

March 2004

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



Contents:

1050 Worries	1
Sun n Fun	2
Bletchley Park	3
Music in the Air	4
Home Thoughts	4
Contacts	4
Diary Dates	4

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



"Now I Understand"

March Meeting – Quiz Night

Winter Almost Over??

Not Yet!

Exciting things to read this month

- Potez engines are a problem !
- Pictures of Strut Aircraft particularly needed
- Please let Editor Mike have your articles for inclusion in the Newsletter



G-BLKM (KM) is a beautiful Jodel DR1051 Sicile Record– number 519, built in 1964. Having learnt to fly in a 152, in the late eighties at Redhill I joined a new group being formed around a PA28 180 Cherokee (G-BRGI). I flew this for several years and the group shared many trips including visits to Cannes and many other European destinations. However, the pressures of work and a young family meant that by the mid nineties I was down to flying only 10 hours a year – making the hourly cost rather silly. For the next few years I kept my licence alive – just!

The time seemed right in late 2002 to start again, and after reading articles on tail-draggers of various types, particularly PFAs, I attended a meeting of the Mid Kent strut to educate myself

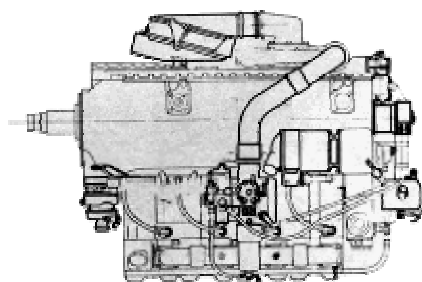
At my first two meetings there was much talk and enthusiasm for the likes of Luscombes and Jodels – little talk of PA 28s. I thought of trying to join a group, then of forming a group to buy a particular type of aircraft. However, impatience overwhelmed me, and hooked on the concept of a taildragger, I started reading the classifieds. I had often done this before, but this time I knew I was ready to buy.

An advert on the Jodel website caught my eye, and when I phoned the seller his fondness for this aircraft only increased my enthusiasm. He had owned KM for 16 years, flying it all over Europe, and was reluctantly selling only on grounds of cost and health. The engine had only 90 hours and the airframe 1700.

Two days later I drove to Goodwood and was smitten. I had never before looked really closely at a Jodel – let alone sat or flown in one – but by the time we reached 500 feet I knew there was no need to search any further. The aircraft climbed at 900 ft per min, two up, had loads of luggage space for touring, handled positively and looked very shiny and pretty!



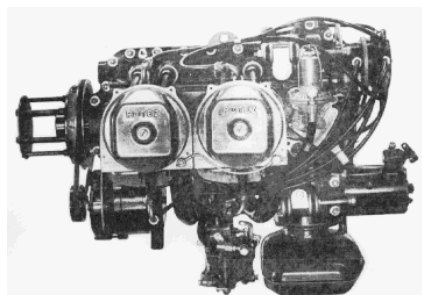
Having persuaded the wife (and myself) that buying the aircraft before I formed the group was quite logical, I returned the following weekend for another look. Still in love, I realised that common sense dictated I should have a survey. This (as a newcomer to Jodels) I found harder than expected to arrange. I spoke to numerous engineers on



Potez Engine



"I saw the look of concern on some faces when I mentioned the word "POTEZ"



Another view of the Potez Engine



the PFA list but none seemed keen to travel to inspect it (at any price) and in the end I persuaded the local engineers at Goodwood to do the job.

Two weeks later I heard that the survey was fine, and it was now down to me to negotiate the final price. A deal was struck and I then had a quick panic as I had not arranged any hangarage! Luck was on my side. The day I telephoned Biggin there was a space for a "baby", and because KM was under 800kg the cost was not too extortionate.



Prior to delivery I attended the November strut meeting, where I saw the look of concern on some faces when I mentioned the word "POTEZ". However it was too late to be put off and looking at the photo of KM was quite distracting!

The owner arranged to deliver KM to her new home at Biggin on 2nd December 2002. As a Jodel virgin I then had to seek out a maintenance engineer (KM was on a C of A) and a tail dragger instructor to convert me. Everything fell into place, as "Cobbie" was next door and would be able to care for KM, and after a few enquiries I was also in touch with two willing instructors

Bad weather meant that only one training flight was possible during the next seven weeks. I used the time creatively by advertising the share in Pilot and I soon had 4 other potential members of the group. All keen to fly, on 27th January we were ready for the big day. Three of us met at Biggin with the instructor, one of us needing only a check flight because of his already considerable taildragger experience. I flew for a couple of delightful hours and then off they went for the check flight.

The fire engine escort on their return (all the way back to the hangar) was a slight giveaway that there might be a problem. It seems that at about 3500feet over Old Hay the engine had lost power and begun to vibrate. KM was nursed home, where we discovered that a sparking plug had blown out. As I now know, this is a familiar problem

with Potez engines and again (as I now know) this can lead to a cracked crankcase – yes, after only 3 hours flying KM was dead.

Now I understand the look of concern back at the November meeting when I innocently said the word POTEZ!. It did not take much research on the Internet to find out quite a lot about Potez problems and the general unease that exists amongst non-Potez converts – perhaps something I should have done earlier!.

The prospective purchaser who was flying at the time was never seen again, but the other three stood by their word and paid for their shares, and we began to discuss what to do next. We faced two choices – throw away the Potez and buy an O-200 or take the Potez back to Charles Olliver at La Rochelle, the only engineer who is authorized to carry out a complete rebuild

As the engine been rebuilt 93 hours and 18 months previously we decided to risk the French option. Cobbie removed the engine, and we strapped it on a pallet and put it in the back of my car. As I set off on the 500 mile drive to see Mr Olliver part of me was wishing that I had not fallen in love with KM at first sight! *The story continues...!!!*

Sun N Florida 2004

There is a growing anticipation of excitement for our forthcoming trip to the Sunshine State. Whilst a number of our members have been, some quite regularly, for me it will be the first visit so it will be a time to catch up on all that I have missed so far and with the Gulf uncertainties, hopefully largely behind us lets hope for a happy safe event. There is a larger than average contingent from Mid Kent this year possibly the biggest numbers ever and I note from the Web site that the Kent Wing of the Air Training Corps are providing helpers at Sun N Fun. No doubt the trip will feature in the Newsletter at a future date.

Those Rochester Shares

Just to clear up this matter and confirm John Lucks Statement at last month's meeting there are no shares currently for sale by RAPLC those out in the market at this time are being sold by individuals. We trust that is clear.

**Strut trip to Bletchley Park -
Sunday 7th March**

report by Jaqui Clark

The day dawned bright and sunny, although very cold - something which had an effect on all of us by the end of the day. For those of you who know nothing about the place, briefly Bletchley Park, near Milton Keynes, was the home of the Enigma machine code breakers during W.W.II and the home of the first machine recognised as the grandfather of today's modern computers (Colossus).



Bletchley Park

A 'car sharing' arrangement had been planned for the trip with an estimated meeting time of between 10 o'clock and 11 o'clock at the site. I shared with Derek Grant and Paddy Jordan. I have to mention this as they are the poor souls who had to put up with my chatter for the out and return journeys so they deserve your sympathies.

In the end nine of us made the trip and had all arrived in time for the 11 o'clock guided tour. Thankfully the beginning of the tour commenced in the Mansion House (*in the warm*) and involved an introductory talk about the site and its previous ownership. Then followed a tour of the site taking in the main huts used by the code cracking teams and explanations of how it was all done and how many people were involved. A staggering 12,000 people were involved at the height of activities - 8,000 'working staff' and 4,000 support staff. All of this carried on without raising local or national suspicions - absolutely amazing! The whole tour takes about one and a half hours and our tour guide was very knowledgeable and full of little anecdotes to go with his information - in all a very good guide. There really is too much information to put into

a short article such as this and I would thoroughly recommend a trip to anyone interested in our history. There are several ancillary areas too such as the old post office and toy museum, an old cinema area where pathe news clips can be seen plus numerous old bikes and cars as several private collections are housed on site. Unfortunately it seems that some of the 60 acres has been sold off and earmarked for housing. Will there ever come a time when we recognise and protect our heritage properly?

By the end of the tour Kate (Gary Smith's partner) and I were just too frozen for words. Fortunately the guide ends the tour near the cafe so a hot drink was the first thing on the menu, where Kate and I proceeded to 'hug the radiator'. Us girls 'don't do cold'.

The tour ends at the far side of the grounds and there are plenty of exhibits left to explore as you trace a meandering path back to the main house. I had remembered seeing a board displaying a talk about the enigma machine and the Bombe at 2 o'clock so made my way with some others back to the main house for this. Unfortunately a spell in the freezing cold followed by sitting in a warm room listening to an interesting man with a 'flat voice' had a somewhat soporific effect and I found myself fighting sleep for the next hour and a quarter!



After this I was ready for the journey home and we decided to leave vowing to return to see more on another day (a warm one). So I guess another Strut trip may be in the offing for some time in the summer.



Bletchley Bobby



*" Us girls
'don't do cold'"*

**Have you ever wondered why
they are called apartments
when they are all stuck
together?**

**Don't forget the Quiz Evening -
25th March.
Prizes to be won.**



Committee Contacts

Co-ordinator: Jaqui Clark



New Orchard Farm,
Sittingbourne, ME9 0QL
Tel & Fax: 01795 - 830378
E-mail: jaquiC@pfa.org.uk

Treasurer:
John Dean 01892 822776

Membership Secretary:
Graham Hammond
aviateur@pfanet.co.uk
01622 891466

Newsletter Editor:
Mike Negus 01634 364396
57 Ploughmans Way
Rainham, Kent, ME8 8LH
mike@negus8.fsnet.co.uk



Committee Members:
Mark Balding 01959 523825
Brian Hope 01795 662508
Mike Tooze 01634 865516
Derek Browning 01622 736626
Bob Chequer 01634 668276

Dates for your Diary

Mar 25	Quiz Night
Apr 29	Watch this space
May 27	Dick Richardson Speaks
Sept	Strut Fly-in at Laddingford

Home thoughts from Abroad

Apart from being a song title from the catalogue of that much missed singer/songwriter Clifford T. Ward and it was also the theme of the last Strut Meeting when a number of members regaled us with tales of trips home and abroad to wet our appetite for the up coming season. Graham Hammond a self confessed new boy at foreign touring has been broadening his horizons and his talk centered around the trip to Northern Spain which was undertaken unintentionally, after weather diversions imposed on his French destination meant he just kept on going. The weather across France generally apart from the coastal area was as good as it gets and those halcyon summer days we trust will be repeated this year. Apart from a brush with a couple of fast jets the trip was trouble free.

Mike Tooze gave an illustrated talk, which also centered around France and the Bastille Day celebrations, which were very entertaining. Mike has celebrated 21 years flying with his Varieze which may form the basis of a future article in our sister publication Popular Flying so look out for that one.

300 issues of the EAA Magazine to donate to a good home. All in perfect condition, 1970's onwards.

Phone Laurie, on 01875 833 267 (East Lothian)

**Bring your brain to the quiz night.
Fantastic Prizes for the winning team.**



www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

Mark Balding and Julian Bone provided an amusing tale of their annual pilgrimage to the Danish homeland and the KZ Stauning Rally and the regions beyond. If you fancy Island hopping certainly Scandinavia should be high on your agenda.

Brian Hope and John Dean rounded off the evening with their trip to the Isle of Man via Manchester Barton which centered around the peculiarities of the weather in that part of the world. For those low experience tourers or others wishing to seek information on touring the Strut boasts a wealth of experience and by talking to any of the aforementioned members you would tap in to their accumulated fund of knowledge which would be hard to beat.

Music in the Air 2004

On the 31 July the above event takes place at Middle Wallop airfield which is the home of the Army Aviation Corps in Hampshire. I haven't been myself but those who have, have been nothing less than enthused by the event, which is obviously held in high summer, and weather is everything as always to these out door events. There are flying displays associated with the evening and plenty of room for the picnic a'la Leeds Castle and similar venues.

If anyone fancies making the trip let the committee know because if there are enough we could organise car sharing. Sounds like it could be a lot of fun.

**EUROSTAR Group
forming
Mid Kent**

Flying from June 2004

**Contact Stuart on
01580 764899**

or email

stuart@skdemon.co.uk