FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 116

August 2014

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph by Roz Stephens;

Bob Germany departing from Ringstead Airfield in May 2014 after the North West Norfolk meeting.

Chairman's Ramblings

Wimbledon has come and gone – a bit of a weather pointer, for surely it is never dry for the whole fortnight! That fortnight is an important time in the closing weeks of the maturity of our crops – too much rain and wind and the crops are at their most vulnerable to falling over with the inevitable reduction of yield and quality; too little and the full potential of the crop may not be realised. It is all a great balancing act over which we have little control.

We managed to harvest another excellent crop of hay again, getting it all under cover just before the inevitable lines of thunderstorms swept the southern half of the country – and halted Wimbledon. Every year it is a week of worry from the initial decision to start cutting through to the baling and storage, with the knowledge that one sudden downpour could mean the crop ruined and having to burn the whole crop.

But nature is extraordinary in her ability to correct the ravages of past weather. With just about the nastiest winter weather any of us will have seen, with gales and flooding on an unprecedented level, the crops came into spring looking all but rosy. But here we are some 5 months on with all rape and barley crops in the barn, and the combines already galloping through the wheat here in East Anglia – and as I write it is not even the end of July.

Annette and I have just returned from a 10 day trip with a group of fellow aviators to Venice via an overnight stop at Bremgarten, just over the French border into Germany south of Colmar. An extraordinary airfield with a warbird operation that would rival Duxford (for example it has one operational Me109 and no less than 4 others under restoration side-by-side!) The quality of work on these old aircraft has to be seen to be believed. From there we flew through the Alps on a cloudless blue sky day to the Italian GA airfield at St Nicolo on the Lido just east of Venice International. In the arrivals log I saw Roger Bell had been there just the day before we arrived – what a small world! As we walked up to the plane to depart 3 days later, I was tapped on the shoulder and greeted by my instructor from Earls Colne airfield, just 4 miles from home, who was also just about to depart. It really is a small world!

Your committee has had their last meeting of this year until we all meet up at the AGM. There are some good suggestions for several meetings next year, all of which are yet to be firmed up. We potentially have a Study Tour on the cards again – hopefully resurrecting the Finnish tour – but there is much planning still to do. Any help with suggestions for events or material for Finland from the membership would be hugely appreciated and is an enormous help to the Committee whose shoulders it mostly falls on.

We have had some great flying events yet again this year with some extraordinarily entrepreneurial and successful hosts which have been a real eye-opener for those lucky enough to have participated. As always it is our hard working events secretary, Rick Holt, who has put the programme together for us all to enjoy. For those interested in the history of all the events that the Association has undertaken since its inception, our equally hard working secretary, Paul Stephens, has put together a booklet entitled "FFA TOURS & EVENTS; 1974 – 2014, 40th Anniversary Edition" (hardly a 'booklet' at 172 pages long!) detailing every event in those four decades. It is £20 per copy, which I suggest is a small amount to pay for all the hard work that has been put in to produce it. You will be amazed at the range and diversity of the events we have undertaken in those 40 years – I urge you to buy a copy from Paul.

The best of luck for the rest of harvest and the drilling season, where the result of our year's business success is realised.

Martin Gosling

Editors Notes

The ability to display all the FFA airstrips on Skydemon has proved overwhelmingly popular. I have never had as many requests for instructions of how to get on the FFA website since releasing this file, which is in the password protected Downloads section of the website.

I find it a shame that there was no European Tour in our 40th anniversary year - hence a shorter newsletter. It is the first year we have not had an FFA meeting abroad for about 37 years! Hopefully, next year will be Finland, thanks to some initial work by Roger Bell and George Sly.

Rick Holt is putting together an interesting program of events for next year, so please keep the suggestions coming.

Paul Stephens

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News From GACC

I attended the GACC meeting (now called the General Aviation Partneship (GAP)) on 10th July standing in for Peter Kember who was unavailable. The notable thing about this meeting was that Grant Shapps MP had been invited and was in attendance for the first hour.

In summary, the MP berated the GA unit for not moving quicker in its objectives to remove red tape and inconsistencies and the GA unit responded by showing how much they had done, which appeared to be very little, proudly showed how they had categorised the remaining tasks and complained that it was hugely challenging both to their resources and (to their credit for admitting it), their culture.

In more detail; first, The Minister addressed the meeting saying that there was this window of opportunity to make GA bigger and better with, for the first time in a long time, a minister with understanding of the problems facing GA. He said that the opportunity to do this was running out of time and progress was too slow caused by institutional resistance to change. He wants to make British GA the best in world but there was only 10 months to deliver. He said that the Government's desire to cut red tape knew no bounds. Then there was a question and answer session where inter-alia the following items were discussed:

The need for the 90 day rule? To be fair, the minister brought this one up as unnecessary and It was clear that the feeling of the committee was that there were far more important things to do first.

The need for PPL medicals to be conducted by approved examiners? Just NPPL or all national licences? Apparently there is a working group looking at this.

Should the government be protecting airfields against development? Shapps: “we need to have network of licensed airfields.”

Why can FAA mods not be applicable to EASA aircraft? Shapps: “EASA attitude is getting much better.”

Why does EASA approval for changing something as simple as an HSI so bureaucratic?

AOPA raised concerns about the mandatory roll out of 8.33 spacing.

Why do the CAA need to find definitive evidence of everything even when its not available? The Chairman, Tony Rapson responded that the CAA used an evidence and risk based approach. This approach underpinned the review of the GA unit policy.

Unimpressed by this, the Minister responded that we should reduce red tape even if makes things more risky, likening it to preventing people engaging in dangerous sports. He concluded that in politics, decisions are made in order to make decisions. If there is no evidence then a decision is leadership. And he was gone.

There was a presentation on a review of Safety data over the last 10 years showing a declining fatal accident rate. Fatal accidents are shifting to older age. 80% fatal accidents occur in IMC with pilot not IMC qualified or not current. The committee challenged the over emphasis on statistics based on small numbers. (Example : balloon fatals have doubled, i.e. there have been two this year) . The data will be published soon.

There was a presentation on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) including a video about a completely autonomous UAV which will follow you, filming you on your skateboard (or your combine) - see www.airdog.com This is an area where legislation has failed to keep up with practice and operators are ignorant of the existing generic rules covering models and kites which are largely covered by an ANO article about conducting a flight safely. The first conviction of this type is imminent or has recently concluded.

UAVs can be sold as a toy, defeating much regulation and is exercising the CAA to generate appropriate regulation.

There was a section on GA Policy Framework and future regulatory developments. Discussion highlighted ongoing problems and anomalies e.g. the 1000ft rule - what about landing at unlicensed airfields.

VMC minima under SERA (standardised European rules of the air) and the loss of clear of cloud facility. CAA consulted with EASA with no result. A derogation request is inevitable.

A CAA review of the ANO is anticipated with the objective to separate GA issues in some way. Members were asked to give their top five examples where the ANO has a direct impact on GA to Mark Shortman. They are also looking at remunerated training in Permit to Fly aircraft, SSDR Sailplanes and Paramotor Pilot licensing.

Members were asked to look at the consultation on GA policy framework at http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/2836/CAP%201188%20GA%20policy%20consultation.pdf

There was a brief presentation on the GA programme.

This is in effect the basket of projects currently on the table including the red tape challenges laid down by the minister. The few that had been completed appeared small and easy to do. The remainder had been categorised into high impact/hard to do, high impact/easy to do, low impact/hard to do and low impact/easy to do. The prioritisation betrays the fact that due to available resources few will be completed soon, if at all. I'm afraid the message was always there quietly throughout the meeting - we are all working really hard, there is so much to do and we do not have enough resources.

There is to be the most substantial review of activities of EASA since it began in 2002. This A-NPA Consultation is about basic regulations : performance based regulation, implementing a GA road map, reducing the burden of regulation, a review of excluded aircraft, putting lower risk aircraft into annex 2 or complex aircraft out of annex 2 and the possibility of an EU register.

The Chairman said that in recent meetings the EASA committee were more committed to listen to GA and adopt a more proportional approach to GA.

There was a hint that we might be able to have PPL training without ATO structures.

In parallel with this review there is a separate questionnaire from the commission about the same issues but designed to get a different flavour.

Any other business raised the issue of the Southend RMZ. There was general dissatisfaction, it was an imposition, class D by the back door, unjustified, inconvenient and most importantly a clarification of rules was required. What does "in 2-way contact with the facility" actually mean?

Andrew Cragg

AIRFIELD PLANNING ISSUES HANDLED BY STEVE SLATER ON BEHALF OF AOPA/GAAC. February – April 2014

Summary

The past three months have seen a worrying swing in emphasis. While the number of requests for airfield planning assistance surrounding wind turbine developments has fallen slightly (to six), there has been a clear and increasing trend of flying sites

being threatened by the close proximity of housing or potential changes of use to mixed use or domestic development.

Part of the reason is that Councils are rapidly approaching the final deadline for lodging with Government their housing strategy plans for the next quarter century and airfield sites in many cases offer an enticing 'quick fix'. While there is some support in the National Planning Policy Framework, regarding airfields as part of the national transport and economic infrastructure (of which we regularly inform these councils), the overall trend of Government planning policy is to prioritise on housing ahead of other previously stated priorities.

In addition, during the past years of a stagnant economy, land including airfield sites was seen as a safe, if relatively low-yield investment or 'land bank'. Now as other areas of the economy offer greater returns, some airfield site owners are being advised to liquidate their assets and move them elsewhere. This is placing even very active airfields under pressure.

Housing Pressure

Among the airfields directly threatened by changes of use or allocation for housing development in regional plans is Bourn, facing inclusion in South Cambridgeshire's plan as a location for a 'garden village' of 3,500 houses. Panshanger has been threatened for some time by proposals within Welwyn and Hertford Council's Emerging Core Strategy, to be redesignated as residential land with the potential for 700 houses. In Essex, North Weald has so far escaped inclusion in the east of England housing plan, although local groups are increasingly concerned that areas surrounding the airfield are increasingly being 'infilled' by housing.

In Warwickshire, Long Marston airfield has been designated in the Stratford District Council draft strategy as a preferred location for housing, ahead of Wellesbourne, whose owners nonetheless are continuing to seek other more lucrative uses for the site. In this case, a close relationship with the local planning officers has allowed us to personally brief them on the strategic importance of the airfield as a transport, training and tourism asset and so far at least, there is little support for Wellesbourne's bid to reclassify and sell the land.

Also in the Stratford area, both Steve Slater of GAAC and Geoff Weighell of BMAA acted as expert witnesses for the Council at a Public Enquiry in defence of their decision to deny planning permission to Persimmon Homes, to build a development of 85 houses in close proximity to the climbout from microlight flying site at Arden Heath Farm. The submissions presented by both GAAC and BMAA stood up well under vigorous cross-examination by the developers QC, therefore we can be confident that our core background material and research is of good quality. The Planning Inspector's decision is due early in May.

One positive area noted from these various threats, is that local communities have in every case, supported the airfield as being a potentially better neighbour than extended housing or commercial development. The recent potential closure of Manston on alleged economic grounds was postponed by the intervention of local residents whole, along with the local MP proposed a revised economic package. At Bourn, an action group, BAD, Bourn Against Development, is petitioning the Council and at Panshanger where the site tenant, North London Flying Club, is contractually prevented from making any comment by the landowner, the case against redevelopment is being led by local residents.

In the case of Panshanger, in addition to formally advising the Council of the inclusions within NPPF regarding the airfield's role as part of the area's transport and business infrastructure, we are also working with John Brady of the LAA and with Sport England on the potential classification of the airfield as a sporting site. This gives additional planning safeguarding and if successful may also form a model for other sites including Long Marston and Bourn which lack the infrastructure to be realistically classified as a regional transport resource.

Airspace

As discussed at the last GAAC Council meeting, we only comment on airspace issues following expressions of concern from GAAC members, whose airfields, operations and businesses would be unduly affected. It is noted there has been a widespread appeal for responses to the recent consultation by TAG Farnborough on their proposed significant extension to controlled air space to the south west of London.

While individual submissions have been entered, with the prime response campaign being led by the BGA whose Lasham flying site may be rendered unviable for future operations (see www.gliding.co.uk) so far no GAAC submission has yet been made until the matter has been properly discussed at the Council meeting on 25th April. The final deadline for contributions to the consultation has been extended to 1200 on 12 May.

We have been advised by Louis Chicot (who has been briefed to act if required for the Council) that the recent High Court ruling against Basingstoke and Deane Council's awarding of a Certificate of Lawful Use (CLEUD) to a model aircraft flying site in Old Basing in Hampshire querying whether the airspace around the site should also be regarded as a part of the planning decision, is unlikely to create precedent for other complainants.

However it is noted that objections to a CLEUD for a microlight site on the Lancashire coast have been driven by wildfowler's complaints of low flying microlight aircraft allegedly disturbing nearby geese. There is no evidence that the aircraft emanated from the site in question and we intend to investigate the planning application in question, which does not seem to have been reviewed in line with good planning practice.

Wind Turbines and Anemometer Mast Conspicuity

The number of wind turbine threats, particularly from smaller developers affecting smaller privately-owned flying sites, continues to run at a continuous level of around 2-3 per month, with notable 'hot sports' including southern Scotland and Devon providing the most concerns. As ever, we only object when there is a significant risk to safe flying operations and as part of our submissions, we also recommend dialogue on mitigation, such as stopping a wind turbine from operating if downwind turbulence is likely to create a safety issue.

A notable development in the past months is that we are being contacted by planning officers and developers' agents to discuss potential locations ahead of their being formally submitted. It has to be said that the numbers remain small, but there is increasing evidence that the message we offer impartial advice is starting to get through.

One major turbine development with which GAAC has been involved is the Dorcas Lane development near Milton Keynes where Force 9 Energy made an application for 4 x 125m wind turbines on a site within the Vale of Aylesbury, directly under the

Continued on back cover

Programme 2014

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5th February	Guards Museum, London
??? April	Adam Henson's Farm, Gloucestershire
23rd April	Gilbert Greenall's Estate
7th May	Claydon Farm & Seed Drills
15th May	Norfolk Farms
13th / 14th June	The Abreys' Farm
18th / 20th July	Game Fair Transport Arrangements.
29th October	AGM, Langar



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.

Game Fair 18th - 20th July 2014

Once again, as in past years when the Game Fair has been at Blenheim, I have put together a package for air arrivals at EGTK London Oxford Airport which will include VIP transport to and from the event for a fee per person (probably around £5), and substantially discounted landing fees.

The application details and instructions can be found on the FFA website on the Events page. Otherwise please contact me at the e-mail address below.

andrew@dentcomm.net

Andrew Dent

Newchurch ALG Commemoration Day - 31st August 2014

This isn't meant to be a full blown FFA event, but our Treasurer, Andrew Cragg would welcome anyone interested in celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Advanced Landing Ground at Newchurch in Kent.

Newchurch was one of a number of Advanced Landing Grounds built in Kent during 1943. From July 1943 it became the base for three Spitfire and one Hurricane squadrons. In October 1943 the squadrons moved to RAF Detling while the airfield was improved.

In April 1944 it became the base of 150 Wing comprising three squadrons of Hawker Tempests. Commanded by Wing Commander Roland Beamont the Newchurch Tempest Wing provided air cover for the Normandy landings it was then tasked with defending against attacks by V-1 flying bombs. The Wing destroyed 638 V-1s before leaving Newchurch to support the advance through Belgium and the Netherlands. No longer needed in December 1944 the airfield was restored to farmland.

The event starts at 10:00 am and has a full programme including a Spitfire display.

A note from Andrew:-

As can be seen from the website

http://www.newchurchvillage.org/newchurch-village/c-and/big-weekend/alg-commemoration/

This intimate event is primarily targeted at the veterans and their families and our village, but would be interesting to people with a particular interest in Advanced Landing grounds, Tempests, and the fight against V1's which Newchurch was famous for. There may be a few members who fit this bill and they would be welcome to land at my strip (525m) near the village. I would stress the need to register for the talk as indicated on the website.

Members can contact me directly (acragg@farmline.com) if they have any questions and co-ordinate a pick-up.

40th FFA AGM, Langar, 29th October 2014

Notice is hereby given that there will be an Annual General Meeting of the Flying Farmers Association, to be held on the 29th October 2014. Only a date and venue as yet, but details will be sent to those filling in the reply slip, or please monitor the website for more information.

The meeting will be held in the John Deere facilities on the airfield and likely to be starting at 10:30 and finishing at 15:00. This year, the meeting is a little later and after the clock change due to John Deere's commitments earlier in the month, hence the earlier start and finish. It will be dark around 17:00.

We are hoping to have a couple of speakers, one from John Deere and the other will be David Joyce who has been researching aircraft accident reports over several years.

It is the turn of Paul Stephens and Gordon Bellerby to stand down from the committee. However, they are both willing to stand for re-election. If you would like to be considered for election, please fill in the reply slip.

You can view the accounts on a separate sheet enclose with the reply slip which should be returned to Andrew Cragg by 1st October.

Visit to Gilbert Greenall's Estate - 23rd April 2014

The first flying visit of the year to Gilbert Greenall's estate near Ledbury in April was a very oversubscribed affair with 7 aircraft and crews on the waiting list – admittedly the numbers accepted by our host having to be limited to 30 for logistical reasons. Whether the enthusiasm for the day was for the reasons of an opportunity to fly and rekindle friendships for another year, or because of the anticipated content of the visit, I am not sure. What I do know is that those who were unable to join in were denied a great treat.

In the way that it invariably is for Flying Farmers visits, the forecast for the week ahead looked distinctly second rate on Countryfile on the preceding weekend. In the event, the predicted frontal system with accompanying heavy rain delayed its arrival, and weakened as it approached from the west so that the opportunity for those coming from the East would be flying back to ever improving weather, while those from the South and West mostly took to their cars to improve their chances of getting home. And so 10 aircraft and 5 cars finally made it to the event with only one from Gloucester and one from the northern Borders being thwarted.

After refreshing coffee and biscuits in his well-appointed shooting lunch room, Gilbert began the day with an excellent presentation detailing the past history of the estate and its owners and the reasons why, after Gilbert bought it, things had to radically change for the enterprise to become viable, which it certainly wasn't when he first took it on. He purchased it some 20 or more years ago without competition with the proviso that he acquired with it all the cottages and property on the estate complete with all the sitting tenants. This at first seemed like a poisoned chalice although allowing an uninflated purchase price, but it soon worked to his great advantage as the tenants began dying off and the properties became vacant and freehold.

Bromesberrow estate is in an excellent area for local business and tourism with the M5 motorway running past the boundary with one of the junctions in the most convenient place. One weekend Gilbert arranged for contractors to be on standby and in the space of that weekend had created entrances, gateways, and laid tarmac to make access to the estate direct from the junction. Brilliant! The Highways Authorities however, failed to see the brilliance in it come Monday morning and immediately issued all sorts of notices of dire consequences, both financial and practical. Gilbert was not easily fazed though and fought the restitution orders tooth and nail for 5 long years, not entirely unconcerned about the outcome, it has to be said, so much so that he wisely set aside a large amount of money should the Highways Authorities win the day. It was around this time that Gilbert's lawyer discovered something very interesting – that the motorway exit did not comply in many aspects of its design specification!! The cost of redesigning the entire junction would be prohibitive, and surprise, surprise, Gilbert has heard nothing more from them since about his little entrance off that junction. More brilliance!!



His first enterprise was to try to reduce the enormous cost of heating the large house and adjacent outbuildings and to that end he decided to do away with the conventional oil boiler and replace it with a biomass boiler fed with split logs from the estate. He considered many alternative options and although he freely admits it is a system that may not suit everyone, it fits in well with the woodland commodity, and labour to operate it, that he has available. All the wood is corded and split and stored in 1 tonne builders bags loaded directly from the end of the machine (which splits each log into 6 quadrants). These bags are then handle by fore-end loader into ventilated storage where they are allowed to dry naturally before using – it being vital to use dry timber for its much increased calorific value. He can produce up to 300 tonnes a year with his two operators, although annual usage is around 90 tonnes. He does not intent to sell the surplus, rather to ensure he has an adequate ongoing supply of dry material. The bags are brought to the boiler which is hand loaded twice a day to maintain the supply of hot water used for the heating which is stored in two vertical cylindrical 2000 litre tanks. This volume of water is the reason that the boiler does not need to be running all the time, only long enough to recharge this hot water supply twice a day. Relighting the boiler is as simple as screwing up a sheet of newspaper and using a single match!

This operation, which is supported by large government subsidies such as we get for solar panels and windmills, has changed his annual £14,000 outlay on oil to an annual net income of over £20,000.

Scattered around the estate are a few odd corners containing 2 or 3 acres of unproductive land such as we may all have on our farms. These were planted to orchards and over several years Gilbert had arranged for the fruit to be gathered by interested neighbours and organisations. Every year just as the fruit began to be ready for harvesting these people mysteriously found that they couldn't take the fruit, and so every year he was left with a carpet of fallen fruit. Sickened by this annual wastage, he decided that if others were not prepared to take the fruit, he would set up an operation to do it himself, and so he bought the necessary equipment, hired in other equipment such as temporary tanks, replaced trees as necessary that were damaged, and with some more of his own staff produced his own juice which he ferments to the correct percentage of chemicals and alcohol with some clever computer programme and sends the end product to a local community bottling plant.

All this takes place in a small shed about the size of an average kitchen, which was converted for the purpose – more government assistance being available for this new enterprise. I think the setup cost was around £30,000 and he said there was around £30,000 of material in the tanks waiting to go off to the bottling plants this year alone. Another small, but extremely cost-effective enterprise.

We were shown around some of the barns and sheds which many people would have simply knocked down as being derelict, but in every case Gilbert had tastefully and effectively worked


Gilbert Greenall on the left, Rick Holt on the right

with the planning authorities to resurrect and upgrade to create properties that he is able to rent out to local businesses.

He had built a new grain store, and at the far end of it an extra section used as a workshop which he rents out to a local motor cycle company whose business is to train people in all aspects of motor cycle riding, from the novice rider to the trans-world adventurers. This training is carried out on trails all around the estate from surfaced areas, to dirt tracks to hilly areas to replicate the type of terrain that may be found in underdeveloped areas of the world. These tracks are used with great sympathy to the environment paying great attention to the weather and ground conditions, such that there was no evidence that these tracks are use by bikers at all. Trainees come from all over the country and abroad as well. Above this workshop area on the end of the grain store there was an open plan area which he had plans to convert to a couple of apartments. This looked a rather risky development on the back of a grain store, but he assured us there would be no problem with planning!

Another building has been converted and is rented out to a large genetics company which specialises in AI.

On the estate there is another company specialising in "Glamping" (glamour camping). This business runs without input from Gilbert who finds it a rather odd enterprise, but he is happy to take their rental with no interference to the running of the estate.

There is some higher ground on the estate which gets further government subsidy for being grazed off for certain periods in the year and to this end Gilbert brings the requisite allowable number of cattle from his 4000 acre Dartmoor estate. He ties this in with shuffling sheep back and forth so that he gets the greatest cost effectiveness from his own transport, and not having to use a haulier. He works very much hand in glove with Natural England who make all sorts of rules about what he may or may not do and in general he finds it easier and very much more beneficial not to try to rail against them. But one area where he has disagreed is in the parkland area where their decree was that the grass should be left natural with no mechanical interference. This went against the grain because Gilbert knows the way to get the best from permanent grassland is to chain harrow, roll and top it periodically as required. Consequently he has removed ½ the parkland acreage from the scheme and he will be monitoring and recording the progress from both areas over time – and undoubtedly presenting Natural England with the long term results.

It was now time to go back to the shoot room where his delightful staff had laid on an excellent lunch for us all. The weather forecast was still a bit iffy in the West for our departure, so 2 aircraft took the opportunity to depart so as not to get caught out, the rest of us confident that we would still get improving weather travelling home to the East.

After lunch we inspected several of the properties, both domestic and agricultural that Gilbert had a long-term vision of converting to the let market. He is indeed fortunate to be in an excellent catchment area as far as rental property is concerned with no difficulty in finding tenants, but at the same time making sure that he doesn't try to 'screw' the highest price out of people. A happy tenant is a reliable tenant. Every property conversion has to be economically viable in its own right – there is no borrowed money involved in any of his projects.

Returning again to the shoot room his girls did us proud with tea and cakes before we all (nearly) went our separate ways home humbled by Gilberts vision and enthusiasm. His daughter who still lives on the estate has made a bed and breakfast business out of one of the houses, and that came in very handy for one of our members who found Bournemouth to be below limits for his return after the event! She also looks after the extensive walled garden with its vines, flowers and vegetables all laid out in a most attractively formal way.

It was a visit fascinating for its content, but mostly to learn of Gilbert's enormous energy, foresight and appetite to take every opportunity offered by the Government in subsidies and incentives. It is amazing that he has time for anything else, but he also runs a syndicate shoot on the estate with himself being the gamekeeper, he runs another 4000 acre moorland estate on Dartmoor and enjoys flying in his Cessna 182RG, often flying abroad on trips such as his recent one around South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique in February. For 15 years he was a practicing accident and emergency specialist, he has served in the army and still is on call to the Government for advice as a humanitarian relief coordinator. No wonder he was bestowed with a CBE!

Martin Gosling

Claydon Farm Visit and Drill Production - 7th May 2014

The morning of May 7th was almost CAVOK and the aircraft started to arrive spot on time at 0930.By 1030 everyone had arrived and after a brief introduction we were off in the trailer laid on by the Claydon family .First stop was to have a look at a crop of wheat that at one stage was a right off due to Black Grass. David Claydon with the help of RTK GPS system off set the drill by 150ml. to run in between the rows and cut the Black Grass out. It seems to have worked.



From left to right, Andrew Cragg, Jeff Claydon, Philip Young, Richard Howard and Julia Young

We were then shown crops on route to the village hall where we had a presentation by Jeff Claydon and Charlie Eaton followed by a very nice buffet lunch.

The Claydon sytem is a very straight forward way to establish a crop. After combining and chopping or clearing the straw the next job is to go over the ground with a straw harrow. This has the effect of making the weeds and black grass germinate and also



exposes slug eggs. It is a fast operation and at 15/20 mph. you can cover 200 acres a day with a 6mtr.straw harrow with ease. Spray the weeds off and you are ready to start drilling. The tilth created keeps the black grass seeds in the top 30 ml. of soil. The Hybrid drill cuts a drainage channel and the duck foot shoe skims over the top of the channel where the seed is laid on each side giving a perfect start for germination. Finally a pass with a set of rolls and the job is done.

Soil temperature is also a very important thing to take into consideration when you are thinking of drilling. Jeff Claydon started drilling on 22nd September and had drilled 600 acres by 28th September. Very good going to say the least.

After the lunch we moved off for a very comprehensive demonstration of all the equipment in action. This was followed by a tour of the factory where the drills are built. The Claydon drill system started some 12years ago and are selling drills all over the world. Over 1 million pounds has been spent to set the factory up and get it running to its capacity of building six drills per week.

Peter Evans.

A Visit to North West Norfolk, 15th May 2014

The 15th May 2014 was an idyllic Mayday with plenty of bright sunshine and ideal flying weather. The visit to Ringstead was probably the most easterly point of Flying Farmer's visits in Britain. There was a good turnout with about 40 members in 20 aircraft landing at Philip Young's lovely strip near Hunstanton in North West Norfolk.

We were taken to Philip and Julia's beautiful house in the village of Ringstead and after a welcome cup of tea the visit started with a short briefing by Philip on the use of Anhydrous Ammonia as the main nitrogen fertilizer on his 900 acre farm. The gas under pressure is a highly concentrated form of nitrogen (82%) and has a considerable advantage in the low price and slow release of nitrogen.

A short coach drive to near by King's Lynn took us to Greenworld. They accept garden waste and wood waste from local authorities which are mixed for the compost process to begin. The material is enclosed in a polythene sausage which then enables the microbes to convert the bio degradable materials into quality compost. The material is widely used on Norfolk farms to build organic matter. The company offer their own spreading service using huge high tech Bunning spreaders.

A short trip then brought us to the village of Great Massingham where we all enjoyed a splendid lunch at the Dabbling



Duck.

Adjacent to the village is the wartime airfield of Great Massingham which is still actively used by the local general aviation community. We were able to see photographs and wartime mementoes which showed the airfield was host to the first B17 squadron in 1941, when the RAF operated a very early model B17, as a trial and before the USA entered the war.

We then took a short drive to Sandringham House, the home of Her Majesty the Queen. Built in 1870 by the Prince of Wales, it includes an estate extending to 22,000 acres of farmland and woodland. Five thousand acres are farmed in hand, with the remainder of the estate tenanted.

Sandringham really has much to offer the visitor, whether just visiting the ground floor rooms regularly used by the Royal Family, that remain very much as they were in Edwardian times. Sandringham is surrounded by 60 acres of glorious gardens and lakes. The formal planting of the Edwardian age has given way to great sweeping glades, boarded by banks of shrubs with splendid specimen trees, to create an informal garden which was particularly delightful on a warm spring afternoon.

The pride of place at the museum must be the Royal motor









vehicles, which include the first car owned by a member of the Royal family, a 1900 Daimler Phaeton, together with the splendid Merryweather fire engine which was used by the estates own fire brigade.

For those who visited the rooms attached to the stable block we were able to see King George V's private museum of big game trophies.

So after a morning of farming activities, there was something to see for everybody during the afternoon visit to Sandringham.

A 20 minute coach ride from Sandringham over the undulating farm lands of Northwest Norfolk took us back to Philip and Julia's home for an enjoyable tea and cakes before departing homeward bound.

Thank you very much to Philip and Julia for hosting us at their farm and their lovely home.

Flying Farmers Visit to R G Abrey Farms and the Euston Estate, 13th – 14th June 2014

Twenty-six aircraft landed in warm sunshine on Giles Abrey's manicured farm strip. Giles, his father, two uncles and two cousins run the hugely-impressive R G Abrey Farms near Thetford in Norfolk. Our first and lasting impression was that whatever the Abreys do, they do well.

Giles told us of the family business' growth from 252 acres in 1939 to 5750 acres in 2014. In addition to the root-crop enterprises that we visited they have a combinable-crops farm in nearby Suffolk. As well as the six partners there are 53 full-time and 24 seasonal employees. Each of the partners has prime responsibility for a major aspect of the business; onions (growing, storage, sales) for example, or irrigation.

The farm is on the Norfolk Brecklands, home to more than a quarter of the UK's rare species. Stone curlews like to nest in onion fields so a bund has been built around the storage sheds to stop the birds being disturbed by their lights. The Breckland soil is almost entirely sand, with only 1% organic matter, so irrigation is vital. As well as storage for 9,500 tonnes of potatoes and 18,000 tonnes of onions, with associated grading and packing lines, there is storage for over 400 million gallons of water. The Abreys produce in excess of 100,000 tonnes of root vegetables (brown, red and pickling onions, shallots, potatoes, carrots, parsnips and sugar beet) a year. They can grow and store enough onions to ensure ten or eleven months' availability, but to secure year-round continuity of supply to their customers they buy in onions from Spain, Egypt and even New Zealand (the best, but three times as expensive). Carrots are lifted at night, to stop them going rubbery, and delivered direct to customers by the following morning.

Before we left for a tour of the buildings and fields we were treated to a fascinating talk on helicopter operations in Afghanistan by Flight Lieutenant Colin Jenkins from the Defence Helicopter Flying School at nearby Shawbury. His talk was illustrated by photos of Afghanistan's dramatic dangerous desert-and-mountain terrain with its constantly-changing weather and perils. Colin spoke of the challenges of air-lifting troops when the carrying capacity of a helicopter was affected moment by moment by altitude and changes in temperature - a cloud temporarily covering the sun might mean that they could add an extra soldier and his kit to their load. Amongst other things Colin told us how improvements to Afghanistan's roads, almost non-existent prior to the war, had led to a huge increase in the narcotics trade there.

Our tour of Abrey Farms' storage, grading and packing facilities ended in the offices – reception and admin downstairs and a family office 'with padded room for board meetings' (if it exists we







weren't shown it!) where each of the six principals manages his particular area of responsibility. They meet at 6 o'clock each morning to plan the day's operations. The crucial importance of timely irrigation, particularly for potatoes, was emphasised again – each field is sampled by digging every three days to check moisture levels. We were shown a very impressive system for remotely monitoring the track, work-rate and service status of each of the firm's many vehicles. Giles explained how inefficiencies could threaten the profitability of a large, complex operation like theirs. They might be harvesting five crops at once and needed to control and maximise machine and man-power use.

After a delicious buffet lunch we toured the Abrey fields including the STANTA Battle Area. This is an Army training area,



where the Abreys farm a sizeable acreage, the rest of the area being a typical Breckland heath – the final scene of 'Dad's Army' was filmed there. We were taken to our hotel to tidy up before returning to the airstrip for drinks on the runway and a superb evening BBQ during which we were entertained by a display of aerobatics by two dashing Pitts Specials, the Wildcats. After dark we watched carrots being harvested by tractor headlights.

Next morning we were taken to His Grace the Duke of Grafton's 10,500 acre Euston Hall Estate where the Abreys also grow root crops. We were welcomed by the Duke and his estate director Andrew Blenkiron. The Duke is investing vision, effort and money in returning the house and estate to profit – the results are already very impressive. The grounds laid out by John Evelyn, William Kent and Capability Brown are being restored to their original seventeenth century design. A recent major project has been the clearing of Kent's lake in front of the house – Capability Brown's sluices still work well, the Duke said. After an introductory talk from the family archivist on the history of the house and the estate we were taken by trailer on a tour of the farms.



From the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century: our tour took in a newly-planted 'crop' of solar panels as well as the start of work on an anaerobic digester. The estate supports 12 HLS schemes and numerous SSSIs. We saw evidence in very good husbandry, state-of-the-art rearing pens with meticulous biosecurity (the Euston commercial shoot is one of the most renowned in Britain and offers prime quality deer stalking as well as fifty pheasant and partridge days a year), roe and red deer, wild peacocks, glorious woodlands, beautiful parkland, the longest ha-ha ever, and a stunning new gold, green and purple garden, the setting for many future weddings - the estate even has its own private church. We were privileged to be told something of the present management and future plans for the estate.

What we didn't see were any great crested newts (Farmers Weekly readers of Andrew Blenkiron's farm focus report have already been introduced to his 'slippery little pals')! The Euston Estate is in process of constructing a new 60-million gallon reservoir. The excavation of two small archaeological sites and the re-homing of some displaced great crested newts to Natural England's high standards have already cost two years and many, many thousands of pounds, swallowing up much of the DEFRA grant towards the cost of constructing the reservoir. The estate already farms in a very environmentally sensitive way so one can understand Andrew's frustration.

We enjoyed a superb lunch in the Hall's old kitchen before returning to the farm strip and our aircraft, stopping on the way to admire Robert Abrey's fine collection of vintage cars before flying home in un-FFA-like sunshine.

Such a brief report can only try to give a flavour of two wonderfully interesting days. Our hosts were amazingly generous, not least with their precious time. We thank the whole Abrey family, His Grace Duke Harry, Andrew Blenkiron, the Euston Estate staff, and of course Mike and Liz Rowland and Liz's brother Jonathan Nott for making it all possible.

Clare Golden

Submission by The Flying Farmers Association

I am the Chairman of the UK Flying Farmers Association and as such represent the nearly 400 members of our Association. We are possibly the largest and most active aviation organisation in the country. Our members cover the entire aviation spectrum from twin-engine, single-engine, helicopters, autogyros, microlights, homebuilt, and gliders. They also cover the whole range of qualifications from IFR pilots, VFR pilots and Instructors, and the purely fair weather, non-radio leisure pilot.

Although we are based across the length and breadth of the UK and Ireland, membership is more heavily weighted to the area in the Southern half of the UK. Our activities are to a great extent individual, but as an organisation we arrange a diverse range of events from the one-day visit through to a study tour which may take place over several days up to a full fortnight. These visits take place in a variety of areas and are very well supported by our members – with often in excess of 15 aircraft for any given visit up to a maximum of around 25 aircraft. Wherever these visits take place it will involve aircraft from all regions of the country, therefore we will always have several aircraft flying through the Farnborough area either from the South and East for a visit arranged in the West Country, or vice versa for visits arranged in the East or again in the North or South.

As an organisation we are most concerned at the restrictions that the proposed airspace change at Farnborough will bring. The funnelling of aircraft through the two narrow corridors on the corners of the Heathrow and Gatwick zone invites, sooner rather than later, in our opinion, a flurry of infringements of both the Heathrow and the Gatwick Control zone and of course the potential new Farnborough zone, (and the inevitable prosecutions and costs that go with it), or worse still a high risk of a mid-air collision. Many VFR pilots dislike the prospect of having to cross controlled airspace and prefer to fly around in class G airspace unencumbered by radio, as is their right. The glider pilots in our membership are concerned that the imposition of this airspace will eliminate any further gliding activity at Lasham, a world renowned gliding centre. Gliders go with the direction of the wind, the prevailing wind in this country is Westerly, the proposed airspace imposition is only a short distance to the East of the Lasham ATZ and so gliders will inevitably be blown straight into the restricted airspace.

In Part A of the consultation Document:

3-4 "Modern navigation is much more precise". This would indicate that a lesser amount of airspace is required today than was required yesterday, with the added bonus of less people being affected by noise pollution and greater aircraft efficiency

3-10 "Narrow tracks will be required in the future". Same comment as above.

3-15 "High standard of safety exists already". Same comment as above.

3-16 (b) "The object is to satisfy the requirements of <u>all</u> airspace users". In all the feedback I have heard from fellow General Aviation pilots about the proposed airspace imposition, I have not heard a single positive comment. Thus this does not satisfy the GA community

3-18 (a & b) "Noise and tranquillity" With GA being funnelled below 2500', the noise and tranquillity window from light aviation will be increased – and I would suggest that there are greater numbers of GA aircraft in any given period through the Farnborough area than Bizjet aircraft.

3-19 "...with the fewest possible restrictions to GA". I would suggest that this is far from the case

11-2 "...discussed with, amongst others, the GA". And what were the views of GA in that discussion?

11-3 **"DOING NOTHING IS ALWAYS AN OPTION"**

We in the Flying Farmers Association are DEEPLY concerned at these proposals, as are the whole of the GA community that I have spoken to and heard from.

We FIRMLY believe that doing nothing is indeed the best option

Martin Gosling
Flying Farmers Association

IFR approach to Cranfield. The aviation case for this is being led by Michael Fopp with GAAC support, based on risks of reduced deconfliction between VFR and IFR traffic in the vicinity. The planned Public Enquiry into this development has now been cancelled as the case has been "called in" for personal review by the Secretary of State.

Working with the CAA and the ASIWWG, we are continuing to press for greater conspicuity for 'met masts'. While we have no statutory capability we are hoping that either the use of 'spherical orange markers' or, of colouring the 15 bird deflectors already required on each outer guy wire, may achieve reasonable visual recognition without additional structural load. A met mast being erected in May near Eddsfield in East Yorkshire, with the coloured bird deflectors will be monitored as a future model for other such masts.

Finally, S. Slater recently made a presentation on the effects of wind turbines and anemometer masts on aviation to the Environment Group of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, which was well received. If this presentation is of use to other groups, I will be happy to repeat the exercise or share the presentation materials.

Stephen Slater.
25th April 2014.

A Cheap Way of Navigating

A lot of people have told me that the ipad is a bit big for the cockpit and the ipad mini is better. If you want a good value tablet that size for Sky Demon then look here :

http://www.morgancomputers.co.uk/product_detail/14852/Gemini-7-3G-Dual-Core-1-2GHz-1GB-RAM-4GB-Android-Tablet-WiFi-GPS/

For £54 only, its a 7" tablet with GPS & WiFi and unlocked for 3G (i.e. it will take your sim card) ..and camera.
I got one yesterday and downloaded SkyDemon and it works fine. WiFI at home to plan, GPS in flight and 3G for updates away from home. You can use it as a phone as well and it has all the usual android apps.
Unless you put additional memory in it - a micro SD card is all you need - it will struggle if you start loading films and loads of pictures on it - but them I have my iPad for that.

Andrew Cragg

Changes to the FFA website

In the View Members section, you will find a button "Open/Save PDF File to Print". This has now been updated so that it will allow you to print out a full membership list that is bang up to date. It is in a new format and very clear. Set your printer to landscape to get the best results. Or you can save the file to your computer for easy reference to the membership database.

Joined since 1st March 2014

FFA Number		Strip
8542	Peter Dyer, Ringmer, Sussex	n
8543	Christina Belton, Louth, Lincolnshire	y
8544	Graham Robson, Harmston, Lincolnshire	n
8545	Andrew Friday, Cranbrook, Kent	n
8546	Harry Rifkin, By Leven, Fife	y

The total membership is now 394

