



April 2007

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the Mid Kent Strut of the

POPULAR
flying
Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Easter Fun - Spot Landing at EGTO

Rochester held its by now annual spot landing competition, won by yours truly some years ago he modestly recalls, and this year of course was blessed by some of the finest weather this year which seemed to bring out he world and his wife to enter. Can't believe it was the promise of all those hot cross buns. Circumstances precluded an attempt to reclaim the title however a number of entries from the Strut pilots



April Meeting - 26th April

A Talk on Bush Flying in Africa by Andy Blake.

Golf Club at 8pm.

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were recorded however at the time of publishing the results weren't known but if I remember (unlikely) I will try and find out. One of the more exotic entries was the North Weald based Spitfire Mk11 (photo reconnaissance version) owned by Peter Teichman another of the, it seems, increasing number of well heeled folk building a stable of warbirds and looking very smart in its PRU blue colour scheme complete with invasion stripes, which did the obligatory beat up and barrel roll on departure.

Notes from Rochester and Cancer Research Race for Life 2007

Whilst at Rochester on Good Friday I picked up details from Julia, who most of us know as the FISO who will again be taking part in the Race for Life 2007 having raised a creditable £437 last year is attempting to do even better this year, but that depends on you, so if you wish to back her efforts with cash please collect a sponsorship form from the tower next time you drop in or go on line to the following link :

<http://www.raceforlifesponsorme.org/juliacamp>

Please be generous I expect we all know someone who has been afflicted.....

The woman applying for a job on a Florida lemon grove seemed way too qualified for the job. "Look Miss," said the foreman, "have you any actual experience in picking lemons?" "Well, as a matter of fact, yes!" she replied.?

"I've been divorced three times."

PAFRA are also keen to involve us with the goings on at Rochester and a fair number of our Strut Members are also members of PAFRA so there is also a healthy interface and below is a diary of events this year which you might wish to join

8th May Fly Out to Dieppe
 11th July Fly Out to Midden Zeeland
 27th May Fly Out to Middle Wallop
 8th August Fly Out to Ostend
 13th June Fly Out to Bideford
 26th August Fly Out to Beccles
 24th June Fly Out to Guernsey
 TBA September Fly Out to St Omer

Last but not least Sat 3rd November Bonfire Night at Rochester Airport ...

News Downunder

Not hernia operations but Graham Hammond recently wintered over in the Antipodes and always on the lookout for some aviation related news advised me of the newsletter produced by Tas Aero details below and is an interesting contrast to ours given the type of operation and aerodrome they operate from being a commercial enterprise but fascinating all the same if you care to follow the link. Little gems like admonishing people renting and allowing passengers having 'heaved up' into the sick bags then opening the window and when trying to chuck the contents out only covered the unfortunates in the seats behind, priceless! However other snippets include a visit by Chuck Yeager (I wonder) and photos of visiting aircraft including a very nice 1936 Stinson Reliant XXL with appropriate registration.

http://www.tasaero.com.au/download/s/jan_feb_march.pdf

Check it out, its worth a look and thanks Graham.

A Strut visit to Swanwick Control Centre. By Brian Hope.

Eight Strut members in two cars recently made the trip down the A3 to Swanwick for a pre-arranged visit to the NATS London Area Air Traffic Control Centre. Till the visit I think most of our knowledge about this relatively new establishment (it commenced operations in January 2002) was based on the media reporting of the major problems the software technicians at Lockheed Martin had trying to get the systems up and running to a point where they could safely take over from the existing facility at West Drayton. Huge overspend and six years delay were the inevitable scenario, but then would you expect anything different from a project any British Government had a hand in?

We got off to a rather iffy start when we all turned up at the NATS administration offices about ten miles from where we should have been, but eventually we were suitably attired with security tags and met by our appointed guide. First stop was a presentation explaining what the centre does, and basically that is to look after all of the airspace above England and Wales, with the exception of London and south-east area below 24,000 feet, and the Manchester area below 21,000 feet. The London/SE controllers will be moving down from West Drayton before the end of this year, followed by Distress & Diversion, and

Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean they're not after you.



Can you name this Airstrip?

West Drayton will then close. There is also a small RAF contingent at the centre, liaising with the civil controllers to handle RAF flights around England and Wales. After the general introduction I asked about their position on Mode S, and surprisingly was told that they were not driving this issue, in fact they do not have the technical capability at this time to handle Mode S, they are still using Mode C.

We then had a look around the actual control centre, which is established in an open plan style, with banks of radar and computer screens arranged in the different areas of the country. What was particularly striking was the air of total calm, none of the 'Looks like I picked the wrong day to give up glue sniffing' stuff from the movies as yet another mid-air collision is avoided by a gnat's whisker. When an incident does happen it is possible to track every movement from the screens and even the operator's mouse, so 're-living' the problem allows an accurate assessment of what went wrong and why, a very useful training aid. The actual controllers work a maximum hour and fifteen minutes on screen and then take a thirty minute break, and they work eight hour shifts. That amounts to a lot of

controllers and support staff, around 650 in total.

Naturally we as recreational pilots have little involvement in what goes on at the centre, other than the fact that London Information is based there. The one, or two man at peak times, operation does not have a radar screen to work from, it is all done on paper slips the same as tower controllers at a local airfield. What he does have is access to a great deal of information on danger areas, weather, airfields etc etc, a very useful tool should you require it. What was hinted at was the misuse of London Info by Joe Soap flying from Southend to Rochester and back and feeling the need to tell the world about it. I couldn't agree more, how b**dy frustrating is it when you want to open a flight plan and can't get a word in edgeways because its jammed by people who don't actually want anything from the service at all! All in all an interesting trip, not particularly relevant to our end of GA, but nice to know these guys are looking after us when we climb aboard the big silver bird to jet off to some winter sunshine.

Last Months Meeting

We were entertained by a visit from the RNLI from Thanet arranged by John Knight to explain the necessity of maintaining and operating the various items of equipment used when flying over water and of pertinence to us the

English Channel. I understand not having been able to make the meeting myself that it was highly informative and useful and talking to some of our members subsequently it was well received. Of course the practicalities of carrying life rafts and wearing dry suits have to be traded off with weight and balance issues not to say comfort but all of these count for little when trying to stay alive in a ditching situation. I suppose we all hope statistically that these events are pretty rare and long may they remain so, however there is no substitute for preparation.

Something a Little More Sedate

Committee member Simon Pratt's partner, Fran, who enthusiastically partakes of the odd trip here and there as do a number of wives or girlfriends of our members although their views and aeronautical experiences are seldom reported, but now and again a little snippet comes about.



John was on his deathbed and gasped pitifully. "Give me one last request, dear," he said. "Of course, John," his wife said softly. "Six months after I die," he said, "I want you to marry Bob." "But I thought you hated Bob," she said. With his last breath John said, "I do!"

Fran was treated to a balloon flight recently cancelled due to inclement weather, however this gorgeous spell that we have enjoyed over Easter led to the re-scheduled flight taking place on the Saturday afternoon lifting off from Mote Park. Simon ever willing to take advantage of a flying and photo opportunity had spoken to the balloon pilot previously to discuss the possibility of carrying out a photo sortie, his response being come as close as you like, just don't hit me. A brave man! Anyway the photo sortie was duly completed with Paddy Jordan doing his best with camera shake, whether from Simons flying, vibration from the aeroplane (unlikely she is like a sewing machine) or the alcohol imbibed the previous night I wouldn't like to form an opinion on but the best result is published here. Can't think of a nicer way to spend a lovely Easter evening oh I don't know.... Anyway thanks for the photos.



Next Months Meeting 26th April - Flying in Africa

By chance our Strut Co-ordinator caught wind of the visit back to the UK of Andy Blake a pilot who was one of the instructors at Farthing Corner and latterly has been flying for a Church/

Missionary Organisation in we think Tanzania but this will be confirmed on the night no doubt. He is on leave and due to return to Africa not long after the meeting so we are fortunate to secure his services at short notice so we could be in for a fascinating talk which will be lavishly illustrated from his extensive photographic record.

His type of flying is very much of the 'bush' type and thus operations from rough and short strips will no doubt feature quite heavily. Ken Craigie who was to give us a talk from PFA HQ will still be at the meeting we understand as he will be down on business and wishes to hear our speakers experience and may be able to be buttonholed for any queries either before or after, we will have to see.

Fred Smith from Ol' Tennessee

Fred Smith is one of our paid up Strut members despite the fact he lives in Tennessee in the still Good Ol' US of A where a goodly number of our members are headed for the annual pilgrimage to Sun'N Fun. Which isn't in Tennessee.



Fred as many of us are aware pops up to our meetings taking advantage of flight tickets that come his way from time to time but for whatever reason he

is always most welcome having taken the trouble to call in and see us. Fred is based in East Tennessee and operates a TEAM Minimax from his home airfield details can be found on their comprehensive website www.flyultralites.com and having looked it up found it very informative with more variety of microlights as we know them that you can wave a stick at I culled a few photos showing Fred 'at home' as it were and some views of the field . Have a look yourself and see how they do it over the pond, one thing you notice is the wide open space. Very enviable. Anyway we look forward to the next visit from our long distance member.



RV News Update

One coming , one going possibly.....
 After several successful years in which Peter Gorman and Karl Martin have flown their RV 6 to some far flung corners of the Western Hemisphere, Cyprus, North Cape and Marrakech to name but a few they have decided amicably to split the alliance as Peter is based in Ireland whilst Karl is Kent based. Their present mount will either stay with Peter or Karl this yet to be decided. As a result Peter will be forming a syndicate in the Republic and Karl has requested the following details are posted if anyone is interested.
RV Syndicate seeks one member
A syndicate of two pilots will be formed later this flying season. The aircraft will be a tail wheel RV (6 or 7) based in Kent

and the ideal candidate will:

- 1) *Be a tailwheel experienced pilot*
- 2) *Fly about 100 hours/year*
- 3) *Be an experienced PFA aircraft owner*
- 4) *Have prior experience as a member of a syndicate*

If this interests you contact flyerkarlmartin@aol.com who I am sure will be delighted to tell you all about the proposal.

Second bit of news and part of the story that we have all followed with a great deal of enthusiasm not least because a lot of it rubs off from Gary is the news which probably is best reported first hand from the man himself:

Okay guys the RV9 is FINISHED after 3years 7 months and 2800 hours, hard to believe isn't it.



There are a few other fiddly little jobs to do (like swinging the compass and calibrating the fuel tank gauges) but nothing that will stop it flying. It has taken 9 days to transport and assemble the box of painted bits into an aeroplane at Manston and due to good preparation there were absolutely no problems.

G-CDMN weighted 1087.5Lb painted (inc oil and fire extinguisher) and the average RV9 / 9A weighs 1084lb (taken from the 13 entries on the Dan Checkoway RV site) so its weight is spot on. Or to put it another way it will take myself, Kate, 30 imp galls of fuel and 100Lb (max) baggage and still be 25lb UNDER MOTW.

Presently in the throws of completing the PFA paperwork ready for submission before the end of March. Regards Gary and Kate.

Just to prove it a photo of the said machine sat on its wheels is to be found in the newsletter. Having seen Gary at the Strip on Good Friday he is like a cat on a hot tin roof awaiting his permit to test and who can blame him, having been at it all this time. Don't forget Kate's kitchen now Gary and best of luck with the test flight and of course let us know how it goes complete with some air to airs when you can.

Strut Programme for 2007

From our last committee meeting we can set out the programme which takes in the rest of the year with a bit of tweeking

May - continuing our Health and Safety theme we are engaging the services of or resident AME Bruce Alexander to give us a talk on First Aid for Pilots.

June - We are planning a Fly In/Road In to Steve Solley's strip at Ripple near Deal. We have a number of members down in East Kent and this gives an opportunity for those who may be infrequent attendees to regular strut nights to avoid what for them can be a trek, to somewhere a bit more local. Steve has

volunteered to host a BBQ and it is in a very pleasant location no doubt finished off with a bit of the house speciality - Solleys Ice Cream.

July - We will return to Rochester for our Strut BBQ . The principal reason we outsource our summer meetings is that our usual venue at the golf club tends to revert to their members congregating at the 19th hole which makes it awkward trying to hold our own activities in tandem.

August - We will be having Dinner at the airport Café at Rochester followed by a social chit chat

September - we return to the golf club and the rescheduled visit fro Ken Craigie.

October - Tony Richards an accomplished Headcorn based aerobatic pilot will be giving an insight in to his world and no doubt re capping on a very busy season.

November - TBA

December - Christmas Dinner date to be confirmed

In between we will be having a Strut Fly-In combined with the good folk at Laddingford again date to be confirmed but sometime in September probably over two days which will give some of our members the chance to try out other types.

Weather permitting our ever popular end of season fly out to Abbeville will be scheduled for 29/30th September 2007

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An old man goes to the Wizard to ask him if he can remove a curse he has been living with for the last 40 years. The Wizard says, "Maybe, but you will have to tell me the exact words that were used to put the curse on you." The old man says without hesitation, "I now pronounce you man and wife."

Mission statement:

"To fly for pure joy of flying, using even the feeblest excuse to do so".

Busy Aerodrome on a Sunday morning, circuit is filled with student pilots.

TOWER: "G-ABCD, no need to respond, cleared touch and go."

ABC: "Cleared touch and go, no need to respond, G-ABCD."

Dates for your Diary

Apl 26	Bush Flying in Africa
May 31	First Aid for Pilots
Jun 28	Picnic at Ripple