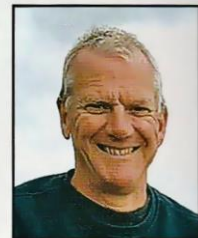




Try something new

BUCKMINSTER REPORT ■ RUSS BOWEY



Buckminster enthusiast Russ Bowey sings the praises of the National Centre and its capacity for providing variety and advises that it's never too late to try something new.

(The article below; is taken from the BMFA News & gives an insight into the progression from an Introduction to Aerobatic training day, to winning a competition!).

After a glorious weekend spent exploring the entire site at the Barkston Heath Nationals last year, I started looking at some of the similar speciality events that take place at the BMFA National Centre at Buckminster, as I'm lucky enough to live fairly close. My vague plan was to go along, watch & perhaps finding out a little more about some of these disciplines. It's one of the great things about Buckminster (apart from the fabulous facilities & a great flying site), that it hosts an amazing variety of model activities; Free Flight, Control Line, Discus Launched Gliding, Rotorcraft, Pylon Racing, IMAC & F3A – to name but a few. Many of these events also encourage new blood to 'have a go'.

After only a little thought & without much/enough research, I found myself heading to Buckminster in October last year with a smallish (54") electric Extra 330 to see what an 'Introduction to Aerobatics' day was all about. These one day events are held on the first Wednesday of every month, save January. I certainly wasn't expecting F3A aerobatics to be 'my bag' but I was hoping to improve my general flying on the day & perhaps learn to fly slightly more precise aerobatics too, rather than the typically ragged up & down the strip aero's that were my norm. If nothing else, at least I had a model capable of doing the requisite 'couple of loops & rolls' as shown on the link, from the National Centre's events calendar.

For various reasons I arrived at Buckminster rather late, so I completely missed the planned introductory briefing, but still, I was very warmly welcomed & soon shown to the flight line where I was introduced to the mentors & some fellow attendees. After a familiarization flight to settle the nerves & get used to the new site, I was soon being coached by the super experienced & wonderfully helpful mentors, which produced immediate improvements on those loops & rolls. A break for lunch gave us all an opportunity to discuss the day's proceedings, as well as various aspects of aerobatic flying & by then I was certainly enjoying the whole environment & the company. After lunch the mentors continued to educate, encourage & improve everyone's flying, so much so that by the end of the day, I was just about managing to fly a 'talked through' F3A (basic) Clubman Schedule. Back at home that evening & after reflecting on such an enjoyable day spent with a whole group of really nice people, I decided to join the GBRCAA (£25) & started to do some proper research into F3A. Soon afterwards I booked onto the next Introduction to Aerobatics day too – there is no limit on how many you can attend.

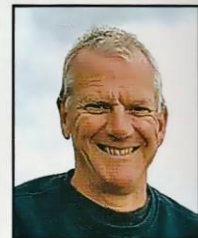
During the intervening month & using mainly the resources on the GBRCAA website, I learned how to get the Extra trimmed so much better (it was massively nose heavy, which I hadn't realised) & I started to get my head around some F3A essentials. Flying the requisite 150-170m away was the first huge challenge.. as it remains, but most of the manoeuvres were equally challenging; Round Loops, Level Slow rolls, Immelman turns - with the exit directly above the entry point, a similar requirement for a Split S etc. & all the manoeuvres were to be flown within a 120 degree arc, dead ahead. All of this was very novel, much harder than I thought possible, but it was good fun too & any success, massively rewarding! The other good news is that I soon learnt that when practicing this at my local club; I was generally the only one flying in that particular piece of sky.



Try something new

BUCKMINSTER REPORT ■ RUSS BOWEY

Buckminster enthusiast Russ Bowey sings the praises of the National Centre and its capacity for providing variety and advises that it's never too late to try something new.



The next month I headed back to Buckminster with my trusty Extra 330, for what was to be another super enjoyable day & with the ever present help of the mentors, my flying was definitely getting better. The only trouble now was that the more I learnt, the more I realised there was to learn. Clearly I was hooked & I found that trying to fly these perfectly precise manoeuvres, massively addictive! It is perhaps worth noting here that in competitions, the judges scoring is heavily weighted on the technical, rather than any personality or favouritism side, so for example; no matter who or what is flying - not starting or stopping a roll crisply would lose 1 point (out of 10), varying the roll rate during the roll or being say 15° off heading on exit would lead to more 1 point reductions, so you can mark yourself as you practice.. Fortunately, there are no negative scores in the competitions!

Back at home there were now two more obvious follow up actions. Firstly I entered a load of Clubman competitions for 2020 (at £6 per event), Clubman being the entry level of course. I then started to look at getting a bit more performance out of my Extra as it was a just a bit underpowered to be comfortable flying reasonable sized 'round' loops from level flight. The model had little (no) room for a bigger motor & I didn't have any suitable 'next size up' batteries. The upshot of which was that a change of model was the best (& cheapest) solution. I didn't want to go for anything too Grande, as there were plenty of options for a few hundred quid, from brand new F3A 'Foamies', to second hand choices. Jumping ahead for a second; I can now say from experience that you don't need a big or expensive model to begin competing with, just as well as all my models must fit into the passenger seating area of a 2 seater sports car.

2020 dawned & I was hoping for some serious practice in the spring & everything (even the weather) was going absolutely to plan, then of course, came the lockdown...

After the lockdown, I started practicing again in earnest, sometimes flying the whole clubman schedule, sometimes individual manoeuvres & sometimes just getting out & flying in weather that I previously wouldn't have flown in - to get ready for some expected unfriendly 'competition weather'. By the way, practicing in 'competition weather' has an added advantage in that there are generally few others at the club site, so you get to fly as & when you like & so you get better value for money from your membership too!

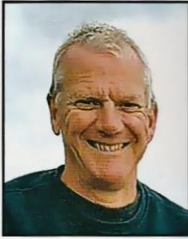
At last it was time for my first competition, at an excellent site, the Plane Crazy MAC at Hurley. Again I was delighted to be warmly welcomed on arrival & was quickly made to feel at home by everyone I met, from fellow competitors, the contest director, scorer, judges (yes, judges) et al. The weather was of course the sadly the expected 'competition weather' at least bright, but chilly with a 90° 15Kt crosswind.. Watching the top class pilots flying their schedules gave an insight at what can be achieved with a model in such conditions, I was quite surprised too to see that these pilots all had their own definite style when completing the same schedule too – it was nice to see they were not all robotically similar. When I wasn't watching the flying, I found everyone to be super friendly, as they helpfully (& patiently) answered all of my questions, about equipment fits, flying styles or whatever. Fortunately I managed to sneak in a couple of half decent flights & at the end of another very enjoyable day, I was lucky enough to end up in first place in the Clubman class. I was fortunate enough to win at Mansfield a couple of weeks later too, both of these competitions were flown with '50 size models.



Try something new

BUCKMINSTER REPORT ■ RUSS BOWEY

Buckminster enthusiast Russ Bowey sings the praises of the National Centre and its capacity for providing variety and advises that it's never too late to try something new.



I've certainly had a very enjoyable few months progressing from the Introduction to Aerobatics day through to F3A competitions. I am now a much better, safer & more knowledgeable pilot, flying models that are trimmed better, easier & more enjoyable to fly. I would highly recommend at least looking at some form of precision flying, in any discipline (F3A/IMAC/Scale etc.), it will certainly be educational, probably addictive & can be hugely rewarding. I'd like to thank everyone I've met on the F3A scene so far, for all being so friendly & helpful. Particular thanks of course go to the mentors at Buckminster who give up their time to make the Introduction to Aerobatics day such a huge success; Ashley Hoyland, Kevin Caton, Andy Shutt, Al Williams & John Morton, I know I wouldn't have got even close to quick success without their efforts & help. It all just goes to show what can be done, if you go along to Buckminster & give something new a try.

