



March 2008

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



GPS—Friend or Foe?

I can imagine that any flying instructor reading this is about to blow a gasket. Both the CAA and instructors say you shouldn't use GPS as the primary means of navigation. I qualified long before GPS and until about 6 years ago I was a staunch supporter of doing things the old fashioned way, it seemed to be real flying! Yeah right!

That was until six of us went to Ireland in five aeroplanes; all the others had GPS's in the cockpit with them. Mine was still in the box where it had been for two years since it was given to me by the



Garmin 496

March Meeting - 27th March 2008 – Golf Club at 8pm
Wartime Glider Operations

Des Paige has now recovered from his illness and is able to give his talk scheduled for last month

'blonde' as a present. It was hard work! Without going into the stress of having to dodge horrible weather, divert into Waterford, as well as getting stuck at Kilkenny and Haverford West, technophobia or not when I got back I learnt to use my Garmin Pilot 111. Not that the others had any better weather than I did, but when it got marginal they had a direct fix on the nearest bolthole.

Since learning to use it, it has failed twice, both times in France, once near Rouen and once north of Troyes, but coming back on line within half an hour on both occasions. Well worth the investment I would say.

The pros of having one with you are pretty obvious. It tells you where you are all the time; the newer ones have airspace marked out, restricted areas, frequencies and more information than the Sunday papers. As for the GOTO button, what a friend when you need it! Every pilot should have one if only to have it tell you what heading to take and how far to the nearest airport when things get a bit tense. I actually know of some pilots who carry two or more units with them when they go touring.

But what are the real cons if you are using it as your main means of navigation as some do? In my view the worst of all is not accuracy, as they are always more accurate than my calculations, but the fact that one tends to press on as visibility worsens. Cocooned in your little bubble it is very easy to carry on, when it would probably be much more sensible to call it a day. The main concern of instructors appears to be what to do if it fails? Well if it does then you have to resort to your map alone, we all had to learn to read

them to qualify. Draw a line with some time estimates, depending on how far you are going it should not take more than 10 minutes of preparation, you can even use the GPS to do most of the calculations for you. If the GPS does 'go down', the aeroplane won't stop flying and unless you are still in the circuit it will already have made the adjustments for wind etc, just write the time on the spot that it failed, wind up your watch, dust off the chart and start looking at the compass.

Another great plus about most pilots investing in one is that they tend to fly direct from one point to another and thus avoiding the congestion and associated dangers at VOR's. There are many pilots who don't fly often enough to be fully confident about cross-country flying, even with a GPS, that without one they would probably pose a danger not only to themselves but to everyone else as well. This way at least they have a chance of looking out of the window.

If the visibility is good and I am in areas that I know I don't mind leaving mine at home although the thought of flying without a map would be quite scary.

So to sum up, I think every pilot should have one but should also have his/her route marked out on the map and follow the progress of the flight, using one to compliment the other.

After marriage, husband and wife become two sides of a coin; they just can't face each other, but still they stay together.

Aaaaaaah Luscombe

What an image this name evokes - an advanced, for its day, high wing strutted monoplane with a beautifully designed efficient wing attached to an attractively shaped all metal fuselage with an almost De Havilland shaped fin and rudder and a purposeful looking nose housing a 65 h.p. Continental engine propelling aeroplane and occupants at an astonishing 100 m.p.h. A respectable performance by any standards but considering this design emanates from the late 1930's Don Luscombe the designer must rank amongst the most successful manufacturers of all time. Designed originally as the Model 8A with a 50 h.p engine and a rag wing this was upgraded to a 65 h.p. and post war the 85 and 90 h.p. models fol-

lowed as the 8E and 8F respectively together with a change to an all metal wing of great strength. This often featured in the Company's publicity brochures with at least 21 employees sitting along the length of the wing to underline this fact.

The aeroplane was also called the Luscombe Silvaire and the company slogan was every cloud has a 'Silvaire' lining, a clever play on words don't you know. This is not intended to be a diatribe on the career of the man and his vision but an insight in to one of the thousands built under his direction and vision. In 1941 The Model 8C was launched in a more luxurious livery with a 75 h.p. Continental still at this time with a rag wing of course and it is this model which is based at Farting



Corner and has been operated successfully over the last few years by four devotees of the marque. In May 2002 Bruce, Paddy, Simon and myself looked at G-BSNT at its home in Cheshire and made the owner an offer and with the deal done the aeroplane was ferried South shortly after. I had previously owned 2 other 8A's with metal wings so this was for me a bit of a departure but we all thought it was a tidy example of the type. At some time in its career it had been re engine'd with a 65 h.p. which would technically make it an 8A but it was built as an 8C so in



my mind it will always be thus.

We have flown the aeroplane these last 5 years and decided that this Winter she would undergo a bit of TLC particularly as the fabric of the wing was looking tired and following a repair to the starboard wing tip following an undercarriage malfunction several years ago recovering was the prime requirement along with a complete respray of the whole airframe. At the same time we thought we would inspect as much of the structural integ-

Woman inspires us to great things, and prevents us from achieving them.

riety as was practical which has resulted in the breaking down of the major components for a look see. We knew the spars and struts had been boroscoped at regular intervals around permit time and the results recorded in the logs but this has given us the opportunity to verify that all is well courtesy of our inspector Alan Bennett-Turner having a good poke round with his camera. This has confirmed all is as it should be and a great comfort to us all! A good place to start a rebuild.

One thing of course never changes and that is the time scale for work on aeroplanes, it always takes considerably longer than you think, even when such dedicated builders as our Gary Smith will testify. At the end of the day what we are dealing with here is a classic which with care and attention will fly on for another 67 years and more.

At the moment the fuselage has been rubbed down and the wings are under preparation for the Ceconite covering to be installed and it is these two areas which have given some clues as to the previous historical provenance. One of the pleasures of being involved with these old classics is finding out through the log books what has happened in the past but it is still interesting what you find out first hand.

We know the wing was last recovered about 15 years ago just after the 'plane was imported so it was probably time to

"I've had bad luck with both my wives. The first one left me, and the second one didn't."

be redone. Stripping off the fabric we were more than pleasantly surprised to find the internal metal structure was in very good condition and apart from some minor attention was pretty much ready for the recover. What has come to light is that we have is two wing tip constructions viz a viz the ribs



as the accompanying photos show.

Part of Don Luscombes far sighted design was to build in the rapid replacement ability of the wing tips and for the outer third this has the ability to be sacrificial to enable a repair to be done in the field without removal of the whole wing back to a repair facility and so it would appear that our bird has one wing tip replaced but under its recover this will not be evident.

When built the basic factory applied colour scheme for our year of manufacture would have been a polished aluminium with maroon trim and of course the stylized 'S' for Silvaire on each side of the nose . Given the number of years since manufacture and the number of owners through whose hands it has passed it is no surprise this has long been covered under successive coats of paint. Currently in white with blue trim previous schemes

involving red and metallic blue have featured on the nose and other metal parts of the wing and empennage which have shown up during paint removal and flattening back. We had decided against a full bare metal respray as the fuselage was in good shape however other areas principally called out for a complete strip back.. The fin has yet to be paint stripped and it will be interesting to see if any trace of its original 'N' number will be etched in to the skin.

Work continues and will do so for a number of weeks yet but as the current custodians of this elegant flying machine we are committed to bringing her back to a finish that will enable us to mingle with other fine examples of the breed and keep the Luscombe Silvaire firmly where it belongs as one of the true classics on the UK register.

Cozy Rebuild 1st Rig

By Jamie Foreman

Dad, Mike Roper and I took advantage of a bright and sunny, if a little windy, weekend to do a full assembly of the Cozy after its long respite in the workshop having the rebuild and overhaul



done.

It has had all the components fitted at



some time or another over the last 18 months or so but this was the first time we would see the 'whole'. It was a leisurely couple of days with no real surprises but none the less satisfying when everything was connected and a very short snag list compiled on the Saturday. Sunday was spent attending to most of the list and quite a bit of interest from family and a few other canard pilots that popped in for a nosey!

Having hung the new 3-bladed prop' we couldn't resist allowing the neighbours

hear how wonderful the engine sounded as Dad checked the prop' tracking. Second spin on the starter was enough for the 0-235 to burst into song. A short run and radio check to Biggin Hill confirmed all systems go and confidence enough to begin the arrangements to take G-DO to Lydd for test flights... as soon as Dad gets back from his next trip. I can't wait to retire!! Will keep you posted on how that goes.

Last Months Meeting

Numbers were up and it was good to see a number of absent faces returning. Unfortunately our scheduled speaker was indisposed but at short notice Gary was able to step in and give us a talk, well illustrated, on the

The most effective way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once..

building of his RV. It was pleasing to see several of our members are also engaged in this rather perverse way of spending their money and hard won leisure time and are obviously encouraged by Gary who always displays an infectious enthusiasm when discussing his build. For those following in the leaders footsteps we would always be pleased to hear of your project and how it is going and as such Don and Jamie Foreman have updated us on their Cozy rebuild. We have covered in this newsletter and in our sister publication 'Light Aviation' details over the past 3 or 4 years the progress and when the machine is seen in the flesh and performing one can understand the current popularity of the RV series. Thanks for dealing with the last minute change so effectively Gary. However the good news.....

Next Months Meeting Thursday 27th March Gliding World War 2 Style

As reported Des was unable to make last months meeting but despite the grand age of 85 years young he expressed his earnest desire to fulfill his commitment to come to us and give his talk on his exploits flying and landing gliders behind enemy lines both at Arnhem and The Rhine in 1944/45 so we have rearranged our published scheduled dates to bring him on . I think we will all find this aspect of wartime flying quite fascinating and to hear it first hand even more so . I know a number of our members started their flying careers on gliders so perhaps the chance to find out what the handling was like with a troop carrier full of heavily armed soldiers dodging Flak and small arms fire with the attendant risk of air to air collision notwithstanding ground obstacles one can only try and

comprehend what was going through their minds. Awesome!

Here and There

As noted it was good to catch up with a number of members who had been absent to find out what had been happening. One welcome face was Martin Snelling currently flying with Easyjet and as we discovered was now Captain Martin having got his promotion early last year so well done to him. Frank Lissimore was telling us that engine problems on his group owned Jodel 1050 were hopefully under control now that it had been re engined. When they had obtained the aeroplane it still had its original Potez engine which caused all sorts of problems which took it out of the air for a considerable period of time. It now has an O-200 which is behaving impeccably and the Biggin based group are finally getting in some hours.

Talking to Don Foreman he mentioned one of those coincidences which Radio 2's Sarah Kennedy would have been delighted to hear of. Now I'm not quite sure of the absolute details but concerns our membership secretary Graham Hammond. Graham and Shirley disappear to the Antipodes for three months every Winter and Don was also heading back from that way and this is where my memory gets a bit hazy but I think it was at Hong Kong or Singapore but evidently they bumped into each other ... spooky.

Our esteemed leader and honourable L.A. editor attended a meeting at Turweston on latest developments on the requirement for Mode S transponder and status of the current

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modes so perhaps we can get a bit of feedback at the meeting.

Sponsorship Needed

Julia Camp, FISO at Rochester is to take part in the "Race for Life" event in support of Cancer Research UK again this year. You can sponsor her by going to <http://www.raceforlifespansome.org/juliacamp1> And clicking on "Donate Now". It takes a matter of minutes, is totally secure and you can leave a message with your donation too. If you pay UK tax, Just-giving will automatically reclaim 28% Gift Aid on your donation at no cost to you, so it's even better for the charity.

You know what I did before I married? Anything I wanted to.

Dates for your Diary

Mar 27 Wartime Gliders
 Apl 24 Ken Craigie, LAA