



# A TRULY BRITISH AFFAIR

Martin Ferid visits Heveningham Hall in Suffolk

**S**ummer is well and truly with us, and it's time to put all the other, less important things in life on the back burner and make use of the long days and sunny weather. Whether you're a pilot who likes an after-work 'bimble' of an evening, or an intrepid tourer exploring the continent, recreational aviation comes into its own at this time of year.

When learning any skill, there are three main factors within the brain that get involved: the cognitive, psychomotive and affinitive. The cognitive domain deals with knowledge, and is usually helped along by our instructor in the early days, although in the aviation world it's really never-ending. Psychomotive skill is the ability to send an instruction from the brain to a particular part of the body and have it carried out with a certain amount of accuracy and, hopefully, over time, some degree of finesse.

The affinitive domain, meanwhile, remains a challenge throughout our lives, as it deals with the way we 'feel' and our attitude to risk in a given context. It's preset in our individual DNA and I can clearly recall many years of flying minimum hours, unable to enhance my skills due to a lack of currency, and certainly filled with a mix of anxious emotions each time I intended to fly. For me, the change started in discovering the PFA, which made flying more affordable, thus more regular, and by its nature, more enjoyable as I began to improve and gain that all illusive 'experience'.

Many LAA pilots are doing progressively less flying each year, some not even managing their twelve hours, so it's no wonder that, with so little time in the air, they lack confidence. I guess that, with the coming of each New Year,

*(Main)* The late 18th-century country estate of Heveningham Hall, near Lowestoft, is fine venue for a Country Fair and fly-in.

the well intentioned make a resolution to fly more, but life commitments and lack of confidence can often dull that desire and another twelve months can easily pass with too little time spent aloft. Also, despite many pilots being successful in other walks of life, aviation tends to be a great leveller, and acquiring competence and confidence can be a huge challenge.

## A VITAL ACTION

However, the solution really is rather simple, and should almost be considered one of the 'vital actions' after any long lay-off or at the beginning of a new season – have a session with a coach or instructor from the LAA Pilot Coaching Scheme (PCS).

Most LAA flying members either share an aircraft or own one outright, so they aren't restricted by the costs or constraints associated with flying clubs. Nevertheless, sadly, very few of them take up this opportunity.

The average club instructor is unlikely to be of much help when flying a Luscombe or Steen Skybolt from an unlicensed farm strip. Happily, the PCS is a cheap and eminently available source of experienced, enthusiastic instructors who are conversant with esoteric types and tricky strips. The cost of any competent instructor, even for a ten-hour block over a short period of time, would be negligible in the grand scheme of things and will help to give you the required boost in confidence and skills.

Of course, there will be those with a pejorative viewpoint – usually stationed at the clubhouse bar – who'll gladly tell you that they once flew a Pitts Special with no on-type training after a two-year layoff, without any problems...

## NEW DESTINATIONS

Each season, I try to stretch myself a little, although maybe not too much these days – I get enough excitement through the weather I encounter during the touring I do. However, I still like to try something different or discover new destinations, in both the UK and abroad. I consider myself a 'grass roots' aviator, at the 'spit and sawdust' end of the spectrum – flying from a farm strip, responsible for my own decisions and enjoying the associated romance and challenges which are more akin to those faced by the pioneers of aviation.

Being able to fly from one patch of ignominious grass to another, hundreds of miles apart, and negotiating whatever nature throws at me in-between, provides fulfilment in a way that really needs to be experienced to be understood. Couple that with the discovery of far-flung places, a bunch of nice people and good food, and life isn't so bad after all.

I've been to many 'wings and wheels' events, with lots of variations, and good fun they are too – as you'll see at the end of this travelogue, I hope to nip over to Germany for the next one. The thing is, whether these events are in Holland, France, Germany or wherever, up to a point they're somewhat similar – except, that is, unless it's at Heveningham Hall in Suffolk. Each year, the owners of this country house near Lowestoft host a full-on Country Fair, promoting the best of the English countryside,





(Left) The Country Fair boasts a wide selection of attractions, including The Sheep Roadshow, run by the National Farmers' Union.



(Below) The 530m grass strip at Heveningham Hall hosts a great range of aircraft during the annual Country Fair.

“Each New Year, the well-intentioned make a resolution to fly more, but life commitments and lack of confidence can often dull that desire”



(Left) The Team Guinot girls (now the Breitling Wingwalkers) atop the team's Stearman biplanes during Martin's visit to Henham Park.

which includes one of my favourite UK events, the Halesworth Lions Club Wings and Wheels Fly-In. Unlike some of the more exclusive or unusual fly-ins, with the usual PPR rules applying, this event is open to anyone who has an aircraft available and the ability to get it in and out of a 530m area of prepared parkland. You'll find more details at [www.countryfair.co.uk](http://www.countryfair.co.uk) and its fly-in side is organised by the Halesworth Lions, specifically John Hill, a 15,000-hour ATPL whose chosen mount normally has its propeller placed horizontally on top. He's currently finishing a T31M motor-glider and has his eye on a Flitzer as a future project.

This year's Heveningham Hall event takes place on 8-9 July, so you could make it your next personal challenge, as it's one of my suggested LAA fly-out destinations. The last LAA fly-out, to Amiens in France, clearly

illustrated the spirit of British pilots – it proved so popular that, due to a lack of space, we had to cut off the number of registrations at 62 aircraft, with 98 pilots and crew, at least ten of whom were first-timers across the Channel. That mix of the experienced passing on knowledge and reassurance to the novice is vital if our sport/passion is to have longevity. And hopefully we can all move along a little further on that path from tyro to becoming self-sufficient.

#### SUFFOLK PLEASURES

It'd be easy to come up with myriad excuses as to why a visit to the Suffolk countryside isn't a priority, but for the less confident it would be good to consider if there's a way to make the trip – why not ask a more experienced pilot to go with you to help ease the way? It's likely that

many LAAers will be there and I'd like to think you'd consider that you'll be in 'good company'.

I discovered the fly-in when it first started, in 2004. At the time, it was held at nearby Henham Park, where it did well as a stand-alone event, with a series of attractions and air displays. In 2012, the landowners' last-minute cancellation, following a prolonged period of rain, prompted the fly-in's relocation.

Watching the Team Guinot girls (now the Breitling Wingwalkers) on top of Stearman biplanes, flying in formation, from under the shade of a tree directly beneath the flightline, was something quite spectacular. Nowadays, the fly-in is part of the Country Fair, which raises money for local charities while providing 'a jolly good day out'.

Beccles is the nearest airfield for fuel, just a few minutes' away, but unfortunately



## TOURING ADVENTURE



overnight parking or camping aren't allowed at Heveningham Hall.

The Grade 1-listed Heveningham Hall was designed by Sir Robert Taylor on behalf of Sir Gerald Vanneck, 2nd Baron of Huntingfield, and was built in the late 18th century. It's twice suffered severe fire damage and, in 1994, was bought and then extensively restored by Jon Hunt, the owner of Foxtons estate agents – it's currently used as his family home.

The estate's gardens and parkland were designed by gardener and landscaper Lancelot Brown, who's better known as the great 'Capability Brown', so named as he's purported to have said, upon viewing each new project, that it possessed 'capability'.

Heveningham Hall's SW/NE strip is about 530m long and is marked out at one end of the estate, but be aware that in windy conditions it can be affected by the nearby trees. Strictly PPR, the landing fee is £10, and pre-booking for the Country Fair costs £35 for a car with two adults and up to three kids, or £40 on the gate.

I get to attend once every two years or so – it isn't that I don't want to go each time, but it sometimes clashes with other events that I haven't been to and, as with most things in life, something has to give. My last visit was on a Sunday a couple of years ago, as I was committed to a farm strip BBQ at Laddingford in Kent on the Saturday. The forecast for the Sunday wasn't so good, with heavy showers and gusty conditions in the vicinity. The forecast alone could easily have been excuse enough to stay at home and do something

*(Above)* A brass band performing outside Heveningham Hall itself, during the Country Fair.  
*(Below)* Heveningham Hall's gardens and parkland were designed by the famous horticulturalist Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.  
*(Opposite)* Vintage vehicles are yet another attraction at the Country Fair.





exciting, like mow the lawn or 'watch the box'. Within reason, these days, regardless of forecast, I tend to go to the strip and assess the weather on the day itself, armed with secret thoughts that forecasters often get it wrong and it's likely to be better than they've predicated.

On that particular occasion, they'd got it pretty accurate, as there were indeed plenty of showers, some very heavy, but in reality these were clearly defined and quite easy to fly around. Therefore, we prepared the trusty Jodel and, shortly after one of the showers had passed through, took off into a blue sky.

Upon arriving at Heveningham, it was clear most people had decided that catching up on household chores was the way to go and we ended up one of only eight arrivals all day. The weather was fine, with the wind 10kt straight down the runway.

### FUN AT THE FAIR

As far as attractions go, it's hard to know where to begin. Let's start with the food! As you leave the aircraft parking area, across a quaint wooden bridge, you'll pass a walled garden adorned with climbing flora and the entrance to a lovely enclosure with a marquee serving morning coffees and afternoon teas, along with sandwiches (probably cucumber) and cake. Further along, you'll find various stalls, which tend to vary from year-to-year, and encompass fish and chips, burgers, locally made sausages or hog roast rolls. On that visit we'd taken our own picnic hamper, complete with strawberries and cream, and good old ginger beer.

Stalls selling a variety of unusual products are nearly all in the area around the marquee. All sorts of homemade produce can be purchased, mostly locally made and having a touch of exclusivity. One year there was a chap basket weaving, and making and selling log baskets, while another vendor had jars of honey harvested from his own hives. The goods may not be cheap, but for something a little out of the ordinary, made in time-honoured fashion, there's much to choose from.

The main ring has something happening throughout the day, including all sorts of

country pursuits, from falconry and tractor displays to geese- and sheep -herding, and an equine display of Suffolk Punches, the world's oldest breed of working horses.

One American import are the monster trucks, which I admit aren't my cup of tea but seemed popular enough with the crowd. I much preferred walking around the grounds, and looking at activities which the public can take part in, such as clay pigeon-shooting and canoeing on the lake. Kids, big and small, will be in their element at the event, as there's a wide array of animals to see and even a Punch and Judy show.

The classic cars and motorcycles are always interesting – I guess if we had more money, we'd all have a few aeroplanes and maybe a classic vehicle or two tucked away somewhere. In and around the marquee area, you're likely to come across a quartet playing classic musical instruments, a jazz trio or Morris Dancers. Outside the main house there's even a brass band performing at certain times throughout the day. If your legs start to ache, simply relax under the shade of a tree and watch the morning or afternoon air displays, or other light aircraft coming and going.

### LAA FLY-OUT

Upon invitation from the organisers, we're making this year's Country Fair, on 8-9 July, an LAA fly-out – either the Saturday, Sunday or both. I'll probably book a B&B near Beccles. If you're interested in attending, simply send me an email via [stoneacreaviation@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stoneacreaviation@yahoo.co.uk).

PPR is essential, so email the event's Flying Director, John Hill, via [john.david.hill@btinternet.com](mailto:john.david.hill@btinternet.com) or call him on 07796 878052. As previously noted, further event details are available at [www.countryfair.co.uk](http://www.countryfair.co.uk)

LAA member Tim Palmer, who also flies a Jodel, has made a couple of videos which might be of interest if you're interested in flying-in, view them at <http://bit.ly/2qnhhHW> and <http://bit.ly/2pQaWSH>

Next month's *Touring Adventure* will concern the Taildragger Fly-in at Châtellerault (LFCA), France, which this year will be on 2 September. ■

### GELNHAUSEN FLY-OUT

**FOR ANYONE** who wants a bit more adventure in their lives, I'm planning to go to a 'Wings & Wheels' fly-in at Gelnhausen, Germany on 9-11 June. German airfields are – as you'd expect – clean and largely English-speaking with long runways, restaurants and plenty of facilities.

If you'd like to come along or meet up there, drop me a line via the email address below. For more information on the event, visit [www.flugplatzkerb-gelnhausen.de](http://www.flugplatzkerb-gelnhausen.de)

*If you think that an event of yours would be of interest to LAA members and would like to see it featured as part of the Touring Adventures section of LA, just drop us a line via the email address shown above. It doesn't matter whether it's a small event at a farm strip or something much bigger, in the UK or abroad. If we can, we'll drop it in.*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**MARTIN FERID** is a Class Rating Instructor and Revalidation Examiner, with over 2,000 hours (roughly an even amount of tail- and nose-wheel time) and a similar split of touring and farm strip flying. He specialises in helping qualified pilots expand their horizons. Many of his summer weekends are spent introducing UK aviators to the splendours of flying in Europe, using their own or hired aircraft. More info at [www.lightaircrastraining.co.uk](http://www.lightaircrastraining.co.uk)

If Martin can be of help with any aspects of touring or flying in general, drop him a line at [stoneacreaviation@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stoneacreaviation@yahoo.co.uk), or call him on 07958 880178.

Indeed, if you've any tips, advice or comments of your own, they'll be most gratefully received by Martin.

