



NEWSLETTER

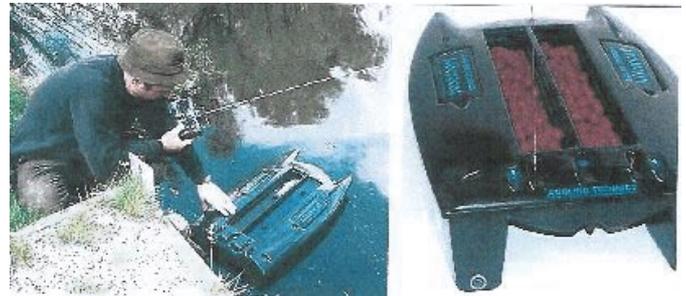
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Editor : Michael Sullivan

FREQUENCY WAR WITH FISHERMEN THREATENS R/C FLYING CLUBS

A local model flying club, plagued by interference-related crashes, has stumbled across the widespread, illegal use by fishing enthusiasts of radio controlled “bait boats” on the 35 MHz frequency assigned to model aircraft. Members of the Phoenix flying club at London Colney, near St Albans, discovered the fishermen flying orange 35 MHz pennants well within radio range of their field but were abused and threatened when they attempted to point out that the legal frequency for boats is 40 MHz. Thousands of fisherman across the country use the boats to drop bait and ferry hooks and floats out to inaccessible spots in search of carp. A model flying web site chat line has received hundreds of complaints from flyers who have suffered interference from fishermen illegally using 35 MHz radios. The BMFA has become involved in attempts to persuade the fishing fraternity to halt the practice.

Building and selling bait boats is a growing industry. One big Wiltshire fishing equipment supplier, using the correct 40 MHz radios, sells a sophisticated twin-hulled design, powered by electric water jet motors. The real fishing fanatics use echo sounders, sonar and even radio-linked, underwater video cameras in search of their quarry. The Phoenix Club’s investigators, telephoning around the country, found one small company which began trading in June had sold 200 boats by November. That one was also using the legal, 40 MHz frequency but fisherman with less money to spend are buying their radio gear separately from model aircraft shops, or their boats from small dealers who are not fussy about supplying radios of the right frequency. A company in Nottingham was found to be selling 35 MHz boats before hastily withdrawing its internet web site over Christmas. Tracking down the illegal boat users is not easy. They transmit only long enough to send a boat out and back again. That makes detection by frequency scanner a hit and miss affair and it took the Phoenix Club some time to establish the source of their interference. Fishermen travel all over the country to popular fishing grounds and sometimes the boats in use at one location are so numerous that 35 MHz is used in an attempt to avoid frequency clashes with other fishermen. Our Harefield site is close to several fishermen’s haunts and WLMAC committee members intend to make cautious inquiries among fishermen on the canal and at lakes along Springwell Lane. Aggressive confrontation and talk of illegality, however, would be a big mistake. The experience of other clubs has shown that it can be difficult, if not downright hazardous to broach the subject with fishermen who do not understand that frequency use can be legally enforced by the Radio Agency, a government department. To put it bluntly, most of them couldn’t give a toss. They can crash our models but we can’t crash their boats.



Fisherman and his bait boat. This one is legal. Many are not.

CLUB FINANCES HEALTHY DESPITE NECESSARY SPENDING.

Treasurer Peter Nielsen reported to the AGM in December that despite spending on equipment and essential field maintenance, which included more than £2000 on the new access road at the beginning of 2002, the club’s cash reserves remain almost unchanged at £13,000. The total cash in the club bank account is actually £23,000, but Peter once again reminds us that £10,000 of that represents loans made to the club by ten long-standing members who are entitled to ask for their money back at any time. That has generated over £750 in bank interest, but cannot be counted as part of the club’s permanent assets. He said that the club must maintain a healthy bank balance to be ready for unforeseen financial demands.

Building, or bought something new for the 2003 season? Bring it to the **next monthly club meeting at the Battle of Britain Club on Thursday, January 9th at 8 p.m.** It’s always a good excuse just to stand around and talk model aeroplanes!

NO RENEWAL, NO FLY.

There are still some members who have yet to renew their membership. They are reminded that without current membership, and in particular without BMFA membership and its insurance cover, they may not fly at Harefield. If you have simply overlooked it, please send your cheque (£75 for membership. BMFA membership is £23 for adults and £13 for juniors) to **Peter Nielsen at 176, Cherry Tree Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 1BA.**



SOGGY SITE.

Few will be surprised to learn that our flying site has been a lake or at best a quagmire. It is best to regard it as unflyable but if you can't do without your flying fix, bring a float plane and do not paddle on the grass.

CLUBHOUSE PICTURE GALLERY. Newsletter has been bringing you high definition photographs each month for more than six years now, and those members who get their newsletter by email get them in colour. They provide such a vivid picture of our club's activity through the seasons that it seems a pity to keep them tucked away in a photograph album, so they have been copied and put on permanent show inside the club house. They join Bunty Taylor's excellent display, which has been a club house feature for some time.

WLMAC RULES TO BE REVIEWED.

The club's rule book will be reviewed later this month, and the committee will be discussing some new recommendations, published in the BMFA's 2003 hand book. Some are simply not possible at Harefield, but some will be seriously considered for adoption. "They are only recommendations", says Secretary Leon Taylor "But if we choose to ignore them we could one day find ourselves explaining why we did so to our insurers or a court of law". Among them is the recommendation that over the field, circuits must be flown, making every pass in the direction of take-off and landing for the day. Deviation from that would be only beyond the field itself. The BMFA also reminds us that active mobile phones should be kept away from the field and pits, where they add to the general frequency clutter and have been known to be capable of wiping computer transmitter memories. There are also safety recommendations for spinners or domed propeller nuts to be mandatory; for 10 kHz frequency spacing and the use of dual conversation receivers, though it is to be argued that all that is in the "ideal world" department. Finally, the BMFA reminds us that electrically-powered models are not the pussy cats we often assume them to be, and that greater care should be taken to restrain them and keep hands away from propellers when connecting batteries. More than one of our members has learned that lesson to their painful cost. The new recommendations are clearly marked in the BMFA hand book with vertical, solid black lines beside the text. They were devised with BMFA's knowledge of accident figures throughout its affiliated club membership, so sit down and read them!

KNOW THE STATE OF YOUR BATTERY?

There are hopes that 2003 will be the year of more diligent battery management among WLMAC members. Chairman Bob Young told the Annual General Meeting that there had been an uncomfortably high incidence of crashes caused by in flight battery failure, and that some had been potentially dangerous to life and limb. John Herman, who builds and flies big, high-speed jets, told the meeting that he cycles and charges his batteries between flights! He advised that a £100 Graupner battery manager was "worth its weight in gold" giving a clear indication of a battery's state of health and discharging and recharging it to keep it at peak efficiency. Take a look at your own, tatty old battery. If you don't know exactly what it's up to under that shrink wrap plastic coating, is it really worth risking a model with it?



Along with this picture of a 737 getting in the way as Newsletter attempted a decent shot of the full moon, we wish each and every one of our members a Happy New Year of safe and enjoyable flying in 2003!.