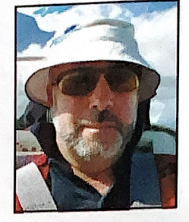




# Changing World...again

MANNY'S MUSINGS ■ MANNY WILLIAMSON



A short time since I submitted the previous article to the Editor but globally much has happened in the interim, sadly little of it good, writes Manny Williamson. As I write this piece (beginning of March) the citizens of the Ukraine are facing relentless bombardment and attack at the hands of the Russian military and the situation looks set to worsen.



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Looking forward to sunny days at the Centre.

**Our thoughts are with the people of the Ukraine including of course the many friends in the aeromodelling community there where they have a long history of competition success and manufacturing innovation.**

Hopefully this madness will be brought to an end in the near future as the threat and risk globally seems very real.

Of course, on a local level we are already seeing the negative impact of the conflict in the form of rising costs, particularly in respect of fuel and energy. Indications are this is just the beginning. Already, filling the car with fuel has become an eye-opening... and eye-watering experience.

Following the steady easing of the Covid pandemic measures it felt like 2022 had so much promise and so much to look forward to... I am now not quite so sure.

### THE BMFA NATIONALS

As you will already be aware following the recent letter from the Chairman direct to all members, the BMFA Nationals (both the May Free Flight and the August Power and Control Line) will not be taking place in the traditional format and location, as despite the concerted efforts of our Chairman and CEO we have been refused access to Barkston Heath for 2022.

Of course, after already missing two years due to Covid restrictions it is something of a blow, particularly in the Society's centenary year.

In terms of the competition side of things we are of course fortunate to have the National Centre and a number of the RC disciplines already have domestic competitions booked in that can easily be repurposed to be their National Champs. This worked very well last year and some disciplines actually preferred the format and setting at the National Centre and enjoyed the uncrowded airspace and relaxed atmosphere, some also

reported their best entry numbers for some years.

Already the E2K and C32 Short Course Pylon Racing Nationals have been scheduled for September, the IMAC (International Miniature Aerobatics Club) have made their pre-booked event in August their National Champs and I suspect that a good number of the disciplines will follow, in essence it is going to be substantially a re-run of last year.

### MOBILE PHONES AND TRANSMITTERS - A REMINDER

You will probably recall this subject from the early days of 2.4GHz use in the UK and in particular the initial mainstream use of computerised transmitters.

There were a number of reports that indicated the close proximity of a mobile phone in some circumstances had the potential to corrupt the data stored within the transmitter memory.

This manifested itself in a number of ways but predominantly reversed or changed settings which lead to a small number of incidents.

A number of warning bulletins were issued at the time but it was difficult as despite substantial research and testing it was never consistently repeatable.

The continued potential for this issue was recently highlighted in an incident report from BMFA member Chris M who suffered an issue during a recent flying session. Chris has given permission to print his summary of the incident in full and it is in the form of the "I learned About Flying From That" articles and was included in his own club's newsletter. Thanks to Chris for sharing the information and allowing me to share:

### I LEARNED ABOUT FLYING FROM THAT!

"I turned up at the patch with my T33 amongst

other aircraft. It didn't take long to fit the Lipo and check that all was working as it should before getting airborne. All seemed to be well in the world and the aircraft flew superbly without any problem for about three minutes.

"I was flying in a benign manner with gentle banked turns against the clear sky. As I came in on yet another pass, I heard a beep, which I initially thought was my transmitter telling me something. It was immediately followed by a complete loss of control. I was fortunate in that it happened when the aircraft was in a gentle turn away from the flight line, and the aircraft carried on this trajectory until the inevitable happened. It contacted the ground on the far side of the patch, damaging the airframe in the process.

"Having retrieved the bits, I decided to reconnect the Lipo to see if the radio was working correctly. It wasn't! The airborne system was completely unresponsive with the LED on the aircraft's receiver showing red rather than green. It indicated that the signal from the transmitter was not being received. To try and isolate the problem, I checked the transmitter with another aircraft and that indicated that all was well. Wanting to take full advantage of the good flying conditions, I carried out a range check and went on to have a number of successful flights with this second aircraft.

"Back in the workshop I looked more closely at the damaged T33. The radio system was still unresponsive with the red LED continuing to show. Wondering whether the receiver had lost its binding with the transmitter, I decided to go through the binding process to see if that would restore the signal. As I delved down through the menus on my Futaba transmitter to carry out this process, the problem suddenly became clear. Somehow my transmitter had changed from the FHSS operating system of the receiver to the FASST operating mode. When I changed it back to the FHSS mode of the receiver, all worked as it should.

"It should be impossible for the transmitter to change its operating mode part way through a flight and yet this is what appeared to have happened. It caused me to scratch my head. The only conclusion that I have been able to come to is that the transmitter's memory for the model was corrupted by some external signal.

"Could the presence of my mobile phone in my breast pocket within a couple of feet of my transmitter have been the cause? It may just be a coincidence, but I received a text message on my phone at almost exactly the same time that I lost control of the aircraft. It accounted for the beep which I had heard and initially attributed to the transmitter.

"The jury has been out' for a good many years on the topic of whether mobile phones can interfere with programmable transmitters. The BMFA acknowledged the lack of evidence when it issued a safety bulletin on the topic back in 2013.

"They nevertheless recommended that mobile phones should not be switched on within 10 feet of any programmable transmitter until more information was available. There is a tendency in all of this to think solely about the frequencies on which mobile phones and our transmitters are operating.



Time efficient...but a little soulless.

"However, when assessing the electromagnetic compatibility of two devices or systems, the accepted aim is to identify and limit the unintentional generation, propagation, and reception of any electromagnetic energy that may cause unwanted effects.

"What have I learned from my recent experience with my T33? First, I should have either switched off my mobile phone before flying, or ensured as a minimum that I kept it well away from my transmitter. It is what I usually do, but I had omitted to do so on this occasion.

"Secondly, and in hindsight, I shouldn't have flown again with the same transmitter until I had identified the cause of the crash. I didn't know at that time that the model's data had been corrupted, or have any knowledge of the degree to which such corruption might have affected the settings of other models.

"As a final observation, I still had my mobile phone in my pocket – the likely source of the interference – and was lucky not to have had a repeat of the problem on subsequent flights that day."

Thanks to Chris for his interesting report and it serves as a timely reminder that there remains the potential for mobile phones to compromise our RC equipment on a number of levels.

The general BMFA guidance has been, and will continue to be, that mobile phones are kept away from transmitters and off the flightline.

This is for a number of reasons, clearly the potential issue identified above is one, however, the primary risk perhaps comes from the potential for direct interference of the 2.4GHz signal that we use.

One of the issues is that the 2.4GHz band and associated equipment is spectacularly reliable and robust, reports of interference or failure are extremely rare, this has to a degree led users into a false sense of security as in general terms the practice of plugging in, switching on

# SAM 35

## Spring Gala 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April 22

### Featuring Sunday Swapmeet from 10am-2pm

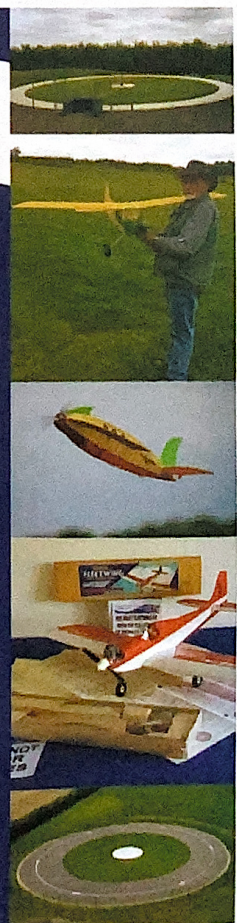
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and it all working exactly as advertised has very much become the norm.

This means that perhaps less thought is given to the general installation and other factors that could potentially affect the quality of the signal.

It should be borne in mind that our radio equipment is operating in an increasingly busy RF environment, and as such we should ensure that although it is largely "plug and play" that we do what we can to ensure it works correctly; essentially this equates to taking care with the initial installation, ensuring a suitable and robust power supply and minimising the potential for direct interference through limiting the number of operating transmitters where possible and maintaining separation from other transmitting devices, remember, if your equipment is already working hard in terms of signal rejection the mobile phone in your top pocket could be the final factor that tips it over the edge.

Of course, as with all guidance there is room for a degree of personal interpretation, if it is a club or event rule then you have to comply, however for those who fly alone there is some merit in having a mobile phone to hand in case of emergencies; on a personal level I regularly fly alone and always carry my phone in my back pocket, to date it has never caused an issue."

### THE NATIONAL CENTRE

The last few weeks (months actually) have been all about preparations for the coming flying season both in terms of event planning and of course in terms of the required physical works.

We are still working through the general winter maintenance activity but events have already started so there is plenty to do and it feels like the winter has flown by.

We are also getting ready for the spring grounds maintenance programme, whilst the grass has already had its first cut of the year it hasn't really got going yet but as the site is currently quite wet, I suspect the first period of regular sunshine will see it growing quickly.

We are still working on some of the machinery which due to difficulties obtaining spare parts has taken longer than planned, hopefully this will be sorted as soon as the grass is already growing.

We are also in the process of improving some of the hard standing as well as the access around the buildings and parking areas. The Volunteer Team as ever is doing fantastic work and members are keeping busy with our ever expanding task list.

As always check out the National Centre Website for the latest News, there will be one of the regular blogs added to the website in the near future.

### DIARY DATES

The calendar is now populated on the National Centre website so as well as the downloadable pdf which provides a snapshot of the whole year you can also see a detailed listing for each event.

It's certainly going to be a busy year and every weekend from now through to November is booked or allocated.

The first large event is the Jet Modellers Association fly-in at the end of March followed by the SAM35 Spring Gala which of course also features the first of our three scheduled Swapmeets for the year.

Talking of which, tables are selling fast for the Swapmeet which promises to be a large event, there are still spaces left indoors and of course plenty of room outdoors, drop me an Email if you require a space.

Taking a glimpse to the end of the year we are again holding the

Model Builders Show in October which will provide a great shopping opportunity in the absence of the much missed Nationals Trade Village.

We look forward to welcoming more of you to the Centre over the coming months, with such a range of activity there should be something to suit most tastes in model flying.

### SOME BUILDING... SOME RACING...

My lack of enthusiasm for winter building has largely continued and none of the intended projects have progressed far, however the loss of my number one E2K pylon racer at the penultimate Winter League did spur me into action to construct a replacement as due to the nature of the racing there is always the potential to lose aircraft and I was keen to not be "sans aeroplane" for the remaining winter races and the commencement of the Summer League.

The new design seems to be working well and has reached pretty much its final evolution so I decided to "mass produce" four airframes while I was at it as it would save time in the long term.

I duly ordered four sets of foam wing panels from Cloud Models which arrived in quick time and were as always perfect quality, an order was also sent off to the nice people at SLEC to top up the balsa and ply stocks and in no time construction was underway.

It was certainly "time effective" producing multiple parts but repeating each process so many times whilst efficient did make it feel more like work than pleasure, however, satisfying all the same and as I write I am close to having 4 airframes ready for covering and finishing, so barring consecutive disasters I should be sorted for this year's racing and leave time for one or two additional development projects.

Competing in the E2K Pylon racing has been an extremely enjoyable and satisfying experience, particularly in terms of developing a competitive model from scratch and seeing it go on to beat some of the established... old hands... in the game on a fairly regular basis and achieve second place overall in the Winter League series.

Next up is the Summer League which starts at the end of March and continues with a race meeting every month at the National Centre.

E2K is a great way to get into pylon racing, close racing with cost effective, simple aircraft and great support for newcomers, why not come along to one of the upcoming race meetings at the National Centre and see what it's all about.

### AND SOME FLYING

As previously referred my full-size glider (22 meter Slingsby Kestrel) has undergone a fairly extensive maintenance programme over the winter months which other than a few cosmetic jobs is thankfully, largely complete, so it will soon be time to return it to the airfield and undertake test flights (assuming finances and the broader considerations of the present time permit).

With this in mind I decided to get current after the long winter lay-off as I hadn't flown with an instructor for the best part of three years (currency requirements were waived for suitably experienced pilots during the pandemic restrictions allowing us to self-certify under the authority of the Chief Flying Instructor).

A recent break in the weather saw me back in a two-seater for a bit of a refresh and check out, all pretty standard stuff and certainly good to be back in the air again, a flight with an instructor is always an opportunity to learn something and never wasted.

Roll on summer... I think.