FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION LTD.

Newsletter No. 1

The Flying Farmers' Association was formed at the end of April as a limited company. The registered offices are at 161 Fleet Street, London, EC4P 4AA.

The committee consists of:

Chairman: Col. J.F. Williams-Wynne, CBE, DSO, MA, FRAgS.
The Estate Office,
Towyn,
Merioneth,
Wales.
Telephone: Towyn (0654) 710328

Secretary: Anthony Poulsom
Foxbury Farm,
Thundery Hill,
Seale,
Farnham,
Surrey.
Telephone: Runfold 2044

Other Committee Members:
Fred. Spencer,
Church Farm,
Shotteswell,
Banbury,
Oxfordshire.
Telephone: Wroxton-St-Mary 275

David Corbett,
Corbett Farms Ltd.,
Shobdon,
Leominster,
Herefordshire.
Telephone Kingsland 351

The Flying Farmers' Association is now getting airborne. This is the first of what we hope will be regular newsletters to keep members in touch with what is going on.

Our initial formative meeting held at the Farmers Weekly's Drainage Demonstration in late April was very well attended. Over 80 farmers turned up - many by air. Transport arrangements were stretched to the limit when 28 aircraft arrived at Baginton. This was far more than anyone had expected.

When the idea of the Flying Farmers' Association was first considered it was thought about 30-40 farmers would join. Already we have over 60 members and the indications are many other farmers will soon join.

The success of the Association depends on the enthusiasm of its members. If everyone is prepared to help and offer useful advice success is assured.

/ ... ...

Our first major event will be a fly in to Shobdon airfield, Herefordshire in September. The final date is still to be finalised but it is expected to be 24th, 25th or 26th September.

Committee member, David Corbett, who farms all around the airfield and who operates Shobdon as a licenced airfield has offered to take members on a tour of his farm. Of special interest will be David's apple enterprise.

Douglas Bader, who is a member of the C.A.A., has offered to come along to talk about the F.F.A. and its relationship with the C.A.A. We hope everyone will come - more details soon.

* * * *

Chairman's Notes

Those who want to fly need three things: they must have a flying machine; a licence to fly it and a field from which to operate it.

Farmers already possess the land so they have an advantage over most other people. Furthermore, a number of farmers are already pilots, and more are likely to become aviators because shortage of labour will make any time-saving device useful; and with an aeroplane a farmer can inspect his stock, see that gates are shut, examine crops which otherwise he could never see, and get from farm to farm in minutes rather than hours, freeing himself to do other jobs.

Where a flying farmer is unique is in his ability to take off from his front door. For him there is no dead time getting to and from an aerodrome. To the farmer, therefore, speed in the air is less important than an aeroplane which will take off and land in very short distances. Such a machine is cheap to buy and to operate as well as being simple to maintain.

The Flying Farmers' Association has been formed to represent farmers interested in personal aviation. An aeroplane used by a farmer for his business comes in the same category as his Landrover or his tractor, it is an agricultural implement.

But whereas most pilots are only concerned with rules of the air, farmers have also to think about the airfields they have made and to make sure that these are not misused or even used illegally.

In the air farmers flying from one farm to another, or working around their own farm have special responsibilities too. Some may find that they are situated near, in, or beneath Controlled Areas. In such circumstances it is both wise and rewarding to establish close liaison with the local Air Traffic Controllers. ATC staff are always most helpful in trying to make life easy for the private pilot, especially if the latter sets out to be efficient and cooperative.

I hope that the F.F.A. will be able to arrange meetings with the National Air Traffic Control Service and also see some of the excellent films which deal with such matters.

I hope also that we shall be able to arrange discussions with lawyers on the subject of the liability incurred by a farmer who permits someone else to use his strip. From that we might be able to go on to the preparation of a short Guide on what precautions to take.

/ ... ...

Chairman's Notes cont.

We are also compiling a list of members with private strips which we plan to circulate in confidence to other members.

Our first meeting is planned for mid-September at an airfield near to a farm which is of general interest. To date we have 64 members who between them operate 46 aeroplanes and have 43 farm airfields. We welcome all who fly and farm and have strips of their own.

COL. J. F. WILLIAMS-WYNNE

* * * *

Secretary's Notes

It was well over a year ago that I, together with a handful of other farmers who enjoy flying, was approached by the Farmers Weekly to assist in forming some kind of organisation which would serve the interests of other Flying farmers. And so the Flying Farmers' Association (or F.F.A.) was born. I don't think any of us realised the problems of forming this association and it has been due mainly to Edward Long of Farmers Weekly, and Col. J.F. Williams-Wynne who is the chairman of the F.F.A., that anything really 'got off the ground' at all. It was hoped that details would have been finalised by last autumn but we were in for a shock. The complicated business of forming a limited company entailed meeting solicitors, accountants and bank managers, and it was not until the end of April this year that the Association 'took off' at the Drainage Demonstration at Solihull.

On reflection, I think it was a good thing that completion took place at this time. I think enthusiasm may have waned if we had been formed during the economic and fuel problems of last winter. Even now things are far from settled and it looks as though we may have to contend with still more increases in the price of fuel. However, despite all this we now have over 60 paid up members and I believe there are several more farmers who are wanting to join.

A map showing the whereabouts of members and airstrips is being compiled. We are including telephone numbers and it is hoped members will contact and visit each other. It was hoped that a committee would be able to fly round and check these strips but it looks as though this will take some time and may not be done until either this autumn or next spring. Then we will issue a detailed description of each strip.

A committee meeting will be held at the Royal Show and we hope to finalise the details of a Fly in which will take place at Shobdon at the end of September, by the kind invitation of David Corbett. We hope everyone will be there.

Finally we are going to try to publish a regular newsletter. This will probably initially take place twice a year. Your comments, criticisms, letters, in fact any contribution at all would be most welcome.

ANTHONY E. POULSOM

/ ... ...

Watch that fuel - A lesson learnt

It was one of those rare early summer days when there was not a cloud in the sky. A 'phone call to the Met. Officer at Heathrow confirmed my own forecast - excellent visibility, surface winds light and variable, outlook for the next twenty four hours little or no change. Armed with this information I finalised arrangements for a trip to the West Country. I had expressed an interest in purchasing a tractor from a well known firm. A representative would collect my companion and I from the nearest airfield to the firm's factory, at about 3p.m. that afternoon. We had calculated that the trip would take an hour and so we estimated a take off at 2p.m. However, a minor mechanical problem with a vacuum pump in the milking parlour delayed our departure by half an hour and it was not until 2.35p.m. that we took off from the farm strip, climbed to 2,000 feet and headed West. Both fuel tanks were full which meant we could stay airborne for 2 hours 25 minutes.

The flight was smooth and uneventful and we arrived at our destination 35 minutes late and full of apologies to the young man who had been sent to collect us. I hurried up to the Control Tower and paid my landing fee. Before leaving I was advised that the fuel pump attendant would lock up his pump at 7p.m. and if we wanted fuel to be on the airfield well before that time. I said that I did not think that we would by any later than 6 o'clock.

The drive from the airfield to the factory took 20 minutes and we spent the late afternoon examining and driving tractors on the firm's demonstration site. We were entertained very well and after an excellent tea we were driven back to the airfield, arriving at 6.50p.m. It came as a nasty surprise when we were told that the pump attendant had gone home and it was only then that we realised that it would be impossible to get fuel on the way home. All the airfields along the route would be closed for fuel. Well, we were not unduly worried, we would still have about fifteen minutes of flying time left when we reached the farm strip, and although I knew it was really not enough reserve, we took off into a cloudless sky and headed eastwards.

We arrived over the strip at 3,000ft having spent an hour and 5 minutes on the return journey. I did not bother to look down. Brakes off, mixture rich, fuel on the starboard tank (15 minutes left). Gauges in the green, hatches and harness tight and secure. A piece of cake, I grinned at my companion as I eased out the carb heat and throttled back to 1500 revs. We were flying downwind at about 1000 feet when I glanced at the airsock to confirm there was no wind. And then I saw them, about 200 of them, they were black and white slugs grazing on the six acres of airstrip. My cows had broken through the electric fence of a nearby paddock and it looked as though they were really enjoying that nice fresh grass.

It was no good buzzing the cowman's house, it was his day off the following day and I knew he was going away that evening. My other man lived a mile away from the farm and I knew he would never get the cows off the strip before my precious fuel ran out. There was no alternative field on the farm, electric wires criss cross the fields at all angles. I had about 10 minutes fuel left and I decided to go for the nearest airfield, ten minutes flying time away. My companion, also a private pilot, was looking very uneasy, we did not say a word to each other. I nursed the aircraft to a safe height, throttled back to 80mph and eased off the mixture as much as I dared.

/ ... ...

Well we made it and we lived to tell the story but the next time I did a cross country from the farm I really made sure that I had enough fuel for emergencies like the one that happened on that early summer day. After all, how often do large numbers of cows graze on proper airfields?

ANTHONY POULSOM

* * * *

Any other experiences that might be of value to others are welcomed for inclusion in a future newsletter.

* * * *

F.F.A. members are invited to fly into this year's East of England Show at Peterborough, Northants as part of the show's air rally.

Free transport from Sibson airfield to the show can be arranged by contacting the show secretary Mr. Roy Bird at Peterborough 64451 before the event.

Sibson is a licenced airfield situated 5NM West of Peterborough at 52° 33'N, 00° 23'W. It is 100 feet AMSL.

It has two grass runways 07/25 which is 2000ft long and 140ft wide and 15/33 which is 1800ft long and 140ft wide.

Prior permission can be obtained by telephoning the manager of the Peterborough Aero Club at Elton 289. The radio call sign is Sibson on 122.3. Radio A/C should call Cottesmore on 124.40 for special instructions, 10 mins before E.T.A.

Circuit direction is variable. 100L aviation spirit is obtainable on a cash basis only. The rally fee, which includes landing charges and admission to the show, is £1 per a/c and £1.50 per person.

Lunch can be obtained in the members' enclosure at the show, to which the rally badge admits, for £1.10.

* * * *

Gang Mowers

With an increasing number of farm strips being built some members have told us it is virtually impossible to find a cheap set of gang mowers.

If anyone knows where there are any spare sets lying around please let us know as there is a ready need for them.

* * * *

Newsletter

Under a heading for Sale/Wanted we expect to have room in the newsletter for any details of aircraft, aircraft spares or equipment, or details of any syndicate shares. If any member wants to buy or sell please contact the secretary - the space if free.

* * * *