OXFORD MODEL FLYING CLUB

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR NEW AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

Thank you for your interest in Oxford Model Flying Club (OMFC). OMFC has been established for over fifty years and, at the time of writing (mid-2021), it has over 80 members and almost every aspect of model aircraft and multi-rotor flying is represented. OMFC is affiliated to the British Model Flying Association (BMFA); please note that BMFA membership is mandatory for all of our flying members. BMFA membership can be arranged on your behalf by the club; alternatively, you can join it yourself either as a 'Country Member' or through another club. Our main flying site is Port Meadow, which is one of the finest locations for model flying in the country. We also fly small models from Begbroke Village Hall playing field at our monthly meetings and other events. Although it is not a dedicated OMFC flying site, the nearby Wittenham Clumps, which are two low hills situated about ten miles south of Oxford, may be used for slope-soaring.

OMFC Monthly Meetings

Normally, OMFC holds regular club meetings at Begbroke Village Hall (3 Begbroke Lane, Kidlington, OX5 1RQ) on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. During the summer months, we are able to fly small models (up to 500g) in the adjacent Begbroke Village Hall Playing Field - albeit within strict parameters due to the proximity of Oxford Airport. During the winter months we often have guest speakers, or speakers from within the Club, who give presentations on subjects related to model flying and aviation in general. The meetings are normally quite well attended and, if you are considering joining the club, it might be worth coming along to meet other members and chat about flying at Port Meadow and other locations. These meetings have been affected by C-19 lockdown rules, but from May 2021 we intend to reinstate them albeit with possible restrictions on the number of attendees.

Flying at Port Meadow

Port Meadow is an outstanding site for model flying; however, it's important to understand that it's open to the public, widely used for recreation, and it's grazed by horses and cattle. Consequently, flyers must take care to operate their aircraft in a safe and considerate manner. Model flying activity usually attracts attention, especially if you're flying a scale model, so expect spectators to come and chat - perhaps at inopportune moments. Also, beware of loose dogs, which might attack models. For Radio Control (RC) flyers who fly models with wheeled undercarriage, there's a mown patch, which is suitable for rolling take-offs and landings; however, in general, the best type model to fly at the Meadow is probably one, which is capable of being hand-launched type. Hand-launching means that you'll have the flexibility to fly your model away from the Patch at times when it's occupied by a herd of grazing animals or a group of picnickers. Away from the Patch, the surface is quite rough with medium-length (grazed) grass.

Flying at Port Meadow

For free-flight models, Port Meadow is a particularly good site; however, it is situated only a short distance to the south south east of London Oxford Airport's (LOA's) Flight Restriction Zone (FRZ). Due to the risk of a 'flyaway' model encroaching LOA's FRZ, and the risk that members of the public or animals might unexpectedly move into an airborne model's anticipated flight volume, the use of either radio de-thermalisers or radio assistance is encouraged. For control-line models, the Meadow is not ideal, but control-line flight is possible with care. A hand-launched type with a controllable throttle is recommended.

We don't have regular flying meetings at Port Meadow; however, a proposal to reinstate these is presently being considered by the Committee. If you fly electric models, rubber/CO2 powered models or gliders, you can fly there at any time; however, I/C powered models are subject to stricter limitations as set out in the Rules. It's important to note that, because Port Meadow is open to the public, we need to be sure that our members are safe to fly. Consequently, to fly a radio-controlled model or drone on your own at Port Meadow, you'll need to hold a BMFA RC Basic Proficiency Certificate (BPC) or 'A' certificate - unless it weighs less than 250g. In the case of models weighing less than 250g, all that's required qualified club member needs to check that you are safe to fly alone. If you don't yet hold a BMFA RC Achievement Scheme certificate, don't worry; we have plenty of experienced flyers who are willing to help you work towards this and, in any case, it's always better to fly with other people. If you're ready, or nearly ready, to take a BMFA RC Achievement Test we have club examiners available and it's easy to arrange. If you wish to fly a free-flight model with radio assistance, separate rules apply, and no BMFA RC certification is required provided your model is operated within the parameters set out in the Club Rules. If you wish to apply to join the Club to fly RC models, it would be useful to let us know your experience level, and the type of model or drone that you wish to fly, so that we can discuss your requirements.

XK A800 Lightweight 'Foamie'

Multi-rotors

Please note that, if you fly multi-rotors at Port Meadow, you must fly under the BMFA's Article 16 Authorisation rather the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Open Category regulations. In particular, you mustn't fly closer to uninvolved persons than the distances specified in Article 16. The reason for this is that the CAA Open Category rules will eventually permit you to fly Sub-category A1 and A2 drones very close to uninvolved persons; indeed, much closer than we would wish at Port Meadow. Given the generally poor public perception of 'drones', it wouldn't take many complaints about close encounters with remote-controlled aircraft to place our continued use of the Meadow at risk.

As already mentioned, OMFC requires a practical flying check for all of its members who fly RC models and/or multi-rotors. This is to ensure that our remote pilots are safe to operate in a public space. For conventional model aircraft weighing 250g or more, this normally means passing a BMFA RC Achievement Scheme BPC or 'A' Certificate test; however, for most modern drones, these tests cannot be used because the BMFA insists that their GPS must be deselected, which may not be possible without hacking into the drone. The BMFA is looking to introduce a new test for so-called 'camera drones'; however, in the meantime, to allow our members to fly, we've amended our rules to permit our own internal club multi-rotor test. This test follows the flight profile of the BMFA's multi-rotor 'A' test - but with the GPS and ATT mode switched on. The BMFA Achievement Scheme site

describes the flight profile for the test, which is straightforward and requires very little practice. There is no additional charge for this or, indeed, any BMFA Achievement Scheme test. As with conventional model aircraft note that if your multi-rotor weighs less than 250g, there is no requirement for BMFA certification or the internal club test; we still need to see that you can fly it safely, but it's not a formal 'test' as such. Finally, some CAA drone qualifications involve a practical element (eg the General VLOS Certificate or GVC); this type of qualification might be acceptable in lieu of BMFA certification. If you hold such a qualification, please seek advice from the Membership Secretary.

Slope Soaring

Our nearest local slope-soaring site is Wittenham Clumps, which is about ten miles south of Oxford. It's a fairly small area comprising two lowish hills, one of which is a former iron-age hill Fort. The site is not dedicated to us; anybody can fly there. It's owned by the Earth Trust, and slope-soaring has taken place there for many years; however, the rules for using the site are unclear except for the fact that the Earth Trust bans 'drones' from its sites. Consequently, OMFC advises its members to stick to the National Trust guidelines – ie no powered flying (including no electric models).

Wittenham Clumps viewed from the north

It's not a perfect site; the best slope, which is on the north-westerly hill, needs a north-north westerly to north-easterly wind which is infrequent in the UK. Also, the landing areas are comprised by vegetation and both hills can become very busy with walkers and picnickers. The south-easterly slope (the hill fort) is best for the UK's prevailing south-westerly winds, but the ramparts cause turbulence and the ditches are filled with brambles. As you might expect, 'floaty" gliders are good in light winds, and foamies have the advantage of being able to cope with less-than-ideal landing areas....such as the brambles! It's possible to fly faster models at the Clumps, but I'd advise confining these to less busy times. On the positive side, the views are superb.

'Meadow Flyers' WhatsApp Group

OMFC has a Club WhatsApp group, which we use to arrange short-notice informal meet-ups at the Meadow, to contact other members and to share other relevant information. This facility is particularly useful if you need someone to join you if you are unable to fly alone, and joining this group is strongly recommended. It's recognised that many people eschew social media of any kind, and this is entirely understandable; however, it's important to note that this is a private group, which focuses entirely on OMFC model flying and other club matters. During the C-19 pandemic, the group proved to be an excellent method of organising short-notice, socially distanced meetings for multiple groups at the Meadow.