

# ***ROBIN FLYING GROUP NEWS***

## ***Christmas 2017***



Plenty of excellent flying earlier in the year has been balanced by much more variable weather in the past few months, which has impacted our fly-outs as well as day to day activity.

### **MEMBERS**

Since the last Newsletter in June, we are delighted to welcome Mike Morgan, Sam Lawton and Andy Sawicki (PPLs), Alex Hamilton, Richard Gore, Hugo Cowley, Josh Breslan, Lewis Boyles-White, Toby Kay and Alex Macan (SPLs). Congratulations to Nigel Gartley and Alex Macan for flying their First Solos and David James, Harry Barlow and Alex Bowen for passing their Skill Tests and achieving PPL status! Michael Freeman is right there but has been frustrated by the weather.

### **TRAINING**

The training side of the group has continued to thrive. Our reputation has been rewarded with a steady flow of new student pilots without the need to advertise or promote ourselves.

I believe that what sets us apart from most flight training organisations is that our members emerge as truly competent and capable pilots - not just licence holders!

By the time of their skill test, most of our student members will have flown into 5-10 varied airfields versus the standard 3. Many will have been on fly-outs, perhaps including ones to France. As well as flying themselves, they will have accumulated useful time observing other pilots flying and absorbing valuable information. Overall they will already have gained a diversity of experience never enjoyed by most PPLs, even years after getting their licences.

Helpful as such experience is, the quintessential ingredient of outstanding flying training is the quality of instruction. With David, Lyn, Howard and Peter available to members we are exceptionally well placed to deliver the best instruction, whilst catering for individual tastes and requirements.

Lyn's full-time status inevitably makes her the lynch pin of day to day training operations. Exceptional dedication, combined with a true passion for flying and the thoroughness and attention to detail of an ex-schoolteacher ensure the highest standards for our students.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating". Our "home grown" PPLs and LAPLs have consistently proved to be safe, competent pilots - almost invariably more capable than experienced pilots trained elsewhere. That is not to denigrate those who have joined us as already experienced pilots, but most of you will have found Lyn's influence very helpful too.

Several students and PPLs have pointed out that Lyn's charges are ludicrously low for the service she provides, so her hourly rate is to rise to £36 from 1st Jan 2018. Still pretty modest since that is based on the flying element only with no charge for briefings before or after each flight.

### ADVANCED TRAINING

We are well-placed to offer training for Night and IMC Ratings. All our aircraft are night-capable and GORA, CKLI and RONS are well-equipped for IMC work, each with ILS, DME and ADF.

Both ratings are interesting and rewarding to gain so do ask Lyn or David about them if you might be interested



### AIRCRAFT

G-CEKO, G-OYIO, G-GORA and G-CCZX remain as the ideal RFG long term fleet. G-CKLI our Piper Arrow has been much enjoyed by those who have checked out and is now on Annual Inspection into the New year.



Meanwhile, what passionate Robin enthusiast could resist the temptation of a pristine DR400/180 Regent with one careful owner, under 1000 hours from new, full IFR capability and autopilot – all at an unusually reasonable price? I could not, I'm afraid!

Ironically, after the epic voyage to Copenhagen to buy the Arrow, G-RONS came all the way from Dunkeswell... Her future is uncertain as we do not have the demand to justify two DR400/180 Regents in the long term, but she has proved a useful addition to fly-outs and IMC training and the plan is to review the fleet requirements following our big fly-out in April.

### AVIONICS

Faced with the threat of our operations being constrained by the moving goal posts of control and legislation we decided to "bite the bullet" and equip all our aircraft with identical 8.33 KHz capable radios and Mode S transponders – at a potential cost of over £30,000. Not a welcome expense, particularly after the c £50,000 overhauls to CCZX and OYIO in the past year!

After extensive research we have chosen Trig equipment as it is very well made, promising to be durable and has excellent features.

Most of you will be familiar with the TT31 Transponder by now – all our aircraft now have one except CKLI who will get one in the course of its current Annual. Its operation is unusual as you select the digits of the squawk with a knob then press the "Enter" button instead of turning individual knobs for each digit. In practice this is quickly learnt and the TT31 has the additional useful features of a "VFR" button to recall 7000 instantly and an altitude read-out based on 1015mb so that you know that you are transmitting correct altitude info.

Less familiar will be the TY96 radios, which are delightful to fly with. Features include:

An "Emergency" button for direct access to 121.50

A "Monitor" button to allow listening to two stations at once

A "Memory" button to recall last used frequencies or ones uploaded via a USB memory stick

A "Play" button to replay the last radio transmission received instead of requesting "Say again"



If you think that I am beginning to sound like a Trig salesman, that is because I am now one! We have become official Trig dealers, giving us a discount on the equipment we have bought for our aircraft and the ability to claw back some of the cost by selling Trig kit to others which we are doing successfully. We have also been able to claim, through the CAA, a 20% EU grant on the purchase price of our own equipment.

Please take the time to read the operating instructions (viewable in the caravan) of both the radios and the transponders and get the feel of the equipment before flying with it. I believe that you will find doing so well worth the trouble and the new equipment a positive benefit in action.

### **COSTS**

We propose to hold flying charges at their current levels into the New Year, but our operating costs are rising inexorably and we anticipate at least a modest increase in charges from April 2018.

### **FLY-OUTS**

The weather has disrupted this year's fly-outs, with several postponements or curtailments. Nevertheless, we have enjoyed three French Fly-outs since the last newsletter in July.

As advertised in that, we had an invitation for nine members to visit the Robin Factory at Dijon at the end of June for lunch and a factory visit. Demand was such that we ended up (slightly impolitely!) taking ten, in CCZX, GORA, OYIO and DAYO the Bonanza to leave CEKO available in our absence.

The weather dealt us a tough hand, particularly for several relatively inexperienced pilots in the mix. Nevertheless, all coped admirably with thunderstorms, poor vis, low cloud and two unscheduled nights in Dijon for a memorable and enjoyable expedition.



The reward was our best ever day at the factory so far. The exigencies of the weather resulted in only two other aircraft turning up for Robin's lunch and factory visit. Faced with cold driving rain, the two young pilots in one (dressed in shorts and t-shirts) announced that it was ok for us English who are used to bad weather but not for them. So they beat a hasty retreat and immediately set out for home before going near the factory or the lunch!

We were treated to an exceptionally good lunch and the undivided attention of Kasimir Pellisier, the owner's son, who proved a superb host, showing us all aspects of the factory and giving us the opportunity for detailed discussion with everyone involved in building the aircraft.

I found the Parts Department particularly fascinating. When we discovered that the shipping cost of a canopy section was 500 euros, Kasimir and I each carried one out to the Bonanza and we converted it from school bus to parts van!

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**End of Year Fly-out - (This Thursday 28 Dec)** Blow out the Christmas cobwebs with breakfast somewhere (Kemble?)

**French fly-out - (Fri/Sat either 26/27 Jan or 2/3 Feb).** Two alternative dates to provide for the weather! Hotel booked in Versailles for the first and La Rochelle for the second

**French fly-out - (Sat/Sun, 17/18 March).** Possibly to the destination we don't go to in Feb. Hopefully a good opportunity to fine-tune aircraft and pilots for April....

**2018 Big One - (Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April – Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> April)** – Seven country Fly-out, overnighing at Konstanz (2 nights with day in between at Aero Friedrichshafen), Venice, Dubrovnik, Calvi and Albi. Seven days' flying through some of the most varied and beautiful parts of Europe including an Alpine crossing. Possible crew change at Venice for those who don't want to go all the way round.

**TBA – Brittany Fly-out (2 days/1 night in May).** The old favourite: St Brieuc - Ouessant – Quimper – Belle-Ile en Mer – Quiberon – La Baule – Dinard – a Channel Island – Exeter.

The big fly-out is already fully subscribed, but please say asap if you are interested in any of the others.

***We wish you a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!***

*Dermot and Debbie*

*Thanks to Marie and Lyn for the photos.*