

August 2003

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



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Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Natter Night Becomes Nosh Night

**August Meeting –
Dinner at
Rochester**

**Exciting
meetings
arranged for
Winter**

Exciting things to read this month

- A Trip to Spain?
- Pictures of Strut Aircraft particularly needed
- All material for publication welcomed and always wanted

There is another departure from the norm as the meeting scheduled for the 28th August will be held at Rochester Airport in the Horizon Café and we intend to have a meal courtesy of John Luck and his staff which will be to a French theme. The menu will be published as a flyer with this Newsletter and you are asked to book for your meal with John Dean whose telephone number is with the Committee details on the back of the Newsletter. He can also be contacted by Email at golfgolf@onetel.net.uk.

The meal is not mandatory so it will be a social gathering as usual however on this occasion if you wish to imbibe bring your own wine or beer, soft drinks and beverages will be available.

So just to recap, Thursday 28th August Strut Night at the Horizon Café 7.00pm for 7.30pm Rochester Airport whether you eat or not and don't forget to book your meal through John Dean (Treasurer).

**For a forecast of the
weekend flying weather, try
sending an Email to
flyinghigh-subscribe@topica.com**



*Strut Member Rob Brown's Aircraft.
Submit a photo of yours for publication*

Last Month

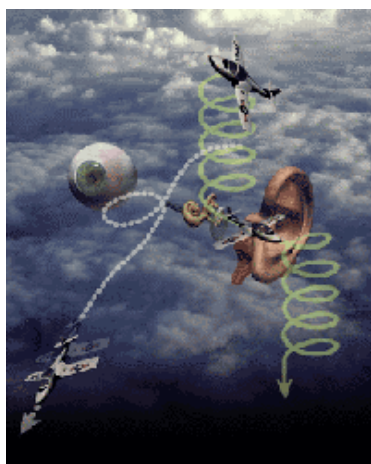
Well the weather held out for the Bar B Q on the last Thursday of July and thanks to the generosity of RAPLC in loaning their admirable Bar B Q equipment and the use of the Airport a good time as they say was had by all. As the saying goes cometh the hour cometh the man, a new talent in the firmament of cooking al fresco one Martin Ferrid took over from the two inadequates who started the proceedings. Having volunteered to show us how, we were more than glad to act as helpers, anyway thanks to all for attending even if the non publishing of the start time fooled one or two people



*Meet your Committee
- Derek Browning.*



*“Abbeville Fly-Out
is on again this
year!!”*



*More on going giddy next
month*



E - Newsletter

We are conducting a survey of who would wish to receive the newsletter by E-Mail so if this is your wish please notify the Editor or Strut Coordinator Jaqui Clark whose E Mail addresses are published at the end of the Newsletter.

We have had several enquiries of late and this may be the way for the future however for now it will continue to be printed but if we can shift some electronically it will assist the reduction in cost of production and may enable an expansion of copy let us know.

Passenger List

Talking to a number of members who own or hire aircraft that they would be willing when they have spare seats to offer them to other Strut members if only they knew who they were. It is therefore proposed if you could let Jaqui Clark know if you would be willing to subscribe to a passenger list with any criteria i.e. how many hours or days notice to go flying, what distance you would be prepared to travel plus of course means of communication. Lets see if we can get more flying.

PFA Concession at Rochester

By production of your PFA membership Card at Rochester Airport you will get a generous reduction of £2 on your landing fee which for those of us who use Rochester frequently is very welcome.

Future Events for September

The meeting which will return to the Cobtree Manor Golf Club for September will see a talk by Gary Smith and Chris Reynolds (doesn't he look smaller on the Telly) via the preparation and participation of the Pooleys Dawn to Dusk Competition and I for one look forward to finding out more on this fascinating competition of which Gary Smith is a past winner.



Kids on the Wing-See next page for story

Sunday 28th September will see a revisit to Abbeville as an end of Season Strut Fly Out. Last year we did the same which proved very popular and also gives the opportunity for anybody with little or no Channel Crossing experience to come with friends. The restaurant on the Airfield is worth visiting so details next issue.

6/7th September sees a reciprocal visit to St Omer we having acted as hosts to their Flying Club members at our pancake Flyin so an invitation to visit them is extended , contact Brian Hope for details.

Of course this clashes with Peter Kembers invitation to Strut members to visit Laddingford on the 7th September. Nigel Read kindly sent details of the strip including some very useful photos which probably won't translate too well in to black and white but if they appear as a flyer in the newsletter you'll know they did however the salient points are Runways are 21 and 29 the lat and long are N5111.47 E00024.87 . Any other info try multimap.com or the post code TN12 6PW . Nigel can be contacted on nigel@laddingford.flyer.co.uk

**Next meeting is on the 28th
August and is dinner at the
Horizon Restaurant at
Rochester Airport. Book your
place now if you want to eat.**

Spain? Maybe next time!

After the cold and soaking of last year's attempt at Scandinavia, the group decided to head south to warmer climes. The targets were set as Madrid and Barcelona, via the French Atlantic coast. Saturday the 31st May saw frequent mobile phone conversations between the different departure locations, as the poor visibility on the French side of the Channel was slow to clear. Eventually everyone got airborne, then the fun began on board 'WK.

The normally painless opening of the flight plan with London Information was foiled by Heathrow claiming that they hadn't received it. After a brief discussion with London, they agreed to accept air filing of the plan, although this required a feat of memory to repeat the contents of each box on the form. In fact if I'd looked in the open documents bag on the right seat the completed form was there, just as it had passed through the fax machine. Eventually all was sorted out and the flight continued on a direct track to Abbeville. Other participants could be heard on frequency, so there appeared to be a fighting chance of us all arriving at the first port of call.

The company that assembled at Abbeville consisted of Brian and John with their Jodels, Frank with the Piper Colt, Maurice with the Chipmunk and 'WK. The group of five aircraft proved to be a good size. The speed ranges were not too disparate (except 'WK) and everyone knew the ropes from previous trips. The first destination was Bernay, the location of the previous weekend's Jodel Club fly-in. At least the weather had improved over the week, as half the previous weekend's participants had made some or all the journey by car. After Bernay, Saumur was chosen as the first night stop.

The leg south to Saumur offered pleasant flying over the French countryside. On arrival everyone refuelled and secured the aircraft for the night. As often happens, there were other touring aircraft passing through. A useful source of information about weather further along the route. Saumur offered a reasonably priced hotel and dinner in the centre of the city. A firework display was laid on, although it

may have been going on to celebrate some event in the city, we preferred to assume it was for us.

The next morning saw the usual 'slowest first' departure for Bergerac. The weather forecast was not wonderful, but there were plenty of options and alternates on the way. About half way down the leg 'WK met the others returning. At first this was assumed to be due to concern that 'WK was getting lonely at the back of the fleet, but turned out to be because the faster ones had run in to a warm front. The most convenient bolt hole was Couhe; in to which we all descended through progressively thickening cloud. Fortunately Frank knew the area well, having worked there in the past and was able to point the group in the direction of food and accommodation. A visiting aerobatic team from Lyon arrived over the course of the day, equally beset by the weather. At least it had the advantage of being able to scrounge a lift in to town with them. On the evening news we saw that Caen, a little north of the previous days route, had been hit by flash floods. The weather appeared to be stalking us.

There was a marginal improvement next day and we made it as far as Bergerac on the first leg. Once the daily Ryanair 737 had been and gone, we refuelled and consulted the weather prophets in the nearby Meteo office. It certainly didn't look good for continuing south. Severe thunderstorms seemed to be raging both sides of the Pyrenees. A group decision was made to halt at Bergerac for a couple of days, hire a car and play tourist. This worked quite well, as we got to see some of the wine-growing region, to the delight of the wine buffs in the company.

After a couple of ground bound days, it was time to consult the Meteo again. The news was equally grim to the south, even a day trip to Spain, theoretically feasible, was out of the question. 'I'd get out to the west this morning if I were you', or something roughly equivalent in French, was the man from the Meteo's considered opinion. We heeded the advice and departed to the west. 'WK over flew the field of St. Foy La Grande, which was close to the rather pleasant



Castle from the air



"consult the Meteo again"



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Dates for your Diary

August 28	Dinner at Rochester
Sept 6/7	Fly-In at St Omer
Sept 7	Laddingford Fly In
Sept 25	Strut Meeting
Sept 28	Fly-Out to Abbeville

hotel we'd been staying in. They will collect you from the airfield if you are going to that hotel. There's a pleasant looking restaurant on the field itself, definitely a destination for future reference.

The day's destination was Royan; barely an hour's flying from Bergerac. This is a pleasant seaside town on the Gironde Estuary, although it had barely woken up from its winter slumbers. The airfield boasted a busy parachuting club and a gusty cross wind, both of which livened up the approach. After a lunch at the airport restaurant the idea of further travel evaporated in favour of looking around the town and spending a night there. The view from the control tower encompassed the town and the estuary beyond. As well as visiting aviators, the tower was also under siege from a local kindergarten. As the children were later being shown around the field, we decided to sit them on the Chipmunk's wing for a group photo and to show that visiting aviators are friendly! Another arrival at Royan was a British Piper Clipper, appropriately registered G-PAXX and operated by a retired BA Pilot. It turned out that he'd trained on the Chipmunk when it was a British Airways training aircraft at Hamble. Royan proved to be a pleasant night's stop over, with a walk along the sea front and meal at a harbour side restaurant. The die had been cast by the turn northwards, later confirmed by the evening news showing towns to the east of Bergerac being flooded out. Was the weather demon stalking us through France?

Thursday's flying consisted of short hops up the coast, initially to the predominantly microlight field of St. Pierre D'Oleron. After a brief stop there, we continued to skirt the La Rochelle zone and headed to Les Sables D'Olonne as a lunch stop. This proved to be marginally successful, as the airfield restaurant was closed on Thursdays. We walked to the nearest holiday park, to find that

their catering facilities opened the following week. Eventually the Instructor from the field located us. All five, plus the Instructor, crammed in to his Citroen C3 and made for the nearest Supermarket. This allowed us to get lunch at the Supermarket Café and phone for a taxi to get back to the airfield.

The afternoon's leg comprised the relatively short run to La Baule, at the mouth of the Loire river. This offered another pleasant beach side hotel for the night and another dinner in town. La Baule is a pleasant airfield that has a mixture of GA and Microlight traffic and claims to sell the cheapest fuel in Europe. They also offer tie down wires, which save having to park on the grass and risk breaking the screw in tie downs in the rock hard earth. The weather was still unsettled and offered a path home to those who chose to make a run for it.

Friday dawned as a good flying day across Northern France. With the advantage of a tail wind the leg from La Baule to Deauville was completed in just over two hours, the faster aircraft making better time. The day was pleasantly sunny and some of the scenery on the way was quintessentially French. At Deauville the French Military displayed their contempt of the foreign invasion by cutting in between the down wind leg and the runway with a couple of fast jets. Probably as well not to be too quick to descend on to the base leg there. After lunch and much perusal of the weather information, the group split, with the Jodels and Colt heading for Dieppe and another night in France, while the Chipmunk and 'WK headed for home via Le Touquet. Both of the home runs were completed, with the threatening cold front catching them in the last few miles to their respective home fields.

A good time was had by all the participants. Spain can wait for