

March 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

Eddie Clapham (Pilot) and Nigel Beale at Depper Bridge. Flying is tough work!



Chairmans Chat

And the Pump that didn't!

The rain was still raining and the wind was blowing in hard from the West, I was not looking forward to my day at the airfield, but there are jobs that have to be done. In my case run up the engine on the old SE5a, get it warmed up and oil around the noisy bit. I generally assume that after a few weeks sitting in the hanger the oil pressure will not be showing on the gauge in the cockpit when starting up! Ten minutes warming the engine with the heat from my hair dryer (my C90 doesn't do cold !!), fuel on, prime four blades, check chocks, set throttle, it roars into life on the second swing, YES!, trot round to the cockpit, oil pressure ZERO, switch off, tedious, but then I know it's time to get the oil primer kit out (garden spray tank) with tubing and fittings to connect on to the oil pressure take off from the rear of the engine. Not a job I relish, but just get on with it. Oil trickling down the sleeves and rain down the neck, back hurts. OK connected, pump, pump, pump, feels like we have pressure build up, so must have enough oil in the system by now. Reverse the process, re connect the oil pressure line and another start up! STILL NO SHOW ON THE GAUGE, B****R! Switch off PDQ, think what next, could it be this or that or something else. Now we come to my first mistake, and herein lies the message in the story. I hadn't checked that the oil pump kit was delivering oil before connecting, it wasn't, stupid boy!!!

Obtain another pump, check we have delivery, YES, good to go, I reconnect the oil line, pump up the pressure, reconnect the line to the gauge. Fuel prime four blades, FIRST swing and I have 60+ PSI immediately, no more rain or back ache, happy again! SO, always check No 1 before looking at No 3, it could save you a lot of time.

To this end, from the March meeting, the Strut is starting a Tips Book that YOU can add to. Many of us have experiences to pass on, so let's have your words of wisdom.

Mike

Spring is on the way, must be, as I have a Robin nest building in my cowling!!

The last meeting

From Vulcan to Spitfire and Back

Bill Perrins talk was entitled "From Vulcan to Spitfire and Back", and included some of what came in between: It was an exciting ride!

Having joined the RAF and completed his flying training Bill found himself flying as a co-pilot on the Mk 2 Vulcan shortly before it was due to be retired after 19 years of service but just before it was used in anger for the first time. It seems that the Argentinian Government had made enquiries about buying Vulcans but before anything could be agreed they invaded the Falkland Islands in the S. Atlantic. Our government then planned to use the aircraft to 'threaten' Argentina, thus forcing them to keep some of their a/c for home defence. In the event, the Vulcans were used for one attack to close the Port Stanley runway, and another to try to knock out their radar. All this required some rapid restoration of the Vulcan's conventional bombing capability plus its adaption to take anti-radar missiles, borrowed from the Buccaneer fleet.



The base from which these sorties were to be mounted was Ascension Island, still leaving the Falklands out of range. Hence, and more importantly, in many ways, it required some hasty training in in-flight refuelling. Bill explained the complexity of the Victor to Vulcan and Victor to Victor refuelling plan to make the raids possible. Suffice to say they went ahead and made a major contribution

to bringing the invasion to an end.

Bill's next job was ab-initio pilot instruction on the Mk 5 Jet Provost, following which he found himself flying the Hawk, JP and Chipmunk at Brawdy, training forward air controllers. A tour of duty flying the Tornado jF3 interceptor followed. However, he also managed to fit in some display flying on the side, as part of a YAK formation team.

This in turn eventually led to him being invited to fly rich men's Spitfires.

Having retired from the RAF Bill joined Monarch Airline to fly passengers to their holidays in big Boeings, before transferring to Virgin Airways as a Boeing 747 captain. He then got a call inviting him to join the team displaying the one remaining airworthy Vulcan.

Now retired, he owns a share of an Oaksey Park based Chipmunk which he assured us is a delight to fly which perhaps explained his cheerful demeanour.

Many thanks, Bill, for a thoroughly enjoyable Strut evening.

The Wit & Wisdom of Aviation

Quote of the Month

The desire to fly is an idea handed down to us by our ancestors who, in their gruelling travels across trackless lands in prehistoric times, looked enviously on the birds soaring freely through space, at full speed, above all obstacles, on the infinite highway of the air. - Wilbur Wright



A Mercy Flight 1973 by Chris Harrison

I had a rather strange incident when as duty instructor I was preparing to close up for the night at the airfield and go home when I received a call from Meadows air freight on behalf of Fison's agrochemical industries who had a base in Leicester asking if we had a plane available. Asking for more information I was advised of a young boy in Australia who had drunk some lethal Paraquat thinking it was lemonade. Fisons thought they had made some antidote and could I get it to Heathrow where a Boeing 747 of Qantas was waiting to see if the package could be got to them. We had a single engine Cessna 172 four seater available so I told them if they could get the antidote to the airfield I personally would fly it down to Heathrow. I instructed one of the workers at the airfield who was also about to go home to fuel up the plane whilst I spoke on the 'phone to London air traffic control and advised them that this was a mercy flight and could they give me a direct routing to Heathrow when I became airborne, fortunately they said that they would oblige if I called them on the radio when airborne. Some ten minutes later a succession of blue flashing lights from two police cars appeared out of the darkness in a cloud of dust on the approach road to the control tower and screeched to a halt.

One of the policemen rushed in and handed a box to me. By now I had briefly looked at a chart and had figured out a track to steer to head in the right direction. I jumped into the plane and started up and taxied to the runway, fortunately we had runway lights at Leicester which I had turned on before leaving the building. The cloud base was

relatively high at around four thousand feet so I levelled off at two thousand and turned on track keeping my speed up as fast as practical and contacted London air traffic control centre. Fortunately it was a gin clear night below cloud and having been given a direct heading towards London Heathrow and told when forty miles north of them to call them on their approach frequency. At this point I called them and to my surprise was given a direct heading to a two mile final approach, this was something that I had not expected but I think it was all because this was designated as a mercy flight and time was of the essence. I was now about to mix it with big wide body airliners which was a totally new experience. When nearing final approach I was told to contact tower frequency for the final part, and was told by them to keep my speed up as fast as I could. I kept my speed to around one hundred and ten knots until just above the runway and then had to try to slow the Cessna down to a touchdown speed of around forty knots holding it floating just above the runway, for what seemed an age, yet another new experience. At last I was now able to land and slow to taxiing speed and exit the runway as a wide body airliner landed close behind me. I was instructed to contact ground frequency and given taxi instructions to a waiting 747. I didn't have a taxiway chart as I would never need one in a small aeroplane so I had to ask them which way to turn at the intersections I'm sure to the amusement of airliners on that frequency. Because of my relative small size and lots of taxiway lights which would have looked fine from a cockpit twenty feet above ground it was all very intimidating to me at five feet above ground level. Eventually I arrived in front of the Qantas 747 which had a set of steps up to the front entrance and as I stopped the engine a person ran down the steps towards me. He grabbed the package unceremoniously and ran back up the stairs into the aircraft, and then the door was closed and the stairs were moved away. I could hear the engines starting on the airliner and decided I should do the same and clear out of way. I was given instructions to taxi to the runway and wait at the holding point for several landing airliners before being given departure instructions, which were after take-off turn right on track for destination. Now I was almost forgotten by London Heathrow as I had completed my mission but set course at a normal relaxed speed back to base at Leicester.

A few days later I contacted Meadows airfreight to see how the boy had got on with the antidote but was given the very sad news that it hadn't worked and he had died. Had the antidote been available immediately in Australia there might have been a slim chance it might have worked, but hopefully it never had to be tried out again in the future to my knowledge. I subsequently had a very pleasant letter from Meadows Airfreight thanking me profusely for my help in being able to get the supposed antidote to the waiting 747 to get it there so promptly even though sadly it didn't work.

Dates for your diary

01/03/2026 St Davids Day Fly In

Swansea Airport fly in. PPR Required.

22/03/26 Sleap

Flour Bombing! PPR Required

18/04/2026 Piper Fly In

Vintage Piper Aircraft Club fly in to Sleap Airport. PPR Required

18-19/07/2026 Middlezoy Aerodrome

Vintage and Classic Fly In

PPR Phone 0790 182 6351

www.mzaero.co.uk



Notable Aviation Events from history

March 1, 1999: The Breitling Orbiter 3 balloon began the first non-stop, round-the-world flight, which was completed on March 19.

March 2 1969: Concorde First Flight The Anglo-French supersonic airliner took its maiden flight.

March 3, 1960: RAF Record Flight. A Vickers Valiant completed the longest non-stop flight by an RAF aircraft, covering 8,500 miles around the British Isles.

March 5, 1936: Spitfire First Flight. The prototype Spitfire made its first test flight from Eastleigh, Southampton.

March 6, 1965: The first non-stop transcontinental helicopter flight across the US was completed by a Navy Sikorsky SH-3A.

March 8, 1910: First British Pilot Certificate. Claude Moore-Brabazon received the Royal Aero Club's first aviator's certificate.

March 16, 1911: First British Certificate of Airworthiness Awarded for a Farman III type aeroplane at Farnborough.

March 11, 1959: First flight of the Sikorsky HSS-2 Sea King.

March 27, 1977: The Tenerife airport disaster occurred, where two Boeing 747s collided, resulting in the highest death toll in aviation history.

March 1973: The Brditschka MB-E1 performed the first manned flight by an electric-powered airplane.



March 1978: QANTAS retired its last Boeing 707, becoming the first airline with an all-Boeing 747 fleet.

Military Airfields

A rather fun [map of current and disused airfields](#) has come to my attention. Don't ask me where I got it from and I won't have to have you shot. It's a fun way to while away time until it stops raining!

A Tale of Two Oil Coolers by Mick Peakman

(with apologies to Charles Dickens)

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.

By my own admission, I am no mechanical engineer so it was an act of bravery in the extreme that I purchased a Europa aircraft that has a large element of self-maintenance. Speaking to others more experienced than myself the popular view was that I would soon start 'tinkering'. 'Not a chance' I replied, 'I'll just give it over to people who actually know what they are doing'. So why was it that two of my earliest purchases were a large red tool chest (the ones on wheels that you see in professional garages) and a set of overalls!

I'm still no expert but am happy to do an oil change and intermediary services (25 and 75 hour) which require nothing more than checking and greasing. Admittedly, the first time I did either was under the watchful eye of someone far more experienced than I but I learned some basic skills including wire locking, jacking up the plane, removing wheels, removing and inserting split pins. So what has any of this to do with oil coolers?

One summers day I was returning from a wonderful day out in the sunshine, approaching Gloucester and about to join downwind. I'd been give 'Number 1' and to report final. As I began my downwind checks, including slowing the plane – Europas are very slippery and getting the speed low enough for landing is a crucial skill, I noticed the oil pressure had dropped from its normal 65psi down to around 40psi. Initially I explained it away to myself that the drop in RPM had caused the oil pressure to drop, but as I increased the power again to prevent any further loss of airspeed, the oil pressure remained low. By now I was turning base with just a couple of minutes to landing. On final, the pressure dropped still further. Somewhat concerned I altered my approach path to maintain as much height as I could just in case. I was landing on 27 so plenty of time to lose height once over the fence.

I landed without issue and coasted along the runway. The oil pressure was now less than 20psi – very concerning.

Back at the apron I powered off, climbed out to be met by a considerable amount of oil dripped from the back of the cowling. Looking under the plane, it was coated with oil – I'd lost a lot!



I fetched a towel to prevent any further oil from dripping onto the tarmac and removed the cowling.

There was oil everywhere, but appeared to be leaking from the rear of the engine close to the firewall. Mopping up, there were no further leaks and I decided the best course of action was to leave the plane until the engine cooled rather than risk burns by inadvertently touching the exhaust or other hot surface whilst searching for the leak. The following day I returned to the plane and finished the mopping up process. Checking the oil level I discovered that I'd lost two of the three litres of oil! There was no obvious sign of leakage, the oil filter was tight, there were no obviously tears in any pipework. It was a mystery.

Replenishing the oil I wheeled the plane out of the hangar and fired it up for a few minutes. Engine off, inspect the engine. No oil leaks. Odd. Fired up again, left it running until the oil got up to temperature, engine off, still no leaks. Then I spotted a small smear of oil on the side of the oil cooler. I wiped it clean and continued to inspect the engine. Nothing. Returning to the cooler I again saw a small smear of oil. Perhaps it was dripping from above. I placed some towelling above the cooler to catch any drops and to my surprise, the smear returned. It was the oil cooler that was leaking.



I'd removed the oil cooler from its brackets previously as it is the only way to get to the sump plug so was comfortable removing the brackets again, but I'd never removed the pipework so went in search of advice. 'Standard AN6 fitting, suitable spanner (18mm)' was the response. Sure enough and it was off.

I took the cooler to Targett Aviation at Nympsfield who were incredibly helpful and we pressure tested it. Definitely a leak where I'd suspected. The weld had cracked.

Off to a welder in Cheltenham who performed the required magic and charged me £20 for the fix. Happy with that I was back at Targett. Another leak was discovered, this time on the vertical section of the weld. Back to the welder with instructions to 'weld the entire section'. Another £20 and back to Targett. This time, all was well and no leaks so back to the airport. Luckily it had been a fine day and I'd used my motorbike for the trip so I actually enjoyed the day as well.

Refitting took a few minutes. There was no need to pre-fill the oil cooler. I'd taken the precaution of asking Jabiru who told me it was standard practise to fit it dry. Engine checks proved all was well. A short flight 'around the patch' resulted in no issues, so longer trips became the norm and I quickly forgot about the problem.

Fast forward forty hours of flying. Parking up on the apron I noticed some oil dripping onto the floor. Cowling off, I immediately suspected the oil cooler and proved to be correct. The repaired welds had split. Figuring it was God telling me it was time for a new oil cooler I set about locating same. I quickly realised that there is no such thing as an off-the-shelf replacement oil cooler for a Europa. They are all the same, but all different and I figured that even if I found one that was 'close enough', I'd have some engineering work on my hands to make it fit. I found a company near Hereford that specialised in custom built oil coolers so went to see them, taking the offending cooler with me. Yes indeed, they could make an identical copy. They were a bit more expensive than off-the-shelf coolers but not much so the deal was struck.

A few weeks later, I collected the cooler and fitted it onto my engine. All checks done, I again elected to do a short check flight followed by slightly longer flights.

Fast forward five hours of flying! Out of the plane, oil leaking! Yes, it was the new cooler. Same side as the old one, not quite so bad, but bad enough. I took it back to the manufacturer who were rather embarrassed and promised a new one.

In the meantime, I set about determining why the oil coolers were proving so unreliable and asked around on various forums and of course, got many and various theories:



1. The rubber mountings had hardened and caused vibrations
2. The rubber mountings had softened and caused vibrations
3. The propellor needed to be re-aligned.
4. The pressure relief valve was faulty causing the oil to pulse at a pressure high enough to break the weld.
5. Contact with the cowling is causing vibration.
6. The new cooler was not built robust enough.
7. It was just unfortunate and age related.

To mitigate the first two of these potential issues, I've replaced the rubber mountings with new ones, taking the opportunity of changing them from male-male to male-female to make it easier to attach and remove the oil cooler and brackets – with the male-male mounting, the entire bracket had to be removed from the cooler before it could be

removed from the mount, with a female connection, removing the bolt allows the cooler to be dropped out with the brackets still in place. As it happens, the new mounts are much firmer than the old ones so theory '2' above is more likely than theory '1'.

I don't believe there is anything wrong with the propellor balance, I'm sure I would have felt that so I discounted theory '3'.



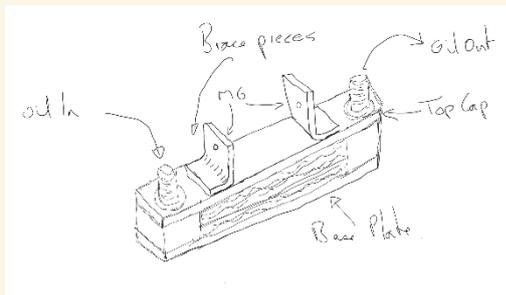
I'm told by someone who knows about this stuff that the oil filter interface is the 'new' type that does not have the same Pressure Relief Valve (PRV) issues as the older ones so I can discount theory '4'.

Whilst waiting for the 'new' cooler to be delivered, I took the old one to a friend of mine; Mark, who runs an engineering company and knows more about mechanical stuff that I will ever know. As it happens, he knows the guy who did the welding and thoroughly recommends him. We agreed that replacing the mounts was a good plan, and he also arranged to get the weld cleaned out and repaired again.

That done and tested, I also engaged the services of Pure Aviation at Staverton to take a look and maybe offer advice. Without a complete redesign of the positioning of the oil cooler, it was agreed that the mountings were most likely the cause, but that I should check the gap between the cooler and the cowling to see whether contact is possible.

Refitting the old cooler, I got it inspected and signed off by Pure Aviation, then reassembled the cowling. It seems there is a significant gap between the cooler and the cowling, so theory '5' is also discounted.

I have now logged a few hours with the old cooler - the January rain, which has been so bad, even Noah would have been worried, has prevented more hours. So far so good (he says, touching every piece of available wood!). I also have the new cooler back in a much more robust cage than previously.



The new cooler design



The new cooler reality

The plan is to run the old cooler until the next engine service, then take a view on whether to go straight to the new one or leave the old one in place for a while. The answer to that question is one I intend to take advice on. The manufacturers of the new cooler tell me

that when re-welding aluminium that has been subject to oil exposure, the oil 'gets into' the aluminium and any welding is not going to last indefinitely. Of course, any oil leaks will make the decision for me and I pray that they will be small.

Time will tell whether these modifications and fixes have worked.

Where is this?

No prizes, but who can tell me where this airport is - hint, the photo is very old!



Downloads from the CAA and others

Insight

January 2026 UKAB INSIGHT newsletter now available

January's edition of AIRPROX INSIGHT features an Airprox between two Cessna 152s at Leeds East airfield – one established in the circuit and one joining from a long final. The article discusses the limitations of operating at airfields served by an Air Ground Communication Service, and discusses considerations for, and the potential pitfalls of, integrating into an occupied circuit using techniques other than a standard overhead join, including possible additional information calls that could be included or requested.

Read the [January edition](#).

CAA Stuff

New GA occurrences report focuses on RT phraseology

A new [Occurrences case study](#) highlights how misinterpreting ‘hold short of the runway’ led to an unintended runway incursion and a go-around by another aircraft.

The report reinforces the importance of understanding and using correct RT phraseology, correct use of holding points, and staying alert to airfield layouts. More information on RT is

available in [Radiotelephony for General Aviation Pilots](#), part of our Safety Sense series.



Updated Standards Document 14 (A), V10

This document provides guidance for Pilots of Single Pilot Aeroplanes, Class, Type and Instrument Rating Skill Tests and Proficiency Checks (Excluding Single Pilot High Performance Complex Aeroplanes).

Read [Standards Document 14 V10](#)

Consultation on changes to the Pilot Medical Declaration privileges

We have launched a consultation on changes to the privileges of the flight instructor and class rating instructor when supported by a Pilot Medical Declaration (PMD).

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

Reminder: Safety Sense Leaflet on Winter Flying

Winter can bring different challenges for GA flying in the UK, including changes in weather systems, aircraft preparation, operations on contaminated surfaces and flight in icing conditions.

Our [Safety Sense Leaflet on Winter Flying](#) provides guidance on the common issues associated with flying light aircraft during the winter.

You can view this and other Safety Sense leaflets, on topics including – but not limited to – VFR flight into IMC and Piston Engine Icing, on [our website](#).

GA Occurrences - Overflight of an active winch launch glider site

The latest [Occurrences case study](#) involves the overflight of an active winch launch glider site by a fast-moving GA turboprop aircraft.

The report reinforces the importance of planning, communication, and effective threat and error management. It highlights the risks associated with over-reliance on VFR moving maps, noting that gliding sites are depicted differently on paper VFR charts and

that a site's maximum cable altitude may not be visible on a moving map without action to reveal more details.

More information on the risks of [flying over gliding sites](#) is available on the CAA website.

Updated Standards Document 19(H), V7

This document provides guidance for applicants taking the LAPL(H) and PPL(H) Skill Test for the grant of the Light Aircraft or Private Pilot Licence. The information will help applicants prepare for the test.

[Standards Document 19\(H\)](#)

LAA Stuff

New Course Dates

Advanced Electrics for Permit Aircraft - more info [here](#)

Saturday 18 April at Turweston from 9.00am to 5.00pm

Permit Aircraft Avionics - more info [here](#)

Sunday 19 April at Turweston from 9.00am to 5.00pm

AIRCRAFT CARPENTRY - more info [here](#)

Tuesday 5 May at Turweston from 9.00am to 5.00pm

AIR TO GROUND RADIO OPERATOR'S - only TWO places left! More info [here](#)

16 & 17 May 2026 at Popham

Please call Cheryl on 01280 846786 or [EMail Cheryl](#).

Potential courses

Dear Member

The LAA currently offers a range of popular training courses and we are keen to build on the success of these courses by expanding our course list even further.

We are inviting members to share ideas for new courses they would like to see offered, as well as suggestions for potential tutors who may be willing to deliver them.

If you have expertise you would be interested in sharing, know someone who would make an excellent tutor, or have identified a training gap that would benefit our membership, we would very much like to hear from you.

Please send your ideas or thoughts to [Cheryl Routledge](#). All suggestions are welcome.

Thank you for helping us continue to develop a training programme that reflects the needs, experience, and passion for aviation of our members.

Gloucestershire and other airports

Good afternoon,

The following is a brief general update:

1. As many of you will be aware Jason Ivey (MD) left the business on the 28/01/26. Consequently, I have been asked to cover his role and that of Accountable Manager on an interim basis, until the airport sale is complete.

2. Speeding vehicles The number of cars being observed speeding on the airport road adjacent to the Terminal has increased noticeably. This now includes some taking short cuts via the Car Park to avoid the speed humps.

I have written a number of AAN's over the last 2 years in regards this behaviour which is both reckless and dangerous. The airport will now be regularly monitoring these areas and it will be a case of a zero tolerance approach. For clarity this would mean a permanent vehicle ban for those involved.

Can I please ask the everyone ensures all staff are made fully aware of this please.

Many thanks

Brian Rawlings

Tail piece

On the right, Mikael Carlson's Thulin A (Bleriot XI) aircraft making an approach in the evening. Mikael Carlson owns and flies two original Thulin A / Blériot XI aircraft, both powered by authentic 1908 Gnôme Omega 50 hp rotary engines.



The next meeting

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

The speaker is Kev Noble who will be talking about flying Jaguars in the RAF and Tornado operations in Gulf War 1.

Kevin Noble: Studied for a Mechanical engineering degree at Bristol University, then went straight in the RAF in 1980. Flew Jaguars in Germany 1983-88. Then Tornado GR1a (recce variant) Germany 1989-90, East Anglia 90-95; MOD -97. BA 97-2020: 747, Avro RJ100, Airbus 320 and 787. After all of that, he is now a Flight Instructor and flies Stearman for fun!