



June 2009

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



PEENEMUNDE

by Gary Smith

France has been our traditional touring ground but last year a small group managed to navigate to Berlin (and back). Having extended the boundaries of ourselves and our homebuilt wonders, we were soon looking for another long distance adventure with which to get absorbed.

I remember my father telling me war stories about the German V1 and V2 flying bombs and that their development had been at a secret place "so far away, British bombers could not destroy it". The "Discovery Channel" ran a program about the site in 2006 which re-kindled my interest and the desire to



Power Station at Peenemunde

June Meeting — 25th June 2009
BBQ at RIPPLE

Airstrip Map at www.midkentstrut.freemove.co.uk/ripple.gif

Road Map at www.multimap.com/s/QIjOzQIo

www.midkentstrut.freemove.co.uk

visit Peenemunde was an adventure in the making.

Studying the maps of Eastern Germany on the Berlin trip I stumbled across the weapons site and surprisingly it was not much further east. Research showed they still had an active runway open to general aviation and part of the site had been preserved as a museum.

We enlisted the help of our German friend Hubert (who had organised the Berlin “fly in” 2008) to fix a visit to the weapons base for us over the weekend of 22-24 May and this he did with all vigour.

The word went out from the Mid Kent strut and interest was high, before long we had become a full blown squadron. The first wave of aircraft comprising of two Jodels, RV9, Piper Colt and Jabiru J430 departed for Midden Zeeland (Holland) on Thursday morning. No sooner had we landed, the Laddingford contingent arrived (two europas and a eurostar) closely followed by Bob Hallum in his trustworthey Cessna from Lydd. Overnight arrangements were diverse but our group of four aircraft set out for Damme (Germany) to share a log cabin for the night. Whilst over Holland I asked Dutch Mil if I could fly at 2500ft and they said “fine”. Where the fairy tale about keeping below 1200ft in Holland has come from I do not know!

Damme were preparing for the Vans “fly in” that weekend and showed us the same excellent hospitality as last year, luckily there was one RV in the group. Friday mornings weather was fine and a 25Kt tail wind all the way to Kyritz (on the outskirts of Berlin) really helped.

The majority of the strut aeroplanes arrived during the afternoon and without the need to repair Brians engine (last years excitement) the afternoon

was spent in a more relaxing way. I don’t know if erecting my tent enraged the weather gods but by 5pm it was raining and threatening to blow everything flat. Things improved for the boat trip and the skipper set us down at a pretty hotel on the far shore of the lake for a splendid evening meal.

Saturday morning dawned grey, low cloud and windy, not the sort of day you would go flying unless you had a mission. With breakfast done and Huberts briefing complete it was off to the aeroplanes, bravest pilots first. It was possible to maintain 1200ft but there were some very dark clouds and the weather did not look any better at the coast. Arriving first (out of the Kyritz group) I took some pictures of the island whilst downwind but the sky was so black they hardly came out. Its hard to imaging the sort of military hardware that used this runway back in the late 1930’s or even during the cold war but the dark forboding cloud and blustery cross wind really gave the place an eerie feel.



Taxying to the pumps I saw Mike Roper, Steve Brown and Pat/ Lynda Elliot in their composite “Eazy” aircraft from Biggin Hill and Dunsfold. They had flown in from Munster the day before and had spent the night on the penin-

sula. It started to rain as the others arrived and before long we had two more RV's from Devon, the Europa group from Laddingford, Ivor from Rochester and the remains of the flyers from Farthing corner. In total 16 aeroplanes from the Mid Kent Strut gathered upon the apron at Peenemunde to absorb the ambience of the German WW2 weapons test facility.

In its hey day 5000 scientists worked on the peninsular, a location chosen for its discreetness, distance from allied assault and ease of defence (surrounded by water on 3 sides). A 5 minute bus ride took us to the power station building which is the centre point of the museum and where the majority of the story is explained. The courtyard is home to many "modern" exhibits such as jet aircraft and helicopters but it must be remembered that during the cold war much of the original site would have been dismantled to make way for modern nuclear bunkers etc. I am sure there is much more to see than we were allowed but the walk back to the airport between the wire fencing reminded us that this place still had sinister secrets :- apparently 20,000 slave labourers worked on the site assembling hardware but on liberation day the Russians only found 400, the rest were nowhere to be found! Time to go eh!

The two RVs from Damme assured us that the weather had been better there so our group decided to head west. A special cross wind departure was executed where you line up on one side or the runway, point yourself at 45 degrees across the expanse of tarmac (into the 25Kt gusting drizzle) and are airborne in about 80 yards.

True to their word the weather improved 100% and gave us a nice flight into Wisma, a small coastal airfield on the Baltic. The strip was very quiet and

"Herman" was genuinely surprised to see 5 British aeroplanes turn up and double the number of aeroplanes on his field.

I was done with camping so we did the hotel thing in Wisma despite the pound being weak against the euro. Sunday we headed out across the top of Germany towards the Fresian Islands, the sun was shining but the haze reduced visibility to 5nm. By the time the islands came into view the haze had all but cleared. It was truly memorable flying down the strip of water with the German main land on my left and the Fresian islands passing by on my right.

A quick fuel and flight plan stop at Norden-Norddeich saw us leave Germany and route back into Dutch airspace. Once past Gronnigen I flew along the edge of the Zider zee (the big wet bit in the middle of Holland) at 500ft (or perhaps a little less), following the waters edge at 140Kt like a sports car.....brilliant. I remembered to turn my transponder off when under the Amsterdam class A airspace and within 15 minutes was on the ground at Midden Zeeland . The flight back down the coast to "Blighty" was uneventful and we all managed to get to our various bases un-hindered.

Mike Roper and Steve Brown left Peenemunder on Saturday afternoon and flew DIRECTLY back to Biggin hill. Mike claims that he had enough fuel to turn around and fly back to Hannover if he has to.

Dave and Marion Watts decided that Peenemunder was merely an "local flight" and continued south in their home built Europa to visit Spain, Morocco, Gibraltar. Perhaps more of that story on another day.

On returning home I calculated that

the RV9 had been doing 26mpg at an average of 148mph (not bad for something built in my garden shed). Ideas for next years adventure on a post card please

Notes from the last Committee Meeting for Future Events

Wednesday 24th June - 10 pin bowling at AMF Maidstone, £10 as many games as you like, start bowling at 8pm. Strut have reserved 30 places and paid the deposit and still have places. Asking for £5 deposit (per person), please contact member of committee to reserve a place.

Thursday 25th June - Strut BBQ at Ripple farm (near Deal). Members can either fly in or drive but please contact a member of the committee to get idea of catering numbers / directions / airfield information (it's not that long). John Dean will provide a map or a link to a map for directions. Action starts 6pm onwards (to allow time for air arrivals) Contact Steve Solley for further info on 01304 374337

Thursday 30th July, Strut BBQ at Farthing Corner airfield, Further details will be published in the July Newsletter but kick off will be around 6.30 for 7.00 pm.

Thursday 27th August - Treasure hunt by car, 7pm start at the M2 Medway MOTO Services "London bound". To last one hour and end at a pub somewhere. Please contact a committee member if interested to give idea of scale of organization required.

Thursday 24th September - Back at Cobtree manor golf club, speaker to be

confirmed for this evening but watch this space....

Saturday 26th September. End of season flyout to Abbeville and last chance to get to grips with AVPEX flight planning. Members of committee will be available to assist those who are still having trouble doing their flight plans.

Thursday 29th October Talk by John Thorpe (GASCO) about "Bristol Flight Test 1960 to 1970" which resulted in production of Concorde.

Thursday 26th November Talk by Stephen Hayman "aviation large and small".

Up to Date e-mail Addresses

We would very much like to have your latest e-mail address because we do from time to time have impromptu fly outs and would like to invite other flying members along, also there are often spare seats to flying events which remain vacant as it is difficult to contact people at short notice. Could you please advise if there is any change in your electronic address or advise if you think we don't have it. Whilst on the subject do you wish to take the newsletter electronically if not already although we fully understand if (like me) you prefer a hard copy.

Invitation to a Private Fly-In at Pent Farm, Postling (Nr Folkestone) Saturday 18th July 11.30 am onwards

Chris Reynolds has issued this invitation on behalf of Vintage Aero Ltd 2009 Gathering of Friends at Pent Farm in aid of Postling and Stanford Churches and is reproduced below.

Weather permitting we look forward to seeing you on our 4th open day for clients and friends. Please book a slot with Howard Wade as soon as possible on 07782 331611 so that we know possible numbers.

On the day please phone Chris Reynolds on 07850 628981 or 01303 862436 to book in. Runway is 07/25 with about 880 metres available. NO circuits to the South East and NO over flying of the villages of Stanford or Postling. Bacon rolls and beverages for sale between 12.30 and 4.00 pm. Between 6 pm and 10 pm we are again holding a hanger party with Jazz Band, spit roast, raffle and bar. Tickets £8 per head. You are very welcome to camp on the airfield or alternatively we could try to arrange B&B with enough warning.

All profits to Stanford and Postling Churches. Please send any bookings with your cheques payable to 'Postling Hall Ride' to:

Chris Reynolds, The Pent, Postling, Hythe, Kent, CT21 4EY

Having been a couple of years ago it is a lovely location and a friendly atmosphere.

Talking of Disc Jockeys

There was a time long, long ago when rock n' roll was all the rage and for the youth of this country eager to listen to the cutting edge of music other than that gleaned from the BBC Light Programme along with AFN or Radio Luxembourg on our crystal sets or transistor radios a new and exciting alternative burst on the scene. Pirate Radio!! Recently in April some of the

original Jocks and crews have been attending reunions both in Harwich and the Isle of Man from where one of the best of the pirates operated offshore and in amongst it all was our own LAA Inspector Alan Bennet-Turner. I gratefully acknowledge the following from the Pirate Radio Hall of Fame website which includes this entry for our own ABT

Alan Turner was born in Blackheath, London, on 29th March.



He got his first taste of show business at the age of 19, while living in Singapore, but he had also spent time as a salesman, engineer and policeman before becoming a disc-jockey. Known as "Neddy" after the character in The Goon Show, he joined Radio Caroline in 1964 initially as a crew-member. In the early days of the station the disc-jockeys had technical operators to play the records for them and Alan took on that role before moving to the other side of the microphone. Along with Tom Lodge and Jerry Leighton Alan took part

in the ultimate long distance radio broadcast when the original Caroline ship, the MV. Fredericia, sailed round the coast of England and Wales to take up her new position off the Isle of Man. We asked if anyone knew Alan's present whereabouts and, in April 2004, as Caroline celebrated its fortieth birthday, we heard from the man himself: "In the immediate years after leaving Caroline my wife Elaine and I ran a very successful retail/wholesale business but after a good few years of doing that I eventually drifted back into the world of aviation.



*ABT without his familiar
white overalls*

For many years now we have operated an aviation maintenance facility. This involves a lot of travelling throughout the UK and northern Europe. One of our avia-

tion projects is the operation and maintenance of the aircraft used by Invicta Radio (the Kent based station owned by the GCAP group, not the old pirate station) for their 'Flying Eye' road traffic reports.

So although I no longer broadcast I am still actively connected with commercial broadcasting. I have quite a lot of photos of that time and I also have the original LP which contains the station theme music 'Round Midnight by Jimmy McGriff - the very first record played on Caroline." Since writing, Alan has sent us some fantastic photos from his collection. There is a recent photo of Alan, taken at the Radio Academy's Celebration of Offshore Radio, here. (Thanks to Alan for getting in touch and to Steve Kirby for providing the biographical details.)

Update on Roger Chaplin

Roger continues on his path of rehabilitation and his partner Kim has sent this latest update

Dear All,

So sorry that I have not written for such a long time, it has been extremely busy and at last we seem to be in a (sort of) routine. Rog and I came home on 27th January and as you probably remember one of our many challenges was 'the pint glass'. I am delighted to report that this has been fully achieved as has Roger's taste for beer! (oh and wine, gin, brandy....)

We have an established team of carers who visit twice a day alongside district nurses and rapid response nurses. This continues to be a bit of an intrusion at times but luckily is now reducing (I

have to confess I have had to bite my tongue and take a walk around the garden, but we do need them)

The Rog I brought home sat in his wheelchair, nodded off at least twice during the day, woke me at least twice during the night, required feeding and help with drinking as well as all aspects of personal care. Our door frames are in dire need of some TLC as the wheelchair only just fitted through the door. I felt incredibly anxious about leaving Rog in a room by himself for even 1 minute in case something dreadful happened. Car transfers I also dreaded as I had to make sure the car was almost touching the garage door in order to extend the ramps (which would invariably scrape the skin off my knuckles) push Rog out of the house, dismantle the ramps, load him into the car (remember that snowy period) as quickly as possible, so he didn't get cold; drive to Coxheath or Chelmsford and unload (with various rucksacks full of medication, snacks, drinks etc). I hated going out of the house because it seemed to be a complete ordeal.

But we still managed to laugh.

That has kept us going through some tricky times. We have maintained, some would say even developed further a black humour that allows us to laugh at the situation.

So, what have we achieved.....

In the succeeding months to date...

Rog is beginning to walk. Many thought he wouldn't (a) because they wanted to remove his lower legs and (b) because of the severe burn damage. I have always expected him to (possibly because of the aisle)

The wheelchair is sitting in a corner and

occasionally is put in the boot of the car for a day out! The ramps have remained propped up against the wall outside and I don't need to park the car as close to the garage, in fact we can choose which car to go out in.

Uninterrupted sleep for me (unless I need to get up!) We sit at the table and eat together instead of a carer having to help Rog to feed.

Despite the obvious lack of stairs in our house, Rog walks up the two flights of stairs in the hospital to Outpatients. (Considerably higher than those simulator steps!). His general personal mobility and stamina is much improved and despite needing the use of a walking stick can now make quite reasonable distances as well as using a treadmill and stepper in the gym. The four visits per week to physio are certainly showing an effect!

The next step should be eye surgery at Moorfields in London to fully restore eyesight in his right eye. Sadly, that in the left is very much a lost cause. To follow, we expect brief visits to Chelmsford to 'tidy up' his slightly ragged appearance. (I've requested George Clooney looks but they won't oblige). On a lighter note, on seeing Rog with his eyepatch, a little boy on visiting outpatients was heard to exclaim "Look Daddy it's a pirate". Rog remains most determined to get back into the aviation business. Having seen what he has achieved so far, and knowing his love of aviation and his strong determination, I have no doubt that he will.

With lots of love

Kim x

I am sure you will join us in wishing Rog and Kim all the best.

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www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

From a Zimbabwean newspaper

While transporting mental patients from Harare to Bulawayo, the bus driver stopped at a roadside shebeen for a few beers. When he got back to his vehicle, he found it empty, with the 20 patients nowhere to be seen. Realizing the trouble he was in if the truth were uncovered, he halted his bus at the next bus stop and offered lifts to those in the queue.

Letting 20 people board, he then shut the doors and drove straight to the Bulawayo mental hospital, where he hastily handed over his charges, warning the nurses that they were particularly excitable.

Staff removed the furious passengers; it was three days later that suspicions were roused by the consistency of stories from the 20. As for the real patients: nothing more has been heard of them and they have apparently blended comfortably back into Zimbabwean society.

Dates for your Diary

Jun 24	Ten Pin Bowling
June 25	Tea at Ripple
Jul 30	BBQ
Aug 27	Treasure Hunt
Jul 25	Rochester Hangar Dance