FLYING FARMERS NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 1975

The Cranfield meeting was a success. I could not count how many members turned up for the talk and film show organised by Ciba/Geigy, all I know was that there were not many spare seats in the lecture hall.

Although learning about spraying rice was very interesting I was disappointed not to learn more about aerial spraying in the United Kingdom. Perhaps this will come at later meetings. Anyway I'm pleased so many members attended and I'm glad that the major Chemical Companies recognise the F.F.A. I frequently get their latest circulars on new products.

The weather at Cranfield was excellent which prompted many of the older aircraft to venture out for the day; although I found only one Tiger Moth in the aircraft park, which shows that over the last fifteen years the poor old Tiger has almost disappeared.

I had a few circuits in one or two of the latest aircraft on domonstration. I was surprised to find how very easy they were to fly and compared to my own aeroplane they were incredibly quiet. However, with even a fairly simple avionic package the total cost was staggering so it looks as though I shall still be bumbling along at 100 m.p.h. in a thirty year old aeroplane for several more years. Anyway, I wonder if some of our modern machines will still be with us in thirty years! However, I gritted my teeth and bought one of the latest 720 channel V.H.F./VOR sets. Apparently 360 channels are not enough nowadays and the old radio was getting temperamental so the time has come for a change and I'm pleased to say its great to fly along without hearing the continual hiss and static that I have had to contend with for several years.

Before I close I must apologise to any members who may not have received all the correspondence that I have circulated. This is probably because I have mislaid some addresses during our recent move. If anyone knows someone who is a member and has not been getting letters etc., then please get him to contact me at White Lane Farm, Tongham, Surrey, GU10 1BU Telephone Guildford 810251.

Date for your Diary

Tuesday 2nd December at 2.30 - 4.30 p.m. at Smithfield Show. A talk by the C.A.A. Airworthiness Division about Cases of Failure from Do-it-Yourself Maintenance. The Discussion will take place at the Stewards Room, Number 56, 1st Floor Exhibition Offices.

Turn left on leaving the lift at the Warwick Road Entrance of Earls Court. The room is on the left opposite the Stock Office. As this is a private room it is not possible apparently to hang up a sign.

Spring Meeting

Our Chairman has organised a visit to British Airways Overseas Division Training Centre at Heathrow. This is where the Flight Simulators are operated. This is a fascinating place and we are very lucky to be able to have the chance to come here.

If there is enough support I suggest we fly to Fair Oaks and go by coach to Heathrow. I think April/May would be a suitable time.

A.E.P. Secretary.

"Old men forget, and young ones cannot know"

After the earliest harvest in living memory we took a short holiday in Malta this autumn. I have visited the island several times since I first set foot there. That first time was in December 1929 when we were allowed off a 'Trooper', en route for India, to stretch our legs. It is a fascinating place: Syracuse, Carthage, Athens, Rome, Tyre and Sidon all come to mind as one walks round Valetta. Indeed it is steeped in history since long before St. Paul was shipwrecked there in AD 62, and my mind was in the very distant past when, out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of a notice "The Gladiator Faith....."

I walked on, beneath the walls of Fort St. Elmo. Then, with time to spare and suddenly curious, I wondered what this "Gladiator Faith" was all about. Some Roman cult possibly, but I'd never met it before so I might as well investigate. I retraced my steps.

When I reached the gateway with the notice board I read the full inscription "The Gladiator Faith and war relics museum". I went in, pursued by a man demanding 10c (12½p our money), and found myself in what must have been an ancient magazine. It was cool but well lit and there, at the end of this cavern, was the Gloster Gladiator "Faith", of the famous trio "Faith", "Hope" and "Charity", the only fighters on the island when the second world war started.

"Faith" has lost her wings and her panel but is otherwise in good order. She looked very small. Very small indeed. Many of us have larger aeroplanes! Yet this little biplane had taken off alone to tackle hordes of German and Italian bombers.

That was how Britain started the last war. I stood, deep in thought, remembering the days of "Faith's" epic battles. I remembered my own experiences; how when I, a young captain and the only officer in the 3rd Medium Battery Royal Artillery had to go off to another regiment, I handed over to a much younger subaltern, who was already the only officer in the 1st Medium Battery. The date ? September 1938. One year before the outbreak of a war which was, for me and many others, to last six long years.

Some of our members may remember "Faith" and her sisters. Some may know where she is today. But those who visit Malta would, I think, be interested to see how the Royal Air Force started the war, even if they can remember those years it is a salutary reminder of how ill-prepared we always are.

Anon