



February 2009

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

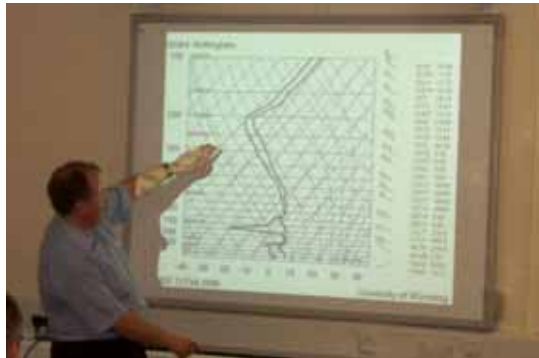
Mike Negus -
Editor



Weather School Notes

By Nigel Read

Some of you may be aware of Simon Keeling's www.weatherweb.tv and the aviation orientated forecasts he provides free of charge. Simon also offers one day courses on weather (via his Weather School company), where he will present a fore-caster's view of weather prediction. I recently attended his Part One course having arranged for my employers to pay for it through an employee training scheme. Simon is an absolute weather nut and ex GMTV presenter who runs his own business providing specific aviation forecasts and runs his Weather School based in the



February Meeting

26th February 2009 - Cobtree Manor Golf Club - 8pm

BUILDERS EVENING

www.midkentstrut.freeserve.co.uk

village of Wombourne, a few miles east of Halfpenny Green and not too far from junction 10 of the M6.

A dozen candidates assembled at the village community centre for a 9:30 start. I left home at 05:30 to be the first arrival (unusual for me) at 09:05. Simon was setting up with his dad for what turned out to be a very interesting day, Simon's enthusiasm rubbing off on us. One of the twelve being Ian Seager to do a bit for Flyer. The next course is on the 14th March.

Starting from the basics of atmospheric circulation, layers and air masses we went thoroughly through the information relevant to pilots, fronts, thunderstorms, clouds types, precipitation, icing and weather systems. Have you heard of the Cheshire Gap? This is where one of the main air masses affecting the UK, the north westerly Polar Maritime finds it's way through to us in the south east, unlike other westerlies that dump their moisture on high ground to the west.

Finishing up with Skew-T diagrams, (picture) which certainly benefit from a lecturer led description. These provide a vast amount of data from temperature, dew point and winds that can be used for predicting cloud, precipitation, icing etc if you know how to interpret them. These are the charts that result from the radiosonde weather balloons.

Google Skew-T and you can find a site explaining them but <http://www.weatherjack.co.uk> is particularly comprehensive and has a number of links, some gliding orientated. Others suggested:- The University of Wyoming provide a source of actual

charts so you can start doing your own forecasts. <http://weather.uwyo.edu/upperair/sounding.html> select Europe, Skew-T and click one of the relevant stations on the map. Did you know the models used for forecasting use different resolutions? A high resolution model from the USAF is available at www.westwind.ch click MMR then Afwa then the type and time. Another recommended high res. forecast is the BBC's at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/ukweather> having come via a forecaster in Exeter and another at the BBC. The met office's Airmet update service is underutilised and presents an experienced forecasters view of weather changes, perhaps more informative than TAF's and METAR's and the data is interpreted for you. Others sites suggested www.sat24.com and from my adjacent course member www.xcweather.co.uk. The fax pressure charts can be found from the link on John Luck's PAFRA site along with links to web cams. Alternately www.meteonet.nl/aktueel/brackall.htm.

The dotted lines on some of these charts refer to thickness of standard layers in decametres e.g. 1000 to 500mb - 528 (5280m) through the British Isles indicates >50% chance of snow, 546 is normal and 564 in summer indicates a heat wave or Thunder storms. Minus signs along the fronts - the front is strengthening, plus signs it's weakening, symbols not filled in - front is above the surface.

If you want to sample this course for yourself information and online booking is at

www.weatherschool.co.uk and

Simon assures me if you mention this you will get very special day.

Last Meeting - AGM

The committee formed up to face the members and reports were given by our Co-ordinator who completed his first year of office and was happy to offer his services again, of which more later. Our membership secretary for last year Graham Hammond was absent and sent his apologies but Gary reported that membership was holding up well and it was gratifying to see a number of our newer members at the meeting and hopefully we will see more of you.

John Dean, Hon Treasurer reported on Strut Funds which were presented at the AGM for those that attended to comment on however all looks OK but if anybody wishes for a copy please contact the Treasurer or any committee member and we can issue you with one.

Mark Balding gave a report on our attempts to arrange more interesting trips, given these security conscious days not always easy but watch this space to use the well worn cliché for details as they arise.

Mike Negus, Newsletter Editor, reported on the year which had seen some interesting articles from a number of members for which we are always grateful as without your input you will get to hear more on the restoration of the Luscombe! Thanks to everyone who took the time to put finger to keyboard including the Editor of our sister publication Light Aviation, Brian Hope, who has come to my aid when copy was a little short and chiefly to John Dean who also takes care of the typesetting and printing . We currently print about seventy copies but if anyone wishes to convert to an electronic version which saves both printing

and postage do let us know. On the subject of printing since the decision to buy a copier and do this 'in house' it has been economic so to do but one which is under frequent appraisal.

After all the reports the entire committee put themselves up for re-election which was proposed and seconded from the floor.

The meeting closed and broke up for drinks and a chat and so we look forward to another season which has been previewed elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Next Meeting - Builders Night

Always popular, this after all is mainly what the L.A.A. is chiefly about and as a Strut we have a huge depth of talent in all disciplines from traditional wood and fabric, metal and composite construction ranging from hang gliders to helicopters and we hope to have a talk from some of our members skilled in these black arts.

From feedback and talks with various people it is apparent that there is still a healthy desire to build and

**If you argue with an idiot
he will drag you down to
his level and beat you with
experience.**

not only from kits but also back to basics so we expect a good turn out for what is always a popular evening.

It is a good opportunity to meet a good spread of our members who may have built in the format you are considering or indeed currently under way with to swap notes with or seek advice and encouragement from. From a non-builder it never ceases to amaze me on the results of our members labours and we have some fine examples on the Strut Fleet but we would like to see a lot more.....will it be you?

2009 Anniversaries

We have a number of significant celebrations coming up marking the dawn of aviation both of which concern our neck of the woods

On the Isle of Sheppey the first manned flight by a British subject in heavier than air powered machine took place in 1909 from Shellbeach Aerodrome at Leysdown.

This took place when J.T.C. Moore - Brabazon flew his Voisin 'Pusher' French built aircraft from there on the 2nd May 1909 and was thus recognised as the first controlled power flight by a

British pilot in Britain. For this achievement he was awarded on the 8th March 1910 the Royal Aero Club Flying Certificate No1. Lord Brabazon had formed the Royal Aero Club at Leysdown in 1901 to popularize ballon flying which led to the Short Brothers establishing the Shellbeach Aerodrome in 1909 to accommodate half a dozen Wright Flyers later moving to Eastchurch in 1910 where a new aerodrome had been built.

When checking on www.swale.gov it would appear that two events are being planned, one around Muswell Manor at Leysdown, currently home to the holiday caravan complex, on the 1st and 2nd May featuring a flypast by the Royal Navy and possibly the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Greene King, the brewers are also involved and hope to display some replica aeroplanes.

The other event is scheduled for the 25th and 26th July by Eastchurch Parish Council featuring similar service participation with re enactments and model flying. I know we are in contact with some of the organisers to see what if any help we can be. The other and perhaps more well known celebration and commemoration will be the crossing of the Channel by Louis Bleriot in 1909. Louis Bleriot, the 37-year old French inventor,

I refuse to have a battle of
wits with an unarmed
opponent

Lady, you want me to answer you if this old airplane is safe to fly? Just how in the world do you think it got to be this

aircraft designer, and self-trained pilot, flew across the treacherous English Channel early on July 25, 1909, in an aircraft he designed himself--the Bleriot XI. The flight from Les Barraques, France, to Dover, England, undertaken in bad weather, earned him the £1000 prize that the London Daily Mail had offered to the first aviator to cross the Channel in either direction. His accomplishment delighted the public and shocked many in the British military and political establishment.



For the July 9 attempt, the French government authorized Bleriot to have a destroyer, the Escopette, support his attempt to span the English Channel. The day before the flight, Bleriot ordered the destroyer to sea. The next morning, when Bleriot drove to the field in Les Barraques, France, where his Model XI was garaged, he noted the light, southwest breeze that would favor his attempt. By 4:30 a.m., just before takeoff, daylight arrived and the wind began to blow. He reported, in a cable to the Washington Post, that he pushed his engine to 1,200 revolutions per minute, nearly top

speed, to clear telegraph wires at the crest of the cliff near the field. Then he lowered the engine speed to give the XI an airspeed of approximately 40 miles per hour (64 kilometers per hour) and an altitude of about 250 feet (76 meters). At that speed, he rapidly overtook the destroyer and became lost in the clouds, which blocked his view of all landmarks. He could not even see the ship. The sea below had grown rough. There was wind and rain. His craft did not have a compass! Afterward, he reported those moments, "I am alone. I can see nothing at all. For ten minutes, I am lost."

He continued flying straight ahead as best he could. Roughly 20 minutes after leaving France, he spied the green hills of Dover and the famous castle. The wind had blown him off course. He was near Margaret's Bay, west of the field where he had planned to land. He would have to push his engine to a greater distance. However, the rain that might otherwise be a problem was cooling his engine. As he approached the Cliffs of Dover, gusts were stronger and airspeed slower as his "beautiful" plane fought the wind. But the Anzani was powerful enough to propel the XI over the Cliff. He spotted his friend waving a French flag to confirm he had the right field. Now Bleriot had to maneuver the craft to not hit any of the buildings near the field. Bleriot reported that the wind caught his plane and whirled him around two or three times. With his altitude at about 65 feet (20 meters) and being driven by the wind, he immediately cut the en-

gine and dropped to the ground! Bleriot commented, "At the risk of smashing everything, I cut the ignition at 20 meters. Now it was up to chance. The landing gear took it rather badly, the propeller was damaged, but my word, so what? I HAD CROSSED THE CHANNEL!" British Customs had no provision for a landing other than by ship, so Bleriot was logged in as a ship's Master and the XI as a yacht.



Bleriot

The significance of Louis Bleriot's successful 37-minute flight over the English Channel could be measured not only by his "immense acclaim" upon landing in Dover but also by the impact on political figures, military commanders, and planners. They came to the startling realization that Britain was susceptible to enemy attack by other than water. The nation had a strong navy and could face attack from the sea—not from the air. Politicians saw that Britain was not pre-

pared for this new transportation system and its new technology. David Lloyd George, chancellor of the Exchequer, said, "Flying machines are no longer toys and dreams, they are established fact. The possibilities of this new system of locomotion are infinite. I feel, as a Britisher, rather ashamed that we are so completely out of it." Dover District Council has revealed the first details of its plans for a weekend of celebrations next July to commemorate the centenary of Louis Blériot's epic flight across the English Channel. Throughout the weekend of 25-26 July 2009, Dover will host a prestigious international festival in celebration of Blériot's achievement in becoming the first person to fly across the Channel, and to commemorate the pioneering age of aviation. Looks like it will be something to look out for, particularly if you are going to or coming back from France that weekend!

The Season - An Observation

If I had a double-barrelled name, had gone to a public school and was really rich, 'the season' would mean, the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, the Henley regatta, Ascot and champagne & strawberries. Being somewhat pecuniary disadvantaged, a lowly pilot and a member of the LAA my season is somewhat different.

At one time it used to start with the Jodel fly-in at Bernay on the second May bank holiday, followed closely by Alderney, the PFA rally and lunch at Abbeville in November to finish off. These days' things are a bit up in the air; we have the LAA rally back, Schaf-

fen and Tannheim to name but a few.

We certainly don't have to look too far if we need an excuse not to fly, as there are many real and perceived obstacles in



Bernay

our way, particularly if you intend to go foreign. Flight plans have to go somewhere new, can't be filed by phone and will probably only be accepted by e-mail in time. We are all going to have to get PLB's. French customs are requiring more notice; many French airfields only accept Total cards (can't get one without a French bank account). Mandatory transponder zones are increasing and mode 'S' is still in the background.

Is it really that bad or are we just being grumpy at changes that we don't like. I can remember the joy and disbelief when we stopped having to go to Lydd to clear customs (at £20.00 a go) and bit by bit actually being able to fly abroad direct from a remote farm strip. Had the UK signed the Schengen agreement (we live in hope), I don't think we could have had it any better. The two main killer blows are the price of fuel and the state of the £ against the Euro. Either that will make us fly less or we will find ways to minimise the costs as best we

can.

Some of us are cleared for Mogas, which is becoming more available; maybe instead of flying solo we will have to take a contributing passenger; it is possible that the ground won't feel so hard and a tent will seem more appealing compared to a hotel room. Flying in a group will reduce cab fares and the cheaper set menu may taste as good as the 'menu gastronomique'.



The Museum of Peenemünde

For me this year's season will start as usual on the second May bank holiday, but this year with a trip to Peenemunde, not exactly a name that rolls of the tongue or a fashionable buzzword like 'zeitgeist', but a place of great significance during the Second World War.

I already know of six Kent based aircraft intending to make the trip, an RV9, a Jabiru, a Luscombe, a Colt and

**I fly because it releases
my mind from the tyranny
of petty things.**

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two Jodels not all of which are transponder equipped. If you think of starting the season in good company, with some of the 'old salts' of the air you are welcome to come along, all flight planning, route and itinerary will be gone through beforehand, to find out a bit more, just ask a committee member and maybe we can launch an invasion of our own.

Interestingly one of our group is the nearest thing to a historian we could afford, so if it's factual detail you are after, it's all part of the service.

When asked by someone how much money flying takes: I answer "Why, all of it!"

Dates for your Diary

Feb 26	Builders Night
Mar 26	Parascending
April 30	Talk