

Control Line Secretary's Report 2017-2018

The past 12 months have seen some challenging times for us C/L fliers, but I'm pleased to report that the next year is looking good. First, a brief note on why I'm in the chair: I was persuaded to take on the role over tea and cakes in the OW café by a charming and flattering gentleman immediately after the last AGM. My credentials were shaky (almost as much as my flying!) but after a quick consultation by C-mail with the Quality Inspector I agreed to give it a try – "It might get you thinking about the need for better attention to the needs of others!" he grumbled (it was his lunchtime after all) "and that can't be a bad thing..."

He was right of course. My main involvement in C/L over the last 10 years has been in Carrier Deck flying, but I now have had a great opportunity to expand my knowledge of all the other disciplines, which I'd already been trying to do in my other role as compiler of the "Wind in the Wires" column for SAM Speaks.

First off, a sincere word of thanks to the chaps who have supported me by organising events and providing me with material for WITW, especially Brian Lever, Steve Betney, John Ashmole, Mick Taylor, Peter Fox, Gordon Rae, David Catlow and many others – you know who you are! By living on the Dorset coast I'm about as far away as it's possible to be from the hub of C/L activity which is firmly located in the heart of England, so it's hard for me to get as hands-on as I'd like to.

Looking back over the year, the epic debate about the Mark 1 Ranger's eligibility for the Fireball competition was finally resolved thanks to Steve Betney and Henry Hannant making a firm ruling "Yes it's ok!" In the meantime, many other competitions were open to SAM members for Phantom Speed, Beebug, Weatherman, Vintage and Taster stunt, Vintage and Classic Speed, Rascal, Trojan and Voetsak racing, variously at Old Warden, Barton, Colerne, Barkston Heath, and the new BMFA centre at Buckminster, all due to the hard work of the organisers – thank you again!

Talking of Buckminster, this initiative by the BMFA has taken doubters by surprise – it's not only up and running, but proving to be a real success - plans are in place to enhance the C/L facilities (subject to funding) by the provision of a hard circle with protective wire netting for running team race and speed events, as well as being available for a possible dual use by tethered cars. This is a real boost for us C/L fans – not so long ago the talk was all about C/L being dead as far as the BMFA were concerned, but this is clearly not so.

A venue that came under serious threat this year for C/L was Old Warden itself. Due to misunderstandings, some inter-personal problems between competitors and a sudden interest in C/L safety by the operators of the events there, we were faced with a complete ban on speed flying, and the imposition of some onerous conditions (e.g. limiting all lines to 60') that might have led to OW becoming a C/L no-go area. However, Brian Lever, Tony Goodger, Andy (Carrier) Housden and myself worked together to give Brian the proposal he needed to go back to ModelAir and re-negotiate the changes down to an acceptable level for most fliers – stunt is back to 70' lines and speed is back, although limited to 1.5cc motors. This was also a great example of co-operation between the various C/L disciplines, with a new joint circle marking-out agreement to prevent overflying each other and more importantly perhaps, the members of the public visiting OW.

Whilst not strictly a SAM venture, a new twist to C/L flying is available to SAM members on event days at the Leicester MAC, where Andy Green (also SAM Webmaster) has been working hard to promote interest in float-plane flying from the water-tank he persuaded the LMAC to let him build on the club's site. There has been a good take-up, with some wonderful action there, and some great models. I'm ashamed to say that my Wildcat (not a float plane!) also took to the water tank, flopping into it dead-stick after overshooting the carrier deck next to it, resulting in a soaking that made the front cover of SAM Speaks in October 2017. This caused an angry outburst from a member who rather misunderstood the whole thing – however, I think most of the membership had a good chuckle at my misfortune!

Having the platform that "WITW" gives me is the best possible way as C/L Secretary to communicate and promote C/L to the membership at large, even to those who have never held a handle in their lives. I do try to make it accessible to all by the use of humour, and of course that's where the Quality Inspector is such a valuable ally – he is the sensible counterbalance to my most idiotic excesses, and is always there to offer advice, unpalatable as it sometimes is to me! We were both immensely grateful for the support from the all those who wrote to Speaks after our column had been roundly criticised as "rubbish!" by a member because of the QI, who aptly remarked that my part might very well be rubbish if I didn't have him to set me right – how true!(cod fillets all round...)

On to 2018: with OW safe, Buckminster in operation and many other venues and events (including of course Barkston for the Nats!) offering us all the chance to circulate, I think we are set for a good year. Thank you all for your support, and as always I wish you tight lines, smooth grass and the necessary altitude below your model at all times!