

Stansted Model Flying Club Newsletter

October, 2017

***Our next Meeting will be at Ugley Village Hall on Monday
6th November at 8PM***

Mike's Chat:

Well, the weather has been a bit patchy of late, what with the tail ends of a couple of hurricanes battering the UK and the onset of autumnal weather. This week does look a lot more promising, though, with light winds, so maybe this is a chance to go up to the flying site and get in some late season flying hours before it's too late.

The first indoor club meeting of the winter was a fairly informal event, with a modest turn out. Bill again raised the need for improved safety discipline – I think that we are going to hear more of this at the AGM! It is a shame that Bill will not be able to continue leading the club after the end of this year.

Howard regaled us with his observations from his recent visit to the new BMFA National Centre – it looks as though this venue is coming along well.

Don't forget! The AGM will be with us soon, time to meet up and review the year and to set the club's direction for the next year. All committee positions are up for grabs, so get your bids in. There will be a chance to sample a pre-Christmas hot mince pie and you can take the opportunity to renew your membership for 2018.

Cheers Dears

Mike

SMFC Events:

Tea, coffee, and biscuits, together with the usual convivial atmosphere, will be on hand from 8PM on 6th November. As always, members are encouraged to bring in models for a "show and tell" session. Also, club members who wish to sell models or modelling equipment might like to make use of any meeting. Please let me know what you plan to bring in for sale so that I can circulate the details to all members before the meeting.

Provisional plans for our winter meetings include our regular indoor chuck glider competition and an evening of simulator/bombing flying - both great fun!

Annual General Meeting:

The Club's Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 4th December at Ugley Village Hall. We should have the BFMA Membership rates by then so you will be able to renew your SMFC and BMFA Memberships at the meeting. Main topics will be reports from this year's Club Committee, the election of Club Committee Members for 2017, and the Annual Club Awards (see below).

There will be a small raffle with free entry for those attending and hot mince pies to finish off the evening to get you into the Christmas spirit.

Committee Membership for 2017:

The Club's Committee presently comprises: a Chairman, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Safety Officer, and a Webmaster. Committee membership offers direct involvement in how the club is run and its future direction. To compensate for the work involved, SMFC Membership fees are waived for Committee Members.

While all committee positions for the next year are up for election at the AGM, we *must* elect a new Chairman. Bill Michie, who has ably filled this or the Secretary's roles for many years, is unable to continue. This is a leadership role and requires someone with both the stature and dedication needed to guide the club through the next year.

We also need a Club Secretary. (*While I have been covering this role as best I can in addition to my Membership Secretary's duties, my best has not been particularly good. Also, I will be away a lot next year. LP*) The main role of the Secretary is communication and organising: taking the minutes of the AGM, producing and circulating the monthly newsletter, and pushing out notices to members as and when required. The Secretary is also the main point of contact for external organisations, although most of the communication from the BMFA goes to the Membership Secretary. The Secretary would be expected to work with the Chairman to organise the Club's annual events up at the flying site and the winter meetings in the Village Hall.

In practice, there is flexibility in allocating specific activities between the various committee members so, if you would like to serve on the Committee but don't fancy carrying out a specific activity, we can probably accommodate you. If you would like to offer yourself (or to nominate someone else!) to fill any of the Committee posts for the next year or would like to know more about these roles, please contact me or Bill or speak to us at the next meeting.

Club Trophy Awards for 2017:

The club awards two trophies annually to deserving members. These are the:

Alan Banks Trophy: For achievement during the year. This can be for activities both with the club and in the wider model aviation field.



Nigel Smith Trophy: For outstanding model design/building, which could include modifications or enhancements to an ARTF model. The trophy takes the form of a fine (non-flying!) model of a Spitfire.



We already have some nominations for both awards this year but more are invited. Please contact me or any other committee member with your nomination, together with brief reasons why you are nominating this club member for a particular award, so that the Club Committee can adjudicate between conflicting claims!

The New BMFA Handbook:

You should all now have your copy of the BMFA's new Handbook – and riveting bedtime reading it is, too! I have managed to read it through – fortunately, it seems to be somewhat shorter than the old version. I particularly noted the increased references to the Air Navigation Order and the guidance on the actions to be taken in the event of an accident when model flying.

There is a strong emphasis on safety in the new Handbook, particularly in references to the Air Navigation Order. This is, of course, part of the BMFA's response to the increased public awareness of the risks and potentially intrusive nature of drone flying and the proposals that have consequently been made at the European level for the control of all model flying. The BMFA's East Anglia Region has produced a summary of "Best Practice" recommendations for clubs that I have attached to the end of this Newsletter.

And Finally:

My new workshop is up and running, at last! My better half insisted on having the kitchen replaced in our new home, so where better to re-use the old kitchen units than in the garage/workshop. Mind you, as the new kitchen will be a while arriving, meals are now a little basic and will be so for some time!

Laurie

Notes regarding best practice

The majority of clubs will have the below embedded into their rules and procedures, but some may not and there are some interesting developments that we would like to draw to your attention. Therefore, we hope the following will help you as a committee support your pilots and your club to be able to prove due diligence in case of an instance. This is not meant as a definitive list or in any way a directive. It has been put together to attempt to be supportive to Club committees.

Legal Issues and SWEETS/SMART

The recent focus on Air Law, resulting from the popularity of drone usage, means that Article 94 needs careful attention. It states that “The person in charge of a small unmanned aircraft may only fly the aircraft if reasonably satisfied that the flight can be safely made”. Consider what a Court of Law would take that to mean. For example, it might be considered reasonable for the following actions to be taken:

- Range test to be checked before each session
- Failsafe checked for correct operation before each flying session remembering that for almost all 2.4 GHz radio, a failsafe function is provided and must, therefore, be set. It is mandatory for all aircraft exceeding 7 Kg all up weight and all jets to have a functioning failsafe
- Rx battery to be checked prior to each flight – or at least checked via telemetry if that is fitted to the Rx battery status. Remember, if using a voltage regulator to power the Rx from, say, a 2 cell LiPo, telemetry will not give you the battery voltage but the regulated voltage.
- Are you confident you have skills to fly in the current conditions? Are you physically fit to fly?

7kg plus planes –

The BMFA recommends that you hold a B certificate if you fly a plane over 7kg, a number of clubs have added a rule to say that you **must** hold a B cert or that you and the plane have to be assessed by one of the club examiners prior to flying (each year?).

A consideration could also be that you put in place a recommendation, that the pilot has his safety checks observed / verified by another member on an annual basis. This would give you belt and braces in the case of a possible investigation and from a practical point also reduce any brain fade that we all have from time to time!

Another advantage of adopting this would be to allow the safety checks to be enforced with a light touch without the need for safety officers/ committee members to police it, as it would hopefully get embedded into the Clubs culture.

Pilot competency -

All Clubs will have a way of confirming that a pilot is at a safe level to be able to fly solo. It would be prudent to make sure your procedures are recorded and suitable.

A lot of Clubs use the A certificate as a marker of competence to fly without supervision. This is generally fine, but you again may want to consider if a new member has a certificate are you confident that his abilities are still suitable (he could have taken it a long time ago!) and that he has had some formal/ recorded instruction on your site rules and is up to date with the current safety requirements. Remember also, that Clubs are not required to accept the qualifications of members who go elsewhere to get an A or B. It is perfectly in order for a Club Committee to seek to satisfy themselves that the member is at the required standard before allowing them to exercise the privileges of their Achievement Scheme rating. Better safe than sorry.

Some clubs will have a system that they need to be formally signed off by the club examiner/ instructor, you would need to question if this is recorded, what is the standard required and is it consistent across all examiners and instructors. If you have no procedure in place the club would be open to questions as to how they make sure their members are safe to fly at the site?

Basic Proficiency Certificate

The Basic proficiency certificate (BPC) has now been in place for some time but your rules may need amending. The point of the BPC is to allow pilots with aircraft which fall outside the A Certificate (below 1 Kg or have stabilisation software) to demonstrate they are safe to fly solo at the Club's site. In summary:

- If the candidate presents with a model that is not capable of taking off from the ground they will take the BPC
- If the candidate presents with a model that is under 1kg, they will take a BPC, (irrespective of whether it has electronic stabilisation or not).
- If they present with a model with electronic stabilisation, they will take a BPC (irrespective of mass).
- If they present with a model without electronic stabilisation, which weighs 1 Kg or over and is capable of taking off from the ground, they will take an 'A' test.

However, you need to be aware that pilots who hold a BPC should not fly unsupervised with an aircraft that does not have flight stabilisation software or which weigh 1 kg or more. That will need an A Certificate. It's a bit like drivers who pass their driving test in an automatic transmission car are not allowed to drive a manual gearbox car but the opposite is OK.

This also brings up the question of how you would police this?

Other areas worth consideration -

- What is your restraint policy and would it hold up to scrutiny in a court if an accident happened? Even lightweight foamies can, if equipment malfunctions, cause serious injury if armed without being restrained. How often do you see that at your Club?
- Have you a way of capturing near misses (in regard to possible accidents, but we got away with it!). This could be used as evidence that the Club is recording and assessing risks and identifying where additional rules/ procedures may be needed.
- Is Safety on the agenda at each club meeting?
- Is Safety down to everybody? A potentially dangerous situation where no one takes responsibility.

We would suggest that some of the above is embedded into your rules, and put it out at intervals via newsletters, your web site etc.. so it can be proved the club is actively enforcing these. However, if it is not embedded into the culture and practiced at the field, the courts/ insurance companies will easily be able to determine this from witness statements.

All Clubs need to tread a fine line with their rules and regs and the desire to keep model flying enjoyable. Clearly, this will be down to the individual committees to keep a common-sense balance, but we hope the above is thought provoking and supportive.