

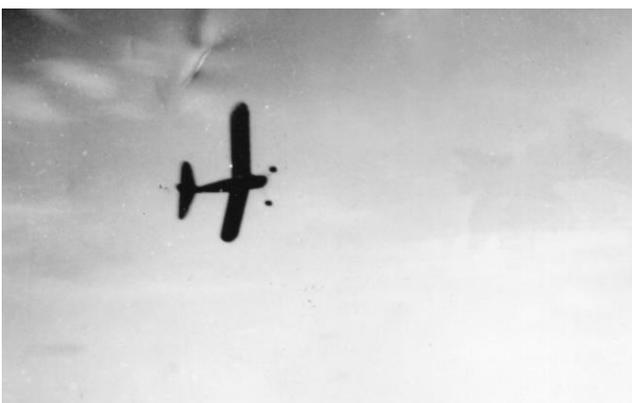


## A Short History of Brighton Radio Flying Club



In 1934, a small group of model aircraft enthusiasts began The Brighton and District Model Aero Club, flying diesel-engined and rubber-powered free flight and control line models on the downs north of the Chatri War Memorial on the outskirts of Brighton. This small Club has continued to this day, albeit with a diminishing membership, but now flies free flight models on the Ashdown Forest.

Here are some snaps taken from those early days between 1948 and 1950 showing free flight and control line models in action.





And a very young Percy Wixler (aged around 15) with his Hermes model.

During the early sixties, it would appear that some of the members of this original Club, using radio controlled models, began to use part of the Wild Park, a flat area known as "Thirty Nine Acres", accessible from a car park at the top of Ditchling Road, Brighton, and started the forerunner of our Club, then known as 'The Thirty Nine Acre Club'. Meetings were held in various members' houses and for a short time a Club magazine was published.

On most Saturday mornings, members would meet at Arthur Mullet's model shop in Meeting House Lane in the area known as 'The Brighton Lanes', one side of the shop would be the group interested in building Balsa wood flying models, and on the other side of the shop a group that built plastic kit models would hold their informal meetings.

Later, the Club became affiliated with the S.M.A.E, the organisation representing model flying at that time, which became the British Model Flying Association.

Also at this time, with the advent of improved radio control equipment, the Club changed its name to the "Brighton Radio Flying Club" and began to meet on the first Wednesday of each month at the original Patcham community centre, where after Club business was finished, the remainder of the evening was filled by Club members or guest speakers giving talks on various aspects of aircraft modelling.

Before the advent of ARTF models, the Club would hold a 'bring a model' night, when almost all Club members would take part and bring along fifty or more of their scratch built or home built kit models for judging by their peers. *See [link to sample of Newsletter produced in 1986 for Club members.](#)*

In the late eighties, a petition raised by the nearby residents of Coldean was presented to the local council, complaining about the noise made by the Club's model aircraft. This resulted in the Council offering to lease to the Club the current site, a forty metre square patch of land on a local tenant farmer's field for its flying activities, at Saddlescombe Road, near Devil's Dyke. This wasn't without its problems as the farmer wasn't too happy at

losing some of his land and cattle were put onto the field, requiring the purchase of a small battery powered electric fence to protect the square. Corn was planted up to the boundary of the runway and the farmer then forced the cessation of power flying until harvest time, fearing that hot engines may set fire to his crop.

Gradually, after several years of negotiation between the Club Committee and the Brighton Council, the trees on the far boundary were removed and the runway was doubled in length. The hill behind the pits was included in the leased area and the Club's present boundaries were established and fenced.

Club photo at the new flying site, Saddlescombe Road.



Various improvements have been made to the site since then. Initially members walked diagonally across the runway from the car park to gain access to the pits area and flyers were permitted to fly in every direction around the pits. As membership increased, more emphasis was placed on safety and flying was restricted to the area in front of the flight line. In the late nineties, a new pathway was constructed along the eastern boundary, farthest from the runway, to provide safer access to the pits.

Not long after this improvement it was decided to construct a rabbit proof fence, as constantly filling the numerous rabbit holes before each flying session was causing bumps in the runway. Some years later a series of steel posts were erected on the boundary of the car park to make it more secure.

See if you can recognise these two members from the 1980s who are still very active in the club today.



And of course, here is long standing member Mick Skinner proudly receiving one of his many trophies/plaques at an award club meeting.

The Club is still very active today with a steady annual membership of around 70+ members and meetings continue to be held at Patcham Community Centre or at the flying field on a regular basis. In more recent years, the Club has held 'Indoor Model Flying' sessions at a local sports hall during the winter months, which all members are invited to attend. In addition, a group of members have recently organised slope soaring events at a nearby location. BRFC has an active social calendar with competitions and events run throughout the year and speakers are regularly invited to attend monthly club meetings to give presentations on interesting topics.

Also available to read on the website is a copy of one of the original club newsletters that would have been produced around the mid-80s, and personal recollections of long-standing member, Arnold Murdoch.

A short film of Club flying activities in the earlier years can also be viewed on the website.

Below are some examples of an original membership card and flying permits between 1974 and 1983.

Member/Permit No. 5  
 SMAE No. 69944

BRIGHTON RADIO FLYING CLUB

This is to certify that the person named hereon is a fully paid up member of the B.R.F.C. until the expiry date shown and is covered by the Approved Club Insurance Policy.

Exclusions: Demonstration Flying of any kind, unless B.R.F.C. Committee approved.

Membership of the B.R.F.C. is conditional on the possession of a current radiollicence and the signature on this will be considered to represent acceptance of current club rules.

| Date of expiry | Subscription | Treasurer's Signature |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 31-12-78       | £6.00        | <i>T. Clark</i>       |
| 31-12-79       | £6.00        | <i>D. Simpson</i>     |
| 9-1-80         | £8.00        | <i>A. Head</i>        |
| 31-12-81       | 9.00         | <i>[Signature]</i>    |
| 31-12-82       | 12.00        | <i>[Signature]</i>    |

SURNAME ABRAHAMS INITIALS R.M.C.

ADDRESS XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

HOVE XXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

MEMBERS SIGNATURE *R.M.C. Abrahams*

SECRETARY'S SIGNATURE *[Signature]*

No. 377  
 COUNTY BOROUGH OF BRIGHTON  
 PARKS & GARDENS DEPARTMENT  
 Moulsecomb Place, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GL

**PERMIT**

M. R.M.C. ABRAHAMS  
 of XXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
HOVE  
 To fly radio controlled model aircraft at 39 acres.

THIS PERMIT IS VALID  
 from 15th May 1978 to 30th April 1979

*[Signature]*  
 Director of Parks

This Permit to be produced on request to any Police Officer or Officer of the Corporation.

No. 343  
 COUNTY BOROUGH OF BRIGHTON  
 PARKS & GARDENS DEPARTMENT  
 Moulsecomb Place, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GL

**PERMIT**

M. R.M.C. ABRAHAMS  
 of XXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
HOVE, BN2 4RL  
 To FLY RADIO CONTROLLED MODEL AIRCRAFT AT THIRTY NINE ACRES

THIS PERMIT IS VALID  
 from 1.5.74 to 30.4.75

*[Signature]*  
 Director of Parks

This Permit to be produced on request to any Police Officer or Officer of the Corporation.

No. 298  
 COUNTY BOROUGH OF BRIGHTON  
 PARKS & GARDENS DEPARTMENT  
 Moulsecomb Place, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GL

**PERMIT**

M. R.M.C. ABRAHAMS  
 of XXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
HOVE  
 To FLY RADIO CONTROLLED MODEL AIRCRAFT AT THIRTY NINE ACRES

THIS PERMIT IS VALID  
 from 1.5.73 to 30.4.74

*[Signature]*  
 Director of Parks

This Permit to be produced on request to any Police Officer or Officer of the Corporation.

No. 241  
 BOROUGH OF BRIGHTON  
 PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
 Moulsecomb Place, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GL

**PERMIT**

M. [Signature]  
 of [Signature]  
 To fly radio controlled model aircraft at 39 acres.

THIS PERMIT IS VALID  
 from 1-4-82 to 31-3-83

*[Signature]*  
 Director of Parks

This Permit to be produced on request to any Police Officer or Officer of the Corporation.

No. 133  
 BOROUGH OF BRIGHTON  
 PARKS & GARDENS DEPARTMENT  
 Moulsecomb Place, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GL

**PERMIT**

M. THE HOLDER OF THE PERMIT  
 of BRIGHTON R.F.C.  
 To fly radio controlled model aircraft at 39 acres.

THIS PERMIT IS VALID  
 from 1-4-80 to 31-2-81

*[Signature]*  
 Director of Parks

This Permit to be produced on request to any Police Officer or Officer of the Corporation.

No. 113  
 BOROUGH OF BRIGHTON  
 PARKS & GARDENS DEPARTMENT  
 Moulsecomb Place, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GL

**PERMIT**

M. Holder of this permit  
 of Brighton R.F.C.  
 To fly radio controlled model aircraft at 39 acres.

THIS PERMIT IS VALID  
 from 1-4-79 to 31-3-80

*[Signature]*  
 Director of Parks

This Permit to be produced on request to any Police Officer or Officer of the Corporation.