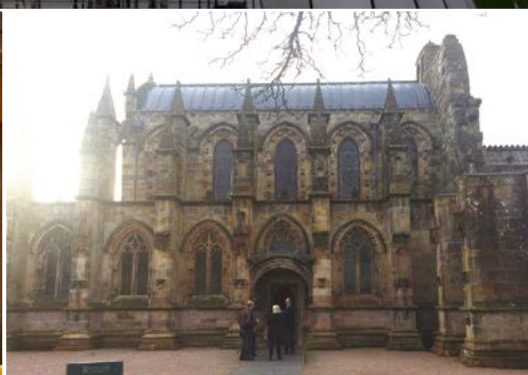
FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

March 2020 newsletter no. 133









CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

We are in a fast changing world! Whatever we blame for climate change – natural cycles, man made or both – we are going to have to adapt our farming to more extreme weather. This will have to be factored in with the new Agricultural Bill as well – together they could lead to some radical changes to our present regimes. We must be adaptable with cropping and cultivations, as farmers always have been, to deal with factors beyond our control.

In the farm office things are evolving - we are getting totally computer reliant. We have BPS online (until the UK adopts its own system of payments which will no doubt lead to even more problems with the RPA.) VAT has already gone to digital submissions and tax will follow. A lot of businesses are sending their invoices by email, with a simple button to press to make the payment. This can then be linked to the accounts program to make bookkeeping quick and simple.

Likewise, it is time for change within the Association. We must keep up with technology. We have a new website coming and we will be introducing online bookings and payments for events. The days of using cash, cheques and standing orders are numbered. Everything will be electronic - it is faster and easier.

I hear our ageing membership screaming that they don't even know where the on/off button is on the computer. But I do know that most people use a mobile telephone, have an email address and are lost (so to speak) without Skydemon. We are all taking on the electronic world. But for those that really are in the dark ages, there will be means to get by with old fashioned techniques in the Association – for a short time!

Do we stick with the old Lycoming swallowing 40 or 50 litres an hour of Avgas, or do we go for an aircraft with a Rotax or Technify motor consuming less than half the fuel? A positive move towards carbon zero? Do we stick with the AME or go for self declaration for our medical? I suppose it will all depend on what type of flying we want to do and where we want to go – and not least, what changes there will be if we leave EASA.

What will the FFA look like in another 20 years' time? Will there be any young farmers who want to fly? For that matter, what will farming look like?

Let's hope we don't follow the US International Flying Farmers organisation (IFF), which peaked at 11,000 members in 1977. The organisation was started in 1945 and at one time they could influence the aircraft manufacturers to build suitable aircraft. The Luscombe Silvaire was developed to suit the IFF. Stinson developed the Flying Station Wagon and the Ryan Navion was advertised in the IFF magazine as "the plane you said you wanted".

But, as the number of farmer pilots declined and they couldn't fix their aircraft themselves with a bit of baler band like they used to, membership dropped to the current count of only 275 families! Far less than our membership.

To most of our members, the FFA is mostly a social organisation. But we must remember that we have a political side as well. We probably have the largest database of private strips in the world. It is important that the FFA are recognised by the authorities and we can maintain this privilege of being able to operate from our farms.

Let's now hope as Spring arrives, that the weather will allow us to get back on the land and most importantly, that our strips will dry out to allow us to fly again. I know one member who hasn't been able to get his aircraft out since September as his ground is saturated.

Paul Stephens

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Joined Since December 2019

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8683 Stuart Brierley, Itchingfield, West Sussex
8684 John Mack, Holt, Norfolk
8687 Winston Lee, Corsham, Wiltshire

Committee Meeting, February 26th 2020

The FFA committee met at the Farmers Club in London on February 26th. It was to become the longest committee meeting in our history. All the committee were present, and the meeting started promptly at 10:00.

First of all, we had a meeting with the Department for Transport (DfT). Grant Shapps MP, our member who set up the APPG on General Aviation involving 208 parliamentary members, has now been made Secretary of State for Transport. Within this government department, he has set up a team dedicated to General Aviation and from that team, Emma Foley came to meet with us.

It appeared she wanted to meet with all stakeholders in GA and this was an opportunity for the FFA to highlight existing and potential issues. Grant Shapps' aim has always been to make the UK the best place for GA in the world. To this end, as a country, we need to encourage new pilots, which means having an infrastructure of airfields with instructors and examiners who are qualified to deal with modern aircraft with glass cockpits etc, together with maintenance units that can look after new types of aircraft and engines. Funds could well be available to support this modernisation.

Emma was interested in our comments about airspace grabbing, problems with the CAA, the protection of our airfields etc.

We moved onto the committee meeting proper. The Membership Secretary said there had been 3 new members enrolled and one resigned since the AGM, making a total of 419 members.

Our very efficient Treasurer, Andrew Cragg, explained that we were running at a small loss, but this was transient due to a new website being developed and the microphone audio system being depreciated. The website had to be brought up to date as the original was complicated and tired. The audio system has been a great success with those attending events, allowing our ageing and hard of hearing membership to easily concentrate on what our guides are saying.

Our Events Secretary, Neville Stops, said his aim was to have the Summer 2020 calendar in place before the issue of the December 2019 newsletter and this had been achieved. Incredibly, every event is fully subscribed which is credit to Neville for his drive and enthusiasm and the quality of events being arranged by the volunteer organisers. Long may this continue.

Neville even gave an outline of 2021 possibilities, which I was pleased to hear included events in the north and some farm visits – which is an important part of the FFA.

We review the amount we donate to different organisations each year. One of the purposes of supporting various organisations is to give us entry for our representatives to attend their meetings and have our say. If anyone has anything they would like brought up at GASCo, GAAC or GAP, please let me know and if these points haven't already been raised, our representatives will take your ideas to these meetings.

Andrew looked a bit deeper into what happens to our contributions and if we are being reasonable with the amounts. Two things came out of this. Firstly, although we donate £750 pa to AOPA, which makes the FFA a Corporate Member, it probably won't help individual members if they run into problems. AOPA is struggling a bit for resources and to this end, we can only encourage more members to take out subscriptions with AOPA. There are a lot of benefits. As well as having someone to help you if you get into a situation, you get a good periodical and a membership card with discounts available for all sorts of goods and services. They are a bit like the NFU – fighting GA's corner behind the scenes.

The other revelation was that the LAA don't really need our donations. They have a good amount of funds coming in from their membership, so on that basis we have reduced the donation down from £400 to £100 – but still keep a foot in the door.

The new website was probably the biggest point of discussion, which will lead onto online bookings and payments for events. The "old" website needed a thorough overhaul, so it was decided to start afresh. Giles Abrey, our newsletter editor has bravely taken this on board, and he showed a preview of the new site. It will be much improved, faster and have more features – but still retain features from the old site such as the membership list and the location maps of our airfields.

The online booking will be a big step forward for us, as will the online payments. All will be revealed shortly – hopefully in April or May. We are even working on integrating an easier means of displaying our airstrips on SkyDemon, which will also include more details like runway lengths, orientation etc.

Other points discussed included a question of what extra services we can offer to our members - like more periodic emails keeping us up to date and possibly a GASCo safety day/evening. As we have an increasing number of lady members, we need an alternative item to the men's tie to put in their joining pack. On the financial side, we need to get away from standing orders and move to a direct debit system for membership fees. This will come in the future, as if or when we have to increase the subscription, it would be a lot easier than everyone having to make out new standing orders and the total confusion we experienced last time the sub was increased about 20 years ago, from £5 to £25. Don't worry – this isn't happening just yet!

The meeting was closed at 16:30 - a 7.5 hour meeting!

Paul Stephens

Annette Laming

Annette died suddenly but peacefully on 11th January, aged 72. Robert and Annette were very regular attenders to our meetings arriving in their Cessna 172 G-FNLD.

Our very best wishes go to Robert and his family. 9 FFA members attended amongst around 400 at the funeral service at St James Church, Newton and the reception afterwards at Snowdrop Farm, near Fenland Airfield.

GAP Report 10th March 2020

So its official, we are coming out of EASA on 31st December 2020.
Like the debate around Brexit, much of the concern revolves around judging the decision in the context of where we are to today and much of the positive lies in imagining where we could be tomorrow. For example, talk of pilots rushing off to get EASA licences from other member states was balanced by the argument that if we can emulated the FAA and promote an attainable UK (ICAO) licence then the world will want a UK licence just as we Brits embraced the Airman certificate and the N-reg in large numbers. Also, free of the EU VAT rules we can pursue removal of VAT from flight training. The clarion call from our Secretary of State is to make the UK the best place for Aviation in the world. I think he realised that it wouldn't happen while we were part of the glacial bureaucratic hazard-based landscape of the EU.

Again, like Brexit, leaving EASA will result in annoying short term uncertainties and practical difficulties such as the recent refusal of the EU to renew a derogation expiring on the 7th April this year. As well as the issue with self-declared medicals and EASA aeroplanes, it also means that UK national private pilot licence holders are no longer able to fly an aeroplane with an EASA certificate of airworthiness from 8 April 2020. This change does not affect balloons or sailplanes including powered sailplanes. Word on the street is that EASA is going to play hard-ball and that we can expect more of this before its "all over". What we do know is that licences, certificates or approvals issued by EASA before the end of the transition period will retain validity in the UK for up to two years.

It was great to see so many people from the DfT. As reported previously, they have a dedicated GA department to make the UK the best place for Aviation in the world. (Have I heard that before?) Here are some highlights:

Airfields Development fund Of interest to any of our members with commercial airfields with less than 200,000 passengers per year, the DfT have announced this fund to provide advice, e.g. business planning, commercial, legal, planning advice, which would support aviation activity and promote the long term sustainability of airfields. Opening later in the spring.

Reach for the SKY - Promoting aviation as career through a new team of motivational Aviation Ambassadors and a careers taskforce.

Aerobility Dft have made funds available to Aerobility to refurbish a number of the MOD's fleet of Vigilant gliders, which were recently grounded earlier than planned, for use in their work with people with disability.

Skywriting DfT are consulting soon on the legalising Skywriting – a few sighs around the room – don't we have bigger fish to fry? – but welcome all the same!

And there is a **new GA Advocate**, Phil Dunnington, somewhere between a Guru and a Tsar but without the latter's ruthless power, he will be a welcome intermediary between the industry and government. I'll leave you to Google him if you wish.

The CAA has a new guy in charge of the GA programme and he's given it a new look. A manageable list of 54 projects grouped under four headings: De-regulation, Delegation, General Improvement and Guidance and Clarity.

What's not to like about that? Further, they are categorised as "In-flight", "Ready for take-off" or "In the hangar" – a bit cheesy but not difficult to understand. With a new head in the GA Unit and new people funded by DfT there's obviously some orientation, a focus on outcomes and an emphasis on communication and outreach to our community. Unfortunately, in amongst all this euphoria I think the eyes have come off the ball and some wheels have fallen off the wagon. If they don't soon address the landscape for instructors and examiners and the appalling processing of the "paperwork" then there will be precious few pilots left to communicate with. On the matter of paperwork, the CAA has been experimenting with e-licensing, a **Pilot personal online portal** to you and me. Rolled out to commercial pilots only in 2017 it's true to say its not been a great success so before they roll it out to the GA sector they are going to consult widely in order to kick out the old-school regulator model in the old system and embrace the "customer experience" so we can have a one-stop online place for our licensing needs be that the path to a new PPL or renewals and revalidations.

AVGAS
REACH (EU Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) introduces significant obligations to find alternatives for 'Substances of Very High Concern', such as Tetraethyllead (TEL) which gives Avgas its 100 octane rating. IAOPA Europe believes EC may act to ban use of TEL in Avgas possibly as soon as mid-2021. This could have a significant impact on owners' maintenance programmes particularly for high performance turbo charged and some other older engines. Another uncertainty, all we can do is watch this space for the time being.

Electronic Conspicuity
This is not just a safety issue. It is seen as an enabler for certain strands of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy (where the CAA has been tasked by the DfT to make airspace fit for purpose for the years up to 2040). So, yes, let's not bump into each other, or the drones that are looking for airspace to fly parcels, or other unmanned aerial vehicles such as aerial taxis. And, what about smaller airfields having their own affordable "radar"?

With competing products in the market and after much consultation and testing, the CAA has decided that ADS-B on 1090MHz is going to be the best way forward. Also, the government has decided that "to see and be seen" is a **good thing**. So much so that we can expect, as early as 2020, some kind of funding for such equipment in much the same way as it was rolled out for 8.33KHz radios. The truth is that we still haven't got a single affordable piece of kit that is truly interoperable (everyone can see everybody else – especially gliders) so what do you do?

If they had their way, the CAA would seek to mandate carriage of ADS-B starting with certain classes of controlled airspace and eventually everywhere much like the carriage of emergency locator beacons in some EU member states. But they won't - yet. In the meantime the government thinks that some EC is better than none so you can go buy what you like with the money. Personally, I tried and failed miserably with one cockpit mounted option; unable to fit any external aerials on my EASA aircraft the device would only "see" what you could see from the window it was mounted by. (Owners of Annex 1 aircraft might have more options). So now I'm going to see what ABS-B options are available for the Garmin panel – it might be future proof but I still won't be able to see gliders unless they fall in with the same programme.

Did you know that if you have a serviceable transponder then it is a legal requirement to turn it on?

Andrew Cragg

GASCo

The General Aviation Safety Council

Safety Evenings 2020

We are now taking bookings for Safety Evenings. If you or your group, club, training organisation or association would like to host an evening then please get in touch with Penny in the GASCo Office. We provide all the promotional material and practical help. Virtually all the host has to do is provide the venue and fix the date. We can also offer shorter presentations on safety topics to fit in with other events.

Please visit the website for further information and dates.
https://www.gasco.org.uk/flight-safety-information/safety-evenings

Rick Holt

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Editor: Dave Unwin.

If you're serious about your flying …

GASCo Flight Safety

General Aviation Awareness Council

As those of you with places on the various GA APPG Working Groups will know, there is much overlap between the two organisations, but with the significant difference that the GAAC is not affected by changes in Government or 'suspended' as was the GA APPG during the recent election.

The GAAC provides continuity and remains essential to battle with a possibly hostile Government. Thankfully, the current Government and the DfT is particularly favourable to General Aviation and the recent funds of some £2m made available to Airfields is indicative of their support.

Members of the GAAC have continued meet regularly with the DfT, CAA, ACOG and others to put forward the issues of concern and are actively engaged in consultations with the UK BREXIT negotiating team…..so the silence does not in any way imply that our voice is not being heard.

Anthony Kedros

Anthony Kedros has volunteered to be the GAAC Board Temporary Hon Secretary

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

FFA Clothing

Item	Logo	Sizes available	Price
New Style Jackets		M, L, XL	£40.00
Lined Fleece Jackets		S,M	£30.00
Unlined Jacket (discontinued)	Old style	M	Half price £10.00
New Style Body Warmer		M, L, XL	£28.00
Unlined Fleece Waistcoat	Old style	S	Half price £8.00
Sweat Shirts		S, M, L, XL	£14.00
Sweat Shirt	Old style	S	Half price £7.00
Polo Shirts		S, L	£12.00
Polo Shirts	Old Style	M	Half price £6.00
Baseball Caps			£5.50
Ties			£15.00

The following clothing is available from stock. If your size isn't listed, it can be ordered. Please note reduced prices on old stock with old logo. Prices do not include postage. Please contact Roz Stephens with your order - **chix@farmline.com** or **07773 052001**



Programme 2020

2020 started off with a visit to Edinburgh, this is the first time that we have had a 2 day visit, at this time of the year, and one that we might well repeat, somewhere in the UK

All entries for the 2020 visits are now closed, as they are full. Most of the events were full within the first, few days of coming out in the newsletter, and some events even now have a waiting list. This shows the importance of booking early. I have had a number of phone calls asking if there were spaces on some visits, getting towards the last few days of and after the closing date. We hope, that by next year we will be doing online booking for events or even for the AGM, more on that when we know when, and how this will run.

Lets hope we have a better years flying weather, it has not started off well yet!

Neville Stops



Events for 2020.

- 21st April – Morning visits and Faccombe Estate – William Boutcher – **Fully booked**
- 29th April –Visit to J Cossins and Son Ltd, Tarrant Rawston, Dorset – John Golden – **Fully booked**
- 6th May – Harper Adams University – Roger Bell – **Fully booked**
- 13th May – Bullets n Beers, Wiltshire – Organised by a regular guest – **Fully booked**
- 21st May – 30th FFA 2020 Study Tour – Peter Gale – **Fully booked**
- 10th June – Pathfinder Museum – Rebecca Rayner – **Fully booked**
- 17th June 2020 – Day Tour of the New Holland Tractor Plant at Basildon – Mr P .Evans – **Fully booked**
- 1st & 2nd July – Tony' Fisher 2 Day Vintage Extravaganza – **Fully booked**
- **September date TBC – 2020 AGM, Leeds East Airport.**

Pop-In Meetings

- **Saturday 28th March** - Peter Gale – My airstrip is on top of the scenic downs at the Northern edge of the Salisbury Plain Training area. There will be a mini-bus to transport participants down to my farm where there is a tearooms doing light lunches. Please arrive early to get your food orders in well before the lunchtime rush! It would help to be here by 11.30 latest, departure anytime. As the strip is just inside the Danger Area will pilots please ring me Friday 27th for clearance details on **07747 763020** or email **petergale471@gmail.com**
- **Saturday 11th July -** Charlie Papworth has very kindly agreed to host a Pop-In event at his Main Hall Farm strip in Cambridgeshire. Plan to be on the ground by 12.00 latest and we will then go to the local pub for lunch. Please contact Charlie, **charliepapworth@gmail.com** for a briefing and numbers intending to participate, by 5p.m. the day before.

Corona virus

We have a full year of events planned, and all are now fully booked. The organisers of these events are keeping in contact with their host. With the outbreak of the "Corona Virus" it may be that our host may have to cancel our visit at short notice, if this should happen the organiser will of course let members know that have booked. Most of us will be coming from our own strips, and landing at minor airfields or other members' strips, so it's down to our Hosts.

We would like to thank all the organisers of events for making these meetings possible. If you happen to see anything in your area that would form the basis of an interesting FFA visit, then please contact Neville Stops (neville.stops @gmail.com) or Gordon Bellerby (gordon@jgbellerby.com).

Events such as these set above are arranged by FFA members on a voluntary basis. It is accepted by those who participate that nothing undertaken by the FFA collectively or members individualy shall be construed as establishing a duty of care nor in anyway removing or modifying the duties, responsibilities or obligations of pilots or land owners in relation to any event and attendance thereat. All information provided in these programmes is purely advisory and should ALWAYS be verified from official sources.

Edinburgh

2020 started off with a 2 day visit to Edinburgh, which was run by Richard Lawrence, it all went like clockwork. We were extremely lucky with the weather and missed the rugby match. As we were departing on our return flight with Flybe to Southampton on the Thursday evening, there was a plane load of English supporters arriving!!!!

On the first night at our group dinner we had an very interesting and amusing talk given by an ex RAF gentleman by the name of David Heather-Hayes (Some may of heard of him). He has accrued some 25,000 flying Hrs over his career, flying for the RAF and displaying flying in his own Pitts.

The first visit the following day was to The Royal Yacht, then on to the Falkirk wheel, and to finish that day the Kelpies. The following day some went to the Rosslyn Chapel.

Neville Stops

The Royal Yacht Britannia

At 10.20 am on 5th February some 40 or so flying farmers, spouses and friends gathered on the 3rd floor of the Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre in Leith, Scotland, entrance to one of Scotland's most popular tourist attraction, The Royal Yacht Britannia.

At midnight on the 30th June 1997, Britannia slipped her mooring in Hong Kong harbour with The last Governor and Prince Charles on board after handing the city back to China for her last voyage home.

Temporary home to HRH Queen Elizabeth 11 and numerous members of the Royal Family, their country house at sea, ambassador and trade envoy for UK Ltd, sumptuous dining establishment and standby hospital ship between 1953 and 1997, this pristine vessel now plays a different role beguiling members of the public with her style and panache. Moored permanently alongside a special berth a few miles from Edinburgh Centre, she draws over 300,000 visitors a year to pour over her decks with their furnishings, artefacts and memorabilia.

During her days hosting the Queen, Britannia had a complement of over 200 Royal Yachtsmen (crew) and 21 officers including a platoon of Royal Marines, (the band of about 26). We only had access to crew quarters for about 40 regulars, so one assumes the bowels of the ship must have been filled with extra cabins to accommodate such a large complement. Extra cabins were also required for the Queens's household. Visiting guests could number up to 250 although the state dining table seated only 96.

Many dignitaries and luminaries have been hosted on the ship over its 44 years of service from Presidents Eisenhower, Reagan, Clinton and Mandela to Prime ministers Thatcher, Major and Blair to name but a few. Trade deals were often concluded on board in far flung ports and the Overseas Trade Board estimated that over £3 billion worth of revenue had been made for the Exchequer between 1991 and 1995 alone as a result of commercial days on board.

Should UK Plc invest in a replacement or will Charles and Will, first and second in line to the throne fail to ignite Britannia's buy British image of quality and style as HMHR clearly did. I once saw the Queen and Prince Philip disembark from Britannia in New Westminster, British Columbia, where she had made passage some 20 miles up the Fraser River. What a sight, almost as breathtaking as this vision of The Queen in white gown and tiara took everyone's breath away with her style and charisma.

I was however a little disappointed to see into the Queen's cabin on board, only a 3 foot wide single bed. Hmmm

There was a slightly wider bed in the honeymoon sweet but I don't believe this was installed until Charles' honeymoon with princess Dianna years later.

Of particular interest was the garage deck assigned to the royal 4 wheel drive transport. A pristine series 2 royal blue Land Rover occupied the space for cruises in the Western Isles and a RR Phantom V for state visits. The bumpers had to be removed to get the latter vehicle into the allocated space.

The engine room with its twin multistage 6000 HP steam turbines coupled to large reduction gearboxes, were wonderful to behold. The gearboxes were almost as large as the engines and coupled to their 30 metre long propellor shafts could push the ship along at 22.5 knots at full power. The ship covered over a million miles in her lifetime, mostly at 14 knots.

A visit to the commercial sized laundry with its James Armstrong & Co's 'Amazon Drying Tumblers', I was brought back to the present with thought's of Jeff Bezos and his Amazon empire.

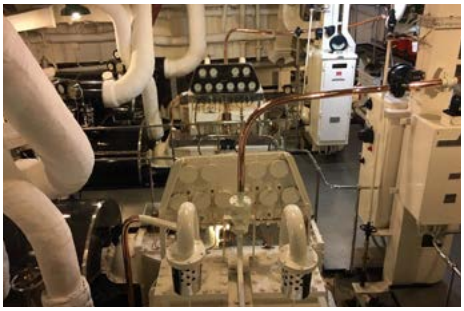
A truly memorable visit.

D Soul












Falkirk Wheel

After a most interesting visit to the Royal Yacht Britannia we arrived at the Falkirk Wheel wondering what Richard had got in store for us. We were not disappointed. The Falkirk Wheel is the only rotating boat lift in the world that takes boats up or down 24 metres connecting the Forth and Clyde Canal with the Union Canal. This has made it possible to get from one canal system to the other for the first time in 90 years. Before this eleven locks had to be negotiated.

Having had our haggis lunch, we made our way onto a barge which took us up to the top in company with a 3 man canoe, which then paddled off allowing us to come down. The view from the top and the workings of the wheel were explained by our very efficient and humorous Guide.

The Queen opened the Lift in 2002, our second connection to Royalty that day.

William and Jane Procter







Falkirk kelpies

What could be more perfect, at the end of an interesting, varied and well organised day, but to visit some kelpies. Not just any old kelpies but the Falkirk kelpies-the world's largest equine sculptures.

After a debriefing by an exceptionally enthusiastic Andy, our guide for the tour, we marvelled from the outside at these towering 30 metre high Clydesdale horses before Andy unlocked the magic door. This gently swung open to allow the group access to the inside and to reveal the most amazing and complex piece of artwork and engineering which was the vision of Scottish artist, Andy Scott. His idea for creating 2 such colossal pieces had stemmed from wanting to show how the history and local Falkirk industry could combine to create these breath taking designs. Andy, the guide, kept us entertained with tales of kelpies whose name reflects mythological transforming beasts but that the sculptor had shifted from references of mythology towards a monument celebrating the horses' role in industry and agriculture as well as the association with canal tow path horses. The sculptures (which are clad with 990 uniquely shaped stainless steel plates) stand on the Helix, a land transformation project which is the gateway to the Forth and Clyde canal and is aimed at regenerating local communities.

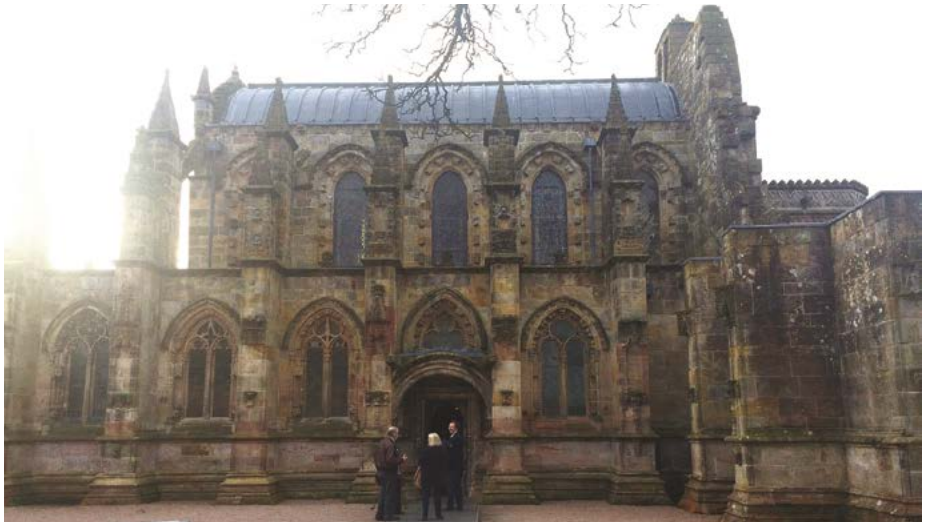
These towering and dramatic creatures will have left a lasting impression on every one of us in the group.

Gill Oliver









Visit to Rosslyn Chapel

The next morning, 30 members boarded the bus for the short trip to Rosslyn Chapel.

Unlike the previous day when the bus driver had been credited with "cutting through the Edinburgh traffic like a knife through butter", the Edinburgh bypass gave little opportunity for circulatory innovation in traffic that was maintaining the City's unenviable reputation.

The Chapel was largely obscured from view on the way in and again until we emerged from the visitor centre in brilliant sunshine to reveal the chapel in its full glory. Suddenly I was underwhelmed and overwhelmed in equal measure. Underwhelmed by how small it was and overwhelmed by its dark and intricate beauty.

Once inside, a guide gave a talk on the history of the chapel. Rosslyn Chapel was founded in 1446 by Sir William St Clair, 11th Baron of Rosslyn, 3rd Prince of Orkney. This William came from a long line of St Clairs dating back to 1066 when William 'The Seemly' St Clair came to England with his first cousin, William the Conqueror, and fought with him at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Known as 'the Seemly' for his 'fair deportment' he was granted the Barony of Rosslyn in 1070. He was also made Warden of the Southern Marches with responsibility for defending Scotland's border against the frequent attacks of the English.

The original plan was for a cathedral three times the size and although what we see took forty years to build, it was incomplete at the time of his death in 1484 and with his death also died the impetus and the original building was never completed.

In the 1570's during the Reformation, the altars were destroyed, the Chapel ceased to be used as a house of prayer and subsequently fell into disrepair. Unlike the castle it narrowly avoided being destroyed during the Civil War and remained largely unloved until Queen Victoria visited in 1842 expressing the desire that it be preserved for the country. Restoration work carried out by the architect David Bryce on behalf of James Alexander, 3rd Earl of Rosslyn, made the Chapel useable again 20 years later, in 1862.

The beauty of its setting and its ornate medieval stonework have inspired, attracted and intrigued visitors and artists for generations. The present Earl of Rosslyn established the Rosslyn Chapel Trust in 1995 to manage the conservation and public opening. In that first year, the Chapel welcomed just under 10,000 visitors. The Chapel came to worldwide prominence in 2003 when it featured in Dan Brown's best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the subsequent film released in 2006. Visitor numbers rose dramatically in that year peaking at 175,074 visitors. You might think that interest would fall away but that record was broken again in 2017 with 181,700 visitors. It is this income that has allowed the conservation to be completed. Thank you, Dan Brown.

A fan of the DA Vinci code, I dutifully followed in Tom Hanks' footsteps down the steps to the crypt and turned left into the small anteroom alleged to contain the lost Holy Grail and… instead of the richly appointed storeroom with old masters and secret vault – there was just this small and rather dull sideroom. Sadly I had not been instantly transported to Pinewood studios where that action had continued on set.

We reconvened in the Coach. The pressure was on – we were due back to the hotel at 12:00 for return flights and trains. Tony Fisher was missing! Neville went off to find Tony, Tony came back, now Neville was missing; Richard went off to find Neville. Neville was spotted in the distance, but no Richard. Was this a mystery to rival the Da Vinci Code? No, more to do with nature – calls of, we think. All back on board, we were off and the end of an extraordinarily good "London" visit.

Andrew Cragg



Helpful reminders

If you are organising an event…

- Please nominate someone before the day to write up the event.
- Please take pictures with a high resolution/picture quality.
- Please name all people in pictures left to right.
- Please take some portrait pictures that could be used as a front cover image for future newsletters.
- Please send photos as seprarate files rather than embedded in text
- Please indicate clearly which text and photos go together
- Please provide any video footage that could be used in the new website

To help us to edit and produce the newsletter in a timely fashion please could the event organisers collect all writeups including videos and pictures and provide all together within three weeks of the event taking place-.

Deadline for articles for the July/August newsletter 30 June 2020, please email giles@abrey-farms.co.uk.

Solo Charity Flight London to Cape Town



1. London
2. Calais
3. Troyes
4. Valence
5. Cannes
6. Salerno
7. Kerkira
8. Heraklion
9. Mersa Matruh
10. Cairo
11. Abu Simbel
12. Dongola
13. Merowe
14. Khartoum
15. Ad Damazin
16. Addis Ababa
17. Lokichogio
18. Nairobi
19. Dodoma
20. Kasama
21. Lusaka
22. Livingstone
23. Maun
24. Windhoek
25. Eros
26. Luderitz
27. Upington
28. Cape Town



In 2007 inspired by books I had read about the pioneer aviators of the 1920s & 1930s combined with the love of Africa I decided that one day I wanted to fly from London to Cape Town.

In 2007 I purchased a quick build Vans RV8 along with a friend, Stephen Tortice. The build involved a team of six with our first test flight taking place on Christmas Eve 2011 in the capable hands of Stan Hodgkins, an ex Lightning pilot and experienced RV8 pilot.

Detailed planning for the London to Cape Town trip then started, involving Irv Lee (Master Class), Sam Rutherford (Prepare2go), Mike Gray (White Rose Aviation), Gina Long (and the Geewizz team), together with Vernon Millard on aircraft set up.

I had always intended to do this flight for charity, picking three charities to support that resonated most with me: The Institute for Cancer Research, Gee Wizz (a local charity) and Farm Africa.

My departure date was Saturday 3rd November 2019, nearly 100 years on from the first ever London to Cape Town flight by Col Pierre van Ryneveld and Lt. Col Christopher Joseph Quintin Brand, in a Vimy named the Silver Queen. The weather on the day



was fair, and I had a great send off from family and friends, with nearly a dozen aircraft flying in to see me depart.

Although very tired I was relieved after many months of planning and preparation to be on my way at last. I waved farewell to everyone as I departed overhead and set course for Troyes in central France with two other RV8s accompanying me to the coast before they banked off and turned back to base.

As I coasted out over the North Sea the enormity of the adventure ahead started to dawn on me. I had just under 380 hours flying experience and France was the furthest I had ever flown solo, so it certainly had the potential of being the adventure of a lifetime.

On reaching the French coast the sky looked very black inland and the forecast had been for heavy rain. After the build up to departure and lack of sleep the night before, I decided to divert into Calais. Lille Information informed me the airfield was closed but it was okay for me to land and to blind call in French which proved interesting as my GCSE French was a little rusty.

The forecast the following day was not great, with towering cumulus and strong gusting winds for the afternoon. I took the opportunity to depart early ahead of the weather, climbing to just under 6000 feet and leaning the engine mixture back to give 25 litres per hour fuel consumption, which was sure to help if I needed to turn back at any point.

The wind on arrival at Troyes was 17kts gusting 25kts straight across the runway. I knew there was a grass cross runway that would suit better. On arrival overhead ATC informed me: "the cross runway is a bit waterlogged". I asked if they could clarify if it was serviceable and five minutes later they came back and said it was. Finals runway 23 and I was safely on the ground before the bad weather rocked in. After a testing 90 minute flight I was looking forward to blue skies appearing at some point.

The following day the weather was better, I flew down to Valence with the intention of staying there but on arrival the guy on the pumps informed me the weather was closing in later that afternoon. I was tired but soon came to the realisation that now may be my only window over the next few days to cross the Alps. As time was pushing on, I skipped lunch and opted to flight plan for my hop over the Alps.



As I departed ATC asked me to confirm what flight level I wished to climb too. I requested FL090. I climbed and climbed, for the first time feeling the 180hp engine slightly underpowered. I set course with butterflies in my stomach, looking forward to arriving overhead Cannes. Unfortunately, I had underestimated how high I needed to go and ended up at just over 12,000 feet. I had no oxygen and knew I was on the limit. Just over an hour later I touched down in Cannes - a big relief!

I had a few delays in Cannes trying to get flight clearance into Italy before I worked out that I required a handling agent to facilitate clearance. This was my largest water crossing of the trip at almost 400nm and I was lucky the weather was with me.

The next day was similar, with another large water crossing to Kerkira (Greece). I remained there for a few days as heavy thunderstorms passed through before I picked a weather window to head south on another water crossing to Iraklion in Crete.

Opposite: Sossusvlei Sand dunes, Namibia.

Top left: G-GAST ready to go.

Top right: Day of departure, left to right; Kitty, Johanna, Giles and Joshua Abrey.

Bottom: Finals runway 34 Kerkira, Corfu.







The following day marked the last of my water crossings, a flight over the Mediterranean Sea to North Africa. Coasting into North Africa was a milestone in my adventure; the Egyptians are very strict, and I made sure I maintained the required minimum of FL080 right up until the point of descending into Mersa Matruh for a full stop landing.

What a feeling after a three and a half hours flight to at last be on the ground in Africa, I couldn't believe it! With the temperature at 30 degrees it didn't take long for me to remove my immersion suit and Nomex flight suit, I felt like a 'boil in the bag' and my clothes were dripping wet.

Mersa Matruh is a military airfield in the middle of nowhere and I have to say I felt a little intimidated by the military presence as two F16s taxied in behind me. What appeared to be a deserted apron was suddenly filled will people approaching the aircraft: the escort vehicle driver: my handler who was co-ordinating my arrival; the airport official requesting to see my fumigation certificate and empty cans; customs wanting to check the luggage in the aircraft; the fuel lorry then turned up with a team of three; the fire truck then arrived to have a look with another team of people. All were very friendly, very efficient and interested in my trip.

Once fuelled and customs cleared, I departed bound for 6th October airport on the outskirts of Cairo. I was delayed departing by 40 minutes due to a radio issue then waiting for further F16s to land, fingers crossed I would be in Cairo by sunset! I arrived at 6th October airport in good time and starting to get used to flying in the somewhat murky conditions. There was a good cross wind on arrival just to finish the day which made for an interesting landing. I was very relieved to be on the ground; a big day, 642nm, five and a half hours flying.

After a couple of days in Cairo viewing the pyramids it was time to move on. I departed 6th October airport and climbed to FL090. I could see the pyramids off my port wing and the green crops bordering the Nile. This was to be the longest leg of my trip so far, to Abu Simbel, over 500nm. Although a long flight, the air was completely calm, no turbulence and amazing views of the desert and the Nile. I joined Abu Simbel circuit downwind for runway 15. Refuelling was quick, as I still had two flights to go to get to my destination in Sudan.

I arrived in Dongola (Sudan) (which seemed a very remote airfield) later than expected and still had to fly to Merowe before sunset. I noticed in the flight log I signed that the last GA aircraft visited on 16th Feb 2017, so I was unsure if they were used to visitors. Having said that they were all very friendly and after a quick turnaround I was back in the air. My final flight of the day was cutting it fine and I arrived in Merowe 10 minutes before sunset; the runway lights were on. The was to prove the biggest day of the trip 826nm.

Avgas is unavailable in many parts of Sudan, so a 200-litre drum was bought in by truck from Port Sudan. Among my kit I had a siphon hose, so we were able to gravity feed from the drum into the two 80 litre fuel tanks of G-GAST. Everyone was very helpful and wanted to be involved, with 11 of us at one point all helping in the process.

The morning after I arrived in Sudan, I was asked to report back to Merowe airport. After a meeting with five others I was told I had entered Sudan illegally. I was then asked to report to the passport office in Karima the local town. There was an issue with where I had initially landed and that I had no visa. I was transiting aircrew in the country for less than 72 hours so technically didn't need one but had not presented the relevant documentation. The airport of entry was a registered entry/exit airport, but this didn't seem to be common knowledge. Several meet-

Top: Coasting out from Crete, next stop North Africa.

Middle: Coasting in to North Africa.

Bottom: Veiwing the pyramids at Giza.












Top left: Sun setting on arrival in Sudan.

Top right Arrival at Merowe, Sudan.

Middle Left: Nubian pyramids, Karima, Sudan.

Middle right: Cropped areas fed by the nile.

Bottom left: Khartoum.

Bottom middle: Agricultural area south of Khartoum.

Bottom right: Refueling in Ad Damazin, Sudan.

ings were had over the course of the day including a phone conversation with a rather upset official. By the afternoon with the help of an agent in Khartoum things were resolved, my passport was returned, and I could leave.

Next stop was Khartoum, a huge city with the main airport located in the centre. I left Khartoum early the following day and headed for my last stop in Sudan, Ad Damazin. A remote airfield but amazingly my barrel of avgas laying there waiting in the long grass on the side of the runway. The local Sudanese people were some of the friendliest I have met since I started the trip. It was 36 degrees when I landed and after fuelling, I was welcomed in for a local tea and ice-cold filtered water from the Nile before departing to Addis Ababa

Ethiopia was one of the countries I most wanted to visit on my trip and it didn't disappoint. The area where I entered was very mountainous, with some of the peaks over 15,000 feet and large rivers winding their way down the mountains to the flat valley floors below. Addis was always going to be an interesting airport to arrive at, it's very busy, perched at 7625 feet above sea level and surrounded by mountains. The weather forecast when I left that morning from Khartoum was for thunderstorms moving up from the south in the afternoon, so I needed to get a move on. Apart from a few weather patches I had to go around I was lucky and made it to Addis in good time.

Unfortunately I didn't make a great impression on arrival. I hadn't appreciated I had gone through a time zone and my GPS was set to local time rather than Zulu so, although I was talking to ATC and they could see me on radar, I arrived sooner than expected. They cleared me to land runway 07 which was all good until the engine stopped on touch down. I rolled to a holt in the middle of the 3.7km runway with ATC requesting me to "expedite my taxi". The engine was flooded and there I sat for five minutes trying to restart! There were two Ethiopian airliners at the hold waiting to depart and one in the air waiting to land. I realised I had probably pi**ed a few people off, so did go to the tower to apologise. I had discussed when planning the trip about leaning on take-off when at altitude but not when landing. Live and learn!

One of my nominated charities for the trip was Farm Africa, so while in Ethiopia I took the opportunity to visit some of their projects in the Rift Valley and had a very memorable few days visiting

local communities, looking at the new infrastructure Farm Africa had helped implement to benefit food production, living standards and overall sustainability for the future. Farm Africa are also working with the Abijatta-Shalla National Park, which had some of the most amazing views I had seen in Africa.

Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania had been experiencing large storms and heavy rains (characteristic of the ITCZ) that had created landslides and flooding in some areas, which delayed me leaving Addis. With high ground and storms this was always going to be a flight to pick my way through. As I made my way south the weather was okay, but not as good as the forecast had suggested. With so many hours to fly I had butterflies in my stomach brought on by the knowledge that at some point I could hit a wall of thunderstorms with high ground either side and insufficient fuel to turn back.

Three and a half hours later I arrived in Lokichogio (North Kenya) one of the most remote locations I have ever been to, but by chance stumbled across a good friend Sam Rutherford (director and owner of Prepare2Go), who helped mastermind this trip in terms of preparation, routing and the logistics of getting fuel to the remote landing locations. Sam happened to be helping ferry a new Tecnam aircraft from the factory in Italy to the Seychelles. We had spoken and I knew he was routing down through Africa but what are the chances?

The following morning, I headed for Nairobi Wilson airport, reportedly one of the busiest airports in Africa. As I got within range, I called on the radio to ask for joining instructions. They had helicopters coming in and aircraft arriving and departing from two different runways. What could go wrong?

I mentioned over the radio early on that I was not familiar with the airfield; I knew I had to look for a monastery and a racecourse to report at but couldn't see them anywhere. I did however manage to spot what I thought was the airport in the distance. They cleared me left base and asked me to report finals 07 number two. As I tracked down finals I looked ahead to try and see the other aircraft. I spotted it and could see it was a Cessna Caravan and I was starting to catch it. I called the tower and explained there was insufficient separation between myself and the Cessna and asked if I should go around, the reply was no please continue. I wasn't sure if the controller had heard me correctly but then noticed the aircraft in front going around. It was a great experience to land at such a busy airport.

I was fortunate enough to be able to park at the Aero Club of East Africa, which is at the far end of Nairobi Wilson Airport. Everyone made me feel welcome and couldn't have done more to help me prepare for my next leg. The Aero Club is one of the oldest in the world, dating back to 1927. The history was amazing to see, displayed on the walls around the clubhouse. Having clocked up over 40 hours I thought it best while in Nairobi to remove the cowlings and have a good look at the engine. Apart from a broken exhaust bracket (which a very helpful team at the airport helped mend) everything else was good.

Top left: Teff harvest, the Rift valley, Ethiopia.

Top right: Southern Ethiopia.

Bottom left: Lake Turkana, also known at Lake Rudolf, North Kenya.

Bottom middle: Transprt to the hotel Lokichogio, North Kenya.

Bottom right: Lokichogio town.













Delays in Nairobi meant I was able to catch up with friends Daniel and Lucy Haywood who live there. Daniel's grandfather was involved with the start-up of Farm Africa and was also the first person to start the flying doctors in Kenya. It's a small world.

Kenya had had its fair share of storms and these caused a few delays, but so far I had been lucky not to encounter too many in flight. As I crossed the border into Tanzania to my left was Kilimanjaro and to my right the Ngorongoro Crater; unfortunately due to low cloud I could see neither. I only had one stop in Tanzania and spent the night in Dodoma with an early start the next morning as I had two flights ahead of me.

As I crossed the border into Zambia it wasn't long before I was calling Kasama 20 miles inbound, who then told me to report left base runway 31. It took me a while to find as I was expecting a tarmac runway, but in fact it was gravel. ATC then said land on the left runway, but I could only see one runway. On closer inspection there looked to be a very small strip to the left and what I had been looking at in the first instance was a new runway under construction – my landing could have been interesting!

Two guys from the Zambian military had just landed in a C-27J Spartan, it is amazing how they get such a large aircraft in and out of a gravel strip. It was going to be hard to get fuel to Kasama as it was quite remote, but Sam Rutherford knew someone who had some spare avgas, just to give me enough to make Lusaka (Kenneth Kaunda Intl) my next stop.

I departed Kasama just after lunch and hit several thunderstorms en route. I was able to go around them but as time passed there were fewer and fewer gaps. Pleased to see the airport, I arrived slightly later than planned due to my zig zag routing.

My arrival in Livingstone was a very memorable moment. As I came down finals, I looked across my starboard wing and could see the spray from Victoria Falls filling the sky around me, with a British Airways aircraft following me in.

Routing to Maun in Botswana took me down the Zambezi river then overhead Kasane before picking up a direct track to Maun. An amazing flight, the visibility was unbelievable and there was no-one on the radio for over an hour and a half. It was very hard to spot the game, but I did see an elephant at a watering hole as I flew overhead Chobe National Park. As I landed the heavens opened and I experienced some of the heaviest storms of the trip so far. The wind had picked up and I quickly tied the aircraft down, realising my flight into Namibia would not be happening that day.

Departing Maun, the following day I flew across the Okavango Delta towards the Namibian border. The ground was very flat and I could see what looked like the edge of the world in all directions. The radio was quiet apart from a few safari aircraft broadcasting their position. After several hours the terrain started to change, and the orange sands of Namibia started to appear on the horizon. I arrived in Windhoek only to find out they had no fuel, so cleared customs then departed to the nearby airport of Aeros where avgas was readily available.

The following day I made the flight I had spent all those years visualising, flying over the Sossusvlei sand dunes, Namibia. This is one of the remotest

Above: Chobe National park, Botswana.

Below: Kasama, Zambia.





parts of Namibia and I had no radio contact for over two hours. It was along this coastline I saw probably the best wildlife moment of the trip, a flock of flamingos flying over the dunes tracking down the coastline just under my path; it was an unforgettable moment. I landed at Lüderitz, which was literally within the dunes, my crosswind leg involving a climb to clear some of the high dunes.

I was there only a few hours for fuel and to clear customs as my next flight was going to take me into South Africa. As spectacular as the scenery was, and after such an amazing first flight of the day, the flight to Upington was particularly unpleasant. The winds seemed okay and I was up high above the ground, but as I got closer to the Fish River Canyon the turbulence started to increase. I had experienced some turbulence routing to Nairobi and some in Zambia but not like this. I requested a higher flight level and kept climbing. In the end I was at FL095 and over 5000 feet above ground. The airliners on the radio were reporting moderate to severe turbulence at FL380 in the Kimberly area so there was not much hope for me. I still had one and a half hours of flying left and the canyon meanders all the way to Upington. I pulled my harness as tight as I could get it, one hand on the stick and the other wedged against the side of the aircraft. It was the first time on the trip I felt vulnerable in such a small aircraft and I was very relieved to arrive at Upington!

My final flight of the trip was Upington to Stellenbosch. After just under three hours flight time I crossed over the last mountain peak of the Hawequas mountains at FL070 and descended into a picturesque valley, which looked very familiar; it was Franschhoek. I now knew where I was and started quickly descending as Stellenbosch was only just around the corner.

Cleared for a low pass I accelerated towards the airfield and buzzed Mum and Dad and a few friends who had been waiting patiently for the last few days for my arrival, before joining the circuit for a full stop landing.

7905nm, 27 flights, 14 countries and just over 70 hours flying, I had made it to Cape Town !

Giles Abrey

Above: Namibian coastline.

Below left: Arrival at Stellenbosch, Capetown.

Below right: Greeted by parents Richard and Dee Abrey.

A big thank you to my family, friends and everyone who helped me make this adventure possible and to raise currently £39,025 for three great charities. For more information on the trip or to donate please visit. **www.adventures4charity.com**



