FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 96 *December 2007*

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph;

Gerry Humphrey's Friesian RV7 on it's maiden flight.

Chairman's Message

It seems a long time since the AGM in October - a good event, quite well attended. Our speaker, Martin Robinson of AOPA, gave a very interesting talk and brought us up to date with all that is troubling General Aviation.

During the past year we have enjoyed a number of excellent events. The weather certainly had its inputs but, although some participants had to cancel, all the meetings went ahead - our grateful thanks to all those who worked so hard to make this possible.

This is also a good time to look forward. Things certainly seem to be brighter for cereal and dairy farming, so let's hope that the other sectors of our industry will very soon receive price increases to recompense them for their hard work and long-term commitment.

As an Association we can look forward to an exciting programme of events this year, events of farming, engineering, scientific, historic and aviation interest – possibly the greatest number of meetings ever in a year, all organised for your pleasure and benefit, so take advantage of them.

It would help the organisers enormously if you could register your interest in events early. It is always a disappointment if an organiser has to turn applicants away, but it can be difficult and often fruitless to ask a coach company at the last moment if they have a larger coach or a restaurant if they can squeeze in a few more tables. In the case of overseas tours it can be impossible to find extra hotel rooms late in the day – you would be surprised to know how many hotels on the continent were booked up for next summer by November of this year. I think it is important that on foreign trips we stay in the same hotel and eat together at least once a day – these are social occasions and we should make the most of our times together.

I hope you all have a happy festive season. May all your wishes come true (well, most of them), and may we see you next year sometime, somewhere.

John Golden

Editor's Notes

Having put together the script for the 2008 programme, I must congratulate Mike Cuttell on such an interesting events calendar. They are a good balance of farming and general interest, and spread out over England, Scotland, Wales and Normandy. Everyone's interest must be stimulated by at least one of those events. Hopefully they will be well attended, as there is no bigger compliment to an organiser than for them to be fully booked.

I couldn't resist putting one of our Irish member's aeroplanes on the front cover. It symbolises perfectly the Flying Farmers with the colour scheme. Please see his article later on in the newsletter. I double checked with him about his last paragraph where he invites anyone to go and see and fly his RV, to make sure his letter wasn't just addressed to myself; but he reassured me, with typical Irish hospitality that the offer is wide open.

It's good to keep in contact with Tim Harrison to see how he is coping in New Zealand. His article implies that life couldn't be better. One thing I learn from doing the foreign trips is that we tend to get very insular if we don't spread our wings. Seeing how the rest of the world are getting on makes you realise the good and bad of what we have at home.

On the subject of travel, hopefully, Martin Gosling will pull together another interesting European Tour to Spain this year. No matter what is on the agenda, in typical Flying Farmers fashion we will enjoy the company and the tour anyway Although an itinerary hasn't been decided yet, please register your interest with him to aid planning.

David Corbett continues to bring us hot news. One thing to be wary of when crossing the Channel to Northern Europe is the probable need to have Mode S before by 31st March 2008, if going into controlled airspace, which you probably will to clear into the Schengen area.

Paul Stephens

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A company limited by guarantee; registered in England No. 01166733
Registered Office—Brooker Farm, Newchurch, Romney Marsh, Kent, TN39 0DT

There are currently three hot topics, and several items with less importance, about which to update you. Following my report in the March newsletter, I had promised to write more in the August edition – but because of harvest Paul needed to go to print before the July GACC meeting. I now give brief updates on the items covered in the March edition.

EASA Maintenance arrangements – Part M, and Sub parts F & G.

The most recent GACC meeting was on 20 November. At that meeting the CAA reported that, in spite of the fact that the new EASA maintenance system is supposed to be up-and-running by the end of September 2008, very few M3 maintenance organisations have applied for their Sub part F or G approvals. CAA do not have the staff to process large numbers of applications in a short period, and there is a real danger that many organisations will not have their approvals in place by the due date. This could lead to chaos in the maintenance industry.

In the meanwhile, pressure is being applied to EASA to exempt the lighter end of the GA aircraft sector from the over burdensome requirements of needing both Sub part F and Sub part G approvals to validate their Airworthiness Review Certificates. We are watching this potential drama unfold with interest...

Mode S transponders

We can now see a more realistic scenario developing. The latest situation can bee seen by visiting the following web link http://www.caa.co.uk/default.aspx?catid=810&pagetype=90&pageid=4601 which gives you the latest position at 23 October 2007, verified by an open meeting at Turweston on 3 November. The Powerpoint presentation given at that meeting, well worth viewing, is at www.pfa.org.uk/PFA%20Turweston%2017%20Nov%2007.ppt

Restricting my comments to GA aircraft that our members are likely to fly, this is a summary; there are 2 phases, and Phase 1 requires that:

- If you are currently required (because of the airspace you use) to have xpdr fitted, the revised ANO will state that from 31 March 2008, you will have a 4 year transition period to upgrade to Mode S. If, for some other reason, you have to fit a new transponder during that period, it must be Mode S – and all new aircraft must be Mode S equipped. If, however you are not currently required to carry an xpdr, there will continue to be no requirement for you to fit a xpdr.

Phase 2 is about to come out for consultation. This will propose that the requirement to carry xpdrs will be extended to:

- Aircraft making VFR flights in controlled airspace below FL 100
- Powered aircraft making international flights; note – ICAO makes Mode C mandatory for international flights already, but European countries have filed "differences", and it is expected that some of those differences will continue
- Flights within any new Transponder Mandatory Zone (TMZ), which will be a new class of airspace, for which any applicant will have to submit an evidence-based proposal

It is not expected that there will be any requirement for aircraft flying in Class G airspace only to be fitted with Mode S

There will also be changes to the current exemptions for gliders.

I attended the open meeting on 3 November, and I am satisfied that there is a very much more realistic attitude within CAA to Mode S now than there was 6 months or more ago. Read the latest information on the link above, and watch out for the next consultation; in the meanwhile, this is not going to be a major problem for GA.

Finally, if you do decide to fit a Mode S transponder, make absolutely certain that it has built in to it a "1090 mhz extended squitter" (maybe 1090 should read 1099); if an xpdr has that facility (not all current Mode S xpdrs have this yet), it will be compatible with ADS-B if and when that system is also approved in Europe. However, that is a long way off yet – and ADS-B will require a certified GPS unit to link through the squitter.

MOGAS

This, however, is going to be a major problem for all those currently using MOGAS – including PFA types such as Rotax powered engines. There was an important meeting on 9 November, which I did not attend, but which was reported at GACC; this was organised by DfT (there is a very friendly and understanding GA contact man at DfT now) and was attended by representatives of the fuel industry and of leading GA organisations. The bad news is that MOGAS will – indeed some suppliers already do – have alcohol added; the good news is that the fuel industry reps stated that AVGAS production would continue for the foreseeable future.

The bad news, arising from the addition of alcohol, is that MOGAS approvals (Notice 98) will be withdrawn by the CAA; and the PFA/LAA's position is that, although Rotax do approve up to 5% alcohol, an aircraft's fuel systems – pipework, gaskets, etc – will need to be specifically approved to overcome possible problems arising from the corrosive nature of alcohol on some materials used in fuel systems. Watch this space for further news...

Continued on the back page

Mike Cuttell is asking everyone to fill in a survey regarding events. You can find it with the reply slips. Thank you.

Welcome to New Members

Since 1st July 2007, the following have joined / rejoined

		Strip
686	Robert Buxton, Norfolk (rejoined)	y
816	Michael Porter, Defford, Worcestershire	y
817	Richard McCaire, Newmarket, Suffolk	y
818	John Houldcroft, Nuneaton, Warwickshire	y
819	Ferris Whidborne, Alton, Hampshire	y
820	Vince Hallam, Torquay, Devon	y
821	David Ashley, Powys, Wales	y
822	Simon Roe, South Hykeham, Lincoln	y

The total membership now stands at 386

Programme 2008

February 20th	Kew Bridge Steam Museum, London
March 19th	Silsoe, Bedfordshire
April 16th	Alvis Bros. Lye Cross Farm, Bristol
April 22nd-23rd	Central Science Laboratory plus other visits, Yorkshire
May 6th-8th	Floatplane Flying, Perth
May 14th-24th	European Tour to Spain
Early June	Orford Ness, Suffolk
June 21st-25th	Normandy, France
July 9th	Yattendon Estate, Berkshire
August ?	Welshpool, Wales
October ?	AGM



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.

Wednesday 20th February 2008, London

We have chosen London again for our non flying winter get together. It is easy to reach ny road or rail, and there are so many add on attractions.

This time we are visiting the Kew Bridge Steam Museum who have agreed to provide a live demonstration for us.

The pumping station provided London's water for 100 years. As we will see, many of it's engines are in running order, including the massive 197 year old 90" Boulton and Watt. It is the largest working engine in the world. Some of their early diesels will also be started for us. This museum was the winner of the Classic Museum and Heritage Award in 2006.

Raising enough steam to power these monster engines for a private visit will be expensive, but from the photos I have seen, you will not be disappointed.



We are having a sandwich lunch in their restaurant and our Committee will hold their meeting there in the afternoon.

Costs, to include lunch, will be £17.50 per head. Please send a SAE with the reply slip and cheque payable to John Golden by 15th January.

Wednesday 19th March 2008, Silsoe

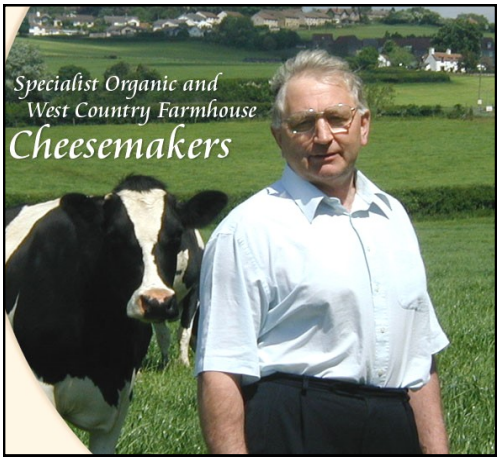
An invitation to visit the Spray Research Unit at Silsoe, Bedfordshire. Professor Miller, who will be our host, is also hoping to arrange for us to visit Wrest Park Gardens which are nearby.

We are hoping to land at RAF Henlow, but approval is still awaited. Anticipated costs to include a coach, lunch and landing will be £25 per head. Please send a SAE with the slip and your cheque payable to M.J.Cuttell by 19th February.

Wednesday 16th April 2008, Alvis Bros, Bristol

We are grateful to John Alvis (photograph below) of Alvis Bros. for allowing us to visit Lye Cross Farm, Redhill, Bristol. The farm is made up of 176 acres permanent grass, 1774 acres of maize/cereals, 1000 milking cows, 30,000 baconners annually and 4,000 tons of cheese annually.

As you can see, this is a massive enterprise. We will be landing at Garston Farm, in the Colerne zone by kind permission of Michael Ball (FFA No. 341) from where we will be transported by coach. Costs to include coach and lunch will be £25 per head to be sent with an SAE to Peter Gale by 16th March.



Tuesday 22nd/23rd April 2008, Yorkshire

This will be a one day meeting with an option of a night stopover, with a group dinner and a further visit the next day. If anyone wanted to come just for the second day it wouldn't be a problem. Programme as follows;

Tuesday;

10:00 Fly into either Paul Stephens' strip or Eddsfield where fuel is available. Edd Peacock is an FFA member.

10:30 Coach leaves for Wolds Way Lavender farm. There is a tea room where a light lunch can be found.

12:30 Coach leaves for Central Science Laboratory.

13:00 CSL has over 500 scientists working on just about anything that affects our food chain and the environ ment. They do crop monitor reports for the whole country, they look at pesticide residues, how climate change impacts on us with new pests and diseases etc.

16:00ish Return to the aircraft. Chance to have a look at a new 1500 tonne corn store built in 2007 at Moor Farm with on floor drying with grain stirrers.

19:30 For those staying over, we will have a group dinner.

Wednesday;

09:30 Depart by coach for Eden Camp at Malton. POW Camp 83 was built by Italian pows ready for German pows, who worked on local farms under War Ag. Control. It was opened as a living museum in 1988 and has won many awards. Each of the 37 huts covers a different aspect of the war from rationing, evacuees, propaganda, women at war, animals at war, munitions factories to Bomber Command, Pathfinders, the War at Sea and Prisoners at War. The list is endless. Lunch will be available in the Prisoner's Canteen.

14:00 Return to the aeroplanes and depart.

Cost will be £15 per day to cover transport and entries and a £25 per head deposit for the night. Entries in by 15th February please. Numbers might be restricted to 40 for CSL.

Tuesday 6th to 8th May 2008. Perth

Mike Ashmole has organised an introduction to floatplane flying for 18 persons. Each pilot will get 1 hour in an Aviat Husky floatplane.

The logistics are complicated, but all should arrive at Perth by the evening of the 6th May. Next morning 9 pilots will go by car to Loch Earn which is 50 minutes away to arrive by 09:00 am. Half of this party will have a briefing and their flights whilst the rest will have a farm walk locally. They will then change over. For those that don't want the drive, a Robinson R22 will be available for a trial lesson to Loch Earn taking 30 minutes. This will only be viable if another person can be found to take a trial lesson on the return journey.

In the meantime, those that are on the second day's flying will fly out to Jim Anderson's strip north of Aberdeen for a farm visit.



Next day, all swap round. For wives and partners, a tourist type day in Perth will be available both days.

We will stay at the new on site accommodation at the airport where there is a smart restaurant.

Costs:		
	Floatplane lesson	£200
	Helicopter lesson	£100
	2 nights accommodation	£80
	Additional travel	£25

Please note: The floatplane cost will be refunded if there is bad weather at Loch Earn. The accommodation price is per room for the two nights, single or double occupancy. The only meals included are the two morning's Continental breakfast.

Deposits required are £250 per floatplane participant and £25 non participating partners. Please fill in the reply slip and return fully filled in to Mike Ashmole by 15th February please.

14th - 24th May 2008, Spanish Tour

Still at the planning stage, Martin Gosling is organising a 10 day tour of Spain. **Possible** visits include Olives and electricity made from Olive residue, Poplar trees, Gibraltar, solar panel research, Barcelona, farm machinery, farm visits etc. with stops in France both ways. All yet to be confirmed and arranged.

As these foreign tours are nearly always fully subscribed, priority will be given on a first come first served basis. Anyone carrying non FFA members will have to be held over until the closing date of January 31st. If the tour isn't fully subscribed by that date, then non FFA member passengers will be allowed.

Please indicate your interest by sending in your reply slip to Martin - A deposit will be required by the end of January. As there is usually a lot of correspondence leading up to the event, it is important to give your correct email address. Entries could be restricted to 40 people. Note - Mode S might be required in France by 31st March 2008.

Early June 2008, Orford Ness

By popular demand, another opportunity to visit Orford Ness, thanks to Paul Coulten. We will be landing at Bentwaters, for the coach ride to our destination. Further details in the March newsletter.

21st - 25th June 2008, Normandy

John Golden is organising a mini French tour in the Normandy area. He is hoping to include a visit to an historic airship base and the French Navy museum at Cherbourg where we can go aboard an immensely large French nuclear submarine in dry dock.

Participants may either fly into Granville-Breville airport or drive to Villedieu les Poeles, where the tour coach will be waiting.

Please send an SAE, the reply slip and a deposit of £50 made payable to John Golden by 28th February please.

Wednesday 9th July, Yattendon Estate

An invitation from Joe Iliffe to visit Yattendon Estate near Newbury. This will be a 'must do' event. The estate covers 7 miles N/S and has its own landing strip. More details in the March newsletter.

August, Welshpool

Date to be advised. David Corbett is organising a visit in the Welshpool area to see a windfarm and the manufacture of hot air balloon baskets. More details later.

The Tank Museum, Bovington

Wednesday 25 July dawned wet, windy and cloudy, and it was a sad but easy decision that there was no way I was going to be able to fly to Dorset.

Driving east on the M50, and then south on the M5, I passed over the vast flooded areas of Gloucestershire, where 135mm of rain had fallen in one day on the previous Friday – 20 July – leading to the average annual rainfall in our part of the world being exceeded by the end of July.

On arrival at David Hawkins' farm at Milbourne St Andrew, I found that only one member – Tim Franklin, from the Hitchin area – had managed to fly in. All other members had driven – Tony Fisher from Thorney, near Peterborough, had probably come the furthest; our party was 22 in all, including the bus driver – see photo!

We all assembled in David and Mandy's kitchen for a very welcome cup of coffee, and then climbed aboard the "...bright red painted, diesel engined, London (Routemaster) bus..." which conveyed us, in true steamed-up-window fashion, to the Tank Museum at Bovington, near Wareham, Dorset.

We were met by some very efficient lady guides, who each took us through one section of the Museum. The Museum has been building its collection since 1923, when Rudyard Kipling suggested that they should stop cutting up old tanks, and preserve some; the Museum now has nearly 300 exhibits, with items from before World War I to the very latest British army main battle tank, Challenger II – and with tanks and other vehicles from some 26 countries.

We started our tour by visiting the WWI trenches, where we saw how much greater design and innovation and build quality had gone into the German trench system than the Allies'. We then worked our way through the WWI section, looking first at the Mark I tank of 1916 vintage, complete with its towed steering bogie behind, about to climb over the open trench through which we exited the underground network. The famous lozenge shaped WWI design was considered as either Male or Female – depending upon which type of gun(s) were fitted to the small "turrets" on each side of the tank; by 1917 it was decided that their heavy machine guns made female tanks far more useful than males, and therefore the build ratio was established as 2:1!

We spent the rest of the morning being guided through the various time-periods of the Museum – a collection so large and comprehensive that it merits at least a full day's visit to do it justice. There are a large number of working tanks kept in a separate building, including a WWI mark V – and there are certain days of the week when driving displays are put on.

After a quick lunch in the Museum restaurant, we were privileged to accept the very kind invitation from Lt Col Simon Ledger, the Light Dragoons, who commands the "D & M" (Driving and Maintenance) School of the Armour Centre, to be given a background briefing by him about the Royal Armoured Corps, the Armour Centre itself, and what the D & M School does; and then to visit various sections of the school and be shown by instructors a little about the current Challenger





II tank. Nostalgia crept up for me when we were invited to drive the C II simulator – I grabbed the first slot, having last driven Centurion and Conqueror tanks for real in the late 1950's in Germany. The modern tank is far easier to drive – its automatic transmission means that two pedals and two steering levers are all that you need; after setting off cautiously, the instructor told me to "follow that tank" coming in from my left – and we set off flat out across country, through all sorts of obstacles and gradients, eventually arriving in a tank park where I had to manoeuvre the tank up onto a low loader. I never did discover whether I squashed the soldier marshalling me - but the whole experience was a magical memory trip, at least until I had to get back out of the driver's position into the main turret area. This involved sliding backwards and upwards through a tiny slot, and for one moment I seriously though that my 70 year old body was in the driver's compartment for ever! We then looked inside a turret, and at the engine compartment, which houses a Rolls Royce 1200 HP 12 cylinder diesel engine, shoehorned, with the transmission and fuel tanks, into a really tight space; but the complete engine/transmission unit can be changed on the battlefield in just 2 hours. The fuel consumption was quoted at 3.4 litres per km – which compares to our Centurions, 2 gals (petrol) per mile.



Sadly, our wonderful day at Bovington came to an end all too soon, and we climbed aboard the Routemaster to return to Bagber Farm for more of David and Mandy's hospitality, before driving off to our respective homes. Tim had to leave his aircraft at Bagber – he collected it 3 weeks later – but I drove into glorious sunshine about half an hour north of Bagber, and continued up the back side of the cold front all the way home.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to David and Mandy Hawkins for organising this visit and for their hospitality both before and after the visit; and to Lt Col Simon Ledger for inviting us to the D & M School, and answering all our various questions in such depth. Thank you all so much.

And finally – I heard on Radio 4, on the morning of 20 November 2007, a report that the battle of Cambrai had started at that moment 90 years ago – when 500 tanks had overwhelmed German lines and established a salient into enemy territory; unfortunately, this was a new and unexpectedly successful tactic for British forces, and we were unable to capitalise on the gain with sufficient troops to prevent a successful German counter-attack.

David Corbett

Despite some iffy weather in the South, all aircraft and crews made Oban in time for dinner on the 16th August -10 aeroplanes with 21POB.

Next day the new facilities at Oban were well and truly tested, including a shuttle bus between the Hotel and the airport.

The previous 8 days had been virtually unflyable on our intended route, but almost as if by magic the promised small ridge of high pressure appeared and we set off for our first destination, Sollas on North Uist in perfect VFR.



As is pretty obvious with all beach landings the width of the runway increases as the tide goes out, as high water had been just an hour before the first arrivals the strip looked rather narrow, the later arrivals enjoying a full 100m of hard sand.

John Mcleod, the neighbouring Isle of Lewis's only active pilot had set up his marquee installed his portaloo and had the coffee brewing.

John's brother in law Ian Macdonald then gave us an introduction to crofting on these remote islands with the main difficulty of getting stock to market. The ferry trip to Skye took 1 hour 40 minutes and the ongoing road trip to Dingwall market a further 3 hours. Ian has a 1000 acre croft on which he runs 200 ewes producing about 80 lambs a year, he also works as a teacher in the local school. He explained the intricacies of crofting tenure, and despite crofters having statuary right to purchase their crofts for 15 times the annual rent, with rents as low as £20, very few bothered to take advantage. Ian went on to say that generally the future of crofting looked bleak not just because of the livestock prices and logistics but a lack of interest in this way of life by the younger generation.



Regardless of all the hype we hear from Prince Charles and others on crafting, we came away with the feeling that this traditional form of land use was in terminal decline.

Next stop was Barra another beach airfield but this time with air traffic controllers, firemen and a shiny new terminal. It was interesting to note that our arrival seemed to be more chaotic than when we were helping ourselves, with a couple of go rounds.

Because of the tides we only had an hour on the island so we quickly mounted the waiting bus for a whistle stop tour of this historic island. Enroute, we made a 10min stop at the only abattoir on the island owned and run by a very enterprising crofter - he had cornered the islands meat trade. He had dealt with the fifth quarter problem by insisting his customers. mainly the islands hotels, bought the whole carcass rather than selling by the joint. He seemed to be making as much profit from his government contract to handle the islands fallen stock, which he stored in a refrigerated van until he had enough to transport to the nearest incinerator at Dumfries 3 hours ferry and a further 4 hours by road, bonkers!

By this time the dire forecast for the following day was beginning to have an affect and 'get home itis' had set in great style, resulting in only 4 aircraft making the next scheduled stop - the Isle of Mull - the remainder opting for an early return home.

It was a much depleted party that enjoyed dinner in a super fish restaurant in Oban.

Next day's weather was as predicted and for some of us it meant an extra day in Oban, but with the hospitality of the airport staff and David Corbett's yacht moored in the harbour there could have been much worse places to be stranded.

Mike Ashmole

Post Script

A donation was made to the local community at Sollas in return for their hospitality. This reply is included to demonstrate that there are communities out there that actually like aeroplanes!

Dear Mr Ashmole,

On behalf of our local community group in Sollas, North Uist, I would very much like to pass on to you the grateful thanks of the members of our community group, for your kind donation to our funds.

John MacLeod, my brother passed the donation on to me. The Taigh Sgire committee members were surprised, but quite delighted that you had remembered the local community here in Sollas.

The Sollas people are always most enthusiastic about the fly-ins which take place on the beach. They enjoy meeting intrepid pilots from various parts of the country.

At the moment we are in the process of building a new community hall so I can assure you that your generosity is much appreciated and the money will be put to good use.

With kind regards from Sollas

Joan M MacDonald Secretary, Taigh Sgire.

AGM, Sywell 10th October 2007

The customary, shall I or shan't I fly weather greeted us on the AGM morning of the 10th October 2007. The mist and fog was promised to clear by late morning, but in order to arrive in time for the 11:00 am start, would entail an early set off by car for most.

However, for the determined aviators - approximately 20 aeroplane's worth - the fog did clear and it turned out to be a lovely October day. Eventually, there were around 60 members at the AGM (see the Minutes elsewhere in this newsletter).

Two Committee members were due to stand down - Paul Stephens and Anthony Kedros - the former restanding, the latter throwing in the towel after about 12 years on the Committee, many of which as our Events Secretary.

Rick Holt will be the new Committee member and will bring some new thoughts and ideas to the Committee meetings.

The present Events Secretary, Mike Cuttell gave us an outline of what to expect on the 2008 programme which can be seen on page 4.

A lively debate took place in the discussion time, mainly about who the FFA should support with the pledged 10% of membership income. AOPA and the PFA ranked as favorites, possible because they are the highest profile of all the organizations, but maybe others like the GAAC, Royal Aero Club and GASCo shouldn't be forgotten as they do useful work. The debate continues.

Other matters discussed were the costs and venue of the AGM, the current survey on Mogas, Pat Burnett warned us that a Spitfire is carrying out jollies over East Kirkby under a NOTAM which has to be avoided and Bill Burton thanked the Committee for their work.

Lunch was next on the agenda followed, quite appropriately, by a run down on the work of AOPA by Martin Robinson. He ran through all the current political changes mostly to do with Europe and the transition to EASA.

At last year's AGM, we had a raffle to raise some money for the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. The prize for the 4 lucky winners being a formation flight with The Blades aerobatic team based at Sywell. The Blades have been extremely busy with a tour to Dubai and a full summer schedule, so the flight only came to fruition at this year's AGM.

The four winners were George Sly, Adrian Hatton, Bob Beard and Jane Procter. Bob feared for his stomach, so his seat was re-auctioned by means of the FFA e-news and Mark Badminton won his place and the money went to the Lincs. and Notts. Air Ambulance. Jane Procter feared for her life so she gave her seat to myself (Paul Stephens) for my birthday present (the day before the AGM).

I was particularly looking forward to the flight to experience aerobatics in formation and being chauffeured by ex-Red Arrow pilots. I was certainly not disappointed!

From the start, the RAF attention to detail was apparent with a full briefing and kitting out with overalls and parachute. The Extra 300's were immaculate and lined up waiting for us. The cockpit was quite a tight fit for the larger person as I was wary of not interfering with the full movement of the stick in all directions.

Take off was in two pairs, quickly joining up to give a fly past in formation. We then left the circuit to do some gentle turns in formation, building up to gentle aerobatics. I couldn't believe how close they were and how the formation stuck together



like glue. We have tried some formations on FFA events and were soon all over the place. These men were professional and just reacted so quickly to every movement of the leader.

We then broke off into individuals to do some more advanced aerobatics and anything we wanted. I asked to do some simple rolls myself and just couldn't believe how quickly the aeroplane went round at 540 degrees per second. At first I just tried a simple turn left and right, but with the extreme sensitivity of the stick, I was soon rolling all over the place!

My pilot, Andy Offer MBE then showed me the sort of maneuvers that you see from the ground and wonder how on earth an aeroplane can do that. One that I was fascinated with was a stint where you climb vertically whilst rolling and just go on and on until it won't go anymore. It then slides backwards and you get enveloped in the smoke until finally it all falls forward and you dive vertically. An aerobatic pilot will have a name for it, something like a tail slide. but I can't remember what he called it.



I was then allowed to fly back to the circuit and Andy made a lovely landing. When disembarking, we were warned that we might be a little wobbly, which I was and in fact wasn't 100% until next morning. It was maybe the aerobatics, but I think it was mainly being on such a high after the experience.

Thanks to all at The Blades (see www.2excelaviation.com) and especially to Dick Walgate for setting the whole event up.

Paul Stephens

Gerry Humphreys' RV7

I am delighted with my new RV7. The build took 5 years at a leisurely pace, interspersed with turning grass into organic beef and flying about 400 hours a year for a locally-based commercial bank.

It was well worth it in the end. It's got almost 140 hours on the clock since it first flew in January this year so I have got to know it quite well by now. A 160Kt TAS cruise at 2400 RPM from a 150HP Lycoming, with a metal fixed pitch prop is quite remarkable. I have been careful to streamline everything - I put insulation tape on all the cowling joints for example (I heard the Red Bull boys do it so why not - every little helps!!).

The take-off and climb performance are perfectly respectable, we have been in and out of a 350m grass strip with no drama and it climbs happily at over 1000 fpm. I run mogas in the left tank for cruise and Avgas in the right for take-off landing and aeros. The Irish authorities accepted that the aircraft was designed with sport aerobatics in mind so I got John Harper to renew my DA this summer in it. It does delightful 'gentlemans aerobatics' i.e. no violence or negative 'g' - I'm getting too old for that sort of thing these days! The controls are light and sensitive, not quite an Extra, but close. With a fast cruise, slow stall (60mph ish) and an 800+ nautical mile range it does everything I could ask of a small aeroplane.

I fitted an autopilot, nav lights and a full set of instruments so next step is to get someone to approve it for IFR!! I flew it 'naked' for a few months before starting the paintwork. Partly because I couldn't wait to get it flying and partly because I wanted to wait for Summer weather, which I assumed would be better for painting. (As it happened it rained almost constantly for the 6 weeks it took to paint!). It was a good plan though, as I was able to take it apart and inspect it completely after around 50 hours of flying.

The colour scheme took a while to decide on. My wife and kids all had different ideas about what it should be - black with flames - pink with silver bells, all with their merits, but none appealed to me. With such a small fast aircraft I wanted something that would be easy to see, (Pinball wizard Tommy, the deaf dumb and blind kid has taken up flying helicopters around here I reckon - I've had a few close shaves in the past few years).

In a previous life I was involved in the investigation into a tragic mid-air collision between a Cessna and a Jaguar over Wales. I became very interested in the research being done by John Chappelow at Farnborough at the time. The basic message was that the eye does not perceive colour at the sort of distances needed to avoid a mid air. Our eyes are much better at detecting contrast, so anything that contrasted with the background would be more likely to be seen. Today all the RAF's trainers are painted black as a result.

I was flying along in my silver RV one day in May when I noticed a herd of Friesian cows a long way ahead. They really stood out against the countryside, so I thought - that's it!! The whole family instantly agreed, so Cow it was! The only problem was that we had already registered the aircraft as EI-HUM - we should have had EI-MOO!! Perhaps we could get away with a 'reverse typo' under the wing saying EI- MUH.... I think the end product stands out well, with strobes and 150W landing lights hopefully Tommy will see us coming. Who knows, maybe even the RAF will be convinced and start their own herd!

I honestly don't think I would do anything different if I was starting again, perhaps a couple of Glass Multi Function displays - they have come on such a lot in the past few years - and possibly a slider canopy to keep the rain off the instrument panel but not much else.

I can see why the RV series are so popular, the kit is superb and the amount of info available on the internet means that anyone could build one. It's the most practical efficient and enjoyable little aeroplane I have ever flown... so next time you are in Ireland do get in touch and come and have a go.

Gerry Humphreys



By the time you read this newsletter we will have been here two years. It wasn't quite a step into the unknown but all in all a pretty big undertaking to move our lives to the other side of the globe. Now that we've been here two years it really does feel like home and there is no way that we would return to the UK to live permanently.

At first we read the weekly 'Telegraph' and kept an eye on 'BBC world' but as time went by we traded these for the NZ Herald and local radio and television (more balanced and less politically influenced!) My only concession to 'Blighty' is to get a copy of the Spectator magazine now and again. From this source I read that 'Comrade Brown' has worked out yet another way of getting his hand into your pockets, do away with Capital gains tax indexing and charge it to a flat rate. Here there is no Capital gains tax and I can tell you that this is the one big thing for a vibrant economy.

Farming here at the moment is fairly mixed; dairy is having a bonanza meanwhile sheep are on the slide. But hey, guess what happens in a free society – sheep farmers quit and either go



into dairy or something else – it's called the free market! Bet you're thinking; what about the sheep folks who are in the high country or just got darn steep land, well 'aunty Helen' has embraced the Kyoto accord to the point that she and her gang want New Zealand to lead the way with emission trading. Forestry is first and can be registered from 1st Jan 2008 and if the



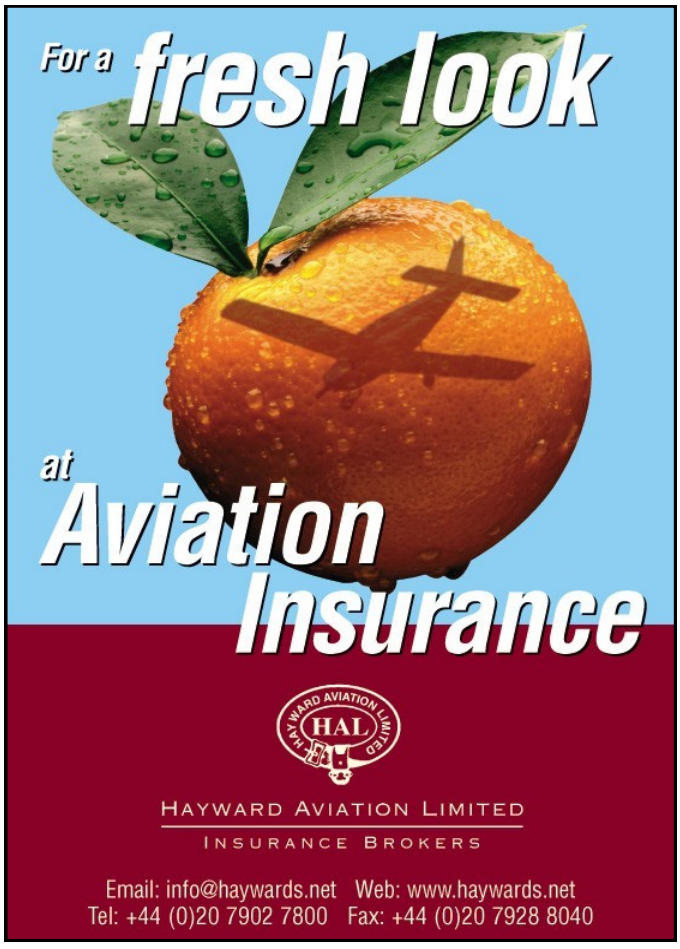
land owner meets some pretty simple rules can collect credits annually. So it's trade sheep for trees! Here's the irony, when agriculture comes into the scheme those rich dairy farmers will have to buy credits from the once poor sheep folks who by then will be fully planted up with trees (please take this last line with a pinch of salt).

I flew over to Great Barrier Island on Sunday for a bit of recreation (20mins straight line) and walking over to the airfield gate got chatting to a guy trying to jump start a Cessna with a flat battery. Well it turns out that he's married to Fiona (Jim Anderson's daughter) and his name is Greenie, together they run the local car rental business; it's certainly a small world!

That's it for now so all of you have a good Christmas.

Tim & Carol Harrison.

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FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the 33rd AGM

Sywell
Wednesday 10th October 2007

Present: J.R Walgate (President) J. Golden (Hon. Chairman), P. Stephens (Hon Secretary), A.Cragg (Hon. Treasurer) M. Cuttell (Hon Events Secretary), M.Ashmole, M.Gosling (Committee Members) and approx. 53 members.
P.Stephens took the minutes

	Description	Action
	The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 11:48 hrs (local)	
1	**Apologies for absence** Apologies received from Pat Nutt, Mr Graty, Jenny Lowe, Robert Knapton, John Graves, David Johnstone, Diana Dent, David Gittins, Malcolm Easy, John Hardy, Richard Blant, Chris Ussher, DM Wood, Trevor Williamson, J Martin, K Kelso, Bob Crowe, Peter Pilch, Richard Macaire and Tony Poulsom	
2	Signing of the Minutes of the 32nd AGM held at Sywell on the 12th October 2006	
	The minutes were signed as a true and correct record.	
3	Any Matters arising from the Minutes	
	There were no matters arising	
4	Chairman's Report	
	The Chairman gave his report saying that the Committee had met three times, the FFA was financially sound and going forward..	
5	Treasurer's Report	
	The Treasurer gave his report detailing a few items on the accounts.	
6	Election of Committee Members	
	It was the turn of Paul Stephens and Anthony Kedros to stand down from the Committee. Anthony Kedros decided not to stand again. Paul Stephens agreed to stand again and together with Rick Holt, who was proposed by David Corbett, being the only two standing for election, it was agreed that they should be elected as Committee members.	
7	Membership Report	
	The Secretary declared the total membership stood at 393 members. In the previous 12 months 19 new members had joined and 15 members had left.	
8	Event Secretary's Report	
	The Event's Secretary gave his report.	
9	AOB	
	There was a lively discussion on current issues; where the agreed amount of subscription money should be donated to, the cost of the AGM and Bill Burton thanked the Committee for their work	
	The Chairman closed the meeting AGM at 12:42 hrs (local)	
	Minutes approved at a subsequent AGM.....	

Carriage of ELT's

The exemption issued by the CAA affecting GA aircraft continues until 31 March 2008. In the meanwhile, the CAA is actively working to find a solution to this problem. It has been suggested that PLB's should be approved in lieu of ELT's. However, there is a potentially major administrative problem in that if all walkers, riders, bicyclists, pilots, etc, etc carry PLB's – how will the registration authority cope with the potential numbers, each requiring a 24 hr contact number, and how will the emergency services cope if there is an event that triggers a very large number of PLB alerts? Again, this is a "Watch this space..." situation, but it must be resolved by 31 March 2008 – or a further exemption granted. Additionally, of course, liferafts, lifejackets, and some other items are also subject to CAA exemptions at the moment; these exemptions will be reviewed after the ELT/PLB situation has been resolved.

The IMC and IR ratings.

There are discussions going on in Europe as to whether the UK standards for the IR are "over the top" and can be reduced to bring them in to line with proposed EASA licence standards, which are not yet agreed. At the same time, there are discussions about the IMC rating – which is unique to UK, and therefore not of interest to enough EU states to get it adopted into the EASA licence regime. It is not yet a lost cause, but there is not much optimism.

AIS website

There is a good new booklet out - AIS Website User Guide (Second Edition) – which helps you through the AIS website. An AIS officer demonstrated use of the website to us at Shobdon on 22 November, and our members went away much happier that the site was becoming more friendly to use.

The PFA (Light Aircraft Association) and Permits to Fly

The PFA will become the Light Aircraft Association from 1 January 2008; this is for a number of reasons, but particularly because EASA is introducing a "Light Aircraft pilot's licence", a new Light Sports Aircraft category, and the PFA/LAA has recently been a leading player in the formation of the European Vintage, Recreational and Light Aircraft Association.

And – in early December it will be announced that all 1050/1051 Jodels – right up to Mousquetaire – will be transferred from C of A to Permit to Fly from their next renewal after 1 December 2007; it is expected that the Auster fleet will do likewise; and there are one or two other aircraft types that may follow suit. Additionally, the present restriction on Permits to Fly that prevents over-flight of built-up areas will soon be removed – except for Permit test flights.

GETMET 2008

We have been advised by the Met Office that the 2008 edition of GETMET will not be published until mid-summer at the earliest – so hold on to your 2006 editions.

Lifetime PPL licences

Holders of lifetime PPL licences – old men like me! – (and JAR and NPPL licences) will be required to change to an EASA licence within 4 years of the "Essential Requirement" being mandated by Europe. At the moment, it seems likely that the transition period will run from mid 2008 – and the current proposal is that those of us who hold UK lifetime PPL's will be required first to get a JAR PPL, and then the EASA PPL. It is interesting to report that currently the CAA Enforcement branch are writing 50-60 letters per month to JAR licence holders who have failed to renew their licences. If you have a DVLA driving licence, or a JAR commercial pilots licence, you are automatically reminded to renew; if you have a JAR PPL you get no reminder!

David Corbett

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