

BMFC 2018 Chairman's Report at AGM - Richard Sharman

The purpose of the BMFC is to manage model flying at the Beaulieu Heath airfield on behalf of the Forestry Commission(FC) which has responsibility for Crown Lands within the New Forest National Park.

I am pleased to report that 2018 has been quite a good year for model flying in general and for the operation of the Beaulieu Model Flying Committee (BMFC) in particular. I am much indebted to Mark (secretary), Ian(flight line), Trevor(treasurer) and Roger(freeflight) for their excellent work during the year.

The number of permits issued in 2018 has fallen by about 12% from previous years, similar to the fall in the size of the BMFA membership. This may reflect a loss of opportunity due to weather and other factors, or to a reduction in interest in model flying generally. 68% of permit holders are BMFA Country Members, with 32% belonging to another BMFA club.

The large number of permits issued indicates that the Beaulieu flying community is healthy.

RC model flying has been the main activity (84% of all permits), with models now predominantly electric powered (70% of RC permits), although i.c. motors are still most popular (29% of RC permits) for larger, scale models. (1% unknown).

Free Flight operation has continued (16% of all permits) with Roger Newman taking over the organisation following the sad death of John Thompson.

Drone operation. A significant number of permits (15% of all permits) has been issued to potential drone flyers. A designated place to operate drones has been identified, in order to prevent clashes between drone operation and normal FW and H operation. Further Air Law restrictions on drones are expected. The suitability of Beaulieu for drone flying is seriously questioned.

Drone flying has not become as popular as expected, and interactions have been avoided.

The proportion of flyers having some BMFA certificate is still low (28% of all permit holders), with a B or higher (43% of certificates). The majority of permit holders (72%) have no qualification. It is important as a demonstration of the awareness of public safety that we work to increase the proportion of flyers with some qualification. Your chairman has this year been promoted from Club Examiner to Area Chief Examiner by the BMFA Southern Area. A number of both A and B certificates have been awarded this year to successful candidates in Fixed Wing(FW) and Helicopter(H) disciplines. No Multi-rotor(MR) pilots have come forward for a qualification. *It is the ambition of the BMFC to help raise the level of skill in terms of qualified pilots.*

The BMFC website has been well used and has been the main entry point for flyers to obtain permits by online application. This will continue in 2019.

Permits will still be available by application in person at the field, but not by post.

Air Law, as it affects model flying, has changed in 2018 and is planned to evolve in 2019. The BMFC is keeping a close watch on the changes as they may affect operation at Beaulieu. Since we operate models under 7Kg in weight the 400ft height constraint does not affect us. Formerly that was allowed because we are in unrestricted airspace, now it is allowed because the BMFA has obtained an exemption for BMFA members.

Conventionally operated fixed wing and helicopter flying can continue as normal.

The weather has been very varied this year. A long, cold spell lasted well into March with at least two episodes of snow restricting activity. Since then there has been a normal number of flying

days, culminating in an extraordinary period of summer weather June to August during which much activity took place. Sport, scale, and aerobatic planes and helicopters have been much flown. *As a result more flying has been done than in some recent years.*

The access track from the Lymington Road, which had degraded over the previous winter, was closed by the FC at short notice for repairs in February which were completed and re-opened by Easter. During that period the BMFC negotiated limited access via the HawkHill access gate with committee members operating the Forestry padlock. The Access track was then closed again by the FC to help ground nesting birds. During this closure the BMFC negotiated unlimited access via the Hawkhill gate, using a combination lock. Since July access arrangements have been normal. *Closures may occur again in future years and we hope that access will still be possible.*

The condition of the car park, airfield and surrounding areas has benefited from the reduced numbers of vehicles gaining access, with consequent reduction of the numbers of dog-walkers and therefore fewer interactions. A number of warning signs have been obtained and deployed regularly. The amount of litter has reduced over previous years, with BMFC members working to remove unwanted objects, animal residues and other items. This has been appreciated by the FC. *The access condition is good, but if the track degrades during the winter it may be closed again.*

Flight Line discipline has been good, with relatively little flying behind the flight line, and most pilots being intelligent over the need to take turns. This is very much appreciated.

Issues for 2019.

Changes to Air Law - need for registration and/or qualification,
Expected Drone restrictions - dependant on UK and EASA legislation,
Extended functions for BMFC website, with a new BMFA facility available,
Airfield access arrangements are subject to change at short notice.