

IN THE GREEN

The official newsletter of Thurston Helicopters

CHRISTMAS 2008

Tuke Torque...

It's been some time since we last produced a newsletter, I don't really have any excuses for this but I have now sat myself down to write my piece, so here goes. Also, Haydn Mellowship, a 2007 student who has now emigrated to Canada, has kindly written an excellent article for us so I had no further excuses for delay!

New premises

Firstly, I'm delighted in some ways and sad in others that we have now moved offices on the airfield. We are situated near the Tiger Club and much nearer to our pads and the hangar which is a good thing but, on the other hand, we have left the hustle and bustle of the main building where we've been for nearly twenty years and we'll greatly miss working close to Sue, Jacqui in the Café, Mary at Weald and all those who work in ATC. We do intend to visit on regular occasions just to keep up with the gossip!

Our new offices give us at least twice as much space and also provide a briefing room which can double-up as an



office or even a Board Room! We also have our own kitchenette!

Rates changes

You've all noticed what's been happening as regards fuel prices both in terms of aviation and on the road – to say nothing of this appalling recession we're now all experiencing. Throughout the year we have had a 32p per litre fuel price increase and a 4p/litre drop so a net rise of 28p. We have had cost increases especially in maintenance and insurance rates are tightening as well. However, I'm hoping to hold the prices listed below for as long as I can but it is possible,

due to the R22 prices going up faster than the R44, that we may have to impose a £10 per hour rise on those machines.

I will be making a final decision on this at the end of the year. However, we are able to offer a *very special rate for ab-initio training and conversions on to the R44*. This rate is £337 per hour which will make it cheaper than anywhere else for R44 dual training so for those of you not yet converted onto the R44 now is your chance. We have only been able to do this with the agreement of the owners of the machines who have agreed to cut their share of revenue substantially for this sort

of flying. The normal re-currency training and self-fly-hire rates remain as detailed below.

Current Rates are as follows (all subject to change at short notice I'm afraid):

- R22 Dual Training (ad hoc – pay-as-you-go) £230 + VAT/hr
- R22 Dual Training block rate (10hrs purchased) £219 + VAT/hr
- R22 Self-Fly-Hire (pay-as-you-go) £175 + VAT/hr
- R22 Self-Fly-Hire (5-10hrs purchased) £165 + VAT/hr
- R44 Dual Raven 2 Training (ab-initio training & Conversions only)

£337+VAT *SPECIAL RATE*

- R44 Dual Raven 2 Training (re-currency training) £381 + VAT
- R44 Dual Raven 2 Training block rate (10hrs purchased) £371 + VAT
- R44 Raven 2 Self-Fly-Hire (ad hoc) £327 + VAT
- R44 Raven 2 Self-Fly-Hire (block) £317 + VAT

G-MAML

We have a brand new Raven II on the fleet – G-MAML. It is light and fast, a delight to fly and thoroughly recommended. Please note that it does not have pop-out floats for over-water flights; for that you need our beautiful Clipper II G-SAIG which is highly equipped with an HSI and Garmin GNS430 etc etc. G-JSAK and G-THLA continue to make up the R22 fleet and are both performing very well.

Day trips

I'm intending to try and organise some simple trips next season. If you

are interested please let us know. We would do them on a Saturday or Sunday and to begin with they would be:

- **Day trip to Compton Abbas** The highest airfield in the UK at 900 AMSL (QFE= -30Mb on the QNH!) There is a very pleasant restaurant and the Dorset countryside is lovely. It's about 1.5 hours each way in an R22.
- **Breakfast Trip to Goodwood** This is normally combined with something to do with the cars at Goodwood coupled with a 'gourmet' breakfast. It normally takes place on Sundays.
- **Day Trip to Le Touquet** A cross-Channel checkout for those of you that have not already had one. French food, a walk through the town and return. 1hour each way in an R22.
- **Evening Trip to London ATC at Swanwick (near Fareham) in Hampshire** It is intended to hire a minibus and drive in the afternoon leaving

about 4pm getting to Swanwick at around 6pm. We would then be given the comprehensive tour and return to Headcorn around 10pm. Timings, prices and arrangements to be confirmed. I just need to get an idea if anyone's interested in doing this.

- **Headcorn based Robinson Safety/ Airmanship Evening** Will Samuelson has kindly offered to put something together specific to the sort of flying we all do. It will be in the form of videos and pictures in the format of "What's going wrong here?" or "What's about to go wrong?". We will serve refreshments during the evening which will start at about 6:30pm and, depending on numbers, will either be held in our building or in the Weald Briefing Room. Costs will need to be met but I don't expect this to be more than £5-10 per head. Once again, please let me know if you might be interested in this.

On all the day trips instructors accompanying

the group will need to be paid for and it is intended to divide this amongst the whole group whether any one particular person or not is accompanied by an instructor. The fee will

also include their lunch!

Finally some gripes...

- Someone is overtightening oil dip sticks. Please stop! Don't forget the dip-sticks and sometimes we have to revert to using pliers to remove them after an hours flying or so. You only need to take them to finger tightness.
- R22 and R44R2/C2 datcons. Please note that if the datcon is 'on-the-change' when you shut down you should put the higher figure in the auth sheet/tech log. Why RHC put these not-instantaneous change datcons in the Raven/Clipper IIs I don't know – I suspect it was because there was a convenient hole in the instrument panel where the carburettor temperature gauge used to be! In the R44R1s the change over is instantaneous and we don't have this problem.
- Governor switch should be left on at all times.

Some of you (normally those who qualified some time ago!) are switching them off. Please cease! The idea is to attempt to stop over-speeds on start-up also, the POH specifies that it should be on at all times.

Anyway, that's all for now – Keep safe everyone and a very Happy Christmas to you all.

James



From Project Manager to Canadian Bush Pilot

It may not be that big a stretch for the readers of this newsletter but a lot of my friends and colleagues think I must have taken leave of my senses to give a promising career in the city as an IT Project Manager to fly helicopters in Canada. The fact is it is my wife's fault, at least that is my excuse and I am sticking to it.

My wife did a tandem skydive at Headcorn (a Christmas present from me) and I saw Thurston Helicopters and this gave me the idea of buying a flying lesson. I booked to go as soon as I could. One cold but clear December day I went flying, with Phil.

We did Exercise 3 & 4. I was hooked. We had submitted our application to immigrate to Canada the previous October and my intention was to get my commercial license once we arrived in Canada, but once I got a taste of flying I had to keep going. This answered one of my three big questions. Did I like it? The remaining two, "Can I do it?" and "Can I get a Class 1 Medical?" remained to be answered. Fortunately the answer to these questions was also yes.

After a rather stressful morning at CAA medical I got my Class 1 medical and I passed my flight test after about nine months of flight training. I

flew every other week-end, weather permitting and took a whole week off work, to get it done as quickly as possible. Initially I thought that I would never be able to hover. The first solo turned out to be rather more straight forward than I imagined – I think largely due to Phil's tuition rather than my aptitude. I did have a lot of trouble with ATC at Lydd on my solo cross-country, but other than that I enjoyed my training and became quite fond of Headcorn and the Kent countryside.

While I was training on the R22, I jealously watched as other pilots took off with three of their friends in the R44. Once I got my license I justified to myself that I should get a rating on the R44 so I could do the same. This turned out to be a good idea as I will explain later.

Why had we decided to move to Canada? My wife and I decided that we had enough of the investment banking world and wanted to make a change. She had family in Canada and I had always wanted to pursue a career as a commercial helicopter pilot. In the UK it is a tough path to follow with few opportunities. The cost is also very high. Canada is the second biggest market for helicopters after the States and arguably has the best flying in the

world. You can also get a commercial license for only CAD\$ 50,000. So we applied to emigrate to Canada. We set off for Vancouver, British Columbia (BC) on 26 August 2007.

On arriving in the Vancouver area I set about finding a flight school. There are five schools and four airports within an hour of where we are living. I decided to fly with four of them and pick one to train with. They all had different training aircraft. Robinson R22 BII, Schweizer 300Cbi, Bell 47 G2 and Bell 47 G4. I ended up selecting Premier Helicopter Training. The school flies the Bell 47 G4 and in many ways reminds me of Thurston Helicopters.

The Bell 47 G4 is quite a machine. Here are some statistics. Empty Weight 1900 lbs, Gross Weight 2950 lbs, Useful Load 1050 lbs, Length 43.63 ft. It has the same engine as the R44 and in some respects handles in a similar manner, but the similarities end there. PIC sits on the left hand side; the instrument panel was designed before anyone had thought of the 'standard' T design and is much simpler.

The airspeed indicator is in Mph rather than Knots. There is no governor so you have to manage the throttle but thankfully the engine and rotor

RPM green zone is quite large. You do have to watch making large collective changes as this will load and unload the engine causing you to have to work the throttle. The blade system is a high inertia two blade teetering head, which is very similar to the Robinson family, except the high inertia blades make a big difference in autorotation it is a much more sedate and relaxed affair.

Lastly the 'bubble' cockpit affords the pilot a fantastic view, but does mean that it is not that aerodynamic so the cruise speed is about 80 Mph. I am fond of C-GSKY despite its quirks and I can see why so many other pilots have fond memories of their time flying the Bell 47.

Almost immediately I started flying I noticed the differences between flying in Canada and the UK. Pilots here fly to a power setting rather than a speed and altitude. Invariably that setting is maximum continuous power. You routinely fly much lower usually 600 feet – 800 ft AGL and only 1000 ft AGL in built-up areas. There is radar coverage over the whole area that I fly and each time I take off I am issued with a unique transponder code.

Almost all aerodromes are either Class C or D airspace with all the attendant air traffic

control. Class B airspace only starts at 18,000 ft. This is in contrast to the radio discipline. It is much more relaxed, but they do talk much faster. This morning I heard one pilot calling another over the radio. The conversation went something like this:

Cessna 172: "Morning, Buddy how you doin'?"

Bell Jet Ranger: "Hey Buddy, Good!"

Cessna 172: "Fancy a beer down the pub at lunch time?"

Bell Jet Ranger: "Sure see you there."

In general, Canada is one vast area of uncontrolled airspace with very few 1:250,000 maps. The wilderness is also right on your doorstep. On some mornings there are

coyotes on the runway. It takes about fifteen minutes to reach the mountains. I have been doing a lot of landings in confined areas, swampy forest clearing or areas cleared from forestry activities; all fun and challenging. Another big difference is that helicopters always fly direct approaches, no circuit, no runways and nobody seems to mind. The very obvious thing is that there are a lot more helicopters around.

The other day I watched a Sikorsky S-61 slinging an AS350 Squirrel on a 200 ft long line back to the airport after the squirrel had failure of the FADEC while practicing long lining itself in a 200 ft

hover. The machine was in bad shape but the two pilots are fine.

It is not uncommon to see five or six helicopters a day coming and going, but I am told the further north you go the more helicopters you will see. This is largely because it is usually the most practical and cost effective way of achieving your goal. This means that there is a lot of opportunities and plenty of work. Talking to people the most likely work I will get to begin with will be working on the ground helping service and maintain the helicopters. I could expect to get my first flying job in six to twelve months, apparently they want to see what sort of guy you are

before letting you fly off into the wilderness in one of the machines.

The first machine I am likely to fly is either a Robinson R44, (luckily I already have an endorsement) or a Bell 206 Jet Ranger. To begin with I will be flying people or cargo to remote locations but as my skill improves I will be slinging, long lining and firefighting and who knows what else.

At the moment I will be happy to get any flying job so I am focusing on getting my licence as this seems to be essential. I will however always remember where I first started and hopefully I will be back at Headcorn in the spring to take my LPC.

HAYDN MELLOWSHIP
(EX THL STUDENT)

Airmanship Evening

Airmanship is not just about preventing accidents or indiscretions that to other people may appear foolish. It's about having the right skills, knowledge and attitude to operate an aircraft effectively and efficiently. None of us will fly long enough to encounter all the possible problems. This is why we never stop learning and so enjoy

one of the main attractions of flying.

Airmanship is not something you can learn in a short period of time – it is acquired slowly as flying experience is gained.

However, one of the best ways to build a good airmanship mentality is through open discussion. and early next year Thurston will be hosting an evening to provide an opportunity

to get together and talk about and address some of the more everyday issues pilots encounter. We will be showing lots of photos and videos to promote open discussion and hopefully provide an opportunity for people to ask questions to encourage continued learning.

We hope that this will prove to be a popular event. It would help us enormously if those of you who are interested could

register with Polly either by phone or email so that we can get an idea of numbers for the size of room needed and, most importantly, the catering required.

I very much look forward to seeing you there. In the meantime, if any one has any issues they would like to discuss or ideas for the Airmanship evening please feel free to email me on:

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WILL SAMUELSON

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