

Newby Thoughts 1

We have, over the last few days, had some great flying weather up here in Northumberland. The Hexham Model Flying Club field is open to the wind and exposed in every direction, the views are magnificent and our carefully tended runway is like a lawn, (except where the sheep have left their love). Those of us who were able grabbed what we suspect will be a last opportunity to fly this week before the autumn reaches into our little paradise and makes each day more of a challenge.

Many of my fellow members have invested a lifetime in the hobby, they fly traditional airframes outdoors (often the product of many hours in the shed over the winter months deploying craft skills that I can only dream of), powered by IC engines and supported by field kit that has grown in complexity and weight over many years. They seem to be the proud owners of more models than my management team will allow, they have of course been at it for a long time.

Yesterday much of my fellow members' time was spent checking their models, tuning engines (or just getting them started), flying time was rather limited. In my brief 3 years experience in the hobby this is not unusual, we all enjoy talking to each other about what we are trying to do, offering advice, tools and a hand to steady the model while the adjustment is completed.

Flying was eventful to the extent that two much more skilled and experienced pilots than I am wrecked much loved models in benign conditions, engine failure and control problems were apparently the cause. They were gently resigned to what some have referred to as "the walk of shame", returning to the pit area with all they could recover. Reminding each other that repairing is part of the hobby.

As a relatively new member of our club I have benefited a great deal from advice and coaching, I am however in a minority flying foam airframes with electric motors both out doors and in.

For my part I achieved 60 minutes of stick time with a 90cm foam wing, I'm no hotshot but I had no power or control difficulties (even though there were a few exciting moments as I tried new moves!) Misjudgement resulted in a couple of heavy landings but no damage to what is a very strong airframe. After careful inspection I was quickly back in the air.

On the odd occasion, where I am brave enough, and suggest to my friends that they think seriously about the type of models I fly I'm left in little doubt that what they do is all part of the hobby they love and change at their time of life will result in additional investment they are reluctant to make. They recognise the amount of time needed to get into the air and I understand their love of the power, sound and smell when their model takes wing and races off into the sky. I respect this but wish there was something I could do to open their range of experience to the point that they consider getting at least one electric foamy. Getting into the air should be number one.

On reflection, anticipating the coming winter months, I would encourage everyone to try flying indoors; there are many indoor BnF and foam models that are modestly priced. A number of us fly RC Factory foam profile planes in the local school gym as well as helicopters, not much space & unforgiving walls all round. Our planes are robust enough to withstand mistakes and agile enough to allow everyone from the most skilled sky god to the makee learner to have a good time. It is not weather dependent and I am greatly impressed by the aptitude and progress being made by some of our younger members.

Some of our members like myself fly in both environments, others stick to one or the other, I think we all have something to gain from sharing what we do. The wonderful feeling of freedom being outdoors is comparable with the challenge of getting your model round the hall without incident.

About me – I'm 69, I started flying model aircraft 3 years ago after building a traditional glider for my grandson, he was not very interested at the time, I was and spoke to our local model flying club. I now have a very battered and much repaired Easy Star and a Toro 900 wing for outdoor flying and two scratch built quadrotor helicopters that I've built (and are in a continuous cycle of "improvement" after each damage episode). I also fly a RC Factories profile foamy and Blade MSRX indoors. I'm exploring aerial photography.