

**INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP
OF FLYING ROTARIANS
U.K. Section**



**THE ROTATING BEACON
AUTUMN BULLETIN 1999**

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WHEN IT ALL WENT DARK

During the course of the Norwich Convention several members suggested that we use our aircraft as a method of seeing the total eclipse of the sun which only occurs in Western Europe about every 75 years. Hearing that south west England was about to be crowded with grockles, Norman Beadle spoke to his good friend Gerard who operates the airfield at Dieppe in northern France. He was expecting 60 French aircraft for that occasion but was willing to accept up to ten IFFR aircraft from the U.K. on receipt of full Customs particulars. This allocation was quickly taken up by members from as far apart as Aberdeen and the Channel Islands.

On the afternoon preceding the eclipse word reached us that the airfield had been invaded by a large contingent of gypsy caravans and was closed for safety reasons. Gerard was distraught, and informed Norman that 'steps were being taken', and that we should carry on with our plans and have Rouen available as an alternate. In the event on calling Dieppe from 20 miles out we were told all was well and we could land. On arrival we found that the French handle such matters rather better than us. It can take a week or more to shift gypsies in this country. Over there a party of extremely large and well-armed men guarded the corner of the airfield to which the caravans had been removed and some 70 aircraft parked wingtip to wingtip on the grass. The small bar did a roaring trade in snacks and soft drinks while we awaited the disappearance of the sun. In spite of some patchy cloud we all saw the moon shadow creep across the sun and felt the sudden drop in temperature as this happened. Ian Kerr had thoughtfully provided many sets of special eye protectors which we shared.

Dieppe Airfield stands well above the surrounding countryside, and a memorable sight was the sun shining on the fields and the sea around the shadow which moved towards us, and which itself moved away east as the moon swiftly melted away. For everyone a momentous occasion and we all flew home realising that this was something that we should never see again during our lifetimes. Our thanks to Norman, Ian and Gerard for making it all possible.

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Some One-liners for your collection

Flying is the second greatest thrill known to man . . . landing is the first

Asking what a pilot thinks about the CAA is like asking a lamppost what it thinks about dogs!

The propeller is just a big fan on the front of the plane to keep the pilot cool. Want proof? Make it stop; then watch the pilot sweat.

The only time you have too much fuel on board is when you're on fire

You know that you've landed with the wheels up when it takes full power to taxi.

Any pilot who relies of a terminal forecast can be sold the Eiffel Tower. One who relies on winds-aloft reports can be sold the Isle of Wight.

WHAT A YEAR TO END THE CENTURY OF FLIGHT

Man first flew heavier than air in 1903. Paul Harris originated Rotary in 1905. IFFR was formed in 1965. Thirty five years later we look back to see what has been achieved. Now not only the jet and Rotary International but also IFFR encircles the world. Aircraft evolved as a means of injury to mankind - most developments were for military reasons. Rotary and IFFR evolved to promote the fellowship of mankind and appreciation of the many various ways in which we serve one another.

In the past year Flying Rotarians from Britain have been present at all the IFFR Meetings in Europe, and at many around the world, in particular the Fly Round of North Australia reported in the August World Bulletin. The Elba meeting of the Italian Section and our own International meeting at Norwich were reported in our Summer Bulletin. Since then there have been weekend events at Stockholm, Hamburg, Ghent, Valenciennes and Tarragona. What is more, Ern Dawes the World IFFR President and his wife Nola came from the other side of the world to attend these activities and support the eight sections that comprise the European Region.

Communications have revolutionised in the past 35 years. No longer dependent on postmen and telephone operators, IFFR has the immense advantage of a common language which enables members to send and receive programs and reports by fax, STD mobile phones and email wherever they are. Paul Harris would have been amazed and delighted. BUT - what part have YOU played in this. To get the best out of IFFR you have to participate. You read the Bulletins, or at least part of them, but did you attend any meeting? Did you submit a report of aviation activities that would interest your fellow members? Did you recruit other members, or talk to your Club about flying? If not, why not?

Make your New Year Resolution to attend at least one IFFR meeting, bringing your wife, partner, or fellow Club member. If you no longer fly then come by road, rail, or commercial aircraft. Plenty of others do and enjoy meeting friends old and new. Can you help to arrange a fly-in at your local airfield? It may only be for lunch, and a phone call to Neil Smith - 01270-878298 - will tell you all you need to know.

Now we look forward to the next Millennium. We open with a fly-in to York in March, then Manston, Kent for the Spring Bank Holiday. The European Calendar is already filling up. Austria and Portugal in June, Norway in August, France and Germany in September. Details to follow. There is plenty of choice so start your planning NOW. And when you have decided let us know - others will wish to share the experience with you. Remember, it is no good being down there wishing you were up there with the rest of us. Make it a memorable start to another Century of Flight.

CHRISTMAS IS UPON US

What can the children give Daddy or Grandad? Why not a new IFFR tie. These are now in, dark blue with a woven badge and the letters IFFR in gold, and a gold stripe across the blade. Very smart, and only £5.50 including postage from the Treasurer, John D. Ritchie, 84, Broadway, Letchworth, SG6 3PH. Cheques to IFFR-UK please.

THE MALTA AIR RALLY 1999 - by Angus Clark

The Malta Air Rally has a well-earned reputation for combining competition with a friendly social atmosphere. 1999 was the 30th anniversary of an event which over the years has attracted 2700 competitors in 950 aircraft from over 20 countries. These have included places as far apart as the United States and Malaysia.

Our previous touring had taken us to France, Holland, Denmark and Norway. Flying the 1400 or so miles on the Rally would give some purpose to this year's tour. On previous trips I had done the flying but as Alisma had gained her PPL last year this was the first real opportunity to redress the balance in terms of flying hours. Alisma was the official entrant.

Our first decision was how to route to Malta. There were really only two options - either to fly down the west coast of mainland Italy or to go by way of the islands of Sardinia and Sicily. Both involved Italian air-space and that country's reputation for dealing with light aircraft was very mixed. We therefore decided that our preferred route would be by way of the islands so as to limit involvement with air traffic control.

As fuel availability, or lack of it, was another part of the folklore of Italian flying we made fax contact with our chosen airfields - Olbia in Sardinia and Palermo in Sicily. Positive responses were given - in particular the handling agent at Palermo rang us back to confirm that fuel was available and said "you are clear to come in". That was pretty welcoming but it left a question in our minds - why would he say that?

We took off from Netherthorpe on a perfect flying day - CAVOK all the way to Troyes which we reached in under three hours. After refuelling we set off for Le Chateau La Chassange. This establishment has been well covered in the various flying journals. Suffice to say M.Bach greeted us in the Follow-me Rolls Royce and Alisma was initiated into *Le Club Cremant de la Confrerie* by decapitating the bottle of Cremant with a sword. M. Bach said it was a double celebration as we were the first aircraft to land on 06 as the pylons that had previously blocked the approach had been removed the previous day.

Our next legs were when the flying became a bit more serious. Firstly down the Rhone Valley towards Avignon and then directly over the mountains to Cannes. We arrived at Cannes at what is a bad time in France - lunchtime. It took us 3 hours to get Met, file a flight plan, buy two Mars Bars - our lunch, pay our landing fees and refuel.

The Met problem was that the system was automated. We went through the instructions, helpfully provided with an English translation, until the last stage when it asked us whether we wanted a print or not and had the symbol (N) beside it. Now you and I know that the opposite of (N) i.e. no in computer parlance is (Y) i.e. yes. After 25 minutes - just before an acute attack of Computer Rage was about to come on, the blindingly obvious hit us - the opposite of (N) is (O) i.e. oui.. Success - we had all the Tafs and Metars we wanted for our flight to Olbia.

We now had ahead of us the first piece of real water to cross from Cannes to overhead Corsica and then on to Olbia in northern Sardinia. Olbia had been recommended by some flying friends as being a particularly friendly place to visit.

The routing out of Cannes was initially low level to avoid the landing traffic at Nice. After 10 minutes or so we were able to climb to our cruising altitude of FL 55. Visibility was reasonable and it was not long before the mountainous skyline of Corsica came into view. The crossing time was barely an hour.

The next sea crossing to Sardinia was very short - less than 20 miles. The approach to Olbia was straightforward by a designated VFR route from Capo Testa. The hills here rose to 2500 feet- just to help matters the Italian charts give airspace information in feet but ground and obstruction heights are in metres.

The welcome was as we had been promised. We were met by minibus and taken to the luxurious GA section of the terminal. The necessary form filling in was done by a pleasant English speaking official. A hotel to the required standard was booked for us and a taxi arranged. We were in our room within an hour of landing - this couldn't be the Italy that we had been warned about - could it?

Sardinia is dominated by a large Danger Area over the mountainous central area and an equally large Prohibited Area off the East coast. Our route next day therefore took us down the West side of the island. We then left Sardinia at its South-eastern tip tracking directly across 160 miles of Mediterranean to Capo San Vito on the west coast of Sicily. From FL75 the Med looked a lot more inviting to ditch in than a typical North Sea - if such a thing can look inviting. With a favourable tailwind we were over the water for less than 75 minutes in spite of using economy cruise.

The initial welcome at Palermo was as friendly as Olbia. The Follow-Me minibus took us straight to the fuel pumps with refuelling completed without any fuss. A very enthusiastic young lady from the local Air Sicily airline came over to admire the Robin, to ask where we had come from and to where we were going. She also asked how we had got on with Italian bureaucracy - a prophetic question. No problem we replied. At the handling agent's office we dealt with the paperwork and then awaited the arrival of Chris and Maureen O'Connell, in their Mooney.

It was after their arrival that things began not to go to plan. The handling agent said that we were both required to go before the local airport authority as we had landed without permission. He explained that a Notam had been issued in 1998 requiring all GA aircraft to have prior permission before landing at Palermo. I remembered the words "you are clear to come in" that had been given in response to our fax concerning the availability of fuel. Who had given us permission? We didn't have a name. We were advised that we would be given a reprimand. This was administered in the form of a written document issued by two unsmiling officials. Our signatures were required - which left us uneasy as the document was in Italian. Given the reassurances of the handling agent we thought it better to comply. So ended an episode, as Chris said, reminiscent of a visit to the headmaster's study.

So where had we gone wrong? We can only surmise that "you are clear to come in" was a question and not a statement. The Italian AIP that I had consulted at

Heathrow stated that “due to increase in civilian air traffic, Military flight activity should be approved in advance by local Civil Aviation Authority”. The Bottlang acquired less than two months prior to the trip contained an identical phrase. Neither made any mention of a similar GA requirement - so where had the 1998 Notam got to? It was not in the Notams we had got from Heathrow. The hotel arranged for us in Mondello, a seaside resort near Palermo, was pleasant enough - but yes, the taxi fare was generous - both ways. Not our favourite place!!

The first competitive section of the Rally was that of a timed arrival - our arrival slot overhead the Gozo NDB was 1140 local and the flight time from Palermo would be approximately 80 minutes. Together with Chris and Maureen we decided to take no chances - we were at the Airport at 0830. It took almost half an hour to get past security to enter the GA area. Even then there was still ample time. No need to rush - let's get all the charts and paperwork in the right order.

0955 “Permission to start our engine?” - “Start at your discretion”

“Permission to taxi?” -

“You do not have local authority clearance to depart, hold position”.

We contact the handling agent by radio. We wait. No progress. Remember the golden rule - don't get agitated in Italy - keep cool. Very difficult when the air temperature is in the 30's and in the greenhouse cockpit of the Robin it certainly doesn't get any cooler. At 1025 permission is finally granted to taxi - although behind schedule we might still be in with a chance. The problem now is that we are no.2 to an Alitalia DC9. At the hold the DC9 waits for 3 or 4 minutes for a landing aircraft then we have to wait for the wake turbulence to clear. When we are off the ground and on track we are 12 minutes behind schedule. Alisma puts revs up to the top end of the white arc, we get a bit of a tail wind, we fly higher than planned to avoid a dogleg. The Skymap's projected time of arrival slowly moves down from 10 minutes late to 8 to 6. We eventually get it to 2 and for one brief moment it indicates that we might get there on time. The trouble is that we are at 5500ft and we have to cross the Gozo NDB at 1500ft and the Skymap does not take account of Mr Pythagoras's theorem.

We eventually cross the beacon 75 seconds late. The next task was a timed section to overhead Luqa Airport at a nominated cruise speed. The result here was not bad but not as good as we had hoped. The final flying test was a spot landing - here it was 'nil points' - we didn't see the line! On taxiing to the aircraft park we had a tremendous feeling of satisfaction having reached journey's end and completed the 1420 miles of flying from Netherthorpe.

A great sense of camaraderie developed over next 4 days among the entrants during both the informal and formal social events. At the end of the day however this was a competition with various prizes and awards to be won. Most significant for us was that Alisma won the Ladies Trophy and we were second in the flight planning competition

The important thing however was to have taken part. The organisers are to be congratulated on putting on such an enjoyable event - not just this year but over the last 30 years. What about an IFFR outing to Malta next time?

WHAT RAIN IN SPAIN ?

We never saw a drop

Although the first meeting of the Iberian Section to be held in Spain will be fully reported (and in English) in their Bulletin the presence of no fewer than ten British members lead by Chairman Ives Branson and accompanied by members of their families justifies a report in our own Bulletin.

The meeting opened with a reception by the City Council of Tarragona followed by an informal dinner in a traditional local restaurant at which Victor Merelo, one of the Spanish members, welcomed the guests including World IFFR President Ern Dawes and past Presidents Charles Strasser and Graeme Le Quesne and their ladies. On the following morning we were given an entertaining talk on the history of the Roman City of Tarragona and a tour of the old part of the city by a fluent English speaking guide who described the effects of the Moorish occupation of Spain in the Middle Ages and explained the reasons for the many differences between the Catalan people of the district and those of other parts of Spain.

A brief coach journey to a leisurely lunch at a seafront restaurant a few miles outside the city left time for shopping or a siesta before the Gala Dinner that evening, attended by the President of the local Rotary Club at which greetings and banners were exchanged, followed later by dancing for the energetic.

On Sunday morning the visiting IFFR members were welcomed to the Annual Meeting of the Iberian Section at which the program for the year 2000 was discussed and it was agreed that in future years Iberian Meetings should alternate between Spain and Portugal. Luis Henriques, who has been instrumental in the establishment and expansion of the Section indicated his wish to stand down as President next year and Victor Merelo who was responsible for the excellent arrangements throughout the weekend agreed to succeed him. Ideas for the promotion of an interest in aviation especially among the young were discussed and the morning concluded with a farewell lunch and promises of more re-unions in the coming year.

Three aircraft made the long journey down to the combined civil/military airfield at Reus near Tarragona for the meeting, including G-IFFR flown by past Chairman Feroz Wadia accompanied by the Secretary John Ritchie and Events Officer Neil Smith and wives Rae Wadia & Mary Ritchie. They had decided to make a holiday of the occasion and flew on to stay for a few days at Neil's summer home at Nerja near Malaga before returning home via Madrid and La Rochelle. For those who have never flown in Spain we can only recommend it. Fuel and landing fees are everywhere much cheaper than at home, ATC procedures and English are familiar, and even the busy Madrid G. A. airport of Cuatro Vientos presented no problems. Next year it is Oporto for the Iberian Meeting, probably in late June. I expect that many of us will be happy to make the effort for such a warm welcome awaiting us.

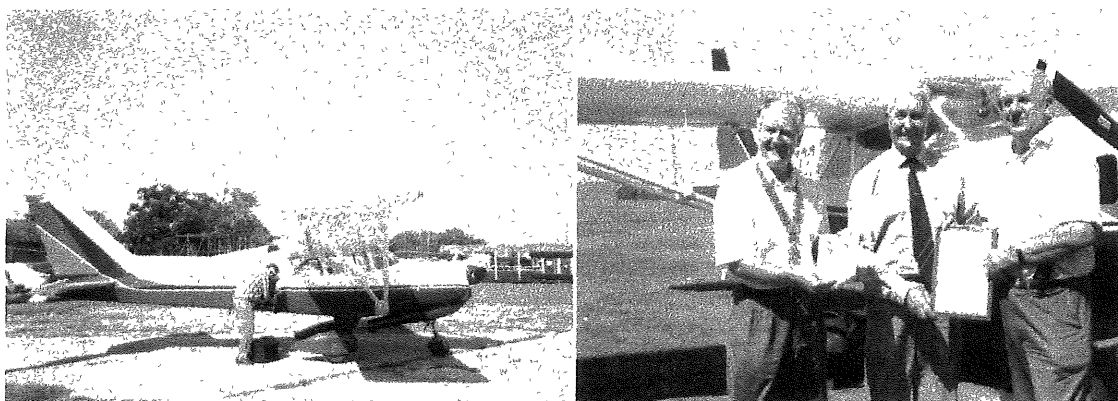
For those interested in such details G-IFFR flew 2237 NM in 21 hours 15 minutes on 1065 litres at an average speed of 105 kt using 50 litres per hour at a cost of £33 p.h. Well, Feroz likes to fly high over the hills and clouds and at a setting of 21:23 the PA32 is slow but economical for five up with full tanks and 15 lbs baggage each.

CORNISH PASTIES

Over the past two years at the instigation of AOPA the fellowship has written letters of support and pledged limited financial assistance to several airfield owners and support groups including Little Gransden whose appeal was so outstandingly successful. In his report Mark Jefferies mentioned that Philip Irish at Truro was having a similar problem with his local authority and would appreciate the aid that Little Gransden no longer required.

Inspection of old membership records disclosed that Phil Irish was one of the early members of IFFR and in his acknowledgement of our donation to his cause he confirmed that although no longer flying personally in view of his age, he was still a Rotarian. He sent particulars of his planning problems in respect of a hangar for engineering maintenance which was urgently needed, and on reading these the Committee unanimously agreed that having built an airfield from scratch with full local approval his efforts in furthering General Aviation in the community justified the award of Honorary Membership of the U.K. Section of IFFR. A suitable Certificate was prepared and framed, and the Chairman, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary John Bowden in his Beagle Airedale flew down to Truro to present it.

We were received not only by Phil and his wife who replenished the hungry flyers with home made Cornish Pasties - worth the long flight for these alone - but also by the President and members of his Rotary Club. The photo shows, left to right, the President, Ives Branson presenting the Certificate, and Phil accepting it. We were given a tour of the city of Truro and the airfield itself before departing and can only congratulate Phil on providing such a well presented and valuable asset to the community entirely at his own expense. Anyone wishing to fly in would be most welcome on a prior phone call - details in Pooley.



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IN THE NEXT ISSUE :

Ray Stebbings writes about his career as a pilot in the RAF and the foundation of IFFR in the United Kingdom. A Calendar of European IFFR Events to celebrate the opening of the New Millennium. Letters to the Editor - why not write one ?