

Guild Visit to Multi Pilot Simulations (MPS) The Netherlands - 11th September 2012

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The visit to Multi Pilot Simulations (MPS) was planned to enable GAPAN and its members to gain a better understanding of the world of flight simulation used in today's commercial pilot training. From a personal standpoint, as a student going through ATPL ground school, I believed the visit would prove very beneficial to myself to see the equipment I would eventually be training on and being offered a rare behind-the-scenes look at the world of flight simulation.

The visit started on Monday 10th September in which four Guild members flew out on a private PA-32 Lance piloted by Guild Freeman and PPL holder Peter Dobson accompanied by Immediate Past Master Wally Epton (ATPL), Assistant John Denyer and myself (both PPL holders). After a flight from Lydd Airport, Kent to Hilversum in a brisk 1 hour 15 minutes and an average ground speed of 200mph we were greeted by customs officers who checked our documents. We were then met by MPS sales manager René Veerman who kindly drove us to our hotel for the evening where we met the CEO of MPS Dick Verburg who generously treated us to a 3 course meal. We were joined by fellow Guild Liveryman, Neil Lee, a resident of Holland and current B737 captain with Arkefly (TUI).



Peter Dobson, René Veerman, The IPM, Dick Verburg, the Author, Neil Lee and Assistant John Denyer

The following day René picked us up from our hotel (which was a lovely stay) and we were taken to the Multi Pilot Simulations offices and manufacturing warehouses in Groenekan. We were given a presentation by Dick on the operation of the business and what it strives to achieve, its goals, company structure and future plans which was very informative.

With 18 staff, MPS is a flight simulation company developing fixed-based systems based on the Boeing 737 Next Generation

(NG) series of aircraft along with the Airbus A320. These types are chosen primarily for their dominance in the commercial airline market and notably as the aircraft most newly qualified pilots will start their professional careers on. The simulator structure, found in the adjacent manufacturing warehouses, use actual aircraft fuselage cockpit sections from decommissioned airframes kept in storage awaiting disposal, mainly from the US. These are then stripped down completely, cleaned and resprayed before the new simulation avionics suites are fitted along with the computer systems and large concave displays for the visuals. Most of the switches and hardware are genuine parts purchased from both Airbus and Boeing to give the ultimate in realism and accuracy. The build time from order to installation is typically 6 months. MPS has all its own software, hardware and installation engineers on site and indeed it was fascinating to see a B737 simulator in the final stages of development alongside A320 and B737 bare-cockpit sections awaiting work to commence.

Despite being fixed-base, the simulators are designed to replicate every single aspect of both the Boeing and Airbus and as such the level of detail and realism has allowed MPS to receive certification for up to 50% of a type rating course to be conducted in their simulators. This greatly reduces the cost involved to individuals and airlines who traditionally had to use full motion simulators. This is achieved through lower maintenance and operating

The view of the fixed-base simulator's flight deck



costs along with lower infrastructure and acquisition costs. They also can be a great tool in the use of MCC and CRM that is now an essential part of modern airline pilot training. Dick emphasised from personal experience how ill prepared many pilots are when transitioning from small piston twins, such as a Seneca, onto high performance jet aircraft and the adjustment to the complex systems (and speed) of these machines. The consensus was that reducing the cost of training in flight simulators should give the candidate more time in the training environment for the same price as a traditional course, rather than simply to save money.

After the presentation and tour of the warehouses it was time for a spot of lunch, again generously provided by MPS, and then it was on to their strategic partner- The European Pilot Selection and Testing (EPST) centre, located about a 15 minute drive from MPS in Utrecht. A company Dick set up and is still a part-shareholder in. Here we met the 6th and final Guild member of the visit, Chris Long. EPST is an airline partner school training students, mainly from FTO's such as Oxford Aviation Academy and prides itself on its excellent reputation with placing students with airlines and its rigorous selection process which is now



Redundant equipment being re-worked for use in simulators



Trying out the simulator

used worldwide in pilot recruitment. Indeed the selection process is very tough and it was a surprise to hear they only take on 15% of all students that go through their selection process (which comprises the COMPASS aptitude tests along with group interviews and simulator assessments). We met Eric Duijkers, Martinair Boeing 767 pilot and current Managing Director of EPST who after a short presentation, again covering the background of the company, invited us all to have a go in a Boeing 737-800 simulator, the kind manufactured by MPS. My co-pilot, John Denyer and I found it to be an enormous step up from the Chipmunks and Cessnas we are used to flying...there are quite a few more switches! We both had a go at a full take-

off, circuit and landing each getting at least 15 minutes at the controls with Eric talking us through the various procedures and systems that make up the aircraft, a great experience.

After our simulated flight and goodbyes it was quickly back to Hilversum, again kindly driven by René who saw us off. Our documents checked and just in time to coincide with our flight plan we were airborne with Peter very kindly allowing me to fly the PA-32 back to Lydd.

All in all it proved a fantastic trip and it was very interesting to see the development of flight simulators and a chance to see the requirements of current and future commercial aircrew. I would like to personally thank Rene for being a



Our PA 32 took us there and back

great host (and taxi driver!) Dick for allowing us all to have unrestricted access to the facilities at MPS and EPST and thanks to Eric for being a great instructor.



Guild Visit to Lasham Gliding Club 19th September 2012

UPPER FREEMAN CAPTAIN RICK THOMAS

My own flying career began at Haddenham Airfield in 1967 courtesy of the Upward Bound Trust. The principle of this trust was to instruct young people between the ages of 16 and 21 to fly gliders, and to obtain their A & B certificates. The remarkable part of Upward Bound Trust in the early days was that staff members were all volunteers from the Glider Pilot Regimental Association who taught the young men and women they trained their own motto; "Nothing is Impossible".

I spent many Sundays helping with all the tasks associated with the operation of gliders, towing, pushing, running and eventually getting some launches in to the air. I completed 30 flights in T21 and T31 (which many Guild members will remember fondly no doubt), achieving 3 solos for the A & B certificates.

That trust also had an interesting link with City Livery Companies in that it initially came into being through the financial generosity of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, The London Parochial Trust, The Dulverton Trust, Lloyds, The Pathfinder Association and the RAF. There are some interesting parallels with the Guild's own gliding scheme for young people. It is still in operation at Haddenham Airfield today.

That was the last time I had flown in a glider so the Guild's visit to the Lasham Gliding Club seemed to be an opportunity not to be missed, particularly as the prospect of a flight was on offer.

Lasham Airfield is situated between Alton and Basingstoke. We arrived for coffee at 09:30 and were soon ushered in to the daily briefing. This was very well attended and it was clearly going to be a busy day at Lasham.

First off was a weather briefing which for someone used to perusing the TAFs METARs and SIGWX from an airline's briefing sheets was very comprehensive, discussing the general situation over the British Isles, the local weather and prospects for convective activity. It also re-introduced me to my old friend the Tephigram. I nodded sagely and tried to look as though I know exactly what could be gleaned from it, racking my brains for how one could predict the extent of instability. From the weather briefing an excellent gliding day was in prospect with Cumulus forming from about 11:00 forecast to last until 18:00.

Next came relevant NOTAMS and some 'Tasks' for the day of 100km, 200km and

The Guild visitors on arrival



300km. The 'grid' for the day was clearly going to be large with in excess of 50 gliders and the tug pilots would be busy. It was also an opportunity to meet some retired colleagues who were now active glider pilots. Aviation always seems to be a very small world.

Once the briefing had dispersed Upper Freeman Peter Reading, our host for the day welcomed us all to Lasham, told us a little about the history of Lasham and the Gliding Club and what we would be doing for the day. We would divide into two groups, one flying in the morning, the other flying in the afternoon. Whilst not flying there were some lectures to enjoy and the opportunity to explore the fascinating history of Lasham Airfield shown on the displays in the large comfortable clubhouse.

The airfield was completed in 1942.