Meadow Flyer
Newsletter of The Oxford M.F.C.

Spring 2026

David Lovegrove launches his rudder/throttle electric Skyleada Bantam on a classically misty early Spring morning; having said it was Spring, I have to report that on the day it was absolutely freezing! The Bantam is built from a reduced-size plan published in Aeromodeller and at 26" span and 90+ grams (much of it nose weight) it should be an ideal model for flying outdoors at Begbroke during the summer months [Andy B photo].

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Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of the OMFC Newsletter, I hope the content is reasonably eclectic in an aviation sort-of-way. As ever, we could do with a bit more RC coverage to better reflect the range of interests in OMFC, but I think this issue isn't too bad, coverage-wise.

My winter building program has proceeded more-or-less according to plan, except that the plan has slipped slightly; I'm hoping to have the Bristol Scout and perhaps the Barracuda dimer ready for the next Begbroke meeting on Wednesday 18th March. Basically, I'm not a fast builder.

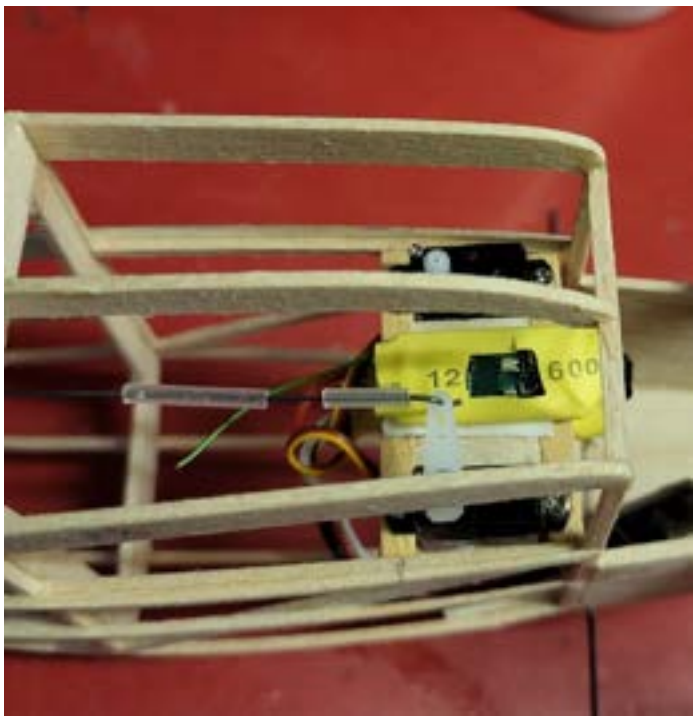
I'm currently thinking about what I might want to build this year; I used to have a fairly complicated spreadsheet for all this with calculated scores and everything, but I've abandoned that idea after the good-natured ridicule of my flying friends became too embarrassing. On balance, I think I want to try a Coupe later in the year, and another FF scale biplane. And if I can start building something at about the right time (around June, given my building speed) I might even get to next year's Indoor Scale Nats.

I'd like to thank David Lovegrove, Simon Burch, Andrew Longhurst, Bill Dennis, Chris Brainwood, Gary Law, Martin Bennet, Simon Milan and Peter Brown for providing content and services for this newsletter - much appreciated, gents - couldn't do it without you.

Chairman's Chat – Simon Burch

With Port Meadow turning itself into a lake, I've not had the opportunity to fly anything for a while now. Instead, my aeromodelling activities have been confined to building my long-running West Wings Puss Moth project, which I'm converting to lightweight electric RC for indoor flying.

Rather than build the actual kit, I used the plan and cut the parts myself. While chatting to Paul Thomas on the way to the Patch a few weeks ago, he (jokingly, I think) asked me whether some kind of childhood trauma had stopped me from building the kit. On reflection, perhaps Paul wasn't so far off the mark; I well remember my first I/C powered kit - a CL KK Radian. As a 12yr old, I'd saved for ages to buy it, but my patience, skills, and tools weren't really up to building it properly. I was hugely disappointed with the result. The instructions, which somewhere read 'care at this stage will considerably enhance the appearance of the model' were not wrong. I knew I could do better and I wanted my unbuilt kit back again, but I'd run out of money. Of course, that hardly qualifies as a 'childhood trauma', but it was a salutary lesson.



55 years later, the actual reason for not building my Puss Moth kit was because, eventually, I want to build it as a 'proper' rubber-powered model. As for my RC conversion, I've struggled with it. The West Wings plan is pretty good; the only fault I've found is that it shows the rudder balance section in the wrong place. Naturally, I discovered this only after I'd installed the tail feathers. The structure is fairly complicated, and it took me four attempts to cover the right wing with troublesome silver tissue. The lightweight Futaba RX that I used needed direct precision soldering to the servos and ESC, which isn't my forte - but eventually it all worked - much to my amazement. Yes, I know you can buy this stuff ready-made from Micro Aces, but why make things easy? Hopefully, I'll have it ready to fly by the summer.

Slightly more successful than my building efforts was last month's indoor Scrapbox Glider Challenge at Begbroke. With plenty of entrants, we had a thoroughly enjoyable evening, and there was a diverse range of models on show. I thank everyone who contributed to the event, and all those who took the trouble to build models and take part. Report and photos are on the OMFC Website: https://oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/omfc-indoor-scrap-box-glider-challenge-2026/

If anyone has any ideas for future winter indoor flying events at Begbroke, please let the committee know. Perhaps you've seen something that worked at another club. Ideally, events need to feature simple, inexpensive models that are easily accessible to newcomers. If you're willing to run an event, so much the better.

Safety Thoughts

With little flying taking place, I've not heard about any safety-related incidents happening so far this year.

Instead, let me draw your attention to some changes to the latest edition of the BMFA Handbook, in particular Incident Reporting Procedures at para 5.4, where it states: 'you must declare on the form whether or not you believe you have any responsibility for the incident'. As I interpret it, the declaration must be made to the BMFA (i.e. your insurer) on the form - not necessarily at the time of the incident.

Note also that the BMFA Handbook now refers, at 8.2, to the UK's Unmanned Air System (UAS) regulation document - i.e. (EU) 2019/947. CAP722, which you've probably heard of, is still extant but it's not actual regulation: rather, it sets out the CAA's guidance and policy. So far, so dull...but what does the change at para 8.2 mean for us?

In summary, the important thing to understand is that you need to hold a CAA Flyer ID to operate under Article 16 - regardless of how much your model weighs.

To fly models that weigh less than 100g, you don't need to hold a CAA Flyer ID but, if you don't, you must fly under the CAA's Open Category and not Article 16. That limits you to 400ft amongst other differences.

For us, operating under Article 16 is much easier. I strongly recommend all members to hold a CAA Flyer ID, which is best obtained by taking the BMFA's online Registration Competency Certificate (RCC) test at: https://rcc.bmfa.club/

For those interested (I suspect not many!), the UK's Unmanned Air System (UAS) regulation document (EU) 2019/947 is here: https://regulatorylibrary.caa.co.uk/2019-947-pdf/PDF.pdf The section most relevant to us is Annex A to Article 16 (pages 378 to 389). For those who wish to fly under the Open Category (as I mentioned, mandatory if you fly models weighing less than 100g and don’t hold a Flyer ID), the appropriate section is Annex Part A (page 106 - 141)

Balsa Stripper - Peter Brown

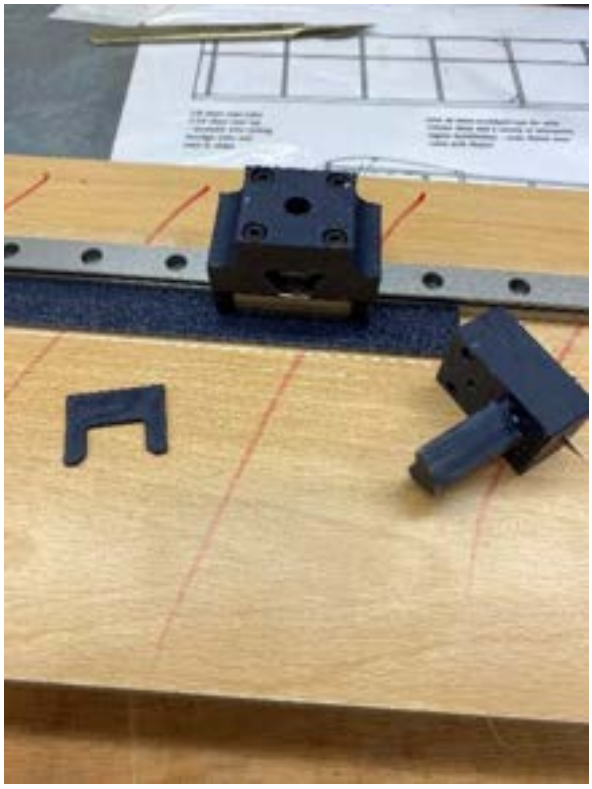
Having struggled to get consistent results (mainly a straight cut) with the Master Airscrew balsa stripper, I reverted to a steel straight edge and scalpel. Nice straight cuts but some issues trying to get the width dead on.

I *was* going to invest in the SLEC one with the aluminium guide channel, but they seem to have discontinued them. I set about making an unashamed copy (in principle), bought a piece of aluminium channel and 3D printed a blade (no.10A) holder assembly. For width control the blade holder can slide in/out of the bit that slides in the channel, locked in position at the desired width with a screw. This worked well but I wanted to improve the width control to preset standard widths. I printed some U-shaped shims in 1/32”, 1/16”, 3/32” and 1/8” thickness, these are inserted into the unit for desired width, can be stacked for wider widths. For cutting strip that is exactly square I realized if the shims were made from a piece of the sheet being cut then the cut strip is same in both directions.

Then whilst idly browsing eBay, I noticed that someone in Banbury had a new unused linear bearing track and carriage listed, I won it for a fiver (not that dear new-around £20). I adapted the blade holder to fit this and now get a smooth almost frictionless cut.

The track is mounted to an old beech laminate shelf with double sided tape and is 500mm long (had to cut track down from 1000mm as it was too long for what I needed)

It’s probably a bit over the top but it’s nice to have something that works really well that will cut up to 1/4" thick balsa in one pass. I did consider a Micrometer type width adjuster but quit whilst I was ahead.



3D Printed blade holder components

Components screwed together showing where the U-shaped spacer(s) fit

VMC Bebe Jodel - Andrew Longhurst

Father Christmas arrived with a Bebe Jodel kit from the Vintage Model Company. A relative had demanded to know what aeroplane kit I wanted for Christmas, I chose this one because, you will never guess, it has no hateful wing struts!

In 1946, Edouard Joly and Jean Délémontez formed the Société des Avions Jodel to supply kits, materials and plans to allow homebuilders to construct an ultralight monoplane designed by Délémontez and named the Jodel D.9 Bébé.The prototype was powered by a single 25 h.p. Poinsard flat two-cylinder engine, but later on everyone turned to the flat 4 Volkswagen chugger. Over 500 aircraft have been built by amateurs, flying clubs and indeed commercially in all parts of the world.

So, this little plane was just a large model in effect. I confess to not really liking scale models but I do them because they are part of the spirit of this club.

I don’t know where VMC get their wood from but the quality of it is fantastic, better than any I can get. Everyone who reviews their kits seems to say this and I know that they once stopped production for a few weeks because they couldn’t get wood to their standard. Yes, the days of the Keil Kraft kits having to be cut out with a bone saw and adze are gone…thankfully. The laser cutting is so perfect that it could all be pressed out gingerly by hand. It still had to be sanded to remove the laser burns but you can’t have everything. The parts fit together and are all exactly as plan. In fact, I think an experienced builder wanting a jigsaw puzzle for

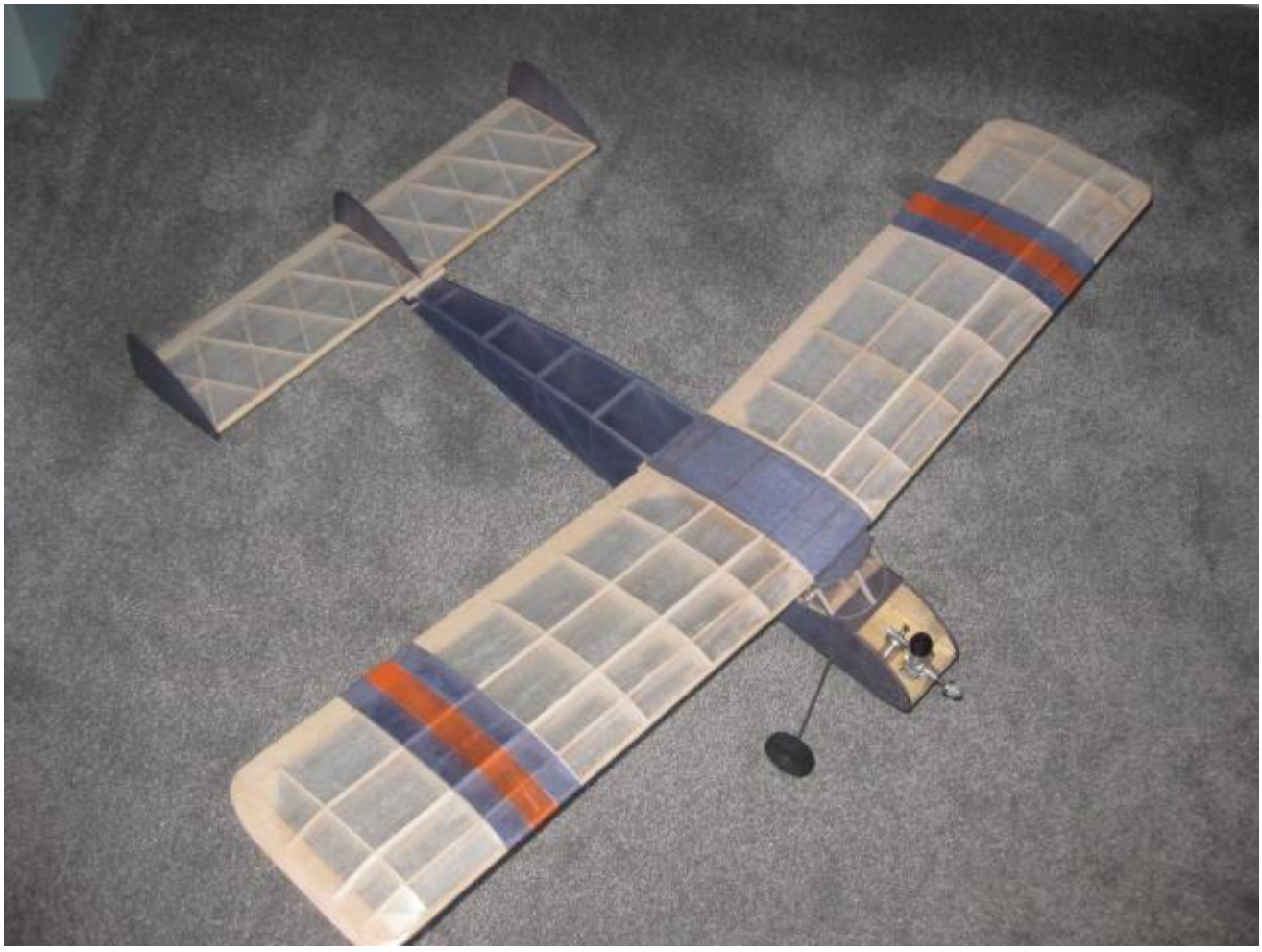
entertainment could build this without plan or instructions of any sort. Just a photo of the finished model would be enough. The PVA glue supplied is fine but takes half an hour to go off but the unsurpassed dispenser is surgical in precision.

All went swimmingly until I got to the front turtleback. It says to cut out the pattern in office paper, cover it with tissue using Pritstick and wrap it right round the diameter of the front. Once it's on, stick the well-formed canopy onto it. Well, that sounded pretty flimsy and I don't like Pritstick because it's made from potato starch and over a few years in my unheated shed it supports mould growth and it develops brown marks. To maintain a perfect political balance, I must state that this makes it biodegradable, so if you use it you can feel virtuous. A different adhesive might be OK, but I had a largish scrap of 1/32 balsa so stuck that on with good old balsa cement.

Modifications I made with a view to keep it airborne a little longer were to move back the rear motor peg a bay and compensate that with a bigger and heavier 7inch prop. On completion the CG was still aft of the 33% shown on the plan so I had to insert 2g of lead in the nose former. A loop of 3/16" is recommended but it's really stable in flight we might go to 2 loops 1/8".

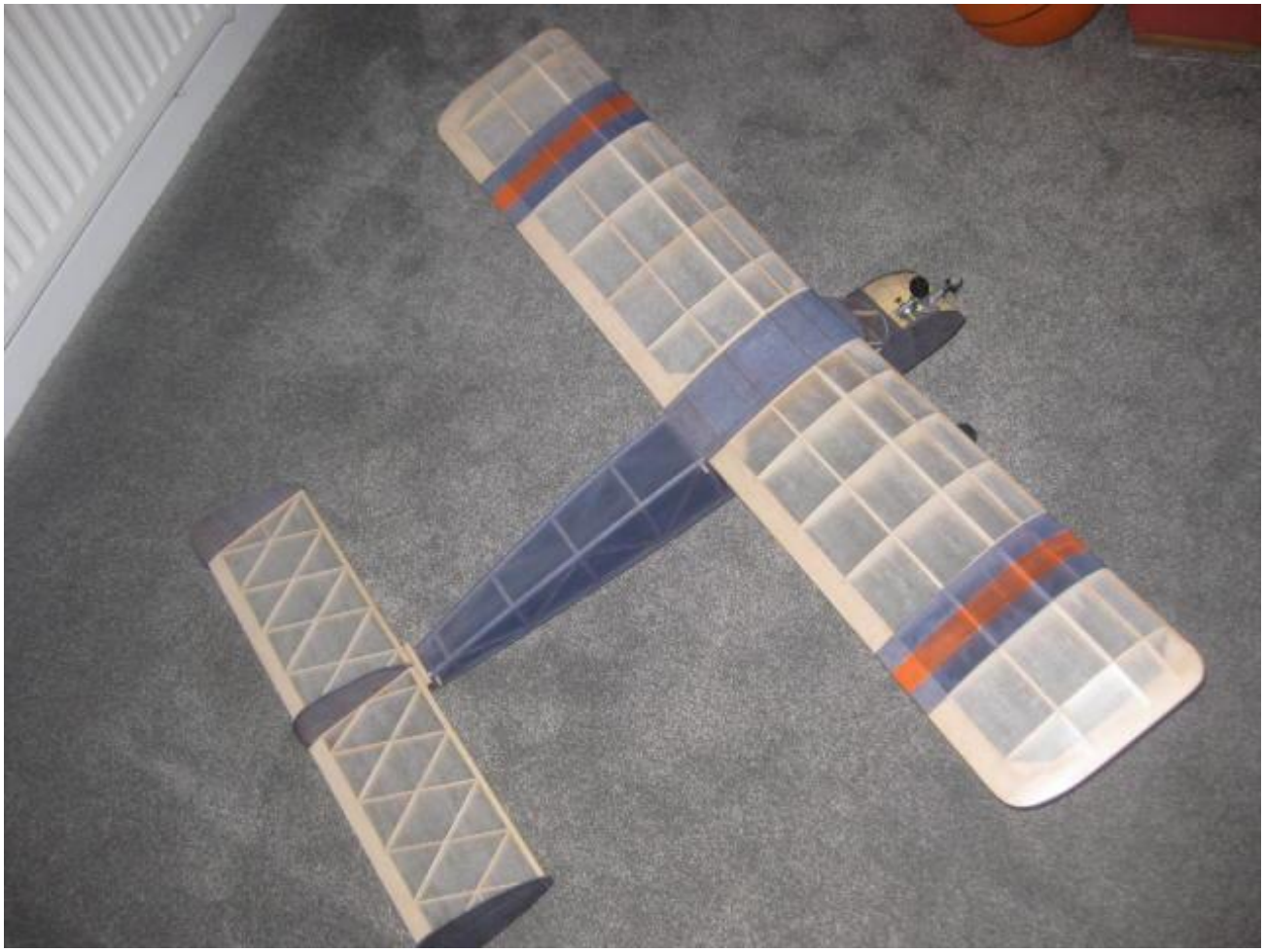
Weights - Fuselage 14.5, Wing 9.5, Tail 1.5, 8ins Prop 5.0, Total 30.0g

Performance Kits Apex - Bill Dennis



Some years ago, I was mightily impressed with Charlie Newman's Performance Kits Apex. A very strange looking model with some weird structural features but it flew magnificently.

I embarked on my own version, but it went wrong in a way I can't remember and was abandoned. I think it involved a starving horse. This new version has gone better and by using 6lb wood extensively, the weight is down to 11 oz, translating to under 5oz/sq ft. A Mills 75 should be adequate. Covering is Modelspan over Doculam, which is much easier and forgiving to use than mylar. I managed to get a warp in a wing but discovered that once re-heated, Doculam stays malleable for a short period, allowing the warp to be removed. It awaits testing when the Meadow is clear of boats.



How I Got Hooked on FF Scale - Bill Dennis

Andy asked for copy and so if he is really desperate, he can have this; the story of how I got hooked on FF scale. I've told the story before but it was years ago. Nevertheless, I can recall all the details as if it was yesterday.

In 1965 I attended the first SMAE Scale Rally at RAF Hemswell. Unfortunately, the weather was too bad for any flying but happily the Station CO allowed everyone to shelter in a hangar. This was reported in the July Aeromodeller, along with a list of all the models present. There was a smattering of early RC models, more CL (they ran their engines and the smell of nitro fuel still takes me straight back) but by far the majority was FF, almost all diesel-powered. But still I hadn't seen a free flight scale model in action – I didn't count Eric Coates and Terry Manley's machines flying on tethers at the far end of the hangar.

Scale Roll Call

Next year we tried again. I was just a spectator and being young and daft, I started at the RC scale area. There was a chap with a Piper Cub on floats. As he set about trying to start the thing, his wife sat down on a folding chair next to their dog and began knitting with a bored demeanour and Mrs Merton glasses.

After about 20 minutes the engine burst into life and the model was released, before rearing up into a stall and crashing onto the runway, scattering details, floats and the remains of the pilot far and wide.

At this, the wife folded up the knitting, turned to the dog and said, “That’s it, he’s broken it – we can go home now.”

Hopefully they got home in time for Sunday Night at the London Palladium.

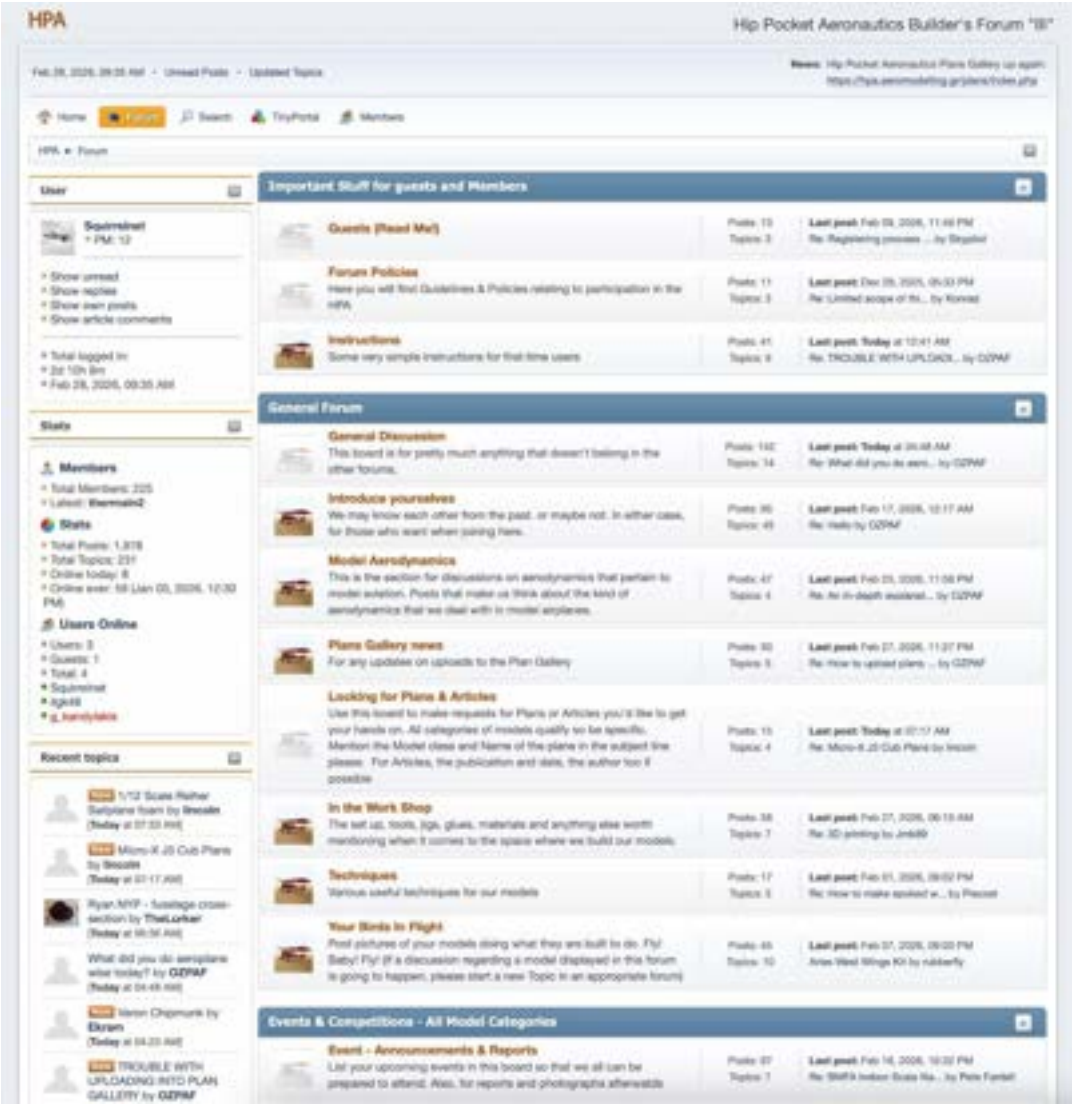
I then wandered up the perimeter track to what was the FF area to see what was going on. As I arrived, a chap who I subsequently learned was Terry Manley, came out with a Bristol Fighter and placed it on the runway.

With a couple of flicks the engine was running and off it went. It lifted off and turned right (this was before I knew it should have turned left) and headed towards the curved WW2 hangar that lay menacingly alongside the perimeter track. Striking it halfway up, the Bristol settled into the corrugations and ran all the way up to the apex. At this point it jumped up and executed a 90-degree left turn and ran along bumpily right to the end. It got better. Jumping up again, it now did a 180 and exactly retraced its path, turned right, ran down the side, lifted off and landed right at Terry’s feet. I couldn’t believe it and I promise I haven’t exaggerated but from that point it was FF scale for me, for good or ill. Terry tells me he once saw 8mm film of the feat, but it has yet to turn up on YouTube!

Hip Pocket Aeronautics Reborn - Chris Brainwood

The world of online forums has been with us for a couple of decades now, many of us maybe familiar with rcgroups.com and Modelflying.co.uk. both quite RC centred. For the FF orientated modeller the place to go in recent years was Hippocketaeronautics.com with its worldwide membership and comprehensive plans gallery so it was a great loss when last December the site closed down after a series of technical difficulties. Bruce Feaver had been doing a sterling job carrying on after the loss of its creator Dave (Ratz) as HPA 2 but in the end the challenges were too great ending in the demise of the old site and the loss of much of its data.

However all is not lost as riding out of the sunset is Aeromodelling's own knight in shining armour, well known FF Scale modeller George Kandylakis. George was already running an Aeromodelling site in his native Greece and offered to set up a sister site as a new home for the Hip Pocket refugees. With Bruce's blessing it has become known as HPA 3 and is gaining momentum with over 200 members to date, many being the old faces from HPA 2. The plans gallery is slowly being rebuilt with over 10,000 files thanks to many of the original up-loaders and there is a growing archive of magazines including the Profile series and Aeromodeller all available as PDF downloads.



The site is simply laid out with 'Recent Topics' on the front page which is the way most use as a way of keeping up with posts as well as event reports and detailed build threads.

Over to George Kandylakis for a run down on the site -

It was back in 2004 when I first discovered the Small Flying Arts forum. A great find, a forum of like-minded aeromodellers from all over the world, where we could "meet", discuss and exchange ideas and information. Unfortunately, with the passing of Dillon Bhagat in 2013, the forum shortly followed, much to the disappointment of hundreds of aeromodellers world wide.

The rescue came quite quickly in the form of the Hip Pocket Aeronautics forum, which was already running in parallel. It became the first choice and went perfectly for years. The recent passing of its administrator, Ratz, left Bruce with the difficult task of keeping it afloat. Sadly, despite his best attempts, it is gone too now.

With both forums, tons of posts, images, discussions, information etc. got lost. Most likely forever. But the need for an aeromodelling forum for our type of aeromodelling is still there. There are alternatives for communication but not of the same type we came to like.

So, this is an attempt to continue, even if the starting point is zero, given the massive loss of data. Bruce was generous enough to allow the use of HPA as a name for this new forum, so we continue with it, Hip Pocket Aeronautics it is...

Data and people cannot be brought back. But we can try and rebuild our community from now and for the future. With care that we do not suffer another irreversible loss. So I welcome anyone who would like to join, to give it a try and help in that direction.

Quoting from the original HPA and Ratz, some valid points, worth repeating:

Don't hesitate! Join in the fun!

If you're an experienced builder of model aircraft or just beginning to develop an interest in this hobby we'd love to have you as a member of Hip Pocket Aeronautics - Builders' Forum (or this follow-up one in our case).

Share knowledge, learn new building techniques, give or get help in your areas of interest or just share photos of your projects for all to enjoy. There are no qualifications in order to be a member here... well maybe one... it helps if you are into "stuff that flies".

By Registering for access you'll have the opportunity to discuss all those things you are looking for answers to or you'll be able to help someone to develop their building skills and reach the next level of success with their models.

HPA can be found at https://hpa.aeromodelling.gr

The Plans gallery can be found in the top right hand of the forum as a link or directly at https://hpa.aeromodelling.gr/plans/index.php

Registration is required to gain access with 3 security questions involving the world of Aeromodeller, Flying Aces Club and small 13” peanut models to avoid the bots.

A Look Back to the Meadow Flyer October 2022 Edition - Gary Law

The October 2022 edition of Meadow Flyer was, as we have come to expect from the house magazine, an impressive mix of items and articles covering both radio control, free flight and general aeromodelling topics. It also records several changes within the club.

This was the final MF edited by David Lovegrove, who had taken over from David Thurling's marathon editorship. Andy Blackburn took up the reins and continues to produce an outstanding magazine; definitely not a snoozeletter.

This post-Covid edition featured a report on the last Scalefest organised by Charlie Newman and flown in September. His declining health, sadly preventing him from continuing to run an event that had been an important part of the national scale calendar for many years.

Andy Crisp too, had stood down from running his very popular Dreaming Spires Gala. Gavin Manion described earlier galas to me recently as 'like a Bedouin encampment', with dozens of competitors being allowed to camp on the Meadow. I have a small trophy from the 2019 gala, 'Third, HiStart Glider'. This was Andy's last Dreaming Spires. Covid then intervened in a big way!

Bill Dennis' KK Lysander [Chris Brainwood photo]

The October 2022 Meadow Flyer also included a report on the 2022 Cloud Tramp mass launch to which had been added a P30/Coupe and a kit scale competition. This was an attempt by a few members to resurrect a club free flight competition to replace those now lost. Alan Trinder won the Cloud Tramp, Andrew Longhurst the P30/ Coupe and Bill Dennis the Kit Scale. I well remember Bill's expertly finished Lysander: it flew beautifully.

So what began as a hurried and low-key consolation event for the lost Dreaming Spires and Scalefest Galas has continued to run and has expanded into four competitions each year that hopefully give us all another reason to build a model or two.

The duration classes are recognised BMFA, SAM 35 or Peterborough MFC classes, which enables the model to be entered in other events and not just our own competitions.

At the Scale events, there are BMFA recognised classes and also a number of low key OMFC rule sets that fill in a couple of gaps in the BMFA scale event classes. Of these, Scale Glider, launched from a Peterborough histart has been very successful and there are 'high' (sorry!) hopes this year for 'Rubber Scale Duration' where more emphasis is put on the duration of the model, rather than just its scale appearance - there's no static judging. This is an idea from the busy brain of Andy Blackburn and offers duration flyers the opportunity to try their hand at a simple scale model.

The new programme for 2026 has now been published; there has been little change from previous years. Most of the classes are not too difficult to build or fly, each competition is scheduled to run from 9:30 am until 1:30 pm with prizegiving soon after. A taxi service should be available to transport models and flyers from the car park, if required.

Come along and join us, either as a competitor, fun flyer or spectator. Anyone prepared to act as a timekeeper would be especially welcome. We always have fun and the flying is great to watch.

Getting Started in OMFC Free Flight Competitions for 2026 - Gary Law

Spring is not too far away so it's time to encourage you all to build, repair or fettle some flying creations for the coming seasons competitions. If you are a radio flyer, perhaps consider going back to basics and put together a simple free flight model just for the club competitions.

Spring Duration Competitions & Fun-Fly

The program for the Spring Duration Competition on Saturday 16th May includes the following classes. We start at 9:30 and finish at 1:30. Good weather is guaranteed and a car should be available for those who need help getting themselves and / or their models across the Meadow. It helps if you let me know if you need transport, a few days in advance by email, WhatsApp or phone, or just phone on the day. (07896 946184). The team will be on the meadow by 08:00 on the day.

E20

Dave King with E20 [Andy B photo]

Colin Sharman has kindly agreed to CD the two E20 competitions: the first at the Spring Duration on the 16th May and the second at the Autumn Duration on 12th September. E20 competitions will also be run at Buckminster and Peterborough this year. (Our own Peter Brown won last year's Buckminster E20 prize). With a 20" wingspan and 10 to 20 second motor run, they tend to resemble 1950s power models, indeed there are a number of E20 plans based on such models.

VMC sell a good first E20 model, laser cut of course at £24; Alan Trinder and I fly them quite successfully. I think that we both reduced the dihedral shown on the plan which looks a little excessive, but I believe the model was designed by Andy Sephton and Sean Wallis so perhaps not a good idea to make changes! Peter Brown flies an Idiom which was a free plan with a very informative construction article from Aeromodeller May 2024. I have just started to put one together.

Power is supplied by an amazing E20 package from BMK at £30 that includes everything needed, including battery, motor, prop, motor timer and band burner DT. The package includes the smallest charger imaginable. I had to buy a USB to Micro USB lead from Sainsburys (!) for £5 to connect the charger to a USB outlet. The components just plug together: no soldering is required. Two propellors are provided in the package: one left and one right-handed - make sure you fit the correct one! E20 is a Total of three flights (TOTF) to a 60 second max. 15 or 20 second motor run. Ten second motor run for fly off.

P30

Sweet P30 [Andy B photo]

Simon Richardson won the P30 class at last year's Free Flight Nationals. His articles in previous Meadow Flyers have been very informative and highlight the attention to detail needed to win at this level.
With a wingspan of 30", 10g of rubber and a plastic prop, these models are the entry point into serious competition rubber flying when built down to weight but also make great sport flyers.

Mike Woodhouse at Free Flight Supplies sells several P30 kits, including the 'Sweet P30' (£42). This is a fabulous kit, designed and kitted by Spencer Willis. The rolled balsa tube fuselage is a work of art and, coupled with the partially finished prop assembly, means that the most difficult parts of construction are done for you. Mike also has a few P30 plans and of course Outerzone has quite a few. P30 is TOTF to a 90 second max.

36" Hi-Start Glider

Paddy Mcmahon with Baby Lulu [Chris Brainwood photo]

This is my favourite! Like E20, there will be 36" glider competitions at Buckminster and Peterborough this year. Launched from a Peterborough Hi-start (7.5m of 1/8" rubber plus 22.5m of towline), this is a great fun class. Any glider of 36" span (projected) or under, can be flown. Downsized Caprices are popular as is the Corsair, a reduced A2 glider which is only 48" span full size but has a very wide chord.

Perhaps the easiest to build, to fly, and the most rugged, is the Mercury Gnome. At 32" span it is undersize but will fly well and is available from VMC. Or you could download the plan from Outerzone and ask your local print shop to run off a copy at 115%. This should result in a projected span at just under 36". (£5 or £6 to you sir!). You could of course design your own - Simon Milan has and it flies well. Just stretch the Hi-start back a few paces, hold the model straight and into wind, and let it go. TOTF, 60 second max. Couldn't be easier. (Honest!).

Under 25” Vintage Rubber Cabin

1Mike Stuart’s KK Eaglet [Andy B photo]

This is a SAM 35 class and there’s a huge range of models that fit this description.

Most models can be made to work in this class, so start by checking out the OMFC website results page. Although Andy B did well with the Keil Kraft Achilles, he doesn’t recommend it; It does have a reputation for being difficult to trim and can be rather inconsistent.

The Flying Aces Moth is a good flyer and usually performs well. The Keil Kraft Eaglet is available from VMC as a kit and has done well. Plans for most of the others from Outerzone. TOTF, 90 second max.

Catapult Launched Glider (CLG)

Dylan Roberts with CLG [Martin Bennet photo]

No limits on size of the model but only 2 grams of rubber attached to a 6” handle is allowed for the launch. The optimum size of model seems to be about 12” – 14” but the winner of last year’s Peterborough Flying Aces CLG competition was a New Zealand lady with a much smaller model than this.

VMC sell a pack of two chuck / catapult gliders for £18. Designed by Joshua Finn in the USA, they are based around a lightweight 1\16” balsa wing. SLEC offer a similar design called the ‘Captains Thermal’ which includes the 6” catapult handle. I am still able to put together a kit of Andy Crisp’s design for a few pounds if anyone would like one. This uses a 1/8” wing blank that requires cutting out and sanding to section but is more robust. The catapult handle and rubber are included.

In the past, I believed that anyone who could manage three or four 40+ second flights on the meadow would win our CLG class but last year, Bill Colledge flew five straight 60 second maxes and Dylan Roberts scored three! (Bill had won the CLG class at the 2025 Nationals a month earlier). Don’t let that put you off because as with P30, there’s the chance of beating the current National Champion! Best five flights of seven. 60 second max.

FF Scale Fly-In Competitions and Fun-Fly - Andy Blackburn

The program for the summer Scale Competitions on Saturday 20th June includes the following classes. We start at 9:30 and finish at 1:30. Gary assures me that previous remarks about guaranteed good weather, transport out onto the meadow, etc. still apply.

OMFC Scale Rubber Duration / Flying only

Scale Rubber duration is max span 36" monoplanes, 30" multi-wing, no static judging, 90 s Max, Total of three flights. Many people enlarge a Keil Kraft or Veron Flying Scale design to 30"- 36" at the local copy shop, or Dumas do some quite good 30" span kit models. Consider moving the rear peg forwards (ask someone who's built one before) and choose a prototype that has a long nose.

Top beginners' tip is probably a Dumas Douglas AD-2 Skyraider kit (see picture), leave off the undercarriage and all the underwing furniture, the wing can be easily banded on rather than making it a one-piece model, make sure it has at least 9 degrees of dihedral and a bit of washout. The key with these things is to try and build them as light as possible, probably using coloured tissue; you might get away without a dethermalizer but it would be wise to add one if you can afford the weight. And always fly low-wing models left!

You can also enter the same model in the “Flying Only” competition, just give it fewer turns so that the climb is slower and more realistic.

Frog Senior

The six Frog Senior models are lovely models to build and are usually reliable flyers, although some are (of course) better than others. Plans are available from Mike Stuart’s House Of Frog, and VMC have some really excellent updated kits with good wood - however, be aware that if you want to enter competitions rather than just flying for fun you won’t be able to use the optional built-up tail surfaces. Don’t forget to trim the prop to 6.5” important even if you’re not entering in competition because it will then match the usual power source of a loop of 3/16” if it’s average weight (28-29grams), or two loops of 3/32” if it’s light (18 grams or less(!)). The Raven and Redwing seem to require a particular touch when trimming, my personal choice would be the Linnet (pictured) or Heron built with some of that 5lb cu/ft sheet that I’ve been saving for a special occasion. Bob Lee insists that his Tomtit (biplane) flies really well, but there’s a lot of wood in the design…

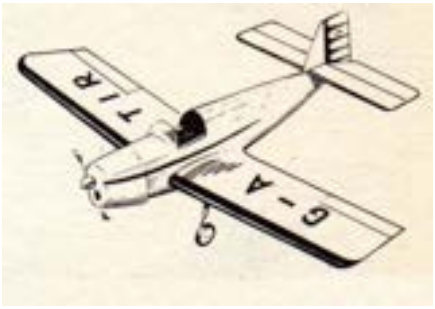
Hi-Start Scale Glider

Not much to say about this because people are still learning what works and what doesn't; the model size is limited by the power of the hi-start. What we observe, though, is that the models with a smaller wing area (usually high aspect-ratio models of ~30"-32" span or less) tend to fly less well - they go up the line well but then come down again quite quickly, so it's probably best to choose something bigger (40"+) and build it light - maybe a scale slope soarer reduced in size at the copy shop? A Keil Kraft Minimoa (50" span but high aspect ratio) might work? Or a 30" Veron Slingsby Prefect enlarged to 40" span?...

Postals

Winter Kit Scale

The OMFC Winter Kit Scale postal competition is running at the moment but closes on the 1st April, which isn't far away.



I have a Keil Kraft Fairey Junior (see picture) to cover and trim for that. My first scale model since childhood. At 18" span and with a low wing, I suspect the flights will be quite short (due to inexpert trimming) but it looks like it will be an attractive model when finished.

V20

From April 1st until June 30th, the postal competition will be V20. This is another Peterborough / SAM designed class, similar to the 25" Rubber Vintage Cabin but with the span limited to 20". A number of Wasp IIIs, designed by Peter Chinn in the 1940s have been built by club members. Other types were flown last year.

I have a Veron Skylark (see picture) built by club member Lionel Lawley who cannot get about these days, my intention is to re-cover the fuselage as the tissue is very brittle and fly it on his behalf. The Skylark is a great little model, described favourably by Andrew Longhurst in a recent SAM Speaks magazine. It is quick to build, with all sheet tail surfaces and a simple Jedelsky style sheet wing. I built one a few years ago and lost it at Old Warden OOS at 3 mins 20 secs.

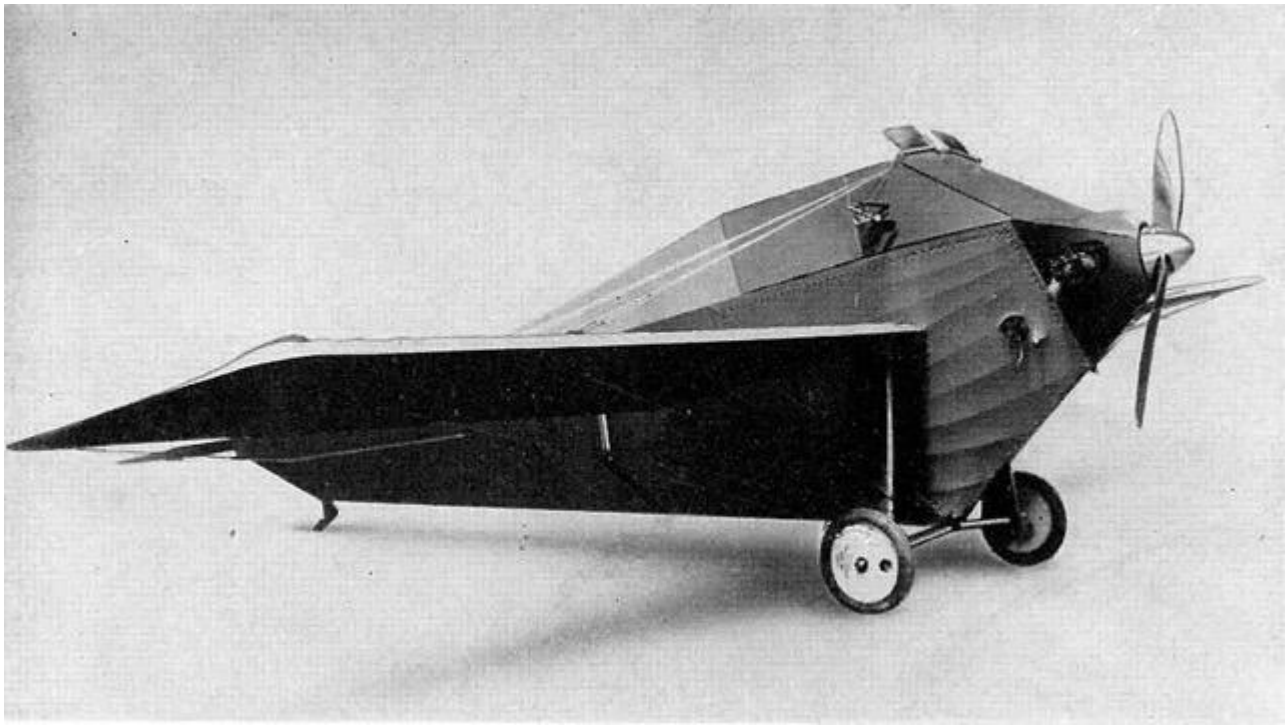
The second round of the V20 postal runs from July 1st to September 30th.

Another Daft Idea - Simon Milan

Being generally of an unsound mind, I tend not to pursue scale model ideas which have the greatest chances of success (even if that's only flying nicely and surviving first outings). Hence why I've never wanted to build (e.g.) a rubber-powered Piper Cub for the OMFC scale comps. Indeed, my attempts at scale aeromodelling have been pretty-much limited to such exotica as a rocket-powered B-58 Hustler and Opel RAK 1 and various indoor creations, all with limited success. OK, I have built an o/d rubber-powered 30" span Piper Pawnee but its limited excursions to date aren't encouraging (think bubble; must try a much bigger motor).

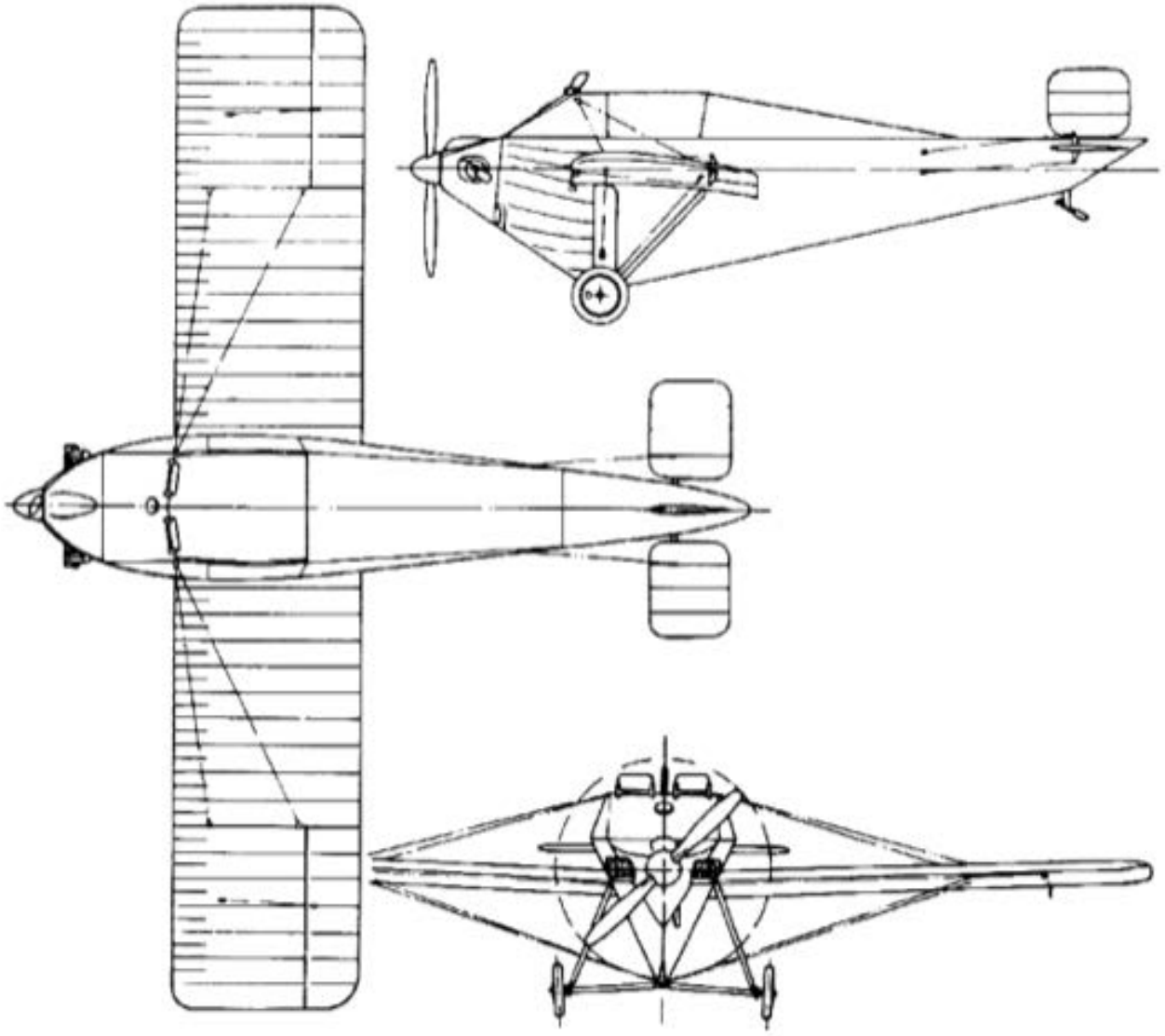
Maybe my 41" Vampyr Hi-Start glider is a bit of an exception, but even that exhibits strange habits from time to time - and anyway it's a glider, so much simpler all round.

So…. the trouble with having acquired many of Putnam's aeronautical history masterpieces over many years, is that they contain loads of information on very interesting but potentially-hopeless free-flight scale models!. One of these that attracted me was/is the Blackburn Sidecar, an early '20s light open-cockpit monoplane with nice straight wings and an interesting wedge-shaped fuselage. There's no evidence that the actual Sidecar ever flew - its original engine being too low-powered - but so what?



From my increasingly ham-fisted perspective, a mild advantage of the Sidecar is that there's no clear info about its finish (something dark, almost certainly) so some latitude here, and it doesn't have the complication of needing to apply any civil registration lettering across the wings etc. Plenty of other complications, but we'll come to those in due course! The more I thought about it, the more I thought why not? Maybe a 30" span rubber version for this summer's Port Meadow comps. What's not to like? It might never compete successfully with the dreaded Pipers, but at least it'll be something different.

Apart from various issues like figuring out how best to attach the wings (their roots pretty much aligning with the rubber motor position) and fitting an effective DT (there's optimism for you!), only one thing caused me serious doubts.



As will be evident from the above 3-view, the Sidecar had a tiny (only 9% of wing area) tail, being manifestly hopelessly small for a powered inherently stable free-flight model. Sure, even before the era of sophisticated onboard electronics, contest free-flight duration models (particularly gliders and rubber modes) often had very small percentage tail areas, but their aerodynamic layouts allowed this - not so with “simple” scale models[1]. In reality, of course, this needn't be a problem, as - in the case of most free-flight scale models - we simply enlarge tails sufficient to ensure inherent stability and simplify trimming.

However, I felt that departure from scale proportions should be kept to the minimum wherever possible (even more important where there's such a stark difference between wing and tail areas), and building a Sidecar with, say, a safe 30% tail area would, to my mind, look silly and be stretching things too far. Where’s the fun in that?

So how small a tail area could I get away with for my Sidecar, before it became too difficult to trim? Enter our very knowledgeable Editor who reminded me of his excellent "Getting Started with OMFC Rubber Scale” article in last Christmas’s Meadow Flyer and re-acquainted me with

[1] I deliberately make no mention of gyros as the use of these is way beyond my pay grade!

Bill McCombs very useful Tail Volume Coefficient/Starting C.G. formula. Andy also suggested building a small “technology demonstrator” using this formula (which calculates preferred CG positions from known wing and tail areas and moment arms) to maybe see how small a tail area I might be able to get away with. Good idea! So here’s a pre-flight test pic my 11" span "No-Cal” version of the Sidecar sitting in its winding stooge with its initial 27%-of-wing-area tail (a safe starting point?):

I took it to one of my local indoor flying venues in Whitchurch up here in Shropshire in early February. I added some blu-tack to get the CG in the right place according to Bill McCombs and off we went! Initial flights were interesting (aka aerobatic!) - mostly because I'd made no provision for altering the thrust line - but it seemed to fly reasonably OK once the initial power burst had worn off. So far so good and after fiddling with the fin and tail incidence to try and get a better flight pattern, I carefully took my scissors to the tailplane and by stages reduced it to just under 20% of the wing area. It still seemed to be flying well enough to give me confidence that this whole dodgy enterprise is worth pursuing.

Maybe I can reduce the tail area a bit more by reversing its aerofoil? Hopefully we shall see. Still these other construction issues to sort out (tongue and box wing fixings? DT arrangements? undercarriage structure?) so whether I’ll get everything together in time for the autumn scale comps, I really don’t know. If I do - even if a bit too late for the autumn, there will be a Part 2.

Is this Another Daft Idea? Quite probably, but as Andy B says in his article “Choose a model you like.”

OMFC Indoor Scrap-box Glider Challenge 2026 - Chris Brainwood

A total of 23 gliders were entered in the competition, balsa being a popular choice for construction [Chris Brainwood photo]

This year's winter build challenge was to make a glider from items in your scrap-box and then fly it in a series of competitions at Begbroke. The rules are fairly simple: to build a glider of any design which must be capable of wing-borne flight, so no darts, arrows or balls, with max weight of 40g.

Wednesday 18th February saw the flying part of the competition which attracted an impressive array of 23 gliders from 12 entrants.

The range of different ideas was impressive too from a wonderful scale primary glider by David Fillingham to my simplistic foam chuck glider. Bob Lee had a wonderful looking Skyray from the Bill Dean plan and Duncan Martin sported a nice profile Lightning. Andy Stephenson also went down the delta jet glider route. Canards proved popular with both Gary Law and Brian Harvey making balsa gliders which performed well. Colin Sharman’s canard needed some running repairs, but he had also brought along the smallest model of the meeting a tiny 4” span chuck glider in balsa. Mike Beach had a very unusual choice for wings as they were made from aluminum drinks cans, tonic water in fact, they worked very well making distinctive sound on landing . Foam was also a popular choice with myself and several others, Andy Crisp producing a simple design which flew very slowly.

The flying consisted of 3 parts- a duration event, a fly-through-the-hoop challenge and a spot landing competition. Simon Burch (the instigator of the event) was CD with Roger Matthews taking on timing duties, armed with his phone and the knowledge that his decision was final. The evening started with some general trimming for people to try the gliders in the hall, most had only previously made flights across the bed so good fun was had trying them out

The first event was Duration; each flyer had 3 flights, the total giving the final score. The key seemed to be having a very slow flying model to make use of the small size of the hall. Both myself and Andy Crisp went down this route using wall foam and simple chuckie design. The lightweight and resultant floaty glide paid off with both managing a 5 second flight, in the end I hit the walls fewer times than Andy and came first with Gary Law in third with his canard glider.

Andy Stephenson shows how it's done [Chris Brainwood photo]

For the 'Fly Through the Hoop' a Hula Hoop was suspended from the ceiling some 3m or so in front of the launch point. Again, a period of trimming beforehand allowed everyone to have a couple of goes and it proved much harder than it looks. My own floaty glider would not float through the hoop it always floated past it so there was no alternative …more nose weight. With the nose weight tripled the model could now be given more of direction if with somewhat steeper glide. A few others took this route but some gliders were just better suited and/or better launched to get through the hoop. A duration score was added if the model made it through to decide the winner. Brian Harvey came out on top followed by Mike

Beach and his Tonic-water-can-winged creation, I was third with my nose weight attached to a model. Duncan Martin proved just how tricky it can be wedging his foam Lightning between the ceiling and the hoop much to everyone's and his own amusement

Andy Crisp at the Spot Landing [Chris Brainwood photo]

The final event was Spot Landing. A paper sheet had been marked up with some scoring zones from 1 to 4 with a cardboard box at one end to provide something to aim for to get the elusive score of 5.

Only Duncan Martin and Alan Trinder managed to hit the jackpot 5 but Duncan's 4 on flight 3 sealed his win. Two 4's from Colin Sharman saw him take second while my noseweight was still doing its job for third.

There were other prizes on offer too; David Fillingham won 'Special Model' with his wonderful primary glider, Martin Bennett won 'Best Scrapbox Model' with his balsa glider and Bob Lee won the 'Wooden Spoon' award with his Skyray.

It was a fun evening with chocolate-based prizes and even an RTF model for those lucky enough to win. Many thanks to Simon Burch and Roger Matthews for coming up with the idea and running the competition so smoothly on the night.

Full results and lots of pictures are on the club website https://oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/omfc-indoor-scrap-box-glider-challenge-2026/

Royal Flying Corps Colours on the Western Front - Andy Blackburn

I'm sorry about taking the lid off this can of worms but the situation has got to the stage where I really do want to get it off my chest (as it were)...

The question is this: what colour were the top surfaces of most Royal Flying Corps (RFC) aircraft at the western front from 1916 onwards? There is a distressing tendency for them to be rendered as green on kit box art:

Comet SE5a from the mid-1970s

Sterling SE5a from 1964

Both of these renditions are wrong, but once an image is printed and your average modeller gets the idea that something is a particular colour, it tends to take on a life of its own and is then passed on as the gospel truth. Oh dearie me…

I will admit that determining the correct colour 100+ years after the fact is a very difficult task; there were very, very few colour photographs of WW1 aircraft and the black and white film in use at the time typically didn't render grey scales as perceived by the human eye; for instance, Orthochromatic film, which was a fairly advanced technology at the time, is more sensitive to blue and green light and less sensitive to red (so it can be developed using a red safelight), so blue objects will appear lighter and red colours will appear darker.

[This is of course why many photographs of the time show the blue roundel colour as a much paler blue than it should be, and the sky is often very light grey or white]

The colour response of the film can be adjusted by using various filters (orange and/or UV, for example) but the amateur historian has no way of knowing for sure what sort of film and filters were used to take a photograph unless they have access to an original print that has been suitably annotated, and even then the original colours are subject to speculation.

Having said that, I think it’s a fair bet that if the sky looks a kind of washed-out white colour, the film is probably orthochromatic and there probably aren’t any filters in use.

This all sounds a bit tricky, but all is not lost. There are a few contemporaneous colour recollections available, and much valuable work was done by the 1960s Historic Aircraft Maintenance Group in tracing the original paint specifications, and much of this work informs the colour plates shown in the Blandford Colour series (e.g. "Fighters 1914-19" by Kenneth Munson).

Lets start out with what we know of the current state of the art by looking at how The Shuttleworth Collection does things:

Shuttleworth SE5a [Neil Harvey]

Shuttleworth Sopwith Triplane [Bill Beeby]

The SE5a is finished in what is called Protective Covering Varnish no.10 (P.C.10) and the triplane is finished in P.C.12 as specified by the Sopwith works drawings. Both are predominantly brown, but the SE5a has a slight greenish sheen under some lighting conditions. Most RFC machines were finished in P.C.10 from spring 1916 but when stocks were unavailable (which did happen), aircraft were sometimes finished in P.C.12 (which was usually used on aircraft sent to the middle east).

The colour specification of P.C.10 was expressed as a ratio of 17 parts by weight of powdered yellow ochre (a natural oxide of iron) to 1 part carbon (lamp) black; yellow ochre being considerably heavier than carbon black and when the dry ingredients are mixed together, the *only possible result* is a Khaki-brown shade. Notice that I haven't mentioned "green" at this point!

One of the things that has confused matters is that when the dry pigment is mixed with cellulose acetate, oil varnish or similar, under certain light conditions the finished product when wheeled out of the factory tended to look slightly more green-ish than might be expected (as discussed above), although it still looked predominantly brown. However, after the covering had 'weathered' for a few weeks in service, **the effective colour always changed to a positive brown**.

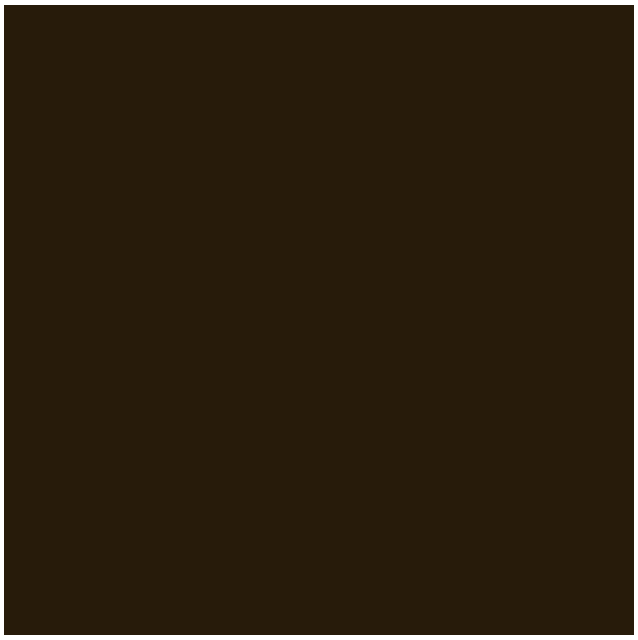
This is clearly a complicated subject about which much has been written, and the final colour obviously depends on the medium carrying the pigment and how it was applied. There were three main classes of doping/finishing schemes, each of which would look and weather slightly differently.

Finishing Scheme	Description	Main Usage
Class A	5 coats clear shrinking dope + 2 coats non-shrinking pigmented (e.g. P.C.10) cellulose varnish	April 1916 - end of war
Class B	3 coats shrinking pigmented cellulose dope + 2 topcoats of clear waterproof cellulose varnish	Late 1917 - 1918
Class C	3+ coats of waterproof shrinking pigmented cellulose dope	Early 1918 - end of war

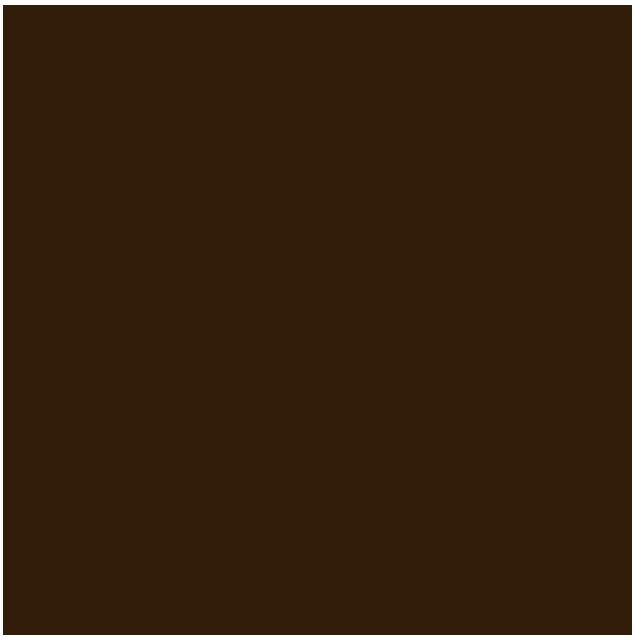
Needless to say, exactly which doping finishing scheme was used on any particular aircraft can only be an informed guess at best. But we can take a reasonably accurate guess if we model an aircraft that isn't factory-fresh…

Conclusions

I have simplified matters considerably because this is a bit of a niche interest and most people have probably nodded off about three paragraphs ago, but as a general rule most WW1 RFC machines finished in P.C.10 would, after a few weeks' wear and tear outdoors in the sun and the rain, be correctly rendered in a range somewhere between the following colours:



Darker P.C.10 varnish from late 1917 to the armistice (varnish classes B & C)



Lighter P.C.10 Varnish from spring 1916 to the armistice (varnish class A)

These are very probably darker than most people would expect, but if printed in normal quality on a decent inkjet printer, then once they've dried, they should closely match the available authoritative colour plates when viewed in sunlight - I verified this on my Epson printer, but your experience may vary slightly.

So, there you are - they were predominantly a chocolate brown colour rather than green.

However, you don't have to take my word for it; page 174 of Cecil Lewis' "Saggitarius Rising" (one of the classics of WW1 literature) flew S.E.5s in early 1917 and has the following text about the events of 7th May 1917:

"The squadron sets out eleven strong on the evening patrol. Eleven chocolate-coloured, lean, noisy bullets, lifting, swaying, turning, rising into formation - two fours and a three - circling and climbing away steadily towards the lines"


OXFORD MODEL FLYING CLUB
Spring Duration
Competitions & Fun-fly
Sat 16th May
P30 E20 36" Hi-Start Glider
Under 25" Vintage Cabin
Catapult Glider
Free Flight Fun-fly
CD Gary Law 9:30am Start
Port Meadow, Oxford OX2 8PU
All flyers must be BMFA members and abide by the OMFC club rules
which can be downloaded at oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/membership-information/
Full details - oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/club-events/


OXFORD MODEL FLYING CLUB
FF Scale Fly-in
Competitions & Fun-fly
Sat 20th June
OMFC Flying Only
OMFC Scale Rubber Duration
Hi-Start Scale Glider
FROG Senior
Free Flight Fun-fly
9:30am Start, Port Meadow, Oxford. OX2 8PU
All flyers must be BMFA members and abide by the OMFC club rules
which can be downloaded at oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/membership-information/
Full details - oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/club-events/
Photo - Andy Blackburn

Club And Other Local events, 2025/2026

Club Meetings at Begbroke

Club Nights are held at Begbroke Village Hall, Begbroke Lane, Kidlington, OX5 1RN, 7.30 p.m. - 10p.m. Club business (if any) commences at 8 p.m., unless otherwise stated.

Wednesday 18 March 2026	**Bring a model evening** – bring along your latest creations to show and chat about, as ever there will be prizes.
Wednesday 15 April	**Club Night** - fun flying on the Begbroke field from 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday 20 May	**Club Night** - fun flying on the Begbroke field from 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday 17 June	**Club Night** - fun flying on the Begbroke field from 7:00 p.m.

Competitions on Port Meadow for 2026

Definitions:
The "Peterborough" Hi-start = 7.5m of 1/8" rubber and 22.5m of line.

Rules for all classes at https://oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/event-rules/

Spring Duration - Saturday 16th May

E20 – Total of three flights, 20s motor run, 60 s Max.
P30 – Total of three flights, 90s Max.
36" Hi-Start glider – Peterborough Hi-start, Total of three flights, 60s Max, RC models allowed but clock stops if the transmitter is picked up.
Under 25" Vintage Rubber Cabin – Total of three flights, 90s Max.
Catapult glider – 60s Max, total of 5 flights.

FF Scale Fly-in Saturday 20th June

OMFC Flying Only – IC/CO2/Electric/rubber, OMFC rules, no static judging
OMFC Scale Rubber Duration - max span 36" monoplanes, 30" multi-wing, no static judging, 90 s Max, Total of three flights. Flyoff if necessary.
OMFC Hi-start Scale Glider – Peterborough Hi-start, Total of three flights, no static judging.
FROG Senior - Total of three flights 60s max
Open to all BMFA Members

BMFA FF Scale - Saturday 1st August

BMFA FF2 (IC/CO2/Electric/rubber) BMFA rules – includes some minor static + workmanship marks
OMFC Hi-start Scale Glider – Peterborough Hi-start, total of three flights, no static judging.
OMFC Scale Rubber Duration - max span 36" monoplanes, 30" multi-wing, no static judging, 90 s Max, Total of three flights. Flyoff if necessary.
Cloud Tramp Mass launch - Prize for last one down
Open to all BMFA Members

Autumn Duration - Saturday 12th September

Classic A1 Glider – 90 s Max, total of three flights.
Vintage/Classic Glider – 75 inch span limit, 90 s Max, total of three flights .
launch using either the supplied Hi-start or a 50 metre towline, at the discretion of the entrant
Coupe d'Hiver – Total of three flights, 90 s Max.
Catapult glider – 60 s Max, total of 5 flights
OMFC Scale Rubber Duration – max span 36" monoplanes, 30" multi-wing, no static judging, 90 s Max, total of three flights. Fly-off if necessary.
E20 – Total of three flights, 20s motor run, 60 s Max
Open to all BMFA Members

Postal Events

2026

Classic Kit Scale Winter Postal - 1st January 2026 - 30th April 2026. A postal for the classic rubber scale kits from Veron, Keil Kraft and latterly VMC amongst others decided with a total of 3 flights. It can be flown indoors or outdoor with a 10sec ROG bonus for indoor flyers. 1st Prize a Fokker DVIII kit donated by the Vintage Model Company. Full details and rules on the website https://oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/omfc-2025-winter-kit-scale-postal/

V20 Postal – SAM 35 rules, 2 rounds April 1st – June 30th and July 1st – Sept 30th. For rules see https://sam35.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Rubber-Vintage-V20-rules.pdf

Coupe/P30 postal – Total of three flights, 90 second Max, entrants submit three times to Max + unlimited fly-off time. 1 Sept - 31 Oct For rules see:- https://oxfordmfc.bmfa.club/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/P30-and-Coupe-Postal-rules-v1.2.pdf

Indoor Flying

RC and Free Flight Indoor flying resumes this autumn, once a month on Tuesday evenings. Note that we have a new venue - Cheney School, Assembly Hall (OX3 7QH).

Dates for the diary: TBC, all from 8:00pm to 10:00pm. We plan to charge only £5 per flyer.

OFMAC Advertisement

OFMAC

2025-2026 Season Dates

Indoor Model Flying

Funfly for all. Freeflight, Rubber, CO2, Electric

Venue:
Abbey Sports Centre
Green Furlong
Berinsfield
Oxfordshire
OX10 7NR

Dates:
Sundays Times 09:00 to 15:00
5th October 2025
2nd November 2025
7th December 2025
4th January 2026
1st February 2026
1st March 2026
12th April 2026*
10th May 2026*
*Note: 2nd Sunday

Contact:
Ian Melville
07545158177
ofmac@redkite.aero

Contributions to the Newsletter

Please let me have your contributions by the end of **the last week in May** (preferably a little earlier) for inclusion in the Summer 2026 newsletter. Anything aeromodelling-related would be of interest.

A few reminders for when taking pictures:
1. Try and keep the horizon level,
2. It's usually best to have only one model aeroplane or subject per picture,
3. A non-cluttered background is best,
4. If using a phone, a small amount of zoom (~x2) often makes the picture look better,
5. If using a DSLR, sport mode with auto-focus usually works well, but try and keep the model in the centre of the image to give the camera the best chance of focusing properly,
6. If using a long lens, remember that the last 25%-35% of the focal range (so 200-300 mm on a 300 mm lens) can often produce a "soft" image, so limit the amount of zoom accordingly.
7. Finally, can I have photos as JPEG or JPG files, please? PDF files just add extra work.

Send contributions to: Andy Blackburn at *newsletter@oxfordmfc.bmfa.uk* although this doesn't seem to accept attachments (try WeTransfer for images). As mentioned earlier, an email and some pictures is best; M$ Word documents are more work to integrate with the newsletter.