

Two Days of Sublime Soaring on the Great Orme

A full report of the UK's Power Scale Soaring Association Fly-In, 5th/6th September, 2020.

[Phil Cooke](#)



Superb Fouga Magister built from the Island Models kit by Bob Jennings. (image: Phil Cooke)

This article is reproduced through the kind permission of the PSSA. It originally appeared this past fall on their [website](#) and [Facebook](#) pages. Special thanks to Phil Cooke who not only wrote the original report and took all the photos, but also pulled together all the details to make this available to the NEW R/C Soaring Digest.

2020 has been a very odd 'stop/start' sort of season with no planned flying events running at all until July due to the Covid-19 situation. We've since run a couple of quite low-key events — with some good PSS flying achieved at

the Orme but very little at the Lleyn due to high pressure conditions — this weekend certainly made up for our losses and got us well back on track with non-stop flying both days on two of our most favoured slopes. Overall attendance was still a little down on what we had become accustomed to over the past couple of seasons, but for me our September event will be remembered for the sheer amount of maiden flights completed over the two days and the impressive range of new models on show. Maybe one twisted benefit of the lockdown period!?

Saturday dawned with good strength WSW winds which prevailed all day. The winds were measured at 25–30 mph, just perfect in strength really — plenty of energy without the buffet and turbulence near the edge you'd get if the winds were any stronger — and although the direction was a few degrees off the ideal SW heading this did not impact the lifting ability of the Great Orme's main slope. The Sunday brought slightly calmer conditions, 12–18 mph winds from the NW which saw us flying all day in gorgeous sunshine from the lower café slope.



Rich Henderson and Clive Gudgeon had joined us on the Saturday morning and were quick off the mark in rigging their fantastic new Lancaster duo! Finished over the past few months these 'Lockdown Lancs' were designed and built jointly by Rich and Clive, with Rich making the wings and Clive the fuselages in separate workshops remote from each other. The airframes were all jig built and very accurate in construction — in fact the wings have proven fully interchangeable between the two models! At 110" span, the wing uses the well proven Clark-Y section and incorporates a carbon tube main spar right through the fuselage and out to the dihedral break. The models are both fully built up conventionally using balsa and ply and weigh in at ~15 lbs ready to fly.



Superb detailing on the large PSS bombers! (image: Phil Cooke)

The level of detail was really impressive on both models, right down to rivet detail on the fuselage — the airframes are littered with scale features like

machine guns and glazing and both models even have a working bomb-bay with an array of ordnance inside!

Rich's Lanc was finished to represent the BBMF's PA474 as it flew in the 2007 display season in the colours of 'Mickey the Moocher' a famous 'ton up' Lanc with over 120 missions to its name. Clive's airframe is finished in the colours of 'Just Jane' — the ground running example currently being restored in Lincolnshire to flying status.



Rich Henderson's Avro Lancaster captured during it's maiden flight at the Orme. (image: Phil Cooke)

Rich was first to get airborne with a little help from Andy Meade who provided a good launch into the 25 mph winds. The model soared away immediately with ease and from the look of it required very little trim or adjustment, Rich was quickly settled in with the bomber in the ideal conditions we were enjoying. Clive wasn't too far behind and Tim Mackey provided the launch to ensure we got to see the two new Lancs in the air at the same time — fantastic stuff! Both models had a great 'sit' in the air and

looked most realistic cruising up and down the slope, particularly at low level over the water towards Conwy. Two really impressive new models, great to see them in action for the first time at a PSSA event!

Another eagerly anticipated maiden flight was that of the F-100 Super Sabre built for PSS by Andy Meade. We had seen this model at the Lleyrn event in August but the conditions there were far from right to test fly a model of this type, so all eyes were on Andy from mid-morning once the slope lift had been well proven. Thankfully he didn't make us wait too long!

The model was built from an Art Johnson plan downloaded from Outerzone — the fuselage is built up and planked as per the drawing with the omission of the internal power ducting and some focus on weight reduction, but Andy redesigned the wing completely with a revised slope proven section and had that commissioned in veneered foam by Cloud Models. The model spans 56", has an AUW of 8 lb and as with all of Andy's models is superbly finished with glass resin and paint. I was particularly taken by the heat affected panels around the engine exhaust where clearly some talented work with the airbrush had gone in to create the final look.



F-100 Super Sabre built and flown by Andy Meade. (image: Phil Cooke)

Although Andy has modelled and 3D printed a huge array of wing stores for this Vietnam mud mover, he elected to test fly the model clean. Bob Jennings was called into action for the launch and the model set off smartly enough — however it was quickly apparent the F-100 was nose heavy. Thankfully Andy was able to land the model out safely onto the lower shelf below the launch point with only minimal damage to the all moving tail. Back up on top Andy set about the minor repair work and adjusted the balance point with a little shuffling of the hardware within the cavernous fuselage. After an hour or so the model was reintroduced to the launch point. This time the model set off superbly, and Andy enjoyed a lengthy flight putting in a spirited performance with this rarely modelled jet — another impressive addition to the ever growing fleet!



Chris Barlow provides a textbook launch for Bob Jennings's new Fouga Magister. (image: Phil Cooke)

Bob Jennings' stunning Fouga Magister was another model we'd seen at a previous event earlier this year but was still yet to be test flown. Built from the well proven Island Models kit, Bob has gone to town with the airbrush and finished the model in a complex French airforce 'Tiger meet' scheme as the aircraft was seen representing 3rd EIV at RIAT 1991. It looks stunning! Today the conditions and location were ideal for a test flight and Bob enjoyed a lengthy sortie flying his model at times with the two other Magisters of Jez Billington and Rich Henderson. The model was well flown and looked superb in the sunshine with the contrasting colours and stripes.

Having made the required balance adjustments following a difficult short maiden flight attempt at the Orme in July, it was great to see Jez Billington back at the launch point with his 150% scale Jet Provost, built from the new Andy Blackburn plan and SLEC woodpack. Finished in an RAF training scheme the model soared away well this time much to the relief of Jez and all who were watching. Jez's example has turned out a bit heavier than the

models of the same type built and flown by Peter Garsden and Steve Kemp, but this seemed to have little effect in the conditions, the model just as smooth as its stable mates. A number of Jez's models including his new JP are fitted with some really impressive lighting units from Flytron — producing high visibility strobes and nav lights that work really well even on good sunlight! Well worth a look for any PSS model of this sort of scale.

Having delayed our Sabre Mass Build event until 2021 we are naturally starting to see the first completed models at the slope being cautiously test flown in readiness.



Martin Gay launches the NASA F-86 Sabre built and flown by Rob Sketches. (image: Phil Cooke)

Rob Sketches chose to take part in our Mass Build project with his first PSS build and he's certainly done a lovely job! His F-86 Sabre is built to represent an F-86F that was used by NASA at their Ames research facility to investigate boundary layer control. The striking silver and red scheme is sprayed over a glass and epoxy finish, resulting in a model with an AUW of

just over 4 lbs. Rob's pre-maiden nerves were calmed somewhat by Martin Gay who allowed Rob some time flying the prototype model before helping him with a launch of the NASA bird. The maiden flight appeared to go very well, a little up trim was needed and Rob later reported he felt some additional up elevator movement would be required to tailor the controls better for the correct feel throughout the speed range. Certainly the crow brake system was seen to work very well, Rob bringing the Sabre safely home for a smooth landing at walking pace. Congrats Rob on your first PSS build!!



Unusual types work well from the slope too — the Arado 555 is a good example! (image: Phil Cooke)

Martin Gay and Gordon Studley successfully flew their far from conventional Arado 555, a Luftwaffe X-Plane design built from the Chris Golds EDF plan but heavily modified for PSS. The model spans 42" and has an AUW of just under 3 lb. An initial launch and flight proved the Arado to be a little nose heavy. Martin landed out and tweaked the balance point before another launch was performed followed by a much lengthier and successful flight!

The obscure shape in the air takes some getting used to and Martin reported it was difficult to maintain orientation at some points of a turn. That said it was flown really well and the model was eventually brought in for a smooth landing right where you'd want it on the short grass in the LZ. Excellent stuff chaps!



Arado 'parasite' fighter designed and built by Gordon Studley, flown by Tim Mackey. (image: Phil Cooke)

Tim Mackey was seen flying a new, rather strange looking model in the shape of the Arado Parasite fighter — the Ar 381! Another airframe expertly built by Gordon Studley — at 1:6th scale it spans just 35.5" span and has a 30 oz flying weight. It's flown simply on two channel aileron and elevator and looked an absolute dream to fly across a large speed range, it was really nippy and Tim was clearly loving his new model flying it with gusto throughout the two days!

The second hand market for model aircraft of all types is so vibrant these days with the ease of marketing through forums and Facebook pages, and

the PSS market is no exception! Al Gorham has recently acquired a trio of new airframes all designed and built by a modeller named T. Walls. Sadly beyond that not much more was known regarding the designs' heritage — but clearly all three models were finished to a high standard and Al enjoyed successful 'maiden' flights with his N.A. P-51B Mustang, Hawker Tempest and Shorts Tucano.



Hawker Tempest flown by Al Gorham. (image: Phil Cooke)

Each model was built to a practical scale giving them a wingspan of around 45" and they were all simple two channel models, aileron and elevator. They all utilised fully built-up construction and were covered in Solartex then painted. I quickly grew quite fond of all three of these little models — I've a big soft spot for any rendition of the Tucano and it was lovely to see another O/D of the type. The Mustang was a lesser modelled 'tropicalised' P-51B variant which looked great in the RAF's desert camo scheme. And for me the Hawker Tempest was a lovely twist on the more commonly modelled Furies and Typhoons which looked superb darting about in the sun with its

distinctive allied invasion stripes and the big 'bull-nosed' yellow spinner. Well done AI on your three successful maiden flights!

Of course there were many more models flown throughout the two days in very good conditions, too many to mention here but there are some more photos of other types in action in the [events photo album](#).

So now our focus turns to the last planned event of the year **10/11th October**. As I write, the UK is seeing another surge in the Covid-19 'R rate', with local lockdowns and curfews being put into place in numerous regions. Work is well underway to ensure our Fly-In will be fully compliant with the latest guidelines from both the Government and the BMFA and we will do everything we can to ensure we stage the event in a safe manner, assuming of course we are allowed to travel into North Wales. I will see you there of course — fingers crossed!!

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