

Website: <http://www.laahighlandstrut.org.uk>, Newsletter email: laahighlandstrutnews@outlook.com

Strut meeting on Friday 26th May 2023, 7:30pm, at Highland Aviation, Inverness Airport.

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FROM THE CHAIR – May 2023, by Paul Wayman

The flying season is now well under way with official summer just a few days away. I can't believe we're only a little over 3 short weeks away from the summer solstice already. Where does the time go?

The first of the local fly-ins at Easter took place on the 30th April, more info below, but looks like a reasonable turnout given the weather that weekend.

When I say flying season, mine starts on the 1st January and ends on 31st December, but the thing I like about this time of year is the ability to get out flying in the evenings, which fits around work and family a bit better. The last couple of years, this wasn't so easy with Inverness Airport being open sporadically due to Covid and industrial action, but this year it's open until 21:30 local time every day – normal service is resumed.

Dornoch Airfield

I expect many of you will have seen news articles concerning the future of the three airfields operated by Highland Council, these being Ashaig (Broadford), Plockton and our much cherished Dornoch. The news articles didn't really tell us anything new, we knew the Council had engaged the services of an external consultant to undertake a study looking at the ongoing viability of the airfields more than a year ago. But the elected members have now agreed to follow the recommendations in the report and offer a lease on Dornoch airfield to "interested parties". They will look at the sale or long term lease of Plockton, but will continue to operate Ashaig to a level that may allow commercial services to operate from there in the future.

As far as Dornoch is concerned, the long term future looks uncertain. If a leaseholder cannot be found, there is a risk that Highland Council might close it down altogether, which would be a tragic loss to the aviation community. However, I am advised that the process of offering Dornoch for lease could be a lengthy one, hence there is no immediate threat or change to our operations there as landing card holders for the time being. I will update on this when more information is available.

Airspace

Paul Jenkins has sent a very robust objection to the Clash Gour windfarm ACP to the CAA, which will be circulated separately to the newsletter. Paul has also asked to remind members who have not objected that there is still time to do so – the deadline for objections reaching the CAA is 31st May. If you are minded to object, please do so in your own words.

Gasco Safety Evening

Thanks to those of you who got in touch with ideas for venues for hosting this. Very helpful. I am still in the process of gauging interest and finding out when someone from GASCo will be available. I might have more information in time for the meeting.

The way it works with GASCo is that it has to be open to all pilots, not just Strut members. If you know any pilots who are not Strut members that might be interested in attending, please let us know. The last seminar held locally was in 2014 and the one previous to that was 2011, so I think we're well overdue another. You get your log book stamped for attending and it counts towards things like the LAA Wings Award Scheme.

Safe flying and see you at an airfield soon.

Event and Fly-in Diary 2023

Strut Meeting – Friday 26th May, Highland Aviation, Inverness Airport.

Easter Airfield

Summer Fly-in – Saturday 24th June

LAA Highland & Islands Strut Fly-in - Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th July

Glenforsa

51st Mull Annual Fly-in, Glenforsa – Saturday 27th, Sunday 28th & Monday 29th May

Sollas

LAA Highlands & Islands Strut Sollas Beach Landing Fly-in – Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th June

Lamb Holm

Lamb Holm Fly-in, Orkney – Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd July

Perth

Scottish Aero Club Annual Fly-in - Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th August

Montrose

Pop-Up Airfield Fly-In – Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th August

East Fortune Fly-in Saturday the 10th and Sunday the 11th of June.

Please email details of any fly-ins or events you know of to: laahighlandstrutnews@outlook.com



Easter Airfield News

The weather gods were not kind to us on the 30th of April for our flying. Although it was reasonable weather at Easter, the rest of the country had poor weather for Flying. We only managed to have about a dozen visitors, we don't know how many because nearly everyone forgot to sign in!

Jim Simpson took some wonderful photographs, and we thank him for them.







David Lockett did Aeros over the field, and when Mike Wood is departed, he did a flypast with smoke, which is absolutely delighted some of the non-aviation visitors to the airfield!

Saturday, the 20th of May brought our first PC 12 visitor of 2023, staying over the weekend with guests for Skibo



We are expecting to host a French flying party Friday 9th June , which will include a dozen Gyros.

Our next event is the Summer fly in. 24th June , hopefully better weather that day

David Edes,

The Green Field. By David Lockett

This is mainly a story about luck but with a hint of a little extra. When I looked up some memorable quotations about luck, what struck me as appropriate was a saying of Louis Pasteur who said, "*Chance favours the prepared mind*".

Sometimes in life events seem to go from bad to worse. You know the sort of thing..... the dropped piece of toast lands jam side down on your clean trousers.

The line goes dead after you have been hanging onto your phone for forty five minutes listening to awful music to get to the top of the queue, etc, etc.

But sometimes the ducks line up when it matters most.

The 28th of May 2022 was going to be another good flying day.

The season had got off to a great start the previous weekend with an excellent excursion in our lovely old Jodel D117 G-ARNY. We are a three - pensioner group which includes an LAA Inspector.

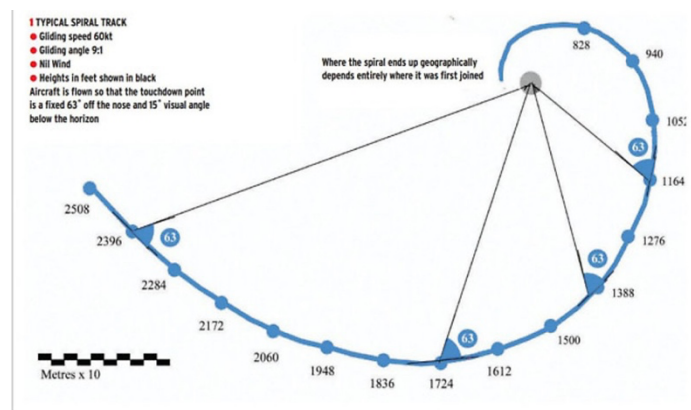
Several of the Birnie Flying Circus of Easterton, of which I am a member, were off to a fly-out at the Buchan Aero Club at Peterhead. Lovely weather and a plan for three of us to return low-level down the coast back to Easterton. A very enjoyable tail-chase at minimum legal altitude, harbours, beaches, and rocky cliffs. (See photo above) All good fun and only a fleeting thought that it was not the best of places to have an engine failure.

After a cup of tea at Easterton, it was back to our airstrip at Knockbain Farm and a few practice glide approaches to end the day. In fact, I had been practicing glide approaches and PFLs on a very regular basis and, indeed, it had become a bit of an obsession.



Having our own airstrip means that all kinds of non-standard approaches can be done without the constraints of airport procedures, and we have two other fields with different topography where we can do full-stop landings.

I have probably done hundreds of simulated emergency landings here over the past forty years. There's something about the 'Constant Aspect' technique that makes the PFL



procedure quite easy and, ultimately, instinctive and it almost miraculously draws you towards the selected touch-down point while correcting for under/over shooting and wind, providing you maintain your full attention to the all important aspect - really an invisible cone in the sky which you can join at any point that is convenient, even as low as the final turn. There are several excellent articles on the subject. The above diagram is from an article published in Pilot Magazine. The main point is that practising away from airports can be done all the way to touchdown and I find it a wonderful and relatively cheap way to enjoy a tactile and finely judged end to a lot of local flights.

Unfortunately, the full procedure does not suit the airport environment as you normally end up on a curved approach to short finals and, to do that, say, at Inverness, the base/final turn would be over car parks, terminals and aprons and this definitely tends to frighten the horses, as they say.

Anyway, back to the theme of luck. The following weekend there was a fly-in at Glenforsa, Isle of Mull. First of all, there was a little three ship formation in company with a Bowers Flybaby and a Mini Sport from Knockbain to Fearn Easter. The others flew back to their base, and I returned home (another PFL) and an early lunch before setting off for Glenforsa. Unusually there was a moderate North-easterly wind blowing so it seemed a no-brainer to fly to Mull at medium level rather than the usual low-level run down the Great Glen. First bit of luck. The GPS groundspeed progressively increased until it stabilized at 5,000 feet West of Cannich heading towards the remote and mountainous Clunie.

Then a slight change of engine note and a sinister, unusual vibration.

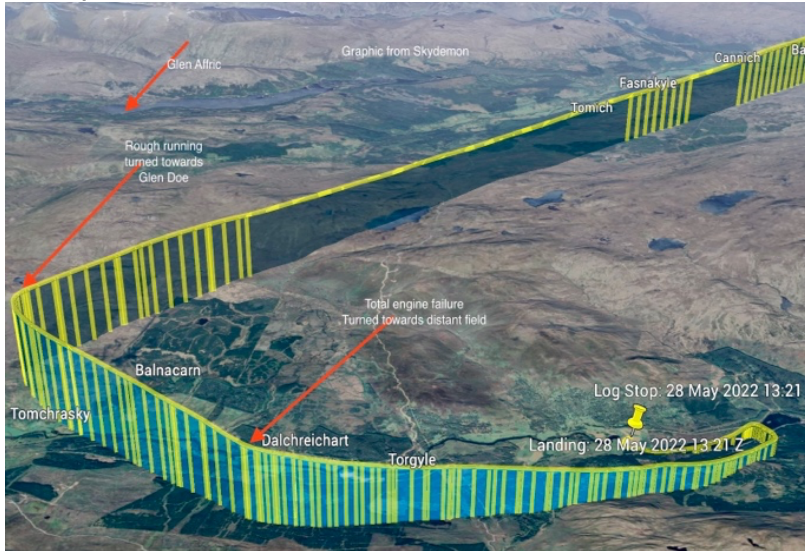
Glen Doe airstrip near Fort Augustus was visible in the distance about twelve miles away, so an immediate turn was made and the usual engine health checks, which were normal. I decided to leave the throttle alone as the slow descent looked adequate to make Glen Doe, but it did seem appropriate to make a PAN call to Inverness. The PAN procedure did result in a bit of Q&A with ATC and, while explaining intentions there was an almighty BANG encouraging a rapid upgrade to a full MAYDAY. ATC very helpfully did not press for more information which helped with the need for some serious aviation and navigation to be done first. The rate of descent rendered Glen Doe out of range. Much nearer, there appeared to be a patch of green about 5 miles away in Glen Morriston, so a turn was made in that direction because everything else was mountain and rocks.

As the engine was of no further use, all the usual things were done to minimise the risk of fire, 7700 was set and the ELT beacon, which was round my neck, was activated, or so I thought, by breaking open the flap and deploying the antenna. As the green area was clearly now within range, I made a quick call to ATC with intentions, and they acknowledged without bothering me with further questions. I did hear the SAR helicopter say that they were on the way as they had heard the PAN and MAYDAY calls while exercising in the Moray Firth.

The **Green Field** was on Dundreggon Estate, Invermoriston, and the only place for miles around that didn't have pylons, bogs, rocks, trees, ditches or obstructions. More luck. It was a simple matter to "join the cone" with a little modification to correct for being a little high and a bit too close at one point, before re-joining the ideal base/final turn over the river. As usual the last straight part of final approach was only about three hundred metres, and a bit of extra speed allowed us to skip over a boggy looking bit and into the centre of the field. We came to rest.

At this point I checked that the ELT (Macmurdo Fastfind) was transmitting, only to find that there is a little button inside the unit which needs to be pressed after breaking open the flap. This is not normally visible, and you only know it is there if you read the manual. Once pressed, the entire global hemisphere is alerted, and the SAR helicopter was soon with me.

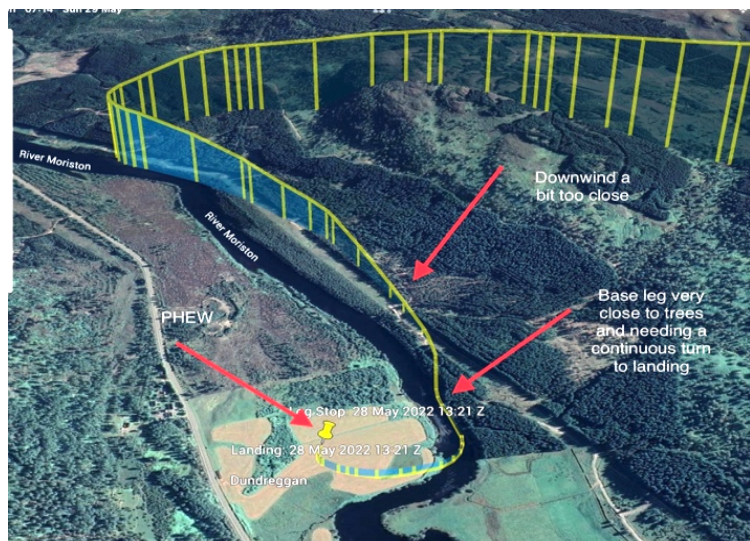
The engine had broken a crankshaft web and the flailing pistons and rods had punched some impressive holes in the crank case with the shock of instant stoppage bending the engine mounts and cracking the propeller boss. The only other damage was a broken canopy door caused by the airflow, having opened the door as part of the pre-crash checks while downwind.



I know this sort of story has happened thousands of times in the history of powered aviation, but the outcome has not always been good. What really helped was the sheer muscle memory of many practices which, vitally, removed most of the fear and allowed maximum concentration on the task. What cannot be denied is the massive amount of luck at being at a height which

gave a lot of time (at least 2 minutes) to plan what to do, and a further three minutes

to put the plan into action. I have no doubt that, without that practice, I would probably have failed to achieve a safe landing, but on the day, I was granted a favourable wind direction, altitude and that wonderful solitary field which I will re-visit in May to say a little 'Thank you'.



The engine had suffered a fatigue failure of the rear crankshaft web. There had been no advanced warnings, and despite a lot of hours, all the engine's vital signs had been good at the Permit renewal the previous month. Many thanks to LAA inspectors Alister and Paul who carefully dismantled the engine. Nether the LAA or the AAIB have shown any interest in the cause of failure.

A couple of amusing points. The SAR crew (many thanks to Bristow Coastguard) heard my PAN call which apparently was prefixed with the word "PRACTICE" They added that the MAYDAY omitted the inadvertent practice prefix.

The attendance of the police to carry out the mandatory breathalyser test was made totally hilarious by The Law asking me for directions on my mobile phone. Having got themselves lost, the SAR crew flew off to find the blue light on its way towards the West coast and hover taxied over the car to ensure that the relieved pilot was in a sensible state.

Sad to say that the insurers wrote the Jodel off due to the cost of dismantling/ road transport and the probable re-assembly costs. Our little group now has a lovely but basic Vans RV6. The Jodel has found a good home as a rebuilding project/



Unservicable engine



Serviceable pilot and SAR crew & our RV6



The Green Field By David Lockett

Highland Strut membership renewal for 2023:

Treasurer:- Chris Haycock.



January 2023

We have once again been able to maintain membership to the paltry level of only £5:00 for the year. Subscriptions due by 28th February.

Payments can be made by BACS. Sort Code: **83-27-35**, Account No: **00665726**, Account Name: **Highlands & Islands Strut of the LAA**

Please use your name or other suitable ID (e.g. Aircraft reg for landing card) in the reference field. Payees' must send an E mail to **janimar.50@btinternet.com** confirming details of the payment made. This is to ensure your payment is recorded accurately against individual members.

Alternatively, come along to the next meeting and pay in person, but please complete the details below which will form the basis of our membership list.

Name:

LAA

BMA

Address:

Postcode:

BGA

LAA Membership No.: -----

Email address: -----

Telephone: -----

Mobile: -----

