

POOLEYS

**Microlight  
and  
Small Seaplanes**

*Anna Markey*

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Microlight Book and Small Seaplanes - Anna Markey

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# *Anna Markey*

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Anna Markey started her flying career on paragliders in the Wessex hills, before taking to powered flight on flexwing microlights at Old Sarum airfield. In parallel with pursuing an international career as a financial and IT consultant, she moved on to 3-axis microlights, a JAR PPL and light aircraft seaplane rating. Subsequently she became a microlight instructor and took a well-timed career break, seizing an opportunity to instruct on seaplane microlights in Sweden - 'the best seaplane environment in Europe'. Since then, Anna has become a BMAA examiner and now offers the microlight seaplane rating to UK pilots from her Swedish lake-land base at Siljan Airpark. This book evolved out of a need to bridge the gap in training material between light aircraft and smaller seaplanes. Anna uses the amphibious Seamax 3-axis flying boat and Polaris am-FIB flexwing for training.



Photo: Anna with her Seamax training aircraft in Sweden

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# *Introduction*

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## **Introduction to Microlight and Small Seaplanes**



Photo: DTA Floatplane Prototype, south of France



Photo: Seamax Flying Boat, Stockholm archipelago

The primary intention of this book is to assist the novice seaplane pilot in understanding the techniques and acquiring the knowledge to attain his sea rating in a microlight or small seaplane. In doing so, it is not intended to be a substitute for proper instruction gained with an experienced seaplane instructor. Rather, it is intended as a supplement to such instruction and may be regarded as study material prior to attending a seaplane course. If a prospective seaplane pilot has fully read and digested the material contained herein, it will make both his task - and that of the instructor - so much easier during the course itself.

There is much to explain with regard to seaplane flying and this book grew out of the need to produce 'long briefings' to microlight seaplane students, where such existing material was either difficult to obtain or more geared towards larger, light aircraft seaplanes such as Cessna floatplanes. To my knowledge, no book to date has been written specifically for small seaplanes and this book therefore aims to fill that gap. The light aircraft seaplane pilot may also find much of technical interest in this book, since many of the techniques and characteristics discussed are equally relevant to all seaplanes. However, there are differences between flying high-inertia and low-inertia aircraft, as well as differences between particular types and this book is definitely not 'type specific'. It is crucial to thoroughly read the Pilots' Operating Handbook (POH) for the specific aircraft one intends to fly and refer to the manufacturer for any clarification/omissions.

Readers of this book should be aware that the range of techniques covered is primarily those basic techniques which are required to obtain a sea rating. It also includes some areas which are considered 'advanced' seaplane flying, such as operating on currents and takeoff from restricted areas. However it should be borne in mind that ANY seaplane flying - even that considered within the 'basic' category - is more fraught with dangers and less forgiving of error than normal land plane flying. In this sense, ALL seaplane flying is 'advanced flying' and as such should be treated with due caution and respect.

Not only does this book deal with the practical techniques associated with flying seaplanes, it also gives an outline of the requirements for the seamanship exam from a theoretical point of view. Therefore the subjects of Buoys and Buoyage, Collision Regulations, Tides and other subjects relevant to the theoretical exam are included.

This book is written as a generic guide to flying microlight seaplanes and other small seaplanes. The main body of each chapter covers techniques which are relevant to 3-axis types as well as in principle to flexwing types. Major differences relating to flexwing aircraft are discussed in separate sections entitled '**Flexwing Considerations**', which follow the main body of each chapter. Therefore the flexwing pilot should read the main body of each chapter in addition to the '**Flexwing Considerations**' sections. It is assumed that the reader is already aware of how to fly a low-inertia aeroplane and of the control differences between 3-axis and flexwing aircraft.

With regard to obtaining a rating, one important question that might arise is 'what is the point?' since at the time of writing there are very few UK-certified microlight seaplanes (mainly due to weight restrictions) and few seaplanes of any type in the UK (although their number is growing). The answer to this is multi-faceted. Part of the answer relies on the fact that more and more microlight and small aircraft manufacturers are looking to provide floats as an option on their aircraft and that given sufficient time and interest such options will be available within the permitted weight range.

It is also necessary to have somewhere to fly the seaplane. Scotland and Northern Ireland are better endowed than England and Wales with inland waterways, and more disposed to grant the necessary permissions to make use of them. However there are several bodies of water in England and Wales that could be used by seaplanes and simply require that one makes the necessary enquiries to obtain permission. The whole of the UK also has a significant area of coast line. Sea water is somewhat less seaplane-friendly than inland waterways and poses a bigger problem with corrosion but is by no means unusable. All of these potential 'hydrodromes' require that permission be sought from the relevant land owners,

local authorities or port authorities. It will be up to pilots who want to fly seaplanes in their local area to foster a relationship with their local water authority to gain access to some of these waterways. That is something that will take time to negotiate but should become more commonplace given sufficient enthusiasm from the right kind of knowledgeable and responsible pilots. Equally, with travel to Europe becoming increasingly common, there are many opportunities for flying seaplanes overseas.

And so to the point: which is simply that seaplane flying is one of the most fun forms of aviation invented. Seaplanes and microlights are natural allies: when a light aircraft seaplane pilot waxes lyrical about the joys of seaplane flying it is often the aspect of freedom from controlled airspace and the restrictions of the circuit that are the points most emphasised. These freedoms have long been the privilege of microlight pilots, for whilst many operate from controlled airfields, they still have the freedom to land at 'unimproved' sites and farmers' fields (with the necessary permission). Adding floats to the equation means taking this freedom a stage further by allowing the opportunity to land and take off on water, a simply exhilarating experience which once tried never fails to leave one wanting more. Water flying is fun, complex and challenging, a combination which should appeal to any pilot wanting to add an exciting new dimension to their flying skills.



Photo: Piper Cub on floats, Loch Earn, Scotland.

One of the lighter-weight floatplanes in the 'light aircraft' category, this is a 2-seater tandem floatplane.