FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 107 *August 2011*

Opening Thoughts

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Editor, Publisher & Printer;

P.A.& R Stephens
Moor Farm
West Heslerton
Malton
North Yorkshire
Tel: 01944 738281
Fax: 01944 738240
Email: chix@farmline.com

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Cover photograph;
RAF Valley

Chairman's Ramblings

Good grief – it's past the 21st June and the days are getting shorter already! How quickly the years seem to roll by nowadays. I remember when I was at school all those years ago (about the middle of the last century!) we used to count the days and the hours until the end of term, and they seemed to drag by so slowly.

It doesn't seem very long since our first fly-in of our season here at Stones Farm. We've had some excellent fly-ins so far this year and a very successful Study Tour to France, organised at short notice by Gordon & Caroline Bellerby to replace the intended tour to Finland which had to be postponed due to the untimely death of Bill Burton who was organising it for us. The Committee hopes that it may yet be resurrected in the near future. All our events have enjoyed excellent weather with virtually a 100% turn-out. By the time you read this the Guernsey two day trip will have been and gone and I hope we will have enjoyed yet more good weather.

In February and March, Annette and I joined 7 other aircraft to fly all around the African continent, starting down the Eastern side, leaving riots and general mayhem behind us in Egypt and Libya, having a two week break around Cape Town before setting off Northbound up the Western side to complete the journey, arriving back in the UK on April 1st. It was the experience of a lifetime and I know many of you followed our tracking blog which we tried to make both informative and entertaining. Straight forward it wasn't, but hey! it was Africa and nothing is straight forward in Africa. A report on our trip will have to wait for the Winter newsletter as I have been just too busy to write it up in time for this one.

When we left the UK it was rainy and miserable with a stiff, cold Westerly to help us get airborne with GOSL stuffed, literally, to the gunwales. When we got back two months later, we were already in the beginnings of a drought and the temperatures were in the 80's. Spring had completely passed us by.

And the weather has continued to be unseasonably dry, particularly in the South Eastern areas. Crops on the light land look very mediocre, particularly from the air, where they have all but died off due to lack of rain. The heavy land crops seem to have fared better, but there are many reports of crops looking quite reasonable 'over the gate', but when tracking through them with the sprayer, they look distinctly thin where many of the tillers have just died off.

An early harvest is on the cards and I pray that it will be a dry and easy one. It seems that storage space could be at less of a premium this year. We at least have the comfort that prices seem to be very firm and that will be some compensation for the certainty of lower yields. But of course high prices are not good for everyone. The livestock sector suffers a lot with high prices, and couple that with a near disastrous hay crop this year, and the serious prospect of a much reduced straw yield, they will have much to worry about. When we visited a large arable farmer at Bourges in France on the Study Tour, he told us that the French government had banned farmers from chopping their straw (whether it was Regional or National I can't remember), and that straw had to be made available to the livestock sector. Now that is government looking after farmers' interests – I doubt very much that our government would do it in this country.

I wish you all an easy harvest and leave you with the thought shared with me by my father. In a wet year you wonder where the yield has gone to – in a dry year you wonder where it has come from. Could our yields surprise us after all?

Committee Members

Dick Walgate	President	01472 371203
Martin Gosling	Chairman	01787 269369
Paul Stephens	Secretary	01944 738281
Andrew Cragg	Treasurer	01303 874251
Rick Holt	Events Secretary	01386 761816
Gordon Bellerby	Committee Member	01423 520770
Philip Young	Committee Member	01485 525666

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www.ffa.org.uk

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Editors Notes

As usual, this July / August newsletter has plenty of content. It is good to see that our representatives at GAAC, GACC and GASCo are settling into their jobs and we are getting reports back which demonstrate how these Councils are working for our GA interests.

There was to be a report of our Chairman's epic flight round Africa in this newsletter, but lack of his time to write it and lack of space has meant a postponement to the December newsletter. We might also be able to persuade him to give us a story about his air racing activities, which he has taken part in over the last couple of years - as have a few of our members. Two have actually won the Kings Cup, one of them twice!

Paul Stephens

GASCo.

I attended my first GASCo meeting in CAA House in London in November of last year which was somewhat of a baptism of fire, but I was warmly received. There were reports from various of the organisations represented and a presentation by the FAA/CAA head of liason, a Mrs Tweet Coleman. She was an impressive authority with huge aviation experience, but did exude the love of over-regulation to which the Americans seem prone. There were no issues in the meeting of specific relevance to FFA members, but much mention was made of the incoming licensing changes and increasing airspace complexity. Also you may or may not be aware that GASCo have taken over responsibility for the safety evening programme and requests for an evening to be held locally should be made to GASCo, not the CAA.

I am attending two GASCo events in the near future on your behalf. Firstly a meeting at the end of this month at Swanwick, a joint GASCo/CAA venture to aid planning of this winters safety evenings, and secondly the AGM in Cambridge in July, where I shall present a short report. I intend to raise the issue of wind farm planning which we have been discussing, and also the issue of airspace and ATSOCAS service provider overlap, the streamlining and rationalizing of both of which I feel could bring significant safety benefits to our members, flying from small strips, especially in the south of England. If you have any points you would like me to raise, please do not hesitate to contact me directly, and I will submit a further report after the two forthcoming meetings.

Mark Badminton

GACC.

On the agenda for the General Aviation Consultative Committee held at Gatwick on the 6th July 2011 were a number of items of particular interest to FFA members, including the move towards a European pilots licence instead of National and ICAO recognised licences as we have at present, plans for standardised European Rules of The Air, visual presentation of NOTAMs, the airspace restrictions being planned for the duration of the Olympics and Para Olympics next year and the impact of Wind Turbine Farms (WTF) on the operation of aerodromes (in which I include farm strips).

The FFA secretary had asked that I raise two items on behalf of the FFA, namely pilot licences and the impact of WTFs for the safe conduct of flights. I am pleased to state that, at my request, the CAA included WTF as an agenda item and I was allowed to present the FFA (and my own) concerns on WTF impacts.

I started by explaining that some farmers had benefited financially from a WTF whereas others were alarmed at the proliferation of WTFs and the real problems of ensuring flight safety when flying near to a WTF.

I explained that, as a chartered town planner who had specialised in airport and aerodrome planning for twenty or so years. I often present evidence to public inquiries into development proposals planned by or affecting flying sites. Only last month I gave evidence on behalf of Breighton Aerodrome, Yorkshire against a WTF proposed on the extended centreline of Breighton's runway 09, approximately 1.8 nm from the threshold. Many hours of inquiry time had been taken up by dispute about the ability of pilots, particularly those flying the historic aircraft based at Breighton, to climb above and thus to avoid the WTF array or to turn onto final to land whilst keeping a safe distance from the turbine blades. I told the Inspector (as did three other very experienced pilots) that pilots usually adopted a 3 degree glide slope but astonishingly the "aviation expert" speaking for the developer, Volkswind, described a 7 degree glide slope as being normal because, as an instructor, that is what he taught at Glenrothes! If there was unambiguous CAA guidance on WTFs the public would have greater confidence in the planning inquiry system.

I criticised the CAA for "sitting on the fence" with regard to their guidance on WTFs, and that, whatever the position of the Government of the day, the CAA should offer positive advice which could be understood by members of the public and Planning Inspectors who may have little or no specialist knowledge on the subject. Ben Watkins from the CAA said that it could work against FFA interests if a flying site had been rendered unsafe by the construction of obstacles close to flight paths, but he did suggest the name of a CAA official who could answer specific questions on flight safety. The debate was long winded but the consensus was that more guidance was needed. At that point Charles Henry from the General Aviation Awareness Council (GAAC) informed the meeting that GAAC guidance on WTFs was now available in draft form and I was asked to comment on it before it is published. From what I have seen so far the GAAC document needs a lot of work to be of practical use.

On the subject of standardisation of Pilot Licenses the CAA is planning to offer the new EASA licences in the period from April 2012 to April 2013 when the process must be complete, although this is subject to ratification by the UK Parliament. It looks as though our beloved National Pilots Licences will soon be replaced by a lifetime EASA licence.

Gerry Corbett of DAP addressed the issue of the Olympic Restrictions on airspace. Everybody that spoke at the meeting including CAA staff describe the Restrictions as overkill but it is clear that "the spooks" are driving this issue with the sole objective of preventing terrorist attacks on the games. Apparently DfT have no appetite for allowing corridors into and out of aerodromes or other flying sites lying within the restricted area. I said that I feared that the need to file a Flight Plan for all flights into and out of the Restricted Area would swamp the ATCOs ability to deal with FPs. I was told that there would be a huge workforce but the FPs would be dealt with on the basis of "first come, first served".

Personally I fear chaos, which is why my aeroplane will be based outside the zone for the 8 week duration of the restrictions. I urge every pilot to lobby his or her MP on this subject. I have personally questioned my local MP, Greg Clarke on the subject but not yet received the written response that he promised me.

If any FFA member would like to read the minutes of the meeting I should be pleased to forward this by email when published and I am prepared to consider raising specific issues at future meeting of the GACC if members outline their concerns. Members should email me at 2pk@peterkember.co.uk

The dates of the next 4 GACC meetings have been fixed as follows: 16th Nov 2011, 6th March, 3rd July and 6th November 2012.

Peter Kember Dip TP, MRTPI, MRAeS,

Aviation Planning Consultant to Kember Loudon Williams LLP Managing Director of Laddingford Farm Ltd.

GAAC

The AGM of the General Aviation Awareness Council was held on the 20th May 2011. Items concerning the FFA were:-

Recognition of the passing of David Corbett who had represented the FFA at GAAC for many years.

The Chairman (Charles Henry) noted that the CAA have become more involved in GA matters over the past year. He suggested that the greatest threat to GA is from wind turbines. Whilst the GAAC supports renewable energy, there must be no risk to flight safety.

(see article 'Should You Come Out' page 19 of this issue)

The Olympic airspace was discussed with David Shephard (DfT) explaining that the overall aim of the restrictions was to acquire a 'recognised' air picture. The GAAC expressed disappointment at the extent and severity and questioned whether they would actually contribute to safety and pointed out that a terrorist could conform with all the requirements, flight plan to a London airfield and be within minutes of an Olympic site.

The air traffic capacity would be 130 aircraft which was considered totally inadequate for a busy time of year for GA in the area. The Council also considered it regrettable that no impact assessment had been carried out and the financial cost to aviation businesses ignored.

Anthony Kedros

Unveiling of David Corbett's Memorial

On a glorious day for flying, Shobdon airfield hosted a fly-in and festival of food for the LAA strut, and it was during this event that the airfield arranged for the unveiling of a memorial to David Corbett, a founder member of the Flying Farmers Association and committee member for some 30 years

David had a very large association with Shobdon, resurrecting the airfield from disrepair after the war, learning to fly there, becoming an instructor and ending up by becoming the owner of it in the 1990's. He was a most enthusiastic member of the community, belonging to many organisations of farming, flying and sailing, and it was in recognition of his particularly strong involvement with Shobdon airfield over so many years that a decision was made to erect a memorial to him.

The memorial was in the shape of a bronze bust of David and a wall plaque in the shape of a 3-bladed propeller with his name below. A tribute was given by Sir John Allison, who next year



takes over the reins as director of the Shuttleworth trust.

The unveiling was attended by David's widow Penny and his son Richard, as well as many members of Shobdon airfield and 3 members of the Flying Farmers who flew in for the occasion.

Martin Gosling

Committee Meeting

The Committee met on 20th June 2011 at our new committee member's house near Hunstanton in Norfolk. Philip and Julia Young were excellent hosts for our meeting and thank you Philip for letting us use your strip.

Over the last year, we have gained 14 new members, but 2 have been killed in aircraft accidents (David Watt and Jim Balmer), 2 have died, 17 have resigned (mainly age creeping up curtailing their flying) and 8 have been struck off due to loosing contact.

Total membership is now 384 members.

The Treasurer reported that the surplus at the bank has been rising and we should consider a plan for the excess funds as we are considered a non profit making organization by the Revenue. It was thought that over the coming years it is likely than membership numbers will gradually drop (that age thing again), hence subscription income will drop and therefore the surplus will decline. Also to avoid having to raise the £25 annual subscription due to any forthcoming increases in costs, it was agreed to use the excess funds to balance any drop in profits.

The committee agreed that their attendance allowance should rise to £75 per meeting to go some way to cover travelling costs. AGM costs for all members will also be covered in the most part.

The donations to GASCo (£200), GAAC (£200), AOPA (£600) and LAA (£200) would remain the same for this year due to an extra donation being given to the David Corbett memorial (£250).

The Events Secretary reported a good run of attendance and weather at events. Suggestions coming in for 2012 include the French Battlefields, NATS, Hawker Restorations, Adam Henson's farm (Countryfile) and a bio-ethanol plant such as Vivergo.

Regarding the European Tour, the possibility of reviving the Finnish tour will be investigated, alternatively we will look at Southern Ireland, as we have 3 members across there who might be able to do something for us. Any volunteers to take one of these on, or suggest other destinations?

It has been much debated over the years at committee level about whether we should make a category for associate members. It is felt that we sometimes have to turn away potential members who could be of value to the FFA. It was therefore agreed to put an amendment of the Articles to the membership at the AGM to form a way of allowing these people to become members. They won't be allowed to vote at meetings nor become officers of the Association, so that the direction of the FFA is kept down an agricultural line.

One such applicant is a British Airways 777 captain who is also a gliding instructor, flying instructor and LAA coach. He also has a flight safety job with the British Airline Pilots Association. He has a Fournier RF4. He would like to join, but does not qualify for full membership.

The intention is only to allow a handful of these associate members, on the condition that they can offer something to the Association. In this applicant's case, it would be his instructing and safety experience that might be called upon in the future.

Since 31st March 2011

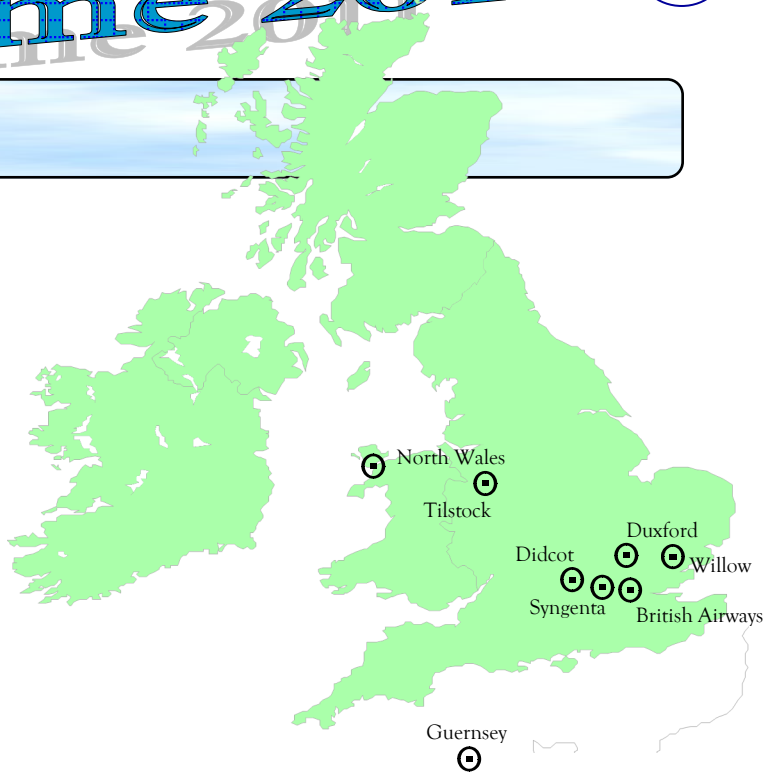
New Members

863	Alison Peacock, Eddsfield, East Yorkshire
864	Dr. John Bate, Colne, Lancashire
865	Ian Harland, Ramsey, Isle of Man
866	Tony Gibson, Totnes, Devon
867	Hamish Monrow, Hastings, Suffolk
868	Robert Cole, Sedlescombe, Suffolk

The total membership is now 384

Programme 2011

28th January	British Airways Museum
13th April	Willow growers, Essex
4th & 5th May	North Wales
28th May / 5th June	FFA Tour to France
8th June	Syngenta - White Waltham
14th June	Polly Vacher's strip, Didcot
21st June	Tilstock, Shropshire
28th to 30th June	Guernsey
10th October	AGM, Duxford



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 individually shall be construed as establishing a duty of care nor in any way 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.

AGM - Duxford, Monday 10th October 2011

The AGM will be held at the Imperial War Museum Duxford in the Airside Suite (to be confirmed). This is a superb venue which we can fly into (see details at http://duxford.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.1181)

The programme is as follows:-

11:00 AGM

11:45 Martin Robinson (CEO AOPA UK and Regional Vice-President IAOPA Europe) will address us on current GA matters.

13:00 Light lunch

After lunch, you have the rest of the day to look round the museum. For those flying in, bear in mind that official sunset time on 10th October is 18:19.

Please send your completed reply slip to Martin Gosling. The costs of the AGM (the venue and the lunch) will be paid for out of FFA funds.

At the AGM, as per normal practice, two Committee members will stand down. This year it is the turn of Paul Stephens and Gordon Bellerby. Both are willing to stand for election again.

On the reply slips, there is chance to nominate a member (with their full permission) to stand for election. Please send the completed reply slip to the Secretary, Paul Stephens, before the end of September. If there are any nominations, a ballot will be held at the AGM to elect two Committee members.

As mentioned on the opposite page, the Committee would like to suggest a change to the articles to accommodate Associate members. A vote will be taken on the day to approve this amendment.

It will read as follows -

Article 5 – amend to – There shall be four classes of members, namely (1) Founder members, (2) Honorary members, (3) Ordinary members and (4) Associate members.

Article 7a – add Article – For those that do not fully qualify to be Ordinary members of the Association, Associate members may be elected by the Committee in the same way as Ordinary members. However, they should show some qualities that would benefit the Association and pay the same membership fee as Ordinary members. Associate members shall be entitled to all the privileges and subject to all the duties of the Association except that they shall not be allowed to vote at meetings, serve as officers or be Committee members, nor to claim share of the assets of the Association upon it dissolution. To distinguish their membership status, their membership number shall be begin with an A.

All sizes of FFA fleece jackets in stock. Also waistcoats, baseball caps and ties. Call Roz Stephens on 01944 738281 or email chix@farmline.com

Lined Fleece Jackets - £30.00
Fleece Waistcoats - £16.00
Sweat Shirts - £14.00
Polo Shirts - £12.00
Baseball Caps - £5.50
Ties - £8.00
All plus postage

April 13th 2011

The first flying visit of the 2011 season brought 17 aircraft and 47 participants to our airstrip in Essex to visit the factory of J.S.Wright and Sons Ltd: - Willow growers and cricket bat makers. The event was oversubscribed by a considerable margin with 28 aircraft and 64 applicants, but the limit of a 49 seater coach had to be imposed for logistical reasons of factory space and lunch. It was sad to have to turn applicants down, but gratifying to have such a strong response.

With a tight timetable, strict instructions were to land by 10am at the latest, and the last aircraft taxied to its parking space right on time – with all aircraft scheduled, arriving with no weather issues. A call was received from a concerned controller at Stansted who had seen all these maggots crawling across his radar screen and descending to an unknown destination (I have only had the strip here for 32 years....!), but he looked up the co-ordinates in the farm strips guide and got my number from the book. (It shows how they **can** trace you to your destination even if they don't know the strip!) Apparently one aircraft had failed to squawk in his TMZ, but as it was not possible to identify which one, and I was not about to tell him the registrations, he just asked me to tell everyone to stick to the rules on departure. He was also concerned that we were going to have what he termed a 'squadron scramble' departure flooding his screen with more maggots!

The coach arrived at the factory spot on time and after introductions we were split into two groups, one hosted by Nick Wright, chairman of the company, and the other by his son, Oliver, the third and fourth generation since the company was founded in the late 19th Century.





The procedure is that a 4' pointed length of willow, about 6" in diameter called a Set, is hammered into the ground at 4' spacing and allowed to take root on its own. Within 4 years that Set has taken root and produced a multitude of shoots up to about 15' long. These are all harvested, and of maybe 15 - 20 shoots from each set, there will likely only be one that will be of the right quality to be planted in its own right to continue on to become a bat willow. The rest are destroyed as being of no use. The shoot that is selected will be cut off, have a sharpened point and pushed into the ground as far as it will go, helped by having a hole prepared with a crowbar to as deep as possible to aid stability as it roots and grows. The Sets will produce around 4–5 crops of shoots in its useful lifetime.

Access to water is beneficial, but not essential, and the tree will be mature for harvesting in about 13 - 15 years. The critical part of its maintenance is to keep the first 10' of the trunk completely free of all side shoots to prevent any knots forming – a knot obviously being a bad feature for a cricket bat. The 10' allows the clean trunk to be cut into 4 sections of 30" to maximise the number of bat blanks per tree.

The trees produced as described are either grown by the farmer and the finished tree sold to the company, or sometimes willows are offered to the company on spec, but mostly now the procedure is to have a shared arrangement with the grower and all costs and returns being split equally, with shared responsibility of management. The harvesting is undertaken by professional teams supplied by the company – of which there are 3 teams operating year round.

The harvested trunks are brought back to the yard where another team cut them into the required length before they are taken to another team where the bark is removed by hand with an axe before each length is split into the basic size required with a hydraulic splitter – a job which used to be done by hand. These primary blanks are then taken to the final preparing shed where several teams stationed at circular saws trim one side flat, which will become the face of the bat, and the other side with two angles which become the back. Since all this has taken place within between 24 hours and a fortnight of the tree being still growing, the now finished blank is very wet from the sap, so the two ends are dipped in hot wax (by hand) to seal them from splitting during drying.

Each pallet of finished blanks now enter the drying process which is done either in a temperature controlled electric kiln,

which takes about 3 months, or they are put into large sheds for natural air drying which takes about 13 months. Once dry, the final process is to grade the now-dry blanks (by a man who has been with the company for many years and grades about 2000 blanks/day) for sale to the bat making customer, who in most cases is in India or Pakistan.

All the waste timber is taken to the end of the yard and put into an enormous heap, which up to a few years ago was burned on a weekly basis – but now with all the present day fuss about controlled emissions, the heap is chipped and shipped to Stansted airport to be used in their large wood burning plant. It is apparently sold for 'peanuts', but perhaps this is an area where there could be a greater economic recovery for the company.

The UK is the primary producer of bat blanks in the world, and J. S. Wright and Sons are the largest producer in the country. They have around 20 employees at their factory and they produce 40,000 blanks a month – or around ½ million a year, and they cannot produce enough to satisfy demand. Assuming that the other producers make a similar number between them, that is a million bats a year! It is hard to believe that there is such a market world-wide, but as Nick pointed out, there are an awful lot of people in India and Pakistan, and they are all cricket crazy. The introduction of the 20/20 cricket series has also stimulated the interest in cricket.

Tour over we bussed a couple of miles to the Square & Compasses pub who gave us an excellent lunch, before returning to our aircraft for departure. There was the forecast of a front moving in from the west during the afternoon, so those going in that direction beat a hasty retreat, whilst those with less urgency stayed for a little while at the airstrip for tea and buns before their own departure.

All in all a successful first event for the new season, uninterrupted by weather.

Martin Gosling

North Wales

May 4th & 5th 2011

In all, twenty aircraft and FFA members, wives, partners and friends made the journey to Caernarfon Airport (formerly RAF Llandwrog and birthplace of the Mountain Rescue Service – of which more later) by air or road. The winds around Snowdonia were kind, and arrivals were handled expeditiously by Mike James, an ex-RAF Controller. Following refreshment in the Apron Café, a coach ride to RAF Valley departed at noon for those in Group A, whilst those in Group B took off for the alternative programme, which offered a trip to "The Electric Mountain" or the Snowdonian Railway.

RAF VALLEY

In visiting Valley, we were thrice blessed, although ladies who may have hoped to meet Flt Lt Wales were disappointed, albeit that he was at the Station and on duty. However, anecdotes from his colleagues may have afforded the odd titbit not necessarily in the public domain, an example of which being that mugs of the happy couple had been mass-produced in China, showing the face of the Bride and Prince Harry! Needless to say, the crew room had a good collection of these, and yes, Prince William knew nothing of the Sea King training trip from RAF Marham which just happened to overfly the Mall on the previous Friday, streaming the banner "Just Married". Apparently, that idea came from the Groom's father, was blessed by his grandmother and the rest is history, save for some sniping requests of the RAF made under the freedom of information laws.

Our visit commenced with a briefing on the RAF's SAR capabilities by the SAR Force Operations Officer of 22 Squadron, Peter Armitage. We were in his capable hands for a forty-five minute presentation and a subsequent visit to one of the Sea King 3 and 3a helicopters.

To give a flavour of what we heard, there is a live programme of military SAR units around the UK, supplemented by fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters operated on behalf of HM Coastguard, all of which are co-ordinated or tasked through RAF Lossiemouth. During our briefing, a number of aircraft were shown at readiness, or on training, whilst a helicopter was bound for a ship 370NM west of Ireland, where a crew member had suffered a heart attack.

Refuelling stops would include offshore oil installations.

Aircraft have a day response time of fifteen minutes, slightly longer at night. In 2009, callouts totalled 2,300, with 1,850 people assisted. The previous weekend had seen a total of 52 rescues being undertaken. Routinely, 67% of helicopter services performed by the RAF involve people on land, predominantly hills and mountains, 24% coastal and the rest a mixture. It was interesting to note that one of our FFA members had spent the previous night flying a SAR aircraft, and had not even managed a nap on the way up from Guernsey to Caernarfon, illustrating that we have more in common with our hosts than they may have imagined.

The RAF are feeling the loss of the Nimrod, as it leaves a whacking great hole in their long range SAR capability which the twenty Sea Kings cannot hope to cover. We suggested that, when on deep-sea SAR Ops, the helicopter crew of four might be supplemented by an MP, giving each a feel for the consequences of their actions when viewed from the sharp end!

Flt Lt Alex Brassington, a pilot on 22 Squadron, took us around one of the aircraft, outlining the role of crew members and explaining the ups and downs of winching. Winchmen are qualified paramedics, and the equipment carried for resuscitating and stabilising casualties was state of the art, as was the thermal imaging camera, homer and other specialist equipment on board. It was truly a privilege to be welcomed and informed in the way we were.

From 22 Squadron, we were put in the hands of Flt Sgt Steve Price, a team leader of the Mountain Rescue Team based at Valley. Four such teams exist, each comprising eight volunteers, whose primary duties lie elsewhere within the Service, Steve Price being an avionics engineer seconded to the MRT for a period of around three months, during which time he puts away his tools and dusts down his hard-weather kit. The other three teams are based at RAF Kinloss, Leuchars and Leeming.

The history of RAF Mountain Rescue is fascinating. In the last five months of 1942, there were ten major accidents in the area of Snowdonia. Flt Lt George Graham, the MO of RAF Llandwrog at that time, concluded that more aircraft were being lost on training than operations, and more aircrew were being lost as a result of post-crash trauma, or exposure, than as a result of the accidents themselves.

He scrounged a vehicle or two, some willing helpers and a few canvas stretchers, and thus the RAF Mountain Rescue Service was born. The initiative of Flt Lt Graham was recognised by the award to him of an MBE. The rest, as they say, is history, but each team expects to respond to around 36 calls a year. Their



vehicles contain a full range of communications equipment for contact with aircraft, police, ambulance and other ground-based units. Each team has a medical capability and can be self-supporting in the field for a couple of days.

Their work in saving civilian lives is well known, but their primary purpose is the saving of Service personnel and post-crash management.

Having had our fill of search and rescue, the day was rounded off by a visit to see some ultimate 'toys for the boys' (and girls – one of whom was in the circuit) during a visit to 19 Squadron, the training squadron equipped with the Hawk Mk II, which our programme aptly described as "the cutting edge of fast jet training in the RAF".

For the third time on that day, we were in the friendly and informative hands of a specialist.

Flt Lt Chris Pearson is a weapons instructor on the Hawk, and was joined by another pilot, Flt Lt John Rigg. Between them, we were given a briefing on the very intensive training which a prospective fighter pilot receives at RAF Valley, following about 180 hours of initial flying training on the Tucano and other aircraft. The fast jet course at Valley lasts about a year, involving flying around 100 hours, and predominantly prepares pilots for the Typhoon. With an operating cost of £90,000 to £100,000 per flying hour, it is essential that prospective pilots are comprehensively trained on the Hawk Mk II, which has systems and computers designed to mirror the 'big bird' but at far less financial pain to the long-suffering tax-payer.

We saw something of the basic training aids, and those under the wing of John Rigg even managed a jolly in the simulator, with various farmers shooting up to 20,000 feet in but a moment or two, to alarm themselves with fast-jet stalls. Those who recovered were then able to return to the airfield and, shall we say, "plant" the aircraft on the ground. From my tone, you will see that the writer missed out and is a little jealous!

Sadly, we were told that about 175 trainees had been made redundant during their courses.

Although this is really bad luck for all concerned, there is a silver lining in that Cathay Pacific have offered many a job with the airline. This seems pretty shrewd, given the material they will acquire, no doubt with grateful thanks to the British tax-payer. As an exairline man, one suspects less fun but more money!

All of us came away from Valley having seen many and varied things, each resolving not to become a customer of either the Sea King or the Mountain Rescue Team.

Our first day was rounded off with a very enjoyable dinner at the Royal Celtic Hotel, where we stayed. Our guest for the evening was Flt Lt Peter Armitage of 22 Squadron, and we rounded off the event with an enthusiastic vote of thanks and a presentation to him by Neville of a cheque for £400, to be split between SAR and the Mountain Rescue Team. An invitation was also extended to any of the personnel at RAF Valley who might find themselves in Guernsey to visit Channel Islands Air Search, to see what the most southerly unit in the British Isles has to bring to the party.

THE ELECTRIC MOUNTAIN

The second element of the visit to Wales offered a tour of the largest pump storage power station in Europe, "The Electric Mountain", a railway journey up Mount Snowdon and the opportunity to visit a nearby Slate Museum.

The Dinorwig Power Station uses water from what was once the second largest slate quarry in the world, Llanberis, employing three thousand men at its peak. The power station was created under the Elidir Mountain, where 12 million tons of slate were excavated and ten miles of tunnels created. Situated between the upper and lower lakes, with no outward sign of its existence, the plant uses up to six turbines to generate enough power for 300,000 users, with all six turbines having the capacity to meet the needs of the whole of Wales for up to five and a half hours, as water from the upper lake flows through the turbines on its way to the lower lake.

During off-peak periods, surplus electricity from the National Grid is used in a reverse process, by which the turbines become pumps, to lift water back to the upper lake. The power station was completed in 1984, and took ten years to build at a cost of £450 million, with a twelve-year pay back. The main chamber, if free of plant, could accommodate St Paul's Cathedral, and power

is available almost instantly to meet peak requirements due to adverse weather, or commercial breaks during "Coronation Street". This translates into 1,320 megawatts of energy being available within twelve seconds of a demand being made of the station from the National Grid Control Centre.

All this gives an idea of what lives within the heart of a Welsh mountain, but the sense of being several thousand feet below the surface in a huge facility with buses, roads and traffic lights, and around two hundred staff, is difficult to convey.

Tales from our guide about the fossils of Welsh dragons and the appearance of the odd ghost were taken with a pinch of salt, but bats, ferns and stalagmites have all established a presence since 1984.

As one who had never heard of the Electric Mountain, I came away somewhat awestruck, not only by the scale of this project but also by the fact of it being so eco-friendly; truly, a visit worth making and a most interesting contrast with the Scottish wind-farm which we saw on last year's Study Tour.

Finally, no report of this event would be complete without mention of the effort which Neville and Martin (the latter as leader of Group B) put into making the trip so memorable, and from us all, thank you, Neville, for those charming gifts which were quietly placed in each of our rooms.

Roger Dadd

Nottingham

10th May, 2011

Perfect flying conditions saw the arrival of 12 aircraft to Nottingham (Tollerton) Airport with ample time to socialise with the car arrivals over coffee and biscuits.

Before departure by coach, the airport operator, Mr. Derek Leatherland, was presented with a gift to show our appreciation for waiving all landing fees as we were members of the FFA !! If any members need to get together in the future, please try and use the airport when you will be afforded another warm welcome.

A short journey via the beautiful Trent Valley, and over the River Trent took us to the farm of David and Rachel Prince as Anthony Kedros describes :-

This is a very professional beef fattening unit where the quality of the stock, housing, management, welfare and, one presumes, the product are of the very highest.

Beef cross steers and heifers are brought in at 12 to 18 months of age for fattening. Mr Prince does not buy them himself but finishes them under contract for Waitrose. The throughput is about a hundred head a month with a total on the farm of 900 at any one time.

They are bedded on straw in airy yards, typically, with only the bedding area roofed and the concrete-floored feeding area separated by motorway crash barriers which are robust but rounded. There are a couple of open feed-lot-type areas which have proven to be very successful, even in the most inclement weather. The only price being a relatively small increase in food intake.

The ration is whole crop maize and wheat silage supplemented with rape meal, brewers grains, straw and minerals, fed ad lib.

The yards are mucked out twice a year.

I must say that the animals looked in superb condition, clean and totally stress-free. A result of excellent management and stockman ship.

The animals are weighed monthly (until the final finishing period when they are weighed weekly). Weights and ID recording are all done electronically.

Many thanks to Dave, Rachel and stockman Andrew Perry for an insight into how beef production can be a worthwhile enterprise.

Anthony Kedros.

Returning over the River Trent, we reached the vast sewage works for Greater Nottingham, owned and operated by the Severn Trent Water Authority. We were welcomed by Mr John Jackson, General manager of the Anaerobic Digester and the farms which grow the maize to feed it !

A short film followed explaining the construction and workings of the "Concrete Cow" and of the inputs and outputs. Over 700 ha of maize is grown to produce circa 37,000 tonnes of silage to feed the beast, which in turn produces 15 GWh of electricity, digestate for fertiliser and surplus heat for sale. The cost was £15 million with a payback in 15 years.

An excellent lunch followed whilst we did some digesting ourselves before donning gear for a walking visit of the plant in 2 smaller groups. The plant, only working from new for a few months was almost like a scene from "Star Wars" and most impressive by its scale and cleanliness.

Returning to the airport was only a short drive so everyone was able to have tea and refreshments, and above all, more time to socialise as the perfect weather meant there was no rush to return home.

We had a great time looking after you all, and hope you will return to Nottinghamshire for another visit in the not too distant future.

John Hardy and Richard Blant





The French Tour

Sunday 29th May

Our Flying Farmers group arrived for the start of its 2011 Study Tour at Le Havre St. Romain airport. Deauville was to have been the airport of choice but the G8 conference was being held in the town and that seemed to take preference over the Flying Farmers visit.

We all arrived safely and the hotel that Gordon & Caroline had chosen for us was on the seafront in Deauville – The Hotel Villa Gardena. We got together for a welcome dinner in a local restaurant.

Monday 30th May, The French National Stud

Our first visit on the Monday was to the French National Stud, Harass du Pin, in Normandy. We left our hotel at 9 am and drove for just over one hour through the lovely French countryside. Our bus driver pointed out the beautiful Chateaux and places that produced Calvados, Cider and Apple juice, and there were quite a few. Chateau Du Breuil was large, beautiful and a well-known one. We arrived at the stud, and were welcomed by our tour guide Christine. We gathered together and had a very special guided tour. Le Pin National Stud embraces 300 years of equestrian history. The first identity under the administration of the Royal Stud was created by Louis XIV in1685, and was built in the 18th century by the Kings architect, Robert de Cotte.

In the 19th century it became a training school for officers, but has since been developed into a training centre proposing various courses to students and professionals alike – each one leading to a recognised qualification, notably in the area of breeding techniques such as Artificial Insemination, Ultrasound Scanning and Embryonic Transfer, or that of rearing horses such as foaling and pasture management. There are also the equestrian techniques learning carriage driving, training young horses and qualifying in the traditional trades of the equine sector, harness making and farrier training being amongst the qualifications.

The chateau, gardens and stables nestle in a green haven covering more than 2500 acres, and is fondly called 'The Versailles for Horses', and is one of the most famous studs in the world. Christine, out guide, tells us all about it as we enjoy a stroll through the stables, home to 40 horses of 10 different breeds. It was a joy to see the individual horses all cared for with such love and happiness. Amongst the breeds were Percheron, Pur Sang, and the Trotter Francais used for carriage driving, racing, and trotting.

We visited the harness room full of tack, which is made on the premises and have their own identity which is a special medallion with a capital H in a circle and the inscription around it s 'Les Haras Nationaux'. They are very proud to have a very special saddle on display which had been given to the French President Gistard d'Etang by the president of the Republic of Algeria. After the tack room, we went across the courtyard to the carriage museum with its large collection of all different carriages used for various occasions from a one-man buggy used for the trotting races, to a beautifully restored carriage called a Grand Coupe de Voyages, made in Paris in 1843 for a particular aristocratic family.

We then went into a building they had turned into a museum and a modern sphere with the most recent technology enabling you to better understand the world of horses and their upkeep, and the history of Le Pin National Stud. They had their own farriers and all their saddles and harnesses are made on the premises.

There were video presentations of many of the activities going on at the stud.

We then took a walk to the terrace of the Chateau to look at the view of the garden and the large paddocks where some of the horse events are held. It is impressive, designed with such precision, as so much is in France. In a prominent place in the garden was the grave of the most successful stud stallion in their history.

When we turned to go from the front of the Chateau and headed across the courtyard we could see, the beautiful wrought iron gates at the entrance which has the head of a horse in gold looking down the chase away from the Chateau.

We all left feeling very privileged that we had been shown such a special stud, and understood why Le Pin du Harass was called 'The Versailles for Horses'.

Annette Gosling

Visit to Arromanches

On a grey afternoon we embussed to the cliffs to the east of



Arromanches to see the gun emplacements and get a view of the coastline. We then descended into Arromanches itself for a visit to the museum. This told the incredible story of the creation of one of two Mulberry artificial harbours.

Despite American scepticism (*"I think it is the biggest waste of man -power and equipment that I have ever seen". Admiral John Leslie Hall, US Navy*) the concept of an artificial port originated in the UK, and although over 20,000 workers were involved in the construction, remained a complete secret. Over a million tons of concrete and steel had to be assembled and then towed to France. The Mulberry harbour at Arromanches was key to the logistics behind the successful D-Day landings, survived an unusually severe Channel storm shortly after D-Day, and took the German opposition by surprise. A brilliant UK engineering achievement.

From the aviation point of view the depictions of the many types of British aircraft involved in the invasion reminded one of the very great skill and bravery of the lady ATA pilots, who had to ferry all types of aircraft ranging to single engine fighters to four engine bombers, in all types of weather, without proper instrumentation, and with no training except a one-page aircraft handling note. Particularly depicted was the Hawker Typhoon ground attack fighter. Diana Barnato Walker was delivering one of the these from the Hawker factory when most of the underneath of the aircraft fell off with a huge bang, giving a great view of the ground, but also necessitating a 230mph landing speed.

Returning to Deauville we passed by the Pegasus Bridge and the

Café Gondrée, saw the Horsa glider mock-up, and then spent some quiet moments at the Ranville war cemetery recalling the sacrifices of a very brave generation.

Chris Moore

Tuesday 31st May, Bourges

The weather was fine on Tuesday for our short coach journey back over the magnificent Normandy bridges to return to our aircraft at St Romaine for the easy, ninety minute flight to



Bourges, 130 miles south of Paris.

After a sandwich lunch at the airfield, those members of the party with less of an interest in agricultural matters were offered a conducted tour around the city of Bourges and its very impressive twelfth century cathedral. After a short journey passing large, flat arable fields, many being irrigated with centre pivot irrigators, the rest of the party were shown around two local farms.

The first farm visited was, perhaps, the best example that I have ever seen of a superbly integrated arable and livestock unit. This farm was the largest pig farm in France, keeping over 2700 sows and producing over 75,000 finished porkers each year. Rations for all the pigs are produced in two, on farm, feed mills. These were very modern units with computer controlled equipment that could produce feed at rates up to 50 tons per hour. The cost of the growing pig ration was minimized by the use of high levels of skimmed milk and re-milled waste bread. The removal of the plastic bread wrappings and the re-milling were achieved by feeding the waste bread through an old conventional combine parked in the corner of one of the sheds! The bread was purchased at 20% of the equivalent cost of wheat, while the waste milk had only a nominal cost. The inevitable consequence of the high levels of waste milk in the ration was that the effluent produced was very liquid! This, after solids were separated, was then mixed with water pumped from numerous boreholes on the farm, and used to irrigate the farm's arable crops. The farm extended to over 3000 acres, growing grain maize, wheat and oilseeds. The nutrient value of the effluent/water mix enabled these crops to be grown with no artificial fertilizer, while at the same time producing maize yields of over 15 t/ha, some 40% more than the regional average. Any field corners or margins that could not be reached by the irrigators were dressed with the separated solids to provide an equivalent nutrient level.

When Etienne, the farmer of this unit, took over the business the pig unit had only 150 sows. This was built up in stages to the present 2700 and plans are in place for continued expansion! The productivity of the farm has enabled Etienne to buy out the financial interests in the business of his four brothers and sisters who took no interest in farming. We only discovered later, over the diner table, that in addition to this farm, Etienne also had extensive farming interests in Morocco, including 60 hectares under glass producing cherry tomatoes for the north European market, and another unit growing 1700 acres of oranges! Quite an amazing family farming conglomerate.

The second farm that we visited was run by Francis Lejault. A lack of suitable expansion opportunities in his home farming area, over 100 kms east of the Bourges region, brought Francis seeking business in this area. From nothing 15 years ago he is now farming over 5000 acres in a number of different management agreements, and is actively looking for more. The crops, including wheat, barley, oilseeds (rape and sunflowers) and grain maize all looked excellent considering the lack of rain this spring. The crops that had been irrigated, including all the grain maize, showed the real potential of this land. Francis's latest investment which he proudly took us to see in operation was a new centre pivot irrigator, the central pivot of which could be moved laterally about 500 yards, so irrigating a race track pattern. This machine, costing over 130,000 Euros, could irrigate 500 acres every 7 days. Francis hoped that the machine would pay back the investment in one dry year! All the cultivations, planting and harvesting are carried out by two staffing teams so keeping the machinery working 23 hours a day. He hopes to harvest all 5000 acres with one 40 foot Claas combine, which, when we were on the farms in June, had yet to be either delivered or even built! To reduce soil compaction he is aiming to get all his machinery, including a grain chaser bin, onto rubber tracks. On the tractors that we saw (500 HP Challengers) there was little evidence of the 100 kms that they have to travel frequently between farms!

I believe that we all thoroughly enjoyed our farm visits to this part of France. What I took away with me was, not only the great professionalism shown, but also the incredible energy, drive and enthusiasm displayed by both of our hosts. This came as quite a tonic after the atmosphere that sometimes one comes across within British agriculture of gloom and despondency! Many thanks are due to Richard Howard who organised the day for us all.

David Keene

Wednesday 1st June, Toulouse

With our leader's plane short of breath and not in the best of health and wanting it to see another engineering doctor for a second opinion, it befell me to draw the short straw to become leader for the day for our visit to the Airbus factory at Toulouse.

We were asked to avoid the 11.00 – 11.30 rush-hour period at Toulouse, but as we were behind schedule arriving at Bourges, it was decided to delay the first arrival until after 11.30. We advised Toulouse of this and got the response that as we were supposed to have all arrived between 09.00 and 11.00 (that was news to us!) would we please now not arrive until after 13.00!! I managed to persuade them that as we had a tour planned to start at 13.30, we really must start arriving by 12.00 at the latest. This was rapidly beginning to turn pear-shaped before we even left Bourges!

We tried to organise the fastest to get there first and space the arrivals out by 5 minutes per slot, but the calculations were too complicated for my small brain so we all left with an approximate plan and left it to chance.

Most aircraft went at lowish level but I climbed up to FL75 above the cloud and found myself with a 40 knot tailwind, and even slowing the revs down to 1900, I couldn't prevent myself arriving 15 minutes early, just behind the first aircraft and we were, surprisingly, given clearance to land without delay. Those that arrived after us were asked to hold at varying points around

France for anything up to 40 minutes – that's a long time to be going round and round in circles!

As soon as I arrived I was approached by a handling agent who said they had to take us to the main terminal to be cleared by the police and that there would be a minimum charge of 200 Euros per aircraft! (That was 3,200 Euros for a few journeys to the other side of the runway!) Luckily the airport manager, who was being extremely helpful to our group, came across, and when I said it all seemed a little unreasonable, he sent the handlers away with a flea in their ear and persuaded the police to come to us instead (which they had at first refused to do). By soon after 1 pm the last aircraft had finally been allowed to resume straight and level and come and join the party.

With all aircraft now on the ground the police started their formalities and were very surprised to discover that we had all arrived from an airfield in France and that we had cleared customs a couple of days earlier – and indeed we were continuing on to another airfield in France! As their services were not required after all (we all wondered why they wanted to see us anyway), they put their notebooks away, gave a Gallic shrug and went back to their nice warm office on the other side of the airfield.

Now we were a long way behind the power curve as regards our schedule, but we caught the shuttle bus to take us to the start point for the Airbus tour where our guide said as we were now ½ hour late for the start time we would have to have an abbreviated tour – unless we wanted to delay for an hour and a half and slot in behind the following tour. I could see this would just make a bad situation even worse as far as our next plan in Carcassonne was concerned, so we accepted a shorter tour.

We were given facts and figures concerning the idea behind the design, the time scale from drawing board to the present day, all the numbers built to date and for whom and the orders in the pipeline, which are considerable and will ensure the operation will be ongoing for several years yet (and, no doubt, the orders will keep coming in). We looked at part of the production line from a viewing window, but with the next group hot on our heels, we had to cut that part of the visit short. The two facts that really stood out for me were that in sardine mode, an A380 can carry 843 passengers - and one holiday operator runs two aircraft in this configuration (wouldn't it be just great to be at the back of the queue waiting for customs!), and maximum take-off weight is around 540 tonnes (that must take a lot of shove to get it airborne).

We jumped back in the bus to be taken to look at a static Concorde exhibit and talked through the history of it, of which we probably all know. It is hard to believe that is was a design that was begun 50 years ago and was so successful in its niche market, but progress in fuel efficiency and noise emission, and the disastrous Paris crash put the final nail in the coffin of this iconic plane. She looked rather sad and tatty out in the open and desperately needs some TLC as a housed exhibit – something which is being talked about for the airfield in the future. Although there were some fixed steps up to the cabin, the great Elf'n'safety culture kicked in and decreed that we couldn't go up! (too many of us, too unsafe), so we milled around underneath in the cold wind poking and prodding the tyres, struts and afterburner vanes, and anything else we could reach.

Our guide then very kindly offered to take us back to the group assembly point where there was a mock-up of the cockpit and cabin area, and as there were no further groups waiting for tours, we spent time there marvelling at the apparent simplicity of the cockpit and the size of the various cabin configurations, and asking a multitude of pertinent aviation questions of our guide, before being taken back to the flight line for our onward flight to Carcassonne.

By now it was the evening rush hour at Toulouse and we were asked to call for start-up clearance in sequence (slowest first) but to expect a 5-10 minute gap between planes for the clearance being granted. It took over an hour to get us all away for the relatively short flight to Carcassonne. It has to be said that the authorities at Toulouse bent over backwards to help us in all respects, but they are an extremely busy airfield all the time and the sudden arrival of 16 light aircraft was very difficult to slot into the sequence – both inbound and outbound. In hindsight, perhaps the GA airfield on the outskirts of the city might have been an easier option.

Meanwhile our leader's plane had had several screws refitted to the air intake side of one cylinder to enable her to breathe properly, and he and Caroline had bypassed the frustrations of Toulouse and were happily sitting in a bar in Carcassonne with their feet up and a large glass of wine in hand.....!

Martin Gosling

Friday 3rd June, St Etienne

After a free but wet day in Carcassone on the 2nd of June we all departed for St Etienne on the morning of the 3rd with all planes taking various routes due to the cloud base, some over the hills and others around the coast.

All arrived safely at St Etienne by midday to a reception of media and camera crews and the local television was in attendance due to the increased traffic using the local airport on that day.

We were greeted at the airport by the Verney Carrion Brothers, John and Giullaume who conducted the interview with myself and Martin Crossling with regards to the Flying Farmers club and my purchase of a matched pair of Demas Guns.

We arrived at the factory in the centre of the town and as it was a bank holiday the factory was unmanned we were given a fantastic tour, demonstrating the enormous capacity to make barrels for many other gun manufacturers. Also their custom shop manufacturing hand engraved Demas guns.

Verney Carron was established in 1820. Their collection of guns and rifles, which have been manufactured for almost 200yrs was outstanding and all on display for us to see. There are only two gun manufactures now left in France.

Guilliam had kindly asked two members of the engraving staff to come into work to show us their skills performing such intricate work on a daily basis. The detail was quite astonishing especially the whiskers which had being applied to a leopard which had been engraved on the side of a rifle. The walnut hand selected stock with a mirror type finish achieved by pure oil finish was truly amazing.

The tour was then led to the commercial aspect of the business -





barrel making and 44m double barrel hand pistol which fired a hard rubber ball at the offending rioters.

Demand for this weapon was high as Guillame put it “there is a lot of rioters in the world”

Lunch was a super buffet affair on the outtkirts of town. We all departed St Etinenne by mid afternoon en route to Semur-en-Auxois in good flight conditions.

Chris Makin

After a most interesting tour of the shotgun factory and a mouth watering lunch in St Etienne organized by Chris Makin we returned to the airport for a short flight to Semur en Auxois in Burgundy. We landed in glorious sunshine at the most delightful small club airfield to be met by Marc Barc our host and organizer for the next two days. Quite a few local families had gathered to watch the unusual spectacle of 18 planes descend on their normally quiet and peaceful airfield After most had refuelled we were coached to our Hotels in Semur for a group dinner at one of the Hotels.

Saturday 4th June

Saturday morning dawned another warm and sunny day as we boarded the coach for a visit to Chateau de Commarin the home of Count and Countess Bertrand de Voguethe, 26th generation of owners. Commerin is mentioned for the first time in 1214 but it wasn't till the 16th century that the Chateau as it now stands was built. We were given a guided tour by a French lady who did not speak very good English. (David Soul very ably stepped in to interpret for us) She told us among many things that, at the time of the revolution the local villagers and tenants of the estate had saved the then owners of the Chateau from the guillotine as they were deemed to be good landlords who had looked after them well.



Our next stop was lunch at Chateauneuf en Auxois a medieval. Village set high on a hill with a stunning views over the Canal de Bourgogne. The coach driver performing miracles negotiating the narrow streets to get us close to the restaurant.

Well nourished, we moved on for some wine tasting at the famous Chateau de Pommard just to the southwest of Beaune. We were split into three groups each being given a guided tour of the vineyard ending with a chance to sample some of the most famous vintages. This part of the proceedings being enthusiastically supported by all. We were then left to wander round the excellent museum of ancient tools used by wine growers through the ages. There was also a very interesting art gallery with an exhibition of paintings by such famous artists as Picasso and Salvadore Darly and sculptures by Josepha an up and coming French artist who's forte is sculpting scantily clad young ladies. Her work being greatly admired at length by most of the men.

Everyone being counted back on the coach we set off for a journey down the most famous wine route in France taking in such iconic villages as Nuit St Georges and Beaune, Marc giving us a running commentary on the famous vineyards as we passed them by.

On our return to the Hotels it was the usual European FFA tour scramble to get changed in half an hour for the evenings festivities. First port of call was Marc’s house (Chateau de Flee) which Marc has been painstakingly restoring for the last thirty years. A mammoth task which had most of us shaking our heads in disbelief at what he had achieved and what was still to do. After being initiated into the ancient order of the brotherhood of I know not what, by knocking the top off a bottle of bubbly with a sword, we all were served canapés and a glass or two of what did not end up on the grass by Danielle (Marc’s wife).

Dinner was beckoning so everyone rounded up and back on the coach we set off to Flavigny sur Ozerain, a small hilltop village famous for being used as the location for the film "Chocalat" and where the monks at the Abbaye de Flavigny have a small factory making aniseed balls. The meal was to be in a restaurant which is run by a local farmer and his family. Whilst on the way there, a torrential storm ensued, its pinnacle being just as we arrived in the village. The streets being narrow and the coach being wide meant it could not get us to the door. A sprint of several hundred yards in the pouring rain, not knowing exactly where the restaurant was ensured everyone being well and truly soaked by the time we finally arrived. But the Flying Farmers spirit soon shone through, damp jackets and cardigans hung on the backs of chairs to dry, the meal began.

All the ingredients being grown or raised on the farm. After the meal a vote of thanks was most eloquently given by Martin, to all who had made the trip possible.

Sunday 5th June

Sunday morning arrived bright and sunny in Semur, It saw most pilots checking weather and filing flight plans for there trip back home. Thunder storms in northern France being a concern to most. After arriving at the airfield , farewells being said everyone departed on their various routes home - most encountering some sort of bad weather as expected, but everyone making it home safely.

Gordon Bellerby.

June 14th 2011

We flew into the Vacher's strip near Didcot. Our morning visit was to Angus and Patricia Dart, their neighbours. Angus gave us a brief description of their two large arable and dairy farms, both separate businesses. There was some confusion about their relationship until Patricia pointed out that she married the boy next door!

The arable is on a 4 year rotation (2 years grass, maize and wheat) to support the dairy units which comprise two herds of nearly 300 holstein freisians. Angus jumped off the trailer to explain various crops in the field. The general opinion was that they looked well considering the desparately dry spring.

We stopped at Field Farm where Patricia gave us a detailed talk about her background and dairy business. Her Scottish family have been farming here for 3 generations and have recently sold a London meat business to concentrate on the farm. The herd is split into 3 smaller groups, the one we saw kept in a large well ventilated shed. These are fed on a total mixed ration which is always available to them. They are milked twice a day in a 'rapid exit index 90' parlour yielding between 10 and 50 litres a day.This group will spend time outside later in the year when an initial drop in yield will be expected. The milk is contracted to Asda and collected every other day. Margins remain extremely tight. A hard won 2p increase has been whittled away by fuel and feed increases. The cow's welfare, on an individual basis, is of great concern to her. Much can be gleamed by studying their behaviour. For instance if a cow lies down in a different cubicle to her normal one then something is wrong. The nearest case of TB is 15 miles away in Faringdon.

Study groups are shown around, they recently had 35 vicars, but alas they can no longer accommodate school groups. The risk assessment is too formidable. This is of course of enormous concern. The ignorance of the odd teacher was lamentable but who cares any more where milk comes from!?

This was an extremely informative visit by two dedicated farmers who are determined to succeed.

Rick Holt

After an enjoyable buffet luncheon and a fruity sweet in a wonderful setting overlooking the private airstrip, with a choice of wine for those not intending to fly their aircraft later, the FFA gathering was entertained to what I can only describe as the best solo display I have ever seen by an existing WW2 warplane. It was just simply, superb!

Polly and Peter Vacher may be more widely known as a result of Polly's worldwide travels in her Piper Dakota aircraft G-FRGN, but Peter himself deserves just as much praise for his dedication and perfectionism in restoring a derelict and forgotten Hawker Hurricane fighter; one which actually saw combat during the Battle of Britain and was credited with five enemy kills!

Peter is a well respected restorer of old cars and searches the world for suitable car projects to restore. During a trip to India back in 1982 looking for cars, he stumbled across a wrecked aircraft hidden in undergrowth behind some university buildings which was later identified as being Hurricane R4118. To cut a long story short, he warmed to the idea of restoring not only cars but also an old abandoned aircraft and eventually acquired the remains of this aircraft, restoring it to flying condition after a lot of hard work, Indian bureaucracy, and the inevitable expense. Remarkably, a staggering 60% of the original airframe and wings were used, including all 100% of the Hydraulic systems, due to the anodising of the metal used during its construction in Canada. It is now kept and maintained to a very high standard with correctly kept records and a proper Technical Log and looked after by 4 volunteer ground staff, one of which is a night club singer when he is not getting his hands dirty polishing the aircraft!

After an impressive warm up display by a Pitts Special G-SWON, flown by Stuart Goldspink, a friend of the Vacher family, the gathering was treated to a special display of the Hurricane flown by Carl Schofield who is a well known and experienced warbird flyer. Polly herself took flying lessons in a Harvard with the intention of flying the Hurricane herself but decided not to risk it, leaving its airborne adventures to more experienced pilots with similar experiences of other older types of aircraft.

After starting up outside an immaculately kept hangar (or should we say agricultural building) in typical WW2 fashion with



a battery cart trolley and a puff of smoke, with chocks in place, the priceless Hurricane was carefully taxied out slowly to the grass strip and departed to the south with a relatively short take off run. After a number of safety checks away from the field and out of sight of the waiting audience, we suddenly heard the sound of a Merlin approaching and witnessed a fast and low flyby into an excellent display sequence which lasted for about 20 unforgettable minutes. Carl was able to carry out a number of 360 degree turns in each direction which afforded an excellent view of the aircraft for the many photographers who were present. He even made one careful slow roll while climbing away, during which the engine gave a momentary cough and sputter due to the application of negative G. After a final lower pass in the other direction, the landing back was seen to be a firm but safe arrival using up less than half the strip length.

We all felt very honoured to be given an exclusive display. The Hurricane is not cheap to run and I noticed on a poster on the wall of the hanger that a small air show organiser in the Czech Republic offered £15,000 to have R 4118 come and do a display. I was told that flying it realistically costs about £2000 per hour. There were also lots of other pictures, details and memorabilia for one to look over in the building; including some restored old cars for one to see.

The Supermarine Spitfire may get all the glory due to its name, shape and sound but one should not forget the dependable Hawker Hurricane which could not only take more battle damage

due to its rugged construction but was actually credited with more successes in the battle. I for one was truly impressed by the display but the FFA and the country generally should give credit to Peter and Polly for their dedication in getting R4118 (G-HUPW) back into the air. Anyone wanting to know more about this unique aircraft should send an e-mail to Peter, he is listed in the membership list of the FFA, asking for a copy of his beautifully illustrated book on the story of the discovery and restoration of this iconic and priceless aircraft. There are a few other Hurricanes flying but this is the ONLY one which saw actual combat during the Battle of Britain back in 1940. For this reason only, I can safely say that its value is priceless; a term you should not use lightly.

R4118 now resides alongside the equally impressive Piper Dakota in which Polly flew around the world and over both Polar Regions with a few Flying Farmers names on the wings. Her story is also documented in another book, "Wings around the World" about her exploits and adventures. That book is another worthy purchase; available from the same e-mail address! Can I end this report by remembering David Corbett who initially began the planning for this very successful visit. He would have been more than pleased at how well it went, with excellent weather, no wind, a fine crowd, and the best flying display I have seen in years! Talking about the airstrip, Polly told me that they receive numerous complaints from the local community, not about the noise, but for how little they see of the Hurricane flying. Thank you Peter, Polly, Stuart, the weather, and Carl for making our FFA visit such a memorable occasion.

Hugh Thompson

Tremlows Stud

June 21st 2011

Eight aircraft flew into Tilstock, north of Shawbury, and landed on a very narrow grass strip with a hearty crosswind. Richard Matson greeted us and arranged for the parachute van to transport us to the lecture room on the farm for coffee.

He gave us a brief history of the farm and airfield. It was built for bombers during the war, but although one field is still called the bomb dump, they were never armed. The area had been a major de-mob centre in WW1. The airfield is now used for parachuting (90% land on the designated area!), rally driving, defensive driving training, pistol shooting, green waste composting. His Father, having been tenant, bought the farm after the war to produce milk and make cheese. It runs to 340 acres, all grass on sandy soil. There is a conservation area, specifically to preserve a type of butterfly, where unfortunately ragwort thrives. In the late 80's he changed from dairying to horse breeding, since when both sons, Edward and Tullis, have joined the business. They manage the mares and stallions.

Edward trained at Cirencester and for a time was operations manager for a helicopter company at Cranfield, returning ten years ago. He provides full boarding facilities for the mares which, except for thoroughbreds for racing, are all covered by AI, using fresh, chilled and frozen semen. Throughput is in excess of 300 mares. He specialises in 'difficult mares'.

Tullis gained his PPL at Sleap. He also has 1600 jumps under his belt, doing photography and filming the tandem pairs. Unfortunately whiplash from the heavy head mounted camera prevents him from continuing with this. For a time he was assistant trainer to Philip Hobbs and in 1988 worked in New Zealand where he was convinced of the future of equine AI. He is licensed to export semen worldwide, mainly Europe, Australia and America, taken from 130 different stallions each year.



We then toured the farm. Because it was raining we were assembled in a parlour to watch a lusty 30 year old 'jumping' a dummy horse. His semen was then viewed in a laboratory where the activity of the sperm could be clearly seen on a screen. Tullis explained that the batch will be rejected because most were going around in circles, not straight lines. It had now stopped raining. The horses and foals in the paddocks looked alert after a couple of claps of thunder.

We were returned to the lecture room for a tasty finger buffet and drinks. A cheque for £340 was handed over from the Flying Farmers to Horses Help Heroes. A horse drawn carriage was leaving Lands End that very day taking a week to reach John o Groats with a target of 1 million pounds for Help the Heroes. It was due to call on the farm that Friday.

Richard Matson had kindly arranged an afternoon visit to Belton cheese run by longstanding friends, the Beckett family, so we jumped in cars for the 5 mile journey. In the early 20's Stanley Beckett left the family textile business in Manchester to work at Belton as a farm student, before taking on the tenancy and eventually buying the farm. John Beckett, his son, has farmed Belton since 1970 when Traditional Farmhouse Cheshire cheese was made at one end of the farmhouse from milk produced on the farm. Now, Justin Beckett carries on the tradition of excellence in cheesemaking. As well as supplying the major supermarkets they export all over the world, and recently won Supreme Champion at this year's Royal Bath and West show for their Wensleydale.

Justin gave us a tour of the factory from the curd tables and pressing rooms to the grading room and finally the environmentally controlled storage area where the cheese is left to mature for up to 12 months. He showed us the huge range they now make. After drinks and sampling we said our farewells and returned to Twemlows. By now the sun was shining, so after a vote of thanks, the parachute van was summoned and Richard was at hand to see us off.

This was a fascinating day looking at two thriving family businesses. This illustrates yet again the unique benefits of membership of the Flying Farmers. Many thanks to Richard Matson for a superbly organised visit.

Rick Holt

Guernsey Visit

June 28th to 30th 2011

With a band of thunderstorms lying North/South over the UK, the slick arrivals planned for the 18 aircraft inbound to Guernsey at 10 minute intervals rather fell apart. With just 3 aircraft on the apron on time, I began to get phone calls from all around of delays due to thunderstorms and poor weather generally, but by the time the coach was due to leave for the first visit at 2 pm, the majority had arrived, demolishing the large selection of delicious sandwiches laid on for us by the Aero Club.

A visit to the Rocquette Cider Company, run by James Meller gave us an insight into the art and peculiarities of cider apple



production and harvesting. A venture started ten years ago with little previous knowledge of agriculture has developed, mostly by trial and error into a thriving little business which, by his own admission, is only just beginning to be able to stand on its own feet financially. Fortunately the family runs a thriving property business which I am sure plays a big supporting financial role.

There are 15 acres of cider trees planted at a density of 300 trees to the acre, and the harvesting is achieved by a device consisting of a strap looped around the trunk of the tree and attached to a counterweight gizmo on the PTO of the tractor. The tractor drives forward, puts tension on the strap, a quick burst of PTO and, hey presto, all the apples fall to the ground! The apples are raked from under the trees into rows in the centre where they are picked up semi-manually by hand pushing a gathering device which puts them into boxes to be taken to the press. It all looked to be rather hard manual work, but their efforts are paying off as they begin to find and explore new markets into the neighbouring islands and mainland.



James was a really laid-back guy who gave the impression that he didn't know much about what he was doing – but that was most definitely not the case. The whole area was beautifully looked after, and the family home, around which the business was positioned, was in an idyllic setting. After a liberal cider tasting session with local cheese and biscuits to absorb as much or as little alcohol as required, we boarded the coach to be taken to our very comfortable hotel – The Cobo Bay – on the west coast.

By this time all but one aircraft has beaten the weather, with the promise of the remaining one to arrive first thing in the morning.

A couple of hours later after a wash and brush-up, the coach reappeared to take us to The Farmhouse restaurant for a dinner at which we hosted the Air Traffic controller who had been so helpful in setting up our arrival arrangements into the Jersey Zone, and Penny and Mark Dravers, who were hosting us the next morning at the Guernsey Sea Farms oyster hatchery. Sadly Ray Watts, our host for the Thursday morning visit was unable to be with us due to a prior commitment.

Wednesday dawned bright and clear for our visit to the Guernsey Sea Farms, run by Mark and Penny Dravers.....

Martin Gosling

We have many different types of farmers within the FFA, Mark and Penny Dravers being two of the most diverse. I remember, when they applied for membership 8 years ago, farming just 6 acres in Guernsey and not owning an airstrip (not allowed on the island), made them a bit borderline. It must have been their Robin President that sealed the deal! However, we would have been very foolish to have turned away such an enterprising partnership which made for an amazing visit to see their oyster breeding business, known as Guernsey Sea Farms.

They make a perfect partnership with Penny being the biologist



and Mark the engineer. The 'farm' consists of an old granite quarry, converted to a sea farm by blasting a hole through to the sea. Some of the quarried granite was used on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral due to its particular colour and qualities. The sea water is exchanged by means of a sluice gate on the Spring tides.

Penny was full of enthusiasm as she explained how the spawn is collected from the mother oysters. She explained that oysters can



seemingly change sex at will (not much different to some humans!) and can produce 20 to 30 million young. At this stage they are free swimming larvae and microscopic. Certainly a different kind of farming when you can't even see your stock.

These larvae are carefully nurtured in heated seawater and fed specially grown algae, which is also cultured on site. The spawn numbers are gradually whittled down by frequent screening, so that only the most robust oyster seed is selected.

After a couple of weeks, they change to sedentary spat. At this stage they are transferred to upwelling tubes with high flows of water and algae passing through them. Each tube can contain up to 7 million young spat.

The food, algae, is started in test tubes and follows a similar process to the oyster seed, transferring to larger and larger flasks, then to polythene tubes and finally to large outdoor tanks. I could understand now why Penny has to be a biologist!

Meanwhile, Mark explained how he has developed a large paddle wheel, looking for all the world as though taken from the back of a paddle steamer, to move 30 tonnes a minute of water with only a small electric motor. The water is circulated through the outdoor tanks where the oysters are transferred to in mesh boxes, when they reach about 3 mm in size. They remain here until they have grown to around 10 mm at 4 months old and are then marketed mainly to Ireland. Other markets are in Spain, Italy, Israel, Namibia, South Africa and Canada.

A mature Oyster can take 3 years to become mature, although in the algae rich seas of Morocco and Namibia, they can mature in 12 months.

Because of health problems in the French oyster farms, their business is thriving. They are maintaining a high health status through a high level of management and being isolated in their quarry from other shellfish.

Mark and Penny are currently marketing about 50 million seed oysters a year. These have gone through a strict screening process at all stages to ensure that they are only supplying quality stock. Another side to their business is supplying environmental laboratories worldwide with oyster seed for testing water quality.

Mark has another hidden talent, as he demonstrated later on that night, when he did the barbeque cooking for our evening of entertainment by the Guernsey Aero Club. But I guess like all men, he just took all the glory, whilst the women did the preparation and the cleaning up afterwards!

Thanks Mark and Penny, you have certainly proved your worth as valuable FFA members.

Paul Stephens

Back to Martin



At lunchtime, we took the ferry to the Island of Herm where everyone did their own thing with lunch, relaxation or exercise before returning to the hotel to get ourselves ready for our return to the Aero Club where we spent a pleasant evening with about 30 club members having a barbeque and a mingle. During the evening two of our members, who are retired pilots from the Guernsey Search and Rescue Islander, arranged for visits to this aircraft, to see all its equipment and gizmos, and to be given a full briefing on its capabilities and activities which are so important to the islanders. All of its crew - pilots, navigators, and medical - are volunteers and its annual running costs are around £80,000, raised entirely through donations and fund-raising.







Thursday also heralded good weather and our last visit of the trip was to Meadow Croft Farm, the largest farm on the Island of Guernsey. It was run by Ray Watts who is now the worldwide President of the Guernsey Cattle Association. (Ray was a fellow student of mine at Shuttleworth Agricultural College some 45 years earlier and has obviously done much better with his education than me!). We were shown some of his fields which were planted with a variety of crops, including one field of Triticale which was supposed to have been wheat but the wrong seed was supplied by the seed company back in the autumn – a situation not readily noticeable at sowing time as the seeds look nearly identical. I feel a compensation claim coming on! A few of his fields were immediately above the German underground military hospital, and great care has to be exercised as to the volume of slurry applied to those fields or he has the tourist board on the phone pretty sharpish!

The farm extends to around 300 acres, with only a small ownership, the remaining acreage farmed with 42 landowners with rent ranging from very little to £250/acre. There is almost zero security of tenure which must make long term planning a nightmare, and with only 18 farmers on the island there is intense competition for any land that comes on to the market

Some fields are as little as 1 acre in size. His cereal crops are all harvested with a combine with a 10 ft header which makes transport between the fields moderately easy, although the header still has to be taken off to negotiate some of the very small roads of the island. All the produce is for home consumption by his cows.

A diversification enterprise was setup 5 years ago into butchery and the supply of quality meats and cheeses to a variety of outlets which was run by his wife, but she sadly died from very aggressive cancer 2 years ago leaving Ray to take over the running of the butchery business and propelling his son James into the hot seat of the farming enterprise, which he is coping with extremely well as young enthusiastic sons often do.



Having seen around all aspects of the farm, Ray and James gave us a very nice buffet lunch in his garden before we all returned to the airport for a leisurely return to our various bases – with the Anderson team sending me a text to say they had arrived safely

The FFA in association with Hayward Aviation Ltd, have created the **Flying Farmers Association Airfield Owners and Operators Scheme.** The basic policy is available in two parts. The first part covers the premises liability and there are two choices of cover limits available. The premium is determined by estimated third party movements each year and the limit of liability cover chosen.

Annual Movements by Third Party Aircraft	Limit of Liability £500,000	Limit of Liability £1,000,000	Other
Up to 100	£195	£300	To be agreed
Up to 250	£240	£325	To be agreed
Up to 500	£275	£360	To be agreed
Up to 1000	£385	£440	To be agreed
Up to 2000	£440	£495	To be agreed
Over 2000	To be agreed	To be agreed	To be agreed

In addition to premises liability and if hangarage is provided, or if aircraft are kept in your care, custody and control, or where aircraft are moved by you or your employees, then you should include **Hangarkeepers Liability** for an additional £100 for £500,000 any one occurrence, but limited to £50,000 any one aircraft. For £1,000,000 any one occurrence, it would be £200, limited to £50,000 any one aircraft.

Additional premium for Extended Coverage Endorsement (Aviation Liabilities) AVN 52G, 15% of premium charged for Premises and Hangarkeepers Liability.

If you have any queries whatsoever, contact **Tim Procter** at Hayward Aviation on 0207 902 7800 or email TProcter@haywards.net.

Finally, it is worth noting that the FFA Committee are so concerned about liability claims that the FFA will be unable to organise an event at any strip that does not have this or similar cover, for fear of exposing itself and in turn its members to any liability claim. Under certain circumstances, the FFA will pay a year's premium if a member will allow their strip to be used for an event.

Please say that you are a Flying Farmers member when you call.

You either love them or detest them - but one thing's for sure, if a dozen 400 - 500 foot turbines are proposed on your neighbours farm, which will pose a huge safety hazard for the users of your strip, you could well question whether they are truly worth the disruption they will cause. These 2 to 3 MW turbines are huge and will likely be the biggest change to your beloved countryside since Neolithic man first stepped onto your patch.

As we have learnt on FFA tours, the landowners are being sucked in by seemingly irresistible rental offers by these new age 'double glazing' salesmen, who are desperate to reap the over generous government incentives to erect turbines. These farmers are slowly becoming a little more street wise and are now asking 10% of the income per turbine. This would equate to around £60,000 per turbine per year for the farmer - a life changing deal.

At the present time, there are around 3500 wind turbines in the UK. The unachievable target set by the Labour government was to have been 12500 by 2020. Also in this country there are around 1100 airfields – no one really knows how many there are, as a lot of private strips are kept low key and no authority knows the true total. Within the FFA we have around 300 - about a quarter of all airfields in the UK.

Windfarm developers, no matter what they might tell you, don't give too much thought about your airfield, your safety and how it might affect your duty of care to any visitors to your strip. They are only in the job for one thing and that is the government subsidies in the form of Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs). The ROCs force the electricity providers to supply a percentage of their power from renewable sources and pass this cost onto the consumers in the form of Government Obligations or similar terms on your electricity bills.

The major problem, when it comes to objecting to a planning application for a windfarm, is that it is government policy to go down the route of wind turbines to meet KYOTO agreement targets on renewable energy. This puts pressure on the local planners and other government bodies that are consulted in relation to a planning application. You will also be dealing with developers who are artists at slinking through the planning process, whereas we individuals have probably got little knowledge of turbines or the planning process.

So what can you do to protect yourself from having a windfarm erected at the end of your strip? The CAA are towing the government line, saying that it is up to airfield owners to non-official safeguard their airfields. This procedure will inform the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that your strip exists and theoretically, they will inform you of any development near you.

I recently went to a GAAC meeting in London, where the speakers were from Renewables UK (the professional body of windfarm developers) and the CAA. Before I went, I did a very quick poll of our airstrip members and had a remarkable response of 66 in a matter of 4 hours – obviously a hot subject! The overwhelming response was – do not talk to the LPA and keep a low profile. Our members were almost unanimous in their feelings about the LPAs, saying that revealing your strip either opens a can of worms, or you get a negative response.

On that basis, our members are not going to follow CAA advice, and are not going to non-official safeguard their strips. Full safeguarding only applies to around 40 airfields in this country (the large commercial ones) and does what it says – protects the area around the airfield. We don't get that privilege.

At this London meeting, I made it known to the CAA that this safeguarding thing is just not going to happen as our members (who have around 25% of all airfields in the country) want to remain low profile. In the room there were representatives from all different branches of aviation and they all agreed that the LPAs were either not good to deal with, or that the non-official safeguarding did no good anyway.

My message to Renewables UK was that in our opinion, if developers want to build hazards near our airfields, then it is up to them to make sure that they are not going to affect our flying or safety – after all, we were there first. In fact under national planning policy (PPS22), it states that developers have to address all aviation matters **before** applying for planning permission. This isn't happening either!

So - we have a problem - over the next few years there are going to be more and more proposals to build windfarms near our airfields. In my case, I thought I had a very low profile airfield – it wasn't even in the FFA Membership List. Now, because I am objecting to a windfarm only 2000 metres from my strip, the LPA know all about it and even the CAA and Renewables UK had seen my objection. It has gone from not being known to hitting alarm bells with national authorities. Not what I wanted at all!

How do we protect our strips from being encroached upon by giant turbines rising 500 feet above our airfield level? Despite what the CAA say about safeguarding, I still wouldn't want to 'come out' until I was forced. Advice from Renewables UK was to lodge a dated diagram of our circuit procedures with our solicitors, so as to show at a later date that we are not altering our circuit to make it look like it goes through a proposed windfarm.

From what I am learning, airfields do cause problems with the LPAs due to the safety matters involved. They are also dealing with something they don't know much about. We can object by quoting CAA policies CAP428 and CAP764 which are guidance for strip owners in relation to objects near airfields and their advice about airfields and wind turbines. They are not law, just recommendations and the windfarm developers play on this. The CAA themselves aren't that interested in our strips as they aren't licensed.

However, if the windfarm gets turned down at local level and goes to appeal, it appears that the government inspector, who will take over the application, will consider airfield safety paramount and will use the CAPs as guidance when making his decision. I know of at least two cases that went to appeal and both were thrown out on air safety grounds, one being our member Jim Anderson's strip in Aberdeen. The other was a 400 metre microlight strip in Kent where the inspector said that although only a small, one man airfield, his safety was considered just as important as one pilot operating out of Heathrow.

Paul Burtwistle, who has decided to go the other way (so to speak) and sacrifice his airfield to build turbines on his land, suggested that we should maybe all inform Renewables UK about our strips so they could put together a map, from which they could guide their windfarm developer members where not to build.

After considering this and seeing how developers operate, I think this might not be that appealing to our members either. Apart from anything else, not all developers belong to Renewables UK and they tend to build where they can tempt a landowner to host them, regardless of local airstrips.

So all this sounds a bit negative and probably not much help – but, that is the way it is. All we can do is object using planning policies and make it known how it will affect safety at our strips.

Paul Stephens

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