

Fran's Page



I first became interested in models (of the flying sort) when at senior school. The model shop in Gloucester, at that time, was only a few minutes' walk from the school gate. The shop was Fletchers and on the ground floor they sold sporting equipment mainly guns, fishing tackle and the like. The first floor had the modelling items and it was from that shop I bought my first model kits which were balsa tissue covered models. They were both none powered and rubber powered models, the rubber powered models didn't have a very long life if the rubber was over wound, which did happen. I then tried Jetex powered models with not too much success, so the Jetex unit was fixed to a small plank of wood (very crude) which I free sailed (no RC) to and fro across a local pond.

I left school and served a five year apprenticeship in electrical engineering, after which I was invited to join one of Her Majesties armed forces. I choose the RAF and duly served my two years conscription as an "air navigation radar" technician, repairing and calibrating radar equipment used in aircraft. During the years between leaving school and leaving the RAF I did no modelling at all, except for reading the model magazines, the interest was still there.

Aero modelling was rekindled in the early 1960s building from scratch as well as from kits and of course rebuilding when the landings didn't go quite to plan. My first radio set up was a home built single channel transmitter and "super regen" receiver, it wasn't very reliable, so many hours were spent chasing fly-a-ways. The circuit for a 27 MHz digital transmitter and "super het" receiver called Classic was published in one of the model magazines, so I built a set and this transformed model flying for me, proportional control on all channels and a reliability that was so much better, even so, on occasions the models still suffered untimely landings and had to be rebuilt.

Having flown IC powered aircraft, gliders both slope and thermal I progressed to helicopters my first being a MicroMold Lark. After several pod and boom models my thoughts turned to tandem rotor helicopters so I designed and scratch built a Chinook to 1/12th scale. The Chinook was the most complex model I had built so far. Designing the model from a small three view drawing, machining the components, then building the model and installing RC control system was quite a challenge.

My interest widened to model boats mostly electric powered scale kits but I have built one steam powered model. My model boating also includes the challenge of model submarines, scratch built of course, and dynamic divers I felt were the best option as they are less likely to be lost below the waves, stop the drive motor and the model pops up to the surface. With an ever widening interest I ventured into hovercraft and multicopters. Both of these branches of modelling have presented a whole new range of challenges.