FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

March 2023 newsletter no. 142



CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

Our job as farmers is to feed the population. This means we must rear animals and grow crops to a budget that people can afford – although we get severely criticised for doing so.

I don't particularly enjoy growing chickens intensively – these birds are highly bred and can break down with stress, disease or bodily malfunctions if someone so much as walks into a shed with a different coloured boiler suit! I would much rather they were given more space using a slower growing breed, because from the farmer's point of view, they are easier to manage and better for the welfare of the bird. The big but, is that very few consumers can, or want to afford that extra growing cost. Plus, their carbon footprint is far higher due to the use of more heating, electricity etc. per bird place.

Likewise with crops – wouldn't it be preferable to convert to a more organic type of system with lower input costs, wide margins round the fields planted with wildflowers and have tree lined avenues with daffodils and crocuses popping out in spring? But again, the tonnage grown would be far less than the high input system that most of us employ - consequently people will find food unaffordable. We would then have to import cereals from countries like South America, grown using chemicals that are banned in the UK, and again, the carbon footprint would be much higher due to all the transport involved and demolishing the rain forest.

So, in these difficult times with more and more people forced to go to food banks, I do not understand the government policy to stop subsidising the consumer by means of BPS direct payments to produce food - and then encourage us to convert land to habitats for invertebrates. Anyway, why is it these pen pushers reckon they know more about improving soil health and sustainability than the farmers themselves who are now growing bigger and better crops than ever before because the soil is in such good state?

An observation I'm sure we have all noticed as we fly about, is the amount of new housing and development on greenfield sites around every town and village. It is estimated that in the last 2 years alone, 35,000 acres (the size of the whole of Dyson Farming) has been lost to development. Most of that is prime wheat growing land, which consequently is not absorbing the 145 billion litres of rainwater that falls on it every year. Plus, that's a load of environmental habitat lost for ever. The situation will only get worse!

My other ramble or rant for this newsletter is the word percentage, which seems to crop up a million times on every news item. When the strikers demand a percentage, it isn't a number that you can put a value to - unless you know what it is based on. The rail unions are reluctant to say that a train driver can already earn £70,000 a year plus. A nurse will be on less than half of that. They both complain because a loaf of bread has risen by 30p. So surely the answer is to talk about a set figure of say £2000 across the board for their increased salary, rather than a percentage, because the loaf of bread to a train driver is the same cost as to a nurse – unless the train driver thinks he should be eating crusty artisan bread and the nurse should stick to the sliced loaf. Percentage increases will only widen the pay gap between workers' wages exponentially, which is contrary to the governments 'levelling up' agenda.

Back to the FFA. We had a very pleasant lunch cruise up and down the Thames in London, with an extremely knowledgeable guide on February 8th - Despite one member predicting that we would need an icebreaker in February, it was a perfect day with absolutely clear blue sky.

Let's hope for a favourable spring and summer this year, both for farming and flying, as Neville has yet another interesting calendar of events put together and is already thinking of 2024 – the 50th anniversary of the FFA.

Paul Stephens

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 Chairman's Ramblings
3 FFA News
6 FFA Safety
12 Programme 2023
16 VISITS
20 Adventure
33 FFA member story
36 Member profile

Publisher & Editor: Giles Abrey
newsletters@ffa.org.uk
Art Editor & Production: Kirsten Lee,
kirsten@leeillustrations.co.uk
Cover photograph London visit by
Roz Stephens

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Martin Gosling	President	01787 269369
Paul Stephens	Hon Chairman/ Hon Secretary	07711 201431
Andrew Cragg	Vice Chairman/Treasurer/ Hon Membership Secretary	01303 874251
Neville Stops	Events Secretary	01264 889678
Gordon Bellerby	Assistant Events Secretary	07802 948000
Rick Holt	Committee Member	01386 761816
Giles Abrey	Newsletter Editor	07967 665470
Rebecca Rayner	Committee Member	01487 773282

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION LIMITED
www.ffa.org.uk
A company limited by guarantee; registered in England No. 01166733
Registered Office: Brooker Farm, Newchurch, Romney, Kent, TN29 0DT

Joined Since December 2023

8775 J. Shanks from Hawick, Roxs
8774 D. Wood from Salisbury, Wilts

Departing Members

8645	J. Hammond from Norfolk	Lapsed
478	R. H. L. Brittain from Suffolk	Lapsed
94	P. Platt from Worcestershire	Passed away

FFA Committee Meeting – Tuesday 7th February 2023

The FFA Committee met on the 7th February 2023 at The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, London. For those that aren't familiar with The Farmers Club, from my personal point of view, I find it quite austere, although it could be said that they are upholding standards, such as jackets and ties must be worn in the bar and restaurant (except on extremely hot days). But at least women are allowed in! Maybe that's just me being facetious.

However, some of our Committee are members, so they can take advantage of discounted accommodation in this central London location. The website states – most rooms have en-suite facilities and there is a deliberate lack of televisions to ensure a peaceful getaway!

A small conference room is used for our meeting, which is ideal for our purposes. All Committee members were present, except Rebecca Rayner due to her being in warmer climes. This is a resume of some of the matters discussed:-

As usual, we set off making sure that all previous action points had been carried out, including finding a way of inserting a disclaimer into the Eventbrite booking-in system for events. A disclaimer probably won't stop a claim on its own, but is part of the process of protecting our organisers and the FFA from a claim and it does make sure that aircraft have a minimum amount of insurance.

One point clarified was about the AGM attendance. Last September, we had an amazing venue at Belvoir Castle, courtesy of our member The Duke of Rutland, resulting in a record turnout. We made a policy a few years ago that there should be no charge to our members for attending their own AGM. But this year, due to the large entry and the cost of the amazing buffet lunch, FFA funds could not stretch that far, so we asked attendees to contribute a small amount towards the cost of the lunch. But of course, some of those attending are guests of members, so it was thought that maybe they should pay the full cost of the lunch in the future.

But what constitutes a guest? Membership of the FFA is a family affair, so there is no problem bringing along your wife, husband, daughter, son etc. But some of the 'navigators' are maybe 'closely connected' to the pilot, but not family. It was therefore decided to include partners in the family membership. We don't mean partners as in the business term, but members who have a close lady/man friend. I'm trying to be subtle!

By the way – if anyone has a suitable country house / castle with an airstrip and you feel that you could offer facilities for an FFA AGM, please contact us as we are always looking for these superb locations for an AGM.

Members sometimes ask us to place aircraft sales on the website and in the newsletter. Its very rare that anyone asks us to remove said aircraft after it has been sold, so we will adopt a policy of removing advertisements after 6 months.

There is still a hardcore of the membership who haven't signed up for GoCardless for their subscription. The old standing order system is outdated and inconvenient to both members and the Treasurer, as the standing order can only be cancelled or altered by the member. Hence we have a number of members and ex-members still paying standing orders from years ago, even from 1999 when the subscription rose from £5. One day, the present subscription will have to rise from the present £25 and no doubt, members will give us the same woes about us not cancelling their old standing orders. We cannot do that! The Treasurer will also have the extra work of badgering members to pay the new amount, as again, we cannot alter your standing order.

It was agreed to maintain the level of donations to the various councils. GASCo, GAAC and AOPA all receive £750 a piece and the LAA receive £100 of our subscription income. It is important that the FFA support these bodies, but we wonder how long the GAAC, who often support our members with airfield problems, will be able to keep going as they lack funds.

The Events Secretary ran through this year's program and proposed events for the future. More about that elsewhere in this newsletter. We are trying to devise a way of making the Newsletter Editor's life a little simpler as he has to continually chase reports and then has to sort out photos and script from various events when he maybe hasn't attended himself, so is coming at it blind. The 50th Anniversary Tour of the UK is still being discussed and will replace the 2024 European Tour.

We get a rising number of applicants who are hardly farmers, but claim they were brought up on a farm, or have a farm strip, or they work in the agricultural industry. The policy is that an applicant should have a substantial part of their income from farming or be closely associated – as well as being a pilot. If an applicant is borderline and refused by the Committee, the Membership Secretary sends a letter to the applicant with the eligibility criteria, asking why they should be accepted. Also, one of the Committee will talk to them. The age-old debate goes on about eligibility, but we must keep the FFA as a farmer's association – just like the Farmers Club in London does.

Paul Stephens

GAP – General Aviation Partnership Report 23rd Feb 2023

First up was a report on EGNOS. Members will know that the UK decided to terminate its membership of the European Galileo and EGNOS programme in June 2021. EGNOS provided an additional reference signal to enhance the accuracy of a GPS position from +/- 20m to +/- 1.5m. Whilst the signal is still available and receivable, the signal can no longer be used for certain functions, particularly the LPV approach ("Localiser Performance with Vertical guidance", an approach with minima similar to CAT1 ILS, descending to a 200ft decision height). Other GPS instrument approaches are still available, including LNAV, LNAV/VNAV, where the vertical guidance is provided through the aircraft barometer.

Crown Dependency aerodromes including Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney have separate arrangements for EGNOS and have been able to retain their LPV procedures.

To restore these, the UK would need to run its own Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS) service. Work is ongoing to explore the possibility of enabling such a service. Predictably there was much criticism of the loss of this service. Since it was a political decision taken by gov-

ernment and opposed by DfT and CAA, it was very much a case of "don't shoot the messenger"!

ACOMS : Airspace Co-ordination and Obstacle Management Service
This is the CAA department which deals with what is termed "unusual" aerial activity which includes Aerial Surveys & Flight Trials, Calibration & Research Flights, Air Displays, Flypasts and Fly-ins, Airspace Restrictions, Captive Balloons, Cranes or other tall structures and Obstacles, Drones, Model Aircraft, RPA, Dropping Articles, En-route Obstacles, Exercises (Civil and Military), Explosives, Filming, Gliding, Paragliding, Paramotoring, Parachuting, Hot Air Balloons, Kites, Meteorological Balloons, Lasers, Searchlights, Fireworks, Sky Lanterns, Rockets & Underslung Loads. These will more often than not result in a NOTAM and yet another circle on the Sky Demon map. Forgive me for listing them all but I was surprised at the amount of work involved. Now factor in that the number of these unusual activities is expected to rise from 6500 in 2022 to 900000 in 2030 and you realise why the CAA wanted to tell us that they are moving from a manual to a more automatic system. You would be right to assume that the expected increase in drone activity is the main culprit but you may not know that changes to legislation means that from 2025 all cranes over 10m (Yes,10m) will have to be lit and notified. But, again, that must be all about drones! I hope they don't put all these cranes on Sky Demon…..

DVOR / NDB Rationalisation
Gone now are the days when aircraft were required to fly point-point routes directly over the supporting ground navigation aids. These VOR's and NDB's owned & used by NATS in the UK are becoming obsolete and difficult to maintain and a project to reduce the number DVORs from the remaining 45 to 19 them was developed in 2008-9. The Project is now working with airports to support them in removal of their own dependencies and co-ordinating timelines and plans for switch-off. NATS is about to submit the Impact Assessments to seek the switch off of the following facilities in the coming months :

DVOR's LYD,MAC & OCK (+DME) (end of Dec 2023)
NDB's WHI & WCO

CHIRP
Most members will have heard of the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme.

There was a presentation on the history of CHIRP, why it came about and what it does. It is entirely confidential and voluntary and exists to identify behaviours, cultures or activities that have resulted in, or if left unchecked, could result in a safety incident or accident.

It is funded by CAA but it is a fully autonomous charitable trust independent & external to the regulator.

Most importantly it provides a vital safety net for collecting reports that would otherwise have gone unwritten. There is a user-friendly system to encourage reporting –www.chirp.co.uk.

You can read reports online at this address https://chirp.co.uk/aviation/reports/ and use the filter to show just GA reports by using the drop-down filter box.

Andrew Cragg

General Aviation Awareness Council

Activity since the last report has been mainly concerned with the Call for Evidence submission in relation to the CAA which was made to Jeremy Newman at the Department for Trade & Industry (DfT) attended by around 25 delegates from the GA spectrum on 8 February.

It was the third in a series of four such meetings to review specific segments of the CAA's activities and Mr Newman commented that it was markedly different to the previous two in that all the delegates were highly critical of the CAA and all spoke in support of each other. His final question rather summed up the day "Has anybody got any good news"?

There were a number of issues put forward by the GAAC concerning waste and inefficiency such as the requirement to double certify parts and aircraft cleared by EASA; poor communication and lack of liaison between different departments or organisations; slow response times to enquiries (twenty days being the target); failure to realise that we are all customers, not problems.

Vice Chair John Gilder:
So far 2023 has differed from previous years as the focus has been on political, rather than planning, considerations. As ever I offer my grateful thanks go to Ann, Louise, Ros, John W & Richard V for the extraordinary contribution they continue to make to our team.

Personnel changes in government are still affecting our progress with the politicians. Meanwhile our 'client' list has reached 110 while the number of active cases has slightly reduced following a success at Baxby and the closure of Rougham. Work on the MCA (Coastguard), NHSE & HELP (Helipads) and EAAA Working Groups continues. The airfields dominating our workload are Denham, Gamston, Little Mongeham (Deal), Rochester, Swansea, Coventry, Addenbrookes and Wellesbourne.

New White paper: A new Gove / DLUC White Paper emerged on Dec 18th. The DfT believe it is very similar to the previous one in focusing on Housing and Green considerations but we are jointly preparing further comments as aviation continues to sit at the edge of policy concerns. The first joint meeting with DfT's Planning team was very constructive.

Strategic Network: The continuing uncertainty over the DLUC proposals is the incentive to arrange a meeting with the Aviation Minister at the earliest opportunity and we are working through several avenues to bring this about.

Call for Evidence: GA was the third of four Forums collecting evidence in relation to the CAA's performance. About 25 GA delegates attended and presented a cohesive criticism of the CAA to the extent that at the end the Moderator asked if there was any good news!

Insurance: Chris Varley is looking into various insurance issues and cost savings that maybe of interest to GA.

Emergency Helis: The GAAC now sits on the UKSAR (Coastguard) and HELP (HeliMed) Working Groups. Initially we advised on Safeguarding but our role has steadily broadened as we

become more conversant with their issues such as those arising from the introduction of larger helicopters.

APPG-A Update: Further changes begun just after our last meeting. The name has changed and a meeting of Chairs is now set for mid-March by which time the website and emails should be working properly.

EGNOS: A report was prepared for submission to BEIS, with the break-up of BEIS it is now being amended.

Our bank balance continues to decline.
Can anyone recommend a professional fundraiser (bearing in mind that we are not a registered charity)? If so, please contact Ian Sheppard gaac.alerts@gmail.com.

Anthony Kedros

GASCo

The General Aviation Safety Council

Nothing to report

Rick Holt



Border Force: Introduction to the Home Office Field Officer

I am writing to you via the Flying Farmers Association newsletter to introduce myself and explain the role of a Home Office Field Officer and how we can support you.

My name is Michael, and I am a Home Office Field Officer, based at Folkestone in Kent. As a Field Officer, I work closely with Officers across Border Force and Immigration Enforcement.

Border Force, part of the Home Office, is responsible for securing the UK border and for controlling migration at ports and airports across the UK and overseas. Immigration Enforcement is also part of the Home Office and works closely with Border Force, it is responsible for enforcing the Government's immigration laws and policies as a core part of the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System.

I am sure you have all met Border Force Officers at passport control when re-entering the UK from abroad. As well as enforcing immigration controls at ports, it is also the role of a Border Force Officer to carry out customs related activities such as searching bags, vehicles, planes, trains and lorries for illicit importations of restricted and prohibited goods.

The job of a Home Office Field Officer is incredibly varied, and part of the role is engaging with the general aviation community. This could be an airfield owner, flying club, flying instructor, charter company, refuelers, ground crew, mechanics – the list is endless and includes many of the members of the FFA.

The intention of our engagement with you through the FFA is to highlight **Project Pegasus**, a joint Border Force and law enforcement operation tackling aviation border crime around the UK. Report suspicious behaviour at a small UK airfield and airports: Project Pegasus - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Because not every plane and airstrip can be monitored 24 hours a day, the aviation and local community can help play a vital role in preventing border crime and maintaining a safe community.

Border crime causes immense harm to the UK, whether it is the smuggling of people, drugs or firearms, or terrorism related.

We have Home Office Field Officers based at various locations around the UK who can work with you. Home Office Field Officers can also support you when it comes to approvals or any enquiries relating to the submission of General Aviation Reports (GARs).

I would encourage you to engage with your local Officer. If you don't already have contact details for your local Field Officer, please contact the Flying Farmers Association on info@ffa.org.uk who will pass on our details.

Michael Kynvin
Border Force Officer 12253



MEMBERS MISHAPS

ILAFFT (I Learnt About Flying From That)

A platform giving members the opportunity to submit any article about their flying career from which other members can benefit and learn from. If anonymity is required that will of course be respected

Several anecdotes re learning about flying!

First; I was doing an air test from a short uphill grass strip in a Zlin 226 with a passenger. In my haste and anxiety to get airborne I dragged it off way below its normal take off speed. Although flying in a stalled state it was rapidly heading towards rising ground which I had no chance of clearing. I suddenly realised that I was on the wrong side of the drag curve and decided as a last resort to lower the nose. The result was dramatic as the wings became unstalled and the aircraft shot skyward! Lesson learned!

Second: a hot day in summer, a tired Cessna 172 well down on power, a short grass strip, an unweighed heavy passenger. Result was a sluggish take off and a low level circuit with a continuously bleeping stall warning but a successful landing after some delicate airmanship!

Third: while learning to fly at Sywell in an Auster (it was a long time ago) I was tasked with doing a short field landing. This involved getting the air speed right back until just above the stall, dragging the aircraft over the hedge with a high power setting on the Gipsy Major, then chopping the throttle. What my instructor failed to say was make sure you are near the ground when cutting the power, not 20 feet higher! Result one broken wooden prop and an insurance claim but lesson learnt! (A sideline to this was the confession by a Holme on Spalding Moor BAE test pilot that he had done exactly the same thing whilst learning during the War in Rhodesia which made me feel better.)

Warwick Banks

Flaps

Part of my pre-flight check list in my PA31 is to check the operation of the flaps. I used to select full flap and then retract them fully. An instructor once said to me "Don't ever do that. One day you'll leave them down." It seemed a rather negative way of avoiding a possible problem by avoiding the detection of a possible other, so I had ignored him.

However, it seems that I had got in the habit of watching both flaps travelling symmetrically all the way down, and then of selecting full up and carrying on with the next item in the check list. On the day in question I was departing from my strip in North Wales which is heavily grazed by cattle in summer. I started the take-off run and immediately noticed when airborne that things felt odd. The plane got airborne at a lower speed than I was expecting, it wasn't accelerating properly and there was a lot of vibration. I looked round and saw out of the corner of my eye that though the flap lever was full up the flaps themselves were full down.

I recycled the lever to no avail. No chance of landing again as we had crossed the trees and were heading towards the hills at around 72 kts (best max angle of climb being 85 kts, and stall in landing config 70 kts). But at least it was climbing and I had the gear up by then. We managed to avoid the hills and landed at Hawarden 14nm away safely. My wife, who was in the back, was understandably not impressed!

The excellent people at North Wales Military Aviation Services at Hawarden agreed to look at it and found later that cow muck had jammed one of the flap travel limit microswitches. A wipe and a spray with switch cleaner was all that was needed.

During my pre-flight check list I now watch the flaps down, and all the way up again!

Philip Naylor-Leyland

Ice can be deadly.

In September 1993 when I was still flying a Lake Buccaneer, an amphibian, I was en route from Inverness to Perth, my home airfield, some 70NM, a trip I had made many times before.

The Metar for the route was giving cloud base at 5000ft.no precipation.

The direct route to Perth is over the top of the Cairngorms which run up to just about 4000ft., so I opted to fly VFR under the cloud base, as the journey progressed the base lowered and ice began to form on the airframe, I was flying solo and had half tanks I pulled full power but the plane continued to descend and entered IMC, I was flying IFR into the granite, this was before Skydemon etc. so I was not that sure of my position. I broke cloud at 1800ft. the ice began to drop off and it turned to VFR, I had descended in the valley of the A9 Main Rd to Perth, much relieved I continued on to Perth for a safe landing.

Amphibians because of their large surface area, sponsons etc. are particularly more vulnerable to ice, but any light plane in similar conditions would be vulnerable.

In hindsight I should have taken the low level route another 10 to 15mins.

What have I learned?
IF ICE IS FORECAST DONT GO.

Safe flying
Mike Ashmole

Heavy landing on a high altitude bush strip in Kenya.

My Parents had a Cessna 182 and were living in Kenya during the late 60's and 70's I was posted to Throws Farm, Nr Dunmow, Essex and saw an advert 'Get your PPL for £250-00 @ Stansted over the winter months in 35 hours !

My parents had organised a pretty comprehensive flying holiday round Kenya for us in the spring.

Hence the challenge was on ---get my PPL without telling my Parents and hopefully fly 'The old man's 182'

I hadnt really impressed my Father in the past--- having failed to get into Cambridge University etc so I thought this was my chance!

Basically I got my PPL in 35hours and 10 minutes----after my GFT we were delayed by a VC 10 on long finals ----hence the extra 10 minutes.

The CFI was cross because he wanted as much as I did to have the exact time on my Log book !

Fast forward-----we loaded my Father's Cessna 182 5Y- KUC with all our luggage, full fuel and 4 POB at Wilson Airport, Nairobi

Father was meticulous being an Assistant Instructor ensured that we were in limits

Imagine the look on my Fathers face when I asked if I could sit in the LHS ----- especially when I showed him my Pristine Licence.

Off we went ----I was a little surprised how long it took to get airborne but I was doing everything by the book.

Map reading was easy flying up The Rift Valley. The temperature was nearly 40 degrees at ground level with very little wind and our destination airstrip was over 7,000ft!

The strip blended in with the rocky terrain. We did a low level pass overhead to check for game/anthills/burrows etc

I turned on finals , made a nice approach and started to flare over the threshold...Bang---the ground came up and hit us so hard that it felt like the undercarriage had gone up through the wings.

Luckily I had the nose wheel well up so it was unaffected----- I silently taxied to a suitable parking spot wondering why I hadnt done a greased landing like I always tried to do at Stansted.

My Father quietly commented----You may have your Pilots licence, Cock, BUT you have a hell of a lot to learn especially in the bush !

I certainly learnt about flying from that.

Compared to Stansted's 3 mile long runway/silky smooth/low temperatures/ barely 300 feet above sea level etc

This strip was 7,000 plus feet above sea level/800 yards long/rough surface/30 plus degree temperature in the middle of the day with no wind.

Also the plane was fully loaded!!

John Milne

Some useful advice from the Chairman

Several years ago when the European study tours were in far off countries it wasn't just fuel range that needed addressing. We revieved in the post from Paul and Roz a parcel with instructions for us both to help with the problem.

To William

Next time you get caught short
To a kenco jar you wont have to resort
With this little john you'll get relief
The feeling is beyond belief
Hoping the neck is not too short
And on the edges you don't get caught

To Jane

Love is sharing a little john
And with this Lady Jane you should fit on
That is in the embarrassment is not too great
Otherwise it might just be too late
Turning so you shouldn't be shy
One day on this device you might have to rely.

Hoping this could help some of out members!

William and Jane Procter

2023 Renewal - FLYING FARMERS – PRICING MATRIX

SECTION 1 and 3 – PREMISES and PRODUCTS LIABILITY
Limit of Liability (any one occurrence and in the aggregate in respect of Products Liability)

Annual Movements of Third Party Aircraft (see INFO in the last year renewal schedule)	**GBP500,000**	**GBP1,000,000**	**GBP2,000,000**	**GBP5,000,000**
Up to 100	GBP420.00	GBP600.00	GBP780.00	GBP1,320.00
More than 100 up to 250	GBP480.00	GBP660.00	GBP840.00	GBP1,440.00
More than 250 up to 500	GBP540.00	GBP720.00	GBP900.00	GBP1,560.00
More than 500 up to 1,000	GBP720.00	GBP900.00	GBP1,080.00	GBP1,740.00
More than 1,001 up to 2,000	GBP840.00	GBP1,020.00	GBP1,200.00	GBP1,860.00
More than 2,000 to be agreed by Slip Leader	To be agreed by Slip Leader			

SECTION 2 – HANGARKEEPERS LIABILITY
Plus GBP210.00 for GBP500,000 any one occurrence, but limited to GBP75,000 any one aircraft.
Plus GBP420.00 for GBP1,000,000 any one occurrence, but limited to GBP75,000 any one aircraft.
Minimum premium in respect of mid term additions GBP145.00 in full, subject to AVN9A (applicable to the movements/limit banding).

If any memebers are interested further details can be obtained by contacting Gallagher directly (0800 612 3635).

How I survived to tell the tale of a flight through Poland in a C150





Picture credit - Illustrations, from1990 TPC Chart: **Left**; Debnica Kaszubska Highway Strip SE of Slupsk, **Right**; Planned turning point at Elk and leg to Bialystok. We turned about 8 NM too soon!



Hangarage in a hardened aircraft shelter at Peenemünde, prior to crossing into Poland.

It was 1999, and the only detailed VFR chart available at the time was the 1990 MOD Tactical Pilotage Chart (TPC). However our arrival in Szczecin (Goleniow), from Heringsdorf in Germany, went to plan. It was a good omen. We were served a sort of coffee, in a room with a view: a control room raised up on a giant scissor- jack!

Our next destination was the NATO airfield of Slupsk. It was not mentioned in the flight guide, but was listed in the Polish Air Information Publication as being open to civilians, with PPR, so we were destined for a night in a hotel in Goleniow, a former military accommodation block where Lech Walesa look-alikes padded past the door on their way to the bathroom, wearing just their moustaches and Y-fronts.

It was to be an interesting and ….err… challenging route! At the time there was a system of VFR airways in place, based on the network of VORs and NDB's. These were set up after a series of disasters involving foreign visitors - the routes were intended to steer light aircraft clear of restricted airspace and to guide the rescuers to the scene of the crash! I had a VOR receiver, but *no ADF*…I filled in the compulsory flightplan let's say "creatively". I was a late convert to GPS, so in 1999 I had no backup!

However the next morning conditions at Szczecin were unflyable. The woman in ops was shocked when we asked for the flight plan to be delayed a second time: there was an English speaking controller waiting specially for us at Slupsk, how dare we keep him waiting! Eventually the weather improved and I relented, only to have to return when we found the cloud down to 200 feet at Chociwel. White-out, no ADF of course, but against the odds I made it back to Slupsk. That was the first near-catastrophe!

Apparently the woman in ops at Szczecin was worried that we would ask for our money back. I think she thought the aborted flight was her fault for pressuring us to go! However we made it to Slupsk at the second attempt. We had been warned that the altimeter setting here would be in millimeters of mercury, but they converted it for us to millibars. By now we were used to the wind in meters per second: double the figure to give approximate miles per hour, plus a bit more for knots (and luck!). A gang of squaddies dragged the Cessna into a hangar full of Migs (we were invited to have our picture taken in one), and we spent the night in the temporary accommodation block.

The next day our route took us via Gdansk to Ketrzyn. At one point the road



Hangared on the NATO airfield at Slupsk



John, my partner in crime, poses in a Mig 23 at the NATO airfield, Slupsk. Clearly we were not a threat!



A day out from Slupsk to the seaside and the famous sand dunes of Leba.



Teutonic architecture in Lidsbark Warminski, the former East Prussian town of Heilsberg



Landing at Ketrzyn -Wilamovo airfield: disused concrete matting runways, but rows of clear white markers on the grass field: what could go wrong?



Ketrzyn-Wilamovo, Hitler's landing ground for his "Wolf's Lair" at Rastenburg, as it was then.



Hangared at Bialystok, near the Belarus border, with the Borderguard's new Wilga 2000.



Palace park, where Göring landed to hunt in the Bialowieza Forest

below us widened into one of the highway strips marked on the chart as Debnica Kaszubska. *(See photo)*

Formerly Rastenburg, Ketrzyn was the site of Hitler's "Wolfs' Lair". It was No-tamed as closed, but I had obtained official written permission to land there. Hence they should have been expecting us. I called them up. No reply. The old concrete matting runways on which Hitler's team landed were visible in the grass, but a bit battered, and we had been advised not to use them. However there were parallel rows of white markers on the grass field. They were big and clear, a bit like the touch pad of a telephone designed for the visually impaired. What could go wrong?

Fritz Todt, Hitler's Minister of Armaments, was killed shortly after take-off from Rastenburg, but it was the landing that nearly claimed us: the markers turned out to be silage bales, and nothing to do with a runway. Mistake number 2. But my luck held again, and we bumped to a halt unscathed.

There was another landing place even closer to the Wolf's Lair - it had been just a small field suitable for Storch and such-like STOL aircraft. It would have saved us a walk, but there was no sign of it, and yes, definitely, it would have been too short!

After a visit to the huge complex of bunkers from which the Germans' eastward advance was organised, and where von Stauffenberg made his ill-fated attempt on the life of his ignominious master, we set off for the most challenging flight of our trip: to Bialystok, near the Belarus border, and the Bialowieza forest, Hermann Göring's favourite hunting ground and the last wild habitat of the rare European Bison.

There is some scope for your imagination in filling in the flight-plan – you can vary the route as long as you clearly state your alternative. So, looking at the map, the sensible thing seemed to be to enter Elk as a turning point. Sensible, I suppose, if you have the means to identify it. We didn't. Mistake number 3! Instead we turned SE at the first Elk-sized town. *(See photo).* Visiblity was poor, and soon we were lost, in the vast, boggy expanses of eastern Poland, too low and far away for radio contact, too close for comfort to the Belarusian border, and soon to be running short of fuel. Where there was dry land there were tiny, short strips of grass (or cabbages?) where you'd have been hard-pressed to land a sparrow.

Then, to cap it all, the threatened rain, in the shape of a warm front, hove into sight. From the time on the clock, we knew we weren't far from destination, and we had radio contact with Bialystok but no-one spoke English (we had not given enough notice), and I had no idea where it was. I climbed ahead of the front, while I still could, and at 3,000 feet managed to raise Warsaw to get a position fix. They couldn't help. Eyeing the cabbage patches below (from the map there were no other airfields whatsoever within 40 miles) I switched to the emergency frequency. No reply! Finally a KLM crew who were monitoring the frequency took our details and managed to get us identified. We were only eight miles from Bialystok: a grey city invisible against the grey sky. At least by now Bialystok's only English speaking controller had been called in from his day off... We landed on the huge field, with no particular runways, underneath the lowering cloudbase.

A taxi ride next day took us to the primeval forest on the Belarus border, and the Palace Park, the site of the Tsar of Russia's hunting residence. Göring used to land in the park – something, thankfully, I hadn't thought of trying!

We found some of the aromatic Bison Grass that grows there and is used to flavour the famous Zubrowka vodka, but the bison themselves had evidently gone into hiding. Eventually we found some captive ones in a pen!

Though we had achieved all our aims and survived to tell the tale, I have to say my confidence had taken a severe knock, and back at Bialystok airfield I was wondering whatever I was doing in this gloomy place so far from home. I remember I wasn't looking forward to the return journey one bit. On reflection, certainly in the days before GPS and accurate charts, the Polish VFR Routes were a damned good idea!

Christina Belton

GASCo

The General Aviation Safety Council

Farm Strip Flying – Part Two

Getting in the strip was easy – but what about getting out?



As we ascertained in the last issue although farm strip flying is great fun, a strip can contain many more hazards than a smooth tarmac runway, as Dave Unwin explains.

First things first, always remember that just because you got in there's no guarantee you can get back out. It is a truism that (with the exception of the Harrier and F-35B) most jet aeroplanes require more runway to land than takeoff, most propeller-driven aircraft require less distance to land than take off, while the inverse is true for piston-powered aeroplanes. Don't get lulled into a false sense of security that because you barely used half of the runway to land, that's all you'll need to takeoff. You may be in for a nasty surprise! We'll assume that you've had a most agreeable weekend visiting friends, and that the weather is totally different to the day that you arrived. There has been a fair amount of rain overnight and the pressure has dropped. It's a warm, slightly humid day with only a gentle breeze, which is at 90 degrees to the runway. First things first, set zero on your altimeter and note the pressure indicated in the sub-scale window, that's the local barometric pressure. If you don't know the airfield's elevation and you certainly should, otherwise what are you doing there? Then set the sub-scale to 1013.2: the altimeter is now indicating the pressure altitude. Note the ambient air temperature and use your E6B to calculate the density altitude. It probably won't be a factor, but let's just make sure, shall we? On a really hot day it can make a big difference. To give you an extreme example, I have flown out of the aptly-named Furnace Creek airfield in Death Valley. Although the airfield is 211 feet *below* sea level it gets so hot in the summer that density altitude can become a factor! While we've got our calculating head on, let's also review the Weight and Balance of the aircraft, particularly if you're taking Uncle Fred back with you, and then re-calculate the length of the takeoff roll (while remembering to consider all the factors that will influence the takeoff, such as the wet surface and slight cross wind), before multiplying the final number by 1.33. Bear in mind that while an increase in weight will not have a profound effect on the takeoff speed it *can* acutely affect the takeoff run as the increase in weight can significantly reduce acceleration. Finally, do not make the same mistake that has killed countless pilots and only calculate the ground run. There may well be an awkwardly positioned obstacle just waiting to catch an unsuspecting aviator. The prudent pilot will include the distance required to clear this obstacle and it can be startling how much more room that requires. On a standard ISA day, your aircraft may well take off after a ground roll of, say 300m. However, to clear even a 50ft obstacle may require almost double that. Therefore, don't hesitate to reduce the all-up weight by whatever means necessary, such as unloading baggage or even Fred!

Next, take a leisurely walk along the entire length of the strip. The rain may well have made some parts of the strip quite boggy and this is the time to ascertain exactly where they are. The importance of the actual surface of the runway cannot be overstated. If the surface is particularly soft and muddy, or covered in snow or long grass, the coefficient of friction between the wheels and the runway will be significantly higher than on a smooth tarmac runway. The net effect is a substantial increase in the rolling resistance; so much so that a heavy aircraft can 'bog down' to the extent that it never actually achieves flying speed as it has insufficient power to overcome the formidable drag. A good clue here is that if your footprints rapidly fill with water then it's almost certainly too wet. As we've already ascertained that the cross wind is exactly 90° to the takeoff run you probably have the option to go either way. Unless there is either a very good reason to go in one particular direction, i.e. to use the downslope or avoid particularly tall trees, then I would suggest using the cross wind to cancel out any tendency to swing, so if your aircraft swings to the left on takeoff, try to put the cross wind on the right. Although this can be particularly important for the pilots of monowheel-equipped aircraft, any aircraft that relies on differential braking for steering can also benefit from using this technique. If you're trying to accelerate, you don't really want to be dabbing the brakes! Having decided which way you're going to go, take a good look at the topography. For example, a large hill that is directly upwind of your intended climb-out path may well produce a disturbing downdraft. If departing down a valley which has the wind blowing directly across it, plan to fly in front of the slope which has the wind blowing up it – you'll be surprised how much this very simple trick can improve the climb rate. Finally, having decided which way you're going to go note roughly where the first third of the TORA ends, as a good rule-of-thumb is that you want to have achieved one-half of your takeoff speed within the first third of the runway.

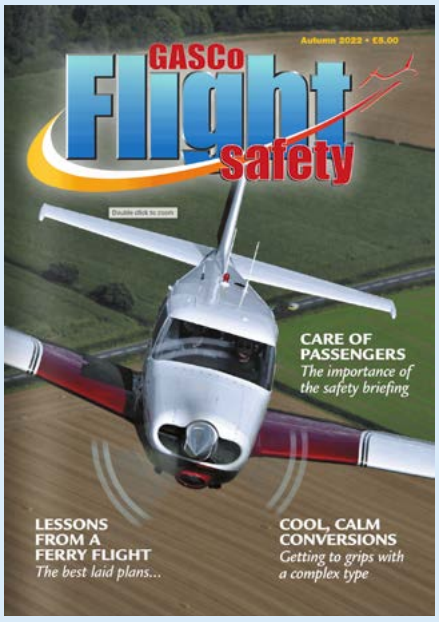
When considering the various factors that will influence your takeoff an important factor to consider is the aircraft itself. A good pre-flight will pick up some of the more obvious reasons that can impede acceleration, such as under-inflated tyres or wheel fairings jammed with grass or mud, but what about the wings and propeller? Obviously, in winter any snow or ice must be removed but have you considered the implications of an accumulation of cow or sheep excrement, or mud on the wings, or even a heavy dew? Laminar flow aerofoils will only retain laminar flow if the wing is kept clean. A dried-on cow pat can have a detrimental effect on the total amount of lift produced, while lots of mud on any of the flying surfaces is far from desirable. A propeller covered in mud or bugs is far less efficient. Remember that the propeller is essentially a rotating aerofoil, and we have already ascertained that to be efficient it needs to be clean!

Now, this is obviously going to be a 'performance takeoff', but have you considered whether you will be using short-field or soft-

field techniques? As these tend to be type-specific they won't be covered in detail here. However, I *will* say that the numbers and techniques promulgated in the Pilots Operating Handbook should be regarded as 'gospel'. Do *not* listen to old so-and-so and his rather dubious tales of unusual techniques in the club bar. No one knows an aircraft better than the manufacturer, who will have spent a considerable amount of time and money in flight-testing before writing the POH. If, for example the POH recommends 10° of flap, a Vr of 50kts and a Vx of 55kts until the obstacle is cleared then that is the correct speed and flap setting to use. It really is as simple as that. I recently tested a Cessna C182C, and the owner was curious about a technique he'd heard that recommended milking the flaps down from 10° to 20° at 35kts. Well, we tried it and neither of us could really discern any difference in the ground roll, and certainly not enough to justify letting go of the throttle to change the flap setting at such a critical moment. You'd be much better off just leaving the flaps at 20°, as per the POH. Also, bear in mind that, for a performance take off, 55kts means exactly that - 55kts. Even a deviation of only a few knots either side of the target airspeed will affect the climb rate, so two points that you might want to bear in mind are; Can I hold a given airspeed *exactly* and when did I last have the ASI calibrated? Now, most POH's will contain two different climb speeds- Vy (best rate of climb speed) and Vx (best angle of climb speed). Now, for those of you who don't fully understand the difference, Vx is the speed that produces the greatest gain of altitude over a given *horizontal distance*, while Vy produces the greatest gain in altitude over a given *time*. Clearly, Vx is the speed to use, but what is the best way to accelerate the aircraft to this value? Well, firstly, if it can be done safely a rolling takeoff can reduce the takeoff roll considerably. The aircraft's at-rest inertia has already been overcome and the propeller will be getting a good bite on clean air. However, care should be exercised with the rolling take off; not only can it put excessive side loads on the undercarriage but directional control can be compromised. The alternative is to line up with the centre of the strip and apply power against the brakes. While this does have the advantage of letting you check the engine monitoring gauges, with particular emphasis on the rpm and manifold pressure, before actually going anywhere, it is a fact that a propeller that is revolving at high rpm but not moving forwards will be cavitating, which is inefficient. Finally, if you feel that a rolling take off is required to make the takeoff viable then the whole affair is already more than a little fraught. If you aren't *absolutely* sure that it's doable then don't even try. So there you are, accelerating down the strip. Check that the engine is producing full power and that the aircraft is accelerating at the rate at which you would expect. Concentrate on keeping straight, lift the nose wheel or tailwheel just off the ground (to reduce friction drag) and keep monitoring the acceleration. If you're flying a nosedragger, don't get the nose too high. Although the wing will be producing more lift (due to the high angle of attack) it is also producing drag, while the thrust from the propeller will be directed slightly more downwards, which may impede acceleration. If anything at all seems abnormal, abort the takeoff early rather than late. You just never know when farm strip flying; you may have a length of wire wrapped around the tailwheel or a stick jammed in a spat. At the correct speed ease the aircraft off the ground but do not attempt to climb away. When the aircraft is around a wingspan or less to the ground there is a considerable reduction in induced drag (the drag created by the production of lift). This is the aerodynamic phenomenon of 'ground effect' and it can be used to advantage. Hold the aircraft in 'ground effect' until you have attained Vx. Do not try easing the aircraft into an early climb. There is nothing to be gained, but everything to be lost! Indeed, as the aircraft climbs away from the runway, the induced drag increases and the aircraft may stop climbing and might even sink back down until it re-enters 'ground effect'. Not the result you were hoping for! As soon as you have achieved Vx, begin easing the nose up and maintain the correct speed *exactly*. Having thought about your climb-out route in advance you already know which way you're going to go and, having prepared thoroughly beforehand, you should clear any obstructions with a safe margin. Finally, if you have miscalculated and you're not going to miss the trees by as much as you'd like – do NOT panic, and either pull back or turn, as a turn at slow speed often finishes in a spin. Maintain your target speed and aim to just miss the obstruction.

GASCo Safety Evenings

Gloster Strut 19:30 - Tuesday 14th March 2023 Email: info@carouselgolfing.com
Wycombe Air Park 18:30 - Wednesday 22nd March 2023
Email: operations@bookeraviation.aero
Cambridge Aero Club 19:00 - Wednesday 22nd March 2023 This Safety Evening will be held online. Contact Mike Webster
Goodwood Aero Club 19:30 - 19:30 - Thursday 30th March 2023
Email: amy.harte@goodwood.com
Southdown Gliding Club 19:30 - Thursday 13th April 2023 This Safety Evening will be held online. No contact details available yet
Popham Airfield 19:30 - Monday 17th April 2023 Email: alan.lovejoy18@gmail.com
Further details on GASCO website: https://www.gasco.org.uk/events/safety-evenings



Subscribe to GASCo Flight Safety Magazine

GASCo Flight Safety Magazine provides an independent view of General Aviation flight safety

An annual subscription by direct debit costs only £16 (for UK addresses) a useful saving compared with buying a subscription a year at a time for £20 p.a.

In the meantime, if you would like to receive a complimentary copy of Flight Safety magazine please contact the GASCo Office by telephone on 01634 200203 or email to: penny@gasco.org.uk

https://www.gasco.org.uk/flight-safety-magazine/subscribe

Programme 2023



Please see a list of events that are running so far this year. Things have not changed much from the December Newsletter. As the finer details firm up on these events, they will appear on the Website, along with booking details.

The 2024 Tour is still in the planning stage. If any one has any ideas for the South Coast or near Wales, please contact me by email.

Neville Stops

Events 2023

- Date TBC – **Possible Retro Track and Air event with leading experts on over haul of Vintage engines.** – Cam, Nr Kemble
- Date TBC – **A Days Visit to Lasham Vintage Gliders & Flight experience**
- 26th April – **Modern and Ancient: John Deere & R J Fenton (private collection of Tractors)** – Notts and Melton Mowbray
- 3rd May – **Spetchley Park & Weaving Machinery**
- 27th May – 4th June –**Study Tour – France**
- 14th June – **Air Salvage International** (Kemble)
- 20th-21st June – **2 Day visit to Bosworth Wing-Ding** – Gill & Alf Oliver – **FULLY BOOKED (there is a waiting list).**
- 28th June – **A Farm Diversification Visit to a former National Dairy Cow breeder** – Avebury, Wiltshire
- Date TBC – **Possible Visit to Alderney**
- 5th July – **Tip tree Jam**
- Possibly 12th July TBC – **Our chance to become a Freeminer for the Day** – Forest of Dean

Pop-Ins 2023. For all Pop-ins (unless otherwise announced) the intention is to meet at 12.00pm for lunch.

- Saturday 18th March 2023 - **White Waltham**
- Saturday 8th April 2023 – **Leeds East**

If any members wish to offer their strips for informal gatherings next year, please do contact David Keene (david@davidkeene.co.uk) or Neville (neville.stops@gmail.com).

We would like to thank all the organisers of events for making these meetings possible. If you happen to see anything in your area that would form the basis of an interesting FFA visit, then please contact Neville Stops (neville.stops @gmail.com) or Gordon Bellerby (gordon@jgbellerby.com).

AS THESE EVENTS ARE CONFIRMED, THEY WILL BE PUT ON THE WEB SITE. WHEN THEY OPEN FOR BOOKINGS AN EMAIL WILL BE SENT OUT TO ALL DETAILING WHEN YOU CAN THEN BOOK THROUGH EVENTBRITE.

Eventbrite

When you book a place please fill in all sections, even if you put N/A. If coming by car, put this in under A/C, and the Reg under A/C reg. If you do not fill in all sections Eventbrite will not accept the booking.

If you are thinking of organising an event please contact either Gordon or Neville and we will send you the updated "Guide for Events Organisers".

Event Information: Joining instructions and attendee lists will go on the web site under that event.

Booking note: When booking on the home page next to general admission there is a drop down menu, please select how many people you are bringing.

Cancellation Policy: We will have to have a strict Cancellation policy. All events will be going through Eventbrite, and up until the closing date you will be able pull out and get a refund, BUT after the closing date you will be committed for the full cost. This is because coaches need booking, caterers need advising, and hotels rooms numbers need confirming.

This Policy will stand unless there are people on the waiting list or you can find a replacement.

Events such as these are arranged by FFA members on a voluntary basis. It is accepted by those who participate that nothing undertaken by the FFA collectively or members individually shall be construed as establishing a duty of care nor in anyway removing or modifying the duties, responsibilities or obligations of pilots or land owners in relation to any event and attendance thereat. All information provided in these programmes is purely advisory and should ALWAYS be verified from official sources.

Modern and Ancient – Wednesday 26th April 2023



Morning; John Deere Ltd. at Langar, Nottingham.
Plan to land at Langar airfield (postcode NG13 9HY) between 9am to 9.15. (No landing fee thanks to John Deere Ltd.) We will be collected from the airfield and travel to John Deere headquarters (5 minutes) for coffee and biscuits. After refreshments we will be given a presentation including the history of John Deere in the UK; a talk on how the overnight parts delivery service works and a look at the newest, biggest and best John Deere machines including combines; tractors; and self-propelled sprayers.

Afternoon; R J Fenton at Old Dalby, Melton Mowbray
After lunch we will be travelling to R J Fenton, Vintage Tractors at Old Dalby, near Melton Mowbray. Richard will show us round his wonderful collection of ancient and rare tractors. Starting with the David Brown shed (note David Brown 4 wheel drive tractor next to a new Aston Martin); followed by the IH and the Massey Ferguson sheds. Richard also collects old signs and there is a collection of ploughs.

Richard and his sons are passionate about their vintage machinery and are delighted to be able to share their collection. Janet Fenton will then provide refreshments before we travel back to the airfield for the return journey.

Richard and Janet would be pleased to recieve donations towards the air ambulance.

PLEASE NOTE: appropriate footwear is needed and the sheds may be cobwebby!

Air Salvage International, Kemble, 14th June 2023

The usual format is a 30-minute talk by Mark Gregory, ASI's founder and Managing Director about the history of the company and the aircraft disassembly market sector in general. This is normally followed by a walk to Hangar H2 and the apron outside to view aircraft undergoing the disassembly process, before boarding a vintage Boeing 727. The final stage is a short mini-bus ride to the Belfast site to view aircraft in the final stages of disassembly.

Arrive at Kemble to meet at the Resturant "AV8" no later than 10:00, our visit is a short walk. We will leave promtly by 10:15

SAFETY WHILST ON SITE • The group MUST arrive with their own hi-vis and suitable hardwearing footwear should be worn.

All pilots to pay their own landing fees.

There is no charge, but we request that a £10 per head charitable donation is made to Wiltshire Air Ambulance that will contribute towards ASI's yearly fund raising. This should be done in the form of a cheque made out to Wiltshire Air Ambulance

Bosworth Wing-Ding – 20th/21st June 2023

FULLY BOOKED

An exciting opportunity. Alf and Gill Oliver invite you to Land at Fenn Lane Farm, the site of The Battle of Bosworth 1485, where Richard III died.

This is not open to the public. Talk provided by the battlefield archaeologist who made the recent discovery.

Overnight at Bosworth Hall Hotel, spa available. A fascinating second day tour to Statfold Seed Oil led by the owner. How he developed an international essential oils business. See the UK's most significant collection of narrow-gauge locomotives and travel on the farm railway line.

Price £210.00 per head, £28.00 Deposit through "Eventbrite"
This event is fully booked. There is a waiting list, if you would like to put your name down



Farm Diversification Visit Wed 28th June 2023 Organised by Judith Marcham (members guest)

A Farm Diversification visit to a former top National Dairy Cow Breeder, the famous Noremead herd. East Farm, Avebury, is a 900 acre mainly arable farm adjacent to the Avebury World Heritage site, run by the third generation of the Cooper family.

Downland grass managed within the Marlborough Downs Space for Nature project. Part of a 2500 acre farm contracting group. Diversification includes:

- Warehousing
- Children's teaching swimming pool: 0 to 10yrs
- Goat meat producing herd "The Gourmet Goat Farm"
- White Park cattle herd for beef production.
- The Larder Café with Farm Shop selling home produced Goat and Beef meat from their own butchery.



Your Chance To Become A Freeminer For The Day Date TBC (possibly 12th July)

Fly to Gloucester airport, tea and coffee awaits you

Morning Visit

Clearwell Caves; The nine caverns open to the public at Clearwell are part of a mine complex extending over 245 hectares (600 acres). The cave system consisting of thousands of caverns and over 30km (20 miles) of passageways, throughout the limestone strata which dips from west to east at an angle of 15 degrees. The old mines extended down to 135 m (530 ft) below the surface but since deep mining and water pumping ceased in 1945 the water table has returned to its normal variable level of around 110-120 m (350-400 ft).

Lamproom Café For Lunch

The Lamproom Café sits above ground and is the only marker for the adventure taking place below.





Afternoon Visit

Discover the fascinating history & heritage of the Forest of Dean in our 5 Gallery museum with a guide
Return to Gloucester airport, fly home

FFA Euro Tour 2023

The Tour this year is as interesting but more relaxing than previous tours. Quiet and comfortable hotels have been chosen for two-night stays and short flights have been set with plenty of time off for relaxation. We hope you will want to join in and come to France for some fun, good food and culture.

Itinerary:

Saturday 27th May

- Fly into St Cyr l'École LFPZ near Paris in your own time.
- Call a cab to 4* Hotel Le Louis in Versailles to meet up and have welcome dinner together.

Sunday May 28th

- Walk to the Palace of Versailles for a guided tour of the Royal Apartments in the morning then lunch in the Palace café and leisurely walk in the gardens in the afternoon.
- Dinner at restaurant of your choice in the evening.

Monday May 29th

- Coach to St Cyr L'Ecole fly to Angers Marcé LFJR.
- Lunch in café on airport then coach to 4* Angers Mercure Centre Gare Hotel.
- Free afternoon to visit Chateau and evening in town.

Tuesday May 30th

- Coach to Claas Tractor factory then coach to drive round 24 Hour Le Mans circuit in coach – observing speed limits
- Lunch in Arnage.
- Return to Angers for free evening stay in same hotel.

Wednesday May 31st

- Coach to Angers Marcé fly to Bordeaux Leognan Saucats LFCS.
- coach to Exclusive vineyard Leoville Barton
- Then to dinner in 4* Hotel Mercure Bordeaux Centre Ville

Thursday June 1st

- Free morning - shopping in Bordeaux maybe ladies?
- Then cruise on the Garonne with gourmet lunch.
- Free evening.

Friday June 2nd

- Coach to airport fly to La Rochelle LFBH.
- Lunch in airport café coach to oyster farm
- Then to 3* Hotel Le Yachtman.

Saturday June 3rd

- Coach to Ile de Ré visit Salt pans then either lift back to town in coach or hire a bike and go for a ride with your pals or laze on the beach and make your own way to town later.
- Wash up Dinner for all in private room in Bar André.

Sunday June 4th

- Coach to airport and disperse or you may choose to stay on in La Rochelle or go elsewhere such as Vannes and the Golfe de Morbihan your choice as that is the end of the Tour of France for Flying Farmers for 2023.

Costs: The estimated cost will be £1,500.00 per single person and £2,000 for a couple plus flying and some meals and drinks.

If you would like to join us please make a first payment by BACS of £500.00 per person to J Roger Bell
Sort code 20:53:53 Account number 50164704

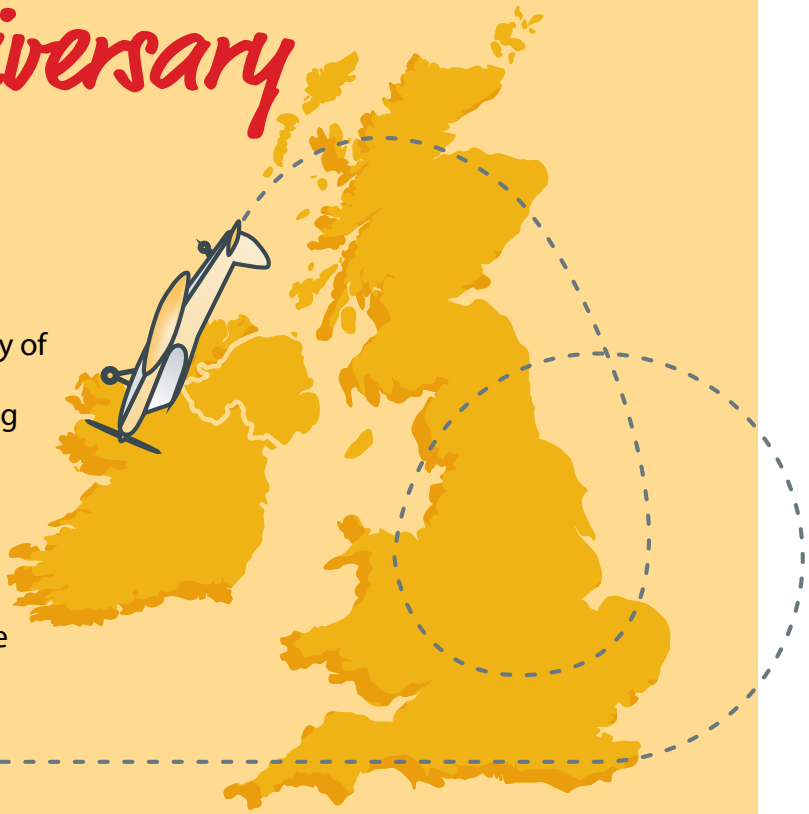
For further Information:
Contact telephone 078 5058 4878
email rog@agric.uk

Closing date 1st March, although this date has passed please call to enquire.

Roger Bell



FFA's 50th Anniversary Coming soon!



FFA's 50th Anniversary 2024 Tour:
In 2024 we will be marking the 50th Anniversary of the FFA. How do we celebrate this occasion? We have had many suggestions and are thinking of a Grand Tour.

This would consist of an 8 to12 day tour, flying round the UK, starting and finishing in central England.

Afterwards there will be an End of Tour Black Tie dinner, all members welcome.

The distance will be approx, 1,800 miles

IMPORTANT Membership Matters

1. Change to Direct Debit – GOCardless – Signing up

Members **cannot now not know** that we are asking members to move from Standing Order to Direct Debit to simplify the collection of subscription in the future. It will also enable one-off payments to the Association for FFA clothing, for example. If you have not set up the direct debit with GOCardless then PLEASE Go to the website; News > Subscriptions https://ffa.org.uk/membership-subscriptions/ and click the link. If you have any questions or concerns then please email treasurer@ffa.org.uk or ring the office on 01303 874251

2. Change to Direct Debit – GOCardless – Duplicate payments

Last Year, 37 members who had successfully signed up for Go Cardless also forgot to cancel their standing order.

As a reminder, the agreed and widely promulgated procedure for duplicate payments is that **all who ask** for a refund within 12 months will receive one. Once we begin the next subscription year, all duplicate subscriptions for the previous year will go into FFA funds. With the new subscription year beginning shortly, please check your standing orders. We cannot cancel them for you.

The beauty of GoCardless is that, once setup, we can do the administration of the subscription from our end.
Please - please - please, do not cancel GoCardless instead by mistake!

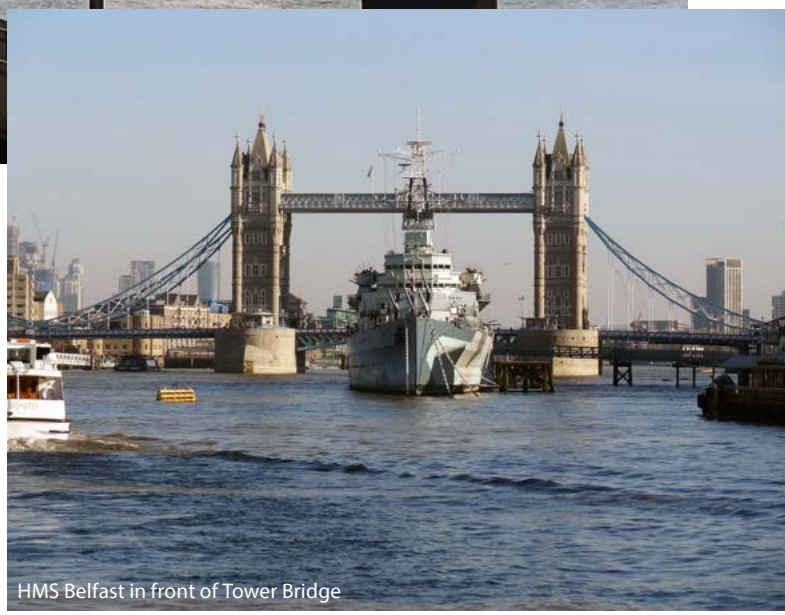
3. Flying Farmers Emails

We now use emails to send you important regulatory information, requests from members and most importantly, details of events and booking links. 65% of our membership routinely open emails and while we contact those whose emails are undelivered we can do nothing about those that go to spam or an unused inbox. If you are not getting regular emails from **info@ffa.org.uk** and you want them then please contact us on the website, **info@ffa.org. uk** or 01303 874251.
If you don't want them, unsubscribe at the bottom of any email or contact us as above.

Thames Cruise, 8th February 2023



With the fog rolling away, a beautiful clear crisp blue sky was our companion for the rest of the trip.



HMS Belfast in front of Tower Bridge

It was a foggy morning over the Thames when 30 or so members presented themselves at the Tower Millenium Pier in the shadow of the Tower of London. The air had a nip to it as we watched a steady flow of water taxi punters and tourist cruise-goers make their way down the gangplank to the multi-berth pier. The Uber water taxi, a sleek catamaran effortlessly kissed the pier, exchanged its passengers and then roared off gracefully with the satisfying grumble of the twin Volvos.

Our much less elegant ride, the Westminster, not having the power nor the urgency of the Uber, followed the Thames traffic pattern for landing but in this case observing the flow of the tide rather than the direction of the wind and landed into tide. In a resigned and "I do this every day" way, she chuffed into land, the members embarked and the tour began. With the fog rolling away, a beautiful clear crisp blue sky was our companion for the rest of the trip.

This was a private tour with a two-course lunch and a private guide. A glass of bubbly was on offer as we filtered into the cosy (as in "not-huge") cabin where tables were set ready for starters. A few introductions were made. On this occasion the FFA was delighted to invite Emma Gorman as our guest. Many will know Emma as the voice of the FFA in the Treasurer's office. She diligently deals with membership and subscription queries as well as many of our outgoing emails to members. She had also been the heavy-lifter in the organisation of this event. Also, our guide for the duration was Avril, a resident of the Thames (a houseboat upstream) and a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge.

After a short detour downstream to pick up the main course (to keep it hot, I guess) we cruised upstream with the rising tide under London Bridge, the one that was famously sold to an American. Apparently, the story that he thought he was buying Tower Bridge is untrue. How did the OXO Tower get around the planning restrictions on advertising? They applied for "geometric shapes" and nobody twigged! [Clearly the applicant was a seasoned architect] The Millennium Bridge - the wobbly one – not so much a question of bad design, more that many more people used it on the first day than was ever anticipated and the combined footfall set up a resonance wave that gave rise to the "wobble". Under Blackfriars bridge, the only train station located actually on a bridge. The Houses of Parliament with the clock

tower resplendent in its new coat of gilded paint, Lambeth, MI6, Chelsea Hospital and the Physic garden, Albert bridge, (the prettiest of the Thames Bridges?), Battersea power station re-born, Putney and Hammersmith. Then back upstream against the tide, still flat-out but now noticeably slower. By then, many had left the warm bosom of the cabin and ventured up onto the deck where Avril was still in full flow with interesting and entertaining facts. We saw Great views of HMS Belfast in front of Tower Bridge (which did not need to open for our boat of modest tonnes) and towards Wapping. For over 400 years, Wapping was home to London's infamous Execution Dock. This was a gibbet that hung over the Thames on a dock, and it was the place of execution for pirates and sea goers who had broken the law. They would be hanged at the dock and their bodies would then traditionally stay hanging until three tides had submerged the bodies. According to the law, the Admiralty only had jurisdiction over crimes at sea, hence the fact that the dock and gibbet were located beyond the low tide mark. The most famous person to be executed here was the pirate, Captain Kidd. Wapping is also supposed to be the place that first invented a marine police force. A local magistrate established a group of police officers in the late 1700s, which was tasked with stopping crime on ships moored in the area. Running from Wapping to Rotherhithe on the other side of the river is the Thames Tunnel constructed in the early 1800s by Marc Isambard Brunel. This was the first underwater tunnel in the world.

Then Canary Wharf. Suddenly, why is the Shard on the other side of the boat? The ox-bow around the Isle of Dogs got everyone "temporarily unsure of position", particularly when it was all reversed on the way back. A speedy return with the tide and we were back at the pier at 15:15.

Andrew Cragg



RAF Memorial statue of a Golden Eagle on the bank of the river Thames



The Tower of London



On deck with our guide Avril

Pop-In – Kemble, 8th December



December 8th was certainly a day the weather forecasters got absolutely correct. For days before, the 8th was forecast to be a typical winter anticyclonic day with clear blue skies, no cloud and limitless visibility. The morning dawned cold, but absolutely as forecast. It was a real pleasure to get the aircraft out of its hangar for the short flight to Kemble.

The day proved a popular venue with 11 aircraft flying in with 22 members & guests. The café here is excellent and the staff were happy to reserve a group of tables to enable members to sit together. We were very well looked after and lunch was served promptly with good humour. It was good to feel no pressure from the weather to make an early departure, and to have the time to speak to all those present.

The flight home, eastward with a setting sun behind us, was quite magical and really confirmed the privilege that is ours to fly, often with little or no restriction.

David Keene.

Picture left to right; Mary Stavron, Charles Papworth, Neville Stops, Richard Butler, Bill Boucher-West, Stephen Goddard, Peter Mailer, Mike Cuttell, Judith Marcham, Mervyn White, Peter Gale.

Pop-In – Turweston 18 January





14 Aircraft. 26 attendees

John Webb, Gary Nelson
Tony Fisher, Gordon
Roger Bell
Neville Stops, Gaynor.
Peter Mailer, Maria.
Stephen Goddard, Ray Friedlander.
Peter Evans.
Richard Howard, Jim Wallis.
Andrew Collett.
Mervyn White.
Robert & Ann Knapton
Michael Porter.
Stephen Watkins, Richard Proline
Rick Holt
Andy and Shelagh Preston.
John & Jill Graves

As we all know the weather is vital part of any flight, so on Sunday afternoon I reached for my iPad and selected the WX-Cart weather App. With Arpege selected as the weather model I navigated to Wednesday's prediction, I find the Arpege model the most reliable for looking one to three days ahead and will stretch it out to four days if needs be . Low pressure but clear of showers in the centre of the UK with a chance of a shower in Somerset/ Devon. Very little if any cloud over my flight path and the temperature is most likely to be very very cold, that will do for me !

The next port of call is Eventbrite to book myself into the first fly in of the new year and with that done, I just have to wait for Wednesday morning.

As the dawn broke and the sun began to rise I could see that the weather prediction was spot-on, blue skies overhead, a cloud formation out to the west with a gentle pink tinge. Is this rain or maybe snow showers descending over the Bristol Channel into Somerset I wonder ? A quick look on the rain radar, Metars and Tafs. confirmed that all the predictions were being followed to the tee.

Paperwork in hand I left for the airfield, boy it was cold -6 centigrade with thick ice on the car windscreen of the car . It suddenly dawned on me that this is the second day of really cold weather, and it might be that my little baby won't actually start without a little coaxing, still time will tell.

On reaching the airfield and opening a hanger door there was "Bluebird" my trusted Zenair 601 tail dragger, snuggled under her covers in the corner of the cosy hanger:- but will she start ?

Covers removed all checks done and enough fuel in the tanks to get me there and back again, I am ready to pull her out into the crisp bright winter sunshine:- but will she start ?

As I crank the engine over, I gently feed in the choke until the engine fires, and then balance the choke and throttle until the engine purrs like a kitten. Of course she will start!!!! Ye of little faith, could only doubt!

With warm engine and clearance to depart from Edington Hill, I head for the skies. **Wow** at 600 feet I enter the base of the cloud, hang on, this was not predicted where did this come from? With a quick scan round I can see that the depth of the cloud was not that great with plenty of holes for me to pop up and descend back down through. No worries, I will pop through on top, I climb to 2000 feet and head towards Oxford, what a beautiful day to be flying. Forty minutes into the flight, and it's time to change to Turweston radio, instantly a joy to my ears to hear many voices that I recognise already arriving and jockeying for position to land.

Once on the ground and parked up the first thing to do is pay my landing fee in the control tower, where I met up with the first of the members Tony Fisher and Gordon, who had just flown in before me. Tony proceeded to show off his skills in being able to down a card payment machine so we all had to wait while the system was rebooted before we could pay our dues.

Two floors down the early birds had already got their coffee in the cafe and had a warm welcome waiting for us as we en-

tered. It was good to catch up with friends and meet new members that I have not seen before, I am still very much a newbie. As the numbers grew, with 26 attendees with 14 Aircraft total, the conversation and banter got into full swing so did the noise level, there was no disputing we were all enjoying ourselves !

It was now past midday and the food that we had ordered started to arrive from the kitchen, that took the edge off the noise level, well a bit. Then the door opened and the last two arrived, I could tell that they were well known to many members as most were waving and welcoming them to the meeting and once they had entered many paused from eating for a chat and catch up with them. I later found out that Robert & Ann Knapton were founder members hence everyone knew them .

As they say, all good things must come to an end and it's time for us to fly back to our respective home airfields . The frost has now lifted and the grass taxiway was a bit sticky to say the least. As we changed over from grass taxiway to backtrack on the hard there was departing traffic in all sorts of weird and wonderful places, but we all kept our heads and departed safely . For those of us flying south and more specifically towards the southwest we had the low sun to contend with, and guess who forgot to clean his windscreen this morning, now with the biggest pair of foggles I have ever used the return home was a little challenging, but still very enjoyable.

With my baby back under her covers in a nice snug hanger it's time to reflect on my day, an excellent flight, good food , entertaining banter and conversation but most of all outstanding friendship. Can't wait till we all meet again .

Mervyn White, G-CECZ

Pop-In – Bovingdon, 18 February

I, like many other Flying Farmers, have been overflying Bovingdon airfield for very many years but had never actually landed there. So it was with great interest and appreciation that I accepted Gary Nelson's offer to organise and host a winter Pop-In at Bovingdon with a lunch at the White Hart pub which is immediately next door to the airfield.

The weather forecast for the arranged day was simply unflyable so we decided to postpone to the following Saturday. Unfortunately, again the weather forecast was poor with winds gusting to 30 knots and a cold front that was forecast to lie across southern Britain.

On the morning of the event the front had moved through central Britain, with brilliant visibility, but remained slow moving over southern Britain preventing a number of members from flying. In fact, only three members flew in and one made the trip by car, so lunch was enjoyed by just the seven of us.

The area presently available for landing at Bovingdon is 620 meters of the western end of the old east/west runway. The condition of the concrete is very good, but care is required both because of a very large studio building on the line of the runway beyond the eastern threshold and heras fencing along the full length of the northern edge of the runway.

We appreciated the invitation from John Webb, the owner of the airfield, but because so few were able to attend we will organise another visit in the near future.

David Keene

Reply: Just unfortunate about the weather... better luck next time !

Paul Gary & I hope the few who managed to arrive today by air, (and the less brave by road,) all had an enjoyable day, and found The White Hart Pub facility to your liking.

Those who couldn't make it today, I hope you are able to visit us sometime soon.

Many thanks for Pilots being most considerate in the way you performed on this visit, I don't think the neighbours who are likely to make a fuss about aircraft landing were even aware you had been here today which is good for all of us as you are all welcome to visit again at your convenience. (For safety, PPR of course)

Please bear in mind the Runway is sometimes not available as it is also used for film location work, but just drop us an email when you have a date in mind and we can advise by return if the Runway is available. Remember to book if you plan to have lunch at the Pub. 01442 833367.

I am sorry I was preoccupied today when I spoke briefly to you all in the Pub, but today's visit coincided with an important site meeting that I could not escape from.

Gary apologises for running late, and was not able to arrive before you all left. He looks forward to your next visit. We look forward to hearing from you again soon,

Kind regards, John,
on behalf of Paul, Gary & I. Bovingdon Active Airfield.



Left to right: David Keene, Dave Topp, Robin Culley, Richard Butler, Anthony Kedros, Fliss Holt, Rick Holt.

A cross country flight – Ivan Shaw



Above main picture: Take off from Medinah was 5000 feet with an immediate climb to 10,000 asl required to get over the mountains to Wejh on the Red Sea coast.

I suppose that there is a basic desire in all pilots to point an aircraft onto a compass heading and just fly!, lets face it, it's what airplanes are good at, straight lines from A to B, with a birds eye view of the world along the way. Pilots have been doing it as long as, well, as long as aircraft have been flying!

That qualifying cross country whilst training gives a flavour of things to come, then maybe a little later on after gaining your license a flight to a foreign country.

Like thousands of others my first trip abroad , after a course on 'going foreign' at the flying club, was made across the English Channel to Le Touquet, an adventure at the time tinged with a frisson of danger and excitement. I remember the greeting as we arrived in Le Touquet, "Bonjour, essence Monsieur"? Wow, we had arrived in a foreign land!

Nearly forty years later I look back with a little satisfaction at possibly completing more than my fair share of cross country flying in small aircraft. Over the last few years I have criss-crossed

Europe and the USA in both Europa's and the Liberty XL-2.

The USA is a land perfect for cross country flying, a beautiful ever changing vista from mountains, deserts, prairies and coasts, airports every where, no landing fees, excellent met briefing and flight following services, inexpensive fuel, a FBO with full service facilities within an hours flight of just about every where, the same language, culture and, an oh so warm welcome where ever you land, hot coffee on the hob and at the very least a 'pilot cuisine' machine. In many ways it is too easy and flying around Europe is largely the same, OK we have many differing languages, cultures and it may be more expensive but the essentials are the same.

So, when The Liberty's CEO called me and said that they had a Liberty XL-2 in Dubai and could I go out to demonstrate it to various military and police forces in the Gulf region and by the way Ivan we need to get it back to Europe so possibly you could just continue on home?!

I thought, MMmmm! Bit of a challenge and continued thinking MMmm! as I looked at the Atlas. The best way would be straight to Kuwait then over Iraq following the Euphrates River into Syria and Turkey but wait a minute that way is definitely out at least for the time being so to plan 'B.' We had aircraft demos and presentations to do in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain and Riyadh before proceeding home so the best way would be to leave Riyadh, cross Saudi Arabia to Amman, Jordan then over fly Syria to Beirut airport in the Lebanon before continuing north through Turkey and on into Europe, very little over water flying, just what you want in a single engine aircraft. Well, 'The best laid plans of mice and men' and all that, just before my departure Hezbollah had their own plans for that part of the world and didn't bother to consult me on the matter, neither did the Israelis when they bombed the runway in Beirut?

Some one did suggest that there was room to land a light aircraft between the bomb craters but I didn't find that idea very appealing!

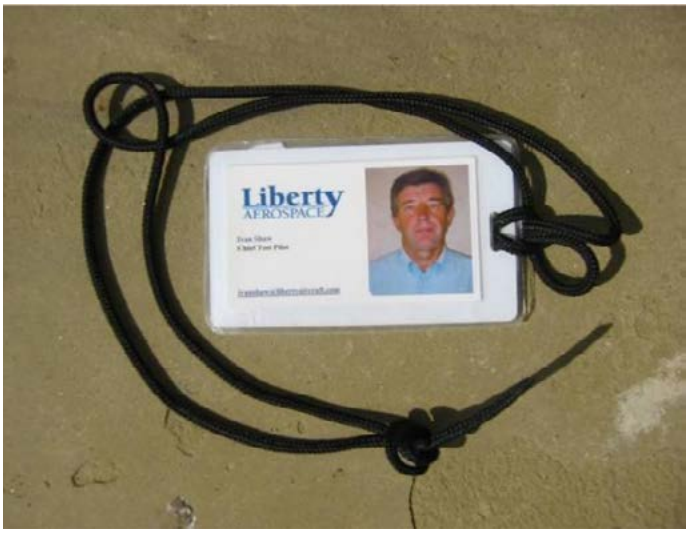
OK, plan 'C' it is then, cross Saudi Arabia, over the Red Sea into southern Egypt, Luxor, north to Cairo and Alexandria before launching off across the Mediterranean Sea to Crete or Cyprus.

Time to go.

Arrived safe and sound care of British Airways in the modern and expanding city of Dubai then a short trip 30 miles up the coast to the airfield of Umm Al Quwain where the Liberty XL-2 had been stored after being freighted out to the Dubai Air Show.

After checking the aircraft over followed by a short test flight it was time to fuel up and get on my way. First surprise, Avgas is expensive in the Middle East





Above left: Avgas arriving at Umm Al Quwain, to save us waiting until the fork lift truck arrived the following morning they kindly siphoned fuel out of one of the drums.
Right: ID tag that gave instant access and was never queried

at over $3 per litre and there is not always a lot of it, if fact we had to wait until later in the afternoon for new supplies to arrive and when it did arrive it was in 45 gallon drums in a 20 ft container all the way from the USA!! No where in the Middle East is Avgas refined!!

It might be a good time to point out some of the differences in flying around the USA or Europe to the Middle East. Firstly there is little or no general aviation flying as we know it, you are either military or flying for an airline/executive jet therefore to be allowed to go anywhere near an aircraft or 'flight side' you must have 1, copious amounts of gold braid and 2, some kind of ID tag around your neck neither of which I had with me so time for a little action.

First purchase uniform shirts and epaulettes, now, in my airline flying days I only ever made first officer so felt a little guilty promoting myself to captain, but what the hell! Every aircraft must have a captain and as this was going to be a solo flight then four stripes it is! You do get the feeling that there is too much gold braid for the weight of the aircraft but that's what is needed/expected!

Now for the ID problem, the only thing I had that looked anything like official was my Liberty business card so, get passport size photo taken at local booth, stick onto business card covering address and telephone numbers, stick that onto a piece of plastic then pop down to the hotel business centre to laminate it, add a black boot lace and Viola! Captain Shaw is ready to take to the skies

When I flew into Bahrain my passport was never stamped, my gold braid and ID tag were sufficient to allow free access.

Oddly when I was to fly four Bahrain police pilots in the Liberty XL-2 they were not allowed to proceed flight side with me although they were Bahrain nationals in Police flying uniforms and had proper Police ID tags!!

It took the best part of an hour and several phone calls to get clearance for them to accompany the captain to the aircraft!

Fitted out with all the correct dress and accoutrements it was time to leave Dubai for the short flight to Abu Dhabi where we had clearance to fly into the military base of Al Bateen.

Flight plan filed and it was down the coast all the way, once airborne it was very reassuring to hear the largely British, Aussie and South African ex pat air traffic controllers, in fact on the entire trip the standards and professionalism of air traffic controllers was the same where ever I flew from Dubai to Doncaster! Any hassle was always from engine shut down to your next engine start up!

Used to flying in Europe a few things take a little getting used to, the first is the lack of anything green and the second is the poor visibility, sand storms blow up pretty regularly and then it takes several days to settle back down and for viz to improve. Although you may be in legal VMC conditions it is often much easier to settle down and fly on the gauges. Oh and one more thing, the heat, July and August is not the best time to visit the Middle East, temperatures of 45+ degrees centigrade, 112F in the shade are quite brutal to both man and machine, start the engine and it feels like some one has just turned a hair dryer on you.

The aircraft was a standard production model without any modifications, extra fuel tanks etc.

Designed as a comfortable two place go anywhere tourer it would be a good test for the Liberty XL-2 in this role and for the company a good test of operations in pretty extreme conditions from a structures, systems and engine cooling point of view.

Airspace tends to be simply divided into two, there is the airways system used by civilian aircraft and the rest is mostly restricted military airspace!

Abu Dhabi.

Al Bateen air base had been set up by the British so on landing it felt more like your local RAF station than somewhere so far away. A quiet efficiency prevailed and we were made most welcome by the Commanding Officer and everyone else for that matter.

Abu Dhabi is one of the independent countries that make up the UAE, the United Arab Emirates and the next morning we were to fly HRH Prince, Sheik Nahyan Al Nahyan, the rulers' son and Minister for Education.



Above: HRH Prince Nahyan Al Nahyan gives the Captain a guided circuit of Abu Dhabi in the Liberty XL-2

These countries are not run on the western model of a democratic system that we are brought up to believe is the only system that people can live a full and happy life under, so I was more than a little surprised at the high regard and sincere affection that the ruling royal family are clearly held in by all I met, from the squaddy at the gate, the man in the street and the senior offices. Apparently the citizens of Abu Dhabi get free health care, free education including university and that includes going up to Oxbridge if you are clever enough to earn a place, a cash payment of $12000 when you get married and free or subsidised housing! As was said to me on more than one occasion, "Why do we want a democracy when we have a Royal family that takes care of us"? Certainly a different point of view!

This was in some ways brought home when HRH arrived at the base, he was driving himself in a Rolls Royce without ANY security measures, he simply pulled into the base off the street, no armed escort, or other vehicles!

HRH was simply dressed in a plain white traditional Arab dress, no row of medals, plumes, sword or other adornment, a quietly spoken gentleman who had all the benefits of a better English education than I had!

"I'll have a circuit Captain" after our introduction, HRH is both a fixed and rotary wing pilot, his other aircraft is a Boeing 767. On our wide circuit of the base HRH pointed out all the historic points of interest to me. On landing it was good byes to everyone back into his Rolls and out into the traffic. Anyone could quite easily take a pop at him but the pleasing and surprising thing is that no one wants to! I would be hard pressed to think of a western leader who enjoys the same level of freedom, even in his own country!

The UAE has progressed in leaps and bounds since I was first there in 1968; I think that it was known as the Trucial States back then. Jobs that were/are being done by ex pats are more and more being done by local people.

The UAE together with Bahrain appear to be very moderate progressive countries with a mixture of East and Western cultures, westerners are allowed to drink if they so wish and the ladies do not have to be completely covered, tolerance seams to be the order of the day, little wonder that Dubai and Abu Dhabi are fast becoming popular holiday destinations. I was very impressed.

With our business completed in Abu Dhabi it was time to head off to Bahrain. I wanted to fly around the coastal route, transit Qatar then hop the 26 miles over water to the Island of Bahrain.

The whole route is a military restricted area but our friends at Al Bateen said, "Captain, enjoy flying around our coast line, you have clearance through the military areas" That now just left clearance over Qatar, well try as we may for three days using both civilian and military channels clearance was not forth coming. Apparently the largest US base outside of the lower 48 is in Qatar and that was the problem, the fact that the Liberty XL-2 is a US manufactured aircraft bearing a US registration flown by a US friendly pilot only confused the issue! The only route open was to file airways and go but this meant a 260nm leg over the Gulf of Arabia.

Still, needs must as they say, so it was file airways and go, apart from 20-30 miles in the middle I was in radio contact with first Dubai then Bahrain who gave me radar vectors to the ILS on runway 12L at Bahrain International or RAF Muharraq as it was known when I was last there in 1968.

Flying into Bahrain was a rather special occasion for me because in a way, it was here that I started flying!

Let me turn the clock back a few years. In 1968 I was a professional musician, well a drummer who is technically a guy who hangs about with musicians, working for the BBC British Forces Broadcasting Corporation. We were taking a show out to the Persian Gulf bases to entertain the troops; it was the first time that I had ever been in an aircraft, the Royal Air force Support Commands VC10's four engine jet. I remember thinking Wow, this is a beautiful piece of engineering as I balanced a three penny bit coin on the seat arm rest. When a man in a uniform came back from the front of the aircraft I asked him if I could have a look in the cockpit. He said," Who are you"? And I said, "I'm a musician with the show that you have on board". And he said, "You have some dancing girls I believe"? So I said, "Yes, a whole troupe". And he said, "Well you introduce me to your dancing girls and I'll introduce you to my co-pilot" The deal was struck and a minute later I was shown onto the flight deck, told to sit in the left hand seat where upon after introducing me to the Co-pilot, flight engineer and navigator the captain simply said, "Show him how to fly it" and disappeared until the top of descent into Bahrain.

The co-pilot explained that we were at 33,000 feet just coming over Rome, switched off the auto pilot and invited me to have a go!

It was a case of, "Ease the yoke forward and the houses get bigger", I was hooked and started flying lessons on my return to the UK.

As I taxied the Liberty XL-2 onto the ramp I could hardly believe my eyes, there they were, three RAF VC10's now refitted as tankers, I thought bet it was one of those that I first flew! Just goes to prove the old saying, 'What goes around come around'!

Our business in Bahrain was to demonstrate the Liberty XL-2's capability in the surveillance role to the Ministry of the Interior and the Police. Interestingly the gyro stabilized cameras and other equipment used for surveillance work used to be, 1, physically large, 2, Heavy and 3, Have a high electrical power requirement. This necessitated a large helicopter or fixed wing aircraft. Well as with all things electronic this same equipment is now small, light and energy efficient. This means that the Liberty XL-2, with it's large comfortable cockpit, big enough to wear a bone dome, the excellent field of view, particularly in circling flight from the low wing configuration, certification for night and IFR can do the same job as a helicopter costing $9 million a copy and with less than a twentieth of the operating costs!

I flew several sorties out over the Gulf of Arabia finding ships then circling them at 100 feet and 50kts, on one occasion the ship turned out to be a US navy patrol vessel on its way to Iraq, as we circled it I could see that on the aft deck under canvas covers was an anti aircraft gun, I said, "If they start taking the covers off that gun we are outa here at the double" but luckily for us they just waved!

Before departing for Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the trip to the UK I wanted to do a little maintenance to the aircraft, change the engine oil and filter etc and replace the artificial horizon that had started going US intermittently, didn't fancy the idea of flying all the way home with no more than a 'bat and ball' in the blind flying instrument department!

The temperature was far too high to complete this work outside so I legged it over to the SaudiAir hanger to see if they could help? Not knowing what sort of a reception to expect I was delighted when just about everyone there was British or European ex pats and were greatly interested in the Liberty XL-2. John from Glasgow said, "Wheel it in Ivan, we have an Airbus 340 coming in this afternoon but we'll just work over the top of you, a great bunch of guys.

Pete an instrument technician on the Royal Flight was just preparing to go up on a training flight in the kings new 747, 400.

This was being added to his other two Jumbo's and a few other lesser jets, for a place that is the size of the Isle of Wight they appear to be doing very well, a King, a booming economy, a growing tourist and financial services industry, sort of makes you feel that the people on the Isle of Wight aren't quite giving it there best shot!

With all the work completed it was time to depart for Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, into the flight planning office to get the weather, check Notams and file a flight plan. As I handed my completed flight plan form to the ops manager I said, "I'm off to Riyadh, and he said, "inshallah" I wasn't quite sure whether he was giving me some sort of a local blessing or thinking, God help him!



Left: RAF VC10 on the ramp at Bahrain International.

You find out that pretty well every thing in the Middle East is 'inshallah' [If it is the will of God].Which is fair comment I suppose!

I departed Bahrain at 06.30 when it was already 95F on the ramp, cleared to 8000 ft and then once over Damman I was handed over to Riyadh control who promptly cleared me to flight level 240! After explaining why I couldn't accept that level they finally settled for 10,000 feet. Once in the cruise I was able to relax and enjoy the flight, the strange beauty as the sun rose behind me, an almost eerie light, more of a glow that cast long shadows across the desert. You sit, you look, you think and you contemplate!

The temperature at this height was 78F and with the cabin vents providing a good blow of fresh air the flight was both comfortable and enjoyable.

Radar vectors to the ILS on RW 33 right completed the flight. It was 107F as I taxied onto the GA ramp of the King Khalid International Airport and it was only 0930.

Navigation and landing fees $300, handling fees $350, will that be cash or credit card Captain?!! My final destination in Riyadh was a military field just 16nm North West of the airport, I thought I had better depart right away; I shudder to think what an extra days parking would be!

Extra 24 hours parking Captain will be $4!! Oh well in that case I'll depart early tomorrow morning when it's cooler, nice to be a high roller now and again!?

Now that I was staying the handling agents wanted to move my aircraft a short distance across the ramp so having walked out with them to remove the brakes I started to reposition the aircraft pulling on the root of the prop whilst the handling agents walked beside me! I suddenly thought, wait a minute, the only thing that these guys have done so far is handle my cash so I instructed them how to move the aircraft and



Above: On the GA ramp in Riyadh, a prince's 747,400 and the smallest aircraft to visit the airport, The Liberty XL-2.
Below left: Landing at Thumamh, an out of the way military base
Below right: The Saudi Aviation Club is chaired by HRH Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (the first Saudi Astronaut).

deliberately walked ahead of them like some sort of airport Pied Piper!

Liberty's Saudi agent, Amos is a 6 foot 5inch, 395lb Texan who came to Saudi Arabia nearly thirty years ago to demonstrate 'marshal arts' and never went home! A larger than life character who changed his religion from Southern Baptist to Islam!

When I asked Amos about security in Saudi for westerners as the British Foreign Office website recommends extreme caution, he said that things were quiet now but had been quite nasty. I thought what he calls quiet and what I call quiet are two entirely different things, according to the British Foreign office web site there were 6 terrorists killed in a shoot out less than a month before my visit in this very city!!

Amos continued," Several Westerners had been kidnapped and then be-headed, showed it on the internet, I have it on my laptop if you want to see it"?!! I assured him that I did not! The hotel was surrounded by concrete blocks and our car was searched before we could enter the car park, entering the hotel necessitated going through a full airline type screening with all bags being searched, they take security seriously here!

Apparently various terrorist groups were/are active in Saudi but the King, the keeper of the two Holy Mosques, decided that enough was enough, and there have been several shootouts to try and sort out the problem, we were also stopped at several impromptu roadside security checks by the police and military.

Certainly the gloves are off in their dealings with terrorists.

Funny, but no matter how many guns I see, even in the hands of the good guys they never make me feel any safer!

I had a very interesting night out with Amos and his friend Jameel with dinner being served at a traditional Arabic restaurant; men only, sat on carpets on the floor. We spent a few fascinating hours discussing the differences between Christianity and the Muslim faith after which they presented me with a copy of the Qur'an in English and Arabic. One of the great attractions of travel is to meet people with a different background and point of view on life, this evening it was Camel steaks and the Qur'an tomorrow, who knows?

As the sun rose the next morning it was off to Thumamh a military base near Riyadh that oddly enough was not on my Jepps chart and whose identifier was not in the Garmin database!

Young Saudi's used to go to the USA to complete their pilot training but after 9/11 things have become a little more difficult. Now the intention is to train more pilots at home and to this end pilot training organisations are being set up

With demonstrations completed it was time to fuel up for my flight across Saudi Arabia to the Holy city of Al Madinah, as there was to be no avgas there it meant I would have to tanker my own.

I carried 26 gallons in four containers, I also took a gallon of water in case I came down in the desert and with the war going on I thought it may be a good idea to take a fez and a clip on foreskin just in case!

New pilot training organisations are being set up in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Aviation Club is chaired by HRH Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (the first Saudi Astronaut). With 15 aircon units going full blast in the hanger it was still 93F

The next morning I was airborne at 0530 from Thumamh and climbing to 8500ft for a 400nm leg over some quite inhospitable looking country.









Above left: Approaching the ancient and Holy city of Al Medinah which is closed to all but Muslims

Above right: Air traffic control Al Medinah style. One could not have asked for a more friendly and helpful group.

The FADEC, Full Authority Digital Engine Control on the Teledyne IOF 240 engine kept the head temps in the green in the hot extended climb. If temps start to approach the top of the green arc then the FADEC will richen up any hot cylinder to cool it down, nice!

In fairness to the Liberty XL-2 the engine and oil cooling worked really well even in these extreme conditions and I never saw either out of the green arc.

I was using Jeppesen En Route charts but I did get a distinct feeling that all other charts would have some thing like, 'Here there be Dragons' blazoned across them!

The desert does have a strange beauty of its own, the visibility would continually change, at one time I could see the sand building up on the engine cowl in flight!

That was at a time when I had lost Radio contact with Riyadh and could not yet talk to Jeddah but this was only for about half an hour, I did make sure that I had 121.5 dialed up on the comms flip-flop just in case I needed it in a hurry.

I have flown over some pretty inhospitable looking deserts in the USA but I always had the feeling that if push came to shove the cavalry would not be long in coming to your rescue. I did not have that same comfortable feeling here; maybe I am being unfair to the Saudi emergency services but that is how I felt.

With seventy miles to run I was handed over to Medinah Approach and was asked for my military clearance number? 4049 I replied the only one that I had been given. This number is invalid came the reply, you do not have permission to land at Medinah! This was potentially quite serious because at that point I had no where else to go, I suggested that we talk about this on the ground and was told to 'stand by'.

I had been told in Riyadh that the Kings sister who was using brothers 747 for a flight within Saudi had been refused landing permission because the correct procedures had not been followed. They took up the hold whilst phone calls were made to no avail, the captain eventually declared an emergency due to low fuel before being given clearance to land! I was thinking if that can happen to the Kings sister there's not much chance for Ivan Shaw from Hutton-Le-Hole!

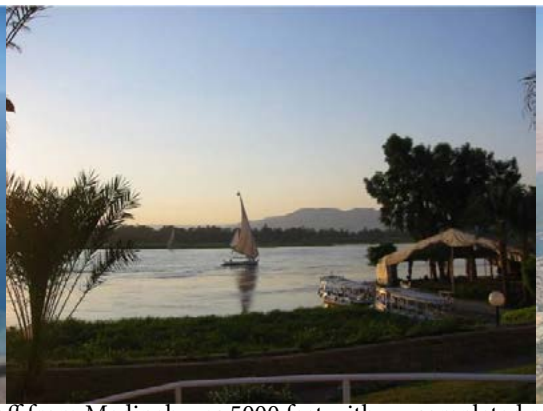
I spent a nervous ten minutes before they came back and told me to continue my approach! Touching down at the Prince Mohammad Airport I taxied onto the Haj ramp that was normally used for pilgrims.

Medinah is the second holy city in the Muslim faith, Mecca being number one. Mohammad the Prophet, 'peace and blessings be upon His name' is buried here.

Being interested in other faiths it would have been really special to visit the mosque and it is a pity that non Muslims cannot visit because I am sure it would help give a greater understanding and appreciation of Islam. I did think of asking if I could have a half days membership but thought better of it!

As soon as I switched the engine off I jumped out of the aircraft and for two reasons started refueling from my cans, firstly it was hot, like 45 degrees hot and I thought it unsafe to leave the avgas containers in the aircraft and two, I wanted to get it done before some one came and said that I couldn't. Halfway through re fuelling a car sped out to the aircraft with an official looking driver, I thought get ready for it but the friendly customs officer after shaking hands and learning that this was not an international flight held the funnel for me making my task easier. I was also intent on not paying the minimum US$1400 handling fee that had been quoted so once refueled I made a dash for the tower before any 'Handling Agents' could get their hands on me. Once in the tower the air traffic controllers could not have been more understanding and helpful. They arranged and took payment for the landing and navigation fees they also allowed me to file a flight plan for the following morning and arranged a hotel out of the city and a taxi! They did suggest that I could possibly get a taxi driver to show me around the city under cover of darkness but as the hotel was about fifteen miles out of the city I decided not to bother and simply stayed in the excellent and quite inexpensive hotel.

The next morning I was airborne at 0645 en route to Luxor in Egypt some 410nm distant. The density


Above left: Coasting out over the Red Sea, next stop Egypt.
Middle: A felucca on the River Nile in Luxor, a fascinating city.
Right: Luxor in the River Nile valley. One mile either side of the fertile valley and it's back to barren desert, and I mean barren desert!

altitude on take off from Medinah was 5000 feet with an immediate climb to 10,000 asl required to get over the mountains to Wejh on the Red Sea coast.

Flying over these rugged and isolated mountains it was possibly the place that I thought of the engine and said, In Shallah, don't stop now!

The headwinds were much stronger than forecast on this leg and I was still experiencing strong headwind as I coasted out across the Red Sea

Once over the Red Sea I was handed over from Jeddah to Cairo control passing to them my Egyptian clearance number TAS1153. As the Egyptian coast came into view I reviewed the situation, the strong headwinds had really slowed me down. I was sure that I would have enough fuel but what If the head winds should get stronger and what if when I got to Luxor International I was kept holding for forty five minutes or so!

Look, there are old pilots and bold pilots and I now fall into the former group so decided to divert into Marsa Alam a resort on the Red Sea Coast. Once handed over to approach control I was a little surprised to be asked how I was going to pay! 'Do you have cash Captain? Er, yes, American dollars I replied. Then you are clear to continue your approach!

Taxi onto the stand, apply brakes, shut down, open canopy and before I could unfasten my seat belt and say Ali Baba the 'Handling' agent was handing me an invoice for US$180! Welcome to Egypt!

It appears that most international airports and many others have a rule written into the small print that all aircraft must be handled by an agent; this to many agents is a license to print money.

" Minimum charge Captain, we know that it's the same as a 737 and yes we do know that it's daylight robbery but that's the way it is and there's nothing you can do about it Captain"!! Now I can go along with this for security reasons and an airline that requires a quick turn round,

250 passengers off, clean aircraft, food on, arrange fuel, get weather and notams, file flight plan, Passengers on, push back, ground equipment etc but a two seat light aircraft with one person on board!

Some airports, Rhodes and Corfu for instance where the handling is done by Olympic Airways take a much more pragmatic view of things, they charge you for the actual work done.

In Rhodes a lady arrived at the aircraft in a car and first thing said, "Welcome to Rhodes, what can we do for you"? She ordered the fuel truck and with that completed ran me to the landing fees office then to the met office and finally to the tower to file a flight plan before driving me back to the aircraft. A quick efficient turn round and the handling fee? £23, no problems with that.

Then again there is always the exception to every rule, In Marsa Alam a young man who worked for the airport, Mohammed Saleh came to the aircraft to see if he could be of any help. He was the one who transported me to the tower to file a flight plan then to the met office before suggesting that as this was a non commercial flight and I had diverted to the field for a tech stop, the navigation and landing fees of US$400 should be waived. He went off to see his boss and sure enough came back five minutes later having got the fees waived! He would not even take a tip as he said this would reflect badly on the airport!! Mohammed take a bow, if Egypt has a future in the modern world it will be because of people like you! The handling agents did nothing except take my cash.

Once fuelled it was off to Luxor for a repeat performance with the handing agents. In an earlier conversation with their head office in Cairo I had told them that I would not be requiring the aircraft night guard at $25 or hire/use of 'ramp equipment' at US$175 but was told on arrival that as the marshaller had used his bats to assist my parking and that he had then put wheel chocks under the aircraft it was already too late to waive the charge! To add insult to injury I was not allowed to walk the 75 meters to the terminal but had to have the bus at US$28 per one way trip.

Ali Baba and his forty thieves are all alive and well and running 'handling' agencies in Egypt! To say I had a small altercation with these people is to put it mildly, no one minds paying a fair price for a service but no one likes to be 'Rogered' sorry Roger!

Luxor is an ancient city with much to see and do; unfortunately I only had a half day there so it was rent a bike and off on a whistle stop tour of the city. A mile either side of the River and the countryside turns from a verdant green to barren desert and I mean barren.

Arriving at the airport at 0545 and having learnt that there was no Avgas available in Alexandria I wanted to fly to Cairo, refuel there and then proceed directly to Pafos in Cyprus but things are never that simple particularly when dealing with 'handling agents' After refusing to pay for the hire of 'ramp equipment' they settled for a fee of just $186 to

accompany me around the various offices and file a flight plan to Cairo.

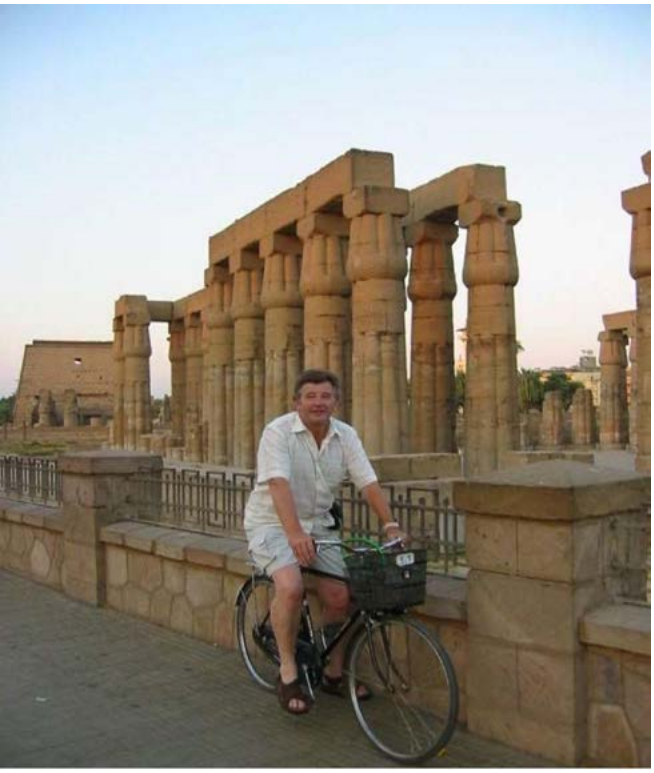
Entering the flight planning office at the base of the tower I was surprised to find that behind the counter was a double bed with the ops manager just getting out of it. With the flight plan form filled out he could not accept it until it had been stamped by the landing fees office and yes you've guest it, $28 there and $28 back. Works out about $2000 per mile! It had now taken over two hours to get to this stage so with all paper work completed it was at last time to depart. Strapped into the aircraft I called for start clearance only to be told that they did not have my flight plan, I told him that it had been filed two hours ago three floors under where he was standing! He came back to me and said that the handling agents had cancelled my flight plan!!

He said that he did not have their number so could not contact them!!

By now it was over 100F on the ramp, I had smoke coming out of my ears and had suffered a serious sense of humour failure.

I jumped out of the aircraft and bounded over to the control tower, luckily no one tried to stop me on the way! The 'handling agents' were nowhere to be found, they had made a 'dash with the cash'!

There was nothing for it but to start all over again on my own, clearance could now only be given to Alexandria and yes it was back to the landing fees office to get the new flight plan stamped. Another good little earner is, " Yes Captain that will be $168 for navigation and landing fees and we only accept cash" Tender two hundred dollar bills and, I can tell that you are ahead of me already, "We have no change Captain" By this time you are thinking, anything, take everything just let me out of here!



On your bike, a great way to see the ancient wonders of Luxor.

In fact I just sat down on a chair besides the six people who were making coffee in the landing fees office and laughed out loud, it was either that or cry or murder somebody! The whole thing was like a TV comedy sketch and I needed to get back into a better frame of mind before thinking of flying off to Cairo!

Eventually airborne from Luxor at 0955 I wended my way north and when abeam Cairo simply diverted into the, Sixth of October airfield which is about twenty miles west of Cairo where they had avgas. The Liberty XL-2 was the only aircraft on the airport, there were thankfully no handling agents so we got a reasonably speedy turn round from the friendly airport staff, however I would still have to go to Alexandria to clear through immigration.

It was very hot as I climbed out of the, Sixth of October airfield and very bumpy in the lower levels. As I rejoined the airway at Cairo I looked out and saw, quite by accident, the Pyramids, Wow, I was really excited at seeing and flying over the most ancient and recognisable landmark in the world. It was one of those special moments that I will never forget!

It was back to 10,000 feet and very soon Alexandria and the Mediterranean hove into view, eventually handed over to the tower frequency I informed the controller that I wanted to park as near to the tower as possible for a quick turn round and departure to Pafos on Cyprus. The same handling agents as Luxor operate here and I was determined to have nothing to do with them. I taxied up near to the tower, switched the engine off, opened the canopy and with a few choice words stopped a man dead in his tracks as he approached the aircraft wheel chocks in hand! I was out of the aircraft in a flash, announced that I was off to the tower and with a wave of my hand started marching briskly across the ramp.

Within seconds I was being pursued by said handling agent, two of his accomplices and an airport security guard!

They were all shouting at once trying to get me to stop! I thought 'no way' or something similar and simply carried on walking, even when they ran and stopped in front of me I just walked round them, waved them aside and said, "Sorry, don't understand" I knew their little game and was having non of it, I resolved only to stop walking if I heard the safety catch come off the Glock 9mm pistol that the security guard was carrying!

Three Egyptian airports in one day is too much for any man to maintain his sense of calm to say nothing of his sense of humour!

Once in the tower they knew they were beaten and backed off never to be seen again, the air traffic controller who had been watching the whole fracas going on below him said, "It was a good job I parked you on the nearest stand to the tower, you'd have never got away with it if you'd been parked further away"! He obviously knew what goes on and I think was quite pleased that on this occasion it was Ivan 1, Ali Baba 0.



Above : Skirting the Turkish coast, care must be taken not to infringe their airspace.

I was also not in the mood to round up the landing fees to the nearest $100 but eventually did as both banks in the terminal were closed, "Gone to prayers," someone said.

It was 17.10 when I got airborne on the 275 nm over water leg to Cyprus. As usual, once over water the air was lovely and smooth and I had a very pleasant evening flight. I did expect to see more shipping around but only saw one yacht on the whole crossing.

Once handed over to Nicosia radar I could hear that there were a couple of military aircraft on the frequency together with one from the United Nations. One military aircraft announced that he was going to operate within a block of airspace that I was in; the controller restricted this to make sure that I did not become involved, Lebanon and Beirut being only one hundred miles away. Oddly when questioned about his point of departure and destination the pilot was very reluctant to give this information, when pressed he eventually said that he would be returning to the ship! With the block of airspace he was defining earlier from 29,000 to the surface it was obvious that this was a fixed wing aircraft and must therefore have been from a US carrier!

Vectors to a visual approach on the westerly runway just as the sun was going down was a welcome end to a hard days flying but it wasn't the end of the hassle!

After landing the 'Follow Me' truck came out to meet me and stupidly, as you do, I followed him to my parking space.

A second vehicle arrived complete with ferocious looking handling agent aboard, I explained to her that I did not need much in the way of handling as this is only a small aircraft and I am the only person on board.

She was just making it clear to me, in no uncertain terms that she would decide what handling I needed because it was 'compulsory' when a third vehicle from no less than the CAA screeched to a halt with an even more ferocious looking woman on board.

"You can't stop here", she bellowed, frightening the seagulls away that had settled at the end of the ramp. The feeble excuse that I had only followed the 'follow me' truck was received with quite ill grace I thought. Pointing to a rather timid looking 'Follow Me' truck driver she said and I am not making this up, "He thought you were a large aircraft"

I was going to ask if blind people normally drive round the airport but thought better of it. The three vehicles followed me over to the GA parking area and once there instantly departed leaving me, suitcase and flight bag in hand, pretty well knackered, on the tarmac. Five minutes later a large bendy bus came out to transport me to the terminal only this time it was US$50 per one way trip! Welcome to Cyprus! Come back Egypt all is forgiven!

After a very pleasant day off in Cyprus visiting friends it was time to get off on another busy days flying, three legs, 700nm just about all of which would be over water. US$500 settled the landing, parking and 'handling fees whilst fuel was the most expensive so far at nearly $4 per litre. Still the weather forecast was good so it was take off, climb to 8,000 and head west for the Greek island of Rhodes 250nm distant. Although the visibility wasn't great it was really pleasing to see the turquoise blue of the Mediterranean below, I had been starved of anything so blue for weeks, a similar thing happens when you get home to the UK after a trip, every thing looks so green!, little wonder we describe it as, 'This green and pleasant land'.

The route took me within 12 miles of the Turkish coast and right onto the edge of their airspace which you must not penetrate if flying from Greek island to island, this airspace hostility is something that will have to be sorted out if Turkey are ever to join the EEC. A visual approach and one of my better landings had us safely parked on the GA side of the ramp at Diagoras Airport.

Rhodes is as beautiful as it is historic; it was part of both the Roman and Byzantine empires before being conquered by the Knights of St John. They occupied Rhodes from 1306 to 1522 and their medieval walled city still dominates Rhodes town.

A quick and efficient turn round soon had me on my way to Athens the Capital of Greece on the mainland, another 250nm leg.

Once set up in the cruise at FL80 island after island would slowly appear then disappear back into the haze

Islands would appear and disappear back into the haze. The island of Kos with the airport clearly visible.

Once I got near to Athens things started to get really busy with many radar vectors and level changes until I was finally handed over to Megara tower and cleared to land on runway 26 with a challenging cross wind from the north.

Magara is a military airfield that is now open to GA and there is a separate ramp area in the south east corner well away from the military aircraft. The Jeppesen notes state that photography is prohibited! Knowing how touchy the Greeks can get over this and not wanting the same fate that befell several

British aircraft enthusiasts/snappers I made sure that my camera was securely tucked into its case!

A friendly and helpful flying club/school soon had the aircraft refueled and use of their computer to check the weather was much appreciated as thunder storms were building over land to the north. With a flight plan filed it was off to the most northerly Greek island of Corfu, routing west out to sea towards the islands of Zakinthos and Kefallinia before taking up a northerly heading. There were some really active thunder storms around but fortunately they were isolated and not venturing out to sea. Oh I forgot to mention that there weren't any landing, navigation or handling fees at Magara, a very welcome change indeed.

Corfu is yet another stunningly beautiful and historic island, so much so that it appears that just about everyone has wanted to rule it. In 229 BC it became a colony of the Roman empire before coming under Byzantine rule in AD 337. Between then and now it has been run by the Goths, Normans, Angevin, Venetians, French and even the British 1814-64 before unification with Greece.

Corfu,an uneventful landing on runway 35 saw me parked outside the old terminal building for the night.

Corfu old town is a delightful blend of European influences, the Venetians ruled here for over four centuries and elegant Italianate buildings with balconies and shutters can be seen alongside the wealth of public buildings and monuments left by the British, there is even a cricket pitch.

My next stop was to be Split in northern Croatia but getting there could be a bit of a minefield. The ideal way, the one with minimal over water flying would be to over fly Albania and then over what used to be Yugoslavia but is now six separate countries each with a plethora of restricted, danger, prohibited and just to top things off, 'no fly zones'! The whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina is marked as a 'No fly zone from ground to FL310' except airways! The whole of the Adriatic is similarly covered with red and I felt like the man who stopped to ask the way only to be told that it would be better to go some where else and start from there!

With many 'one way' airways restricting my route I ended up flying the whole route over water, initially flying north west to Brindisi on the heel of Italy before turning north east to Split, a total distance of 320nm.

A new country, a different language and culture, but what a pleasant welcome, no sooner had I switched the engine off when a lorry with a fork lift truck in hot pursuit pulled up along side the aircraft. The friendly drivers informed me that thunder storms were forecast later in the day so they had brought out, without being asked, three large concrete blocks that would have held a 767 down. With the aircraft secured a young lady arrived in a car to take me to the modern terminal, she quickly escorted me through immigration where no more than a cursory glance was made at my passport then through customs. This former communist and until recently war torn country had just proven to be the most friendly and efficient airport of the journey, ten minutes after landing I was stepping into a taxi and heading for the world heritage town of Trogir and visiting with friends who were on holiday on the adjacent island of Ciovo.



It did indeed rain that day and the next with some heavy thunder storms and strong winds, so it was a case of 'hunker down', relax and plan the rest of the trip.

Departing from the airport was just as easy and efficient as the arrival, landing, parking and airport fees a mere few dollars whilst fuel was the cheapest of the whole trip at $1.20 per litre, they even gave me a free half milli map of the country with all the preferred VFR routes clearly marked.

Next stop was Pula in northern Croatia just a short 135 miles hop along the beautifully rugged Adriatic coast, this is a sailors paradise with hundreds of shel-



Above: After another long days flying I was glad to see the island and the airport of Ioannis Kapodistrias come into view.
Left: Old Corfu town where cricket is played on the green.



Above: Cb's were building ahead and even to the south of my track.

tered inlets and small islands, I made a mental note to revisit this coast in the future.

On the approach to land I thought that the engine didn't quite sound or feel right although all the T's and P's were where they should be, and as my next leg was to be north over Venice and Northern Italy before climbing over the Alps into Switzerland, I felt concerned enough to ask if there was a mechanic on duty.

It was Saturday afternoon and there would be no one available until Monday but three miles to the south is Medulin airfield a rough grass field where a company operate sky diving, air taxi and sight seeing aircraft, maybe they could help?

The engine started OK and once warmed up developed full power, the short three mile hop was uneventful and the Liberty's rugged undercarriage did a sterling job of coping with the very rough and bumpy grass field.

Whereas Pula had been quiet, Medulin was teaming with activity, a dozen sky divers were boarding a Antonov AN2. as a C172 landed disgorging a couple of sight seer's before hastily taking more passengers from the queue and departing downwind.

This hive of activity was the result of one family firm that was headed by Nijaz Delic,[father] and sons Nenad and Boris,all professional pilots, not forgetting Mum who appeared to run a complete field kitchen from her caravan producing an endless supply of meals for her crew!

Nenad welcomed me and once aware of my problem could not have been more helpful, the camaraderie that exists between pilots where ever we may find ourselves, particularly when we are in trouble came to the fore and the genuine kindness shown to me by all the family was quite humbling particularly as they were speaking to me in English when I had not a word of Croatian! Nenad first sat me down at the family dining table where Mum produced a hot pork roast with fresh vegetables and this was followed by a tasty pudding topped with hot custard, real pilot cuisine!

Next Nenad said that a friend of his, an FAA licensed mechanic from Macedonia, would be flying in later in the afternoon whilst en route delivering an aircraft from Spain to Bulgaria and need do nothing other than enjoy their hospitality until he arrived!

At six in the evening a C182 arrived with three crew aboard, one of which was Zeljko Ivosevic our mechanic, a friendly if serious looking man in his mid forties who without hesitation offered to help.

Now that the engine had cooled on the Liberty, compression was down on cylinders number two and four which I reckoned was sticking exhaust valves, Zeljko thought it more likely to be the hydraulic valve lifters, anyway it was now getting dark so we postponed things until the following morning and had a beer or two.

Sunday morning dawned bright and clear and with tools and equipment loaned from Delicair, www.delicair.hr we soon had the cylinders stripped down. Zeljko was right, the hydraulic valve lifter assemblies appeared stiff but he soon had them stripped down, cleaned and re assembled . On completion we finished off with a compression check and a ground run with everything OK, it had taken us just three hours. Zeljko had given up his Sunday morning and delayed their onward journey to help, when I asked him how much I owed him he said, "Nothing, I'm pleased to help get you out of trouble"! Needless to say I insisted that he accepted something; after all there are limits to how much kindness one can receive in twenty four hours!

This pool of camaraderie among people who fly should never be taken for granted; it is up to all of us to make sure that when possible we put something back into the pool lest it dry up!

With thank you and goodbyes said it was off back the three miles to Pula to clear immigration file a flight plan and get on my way, the only problem being that there was now bad weather to the north, active embedded Cb's over the Alps and the whole system was heading southeast! I now had a choice, stay where I was for two or three days as it was a huge storm system or run to the south west to Nice in the south of France and hopefully then fly behind it up the Rhone valley.

I decided to file for Nice and with all the necessaries taken care of took off and once more headed out to cross the Adriatic. With thirty miles to run to the Italian coast I was handed over to Padova Info then Milan control, routing north of Bologna and just south of Parma, where the ham comes from. Ahead lay the Monte Maggiorasca mountains with a minimum safe sector altitude of 8400ft and Oh dear it looked as if I had not quite been quick enough off the mark as I could see several Cb's building ahead and even to the south of my track!

As I neared the mountains the Cb's became quite active with lightning and heavy showers, fortunately the visibility was good and 'inshallah' I would find my way around them, which I did. On reaching Genova on the Mediterranean I followed the coast south west and was soon handed over to Nice

approach who wanted to vector me into the biggest Cb that I have seen in many a year just to the north of the field! Suggesting that we find a different route he cleared me to let down to 500ft over the sea no further west than Monte Carlo

Proceeding west over the water at 500ft I joined right base for a visual approach onto runway 04 right. Nice is a busy international airport and I appeared to have a couple of miles of taxiing to do to get to the GA parking area and I was glad to have the Jeppesen airfield chart to hand. Asking for taxi directions at a small airfield is one thing but at a busy international airport it is quite embarrassing and often frowned upon, anyway even in small aircraft we can be just as professional in our flying as the big boys.

The thunder storm broke just after I landed and continued well into the night so I didn't get much of an opportunity to see the sights. Nice is a lovely city but very expensive, the air of affluence hits you even before you walk out of the airport and I stayed at the most expensive hotel of the entire trip, not the best by far but certainly the most expensive!

The next morning it was up and off to Le Castellet, seventy miles to the south west for fuel because Nice does not have Avgas!

Le Castellet airfield is set in beautiful mountain scenery at 1400ft above sea level and appears to owe its existence to the adjacent Paul Ricard racing circuit, there is an interesting café next door full of motor racing memorabilia where I managed a quick lunch before departing north up the Rhone valley.

The Mistral was blowing at 40mph so this was going to slow my progress but for the first time in ages there was no need to file a flight plan so I decided to take off, head north and see how far I got expecting the Mistral to weaken the further north I travelled. Passing east of Avignon and over the city of Montelimar conditions were quite bumpy but as I approached Lyon the valley widens and the strong head wind moderated. Passing west of Macon everything was going well, a quick, 'how goes it' showed that we had travelled 220 nm, plenty of fuel left, the weather ahead looking reasonable and all the T's and P's were in the green, should maybe make it to Reims. The turbulence had now subsided so it was time to sit back and enjoy the scenery through this part of France, and then it happened!

The engine started to lose power! If there is one thing that will get a pilots attention this is it. As power was lost vibration increased to the point that I had to close the throttle completely, a quick glance at the engine gauges showed that fuel and oil pressure were OK but EGT's were cold on two cylinders! Oh sh!!. There was now only one thing the aircraft could do and that was fly me to the scene of the accident! I was at 6500 ft and fortunately, very fortunately, there was the airfield of Montceau-les-Mines about five miles away in my two O' clock. As I approached the westerly runway I realized that there was still a strong northerly wind blowing, [gusting over 20Kts] but this was a small price to pay for having 900M of tarmac within gliding distance and anyway I knew the aircraft could handle it. Keeping high on the approach and once I knew that I would make the runway I took full flap and side slipped the height off touching down about half way down the runway, fortunately I had enough energy left to carry on down the taxiway and onto the apron so I didn't even have the indignity of having to get out and pull it! There were three people stood on the apron watching this odd looking glider making a surprise visit, I opened the canopy and said, "Bonjour, it's knackered!"



Above: Letting down to 500ft over Monte Carlo harbour.

During any emergency you don't have time to reflect on what is happening, it's a question of focus on the job in hand and 'fly the aircraft' but once on terra firma I could not believe that I had had another engine failure!

I have often said that 'Statistically' I am the safest pilot to fly with regards expected engine failures because I have already had more than my fair share, about ten, without going back through my log books, and these include two double engine failures in a twin and believe it or not a double magneto failure whilst test flying a LongEze! Always thought that my next engine failure could be expected about the year 4027, it just goes to show that you can never put your faith in statistics!

OK, when you're in the business of developing new aircraft it sort of goes with the territory but this was totally unexpected, the Teledyne Continental 0240 engine is a superbly reliable motor!

If you are going to have a problem with your aircraft in a foreign country then France, that home of aviation is a good place to have it!

Help was immediately offered, the aircraft was wheeled into a hanger/workshop where it stayed until it was repaired. John Pierre of the Aeroclub du Bassin Minier kindly loaned me his tools and on inspection I found that the exhaust valves were stuck open on cylinders two and four also the tops of the pistons were marked where they had been in contact with the valves!

Teledyne Motors response was excellent, they immediately dispatched four complete cylinder and

piston sets for the engine and as it was the French holidays arranged for Bob Wright an FAA licensed mechanic of Channel Island Aero Services to fly himself over from Jersey and complete the repairs, you can't get a better engine warranty than that.

While waiting for the spares to arrive from the USA I stayed in the town of Montceau-les-Mines which happens to be on the 'Canal Central'. Walking along the canal I spied a British red ensign on the stern of an old Dutch barge and within minutes had been invited aboard for a cup of tea. The barge belonged to Dick and Vicky Atkinson, Dick, originally from York was a retired BA Jumbo skipper, it's a small world isn't it? During our long conversation I had lamented the fact that because of the engine problems I would now not be home for my birthday which was the day after, well later that afternoon I received a phone call from Dick inviting me to come and have dinner with them on board and also, "Bring an overnight bag so that you can have a drink and, you might as well stay and cruise with us to the next town". On arrival Vicky and Dick popped the cork on a bottle of champagne, handed me a birthday card and even sang a verse of, 'happy birthday'! This was followed by a most enjoyable dinner and a cruise the following morning which I also thoroughly enjoyed. Wow, what kindness!

Once the spares arrived Bob soon had the repairs completed and on inspection could only put the stoppage down to tight tolerances on the valves and guides!

It was once more time to take to the air and trying to pay landing and hangerage fees etc to the club only resulted in that typical Gaelic shrug of the shoulders and the comment, "There is nothing to pay"!

For the second time on this trip I was dipping into the pool of aviation camaraderie, a contribution to the club was accepted but was in no way expected. Thank you to all the club members.

Air born I headed for Lille passing over the historic city of Reims with its majestic Gothic cathedral where past kings of France had been crowned. As I looked down on the airfield I reminded myself that here in 1909 Glenn Curtiss and Louise Bleriot had taken part in an international aviation exhibition and thought, had it not been for these early pioneers I would not now be passing overhead in a light aircraft on a , 'matter of fact flight' from Dubai to Yorkshire! Safely landed at Lille I decided to stay the night as the weather was bad over the channel and the UK.

The next day was beautiful and clear and I was soon off on the last leg of the trip, the English Channel came into view and I coasted out over Calais, ahead lay the white cliffs of Dover and home

The rest of the journey appeared to pass very quickly and I felt quite excited as the north Yorkshire moors hove into view, a final approach, a final landing, journeys end!

It had been quite an exciting trip, a little too exciting at times! The Liberty XL-2 had proven itself to be a really capable, economical and comfortable touring aircraft and the engine problems I feel sure were that one in a million chance of something going wrong! Had I been given some contaminated fuel or a wrong grade of oil? Who knows!

I look back on the trip and think how fortunate we are as pilots to have the freedom of the sky, a bird's eye view of an unfolding world, of all the places seen, from the pyramids to the white cliffs of Dover, cameo moments that will stay with me for ever. But maybe more importantly are the scores of fascinating people that I met along the way. Keep an open mind and drive out any pre conceived ideas of particular peoples or countries as you travel, look for the good everywhere and enjoy the journey as we, 'Slip the surly bonds of Earth'.

Ivan Shaw , 2006



Right: The North Yorkshire moors and home.

Chance Meeting – FFA Members

By total coincidence Robert Laming, Anthea Brown, Gill and Alf Oliver, Judith Marcham and Peter Gale. discovered that they were all planning to go to New Zealand for a holiday just after Christmas. They realised that they would all be away at the same time and would be able to meet up at various points along the way. Some great social evenings were enjoyed along with chats about New Zealand farming along with sampling the fabulous Pinot noir and Sauvignon blanc wines.















Left to right from top – Exploring the Chinese mining village (after the gold rush in the 1860s); Peter and Judith land on Franz Joseph Glacier; Mount Cook with the turquoise waters of Lake Pukaki; Robert Laming and Anthea Brown, flight in a the Cessna Caravan; Lakes Wakatipu from the helicopter; Peter inspects a vintage bulldozer; Floods near Auckland. Photo credits; Goldrush Robert Laming, all other photos by Anthea Brown

"Ladies and Gentlemen, the northern lights from London"

Passing over head Heathrow at 35,000 feet heading north to Leeds Bradford airport. Full up with passengers on a 737, no one else saw it except the Captain and his mate.

Sent by a Jet 2 pilot, friend of a friend of an FFA member. 26th February 2023.



FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION





FFA Clothing

Item	Logo	Sizes	Price
New Style Jackets		M, L, XL	£40.00
Lined Fleece Jackets		S,M	£30.00
Unlined Jacket (discontinued)	Old style	M	Half price £10.00
New Style Body Warmer		M, L, XL	£28.00
Unlined Fleece Waistcoat	Old style	S	Half price £8.00
Sweat Shirts		S, M, XL	£14.00
Sweat Shirt	Old style	S	Half price £7.00
Polo Shirts		S, L	£12.00
Polo Shirts	Old Style	M	Half price £6.00
Baseball Caps			£8.00
Ties			£15.00
Umbrellas			£29.00
Clocks (NEW)			£30.00
Pens (NEW)			£2.50

The above clothing is available from stock. If your size isn't listed, it can be ordered. Please note reduced prices on old stock with old logo. Prices do not include postage. For all orders contact Roz Stephens **07773 052001** or **chix@farmline.com**

The price of FFA New Style jackets has risen considerably and once the current stock has run out the new price will be £85.00 plus postage and packing.

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

NEW FFA name badges

£3.00 each plus £1.50 postage and packing.

To order please email: charliepapworth@gmail.com with the name you would like on your badge and the address if you require it to be posted.





Deadline for articles for the August newsletter is 30th June 2023

To help us to edit and produce the newsletter in a timely fashion ***please could the event organisers collect all write-ups including videos and pictures and provide all together*** within three weeks of the event taking place.

Please email newsletters@ffa.org.uk

NEW **Please note change in newsletter email address; newsletters@ffa.org.uk**

NEW **Event organisers will now revieve a newsletter check list as well as an event organisors guide when planning an event. This will just help editing the newsletter in knowing running order, expected write ups, photos etc.**

EVENTS – FFA MEMBER HELP NEEDED

- Please NOMINATE someone to write up the event AHEAD of the event
- Please provide in CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER the day/day's events
- Please let us know WHO is writing up which part
- Please take pictures with a HIGH RESOLUTION/PICTURE QUALITY
- Please send ALL pictures as SEPARATE files and not embedded in text
- Please indicate WHICH photos and text go together
- Please provide NAMES (Left to Right) & CAPTIONS for Photos
- Please take some PORTRAIT pictures that could be used as front cover images for future newsletters
- Please provide any video footage that could be used in the website.

Kirsten and I would both like to thank all FFA members who have contributed to writing up trips, sending in articles, pictures and other useful info for the newsletter. It is your content that enables us to fill each issue so please keep it coming!

For Sale

Boeing. Stearman 1944

A/F 1621 hrs • Eng 90 hrs Continental W670 220hp (Vintec) • N Reg • Never a Cropduster • £130,000 • Please contact Brendan Walsh on 01680 300377 or email brendan@glenforsa.com



For Sale

De Havilland Gypsy Major 1 Engine with Logbooks removed from an Auster Aircraft

Please contact Rob on 07880713159
Email: robertthetent@hotmail.com



SHARE FOR SALE

Stearman syndicate

Registration N1731B
Airframe 6135hrs
Engine 300hrs since TBO
Continental 225HP
Kemble, Gloucestershire (Oaksey Park, SN16 9SD)

I'm looking for one additional syndicate member 1/6th share at £18,500

Share available in this £100k plus aeroplane

Beatifully maintained and always hangered

Recent Annual.

For viewings contact Mike Woodhouse
Tel: 01666 575118/Mob: 07771 503710





For Sale

Hi my RV6 is for sale if anyone is interested, details are on AFORS, link below.

https://afors.com/aircraftView/57639/VANS-RV-6-for-sale-95k-ono-IFR-cleared-UK

Contact Brian Harvey 07977 579701



Bowser Wanted

Based up in the Highlands and am looking to purchase an Avgas bowser (Newhall Mains). I was wondering whether any FFA members have a second hand one they are looking to sell.

Please contact Euan Ramsay at ramsay.euan@googlemail.com

Profile: Robert Laming, Holbeach, Lincolnshire

By Rebecca Rayner



Robert Laming, stood in front of his Cessna172N G-FNLD

Hello Robert, we were first introduced to each other by Tony Fisher and we have been friends ever since. We saw each other at Fenland Airfield last year as well as at other FFA events. Robert's cheeky banter always keeps us all in high spirits!

Robert, tell us about your early days…
I was born in 1949 and lived at Snowdrop Farm (my grandparents' farm) in Holbeach St John's, Lincolnshire. I went to the primary school in the village and then I went to boarding school at Hunstanton St Michael's. I left St Michael's when I was 15 to work on the farm. At sixteen years old I went to Caythorpe Agricultural College in Sleaford for one year, gaining a National Certificate in Agriculture before returning to the farm.

What happened when you returned home to farm…
My father had died when I was 13 and when I finished at college I ran the farm with my mother. We were growing potatoes, sugar beet, wheat, barley, beans and oil seed rape which we continue to do today. My first tractor in 1960 was a Fordson Dexter which I now use for charitable road runs and shows.

Tell us about your family
I got married to Annette in 1972 and we had two sons, Frederick and Stuart. Unfortunately Annette died three years ago. Annette farmed at Sutton Bridge nearby and my son Frederick and I now farm both farms. Frederick and Melissa have three children: two girls, Millie and Florence and a boy, Arthur, the youngest, who is keen to be a farmer himself.

When did you start flying and getting your PPL…
My mother won a raffle prize for a trial flight at Fenland airfield, which she gave to me. I had my first flight in the cockpit and loved it straight away. I got my pilot's licence in 1986 and a year later I went on to do IMC and Night Rating. In 1996 I gained a helicopter pilot's licence.

How did you get to know about the Flying Farmers Association?
I was introduced to the Flying Farmers Association by Tony Fisher and joined in 2000 and I've enjoyed many memorable flights since then. My most recent Flying Farmers overseas trip was to the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland, which was very enjoyable. I've now completed 1,800 hours flying and I'm looking forward to many more.

Do you have any other interests other than flying?...
My other interests are shooting with my Labrador dog, Jess, travelling and dining out.