Flying Farmers Association

Newsletter - March, 1983

Annual General Meeting, December 1982

There were some 26 members present at the AGM at the Kensington Court Hotel on the Wednesday afternoon of Smithfield week.

Col John Williams-Wynne, who has been Chairman since our formation in 1973, retired from the Committee, but was unanimously elected Honarary President of the Association.

Dick Walgate and Robin Dent were elected to the Committee, and Dick has subsequently agreed to be Chairman of the Association. We welcome both our new Committee members, and thank Dick for agreeing to take on the responsibility as Chairman.

After the AGM, we had a most interesting talk from Darrol Stinton of the C.A.A., who showed us many slides of the interesting and varied light aircraft which he has flown, both in U.K. and overseas, in his capacity as Chief Test Pilot, Light Aircraft.

Programme for 1983

The programme for 1983 is now beginning to take shape. The outline is as follows:

8th April - R.A.F. Binbrook - see full details in next paragraph

23rd May - during week commencing 23rd May there will be a visit to the Scilly Isles. See outline detail in following paragraph.

June - we are hoping to arrange a visit to see the new airship being built at Cardington.

We also have an invitation to fly in to Badminton Estate, home of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, and we still hope to arrange a visit to Wg Cdr Ken Wallis to see his autogiros.

R.A.F. Binbrook

By kind permission of the Station Commander, Group Captain Barcilon, we are invited to fly in to R.A.F. Binbrook on Friday 8th April. A fairly crowded programme has been arranged, and it will be necessary to make an early start.

R.A.F. Binbrook is situated on the Lincolnshire Wolds some 15 miles south west of GRIMSBY. The station is the home of the Royal Air Force's Lightnings - the only base in Europe to operate them - and so it is one of the airdefence stations of the East Coast. Two squadrons operate out of Binbrook, No 5 and No 11, and the station houses some 50 Lightnings, some being a training version with side-by-side seating for the instructor and pupil.

The Lightning first flew in 1954 as the English Electric P1 and entered RAF service in 1960. It is powered by two Rolls Royce Avon 302 turbojets mounted vertically and these give sufficient power for the Lightning to climb to 36,000 feet and accelerate to supersonic speeds in less than 3½ minutes. The Lightning is due to be phased out of service in the late 1980's and replaced by the Tornado Adv.

On the day of our visit, it is expected that a French Squadron will be visiting Binbrook, and we hope to visit that Squadron as well.

During our tour we expect to visit the following sections:

Briefing, Air Traffic, Met., Fire station, Lightning Squadron ops., Lightning simulator, French Squadron, and see flying. The programme will obviously be subject to rearrangement on the day to fit in with operational and weather requirements.

This visit has been organised by our new Chairman, Dick Walgate, who will be doing all the liaising with R.A.F. Binbrook himself. Therefore, the tear-off slip at the end of this newsletter should be sent to Dick at the following address:

J. R. Walgate.
Cuxwold Hall.
CAISTOR.
Lincoln LN7 6DA Telephone Swallow (047 289) 203

All queries about this visit should be referred direct to Dick at that address. Dick is very anxious that we should have the best possible turnout on the day. Please return the tear-off slip not later than 31st March.

Visit to Scilly Islands

We are hoping to confirm two days for this trip during week commencing 23rd May. The principle objective of the trip will be to visit Tresco and see how that island has been developed over the years to its present almost self-sufficient economic state.

There are several ways of getting to Tresco:

(i) by air (public or private) to St Mary's, and then by boat to Tresco.

(ii) by helicopter direct from Penzance to Tresco (limited service now this year).

(iii) we may be able, subject to the tenant's permission, to fly direct onto Tresco to a new airstrip being opened this year. But this airstrip will be strictly for STOL only.

Accommodation on Tresco itself is limited, and likely to be fully booked up. We therefore envisage that we will have to visit Tresco for the day only, staging either from the mainland or from St Mary's. We shall leave this choice open to members but will provide a list of accommodation for members to contact if they wish to prolong their visit to that part of the world.

We have an invitation to visit Brendan Butler's airstrip at Okehampton on the way down or back - this is believed to be the highest airstrip in England, being situated on the edge of Dartmoor. An article about this airstrip appears later in this newsletter.

Future newsletters

We will publish another newsletter as soon as Tresco details are agreed. By that time we hope to have details of more visits for this summer.

"Father's Fly-in" - by a Flying Farmers Daughter

We are extremely grateful to Juliet Butler for writing the following extremely well written article:

"The day of the official christening of the new 1,000 feet a.m.s.l. north/south 350 metre long air-strip at Westcott Farm, Dartmoor dawned a bright blue Sunday, with only the habitual mid-July early morning mist lingering in the valleys and hollows of the hilly Devon landscape.

The aircraft belonging to local farmers and members of the nearby Dunkerswell aero club were hopefully begin arriving at 12.00 hours and my father quickly disappeared off to the Club to fetch his Rallye and fly it back to the strip, leaving my fluttering moth with hasty instructions to pound up and down the hill carrying charcoal for the barbecue, water for the tea and cream for the scones. Everyone had been at panic stations the previous day as a typical Dartmoor summer had made it impossible to harvest the soggy mass of grass (euphemistically called hay) which lay over the strip in depressing swathes. At the last moment the decision was taken to try and turn it into silage, and with the help of a neighbouring farmer who luckily had the equipment and who being a flier himself

realised the urgency of the situation. the field was cleared leaving the evening and a very short morning to roll out the worst protusions. In fact my morning's rolling was even shorter than I had expected because as I rumbled down the middle of the airstrip I suddenly heard the roar of a Rallye engine above the noise of the tractor and, cowering over the wheel, I glanced up to see my father thundering overhead and gesticulating furiously at me to clear the run-way.

At twelve o'clock on the dot the first invitees, the postman, the postman's wife and the postman's two young children appeared at the far gate and strolled curiosly over to the parked aircraft, inspected it cautiously from a few yards. Soon one side of the air-strip was bustling with farmers taking a brief hour or so off from harvesting; families from nearby villages keeping dogs and children under dubious control; elderly couples perching politely on the edges of straw-bales and looking hopefully up the run-way; a hand ful of Dutch tourists in full cycling gear organising the barbecue - and a retired civil airling pilot protesting loudly that he wouldn't go near a plane without a fully qualified flight engineer to hand.

By 13.00 hours the beef-burgers, sausages and rolls have been happily consumed by all the guests and my father has made seven flights and is beginning to look a bit pale at the prospect of being a lone pilot for the rest of the air-day. However, just as he steps unsteadily out of G AWAA with his eighth delighted passenger and is handed his sixth cup of tea, the distant hum of light aircraft, music to our ears, is carried up the valley on the breeze and a minute later they come swooping, circling and dipping over the rise, sweeping over low hedges (and lower heads) before gracefully coming in to land one after the other in front of the thrilled and astonished eyes of the assembled onlookers - and to the great relief of my father.

From that moment on time literally flew as farmers, butchers, old ladies and children were whisked up into the skies to look down with amazement at their villages and homes. The pilots themselves seemed no less delighted at the pleasure they were giving and, indeed, seemed to relish the enraptured, awe-filled expressions of their passengers, just as much as the between-flight cream teas which my mother was providing in the caravan which doubles as Flight Control Centre and kitchen.

P.T.O

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Details wanted

Aircraft Reg. G-.....Type.....AUW.....kilos

Services required Fuel Grade Avgas 100L. quantity - - - gals / litres
Payment by cheque and Bank Card and cash only.

Arriving from.....

Met Met forecast required for departure yes/no to.....
(this can be requested on arrival)

Pilots name.....

Passengers' names 1.....2.....

3.....4.....

Any special requests

E.T.D.....Destination.....

To J. R. Walgate,
Cuxwold Hall,
CAISTOR.
Lincoln LN7 6DA

Signed.....

Every time another plane bounced off down the runway heading straight for the hedge at the far end, breaths were held and scones halted half-way to mouth. Would it make it? Fortunately it always did. One local farmer, who flies his plane with some panache, took me up "for a quick loop the loop" and other aerobatics directly above the airfield, an exhilarating experience. The onlookers below must have either heard my screams from 2000 feet up or else have eated too many cream scones, for nobody took up his offer to view the world from upside down.

Towards evening an unknown Swedish tourist who had glimpsed all this activity from his car arrived at the airfield and, consumed with curiosity, walked cautiously to the edge of the strip just as an aircraft was coming in to land. Having helped out his chattering passengers, the pilot glanced round for more and, catching sight of the bemused Swede, beckoned impatiently to him to get in. And having secured him into the passenger seat took off for a spin over Dartmoor. Half an hour later the dazed tourist tottered uncertainly back to his car, no doubt convinced that the English, and in particular the English farmer, was and always would be, quite mad.

As dusk started to fall at the end of a beautiful day, the aircraft on by one took their departure leaving behind many happy memories in the hearts of all those who had been fortunate enough to experience that most perfect of pleasures, flying in a small aircraft over beautiful English countryside.

Juliet Butler

Editor s notes - this article was sent in as a result of my plea for articles in the November newsletter. If I now repeat that plea, will other members also send something in - no matter how long or short, or what subject matter. PLEASE !!

and - whoever has heard of a jet engine being mounted vertically? But - that paragraph was written somewhere in Lincolnshire - so we shall see, won't we !!?