

The Rotating Beacon

The Newsletter of the UK Section of IFFR



September 2011

A Letter from the Air-Com

The Newcastle Weekend was a real bash. Three Danes, two Outer Hebs, four Germans, one Jersey and with a mixture of rich southerners and poor northerners made a total of about 40+1.

Nine aeroplanes arrived at the Northumbria Flying Club, with others meeting at the Copthorne Hotel by a mixture of transport. We duly gathered in the Quay 7 bar, where the never ending large glasses of white wine kept on coming. Dinner in the adjoining restaurant was OK!

After breakfast a gaggle of folk made their way stopping every 10 steps up to the station, with most catching the 1035 am to Durham or DURRR Ham as Sos wanted to call the place! Eleven minutes later we arrived in the heartland of Northumbria.

Most wandered up to the magnificent Cathedral, and about 45 minutes later could be seen just popping into the pub to get the day really started. A super luncheon followed at the Marriott adjourning to catch the train back to Newcastle ... and the mandatory afternoon snooze.

The pre-show dinner was a bit of a rush, and we had to come back at half time for coffee.

The first half featuring the worst

60 person choir you have ever heard, along with the Southern Boys Band did test our stamina.

Fortunately after interval on came Irma Thomas and smiles began to appear ... she and her band including the drummer (my mate) Choo were simply fantastic.

The AGM was very wisely moved to Sunday morning, and we got through the business in just enough time to board the ship. The AGM Minutes will follow. The weather was simply CAVOK and nearly hot. Members were welcomed on board to more white wine and a super David Hayes M & S picnic.

Back at three and more afternoon naps. Café 21 our last supper venue did us proud. We had a great time, fab food and loads of wine accompanied by more noise than John Bowden's Airedale. Of course the toast was to all IFFR members who drive a second hand Cirrus!

Final kisses and cuddles on Monday morning as we left. I hope to see you all in either Liverpool or Blackpool in 2012.

James Alexander

Front Cover: Neil Smith at Welshpool with the Sting that he built himself. See the article on Page 6

German Meeting May 2011

Martin Wellings writes on the Spring German meeting held in Trier

I am probably like many other pilots – plenty of experience of new airports, but not a lot of the towns that go with them. Trier was one of the places that I had used as a stop off, being a convenient customs airport en route further into Germany, but I had no idea what an attractive town it was, made all the better by the efficient organisation of the German Section.

Rodney Spokes flew from Leicester to Shoreham in his 182 to pick me up for the onward trip straight to Trier, and we had the timings worked out perfectly in order to arrive at around 1300, but as is all too common, the best laid plans did not work out.

We had an unacceptable mag drop at the holding point and had to go and have it fixed, so after about an hour and all ready to go, we discovered that Shoreham were short staffed, and was closed for departures for another

half hour – the last thing we wanted to hear.

My track record flying with Rodney to IFFR events has a history of weather problems, ranging from having to go from Le Touquet to Belgium by car for one of the previous Belgian meetings, to leaving the aeroplane at Lyon, and proceeding to Cannes by train for a French Section meeting, and then last year returning from Copenhagen, the flight involved a mixture of IFR and VFR, skirting round significant CBs, weather delays and stonking head winds.



In the Main Market in Trier at the Market Cross

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Trier continued.....

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In contrast, the Trier trip was a doddle with good viz the whole way.

The route was via Dover and Koksy in Belgium, and then weaving our way through the Brussels area and some of the military areas, straight to Trier. We just had two problems on arrival; the bus had left for the scheduled aeroplane exhibition

(disappointing), and probably even more serious was the closure of the small restaurant, which meant no eagerly sought German beer!

There were eighteen aircraft listed on the arrival sheet, and apart from the German contingent, there were members from Belgium, Scandinavia and a good contingent of Brits, although surprising when we were so close to France, no one from that country. Unlike some of the IFFR meetings that I have been to, it was good that there was a lot more mixing of the nationalities, which was probably because so many Germans speak English well, and the Scandinavians usually perfectly.

I confess that I knew absolutely nothing about Trier before I had

been there, but was most impressed, and for those who did not make the trip, I would certainly



Some of the UK contingent on the Mosel boat trip.

recommend it for a weekend break. It has a lot of history, starting with the Roman occupation, and its landmark monument is the original Roman gate called the Niger gate (from the Latin niger meaning black due to the gate's colouring), which looks in remarkable condition, and this coupled with an old town centre and plenty of cafes and restaurants, all within easy walking distance, all make it an ideal destination. Apologies if this sounds a bit like a travel brochure description, but being in the travel business, I lapse into brochure-speak automatically.

During our stay, we had escorted tours of the town with a guide, who

sometimes seemed somewhat keen in giving us every last detail, and we were left with something like information overload, and a bit “churched out” after the third church in a morning. I think the only thing that we were not told, was the colour of the workers’ socks building the churches. Nevertheless, it was an interesting walking tour of the town, and the only down side was passing by several tempting cafés for a mid-morning coffee without stopping.

On the Saturday, we took a boat trip on the Mosel for the two and a half hour trip down to Trittenheim, and then lunch on a high point overlooking the River on arrival. That evening was the final dinner of the trip, and held at the Weingut

von Neil, which was one of the local vineyards, where we had another session of wine tasting, and I am sure for most us, was a refresher on German wines, as you don’t see so many in shops at home these days.

It was a most enjoyable trip, and our hosts made us very welcome, and with Ulrich leading the arrangements, all the arrangements went like the clockwork, and it was good to see that the Germans’ renowned reputation for organisation did not falter. So, on Sunday morning, we were transferred to the airport, and we made our various ways back home in good weather.

Martin Wellings

Right: The “Tyne Cruise” at the Newcastle meeting.

Below: The Air Com’s July lunch at Welshpool.



Photographs on this page and pages 4, 14 & 15 — thanks to Rodney Spokes and John Dehmel.

A Sting in the Tail!

Neil Smith tells the story of his 3 year project to build his Sting.

I first saw a Sting carbon fibre aircraft at the Light Aircraft Association Rally at Kemble in 2007. I was so impressed by its smooth clean lines and large bubble canopy that I arranged with the UK agent to visit the factory in the Czech Republic to see how the kit was made. TL Ultralight has developed the Sting from a glider and microlight background in a very modern factory with the help of Prague University and design consultants, Vanessa Air. With the assurance of the agent that UK approval would take about six months I added the options of autopilot, ballistic parachute and constant speed prop as I placed my order and paid the deposit.

Most of TL Ultralight's production is exported as finished aircraft to America, Australia, New Zealand and parts of Europe where local rules are applied to the Approval Process. The UK is unique in using a set of standards created by the European Aviation Safety Agency and called CS.VLA. These standards appear to be the toughest in the industry and the kit manufactur-

ers were keen to obtain the prestige of UK approval and gave a great deal of support to the agent who engaged the services of a Kingston University Professor in aeronautics to carry out the stress calculations and recommend any modifica-



Not all aircraft are built in large factories!

tions that might have been necessary. There are not many freelance aerodynamicists in the country, who have experience with carbon fibre aircraft construction, so the choice was very limited. Even the Chief Engineer of the organisation that oversees amateur aircraft building in the UK (a very highly qualified engineer) is more familiar with wood and aluminium construction.

The kit arrived on Friday 15th February 2008 having travelled through Europe to Denmark where the papers were stamped as being the export country, so that their wonderful VAT rate of 0% could be applied, and then via north sea ferry to a very cold Cheshire. Unfortunately, the Danes have since been forced into line with the rest of their EU neighbours and there is no advantage now in moving anything through their country.

My kit was designated as Number 8 and came with hundreds of components and packages containing almost everything that was needed to make a well equipped aeroplane. My single garage workshop was only just big enough to accommodate the fuselage without the wings. These were stored in another garage awaiting the fitting of pushrods, flaps, ailerons and lights. The factory insist on painting all components in house to a very high standard, so the building process becomes more of an assembly job, but has to satisfy the rule which insists that 51% of the total construction must be carried out by the builder. It was a little like a giant Airfix kit, but still leaves scope for individual touches, for example, the factory does not include a parking brake so it was necessary to obtain one from an Italian

manufacturer and incorporate it into the hydraulic brake pipes.

Electrics and electronics are something of a black art to me so I jumped at the chance of some help from a friend who had experience, and he proved invaluable in helping in so many other ways during the construction. I found it very useful to discuss different solutions to the



A Very Professional Panel

myriad of problems and Peter spent almost as much time as me in the cramped workshop, which fortunately had a very efficient heater. The factory supplied a wiring harness for the engine and some of the instruments that had been ordered through them as part of the original equipment, but the radio, transponder, encoder, intercom and GPS were obtained from Harry Mendelsohn who made up a harness specifically for that equipment. A great deal of time was spent on the electrics and if we were not satisfied

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A Sting in the Tail continued.....

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with the way a piece of the system looked, it had to be replaced.



The Classy Cockpit.

The Approval Process was taking a long time, much to the annoyance of the UK agent and the frustration of the factory, mainly due to the time that the aerodynamicist was prepared, or able, to devote to the submission, and it appeared to lurch from problem to problem. When one problem was solved by the factory supplying a fix, another obstacle appeared a few weeks later. A total of 35 modifications were necessary by the time approval was gained. Many of these were of a minor nature, but the redesign of the tailplane and trim tab, a completely new noseleg manufactured in the UK, and a new semi bulkhead were major items that required testing before installation.

By now, the 13 UK builders were in regular email contact and Kit 1 builder was brilliant at keeping us all informed of progress, even though at times there seemed to be none. The UK agent is a very good "spanner man" and was always prepared to crawl inside the slim fuselage to incorporate a modification or fit the ballistic parachute, and he approved the method of communication. As a matter of interest, these two have now formed a business partnership to market the Sting in UK and Ireland and will soon be

importing the latest high wing creation from the TL Ultralight factory.

And so it took almost 3 years to carry out the construction and incorporate all the modifications, but that fitted my working pace very well, although some of the builders were frustrated because they had previous experience of aircraft building, or were able to devote more time, and wanted to go flying. The Light Aircraft Association operates the Approval Process as an agent of the Civil Aviation Authority and controls a large number of Inspectors in all parts of the country. The Inspectors are often retired aeronautical engineers or people with experience of building aeroplanes and a profound love of avia-

tion, and only expect to recoup their expenses. I chose an Inspector who, although he lived 90 miles away in Leicestershire, was also building a Sting, and he proved not



The Finished Aircraft.

only to be an extremely competent engineer, but very helpful as well.

While waiting for the Approval Papers to arrive, in November 2010, I took the aircraft on a trailer to a private strip at Warrington and assembled it ready for test flying. I then carried out some

ground runs to check the power output of the Rotax engine. Everything seemed satisfactory and it was now up to my test pilot, himself a licensed engineer with previ-

ous experience of flying Kit 1, to put the aircraft through its paces and on 11th December she took to the skies for the first time. What followed was sheer frustration as the taxiway at the private strip was waterlogged for two months and there was no possibility to carry out more testing until the conditions improved. On 20th February 2011 my test pilot flew the aircraft to

Sleap where I had managed to obtain hangarage and from where the test flying was completed.

The aircraft now has 33 hours on the Hobbs Meter and I still can't stop smiling.

Neil Smith

Coming Events

August 31	Air Commodore's Lunch	Fife
September 9 -11	French Section Meeting	Lyon
September 16 - 18	Italian Section Meeting	Turin
September 28	Air Commodore's Lunch	Goodwood
October 26	Air Commodore's Lunch	Tatenhill
November 30	Air Commodore's Lunch	Cranfield
December 12	Christmas Lunch - The RAF Club	London

IFFR Fly Away 2011

The Lady Catherine's whirlwind tour of the South Eastern United States escorted by the Air Commodore

The Trip: Began in New Orleans. States visited included Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. These states are fiercely patriotic, flying huge Stars and Stripes. We were in the Bible Belt, the home of blue grass, country music, magnificent 18th Century Plantation Houses, Civil War battle sites, huge churches, luxuriant farmland, and iced tea. We covered 2000 miles, completed in 18 hours flying time over 10 days.

The Aircraft: 22 planes, ranging from a 60 year old Luscombe to a state of the art Skylane 182 turbo with red go-faster stripes. Ours was the only rental – a Cessna 172. I loved the plane as I had my own door with an opening window! The high wing was ideal for sheltering under in 95 degree heat, though a less good view for spotting other aircraft.

The Rotarians: World President: Peter More and Shirley, past-its Sam Bishop and Elena, and Tony Watson and Jane send especial greetings to fellow past its Charles Strasser and Dorothea, Angus Clark and Alisma, and Feroz Wadia and Raye who were all much missed.

As sole representatives of the UK, the pressure was on to represent *y'all*, as they would say. Many friends old and new kept an eye out for us.

The Flying: Pretty non scary with few clouds or mountains. We were lucky with the weather. Thunderstorms are not allowed before 3pm, and we always left early because of the heat.Air traffic was very helpful. There is a number you can call and chat about the weather before you go. There was only one scary bit, as we approached Knoxville. I had an eye on approaching aircraft catching us up. When four planes were only an inch away (okay – 5 miles) the screen went blank and an unconcerned lady said to us “traffic data not available”. We were out of range of a beacon or whatever. Better not to have known they were there in the first place.

At several airports, smiling ground staff whizzed out on little trolleys to meet us. Fuel was less than half UK price. The unfailingly fabulous and air conditioned airport facilities were all free. Squashy leather sofas, huge TVs, free coffee and cookies, internet access. The toilets mostly flushed themselves....

One unmanned airport we refuelled at in Florida had a courtesy car you could just borrow and pick up the key off the desk. Just write your name in the book it said!

Stop overs:

First night at Natchez: 75 minutes north of New Orleans. We flew over miles of levee banks, and saw the massive flooding of the mighty

Watson singing Amazing Grace on the karaoke. On to our hotel – the surreal Gaylord Opryland Hotel, with 2881 bedrooms. It had two atria complete with a river, boats, raging waterfalls, almost a little village of restaurants, and bridges from place to place. Internal bedrooms had little Spanish balconies overlooking the waterworks. Not a good place for the physically or



Mississippi. Stayed at The Grand Hotel, right on its banks. A very attractive historic town.

Next 3 nights at Smyrna for Nashville: Here we started with a tour of the Nissan plant, which was fascinating even to me. We were driven around on a little road train wearing our safety goggles and ear phones for the commentary. Employees waved cheerily as we passed. James said he could have stayed there for days... perhaps not...

Back to the airport for a hangar supper and the delights of Tony

directionally challenged. We went to a free breakfast for gospel singers by mistake. Also forgot room number, so had to journey all the way back to Reception... D wing had two exits a 15 minute trip across walkways apart, which fooled many of us. Beautiful bedrooms though – but why always two double beds I wonder? Next day we visited Franklin, scene of a particularly awful Civil War Battle. We were emotional wrecks after guides had described the hand to hand combat in the dark, and

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IFFR Fly Away concluded.....

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shown us the bloodstains where limbs had been amputated in a nearby farmhouse. ... Light relief that night at Grand Ol' Opry, the opera house of country music. And even better the next night, when we dined on a beautiful paddle steamer cruising on the river.

Lunch at Knoxville where Dale Read had arranged a Hangar Lunch with more country music. It was Veterans Day, and the Americans held hands in a circle and sang God Bless America, which was wonderful to see.

3 nights at Asheville which is a wealthy town in North Carolina. Here we visited Biltmore, a home of the Van der Bilts, built in 1913 on a huge and opulent scale. That evening Sam and Elena took us to our first baseball game in 90 degree temperatures. Great fun and very smart outfits they wear – but so complicated. No half time and it goes on “until it is finished” I was told. The batsman is allowed his

song of choice to be played as he comes on – to pump him up. A good idea for cricket I thought...

Last 2 nights at Charleston. Don't miss it if going to this area. A beautiful historic town full of interest. Some cobbled streets were made using ballast from ships coming out from England, and many buildings are Georgian Palladian, designed to be as cool as possible. A cultural festival was in progress with art exhibitions and concerts everywhere. The farewell dinner with speeches was memorable, with awards invented by Herman Hassinger.

Thank you American Rotarians for a really wonderful trip that I wouldn't have missed for worlds! Amazing coincidence: In New Orleans we met the drummer who was playing with Irma Thomas at the Sage Newcastle at our Fly out! He was our taxi driver. We heard them play at the open-air Oyster Festival and they were great.

Catherine Alexander

Congratulations Tom!

IFFR's own daredevil, 91 year old Tom Lackey, has achieved another Guinness World Record entry. In June Tom wingwalked to France and back in a further charity fund raising effort. Tom's latest mission was inspired by the battles his family have had with cancer. Tom lost his wife to the disease in 2000 and his son Alex only in May while his daughter Anne has successfully beaten breast cancer. "Cancer is my enemy number one which is why this wingwalk was in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer," said Tom.

Flying Lessons by Martin Wellings

Flying lessons in this instance don't refer to the actual learning to fly, but the points that you learn by trial and error, with the emphasis on error.

For some time I have kept a log of a personal de-briefing, when I have done things that I really should not have done, and need to be noted for the future. Currently my log consists of eleven detailed pages of A4. I hope that other IFR members will share their own experiences, either with name or without. I will start by entering the confessional with a few brief items from my log.

Lesson 1 Many years ago when you had to taxi to a marked area to clear customs, a distance of 500 yards, I did not do my normal walk round on the basis that I would do it in the customs area to save time. I started up the engine with the tow bar still attached; the prop knocked it off and it flew and hit the hanger doors, taking off the aerial of a Tiger Moth en route. Lesson learnt, absolutely never taxi *anywhere*, without doing the walk round!

Lesson 2 Again many years ago, very soon after passing my IR, I did a trip down to Barcelona with fellow pilots. It was planned to go airways for the whole trip, so we did not bother with VFR charts either for the journey or route planning – big mistake! On the leg across the Pyrenees, although not

forecast, the weather turned nasty, and the clouds were as black as the Ace of Spades, with passenger jets advising that they were turning “to avoid a bit of weather”. None of us had appreciated that around the Madrid area it is pretty high ground and few diversion opportunities. Suffice to say that after that trip I vowed never to go anywhere without full set of VFR charts irrespective of whether I was flying VFR or IFR, and after a particularly “glad to be down” feeling, the first thing I did was to buy a Stormscope!

Lesson 3 My list is littered with items – some of them very small, but items where I should have known better. These range from failing to set altimeter to airfield QNH for an instrument landing, forgetting to raise flaps after a go-around, and on a landing at Blackbushe, after passing Farnborough about five miles to the south, I managed to land in the wrong direction because I assumed that the direction of landing had to be exactly the same as Farnborough. Two lessons for me were reinforced here, one *always* religiously go through a check list, *never* assume anything in flying.

I could go on with several other lessons learnt, but will leave my confessions until a later edition!

Martin Wellings

Bruges or Brugge?

Joyce Norfolk reports on the Benelux meeting

Bruges or the correctly spelt BRUGGE is an historical, interesting and beautiful city even though in my experience, and this trip was no exception, it could be called 'the windy city'.

When the Benelux Section announced that their 2011 meeting would be in Bruges there was no doubt in our minds that we would attend. What more could you ask for than a magical city surrounded by many friends old and new. Ron and I travelled by Eurostar although we did wonder later if we would have been better going by car particularly as we had to stand all the way from Brussels to Gent. We did not arrive until the middle of the afternoon so missed the Beer Brewery – 'Brugse Zot'.

We all met for drinks dinner where we enjoyed a great deal of food, friendship and of course wine or beer! Karel (the Benelux Section Leader) welcomed us all particularly the members from Sweden who had not attended the event before. Amongst the attendees there were members from Belgium, Scotland, England and Denmark; Niels Rasmussen was given a special

welcome as the President of Rotaract in Denmark, and of course members from the Netherlands. Wilfred Lemmers complained that France had not been mentioned which is his second club – he also said that he should be congratulated as being the elder statesman in IFFR who was still



At the Brugse Zot.

flying. This was disputed by Ian Kerr who said Ron Wright was several years older and still flying!! Ron replied that Wilfred deserved to win – it was just a pity he was so young. We were all very sorry that Angus and Alisma were unable to join us due to instrument problems on the way.

The following morning we were given a city tour including one museum/art gallery (there are 16 muse-

ums in Brugge). In the 15th century Brugge was one of the main centres of art attracting such artists as Jan Van Eyck (whose statue can be seen in the centre of Brugge), Petrus Christus, Hans Memley, and Gerard David. We saw paintings by some of them - they were called the Flemish Primitives - the techniques they used achieved unprecedented quality making them world famous in their own lifetimes. We also visited the Church of Our Lady and saw the Carrara Marble statue of Michael Angelo's 'Madonna and Child'. Strangely enough Brugge was not damaged at all during the war which is why there are still so many carvings and statues intact.

Another interesting building was the College of Europe for postgraduate students which is the oldest Institute of post graduate students and costs €18,000 to enrol - I don't think any of us will try. There was so much to see and we were taken to the different Squares and given information about each of the buildings but this article would be so long if I described them all even if I could remember them. I just marvelled at the beautiful architecture from each age including Gothic and modern and the wonderful atmosphere where people were sitting at cafes and others travelling in horse and carriage clip clopping over the cobblestones.

Lunch was at De Koetse restaurant where we enjoyed a very tasty but large meal and we were concerned that as we had the visit to the Chocolate Museum to follow and the Gala Dinner in the evening we would still be full from lunch. Definitely dieting for me the following week after all the lovely food in Brugge.



Looking Skywards again!

Luckily when we visited the chocolate museum we were only given a few chocolate drops to taste and were then allowed to explore the museum where we learnt how the cocoa pods became chocolate as we know it. After this we were let loose on the shops - Brugge is particularly famous for lace, leather and of course chocolate, but several of the ladies found very fashionable dresses and shoes which they wore to the gala night. I was very restrained and only bought a few chocolates as a gift!

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Bruges or Brugge concluded... .

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After a short rest we dressed in our finery and joined the Group for the 'sparkling moment' - the ladies were equally as sparkling as the champagne. Then to the Gala dinner, after which we all sang the IFFR Friendship Song which was written by Karel's dear Liora. Egide and Stan were thanked and given rousing applause for organising such a wonderful trip.

The following day breakfast, packing and off to a boat trip which was great - more interesting and historical facts - it is strange but you see the same buildings from the other side (i.e. the water) and they look completely different. You need a good memory (which I do not have) to remember everything we were told - my memory was of a dog sitting on a window sill watching and also a Teddy appearing to do the same thing - how dreadful with all the culture around us! Seriously we had an excellent driver (if that is what you call him) and orator in both English and Flemish who made it all so real which he peppered with anecdotes. All good things must come to an end and we all climbed into the coach to take us

to the airfield for lunch and departure. We said goodbye to our friends and watched the planes take off and again we were lucky enough to have several offers of a lift to Brussels - in fact a young lady member of IFFR took us (I wasn't sure at first if I was included or if she just wanted to take Ron!!). Once again a most entertaining, informative and enjoyable trip - I personally feel very privileged to have a partner who is a Flying Rotarian.

Joyce Norfolk

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