



NEWS

Most of you Fournier enthusiasts will be familiar with our aerobatic display operation with the two RF4's. 1987 will be our 4th full season, and our third with Unipart support, with the fleet liveried in its eye-catching red, white and blue paint scheme.

John Taylor, who still flies the display, conceived the idea in late 1983, together with a Tiger Club associate, Brendan O'Brien, and they flew a few displays in that season to see how the concept would be received. The idea of a duo of attractive and graceful motor-gliders performing gentle aerobatics to music, trailing wing-tip smoke which traced the paths of the aircraft in the sky proved popular, and planning went full steam ahead for the 1984 season.

For those of you who may not have seen the display, it combines about 14 formation and opposition manoeuvres, set to music by Pink Floyd - 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' from the L.P. 'Wish you Were Here'. The extremely effective double wing-tip smoke trails are created by cannisters in mounted pods - an ingenious system which was custom designed for the Team. There is not intended to be any commentary during the 10 minute sequence, so people can just relax and be gently entertained. The display starts high at 1800' and descends down to the point midway through when they fly the famous 'gliding mirror' manoeuvre, which has become the 'trademark' of the Team. You RF4 owners will appreciate how skillful this is, lacking an inverted fuel system! They then take a few moments to climb back for height again, with the second half of the sequence taking them down to 200' to finish with flypasts and the old 'cardboard arm' royal wave!

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As the RF4 is not exactly drunk with power, it presents a very graceful and quiet performance, appealing to all ages and types of audience. It is in itself a very attractive and elegant concept, and this effectiveness is enhanced by the contrast created against the noisier, fast aerobatic machines and the heavy metal of the jets. This display has proved that attention catching aerobatics do not have to be highly sophisticated and frantic to provide spectacular entertainment!

Having something so new and unusual to offer can sometimes work against as well as in one's favour; the more established events were willing to take a chance on something new, but it was at the same time difficult to adequately describe the full appeal and effect of the display to those who needed a bit more convincing to try a change. Once people see the show they are usually sold on it, but occasionally it was a Catch 22 situation - like you can't land here if you haven't landed here before!

Many organisers were sticking with what they knew and loved - usually the Pitts - but the Team's reputation for high quality creative flying has spread and grown, and the display is in demand throughout the UK and Europe.

We knew we had a display which was also suitable for events where other noisier acts would not be welcome, such as events with sensitive livestock or animals on site; This was the area of County and Agricultural events and horse-racing meetings for example. There were a lot who were happy with the noisier displays, but some who had been put off or were not willing to risk it. One particular organiser of one of the largest

agricultural shows told me that he had literally 'staked his reputation' on the Fournier display being suitable for their event - and had convinced the Committee of this; relying on our truthful description of how unobtrusive it was!

Fortunately for everyone we proved his decision to be the right one! 1986 was a record year for county and agricultural shows, what we term 'off-airfield' events, which need special CAA dispensation to be flown, with lots of shows being flown for the first time, which is always satisfying to achieve.

As mentioned, 1987 will be our third year with Unipart. In 1984 it was painfully obvious from the non-existent bank balance that we could not continue to run the Team without some sort of commercial backing. Up to that time the Team enjoyed the dubious honour of being the only full time professional aerobatic operation flying on the display scene

without names all over the aeroplanes! Flying then as the Kf4 Duo. So during the winter of 84/85 John and I set about single-mindedly pursuing every big name under the sun, offering them the honour of having their name on our planes! It was getting rather late in the day and we were getting rather tired and desperate, when Unipart came up with some 11th hour support for the 1985 season. We had had to continue with the planning and arranging for the season meanwhile, not knowing if we would have a display to operate at all! So, we underwent a dramatic and hurried mid-air change of identity to the Unipart Aerobatic Team. We somehow managed to get everything done in time for the start of the season, and Unipart hosted a Press and hospitality centre at the Biggin Hill Air Fair, being the first major event of the season and also our home ground! Typically, the great British summer was elsewhere at the time and John Brendan did their best to impress in 200' of fog and drizzle! Funnily enough, although it wasn't funny at the time - it sort of swung our way, as our new sponsors were so impressed they had got airborne at all in the conditions!

The display has proved to be very popular on the continent, and in its brief history the Team has flown in France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland, and as far afield as Spain! The Spanish trips were epic as you can imagine, but fortunately the Fourniers make comfortable long-distance vehicles, if a little limited on luggage space. One becomes quickly adept at travelling light and finding every possible empty corner of the cockpit in which to stuff odd shoes and socks! Long 2½ hour stretches are filled with map reading and monitoring, and at a sedate 90 knots there is also time to enjoy the often magnificent scenery which passes below - and on occasions passes above, as in the Alps! Not unusually the display is popular in France and the Team are regular visitors, often transiting through en-route to or from somewhere else. We have had several enjoyable trips to Switzerland, flying events such as the Geneva Festival and the Zurich Festival last year, displaying to an audience totalling 1 million people over two days! The first trip, in September 85 sticks in my mind, as we had great weather all the way, travelling to an air show at Morcote, right down in the south, near the Italian border. Routing via Toussus-le-Noble, Geneva and Sion, arriving early on the morning of the third day. The weather was brilliant through the alps,

with clear blue cloudless skies, ¹⁰ as we made our way through the Simplon pass, linking Geneva and Lugano, encouraging the Fourniers to struggle slowly up to 8000' in the thin air, passing Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn in the distance. Obviously careful planning and preparation is needed for these sectors, with just the mighty VW keeping one afloat above the chasms of rock below, often with no place to put down if necessary.

When John and Brendan began flying the display John was using the Tiger Club RF4, and Brendan was flying his own machine. In early 1985 John acquired his own aeroplane, and they were liveried in matching red, white and blue *paint* schemes, which proved very convenient, as of course Unipart's colours are these, so their logo slotted nicely into the existing design with little alteration. So their aircraft were G-AVNZ and G-AVLW. In September of that year we acquired an RF5, G-AZZW from Staverton, and this was duly painted in the Unipart scheme also.

In 1986 we took on two new pilots, so we had to acquire our own second RF4. This was G-AVWY, purchased in late 1985. One of our new pilots also acquired one to add to the Team strength in early 1986; this one had been sadly languishing - engineless literally just across the way from us at Biggin, for the past 7 years! It was duly rescued, and given a new engine and it too was made resplendent in Team colours. So our fleet now consists of RF4's G-AVNZ, G-AVWY, G-AVNY and RF5 G-AZZW.

In 1986, as mentioned we took on two new Team pilots, the idea

being that the two of them would work up to a point where they could fly together, thereby releasing John from the need to be constantly in the cockpit all season. They were both Tiger Club friends and flying colleagues of ours - Mike Dentith and Tizi Hodson. Mike had flown with John in the Club Turbulent formation Team and Tizi had a fair amount of competition aerobatic flying, as well as extensive general aviation experience. Unfortunately the training period was shortened considerably by being dogged with technical and engineering delays, so the two of them were rather thrown in at the deep end at the beginning of the season in May, with little real preparation, and having to learn on the job as it were - a tall order in this business! But they made it through much to their credit, flying alternate shows as wingman (and winglady!) to John's lead.

For the 1986 season, Mike will ⁻¹¹ again be flying with John. Tizi has very sensibly disappeared off to aviate in warmer climes; Florida in fact, where we would all prefer to be actually! The hectic schedule of events starts in May and runs through September, with preparation and planning and engineering being done mainly in the six month period between, together with training of course. 95 shows were somehow fitted in last year, weekends and weekdays, with few gaps, as you can imagine for some of the farther events, free days are used up in travelling to and from. In August last year they flew a record 9 shows in a weekend - that takes some careful flight planning and arranging - one of my responsibilities. Shows are a mixture of all types of events - ranging through full blown air shows, beach carnivals, town and City Festivals, county and agricultural shows and sports meetings of all kinds - anything really! So if you have not yet had a chance to see the Unipart show - I recommend it, although I am of course biased!

Here is the Team line-up for the coming season:

- John Taylor - Team Manager.** John is in his 10th season as a Professional Display Pilot. He learnt to fly in Gliders, and flew Fourniers at Biggin Hill as soon as he was old enough.
- Mike Dentith - Wing Man.** Mike is in his second season with Unipart, having had several years experience of Display Flying. He obtained his licence in 1978.
- Joy Frazer - Team Manager.** Joy has been with the Fournier Duo Team since its foundation. She started in aviation by Parachuting, and then became involved with a Standing on the Wing Act. She obtained her Licence in Texas in 1980
- Bob Warren - Engineer.** Bob has been with the team since mid-1985. His engineering career started with Racing Engines, building Rally Cars, and then into the design and construction of Yachts.