FLYING FARMERS SPRING NEWSLETTER

Despite waterlogged land Spring has once more arrived and we look forward to the start of another farming year.

My farm has come through another wet winter and except for last spring when the barley went in by the end of January, I just have to sweat it out and try to be patient before attempting to work the land while my drier neighbours tractors are purring away in the distance. I'm kept busy by doing chores around the farm and also the never ending business of fencing.

My flying has been kept to a minimum recently and except for a few trips to the West and one to the East Coast I have remained firmly earthbound.

At this moment the Aeronca is still scattered around the hangar floor undergoing its annual C of A. We hope to have it ready for our first fly-in on April 3rd but I have an idea that there will be another three weeks work to be done before I can do the flight test, and then it has to be cleared by the CAA plus, of course, the endless paperwork which seems to mount up more and more as new AD's and Bulletins are published. We all realise Flying must be made safe but sometimes things do go a little too far.

It has been agreed to try out our Monthly Fly-In programme this Summer and below are set out the visits which we have planned.

Sunday April 3rd at Finmere by invitation of Bill Knapton in conjunction with the Vintage Aircraft Group. Finmere is 3 miles WSW of Buckingham. 51°59'N. 01°-04'W. The EW Runway is 701x46 metres. 405 AMSL. High Wires to the S and W of the runway and Barbed Wire along the S side of the Runway. The airfield is open from Dawn to Dusk and information can be obtained by phoning Finmere 589.

Wednesday May 25th at Old Leake by invitation of Mr. Grant. A circular will follow soon giving details.

Saturday & Sunday June 11th & 12th at Kibworth, Leicester by invitation of Mike Stops.

July 25th & 26th by invitation of Tom Corbett in Shropshire in conjunction with a visit by a French Aero Club.

1st Week August A visit to a farm near Beauvais in France. This will be a one day visit if possible. A firm date will be given later.

Thursday September 15th Mr Weston has invited us to visit his farm near Alford, Lincolnshire.

Details of all these visits will be sent out later.
Meanwhile I hope to see most of you through the summer months.

Anthony E. Poulsom
Secretary

White Lane Farm
White Lane, Tongham
Nr. Farnham, Surrey GU10 1BU
Guildford 810251

Wanted: Gypsy Major plus propellor for Auster J.I.N. Please phone Guildford 810251.

THE FIRST THREE YEARS

John Williams - Wynne

At a succession of meetings over the past three years we have had attendances of between 20 and 40 at each. This only represents about 20% of our total membership so that in fact these Newsletters are the only way that we can let you and most of the other members know what is happening.

So let's take stock for a moment.

The original idea behind the formation of this Association was to safeguard the interests of farmers who flew from their own farm fields, and as far as possible to ensure that this freedom was not taken from them.

Three years ago Britain was joining the EEC and there was a danger that we might find ourselves subjected to the same rules which apply in some other states in the Community. One in particular applies in France, where you may not take off from a farm field unless an official has come, at your expense, from Paris, to licence it for the occasion. As soon as you have taken-off he revokes the licence and returns, again at your expense, to Paris.

With this sort of cumbersome and expensive procedure in mind we have taken great care to tell all those in authority and high places of our existence, of our respectability and of our activities. We started off with a talk from Gp Cpt Sir Douglas Bader, a Member of the Board of the CAA, who flew to Shobdon for the occasion. Next we were addressed in London during the Smithfield Show of 1974 by Lord Boyd-Carpenter, then Chairman of the CAA, which was singular recognition so early in our history. After that we had a talk by one of the staff of the NATCS on Air Traffic, and at the Smithfield Show in 1975 we had a most interesting talk from Mr John Pardoe and Mr Don Guilbert of the ARB at Redhill on some of the hazards of DIY repairs and the reasons why the ARB takes such care. All these talks have helped to break down misunderstandings and to forge a relationship with the CAA so that today the FFA is an established body associated with the AOPA and I think we can claim to have arrived.

What is more of a problem is the question of publicity. So many farmers are finding that life is getting very tough that we have felt it wise not to give publicity to our achievements. In actual fact we have, and I find this astoniching, got 143 members despite our reticence and our low-key publicity. Of course the Farmers Weekly has helped us wonderfully, slipping in a paragraph now and again, unobtrusively where those of us on the look-out will see it but where it won't attract much general attention. The BBC has also been very helpful by keeping our activities out of the news and even by keeping all reference to flying farmers out of the Archers.

But this modesty of course means that there are still quite a lot of farmers who fly, who have strips and who would join if they knew about the FFA. All I ask is that when you hear of such a man you try to get him to join by sending his name to our Honorary Secretary and telling him of our work.

I hope that you approve of what we have been trying to do and that you will bear with us in helping to consolidate our reputation with the authorities for a bit longer. I am in touch with the Legal Adviser to the CAA and am hoping to arrange a talk from one of his staff this winter on "Operating a farm air-strip".

When we have established our reputation with the authorities we shall be in a good position to go ahead with an agricultural programme and I am in touch with a farm near Beauvais which we could probably visit inside one day, without any overnight stop unless anyone wants to stay in France longer. I realise that we represent all kinds of farming, arable, dairying, livestock, poultry, pigs and fruit, so that it will not always be possible to fix tours to suit every member, but we will do our best to do the rounds and see everything.

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Meanwhile we will continue to keep an eye on the rules and regulations and to make sure that, as far as possible, you are able to use your strip without interference.