

Published by the BMAA
MARCH-APRIL 2004



MF
Microlight Flying

A little bird that means a lot

by Dave Broom

The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) is a global non-profit making organisation responsible for furthering aeronautical activities throughout the world. All national and international record claims and competitions must comply with their rules.

The FAI also has a system designed to award personal achievement in the field of microlighting, known as the Colibri awards (Colibri is French for Hummingbird). Once you have earned a Colibri award (which is recognised worldwide), it is yours for life. A Colibri can be an excellent memento of a great flight, as well as an incentive to push your own personal limits and try something new.

There is a range of Colibri badges available for differing levels of microlighting achievement, ranging from Bronze to Diamond level. The requirements for each are listed below.

Bronze Colibri

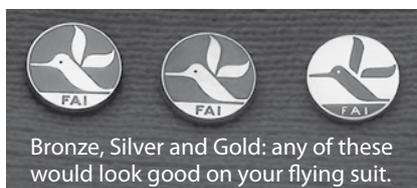
- 20h solo on microlight aircraft including at least 50 flights.
- Three precision landings within 10m of the centre of a given spot.
- One precision landing within 20m of the centre of a given spot from a height of 300m (1000ft) AGL with the throttle fully closed.
- Demonstration of correct go-around (overshoot) procedure.
- Two 75km cross-country flights over a triangular course, one with an outlanding at a designated point along the route.

Since the British Microlight licence is judged to be of a higher standard than this basic requirement, if you've got your unrestricted licence, you are already qualified for the Bronze Colibri! Simply send a photocopy of your licence to Lew Perring with the administration fee and you'll receive the award. Even the Bronze is quite prestigious in countries where the licence requirements are less onerous. Some touring British pilots have been treated like Sky Gods once the Colibri badge has been seen on their flying suit!

Silver Colibri

- 100h on microlight aircraft including at least 200 logged flights.
- Two flights to approximately 300m (1000ft) AGL then stop engine(s), complete a 360° turn and land within 5m of the centre of a given spot.
- Four 150km cross-country flights with any landing or turnpoints pre-declared. The courses may be straight, dog-leg (one turnpoint), out and return, or triangular (two turnpoints).

This award requires a few more cross-country flights, but most microlight pilots will be completing flights of this length within their first 100h as a matter of course. This year, while flying to Spamfield, why not get an FAI award at the same time? I would advise a bit of practice on PFL technique before committing to an engine-off landing; do it a couple of times with the engine ticking over!



Gold Colibri

- 300h on microlight aircraft.
- Have competed in two National or FAI-recognised international microlight competitions, as pilot-in-command.
- Complete a tour of at least 1000km in length to a pre-declared flight plan within seven consecutive days, the route to contain at least three control points which the aircraft is observed to overfly or where a landing is made. Only the final landing of the tour may be made at the initial departure point.
- Hold one of the following: national microlight instructor rating; national microlight record (or have held such a record); national microlight seaplane rating plus two 75km cross-country flights on a seaplane; national Alpine rating; have participated in an FAI first-category event, as pilot-in-command.

The prestigious Gold award requires some fairly major commitment to win, and should challenge even the most enthusiastic of pilots. However, it is by no means impossible, and pilots with over 300h may well have completed a large section of these requirements already.

The national competitions are held throughout the country, and require only a small (£15-£30) entry fee to try. A first-category event, such as last year's World Microlight Championships, would also be acceptable.

The obvious event to complete the touring requirement used to be the Round Britain Rally, but already alternatives (such as FlyUK, details on the BMAA website) are being organised. Even a private tour of that length is

within most people's budgets — a modern microlight can do that much in a day!

Unfortunately, Britain lacks the hills to warrant a National Alpine rating, but there are a few schools that can offer seaplane training and hire (most recently Gerry Breen's in Portugal — Ed).

Finally, Britain's national record collection is woefully bare. Anyone willing to do the paperwork could probably get a national record in their class by taking off, flying a circuit and landing again! Richard Meredith-Hardy has an excellent website describing how to go about setting a record at <www.flymicro.com/records/>.

Diamond Colibri

This is only awarded directly by the FAI, for an outstanding microlighting achievement. Some well-known British owners of this award include Brian Milton, Colin Bodill and Paul Dewhurst. It is open to anyone qualified to Silver standard, although all the other badges need to be collected in the correct order (Bronze then Silver then Gold).

How to Get the Award

Any precision landings must be witnessed by a BMAA observer. However, any inspector or instructor at your local club is implicitly qualified as an observer, and observer application forms are available from the BMAA for anyone who is familiar with microlights. An observer also needs to receive details of any planned cross-country flights before you take off, as in order to qualify your plan needs to be within 15% of your actual flight time. That means any of you guilty of just filling the tanks and following the GPS will have to remember how to do triangle of velocities! Any out-landings can be signed off by a suitable person in authority at the remote site (the CFI of a flying club is ideal).

Then you and the observer simply fill in the application form (you will receive an application form for the Silver Colibri along with your Bronze award), write a cheque made payable to the BMAA for the correct amount (£5 for Bronze and Silver, £10 for Gold), and send it all to Lew Perring at 56 Green Lane, Rednage, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 4DN; tel 01494 483492.

You will receive your badge, along with a certificate (which you will need to send back with any subsequent claims). Turnaround time is usually a couple of days, so why not have a go at finding how high up the Colibri rating you can get this year? **MF**