
FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION
УКРАЇНА
ПРИКОРДОННА СЛУЖБА
BORDER GUARD
Newsletter No. 114
December 2013

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph;

Don't we wish all customs officials looked as attractive as this - taken from Martin Gosling's Ukraine report.

Chairman's Ramblings

I suppose it is a symptom of my age that the years whizz past at such alarming speed. Or maybe it is because I am retired and friends say I haven't got enough constructive things to do in my life, although I seem to be pretty busy most of the time doing what I want to do and not what some governmental busy body wants me to do.

Anyway, it really does seem to me that only a few weeks ago harvest was behind us and the drilling programme was in full swing. And now, by the time this wonderfully produced newsletter drops onto your doormat (thanks Paul for all your continuous sterling efforts), we shall be within a couple of weeks of the days beginning to lengthen again, albeit slowly for a while, and who can complain at that? And, of course, Christmas with all its razzmatazz that started at the beginning of November to encourage us to dip deep into our pockets. A wonderful time for our children and grandchildren, but a time that I find ever more distastefully commercial.

Christmas will not be a happy time for the families of the 9 people so tragically killed in the Glasgow helicopter crash last week – as aviators we have more interest than most in these type of events but it really does remind us that our lives are at all times 'in the balance' and we really do not know what is just around the corner. Who could have possibly imagined that for a fun night out in the pub with one's friends, such a dramatic thing could have happened. Our hearts bleed for everyone affected.

As yet our autumn and early winter seems to have been pretty kind to us, remaining almost unseasonably mild and none too wet – here in Essex at any rate. Harvest seems to have been the easiest to gather in for many a year with, thankfully, few drying costs. The results seem to have been a bit like the curates egg – although very much better than any of us dared hope for after the appalling conditions of 2012 harvesting and drilling campaign. Prices being significantly down on the highs of 2012 are not helpful to our cash flows and only go to remind us that we farm totally in a world market – no matter what our harvest may or may not be, a disaster in some far off country, or indeed a magnificent harvest elsewhere is what shapes our returns more than anything else.

Pundits are claiming that we are due for a very hard spell of weather to come – but what do they know? It is mostly presumption with a 50/50 chance of them getting it right and then saying 'I warned you it would be bad'! It will be what it will be, but a spell of hard winter weather surely does more good than harm.

Whatever it turns out to be let us enjoy it to the full at this festive time, come rain, snow, wind or sun, remembering that another flying season is just around the corner. 2013 had some excellent FFA flying events, and it looks as though the programme for 2014 will be just as exciting. For that we all owe a great debt of gratitude to all those who have arranged events for last year and for this coming year – and to our hard working events secretary, Rick, for putting it all together.

I look forward to meeting up with you all again in 2014, and, along with all of us on your committee, I wish you and your families a peaceful Christmas and a successful New Year.

Martin Gosling

Editor's Notes

In this issue, we have two very good and very contrasting reports of members' flying tours. Mike Ashmole relates his experiences of hiring a 172 in Canada and makes it very tempting to do likewise as all seems very relaxed, easy and efficient.

Martin Gosling's epic tour to the Ukraine was just the opposite and seemed a very different, high living tour with loads of seemingly impossible bureaucratic hurdles to get over, years in advance of the trip.

Both demonstrate what can be achieved within the privileges of our licence and with light aircraft. I welcome anymore reports of members' experiences for these newsletters, as we all like to read about the good bits and the problems, especially if we don't get the opportunities to take part ourselves.

Peter Kember is keeping us up to date with CAA plans that will affect us all, and Rick Holt is getting the 2014 calendar of visits together.

Paul Stephens

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GACC Report

On the 7th November 2013 I attended the CAAs 41st General Aviation Consultative Committee, held at the CAAs Aviation House near to Gatwick Airport. I have now been a member of this committee for 3 years following in the footsteps of the late and much missed David Corbett. The GACC is made up of about 10 personnel from the CAA, chaired by Bob Jones, the CAAs Head of Flight Operations and 30 industry representatives including, inter alia, the Light Aircraft Association,the FFA, AOPA, British Helicopter Association, BGA and the BMAA.

The agenda included the usual introductions, apologies for absence, acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting held in November 2012, a review of the action log, and a very fruitful discussion of the Government sponsored "Red Tape Challenge" as promoted by the Chairman of the Conservative Party and Minister Without Portfolio, Grant Shapps (who has a PPL and flies a Piper Saratoga based at Panshanger, an aerodrome which is in the limelight because of a threat of closure arising from a housing land allocation by the Local Planning Authority). Other topics included a review of the programme for GA in the future, an update on the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) and the UK "Skyway Code" which in coming years will replace the Rules of the Air Regulations, a report on the GA Strategic Forum from the Chairman of the LAA, and the usual open debate under "Any Other Business" where I again raised my continuing concern about the CAAs lack of any worthwhile policy on aerodrome safeguarding in the current climate.

The Committee were introduced to Andrew Haines, the new CEO of the CAA who has the task of ensuring that the CAA turns a profit of 6% on turnover. He did not seem a relaxed character but then he has got some monumental problems on his plate. Mark Swann, a Group Director at the CAA, explained that the CAA wish to deregulate where possible over a 2 year period. By April 2014 there is to be a dedicated GA unit within the CAA and staff are being recruited as I write. We were told that the CAA is downsizing as the programme of deregulation comes into effect. By the end of 2013 the Directorate of Airspace Policy and the Safety Regulation Group will have been merged with some job losses likely.

Mike Barnard from the CAA is tasked with designing the structure of the new dedicated GA Unit within the CAA. He is a sensible man, an ex Ford employee, who appears to understand the need for not only consultation, but using where possible, representatives of the industry to carry out the legwork necessary to achieve a better, more simplified regulatory regime. The cynic in me suggests that this is a way of passing off the costs of reorganisation to the industry but we should, at this stage, keep an open mind on the subject. The overriding message, often repeated, is to deregulate, to simplify, to speak in plain English, and to fast track worthwhile changes in the regulatory regime. One of the areas currently being examined is flight training in the UK bearing in mind the AOPA strapline "Bad training hurts you, whereas a bad attitude kills you". Mike seems keen to develop GPS approaches to more airfields including, where possible,small airstrips. In the USA there are currently 12,000 airfields with FAA approved GPS approaches, whereas in the UK there are currently less than 10 CAA approved GPS approach procedures! There was even the mention of the resurgence of the UKs light aircraft industry. I am not holding my breath on that one!

It has been estimated that the UK GA industry is worth about £1.5 billion to the economy and it is clear that the Government and many MPs including Grant Shapps are keen to see new UK designed and built light aircraft. Currently only the Swift Aircraft Technology Group, the current owners of Europa Aircraft, have any significant new designs under construction. In the Red Tape Challenge there were over 150 suggestions made that have a real prospect of producing a better future for GA. "Proportionality" is apparently the new mantra in regulating the industry and at the LAA Rally at Sywell this September the CAA announced the deregulation of single seat microlights. Well, it is a start, I suppose. We were told that in Europa, EASA is trying to respond positively to the malcontent which is evident from over-regulation in the industry. It is a fact that over 90% of GA aircraft accidents are attributable to pilot error, so it is understandable that both the CAA and EASA want to improve pilot training and continuing pilot development.

Cliff Whittaker, the Head of Personnel Licensing Policy at the CAA, told us that the IMC rating was now safe until April 2019 subject to certain loose ends to be tidied up by the CAA. Payments for flights, in the form of cost sharing, can now be accepted by PPL and LAPL holders in the UK and this can cover the issue of "trial flights" by members of the public (subject to ratification by EASA before April 2014). At my own aerodrome, Laddingford in West Kent, two pilots have just obtained their IMC rating flying a very well equipped Trigear Europa (not mine) operated on a "Permit to Fly". I suppose that night flying in a Permit aircraft will be next!

Ben Watkins, from the CAAs Flight Operations Policy Unit, has been monitoring the work that EASA is carrying out on the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA). It seems likely that the UK will derogate from certain EASA rules in favour of the current UK Rules of the Air Regulations. It seems daft to me to have one set of rules for the UK and another for France, Belgium, Germany etc. How can that result in a standardisation across Europe? How can any pilot hope to understand different rules for each country in which he flies? Ben Watkins responded to my often voiced criticism of the CAAs current policy on the safeguarding of UK aerodromes and other flying sites. Apparently a new information pack has been drawn up for distribution to Local Planning Authorities and Mike Barnard, (who had hopped into Bob Jones role as chairman when he had to leave urgently), told me that I will be consulted on it before it is published. I await the documents with interest.

Finally Mike Barnard informed us that the GACC is likely to change in the future to better represent the industry and to work with the CAAs new GA Unit. The twice yearly meetings may become more of a workshop for change rather than merely a forum for consultation with the many special interest groups. The next meeting will be on the 28th January 2014 and I hope to attend on my return from my holiday with my son and his family now living in Auckland NZ. I hope to try my hand at flying in that country. Any tips?

Peter Kember Dip TP, MRTPI, MRAeS,
Aviation Planniong Consultant to Kember Loudon Williams LLP.
Tunbridge Wells. "

Provisional Programme 2014

Programme 2014

5th February	Guards Museum, London
??? April	Adam Henson's Farm, Gloucestershire
23rd April	Gilbert Greenall's Estate
7th May	Claydon Farm & Seed Drills
15th May	Norfolk farms
13th / 14th June	The Abreys Farm
??? July	John Golden / John Milne, Watercress etc.



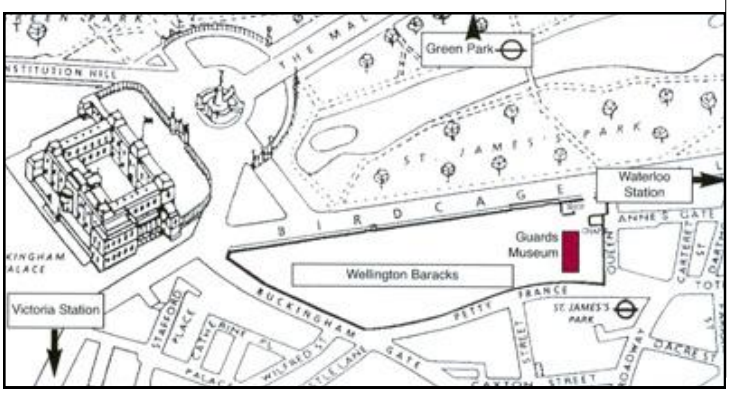
Events such as these set above are arranged by FFA members on a voluntary basis. It is accepted by those who participate that nothing undertaken by the FFA collectively or members individually shall be construed as establishing a duty of care nor in any way removing or modifying the duties, responsibilities 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.



London Visit, 5th February 2014

This year's London visit will be to the Guards Museum followed by lunch at a local establishment. This event has been organised by George Sly through his London contact and Rick Holt.

- Meet at the Guards Museum in time to have a private 2 hour guided tour starting at 10:30 am. This would normally cost £7.50 per head but George's contacts can do this for free - but we will be pointed in the direction of the donation box! The tour covers the history of The Foot Guards from the end of the English Civil War right up to the NATO led Afghanistan campaign. You will learn about the life of the officers and soldiers, the campaigns they fought in, their uniforms and equipment and their ceremonial duties in guarding the Sovereign and the Royal Palace.
- This will be followed by a lunch at a nearby hostelry.



Please complete the reply slip and return to George Sly by 15th January 2014.

Adam Henson's Farm, April 2014

Adam Henson has become a household name through his work with the BBC on programmes like Countryfile, Farming Today, Lambing Live and Nigel and Adam's Farm Kitchen.

Whilst most of us moan about programs such as Countryfile getting too distant from farming and becoming a tree huggers show depicting farming as rearing a few Alpacas, or featuring some weird conservation project in the depths of South Wales as planet saving, Adam has made full use of this modern approach which the media has to the countryside and become extremely successful.

This visit to his farm is not arranged as yet but agreed in principle with Adam, and may include the Countryfile team being

present to make a feature of the Flying Farmers Association.

Some will be sceptical that we could be portrayed as being playboy farmers with aeroplanes. But perhaps, like Adam we too should stop moaning about being hard up farmers and embrace the idea, showing ourselves as being genuine farmers whose hobby is flying and how we use the aeroplane for business purposes.

We had a similar meeting at Ledbury many years ago which was handled well by the BBC which demonstrated that we don't fly around in business jets and how we make use of our aircraft.

Adam's farm is well known for his rare breeds collections at the Cotswold Farm Park which attracts 70,000 visitors a year, but perhaps less well known is that in conjunction with his partner, the rest of the farm comprises 1600 acres of arable and 350 head of sheep.

If you are interested, please fill in the reply slip and you will be kept informed by Rick Holt.

Gilbert Greenall's Estate, 23rd April 2014

More about this visit in the March newsletter.

Claydon Farm and Seed Drills, 7th May 2014

Peter Evans has arranged for us to visit the Claydon family's farm and machinery factory near Newmarket.

The Claydon family started farming in Suffolk in the early 1900's. They now farm over 1000 acres and have turned to machinery manufacturing. Jeff Claydon designed a combine weighing system, the Yield-o-Meter in 1980 and now manufactures the increasingly popular Claydon drilling system as well as other machines which make up a complete drilling system.

This is proving so popular that they have gone international with agents in the UK, Europe and even New Zealand.

We intend to land at a Claydon family strip and be taken by tractor and trailer to see the farm which has been direct drilled for 12 years. After a buffet lunch, we will be shown the machinery works.

There is just a modest charge of £10 per head to cover any eventualities. Please fill in the reply slip and return to Peter Evans.

The Abreys Farm Visit 13th and 14th June 2014

A great opportunity has arisen to visit a large family run farm in the Brecklands in Norfolk on the 13th/14th June next year.

The business was started by the late Russel Abrey in 1939 and is now in its third generation. They specialise in growing early new





season root vegetables including potatoes, carrots, parsnips and onions. Annual production is in excess of 100,000 tonnes supplied direct to wholesale and processing outlets. Recently it was in the press that they had built one of the largest onion stores in the country. Some of the success relies on very intuitive modern farming methods and the ability to have a large amount of water supplied by their own reservoirs.

We will be privileged to have a personal tour, looking round the buildings, root stores and vegetable equipment in the morning and a tour by trailer of the crops in the afternoon.

The day will finish with drinks and a barbeque on the runway and we will have the unique opportunity of an air display by David Jenkins, the current British advanced aerobatic champion. It is hoped he will join us after the display.

On the Saturday we will visit Euston Estate which appears in the Doomsday Book in 1087 and has been the home of the Dukes of Grafton for the past 300 years. This is a 10,000 acre estate which includes 1500 acres of woodland. We will be shown around the shooting, timber, deer stalking and ancient woodland.

We will finish with lunch at a local restaurant and back to the aircraft.

Numbers will be limited. Contact me by email if you wish.

Final details of the trip will be in the March issue.

Mike Rowland Mike. rowland@bowden-farm.com

European Tour

You might have noticed that there is no European Tour scheduled for this year - as yet. This is simply because no one has come forward to organise one.

However - there is still time if someone wants to volunteer to do a tour. I (Paul Stephens) can help out with any organisation to make a tour possible, but I cannot commit to handling one at the usual time of late May / early June. Please email me at chix@farmline.com if you want to have a go.

FFA Website Problems

There is a problem with the FFA website if you are accessing it with an iPad. You might find that it shuts down unexpectedly. We are aware of the problem and our webmaster is dealing with it. Sorry if you are experiencing this problem. It is working ok through a PC.

Joined since 1st August 2013

FFA Number		Strip
8537	Trevor Kellett, County Meath (rejoined)	y
8538	Nigel Edwards, Cirencester (rejoined)	
8540	The Duke of Rutland, Belvoir Castle	y

The total membership is now 396

AGM Report

The 39th AGM of the Flying Farmers Association was held at Sherburn-in-Elmet in Yorkshire on 23rd October 2013.

The weather wasn't good in the south, but most of those who couldn't fly made a valiant effort and drove, some doing over 4 hours driving in each direction. The result was that we had about 50 members including Peter Vacher, our speaker.

Sherburn gave us an extremely warm welcome with complimentary landings, tea and coffee. Thank you very much to the airfield manager, Richard Maxstead who also ferried us to our aircraft on the far apron in his car and looked after them as the wind increased in strength during the day.

The Chairman, Martin Gosling opened the meeting at 11:30



exactly and following the usual apologies for absence (why do we always list those that can't come, but not those that do attend?) and signing of the previous AGM minutes, he gave his Chairman's report.

Martin stressed on us once again that it is up to the membership to come forward with ideas for events and how we run the Association. He thanked the rest of the Committee for another successful year's work.

The Treasurer, Andrew Cragg was unable to attend, so Martin read out his explanation of the accounts for 2012 / 2013.

The Secretary, Paul Stephens also gave his report stating the membership had dropped by 2 and now stood at 394 members. The average age of those declaring their dob, had crept up 62.28 years.

The Events Secretary, Rick Holt summarised the years events and took note of suggestions from the floor for next year's events. These included a suggestion to visit the underground (tube) control centre as our London visit in February, a visit to a large vegetable farm near Lakenheath, a visit to Wyton to see the Pathfinder Collection, Claydon seed drills, a talk about ditching and survival followed by a visit to the Scilly Isles and a visit to Hawker Restorations.

In AOB, a new member, Bob Walker raised the question about planning permission for his airstrip, which was recently refused on noise grounds. It is in the North York Moors National Park, but there are already others operating in the Park. The only reason he sought permission was that he wants to hangar other aircraft there as well as his own. He received some good advice, particularly about a noise report which he will have to do if he takes it to appeal.

Mark Badminton, our representative at GASCo asked if there were any volunteers to do GPS approach work on their strips in conjunction with the CAA.

Paul Burtwistle said that he tried to use his AOPA Aircrew Card as identification at Humberside but it was refused. Bob Walker commented that he used his bus pass once, but it was a few years ago!

Martin Gosling reminded everyone that if they are flying an EASA aircraft then they will have to update their non expiring licence to a non expiring EASA licence by April 2014. the relevant form can be found as a download on the CAA website.

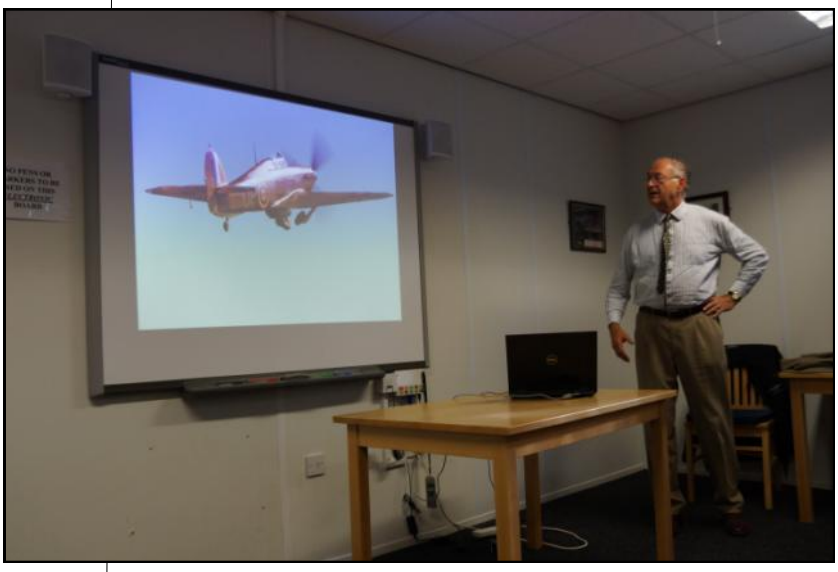
They will also need to complete a form to say that they can speak English, which can also be found on the CAA website.

And don't forget the fee of £73.00 plus the £6.00 charge for secure return postage.

Finally, Gordon Bellerby congratulated Martin Gosling on becoming the British Air Racing Champion.

After a superb lunch put on by the aeroclub with both hot and cold dishes, we were treated to a talk by one of our members, Peter Vacher. Some attended the visit a couple of years ago to Peter and Polly's strip near Oxford and were given a very privileged 20 minute air display by Peter's Hawker Hurricane.

His talk was about how he spent many years trying to buy and extract the wreck from India, which he found at a university. He then went about renovating it to add to his collection of Rolls Royce motor cars that he has previously restored, dating from the 1920s.



It was probably one of the most interesting talks we have had and throughout the hour or so that Peter spoke, everyone was totally engrossed.

And so ended the 39th AGM.

Paul Stephens

Minutes of the 2013 AGM

Sherburn-in-Elmet, 23rd October 2013

Present: M.Gosling (Hon. Chairman), P.Stephens (Hon Secretary), R.Holt (Events Secretary), G.Bellerby (Committee Member), P.Young (Committee Member) and about 40 members.
P.Stephens took the minutes.

	Description	Action
	The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 11:30 hrs (local)	
1	**Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from A.Cragg (Hon. Treasurer), P.Pilch, J.Milne, R.Taylor, Mrs.W.Burton, A.Kedros, M.Easey, J.Golden, C.Dobson, T.Jarvis & C.Moore.	
2	**Signing of the Minutes of the 38th AGM held at Middle Wallop on 10th October 2012**	
	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 FFA had had yet another excellent year with good visits organized by the Events Secretary. He stressed the importance of the membership coming forward with ideas for future events.	
5	**Treasurer's Report**	
	In his absence, the Treasurer's report was read out by the Chairman. Insurance was up due to a claim because of snow bringing down a large hangar. The new website's costs were shown on the accounts. There was no membership list in the year and newsletter costs were down. He was conscious of a large amount of money on deposit at low rates of interest and asked for any suggestions as to a better investment of business money.	
6	**Election of Committee Members**	
	It was the turn of A.Cragg and R.Holt to stand down from the Committee. They were both prepared to stand for re-election. There were no new nominations and both were re-elected. Proposed by I.Weston and seconded by P.Burtwistle	
7	**Membership Report**	
	Membership had dropped over the year from 396 to 394 members due to 11 joining and 13 leaving. Following the recent trend, the average age of those declaring their age has risen from 61.66 years to 62.28 years.	
8	**Event Secretary's Report.**	
	R.Holt ran through the 2013 events which had proved very popular. A number of suggestions were made for the 2014 calendar.	
9	**AOB**	
	A very lively discussion took part following a thank you to the Committee for their work. Subjects included airstrip planning matters, volunteers for using strips for GPS approaches, AOPA crew cars not acceptable as ID at Humberside, a reminder to sort out licenses if flying EASA aircraft after April 2014 and a congratulation to the Chairman on becoming the 2013 British Air Racing Champion after taking the cup from G.Bellerby who was the 2012 champion. The manager of Sherburn airfield was also thanked for providing the venue and excellent lunch at reasonable cost and for waiving the cost of landing and the coffee on arrival.	
	The Chairman closed the meeting AGM at 12:25 hrs (local)	
	Minutes approved at a subsequent AGM.....	

Tour of Eastern Canada May 2010 by Mike Ashmole.

As the autumn days get shorter and flying becomes confined to the odd circuit at weekends Scottish Aero Clubroom chat turns to next years fly outs. Our only Canadian member Dave Mcelroy suggested we do something really different, how about a trip to Canada, where the flying is easy and relatively cheap. There was sufficient interest to at least do some research, it was confirmed that aircraft were available for hire at reasonable rates and a current UK PPL was all that was needed to obtain a Canadian validation, with no tests required. The die was cast.

Dave has his own Comanche 250T based in Canada and he was happy to take husband and wife members Ian and Fran, my wife Jean and I would hire an aircraft in Canada. Our preferred option was a C182 but the only one available was a glass cockpit version which had a minimum check out of 10 hours - who says that glass cockpits make life easier! So we settled for a venerable C172 with a 180 hp engine. This was duly booked via the internet with the Brantford Aero Club in November for the first 10 days of May, no minimum hours or deposit required. Flying in Canada was already proving to be easy.



Brantford Airfield - typical RAF wartime layout

A flexible route was planned which followed the North shore of Lake Ontario on to Ottawa and Quebec then along the St.Lawrence turning Southeast towards Nova Scotia with the turnaround at Baddeck on Cape Breton the site of the first powered flight in Canada in 1909. Dave obtained the necessary charts and flight guides, and by December cheap tickets to Toronto had been obtained and most of the flight planning completed.

Fortunately I have a brother who lives near Toronto and he was happy to act as chauffer and was able to drive us to Brantford and on route pick up my Canadian validation at Hamilton, this took even less than the 15 minutes I had been told to expect, in exchange for $Can 45 I had a shiny new license which I am now able, to revalidate over the internet. Back in November I had booked my check out for 11:00. We arrived at 10:30 and the C172 and instructor were ready for action, Ashley who was going to put me through my paces for the next hour looked younger than my granddaughters but thankfully showed me a bit more respect, a forty minute ground briefing followed by an hours flying in reasonable weather ensued, my log booked was stamped and we were ready to go the next day. I had been aware that flight



Our first port of call

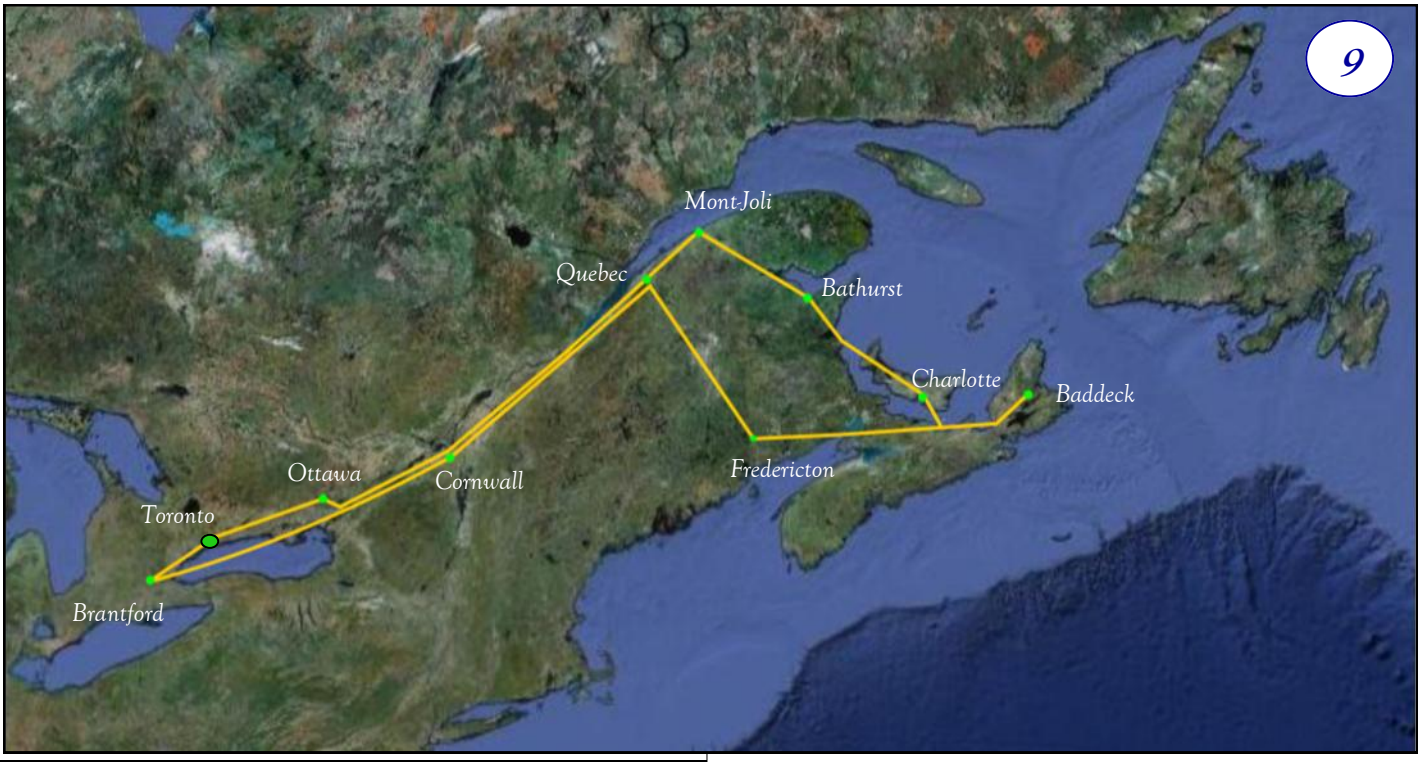
plans are required for all flights more than 25 NM and had thought it would be an imposition I could not have been more wrong, you can only file your plan by telephone toll free even on mobiles, the operator takes you through your plan then offers a weather route briefing and notam briefing and finally an individual squawk for the intended leg.

Our first leg of 200nm was to route up Lake Ontario past Toronto and on to Westport which looked to be a quiet airport in a very scenic area. On filing my plan I was asked what height I would like to route through Toronto airspace - when I said 3000ft. he said "ok stay at that height till your are clear" and that was that.

A quiet airport turned out to be an understatement I had telephoned ahead and it was obvious that the guy who answered the phone was surprised that anyone should want to come. He apologised for not being able to meet us. He confirmed that lodging would be available and he was sure someone would be around to give us a lift. We had had a tailwind of 30-40kts and the 172 was doing 150kts ground speed. Fortunately the 1000m grass/gravel RW was aligned into wind and we stopped in 200m and parked next to the only other visible aircraft which was parked next to a broken down wooden hangar. There was no one about so we struggled with our bags back down the RW as we had seen the road to the village as we crossed the threshold. Eventually a kind lady gave us a lift and we were soon installed in a very pleasant country inn, drinking well earned beers. I thought it only polite to contact the guy we had spoken to in the morning - he could not understand how we had not got assistance, equally when I described where we had parked, but he promised to come and collect us next morning to take us back to the airfield.

The next day we had planned to join the rest of the party in Ottawa, our new friend Jim turned up early. He had the day's weather which was forecasting the wind to get stronger and the chance of thunder storms all day. Westport looked like a great place to spend a grounded day so flying was abandoned. After breakfast we strolled back to the airfield to check the plane, the wind was still blowing 40kts but as the strip had been cut out of a forest it was relatively sheltered. So while Jean took the opportunity to do a bit of sunbathing, I walked the other 800m of RW and all was revealed because at the far end there were new hangars, first class clubroom and proper tie downs, but most interesting of all a large board advertising all the local accommodation providers all offering a courtesy collection service!!

Having given up on meeting Dave and his party at Ottawa the





Did not discover the info until next day due to us landing short

next rendezvous was to be Quebec which was a leg of 280nm. I had decided on a fuel stop halfway at Cornwall, but on filing my flight plan and getting the notam briefing, Cornwall required an hours notice due to runway repairs, so we refiled to Brockville Thousand Island airport. I am not sure whether it has anything to do with the salad dressing. Brockville has a 1400m tarmac runway and was a one man operation and we were on our way again in 20 minutes. We filed for a small parachuting airfield St. Jean which on the chart looked only about 10nm from the centre of Quebec, as we figured the taxi ride would be about the same price as the landing fee and taxi ride from Quebec International.

As we climbed out of Brockville we got our first sight of the mighty St. Lawrence which was to become our line feature for the next 400nm. We kept to the north side of the river as at this point it forms the International boundary with the USA. We did not count the islands but it must be close to a thousand, most with sumptuous houses. A stonking crosswind greeted us at St. Jean, which has a very narrow runway with the first half crossing open farm land and the second half through forest. Suffice to say it was the most interesting arrival of the whole trip. We were not wholly prepared for the immediate language barrier - we had arrived in French speaking Quebec - but it was not long before an English speaker was found, fuel dispensed and lunch served in the airport restaurant. Every bit as good as you would get in La Belle France. A taxi was ordered, and we were on our way to Quebec.

Our intention had been to stop in modest accommodation and use public transport into the city centre but enroute we had a phone call from Dave who had just landed at the International airport, to say he had booked us in the downtown Hilton. I suppose if you have a Comanche, fly IFR and land at international airports you can not slum it in a cheap motel. Dave's son Sean, also a pilot and who works for the Canadian air traffic system, had now joined the Comanche crew and at last after 3 days the team were altogether and we celebrated with an excellent dinner in the old quarter of this very European, very French and very beautiful city. The food matched the best of France. Dave's crew were so enamoured with the city that they booked an extra night, but having looked at next day's forecast, Jean and I decided we would make an early start and get ahead of the fast approaching front. Not for the first time on our flying travels we had a job convincing the taxi driver that another airport existed in the city. Eventually after producing the chart, he agreed to take us back to St. Jean. Fortunately as soon as we reached the outskirts of Quebec the airport was signed. As we filed our flight plan I was asked "did we intend to return the same day as the weather was expected to deteriorate significantly by lunch time". What a service.

It was Saturday and the usual excitement of a parachute airfield was tangible . Luckily they had not fired up their immaculate 208 so we were able to depart unmolested. At 500 ft. we were back in touch with the river which had now changed its name to St. Laurent and we continued at 1000ft., under the Quebec control zone flying along the south shore in perfect weather conditions. As we continued east the river widened and the islands got larger many had there own airfields and occurred to us a great flying holiday could be had just exploring these islands.

Below, the grid like layouts of the towns and villages of English speaking Canada had given way to typical French layout, with the church at the centre and the village spreading out in all directions, and as in France the villages were named after the churches' patron saint.

Our next stop, Mont-Joli was visible from 15 miles out, the tower was manned and the fuel bowser and the172 arrived on the apron at the same time. Inside the large but deserted terminal

there was a café and hire car desk with a guy who could speak reasonable English and who was able to translate between ourselves and the refueller. He also showed us to an excellent briefing room where we filed for Bathurst. Flight plan filing was now getting even easier, as our basic details were stored on a central computer and drawn down by the operator so all that was needed was timings and route. Dave's team having looked at the forecast had decided to cancel their rooms, at great expense, and travel East and they arrived as we were about to depart.

The next planned stop had been Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island. A straight line distance of 250 nm, but this entailed some long over water crossings so we had opted for a more overland route to Bathurst when we would review the next leg.

We were now to leave the St. Laurent, which had become over 30nm wide, and head south east, the scenery beneath now changed from the intensive agriculture of the St. Laurent valley to dense forests of conifers and deciduous trees. Our only regret was that spring had not arrived and the colours were rather drab but must be magnificent in full spring or in the fall.

The flying conditions were still excellent and we climbed up to 3000ft to clear the hills, Bathurst came into view at 50 miles. We had now passed out of Quebec and were in New Brunswick and back in the English speaking world.

As we approached at Bathurst a lady student was busy doing touch and go's on the easterly runway. We broadcast our arrival, I do not know whether it was the strange accent but she immediately departed the circuit. We had had a westerly tailwind for our whole journey so were cautious making an easterly approach, but sure enough the wind was 10kts from the east. We topped the tanks, walked 4 miles to a non-existent café, eventually settling for a bag of crisps from the airport vending machine and deciding Bathurst was not for us and we would continue on to Charlottetown. Weather conditions were still good and we flew down the coast to New Brunswick in order to make the shortest over water crossing to Prince Edward of about 14 miles. Visibility was unlimited and soon the deep and red soils of Prince Edward Island came into view. PIS is the seed potato capital of N.America and cultivation was in full swing.

I was about to make the only boo boo of our entire journey, I called Charlotte from about 20 miles out and again at 10 I had got used to not receiving a reply and continued towards the airfield calling again at 5miles, at 4 miles I was able to see a Dash 7 backtracking the runway and I realised something must be wrong, a quick check on the frequency showed we were on the wrong one, as I was approaching the overhead at 2000 and had been on their radar for 20 miles no delays or conflicts occurred I



Fertile potato land Prince Edward Island



Rugged land of Cape Breton, rough gravel airstrip in distance.

apologised to the controller who said it happens to all of us, but it meant a mandatory report. Dave and his crew had arrived and had booked us all in an upmarket B&B.

We decided that Sunday would be a rest day from flying so a car was hired to explore this interesting Island. Apart from potatoes, its other claim to fame is that it is the fictional home of Ann of Greengables. It appears she is a real cult figure in Japan and the supposed house has now become a shrine for thousands of Japanese tourists.

Our final outbound leg was to be to Baddeck on Cape Breton Is., where Alexander Graham Bell and a few others built and flew the first powered aircraft in Canada. Departure was delayed until midday because of low cloud. The base at the airport moved up to 1500ft. and we set off full of confidence but as we neared the coast the cloud came down to 800ft. and we were into heavy rain. The coast line of Nova Scotia 20nm away was still visible so we pressed on. There was a further short sea crossing and we were flying over Cape Breton, Baddeck or to give it its Sunday name Crown Jewel Resort is a 1000m gravel runway carved out of a hillside intended to be the centre piece of a GA flying resort.

We had travelled through English and French speaking Canada now we were into Scottish speaking Canada as we were met by Greg, ex. bush pilot, who hails from Bridge of Allan just 20 miles down the road from Perth Airport. As well as the aviation activity Greg runs a 1000 acre completely organic farm with a team of horses and not a tractor in sight, the idea is that Dad goes flying for the week while the wife and kids experience the fun of mucking out. For the winter months he keeps a team of huskies. They all looked a bit too mean for me. Greg organised a car for us with 6 seat belts so for once we could all travel together. Our delayed departure from Charlotte meant that we were too late to view the Bell museum that day so we went into town and booked ourselves in a very comfortable hotel with an indoor swimming pool and for the first time on the trip Jean thought she was on holiday.

Next day the plan was to visit the museum and then begin to travel west. The museum was excellent documenting Alexander Graham Bell's remarkable life and his many inventions, the most successful was obviously the telephone, but equally impressive was a Hydrofoil powered by two Renault aircraft engines, that achieved a speed of 71mph in 1919. it had been partly restored and was one of the major exhibits. His aeroplane The Silver Dart was not such a success and was quickly overtaken by American designs. It was interesting that the first flight was off a frozen lake

After lunch we made our way back up to the airstrip, the museum had been at sea level and the cloud base about 1000ft with more than 10kts viz, good VFR conditions by Scottish standards,


Tanker on the St Lawrence

but as we climbed the 400ft. up to the strip it was all looking a bit gloomy although the viz was still ok, and the coast was visible, and to my untrained Cape Breton eye looked flyable.

Despite the day before Greg regaling us with his exploits of daring do, when he was a bush pilot he declared he would not fly in such conditions. It is amazing how a statement like this becomes infectious particularly among the passengers - the result, another night in the comfortable hotel. This delay now meant that we had to rejig our route, missing out Halifax, and going more or less direct to Fredericton a leg of 250nm following the north coast of Nova Scotia, this was an extremely scenic flight but somewhat turbulent.

Fredericton proved to be the busiest airport we had yet visited, with several training organisations based on the field, up until now the direct to button on the GPS had been sufficient to call airfield in sight and we would be cleared to join the circuit and land, trying to break into the frequency was the first problem, as aircraft were being told to orbit, go around, join beacon out bound, etc, etc, we eventually made contact and were told to report at a VOR 8miles north of the field which required some hasty nav. Planning. May be my unfamiliar accent gave me some priority as the next call was cleared for a straight in approach, while some poor guy, probably paying $250 an hour, continued to orbit.

The Comanche had filed IFR from Baddeck and had zoomed up above the clouds, but despite their 140kts. against the 172's 110kts. they had only just arrived. It would have made my day if they had been one of the planes orbiting in the hold. The bad news was that the Comanche had dinged his or hers prop on takeoff on the gravel at Baddeck and needed the attention of an engineer, but because of the amount of activity on the airfield, there were several maintenance shops, so this was not a problem. By the time we had got back from lunch at the recommended Barbie and Kens, I leave you to imagine the décor, both planes were ready to go.

Dave decided to file IFR again, direct to our planned night stop La Chute 30nm west of Montreal, the direct track passed over hills up to 5000ft and with bases forecast at 3500-4000 we had to work our way up the valleys in a North West direction to rejoin the St Lawrence at Riviere Du Loup. Our filed route took us over the US border into Maine, but this did not create any problems, a rather bumpy 170nm skirting snow showers but with 50nm viz. and spectacular scenery.

Riviere was a one girl operation; despite her excellent English RT, it was not so good on the ground. Never the less ,she was extremely helpful. Because of the turbulence on the last leg we were about to call it a day, but while our new helpmate refuelled the 172, a young lad landed in a 152. He had been having a bumble around over the St.Lawrence and he reported it was perfectly calm with a 10kt easterly.

This was too good to miss so we decided on another easterly leg down the river to another St. Jean. We had passed over this airport on our outward journey and I had noted that it seemed to be in the centre of the town so accommodation would probably be walk-able. With the favourable wind we would do it in an hour, which would be 1900. Our girl rang ahead and confirmed they would be open till 1900.

We had a super flight down the river at 800ft. but as we progressed the wind went to calm and we were not going to make the field by what we imagined was the closing time. Having experienced real French controllers in these sort of circumstances it was with some trepidation that I called the field 25 nm out to report a new ETA. The only reaction was, report field in sight.

This St. Jean was a typical 3 runway WW2 airfield and had been used to train wartime UK pilots, and was still being used by the Canadian equivalent of the University Air Squadrons. We parked up and proceeded to the tower where we fully expected the controller to give us a rollicking for our late arrival, only to find the airport was open for another couple of hours. Obviously a translation problem at Riviere, in fact he had been watching our progress on radar from 50nm out. We were his only movement in the last two hours.

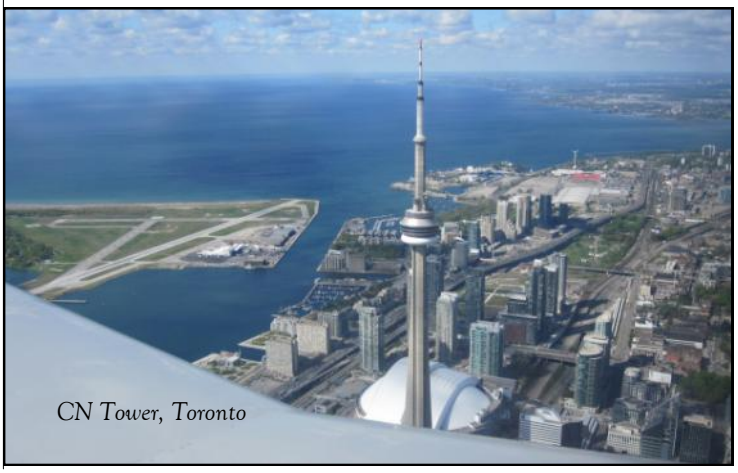
The idea that because the airfield was nestled in the centre of town accommodation would be close by went to pot, when we discovered that the hotels had moved to the outskirts on what appeared to be an industrial estate. So for our last night in Quebec Province, instead of the anticipated gourmet meal in a French restaurant, we had to settle for Pizza Hut and Holiday Inn Express - but we did get senior rates.

Meanwhile Dave in the Comanche had made it to Montreal International, but not before having to climb to 11500ft. to avoid ice.

Next day there was a weather window to fly to our intended last port of call, Parry Sound where a friend of Dave had invited us to stay at his cottage which could only be reached by boat or seaplane, and with the promise of a ride in his Maule float plane.

Or we could make it back to Brantford, with the weather forecast to go downhill and with untransferable tickets back to the UK ,regretfully we chose Brantford.

Our final leg was to be to be our longest yet - 380nm, we had experienced tails winds on most of the outbound legs, and we had been glad we had not been travelling in the opposite direction, but miraculously, or perhaps its got something to do with cyclones and anti cyclones, I never did understand all that met. stuff, we yet again had a tail wind of 20kts.We proceeded in relative smooth air with infinite viz. on through Toronto control


CN Tower, Toronto



Mike and Jean Ashmole

zone over the busy harbour airport, even being able to take photos of my brother's apartment.

The forecast had indicated that the anticipated front would hit Brantford at about the time of our arrival, and with just 20nm to go we were into lowering base's and rain and it was with some relief, when we switched to Brantford they were still doing circuit training. The 172 greased itself back on to its home tarmac and seemed as pleased as we were that we were all back in one piece. Within 30 minutes of landing, the plane had been refuelled, our bill calculated and paid on credit card and a lift to the rail station organised.

The round trip cost of plane hire for 20.6 hours was $Can. 2039 - approx £67 per hour. The average cost of fuel was $Can. 170 per Lt. approx £1.1. Of the 10 airfields we used, 3 charged for landing and only one, Baddeck charged for parking.

Canada must rank as one of the most GA friendly countries in the world. In hindsight our trip was ambitious and we were reasonably lucky with the weather. An equally enjoyable time could be had operating from Brantford on a daily basis with over 70 airfields within an hours flying including Niagara and the US.

Dave, Ian and Fran all made the seaplane and despite Volcanic ash we all arrived back in Scotland on schedule.

Mike Ashmole

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

Annual Movements by Third Party Aircraft	**Limit of Liability £500,000**	**Limit of Liability £1,000,000**	**Other**
Up to 100	£235	£360	To be agreed
Up to 250	£285	£390	To be agreed
Up to 500	£330	£430	To be agreed
Up to 1000	£460	£528	To be agreed
Up to 2000	£528	£595	To be agreed
Over 2000	To be agreed	To be agreed	To be agreed

In addition to premises liability and if hangarage is provided, or if aircraft are kept in your care, custody and control, or where aircraft are moved by you or your employees, then you should include **Hangarkeepers Liability** for an additional £120 for £500,000 any one occurrence, but limited to £50,000 any one aircraft. For £1,000,000 any one occurrence, it would be £240, limited to £50,000 any one aircraft.

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

If you have any queries whatsoever, contact **William Man** at Hayward Aviation on 0207 902 7800 or email wman@haywards.net.

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

Please quote your Flying Farmers membership number when you call.

Flying to the Crimea through the Ukraine

The idea of flying to the Ukraine and the Crimea – an ex-communist country which still has almost non-existent sport aviation, began in 2002 with the dream of a Tiger Moth pilot to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Balaclava and the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1853. Some 40 members of the Air Squadron signed up in principle to participate. In June 2004 a meeting was called for a progress briefing at White Waltham to be told that the planning was going well but the organisers were still awaiting confirmation of guaranteed Avgas supplies for our group in both countries – leaded fuels having been banned for some time. After 7 months of intense negotiation with the authorities giving insufficient progress and the decision deadline approaching, the organisers admitted defeat and called the trip off.

In 2005 this same enthusiast, determined to make the flight, set off with the support of another pilot in a Robin with long range tanks giving 1000 mile range. The Tiger was happy to run on mogas and the Robin also used mogas when avgas was not available, and was able to carry sufficient spare fuel to feed the Tiger when fuel was unavailable.

This trip was successful and culminated in meeting many people in authority, both in Government and the Military who were subsequently able to be very useful in the planning of the 2013 trip. Thus encouraged, so began 7 years of planning and negotiation to bring to fruition a trip for members as originally envisaged. During these years of planning, the patron of the Air Squadron, Prince Michael of Kent, got to hear of the plans and offered his assistance since he was both a fluent Russian speaker and an enthusiastic trade delegate to that part of the world. By April avgas had still not been guaranteed, but we were assured that a bill was to be presented to parliament to change the law and allow it into the country. There were some 160 bills on the table before parliament at that time to be debated, but due to the recession and time constraints, only 40 or so actually got debated. The avgas bill was one of those that was debated and was passed by a majority of 403 – 1!! So with enormous relief to the organisers after the years of planning – the trip was finally, definitely, on

So during Wimbledon week at the end of June 2013 and armed with a large folder full of every conceivable detail of flight planning and social activity for a fortnight, 26 aircraft of very different capabilities, ranging from 4 Tiger Moths at the slow end, to 2 Mustangs and a Yak 3 at the quick end, set off with their own planning from their various bases to meet up in Wroclaw in Poland where the organiser assumed control of all the planning. (Wroclaw was a late change of plan because the original airport of Prague planned for the meet-up issued a notam to restrict arrivals to a minimum aircraft weight of 5 tonnes. The thought of 26 landing and handling fees and large quantities of potential fuel uplift, cut no ice with them)



A Mustang stages through Karlovy Vary

Our journey to Wroclaw took in a refuelling stop at Seigerland in central Germany – a very friendly airfield with good facilities and a nice restaurant, before overnighting at Karlovy Vary just over the German border in the Czech Republic. A beautiful old spa town which was bustling with activity because the film festival was in full swing and all the high and mighty film actors and actresses were there, making hotels and restaurants inflate their prices and difficult to come by in the very attractive city centre. We met up with two other couples also on the trip and spent a pleasant warm evening at a restaurant watching all the 'beautiful people' passing by.

The next day, Saturday, we had a gentle hour and a quarter flight to Wroclaw and found three or four of our team members already there. We were in very good time so spent a lazy afternoon and evening exploring this beautiful city with stunning buildings. As a country bumpkin, I steer clear of cities like the plague, but as cities go, it was by far the nicest I have ever been to.



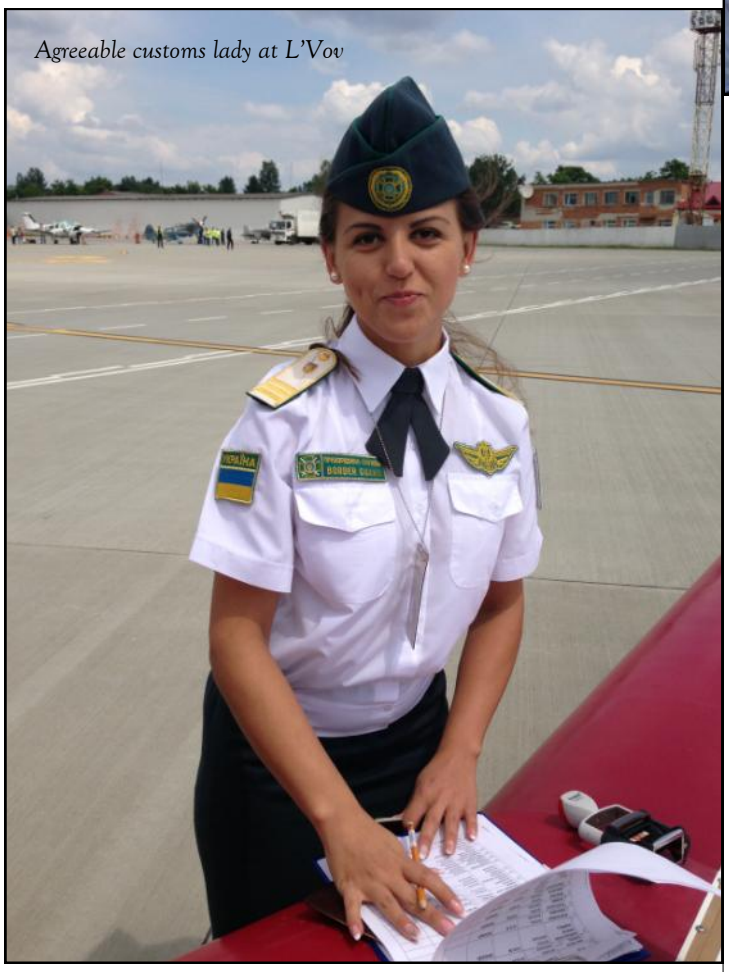
Wroclaw city centre

For the transit through The Ukraine and Crimea we were split into speed groups with one aircraft assuming the responsibility of all the radio work for its own group. Flight planning for all aircraft was done by the overall Squadron navigator. There were 6 designated groups; Group J – the IFR group; Group W – the Warbird group; Group A – the fast twin group; Group B – the fast single group (140 kt+); Group C – the slower singles; and Group L – the 'Low and Slow'. Each group had its own take off slot time with departures at two minute intervals between aircraft within the group. They also had a designated arrival time and it was beholden to each group to adjust their flying speed to ensure their arrival on time. I can report that our group (group C) was by far the best group for getting this right and we never had an arrival more than 1 minute adrift from that required – even after our longest leg of 3¾ hours. At times that meant the lead aircraft throttling back significantly, and at other times the Tail-end Charlie, although looking serene, paddling like hell under the surface!

And so we left Wroclaw for our first leg to the Ukrainian capital of L'Vov (sometimes spelt L'Viv). This was not our finest

hour in the discipline stakes with aircraft starting up and taxiing out at random, barging past those with earlier slots and jostling for position. However once airborne we adjusted our positions into our designated order (we were Charlie 4 in our group), and arrived in the right order and with immaculate time keeping. This flight started VFR but soon deteriorated to solid IMC at 1000' with tall masts scattered around, so we all self announced different heights and carried on IMC for an half an hour or so until the weather improved.

L'Vov airport had been closed for a couple of hours for our arrivals and a military band was there to greet us (actually for Prince Michael's arrival, but we took full advantage of it!) The



Agreeable customs lady at L'Vov

weather was really warm with hotter conditions predicted as we went further South. Refuelling was predictably slow and bureaucratic, but that was soon forgotten as our coach to the hotel had the full police escort treatment with all the 'Blues and Twos'. Every red traffic light, roundabout and crossroad were crossed with impunity amid cheers from us passengers – the driver must have been in heaven!

The first evening in The Ukraine we went to the beautiful Opera House where we were treated to a performance of the opera "Carmina Burana" with specially designated seats in boxes giving us an unparalled viewing experience. Several heads were noted to nod during the performance but they soon perked up amidst a lavish reception to finish the evening off.

A fairly leisurely start on the Monday saw us taxi out behind the warbird group but the Yak 3 reported restricted stick movement, so that group were held up while the problem was quickly resolved. They soon overtook us on our 2½ flight to Kiev, which was over many miles of still-flooded land, the result of unprecedented rainfall over Eastern Europe during June. Kiev airport, like L'Vov, was also shut for two hours for our arrival, but de-



Le'Vov Opera House

spite acres of available concrete ,we were parked in a very rough area of grass which tested both our aircraft's suspension and prop clearance! We spent a couple of hours at the airfield with the public all milling around excitedly asking questions and queuing up to be photographed sitting in the planes, then we shut the planes up and went off to a reception held in one of the museum's aircraft fitted out for the occasion and finally off to our hotel for a welcome free evening in Kiev city.

Tuesday saw us split into the girls group, who went off to the Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture, while he boys group went off to see the Antonov Design Bureau. Antonov aircraft have never competed in the military world or, indeed, competed against the long-haul likes of Boeing and Airbus. Their forte has been short-haul notably into the more rugged environments of the world. There were two highly notable examples of their products – the first being the ubiquitous AN2 biplane which was designed in 1946 and is still in continuous production to this day (in China) with very little change to its airframe or engine (although there are now several conversions to a turbine powerplant in deference to the enormous avgas appetite of the Wrights Cyclone radial engine) The second example was the production of the largest aircraft in the world, the Antonov 225 cargo aircraft, which was designed in the 1980's and has a MTOW of 640 tonnes, is powered by 6 turbofan engines, and can carry 5 x 50 tonne battle tanks at the same time. Only one was ever completed, with a second one partially so. This was a very privileged visit with no restrictions on anything we saw or photographed.

After lunch we were taken to the Youth Aviation Academy, a similar idea to our Air Cadets but with a much broader age and skill range. The youngest group was of 10-year olds who were involved in the principle of design, up to the oldest group who



A traditional welcome from the youngest members of the Aviation Acadamy

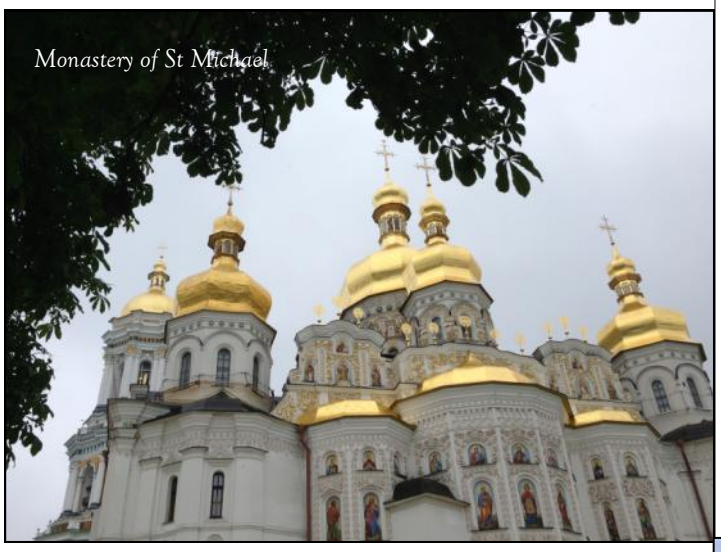
have designed and built their own working cockpit simulator. Their enthusiasm and pride was a delight to see. The day concluded with a reception with the British Ambassador, Simon Smith, at his embassy – Simon having played a key part in getting the authorities on board for the approval of our visit.

Wednesday was the day that the lucky 5 members of the group got to fly shotgun in Mig 29's. The group of Tiger Moths, Super Cubs and Warbirds set off for the military airfield 12 miles away at crack of dawn to give the military some flights in these older aircraft as a quid pro quo for the Mig flights. Sadly the weather wasn't up to much with low cloud and a strong wind, so the Tigers didn't get to fly, but the privileged 5 got to whizz about at high 'G' and high level between layers out of sight of anyone except themselves, and came back with exceedingly broad grins!

Meanwhile the rest of us – the also rans – visited the most ornately gilded monastery of St. Michael which is highly important to their faith, having been originally built in the mid-11th century and been destroyed and rebuilt 4 times in the meantime



G-GOSL parked beside a Russian Bear from the Cold War era



Monastery of St Michael

(earthquake, fire, unidentified explosion and war). We toured the associated caves where the celebrated St Anthony lived for most of his life, and where monks have subsequently lived, meditated, prayed and died, and are now buried. This visit was finished off with a visit to the museum of artefacts which were amazing in their complexity and antiquity.

That evening, another dinner with governmental big wigs and military top brass.

Our final day in Kiev was dedicated to an 'air show' for the public. Each of our aircraft had been placarded beside it with a presentation board of the technical data and performance of that aircraft, and there were crowds all around every aircraft jostling for the chance to sit in them to be photographed and ask questions as to its engine, its performance, its fuel, its everything. Light aircraft were completely alien to them. It was an extremely hot day – well into the 30's – and for the entire time we were there (over 6 hours) there was a uniformed soldier standing to attention behind each of our aircraft. I never saw one of them move or keel over, and our offers of a drink of water went unheeded. In the early afternoon 11 of our aircraft (3 warbirds, 3 Tigers and 5 spamcans) 'displayed' by doing one circuit each to show off its lines. This would not even generate a second glance in Europe, but the public were thrilled to bits by that. As we prepared to depart the airfield we walked down a rope line holding the crowds back and everyone pushed forward to shake our hands and thank us in as much English as they could muster. The evening was thankfully our own before tomorrow's flight



Enroute to Sebastapol

South and into the Crimea for Sebastopol

A 3½ hot flight saw us arrive in sequence and exactly on our allotted time at Sebastopol, but my personal arrival was spoiled by an ominous rumble at the moment of touchdown followed by a containable veer to port – the dreaded puncture. I managed to steer sufficiently off the runway to allow others to land, but ATC were unimpressed with my "negative – unable" response to their request to taxi clear of the runway immediately. Eventually, help arrived in the guise of a platoon of soldiers at the run and a car full of hierarchy who helped take the weight off the wing as we pulled it 50 yards up a taxiway. A while later a man with a socket

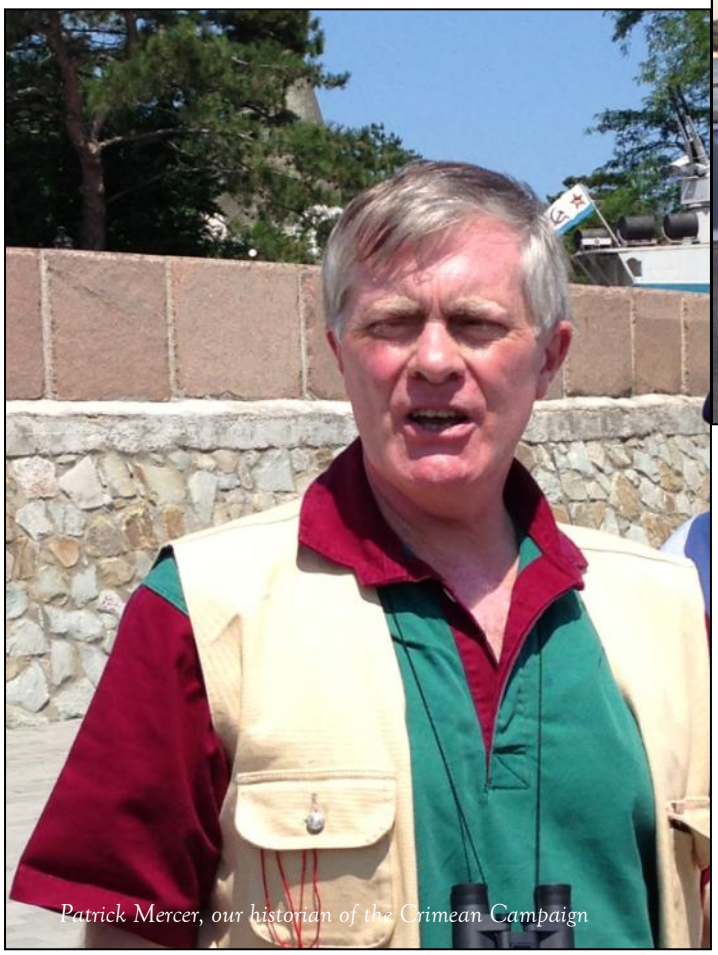


Memorial stone commemorating the visit of the Air Squadron to the Ukraine

set turned up and later still another with a large capacity jack that had a very short stroke. After 5 attempts to get sufficient height, by adding more lumps of concrete underneath it and socket extensions to the top of it, we had the wheel off, the rim split and a new tube fitted. [Now where did I conjure up a new tube, I hear you ask. Well, on our trip around Africa a few years ago I asked my engineer to put in a spare tube to take with me. He put a box in which actually had two tubes in it, and I used both tubes during that trip, one for myself and one for a Mooney nosewheel. No-one else on that trip had any spares with them. With that experience in mind, I have since always thought it prudent to carry a spare tube in the plane with me.]

You would have thought that with my aircraft now serviceable again, ATC would have been keen to get me away from the taxiway and parked up with my colleagues, but my request to taxi met with a curt 'negative' and a demand to remain inside my cockpit. After a few grumpy exchanges, a car arrived and explained that the President of the Ukraine was on finals and the airfield was in lock-down until he had changed into a helicopter and departed for Yalta. Only after 15 minutes after his departure was he deemed to be far enough away for any miscreants that may be lurking around not to pose any more threat to him. Thus was I able to join my colleagues again who were waiting on a grassy area set aside for us well away from any active part of the airfield.

It was now Saturday, 8 days after we had left the UK, and the day that was the whole raison d'être of the trip – the day of the re-creation of the famous Charge of the Light Brigade, in which our Tiger Moths, Super Cub and Mustangs were to give their own aerial interpretation of the battle. But first we had an overview of the whole campaign leading up to the battle by historian and Conservative politician, Col Patrick Mercer, who you may remember did some naughty things in Parliament like taking cash for favours, and promptly lost his seat. He was however a very able speaker and enthralled us with both his knowledge and its delivery which held our attention well. A light lunch was followed by being bussed to the scene of the re-creation where we had prime seats reserved for us in a tent. Unfortunately the tent was very airless, the temperature very hot and the view very restricted, so most of us elected to move out into the open for a better view and risk the sunburn. Many horses, guns and troops in authentic uniform gave a commendable re-creation with much gunfire, smoke and noise – although some clever clogs pointed out that they actually charged the wrong way down the valley, not that it made the slightest difference to the effect.



Patrick Mercer, our historian of the Crimean Campaign

It was now our turn for the aerial re-enactment and the 4 Tiger moths flew over the area each flying a regimental banner from their wing struts of the participating regiments in the battle. Their representation was of the Light Brigade charging down the valley with the two Mustangs due to sweep in from the other end of the valley representing the Russian gun defence. Murphy's law showed his head and one of the Mustangs refused to start and flattened it's battery. By the time it had been 'jump' started the Tigers had returned home and the Super Cub did a slow pass down the valley dropping 120,000 poppies as it passed the VIP tent – a very emotional tribute. Finally the two Mustangs swept in for a unrehearsed finale, doing 3 passes as a victory salute – a great crowd pleaser none-the-less. Although very disappointing for us who knew it had not gone as planned, the efforts put into the whole performance by the pilots were much appreciated by the large Ukrainian crowd.

Back to the hotel for a most welcome wash and brush up before out again to another reception – this time on the flagship of the



Guard of Honour approaching the flagship

Ukrainian Navy which had been held back from NATO exercises for 24 hours to accommodate our visit. Brass bands, guard of honour and a sumptuous buffet and champagne reception hosted by the Admiral in the helicopter hangar on board, had us much refreshed after our hot and busy day – but by 10 pm we were about to outstay our welcome since the ship had to sail at 4am the next day to catch up with its counterparts on exercises

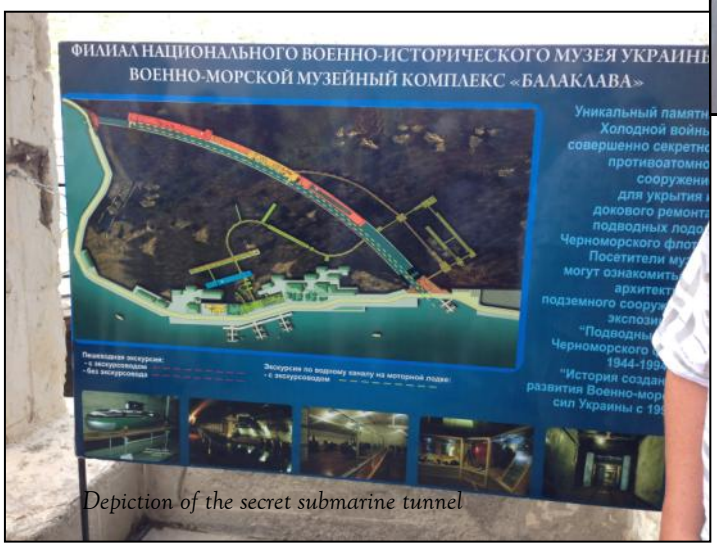
It's Sunday, and the temperature keeps rising – it's now nudging 40* and we are due to have a further historical update by our accompanying historian, Patrick Mercer. Having visited the Russian Memorials in Sebastopol City, we then transferred to 'Redoubt No 4' to have explained the strategies and positions involved by both sides in the Siege of Sebastopol in 1855. We jostled for position in whatever shade we could find, with Patrick being apparently unaware of the heat, and there was no doubt that he was extremely knowledgeable, but there is only so much


Shade was at a premium

information that one can absorb whilst fighting off sunstroke. We lunched overlooking Balaclava harbour with the prospect of further history lessons on the Battle of Inkerman in the afternoon, but the restaurant overlooked a mostly forgotten relic of the Cold War, a submarine museum. When a groundswell of overwhelming interest began from the group to visit this museum, a campaign was launched to try to dissuade us – we were here, we were reminded, to learn about the Crimean history and the museum was 'just an empty tunnel, and we would be bitterly disappointed'. About 15 of us stuck to our guns for the museum, with the remainder frying to death in the midday sun learning about Inkerman.

The tunnel was fascinating – and blissfully cool at 15*. Created as a servicing base and safe haven in the event of nuclear attack in the Cold war, it was built 300 meters beneath the hills leading off Balaclava harbour and was 800 metres long from entrance to exit comprising a continuous curve to dissipate the potential effect of blast and shockwaves. It took 7 years to build in secrecy with all those living in the area being moved elsewhere. It had the capability of providing survival for 3000 people of the hierarchy for 30 days behind two enormous blast proof doors at either end. With the ending of the Cold War it was no longer needed and was unable to cope with the larger nuclear subs being produced as they were unable to negotiate the radius of the curve, and so it was abandoned – only being opened as a tourist attraction in the last decade.

Back to our hotels for a wash and brush up for another reception, this time the venue being the Milkailov Battery, a fort built at the mouth of the harbour as a protective defence against enemy ships. Completely restored in 2010 it now houses an extensive and unique war museum. In addition to a superb buffet banquet, we were entertained by a large variety of their top musicians of the utmost quality who performed



Depiction of the secret submarine tunnel


Reception at the Milkailov Battery

all evening for us, the whole evening ending with a spectacular firework display.

The last full day in the Crimea was approaching and the group was split into the aircraft captains, who had to refuel their aircraft for the next day, and the remainder who were bussed to the town of Yalta where the post war conference between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin took place in the palace to discuss the reorganisation of post-war Europe. 3½ hot and tedious hours later all aircraft were refuelled, now all easily able to reach their next refuelling point on the start of the journey home. The Yalta contingent had a much more rewarding day even though it was a


Our final reception in Sebastopol

significant bus journey both ways.

We had time back at the hotel for a short rest before – guess what! – A RECEPTION.

This one really was the last one we were to endure. I say 'endure' because it was becoming rather a marathon, night after night. It was (another) lavish and unforgettable party with (another) Guard of Honour upon arrival, and (another) firework extravaganza to send us to bed. In between we had many farewell speeches of comradeship and gratitude for our visit, food and drink galore with displays of ballet, opera, harmony singers and dancers. Each reception seemed to try to out-do the previous one, and I must say the Ukrainians certainly knew how to lay on a magnificent event (I do wonder, though, at what cost!). And now


That's a drinks table!



Hmmm!


Pyramid of Champagne glasses

it was time to start our way North and back to Europe.

It was a case really of 'kick the tyres, and light the fires and press the "Go To" button'. In all the months and even years of planning that had gone into the trip, every flight planning scenario had been carefully worked out and given to each pilot before departure – even down to 'wheels rolling' and 'touch down' times at every destination. No stone was left unturned and it worked faultlessly on every occasion – save our departure from Sebastopol. ATC couldn't get their head round a largish group of aircraft using their airspace while there were a few important Heads of State (very) intermittently flying in. The fact that we could have all started up, taxied out, taken off and been miles away over the horizon before the next Head of State turned up, wasn't in their script. Thus we all hung around a very hot grass airfield for well over 2 hours with the prospect of a timely arrival in L'Vov looking ever more unlikely with 6 hours of flying plus a refuelling stop ahead of us.


The long wait for take off clearance

At 13.30 we were given the thumbs up to start, and 3¾ hours took us a fair way North to Vinnitsa for refuelling and where the reception committee had gone home! There were however about a hundred stalwart members of the public waiting behind a police cordon to greet us, and after shutting down engines they were allowed to swarm around us with cameras and questions galore. It really was hard for us to get our head round what a novelty to the Ukrainian man-in-the-street sport flying in general, and our visit in particular, was.

Another 2 hours flying saw us arrive at L'Vov just after 20.00, where the relief of a frustrating day behind us was shattered by that ominous rumble of a flat tyre as we taxied through the main apron. Now what? No more spare tubes and the evening drawing in. After much faffing around by lots of people all arguing as to what to do, a pallet and pallet trolley was produced, while I took the wheel off and rested the axle on the pallet using the trolley as the third wheel to move the aircraft a couple of hundred yards to a parking slot out of the way. An English speaking handler now took us under his wing, organised a taxi for us and led the taxi with him on his motor bike to a most unlikely little shack in an out of the way place, which turned out to be a one-man-band tyre repair shop still open and in business even though it had gone past 10 pm. The handler remained with us through-

out as translator and the taxi waited while he repaired the puncture. As an afterthought I asked if he could repair the other punctured tube 'just in case'. That tube had a split in it about 3" long and the longest patch he had had was no more than 4" long. It seemed a fairly pointless project, extremely unlikely to hold air under pressure and any repair place in the UK would have rejected the idea out of hand, but for the sake of another 5 euros I thought 'why not' – you never know! The patient taxi driver found our hotel for us where we fell into bed at 11 pm with the prospect of an early start in the morning to try to make it all the way back home in the day via Dresden for Customs and refuelling – around 8 flying hours.

An early breakfast saw us depart for the airfield clutching our repaired wheel and spare tube, which we quickly had reassembled (I'm getting the hang of removing spats, brake callipers, and splitting wheel rims by now – not sure about locking wire and double checking the work, though!). The fueller appeared on request and we were airborne at 10.15 en route Dresden. 3¾ hours later Dresden hove into view, we landed and after a long taxi, and just as we entered the GA parking area, down went that tyre again! The ground controller quickly sent help in the guise of half a dozen individuals, most of whom had the job of watching proceedings without lifting a finger. Another man then appeared followed by a large robotic aircraft mover under radio control and more suited to airliner recovery. That was quickly despatched back to base, and a more sensible hand operated wheel lifter arrived in its place. Much inefficiency later the wheel was inserted into its scoop, strapped on and the aircraft moved 50 yards to a parking slot. Removing the scoop revealed a large pool of hydraulic brake fluid emanating from the brake pipe union which they had neatly sheared off the calliper. That really bothered them 'cos now their nice shiny concrete had brake fluid on it and men set about at a run to get it wiped up with detergent and then quietly melted away never to be seen again


The last straw!

So there I was left with the handling agent who asked me what I wanted to do – he offered only the suggestion that there was a tyre company on the other side of the city about 45 minutes away. I suggested a jack to lift the wheel might be useful as without that we would have an impasse – a suggestion he could not comprehend in its importance. There was no such thing as a jack on their airport, he insisted, and my suggestion that that was ludicrous and that every car and van that was running about the airport would undoubtedly have a jack in it. He shrugged, insisting there was no such thing, and insisted we go to see Customs urgently as we had arrived over an hour ago from outside the EU. On arrival back at the aircraft every single person had buggered off, but there were however, three jacks and some blocks of wood left by the side of the wheel!!

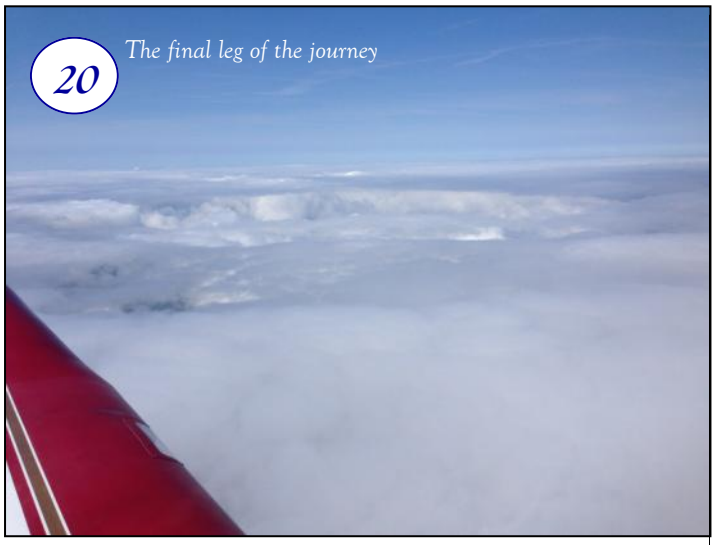
I now set about removing the spat (again), taking off the wheel (again) and splitting the rim (again). There was nobody around to help or advise me, and all I had to help myself out of our muddle was a badly damaged tube I had thoughtfully repaired at L'Vov, but which had almost zero chance of supporting another take off and landing. Annette quite rightly said 'what was the point of repairing it if I wasn't prepared to give it a try, and in any case with no one else around, what alternative was there?' She was right of course. So we reassembled everything and then realised we had no compressed air – at which point, the only helpful man in Germany appeared in the shape of a Lufthansa mechanic in a white van – with a compressor on board!! We carefully inflated the tyre and then gave it about 5 psi extra to try to remove some of the sidewall flexing, but not too much so as to blow the dodgy repair patch off. We spoke to our engineer in England and told him the story and asked him about the sheared brake pipe. He advised us that if we were happy to fly with only one brake, we could tape up the end of the hose to prevent the air sucking the fluid out of the reservoir and also strap it to the torque link to stop it flacking about. He suggested that possibly the cause of our punctures was a rogue wire in the sidewall protruding into the tube when the sidewall flexed, which certainly sounded plausible.

By now it was too late to contemplate further flight so we booked our flight for early the next morning with the GA office who declined to collect our landing and handling fees, saying he would do it on the day of departure, and rang our friends who had earlier landed in Dresden to book a room at their hotel, and met up for drinks and dinner. We had a sleepless night worrying about what if the tyre let go again while we were taxiing – or worse still during the takeoff run causing a blocked runway and endless diverted flights. It really didn't bear thinking about.

Another early breakfast saw us back at the airfield – too early for Customs who had to be winkled out of bed, or so it seemed, as we had to wait half an hour for them to appear for their 30 second cursory glance at our two passports, and certainly far too early for the GA office to be open, so they didn't get their payment before we left. Our nerves were now as taught as they could possibly get as we got taxi clearance for takeoff. We did the slowest taxiing I have ever done to get to the runway, asking for an intersection departure to reduce the distance.

OK so far; lined up, clearance given, stick as far back as I could get it, full throttle, a VERY deep breath and a big prayer from both of us – and a very long 10 seconds later we were airborne with no further drama. We both shouted 'made it!' at the same time and both punched the air together with enormous relief. Next stop Stones Farm.

4¼ hours later after an uneventful flight, commenting en route



that we had a Northerly wind, we arrived overhead and set up to land on R/W 36 our shortest runway, but which had a cut crop of hay helpfully on either side to swerve onto if the tyre let go again. On very short finals, Annette said we seemed to be going much faster than usual, but a quick glance at the ASI showed a steady 60 knots. As we touched down Annette said 'are you sure we are going to stop?' I said I wasn't sure, and dabbed the brakes which veered us off towards a wood beside the runway, so I quickly abandoned that idea. As Annette's bum clenched ever tighter, we slowed sufficiently to finish our landing run by turning right through 90* down R/W 27. That would indeed have been a sad end to an amazing trip.

After lunch I took the plane to my engineers to throw away the tyre and tube and give me another one. As I taxied out, I was amazed to find the wind had gone round by 180* and it then slowly dawned on me – I had landed on my shortest runway, downwind with a dodgy tyre and only one brake! Lucky – or downright poor airmanship? The latter, I fear! Later that afternoon a Customs man turned up at home for the first time ever, to check on my arrival and was surprised to find me already home – and why wasn't my aircraft there for him to check? I merely replied – "If only you knew...!"

It was a truly remarkable trip, more than anything else for all the massive planning that went into it over a number of years. The friendship we encountered in all walks of Ukrainian life and the reception committee we received in high places was unparalleled – although one more evening reception might well have been one too many for me! The success was almost entirely due to one man's vision and determination to overcome the complexities of getting over 60 people in 26 aircraft the whole length of a country which hardly recognises sport aviation at all and to celebrate a very British war in a far off place, and to get everyone and every aircraft back home again safely and in one piece (just!). There cannot be many aviators who have single-handedly changed a law in a country to allow such a visit to go ahead!

PS Four weeks after I got home I received a grumpy demand for the landing and handling fees wondering why I had departed without paying. I suggested that not paying those would be a small compensation for damaging my aircraft with no apology whatsoever. As you may imagine, that suggestion was not well received.

PPS Two weeks later still I received an invoice for the assistance given to my aircraft at Dresden airport, and breaking it, without apology, at the same time.. This was for 972 Euros. That is NOT a misprint – around £820 for being the most useless and unhelpful set of individuals to ever walk this earth. In one of the letters the 'services' they 'provided' were itemised and 75% of them were clearly not provided at all. After I had had 4 exchanges of letters with them, each time telling them I had no intention of paying for such non-existent and unhelpful service, I received a final demand before referring it to their lawyers. I referred to my lawyer who suggested that at leastI pay the amount that I felt was reasonable for the service I had received. This may stop any further action. I worked it out on a spreadsheet, deducted a charge for the repair to my aircraft, added a 40% goodwill gesture and sent them 295 Euros in cash (I wasn't about to give them my Credit card details) and told them it was in full and final settlement. I await a reply, or even an acknowledgement of receipt of funds.

I cannot disguise how much I despise their greedy and unhelpful attitude towards someone who needed help on the day, and which they should have provided. Had an English airfield done that to a foreigner, I would have been both appalled and disgusted. (Out of interest, neither Ukrainian airfield made any suggestion of a payment for their considerable help.)

Martin Gosling



It was announced in October that Martin Gosling is the 2013 British Air Racing Champion. This makes a remarkable run for FFA members as Geoffrey Boot took the title in 2011, Gordon Bellerby won in 2012 and now the third FFA success in 3 years for Martin.



Martin in the centre, Gordon Bellerby on his right and Geoffrey Boot on the far right