 11am](#) and [23 February at 3pm](#). Sign up today!

Sign up to [MAVIS](#) and [access more information and updates](#).

LAA Stuff

AIRCRAFT CARPENTRY - time is running out to book onto this fun and interactive workshop.

This is the perfect course for the would-be aircraft builder, contemplating repairing a classic wooden aircraft. Hosted by Alan James and his host of many carpentry skills.

Date: Tuesday 24 February 2026

Time: 9.00 - 5.00 at Turweston

Cost: £213 for members and £233 for non-members

BASIC ELECTRICS FOR PERMIT AIRCRAFT

This popular course, hosted by Mark Castle-Smith, provides the theory and practical knowledge to enable the implementation of a basic electrical system in permit aircraft.

Date: Saturday 7 February 2026

Time: 9.00 - 5.00 at Turweston

Cost: £224 for members and £244 for non-members

ADVANCED ELECTRICS FOR PERMIT AIRCRAFT

The Advanced course builds on the Basics course by providing more detail about component selection and options and the use of integrated power management systems.

Date: Sunday 8 February 2026

Time: 9.00 - 5.00 at Turweston

Cost: £224 for members and £244 for non-members

ROTAX FUEL INJECTED 912/915iS INSTALLATION & OPERATION

Electronics and Rotax iRMT certified engineer, John Barrott, hosts this course to provide help and advice on the installation and operation of this new generation of aero engines.

Date: Saturday 21 February 2026

Time: 9.30 - 5.00 at Turweston

Cost: £224 for members and £244 for non-members

All further information regarding the courses we are currently running are on our website [here](#).

To book, call Cheryl Routledge on 01280 846786 or email [Cheryl](#) - before all places are full!

Gloucestershire and other airports

Airport Sale

Dear Customer,

A happy New Year to you all.

I am conscious that it's been several weeks since I have given you all an update on the airport sale, and this is understandably causing a level of concern. What I can tell you is that both Councils have advised myself and the rest of the Airport Board that the airport sale is on track to be completed on 30th January 2026.

Working on the basis that this date will be met, I have been advised by the Horizon Aero Group that they intend to hold a communication exercise the week commencing Monday 02nd February to brief staff and tenants on what their plans are and, to field any questions that will naturally arise.

Please be assured that this is all I know, and hence, can share with you at the moment.

If in the meantime you have any questions, please do let me know.

Kind regards.

Jason Ivey. Managing Director

AIRPORT CHANGES – MAJOR PROJECT 2026

I wanted to give everyone a heads – up in regards some changes to the airfield that will occur during 2026.

The main one is that due to magnetic variation changes the present Runway Designators will change. Rwy 27/09 will become Rwy 26/08 and Rwy 22/04 will become 21/03.

As you can imagine this is a huge and expensive project requiring changes to, markings, signage, procedures, equipment and documentation and will require you to amend your own procedures etc.

In addition to this CAP168 has detailed changes to the markings required at Holds. This is an ICAO requirement and must be in place by November 2026.

It is my intention to try and get both completed together as one project. Currently, we are planning for May 2026 although this is very much at the planning stage.

It is unlikely that the whole of these works can be completed without some disruption to operations.

In early 2026, I will be looking to provide more specific details in regards planning and execution of these works. However, I urge you to be aware of this significant change and how it might / will affect you.

Many thanks

Brian Rawlings, Head of Operation

2025 Airport Movements

I thought you'd all be interested and pleased to know that our total number of movements for 2025 was 70,712.

This represents more than a 9% increase from the total of 64,850 in 2024.

Considering we spent much of the year training new staff in ATC (due to being understaffed), I'm sure you'll agree, this is a considerable achievement.

Thanks to staff from all airport departments and thanks to all operators for your patience, understanding & support.

Happy New Year and happy flying

Chris Brian (Air traffic Services Manager)

Tail piece

On the right is a Scandinavian Aero Industries (SAI) KZ-7, one for just two designed in 1944 for an air ambulance role, and a first appearance outside Scandinavia.

The next meeting

The February Strut meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th February at the Victory Club in Cheltenham.

The speaker is Bill Perrins who will give us a talk entitled "From Vulcan to Spitfire and back".

