

Report of the 23rd AGM of the British Aerobatic Association

At Sywell on 15th February 1998

Those present:

Committee - Nick Buckenham (Chairman), Eric Marsh (Vice Chairman), Steve Green (Treasurer), Tim Shears, Gareth Roberts, John Gilbert, Ray Stoward and Tom Cassells,

Co-opted - Jen Buckenham, Nick Wakefield, Ben Ellis and Simon Cattlin

Apologies for absence - Alan Cassidy, Peter Davis, Bob Oliver and Chris Pollard.

Members - Chris Kelleher, Iona Radice, John Bastin, Jim Duthie, Graham Saw, Nikki Mills, John Askew, Christele Robineau, Annabel Wakefield, Nick Onn, Robert Tinkler, Nick Plumeridge, John Vize, John Wicks, Sally Hunstable, Mark Walden, Kester Scrope, Richard Gee, Roger Andrews, Duncan Mackillop, Chris Noon, Martin Sandford, Gary Ferriman, Ian Scott, Julie Wood, Gavin Forrest, David Squire, Martin Rafter and Diane Rafter.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 1050. A cheque for £875 was handed to Jen Buckenham for later presentation to the Kwiecien family, this being the total donated by Association members following Stefan Kwiecien's sad accident last year.

The Chairman's report for the previous competition year

In his opening remarks Nick said that the season was dominated by the weather - probably the worst we had experienced for seven or eight years. The opening glider competition at Dunstable - the Dan Smith Memorial - was, however, brilliant. In this inaugural event Guy Westgate came first, but Stefan Kwiecien took away the principal Sportsman level trophy. Here the newly written computer software for scoring survived its first outing, and now after a season's development is fast and effective, with judging analysis expected to come on stream soon. The very last event - an 'extra' one at Brighton - was also a success, but due to noise problems we won't be able to return there in the near future.

Although not detailing the in-between meetings, Nick commented that the three Nationals were all extremely good. In the Standard and Intermediate event at Wickenby excellent flying standards prevailed and the result was very close, respective champions Mark Walden and Martin Sandford emerging victorious, whilst at the Advanced and Unlimited Championships at Sywell Tim Barnby put in a first class performance to collect the National Aerobatic Champion's silverware, the Chairman being similarly successful at Advanced. At Sywell we had a guest competitor in the shape of Svetlana Kapanina, it being thought important for this key event to invite at least one leading international pilot to set a world standard - in the same vein Deitmar Pohl was our guest at the Glider Nationals, where Jamie Alan became UK Unlimited champion and Jon Bastin and Graham Saw took the Sportsman and Intermediate levels. Unfortunately notification of Svetlana's attendance was rather late as there had been some uncertainty over her ability to attend, and not as many people as might otherwise have done so managed to see her superb performance. This, the Chairman noted, was definitely their loss.

Training camps and Judging

The 1997 Training camps were very popular, entrants receiving their radio critique from Alan Cassidy and Mike Riley. Organiser Tim Shears said that sixty people had applied and all were allocated to camps, although the weather did prevent a few people from flying. Judging in 1997 went very well, and Ben Ellis is now on the CIVA international judges list. Ben said that 36 people had participated in UK judging during 1997, and a list is available - probably to go on the web site

Nick thanked everyone for the effort that they had put into the UK contest scene. It was another year clear of accidents at competitions. He emphasized that we've had 24 years of the same, but that we must always broaden the view to reality and in particular recognise that in free air space the tight controls we enjoy at competitions do not exist. The fatal accidents of Stefan Kwiecien in July, our friend Omar Bilal the same weekend in Belgium, Hoof Proudfoot, Pete Clarke and Len Perry two years ago - and late last year two hugely experienced American colleagues - were all tragic reminders. We do play on the motorway without a safety net, he observed, and obituaries are hard to write.

Brits at foreign competitions

Congratulations were due to Nick Bloom - who now almost owns the Coup d'Anjou. The second Advanced World Championship in Kansas was great fun, with Alan Cassidy in particular doing well. The BOAC contest at Midden Zeeland was attended by a few hopeful Brits - but high winds spoiled the weekend. Ian Tunstall and Guy Westgate flew well in the World Glider Aerobatic Championship at the inaugural World Air Games, although John Gilbert commented that the Turkish tug pilots seemed particularly inexperienced, and several people referred to the incidents that had occurred in Turkey. Nick said 'well done' to Nick Onn for going all the way to Turkey to represent us in Power.

Membership development and the BAeA Web site

Some hard work was put in on Membership Development during 1997 by Simon Cattlin, who said that on reflection as a purist, small community we would be better advised to concentrate on developing people once they are in the Association rather than committing resources to recruitment to bring in any new members. John Gilbert said that in gliding there is a strong link between training and aerobatics leading to bringing new pilots into competition - was there a similar link with Power training? Current membership is 131, and no doubt this will grow as competitions start. Gareth Roberts was thoroughly commended for his good work this Winter on the BAeA Web site - Gareth had a small display at the meeting to show some of its features. The site contains a great deal of information for pilots and people wanting to know about about the BAeA. This is a major source of competition aerobatic advice - available now through the Internet to everyone all over the world.

The Aerobatic News Review

The bi-monthly Aerobatics News Review is getting better and better - to this there was general agreement from the floor. Sarah Williams is now taking over publishing, Tony Lloyd of course remaining as Editor. Despite the full colour cover costs have remained about the same. Nick said he'd like to see more letters, contentious (!) or otherwise. The ANR is really not just about what the committee says, it's a membership Journal and so is the right forum to vigorously promote and discuss their views. In addition to the 250 or so members, the journal goes to about 100 other people around the world and the committee is looking at ways of balancing the cost of this. Until the IAC Sport Aerobatics magazine rose to its current excellent status the ANR was almost the only aerobatics journal that went around the world, and as a direct result the UK aerobatic scene is viewed and judged by the rest of the world through our journal. More than one highly regarded eastern European official even made a special point in Kansas of telling Nick that the journal is highly regarded for it's balanced views and content - praise indeed!

CIVA

Alan Cassidy is now our CIVA representative with Nick Onn as alternate, and Alan is already exerting a strong effect on the catalogue committee. There are important changes in allowable figures for unknowns. The commission of course really looks after Unlimited, and most European countries

follow CIVA at their various national levels. Alan's world beating Aresti-4 pc software is now the official standard - and rightly so.

Finance

Steve Green gave a review of the 1997 accounts. These reflected 11 months, as the Association's accounting year has changed. During the year, we put out six journals and ran ten competitions. Revenue however was lower than in 1995. We started the year with £11,830 and ended it with £8,777, a paper loss of £3,000. Some of that is accounted for in new equipment, medals etc. Subscription income and interest amounted to £8,992. The journals net cost is £4,953 and each copy costs £2.06 on average, including postage. Competitions took in £7,000 and we spent the same amount running them but associated costs were £1,154 more, so a net loss here. Some competition costs were - £1,924 on insurance, £1,570 for medals (this investment will cover the next 2 years too). The Sywell nationals costs £2,117 and Wickenby £553 - in each case however a hefty airfield fee dominates. Saltby had made a small profit. For the major international competitions the BAeA acts as the 'bank' and pays the entry money up front, this then being recouped from the competitors. CIVA meeting attendance cost £383. Other expenses are the mandatory RAeC membership at £531, GASCO membership at £200, Internet service at £293, miscellaneous (paper, phone, post etc.) £1,014, trophy costs £993 (largely insurance). Nick said that Don Henry's widow had agreed to provide \$350 for new Don Henry and Golding Barrett trophies, and he had therefore purchased permanent trophies that will now carry the winners' names rather than the previous smaller new ones each year. We start 1998 with about £8,000 in the bank - a strong position. Ben proposed and Jim Duthie seconded acceptance of the accounts, this being unanimously approved. Eric Marsh congratulated Steve Green on a very clear and comprehensive presentation. Steve's final point was that if necessary we might have to increase membership by a maximum of £5 during the year. Jim Duthie proposed and Kester Scrope seconded a motion that the committee be empowered to make such an increase without further recourse to the membership.

Election of Officers

In accordance with BAeA committee rules Alan Cassidy, Nick Buckenham and Eric Marsh had all 'retired', and all had agreed to present themselves for re-election. In answer to the Chairman's question however the membership secretary revealed that she had received just one voting slip. NHB & EM withdrew to allow a discussion to take place, Tim Shears chairing the ensuing discussion. Ray Stoward said those up for election led the Association in a very wise way. Nick Onn asked if anyone else wanted the job, but there were no responders from the meeting. After a short general discussion Martin Sandford proposed -

- a) A vote of thanks for the outstanding work done by those up for election
 - b) That the committee be asked to find ways of lightening the load on committee members.
- Simon Cattlin seconded this motion, and the three outgoing committee members were voted back into office unopposed.

The prospect for 1998

The Chairman said that Little Snoring has been omitted from the list of contest sites this year due to the state of the runway and taxi surface, but that we were returning to Seething and Fenland. No Wickenby (under new ownership), but for the first time Peterborough Conington will host the Standard and Intermediate Nationals. There will be a formal attempt this year to run a joint Irish / British competition at Kilrush. For 1998 there are also some extremely interesting new aircraft in prospect - a group run CAP-222 (nee Giles-202) and another Yak-55 at White Waltham, a Yorkshire based CAP-232, the rebuilt ex-Jordanian Falcons Extra-300, and (if it's finished!) even an RV4. Tom Cassells was highly commended for the number of people now receiving training on his Slingsby T-67

There are also two new BAeA trophies for 1998 - the Pitts Special Trophy is a silver rose-bowl provided by Peter French as a mark of respect to Stefan Kwiecien and G-BKDR. This is a points trophy for all Pitts pilots at all levels and all competitions. The Shaggy Cow Trophy - shown in drawing form only - is to be competed for in similar fashion by all Yak pilots, and has been graciously donated by the membership secretary Jen Buckenham.

The Web site will be kept up-to-date throughout the year, and is expected to include points tables showing all the relevant 'leagues'.

The European Advanced competition in Slovenia will be attended by several UK pilots, as will the World Unlimited Championship in Slovakia. The Association expects that there will again be a Freestyle competition for six pilots at the Biggin Hill Air Fair in June. The Benelux competition will once more be at Midden Zeeland, and the Chairman strongly urged all members to visit this event - it being probably not even as far away as some UK events.

This year, Nick said, is well set to be as good as ever.

Any Other Business

The Tiger Club CFI Peter Kynsey had written to the Chairman disapproving of the practice of allowing a 'safety pilot' to accompany a competitor during a competition. Pete's view is that pilots shouldn't take part unless they can fly the whole thing - take-off to touchdown. During the general discussion that followed it transpired that in the past few years this had happened on a variety of occasions, not just with Alan Cassidy and G-STUA. Alan had given a written response, which was read out. Essentially, he feels that he can get a student into the competition environment more quickly. To counter the argument that his presence removes the apprehension about the landing once the sequence is over, Alan always makes the student attempt at least the first landing, only taking over for any go-around. If there was any advantage to pilot's scores from his presence, then it would be expected that scores would go down once the pilot competes solo; this is not the case, pilot's scores improve. One pilot pointed out that from his experience the exhaustive de-brief following a dual competition flight with Alan is enough to inspire anyone to go solo! Nick Onn said that he largely agreed with Pete, but precedent had been set with a couple of circumstances in the past. He felt that flight with a safety pilot smacked of unprofessionalism. Eric Marsh said it should only be allowed at Standard and Beginners, and in any case should be flown 'Hors de Concours'. Annabel Wakefield's opinion was that the practice just makes life more difficult as the safety pilot's head gets in the way of the view from the rear cockpit! Martin Sandford was sure that it helped him to make a start that he might not otherwise have managed. Several people joined in the discussion, and Nick asked for views from those who had placed lower than competitors flying with safety pilots. No one however expressed a strong opinion. Kester Scrope said it made it possible for people to fly other aircraft when their own is unserviceable - mostly from the insurance angle, and Chris Kelleher added that we should rely on a pilot's integrity not to have coaching during a flight. Ian Scott thought it would encourage people take part and soon get going on their own. Nick Onn proposed and John Wicks seconded that there be a rule change that dual powered flights would henceforward be allowed at Standard level only (noting that Beginners is not thus affected) and would be 'Hors de Concours', and the meeting accepted this motion as final.

The CAA, said the Chairman, still seem likely to introduce an Aerobatic Rating as a result of their ten year accident review. This will require some formal training before a rating is issued. The BAeA is being pushed towards being involved in the administration of this. Further developments are awaited.

A discussion was held on the possibility of holding the Advanced European Championship in Britain in the year 2000. The International view apparently (!) is that the weather is traditionally bad in the UK, and so such a submission may not be viewed well by CIVA. The logistics revolve around the pilots, with John Gilbert expressing his experience with running glider competitions. It was thought that such a major event couldn't be run as a money-making venture, but could be a Corporate Hospitality opportunity. Several members expressed concern as to how sponsors can take over an event and attempt to shape it for their own needs, although Tim Shears felt confident that it could be done. Eric Marsh suggested that Tim and Nick should get together to have a look to see if it is possible. A sub-committee could be formed to produce a proposal which should be aired in the journal and on the Web site. The majority of the meeting agreed with the proposal.

Tim Shears commented that this year he hasn't had a single response to his request for offers of venues for training camps and only seven applications for places at them. He proposed therefore that the idea of training camps be dropped. John Vize however felt that the demand was there but perhaps this year's publicity had been too low key. Tim said that if people wanted training then they MUST organise a venue. A general discussion followed.

Nick Buckenham said that Apprentices and Masters hadn't been popular so last year's emphasis had been on Freestyle. He asked how people felt about a sudden exposure to Freestyle once they attained the upper levels of competition. Nick Onn felt that with more advanced machinery it could cause problems at the lower levels. Richard Gee said even if he was to fly at Unlimited he still wouldn't fly Freestyle. Several people agreed that it was a different sort of flying from the familiar Aresti style competition flying.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked all those present for their input and closed the meeting at 1320