FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

April 2024 newsletter no. 145



CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

We are now in our 50th year since the Flying Farmers Association was formed. Coincidentally, on our 25th anniversary the subscription was raised from the original £5.00 to £25.00. Now on our 50th, the subscription rises to £50.00. Our Treasurer, Andrew Cragg was actually going to propose a more moderate increase at the AGM last September, but proposals from the floor and a unanimous vote set the sub at this new level.

This increase will allow us to keep up and hopefully improve further, the benefits of being a member of the FFA. One of the largest expenses is the newsletter which has faced ever increasing costs due to printing and postage. I'm sure you will all agree that Giles Abrey is doing a very professional job and has turned my amateurish publication into something to rival any periodical.

In recent years it has been our intention to make the AGM a meeting to which members shouldn't have to contribute, if they choose to attend. But recently the costs have weighed on the balance sheet, so we have had to make charges. Its things like this that will allow the committee to keep up the standards.

We have about 110 members taking part in the 50th Anniversary Tour of the U.K. Our Events Secretary, Neville Stops has spent 2 years on this project, coordinating it with the 12 regional organisers to form an event which until the closing date, members could literally select which parts they wished to attend, culminating with a dinner in Harrogate. Tony Poulsom, who in my opinion was the instigator of the FFA, will speak to us after dinner.

Back on the farm, we continue to experience weather records nearly every month. As farmers, we will adapt to the weather as we have done since we progressed from being hunter gatherers to farmers, growing crops and raising livestock. Some are taking advantage of the government schemes to grow stuff we can't eat, on land which is too risky to invest in an arable crop. In our case we have had to invest a considerable amount of money in misting systems to keep the chickens cool when the temperature rises above 30 degrees C. Others are changing their arable equipment to delay sowing because of black grass, but still be able to cope with impending wet drilling conditions in November / December.

As farmers, we will survive. What doesn't add up though is that our farmland is being lost to housing, HS2, roads, solar panels etc at an alarming rate, which is probably necessary to provide infrastructure for the ever expanding population - but this population needs to eat.

The most valuable commodity on earth is not oil - it is water to enable us to grow food and I guess this will ultimately limit population growth.

Paul Stephens

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Publisher & Editor: Giles Abrey; newsletters@ffa.org.uk
Art Editor & Production: Kirsten Lee; kirsten@leeillustrations.co.uk
Cover photograph Shakespeare's Globe Theatre 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
Alf Oliver	Committee Member	07860 165659
Giles Abrey	Newsletter Editor	07967 665470
Rebecca Rayner	Committee Member	01487 773282

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Joined Since August 2023

8812	S. Ward from Gainsborough, Lincs
8811	J. Alton from Ripon, North Yorkshire
8799	E. Wakefield from Stockbridge, Hampshire
8809	R. Woodall from Chessington, Surrey
8808	W. Mitchell from Ellon, Aberdeenshire
8806	P. Peal from Southrepps, Norfolk

Departing Members

8527	R.W. Walker from North Yorkshire	Lapsed
731	P. Kember from Sussex	Lapsed
377	D.R.L. Hawkins from Dorset	Lapsed
446	S.J.G. Mole from West Midlands	Lapsed
855	A. Mumford from Kent	Lapsed
8520	R. Lucey from Clackmannanshire	Lapsed
744	A.B. Moore from Northumberland	Lapsed

FFA Committee Meeting – Wednesday 27th March 2024

The FFA committee met at The Anchor, Bankside, London after the visit to The Shakespeare Globe on 27th March 2024.

All committee members were present including Alf Oliver at his first meeting after being elected at the last AGM. The usual process of approving the last Minutes and making sure all the action points had been carried out.

The Chairman thanked the newsletter editor, Giles Abrey, for continually improving the newsletter whilst still keeping the costs under control. He has now found a printer who he is happy to work with and I'm sure you will all agree that he is producing a quality publication.

The Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Andrew Cragg, presented the budgets for the next 12 months which show us going back into the black with the new, more realistic subscription charge which is starting this April, which was proposed and seconded by members at the last AGM. He pointed out the vagaries that can occur as he still won't be certain of how many members will pay their dues as last time the subscription was raised 25 years ago there was some fall out from it. Hopefully not too many will drop out due to this rise from £25 to £50, in order to cover costs, the largest of which is the newsletter.

One of his concerns is that there is a group of members who haven't signed up to the GoCardless direct debit means of paying the subscription. These members, unlike those on direct debit who don't have to do anything, will be sent a letter asking them to increase their standing orders to £50. But because these members don't seem to respond to correspondence, they might not carry out the increase and we will be left with a group still paying £25. It was agreed that if after receiving a letter asking them to react, if they don't then they will not receive any newsletters in the future. This may seem harsh, but rather than write them off as members, they will continue but they won't incur the cost of the newsletter.

Our Events Secretary, Neville Stops, ran through arrangements for the impending 50th Anniversary Tour starting at the end of May. It was agreed to have a WhatsApp group for each of the legs, which Alf Oliver agreed to set up. An anniversary tour guide will be sent to all pilots in early May and also forwarded as a PDF file. This is not only a programme of events but also a bit of a memento as the Chairman has included a collection of FFA photos from years past.

We are looking for a venue for the 2024 AGM at the end of September. Unless we can find another grand venue like the Belvoir Castle meeting 2 years ago, we might be looking at Sherburn in Yorkshire which has good facilities. Any suggestions welcome.

Moving on, we discussed the matters of representation. Andrew Cragg is our General Aviation Partnership (GAP) rep. This is where all the different aviation stakeholders meet with the CAA. Anthony Kedros continues to represent us at the General Aviation Awareness Council (GAAC) which is important to the FFA as they raise awareness and try to support airfields, particularly when they face development problems. We were also looking for a new representative to attend the General Aviation Safety Committee (GASCo). Gordon Bellerby and Alf Oliver both volunteered to consider representing us.

The matter of Pylons being pushed through on two routes has been raised by a few members whose strips will be impacted by this development. The GAAC are being helpful by taking this up and GASCo should also consider the safety aspects as the developers don't take seriously the impact they have on strip operators. Members rightly contact the committee but obviously we are powerless, but can pass on this feedback to those in higher places. We can also discuss matters like safeguarding strips as developers won't even consider an airstrip unless there is some record of the strip lodged with the local Councils - but then the Councils can be problematic themselves as some don't even know what a private strip is. In fact when they are approached, they immediately think that another Heathrow is being proposed.

In AOB, the matter of SkyDemon not being able to do the new GAR forms anymore was raised. Neville wondered if a meeting to do a First Aid training day would be feasible, and we could be looking for someone else to arrange Pop-in meetings in the future as David Keene has indicated that he might like to step down from the job after doing it for several years.

The meeting lasted 3 hours.

Paul Stephens

GASCo

The General Aviation Safety Council

Met Office

2024 GASCo/Met Office Weather Decision Making Seminar
A date for the 2024 event has been confirmed;
Thursday 26th September. Details to follow

GetMet
A new version of GetMet has been developed and will shortly be uploaded to the Met Office's Pilot Resource web page. As well as some editorial changes the new version updates several CAA contact details, and introduces a new section on GAMETs.

Pilot Resource page
The Pilot Resource web page has been updated more generally. The page is now ordered into the following 3 sections, to make it easier for pilots to find information of relevance:

- Understanding the weather
- Pre-flight briefing information
- Understanding aviation MET products

The Met Office continues to welcome suggestions for new information.

General Aviation Awareness Council

Briefly. We are looking for a new chairman to replace Charles Henry who will remain a director. The finances have improved with a fundraising campaign 'Save Our Airfields' and an improved website https://gaac.org.uk/save-our-airfields/. Otherwise, business as usual.

Anthony Kedros

GAP – General Aviation Partnership

Nothing reportable from the Feb meeting

GASCo Safety Evenings

Goodwood Aero Club TBA - Thursday 9th May 2024
Email: aeroclub@goodwood.com

Further details on GASCO website:
https://www.gasco.org.uk/events/safety-evenings

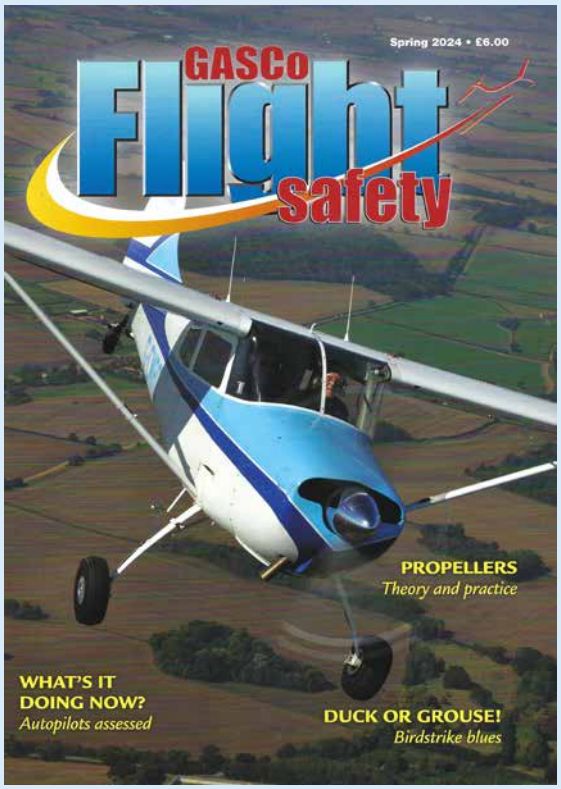
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https://www.gasco.org.uk/flight-safety-magazine/subscribe



2024 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 100	GBP470.00	GBP660.00	GBP780.00	GBP1,320.00
more than 100 up to 250	GBP530.00	GBP730.00	GBP840.00	GBP1,440.00
more than 250 up to 500	GBP595.00	GBP790.00	GBP900.00	GBP1,560.00
more than 500 up to 1,000	GBP790.00	GBP990.00	GBP1,080.00	GBP1,740.00
more than 1,000 up to 2,000	GBP925.00	GBP1,120.00	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 GBP235.00 for GBP500,000 any one occurrence, but limited to GBP75,000 any one aircraft.
Plus GBP470.00 for GBP1,000,000 any one occurrence, but limited to GBP75,000 any one aircraft.
Minimum premium in respect of mid term additions GBP175.00 in full, subject to AVN9A (applicable to the movements/limit banding).

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

Nb: members might already be covered under their farm Public Liability insurance. PLEASE CHECK!

IMPORTANT Membership Matters

1 Subscription increase April 2024

At the recent FFA AGM it was resolved to increase the subscription from £25 to £50 with effect from April 2024.

For those members who pay their subscription by GoCardless, no action is required since the FFA will take the new amount directly on the renewal date of 26th April.

Members who still pay their subscription by Standing order (SO), who wish to remain a member must either,

- Amend their SO with their bank using whichever process is usual for their bank, now often online. The FFA cannot do this for you.

Or

- Cancel their SO and sign up for Go Cardless direct debit in good time to collect the new sub in April 2024.

Go to https://pay.gocardless.com/AL00032MSHY9RB

Please remember that the renewal date is 25th April 2024

2. 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.

There have been many members who have unsubscribed from the email service since the last newsletter. Often no reason is given and a few have cited "spammy content". Where no reason is given, members have often unsubscribed by mistake. Rest assured that there is NEVER ANY SPAMMY CONTENT in out emails. Other than event information, we only send out relevant safety and regulatory messages. We try very hard to position the title to show members what is in the email so they can ignore them if they are not relevant to them. If you unsubscribe you will not get notification of an event opening on Eventbrite.

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.

* NEW COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING *

You might have noticed that your newsletter has arrived packaged in an eco friendly fully compostable bag rather than the traditional envelopes. These can be placed in your recycle waste bin or home compost.





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

Being offered the chance to ferry a Cherokee 180 out to Kenya with 2 weeks notice in 1975

The Danish Commercial Pilot hired to do the job suddenly became ill and cried off– all the visas/passes had been arranged.

I had 220 hours TT on my licence mainly on Cessna 150's and Cessna 172's and our Group owned a Rallye Club. I had done a few hours IMC training plus a Night rating. Most importantly my Boss an ex Fleet Air Arm Pilot gave me permission to go.

In the next 3 weeks I learnt more about flying than I dreamed was possible. See list of items I thought of/learnt during the trip.

- Familiarisation on the Cherokee 180 before going.
- Obtaining all the maps from The British Light Aviation Centre.
- I couldn't obtain a life raft so I half inflated a tractor inner tube and made a 'jewry net of baler twine' attached.
- Being half inflated meant that I could squeeze it into the rear of the cockpit.
- Some basic tools plus Axe/Gramox- one can as a 'piddle bottle'/
- Survival kit
- Besides Visas I bought some US Dollars – proved essential when clearing Customs etc
- Fuel filters/extra hand fuel pump to pump fuel from 44 gal drum positioned in the cockpit with the rear seats stowed!
- Flight by 'Dead reckoning' I lost my VOR over the Mediterranean Sea and had to rely on my NDB where feasible plus dead reckoning . Fortunately the winds over Egypt and the Sudan were very predictable !
- Engine oil----I carried surplus which paid off because almost impossible to obtain outside Europe.
- Extra stick on Sun Visor.
- Bought a Captains shirt with all the 'Braid' on it-------certainly helped speed things up at Airports.

John Milne

Learning to fly in South Africa

Having started my PPL in the UK, but training being inconsistent due to work and other commitments, a friend mentioned to me about going abroad and learning without all the distractions. My chosen destination was Cape Flying Services at George airport in South Africa. I already had six hours experience and hoped that the three weeks I had set aside would get me my PPL(A) licence.

Cape Flying Services, which are sadly no longer operating, were based at George airport, situated along the garden route, about four hours East of Cape Town. The flying was incredible, huge open spaces with the Outeniqua mountains to the north and the Indian ocean to the south, making navigation much easier for a newbie PPL student. That said, George airport was a busy place and regularly there would be three or four aircraft in the circuit , having to orbit while the bigger jets coming in from Cape Town would call long finals.

My training aircraft (ZS-JLF) was a well used PA28-140 which had spent many years in the circuit. I was greeted will a little pool of oil each morning when I went to pre-flight, a good sign that it was functioning as expected. It was a great aircraft to fly, although a little underpowered with two P.O.B's on some of the hot sunny days. There was no need for a headset as it came complete with built in radio with the mic on a long coil cord, much like CB radio. Incoming radio calls were hard to hear over the engine noise and I did have to raise my voice to make calls, but soon got used to it. Training progressed, and the local area soon became familiar.

Luckily I wasn't told exactly when my solo would be, so when Paul, my instructor got out of the aircraft, and said ok go for it, I didn't have time to question it, the door closed and it was down to me. It all seemed to happen very quickly and I was surprised at the performance of ZS-JLF, now I was on my own. I made it round and was very pleased to feel the wheels touching back on the runway for a full stop landing. As I taxied back to the clubhouse I was met by my instructor and a commercial student who was going to swap with me to go off and do some training. A few hours later I heard ZS-JLF in the circuit, the wind had picked up, which was all too common at George airport, due to the proximity to the coast, and regularly resulted in a strong cross wind. Unfortunately this was to be the last flight for ZS-JLF as the student pilot landed heavily on the nose wheel snapping it clean off. Luckily no one was hurt.

I now had no aircraft, so a few of us were upgraded to ZS-MZU a much newer, more powerful PA28-180. I could now use my new headset, no hand held mic ! I did a few circuits with my instructor to get familiar with the aircraft and then he stepped out, and I was on my own again, my second solo circuit. Once cleared for take off, I applied power and very quickly reached rotate speed, having used very little of the 2km runway. ZS-MZU climbed swiftly away and very soon after I was going through my post take off checks.

Comfortably set up downwind everything seemed very quiet and calm. Now was a good time to call the tower to let them know I was downwind. No reply. I tried again, no reply. I thought, maybe they are away from their desk, I am on a long downwind leg, I will leave it a minute then call again. Again, no reply. I was now approaching late downwind and beginning to get very anxious. One thing I remember my instructor Paul telling me was, NEVER land on the runway without permission. He had then gone onto explain how frequent the jets from Cape Town were, normally arriving on long finals with everyone in the circuit then having to orbit.

I quickly started to go through my checks and think what it could be. I remember how the human factors I had been learning about that week was now playing out. I was struggling to think straight and everything seemed to be happening so quickly. At the point of need-

ing to turn left base I sat back, tried to compose myself and decided the best plan was to continue down wind until I was well out of the circuit to give me some more time to try and work out what was going on. I had the sea to my left and the mountains to my right so I was relatively comfortable I wouldn't get lost.

I started fiddling with the fuses on the right hand side of the panel hoping that one had popped out or there was a loose connection. I tried the radio again but still no reply. After about five minutes I thought, I can't stay up here all day, I am going to have to land.

I turned and headed towards the airfield, keeping a constant lookout for aircraft in the circuit and any jets on finals. I had a slight headwind so seemed to take ages. I made it onto finals, the runway was clear. I cleared the threshold and touched down on runway 11, very relieved but not relishing the thought of explaining my surprise exit and entry of the circuit!

I maintained a swift taxi speed, as still unsure if there were other aircraft in the circuit. I went through my after landing checks, then suddenly my radio sprang to life. I could hear the controller and the other aircraft talking to each other. I was close to the mid section of the runway where I was to depart left. As I left the runway and mic'd in, I paused and then said in a calm, assertive voice, ZS-MZU vacated runway 11. As I mic'd out the radio went quiet for a short time, then the controller replied, "Roger, MZU, perhaps you could give us a call when back at base".

As I parked and shut down, I sat in the cockpit looking at the panel and it then dawned on me what had happened. Most of the switches were toggle switches. Two of them had a red rubber covers, one was for the fuel pump, the other was for the master switch. With my left hand on the yoke, the fuel pump switch was blocked from vision by my hand so I must have turned off the one I could see in my peripheral vision which happened to be the master switch! **I learnt** *Keep calm, remember your checks, and always look for the obvious first.*

After a debrief from the tower, training continued. Eventually I advanced onto solo cross country's, which were really enjoyable with the mountains, ocean and large open spaces. It was November, which was breeding time for the Southern right whales, which were easy to spot near the coastline in the shallower waters.

After one particular cross country I was heading back to George airport and noticed things starting to get hazy. With George airport located close to the coast, there was always the risk, without warning, of sea fog, which could quickly cover the airport and surrounding area. As I tracked along the coast, things deteriorated, and I ended up on top of a fog layer. I was within 10nm of the airport so called George on the radio to ask for their advice. The reply came back "MZU, if you don't know what you are doing, I suggest you get that aircraft back on the ground, now". Unsure whether there was an encrypted message in their reply that I had missed, I simply replied "Roger".

A few minutes later I plucked ups the courage to call the controller again to ask for advice. He then called me back and asked for my position. I knew roughly where I was so relayed it back. He told me to continue coastwise until the fog cleared. The weather to the East of the field was clear and I was then able to descend and approach to the airfield as normal. **I learnt,** *If an airfield is renowned for certain weather conditions, expect them and have a plan should they occur.*

The foggy days continued for a period, and I was rapidly running out of time with my return flight to England only 7 days away. I had a discussion with Paul my instructor, explained my situation, and asked if there were other options, as I couldn't see how I could complete in such a short time. We were never able to take advantage of the clear mornings as the commercial students had normally drained the aircraft of Avgas night flying, and fuel was not available at the airfield until 8.30am. He pondered on it, then said "Ok, early start tomorrow, I will pick you up at 5.30am".

This was a few hours before he normally collected me, and it was still dark when he arrived. Once at the field, he opened the boot of his car and pulled out a long reel of hose pipe. I looked at him and had a good idea what he was thinking. We pulled the five aircraft out of the hanger and proceeded to syphon all the remaining fuel into MZU from the other four aircraft. **I learnt** *If you need to syphon avgas, don't get it in your mouth, it burns!*

The rest of my course luckily was fairly event free. My flight test day came, 22nd November 2003, which was also the rugby world cup final day. With many nationalities learning to fly, including several from the southern hemisphere, there was a lot of competitive banter leading up to the day. Unfortunately the match was before my flight test so I was unable to enjoy the liquid celebrations like my rivals did. I did however get to see the match, and with England winning I was on a real high. It was now down to me to do my bit.

After a successful flight, and now officially having a PPL(A) licence, I headed into town to join in the celebrations. Later that evening, moving on to another bar, we approached a main road where I wandered out in front of an on coming bus. Someone shouted, and grabbed me as I stepped out in-front of it. Luckily this was my only near miss of my three week adventure, and when people ask me, isn't flying dangerous, I give them the honest reply that you are more likely to be run over by a bus!

Giles Abrey





I learned about flying from that: Welcome to Waddington!

Martin Gosling's Mildenhall escapade (December 2023 FFA Newsletter) reminded me of a "talk-down" I had into Waddington one grim winter evening in 2005.

I was on my way back to Strubby in the C150, aware that there could be some sea-fog creeping in. The light was fading. The visibility got worse and worse. I knew I was very close to the airfield but I couldn't make out very clearly the ground below me. Hoping that I would still be able to pick out our nice tarmac runway, I bumbled on, at about 500 ft.

Next thing, I saw some lights below me, just a blurred glow. It was a house, and it was close!

Full power, nose up and into the fog, a climbing 180 degree turn to head for Waddington, which I knew was open, and reasonably clear.

Every time I do my IMC rating renewal I go through the process of being blindfolded while the instructor throws the aircraft about for a bit then hands it back to me to sort out by reference to the instruments. It's supposed to disorientate you, and you have to believe in and react to your instruments or you will crash. Seat-of-the-pants no longer works!

I can claim never to have had the slightest difficulty with this. I had never been in a situation where, for example, I was at an angle of 30 degrees but thought I was straight and level.

So there I was, climbing away, in IMC. Rate of climb and speed seemed fine. I straightened up and levelled off, with a feeling of relief that I was now upright again. But suddenly I became aware that the DI was still merrily turning. Instrument failure was all I needed! It's slow but relentless turning was confusing. Disorientating, even. Huh? Suddenly from beyond the grave my instructor's voice broke in: "Believe your instruments!" Instead of fixating on the DI, I transferred by gaze to the turn-and-slip. It agreed with the DI. I glanced at the compass. Ring-a-ring o' roses: it was dancing and jiggling in a slow, wobbly circle. We were still turning!

I forced myself to make the necessary correction. It felt weird, not right at all. It did really feel now that we were turning. But the instruments were steady, at peace. I had fallen for it! I called Waddington who, very professionally, brought me in. I landed without incident.

Waddington is huge. I was "escorted", to a spot which seemed about a mile away from the buildings. People emerged, some armed, one with a dog, from the vehicles that now encircled me. Did I have ID? Actually yes, my passport. Not sure if they took everything out of the aeroplane or if I did. It was now dark. Torches flashed, I could just make out people's faces as they fired questions at me in an urgent, aggressive tone.

They clearly suspected I was a terrorist, and that was why I was taken so far away from the buildings. If it hadn't all been so surreal and scary it would have been funny: "What are you doing here?" "I got stuck in fog, you guys just saved my bacon, so thank you!" I said soothingly.

Then, wait for it, "Why do you have a Sarajevo stamp in your passport? And a jerry can in the back?" "Er, I flew to Sarajevo" "Why?" "I suppose to see if it was possible to do so…" "And is that why you came here? To see if you could?" "I paid Austrocontrol 30 dollars to obtain the clearance", I said indignantly, "I did it all properly!", I remembered spending an exhausting morning in a post office in a village near Zagreb, faxing all the documents to Austrocontrol, the agent.

I explained that the jerry can dated from a recent trip to some remote area, I can't remember where, but I took the can in case I needed to collect fuel from a garage. I remembered once having to cadge a dodgy plastic one off some French surfers in Morocco.

They clearly didn't believe a word of what I was saying, so I took a different tack: "Look, it's only little me", I weedled, "I live just down the road, your guys talk to me regularly over the radio." A very stiff-looking, uniformed (of course) man pressed his face up to mine: "Look, I have 6 months to go in this job before retirement, and YOU are not f***ing it up for me!!!"

I was then driven to the office, photographed and released, and returned the next day to collect the aeroplane. Perhaps it wasn't the wisest move to take an Italian friend with me, and risk giving them something else to worry about, but she did smile seductively at them, which seemed at least to sweeten our way through Security!

I laugh about it now, but I remain eternally grateful for their assistance!

Christina Belton



Why did I have a jerry can on board? Dodgy plastic container cadged from some French surfers in Essaouira, Morocco in 2002



Why did I have Sarajevo stamp in my passport? Sharing the apron with a Transall C-160 in Sarajevo in 2003

Operation Market Garden: What Might Have Been...



THE PLAN: Conceived way back in June 1993, to recreate an historic mission on the 50th Anniversary.

THE ARCHITECTS: Neville Stops, Tiger Moth Pilot and Nick Nicholls, Chairman of the Glider Pilot Regimental Association.

WANTED: A volunteer glider pilot who had participated in Operation Market Garden in September 1944.

Nick enquired of Peter Clarke of Abingdon if he would be interested in repeating the exercise on the 50th Anniversary. Peter was part of the original Market Garden operation back in 1944 as co-pilot of a Horsa Glider which was piloted by Peter Aalbers of Bennekom, Holland which landed in "zone Z" of the Arnhem landing zone. Peter accepted the invitation. The plan was to do it in a Kirby Kite owned by Edward Scott (at this time there were only three Kirby Kites airworthy in the UK). This Kirby Kite was one of the Types that the "Glider Pilots" trained on back in 1944, which spends part of its life suspended from the roof of the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop. So began, with support and encouragement of many at Lasham and the Upward Bound Trust at Haddenham, the long process of retraining, with that most remarkable activity known to the initiated as "thermaling".

The T21, used for ab initio training at Haddenham, was seen to be the ideal entry to the Kite, as Peter had not flown for the past 49 Years and so it proved to be. June 1994 saw Peter both satisfying his assessor and owner of the Kite at Middle Wallop and a few days later, staying up for 5 Hours 21 Minutes in glider K8 474 at Lasham. In August, thanks to block leave, 20 further flights were accomplished in the Kite at Middle Wallop, the first of which occupied a delightful if muscularly stimulating 2 Hours 45 minutes.

By Tuesday, 13th September, the Kite was re-assembled at Terlet, the Royal Netherlands Gliding Centre having been road transported from the UK. The Tiger Moth, lent by Johathan Elwes and flown by Neville Stops & Gaynor Luckett had arrived safely at Deelen, the base of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Deelen Air Base was founded in 1913 as a base for border patrol missions. When the Netherlands surrendered to Germany in World War 11, the Luftwaffe started using the field, significantly expanding and upgrading the base. The Focke-Wulf Fw 190, Messerschmitt Bf 110 and Junkers Ju 88 were operated from the airfield, and anti-aircraft guns were installed. A railway from the nearby town of Wolfheze was constructed, initially to facilitate the transport of building materials for a Luftwaffe command bunker and later to supply the base with munitions. It was the headquarters of Jajd Division from May 1942.

In 1944 the airfield was extensively bombed by Allied forces in preparation for the Battle of Arnhem, and flying activity from the base was suspended by the Germans. The base was reduced to an auxiliary airfield and turned into a depot for V-1 flying bombs. After the war, up until 1950, the Dutch military used Deelen as a storage facility. In 1950, the decision was made to restore Deelen back to an operational air base, and from 1957 to 1963 was the base for the Royal Netherlands Air Force Republic RF-84F Thunderflash photo reconnaissance aircraft.

Where the party was afforded generous hospitality. Mini cameras were reinstalled on the Tiger Moth and Kirby kite by the BBC, following earlier testing at Middle Wallop. The Tiger Moth arrived at Terlet around noon the next day but only just ahead of the rain which heralded a steady deterioration in the weather. The landing was due to take place at 16:00 hours on the 15th but by that morning, a 976 mb depression sat squarely over the Netherlands with mist and low cloud,winds forecast to be gusting 25-30knots by the afternoon. At least the decision to cancel the venture, which intended to include a K13, two T21's and two K21's, each with a WW11 glider pilot as passenger, was "Hobson's Choice"...but a bitter one all the same, especially for the Tiger/Kite contingent and other members such as Peter's wife and also their son David, who had come over from Boston Massachusetts to be with them for this unique occasion.

The Annual Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving in the Cemetery at Oosterbeck, placed events in their real context.

The operation in 1944, had involved almost 1400 glider pilots, 229 of whom, including Peter Aalbers, there was no return flight... they did not grow old, nor did the years condemn... for the Tiger/Kite contingent it was truly a case of WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

Peter Clarke & Neville Stops, September 1994

Programme 2024



As I am sure we are all aware it has been the wettest winter on record, to that end sadly all of our Pop-Ins have been cancelled. (There is an article in the News Letter) Please reply with your thoughts, A great deal of effort goes into these Pop-ins. If you sign up and are unable to attend please let the organiser know, so they can inform the Airfield & Cafe.

By the time this newsletter is published, we will have had our first visit to the Shakespeare Globe in London and the the 50th Anniversary Tour will be fast approaching. Booking is now closed for the tour events with the exception of the following list;

- Event 2 Paul & Roz's BBQ – no charge for this event, but a donation to the Air Ambulance
- Event 6 Shobdon lunch – this is an easy and attractive half day event which can readily be enjoyed as a one-off stand alone. Newer members may not be aware that Shobdon was the venue of the very first FFA fly in, in 1974. But it was also the home airfield (and estate too) of David Corbett, one of the founding members of the FFA back in 1974.
- Event 9 Andrew Cragg's Coffee break.
- The closing date for the remaining events (above) is the end of April, for more details and booking please visit the web site.

All events are on the web site and as soon as they open for bookings an email will be sent out. It is a good idea that you check your spam box, as some of our emails end up there. Please ensure you book before the closing date so that we are able to confirm transport and catering.

If any member has got any suggestions, or is willing to offer a venue for us to hold our 2024 AGM, please contact me by email: neville.stops@gmail.com

Happy & Safe flying in 2024
Neville Stops

Events 2024

- 25th April – **The Isle of Sheppey – Fully booked**
- 8th May – **Lasham Gliders** – Lasham
- 24 May–7the June – **FFA's 2024 Study Tour, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Association (x3 events still open).**
- 26th June – **Fairline Boats** – Ipswich
- 3rd July – **Denjie** – Southminster, Essex
- Late July/August – **Bright Seeds** - Salisbury
- Postponed to 2025 – **RAF Valley** – Holyhead
- Postponed to 19th-20th June 2025 – **Miserden Estate** – Stroud

* **Please note that some of these dates may change but will be updated on the website.**

Pop-Ins 2024. For all Pop-ins (unless otherwise announced) the intention is to meet at 12.00pm for lunch.

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.

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 hotel rooms numbers need confirming.

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

FFA 50th Anniversary Tour



3. Cumbernauld
- Glasgow Museum of Transport
- Burrell Collection

4. Perth
- Blair Athol Hydro Electric
- Lunch at Bruar Falls (Harrods of the North)
- Blair Castle

5. Stafford County Show
- Members Guest Tickets so that we can have access to the Members Pavilion and Grandstand

12. Harrogate
- Taylor's Tea & Coffee factory

6. Shobden Airfield
- Lunch
- Talk on Shobden and surrounding area over the last 50 years
- Fly to Bodmin

Open to book, closing 30th April 2024

11. Harrogate
- ★Grand Dinner★

2. Paul and Roz, North Yorks
BBQ

Open to book, closing 30th April 2024

1. RAF Waddington – SOLD OUT
- Red Arrows
- Air Battlespace Training Centre
- Vulcan restoration project

7. Bodmin, Cornwall
- Isle of Scilly
- Eden Project
- Treasure Hunt – (Bodmin to Isle of Wight)

8. Isle of Wight
- Treasure Hunt – (Bodmin to Isle of Wight)
- Osborne House visit
- Boat Tour of War Ships

9. Andrew Cragg, Kent
- WW2 Advanced Landing Ground memorial and History windows

Open to book, closing 30th April 2024

10. Martin Gosling/Charles Course, Stones Farm, Essex
- Hawker Restorations
- Lazer shooting
- Hedingham Castle
- Bulmer Brick and Tile
- Maldons Brewery

Pop-Ins, winter 2023/4

After several successful years, the Pop-In events this winter have been badly affected by the terrible weather that has left all our farms, if not actually under water, completely water-logged for extended periods of time.

We had a reasonable attendance at our meeting in December at Turweston, but I decided to cancel both our meetings in January at Tollerton and February at Wellsbourne due to high forecast winds with heavy rain. I was hoping for better weather in March for our last event of the winter at White Waltham but, again the weather on the day was accurately forecast with very active thunderstorms all over southern Britain.

I am very keen to hear if members have views on how we plan for Pop-In events next winter. I feel that the preferred venue will be reasonably centrally located, with a hard runway and good café that is willing to be very flexible with expected numbers, and that does not require pre-ordering of our meals. This does limit the number of possible venues, but please do let me know if I am missing some good airfields.

Some members have suggested that booking through Eventbrite does compromise the flexibility required when dealing with changeable weather through the winter months. However, as I have mentioned before, if members do book through Eventbrite, it is made very much easier to communicate both with the airfields that we are visiting with aircraft and pilots' details and also with participants with last minute information.

Please do contact either myself, david@davidkeene.co.uk, or Neville Stops, neville.stops@gmail.com with your thoughts.

David Keene.

Deadline for articles for the August newsletter is 30th June 2024

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

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

Event organisers will now receive a newsletter check list as well as an event organisers 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!

Turweston Pop-In, Friday 8th December

For a number of years, we have been very fortunate with surprisingly flyable weather for most of our winter Pop-In events. Very few of the planned events have been cancelled. However, this certainly has not been the case through the autumn of 2023 with our Pop-In evens at Pent Farm and Tollerton both cancelled due to a very poor weather forecast for both events and poor ground conditions at Pent Farm. The weather forecast for our Turweston event was not good but rather miraculously the weather on the day turned out to be excellent with clear skies and a moderate wind. However, with most of our strips, including my own, unusable due to waterlogging, only 3 members managed to fly in, while others arrived by car.

We all enjoyed meeting together, having an excellent lunch while comparing notes on the state of our airstrips, state of our farms and the lack of flying opportunities in the previous 3 months. The facilities at Turweston are now excellent and it was good to be able to support this thriving airfield and its owner, David Owen.

David Keene.



Names left to Right; David Keene, Merv White, Robert Laming, Anthea Brown, Tony Fisher, Andrew Collett, Peter Gale, Richard Butler, Mrs. Jeannette Collett

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, London, 27th March 2024



We met on a sunny and breezy morning at the Globe Theatre on the southbank of the River Thames just next to the Millennium Bridge. We first looked round the exhibition and museum which gave us some colourful background to Shakespeare's time in London at the turn of the 17th Century. London being an important international port and trading centre with travellers from the Americas; Africa; the Mediterranean and northern Europe. The exhibits included a beautiful little diorama of a Frost Fair held in London in the early 1600s during the 'Little Ice Age' when the Thames froze over.

Many quotes from Shakespeare's plays filled the walls:
"That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet" **Act 2, Scene 2 from Shakespeare's, Romeo and Juliet**

"If Music be the Food of Love, Play on"
Act 1, Scene 1, Shakespeare's Twelfth Night

Plus many other romantic poems penned at that time:

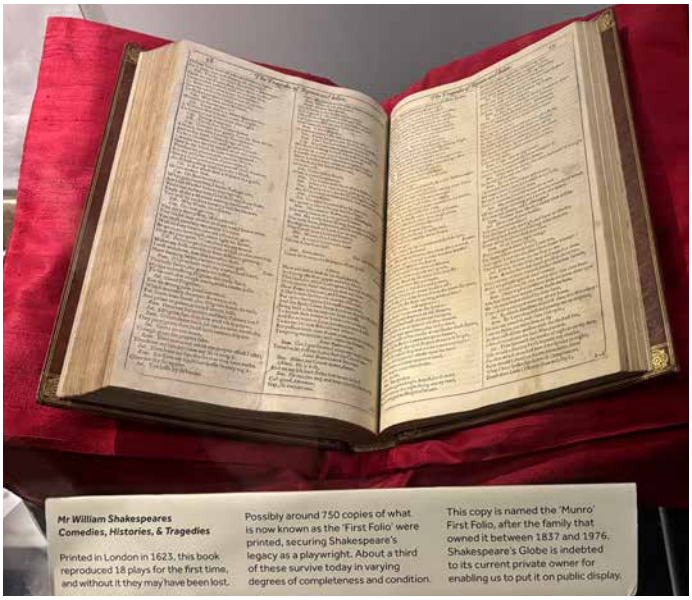
"Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove,
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields
Woods, or steepy mountain yields "
from Christopher Marlowe, The Passionate Shepherd to His Love. 1599 (Reputed to have influenced the Rolling Stones "Live with Me" 1969).

And some writings of the time:

"On September 21st after lunch, about two o'clock,
I and my party crossed the water,
and there in the house with the thatched roof
witnessed an excellent performance of
the tragedy of the first emperor Julius Caesar"
Thomas Platter 1599







Some Flying Farmers took advantage of the dressing up box with costumes used in performances.

After the exhibition we moved on to the official guided tour itself in the outdoor theatre with Clive, our very knowledgeable Guide.

We learned that the Theatre had several rebirths following its initial beginnings as a company owned by the actors themselves, putting on plays in large houses or touring the country as strolling players producing miracle plays.

In 1576 The Theatre was located in Shoreditch (then outside the City Walls) and built by James Burbage and John Brayne who also performed in the plays as the Lord Chamberlain's Men. William Shakespeare wrote the plays and part-owned the company. After the loss of donations in 1597, with the lease no longer available, the theatre was dismantled and moved by barge to the present location.

In 1613, during a performance of Henry VIII the theatre was burned down, reputedly after a cannon was misfired from the special effects room in the attic.

In 1614 the Globe was rebuilt. The seats were on three levels (as they are today). In Shakespeare's day, the cheapest seats cost 1 penny in the open yard; rising to 6 pennies for a box for gentlemen; up to 1 shilling for the most expensive seats at the highest level reserved for Lords (All sorts of bad behaviour and high jinks took place in the top gallery if the play got a bit boring)

The theatre was very popular and Queen Elizabeth I was reputed to have attended although the risk of fire may have discouraged her.







Clive explained some tricks such as how stabbings were made to look authentic with lots of blood flowing, using a pig's bladder full of blood under the costume.

In 1642, the Puritans closed all theatres including the Globe. They thought the plays encouraged criminal behaviour and the Globe was demolished in 1644.

The modern Globe Theatre, opened in 1997, is a realistic reconstruction of the original. It has a partially thatched roof but is completely uncovered in the central yard which has standing tickets. Along with a full programme of productions, a production of Romeo and Juliet is due in April and rehearsals were in progress. The stage being decorated with graffiti for a modern interpretation. Many other events are on offer, such as short courses for young people who are aspiring actors instructed by Globe actors.

A wonderful tour with many fascinating historical details which fully immersed us in the atmosphere of Shakespeare's London.

We finished the visit with an excellent buffet lunch at the Anchor Inn, a short step along the river. The Anchor is an ancient Inn which is the sole survivor of the riverside inns that existed in Shakespeare's time. So a very fitting round off for our visit.

Anthea Brown

Please *note, Sam Wanamaker's Playhouse which opened in 2014 on the same site, is an indoor, primarily candlelit venue.*

Sam Wanamaker, an American actor, was the leading figure in the Globe's reconstruction.



African Exploration – by Mike Ashmole



Above main picture: Approaching Xugana strip

Early in 2006 David, a fellow member of the Scottish Aero Club, suggested that Jean and I join with him, renting an aeroplane in South Africa for a trip to Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana. The ideal time from a climatic point of view would be March, so we agreed to position ourselves in Africa late in February 2007.

By November 2006 a C182 had been booked for two weeks, charts and guides purchased and lines drawn.

David holds a South African licence and was to act as P1 on the trip. Unfortunately David had to return to the UK unexpectedly and was not able to complete the required check ride, and would not be back in South Africa with time to spare before our scheduled departure. Jean and I had arrived in South Africa five days before to do some motor touring, therefore it was suggested that if we wanted to keep to our programme, I should have the check flight and validate my UK licence.

I was promised that for a man of my experience this would be a formality, and while I got started in the written exam (my first shock) they would arrange for an instructor to be on hand. I should add, this discussion was with the owner of the flight school who also made his C182 available for me to hire, and the discussion had all been sweetness and light. He departed the scene, and I was left to the mercy of younger hours-building instructors, who to say the least were disinterested. I requested the relevant reference books for the written exam and was told this is not allowed, so I sat down to a five page James Allan type quiz with multiple choice – I managed to scrape a pass.

By mid-afternoon they had arranged a check pilot, no time for a briefing 'Let's get flying' he said. Recognizing my mature years, he added, 'It's too late to change your style, just fly as you would at home.' The outside air temperature was 35°C, and the 1967 aircraft was standing outside without shades, it was like getting into a sauna. As I reached for the check list I was told to forget it, and do it like this: he waved his arm about starting with the clock, which I never felt important in old aircraft. So much for teaching an old dog new tricks. We got fired up and then discovered the aeroplane did not have intercom and I had the only PTT switch, something my check pilot was unaware of – in fact he had never seen the aircraft before (second shock).

We proceeded with him yelling instructions and waving his arms about. The thermal activity was the worst I've ever experienced, yet we continued to do steep turns, stalls and incipient spins.

He asked whether I had a chart, which I produced and he pointed to an airfield which I guess was 30 miles away and said 'Take me there.' Fortunately I was able to establish our present position due to a large reservoir and a railway line running towards our destination. Much to my relief the airfield eventually appeared on the nose. 'Do an arrival and land.' The airfield was unmanned, I asked if he knew what height the airfield was, he said 4500 feet. As we turned on to final approach, at 5000 feet it was clear

we were too high and no amount of slid slip would get me onto the runway; it then dawned on me that he had given me the circuit height, so around again for a touch and go, with a nice firm arrival. He felt we rounded out too high, when I tried to smooth it out on the next attempt he felt I used too much of the runway. My view was that on a runway of 1400 metres I could have got landed and airborne again.

By this time he had to collect his kids from school so we made our way back to Lanseria. I suggested that he demonstrate the landing, to give me an idea what he was looking for. He then made an absolute balls of it, touching down with considerable sideways movement. He apologised and blamed the wind shear caused by the adjacent hangar.

The debriefing was slightly longer than the briefing, everything was alright except my landings. He would show me how to land at short fields the next day. Never once did he ask me what I flew or whether I had any short field experience. We agreed to meet next day at 09.00. On the way back to the hotel I had a message on the mobile that he would not be available the next day but that they would arrange another check pilot for the following afternoon. I was now getting rather fed up with Lanseria, and said this was not acceptable, so they managed to locate another C182 type-rated pilot, who was prepared to tum up at 07.00 the next day.

Exactly as before, no briefing, first time he had seen the aircraft; he said all he wanted was to see that I was safe, again it was a lot of shouting and hand signals. But as I landed after the first circuit he announced he was happy to sign my validation form. Straight back to the flight centre, where I was told that all I had to do on Monday (this was Saturday) was drive to Pretoria to the CA office, present my credit card and I would have a South African licence.

I was back in our hotel by 09.00 and Jean and I were able to enjoy a weekend in the Drakensberg Mountains.

David had arrived back from the UK and we met up on Sunday evening, when I reported the proceedings and that we had to drive to Pretoria to get the validation. As David had been through the procedure before he knew the office had moved some two years previously and now was in Midrand (third shock). Bright and early we presented ourselves at the CAA's office, being first in the queue, with log book, medical, exam results, validation certificate and £25 all to hand. After photocopying the last 25 pages of the log book and everything else, I was told to wait. After about 30 minutes the guy returned to ask where the eight page report on my validation flight was. Needless to say I had not got a clue, no eight-page report - no licence (fourth shock). Back to Lanseria, who claimed that the procedures had changed recently and they were not aware of this requirement. OK, just fill the form in and I will go back to Midrand… but the form had to be signed off by the pilot who had conducted the test, and neither of them were available. We were due to depart next day, so the only option was to undertake the test again (fifth shock). Yet another check pilot was arranged, for the afternoon, when the thermals were most active of course.

Getting to know the form I insisted on a full briefing. What was required was tantamount to a full blown general flight test with a navigation exercise without nav aids (sixth shock), visiting three airfields.

More by luck than judgment I found the three destinations and made three perfect landings. We arrived back and the forms were signed with just 35 minutes before the CAA closed at 4.00 o'clock. David driving and breaking all the speed limits, we arrived at the CAA at 4.05, just as the lady supervisor who had heard me pleading my case in the morning was coming out of the building. She turned around and instructed some minion who had not been as quick leaving his desk to organize the licence, and by 4.45 pm I was walking out of the office with my South African licence complete with photo scanned from my bus pass.

We were now ready to depart on schedule, except as we had shut down the aircraft the mixture cable had come away in my hand. The only way we could stop the engine was by switching off the fuel. Lanseria promised to fix this by the following midday, which would still mean we would have time to get to our first planned destination.

There is one more incident to add to this sorry saga. On returning to Lanseria from the aborted CAA visit, all the parking spaces were full and we had no option other than to double park. On returning to the car to retrieve some paperwork in less than three minutes, I was confronted by an irate individual who proceeded to give me verbal abuse for at least five minutes, the like of which I had not experienced since I took leave of my flight sergeant some fifty years ago. I eventually found this amusing, which only made matters worse, and he was very close to violence. It was only after he had departed with much door-slamming that I read above the parking slot, 'Chief Instructor Helicopter'; maybe he did not realize I was about to pass several thousand rand to his organization, or perhaps he did not link the customer with his future employment security.

At last we had a certificated pilot and a serviceable C182, built 1967 and looking every minute of its age. But the logs confirmed the cylinders had been renewed 100 hours previously, so the donkey should be okay. We were ready to set out from Lanseria, South Africa.

Our month of meticulous planning scheduled us to fly to the coast of Mozambique, then through Malawi on to Zambia to Victoria Falls, then back through Botswana. We had employed a local agent to negotiate the necessary clearances and secure fuel. Contrary to the service that had been provided to date by the aircraft hire, which had been abysmal, this agent was excellent, and proved at the end of the day a real life saver, as just as we were due to depart we received a text message to say that our second port of call, Vilancoulos in Mozambique, had just declared a state of emergency due to a major typhoon, this made us



Above:
Dry Limpopo River

adjust our plan, and the easy thing to do was reverse it, with the hope that the horrendous weather affecting the east coast of Africa would have abated by the time we arrived.

We modified the route so that we could take in the three major rivers of southern Africa: the Limpopo, Okavango and Zambezi. Within the hour our agents had rejigged the clearances and we had two hours to get to our first destination in Botswana.

Lanserra airport, our base station is an extremely busy airport, even by European standards, with parallel runways and a lot of big B12 jet traffic. To get from our parking lot to customs and immigration required three frequency changes, tower, ground, apron. A departure that we thought would then be a formality having already filed our flight plan, gave us our first taste of the bureaucracy to which we would become accustomed. All this meant our precious two hours was being eroded but we eventually set off knowing that we were going to be 45 minutes late for customs, and would only have ten minutes of daylight left by the time we arrived.

I had taken the Skyforce III out of the Maule and purchased an up-to-date Atlantic International card, and we were able to dial in our destination and take a direct track to Limpopo in Botswana. The strip, as the name suggests, is adjacent to the mighty Limpopo, and I was confident that should, the GPS fail us the river would not. In the event I never saw the river! Jean and David confirmed after landing that they had seen a very wide dry ditch.

Customs had waited for us, together with a safari type Land Cruiser from the hotel/lodge, and by the time we had the luggage unloaded the black African night had engulfed us. We completed the paperwork by the light of a paraffin lamp.

Our guidebook had suggested that we should be prepared for an element of corruption on the trip, and when the customs officer said that there would be a penalty charge for the delayed arrival, I thought, 'Here we go.' The charge turned out to be 10 rand (70p). We were so pleased to be on our way, we would happily have paid fifty times that.

We then had a 30 minute drive to our lodge along dirt roads that obviously become impassable when the river is in flood. We had not been going five minutes before a large male giraffe appeared in our headlights. This really confirmed that our African adventure was truly under way.

God bless the American tourist, although we did not meet any on this trip; it was obvious they had set the standards of accommodation when perhaps the dollar was worth a little more. We could not fault it, it was four-star all the way. We dined out under the real stars with a group of would-be wildlife rangers, mainly young female white graduates who were about to save Africa. After dinner the lecturer in charge invited us to view the stars. We climbed a rocky outcrop of about 150 m. At the top were wooden benches, where we lay and had an extremely interesting introduction to the African night sky, accompanied by the usual wildlife chorus. It was clear this was our guide's forte, and he had probably bored the pants off the other guests, but for us it rounded off a very full and successful day.

At the planning stage we had agreed that we should complete our flying as early in the day as possible so as to avoid the thermal and thunderstorm activity, and be more relaxed at our destination. This plan immediately got blown out of the water when daylight arrived and we were able to see what an idyllic location we had arrived in: manicured lawns, tree blossoms of every hue, antelopes grazing, and a large swimming pool just for the three of us. We quickly convinced ourselves that it would be just as comfortable travelling in the evening. And so we enjoyed a relaxing day, and an opportunity to see the dry Limpopo at closer quarters. The trip back to the airport confirmed how rough the tracks were, as we wove our way through herds of kudu and zebra, and how easily you could become lost in this terrain.

For our departure they pulled the fire engine out of the garage, and manned the radio, even the tea lady turned up. I'm sure ours was the only movement of the week. Our next destination was Francistown, a one hour leg. Our route followed the Zimbabwe border; Mugabe's air force long gone, we did not worry too much about infringements. Soon we realized that our disadvantage of travelling later in the day was that the services, i.e. fuel, had closed down by the time of our arrival. We had some difficulty securing accommodation, and had to put up with our fifth choice, which was okay apart from the food, which turned out inedible to European palates. This was the one and only time we were conned: a generally friendly guy at the airport had suggested the regular taxi driver would rip us off, and his brother would take us to the hotel a lot cheaper. For the return journey the regular taxi charged us £3 less.

Our next leg was to Maun, still in Botswana, and regarded as the Cessna capital of Africa on account of the large number of light aircraft based there servicing the safari business. Due to the poor road infrastructure, together with the long distances involved, tourists are flown to the various safari lodges by a





mixture of C182s, C206s, Caravans and a brand new Australian Skyvan. This two hour leg took us over the eastern edge of the Kalahari Desert and across the massive Makgadikgadi salt pan. We flew for 40 miles over nothing but salt as far as the eye could see. Eventually the salt/desert conditions gave way to savannah type vegetation, as we neared the Okavango Delta. Sure enough, when we arrived at Maun, it was difficult finding a parking spot. But as we were in a C182, the airport staff must have thought we were just another safari trip and collected our luggage and delivered us to the terminal in a golf cart, a la George Bush.

The terminal was full of would be lion hunters, all in their safari suits and big hats, and dripping with cameras. I could not help wondering how enthusiastic they might be after a couple of hours bumping about in the thermals in a light aircraft.

Over the road from the airfield was an aviation bar with some of the best aviation memorabilia and photos I've ever seen. David went off to secure some accommodation. The temperature was 35°C and the beer slipped down a treat, no more flying today.

Africa is full of surprises, as when David came back he reported that the lady who had arranged the accommodation came from our home county of Derbyshire and had announced in a very familiar dialect that "because of the dry conditions all the wild animals had buggered off hence accommodation was available and we would be collected in a short while".

Instead of owning a colour telly in Maun, the status symbol is to own a donkey and as we progressed to our camp first on tarmac and then dirt roads, we must have passed at least 500 donkeys. Our hotel camp had just been built and was luxurious, a large wooden main block with open air dining, and individual tents (log cabins with canvas sides) with all mod cons, indoor and outdoor showers etc. We arrived for afternoon tea, which would not have been out of place at Gleneagles.

There was only one other guest, a young geologist from Australia who was on a break from prospecting in Namibia. Once again the environs were teeming with wildlife. After dinner the young geologist went off with a flashlight to view the hippos, but he was back in about 30 seconds looking ashen faced. We were told that hippos are responsible for more human fatalities than any other wild animal in Africa.

Next day we departed as early as the system would allow for a 70 minute flight to Shakawe at the northern end of the Okavango Delta. As we flew north the effect of the rain that had fallen in the Angolan mountains the previous November was greening the Delta and the vegetation became denser. Having located our prebooked accommodation from the air, we circled, and by the time we had landed at the delighted unnamed airport, our transport was waiting.

We stayed the night at Shakawe and soaked up the bird life; the swimming pool had been taken over by a two-metre crocodile, so we were not enthusiastic about swimming. The lodge was right beside the River Okavango, and as soon as it was dark the hippos invaded the lawn. It was difficult to sleep with the bad-tempered grunting of the enormous animals.

A memorable part of our stay at Shakawe was a visit to a crocodile farm. They had delayed feeding until our visit, it was truly gruesome, as a wheel-barrow

Above left: Hippos on the Okavango

Above right: Crocodile farm visited during our stay at Shakawe

Below: Elephants near the border of Zambia





Above:
Spray rising from Victoria Falls, taken 20 miles from the falls.

full of dead chickens was devoured in one gulp. The owner, a huge South African, said the crocs preferred live food, but the villagers wanted too much money for their donkeys. I cannot think what the little old ladies who leave their fortunes to donkey retirement homes in Dorset would think.

Our next destination was Kasane on the border of Zambia, a two hour leg over featureless savannah. It was on this leg that we thought we would see wildlife from the air but it was not until our final approval that at last we saw elephants and giraffe. Kasane Airport, still being in the safari tourist area, had all the facilities and transport was waiting to take us to our camp. By now we had cracked the foibles of the C182 and she purred along at 130 knots, burning less fuel per hour than the Maule.

We took a boat trip up the Zambezi through Chobe National Park, which boasts a hundred thousand elephants. The temperature was soaring and the elephants were cooling themselves in the river. We passed family after family of elephants and hippos, baboons, kudu, gazelle and giraffe it was akin to travelling through a vast zoo.

The following day as we climbed out of Kasane for Livingstone in Zambia, spray rising from Victoria Falls was clearly visible some 40 miles away. This was the shortest leg of the trip, just 20 minutes. Livingstone, like everything else in Zambia, had seen better days but we were able to hire a car and find ourselves very acceptable accommodation. The Falls were breath taking, we were fortunate to witness the highest water for 30 years. Even the locals were visiting.

On return to our accommodation we made a stop at the Royal Livingstone Hotel for afternoon tea – $20 a head but the height of luxury. It's hard to imagine what the staff must think of all this excess, when they go home to their mud huts.

The next day was decision day: Do we continue flying east towards Mozambique or go to Namibia?

Livingstone airport had a Met office: three guys sat in an oversized wardrobe with a computer between them. By the time we three had climbed into the wardrobe with them it was pretty congested to say the least. We posed the simple question, where was the best weather, east or west? After an hour we were no further forward but we did have a print-out of the Livingstone weather which was rather obvious by looking out of the wardrobe. Eventually the three Met guys were unanimous that if we travelled west we would have good weather, so once again our trip was re-jigged, and we flight planned for Katima Mulilo in Namibia, a one-hour leg.

On start-up we asked for permission to fly over the Falls, which was granted at not below 6000 feet. The Falls are at 3000, the microlights fly at 4000, the helicopters at 5000 and fixed wing at 6000. Unfortunately, I made a cardinal error in admitting that if we climbed through 4500 feet we would be in cloud. With this, permission was withdrawn despite no other traffic in the vicinity and we had to content ourselves with a three-mile view.

We planned to fly along the Zambezi, but after about ten miles the highest water for 30 years was evident and the river widened out to cover a distance of ten or more miles. With massive flooding, simultaneously we ran into the worst weather of the trip, low stratus and torrential rain. So much for the Livingstone weathermen. The Skyforce clicked off the miles to our destination, and with David calling 'right a bit, left a bit,' this marvelous piece of kit put us over the Katima's 2300 metre runway. Would we have departed Livingstone if we'd had an accurate forecast? NO.

A team of at least ten greeted us, and two ladies refuelled the 182, carefully holding umbrellas over our fuel tanks. There was masses of paperwork but it was all filled in with the best of humour and minimum cost. There was only one other aircraft on the field, a corporate C240 with two professional pilots awaiting their passengers. They invited us to use their hangar for the night, which was a real blessing as the 182 had become extremely leaky.

It was rather ironic that we then experienced 24 hours of torrential rain in what is the driest country in Africa, south of the Sahara. We were fortunate to secure accommodation, as later in the day other lodges got swamped by the flood, and rooms became very precious.

We spent the day poring over our charts to select the next destination. We would have preferred to continue south through Namibia but the nearest fuel

was just on the limits of the C182 endurances, so we decided to route back to Maun in Botswana.

Next day the weather was still not ideal, but with a promise of CAVOK at Maun, and a brighter sky to the south, we set off for Maun. On this one and a half hour leg we were able to spot the odd elephant, which made the featureless savannah a bit more interesting. After 30 minutes we were in CAVOK. Our choice of Maun turned out to be extremely fortuitous, as just as we taxied off the runway the tyre that had large areas of canvas showing before our departure from Lanseria finally gave out, and we finished just 50 metres from the active runway.

In no time we had a delegation around the plane offering advice, including the Botswana CAA engineering/inspection man, I think the thought of him having to write a report on the incident was enough incentive to pass the problem to the resident maintenance organization, and he quickly disappeared from the scene. The maintenance guy arrived within five minutes with a team of boys and a spare wheel. They lifted the wing, whipped off the wheel and replaced it, and we taxied over to their hangar. I'm sure the incident could not have been handled any quicker in Perth. In fact, inside two hours they had replaced the tyre and tube and we were ready to go, all for £40. We were extremely lucky this happened at Maun as it was the only airport on our trip that had maintenance.

As we had journeyed we had noticed several safari camps with their own dirt/sand strips, and we quite liked the idea of getting further into the wilderness. We settled for Xugana which can only be accessed by air. This was the first time the Skyforce did not have our destination in its database, but we dialled in the given coordinates and set forth. The guidebook included a picture of the airport and sure enough when the Skyforce said we had arrived everything matched up. We landed on smooth river sand. Once again our transport was waiting, we were a little chastened to hear that the supply plane that had landed an hour previously had had to circle for some time because elephants were on the runway – this eventuality had not been mentioned in the guidebook.

We then enjoyed two days of absolute luxury, with two guides allocated to the three of us, and a boat and Land Cruiser at our disposal. It all became rather hard work with early morning tea at 5.00 a.m., a safari by boat until brunch at 11.00 a.m., a small siesta until 2.00 p.m. then boat or Land Cruiser until sundowners, taken from two enormous cool boxes from the boat or truck. Then back to camp at dusk, passing in touching distances of elephants etc., more cocktails, and then formal dinner. During our stay at Xugana we identified 85 species of bird, including two on the twitchers' most wanted list.

It was now time to head back with yet another landing at Maun for fuel, then a flight over the Kalahari Desert to Gaborone, a leg of two and a half hours. Two hours of the journey were completely void of human habitation. We had hoped to see the zebra migration, as someone in the camp had seen this in the last two days, but we were unlucky. Large airports make such an impact in this landscape that we could see Gaborone from 40 miles out. Gaborone is a modem airport with a 3000 metre runway, a modern terminal, fuel, but no traffic. We filed our last flight plan back into South Africa and Lanseria. Gaborone is 3000 feet above mean sea level, but we had to climb to 7000 feet to clear the mountains on the border. The thermals were pretty active, and we were pleased to see Lanseria.

We pulled onto the immigration apron expecting a wave through, it was Saturday afternoon, no such luck… we had to unload bags, take them into the terminal and pass them through an X-ray machine, with none of the numerous staff taking a blind bit of notice. The fact that we left three bags and all the electrical equipment in the plane did not seem to matter.

Our last brush with Lanseria Flight Centre: a young instructor who had been detailed to fill the plane with fuel came back to say that he was not touching it, as when he inspected the fuel tanks he was sure they had been filled with non-aviation fuel and if he started the engine and it blew up he would get the sack and lose his license. I asked what the problem was, and he said it did not smell right. Showing him the BP receipt, coupled with the fact that we had just completed four and a half hours' worth of flying over the desert, did not convince him. Maybe the fact it was 16.50pm on Saturday evening had more to do with his reluctance.

We finally convinced the lady cashier that all was in order. We settled our bills and departed Lanseria Airport with no regrets.

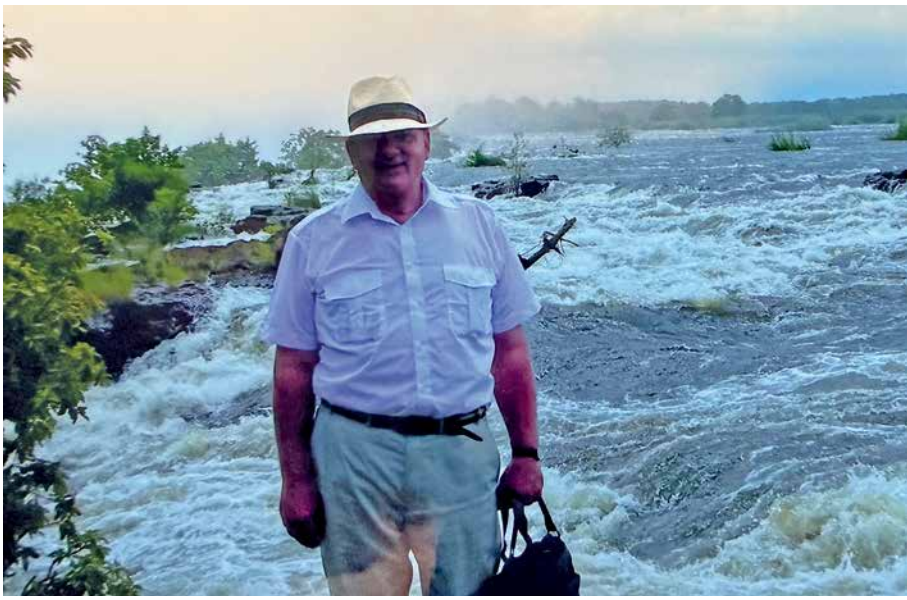
It occurred to me later that the unusual smell the young instructor had picked up could have been the emergency ration David had prepared some ten days previously, which included smoked salmon, which with temperatures of 35°C had putrefied.

Apart from our difficulties with Lanseria Airport we had a great trip. The problems we anticipated travelling in Botswana, Namibia and Zambia never materialized, landing fees were negligible, fuel was 40p per litre, and there was always a friendly smile.

For a once-in-a-life time flying trip, highly recommended.

Mike Ashmole

Below:
Mike at the Falls



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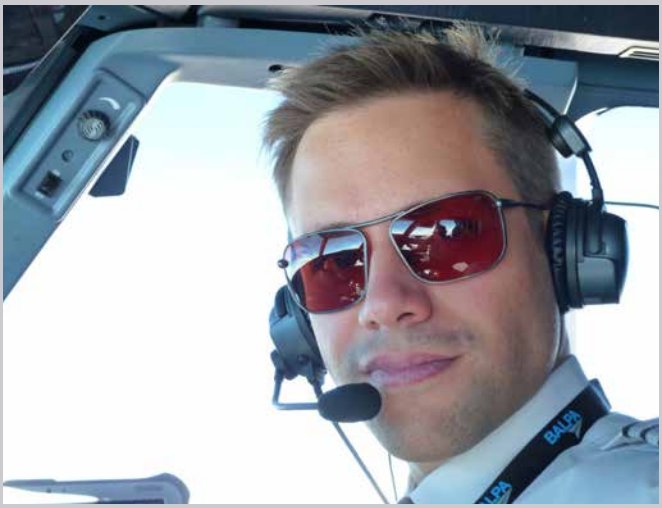
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The widow of our recently deceased member Tom Beck is looking to sell the property for the purchase cost which was approximately £200,000 or there abouts.

In the first instance please email Peta Beck for more information email: tb.pb@zen.co.uk

Situated about 100 miles North of Orlando. (about 1½ hour's drive)

A single storey house built by Newday Homes https://newday-homes.tripod.com in 2003, incorporating the Arxx Wallsystem of construction which provides for superior insulation, durability and sound-proofing.

The building comprises: Master bedroom, adjoining bathroom, walk-in wardrobe. Double bedroom with fitted wardrobe. Single bedroom with fitted wardrobe. Bathroom with fitted cupboards. Large room (app 34' x 20') incorporating sitting room, dining room and kitchen with fitted cupboards, sink, cooker, fridge and micro-wave.

Fully but simply furnished with 2 queen-size (large double) beds, 2 single beds, desk, settee and 2 chairs, 2 kitchen stools, dining table and 4 chairs, crockery, cutlery, bedding. Ceiling fans in all rooms.

The house has very recently (2023) been re-roofed carrying a 25-year warranty.

Integral double garage with automatic door, washing machine and tumble dryer. Heat pump providing heating and air conditioning.

Covered walkway to Hangar with Horton Stack doors built by Newday Homes in 2004

Power boat with recently reconditioned engine and refurbished trailer.

Ride-on mower. Barbecue. Chimnea. Lakeside Swing Seats.

Profile: Graham Robson, Lincolnshire

By Rebecca Rayner



Graham Robson, stood in front of his Cessna 120 G-AJJS

I first met Graham on an emergency divert into Duxford airfield. We were both flying back from Martin and Annette Gosling's BBQ at Stones Farm a few years ago. We departed at similar times into blue skies and then hit a wall of threatening clouds. We spent an enjoyable hour talking at Duxford whilst the storm went through and we have been friends ever since!

Graham, tell me about your younger days…
I was born in Newcastle on Tyne (June 14th1961), loved aeroplanes and was frequently being told at school to stop looking out of the window at them and concentrate on school work! I studied at Gosforth Grammar and left at age 16, as I wanted to start earning, I couldn't stand the idea of more years of education.

And your first job after school?
At age 16, I took my first (and only ever) interview for the grand position of 'office junior' in the agricultural sales department at Bridon Fibres & Plastics, a division of British Ropes. Bridon were the manufacturer of the famous Red-Star brand of baler twine which was the most productive and biggest department of the company. In late 1984, I received the opportunity to replace a retiring colleague and take the position of sales-representative in the Midlands area, I jumped at the chance. Company car, expense account and all that…. I moved to rural Lincolnshire in 1985, where I still live.

In 1997 I was head-hunted by a small direct Israeli competitor called Tama Plastic Industry. As Technical Manager, my role was to establish the concept of 'Technical Selling' which required deep product knowledge, its manufacturing processes and how it's used in the field. In time, I relished this undertaking and established Technical Selling to all of Tama's nine European based companies covering 40 countries.

In addition, my role at Tama also took me to other countries with crop baling business, travelling extensively in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada as well as China, Russia and South Africa. Tama is now the largest manufacturer and seller of crop baling products throughout the world.

Tell me about your family life
I was married for 20 years, though no longer - for the past 17 years lived the fine life of a single man ;)

How did your love of flying evolve…
I first visited the USA as a teenager, in 1980 and have now travelled there more than 100 times. My love of aviation and hobby of photographing aeroplanes lead me to writing a book about aeroplanes, and then a further five other titles.

I became acquainted with owners and pilots of some rather exotic and exceptional types and I enjoyed interviewing them and photographing their aeroplanes air-to-air. One opportunity eventually lead to another with the need to return the following year. I made some long-lasting friendships that, eventually, the question came… "with all this flying in others' aeroplanes, do you fly yourself?"

And your flying training …
Eventually in October 2007, I started an accelerated flight training course in the USA… 18 days later I became a certificated pilot. It was the most intense thing I had ever done!!

On coming home, I was keen to keep flying. I found a 1/3rd share for sale in a lovely Cessna 150 on a farm strip 15 miles from my house. In two years I flew 200 hours, this was when I really learned to fly! In 2009 I bought my first solely-owned aeroplane, a 1946 vintage Cessna 120, on which I mastered tailwheel and grass-strip flying and in 2014 swapped it for smarter one in better condition, which I still have today and now have over 1,600 hours Cessna 120, tailwheel, time and almost 2,000 total in the logbook

How long have you been a member of the FFA?
On learning my business was so directly involved with farming, I was invited to join the Flying Farmers by my good friend Richard Howard in 2012.

Ironically, I had been in contact with the Flying Farmers in 2000, and had I organised a visit to a baler twine and netwrap company in Porto, Portugal. The link up was when I knew Roger Corbin, a Flying Farmer from Wiltshire, who was a very large end-user baling contractor who had his own aeroplane and airstrip on his farm. I learned about the annual study-tours, and offered to organise visits as I had contacts from all over the world. Subsequently, since becoming a 'Flying Farmer' I have helped organise study-tours and visits in Finland, Germany and France.

Do you have any other interests other than flying?...
I mentioned photography earlier and writing, with 6 books published and three more 'on a back burner', I have also written and had published countless features and stories in many aviation magazines, both in the UK and overseas.

I also enjoy cycling, which helps me manage my work-life balance. I have worked from my Lincolnshire home for 40 years. When I am not travelling the world, I am home based. For me, cycling is the perfect way to separate and break up the work-day from home life. As well as good physical and mental health, the rhythmic pace of cycling helps me think through much needed solutions.

As I write this, I am, literally, weeks away from retirement, after almost 47 years continuous work in the agricultural crop baling industry.

Graham Robson's latest book: Dancers on Wingtips is available from Blurb.co.uk: https://www.blurb.co.uk/bookshare/app/index.html?bookId=10769239