



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2003

Editor : Michael Sullivan

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO FLYING!

A "big cat" has been seen at Harefield, and it has left clear impressions of its paws in mud and gravel. It may be one of several hundred which many experts now acknowledge to be living wild in Britain – and not necessarily in remote areas.

Two rabbit hunters watched it through telescopic sights from a distance of only a hundred yards before it loped out of sight into long grass. Their description of the animal, and the size of its footprints suggest that it is a black panther – a cross-breed of several species of predatory big cats which is the most frequently seen in Britain. A little larger than a Labrador dog, it is usually about seven feet long, though three feet of that is its tail. Average weight is about 100lbs. The sighting was deep in the rough ground to the right of the road as you approach our flying site – a no-fly area for us, where models are unlikely to come down if the flyers are obeying the rules.

Before going into full throttle scoff mode, readers should know that serious researchers have come to the conclusion that a variety of inter-breeding big cats, ranging from Leopards to Lynxes and Panthers, have adapted to living in the wild here. A substantial population of British big cats began with the Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976. It had become fashionable among celebrities to own them but the new law specified higher standards of care and control of the animals and many owners hastily unloaded their unwanted pets, often by simply letting them loose in the countryside. Rich vegetation and a plentiful supply of easy prey like rabbits, sheep and deer have provided them with effortless living. Our climate is not a problem to them – the Lynx was once part of Britain's indigenous wildlife. Their solitary nature has provided only rare glimpses of them – many at night, when they hunt. Consequently snatched video and photographs of them have been of sufficiently poor quality to keep the scoffers in business. But the British Big Cat Society, formed to log, research and collate big cat reports has published a list of more than a thousand reported sightings and incidents in 2002. If the Harefield creature was a big cat it was probably only passing through. Its chosen territory can cover hundreds of square miles. But keep your eyes peeled, and your camera handy! A really sharp picture of our big cat would earn you a fortune.



Three and a quarter inches across, this is the paw print of a big, big pussy cat

MINI DAM BUSTERS

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Dambuster Raid, model Lancasters will attack a model dam at Brooklands in May. A WLMAC member is building an 11 foot span Lancaster to drop a tennis ball replica of Barnes Wallis's famous "bouncing bomb". Watch this space.

More from the aeromodelling goody trade when Al of Al's Models (Finchley) comes to our **next club meeting at the Battle of Britain Club next Thursday, March 13th at 8 p.m.**



Mike Pugh looks tickled pink at this natty little radio controlled electric twin. "Rudder" authority is provided by simply reducing power on one of the motors. The model was displayed at the February meeting by David Wilshere, who had just returned from the Nuremberg Show. David kept a well-attended meeting enthralled by his account of the advances and changes in style in our world of model aircraft. Although he is himself a skilled "jet jockey", he is one who forecasts the development of electric power until we are all flying big, silent models. After his talk we all enjoyed ourselves watching once again that video of a procession of disastrous and expensive model crashes at a big American meeting. Dave's message was that it demonstrated that many who can build exquisite scale models have a poor grasp of aerodynamics, and tend to crash a lot. But we knew that already, didn't we?



Bill Mercer's 46 two-stroke powered P51 Mustang executes a neat getaway from its dolly at Harefield. Although a courageous hand-launcher of other people's models, Bill prefers a more realistic departure for those of his models which do not have the luxury of an undercarriage. So he set aside some of his building time to design and construct a decent dolly. Essential ingredients, he says, are bigish wheels (to take care of wet grass, grass which needs cutting and rabbit holes), enough weight to keep it on the ground as the model lifts off, and a padded cradle which allows the model to sit at slight angle of attack so that it will fly itself off without any elevator wagging. Not a difficult exercise, but one which many modellers cannot be bothered to tackle. "Take care of your dolly and she'll give you good service", says Bill.

RESCUING A WEARY VETERAN FROM THE GREAT BIN BAG IN THE SKY.

Many of our more mature members will recognise this stripped down airframe as that of the venerable Super Sixty, once a free-flight design, later converted to rudder, elevator and throttle for radio control. It's the model which has been kicking around our club house for several months, having been donated to the club by a departing member. None of the club's ARTF and swapmeet addicts was interested in it and the ageing fuselage was collecting more and more damage as it was shoved around to make way for our growing collection of plastic garden furniture and field maintenance equipment. Now it has been rescued. The first stage of its restoration has been to remove the covering, which turned out to be well-doped and fuel-proofed nylon. It took a brand new scalpel blade to penetrate it at all, and then much careful pulling to persuade it to part from the balsa beneath without doing more damage. Although it was pretty tricky and time-consuming to make a good job of doped nylon it was much stronger than the iron on, heat shrink fabric which so speedily replaced it. And in this case it had successfully coped with the clouds of oil which had coated the fuselage, stabiliser and elevator on the right side. The wood underneath was quite dry. But age and rough treatment have parted some of the glue joints and broken or cracked a longeron and several struts. With a structure made entirely of that chunky, quarter-inch square strip, the restoration work was both speedy and therapeutic. The tail



fin, though broken away from the top of the rear fuselage, will only need recovering. The distorted stabiliser, however, will have to be replaced. There are clues that this fuselage might well have been built some thirty years ago. It would have taken far too much fuselage butchery to make space for a bigger, modern fuel tank so the smallish, cylindrical fuel tank will stay. It should be adequate for the low power required for the Super Sixty to fly. The wing, covered in yellow Glosstex, will be a different kettle of fish. Under the covering a much more recent build was revealed and to be honest, a much tidier one. The tips were unmistakably Super Sixty but the overall span had for some reason been increased by some twelve inches. A piece of fishing line was slung between fittings on the undersides. The idea had been to pass the wire under the fuselage, providing a "flying wire" to discourage the wings from folding under high positive G. An old alternative to struts, I was told by a veteran modeller. The wings will be restored to their original 60 inch span and strengthened to make them self-supporting, though the original Super Sixty design was without struts. The entire model will be re-covered in Cub Yellow Solartex. Then it will join the several feather-light, high-lift veteran designs in the club which are such a joy to watch on a balmy summer evening. And they're quiet.

UP FOR GRABS Ian McPherson says he is "rationalising his models and converting things that are no longer productive into money to obtain other planes"! He has for sale:- "Shuttle", helicopter airframe fitted with an MDS 38 two stroke engine. Kyosho 30, helicopter, which comes with everything – OS 32 engine, Futaba Gyro and servos – and the Futaba Radio. And his blue Solartex-covered, 84 inch span Precedent Stampe biplane. (Without engine) £100 for that, and make him an offer for the helicopters. Call him on 01628 527293. Or email him on ian@ianmcpherson.freeserve.co.uk.