Fun For All at the RC Hotel

For the third year on the trot, a small group from WLMAC has visited the RC Hotel in Corfu. We've just returned and a great time was had by all. Unfortunately, at the last moment, Club member Dave Weeden was unable to travel.

The rest of us soldiered on and took the 07.30 flight from Luton with EasyJet. We were met upon arrival at Corfu Airport by taxi's that are arranged by Spiros, the hotel's owner. They then took us to our hotel where we immediately set about lunch and settling in. We all went full board so had all our meals in the Hotel and excellent food it is too!

Each day is roughly the same, breakfast, followed by flying between 9 am and 1 pm. Flying stops for the afternoon for a mixture of lunch, maintenance, charging and snoozing by the pool. Flying then re-starts between 5 pm and 8 pm, after that it's cocktails before dinner is served at 9 pm. Everyday was roughly the same but we did lose our Saturday due to heavy rain all day.

Interestingly, since last year, Spiros has converted a lot of his fleet to electric power, roughly 3/4 of his fleet is quiet power. Everything is supplied by Spiros, the plane, Futaba radio gear and the all batteries which he charges too. All you have to do is select a plane, the correct battery, radio and go and fly.

Once again, we took fancy dress costumes with us to entertain ourselves and everyone else. This year the theme was 'Comic Book Hero's'.
Just so you know, from left to right we have
Captain America, Batman, Thor, Wolverine, Superman and The Joker.

Stuart as Thor

Kaiyo was Captain America

Roger with hair!

Mat as Wolverine, not Peter Griffin.

Gareth was The Joker

This year we had contacted Spiros and asked for a Ripmax Bullet to be shipped over specifically for us. Spiros included it in his order for planes so we only paid £10 extra for the plane to be ready and waiting for us upon our arrival. So, whilst it rained on the Saturday, we had fun and games putting an ARTF together. We'd taken the engine, radio gear and glue out with us, together with some bits and pieces that we'd need to build it. The Bullet has a couple of build problems but we'd planned for these and everything went smoothly. The plane flew very nicely and as it was our plane, we could fiddle with the engine to our hearts content. The plane was then flown regularly by Gareth, Mat and myself and proved to be a great choice of plane. Especially with the move to electric powered planes, we had one that could fly for longer and there was no need to allow the ESC to cool between flights.

The plane is shown and the eagle eyed will be able to see that a bit of red trim has already come off the left hand wing. At the end of the holiday we sold the plane back to Spiros complete with the engine and servos, all he had to do was add a Futaba receiver. Unfortunately the life expectancy of his planes is not long and the plane is unlikely to last the Summer.

It was raining outside so everybody helped. Kaiyo has got a Bullet to build upon his return so was helping with interest.

This is a panoramic shot showing the tables for sorting out your plane and the the runway in the distance.
Helicopters are catered for too, lessons are available for both fixed wing and heli's.

The State of the Club Hut.

The lack of washing up has returned to its normal level with only a few clearing up after the rest. Please make an effort to boil a kettle and use hot water to wash up after your day at the field. The mountains for cups left for others to clear up is a depressing sight. Be aware, Tony Parrott is on the case and will be looking and checking to see that there is some improvement.

The Tuck Shop has been re-stocked so please feel free to indulge, don't forget the 50p per item in the honesty box!

Roger Darvell hasn't had a chance to start his DeHavilland Rapide but has now received the fibre glass mouldings from America. He hopes to start the build days after returning from Corfu so hopefully there will be some snaps next month.

If you've got something on the board, please let us know and include a few snaps.

Here's a report written by Andy Blackburn, detailing his experiences of building his 109.

Hangar 9 Messerschmitt 109F

I've finally finished this Hangar 9 ARTF Messerschmitt 109F that has been languishing in the garage for a couple of years. It's been a troubled assembly process; I bought it from Sussex Model Centre soon after the kit was released with the intention of using an EFlite power 60 and a large 6s pack, but progress quickly came to a halt when it transpired that the matching EFlite 81 degree retracts (+ oleos) didn't work properly, usually jamming when part-retracted. SMC replaced them straight away without any quibbles (for which they get points, obviously) but by the time the replacements had eventually arrived I'd moved on to something else.

Enthusiasm was re-ignited when RCM&E did a kit review in the May 2014 issue, but on reading it carefully I had some doubts about the power system; the review model was at the top of the expected weight range (11.5 lb) and required 400g of nose weight to get to the aft c.g. position, but in that installation (big spinner) the power system was only producing 1046 Watts or about 91 Watts/lb, which is not nearly enough to give the 109 the required performance, in my view. So it was all shelved again whilst I considered what to do next.

At some point I saw Chairman Mat's Hangar 9 109F which had a very neat and unobtrusive I.C. installation flying with a Laser 100 ("not quite enough") and later with a Laser 150 ("a bit too much") so after a bit of checking of the bank balance and a careful examination of Mat's installation, I got myself a new Laser 120. The factory fuel-proofing in the engine bay was gone over with 30 minute epoxy, and in accordance with the very explicit Laser instructions the supplied metal engine mounts were replaced with commercial reinforced plastic ones. The engine bay went together pretty well, although it took a while to steel myself to cut the cowling!

There were some shenanigans with the retracts on the port wing - how Hangar 9 have managed this I don't know, but it transpired that the retract mounts were in a slightly incorrect vertical position compared with the other wing and also twisted - so the retract unit would never have worked properly anyway! After a lot of fiddling with ply packing pieces and much bad language, it needed 3 mm packing on the front inner hole, about 1 1/3 mm on the rear inner hole and about 0.8 mm on the rear outer hole to get the retract unit to sit flat so that it would work OK; I made a little flat-plat jig from 1/4" sheet covered in Solarfilm and filled in the non-flat parts of the retract mount with epoxy and micro-balloons, bolted everything back together and - so far - it's worked every time.

Balancing was a bit traumatic - the thing weighs a ton anyway and required 400+ grams (nearly a pound!!) of noseweight, so by the time the c.g. was at the mid-point of the c.g. range it weighed about 5 1/4 kg according to our rather rubbish scales - that's 11.6 lb in real money.

Flying

The first flight was on Sunday 15th May; executive summary: nothing got broken! The Laser 120 started first flick (!) and had a tankful run through it, loads of smoke at part and low throttle but that's OK, idle was set quite high at 2500 RPM and although it was running rich it turned a 16 x 8 prop at about 8200 RPM, which was judged to be enough for flight - so after a cool-down period I got Mat to stand next to me as co-pilot and we had a go.

I'd expected take-off to be a challenge but both times it's flown, it's been fine - just ease the throttle forward with a bit of right rudder as required and as it gathers speed, release the back stick and roll the throttle on with maybe a tap of down if the tail isn't up, then back on the stick a tiny bit and it flies itself off. Mat kindly dealt with the retracts on the climb-out.

Luckily, it turned out to be one of those aeroplanes where you think "ooh, this is nice..." after a few seconds' flight - all the mucking around with retracts was worth it, just for that! It needed a click or two of aileron trim and quite a bit of down trim (thanks again to Mat), and needed a bit of rudder mixed with aileron for normal turns. It's party piece is the amount of speed it gains when the nose is pointed downwards (a characteristic it shares with the full-size) and it retains a fair bit of energy in the subsequent zoom climb. In general it handles nicely although it could perhaps do with a little more fin & rudder area - but it's perfectly flyable as it is.

The stall was a bit abrupt, dropping the port wing quite sharply with flaps up or down - I've added 40 grams of noseweight which will creep the c.g. forward a smidge (about a millimetre, in metric) and I noticed after we'd finished flying that the starboard wing peg had vibrated out and was rattling around the tank bay - I thought I'd be clever and make them a tight push fit in case they ever needed replacement, but apparently it wasn't tight enough - this may have been enough to decrease the wing incidence on the starboard wing so that the port wing always dropped first. Mea culpa...

As this is a 109, landing was expected to be what one might call "sporting", although in the event it was OK, even though it missed the runway slightly on the first landing (I was a bit stressed! :-)); the drill is to lower the gear on the upwind pass, checking that they're both down, drop half and then full flaps on the downwind leg and then as you turn onto finals, lower the throttle to no lower than a quarter (otherwise it'll run out of speed) and establish a rate of descent so that you can just see the top wing surface. When it gets to the runway threshold, just wheel it onto the runway with the fuselage horizontal, without holding off as you would in a normal three-point landing; old habits die hard and I almost managed this, but got away with it both times.

Alternatives

It's a shame that Hangar 9 have discontinued this kit, although I think you can still get spares and you might find one in the back of a shop somewhere or at a swap-meet. An alternative for wannabe warbirders is the Top Flite AT-6 Texan - much lighter than the 109, not difficult to assemble, almost perfect manners and a pleasure to fly - but don't make the mistake I made and rely on the factory fuel-proofing, it became so fuel-soaked after about 18 months that the front literally fell apart when I had to belly-land it after an engine failure.

I'm Finally Off to Ukraine.

I'm leaving you all for a while, I've got a job with the Foreign Office. I should have left the UK in March but was delayed until now. I'm going to Ukraine to help monitor the ceasefire, or lack of it, between the Ukrainian Army and the breakaway area's in the East of the Country. So, in my absence, Tony Parrott will be writing the newsletter. I'll have access to the t'interweb over there so I'll update you with what goes on in The Peoples Republic of Donetsk!

I will be back from time to time but, as with everywhere, booking the leave with your co workers is the hardest bit.