

Cov Aero

The Newsletter for Coventry Aeroplane Club Members

Issue 9 • Winter 2020

Return Flights

...from Scandanavia and Africa



COVER PICTURE: Standard pilot pose in front of Gibraltar's iconic rock



... News From The Field ...

Happy New Year...but first:

No one will be sad to see the back of 2020 and, whilst we look forward to a much better 2021, there are unfortunately still many restrictions on club activity. Disappointingly but not unsurprisingly, Coventry and the surrounding area has been placed into **Tier 4** of the coronavirus restrictions. Anyone not familiar with the restrictions relating to General Aviation can update themselves here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-aviation/coronavirus-covid-19-general-aviation>

Suffice to say that the school will remain closed for the time being. Your committee continues to review the situation regularly and changes will be made as soon as it is deemed safe enough to do so.

Licence & Rating Validity Flights

While you will be aware of the current opening and operational restrictions at the Club, we would like to reassure members that in line with CAA messaging, we will endeavour to satisfy any urgent licence currency or validity issues through exceptional flights.

If you are about to face a rating currency issue arising from our ongoing dual-instruction restriction that may be resolved with a minimal amount of airtime we will endeavour to assist. Typically, this may be your bi-annual currency flight with an instructor or similar which will take just an hour of airtime, but without which you will lose rating validity.

Each case will be assessed on its merits, so if you feel you are in this group, please contact our CFI, Mark Rawlings directly on cfi@covaero.com

CAA Reading & Listening

The CAA has added another podcast which might be interesting to us GA pilots. The latest podcast is about **Threat & Error Management** and offers useful thoughts to re-sharpen our minds as – let's face it – we're all a bit rusty at the moment! The podcast can be found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-134290775/ga-tem-podcast-int01-mp3-mixdown>

The CAA also periodically releases its **"Clued Up"** magazine which looks at topics which we're all interested in. The latest editions look at "Winter Flying", "Electronic Conspicuity" and the current hot topic of towbars! The complete list can be found by searching online for "CAA Clued Up" or using this link: <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=11&mode=list&type=sercat&id=83>

GASCo Webinar

Sticking with the theme of "Return to Flight", GASCo has also released a webinar which helps re-focus the mind following an extended period of not flying. <https://pro.ispringcloud.eu/acc/pTPKR6MxMDQxODI/s/104182-BZsNt-ah6Vw-ERzclU>

Exam Validity Periods

The **PPL/LAPL e-Exams** exception that permits continued use of certain paper-based Theoretical Knowledge exams under exceptional circumstances **will end** on 5th January 2021. This affects the 9 core subjects for PPL and LAPL aeroplane and helicopter exams for initial licence issue but does not apply to VHF Comms paper-based Theoretical Knowledge exams held by FRTOL Examiners. Any affected paper-based Theoretical Knowledge exams taken after 5th January 2021 will not count towards licensing action.

The CAA, has released ORS4 No.1446 which extends the validity periods of theoretical knowledge examinations completed as part of training courses for pilot licences, ratings and certificates carried out in compliance with Part-FCL of the Aircrew Regulation. The document may be viewed here: <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/ORS4No1446.pdf>

Changes to Class D VMC Minima

You may remember that the UK recently adopted the full implementation of SERA VMC minima for class D airspace which

means that you must have an in-flight visibility of 5km and be 1500m from cloud horizontally and 1000' vertically in order to be classed as "VMC".

This will remain in force until May 2021 when a proposed amendment should allow the old practice of "remaining clear of cloud and in sight of the surface" to be reinstated. Remember there are other conditions that apply so have a look at this link for the full text: <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP493%20SI%202020-07.pdf>

Congratulations...

We may not be able to fly at the moment but there's still plenty of things to do, especially if you are a student in the midst of a training course. Congratulations to Dave Penson who passed his FTROL oral exam before Christmas.



Get Well Soon!



Some of you will know club member **Russell Smith**, our trailblazing octogenarian, has been unwell recently. We just wanted to say that all of Russell's Coventry chums wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to his return to the club for a catch up.



ABOVE: Tromsø from the adjacent escarpment

Heading Home

As our intrepid adventurers' thoughts turned towards heading home from their trip to Europe's most northerly point, we left them on the tarmac examining a Jubilee clip of unknown origin...

Part 2 of 2

Read Part 1 in the Autumn 2020 newsletter on the Club website [here](#)

It looked like a clip from an air hose but our aircraft had been behaving fine, including both normal air intake and carburettor-heat operation as expected. The fueller confirmed that a couple of other aircraft had parked in the area that day and that one may have had some work done on it, so he went in search of the owners. We went in search of the fire crew in order to pay our landing and parking fees and eventually found them on their lunch break behind the fire station catching a few rays – there were no flights for some time and apparently it was one of the nicest days of the year so far and they did not often get that much sun.

We had to put a bit of a spurt on at the end of our descent, because more rain was coming and this time it was heavy. We mostly dodged that one, bought some lunch at the local shop (ate inside while the heaviest part of the rain shower passed) and

went to have a look at the Cathedral. The Arctic Cathedral is quite a modern building, a whitewashed concrete structure with modern stained glass windows and a modern tapestry behind the altar. The orientation allowed the sun to illuminate the inside through the stained glass beautifully. The modernity does not detract from it being welcoming (the staff were delightful too). It reminded us of home – the style of Coventry Cathedral is different in many respects but the overall feel was surprisingly similar. The day was finished off with a pizza and some wine – a very good holiday day.

Having paid the airfield fees directly at Alta, for the rest of the trip, we decided that it was most cost effective and least faff to pay for a week of landing fees and parking for any Avinor airfield (Avinor is the main Norwegian airport operator). All

was sorted following only a minor skirmish with the computing gods The next morning we returned to the airfield to continue to our next stop – Bodø. The flight guide warned about the busy airspace around Bodø (mix of civil and military) and about needing to agree a time for arrival but Bodø operations did not seem to share the concern. On the day they were really chilled and just told us to turn up when ready (we were going to submit a flight plan anyway).

I decided that I didn't want to continue until I had positively confirmed that the Jubilee clip that Sue had found in Alta was not one of ours, so before setting off, I took the cowling off (a bit of a pain on a C172). Good job I had – the clip had been ours, the carburettor heat hose had come off. So why had I not noticed it during the checks and the two subsequent flights? Inspecting the hose made it apparent – the

hose was lying in the engine compartment, so the temperature will have been a bit warmer than the surrounding atmosphere but the main reason was that while the body of the hose was reinforced, the end that sleeves over the exhaust manifold bracket had to remain flexible in order to allow the jubilee clip to do its business. The effect of this was that the end flopped into the hose partially blocking it and reducing the airflow into the engine. This produced similar symptoms to applying carb heat, i.e. reducing the engine power but it is unlikely that it would have given the benefit of melting any carb ice. So a big thank you to Sue - the prospect of a forced landing in or around the fjords or over the North Sea on the way to the Shetlands due to carburettor icing was not an attractive one at all. There was nothing in the flight guide about maintenance facilities at the airport and we no longer had the Jubilee clip, so we were going to have to find a local garage to get one. SkyDemon made it easy to postpone our flight plan and we called up security to come to take us from the aircraft back to the gate. We asked the security chap (the driver) for the location of the nearest garage with spares. Yet again we got more help than we could have hoped for – when he realised what we needed, he took us to the maintenance depot at the airfield and found a Jubilee clip that suited the task perfectly. I then spent some time fitting the hose and clip. It was a fiddly job in the



ABOVE: On the runway at Alta - I knew that if I held my nerve the 737 would swerve first!
BELOW: Stunning scenery along the Norwegian coast

constrained space but it was worth persevering because taking the lower cowling off is an even less attractive option. Job done, I contacted the aircraft owner and our licenced engineer to explain what had happened and what I had done to remedy the situation. The engineer wanted confirmation that there was no damage to the hose or the exhaust manifold but apart from the awkward space, the remedy was so straightforward that he confirmed it should be OK to continue. So we unwound for a short while, had a spot of lunch at the airport and finally set off for Bodø.

Bodø, Norway

After yet more stunning scenery

along the Norwegian coast, we arrived in Bodø. Everything for GA at the airport was self-service but the airport was very well organised and it all worked well.

Bodø has become a very popular tourist destination. Because we had only started booking the accommodation for the latter part of the trip when we had reasonable confidence that the weather would allow us to reach the various destinations, we could not find any accommodation that we wanted in the town itself. So we booked a room in a fishing community some 20km outside the city and hired a car again (much cheaper option than taxis). The place was well set-up to accommodate anglers – it had a fishing tackle shop and a large bank of chest freezers for the catches – fishing is obviously a hugely popular activity there.

When we arrived it was already approaching dinner time, so we drove to a nearby hotel for our evening meal. The hotel overlooked Saltstraumen - a small strait with very strong tidal currents. When water funnels through the strait it creates one of the earth's strongest Maelstroms (whirlpools). It was the wrong time of day to see the full spectacle but the river and sea did give enough of a show to make us realise that it would not be a great place to be in a small boat. And the view was complemented by a glorious red sunset.

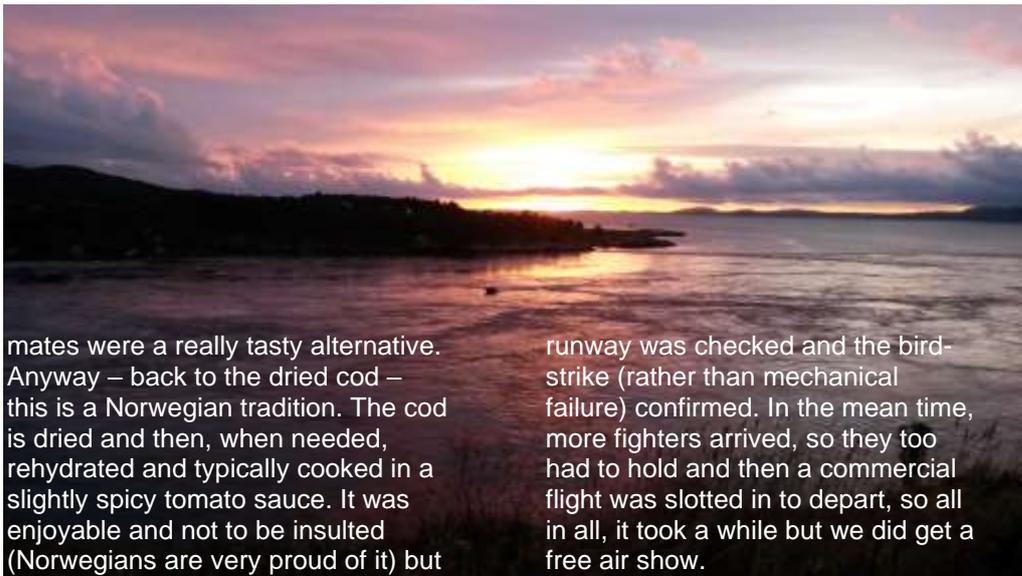
For dinner we tried some dried cod. It was one of the very few disappointments of Norway that there did not appear to be much fresh fish to be had – we both love fish and had been looking forward to it. That said, we found that Rudolph's





ABOVE: VFR flying - Norwegian style.

BELOW: A beautiful sunset compensated not seeing the Maelstrom at Saltstraumen.



mates were a really tasty alternative. Anyway – back to the dried cod – this is a Norwegian tradition. The cod is dried and then, when needed, rehydrated and typically cooked in a slightly spicy tomato sauce. It was enjoyable and not to be insulted (Norwegians are very proud of it) but we both prefer the fresh stuff.

runway was checked and the bird-strike (rather than mechanical failure) confirmed. In the mean time, more fighters arrived, so they too had to hold and then a commercial flight was slotted in to depart, so all in all, it took a while but we did get a free air show.

Mølde, Norway

In the morning we set off back to the airport. I had submitted a flight plan but as we were taxiing Bodø ATC informed me that the flight plan had been rejected – apparently because I hadn't put at least one alternative destination. ATC offered to help with submitting a new plan but I declined, thinking that it was a relatively short internal flight and so it wasn't worth faffing. In retrospect the decision was a poor one, the weather wasn't great and the coastline, while spectacular, looked very unforgiving. As usual, Norwegian ATC were very helpful during the flight but I should have helped myself a bit more too.

The departure from Bodø took over 20 minutes - as we were doing our power checks, several inbound military aircraft arrived. One of these hit a bird and the remaining aircraft were held in the vicinity while the

The mixed weather provided for fantastic flying along the rocky coast and the fjords but it needed careful navigation with constant reviews of the alternatives (with the ultimate backstop always being a climb into IMC and away from the granite teeth hungry for a bite of our airplane). During our stop in Brønnøysund for fuel and for lunch, I re-planned the next leg to Mølde. I had planned to fly inland along some of the spectacular fjords and valleys but the weather really would have made it a hazardous proposition. So I simplified the route to fly most of the leg along the coast.

By the time we were getting close to Mølde, it was still raining on and off but the visibility was good. Mølde runway is on a spit of land and runs parallel with the coast of Møldefjord, making for a very scenic approach. Mølde was a delightful town. It is small and friendly but well provided with facilities. We had picked a hotel on the shore - the Scandic Seilet

Hotel. It was modern (not usually our preference) but its location promised that it would have good views, which it indeed did. What was even better was that the food was excellent. Many of the places where we stayed had excellent breakfasts but the breakfasts in this hotel were just amazing. In addition to cooking food to order, there was a superb selection of bread, fish, cheese and all the other stuff you might consider for breakfast, and a lot more that you wouldn't even think of. They also allowed guests to make themselves up a packed lunch for a moderate fee, which we did on both days. One can walk from the town to the hills above the fjord, or one can drive up there and do a circular walk in the hills, with distances to match most tastes. We spent a few hours there and saw a couple of eagles while walking, which complemented the scenery beautifully. Early to mid afternoon we decided to drive up the fjord to find some more walking. However, the weather set in - as expected - so we kept the walk brief and returned to the town and found a nice cafe to sit, drink tea, read books and just while away the time in a very pleasant and civilised way. By the time we returned to the hotel the weather was finally lifting and I spent a while standing outside taking pictures of the fjord with the afternoon sun breaking through the clouds. It turned out to be similar to stuff we would have to fly through the next day.

The next morning we used the superb breakfast facilities to make salmon and prawn sandwiches for our trip across the North Sea back to the Shetlands. At the car we found that we had got a parking ticket, even though we had paid for the parking. When we got home we contacted Mølde Council and it turned out that even though we were almost next to the meter, the parking we had paid for was in the opposite direction, this was a council parking area with different arrangements. All the signs were in Norwegian and the Council kindly let us off, saying that we had obviously intended to do the right thing. The courteous and helpful response left us feeling even more positive about both Mølde and Norway in general.

Via Bergen, Norway, to Sumburgh, Shetlands

The weather for the departure from Mølde was forecast to be

changeable again and we kept the route to Bergen (for customs and fuel) simple along the coast. Bergen is one of Norway's major airports but we were made to feel welcome - picked up at the self-service pump (that worked!), processed through customs and were soon on our way across the North Sea to the Shetlands.

The UK was just starting to receive the full benefit of storm Ali, which was making its way over from America. Visibility was pretty good though and dodging a few cumulonimbus clouds at 6,500 feet just added to the interest. The fairly strong wind was straight down the runway and our arrival was pretty uneventful. We did decline the initially offered parking space, because there was nowhere to tie the aircraft down but as ever, the airfield staff were really helpful and after repositioning provided the necessities to secure the aircraft. We had booked in at the Sumburgh hotel, which is really close to the airfield. The big rooms in the main hotel are from another era - spacious and airy, with fantastic views, including of the lighthouse at Sumburgh Head. There is a very nice walk from the hotel (past a neolithic settlement site called Jarlshof - definitely worth a look-see) along the coast up to Sumburgh Head. Between March and August, puffins arrive to use Sumburgh Head for nesting and to rear their young but it is busy with bird life at all times of year. There is a good museum under the lighthouse and a nice cafe too. The walk is around 1.5 hours each way from the hotel (if you use the coast / cliff-edge, would recommend walking boots but the road is fine for shoes).

Glenforsa, Isle of Mull

The weather for our next leg to the Isle of Mull was uncertain - visibility would not be an issue but the winds were a problem. Sumburgh airport is well provided with runways but with a wind forecast of high 20's gusting to 50 kts, anything but almost straight down the runway was going to be a no-no for departure. I got the aircraft ready and luggage loaded and we then spent several hours waiting for the wind to back onto runway heading as forecast. When it eventually did, my biggest concern was the taxiing - that sort of wind could easily pick a wing up, especially on a high-wing aircraft like



ABOVE: More stunning fjords
BELOW: Glenforsa airstrip - on a nicer day - with the aircraft parking area and hotel mid-way along the airstrip

ours. All worked out OK and we set off for Mull.

We routed down the east coast of Scotland. We had been hoping to stop for lunch with some friends in Dornoch, which is a very pleasant small town about 20 nm north of Inverness. It has a small but very well kept airstrip adjacent to the golf course (located within the Tain Range Danger Area). The weather delay and the continuing strong winds persuaded us to give Dornoch a miss. So we just flew past Dornoch and Inverness and then down the

Great Glen to the Isle of Mull.

I had read about the Glenforsa Hotel on Mull in Pilot magazine many years ago. It has a well kept grass airstrip just next to the hotel and it sounded perfect for GA pilots, so we stopped there after our first flying visit to the Irish Republic. It has become a bit of a home from home for us since then - this was our 17th visit.

The hotel is a lodge built from Norwegian pine. It is owned and operated by Brendan and Alison Walsh, who took it over around 20



years ago and have been both running and improving it over that time. The latest upgrade was a re-modelling and extension of the bar area (replacing a big chunk of the front elevation of the hotel). They have also built a couple of large self-contained (self-catering) cabins in the grounds. They both have flying experience and, recently, have taken over the operation of the airfield from the council.

The trip so far had been amazing. But it had been hard work - there aren't many holidays where you have to get up around six in the morning to complete weather checks and the consequent flight planning, then submit flight plans, then finally have breakfast before heading off to the airfield to continue flying, with all the responsibilities that that includes. It is a great experience and the focus that is needed certainly takes your mind off your normal life. Now it was time to relax completely - Glenforsa on Mull was our holiday from the holiday. The stormy weather closed in for several days and we had to extend our stay - what a hardship! With Brendan's assistance we put G-BORW into a well sheltered location, tied her down and settled down to several days of reading, drinking Guinness, eating excellent food and watching the weather over the sound of Mull from the upstairs lounge of the hotel. In the summer, on a good day, one can get fabulous views of sunsets from there. There have also been many occasions when we have watched sea eagles flying past the hotel.

During a couple of the days we really did not venture out at all. On the other days we managed a couple of short walks, made a trip by bus to Tobermory (the main town on Mull - has an excellent fish restaurant - 'Cafe Fish') and by bus and ferry to Oban, which is always a delight (and which has another very nice fish restaurant - 'Ee-usk'). The weather was changeable and very windy, to the point that even the ferries between Oban and Mull were disrupted some of the time, which does not happen often. So for most of our stay, we just enjoyed the peacefulness and hospitality of the Glenforsa Hotel.

Home

While on Mull, there was one afternoon mid-week when the weather subsided for long enough to pop over to Oban for fuel (a flight of less than 20 miles). It meant that we

would have sufficient fuel to return directly to Coventry when the weather did finally improve. And, of course, it was an opportunity to say hello to Paul Keegan who operates the fuelling facilities at Oban and who always provides a cup of tea and a jammy dodger.

By the end of the week the weather was getting better and we had to admit that we really should be returning home. It was still windy and changeable but after five nights on Mull, we set off back to Coventry. It was still quite lumpy and bumpy out there and over a third of the 3-hour flight was spent flying on instruments but overall it was uneventful.

In conclusion - we had had a brilliant time. We had been lucky with the weather for most of the route but the call to go anti-clockwise was a good one. This was especially true because accommodation in some of the places that we visited isn't easy to come by (and we had to make all the bookings as flexible as possible) but it all worked out well.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning what an excellent aid SkyDemon was. It made both the flight planning and the submission/modification of flight plans so much simpler than on previous trips but it's important not to rely on it completely - we did find a few minor mistakes in the information and when I logged in at six in the morning in Finland (which is 04:00 UK time), getting the message that the server was off-line would have been very disappointing if I hadn't had alternative ways of getting the weather and NOTAMS. But overall, it worked very well and when flying, it provides navigation information and great situational awareness. And lastly, it does keep a log of the flight, which can be exported to Google Earth. These logs display the route and even a visualisation of the aircraft altitude, all of which supplements the memory of the flying - well done to the SkyDemon team for an excellent product.



WORDS & PICTURES: Mike and Sue Konrád

BELOW: One epic trip laid out in Google Earth





Out of Africa

As part of CovAero's summer "JuFly" challenge, two club members set out for Africa. Three days' flying saw France, Spain and Africa ticked off the list. Now all that needed to be done was get home...

Part 2 of 2

Read Part 1 in the Autumn 2020 newsletter on the Club website [here](#)

Day 4: Tangier - Gibraltar - Granada - Alicante

The early hours of Eid in Morocco were full of the sounds of a celebration getting into full swing...sleep was somewhat hard to come by! Nevertheless, a few hours were snatched here and there and all too soon the alarm rang at some ungodly hour and it was time to go! We were well ahead of the hotel's breakfast schedule yet the staff kindly put together a couple of 'breakfast boxes' to take with us.

Upon landing the day previously, our Swissport handling agent had arranged for a taxi to take us to our hotel and she also (sternly) instructed him to pick us up and get us back to the airport today. To his credit, he duly arrived at 6am to whisk us through the early morning emptiness of Tangier to the airport.

Whilst waiting for our handling agent, we munched our way through the breakfast boxes and briefed the 20-minute, 51nm flight to Gibraltar. It looked fairly straightforward; taking off to the west, turning right at the Atlantic then left at the Mediterranean onto final for Gibraltar's runway 27. And so it transpired – we lifted off and the mighty Atlantic Ocean came

into view. As we crossed over the shoreline and made our right-hand turn to the north we couldn't help but wonder what adventures might lie to the south. Maybe some other day!

The main challenge with Gibraltar is, unsurprisingly, how the wind chooses to swirl around the rock on any given day. The military AIP includes really useful charts showing prevailing winds alongside the corresponding turbulence areas to be expected - we had pored over these in the days and weeks prior to the trip. On the day we got lucky; the wind was from the northwest which gives minimal additional effects. The last thing to keep an eye on is Spanish restricted area LER164 which encroaches on the extended centre line for runway 27 necessitating a slightly offset approach.

The single east-west runway at Gibraltar famously crosses over the main north-south road from the Spanish border north of the airport to Gibraltar town to the south. The arrangement is broadly similar to a railway level-crossing where barriers descend across the road to halt all traffic and pedestrians for a given period of time prior to each flight's arrival and then remain down for a

quick runway inspection afterwards. It's no trivial disruption and thus being on an approach to Gibraltar is a rare treat in a PA-28 these days! Stefan greased it onto runway 27 and vacated as directed on taxiway Alpha, well before the 'level crossing' which must only have added to the chagrin of the locals waiting to cross the runway and go about their business!

Our trip was aimed at raising some awareness and financial support for the Aerobility charity. When we were organising the trip to Gibraltar the airport management was really enthusiastic and talked about us being interviewed by the local press! So as we parked on stand 5 we were half-expecting the handling agent to be flanked by TV crews and a press scrum – but no; it appeared they had toned it down to a meeting with the Airport Manager and Deputy; both thoroughly affable chaps who were clearly interested in our trip and delighted to be hosting us.

We wandered south into the town proper and I was surprised at how it felt bigger than I expected but also how 'English' it all seemed! Road signs, shop fronts, brand names...all exactly as you would see in any UK city. It almost feels as though you've



stumbled upon a novelty English-themed park at the southern tip of Europe. All too soon it was time to head back to the airport to get underway for the next leg. As we plodded up the main road the runway gates came down in preparation for a flight arrival. A bit of karma for us? Maybe! We watched with interest as the traffic built up on either side of the runway: cars, trucks, busses...we wondered what would happen if an emergency vehicle ever needed to cross. The halted crowd of local pedestrians, having seen all this before, just waited patiently – reading their Kindles and browsing their phones. In due course a Gulfstream landed in front of us, rolled out to the turning circle at the extreme far end of 27 and slowly lumbered all the way back to taxiway Alpha. A runway inspection and sweep ensued, using those little road sweepers with the two rotating brushes sticking out of the front. Meanwhile we waited. No trivial disruption indeed!

Back at the airport we were escorted out to Stand 5 and clambered into our life vests ready for the long haul back to the UK. At Stand 4 fare-paying passengers clambered aboard an easyJet A319 and strapped in for their short hop back to the UK. I suppose it's all relative!

Take off clearance from Gibraltar was the rather novel "No flight over the harbour or any part of The Rock, cleared for take-off runway 27..." We left the ground long before reaching the level crossing barriers which had been duly lowered for our departure – creating the customary road traffic chaos. Work is well and truly in progress to create tunnels under the runway which should make such chaos a thing of the past.

We climbed to 7500' for the 1-hour, 110nm, leg back to Granada where we had departed the Schengen customs area only the day before. It seemed much longer than that, having experienced both Morocco and Gibraltar in the intervening 24 hours. Pinch yourself – what a privilege! The leg was a straight reversal of the outbound one: we entered the Sevilla class D TMA, crossed the coast of Spain at Punta Calabura and sailed overhead the international Malaga/Costa del Sol airport. Even at 7500', a full 3000' above the ground directly below us (although lower than some of the surrounding peaks), we felt the effects of a mountain wave tugging us groundwards as we crossed over

TOP: Final for runway 27 at Gibraltar. Restricted area to the north so slightly offset final to the south.

MIDDLE: Two aircraft, same destination, different routes!

BOTTOM: Departing Gibraltar: "No flight over the harbour or any part of The Rock".

the ridges of the Sierras de Tejeda National Park. It didn't last long and the floor drops away down towards Granada where we were soon back on the ground clearing customs again.

Fed, watered and feeling able, we continued for the day's third leg back to Muxtel - and a second welcome layover courtesy of Stefan's family, not far north of Alicante. In common with most other nations' charts, Spain's is littered with Danger and Restricted areas, two of which were of interest on this leg. The first was LER111 – in order to remain outside it we had to climb to 7000'; not a huge issue as we had to clear the mountains that border Granada to the south in any case! The second was LER63 - which covers a huge area in excess of 7500nm² - and it was being activated by NOTAM at 16:00, later that afternoon. We'd left Granada at 12:30 and were due to be on the ground at Muxtel shortly after 14:30, almost 90 minutes before NOTAM activation. You can sense the "but" coming I'm sure BUT our area controller was less sure. Perched up at 7000' with less than 10 minutes to go before crossing into LER63 we were asked to descend to not above 1000' so as to remain outside the NOTAM'ed area. Somewhat surprised at apparently getting our timings so wrong, we started an immediate descent (to avoid risking hurting our poor ears!) but asked the controller to confirm whether the NOTAM activation time had been brought forward from 16:00. The controller didn't seem able to confirm the start time of the NOTAM at all and we thought we might be on for a reprieve. We levelled off and did a few orbits but to no avail: we were told not above 1000' "just to be sure". Poor show but down we went, taking our bemusement with us. So here we were again, out low over the water but well prepared with our life vests, raft and a plan to ditch near one of the many boats that were out playing on the sea. Always as steady as a rock, G-OGEM had no intention of doing anything other than flying and lapped up the next 130nm at 1000' AGL (or is that "AWL"?)

Just over 2-hours and 252nm after leaving Granada we were lined up for final on Muxtel's runway 30 and that brought to a close another superb day's flying: Tangier to Gibraltar to Alicante. Can't be bad!



ABOVE: Flying low out over the water to avoid an inactive NOTAM!

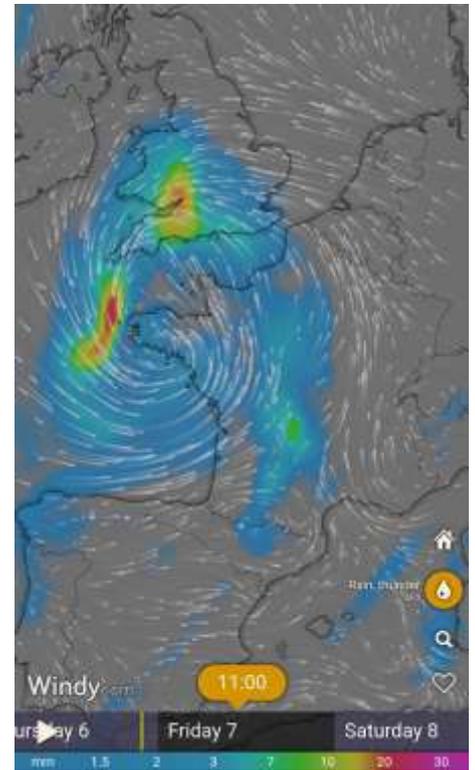
BELOW: Good clean VFR fun – flying past the peak of Monserrat-Sant Jeroni



Day 5: Alicante – Reus – Toulouse

From Alicante back to the UK we had always planned to fly a different route to the outbound route; does every pilot not also collect airport ICAO codes in their logbook as a sideline? The first deviation was a plan to strike out for the island of Mallorca, some 180nm east of Alicante with a water crossing in the region of 130nm. That was the easy bit. We looked at routing to Son Bonet - the 'old' airport - but approaching VFR from the west is a trickier option due to high ground and the presence of the busy 'new' airport. This leaves you with no real option other than to extend your water crossing to fly to the north of the island, hook around the offending high ground and then fly back down the centre of the island to Son Bonet. We eventually decided that it was probably beyond the scope of this trip but we figured knowing what is achievable and what is less-so is an important aspect of a

successful trip! Plan B was to fly up the coast to Reus ("Barcelona" in Ryanair-speak). We thought we'd try to get in there without a ground-handling agent so we phoned ahead for PPR but after much back and forth and problems assigning us a parking space we decided to get a handling agent so sort it out after all. One call to Swissport again and all the problems vanished! I guess that's what you pay for! So after fuelling up at Muxtel we set off. This time our water crossing was at an entirely more appropriate 6000'. After being cleared into the Reus CTR we were asked to follow the coast before being instructed to orbit whilst a Ryanair 737 completed its approach. Once that was done the controller swiftly got us on the ground to our waiting Swissport minibus – on an apron packed to the brim with empty aircraft parking spaces. Go figure! Reus was ostensibly meant to be a rapid fuel stop but our handler whisked us over to the other side of



ABOVE LEFT: An awesome display of nature's power crossing the Pyrenees.

ABOVE: A huge low swept through France producing the trip's only unflyable day.

LEFT: On the ground at the delightful Toulouse Lasbordes.



sobering to see, first hand, the effects of what must have been conditionally unstable air in the vicinity of the mountains. We had ensured a good 'out' for ourselves by keeping much lower ground to the east but it was still quite a steep decent to keep ourselves VMC. We continued to pick our way through the build-ups, some of which towered like vast vertical monuments to the power of Mother Nature. As we crossed the border into France the high ground fell away, so too did the cloud and after a total flight time of just over 2 hours we were on the ground at Toulouse Lasbordes.

Lasbordes was perfect; the picturesque epitome of a sleepy French airfield. The fuel pumps were located just off the taxiway where we vacated the runway so we refuelled immediately – hoping to facilitate a speedy getaway the following morning. We parked G-OGEM on the apron right in front of the tower and headed to our digs for the evening.

Day 6: Toulouse

"Death and Taxes" as the saying goes...and Weather Delays are perhaps the 3 inevitables in every pilot's life and so it was that the

the airport to check our passports and bags – perhaps they felt obliged to provide some sort of chauffeuring service to justify the handling fee!

So, where to next on our route home? The weather in France was certainly less favourable than the outbound trip so we had to pick our route a bit more carefully. Perpignan perhaps? No, too short a leg. Carcassonne? Possibly. What about Toulouse? Not the enormous Blagnac of course - home to the Airbus factory - but we did notice that Toulouse is also home to two nice looking out-of-town airfields: Francazal to the west and Lasbordes to the east, which looked ideal. We filed the flightplan for Lasbordes, refuelled the aircraft and headed off; keen to get a move on as cumulous clouds were starting to build immediately to the north of Reus.

First order of business was to negotiate our way past Barcelona's El Prat international airport. It lies on

the coast with rising ground inland to the north. Its TMA puts a lid of 4500' on VFR traffic over the whole area and steps down towards the surface closer to El Prat, as you'd expect. However, the whole arrangement does leave a definite playground to the north where we could squeeze through. Not too far north though; there is high ground with Monserrat-Sant Jeroni peaking at 4055' AMSL. The convective afternoon allowed us decent enough VMC between scattered cumulous and let us bump and yaw our way past the peak at the perfect sightseeing level.

Once we had passed El Prat and Sabadell we were free to climb to 7000' which got us above the cloud tops. That worked for a while but as we headed north towards the Pyrenees the cloud tops got higher, the bases got lower and the coverage increased to BKN so we really had no other option but to descend to remain VMC. It's quite



TOP: Mile after mile of VFR flying French-style, at 9000'
ABOVE: Approaching Nantes: it's polite to clean an aircraft before returning it.

weather further north in France kept us on the ground in Toulouse for a whole day. The weather around Toulouse was reasonably flyable but there just wasn't anywhere useful to go once airborne. We spent the day wandering around Toulouse, grabbed a bite to eat and then realised that the Airbus factory offers tours every few hours. Let's go then! The tour was interesting enough to pass a few hours but it could have been better. If we had made a trip to Toulouse specifically to see the Airbus factory tour then I think both of us would have felt somewhat short-changed.

Day 7: Toulouse – Nantes – Jersey – Coventry

Day 7 dawned, the weather looked much more favourable and the Aéroclub de Loire-Atlantique at Nantes beckoned. Back at Lasbordes before opening time, we couldn't find anywhere to pay our landing fee and as time dragged on one club suggested that we sent the fee via post after we arrived home. It was really all very relaxed. G-OGEM bounded up into the cool morning air whilst we tuned to the Toulouse controller who was happy for us to climb to 6000' before handing us

over to the next controller enroute – again, a real treat for us British pilots.

We were expecting increasing patchy showers as we progressed towards Nantes and, indeed, the cumulous beneath us starting closing up a little more and the tops climbed up towards us. With nothing but open FIR and class E around us we climbed to 7000' and ultimately 9000' to stay well above the cloud tops before it was time to think about descending for Nantes through one of the gaps.

The world below the cloud base was murky and showery. Again it brought home how lucky French fliers are in that they have so much open airspace which allows for this kind of high, easy cruising. The same trip below the clouds would have been much more draining. We gave the aircraft one last really good soaking and then we were asked to join left-hand downwind for runway 21 and turn base when we were visual with the 737 on final. I love these examples of GA and CAT living together side by side – for my part I just had to make sure I didn't let the side down! I always try to think of each of us as representing the *next* GA pilot that wants to come this way.

Once on the ground we were directed to the dedicated GA parking area and, as usual, ordered some fuel. We'd got into the habit of filling up wherever avgas was available. With the two of us and all our equipment on board we still had the luxury of being able to take full fuel so keeping it topped up was a no-brainer.

We made our way over to the Aéroclub de Loire-Atlantique building where club member Adrien greeted us like old friends. The coffee pot went on, we chatted freely, even the club's dog trotted over to say 'Bonjour'...this is the way all club flying should be! It was just approaching midday as we had landed at Nantes and by this time we has assessed that the weather was good enough to press on to at least Jersey plus, once back in Channel Islands and UK airspace, we'd be able to make use of instrument flying too, if needed. Adrien graciously led us through the maze and crush of international passengers in Nantes' main terminal building so that we could pay our landing fee and clear Schengen area customs for the final time. Why did Adrien do all this? I have no idea! He was under no obligation to do so but he gave his



ABOVE: Coasting out to the east of Dinard, heading for Jersey.
BELOW: Improvised water-canon fun back at Coventry.

time freely to fellow fliers and we thanked him cordially.

Nantes ATC deftly got us airborne once again and we climbed initially to 3500' via the "NW" VRP before turning north. We routed directly overhead Rennes Saint Jacques which had been our first stop on the trip a whole 7 days previously. The air was actually pretty bumpy over land but eased as we coasted out over the sea to the east of Dinard where the scenery was nothing short of stunning.

Clouds and showers were forecast to be hanging around at Jersey so we had planned for an ILS approach. In the end we didn't really need it as the offending clouds had drifted away from the approach and we touched down just an hour and a quarter after leaving Nantes...it had felt like a fairly short hop! It's funny to note how the longer legs re-calibrate your mind with respect to what constitutes a "short" leg. We'd both flown to Jersey previously so it felt somewhat familiar as we taxied behind a FlyBe Dash 8 and easyJet A320 before turning right onto the grass parking at Jersey Aero Club. It was still only early afternoon as we made our way upstairs to the café and ordered some lunch.

Thoughts turned to whether we could get the final leg back to Coventry completed today. Certainly there was more than enough time but the weather and cloud across the English south coast and at Coventry weren't great. We could transit the

south coast IFR so that was no problem but with Coventry's oh-so-useful ILS long since gone we really needed the weather to improve before setting off. The forecast did show that it would be clearing over the next few hours and after exchanging a few text messages with instructor Claire on the ground at Coventry we realised that it was already clearing thanks to a good stiff wind. It would easily be clear enough given that it would take us an hour and forty minutes to fly there.

Final flight plan submitted, our clearance from Jersey for the water crossing was "not above 1000'..." Oh

no – here we go again! However, once we changed to Jersey Approach we were granted a climb to 5000' and there we stayed for most of the way home. We routed past Cap de la Hague – the last glimpse of France that we would see on our epic trip and, as we made our way towards the coast at Southampton, we could more clearly see the cloud build-ups that lay across our path. Nothing nasty looking so we agreed that the easiest way through would indeed be an IFR transit courtesy of Solent Radar. We were granted the transit and we hit only our second round of IMC of the whole trip. The first had been in more or less the same place on the outbound leg, a week earlier!

The cloud broke up before too long and we continued north towards Oxford, passing familiar landmarks like Greenham Common, Didcot, Brize Norton and then all of a sudden it was Gaydon, Draycote Water and left base for 23.

What a trip: just under 3000nm, 14 take-offs, 14 landings and 28 hours of faultless performance from G-OGEM...what a machine! It can be hard to take it in whilst it's actually happening – did we really just fly through France and Spain to Africa and then back again via Gibraltar? We heard it announced on local radio the following day and that, apparently, makes it official!



WORDS: Anthony Ryan
PICTURES: Stefan Winkvist



Stefan ran a Twitter feed throughout the entire trip which you can see here:
<https://twitter.com/JuFlySouth>

Should you feel so inclined you can still donate to Aerobility here:
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/flying-south>

“A I F O A” Aviation Is Full of Acronyms!

...so just for fun, and to help out those who may not have seen some of these before, here is a list of every acronym we could find in this edition of the newsletter.

' – foot/feet

AGL – Above Ground Level

AIP – Aeronautical Information Publication

AMSL – Above Mean Sea Level

ATC – Air Traffic Control

avgas – Aviation Gasoline

BKN – Broken (cloud)

CAA – Civil Aviation Authority

CAT – Commercial Air Transport

CFI – Chief Flight Instructor

CTR – Control Zone

e-Exams – Electronic Exams

FCL – Flight Crew Licensing

FIR – Flight Information Region

FRTOL – Flight Radio Telephony Operator's Licence

GA – General Aviation

GASCo – General Aviation Safety Council

ICAO – International Civil Aviation Organisation

IFR – Instrument Flight Rules

ILS – Instrument Landing System

IMC – Instrument Meteorological Conditions

km – kilometres

kts – knots

LAPL – Light Aircraft Pilots Licence

LER – Spanish Restricted area

m – metre

nm – nautical miles

NOTAM – Notice To Airmen

NW – Northwest

ORS – Official Record Series

PPL – Private Pilot Licence

PPR – Prior Permission Required

SERA – Standardised European Rules of the Air

TMA – Terminal Control Area

UK – United Kingdom

VFR – Visual Flight Rules

VHF – Very High Frequency

VMC – Visual Meteorological Conditions

VRP – Visual Reference Point

It's Your Committee...

Coventry Aeroplane Club is owned by its members and run by a General Committee elected at each AGM.

The committee members are also directors of the two limited companies owned by the club.

Officers:

Chair: Claire Leadbetter

Vicechair: Vacant

Secretary: Rowan Smith

Treasurer: Neil Hedges

General Committee Members:

Darren Cheshire, Peter Gibson, Richard Holland, Stuart Robottom-Scott, Anthony Ryan, Lauren Tilsley, Alex Whyte, Stefan Winkvist

Head of Training/Chief Flight Instructor:

Mark Rawlings

Want to Join us?

Email us at committee@covaero.com

Safety ...is at the heart of everything that we do. If you want to discuss or report a safety issue, please email safety@covaero.com

...and it's Your Newsletter

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter – our aim is to produce them for Club members quarterly.

What else would you like to see?

Warm thanks go to all of the contributors of this newsletter; if you enjoy reading the features then remember that all of them are written by club members just like you.

Do you have a flying experience that you would like to contribute? If so we would love to hear from you! It can be anything to do with flying ranging from flying trips (long and short), useful tips, historical items, pictures – if it's something that interests you then it will interest others too!

Get in touch with any committee member or email committee@covaero.com

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