FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 122

August 2016

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph by Roz Stephens;

Broccoli harvesting in Lincolnshire .

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Chairman's Ramblings

So, Brexit has finally happened; David Cameron has resigned; The Labour Party is in disarray with a leader still to be elected: The Lib Dems seem to have disappeared off the radar: but today we do have a new Prime Minister in Theresa May who seems steady, mature and confident. Let's hope she starts the Brexit ball rolling with the EU very soon so that we can get on with what the country voted to do. It remains, of course, to see how it all pans out, but I very much doubt that all the doom-mongers will be seen to be correct. True the pound has fallen out of bed (good for grain prices) but the stock market is now at a higher level than it was last summer. And don't forget we have three new Wimbledon champions – Men's Singles; Mixed Doubles; and Wheelchair Men's Doubles. Much to celebrate there. A pity about Euro 2016 – and to Iceland for heaven's sake!!

With no really settled weather, my hay crop still stands (sort of) in the field, a good three weeks past its prime. All very frustrating but there is no point making prime hay badly and having it spoiled. That is no use to any animal. I'm hopeful there will be a window of opportunity coming up as I write this.

Blackgrass remains a ghastly problem for some farmers with considerable areas of some fields having been sprayed off with Roundup to reduce continued soil contamination – all so easily witnessed from the air to its full extent. It doesn't take much imagination to realise the impact on the budget when that happens. And what is the future of Roundup to be? Surely well up there in the success stakes for its usefulness to the farming community as well as gardeners. I was always led to believe it was one of the safest chemicals ever produced being originally developed as a washing up liquid – but hey ho, I suppose some rat somewhere was given a few litres of concentrate to drink and it got a bit of a tummy ache.

A few early crops of barley and rape have seen a combine, but to date I have heard no reports of yield or quality. Certainly some of the crops around here look to have good yield potential, but with a serious shortage of sunshine in the last couple of months, the grain may not have the quality. In three weeks or so we will all know the answer to that.

I always enjoy reporting that we have had some great flying visits, and this year is again no exception. Great attendances by our members with (mostly) great flying weather are always so gratifying to the organisers, to whom we owe an enormous debt of gratitude. Reports on the visits are elsewhere in this newsletter. Please keep your ideas flowing in to Rick, our events secretary.

Visits and tours are the lifeblood of our association. And talking of tours, there is a germ of an idea for a summer tour centred around Poland for next year, so keep your eyes and ears open for that one. It will undoubtedly be popular and numbers will, as always be limited, so you know what you have to do. Participation is always on a 'first come first served' basis.

Good luck to you all for a dry and inexpensive harvest (comparatively) – we don't need heavy drying costs on top of poor commodity prices.

Martin Gosling

Editor's Notes

This edition of the newsletter always puts a bit of weight on with the Summer reports.

We are also getting useful up to date news from our Council representatives who currently are - Gerald Hackemer who attends the GASCo meetings - Anthony Kedros at GAAC and - Andrew Cragg and Neville Stops who between them attend the GAP meetings, formerly known as the General Aviation Consultative Committee (GACC).

With the FFA funds increasing, we have recently upped our donations to GASCo - the safety committee and to GAAC which is the only organisation that really fights for our private airfields. Like a lot of commercial airfields, some of our strips are being encroached upon by development, whether it be housing, industrial estates or wind turbines, which the GAAC actively oppose.

If you would like to put an article together for the winter newsletters, whether it be an interesting flight, a frightening flight or something else relevant to the FFA, please submit to me at chix@farmline.com for consideration.

Paul Stephens

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A company limited by guarantee; registered in England No. 01166733
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Committee Meeting, 18th July 2016

The FFA Committee met at Martin Gosling's home in Essex on the 18th July. What a glorious day, with temperatures in the 30's, and what a superb setting in the Gosling's new orangery for our meeting, with a superb lunch prepared by Annette.

There wasn't a great deal on the agenda, just a good excuse for your Committee to meet on a beautiful flying day!!

The membership tally is now up to 413 with new applicants still coming forward.

The accounts can be seen elsewhere in this newsletter and the forward budgets are showing a continued small profit thanks to reduced insurance charges and increased subscription.

The Summer events have all been successful and well attended, despite two meetings being virtually unflyable and the European Tour being dogged with bad weather in France - more of which in the report later on in this newsletter.

One of the main items on the agenda was running through the arrangements for the FFA 2016 AGM. Again, details to be found elsewhere in this newsletter. We shall continue to fully fund this event as long as we continue to show a profit, as we don't see why members should have to pay to attend their own AGM. So please make an effort to come and enjoy a good day out at Gaydon and the British Motor Museum.

Suggestions for meetings in 2017 include a visit to a bio-digester plant belonging to one of our members, a Tour of Poland, glass recycling, a forge and a visit to some members in Kent.

It was thought that the FFA clothing is due for an update. The fleece jacket is now very dated and will be replaced with a rather nice water and wind proof jacket and a new body warmer will be available as well. They will be embroidered with the FFA logo and should be reasonably priced, around £40 for the jacket and £28 for the body warmer. Watch out for details on the website. They should be available at the AGM.

If you would like to pre-order one, please fill in the reply slip or drop us an email to chix@farmline.com stating your size. This will help with assessing how many to order.

Paul Stephens



GAAC Report

Turbulent Times...

BREXIT: The vote to leave was unexpected and our current focus is on learning as much as possible on just how the future regulation of General Aviation will be conducted. My purely personal view is that the CAA has been through a transformation programme based on its role as a local branch of EASA. This has reduced the number of staff and favoured management skills over aviation expertise. The GAAC has already scheduled high level meetings with the CAA and aims to reach interested MPs as soon as the political dust has settled.

PLANNING: Insofar as it affects airfields this is another key concern but the detailed regulations necessary to protect airfields have been difficult to influence at a time when the absolute priority for most MPs has been the Referendum. We understand that, following Sir Gerald Howarth's intervention during the debate on the Housing Bill, the Government is sympathetic to our concerns that Airfields should not normally be developed as Brownfield land. Indeed, the Government response to Steven Slater's Petition, when he was our Vic-Chairman, was to confirm that *'National policy and guidance recognises the importance of airfields and we will work with the aviation sector to ensure the current policy relating to development on airfields is better understood'*. We have been invited to join a meeting when we can present the case for GA to the Minister. Baroness Williams (Parliamentary Under Secretary at the DCLG) also clarified the issue in a letter to the House of Lords where we are fortunate to be represented by GAAC President and FFA member Lord Rotherwick.

Our Vice-Chairman, John Gilder, deals with individual airfields and produces regular reports on his work. He is faced with an ever increasing number of requests for help and, at the last count, there were twenty sites under threat....with the MoD expected to name more airfields 'surplus' to their needs. Copies of John's report have been circulated to the Board and are available on request.

CAA: The current GA Division of the CAA has around forty staff with Tony Rapson as Head of the Unit. The Unit was heavily engaged, following the tragedy at Shoreham, but is committed to taking a proportionate approach to regulation with many 'lighter touch' changes to some previously onerous regulations. Examples, many of which follow from proposals in the Red Tape Challenge, include a change in the Medical requirements; Training in Permit Aircraft; exemptions from some Microlights to have a 'noise certificate' etc. However, Air Displays became subject to a new raft of regulation. These new rules have resulted in the cancellation of many events with even the Red Arrows unable to perform their aerobatic display at Farnborough. This will deny many of the younger generation their first exposure to the excitement of flying and may reduce the future pilot numbers.

EASA: The trend towards a different and more tolerant regime for GA continued through the year and we have every hope, that whatever the effect of Brexit on their relationship with the UK, this will continue for at least two years.

WIND TURBINES: The GAAC continues to sit on the ASI Windfarm Working Group where cooperation between Aviation and Wind Turbine Developers has now established a better understanding of how best to work in the common interest. The latest development has been a Policy Statement by the CAA on the lighting of Onshore Wind Turbine Generators with a blade tip height at or in excess of 150m above ground level. New designs, particularly for off shore turbines, incorporate a massive increase in blade lengths to increase efficiency but which create a considerable obstacle.

DRONES: Much has been written about RPAVs in proximity to airfields, but little definitive action has been taken to reduce the potential hazard. There are clear regulations followed by those commercially recognised by the CAA and by responsible flyers following the BMFA Code, but these rules are not even known to many who may purchase their equipment via the internet. The GAAC would welcome thoughts on how this problem might best be addressed.

INFRINGEMENTS: The CAA, NATS and the FAS VFR Im-

plementation Group are working together with the GA Community and the MoD in an effort to reduce airspace infringements which remain at over 1000 events per year and the GAAC will be attending a Seminar on this subject on 12th July. The CAA has confirmed that the license of a 'serious' offender will be suspended (as one Helicopter Pilot has already discovered to his cost). The GAAC would also welcome thoughts on how to improve this situation .

Charles Henry FRAeS
Chairman GAAC

GASCo Report

Notes from the meetings held on 30th March 2016 and the AGM held on 28th June 2016 at Farnborough Air Sciences Trust:-

51 Safety Evenings have been held in 2015/16, well beyond the contracted number with the CAA. The contract for Safety Evenings has been renewed for 2016/17 and will concentrate on Human Factors, Loss of Control and Infringements. Also in 2015/16 two Evenings were held in Eire, and GASCo has taken part in 2 Military Civil Air Safety Days.

Subscriptions for 'Flight Safety' are gradually increasing and the emailed 'Flight Safety Extra' goes from strength to strength. GASCo is pleased to note that some organizations distribute 'Extra' to all their members.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems Association (UAVS)

As the FFA representative to GASCo I was asked to raise the concerns of our members regarding uncontrolled use of drones. The first response of the UAVS representative was to say that farmers are one of the major users of UAVs members. He then added that his members are as concerned as anyone about the unregulated use of drones.

The UAS industry with the European Legislators is taking an active role in creating EU wide 'baseline' regulations which is expected in 2016. There is also work progressing on the development of a 'capability' based CE certificate ensuring the items sold in the EU comply with a minimum capability fit such as Geo-Fencing and registration.

UAVS has had to deal with many reports of UAV's being sighted by manned aircraft and even had to answer headlines showing a picture saying that "this should not be allowed". In the photo there was no information as to the altitude, location or what they were both doing. UAVS has also had to answer similar 'all UAV's are a problem' statements presented at the recent NATMAC meeting.

UAVS appreciates that its members are often swept up with recreational users by the un-informed. However UAVS represents the professional end of the UAS/RPAS industry that are highly trained and working for CAA licenced operators with approved processes and procedures. Our members are as concerned about the risks posed by the untrained, unlicensed and untraceable users as all the other organisations. UAVS is not responsible for the recreational user but is working with the UK and EU governments to try and use technological measures to control the capability and operational areas where these can operate.

Where anyone sees a user over-extending their ability they should try to educate while UAVS will continue to also support EU wide standards developments. There is a need for the whole aerospace industry, professionals and recreational users, to understand that there is one airspace, it is open to all and we all need to operate within the controls set by the regulators.

Met Office

The Met Office implemented a number of enhancements to the Met Office GA briefing portal in October 2015. These included TAF and METAR bulletins, by area, in a printable list; balloon locations on a map as well as aerodromes and functionality to save favourite map views.

It was pleasing to hear from feedback that these changes were broadly well received. That said, we have initiated the development of a number of additional features in response to the feedback received.

The changes developed represent the features most users wished to see on the new site. These have been endorsed by the CAA and are summarised as follows:

In short, the changes you will see:

Global TAFs and METARs search

Improved home page, clearer navigation and more quick links

Separate landing pages for balloons or aerodromes with option to set either as your default

Maps now available on your mobile device

Upgraded map layer picker

Clearer navigation to briefing charts and TAF/METAR lists

Improved print functionality

Face to face user testing involving prominent users has taken place. In terms of supporting material, the Met Office has updated all FAQs and created online video content to demonstrate the main changes in more detail. The release date of these new enhancements was 23rd March. The legacy briefing site is currently still available and will be decommissioned at a date to be confirmed in consultation with CAA.

The Met Office representative reported on their analytical software on the new GA web briefing portal. The purpose of this software is to help the Met Office better understand user behaviour, i.e. peak access time and what pilots view most. Results from the analytics will assist the Met Office to adapt and fine tune the web site so that that it provides the best possible user experience.

A lot of statistics were presented and the results appear to show that pilots' use of weather products during briefing may be related to how well the weather phenomena they describe are understood. Some valuable products (i.e. synoptic charts) may be overlooked due to a perceived lack of confidence in interpreting them. This may be a result of how weather training is focussed during pilot training (i.e. focussing on products such as TAFs, METARs). A different emphasis on training may well influence pilot briefings. Another reason may be how the products are presented. For example, AIRMETs for F215s contain a lot of abbreviated information, especially on days where there is a lot of weather detail to convey succinctly. On an related issue, the Met Office Aviation Team are currently investigating the best and most useful way that they could present probabilistic weather forecast information.

FlyOnTrack

The 'FlyOnTrack' web site has been kept up to date with news items, new pictorial guides for flight in the vicinity of control zones across the UK, and lists of future restrictions.

The CAA now asks those who infringe controlled airspace, after some pre-reading, to sit an online test. There is concern that by far the majority who sit it 'fail' this test. The questions are all linked to such things as navigation, preflight planning, features on charts, etc, not general 'Air Law', and the answers are all covered in the pre-reading material. The CAA offers the failing candidates 3 options. Namely, to study and repeat the test and be debriefed by a CAA examiner, or to pass the Air Law and the Operational Procedures ground exams, or to undergo a one-to-one tailored ground course, without testing, at a club.

Teams of pilots, air traffic controllers, and the CAA staff have been set up in the area of known infringing hotspots such as Birmingham, Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton, Southampton, and Stansted. Surprise has been expressed at the lack of knowledge by

some pilot members of the groups. For example what the pilots expect from a Basic Service. Obviously this is being followed up and reported through the CAA reporting channels.

Gerald Hackemer

GAP Report

Report on Meeting of General Aviation Partnership (GAP) 21st July 2016

It was inevitable that the chairman would open the meeting with the CAA GA unit's opinion on Brexit. It was not surprising that the sentiment was to seek to retain the European harmonisation already achieved. To what extent we could expect or desire to regain supremacy over more local issues was too early to say.

NATS gave a presentation about the AFPEx system which has recently come in for criticism following the introduction of fees for participating airfields. AFPEx was introduced on the closure of flight briefing units in 2007 and needed to be updated and to service this work fees were introduced. Smaller airfields are faced with an annual fee of £1995 to access the system. Since the service remains free to GA pilots, NATS accepted the argument that it was difficult to justify passing on this cost to GA pilots who continue to see it as a free service. So, AFPEx lite will be available soon for £500 per year with reduced services, the most significant of which will probably be the cap of 200 messages/month, in and out. Bearing in mind that subscribers will receive inbound messages that are out of their control, for example, when an airfield is given on a flight plan as a diversion, the point was rightly made that the cap was at best unfortunate and at worst, unfair. NATS could only say that they would be understanding if such a situation arose. We will have to wait and see what that means exactly. It should be noted that the service remains free for charity events and air shows on request.

There was an update on the work of the **General and Business Aviation Strategic Forum** from Roger Hopkinson from the General Aviation Alliance and Royal Aero Club. This small group of industry representatives supporting the GA reform process and reporting to the minister once a year is seen as highly effective largely due to its small size and focus. Of the many current issues, a priority is the simplification of the General Aviation report (GAR). Although progress on this is slow, Roger did praise the emergency telephone number (to submit if no other means are available) having had to use it recently.

How to address the increase in infringements? No big surprise that a majority of infringing pilots are not using GPS but its not easy to encourage or mandate carriage of GPS. Training is seen as key measure and perhaps an infringement awareness course is a more proportional response to a conviction?

A representative from the DfT told us that the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport with responsibility for aviation was Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon. The current DfT opinion on Brexit was that the UK would remain fully involved with the structures of the EU until new arrangements were in place (No, Really?). The more important issue was that they don't yet know what Brexit means. Could it be a Norway, a Swiss or a unique model? Different approaches may be pursued in different sectors. The DfT is seeking opinions on how GA organisations see themselves in the new regime and although there is no formal consultation, they were invited to write in to give an opinion.

Update on the GA Programme. Partly in response to the Red Tape challenge and the drive for proportional regulation, the CAA GA Unit has the GA Programme, an ongoing suite of projects to help steer the CAA in this area. 200 projects have been identified of which 59 are completed, 26 active and 8 prioritised: The introduction of Medical self-declaration for certain non-EASA licence types begins in August 2016. The Implementation of self-declared maintenance program and removal of LAMP is anticipated in 2018 but it depends on issue of the new EU Part M (Light) maintenance programme. There is now an online allocation for Air displays and special events. The gyroplane CPL framework is nearing completion.

Under EU regulation all radios in EASA aircraft will need to be 8.33KHz spacing from Jan 2018. It is proposed to ask for some 6-7 exempted frequencies for a transition period. The CAA have successfully applied for EU funding which may provide up to 20% of the upgrade costs. They are currently investigating pilot/aircraft eligibility criteria. The EU has announced an EU/FAA bilateral agreement covering mutual acceptance of TSO/ETSO radios but on closer questioning no one from the CAA was able to say if it really means you can go to Oshkosh next week and buy approved radios. What we do know at the moment is that to be approved by EASA, a radio must appear on the list of approved equipment and since there is currently no mechanism for an FAA TSO radio to apply, "this would suggest that although acceptable, FAA TSO radios will probably not appear on the EASA approved equipment list going forward. CAA will need to explore with the radio licencing team, how they can recognise the acceptability of an FAA TSO approved radio that is not on the EASA list for the purposes of the issue of a radio license. This will take a period to undertake, so any radios purchased in advance (for example at Oshkosh over the next couple of weeks) would be purchased at risk. CAA will work to resolve this issue at the earliest opportunity and advise."

Annex 7 Part NCO : This piece of EU regulation comes into force on 25/08/16 and relates to the proper conduct of non commercial flights in EASA aircraft defined as "other than complex-motor-powered aircraft" (which required several pages of definition in itself but simplistically is "light aircraft"). Some of the new key requirements which will be new to pilots are :

All powered aircraft (but not aerobatic) must carry an ELT or PLB

All flights must be recorded in a journey or tech log

No fuelling with passengers on board

Published noise abatement procedures must be taken into account

Simple information about how these regulations affect the GA pilot are hard to come by. The CAA was criticised and admitted that communication about this has been poor but said that they must be careful not in interpret EU law by issuing guidelines! EASA information (all 88 pages!) is similarly vague on what pilots should do to comply and similarly, EASA state that it is not their job to interpret the law, rather it is the role of the Court. "It is the role of operators to ensure compliance". This is how it is!

The ANO has been extensively revised and is expected in 2016.

It applies to non-EASA aircraft; where relevant EASA rules not yet implemented and operations where EU would not reasonably expect to be involved. Some provisions of interest :

Charity flights; if money is paid to the charity and the charity is not operator of the aircraft, it can be a private flight.

Introductory flights and Glider towing can exploit exemptions for private flight.

IMC is valid in the Channel Islands.

Aerial work is removed and replaced by Commercial operation.

If an aircraft and instructor arranged separately, a training flight can be non-commercial

"E-conditions" - new simplified rules for conducting flight testing of novel aircraft.

Website and Skywise

The new CAA website now has dedicated GA section.

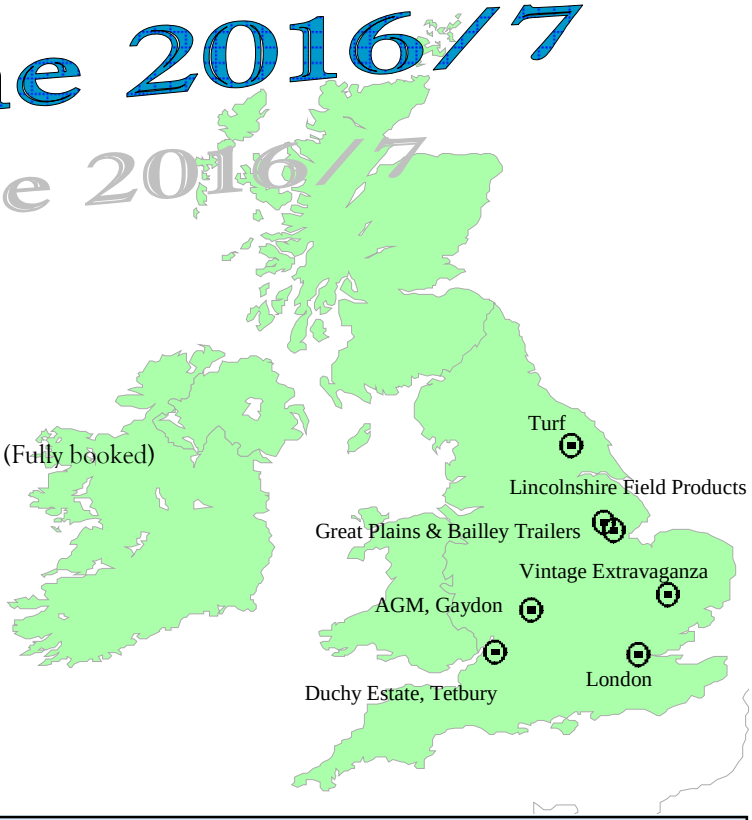
The CAA has launched a new service called Skywise replacing the old email alerting system. Important information (including restricted airspace) is published via phone app, webpage, or email alerts.

Andrew Cragg

Programme 2016/7

Programme 2016/7

20th April	Turf Production, Full Sutton
11th May	Great Plains and Bailey Trailers
28th May	FFA European Tour to Spain and Portugal (Fully booked)
22nd - 23rd June	Tony Fisher's Vintage Extravaganza
29th June	Duchy Estate Organic Farm, Tetbury
6th July	Lincolnshire Field Products
15th October	2016 AGM, Gaydon
8th March	London Meeting - Bank of England



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, Gaydon, October 15th 2016

Notice is herby given that the Flying Farmers Association will hold their Annual General Meeting at Gaydon on Saturday, October 15th 2016 at 11am.

08:30 First arrivals at Wellesbourne Airfield
09:30 1st shuttle bus to the British Motor Museum (BMM)
10.00 Coffee, arrivals, welcome
11.00 AGM start
12.15 Buffet lunch, tea and coffee (BMM)
13.00 British Motor Museum tour
14.30 1st shuttle return to airfield
15.00 First take off

Organiser - Neville Stops

Cost - £0.00. The AGM is totally funded by the Association including landing fees at Wellesbourne.

It is the turn of Neville Stops and Andrew Cragg to stand down from the Committee. They are both willing to stand again for re-election. If you are interested in becoming a Committee member, please fill in the reply slip enclosed with this newsletter.

BRITISH MOTOR MUSEUM

British Motor Museum
Banbury Road,
Gaydon,
Warwickshire,
CV35 0BJ

The world's largest collection of historic British cars.

From its earliest days the British motor industry has been a vital part of the economy and the lives of people living in the Midlands and it is still a hub for automotive creativity today. The Museum tells the story of the birth, decline and rebirth of the motor industry and the cars it produced, as well as celebrating the skills and creativity of the people who designed and built them.

The Museum opened in 1993 as the amalgamation of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust's preserved car collection.

The Trust decided that the car collection and artefacts were outgrowing its then two locations, Studley in Warwickshire and a museum in Syon Park in London. A dedicated purpose-built residence was needed to give the collection pride of place and open for public viewing.

It was the Trust's mission to keep the memory of the British motor industry alive and to tell its story to all, starting from the beginning of the 20th Century to present day. So a building was designed that not only housed the cars and its extensive motoring archive, but also had educational and conference facilities thus ensuring its sustainability. The Heritage Motor Centre, as it was first known, opened in May 1993.

Bank of England, March 8th 2017

Arrive at the Bank of England, Bartholomew Street, London no later than 10:50.

Early arrivals can visit the free museum until the group talk about the Bank of England at 11:00.

Visit the museum between 12:00 and 12:30

Lunch at Simpson's Tavern, less than 5 minutes walk away.

After lunch there is no formal activity, but St Pauls (roof visit a must) and the Monument to the fire of London (311 steps to the top) are only a few minutes away.

The FFA Committee will adjourn to the Farmers Club.

Further information:

www.stpauls.co.uk

www.themonument.info/history/introduction.html

Target number 35 - maximum 50

Organiser - Andrew Cragg

Inturf - Full Sutton, 20th April 2016

The weather was kind to the Flying Farmers on Wednesday 20th April, with clear blue skies and superb flying conditions.

One of our new members Bill Boutcher-West, who is a turf farmer from Andover, and who deals with INTURF, had organised the day with the help of Neville Stops, for which we were all extremely grateful. A brave move for a new member.

Everybody got to Full Sutton in good time, and were kindly supplied with bacon rolls and tea and coffee, by the owner Simon Pocklington and his wife. Soon after 10 o'clock we boarded our coach for the turf fields. We were greeted by Steven Edwards, who runs INTURF with his twin brother, Alex.

The field we were in was being harvested with an American cutting, rolling and palleting machine. Very impressive. Fork lifts were then loading lorries for dispatch throughout the country. They have supplied turf to all the major sporting venues, including Wimbledon and Wembley. The grass was of an exceptionally high quality, and we had a demonstration of two types of mowing machines, both were more than 10 metres wide. They could cut approximately 150 acres per day.

The field being cut that day had been turfed for 25 years, and the level had not dropped at all, as organic matter is put back every year. Of the 1000 plus acres turfed each year, they reseed with 60/70 tons of grass seed. They have a daily production on good days of 30,000 sq. metres from their two centres in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. All their land is rented at approximately £250 per acre, with the ability to irrigate.

At about 12.30 we thanked the Edward's brothers, and then made our way into York. We were dropped off at the National Railway Museum, where we could have lunch and visit the museum or City centre.

We returned to Full Sutton by 4.30, and I am sure everybody enjoyed their flight home.

Bill and Neville would like all people on the trip to know that surplus funds from the day will be split between The Great Northern Air Ambulance, Parkinsons Research and the FFA contingency fund.

Jane & William Procter

Visit to Great Plains and Bailey Trailers, 11th May 2016.

When I looked out at the weather on the morning of 11th May to see rain and low cloud I knew it wouldn't be long before my phone was to start ringing. This is an organiser's worst nightmare.

I had twenty five aircraft booked to fly into Fenland Airport and only two braved the awful weather. In the true spirit of the flying farmers forty people took to their cars, some went directly to Great Plains at Sleaford and some to Fenland Airport. I would like to thank you all for that great support and effort.

David Holmes UK Sales Director made us all very welcome and gave us a talk and film documentary on Great Plains in the USA and this country. The site here is an assembly site only and all the various parts are brought in shot blasted, painted and then assembled.

After a tour of the assembly plant we were all treated to a superb buffet lunch and a group photo in front of one of their seed drills.

We all boarded the coach for our next visit to Bailey Trailers only short distance on the same site. Graham Wright sales manager was there to meet us and split us into three parties to tour the factory.



The business is run and owned privately by the Bailey family and they employ approximately eighty staff. Mr. Tom Bailey senior, Mike Bailey and Graham Wright took us round the factory that can produce up to thirty trailers of all shapes and sizes. The place was humming with activity and all the staff seemed to be quite proud to show you there part of the production line. The sheet steel is all cut by laser to a very high degree of accuracy and they have enormous hydraulic presses to bend it into shape.

It was really nice to see a business with so much enthusiasm and drive. The quality of the trailers is second to none. After tea and biscuits it was time to leave for home.

Peter Evans

FFA European Tour to Portugal, 2016

The overall story is by Graham Robson. Articles in italics are by others on the tour. Photos by David Soul and Neville Stops - editor.

This year's study trip to Spain and Portugal was my first as a full attendee, although I have assisted in two previous trips, arranging and organising factory visits in Finland last year and Portugal some years ago. I travelled with my good friend Richard Howard, in his newly acquired RV-6 G-RIVT, who for his sins had organised the entire trip, so it was interesting to see and understand the planning of such an event as well as enjoying the results thereafter, with both of us learning the finer points of RV flying into the bargain.

Saturday, 28th May

Day one called for nothing more complicated than us all meeting at La Baule, though this was easier said than done, with the threat of poor weather on the French coast, some elected to leave Friday to try and beat the weather. The best laid plans of mice and men, and all that, transpired to have some of our group trapped on the ground in various locations along the French coast come Saturday morning, due to persistent coastal fog. Richard and I decided Saturday was the best option, flight planned for Cherbourg with Rennes as an alternate, which worked out well, where we met up with David and Lavinia Soul who arrived soon after us. Eventually, most of the 'flying' group arrived into La Baule by mid-afternoon Saturday, so a welcome beer or two and mutual greetings. Transfer to the hotel followed, after which, came the rain.....sadly, trapping one of our group on the ground not far away in Nantes, having landed there to clear customs. A 'technical detail' delayed them sufficiently that the weather over-took them and there they remained.

8 Sunday, 29th May

Sunday morning was a slow affair, with a leisurely morning appreciating the stark majesty of St Nazaire's World War 2 U-Boat submarine pens, an education in heavy construction to suit a need; we awaited improvement in the weather. Here is David Soul's story so far:-

We left Turweston on a flight plan to Cherbourg with an improving weather forecast and no alternate in mind. (First error. An alternate with acceptable weather would have been a good idea.) With about 50 miles to go to Cherbourg I requested latest weather for Cherbourg from Deauville who gave 200ft cloud base and 500 metres viz - below IFR minima. Woops. – "What are your intentions?" A quick check of my Aerad Europe & Middle East Supplement (very slightly out of date, second error) gave Rennes, on route to La Baule, as a customs airfield. Weather good. Deauville didn't demure so we happily bowled along above cloud until about 50 miles to go when the weather cleared and we landed. Tower asked how long we were staying for parking purposes. I replied as soon as we have cleared customs, we will continue to La Baule. They came back with: - "Sorry we do not have customs anymore, arrangements have changed!" But...but. Then – "I can try and arrange customs for you as you have diverted from Cherbourg". Thank goodness - visions of being detained for weeks etc gradually evaporated.

The pleasant customs man turned up after about 30 min and with, a cursory look at our passports waved us on our way. Then we set off for a short uneventful trip to La Baule, but that evening while exploring the town, we experienced the worst thunderstorm ever (for us) with hail around a centimetre in diameter and floods on the roads. Fortunately, we had shelter as we had stopped for a coffee. The deluge lasted about an hour with the café roof, leaking like a sieve.

Next day, Richard, our excellent organiser, was informed that the venue of our first visit, the U boat submarine shelters in Saint Nazaire, was flooded and would not be open. Submarine shelter flooded we all asked! The coach was booked so Richard decided to take us anyway to view the area. On entering the town we noticed piles of leaves and ice on the sides of the road. They had just experienced another storm. The trees were almost stripped bare. Some concern about flying onward that day was evident amongst many of us which you will all understand if you can view the video clip of the evening before.

The submarine base consists of a dozen or so pens or docks under a



massive concrete shelter with the roof being up to 8 metres thick. Apparently it withstood a Tallboy bomb, 1200 lbs of explosive, designed by Barnes Wallis, during WW2. Wikipedia has all the details and a few pictures. The openings in the shelter for the submarines had massive blast doors that could be lowered for protection and also barriers that appeared to rise from below to protect from underwater penetration.

We had a good look around the interior of the pens taking care not to slip into the water and noticed the imprint of the shuttering evident on the concrete walls. Today we use steel panels or large sheets of ply but the shuttering used consisted of many wooden boards about 6 in wide. You could see the wood grain in the imprinting. The only part of the facility that was closed was the museum interior, so I didn't feel we missed that much. Could be wrong, but we weren't disappointed not to see it. A steep climb along a ramp onto the roof gave us an excellent view, in the mist over the harbour, and details of the roof structure which looked like petrified poly tunnels, (concrete) about 6 foot wide spaced perhaps 3 feet apart running longitudinally along the roof. There was a display in pictures and a description of the early history of the harbour and the German construction. Interestingly a very large passenger ship was build there in the early 1930s, the SS Normandie. She was the largest and fastest passenger ship ever built at the time and held the Blue Riband, for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic, on several occasions.

Many of us then retired for coffee and a bite to eat and then returned to La Baule on the coach for onward passage to Pamplona. The initial stages of the onward flight were of some concern, with heavy rain shown on radar images on the Ipad and questionable visibility, but after the first 40 miles or so mostly in reasonable viz between layers we completed the trip in sunshine and good VMC. The approach controller at Nantes helpfully warned us of heavy rain showers and confirmed the absence of thunderstorms. Phew.

David Soul

Finally, after much checking and cross-checking of TAFs, and every weather app available, the decision came to make a move and try to beat the weather that was surely forecast to hit the area later that day. There followed a mass procession of 11 aircraft headed southbound, destination Pamplona, in Spain, all except Clint and Alan in the Jabiru who decided conditions were bit beyond their comfort zone, deciding to catch us up the following day....more of this later !

In planning the trip, Richard's over-riding concern had always been the suitability of alternate routes and landing sites, should the weather not play ball. Added to this, was the surprising difficulty in finding airports with fuel and available parking space for up to 18 aircraft, not an easy task. Departure from La Baule was slightly torturous, for those of us in smaller types, snaking our way through the heavy weather, between cloud layers avoiding the rain, which took many quite a way out to sea before things improved, for an altogether more pleasant trip down the Atlantic coast in glorious sunshine, destination Pamplona, Spain. Once again, weather concerns in this corner of the coastline, which is blessed with its own 'micro-weather system', we had more concerns about being able to clear the high ground between the coast and Pamplona, which had led to a dilemma with our reserved coach transportation, do we gamble on everyone being able to reach Pamplona, or should it be sent to San Sebastian, a little further along the coast..? In the end, all was fine, and we even bolstered our numbers with one or two late-comers joining the party - Neville Stops having been weather delayed en-route and Gordon and Carolyn Bellerby able to join us after a delayed departure from the UK. Evening pleasantries ensued, with dinner and wine a plenty and the expectation of the first of the planned visits.....though we were still down on numbers, poor Clint and Alan we discovered were still stuck at La Baule.

Monday, 30th May

Monday's itinerary called for a visit to Limagrain's trial site to view their plant breeding site, where we were treated to the intricacies and finer details of plant breeding, including shown how to 'castrate' maize plants, no less ! This was followed by a visit to one



of Europe's most ambitious irrigation schemes, which has completely transformed the fortunes of farmers in this far northern region of Spain, bringing with it a change in lifestyle for many, which may have far reaching consequences for the traditional lifestyle of residents of the region.

This is Martin Gosling's story so far:-

After an overnight stay in La Baule where nearly all participants had gathered, during which there was a seriously grown-up hailstorm which stripped many young trees in town and dented some car roofs, we visited the WW2 St Nazaire submarine pens. Unfortunately the overnight storm had flooded the visitor centre, cutting off power so that a guided tour was no longer available, so all we could do was to see the areas which were unaffected and look at the structure in some detail along with some very interesting factual information posters of the past and present history and development of the area. With a roof thickness of some 20 feet of reinforced concrete, it was no wonder that the allied bombers were unable to penetrate it during their attempts to destroy this base and repair centre for the Atlantic wolf packs.

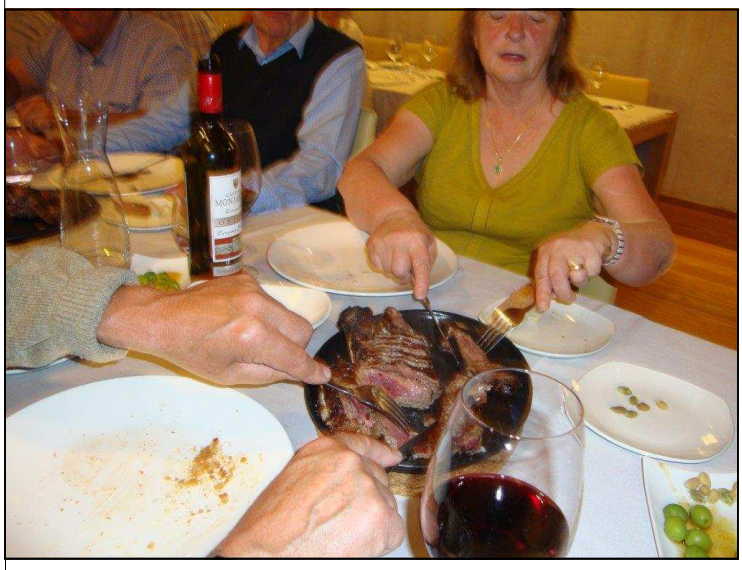
Back to the airfield for the planned departure to Pamplona during the afternoon, brought out the whole range of weather apps: to try to find one that showed some promise for the journey. There was some negativity around, but as soon as one aircraft bit the bullet, then that was the catalyst for the remainder of the group to join in. After three quarters of an hour of low cloud – avoided by taking a seaward route, the cloud thinned and rose higher and the remainder of the flight went off into ever improving conditions, and duly all aircraft, except one that had elected to delay his departure, arrived in the sort of weather we expect in Spain in the summer time.

Refuelling in Pamplona was certainly not as slick as we expect in the UK, with two people deployed to issue paperwork asking for VAT registration numbers, then coming back to pick them up when completed and put them in a file, and then eventually return to refuel and collect payment, all of which was very long-winded and time consuming. Finally the bus departed with some aircraft still un-refuelled and took us to our comfortable hotel in town for an in-house dinner.

On Monday morning we set off for the head office of Limagrain half an hour's drive away, a large seed development and production company which amongst others, incorporated Nickersons Seeds of Lincolnshire into their umbrella organisation around the turn of the century. We were greeted very warmly with a tea and coffee introduction, followed by the inevitable power point presentation of all the company's activities saw all members remaining awake and alert, no doubt because it was still early on in the proceedings of the day. Presentation over we toured the plant which was in limbo waiting for the new harvest to begin within the next two weeks or so.

Limagrain was created in 1965 as a cooperative specializing in Maize seed, and just 5 years later registered the Maize Hybrid LG11 - probably the most successful of all time. They are the market leaders in Europe for seed production of Maize, straw cereals, Oil seed rape in the North and sunflowers in the south.

Having toured the plant and exhausted all avenues of queries it was time to move on to their equally important arm of plant breeding some distance away, but before we could consider the complexities involved in that discipline, we were treated to an excellent lunch in a local restaurant which lasted probably longer than it should have, but then, well fortified we were taken to a farm with many trials in progress where the lady in charge tried her hardest to explain how new varieties were created. It is very labour intensive and involved manually removing the flowers from one variety with a pair of tweezers and introducing them to another variety and then covering it up with a paper bag to stop any cross contamination. At least that was what I thought was the gist of it but I was lost in the translation very early on. What was made clear to us though was that to be a plant breeder you need to start in the early part of your life because it takes around 15 years from the original cross-pollination, followed by repeated replication trials year after year to get a new variety into production and there still is no guarantee that it will be a success, and if not you have



to start all over again – by which time I guess you will be getting on towards retirement! No wonder new varieties are expensive. It was very dedicated, very impressive, and very hard to follow the understanding of the whole process.

With time still available we move on to a field area where a very enthusiastic Canadian researcher showed us how hybrid maize varieties were produced. The main crop was planted at the optimum time and allowed to germinate and then after a predetermined time (I think it was about 3 weeks), another variety was planted between the rows (but only one row to every four original rows). The crop was allowed to grow to the point where it was about 6 ft tall and the flower heads were standing proud of the top. At this point a specialist machine went down the rows removing the flowers, presumably to prevent the grain being corrupted and the result was a field of hybrid seed – I think!

That was about as much as my brain could take for the day, and we then returned to our hotel for a quick wash and brush up before a brisk 10 minute walk to a local restaurant where we had an excellent and enormous char-grilled rib of beef meal and much wine.

The next day the team were to move on to Portugal, but sadly my crew had to return to the UK. We arrived at Pamplona airport in good time, with most flight plans filed, expecting a speedy clearance through customs and security, across the apron, into our planes and away. No, no, no, that was not their idea at all. Suffice it to say it was three hours of sheer bureaucratic incompetence, with Richard doing his best (and his nut!) in the

FIS office trying to coordinate all the flight plans before they would accept any landing fees - even for those that had been filed and accepted some two hours earlier. They wouldn't accept landing fees individually, and so the whole saga went round and round without any apparent resolution. It was a classic case of a commercial airport, and not a very busy one at that, being completely incapable of understanding the simple needs of general aviation. The team finally got on their way around midday and flew into ever improving weather towards Porto, while we went north and had to divert into Cherbourg and where we were weathered in for 36 hours!

Martin Gosling

Tuesday, 31st May

Pamplona airport had been chosen for its ability to host our large group of aircraft, although their penchant for bureaucracy was to test everyone's patience. Clearly, this regional passenger airport was ill equipped to handle eleven competent, well prepared private pilots and their crews, as what ensued was a textbook lesson in confusion and incompetence. It is fair to say that few of us would venture to ever return to this airport through choice. Once again, weather played a big part in the proceedings on departure, with low cloud hugging the many hills and high ground around Pamplona, doubt remained up the last moment that a longer transit out and around the coast a possibility. In the end, brightening conditions allowed a more direct route. We chose the easier option, to climb up above the high ground and head for the clearer air on top of the clouds and with many gaps in the cloud deck we remained legal, although the views below were anything but inviting should the engine decide to quit. Once clear of the high ground, we wound our way around and alongside the occasional military restricted areas on our way south, into ever warming temperatures and clearer skies. This leg of the trip would be one of the longest and it was my turn in left seat and would be memorable for one other, for me, important reason. During the 3 hour 20 minute transit, I logged my 1,000th hour as PIC, achieving this mighty number in only 7 years and 7 months and what a way to enjoy the moment, at 8,500' crossing the Spanish border into Portugal, quite a special moment which was topped off with a large cocktail later that afternoon.

We were now headed for the central Portugese town of Evora, famous for being Europe's major cork producing region. Arrival into Evora was a pleasure, after Spain's less than competent style, thanks to Richard's well-appointed contact in Evora, who was the local ATCO. It was interesting to note that after such a long journey, during which many different routes were taken by our gaggle of fliers, we all arrived in a well-mannered procession with the circuit continually active with one, two or sometimes three arrivals together, all joining the queue for fuel after landing. Because of the expected spread of arrivals, local taxis were used to get to the hotel, to avoid those who arrived first having to wait for the tail-end-charlies. Dinner was spent in the restaurant of the hotel, enjoying a generous buffet.



Over to Roger Bell:-

Wednesday, 1st June

Wednesday dawned bright and sunny good for an 8.30 embarkation on our luxury coach ride along the Alentejo. Urbanisation quickly gave way to mixed arable and grazing land then wooded farmland with olive, myrtle, and spindly pine trees giving way to oak trees over good luck pasture. Herds of healthy cattle appeared de-pastured open range style with cows, calves and bulls all happily grazing slowly over the countryside. It is a peaceful and restful place. After turning off the well maintained major road onto a gravel track, we came across some men working up trees in a field by the road. These men harvest oak planks from the oak trees. We met Joanna Mesquita, who works for Amorim and who was to be our guide for the visit together with a very elegant and charming lady who is the owner of the oak woods. Joanna gave us a brief introduction to the cork business under the beautiful oaks with their spreading branches giving us welcome shade. The harvesting carried on while she talked. Gangs of two man teams work using a sharp short handled axe with a back spike chopping a long cut vertically into the bark of the tree. After that they chop a cross cut and lever the bark from the tree using the spike. The planks are anything from a couple of feet to 6 or 8 feet long and about two inches thick.



Joanna told us that Cork is the bark of the Cork Oak tree (Quercus Suber Linnaeus). It is an all natural raw material, with unique properties which give it an unparalleled character. It is light, impermeable to liquids and gases, elastic, compressible, provides thermal and acoustic insulation, a fire retardant and highly abrasion-resistant. Furthermore, it is completely biodegradable, renewable and recyclable.

It is estimated that there are over 2.3 million hectares of cork oak forest. About 716,000 hectares are situated in Portugal, which represents 22,5% of the national forest area. Half of the world cork production is Portuguese. The rest is situated in Spain, Italy, France, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.

All the while we were listening flying farmers were visibly wincing as the men swung around in the trees hacking away with their obviously razor sharp axes within inches of each other with no protection or any safety gear in sight. Evidently they get paid about 100 Euros a day which is twice the national average. Good luck to them, I wouldn't do the job for twice that!

After inspecting freshly harvested planks that were being loaded onto a traitor trailer by the local lads who work for the owner of the woodland, we hopped back on the bus to go the factory where the cork planks are delivered for processing.

The factory covers an area of about 20 hectares most of the area being taken up by cork stacks about 15 to 20 feet high with sheets of corrugated iron laid over them to keep the weather off. Evidently they don't enjoy baking in the sun or being drenched by winter rain but like to quietly dry out for about a year before being taken into the factory for a steam bath and sizing. The planks are assessed for quality by eye and sorted into separate piles manually before being cut into shape by machine.

The Amorim factory specialises in champagne corks. These are cylindrical in shape before being pushed into bottles where they take up their characteristic mushroom shape in time. We were shown all around the large modern factory by Joanna who told us, cork's success over centuries lies in its unique physical properties that no man-made closure has been able to replicate. It has lightness, compressibility, impermeability to liquids and resistance to wear, heat and rot. Cork also allows a minute amount of oxygen to permeate into the wine after sealing. This appears to have a beneficial impact, but more research is needed to understand the full contribution of the cork to wine development.

All over the world, 12 billion cork stoppers are produced annually. If we were to join them together, they would circle the Earth 15 times.

In addition, the introduction of technical corks such as Twin Top, champagne corks and Neutrocork has extended the range of cork products available to suit each wine style and market.

We saw the well-equipped laboratory where problems with ACT and other rot problems are researched.

With proper handling during and after bottling to ensure the best performance, cork is tops as a wine closure.

Evidently a 125 year old bottle of champagne was opened last year and it was still drinkable. By whom we were not told but it had just been sold for thousands of pounds.

After photographs and a thank you address by yours truly we repaired to a local restaurant for yet another excellent meal before leaving for a wonderful afternoon flight up to Porto.

During the tour Peter Farrington and I took over 1,000 photos which are on the FFA website. When making presentations after a vote of thanks I tried to arrange for the photographs to be taken in such a way so that the beautiful crystal paper weight which Richard had provided for our hosts was visible to the camera. The problem being that in some of the photos of our hosts being presented with this lovely memento they look as though they are being given a small black box! It is worth remembering in future that the Grand National Trophy is taken out of its transport box before being presented!

Roger Bell

With our Evora adventure over, it was all systems go for the final port of call, Porto. In a master stroke, Richard had found a true kindred spirit in Mr Pedro Prata, a member of the Porto Flying Club who had recently retired from the position of senior Air Traffic Controller at Porto ATC, a combination that would pay handsome dividends in the planning of all things relating to the time in Porto. A wonderfully scenic flight north from Evora culminated in a very well co-ordinated arrival procedure into the picturesque airfield of Maia, situated on high ground to the east of the city. Thanks to Pedro's involvement, Porto's approach controllers co-ordinated a smooth and seamless arrival stream into the hill-top airport and we were greeted with warm enthusiasm by many of the local aero club members.



We were to have three nights in Porto, in a rather stylish, city centre hotel, where we finally met with those of our party who were unable, for various reasons, to fly themselves down and the services of a well-known budget airline brought the rear-guard to us and we were, finally, a full group...well, apart from those still stuck in France.

Thursday, 2nd June

Thursday saw us boarding the coach for a long but wonderfully scenic journey from Porto inland, up through the Douro River valley, where we were to visit the Duoro Winery to view Port Wine production. The long, though enjoyable day, was rounded off with a very pleasant river trip to view the 6 Bridges over the Douro River, in Porto before dinner 'al fresco' in a riverside restaurant.

Friday, 3rd June

Our final day saw us calling en-masse, on a leather goods producer to the South of Porto, where our party seemed to take over the factory, finally adding to their retail sales, with purses and hand-bags to suit all tastes.

This is William Proctors report:-

On Friday morning on the bus for about 30 mins trip to a leather goods manufacturing Company South of Porto called Cachorrinho, where they manufacture handbags, briefcases, belts, purses And wallets in large quantities for Department Stores throughout Europe

On entering the warehouse, we were amazed at the number of handbags in rows on the floor. "A girl's paradise".

Whilst choosing items we would like to buy, small groups were taken downstairs (underground) To the workshop where 30-40 women and some men cut, glued and stitched all the leather goods.We were shown a computer controlled cutting machine, that cleverly planned its cutting to Waste as little as possible from the huge array of leathers in every colour you could think of.

The Company is family owned, and is run by a son and 2 daughters, who showed us round.

A vote of thanks was given, and they were presented with a FFA cap each, and a glass paperweight As a way of thanking them for a most interesting morning.

William & Jane Procter

After lunch, we got back to more traditional pursuits with a visit to one of Portugal's largest dairy farms, to see their robotic parlour milking system. Gordon Bellerby recalls:-

After a magnificent lunch in the restaurant Tourigalow we boarded the bus for our last farm visit of the tour.

The venue was a large modern dairy unit "Dairy Exploracao Teixeira Do Batel LDA" in the small village of Villa du Conde.

We were met by Jose Santoalha from Harker (the dairy equipment dealership) who installed all the milking equipment and oversaw the construction of a the new cattle housing building. Jose then introduced us to the farm owner Jorge Hermano and his daughter Marlene who then showed us around He explained the farm ran to some 700 hectares, mostly owned, some rented. There were around 750 cows on the premises split into two herds. One of 300 cows (the lower yielders) were housed in a

traditional style cubicle house and milked twice a day through a 20x20 herringbone parlour. The other 400+cows were housed in the new building, which was of a large open span construction and had the latest design cubicles giving the cows more room and ease of movement when standing up and sitting down. The whole building sat over a huge tank which collected all the slurry from the cows through a slatted floor system. The slurry then being pumped and spread on to the land at appropriate times.

The cows had access to four DeLaval robotic milkers positioned in the centre of the building and could choose to be milked as and when they wanted (a little concentrate being offered as an incentive for them to enter). If a cow went in too regularly she would be identified as doing so by the computer and pushed through without being milked and no concentrate reward given.

The basic feed ration was made up of maize and alfalfa silage (most being grown on the farm and the remainder being contract grown by neighbours) mixed with various concentrates such as maize gluten, soya meal, sugar beet pulp etc.

All heifer calves were reared through to enter the herd whilst bull calves were sold on to be reared for beef or veal.

The herd average milk yield per cow was 39 litres which is very impressive but not surprising given the high level of management and attention to detail The economics of the situation were not good, but better than in the UK. They were receiving 28 cents per litre with a break even of 28 cents, whilst in the UK the break even point is 28p-30p most producers receiving just 17p-18p per litre.

One can only hope the situation improves dramatically soon for everyone no matter which country.

A vote of thanks was given and a memento of the occasion presented before all departed for our hotel in nearby Porto.

Gordon Bellerby

Our farewell dinner was in the splendid location of the Burao Fladgate Restaurant, part of the Taylors' Port Winery, in Porto. With stunning views over the city and River below, we enjoyed a sumptuous meal with wine and port from the cellars below, which we had had the good fortune of being able to view exclusively, prior to sitting for dinner. It was also fitting that our good friend and wonderful ambassador Pedro Prata and his wife Mi, joined us for dinner.



Saturday, 4th June

So, Saturday dawned clear and bright and all thoughts were for home. Here the trip finished being an organised event and it was now back to flight planning for everyone. Richard and I had planned a fuel stop in the remote location of Burgas, a supreme example of where the UE money is being spent, a wonderfully equipped commercial airport, with no services, no passengers and nothing happening, other than Peter Evans and Neville, following us in shortly afterwards. Our journey north continued, on top of a heavy under-cast all along the north Spain coastline, extending well up into France, before another fuel stop at La Rochelle, where some of our group's aircraft were seen parked up, obviously making their night stop here. Richard and I continued further north, to enjoy the generous invitation to spend the night with John and Clare Golden at their house close to Mont Saint Michelle. Arriving into the quaint grass strip of Granville, Richard and I were amazed to see the Jabiru of Clint and Alan parked up alongside John's Beechcraft. They had finally made it out of La Baule, only to be trapped for the remainder of the week at nearby Soulac su Mer, poor guys ! We all met up again at John and Clare's and enjoyed a boisterous dinner in a local pizzeria, trying not to regale too many stories of what they had missed !

Graham Robson

Vintage Extravaganza, 22nd June 2016

Day 1

With a favourable forecast on Wednesday but weather not looking quite so good for the following day, there was a good turnout of aircraft who were all safely guided in by Ray Nicholson, Fenland Air Traffic Controller plus several cars for the first leg of Tony's two day vintage extravaganza visit.

We were given a very warm welcome at Wallis International airstrip by Tony and family, and after welcome refreshments, we were treated to view Tony's collection of vintage tractors and engines, including Millott,Blackstone,Crossley,Hornsby Benz Lanz Bulldog, John Deere model R, David Brown and Marshall tractors, all running and in immaculate condition. There was rather a quick exit of the hanger by some when the Marshall was fired up amid a cloud of black smoke, and the David Brown WW2 tug was put to good use pulling the trailer with everyone's luggage to the coach.

With everyone on board, we travelled the short distance to James Cowards Singlesole Farm and another warm welcome and a free hand to wander around James collection of early John Deere, Scemia, Titan 10-20 Allis Chalmers and Fordson tractors and a rare John Deere crawler amongst other interesting vintage farm machinery. Two imposing Burrell traction engines and a very rare Tuxford steam engine built in Boston Lincs in 1880.These engines were used on large estates as a portable source of power and there are now only three left in the word



which are still capable of steam and we were lucky enough to witness this one in full working order. James also showed the party around his vintage car collection which included a 1939 Armstrong Siddeley, a 1948 Jaguar SS and a 1937 MG Midget. We were also extremely privileged to have the opportunity to see a vintage Turner car and Turner tractor exhibited together. After a most enjoyable visit, our next stop was to The Papermills public house where we all enjoyed an excellent buffet lunch.

The afternoon visit was to Ron and Brian Strawsons farm to view their extensive collection of early combines and harvesting equipment all in working condition, including a Ruston & Hornsby ploughing engine, Ruston & Proctor steam roller and a pristine 1915 Roby traction engine which we saw working and several of the party climbed up into the drivers platform. A collection of classic cars including a classic Model A Ford pickup, Austin Healy 3000, Triumph Stag and Austin A35.At the end of the visit Ron and Brian showed us a miniature model made by Father/Grandfather which showed an invention idea of future farming technology to come.

Our final visit of the day was to the pumping station and museum at Cross Guns Thorney Toll where we were given a brief history of the drainage of the fens. The Cross Guns was one of four new diesel pumping stations built between 1936 – 1942 as part of the Third Major Improvement to The North Level because of the poor state of the river Nene.This third scheme took place because of severe flood events from 1912 to1936.

Back on the coach we were transported to our very comfortable overnight accommodation at The Oliver Cromwell Hotel in March where we enjoyed an excellent evening dinner. Our surprise after dinner speaker turned out to be Gordon Easton who was hosting Thursday's visit. Gordon kept everyone very amused with his stories and rustic charm and we all eagerly looked forward to more of the same when we were due to meet Gordon at Engine Farm Museum the next day.

Many thanks to Tony and Neville for putting together and arranging a very enjoyable first day's event.

Robert Knapton

Day 2

On Thursday we headed to Gordon Easton's Collection at Engine Farm.

Gordon met us at the gate, greeting all the ladies with a kiss. He mounted his auctioneers rostrum to introduce us to his far ranging areas of expertise and eye for a bargain to fill gaps in his assembly of artifacts, mostly Fenland in origin. He started farming in 1958 with 22 acres paid for with the proceeds of eel catching. He began collecting in 1972.



Included in his sprawling barns he has a wartime Jeep, a Trabant, a dalek, several Massey Ferguson tractors and many implements, Caterpillar D2, Nuffields, gypsy living vans, a 52 rung ladder, a full barn of hand tools for eel catching, drainage works and every farming task you could think of, Showmans engine "Vulcan", two complete walls of cast-iron seats, collections of fur coats, teaspoons, horse brasses, a container full of music hall organs, traps, mincers, scales, dolls houses, model sailing boats, pistols, a replica 1950 shop and workers house, BMC and Leyland lorries, many horsedrawn implements including a sledge and a gentlemans carriage, farm carts fully restored, and painted by "Slosh" Gilbert who agreed to paint them because he sat next to Georges mother in Primary School.

There is more detail to be found on Google, and the Fens Vintage site.

We were conducted throughout by George, story teller and fountain of knowledge of his subject. He told us where, when, from whom he had bought his treasures. "How much" was met with a shrouded answer such as "a bit more than I meant to"! I pointed out he was under represented in Model Railways, to which he replied "Ah, I've kept them at home, mostly "0" guage". We realized how his 'Cock Sparra" nickname had come about - he is always chirpy!

We enjoyed a superb lunch in his barn and then took leave as duties of national importance called - The Referendum.

Bill Boutcher-West

Duchy Home Farm, 29th June 2016

It was so cold, wet and windy that only two aircraft flew into Greville Vernon's Bowldown Farm Strip nearby. We boarded the coach for Broadfield Farm where we were greeted by two friendly little dogs, one of which jumped on the coach to check us out. Over coffee David Wilson gave us a talk on the farm which has



increased in size since our last visit in 1997, to 1900 acres, all organic to soil association standards. Dairy, beef, sheep, pigs, arable, vegetables and woodland are managed by only six permanent staff. All the produce is sold to independent outlets – organic milk suppliers co-co-operative, Duchy originals, Fortnum and Masons, organic livestock co-operative, Royal Household are some. Rye is sold wholesale for organic bread making through the local Shipton Mill. Vegetables are sold off the farm using an honesty box. Their own farm shop has gone but they do supply others.

We walked past the dairy herd of Ayrshire cows to view a field of several different varieties of wheat. After discussing yields and

the diminishing gene pool of modern varieties, we followed a lovely path through the woodland to board a trailer back to the farm buildings. We then took cars into Tetbury for lunch. Afterwards we saw the veg at Close Farm. Prince Charles is keen to preserve the old varieties, so 1000 varieties of apple trees have been planted in wide rows with veg growing between them. Salad crops are grown in polythene tunnels. The manager is using the heat from decomposing woodchip to propagate tomato and pepper plants. After two years this is mixed with mushroom compost as an alternative to peat.

Prince Charles and David Wilson have a very straightforward view of modern agriculture. The path we are taking is not only bad for the environment but also for us. Our continuing quest for plentiful cheap food driven by the supermarkets and multinational food companies is depriving us of the gene pool which our forebears enjoyed. This is manifested by indifferent taste and food allergies.

David Wilson explained that Prince Charles loves to get stuck into farm activities. Once when hedge laying he lamented that he had to attend a meeting in some far away country. Why can't they come here and we can discuss it laying hedges!

Everyone left full of good cheer despite the dreadful weather. We were glad to get the car heaters on. Many thanks to David Wilson and Anthony Kedros for hosting this enjoyable event.

Rick Holt

Lincolnshire Field Products and Elsoms Seeds, 6th July 2016

Today we saw the life of a brassica plant from breeding and seed selection to planting and harvesting and finally packing and palletising for distribution to the supermarket shelves. More than 50 of us flew into Fenland in glorious weather, what a contrast to last week. We boarded the coach where MD of LFP Robin Hancox gave us a talk on their massive operation.

They grow potatoes, sugar beet, brassicas, AD crops and combinables on 16000 acres of grade 1 land. It is largely rented at between £250 and £450. They recently took on 3,500 acres from



a family who had invested the proceeds from land sold for housing. The staff of full time and agency, local and Eastern European, numbers 1000 at peak times and costs over half a million pounds per week.

First stop was a field being ploughed and planted. Care is taken not to go deeper than one foot and the timing is important to maintain moisture. Irrigation is used as a last resort. We were allowed to walk on and smell the beautiful Fenland soil, and talk to the men on the planting rig. Because they are on piece work slackers are not tolerated, they just don't get picked up in the morning. Next we saw broccoli being harvested by teams of seven



on self-steering tractors and rigs. The pickers can adjust the speed on the ground, flat out today on piece work. Two passes are made per crop. A third will be considered if there is a shortage. Harvesting is completed in the morning to reduce the field heat.

On the way to the pack house at Wool Hall Farm, Robin gave us a very frank talk about the demands of the supermarkets and his disappointment at Brexit. His overdraught for cash flow amounts to £15 million, sustainable during low interest rates. The retail price of broccoli is 47p down from 60p and hardly profitable. Sainsbury have been unreasonable this year so he has dropped them. The effect of Brexit on labour is yet to be seen but the weak pound will make machinery more expensive. We donned hairnets and coats to see the broccoli being wrapped. Just one poorly wrapped head which causes the leaves to go brown and will jeopardise the whole consignment.

Robin obviously enjoys his job despite all the risk and uncertainty involved. He joined us on the coach to Elsoms before departing for a transport awards dinner in London. He deserves to do well.

Katie from the airfield put on a magnificent buffet before Robin Woods of Elsoms gave us a talk. They breed and produce conventional and organic seed for the UK. They also treat competitor's seed and have 100 staff with a £20 million turnover. 36 are in R & D and 19 in sales and marketing. They have several overseas partners including Bejo of Holland.

Elsoms have an extensive site of warehouses, glasshouses and polythene tunnels which we viewed in three teams. We saw rocket being dried and lemon basil being grown for seed collection. The process of obtaining and the advantages of F1 hybrid selection were explained to us and we saw several people carefully transferring pollen in the glasshouses. Next we visited a lab where we were told about anther and tissue culture. This speeds up the process of obtaining plants from 10 years to one or two years. Finally we saw where they treat and turn the seed into pellets.

By now we were flagging after such a good lunch and all the information but time was pressing so it was back on the coach for Fresh Linc. The hauliers are based in Spalding but have several smaller depots around the country. Again in teams of three we saw the contents of lorries being unloaded into the cold stores. They run a one collection point, one delivery point system. We gathered in the operation room where the drivers are briefed before each delivery. On returning to the yard they are allocated a parking space and if necessary their presence announced by walkie-talkie.

After a vote of thanks it was back to the airfield for a welcome tea or coffee. This was a very well planned and enjoyable day. Thanks to everyone concerned, in particular Robert Laming for arranging it.

Rick Holt

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 ST MARCH 2016

		2016		2015
INCOME				
Subscription & Entrance Fees		10568		10193
Surplus on sale of stock of clothing		73		43
Interest earned		684		637
		11325		10873
DEDUCT EXPENDITURE				
Newsletters - cost of production	4604		4043	
Less - advertisements	-265		-375	
Net newsletter cost		4339		3668
Membership booklet		0		0
Committee expenses		1417		473
Contribution to AOPA		600		600
Contribution to GAAC		300		300
Contribution to GASCo		200		200
Contribution to LAA		200		200
Accountancy		300		300
AGM costs		1295		120
Website costs		354		503
Insurance		1240		1655
Sundry		67		383
Total expenditure		10312		8402
Surplus/(deficit) before taxation		1013		2471
Deduct Corporation Tax due on interest earned		-137		-127
Surplus/(deficit) after taxation		**876**		2343

THE FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION LIMITED BALANCE SHEET at 31st MARCH 2016

	2016	2015
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stocks of clothing	914	1205
Debtors	22	1288
Petty Cash	136	111
Cash at bank	37231	34176
	38303	36780
DEDUCT: CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year		
Creditors and Accruals	585	350
Corporation Tax	139	127
	724	477
TOTAL NET ASSETS	37579	36303
RESERVES		
Reserves	34981	32637
Fly-in Fund	1722	1323
Profit & Loss	876	2343
Accumulated surplus	**37579**	36303

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