

June 2023



WAYPOINT INT

Newsletter of Priory Farm Aviators
www.flypfa.co.uk



Committee Members

John Fielding (chair), Bob Sage (airfield owner), Mik Horne (Treasurer), Alan McNeal (WX station, R/T, Waypoint editor), Paul Jackson, David Brown, Richard Flagg (webmaster), Maurice Edwards, Sean Simington (social events booking), Julian Campbell, Nigel Hall (Club insurance).

Flamin' June

...or so we hope - this being well into the 2023 flying season and the month we hold our annual fly-in. This year, for operational reasons we had to move the date from on-or-around Father's Day to 11th June so it is called the Priory Farm Summer Fly-in. We are hoping for a good day and look forward to welcoming many visiting aircraft & pilots to our great little airfield.



The event will be much the same as previous years, relaxed & fun, with some changes. Catering will be courtesy of Tom & Suzanne Garnham with their new new coffee & hot food trailer. I will provide an air/ground (AGCS) radio service as usual, but this time four of us will be equipped with two-way radios (*walkie talkies*) - me, David Brown (*who will be overseeing the event in John Fielding's absence*) and our two aircraft marshals - Bob Sage & Keith Sowter. This will improve marshalling & parking as well as add a further safety element to the proceedings.

We will need help set up the airfield on the day beforehand - that's Saturday 10th June, so if you want to support your airfield & club, think about turning up to lend a hand for a couple of hours. Call Bob or David Brown to confirm please.

East Anglia Air Ambulance

Last year we donated £2,000 to the East Anglia Air Ambulance. This year our finances are healthy so the Committee decided to provide a further £2,000 to this worthy emergency service that we all hope we never need.

Broughton & Fenland Club Fly-out

The end of April saw our first PFA Fly-out - to Boughton near Kings Lynn and on to Fenland for lunch. Half a dozen aircraft took part. The people at Boughton were very welcoming...





Trevor Villa arriving in the PF 172, Mike Lima



Loo Smith & Dot Mathey depart in her Auster



Fenland provided its usual excellent hospitality & food so a good time was had by all.

Share a seat day

It all started a bit murky, but the sun eventually broke through so a few PF aviators, including John Fielding & Adrian Hall-Carpenter and others were able to take up members for a bumble around the Norfolk/Suffolk countryside.

Also on Share a Seat day Hot Air Balloonists Sean Simington and David Stagg brought their new Ultramagic 425,000 cubic ft balloon for its first free flight. G-NLCB was built over the winter in Spain and is the largest passenger balloon in operation in the UK. Capable of carrying 18 passengers aloft. Sean and David took four fellow PFA members on the first flight. A pleasant flight to the north east was enjoyed by all aboard with a landing on a ploughed field at Tasburgh.



The new balloon launched from Priory Farm



Champagne for everyone after landing

New Committee Member

With Paul Archer relocating to the North we found ourselves 'deficient of a committee member to the tune of one' - *(for those who remember the Peter Cook & Dudley Moore sketch about casting a one legged man for the film role of Tarzan...oh, never mind!)*. Anyway, our 'first reserve' from last year was Maurice Edwards who has kindly agreed to be co-opted onto the committee in Nigel's place. Welcome Maurice. I expect you will get a job to do soon Maurice!

First Flight

Nick Duckworth taken just before he took off on 29th April in his Flylight Pea Bee sub 70kg trike. Apparently, the wing had been test flown by the manufacturers but the trike had never flown before. Nick enjoyed a 20 minute flight where everything went perfectly. That's what we want to hear!



Airfield 'Safeguarding'

What's that, I hear you say? It is a process of formally registering a property with the planning authorities so that they are aware of its existence and attributes in the context of forthcoming & future planning decisions that may affect it and its function.

In our case, we have formally registered the PF site to ensure that the interests of the farm and its airfield are factored into any decisions that may be made regarding the routing of the proposed electricity pylon route from North Norfolk to Essex that has been in the news in the last few months. More on this as it unfolds.

Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting held at PFA club hut on 8th May - chaired by John Fielding

Present: Alan McNeal, Bob Sage, David Brown, John Fielding, Mik Horn, Richard Flagg, Sean Simington.

Apologies for absence: Julian Campbell, Mik Horn, Nigel Hall, Paul Jackson.

1. Committee member. Paul Archer has moved up north, beyond the realms of Norfolk. The committee expressed their thanks for his contributions. John said he'd approach the members who volunteered back in November, in the order in which they had contacted him.
2. Membership. Despite the membership fee of £40 being due in January, there are still some people who have not paid. Bob gave John a list of those people who he thought would want to be members but who are yet to pay. It was felt that a firmer approach needed to be taken as it wasn't reasonable to expect a club, run by volunteers to give their time chasing payment from a few bad apples. John agreed to send emails individually to the non-payers telling them to stop using the club hut and toilets. They would also be removed from the club mailing lists.
3. Fly-in 11th June. John will not be here to help Bob with the organisation and set-up. David (who is to become chairperson in 2024) will chair the next committee meeting and help Bob with the fly-in arrangements.
4. Hangar lights. Bob reported that the PIR floodlights on the hangars are currently working. They've been problematic but he'd keep an eye on them.
5. Club electricity and broadband. Bob agreed to give a breakdown of costs to Mik so that the club can reimburse him.
6. Threat of pylons. Member Linda Smith has kindly been in communications with the Norfolk Gliding Club and learned of 'airfield safeguarding arrangements' information that might help encourage the routing to be more distanced from the PF circuit. David agreed to take this on.

7. Financial Statement from Treasurer. This monthly report can be available on request to any paid-up member of the PFA.

8. Air Ambulance. Bob proposed and the committee agreed that the club should make a contribution to the Air Ambulance. It was agreed that the club should give £2000. Mik said he'd arrange the payment.

End of minutes.

That Worst Day...(part 2)

The story so far...

The pilot had departed a Norfolk airfield bound for his home base in Hampshire on a straightforward two leg route - via Cranfield VOR near Bedford. Having taken off, the sun was shining, so on impulse he opted for a longer more scenic route around Marham, Kings Lynn and the Wash. The extra time taken and the extra fuel used would have consequences later on the trip.

Nearing Cranfield he encountered very low cloud and during an attempt to turn back east he spotted a grass airfield and dropped into it. Having re-examined the weather forecast (MET Forms F214 & 215) at this airstrip, he decided to wait a while for the current weather front to pass. He estimated the gap between fronts one & two to be enough for him to reach his destination airfield - *or so he thought*. After an anxious wait, the air cleared so the pilot decided to go - anxious to get home. Having profusely thanked his host for his hospitality & help, he took off and headed WSW to pick up his intended VOR radial from Cranfield to his destination. All went well at first. The air was clear, but a bit bumpy after the Front. Passing Bedford he headed for Aylesbury which passed on the right.

As he got nearer to the high ground of the Chiltern Hills he saw what looked like another bank of dark low cloud ahead. Oh no - it can't be? The next front isn't due yet - *or so he thought*, but there it was - right across his route. Again! Disregarding better ideas - like looking for another airfield he could make a run for whilst in clear air - he pressed on, hoping for the best.

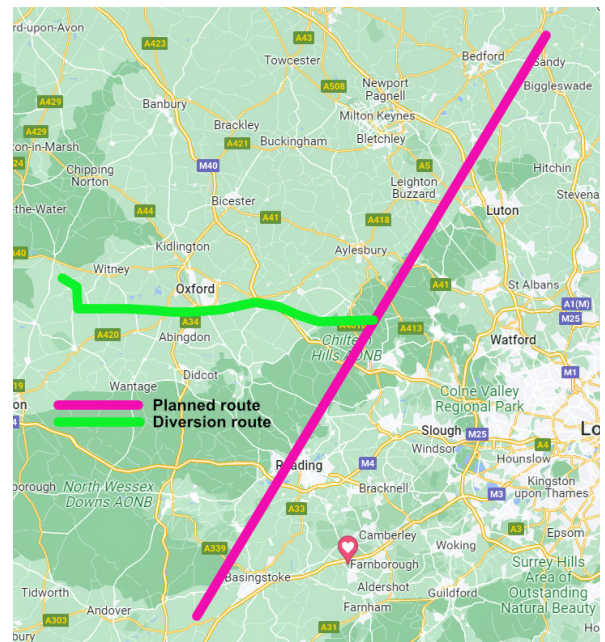
'The best' didn't happen and his decision-making ability was fast deserting him to be replaced by a sense of complacency and inertia. Hoping it would be a brief, narrow bank of cloud that he could muddle his way through in a few minutes, he soon found himself over rising ground and a fast lowering cloud base until he was just a few hundred feet over terrain which was unsuitable for an aircraft looking to land. Catastrophe number two - on the same day!

The pilot was now on the verge of panic and resigned to either dropping the flaps, putting the aircraft down in the first available field and hoping he would survive the experience....when a little voice in the back of his head said, *"Pull yourself together or you're going to become just a statistic - another crash victim. What happened to your training? You KNOW what to do so do it!"* Wow! Shaken out of his mental lethargy he applied what instrument flying skills he had - made sure the aircraft was straight & level and started to gently climb to a safer height. Fortunately, he was flying in and out of IMC as the clouds weren't yet a solid mass.

Having calmed down a bit, he selected the emergency frequency 121.50 on the radio and called *"PAN PAN PAN PAN G-XXXX, Cessna 150, 1 POB, lost in cloud near Aylesbury and need help!"*

A calm voice answered *"G-XXXX, PAN call acknowledged. What is the nature of your problem? Is the aircraft level & under control?"* "Yes". *"Does the pilot hold instrument qualifications?"* "No, but he does have some instrument flying experience"....*(a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing).*

"Further information on altitude & the state of the IMC conditions were gently asked for. *"What do you estimate your duration to be?"* A glance at the fuel gauges was alarming. They were close to the empty stops! "40 minutes" (the pilot guessed).





The nice calm RAF man at the Distress & Diversion cell of London Air Traffic Control Centre at West Drayton* in West London then said. *“Your are identified (position given). You circumstance is understood as is your fuel state. Keep flying the aeroplane straight & level and standby. I will come back to you”.* (my words as the actual conversation has been lost in the mists of time!). Argghh!

*Now at Swanwick ATC Centre near Southampton

The pilot focused on keeping the aircraft level and saw that his altitude was now about 1,400ft. After what must have seemed an

age, but was probably no more than a minute, the RAF man came back to check the aircraft was still in the air and under control. *“That’s great. I’m going to pass you over to an approach controller at RAF Brize Norton who will handle this call and guide you to a safe landing. Here she is...good luck...”*



The female controller took over handing the emergency with calm skill, explaining she would guide the pilot to the air base. She gently established he was still in control, checked his duration again, whether he was in total or partial IMC and generally managed the situation in a way that helped the pilot keep flying the aircraft whilst updating him on how close he was to the airfield.

This worked nicely for a while. The pilot remained in control and was a little calmer then - all of a sudden, he was out of IMC - in sunshine and in sight of Brize! He reported this piece of joyous information to the controller who asked if he wanted to continue to Brize or resume his journey to the Hampshire destination. It was a no-brainer! He wanted to get on the ground as quickly as possible before his nerves gave way or his fuel ran out. Having passed this wish to the controller she said, *“OK, your on a long right base for runway 26, you’re cleared to land”.*

The pilot spent the next few minutes making his approach to this enormous runway ‘by the book’ as he didn’t want to screw up the landing after what he’d been through. After touching down he was asked to ‘vacate right on to the main apron & park next to a Lockheed Tristar and a C130 Hercules!

The pilot was very relieved to be on the ground but fully expected to receive a rather ‘sniffy’ reception from all & sundry for being an idiot. Now the fear & panic had subsided he just felt stupid & incompetent, but to his relief all the personnel were kind, friendly and very understanding.

After arranging a lift home he returned the next day to collect the aircraft after fuelling it up at the Brize Norton Flying Club. He filled the tanks to find out what his fuel remaining had been on landing. Half an hour to dry tanks was the answer! Not good!

So, what can we learn from this pilot’s experience? First, he was no cowboy. Normally a careful flyer who planned his flights thoroughly and did not take unnecessary risks. On this occasion he became the victim of a mostly self-inflicted chain of errors & poor judgements which combined to lead him to near disaster.

Putting on my old hat of a contributor to the General Aviation Safety Council on Human Factors & Limitations, here are some of the HF elements that contributed to this ‘worst day’.

Analysis

There is an old saying....'The accident happened on the Friday, but it was planned the previous day.'

- In this case, the pilot determined to return home that day. He had checked the weather on Met Forms F214 & F215 so he knew there were multiple fronts forecast with brisk winds from the direction of travel, so it should not have been a surprise that he encountered two of them and used more fuel to fly against the associated wind. Everything in those Met Reports was telling him to postpone the journey that day, but 'get-home-itis' prevailed instead of common sense.
- Instead of keeping to his planned route he chose to deviate from it, adding time to the journey, increasing the probability of encountering the fronts earlier and using more of his fuel to do so.
- He knew the Cessna fuel gauges were imprecise, but he did not dip the tanks to check what he actually had, let alone top up the fuel for safety.
- On encountering the first front with its low cloud, he made a good decision to do a 180 & head away from the weather. He was very lucky to see the aerodrome almost immediately and made a good job of landing on it safely.
- His subsequent examination of the impending weather should have told him to stay where he was, so why didn't he? Partly because he was embarrassed to descend on the unsuspecting airfield owner out of the blue (grey)? Partly because he still wanted to get home that day, come what may?
- Having run into more bad weather, faced with a situation that was certainly a threat to life, at least he kept his head and made an Urgency call to 121.50. His elementary instrument flying skills held up and kept him alive and airborne for long enough for the expert help to make a difference.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with D&D, it is run by 78 Squadron, RAF from the London ATC Centre at Swanwick. They can help by fixing your position instantly and guiding you out of trouble. Follow this link for more details...<https://nats.aero/blog/2014/08/distress-diversion/>

- Having got clear of IMC he wisely avoided the temptation to continue to his original destination, thereby avoiding front number three and running out of fuel.

Afterwards, the pilot self-examined every element of that day and his decision making. He says he never made the same errors again - at least maybe the odd one in isolation!

The bottom line? We are all fallible. In spite of all the pilot training it is easy to allow a series of small errors to link together into chains that can lead to disaster! This pilot was lucky to get away with it. Many have not in similar circumstances!



And Finally

The 10mph speed limit signs are now in place on the access road to the airfield. Bob asks that you heed them! Until next month.....au revoir.