

Trip To Visby , Gotland Summer 2007,

16-19th August 2007,

Thursday August 16th.

After staying overnight chez the Walkers; John & Rodney set off with Colin and Jo from Gamston on route to Visby in Gotland via Sønderburg in Denmark where we stopped for lunch.

Due to some inclement weather over the North Sea, we decided to file an IFR flightplan which kept us above all the cloud and rain and up in the bright sunshine. The only consideration was that between Retford and Denmark there is a mid-air refueling sector which means that the base of the airway starts at 18,000 ft and since we were transiting eastwards this meant that we had to climb to 19,000 ft and remain there (breathing oxygen) until we were past the FIR boundary from where we were able to descend to a comfortable 12,000 ft – still above the weather but conserving the oxygen supply.



After a light lunch at Sønderburg we set out to continue on into Sweden for the start of the meeting of the Scandanavian Section.

We landed at Visby in the afternoon where we were met with local food and local beer served in the flying club, later on we were transported to the Hamn Hotel which is a modern, camping style hotel near to the ferries and docks. These were originally built to

house participants in the Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway.

That evening we enjoyed a get jovial together where we renewed our acquaintance with other attendees.

On the Friday (17th) after a scandanavian breakfast we spent the day in Visby, We begin with a guided walking tour of the city and a visit to; the botanical gardens, the county museum and the cathedral.

Visby is a mediaeval city with sturdy walls to protect the rich merchants from marauding pirates who were keen to relieve the local townsfolk of their quite significant wealth, in the afternoon, there was free time for us to explore Visby, eat lunch, and do a spot of shopping.



That evening we had a gala dinner at the Freemasons lodge which included some highly entertaining and very innovative musical accompaniment played on, amongst other instruments; a bicycle, a ski, wine bottles, wine glasses, and an enormous wooden construction that was described as the worlds largest flute!. The highlight of this evening was the presentation to John and Mary Ritchie of the Nordic

Trophy in well deserved recognition to their contribution to the Scandinavian section of IFFR.

On Saturday (18th) we were picked up from our hotel in the morning and then went on a guided coach tour of northern Gotland. The island is a solid plate of limestone that had been compressed by glacial forces which led to some very interesting scenery and rock formations. The limestone outcrops have been extensively mined in the north to make concrete and we passed through imaginatively named towns such as Concreta.

On the tour we stopped for lunch at an old airbase in the north of the island where we had the opportunity to see and climb aboard a huge old Russian Antonov biplane



The tour ended on the island of Fårö, where we were introduced to a variety of traditional games based on old Viking “training” games. Colin managed to excel at nearly all of these, beating all comers and he even managing to “toss the caber” the Viking version of which is a bit harder than the Scottish version since the participant has to pick up and hold aloft the “caber” without assistance before “tossing it”, later on after some traditional (local brewed) wheat beer we had a delicious dinner in a traditional “longhouse” at Stora Gåsemora, Fårö.



Sunday was the day when the Scandinavian section held its annual meeting but for the rest of us it was time to make tracks towards home and so we left Visby airport to make the return journey back to Retford stopping again at Sønderburg for a snack – unfortunately as it was Sunday the dining room was not open and so we had to raid the vending machines for some nourishment before we made our way back to Gamston.

We all enjoyed the weekend and having the company of John and Rodney in the aircraft made the journey even more enjoyable proving the adage that “a pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled”.

Thanks to Bo Johnsson and his team for a delightful weekend.

Jo Walker