



September 2004

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



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Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Schaffen Shines

September Meeting – Come and Enjoy

Cyprus By RV6

Exciting things to read this month

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



Having been to the Old Timers fly-in with Mike in 2002, I heard that the event, having not been run in 2003, was back on this year. Within the group we agreed that I could use Beryl that weekend and take Chris away for an exciting break in Schaffen-Diest. There then followed weeks of wondering whether the meteorology would be kind enough to allow us to go.

The next stage was the lengthy discussions with me extolling the virtues of camping under the wing of the aeroplane and being woken by the morning singing of a variety of aeroplane engines, then going to the shower block for a cold shower because all the hot water gets used early, and Chris not agreeing with me. Finally, I decided to back down and agreed to book a hotel room for the one night that we were going to be staying. Martin told us where he was staying and gave us the web site so that I could book in there. On booking over the phone I found that they were giving a discount for the fly-in, which was quite a pleasant surprise.

As we were to be leaving as early as possible on Saturday, I went up to the strip on Friday evening to get Beryl ready. As we have been using a lot of oil recently I made sure that we had enough to get us through the weekend. Filled the tank with fuel and had a good look round to make sure nothing had fallen off during previous usage (for some reason Chris likes to be sure that I have done this thoroughly before she will get in).

Saturday dawned. As the aeroplane was fairly heavy and the wind was light, it was deemed prudent to collect Chris from Rochester. We left EGTO in good weather and looked forward to an enjoyable flight. The first stage was to Kortrijk-Wevelgem in Belgium and all seemed to be going well as we coasted out above a few fluffy white clouds. As we reached mid channel the cloud began to increase so the crossing was continued below the 1200 foot cloudbase.



As the French coast came closer the visibility inland was low so a right turn along the coast a bit to a

Don't forget the September Meeting is a talk by Karl Martin on Flying to Cyprus by RV6 See you there!



Diest Cathedral

lighter patch was called for. We went round the worst of this weather and ended up going past St. Omer. We got to Kortrijk only a little behind schedule and got a light lunch and refuelled ready for the next stage through the small gap between the Brussels and Antwerp airspaces followed a right turn towards Diest. There was another English pilot who landed shortly after us and as the weather wasn't too brilliant where we were he phoned Diest to be told that the sun was shining, so we decided to head off.

This stage went well and the visibility gradually improved as we flew further. On arrival there were a few other aircraft just arriving but there didn't appear to be as many on the ground as two years ago. While taxiing it was noticed that the ground was very boggy in places, which we learned later, was due to torrential rain during the night. We booked in and got our free vouchers for food and drink, which we immediately partook of. During the partaking of the vittels, I tried to phone Martin but his phone was not responding. On finishing the food we got up to have a walk round and Martin sitting across at the other side of the hangar.

After a walk round we went into town and found the hotel. Apart from us being booked into a single room (which was soon remedied) it was a very nice hotel. On my previous visit I went into town where there was a stage set up in the square so there was obviously something going to be happening, but as we had already paid for the barby at the field we didn't see the entertainment. This time was different, we were staying in town. We went into town and sat outside one of the restaurants and were told that there was a set menu, as they knew they were going to be busy. The starter was ham and melon with a choice of salmon, moules or chicken, followed by a selection of desserts. The meal was very good, starting with a free glass of champagne and ending with a surprisingly inexpensive bill. The entertainment turned out to be a small orchestra with a number of singists regaling the assembled throng with a full evening of music and song (in English, which was very useful for us.

Sunday arrived and we were run back to the airfield by the hotel owner (was this because he liked us, or did he want to make sure we were going? To make a bit more of the trip it was decided to return home via Midden-Zeeland. During this flight we formatted with a Jodel who took a number of photos of Beryl in flight. For those of you who haven't been there, this is only about an hour and a quarter away from Rochester. At the airport

there is a small "museum" of almost everything aviation (there is a small entry charge). A short walk (15-20 minutes) away there is a hotel, which overlooks a lake with various water borne activities. About a 9 euro cab ride away is the town of Middleberg which is also well worth a visit.

We, though, stayed at the airport and had a light lunch. Having been here a few times before I can say that the restaurant on the airport is very good. Flight plans filed, we decided to check weather before taking off. This proved to be a good decision as there was heavy rain, lightning and other such nasty stuff coming along the coast past Ostend towards us. We sat the rain out and then headed down the coast past Ostend at 2000ft. with better visibility ahead than inland. As usual Ostend were very helpful and there was no problem being negative transponder (although they do like a phone call first if this is the case). After being handed over to Lille Info we continued down the coast until just before Gravelines where it is a really good idea to fly round the back of Calais rather than over Gravelines Nuclear Power Station as the authorities will either shoot you down or fine you many thousands of Euros. You can see the reasoning behind this as a 1300lb aeroplane could really make a big scratch on a nuclear bunker!!

Not having done much European flying without having another pilot there to help with the thinking bits, I have come to learn that none of it is anywhere near as daunting as it seemed a couple of years ago. If you still haven't ventured over La Manche (as them over there like to call it) there are plenty of people in the Strut who go regularly and will help you out with any questions, you may even wish to tag along on one of the trips.

This and That.

From Brian Hope.

Once again our esteemed editor has asked me to 'fill' some space so I wondered whether I should go with some news from the orifice at

**The only difference
between a rut and a grave
is the depth.**



To the Show



Turweston, or a tale of a pleasant weekend jaunt I and a four fellow Strut members made in late August. I shall start with some news and let Mike cut what he thinks is too boring!

Biggest news of the day is that on Friday 17th September the Executive Committee voted in favour of Popular Flying going monthly from January. As many of you will know, a monthly magazine has been on the PFA agenda for some time and I am naturally delighted that it has finally come to fruition.

The Annual General Meeting was held at Turweston on Saturday September 4th and was pretty well attended. The day started with a couple of talks, the first by GASCo editor Nigel Everitt, who spoke on aircraft performance, and the carb heat knob, which GASCo are campaigning to see eradicated from the cockpit in favour of more satisfactory anti-icing systems. The second speaker was CAA Test Pilot Paul Mulcahy who spoke about his life as an RAF, and latterly civil test pilot. Paul turned out to be a most entertaining speaker.

The AGM proper started at 2:30 and though it proceeded reasonably well to start with it soon got bogged down with trivia and irrelevant issues. I had flight planned from Turweston direct to St.Omer in France for a Jodel fly-in, with a departure time of 5:00. At 5:30 I was still waiting to present my AGM motion on Engineering Charges, and the airfield closes at 6:00. In the end I had to withdraw the motion and finally got airborne at 5:45, arriving at St Omer just as the last vestiges of the sun disappeared behind the horizon. This is not the first time the AGM has not been properly controlled to hold to a strict timetable. I hope next year that it starts an hour earlier and that trivial debate is curtailed so that all the business can be dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. Dream on!

On to more interesting stuff and on the Saturday the August Bank Holiday weekend myself, Frank Rothera (Piper Colt) and John Dean headed off to Midden Zeeland in Holland for the Dutch Homebuilders (NVAV) fly in. It was a beautiful day and we had a particularly nice trip for what is a very low key event. There were perhaps about twenty homebuilts there but we were made welcome and had a pleasant lunch in the airfield café.

All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

We departed around 4:00, John and Frank to return home and I to continue on to Bagnoles in France, to meet two more Strut members, Simon Pratt and his partner Chris (Luscombe) and Martin Fered and his lady friend Sue (Jodel).

I had a headwind all the way down and my two and a half hour flight turned into three hours, arriving at 7:00 to a thankfully not quite deserted airfield. A chap in the clubhouse kindly dropped me off in the centre of town, right outside the restaurant where my compatriots were just starting dinner. Needless to say I forced myself to join them and had some wonderful moules a la crème.

This was my first visit to Bagnoles, quite why I haven't been there before I do not know because I've visited just about every other airfield in the region, and what a lovely little town it is. The central square has a fountain in the centre and a choice of several hotels around it. We stayed in the Grande Vadeur for about 40 Euros (double room) and I awoke at six in the morning to the sound of heavy rain, only to discover that the sun was still shining and the 'rain' was in fact the fountain!

We headed for home via one of my favourite watering holes, Bernay, where the excellent airfield restaurant was closed for the holidays so we had to get a taxi into town for our lunch. Abbeville and then home to end a very pleasant weekend. Martin has been telling me for some time how nice Bagnoles is and I can certainly agree with him. It is well worth a visit if you are looking for somewhere to go for a weekend. Midden Zeeland is also a very pretty little airfield if you're looking for somewhere to go in southern Holland. Plenty of sailboats in the nearby inland sea make for a pretty setting, and there is a very nice period hotel on the sea shore about a half hour's stroll away.

Enough from me; hope this has filled Mike's hole, if you'll pardon the expression, and has also managed to cure those with insomnia.



Bagnoles De L Orne, France



Gladiator



"only two escaping the melee"



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Dates for your Diary

Sept 30	Cyprus by RV6
Oct 3	Fly out to Abbeville
Oct 28	Rotax and Rans
Nov 25	Flying at Shuttleworth

August Meeting at the Nosh Night

Members went to The Horizon Café at Rochester Airport for a meal and social evening and enjoyed a very pleasant chicken provencale preceded by home made soup and finished off with a choice of puddings. Our American member Fred Smith once again joined us from across the pond on one of his frequent flying visits, always a pleasure to see you Fred and look forward to the next time. On behalf of those taking dinner thank you to the staff of the Horizon for a jolly good time.

Next Meeting

Next Meeting September at the Golf Club (Back to Normal after our Summer Wanderings).

If ever you think you have done well getting over the ditch and flying to France, ponder this. What about Cyprus for a jolly! Come and hear how member Karl Martin and his co-owner made the trip earlier this year, it should be a cracker.

Karl flies an RV6 and has been putting its performance to good use over the last few years and we look forward to more tales of derring do.

Lawrence William Fraser Stark : An Appreciation

Better known to us as Squadron Leader 'Pinkie' Stark RAF Retd and the Airport Manager at Rochester for 25 years until retirement in 1989. Pinkie died on 1st August which brought to an end a most illustrious life and career.



Pinkie Stark (Centre)

He had a very distinguished



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wartime career flying Typhoons with 609 (West Riding Squadron) joining as a sergeant pilot and finishing as its commanding officer at the end of the war. Credited with 6 confirmed victories the first in March 1943 against the much vaunted FW 190 shooting one down into the Channel. Operations over France and the Low Countries led to further victories until he was posted in to 263 Squadron as a flight commander then engaged on ground attack missions after D Day a task the Typhoon was employed on with great success, although not without great risk. In July 1944 he was shot down and after evading capture was helped by the French Resistance to escape back to Blighty where he was awarded a bar to his DFC. He was at Glosters flight testing new Typhoons for 6 months but after a short posting to 164 ended up commanding 609. Post war a number of appointments within the RAF including work on the blind flying system development and eventual retirement from the Service in 1963.

He was very active locally and remained with strong links to 609 Squadron Association and I last met him in 2003 at Duxford for the launch of a book on the Unit and he was there with a number of pilots and groundcrew to sign copies. His brother, Roy, who flew Spitfires in the Burma campaign survives him.

Abbeville Strut Flyout 3rd October

Always popular and well supported so if you fancy one more bash across the ditch let Mark Balding know and see last months newsletter for info and numbers will be booked for the restaurant accordingly.

Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming -
Wow! what a ride!"