

ROOKIE ROUND UP

John Morse reports on a fun filled one-model competition hosted by the Nene Valley Aeromodellers to honour their much-missed club President - David Boddington.

words » John Morse | photos » Steve Thom

Nene Valley Aeromodellers (NVA) was formed in the sixties and early seventies, with its origins in the area around Wellingborough and Rushden, Northamptonshire. The club's website includes a comprehensive summary of those early years written by some current members who were there at the beginning (www.flynva.org/nva_history.html). Amongst them were such notable names as Charles and David Boddington; in fact, David (aka Boddo), was president of NVA right up until his passing in 2010.

The first name adopted by this very early group was 'The Monks', since one of the flying sites they had was in the grounds of an old abbey. This later became Wellingborough MAC until the group formally changed its name to the Nene Valley Aeromodellers on 1st September 1972. Around 1980 the club was affiliated to the SMAE, which was later renamed the BMFA.

After losing several flying sites, some to gravel quarrying, an arrangement was made with a local farmer near Olney to rent the site that the club now occupies. This later came under the management of Compton Estates and the club now has a formal agreement based on a renewable three-year lease.

The greatest number of members the club had in those years was around 160, with an extensive programme of competitions and displays. Around the year 2000 the club acquired another site near Wellingborough. This split the membership into two groups and eventually resulted in the Wellingborough group breaking away to form their own club. The current membership of NVA stands at around 60, with capacity for some additional members. Thus, enquiries from potential members are always welcome.

ROOKIE EVENT

The extensive competition and flying display programme we once enjoyed is far more modest these days. The programme now includes fun-fly, electric glider and aerobatic events. NVA also stages what is probably a unique competition for one of Boddo's designs, the 'Rookie' glider. This involves fitting a regulation 7.5 ml fuel tank to the engine pod. The objective is that the flight should be exactly 10 minutes long. Points are deducted if the flight is under or over the ten minutes. A bonus can be earned for landing on the mown strip.

The favourite combination is the standard Rookie with a 1 cc diesel engine. Flick starting and the smell of diesel fuel and exhaust is evocative of the past for many of the older members (that's most of us!)

This event, held over two Sundays, involves a lot of activity, with launchers and timers, as well as the pilots, intent on giving the tank a last top-up before a good hard chuck! The average engine run is about three minutes, then it's time to look for the Red Kites to show you where the thermals are.

MIND THE TREES!

NVA still attends a few local static shows but the last flying display was in 2010 at the Castle Ashby Country Fair, which is no more. Sadly, the future for such displays does not look good with all the health and safety issues to consider.

The NVA flying site consists of a fenced strip and pits, which generally keep sheep out, although we have had a few with Olympic high-jump skills pay us a visit in the past! (Have you ever tried to catch a sheep at full gallop!?) There is a very large outfield, but the site is not without challenges. In the far distance and directly behind the pits lies a forest; there are also a few trees in the outfield. It is not unknown for models to land in a tree. In fact, some say that the trees have a magnetic attraction to their models! Those pilots that land their plane in a tree are awarded a sticker for their flight box to commemorate the event.

The site is kept in pristine condition by a dedicated few who give generously of their time (and the use of a digger). This includes a year-round car park constructed over the past two years. Also, there is a link to a panoramic video of the site and surroundings on the club's website.

To minimise tree landings and other mishaps the club offers training to all those new to model flying and a BMFA A certificate is required before unsupervised flying is allowed. This has resulted in a high standard of proficiency amongst the membership. Many members have also gained a B-certificate and have become instructors or examiners.

Like all clubs, NVA has rules and almost all are safety related. NVA offers a friendly atmosphere where members are serious enough about their flying without being over officious. There is always room for a few more members. For more information visit the club's website at www.flynva.org



1 With its engine on song a Rookie is ready for the off. 2 A launcher gets his final instruction. 3 The pits are very hectic on competition days. 4 A timer waits to start his stopwatch the second the Rookie leaves the launcher's hand. 5 A last-minute top up for the regulation 7.5ml tank. 6 A Rookie gets an enthusiastic two-handed launch!