



## And now for something completely different!

From Alan Cassidy

Membership of our Association fluctuates. About that, we can do nothing. What we can do, however, is explore all avenues we can think of that will help in introducing contest aerobatics to a wider potential clientele. We all know just how much fun and frustration is there for the taking. Explaining to others that the entry barriers are much smaller than they think is of immense importance in recruiting.

So this year we have had more of the LOOP beginners days and we also had the Wellesbourne Mountford experience.

Last year, Alan Newton, head of On-Track Aviation, contacted us to enquire about having an event at Wellesbourne; pretty much in the heart of the country. On-Track, as a company, is primarily

concerned with training new flying instructors. They also dabble in aerobatics, because they also need to train instructors who want to remove the initial restriction on their FI Rating that prohibits them from being teaching aerobatics.

It struck Steve and me that any event at Wellesbourne should be aimed largely at introducing aerobatic instructors, who do not normally revolve in our orbit, to the differences between what they normally do and what we actually require at competitions. We also thought that an event exclusively for instructors would enable these pilots to overcome their natural reticence to show their shortcomings in front of students!!

Because Wellesbourne has a weekend



market, flying would have to take place on weekdays, and we also wanted to have something fairly exciting for the audience, so we arranged a Beginners event for the instructors on Thursday and an Advanced competition on the Friday. So that the needs of contest flying could be more fully explained, we also decided that I would lead a seminar for all the instructors on Wednesday evening.

The Wednesday evening tutorial went down very well, along with a couple of beers, and then the general lecturing/discussions also went on a bit Thursday morning as the weather was not conducive to a Beginners contest until after lunch. Eventually we got just enough cloud-base and visibility to launch into the Beginners routine, each contestant flying with an experienced BAeA pilot to act as a safety net just in case. Of the larger number attending the theory class, six flew Beginners only once in the time available, but all found it a very valuable, if salutary, experience.

Thursday evening On-Track laid on a great barbecue and lots of the local Wellesbourne flying folk were there to soak up the atmosphere.

On the Friday, the weather was somewhat similar, but eight Advanced pilots were ready for action and managed to complete both a

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known and an unknown. We also managed a few more Beginners flights between the two Advanced sequences. The cloud danced in and around the box and visibility was very poor. I remember running in for the unknown and being unable to fly level at low speed prior to the start because of the complete absence of horizon. Scores were, as a result, probably a bit lower than they might otherwise have been - try stopping a full flick on a 45° up-line with no visual reference and you will see what I mean.

For me, the event was a success in that it helped me get just a little more match fit before the trip to Finland. The same was true for Julian and Steve Madle. For the instructor "beginners" it was also a very valuable couple of days. Socially, it was a great success for the airfield as a whole. I look forward to doing it all again next year.

Alan Cassidy

