



September 2008

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



THE PYRENEAN FLY-IN

By Brian Hope

A little over a dozen years ago, a French Jodel pilot and enthusiast, Alain Mathon, decided to organise a Jodel fly-in in his home, Haute Pyrenee region of France. Tarbes Laloubere, a single runway grass airfield, hosted this first event, held that first year in early October, and I decided that given a reasonable weather outlook I'd give it a go. The weather was good, and I made it down to the event, which was a friendly and fairly low key affair. A further two or three fly-ins were held at Laloubere before local planning issues (yes they have them in France as well!) caused it to move



*The view from our hotel room window,
the Pyrenees in the distance*

September Meeting

25th September 2008 - Cobtree Manor Golf Club - 8pm

BRENDAN O'BRIEN TALKS

www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk

about 50km east to Castelnau Magnoac, another simple grass field. Though the event never grew to more than about forty or fifty arrivals, there was often upwards of ten British aircraft and one or two Germans, notably Uwe Malter - one of those aerial vagabonds that you meet at various events around Europe - from near Nuremberg with his immaculate DR1050.



A general view of the aircraft park. The yellow aircraft in the foreground is a single seat homebuilt Jodel D9. The builder has raked the turtledeck back slightly and made his own perspex canopy, which lends a sleeker and more modern appearance to what is a sixty year old design. Performance is improved from a typical 80knot cruise to a near 100 knot cruise with a 1600cc VW conversion.

Sadly the event faltered and died, but I'd see Alain occasionally, and at the last Kemble Rally in 2006 he threatened to revive the Pyrenean Jodel fly-in, and low and behold it was back on the agenda for August Bank Holiday 2008. I immediately emailed Alain my intention to attend, and then set about persuading my usual travelling companions, Frank in the Piper Colt and John in his Jodel, that what they really wanted to do over the holiday weekend was come with me to the south of

France.

We decided to leave early on Friday morning with a first stop for Customs and lunch at Blois before continuing to Sarlat, where we planned to overnight with former LAA CEO Graham Newby, who has a house nearby that he and his partner Liz have been renovating for the past ten years. As has been the norm this year, the weather forecast was none too promising and having reached the French coast it was soon apparent that our first turning point of the BNE beacon was a non starter and we'd have to route down the coast past Le Touquet and then hope to be able to head inland to Abbeville and onward south. About twenty miles south of Abbeville we were being forced lower than we wanted to go so we did a swift 180 and landed at Abbeville, our designated alternate.

We gave it an hour and set off again, but were once again stalled by low cloud, so we headed out to the west where the weather was clearer, and dropped into Bernay for an excellent and very reasonably priced lunch (12 euros for three courses), at the airfield restaurant. France is soooo civilised.

Our third attempt to make Blois ended west of Chateaudun where we had to divert yet again, this time to Mortagne-au-Perche, a field I'd never been to



before. It was by now getting on for five pm local and was chucking it down so we decided to call it a day. Reluctantly I rang Graham to tell him we would be unable to enjoy his hospitality this time around, and accepted the offer of a lift into town and a hotel owned by one of the club members. It proved a good choice, and the town was also very pleasant and worth a visit.



A Ryan PT22 WW2 Trainer

Saturday morning was much better but there was a fair amount of fog about and we delayed taking off until we were certain it wasn't too widespread. Having consulted the flying club computer and satisfied ourselves all was well, we headed off down past Le Mans and into Angouleme in glorious weather. Re-fuelled, a quick turn-around soon saw us headed for Castelnau, where we arrived at about two pm, just in time for the last knockings of an al fresco lunch in real summer-like sunshine, the glorious Pyrenees as our backdrop. Three other UK aircraft were there, plus two Germans (Uwe and his mate Lutz), plus three from Spain; the remainder being French. It had taken us seven and a half hours flying time to do a trip that usually takes six, all down to the diversions of the previous day.

That night we had what was described as a 'whole sheep barbecue' and a prize giving, your truly receiving a cup for best SAN Jodel and also for being a long-time supporter of the event.

We stayed the night in the pretty little village of Castelnau, in the only hotel, the DuPont, a gloriously grand old establishment in the main square that had probably seen its best days in the thirties when pretty (and rich) young things came down from the north to take the mountain air.

With yet another weather front threatening to cut off our route north, we departed about ten a.m. the next morning back to Angouleme for fuel, our initial intention being to continue north to the pretty little spa town of Bagnoles to overnight. We discovered that the weather in Poitiers, which was on our direct track, was already deteriorating so we routed farther east to Orleans, where we encountered some quite large showers, and then dropped into Chartres, which is just south of Paris. This is a good stop-over as there are a number of hotels just outside the airfield, including a Camponille, and the historic old town is within walking distance.

Heading off next morning to Abbeville, we had to skirt around to the west of some low cloud near Beau-

*Anyone who lives within
their means suffers from
a lack of imagination*

vais, but otherwise all was pretty uneventful. Leaving Abbeville we had to drop down to fifteen hundred at BNE to remain VFR, and at times across the channel we were below 1000ft, the weather getting worse the nearer we got to the English coast. We knew Southend was broken at 1500ft, so when it was evident that the cloud was down to the cliff tops at Dover we hung a right and routed around the North Foreland and along the north Kent coast, the weather improving all the while. As ever, Kent's paradise island (Sheppey of course) shone like a jewel in a turquoise sea as we passed by to the west, clawing our way into a 25kt headwind which made for a sporting approach and landing back at Farthing Corner.

It had certainly been an interesting weekend, but we had made our destination and got back on the day intended. That was a result compared to one trip I made to Castelnau with Frank a few years ago- we ended up stuck at Pons, near Cognac for four days. When we finally scudded into Deauville for Customs on the Thursday, the place was awash with Brits coming in from all points south and east with the same intentions. The whole of France had experienced unflyable weather since the weekend, trapping many pilots from returning home on the Monday as planned.

Castelnau is not a large event, and it

What's legal may not be safe. What's safe may not be legal

never will be, but it a great location, it's very friendly, and there's some great flying to be had getting there and back. I really do hope it is back on the calendar for some years to come.

Young Aviators Day

Following on from the very successful day last year when we arranged to fly a number of Air Cadets, we are holding a similar event this year on Saturday 18th October at Rochester Airport.

As usual we need pilots with aeroplanes to volunteer to do this very worthwhile event. Please contact John Dean (details on back page) with your name and number of passenger seats available. If you need any further information John is the person to contact.

We will also need a few non flying people to help with admin and volunteers for this would also be appreciated.

Last Months Meeting...

A number of members met at Pippins for what I am given to understand was a very convivial evening and thus ends our away days (evenings) for this year as we are back to business at the Golf Club, our usual venue so make note of the date.....

Middle age is when your age starts to show around your middle

Thursday 25th September 2008 - 8:00pm a talk by the redoubtable Brendan O'Brian

If you look on Brendan's web site you will see what a varied and interesting career in aviation he has had so this is an evening not to be missed which will kick off our new seasons programme with a wallop! For those souls unfamiliar with his C.V. here is a brief synopsis culled from his website which is www.brendanmarshallobrien.com or www.skyfever.com



Brendan spent his formative years in London and he was orphaned in his early teens and thus began his life of travel and adventure. As a child he had been fascinated by birds and perhaps flying was in his blood from birth. Not surprising then that the world of aviation beckoned initially with ballooning and gliding before being seduced by powered flight. Now, more than thirty five years later Brendan has over thirteen thousand

hours on nearly three hundred types of aircraft and holds a licence to fly every kind of flying machine. He holds in excess of two hundred aviation world records ratified by the FAI in Paris.

He is a CAA display authorisation holder/examiner, test pilot and medalist of the Royal Aero Club and has flown on every continent in the world including Antarctica. Brendan also trained as a civil and military parachutist and has taken part in several international para-military expeditions including the famous Trans Americas crossing of the infamous Darien Gap. He has been a keen mountaineer and is an all round naturalist with a particular interest in the fauna and flora of the Polar Region.

From the awe inspiring moment of his first loop in a glider Brendan developed a fascination for aerobatics which was to become one of the strongest motivational forces in his future flying career.

Though never attracted by airline flying Brendan flew as a single crew commercial pilot for several years in the early days of the UK oil boom in Scotland with such wonderful machines as multi-engine De Havilland Heron and flew that same type on oil support in the Persian Gulf. It was with another DH aircraft, the Twin Otter, that he had the privilege of experiencing the glories of Antarctica. He has ferried aircraft, many of them single-engine over all the great oceans of the world. However it was in airshow flying, and in particular "flying circus," that Brendan was to find his forte and make his mark. He formed and led the renowned Fournier RF4 Duo aerial ballet flown to the music of the Pink Floyd (whose members he had taught to fly), with his

colleague John Taylor. He brought the amazing "Truck top Landing" to UK and led the first team of wingwalkers in Europe and in the process flew the first inverted wingwalk on that continent with Helen Tempest.

Brendan has flown for more than a dozen successful sponsorships and is now working up yet another new and innovative act for the coming airshow season. He is also a highly experienced flying instructor/examiner on fixed wing and rotary aircraft, Microlights and gliders and delights in enthusing others to become part of the wonderful world of aviation.

30th October 2008 Meeting - John Thorpe Chief Executive of GASCo

The General Aviation Safety Council of which John is the Chief Executive based at Rochester Airport will be calling in to our meeting to talk on aviation safety, a subject which should be close to all of us so don't miss this opportunity to meet the man with a lot of facts and figures which will affect you.

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome a couple of new members so it is nice to see Alan Bourner back for his second shot together with John Woodcraft. Alan will be known to most members as he also runs a suc-

cessful business producing vinyl lettering and masks for all types of aircraft and gliders. He is also producing stainless steel placards for the cockpit and we hope to have the Luscombe so bedecked eventually so we are sure Alan would be pleased to discuss your requirements. John Woodcraft is a new face and it would be most interesting to hear what area you are involved with so get in touch. We all hope to see you at the Strut do's of which more are to be announced.

Photographs of Strut Aeroplanes

We are putting together a notice board that can be placed outside the golf club on Strut Night and at any other occasion so if you are prepared to let me have an electronic copy together with a few words on it's provenance that would be most helpful. We have one or two ideas bubbling on how to promote the LAA and Mid Kent Strut and this could be a useful tool in the armoury. In particular if you have built anything some photos of the process and the completed article will be most acceptable. We know of a number of recent builds of the fixed wing , rotary and ultralight variety so please let us see them.

Abbeville Flyout Sunday 29th September 2008

Plans were afoot to make this a two day event several months ago but the weather did not play ball but as I sit typing this out could it be that we are in for a slightly more settled period? Anyway playing safe we are suggesting an end of season run out to Abbeville

By the time you can make
ends meet, they move the
ends.

as detailed above so this will be a same way same day do so if anybody wishes to meet for lunch in the renowned Abbeville Restaurant on the airfield then this is the day. If you need any help or guidance on crossing La Manche there are plenty of experts on hand at the September meeting who can advise.

Roger Chaplin

Some of us have been receiving regular bulletins on Roger since his accident and we can report that he is out of intensive care and is now settling in to what is expected to be a slow and difficult path of rehabilitation.

An Alternative Way to Cross the Channel

If you are travelling between Dover and Calais later this month keep your eyes on the sky and you may see a man with four jet engines strapped to his back.

Swiss adventurer Yves Rossy will fire up his homemade jet wing, jump from a plane and attempt to cross the Channel in 12 minutes at about 120 mph.

Yves Rossy is scheduled to start from Calais and make his attempt on Wednesday, September 24, subject to weather conditions, with a daily contingency window through until Friday, September 26. Rossy, who refers to himself as Fusion Man because he says he represents a true fusion between pilot and plane, will jump from a small aircraft almost two miles above the ground wearing a specialized wing made from carbon fibre and which includes four kerosene-burning jet turbines.

"I have enormous admiration for the pioneers of aviation," said Rossy. "There

is great beauty in the exploits of Bleriot and Lindbergh, for example. They risked their lives to discover the path not taken, to go where no one has gone before."

During an earlier test flight, Yves Rossy, jumped out of a plane about the Swiss town of Bex and flew for around 10 minutes over a distance of 35kms, so he is confident of crossing the Channel. Wearing a special suit, helmet and parachute, Yves Rossy, has taken extensive precautions to protect himself from the four jet turbines resting just a few inches away from him, but the wing has no steering devices and Yves uses his head and back to control its movement.

The National Geographic Channel has set up a [special website](#) for people to view Yves Rossy's cross-Channel attempt live, and [France 3](#) are also scheduled to cover the flight.

Reproduced with thanks to This French Life www.thisfrenchlife which by the way for all you Francophiles is well worth a look as it is freely translated in English and as the title infers is dedicated to all things French.

On The Subject of France

Once again the anniversary of the start of World War Two comes this month and has coincided with the launch of a major book earlier this year on the Battle of France which as you will know commenced with the declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France following the violation of the Pact we had with Poland at that time.

The book in question is called 'The Battle of France Then and Now' by

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Peter D Cornwell published by After The Battle. This book for anybody that has read others produced by this organization including the magazines follows the format of comparing the sites of conflicts then and now hence the title. The interest for me and maybe for others is this deals with the aerial conflict by all the participating nations including the Dutch and Belgians on the Allied side and Italy battling for the opposition. Of course a lot were little more than fields with tented accommodation and have long returned to their original purpose but nonetheless is still quite fascinating.

For the record between May 10th and June 24th 1940 the RAF lost 1004 aircrew and 934 aircraft of all types and in the Battle of Britain which is celebrated on the 15th September the losses were 544 aircrew and 1023 aircraft .

History lesson over see you at the meeting on the 25th September.

Dates for your Diary

Sept 25	Brendan O'Brien
Sept 27	Fly- out to Abbeville
Oct 30	John Thorpe Talks