



August 2007

# SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the

POPULAR  
**flying**  
Association

**Mike's Mutterings**

Mike Negus -  
Editor



## To Infinity and Beyond

**-well Vichy anyway!** By Gary Smith

Having pledged that I would finish my RV9 project in 3 years I made many sacrifices along the way. Despite the fact that I still had the Vagabond, I turned down many flying opportunities including several occurrences of the French RSA Rally.

So with the RV finished in April 07 and all the test flying completed I was "all revved up with no place to go". The Vaga knew its way to France like falling off a bus bike but the RV was still a cross channel virgin so it made sense to



*Strut Members at Avallon*

**August Meeting - 30th August Evening Meal at Rochester Airport.**

Please call Mike on 07767 496065 or Derek 07885 298484 to book your place so we can advise numbers.

[www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk](http://www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk)

put everything together and go to the French RSA Rally at Vichy. Kate still had her bad back (she has not even sat in the RV yet) so I asked Karl Martin (co owner of the Farthing corner based RV6) if he would like to ride along and hold the map.

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July dawned very overcast and despite the forecast improvement after mid day we were impatient to get going. Taking off from Clipgate Farm was no problem despite being close to max take off weight, the 160Hp engine and VP prop combination provides a truly amazing departure but sometimes that's no asset as within 30 seconds we were in the bottom of the clouds. A rapid return to the field was called for as I did not want to excel the first virtue of an RV :- fast aeroplanes just get you lost faster. Having made a slightly heavier landing than Vans recommend we ascertained that the plane could be used again and went to the "greasy spoon" café on the A2 to wait the promised improvement in the weather.

11:30, back to the airfield and we were on our way. Unfortunately Clipgate Farm is only 6nm from Dover, that gives you just 4 minutes to climb to height, contact London information and activate your flight plan before calling "at the coast". 8 minutes later we were over France and I thought Lille approach were being their usual ignorant selves by ignoring my radio calls. A familiar voice came on the radio and it turned out that Lille could hear Mr Hope in his Jodel and my transmissions but I could not hear them, oh the delights of a radio with auto squelch (I have adjusted it since). So Karl and I were not alone, Mr Hope was lurking in the much improved sky and that meant

the Frank Rothera and John Dean were probably not far away either. As Karl and I joined overhead Abbeville John had just landed in his Jodel, Frank was down wind in the Colt and Brian was just behind us in the second "bent wing wonder" from Farty Corner. Its amazing to think that the others intended to depart on the Thursday evening or possible earlier that morning and in fact we had all arrived within minutes of each other. As we finished fueling up Graham Hammond and Shirley arrived in their Jabiru, so that brought the Mid Kent ménagerie to 5.

The day was really getting warm by now and Grahams request not to fill the Jabiru to the top with fuel fell on deaf ears, despite this it still took off. John and Frank had dissected the French Notams and discovered the French intended to use their own airspace west of Paris to practice their "Bastille day" flying display, how selfish. Having missed this little gem of information I duly moved the lines on my map and we collectively decided to route down the east side of Paris and hotel at Avalon over night. Being a few knots quicker the boys made me go first. This was an ironic twist since in the days of the Vagabond they made me go first so they could pass and wave, now they wanted me to go first so I could not do the same to them.

My friends and I were on a beer run and noticed that the cases were discounted 10%. Since it was a big party, we bought 2 cases. The Cashier multiplied 2 times 10% and gave us a 20% discount.

Having arrived at Avalon it was definitely "shorts weather" and Karl and I got to grips with the fuel pump and some cold drinks whilst we waited the few minutes for the others arrived (more like 30 minutes). As soon as we were fueled up Graham and Shirley arrived, a nice surprise as they had elected to go straight to Vichy but obviously the attraction of dining with us rif raf was too much an offer.

The hotel we normally use is only a mile walk into town and is really rather nice. Dinner in the restaurant next door was as good as ever but Shirley unfortunately did not grace us with her presence (probably tired after flying the Jabiru all the way whilst Graham had his feet up reading the PFA magazine). The morning brought sun shine again and after a leisurely breakfast we returned to the field. Yet again the boys made me go first and it was lonely being out in front for a while until we reached the circuit at Vichy. The radio implied there were about 10 French aeroplanes doing something that we really did not understand so Karl and I decided to do a text book approach, this was duly noted by somebody as you will hear later.

The Stoneacre boys (and girls) club were scattered around the aeropark by the time we booked in. Karl was quite insistent that I put my RV in for judging and made the lady understand I needed a trophy of some sort to take home. Brian, John and Frank arrived and booked in as

**I was reading this book today, The History Of Glue, and I couldn't put it down.**

group and we started on the liquid refreshments. Having packed Graham, Shirley, John and Frank off to town (where they had hotel rooms waiting), we discovered that a UK registered Long Easy had developed a problem and had narrowly escaped a false landing on finals. It turned out to be Sean from Southend and it appeared that the spinner on his aircraft (a pusher) had come off and damaged the prop. The vibration became worse and worse and by the time the aeroplane was on the ground the prop could best be described as a splinter with a foot missing off each end.

A replacement prop was picked up by a friend in the UK and driven down to the rally, when we departed the prop was fitted and Sean was looking to carry out ground runs. (I believe he subsequently got home without further problems). Over night the wind got up and overturned 50m of Heras fencing that was backing on to a line of aeroplanes. Luckily the wind direction tipped the fence away from aeroplanes else there could have been some very sad faces.

Sunday morning dawned bright but the wind was still a strong southerly. We made our way to the presentations marquee and after a lot of talking in French they called out my name and gave me a silver plaque. I was very proud until John Dean translated it for me. There were some brilliant RV's at the show and these deservedly got awards. Apparently my "gong" was awarded to me for my "superior airmanship and command of the air", remember the text book approach and landing

when we arrived. The Stonacre boys also got a "gong" for the largest single club attendance and I believe the award is on display in a glass case the Stoneacre caravan. (Actually being used as a door stop )

Soon it was time for Karl and I to leave and head north for home. The strong southerly wind reminded me to taxi with great caution but I knew as soon as we took off we would have a blinding tail wind. Vichy to Abbeville took 1.8 hours and at times we were seeing 165Kt ground speed. Brian, John, Frank and Graham/Shirley routed rather slowly to Corsica, but that's another story.

## **August Meeting Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> August 18.00hrs - Rochester Airport Café**

Our final 'away fixture' will be a sit down meal at the Café but this time a scheduled indoor event. We have in the past had reports that people perceive this evening as a suited and booted rather formal affair but nothing is further removed from the truth so casual is the dress code as this again is an opportunity in the holiday season to have an informal gathering for purely social discourse between like minded souls and their friends wives or partners to enjoy a mid season meal before returning to the general programme of events in the Autumn and beyond.

The Menu :

Melon & Prawn Boats  
Le Roas' Bif , Yorkshire Pud , Roast  
Pots and Seasonal Veg  
Sherry Trifle  
Coffee  
All for a staggeringly competitive

£12.00 per head including a complimentary glass of House wine.

..... That can't be bad

**Please call me (Mike) on 07767 496065 or Derek 07885 298484 so we can advise numbers.**

### **Top Nav by Simon Pratt**

Every year the Royal Institute of Navigation have a navigation competition. This first came to our notice three years ago when spotted in Flyer magazine. The contest starts from White Waltham and is routed wherever the organisers decide. There are two routes of approximately 100nm and 200nm. The competition is open to all aircraft and pilot abilities, and following discussion re PFA aircraft not being allowed to overfly built up areas they allow diversions to be logged to take this into consideration.

The navigation calculation method is by the sheets supplied, which is fairly easy to understand. The turning points are easily found from the information given. The rest is up to you. The sheets supplied need to be filled in with as much information as possible including your track and speed/time calculations, en-route corrections, fuel calculations and whatever else you may see as relevant. Photographs of the turning points need to be supplied so that they know you were in the right place. This year each aircraft was issued with a GPS logger, which can give the organisers a positive check on what went on and that the navigation was as recorded on the sheets.

The aircraft taking part range from single seaters to six seaters and even a helicopter. There are a number of prizes so it's not a simple matter of one win-

ner, therefore anybody is in with a chance of getting something. A slow aircraft is probably an advantage, as is a good navigator who can think and write quickly (if you can take out the right hand stick that can help too).

We hope to try again next year, hope to see some of you there too.

### Romney Street Auster Fly-In

One event that did manage to take place in July was the the local Auster Fly- In at Romney Street hosted by Paul and Jan Lipman aided and abetted by Colin and Robin.

For non Auster Owners this is by invitation and those of us privileged to visit enjoy hospitality of the most generous kind. Romney Street for

those unfamiliar with it at ground level lays near Otford and Brands Hatch way out in the sticks and with the visiting aircraft and motor cars has a very affable and friendly feel to it.

Of course the Auster was designed for such surroundings and looks most comfortable, dare I say even agricultural on its home turf. Having made friends on the near European Continent it also attracts visitors from foreign, even non Austers but such is the way all are made welcome. For us the highlight is Jan's Curry. Catering for the assembled throng takes some doing but the times we have been lucky to go it has been truly mouth watering and with large amounts of Beer to wash it down followed by Strawberries and Cream. What a sublime evening. Mind you for innovation the ablution facilities on site take some beating with a fully functional



shower facility complete with vanity shelf, thermostatic heat control and plenty of room (see attached photo) and of course having no need ourselves I bet it was used extensively ..... clever these Auster types!

Big thanks to Paul and the crew and especially to Jan and the girls who I know that while we only attended the Saturday night the festivities (and food) carry on all over the weekend, a lot of work but I know they enjoy it and hopefully so will we in some future do.

### Last Months Bar B Q at Rochester

Our annual Bar B Q held at Rochester was blighted like so many events being held over this most unmemorable Summer, by a decidedly uncooperative rain band moving through the area. Or perhaps memorable but for all the wrong reasons, however such is the fortitude of our membership that a goodly number still turned up on the evening and thanks to the quick wittedness of our hard working Co-ordinator Derek Browning arranging for the use of the Airport Café the evening was under the circumstances an unqualified success.

The Café Staff managed to cook a traditional Bar B Q outside as it had fortunately stopped raining by this time whilst us punters had a convivial evening in the warm and dry. Thanks to the Café staff for sticking with it and to everybody turning out to make the effort.

**So this lorry full of tortoises collided with a van full of ter-rapins. It was a turtle disas-**

### Montbeliard and the Angel of the Marie Celeste by Frank Rothera

Whilst on our recent trip to Tannheim via the RSA rally at Vichy and Propriano in Corsica, Brian and I dropped in to a small airfield in France called Montbeliard. It was around lunch time and it was only to be expected that we might have to wait a while but even from the overhead there was something wrong with the place. Not a thing was to be seen moving, the whole field gave an air of extreme tidiness and there was one of those French twin communications aircraft a Flamande parked near the hangars.

Brian's first reaction was that we had lobbed in to a military field but they had the usual petrol pump so we parked there and went off to look for signs of life. First of all towards a new building with Aero club all over it but it was obvious from a hundred yards away that there was no one there so we changed direction towards the terminal building. The door was closed but not locked and inside was clearly deserted. The Marie Celeste had nothing on this. On a desk over to the left was the movements book which we duly filled in and a note saying that if the desk was unattended then one should ring 122 for the tower on the phone provided. Needless to say there was no reply. There was also a sign suggesting that landing fees etc could be dealt with in the tower so we started off up the stairs. On the first floor were a number of offices and in one completely to our surprise was a lady in front of an ironing board ironing a shirt. Jokingly I asked her if they had left her in charge of the airport and she confirmed that this was in-

deed the case. Oh says I, we really wanted some petrol, that's ok she says just let me finish this shirt and I will be with you. You don't do flight plans as well do you? Yes of course I'll be with you in a mo. So she finishes off the shirt and leads us up to the tower. There she takes our landing fees gives us a flight plan form and says don't bother with two just do one and the differences. Next minute she has rung them through to Bale info and we are off to get petrol. Into the fire station rummage around on someone's desk for a bunch of keys and we are filled up with petrol. Fortunately this was one of those slightly more intelligent pumps which like a mogas pump not only has the quantity but the price

as well so one can put €75 in which saves messing around with change and a trip back to the tower.

Ok you can go now have a nice flight bye bye and I suppose the angel went back to her domestic chores. It could not happen anywhere but in France

**My sister has a lifesaving tool in her car designed to cut through a Seat belt if she gets trapped. She keeps it in the trunk.**

## Auto Trader



### 06' Suzuki GSXR 1000

Fourways, Johannesburg

This bike is perfect! Only done 7000 kms and has had its 1500 km. dealer service. No falls/scratches. I use it as a cruiser/commuter. I'm selling it because it was purchased without proper consent of a loving wife. Apparently "do whatever the fuck you want" doesn't mean what I thought.

Call me, Steve. (011) 867-8292

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While working at a pizza parlour, I observed a man ordering a small pizza to go. He appeared to be alone and the cook asked him if he would like it cut into 4 pieces or 6. He thought about it for some time before responding. "Just cut it into 4 pieces; I don't think I'm hungry enough to eat 6 pieces."

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 £23900 ono. 01622 891466

**Don't forget to book  
 your place for the  
 August Dinner Meeting**

**Dates for your Diary**

|         |                     |
|---------|---------------------|
| Jul 26  | BBQ at Rochester    |
| Aug 30  | Dinner at Rochester |
| Sept 27 | Trips we have done  |