

# Firebirds Model Club



*Newsletter* December 2014

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## Committee News

Here's the latest from the committee room.

## Poplars Flying Times

The committee apologies for not reminding members that from the clocks going back in October, weekday afternoon flying sessions can start an hour earlier at 1200. The normal 1300 start time will be reinstated from the date the clocks go forward next March.

### Summer:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
13:00-18:00 QF	13:00-18:00 All		13:00-18:00 All	13:00-21:00 QF	10:00-14:00 All	10:00-13:00 All
18:00-21:00 All						

### Winter:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12:00-18:00 QF	12:00-18:00 All		12:00-18:00 All	12:00-21:00 QF	10:00-14:00 All	10:00-13:00 All
18:00-21:00 All						

## Christmas

The flying times over the Christmas period are mostly the normal flying hours as per the table above. The bank holidays are as follows:

- No flying on Christmas day
- Normal winter Friday hours on Boxing Day

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- The weekend in between Xmas and New Year is as normal
- Normal winter Thursday hours on New Year's day

## **11<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

At this meeting we will vote on 2015 club fees and will have the opportunity to re-join on the night so bring your cheque book or cash. There will be a free Christmas buffet, annual raffle prize draw and trophy awards.

## **15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 - AGM**

We will be having our annual general meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January. Items you wish to discuss at the AGM must be with Roger, in writing (his email address is at the end of this newsletter) a week before the meeting i.e. by the 8<sup>th</sup> Jan.

## **Are you able to check the club's accounts?**

We need a volunteer to check the club accounts and sign that they have done so. You don't need to be a qualified accounting auditor, we are just looking for someone (independent of the committee) who can check through the income, expenditure and current balance to ensure that the numbers add up as the treasurer says they do.

It doesn't have to be someone in the club, so if you know someone who might be able to do this for us, then that would be fine. Please check with Russell first because he is already approaching a friend or relative who may be able to help.

## **Balsa Brain**

The annual Balsa Brain competition has now been running for 31 years and last year the Firebirds won it for the first time. This year the team comprised Roger Stanton, Lee Fryer, Mark Benham and Pete Clark and they triumphed again!

Well over 70 members from BMFA Southern Area clubs attended, and they were all impressed by the facilities we enjoy at the Hamble Club. The excellent buffet supper went down well too. The committee would like to thank Alan Shergold for his loan of a projector and screen for this event.

## **Instructors**

Typically instructors are providing tuition to members who are working towards their first solo flight. Both the instructors and quite a number of other experienced members can also provide tuition/guidance for anyone who would like to learn an aspect of flying they are not currently confident with e.g. a particular aerobatic manoeuvre

I benefited enormously from having an aerobatic training session with Roger not long after I had gone solo. So please come forward and ask if this is something you are interested in.

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## Down at the Field

After seemingly endless rain, we eventually got a good week at the very end of November. I was down at the field on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> and found an abundance of fellow members.

First up we have Lee who seems to be really getting back into things now after quite a long and involuntary break.

His mini Funtana flies beautifully.



Lee's Seagull Super Stearman 46 really caught my eye. I tried to find out where these are being sold in the UK but drew a blank. There's a little bit of information about the plane [here](#).

Where did you get this Lee?

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Crazy fast builder Pete turned up with two depron delta jets, I think there are called "Alpha Jets" on the plan Pete used.

*[Note: When I say "Crazy fast builder", I don't mean he's crazy and builds quickly, I mean he builds crazy quickly. He may well be crazy but I'm not the one who's going to step forward and say so.]*



Justin was helping to keep Chris Foss in the lifestyle to which he has become accustomed by buying and running a couple of his designs. Here we have a WOT4 and an Acro Wot getting ready for some aerobatics.



Roger flew this recently and beautifully finished Junior 60 or Super 60 (can't remember for sure now, I think it's a Junior).

I love the stitched hinges for the rudder and elevator.

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A number of us had visited the table top sale at Romsey School, which was organised by the HMFA.

Inevitably, somebody else's cast offs found new homes with Firebirds members.

I know Russell and Pete bought a pair of foam warbirds.

Here is Russell's Spitfire. I believe that Pete bought a Lavochkin La-7 from the same range but after a radio problem, this is now being 'looked after' by one of the trees at Poplars.



While I was looking around Justin drew my attention to this Great Planes Super Skybolt. Already equipped with a nearly new OS 91 pumped four stroke engine, Futaba 2.4Ghz FFAST RX and all servos.



Justin and I were both interested in the plane. So while Justin was examining the fuselage, I forked out the cash to the seller and bought it before Justin had a chance. I felt a bit guilty but it soon wore off, especially when I flew it. It is a superb machine and does everything I want.

Despite being a little larger (57" span) than say the Hangar 9 or Seagull Christen Eagle (both 54" span), it's a full kilogram lighter at 3.5Kg. This translates into a sparkling performance and nice low speed handling where the lighter wing loading really makes a big difference.

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Alan's Cub is a regular performer at Poplars but it's such a nice model, I still like to get another picture of it in the newsletter.



Rob's Jupiter (red) and Bob's silhouette (very yellow) are also a regular sights down at the field.



By-the-way Bob sent me a great video link of some aerobatic flying by Joe Smith [here](#).

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Over the weekend, the instructors were out in force. Here Roger and newcomer Tony prepare for another training flight.

Having accomplished a number of take-offs and landings, Tony is now on the cusp of going solo after only a short time in the club so this is great progress.

Below Matt is also within reach of his solo. On the day of writing this, Matt had just completed round of 10-15 take-offs and landings

Here, Matt is picking up some engine setup advice from Russell (also an instructor who is currently training Olivia) and long standing member Lee.

Someone has their back to us but I'm not sure who. Is that Terry?

Below Paul (on the left - yet another instructor) is trimming newcomer Bob's plane.



On the right I'm instructing Matt who accomplished his first bumpy landings that day.

Now he has a string of successful flights behind him and all I had to do was hold the trainer button.



## Safety Matters

One brief note to quadcopter fliers before the main article. If your quadcopter has a return-to-home function, then please make sure that you arm it at place where it is safe to come down i.e. not in the pits or right on the flight-line where the pilots are. Near the entrance corner of the strip is OK or even on it as long as the arming process doesn't take too long.

This note has been prompted by a minor incident in another club. I know there aren't many quad fliers in Firebirds so please don't feel anyone is concerned about your flying in this regard.

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Many thanks to Geoff our Safety officer for the following article.

A little story from about 35 years ago this month (I know, I know, I'm slowly turning into a sad old git).

In the early days of electric flight I was lucky (if that's the word) to assist in some small way with evaluating the very first commercial electric r/c model to come onto the market. Our local model shop in Portsmouth was run by Ray and Audrey Brown. Now Ray was a brilliant and highly skilled modeller; some of you may remember his highly successful "Chevron", kitted by Model Flight Accessories. Through his connection with MFA he was given a pre-production kit to check out. It was a cute little high wing model called the Hummingbird and amazingly it was electric! It featured a Mabuchi 540 brushed motor, 8 cell NiCad pack, and a servo operated on/off switch for motor control!

It was hopelessly under powered, and Ray managed a couple of flights just about staggering around the patch. A couple of days later in the shop, Ray, now a bit disillusioned, handed the whole thing over to me to see if I could do anything with it as MFA were hoping for some feedback. A quick check of the battery pack showed that one cell was a bit down so we replaced it ready to try again.

It's interesting to reflect at this point that in these early days of commercial electric flight the real danger was perceived to be the unvented NiCad cells. If the battery heated up too much, either through discharging too far (no automatic cut out in those days) or by overcharging, there was nowhere for the expanding electrolyte to go, so the batteries exploded! I witnessed this a few years later, and it happened after the flight with the model just sitting on the ground doing nothing. Very impressive, and very little left! Fortunately it was about 20 ft away from anyone.

Anyway, back to the Hummingbird. With a fully charged pack and ready to leave for the field I decided a quick check was in order. Now for some reason I took it into my head that the best place to do this was on the bed. . . . .





Now a nice soft bed is not really the best place to stand a transmitter up on. Before I had a chance to grab it, it had toppled forward, ever so slightly moving the throttle stick, but just enough to operate the motor ON switch in the model.

It was at this point that the really big difference between IC and electric became violently obvious! Ever wondered what they put in all the little pockets of a Duvet? (I'm sure we used to call them "continental quilts"?) I found out very quickly because the room was soon full of it!

Fortunately, and I'm not sure how, I didn't get injured grabbing anything and managed to stop the motor, but the damage to the bed was extensive. Every time I power up an electric model I remember this little incident, and so far it has stopped me doing anything stupid!

So what are the lessons? According to the latest BMFA figures an increasing number of personal injuries are now related to electric power systems. I'm convinced that none of these would happen if a few simple rules are adhered to.

### Firstly, at home on the bench.

1. Modern speed controllers are designed to be more or less idiot proof, but they can go wrong! If you are setting up a model NEVER do it with the prop fitted. The most common scenario is to have the throttle reversed. If you've done this, even if you realise what has happened it is very difficult to convince yourself that the throttle needs to go the wrong way to stop the motor! No prop = no damage. Don't run the motor with the prop fitted in the workshop unless you have plenty of clear uncluttered space. Better still, take it out in the garden.

### Secondly, at the field.

1. Even if the transmitter throttle is in the wrong position modern speed controllers should not start the motor until the throttle has been cycled to arm the system, but apparently this can go wrong, so ALWAYS have it in mind that the prop might start spinning the instant you connect the battery. Hold the model securely and get behind it when you connect the battery. If the model has retracts make sure the transmitter switch is in the correct position!
2. The design of some battery compartments is such that the battery has to be fitted from the front, through the propeller arc, often with the model on its back. By far the safest way here is to fit a shorting plug such that the final connection is only made with the plane upright, but if this is not practical it's often possible to wedge the prop firmly on the ground; If it does try to start the worst will probably be a burned out speed controller, although arguably it will already be damaged to allow this to have happened, so you'll not have lost anything!



3. Once the model is ready for flight it is potentially capable of injury. Assume it could start on its own and treat it accordingly. If you use a transmitter tray be particularly careful when putting the straps over your head – it is SO easy to knock the throttle stick up. . . .
4. After flight, the FIRST thing to do when the model is clear of the strip is to disconnect the battery. NEVER leave a “live” model in the pits unattended.

Having hopefully taken all that in, you might be wondering what became of the little Hummingbird? Well, it survived with nothing more than a broken prop and although by today’s standards its flight envelope might best be described as “barely adequate” it did fly quite well and went into full production.

When the battery pack failed again after about thirty flights I gave up and fitted an Enya .09 and it was eventually retired fuel soaked about five years later. I can’t help thinking that if they had sold it as IC from the start it might have done better, but that would have been boring!

### Fly Past

I don’t have a Fly Past article for this month because the newsletter has to be pushed through quite quickly. However as my first Fly Past article (in the April newsletter) focused on my VQ FW 190, I thought I would do a quick update on that plane.

I have continued to fly it heavily throughout the year ([here’s a brief bit of video Rob took](#) a few months back) but suddenly today I had some kind of on-board failure. A number of worrying moments occurred within the first two minutes of flying. The plane just wasn’t handling right but I couldn’t work out what was up.

I started to manoeuvre into position ready for a landing but then the engine suddenly cut and I had no control (failsafe mode?). It descended in a rapid slightly spiral dive. For a brief moment, control returned and I arrested the descent but then control was gone again and the FW 190 slammed into the ground.

It’s not impossible to repair but the damage is significant and the general condition of the finish was already becoming quite poor so I’ve decided to retire her.



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The pilot whom I fondly refer to as 'Fritz' has given up a lot to fly with me, especially from the waist down.

I quizzed him about the incident, which is tricky because he's not exactly the loquacious type. He said it was my fault for buying a Vietnamese airframe instead of a proper German one.

I tried to convince him that VQ stood for "Vietnamese Quality" (emphasising the Quality). He said it was "Vinh Quang" junk. How rude!

After a 3½ year tour of duty, I'm going to let Fritz return home to his wife or "that venomous harridan", as he calls her.

## External Events

This section details events in Hampshire (or further afield if they are significant events) that might be of interest to club members.

Well there don't seem to be many local events left on the calendar for this year, so this section will be a bit bare for a while.

## Club Information

This section gives a summary of club services and contact details. Apart from the "Future Club Night Programme" most of the info here is fairly static.

## Future Club Night Programme

Up and coming events at our club venue.

### 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Christmas buffet, annual raffle prize draw and trophy awards. We have £600 worth of prizes for the raffle so buy some tickets and win some of that booty.

### 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015

AGM.

### 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Video presentation of flying activities at Poplars Farm during 2014 by Alan Shergold.

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## **Cheap Glow Fuel**

Fuel is available through the club and supplies are held by the club. All grades of fuel are available to order. Terry holds many other useful items: glo-plugs, propellers, glue, fuel tubing, wing bolts etc.

**Contact: Terry Jacobson on 023 8040 2080 or see him at the field.**

## **Club Clothing**

A number of items of club branded clothing are available from a local supplier. The current prices are:

Sweatshirts	£14.25
Polo shirts	£12.50
T shirt	£ 8.50
Caps	£ 7.95

All shirts are Fruit of the Loom and available in all sizes up to XXL & most colours. There is also a huge range of quality outdoor wear that can be embroidered with the club logo.

**Contact Justin on 07572 613190, email [windgyber@hotmail.com](mailto:windgyber@hotmail.com) or see him at the field.**

Our meeting venue is the Hamble Club at this address:

Beaulieu Road  
Hamble  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO31 4JL

The entrance to the club is on Hamble Lane, only a short distance from a pub called The Harrier. The club looks like this:

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## Firebirds Club Committee

The following are the contact details for the Committee. Each has given permission for their phone number and email addresses to be included in this Newsletter.

Chairman	Pat Parsons	023 8056 2611	<a href="mailto:patrickparsons.parsons3@googlemail.com">patrickparsons.parsons3@googlemail.com</a>
Vice Chair	Russell Lewis	023 8056 1397	<a href="mailto:russell@pilot1.co.uk">russell@pilot1.co.uk</a>
Treasurer	Paul Adams	023 8069 2729	<a href="mailto:paul.adams10@tiscali.co.uk">paul.adams10@tiscali.co.uk</a>
Secretary	Roger Stanton	01489 784152	<a href="mailto:roger-stanton@sky.com">roger-stanton@sky.com</a>
PRO	Peter Clark	01489 692881	<a href="mailto:psclark911@hotmail.com">psclark911@hotmail.com</a>
Flying Site Rep.	Dave Hoppe	07704 826343	<a href="mailto:davehoppehome@gmail.com">davehoppehome@gmail.com</a>
Safety Officer	Geoff Griffiths	023 9265 5931	<a href="mailto:gcgriffiths@hotmail.com">gcgriffiths@hotmail.com</a>
Membership Sec.	Geoff Scott	023 8039 0013	<a href="mailto:geoffrey.scott100@ntlworld.com">geoffrey.scott100@ntlworld.com</a>



**Remember...**  
**Safe flying is no accident.**