

The Flying Farmer

Gloucestershire *from the Air*

By Rob Keene (Pilot/Farmer) and Guy Woodland (Photographer/Publisher)

The 'Flying Farmer' project was dreamed up over five years ago, and largely as a bit of a prank. Farmer and pilot Rob Keene needed some photographs of his farm, which for Guy as a seasoned aerial photographer (flying a Cessna 172) seemed a straight forward request.

However, his request came with a twist. It turned out that Rob expected Guy to be strapped to his microlight - something of a new experience for him. It was also on a bitterly cold November. But after a freezing and rather exposed flight the job was completed. That 'adventure' was to fire their imaginations for a much broader, and exciting, concept.

To make up for the bone-chilling winter experience Rob in the summer took Guy on a glorious three-hour flight on a very lovely, warm day, when Guy got to view the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire from the air. Five years later, and after many flights, they have managed to capture all the seasons and the uniqueness of this beautiful area. Their most recent flight took place with the first snowfall in 2017, which despite the cold – again – gave Guy a wonderful opportunity to take photos of the pristine beauty that lay beneath the wings of Rob's microlight.

They have now decided to publish the images of this glorious part of Britain in a lavish hardback photo book - approximately 100 pages and printed on the finest art paper - which is to be available before Christmas this year (2018).

This exhibition of prints at the Dean Heritage Centre is a 'taster' of the book, and they are hoping that visitors will indicate the images they like best. Unlike in a set-piece formal gallery display these prints are actually available for anyone to take away and keep, should they wish; a donation would be appreciated but is not essential.

Rob Keene is a dedicated and passionate Gloucestershire ruralist and farms Over Farm on the outskirts of Gloucester. He also operates a 'country market', selling his own local produce, and he offers educational visits to his farm for school children.

His passion for flying started in 1994 and today he has over 3,000 hours flight time. These days he is also a qualified instructor and trains student pilots at his farm and as well in France, near Toulouse. Further details can be found at www.overfarmmicrolights.co.uk

In 2009 Guy decided to make the Forest of Dean his home base. However, adding to a long track record of international photography assignments, since then he has also worked a in China, taking photographs in remote rural areas, villages and small towns. These assignments were part of the official Chinese government sponsored 'China Goes Global' tourism program. Apart from regional/provincial exhibitions a collection of his photographs was on display at the National Museum Beijing, Tiananmen Square organised by the state-run Cultural Department.

Meanwhile, Guy has been getting to know the Forest of Dean and the local area and is keen to 'tell the story' – in photographs – of its extraordinary natural beauty, linked to its remarkable history.

In fact, in China his photographs of Gloucestershire have been displayed at a number of exhibitions in several provinces and he is now also planning to invite Chinese photographers to come to the Forest of Dean and 'see for themselves' and take their own images. He is

also intending to take the 'Flying Farmer' exhibition, and book, to China in 2019.

Guy likes to describe himself as a 'creative communicator' and uses photography and book publishing as his main platforms for highlighting and promoting the projects and ideas that he has been involved with over the years. However, he also makes use of other methods of 'telling these stories' via websites and a range of social media applications.

The 'Flying Farmer' (book) will be available in November. If you would like details of the book, please email for more information. The first 300 people to register will get an early bird discount of 25%.

A donation from every copy sold will be made to *Relay for Life – Forest of Dean (Cancer Research)*.