



April 2004

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



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Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



"Banjul Flying"

By John Wright



I wish microlighters were as witty as the gliding fraternity when it comes to stickers and T shirts. I could do with a T shirt for last year and the year before, which said "Too windy, too bumpy, too low cloud, rain, imminent rain, instructor too busy" to account for the pitiful number of hours I managed to get airborne, in return for the endless, endless days I seem to have spent at Rochester drinking tea and hoping it would suddenly get better. The low spot was my failed attempt to get my two sets of Wright Brothers in the air on December 17, when I sat in the airport café instead and calculated that my cost per hour in the air was nudging £250. Ouch!

Drastic action was called for in the shape of a decampment for New Year to The Gambia where rain and wind are rare treats, decent beer is 40p a bottle and the flying is as good as it gets. The microlight school there is run by Will Knowles, an affable Devonian who decamped there from Weston Zoyland. If you have read "Propellerhead", Will appears in it as 'Ken'-names having been changed to protect the innocent! If you want, you can stay at Will's house, but on this trip I had decided to take my wife along and there is more for her to do while I am flying if we stay at one of

the many coastal resorts.

In fact it's a great way to share a holiday with a non-flying partner as you fly either early a.m. or more usually early evening, leaving you both free to enjoy all that the resort has to offer during the day, and all the excursions (wildlife, bird watching, ecotourism, The 'Roots' experience, markets etc.) as well as the great night-life.

On the other hand, if you go on your own, there is also (so they tell me!) no shortage of companions on hand - of either gender. Flying training takes place at Banjul International Airport, into which you fly from Gatwick. Flights leave here and other European airports at a civilised breakfast time and arrive with no time change mid-afternoon, leaving the airport free and the circuit empty for us at the beginning and end of the day when the air is calm and warm.



Banjul Airport is an emergency alternate landing site for the US space shuttle, so boasts a two and a half mile tarmac runway which is just great for landings practice-you can get four touch-and-goes in every circuit! Most wonderful for flexwing pilots is the steady heat-no suit, no gloves needed -just a

April Meeting – Rotorcraft

Winter Almost Over?? Maybe!

Exciting things to read this month

- Banjul Holiday
- Pictures of Strut Aircraft particularly needed
- Please let Editor Mike have your articles for inclusion in the Newsletter



What a View



*"Many vestiges
of poverty "*



Proud owner of a new engine



T shirt and shorts, and, just before dusk (always a beautiful sunset) when the warm air from the Sahara overcomes the sea breeze for a while it's warmer at 1000 feet than on the ground. The views are spectacular and if you are qualified there are a host of interesting places to go cross-country, including "foreign" i.e. Senegal where you can land on the beach by a hotel with a fabulous restaurant (£10 for a blow-out lunch). Going South, on the other hand, I am told it is advisable to keep above 3500 feet as the rebels there are occasionally minded to use light aircraft for target practice.



Apart from that, and the small risk of treading on something lethal in the undergrowth, and the beach hustlers, who are generally polite and good humoured, The Gambia is like heaven on earth. Don't expect total luxury, and be ready to live with the many vestiges of poverty, but the people are genuinely friendly and the place like nothing in Europe. As for the flying, picture yourself calling for start-up in the shadow of an airbus then taxiing to line up on four miles of tarmac 200 yards wide. Fixed or flexwing the instruction, ground handling and aircraft are great, and most of all, you WILL fly every day as much as you want. So here we are three months back in UK, eight great hours flying under our belt in The Gambia, not having got off the ground for one single minute since! Back having yet another cup of tea at Rochester, back wondering when it'll not be.....too windy, too bumpy, rain, threat of rain etc.....

Never mind, only ten weeks to go before the kids holidays and there just happens to be another microlight school in Portugal, nice villa, nice town, night life, beaches. Gosh, the sacrifices I make to accommodate my family. Maybe , I'll tell you about it next time.

Contact Will Knowles at www.madoxmicrolights.com and for travel and accommodation www.gambia.co.uk

A New Elastic Band

By John Wright

Those of you who know me are aware that the blonde and I essentially like to tour, so when our illustrious editor asked me to write an article about a subject that I knew very little about, I naturally agreed.

On becoming the new owner of G-XU last summer and having left all the technical expertise behind in the group that I was part of, I wasn't sure exactly what to do, so I changed the oil and spark plugs and flew.

Summer passed, with no major problems although at times I had to keep an eye on the oil pressure, especially when ambient temperatures were high. With winter here, it was maintenance time, but where to start? There was talk of barrels, magneto timings, compression checks etc. etc. I listened to all sorts of, sometimes-conflicting advice and eventually decided on taking the engine out, a Continental C90 and having it looked at by Richard Isenberg at Southend Airport, who is a D- licensed engineer.

Luckily for me being based at Farthing Corner there were some big guns around in the shape of John Dean and Brian Hope to supervise my work. In reality this meant they took the engine apart in about 4 hours and passed me the parts to clean, bag and label, easy this technical stuff!

According to Richard, that's Mr. Isenberg, my engine was getting old, a bit like the owner and needed new parts from crankshaft up. 8 weeks later I went to pick up my now zero timed engine, which meets all AD's to date. After what it had cost I wasn't sure whether to display it or wrap it in cotton wool. My head mechanic, John Dean had other ideas, he wanted to improve my spanner passing and tea making skills, which he did relentlessly until engine and airframe were re-united. Two inspections, some ground runs and a test flight later all the necessary paperwork was completed and a new permit dropped through the letterbox. The net result is that I am now on first name terms with engineers, aero part suppliers, as well as my bank manager. I own a Continental Engine's manual, I have an aeroplane that has cost more than it is worth, but most important of all I will have a certain amount of peace of mind the next time I'm creeping along underneath a low cloud base.

Quiz Night

The March Meeting hosted the ever popular Quiz Night which was very well attended for a close fought contest without I am pleased to say the controversy of last years.

Some of the teams were a little on the large side, numbers, not physically but it was pleasing to see several new faces to whom we confirm our welcome.

Having rattled through 8 sets of questions and a bonus round the winners were announced as The Heathens with a very creditable score of 75 out of a possible 110. Prizes of Easter Eggs (oh yes ! these things aren't just flung together, due note is taken of the season) and wine were distributed to those worthies who won and a consolation handed to the tail - end Charlies. Thanks to all who participated and made for a pleasant evening.

Plagiarism or What ?

Did anyone notice the easyJet Advert placed in The Daily Telegraph on April 1st (all fools day) showing the little boy in the horn rimmed glasses clinging to the outside of a Jet in the process of landing . It looked very familiar and indeed a very similar image graced the front page of our February Newsletter.

I had a mind to e-mail a copy of said newsletter to the publicity department of easyJet in an attempt to obtain free tickets on the grounds of plagiarism but on checking the source of our own image was unclear and thus dismissed the idea. Shame, a little break in the sun would have been nice.....

Snippets from GASCo

Noted in their 'Bits and Pieces' , on the 17th December 2003 which you remember as the day to mark the Centenary of powered flight there were no less than 260 movements reported at Rochester and some 386 at Shoreham. Notably nothing untoward had been reported on the safety front with this upsurge in flying which is obviously a GOOD THING .

Included was this little item, well it amused me!

Good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment.

The owner of an Aztec in Africa had an engine problem in a remote location and was considering trying to take off on one engine to get to a maintenance base. The message he sent to Pipers Engineering Dept ended with 'how long will it take to take off with one engine ?'

The message got to the Aztec project engineer who replied 'Ask him if he wants the answer in miles or months'.

Talking of which.....

All Change

Engines seem to be at the front of things at the moment, if you pardon the pun. Martin Ferrid has written a piece elsewhere in the Newsletter on his recent experience, this following from the article last month which should have been credited to Frank Lissimore apologies Frank but looking forward to part two, in your own time but something for next month would be good.

Paul Newman, he of the Piper Vagabond, currently holding the title of hanger queen at FC has also decided that the existing Cont A65 needed some TLC but took frit when told of the probable cost has decided to acquire an ex Luscombe engine recently redundant when that owner decided would re engine. This new purchase is of an engine with a fairly recent overhaul and good compressions and when installed should serve Paul well. We all look forward to seeing it back in the air.

Beryl, the group operated Luscombe at Farty Corner is also in the maintenance hanger getting a once over in preparation for the issue of a new permit with the installation of new screens and spats, the latter should give the 63 year old lady an improvement over an already sparkling performance to enhance the 80kt cruise figure.

Recent returns to the air have been Frank Rotheras Piper and Martin Ferrid's rejuvenated Jodel. Hopefully the others won't be far behind.

Blimey That Was Quick!

Allen Jubb and Jaqui Clark co-owners of Auster G-BXKX have recently collected their fuselage from Pat Spiller at Spilsby in Lincolnshire after a thirty four day recovering exercise. The accompanying photograph shows a proud AI practicing his knots prior to bringing the fuselage home.



Recovered Auster



"34 days to re-cover an Auster!"



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Dates for your Diary

Mar 25	Quiz Night
Apr 29	Gyros by Marc l'Hermette
May 27	Dick Richardson Speaks
Sept	Strut Fly-in at Laddingford

The wings were recovered by Jaqui and Al several years ago but resulted in the aeroplane being grounded for longer than they wished, where have we heard that before, so decided for this exercise would have it recovered professionally and therefore expeditiously. Looks quite nice.

Nattering With Gary

Caught up with Gary Smith before he disappears with the Maypole mob to Sun'n'Fun to find out how the RV9 project was going. Gary is probably 1 year in to a 3 year project but has recently suffered a set back which has cost him about 3 months and involved the main spars. Having completed the empennage which is now signed off, plans were made to move on to the wings when a problem arose in the location of the pre drilled rivet holes to the four piece spar. Without going to the technicalities which I am sure Gary would be happy to discuss with any interested parties the offending parts were shipped back Stateside and awaited replacements from the next component run, all this because of drilling being about a quarter hole out.

Whilst talking, he was telling me how the spot landing competition went on Good Friday which given the good weather, how apt, brought 40 attempts on the competition with the closest being spot on number two about 1 metre



Robert Armstrong's New Mount

**The only time you have
too much fuel is when
you're on fire**



www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

with Gazza and the Vaga about 4 metres so a very creditable attempt. The Clubhouse was crowded and by 1300hrs some 150 movements had been recorded so it sounds like a successful day.

PFA Open House

Your chance to meet the staff and have a social evening amongst fellow enthusiasts.

One of the proposed benefits of moving the PFA Headquarters to a more central location has been the promise of more services to members in the form of Homebuilder Workshops and Seminars. These facilities will undoubtedly come in good time but in the immediate future are four Open Houses. Planned for Friday afternoons/evenings the Open Houses start at 1:00pm when PFA staff, particularly those in the Engineering department, will be available to answer your questions. Between 4:00 and 5:00 there will be a barbecue, and from 5:00 till 6:30 a prominent guest speaker will give a lecture.

The first event is scheduled for Friday May 14th and the speaker will be John Farley, ETPS Graduate and Chief Test Pilot for the Harrier program.

On Friday June 25th David Scouler is lined up. He is an Ex RAF fighter pilot and a test pilot on Harriers and Tornados.

There will then be a summer break before the third Open House on Friday August 20th when it is hoped to have a prominent speaker from the Air Accident Investigation Board. Final event for 2004 will be on Friday September 24th, speaker as yet unconfirmed.

Members are encouraged to drive or fly in and if you wish it is possible to cap on the field on the Friday night. Please support this new initiative. These meetings promise to be very interesting.