

IBM Flying Club Newsletter December 1996

Start Up - Irv Lee

Well, we have an interesting selection of reports to end the year. If you ever felt the world seemed to be against you, you'll 'enjoy' this story of Jon and friends with G-ZERO stuck on the other side of the mountains in the far corner of Wales. Fortunately all concerned were probably only in danger of going insane rather than physical injury. It makes me pleased Steve Pick and I called off our trip over the mountains into the Czech Republic last month.

We also have some good 'briefing' advice on priming and over-priming, and the fires that can result from the latter.

I have also issued the 'Benefits' list again to members. If you haven't received it please let me know. Don't forget there is usually someone in or around our club who has advice on what-ever you may want to know more about.

A good weekend's flying- Dave "Spiderman" Ashford

The other guys in the syndicate take the Mickey out of me for flying so many hours in G-ZERO (I did 12 hours last month), but after a weekend like the one I have just spent, who could blame me. I have just had some of the most enjoyable flying I have ever done and none of it planned more than an hour or so ahead of time. What a pity some of the other aircraft at Southampton spent the whole weekend tied down and covered over - their owners really missed some great flying.

The Saturday

On Friday the weather reports for the weekend didn't look too promising, however being optimists the Zero Boys (Capts Fray, Goodman and Ashford) decided to try a three-legged trip to include Kemble and another destination to be decided on the day. Saturday dawned and the weather was better than expected, however we couldn't raise Kemble on the phone and nobody had the radio frequency, so we looked at the chart on the wall in Osprey and decided on Liverpool for lunch, returning via Shobdon.

Neale flew the out-bound to Liverpool (another of his famous 'straight-line' trips) and we had a good journey. 1hr 40mins en-route with good radar service from everyone until we called Manchester. Once we told them we were going to fly under their zone they told us QSY off, so we talked directly to Liverpool.

We joined the circuit on base leg over the river Mersey and were number 2 to an Airbus 310. After paying the £21 landing fee (ouch!) we found the cafeteria and ordered lunch - expensive beef burgers (£5.00+ for a quarter-pounder) with sachets of ketchup, vinegar etc at 5p each (well they would have been if Neale hadn't complained and we got them for free). The England soccer game was on the television so Paul joined a group of about 100 Liverpudlians in the bar area and watched the end of the match. As soon as it was over the loudspeakers announced boarding for their Alicante flight (the A310 we followed in) and they all staggered off to board it. We remarked that there were hardly any women boarding the plane - I wonder what goes on in Alicante in the Autumn? We sat and watched a couple of rain showers go through as we ate lunch, then headed off for Shobdon.

I lost the toss for the lucrative 'two-airfield' middle leg, so Paul flew that. The journey to Shobdon was uneventful and we had no trouble finding the airfield, despite the article in Pilot stating that a large proportion (25%, I think) of 'lost' calls to D&D on 121.5 were for aircraft in-bound to Shobdon or Welshpool. Joining the circuit might have been a little intimidating for a less experienced pilot

than Paul - on finals we overhauled a helicopter on finals to a parallel runway and I also recall a micro-fright near us at one point on short finals. There were other aircraft (rotary and fixed wing) buzzing around making it a very busy little airfield. It is in a beautiful part of the country and I would recommend it to anyone who likes a real flying-club atmosphere. I bumped into an ex-Soton instructor (James somebody, I forget his surname, but he worked at Solent Flight about 2 years ago) who now does some part-time instructing at Shobdon.

The return leg was mine and we headed south-west up the valley to abeam Talgarth gliding site, down the next valley to Abergavenny then overhead Nympsfield and Kemble to CPT then back to Southampton. We had thought that we might drop into Kemble if we could raise them on the radio, but it was dusk when we left Shobdon, so it was pitch black by the time we got to Kemble (we got the radio frequency from Brize Radar).

All in all we had a wonderful day's flying. Good scenery, good weather and two totally different airfields plus some good night flying and even an IFR re-join at Southampton, just to keep my hand in. Magic!

The Sunday

After the previous day's flying I had no right to expect another good day, however Sunday turned out to be even better than Saturday. Capt Butts and I met at Osprey at 10:30 and looking at the weather decided that north-west looked like the best direction. Jon had never been to Halfpenny Green so we set off at about 11:30 with a 1200' cloud base and plans for an early return if things didn't improve. We flew at 1000' to roughly east-abeam Middle Wallop then climbed up through a hole into the clear blue on top. As we headed northwards the cloud went from BKN to SCT to FEW and the scenery revealed below was magnificent.

Approaching the Vale of Evesham we could see fog and mist rising from the river Severn and Volmet gave fog and low cloud at Birmingham. A quick call to Halfpenny Green gave 'unofficial' weather of 4500m visibility with cloud FEW at 800 feet. I planned a diversion from Halfpenny Green to Welshpool, just in case, but we decided to press on - we had plenty of fuel and the mist and fog in the valleys below looked wonderful. Just south-west of the town of Evesham is a large hill whose top was just poking through the fog. Jon and I discussed what we would do if the fan stopped at this point and decided that field choice was simple - the top of that hill was the only place we could see!

By the time we got to Halfpenny Green either the weather had improved dramatically or their 'unofficial' weather reporter needs to get an eye-test - the weather was not far off perfect - a few fluffy Cu with just a light haze close to the ground. We landed and taxied to the base of the tower - the runway is pretty bumpy, although not too rough to consider a return visit and the grass taxiway required some very careful manoeuvring due to the ridges and gullies, but we managed to park-up without incident.

Lunch in the clubhouse was good (I had an excellent spicy Cumberland sausage casserole) and this is another place that goes in my book of good lunch stops (along with Turweston and Leicester). We had planned to fly back to Soton via Wellesbourne Mountford, however we had heard several aircraft on frequency departing to Caernarfon and as neither Jon nor I had been there we thought it sounded like a good place to go, so I did a quick bit of re-planning and we were soon airborne heading towards Snowdon.

This leg of the trip has to be one of the prettiest trips I have ever done - Snowdon looked most impressive as we approached it at FL55, the light dusting of snow on the top giving an indication of its height. I hope the pictures Jon took came out. That's twice I have been near Snowdon and twice I have been lucky enough to see it, although this time there was a little cloud on the western face, so

we didn't orbit it like I did last time with Neale.

A call to Caernarfon required me to do an overhead join "not above 1300 feet with a right-hand circuit for rwy 26". I asked for confirmation that 1300' was an UPPER limit and he confirmed it, reminding me that the circuit was at 800' and repeating the QFE (which is also the QNH). As I always do, I looked at the DI and worked out where I needed to be to join overhead, position for the dead-side descent and cross the runway to join downwind, however even though I talked myself through it, I STILL got it wrong and ended up flying through the dead-side at 1300' and joining cross-wind at that height. I can see why my instructor drummed home the message "keep your head swivelling when descending dead-side" - it was to look for idiots like me who can't tell their left from their right - I must write a big L and R on the back of my hands next time. Fortunately the radio operator saw me and told me that I had actually just turned downwind and was not descending dead-side as I had reported and he requested that I expedite my descent to circuit height ASAP. On landing Jon noticed that the Altimeter indicated 300', so the QFE he had passed me was wrong (in my favour, as it turned out), but all-in-all it has to have been one of the worst circuits I have ever flown. Incidentally it must have been the clearest air I've ever flown in - we could see Ireland 70 miles away.

Jon flew the departure from Caernarfon from the right-hand seat and we found we could see right down to the South West tip of Wales. He took us as far as the river Severn, where I took over and flew us overhead Lyneham and back to Soton, via Bullington Cross. My leg of the flight was in darkness and Bullington cross makes a great VRP at night, although nothing compared to the M4 snaking out of Bristol and heading Eastwards via Swindon to Reading and London. The traffic on it was nose to tail in both directions and it was just like two ribbons of red and white laid on the blackness below. If ever a motorway could be said to be beautiful, this one was.

Southampton kindly changed runways for us and gave me vectors to the ILS and asked me to keep my speed up on the ILS, so we screamed down the glideslope at about 160 knots until 2 miles out and then slowed up to execute a very satisfying 'greaser' landing and end a wonderful weekend. I'm glad every weekend is not as good as the one I have just spent - I couldn't afford it!

Old Sarum 24th November - Dave Ashford

The turn-out at Old Sarum this Sunday was one of the best we have had this year, however only two aircraft actually flew in: Roger and Verity West in an Archer from Goodwood and John Southerst & Phil Russell in G-BRTD from Popham. The rest of us - Richard Valler, Graham & Jill Horne, Dave Sawdon, Ranjit Bhagra (sp?), Norman Luland and I - arrived by car, although I did use my Pooley's to make sure I found the correct road out of Salisbury (flying is so much easier). I understand that Neale Fray and Paul Goodman arrived later on, also by car. (ed: I was having a cup of coffee with Bob and Gil at Osprey, flicking through 'AIC's - we wouldn't have got out of the circuit had we tried)

Those who arrived before 10:30 found the weather dull but flyable, however by the time Dave Sawdon and I were ready to walk out to the Bulldog (to do some aerobatics), it had started to rain. We decided to sit in the aircraft anyway so that I could at least familiarise myself with the controls. Whilst Dave and I were talking we heard a plane start up nearby. I saw a flicker in the corner of my eye and turned to see flames coming from his engine. Dave and I yelled 'FIRE!' at him, but the pilot couldn't hear us so we leapt out of the Bulldog (well Dave Sawdon leaped, I climbed) and whilst Dave ran to the 'plane, I ran to a nearby aircraft and retrieved its fire extinguisher. By the time I got back the occupants were out of the cockpit and Dave had extinguished the fire. The incident was over even before the fire truck arrived and I would estimate that the whole thing had taken less than two minutes.

The fire had occurred due to over-priming a hot engine, something easily done and, on this occasion, quickly dealt with. It was not only a good reminder that we all need to constantly review our safety

procedures but also it highlights the dependance we sometimes have on others to help us out when things go wrong. As is often the case, the most surprised person was the pilot when Dave opened the cabin door - he was totally unaware of the fire as he hadn't heard our shouts and couldn't see the fire from where he was sitting. I was impressed by the speed with which Dave acted and gratified to see that an extinguisher properly used is very effective against an engine fire if caught early. I was also impressed by the speed at which the fire truck arrived.

Aside from this excitement, the rest of the day's flying was a disappointing wash-out, however we did have a good lunch and a long natter about flying, so it wasn't a wasted day. Perhaps next year the weather will be better, I will get my flight in the Bulldog and Paul Goodman will get out of bed early enough to get there for lunch :-).

Priming Engines and Fire Risks - Dave Sawdon

Fly-in/subsidy day - Dave Sawdon

Unfortunately the weather stopped our plans for last Sunday from working out, watch this space for announcement of the next attempt. In the meanwhile give Brian, Irv or I a call if you want to arrange a safety refresher trip so that you can claim your subsidy.

Look Back in Hangar '96

Bob has supplied me with the attendees for our events back over 1996, the table reads 'where, who-organised, which-planes-attended'

FRANCE	GC	G-AZWD		G-BHXX		G-ZERO	
LULSGATE	IL		G-BLMN	G-BEUK	G-BHXX	G-AVSF	G-ZERO
LASHAM	NF	G-AZWD		G-BEUK	G-BRTD	G-AVSF	G-BEMB
OLD WARDEN	EM					G-PORK	G-ZERO
SCHAFFEN-D							G-ZERO
NEWARK	PE	G-BNHT	G-ARLG	G-BEUK	G-BHXX		G-ZERO
MID WALLOP	NL	G-JTYE	G-ARLG		G-BRTD	G-PORK	
NEWBURY	RE			G-BEUK		G-PORK	G-ZERO
BRUNT 'ORPE	NF			G-BEUK	G-BHXX	G-PORK	G-ZERO
COSFORD	JB		G-BLMN	G-BEUK			G-ZERO
N COATES	IL		G-BLMN				G-ZERO
MID WALLOP	NL	G-JTYE	G-BLMN	G-BEUK	G-BRTD	G-MYSO	G-ZERO G-BPVH
BROOKLANDS	RE	G-BOFY	G-ARLG	G-BEUK	G-BHXX		G-ZERO G-BEMB
COVENTRY	PG				G-BRTD		
ASHCROFT			G-ARLG				G-ZERO

Robinson 22 BM 6 members

Club Talks:

W Drayton	DA	8 members
Iceland	RE	6 members
BarBQ	DH	Huge Numbers
Captain Vic	RE	25 members

Don't forget POPHAM on 1st January!

Diabetes - Dave Ashford

FAA STICKS ONE TO DIABETES, OKAYS WAIVERS FOR INSULIN USERS

Once in a while the old FAA finds that medical technology has changed somewhat since the original

Civil Air Regulations were written, so just like doctors abandoned the use of leeches, the FAA has adapted to modern times with waiver mechanisms for diabetics using insulin to control their blood sugar level. The waivers will be limited to flying privileges available with a Third Class Medical Certificate: student, recreational and private pilots. No go for ops requiring a Second or First Class Medical, so still no commercial pilot jobs for diabetics. (ed: presumably this means diabetics ruled out by the CAA could legally fly here by getting a full FAA PPL (ie: actually pass the tests rather than claim one on the back of a CAA PPL) and an FAA Medical and then fly G-reg aircraft over here providing they did a BFR check every two years??)

NOTE: Details of the new selective certification of insulin- dependent diabetic pilots policy is available in this week's AVweb Newswire.

R.Ae.Soc Talk Jan 23rd - Danny Elliott

Danny tells me that there is a talk on 'Flight Simulation Through the Ages' on January 23rd at the University Air Squadron in Southampton (1 Bugle St). It is a meeting for the R.Ae.Soc Southampton Branch, but all are welcome. Confirmation of start time in next newsletter.

CAP - Mike Allen

(ed: I asked one of our US contacts, ex-pat Mike Allen about what he gets up to with the equivalent of our Air Training Corps (ATC). Here's his version of the organisation)

CAP = Civil Air Patrol; identical to ATC for cadets. (ed: I couldn't agree with the 'identical' after reading the rest of this!). I belonged to ATC Sqn in Surrey a VERY long time ago- got Glider B license at Hawkinge. CAP is divided into 50 Wings at one per State. Maryland State sponsors 12 cadets to solo each year, 2 to PPL standard. Also cadet drill, band, other activities just like ATC (no rifle-shooting, I used to enjoy travelling to Bisley every other month to make loud bangs and sew the crossed rifles on my sleeve).

Maryland Wing also sponsors an annual Cadet Nav. competition; two instructors teach Nav. ground school to about 24 cadets on Saturday; on Sunday 12 teams of 2 plot a triangular course, and 6 pilots turn up in CAP C172s and fly 2 teams each on the headings/distances plotted. My instructions when flying my cadets yesterday were, "Go where they want for as long as they want, and note LORAN co-ordinates every 5 minutes. If you haven't got near planned turning-point after 30 minutes, scrub that leg and start next leg. If all else fails, stop at the Atlantic or the Mississippi, whichever comes first."

If you read the US avmags, you're also aware that CAP adults ("Seniors") do more than chaperone cadets. USAF tasks and funds us to search for all missing A/c, ELTs in Continental USA; co-ordinated from USAF RCC at Langley, Virginia. (USAF searches actively only for missing military A/c, they call us for all others). DEA tasks "security-cleared" pilots to search for drug-patches in the boondocks. Maryland State funds us to search Chesapeake Bay Summer Saturday/Sunday evenings looking for boats in distress; some units are funded by local authority to search forests on weekend evenings looking for fires. Not much weed-flying in Maryland, but I talked to a guy from CAP Hawaii (don't I wish) who flew 4-5 hours every Sat/Sun for two years FOC, looking for (and finding) weed in Hawaiian mountains.

I'm qualified to fly all above (security-cleared despite being UK National!), & I'm Safety Officer of Maryland Wing as of mid-October. Lots about CAP on the WWW.

Probably more than you wanted to know. But I have fond memories of the instructors I had as an ATC cadet, its' nice to give some of that back nowadays.

Paris Soiree - Irv Lee

Hearing the Czech trip was off, Dave Ashford stepped in quickly with the offer of a cost share down to somewhere in France, and he and I settled on the VFR route around North and East Paris on the Thursday across Le Bourget to Lognes, the Euro Disney airfield, and then, who knows where? We cleared customs in Le Havre and had good clear weather above the 2000' inversion, but below that it was fairly polluted. Unfortunately the VFR route around Paris is not above 1500 feet, so we didn't get the Paris panorama we'd hoped for, but it was still pretty interesting - if you do this route, it is much easier with two pilots - one to fly and one to spot the turning points which have to be hit on the nail.

Lognes were friendly, and I'd arranged an airfield pick up, and coffee and cakes with my Goddaughter Charlotte's family nearby. Dave had now decided Lognes was the final destination (I had no problems with this!) even before Charlotte's mum rolled up to greet us, and an evening in Paris was in order. We were taken home for coffee and cakes, and with recent family photos reviewed, it was time we met Charlotte from her school and caught up on all her news - I haven't seen her for 2 years so there was a fair bit to catch up on. Too soon it was time to be dropped off at the nearby R.E.R. for a quick transfer in to Central Paris.

I took the risk of recommending a restaurant I knew, and we found a hotel nearby before settling down. Dave recommended I should find another hotel about a mile away as he is an admitted heavy snorer, but I took the risk and shared a room. Knowing the problem exists and it was only for one night made me very brave, but I also thought that hitting the beer bars until late would help me sleep through. The meal was brilliant thank heavens - I HATE recommending restaurants that I know "were good last time", but it doesn't usually stop me! Plenty of beer in various bars around the Latin Quarter, and then off to 'face the music' overnight. I survived - just.

We got the R.E.R. back to Lognes at lunchtime and using their hands-on Met service we soon worked out we could afford a leisurely lunch at the nearby steakhouse whilst a weak front went through. Lognes weren't interested in charging an overnight fee, and made the usual promise that they might put a (cheap) landing fee bill in the post, but I've heard that before from them and it didn't happen last time. Lunch and the weak front arrived together, it all went to plan, and the afternoon saw us taking the same VFR route in reverse in good weather with a somewhat better view of Paris, this time heading for Deauville and then home. If we'd had definite plans for the couple of days we could have had Customs both ways at Lognes but we are never that organised. For next year, anyone want to organise a Euro Disney trip?

New syndicate opportunity - Dave Sawdon

1 or 2 more people needed for a new syndicate around a CAP10B, Zlin or similar? It would be on a Public CofA, based at Old Sarum and would be hired out to partially earn its keep when not needed by syndicate members. Overall operations would be generally similar to the way Brian operates the Fuji.

TRAINS, PLANES, AND AUTOMOBILES 2 - Jon Butts

(Chris Thompson, Gil Collins, cop this - it's a big one!) (ed: now, don't start a competition!) Ok, so my three non-pilot passengers had been a little disconcerted seeing the aircraft in bits in the hanger, but it was soon re-assembled after its scheduled check, and now we were en-route to Caernarfon (North West Wales) for a most unforgettable experience. North-west bound, the low winter sun behind us lit the landscape for thirty plus miles all around, bringing every feature into sharp relief through gin-clear polar air. What a magical introduction to light aircraft flying - really special VFR!

Jim, Helen, and Helen (yep, that's two, not a typo) used the spare chart to identify features for

themselves - 'That must be Salisbury over there, that's Southampton..., the Isle of Wight...'. Approaching Longleat, still listening to the geography lesson on the intercom, I began to interpret the landscape on my side. 'So, those are the Mendip hills, that water is the River Severn, so those hills beyond are, and well, that's Wales already folks!'. By the time we got to Bath we were in sight-seeing overload - The Crescent, The Circus and The Pulteney Bridge, everything.

Onwards north of the two Severn Bridges to Hereford, admiring the snow covered Brecon beacons to the South, time now to assess the scattered shower clouds marking the high ground ahead. After several aborted and diverted trips bound for Caernarfon in the past, I got lucky (well sort of) this time - the clouds were high with big gaps between them; we carried on. By mid-wales we really were flying over a Christmas card scene, lightly dusted with snow. I couldn't help myself: 'I hope you're all enjoying this, isn't it great!'. I enthused, 'What you have here is the best of private flying.' (Why did I have to go and say that?). A quick excursion up the Menai strait for more bridges and castles completed the sight-seeing before landing at Caernarfon. Yeehah, was that fun or what!

A slap up lunch in the restaurant (excellent, don't let the white linen on the tables put you off!), a walk on the nearby sandy beach in the bracing sea air, and it was time to head back home before it got dark. Jim and the Helens had a coffee while I taxied the plane to the pumps. Mark, the fueler put 120 litres in for me, and I taxied back to stand 8. Everybody clambered in. It had been a long day already. We were all a bit on the tired side, and ready for the 1hr10 trip home (tailwind this time!). For the third time in fifteen minutes I called 'clear prop!' and pressed the starter. 'Hmm', I thought, 'that noise must be the starter, but why isn't the prop moving!?!'. I only just stopped myself from saying out loud 'Well its never done that before!', which isn't the right sort of thing to be saying to passengers of course. Still, they were thinking exactly what I was, 'Oh heck, we're NOT going to get stuck here are we!'.

Plan A. Mags off, electric's off, brakes on, swing the prop twice, who knows it might free something. Back in the plane, try again, no joy. 'Don't worry folks, I'll just call the engineer out to take a quick look at this for us...'

Plan B: The engineer appeared in the fire landrover, orange light flashing. It was the same chap I'd just been chatting to, Mark. 'No problems, starters most likely just a little worn and grubby, I'll clean it up and you should be away'. Cowlings off, cleaning 'stuff' squirted about, 'try turning it over now, no mags on'. Ahem, no joy now either. 'Has the starter been playing up recently?'. 'Nope, I even just used it twice, if you remember?'. 'Oh, in that case, sounds like a parts gone.'

Plan C: 'You happy to hand swing it?'. 'No', said I, 'I've not done that before. But I've read about how to do it... ..and the accident reports'. 'Yeah, well I'm sorry, but I won't hand-swing either, I'm afraid'. 'Don't worry, I'm not asking you to! Even if it starts now I'm not going over the mountains in the dark!'

Ok, so this is it; turn round to passengers, calmly say the words they've been hoping not to hear. 'I am really sorry folks, this has never happened to me before, but... ..we're not going to be able to fly home today. We'll sort out a stay at a B+B tonight and head home tomorrow'. Luckily for me Jim and the Helens had already braced themselves and took the news in a very understanding spirit. Mark and I pushed plane into to the hanger for Plan D: replace the starter/bendix overnight or first thing, and fly out in the morning. Mark looked up the part numbers. No joy, the parts required were not in stock, available Monday lunchtime soonest. 'Oh well, not to worry, we'll leave the plane, and arrange a ground option to take us home', I said (not realising what I was saying).

In the meantime Jim and the Helens had enlisted the help of the Flying Club staff and we were booked onto the Harp Hotel, Llandwrog, about four miles from the airfield. The Air Atlantique staff kindly offered us lifts, but just before left I got called back to engineering. I left the hanger with some more bad news to break, this time to my syndicate partners, and it was the expensive kind. As

they say, it never rains but it pours!

At the hotel/pub we settled down to a round of beers. We decided that we would be able to relax and make the best of this adventure once we knew how and when we would get home, especially Helen M who needed to get into back for a few hours Sunday working, and a ballet in Chichester!

Plan E: Get a hire car delivered here, as soon as possible, and we'll drive back. Yep, great, none of us fancied a British Rail epic, so we got the a stack of numbers for Avis, Hertz and EuropCar. All the branches were shut till 0830 Monday morning. The national Central Reservations numbers ran loop tapes saying the same, except Hertz which gave the Heathrow number. In desperation we tried it, all the chap could do was tell us prices of car hire, he couldn't book a car for us because Central Reservations were shut until 0830 Monday. Useless! The local car hire companies wanted their cars bought back of course. You may not believe it, but you cant get a hire car on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning without having pre-booked or going to an open depot like Heathrow.

Plan F: Trains. Three British Rail numbers later we found out that we would need to catch a bus from Caernarfon station, to Bangor for an 11:39 train to Liverpool. Then down to London, change again for Portsmouth/Southampton. Arriving at 2230, subject to Sunday service and engineering works. Tickets £55 each. That did not sound at all pleasant, writing off the whole day, subject to the mercy of the wrong kind of leaves etc.

Plan G: Buses\Coaches? The locals in the pub just laughed! 'Forget that one, you're in the sticks now boyo!'. We were the entertainment for the evening! It seemed to amuse (and shock) the locals to think there wasn't much of a way out of here without a car.

Plan H: 'My buddy Ken will drive you anywhere in his car I reckon' said one of the guys at the bar. 'Let's have his number then, I'll call him' I replied. I rang the number, only to hear. 'The mobile phone you are calling is switched off'. We tried a couple of local (one man) taxi numbers and got the same message, sometime varied by 'This is the British Telecom Answering service...!'

At this point we were not seeing our way to being able to relax at all that evening, it had to be said - things were not at all promising; it was a long walk home! Time to try to pull an ace from my sleeve. Plan I: 'Don't panic, there is another possibility I've been saving. Our Chief Flying Instructor, Brian Mellor, has rescued people in the past, I'll try and contact him.'. Brian was at home, just going out for a meal.

Unfortunately Brian was booked to fly NFTs etc the next day, and the twin I was thinking of was booked too, so Brian and I looked for alternatives. Plan J: 'Why not get one or two of the Zero Boys to fly up in a couple of planes to get you?' suggested Brian. I wasn't happy to get more people involved, and possibly stuck. The weather forecast wasn't brilliant for the morning, and the compulsion to press on in less than ideal conditions would be that much greater for anyone trying to rescue us. I just didn't want to ask PPL\IMC's (no disrespect guys!) to come over the mountains for us in case anything happened.

I wanted someone with an IR. 'How about Graham Sayles? Is that Saratoga G-BPVN available?' I wondered out loud. Brian liked that idea. 'Yeah, that might work out. Leave it with me. I'll try and contact the owner and Graham to see if it's can be done, I'll call you back'.

We worked on other schemes. Plan K: 'I'm in the AA, with personal recovery, do you think they would help us?'. Hmm, we were getting short of ideas! Then Brian rang back about half an hour later to say 'Yes, the Saratoga is free, Graham can come for you, but it must be first thing.- he must be back at Southampton by 12:00'. Well, that suited us down to the ground! That was it, we had a plan, Plan L! The locals were impressed - it was easier to organise a plane and a pilot than any other mode of transport!

The landlady managed to get us 'Ivan's Taxi' to take us to the SPAR shop five miles away to buy toothbrushes, razors and the like. We came back to the pub and sat down to our (late) evening meal, having booked Ivan to be back at 08:45 to take us to Caernarfon Airport in the morning. 'Well, I said earlier that you were seeing the best of flying, but...', Helen finished my sentence for me: 'now we're seeing the worst of it.'. Still we had our second great meal of the day, before retiring for the night happy in the knowledge that there was a way home in the morning. Jim didn't have an alarm clock so asked me to knock on his door at 07:45 so he could be ready for the 08:00 breakfast. 'No problem' I said. (I really must stop saying that!).

I didn't sleep particularly well, and got up at 06:45. First job, (brace yourself!) is to look out of the window at the weather. If it is bad, we are back at square one, with no idea what to do next.

Even in the darkness I could see the top of Snowdon four miles away, and the lights on the 2000 AGL TV mast. What a relief! 'Graham will get in on that!' I thought. I had a leisurely shave and then looked out the window again. But now I couldn't see anything of Snowdon, or the TV mast! It was raining, and the wind was getting up. 'Oh no!', I said, and not for the first time that weekend, 'I DON'T believe it!'. Victor Meldrew eat your heart out... This was looking awful. I could expect Graham to arrive overhead and be forced to divert back without us. With his nine year old son on board, no ATC, significant crosswind, 940 metres, low clag and rain, mountains very close by... ..even with an IR I really did not want Graham to stick his neck out, at least we were safe on the ground.

I knew the others would be waking soon. What on earth was I going to say to them? How would they react? I didn't know, but it was 07:45 and time to wake Jim. Maybe I could talk it through with him before I break the news to the ladies. My room was on the opposite side of the pub to Jim's, so I had to go down the stairs my side, through the bar, to the stairs on the other side. It was still dark and I was the only one awake. My mind fully occupied searching for another plan, I walked into the bar area.

I don't know what I upset, a laser beam or an infra-red sensor, but either way now the Intruder Alarms, inside and outside the building, were blaring away. 'Oh No! (ish)'. I stopped dead in my tracks, and thought 'Well that's Jim woken up, so no need to knock on his door now.'. I just slowly turned around, and went back up the stairs to explain to the rudely awoken landlord and lady that 'It was only me, I was trying to wake up Jim, very sorry!'. They were ok about it and switched the alarms off. I wondered what the rest of the rest of the village were thinking.... .

I now had ten minutes before breakfast and the moment of agony. I went outside and the weather was even worse. 'No chance of a let up then!!!' I thought angrily to myself. Well, it was obvious that Graham would be wasting his time, so I called Osprey at Southampton to try and get a message passed along to him. Graham was still there, just, waiting for a very late refueller. Graham was surprised to hear the weather was so bad, the forecast he had for Liverpool was pretty good. I told Graham what I could see from the phonebox, and he began to appreciate what I was saying. Graham's response was 'So you want to cancel? It's now eight o'clock, I have to get up and back by 12:00, if I don't leave right now, that's about it I'm afraid.'

'Liverpool' I said, 'You could get in there. Tell you what, if you get yourself there for a 10:00 departure I will try to get my lot there too. I think that's the only option. If we don't get there in time by all means leave without us.' Graham agreed, so I slammed the phone down thinking 'How do I get everyone to Liverpool, and how long does it take?'. By now my breakfast was on the table, but I had to try for a taxi to take us to Liverpool. Once again I only got the 'Mobile switched off' and 'BT answering service' messages. They had all been out working till the early hours of Saturday morning of course.

Back into the pub, sit down, eat while you can, who knows what is going to happen today. Jim and

Helen F came down, very concerned about the weather. I told them Caernarfon was off, that I wanted to get us all to Liverpool airport as soon as possible, but with no luck so far with cars. The landlord overheard and said 'Liverpool is an hour and a half, to two hours, drive you know, you should have left by now.'. I said 'Whatever it is we have to just get cracking, if there was a car at the door now, we'd all be in it.'. The landlord got the message and stepped into action. 'Right, what time was Ivan coming for you?' he said. '08:45 to take us to Caernarfon' I replied, 'If he could come now and take us to Liverpool instead that would be great.'. The landlord shot off to call Ivan. No joy, so he ran round to Ivans house. I was grateful to have someone else helping out. We ate breakfast, contemplating our increasingly desperate situation.

All I could think to say was 'Look, at SOME point our luck HAS to change! It just CANT go on like this'. Yep, I was scraping the bottom of my barrel of 'positive attitude' now. Plan M: 'Right , we just steal a car, that's the next practical option.'. 'Anyone know how to hotwire a car?' None of us did, so that was that plan out of the window. We were only half-kidding by the point. Plan N: 'Hijack a car, we're too tired to want to drive anyway!'. Obviously it was silly ideas time. Plan O: 'There is a Search and Rescue Squadron at Valley, wonder if they'd send a chopper for us?' 'Hmm', I thought, 'Might do, if we walk into the sea first, but the way our luck is running I wouldn't bet on it'.

The landlord returned, huffing and puffing away. 'I can't find Ivan' said the landlord, 'he is not at home'. I had already thought Ivan might not show for a couple of quid fare first thing on a Sunday morning having worked the night before. Now we really did have nothing sorted out, all I could do was pray that Ivan would show up at 08:45 and I could persuade him to go to Liverpool. The phone rang. It was Dave Ashford, one of my syndicate pals. 'Hi Jon, how's it going?'. I told it like it was but there was nothing Dave could do. The night before I had been through the options of getting someone to do the six(ish) hour drive up for us, and then back again. I didn't want Debbie (my wife) to do it, or think I could ask anyone else to. It would ruin someone else's weekend, and the driving conditions were deteriorating in the midlands due to snow to top it off.

'Ivan is here!' someone shouted. 'Got to go Dave, I might be in with a chance after all!'. Over to Ivan at the door, 'Change of Plan - can you take us to Liverpool, now?'. Ivan didn't give himself much time to think, just said yes. Before he could change his mind I got everyone in the taxi and said bye, sorry, and thanks to our (by now shattered) hosts. It was now 0855, come on lets drive! No, Ivan had to get on the mobile phone first. A long conversation in Welsh later, Ivan put the phone down and said 'I can't take you to Liverpool, I have some pre-booked fares this morning.'. 'Good grief, please, you cant say that' I thought. Perhaps Ivan read my expression instead. 'My mate John will take you to Liverpool. I will drive you to his house in Caernarfon'. We got to 'John's Cabs' house at 09:10. John was on the doorstep, tea in one hand, fag in the other, wavering about with his eyes shut. He'd just got up again having gone to bed at 04:00.

With curtains twitching all around, we leapt into John's car and headed off for the main road to Chester. 'How long do you think it will take us to get to Liverpool?' I asked casually. John looked at me. I thought maybe he was too tired even to speak, but his facial expression said, 'I don't know. Why do you want to know that?'. 'Well, we really want to be there for a 10:00 flight you see'. Now John's expression now read: 'What!? No chance! You want me to stop now? And who the hell are you people anyway , am I having a nightmare?!'.

'It's ok', I said, 'It's a private flight, it might wait for us, and if not we'll get a hire car at airport if we can instead.'. John reckoned we'd get there at 10:45 if the traffic didn't give us any trouble, and let me use his mobile phone to leave our estimate and phone number for Graham at the airport information desk. Whatever else happened now, we were putting miles behind us, going the right way with two viable plans. The roads were quiet of course and we made good progress. The mobile phone rang and it was Graham. He was at Liverpool, and would wait until 10:45 latest for us. Great! At last things were working out!

I used my chart to see where we were, just passing Bryngwyn Bach gliding site, on a long straight bit of dual carriageway about fifteen miles north west of Chester. You'd have thought I could relax a bit now, but then it happened. The car began to judder badly, the engine misfiring. I sat there in stunned silence. I knew my companions were also wilting at the thought of waiting on the hard shoulder in the rain, figuring out yet another rescue plan! 'Oh, it does this sometimes' said John, 'Its a spark plug jumping, If it quits, I'll restart it, usually works'.

We limped along for a couple of miles, and thankfully it evened out. Of course we didn't know if or when it would happen again, so now both our viable plans were in jeopardy! The ladies slept in the back, or maybe they were just trying to pretend this wasn't really happening to them.

A couple more judders later, we arrived at Liverpool airport at 10:35. Graham and his son Daniel were there as advertised! A quick trip to the shop for a chocolate bar and drink, the loos and we were to meet up at flight briefing. Daniel was outside the office marking the meet point. I got chatting to Daniel. 'Yep, he's my Dad. (pause) and he is COOL!' said Daniel. I had to agree! (Sounds like Daniel knows the score Graham, and is very proud of you!). Graham came for us and we trooped out to the Saratoga. Now, it was cold raining and windy, but once we got aboard everyone felt much better. What a fantastic aeroplane. Now this is the business, and we are going home! The passengers didn't mind at all that it would be in cloud all the way.

Graham made the best crosswind take-off I've ever seen. It was tricky and we were heavy, I was glad this wasn't the 940 metres at Caernarfon! I sat right seat while Graham did all the work, this wasn't the time to get familiar with the PA32! ILS into Southampton (a really sweet landing too!) at 12:30, followed by a round of applause for Graham being so kind to come and get us on his Sunday morning.

We let the passengers out right next to the door at Osprey, the staff came out with umbrellas for us, and I was relieved to be able to say 'You are free to go, sorry once again, I hope you'll be able to do some of the things you wanted to today after all!'. Rather than lynch me, Jim and the Helens said their good-byes and left in the car they had left in the car-park all those aeons ago on Saturday morning.

I helped Graham secure the Saratoga (If I win the lottery... ! Is it possible to really fall in love with an aeroplane?). Next problem was how to get Daniel to his friend's party at LaserQuest at 13:00. A few hints from the Osprettes later, we trooped out and I thanked Graham one more time in the carpark. I got into Debbie's old Fiesta, which we have kept because it is so reliable, and it always starts first time. I turned the starter, and it didn't. Normally I would have said 'I don't believe it', but I COULD, I had got used to the idea that this just wasn't my weekend. Fortunately it did start second time, so I was able to drive home, thinking about how to break the bad news to the syndicate partners, and what we would do to rescue G-ZERO herself. And that, as they say, is another story...

At the end of an epic tale like this (all true and not exaggerated!) there are a number of people to thank: Mike Sparshatt-Worley for the use of his lovely Saratoga G-BPVN, Graham Sayles for flying for us, Daniel for being so patient worrying about the party!, Brian Mellor for being 'Contacts 'R Us', Jim and the Helens for not giving me a rough time; all the people we met and who helped us at Caernarfon Airport and the Harp Hotel, Ivan and Johns taxi's; my syndicate partners for being generous enough to offer to chip in towards my 'unexpected costs'; and last but not least, Debbie for believing all this, and putting up with me and my flying!

Finals - Irv Lee

I managed my usual 'Beaujolais Navex to Calais' on Beaujolais Nouveau day. It's amazing how often that day (first Thursday after mid November) is CAVOK. I usually find two willing NAVEX students or PPLs wanting a cross channel checkout, a lunch, and a story for the bar. Calais is

excellent for a Navex - it is 95% over land. Loaded with shopping almost to the edge of our envelope, (very little of it Beaujolais Nouveau actually) we dropped into Shoreham on the way back - I don't think I have seen a busier airfield except during an organised fly-in, and this was just a sunny Thursday. One guy had been held for 45 minutes for taxi and take off, and as we arrived had to give up and taxi back as he could not get home before dark. (Amazingly he wasn't too displeased about having to find a hotel for the night, but his younger blond female passenger didn't look too happy to me! - wonder if her name was Helen....)

Some more 'leaving' news - Brian Mellor will be turning his attention full time to aviation from the New Year. Of course he will still be contactable via e-mail, phone, pager or letter, but he's giving up the office job! It will be interesting to see and hear developments for BM Aviation over the next few months - Good Luck Brian! Perhaps he just wants to keep an eye on Bob Elliott, who retires the same day....

Bob phoned me this week and announced that 'the Spice Girls' had flown into Southampton last Saturday morning on their way to France. I suggested it might only have been someone 're-stocking' the reception desk at Osprey Aviation, but apparently not. He'd naturally rushed to see them but they never got off the plane. I can see this being an interesting retirement if he is going to be a Groupie for young female singing stars. I just hope he keep writing reports for us! Wonder if this is why Brian decided to leave the office job?

Some of you may have noticed Bembridge on the Isle of Wight "closed" - well it's open again for 6 months. The Council have funded one and a half salaries for that time whilst they try and convince the EU that they need a hard strip airfield on the Island. If that fails, it might go, so try and put some usage in when you can, movement numbers might make a difference. There is a pub for lunch on the airfield, and a pleasant walk onto and down chalk cliffs nearby. Use it or lose it perhaps.

Finally for 1996, let's wish ourselves another safe year in 1997. If people would like to turn their minds to planning trips and social events for next year, please let Jon Butts know. We already have some in mind. We will have some new Instrument Lesson software fairly soon, so we intend to hold proper training evenings on that from time to time in 97. I must persuade Neale Fray that he and I should organise an 'Bar-Navex' - they take time to set up but they are good fun, and everyone learns a lot. Don't know what one is? Well, you'll have to come and see. Remember if the weather is good on January 1st, Popham seems to be Bob's chosen target for his first trip of the year, but you might be able to make a triangle out of other airfields holding New Year events. Bembridge, Old Sarum, and Compton Abbas have been known to hold them - check first though. Jill and I won't be at Popham, we intend to be in Dublin over the New Year, investigating how they celebrate it out there. I think I can guess, but we're going just to check we're right. Happy New Year to all our readers!