

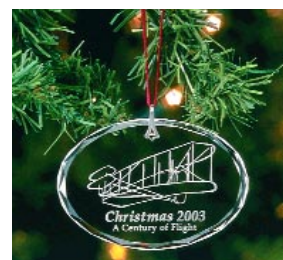
# TOP GEAR

PRODUCTS | BOOKS | VIDEOS | SOFTWARE | FLIGHT SIMULATORS

## Xmas Flyer

Sporty's Christmas decoration ■ [www.sportys.com](http://www.sportys.com) ■ \$24.95

It was inevitable, given the proximity of Christmas to the great centenary, that Wright Flyers and tinsel would appear together. So put one on your tree with this year's crystal Christmas ornament from Sportys. It comes, says Sporty's, with 'a colorful ribbon to use for hanging'.



## Bose Headset X

1000 Euros (excl VAT) ■ +31 (0)299-390777

I've flown with more types of headset than I care to remember. Some were fine, some hurt a bit and others had a clamping action so strong that the Japanese could use them to train Sumo wrestlers. For the price of one set of these Bose headsets you could buy six or seven hours in the air. The money you'd spend equipping a four-seat tourer would almost buy a re-spray. By any standards they are expensive, and when they landed on my desk with a stem 'give them back' I couldn't really see why people would spend that much money.

I took the Bose on a three hour flight and they were simply fantastic, the best I've ever used by



The Bose Aviation Headset X – expensive, but very high quality with excellent performance

a significant margin. Not only were they very comfortable, but the audio was clear and the ANR system transformed the Cessna from a 182 into a Citation. Okay that's a bit of an exaggeration, but you know what I mean.

The battery does have a habit of running out if you forget to switch the ANR unit off (why isn't

there an auto-off circuit in a top of the range unit?) but if you do a lot of flying and you like your stress levels to be the same at the end of the flight as they were at the beginning you may just find that you have to dig deep and buy the Bose. **Ian Seager**

## Computer-based PPL training discs

Transair Pilot Shop ■ Complete set (without R/T) £249.95 (inc VAT) ■ [www.transair.com](http://www.transair.com) ■ 01273 466000

CBT – Computer Based Training – for the ab initio PPL student is no longer just 'the future', it's the 'here and now'. This package from Oxford Air Training and Transair Pilot Shop contains six CD-ROM discs for use on Windows 98 or later. Each disc covers a ground examination subject for the JAA or

UK National PPL (the seventh topic, Radio Telephony, already exists separately).

Detail in each exam subject is covered by animated diagrams while a voice over ensures points are made. Still photography is used where needed, eg discussing a navigation route. Movie clips are kept to a minimum, presumably to keep the whole course on

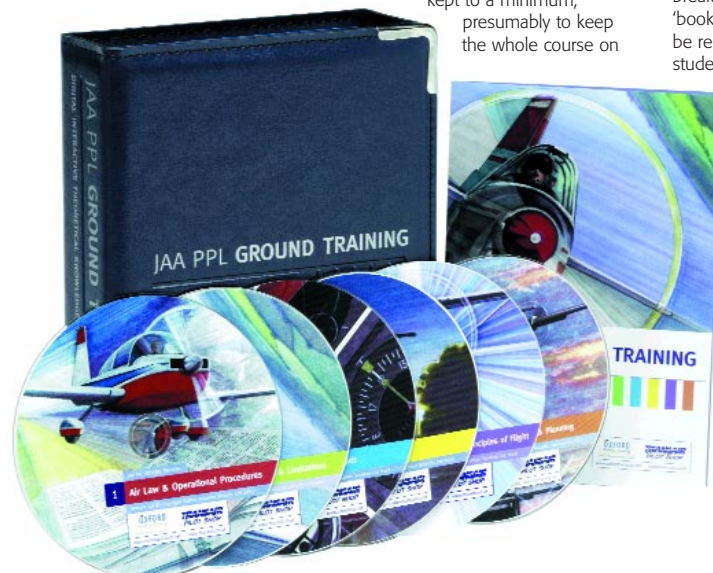
just six CDs and package price under control, thus ensuring widest possible take up from the target audience, the ab initio student.

"You have control" is heard at the end of the introduction on each disk, summing up a major benefit. Students can move forward or replay detail as necessary, and, if a break or further thought is needed, 'bookmarking' allows the lesson to be restarted later from where the student left off.

Students self-check understanding through multi-choice examination questions similar to 'the real thing'. In doing so, they practise reading questions properly and differentiating between seemingly similar, yet subtly different, answers – previously sometimes a skill learned the hard way failing PPL ground exams.

The beauty of CBT in general and this package in particular is the consistency and quality of both presentation and instruction. Your personal trainer never has a bad day.

**Irv Lee**



## Memphis Belle B-17

£20 ■ for CFS3/FS2004 ■ [www.justflight.com](http://www.justflight.com)

Take control of the famous B-17 'Memphis Belle'. This package contains a flying model of Memphis Belle plus paintwork and Basingbourn for FS2002/2004, with additional missions for CFS3. What is one of the most important bombers of WW2 like to fly? I loaded up FS2004 to find out. Mistake one is that there seems to



## Jet Provost: Hot Seat

From the Pilot's seat: Jet Provost ■ [www.garmax-aviation.com](http://www.garmax-aviation.com) ■ £25



As a PPL, I would give various of my appendages to be able to fly fast, ex-military jets. So this video has appeal. The box claims we will be taken through the "briefing, walk around and start up procedure" with "all stages of flight from circuit to aerobatics". Perfect.

The first section features the instructor giving the whole pre-flight brief to a silent student while you watch, becoming increasingly bored. This continues through the exterior aircraft checks, startup procedure and taxi halfway round North Weald. And then, when you're finally expecting action, you are led up "Anticlimax Alley" with just a single circuit.

So much for "all stages of flight". What other flying action is there? Another pilot takes us through four or five basic aerobatic manoeuvres. Sadly, that's it. Sound here suffers from the RAF mask 'crackle' – subtitles would have been useful. Other material? Some textual information on the JP. There are interviews of three pilots, yet the interviewer asks too few questions that produce any insight.

Those who require a pre-flight instructional video for the JP may find this video of some benefit. For the rest of us, we are left behind with little action. This I fear stems from mistakes made in pre-production planning. The use of a presenter as a vocal student pilot would have stimulated interest. £25 is just too much to ask.

**Neil Gascoigne**

be no force feedback profile for the model. Even without this, I had a sense of disconnection from the virtual flying experience. Was I really flying a B-17 with four large radials or an oversized C172? Poor show, JustFlight, when, for example, Microsoft can do a better job with the smaller DC-3.

Other notable disappointments were a standard panel which looks flustered and amateur. Having said that, the rumbling radial engines, nice paint work and virtual panel detailing are implemented in a much better way.

In CFS3, you get the added bonus of being able to blast bits of

Jerry to pieces, be that bombing or shooting from one of the many gunnery stations on the Fort.

Overall, I felt disappointed. The aircraft model felt cheap and more time should have been spent on it. Is it worth the £20 asking price? Probably not.

**Neil Gascoigne**



## ON THE Shelf

### HOW WE INVENTED THE AIRPLANE

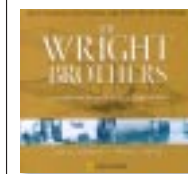
By Orville Wright Published by Dover c. \$9.95 ISBN 0486 256626



Written by the man himself, with commentary by Fred C Kelly (a friend), lavishly illustrated by photographs. Absolutely fascinating. It's quite technical with a dry matter-of-fact style, but if you are interested in the process – the experiments, development of ideas, and the construction of the Flyer – and what it was like to fly, you'll read it in one go. I learned a lot. For instance, the reason for the anhedral on the early machines: although it made the aircraft less stable laterally, it reduced the tendency to lift a wing in a crosswind. Kelly's commentary is excellent, too. He describes how that most famous photograph was taken – and it was no happy accident. A slim volume, but an essential addition to the library.

### THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

By Tom D Crouch, Peter L Jakab c. £25 ISBN 07922 69853



Perhaps lighter on text than the other books, and widely spaced too, this comprehensive look at the Wright brothers covers all aspects of their life and things pertinent: there's a considerable section on the efforts of those that came before, starting with Sir George Cayley and Lilienthal, and looking at the efforts of their competitors. As you'd expect from National Geographic, the photography (even those of well known images) is writ large and beautiful. Good bibliography and index, it's more of a coffee table book than a detailed examination, but a very good one for all that. Worth it for the photographs alone, you'll also learn more than just the main points of their endeavours.

### FIRST TO FLY

By James Tobin Published by John Murray c. £20 ISBN 0719557275



This book covers a narrower period in detail, from Langley's experiments to about 1910, when the opposition began to go faster, higher, further, and better, and Wilbur retired from flying. It's great read – the style flows, and paints a convincing picture of both the events and the personalities. It weaves a complex tale with the Wright family in the centre; I gained a number of insights into the character of the players as well as catching some of the excitement of events – the flights around New York, the first time all but a handful had seen an aeroplane in action, were a monumental event, with a subplot of growing rivalry with Curtis. There's a lot on Langley's 'Aerodromes' as well – central to all sorts of threads from court battles to the squabble with the Smithsonian. Cracking stuff – top of my list.

### THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

By Ian Mackersey Pub Little, Brown c. £20 ISBN 0316861448



This is a book of two parts – up to the period they perfected their powered airplanes, a time of experiment and intellectual endeavour; and after, when the Wright Brothers' lives were dominated by finances and dispute, law battles and determining their place in history. I particularly like the descriptions of the brothers wrestling with the problems of control as they flew, crashed, and modified their gliders – by the time the first powered flight took place, they were accomplished airmen, the only ones in the world: they were confident about flying in pretty high winds – indeed, that historic first flight was into a 27mph wind, and although the duration was 12 long seconds, the distance covered was barely three times the wingspan. Well worth a place on the bookshelf.

All book reviews: Miles McCallum

Got anything to review? Then send it to Reviews Editor, FLYER, 9 Riverside Court, Lower Bristol Road, BA2 3DZ