



February 2007

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the Mid Kent Strut of the

POPULAR
flying
Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Winter Flying & Other Musings by Brian Hope

Looking forward to a brighter future, provided the UK doesn't insist on going it alone to save the planet.

The winter weather has certainly been very mild this year, and has been so pleasant that on the first weekend in February, five aircraft from Farthing Corner were able to head off to Abbeville for lunch. I cannot remember ever being able to make a cross channel trip so early in the



Checking the oil at Sandown

February Meeting - 22nd February

Our ever popular Quiz Night. Come along and have a very good evening.

Bring your wife, partner, mistress — but not all together!

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year, it really did blow the old winter blues away.

It would of course be easy to say that such a mild winter is due to global warming, let's face it hardly a day goes by without somebody trying to ram that one down your neck. I doubt most of us are going to suffer the ill effects of global warming, it would appear that any real problems are not likely to occur until the second half of this century. What does concern me though, is that we are going to be the ones who will suffer the political backlash. If we're not very careful, we could have a whole raft of laws and taxes imposed on us in the name of saving the planet, we've already had a hike in airport tax which, worryingly, seems in no way to be linked with any kind of environmental expenditure.

Motoring and flying seem already to be the major targets of the green lobby, but if every car and aircraft in the UK ceased to exist it would not make a single jot of difference to what is a global problem. Can you imagine a scenario where we in the UK are priced off the road and out of the sky whilst the rest of the world carry on regardless? It's a frightening prospect, and one that we all need to be vigilant about and prepared to fight against.

Of more immediate concern is Mode S, though I have to say I am now

Women and cats will do as they please, and men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea.

more confident than ever that there will be a realistic compromise. CAA is making the right sort of noises to suggest that mandatory Mode S by 2008 is not going to happen, pity that certain avionics suppliers feel the need to use scare tactics in their advertising to coerce the less well informed into buying new transponders. If you are in the market for a transponder then buying Mode S makes sense. If not then hold on until the situation has been finally resolved. I am hopeful that those of us with Mode C sets will be using them for some while to come, and those without will have plenty of unrestricted airspace to operate in.

NPPL has been a great success, and we now know that a European wide equivalent will be with us by the end of 2008. It will be called the Leisure Pilot's licence, and hopefully will not entail any more onerous medical requirements than our NPPL. The nuts and bolts of how it works have not yet been finalised, but there is every possibility that it will be modelled on the UK NPPL.

There's plenty we can get concerned about, but I am confident that flying-wise we are going to benefit from Euro legislation, I just wish I could be as confident that the green lobby isn't going to cause us too many problems.

AGM January 2007

A small but vocal membership attended the AGM held at the Golf Club on the 25th January which was also Burns Night which probably accounted for the degree of absenteeism, I didn't know we had so many Jocks amongst us but in their honour before reporting on the meeting a little joke.

Two Scots, Archie and Jock are sitting in



Can you name this Airstrip?

the pub discussing Jock's forthcoming wedding. "Ach it's all going grand" says Jock. "I've got everything organised already, the flowers, the church, the minister, the cars, the reception, the rings, even ma stag night..."

Archie nods approvingly.

"Havens I've already bought a kilt to be married in!" continues Jock.

"A kilt?" exclaims Archie, "That's braw, you'll look pure smart in that!"

"And what's the tartan?" Archie then enquires.

"Och" says Jock, "I'd imagine she'll be in white...."

Anyway back to business...Derek our Strut Co-ordinator having survived his first year in the post reported on events held during the year which were as disparate as ever such as the wide range of talks - airspace incursion, helicopter building, weather, touring etc and also some of the ac-

**Marriage is a three-ring circus:
Engagement ring, wedding ring,
and suffering**

tivities flying at Pent Farm, visit to the coast guard and we look forward to more of these type of events through the forthcoming year, some already in place.

Our membership secretary, Graham was off in the Antipodes, escaping the English Winter, but had left his report in that the membership remains fairly static at around the 90 mark but we are always on the lookout for new members so if you hear of any lost souls needing to be led in to the flock bring them along.

John reported on the financial position which remains healthy and advised the meeting there would be no necessity to seek an increase in subs so they remain fixed for 2007. Good news there then.

Mike gave a report on the newsletter and as always we could do with more comment, stories or observations to put in the journal otherwise it risks becoming an organ of the few instead of representing the many. We had this year some entertaining stuff to put in the newsletter and to all those who took the trouble thank you and keep it coming.

A decision was taken over a year ago to invest in a printer and carry out the printing of the newsletter in house or rather John Dean's house and we can report that although Johns personal workload has risen as he single handedly prints and staples what you receive, financially the liability to the Strut on the printing costs have reduced significantly so all thanks to John for this commitment.

Mark was absent on the events front but the trips out last year were well attended and we are lining up some more as reported in the last newsletter.

The members of the committee had all

expressed a willingness to restand for election and were proposed and seconded en bloc so on our behalf thanks for your continuing support and see you at the next meeting

Welcome to the Committee



Nigel Read!!!

At the end of the AGM a call was made for a couple of new committee members to inject some fresh blood which has worked well since Simon and John were co-opted last year. As always there was a certain amount of reticence from the floor and thus stronger tactics were required reminiscent of the naval press gangs of yore but let Nigel take up the story....

'It's my own fault for sitting so close to my beer at January's AGM - I parked it on a table used by the committee and found myself co-opted despite my protests. Mike has asked me to write a bit about my flying by way of introduction. Generally I blame Christo-

The reason MP's try so hard to get re-elected is that they would hate to have to make a living under the laws they've passed.

pher Trace on Blue Peter for getting me interested in model aircraft when he built a Keil Kraft kit, I went out and got the same one, must have been around 1963.

I seem to remember it only survived the first outing, looping around the lights strung up in the back garden over the Bat & Trap pitch (I lived in a pub). Now there's an idea for non flying days. I joined the model aircraft club at school and the teacher who can still be found working at MAPS suggested I join the ATC. From there I did an A&B course at Swanton Morley in Sept 1966 soloing after 20 flights in a Kirby Cadet Mk III (T31), joining the Kent Gliding Club about 3 weeks later. After completing a Bronze and an instructors course with Glyn Richards I started instructing in 1970. Silver C was completed with a 5hr 37 min flight in 1969 over the North Downs, venturing along as far as Wouldham, the 3300' climb at Portmoak in 1970 and the distance to Redhill (70 km then back again after tea at the Tiger Club) in 1971.

This enabled me to do a Silver C conversion to PPL at Rochester in a Jodel 1050. This only required 3 hrs solo a couple of written papers and GFT with spins in a Condor. Solo was done after 1hr 35 mins - Ross Skinner wanting to send me sooner but my Student PPL had not arrived. After about 20 hrs including 3 flights in the Nipper I let the licence lapse, preferring gliding, it all seem too easy - and expensive at £8.80 per hour

There are two times when a man doesn't understand a woman: Before marriage and after marriage.

(VAT arrived at 10%) or £4.40 in the Nipper, which unfortunately suffered a prang taking it out of use for about 18 months just when I could have done with it. A bit more flying and I could have started building hours tugging but somehow that didn't appeal at the time.

After about 20 years of instructing at Challock and with the ATC at West Malling, three more instructor courses at Central Gliding School Swanton/Syerston and a short stint at Swansea in the 1970's I found myself back in Wales in 1990 and joined the Gliding club in the Black Mountains which got my enthusiasm for flying going again. On return to Gillingham in 1992 I read about a prang up at Farty, which despite being practically on my doorstep I did not know about. A trip to find the place ended with me doing another Silver C conversion in Jim's Cubs. This time there was a bit more to do, extra written papers, a Nav exercise, instrument practice - you know what's necessary but surprisingly spins had disappeared. I must have done nearly 100 hrs in the Cubs and ARNI the Colt.

Next came the Europa years, still building after 13 years (it put a stop to instructing, in fact it must be ten years since I flew a glider although I have kept a very small share in a Slingsby T21 at Talgarth). Without checking Log books I have 30 Glider types, about 750 hours & around 4300 flights including 1000 in Mk III's (there was one on display at Duxford a few years ago, nothing like making a chap feel his age!).

In my other Europa which is finished and resides at Laddingford, I have topped 100 hrs. Total must be over 220 hrs so you can see I am pacing

myself well'

As you can see it was all quite painless in the end and reading Nigel's words it was interesting learning of yet another entrant via the gliding route, but anyway welcome aboard and already his input is beginning to tell but if anybody else is willing we could probably do with at least one more so watch where you drink at February's meeting.

February 22nd - Return of Quiz Night

After a break in 2006 we will be having a quiz night, with prizes .. oh yes!! So dust off the brain cells, sweep away your Winter sloth and pit your wits against your fellow members for a bit of fun before having a chat with your chums.

I Learned A Bit About FlyingFrom This

Whilst having our committee meeting recently discussions on content and what we could add to the newsletter came up and some of these ideas will emerge in issues to come but one topic to surface was the old chestnut of experiences that I guess we have all been through that have influenced our future attitude to flying as a result. One of our throng and it matters not who related a little tale that could have had a different outcome. Did the unusual instruction actually save the day or contribute to the situation I will leave the reader to make up their own mind. I will relate the tale as it was written....

"My bi annual check out was due and having made the appropriate arrange-

ments for this the day duly arrived. Feeling it would be nice to get this out of the way I arrived at the field checked out the aircraft and my examiner arrived on time all smiles and to cap it all the weather was CAVOK. After a brief chat as I explained what I felt I needed to practice it was 'lets go flying'.

During the climb out my man looking quite content and playing with the instruments instructed me to turn on to a heading of 130 degrees and climb to 2000 feet to the VOR at 70 knots. I thought if that pleases him then so be it.

After a brief spell of jiggling the controls to achieve the desired effect a glance to my instructor was reassuring given his radiant smile and the phrase 'continue to the beacon' I next carried out a quick scan of the instruments including the D.M.E. situated on the right hand side of the panel. At this stage I should point out that this aircraft would normally cruise at around 100/110 knots indicated and to achieve the speed we were going at, 70 knots required quite a nose up attitude caused by the high angle of attack.

It was about this time it all happened, my instructor in literally a laid back mode, after the D.M.E. check that I instinctively glanced up through the right side windshield and to my horror saw not the clear blue sky but the big yellow cowling wrapped around a radial engine, maybe a Stearman type, bearing down on us and very close almost filling the windshield!

Evading action was purely instinctive yoke pushed forward and full power into almost a bunt waiting for the bang of the collision until I levelled out at 200 feet surprised to still be in one piece calling out 'DID YOU SEE THAT!!' The reply 'heard him, he was doing aerobatics near

the beacon which is very wrong , one shouldn't do that'.

I really felt shaken but realised my God was not ready for me that day but as I attempted to shrug off the experience my man on the right did not seem unduly perturbed about the whole thing so we pressed on and completed the bi - annual check successfully.

At the end of the day I held my own private enquiry and asked myself what did I do wrong? Well I should have insisted that if I were flying on instruments in CAVOK in Class G airspace that the instructor keep a sharp look out or even questioned the advisability of the request as it was a Saturday morning in the Summer when the world and his wife would likely be flying.

The main factor of course when the instructor is a pilot of high repute with vast experience and stature and also a man of great charm and patience we are inclined to forget the human frailties and the possibility incorrect decisions.

Conclusion, move on, enjoy our flying and learn and be wiser from our experiences.

Forthcoming Attractions

In these health and safety conscious times and thoughts turning to going foreign we will be looking forward at the meeting in March to a presentation from a representative of the RNLI who will discuss maintenance and care of life jackets and rafts and other matters pertaining to flying over the wet stuff. For some of us I gather the

season has already started by a quick weekend visit to Bagnoles as reported by non other than Karl Martin and his RV who else!

We are also looking at a talk from a leading exponent of aerobatics which should also be entertaining and enlightening.

Discussions are still on going to hold a Strut fly in alluded to in the last newsletter which may now shift to later in the year rather than earlier but more about this next time.

Committee Meetings

It was felt that it would be useful to brief the members monthly through the newsletter on topics discussed during the meeting some of which have been touched on elsewhere so next time it will be rationalised in to more of a report.

Aeroplanes in Miniature

Reading Nigel's introduction and his early foray in to model aeroplanes streams in to two parts the balsa flying model and the plastic scale model. I have been interested in the latter all my life and with it a keen following of most matters historical associated with the type of aircraft I choose to model. It could be argued that most people of my generation cut their teeth on Airfix kits whose fate was much discussed in the press after their demise but thankfully the brand was resurrected and will once again be available. The hobby still remains viable and more products than ever are available to those of us that pursue it and if your early experience of the old Airfix, Revell, Aurora or Frog kits lead you to sticking with tubes of glue a

fairly crude facsimile of a Spitfire or Messerschmitt with a moulded pilot integral with the fuselage and minimal detail that would ultimately be hung on the washing line to be blasted in to oblivion with your Original air rifle or Webley 177air pistol forget it.

These days the detail and finesse on kits today from every corner be it the USA, UK, Eastern Europe, Japan and now of course China is as far removed from the full size as the technology to build say a Jodel or Condor to one of the state of the art RV or composites.

What the hobby is bringing up and the reason for this little piece is aeroplanes that would remain in a civil aircraft modelling dream let alone the light GA or permit type aircraft we fly that are now coming out, if you know where to go , in increasing numbers. Most people would be familiar with the scale of kits in 1:72 and are still produced but over recent years 1:48 is more the scale of choice.

There have been on the market for a number of years spam cans such as the C.152 and C172, Cherokee and a Bonanza but how about these. Auster, Druine Turbulent, Evans VPI, Cosmic Wind, Mew Gull, Flying Flea and Lordy, Lordy A Luscombe 8A Silvaire about to come out.

Even the gliding fraternity are not immune with modern high performance aircraft and older types such as the Slingsby T21 and T31 and Kirby Cadet Mk 7 to name but a few. Some of these are produced as plastic kits others in resin which allows much finer detail for which superglue is the construction medium.

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

Nigel Read 01634 362375

Stephen Solley 01304 374337

John Knight 01322 529079

Simon Pratt 07973 402986

www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

Other accessories produced by cottage industries burgeoning into commercial enterprises making decal sheets (transfers to you) for alternative markings, etched brass detail sheets, resin replacement components and a whole plethora of magazines and periodicals to assist in your chosen field. If you are bored and not building full size why not in what remains of the Winter perhaps take another look at a hobby that has gone well beyond the 2/6d spent in Woolworths in the 1960's to a means of producing a perfect miniature of your favourite type. I shall be adding at least 3 Luscombes to my mantelpiece. If this is of interest I would be pleased to answer what I can on the subject and my guess is one day we will see even a Jodel in plastic now there's a thought.

Airfields in Danger

Don't forget to check:-

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Airfields/> to add your weight to any further threats to our flying environment!

Dates for your Diary

Feb 22	Quiz Night
Mar 29	Survival Techniques
Apl 26	Watch This Space