Final To Land

The first, and quite possibly last, new fanzine from
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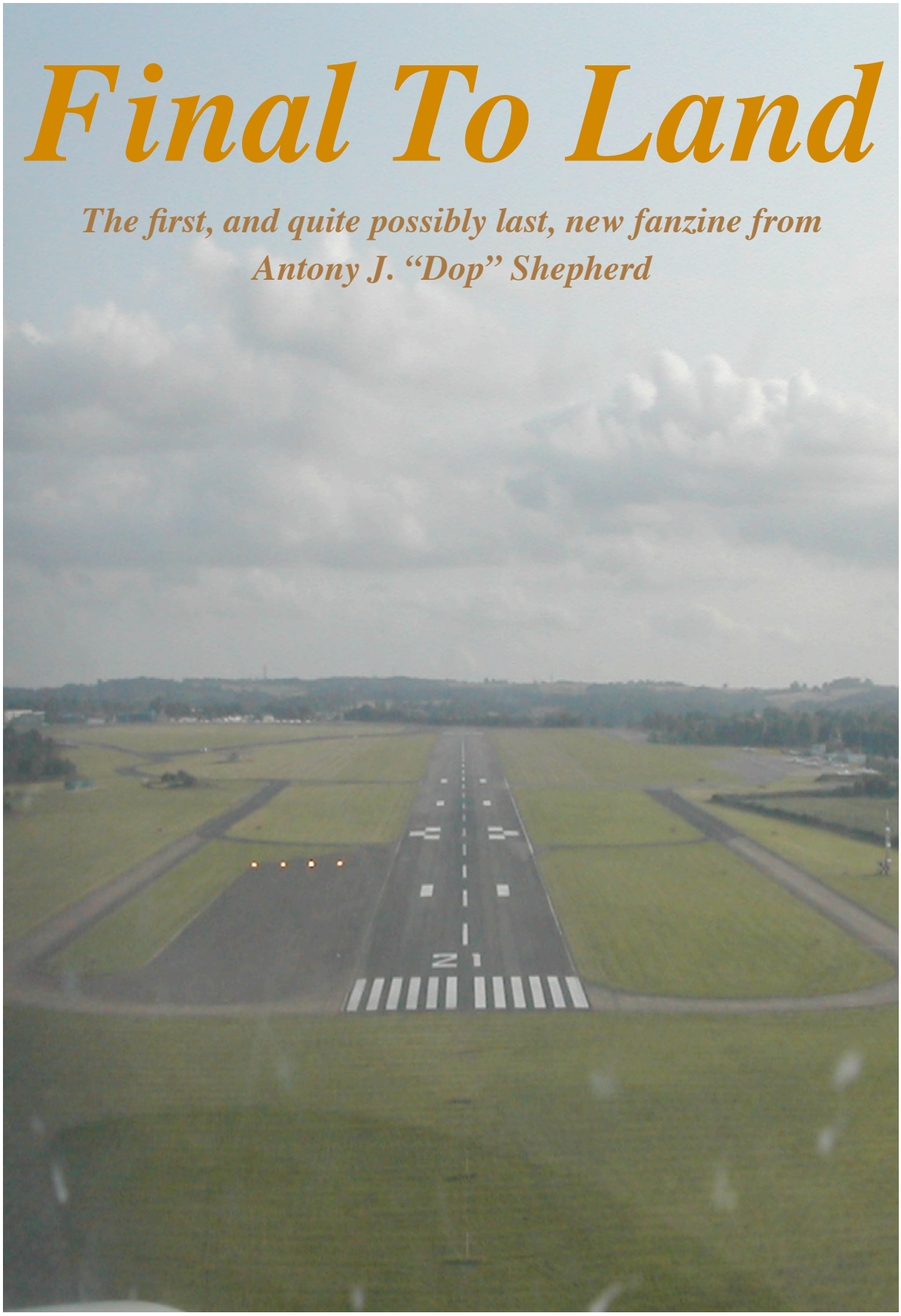


Blast from the Past

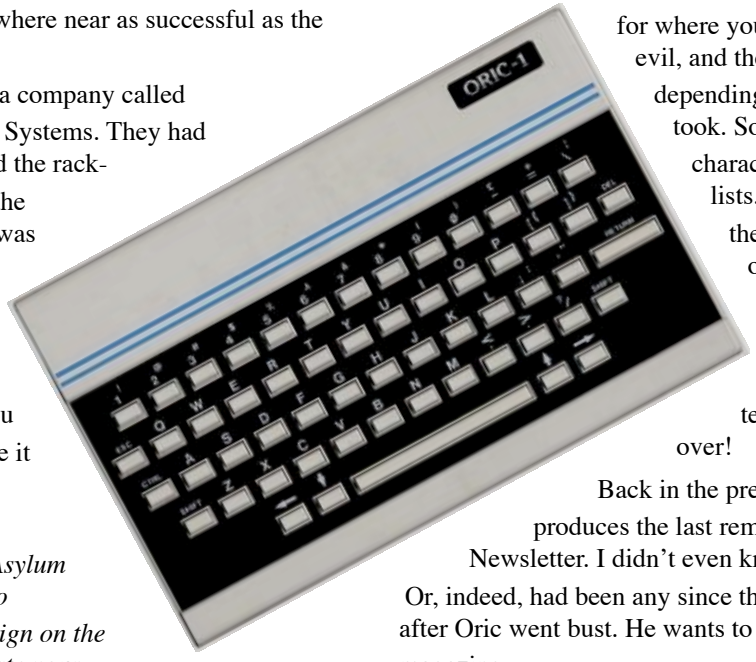
A little while ago my dad forwarded me a letter which had arrived to my old address. This was quite intriguing, as I couldn't think of any reason why anyone would be writing to me at that address.

The letter turned out to be a communiqué from my dim and distant (and very very sad) past.

This guy had written to me at the only address he'd been able to find, because he wanted to talk to me about some programming I did on the Oric-1, way back nearly twenty years ago!

Let me take you back to the early 1980s, when dinosaurs roamed the earth. The Oric-1 was a small home computer intended as a competitor for the Sinclair Spectrum. It used the 6502 processor rather than the Spectrum's Z80, and had a sound chip which led to the onomatopoeic BASIC commands ZAP, PING, SHOOT and EXPLODE. However it was pretty buggy and nowhere near as successful as the Spectrum was.

It was developed by a company called Tangerine Computer Systems. They had previously developed the rack-based 6502 system, the Microtan 65, which was the first computer I owned.



Back in the day, I used to write text adventure games. You know, the ones where it would describe your situation like this:-

You are outside the Asylum gate, standing next to Prudence's Mini. A sign on the door says 'Please state your business'
You can see:- Prudence's Mini

Then rather than pressing buttons or moving a joystick, you would type in an instruction, such as go north or get towel or hit Leo.

I wrote a lot of these. I even sold some. The early ones were supernatural-based, but then I moved away from that to something funnier.

They had names such as *Crowley's House, Asylum! (Follow the Cheese & Pickle Sandwich), Prisoner of the Dark Pearl*, and *Doppy & Pru's Summer Holiday.*

They were on the whole crap, and even the better ones were ludicrously derivative of whatever I happened to be into at the time.

But I had developed quite a good parser that could take complete sentences, and a series of routines for computer-controlled characters. It tended toward slapstick, but worked quite well.
Earlier games were written on the Microtan 65, Some converted to the Oric 1. Even the Mandarin IP-68. The last few games were ported to the Atari ST when I had one of those, and my final adventure trilogy to the PC back in 1990. I've not written one since. I probably couldn't now even if I wanted to.

I still have the folder containing my unworked ideas. Supernatural mystery *Adagio*, comic SF *Julia Crispen-Regis And The Things From Another World*, and the one I never came up with a name for where you could be good or evil, and the plot would develop depending on which path you took. Some even have maps, character sheets and object lists. All written out, on the folder, at the back of the cupboard under the stairs.

But it doesn't really matter, as text adventures are so over!

Back in the present, This guy produces the last remaining Oric Newsletter. I didn't even know there was one. Or, indeed, had been any since the mid to late 80s after Oric went bust. He wants to interview me for his magazine.

What????

On the one hand, there's a bit of curiosity as to what the hell that's all about. You might even think there'd be some ego massaging there.

But it's all so saaaad! And is it even possible to get, ahem, *egoboo* from people who are still scratching over the grave of what was, actually, a pretty crappy machine even for its time…

So I threw the letter in the bin, and that's that.

Battlestar Galactica

I never expected I'd ever say this, but the revived Battlestar Galactica is really very good. OK. Saying that it's a lot better than the original isn't difficult, but really, it is much better than I could have imagined.

The new version follows the same basic premise as the original, only revised and improved. In the two part mini-series that began the revival, it's made clear that the Cylons were created by humanity, rebelled against their masters, and there was a big war with the Cylons forty years ago. The Cylons were given their own planet, and a space station set up in neutral space for diplomatic meetings. But nobody has heard anything from the Cylons since.

Then, the Cylons turn up. And they're very different from the ones we remember from the original. The battle robots are vicious looking CGI creations, not blokes in tin suits. The space fighters are Cylons, and particularly evil looking ones too, the red 'eye' having been maintained. Then there are the new breed of Cylons. These can pass for human, and some don't even know they're Cylons. There are many duplicates, so one can be replaced.

Number Six, a humanoid Cylon seduces top scientist Gaius Baltar into revealing the defence codes. This lets the Cylons hack into all defence systems and leave the colonies defenceless. The Cylons come in, and nuke everyone.

The Battlestar Galactica is the last of the Battlestars used in the original Cylon war. As the two parter commences, it's about to be decommissioned and turned into a museum. (There's a very nice gag where you get a glimpse of one of the original series Cylons in a display cabinet labelled 'Mk. 1 Centurion'). So as news of the Cylon attack comes through, it's rushed back into service. It isn't networked, so immune to Cylon interference, and it's carrying a full complement of Mk.1 Viper fighters, also immune to Cylon interference, unlike their more modern equivalents.

They gather together what's left of civilisation in whatever spaceships are available, and try to escape, which is how the two part mini-series ends.

A new series was commissioned and was shown (in the UK) from late 2003, ending in January 2004. It was consistently good, and the writers developed their plot much further.

Baltar is plagued with visions of his Cylon seductress. Is it just his guilt for having caused the deaths of billions of people? Did the Cylons implant him with something? Is he a Cylon who doesn't know he's a Cylon? The visions lead him along a strange journey, but where to? The Cylons have got religion of a sort, being monotheist while the humans are pantheist, and Baltar is told he is part of God's plan.

There's the sub-plot with 'Helo', the crew-member left behind on Caprica, and a Cylon 'Boomer', as they try and keep one step ahead of the other Cylon forces.

There's the political situation aboard the fleet. The president is dying, and there's been a fight for free elections. How do you have a political system with under 50,000 people?

The Vipers are better thought out. They've got inertia, and manoeveuring thrusters can be seen firing as the ships turn, or slow down. There's been a lot of thought given to how they would work in space.

The general feel is much darker and grittier. There's no big laugh at the end of the episode with the reset button pushed by the start of the next, the consequences of events linger on for several episodes. There's conflict, between individual characters, and between the political and military groups.

Even from the beginning, the mood is very different. Rather than the pompous orchestration of the original theme, each episode opens what can only be described as a lament. A lament for a doomed civilization, played out over battle scenes and exploding ships.

Throughout the first series, it managed to keep that dark edge. It doesn't overplay space battle scenes, and has gone for several episodes without any space action. Sometimes you really get the feeling that they actually could end the series with everyone getting killed. This has been the best SF TV since Babylon 5. At its best, just as good as or (heresy!) better. It's intelligently written, and thought provoking. I've not seen an episode I didn't like.

Up and Away...

It's a beautiful day for flying. The sky is a clear blue, with just a handful of cirrus clouds and the occasional contrail stretching across the sky. It's a cool day, which means less turbulence. Because cooler air is more dense than warm air, you also get more lift from the wings.

I arrive at the flying school and go to check out the plane. I walk out the back of the flying school with my checklist and my fuel tester, and there, standing on paving slabs set into the grass just off a taxiway, is my plane for the day.

G-JUDY is the aeroplane I have done most of my flying in. She's an AA5-A 'Cheetah', manufactured by the Grumman American Aviation Corporation in 1978. In the 1970s military aircraft manufacturer Grumman decided to get involved in the General Aviation market, General Aviation being the term used to refer to private aircraft.

They did this by acquiring a small company called American Aviation who made a two seat AA1 and the four seat AA5. Grumman improved the aerodynamics and handling, resulting in the AA5-A and AA5-B, dubbed the Cheetah and Tiger. Many Grumman aircraft have had cat names.

The main difference between the two is an extra 30 horsepower in the engine of the Tiger.

In 1978, Grumman sold their GA operation to Gulfstream, who produced the planes for another year before ceasing production in 1979.

In the nineties, a company called General American Aircraft Industries bought up the rights and produced a revised version of the AA5-B as the AG5-B Tiger, with a few more tweaks, and replacing the old plunger type engine controls with a quadrant. They went out of business in 1994. Then a few years ago a company called Tiger Aircraft revived the Tiger and produces new aircraft.

But enough history, I have a plane waiting. Judy hasn't flown today, so is still tied down. Thick yellow nylon ropes attached firmly to the ground on tiedown points inside an old tyre painted yellow, are tied to eyelets sticking out below the wingtips. I untie the rope on the starboard wing, and put it inside the old tyre out of the way. I go round the front to the port wing and do the same. I then go behind the port wing to get into the plane.

Getting into Judy is a bit like climbing into an old fighter plane. There's a step below the wing. Use that to climb onto the wing, treading only on the part with the non slip black surface. Standing on the wing, you open the catch on top of the canopy, and slide the canopy back. I usually then kneel down and slide the seat back as far as it will go, before stepping into the cockpit. Sit down. In front of me is the control yoke, and the instruments. Remove the control lock. This is a hook that goes through the control yoke and stops the wind flapping the control surfaces around. The other part of the lock has a big metal sign that obscures the ignition switches as a reminder to remove the lock before starting up!

I put the parking brake off, pump the footbrakes a few times, making sure I can feel pressure, and put the parking brake back on. Along the bottom of the instrument panel are the switches. I switch the battery power on using the right half of the big red switch. I then turn on the flashing beacon, strobes, and pitot heat. If it was late in the day, I'd also switch on the landing light and navigation lights, but at this time we don't need them so the check is optional.

I switch on the electric fuel pump. I can see the needles in the fuel gauges rise, the fuel pressure rise, and hear the clicking of the pump. I turn it off again. I can also hear the whine of the instrument gyroscopes.

On getting out of the cockpit, I check the first aid kit and fire extinguisher are present and correct. I then jump down off the wing. I look at the top of the tail, to see the red beacon is flashing. I go back out to the port wingtip, and note the strobe light is flashing. The strobes work like a camera flash. If I was checking the navigation lights, I'd check the red light next to the strobe was also illuminated. Over to the starboard wingtip, and check the strobe is flashing OK. That's fine. I'd also be looking for a green light here if the navigation lights were on. About a third of the way out on the starboard wing, a small metal tongue sticks downwards at around a forty-five degree angle. This is the stall warning alarm. Normally, it sticks downwards. When the angle of attack – which is the angle at which the wing meets the airflow – increases to a certain level, the metal tongue will be pushed up by the airflow, and make a contact which sounds an alarm in the cockpit to tell us we're getting close to the stall. I flip the tongue up a few times to make sure I can hear the alarm sound. Back round at the port wingtip, I touch the pitot tube to make sure the heater is working. The pilot tube is mounted at the wingtip to

be out of the propeller wash. The tube points forward, and air enters at the tip as the plane moves forward. It’s the pressure of air coming in the pitot tube against the static air pressure that drives the airspeed indicator. The purpose of the pilot heat is to stop the tube icing up, in which case you would no longer know your airspeed.

Going back to the cockpit, I turn all the switches off, including the battery switch. Now it’s time for the rest of the initial pre-flight checks.

Check over the windscreen for dirt, cracks, whatever, and check the OAT (outside air temperature) probe is intact. The canopy slides OK, and the side windows are all OK. Check the baggage door is shut and locked. Check the static air vent on the side of the aeroplane to make sure there’s no dirt or ice blocking it. It’s the static air vents (one each side) that give you an idea of the external air pressure. Look at the aerials, make sure they’re not broken off or damaged.

Look up the tail fin, make sure it’s OK. Check the horizontal stabilizer is OK, and move the elevator up and down. As the elevator moves, the trim tab should also move. The trim tab is a part at the back of the elevator controlled by the trim wheel between the front seats in the cockpit. The purpose of the trim is to relieve the pressure on the yoke. When the plane is trimmed out properly, it will hold its attitude without requiring the pilot to maintain forward or backward pressure on the yoke. You can fly the plane with your little finger.

Round the back of the plane, check the rudder is straight, and check the tiedown eyelet under the tail to make sure nobody has scraped the tail along the floor. Starboard side now, move the elevator again to check the trim on that side, check the static vent, and move up to the wing.

Check the flap hinges look OK, and don’t have any dirt that might make them stick. Check the aileron, move it up and down a bit and check the counterbalance is free to move through the hole in the underside of the wing. One crash was caused by a jammed aileron where the counterbalance got stuck. Check the wingtip looks good. Move down the leading edge, making sure there’s nothing there that would spoil the aerodynamics.

On top of the wing is the fuel filler cap. Each wing has a fuel tank, which holds about 99 litres of 100LL Avgas. Open the cap, and look inside. Normally, the plane is filled to ‘the tabs’ – metal tabs visible under the filler cap. If both tanks are full to the tabs, you’ve got 144 litres on board, which equates to about four hours of fuel. Normally, that’s what they’re filled to. Screw the cap back in, and then take out the fuel tester tube and get down to check the fuel drains.

My fuel tester tube is a long clear Perspex tube. At the bottom end there’s a reversible screwdriver tip. The top end has a plastic crosspiece with a prong, to open the fuel drains and drain off fuel into the tube.

The first fuel drain is recessed into the wing. Stick the prong up into the hole and fuel drains out into your tester. Remove the tester, and hold it up to have a look. The fuel should have a slight blue tint. Sniff it, to make doubly sure it’s fuel. If there is water in the tank, it will sink to the bottom, and come out of the drain hole, so you’ll be able to see that. If there is any dirt in the tanks that could clog the fuel pipes, you’ll see it. Pour out the contents of the tube, and onto the second drain.

The second fuel drain sticks out of a sump near the undercarriage. Press the crosspiece against the drain, and fuel floods out into your tube. Check it again.

If there ever was anything in the tube but fuel, then you’d declare the plane grounded, and someone would have to completely flush the tanks and check the fuel pipes over before the plane could fly again.

Now it’s time to check the oil. Make sure the engine compartment doors are secure, then open the access panel to the oil filler tube. Unscrew the top and pull out the dipstick. There must be at least six litres of oil in the system. Any less, and it requires a topup. Screw in the top firmly again, and close the access panel. At the front of the plane, check the propeller is intact, and there are no cracks in it or the spinner. Check the air intakes are clear, there’s one each side of the propeller, and a smaller one underneath. If these are blocked, they will cause the engine to overheat.

Check the nosewheel looks OK. The nosewheel is the weak spot of the aeroplane, as that’s the first thing likely to be damaged in a bad landing.

Check the fuel on the port wing in the same way as you checked the fuel on the starboard wing. Check the wingtip, and check the aileron and counterweight. Check the flap hinges are OK

The pre-flight checks are completed. If everything checks out, the plane is OK to fly.

I’m doing a navigational exercise, called ‘navex’ for short. You have to learn to navigate the old fashioned

way. I have a map to a scale of 1:500,000, which covers the nearest French and Irish coasts, the Channel Islands, and England and Wales as far north as Sheffield. Further north than that and I’d need to buy another map. It’s laminated, which means you can plot your route on it, and then clean it off later when you’re finished. So I have some felt tip pens for drawing my route, a ruler marked out in nautical miles to the scale of the map, a square protractor with a grid marked on it for lining up with the lines on the map, and my Pooley’s CRP-1 Flight Computer or ‘whiz-wheel’, which is essentially a circular sliderule.

I choose my navigation points on the map. These would usually be things that are easy to see. Motorway junctions make good navigation points, as do bridges, road/rail crossings and lakes. Things that are easy to see from the air. My first navigation point is a bridge just north of Sevenoaks. It’s quite easy to spot, it’s where the railway crosses the M25, not too far from one of the lakes on the northern edge of Sevenoaks. My second navigation point is the dam at Bewl Water. This is a large body of water, and so it’s easy to spot from a distance, and makes a good navigation point. Although you need to be careful, as it’s such a good navigation point, there may well be other people with the same idea, so a good lookout for other traffic is essential.

Finally, I’m flying down to Beachy Head, so that’s my third nav point. I circle my nav points, and then draw straight lines between them in green indelible felt tip. Next, I take my protractor and read the true heading of each line. Because I intend to come back the same way, I read the headings coming back as well, and I write them all down on the pad attached to my kneeboard. This gives me the ‘true’ heading between one point and the next.

But that is just a starting point. You first need to allow for wind. Wind will blow you off course, and so you need to estimate how far the wind will blow you off course, and how much you need to change your heading by to ensure you end up where you want to be.

Wind speed and direction is available from the Met. Office website, and so estimating a cruise speed of 100 knots, I can then start to calculate a new ‘true’ heading. This is where the whiz-wheel comes in.

One side is a circular slide rule. The other side uses the rectangular plastic slide to calculate wind drift. Set the centre of the circle to the ‘100’ line on the slide. Set the compass rose on the wheel to the wind heading, read down from the centre to the windspeed. If the wind speed was ten knots, then you’d mark at the ninety knot mark.

Now turn the wheel until the compass rose is set to your original heading. This will show you how far off you’ll go. Turn the wheel again, adding or subtracting the number of degrees indicated by the horizontal position of the mark, If this changes, then tweak the wheel a bit more. The compass rose now indicates your corrected heading, and the mark’s position above or below the 100 knot mark indicates your groundspeed, so I write that down on my pad, and do the same for each heading.

That gives me a true heading. However, my compass needs a magnetic heading, so using the lines indicated on the map, I have to adjust my heading to allow for the difference between True and Magnetic North in this part of the world. The position of the magnetic lines of force change as the Magnetic North Pole moves, so the maps are revised each year.

With the groundspeed calculated on the whizwheel, and the distances measured with the ruler, I can now calculate an estimated time for each leg of the course. This enables me to check with a stopwatch and work out where I am where I am supposed to be. Also, this is important for calculating fuel burn. The AA5A uses 35 litres of fuel per hour, so if your round trip takes an hour and a half, you know you need 53 litres. Then you add on six litres at each end for taxiing, and an hour’s reserve. So for that hour and a half flight you’d need a minimum of 100 litres to keep a reserve. Fueled up to the tabs we have 144 litres, so in this example, we’d have plenty to spare.

So now after pre-flight checks, and after working out the course, it’s time to go. Walk out to the plane, step up on on the wing, and slide the canopy back. Pause a moment, to take out my headset (David Clark H10 -13.4), my kneeboard, map, and my checklist book. I’m flying solo, so I can put those on the right hand seat. I’d also keep out a felt tip pen just in case I need to do any diversions en route.

Throw my bag and coat on the back seat, then climb into the plane.

I adjust the seat. Too far forwards, and my legs get in the way of the yoke, Too far back, and I can’t use the brake pedals properly. The seatbelt in Judy is rather primitive. There’s a lap strap, which comes across and fastens to the buckle. The second strap which comes

over my shoulder and across clips onto a peg on the lap strap fastener. If it’s too tight, it makes it hard to reach the radios. If the strap is too loose, it keeps coming off the peg.

Take the parking brake off, and pump the footbrakes, then put the parking brake on again. Plug in the headset. There are two plugs on the headset, one for the headphones, and one for the microphone. The plugs are different sizes so you can’t get them the wrong way round.

Switch on the Battery Master/Alternator switch, the big red one. Usually, the ‘Low Voltage’ light comes on here, as you’re running on battery until you get going. Not using the navigation lights this time so they’re OK.

Now it’s time to check the controls. Pull the yoke out, and push it all the way in, while turning it from left to right, to make sure there is full and free movement of the controls. Repeat in the opposite direction, and look out at all the control surfaces to make sure they’re moving properly. The only thing you can’t see is the rudder, so as you pump the rudder pedals from side to side you go by the feel. They move OK, and feel connected to something.

The fuel selector is located down below the instruments, in the middle. Turn it to the tank with most fuel, or usually the left hand tank if both tanks are equal. Turn on the fuel pump, check you can hear it ticking and the fuel pressure starts to increase.

There are two fuel pumps on the aeroplane. The one we just switched on is the electric fuel pump and is only used for takeoffs and landings. Normally, fuel is pumped from the wings by a mechanical fuel pump driven by the engine. The electric fuel pump is just to make sure.

Check the carburettor heat control by moving it out and back in again. Check the circuit breakers are all in, and the fuses are secure. Turn on the flashing beacon, the red light mounted on top of the tail fin. It’s time to start the engine.

Exercise the mixture control, in and out and in and out, then push it firmly all the way in. This controls the amount of fuel in the fuel/air mixture that drives the engine. Move the throttle control through its full range, and set it about a quarter of an inch open.

If the engine is cold, you may need to prime it to get it started. The primer plunger, when pulled out and pressed in, squirts a bit of fuel directly into the cylinders. A small tab locks the control in when not in use, check that it’s locked in OK. Now the engine is ready to start.

Put the key in the magneto switch and set it to L – the left (impulse) magneto. Open the canopy, if it’s closed. Look around for people and shout “CLEAR PROP!”. Another look around, and then press the start button.

The propeller will start turning, and as soon as the engine coughs into life let go of the start button, and make sure the starter warning light goes off. If the light stays on, you’d need to kill the engine immediately to avoid causing too much damage.

Make sure you don’t start rolling forward as you turn the magneto key to ‘Both’, set the throttle to 1200 RPM, check all temperatures and pressures are in the green and that the suction is in the green arc. With the engine running and everything OK, it’s time to get on the radios.

Turn on all the radio sets. Turn the transponder to ‘Test’ and make sure the light lights up, then turn it back to standby. First thing to do is check the navigation radios. Tune in NAV1 to the local beacon at 115.1. This is the structure you pass on taxiing out. First, you can check you’re tuned into the correct beacon by identifying it. All navigation beacons transmit their identifying code in morse code. So you pull on the IDENT switch, and wait to hear the morse code that identifies the beacon. You need to do this on all the navigation radios, to make sure they’re tuned properly. Accidentally tuning into the wrong beacon could cause you problems. Then check the navigation instruments are working. Estimating the compass heading of the beacon from where the plane is parked (around 20 degrees, give or take) turn the dial.

The dial looks a bit like a compass. You turn the dial using a knob at the side, and this lets you navigate by radio. Turn the dial to your estimated heading. The FROM/TO flag should indicate ‘TO’, and the needle settle towards the middle. Fine-tune your setting until the needle is in the middle. This means your dial is reading the heading TO the beacon. Check five degrees each way to see the needle move to the dots on either side. Then turn the dial round so you have the reciprocal heading. The FROM/TO flag should read ‘FROM’, and now you’re reading your heading FROM the beacon. Now set it to your departure heading. In this case, 210.

Repeat this with the second nav radio. The second one is not quite as sophisticated as the first one. Last time I flew Judy it had been removed for servicing.

The DME measures your distance from the beacon. Identify it, and the display shows you how far away you are from the beacon. Another setting will use that to calculate your groundspeed.

With the navigation aids checked, tune into the ATIS and write down the details.

The ATIS – Automated Terminal Information Service – is a recorded message which loops around announcing the conditions at the airport. First, there'll be the information letter, which you read back to the Tower to let them know you have the current information. The rest of the message will include the runway in use, the wind speed and direction, the visibility, the cloudbase (if any), and the QNH, so I note this down on my kneeboard. Once I've got all the information, I can leave the ATIS frequency.

Set the altimeter. The altimeter works through air pressure. The QNH is the air pressure at mean sea level. The term QNH is a throwback to the Q codes used when planes communicated in morse code, as a few other codes still in use. There's a small dial in the altimeter which you adjust with a knob at the side to set the pressure you've been given. In the UK, we use millibars. Some places use hectoPascals, which are exactly the same value as millibars. America, to be different, uses inches of mercury. Air pressure drops 1 millibar for every 30 feet. Biggin Hill is about 600 feet above sea level, so there's a 20 millibar difference between mean sea level and aerodrome level (QFE).

There are two communication radios, COM1 and COM2. Normally I tune one into the Tower frequency of 134.8, and the other into the Approach frequency of 129.4 This is so that when I'm handed from one to the other, I only have to press a button to change over

I've tuned COM1 into the tower. Now it's time to announce my intentions.

There's a small push button on the left hand grip of the yoke. I listen to the tower and any responding planes, to make sure it's OK for me to transmit. Only one person can transmit on the frequency at one time. If two people try to transmit, you just get a horrible squealing noise as the carrier waves interfere. Nobody's talking, so I push the button down, and say my piece.

"Biggin tower, this is Golf Juliet Uniform Delta Yankee, requesting local VFR to the south-east."

The tower will respond, with something like *"Golf Delta Yankee, pass your message."*

"Biggin tower, this is Golf Juliet Uniform Delta Yankee, an AA5 parked outside Cabair with one on board, requesting local VFR to the south-east, with information Delta"

(That is, if the ATIS information letter was Delta, in this example).

So they'd then say something like *"Golf Delta Yankee, cleared to taxi to alpha one, runway 21, crossing runway 29."*

"Golf Delta Yankee, clear to taxi."

So it's time to taxi up. Take the parking brake off and start to move. It can take a bit to get the plane going, so you might need to haul the yoke back to relieve pressure on the nosewheel and apply some extra power to get the plane moving. The first part is over grass, which is always more difficult than taxiing on tarmac, so keep the yoke back and try not to get bogged down in the turns.

It took me a long time to get the hang of taxiing the Grumman. While some aeroplanes have steerable nosewheels, the AA5 has what they call a castoring nosewheel. Basically, it's like the wheel on a shopping trolley (only larger). So you cannot steer the nosewheel to manoeuvre the plane on the ground, and at such slow speeds the rudder does not have enough authority to turn the plane. In order to steer, you use differential braking.

At the top of the rudder pedals, are the brake pedals. By applying left brake, the plane turns left, by applying right brake only, the plane turns right. To go in a straight line involves the occasional dab on the brakes to correct any impulse the plane may have to go off to the side. It takes quite a bit of getting used to, but it does mean the plane will turn about one of the main gear. Of course it also means that a brake failure makes it impossible to control the plane when on the ground!

Check the brakes, and taxi up towards runway 11/29, and have a good look out to make sure nobody is attempting a landing there, then cross over. You have permission to cross, and nobody *should* be trying to land there, but you check anyway. At the other side there's a gutter, so you weave to cross it at approximately a forty-five degree angle to reduce the bump. The next part of the taxiway is a bit rough, so care is needed there too. Given a chance, the nose will bounce up and down a bit on a rough taxiway, which

if it doesn't damage the gear, may damage the prop. So take it nice and slow. As you approach a junction on the taxiway, look out for planes coming in the other direction. Planes coming from the left have right of way, so stop and let them pass.

On the way, also check the instruments are indicating correctly as you turn. The turn co-ordinator should move, as well as the DI and the compass. However the attitude indicator should not move.

Taxi up and there's a disused stump of a runway, which you pull onto and line up into wind to do the power checks.

If there are going to be any problems with the engine, you would ideally like to know about them when the plane is on the ground. The power checks are an engine test which you carry out prior to takeoff, to make sure everything is OK.

So check the temperature and pressure gauges to make sure everything is OK. It should all be in the green, or at least yellow. If anything's in the red, you have a problem!

Switch over to the other fuel tank. You've been running on the left tank, so you need to make sure there are no problems with the right tank.

Have a look around to make sure nobody is behind you or too close ahead. Cycle the parking brake, and apply 1800rpm of throttle. The parking brake is notoriously crap, so you may need to jump on the footbrakes.

The next stage is to check for carburettor icing. This is as likely to happen in summer as it is in winter. Pull out the Carb. Heat knob. What this does is to take the carburettor air intake from the hot air that has been blowing over the engine. Hot air, being less dense than cold air, means you get a drop in engine power when you do this, which one reason why you don't have this on all the time (the other reason is that this air isn't filtered, so dust or dirt could get into the carburettor).

When you apply Carb. Heat, the RPM drops. If the RPM starts to increase again, this means you have ice in the carburettor. Once you're sure everything is OK, or any ice has been melted, push the knob back in to reselect cold air.

Now it's time to check the magnetos. The aeroplane has two ignition systems. Normally both are in use to get the full performance from the engine. If one should fail, the other one should be enough to get you to the nearest airport, or do a precautionary landing. The magnetos generate the power that makes the spark plugs spark on time.

Turn the magneto switch to R, and the RPM should drop by about 100. Turn it back to BOTH, and watch it go back to what it was. Now turn the switch to L, and see the RPM drop by about the same amount. If the RPM doesn't drop, it means you have a dodgy magneto. If the RPM drops too much, you have a dodgy magneto. If the engine starts to run rough, you might have spark plug problems. Leaning the mixture (using the Mixture knob) can burn off any clogging on the plugs, and if that's the case, lean it a bit, and see if the running improves, then go back to full mixture. This has happened once or twice.

Magnetos back on BOTH.

Again, check the dials, make sure temperatures and pressures are OK, and the suction is in the green range.

Slowly pull out the throttle to idle. RPM should drop to around 700-800rpm. Now put the throttle back up to 1200.

Now come the pre-takeoff checks. Between the seats is the trimmer, and you want that to be in the takeoff range – indicated at the side of the wheel by a green zone. Usually have it towards the back for a little help in the takeoff. Check the throttle friction is OK. This is a wheel on the base of the throttle control which you tighten to make sure the throttle won't slide about by itself, but not so tight you can't move it!

Mixture should be rich, and the carburettor heat should be cold – both knobs pushed all the way in. Select the fullest tank and check the fuel gauges. Check the primer is locked in place, check both magnetos are selected by turning the key to the right.

Biggin is quite a long runway, so we don't need flaps for the takeoff, so leave the flaps up. If it's cold, check the heater is on, or if it's warm, check the air vents are open and everyone has enough ventilation.
The flashing beacon should still be on, the autopilot should be off (G-JUDY has an autopilot, but G-BXHH, the other plane I've flown quite a lot, doesn't. I've never used it, and my instructor isn't sure how it works without looking it up!)

Check seatbelts are fastened. Check the canopy is locked. On warm days, this stage is best left until reaching the holding point, as it can get quite warm in the cockpit and having the canopy open a crack provides more cooling air than you'll get through the

air vents alone. The plane can be flown with the canopy open a few inches, thought that would make it a bit draughty when handing maps and the like!

Again, check all the flying controls are moving OK by turning and pulling and pushing the yoke, and checking the rudder pedals.

Check all the radios are set up OK, switch the transponder on. On G-JUDY, this is just switching it to ON, as it has quite an old transponder without altitude information. Some have transponders with altitude information, and for those you'd switch to ALT.

The transponder is a special radio, which receives a signal from an aerial attached to a radar dish. It responds with a signal which lets Air Traffic Control see where you are. Normally, it's set to a general setting of 7000. If travelling through controlled airspace, such as the London City area, you would be asked to squawk a particular number, unique to you. That would let them uniquely identify your aeroplane on their screens. Some codes are used in an emergency only.

Turn the fuel pump on, and check the fuel pressure. Turn the pitot heat on. The altimeter needle should flicker to indicate the load, but go to normal. If it's below 10 degrees, leave it on, otherwise turn it off again.

Check your instruments, check your DI is set correctly. The DI (Directional Indicator) is a gyroscopic compass. The regular magnetic compass mounted on the windscreen is unstable, If you're doing anything other than flying straight and level at a constant speed, it will read incorrectly. So you set your gyroscopic compass to the same setting. This is a dial on the control panel. Imagine the plane turns around the gyroscope, and this turns the dial to indicate your heading. This is subject to drift, so needs re-checking at fairly regular intervals to ensure it's correct.

Turn on the strobes. Last thing on the checklist, the "Captain's Brief".

This always seems a bit weird to me, but it's required in the test, so what I'd say would go something like this.

"Ok, we'll be taking off on runway 21, the wind is <whatever> at <whatever> speed, which means a crosswind of <whatever> which is well within limits. If we have a problem during the takeoff run, I'll abort the takeoff and we'll taxi back in. If we have a problem shortly after the takeoff, I'll cut the power and land back on the runway if there's room. If we have a problem after that, I'll attempt to land in a field off to the right. Any questions?"

The wind speed would have been given you on the radio, and you can calculate the crosswind by the one in six rule. For every ten degrees off the runway heading, a sixth of the wind speed is a crosswind. Sixty degrees or more means the entire wind speed is crosswind. So if the wind is at 240 degrees at ten knots, that's thirty degrees off, and so the crosswind is five knots. As a student pilot, I'm not supposed to fly with a crosswind of above ten knots, although the AA5-A is rated to a maximum crosswind capacity of 16 knots. If it was anywhere near as bad as that, I really wouldn't want to try it anyway.

Taxi out of the run up spot, and continue up to the holding point A1. Once you get to the hold, (which can take some time if there's a bit of a queue of planes waiting to depart), it's time to let the tower know you're ready and waiting.

"Golf Delta Yankee, at alpha one, ready for departure"

There may be planes coming in, so you have to wait. If a plane's on late final and isn't being followed, they might tell you to line up after the landing plane, in which case you can pull out as soon as the plane has passed you by. Or you might get a clearance right away.

"Golf Delta Yankee, line up and wait"

"Lining up, Golf Delta Yankee"

Take off the brakes and, keeping a look out to make sure no unexpected traffic is coming in, line up on the runway. The threshold of 21 is right at the end, so you line up on the 'piano keys' – the white stripes painted on the runway. Point down the runway, and check the DI against the compass again.

"Golf Delta Yankee, clear for takeoff, wind 240 at ten knots, standard left turn"

"Clear for takeoff, Golf Delta Yankee"

Throttle up to 2000 RPM. Feet off the brakes, and start rolling. Now go full throttle, about 2500 RPM. Dab the brake to keep the plane straight, then put your heels down to keep you off the brakes, and use rudder to keep the plane straight. It will want to veer to the side, Let the speed build up, and at 60 knots start to slowly pull back the yoke.

On a cold day, the plane will leap into the air, especially when flown solo. Warmer days have less lift, so climb performance is rather less energetic and the plane takes longer to unstick.

When the main gear leaves the ground, the plane is now under the influence of the crosswind, so keep aileron into wind slightly to compensate, and hold the centreline. You've probably seen film of planes taking off and seeming to swing slightly to one side, this is why. When on the ground, you have friction from the tyres, but in the air, you are afloat in a fluid medium.

Climb at 80 knots for the best climb performance. To help, you trim the aircraft so you don't need to keep hauling back the yoke.

There's a wheel between the seats called the trim wheel. Turning this wheel moves the tabs on the elevator. The idea is that you use the trim to maintain your attitude, and reduce the workload of the pilot. So in a standard 80 knot climb, you'd turn the wheel back until you no longer need to maintain backwards pressure on the yoke. The trim does the work for you.

At two miles out (indicated on the DME display), make a steady turn left, heading south. At some point, Biggin Tower will ask you to call Biggin Approach (unless it's a slow day and they're only using the Approach frequency).

"Biggin Approach, this is Golf Juliet Uniform Delta Yankee, currently at 1700 feet climbing to 2300 feet"

They'll tell you to call at Sevenoaks.

You can see the M25, and you need to stay to the north of that, as it marks the boundary with Gatwick's class A airspace, where the likes of me are not allowed. That's IFR only, and I am a VFR pilot.

Staying north of the motorway, start heading east again towards Sevenoaks. One aid to distinguish Sevenoaks is the three lakes to the north. They're quite easy to spot. Our first turning point is a particular bridge over the M25, just past the third lake, a flooded quarry by the looks of it.

Level now at 2300 feet, keeping 200 feet below more airspace we're not allowed in. Trim the plane to maintain the altitude at the current power level. Cruise is about 2300 RPM.

As you gained height, you could see the ground get further and further away to the sides, but it is as you level out that you get the whole effect. England lies spread out below me, and you can see the shape of towns and cities, and the texture of the land – hills, valleys, features shaped by nature, and features shaped by man.

It's a view few people are privileged to see.

Once level, it's time for a FEDRA check.

Fuel – turn the fuel pump off, and check the fuel pressure remains constant.

Engine – pull the carb heat on, and check the RPM for ten seconds. If the RPM starts to rise after its initial fall, then you had carburettor icing. If the RPM just decreases and stays there, then everything is OK and you can turn the carb heat off again.

Direction – Check the DI against the compass, and adjust if the gyro has drifted.

Radio – Well, we're going to call when we reach Sevenoaks.

Altitude – Maintaining 2300 feet, on the QNH.

At Sevenoaks, it's now time to say goodbye. *"Golf Delta Yankee, at Sevenoaks"*

"Delta Yankee, call for rejoin, goodbye."

"Will call for rejoin, golf Delta Yankee, goodbye"

And that's that. We're now near the turning point, so it's time for a CHAT Check.

Compass – check the DI and compass agree.

Heading – look up your new heading, so you know what you're doing

Altitude – check you're maintaining your altitude

Talk – Do you need to talk to anyone?

Then once we reach the turning point, it's time for a TTT check.

Turn – onto your new heading

Time – restart the stopwatch

Talk – if you need to contact anyone on the radio.

Finally, a slightly modified CHAT check.

Compass – check it again.

Heading – do a 'sanity check' to make sure you've got the right heading. If the lake which should be on your right is ahead or on your left, then you know you've made a mistake somewhere!

Altitude – check that's still OK and you've not lost or gained anything during the turn.

Talk – If you have to.

Once you're all settled down, just hold your course. You can find something on the horizon that lines up with the nose, and follow that, which is easier than having to check the DI often. Also keep a good look out for other aircraft.

On the map, you’ll have picked out a halfway point on each leg of your course. It doesn’t have to be exactly half way, you’d pick a good visual reference which was around the halfway point. Flying down from Sevenoaks, heading for Bewl Water, the half way point would be the railway line heading into Tonbridge Wells.

On the kneeboard, I’ve made a note of how long it should take me to reach my halfway point. As the halfway time approaches, I look out for my halfway point.

It’s very easy to spot. It’s like someone took a ruler and drew a line across the landscape. Which, in a way, is what someone did when they put that railway line there in the first place. It’s absolutely clear, and you can see the line stretching off to the left, and to the right see the station building and the line continuing past it to the distance. If you’re lucky, you may see trains running along the line.

One thing about this is that if your time to the halfway point differs from your estimate, then you can adjust your estimated time of arrival accordingly. Also, if you find you’re off to the side of where you expected to be, you can figure out how much you’re off course by, and how you need to adjust your course to bring yourself back on track. So if you’re five degrees off course at the halfway point, you need to steer ten degrees in the opposite direction to get back on course when you arrive at the end of this leg. It could be you made a mistake, or it could be that the winds aren’t exactly how you expected them to be.

At the halfway point, do a FEDRA check, and this time turn the fuel pump on, change tanks, and after checking the fuel pressure, turn the pump off, and check the pressure is still there.

As you approach the end of the leg, you need to do a check. Bewl Water is a good visual reference point, as a large body of water can be easily seen from a distance. On a good day, you can see it from the halfway point. It does have the disadvantage that as it is such a good visual reference point (VRP), there are liable to be other people in the same area and at about the same altitude, so you need to keep a good lookout at all times. Every time I’ve been there, I’ve usually seen at least one other aeroplane doing the same thing I’m doing. I’ve even had to overtake (giving a lot of distance) another plane which was much slower than me

As before, you do a CHAT check, a Turn, Time, Talk check, and a final CHAT check after the turn.

That’s the end of the first leg of the course, so we now need to keep an eye on our next halfway point.

Between Bewl and Eastbourne there aren’t really any obvious halfway points, so I ended up picking a spot between two villages. However this was very hard to find, and I ended up drifting off course by about five degrees when I got my halfway point wrong. Rather than ending up at Beachy Head, I ended up pointing directly at Eastbourne, so I flew round the edge of town, and then flew west for a while following the coastline.

There’s a rule regarding flying along by following some landmark. If you’re flying along following the coast, or a road, or a railway, there’s a chance someone coming the opposite way may be doing the same thing. So you always fly on the right of the ground feature you’re following. That way, you get a

better look at it as it's on your left, where you sit, and anyone coming the opposite way is on the other side.

So I flew over land, the coastline to my left with the sea beyond it. Below I could see a radio beacon, in the middle of a small wood with an access road running to it. I could have navigated here following the radio beacon, tuning my navigation radio into it, identifying it by its three letter morse code ID, and tracking a vector on my instruments, but that wasn't the point of the exercise.

I fly past Seaford, and then start a turn to go back. Now I'm flying over the sea, the beach to my left, and the white Seven Sisters cliffs. What a view! It's a view I've seen in films, with Spitfires flying past. I am flying past the same spot, but with significantly less style. Still looks bloody good though.

I see another plane now, a Cessna, flying overland where I had been, keeping to the right of the feature they're following. I give them a wave and a bit of a wing waggle so they can see I've seen them. I fly past the Beachy Head lighthouse, and then it's time to start checks and fly back along the same route I flew down. After the second CHAT check I do a FEDRA check and change tanks again.

The first leg back is easier than flying that leg down as Bewl is so easy to spot. At Bewl, turn again to head out past Tonbridge to Sevenoaks. There's a bit of cloud ahead, and I have to fly a bit lower to stay under it. As I approach Sevenoaks, I have to think about my safety attitude. I should be OK, as the highest spot in the zone is a radio mast which I know to be off some way to my right. However I have to consider the possibility that if the cloud continues lowering, I may have to divert. Best plan is to pull a 180 and head for Shoreham, as the cloud gets higher to the south. However it isn't too low, and so at Sevenoaks it's time to make a call.

"Biggin Approach, this is Golf Juliet Uniform Delta Yankee, at Sevenoaks requesting rejoin".
"Golf Delta Yankee, call three miles deadside for runway 21, QFE (whatever)"
"Call three miles deadside, QFE (whatever), Golf Delta Yankee"

The QFE is the air pressure on the runway. When set on the altimeter, this will let me know my height above the ground. But I don't set it until I can see the airfield. FEDRA check and leave the fuel pump on.

I know where to look for Biggin, so I soon pick up the airfield. It's an acquired skill and spotting airfields from a distance isn't easy. Grass strips are worst, you're looking for a strip of green on a green background, so spotting proper runway is easier. It's the shape of Biggin that's the giveaway. So I dial in the QFE I've been given (20 millibars less than the QNH), and start a steady descent down to circuit height, which is one thousand feet.

The DME display is reading off my distance, so as it approaches three miles, I make my call. *"Golf Delta Yankee, three miles deadside"*
"Golf Delta Yankee, contact Biggin Tower on one three four decimal eight"
"Contacting Biggin Tower, Golf Delta Yankee"

I then switch radios, and call the tower. *"Biggin Tower, this is Golf Juliet Uniform Delta Yankee, two decimal five miles deadside"*
"Golf Delta Yankee, call on downwind"
"Roger, Golf Delta Yankee"

Runway 21 is in use, so I fly over the opposite end (the 03 end) of the runway, at 1000 feet which is circuit height for Biggin Hill. I keep a lookout for any other traffic which might be turning downwind, and at the right point, turn onto the downwind leg.

"Golf Delta Yankee, downwind"
"Golf Delta Yankee, number two behind the Cessna"
"Number two behind the Cessna, have it in sight, Golf Delta Yankee"

Luckily the Cessna is some way in front, as the approach speed of an AA5 is about ten knots higher. There are times we've had to put full flap on during downwind to avoid catching the Cessna in front.

But now it's time for the downwind checks.

Brakes – check the brake pedals to make sure you have brake pressure. If you don't have brake pressure, then you've got a problem once you land.
Undercarriage– Down and fixed, or as I heard somewhere, down and welded. If you were flying a plane with retractable gear, you'd need to check you had three greens on the undercarriage status.
Mixture – rich
Fuel – pump on, change tanks if necessary
Instruments – QFE set, compass OK
Call - on final
Hatches & **H**arnesses – the canopy is locked and seatbelts fastened securely.

Keeping an eye on the Cessna in front, we wait until it's gone well past us and turn base. Now we start descending.

First, the carburettor heat comes on, and the throttle goes back to 1800 RPM. Let the speed drain a bit, and check that the airspeed indicator needle is in the white arc. Reach down to the flap switch. Pull the switch back, and count "one one thousand, Two one thousand, three one thousand". At a normal rate, that gives you one stage of flap. There is an indicator which shows you how much flap you've got on, but that's down between the seats, so it's easier to count and then maybe take a quick glance later. As the flaps come on, the nose will try to rise as the plane gets more lift, so apply forward pressure on the yoke to prevent this. Switch the flaps again, for a second stage of flap. That's the usual amount. On shorter runways, you could use three stages of flap.

You can land without any flap, but your view on approach isn't as good (as the nose is higher), and you float for longer, so normally we use two stages of flap.

Trim the plane for seventy-five knots, which is our normal approach speed.

One hand always on the throttle, adjusting the throttle to control our descent. If we're too low, more throttle, if we're too high, a bit less.

Turn onto final, and line up with the runway. There's a light crosswind coming from the right, so the nose of the plane points into the wind a little to keep the plane lined up.

Biggin Hill has a PAPI – Precision Approach Path Indicator. There are four lights on the left hand side of the runway, and the colour of the light is dependent on your relative position. If all four lights are white, then you're too high. If all four lights are red, then you're too low. The correct approach is indicated when you see two reds and two whites. This is actually for the benefit of larger aircraft, and you can land perfectly well without it. In fact it's advantageous not to depend on it too much as when you go to smaller strips, you won't have one, and you'll want to get your wheels down as close to the threshold as safely possible.

On the way in, make your final radio call.

"Golf Delta Yankee, on final"
"Golf Delta Yankee, clear to land, wind is 240 degrees at ten knots."
"Clear to land, Golf Delta Yankee".

Getting close to the runway now. At three hundred feet, turn the carb heat off. This is in case you need to go around, as you would want all the power you can get. We're crabbed slightly, so we need to straighten up, so put the into-wind wing down a bit, but then to stop the plane turning and hold it straight, apply some opposite rudder. Once assured of the runway, take off all the power.

When you get to about the height of a double-decker bus, start to flare. Pull back the yoke to stop your descent. Don't pull it back too far, as you'll balloon, and if you do that too much you'd need to go around. As the plane descends, running out of lift now, keep pulling back on the yoke to stop it descending too quickly.

The thing about landing is that you're really trying to stop it landing for as long as possible. Drag and gravity land the plane, not the pilot. This is where the flaps come in again as they increase the amount of drag. The AA5 with its rivetless body is quite slippery, and without flaps you'll float in ground effect for a long time.

As you hold off, you might hear the stall warning go off as the angle of attack increases. If you've got it right, you should touch down reasonably smoothly. on the main gear.

Keep the nose up for as long as you can, then set the nosewheel down gently, and coast along the runway until you pick up the yellow line leading you off to the taxiway.

Once you're past the boundary marker on the taxiway, it's time for the post-landing checks. Flaps up, turn all unnecessary electrical equipment off (just leaving on the radio you're currently using, and the lights), and then taxi back in to park up.

Stop the plane back in its parking slot, then shut down.

Turn off the radio, and everything but the flashing beacon. Check the magnetos, to make sure you get an RPM drop when you only select one magneto. If you selected the left magneto, but the RPM stayed the same, it would indicate the right magneto was always live, which would be a problem. Now pull the throttle all the way out to idle, and pull the mixture all the way out. The engine, deprived of fuel, stops. Turn everything off, take out the keys, and you're done.

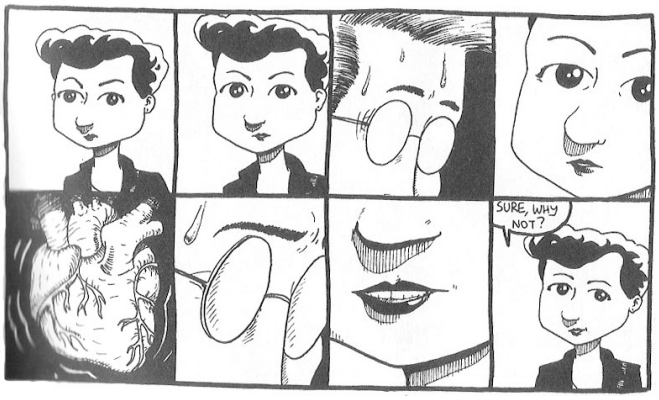
Take off and unplug your headset, undo your seatbelt, then reach up and slide the canopy back. Slide your seat back, stand up, and step out onto the wing, gather your stuff back into your flight bag, close the canopy, and jump down.

It's been a good flight.

Dop's Essentials 1: Graphic Novels

The idea of this feature is to mention a few things which I consider essentials, and which you should get.

Starting off with some of my favourite graphic novels. If I had to chuck out all my comics, except for a few, these are the first ones I'd be sure to keep.



Box Office Poison by Alex Robinson is a great ensemble piece, with interlinking stories that twist around each other and until the end you're never quite sure who's story this is anyway. There's the story of Stephen and Jane, how they met, where they live, their relationship, their family, and what happens to them. There's the relationship between Sherman and Dorothy, how they met, and what happens to them. Then there's the friendship between Sherman and Ed, best friends but they drift apart. There's Irving, creator of a top comic character but living in poverty and doing the occasional illustrating job, and Zoom Comics, who he sold his greatest creation to for a pittance. And all the people they know.

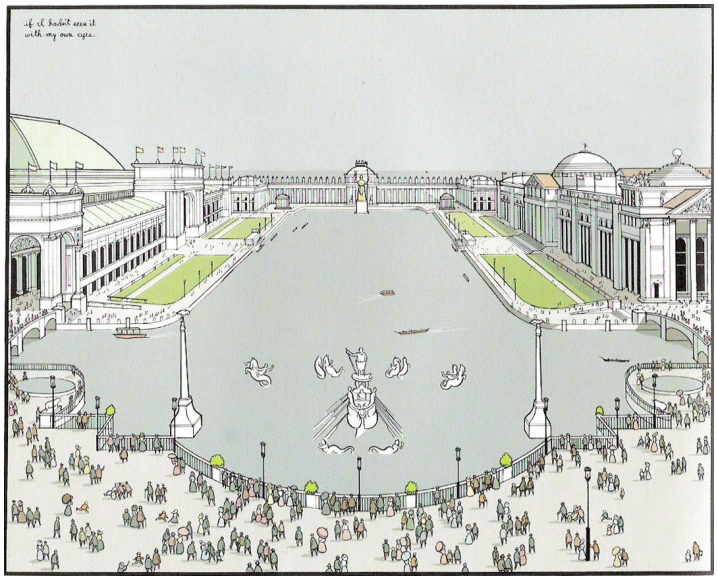
The stories interleave, and wind around each other, and it's not until the end you find out who the story is really about.

It's very observant, and funny, and sad in places. I particularly like the author's device of asking his characters a question and having them answer it in the other eight panels on the page.

Jimmy Corrigan, or, The Smartest Kid On Earth by Chris Ware once won the Guardian's best first novel award, and the idea of a graphic novel winning a literary award is almost unheard of.

It is, as the title may suggest, the story of Jimmy Corrigan, who is a sad middle-aged loser dominated by his mother and nervous of women. One day, he hears from his father James Corrigan, who he has never met, and goes off to Chicago. Mixed in with this is the story of his grandfather, Jimmy Corrigan who's father abandoned him during the great World's Fair of 1893.

Ware's artwork is precise, atmospheric, and brilliant here, from the tiniest panel of subtle colours to the full page illustration of the great white city built for the world's fair. The entire presentation of the book is wonderful, from the foldout dust-jacket, to the covers, to the inners, to the cut out models (which nobody would ever cut out, if they had any sense).



The story is quite poignant. Poor Jimmies, all three of 'em.

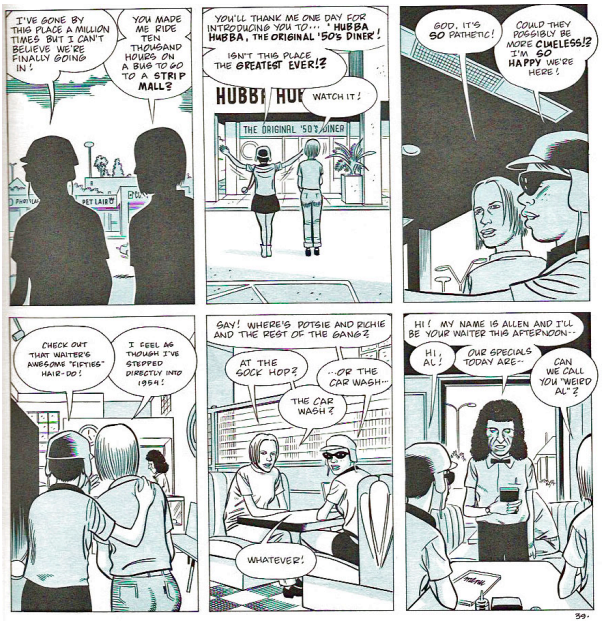
decade. But so far, it looks worth waiting for the end.

The book is wonderfully produced, in black and white but with blue wash shading that complements it so well.

Of course, since this came out, Seth's art has appeared in the pages of the *New Yorker*, and that knowledge just adds an extra footnote to this work.

Ghost World by Dan Clowes. If I ever do an essential films piece, I'd probably include the film of this too, but they are completely different things. The comic came first, of course, in Clowes' long running *Eightball* series. It's black and white, with a green wash.

It's one last summer, following graduation,



It's A Good Life, If You Don't Weaken by Canadian cartoonist Seth is one of my favourites. Originally published over several years in infrequent comic *Palookaville*, this quasi-autobiographical comic begins with Seth going through old copies of the *New Yorker*, where he finds a cartoon by an artist using the name Kalo. Seth becomes fascinated by Kalo as their style is very similar, and while many *New Yorker* cartoonists of the era are well known, there's nothing about Kalo anywhere. Who was he? He must have been good enough to make the pages of the *New Yorker*, so why is there so little of his work available? So Seth roams second-hand shops trying to find more Kalo cartoons from the period, discusses Kalo with his friend Chester Brown (another Canadian cartoonish), gains and loses love, and eventually learns that Kalo was, like him, a Canadian, who lived in the town where Seth grew up. Seth goes there on a sentimental journey, to try and find more.

Seth asks himself why he's so fascinated with Kalo. Is it because if he didn't try to find out more about him, nobody else would? How are we remembered by the people we leave behind? What kind of legacy is eleven yellowing cartoons?

There's a secret to Kalo. I don't want to tell you, as it may spoil it.

Seth is now working on a story entitled *Clyde Fans*, which if we're lucky will be done by the end of the

when Enid and Rebecca are trying to decide what to do with their lives, and slowly but surely drifting apart as they go around commenting sardonically on what's happening around them.

If you've seen the film first you might be surprised by what's not in the comic. The whole 'Seymour' and 'Art class' threads of the movie are not in the comic at all, although the opening of the 'Seymour' thread is. The ending is pretty much the same, although in the film it's more of a metaphor for death.

And of course if you've seen the film *then* read the comic, you'll realise how brilliant the casting was.

This is one of Daniel Clowes' finest works, for sure.

Paul Has A Summer Job by Michel Rabagliati. This is the first full graphic novel from Rabagliati, who first introduced us to the character Paul in the short *Paul, Apprentice Typographer* which featured in the volume *Drawn and Quarterly 3*. A comic followed, *Paul In The Country*, which was in turn followed by this. In this story, Rabagliati's character Paul (possibly based on himself?) has walked out of school over an argument and got a menial job in a printing works, when an old friend of his, a trainee priest, calls up from out of the blue to ask for his help. One of the people who were supposed to be running a summer camp for deprived kids has dropped out, and can Paul stand in. So with nothing better to do, Paul quits his job and goes off for a summer in the country with a bunch of wild characters, where he loses his spoilt edges, learns about life, and learns about love.

It's very well written and evocative of those teenage years.

There's a coda to the story where present-day Paul, attending a party with his wife and child, discovers he's in the area the camp used to be, and finds something once thought lost.

Why I Hate Saturn by Kyle Baker.

Anne is a writer on a style magazine in New York. One night after she's accidentally drunk a whole bottle of whisky, her sister Laura turns up. Laura is the Queen of the Leather Astro-girls of Saturn.

Then Murphy turns up. He's a rich and powerful man, who has a diary.

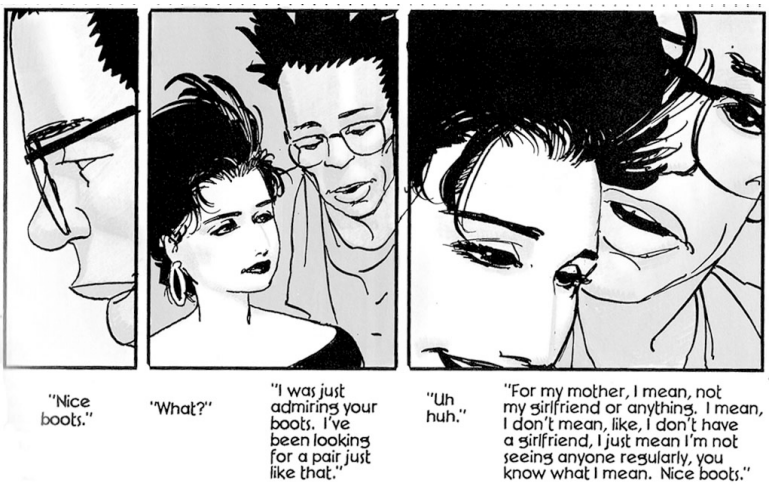
The diary is the tale of Frank, who coincidentally has been the lover of both Anne and Laura. Murphy killed Frank, and framed Laura for it, and now demands to know where Laura is.

Anne finds herself without a job, or a home (Murphy *is* a rich and powerful man!) so she goes off to find her sister and find out what happened.

They go on the run, change their hair, but Murphy catches up with them.

And suddenly, they're on Saturn.[1]

Kyle Baker has done some wonderful stuff, but I think this is one of his best. There's some very insightful stuff here.



There are plenty more, but I figure a half dozen is enough for this fanzine. There may be a part two at some point. I could write about such favourites as *Sleaze Castle* but that's out of print, so while I love it deeply and it's a great shame that it's out of print, I'm trying to recommend stuff that you could go out and buy should you see fit.

So later, dudes!

[1] Metaphorically speaking. It's not SF. Read it, you'll know what I mean!

This is G-JUDY, the plane I often fly in. It is a AA-5A 'Cheetah' built in 1978 by the Grumman American Aviation Corporation.

Picture taken at Shoreham Airport.

And that's your lot.

Well, this began when I wrote the enclosed piece about flying, and then I decided that rather than just put that out on its own, I could top and tail it with other articles and turn it into a fanzine.

It's a long time since I've written a fanzine, I've not even done so much as an *Our Dog's Basket* for years, and my previous attempt at fanzine writing, *The Disillusionist* (which briefly became *The Disillusioned*) is long forgotten by anyone with any sense.

There probably will be another issue of *Final To Land*, (I may call it *Go Around*!) as I want to write another piece on flying, but with a different viewpoint. More of which later.

Mainly, I suppose, the reason for this is that I have got so dreadfully out of the habit of writing anything, and that's a habit I'd like to reacquire.

If you want to comment, send your comments to dop@btinternet.com and mark them [LOC] so I can pick them out easier (and spot any that fall into the spam trap!). No point my giving my home address here, as I want to move out in the near future, but don't envisage changing email address.

Hope you liked this, and want to read more...

Antony J. "Dop" Shepherd, Croydon, April 2005.