FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 85 *March 2004*

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph;
Boyd Munro's (FFA No. 461) superb new Caravan with his special paintwork. See article in this issue.

Chairman's Message

Here in the South in February we are experiencing generally mild weather. – unfortunately at times this brings with it fog and other things that don't contribute to easy flying.

I recently had another session with Wiltshire Police, who want to make regular visits – including night visits – to my airstrip. This is all to do with the Anti-Terrorism Act and the possible use of airstrips for illegal operations. I hope the airstrip issue will not be over-played, because while I accept that it would be very easy for a light aircraft or even a microlight to take off from a private strip with a bomb on board and follow the road to London at low level, it would be just as easy to pack a 25-tonne curtain-side lorry with explosives and drive it into London. Even if the intended target had security gates a vehicle of this mass could probably drive straight through them, and 25 tonnes of explosives would make a very big bang!

I very much value the privilege of being able to fly direct from my own strip to foreign destinations. I definitely do not want to have to return to the old routine of being required to leave the country through a Customs/Special Branch airfield – and anyway the regional airports that I would have to use do not want GA aircraft.

I feel that we have not heard the last of this issue. There may soon be a tightening of the rules on re-entry into the UK from the Channel Islands – at present it is easy to fly from there to a French airport, clear Customs and then fly direct from France to the UK without the need to inform Special Branch. This may be an easy option for the pilot, but it is certainly not helping the officers of Special Branch to carry out their duties to the British government and people.

I asked DC Cripps of the Wiltshire force if he would contribute an article to our newsletter on the current situation. I am grateful to him for doing so – you can read the article elsewhere in this issue.

Please be vigilant and careful to comply with his requests. We don't want to have our freedoms and privileges taken away, so let us do all we can to make sure that our strips are not used by the few who intend evil.

I had a pleasant surprise recently. For several years I have been a fairly regular visitor to the airfield at Granville in France. A nice little airfield, it has a 960m hard runway in a good state of repair, with radio-actuated landing lights. For the last eighteen months the local Chamber of Commerce has been erecting a large new terminal building, new control tower and new restaurant – splendid, we all agree, but I feared that landing fees would increase to reflect the capital investment. Not a bit of it: they have gone *down*, from 8 Euros to 5 Euros, with no parking charges. Regional airports in the UK *please* note!

John Golden

Committee Members

Dick Walgate	President	01472 371203
John Golden	Chairman	01725 552384
Paul Stephens	Secretary	01944 738281
David Corbett	Treasurer	01568 708351
Mike Cuttell	Events Secretary	01242 236770
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Anthony Kedros	Committee Member	01295 720876
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Editor's Note

First, let me endorse everything that John says about our privilege (or is it a right on our own land?) to have our own airstrips. It's not every country in Europe that allows private strips — some may say the same of certain counties in England; so let's cooperate with the Special Branch / Customs so it doesn't give them cause to consider restricting us.

You will find a questionnaire enclosed with this newsletter, complete with a stamped addressed envelope for its return. I can hear the moan from here, 'not another questionnaire', but it is important to gather this information in order to find out a bit more about the membership and what you expect of the Association. Hopefully, the statistics will be published in the August issue and it will also be in time to update the membership list with any corrections before the 2004/5 edition goes to print in June/July.

It should only take 2 minutes to complete.

Paul Stephens



Dear Editor

I have found the FFA so very useful since I joined two years ago. My business, Tonick Watering, makes irrigation control systems, mainly for golf courses. Every Spring & Summer I get calls from Greenkeepers around the UK requesting technical support. Most can be resolved over the phone but a few require a visit. Rather than slogging it through the traffic from SW Wales, I find the FFA member nearest the course, obtain permission and get the Greenkeeper to meet me there. Thus I can do two day's work in one and enjoy some flying to boot!

The members on whose strips I have landed have been without exception, so very kind and helpful, even going as far as giving me a lift on some occasions. It is a credit to your membership to have such great people in it!

Obviously, if anyone wants to try 400m with a 6% gradient they will be most welcome at my strip (PPR & briefing) and be assured of a warm welcome. My Bölkow 207 taildragger handles the strip well, taking off downhill and landing uphill; great fun!

Tony Ware (FFA 723)

Watch out for Mice!

One of our members recently found mice in the wing of his wooden aircraft. He has kept a number of his pride and joys in the same hangar for the past 40 plus years without any similar occurrence. It appears the little brats have climbed the main wheel undercarriage leg, scrambled through the holes in the ribs inside the wing and made a large nest in the wing root.

As they are incontinent, their urine has run to a low place and rotted the woodwork. This has involved a wings off repair which has totally sickened the owner off with the time taken and the cost, then on top of this it will probably need a total respray as there will be some patching up to do on top of old paintwork.

A year ago it was thought that a mouse had been in, but no damage was apparent. The owner had religiously checked for mice ever since, but unbeknown to him they must have been there for some time, during which they had done quite a number of hours flying last year, possibly even to Estonia and back!

Unfortunately, the insurance company say that it is 'progressive damage' and cannot be claimed for. The owner is now appealing to AOPA to see if there is an insurance case as it does appear to be a be a bit of a grey area.

Committee Deliberations

The FFA Committee met on February 2nd in the PFA temporary boardroom at Turweston.

There has been a long standing debate on the Committee, firstly about membership requirements and secondly about application procedure. It is essential that we screen the applicants to maintain the genuine flying farmer who's interests are mainly of a farming nature, otherwise we wouldn't be the Flying Farmers, as such, any longer. In this case, we refer back to the Articles of the Association where it clearly states that those that qualify will be farmers, foresters or owners of land with an airstrip. We are now asking for proposers and seconders to these applicants, then their application will go before the Committee for their approval, all as per the Articles.

On membership issues, another debate was whether we should make a place for Associate members for those that don't fully qualify, but who we would like to be members. This point is still under discussion and could be raised at the next AGM in order to seek members' approval.

A questionnaire is being put together to try and clarify what the membership expect of the Association. It will also give the Secretary some important information for the membership database and to check the existing data for accuracy. It will be made simple to fill in, so please make every effort to return it.

The website was started a few years ago as a trial run, but it's not being updated often enough to make it a useful tool and interesting. This is mainly because it was an experiment and was put in the hands of Mike Stickland, a web designer who has produced an excellent format, but as he is not a member and is not familiar with weekly occurrences, it only gets updated when anyone asks for a change. Our ex Events Secretary, Anthony Kedros is looking at the possibility of taking on the website in order to make it a more useful tool and post any last minute changes to events or to add important information from members etc. which will make it more worthwhile logging onto.

It has been suggested that we look at adding a forum to the website in order that members can share problems about flying and farming matters. This would have to be password protected, but could prove useful and bring out common problems experienced by our members. Anthony will first try to get to grips with the website itself. He admits to being unfamiliar with suchlike, but is willing to learn!

The Events Secretary, Mike Cuttell is keen to form an events program well in advance — even to the point of laying out a schedule for possible European tours for several years ahead. This might stimulate anyone with contacts or interests in these particular countries to come forward and offer their help.

As the stock of FFA ties has run out, David Corbett has now ordered the new batch which will be a slightly different width to be more fashionable. They will be available shortly at £8.00.

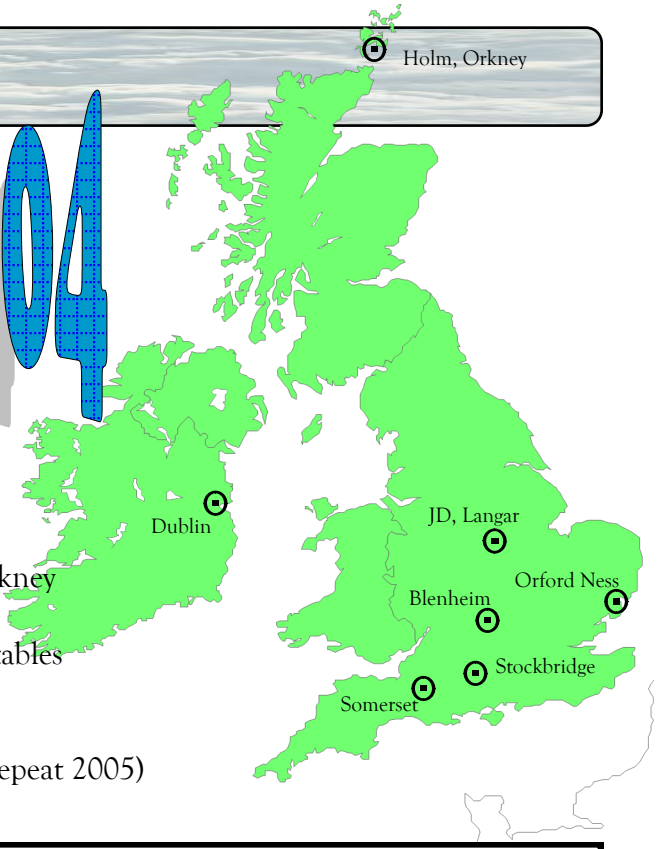
Welcome to New Members

Since 1st December 2003, the following have joined the FFA

758 Veronica Partridge, Kersey, Suffolk

The total membership now stands at 365

Programme 2004



April 21st	John Deere, Langar
May 26th	Leckford Estate, Stockbridge
May 29th to June 6th	FFA tour to Southern Ireland and Orkney
June 10th & 24th	Orford Ness, landing at Framlingham
July 14th	Somerset, cheese makers and racing stables
July 23rd to 25th	Game Fair, Blenheim.
October	AGM—to be arranged
Nov. 7th—20th	Australian tour (fully booked, might repeat 2005)

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.

Mike Cuttell, our Events Secretary is very keen to hear from anybody with ideas, or willing to arrange events for 2005. He is looking to have a programme mapped out well ahead, including ideas for European tours.

He would be particularly interested in anyone willing to invite the members to their farm and to land on members' strips. Although we do like the adventurous tours, we would also like to get back to grass routes and do a bit of farming with a good old fashioned farm walk.

Wednesday, April 21st 2004
Visit John Deere Limited at Langar

There has been a good response to this visit with approximately 65 members wishing to attend.

Bob Beard has kindly offered to arrange the visit for us. We land at Langar (no fuel available) from 10:00 to 10:30.

The tour starts at 11:00.

Bob's contact number on the day will be 07708 248 571.

Wednesday, May 26th 2004
Visit Leckford Estate Limited

The Leckford Estate was purchased by John Spedan Lewis of Oxford Street in 1928 as his private estate, was converted into a limited company in 1929 and is now part of the organisation known as the John Lewis Partnership. This organisation with 59,588 employees, has 25 department stores and 140 supermarkets.

In 2001, the Estate became part of Waitrose, providing a real focus for it to produce food for the Partnership's Food Stores under the Leckford Brand.

In addition to the farming and leisure enterprises, the Estate provides residential facilities—2 country house hotels and a holiday camp—for John Lewis staff.

The Estate consists of 3,750 acres in a ring fence, divided almost equally by the River Test, running north and south, and some two miles upstream from Stockbridge and four miles from Andover. The soil is mostly loam over chalk with occasional clay caps and further occasional peaty reclaimed 'Down' soil.

It is utilised as follows:-

Countryside Stewardship: A 10 year agreement has been entered into and encompass tree and hedge planting, chalk land pasture management (138 acres), grassland regeneration (77 acres), stone curlew plots (15 acres) and 6m arable margins (31.5 km, 47 acres).

Amenity and long term grassland: 550 acres water meadows (fishing), golf course (150 acres), steep banks, ornamental gardens (150 acres), woodland, roads etc.

Arable: All combinable crops (1536 acres), except for oilseed rape (89 acres), Crambe (117 acres) and poppies (112 acres) which are grown for seed.

Grassland / Conservation: Forage maize (113 acres), grazing for dairy cows (275 acres), grazing for youngstock (210 acres).

Fruit: 230 acre fruit farm. Main production is Cox's Orange Pippins. Cold storage for 800 tons. 20% sold through the fruit farm shop, 70% through Waitrose and the remainder through a cooperative.

Potatoes: 5 acres for sale in the fruit farm shop.

Dairy: 200 Holstein x Friesians and 200 Ayrshires. 100 dairy replacements reared. Hereford x calves go into Waitrose Dovecote Park Hereford Scheme.

Milk Processing Dairy: Established in 1993, adding value to the Estate's milk. Processes milk for Waitrose's own organic brand. Goats milk sold under Waitrose own label is purchased and processed in the dairy.

Nursery: A staff of 6 produce and sell a wide range of plants.

Water Garden: 3 gardeners look after the amenity designed by John Spedan Lewis. Voted one of the best 100 gardens in the world.

Poultry: 15,000 free range broilers kept in 13 houses.

Mushroom Farm: Formed in 1986 producing 23 tons a week.

Fishing Department: Staff of 4 riverkeepers maintaining 11 miles of bank on the River Test. Also a fishing lake.

Golf: 4 greenkeepers look after 2, 9 hole courses.

Residential Facilities: These are run entirely for Partners and include two country house hotels with amenity gardens, a holiday camp, 2 open air swimming pools and tennis courts.

Staff: The Estate employs a total of 240 people.

Arrive at Thruxton between 10:00 and 11:00 local. Coffee / lunch available.

Bus departs for Leckford Estate at 13:00

Tour Estate

Bus returns to Thruxton at approx 16:30

Charge £15 per head (does not include landing fee, coffee, lunch). Please fill in the reply slip and return to John Milne by April 30th

May 29th to June 6th, FFA Tour 2004 Southern Ireland and the Orkneys

Now full booked, Martin Gosling has completed a recce and will be sending details to participants during April.

Orford Ness, June 10th & 24th 2004

The day will start by arriving at Framlingham (Parham) airfield by 09:30 local. We will then be taken to Orford Quay by bus for 10:00, ready for a short boat trip across the River Ore to the spit, which is Orford Ness. After a full day, we will return to Orford Quay by about 16:30 for tea and a bun, then a quick tour of the restored WW2 tower full of memorabilia back at the airfield, after which you can depart at will.

Both days are fully booked for the conducted tours, but if you are interested in a walking tour, please contact Paul Coulten on 01366 500315 or PaulCoulten@compuserve.com



Wednesday July 14th 2004, Somerset.

Visit to Barber's, the Somerset cheesemakers by the kind invitation of Anthony Barber. Also in the afternoon, Paul Nichols' racing stables.

10:00–10:30 Arrival at FFA member David Stokes' farm strip at Lower Withial Farm, East Pennard, Shepton Mallet, Somerset (call Yeovilton Zone). This is a grass strip 500 * 30 yds 05/23 and contrary to the Membership List details, the wires on 05 threshold have been removed (not by a visiting FFA member!)

11:00 Coach departs to Barber's where we have a conducted tour of the factory. A range of their mouth-watering cheeses may be purchased and since they are not charging for the tour, it would be pleasing if we could support them.

13:00 A short village walk to The Manor for lunch.

14:15 Coach ride for 3 miles to Barbers dairy unit to see 450 head milking herd. Then return to Ditcheat to Paul Nicholls racing stables.

16:30 Return to the airstrip. Nearest fuel, Henstridge.

Cost of the trip will be £6 per head excluding lunch.

The tour is limited to 50 people with a deadline of May

Friday to Sunday, July 23rd to 25th 2004 The CLA Game Fair.

As on the last occasion, the world's largest country sport and national countryside event will be held at Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire and Andrew Dent is organising air arrivals.

Fixed and Rotary Wing a/c will need to land at Oxford (Kidlington) Airport – there will be no landing area for helicopters at the show site. A regular shuttle service will operate between the airport and the show site on all three days. The landing fee for private singles is £10 (£16 for twins) on the Friday, while the weekend rate is £5 for either, or free if you uplift more than 40 litres of fuel. Places on the shuttle service may be chargeable, subject to a suitable sponsor being found, but the cost should be no more than £10 per head.

PPR is required from Oxford Ops on 01865 844267, and Andrew Dent can be reached on 07860 378429 for shuttle availability.

Further information on The CLA Game Fair and to order tickets, please visit www.gamefair.co.uk or telephone 01634 226211. For arrivals information ring Andrew 07860 378429 or email andrew@dentcomm.net

Winter Meeting Report

After several days of forecasts predicting snow, it finally arrived on the day of our visit. In spite of this about half the intended participants arrived at Tatenhill Airfield by road, very efficiently coordinated by David Gittins who had organised the day for us.

The awaiting coach left only half an hour later than planned for the JCB factory at Rocester. However, just before departing, an aircraft was heard overhead and a small bright patch appeared through the falling snow, through which one of our most determined members arrived on the runway, followed by a sprint to catch the coach. With another 8 people arriving at the factory, we had a very respectable turnout.

We were greeted by enthusiastic JCB personnel and after a welcome coffee, we were given a presentation and shown a corporate video by Guy Robinson, the Agricultural Director.

The company was founded in 1945 by Joseph Cyril Bamford and has expanded steadily. The Rocester factory is the headquarters employing around 1500 people. A further 1000 plus are employed in the UK, with between 3000–4000 worldwide. Rocester produces about 6000 telescopic handlers per year, overtaking Manitou. About 8000 backhoe loaders (JCBs) are also produced at Rocester, with additional production in factories in the USA, India and also an assembly plant in Brazil. Two further factories at Cheadle, about 15 miles from Rocester, produce the Fastrac range of high speed tractors, and also the compact range of forklifts, mini-diggers, Robot forklifts and also a range of wheeled loading shovels.

Transmissions and axles are produced at their Wrexham plant, cabs at their Rugeley plant, whilst the original Bamford family's large factory at Uttoxeter produces tracked excavators between 7 & 45 tonnes. Two years ago the parts division was moved from Rocester to just outside Uttoxeter into their massive World Parts Depot.

It has just been announced that a new engine factory is opening this year on the disused Church Broughton airfield site between Uttoxeter and Derby. This will produce their own designed engines to replace the Perkins engines which are currently used. (The fact that Perkins is owned by Caterpillar is perhaps part of the reason).

JCB have during the last 10 years reverted to many in house manufacturing processes. On our walk around the two main production lines, we witnessed many of these. Hydraulics and pivot pins are produced by friction welders and the EMAG flexible machining system–fully automated. Huge steel plates are cut by laser and plasma profilers which are very cost effective, minimising waste by computer programming, effecting perfect cuts which do not require finishing.



Photographs weren't allowed once inside the factory

The impression of efficiency and quality control was apparent to all as we walked round. I noticed one part which had been rejected and put on one side with the comment chalked on it 'About as much use as an ashtray on a motorbike'! Completed machines were rushing around outside the factory buildings being tested and put through their paces. With up to 70 machines completed on an average day, probably 30+ were completed during our morning visit.

We were then given a superb hot lunch with sweets to follow and then back on the coach for the journey to the Cheadle factories. Unfortunately, the snow fell harder as we slowly progressed uphill passed Alton Towers towards Cheadle, when it became impossible to continue. The bus had to turn round in a narrow entrance and finally lost its grip. But with the help of all of us getting to the back of the bus and a bit of bouncing, we were away again (bringing back memories of my school days!).

Safely driven back to Tatenhill, some of our members must then have had a difficult drive home. We were just a bit unlucky as the next day was a good one. However, it was a worthwhile trip and the Fastracs could be another trip.

Our thanks to David and all at JCB.

Footnotes:- JCB have a fleet of limousines and executive coaches besides their Gulfstream operated from East Midlands and 2 S76 Sikorsky helicopters to transport overseas visitors and their own executives.

Average cost per hour per person employed by JCB.
UK £15, USA £11, India £2, China 70p

Richard Hall

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Roz Stephens telephone 01944 738281 or email chix@farmline.com

A recent visit to John Golden's airfield highlighted a level of confusion with regard to the existence of Police Force's Special Branch Ports units, their role, legal powers and the submitting of the General Aviation Report (G.A.R.) by pilots. With this in mind I hope this will assist in improving the wider understanding of ports units and the legislation that they work with and implement.

The role of the Wiltshire Constabulary's Ports Unit is not unique, each police force in Britain outside London has a special branch, these vary in size from a couple of dozen to over a hundred officers. Within each of these units there is a dedicated ports unit. The ports units deal with all land, sea and air ports tailored to the respective county's geographical and demographic needs.

Special branch's primary work is directed towards counter-terrorism and the ports units combines this with work targeted against organised crime. Officers from each forces ports unit will either be based at the larger 'designated' airports or assigned to focus upon general aviation; they will make visits to airfields in an effort to meet owners, pilots and operators with the intention of establishing a more effective working relationship between the general aviation community and the police in the United Kingdom. The Wiltshire Constabulary's Ports Unit primary objective is to fit into this structure; covering the county's 61 airfields both military and civil. These range from the large RAF sites such as RAF Lyneham and Boscombe Down to the unmanned ZZZZ farm grass strips as used by the Flying Farmers membership. This approach is duplicated in other forces around the country.

Officers from each force's ports units in policing all the non-designated airfields in their respective county ensure that the relevant legislation, in particular the Terrorism Act 2000 is complied with. Under this act any person connected with an aircraft which is due to fly or land from abroad can be examined by the officer. The term examination means that the pilot and passengers identification documents may be checked and confirmed and their aircraft may be searched. More importantly for members of the Flying Farmers Association wishing to fly further a field, the Terrorism Act stipulates that no aircraft can legally fly in or out to the Common Travel Area (the CTA consists of the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Eire and Northern Ireland) from a non-designated airfield without 12 hours prior notification to their relevant SB Ports Office.

They should do this with the completion of the G.A.R form. This is completed by the pilot or airfield Operator and faxed to the relevant Ports Office. To speed this process up, the Wiltshire Constabulary has included an electronic G.A.R form which can be completed via their web site and other forces are shortly following suit. You can also down load a copy of the G.A.R. form from the same web site in a PDF format. It is recommended that as a matter of best practice, if you are flying from a non-designated airport to any destination outside mainland Britain, you submit a flight notification to the ports unit in the county of your departure.

Ports units nationally are also promoting the 'Air Watch' campaign. This is a combined Police, Customs and Immigration service campaign which draws attention to the use of aircraft and airstrips by individuals involved in criminal activity or terrorism. Could I therefore ask the Flying Farmers membership to be aware of unusual or suspicious circumstances in or around their airstrips or when they are flying, these could include:

- ◊ Aircraft performing circuits over private airstrips as if looking to see if there is anyone waiting on the ground to meet them
- ◊ Packages being transferred from an aircraft to a vehicle in unusual locations, such as a remote part of an airfield. Participants acting furtively or nervously
- ◊ Windsocks in unfamiliar places
- ◊ Sightings of aircraft on the ground at normally disused airstrips
- ◊ Evidence of unauthorised activity at your airstrip, such as fresh tyre marks
- ◊ Activity at previously unused airstrips, such as temporary landing lights, vehicles parked in such a way as to illuminate strips or to act as a navigation point
- ◊ Overheard radio communication between aircraft and vehicles or persons on the ground at normally disused airstrips
- ◊ 'Strangers' trying to hire your aircraft, or an aircraft belonging to club members
- ◊ 'Strangers' wanting permission to use your airstrip for no valid reason
- ◊ Flying at night or in poor visibility without navigation lights
- ◊ Night flying at non-licensed airports
- ◊ Evidence of small fires in fields which may indicate a landing site
- ◊ Flying at low altitude, especially when approaching the coastline
- ◊ Extra fuel tanks on aircraft, or doors which have been re-hinged from above
- ◊ Evidence of adaptation of aircraft for concealment purposes

If you do notice anything unusual:

- ◊ Do not involve yourself
- ◊ Do not touch any suspect packages
- ◊ Do make a note of any registration numbers or markings
- ◊ And please inform the police as soon as possible

I hope this article has been of use, if you have any other questions I or your county's own police force ports unit would be glad to help.

Paul Cripps
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Ports@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk
Fax. 01380 734170 Tel. 01380 735011

Electronic GAR form for Wiltshire flights; http://www.wiltshire.police.uk/portsunit/garform.asp

A Brief Encounter with the DA40 TDi

When you see TDi on a car you immediately recognise that as a diesel car. They used to be noisy, smelly and wreak blue smoke. Car diesels have changed to the point where they are quiet, very smooth, have oodles of torque and are extremely efficient. A Mercedes four door will now do 45 to 50 mpg and you can't tell it's an oil burner.

This same technology is being taken even further by Thierlert with their Centurion 1.7 diesel (based on a Mercedes) with full electronic engine and propeller systems. Diamond are leading the field by using this system in their DA40 four seater composite aeroplane and Diamond Aircraft UK Ltd, led by Bob Green are the ideal people to promote and sell this new technology aircraft.

I met Bob for a quick demonstration on a beautiful, but very cold March afternoon at their Gamston / Retford base. First thoughts are diesel and waxing, which go hand in hand on the old tractor on a freezing winter's morning, but of course this engine is tuned to run on Jet A1 (around 34 p/lt) which has a minimum starting temperature of minus 35 deg C. With only a few minutes work, the engine can be altered to run on your red diesel which is only half the price of Jet A1. There are restrictions though – no starting below minus 5 deg and a 5000 foot height restriction.





The airframe is the same as the DA40-180 that I reported on in a previous issue. Very modern in design, not to everybody's taste with a high tail and a 37 foot wingspan, which before you buy, you should check your hanger doors to make sure it will go in. It has a forward hinging canopy which looks very vulnerable on a windy day and doesn't offer any protection from the weather when embarking when it's pouring down. The finish looks superb, but so it should when it comes to the price!

You mount by climbing onto the leading edge of the wing and sit astride the joystick on gel foam seats that mould to your shape. Talking of shape, I'm a little on the larger size and I found that as the seat is not adjustable, I felt that I needed a size 14 cockpit where this is definitely a slender 10. When I moved the rudder pedals away a bit, I could then stretch my legs, but I felt that the stick was too close. It wasn't too easy to reach round to the rear seats either where I would normally keep my flight bag etc, probably because of the high backed front seats. A smaller built human would feel less restricted.

Bob ran through the instruments, some of which I didn't recognise at all. The aeroplane was extremely well IFR equipped (optional, but in my humble opinion over the top for this type of aircraft) and there were extra digital instruments for fuel temperatures and engine monitoring which were very cleverly displayed so that if you glance across, if everything is glowing green then alls well. A red light would jump out at you.

One very big difference to petrol aeroplanes with constant speed props, is the lack of things to twiddle. One power lever takes the place of the usual power, prop and mixture controls. All you look at is a power percentage digitally displayed – 100% is flat out, 0% is stopped, simple as that!

Taxiing is by individual brakes with a busy sounding engine turning the three bladed prop through a gearbox. Engine checks at the threshold were simply; give it 100% power and check round, then press a button for the computer to do a management check on all its functions.

Having lined up, it was flat out with the T handle, keep it straight and wait. On tarmac it took a fair time to accelerate to about 60 kts then squeeze back on the short stick, climbing away at about 75 and trimming with the electric elevator trimmer. I would guess on grass it wouldn't be suitable for the 400 metre strips, but 600 would be ok with maybe two on board and full tanks. The specification quotes 635 metres over a 50 foot obstacle at MTOW (1150 kgs), but that will be off tarmac.

Climbing away, we had a reasonable rate of climb, but then it starts to come into its own with altitude. Being turbocharged, the 135 hp is still available right up to as high as most of us fly, where as the normal 180 hp would be down to about 80 hp by 10,000 feet.

I didn't have time to go to those heights, but leveling off at 2500 feet I wanted to see what the figures were at a normal cruise height for this country, rather than the 10,000 foot figures quoted in the brochure. Bob said 'push the nose down and set it on 140 kts' which I did, then trimmed it out and I could hardly believe what was happening. It stayed level and held 140 kts propelled by only 135 hp. The low air temperature did help and we were set at 100% power. Reducing slightly to 90% we cruised along at 135 kts and the digital readout said 7 US gallons an hour (26.5 ltres). Reducing again to 75%, we showed 125 kts and were down to 5.2 gallons and hour (19.7 litres).

Then as a demonstration of cheap hourly flying, at 90 kts (Cessna 150 speed), it was consuming an incredibly low 2.1 galls an hour (7.95 litres). I make that around £2.70 an hour for the Jet A1!

By now, I had forgotten about my initial cramped feeling and was enjoying the good unobstructed view. The controls were light and a pleasure to use. We didn't get into the autopilot, but it is a very comprehensive setup, linked to the dual Garmin 430's with a dial up altitude preselect.

It was now back to the circuit and I was instructed to fly to the threshold at 75 kts which was easy to hold, then made a reasonable landing.

The important question now was 'how much?'. I wanted to compare the two DA40s. Bob explained that it is all currency based at the moment with the DA40 180 Lycoming version being priced in dollars, where the Thierlert TDi is priced in Euros. So, working from the price list and 2nd March 2004 currency values, the basic petrol version plus IFR fit and autopilot is $235,900 ex factory (Ontario, Canada). Assuming $1.87 to the pound, that is £148,225 when the VAT is included. The diesel is 240,780 euros with the same IFR kit, which at 1.50 euros to the pound comes to £188,611 ex factory (Wiener Neustadt, Austria) with the VAT added. Remember, these are before delivery and any other extras such as upgraded interiors etc.

So the difference in price between the petrol and diesel versions is over £40,000 at today's currency values. If you did 100 hours in the year, with the Avgas version you would use 3500 litres (assuming 35 ltrs. an hour) which would cost about £3325 in Avgas. The diesel would consume 2000 litres (assuming 20 ltrs. an hour) which would cost about £680 on Jet A1.

You have saved £2645 in fuel – but if you borrowed the money to finance the extra £40,000, it would have cost you most of what you saved in interest payments!

Add onto that the higher depreciation cost on the engine (approximately £20,000 at 2400 hours) and it takes away the fuel efficiency advantages. This is based on 100 hours a year. If you do less, then the cheaper Lycoming version is more cost effective. However if you run the aeroplane on a group basis or it's a training aeroplane and you are doing 500 hours a year, there must be massive savings to be made.

Although we keep hearing that Avgas has a limited time left, this is mainly being broadcast by the diesel engine fans. I think of more immediate concern, is that it isn't every GA airfield that has Jet A1, so a bit more planning will have to be done for fuel pickups. Also, how long before the Chancellor sees the loophole and taxes Jet A1 for private use, similar to the Avgas tax system in Spain?

Having said all that, Bob has now sold 35 TDi's in the UK. Cabair are a big customer for their training fleet. Even more exciting is that he has already taken orders for 35 Twin Stars and the aeroplane hasn't even been released yet. This is the biggest order book for a light twin engine aeroplane in this country ever. The Twin Star is basically a DA40 with two Thierlert diesels and a wider wingspan. Worldwide, 250 have been ordered and deliveries should start in July this year at around the £350,000 mark including the VAT. Already Diamond UK have two major fleet orders for 12 DA42 Twin Stars.





Another exciting development is the D-Jet. This is a 5 seat single engined jet with a maximum cruise of 315 kts. Bob can see this being a useful means of transport for the rich and famous who want to avoid the crowds and the hassle of airports. It could also be a very useful jet hour builder for those commercial operators that like to see pilots with a minimum number of jet hours. Already he has customers wanting to put down the 20,000 euro deposit to secure a position.

Expected certification date is the beginning of 2006 with a price of around £580,000 plus VAT. Bob, being a forward thinking man and wanting to keep Diamond Aircraft UK going forwards, already has the maintenance sorted at Gamston for those first customers with a specialist jet engineer on the airfield.

Just as I felt on my first visit to Diamond UK, I was impressed with the enthusiasm, the facilities and the way the company is taking on this new technology market and succeeding. Myself, I committed to a petrol aeroplane a couple of years ago, so I am naturally trying to justify my decision. There's no doubt that the diesel is the engine of the future for the higher hour operator and when I look outside this office I see two diesel cars, so I am a bit hypocritical. I just think the old Lycoming still has a place, even if it is in a museum!

Paul Stephens

Member Profile—Boyd Munro

Boyd Munro (FFA No. 461) joined the Flying Farmers in 1991. On his application form it simply says "farms 10,000 acres, operates 2 Navajos and a Tiger Moth". This is to say the least, quite an understatement about himself.

His home is now near Perth and he has a Caravan. With the first understatement, I ask myself, is this Perth Australia or Perth Scotland and is that caravan, as in behind a car or Caravan, as in £1 million aeroplane? I had to find out more about this larger than life character.

After a few emails had exchanged between myself and Boyd, he dropped in one day (with PPR) to my strip and introduced himself and his fabulous custom made Cessna Caravan, in a glorious red paint scheme with this massive exhaust sticking out of sharks teeth nose artwork. Once this aeroplane is on a strip, you realise the size of the thing. They are big, purposeful but by no means ungainly and apparently a pussycat to fly. But that comes from a man who has owned more than 20 aeroplanes and helicopters from a Tiger Moth (won in a New Zealand air race) to corporate jets of all sorts.



Boyd with Poppy, the Ridgeback

As you would expect with the name Munro, Boyd's grandparents were from Scotland, emigrating to Australia where Boyd was born at Rockhampton during the 2nd World War. His aviation interests started at the age of 5, as it was quite common in Australia to fly on airlines, unaccompanied as a child. Still at the age of 5, young Boyd went walkabout. His parents eventually received a phone call from Brisbane International Airport — "Is this your child at our airport?"

So the fire was in his belly and after studying Science at university, Boyd learnt to fly. He then got a job with IBM setting up computers in the mid 60's. Computers were at their early development stage and Boyd was increasing sales for IBM by setting up systems for companies. After a couple of years, he realised that there would be more money to made developing the software for them. He could see opportunities in the USA, but couldn't get a visa. So he came to London instead and established a company developing software and selling it to large companies, who at the time were buying IBM computers without any programmes, which was the normal practice.

He then set about converting his Australian PPL to a British one at Biggin Hill in 1968 and gradually added a night rating and IMC rating. He bought a Mooney as his first aeroplane and recalls his first engine failure on take off from Gatwick. Luckily he was only a few feet from the ground and with over a mile of runway in front of him, he was able to put it down. Trouble is it blocked the airport for 20 minutes whilst recovery vehicles moved the disabled aeroplane. Two future engine failures were on twins.

He did an instrument rating at Oxford in 1971, which at the time was unusual on a PPL. Next aeroplane was a Navajo in which he flew to California only two days after buying it. He still has the same Navajo.

He always wanted to keep connections with Australia and in 1980 he bought a 5000 acre farm, inland and south of Brisbane. This farm is in a high rainfall area, so when the cattle farmers in other parts are selling their stock due to drought, Boyd is a good customer at their markets and buys these cattle to bring on at his more lush farm. When the rains come, he takes the cattle back to the markets and the farmers restock and all are happy!

Around the same time he bought a similar ranch in the US on the Oregon / Idaho border, although this one wasn't so successful and was sold recently. He developed airstrips on both these farms and had a Navajo based on each.

He prides himself on obtaining a British ATPL in 1985, although he has never flown commercially. He claims the software company has treated him very well over the years and through his work and by using aeroplanes as serious means of transport, Boyd has totted up over 7000 hours, almost half being on jets which he has owned and flown including a BAC 1-11 and a Citation.

He recalls his helicopter experiences, one of which was when he lived in Bermuda; he flew his Jetranger direct from Bermuda to Washington over water. This was an 800 nautical mile flight. He had taken the floats off as they knocked 10 knots off the speed, put a couple of fuel tanks on the back seat with a variety of electric and hand pumps to transfer fuel to the main tank via a hole he drilled in the filler cap. On landing at Dulles he was so terrified that he could have come down in the water that he left the aircraft and never saw it again. One good outcome was that he registered the flight with the FAI as a record, which has never been broken. He has also set records from Singapore to New Zealand and Singapore to Tasmania in Navajos.

He still likes to spend about 3 months a year in Australia and


A dull day at Orchil Castle


Orchil Castle, the start of renovation

usually makes 6 trips a year across there either by his own means or commercial. He set up a lobbying group called Air Safety Australia which looks at bureaucracy and new legislation coming out of CASA (the equivalent to our CAA). With the backing of his 2500 members he has been able to quash some of the legislation being thought up that could ruin General Aviation.

Boyd has now bought Orchil Castle near Perth in Scotland, moving from his London address. The castle is of a chocolate box, fairy tale design perched on rising ground looking out across a lake and the mountains beyond. We had a conducted tour and could see that it is going to be a renovators delight, as he wants to put it back to as near the original layout as possible, but still have all the facilities to be comfortable in years to come. We wondered why he had chosen this particular area to live, which was easily answered as Gleneagles, a favourite place for holiday breaks for the Munro family in the past, is only two miles down the road.



On the beach at North Uist, Outer Hebrides

The Cessna Caravan was custom made to Boyd's design with the front 4 seats facing forwards. It is of course fully IFR equipped with added extras such as radar altimeter, weather radar and a cunning little display that gives wind speed and direction in flight. One of the second row seats is rigged up with a desk in front of it with a computer station, which comprises Boyd's airborne office. The laptop is connected to a satellite telephone so he can do his emails and get any weather forecasts en route.

Behind these forward facing seats in this stretched Caravan are two three seater benches going down the length of the fuselage which convert into beds so that he can go 'caravanning'! There is an on board generator to give the power. Further back are the cabin style stairs, a huge cargo netted luggage compartment and a TV screen with a moving map display for the occupants in the back.

I was rather surprised that when Fabio, Boyd's employed pilot jumped out, before Boyd could get out of the front, he had to install a tail prop as the machine is prone to sit on its backside.

So why, after all the aeroplanes that he has owned and quite a few of which he still has in Australia, did Boyd go for a Caravan? He says the Caravan has the biggest cabin of all the aeroplanes he has had, it runs on Avtur which is easier to get than Avgas is some parts of the world, surprisingly he looks at the economics of running costs and of course it is suitable for most strips. It even has mudflaps, an Alaskan extra!

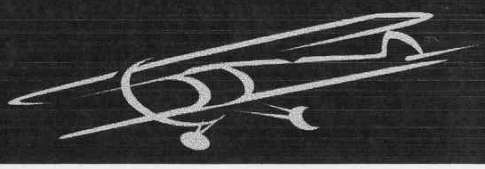
As the turbine has a 3000 hour life and he does 300 hours a year, he considers that it should see his flying days out without too much expense.

We wish Boyd, his wife Jo Ann and his family (one son working in London, two sons and a daughter in Australia and Arabella his youngest who is still at home) the best of luck with renovating Orchil Castle and long may that fire in his belly keep burning. He simply says, "I'm a passionate flyer".

Yet another character in our Flying Farmers Association.

Paul & Roz Stephens

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Have you filled in your Questionnaire? Thank you.

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The FFA in association with M. P. Bolshaw & 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 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 Hangarkeeper's liability for an additional 20% of the applicable premium. There is a £50,000 limit on this section and insurance premium tax will be charged at 5% of the final premium.

If the aircraft movements at your strip exceed 200 p.a. or if £50,000 any one hangarkeeper's liability is insufficient, or if you have any queries whatsoever, contact **Darren Smith at M. P. Bolshaw & Co. Ltd on 020 8953 8033** or fax 020 8207 4007 or email 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 similar cover, for fear of exposing itself and in turn it's members.

On contacting Bolsahws, please tell them that you are an FFA member and quote your membership number.