

Monday, June 10, 2002, 00:00

Model plane flown from Gozo... in spite of the wind



The first ever Gozo-Malta non-stop crossing by a radio-controlled model plane was successfully concluded yesterday by members of the Hal Far Model Flying Association.

Despite strong winds and grey skies, members of the club managed to fly a scale model of a Piper J-3 Cub between the two islands in about 90 minutes.

The model plane 'took off' for the 30-mile endurance flight from Ta' Xhajma in Ghajnsielem and landed at Hal Far. It was controlled by six members of the flying association on land and on boats.

The man who hatched up the idea for this flight was Jesmond Bajada who has been flying model planes for the past 18 years.

Made mainly of balsa wood, the model plane has a wingspan of 3.6 metres and is about 2.3 metres long. It took 18 months to build and those who put their minds and hands together in building it included Mr Bajada, George Bonnici, Alfred Pace and Joseph Saliba.

"The most difficult thing in organising this event was to obtain the necessary permits and get the model plane insured. Similar events have been organised abroad, among them the crossing of the English Channel, a distance of 22 miles.

"The flight from Gozo was good and the plane could have arrived 15 minutes earlier at Hal Far had the wind been lighter," he said.

Mr Bajada explained that the plane, which has a range of four hours flying, was carrying nine litres of petrol. The association is now thinking of flying the plane over a much longer distance.

Yesterday's flight was in aid of Dar tal-Providenza in Siggiewi, the residential complex for persons with disability. Anyone wishing to make a donation can do so either through the bank account at HSBC 013149406050 or at the Bank of Valletta 173-1971801-8. Donations may be made also by phoning 50049522 to give Lm2 or else 50049523 to give Lm3. The lines and bank accounts will be open till Saturday.

Set up in 1990, the Hal Far Model Flying Association has about 120 members.

"Some members build models from scratch while others buy a ready-made kit which could put you back by Lm250 which, all in all, means that model flying is not an expensive hobby.

"The satisfaction of flying models is in seeing how what you have built with your own hands will take to the air and follow your commands," Mr Bajada said.

The association's web site is www.geocities.com/hfmfa

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