Chairman' Ramblings

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Cover photograph by Roz Stephens taken at Haywarden whilst departing the airfield.

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A Cautionary Tale

I had a look back at my Ramblings from this time last year and I noticed that I was just about to set off from Cannes to Malta on a flying trip. That was the start of a nightmare for me, because on my return a week later, I had a call from the CAA asking me why I had been flying whilst my licence was temporarily suspended.

This all came about from an incident in September 2016 when I inadvertently infringed the very edge of the London TMA near Tunbridge Wells for about 15 seconds whilst on my way to La Rochelle. The CAA took a dim view of this and invited me to undertake an online test which, along with over 80% of all others taking it, I failed. This resulted in an invitation to Gatwick to discuss the events of the infringement, and that it would last about a couple of hours or so. When I told them I could tell them everything about it within two minutes and that I willingly held my hand up to admitting the infringement, little did I know where it was going to lead.

Only about 5 minutes of the interview was concerned with the Tunbridge Wells infringement, the remaining time was taken up with discussing events going back over a decade about which I had been given no warning that it was to be discussed and all of which had been satisfactorily investigated and dismissed at the time. At the end of the interview the two interviewers had decided, even before I arrived in the room, that I was to be suspended until I had done some refresher ground school and taken a navigation test with a CAA staff examiner, crucially stating that the suspension would not be legally enforceable until I had received written confirmation from the CAA. Consequently I flew into Andrewsfield for the ground school, but this did not go down well with my Gatwick interviewer who threw his toys right out of his pram and told me I now really was suspended "and that's official". However I figured that it still couldn't be official because I hadn't had the letter from the CAA (why they were so idle in sending the letter really beggars belief, but that's the CAA for you), and so off we went to Malta!

Over the next few weeks I had many communications with the senior investigating officer at the CAA who seemed a most reasonable man on the phone, but I was firmly warned by friends not to say anything without legal representation, so this is where our friendly FFA member and legal adviser, Tim Scorer, comes into the story. Over the next few weeks and months he negotiated with the CAA on my behalf, warning me that any resolution was likely to take many months, as the CAA never seem to be in any hurry to bring things to a conclusion.

Six months later the CAA made their decision - they were going to prosecute me for flying whilst provisionally suspended. I vehemently denied any wrong doing and pleaded not guilty at the plea hearing at Chelmsford Magistrates court in March, which culminated in a trial date of the second week of June. Meanwhile Tim had recommended a barrister, Stephen Spence, who specialises in aviation law to represent me in court. On the day of the trial Stephen asked my Gatwick interviewer, in the dock, just half a dozen questions relating to his authority to suspend me and the time frame getting an official letter to me. His reply was that he did not in fact have the authority to suspend me and the delay for getting the letter to me was because the Authority was 'quite busy' at that time. The Judge determined that there was therefore no case to answer and the case was summarily dismissed.

You will notice that I have up to now made no mention of my Navigation test with a CAA examiner. The CAA produces a document called CAP1404, which states that any navigation test MUST be undertaken within 90 days, or further action WILL be taken. Despite over 12 attempts to force the CAA to appoint an examiner to conduct my test, it took 246 days to get them to do so.

I have many questions for the CAA to answer and have asked them to urgently respond to me. I have had a reply from the CEO stating that he has passed my letter to the relevant department and that I shall hear 'in a short while'. I shall await their answers with interest!

Be warned - the CAA are taking infringements ever more seriously. My thanks to Tim and Stephen in bringing this case to a sensible conclusion - albeit at considerable cost. It

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would have been so much cheaper to have just pleaded guilty but I was not prepared to have my name besmirched by the CAA.

What topsy turvey weather we have had this year. The wettest spring I can ever remember resulted in the meeting point for the first flying event if the year to the Kelvedon Hatch Nuclear Bunker, scheduled to be using my strip for arrivals, having to be rearranged to fly in to North Weald due to severe water logging here. As I write this we here in the east have had no rain for over 35 days and at least another dry week is forecast. Nice as it is to have all this hot settled weather, it does nothing for the crops - particularly on the lighter soils.

Our sugar beet are now really suffering. Having been drilled at least 6 weeks behind the optimum time due to the wet, the headlands weren't really fit when the body of the field was drillable. Consequently the emergence of the headlands was very poor and some plants are still only on the 4 or 6 leaf stage and probably won't survive this dry spell. The knock on effect of all this lateness is that the crop will probably have to be left in the ground much later than ideal to allow it to bulk up, thus reducing the window of opportunity to get a good crop of wheat in behind it.

All this good weather allowed an excellent crop of quality hay to be made - despite my annual avowed intent to not get involved in making hay ever again! Now I have been told by some of my horsey customers that their animals have turned their respective noses up at my hay! I have no idea why they don't like it so I have had to send some samples off to be analysed to see why it is not palatable. Theories abound but really we have no idea at the moment.

A good spread of visits are in the pipeline for next year along with the foundation of an idea for a Study Tour based on an area in Switzerland. We are forever grateful to all members who continue to step up to the plate with ideas for events - the lifeblood of our organisation. Our grateful thanks to each and every one of them.

Will this weather last for the harvest which looks like it will start around here within a fortnight or so? It will probably break down eventually with massive thunderstorms which will flatten some of our precious crops - although we will be desperate to have some considerable rain between now and harvest. Let's hope that vital 6 week harvesting period has some stable weather. In the meanwhile at least this dry weather means that our lawns, ghastly though most of them look, mean that they hardly need mowing any more!

Martin Gosling

FFA Committee Meeting, 26th June 2018

All seven FFA committee members attended a committee meeting at our Chairman's house at Stones Farm in Essex on a perfect flying day.

Matters arising from the previous meeting's minutes:-

The new microphones and headsets have come into good use at several meetings, allowing our gradually ageing members to hear every word our host or tour guide says. One comment was that people get a bit strewn out at times, but they don't start chattering amongst themselves as they can still hear the speaker which is better for all.

The Indemnity Agreement offered free of charge to FFA members hasn't materialised yet. With the present arrangement, all applicants' details have to be forwarded to our tame solicitor, Tim Scorer, so that he can make sure that they are worded correctly for each Agreement. Unfortunately, Tim has been busy and not managed to complete these as yet. The Chairman is going to contact Tim to see if the Agreement can be completed by individuals themselves without bothering Tim. This might or might not carry as much weight in the case of an incident if it hasn't been verified by our solicitor.

Membership:- There were 409 members until the Treasurer announced his reconciliation with the subscription income, which resulted in 2 members being removed as they haven't responded to reminders. So the tally is 407 members.

Finances:- The Treasurer presented his budget for 2018 / 2019 which showed we are toddling along, fairly well in balance.

Events:- Neville Stops summarised the 2018 events so far and we discussed the suggestions for 2019. They will be available on the website as soon as the program is complete.

It is hoped that the London meeting in January / February will be at the Royal Mail. Other events on the list are Sandhurst, landing at Blackbushe, Tangmere Museum and a pepper grower in Essex, a weekend in France at Quiberon, a European Tour based in Geneva, a Yorkshire and Scottish Borders meeting, possibly combined with a visit to Bute in Scotland and a visit to Beeswax Farming - Dyson Farms - on 26th June 2019.

The 2018 AGM will be held by very kind permission of our relatively new member, Rebecca Rayner at her Glebe Farm near Huntingdon. After the AGM meeting, she will show us her interesting farm growing and processing gluten free oats. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10th October 2018. This will be the first AGM at a member's strip for many years.

SkyDemon:- Andrew Cragg has been in touch with one of the SkyDemon team who says he can display our members' strips in a better format on SkyDemon, showing more information like runway length etc. Andrew will make more enquiries of how this can be done.

General Data Protection Regulation:- You will be thoroughly fed up of everybody you deal with having to send out emails and letters regarding GDPR. This new regulation gives you more say in what happens to your data like email addresses and postal addresses. The FFA hold your information on a database so we have had to make alterations to the website making it secure and altering the wording of the application form etc. There will be a privacy statement published on the website and by careful study of the rules, it was decided that we don't have to ask everyone to opt-in to allow us to hold your data, as it is a necessity in order to send periodic newsletters and run the association to which you subscribe every year. At any point you can cancel your standing order and your data will then be removed from the database.

If you do not want us to hold your details, then please let me know on chix@farmline.com and I will delete your information. But of course, I will then be unable to send you newsletters and emails. There is an unsubscribe button on the emails if you want to be removed from that list.

Clothing:- As you will be aware, FFA clothing is available from Roz (chix@farmline.com). We will now be adding FFA bank details to the invoices if you wish to pay electronically.

New Applicant:- We had a discussion about an applicant who wanted to join who wasn't a farmer - he has a business in London - but his mother and father in law have a large farm in the country. He doesn't have a strip but intends making one on the farm where he lives with his wife. Unfortunately, he doesn't qualify as he isn't a farmer and he doesn't own a strip. If his wife was a farmer then she might qualify, but that is debatable if she doesn't

fly. The correct member in this situation would be the father in law as he is the landowner.

We get a few cases like this every year, which makes us wonder if we dare raise the issue of having an Associate Member category. The last time we suggested this at an AGM at Duxford, there was an overwhelming vote against the proposal. If anyone cares to drop us an email (chix@farmline.com) with your thoughts on whether we should allow Associate Members, it would be appreciated.

Finally, I offered the position of Newsletter Editor to anyone with spare time on the committee, as I have now done the job for 20 years. There was an eerie silence whilst I waited for a volunteer! If anyone out there would like to take over from me, please offer your services. I have had a certain sort of kick out of producing it, but I think it is time for someone else to take it up a gear and no doubt improve on it.

Paul Stephens (Secretary)

GASCo Council Meeting, 22nd March 2018

Held at the Iasham Gliding Centre.

The FFA had not provided a report or asked me to raise any issues with the Council.

I did however inform the Council of two letters that had appeared in the recent FFA Newsletter both of which had reflected favourably on GASCo. The first was from Mike Cuttell regarding a GASCo 'Safely Evening' at Kemble that he had attended. The second, from Roger Bell, was a detailed description of an 'Airspace Infringements Awareness Course', now run by GASCo on behalf of the CAA, that he had undertaken. The Council was delighted at the complementary tone of the two letters. With Roger's permission his letter was subsequently published in the 'GASCo Flight Safety' magazine.

Elderly Pilots

Apart from the usual reports from the Chief Executive and Council members the main part of the meeting was occupied by presentations on 'Elderly Pilots'. Firstly by Dr David J. Smith BSc PhD CEng FIEE FIQA HonFSaRS MIGasE of Technis followed by Professor Michael Bagshaw MB BCh MRCS LRCP FFOM DAvMed DFFP FRAeS.

Dr. Smith showed that the relationship of currency to both incident and fatality rate is highly significant at all ages and this relationship is not markedly different in respect of specifically fatal incidents. Also the effect of age is markedly different when comparing rotary and fixed wing flying**.**

The most significant factor which emerges so far is the level of currency relating to age. Whereas this applies to both fixed wing and rotary it does not explain the higher likelihood of fixed wing pilots being involved. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that there should be further debate as to the reasons for the above findings. Some possible factors for discussion have been raised, namely:

1 A more frequent (and examiner based) helicopter Licence Proficiency Check

2 A more risk averse culture due to the potentially more hazardous nature of rotary flight

3 Older rotary pilots are more likely to fly with a safety pilot

4 Rotary flight is more likely to be from a training based establishment whereas many fixed wing activities are farm strip based

5 Lower currency in some older pilots

6 High hours fixed wing pilots flying lower powered aircraft later in life

7 Note that fatal incidents only differ by virtue of factors additional to the incident cause, thus all incidents are potentially fatal

Irrespective of these findings, pilots should make appropriate allowance for any limiting factors such as endurance, response times etc. imposed by their age.

Professor Bagshaw agreed that there is obviously a correlation between age and medical incapacitation but this must be considered against the time an aging pilot actually spends in the air. Sudden death, without prior indication, is rare and it can be argued that the risk of it happening while flying over a populated area is acceptable. Recent inflight incapacitations of commercial pilots in the USA have all involved pilots younger than 60. Of more concern is the effect of aging on judgement and decision making, unfortunately there is no simple test to measure this.

The CAA and European medical regulators have tried applying the 1% rule to achieve a fatal accident rate of less than 1 in a million flying hours. Medical incapacitation should account for only 10% of this. Further research has indicates that a 2% rule would be more appropriate. Population based epidemiology is a poor indicator of individual risk and holders of Class I medicals appear to live longer than the general population. However using general population data will tend to produce an over-cautious outcome if used in aeromedical decision making. The exercise ECG is neither completely sensitive nor completely specific but it is considered a valid screening tool for pilots over 65. Many PPLs fly on a self-declaration of fitness to fly and Professor Bagshaw found no correlation with accident rates among this population.

In his opinion the imposition of an age limit for GA pilots would be arbitrary and take no account of individual variability. The biennial flight review with an instructor should identify any deterioration in cognitive performance and the onset of dementia. Possibility a case could be made for increasing the frequency of the flight review for those over 70.

An article 'GA Pilot Age Limit' by Professor Bagshaw has appeared in the Summer Edition of the GASCo magazine 'Flight Safety'.

Dr. Smith's report: Analysis of the effect of currency, age and experience on incident and fatality rates, general Aviation (fixed wing and rotary) Technis Report No T891is available from:

G.C.Hackemer@Gmail.com

Finally

A word for our Sponsors:-

Our Sponsors are you the pilots reading this. We ask, if you can, to help us in the production of this monthly summary of safety information and generally in our work of 'Saving Lives in UK General Aviation'. A subscription to the print magazine 'GASCo Flight Safety' would show you support and reading it might save you from an unpleasant experience in the future. It is only £16 p.a. by direct debit including the digital version and postage. Gift Aid is available.

Contact: Penny Gould at the GASCo office
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Gerald Hackemer

Programme 2018

24th January	RAF Museum, Hendon - Neville Stops
25th April	Secret Nuclear Bunker - Martin Gosling
6th to 14th May	European Tour - Peter Evans & Roger Bell & Roger Dadd, Chris Unitt and Mark Dravers
17th & 31st May	Airbus, Hawarden - Richard Howard
5th June	Membury Airstrip - David Hunt & John Milne
20th June	Re-visit John Innes, Norfolk - David Soul & Peter Gale
4th & 5th July	2nd Vintage Extravaganza - Tony Fisher
10th October	AGM, Glebe Farm - Neville Stops and Rebecca Rayner



Please note - if you happen to see anything in your area that would form the basis of an interesting FFA visit, then please contact the Events Secretary, Neville Stops (neville.stops@gmail.com) or Gordon Bellerby (gordon@jgbellerby.com).

Events such as these set above are arranged by FFA members on a voluntary basis. It is accepted by those who participate that nothing undertaken by the FFA collectively or members 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.

Pop-In Meetings

The Pop-In meetings have proved a popular idea, so more will be organized in the future. David Keene is happy to co-ordinate these in conjunction with our Events Secretary, Neville Stops.

The first two were held in April at Tollerton and Turweston. Around a dozen members dropped in for each meeting, which was a pleasant surprise as many member's strips were water logged and out of action and some were busy trying to catch up with spring work on the farm.

It is hoped that future meetings could be held on members' strips, the problem being an unknown number of visitors and hence catering could be difficult.

If you would like to offer your strip as a venue or want to suggest an airfield, please let David Keene or Neville Stops know.

FFA AGM, Glebe Farm, Kings Ripton, Huntingdon - 10th October 2018

Rebecca Rayner has invited the FFA to hold our AGM at her premises on Wednesday 10th October 2018.

More details will be sent to those filling in the reply slips when arrangements have been finalised. We will be landing at her 600 metre strip on the farm and this will be the first AGM to be held at a member's strip for a long, long time.

The AGM will start promptly at 11:00 am, followed by lunch, then a tour of the farm looking at the gluten free oat production and processing.

It will the turn of Martin Gosling (Chairman) and Paul Stephens (Secretary) to stand down. Both are willing to stand again.

If anyone would like to be put forward to stand for nomination to be a committee member, please fill in the reply slip. As mentioned elsewhere, the Secretary would be happy to let any volunteer take over the newsletter production. No doubt some new ideas and more enthusiasm will do nothing but improve the production.

Meetings for 2019 - not finalised as yet!

These are some provisional events for 2019, they are provisional and not all these ideas will be used in 2019:-

London - January / February - The Royal Mail

Sandhurst, landing at Blackbushe

Tangmere Museum & Pepper Grower, Essex

A weekend in France, possibly Quiberon, Brittany

Yorkshire & Scottish Borders & Isle of Bute

European Tour based in Geneva, Switzerland

Beeswax Farming - Dyson Farms, 26th June 2019

As always, please keep these ideas coming and if you have any ideas or contacts that could help the organisers of the above events, please contact Neville Stops, our Events Secretary. (neville.stops@gmail.com)

Kelvedon Hatch Nuclear Bunker, 25th April 2018

The first flying visit of the 2018 season was beset with difficulties because of the extremely wet spring - Martin's strip was waterlogged, and despite a week of dry settled weather in the week leading up to the event, it was never going to be in good enough condition to safely accept the planned 24 arrivals. So both Stapleford and North Weald were considered as alternatives, with North Weald being chosen because of its more friendly attitude.

The good weather leading up to the event had a twofold effect - some participants cancelled because the farming backlog allowed them to catch up with much delayed land work, and others who were thinking they might have to drive, ended up finding their strips were operational again. The original 56 participants reduced to 39 on the day for many reasons, but North Weald looked after us well, whether by plane or by car.

The Bunker is an extraordinary construction. Set on sloping farmland, there is nothing to suggest the Bunker even exists. Entry is by the front door of a perfectly ordinary looking bungalow standing on its own in some trees - but once inside one finds the bungalow is simply a façade for what lay beyond. Tunnelling a couple of hundred metres beyond the entrance and sloping slightly downwards, one reaches the main bunker which is on three floors over 100' deep and encased in 10 foot thick reinforced concrete.

It was built in great secrecy so that local villagers knew nothing of what was going on, but since the concrete was all laid on a continuous day and night 'pour' so as to avoid the concrete layering, and with a perimeter of bonfires to keep any frost at bay, it is hard to believe that they did not suspect something fishy was going on!

The Bunker is the biggest of a whole chain of them covering the country, with most of them either dismantled or abandoned, and would have been where the RAF tactical controller would have reacted to any nuclear attack, and also where the Regional Government HQ would have been set up and where. there could have been up to 600 personnel, including the Prime Minister, organising the survival of the civilian population in the aftermath of a nuclear war. There were some old propaganda film aimed at the public as to how they could survive an attack by leaning some doors up against the wall and covering them with mattresses and suitcases and dirt to make their very own hidey-holes! When one sees contemporary footage of the destruction after the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and knowing that a hydrogen bomb is 1000 times more powerful, I don't think an old door would have had much effect! I am sure the government knew this too, but was just trying to avoid public panic and give them something positive to aim at.

The whole building is a time warp with all of the original desks, equipment, machinery, charts and fittings, from the radio equipment to the air purification plant. The 'wands' we were given which fully explained every stage of the building and the purpose to which it was put, had a very good commentary which was originally recorded by the present owner of the Bunker on whose land it stands, Mr. Mike Parrish. There were no guides, with everyone able to take their own time to absorb the reality of 'what might have been', as they moved through the various sections of the bunker.

At the end of the tour we arrived at the cafe where Mike Parrish had laid on an excellent cold buffet, with copious quantities of food fit for farmers. Whilst waiting for the buffet to start, there was a real time power cut with the stand-by generator failing to auto-start, so we were bathed in just emergency lighting for 1/2 hour until it was all up and running again! This only added to the atmosphere of what it could easily have been like in the event of nuclear Armageddon.

We brought forward the bus departure time to help defeat the imminent arrival of poor weather for those going departing north, and everyone got home safely having had an interesting visit for the first event on the FFA calendar.

Martin Gosling

FFA European Tour, 6th to 14th May 2018

Belgium, 6th May 2018

On 6th May 2018 in blue skies the Flying Farmers flew into Ostend /Brugge airport for the start of the European Tour. There were 10 aircraft and 23 people on this part of the New Holland combine factory visit.

A short taxi ride to the Mercure Hotel and there was still time to have a look around this beautiful city with its' long beach and old architecture .In the evening we all met up at the hotel for a welcome meeting and a very nice buffet dinner. The next morning the coach arrived on time and we went to Zedelgem where the combine factory is based. The site stands on some 36ha and over half is covered.

We were shown a film of how the business started back in 1895 in Pennsylvania by Leon Claeys. In 1909 Mr. Claeys built the factory at Zedelgem Belgium where the first machines were produced. There were many mergers over the following years and it has a global presence in 120 counties and over 2000 dealers.

In 1952 the first self- propelled combine was made and this would have been a sack machine. This was a great step forward from the days of the thrashing tackle and the trailed combines.



Most of the parts for the machines are made on site with mega size presses and laser cutting equipment. Robots do a lot of the welding but of course a lot is also done by hand. As the combines move down the production line the parts are moving in from the right and left at just the right time as the machine is assembled.

The headers are made in Poland, the engines are built in France and all the various cabs are built in England.

The plant can turn out between 16 and 25 combines a day depending on demand. Eighty percent of the machines being produced have an order and twenty percent are made for stock. There are approximately 7200 parts in a combine.

Each combine is recorded and when we were there they had built in excess of 225,000 machines.

After our tour of the plant we were treated to a very nice buffet lunch, tea and coffee.

A group photo was taken with us all standing by one of the 30ft. tracked machines.

The bus then took us all back to the airport where we flew to St. Omer for the start of Part 2 of the European Tour.

Peter Evans

But first - a message from a guest on the tour - Ray Lee

Flying Farmers Belgium & France 2018

What to say about this terrific experience? Merveilleux! Accueillant et un festin d'apprentissage (for you Roger) !

With less than a week's notice I was asked by my son Winston if I would like to take his place for a few days on the first leg of this tour as he was unable due to business and family. Having flown in his aircraft as far as Switzerland and Germany it held no fear for me to take up the offer with Peter Gale pilot as we are well acquainted. I was sent the latest itinerary and it all looked very interesting but of course the cuisine and the WW2 memorial trip were especially alluring, but also the chance of flying into St Omer and Abbeville, two major Luftwaffe bases I had read so much about in my youth was a thrill not to be missed.

An easy early morning drive down from Blackpool on Saturday and the Sunday preparations complete from Edington field, Pete and I had a very pleasant flight over to Oostende where I was welcomed by the FFA community slowly assembling there and introduced as 'Winston's father'! What a welcoming lot! Already tales to tell about forgotten passports and officious customs officers we passed through with little trouble and took part in the 'taxi scramble' that became a bit of a feature of the tour! The hotel was comfortable and after settling in Pete and I took a very pleasant stroll through Oostende, the park and to the marina full of boats and a barquentine training ship the Mercator, fully restored. Back to the hotel our meal and service were excellent though Pete and I shared different tables as I had not altered my watch and he had to phone me to ask if I was dining! However this allowed me the opportunity to get acquainted with some of the FFA party and what pleasant company I enjoyed. Indeed Pete and I were most often in separate groups on these trips and the chance of listening to other experiences and life stories is one I will truly value. Many backgrounds from butchering to antiques and farming to grass cultivation a diverse and most interesting group as I would ever wish to meet.The trips organised and the various destinations I know will be well covered by others 'volunteered' to write individual accounts for this publication but as a non-flying, non-farming guest I have to say that each one was without exception, educational and enjoyable in equal measure from the tired legs at the end of the New Holland factory tour in Oostende to the tranquil boat trip at the Marsh House at St Omer.



However of particular interest were the two WW2 museums at La Coupole and the story of the closing of the Falaise pocket at Montormel. The latter being particularly poignant for me as in the 1970s I employed a Polish baker who had fought there as a Sherman tank commander and had told me of his experiences in detail and that he was the first Polish soldier to shake the hand of a Canadian serviceman on closing the pocket. I was honoured to be there to pay my homage to this humble man who in fighting for freedom had lost his life chances leaving Poznan University studying law to fight the Nazis. Thursday came too quickly for me to depart but after a sumptuous meal the night before at La Renaissance hotel where I broke a tooth from my plate with the delicious and constant flow of crusty French rolls, I was ready for my return and for Winston to be able to take his place amongst friends old and new.I must thank in particular Neville and Roger for their hard work and welcoming company, I appreciate the work that goes into organising events but this would be hard to surpass in terms of quality and quantity of the trips and accommodation provided. Of course were it not for the generosity of my son nor the patience of Peter Gale in the piloting and planning of our routes I would not have had the trip. To you all I thank you most sincerely for the laughter, banter, camaraderie and shared experience which have made such unforgettable memories for me. I hope we will all meet again.

Ray Lee

La Coupole, 8th May 2018

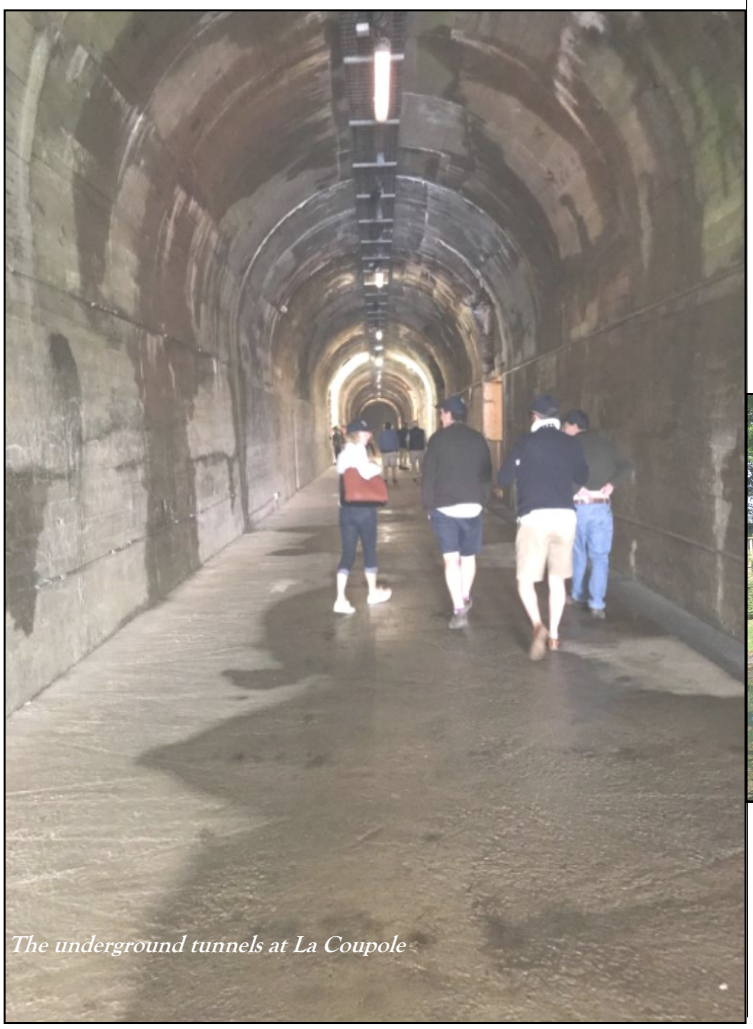
On your correspondent's first ever morning with a Flying Farmers event, I was gently persuaded by Roger Bell that I would love to write a review of La Coupole.

As it happens it was a fantastic museum, not only was it thought provoking but also made us realise what a sanitized version of history we are taught in the UK. The sickening use of



deported concentration camp prisoners and soldiers used for labour by the Nazis together with the appalling treatment of the local population was graphically but movingly shown in numerous films and photos taken during and after the liberation of Europe.

La Coupole was an underground city built by the Nazis in 1944 to conceal the preparatory work for Hitler's secret weapon, the V2 rocket, which could have destroyed England. The massive concrete dome and associated service tunnels which form La Coupole were worth the visit alone but the museum was excellent with a mixture of displays covering the battlefields of France during the First World War and then the Invasion of France during WW2, the occupation of Nord and Pas de Calais together with the development of the Nazi "wonder weapons"



The underground tunnels at La Coupole

I was particularly intrigued by the film and exhibits highlighting the career of the German rocket scientist and aerospace engineer Wernher Von Braun, who had been a dedicated Nazi party member and also joined the SS. He was the leading figure in the development of rocket technology in Germany before and during the war. We watched a fascinating video about the development of the V2 at Peenemunde and how the Nazis needed to move underground to conceal their rocket programme. This same Wernher Von Braun was secretly moved to the USA after the war and was rehabilitated by their military assisted with a convenient bout of amnesia concerning his use of slave labour. He went onto become the father of rocket technology and space science in the US, his group of scientists were assimilated into NASA and he went on to receive the National Medal of Science.

At the end of one particularly harrowing film we were left with the thought "who can say what they endured"? This museum is a must for us all in order that we might learn from the mistakes of the past.

Gillian Oliver

P.S. Alf, Gill, Phil and Rose would like to thank all the organisers for a wonderful trip and to the rest of the party for making us first timers so welcome.

Maison du Marais, 8th May 2018

After the sobering visit to la Coupole it was something of a relief to be deposited outside a rather large and very modern museum. And once inside the mystery was: what is this place? A quick glance around the large atrium and reception area didn't reveal much. Something about rural life; bygone artefacts, perhaps?

On entering the inner sanctum, a rather dark and muted exhibition area, the answer very gradually became apparent. The museum consisted, for the most part, of exhibits explaining and celebrating the Audomarois Marais, a peaty wetland or marsh. On view were local shallow drafted boats; tools; fish in tanks (some so still one imagined them dead or stuffed); thatching reed; and boards proclaiming facts:

The Marais covered 3,731 ha and 13,200 plots of land and water, including 170 km navigable waterways and 560 km of ditches. This is remarkable as the area was originally under sea water until partially drained by monks in the 7th century. It is still an area known for its fertility and market garden produce.

The Marais is also home to 1,517 species of flora and fauna.

Most of our group, suitable apparelled in dayglow life jackets, boarded large, local, wooden flat-bottomed river barges (*bacove*) to



experience the waterways at first-hand. The boats were electrically propelled and silent, making the trip peaceful and unintrusive.

Afterwards, it was all aboard the coach to the airfield to fly to the next stop: Abbeville.

Anthony Kedros

1,000 Cow Milking Unit, 9th May 2018

On another gloriously sunny morning we boarded the coach at 8am from our hotel in the centre of Abbeville for a visit to to a huge dairy farm complex at the side of Abbeville airfield runway.

Roger had not had the go ahead for the visit until the very last minute. It soon became apparent why when we were greeted by the general manager Michel Welter. He explained of all the problems they had had with locals and animal rights groups over the last years. It wasn't until Roger assured him of our good intentions and our interest being purely from a farming point of view that he relented.

At one stage they had had 300 hundred police guarding the premises after numerous break ins and vandalism. To date they had been to court fourteen times fighting there cause.

The whole complex was surrounded by chain link fencing and the road running up to it was kept in a very bad state of repair on purpose to deter unwelcome visitors.

The complex consisted of several low open sided buildings



housing the cows in cubicles. The cubicles being of the very latest design offering the cows the greatest comfort.

Michel explained to us that they milked almost continuously with three teams of three men through a fifty place carousel parlour. One man bringing the cows to the parlour, another washing, drying and inspecting the teats and the third putting the machines on.

The cows are mostly Holstein Friesian but they had started a program of crossing them with Swedish Reds to alleviate foot and calving problems and a few with Chanel Island breeds for butterfat and protein content.

They were fed on 80% maize silage to 20% grass silage all grown on the farm's 1000 hectares, bought in concentrates being added to the mixture.

They had a 385 day calving cycle giving a 28lt a day yield average. At the moment they are producing 24000 lts per day off 870cows.

All the milk goes daily in one large tanker to a dairy in Belgium where they receive 31 cents per lt, as no French Dairy will touch it. Such is the animosity towards them in France

This did not seem to faze Michel one bit. He said it only took two hours, probably a much shorter time than the average milk tanker is on the road in the UK.

Half an hour had been allotted for the visit as we all had to fly on to Argentan to be at the next venue for 12:00pm and already well over an hour had gone by in no time at all.

Roger had to crack the whip to round everyone up for him to give a vote of thanks to Michel. The visit was so interesting and Michel being so easy to listen to meant most would have liked to have stayed longer.

Gordon Bellerby

Safron de Normandie, 9th May 2018

Welcomed by Monsieur Pascale, this was the first try-out of the FFA headsets and radio mike, which proved a great success. Our gesticulating host could be seen and heard from a distance, his broken English plumbed direct to the ear.

There are two autumn crocus, one is toxic and the other Crocus Sativus is the producer of Safron. The finished product sells for £35 per gram, and is the most valuable of spices. Much Safron was grown in Safron Walden in the UK but now only one farm remains. It is also grown extensively on the middle east, and by 70 small growers in Normandie.

Planted by hand in ridges in early August it needs rain and then grows and the flowers are harvested in early October, picked by hand the whole flower is then separated into its components on the kitchen table. The saffron is dried for 24 hours and held in development for a month to cure before it is ready for packaging, sale or infusion.

Monsieur Pascale was formerly a lawyer, and started in 2011. The first year he planted 100,000 bulbs, and then again the next two years. He now has nearly 3 million bulbs, but only those greater than 9cms circumference produce a viable flower. On 1000m2 after 4 years he should get 200 to 400 grams of product. His biggest pest is mice who eat the bulbs, so he encourages owls and cats. He employs casual labour for planting and harvest and he and his wife produce Safron and Safron flavoured products such as honey locally sourced. He only buys in salt and mustard (and the original bulbs).

He also has 5000m2 of wild organic garlic in a wood, the leaves picked by hand and used in salads or dried and used as a powder.

We tried out some of his products in a tasting, including a cider, and most visitors made purchases. I gave the vote of thanks and presented him and Nicole, his wife, with an increasingly rare FFA clock. They made us all very welcome and fielded a barrage of probing questions throughout our visit.

Bill Boutcher-West



Trip to The Bailiwick of Guernsey, 11th to14th May

What is a Bailiwick, you may well ask? In the case of Guernsey, it embraces the main Island plus Alderney, Sark, Herm and Jethou (the latter privately tenanted).

It was during the previous year's tour of Poland that Chris and Pauline, Mary and I suggested to Martin and Annette, Neville and a few others that we might make our Islands a destination



or, at least, part of the 2018 Study Tour. That proposal was well received, and so the planning began upon our return.

Hotels, restaurants, ferries, museums, German fortifications, the only "proper" railway in the Channel Islands (in Alderney) and coaches were all fairly straightforward. Guernsey Airport was a different kettle of fish altogether, with requirements for Risk Assessments, Insurance, a detailed brief, six yellow jackets for every aircraft...you get the drift!

By using the local FBO and promising that the visit was not an "organised event", a solution was found. The political fall-out of threatening to route overhead to Quiberon may have had something to do with it.

Thus it was that, on the morning of 11 May, the participants in the earlier part of the 2018 Study Tour, and others, brought Roger Bell to Guernsey to recuperate from a mammoth single-handed tour de force in organising the first part of the event through Belgium and France. I could only hope that we would be able to help him recuperate in the best traditions of Island hospitality...

Arrivals were hosted first of all by the Crew of Channel Islands Air Search, for which Chris and I flew as volunteer pilots for many years and sometimes in unspeakable weather. Think of a "flying lifeboat" and you will get the idea. With huge tides, changeable weather and far too many rocks, a rapid response 24/7 SAR operation is welcomed by mariners and airmen, not a few of whom are here today because of ..., but that is another story altogether.

After check-in at the Cobo Bay Hotel (the name speaks for itself), and a very pleasant light lunch, people departed variously for the town of St Peter Port or the Guernsey Occupation Museum and a tour of some of the German bunkers at Fort Houmet on the West Coast, courtesy of Festung Guernsey, a local volunteer group which is pre-eminent in bringing to life the fortifications which Hitler imposed on the previous generation of Islanders as part of his Atlantic Wall from Norway to Spain (see Richard Butler's report).

With a Bailiwick tour in mind, the day ended with a ferry to the Island of Herm for dinner (see Ray Friedlander's report). Herm is a peaceful destination – the White House Hotel (the only one) has won many accolades, and our first evening of the three was extremely convivial.

Saturday (Day Two of the three) was very much Chris's event, as he lived in Alderney for many years, and has the unique distinction of being the only licenced commercial pilot and train driver of whom we know. I will not dwell on Alderney, as Wendy Burton could cover it far better than I.

On return to Guernsey, everyone repaired to the Marina Restaurant at Beaucette Marina, in the north of the Island. Val Scowen and her Chef husband did us very proud, not least because, in a previous life for both of them, the Chef was a pupil in Mary's class! I think he was trying to make a point to the former "Miss Ferbrache", in which case he succeeded admirably.

Day Three, Sunday, involved a longer ferry trip to Sark. Bless them, the ladies of Sark opened the Island Hall to us and provided a potential refuge (in the event, not required) in case of bad weather.

We had planned three events for the afternoon: firstly, a trip with George Guille in his small boat around the coast of Sark, looking at marine life, sea-birds, caves and other points of interest or, secondly, a carriage ride with Phillip Peree and his team (as you may know, there are no cars on Sark, so it was this or a tractor, and to we of the FFA, this seemed like 'taking coals to Newcastle'!). In the event, George had yet to put his boat down, but he was forgiven.

The third event was a tour of the manorial home of the Seigneur (the feudal Lord of Sark). Major Christopher Beaumont had succeeded his father as Seigneur in August 2017, and he came to our lunch at the Island Hall to talk to everyone about his obviously beloved Island. His was a new venture in opening his home to the public - previously, one could tour the gardens but not the house, save in the odd case, including myself when, as a lawyer for a prospective purchaser of one of the forty freeholds (Tenements) of Sark, one went to negotiate the feudal dues, set at 13% of the price of the property, a practice now dispensed with.

Christopher intrigued our members by showing them the bedroom recently used by Prince Charles on a low-key visit to the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey. Apparently, no agreement could be reached upon which of the "big Islands" he would stay on and so, like his mother and grandmother before him, he opted for this small but treasured Island.

Sunday evening was spent at the Hotel, where a carvery had been laid on, with a selection of local seafood for starters and a series of roasted meats to follow. The fact that we had twisted the arm of the local cider-maker and the local brewer to donate sufficient of their products to get us off to a good start made for a warm and friendly conclusion to the latter end of the 2018 Study Tour, by which time I am pleased to report that Roger Bell happily showed signs of a complete recovery!

Between the three of us, Mark Dravers (oyster farmer), Chris Unitt and myself, we were able to share the tasks of organising the event. We think it went well, we hope it went well and we hope to see some or all of you back in our Bailiwick 'ere long.

À la prochaine.

Roger Dadd

Visit to the German Occupation Museum

Probably the most fascinating non-farming visit made this year was to the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey on the Friday afternoon. Situated close to the south coast of the island, the Museum is a non-profit making venture of a Guernseyman

who was born on the island towards the end of the war. He was there to meet us and to explain aspects of the museum and surrounding area. The island was occupied for 5 years from June 1940 to May 1945 and, whilst most of the school children and about half the adult population had been evacuated, those remaining suffered severe privations from 30th June when the first Germans arrived by air. Prior to that, 34 civilians had been killed when the Germans bombed the harbour on the 28th. Exhibits near the entrance give a taste of the evacuation.

From the entrance the visitor progresses through a series of rooms where displays of a vast number of items show both sides of the occupation, from instruments used by the German military band to crystal sets constructed by civilians whose radio sets had been confiscated. At the height of the occupation over 12000 troops, including 2000 Luftwaffe were stationed in Guernsey and, despite these numbers, many islanders were defiant and carried out acts of sabotage. Anyone caught suffered terribly in prisons on the mainland. Some did not return. In September 1942 all non-Guernsey born islanders were deported to the continent and interned in camps on Hitler's orders; they, too, suffered badly.

The museum is very even-handed in providing details of both the lives of the German occupying forces and that of the civilian population. A common thread was nutrition and transport and towards the end starvation was a real threat. The Germans had used horses for transport and had imported 700 but half of these had been eaten by the liberation leaving only bicycles for the population as petrol was severely rationed. A Red Cross ship made several visits carrying food parcels (one parcel per family per week) and this saved the population from starving in the latter days of the war following the fall of France in June 1944, when the massive re-supply chain to the Germans was cut.

Apart from a shortage of food, there was also a lack of information. Crystal sets provided news from Britain and, initially, newspapers were allowed. Then they were banned but Charles Machon started a secret press which provided the islanders with much sought after information about how the war was progressing outside.

This is a very well laid out museum which has gathered exhibits and artefacts over many years - far more than can be mentioned here. It's well worth a visit if you are on the island!

Richard Butler

Evening Meal on Herm, 11th May 2018

After our first afternoon in Guerney either at the Wartime museum or strolling around St. Peter Port we all boarded the bus again at the hotel to pick up the ferry boat from the harbour for the 20 minute crossing to the island of Herm which is, I believe, the closest island of any size to Guernsey and barely inhabited.

It had started to rain by late afternoon but, fortunately, had ceased by the time we got on the boat at 7p.m. We were greeted at the other end by a fine smart young man in some kind of uniform and escorted the 25 yards or so to the Ship Inn where we were to have our evening meal. More a restaurant than a pub they provided us with a three (or was it four) course meal according to our previously made choices. So a jolly good time was had by all, helped, of course, by the wine.

By the end of the meal it was truly dark outside with not much moon. This made the journey to the boat interesting since it was patently no longer there, where we had disembarked, at the jetty near the restaurant. Momentary panic then, one by one and with the light of our mobile phones, we picked our way over stony ground to some lights in the distance. These turned out to be on our boat which had moored several hundred yards away. Must have been the tide.

Finally a head count: all present and correct, so we chugged our way back across the water to connect with our coach back to the hotel.

Sadly we had been unable to see much of Herm but we had had a good time and an interesting meal.

Ray Friedlander

Alderney, 12th May 2018

40 members of the group flew in 16 aircraft to Alderney. The good weather the group had enjoyed so far continued and we were able to enjoy this beautiful island at its best.

The airport groundcrew had prepared an area for parking and we were soon directed to buses which took us to see the Gannet colony at the Giffoine passing the Free Range Pigs on the way. The group were then able to wander down the cobbled Victoria Street to shop or stop for a coffee and soak up the atmosphere of peace and calm that is Alderney. A further walk downhill to the



Braye Beach Hotel where the manager, Richard had organised lunch on the sunny terrace overlooking Braye Beach.

After lunch we travelled on the train - the only train on the channel islands. The carriages are from the London underground Northern Line! We were then bussed back to the airport with the drivers giving a short commentary of landmarks on the way.

There is so much history on Alderney, that a short day visit only gives a taste so those of us who know the island hope that some of you will fly in again and spend more time and maybe visit the museum walk on the cliff paths, hire an electric bike or stop for a lobster or crab lunch!

There are many places to stay and for light aircraft and passengers, it is so easy to walk into town or take a taxi. The locals are all very helpful with information and suggestions of what to do on the island.

Thank you Chris for arranging the day and special thanks to Mark , my pilot for the day. I enjoyed every minute of the short flights. Thanks also to Roger Dadd for the coordination of the Channel Islands tour.

Wendy Burton

Summaries from other participants

This is Rob Keene's experience

Chris and I really enjoyed our first Flying Farmers tour, and meeting everyone.

We set off from the south of France in our Quik R flexwing aiming to meet everyone at St Omer on the Monday night. (Photos from We Transfer)

Unfortunately, our radiator sprung a serious leak and purged itself of all the coolant, somewhere near Rennes. This required a



quick forced landing into a field before the motor cooked itself.

The very helpful dairy farmer kindly lent us his car and we drove into Rennes to a breakers yard where after 2 hours we found a radiator which had the same hose connections as my microlight.

On return to the farm the farmer found some oak planks and set about with his chainsaw making a bracket for this new large radiator.

Another 2 hours and we were ready to fly, and the temporary



repair worked flawlessly for the next week of flying!

We thoroughly enjoyed flying around the Channel Islands, which are so beautiful from the air, but crossing the coast of the Isle of Wight was equally spectacular and relieving knowing that the only water left to cross was the Solent, between us and our farm near Gloucester.

Thanks to everyone who put so much into making this tour happen.

Rob Keene

Peter Mailer's experience - My trip with the Flying Farmers...by car

It wasn't supposed to be like this. I was left with no choice. The light aircraft I ordered some 20 months ago failed to materialise so after the trip was over, I drove back up to Abbeville and expecting to drive onto Belgium in anticipation of flying a similar plane to at least get my 5 hours familiarisation training, but neither was forthcoming, so more disappointment. Filip Lambert is now at least going to deliver the plane so I achieved something.

The driving in France is a pleasure. Fantastic autoroutes, pot hole free rural roads, beautiful laburnum in full flower. I enjoyed the experience.

The Flying Farmers trips are always interesting, the members so friendly and always willing to help one another on flight plans or whatever. I had a very enjoyable time. I was happy to help where I could and very grateful to tag along. I would like to thank Anthony Kedros for the flight to Guernsey and back to Cherbourg and Roger Bell for encouraging me to go.

Peter Mailer

A note from Roger Bell to Peter

I am very grateful to you for carrying David Keene everywhere. It makes a huge difference to all of us if he doesn't have to carried up the steep staircase on to a coach by four old men all of whom have knackered backs. You are a hero for doing that so uncomplainingly.

Your contribution to the party was well received by all members and we all felt for you not being able to fly the Belgian and French bits.

This is Tony Fisher's summary of his journey.

Robert Laming, Annette and myself took off from Fenland in C172 G-FNLD on May 6th, on a beautiful morning routing Southend - Dover - Ostend reaching the FIR boundary in 1hr 15m. and into the Ostend special rules zone with a very helpful controller allowing a straight in approach onto the huge runway. After customs and immigration it was then onto the hotel.

A splendid tour of New Holland next day then back to the big airport hassle, having filed a flight plan to St. Omer only to be told when about to start that it was not filed and Robert having to go back to control to readjust a minor amendment which could have been done over the radio.

An hour lost and on to St. Omer and overnight in town . Next day was a visit to Cupola - a vast underground complex built by slave labour for V1 rocket production, only to be bombed extensively by the Allies, but not totally destroyed.

We were conveyed back to the airfield in a sumptuous £400,000 bus where in WW1, the RFC were based for four years with 2 VCs won and Hugh Trenchard there also.

Off to Abbeville next. An uneventful flight over some interesting countryside only briefly chatting to Lille information. A fascinating visit to the controversial 1000 cow dairy farm, then in the evening off again to one of Roger's restaurant gastronomic.

Next day a splendid flight to Argentan, passing over the magnificent meandering River Seine and slipping past the penitentiary into the somewhat unkempt grass airfield of Argentan. Two fascinating visits that day, one being the Montmorel Memorial depicting the Battle of Falaise. More gastronomic eating later.

Next day a lovely flight north over the magnifique Normandy countryside passing by St. Lo and then up to Cherbourg's enormous runway with more than helpful ATC. They haven't forgotten!

Lovely hotel in town and more Roger Bell gastronomic later and they all know him in town! Museum de la Mer visit and the nuclear submarine. Very interesting.

Next day splendid weather again, off to Guernsey ,chatting with a very courteous Jersey controller and handing us over to Guernsey approach with a very turbulent final into Guernsey.

Good pickup there and off to the hotel in the Vintage bus for 3 nights with one day flying visit over to Alderney, all in splendid weather.

The return to the UK was smooth, clear and uneventful until reaching Hampshire, when it started to rock and roll until we cleared the Chiltern Hills heading north to Fenland, some 10 minutes short of 3 hrs.

Oddly enough we encountered headwinds all of the 9 hours flying time but blessed with superb clear weather every day.

Thanks very much to all the organisers - Neville Stops, Roger Bell, Roger Dadd and Mark Dravers for a splendid tour.

Tony Fisher



Hawarden - 17th May - A day of comparison!

The wonderfully successful and well supported Flying Farmers' fly-out visits has, over the years, allowed us to see and appreciate many interesting venues, mostly, I have to say, with the emphasis on the 'Farmers' part of our Association name.

In May this year, Richard Howard very successfully organised a fly-out event that clearly put the emphasis on 'Flying', with two consecutive visits to the huge Airbus UK manufacturing plant at Broughton, near Chester in North Wales. Originally, part of the British Aerospace group, who were early partners in the European Airbus programme, which brought about the A-300 Airbus in 1972, the factory, famed for its un-rivalled wing design and manufacturing skills, is now wholly owned by Airbus, having been sold off by BAe some years ago.

Places on the trip were limited and soon filled up, a point of note being that the visit planning had begun almost 18 months earlier. Such is the popularity of the tour and the need for two separate fly-outs was necessary because of the limited number of visitor spaces on the weekly guided tours around the plant and security clearances needed to be in place well ahead of time, requiring passport or photo driving licence information - no ID clearance - no visit ! A definite occasion to use the phrase "he who hesitates is lost" !

The first trip was Thursday 17th May, with the second being 2 weeks later, on 31st May. Hawarden airport is, surprisingly, busy place with a healthy array of GA and flight training but the airport is essentially there for to support the production of Airbus airliners. As a result, they do not tolerate anything that may hold-up their busy flight schedule of Beluga transporter aircraft, which carry the completed wings to the final assembly plants in France and Germany. Some of us on the 15th had decided to avoid the risk of being late arriving on the morning of the tour and fly there the evening before, as Airbus were very strict on arrival timing to meet the tour, although strong winds in the south-east prevented one or two making it that evening. Even then, one or two members were required to hold before entering the circuit, to allow a Beluga to depart. A very pleasant and un-hurried evening ensued at a nearby hotel.

Next morning our minibus took us back to Hawarden to meet the rest of our friends, who had flown in from a very early start at home. We were met by Shaun Maloney, Airbus UK's very friendly and genial tour host who's background as former Security Manager for Airbus brought a wealth of knowledge and insight. The tour was slightly delayed whilst a member of the Welsh assembly was doted upon, for a noteworthy breaking-ground ceremony on new building project that will further increase the plant's output. Once the highly polished spades were put away, it was time for us to be welcomed formally and shown an interesting presentation outlining the many highlights of the Broughton site over the years and where it fits into the complex world of Airbus manufacturing.

The site at Broughton is divided east and west, with the runway separating the locations. Eastern side is dedicated to wings for narrow-body Airbus and the Beluga loading facility, the entire western location is for A380 wing production line, which gives convenient access to the River Dee. Our tour was through this enormous building, where we were able to see, at very close quarters, the entire production process from aluminium planking being milled down to size and specification, construction of the wing from the finished planks, through to final assembly with all of the control surfaces and accessories. Standing alongside the wing-root of a newly completed wing assembly brought home just how big passenger liners have become - an awesome spectacle.

Most of us know exactly what an Airbus wing looks like, from



the aspect of looking out of the cabin window as we fly away on holiday, but seeing the complexity of how they are constructed and assembled was a true spectacle. The Broughton site makes the wings for the entire Airbus family and, such is the demand for new Airbus airliners that they are currently turning out 40 pairs of wings a month, which will increase to a staggering 60 pairs per month by next year. Wing sets for the narrow-body Airbus models are shipped in pairs to the final assembly plants at Hamburg and Toulouse, but the new wide body A350 wing is so big it must be transported singly, meaning the 5 strong Beluga Super Transporter fleet are in and out of Hawarden numerous times each day, every day! Next year Airbus will introduce an even bigger Beluga-XL into service, which will be able to accommodate a pair of A350 wings. The massive wings for the double-deck A380 are so vast they cannot be transported by air, needing a combination of land and sea for a complex, but well tuned, operation. The enormous set of wings are taken on trailers to a purpose built loading dock on the River Dee, close to the factory, loaded on a barge to Mostyn where they are transferred to a roll-on roll-off ferry for shipment to Pauillac, the closest port to Toulouse. Here they transfer to a convoy, consisting of six sets of massive truck-trailer combinations to travel the final 240km, by night in two stages.

Moving on from Broughton, our mini-buses then took us the short journey and a step back in time, to the equally unique Anderton boatlift near Northwich.

The Anderton Basin, excavated to combine the River Weaver Navigation and the Trent and Mersey Canal was a major interchange for trans-shipping goods in both directions, with extensive warehousing. Trans-shipment was time-consuming and expensive, and the Trustees of the Weaver Navigation decided a link between the waterways was needed, to allow boats to pass directly from one to the other. Consideration for a flight of locks was discarded, mainly due to lack of a space and the loss of water that would have resulted from using them, so in 1870 a boatlift was proposed.

The history behind this and the lift's operations over the years is a fascinating story, however, our tour guide was not only knowledgeable he also had a wonderful gift of hypnotism! The long-winded story-telling denied anyone an opportunity to ask questions, instead we were 'treated' to a monotonous monologue of its entire history.

The fascinating structure operated right up to the early 1980s, the majority of traffic being by now leisure oriented, although by 1983 during regular maintenance, extensive corrosion was found in the superstructure and it was declared structurally unsound and closed. The early 1990s brought a plan to restore this unique artefact, thus, a partnership between the Waterways Trust, the Inland Waterways Association, the Anderton Boat Lift Trust, the Friends of Anderton Boat Lift, the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs, British Waterways and the Trent and Mersey Canal Society was created. With some funding assistance from the National Lottery Heritage foundation, the goal to raise the £7m funds needed to complete the project was achieved in 2002.

Suitably refreshed, from lunch at the boat-lift's cafeteria and our own descent on the lift, it was time to return to Hawarden, saddle up and head off.....without delaying any Airbus Beluga traffic, of course.

Graham Robson

Visit to Ramsbury Estate, Wiltshire, 5th June 2018

Organised by David Hunt and John Milne of the FFA

The day started with low cloud and drizzle which understandably meant that most people elected to drive rather than fly, with only 3 intrepid aviators arriving by air!



This photograph shows the lower 2/3 of Membury Mast ...with the remainder lost in the clouds!

On arrival at Membury we were given a most interesting talk by Steve Jones about his company Southern Sailplanes. It took some time but we also got him to divulge that he is a double World Gliding Champion in 2001 and 2014, adding to many other awards won by this outstanding gliding family.

From Membury we drove the short hop to Ramsbury Estate Brewery, were we met with the Estates Manager, Alistair Ewing.

Ramsbury Estate is owned by the Persson family from Sweden. Their core business is H&M, the renowned worldwide clothes store.

Ramsbury Estate amounts to 3500 acres and was purchased in 1997. Since then additional acquisitions including the Littlecote



The woodchip boiler which provided heat for the brewery and distillery

Estate, Hungerford Park Estate, Linkenholt Estate and more recently the Savernake (Crown) Estate has brought the total acreage up to 19000 acres.

The Estate has approximately 150 houses, lets redundant farm buildings to approximately 40 local businesses and also owns The Bell in Ramsbury.

Alistair started by giving us an overview of the woodchip boiler which provides all of the heat for the brewery and distillery. The boiler is fuelled from timber produced on the Estate, using approximately 600m3 of Roundwood per year.

The brewery was started in 2004 and quickly out-grew the original building, resulting in the new facility we viewed on our visit.

The brewery uses barley grown on the Estate, and produces a range of superb beers. We learnt that stronger beer has a longer shelf life than weak beer, hence the reason why India Pale Ale, was traditional a strong beer so that it travelled well when being shipped overseas!

The distillery was added in 2015 and produces both Vodka and Gin. Wheat grown on the Estate is used in this process. The product is bottled and labelled on site using specifically designed



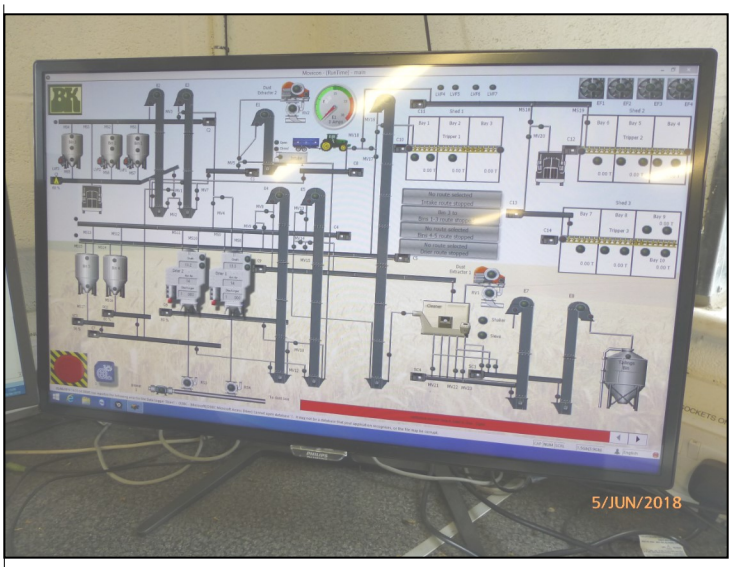
The Stills!!

bottles which add to the "brand".

A very good lunch followed the tour, where we all got the opportunity to try the products from the brewery and to purchase other Estate products such as Rape seed oil and smoked game and fish from the Estate Smokehouse.

The afternoon saw us embarking on a tour of the farm and woodland, led by Farm Manager Duncan Lee and Woodland Manager, David Hunt

The Farm is managed in house with approximately 7000 acres in hand with a number of other farm contracting operations being undertaken by the team. Most of the



Screen shot of the drier complex control panel.

farm is arable, mostly winter cropping with Wheat, Rye, OSR and Barley. The Estate also has a small Beef herd.

All of the machinery is up to date and is owned by the Estate. Recent investment includes a new state of the art drier and storage system. This was built in 2015 and can dry 150t per hour.

The woodland holding amounts to approximately 2200 acres and comprises around 70% mixed broadleaves and 30% commercial conifer.

The woodland is managed commercially where possible, producing biomass for the boiler, with higher grades of timber being sold to generate additional income. The woodlands generally produce around 1500 m3 of timber per year.

David highlighted the ever increasing problems with pests and diseases, particularly Ash dieback (Chalara).

This summer has seen dramatic changes in the affect that this disease is having and we are likely to see major changes in our landscape as more trees have to be felled.

The site visited in Henswood is a particularly valuable site for Dormice and Willow Tit, with the Dormouse being a European



Protected Species. Considerable efforts are made within this particular woodland to protect and enhance their habitat.

Additional diversification in the woodland includes Pigs. These are fenced into one large compartment and seem to enjoy their lives foraging. The pork is utilised on the estate both in the smokehouse and The Bell.

The nature of the terrain at Ramsbury lends itself to producing good quality Pheasant and Partridge shooting. The Estate currently let around 60 days which is overseen by a team of 3 keepers.

In addition, deer stalking is carried out in house producing venison for The Bell as well as the Smokehouse. Some accompanied buck stalking is also carried out with foreign guests (mainly Belgians), which generates additional income on top of the venison value.

The River Kennet runs through the Estate and provides excellent trout fishing in the gin-clear water. The fishing is let individually to a small number of local rods.

Back at the brewery thanks were given to Alistair and his team for laying on such a fantastic day.

As predicted, we all drove off in lovely sunshine!

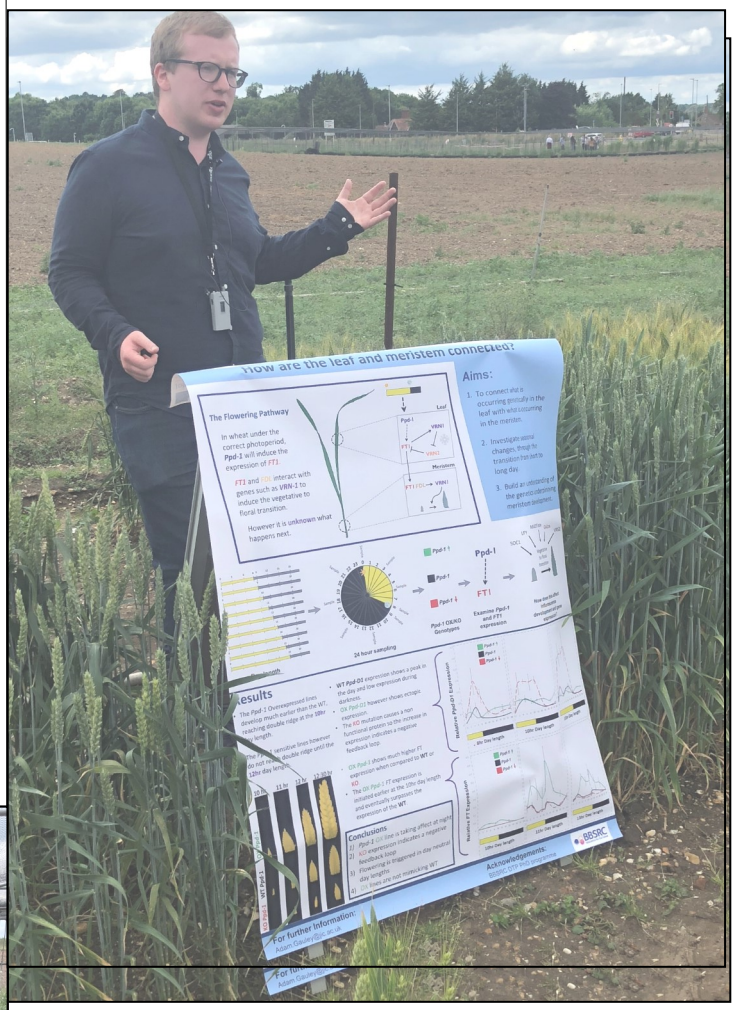
David Hunt

Visit to John Innes Research Centre, Norwich, 20th June 2018

After a sunrise of low cloud in the Southwest we only lost one booking and eleven aircraft flew into Robbie Buxton's Kimberley Hall airstrip on 20th of June.

With just a 15 minute coach transfer to John Innes 24 members were met by Dr Anne Edwards who gave us a short presentation on the history of the research centre which started in north London before moving to its present site at Norwich.

This was followed by a presentation on Brassica Research which was mainly on the work being done to find the OSR varieties that the flea beetle disliked the most allowing the crop to establish more easily.




Our Chairman hoeing whilst listening on 2 tourguides - stereo!

We were then split into three groups visiting Germplasm, Bioimaging, Insectary, The Seed bank and Glasshouses.

After lunch in the very good staff canteen we went outside to see a mobile infra-red gantry constantly measuring disease in wheat plots. We also went into a bird free cage to see pea trials.

We saw just a small part of the intensive independent work being carried out at John Innes to find solutions to our problems in growing crops. They are sponsored by all the major names in Agriculture, I urge you to support their work whenever the opportunity arises.

Back to Kimberly Hall where the usual race to be first airborne ensued. This was won by Neville, keen to find somewhere still open to refuel the Chippie!

Richard and Joyce Hall and myself were given a personal tour of the restored parts of Kimberley Hall by Robbie Buxton, the Hall now being used as a conference centre and upmarket Wedding Venue.

My grateful thanks to Robbie for the use of his strip and providing coffee/tea and cakes on arrival, and to Dr Anne Edwards and all her team at John Innes for providing us with a very interesting visit.

Peter Gale.