

OLD WARDEN SEPTEMBER 2015 – Your Webmaster’s Report

Due to lack of time caused by some stressful stuff at work and home, your Webmaster’s one and only appearance at a meeting in 2015 was at Old Warden for the September Festival of Flight. It was with a gladsome heart that I decided to forget all my woes, stretch the credit card further than usual, spend three nights at the Bedford Marina Premier Inn, and see if I could get any of my fleet into the air, back onto the deck again and somewhere above the bottom of the scoreboard...

Arriving at Old Warden at 09:00 on Saturday I found the usual team of willing dockyard mateys manoeuvring HMS Incredible into her reserved slot opposite the café, ready for the field to open at 10:00. As they had everything under control, I wandered away to see what the trade stands had to offer, returning some time later with a fully built but uncovered Housden Hellcat (£5), a brand new Class VII Weatherman (unflown - £10) and a gallon of diesel fuel for £20 – I was elated and so was my wallet! The meeting itself turned out to be very well attended, and produced some nail-biting moments and some controversy, so let’s get started...



The carrier was now ready for action and more pilots had arrived – the gates were opened, the sun shone and the wind went away for a day’s holiday – perfect!

I first chatted to Chris Howelll, who seems to have recovered from the theft of all his models and tools while camping at the Mayfly meeting. He’s made great progress in converting his large van into a control line command centre with model racks,



bed, swivelling chairs, fridge, etc so a visit to a meeting must now rather like bringing a man-cave and a bedsit with him! I was envious...

Chris had recently bought a **Ryan Fireball** powered by an Evo 36. This model was built and last flown (I believe) by Arthur Dickinson at the 2012 Nats, and is a really smart machine that benefits from a tricycle undercarriage and light but rugged construction. Chris also brought along his Messerschmitt BF109T and an amazingly well-organized line and handle box.



A quick check with **Andy Housden** revealed that flying operations were now ready to commence, so I took the opportunity of getting a shot of “Flyco” himself ready to start the proceedings. As I’ve remarked many times, without Andy (and Mike Welch and the other carrier stalwarts) there would be no carrier flying in the UK – it’s a lot of work, often unsung, to put on a professional show the way that Cap’n Andy always does.



David Cowburn from Hull was first to fly on Saturday with his **Supermarine Seafang** (Irvine 36). This model represented the final evolution of the naval Spitfire, with a wider, ruggedised undercart and more powerful Griffon engine.

Dave made three flights, all with 26-second fast sectors, but the slow laps weren’t really slow enough (75 sec). He couldn’t improve upon his best Saturday score despite reverting to his trusty **U2 (SC 32)** for one flight on Saturday afternoon, and again on Sunday. Despite notching up a best flight 165 points, this wasn’t good enough to improve upon the Seafang’s performance so Dave had to settle for **14th place with 169.6 points.**



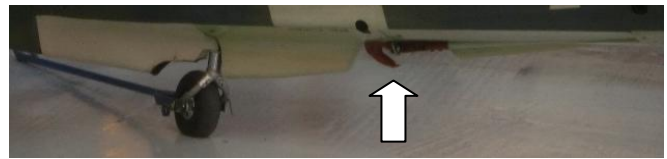
Nick Ford has worked hard to improve his scores over the last couple of years, flying his Russian-liveried **Hawker Sea Hurricane** (ASP 46) very effectively, despite some epic encounters with the oggin.

Whilst not having the fastest-fast or slowest-slow plane, he regularly achieves scores in the 170 – 200 point zone, which he did again at this meeting with four completed flights out of six, yielding a best of **198.2 for 10th place**.

By pure coincidence, it was great to see a real Sea Hurricane in the hangar just behind the Carrier circle, complete with arrestor hook!



...Sea Hurricanes greater and smaller...



Mike Welch rang the changes on Saturday, flying three different models for his three flights with no DQs, ditchings, or dramas - just a couple of AoA warnings to indicate that he was trying hard. All three models (**Swordfish, Hellcat and Pup**) scored points – amazing when you consider that Mike brought along four or five scale models as well including his massive 80" span "Utterly Buttery" **Antonov An2** which he flew in a spare moment, Mike put on a great show for the crowd, scoring **228.6 with the Hellcat for 5th place**. The Pup may make the slowest fast laps (it does only have a 4-stroke motor!), but a 122.7 slow sector is very good for any model and it looks an absolute delight in the air...





Chris Howell then stepped up to the circle, choosing to fly his **Ryan Fireball** (he'd even glued its pilot back into the cockpit for authenticity – and damn the weight penalty!). This is a very competitive model, and turned in three completed flights, although the second landing was a zero-pointer. The others weren't however, with fast segments of 29 seconds and slows of 120-plus. On his third attempt Chris notched up **8th place with 214** points - well done mate, they can't keep a good man down!

Chris went on to fly his new **Messerschmitt Bf109T** on Sunday, but despite scoring well on his first attempt (191.5), his second flight dropped 60 points on the landing (161.5) although the shape of things to come could be seen in the slow sector, where Chris loitered for 130.9 – that's good by any standards.

Paul Stubbs is a relatively new name on the Carrier scene, flying since 2014. He built this very impressive **SIG Skyraider** for the Barton Bash this year but found that his 3-line handle had gone missing after flying at the 2014 NATS.



I was happy to donate a Brodak special handle to get Paul in the air again, and he has now started to get onto the results list.

Flying only on Saturday, he chose to fly his **Hellcat** (Enya 40) first rather than the Skyraider (J'en 37), which he navigated carefully through two scoring flights and one non-scoring attempt, the best of which netted him **170.5 points for 13th place** – both flights ended with 100-point landings, so he's definitely getting to grips with his Carrier flying. His three flights with the Skyraider were less successful, racking up three DQs, all after the fast lap segment.

Nigel Frith brought along his **Grumman Hellcat**, the first electrically powered model to fly. It was at this point that I rather lost focus on the deck activity as I was (as usual) wrestling with various technical issues with my own fleet; although I'd had 11 months to fix them, those gremlins were still preventing me from flying, making me feel rather silly...so, apologies to Nigel whose flights I didn't get to see or photograph. However, he too evidently had some things to sort out as he made just one scoring flight with a nil-point landing for 91.6 points, with another that resulted in a DQ. However, better things were in store for Nigel (and thankfully for me too!) on the Sunday session,



Dave Holmes had an attack of the gremlins too with his OS 40 four-stroke powered **Sopwith Strutter**, which made two flight attempts, both of which unfortunately resulted in DQs. He tried one flight later on Saturday with his **Martin MO-1**, but that too ended in an early DQ. The Sunday session was no better for Dave; moving on to his pictured **Sea Hurricane** (Enya 40) he made three flight attempts, none of which scored points. The best of these abortive flights saw him taking a default **17th and last place** – a shame, because Dave normally does a lot better than that.

George Ford is always good value at any meeting, bringing a car full of models and a dry sense of humour, not to mention a determination to put in at least one good flight. His **Fairey Barracuda** has flown innumerable sorties over many years from many decks, bears its scars proudly, and still comes back for more. George flew twice on Saturday and no less than five times on Sunday, He notched up four DQs, one zero-point arrival and two good landings, the best of which ushered him into **12th place with 189.7 points**. Well done George; a real triumph of perseverance!



Andy Green has chosen an interesting approach to his Carrier flying, with only the Dave and Yvette Horton following in his footsteps around the centre circle.

Andy's immaculate **Grumman Wildcat** is much smaller than most competing models, is powered by a relatively tiny OS 15, and he actually competes it as a Junior Carrier class entry. This means shorter 35-foot lines and ten timed laps rather than seven. However, there is an obvious benefit for the pilot – he is 25 feet nearer to the deck, flies more slowly and therefore has a much better chance of watching the plane down to a perfect hook-up! Andy is of course a very experienced pilot and his strategy clearly pays off – he flew four very consistent perfect sorties, all netting over 180 points, with the best on Sunday easing him into **9th place with 199.2 points.**

Your correspondent (**Mike May**) brought three models along but was determined to fly just the one and actually score some points with it – his **Martin MO-1** with that monster Webra Speed 61 fitted as nose ballast. He took this do-or-die attitude because the MO-1 is two years old, took a lot of building, but had made only two flights in all that time – a real hangar queen...

The problem was finally diagnosed as a poor tank position, so with yet another new tank strapped on he stepped up to fly. Two rotten landings and an over-rich engine on full throttle netted two scoring flights on Saturday with a best of 50.9 – not good! Sunday began even worse with a DQ and what must be one of the lowest scores ever – a mind-numbing 32.1! However, it all sort of came together on the last attempt with a dodgy but ultimately max-point landing, nailing **133.9 points for 15th place,** so roll on 2016!



Ray Ewart piloted his **Vought F4U Corsair** (OS 40) at this event. It's a very smart model with those unmistakable cranked wings, and an interesting vertical fuel tank setup. It moved pretty smartly through the fast laps in sub-30 second times on both of Ray's two flights, but failed to grab a possible 160+ point result on both with two zero-point landings, leaving Ray with a best of **63.3 points for 16th place.** Flying on Saturday only, Ray had no further chance to better his score.

Gary Church is a long-time competitor and a first-class flyer, He was always likely to be a top-three contender at this meeting, and his **Mitsubishi Zero** really looks and flies the part. Taking to the air just once on Saturday only, Gary made his intentions clear with a 31/133.5 set of timed laps, but a missed approach robbed him of a vital five points and a higher placing, finishing **7th with 217.5 points,** just 0.5 points behind Peter Tribe's 218.0.

This electrically-powered model is incredibly quiet and smooth in the air – the **OS 3315 motor and 3S 1800 battery** power plant combination seem to be ideal and it is (I'm sure) capable of even better results.



Peter Tribe flew his Gloster Meteor MkIII (twin electric motors) on the Sunday only. Unusually for Peter he completed only one flight out of the three, ditching on flights two and three. However, flight number one was up to his regular standard and turned in a good performance with 29.5/127.5 sectors for 6th place and 218.0 points. Throughout the day, Peter was heavily involved in assisting Andy to run the contest, which might account for his lower-than-expected placing. In this picture, he's seen on tape-measure duty when HMS Incredible had to up-anchor and move downwind halfway through the morning's air operations when the breezes veered 90 degrees.



Whilst we're looking at the administrative side, here's another shot of Flyco in action during Sunday's action, Note the automatic camera behind Andy's left shoulder set up to capture every landing, the stopwatches, scoresheets and other essentials that he has to lug along to every event. The gazebo was missing this time, but that's about all! We've already looked at Mike Welch's flying activities and fifth place score with his Hellcat, so let's move on to the top four fliers.

Bob Phillips brought along his unique **Supermarine 508** with West 36 (reverse rotation!) and butterfly tail – it also uses disposable cable ties to hold the wings on, a simple but effective innovation!

Bob decided to fly just the once, but that was enough deliver a blisteringly fast segment (27.3) and a very respectable slow (137.1) which, with a perfect landing, racked up **229.3 points and 4th place**.

Bob often spends more time helping other fliers than he devotes to himself – it's much appreciated, Bob! – but he still pulls top class flights out of the bag!

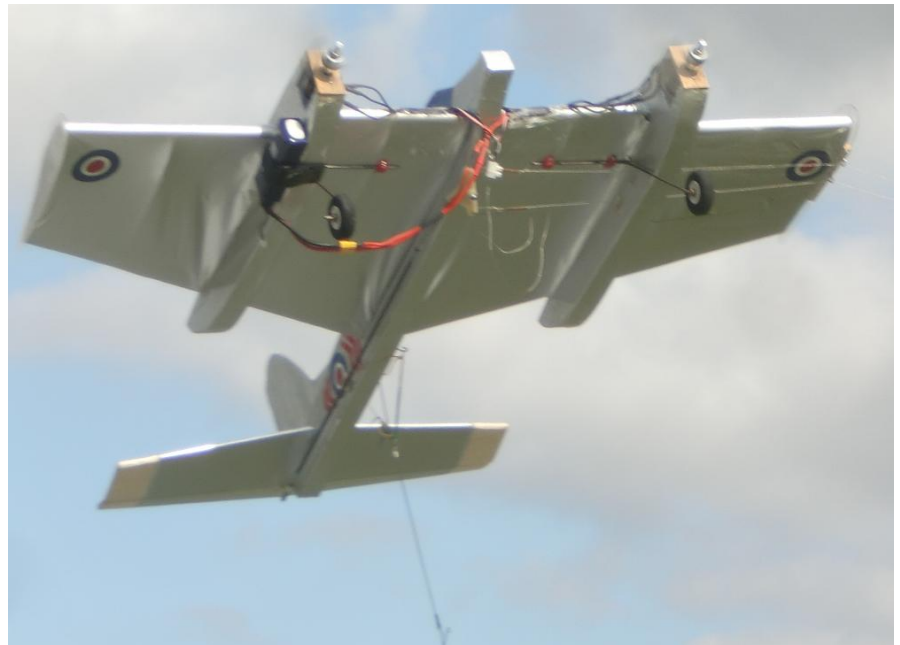


Ian Gilbert only flew on Sunday, with his Fairey Spearfish (although the official score-sheets have logged his Wyvern flying, the camera doesn't lie!) Ian had been modestly surprised to find himself starring in a YouTube video (since going viral in the control-line community) shot by an anonymous passer-by at the UK NATS, who marvelled at Ian's control over his plane while he was practising for his NATS competition flights. Practice clearly makes perfect, and Ian duly took top honours at the Barkston NATS with 267.4 points. However, he faced some very serious competition at Old Warden from John Philipps and John Green, and in the end could "**only**" (!) manage sectors of 32.9/166.0, yielding **253.1 points for 3rd place** after two flights! The photo below captures Ian's 30 degree hang which was perfectly maintained throughout – no warnings despite having to satisfy the notoriously hard-to-please anti-hanging Judge Tribe!



That leaves us with the battle for top place. The two contenders have adopted completely different technical solutions to the challenge of flying carrier. **John Philips** has been working on his **Sea Hornet** for two years, gradually refining the wing, electrical systems and motors to deliver the maximum power and lift, with his sights set firmly upon toppling Peter Tribe's Meteor from the top electrically-powered slot, and Ian Gilbert from the role of best UK flyer that he's held for the last few years.

However, John can't (I'm sure) have ever seriously considered a serious challenge coming from a conventional, glow powered and rather mission-weary LTV Crusader as flown by John Green. As it turned out, he was blindsided by an incredible display of slow flying from John Green, although that in itself was the subject of considerable controversy after the flight had ended. Here's what happened...



John Philipps (JP) flew first, and on his only flight clocked a score of 255.9, just enough to establish himself in first place above Ian Gilbert (253.1) despite actually losing 5 points on a missed approach. Satisfied with this, JP settled back to watch the rest of the competition.

CONTROVERSY!

Late in the afternoon, **John Green (JG)** brought his **LTV Crusader (SC 25)** up to the deck. His first two flights resulted in DQs, but watchers could see that JG was onto something on the slow segment – the wind had picked up, and was producing a steady 8-10 mph breeze on the upwind side of the circle, and JG was taking full advantage of it to loiter along at a very slow pace indeed. Staking all on his last flight, JG produced a 33.6 fast sector, then a 180.7 slow sector (the first

3-minute-plus seven laps for quite a while). He picked up two AoA warnings in the process, but then sped away for the landing. Coming in steep and slow, the model pitched up before taking the wires for a perfect landing and a score of **267.1 points and 1st Place**, bumping a thunderstruck JP down to **2nd place with 255.9 points**.



Shortly afterwards, JP lodged an official protest with the Contest Director on the grounds that a) the Crusader had actually stopped moving forwards on several occasions while going upwind, thereby disqualifying the flight, and that b) the model's AoA had exceeded 30 degrees on the final approach, which was also grounds for disqualification. Because this is an interesting case and the first official protest that I can recall witnessing, it's worth reminding ourselves of the BCD rules here, which say in Section 8:

“Throughout the entire flight, you must remain within the 3m diameter pilot's circle, you should not fly higher than 20ft (6m), model progress should always be forwards and anticlockwise...”

...and...

“After the landing signal, a single exceedance of 30 degrees, however momentary, will disqualify the flight without warning.”

...and...

“The Contest Director may choose to position himself close to the pilot's circle in order to monitor the above requirements”.

You'll see from several of the pix in this article that Andy had delegated the centre-circle judge duties to Peter Tribe for the afternoon, which he was perfectly entitled to do. Peter is noted for his accuracy and strict application of the rules when officiating from the centre circle, hence his reputation as the 'anti-hanging judge' [i.e. no 30 degree AoA exceedances allowed!]. When Andy asked for his opinion on the questions raised, he therefore knew that he would get a fair and accurate answer. Peter was adamant that despite JG's statement that, in his own opinion, the model had indeed stopped moving, from Peter's vantage point behind JG it **was** still making progress, albeit very, very slowly. The AoA exceedance challenge on landing was not pursued further due (I understand) to the lack of evidence one way or the other, so the result stood and **John Green was declared the winner** of the event at the end of the afternoon.

As the event reporter, I can't and won't pass an opinion on the flight or the outcome of the protest. I will say that the protest seemed to be dealt with fairly and objectively by asking the opinion of the only person who could see the whole picture - the centre circle judge - who declared in accordance with the facts as he saw them. Andy explained all this to the pilots at the prize-giving, and by the end of the day your unofficial photographer even managed to get a candid snap of JG and JP talking it all over – a good sign!



STRIKING DOWN...Going Home

So ended an exciting, and enthralling, weekend of carrier-flying; with scores ranging from stratospheric for the top pilots to subterranean for those of us at the opposite end of the score-sheet, but in the end it was a great session over two sunny days. This was thanks very largely to the sterling efforts of our Flyco Andy Housden, his helpers, the management and organizers at Old Warden, and not least to all the model fliers who travelled sometimes epic distances to compete, chat, camp, snooze, plan and meander through the fantastic trade stand area.

As a grand finale, here's a nostalgic sight you'll only see on the back-roads returning from Old Warden to Bedford – the Cardington Airship sheds, apparently repaired and in good condition again, previously home to the ill-fated R101 and its apparently safer but little-used cousin the R100. Maybe they'll become available again one day for indoor model flying! Sorry the pic's a bit hazy, but this shot is always right into the afternoon sun!



...and here's my favourite shot of the weekend – Mike Welch's Sopwith Pup making a final circuit over the Old Warden turf prior to landing back on board HMS Incredible – it's just so evocative of the Old Warden atmosphere!

