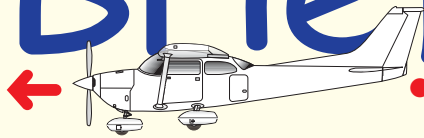


Briefings



Left: Mike Young lands, still dumping water ballast, after taking third place in the 18m class at the World Gliding Championship
Above: all-conquering Gerald Cooper with his XtremeAir XA41 in Slovakia
Below: The British Helicopter Team on the podium after taking silver in Moscow; Quentin Smith, far right, took individual freestyle gold



More medals for Britain

British gliding and helicopter teams have finished in the silver medal position in world championships in Moscow and Texas.

And Gerald Cooper, from Lincolnshire, won the European Freestyle Aerobatic Championship in Slovakia in September, beating 21 of the best aerobatic pilots in Europe and winning Britain's first-ever gold medal in Unlimited Aerobatics. Gerald, who is Managing Director of Wickenby aerodrome, was flying the new, all-carbon XtremeAir XA41 high performance monoplane for only the second time in international competition. The British

Gliding Team were placed second in the World Gliding Championships in Uvalde, Texas, while the British Helicopter Team were edged out only by the Russians in the World Helicopter Championships at Drakino, south of Moscow.

The gliders took part in 13 days of intense competition, during which the pilots cumulatively flew over 800,000km. The team gold was won Poland, with Germany third. The top British individual performance came from Mike Young, who was third in the 18m class, just one place ahead of team mate Russell Cheetham.

Pete Harvey, flying the new Antares 23

sailplane, an aircraft that he had no previous experience of, finished 5th overall in the Open Class after racking up three day wins. Ed Johnston finished 6th overall in a very strong field in the 15m class, with Matt Cook 23rd.

Non-flying team captain, Phil Strurley, commented: "This was a splendid all-round effort by Team GB which displays the UK's strength in depth at this level."

The Helicopter team returned its best-ever result in a World Championship, where the Russians traditionally win but are usually chased by the French and the Germans. Quentin Smith won the World Individual Freestyle, but was forced to share it with an Austrian when they complained about points deductions for flying outside the box. Team Captain David Monks and his co-pilot Caroline Gough-Cooper, a former women's world champion, won an overall second in the Precision Flying Event.

"This is the most successful Campaign the British Helicopter Team has ever undertaken," said David Monks. "The Team stepped up to the mark and performed well under pressure, being second on the podium behind the Russians is a fantastic result for all concerned."

Despite efforts to interest media outlets in the success of Britain's pilots – and the fact that in the case of the helicopter team, two members were the instructors who taught Princes William and Harry to fly – not a single newspaper or TV station deigned to carry a word on the teams' successes. ■





Almost like flying

Air Cadets at Crawley have taken delivery of a basic simulator made for them by the Virtual Flight Centre in Coolham, West Sussex. Even before the budget cuts the Air Cadets were getting very little time in the air, and Steve Skinner of the Crawley Squadron asked Flight Deck Technology Ltd, the trading name of the Virtual Flight Centre, to build a basic simulator out of an old motor glider that was time-expired. The squadron also donated

some old computers which could be refurbished and they obtained funds for a variety of sources, including Lottery funding, to pay for the other components and repair work to the shell.

The idea was to get the simulator working at a basic level with minimum of facilities, then develop it further as funds become available. Even in its basic form it will be a great training tool and will provide enormous pleasure for young flying enthusiasts.

The Virtual Flight Centre provides simulators of varying degrees of sophistication for professional training and for entertainment. They range from full-motion simulators for jet orientation or other courses to corporate hospitality events. They have a 737-800 simulator in an old Ryanair 37-200 frame and use current airline pilots as instructors. They have recently built another 737 sim for an Australian customer and have started work on an Airbus A320 sim. They have also refurbished a PA-28 as a simulator with wraparound screens for IR and IMC training. ■

The old, old story

Fees for obtaining and maintaining licences in New Zealand have gone through the roof. A one-time 'issuance fee' for a pilot's license is going up from \$55 to \$230 (an NZ dollar is worth about 50p) and a new 'medical service application fee' of \$313 per assessment has been introduced. Commercial pilots over 40 must have a medical every six months for single-pilot operations. The CAA's charges for audits will go from \$135 an hour to \$208 an hour in November and will be \$284 an hour by the end of 2014. In all, more than 150 fees are being increased. New Zealand aviation groups claim their members are being made to pay for CAA inefficiency.

Bentley Priory museum

The Battle of Britain Trust has taken over the museum section within Bentley Priory, the former RAF headquarters from which Hugh Dowding directed the Battle, and subject to successful fundraising efforts the museum is due to open to the public in July next year.

It is planned that the museum and 'learning centre' will tell the story of the Battle of Britain as well as the social history of the beautiful Grade 2* listed house. It will focus on the leadership and courage of those involved in the Battle, and the technology that helped secure victory. The museum will also reflect some of the history of Bentley Priory itself – it was a centre for political thought in the Georgian era, the equivalent of Chequers today.

It will be planned, fitted out and run by the Bentley Priory Battle of Britain Trust. Over the last seven years, the Trust has driven the project through the sale of the site, an extended planning process, and the subsequent redevelopment, including securing £11.6 million out of the required £13.4 million along the way. The Trust was awarded a development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2011 and is awaiting the result of a £650,000 Heritage Grant application.

Spitfire and Hurricane (right) replicas refurbished by Gateguards at Newquay – featured in the August issue of *General Aviation* – once again grace the entrance to the Priory building. They have



been repainted as the Battle of Britain aircraft flown by Air Commodore Peter Brothers CBE DSO DFC* and Squadron Leader 'Bam' Bamberger DFC* AE, who died after working hard to ensure that Bentley Priory should be preserved for public access.

Some of the money has been put up by Barratt Homes and City & Country property developers, in return for being allowed to build houses in the Priory grounds

EASA 'plays dirty' with R66



The helicopter industry across Europe is asking searching questions about EASA's continued failure to certify the Robinson R66 turbine helicopter, with some accusing the agency of anti-competitive protectionism designed to favour Eurocopter.

More than two years after the R66 was certified in the United States and a dozen other countries there is still no sign of EASA following suit, and the extraordinary nature of their stipulations on the helicopter is causing the industry to question the agency's motives.

Helicopter operators are very keen to get the five-seat R66 into the market place. It is about half the price, and costs roughly half as much to run, as other single turbines, and experience elsewhere in the world has shown it can sustain operations profitably where other machines cannot break even. At a time of severe recession, many European companies see the R66 as a vital part of their offer.

EASA, however, has declined to certificate the R66, and its reasoning is so bizarre that it's hard to find an explanation beyond protectionism. The sticking point is a valve in a hydraulic system servo. Given that the hydraulics were lifted in their entirety from the R44, the FAA grandfathered it into the R66. But EASA is demanding proof that this valve will operate for 1,000,000,000 hours without a failure. In the R44 fleet, the valve has only performed without failure for 12 years and 26,000,000 hours, so EASA's requirement for one billion hours of failure-free operation will take 400 years to satisfy in service. Exactly the same valve has operated without failure in the Bell JetRanger since the 1960s, but EASA declines to take this into account. Moreover, it is remarkably similar to the systems in Eurocopters which EASA has already certified.

The helicopter industry is in open revolt.

Swiss operators have filed an action against EASA with the European Ombudsman's office and are working up a legal action against the agency. In the UK David George, founder and Chairman of Sloane Helicopters, is organising concerted action to pressurise EASA into taking the R66 seriously.

"I believe that Eurocopter may well be 'influencing' EASA to stop, or failing that, delay the European certification of the Robinson R66 helicopter," he says. "The

R66 outperforms the EC120 in every way and costs less than half the price of the EC120. While our competitors around the world benefit from the R66, we are denied it in Europe. This is doing serious damage to our industry."

In Switzerland, Hansruedi Amrhein of Valair AG says: "This is no technical certification of EASA, it is a political one under influence of the European market leader. The R66 competes directly against the Eurocopter EC120 and the AS350 with much higher performance and much lower initial and operating costs. Almost two years after FAA certification there is no serious expectation of an EASA certification within a rational time. The billion-hour requirement shows clearly that EASA does not want R66 certification. They impose unfair cost burdens on the industry and use their position to distort competition."

One helicopter expert said: "Any failure within the flight control system – not just a servo – is going to render the helicopter potentially unflyable, therefore picking on a single point within the flight control system seems absurd. If EASA wants to cover the remote possibility of a flight control becoming unusable then they will have to require full redundancy. EASA should spend more time and effort sorting out real problems that could make a difference, rather than being led by the nose by a European helicopter manufacturer trying to protect its single-engine production line." ■

Vintage engineering



Chiltern Classic Flight has been granted registered training facility approval for historic and classic aircraft — one of the last approvals to be issued before the EASA changeover.

The organisation has two strings to its bow – engineering and flight training – and is located at the former site of RAF Bicester, which as an all grass airfield is ideal for classic and historic aircraft.

The organisation offers introduction training packages on classic aircraft, tail wheel conversion courses, formation flight training with aspirations later in the year for display authorisation.

Its fleet currently comprises de Havilland DHC1 Chipmunks and a Piper Cub, and there are plans to operate a Harvard. They also offer PPLs on a tailwheel types.

David Spicer and Dickie Bird are the founders of the organisation. "Skills for dealing with classic aircraft are diminishing," says Spicer. "In our group we have more experience than most and feel we can offer a strong service for training and hopefully very soon maintenance for classic and historic aircraft. The skills required to operate and maintain these aircraft need to be preserved for future generations, and our aim is to help ensure this happens. Our engineering team is highly experienced with aircraft such as Tiger Moths and Rapides. We are hoping to assist in furthering the interest many people have in nostalgic aircraft."

See www.thechilternclassicflight.com or call 01869 245004

Bicester on the block



Left: Bicester's Grade II listed control tower – unusually, it was never fitted with a radio

Bicester aerodrome is for sale, a fact which poses as many questions for property developers as for aviators. Much as they would like to get their hands on 350 acres of flat, well-drained land close to Oxford, there are difficulties which would tend to favour

the retention of Bicester as an airfield. Plans to turn it into a housing estate were abandoned in the 1990s in the face of vociferous local opposition and a general determination to preserve a historic site; the airfield has been described as “the finest example of a pre-

war military airfield still almost completely in existence”. Many of the buildings are Grade II listed, and the bomb dump which borders the airfield is a scheduled monument. The local council is keen to retain Bicester for aviation use, and the airfield’s pilots are keen to ensure its future; they are investigating ways of funding a buy-out. While no figure has been mentioned by the Ministry of Defence – the sale will be by sealed bid – it’s a serious undertaking to raise the wind; a sum of £3.5 million have been mentioned. Bomber Command Heritage has begun a fund-raising exercise with the aim of raising £2 million to buy Bicester; the first aircraft used the site as far back as 1911, and between the wars it was a bomber base, home to Vickers Virginias, Hawker Horsleys and Bolton Paul Overstrands. During the Second World War it was the headquarters of the Second Bomber Command Training Group and was taken over by Fighter Command in 1943. The RAF left in 2004. ■

Bill Ryall 1923 – 2012

Flying Officer W J Ryall AFM MSM QCVSA RAF (Ret'd) – Bill Ryall to his friends – has died at the age of 89. A wartime bomber pilot, he edited Pooleys Flight Guide for almost three decades. From 1977 to 2010 he functioned as Robert Pooley’s right-hand-man on the guide, latterly as a consultant. Robert says: “His achievements were enormous and can never be forgotten. To this day, his name continues to appear in the Pooleys Flight Guide.”

Born at Wolverton near Newbury, Bill was a founder member of 211 (Newbury) Squadron, Air Training Corps in 1941 before he joined the RAF in October 1942. Selected for pilot training, he was sent to Canada, and converted to Lancasters on his return. As a Lancaster captain with 626 Squadron at RAF Wickenby at the age of 20, he flew 17 operational sorties over Germany and, in one of the ‘saturation’ raids, was hit by four incendiary bombs dropped by another Lancaster. Fortunately, the bombs had barometric fuses and the crew managed to get rid of them.

When a truce was arranged with the Germans to enable food to be dropped to Dutch civilians Bill took part in three food delivery sorties, flying at 200 feet over Rotterdam and being tracked by German 88mm anti-aircraft guns.

After the war he was put to work as a ferry pilot, flying a wide range of aircraft between the UK and the Middle East and Far East. Among the

incidents he coped with were an engine fire on take-off from Basra, to engine failure on take-off from Habbaniya and double engine failure due to fuel contamination at 8,000 feet over Christmas Island. He had descended to 2,000 feet before one engine could be restarted.

Robert Pooley says: “I remember a letter arriving at our Elstree offices addressed to ‘Bill Ryall, the swashbuckling RAF pilot of the South Pacific’ I think that really sums it up. He was an outstanding pilot in every way. He came to Elstree to moonlight for us, helping to edit our UK Flight Guide, and indeed was responsible for some of the Europe guides and also for the Pilots’ information Guide. On retiring from the RAF in 1981 he joined us full-time and made a considerable impact on the editing of the flight guides, bringing us from the lead age to the computer age.

“Bill continued his flying with the RAF in the volunteer reserves and I believe he was the longest serving pilot in the RAF, and probably one of the last Master Pilots in the RAF, which is equivalent to a Pilot Warrant Officer and the last of the pilot non-commissioned officers. He certainly passed his 65th birthday before officialdom found out. Bill retired in January 1989 with over 8,000 flying hours in 33 different types of aircraft.

“I was fortunate to fly with him on his last flight in a Chipmunk from Abingdon when he let me do a couple of aerobatics and then he took over for his final show. A remarkable man in every sense, and he will always be remembered with enormous affection. Bill was a legend in his lifetime.”

