

Sunday 29th June, Carn Brea, Camborne

Sunday morning's weather conditions were a light South Westerly with sea breezes producing a predicted convergence. I took off from Carn Brea hoping to go XC but unfortunately today it was not meant to be as I only climbed to about 500 feet ATO. At the best of times I climbed in a 4-up, though I flew in zeros most of the time. I did not go with the 4-up because I thought better lift would exist out in front of the hill. After several glides out front that I was proved wrong and I was soon back on the ground.

The next morning on Bank holiday Monday 30th I returned to Carn Brea keen to go XC. The wind was Northerly to North West (the best direction for the Carn Brea Slope) with sea breezes. I got to the hill around 11.30am – a bit late but I had a lot on and was rushing around like a mad man.

The wind was 8 to 12 mph and bang on the hill with a few puffys out front. I could see a small sea breeze convergence line of cloud way off to the south behind the ridge but it was right over the south coast near Helston. I popped the wing up and ground handled it until I felt the pull of a thermal. I leaped into a good thermal which was quite big in size but not really very strong low down as I experienced only zero's and 1-ups. Still this enabled me to climb to around 1000 feet above the hill and there I sat in zeros and 1-ups for a good few minutes before the thermal turned into a 6-up!! so before long I was rocketing up to cloud base.

At base I found it hard to decide where to go next so I had a good look around before I made a decision then headed for the next closest dark looking cloud.

I was now at cloud base, 677m (2221ft) above take off, hopping from cloud to cloud and it didn't matter which way I went I was just happy to be up there.

I did about 10 hops from cloud to cloud using them like stepping stones and before long I could see the darker convergence cloud line. By now I was over the Stithians Reservoir area but there was usual big patch of blue over the lake with no clouds – a huge 'sink hole' where there is no lift. I didn't think I would make it past this obstacle as it has cut short many XC flights from Carn Brea before. I just had to get over the reservoir to connect with the convergence lift or else I would be grounded...and it would be game over!

I decided to stick with the cloud I was under and luckily it drifted slowly over the lake, now the convergence was just a hop away. I connected with the convergence cloud and flew this all the way down to the Lizard. The lift was sometimes on and sometimes off but whenever I lost altitude I just found another thermal and within a few 360's I was back to base.

Just near to the Lizard the convergence cloud street ended. The lizard coast was now just a glide away but into blue cloudless and I was still at base so I turned around and headed back up the street at Helston the street broke into a street that went to Falmouth so rather than go back I thought Falmouth so off I went. At Gweek my street broke and I bombed out to 37m above take off height which was about 3 to 400 feet off the ground. Just as I was deciding where to land, I got another thermal it was small but soon turned in to an 8 up. Finding my self back at base I carried on my merry way to Falmouth

The clouds where really dark now and what ever lift there was, was strong and the same went for the sink but Falmouth was getting near. So on I went still under the convergence but sinking fast I could see some wispy cloud sticking out of a dark bit ahead so I aimed for it. I must have been about 100 feet below the wispy cloud when I hit the core and turned hard and in seconds I was in the cloud so straightened up and whacked the speed bar on I thought I was on a path out of the cloud so I was happy. I would pop out with a bit more height on, but my altimeter was screaming at me and I could just make out my white wing above my head, 12 m a second up, speed bar on full and still white out. It felt like forever and I'm still telling my self you will pop out in a minute. Then I thought I was quite close to the sea... I might pop out there. Shit!

I looked at my height knowing that base was at 677m it's now on 1416 m and almost a continues tone. Then I hit some sink. I have never been so happy to find some because at least 10 mins had past since I could see. I held on to that sink like it was a good core and a few minutes later I caught a glimpse of the ground through a hole in the cloud. I then locked the wing into a spiral and held on popped out around 600m ATO. The strange thing was I hadn't really moved from when I went in.

Falmouth was now a glide away so after cacking my self with the cloud thing I headed on arriving at Manporth beach with around take off height 37 m on the altimeter. Then another thermal ...very weak but possible. I must have played for 10 mins in this and gained 10 meters after which I headed to my landing area which was on the top off a hill as I did not know the wind direction and didn't want to mess thing up now. A slow 360 sorted the direction and a perfect landing in a sw breeze finished my flight - a personal best in Cornwall.

[22 mile distance]

J J T