NEWSLETTER

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

Summer has suddenly merged into Winter down in the South and some of my heavier land is beginning to show the effects of the torrential rain which we have been experiencing over the last week or so.

Most of us down here can look back upon a reasonable farming year. Last years' drought at harvest time is but a distant memory and as we struggled with sprouted and soggy grain this year I wondered whether last years conditions were not so bad after all. My yields then were very low but of course there was no drying to be done. This year yields were well up - 35 cwt of wheat per acre - (apologies to my friends in the Eastern Counties !) but the cost of drying has been terrific and the price of feed wheat has been below £70 per ton. All in all margins are going to be close to last year I should think.

My Dairy Herd has however done much better.

After a struggle for 2 years and a Bracellosis Storm 3 years ago we have finally become accredited. Cells counts are slowly dropping. Yields have increased. The Silos are fairly full of grass and maize silage and the cows are calving rapidly at this time. I would like to think that I have all the time and money to jump into the aircraft and fly away into the blue but I have not much of either and it looks as though I shall remain earthbound until the spring. I am however lucky enough to be able to do the occasional delivery or collection flights for other people and we can have glorious winter days so perhaps all is not gloom.

Our summer meetings have been marred by bad weather. I would have liked to have attended Tim Corbetts, Denis Westons and Robin Richards but it was just impossible to get off the ground down here in the South. I understand several members did get to all three meetings. Congratulations to all those who did.

May I also thank all our hosts this summer for entertaining the members who did turn up. It is not an easy task laying on food and drink for an unknown quantity - yes we still have members who breeze in unannounced. Another time please either tell the Host or the Hon. Secretary. Next year let us hope we can find another group of interesting farms to visit.

Our A.G.M. this year will be held at Aviation House, Kingsway, London W.C.2 on 7th December at 1600 hours. Please be on time. Our Chairman has invited Miss Chippington from the C.A.A. to give a talk on "Infringements of the Law and Regulations". Mr. Nigel Foulkes Chairman of the C.A.A. will attend and address the meeting at 1700 hours.

May I remind all members that we are very lucky to have two such important speakers from the C.A.A. Please come if you can, a good turnout creates a good impression.

Aviation House is easy to find. Take the Piccadilly Line to Holborn Station. The building lies immediately across Kingsway on the corner with High Holborn.

A.G.M. Agenda - for 1600 hrs.

1) Apologies
2) Minutes of last A.G.M.
3) Election of Chairman
4) Election of Hon. Secretary
5) Election of Committee
6) Adoption of Accounts - if available
7) Correspondence
8) Any other business - i.e. future meetings.

I have been asked to include in this newsletter an advertisement from 'Harvest Air', Southend Airport for a Bellanca 280 Scout Crop Sprayer Aircraft. If anyone wishes to purchase this agricultural aircraft please contact Mr. M. Brendish at 0702-544896.

Airstrip Liability Insurance Policy

This policy has been in force since the 1st of July with an indemnity of £50,000 for any one accident in respect of Legal Liability to a third party for bodily injury and or property damage. The premium is £10 per annum for each airstrip owner wishing to be covered by the policy and all 50 members, who have already asked to be included in the policy, should have received a debit note for this amount and a copy of the policy wording.

Those who have not yet paid their premiums are asked to send a cheque to Chandler Hargreaves Whitall and Co.Ltd., 63, Woodmancote, Dursley, Gloucester, without further demand.

Any other owner of an airstrip who wishes to be included in the policy are invited to contact Chandler Hargreaves or Adrian Pelly, Furnace Farm, St.Weonards, Hereford, and to include a remittance of £10.

Listen with Farmer

Are you sitting comfortably?

Then I'll begin.

Last week Farmer was sitting very confortably on his way home from Glamorgan Rhoose International Airport. He was at 3,000 feet on the regional QNH; VMC with only slight haze; the half-million map in hand and the auto-pilot on, watching the hill land improvements and listening, as is his wont, to the local FIR voice.

A voice came on the air. A somewhat anxious voice, but its owner seemed to be OK on R/T procedure as he said;

"London Information this is -------- we have an emergency"

" -- this is London Information, pass your message"

" -- has a malfunction of both VORs. Can you give me a fix please ?"

"What is your position -- ?"

"Point of departure was Lasham. Present position not known".

"-- your message received. Change frequency to 121.5"

"-- Wilco"

Farmer having nothing to do except look at hill land improvements beneath him, changed frequency too because here was a real life emergency.

"This is ------ we have an emergency. Both VORs are malfunctioning please can you give us our position ?"

"-- can you tell me where you think you are and what altitude you are ?"

"Somewhere north of Lasham at 2,500 feet on the QNH"

"Are you transponder equipped ?"

"-- affirmative"

"-- squark ----"

"-- we cannot get a fix what is your heading?"

"-- heading 330"

"-- what are your in flight conditions ?"

"-- Victor Mike Charlie"

"-- How many on board ?"

"Three passengers".

"-- wait one and we will try to pick you up again"

For a few minutes there was silence, then

"-- We think that we have you nine miles NE of Lyneham - call Cotswold Radar on 134.3"

Farmer scanned the landscape, sat in the sunshine, ripened and pondered.

What, he wondered, was anyone doing in an aeroplane complete with three passengers, a transponder, two dud VORs and no topographical map ? Perhaps he had a topographical map but could not read it ? But three lives in his care ! Lost, in VMC, over east Wiltshire ? Farmer recalled the words of Edward Lear - "The owl and the pussycat went to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat, they took some honey and lots of money wrapped up in a five pound note. The owl looked up to the stars and sang as he played on a small guitar..."

For 'guitar' read 'transponder'.

For 'pea-green boat' and 'lots of money' read '€30,000 worth of aeroplane.

And just think what the driver would have done if both his COMM sides had malfunctioned along with the VORs !

(Ed: Hope the pilot of the aeroplane in this story was not a Flying Farmer !)