



July 2009

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Thorney Island

by Gary Smith

Thorney Island is located east of Portsmouth and is shown as closed on the aviation map. Whilst I have flown over it numerous times I have never landed thereuntil now. The airfield was constructed for the war effort but after hostilities ceased it's ownership passed to the army who have remained there ever since. Three operational units are still based on the island so it's not a good idea to "turn up" without prior permission.



One day, out of the blue, an invite to Thorney island appeared on my e-mail. The station Commander had de-

Thorney Island Airfield

July Meeting
30th July 2009

BBQ at Farthing Corner

cided to open the base for one weekend on the condition that participants made a donation to the “Help for Heroes” charity, an organisation who provide aide for soldiers hurt in recent conflicts.

Having made my donation and reserved my place it was time to study the approach brief. The headland is surrounded on three sided by water, easy to defend but probably not a top scoring feature for an airfield. The three original runways were aligned in a triangle and with the exception of the northerly runway, all of the others either begin or end at the sea. It is easy to imagine bomber crews returning from a heavy nights work ending up in the water at one end or the other. On Saturday 6th June the organisers nominated runway 09 with a right hand circuit. This meant that down wind, base and finals (down to about 50ft) were over the sea, with more wet stuff at the far end. Luckily I am not concerned about flying over water and following a quite acceptable landing we were the third arrival of the day.

The local radio controlled model club had laid on a splendid static display and having watched some more arrivals Kate and I decided to take a walk along the shore line. A group of rambles walked briskly past followed by a soldier in uniform. Whilst he was polite it became apparent that he was shepherding these rambles along making sure nobody strayed from the path.

HAMMER: Originally employed as a weapon of war, the hammer nowadays is used as a kind of divining rod to locate the most expensive parts adjacent the object we are trying to hit.

Apparently all visitors have to sign in and out of the peninsular and if somebody goes astray the army sends out a search party. Serious stuff eh!

A well known Luscombe from the Mid Kent Strut joined the circuit, then left, then came back again, then landed. An untrained observer may have muttered the phrase “lost” but the pilot and his assistant assured me they were merely making a “bomber circuit” in fitting with the ambience. Whatever !!

In all 28 aeroplanes arrived (including two “Mid Kent Strut” Europas the Luscombe and the RV9) with the possibility of several more in the late afternoon. We declined the offer to camp or swim from the islands exclusive beach and bid a hasty retreat back to the strip. Another enjoyable day and another airfield to add to the log book.

For more information about “Help for Heroes” go to www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Strut 10 Pin Bowling Evening.

Following the large turn out of Strut and PAFRA members to John Dean's recent “AFPEX Flight Planning” talk it was decided that perhaps we should challenge PAFRA to friendly 10 pin bowling evening. Nobody confessed to having played before so it was a group of 20 evenly matched contestants who descended upon the AMF Bowling centre in Maidstone on the last Wednesday of June. The 8 PAFRA and 12 strut players took residence in the end four lanes and the battle commenced. Well the first battle was programming the score machine, a “Skymap 3 GPS” is a walk in the park by comparison and things

would have been easier if people had have used their real names, not abbreviations.

AMF had done us a special deal which gave us unlimited bowling but it was decided to add peoples individual scores for the first two games, stamina for such energetic past times is not my forte. Well thank goodness Simon Pratt was bowling for the Mid Kent Strut. An unconfessed professional with his own shoes and bowl he managed to score in one game what I had achieved in two. Mike Negus put in an admirable performance (well he could almost reach out and push the pins over) and Rob Taylor kept PAFRA in the running.

Initially it looked as if the Mid Kent Strut had won by a country mile but having corrected the scores for the imbalance of players, PAFRA averaged 186 whilst the Mid Kent Strut averaged 187.5, that's a bit too close for comfort. Perhaps we should get a bit more practice in before next time to achieve a more convincing win.

Please remember that in August the Mid Kent Strut are organising another "social event", the treasure hunt by car, be sure to come along and support us. Rumour has it that anybody taking part in a Messerschmitt 3 wheeler bubble car would win outright for originality.

June Meeting Strut BBQ Fly-In at Ripple.

For those members new to the strut it is probably worth explaining why we move our meetings away from Cob tree manor golf club during the summer months. Basically as the evenings draw out the golfers stay later and later and any presentation we organize get lost in the din

of the "apres-golf". Its not unreasonable for the golfers to use their clubhouse so we make our entertainment elsewhere.



One of our regular summer events is the "Fly out BBQ" at Ripple near Deal and this year was no exception. For the fourth year running Steve Solley gave the open invite to the Mid Kent Strut to either fly or drive to his airstrip and enjoy a rather splendid BBQ. The strip at Ripple is reasonable for short field performing aircraft (400m long) but its approaches are not for the novice or faint hearted. Uttam decided that the strip was best tackled by helicopter and arrived with Janet in a Robinson R22 from Manston. Richard Warriner was already on the ground with his Rans S6 and claimed it was particularly easy, well it would be with 5 GPS' mounted in the front.

Brian jumped a ride in the RV9 from Farthing corner in the hope that the extra speed would get him to the front of the food queue (always thinking about his tummy is our

The main reason that Santa is so jolly is because he knows where all the bad girls live.

Brian).

Mark Balding and Frank Lissimore arrived from Biggin Hill in their 1050 Jodels, and to complete the flying arrivals, Glen and Liz brought their sports cruiser from a strip near Lenham.



Steve had been careful to invite his neighbours and it was nice to show them our aeroplanes and explain how they worked. A “public relations masterplan” Steve later revealed. Now full of food and Ice Crème (because Ice Crème is what Mr Solley does best) it was time leave in a responsible orderly fashion. Okay just one beat-up then. Until next year.

Thanks Steve for your generous hospitality and next month it is the time for Farthing Corner to play host

Summer BBQ - 30TH July (Coming Thursday)

No sooner does the flying season begin we have a mad rush of events and it seems to end. Most of these do not include ‘her in doors’ or the ‘saucepans lids’, the annual Strut BBQ is one exception. Traditionally held at Rochester airport, but after the success of the firework party last year at Farthing

Corner airfield we have decided to hold the event there.

The whole family are welcome anytime after 6 pm and can stay as long as they like. Please see the attached flyer for details of the venue for drivers and we hope to have games for the more energetic as well as a raffle. We are looking for donations of unwanted gifts as prizes and maybe a free flight in something unusual, a day out somewhere interesting, any ideas let us know. Food and a drink will be £6.00 and it’s free for the under 16’s.

Some very sad news.

On 5th July, in France, Julian Harris was flying with his friend Tom Ellison in Tom’s aircraft. Unfortunately the aircraft crashed and they were both killed. Many of you will have known Julian. He had been based at Rochester before moving to France about three years ago and flew a Jabiru. It always had silver spats. He had been working in Dubai for the last year and only returned to France on the 2nd July. His brother Dan had been based at Romney Street before moving to the West country.

Our thoughts are with his family at this difficult time.

August 27th Car Treasure Hunt.

We know it’s not flying but if you can decipher the NOTAMS and plot a route across the South of England then the treasure hunt that Steve Solley will be

Why do they lock petrol station toilets? Are they afraid someone will clean them?

setting us on Thursday 27th August should be a “walk in the park”. The start location will be the “meeting point” on the London bound side of the Farthing Corner services, or MOTO as they are called these days, at 7pm (so hopefully most will finish in daylight). We are assured it is going to be fun, should last an hour and will end at a pub (that works for me). Steve has been busy on this for a while so please come along and support us. P.S. No more than 8 to a car, unless you drive a minibus.

To Sarlat and back.....where you ask, read on.

About 4 years ago I received an e-mail from an old workmate through Friends Reunited. I worked with him about 30 years ago and we lost touch about 1990. He told me that about 7 years ago he had sold up and moved to France. We communicated for a while and then for some reason all of my e-mails bounced back. Last year I had another try to get him through Friends Reunited, this time with more success. We discussed the possibility of me flying down for a visit and he said that there were 3 airfields nearby, even though he had trouble believing that I could possibly be a PPL holder let alone have my own aeroplane.

Just after Christmas he told me that his 60th birthday was coming up this year and it would be good if we could go to his party. I gave him my home address and the invitation arrived and was duly replied to. A week later I had an e-mail from his wife saying that she'd told Dave that we weren't going to his party, this made things a bit awkward as I was now communicating

with her through an e-mail address he had no access to and had to be careful what I said to him so my communications with him were very sparse.

The party was in June so the weather was hoped to be getting better by then. Looking on various maps and route planning programmes, both by air and road, it looked easy enough to get to but a long car drive of about 350 miles from Calais. The plan decided on was to have the car prepared to drive down there but flying was obviously the preferred option the destination being Sarlat on the Dordogne.

The plan was to depart on Thursday morning at 0900 local, which at this time of year is 0800 utc or 1000 French time (even telling the time can be confusing in aviation), because the first destination was Abbeville for Customs and fuel and they go to lunch at 1215 local until 1400. Flight plan was completed through a friend's AFPEX account and I think they got at least 2 but I don't care it's not my account. The week leading up to the departure had dodgy weather to say the least but it was forecast to get better for the weekend, the weekend didn't look like it started as early as Thursday. We got up and drove to the aeroplane looking at the sky all the way, it wasn't looking good but it was getting betterslowly. The decision was made to

BAND SAW: A large stationary power saw primarily used by most workshops to cut good aluminium sheet into smaller pieces that more easily fit into the waste bin after you cut on the inside of the line instead of the outside edge.

fly so I walked towards the aeroplane while reaching into my pocket for the keys, they weren't there. The drive from home takes about half an hour and it was now 8.45. I started driving home but tried calling another key holder on his mobile but it was engaged for the next 15 minutes by which time it was just as quick to go home. Keys collected and we started all over again. By the time we got back to the field the weather had improved a bit more so we loaded up and went, an hour later than planned.

The climb out was good and we had a cloud base of about 2500ft. I called London Information to activate the flight plan and was pleasantly surprised when they came back saying it was all ok. The next call was to London when coasting out and then again at mid-channel when they suggested I call Lille if I could get them as they were on strike and might not answer, they were right. The weather wasn't too bad but the channel crossing was at about 1400ft due to cloud. Approaching France the visibility and cloud all got much better so the flight around the Le Touquet zone to Abbeville was good. It seemed as if the wind was a little stronger than this side of the Channel and on arrival at Abbeville the short cross runway was in use which was much more than was needed. The windsock was showing gusts of about 20kts. After a cup of coffee and refuelling we remounted the old steed and headed for the next stop at Chartres. Due to the wind we only required about a quarter of the 630m runway.

Having studied the maps I could see that on the direct route to Chartres there was a lot of controlled airspace but a closer look revealed that I could fly under it all. This is the thing when you have no transponder, you have to fly round and over or

under a lot of areas. I listened in to frequencies en-route but didn't actually speak to anybody until making calls to Chartres of time to overhead and circuit positions. These calls are basically the same as we use on Safety Com (135.475) but should be in French.

The initial call would be time to overhead "G-ABCD vertical a xx minutes" then downwind "G-ABCD vent arriere" then base "G-ABCD base" then final "G-ABCD finale" not forgetting in each circuit call to add the runway number, for which they use the actual number such as "douze" instead of "one two", the French for runway is "piste". Chartres has a very active gliding club so a good lookout is needed. After landing and taxiing to the pump a friendly elderly man without much



English greeted us but we managed to sort out fuel and fees. When we said that we were staying overnight he immediately made room in the hangar

for the aeroplane and offered his car for our use. As there are 3 hotels of various grades right next to the airport we declined the offer. The town is about a 45 minute walk from the airport and it's worth the walk to see the town and cathedral. The town has a number of good looking restaurants and we ended up in a pavement bistro in a square.

Next morning we went to the airport and waited around for people to arrive and by about 9.30 only the woman in the office was there. The problem we then had was that Nicole only spoke very little English and when I eventually got through to her that my avion was in the hangar and I needed it out to fly away she put a note on the board for the flying club, who would presumably arrive at sometime and open the hangar. After a look around I found a maintenance hangar with somebody in and he found the keys and let us out. The next leg was to Chatellaroux for fuel and then on to Sarlat.

The airfield at Sarlat is at 960ft and is right next to the Dordogne River. Sarlat is also known as Domme and is close to the town of Domme. Domme is a really nice little town where you can sit and eat in the restaurants while looking down into the Dordogne valley. If visiting it would be advisable to call first as there's not always a lot of life around at the airfield, which didn't affect us as we were collected by Dave and then had use of their car for the weekend.

If you were to hire a car a good trip would be to Gouffres de Padirac which is an under ground cavern where you go down hundreds of steps (or use 3 lifts) then get on a boat along an underground river before going on a walk around some lakes, stalagmites and stalactites

with a guide before reboarding the boat and going back along the river and then to the surface (the lifts are best for this). Another visit not far from Padirac is Rocamadour which is an abbey on the side of a cliff with a small town also there, the place was named after a hermit called Amadour who's body was found perfectly preserved on the rock. There's a zig-zag path leading from the car park at the



Rocamadour

top and on each bend there's a picture of one of the stations of the cross. The actual number from the bottom upwards and it was said to me that devotees would have crawled up on their knees, there's now a lift to get back up to the car park. These places are about an hour from Domme. Although the airport is called Sarlat it is a 20 minute drive away but

Atheism is a non-prophet organisation.

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www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

again it's worth a visit as it's a medieval town with lots of things to see such as trebuchets and the medieval architecture. The best day to visit Sarlat is Saturday when the market is on.

The airborne time for this trip was about 6 hours at about 90 to 95 mph with a bit of a headwind all the way. The cost of fuel varied between about 1.6 euros and 2.2 euros (Chartres) per litre. I had been told that to get fuel at a lot of French airfields the payment had to be by Total card but I phoned a few days before going and was told that they would take cash, they won't take any other cards at most of them though.

STRAIGHT SCREWDRIVER: A tool for opening paint cans. Sometimes used to convert common slotted screws into non-removable screws and butchering your palms.

Dates for your Diary

Jul 30	BBQ
Aug 27	Treasure Hunt
Jul 25	Rochester Hangar Dance
Sep 26	Fly-Out to Abbeville

BBQ – 30th July 2009

Farthing Corner Airfield

Purely a social event to include food, glass of wine or soft drink £6.00 per head, under 16's free.

Bring all the family for a fun time, the more the merrier.

We expect to have games available such as badminton, boules and a football to kick around or play volley ball with. (Bring something with you if you like).

We are also looking for unwanted gifts etc to raffle off, whether it be a tin of biscuits, a bottle of plonk or a brut gift pack, all donations gratefully received.

Same chefs as bonfire night!

There will be someone at the strip from 2pm, so come early if you like. Cooking starts about 6.30pm.

To give us an idea of numbers please e-mail Martin – farthingcorner@yahoo.co.uk, with the heading BBQ.

PTO for map, if you need more directions call John on 07880 748064.

