



January 2007

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the Mid Kent Strut of the

POPULAR
flying
Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Warbird Adventure In Florida by John Knight

During my short time as a member of the Mid Kent Strut I have written a couple of techy type articles for the magazine but none on flying and, following a recent first time visit to Florida, that is about to change.

After arriving in Orlando during October I was allowed by my wife after promising to be a good boy to go on a 2-day pilgrimage to The Kennedy Space Centre and was I a happy



The T-6

January Meeting - 25th January

Don't forget to come along and express your views at the AGM followed by a Natter Night

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bunny! Not only did I get to see all of those wonderful devices and gadgets that I had seen in books and films since childhood but I also got to meet and be photographed with Al Worden the pilot of Apollo 15!

OK, now you can bring on all the Disney and theme parks you like and I WILL enjoy them. But wait, there on the desk in our hotel room was a tray of leaflets with "interesting" things to do while on holiday and one of them was by a company called Warbird Adventures based in a little place called Kissimmee, which had a familiar ring to it. Warbird Adventures had all kinds of flights that you could go on and the one that caught my eye, as I had never flown any sort of aerobatics before was the 45-minute aerobatics flight in a Harvard T-6 Texan.

Now having been previously "spoiled" on my 2-day trip to the KSC, which even my wife said she enjoyed, the chances of me getting this flight, was at best slim. So I kept leaving the opened Warbird Adventures leaflet on the table and patiently waited until none of us wanted to walk around yet another theme park and were looking for new ideas to entertain us. And then it happened, my wife found yet another discount voucher, in one of the many voucher books that you get given on I-Drive, that included Warbird Adventures and seeing as this would save us money as well as kill a few hours then I could go. Boy was I being spoiled now!

Borrow money from pessimists - they don't expect it back .

The big day arrived and we showed up at Kissimmee Airfield about half an hour before the flight was scheduled to begin and duly paid the fee, minus the voucher for free photographs, to the receptionist who told us that the designated pilot was on another trip and would we like to look around? We went out to the aircraft, cameras in hand, to look over the craft that was about loop the loop etc with me inside. That was when I had second thoughts about doing this. The T-6 is . . . well . . . big. Having a 600hp Pratt &Whitney R-1340-AN-1 engine and its Height is 3.56m (11'8ft), slightly bigger than the Cesna-152 or the PA-28 that I am used to.

At this point Chuck the instructor showed up and confirmed the type and the duration of flight that I wanted and I found myself nodding my head. The next thing I knew I was being shown how to climb into the front cockpit and to fasten on the seat parachute that the FAA "insists" on you wearing. Chuck then showed me how and when to use the built in seat parachute. He explained that it was attached to a 15-foot ripcord and would open automatically should I exit the aircraft in flight and only if 1, he orders me to bail out or 2, I notice that he has already bailed out! Aircraft cameras loaded and checked, safety briefing complete, engine started, radio the tower for clearance and then we rolled or should I say wiggled down the taxi way. This being a big tail dragger with little visibility from the cockpit while on the ground and it is necessary stick your head out of the cockpit from side to side in order to weave the aircraft down the taxi way to see where you are going. Chuck insists that you do this yourself - even if it is your first time in a tail dragger let alone one as big as the T-6. Due to the runway we wanted to use being closed for servicing we now have a 15-20 knot cross wind component on the alternative runway that



Which way is up?

we now have to use and Chuck sensibly completes the takes the aircraft off himself with me shadowing the controls. Once airborne Chuck passes control over to me and instructs me to catch up another T-6, which took off shortly before us, and fly in formation with it. My instructor at Biggin Hill would have a fit if he caught me doing this!

We pulled up close to the other T-6 and I was then told to fly even closer and level with it so that we could get a photo shot of one another. I must admit to being a little nervous at this point and mentally revised the procedure for bailing out. "Smile for the

camera" says Chuck and you put on the best grin you can manage being what looked so close to the other aircrafts wing tip. We then barrel rolled, with Chuck at the controls, around the other T-6, took some more photos, broke off, passed control back to me and climb to 10,000 feet. We will start with a loop and see how we get on from there says Chuck, I follow his instructions and the world begins to roll. When the aircraft finally levels out I find myself grinning like a Cheshire cat - did you like that says Chuck - You bet! I reply. Want to do some more says Chuck - oh yes! What followed then was a series of steep turns, wing overs, aileron rolls, barrel rolls, loops, Cuban 8s and reverse Cuban 8s while smiling at the camera when instructed.

OK, So what's the speed
of dark?

All too soon my 45 minutes were up and

we headed back towards Kissimmee field gently descending to circuit height keeping the RPM at the correct setting so as not to temperature shock the big radial engine. During this descent Chuck asked if I could see a small blob on the horizon and this turned out to be the NASA vehicle assembly building at Cape Kennedy 50 miles away! The optimum runway for the prevailing wind conditions was still closed and due to the high crosswind component Chuck lands the aircraft and brings it back to the hangar.

As I get out of the T-6 the first question my wife asks me is "did you do any aerobatics?" and with the straightest face that I could keep I replied - no, that we had tried one but I didn't like it. My wife then turns to Chuck, who by this time has twigged what I am up to and also keeps a straight face, and says "you mean we paid all that money and you didn't do any aerobatics?" Chuck shrugs his shoulders and replies, "that some people like aerobatics and others don't". At this point I cannot help but smile and confess to her what we had done up there.

We were then given a DVD of the flight taken from the two motion cameras fitted to the aircraft as well as the 35mm film from the still camera mounted on the wingtip. The 35mm pictures were taken by us to a local shop and processed that day and I still find it hard to believe that I really did it and grin stupidly whenever I look at

them.

There is one thing that I am really sure about this type of flying - I want to do it again and soon!

Karl's Gliding Awards

As many of you will remember Karl Martin wrote an entertaining piece for the Newsletter (could do with more articles, information or W.H.Y. please anyone) about his gliding experience in the States and to bring the story up to date Karl filed the following bulletin :

"The Soaring Society of America have credited the following FAI awards to Karl Martin for his flights out of Minden in September:

Silver: Duration of greater than five hours (actual 5:20).

Silver: Altitude gain of greater than 1000metres (actual 2400)

Gold: Altitude gain of greater than 3000metres (actual 3040)

A distance flight of 50kms was not credited because the altitude loss was 340ft greater than permissible under FAI rules. Naturally, a protest has been lodged.

From this, Karl has concluded he goes higher and for longer but doesn't get anywhere!"

Airfields In Jeopardy

A number of members including Gary

Cashtration (n.): The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time.

Giraffiti: Vandalism
spray-painted very, very high.

Smith, Nigel Read and Paddy Jordan kindly took the trouble to inform me of a petition to stop the potential for losing more airfields which can be found by going to

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/airfields/> so you are urged to put your names forward to assist the greater cause.

Novembers Meeting

Our last meeting of the year was very well attended for a talk on airspace infringement given by two controllers responsible for Stanstead and Luton and was illustrated by a powerpoint presentation explaining the safety and economic ramifications when we do (accidentally) stray in to controlled airspace. This talk was well received I believe and is a further attempt to spread the word and heighten awareness of the problems these incursions give. Our guests left us with an open invitation to visit West Drayton which we have been to in the past and if numbers are sufficient plans will be put in place for a return later this year which leads nicely on to the next item
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Visit to NATS at Swanwick

Our esteemed Events Co-ordinator Mark Balding has arrangements in hand for a trip to Swanwick for up to 8 members sometime in March details of which will be announced at the January meeting.

Home Wanted for PFA Aeroplane

John Knight wishes to purchase a PFA Type aeroplane as yet unspecified, but is looking for somewhere to operate it

from. Any ideas please contact John at jmk@gotadsl.co.uk or via the Newsletter. Hope to hear a positive result soon.

Christmas Dinner and Dance

For the first time in probably the last dozen years I was unable to attend this year but from the committee debrief I understand that we had a good spread of members, the food was good and on the whole deemed to be one of our finest with several positive comments coming out of it so sucks to me for missing it but as Arnie says "I'll be back".

January Meeting AGM 25th January 2007 - Golf Club

As usual our first meeting of this new year will have the AGM followed by a general chat over whichever beverage takes your fancy. At our committee meeting held on 10th January all the remaining members expressed their willingness to stand for re-election in the posts presently held unless you say otherwise at the AGM of course. In the past year we have lost several stalwarts who have dropped away and there fore if anyone fancies a stint with us new blood is to be welcomed as we have discovered by our most recent members Simon Pratt and John Knight whose input this year has been refreshing.

Whilst we reviewed the events of the previous twelve months a programme for the following year was proposed and we should be bringing some interesting and entertaining speakers. Having given over for a number years time to fly the Nations 'youf' at Young Eagles and latterly the Scouts we will be planning a day in May, probably the early Bank

Holiday, at which we will give all our members the opportunity to fly or fly in different types so if you are considering building say a Jabiru or a Europa for example or perhaps buying a classic off the shelf and we have one on the Strut 'Fleet' the plan is to fly before you buy. We are very fortunate in having a good cross section of PFA aircraft so with the co-operation of their owners it will be a good opportunity not only for any potential builders but for those non flying members with limited access to fly.

Other events will be published elsewhere in the Newsletter so we look forward to a happy and safe 2007 and see you at the Golf Club on the 25th of this month.

Notes From Malta

Steve Solley took a recent mid winter break to Malta and amongst the exhibits the Pou du Ciel and Link Trainer were photographed, the Pou being of course featured in a recent issue of our sister publication 'Popular Flying'. Information on this Museum can be found on

www.maltaaviationmuseum.com

This museum has been the subject of a recent expansion and hosted at the opening of the new buildings veterans of the Malta Campaign which led of course to



the award of the George Cross to the peoples of that beleaguered island in 1942. A well publicised visit by Duxford based Hurricane and Spitfire saw a return a couple of years ago of the types largely responsible for the aerial defence not seen in Malta's sky since the war. I would be interested in your holiday snaps, aviation themed of course !

A Little Tale of Caution From Down Under

Courtesy of Australian Flight Review via Gary Smith

Hi Mate,

I am writing to you because I need your help to get me bloody pilot's license back. You keep telling me you got all the right contacts. Well now's your chance to make something happen for me because, mate, I'm bloody desperate. But first, I'd better tell you what happened during my last flight review with the CAA Examiner. On the phone, Ron (that's the CAA dickhead) seemed a reasonable sort of a bloke. He politely reminded me of the need to do a flight review every two years. He even offered to drive out, have a look over my property and let me operate from my own strip. Naturally I agreed to that. Anyway, Ron turned up last Wednesday. First up, he said he was a bit surprised to see the plane on a small strip outside my homestead, because the ALA (Authorised Landing Area) is about a mile away. I explained that because this strip was so close to the homestead, it was more convenient than the ALA, and despite the power lines crossing about midway down the strip, it's really not a problem to land and take-off, because at the halfway point down the strip you're usually still on the ground. For some reason Ron seemed nervous. So,

although I had done the pre-flight inspection only four days earlier, I decided to do it all over again. Because the prick was watching me carefully, I walked around the plane three times instead of my usual two. My effort was rewarded because the colour finally returned to Ron's cheeks. In fact, they went a bright red. In view of Ron's obviously better mood, I told him I was going to combine the test flight with some farm work, as I had to deliver three poddy calves from the home paddock to the main herd. After a bit of a chase I finally caught the calves and threw them into the back of the ol' Cessna 172. We climbed aboard, but Ron started getting onto me about weight and balance calculations and all that crap. Of course I knew that sort of thing was a waste of time because, calves like to move around a bit particularly when they see themselves 500 feet off the ground! So, it's bloody pointless trying to secure them as you know. However, I did tell Ron that he shouldn't worry as I always keep the trim wheel set on neutral to ensure we remain pretty stable at all stages throughout the flight. Anyway, I started the engine and cleverly minimized the warm-up time by tramping hard on the brakes and gunning her to 2,500 rpm. I then discovered that Ron has very acute hearing, even though he was wearing a bloody headset. Through all that noise he detected a metallic rattle and demanded I account for it. Actually it began about a month ago and was caused by a screw-driver that fell down a hole in the floor and lodged in the fuel selector mechanism. The selector can't be moved now, but it doesn't matter because it's jammed on 'All tanks', so I suppose that's Okay. However, as Ron was obviously a nit-picker, I blamed the noise on vibration from a stainless steel thermos flask which I keep in a beaut little possie be-

tween the windshield and the magnetic compass. My explanation seemed to relax Ron, because he slumped back in the seat and kept looking up at the cockpit roof. I released the brakes to taxi out, but unfortunately the plane gave a leap and spun to the right. "Hell" I thought, "not the starboard wheel chock again". The bump jolted Ron back to full alertness. He looked around just in time to see a rock thrown by the prop-wash disappear completely through the windscreen of his brand new Commodore. "Now I'm really in trouble. Suddenly Ron's elongated neck and bulging eyes reappeared. His mouth opened wide, very wide, but no sound emerged. "Take it easy," I told him, "we'll be out of this in a minute". Sure enough, about a minute later we emerged, still straight and level and still at 50 feet. Admittedly I was surprised to notice that we were upside down, and I kept thinking to myself, "I hope Ron didn't notice that I had forgotten to set the QNH when we were taxiing". This minor tribulation forced me to fly to a nearby valley in which I had to do a half roll to get upright again. By now the main herd had divided into two groups leaving a narrow strip between them. "Ah!" I thought, "there's an omen. We'll land right there." Knowing that the tyre problem demanded a slow approach, I flew a couple of steep turns with full flap. Soon the stall warning horn was blaring so loud in me ear that I cut it's circuit breaker to shut it up, but by then I knew we were slow enough anyway. I turned steeply onto a 75 foot final and put her down with a real thud. Talk about laugh. I've never seen the likes of it. He couldn't stop. We finally rolled to a halt and I released

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.freeseve.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



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the calves, who bolted out of the aircraft like there was no tomorrow. I then began picking clumps of dry grass. It was then that Ron really lost the plot and started running away from the aircraft. Can you believe it? The last time I saw him he was off into the distance, arms flailing in the air and still shrieking with laughter. I later heard that he had been confined to a psychiatric institution - poor bugger! Anyhow mate, that's enough about Ron. The problem is I got this letter from CASA withdrawing, as they put it, my privileges to fly; until I have undergone a complete pilot training course again and undertaken another flight proficiency test. Now I admit that I made a mistake in taxiing over the wheel chock and not setting the QNH using strip elevation, but I can't see what else I did that was a so bloody bad that they have to withdraw me flamin' license. Can you?

Ralph H Bell
 Mud Creek Plantation

Dates for your Diary

Jan 25	AGM
Feb 22	Quiz Night
Mar 29	Survival Techniques
Apr 26	Watch This Space

MID - KENT STRUT

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DEC 2006

2005	INCOME	2006	
£		£	£
79.00	BBQ		0.00
99.97	Raffle at Christmas Dinner		95.00
340.00	Christmas Dinner		1405.00
62.60	Fly-In		0.00
20.00	Donation		10.00
41.00	Meeting Raffles		0.00
1106.00	Subscriptions		1071.00
1748.57	Total		2581.00
	EXPENDITURE		
180.00	Meetings	200.00	
1091.69	Newsletter	672.41	
262.09	Printer Purchase	0.00	
45.52	BBQ	0.00	
6.90	Quiz	0.00	
22.97	Raffle at Christmas Dinner	32.00	
339.50	Christmas Dinner	1382.50	
17.27	Fly-In	0.00	
85.87	Miscellaneous	56.47	
110.00	GAAC	107.00	
-413.24	Excess of Income over Expenditure	130.62	
£1,748.57		£2,581.00	£2,581.00

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BALANCE SHEET FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DEC 2006

	2006
	£
Balance in Lloyds Bank at 1/1/06	1541.20
Credit from Profit & Loss Account	130.62
Balance at 31/12/06 in Lloyds Bank	<u>1671.82</u>