



November 2007

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the

POPULAR
flying
Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Twenty-five Years in the best aircraft around by Mike Tooze

Of course being the writer of this I can say that can't I? Come 28th November this year, 2007, I celebrate the first flight in 1982 of my Vari Eze G-EMMY. Editor Mike kindly asked me to write a few words about the intervening period....

A bit like a boy in a cherry orchard I find it difficult to pick out a few of the best fruits from so many wonderful and some not so, experiences I have had over the twenty-five years flying our Vari Eze. So, firstly, to encourage those



One mans love affair

November Meeting - 29th November 2007
Golf Club at 8pm
Talk on Aerobatics

www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk

who may be thinking of 'building from plans'. The Vari Eze plans/manual are still available if one is prepared to dig around. Burt Rutan no longer supports the design but there is support available from elsewhere. Still there are many under construction in the US and around. Also there are the Long Eze and Cozy (supported by AS&S) variants, very similar but different in detail and size from the Vari.

Building the Vari was an education in itself. It was very enjoyable and, with all the extra knowledge picked up on the way, was like gaining a further degree. What's more although encouraged by reports in the CP, Canard Pusher our newsletter, I had no idea of just how delightful it was going to turn out.



Baseleg for 28 at Manston

So there I was, having completed all the checks, all the taxi testing, all the checks again, at the end of 28 at Manston..... It was time for the first flight. Dear old, the late, Harold Best-Devereux my inspector had convinced John Walker, PFA Chief Engineer, that I was good to do the first flight. Cold, clear, blue sky, six knots right down the runway. I opened the throttle not entirely sure if it this was going to be The

Flight or yet another taxi run. The speed built, rotation, now familiar after all the test runs, then stillness. The stillness continued. I finally stole a look down. There were houses down there! I had taken off!! All gauges looked OK. The smoothness was uncanny; I nudged the stick left. Immediately we were into a left turn. Gee! I had a new, tight, engine so I didn't want to throttle back too much. Three thousand feet circling up above the field, now above freezing level. My hand began wobbling on the stick - I only had my jumper on, very chilly - time to come down. This bird didn't want to come down. I reduced to a lower rpm. Called for a landing but found I was around four hundred feet too high. Around I went again this time I knocked-off the excess height to make what was, for a long time, the smoothest landing ever!

Emma, my daughter, was in the car watching and heard the RAF guys cheer as I lifted off. Station Commander Buster Skinner gathered us up and helped us put G-EMMY away. Both chilled to the marrow, he whisked us into his house, prepared a meal, warming drinks and opened the 'bubbly' to celebrate. What a kind and generous host Buster was. I am honoured that he is now a personal friend and since his retirement I've flown him in our Eze.

Buster was the first of many friends we have made over the years directly as a result of flying our Eze.

The Piper Cub is the safest airplane in the world; it can just barely kill you.

I couldn't stay in an RAF hangar for ever so as soon as the test flying was completed I moved to Biggin Hill. Straight into 29 - it seemed very short compared to what I had become accustomed to. I soon got that sorted out.

In the spring I made my first 'away' flight to Perranporth, solo. There I sat on a rock, Cornish pasty in hand with a grin from ear to ear. What a machine, it began to dawn on me. Emma and I made quite a few holiday trips onto the continent in G-EMMY. The first was to Perpingnan; I was fussing around with last checks and a run-up to burn-in some insulation wrap I use around the exhaust pipes. Emma was on the phone to her mum explaining why we hadn't departed yet. Interrupting herself she blurted, reassuringly to her Mum, "and now it's on fire!".... We made Corsica two years running. Once, Ajaccio to Biggin in one hop. Portugal, Brittany followed along with many fly-ins, the RSA being a favourite. With the Ranch guys I fly to Stauning for the Danish national KZ Rallies along with many other missions, escapades, some not reportable.



Cozy-Mk 4

There were, still are, a number of Ezes of different kinds at Biggin. In earlier years it as quite normal to see us landing in formation. Today sadly, longer in the tooth or wiser, this rarely happens but the touring out to France, Alderney or as

short as to the Isle of Wight, is always going on in the background.

When Emma decided that she wanted to go 'commercial' rather than to university where her good A levels were steering her, she caught me by surprise. I said I'd help, not having much idea as to what would be involved. - I do now! She had already won a flying scholarship to get her half way into a PPL so soon she was zigzagging through the plethora of courses and exams that the CAA were continually changing, seemingly just to wrong foot the dedicated. So when we arrived at 'hours building' the Vari was all I could offer. After an age looking for suitably long fields for her first flight we finally came back to Manston. She landed on the last half of the runway but had it taped from then on.

I must say it amused me to be in the main terminal at Biggin one day. The Eze was parked outside Customs. I saw the consternation as some onlookers spotted a young girl, looking school age, striding out - by herself! - onto the apron. Wide eyed they watched as she opened the cockpit, taking charge of the bullet shaped projectile, then, she walked around to the back and hand propped it! Seeing the reaction gave me a grin I can tell you. Emmy doesn't fly our Eze these days. She has achieved her objective and moved on to slightly bigger things. At least now I don't wake in the night thinking of some minor, generally imaginary, item that may need attention before she next flew.

These days if not with the Ranch, I

fly mostly with Jan for holidays chasing those fleeting highs that were all so rare this summer.

Another mission that suits the Eze well is down to where Emma now lives. This was to urgently deliver a nectarine plant I'd grown from a stone. There her tomatoes grow to eight feet so its prospects were rosy. Flying back from Cannes can be done in one hop but outward I generally clear inbound first, as I can never be sure of the midday weather on the rugged last leg towards the Alps Maritime.

People ask what's it like to fly a canard like G-EMMY? I was parking next to a spam can one day. The pilot offered, "I hear you have trouble landing in crosswinds with those". To which I replied, "Well if they're difficult I haven't come across it so far - in twenty years - but I'll certainly watch-out, thank you!" The truth is it's all relative. Stick pressure is much lower than you'd previously experience in a spam can. In fact lets get away from that comparison completely, there seems to be an establishment acceptance that, 'spamcan', is what all planes should be like - nonsense! Those things stall and spin wildly out of control if pushed or the warning signs ignored. They've the feedback of a Foden, remember Fodens?

An Eze will do it's best to look after you. (We also have GIBs in Ezes, i.e., Girl/guy In Back. A French friend's girlfriend takes a ruler up to give him a 'dig' if she thinks he's falling asleep!

Never fly in the same cockpit with someone braver than you. .

By the way, the French guys and gals are not so constrained to the 'cookery book' approach as we over here. The many beautiful Eze variants they have produced give much credit to them and the French system, I'm sure that EASA will take note.)

After a while you just 'think' where you want to go and it darts or flows there according to your thoughts. As directly as you wish it. That's what it feels like. One of the first group of English Vari Eze pilots said, "It's the next best thing to being Superman."

Take-off: Except for short fields, the nose can be 'twitched' into the air pretty soon. My ASI is in mph so I won't complicate things by giving my air-speeds. Hold the nose wheel just clear as we accelerate. This keeps f.o.d. from damaging the prop. (v. rare but it could happen) As airspeed increases so let it lift when it wants. Exactly when depends on who/what if any, you may have in the back, how much fuel you have on board, density altitude, many other things, including what you had for breakfast!

Climb out, lean out and watch out for other traffic. Then it's 'open up the chart'. This is another Eze feature, due to the side stick, right side. (I nearly built mine on the left side but I thought I'd upset too many people - wish I had now.) With the unobstructed map open you can be sure of where you are going

The propeller is just a big fan in front of the plane used to keep the pilot cool. When it stops, you can actually watch the pilot start sweating

and of not dropping tuna sandwich onto your trousers. Laminated maps are best I find.

Landing: I find it hard to say this now because the Eze is my norm, but it's fast, you need to keep ahead of it, you need to know what you're going to do next. Traffic allowing, just whack it into a ninety degree bank and pull hard downwind to bleed off the speed while dropping the nose wheel. Call, and look for base leg, bank and pull hard again slightly nose up if you intend using the speed brake to get it to below max. speed brake A/S. (This isn't essential with reasonable speed control, needed probably for the first year or two.) Look back along finals, there may be someone there. Last check for N/W down. Remember to watch wind direction turning, as any plane, more into wind to crab if it's from the circuit side. Best is to arrive Eze, speed, height, crab all at the numbers at the same time. Switch last moment to a 'wing low' as you kick it straight to touch down and be very sure to touch upwind main wheel first. N/W still down? Look to the far end, grease it on or just make sure of it if it's very gusty. Don't brake, you've miles of runway yet, so don't wear the pads out nor your little tyres. If it's long, like Biggin's 21 long, just aim for, or put in a burst of power, touch down after the bump halfway along, so you don't waste rubber. Keep the nose up balancing till just before your turn off - but not so slow you drop the nose heavily, treat it gently. When I started I needed virtually a set of mains every year, now I get over three years out of them, and the pads.

Too bad, if you get a 'follow the PAXx'

then you're off for a bit of cross-country with no chance to show off your skills!

The cockpit looks tight but it's so comfortable - everything has its place. I was very pleased with my 'glove box'.

I put a single axis wing leveler/autopilot in early on. It holds heading and tracks the GPS fine. But I only use it occasionally. If it's 'iffy', I prefer the situation awareness I get by poling it myself. In those conditions the A/P is OK for looking up a frequency or turning the map over. I was in avionics too long to trust a single channel autopilot.

The speed/range combination enables me to get around weather and generally stay out of trouble. The overall efficiency won us the last-run EuroCAFE, Competition for Aircraft Flight Efficiency, held in Denmark in 1997.

Trimmed out in the cruise you can just about steer it by moving your head from one side to the other. Some Eze owners say you have to be on the stick all the time. In -EMMY I don't find this. I can trim out and in good air it will fly hands-off all the way on long French legs with just the odd toe pressure on a rudder, we have two, rudders that is, to maintain heading. And we all know how pleasurable those wonderful, long, inviting, French legs can be... If you don't, build an Eze...

This Months Newsletter

I make no apology in handing over the majority of this months edition to Mike Tooze and the article on his love affair with G-EMMY the Vari Eze built by him and flown for the first time on 28th November 1982 thus celebrating 25 years with the same aeroplane. Mike is one of

our Strut stalwarts and is a familiar face at the meetings and it is a fitting tribute to the success of the canard breed . Of course some of us fly older aeroplanes whilst some have also owned and flown the same aircraft for a considerable number of years but I know of no-one in the Strut to equal or better Mike's claim, but you might do better and I would be pleased to hear. Over to you Mike and happy anniversary, here's to the next 25.

Last Months Meeting

Regrettably Tony Richards who was due to give our October talk had to drop out at the last minute which was very disappointing as a number of people from Rochester new to the Strut had turned up to listen , but these things happen.... Fortunately we had on hand, just, the ever popular Editor of our sister publication Brian Hope who kindly stepped in for an impromptu Q & A session on all things Popular Flying Association and the soon to be re - branded Light Aircraft Association. Our thanks to Brian for manfully fending off some fairly direct questions on what was a good humoured evening. But now for the good news.

November Meeting Thursday 29th - Tony Richards

We are pleased to say that Tony has been able to re schedule for this next meeting so we all look forward to an entertaining talk on the aerobatic scene. Ken Craigie

It's always a good idea to keep the pointy end going forward as much as possible.

will be rescheduled for a date in the new year

Abbeville Fly Out

The Abbeville fly out ended up in two locations as recorded in the previously article but as Mike Roper reports this is the group that eventually made it to the prime destination.

Abbeville Fly-out - cont'd.

By Mike Roper

In an attempt to boost the numbers of strut members attending the annual fly-out, I rounded up some of the erks at Biggin. As previously mentioned in the last newsletter, the weather wasn't very kind, being a 'no-go' on the Saturday (29th Sept) but flyable on the Sunday. Low cloud at Abbeville was a problem, being down to about 500/600 feet but broken - slightly. First to arrive was Doug Field and his wife, Mavis, in a Long Ez, G-BPWP, closely followed by Gary Smith & Brian Hope in the RV9. Cobb & a friend were next in with a couple of those really old-fashioned aeroplanes (a Proctor and a Vega Gull). They were followed by John Bull and lady friend in John's RV6 and then Mike Tooze in Varieze, G-EMMY. Steve Brown and I eventually landed in Varieze G-VEZE, after about 5/6 circuits, having been balked twice by other aircraft on even shorter finals than us!!

In retrospect, it was just as well that the Le Touquet crowd didn't make it as a motorcycle touring club arrived and about 30/40 of them filled the restaurant. The food was up to its normal high standard and was enjoyed by all. The trip home was the same

again in reverse, i.e. very low cloud at Abbeville but clearing at the French coast for a nice run home. Maybe next year we will all make it to the same place, on the same day and at the same time!!!!

Christmas Dinner 8th December 2007

Remember no meetings after November until the AGM on the 31st January 2008 so if you have not already booked for the Christmas Dinner then please do so on the form enclosed, or attached if in electronic format and send back with your deposit to
Graham Hammond
Twelve Acre Farm
Grigg Lane
Headcorn TN27 9LY

Stay out of clouds. The silver lining everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane going in the opposite direction.

no later than one week before and preferably on the night of the next meeting so that numbers and menus can be confirmed with the restaurant. It promises as always to be the convivial affair that marks the end of another Strut year and the start of another as part of the Light Aircraft Association. The King is dead, long live the King !

New Member - Paul Smiddy

I was pleased to receive the following note from Paul after my request in the newsletter for information on their aviation background

'I started flying when I was 16 - which was very many years ago! I have been a member of the Robin Lance group at Rochester for a long while, but bought my own Glastar

The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.



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recently.

I flew the London-Sydney Air Race in 2001. I have been in the Great Britain Flying Team in the World Rally Flying Championships in South Africa and France in the last four years, and the Europeans in the Slovak Republic a couple of years ago. I am actively involved in the British Precision Pilots Association, and do a lot of touring around Europe'

Hopefully I can persuade Paul to write a little bit on one of these topics as I haven't a clue on what the World Rally Flying Championships is all about and the London - Sydney Air Race sounds positively enthralling.

And finally

The Committee wishes all members past and present a **Very Happy Christmas and safe flying in the New Year for 2008 and beyond.....**

Dates for your Diary

Nov 29	Talk on Aerobatics
Dec 08	Christmas Party
Jan 31	AGM

MID KENT STRUT CHRISTMAS DINNER
COBTREE MANOR GOLF CLUB
8TH DECEMBER 2007
7.00 FOR 7.30

WINTER VEGETABLE SOUP WITH CRUSTY BREAD

OR

BAKED CRISPY CAMEMBERT WITH REDCURRANT CHUTNEY

OR

DUET OF MELON WITH BERRIES AND MANGO COULIS

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ROAST NORFOLK TURKEY WITH BACON CHIPOLATA AND HERB
STUFFING

OR

GIGOT OF LAMB WITH MADEIRA JUS ROSEMARY AND
REDCURRANTS

OR

ROASTED VEGETABLE CREPE AU GRATIN

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CHRISTMAS PUDDING WITH BRANDY CUSTARD

OR

SHERRY TRIFLE WITH FRESH CREAM

OR

CHEESE SELECTION WITH BISCUITS

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COFFEE AND MINTS

£20.00 PER HEAD

(MUSIC INCLUDED)

£10 DEPOSIT TO SECURE YOUR PLACE

STARTER MAIN COURSE PUDDING

MEMBER :

GUEST 1 :

GUEST 2 :

GUEST 3 :

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED SLIP AND DEPOSIT TO ANY COMMITTEE MEMBER
(DETAILS ON THE BACK OF THE NEWSLETTER) OR THE NEXT MEETING.