

Saturday, June 8, 2002, 00:00 by Joanne Cocks

## Gozo-Malta flight by model Piper to raise money for Siggiewi homes

### Open day at Hal Far Model Flying Association



George Bonnici, making sure that everything is in working order on the Piper Cub J3.

A locally built model aircraft, with a 3.6-metre wingspan, will be flown from Ta' Xmajma in Gozo to the base of the Hal Far Model Flying Association tomorrow morning to raise money for Dar tal-Providenza, the Siggiewi residential homes for the handicapped.

The yellow Piper Cub J3, which is one-third the size of a normal Piper Cub J3, will make the two-hour flight with the help of six club members, who will be manning the radio controls.

Main flyer Jesmond Bajada said the flyers, in two groups of three, were needed to help each other during the flight.

"We will leave Ta' Xmajma and head for Hondoq ir-Rummien on a pick-up. There, all flyers and other crew members will board a cabin cruiser and an open-deck boat and sail behind Comino, past St Paul's Bay, Sliema, and on to Birzebbuga close to the Freeport, where we will board another pick-up and head for the base in Hal Far.

"It is important to have more than one flyer so that while one of us is boarding a boat or a van, another is able on his radio to maintain the Piper on its flight," he said.

The aim of tomorrow's flight is to encourage the public to visit the association's open day at Hal Far that day, when visitors will be asked to make a minimum donation of 25 cents for the Dar tal-Providenza.

Work on the Piper Cub began some 18 months ago. The plane, made from balsa wood and covered in plastic materials, cost the club some Lm900, excluding the radio equipment and 41cc engine. Its cruising speed is 45 knots.

It was built from scratch by Mr Bajada, George Bonnici, Alfred Pace and Joseph Saliba. Mr Bajada said the plane is believed to be the largest model aircraft in Malta, having a 3.6 metre wingspan and being 2.33 metres long.

Its first maiden voyage was held on April 1 and since then it has been tested regularly and during one test flight was flown for three continuous hours.

Once it reaches Hal Far, following an estimated two-hour flight which starts at 9 a.m. the Piper Cub will make a five-minute flight over the association's base, before being landed by Mr Bajada. Another display flight with the aircraft will take place at around 1 p.m., when it will be joined by other Piper Cubs.

During the open day there will be other spectacular displays by members of the Hal Far Model Flying Association. Club members are also putting up a display and simulation of war aircraft, including Spitfires and Mustangs.

Anyone interested in the hobby will also get the chance to try his hands at flying model aircraft, getting hands-on experience and what it feels like to fly a plane at the touch of a joystick.

Donations for Dar tal-Providenza may also be made by phone, until tomorrow, on 500 49522 for a donation of Lm2; 500 49523 for a donation of Lm3 or directly into two bank accounts - HSBC account 013149406050 or Bank of Valletta account 17319718018.

### Special handstamp

A special handstamp to mark tomorrow's first model aircraft flight from Gozo to Hal Far will be used at the Philatelic Bureau, 305 Qormi Road, Marsa, indicating the date and destination of the flight, Maltapost said.

All those interested in obtaining the special postmark are to hand in to the Philatelic Bureau, by today at 1 p.m., their addressed covers with the proper postage affixed on them. These covers will also bear the destination's metal hand-stamp "Birzebbuga - 09.06.02" on the back of the cover.

Further information regarding these arrangements may be obtained from the Philatelic Bureau, tel. 2123 9153.