

## Romeo Kilo Goes West

Pictures © John Henderson, Text ©Andy Tobias

The Southern Strut Flying Group's Cessna 150 G-AWRK is a familiar sight at local airfields and does on occasions go as far afield as Le Touquet and Alderney, but recently it traveled further west.

We have both been RK group members for the last few years and decided to risk spending a night camped out in deepest Devon in order to try and fly RK to the PFA Devon strut's fly in at Lundy Island on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2005. Lundy Island is a small island in the Bristol Channel, about 2 standard aviator's thumbs from Barnstable Bay on a half mil chart.

In order to reach Lundy we set off the evening before and flew from Shoreham to Compton Abbas with the intention of refueling RK, and also refueling the pilots. The first was achieved easily, but the second proved more difficult as the café at Compton Abbas, whilst open for drinks, had stopped serving food. This was to be a recurrent theme of the weekend trip.

The next leg was to Belle Vue airstrip, a few miles South East of Bideford. This is a wonderful destination for navigationally challenged pilots as it is clearly identified by a TV mast 1173 amsl, which lies within the circuit.

Here, many years after last doing so, we put up our tents, and, aided by a late supper, a night cap and a half hour's walk back from the excellent local pub we managed to achieve a reasonable night's rest.



Belle Vue Airfield

Last year there were 2 significant incidents at the Lundy Fly in and we were keen not to become a statistic. The strip at Lundy is 400m long, and we calculated that we would be able to land easily, but that take off with 2 people and baggage would be a problem unless there was a decent headwind. Sadly, the day of the fly in dawned, beautifully warm and sunny, but with very little wind. We monitored our take off run from Belle Vue and realised that we wouldn't be able to guarantee a safe departure from Lundy.

We altered our plans and decided to fly over the island, make a low approach and take a series of photographs of the Island of Lundy and the airstrip before setting course for Bodmin airfield.



Lundy Island



Lundy Airstrip



On the way to Bodmin we flew past the Eden Project and took some more photographs. By the time we reached Bodmin, we found we were too late for a cooked Sunday Breakfast but too early for Sunday lunch. Fortunately, the lady cooking an amazing looking Sunday Roast in the clubhouse took pity on us and rustled up a very welcome bacon and egg sandwich.



The Eden Project

Having failed to reach our intended target of Lundy, we decided to capture a few more airfields for the logbook and first visited Perranporth, which has a beautiful tarmac runway and then, much to the amusement of the air traffic controller, flew into St Mawgan with its 2745x87 m Runway. St Mawgan is a military airfield but is jointly run as a civil facility and is then known as Newquay International Airport.



Curved approach to 05 at Perranporth



Short Final for St Mawgan. This is a seriously big runway.

The landing fee and mandatory handling fee were substantial but worth it to get St Mawgan in our logbooks. The military controller asked (in all seriousness as far as we could tell), whether we had a fixed undercarriage, and later, whether we could depart from an intersection to take off with only 2000m of useable runway.

From St Mawgan we flew to Dunkeswell for a late lunch, but, at 4.30 pm found that the café, whilst still open, was not serving meals. Fortunately we were able to refresh ourselves with apple pie, cake, soft drinks and ice cream. Supplies were loaded for the non handling pilot's refreshment en route.





In flight Catering

The plan then was to fly straight back to Shoreham, but we were both feeling rather jaded by then and decided to break the journey at Compton Abbas for a change of pilot.

An uneventful flight back to Shoreham completed what was a memorable trip, 8 legs and 444nm in just over 24 hrs. If 444nm doesn't sound a lot, just remember RK cruises at 80kts in still air.



Back home and the luggage unloaded.

Perhaps next year we'll have another go at the Lundy fly-in. If there is no wind, we may simply have to do it in relays from Belle Vue with 1 person in the aircraft at a time!

Andy Tobias and John Henderson 15/07/2005