

Adventure travel



JOIN THE FLY-UK ADVENTURE



Fly-UK is a non-competitive round-Britain microlight tour. Now in its seventh year, the idea is to fly the length and breadth of the UK in a week and raise much-needed funds for 'Children with Leukaemia'

By Tim Jackson, pilot of GT450 G-CFAT and joined by Steve Sykes, CTSW, G-TODG. Introduction by Dan Tye.

Microlight pilots are a hardy, adventurous lot and the Fly-UK event brings the best of them together. Running every year since 2004, tales from previous years have encouraged a yearly increase in participants all eager to 'Fly by day and socialise by night'.

Sixty two aircraft and nearly 80 people have already signed up to take part in this year's Fly-UK event. There's still time for you to take part too. It begins on Friday 18 June, ending on Sunday 27 June. The event is organised by Tom Dawson who flies G-MWEZ, a Shadow Series CD. He unveils the full routing details only to

registered participants but one of the expectations is to attempt to reach both Land's End and John O'Groats during the week. Starting in the 'Midlands' you'll fly to Land's End, through Wales and on to John O'Groats, back through the Western Isles and down the east coast, finishing with an evening of entertainment at Sutton Meadows.

Fly-UK isn't for the 'hard core' microlight pilot though. You'll find it's about having fun and migrating in groups of aircraft at similar speeds. It might be hard to picture yourself flying round the whole of the UK but break down the days into individual nav legs with like-minded

others and the fear factor subsides. Tim Jackson was one such pilot who took part for the first time last year. He has flown microlights for the past 18 years but Fly-UK caught his attention and his sense of adventure. "I've wanted to do something big, like an expedition for some time," he explains. "I wanted the element of doing an adventure but also wanted to be part of something organised and with others."

Tim says that Tom does a great job of working with the destination airfields to make Fly-UK a great social occasion. Having fun at the end of a long day of flying is hugely important as Tim explains.

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QUIK GT 450, FLY-UK



Tim soars through gin clear skies in his Quik GT 450 which is the only one in the UK to have customised yellow wingtips

Instructor Mike Oakley and his student, Olivia Reynolds delay tucking in to check the weather. Fly-UK is a great way for any student to gain valuable flying experience.

"The adrenalin was flowing the whole time," he says. "On the first few days it was just a huge relief getting to each destination airfield and when you're sat back on the ground with a beer, well it's difficult to describe the feeling."

So if you want a little taste of what to expect, here's Tim Jackson's personal write up of last year's Fly-UK adventure.

DAY 1 SATURDAY

Having spent weeks preparing for the big day, sourcing light weight tents, the most comfortable mattress and purchasing the latest charts, Steve and I met at Compton Abbas at 07.00am eagerly anticipating the start. With last minute preparations completed and the morning fog lifted, we set off towards Sywell into a stiffening north westerly breeze, flying north of Salisbury plain, over Devizes, Oxford and up to Milton Keynes.

An hour and a half later we landed at Sywell in a 20 knot cross wind. Things can only improve. Having refuelled, met other pilots on the event and visited the cafe, we lifted off again for Netherthorpe just south of Sheffield.

With strong winds and thickening grey skies we tracked due north via Melton Mowbray and the Newton disused airfield near Nottingham to arrive at Netherthorpe in just over an hour.

After more tea and a change of chart, we set off again for Fishburn, north of Darlington. The weather was still horrible with dark rain clouds and showers all around us, but fuelled with adrenaline and rearing to go we followed the free air space towards Harrogate and tracked around the Vale of York AIAA. By the time we arrived at Fishburn we looked like drowned rats. Despite appalling visibility the landing was perfect. Steve had landed just in front of me which helped with my own approach. The rest of the Fly-UK fleet were also grounded by the weather giving us an opportunity to meet others, while the club was doing a roaring trade with tea, cakes and Avgas. As the afternoon went on some pilots called it a day choosing to camp for the night at Fishburn, whilst others were determined to go on to Strathaven, south of Glasgow which was the first official stopover. Over an hour later in marginal weather conditions a blue hole eventually appeared so we went for it despite a low cloudbase. It was 18.00hrs and the adrenaline was still flowing. We tracked north in filthy conditions towards Hexham VRP before turning west towards Carlisle. At one stage the turbulence was so bad it was like riding a bucking bronco. Things began to improve as we flew north making flying magical again. We landed at

STATISTICS

P&M QUIK GT450 FLEXWING G-CFAT.

PILOT: TIM JACKSON

Total Engine hours: 25 hours 14 mins

Total flying time: 22.40 hours

Longest flying Day: just over 6 hours 40 mins.

Compton to Strathaven

Longest flight: 2 hours 55 mins

Total miles: 1490 miles flown

Average fuel burn: 12.5 litres an hour

FLIGHT DESIGN CTSW G-TODG.

PILOT: STEVE SYKES

Total Engine hours: 19 hours

Total flying time: 16 hours

Longest flying Day: just over 4 hours 40 mins

Compton to Strathaven

Longest flight: 2 hours 23 mins

Total miles: 1482 miles flown

Average fuel burn: 15 litres an hour

Strathaven at 20.30hrs and were the last to arrive from the Fly-UK team but by no means the last aircraft flying. Flying continued here till nearly 23.00hrs as it never gets dark. Once we had tied the GT450 and the CTSW down and erected the tents we were ready for a beer. There was a party atmosphere with a huge bonfire, beers, burgers and a band playing in the hanger. Yee Hah!

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Tim's instrumentation layout; 68 mph and nearly at 7000ft.



Al Lea and Col Johnson stop at Upfield Farm (Newport, Gwent) to refold their charts.



A happy Steve Sykes back at Compton describing his adventure in front of friends.



Soaring over the countryside in the summer. It doesn't get much better than this.

DAY 2 SUNDAY

We woke to a clear day with 10+ knots of breeze. Others had left early but we were in no hurry. The original plan was to fly to John O'Groats and backtrack to a private strip at Culbokie on the Black Isle, but as the weather reports were uncertain we took it gently. The other issue was that Steve had noticed fuel leaking from his engine as a result of a damaged gasket under a float bowl. With no hesitation a local club member immediately offered him a gasket out of his own aircraft which was perfect. Thanks Strathaven.

It was now early afternoon as we took off in a northerly direction and the weather was perfect. We were also now on the Scottish chart which felt good. We tracked over Cumbernauld as we made our way towards Perth via Dunblane. I couldn't resist it and flew straight over the top of Sterling Castle.

After landing at Perth, and receiving weather advice from a local pilot we took off again towards Culbokie. It was a beautiful evening flying over Pitlochry and Dalwhinnie through the highlands. With a slight tailwind, clear visibility and a cloudbase of over 3500' it was simply breathtaking. Despite not being visible to each other we spoke over the radio on a regular basis giving position reports. At

Aviemore we turned towards Inverness keeping well south of the airport, before tracking towards the Culbokie strip.

Our hosts, Martin and Antonia McCrystal were fantastic and had even hired a shower and loo block for everyone. There was a BBQ on the go, or an alternative dinner, bed and breakfast option being offered. Naturally Steve and I opted for the latter.

**"ONE OF OUR GROUP
HAD ACCIDENTALLY
DITCHED HIS RANS INTO
SANDY BAY AT CAPE
WRATH. THANKFULLY
HE WAS ALRIGHT"**

DAY 3 MONDAY

We awoke to a non flying day with zero visibility. Unfortunately the day before, one of our group had accidentally ditched his Rans into Sandwood Bay at Cape Wrath whilst practising beach landings. He couldn't have chosen a point further off the beaten track if he had tried. Thankfully the pilot was alright and managed to get himself back to Culbokie for the evening meal.

After breakfast, we all volunteered to go to the crash site to see what we could do. Cars were mustered and 24 hours later we found ourselves standing at the northern most tip of Scotland in appalling weather conditions. No one had really thought about the day or what was involved resulting in none of us being dressed appropriately let alone bringing any food or drink with us. Having walked for over an hour across the moorland, the beach eventually came into view through the murk revealing a blue microlight buried nose down in the sand.

We started to dismantle the aircraft, emptying the fuel into jerry cans and digging out the engine before preparing to carry the aircraft off the beach. 3 people on each wing, a minimum of 4 on the engine and the rest pulling the fuselage. We even managed to persuade a couple of passing cyclists to help us. One 65 year old ex fitness fanatic and a younger man built like Popeye.

After what seemed like the whole day of punishing exercise in appalling conditions we eventually carried the aircraft off the beach and over 4 miles of moorland to the nearest road for collection at a later date.

Despite being a non-flying day it was a job well done. ➡

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Fly-UK gives pilots the opportunity to see many distinct landmarks in the UK. Here Tim approaches the Severn Bridge as he makes his way west.



No wonder many Group A pilots are switching to flexwings when they look like this.



Fly-UK is all about flying with like minded people. Why not join in with them this year?

DAY 4 TUESDAY

Today was one of those rare breathtaking clear Scottish days. After breakfast we took off into blue skies and flew southwest towards the western islands. It was great to get back in the air. We flew the length of the Great Glen over Loch Ness towards the isle of Mull.

Glenforsa is one of those 'Got To Do' airstrips with a hotel overlooking the Sound of Mull. We radioed ahead and were given straight in approaches. Steve landed in one direction and I landed in the other due to fickle winds. All circuits had to be out at sea. When asked about refuelling,

we were immediately given the keys to the controller's car and were told to go into the village to fill up. Now that's what I call service. After a cream tea, we opted to fly on to the mainland for the night as a result of uncertain weather patterns in the area. We thought it a safer option than getting stuck on Mull waiting for conditions to improve. As we headed south overflying the island of Colonsay, I opted to land on the long tarmac runway hoping friends would turn up. Nobody appeared, so I took off again. I didn't even shut down the engine. Steve meanwhile was circling above.

It was now getting late so we decided to go straight towards Strathaven as opposed to overfly Islay or Gigha which were part of the original plan. I spoke to Prestwick as we navigated our way through the small corridor from West Kilbride to Kilmarnock. We landed at Strathaven at 20.45hrs and were met by a friend of Steve's who drove us back to his house for a fun evening in town.

DAY 5 WEDNESDAY

After a delayed start due to an evening of true Scottish hospitality, we eventually became airborne at 14.30hrs and headed

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towards Ince Blundell, a friendly microlight school just north of Liverpool. Routing via Carlisle, Lancaster and Blackburn we arrived at Ince at 17.30hr. It was a bumpy ride with strong winds but otherwise uneventful. Ince is run by a charming young couple. Carl Bayliss and his lovely girlfriend who made us so welcome. We settled in for the night, cooking our boil in the bag ration packs of stew and sticky chocolate pudding in the club caravan.

DAY 6 THURSDAY

With a wakeup call at 0600 we were quickly out of our tents making coffee. There was a 17kts wind blowing and our destination was Devon. Flying out west of Liverpool under the Liverpool CTA we tracked down to Colwyn Bay before speaking to Valley Radar on Anglesey where I was requested to route via the Menai Strait at 1500'. Caernarfon was the next waypoint and then due south towards Swansea.

Despite clear visibility I continued to track the coast till Aberystwyth Danger

DAY 7 FRIDAY

Today we decided to fly around the Cornish coastline and return to Eaglescott for the night. We eventually took off at around 16.15 hours and despite the weather deteriorating to the southwest. Whilst avoiding heavy showers and a stiffening breeze we continued south towards Lands End along the north coast. I could hear Steve ahead of me.

Newquay guided me along and Perranporth let me fly straight over the top but as I flew towards Lands End the weather started to rapidly deteriorate and it wasn't until I was near St Ives with a cloudbase lowering to under 400', I made the decision to turn back despite hearing Steve on the radio at the next turning point. I back tracked towards Redruth skirting under Truro and just as I re-tuned back into Newquay Radar I heard the controller advising an incoming IFR aircraft that he had spotted a slow moving microlight to the south west of his airfield travelling in an easterly direction. I immediately press my PTT button to apologise and I could hear the controller

"AS I FLEW TOWARDS LANDS END THE WEATHER RAPIDLY DETERIORATED. AT ST IVES WITH A CLOUDBASE AT 400FT I DECIDED TO TURN BACK"

zone before heading across country. I didn't see anyone on the way down apart from a couple of military Tornado's near Llandeilo who flew by me as if I was standing still. I hope they saw me. Steve flew over Mount Snowdon.


After landing at Swansea I inspected my Flydat which was playing up. No sooner had I pulled the plugs apart, one of the ends fell out leaving naked signal wires. I now had a real problem with no engine readouts at all. However with help from the Swansea microlight school we managed a temporary fix which at least gave me something despite it being a crumpled mass of wiring held together with a cable tie. Several hours later with checks complete and readouts normal we set off for Eaglescott, south of Barnstaple. We flew over the Bristol Channel at 2,500' in appalling visibility. I had no horizon and couldn't even make out the Devon coast till 5 miles out. We came over the coast just east of Ilfracombe and tracked south to Eaglescott for the night.

giggling as he advised me to fly south towards Mevagissey. I duly responded climbing to 4000'. Newquay Radar then wished me bon voyage as I cruised back to Eaglescott.

DAY 8 SATURDAY

After breakfast we said our goodbyes and lifted off towards Compton Abbas. Exeter kept me up to date and Steve was once again chatting to his friends at London Information. We landed back at Compton in glorious sunshine, in front of friends who came out to celebrate with a bottle of champagne. A wonderful end to a great trip. There were scary times, fun times and times of uncertainty but at the end of the day it was a time to remember and a proud achievement for two middle aged microlight pilots.

See more at www.fly-uk.org

The last day for registration for Fly-UK 2010 will be Sunday 13th June. 

SUBMIT YOUR ADVENTURE TO PILOT MAGAZINE

THINKING of flying on an adventure? If so email Deputy Editor Dan Tye to see whether we'd be interested in publishing it on your return. Or email your best 10 photographs along with a 2000 word write up. We pay £300 to those that are published. Email: dan.tye@pilotweb.aero