

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

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NEW YEAR - 2008

From the Chairman

Best wishes for 2008 and I hope that during the year you enjoy attending IFFR events. Whether that be as pilot, passenger or driver, I look forward to seeing you. Some members get extra pleasure out of helping organise IFFR events and here are some opportunities:

There are a couple of slots in the programme which would give a new organiser an opportunity to provide a simple fly in – nothing elaborate needed; just a lunch (preferably without commitment in case the weather turns bad) and possibly something to visit but preferably not needing pre booked transport. Dates to fit in with the programme at home and abroad could be in the second half of March or towards the end of May.

The UK section will be responsible for running the post Birmingham RI Convention Fly-Round taking place from Thursday 25 June until Saturday 4 July 2009. Current plans are for three “hubs”, York, Gloucester and Cambridge at which we need local help. Please let me know if you would like to be involved. We also need a Land Transport Manager – do you have experience in dealing with coach operators?

And finally, there will be an election for places on the IFFR UK Board in July. So if you organise events or could contribute to the organisation in another way, please contact Chairman Elect Colin Walker, Secretary John Bowden, or me for further information.

Good news is that following a substantial increase in membership in 2007, we have another opportunity to bring details of the IFFR to all Rotarians in RIBI. We will have a full-page promotion in the April edition of “rotary today”. Look for it.

Rodney Spokes, Chairman IFFR (UK) Ltd
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IFFR UK and European Programme 2008

UK Fly in to Yeovilton (EGDY) Thursday 24th April & visit to Fleet Air Arm Museum.

German Section Fly-In Speyer (EDRY) near Frankfurt. Thursday 1 – Sunday 4 May

Italian Section, Venice Fly-In (LIPV) Friday 30 May – Sunday 1 June 200 followed by Fly Around in Northern and Central Italy 2– 8 June

Los Angeles, USA Post RI Convention Fly-Out. Ten-day tour including Yosemite, Monterey, Big Sur Coastline, Gold Beach Oregon and Reno. 19 –28 June

UK Section's "Weekend of the Year". Fly in to Perth (EGPT) and UK AGM. Friday 25 - Sunday 27 July. See outline programme below

Scandinavian Section Fly-In to Notodden (ENNO) in Norway. 14 –17 August

UK Fly In and BBQ at St Lawrence private airstrip, Essex – Sunday 24 August

German-Austrian Section Fly-In to Hamburg (EDDH) Friday 29 – Sunday 31 August Including visit to Airbus site in Hamburg.

French Section Fly-In to St Truiden (EBST) near Liege. Friday 12 – Sunday 14 September

UK Fly-In to Sherburn in Elmet (EGCJ) - Sunday 21 September – provisional possibly Laddingford

Portuguese Section meeting at Portimão, (LPPM) Algarve, from 26 to 28 of September, with possible local fly round to follow

UK Fly-In to Kemble (EGBP) Sunday 19 October 2008 (Provisional)

Programme subject to change and prior booking. Please check latest details on www.iffr.org.uk. Bookings should be made by IFFR members whose guests are always welcome. Check that your insurance covers flights into MoD airfields such as Yeovilton and across Germany & Denmark and remember that PPR may apply.

Members contemplating taking part in any of the continental IFFR events are welcome to contact the Committee at this stage so that full details of each event can be sent out as soon as they are received from the organisers, and aviation information (routes, overnight stops, foreign charts etc) can be considered. No commitment yet, but it would be helpful to know who is interested in an activity abroad. The UK Section has always supported the other Sections who in turn support our events. Meet and make friends.

Where shall we go, dear ?

Plenty of events at home to choose from this year – but why not expand your horizons and try one of the events abroad. I know all the excuses put forward by the less experienced pilots, it's too expensive, too far, too difficult to plan, my wife won't come, what if the weather goes bad ? Remember we were all like that once but we didn't hesitate to seek help and advice from the "old hands". The answers :-

Share the costs – bring a passenger, not necessarily a Rotarian, perhaps a member of your flying club, or your instructor – male or female – there will be plenty of ladies in the party. Fuel is often cheaper abroad and you can claim back a quarter of your first fuel bill from the Government by filling in a simple form. We can help you with that. The organisers arrange accommodation, entertainment, and ground transport so you know the cost before you start.

As for distance – most light aircraft will do 100 mph so that the French & German meetings are well within a day's flying. The Italian & Scandinavian events would justify taking a few days summer holiday and touring gently down. Flight planning too difficult for you ? Others members that are going will be happy to help you, and there is plenty of uncontrolled airspace and all the ATC controllers speak English.

Wife won't fly with you ? Put her on the jet and show her that you can get there quicker than she can. It may be cheaper than paying her share of the flying. As for weather – ALL IFFR EVENTS are conducted under VFR Rules. If the weather is too crappy for you it is for the same for the rest of us. Build in a spare day at either end and stop worrying. The organisers provide full MET reports without being asked – we have all "been there before".

Finally if you just can't fly yourself why not bum a ride with one of the others ? Most owners are happy to have someone willing to keep them company and share the cost. Contact Rodney at IFFR@Spokes.biz or Colin Walker at colin@aaron-associates.com and tell them which trip you wish to take and see what they can find for you. Once you have done a European IFFR event you will want to do more – I know !

Read the following testimonial from a new member after attending his first IFFR event abroad :

"You were also asking for feedback, and I thought I would use that opportunity to thank all members of the IFFR club for welcoming me in their midst. I joined recently after spending an excellent weekend in Luxembourg as a guest of Flying Rotarian Ian Kerr. The main reason for me to join was the overwhelming hospitality I received from all your members during that weekend where I've made many new friends. I'm very pleased, and honoured to be part of an organisation that is spreading fun and fellowship on every occasion!

Rene Looper, Vice President, Rotary Club of Forres.

UK Section Weekend of the Year

Perth 25th to 28th July, 2008

Your committee decided it was too long since we last held a meeting in Scotland so you are invited to attend our main annual meeting in Perth.

The airport is at Scone just outside Perth where we'll be meeting around lunchtime on Friday, 25th July. Perth is a welcoming GA airport with 2 tarmac runways still active – 03/21 is 850 metres and 09/27 is 600 metres. There will be refreshments available on arrival together with a light buffet lunch then our first visit will be to Scone Palace, only 10 minutes from the airport. The Palace has a fascinating history and beautiful gardens so we'll spend a couple of hours there, before heading to our hotel, the Royal George situated in the centre of the fair city of Perth, overlooking the River Tay. We'll then have time to relax before assembling for a welcome dinner.

Saturday will start with a hearty Scottish breakfast before the coach leaves around 9.30 for a 50 minute drive to Stirling Castle. This castle is steeped in history and often overlooked in favour of the more famous Edinburgh Castle but prepare to be delighted. We'll have a guided tour followed by lunch at your leisure before the short drive up to Crieff where we'll visit Glenturret Distillery, the home of Famous Grouse the renowned Scotch whisky. We then return to The Royal George Hotel for a breather before our Gala Dinner.

On Sunday morning we'll hold the AGM of the UK section after which you have the choice of departing for home or staying a little longer. An afternoon's flight is planned for you to see some more of our beautiful country. Perhaps the weather will be kind enough for us to fly to Plockton just beside the Skye Bridge. We'll decide on the destination depending on the weather that day. Weather information will be provided as usual for those travelling further afield.

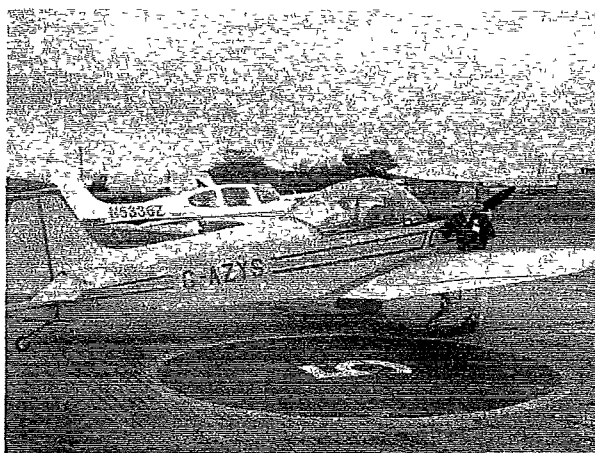
The organiser, Ian Kerr, will send you more details very soon and early booking will be recommended. The last time we held a meeting in Scotland there were 75 participants but this time we'll restrict the numbers to a bus full which is 53. Remember "first come – first served" and our European colleagues will be welcome as usual. Private aircraft from EU countries can fly direct to and from Perth so long as the authorities are informed in advance. For more information advise Ian Kerr when making your booking.

Sandtoft – Sunday 14th October 2007



We were blessed with a nice, if rather hazy autumn day for the last IFFR fly-in of the year at Sandtoft, near Scunthorpe. Rodney had organised a traditional Sunday lunch for us all in the airport restaurant, and our small but select bunch sat down to an excellent meal at about 12:30. Ian Kerr came from Perth in his beautiful Cirrus and Tony Erskine drove in from Cheshire, but the remainder were rather more local: Rodney & Pam from Leicester, Colin Walker (sadly minus Jo who was unwell) from Gamston, and Colin Ferguson and David Drew in their Emeraude from Lambley near Nottingham.

Sandtoft has a longish tarmac runway with a displaced threshold – you realise why when you scrape over the streetlights on short final. The winds was light and down the slot, with a short backtrack to the parking area just across the runway from the Flying Club. No nonsense with yellow jackets, just watch out as you cross! The Trolley Bus Museum lives on the airfield but we were too busy chatting to visit – maybe another time. The food and company were great and the kitchen staff looked after us well. David Drew (right) was so impressed that he was persuaded to become our newest member – as if he had any choice in the matter! Thanks to Rodney & Pam for organising an excellent event.



Colin Ferguson

Subscriptions for 2008 are due

from those that have not already given a bank standing order. Paying that way saves the hard-pressed Treasurer unnecessary work but not everyone has yet complied. A letter from the Treasurer including a form of Standing Order is enclosed if he cannot trace one in your name.

The Annual Sub, which includes the International Dues that we pay to the World Treasurer on your behalf, thus saving you the trouble and expense of an individual remittance in US dollars, is £25.

In addition the Treasurer has on offer at the promotional price of £6 each (postage included), baseball caps bearing the IFFR logo. Just send £6 payable to IFFR (UK) Ltd to John Bowden at Valiant House, 12 Knoll Rise, Orpington. Kent BR6 0PG. Lapel badges are also available at £6 or £10 for badge and cap.

Away with the Birds

Jeff Watkins

It was a 62nd birthday present from son Thomas. A cold grey dawn with ice underfoot found us at the YARAK HAWK Centre near Collumpton. Long socks, longjohns, long vest, and it seemed a long time before our falconer arrived to take us to the bird aviaries to meet our avian friends. It had been a longstanding wish of mine to fly hawks free in a field situation. Here in Devon the Centre does not open to the public but is a private hawking business which runs courses both single day and four day for budding falconers.

Our instructor turned out to be diminutive with a northern accent and a bad cold. My hearing had a bit of a problem tuning in to 'Angelique'. This young woman proved to be a mine of information and in no time at all we were inculcated with the ethos of falconry. An initial trek around all the aviaries (not cages!) proved interesting with an assortment of hissing owls, whooping eagles, and head bobbing hawks. There was even a vulture. "She don't fly because she would try to make it back to Africa or somewhere like that and she is too old to train". This septuagenarian equivalent seemed fit, with shoulders hunched and focussed on my generous tummy much to my discomfiture. A large Snowy Owl looked down beneficently from a perch and slowly revolved her head as though dismissing our presence with a haughty look. Owls cannot swivel their eyeballs, hence the characteristic headturning.

After a coffee break we got into Flight Weights and Balance. It turns out that hawks are like aeroplanes and have an optimum weight for flight. A bit too heavy and it can strain itself at takeoff; if the bird is too light it cannot generate enough power without an engine failure. (Heart failure or low fuel). Using a beautiful Kestrel as an example we were told that half an ounce too heavy or too light was undesirable. This on an eight ounce bird.

Moving outside to the display area it proved too cold to fly the birds. Frost and very cold ground can give them a shock, it seems. Back for more coffee and an introduction to the food arrangements. The nicest things a Harris Hawk can have is morsels of freshly cut up chicken. This is previously frozen in storage and defrosted for the next day. Rats are cheaper but more of a nuisance to the handler it appears. Thank goodness we only had the chicks to handle.

As the air got a bit warmer we took out a Barn Owl to fly. He was a bit grumpy and like many men takes a while to get over an early start. A bit scruffy in appearance but he flew very well and Tom and I were able to fly him back and forth easily. These little birds get to know their name and you call them to you. They know of course that they will get a portion of chick on arrival at your heavily gloved hand but it is still a wonderful moment as they fly onto your outstretched fist. The Owls generally do not mind being stroked down the tummy but try this with a hawk and you are likely to lose bits if the bird does not know you, so we did not experiment.

My personal favourite was a little lady Kestrel. She was a beautiful creature and sat quietly on my wrist eyeing me up. Light as a hundred feathers and embodied all the features of the larger birds. Immaculate!, with red, brown and dark markings, clear eyes, sharp beak, and tight talons she was very special indeed. She flew at medium speeds and this is the bird you often see hovering over the motorways.

The afternoon took us out 'hunting'. A largish Harris Hawk called 'Tetley' launched off the hand, took to flying ahead then waiting for us like a pet dog, but at 25 feet up a tree rather than on the ground. Flying low between us with only inches to spare she sought out prey like mice and small birds and even had a go at a few crows nearby. Always responding to a loud call of 'Tetley come here' I was frankly amazed at her obedience. Our mentor explained that we were her 'family' and that she looked down upon us. This type of Hawk works in a family group in the wild with a 'sitting' order. The older more senior birds sit higher up. Everyone looks out for trouble however.

Tom had been tasked with carrying a small bag during this walk on the wild side. After half an hour we were calling Tetley back ourselves. You face into the wind so that the birds can land into wind easily onto your wrist by coming from behind. Tom's little bag was a mystery until Angelique told us that sometimes the Centre 'loses' a hawk during these walks. Inside the bag was an aerial that could locate the direction of the little lost beasts. It was only one minute after this explanation that Tetley took off across a field chasing a bird. I thought this was an intelligent animal indeed, demonstrating the way it could go AWOL. It was no demonstration. Suffice to say we spent the next hour into darkness crawling through hedgerows, hiking muddy fields, fording flooded pathways attempting to find our feathered friend. Eventually Tom and I had to leave poor Angelique to go home and the last we saw was her heading to the west with a final quote..."I must go across to the chicken farm nearby to chat to the farmer there". Yeh...maybe that would be a good idea, I thought.

These birds are all bred from stock and are not taken from the wild, should you be worried about that aspect. The cost of a Barn Owl is about £40 and a Hawk from £300 upwards. The birds are all ringed and laws apply. There is no licence requirement to be a falconer but commonsense should apply and a course is absolutely necessary if you are to understand the commitment. These birds can live for 30 years. Maybe a dog is a better bet for a pet?

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Editor's Note

We welcome contributions from members and these don't necessarily need to be limited to reports of IFFR activities. If you had an interesting experience that you would like to share with others then tell us about it. An email attachment in Word is easiest for us to handle. Photos don't always reproduce well in black & white. Next issue due in April.

WHY DO I STILL FLY ?

January is traditionally a month for looking back on the past and making New Year Resolutions for the future. I have been looking back on my flying over the years. I held a private pilots licence on single engine aircraft from 1965 to 1999 and began flying as a frustrated motorist with a sister & family in Exeter before there was any motorway other than the M1. I could rent a club aircraft from Luton Flying Club and take the family down for lunch and back in a day rather than having to take the whole weekend and getting stuck in a traffic jam on the Honiton bypass. Subsequently I joined Rotary and then discovered IFFR which has taken Mary and me to make and meet friends across Europe, America, & Australia.

My last flight as pilot was in 1999 coming home from the solar eclipse which I had watched at Dieppe airport. I failed the annual medical exam the following month due to the fact that the bureaucrats who now run the European Union disapproved of the asthma from which I had suffered all my life. This hadn't worried the Civil Aviation Authority but the new regulations required me to take a stress test on the treadmill – ten minutes at increasing speeds. A Marine Commando might find that troublesome.

Happily my son & daughter, both of whom held pilots licences before they held driving licences, enjoy my passion for flying and while I still held a valid licence we bought G-IFFR, a Cherokee Six that we share together with Kevin Young. As I can no longer act as pilot one or other of them does the flying while I keep the group records and accounts, look after the maintenance requirements, do the flight planning, and while flying often handle the radio if only because I know where we are going !

But why do I still do it now that I can no longer fly myself and the budget airlines fly to most of the tourist destinations across Europe at minimal cost? Light aircraft are notoriously expensive to run and non-professional pilots are weather dependent. However cost is not the only parameter and since 9/11 flying in one's own aircraft is even more attractive. We keep the plane at RAF Henlow, 20 minutes from home, where it is guarded by men with submachine guns. The annual Ministry of Defence pass that is all the security checks we need. No booking in two hours ahead of departure. No queuing, no needing plastic bags with toothpaste or cosmetics in, no taking off your shoes or body searches. I did once suggest that as captain I had the right to body search any female passenger under the age of 25 but Mary objected ! We don't have to book flights in advance or travel to Gatwick, Stansted, or Heathrow and can drive up to the aircraft, load the luggage, and then park the car free of charge. We can choose our own route, stopping to sightsee if we wish, and can use smaller airfields closer to the city centres than the airlines.

Independence can sometimes reap an unexpected reward. Having enjoyed several summer holidays with the family in Minorca on package flights from Luton, in 1975 my daughter and I decided that we would take the family down in our own aircraft. We shared the flying between us. When the time came to return home we reached Minorca Airport only to find a seething mass of greatly distressed families trying to get back to England. Clarksons, a popular tour company, had gone broke and their flights were cancelled. No ABTA, no ATOL, in those days but OUR plane was waiting. We were happy to get away unscathed.

Aged 81 and after 1,300 hours in command over 35 years the thrill of being up with the birds has long since gone, although I still enjoy flying in the bright sunshine over a solid deck of cloud while ground bound mortals suffer in the cold below. I keep flying because it still gives me a sense of freedom and independence that is hard to achieve these days.

John D. Ritchie