



March 2007

# SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



**Mike's Mutterings**

Mike Negus -  
Editor



## A New Flying Film - "Flyboys" report by Brian Hope

For several years after the war the film industry, both here and in the US, released a steady supply of films on that subject, several of them being specifically about military aviation in the European and the Pacific theatres. Those days are long gone however, and rarely now do we see a new feature film where the aeroplane plays a significant role, the remakes of the life of Howard Hughes, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour being two notable exceptions.

Enter Flyboys, an American take on the air battles over France during WW1. The film is based on a volunteer US Escadrille prior to America entering the war in 1916, and John Dean and I went along as invited guests to a



**March Meeting - 29th March**

**A Talk on Survival Techniques by a representative of the RNLI.  
Golf Club at 8pm.**

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private showing last week. The film goes on general UK release in early June. I guess we, as interested parties in aviation, look at these films in a slightly different way to the public at large. There is the question of authenticity when a film relates to a specific period and historical event, and of believability in the way, for instance, that the aircraft is portrayed to be flying. It is not unusual that such films fall short when subjected to such critical insight, and it has to be said that *Flyboys* is no exception. This is definitely a 'made for American consumption movie' or, as the cynic might say a 'How America won WW1'. All the German aircraft for instance are red

Fokker Triplanes, bar the one of our mister really nasty character which, inevitably perhaps, is painted black. The American pilots are all flying biplane Nieuports, and consist of a motley crew with the stereotypical rich brat who comes good, country boy down on his luck who becomes the hero, and the black guy who left the US to escape the prejudice. To woo the female vote there is naturally a bit of love interest, between our hero ex rancher and a local French girl.

On the face of it then, all rather predictable, but hold on - I actually enjoyed it! There's plenty of flying action, some of which was filmed in England a couple of years ago, and the computer generated enhancements are in the main, extremely realistic. I liked too the ground shots of the old French towns, people and vehicles, all very period. It is quite a long film, around two hours, but it held my attention, though John commented afterwards that he thought the general public might think there was a little TOO much flying.

For Sale:

Wedding dress, size 8. Worn once by mistake.

So, if you can ignore the historical inaccuracies, leave your cynicism at home, and accept the film as intended, this WW1 action packed drama is worth looking out for.

### Last Meeting - Quiz Night

Five teams took part in this years quiz hosted by yours truly and was fairly tight until the end when a clear winner came past the post with a late gallop. The winning team captained by Jaqui Clarke and her internationally flavoured team, Fred Smith our member from the good ol' US of A had breezed in from one of his frequent flying short breaks in time for the meeting so it was good to see you again Fred, always welcome.

I swear that Jaqui being a fairly infrequent attendee of Strut Nights due to commitments that take her away from the area a lot came back to claim her position as Queen of the Quizes as her track record on success is second to none. Not to denigrate of course the rest of the team as it is as always team effort, well done to all. Anyway nice to see you Jaqui, John (Dad) and Fred try not to leave it as long next time. Thanks to my mate Mike for helping me out on the night.

### Next Meeting - Thursday March 29th 2007 - Life Preserver

Next meeting we have a visit from a

**Intaxication: Euphoria at getting a tax refund, which lasts until you realize it was your money to start with.**



*Can you name this Airstrip?*

member of the RNLI to give a talk on use and more importantly maintenance of life jackets, rafts and associated subjects and for those travelers across the pond English, Irish or Mediterranean it is suggested this could be of interest. So, you are invited to bring along whatever you take on your journeys from ex airline under the seat jobs to commercially available made for purpose types of life preservers for demonstration and checking. You never know you may just learn something that will benefit you sometime in the future !

### Gary Smith and His RV 9

Gary sent a progress photo of the fuselage of his RV 9 which is now rapidly reaching a conclusion, at least of the build phase , do these projects ever conclude, I think as someone once said (Winston Churchill) this is not the beginning of the end, more the end of the beginning! Gary is now all painted and ready to be shipped down to Manston in large lumps for eventual erection and test flight. Gary wrote a full report in last months issue of our sister publication Popular Flying but I think we are all getting a bit excited now as this project has been under way for several years now and as it will be the first of type on the Strut

Fleet it will make a worthy addition, thanks for the update Gary and keep us up to speed, nice reg by the way kind of you to think of me.



### Housekeeping Notes

A little plea from our membership secretary Graham about subs, for those that pay their subs promptly a big thanks and for those a little remiss could we try and emulate the others as this saves on time and costs sending out reminders .... Ahem, sorry Graham my cheque is in the post.

Medway Microlights are having a guest speaker at their meeting and our Co-ordinator Derek has been informed that any Strut Members are welcome to attend. Topically the talk is on the early aviation period on the Isle of Sheppey which featured heavily in PF last issue both from articles written by Brian and Alistair both of whom eloquently expressed a case for putting Sheppey on the aviation map. If you

are interested the meeting takes place at 8.00 pm on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April at the Fen Vale Inn at Lower Stoke which is on the road out to the Isle of Grain which in itself has a claim to aviation heritage being the base of a lot of Admiralty experimentation with heavier than air flying machines for naval use and not far away the Royal Naval air Service airship sheds at Kingsnorth of which the bases and a number of the original buildings formed part of the Berry Wiggins bitumen facility up to the 1970's the concrete bases having now been broken up I am not sure about the buildings. But I digress but perhaps will do a little research on the matter for a future issue, that is unless somebody else wishes to. As far as Derek knows this talk, on Sheppey, is by another person and not the chap who gave a talk on the same subject from MAPS several years ago. Anyway there you are if you fancy those are the details.

Last months committee meeting discussed among other things future visits one of which is about to take place to Swanwick with about 8 members signed up but if interest to the same degree is shown for a trip to West Drayton we will run something in the Autumn. Steve Solley has kindly offered to make his strip at Ripple, behind Deal, available for a Strut Night possibly for the June Meeting to allow people with suitable experience/aircraft the opportunity to fly in and for those going by road obviously not! If that makes sense. The Summer months at the Golf Club are sometimes

Smith climbs to the top of Mt. Sinai to get close enough to talk to God. Looking up, he asks the Lord... "God, what does a million years mean to you?" The Lord replies, "A minute." Smith asks, "And what does a million dollars mean to you?" The Lord replies, "A penny." Smith asks, "Can I have a penny?" The Lord replies, "In a minute."

problematical when we have the golfers repairing to their 19<sup>th</sup> hole and so for June/July/August we generally find somewhere else so Steve has offered to run a Bar B Q for the evening and with the potential to sample Solleys ice cream straight from the cows bum so to speak sounds like a good bet. We had hoped to run a Strut fly day to allow both non flying members or those simply to hook up with others with types they would be interested in flying in sometime in May but although Peter Kember down at Laddingford is happy with letting us use the field May is a little inopportune so we may well be combining with their own fly in in September. Further details to be published and will report on further meetings as they happen.

### **George MacPherson** **1917 - 2007**

It is always regrettable when we have to report the passing of one of our own but it is with deep sadness and commiserations to the family that we pass on the news that George passed away on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March and thanks to Mike Tooze for letting me know. George was related to Jan's sister (father in law).

Back in '92 or thereabouts a bloodless coup took place still discussed in hushed tones in some places when the present Mid Kent Strut came in to its own and from within this reincarnation a number of members followed one of them was George so he really was one of the unsung Strut stalwarts on whom we rely for our strength . I don't claim to have ever known George at all well so can only report largely what I am told however I remember he was always there and attended very fre-



quently until about 4 years ago when his wife fell in to poor health and George then became her carer which made it difficult to attend Strut Meetings. As well as an active member of our Strut he was a supporter of the Rochester Branch of the RAeSoc and I do recall saying hello to him at some of those meetings.

George was born in 1917 and was educated at George Herriot School in Edinburgh and after his education finished joined up to the Royal Navy where he saw service on a number of fronts as widely dispersed as the Spanish Civil War , World War 2 and Korea . For this service he was eligible to wear the following decorations .

The 1939-45 Star	Atlantic Star
Africa Star	Burma Star
WW 11 Medal	S.E.Asia 45-46
Korea Q.E. 11	Korea U.N.

To wear these he could claim to have taken part in the evacuation of Dunkirk to the occupation of Japan having visited and witnessed the aftermath of the

atomic bombing of Hiroshima. At home George always interested in aviation was a keen glider pilot and a founding member of the Kent Gliding Club at Challock and for a number of years was a member of this Strut. His cremation took place at Medway Crematorium on the 20<sup>th</sup> March and a number of Strut Members attended to pay there respects to this well respected member of our community.

## Royal Aeronautical Society Rochester Branch

A couple of dates for those who may be interested in the following talks, always informative and interesting depending on your perspective and they are held at 1900 hrs on both dates:

18th April Lecture on the Nimrod 4 given by Captain Mark Faulds who has been involved and will describe the development programme as this upgraded type will be in service for the next 20 years as this countries prime maritime patrol aircraft. Not bad for an airframe developed in the 1950's and by the time its sevice life is over in 2030 could trace its career path over 8 decades. Incredible until you think if our Luscombe carries on til then the design can be traced through 10 decades!

16<sup>th</sup> May Lecture on 50 Years in General Aviation given by Mr John Campbell a recognised authority on the subject.

## Beagle Pup is 40 (Does that make it a dog?) Birthday 8<sup>th</sup> April 1967

And I don't mean that as a derogatory remark only that this most elegant of British designs has reached a significant milestone and thought it worth dwelling on the type as it part sums up the story of the indigenous development of light aviation in the UK. I have a vested inerest

insomuch that I once had the privilege of flying and flying in one of the RAF's ab initio trainers from their base then at Scampton and I must say that although the Bulldog is a beefed up Pup it still seemed a bit strange being kitted up in service overalls, bone dome and parachute when getting in essentially a light aircraft but as a tax payer I thought an hour and a half flying with one of the instructors was a bit of payback! It was nonetheless most enjoyable and the only time I have had intimate knowledge of the beast but always found the breed to be aesthetically very attractive in a butch aeroplane way.

I make no apology for turning to the authoratitive website of the Beagle Pup and Bulldog Club and acknowledge that the following is taken from this most informative source. When the Beagle Pup was first introduced by Beagle Aircraft Ltd it was hailed as a triumph for British aviation design and engineering. The maiden flight of the 100 hp version was on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1967 and that of the 150 hp version on 4<sup>th</sup> October in the same year. The aircrafts light but positive handling characteristics and excellent performance made it one of the most enjoyable and rewarding machines to fly of its day and it was capable of performing basic aerobatic manoeuvres. These factors, combined with its inherent safety and stability, ensured a strong demand for the type from flying schools both in the UK and abroad.

Nearly 200 aircraft were manufactured at Shoreham and Rearsby during the late 60's. These were mostly Series 1 (100 hp) and Series 2 (150 hp), although a small number of Series 3 (160 hp) were also produced. The aircraft's

future seemed assured and plans were laid for increasing production and expanding production. Unfortunately the cost of producing the Pup greatly exceeded its selling price (£3,495 for the Series 1 and £4250 for the Series 2) so it was inevitable that Beagle Aircraft Ltd eventually encountered serious financial difficulties. Without Government support - which unsurprisingly was not forthcoming, the company was doomed. The last Pups rolled off the production lines in 1969 although a few were subsequently assembled at Elstree from parts and components rescued from the Shoreham factory.

The demise of Beagle Aircraft Ltd foreshadowed a period of decline for Pups. Technical information was hard to come by and certain spares almost impossible to find. Many aircraft became neglected and finished up lurking sadly in corners of hangers all over the country. The early 1980's ushered in a new dawn for Beagle Pups and as flying schools began to find the type more difficult to maintain and operate private buyers entered the scene in increasing numbers. During this phase the Beagle Pup Club was formed providing a focal point for information and most importantly sourcing spares.

Since then, the Pup has experienced a remarkable revival to become one of the most liked and respected small singles around and just about anyone who flies one for the first time is surprised and delighted by its handling agility and sheer friendliness. A separate but related thread of the Beagle Pup story concerns its military sister, the Bulldog. Designed as a military trainer that shared many of the Pups features and components the Bulldog was manufactured at Prestwick by Scottish Aviation.

With its 200 hp fuel injected engine, VP prop and sliding canopy the Bulldog was an instant success. Purchased in large numbers by the RAF and military establishments worldwide the Bulldog has seen continuous service in a training role for over 20 years. Until the late 1980's only a single Bulldog was in private hands and as such the marque was rarely seen outside RAF circles.

From the mid 1990's a spectacular looking RAF Bulldog was a regular performer at air shows around the UK. With its distinctive black and



*Beagle Pup*

yellow paint scheme and nicknamed 'Black Dog' this aircraft flown by RAF pilot Paul Margetts took part in over 60 aerobatic public displays in the UK as well as a number in Belgium and Sweden. Some years before this a Beagle Pup Club Member Brian Richardson repatriated 2 Bulldogs from Hong Kong in 1989 and these were the first Bulldogs to obtain CAA Certification.

The arrival of these two aircraft presaged a veritable flood of Bulldogs in to Britain as the RAF and other air forces gradually began replacing their training fleets, more and more Bull-

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dogs came on to the civil register. Naturally many of the owners joined the Beagle Pup Club seeking advice, technical support and companionship with fellow pilots. Such was the impact on the Club's membership that in 2002 the Beagle Pup Club officially changed its name to The Beagle Pup and Bulldog Club. At the latest count it is believed that 56 Bulldogs are in private hands in the UK and overall 20 are associated with the Club. There is no doubt that Bulldogs will play an increasing role in the Club's future.

**April Meeting**

An early notice that we will have with us Ken Craigie, Chief Inspector, from PFA HQ. He has visited us on a number of occasions in the past and has given a fascinating insight into inspection problems.

Why were hurricanes usually named after women? Because when they arrive, they're wet and wild, but when they go, they take your house and car

**Dates for your Diary**

Mar 29 Survival Techniques

Apr 26 Ken Craigie – PFA HQ