FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

August 2024 newsletter no. 146



CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

As I write this Ramble on 9th July, the Labour party have just moved into Downing Street, full of bravado and gusto. We shall see where they take us, but I have heard it said many times that farmers don't do so bad out of a Labour government – presumably because they will wreck the economy, weakening the pound which leads to imports being more expensive and making it easier to export. The worry for anyone with assets is where they will find the money from to support their idealistic ways to make everything right.

The 50th Anniversary Tour was a great success and credit to Neville as well as the individual event organisers for making it work. Over 110 members took part in 56 aircraft at one stage or another. Read all about it in the articles in this newsletter.

The increased subscription fee has pleased our Treasurer, turning the accounts from red to black. He estimates there was a fallout of about 25 members due to the increase, but no organisation can exist or go forward whilst operating in a loss situation. The fee is still minute compared to most Clubs and Associations and we want to keep improving the standards within the FFA.

Not so fortunate are two of the organisations that we support – GAAC and GASCo. How they will survive is yet to be seen as they rely on donations – the FFA being the largest donator to GAAC.

Back on the farm, we are challenged every year by variations in the weather. The old saying 'never cast a clout till May is out', should maybe be shortened to 'never cast a clout'. After 40.3 deg C was recorded in Coningsby in July 2022, this July has been rather cool so far – at least in North Yorkshire.

Harvest predictions - Our Gleam winter wheat looks as though it's been sprayed with Gramoxone (if that were still allowed) The only green bit is the ear. No doubt this is a disease / weather / variety issue. We also have Zeelum which looks a lot better. The barley that I mentioned in a previous Ramble, which was badly affected by a huge storm only hours after applying a pre-emergent weed-killer, actually looks quite promising now. The potatoes and beans have responded well to the excessive rain in recent months and the beans are standing very high. In fact a decision was taken not to spray for late disease as the amount of damage done by our high clearance sprayer would probably exceed the damage and cost of the spray! Let's hope they stay stood up.

Don't we just love farming! Or as the late Dick Walgate, a former FFA Chairman said – "never let farming get in the way of flying".

Paul Stephens

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Joined Since March 2024

8825 W.Y.D. Dunford from Dorking, Surrey
8824 M. Brown from Marlborough, Wiltshire
8820 W. Buchanan from Woodbridge, Suffolk
8814 R. Heath from Shipston on Stour, Warwickshire
8813 M. O'Hare from Saxmundham, Suffolk

Departing Members

8761	C. Hamp from Bedford	Lapsed
8571	J. Stubbs from Lincolnshire	Lapsed
8536	T. A .Pugh from Shropshire	Lapsed
807	J. Ford from Worcestershire	Lapsed
383	P. L. Pilch from Sussex	Lapsed
411	B. J. Anning from Devon	Lapsed
17	P.L. Clements from Nottinghamshire	Lapsed
470	J.M. Gale from Devon	Lapsed
631	C. Flint from Shropshire	Lapsed
522	G. Roberts from Berkshire	Lapsed
8695	M. Hallam from West Sussex	Lapsed
8726	M. Coles from Worcestershire	Lapsed
8710	C.C. Coventry from Norfolk	Lapsed
624	D. B. Angus from Caithness	Lapsed
477	C. J. Norman from Surrey	Lapsed
8567	A. H. Langley from Cheshire	Lapsed
8697	C. Goschen from Suffolk	Lapsed

FFA Committee Meeting – Thursday 4th July 2024

The FFA Committee met at our President's beautiful residence in Essex on the 4th July. A fitting site as we walked in (we had driven by car from Mallorca) was Gordon Bellerby's lovely Robin parked on the front lawn right outside the conservatory where we held the meeting. All the committee were present except for Rebecca Rayner.

We went through the agenda, first of all making sure that all the action points from the previous meeting had been acted on and any points arising were taken care of.

These included thanking Neville for pulling off a great 50th Anniversary Tour. He also wanted to thank the individual organisers on the event and for everyone that took part making it a memorable tour. Our new committee member, Alf Oliver was tasked with setting up WhatsApp groups for each event on the tour which was a very popular idea. It is an easy means for participants to communicate to the group and the organiser with any weather or organisational problems as the tour progresses. What we don't want is it to be used too casually and taking away its serious use. It was decided to carry on with this additional means of communication on all events.

Alf has also been busy attending the latest GASCo meeting, virtually by Zoom, as he is now our representative at this important safety council. He will be reporting back regularly and can also take any comments from members, to the meetings – as long as they are appropriate.

Gordon Bellerby will be arranging the AGM this year at Sherburn Airfield in Yorkshire, his own aircraft base. This will be in late September again as it seems a more popular date than the shorter daylight days of October. With the increased subscription, we aim to get back to making it an inclusive free meeting for members – as I believe that members shouldn't have to pay to attend their own AGM. But non-members who accompany members will be expected to cover the cost of the refreshments etc.



Committee members departing Stones Farm

There was some discussion about the new GAR form which is mandatory when departing and arriving in the UK - with the threat of a hefty fine if it is not filled in correctly. You submit the form online between 2 and 48 hours before the flight. The point of departure and arrival has to be an approved airfield. If you have gone through the procedure of obtaining this approval for your own airfield, you can no longer enter ZZZZ as the airfield designator. Andrew Cragg has been talking with Border Force about this and they say that approved airfields will be given a four digit code to put in this box – or you use coordinates. But in which format? Other committee members claimed it wasn't working smoothly as yet.

The increased FFA subscription is now in place. Generally, it has gone down well and the new GoCardless method of payment, which 78% of you have signed up for, makes it straight forward to adapt to, as members do not have to mess about with the old Standing Order method, where so many forget to cancel one standing order before setting up a new one. 66 members who pay by standing order, still have not increased their payments. These members won't be struck off but I'm afraid we cannot afford to send newsletters out to them as the publication and mailing costs are the biggest part of the subscription.

Neville is well on with the 2025 events program. It will possibly start in early March with a guided visit to the Royal Hospital Chelsea, the home of the Chelsea Pensioners. It is a 66 acre site on the banks of the Thames with a 330 year history. More events will be listed in the newsletter and on the website. There are tentative plans for another French Tour, this time to the south of France.

Paul Stephens

ANNIVERSARY PEN

Free of charge to members who request one. As there's a limited number this will be on a 'once they're gone, they're gone' basis.

Email: info@ffa.org.uk

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Last chance to grab a free pen inscribed with the FFA logo and the 50th Anniversary 1974–2024

GAP – General Aviation Partnership Report 13th June 2024

The last General Aviation Partnership (GAP) meeting was held on 13th June 2024.

1. Infringements

The CAA's Head of Infringements, Rob Gratton gave a lengthy presentation on the CAA's infringement process.

Bearing in mind that this process is well known to the attendees I can only think that the motivation was to demonstrate that the process is now fair, and that the days of heavy-handedness and assumed guilt are behind them. Certainly, that was the flavour of the presentation.

For interest, the outcomes in 2023 from 1245 reports were as follows:

- No action taken 26%
- "Education" letter 49%
- Infringement awareness course 14%
- Additional training 9%
- Provisional suspension 2%

In that year then, 75% of infringements resulted in a "benign" outcome.

2. Safety Intelligence data

There was a presentation by CAA staff about how statistics are used to formulate safety information.

For starters, it's good to know what is actually flying. There are 17283 registered aircraft as of June this year of which 8509 are aeroplanes, 3649 microlights while the rest are gliders, balloons and rotary. I was surprised that there were only 808 registered helicopters (not including gyroplanes). The most numerous aeroplane is, unsurprisingly, the PA28 numbering 647 in all its power variants.

Then there is the number of hours flown. Only about 60% of registered aircraft report annual hours as this is linked to the airworthiness certificate. From this it can be estimated that on average in 2023, a GA aircraft flies 70 hours.

The total number of hours flown per year fell from nearly a million to 650,000 during 2020 and have only recovered to 780,000 in 2022.

Looking at accident and serious incidents in 2023 per 100,000 hours and the predominant reasons, there are variations between aircraft classes :

- Aeroplanes: 2.1; loss of control on ground and/or abnormal runway contact.
- Microlights: 3.1; engine failures and technical malfunctions in general.
- Gliders: 6.8; loss of control in-flight.

You can Contact Safety Intelligence for various ad hoc requests at Safety.Intelligence@caa.co.uk

For example, they answer questions like:

- How many risk bearing AIRPROXs involving gliders around Lasham Airfield?
- How many MORs involving aircraft with O-360-A1AD engine and what is their average age?
- What is the accident rate for homebuilt gyroplanes over the past 5 years?

3. There is a regular report from the DfT about the more political issues in aviation.

EGNOS/SBAS: There is a realisation, albeit a little late, that replacing the functionality of EGNOS with a sovereign UK SBAS could offer benefits across different transport modes. To that end the UK Space Agency has initiated work to develop an Outline Business Case for a UK SBAS capability, which will be completed by the end of 2024.

Electronic Conspicuity: There is a project running, including live flight trials, to help inform the CAA's future policy and implementation of EC in what only can be considered "a new order" in airspace occupancy. An interim report for work is still expected in July 24, despite delays to flight trials, followed by the final report in September 24.

4. Aircraft Noise (this will cheer you up!)

There was a report from the Aviation Environment Federation (AEF) about aircraft noise.

While there have been previous surveys about aircraft noise in general there was a recent survey conducted in 2022 focussed on Light Aircraft (LA) noise. The issues identified were that LA fly at lower altitudes and at slower speeds (duration of noise); circuits and aerobatics (frequency of noise events); more than one aircraft in the sky at a time (intensifying noise intrusion); older aircraft (noisy engines) and helicopters (which have complex noise characteristics) which were reported to be particularly intrusive.

The impacts reported included annoyance, depression, inability to enjoy gardens, interruptions to outdoor conversations, and an inability to concentrate because of the noise.

Respondents often felt that there was no mechanism for complaint and where there was, complaints went nowhere, leaving "a deep sense of injustice " and feelings of helplessness. A comment from the survey : "I find it astonishing that such a very small number of aircraft users are permitted to have such a negative effect on a large number of people and that there is virtually no control of this, or way of helping people affected by the noise".

This is what AEF would like to see :

Aerodromes and the CAA to be transparent about the number of complaints they receive about light aircraft noise (currently, CAA data is not published)

Planning policy guidance on how to assess aircraft noise and a range of suggested planning conditions that can be applied to airfield planning applications to be reinstated – something like PPG24

A local authority commitment to investigate claimed breaches of planning conditions and to enforce them where they are proved (appreciate that there are issues around resources)

Airfields to be good neighbours by enforcing noise abatement procedures and other noise control measures effectively

Airfields to require newer, and quieter engines in all small planes engaged in repetitive activities like circuit flying and aerobatics, encouraging owners to retrofit other aircraft with silencers and multi-bladed propellers which are available);

Effective noise monitoring around airfields

While I expect the ire of the respondents was directed at larger GA airports, this is definitely not music to a Flying Farmer's ears particularly as we are all intensely mindful of the impact that our airstrips can have on our neighbours. This is not an official survey and no there is no obligation on CAA or government to act upon it; nevertheless, it is a harbinger of what might be to come.

Andrew Cragg

GASCo

General Aviation Safety Council

GASCo Council meeting and AGM Wednesday 3rd July 2024 attended via teams.

Airspace Infringement Courses - 26 since March noted only available to infringers.

Forthcoming Events

Ditching and Sea Survival -22nd July reduced to £250.00 Promote

Weather Decision Making - Met Office, Exeter-26th September

Reports

- FFA Reported the use of WhatsApp as a safety tool on UK tour
- BHA Reported safety concern over suction pads holding Electronic devices and loose items in cockpits after fatal accident in USA
- LAA Reported Christine Carling had been appointed Head of Training also

Permit Aircraft Stats

1994 1100 permit A/c 52 accidents
2023 2700 permit A/c 57 Accidents

CAA Infringement figures

- 420 This year to end of May a15% fall on last year but there was 163 in May
- 54 Infringed Danger Areas and ATC
- TMZ and RMZ infringements becoming more common
- 30 Weather related incidents

If any members have any safety concerns/ issues or experiences they would like aired at GASCo meetings, please let me know. (It may save an accident)

Alf Oliver

GASCo Safety Evenings

Suffolk Coastal Strut
19:30 - Wednesday 16th October 2024
Earl Stonham Village Hall
Forward Green, Suffolk. IP14 5HJ
Email: TBA

LAA Devon Strut
19:30 - Thursday 14th November 2024
Email: david.millin@sea-sea.com

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

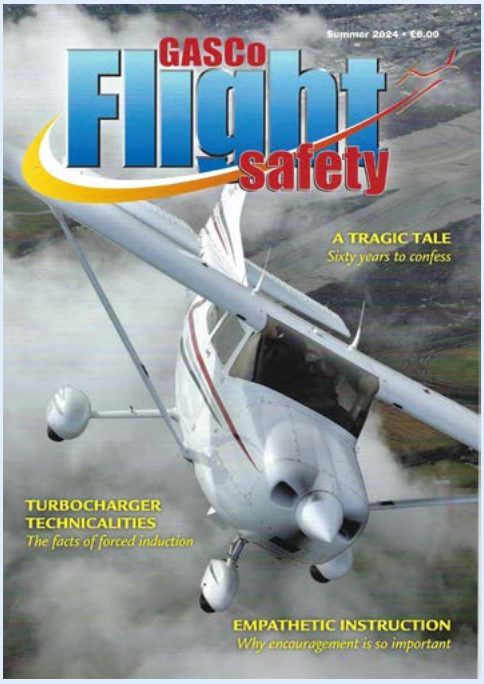
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An annual subscription by direct debit costs only £20 (for UK addresses).

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



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!

General Aviation Awareness Council

The GAAC has a new chairman, Matt Wilkins who is based at Old Buckenham Aerodrome in Norfolk.

"There is an urgent need for GA and the various organisations representing it to work together as much as possible. At the GAAC I represent the Airfield Operators Group which boasts more than 80 aerodrome members.

There are sufficient of these organisations to fill an entire, close typed, side of A4. Dozens of groups often overlap in their remit and frequently present conflicting views to the CAA and DfT. Both have made clear to the Airfields Working Group of the APPG that this is to the denigration of GA. As close to a single voice as is possible is needed and this is likely to be reinforced when the new Parliament emerges in July.

I believe that the GAAC is ideally placed to lead an effort to bring a considerable number of those groups together.

I would seek to call together a summit, under the GAAC banner, to bring as many of the groups whose work does overlap together. Several of you have mentioned that you have similar meetings, with similar topics and the same people across several organisations, including GAAC. That cannot be efficient." MW

In spite of the change in government, and all the uncertainties that that causes, our Vice Chair John Gilder is keen to continue to help FFA members with concerns regarding their airstrips. National Grid pylons seem to be the current issue.

https://gaac.org.uk/

Anthony Kedros

IMPORTANT Membership Matters

1 Subscription increase.

After much reminding of members since it was resolved at the AGM in September last year, the subscription went up to £50 in April 2024. All members paying by GoCardless will have simply noticed the increased amount leaving their bank accounts.

Of the 80 members who do not, thank you to the 15 members who changed their standing order. There remain 65 have not and have therefore not paid their full subscription. At the last Committee meeting in July, it was agreed that we would continue to treat these members as members but in a sub-category which will not receive the newsletter, it's increased cost being one of the reasons to increase the subscription in the first place.

2. Flying Farmer Emails. Not receiving them

We have had an increasing number of vigilant members complaining that they are not receiving FFA emails, either because they are either going to junk/spam or not arriving at all. There could be many reasons for this :

a) Not arriving - Opting out of the list (unsubscribing)

It has become apparent that an unusually large number of members have unsubscribed from the emails in the last few months. Many were highly active members for whom this would be most unusual. On being contacted about this, all said that they had not knowingly unsubscribed. This means that the Mailchimp system has been throwing people off the list without telling them. The emails are an integral part of the way the FFA functions so we try to contact everyone that unsubscribes, but, because they are unsubscribed, we can't always get hold of them. If you are not receiving emails, contact the office and we can check this for you and help to get you back on.

b) Not arriving - unable to deliver

The most common reason for this is that the member has changed emails and not let us know while the other is that your email provider has decided to block our emails. Either way, we get a message to say that our email has "bounced" and we try to contact the member. Where it is not just a simple change of email, getting your provider to unblock has proved more difficult (but not impossible) and a few members have just provided an alternative address.

c) Going to Junk folder

Email providers are putting more and more resources into filtering out spam emails often at the expense of legitimate ones.
Sadly, there is little we can do about it since the filtering of emails typically takes place at the recipients end. The traditional solution is to tell your email program , or email client as it is known, that you don't want our emails to go to junk. We cannot advise you how to do this since each email different program will have a different way to do it. The typical processes to look for are "add to safe senders list", "add to address book", "mark this email as safe".
The easiest way is to Google "<your email program> add to safe senders list" (or one of the other suggestions)
where <your email program> is what it says on the tin: Windows mail, Outlook, Gmail etc

3. Now please read this :

Emails are vital to the efficient running of the association, whether its is events, safety advice, subscription issues, changing personal details or the FFA marketplace. The difficulty is that if you don't know that an email has been sent then you don't know that it hasn't arrived.

WE WILL SEND AN EMAIL, CONCURRENTLY WITH THIS NEWSLETTER, TO ALL FFA REGISTERED EMAIL MEMBERS. IF YOU'VE NOT ALREADY NOTICED, IT SHOULD BE IN YOUR INBOX NOW.

If you have not received it and you do want to continue receiving FFA emails then let us know by email to info@ffa.org.uk

Border Force Online GARs

At the recent committee meeting, issues about identifying a private airstrip without an ICAO code on the new online GAR system were discussed. There were examples of inconsistency both in advice given to members and in the online process itself.

We recently had a meeting with Border Force and challenged them on the issues that some members have been experiencing. Sadly, there were no instant answers to the problems we raised but they promised to escalate the points raised with the national GAR team.

From this meeting and experiences of members we can offer clarification on some points :

There are three ways to identify your ZZZZ (non-ICAO) airstrip:
1. LAT/LONG coordinates
2. The name of the airfield as given in your Certificate of Agreement
3. A reference given to some by a border force officer

1. LAT/LONG coordinates
a) The confusion here was uncertainty about the format for Lat/Long coordinates. Originally it was required in degrees, mins and secs in an unusual format. NOW it is required in decimal degrees to 6 (and only 6) decimal places. If you Google the online GAR form you may land on an old page asking for the old format which won't work.

Use this page : https://www.submit-general-aviation-report.service.gov.uk/login
b) it is suspected that on some certificates of agreement, the Lat/Long coordinates registered on the system may be those of the postal address to where the certificate was sent and NOT those of your airfield. This could be an issue if your airfield is not at the end of the garden.

2. The name of the airfield as given in your Certificate of Agreement

In a number of cases the airfield name does not appear in the drop-down list. This is a known problem due to the fact that not all of the successful applications have had their details registered and it could be some time before they are.

3. A reference given to some by a border force officer. Some members experiencing problems have been given a reference code to use by their local Border Force (BF) officers.

In a lot of cases this has not worked either. This is an internal code used by BF officers to identify airstrips, is not on your Certificate of Agreement and is not a formal identification used by the online GAR. The fact that some reported that it did work was of some bafflement and concern to the people in our meeting and urgent further and better particulars are being sought from the National team on this issue.

4. The Online GAR does indeed keep a list of planes and pilots and passengers in a profile for you to re-use on subsequent submissions. The trouble is that it does it in a back-to-front way. It will not automatically keep the entries you have submitted, rather you must enter them before you start the main form and then they will appear in a drop-down box where appropriate and remain available for future submissions.

We were signposted to a dedicated sGAR helpdesk, GARSupport@homeoffice.gov.uk , it is a busy and working helpline email. Like so many things, the work required to fix these things is resource and priority driven. The more we direct our problems to this helpdesk, the quicker these things might be fixed.

There is also lots of helpful advice within the help section of sGAR at https://www.submit-general-aviation-report.service.gov.uk/help\

Andrew Cragg





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

A flight from La Rochelle to Le Touquet during the French tour 2023 - Never underestimate a headwind

On leaving La Rochelle I decided to put only 60 litres (¾ fill the tanks on the Cessna 172) because I had three people on the plane plus luggage.

When airborne I realised there was quite a headwind and the aircraft was down to 90 knots ground-speed. I kept thinking to myself "Have I got enough fuel to make it to Le Touquet, as the full journey was 285 miles"

However, all went well until we got to around 20 miles from Le Touquet when both fuel tanks started to show below a quarter full each.

We saw on the GPS a small airfield called Eu Mers Le Treport. As we flew over we noted the runway was into wind and it appeared to have fuel facilities. We carried on for a few miles but with second thoughts and following discussion with Tony (Fisher) we thought it safer to return to Le Treport. I tried to talk to Le Treport on the radio but there was no answer. So I carried on with the downwind call and then the finals call for the runway 05.

We landed and headed towards the fuel tanks. We could see the club members were having a rather boozy bbq but they welcomed us with open arms. They offered us tea and coffee and we had a friendly chat (mainly British royalty) and they pressed us to go back and see them one day. Afterwards we fuelled up with the lower octane fuel that was available. We took on 30 litres of this fuel to mix with the higher octane fuel at Le Touquet.

We took off and landed safely at Le Touquet.

What have I learnt from this experience?

It was correct to only ¾ fill the tanks with 3 on board with luggage but I didn't anticipate the strength of the wind and we were lucky to be able to land at Le Treport.

If we hadn't landed at Le Treport it might have been an enforced beach landing.

Captain Robert Laming,
1st Officer Tony Fisher,
Senior Stewardess Anthea Brown

I think you should climb in case we need to vacate the aircraft

These are the most chilling words spoken to me in the 55 years that I have been flying. Wearing a parachute for every flight was very routine to me since joining our local gliding club aged just 14. Flying with the University Air Squadron and then flying quite a bit of formation flying subsequently, I would always choose to wear a parachute. But the thought of actually using it was always a remote one, until this memorable day.

For quite a few years I was fortunate to own a quarter share of a YAK 52, still my favourite aircraft. Many YAK owners were of a similar mind and wished to extend their piloting experiences. And so the North Weald Formation Weeks were born. Each year, for a week both in the spring and autumn, a number of pilots with their YAKs (up to 20+) would assemble at North Weald and a matching number of instructors, usually RAF pilots, most often from the fast jet world, would fly with us for some interesting formation flying. The brief was simple, 'turn avgas into fun', but in a safe and disciplined flying environment.

After these formation schools had been going on for a number of years I wonder if someone in the Royal Air Force higher chain of command wanted to discover why so many aircrew were asking for leave on the same weeks, and perhaps wanted to see what was going on. Anyway, on this day, at the morning briefing, Air Vice Marshal Sir K.. H… suddenly appeared along with his reputation as being a stickler for strict adherence to regulation, efficiency and flight safety. He was regarded as a bit of a 'flying God' to those who knew him and feared by most.

And yes, horror of horrors, I was rostered to fly with him for the first sortie of the day. Thankfully, it was to be a fairly straightforward trip. A four ship (aircraft) sortie, practising turning in different formations of the four aircraft while we all transited out to the practise area where we would split into 2 elements to practise some pairs formation aerobatics, after which we would rejoin as a four for the return to base and landing.

The formation leader was a Squadron Leader from the Tornado OCU, vastly experienced who had been doing this, and very, very much more, most days of his flying life. What could possibly go wrong?

Start up, taxi, take off and departure all went well. I started to relax a little, which always improves one's formation flying. One real secret to this art is to have the aircraft perfectly in trim so that the smallest of stick pressure will help maintain perfect formation position. But something was not right! When we wheeled through the formation changes and turns, I applied the stick loads needed to maintain station, but when I returned to straight and level the aircraft should still have been in trim. But it wasn't. Each time I had to add a little more nose up trim and I was rapidly running out of trim available, and still I was holding load on the stick. I asked the AVM sitting quietly in the back seat of my aircraft, and unaware up to this point that anything was amiss, if he was handling the controls without informing me? Of course, he was not. I immediately informed the formation leader that I had a control problem, and, although I needed no instruction, ordered me to RTB (return to base). Another aircraft was detached from the formation to accompany us back to North Weald. He flew all around the aircraft looking for the problem but could

see nothing wrong. By now all the available back trim had been used and I was using both hands on the stick to keep the nose up. Then came those words from the back seat 'I think you should climb in case we need to vacate the aircraft'. Extra effort was now needed on the stick but applying full power to climb helped a little. At least I could raise the nose of the aircraft. Then suddenly, and with no warning whatsoever, the stick load completely reversed. Now I needed to push the stick forward to maintain the aircraft's attitude. This situation was getting rather worrying! Then a helpful voice from the back of the aircraft reminded me that we had full nose up trim applied. As soon as I centralised the trim wheel the aircraft handled normally. All thoughts of jumping out of the aircraft were quickly forgotten as I requested an immediate precautionary landing which was uneventful.

Well, at least the AVM had an interesting first trip at the North Weald Formation School and he was returned to base without needing to use his parachute! A close inspection of the aircraft elevator revealed the cause of our problem. The fabric that should have been stuck firmly around and over the top surface of the rear of the elevator had become detached and, gradually at first, caught the airflow over the top edge of the elevator, acting as a large and unwanted trim tab. Eventually, the airflow tore through the fabric, suddenly altering the trim of the aircraft back to its neutral setting.

What did I learn? That the pre-flight inspection of the aircraft is always essential. It is easy to be distracted when flying with a group, as often we do in the Flying Farmers, and a moment of distraction on the ground can quickly lead to a significant problem in the air.

David Keene

If there is any doubt, there is no doubt

This all happened a very long time ago but the lessons learnt then are just as valid today, I believe. I had spent 5 years as a student at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne during which time I was very fortunate to be a member of the University Air Squadron. I was even more lucky to have, for the majority of that time, our excellent squadron Boss as my instructor. He was a natural leader of men, a South African who had a twin brother and they had both applied to Oxford University for a Rhodes Scholarship. His brother gained the prize and he came second so he went to Cambridge where he achieved a double first.

He joined the Royal Air Force as a pilot and was soon a flight commander on Hunters and could then have reasonably expected a posting as a squadron commander on fast jets. Well, he did get a squadron but we flew the Chipmunk! He soon settled in, determined to make us as operational as possible which involved getting us to solo formation and battle formation standard. His instruction was firm but fair; we had to work hard at it but these were his standards and we respected him. Then came disaster! I found myself at the 3 year point in my course which was usually the limiting time for Squadron membership – but it was a 5 year course. I couldn't face life without the Squadron and flying but, God bless him, The Boss said that if I agreed to join the Royal Air Force in my ground branch on qualification he would see if he could get me a Volunteer Reserve commission so I could stay in the Squadron for the next 2 years. So, no contest – I agreed, became an instant Acting Pilot Officer, received enhanced allowances which helped run the car, and wore a decent hat instead of a beret. There followed 2 more excellent years of flying training.

I was almost sad when I passed finals because there was no more flying but I suddenly became a flight lieutenant (more pay and a lot more work). How could I sort out some flying, though? I did some research and found that to get an instant PPL I needed 2 things: an R/T licence and carry out a long triangular cross country because the validity of the last one I'd done (whilst on the Squadron) had expired according to the CAA, although I still query their accounting of the months.

But, great news! The Boss was still the Boss and he invited me back to RAF Ouston for a week's flying, getting all the essential exercises done, and flying the cross country. So it was off to Ouston for a week wearing a flying suit with Flight Lieutenant rank braid and Preliminary Flying Badge (which looked like real wings if you weren't too close). This was in May of 1969 and there was quite a bit of risk in this for him but, as I said earlier, he was a natural leader and reckoned we were far too far away in Northumberland for the "wheels" at Brampton (Huntingdon) to bother about us!

So, on the appointed day when all currency checks were complete, I was briefed to carry out the triangular cross-country Ouston-Church Fenton (now Leeds East), refuel, Acklington (roll)-Ouston. This had to be done over lunch time so I didn't deprive a real squadron member of an aircraft. The only problem was that the weather was not good. But off I went and by some miracle found Church Fenton without any problem. I taxied in, parked up, asked to be refuelled and went for a coffee in their University Air Squadron crewroom. The 2 instructors there, both also flight lieutenants, advised me that they had stacked for the day because the weather was so bad but, realising they thought I was an instructor too, I breezily told them it wasn't so bad up north. Refreshed but a bit worried by the mounting black clouds I strapped into my trusty steed and took off to find the cloudbase was now about 800 feet which was rapidly reducing as I flew north. Oh well, I'd just had some instrument practice and had been informed the cloud tops were about 8000 feet so I started to climb. There ensued probably the longest 15 minutes of my life. I couldn't speak to any of the many RAF stations below me as my radio wasn't crystallised for their frequencies, I had to pay particular attention to the instruments, and debate just how high I was going to climb. I saw a flash of sunlight at about 9000 feet, but only for a moment! Encouraged, I climbed to 13500 feet never seeing anything but very thick black cloud and then decided I'd better start letting down into decent weather. Well, it had been sort of reasonable when I left. The descent was almost as worrying as the climb and so it should have been as I broke cloud at about 800 feet remarkably close to the CEGB cooling towers at Blyth.

The last bit was easy by comparison – RAF Acklington (now a prison which is probably where I should have been sent) was always easy to find. I rolled there and then, hey ho, off back to RAF Ouston where I had the gall to ask for a steer just to prove I was still around.

After landing the Boss asked me to describe the flight. When I said it had gone well with no problems I got his piercing look but he said nothing.

What did I learn? If there is any doubt, there is no doubt – don't fly, or turn back if necessary!

Richard Butler

ENGINE FLAMEOUT!



It was 30 years ago, on March 29 1994, I was the First Officer on a Boeing 747-100 on a flight from LGW-MIA. I had joined a new airline a year earlier after flying B737's for Dan-Air and being made redundant when British Airways took over. The crew also comprised of a Captain and Flight Engineer and eighteen cabin crew on the 510 seat aircraft.

The flight was to take around 9:30 and was routing via Lands End, the Azores, Bermuda and finally making landfall at South Beach Miami. Unlike light aircraft, long haul aircraft flying the Atlantic airways fly the shortest time and not the shortest distance. This is dependent upon where the Jetstream lies and varies from day to day, sometimes routing to Labrador, The Great Lakes, inland east coast US to Florida, or Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Long Island, and down the eastern seaboard of the US to Miami.

The pre-flight briefing took place where the route and en-route weather was discussed, along with diversion airfields, NOTAM's etc. There was the possibility of thunderstorms at the destination (something that occurred nearly every afternoon in the summer months May – October). A fuel figure was decided for the flight, I can't remember the exact figure now but it would be around 100,000 kgs with a burn-off of around 90,000 kgs leaving a 10,000 kgs reserve.

The B747-100/200 used approximately 1000 kgs taxiing, 20,000 kgs to the top of the climb- around 20 mins to FL330 – then initially 12,000 kgs per hour gradually decreasing to 10,000 kgs as the fuel burns off and a higher cruise altitude becomes possible.

The crew bus took us to the aircraft and after all the walk around and pre-flight checks were completed, the passengers boarded and at 10:55 we pushed back and we were on our way! We climbed towards the LND VOR, and then after obtaining our Oceanic Clearance form Shanwick ATC we settled on our route, navigating by triple INS.

One thing that always amazed me even after flying the Atlantic for 26 years, was the massive extent of water out there. Going from LND, which took around 25 mins, it could be 9 hours at 500 kts of nothing but ocean, which obviously can be seen by



looking at a globe or an atlas, but never seemed so vast as when you actually fly across.

The flight was uneventful finally cruising at FL390 until about 45 mins out from Miami, when we transferred from New York HF radio to VHF calling Miami Centre who gave us an initial radar heading of 180 and a descent to FL290; followed a bit later with further descent to FL250 and a left heading 150. We complied and all descent checks were completed. We were now told to turn further left heading 060. Now this was slightly alarming to us as this was completely the wrong direction by 180 degrees, and when questioning Miami Centre, we were told it was delaying action due to weather at the field.

After several minutes of vectoring in the wrong direction, the Flight Engineer announced that the Orlando diversion fuel, which was the number 2 diversion, was no longer available, and we were now reduced to Fort Lauderdale diversion fuel, and said to the Captain "don't dig a hole for yourself, we need to make an approach". With that the Captain turned to me and told me to tell Miami Centre that we now needed to make an approach. This I duly did and we re-cleared to our initial fix, which was still 140 nm away with further descent, and was advised that runway 30 was in use.

As we approached the fix, dark clouds filled the horizon, and the ATIS was giving variable winds 3 sm, overcast at 500 ft with similar conditions at our alternate Fort Lauderdale. As we were being sequenced for runway 30, ATC now informed us of runway change to 09L and gave us a heading of 270 to fly downwind. By now we were coming over the coast at about 5000 ft and passing Miami City on our right-hand side.

All the approach checks completed we proceeded downwind and now over the Everglades being about number 4 in the sequence, the Flight Engineer sitting facing his panel suddenly announced "all the forward booster pump lights are on". This immediately sent a slight shiver down my back as this meant the fuel quantity in all tanks was getting low, as the angle of attack increased at slow speed the forward booster pumps were now uncovered; however, as there are forward and aft fuel booster pumps in each tank, and that we were downwind to land, I was not too unduly worried.

(on take-off and landing the Flight Engineer's position is facing forward between the two pilots where he handles the thrust levers the rest of the flight he faces sideways looking at his panel).

The clouds now darkened and the rain began to really come down and was hammering on the windshield as we turned base leg and established on the localiser for runway 09L. This aircraft was only cleared to CAT1 limits, which is 200 ft vertical and 550 m horizontal, and as we descended fully established on the ILS, the aircraft preceding us, Mexicana, called out the he was "Going Around and declaring an emergency". I was slightly surprised and remember feeling some sympathy for him, and then we were approaching our Decision Height of 200 ft and the rain was really torrential now, at 200 ft no runway lights were seen and the Captain called "Go Around, flap 20".

As I selected the flaps from 25 to 20 the Flight Engineer pushed all four thrust levers to go-around power, the Captain called "Gear Up" and as I selected the gear up the Flight Engineer called out "There goes number one" and immediately moved his seat backwards to his panel and opened all fuel tank crossfeeds and shouted out "level it off, fly level". I looked at the engine instruments and saw to my horror all the dials for number one engine were winding down. I called Miami Tower



saying "Going Around and declaring an emergency and request immediate radar vectors to Fort Lauderdale" at which point the Tower controller transmitted to all aircraft "Miami Airport closed". This prompted another four aircraft to declare an emergency due to low fuel.

I have to say I have never been so scared in my life either before or since, and was convinced that the other three engines were about to flame out. However, when the captain levelled the aircraft the engine spluttered back into life once again, and to my relief we continued a shallow climb on the standard Missed Approach Procedure, then set course to Fort Lauderdale. With Miami airport now closed, six aircraft on emergencies and others wishing to divert, it was chaotic, but we proceeded to Fort Lauderdale where the weather was equally horrible hoping we would make a successful approach and landing. With all checklists completed, we established on the ILS and as we approached our Decision Height the runway lights appeared through the gloom and we successfully landed. I have never been so pleased to be back on terra firma before or since.

After taxiing on to the stand and after engine shutdown and all checks complete, we all three took a few moments for relief and reflection of the last 30 minutes of the flight. On landing the fuel gauges all read 3,500 kgs remaining, but when I later looked in the aircraft manual it stated fuel gauge accuracy was 1.5% of the total fuel capacity, which on the B747-100 was 165,000 kgs, therefore could be inaccurate by 2,475 kgs.

What did I learn about flying from this experience???

"Whenever the weather is marginal at destination, take plenty of fuel, you won't be the only aircraft diverting as the minimum diversion fuel suggests, you will need much more"

A year later I became a B747 Captain, and never forgot this experience and always considered plenty of fuel as "thinking time" when planning how long to stay holding before diverting, and having a plan C as well as plan B! As wonderful an aircraft the B747 surely is, without fuel it will not fly!

I flew the B747-100, -200, -400 for 26 years, 24 as Captain; did over 2000 Atlantic crossings and accumulated 23,000 hours. Now retired I farm 360 arable acres in the North East, and I have to say that is way more frustrating and difficult than ever was flying a 747 from Heathrow to Hong Kong!

Christopher Thomson

Programme 2024



By the time you receive this Newsletter all the main events this year will have taken place, with the exception of this years AGM. Overall the events have been very well attended and Eventbrite has worked well, and came into its own when running the FFA's 50th Grand Tour.

The Committee and I would like to thank all organisers that have hosted events this year, especially those that help put the 50th Tour on. With normal tours we get 30-35 members, but this year's tour we had 112 members attend some or all events.

We have updated the "Events Organiser's Guide" which is now in the events folder on the website and is available to all organisers.

FFA's AGM will be held on Wednesday 25th September at Sherburn in Elmet and our afternoon speaker will be Alex from TritonTrak (Proven protection for agriculture).

'The remote location of most agriculture sites makes the equipment used particularly vulnerable to thieves. We know how crucial agriculture machines are to the smooth running of your business and use our expertise to protect your operations. TritonTrak technology prevents disruption and inconvenience caused by the theft of your equipment." Full details will be on the website.

Looking ahead to next year we have a programme of events that will be announced at the AGM, including a "European Tour." If any member has contacts in France, would you please pass these onto me, and I will then pass them to the organiser. I believe next year's tour will have a very different slant on, with the member that is putting it together.

I would like to extend sincere thanks on behalf of the Committee to the members and guests who have kindly hosted events this year, this makes the FFA so very successful.

A huge thank you to David Keene who has organized our "Pop In" visits, they are so successful and enable us to meet up during the Autumn / Winter months. I know we all look forward for more to come.

Events 2024

- 25th September 2024 – **2024 AGM,** Sherburn, Elmet – Gordon Bellerby
- March 2025 – **Royal Hospital Chelsea** – London
- 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 they 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 room numbers need confirming.

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

The 50th FFA AGM – Sherburn in Elmet, Wednesday 25th September 2024

The FFA give notice that the AGM of the Flying Farmers Association will take place on the 25th September 2024 at Sherburn in Elmet airfield.

- We will gather for tea/coffee by 10:30am
- The AGM will start promptly at 11:00am
- There will be a buffet lunch
- Alex from Tritontrak will be our afternoon speaker. https://www.tritontrak.com/

Although the FFA cover most of the cost of the day, we do ask members to contribute £15.00 per head for any guests they bring, as the funds for the day are derived from subscriptions. We will leave it to your discretion how you classify 'guest', as the FFA membership does cover your family but some close friends/partners (or navigators as we now call them) can also be classified within the family membership.

The closing date for entries will be 18th September 2024.

It is the turn of Paul Stephens and Gordon Bellerby to stand down from the committee, but both are willing to stand again.

If you would like to nominate any full member (with their permission) or to nominate yourself (with a proposer) to stand for election as a committee member, then please send an email to Paul Stephens (chix@farmline.com) or by post to Moor Farm, West Heslerton, Malton YO17 8RU, nominating this person no later than 3 days before the date of the AGM. The letter should be signed by both the proposer and the proposed.

If you would like any items placing on the agenda for the AGM please email Paul Stephens: info@ffa.org.uk

Look forward to seeing you on the day
Paul Stephens,FFAChairman

This is from Sherburn's website for members wanting to arrive the evening before or stay on afterwards.

Local Facilities
Please contact the flight desk should you require local information from places to visit, accommodation and local transport.
Taxi - Oz Travel - 01977 683399
Taxi - AB Cars - 0113 2872222
Selby Taxis - 07939313053
A2B Travel - 0113 2888999
Train - Sherburn in Elmet Train Station | Distance 3.0m
Accommodation - Station Farm Guest House | Distance 4.7m | 01937 557088
Accommodation - Maypole Farm Guest House | Distance 8.0m | 01757 268849
Accommodation - Hazlewood Castle and Spa - 01937 535353
Accommodation - Oddfellows Arms - 01977 6782368
Accommodation - Thorpe Park Hotel and Spa - 0113 2641000

Deadline for articles for the December newsletter is 30th October 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 on 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!

Isle Of Sheppey, 25th April


The group in front of the beef fattening pens at Old Rides Farm Eastchurch Isle of Sheppey, Kent

Because of its aviation history the Sheppey visit was of great interest to everyone. Of course the weather plays an important role on all events so we were lucky it just held out long enough,and what a day it was too. We had the pleasure of being driven around in Paul Bakers old bus on the scenic routes which was much appreciated.

Our first visit was to the Eastchurch aviation museum. Guided by the curator Mr Peter West we were split into 3 groups of 10 to make it manageable. One group had a very good presentation on beekeeping by Derek Stevens. It never ceases to amaze me just how industrious and well organised they are, literally natures machines. He covered the life cycle of bees and hive maintenance also with the general decline in bee numbers we should all be concerned. If sealed correctly honey will last indefinitely.

The second group had a short film show and a guided tour around the museum given by Bob Turner. There is a priceless photograph of some very big names of the early pioneers of aviation. Taken outside, Mussel Manor which was purchased by Frank McClean along with 400 acres at Leysdown which was to be the Aero club clubhouse, early 1900.

The third group were taken around the outside by Nigel Boomwade to see what remained of the remnants from the war, a gun turret foundation and one original hangar and big storage buildings. The old railway line from Queenborough to Leysdown. You can see spur line that was put in which bought building materials to the airfield. A very good vote of thanks was given by Roger Bell emphasising the high quality of the presentations and the passion the guides have for the musuem

After the tours had finished it was all aboard the bus for lunch at the Queen Phillipa Hotel via the scenic route.

After a very pleasant buffet lunch we made our way to Old Rides Farm, owned by the Burden Brothers who are quite an incredible entrepreneurial family. They farm 3000 acres and each brother also runs other enterprises within the BB4 Group: Contracting,engineering,Machinery, Hospitality and more. Dale Burden (a very good PR man) gave us a talk on how it all started.

Burden senior buying a few acres of land to store old machinery for spare parts.

The cattle side of the enterprise is a big part of the business. At one stage they had over a thousand head. Essentially the 70 heifers calve early February all covered by AI. which they will increase to 500. The 360 cows calve from 1st March. All cattle grazed on leys and The Elmley nature reserve through the summer ,silage and rolled barley fed through the winter

After the tour Alf Oliver gave a very good vote of thanks. The weather was deteriorating so we had to make a quick departure back to the airfield.

Everyone came away with a little more knowledge about the Isle of Sheppey and I'm sure I for one will be back. The airfield was in good condition thanks to the owner Mike Loxton.

Peter Mailer






Nev and Robert lending scale to bullet holes in the hangar wall at former RAF Eastchurch from marauding Me 109 during the Battle of Britaina


Judith, Anthea, Gillian and Maria catching up on the gossip in the Ferry Inn the evening before the visit



FFA The Phoenix rises in Gloucester!! 2nd May





As they say never give up, just adapt and move on - we organised the Forest of Dean caves and museum for May this year in order to avoid a clash with harvest, but unfortunately we did not get enough members sign up to make it viable.

Neville was ever hopeful that we could get something to replace it for those members who had signed up, so looking round Gloucester itself we decided to move the meeting to the Waterways Museum instead, whilst still rendezvousing at Gloucester Airport.

We were still not out of the woods yet because May 2nd turned out to be unflyable, so all members had to attend by car, some driving a considerable distance. The cafe at Gloucester looked after our needs after our journeys, which was greatly appreciated. Of course we didn't know on our departure for the Waterways Museum that the largest multi-storey car park in Gloucester was closed and everyone was using the nearest car parks to Gloucester Quays where the museum is! It seemed like May 2nd was jinxed!! Eventually however, we all assembled at the engine shed to meet Trevor who has been involved in the restoration of the Fielding Engine since day one, and is a member of the Mid Gloucestershire Engine Preservation Society. He gave us a very informative talk about the engine itself and how the restoration was undertaken to safeguard it's authenticity. He also gave us a handout that outlined the specification of the engine and what it was used for. It is a marvel that an 80 bhp engine with only 220 rpm could do so much work, running on any engine oil that you could get your hands on and at full load sipping a mere 2.5 gallons an hour. The starting motor is in fact compressed air which will turn the engine fast enough to fire off of direct injection of fuel. There are two ways of starting this engine and on the day Trevor used the hot method which entails heating up the cylinder head with a blow torch, so intent was he on answering our numerous questions he forgot to check that the blow torch was pointing in the right direction, hence a slight delay in it's firing up! It was fascinating to see how true the fly wheel ran and that, even after all these years all parts just operated like poetry in motion – truly great British engineering at its best!

By this time lunch was calling so the name of the day being flexibility we departed to the Brewhouse and Kitchen, slightly earlier than planned to be greeted by Bernie, whose only mission was to make sure that all members enjoyed their lunch. She claimed that she would remember all our orders when it was time to settle the bill and she did!!

We returned to the museum to be met by Dave, who is a volunteer there, and he proceeded to give us an insight into the history and development of both the docks on the River Severn and the later Sharpness Canal. Gloucester sits at the lowest fordable point on the River Severn and was favoured by the Romans who called it Glevum. It thus became a strategic settlement in relation to trade with the rest of the world.

A third of the Severn is tidal with the second largest tidal range in the world, 50 feet at high tide in Gloucester and 30 feet at the estuary, which gives rise to the famous Severn Bore. To cope with this tidal range and the depth of water the Severn tug type of boat was developed with a wide beam and shallow draught, designed to sit flat on the river bed if the tide was too shallow and then re-floated at the next high tide without disturbing its cargo. Another issue with the Severn is the number of meanders at the top end near Gloucester which means that the wind becomes a problem at every turn the river takes. To overcome this and to ensure the future of the docks, the Sharpness Canal was built, which started with an Act of Parliament in 1794, and was only supposed to take ten years to build, but was not completed until 1827 and over budget. Sound familiar? The canal is 16 miles long and cuts out 34 miles of meandering tidal river which enabled Gloucester to still be a competitive trading city.

As an aside, the Cadbury family were strong supporters of canals and had a factory at Frampton on the Severn where they made cocoa crumb by adding milk to the cocoa bean, thus transporting both milk and cocoa up the river as one, which extended the shelf life of the raw materials.

Moving on in time, traffic on the canal declined in the 1960s, as containers became more prevalent. Today it plays its part as a tourist attraction with barges and the occasional tall ship or grain barge passing along it.

-After Dave's excellent talk we split up and meandered around the three floors of the museum and the dock area outside, taking in all things related to a working life on the canal and docks. Our final destination before departure for home was a tea and cake in the Waterways cafe.

A huge thanks to Trevor and Flying Farmer Mike Cuttell for setting up the engine demonstration, it was great to listen to the banter between them regarding their shared love of all things engines! Having heard a little about Mike's engine, maybe we will get to see it one day! Yet another thanks to Neville for his dogged determination in ensuring that something happened on the day. Finally a grateful thanks to those who attended the day, it appeared from their faces and keen questions that they all enjoyed it.

Mervyn White

Lasham visit – Wednesday 8th May

I was invited as a guest to attend a visit of the heritage glider hangar at Lasham Airfield in Hampshire with the FFA. Despite not knowing any members, I was greeted to a warm welcome and a cup of tea. After meeting a friendly bunch of flying farmers, we set off with the tour of the heritage glider hangar. We got shown around by two gentlemen with great knowledge and enthusiasm for historic glider aircraft. The tour concluded with a talk in the workshop showing us the ins and outs of how these gliders were constructed as well as rebuilt. We then headed back to the cafe where we enjoyed some sandwiches in the sun. I thoroughly enjoyed myself!

Thanks again to the FFA members for such a great welcome and I look forward to being a future flying farmer!

Will Dunford







Neville and our host, Peter Richie

Lasham is the largest gliding club in the world. With a membership of over 700 people, Lasham boasts a sizeable club fleet of 16 gliders, 5 tugs and over 230 private gliders located on the club-owned airfield. The airfield is in constant use throughout the year and regularly hosts national and regional gliding championships.

The airfield was built on farming land in 1942 as a Royal Air Force Station during the Second World War. The RAF ceased operations in 1948, but an aircraft company, General Aircraft Ltd, continued to fly from the airfield. From 1951, the main activity at Lasham airfield became recreational gliding.

Construction of the airfield was completed in 1942. In 1951 Surrey Gliding Club and Imperial College Gliding Club moved to the site. In 1959 this became Lasham Gliding Society.

Fairline Yachts – 26th June



We were blessed with the most perfect weather for this trip which has been 18 months in the making.

Our destination airfield was Sibson with wide grass runways and a nice coffee shop. The team there were very helpful and accommodating when the squadron of Flying Farmers descended on them.

Our hosts at Fairline were Chris, Miles, Mark and Sam and you couldn't hope to find any nicer or more knowledgeable guys.

Fairline go back to 1966 when the business was originally set up in Barnwell Road, Oundle. Today, Fairline is actually owned by the Hanover investment Bank

It has grown significantly since then, with current production around 50-70 boats per year, varying from 33ft to 68ft long. The workforce comprises 500 people and it seems like they run a "tight ship" (pardon the pun) with working hours 0630 to 1630 Monday to Thursday and the 0600 to 1300 on a Friday. They take on 14 apprentices every year and staff retention and motivation is very high.

The boats are marketed through a worldwide network of 70 dealerships, with 90% of the boats being exported so hopefully they will still flourish in the UK whatever government we have in power.

Although the inland location isn't perfect, the company make it work. All boats are produced at Oundle and then taken by road to Ipswich for testing and commissioning. Because of the traffic restrictions, the journey to Ipswich takes 2 days. There may be a problem looming as every time they resurface the roads the clearance under the







Phantom 65 nearing completion before being taken to Ipswich for sea trials and final fitting.

bridge gets less, so although at the moment they can use lorries which are able to lower their suspension, this may not be the answer going forward!

The cost to move the bigger boats is around £24k plus the protection which adds another £1k, but this is all factored in within the price. After all, what is £24k when you are spending £3.5m on your dream boat?!

The boats are powered by either Volvo Penta 650 or 850's or Caterpillar engines. The cost to run these is significant with the journey from Ipswich to Southampton burning £3500 worth of fuel. Most of the boats have thrusters in the bow and stern to make manoeuvring easier. They even have an app which can be used to "park" the boat.

A recent addition to many of the boats is the IPS pod which can rotate through 360 degrees and provides both propulsion and steering.

The attention to detail and quality control right through the manufacturing process is very impressive. Any minor blemish in the finish is noted and rectified before the boats goes through to the next stage of manufacture. The quality of the woodwork was particularly impressive and it is all produced on site.

So, once you have bought your boat for circa £3m, fuelled it for the year and paid berthing fees, maintenance fees and insurance, the cost will mean that most of us will never own such a lovely thing, but there are plenty of people worldwide who can afford it and the orderbook for Fairline Yachts remains very strong and hopefully the Company will continue to go from strength to strength.

The visit concluded with a vote of thanks to Fairline and the presentation of FFA hats and clock.

A late lunch was taken at the the Crown Inn at Elton, a short distance from Oundle. Although we were a little late in getting there, Xin and her team had everything very much under control and the food was excellent.

Two of our guests on the day came from New Zealand, although not specifically for the FFA visit! Dylan Thomas, based in Queenstown is a direct relation to Dylan Thomas, the famous Welsh poet of "Under Milk Wood" fame.

Aircraft departed Sibson at 5pm for a lovely flight home in perfect conditions.

David Hunt and John Milne



FFA 50th Anniversary Tour



Event 1 – RAF Waddington – Friday 24th May

The long and meticulously planned 2024 UK tour, replacing the usual overseas 'summer-study tour', got off to a grand start in Lincolnshire at the end of May. Very appropriately, in preparation for a visit to the RAF's most advanced and secretive base, nearby historic former RAF Wickenby aerodrome hosted those flying in, landing on the same concrete that 80 years ago reverberated to the nightly action of Lancaster bombers heading out to their continental targets.

In this momentous year for the FFA, as has become some kind of routine, some of the good and great, gathered on the evening before the formal dinner, to swap tall tales and be in-situ for the next morning's proceedings, in a very nice hotel on the water's edge of Brayford Marina in the City of Lincoln.

So it was, on Friday 24th May, we were guests of Royal Air Force Waddington, enjoying privileged access to some of their most sophisticated and secretive assets, generously arranged by former Royal Air Force Tornado Navigator Dave Postlethwaite "Pos" to his friends, a neighbour of Richard Howard, who co-ordinated this opening FFA 50th event. RAF Waddington is home to a potent collection of modern hardware and systems that is the UK's ISTAR force (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance), comprising electronic and signals intelligence gathering Boeing RC-135W 'Rivet Joint' aircraft, as well as two squadrons operating RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems), drones to you and me !

Such was the popularity of this visit, our group was so large it required splitting into two groups and we were all warned that photography was not allowed, as one would expect, but also all mobile telephones and even electronic hearing-aids had to be surrendered before entry was allowed into any of the places we were visiting, for fear of 'stray' electronic signals causing any interference with the sensitive systems in play. Our group started with 31 Squadron, the unit slated to be the first operator of the new MQ-9B Protector system. Flying Officer Matt Colman of 31 Squadron gave a general introduction to RPAS and was keen to point out that this aircraft was fully supported and maintained by the RAF, unlike the older, established MQ-9A Reaper the RAF currently operate in the middle-east, which is supported 'in theatre' by American civilian contractors. We were shown all of the operational options of the new Protector, including civilian Search and Rescue, disaster management and even the ability to support of DEFRA, however, there was no doubt of its true intent within the ranks of the RAF !

At present, there are only two Protectors at Waddington, only one of which has flown here and then, only once last year. These aircraft will have the ability to take off from Waddington, with operators on the ground at Waddington then able to operate it anywhere in the world, for up to 22 hours. This is a better option than the current and older Reaper, operating in the middle-east today, that needs its operators to be stationed out there to carry out the take off and landings 'locally', before handing control over to operators on the ground at Waddington who conduct the mission. We were able to see one of the Protector aircraft up close and an impressive beast it is. As big as a Typhoon fighter jet, its long slender wings and stalky undercarriage making it less attractive, but probably just as potent.

Next, we moved to Hangar 5, home of 51 Squadron who operate the huge 4-engined RC-135W 'Rivet Joint', where, once again, all telephones had to be surrendered upon entry into the building. Although the 'Rivet Joint' airframes are now 60 years old, they are at the peak of their game, so to speak, with modern engines and flight-deck systems to rival any modern airliner. The impressive

• 112 participating members • 56 different aircraft • Around 20 different visits • Distance 1435NM • Total flight time 12hrs 10Mins over 15 days • Average speed 136MPH • 423litres of fuel. (G-DUDZ DR400)

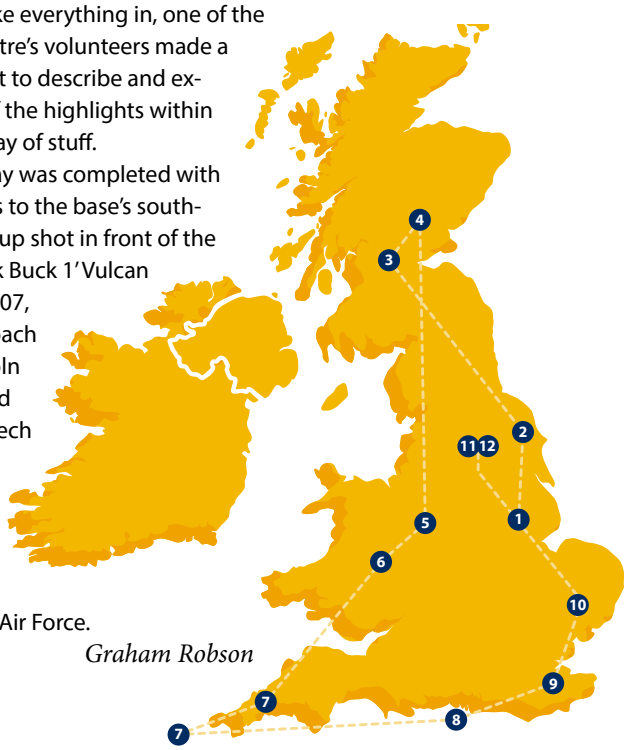


presentation we were given detailed the huge capabilities of this 'spook' plane, the main task of which is electronic and signal intelligence, ELINT and SIGINT in the Air Force parlance and has been very busy over the past three years engaged in operations in support of Ukraine and, more recently, in the middle-east, operating from a base in Crete, offering intelligence support to Israel in its struggle in the Palestinian war. Afterwards, open discussion garnered answers to a number of our questions, though some did remain, politely, un-answered !

The intrigue continued, with a visit to the base's other RPAS unit, 13 Squadron, who have been operating the older Reaper aircraft in 'sandy places' for a number of years now. With eight airframes in service, the aircraft are based in the middle-east, but flown on operation from a secure and sophisticated operations centre, inside number 4 Hangar, comprising a series of 40' shipping-container sized mobile units, fully 'plumbed into' the base's high-tec communications network, to allow remote operation thousands of miles away. With Squadron boss, Wing Commander Stu McAdam as our host we were allowed inside one of these units, which almost replicated a real cockpit and flight-deck environment, for its crew of three. Up front, a Pilot and Systems Operator (both Commissioned Officer posts) flew and operated the aircraft, while 'in the back' was the Mission Co-Ordinator, which is a post for enlisted ranks, generally a Flight Sergeant. The visit to 13 Squadron ended with the biggest surprise, a visit to the actual operations room upstairs, where a huge digital tv display on the wall showed real-time views of two Reaper aircraft flying in Iraqi and Syrian airspace. The access we were given was quite remarkable and privileged.

The group, which had been ably guided all day by young Pilot Officer Chris, who had delayed his Friday afternoon drive to the Lake District to accommodate our day's visit, then moved the building that had been the NAAFI in WW2 and suffered bomb damage from a stray Luftwaffe bomber that dropped its load on the camp. Inside of which, we enjoyed a 'nod' to the base's rich history, at the wonderful RAF Waddington Heritage Centre. Spread over three rooms, it is a very comprehensive and impressive collection of artefacts, exhibits, memorabilia that even includes a considerable amount of wreckage from a Lancaster bomber crash, that has been brilliantly re-assembled around a steel frame replicating a real-size Lancaster fuselage. Unable to take everything in, one of the Heritage Centre's volunteers made a brilliant effort to describe and explain most of the highlights within this huge array of stuff.

Our long day was completed with a drive across to the base's south-side for a group shot in front of the famous 'Black Buck 1' Vulcan bomber XM607, before the coach back to Lincoln for dinner and amusing speech from "Pos" on some of the highlights of his interesting career in the Air Force.



Graham Robson

Event 2 – BBQ at Moor Farm, Saturday 25th May



It gave Paul and Roz Stephens, together with our daughter and son-in-law, Katie and James, the greatest pleasure to welcome around 40 members to Moor Farm in North Yorkshire.

The event was a simple BBQ lunch en route from Wickenby to Cumbernauld. It was good to see a few members that haven't attended many meetings.

The weather behaved itself on the day, but as soon as everyone departed, it clagged in and rained.

There's not a lot really to say, other than we hope everyone enjoyed themselves for this short visit. Maybe leave it to the photos to portray the day.

Thank you to all for contributing £385.00 to the Yorkshire Air Ambulance.

Paul Stephens











Event 3 – Cumbernauld, Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th May







The group reassembled at Cumbernauld Airport mid afternoon for the 3rd & 4th venues.

As the crews dismounted and made there way to the waiting coach, several with walking sticks, it would have been clear to any observer that the group were celebrating some thing that had been about for a long time and by the time Jean and I got on the bus with our sticks, it began to look like an old folks outing with some younger lady carers.

We then drove to our Hotel in the centre of Glasgow, on unusually quiet roads, the Scottish Cup Final between Rangers and Celtic was taking place.

After settling into the Hilton Hampton we proceeded about 50 meters to the oddly named Butterfly and Pig restaurant for our evening meal, the bar was packed with scantily clad Glasgow maidens out on the town, the males in the party were transformed from "old peoples outing to stag party" the sticks had all disappeared sadly all to no avail as we were quickly led to an upstairs room where we had a uneventful dinner, unfortunately due to the noise from below it was only possible to hold a conversation with the person next to you.

Next day after setting a punctuality test the night before to be ready half an hour before the scheduled time, the group passed with flying colours, and began to get agitated in a relatively small hotel foyer.

Our first visit of the day was the very extensive Museum of transport, we were still early so our driver Susan gave us a tour of Glasgow city centre including the famous Sauchiehall street, Roger Bell took over the microphone regaling us with his misspent youth in the city. It was not possible to take in the whole museum in the time allocated.

After a quick lunch it was back on the coach to the famous Burrell Collection of art, put together in all its forms from 500BC to the last century and left to the City of Glasgow by Mr. Burrell (a wealthy ship owner), again the collection is overwhelming and we could not do it justice.

Back on the coach to the Hotel, unfortunately it was raining heavily and we were not able to see how green a city it was, one of the greenest cities in the UK. Dinner again in the Butterfly & Pig.

Mike Ashmole

Event 4 – Perth, Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th May



Next day was Event 4, the plan had been for the short field specialists to fly directly to Andrew Gordon, our member host's strip, and the rest would fly directly to Perth to be bussed. A chat with Andrew confirmed the weather was ok, but was to deteriorate later in the day. I guess the chance of trying to accommodate 24 disgruntled flyers was enough to tip the balance, the decision was they would all fly to Perth and be bussed to Blair Atholl.

I took over the microphone for this trip, apologies to those who would have preferred hearing about Roger's misspent youth in Perthshire, but it gave me a chance to preach the benefits of forestry which was well demonstrated from the bus window.

We arrived at Andrew's strip, which looked in great condition, to a welcome coffee and biscuits . We then had a presentation by Alex Brewster a local Farmer, on the modern thinking on seed mixtures for upland pastures after which we went to Andrew's hangar to view to his Tiger Moth purchased by his father for £10.00 after the war, one of over 200 that had been based at Perth for basic training, a great photo opportunity for the group.



Lunch at The House Of Bruar

Next up was lunch at The House of Bruar, a wonderful example of entrepreneurship, a insignificant roadside pub on the A9 converted to a very large shopping centre, with restaurant's, deli's, Ladies and Gents fashion, food and veg, antiques. We had scheduled a trip to the Blair Atholl Castle gardens, I had my lecture prepared but the weather was becoming iffy, I recognised that the Ladies would much prefer another hour at Bruar rather than standing about in the dripping wet trees. It did allow time for the more energetic guys to view the spectacular Bruar waterfall.

Back on the bus to Perth, a freshen up then back on the bus to The Royal Perth Golf Club for dinner, the club is celebrating its Bi Centenary this year, at last we had a meal where we were able to have a conversation over the table.

I had promised to give a short history of the club after dinner. In the afternoon I had become aware that Roger had opened a book on how long I would speak, I was not aware that I had a reputation for being as gasbag, some of the party had bet I would be over an hour, in the event it was 18 mins including questions.

The last visit was a tour of the University of the Highlands aero engineering college based on Perth Airfield, most of the ladies opted for a coffee at an antiques centre some 30 mins away. The rest of us assembled in a lecture room for a presentation from the college principal, who had seen service in The Army Air Corps.



Dinner at the Royal Perth Golf Club

He explained that it was a two year course leading to a full license. Most of the students are from overseas and are in great demand when they graduate. We then toured the hangar where most of the practical training takes place, there were several types of aircraft and engines that get taken apart and put together again by the students.



Perth Training Aircraft for engineers

Our party became engrossed with every detail and it was obvious that I had not allotted enough time for this visit.

We must have made a good impression with the principal as he wrote to me afterwards,

"Dear Mike, I wanted to extend my heartfelt thanks for your groups visit on the momentous occasion of your 50th anniversary. It was truly a pleasure to experience the energy and enthusiasm of your members and share what we do here at AST." Alasdair Gilbert Principal.

Lunch was taken in the airport cafe when we were joined by the ladies.



The Stranded party at Perth



The 3.5 days were dominated by the weather...

The 3.5 days had been dominated by the weather, every time I turned round some one would be on a mobile looking at the weather or at the back of the bus having a committee meeting on whether they should head for the next venue while there was a window. In the unlikely event that I organise another trip I will confiscate mobiles at the start.

Eventually the weather did catch up with us and the scheduled departure of 1300 was delayed until 1800. I extended the out of hours permission and asked David Heather-Hayes to escort the group around the Scottish Aero Club hangar that has some interesting aircraft.

Confident that the party would all get away at 1800, I took my leave, in the event they were not able to fly that day and a scramble to secure accommodation ensued. My suggestion to try Salvation Army Hostel met with Hostility. They eventually settled for a very smart hotel. David extended the out of hours at Perth meaning the party could depart by 0800 and catch the bus to the next venue.

Mike Ashmole

Event 5 – Staffordshire County Show, Wednesday 29th May

Richard and Joyce Hall had kindly arranged a day at the Staffordshire County Show for Flying Farmers on the Grand Tour. Unfortunately Richard was taken ill and was unable to join us on the day but Joyce valiantly carried on.

We were supplied with "Member's Guest' tickets for free entry to the show and to the members' dining room.

The weather dawned grey and cloudy with a cold wind and likelihood of rain. First of all we enjoyed a good look round the show which was an unspoilt agricultural show in the best traditions. A perfect opportunity to enjoy six rings including horse and pony classes; parades of hounds and beagles; beef and dairy cattle; sheep; pigs; magnificent new farm machinery; farriery; a craft fair and retail stalls.

We walked through the animal sheds and admired the rosettes displayed in the pens and chatted to their proud owners.

We were curious why some sheep had bright orange coloured fleeces and we were told by one of the farmers that the fleeces were coloured by their owners firstly to deter rustlers but also to enhance their show appearance, contrasting with their often jet black heads and legs. The dye is harmless and washes off in the rain. Apparently this has been going on for some years.

A highlight of the day was the Dancing Diggers where JCB put on a show in the main ring with diggers following a routine of dancing round each other. My favourite part was when some of the diggers formed an arch and a teleporter was driven under the arch.

Just as the Dancing Diggers display was taking place, the sky blackened and a torrential rain storm started. Unfortunately the surface of the main show ring suffered badly from the dancing diggers combined with the already sodden ground. We quickly escaped to find shelter from the storm.

Altogether an excellent day out.

We wish Richard all the best for a speedy recovery.

Anthea Brown, 27.6.24

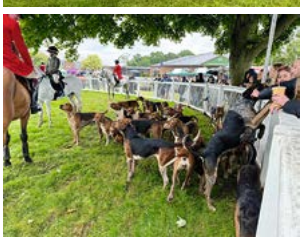












Event 6 - Lunch at Shobdon, Thursday 30th May


Jerry Noble (event organiser) on the right, greeting the arriving aircraft






Paul Stephens, Penny & Richard Corbett



Judy Marcham and Peter Gale



The much anticipated FFA visit to Shobdon went off without a hitch on May 30th. Thanks to Jerry Noble's influence, even the weather proved flyable, although a couple of AOG aircraft reduced the numbers a little.

The Airfield had at last dried out, after many months of perpetual rain and extreme sogginess - and we were able to park all our visiting flyers safely on the grass. Once the refuelling and booking in were over our guests were shown to the Tiger Helicopters hangar, where a most impressive "temporary restaurant" had been created and Chef Daniela Ramsden (Alan's wife and a director of Tiger), had laid on one of her famed delicious buffet lunches.

It seems an age ago since David Corbett died, but it was very touching to see Penny Corbett accompanied by her son Richard meeting many old friends. After lunch Richard gave a fascinating talk based on how the Corbett Farm business had changed over the 50 years that the FFA has existed. He even produced a set of 1974 farm accounts by way of illustration !

After a few words of thanks from Paul Stephens, time for departure came, but there were reports that Bodmin was comfortably below limits! Alternative options were planned (mainly Newquay where the weather was better by the coast), but the Bodmin weather suddenly started improving - and all was subsequently well.

Thanks to everyone who made the visit a success. To hosts Tiger Helicopters in particular, for giving up a sizeable chunk of their main hangar (and lots of their time) to us for the day - and for providing the feast (at cost). To Jerry Roberts (fuelling) and Emma Lloyd (making sure everyone paid for it !), to Tim in the tower for his usual on-the-ball FISO operation.

And lastly to Jerry Noble for such painstaking work behind the scenes to ensure it all went off without a hitch. Apparently that included at least 6 different "final" issues of the schedule, etc .....!

David Johnstone
Maurice Jones
Penny & Richard Corbett

Event 7 - Bodmin, Friday 31st May and Saturday 1st June





Robert Laming & Anthea Brown catching a lift with Gill & Alf Oliver



Arrival at Bodmin airfield

Roger rang me early on Thursday morning to ask if I had seen the forecast - winds gusting 35kts at Bodmin. I asked where he was and he replied still stuck in Perth. You can my imagine my surprise and relief when the first voice I heard on tuning in to Bodmin 120.330 was Roger's, leading us in after a four hour flight. I had earlier been told by Bodmin not to open the hangar door! Eight aircraft made it, the majority coming from Shobdon. I had even told Newquay to expect a weather diversion.

After tea and biscuits we were bussed the short ride to Bodmin Jail, now a hotel after a recent multi million pound conversion. The jail, built in 1779 by prisoners of war, was operational for 150 years, saw over 50 public hangings and was the first British prison to hold prisoners in







Winston and Am Lee











Laura Holt and Helen Cobb enjoying Tresco Abbey Gardens

individual cells. Three cells have been converted into one bedroom.

After checking in we made the fifteen minute walk to Flory restaurant and cafe in the centre of town. The jail dominates this side of Bodmin and it's conversion can only help rediscover it's Georgian charm. Most tourists visit the seaside leaving the centre of Cornwall largely unloved. After an ample meal we retraced our footsteps for an early start the next morning.

Half our group elected to fly to the Scillies in five aircraft. This journey took us along the spectacular North coast, past Lands End and the 30 mile crossing to St Mary's and it's cliff landing. My original intention was to land on Tresco's 360m strip but wet ground had reduced the runway to 200m - a shame because the approach from both ends is spectacular and there is no landing fee. Also Laura struggles boarding boats.

We took the short ride down to the harbour which is always buzzing because most people arrive on the Scillonian from Penzance. There is a choice of boat trips to the outer islands and we all elected for Tresco with it's world famous garden. When our open topped boat arrived it had to moor alongside another boat to allow us to embark.

Poor Laura! The boat quickly filled with people, animals and luggage and we made the short trip to New Grimsby on Tresco. There we took a courtesy bus to the Gardens.

Tresco Abbey Gardens was established by Augustus Smith in the early 19th century when there was not a tree on the island. Having grown a wind break he asked passing mariners to collect plants which has resulted in a sub tropical paradise on an English island stuck out in the Atlantic. Bounty from the many local shipwrecks are displayed in the Valhalla Figurehead museum. Recently red squirrels and pheasants can be seen amongst the vegetation. The gardens change throughout the year and we chose our visit at the best time. The return boat trip departs from a different mooring because of the tides. This involves traversing the airfield and some of us were delayed when the road was closed for a helicopter arrival and departure. But thankfully the boat waited and we returned to the airfield on time for our return flight to Bodmin. By this time a layer of cloud had reduced visibility on the mainland causing flying at Bodmin to stop for the day. In the end three aircraft made it back



Scilly Isles







Roger Bell, Liz and Merv White, Richard Laurance and Peter Mailer





to Bodmin, one diverted into Newquay and we stayed the night in the Star Castle Hotel in St Mary's, highly recommended!

The Saturday dawned another fine day for our visit to the Eden project. We rejoined the group after a hazy crossing, avoiding parachuting at Perranporth. Many people have visited Eden several times. I am always astonished at the high standard of plantmanship. People visiting from tropical countries often comment that the plants in the biomes look better than their own back home. Bear in mind that this is a China clay pit with no soil and pumps constantly running to drain the bottom. We had a very pleasant lunch in the Mediterranean house before venturing outside in the sunshine in time to watch Peter 'James' Mailer flying over the biomes on a zip wire. Well done Peter. By mid afternoon we were all wilting so returned to the bus via the shop for our journey back to the Jail. There was now an opportunity to visit the highly acclaimed museum which pre-dated the hotel development. The evening meal was taken in the chapel restaurant with the roof of the Sistine chapel projected onto the ceiling.

Sunday was correctly forecast to be another perfect day for our flight to Bembridge. Everyone could depart at their leisure because we were not due until mid afternoon. So after another excellent breakfast we assembled for the bus to the airfield at 10.00. Merv White had kindly put on a treasure hunt, perhaps to keep us out of the many danger areas en route. Well I was very grateful for this because it added a great deal of interest to the trip. We landed at a very busy Bembridge at 15.00 to be greeted by the next participants.

Rick Holt

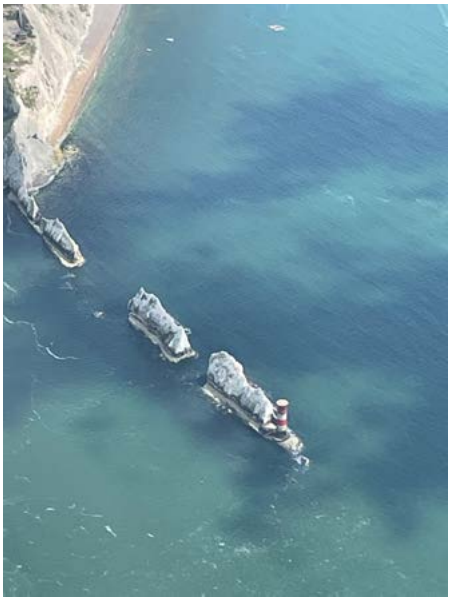








Treasure Hunt Bodmin – Bembridge



This all came about thanks to Neville who had seen a treasure hunt set by myself for local flyers. 'Seemed like a fun idea so what if ...' he said. I was joining the round UK tour of 2024 at Bodmin and going on to Bembridge, hence this was the leg on which the treasure hunt took place.

So what's the history behind this event ? Well I took part in a navigation competition which was run on similar lines – you had to hone your skills on flying an accurate route looking for waypoints along the way. It struck me that this would be a fun activity for newly qualified pilot friends to have a go at, so that they could see the fun side of aviation.

For those of you not involved, it was a voluntary activity, and I think initially many people agreed to take part more out of a sense of courtesy than for the fun of it ! I attempted to allay their fears through several briefings explaining what to do and how to gain extra points for `wowing the judges'. Little did I realise at this stage how competitive the event would turn out to be and just how much work some would put into it.



Following the final briefing and the handing out of the treasure hunt sheets the teams had the chance to work out timings for the different stages between clues, speeds at which to fly to ensure they hit the targeted clue and some used the time to google areas to see if they could forward guess what they had to take a photo of. At this stage the anxiety levels were still rather high, but most seemed determined to have a go now that they had something to work with. For my part I now know what the anxiety levels of a flight instructor are as they send a student off on their first solo cross country!

Clues in hand off we took, this was definitely going to bring out the competitive side in both of us, for me it brought back memories of doing treasure hunts on ponies as a child, the slight difference of doing it in the air was you couldn't use your elbows and horse power to push past others to the finishing line! Charles, on the other hand, is the quiet planning and plotting competitor. He carefully calculated how many seconds it would take to fly each leg at 120 knots on the magnetic tracks given on the briefing sheets before we took off, whilst I was scheming how I could outdo our fellow competitors to wow the judges.

We took off and carefully set time and course to the first clue, with Charles concentrating on keeping the groundspeed at 120 knots and the magnetic track pinned to the heading given on the briefing sheet and counting down the seconds until we arrived at each way point; which surprisingly kept appearing as if by magic. All we then had to do was look around to identify what we needed take a picture off, whilst also setting time and course to the next waypoint.

First clue old and round not fit for a king, second clue one way to get a train between two hills close to the 38, and so the clues continued to clue 9, this one didn't go according to plan, it's a bit of a cock up and finally clue 13 you can land here to claim your treasure.

It was good fun and a good exercise in precision flying which suited Charles well.

We now jump to Bembridge, where I have to say the response from those who had taken part was very enthusiastic, with many saying what fun it had been. At the Propellor inn everyone was enthusiastic and keen to hand in their pictures to the judges. I was supposed to mark and announce the winner that evening. This is where I realised that this was going to take a lot longer than expected, as many of the teams had really gone all out to try and `wow the judges' so it was only fair that we took our time in deliberating. This truly was very difficult and I had to remind myself of the wording on the Treasure Hunt sheet in order to ascertain the winners and runners up.



The final part of the whole event was the debrief where the answers to the clues were given and the winners announced. The runners up receiving key tags engraved with the FFA 50 Anniversary 2024 and the winners with a chopping board with the route engraved on it.

Winners – Charles Course and Helen Cobb – precision flying and superb photography

Runners up – Alf and Gill Oliver, Robert Laming and Anthea for background research which thankfully they had taken the time to process the key information listed!

Finally a huge thanks to all who took part and surprised both themselves and me in the process!

Merv White, Helen Cobb, and Charles Course

Event 8 - Isle of Wight, Sunday 2nd June – Tuesday 4th June

Bembridge Airport was selected as the arrival and collection point for the Isle of Wight because it is more friendly than anywhere else, also it has a tarmac runway which is orientated East / West. It is operated by the Isle of Wight Gliding Club on behalf of the landowner and most importantly it is right next door to The Propeller which is a good pub that has food. Having ticked all the boxes we were delighted to see 15 aircraft arrive from all over UK on the afternoon of Sunday the 2nd of June.

Members repaired to The Propeller for a welcoming glass of ale and a snack. Many of the arrivals had come direct from Bodmin Airport and completed a treasure hunt on the way which had been set very skilfully by Mervyn White.

Each of the clues were debated at length by the participants. Some of them were delighted and others were still mystified even after the clue had been explained. So it must have been a good treasure hunt.

The coach driver who took us back to the hotel turned out to be a complete hero. He had been in the British Army, served as a police-man and moved to the Isle of Wight for a peaceful time before going through training and becoming a coach driver. His knowledge of the island and its history made our journeys interesting and amusing over the three days of our stay.

The Seaview Hotel is in the village of Seaview and there is a view down the street of the sea but it's not on the seafront. Notwithstanding that the welcome we received, the rooms we stayed in and the food that was served us was of the highest standard and the hotel can be recommended.

On the first evening we dined on our delicious, preselected menu items in the hotel main restaurant as a group. After the meal we were regaled by Graham Robson with stories about his youth and his career selling baling string around the world for an Israeli company. There were times when he was clearly delighted with his visits and other times when it was obvious that his time was dreary and a chore. The most interesting for him and for us was his great interest in Aviation and the people he met who introduced him to rare aircraft in some of which he was able to get a flight.

On the Monday morning we climbed back onto our luxury coach for an interesting trip across the Isle of Wight to Osborne house. For those of you who have not been to Osborne house I strongly recommend a visit. It was the place where Queen Victoria retired to after the



death of her beloved Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg and Gotha in 1861. He was Queen Victoria's full cousin and gave her 9 healthy children. Prince Albert's father fought with us at Waterloo so he was clearly a good egg. Sadly, Albert died aged only 42 from a disease he caught while inspecting sewers in London. He was determined to make life better for the British people so engaged in much good work but it cost him his life.

The house and grounds are wonderful and beautifully looked after by English Heritage. It was easy to imagine the widowed queen living her solitary life in these luxurious rooms surrounded by servants and courtiers.

One of the most impressive rooms in the building is the Durbar Room. Queen Victoria gathered all the presents that were sent and brought to her from India in this room. It must be difficult for English Heritage to present a building and its contents which was created over such a rapidly expanding period in the British Empire. Many of the exhibits which were formally in the Durbar room were made of ivory. Clearly ivory is no longer acceptable material for the creation of ornaments, gifts and utensils. As a result of which some of the exquisite ivory artefacts appear to have been removed from the Durbar Room since I was last there 35 years ago. Now there is a dining table set for lunch where there were formerly row upon row of display cabinets packed with ivory items.

Victoria and Albert bought the Osborne estate in 1845 and built



Group shot at Osborne house




Boat trip in the Solent

a new mansion here as an escape from court life in London and Windsor. The Royal family took delight in their seaside home and each year spent as much time as possible here and at Balmoral, celebrating many special occasions, including Victoria and Albert's birthdays, at Osborne. Victoria used Osborne for more than 50 years, finding solace here after Albert's death in 1861. She entertained visiting kings and queens and ministers at the house as well as her own extensive family. Today, the story of a marriage, a family and an empire is revealed in the richly decorated rooms. We saw Queen Victoria's most private rooms, including the children's nursery and the bedroom where Victoria died in 1901. There is a delightful little room with a bath and a shower with hot and cold running water which surprised a few of us. The Italianate design of the house, in which Albert was closely involved, became known as 'the Osborne style' and was imitated throughout the British Empire. Albert also took a keen interest in the gardens and wider estate, and much of the planting today is to his designs.

Some of our members walked down to the private beach and enjoyed seeing the 'bathing machine.' This is a little 4 wheeled changing room on wheels where the Queen could get changed into her bathing costume then she could descend a short flight of steps into the sea without prying eyes admiring her ankles as that was all that would be showing.

Bearing in mind the obsession with propriety and modesty we were surprised by some of the paintings in Osborne. Nudity and flagrant behaviour are the frequent topics of the Queen's taste in paintings.

Separated from the House is a wooden chalet known as The Swiss Cottage. This was built as a play area for the nine children. An excellent idea to give Her Majesty some peace and quiet after the hurly burly of the Royal bedroom!

We found lunch in the cafeteria and had the great joy of being able to sit on the front terrace, of the majestic house with its views across the Solent to Southampton and Portsmouth. https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/osborne/

After lunch we embarked in our coach with its chatty and informative guide / driver and went up to Newport and then to Cowes where we met a day trip boat for a cruise down the Solent and around Portsmouth Harbour. When I booked the boat I specifically requested a skipper of the boat to have some knowledge of the Isle of Wight, the Solent, Portsmouth and the warships that were alongside. So it was our skipper barely stopped talking and we were treated to a travelogue of sea, land, wars, history, scandal and warships. He proudly told us he had organised fair weather and a calm sea for us - (tips please ;-))

When we arrived in Portsmouth, the entire harbour was dominated by the massive bulk of the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales RO9. She had just returned after leading the UK carriers strike group on NATO



Steadfast Defender in March. With a complement of 1600 crew and at 285m long and 65,000 tons she is the biggest and most powerful warship ever built in Britain. She can carry 48 F35B Lightning II stealth multirole fighters and Merlin helicopters for anti-submarine warfare. Visitors to Scotland between 2010 to 2017 May well remember seeing her and her sister ship HMS Queen Elizabeth both aircraft carriers in build at Rosyth. It was very moving to be reminded that the last Prince of Wales was lost in an action against the Japanese in 1941 along with HMS Repulse trying to defend Singapore and Malaya. Our cruise back to Cowes was a very pleasant end to an interesting day out.

On the Monday evening we dined on delicious fresh sea food in the Old Fort restaurant a short walk from our hotel. After the meal some of us took the opportunity to sit outside on the terrace next to the seawall, enjoying the calm and warm evening with the lights of Southampton and Portsmouth twinkling in the distance while partaking of a nightcap.

On the Tuesday morning many of the Isle of Wight visitors flew on for a coffee break with Andrew and Anne Cragg before travelling on to Stones Farm for a visit with our President. I went home for a rest, for after 14 days of eating, drinking and general carousing I had severe gout and was exhausted - clearly the old body can't take the punishment these days. However, I received many messages of thanks from members for organising what had turned out to be a wonderful visit to the beautiful Isle of Wight which was the real Star of the Show so it was all worth it.

Roger Bell

If you would like to organise a foreign or domestic tour or a day visit for members please feel free to call or email me or Neville Stops and we will be happy to give some helpful pointers.

Organising a trip or tour is challenging and immensely rewarding when it all comes together. Roger Bell Tel. +44(0)7850584878

Event 9 - Andrew Cragg's Coffee Stop – Tuesday 4th June



10 planes flew from Bembridge to Andrew Cragg's strip at Brooker Farm, just north of Lydd.

Many Thanks to Charlie Papworth who arrived early and not from Bembridge – there's nothing like a plane on the ground to tell you are in the right spot. Sadly, transport had not been alerted to the early arrival and, standing alone in the flat expanse of Romney Marsh, he was left wondering if he had the right airstrip!

Everyone else save the Olivers, who were refuelling en route, arrived in short order and a clutch of Skodas ferried us to Andrew's house where refreshments were served in the garden. Andrew and Anne being on tour, this had all been organised by Emma, known to many as the voice of the FFA on matters of membership and money, while two stupendous cakes (carrot and coffee & walnut) had been baked by Emma, Andrew's daughter.

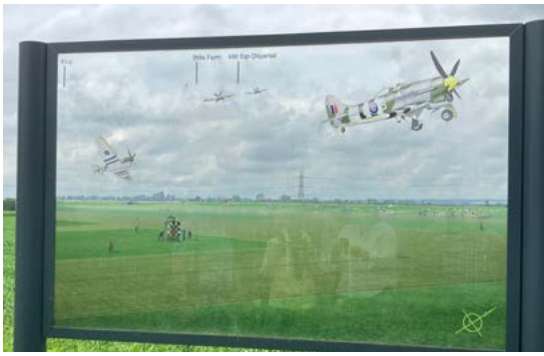
We were then ferried the short distance to the former Newchurch Advanced Landing ground.

In 1943 the site at Newchurch was selected for one of 4 ALG's to be constructed on the Romney Marsh to provide air support for D-Day. Landing ground number 125 aka RAF Newchurch was created with grass runways reinforced with Sommerfield tracking, a heavy steel netting held in place by metal pins, three blister hangars and lots of tents. It would have passed into relative obscurity if it had not been chosen as a base of operations against the VI flying bomb. The Air Ministry asked Ronald Beamont to head up 150 Wing composed of 3 squadrons, 3 (F), 56 and 486 (NZ) to prepare for what the Air Ministry clearly knew was coming. On April 28th 1944 they arrived and brought with them the new Hawker Tempest V, the fastest low-level fighter available and just entering service. In fact there weren't enough to go around so some had to make do with Typhoons and Spitfires while they flew them off the assembly line at Langley nr Slough directly to Newchurch.

The first V1's were launched on 13th June 1944 and Newchurch squadrons claimed their first on 16th June and shot down a total of 638. At the time it was obviously considered such important work that on one particular day an entourage descended on Newchurch including the King and Queen, Winston Churchill, Ernest Hemmingway, John Steinbeck, both war correspondents at the time, and bizarrely Edward G Robinson. Their Majesties stayed only briefly visiting the pilots and ground crew while Churchill and the war correspondents stayed for lunch in the 3 SQN mess tent. The problem of where to get a case of Johnny Walker whisky was deftly solved by inviting the CO of the neighbouring ALG flying USAF Thunderbolts to the lunch. Within a few hours of the deal being struck, a USAF DC3 Dakota landed at Newchurch and quietly dropped off the case. After lunch, Churchill, making an impromptu speech and addressing the war correspondents said : "It has come to my attention that some of your ilk have inferred from time to time that I have drunk enough whisky to fill a battleship." Pausing to quaff another swallow, he continued, waving his fork at all the correspondents in turn, and scowling at them, "That is totally incorrect. I've drunk enough to float the entire Home Fleet." After months of intense activity, when the threat posed by the V1s had subsided, the Wing were moved on to other duties. In September 1944 the site was returned to agriculture.

Little remains of the airfield today, only the concrete refuelling strip. There is, however an interpretation board, a memorial, a large wooden bench fashioned in the shape of a Tempest and two history windows where a ghostly colour image of the airfield lays over the modern farmland. Between the windows is a sound post playing a recording of aircraft at Newchurch in 1944 along with three contemporary accounts of shooting down V1's by pilots of the Newchurch Wing.





In one of the many books written by pilots stationed at Newchurch there is one story recounting that, wishing to "bring a bottle" to a party on the then post D-Day French mainland, one of the Newchurch Pilots filled his drop tank with bitter from the Black Bull but was pounced by an American fighter over the channel. In order to escape the situation he had to jettison the drop tank and I can imagine the pilot sighing wistfully as several gallons of best bitter splashed into the channel.

You can read more about RAF Newchurch here : https://newchurchvillage.org/index.php?cID=215

Anon

Event 10 - Stones Farm, Tuesday 4th June



The final day on the IOW required us to make a rapid early dash for home to ensure all arrangements were well in hand for the lunch where 30 fellow fliers were due to descend on us at Stones Farm within 4 hours - and in fact we arrived before the house-sitter had even got out of bed!

Annette had secretly arranged for our neighbour to come and cut the runway while we were away, which just left the main lawn to have a quick haircut, and we were all spick and span and good to go.

By 13.30 all the aircraft had arrived, some from the intermediate coffee stop with Andrew Cragg, and others who had not so far been participating in the tour. The weather was good and drinks on the patio preceded a sit down lunch in the house. During lunch the Lazer shooting team arrived having driven 3 1/2 hours from Bath, bringing with them a bit of drizzly weather which remained on and off all afternoon. Undeterred, all the participants gathered in the open hangar, venturing out to take their places when it was their turn to 'have a go'. It was an interesting and great fun sport which none of us had encountered before.

In a nutshell, a traditional sized 'clay pigeon' with a laser receptor fixed onto it, is released and the gun (a deactivated shotgun with the relevant laser equipment mounted within it) fires a beam of light at the target. As the beam is literally the speed of light, no 'lead' is required as would be with a real bullet against a moving target. As each gun has its own identity, teams of ten can all shoot at the same time at the same target (with synthesised sound to represent the bang) with individual scores being recorded on a large scoring screen to which the watching audience can either applaud or boo as they feel inclined! There was no damage to the targets which can be continuously reused.

After everyone had had three rounds of 10 targets, the 5 best scores had a championship shoot-off to determine the overall winner (Angus Small), best lady (Helen Cobb), and the wooden spoon (whom I am not naming out of kindness towards her feelings!).

Shooting over and awards given, the coach appeared on cue to take everybody to their hotel in Long Melford for an evening on their own.

Wednesday morning dawned dry and bright, and the coach reappeared to pick everyone up again and brought them to the next venue of Bulmer Brick & Tile Co.

The FFA last visited BB&T around 15 years



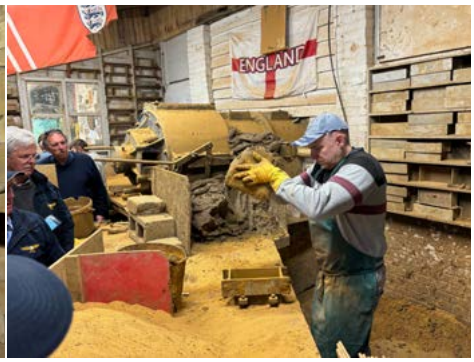














ago and this visit was no less interesting and intriguing. As the last hand-made brick company in existence in the country, their specialism is bespoke bricks for anyone wishing to match any bricks of yesteryear - they have many country estates, National Trust properties and listed buildings on their books, with Hampton Court and St Pancras Station as an example - or even simply to create something unique for one's own property - assuming one's pockets are deep enough!

As every single brick is made one-by-one, one can perhaps understand why they are so expensive - no production line here! First the exact mould for the brick has to be made by their specialist carpenter, then the clay has to be dug from the particular seam of clay which runs through their farm, weathered, made into a pug and then put on individual work tables to be used by their dedicated work force (rather akin to inserting the same nut onto the same bolt on a car production line day after day, I should imagine!)

When sufficient numbers of bricks have been moulded to fill their very old-fashioned brick barrow, they are taken to an open-shedded area to be laid out individually in long rows to dry naturally before being put into the kiln before firing, which is for 3-4 days depending on final requirement, the kiln is coal fired which brings its own difficulties as the coal has to be sourced from wherever they can find it - which is, at the moment, from Poland. I can witness the column of black polluting smoke from my house a couple of miles away, but fortunately the pollution threshold is never quite reached for the environmentalists to get too excited about, as the kilns have finished their firing before the powers that be can get out of their offices and into their cars to investigate - until the next month when it happens all over again!

It is a family run business between Peter (who is now in his 10th decade and still has a very keen interest and input into the business) and his two sons, with future generations also taking part in both the shop floor, and the office departments

The programme suggested that there should be some free time for anyone who wanted a bit of flying to fly to Old Buckenham for a cup of coffee before flying onwards to Elmsett, but that was clearly not going to be practical for timing , so we all returned to Stones Farm for another cup of tea or coffee and more brownies before emplaning for the short 10 minute flight to Elmsett, where Charles Course had laid on an extensive barbecue, a privileged visit to the Hawker Restoration Co based on the airfield, and a free-to-roam look around his very extensive and comprehensive collection of vintage machinery, where both he and his virtually full time mechanic were on hand to answer any probing questions from a load of inquisitive farmers!

By now the group had visibly slowed in their food intake, particularly in the knowledge of a further large meal in the evening, so full justice was not done to the excellent spread laid on by the local hostelry, although we did try our best.

With that meal behind us, Hawker Restorations opened their doors to us for us to witness an extraordinarily skilful group of dedicated aviation enthusiasts. In the hangar entrance was a fully restored Hurricane in all its pristine glory, waiting for the inevitable paperwork before delivery to its new customer in Czechoslovakia. We were specifically asked to not take any photos of this plane, as it was to have an official press launch when it arrived at its new home and the new owner did not want any photos 'leaked' to the media.

Behind this aircraft was the latest restoration project for the company. A Hurricane that was shot down in 1943 diving vertically into the Thames estuary from 16,000' (the pilot baled out - for his 4th time!). Although some of the pieces were recovered on the first attempt, it was not until some years later, and with bigger digging equipment, did they manage to get down to the engine at some 40' deep.

We last visited Hawkers just over a year





ago, and at that time they were able to lay out some dozen or so pieces of this particular aircraft in plan form on the floor. It certainly was not recognisable to the untrained eye as any sort of aircraft - but now, a year on, its fuselage is just having the wooden side stringers put on (not for any structural strength, but so as to create the rigid shape of the body to be covered In the final fabric). The wings were set up in position ready for final work, and it was clearly a Hurricane in the making. Another years work should see it ready for delivery to its customer at White Waltham.

These guys are clearly exceptionally talented and dedicated people and one has to wonder how much longer such people will exist. To put it into perspective there were 14,500 hurricanes built over a 7 year period between 1937 and 1944 which averages at over 2000 per year, but I would guest at least 3000/year at the height of production - that's about 6 per DAY - and almost entirely built by women, as their menfolk were off fighting.

There are 16 airworthy Hurricanes flying in the world and I believe that Hawker Restorations has restored 13 of them - not a bad record for a small Suffolk company!

The short return flight to Stones Farm beckoned and, with an hour or so before the coach arrived to take everyone back to the Bull Hotel in Long Melford, more tea and brownies were on offer, all lovingly prepared and served by the lovely long-suffering Fee, who only came to Stones Farm to house and dog sit while we were away on the rest of the tour, but who loved helping out and meeting up with everyone.

The evening dinner was a formal group dinner at which a local farmer and historian, Ashley Cooper, came to give us a really fascinating talk.

In the latter half of the last century his father



Alf Oliver thanking our speaker Ashley Cooper

noticed some unusual brick-like pieces in a field that he was ploughing and decided to investigate further with a spade. What he eventually uncovered was an extensive Roman settlement, and although the settlement has now been covered up - entirely because of the creeping disease of vandalism - the family has created an extensive museum filled with most interesting artefacts from the site.

His talk to us seamlessly wove together Archeology, History and Aviation, in a very special talk that he created specifically for our Flying Farmer group.

Thursday dawned clear, but we had not finished our period of learning yet, for Charles had set up a visit to a local micro-brewery in the local town of Sudbury in which he has a vested interest.

A traditional brewery produces millions of barrels of beer a year, whereas a micro-brewer is limited to a maximum of 15,000 barrels. Thus the emphasis is on the traditional method of beer production, resulting in a much more interesting product. Their present line-up includes such evocative names as White/Silver/Black Adder, Plough Mans, Suffolk Pride and Mole Trap, and for special occasions they will brew special beers.

Mauldens began brewing beer in 1795 at the Bull Hotel, coincidentally where we were all staying for this part of the tour, starting with a brewery, 30 tied Public Houses and a small farm. Over the next century and a half the business expanded quite a bit, occupying various premises during its expansion until in 1982 it settled on its present site on an industrial estate in Sudbury.

Steve Birch became the head brewer in 1980 and has been there ever since for the, last 45 years, and what he doesn't know about brewing, nobody needs to know! Steve gave us all a rundown of what is the secret to brewing, with all the additives, mixtures and critical temperatures and timings required for the perfect brew (as a non-drinker, most of these requirements went right over my head!), but clearly his passion for the job has resulted in a very successful business.

6 months ago investment in a new cold store and bottle shop was opened adjacent to the original brewing premises, which resulted in the doubling the size of the business. In honour of Steve Birch's passion and involvement of the company it has been christened "The Birch Building". Quite a testament!

Tour of the brewery over, the coach took us back to Stones Farm where the ever-enthusiastic Fee produced yet more teas, coffees and brownies before the crews took to their aircraft, in their own time, to fly North to Sherburn in Elmet. This was the last staging post on this very successful Anniversary tour, before the final black-tie dinner in Harrogate.

Martin and Annette Gosling
Charles Course
Helen Cobb





Event 11 - Grand Dinner, Thursday 6th June



Flying members arrived at Sherburn Airfield early afternoon to be coached to The Hotel du Vin in Harrogate for the last night Dinner. They were joined by several members who had elected to drive, making a grand total of fifty five.

After a pre dinner drinks reception we all sat down to enjoy a four course culinary delight.

Our chairman Paul said grace (with a difference). His daughter Katie (guided by Paul) was the author of his narration. The words were skilfully put together (all in rhyme) which embodied everything the FFA is all about. It was a fitting start to the evening.

After the meal Tony Poulsom gave a very interesting and enjoyable talk on his memories of the inception of the FFA in the early seventies. His faultless recall of names and places was remarkable, he kept everyone enthralled throughout, with tales of humorous and not so humorous flying incidents over the years.

Neville Stops then presented him with an inscribed drinks glass to mark the occasion.

He also presented glasses to all the event hosts. Himself being presented with a Bettys hamper in recognition of all the hard work he had put in over the last two years to make the event happen which brought to a close a very enjoyable evening.

Gordon Bellerby



Neville Stops



Whole Tour Finishers, left to right - Winston and Am Lee, Judy Marcham, Peter Gale, Gill Oliver Martin and Annette Gosling and Alf Oliver



Martin Gosling and Tony Poulsom





Mike Cuttell



John Graves



Gordon Bellerby

Grace from the dinner that my daughter Katie wrote (with a little bit of help) that I read out

I bring you this evening, a reading of Grace
We thank all us farmers, for the food on our plates
Our backgrounds may vary, our aircraft diverse
Which mainly depends on the size of our purse.
50 years the Flying Farmers have been together
With wonderful friendships bound forever
Many strips we have visited, many landing fees paid
Many events arranged and many memories made,
Countless miles we have flown, crossing countries afar
We've seen farming and factories, by air and by car.
Then we gather in the evening, usually in the bar
To recount the day's travel, as Flying Farmers we are.
Which brings us to this night,
no Notams in sight
Give thanks for safe flights,
without too many frights
Let us celebrate together,
then look at the weather
As tomorrow we depart,
for destinations apart.

Paul Stephens







Roz and Paul Stephens





50th Anniversary Event Organisers left to right: Paul Stephens, Richard Howard, Mike Ashmole, Rick Holt, Andrew Cragg, Martin Gosling, Charles Course, and Gordon Bellerby

Event 12 - Taylor's Tea & Coffee Factory, Friday 7th June

A short coach journey across town saw thirty two members arrive at Taylor's Tea & Coffee factory in Harrogate ready for the 11am start for the tour of the factory where we were warmly welcomed by John Hennighan and his team.

We were served tea & coffee and given a short resume of the history of Taylor's and a briefing on what to expect in the factory. We were then split into three groups. Suitably booted and suited we were shown around the factory by our respective guides.

It is a very modern factory with updates and modifications happening almost daily.

A great deal of ingenious design has gone into taking plastic out of the packaging wherever possible. This work is still ongoing.

Everything is automated from the tea or coffee being blended to being packed, boxed and palleted. Great care was taken to ensure the quality of the product, with many checks both manually and automaticly being made along the production line.

There were thirteen tea bag packaging machines each capable of packing 2600 bags per minute running 24 hrs, six days a week. Watching these machines work is mesmerising.

After disrobing and more tea and cakes John hosted a question and answer session.

He told us Taylor's now has 40% of the black tea market in the UK and produces and sells a staggering 40 billion tea bags per year. In total 30 thousand tons of tea and coffee are produced there annually.

After a vote of thanks and a presentation of a clock and a hat we were all presented with a complimentary bag of guess who's Tea and Coffee on leaving.

Gordon Bellerby







G-BSEY Europe tour & Egypt Rally 2023 – by Venetia Brown



Above main picture: G-BSEY Grand Tour 2023, a poster by Toni Hausler

In October 2023, we set off on the trip of a lifetime, and flew G-BSEY, aka 'Bessy', a Beech A36, from the North of Scotland to Egypt and back. We flew through 7 countries totaling 7,367 NM.

Bessy had been purchased in October 2022 by Euan, and is mainly kept up in the Black Isle, where we are based. Euan is a keen pilot and has been flying for the past ten years. We have mainly flown around Scotland, with the occasional trip to Europe, such as Belgium and Le Touquet. Therefore, this trip was a huge undertaking, and we didn't fully understand what we were getting ourselves into or indeed how to plan it!

With the trip vaguely planned, I decided that I should probably have some flying lessons so I knew the basics. That summer, I learned to fly at Highland Aviation, a fantastic small flying school based at Inverness airport. What was meant to be a few lessons turned into a full PPL, with my practical taken two weeks before we set off on the mammoth trip. Although not quite experienced enough to fly the Bonanza solo, I hoped to be of some help to Euan - as they say - four eyes are better than two!

Down through Europe

On a beautiful morning in mid-October, we set off from Turweston heading south across the Channel. We chose Châteauroux as our point of entry into Europe, allowing for easy customs and cheap avgas. After a quick pit stop, we headed south towards the foothills of the Alps. The landscape going into Provence provided a welcome change; high terrain & dramatic scenery.

We followed the Rhône and descended into Carpentras - a small uncontrolled airfield, northeast of Avignon. Having already cleared customs we wanted somewhere with easy parking and minimal bureaucracy. We spent the first night in Pernes-les-Fontaines, a quintessential French town with charming boulevards, a historic gate and numerous fountains.

One goal of the trip was to cycle as much as possible and remove the need for unreliable taxis. We had swapped out the back seats in the Bonanza for two Brompton bicycles. On our first full day, we made great use of them and cycled past vineyards, orchards and lavender fields en route to Gordes - a small town famous for its magnificent backdrop. Later that evening we hopped on a train to Avignon, a pretty city on the Rhône famous for its huge ramparts which surround it.

We departed Carpentras early the following morning in an attempt to avoid the high winds which were forecast. As we headed south we encountered heavy turbulence crossing the mountains east of Marseille. We then followed the low level VFR route towards Cannes. The otherwise tranquil shoreline of the Côte d'Azur looked less than inviting with the super yachts of St Tropez firmly moored and not a sunbather in sight.

We landed at Cannes with a strong tailwind and cycled along the coast to catch our train to Beaulieu-sur-Mer. Beaulieu, a gorgeous town set on the Riviera between Nice and Monaco, became popular in the late 19th century as a winter retreat with notable residents including Gustave Eiffel, Lord Salisbury & Igor Stravinsky. It has since been overshadowed by its more famous neighbour, Saint-Jean-Cap-Fer-

rat but offers a distinctive laid-back vibe that has somehow escaped commercial overdevelopment. Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild is well worth a visit for its stunning gardens.

The weather forecast was not looking great, so we changed plans; instead of flying to Tuscany, we headed south to Corsica. And we are so glad that we did - Corsica was amazing to fly around and ended up being one of our favourite places. The rocky mountains contrast the long beaches all along the coast. We stayed near Porticcio where coincidentally, Laurent, the Airbnb owner, was also the ATC controller! It did rain most days, so we went to our first museum of the trip - to learn about Ajaccio's greatest export; Napoleon Bonaparte.

From Ajaccio, we flew to the south of the island, flying over Bonifacio which looked majestic on the cliff edge. We stayed at the charming family run Ambassador, which was walking distance to the beautiful Palombaggia beach. A bonus about travelling in the off-season in Europe is that you are more likely to get a last minute booking - something that is essential with the unpredictable weather.

We crossed from Corsica to Italy flying overhead Isola D'Elba (where Napoleon was exiled to). From the coast, we flew to Tuscany, over many picture-perfect hilltop towns, including the striking Montepulciano and its surrounding vineyards.

For the following days, we stayed at Podere S. Apollonia, a small Agriturismo with its own airstrip, overlooking Montecchio castle. Antonello, our host, and former airline pilot, was kind enough to arrange a tour of the castle which dominates the Val Di Chio valley. Given its prized hilltop position, it was the scene of several battles between Arezzo and Florence in the 10th and 12th centuries.

Not able to fly for a few days, we managed to hire a car and drove to Siena. Battling torrential downpours we ticked off the big hitters including the Piazza del Campo and the Duomo. The latter definitely being the highlight with its incredible mosaics, beautiful ceilings (especially the Piccolomini Library) and fabulous stonework. The following day we visited il Molina di Grace in Chianti - a fantastic winery run by friends just outside of Castellina.

Next, we flew from Montecchio to Bocca di Falco, Palermo (351 NM), our biggest water crossing to date - with life jackets firmly secured! The approach into Palermo is daunting as you skim over tall apartment blocks, but it did make for an epic video. Sicily was wonderful; we spent a night in the vibrant Palermo and another in the gorgeous town of Scopello - lots of swimming, cycling and long aperol-fuelled evenings in town squares! From Palermo we flew to Comiso to visit the picturesque Ragusa Ibla. Comiso was our most exciting ground experience to date - a large bus picked us up, our plane was fully checked, and our Bromptons assembled and dismantled a few times to ensure they weren't hiding anything! We were in the land of the mafiosa after all…

From Sicily, we flew to Greece and landed in Kefalonia. Unlike France and Italy, nearly all the airports in Greece require handling - a membership to AOPA greatly reduces the cost and the two main agents, Goldair & Skyserv proved to be helpful albeit exceptionally slow at responding to emails - book in advance! Kefalonia was still warm and we sat out in a tavern enjoying a well earned Mythos. Next, it was onto Megara, Athens main GA airport, albeit an active military field. They had no space for parking, so it was a quick refuel before heading south to the Aegean. Absolute chaos ensued when Euan started the engine without permission. Lots of commotion on the radio followed by two F16s circling overhead. We took off with our tails between our legs and headed south towards our next port of call - Syros.



Above main picture: Refiling at Figari Sud Corse

Syros is an idyllic Cyclades island often overshadowed by its more famous neighbour Mykonos. Historically, a major trading port and ship building hub, the capital Ermoupoli had a real buzz to it - besides it being the "off season". We had a wonderful few days, swimming each morning in 25°C splendour - not bad for November!

At this point, we had flown 2,772 NM across Europe and we were nearly at our destination: Egypt! We flew direct from Sitia to Cairo, but the flight was far from uneventful, as we lost radio contact over the Mediterranean - you know it's a long water crossing when you have been flying for two hours and have another two hours to go! We regained contact as we were passing over Alexandria, and kept going south to Cairo where we landed at Sphinx International Airport.

Fly-in Egypt rally

Egypt doesn't have much in the way of general aviation, with most passing aircraft required to fly at 11,000ft or higher. The idea of flying a small aircraft for fun is virtually nonexistent. We were super lucky, therefore, to join a rally of small planes granted permission to fly over Egypt. The organiser, Yasser AKA "The Flying Pharaoh", managed to secure all the necessary permits and approv-







als through Cairo's airspace. The rally aimed to promote General Aviation in Egypt and over the following eight days, we joined Yasser and 10 other pilots in exploring the wonderful country both from the air and on land.

One of the highlights of the whole trip has to be flying around the pyramids - a true bucket list experience! Only upon arriving in Cairo did we learn about the opportunity to participate in a low-level formation flight around these ancient wonders. In fact, we were told that we were among the few aircraft in the past few decades to have this privilege.

Before taking to the air, we visited the pyramids in the traditional manner, (by bus!) in the morning. Standing near these colossal structures gave us a real sense of their size and grandeur and the human work required to have built them. You hear the pyramids are big, but it's only once you are next to them, you realise just how big! Once we had our fill of photo opportunities and dodging through the tourists, we were back to Sphinx International Airport. There, we eagerly boarded our planes for the unforgettable flight over the pyramids. Seeing them from above, after witnessing their scale up close, was truly mesmerising. During our time in Cairo, we also explored the Egyptian Museum, where we marvelled at mummies and ancient treasures, including the iconic mask of the Golden Pharaoh, Tutankhamun.

The next Egyptian stop was Luxor, roughly 300 NM to the south. Flying in formation over the desert was fantastic although it was surprising how mountainous the area was. After a somewhat exciting flight dodging sandstorms and lightning we spent a fantastic two days in Luxor. We began with a morning trip to the Valley of the Kings - one of the most impor-

Above left:
Pyramids by foot
Above right
Pyramids by air
Lower left:
G-BSEY







tant areas of modern egyptological exploration. The inscriptions and artwork that adorn the tomb walls are magnificent. Nestled amidst the Theban Hills, these tombs house the hidden underground mausoleums of some of the most famous Pharaohs and Queens of ancient Egypt including Seti I, Ramses II & Tutankhamun. Exploration continues to this day, with the most recent tomb discovered in 2005. The temple of Hatshepsut was just as impressive, and well worth a visit; the feat of engineering honestly blows your mind when you see it!

From Luxor, we continued south following the Nile. The Nile from above is remarkable with the lush green banks transitioning to the arid desert landscape. We landed at Aswan where a warm welcome (of about 20) government officials awaited us. It was very hot, and we recorded a temperature of 50 degrees celsius in the cockpit at one point! Luckily all the airfields in Egypt are relatively long, so takeoff performance was not a major factor. We visited the Aswan Dam and Philae Temple, and later spent an evening on the boat on the Nile not far from where Agatha Christie based the murder mystery. The next day we embarked on a day trip to Abu Simbel and flew over Lake Nasser, the largest manmade lake in the world. Abu Simbel temple is awesome, and especially incredible in how it was moved in the 1960s to prevent it from being submerged by Lake Nassar.

The last stop on the Egypt tour was El Gouna, where we participated in an air show and met members of the public. Hilariously, all pilots were interviewed, so there's an interview of us that aired somewhere on Egyptian television! At El Gouna, we had our final ceremony as a team before everyone flew back to Cairo and then went their separate ways.

Top: Flying in formation over the Sahara desert
Lower left: Interviewed at El Gouna for Egyptian television
Lower right: Overhead the Red Sea at Hurghada



Above:
Al Qiran, the mountainous desert of the South Sinai
Opposite page:
Venetia Brown & Euan Ramsay

Back to the Highlands

After Cairo, our next stop was Crete, touching down at Heraklion this time. From there, we continued to Athens and landed at Athinai Venielos - the main international airport. Due to the last minute arrival, we could only secure parking for a day, but it was enough to visit the Acropolis and soak up Athens' vibrant atmosphere. It was definitely our biggest airport of the trip, and taxiing in front of an Air China Airbus was a novel experience.

The following morning, we flew along the coast from Athens to Dubrovonik passing Corfu and Albania. Dubrovonik was an interesting landing as the weather was coming in and the elevated position of the runway can be deceiving. Unfortunately, the weather now fully felt like November, and it poured whilst we were there. It was a shock to the system after having been in Egypt, but also a great chance to recuperate as we still had a few days of flying left.

Leaving Croatia, we cut through Italy and touched down at Venezia Lido. This grass airfield is just a short hop away from Venice via a water taxi (which can be ordered in advance over the radio). Venice in November was wonderful, offering crisp winter days without the hordes of tourists nor the heat or smell of the summer.

Returning to France, we encountered severe wind shear from the Mistral as we passed Cannes and Marseilles. It was the first time on our flight that we had genuinely felt uncomfortable with huge white caps and breaking waves beneath us. As we headed west the conditions improved and we refuelled in Montpellier and headed to Deauville where we spent our final night. On departure the airport authorities were very conscientious and conducted a thorough inspection of our aircraft. We had accumulated various gifts and souvenirs from our journey - ceramic plates from Sicily, salad bowls from Greece - all heavily wrapped up in bubble wrap. They went above and beyond to unwrap these but were disappointed to find innocuous housewarming gifts, and not contraband - a frustrating end to both our days!

After six weeks, we crossed the channel and re-entered the UK. Classic November weather greeted us with a sudden turn for the worse. Our plan was to stop at Turweston to visit family before heading back to Scotland. However, flying low due to poor visibility, we were barely able to see more than 1 km ahead. Remembering our human performance training and the risks of pushing through due to personal desires, we decided to divert to White Waltham. Fortunately, Euan knew the airfield well as he used to fly a lot there. Happy to be down on the ground, there was no choice but to leave the plane there and head by taxi from White Waltham to Northamptonshire. Although this slightly delayed our homecoming, we felt it was good airmanship to not be complacent, especially when just minutes from a home airfield.

We could have made it all the way from Egypt only to make a silly mistake back in England.

G-BSEY's 'Grand tour' was an absolutely amazing experience, and we are already contemplating potential routes for our next adventure!

The fly in Egypt tour happens each year, and this year is set to take place in October 2024. We thoroughly recommend it as an extraordinary experience to explore Egypt, something that wouldn't be possible without the organisation and attention to detail of Yasser and Mona. We met some great pilots, from France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Belarus and Saudi Arabia.

For more info email info@theflyingpharaoh.com or follow @the.flying.pharaoh on instagram.



When Euan and Venetia are not flying, they run a boutique hotel on the Black Isle, in the Highlands of Scotland. Newhall Mains has a grass airstrip of 640m and welcomes pilots to come and stay throughout the summer season.

Newhall Mains Fly-in - 14th September 2024

Newhall Mains is a boutique hotel on the Black Isle, owned by Euan Ramsay, a member of the Flying Farmers Association.

Newhall Mains has a grass airstrip of 640m and welcomes pilots to come and stay.

If you are more local, you are welcome to visit our restaurant for an evening meal, afternoon tea or Sunday lunch.

Prior Permission is mandatory and can be acquired by contacting info@newhallmains.com

The next fly-in at Newhall Mains will be 14th September 2024 and we love to see as many FFA members there as possible.

Website: https://www.newhallmains.com/
Instagram: @newhallmains





*NEW Calandar of Events

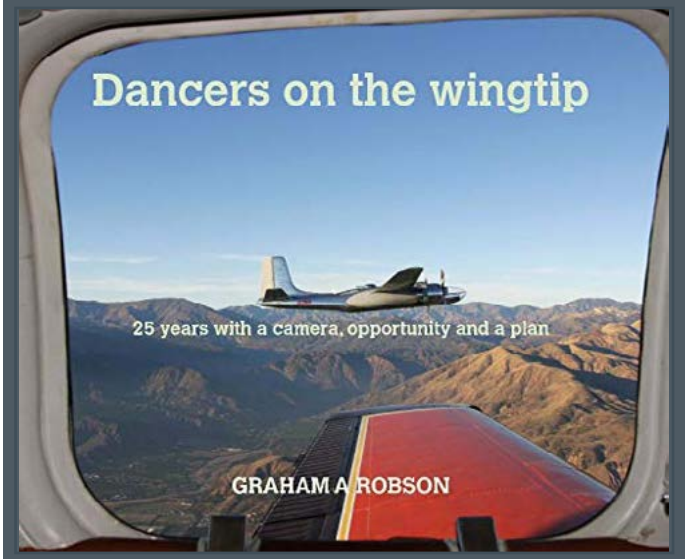
29 Aug – 1 Sept 2024	Spitfires at Compton	Compton Abbas, Dorset
30 Aug – 1 Sept 2024	LAA Rally	Leicester
31 Aug 2024	19 Squadron Flying Day	IWM Duxford, Cambs
31 Aug – 1st Sept 2024	Proms Weekend	Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden, Beds
14 Sept 2024	Fly-In Newhall Mains	Black Isle, Highlands of Scotland
14 – 15 Sept 2024	Battle of Britain Air Show	IWM Duxford, Cambs
6 Oct 2024	Race Day, Season Finale	Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden, Beds
9 - 12 April 2025	AERO Friedrichshafen	Lake Constance, Germany
11– 12 Jun 2025	Join Cereals	Roy Ward Farms, Lincs
18 – 20 Jul 2025	Royal Internationals Air Tattoo	RAF Fairford, Glouc

Member story



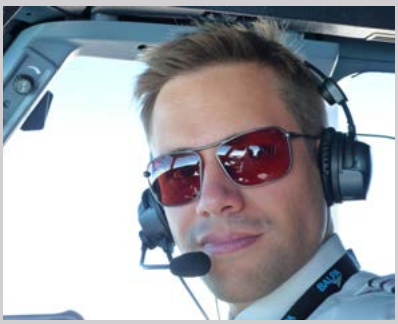
My two junior farmers, flying their Dad's Kitfox in the hangar on a wet day! Jonathan Holland

Book recommendation



Written by FFA member Graham Robson, the book is a chronology of some of Graham's most memorable air-to-air photo flights, from the past 25 years.The subjects and locations are varied, from the USA to South Africa and feature many rare and unusual aircraft. Highlights from his career in aviation photography.

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Item	Logo	Sizes	Price
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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
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Summer Jackets (NEW)			£65

The above clothing is available from stock. If your size isn't listed, it can be ordered.

Please note: Clothes on the list in the sizes available will be at the price stated, but any ordered specially will be at a higher cost. Reduced prices are 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.





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Profile: Stephen Watkins, Worcestershire

By Rebecca Rayner



Stephen Watkins with his Jodel D140 Mousquetaire.

Stephen is a great tie in with this year's 50th anniversary of the FFA as his father was at the very first FFA visit 50 years ago! Stephen's father joined with membership number 136 and Stephen took over his father's membership 25 years later.

Hi Stephen, tell us about your early days…
I grew up on the arable/horticultural family farm with a passion for both farming and flying. My father had gained his pilot's licence in 1949 so I had an early exposer to both.

I went to boarding school to ensure I actually spent time studying otherwise I would have been out on the farm rather than doing homework!

After school I spent four years at the Royal Agricultural College completing the Higher National Diploma in Agriculture and then the Advanced Farm Management course.

And your farming career and family…
After my time at Cirencester, I travelled and worked in Australia and Canada amongst other countries. I then returned home to the family farm in 1980. I joined my parents and uncle but then carried the farm with my wife. We have three children who all live and work in London so I fear as we are largely a tenant farm it is likely to be the end of the farming line.

I have been really fortunate during my working life to have worked abroad in Russia and the Ukraine, this was as a result of winning the first Farmers Weekly "Lowest cost of production of a tonne of wheat" competition. I was also fortunate to be awarded a Nuffield Farming Scholarship which has given me an amazing global farming network.

When did you start flying and link with the Flying Farmers Association?

My boarding school had a combined Cadet Force so as soon as I could, I joined the RAF section, this allowed me to reach solo stage in a glider (well more like a brick with wings) in 1973 and was awarded a Flying Scholarship in 1974. In those days if you completed the course in under six months 35 hours was all that was needed for a full PPL. The scholarship gave me 30hrs and for working all summer on the farm farther paid for the last 5hrs. This means that 50 years ago I had my shiny new PPL not only that, my last 5hrs were at Shobdon, a great tie in with the 50 years of the FFA and the first FFA visit which was to Shobdon.

My father flew into that first meeting and had a membership number of 136 which I took over some 25 years ago, it seemed the easiest way, as we both have the same initial and the farm paid the subscription!

In the early years I flew club aircraft, then was allowed to use the Cessna that father had a share in. I shared a flexwing microlight for a couple of years. Then I built a Kitfox with a local vet and now we share a Jodel D140 Mousquetaire. Three quarters of my time is tail wheel.

Tell us some of your most amusing flying adventures…
During my year after Cirencester I did a tail wheel conversion at Bankstown Airport in Sydney. The conversion was in a Bellanca Decathlon. What I didn't know was that my instructor specialised in sign writing, in smoke. On my first flight he said I should get used to the feel of the plane. What I didn't expect was a full aerobatic sign writing routine including outside loops and rolling loops. I got my endorsement in three lessons!

Whilst in Canada I ordered a Quickie 1 from Burt Rutan and went to collect it from the US with a work mate. The fun started when I came home. I packed all my belongings around the canopy box which was 6'x2'x1' and put the other bits around the engine. All the instruments and fragile parts were put in my hand luggage which was a holdall full of fibre glass chemicals and another bag with glass cloth wheels etc. Because I was traveling in a group at check in I just kept putting a bag or box in every so often. When I put the engine on the scales I was told I must go and pay the excess charge at the check in entrance. I didn't have any spare money so just walked the other way and got away with it!

We were not flying direct to the UK but were spending ten days in Eastern Canada so what was I going to do with my bags? I just left them on the carousel stand behind a pillar and waited. Eventually they were all picked up and placed in the staff office. Ten days later with nothing said I collected them all and checked in the bags again and then went through the 'Anything to Declare' lane at Heathrow. I paid a very small import tax and off I went on my way. I built half of it and then sold it on.

I am not a great one for touring but love challenges. I think the best one in the Kitfox was landing in seven fields in three parishes in ten minutes. No standard procedures for that challenge!

Do you have any other interests other than flying?...
I am also a Liveryman with the Worshipful Company of Farmers (WCF). I have a passion for agricultural education and am honoured to Chair the WCF Education Committee which amongst other things is responsible for our two leading courses, the Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management (ACABM) and the Challenge for Rural Leadership (CRL).