



June 2008

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Berlin - Now or Never

By Gary Smith

Berlin sported a medieval parade ground called “Knights Templar” to the south of the city from 1720’s until the turn of the last century. It was fitting that in 1909 such a large open space would see the first demonstrated flight of a “heavier than air” machine by a French man called Armand Zipfel. Orville Wright also had a little fly there later in the same year.

The population of Berlin continued to be entertained by such aerial activity until 1923 when Templehof was officially designated an airport and construction of the first terminal building began.



Templehof

**June Meeting - 26th June 2008 – BBQ
At Ripple**

See inside and last months Skywritings for more info

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Between the wars Berlin Tempelhof (the city's only airport) was processing 40 domestic flights a day and held the title of "world's busiest airport" in both 1938 and 1939. From the mid 1930's the Nazi party was on the "up" and Albert Speer was called upon to design a grand new terminal building for the new Nazi super city "Germania". Shaped in the form of an eagle with spread wings the new building was started in 1936 and was 1.2 kilometers from side to side. The cantilever roof was designed such that aircraft passengers could walk to and from their aircraft in total shelter but the roof was also to double as a stadium or grandstand for 12,000 air show spectators.



As WW2 broke out commercial air traffic stopped and the airport was used to assemble JU87 Stukas and Fw190's, components being shipped via the airport's unique underground train station. These aircraft were never flown from Tempelhof and the airport was never actually finished due to lack of resources, it was post war investment that brought the building to the standard you see today. In April 1945 the Russians took Berlin from the occupying Germans and following the Potsdam agreement West Berlin became an al-

lied outpost in Russian occupied east Germany. By June 1948 the Russians claimed "technical difficulties" and closed all roads and railways to West Berlin, leaving only three air corridors available to service the city.

The 2.5 million West Berliners had much to be grateful for when on 26th June 1948 a single Douglas C-47 arrived to start the "Berlin airlift". Its 80 tons of cargo was a mere grain of rice when compared to the 4500 tons of cargo that were to arrive every day by air for the following 11 months. Flights every few minutes soon turned the single grass runway to pulp and American forces first built a hard runway parallel to the existing 09/27 and then converted the remaining mess into the second hard runway seen today. During the cold war Tempelhof continued as a USAF air base with a few commercial airlines gradually using the facilities. The opening of Tegel airport 10nm to the north stole all of the commercial traffic in 1973 and so the USAF were left in charge once again. The year 1993 saw the reunification of Germany and the fall of the Berlin wall. The USAF withdrew from Tempelhof after 47 years of occupation and the airport returned to German rule and began to service small charter flights, business jets and GA like ourselves. Berlin City council decided to concentrate all of its national and international flights under one roof and in 2003 a super new air-

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

port at Berlin-Schonefeld was started (north west of the city). Unfortunately the caveat was that once Schonefeld was completed, both Templehof and Tegel must close. Despite getting a 61% vote to keep Templehof open the government claimed the turnout was “insufficient”SO.....on Friday 31st October 2008 Templehof-Berlin will close to all air traffic.....for ever.

Braving less than ideal weather, Brian Hope and Frank Rothera returned from Templehof in 2007 with stories about “flying 15nm over the city” and its imminent closure and I decided that it was a place I needed to have in my log book. Lots of people expressed an interest in the trip and so on Thursday 22nd May our adventure began. Mike Wells and Russell in their Emeraude and Steve Leach in his Taylorcraft had flown up from Somerset the night before and were planning to depart from Headcorn in the morning. Graham and Shirley were also planning to join the group in their Jabiru J430 so the “Headcorn group” totalled three. Matthew in his Jodel, myself in the RV9 and Brian in his Jodel were planning to leave Farthing corner around the same time and we were all planning to rendezvous at Midden Zeeland (Holland) for lunch.

Wearing flip flops, a life jacket and a look of despair Matthew decided that leaving his passport at home was possible the daftest thing he had done that Thursday morning and he left in a cloud of dust to try and save the day. The weather was fine and no sooner had we departed and reached the coast we heard “Headcorn” group airborne too. I was to uncover a few characters of my aeroplane on this trip, one of which is that “fastest is not always best”. The first instance of this was having spoken

to Lille approach I was passed to Calais tower, then to Oostende then Koksijde then back to Oostende, then to Dutch mil etc. By the time the 5th aircraft had passed up the coast I don’t think they even bothered to ask the Taylorcraft if would squawk (just as well as did not even have a transponder). Midden Zeeland was easy to find and within a surprisingly short time we were sitting around a table wondering if Matthew had actually found his passport.

With the distinctive sound of G-ASXU overhead and Matthew’s arrival imminent we started discussing where our night stop should be. A cold front was making its way east from Cornwall and we were keen that it did not catch us up while we were sleeping. Brian, Mike/Russell, myself and Steve decided to head for Damme in Germany where they were preparing for the German RV fly-in and where we could camp. The others opted for Onsabruck where they foolishly believed they stood a better chance of getting a hotel (it being next to a large town). Having been on the ground at Damme for 30 minutes, Mike and Russell turned up and they were most surprised that a) there was no Brian b) they heard Steve call “finals for Damme” but he never landed. Now my German is pretty poor but I can read the signs when a controller is ready to push the big red button to activate “Search and rescue” and his finger was hovering.

I had some words with my wife, and she had some paragraphs with me.

Right on cue the radio came alive with Brians dulcet tones and the controller was then just looking for one aeroplane. A phone call to Osnabruck solved the problem and we slipped away to put the tents up.

Having kept the airfield restaurant staff up late the previous night, they were too tired to get up and make us breakfast the next morning. Camping has a funny way of making you wake up 5am and eventually there comes a time when you need a cup of tea and tummy stuff. The Friday morning weather was fine and by 9am we were bored and hungry so we departed for Kyritz regardless. A large exhibition at the airport aided its location but alas it was nothing to do with the fly-in. Hubert had made a lot of preparations in the previous two years but the weather had been terrible unkind so this year he was keeping it a low key affaire. His theme was Emeraudes/wood and fabric aircraft but he let me "join the party" with my tin RV9 because I had wooden chocks (phew).

The others arrived in their own sweet time and within the hour it was like being back at Farthing Corner. Over lunch at the splendid airfield restaurant we learned that Brian had been experiencing a few engine problems and this was the reason for his delay into Damme and also into Kyritz. After lunch we rallied around for some tools and within no time we had tapped the sticking exhaust valve back into life and all was well again. Hubert our German host suggested that we may like

"There's a way of transferring funds that is even faster than electronic banking. It's called marriage."

to eat at a little restaurant on an island in the woods that evening and hinted that it was just a 3km away. The ambience was lovely but the walk was more like a route march (it was a 20 minute taxi ride back for god sake). The island was really sweet and the atmosphere was really good, just like the German hospitality and beer.

Saturday dawned another fine day which was really kind as we intended to fly into Templehof. Somehow we managed to miss breakfast again and following the flight brief we set off hungry once more. Brian decided to come in the RV and enjoy the view without worrying if his engine would have another "funny turn" right over the city. There are very strict approach procedure into Templehof airport is RIGHT in the middle of the city and you are at least 15 miles in any direction over houses. We had overtaken Frank in his Jodel (from Biggin Hill) soon after take off and before we knew it we were on finals for 09L Right hand. All I remember is the huge terminal building on my left and some really tall houses just on the undershoot, I tried to think of all those aeroplanes that had made this same approach during the Berlin airlift but all that came to mind was "don't screw up the landing"....and we taxied clear. Matthew brought a passenger who was a Berliner and he offered us a whistle stop tour of the city. A short walk to the underground station and a few stops down the line brought us out at Friedrichstrasser, the "London Victo-

Two secrets to keep your marriage brimming

1. Whenever you're wrong, admit it,
2. Whenever you're right, shut up.

ria” of Berlin city. Lunch was long overdue and following a calorie intake we took a very pleasant walk along the river, saw where the Berlin wall had been removed and passed in front of the Reichstadt building (Berlins old parliament building). We looked at the Brandenburg gate whose grandeur had been swamped by tall new buildings, then beat a prompt return to the airport for the Templehof building tour.

The history of the airport and its terminal building is fascinating and I could not possible begin to do it justice here. The moment for me was standing on the roof looking ½ kilometre either way along its roof line, then looking out at the huge oval “stadium” which best described the aura of the place. It soon became apparent why the Germans lost the war, they drowned in bureaucracy and nothing had changed here. Having waited 20 minutes for the first person to get their landing fee “processed” I estimated the last person in the not particularly long queue would need a night rating to get home. Security then delivered their body blow to the situation by demanding my passport (which was in the aeroplane) and I could see a night in one of the bunkers was on the cards. At the end I could not wait to get airborne again and we managed to take some lovely photos of the city as we returned to Kyritz.

Sunday morning brought clear skies but it was not to last. Graham and Shirley did not fancy getting stuck at Damme so we split back into the two groups and agreed to meet at Midden Zeeland that afternoon. The weather was on the turn and got rather damp as we ate lunch at Damme and it appeared that most of the UK based RV’s

had left on Saturday evening for fear of getting weathered in. On departure the controller said I was the first British RV to arrive for the fly-in and the last British RV to depart. Now came more evidence that “fastest is not always best”, we all struggled back through some rather low cloud and mist on the way back to Midden Zeeland with me as “path finder” out in front passing weather reports back to the others. With 20 miles to run things improved and we thought we were home and dry but the weather had not finished with us yet. Our little group were having lunch when the sky turned black and the heavens opened. We heard the distinctive tone or Matthew’s exhaust somewhere overhead and he later confirmed that he had been “down wind at circuit height and right in it”. Not being able to see the ground was a distinct disadvantage and he did the sensible thing and leg it with the others to Oostend instead.

The rain stopped as abruptly as it had started and within 30 minutes we were on our way down the Belgian coast for one of the best channel crossings I have had in years. Kent was bathed in sunshine except for a little line right along the top of the North Downs which included Farthing Corner and Rochester. They confirmed they had been IFR all day so a short divert to Headcorn concluded my return from the east. Within 30 minutes a load more people diverted in and it was like one happy family again. Its hard to believe you can get 9/10 back across Europe in a day but then get stuck just 3 miles from home.

The trip was 1050nm in total and took 8.3 hours in the RV9. Hubert is thinking of running a trip to Peenemunder on the Baltic coast next year (North west

of Berlin) which was the development site of the V1 and V2 rockets, see you there.

Meetings for next 3 months.

Just a quick reminder that we are not at the golf club for the three summer months (June / July and August), but we have arranged alternative entertainment.

JUNE. Thursday 26th June we have been invited to Steve Solley BBQ at Ripple near Deal, Kent. If you intend to arrive by air then please check the map and telephone Steve for details (short field performing aircraft only) 6pm onwards. If you intend to drive (and were not at the May meeting) then please phone Steve before hand so can get a good idea of how many to cater for. Map details as follows <http://tiny.cc/A2lkK>

JULY. Thursday 31 July is our BBQ at Rochester starting from 18:00 onwards. There are a limited number of slots for those wishing to fly in and these must be reserved in advance (please contact anyone on the committee)

AUGUST. Our Annual August "sit down" meal, location to be announced.

Dunkeswell South West Regional Rally. By Brian Hope.

The Regional Rally concept entered its second season with the first of three

events taking place at Dunkeswell in Devon on May 31st/June 1st. In 2007 this event, organised by the Devon Strut, had been a complete washout, torrential rain all weekend preventing any visitors from flying in. Fortunately it fared much better this year, although the weather still had its effects, Dunkeswell itself being bathed in sunshine all day Saturday whilst just a few miles east low cloud was preventing some pilots from getting through.

In all a little over 200 aircraft visited the event, a reasonable number staying over for the Saturday night and enjoying a hog roast served up by the on site café. Have to say I particularly enjoyed the event, it had an easy going ambience with the necessary control of pilots and public being handled with a low key approach for a change. Around a dozen exhibitors attended the Rally, including the LAA Shop resplendent in its new livery.

I flew down on the Friday with John Dean and Frank Rothera, stopping for lunch at a very busy Compton Abbas, the restaurant that is, not the rest of the airfield. Former Strut member Mike Wells and his wife Pam kindly put us up as they live only about five miles away from Dunkeswell - a pleasant change from a tent! Incidentally, Mike has recently bought a half share in an RV4 so no doubt he also will become a frightful bore and keep telling us how fast it is. Did you know that most RV pilots actually arrive before they've even taken off, god those things are fast! Seriously though, great aeroplanes, Gary gave me a ride down to the Isle of Wight at the weekend in his RV9, an effortless 135knots at 24 litres an hour and it gets off and climbs like

When a man steals your wife, there is no better revenge than to let him keep her.

a bat out of hell. If only it was made of wood and had bent wings I'd have one.

John and Frank headed back home on Saturday afternoon, but I stayed on until the Sunday, by which time the summer was over and there were very few additional arrivals. The ride home was a bit murky over land, but nice along the south coast, and the tailwind we had on the way down had for once played ball and turned to be a tailwind on the way back.

As a first Regional for 2008 Dunkeswell can be considered a success, let us hope that the next event at Popham on July 5/6 enjoys some real summer weather and attracts a record number of visitors. There is talk that there could be a return to a single International LAA Rally next year, it is only talk at the moment though, no costed proposal has yet been presented. I would like to see that happen, as indeed I'm sure many members would but it will have to make financial sense before the EC gives it the green light.

RV Fly-in Popham **Sunday 8th June** by Gary Smith

Having driven to the NC meeting on the Saturday (for the good of the Mid Kent Strut) I was more than a little miffed that the grotty weather at Farthing corner had persisted into Sunday. At 12:00 it had improved enough to perform a "test circuit" and it became apparent that it was very localized and clear to the west. By Bewl bridge Reservoir it was CAVOK and then went clear sky for the rest of the 40 minute flight. The circuit was busy with lots of aircraft going around. I find that if you make enough mistakes on the radio they think

you are a total fool and you get a priority to land. Well it worked for me and I was directed to park in line with all of the other RV's. After the air race at Compton Abbas finished, several of the competitors (in RV's) used the Popham meeting as an excuse to beet up the strip, quite badly. If you see an RV7 painted like a cow (black and white), keep well out of his way because he's nuts both upside-down and the right way up. In all 38 RV's attended and for non enthusiasts it was beginning to all look the same (I cant believe I have said that) and so I departed for a lovely flight home.

Shuttleworth LAA **Saturday 19th July**

The LAA have been closely liaising with the Shuttle trust and are planning to use the event on 19th July as a focal point for exhibiting our types of aircraft and promoting the association. A carefully selected lineup of LAA aeroplanes will hopefully demonstrate all of the traits of our sport, be it a plans built aircraft, a one off design a gyrocopter or an RV !!!!! . 60 VIP's have been invited and will be walked down the flight line for a whistle stop tour of "our" aircraft and some of the aircraft will be flown at 5pm. At 6pm they will fly some of the Edwardian aircraft from the collection and it promises to be a good event. LAA believe they may require a few more people to "escort" small groups of VIP's down the flight line (cards with aeroplane details will be provided) so if you think you may be able to help then please contact Gary Smith (details at back of magazine). The next news letter may drop on

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your mat just after this event so please put in your diaries for next month.

**AIR BRITAIN CLASSIC FLYIN,
NORTH WEALD - Sat 21st June**

Just a reminder that the Air Britain Classic Flyin is being held at Northweald airfield in Essex on Saturday 21st June. The theme of the day is the 60th Anniversary of the Piper Vagabond (woops just sold one of those) and the Stampe. PPR is required but it looks like it could be an interesting day.

**Dates for your Diary**

Jun 26	Tea at Ripple
Jul 31	BBQ
Aug 28	Evening Meal