

## **Quiberon (or Epernay or Saumur or Dieppe) or why not Caernarfon**

**By Colin Robertson**

Due to an administrative error, the planned fly out to Quiberon (LFEQ) didn't include the Robin and the event list was full with 130 participants. As the Robin was booked for the weekend, Colin Williamson (CW) and myself decided to look for alternative destinations in France. Careful monitoring of the long range weather forecasts showed that there was a possibility of reasonable weather in the Champagne region so planning for Epernay (LFSW) started.

Unfortunately for us, there must have been something big going on as there was no accommodation available in the area, so another plan was hatched for Saumur (LFOD) in the Loire.

The Wednesday before our departure, Tony Edge informed us that he would be unable to attend the Quiberon fly-in and we could have first refusal on his slot, which we duly accepted. Accommodation was available and everything looked good, except the weather which was now looking reasonable for Saturday but very poor for Sunday. Not wanting to be stuck the wrong side of the Channel, we came up with another plan along with Roy Twigg, lunch at Dieppe (LFAB).

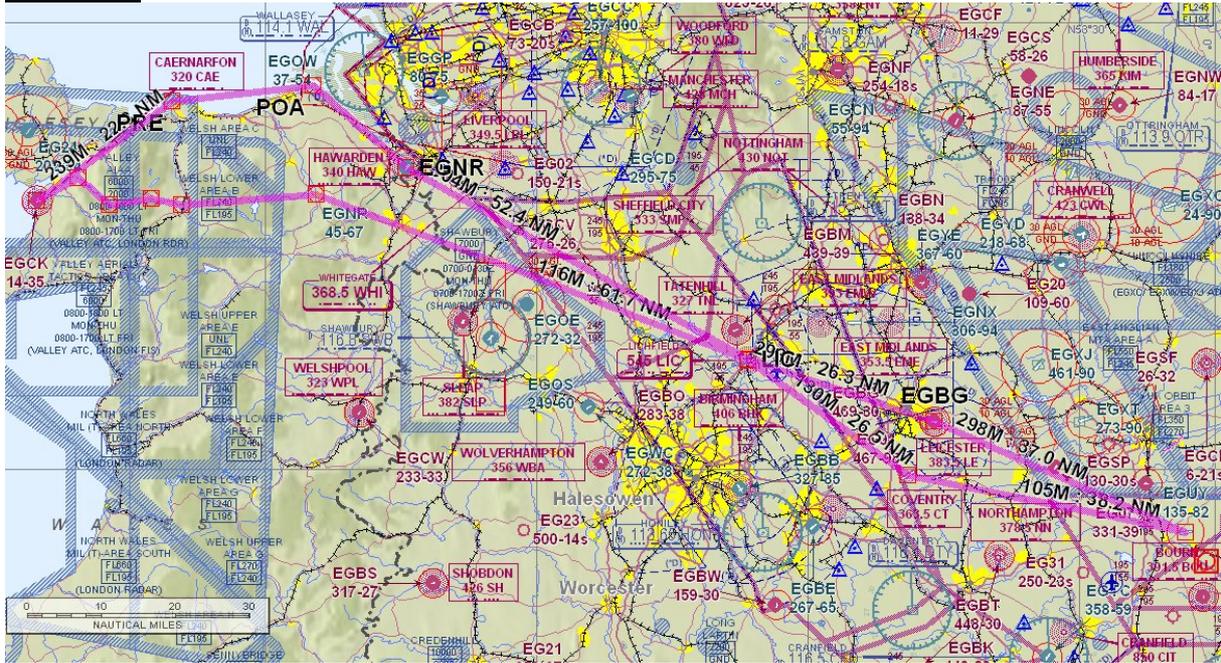
With everyone happy with the plan, routes were planned in FliteStar and lines drawn on maps. I filled out a General Aviation Report and e-mailed it off to Customs. CW filed the flight plan, filled the aircraft with fuel and loaded the safety equipment for the short trip across the Channel.

We met at the flying club at 0800. Roy had been in touch with his friend at Dieppe who gave him the bad news, heavy rain in Dieppe all day. We checked the weather for France on the club computer using NAV2000 and it didn't look good. Demonstrating our superior flying skills in inferior weather was unlikely to go down well with our wives, Tracie and Sue, who had kindly offered to accompany us on our trip.

Admitting defeat for any southbound flight I blurted out 'Caernarfon', let's go there. Another check of the weather and a phone call to them confirmed that this was possible. The wives were a bit disappointed but accepted that good as we were, the weather was just outside of our control.

Frantic planning now took place with FliteStar to get a reasonable route before putting lines on maps. CW would fly the first leg and I would plan and fly the return.

## The route



CW chose to route overhead Leicester (EBGB), the NDB at Litchfield (EGLIC), Hawarden (EGNR), following the coast round to Caernarfon (EGCK).

Checking the NOTAMS showed an aerobatic competition at Leicester and a BBMF display just south of our route, which were added as highlights to our maps. Care must be taken when overflying Hawarden as FliteStar does not highlight a 3000 ft Class 'A' airway directly overhead. It is obvious on the 1:500000 map though.

Finally we were ready to go. With Tracie and Sue in the back, me navigating and CW at the controls, we made our way round to runway 33 for a departure. We changed frequency to Leicester and listened in to see if we could overfly them. We announced our position and decided it was better to fly south of our route and give them a wide berth. Next we used East Midlands for flight information with Litchfield NDB as our reporting point. This beacon has poor range and only locked on at a range of 5 miles. We then transferred to Manchester for flight information before contacting Hawarden and overflying them at 2500 ft staying below the Class 'A'.

Routing us via the Point of Air lighthouse, we were requested to contact London Information on 124.75. Radio reception is quite poor in this area because of the mountains. We listened in on this frequency before changing to Caernarfon who cleared us in for an overhead join for runway 26.

**Deadside Descending Caernarfon for Runway 26**



**Finals for 26**



The landing was uneventful, as we always wish, and we were directed to park in slot 4 and shut down just before 1200. The slots were easy to find. However, it is always worth having a good look at the airfield layout before you arrive using the airfield plate in publications such as Pooleys and also check it out when you are in the overhead. Look to see where the other aircraft are leaving the runway and what the taxi pattern looks like. I haven't been flying long but the only time I have ever had trouble to date is on the ground. It can be difficult to spot the holds, parking slots and engine run-up areas.

Flight time was 1:45. CW paid the landing fee of £15, The handling staff were very helpful and called a taxi for the ride into town, about 8 miles away. This was quite expensive at £14 each way, but unless you are planning to have a sandwich at the airport cafe, there is no choice. The taxi took 15 minutes to arrive. If you are smart, you could save some time by calling them as soon as you land. The number is 01286 831867 or 07785 521571 and the company is M & R private Hire.

### **Sue, Colin and Tracie at Caernarfon Castle**



We were dropped off at a pub called the Black Dog where we had a nice meal. We then had a look round the castle which was very pleasant. We had arranged to be picked up at 1500 by the taxi firm who turned up as requested and took us back to the airport.

We strapped in and started the Robin for the flight back. I confirmed with Wyton by phone that the weather was ok and which runway was in use, 09. We taxied to the run-up pan which is on the taxi way just short of the hold for runway 26. There are tall trees on the approach which don't cause problems when landing but obscure the view of anything on finals while you are at the hold. You need to keep a good listen out for aircraft calling their positions

downwind and finals before calling to enter the runway. Take-off took us straight out to sea before a gentle climbing turn brought us over Caernarfon.

My route back took us through the Llanberis Pass. We checked with the local pilots before departing that the conditions would be acceptable for a VFR flight through the area which they confirmed. There are 3 passes visible as you fly into Caernarfon from the East. It would be quite easy to pick the wrong one if you hadn't positively confirmed which one you required on the way in.

### **Navigating through the Llanberis Pass**



We made sure we knew which one was Llanberis and headed for it. The scenery was spectacular as we cruised through at low level. We changed frequency to London Information who requested position and time to next waypoint. Towering mountains either side of the wings invited favorable comments from Tracie and Sue. We followed the road to the left and climbed to keep clear of the ground. We could hear the radio chatter becoming fainter as the terrain and weather were affecting the reception. Eventually we lost London Information completely so I selected the London Information (East) on 124.6 which worked loud and clear. We had to fly through some heavy showers which slightly hampered forward visibility but we were still well within our capabilities and rules for VFR flight.

CR managing to look out the window at the view.



The route took us via Wrexham, Lichfield NDB, Bruntingthorpe and back to Wyton. Through the rain, we could see sunshine over our destination. I changed frequency to Pathfinder Ops as there was no ATC due to the forthcoming bank holiday. Mick Mahon was operating to the north in G-BYYG and gave me a advisory QFE

Ops confirmed runway 09 and I carried out an initials join and landing at 1720 before taxiing round for a refuel. We used 130 Ltr of fuel and the trip back took 1:35.

It wasn't France but it was a good day out. The trip was uneventful as we carried out the planning as we were taught.

- We checked the NOTAMS which kept us out of the aerobatic competition at Leicester.
- We checked the weather and runways in use at all our proposed destinations before setting airborne.
- We asked the local pilots if it was safe to fly through the pass in the prevailing conditions.
- We had 2 GPS systems but the routes were drawn on the 1:500000 maps, as always. This highlighted the 3000 ft Class A airspace above Hawarden.
- We had a copy of the Caernarfon airfield diagram on board to aid ground navigation.
- We made sure we knew which pass to go through for the way out, on the way in.

The lines are still on my map for Dieppe. It will happen soon, of that I am sure.

Colin Robertson  
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