



July 2008

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



It's the BBQ Again!!!

We are as usual for this time of year putting on a Bar-B-Q at Rochester which will enable some to fly in if they wish subject to the following restrictions. Pilots should contact Rochester ATC on the day to secure permission which will be restricted to a maximum of 5 aircraft on a first come first served basis. Departure from Rochester should be by 20.00 local which complies with restrictions put on airfield based aircraft thus avoiding complaints.

For those who will be coming by car or otherwise proceedings will kick off about 6.30 pm until dusk or when the



July Meeting - 31st July 2008 – Rochester Airport
Grand BBQ
From 6:30pm

www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk

food and conversation runs out.

Catering will be courtesy the Airport Café who have served us well in the recent past and we look forward to this popular event and hope the weather holds up, a tall task given the current Summer. If it's any consolation the Gods usually seem to smile on us as over the past dozen or so years we have only had one rainy evening so the odds are...

Look forward to seeing you there and don't forget if you wish to bring your significant other and friends you are more than welcome.

Last Months Meeting - Steve Solleys Strip at Ripple

A number of souls flew in for Steve's annual Barbie which gives members from the East Kent area a chance to make a more local trek rather than to the usual venue near Maidstone. Steve put on a welcoming and hospitable evening which was enjoyed by all. The strip is to be found just behind Deal in a most pleasant part of the County and whilst only suitable for experienced strip pilots and more importantly aeroplanes capable of operating in this type of environment the rewards from Steve's delicious brand of ice cream can be more than tempting. Big thanks to Steve for his generosity and hospitality.

August Meeting - Thursday 28th August

This will be the final meeting away from the Golf Club to which we will be returning from the September meeting

on and hitherto has been held in the Airport Café where a sit down meal has been produced but as a departure it has been mooted that we go out to a restaurant which may have more appeal to the partners of our members. After a bit of research 'Pippins' on the London Road, Maidstone was selected and road tested by one of the committee members who reported favourably.

Again places will be restricted so if anyone wishes to go they should make there intentions known to one of the committee who will be happy to take a deposit of £10 per head so that we can inform the restaurant of numbers. If anyone has intentions a number of committee members will of course be at the bar-b-q this month.

Future Meetings

Watch this space as usual but we have for October John Thorpe from GASCO penciled in so we look forward to seeing him. Other announcements will be made in the coming months and of course there is always Christmas to think about!!

Weather Casualties

Apart from early May when the impending Summer season looked as if it was off to a promising start it has proved to be anything but with fly ins and other events heavily compromised

There is absolutely no substitute for a genuine lack of preparation.



by the weather. One of the early disruptions was our fly out to Amiens on the weekend of the 17th/18th May which didn't happen. At the seasons end in September we usually run a fly out to Abbeville which this year is scheduled for the 27/28th of September but we plan to tack on an overnight at Amiens. So we fly to Abbeville for lunch then on to Amiens for the night, obviously dinner out and back to base on the Sunday at some point. If you think you are up for a large dose of French cuisine then pencil the dates in.

Needless to say a number of regional LAA fly ins have seen reduced numbers not least Dunkeswell and the latest at Popham which was wind and rain affected. Old Warden was due to celebrate 100 years of flying on 6th July which suffered

from wind but hopefully their Event on 19th July at which the LAA was to be represented in spades went well as this is being compiled the weather on that Saturday whilst a bit breezy was a lot better than of late so news is awaited with interest. No doubt this will be reported in our sister publication 'Light Aviation'.

Biggest casualty by far was the Fairford Air Tattoo which suffered total annihilation following one months rain falling on the Wednesday preceeding the event weekend which made public car parking areas on

**Nostalgia isn't what it
used to be**

the grass all but impossible forcing the organisers to pull the plug on Friday evening. Never cancelled before this must represent a huge blow for the RAF charities which is the prime mover for the show.

Difficult season but we must remain optimistic for a more settled remainder.

Flying Legends Duxford July 12th

Whilst I know this sort of thing is not for the taste of everybody given we operate at the light end of the market but for yours truly it is compulsive and unmissable for there are always some gems that appear.

Highlights for me was the possibility of three B17 Flying Fortresses in the air at one time, two Gloster Gladiators a newly restored genuine Mk 1 Spitfire and a Bleriot Monoplane.

This time the weather held up .. just but in the run up week it was touch and go but other factors came in to play with the Duxford based B17 'Sally B' grounded with engine problems however the French based machine and 'Liberty Bell' flown over from the States still put on a good performance. Unfortunately the Fighter Collections beautifully restored Gladiator hadn't completed test flying in time to perform but it looked superb. The Spitfire had completed a 6 year ground up res-

Someone who thinks logically is a nice contrast to the real world

toration which necessitated a number of changes to make it one of the most authentic looking aeroplanes of its type on the circuit.

Perhaps the most entertaining show was put on by the 1918 Swedish Bleriot Monoplane trainer which is one of 2 owned by Michael Carlson and whilst Bleriot are usually associated with flying prior to the great War it was explained that this craft was used by the embryonic Swedish air arm and was literally one of these mythical finds in a country barn. Not only one but components to restore another. The Shuttleworth operate I think the oldest flying Bleriot which is 'hopped' only in ideal circumstances but to see a similar aeroplane operating in 20 mph winds was quite something, particularly downwind!!

Rochester Survey

This request came in from John Luck just too late for the last newsletter so it may not be current however if you need further info I suggest you contact John on the address below.

Hello Mike - Could I ask that in the next strut "Skywritings" that you put a small note in to say that:-

Shortly Rochester Airport will be asking for your help in completing an anonymous questionnaire. This is an effort to identify what may be done to

If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame



improve the airfield and help analyse the way in which the airport is performing. Questionnaire forms will be mailed to PAFRA members and account holders. There will be copies available at the airport and also downloadable

Reference the Rochester Airport survey, rather than print out loads of forms and send to PFA members could you perhaps include this link to the on-line forms in the next "Skywritings" and generally put the word out.

www.rochesterairport.flyer.co.uk/sv/2008.doc

john@johnluck.flyer.co.uk

A Wave from Minden

by Karl Martin

During a XC course in Minden Nevada USA, conditions were good for soaring in wave. Generally, when high speed winds are at right angles to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, wave is formed high above the Carson and other downwind valleys . When clouds act as thermal markers finding wave can be relatively easy . Well, at least you know where you want to be, even if conditions do not permit you to get there. But when the sky is blue, a trial and error approach is adopted. Here is what we did.

Late in the day, after a three hour return flight from Minden to Mt Grant, 50NM away, we decided to try for wave lift. Leaving the Pinenut ridge of mountains we headed into wind towards Lake Tahoe 20NM away on the other side of Carson valley. At 11,000 feet, we zig-



17,600 ft !

zagged our way at best L/D, feeling for signs of wave. Apart from some turbulence from rotor, which was encouraging, we could not find it before reaching the Sierras. So back we went to the Pinenuts, climbed higher, to about 13,000 feet and tried again.

This time, when about half-way across the valley, we made contact with lift. A stable 600 feet per minute showed on the

vario. This was not a thermal. This lift was even, silky smooth and eerily noiseless. Making gentle S's at slow speed (Vmin sink), we managed to stay in it as we changed our heading to north from west. This was in order to run along the width of the wave, thereby keeping in lift for longer. It worked, we kept rising. The air temperature dropped to zero degrees C. Silence was interrupted only by pulses from the oxygen regulator. Soon 14 thousand feet were showing on the altimeter, then 15, 16 and 17. Now, it was way below freezing (-10 degrees C). Flying the Duo Discus, required no more than the lightest touch. This was effortless soaring, but very cold.

**There is always one more
imbecile than you counted
on**

In the USA, airspace between 18,000 and 60,000 feet is designated as Class A. Normally it is reserved for IFR traffic with appropriate equipment and pilot rating. However, controllers in Reno Approach are very helpful to VFR glider pilots aiming for altitudes which bring them into this airspace over the Carson Valley. On request, they will open well-defined sectors and route commercial traffic to ensure it remains outside these sectors. Apart from squawking on mode C, gliders are exempt from many IFR rules when in this airspace. Clearance to enter is mandatory.

By now, we had been flying for four hours and were becoming tired and cold.

We decided not to go into Class A airspace, but we kept on rising while in straight and level flight. Soon there was a risk we would climb through 18,000 feet without clearance. At 17,500 feet we pushed the stick forward so as not to gain any more altitude. Quickly we reached V_{ne} (adjusted for altitude of course) and just managed to stay below 18,000 feet. Any more lift and we would have needed the undercarriage down and possibly the airbrake so as not to exceed V_{ne} . We were whizzing along at a ground speed of 150kts at times. It appeared as though one minute we were North of Lake Tahoe and the next South of it. We did that trip a few times and became very casual



Lenticular Cloud

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about how effortless it was. Maybe the oxygen had failed!

When tired of wave flying, we headed for Minden 20Nm away and 12,000 feet below us. At a conservative 4Nm per thousand feet we could have had a final glide of 48Nm. We had plenty of altitude and did some gentle manoeuvres to get down quickly. The Duo Discus is not approved for aerobatics. Then rotor helped us lose a few thousand feet very quickly. We headed east to get free of rotor sink. It can be quite violent.

Soon we were on the ground in scorching heat, with no evidence that we had been well below freezing not that long ago. All it took was perseverance and knowledge that high speed winds aloft meant wave was likely to be there. Soaring in wave may not be magic, but it sure is a thrill.

Dates for your Diary

Jul	31	BBQ
Aug	28	Dinner at Pippins
Sept	25	TBA