FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 82 *March 2003*

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Editor & Publisher;
P.A.Stephens
Moor Farm
West Heslerton
Malton
North Yorkshire
Tel: 01944 738281
Fax: 01944 738240
Email: chix@farmline.com

Printers;
MDP, Malton, North Yorkshire

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A photograph of the gate guardians taken by Martin Gosling whilst at the FFA visit to Hendon on a miserable day in February.

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July 1st 2003

Chairman's Introduction

Spring is round the corner, the grass is growing, new crops are to be planted and tended, and the aviator can begin to look forward to blue skies, warm evenings, and the thrill of being "above it all" - air-borne.

It is now almost 100 years since the Wright brothers' first flight. Our pond cousins intend to celebrate this with some enthusiasm, and rightly, but I did enjoy the recent television programme on the pioneering genius Leonardo da Vinci, who in the late 1400s designed what was effectively a hang glider. Some very keen people have followed his plans and built a replica, and a courageous lady pilot has flown it. To steer it requires a combination of weight shift and wing warping - this needed a lot of rather perilous practice in the gusty conditions of the televised flights.

Our first event of 2003 was a visit to the RAF museum at Hendon, during which we were taken round a "History of Flight" exhibition honouring the brave and gifted people who have gone before; included amongst these was Leonardo da Vinci, but mainly for his drawings of a rotary-wing aircraft!

It is sad to hear that almost all general aviation manufacturers are cutting production and some are going into Chapters 7 or 11 bankruptcy. We can only hope that the market picks up and that fresh capital will keep these names before us. I also hope that the new designs that we currently hear about will get financial backing and go into production. How exciting to read about the Diamond DA42 Twin Star. As someone who has travelled over a lot of water I have felt happier with two engines for the last twenty years. According to the press, the DA42 is capable of cruising at 203 knots at 12,500 feet on 14.2 US gallons per hour, or at 168 knots on 7.8 US gallons per hour - as always, the extra speed costs a wee bit more. With full tanks and a range of over 1000 miles, this aircraft has a useful load of more than 900 lbs, the secret being its design, its construction material and its new Thielert compression ignition engines running on Jet A1 fuel. It is incredible that this aircraft went from drawing board to reality in 55 weeks, with many new safety factors and features - even a glass cockpit!

As if this wasn't enough, the same company has also announced that they have started work on a new jet aircraft capable of operating from short airfields and up to 25,000 feet. How can they be so bullish when everyone else is in the doldrums?

Most of us, I guess, due to the (mis)fortunes of agriculture, will have to stick with our present tried and trusted mounts, but I confess that I am dreaming, dreaming hard ……..

John Golden

Committee Members

Dick Walgate	President	01472 371203
John Golden	Chairman	01725 552384
Paul Stephens	Secretary	01944 738281
David Corbett	Treasurer	01568 708351
Anthony Kedros	Events Secretary	01295 720876
Martin Gosling	Airstrip Advice	01787 269369
Mike Cuttell	Committee Member	01242 236770
Mike Ashmole	Committee Member	01738 627622

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http://members.farmline.com/flyfarm

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Editor's Notes

Apologies to everyone for the late arrival of the December newsletter - the printers had gremlins in their equipment. This newsletter follows fairly quickly after the last one and is meant primarily to notify members of the forthcoming events, so content is not that volumous.

There seems to be an increasing number of members doing their flying in foreign countries. Is it the weather here, or the continuous gloom of politics and bureaucracy that is driving us away during the winter months? Tony and Jean Poulsom have just flown in Mexico and been kind enough to share their experience with us in this newsletter. So even if we can't go physically because of the uninspiring future of British farming, we can maybe transport ourselves in mind for a few minutes by reading his article.

Talking of foreign ventures—what about Polly Vacher going over both poles single handed! We will follow her progress on the website and might even be able to get her to relate some of her experiences in a future newsletter.

Paul Stephens

News and Views



Polly Vacher

At the FFA AGM held in Cambridge on 1st November 2001, we all listened in awe as Polly gave us an extremely modest talk about her well publicised round the world solo flight. Everyone warmed to her very down to earth and friendly manner, hardly believing that such a pleasant person could battle her way through all the bureaucracy and dangers of a circumnavigation.

As everyone must already be aware, on 6th May this year, just as she hinted at that AGM, she is taking on an even more daring flight; a circumnavigation crossing both the North and South Poles.

She will again be doing it all for her charity, the Flying Scholarship for the Disabled. If you would like to help her on her way, you can have your name printed on the wing of her Piper Dakota for the small sum of £25. If you send in your donation before 25th March, you can meet Polly and view your name on the wing of G-FRGN at Oxford Airport on 6th April (free landing fees).

You can find out more about her flight, follow her progress and make donations on the website www.worldwings.org Alternatively, use the form enclosed. The FFA wish her the best of luck during this extreme adventure.

General Aviation Report Fax Number

In the last newsletter, we published a copy of the General Aviation Report and a form with instructions for completion of the said report. Unfortunately on the instructions it states "notification for flights should be to the NCU by fax 0870 785 3738". You might also have received copies of these forms through the post from your local police department with the same incorrect number. If you try dialling it, you will only get "the number you have dialled has not been recognised".

The correct number to fax your report to is **0870 240 3738.**

Another thing that isn't made clear is, what does NCU stand for? As far as we can make out it stands for National Co-ordination Unit. Their telephone number is 0870 785 3600.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

A recent AAIB Bulletin (12/2002, amended by 2/2003) reported in detail an accident to a Piper Comanche aircraft, in which carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning was responsible for the death of two crew members.

It was reported at the last General Aviation Safety Council meeting that the AAIB and the CAA are extremely concerned about the risks of CO poisoning in GA aircraft. Both organizations are aware of the availability of small replaceable CO detectors, and they urge all pilots and aircraft owners to fit one of these detectors to their aircraft, and to change them regularly in accordance with the instructions. Consideration is being given to making the fitting of a CO detector mandatory,

Europa aircraft with unprotected slots in the cockpit module for the brake lever – and landing gear levers in Monowheel aircraft – must be more vulnerable to this risk, and owners are urged to fit (and renew regularly) a CO detector.

CO detectors can be purchased from your local flying club, or from GA shops. Light Aero Spares Ltd (01409 281578) list these items in their catalogue at £2.00 each.

AIS website update

NATS accept that there is a major problem with the AIS website. At a meeting on 6th February 2003 the Director of Airspace Policy assured industry representatives that there would be a plan in place by the end of February to demonstrate to industry that the website would be running properly by mid April. It was confirmed that funding is available to achieve this aim.

Diamond Aircraft UK Ltd.

You might remember, I did a flight test and article in the December 2001 newsletter. The aircraft tested was the Diamond DA40-180, which I liked but at the time I was more impressed by the enthusiasm of Bob Green and the approach to marketing the aircraft.

I have just received their latest newsletter with the following announcements which reiterates part of our Chairman's Introduction;

Diamond have launched the DA40-TDI Jet A1 powered aircraft for which they currently have 22 downpayments in the UK for delivery in 2003.

They have also announced the DA42 Twin Star which is a Jet AI twin for which they already have 13 UK orders for delivery in 2004.

Looking even further ahead, Diamond are to build a five seat single engined personal jet. This is projected to achieve 318 kts at 25,000 feet with an 1150 nautical mile range, yet take off over a 50' obstacle in 1600 feet.

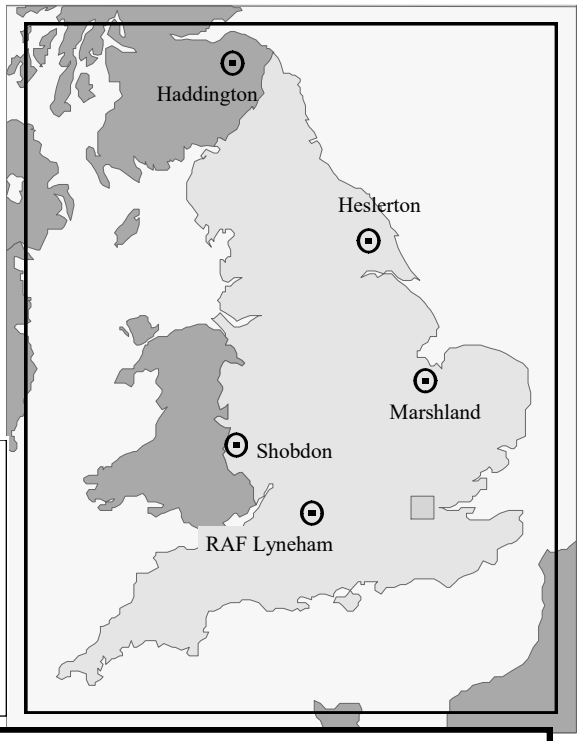
Diamond UK are taking on extra staff and technicians at Gamston to help the company meet the requirements of JAR 145 accreditation. A customer support quality control manager will join the company in May/June this year to help prepare the way for the large number of new aircraft deliveries scheduled for the second half of this year. They will also become an approved Theilert engine service centre from February this year.

They are also launching the Diamond Flight Club this spring. Members will enjoy discounts on renting from a modern fleet of Katanas, Diamond Stars and the new Twin Star. They are also to conduct organised European Tours and a trip to their London, Ontario factory and Oshkosh are also planned for this year.

In the Diamond Pilot Shop and coffee bar, there is a full cockpit Katana Flight Simulator which is available for IMC/IR practice or general flight training.

Paul Stephens

Programme 2003



Still Looking

Due to Anthony Kedros giving us notice of his retirement as Events Secretary, the FFA now need volunteers to come forward and be considered for this rewarding position. The successful candidate will have organisational skills and sufficient cheek and bullying techniques in order to get others off their backsides and arrange meetings for the rest of us. Pay is sod all, but you will become a power freak and thoroughly enjoy it!
Applications to the Committee please.

Events such as these set out below 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.

April 9th	Fly in to Marshland and see Rod Herbert's potato machinery business.
April 23rd	Fly in to Heslerton, North Yorkshire to visit Pat Nutt's farm with lunch in his magnificent hall, then onto Paul Stephens farm.
May 19th-20th	Visit to the Haddington Estate, East Lothian, home of one of our members, The Duke of Hamilton. Next day visit the Scottish Crop Research Institute, Dundee.
June 8th-14th	The European Study Tour, The Baltic States. (Sorry, fully booked)
July 9th	Shobdon, Herefordshire
July 23rd	RAF Lyneham, Wiltshire.
Sept / Oct	AGM, to be arranged

Welcome to New Members

Since 1st Decemeber 2002, the following have joined the FFA

737 John Raw, Sedgefield, Co. Durham (rejoined)
738 John Martin, Andover, Hampshire

The total membership now stands at 353

Old Newsletters

David Corbett has a quantity of early newsletters at Shobdon. If any members would like to add to their collection please fax him on 01568 708177 or email David.Corbett@fwi,co.uk

Tour of Rod Herbert's Potato Machinery business, Wednesday 9th April 2003

Rod Herbert (FFA No 176) is now one of the best known potato machinery manufacturers in Europe. He is a self made man and you will be amazed to see the efficient and modern way he runs his factory. For further details please refer back to the December 2001 newsletter in which there was a member profile of Rod.

We will fly to his strip, Marshland. It's from here that he operates a Cessna 310 and is right next to the factory. We will meet at 10:30. After a liquid refreshment we will be conducted round the works with a light lunch provided by his wife, Georgie at their superb house.

Please send your reply slips to Paul Stephens by March 24th. Further details will be sent to those participating.

Fly to Heslerton, North Yorkshire, Wednesday 23rd April 2003

Pat Nutt farms at East Heslerton near Malton. His two sons, Paul and Andrew run this 'man's land' farm in the Vale of Pickering, growing Potatoes, Sugar Beet, Wheat, Barley and OSR extending to 1800 acres.

Paul Stephens' Moor Farm is in contrast to the Nutt's, being on 'boy's land' at 500 feet on the Yorkshire Wolds. Paul grows Wheat, Malting Barley, OSR and rents land out for Potatoes on this 880 acre holding. One big difference is the 160,000 bird broiler chicken unit at Moor Farm.

Come and compare the two farms, only 5 miles apart and see what measures are being taken to combat the shrinking incomes and increasing bureaucracy.

Both farms have good strips (Moor Farm is 600m, Heslerton is 500m), but have limited parking areas. However it is intended to split the landing aircraft between the two strips and have a coach for the day to move us about. Details of which strip you are allocated will be given after the closing date for entries. Please specify if you have a preference.

Those landing at Paul Stephens strip will be required to land anytime before 10:15. The bus will leave for the Nutts at 10:20, where we will meet up with those landing at Pat's strip by 10:45. There will be coffee available at Pat's hangar, after which we will have a conducted tour of the farm followed by a highlight of the day—lunch in Pat's fantastic Hall.

All will then be bussed to Moor Farm to tour this Wolds farm with a chance to see the broiler chicken unit. Following afternoon tea, those that landed at Pat's strip will be returned by bus and all can leave at will at 16:30 to 17:00 or thereabouts.

Please send the reply slips to Paul Stephens by March 31st, but asap please. There will be a charge of £12 per head to cover the catered lunch and transport.

Visit to the Haddington Estate and the Scottish Crop Research Instituite, Monday and Tuesday 19th and 20th May 2003

The Haddington Estate is owned by FFA member the Duke of Hamilton. Landing will be at Archerfield—550 metres grass, approx 4 miles west of North Berwick.

Lunch will be at the Scottish Air Museum at East Fortune and for those that feel they require more time at the museum, they can fly direct. Please indicate on the tear off strip which airfield you propose to use.

Early evening, we fly to Dundee for an overnight stop. The following morning we visit the Scottish Crop Research Institute at Dundee.

Approximate cost of overnight accomodation and transport is £35 per person sharing a twin bedded room. Add £25 for single occupancy. Unfortunately, the payment cannot be returned for non arrivals.

Reply slips to Mike Ashmole immediately so that the hotel reservation can be confirmed. Plans of both airports will be sent to all participants.

Visit to Shobdon, planned by David Corbett, Wednesday 9th July 2003

A fly-in to Shobdon is being planned for Wednesday 9th July, four of the five visits described below will be programmed for that day.

I am aware that members coming from Scotland or the North may wish to arrive on Tuesday 8th July and stay overnight; therefore, if sufficient members indicate on the reply slip that they would like to arrive on the Tuesday, we may organise one of the 5 visits for the Tuesday afternoon.

- **Energy crops**, at Shobdon itself and at a second site 6 miles away. A local expert has set up various businesses to grow and market energy crops, including miscanthus rootstocks. Planning permission is awaited for an energy crops power station in the Hereford area - a national utility company has submitted an application.
- A visit to **7Y Machinery Syndicate**; the founder, Nick Helme, will talk us through the history of the syndicate, and will also show us his latest project - a bio-organic digester; and we may also see an intensive mushroom growing operation on the same site. 9 miles from Shobdon.
- **Hampton Court.** This Victorian mansion has been bought by an American, and the gardens and greenhouses have been extensively restored and are an accepted "must" in this part of the world. 1 mile from 7Y.
- **Broadfield Court Vineyard**. 2 miles from Hampton Court.
- **Tyrrells Potato Crisps.** A local potato grower has set out to provide high quality potato and vegetable crisps, and is doing very well. 12 miles from Broadfield, 5 miles from Shobdon.

Please return your reply slip as soon as possible if you wish to attend this event - the closing date will be Monday 14 April. For those who wish to stay locally on the Tuesday night, I will make provisional arrangements for you - but you will have to confirm them. Those indicating that they wish to stay will receive a short questionnaire about the type of accommodation you require. It is essential that all those planning to attend give their e-mail address (or fax no if no e-mail) on the reply slip. There will be a charge of £15 pp.

I look forward to a good turnout on the day(s)!!

Visit to R.A.F.Lyneham, July 23rd 2003.

Due to uncertainties about the Iraq situation, this event is on hold. But as this is the last newsletter before this event, would those interested in going please send in a reply slip to Ian Bonham-Smith and he will communicate with you when things are more certain.

Winter Meeting

Flying Farmers Visit to RAF Hendon Museum, 12th February 2003.



Wednesday the 12th February proved to be an excellent choice of day to hold our (by road) visit to RAF Museum Hendon, the traffic was no problem and the museum volunteers were able to give us their undivided attention.

The party (one lady / thirty three gentlemen) was welcomed by David Keen who gave us a brief history of the RAF Museum. In 1910 Claude Grahame-White, a businessman, entrepreneur and aviator pioneer, teamed up with Louis Bleriot, to establish the grandly-named London Aerodrome. Aircraft were manufactured here and flying displays cook place, attracting vast crowds.

During the First World War the aerodrome was requisitioned by The Royal Naval Air Service who erected the two hangers that now form the Main Exhibition Hall. At the end of the first world war the Royal Air Force was formed and they retained control of' the aerodrome in spite of Grahame-White's efforts to get it back. The King's Flight was based at Hendon and the airfield became the London home of the Royal Airforce.



World War Two saw Hendon become a fighter aerodrome and was used by Winston Churchill in 1940. After the war the runway was not long enough for military jets and in 1972 The Queen opened the first part of the museum. 1979 saw the Battle of Britain Hall opened. Presently an impressive new building is being constructed to celebrate the centenary of powered flight this is due to be opened on the 7th December, 2003 (One hundred years to the day 1 believe)

There are seventy aircraft on display many of them unique to Hendon including the last surviving Hawker Typhoon, and a Boulton & Paul Defiant from the second world war. The Harrier on display saw service in the Falklands and is close to a cargo container that was used as a chapel in Port Stanley.

The collection of all aircraft both British, German, American and others is impressive. The history attached to them was explained to us by our very able guides. Edger Child DFM, David Clucas and Philip Buldock; their knowledge, enthusiasm and association with the RAF Hendon was much appreciated. Our parties' tour ended at 17:10 and there was still more to see. For those of you who were unable to go we can thoroughly' recommend a visit.

Thank you Anthony Kedros for organising a most enjoyable day.

John Graves



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"Family" shall mean individual and partner and all dependent children.

"Dependent Children" shall mean all children under 18 or under 23 if in full time educationwho will travel with an insured adult person.

The above premiums apply to persons under 65 at commencement of cover under the insurance. In respect of person over 65 at commencement an additional premium will apply and maximum duration of any one trip will be restricted to 31 days.

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The following is a summary of cover only. The full terms, Definitions, Exclusions and Conditions are contained in the Certificate of Insurance, a specimen of which may be seen on application

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Curtailment & Cancellation – Up to £5,000
Reimbursement for unused travel including pre-booked excursions) and accommodation costs if you have to cancel or cut short your holiday for various reasons.

Journey Continuation – Up to £500
Reasonable additional travel and accommodation expenses in meeting a reserved overseas connection in the event of interruption caused by strikes, industrial action, criminal or terrorist actions etc.

Travel Delay – Up to £250
An amount payable if the aircraft, ship, coach or train is delayed for various reasons, for 12 hours or more.

Legal Expenses – Up to £25,000
In pursuit of a claim against a third party who has caused bodily injury to an Insured Person.

Personal Accident – £50,000
Payment in the event of death or serious injury. For children under 16 years of age the death benefit is £5,000.

Hospital Benefit – Up to £1,500
A cash benefit of £50 for each complete day spent as an inpatient in a hospital outside the United Kingdom. Up to a maximum of 30 days.

Accompanied Personal Baggage, Clothing or Effects, Money & Business Samples Up to £2,500
Reimbursement for loss or damage to accompanied personal baggage, clothing, business samples and money. Limit of £300 for any one article or pair or set of articles. Limit £500 for money.

Delayed Personal Baggage – Up to £150
Purchase of immediate necessities if baggage is temporarily lost.

Loss of Passport – Up to £500
Expenses reasonably incurred in the United Kingdom in obtaining a replacement passport if the original has been lost or stolen.

Hi-Jack, Kidnap and Detention – Up to £15,000
Reimbursement of any additional expenses excluding ransom monies.

Car Hire excess Waiver – Up to £250
Reimbursement of any monetary deductible that you are legally liable to pay following loss or damage to a rental car, hired by an Insured Person.

Ski-Pack – Up to £250
Reimbursement of unused ski pass, ski hire or tuition fees

Piste Closure – Up to £150
A cash Benefit if all skiing facilities are closed at the pre-booked resort due to lack of snow.

Avalanche – Up to £150
Reasonable additional travel and accommodation expenses if unavoidably delayed from leaving the pre-booked resort.

Personal Liability – Up to £2,000,000
If you are held legally liable for injury or damage to other people or their property, (not a member of Insured Persons' family or household).

Aircraft Repatriation – Up to £3,000
Should the Insured Person be unable to fly the aircraft back to the UK solely due to his/her accidental bodily injury or illness, and provided no other qualified pilot in the Insured's party is able to fly the aircraft back to the UK. The policy will pay for the provision of a suitably qualified ferry pilot to bring the Aircraft, and other members of the Insured Persons party back to the home airport in the UK where the aircraft is normally kept.

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From the Scrapbook



Photographs taken from the Farmers Weekly, 1st July 1994 at the Ferme de Vimer visit.

FFA Airfield Owners and Operators Scheme

The FFA in association with M.P.Bolshaw and Co Ltd, a specialist in aviation insurance, 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 the **estimated third party aircraft movements** each year and by the limit of liability cover chosen by you.

ANNUAL MOVEMENTS THIRD PARTY AIRCRAFT	LIMIT OF LIABILITY £500,000	LIMIT OF LIABILITY £1,000,000
up to 100	£150.00	£265.00
up to 250	£200.00	£295.00
up to 500	£225.00	£315.00
up to 1000	£300.00	£375.00
up to 2000	£375.00	£425.00
over 2000	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 20% of the applicable premium. There is a £50,000 limit any one aircraft on this section and insurance premium tax will be charged at 5% of the final premium.

If the aircraft movements at your strip exceed 2000 p.a., or if £50,000 any one aircraft hangarkeepers liability is insufficient, or if you have any queries whatsoever, contact Darren Smith at M.P.Bolshaw and Co.Ltd on 020 8953 8033 or fax 020 8207 4007 or e-mail dns@mpbolshaw.co.uk. This is also the contact should you wish to purchase cover.

Finally it is worth noting that the FFA are so concerned about this problem that they will be unable to organise an event at any strip that does not have this, or a similar cover, for fear of exposing itself and in turn it's members

Beyond the Border

A Flying Tour, Crossing the Border to Mexico, by Tony & Jean Poulsom

If you want to fly somewhere completely different you should try Mexico.

Collin and Marisa Fay run Parkwestair and they specialize in escorted aerial tours around the Southwest National Parks of the U.S.A. One of their tours ventures into Northern Mexico for 4 days.

I had wanted to revalidate my U.S. PPL which 1 had not used for a few years and this seemed the perfect trip to familiarize myself with U.S. Airspace again and also to experience the skies of Mexico, so making use of email. I booked up the trip for both Jean and myself. Two other friends wanted to join us and they would meet us in Grand Junction, Colorado where we would revalidate our U.S. Licences and fly our aircraft down to Tucson Arizona from where the tour would begin on the 3rd November.

We flew out to Denver, Colorado by courtesy of Lufthansa on the 22nd October. From Denver we caught the Californian Zephyr train which crosses the Rockies to Los Angeles stopping in Grand Junction. A wonderful relaxing journey on a warm sunny day in "The Fall". The railroad follows the Colorado River and the Autumn colours are magnificent. The journey takes seven hours and after a leisurely lunch in the restaurant and a spell in the observation car we drew into Grand Junction in the late afternoon. Collin and Marisa were there to meet us and drive us to our Hotel.



We had planned to spend a week touring around by car before the flying and so we travelled back into the Mountains visiting towns such as Rifle, Glenwood Springs and Aspen where the first snow of winter was falling. We saw wonderful wild scenery and on a few occasions drove well above the snow line.

Collin wanted us back in Grand Junction on the 29th October and here he would brief us on the trip which would start the following day. After a short and very casual written test we would have an hours compulsory flight experience. Our aircraft was a Cherokee 180 and Collin soon put me at ease and I have to say I enjoyed the flight seeing the Rockies for the first time from the air. Our English friends were flying a Cessna 172 and after their checkout we retired to our Hotel ready for a start at dawn the following morning. It was dark and freezing when Collin and Marisa picked us up in their Station Wagon and when we arrived at the Airfield the two aircraft were covered with ice, somewhat unusual for Grand Junction for this time of year. However the sun soon did the de-icing for us and by about 8.30 we took off into blue skies. We were heading



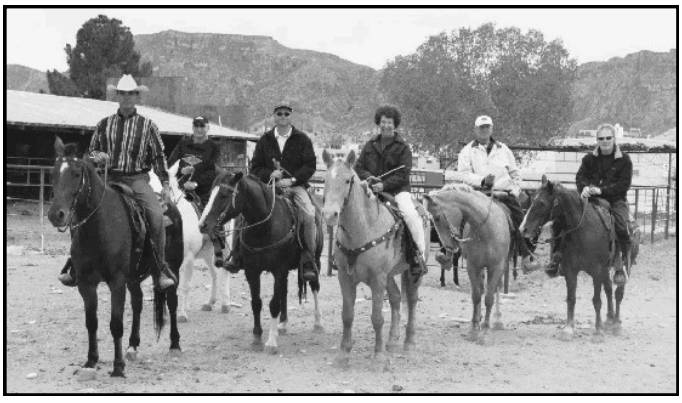
for Holbrook our fuel stop en route to Tucson which was just over five hours flying time away.

Collin and Marisa were flying a Cessna 206 and being that much faster would take off after us and then pass us about half way to our destination and then meet us when we landed. The plan was to meet two Americans flying a Maule at Tucson but more of that later.

Our first stop at Holbrook for fuel was an interesting experience. Never before have I seen a red carpet rolled out for visiting aviators - yes a real red carpet. As well as wanting to wipe windscreens and check oil the refueler wanted to carry Jean's handbag for her into the Airport terminal! Everyone was so friendly. The lady in the restaurant cooked us a huge brunch for $6 each and we were soon on our way following our faithful G.P.S. needles to Tucson, a large very busy International Airport with two runways continually in use. After the paperwork had been completed and all our luggage was loaded into the waiting bus, we were driven to a luxury hotel where we flopped out exhausted into what seemed acre—sized beds.

The following morning we visited the Saguaro National Park a renowned Zoo and Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden all in one. Later we browsed the Pima Air Museum home to more than 200 vintage and veteran aircraft.

The following day we departed Tucson for Las Cruces en route to Lajitas on the Texan/Mexican border. It was unfortunate that the two Americans who were flying down to Tucson from Chicago in their Maule had been delayed by bad weather. We hoped to meet them in Lajitas. We were originally going to fly to Carlsbad New Mexico but Collin's pre flight forecast showed low cloud along the route and so we would stay an

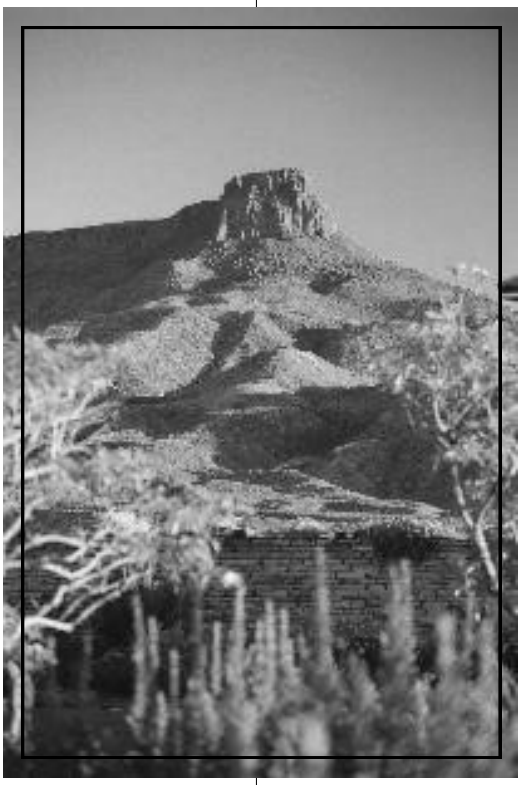


extra night at Lajitas missing out Carlsbad.

The scenery on this flight was stunning. We were leaving behind the Arizona desert and moving closer towards the mountains in Mexico. Lajitas is a small town on the Rio Grande River. It is two hours flying time from any major city. Here we enjoyed riding quarter horses, not a leisurely ride out along a quiet road, but a hard ride along narrow mountain trails with wonderful views into Mexico. The following day an escorted jeep ride around The Big Bend National Park showed us how vast and uninhabited this part of the world is. Our guide was an expert on the flora and fauna. A really interesting day.

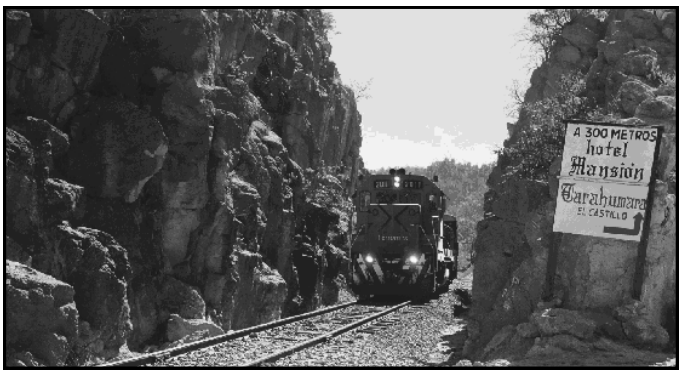
On November 6th, Jim and Patty in their Maule met up with us and all four aircraft departed for Chihuahua. One and half hours flying from Lajitas we were on our final approach. We parked N2399T on the park ramp and opened the door to a blast of hot air. The OAT pointed to 85 degrees.

Although Chihuahua is about 5000ft AMSL it can be very hot indeed and small horizontally opposed aero engines can loose an amazing 30% of their power and so leaning out properly is essential. Fuelling, customs and immigration procedures all went to plan thanks to Marisa who speaks fluent Spanish. We soon learnt that Mexican airports were governed by "El Commandante" Everyone from a PPL to a Senior Captain on large commercial aircraft come under his jurisdiction. There were several serious faced young men in Army fatigues with machine pistols patrolling the parking ramp and it was obvious that no misbehaviour would be tolerated.



The flight from Chihuahua to Los Mochis on the Pacific coast crossed some of the most scenic and wild country in the world. The flight lasted three and a half hours and we flew over The Copper Canyon where we would be staying the following evening. The mountains gave way to a coastal plain about eight miles wide and we almost had a serious argument with a Turkey Buzzard which luckily passed under our starboard wing missing us by a few feet.

At Los Mochis we were ferried by bus back to El Fuerte where we stayed in a very comfortable colonial hotel before catching the Chepe train across the mountains back to The Copper Canyon where we would be staying in probably one of the most scenic parts of the world. Our Hotel was called La Pasada Barrancas Mirador. Every room had an amazing view





across the Canyon. For three nights we stayed here relaxing and taking in the scenery. My two English friends both helicopter pilots had a scenic flight in a Jet Ranger down into the Canyon. Their photographs shown on a computer screen that evening, showed everyone what an amazing place it is. Indians still live in caves and farming is carried out on the top of the flat plateaux. It was soon time to leave Copper Canyon and return to Los Mochis. There was a slight delay to the train journey because of a derailment further up the line to Chihuahua and our train unfortunately killed a cow which had been asleep on the rails but as our waiter in the restaurant car told us, "This is Mexico" and when asked if animals were often hit by the train "Si Senor, last week we hit five cows". From Los Mochis we headed back to Tucson with a fuel stop at Obregon. We all enjoyed the flight over the vast crop growing area of North West Mexico. Some three and half hours later Prescott agency cleared us to Tucson approach. Tucson was again very busy and just as we were about to touch down on 26L, I was asked to switch to 26R because of a heavy coming up behind us. A sharp turn off at Alpha and there was another monster taxiing towards us for a take off. "No problem" said the lady on ground control "just pull over to the left and hold and you have a good day now" - all so wonderfully casual.

Our last dinner of the tour was in Tucson at the Arizona Inn. We said good—bye to Jim and Patty who were flying back to Chicago the next day.

Collin and Marisa had completed all our paperwork and saw our two aircraft safely on our way back to Grand Junction. We stopped for fuel half way and we soon left the Arizona Desert behind and were flying once more into the Rockies to our destination where Collin and Marisa were waiting for us.

Two days later Jean and I boarded the Zephyr to Denver. We had arrived in Grand Junction in the warm balmy days of the Fall. Just eighteen days later we were journeying back through the snow. As we crossed the mountains it was three feet deep and already some ski lifts were operating.

It was a great trip well organised and a lot of fun. Marisa and Collin were excellent hosts making sure everything went to


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EL PASO
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SONORA
CHIHUAHUA
Big Bend NP
30° N
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DURANGO
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LEGEND
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Train overnight stop
110° W
105° W



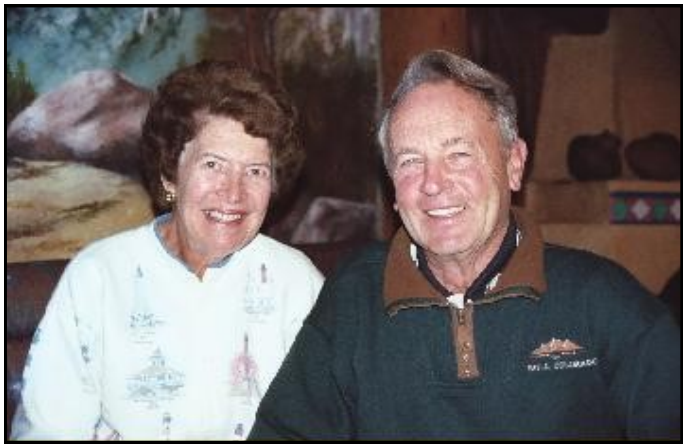


plan and you are shown all the places of interest. This Mexican trip was their first escorted tour and it was a great success. They also host trips to all The Great National Parks of the South West USA. If you are interested in going give them a call. You will not regret it.

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