



November 2006

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the

POPULAR
flying
Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



A Fire at Farthing Corner

Those of you that read these pages avidly will know that a new caravan was purchased for use at Farthing Corner as a Club-room to replace the old one which had seen better days. It was necessary to dispose of the old one and it was towed with some difficulty to a quiet corner of the site and set alight. With only a couple of litres of paraffin to get it started, it went from a few flames to a raging inferno in a matter of a few minutes. Perhaps



The Raging Inferno

November Meeting - 30th November

Don't forget that we have Mike Turner ATCO to address us at the Golf Club at 8pm on the subject of Airspace Incursions.

www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk

something to bear in mind next time you rent a van for a family holiday.

Magic Carpet to Marrakesh (Part 2)

So I flew down to Jerez next day, as my chosen point of departure.

Approaching the Seville zone, there was no response on the approach frequency, nor on several other frequencies specified on the charts though I could hear other traffic. I descended to stay out of controlled airspace and continued towards the zone. Descending of course reduces my VHF signal. Eventually I could continue no further without clearance from the controllistas so I turned southwest so as to fly down along the side boundary of the zone, hoping to get close enough to establish communications. Matters were complicated by Danger areas that I was also trying to avoid. Then I ran off the edge my charts, I was in an area that was not covered by either of the Spanish Jeppesen charts that I had open in the cockpit (it turned out to be on the Portugal chart); I continued on, relying on the GPS suddenly a large aeropuerto with a tarmac runway and lots of hangars appeared in my 1 o'clock - madre del Dio - where am I?? Is the GPS signal OK? Have I busted some major airspace?? Is this Seville? Lost? *Dolores navegacion!* I checked the GPS and compass - signal seems OK, everything looked normal. The gremlin sitting on my shoulder was

My wife is a sex object. Every time I ask for sex, she objects.

muttering something about primary means of navigation, but I couldn't make this out..... Getting the lat/long coordinates I checked my position on the 1:1 million Spanish military chart (this is excellent for topo detail btw). Seemed OK, although details of small lakes didn't seem to correspond with what I could see outside. So I swallowed my doubts and kept my course to pass alongside the airfield - which slowly morphed into a series of large glasshouses and the "runway" turned intosome sort of drainage installation.... Aah-hah!

Eventually, after my long detour, contact was established with Seville and I set course for Jerez.

Jerez is a reasonably friendly airfield but busy with a mixture of airline and commercial training movements. Also the terminal is being rebuilt and the GA parking is several kilometres from the terminal; this requires exit through regular airport security along with the Ryanair, er, passengers, and a transfer to GA in a shuttle minibus (no charge for this, thankfully, but it caused long delays). Another thing you need to know about Jerez, a Notam requires parking to be booked in advance by fax.

Overnighting in a cheap (€14) hotel in old Jerez was a reasonably pleasant experience, and compensated for the high prices I was stung for in Madrid, even if the noise from the party next door had to be blocked out with my trusty earplugs! Do not ever travel without earplugs.

Next morning after a lengthy security delay and a ticking off from police for not knowing how to present myself for departure from the EU (a competence which might be useful in a broader context!), I made the ½ hour flight out over the Straits

of Gibraltar to Tangier, straight in for runway 10. There more form-filling. My tip if you go to Morocco, when you have some spare time get a stack of the "Carte de Embarquement/Débarquement" forms and fill up dozens of them with the required repetitive details about yourself and your life history; one or sometimes two or more more of these have to be completed for each arrival and each departure from a Moroccan airfield.

In the Control Office I got the coordinates for the VFR reporting points for my route to Marrakech. These points are vital for flying in Morocco, you're supposed to fly only along the permitted VFR routes that are defined by these reporting points. There is no problem, provided you have these points, but the points are not published anywhere. Unlike in certain other countries which like you to follow defined VFR routes, the VFR points do not coincide with IFR points. The Morocco VFR map in each Control Office has a topo map marked up by hand with the VFR routes. I did take photos of some of these, if anyone else plans to go there you can email me for copies and a list of reporting points. Incidentally these VFR maps do not all show the same routes. I had brought a road map and marked this up.

Anyhow to cut a long story short, I eventually refuelled and set off southwards towards Marrakech. The visibility while OK for VFR was not great and I tried different altitudes to optimise the visibility versus turbulence trade-off, eventually levelling out at FLO65.

The medical profession is the natural enemy of the aviation profession.

When reporting altitude you must never tell the Moroccan controller you are at an even-number flight level, even momentarily, or you'll get an energetic ticking off for being at an IFR level!

Some miles north of Marrakech I flew near a very large runway and military-looking installations - no these did not turn out to be glasshouses - which were not marked on any of the charts or in the GPS. Who knows, maybe it was stealth airbase (psst - renditions centre?) or a mirage!

Arriving at Marrakech airport I got myself a luggage trolley to move my stuff while tying down G-RVIB. A pilot from a Beech King Air that had just arrived with some passengers came over and, after some amiable small talk, announced "*We need the trolley*". Ahem, I said, this is my trolley. "*We need the trolley*", he said again, pointing toward his doubtless Very Important Passengers. Things went somewhat downhill from this point, but I can assure the reader that I did not part with my trolley..... Truly the light GA pilot is regarded as the very lowest form of life, a mere oilstain on the tarmac, but we must stand up for our rights. (Although with hindsight it would have been truer to the real Marrakechi spirit if I had offered to *sell* him the trolley for a ridiculous price!).

Marrakech itself I found a disappointment. It is a large city of over a million inhabitants, with considerable poverty alongside a manic and not really very attractive central area. I had intended to spend a couple of nights but having had a good look around on my first day I decided to explore elsewhere. I did have a good meal and night's sleep in the family hotel of the taxi driver who had corralled me at the airport, "*come with meee, I*



Finals for Fez

will find you a nice hotel

So next day I decided to go over the High Atlas mountains to Ouarzazate, about as far south as I could go within our insurance policy. Since I couldn't see the mountains due to cloud, and without proper charts was unsure how high they were, I told the Marrakech controller I'd like to climb to 5500 feet. He was not at all happy about

this: "*Attention aux montagnes!!*" - this sounded like at least circumstantial evidence that the mountains were higher, I thought of a number and changed my request to FL095. Climbing up through a hole in the cloud cover, FL095 turned out to be just adequate to get through the pass, following the road through the mountains, and then over the desert, to Ouarzazate.

Approaching this airport I spotted a castle or fort in the desert, a classic

There are certain aircraft sounds that can only be heard at night.

Flying is a hard way to earn an easy living

foreign legion-type fort which I circled for photos. This is obviously the sort of place, I imagined, where in past times desperate legionnaires were surrounded by miles of wasteland and besieged by marauding bands of tribesmen on camelsLater I discovered it was just a film set! Ah well, nothing is what it seems

Ouarzazate was very hot, but a surprisingly prosperous small town in a gravel desert, where film-making has become the main local industry. I suppose they don't have to worry about rainy days! I had a nice meal in town, chicken for safety, getting M*h*mmed's revenge over a desert at 10,000 feet would not be an agreeable situation. The man in the tower explained how I could avoid going back through the High Atlas, by heading north-east along the wide valley between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas, parallel to the Algerian border to Rashidia, from where I could go north to Fez. This route had not been shown on the VFR maps I had previously seen. On the one hand I would be flying over a remote and sparsely populated desert, on the other hand I would not have to cross the highest mountains in iffy weather. So I chose the Rashidia route.

Departing in the heat at Ouarzazate I calculated my density altitude at about 7,000 feet. Leaning for takeoff feels rather perverse, unpractised since my days in Denver. Slowly, slowly climbing up to a comfortable altitude, as the afternoon wore on I inched my way across the map and following a road towards Rashidia. Although the desert looked completely barren, there were small towns from place to place with block-built build-

ings - supported by goatherding or Allah knows what sort of other marginal economic activity. From Rashidia I headed north towards Fez. Although the TAF for Fez was fine, scattered and broken clouds in the mountains were pressing me up/down, you know that kind of uncomfortable situation where it's unclear how high you'd have to climb to clear over the clouds - and you might end up at your destination over a solid overcast - and it's equally unclear whether you definitely have ground clearance to fly under them. Anyway eventually the terrain fell away into a valley and the airport at Fez came into view.

I visited Fez in the 1970's and thought it was a rather charming and exotic place. This time I was also impressed by the central area, the souk seemed just as I remembered it. Friendly people who, unlike at Marrakech, seemed interested in more than just the fastest way of separating me from my money - or at least they approached this universal aim in a more subtle way. I did a lot of walking around the city.

Thereafter this trip went from Fez back to Jerez to re-enter the EU, thence east along the coast to La Axarquia, home of the Real Aero Club de Málaga, where I parked for a few days and went off for some R&R. From La Axarquia I flew to Requena, a new and welcoming privately-owned airfield near Valencia (it has a swimming pool), and thence in a straight line back over the Pyrenees, crossing in uncomfortable turbulence just east of Andorra; full-power climbs to maintain altitude in downdraughts reminds one of the no.1 principle in the mountains - at all stages there has to be a Plan B trajectory available towards lower ground. I landed at Graulhet in

France to meet some friends there. The next day following a slow start as I had intended to stay longer, weather forecasts for France induced me to accelerate my departure and I routed to Dinard for customs. Looking at the outlook for the next day I thought I should edge eastwards away from the weather so I PPR'd Shoreham and got there shortly before dark, flying back to Kilrush the next day.

Some stats, 35 hours flying, 866 litres, 24.4 litres/hour. No tech problems this time.

OK ok that's enough about Morocco, where to next year?!

Visit to Coastguard and Maritime Agency

On the 20th October twelve souls from the Strut made an afternoon of it by visiting the Dover Headquarters of the Coastguard and Maritime Agency. A rather fine facility as you would expect overlooking the Straits of Dover and just to the East of Dover Docks whose activity could be clearly observed. Having loosely assembled at the appointed hour in the (staff!) car park we were escorted in to the building by our guide for the afternoon one Spike Hughes senior officer on watch and the co-ordination manager then shown in to a rather grand meeting room with a panoramic view for an introduction to the itinerary and a promotional video on the Agency.

After the video Spike took a fair number of questions dealing with all aspects of monitoring what goes on in the Channel. Dovers' patch extends from North Foreland from where the Port of London Authority responsibility takes over, both sharing the PLA radar facility at that

point, to Beachy Head in the South thus covering the busiest shipping lanes in the world .



Of course of interest to us was what facilities could we aviators take advantage when crossing the Channel. The answer is a fairly mixed bag. Why we asked posing the question given the undoubted congestion in the Channel at this point is there no helicopter cover. Spike shrugged his shoulders the decision is clearly a political and financially driven one since the RAF withdrew cover back in the early nineties. The option is for RAF Watisham to supply if one is available but would take 40 minutes to get on station, The coastguard's own Portland based chopper which would take over the hour or a call to our French or Belgian neighbours from Le Touquet or Koksyde. Close contact we are assured exists with all the agencies and in Spikes word if an aircraft came down they would throw everything out possible to achieve a rescue. His commitment to this statement is not in doubt

In the Alaska bush, I'd rather have a two hour bladder and three hours of gas than vice versa.

however no direct communication is practical between the Coastguard and aircraft as of course their primary function is to maritime traffic.

The Agency do operate a fixed wing aircraft based at Manston, again primary use is for monitoring shipping but could and would be used for search and rescue duties. All shipping in the area would be notified by the maritime emergency channel and of course there are other emergency services such as the RNLI but nothing is as quick in reaction as would be a locally based helicopter.

Nonetheless flying across the Channel the density of shipping is obvious however is a supertanker or large container carrier going to interrupt their schedules to pick up the unfortunates, unlikely given the stopping distances involved or the best we could expect would be an accurate situation report for the helicopter or lifeboat whenever they could get there. We were guided to the control room via the emergency planning room where the operators were on watch looking at their monitors with real time display of the shipping in the Channel. The other fascinating fact is that they take details of the ships manifest in case of accident management but only have an advisory capacity to warn of possible infringements or hazards being reliant on the masters of the vessels to be responsible for their own separation and safety, much as we are when not in IFR condi-

He who demands everything
that his aircraft can give him
is a pilot; he who demands
one iota more is a fool.

tions.

Nonetheless we had a fascinating and informative insight as to the workings of the Agency who give confidence that should their services be called upon we can expect only the highest level of response. Thanks to all at Dover who made our visit so interesting and to Mark Balding for setting it up. (Glad the nuptials went well Mark)

Christmas Dinner and Dance Cobtree Manor Golf Club 9th December

Can we remind everyone that tickets are on sale for the final do of the year and enclosed is a further copy of the menu with apologies to those who have already booked for the additional paperwork. However at least you have a second opportunity to invite the additional guest you should have done the first time round and for those who have misplaced their original and who are anxiously wanting to book here is your chance.

Bookings can be taken through any committee member who will pass on your deposit and requirement to the appropriate coordinator.

Sales are going well so it promises as always to be a good event , don't delay book right away!

Good, Good News

It is always nice to pass on a bit of good news. The first is that Neil Foreman who gave such an interesting talk on the pleasure of having built his Rotorway Scorpion only to be frustrated time and again by the CAA and

Committee Contacts**Co-ordinator: Derek Browning**

Tel : 01622 851273
 Mob : 07885 298484

Treasurer:

John Dean 01892 822776
john_dean@tiscali.co.uk

Membership Secretary:

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

Newsletter Editor:

Mike Negus 01634 364396
 57 Ploughmans Way
 Rainham, Kent, ME8 8LH
mike.negus8@blueyonder.co.uk

Committee Members:

Mark Balding 01580 851112
 Brian Hope 01795 662508
 Jaqui Clark 01795 830378
 Bob Chequer 01634 668276
 Stephen Solley 01304 374337
 John Knight 01322 529079
 Simon Pratt 07973 402986



www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

seeing his creation languishing at Stanstead awaiting the necessary paperwork to enable test flying to begin has AT LAST now received said authority in writing to enable this to commence and the other thing is we made him so welcome he has become a member so welcome aboard Neil and keep us informed on progress as I am sure you were leaning against an open door where some of your peers were concerned. (And he's booked in for the Christmas do)

Second bit of good news is that one other thing that Roger Hopkinson brought with him apart from a breath of fresh air to go with the blue sky thinking was an award to Karl Martin from the RSA Rally 2006 quite for what we are still unsure but to be sure it is a handsome trophy and Karl and Peters RV is reputed to be one of the most traveled aeroplanes on the PFA fleet, well done chaps.

Dates for your Diary

Nov 30	Airspace Incursions
Dec 9	Christmas Dinner at the Golf Club
Jan 25	AGM

MID KENT STRUT CHRISTMAS DINNER
COBTREE MANOR GOLF CLUB
9TH DECEMBER 2006

GARDEN VEGETABLE SOUP
WITH CRUSTY RUSTIC BREAD

OR

DUET OF MELON WITH WILD BERRIES AND MANGO COULIS

---00000000---

ROAST NORFOLK TURKEY WITH BACON CHIPOLATAS AND HERB
STUFFING

OR

GIGOT OF LAMB WITH MADEIRA JUS ROSEMARY AND
REDCURRENTS

OR

COUSCOUS FILO BASKET WITH ROASTED PEPPERS AND PINE
NUTS

---00000000---

TRADITIONAL XMAS PUDDING WITH BRANDY CUSTARD

OR

STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING WITH FRESH CREAM

OR

CONTINENTAL CHEESE AND BISCUITS

---00000000---

COFFEE AND MINTS

£19.95 PER HEAD
(MUSIC INCLUDED)

£10 DEPOSIT TO SECURE YOUR PLACE

	Starter	Main Course	Pudding
Member :			
Guest 1 :			
Guest 2 :			
Guest 3 :			

Please Return Your Completed Slip and Deposit to Any Committee Member (details on the back of the Newsletter) or the next meeting.