



June 2005

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



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Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



LOUD & CLEAR

Or Perhaps Not ! by John Knight

June Meeting – Come and Enjoy

Ice Cream

Exciting things to read this month

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

In my earlier life I was a radio engineer and I still have a lot of interest on this subject.

One of the things that I noticed while looking at PFA aircraft was how checks were made to make sure the aerial was setup correctly and I was surprised to find out that, in most cases, none were made.

Some of the more common aerial problems that can be encountered leading to poor radio performance are as follows -

If the aerial is the wrong "length" this will cause a problem with a parameter called Standing Wave Ratio or SWR. Unless the aerial is the correct length for the air band frequencies then it will not operate efficiently and some of the transmitted power will be reflected back into the transceiver possibly damaging it. This also affects the receive side and will result in a lower signal level being input to the transceiver during reception.

Polarisation of the aerial is also critical. The



An Example of VOR Aerial

aerial should be fitted vertically to provide vertical polarisation and failure to do so will cause poor reception at both ends. The signal difference between two stations, one fitted with horizontal and the other vertical polarisation, is 30dB. This means you probably could not hear or talk to that station unless you were almost on top of it.

Location of the aerial needs to be in a clear

Don't forget the June Meeting - An Evening in the Country with Ice Cream - Excellent Venue with Visitor Centre



Com Aerial



"I can be bribed into performing these checks!"



VHF Broadband Aerial



space away from other metallic objects. Failure to do so will cause "blind" spots and can also adversely affect the SWR characteristics.

The surface that the aerial is fixed to needs to be "metallic" and electrically bonded to the earth side of it. A poor SWR reading will be experienced if it is not. Most of the PFA aircraft that I have seen are made of metal but I expect that there are a number of them that are not. This problem can be overcome but it will require work, some help from a radio engineer, and possibly approval from the PFA.

I still have some of the basic kit to check the performance of aerials and I can be "bribed" into performing these checks and also help fix them if needed.

Normally I am based at Rochester airport and I am happy to discuss radio problems over the phone as well. My mobile number is 0774 028 3297. Happy flying.

June Meeting

Don't forget it is a fly in to Steve Solley's strip at the ice cream works near Deal. Fly or drive but make sure you have the right day as it will be ONE WEEK EARLY on the 23rd June. Full details were published in the May Newsletter or call one of the Committee if there is a query.

Future Diary Notes

19th June

Wings and Wheels at Rochester, the Strut will be representing the PFA and ourselves we have several volunteers who will be giving out leaflets and talking to the punters BUT we could do with a couple more to spread the load - PLEASE . Call Jaqui with your offer.

26th June

Mid Kent Strut Fly In Rochester Airport Again volunteers are needed to assist at this event as meet n' greet, serving refreshments and marshalling. Again a number of people have put themselves forward but we would like a few more, give Jaqui or Mike Negus a call if you can help.

28th July

Strut meets at Rochester Airport for a BBQ

June Meeting is a week early!

which is a social gathering so bring the family and have a natter with your chums, more details next month

20th August

Shuttleworth Trust at Old Warden have an evening Flying Programme and Jaqui has arranged for a guided tour around the exhibits in the afternoon and for those stopping for the flying camping can be had on the field. Should be a fascinating evening with the Edwardian aircraft being flown. The tour would start at 12 noon and if anyone is interested it would be handy to know so numbers to the Trust can be advised.

12th-14th August Schaffren - Diest

Their 21st Fly In and always a cracking event, someone from the Strut usually goes so if you fancy the weekend in Belgium let me know and I can put you in touch with others that may be thinking likewise

25th August

Strut meal at Rochester Airport details of menu and price to be advised.

September sees Alan Twigg give a talk on the PFA and scout Days

October and 'Jumping with Jane' a welcome return to give a talk on all things parachuting at Headcorn. Those who remember her talk a number of years ago now know it will be an interesting evening.

November it is fervently hoped Dick Richardson from Popham will be able to conclude his two part talk on operating the heavier end of the vintage aircraft scene and they don't come much bigger than the Lancaster!

And finally Christmas; make a note that this year the Strut Dinner will be on the 17th December.

Paragliding in Switzerland

By Anthony van Eldik

Paragliding is becoming one of the fastest growing airports. Imagine packing your flying machine in a king size rucksack and carrying it to a suitable launch site. Strap on your harness, prepare your canopy and fly, then after landing put everything back in the rucksack and take it home.

I have often watched these elegant wings floating through the Summer sky and wondering what it would be like to

fly them. This curiosity was strengthened when meeting a 67 year old grandmother who told me she took up the sport some years ago and is now regularly flying cross countries of more than 100 miles.

When my wife surprised me for my 65th birthday with a five day basic course Paragliding in Switzerland I was obviously very happy but also apprehensive. It looked so easy but how about managing a wobbly wing!

The Flugschule Emmetten I was going to attend is in a small village about 1200ft above Lake Lucerne. A lift is going to the top of the nearby mountain where the school has its launching site at 4500ft amsl. Before making any high jump from there one has to spend

two to three days on the Training Hill to learn to start and land. My fellow course member was a 72 year old gentleman and Marcus our 32 year old instructor was mumbling something about having a geriatric class.

One is supposed to bring high walking boots to protect the ankle otherwise the school provides the canopy, seat harness and helmet. After an introductory video instruction film and a thorough briefing it was off to the Training Site. We were duly explained how to lay out the canopy and to ensure that all the lines are free and not entangled. These so called flying lines are colour coded and bundled in three main groups which control the front, middle and aft



Where 'the Aeroplane???



"One is supposed to bring walking boots"



Soaring like the Birds!!!!

Junk is something you've kept for years and throw away three weeks before you need it

Rand KR2 For Sale - 1834Acro fuel injected engine.Cheap to run at 2.5gph - Cruises at 100K - Fixed undercarriage - Sensible offers Phone Stephen Solley on 07836653257 or01304374337



The Airstrip at Ripple for the June Meeting

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
john_dean@tiscali.co.uk

Membership Secretary:

Graham Hammond 01622 891466
g@twelveacrefarm.freeseve.co.uk

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
Stephen Solley 01304 374337
Norman Willouahbv 01634 314739

Dates for your Diary

June 23 An Evening in the Country
June 26 Fly-In at Rochester
July 28 BBQ

sections of the inflated wing. In addition there are two special sets of lines which warp the trailing edge and function as sort of flaperons.

These port and starboard brake lines are used to steer and control the wing which is rigged to fly at the proper angle of attack however one is to continually apply a small braking action which allows better manoeuvring control and when fully applied the brakes will pull the trailing edge down sufficiently to stall the wing. This enables the usually very gentle landings at almost no forward speed. The harness in to which you strap yourself contains a small comfortable seat which after lift off automatically adjusts the body to a seating position and furthermore there is an airbag to cushion any unexpected hard landings. In addition the harness contains an emergency chute should the wing fail for whatever reason.

After clipping the harness to the flying lines one is taught to hold the front lines in both hands at shoulder height together with the brake lines which have handles. Marcus then attached a radio to my chest and explained the start procedure which involves running forward in measured paces to inflate the canopy which will then raise above your head. Whilst continuing the walk forward one looks up to ensure that all the lines are properly located at the same time releasing the forward lines and pulling the two brake lines to shoulder height at the same time accelerating forward.

After only a few paces one is airborne and floating at a gentle speed with excellent control using the brakes. Instructions are given over the radio however all this sounds easier than done! Running, checking canopy, releasing forward lines, grabbing brake lines and launching all need to be done in a very exact sequence which takes less than 10 seconds. Get it wrong and the wing will go left or right or lose flying speed and collapse which is not funny when jumping off a steep mountain slope.

However if things go wrong one is taught to immediately pulling one of the brake lines thus stalling one side of the wing towards the mountain slope. To master the 10



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second sequence requires great concentration and much practice. The landing is more straightforward. A very organized circuit with down wind, base leg and final is flown. When about 5 feet from the ground one applies full brakes which stalls the canopy enabling a very soft landing. One then gathers the lines and the canopy over one shoulder and climbs the Hill for another try. After a couple of times this became a most strenuous exercise and I certainly lost some weight there.

As the weather forecast after two days was for strong Fohn Winds it became obvious that I would not be making the solo high jump in the available time. Franz Tanner the Chief Instructor however offered to show me the real thing with a tandem flight. Launching from the club launch site we climbed alongside a perpendicular mountain slope to 7500 feet in generally gentle but strong up winds. Being suspended at such height with no airplane structure around you takes some getting used to but the flight over lake Lucerne and the view of the Alps was breathtaking. After one hour and fifteen minutes we landed gently at the club landing site in the village.

In total I made some twelve solo jumps from the Training Hill of which eight were successful and four were aborts. Will I do it again? Yes most certainly. The safety and quality of the instruction and the equipment is impressive. Performance of an 8:1 glide angle is respectable and cross country flights are common with durations of 5 hours or more. The equipment is affordable and in this day and age where cost of flying is becoming increasingly expensive this is certainly the cheapest and most exciting way to soar with the birds.

**Why do bills travel
through the mail at
twice the speed of
cheques??**