

## **A Grand D-day Out! Smeatharpe & Bolt Head, Sun. 6<sup>th</sup> June 04 - John Crabb**

If invited to compile the long list of things that I do not do very well, I would have to include flying, sleeping and playing in a steel drum band. Just before the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-day I was excruciatingly engaged in the latter, to the undeserved discomfort of an innocent village fete, when an elderly gent sidled up and asked whether we played the Can-can chorus from Orpheus in the Underworld. I thought it kinder to pretend that we did not and, in the course of conversation, learned that he had been stationed at Culmhead during the war and flew Spitfires. He was staying in this area with a wartime lady friend, but having lost his driving licence due to a recent stroke, he was unable to visit the celebrations scheduled for Smeatharpe airfield on the Sunday. The injustice in this struck me forcibly and I offered to take him there.

So on Sunday morning I picked Reg up from his cottage and navigated him unerringly to Smeatharpe. This was about the last impressive thing I was to achieve that day. The celebrations themselves were disappointingly thin and, with the greatest respect to all concerned, somewhat disorganised. Nevertheless, a reported 6,000 people turned up and milled about with little to do. Reg was very taken with the big radials on the Beech; apparently he was used to stripping down and reassembling such beasts. He was also fascinated as Mike Mold kindly opened up his Jodel canopy and talked him through the unfamiliar instrument panel. We stayed to view the display by the two Mustangs and then drove over to Dunkeswell and boarded my Jodel for a trip down to Bolt Head and a well-earned cup of tea.

Reg will be 80 in December. In 1944 he was in the Fleet Air Arm and attached to 616 Squadron of the RAF at Culmhead. Basically an engineer, he had been trained to fly Spitfires on ferry flights with a view to moving them from carriers to recently constructed island airstrips in South East Asia later in the war - a task that was scrubbed following the eventual detonation of two atomic bombs. For the time being, however, in the summer of 1944, a number of naval Spitfires had been stripped out for photo-reconnaissance work and it was one of these he flew from Culmhead. He was asked to fly reconnaissance missions over the Normandy beaches in the build up to D-day, which he did. He said that quite a few missions were flown, then the Spitfires "stopped coming back", so the flights were discontinued. By the end of the war he had flown about 50 hours on Spitfires.

On the way down to Bolt Head he seemed initially somewhat overwhelmed by the experience (my flying again, I guess) and appeared to be having trouble with his headset. When invited to take the controls he modestly declined claiming that he had probably lost his touch. Still, everything proceeded smoothly and after demonstrating various unnecessary manoeuvres to try to disguise the fact that I had failed to spot Bolt Head, we eventually settled on an accomplished final approach to the beautiful little strip. Intent on impressing my guest I executed the gentlest of round outs and waited for the tyres to kiss the grass. Instead, the bottom fell out of our world as we hit some sink or shear over the sloping threshold and dropped like a stone. I applied considerable power, the mains touched and we bounced, hung decoratively in the air for a second or two, then clawed our way up at very low speed to go around for another go. The second landing was as perfect as I had hoped the first one would be. Reg took it in good heart. In fact, it somewhat broke the ice (but thankfully not the plane) as it obviously rekindled memories of similar incidents of his own.

As we sat in the sunshine at Bolt Head drinking tea, Reg related some stories from his time at Culmhead. He recalled the arrival of the first two Meteors. They had never heard of jets before and their sudden appearance scared them near to death. Being a young fellow at that time, he thought nothing of regularly walking down into Taunton for entertainment. One night he declined a lift from an American army truck, only to come across it crashed in the roadside forest some moments later with the occupants all laughing and singing at their hilarious misfortune. However, he got more than he bargained for when he spent an evening drinking cider at the Holman Clavel Inn on the Blackdowns. He was making his way back to camp in the early hours when he paused to take a drink

from a roadside spring. The next thing he knew he was in the base sick bay, and not on account of the water. For the next four days, whenever he drank water he passed out again! When he finally got over it, and having been largely unconscious throughout that time, his CO showed him a letter he had composed to his parents reporting him "killed in action".

On the flight back to Dunkeswell, rightly judging that nothing could be as bad as the landing at Bolt Head, Reg was in a much more relaxed mood. The views were spectacular and I enjoyed them all the more by imagining them through his eyes. As a final treat we called in at Smeatharpe village hall to view the excellent photographic exhibition. There was a board of photos and text on Culmhead and Reg was clearly moved looking at the pictures of the old buildings which he readily identified. The text even related the story of the two Meteors that he had told me earlier in the day, and also gave an account of the D-day reconnaissance sorties.

There is also a touching human story to relate. The lady with whom Reg was staying, Mary, had been a friend of his in the war. They both went their separate ways and married, she twice after her first husband died. Later, partnerless and lonely in his flat near Southampton, Reg used to visit most summers until, one day, he turned up on her doorstep and declared that he intended to stay until she chucked him out. Mary seemed quite happy with this arrangement and when I returned him, happy and exhausted at the end of a brilliant day out, she was clearly delighted to see how much he had enjoyed himself. It was a pleasure and an honour to have had his company for the day. Determined to repay me in some way he had treated me to some cans of beer when we dropped in at the shop in Dunkeswell. If I had made a fuss, he threatened he would buy me cider instead! What a gent! What a day!



Andy Foan's Beech 18 at Smeatharpe.

---

## Halwell Fly-in - Sun 20 June

by Derek Boyce

Halwell now has a new runway running parallel to the old one in an adjacent field, closer to the road. It's longer than the old one by about 50 metres, running East/West and is approximately 480 metres hedge to hedge. The hedges seem a little lower in this field and there is an upslope to the east. Unfortunately, the bad weather resulted in only 12 visiting aircraft, which was typical as we had more space to park everyone this year!

Four of the visitors had arrived the day before to camp overnight, comprising of two Ikarus C42s, a Skyranger and a Rans S6. The latter was flown by Steve Slade, a disabled pilot who is very active in microlight competitions. First in on the Sunday was Alistair Way with his Jabiru powered Topsy Nipper from Yeovil. Keith Wingate keeps his Nipper at Halwell and later in the day Chris Pidler flew his Nipper in from Watchford Farm to make a full turnout from the Strut's Nipper owners.

Paul and Mary Aston arrived in the Pegasus CT from Exeter, delivering the onions for the barbeque organised by the South Hams Microlight Club members. Reg McComish called in on the way back to his nearby strip from North Weald in his Aeronca Super Chief. Mike Wells and Russell Marshall had been persuaded by Chris Pidler to fly down from Watchford Farm in their Jodel D112. As their route back Watchford became filled with menacing black clouds they began to regret listening to Chris and after some lengthy discussion on their options, decided their best plan of actions was to have a cup of tea!

Other visitors comprised a Jodel D117 from Popham, Michael Barrett with his Technam Echo from Eaglescott and, in keeping with tradition, Barbara and Mike Fairclough were last in with their Watchford-based Super Cub. Several Strut members arrived by road, partly due to the weather and partly to check out the new runway before flying in. There was some comment about not trusting measurements taken by a builder, but it looked OK to me!

Many thanks go to Keith Wingate for co-ordinating the event and to all the South Hams Microlight Club members who helped out on the day, including Pete Callis and Mary Aston. Finally, thanks to Martin Pengelly for marshalling the aircraft and to both Keith Wingate and Paul Aston for flying Martin in the X'Air & Pegasus CT, respectively.

---

## **Manstage Fly-in – Sun 27 June**

**by Derek Boyce**

Providing a new venue for 2004, Richard and Ingrid Hulls kindly agreed to host a fly-in at their strip at Manstage Farm. The strip is located 4.5 nm east of Okehampton beside the Okehampton to Holsworthy road. Flying from Bodmin, you simply follow the A30 past Launceston, fly over Roadford Reservoir, head towards the telecom mast which is located 1nm NW of the strip, turn right before you reach it and you will find yourself downwind right hand for 30 and all without the aid of a GPS!

The initial flat portion of r/w 30 is about 420m although there is a total of 850m available if required and not an airliner in sight when I arrived to face the expected crosswind! I was not happy with my first approach and on the second attempt I was hit by a sudden gust and started to go around again. I then realised I still had more runway in front of me than I am used to at Bodmin and was down well before the down slope on the runway.

When I got there Mark Keith-Hill had already arrived in a Cessna 152 from Plymouth. Also in the aircraft park was the Piper Tri-Pacer of strip owner Richard Hulls. The Tri-Pacer surprisingly saw Military service with the French Army in Africa, serving in Djibouti in French Somalia. The weather unfortunately kept the total number of visitors down to just 9 aircraft. The other arrivals were Jon Pote with the Chipmunk from Eaglescott, two Jabirus flown by Phil Hatton from a nearby strip at Stone and Geoff Dalton from Bodmin, and from Watchford Farm were Mike Mold with the Champion Traveller, Chris Fitton with his Jodel DR1051 and Chris Pidler in the Nipper. One notable (if notable is the right word!) absentee from Watchford Farm was Mike Wells; I only say this because he gets upset if he doesn't see his name in print! The only visitors from outside the area were Kenneth and Catherine Brackwell in their Robin DR400/180 G-LARA from Goodwood. They are regular visitors to our fly-ins as they enjoy flying over the Devon countryside.



Ingrid and Richard Hulls were excellent hosts, providing a continual supply of refreshments for everyone. Martin Pengelly had a busy day, marshalling the 9 visitors, with Nigel and Robert Nicholson helping out as required. Unfortunately, the trees around the strip shielded any warning of the approaching bad weather and when Martin landed after flying in the Chipmunk with Jon Pote, he suggested we think about leaving. All those flying east made a run for it, but when Geoff phoned Bodmin he found out they had stopped flying, so all we could do was sit it out and wait for the expected clearance to move through. It did brighten up and we had no problems getting back to Bodmin, apart from being bounced around by the thermal activity, but we have come to expect that of late.





Many thanks go to Richard and Ingrid Hulls and their helpers for their hospitality. Thanks also to Martin Pengelly, Nigel and Robert Nicholson for helping out and to Jon Pote for flying Martin in the Chipmunk. Finally a special thanks to Ingrid, whose shrewd investment in a gazebo in the Index sale proved very useful to those of us left behind when the weather turned bad.

---

## Lundy Fly-in – Sun 4 July

by Derek Boyce

The original plan for a number of strut members was to fly over on the Saturday and camp overnight. Unfortunately the great British summer put paid to that idea and all we could do was hope things would improve for Sunday. I had long decided I was not going to take a Bodmin club aircraft into Lundy, even though I had seen Cessna 152s visit during previous fly-ins, and as events transpired, I felt I had made the right decision. Reg McComish agreed to give me a lift over in his Aeronca Super Chief. Reg called Sunday morning to say he could get out of his strip and that the best plan would be to meet him at Eaglescott.

When I arrived at Eaglescott Reg was busy cleaning the Aeronca. The farmer keeps cows on his strip and the new paint job was well and truly spattered! Airborne from Eaglescott, we managed to find a way around the showers to cross the coast near Bideford and fly out into clear blue skies. Thirty-five minutes after leaving Eaglescott we were on the ground at Lundy enjoying a beautiful summer's day.



Terry Wilson and Pete White had already arrived in IVOR and were greeting visitors. A small contingent of strut members had also arrived including Trevor Reed (Jungman), Les Dray and Steve Robson (Condors), Jon Pote (Chipmunk) and Brian Anning (Champion Traveller). The weather on the mainland kept the number of visitors down to 30. These included a number of Jodels and Vans RVs, a pair of Smaragds (German-built Emeraudes), Whitman Tailwind, Europa, a Boredom Fighter and Luscombe Silvaire from Haverfordwest and a Cub Cruiser from the Islands



Everyone adjourned to the local pub for an enjoyable lunch or walked around the island to savour the magical scenery made all that much better by the glorious summers day. A number of people also arrived by boat to enjoy the fly-in including one of our newest members, Maurice Bush, who flies a flexwing from Belle Vue. Light winds combined with a crosswind component were extending take off and landing runs on Lundy's bumpy moorland surface and unfortunately the day was marred by a couple of accidents. An RV4 had a landing accident and has subsequently been airlifted off the island by helicopter. But more serious was the take-off accident by a Cessna 172, which was widely reported in the news. Fortunately for the pilot, Jon Pote and Terry Wilson, two very experienced people at dealing with such situations, were quickly on the scene and managed to pull him clear before the resulting fire took hold. Well done, guys! Also thanks to Keith Wingate who helped Terry put out the fire once the bowser had arrived and the nurse who looked after the pilot until the rescue helicopter arrived. After that, everyone was especially careful, mindful no doubt of the saying that everything happens in threes! Reg took the shortest route possible over the sea on the 45-minute trip back to Eaglescott. Many thanks go to the Lundy "management" for allowing the event to take place, to Terry Wilson who co-ordinated the event, to everyone who helped out on the day and finally thanks to Reg for the lift over and back.

---

## **Taw Mill Fly-in Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July**

**by Richard Horner**

Due to air racing at Eaglescott & the Auster fly-in at Eggesford, Taw Mill owner Fred Baulch decided that another fly-in in such a small area would only add to the congestion of the local air space. He therefore decided not to publicise the event in any great depth. Unfortunately, by this time it had been entered on many calendars and the appropriate magazines. The event on the other hand, has also become the annual gathering for my family 'the Horner Clan' who travel from far and wide to spend a weekend enjoying the delights of the Devon countryside and Fred's field. It was on this note that Fred had asked me to look after anyone who may happen to turn up on the day. I duly agreed, as we would already be there, flying family and friends around the local area.

Saturday evening cleared nicely and by then David Berger in his Super Cub had arrived with his young sons along with Martin Robinson, in the Chipmunk this time, and his family. With clearing skies David and Martin duly took to flying some of our family and friends. Sunday morning

arrived and by 8.30am I had already received 3 text messages asking for details of the fly-in. Was this a sign of thing to come?



A super mellow place, just our style. Although it seems that the fly in was actually cancelled a select band turned up and were made very welcome by Richard Horner and his family. Comment & Photo by Trevor Reed

Our first arrival, almost by surprise, was the Eurostar from a private strip within the Lyneham zone. He was quickly followed by an Ikarus from Dunkeswell, then the arrival of 2 172's also from Dunkeswell, one owned by Fred Baulch. It wasn't long before we saw the arrival of local onlookers, along with the now customary plane spotters. It was impossible now to keep up with the aircraft arriving in the overhead, keep some safe marshalling and pleasure flights. Thankfully with the help of family, friends and marshalling with the help of Martin Robinson, we soon had some sort of order.

Other arriving aircraft included the Jungmann of Trevor Reed, Les Dray in his Condor, Chris Fitton in the Jodel Sicile, the Piper Cub owned by Barbie and Mike Fairclough, a Luscombe, Europa Chipmunk, Jabaru and many different types of microlight. Sorry to those people who like to know which aircraft and from where they had come, but we weren't actually expecting anyone to turn up, so no one was on hand to take notes! As it was, the day turned out to be a great success, and thank you to the generous support of my family (giving up their food and drink) and the help of Martin and David, and of course the generosity of Fred Baulch.

---

## **Branscombe Air and Classic Car Show – Sun 25 Jul**

**by Derek Boyce**

Arriving at Bodmin with the sky full of black clouds, there was a small contingent of us wondering if we could find a way past Dartmoor to get to Branscombe. Undeterred, we set about getting the aeroplanes ready and as I had not flown for a couple of weeks got airborne to fly a few circuits to see what the conditions were like. Encouraged by Geoff Dalton setting out in his Jabiru, I set off in hot pursuit and managed to find a way through passing to the north of Plymouth. In contrast to Bodmin, Branscombe was basking in glorious sunshine and remained that way all day.

What a wonderful day it was too; two fields of vehicles of all description on display, about 112 aircraft flying in and a superb flying display. The flying display opened with the Utterley Butterfly Stearman flown by Vic Norman with Helen Tempest doing her wing-walking act. Next up was



Ernie Hoblyn flying the Sopwith Triplane over from Watchford Farm, whilst playing the bad guy was a Bowers Fly-baby which has been made to look like a WW1 Junkers complete with a dummy rear gunner who moves with the rudder pedals. The Tiger Club Turbulent Team then performed a very polished display in gusty conditions, firstly flying the four aircraft in formation and then performing individual flypast whilst flour bombing a target and finishing up with balloon busting.



Things got a little noisier as two Harvards took to the air to perform some tight formation flypasts before splitting up to perform individual displays of aerobatics. Moving on to a vintage theme the next duo comprised John Hopkins in the Jungmann and Nigel Reid in the Gipsy Moth. Again formation flypasts were followed by individual displays which included some low loops from the Gipsy Moth and then John Hopkins performed one of his usual polished aerobatic routines in the Jungmann.



Chris Bevan then put the Yak C-11 through its paces and finally a pair of Mustangs closed the show, by firstly performing some close formation flypasts and then finishing with individual aerobatic routines.





By the start of the flying display the visiting aircraft park was full to capacity. Amongst the homebuilts were six Europas including monowheel, tricycle and Duncan McFadyean's beautiful tailwheel example. There were two Banbis, one from Old Sarum and one from Shobdon, a Skyarrow from Popham, an RV6 from Henstridge, Christen Eagle from Dunkeswell, a Falco and a rare sight at the moment, a Shadow. Vintage types included a Stampe from Shoreham, Dornier 28 from Farnham, Auster Autocrat from Popham and David Colclough's Terrier from Eggesford. There were 5 Luscombe Silvaires including Betty and Roger Lanary's, Ray Trute's Bird Dog, a Cessna 120 and an Ercoupe in military markings.



I waited until most of the aircraft had left before departing back to Bodmin. Once over the Exe estuary the weather was just like I had left it in the morning, but arrived back at base with no problems. Several aircraft had flown up from Bodmin and we all returned glowing from the sunshine and the day's activities, in contrast to the pale faces that greeted us on return, looking more like they had been left in a darkened room!

I heard a lot of very favourable comments about the event. Joe Thomas and everyone involved with organising the event should be congratulated on a job well done. With so many people involved with helping on the day, I am not going to name individuals for fear of missing someone out [*CH made a fine attempt in the intro! Ed*]. You know who your are & thanks very much for all your hard work.

Postscript 1.

Dear Chris Howell,  
Thanks for allowing Luscombe G-LUSI to attend Branscombe Air Day and Classic Car show. Your event has been the best and happiest we had the pleasure of attending for quite some time. Keep up the good work. Hope to see you again next year.  
All the best and thanks again  
Max Robinson

Postscript 2.

Dear Mr Howell,  
Just in case you are interested, please be aware that I spent a very enjoyable afternoon at Branscombe Air Day today. I am a semi-professional video-maker and took a camera along for fun and to record some footage for my son who flies in Essex.

I was not intending to do a 'proper job' and did not take all my usual kit but I have just had a quick look at the tape, which includes shots of most of the aircraft, cars and some interesting interviews with staff and the public and there is some good material. As far as I could see there were no, good working professional videographers at the event, which was a shame because it was such a

great day and the opportunities for good material and pics were plentiful. Some I captured and the pics, particularly of aircraft taxiing, are stunning.

In the next few days I will put together an edited tape, with a draft sleeve, and send it to you. A couple of the pilots and members of the public asked me for my card to order a tape. If the tape will be of wider interest to members I will be happy to print a quantity for direct sale to customers at my risk. My usual price is £11 per tape (which comes with a full colour sleeve featuring stills from the tape), add £1 for p&p. I am happy to make a donation to your supported charity or organization if you wish. There is no need for you to pay anything now or order a bulk quantity.

Please contact me in the next few days if you are able to circulate news of the availability of the tape to your contacts and if you would like me to do production run (no cost to anyone other than the purchasers). Orders can be placed at my email address and payment can be made by PayPal under the usual security and safety arrangements.

Hope this makes sense and is helpful !

Yours sincerely

Jim Rider

“Jim Rider Video”

[Jim\\_rider@totalise.co.uk](mailto:Jim_rider@totalise.co.uk)

01404 45649 until 12 Aug

---

## Where to Stay Recommendations

by David Cottingham

Fly-ins suddenly became popular with my wife after I suggested it might be nice to stay on overnight and turn them into a mini break. The problem is or where to stay on such occasions?

### **Bolt Head**

For Bolt Head the Cottage Hotel at Hope Cove with its stunning position overlooking Bigbury Bay is wonderful. Take the half-board accommodation as the dinner is both excellent quality and value. When booking ask for Sarah or William and tell them you are flying in and they will provide free transport to and from the airfield. Tel. 01548 561 555 email [info@hopecove.com](mailto:info@hopecove.com)

### **Roserrow**

Following Tony Simpson's Roserrow recommendation we set out from Branscome on Monday the 5th July along the south coast to Exmouth then via Okehampton and down the north coast from Bude. Spectacular coastlines and too good to rush!

We stayed at a lovely country pub at St. Minver which is about 2 miles South East of the golf club. Being outside of the coastal resorts of Polzeath and Rock you are more likely to be able to book accommodation at short notice, especially on Sunday nights.

Jamie, the owner of the Fourways Inn is again happy to pick up from the airstrip and return you the following day. The rooms are all en-suite and have just been refurbished to a very high standard. The food is excellent pub grub and at very reasonable prices.

Tel. 01208 862 384

### **Perranporth**

Whilst it's not usually one of our fly-in venues, Perranporth is an excellent destination as the walk along the cliffs from the aerodrome is superb and only about two miles down to the Seiners Arms. This pub is superbly located on the beach at Perranporth. Again take the excellent value half-board accommodation and watch the tide sweep in past your feet whilst eating an excellent meal! Again

the owners are very “aero-friendly” and used to give a 10% discount to visiting pilots but I think this has now been discontinued. Free transport back up the hill has always been provided to us. Tel. 01872 573 118 [www.seinersarms.com](http://www.seinersarms.com)

### **Lane Farm**

Lane Farm, near Hay on Wye, is an ideal location for rest and recuperation and could help heal the rift between husband and wife - if she will get in the aircraft! Strut members John and Trish Kempton recently stopped over there and enjoyed an excellent day flying around the Welsh hills. Some of the dams nearby were used by the Dambuster Lancasters for training during World War 11. The strip and deer park are owned by John Bally, ex-CFI of The Black Mountain Gliding Club at Talgarth. The website address is [www.lane-farm.co.uk](http://www.lane-farm.co.uk) Telephone 01497-851605 email [jbally@btclick.com](mailto:jbally@btclick.com)

Are there any more little gems out there which are both good destinations and have reasonably priced accommodation close by? Perhaps you would be willing to share them with us all?

---