

IBM Flying Club Newsletter September 1997

Clear Prop! - Jon Butts

Hello again folks, lots of news this month and reports from trips as far apart as the South of France and the Scottish Orkney Isles (and a very short one by Paul Eathorne).

A warm welcome to some more new members; Andrew Astley, Jonathan Airey, Lorraine Dugan, and Kevin Westwood. Feel free to contact any of the membership or committee for any flying advice, help or spare seats you would like.

Tally Ho to Martin Talbot, our man in Russia, who is staying there, but leaving the employ of IBM. We shall stay in touch of course Martin, all the best with your new job.

Irv has donated the funds raised by the BBQ's to the Southampton General Hospital (as advised in the last Newsletter), and has since received a very pleasant, hand-written, letter thanking the club very much for the donation.

The CAA evening planned for the 6th November is going ahead. It is difficult to plan for numbers as the event will be advertised in Pilot and GASIL magazines, plus posters in local airfields. If the IBM Flying Club members would please let me know whether or not they have the event in their diaries it would be very helpful in ensuring adequate numbers are catered for. Remember it is close to Guy Fawkes night - be careful not to double-book yourself!

Pilot from IBM USA - Jonathan Airey *** Fri 5th Sept 1400 ***

Jon, Dave (Ashford)

I have a guy visiting my group this week and next from IBM Raleigh.

He is an experienced pilot (1000+ hrs) and an aircraft owner. He is interested if anyone can fly him anywhere interesting this weekend, preferably Sunday, as he has not flown in the UK before.

If there is time, can you check any of your contacts (or dist lists) to see if anyone is interested in meeting up with him. (ed: hence published in Newsletter - its just going out now anyway - I hope someone can help).

He's in a local hotel over the weekend, but if anyone can help, they can get back to me at work until 6pm, and 01962.77.2686 after that.

Thanks.

Regards, Jonathan Manager, AIS Team, x24.5013 Hursley Services and Technology, MP154, Hursley PHONE(44)1962.81.5013

Chocks away! - Martin Talbot

I wonder if you'd be kind enough to put word in to the next newsletter of my leaving (today's my last working day). I won't send a note out to all the friends individually, in any case it's not so easy to get rid of me and I hope we'll all stay in touch.

I'll let you know my new e-mail, in the meantime the office number of Fintelecom (Telcom Finland)

in Moscow, where I'll start on 18 August, is +358 2040 4914 (the Moscow number is 207 1913). To you my thanks for friendship and comradeship over the years. Take care, and I wish you too all the very best. I guess that I can still get the newsletter by e-mail, once I have the new address... (ed: sure thing Martin)

Carcassonne Trip report - Khalil Barsoum

C-FJNU was to rendez-vous with BIBT and ZERO at the Bordeaux Mairignac Airport for lunch, 11 July, 1997. We departed Blackbushe at 7:17Z, IFR, with clearance from the tower. Within minutes, while still climbing, and in cloud, the routing was changed... direct Goodwood'.

This being my first IFR trip in Europe, I was quick to notice the differences between US and Canadian procedures and those on this side of the pond'. There are 'preferred routes' but do not appear published. On the return trip, as we approached UK airspace, the same routing change occurred... this time through Seaford VOR.

The trip to Marignac was just great. FL090, languages and accents changing, spectacular panoramas (when we could see them). ATC was always friendly and helpful (although very few managed to say 'Charlie Foxtrot Juliette November uniform' completely, correctly, or in the right sequence...). I should get an easier name!

Drake, Siset, Etrat, Deauville, L'aigle, Bonet, Ginon, Poitiers, Cognac - clearances were usually two or three reporting points away... We were never cleared to the airport'. The approach to Merignac was vectors for a VOR approach... very smooth in spite of some traffic.

Upon arrival at Merignac, I discovered I had left my Passport home (London)... Luckily Lucille had hers, after a sermon (delivered in a friendly way) by Monsieur Galopin, the 'grand chef' of French Immigration at the airport, we were both admitted, and went for lunch expecting the arrival of the two Grummans. I will admit that being French from Canada was of great help here.

We were joined by the rest of the team, and took off, behind each other for Carcassonne. C-FJNU went again IFR, FL090, above cloud. Sauveterre, Agen, Toulouse (with many vectored deviations by ATC), Carcassonne NDB, for landing visual at Salvazza (Carcassonne)... JNU and BIBT had landed a while before we were joined by ZERO. I think they went 'castle hopping' en route... (ed: come on guys, what should we be reading between the lines here?!)

The 2 evenings and time in Carcassonne were fabulous. Cassoulet, excellent wine, friendly restaurateur and hotel 'patron'... these will all be fond memories. Unfortunately, time came to return home.

After taking pictures of our three airplanes, we departed Salvazza. It was July 13, approximately 9:00am. The weather was warm and Hazy in the early morning hours. As we approached Toulouse, in and out of cloud, we began to experience showers, moderate turbulence, and saw the glow of lightnings. The strikefinder pointing to heavy activity to our west and southwest, ATC allowed us to deviate around the cells. Arrival at Merignac was uneventful, with light rain... Approach and landing on the ILS, with good visibility.

Return to Blackbushe was on the same routing, as we approached L'Aigle, we could clearly see in the horizon the line of clouds to our west/north west that were marking the approaching cold front.

We crossed the front somewhere in the Channel. Clouds and winds were very different as we approached Seaford. Landing in early afternoon at Blackbushe was a lot of work: traffic with students practicing, strong winds with gusts, with an overworked and justifiably impatient controller!. We had one missed approach, but made it home safely.... No sight of Customs or

Immigration...

I later learned that for people like us (non-EC citizens), wanting to do what we did (fly around in Europe), a special file needs to reside in Immigration at Heathrow with copies of Passports, Visas, etc... ATC alerts them when the flight plans are submitted, and they 'virtually stamp' our passports on departure and return. The file is now set up, and I didn't have to go to jail.

We had a great time, and appreciated the company and guidance of everyone. special thanks to Clare, dave and 'Big Dave', Brian Mellor who guided me on the phone.

Lucille now wants me to plan trips to Luxemburg, Sainte (which her ancestors left for Canada), Brugges, Cognac, Strasburg, Barcelona, etc.... Hopefully the job and the duration of the assignment (ed: and any prison terms!) will allow for some of them.

(ed: Glad that Lucille and yourself enjoyed your first outing with the flying club. BTW: Brugges is well worth a vist and overnight stay, especially when there is an evening carillon concert).

Prop swinging - Dave Sawdon

A few more words on the business of hand swinging props. Providing the correct procedure is followed the "Armstrong" starting method is perfectly safe enough although I confess to dislike doing it on any aircraft with 150HP or above. The correct procedure is contained in many of the books so I won't repeat it BUT some may have forgotten the importance of using the L mag.

The mags are usually set-up so that the sparks from the L mag occur later than that from the R mag, this is so that the piston is nearer (or even at) Top Dead Centre when the spark occurs. Also, the L mag often has an "impulse" mechanism which spins the magneto faster at cranking speeds and so generates a higher energy spark. Both of these make starting easier.

So why not start on BOTH? The reason is that the spark from the R mag occurs earlier and can drive the piston backwards. Some years ago someone was helping me swing an aircraft with a flat battery, unfortunately they selected BOTH (unknown to me) and I ended up with 2 broken fingers.

I now always insist on setting the throttle and mag switch myself and visually check that the brakes are on.

Coningsby Trip Report - Chris Thompson.

Thanks to Clare for the arrangements when we all went to Coningsby. (ed: summer cold Chris?) It was a good day out with several controllers seeming to be quite bemused by so many private aircraft going to and from an active RAF base. The Benson controller actually asked if there had been a party there! It was interesting to get the full RAF Coningsby treatment on approach e.g. asking us if we wanted a "visual recovery", the fact that they were code "White", and all the bumph about the arrester cables being "up", "three inches above the surface, 1300 metres from the threshold". Phil elected to land long in TD but I suppose we could have stopped short of the cables in that distance. (ed: interesting that you should say that - several people thought the same, but none stopped short - apparently the wires were not what we would think of as 1300 metres from the threshold. Did ATC mean, or say, 1300 FEET from the threshold? RAF Lossiemouth in Pooleys show their arrester wires about 400 metres from the thresholds. Or, did they mean 1300 metres ON from the touchdown zone? Unlike the Navy's, RAF wires are for use at the FAR end of the landing run I believe. Either way, full marks to Phil I reckon. Thanks for the report Chris).

Notams, AICs, Freephones - Irv Lee

As many of you know, I don't usually get to fly much northwards as Jill always asks how long the proposed trip will be, and if the answer is more than 45 minutes, she says we might as well go to France for lunch instead. Suits me! However, a recent sunny Saturday in July, (the day of the major Air Show at RAF Fairford), a trip northwards convinced me a newsletter item on Notams, AICs etc is overdue!

We were hoping to go to Dieppe - excellent restaurants and a major Saturday market in town. We had booked French Customs (24 hours notice there), but after checking Notams and weather to the South, we delayed our departure "until the weather on the French coast lifted". It didn't. We cancelled everything at 11:00 local, re-checked the NOTAMS for a flight north, and planned a route to Wellesbourne Mountford. This included a minor dogleg to make it clear we were not hoping to appear at the Fairford airshow. We would still pass through or over RAF Brize Norton airspace on the way. The haze decided it - over Brize at FL40 where it was crystal clear.

I was listening to Brize having to vector quite a few aircraft who obviously had no idea that Fairford was active with a 6 mile radius TMA. One 'known' callsign (on our club website) was given some very stiff vectors to keep them out of trouble! We were on the frequency for 20 minutes at the very most, and there were a fair number of aircraft needing 'advice'.

The ONE thing in flying in the UK that is 'free' is the 0500 number which is updated at 20:00 the previous evening with information for the day. Presumably we do pay for it somehow through licence charges behind the scenes, but the service is there and the call is free. Why not try it right now? 0500-354802. The information is about Royal Flights, Red Arrows displays and temporary restriction of flying orders. It isn't a substitute for checking Notams before flight, but it certainly gave everyone notice of Fairford. If G. A. pilots can't even be bothered to check a Freephone number, why should there be any surprise about decisions and ideas which creep in from time to time from above which treat G.A. pilots as a dangerous annoyance to commercial aviation?

Moving on to NOTAMs, I've noticed with checkouts that when I mention Notams, many pilots look weary and then finally admit they don't really know if they are checking properly. I usually find the pilots have forgotten (or never knew) that the Notams 'work' from the South upwards, 'scanning' horizontally across the country. To check your local Notams you just find somewhere sensibly just south of your southernmost limit of flight and one north of your northernmost limit, and read in between looking for 'today's date', whatever that may be. This is very easy if your route is more or less East-West or vice versa but if you are going to go North-South there can be more to check. Most abbreviations on them are not understood. PJE for example - "Parachute Jumping Exercise" is very common, but few seem to know it.

If ever at Thruxton have a look in their office - an air chart on the wall shows the position of all NOTAMs for that week highlighted with coloured pins, and a number written on the pin to refer you at the detail on a nearby list. Checking Notams there is so easy. There is no real reason why this could not be done at any club, and one day no doubt this will be a 'Website'. Don't hold your breathe if you want an official one though. Has anyone tried to find a 'CAA' website? No chance! (added later: Writing this has made me realise there is an opportunity there, so I've now alerted our Website sales group to a potential customer! Wouldn't that be good - a website where you entered a date and a map of the UK came up with little flags to click on...)

Moving on to Air Information Circulars, they are always worth a read when you are waiting for weather to clear or have actually given up for the day. I was weathered out of a flight last year and when the others asked what I was going to do: Me: 'Get a cup of coffee and read the latest AICs' Two Puzzled faces (club members): "Read what?" Me: 'You know - AICs - those coloured sheets that give information on changes to Airspace between chart issues, special arrangements for Air rallies, new regulations, Safety Information, etc'. Two Blank faces: "What Coloured Sheets...?".

When I produced them from alongside the weather information, one pilot claimed he had never seen them before, the other remembered being told about them once!

Well, that's enough lecturing - what about Wellesbourne Mountford? Arriving at Wellesbourne Jill forgot her French lunch as soon as she spotted the enormous market on the disused runway. Fortunately we were unable to spend too long there - it was far too hot!

A taxi took us into Stratford on Avon and we had a very pleasant day there, despite the hordes of tourists. One thing we noted was that there is an hourly bus service from Stratford to Warwick which stops at the north west corner of the airfield, 5 minutes walk from the aircraft, so the return to the airfield was a cheaper than the way into town. We will probably return for a day in Warwick next time our route to France is blocked. Bus times from the airfield (well, from the crossroads behind the parkde Vulcan) on Mondays-Saturdays are approximately "quarter past the hour" one way and "twenty past" the hour the other way - don't know about Sundays.

Heading back towards Brize and repeating our slight dogleg east of the direct routing, Brize Radar asked if we really wanted the heading we were taking. When he learned I actually KNEW Fairford was active, hence the heading to miss it cleanly, he actually offered to try to get us a 'more interesting routing' with the Fairford Controller. He came back 2 minutes later and apologised as he had failed - the Red Arrows were actually running in to perform as we spoke, and it was clear enough to see the 'trails' from miles away. I'm not sure how 'interesting' he meant 'interesting' to be, had they agreed!

Colour Weather - Chris Thompson

On Saturday I flew in the Cub BCPJ from Popham to the vintage Piper meeting at Old Warden. Our Auster LG was also going with one of the other group members and we met for tea at Popham before setting off since the early weather was given by Old Warden as "Grey" but with Luton giving "Broken at 500ft" we thought it was Charlie Romeo Alpha Papa. As the weather cleared up about 1400 and the Auster is currently non-radio, we telephoned Old Warden again for PPR and the current airfield information. The woman who answered said it was now "Light Grey" and in response to the question "which runway are you using?" she replied "04 or 22" - which was all really quite helpful??*!! (ed: did you hear the one about the Southampton airport person, who when asked which runway was in use, replied: 'What do you mean? We've only got one'. Gulp, sad but true!).

Now, I am aware of the RAF colour codings of "Red", "Yellow" and "White" for airfield weather, but can anyone help me as to where "Grey" and "Light Grey" come in this scale?.....!

(ed: Yes Chris, they come after 'Mr Blue Sky' but sometime prior to 'I Can Sing A Rainbow'. Now then, you are the musician around here - give it a whirl next time *you're* giving unofficial met reports at Popham? When its really grey, really really grey, you could have a sing-along met briefing. Do you know Stormy Weather? Who needs ATIS, just play the appropriate sound-track. Anybody want to put a play list together for us? I'll find you a prize for something clever!)

Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington - James Mason

The Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington was the destination for four aircraft from the IBM Flying Club on the 2nd September. We had a welcome break from recent weather with good conditions and visibility all the way up to York. The museum was developed from a derelict airfield initially as an idea of a local resident, Rachel Semlyen, who happened to work as a press officer for the City of York and saw the potential of the site. Although it is an excellent air museum, it is also a recreation of a second world war air base which makes it even more interesting. Many of the original buildings have been restored including the Control Tower and nissen huts around the site. Everything has an authentic feel about it including eating lunch in the 'naafi' cafeteria, and the phone box with the

'button A / button B' telephone. (ed: the later raised nostalgia to the fore, every museum should have one).

On landing we came across 'Lusty Lindy', the Victor Tanker which looks as if it has just been parked on the apron, with its towing coupler still attached. (ed: indeed; it was fast-taxed at the real fly in a couple of weeks ago). As we gazed across the acres of taxiway and concrete apron at Elvington, there were some envious comments from Southampton-based pilots as there is no shortage of parking area here! (ed: no kidding, we have an airport with no space to park airplanes, whereas Elvington has grounded airframes with a perfect *two mile* runway, and an apron large enough to be seen from space, both built by the USAF in the fifties but they never got around to using either!) The museum has a wide collection of military aircraft with some unique examples such as the Halifax. Looking around some of the exhibits you quickly realise the amazing dedication of some of the volunteers who have preserved some of these exhibits. The case of the Mosquito amazed me, the aircraft had basically been the project of one man who started off in the early 1970s with a crashed fuselage which he towed home with his Singer Vogue car. The chronicle of photographs shows him working on the aircraft in the garage of his home during the 1970s and searching for components around the world, building what he could not find from scratch. In the case of the Halifax, this project started with the discovery of a 25 foot section of fuselage which was being used as a hen coup on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides! I also found the Barnes Wallis collection particularly interesting. (ed: this was really excellent). It covered the many projects that he worked on from airships, heavy bombers and various bombing systems to the supersonic swept wing developments of his post-war career. I remember seeing an interview he gave in which he heavily criticised the Concorde project because he believed that the basic concept of a fixed delta wing was wrong. The display showed some of his ideas in this area where he was using variable swept wings with the use of differential thrust control on the engines instead of rudder control surfaces. The only 'problem' is that there is so much to see and appreciate at Elvington, there is a lot of detail and information around all the exhibits.

On the way back from Elvington, we decided to stop at Andrewsfield which (ed: military controllers please note) is just to the north east of Stansted. The airfield has two parallel grass strips of 790m and has a friendly clubhouse, one interesting feature was the self service for the Avgas! After waiting for fuel at many airfields, it was quite a refreshing change to taxi up to the pumps and have a go ourselves. We also heard reports that the food in the clubhouse was good but the chef, no doubt tipped off by Clare that G-ZERO was headed his way, decided to leave at 6pm that day but perhaps another time! (ed: James is current holder of the fastest trip report record - written and submitted within hours of the trip).

Aborted TakeOff - Paul Eathorne

I know you like the 'I learned about flying from that' type stories (especially when they involve a tall, attractive blonde) so here is one for you!! (Ed: Oh cheers pal! Good try, but I don't think Mrs Ed is going to fall for that!)

Guess we all have a list of people who are keen to go flying you know, yes, when I next go flying of course you can come too... the list tends to be pretty big. Well, I'd offered to take Catherine for a trip to Compton ages ago...and when we finally got around to it, last week, it had been really foul all day, big front moving through, rain, wind.....Catherine was really disappointed and not impressed with my ever optimistic forecast that it might clear through by 16:00. To my well concealed surprise it did, to leave wonderful viz and a dropping wind (which sounds like Paul Goodman after a trip to the Purbani..)

(ed: sorry folks, I nearly edited that out, but figure this way I might get another write-up from Mr Goodman sometime soon).

So we set off to Eastleigh collecting Andy, a sponsored Student in his last week at IBM. On arrival both were pretty overwhelmed by the aircraft but the equally impressive G-PORK. For once, it was to let us down.

All power checks worked out fine, carb heat ok, both mags within limits T&P's in the green, so we backtracked 20 a goodly way, got clearance, opened up full power and we were away...except we weren't. It took a few seconds during which I thought, 'hm, somethings not right' ..before confirming airspeed was not building as it should, despite full power and a light load. Rapidly thinking that maybe overhead Southampton was not the place to sort this out we binned the take-off and cleared to sort out whatever the problem was. Strangely, power checks were again perfectly normal...I would have been happier if there had been a mag drop...but not finding any problem we taxied out again, although I made sure ATC were aware and took a full backtrack. Second time was no better, no acceleration and being still on the ground at the Northern turn-off we aborted and returned. The amazing part here is that despite two failed attempts to get airborne, Andy and Catherine were still keen to go flying, so we quickly dusted off 'UK and then spent an excellent 40 minutes over Portsmouth and the IoW

Catherine (who had somehow managed to get the front seat) was almost as delighted with the flying as Andy was with the very special handling that only Osprey can supply.....

Learning factors here, well, Jon does this much better than me...we still don't know for sure what is causing the power loss...but I'm glad we decided to sort it out on the ground rather than in the air.... out here; having let the Goodmanist one pass earlier).

PS thinking of the excellent service provided by the Osprettes, am I right in thinking Osprey are offering specialist services now? I'm sure I saw someone there recently in a nurses uniform... (ed: this is more an in-joke than a sexist remark so I've let it by. Please, no more challenges to my editorial integrity! Full marks to Paul for spotting the problem on the runway before taking off).

There I was with nothing on the clock... - Dave Sawdon

That's how the archetypal flying bar story begins but have you ever stopped to think what you would do if you found yourself either inverted or vertical with nothing (or very little) on the clock? (ed: the emphasis is on inverted, forget about the clock, this is more of a 'There I was, flat on my back' tale).

The standard reaction on finding yourself inverted seems to be to "pull through" into the second half of a loop - we've all seen loops and they look easier than rolls or anything else so that must be the right thing to do, mustn't it? WRONG! (Ed: I'll just explain to the newer readers that Dave is heavily into aerobatics. If, like me, your standard reaction to the very *idea* of somehow 'finding yourself inverted' is 'WHAT?!?!' then dont worry, this doesn't just happen to you in normal PPL flying. Dave is writing in the context of people learning aerobatics, or maybe trying to slipstream a Boeing 737).

The split-S (half roll and pull through) is a perfectly safe and valid manouevre if performed within certain entry criteria, it almost certainly is not safe if entered as a panic reaction without aerobatic training. The speed gain and height loss will be large and the g loading may exceed the aircrafts (or your) design spec.

The correct recovery action is: stop pulling, roll erect "to the nearest horizon" using full aileron (plus some rudder in same direction), recover from any dive. It will possibly also be appropriate to close the throttle during the process if the nose is appreciably below the horizon, opening it again once you are sat in your seat and the nose is above the horizon. Height loss, speed gain and stresses will all be much less than if you pull through. Non-aerobatic aircraft must be checked before further flight.

If you find yourself pointing vertically upwards and running out of ideas then there's no need to

worry as gravity and aerodynamics will soon solve the problem, all you have to do is to minimise the risk of damage during the process. Close the throttle, lock the stick centrally using both hands, push hard (in case you weren't already) and equally on both rudder pedals..... and wait. The aircraft will either fall forwards or backwards and point downwards (you had tightened your straps, hadn't you?) and blue/white will be replaced by brown/green. Wait until any "penduluming" has stopped and recover from the dive, full power as the nose goes above the horizon. In the unlikely event that you start to spin take the standard recovery action. Have the aircraft checked for tailslide damage before further flight.

I sincerely hope that this information is of no use to you whatsoever but maybe one day the fact that you have read it may make that wake turbulence or other encounter a bit less exciting. Give me a call if you feel that a little training in "recoveries from unusual attitudes" would be useful.

Not Much On the Bristol Front - Irv Lee

One reason why not many G.A. pilots fly into Bristol Lulsgate is the landing and parking fees. Landing is bad enough, but parking for over 119 minutes can seriously damage your wallet. The first weekend in August was the Bristol and Wessex Aero Club fly-in, with no fees, so being our day for the Rutan Long-Ez, good weather in England, a solid front along the Channel, and Jill having an aunt to visit in "Bristle" town itself, we headed West.

We arrived just before lunch having circled a couple of crop marks on the way on the edge of Devizes. They can't be called crop circles - one was an exact square, and the other was a perfect star. Only afterwards I realised that the people in the field examining them must have wondered what on earth was flying above them - Rutan Long-Ez's are not a common sight! More UFO sightings in the local papers now no doubt!

As a side-track: If anyone is in any doubt how 'real' crop circles started, ('real' ones are those which appear a totally unreasonable distance from a pub, or near a pub but before closing time), a trip to the Army Air Museum at Middle Wallop solves the riddle. There, on the first floor at the Western end, you can see a bomb-shaped remotely controlled spy camera with a helicopter rotor on top, a 'secret weapon' used in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and early seventies, developed by the Army Air Corps at Middle Wallop. A drawing from the time shows it being launched and tested from a grass field. The main point of the drawing is the spy camera itself, but what do you see in the long grass beneath it just after launch? Answer: A 'crop circle'. And where were crop circles first noticed? Answer: Around Middle Wallop in the late 60s and early 70s. Anyway I digress, but remember you read it here first, and please don't ruin a good moneyspinner for the local tourist economy, authors, and/or air charter operators at Thruxton and Old Sarum by actually telling anyone about this.

Not much on the "Bristle" frequency - hope there really is a fly-in today... our worries were groundless, as from Finals we could see confirmation in the form of a 'Bouncy Castle' and a 'dodgy burger van' next to the aero club. We landed and found about 3 aircraft there. Not well publicised by the sound of it! The marshalls parked us as far away as possible "to make room for all the other aircraft coming", and after a suitable drink and chat we disappeared into town.

Returning at 1730, there were still 3 aircraft and ourselves there. I don't THINK they were the same aircraft. We enjoyed our time with the Bristol and Wessex Club and appreciated their efforts, and felt suitable guilty about sneaking off. Shame not many turned up after all their work, and I think the Sunday was a wash out. A quick visit to the 'dodgy burger van' for some chips and a drink before departure revealed that we were their 3rd customers that day!

All remaining aircraft decided to depart just before us, and we got to the hold behind two others, another having just departed on a local flight and immediately got lost, causing all sorts of blood pressure problems for the controller, (this is class 'D' controlled airspace) especially when the pilot,

who had apparently left the airspace once, now declared he thought he might have unintentionally come back and was pretty sure he was a mile from the airfield but couldn't actually see it (in good weather). (ed: uh? Why on earth would he think that if he couldn't see an airport?) The other two ahead of us at the hold decided the controller would appreciate them looking after themselves whilst he sorted out the lost aircraft, so once their checks were finished they promptly took off without permission and without a clearance. The controller didn't appreciate it. I wonder if there will be a fly-in next year? (There probably won't be a "dodgy burger van" - she will go broke with that sort of income!)

This sort of thing (taking off without clearances, not burger sales) cannot do G.A. any good at all. There is enough smouldering tinder out there at the moment over 'radio' usage and r/t expertise for G.A. and unfortunately it seems like a vicious circle. The more 'commercial airfields' get commercial and up the prices, the less G.A. pilots train at them or visit them, and the less 'practice' with 'real controllers' for students and pilots. This results in bad radio practices or lack of understanding of procedures on the rarer occasions the G.A. pilots do visit the bigger fields. A visit to a local radar room last year for myself and student elicited the following from the duty controller: 'if you are outside that line (the controlled airspace boundary drawn on the screen) and you are not going to cross it, I don't want to talk to you - keep off my frequency, I don't want to know, I have enough to do'... And they wonder why people get out of practice. (ed: I guess it depends who the controller is. If its the Heathrow Director I guess its understandable. If its a Class D Zone bod then yes that is a lousy thing to say. I've heard a radar man criticise those who skirt a zone without talking to anyone as plain rude and unprofessional, so it's hard to tell what the right thing to do is isn't it! Mind you, some of the calls you hear these days make your skin crawl so much its not surprising ATC are fed up of hearing from some PPLs - does anyone ever check to see if these people actually have a licence?!)

From various hints in various journals it seems pretty certain the CAA will 'have to do something' sometime about the standard of G.A. radio usage, they are getting so many complaints, unless G.A. gets in first and suggests what to do, who knows what the end result will be? Special radio licences for controlled airspace? Spot 'ramp' checks on r/t licences? Frequent renewals of radio licences with a genuine test in a simulator? Something is bound to happen sometime- too many people in places that matter are getting annoyed. If G.A. doesn't put its own house in order over this, don't be surprised when someone does it for us. I do the occasional 'refresher navigation' lesson at Popham, and now make sure the route or diversion goes through controlled airspace, just to give some practice in radio usage too, but I don't yet know what the 'real' answer is.

(ed: Anyone fancy an RT debate - do you have any views on R/T? Is it really that bad? Would you be happy to be re-tested? Should the controllers report people with RT below par - they have the tapes to prove it afterall! Please write me your views, your favourite phrases, tips or hints for others, and pet hates - BTW, mine is: '*coming down*' from someone when assigned a xpdr code).