



May 2007

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the

POPULAR
flying
Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



No Duststorms in Arizona in April ??

By Karl Martin

Instructors at Estrella (Arizona Soaring Inc), advised me not to be concerned about the storm over Tuscon. "It is 80 nm away", "It is far too early in the year for dust-storms" and "In all probability it will fizzle out where it is". They were wrong!

Armed with a declaration form, lots of water (100F+ in the shade), a camera, a barograph and now a weather forecast from



Karl and the Glider

May Meeting - 31st May

A Talk on First Aid for Pilots by Bruce Alexander.

Golf Club at 8pm.

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local experts, I took an aero tow to strong lift at 1600 feet agl. My flight for an FAI distance award had begun. The task was to reach a peak (4512feet) 15 nm north, return to Estrella, then head south about the same distance to land at Potters field in flat cultivated desert.

Within an hour, I had climbed to 9600 feet and made a photographic record of rounding the first turning point. Then, with a gasp, I saw an enormous billowing wall of dust moving towards Estrella, my first alternate. It was biblical in size and moving fast, too fast for



my liking. I reckoned I'd be hit within 30 minutes, far too soon for prayer to work!

Rarely has an SGS 136 been flown so fast. Limiting airspeed to well below Vne was for wimps as I lost some 5000 feet to reach a desert strip a few miles to the west. Although not on any chart, I knew about it from earlier flights in the area. The desert was reclaiming it and this storm was to complete the job.

I've got a free landing fee for there - that's where we'll go!

Now safely on the ground, the imminent storm commanded my attention and respect, great respect even. What to do next? The glider would be airborne in anything more than 30 mph. Pointing the glider into wind; I jammed cushions against the stick to keep one wing down and the elevator down. Then I sat straddling the nose to keep the negative angle of attack as large as possible. The idea of sitting inside the glider did not fit with my instinct for survival! I am not that brave and besides I reasoned sitting on the nose would give me more leverage. Air-brakes - open or closed? I figured closed would be best.

During the next hour, dust, sand, grit, small gravel and bushes swept passed at 30 gusting 50 knots. The windsock along with its pole took flight and was lost from view very quickly. At times I could not see the wingtips. The glider pivoted into wind as it changed direct by 30 degrees or so. The negative angle of attack trick seemed to work and the bumpy ride provided some primitive satisfaction.

Although a borrowed cell phone did not work at any time, I was confident that ASI would come looking for their glider. Sure enough, a Piper Pawnee flew overhead some 30 minutes later, spotted me and flew off after a wing waggle. It was still too windy to land. After another hour it landed in a light breeze.

The aero tow retrieve was not easy. During the first attempt, the tug disappeared in a cloud of dust when it applied power. Also, the gliders' wing-tip dug into little sand mounds before the wings were level, slewing it off line. I aborted the take-off. During the second attempt, the tow plane crabbed delib-

erately blowing dust to one side. I levelled the wings quickly and soon we were airborne. As we picked up speed, the air-vent unloaded its capacity of sand directly into my face. Damn, I must remember to close the air-vent the next time.

Back at base, my hero's welcome was short-lived. "You know we will have to charge you for the entire time you had the glider, five hours by our reckoning. We could not rent it out while you had it. You must admit there is an element of logic to our position".

"Indeed, Phoenix international airport was closed during the storm, recording 30G51knots and you reckon you could have rented a glider during that time. Tell me how many gliders got airborne during or after the storm." "None as it happened - nobody wanted to fly".

"I appreciate you are only implementing policy for land-outs under benign conditions. I'll speak to the owner later. Right now I need a beer, several beers".

The beer was welcome and improved greatly when the owner agreed to charge only for the time airborne, without an argument. He appreciated having his glider back undamaged. Also, he liked the beer.

It's better to have a 100kt plane and a 130kt brain rather than a 100kt brain and a 130kt plane



Last month's airstrip was Laddingford but can you name this one

Polly Vacher to Attempt Another (More Local) Record

The following publicity announcement was recently put out from Birmingham International Airport and by the time you read this Polly will be well on her way so look out for her at an airfield near you ! Birmingham International Airport will bid farewell and good luck to Polly Vacher MBE on May 21 as she embarks on her latest quest to land at all 206 airfields in the British Isles, as listed in the 'Jeppesen manual' - a pilot's reference of British Airports. Polly is aiming to achieve the feat in nine weeks or less. Polly, who holds the record for the smallest aircraft to be flown solo around the world by a woman via Australia and the Pacific, departs Birmingham Airport for her 'Wings around Britain' adventure on May 21, aiming to land at all 206 airfields by 31 July. Every day will involve landing on average at six airfields and flying for around 5 hours, Polly will solo pilot the small four seat Piper Cherokee Dakota to raise money and awareness of the charity 'Flying Scholarships for the Disabled', and hopes to fly into the record books for a third time. Polly has already been in the record books with two solo, around the

world flights -the most recent happening in 2004 when she became the first woman to fly solo over the North Pole in a single engine aircraft and the first person to fly solo around the world - landing on all seven continents. In preparation for Wings around Britain Polly said: "I'm looking forward to this challenge and to continue raising awareness of Flying Scholarships for the Disabled. I've seen first hand the way learning to fly transforms lives. It gives confidence like nothing else can and scholars go on to succeed in all different walks of life, not just flying." John Morris, Head of Corporate Affairs at Birmingham Airport said "We are proud to support Polly in her 'Wings around Britain' adventure and wish her the best of luck. We are sure she will be successful in completing the challenge in the timescale." Polly, who has risen over £400,000 for the charity, hopes to highlight how learning to fly can transform lives by taking disabled volunteers with her on each leg of the journey. Disabled people interested in joining Polly on her route can register their interest at www.worldwings.org and fill in the on-line form. Anyone wanting to learn more about Flying Scholarships for the Disabled can find out more on www.toreachforthesky.org.uk Polly's book 'Wings Around the World' details her second solo flight around the world with all proceeds going to the scholarship programme. To purchase her book visit www.worldwings.org

The Following Announcement Was Received From the PFA

It is with great sadness and regret that I have to inform you of the death of our great friend and tireless PFA stalwart Cliff Piper.

Cliff was at the RAeC yesterday evening to receive his award, but sadly after he returned home and went to bed he was taken ill and died at four o'clock this morning. (24th April 2007)

Cliff's son David contacted me this morning to let me know and request that I pass on the message to all of Cliff's many dear friends within the PFA. I will inform everyone of the funeral arrangements when they are known.

Cliff will be very sadly missed by us all, but has left behind a tremendous legacy as a result of his efforts within the PFA. Celebrate his life, and wish him a happy landing. God bless you Cliff.

Kind Regards,
Barry Plumb

All of us from the Mid Kent Strut would I am sure wish to send our condolences to his family and friends

I visited the offices of the RSPCA today. It's tiny you couldn't swing a cat in there.

Our June meeting will be held at Ripple near Deal and will be an evening Picnic at the Ice Cream Farm. Please let us know if you will be attending (by air or road) so that proper arrangements can be made for the catering. A phone call or Email to any committee member will do. Full instructions on how to get there will be in the next Newsletter.

Struts – the need for change A Discussion Paper from HQ

Introduction

The PFA faces an increasing number of challenges in the future. Many of these were identified during the strategic review in January 2007. These include regulatory changes at European and national level. Also, the image of the PFA was discussed and how it is perceived at local and national level by the general public and the GA community, its image and profile at Strut level by changing its name.

In order to protect the interest of its members the PFA needs to be seen as a forward looking and progressive organisation that will be fit for purpose in the emerging regulatory climate of European and national regulation. The PFA are also striving to be identified as 'the' sport and recreational aviation body. Struts are a vital part of the operational side of the PFA's activity; hence both aspects are closely interwoven.

Some facts

Struts are autonomous organisations that the PFA power or leverage over. Struts affiliated to the PFA are required to submit an annual return, this then qualifies Struts to access the PFA insurance scheme. If any change is initiated then it is up to individual Struts to decide. Other than a change

of name, making the 'Strut' more recognisable to both the general public and the wider aviation community there is no perceived change to activity or operation.

The precedent to change already exists, the Ultralight Flying Association became the PFA and today there are two 'struts' that are not using the 'strut' title. (Wiltshire Flyers and the Oxford Group of the PFA, both of whom share the same status and privileges as the remainder.)

Discussion points

The name 'Strut' is not always easily explained or recognised to those outside the PFA. Anecdotally there is evidence to support this view from a number of sources. The name 'Strut' is also seen by some of the membership as being out of date.

The anticipated benefits of changing away from the name of Strut include a greater and easier recognition, being more attractive to the wider GA community because of a fresh image, thus stimulating people to join. Greater recognition and identification by the general public

To ensure continued recognition it is suggested that a 'strap line' be incorporated into the new title for instance – 'Southwest Sport Flyers - a branch of the PFA'**. A title such as this gives an easily identifiable and clear description of what the body is.

*** Please note that this is just an example of a title and is not to be considered as a proposal to do so.*

This subject seems to roll on and on is this the time for change? The Editor welcomes any feedback which could be transmitted to PFA HQ

Next Meeting 31st May - First Aid for Pilots

Strut Member and resident AME Dr Bruce Alexander is giving a presentation on prevention and dealing with the potential for injuries operating around aeroplanes and any other situation for that matter. Bruce I am sure would have had a lot in common with last month's speaker as we remember Bruce's reminiscences of his time Bush flying in South Africa when practicing medicine at remote villages.

An Alternative View on Sun'n Fun

Ever thought of going to Sun 'n' Fun in Florida but thought it might be difficult to get permission? This year we combined a fortnight in Florida with a short visit to the show.

We arrived on Friday, a few days before the other lads and lass as they were mainly there for the show which runs from Tuesday to Monday. The day after we arrived there was a Mustang meet scheduled at Kermit Weeks' Fantasy of Flight, there were a lot of cars but unfortunately only 4 aeroplanes. Even so, it was good to go and look around at the interesting collection he has there. At Sun 'n' Fun itself there is everything from a parachute to a jet fighter with all aircraft being accessible to visitors. There are marquees in which there are seminars on lots of subjects including how to build and maintain aeroplanes to weather and airspace and lots more. There are lots of

stalls selling bits and pieces ranging from screws and washers to complete aeroplanes. There are also plenty of places to get food and drink.

The microlights (ultralights) are kept on one side of the airport with their own grass runway. Somehow the Luscombe stand found its way into this section this year!! maybe to show them what a real aeroplane is like. During the day the main runway is in use by many and varied aircraft from the latest developments being shown off to vintage aircraft to warbirds to aerobatics. On Friday at sunset a flying display began. This display featured 4 T6 Texans (Harvards) with an abundance of pyrotechnics whilst flying in close formation and aerobating, a glider with fireworks on the wingtips, a small biplane (sorry, might have been a Pitts but memory failing) firing off pyrotechnics from the wings while aerobating, and a helicopter doing likewise. The only problem was that it got a little cool out there in the wind when the sun went down so jackets and trousers were necessary instead of shorts and light tops. Ok, now the other stuff.

Hiring a car means you can get around all over the place easily, the roads are all well laid out and easy to navigate (even by a pilot). If you stay in Kissimmee you are right in the centre of Florida and in easy reach of everywhere. I was allowed to go to Kissimmee airport, after only having been there for a couple of days, and go to play in a T6 Texan for half an hour or so..... that was fun, as John Knight wrote in a recent edition.

April is a good time to go, as the holiday season has not begun so there are

not too many people there, and the temperature is not too high. Food; lots of choice of venues. For breakfast there is a choice of a large number of buffet places where you pay once and eat as much as you like, or there is a choice of other eateries where you can get a breakfast of almost anything you want from a fried egg on toast to strawberries and cream on a stack of pancakes.

Lunch is the same if you want lunch.

Dinner restaurants are many, most of these do steak, ribs and chicken but there are also a number of fish restaurants, McDonalds and pizza places. Another place for an evening of entertainment and eating is Downtown Disney where there are a number of shops and restaurants including a Rainforest Cafe plus entertainment venues such as Cirque du Soleil (really good show), a comedy club and loads more. There is also a "genuine" Irish pub and a fish and chip shop with real chunky chips (probably the only proper chips in America) An alternative to these is the number of dinner venues in the area, we went to two, Arabian Nights and Dixie Stampede. These were both very good shows with dinner and drinks. There are other shows at comedy clubs and a mystery detective night and more if you look around.

Kissimmee is right next to the parks so there is no real travelling to do but about 70 miles either direction there is the Kennedy Space Center and Cocoa Beach one way and Tampa (Busch Gardens) the other. Travelling around is so easy with nice wide roads that distance is no object and in one day we managed to see eagles feasting on a dead alligator

by the road, live alligators in the waterways alongside the road, manatee in the wild, a wild dolphin in the sea, an armadillo and a flock of pelicans low flying over the surf at cocoa beach looking for dinner. If you are into saving money then in exchange for a little bit of time, you can go and see some timeshare places while they try to sell you some, you then decline their kind offer and take the discounted tickets. We paid \$194 for two to go into Sea World and Universal while Brian and John paid \$80 each for Universal only. We also got 4 free tickets to Arabian Nights. This all cost us three and a half hours in total and they also gave us breakfasts.

The Americans are having a bit of a moan at the moment about the exorbitantly high cost of "gas" at \$3 per gallon. Ok their gallons are a little less than ours but 35p a litre doesn't seem that bad to me.

There are other ways to travel of course; there are buses and taxis. I wanted to be more independent though and hired a Harley Davidson for a day. The cost was only a little over £100 and that was for one of the larger bikes and it was a new one. We did 200 miles that day and refilling the tank came to under \$14.

Another bit of fun is an airboat ride. The Boggy Creek Airboat Rides are on a boat that takes about 20 people but at Poinciana there is the opportunity to pay a little more and go out in a smaller group (we went as a group of 2). Seeing alligators is not guaranteed on either of these but we were lucky and got to within about 20 feet of one.

Another place to see is the town of

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www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

Celebration. This is near the junction of I4 and US192. The town was built by Disney about 10 years ago and is the sort of place you only see in films. All the trees along the streets are the same, the streets are kept really clean, all the post boxes on the houses are the same. The centre of town has a large lake with rocking chairs for you to sit on while watching the ducks and turtles. There is an ornamental fountain that you can walk through if you want to get wet. Most of the buildings facing the lake are restaurants. While we were there they had a car show with about 100 Ferraris, 30 Lamborghinis, 18 De Lorians, a number of other models and 1 BMW. There was also The Great American Pie Competition on the same day.

These are just some of the things to do while out there. I am sure we missed a lot of good things but time is always limited when on holiday and we can always go back some time, some people go back every year and still find new things to do.

Dates for your Diary

May 31	First Aid for Pilots
Jun 28	Picnic at Ripple