FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 97

March 2008

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph;

Some of the aircraft at RAF Henlow on March 19th for the Silsoe meeting.

Chairman's Message

The first event of 2008 has taken place - a non-fly-to meeting at the old steam-driven pumping station at Kew in London. It was over-subscribed - we are sorry for those who were a bit late coming forward and so missed a very successful event. Although there will be more events this year than ever before some of them are already full, so my new year message would be: please get booked into events early to avoid disappointment.

The popular saying that a day is a long time in politics is probably correct, but what about a year in farming? What remarkable price changes we are seeing in the arable sector. The price of wheat may have doubled but the price of phosphate and potash has quadrupled and some other commodities seem to be following suit. I am very concerned about the price of avgas in 2009 - I recently heard an oil man predicting the rapid rise of unleaded petroleum to £2 per litre - phew!

I have been hearing of the problems some of you have had with your aero engines, particularly with camshafts that have not been hardened properly during manufacture, resulting in premature wear of the lobes and necessitating extremely expensive replacement. You have my sympathy, but I think that the manufacturer responsible for the problem should make a much higher contribution towards its solution.

The area covered by our local newspaper includes Boscombe Down. Under the headline "Jaguar no longer stalking the skies" an article tells the life story of XX833 the last Jaguar flying, now retired. XX833 came to Boscombe Down in 1994 and in its twelve years' service there flew 1070 hours, suffered five bird strikes and one lightning strike, consumed nine engines at an average life of 122.33 hours each and carried out 864 sorties. Its total hours from new in 1975 were 5335 and it made 7690 landings. What it must have cost to keep the beast in the air!

John Golden

Committee Members

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Editor's Notes

This is just a very short newsletter to cover some of the forthcoming events and report on our winter activity.

A few more new members have joined—where do they keep coming from? Seeing as the FFA has been in existence for 34 years now, I find it amazing and encouraging that farmers with aeroplanes still keep applying to become members. And they're not young farmers either; to the contrary we have recently enrolled a 75 year old and an 80 year old, both actively flying and long may they do so.

Let's hope that the increased cereal prices will pay to keep the aircraft fuelled and maintained to whatever standard or bureaucratic regime is dreamt up next. My sympathy does of course go to the livestock men who are faced with extraordinary feed price increases (I am one myself!). Once the consumers realise that higher and more realistic food prices will have to be paid in the future, the balance between hoof and corn should even up a bit and we'll all be able to keep flying.

The Committee met again after the Kew meeting in London. Not much new to report, other than it was decided to weight our donations to councils more in favour of AOPA, after strong feelings from the floor at the last two AGMs. The 2008 AGM will most likely be held at Husbands Bosworth on October 15th. This will be a central location for most of the members and the theme for the speaker will be safety.

Paul Stephens

Beware

Mike Cuttell would like to make members aware that if your aircraft radio licence has run out, your C of A is invalid and hence your insurance! Also, you are required to register an exemption to operate a Mode A/C transponder until you replace it with a Mode S by 31st March 2012 (see David's article on the next page). The form is at www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?catid=33&pagetype=65&appid=11&mode=form&id=3038 or go to www.caa.co.uk then publications, then general aviation, then forms. It is very straight forward (unlike that address!) and can be completed online.

Rating of Strips

You very kindly put out some word for help on my account last year when the rating officer leapt upon me and attempted to hit me with a £4000 annual rating bill!

After a struggle we sorted it and I thought you might like to see the attached from my agent. The thought process and argument below might be useful to others.

I had a little more difficulty as when the rating officer called by, there was only my aircraft in the hangar and not a sign of anything remotely agricultural!! All now resolved.

FFA member–name withheld.

The appeal for the air strip and premises was argued on the following basis:

- The airfield strip was primarily used for agriculture and sheep were grazing on the field and the farming company were receiving Single Farm Payments
- When the airstrip was needed for landing and taking off the sheep were moved to one side, therefore it was only used on a temporary basis.
- We looked into comparable evidence for the premises which should have been valued in the region of £9 - £10 sq m, however, the rating officer had valued it at £12.50 which was too high.
- Rates on the premises were hard to value as the barn was open ended and had no services.
- Also we argued on the principle that you were a director for the Farming Company and used the aircraft on numerous occasions to inspect crops etc from an aerial prospective to save time instead of walking every boundary and field on the ground.

Report from GACC, 12 March 2008

The 2007 GA fatal accident statistics have been the worst for many years; a preliminary analysis by CAA reveals that 71% of the 2007 accidents were owner/operators. As a result, CAA will be producing 2 new Safety Sense leaflets – one specifically for helicopter pilots, where there is a clear problem of accidents caused by pressing on into bad weather. There will also be other CAA generated safety initiatives to try to address the 2007 situation.

In April 2007, CAA issued an exemption from the requirement for GA aircraft to carry approved ELT's; as the technical problems have still not been resolved, a further 12 month exemption will be issued shortly. CAA are also considering the implications of the carriage of PLB's – more information about this in due course; there is, of course, nothing to prevent you carrying PLB's now – but they must be properly registered. (Maurice Kirk, the flying vet, was recently rescued from his ditched Piper Cub in West Indies waters, because he had a properly registered – in New Zealand - ELT; history does not relate whether it was "approved"!). There is also an ICAO requirement that from 1/7/2008 all aircraft are to carry automatic ELT's – but there is a 4 year transition period for this to come into effect, by which time CAA will have decided the best way forward for UK aircraft.

The Part M airworthiness regime will come into effect from 1 September 2008 – but there is a strong possibility that the sub-parts F and G (and possibly sub-part I) will not come into effect for a further 12 months after that date; watch the CAA website, and other news sources. For those interested, only 50% of those potentially eligible have applied for sub-part G, and only 25% for sub-part F; the CAA accept that if all the missing applications were now received, they could not process them in the time available between now and 1 September 2008.

There is no further news on the Mogas/Ethanol situation; CAA wrote to all engine manufacturers, but only Rotax have replied. However, the principal problem expected is "airframe" rather than engine – degradation of pipework and seals, etc.

Mode S. There is a second consultation out now, for Phase II of the Mode S process; there is too much detail to précis it here. Go to the CAA website – www.caa.co.uk – and in the box on the left of the Home Page, "Tell me more about..." select Mode S. In the first box that comes up on the Mode S page there is an interactive Q & A session, which is exceptionally simple to use, and ends up with a process of registration for the necessary exemption certificate for your aircraft, if you do not have Mode S fitted and are not required to fit it yet. If this applies to you, you must fill in this easy form.

The second box down on the Mode S page leads you to the new consultation, and further on down the Mode S page is an easy to use table that shows you where and when you may/will need to fit Mode S. Please do look at the CAA Mode S page – it is all there for you, in simple format.

There is an ICAO requirement for all pilots and air trafficers – everywhere – to hold English language proficiency certificates. The CAA is issuing these certificates automatically, without any request, to all UK licence holders. All professional licence holders will already have received their certificates, and PPL holders, etc, are now being processed at the rate of 500 per day – so watch your post if you have not already received yours.

David Corbett

FFA airfield/airstrip owners/operators sub-group

Arising from the recent EASA Opinion on "Essential Requirements for the Safety and Interoperability Regulation of Aerodromes" I am anxious to form a temporary sub-group of all FFA owners/operators of aerodromes and airstrips, from the likes of Shobdon, a licensed airfield, down to members' airstrips where there may be several aircraft based. This is because the wording of the Opinion is such that all these categories may be brought into EASA regulation – which none of us (presumably) will welcome. If you fall into this category, and would like to be kept abreast of developments, could you e-mail me please on david.corbett5@btinternet.com putting FFA airstrip subgroup in the subject box.

David Corbett

Welcome to New Members

Since 1st December 2007, the following have joined

		Strip
823	Dean Sempers, Lincoln	n
824	Charles Wheeldon, Lincoln	n
825	David Burnett, Downham Market	y
826	Robert Howell, Sutton On Sea	n

The total membership now stands at 391

Programme 2008

February 20th	Kew Bridge Steam Museum, London
March 19th	Silsoe, Bedfordshire
April 16th	Alvis Bros. Lye Cross Farm, Bristol
April 22nd-23rd	Central Science Laboratory plus other visits, Yorkshire
May 6th-8th	Floatplane Flying, Perth
May 14th-24th	European Tour to Spain
June 18th	Orford Ness, Suffolk
June 21st-25th	Normandy, France
July 9th	Yattendon Estate, Berkshire
September 23rd???	Windfarm, Welshpool, Wales
October 15th	AGM, possibly Husbands Bosworth



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.

Orford Ness, Wednesday June 18th 2008

Here's another chance for members to visit this mysterious place off the coast of Suffolk, reached only by ferry (or a 12 mile walk on shingle from Aldburgh).

For 70 years it was off limits: in WWl there were two airfields on it where they learnt how to conduct aerial warfare, configure bombs etc. Graves in the local churchyard bear witness to the unforgiving nature of parachute development. The Black Beacon was built for experiments into a rotating loop navigation aid.

An unprepossessing building housed the early research by Watson Watt into radar, but for which we would now be speaking German. Nearby lie the feet of the first chain home type masts. After WW2 strange buildings were erected to test A and H bomb fuses (themselves HE) under all conditions - the famous pagodas. The latest exhibit is a (decommissioned) aerial launch A bomb, WE 177.

Then there is the huge Cobramist building and its vast groundmat, designed by the US for over the horizon radar: apparently the Russian trawler which legend says parked in the north sea and jammed the whole thing - all the Yanks got was a humming noise when it was switched on, causing it to be shut down at huge expense, has long gone. We visit the BBC world service, which nowadays transmits from there.

Now in the hands of the National Trust, organised visits to the Ness have the benefit of transport round this large site, a chance to inspect the parts not normally open, and the expert services of Paddy Heazell as guide. For naturalists, there is the remarkable shingle spit itself, with its vegetation and bird sanctuaries.

Members flying in, land at RAF Bentwaters, a cold war monster, now in private hands,. and travel to the Ness by vintage coach. If on landing you see lots of military helicopters, you will find you have landed at nearby RAF Woodbridge, now in Army hands. On our return the Bentwaters cold war museum will be open for a snap visit. See www.bcwm.org.uk. Fee includes transport, admission and gift for Paddy – landing fee and museum donation at pilots discretion! Numbers limited to 24.

Please use the reply slip and return to Paul Coulten before May 18th. Numbers limited to 24!

Full briefing win be sent to those coming. NT members to bring their card. This is an all day event.

Yattendon Estate, Wednesday July 9th 2008

The Yattendon Estate is the amalgamation of several smaller estates acquired by the first Lord Iliffe between 1925 and 1940. In 1955, Yattendon Estate was formed to hold the land and run the in-hand farms.

Today, it represents a total of nearly 9,000 acres divided between in-hand farms, let farms, woodlands, Christmas tree areas, let small holdings and grazings.

The Yattendon Estate takes its role within farming and the community very seriously. It is a family owned estate known for being environmentally and socially responsible.It treasures values such as heritage, tradition, authenticity, uniqueness and respect for the real English countryside.

The ethics are reflected in Yattendon quality products which promote the regional "craft" of baking. The simple presentation also suggests the peaceful local life of the past and present.The Estate has practised "responsible English farming at Yattendon since 1925". This commitment enables Yattendon Estate to look forward to a sustainable farming future in the diverse and beautiful landscape of Berkshire.

Hereward winter wheat is used to make the Yattendon Bread Products.

Dairying

Frilsham Home Farm dairy is a world class 550 cow unit meeting the highest hygiene and welfare standards for both

animals and staff. The building was completed in autumn 2002. The cows are Friesian Holsteins which can be seen grazing on the grass around the village of Yattendon and Frilsham.

Beef Cattle

The Frilsham herd of pedigree British White cattle, a rare and ancient breed, are kept in the parkland at Yattendon. They are regularly shown at agricultural shows in southern England.

Countryside Stewardship

The Estate has been a member of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme since October 1998. Examples of the scheme are as follows;

A planting program has resulted in the annual planting of between 3,500 and 18,200 metres of hedges and coppicing and layering an average of 1,800 metres of hedges per annum.

Two and six metre margins have been left uncultivated around arable fields creating wildlife habitats. Areas of arable land have been converted to downland grass providing habitat for Stone Curlew an endangered species.

The Estate manages 2,181 acres of woodlands on a commercial basis. The main products are seasoned hardwoods, softwoods and Christmas trees.

The Estate is one of the largest producers of Christmas trees in the country having started in the 1960's selling Norway Spruce thinnings from commercial woodlands. Since then a number of varieties of trees have been grown and are available.

Entries in early please to Mike Cuttell on the reply slip. We may have to limit to about 20 aircraft due to parking limitations and to members only. This event is by kind permission of the Illiffe family who are FFA members.

Game Fair, Blenheim Palace, Friday 25th July to Sunday 27th July 2008

Just to let you know (in case you have an FFA newsletter in production) that, as in past years when the Game Fair has been at Blenheim, I am putting together a package for air arrivals at Oxford Kidlington airport which will include VIP transport to and from the event for a fee per person (probably around £5). I haven't had any success with discounts on landing fees but they are relatively reasonable there at present, at least for singles.

Anyone interested can contact me at the above e-mail address or on 07860 378429. You are welcome to publish this as it stands but I will let you have more info as soon as it is available.

Andrew Dent

Windfarm visit, September 23rd 2008???

A visit to a windfarm at Carno, Powys, Mid Wales, will take place during week commencing 22 September. The background to this visit is as follows.

Huw and Gwyndap Thomas are brothers who farm and run businesses at Carno; one of their tenants is David Corbett's family farming company, which has a 32000 bird broiler breeder site on Hew's farm at Carno. The Thomas's have had a joint venture windfarm – with nPower – running for 12 years; there are 56 0.6 mw turbines at that project. The family are now starting another windfarm, on the adjoining site, which will have 12 1.3 mw turbines – without any joint venture partner. Work is





now well under way, and by Easter when CCW (Wales's equivalent of English Nature) require the mountain top project to stop development work for the summer nesting season, all the bases will be complete; as each base requires 380 cu m of ready mixed concrete (over 60 loads!), you can judge the scale of the project.

FFA have been invited to visit the site when the new turbines are being lifted into position – one turbine a day for 12 days, so the window of opportunity is narrow. The turbines are 50 m hub height, and 83 m blade tip height (agl) and each turbine weighs 159 tonnes overall.

We will fly to Welshpool, drive to Carno by coach and go up onto site in the coach, and watch the installation action and learn a little more about this £21m project; we will then look at the outside of the broiler breeder unit as we go back down the hill, and learn about that operation, and then have lunch in the Aleppo Merchant pub in Carno. After lunch we will visit Celticane at Carno, where they may be building balloon baskets, or any other of a range of cane or bamboo products – see www.celticare.co.uk On our way back to Welshpool airport, we will stop for tea at another location of interest – I am having trouble deciding which of two will be of most interest!

A meeting will shortly take place between the Thomas family and the manufacturer of the turbines; at this meeting, the dates of the 12 day installation programme will be confirmed. At present, it is almost certain that w/c 22 September will fall within the 12 days. I therefore expect to organise this visit such that we will book the visit for Tuesday 23 September, but will have a fall-back date of 24 September in case of bad weather on the Tuesday.

Please now register your interest in this visit by completing the reply slip in the normal way, and posting it together with a cheque for £25 per person deposit to David Corbett at the address shown.

Because of my plans for this summer, I need to have the list of names drawn up by 31 May, and I will be making a "reserves" list, because the date of the visit is not final, and it's a long way ahead.

Cheques will not be presented until nearer the actual date.

I will be updating those whose names are on the list with more detail as plans progress.

David Corbett

Kew Bridge Steam Museum

February 20th dawned a lot better than the previous day making it possible for most members to make a relatively clear journey to Green Dragon Lane. From 10 a.m. people arrived in dribs and drabs so by 11 a.m. nearly everyone was there.

After coffee and biscuits the group was halved alphabetically or nearly so as some poetic licence was the order of the day enabling people to keep together.

The museum was opened in 1975 on the old premises of the Grand Junction Water Co., who in their day pumped water straight from the Thames. This company moved from Chelsea in 1828 and continued to pump water from the Thames until 1852.





Most of the engines were in steam especially for the group. Steam now being raised by means of gas not as in the old days by coal brought up the river to the companies' own wharf by barge and fed into huge Lancashire boilers.

Many of the engines carried familiar names from the past, the first engine on our tour being a Boulton & Watt, the next being the Dancing Engine of 1867 which had been moved to the site from Tring, this engine being built by James Kay.

On the way round we were shown some old elm water pipes, these were elm trunks of about 1ft in diameter hollowed out, sharpened like pencils and plugged into each other – this was how the water was pumped in the 1600's.

The next engine was an Easton & Amos compound engine of 1865 i.e. a high pressure and low pressure cylinder making more use of the steam. Looking for more efficiency the next engine was a Hathorn & Davy engine using super heated steam, this engine would pump 2.5 million gallons per day.

Pride of place and the last engines to be seen were the 90" being built by Sandy, Carne and Vivian. The main beams weighed 12tons each. Built in 1846, it is a marvel of engineering and how it was installed without modern tower cranes etc. (No 'elf n safety in those days!)

The last engine, the 100", unfortunately had a cracked beam and at this point in time is a non runner.





The museum is mostly run by volunteers, that is the guides and also the staff who 'drive' the engines, their enthusiasm is amazing.

We were directed to the canteens for a pleasant buffet lunch after which we were given the opportunity to wander around and ask further questions.

Many thanks to our Chairman John Golden and Mike Cuttell for making this interesting day available.

Bob Beard

We were blessed with good flying weather - unusual for an early FF Flyin. Dry conditions and a cloud base of about 1800 ft with a cold Northerly wind.

Sixteen aircraft, two helicopters and 29 members and guests landed at Henlow with the kind permission of the RAF.

The event had been organised by Mike Cuttell, who unfortunately had fallen off some scaffolding two days earlier. I spoke to Mike - not seriously injured, some bruises and maybe a cracked rib or two. The running of the day was admirably undertaken by Andrew Cragg. Nobody was left behind or lost!

The original Silsoe Research Group was run by a Government funded Research Council and this funding and the Group were wound down in 2005 and eventually closed in 2006. Staff and members of the original group have stayed on, establishing their own smaller units and carried forward their research.

Our first talk was presented by John Reed (an aviator himself), the Technical Director of the Engineering Automation Group of Silsoe Technology.



We had a slide show and detailed description of their work of innovation and automation, covering all aspect of farming and food production; for instance robotic mushroom harvesting automation units. In fact anyone with a problem that needs an automated solution can ask the help of this department. Most interesting was the research on tractor implement interactions i.e. tractor rollover characteristics and interaction of forces exerted on vehicles and implements such as ploughs. Spray boom modeling, and solving food handling and harvesting problems also come within their remit.

Then a viewing of fascinating machines being developed by Nick Tillett (yet another aviator) of Tillett and Hague Machinery, who both work together on Computer Vision Guidance, which can be operated by remote control from any distance by satellite instruction and guidance, to spray and cultivate using of course our old friend GPS together with camera technology to recognise crop rows.

There was film of one particularly interesting machine that hoes not only between the rows, but also the gaps between the plants within the rows—and all at a respectable forward speed! Problems with drill bout matching are overcome by linking together a number of different hoeing machines on one tractor, that are the same width as the original drill and all working individually with their own cameras.



Finally a very interesting talk by Clare Butler Ellis of TAG (The Arable Group) on all aspects of spraying, dealing in great detail with all sizes and types of spray nozzles and the detailed analysis of the actual spray droplet.

We saw the steps taken to gather info on the influence of the wind on the spray, giving detailed collection of wind spread contamination of surrounding land and people; what we would call spray drift. Finally we were treated to a demonstration of spraying in a wind tunnel and its effects.

The building in which all this work takes place is situated in the grounds of Wrest Park owned originally by the De Gray Family and now by English Heritage. After lunch we thoroughly enjoyed a walk round the magnificent gardens of the Park which were laid out by Capability Brown, consisting of many wooded walks and canals providing a fascinating history of gardening styles. The present house was built in 1834.

A lovely end to a very interesting and thought provoking day.

A vote of thanks to our hosts was given by Martin Gosling and we then left for Henlow and onward flight home, still with good weather.

Peter Pilch





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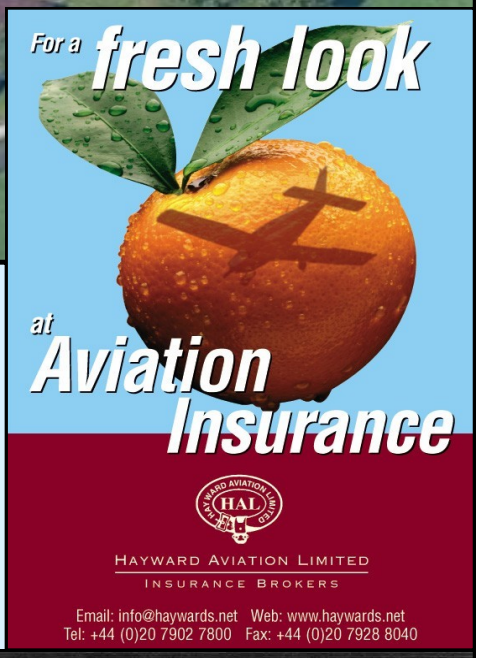
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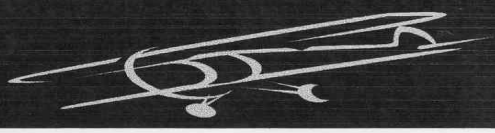
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