



August 2008

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



RSA RALLY at VICHY

After Michael Fish's hurricane blunder back in the mid '80's aviation weather forecasters now tend to paint a far worse picture than actually exists and this often keeps pilots on the ground for no reason. To be fair, the weeks weather leading up to the French homebuilders rally at Vichy was far from summery with parts of the UK receiving 50mm of rain on the Wednesday, so it was with some optimism that four aeroplanes were pushed out of Farthing Corner's hanger on the Friday morning. Despite Le Touquet operating under "special VFR rules" (cloud base of 800ft) the first three intrepid avia-

By Gary Smith



Gary and Brian receiving the Awards

August Meeting - 28th August 2008
Pippins Restaurant
See Flyer for Details

www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk

tors decided to depart anyway with the caveat “we can always come back if its no good”.

John Dean, Brian Hope and Frank Rothera did not return so Karl Martin (my navigator) and I decided that it must be okay and departed for Abbeville too. The south of England had already experienced the passing of a cold front earlier in the week but unfortunately it was slowly drifting towards central France. A second frontal system was coming down from the north west and we had to perform a careful juggling act, departing too soon would see us flying into the back of the first weather system, leaving it too late would see us “shut out” by the second. Our over zealous departure had us fly straight into the back of the first frontal system (don't you hate it when that happens). The channel was clear but low cloud on the French side would have deterred the less adventurous amongst us. Graeham Hammond and Shirley had left Headcorn around the same time and we passed their Jabiru J430 along Le Touquets beach at about 800ft.

As Abbeville came into sight the two Jodels and Franks Piper Colt were already in the circuit. We landed and within 20 minutes Mike Wells and Russell arrived in their RV4 (G-VANS) to bring the squadron up to a strength of 6. The showers during lunch left blue skies behind but unfortunately this was not in the direction we wanted to go. Four of the group pressed on regardless and having waited an hour I believe the two RV's had a better flight for want of the wait. A large bank of cloud 10nm from Avallon made our approach rather interesting requiring a climb to 4000ft before descending to circuit height, but

it all turned out fine in the end. The first arrivals found the airfield deserted and went straight to town, by the time the “RV contingent” arrived the club house was open and Karl convinced us that 8 euros was a good price for a round of “free! beers”.



Strut Aircraft at Avallon

The town of Avallon makes a very nice stopping off point. Its 800m grass airfield is only a 10 minute walk from the quaint little town and despite it being rather small it has a nice hotel and a choice of restaurants. For those into architecture the town is fortified to the south and has a fine collection of towers, walls and bastions. It's a good place to stop for an evening but a day would be too long.

Saturday morning brought broken cloud at 3000ft and excellent visibility. The staggered departure from Avallon was

**A FINE is a TAX for doing
BAD.**

**A TAX is a FINE for doing
GOOD .**

more by accident than design and once the RV's had caught up with the group our "mass" arrival at Vichy was the highlight of their morning. Busy it was not.

We were fortunate to have flown in the gap between the two weather systems but it was not good news for everyone. The first weather system had moved to the east and closed the door for the Germans and the second frontal system in the UK had prevented and more people coming from the north. The exhibition area was fairly well attended by aircraft manufacturers and traders selling their bits and bobs and there was a nice ambience despite the low aeroplane attendance. We met several stalwarts from the UK who drove to the show or flew in on the "big tin bird" and it was good to see some of the regular "show faces". I am convinced there are only 200 people who fly abroad and despite the fact that you may not see them for months in the UK you can be sure to see them at some fly-in on the continent (viz Andy Phillips of Andair products). I was rather interested in an electrically powered Souricelle (Sky Mouse), it was a single seat monoplane, akin to a motor glider but powered by a 12Kw electric motor and a box of lithium batteries. It could take off under its own power and fly for up to 25 minutes, interestingly the motor was made in UK.

The slightly less adventurous took the free shuttle bus to town while the rif-raf set about making camp. Mike Wells had spent the morning stating his independence, so you can imagine our delight when he unpacked his aeroplane to find he had left his tent at home in Devon. Swallowing "humble pie" he grovelled on bended knee to Mr Brian to share his tent, as you can imagine we really got some mileage out of that.

We decided to meet the others in town for our evening meal. Vichy is a spa town and has made a large spectacle of the "grand source". The Victorian architecture and gardens in the centre of town have been beautifully restored and certainly worth a visit. Drinking the water is supposed to cure all ills but having tasted it last year its more likely to make you ill, you have been warned.

The weekend of the rally is also the weekend of the 14th July (Bastille day) but unfortunately all of the celebrations were set to take place on the Sunday night, so it was very quiet in town. Back at the airfield Brian and I decided to "turn in" while Mike, Russell and Karl went on to hunt down the late night entertainment. Having befriended some "rookie" Air France pilots in the main terminal hall the group set about demolishing a bottle of Cognac, the evening apparently ended in a blur. I think it also helped disguise the fact that Mike had forgotten his tent and would be sharing with Mr Brian.

Bright eyed and bushy tailed we were up with the lark on Sunday morning and into the main marquee for the presentation ceremony. After several awards they announced the winner of the most represented club as"The Stoneacre Boys Club" from Farthing Corner and we dispatched Mr Hope to pick up the rather splendid trophy. A little later

Indecision is the key to flexibility

they announced the winner of the “Concor d’elegance” as Vans RV9 G-CDMN from Farthing corner and I was very proud of my efforts. I had noticed Karl “chatting up” one of the judges the previous day but if that is what a co-pilot has to do to get the captain a “gong” then so be it.



Gary with his Trophy

The majority of the group had arranged to stay in France and attend the German homebuilders rally on the following weekend so the two RV’s set track for home. Dodging a few light rain showers, we decided Bagnoles was a good place to stop for lunch and we had the good fortune to see Mr Andrae who is building for the Bagnoles aeroclub a Vans RV9A (they get everywhere these RV’s). A lunch break at Bagnoles really is not enough time to see the town as it is very pretty and has a lovely lake as a central feature. Caen was just 20 minutes further north and with a 4.50 euro landing fee is possible the cheapest port of entry for France. The evening was getting better by the

**Happiness is merely the
remission of pain**

minute and having never been the “long way” across the channel we decided a 5500ft crossing from St Valerie due north to Hastings and a then a slow decent back into Farthing corner.

The trip was 6.6 hours in total and I wish I could have stayed for the rest of the week. Hopefully if the weather is better next year we hope to see some more faces as we want to get the trophy for the “most represented” club again.

A PLEASANT DAY !!

The blonde was doing a charity run so I had the weekend to myself. With a recurring mag drop, the RSA rally at Vichy was out of the question, Saturday was spent finding the fault and drinking tea with the ‘Luscombe boys’ who are slowly putting Beryl, their cherished mount back together again.



Every year there is a Jodel fly-in at Croft Farm, Defford. The site has particular significance as G-XU was based there prior to its move to Kent. I rang the owner who had no trouble remembering my registration being one of its previous owners. The strip is a little way to the West of Turweston with a pub that does B&B about 200yrs away, worth knowing

**Friends may come and go,
but enemies accumulate**

for a future visit. The outbound flight proved to be bumpy with quite a headwind and as fuel is not available at the farm I was glad that I had filled the tank. It was one of those days that you don't really want the radio on, listening to each cylinder fire in turn was company enough. About 15 miles out it made sense to check to who was around, which was just as well as every Jodel on the register seemed to be in or around the circuit.

On landing I found that the marshal's were almost giving points for each landing. As I knew most of them quite well they daren't comment on mine, well not to my face at least. It seemed that current owners of many others types must also have felt an affinity



with the Jodel's or maybe they just wanted a nice day out, which they certainly got.

Even the hamburger seller commented on what 'gentlemen' the participants were, with polite, if rather limited aviation based conversation. All it needed was cucumber sandwiches and a jazz band on the lawn.

Whatever you fly, if it's a nice day next July when the event is on and you're are comfortable with 500 yards

of bumpy grass, it's worth the trip maybe even an overnigher as it a two day event.

All you need is the ability to talk about aeroplanes!!

Next Months Meeting Pippins London Road Maidstone 28th August 2008

This will be our final 'away day' so we have picked on this venue as being both reasonably central for members to travel to and in price. We will need numbers to report to the restaurant in advance so if you are coming please contact in the first instance Graham Hammond, details on the back of the Newsletter or any committee member who will be happy to forward your requirements.

The menu is fairly cosmopolitan and caters for all tastes and of course we would especially be pleased to see partners coming along to dilute the aviation talk that is bound to dominate ! Full menu can be seen at <http://www.pippinpub.net/>

See you there.

Last Months Meeting Bar-B-Q Rochester Airport

One day I will learn to keep my opinions to myself as once again the weather conspired as it did last year to confine the Bar-B-Q to an indoor event. Luckily the Rochester Airport Café whist carrying out the cooking also threw open the café to allow members to partake of their fare indoors thus avoiding the inclement weather outside. We had a good turnout as this event which



attracted all sorts of sartorial elegance or, otherwise, but it was supposed to be bright and sunny.

We are currently re thinking future BBQ's so watch this space for an announcement some time in the future. Anyway our spirits failed to be dampened by the vagaries of the British Summer weather and a convivial time was had by one and all.

Lead me not into temptation,
----- I can find it MYSELF

Some can and some cannot -
some do not know that they
cannot.



Roger Chaplin

Roger is a familiar figure around Rochester Airport and others know him a lot better than I so far be it from me to attempt a potted biography but members will by now be aware that Roger was involved in an accident in his Stolp Acroduster just outside Farthing Corner Airfield having just made a visit for the obligatory cup of tea and a natter. On departure the aircraft was seen to come down through the cherry orchard coming to rest and on fire. A quick response from the four guys that had been working on the Luscombe in the hanger, Simon Pratt, Paddy Jordan, Bruce Alexander and Alan Bourner ensured that such aid that could be administered was given as soon as possible but despite suffering from minor burns themselves and the use of fire extinguishers and water from the nearby farmhouse it was only when the emergency services arrived Roger was extricated from the wreck, stabilized and evacuated by air ambulance to Chelmsford Hospital Burns Unit.

Three weeks on whilst badly burned, he is, with the dedication of the Hospital Staff and help of his partner Kim with other friends and well wishers currently stable but faces a hard road ahead. We would all I trust wish him all the very best.

As a consequence we are reviewing facilities at F.C. installing a fire point and assessing what equipment can be on site and available hoping they will never be called upon, but you are urged to review your own situation and learn the lesson.

Useful Internet Sites

Following our request for interesting aviation based websites we have compiled the following list. The site displaying brazen beauties draped over equally beautiful aeroplanes has been saved for a later publication, perhaps Christmas. Thanks to the anonymous sender.

www.ais.org.uk National air traffic service web site. Can provide NOTAMS etc.

www.airspacesafety.com Good links and information specific to GA.

www.flyontrack.co.uk A wealth of information.

www.adae.co.uk Air displays around Europe, places not to fly through by accident.

www.notamplot.flyer.co.uk

Graphic display of Notams.

www.sia.aviation-civile.gouv.fr French notams for France (obviously).

ncu@hmce.gsi.gov.uk General aviation report form (customs form)

www.ukga.com wealth of information but need to register.

<http://www.ais-netherlands.nl/> Dutch AIS.

<http://www.dfs-ais.de/> German AIS.

<http://www.avbrief.com/> Flight briefing

Committee Contacts**Co-ordinator: Gary Smith**

Tel : 01795 422426
gary.james.smith@btinternet.com

Treasurer:

John Dean 01892 822776
john_dean@tiscali.co.uk

Membership Secretary:

Graham Hammond 01622 891466
grahamandshirley@tiscali.co.uk

Newsletter Editor:

Mike Negus 01634 364396
 57 Ploughmans Way
 Rainham, Kent, ME8 8LH
mike.negus8@blueyonder.co.uk

Committee Members:

Mark Balding 01580 851112
 Brian Hope 01795 662508
 Nigel Read 01634 362375
 Stephen Solley 01304 374337
 John Knight 01322 529079
 Simon Pratt 07973 402986
 Derek Browning 07885 298484



www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

Useful Web Addresses (cont.)

<http://flyinfrance.free.fr/>
 Loads of info on flying in France

<http://www.enav.it>
 Italian AIP

<http://ais.aena.es>
 Spanish AIS

<http://www.bowersflybaby.com/tech/fenton.htm>
 Info on Continental Engines

<http://skylinkweather.com/metar/index.html>
 Weather info.

<http://www.meteoconsult.fr/>
 More weather info.

<http://secure.metoffice.com/logon.jsp>

THE weather info!

Dates for your Diary

Aug 28	Dinner at Pippins
Sept 25	TBA
Sept 27	Fly- out to Abbeville

AUGUST STRUT DINNER

New venue

THE STRUT MEETING FOR THIS MONTH – 28 AUGUST HAS MOVED.

THE AUGUST MEETING IS ALWAYS A DIFFICULT MONTH, SO IN AN ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE MORE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO JOIN US FOR THE STRUT MEAL, WE HAVE MOVED THE VENUE FROM THE ROCHESTER CAFÉ TO

THE PIPPIN RESTAURANT

(WAS HANRAHANS)
LONDON ROAD, MAIDSTONE.

THE RESTAURANT HAS BEEN NEWLY REFURBISHED AND HAS AN EXCITING NEW MENU WHICH SHOULD APPEAL TO EVERYONE.

PLEASE COME - WE ARE TRYING THIS FOR YOU.

WE NEED TO BOOK THE TABLE AND WE WILL ALSO NEED A £5 P/P DEPOSIT MADE PAYABLE TO THE MID KENT STRUT.

THE PIPPIN RESTAURANT CAN BE FOUND ALONG THE A20 ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF MAIDSTONE, CLOSE TO THE SPEED CAMERA!!

COME OFF THE M20 AT JUNCTION 5 AND HEAD TOWARDS MAIDSTONE. PAST THE SPEED CAMRA AND IT'S ON YOUR LEFT.

PLEASE BOOK YOUR SEAT BY SENDING YOUR DEPOSIT TO GRAHAM HAMMOND, TWELVE ACRE FARM, GRIGG LANE, HEADCORN, ASHFORD, KENT, TN27 9LY

I NEED TO KNOW NO LATER THAN TUESDAY 26 AUGUST