



International
Fellowship of
Flying Rotarians

Autumn 2025

Issue 125

The newsletter of the UK Section of IFFR

The Rotating Beacon



Vulcan Bomber

Enjoy our reports insides from around UK, Europe and USA
Help us make membership to IFFR awesome

You provide the transport, we provide the refreshments and the sights!

**WE STILL NEED A VOLUNTEER TO BE CHAIRMAN
SEE THE 'FROM THE EDITOR' SECTION**

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From the Editor

As the main flying season ends, we have several of visit reports in this issue to share – UK, France, and Latvia. Plus, as hinted at in the previous Rotating Beacon, an excellent additional short article by guest and former Vulcan Pilot John LeBrun plus information on a new Vulcan Bomber appeal.

Importantly however we still don't have a Chairman /Chairwoman/ President for 2025-26

Volunteer needed, or indeed ordinary committee places if you have time

On behalf of the publishers, we apologise for a 'publisher error' in the previous issue: John LeBrun's article should have been titled 'The Harvard.'

Tony Flinn
Editor, Past President
and former UK IFFR Flyer of the year.



Enstone Visit

by David Sibthorpe.

After all the good weather we were hoping that the fly-in to Enstone to visit the Spitfire Club, Ace Squadron would be a great day out with a bar-b-q on the grass apron outside Enstone Flying Club. Unfortunately, the weather turned on us and we all had to car-in for the meeting. Even so, eleven members and friends managed to attend and have an enjoyable time, hosted by Paul and Angie of EFC.

After assembling in the club house and catching up over a cup of coffee we all moved into EFC's large hanger and had a super 2 course meal cooked by Angie. It

ACE SQUADRON – ENSTONE



ACESQUADRON
A TRIBUTE TO THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

was atmospheric (and dry!) amongst a collection of different aircraft with the Spitfire Mark 26B in the background.

After lunch, Paul gave a fascinating presentation on the aims and objectives of the Ace Squadron and the ethos behind it. This was a project to build a squadron of Spitfires that ordinary people could not



only touch and feel but sit in and have a flight. The aircraft are designed to be easily transportable not only to shows but also (with their wings removed for a road journey) to places like schools for children to see these great machines.

Then there was an opportunity to not only get up close to but also to fly a Spitfire in the life size cockpit simulator with all the realistic controls and 220 degree view. Replicating what it must have been like during the Battle of Britain, we found ourselves flying over Kent and the English channel, with the French coast in the distance – very realistic! Most of the group had a go and soon realised how difficult it was to shoot down an enemy

fighter aircraft, or even a slower bomber in a fixed formation. Unfortunately, no one became an “Ace” but several managed a decent score of aircraft destroyed.

After a cup of tea we all said our goodbyes and made our way home happy in the thought that we had “flown” a Spitfire in combat conditions!!!

David Sibthorp
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Vulcan Valiant Victor



Quick Reaction Alert

by John LeBrun

Valiant, Victor and Vulcan aircraft were the V-force. From the beginning of first V-force squadron becoming operational, each squadron was tasked with supplying a fully nuclear-armed aircraft with a crew at readiness 24 hours a day throughout the year. This was termed, Readiness 15, QRA duty, or Quick Reaction Alert. The crews were under the control of the Bomber Controller who resided deep in a hole in Bomber Command Headquarters in High Wycombe. QRA lasted until 1969 when the Royal Navy took over those duties with Polaris submarines,

At any time of the day or night, the Bomber Controller tested the readiness of the crew by declaring “Exercise Edom”, changing the readiness state (RS) from 15 to 05 or very occasionally 02. RS 05 meant the crews,

having reached their aircraft, would sit in the cabin in RT communication with air traffic control waiting for the following change of readiness from the Bomber Controller. If the RS went to 02, the aircraft engines would be started, all external connections removed and the aircraft was taxied to the holding point close to the runway threshold. At any time, Exercise Edom could conceivably become Operation XYZ and if the codes received from the Bomber Controller matched the ones carried by the crew, a scramble take-off would ensue.

The time it took from the initiation of the call-out to checking in with air traffic control was tightly controlled and if a crew took longer than about 9 minutes to check in, questions would be asked and corrective action called for.

My experience of QRA was at Scampton. There the armed aircraft were on one side of the airfield, and the operations building, administration, squadron office, and sleeping accommodation for the QRA crews on the opposite side. The QRA estate car which was provided was the oldest and tattiest Vauxhall Vanguard that the Motor Transport section could supply. The crews spent most of their time on the admin side of the airfield and when a call-out came up, all five rushed into the car – first man there was the driver – and rushed like mad to the other side of the airfield and once at destination, the car was parked behind and well to the side of the aircraft. On one occasion on a cold night in the winter there was a callout in the middle of the night. One of the cars could not start due to a flat battery. Transport was requested but the crew did not reach the aircraft until after the exercise was terminated. Questions were indeed asked and a solution was found; 12V chargers mounted on the operations block external brick wall fitted with quick disconnects sockets at the back of the car. That seemed to have solved the problem. Of course, the inevitable happened and on one such

occasion the quick disconnect did not, and the charger was pulled off the wall together with much of the brickwork and shorting out the mains supplies to the operations block, breaking the link with the Bomber Controller and its further link to air traffic control.

Another time, the same station, during a QRA, call-out, with the crew rushing out to the aircraft, the driver, as they arrived at the aircraft, left the car as usual to the side the Vulcan. The normal way of starting an Olympus engine was to use high pressure air from a small ground-based gas turbine. After the first engine was started, the others were started individually using that engine's air output, running at 70% RPM. But on a call out to RS02, the other engines were started simultaneous using 90% RPM. Not only does this setting make a lot of noise but the jet exhaust is very powerful. Unfortunately, that crew's QRA car had been left just a bit too near the jet exhaust. It got picked up rolled over a number of times coming to rest against the perimeter fence stopping it from rolling down the hill to the near-by village.

Dijon visit by Jean-Luc Brice

This article was published by the French Section in their Fall Newsletter.

It is reproduced here by kind permission of Jean-Luc Brice.

FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

A word from the President

Our meetings seem to be appreciated by our friends from all over Europe and beyond ; in fact, there were more of them than those from our French section.



This newsletter will surely bring back fond memories for those who had the pleasure of participating and will allow others to share a little of the warmth of friendship that radiated among us.

Vive l'IFFR, Vive IFFR-France !



AUTUMN MEETING in DIJON

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

The arrival at DIJON-Longvic (LFSD) airport was quite spectacular: a beautiful 2,400-meter runway 35, good weather conditions, a somewhat long taxi along highway-wide taxiways to huge, uncrowded parking lots (it's a former military site now used by the gendarmerie academy). But above all, the airport services provided a rather remarkable welcome: guidance upon arrival, two gas station attendants available as soon as the engine was killed, marshalling to the parking lot reserved for us, luggage transport, a welcome from the facilities manager, discount on aircraft parking fees—in short, the best! Some even had the privilege of traveling in the brand-new fire truck!

And... the cherry on the cake: Jean-Marc DAURELLE, the local for the stopover, was waiting for us and had delivered delicious meal trays prepared by a local caterer.

Dominique and Jean-Luc arrived first in a Cirrus (despite a mandatory but well-negotiated slot); Béate and Michael followed in a Panthera, Benoît by car, Fabienne, Renaud, and François also by car due to a lack of any available planes, Rainer GOETZE, due to poor weather, via a long overland route; Pascale and Alex will join us only on Saturday, by plane.

Among those who have excused themselves, we must mention, among others, Jeanine and Joël LAUNAY, Dominique VARDON, Jean-Pierre GABERT, and Jean-Pierre MARTEAU.

Among the guests are Edith and Thomas MORF (Switzerland), the TAX (Belgium), the MAG-PANIZ (Switzerland), the MENNEL (Austria), the George RITCHIEs (UK), the HARVEY/FIELD (UK), Catherine and James ALEXANDER (UK), the Kris De KEYSER (Belgium), Chris GOOSSENS (Belgium), and the Wolfgang HILD (Germany).

A bus is scheduled at 2 p.m. to take us on an excursion; there are about thirty of us.



We are going to visit Les Salines Royales d'Arc-et-Senans. This former salt factory, commissioned by King Louis XV and built between 1775 and 1779 by the visionary architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It also constitutes a rare example of the history of industrial architecture.

The saltworks operated as an integrated factory where almost the entire workforce lived. Built in the shape of an arc, it housed the living and production areas, comprising 11 buildings in total. Made obsolete by the emergence of new technologies, the Royal Saltworks closed its doors in 1895. Abandoned, looted, and damaged by fire in 1918, the Doubs Department acquired it in 1927, thus saving it from ruin.

A friendly and knowledgeable guide leads us through the various buildings, explaining their functions. Interestingly, it's indeed a saltworks, but there's no salt on site; the brine had to be transported via (wooden) pipes for about twenty kilometers from Salins-les-Bains, where there are indeed saltwater springs; the reason for the location is the presence of wood, essential for preparing the salt.

The coach then takes us back to the hotel, and after a moment to settle in and relax, we meet at the hotel restaurant for dinner.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

Our hotel is located on the outskirts of Dijon. A tram line runs alongside the hotel before reaching the city center. This is indeed the most convenient way to get to Place Darcy, where the guided tour of the city will depart. Fortunately, our treasurer François bravely bought a ticket for each of us the night before from the vending machine, which is clearly

not programmed to dispense more than one ticket at a time.

Two guides were planned, one French-speaking and one English-speaking, and two groups are therefore formed for the tour. Dijon is the capital of the Duchy of Burgundy, a group of states that extended as far as the Netherlands. Many vestiges remain from this prosperous period. In the city center, we saw the narrow streets lined with half-timbered houses, and the Notre-Dame church with its facade characterized by its three portals corresponding to the tripartite division of the nave. Above these arcades, the facade is adorned with two galleries of superimposed arcades, each resting on seventeen small columns of a single piece, crowned with a capital, and underlined by three bands decorated with false gargoyles.

At the top, a clock features four metal automatons, two of which, named Jacquemart and Jacqueline, strike the hours with a hammer on a large bell. The other two automatons, their "children" Jacquelinet and Jacquelinette, strike every quarter of an hour, each on a small bell.

The story of Jacquemart is to be detailed : it was captured in 1382 at Courtrai by the Duke of Burgundy, Philippe Le Hardi (Philip the Bold). Jacquemart, a bachelor at the time, originally featured an automaton driven by a clock and striking a bell. This figure was not called Jacquemart until 1458. Since then, Jacqueline has accompanied him, and they have had children... So, even though our Belgian friends are demanding its return, the people of Dijon are not ready to accept it!

At noon we have a lunch at Gril'Laure, a stone's throw from the Saint Bénigne Cathedral. From there we walk to Place Darcy where the coach awaits us that will take us to the Château du Clos de Vougeot. Our friend





Jean-Marc DAURELLE, Chevalier du Tastevin in this noble house, does us the honor and pleasure of guiding the tour. Wine is no longer made there, but the buildings and in particular the two gigantic wooden presses are impressive.

We are driven then to Le Château de Marsannay, rich in its vineyard 'parcels' (called 'climats') in different appellations including Marsannay, Chambertin, Clos de Vougeot, Gevrey-Chambertin. An erudite (and bilingual!) guide explains all the subtleties of winemaking in Burgundy. After the tour of the impressive cellars, the tasting (with commentary) is well appreciated. 5

Now we have to go back to the hotel because the French section is holding its AGM there. This is followed by the gala dinner, which is also taking place at the hotel. We have the honor of sharing this meal with two past-presidents, James Alexander and George Ritchie, and a President Elect Kris de Keyser.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

It's already time to part ways. Some are heading back to their cars, while those who came by plane are heading back to the airport by taxi. Everyone is heading either by road or by air to the destination of their choice.

THANKS to JEAN-MARC DAURELLE for organizing this event, which will remain in our memories!

A much more detailed photo report by Renaud is available at www.iff.fr.club.

See you soon on our lines

The script was prepared by Jean-Marc Daurelle.

The pictures were captured through the lenses of Dominique and Renaud.

The texts were written by Benoît and Jean-Luc.

The layout was drawn by Jean-Luc.



Piper PA28 wing walk replacement

by Mike Cromati

During our last couple of annual inspections it had become noticeable that the wing walk was becoming spongy. So it was a case of removing the inspection panels and having a good look inside as to what is going on with the endoscope.

On the wing walk there is a double skin riveted together to strengthen the area that People Walk on. The inner skin is pressed with pressings that resembles the shape of half a cigar. The only trouble is that the edges of the pressing is made very thin and with the constant stream of people getting on and off the wing over a period of time these pressed cigars fracture around the edges which makes the wing skin quite soft when walked on.

The only remedy is to replace the inner/outer skin. So one winters day we made up some trestles to sit the aircraft on and proceeded to remove the wing, rather than to remove the skins in situ, and use cherry lock rivets we thought that

even though it was a longer job we would end up with a better job because of the difficulties of the angle of the wing to the fuselage.

So a new wing walk skin and set of spa bolts were ordered from Airpart. While we were waiting for them, we started to strip out the interior of the aircraft to be able to get at the spa and decided that we would do the annual at the same time. Once the interior was removed the fuel tank drained, all lines (Fuel, Hydraulic, Cables) along with wiring etc disconnected it was time to support the wing while we removed the spa bolts. Once all the bolts were removed, we carefully removed the wing and re positioned it on the tresses.

Then it was time to carefully drill out all the rivets to remove the skins. Once the panel was removed it was time to clean everything up and offer the new panel into position. Like all new panels we needed to do a bit of trimming to get it to sit in the



correct position and pin it into position with cleco pins before starting to rivet into position with solid rivets.

While we were painting the new panels on the wing we started to clean the wing spar and airframe ready for re assembly of the wing and treating every thing with ACF 50.

Rather than painting the wing with the std wing walk paint I decided to get a sheet of stick on wing walk material from Brown aircraft supplies which can be cut to size, which I think does a better job.

Once the wing was painted and the paint cured and the wing walk material stuck on it was time to give the inside of the wing a mist coat of ACF50 which will protect the internals of the wing for years to come.

Now it was time to carefully offer the wing back up to the airframe and coat the new bolts with AV8 and torque up the new spa bolts.

With the wing now back on it was time to re connect everything, bleed the hydraulic system remove the trussells and complete the rest of the annual, so the aircraft was ready for the spring. Hopefully that is one job that we will not be repeating any time soon.



Riga, Latvia visit

by Tony Flinn

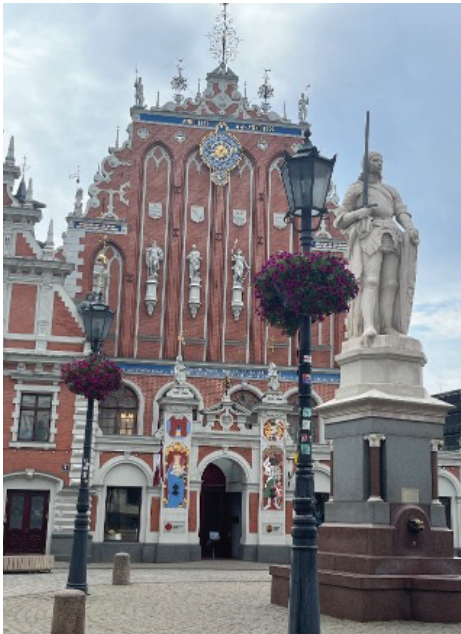
Riga, the capital city of Baltic country Latvia was the location of this year's Scandinavian section meeting. Some aircraft from the UK flew in but your author flew commercially via Amsterdam. Too far for me to fly in my PA28 (2500+ miles return). We arrived a day earlier on the Thursday meeting for Dinner in the Old town:



Friday morning saw us in a walking tour of the fascinating old town.

Those who could access the boat went for a river tour of the city including time in the Art Nouveau district. After lunch in the Lidojosa Varde (Flying Frog) restaurant we were transported to the Aerodium, a vertical wind tunnel where our Rotarians chose not to participate, just to watch the youngsters flying above the tunnel. More appropriate to our ages saw us next in neighbouring Sigulda.





*House of the Black heads and Christmas Tree
in the centre square of the Old Town.*





Sigulda Castle

Saturday began with a tour of the Museum of Occupation of Latvia. As a small country, Latvia was occupied by the Nazis and by the Soviet Union between 1939-1991.

The following text comes from the Museum's website at <https://okupacijasmuzejs.lv/en/exposition>.

Latvia under the Rule of the Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany 1939–1991

This is a story about the Latvian nation and Latvian state that it founded on 18 November 1918, fought for, and built on its ancestral land as the German and Russian empires collapsed at the end of the First World War.

This is a story of the conspiracy between Communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, known as the Hitler – Stalin pact, signed on 23 August 1939. This is a story of three occupations – the Soviet



occupation, 1940–1941, Second World War, Nazi Germany occupation, 1941–1944/1945, Soviet occupation, 1944/1945–1991, – that dismantled the Latvian state, defiled the land, and, within half a century, brought the nation to the brink of extinction. This is a story about oppression, terror, and violence; about defiance, resistance, and heroism; but also – about helplessness, fear, and betrayal. Above all, however, this is a story of the stamina and spiritual strength that allowed the Latvian nation to renew the Latvian state and to re-join the world community of independent countries.

We learned during the tour that 25% of Latvian people during occupation disappeared: either killed, deported, sent



Inside and outside the rather ugly (internally revamped) Soviet era building.

to labour or to concentration camps. A similar percentage of ethnic Russians now live in Latvia some of whom refuse to learn Latvian and assimilate into the country. The country however appeared stable, wealthy and Westernised and as Latvia is now part of NATO should have a secure future.

The final visit on **Saturday** was to the excellent Motor Museum.



A fascinating example of the determination of individuals pursuing their interests in the face of state oppression. The collection was started during communist occupied times by Victors Kulbergs. We were treated to a tour by Victors' son Andris Kulbergs (shown in the pictures) and shared dinner in the museum with Victors' widow Elena Kulberga.

Stalin was so paranoid that there were 8 of these built. There were 4 entrances/exits to the Kremlin. Whenever he left, 3 others would do so at the same time from the other exits, each with a Stalin look-alike inside. The other 4 were kept as reserve. Only 1 survived being scrapped.

The following short extractions from the history of the museum titled 'Mission Impossible' were kindly agreed by author Andris Kulbergs.

The museum can be found online at <https://www.motormuzejs.lv/index.php/en/>.

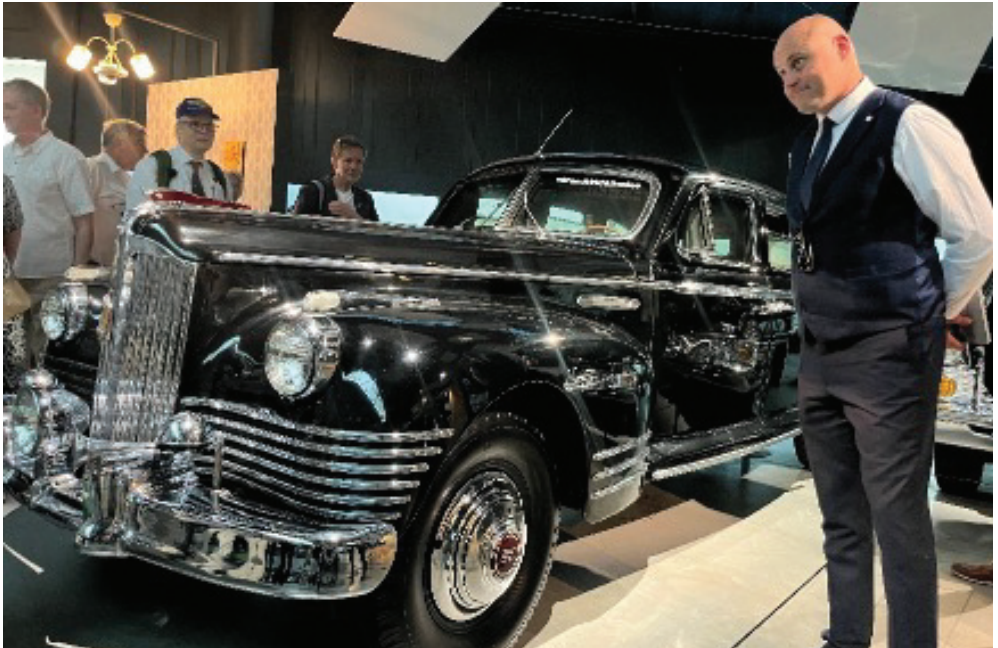


Model of Soviet leader Brezhnev in his crashed Rolls Royce Silver Shadow.

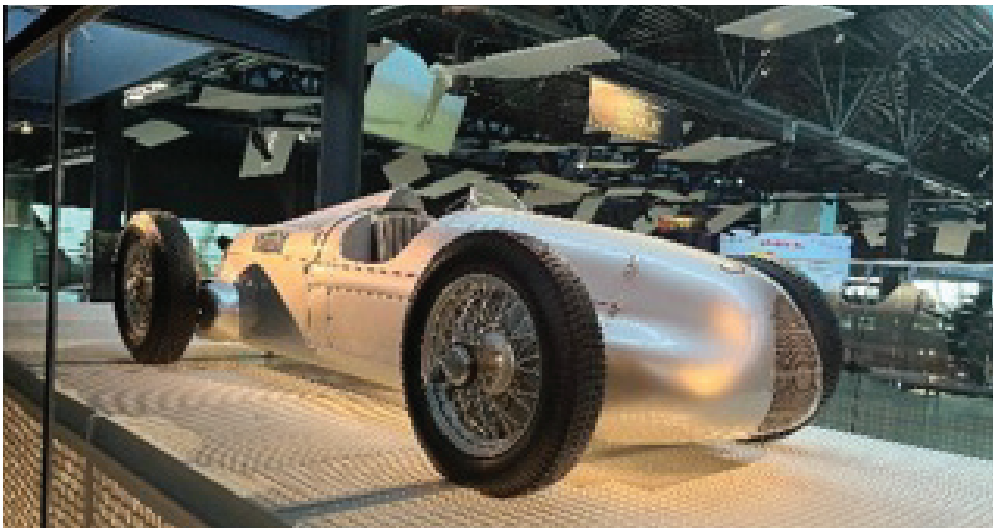
After this accident, the Soviet government adopted a resolution to forbid Brezhnev to drive – for security reasons. President of the International Automobile Federation (FIA) Jean Todt inspects the wax figure of Brezhnev and the damaged car at the Riga Motor Museum.



A very busy, fully packed weekend (English spoken throughout) thanks to Rotarian Janis Andersens of the Scandinavian Section and to Ina Rescevska for organising the event in Riga and Modris Rescevskis for being my personal chauffeur and guide!



Andris Kulbergs with Joseph Stalin's ZS 115S armoured Limousine built in 1949.



"The most expensive car in the world" Grand Prix winning Auto Union V16

Catalina to Biscarrosse

by Richie Piper

This article originally appeared in the Honourable Company of Air Pilots Air Pilot Magazine (August 2025) and is kindly reproduced here with the permission of Editor Allan Winn and Deputy Editor Chris Long.

CATALINA TO BISCARROSSE

By PM Richie Piper

The sole flying Consolidated PB5Y-5A Catalina in Europe, *Miss Pick Up* G-PBYA, still operates on water occasionally, and most years flies down to Biscarrosse near Bordeaux to carry out water operations on the lake, which used to be the Air France hydrobase for its trans-Atlantic flying boat service. The Catalina overnights ashore at the airfield Biscarrosse Parentis rather than staying on the lake, which would require the batteries left on to power the bilge pumps and a watch to stay on board whilst moored. The lake is very large – 35.4km² – and hence can accommodate



The Cat picks up its mooring

most wind directions with only the marine traffic (and 30 oil platforms in the water!) to worry about. Because of the nearby airfield, circuits are kept below 400ft

VULNERABLE NOSE

and, recognising the missile range to the West and noise sensitivity, circuits are flown within the boundary of the lake. In practice, this causes no issues other than choosing a landing lane between the oil platforms. The Catalina was originally designed as a flying boat, and the undercarriage was only added after some 1,800 had been built. It is a compromise, and the nose gear doors are fairly vulnerable, with many Catalinas having been lost because of their failure. Hence, we mostly use a "glassy water" technique, landing in a level attitude without flaring in a descent rate of 100-150ft/min at 72kt. This keeps the doors out of the water whilst planing on the step. It



An engine-change in the field

being essentially a flying boat rather than a seaplane, the accuracy required in all three axes is much higher than that needed in landing on the ground. This is particularly important in yaw, in which the aircraft is divergent, and a lack of precision can lead to a water loop.

This year's exercise, as well as incorporating two weeks of water training for initial issue or renewal of Catalina water type ratings (which also saw the CAA inspect and approve our training scheme), also included shareholders taking family and friends for flights along the spectacular coast including the 106m-high *Grande Dune du Pilat*. The trip was scheduled to culminate in displaying at the water festival airshow, to help defray the expense of the transit down to Biscarrosse and back. Sadly, the high-time starboard engine had issues, leaving the aircraft grounded and missing the air show. Our brilliant engineering team carried out the diagnosis and determined it would require our spare engine to be shipped to France to be fitted out in the field. This was duly done and the aircraft flown back to the UK to continue its display season. □

Ban on 100LL Fuel in Belgium

Antwerp and Ostend Close to Avgas 100LL Aircraft Amid Questionable Environmental Ban

Two major Belgian airports - **Antwerp (EBAW)** and **Ostend-Bruges (EBOS)** - have effectively closed their doors to aircraft operating on **Avgas 100LL**, citing environmental restrictions. NOTAM A1458/25, in effect since March 2025, initially allowed operations with Prior Permission Required (PPR), but in practice, such permission is no longer granted. Ostend followed with a full ban on 1 May 2025.

These measures, driven by regional environmental policy, have raised serious concerns across the GA community. A legal challenge brought by local aircraft operators in Antwerp was recently dismissed. The court cited an expected EU-wide ban on leaded aviation fuel—but no such usage or import ban currently exists. While tetraethyl lead as an additive in Avgas is under review, production under transitional arrangements is likely to be allowed until at least 2032.

IAOPA Europe has condemned the bans as **arbitrary and discriminatory**, noting that no credible health risk assessment has been provided. German environmental data show airborne lead levels from aviation remain well below EU thresholds and are overshadowed by industrial and traffic sources. The situation in Belgium is presumed similar.



AOPA Luxembourg commented: “We support a lead-free future—but not through exclusion and legal shortcuts. These bans set a dangerous precedent.”

The restrictions have even impacted government aircraft, including small twin-engine maritime patrol aircraft of the Belgian Coast Guard. IAOPA, together with GAMA and Europe Air Sports, has brought the issue to the attention of EASA and the European Commission, who have expressed concern.

IAOPA Europe calls on affected pilots to report denied access to their national AOPA. Legal options are being explored, including crowdfunding a formal legal challenge. The association reaffirmed its full support for Belgian pilots during its Regional Meeting in The Hague in May 2025.

Appeal to preserve last flying Vulcan bomber for future generations

The cover photograph of this issue shows the iconic Vulcan bomber. The Trust which looks after the last flying Avro-manufactured Vulcan, XH558, The Vulcan to the Sky Trust, has launched an appeal for funding. The Vulcan is based at Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) which is expected to reopen in 2026. Since 2017, the complete loss of evening events and shop revenue, the pause in tours and the devastating impact of the pandemic, has tested the Trust.

Air Commodore Edward Jarron, chairman of the Board of Trustees, said: "Please consider supporting us today.

Together, we can ensure that she remains an iconic symbol of British innovation and resilience and a critical source of inspiration for generations to come."

XH558 first entered RAF service in 1960 when it was part of the fleet which was the mainstay of Britain's nuclear deterrent during the Cold War.

Visit vulcantothesky.org to make a donation.



RAF Club lunch

Don't forget, our annual Lunch in the superb facility of the RAF Club in Piccadilly, London takes place on Wednesday 10th December. The IFFR(UK) Christmas lunch will once again be held at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, London. After gathering at noon for a drink's reception in the Churchill Bar, Lunch will be served at 1300hrs in the Sovereign's Room on the first floor. The cost of the lunch is £79pp. Andy



**ROYAL AIR
FORCE CLUB**
— FOUNDED 1918 —

Patsalides, Marketing Manager at Biggin Hill will be talking about the history of Biggin Hill Airfield.

All UK members and their guests are very welcome, as are members from Continental European and other International Sections of IFFR from which we normally are well represented.

Visit our website www.iffir.uk for application form

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UK

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We look forward to meeting you!

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