



THE ROTATING BEACON
The Bulletin of IFFR (UK) Limited
THE UK SECTION OF THE
FLYING ROTARIANS

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AUTUMN 2006

From the Chairman

Since being elected as Chairman of the UK Section, I have certainly had some very enjoyable trips in my Cessna 182 attending IFFR events in Copenhagen, Old Sarum, Toulouse and Kendal. And thank you to all those who have worked so hard organising these events. A proof of the good fellowship derived from a common interest in aviation is proved by the number of members who were not able to "fly in" but arrived by car or scheduled travel – their commitment is particularly welcome.

As you will see from our event Diary in this edition, the 2007 programme is already taking shape – please put these dates in your diary now. We will also fill in the gaps with some "informal" events similar to our Old Sarum visit in August; joining an existing event or just meeting for Sunday lunch if the weather is good.

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DIARY FOR 2007

Wednesday 10 January 2007

A guide has been booked for a visit to the Science Museum in London which will include a tour of the Aviation section. This will go ahead subject to sufficient number – so if you are interested, please advise Rodney Spokes (iffr@spokes.biz or 7 The Albany, Leicester LE2 1RH) not later than 10 December 2006.

Wednesday 14 March 2007

Visit to the Mosquito Museum, Hatfield. See details below from Graham Browning

Sunday 6 May 2007 – Visit to Flying Day at Old Warden – Shuttleworth. Fly-in slots have been booked and a roped-off area in the Car Park for those arriving by road. Booking form with the next Bulletin

Friday-Sunday 20-22 July 2007 (Note the Revised Date) Annual Rally and AGM at York. Date changed to avoid clash with other European IFFR events and Race Day at York Races. More details and booking form with the Winter Bulletin

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to three new members who have joined us since the last Bulletin. They are:

1. John Dehnel, a Financial Advisor from Melton Mowbray who flies from Cranwell & Leicester
2. Dr. Frank Hardiman of the Purley R.C. a Mental Health Care Provider who flies from Laddingford, and
3. Nick Taylor, a Chartered Accountant from Sellindge, Kent and member of the Channel R.C. who flies a PA28 from both Headcorn & Lydd.

We look forward to seeing them at some of our forthcoming activities.

UK Section Informal Fly In

Several years ago IP World President Angus Clark suggested holding fly-ins to join an existing event or just to meet for lunch, with no upfront commitment. New UK Section Chairman, Rodney Spokes has picked up this idea and intends to hold an event monthly during the Summer when there is not a more formal event in the UK. Seven aircraft and 17 IFFR UK members and guests attended the first Fly In for the Wheels and Wings Day at Old Sarum, the UK's oldest airfield in continuous use. He says: "The advantage is that with no upfront commitment to hotels or entrance fees, there is no pressure to fly in bad weather. Today we were lucky with good weather and the Old Sarum Flying Club even gave us free landings."

Spring Fly-in – Wednesday 14th March 2007

A visit to the de Havilland Aircraft and Heritage Centre incorporating the Mosquito Aircraft Museum. Elstree Airfield (tel PPR - 675m hard runway) is a short taxi/car journey away. There is a helicopter site much closer. We shall have a private group tour. Ploughmans lunch is available as are liquid refreshments. An excellent museum with unique aircraft, especially The Mosquitos! Contact Graham Browning Email graham.browning@tesco.net or phone 01980-622038

Forthcoming events – 2007

The dates set out above and on the front page of this Bulletin are those of the UK Section alone. Members attending are requested to give a report for inclusion in the Spring Bulletin to encourage even greater support for the summer activities. In addition there will be the usual number of weekend meetings arranged by the other European Sections, and details of these and the booking forms will be sent to any members on request as soon as they are received. Further afield, the R.I. World Convention will be held in Salt Lake City and the booking form for the hotels will be circulated through the usual Rotary channels. To follow the Convention, Bev Fogle an experienced IFFR supporter, will be arranging a flying tour details of which are still being finalised. If you are planning to attend the Convention why not contact her direct at bevfogle@pacifier.com for further information. She would like to know whether you will wish to rent a plane or share seats with an American pilot. Then when you get home send our Bulletin Editor a report for our members.

A Flying Visit to the Pink City aka Toulouse.

Contributed by Graham Browning

Earlier this year, when the European programme was available, I decided that I could manage only one this year and that to take ZV to Copenhagen for the post convention fly-round, although very attractive, would have meant leaving our Cessna 172 ZV on the ground for too long and I did want both Doreen and myself to attend the RI Convention seeing how close to hand it would be. I therefore plumped for Toulouse at the beginning of September.

As usual trying to find a pilot to share the cost and flying was something of a challenge but Rob Tierney of our flying group and a member of the Army Flying Association, with whom I flew to Finland last year, said he would like to come.

Rtn Jean-Luc Brice with the help of his wife Dominique and fellow member of IFFR were the organisers and they did an excellent job in all respects. The airfield approach and accompanying charts were excellent. They needed to be for the approach to Toulouse Labordes is very interesting! But I am jumping ahead.

Toulouse is a mere 500nm from Middle Wallop, so distance was not an issue. However to cover for the possibility of bad weather and to ensure arrival on Friday for the reception lunch (a must, especially in France) we planned to depart at about 1000hrs on Thursday 7 Sep. As it happened the Met for the whole weekend looked favourable. We chose Saumur for our refuel and overnight stop and having made an initial phone call 10 days ahead I did all my route planning. Fortunately I phoned again to find they were refusing to answer so I opted for Poitiers. My Navbox programme indicated all the necessary info I needed so I went ahead and did another route plan. To make sure all was well I made a phone call 18 hrs before ETD only to find they had no 100LL! Le Mans was number three on the list. It was interesting to discover that not all French people are in favour of the two-hour lunch. When I gave our ETA and ETD the lady in the tower reminded me that the tower and firemen (who act as customs, immigration, refuellers and general help!) would be off for 2 hrs over lunch. I said in a pleasant tone of voice that the old French tradition still carried on but it caused some inconvenience. The lady responded by saying how much she disapproved and that the airfield should be open all day!

As it turned out both the tower and firemen were very flexible and helpful so we were able to leave in good time to continue our flight to Toulouse. Fortunately we were experiencing a 10 knot tail wind and the weather en route was good with the chance of rain and CBs coming up from the Med. and there were no known NOTAMS to affect us. An uneventful flight followed over some very interesting and lovely looking countryside. Maps tell you a lot but it's not until you fly over the terrain you truly appreciate some of the vistas and height of mountain ranges.

With three airfields and numerous built up areas to avoid and with a 1500 ft base leg, final approach was somewhat hairy! Rob said afterwards that he would have gone round but I trusted to my gliding field landing techniques and with full flap and engine on idle we crossed the threshold at the ideal 70knts! Two other aircraft had to go round because of the steepness of the approach. Flying time was 5.05hrs. En route we heard John Bowden. He stopped over in Bergerac to stay with Ives Branson at Ives's sisters place. We were a bit perturbed when ATC said they could not track our squawk but since all other ATCs could we decided they were tracking someone else!

For once ZV was the first to arrive since the official start to the weekend was not until Friday. Having learnt by experience, tired and hot though we were, we refuelled before tying ZV down. The ground was parched and very hard but with our screw-in ground spikes we managed to get a good grip winding them into the cracks in the soil.

Rtn Dominique Brice IFFR member and wife of Jean-Luc, the organiser picked us up from the hotel Mercure to return to the airfield for the main arrivals and excellent buffet lunch in a marquee adjoining the airfield restaurant. Dominique is a computer programmer for French ATC and Jean-Luc works for Airbus. About 50 in all attended the Fly in including John Bowden, John Waters, Rob, Rodney Spokes who flew there single-handed, Ives and Graham. Also Ulrich and 6 or 8 from Belgium: some 16 aircraft in all.

That afternoon we were split into 2 groups, one of 10 who had booked early and were to go to the Airbus Training centre and fly the A 340 simulator, the others visited the Cite de L'Espace across the auto route from the airfield with an Ariane rocket dominating the skyline. A good ref point for the airfield!

I was very lucky to be in the small group. We had a fascinating tour of the training facility where they train 7000 pilots a year. When we approached the simulator I just happened to be in front (those who know me know I am not a pushy sort!) and I just happened to sit in the left hand seat. I ended up being the only one in my group of 5 to fly the simulator on two circuits and the only UK member to do so as well! What an experience!! There followed a very enjoyable relaxed dinner in the main square of Toulouse.

Saturday dawned and promised to be another very hot day: it was! The morning was spent being guided in 2 groups around the A/C museum at Blagnac: all run by volunteers and 98% of the A/C sadly outside. There followed an excellent buffet in part of one of the hangers during which a presentation was made of a lovely iced cake with the IFFR wings and mini fireworks! The recipient was none other than Jean Recullet, age 86, founder of French Section IFFR; he has been flying for 70 years! There then followed a tour of the A380 factory. Words alone cannot describe the awesome size not only of the huge aircraft but also the assembly hangar. Of course we were given a very upbeat assessment of the project and personally I felt so sad since returning to UK, and before. I have to say that in the aviation business press there has become apparent some very serious problems with assembly, wiring and overspend and now proposed factory closures! One cannot but look in wonder and awe at the sight of four, yes four A380s side by side on the final assembly line!!! And our guide said they were looking at the project for A390 that could carry over 900 passengers!

In the evening we went out to the banks of the Canal du Midi and boarded a cruiser for the Gala Dinner. We were entertained by an actor who played the part of Paul Riquet who built the canal that was completed in 1683.

Rob and I decided to get our monies worth and stay on for the Sunday morning tour of the city. John and Rodney had to return to UK. The Rose City, for that is what it is sometimes called, is very interesting and has many fine old buildings: mostly in red brick, hence the name.

Yet another fine sit down served lunch awaited us at the airfield. Sadly we could not do it justice for we were anxious to get away in the hopes of making it home that evening, Even with another tail wind we did not quite make it; partly because of a long stop over in Nantes to refuel. As we crossed the Brittany coast the sinking sun cast a red glow on Mt St Michel. We landed at Cherbourg with about 45 mins of daylight left. Insufficient to ensure crossing the channel but enough to get us to Caen for a diversion. As we taxied to park, the airfield had closed but we had made a call to them for clearance, Rob spied figures in the clubhouse. I jumped out and was very lucky to find 3 members about to depart for home. And guess what, one car was going to Cherbourg some 15kms away! In the car were two Canadian students from Lyons visiting for the weekend. Both were from Winnipeg, of my ken: but that is another story!

In some ways I was very glad we had landed at Cherbourg for, although they did not expect us, I phoned Henri from where we had been dropped off just 100m down the road from where he lives and I asked if we could call in to see him and Françoise! I first met Henri when I was 11 and he 13 at his parent's house in Cherbourg where I had been sent by my father to learn French! They gave us much needed refreshment of wine and food before taking us to a very pleasant harbour side hotel for the night. In the morning they gave us a lift back to the airfield where we saw that ZV had been moved to allow some A/C to taxi (we were in a proper parking spot and tied down). We were also in the shadow of a French C120 that had landed a short while earlier.

Yet again the weather was fine, though with an inversion/mist over La Manche. Checking on the state of Danger Areas mid channel proved worthwhile for one was closed to us and we had to track 20 miles to the west to avoid it before heading north for home. We were able to carry out a straight in approach to Middle Wallop and again flying time was just on 5 hrs.

Yet again the value of foreign fly-ins cannot be over stressed: Rotary fellowship coupled with flying fellowship, learning new skills, meeting old friends, making new ones and the joy and exhilaration of flying over new areas, seeing new places and '..slipping the earthly bonds...'.
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By the way have you heard the story related by Ives regarding Alexandre Exupery and his P38 Lightning and the P38 fin stabilizers found in a field in Luxembourg belonging to a USAF pilot from Dec 44? No, ah well, that is another story!

A short report on the accident to World President-Elect Feroz Wadia

Feroz and Peter were taking off from Eldoret, Kenya, on the return leg of an Air Tour to South Africa. There they met Peter Gibbs, Chairman of the S.A. Section of I.F.F.R. and were hosted by his Rotary Club.

Eldoret has a density altitude of 7660 feet and a runway length of around 11,000 ft. N42FW was the last of the aircraft to depart. On rotation, the aircraft managed to climb to around 200 feet but Feroz didn't think they were producing full power. A continuously blaring stall warning, tall trees, power lines and rising ground in all directions dictated the choice of action and they put down in a wheat field. The port wing tip tank contacted the ground first and detached, the aircraft hit the ground and the engine detached at the firewall.

They were both admitted to hospital. Feroz was released 10 days later and returned home to Edinburgh. He had cuts and several bruises, Peter had a cracked vertebrae and punctured lung and was flown to Johannesburg and has just returned home to Vienna. Feroz reckons that they were saved from worse by the double shoulder harnesses he fitted to the Bonanza, rather than the usual lap belt fitted to older aircraft. The engine has been collected by the local AAIB and gone off to Nairobi for investigation while the suspect fuel has been sent to a laboratory in Mombasa. Undeterred, Feroz is now looking for a replacement aircraft.

FUN IN THE FALL **LAKE DISTRICT 15 – 17 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Rodney Spokes asked if I would write an article for The Rotating Beacon, saying that it would be interesting to hear the views of a member who has never held a pilots licence.

I have been a member of Greenwich Rotary Club for over twenty years but only recently joined IFFR. My interest in aviation goes back to my childhood. My father was aircrew in Lancasters and we lived in Paisley close to the Royal Naval Air Station at Abbotsinch (now Glasgow Airport). Twenty five years ago I decided to take 6 flying lessons at Biggin Hill. I enjoyed it so much I went back for more and one day the instructor said I had completed six good circuits, "this time you're solo". Flying that Socata Rally Club for 15 minutes solo was an experience I will never forget. As much as I would have loved to carry on I know my limits. My eyesight is not 20/20 and you can't pull into a lay bye at 2,000 ft to check where you are on the map. I just love flying. As a passenger I have flown in over 60 types from Cessna 150 to Concorde but still love to get "hands on" experience with an instructor by my side and in recent years have had some wonderful times flying various types including the Tiger Moth, Piper Cub floatplane, T-6 Harvard and P-51 (TF-51) Mustang. Enough of my ramblings...let me tell you about our wonderful weekend.

Friday 15th

Most flying arrivals used Cark, an old wartime fighter aerodrome, situated midway between Kendal and Barrow and across the bay from Morecambe. This small airfield with a 500 metre runway, is home to the North West Parachute Centre (will parachuting be on the agenda for the weekend?). The line up of aircraft included Cessna, Piper, Beagle and a Grumman Traveller,(with Chris and Maureen O'Connell). Chris told me he got the keys of the Grumman only that morning and had flown up from Elstree.

Other arrivals by car and Ryanair increased the party to 22. I thought for a moment that Ian Kerr had donned his kilt however it was another Scot attending a wedding. Our host, James Alexander, had invited us to the "get to know you" party at his residence 100 yards from the Castle Green Hotel. There we had the opportunity to meet and mingle with the other Flying Rotarians and their partners. It was so enjoyable listening to the flying experiences of other IFFR members and learning more about their individual Rotary clubs.

Saturday 16th

After a hearty breakfast the coach picked us up at the hotel at 10am for the journey to Bowness on Windermere. James Alexander put on his Tour Guide hat and en route, gave us an excellent commentary taking us from the pre-Roman times to the present day. Katherine Parr the last queen of Henry VIII was born in Kendal Castle in 1512; Kendal is also famous for its mint cake and 'K' shoes.

Our timely arrival at Bowness gave us a few minutes to board the MV Teal for the sail south. The weather was perfect and we enjoyed the stunning scenery on the 40 minute trip to Lakeside where our coach was waiting for us.

The route took us to the valley of the River Leven through deciduous woodlands and narrow twisting roads towards Backbarrow. We were reminded us of its industrial past when charcoal was a vital ingredient of gunpowder. James pointed out some blue stains on the buildings which go back to the late 19th century when a bribed German worker brought an industrial secret to Backbarrow and the

manufacture of ultramarine began. This intensely cobalt material was best known in its “Blue-bag” form – ready to be boiled up with the laundry to produce those “whiter than white” results for more than a century until replaced by modern detergents.

Making a sharp right turn off the main road James suggested we look for something unusual. Twenty two pair of eyes scoured the countryside but to no avail. Had we taken the correct turn? As we rounded the next corner a small stone cottage appeared in the distance with a bright red tail sticking up from the garden behind. As we approached the outline of an aircraft came into view. It was an English Electric Lightning with the number 172 painted on the nose. XM172 was built in 1960 and served with 56 Squadron before becoming the Gate Guardian at Coltishall. The aircraft was later purchased by Parkhouse Aviation and spent some time at Booker Airfield near High Wycombe until an ultimatum in April forced the owner to move the aircraft. The owner is currently seeking planning permission from the local authority in Cumbria to display the aircraft in a more appropriate location but is having trouble with the local planning officer! This Lightning spent a brief period in Jeremy Clarkson’s garden for a TV show.

We stopped briefly for a photo opportunity near the southern end of Coniston Water. Looking across the calm water reminded me that about 5 years ago Bluebird had been recovered from Coniston Water where she had lain since Donald Campbell attempted to achieve 300mph back in January 1967. Back on the coach James tested our local knowledge with the question “How many lakes are there in the Lake District”? No one was close so James had great pleasure in telling us that there is only one, Bassenthwaite Lake, all the others are waters or meres.

Ian Kerr piped up with a follow up “How many lakes are there in Scotland”. By coincidence I was asked the same question only a few weeks earlier when flying in Loch Lomond Seaplanes Cessna 206. I didn’t know the answer at the time but the pilot pointed to the Lake of Menteith and said “only one, all the others are lochs”.

The next stop was for lunch at a private collection of classic cars. When we arrived a spritely 90 year old Mr Bateman offered us a welcome handshake and ushered us towards the entrance. The first room displayed a 1935 Bentley 3.5 Litre Vanden Plas Drophead and a rare 1936 Alvis 4.3 Litre Vanden Plas Drophead. The collection included about 20 cars and 6 or so motorcycles together with a wide range of auto memorabilia. As a previous owner of three classic Sunbeam Talbots it was pleasing to see the collection included two Alpines and a rare 1935 10hp Tourer. I wanted to take home the Red 1952 3.7 Litre Jaguar XK140 and I noticed John Bowden having a very close look at the 1964 V8 E Type. Other marques included MG, Bristol, Triumph, BMW, Daimler and VW, with 90% of the collection being dropheads.

James produced a classic picnic from the boot of the coach. We tucked into a delicious cold buffet including local potted shrimps. The strawberries were excellent. Mr Bateman (whose first car was a Model T Ford) addressed the company and was thanked by one and all for allowing us to visit his unique collection.

We then headed north to Ambleside on the tip of Windermere for a 40 minute shopping stop before returning to the Castle Green Hotel for a rest before dinner. We assembled in the hotel restaurant where James had organised the place settings and were requested not to sit with our spouse. At the end of the first course James had us laughing when he commented on the landings

“Ian Kerr, best value... Colin Walker used the Isle of Man beacon as the FAF... Rodney Spokes won the spot prize... John Bowden was too late for the competition and Chris O’Connell put a groove in the

tarmac with his tail... Malcolm Hill perfect as normal but I was the wrong end to judge". FAF was a new one on me but now I know it means Final Approach Fix. Then it was like musical chairs. Gentlemen were asked to move three places to the left at the end of each course.

Earlier in the year I had the pleasure of being a passenger in Angus Clark's Robin 400 to the French IFFR meeting in Orleans in the Loire Valley. The plan was to drop me off at Biggin Hill on the return journey but due to deteriorating weather conditions we diverted to Southend. At the time, Angus mentioned Charles Strasser's campaign to encourage airfields to waive landing fees for pilots obliged to divert for safety reasons. I was therefore delighted to meet Charles and congratulate him on his achievement as almost 200 airfields have now agreed to accept the recommendation.

Sunday 17th

Marlene and I had a 300 mile drive south to look forward to so we were unable to join the BBQ at Cark airfield or the official opening of James Alexander's new hanger. Rodney did send me a photo of Charles Strasser cutting the ribbon before making his way back to Jersey. I was pleased to learn that everyone got home safely.

The invitation from the "Northern Boys" promised a weekend of Luxury, Intrigue and Excitement and they didn't let us down. The Castle Green Hotel looked after us very well. The food was exceptional and our thanks go to James Alexander for organising a most enjoyable programme. Marlene and I would like to thank all the party for making us so welcome.

Finally may I remind those Rotarians interested in aviation that you don't need to be a pilot to join IFFR. I wish I had joined 20 years ago. Road works on the M1 near Luton caused us some delay on our way home and I thought I must get one of those bumper stickers saying "*I'd rather be flying*".

Jim Mundell

Editor's Note

Before I received the above report, I asked James if he would send a brief report for the Bulletin. I received the following, which while being slightly libellous seemed too amusing to omit

Dear John,

My report is very short....

They all drank too much, stayed up far too late, late for the bus next day, late for dinner, and late leaving.... All in all the party was great fun. John Bowden was the main instigator of the debauchery and he bought shame to the Airdale Owners Club too. Tony and I do feel we have to suggest he resigns from Rotary. Angus (The Chief) tried to fly in on Sunday to make a citizens arrest but John escaped. Neil Smith, Malcolm Hill and Colin Walker are now banned from Cark for abusing aircraft...ie bad landings.

James

Trip to the German IFFR Meeting at Rostock, Laage Thursday 31st August - Sunday 3rd September

The weather for Thursday afternoon showed a frontal system crossing the Low Countries at midday UTC. We were able to leave Wednesday from Earls Colne with G-BBDC, a PA 28 early afternoon and routed via CLN and SPY to Lelystad. 3 hours notice was required by Customs arranged by telephone to the airport staff. A 20 Knot tail wind ensured a reasonably short flight of under 2 hours. We immediately refuelled. We booked into the airfield hotel from the airport bar and ambled over to a friendly welcome. We rarely book before arrival in case of diversion or change of destination. We dined in the airport restaurant with a view of G-BBDC alone on the tarmac apart from a twin Jet. The plan to leave early the following day was reasonably successful. We mastered the flight plan computer and soon departed routing EEL, Luneburg and then direct to Laage Rostock. On arrival we immediately refuelled then tied down. This was followed by the normal friendly welcome and potato soup. Old friends were met and survival stories swapped from the last Saarlouis meeting.

The programme started with a trip to the far side of the airport, the military area that houses the training squadron for the Eurofighter. Colonel Gunter Katz of Jagdeschwader 73 "Steinhoff" gave a talk and invited questions. Gerhard Wrede translated (the English contingent numbered 2). There were some reassuring statistics. viz one minute climb to 40000 feet, the ability to detect GA aircraft, voice control, computerisation of all systems. (Loss of computers means firing the ejector seat) We defected to the training area. The pilots have a progression to solo from firstly being issued with a throttle (to get familiar), 4 hours on the simulator, then dual (4 hours) on the Eurofighter.

We saw the simulator and this was a wide screen; but with cockpit time pressing only 3 to 4 pilots could fly. The effect is totally realistic and I was sympathising with the attempts of our Teutonic colleagues when our organiser Ulrich Starke ushered me into the cockpit. I offered to land the fighter and was guided down to Laage by the commandant. I bounced the EU30,000,000 fighter a number of times along the runway incurring several landing fees. We ended the evening dining in the hotel basement "Restaurant Apotheke" which was decorated with the effects of its former existence as a pharmacy. Appropriate cures and tinctures were administered.

Friday was scheduled for a flight to a seaplane base but this was cancelled due to weather. We coached to Gustrow seeing a ruined Cistercian Nunnery, and churches built on a grandiose scale and the museum of the artist Ernst Balach. In the evening we dined in Silo 4 a top floor restaurant with a spectacular panoramic view of the old waterfront of Rostock

Saturday's weather was an improvement. We sightsaw in Rostock. The group split and our group was guided in English; this was particularly kind of the organisers as we were the sole "auslanders." The area showed prosperity with most of the buildings beautifully repainted from a previous all pervading GDR grey. The morning ended with a champagne reception 200 feet up in the tower of Petri church which has aspire to rival Salisbury. We spent the afternoon in historic Wismar with lunch in a beer Keller situated in the delightfully named Tittentasterstrasse. More churches some on an unbelievably grand scale were viewed; reconstruction was continuing on one both

from 1945 and post 1991; much of the area, a civilian area of little military value, was totally destroyed in WW11. When our guide explained this I claimed Irish neutrality in the matter. The gala evening dinner was completed with a magician of truly Tommy Cooper skills.

Throughout our trip we were looked after with great attention. In particular Gerhard Wrede and Winfried Auferbeck translated in impeccable English during the day and at the table. We enjoyed the programme tremendously and our first trip to the reunified "East". Our sincere thanks to the organisers including Ulrich Starke and Ingo Neufert.

As a Postscript, the flight back was not without "interest". We judged an improving early afternoon forecast and plodded back to Groningen in marginal VFR. Approaching this airport we were informed this was below VFR minima and we diverted to Leer Papenburg on the German border. An error with the frequency caused an unannounced arrival and we feared the proverbial rollicking (spelt with a b) as the commandant approached. He could not have been more welcoming quickly refuelling and re-oiling us, directing us to the restaurant where we interrupted a christening. Within minutes he had the weather typed for the return with a view of the rain pattern on screen (A great improvement one hour later). We left with profuse thanks. For the 2.75 hour return trip we encountered strong head winds reaching 50 knots even at 1000ft. This caused a little angst over the North Sea but with leaning out the full tanks proved sufficient (4.33 hours). Unfortunately we experienced a drop in oil pressure some 60 miles out from SPY. The pressure steadily descended the caution arc but was related to an excessive consumption rate. Nail biting was sanctioned and at the FIR boundary we diverted for the coast reaching this abeam Sizewell. DC was then nursed back to Earls Colne via overhead the intervening airfields. The problem has been investigated and a top overhaul is currently being carried out.

Contributed by IFFR member Chris O'Connell

For the information of those not present at the 2006 AGM please note :

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