

January 2003

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



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Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Foxbat in Kent Skies!

Following up our report in last years August issue Bob Sharp's Aeroprakt Foxbat is currently hangered at Rochester awaiting its maiden flight. A number of service bulletins on the Rotax 912 powerplant have to be addressed and confirmed to Shoreham before the aircraft receives its permit to test but the hope is that within the next 4/6 weeks this event should take place. As the photographs show the build quality is excellent and one of the reasons Bob chose the design over the Jabiru he was considering is the visibility afforded by the



with the very large flaperons in action it can land at 30mph.....a true strip performer. Bob will keep us posted as to progress so that we can follow up the story of its first flight. Any body interested in the aircraft can contact Bob through the Strut Committee.

Future Events

February meeting is a talk by Malcolm Moulton who is Chairman of MAPS Limited the subject of which will be the 'History of Aviation in Kent'. Should be fascinating.

March is the ever popular CAA Safety Evening so note it is a 7.30 pm kick off and don't forget your logbook. Sunday 2nd March is the Spring outing to Duxford. This is basically a car sharing exercise any members who have spare seats let Mark Balding know so that he can put others who may need transport in touch.

extensive glazing particularly to the rear. Coming from a microlight background Bob was convinced after flying the demonstration aeroplane this was the kit for him. The kit is manufactured in Kiev and the team of designers responsible for this and some half a dozen other light aircraft are from the Antonov Bureau no less. Some 10 kits are currently in this country with more to come. Performance is very respectable with 100mph expected in the cruise and

January
is
AGM
MONTH

Do not miss
the talk
in
February

Lots to read this month

- Don't forget the next meeting is the AGM with talks on Group Ownership
- Book your seat to D & D - Now!
- All material for publication welcomed



Mike's Mutterings (cont)

Onwards and Upwards.....

Now the festivities are over thoughts and actions are turning to the new season. Up at Farthing Corner a programme of maintenance on the resident aircraft is apace and it would appear that most of the renewals fall about this time of year which puts pressure on hanger space for those requiring it. Frank Rothera's Colt is all but done and waits final inspection and should be back in the air by the time these words are read. Brian Hope is manfully soldiering on with a fairly comprehensive refurb which should see his much travelled Jodel looking quite smart and no doubt ready for a busy year, as always. John Dean's Jodel is also due for a look at but with the TLC received through the year it won't be grounded for long. As for our Luscombe, a meeting was convened to discuss a programme of works, some necessary prior to Permit issue, others maybe a little less urgent but required in the near future so it looks as if we will be sitting alongside Brian's Jodel for a little while, a rose adjacent to a thorn to paraphrase. John has graciously agreed to carry out his works in the open hanger, but at least this cold snap seems to have passed for the time being.

New Arrivals

One change at F.C shortly will see Paul Newman return to base with his new purchase Piper PA17 Vagabond G-BRSX obtained from Manor Farm, Wiltshire where it has up until recently been operated by an ex airline pilot. 'SX was imported around 1989 and with its distinctive green scheme has earned the nickname "Kermit". Now where have I heard that before? Constructed in 1948 Paul has spent some time looking through the paperwork, always fascinating with these American Imports and hopes to be on the strip late January/early February. Paul was wisely accompanied by the

irascible Gary Smith, Vaga enthusiast and owner to give his new purchase the once over. This means that Paul's current mount a rather immaculate Draine Turbulent is available for some lucky punter. See elsewhere for details.

Business as Usual

January's meeting of course hosts the AGM so any points you wish to raise on Strut or indeed PFA activity you have the opportunity. If we don't get feedback we cannot monitor our performance. A talk and discussion on aspects of operating Group aircraft will be held after to whet the appetites of those who may have been considering this economic option of owning but have yet to take the great leap forward.

London D & D visit **18th February 2003**

At the time of writing two places are available if anybody wishes to take them up. Contact Mark Balding on 01959 523825 for details.

For Sale - Nord 854S, Continental A65 Engine, Side by side shoulder wing aircraft, PFA permit to May 2003. Needs repairs to tailplane & rear fuselage after landing accident. Very easy Project. £6500. Phone 01244 680434



Sure - January is cold !!



*"New arrival at
Farthing
Corner."*



*Nord 854S
(not the one for sale).*



Piper Vagabond

Posh Week-end, with a PFA aeroplane....

By Martin Ferid

I had just put another log on the fire and was hunting for a corkscrew to open a bottle of Nuit St Georges. For any wine lover the Burgundian wines must rank amongst the best in the world, even with the influx of good 'New World' wines I still tend to lean towards French wines.

The wine glass replenished, legs on the footstool, I began to browse through some back issues of 'Flyer', when I came across an article on a chateau in the Burgundy region with its own grass runway that had been turned into a hotel.

In the depths of winter the only flying I could realistically think of in terms of going places was in a 'big' one, with pilots who knew how to work the all singing and dancing panel. My Jodel on a permit could end up taking days instead of the four hours you could expect in fine weather. Maybe one day.

Winter passed, giving way to spring which in turn developed into the wet and warmish climate we have come to recognise as summer, we always know summer has arrived in Britain as we have British Summer Time. It was a July evening and while playing on the internet I came across another article promoting the same chateau, with an e mail address as well as phone numbers.

Impulsively I sent an e mail to manager, Monsieur..... Following it up with a phone call the next day, the blonde and I intended to spend the next week-end away with no real destination as yet. The result was that he had a room for the Friday night, which we could have for £78.00 but we would have move on the next day.

After numerous delays on the day of departure, we managed to get to Abbeville for about 16.00 local, when the pleasant airfield manager said there was a telephone call for me, it was the hotel checking on our estimated arrival time.

I have never found navigation very hard, but have always had difficulty in spotting the airfield or strip on reaching the destination. We had their radio frequency and their call sign, 'Checkpoint Charlie', I knew we were within a couple of miles or so from them but once again I was struggling when the blonde came to the rescue, standing proud behind a

wooded area stood the gleaming white of the Chateau la Chassagne, adjacent to which was the 800 metre runway. We called up to say we 'had arrived'.

Boy had we!

After landing, a cream coloured Rolls Royce appeared with a 'follow me' placard behind it; even though I had read about it beforehand, it still came as somewhat of an impressive surprise. Having parked, between a Cessna 182RG and a new looking Robin DR400 our bags were loaded into the Rolls for the scenic route to the hotel entrance.

In my opinion the little Jodel looked like a delicate rose between two thorns.

A quick shower and change and my presence was required on the veranda as I was to be 'initiated' into the 'fraternity', the ceremony consisted of wearing a medallion and using a sword uncorking a complimentary bottle of champagne, supposed to be done without breaking the bottle, which was not possible in my case. Drinking the champagne in the moonlight on that balmy summer evening I managed to recall the winters night when the idea had first occurred to me, it had to be a bottle of Nuit St Georges with dinner.

The next morning after breakfast we decided to take advantage of the bicycles which were for the use of hotel guests and cycle down to the village, easy especially as it was all downhill, the journey back must have taken nearly an hour as opposed to the 15 minutes to get down there.

The time was getting on for mid-day, we had already toured the grounds seen the horses and deer and could find no more excuses in delaying our departure, the blonde began to load the Jodel using one of their golf carts to go backwards and forwards. On her return she arrived with the hotel manager, who was ex- French Air Force and had in the past owned a Jodel 120 like ours. We knew that the hotel was full that evening but he must have taken to 'us' as he offered us a room on one of their two barges which traversed the nearby canals. It sometimes pays to travel with a blonde!

We would be driven to the barge, have dinner personally cooked for us, overnight



"Enjoy fantastic days at Chateau la Chassagne."



The Jodel



The Blonde ???

France

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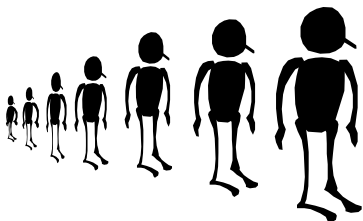
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Dates for your Diary

January 30	AGM & Group Aircraft
February 27	Kent Aviation History
March 27	CAA Safety Evening
April 24	Quiz Night
March 1	Trip to Duxford
May 3 & 4	Cross Channel Fly Out
May 18	Young Eagles Day
July 6	Pancake Fly In

Posh Week-end, with a PFA aeroplane.... (cont)

there and he would then pick us up the next day somewhere further upstream All at standard room rate, Wow!

Furthermore that afternoon, we could fly to a nearby strip and visit a friend of his with a vineyard. Things were looking better and better.

We were given a map and the co-ordinates and told to be there at the strip at 17.00 prompt as the host would be driving up to specially to meet us. We managed to locate the strip easily enough as it was perched on top of a 1500ft hill. On final approach the picture looked all wrong, on touching down I realised that the gradient was much steeper than I had thought and we needed power in order to reach the top, the 700m strip varied in height by 50m from one end to the other.

We visited the vineyard and the cellars along with the German occupants of the C182 that had also been parked at the chateau; we had to be restrained considering weight and balance but bought half a dozen bottles of some very nice wine.

On our return to the hotel, our bags were loaded into a car and we were taken for what can only be described as an enchanted evening, personal chef, personal waitress on a beautiful barge. We shared some of the wine we had bought with the staff and when they had done all they could, they left us with 'help yourselves to the bar'.

The following morning after breakfasting on board, we meandered our way along the canals passing lock after lock, I was even given the opportunity to Captain the barge. All too soon the time had come to head back to the Jodel and

home. By 13.00 the power was going in and we were heading homeward, with the Jodel silhouetting the French countryside.

The journey passed in good weather until approaching Dover, where the way ahead looked dark and we were forced to descend to about 1200', as Clip Gate is only seven miles inland we saw no problem in continuing. On final approach we knew the winds were strong but not quite how strong until after we had landed. Another lesson learned!

For those of you that have considered it, pay the chateau a visit next summer, the cost of the rooms are about double compared to the cost of what we normally pay for the normal two star, but I am sure that you'll think of it as money well spent.

It is situated not far from Dijon and about 45 miles from the Swiss border. There is a fair amount of higher ground; around 2500ft for the last half hour or so, but apart from that it's pretty straightforward.

I am pretty fortunate as whenever I want to fly anywhere, the blonde is happy to pack a bag. For those of you with wives or partners who cannot grasp the splendours of aviation this may be the trip for you to earn some brownie points. I will certainly go again and the blonde feels it should be a yearly pilgrimage and all in a PFA aeroplane!

**CAA Safety Evening in
March - Early start at
19:30 hours**

For Sale Druine Turbulent 1600 cc VW Peacock conversion with 25 hours on engine and 50 hours airframe. Brand new Ledburgh ignition system, many extra's and full history record a very pretty immaculate machine in blue and red. £7000 o.v.n.o. Call Paul Newman on 0208 306 5429