



August 2009

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Bleriot Celebrations Steve Solley

My day started sitting on the end of the runway at home. I had to wait while the first and second Bleriot plane and their entourage of helicopters arrived at the Duke of York military school at Dover where a temporary airfield had been established. I was then cleared to take off for the flight of seven minutes. I arrived overhead and turned left for a down wind over the Dover docks. Considering I have been over the docks many times this was fantastic site. Turned finals and the three pylons on the right towering above me. Next thought get this right as people will be watching!! Over the trees



Bleriot Replica at Dover

August Meeting
27th August 2009

Treasure Hunt by Car

and straight in with only one small bounce. I taxied in and was directed to the line-up. I was able to speak to members of the Bleriot family and have a close look around their machines. Also take pictures of Edmond Salis the first French pilot to land at the Duke of York school.



Sunday was very quiet with only two planes on display One Bleriot and one Jodel (mine!!) I was able to chat with Mikael Carlson who showed great interest in GBIEO. He also decided to fly his Bleriot machine round the field. There was too much wind to fly over the docks. Those few who flew in enjoyed the surroundings and talking to the general public and to be able to record the landing in their log book.

Cucumber Sandwiches on the Lawn

Socially this year is turning out to be a good one for strut members, from

If you spin an oriental person
in a circle three times do they
become disorientated?

bowling, to the coming 'treasure hunt', which I suppose provides some consolation considering the poor weather we have had.

I am not sure whether the summer BBQ or the Christmas party generally holds



place of honour for the best attended event, but this year I think the barbie may just have the edge.

Instead of holding the event at Rochester, it was decided that if it was held at Farthing Corner as we would have freedom to come and go as we pleased and still be conveniently located. As usual we were in the hands of the weather gods, if they played ball, the day could be a success and luckily it wasn't planned for the day before.

The first change we saw that the field was open from 2pm onwards; with afternoon tea, cake, sandwiches and cherries from the farm on offer. One of the first arrivals was a couple of Fenland strut members from Witchford Farm in Norfolk in their well travelled Auster. As the afternoon wore on more helpers arrived to assist in the preparations as well as the tea drinking. The steady coming and going of people created a nice atmosphere from the start.

Cooking started at about 6.30pm, with

a three course menu of prawn cocktail, sirloin steak and apple pie and ice cream. Each steak was cooked to order in true Gordon Ramsey fashion, from very rare to cremated. Enough alternatives were available to cater for all, from those that just don't eat red meat to totally committed vegetarians. Soft drinks, beer, red & white wine, tea and coffee were also included in the £6.00 charge per head.



As the evening gained momentum, we had more arrivals by air and road, from the four corners of Kent and beyond. A Europa from Laddingford, a Renegade Spirit from Clip Gate, the ubiquitous Rans from Heathfield and a Stampe from Maypole all flew into a 5/10 knot breeze virtually down the strip. The pilots and their companions were fed first to ensure that they could depart as desired and get home before dark.

After all 72 adults and their children had eaten their main course it was time for the raffle, with a real mixture of prizes, some requiring a sense of humour and some which were truly worthwhile. With the cooking, raffle and particularly the chatting taking longer than expected

What if there were no hypothetical questions?

we never got around to the planned games and all too soon it was time to head for home.

Thanks to all those helped out or



donated prizes as I think everyone had a fun evening and even the wives and children could see that pilots aren't always miserable old gits obsessed by the weather and spark plugs.

Many thanks to Alan & Martin for all their hard work in organising this event. Mike Negus.

Reminiscences of Thorney Island from Paul Smiddy

Every now and then one of our membership takes the time to comment on the newsletter, which is very gratifying as all feedback positive or not so is welcome, so it was with Paul.

Mike

I very much enjoyed your piece about the trip to Thorney Island, and bitterly regret I could not make it that day.

I just wanted to mention one slightly

misleading point you made. "After hostilities ceased it passed to the army..."

It moved to Fighter Command in 1947, and Flying Training Command in 1950.



Then in 1962 it was shifted to Transport Command, and remained lodged in my mind as a child when Argosies were based there.

It was vacated by the RAF in 1976 and used for housing Vietnamese boat people for a couple of years!! It was not taken over by the Army till 1982. The reason for my interest? It appears in my log book in August 1974. As a member of a UAS, and therefore in the RAFVR, I had bagged a month at RAF Lyneham. In addition to flying in Hercs into Akrotiri as the Turkish/Greek war kicked off again, I logged a day going down to TI. We had one sortie low-level dropping: I was hooked on to the interior of the cargo hold watching pallets accelerate to 60+ kts by the time they hit the ramp, having been extracted by parachute, all the while flying over the airfield at 10-20' agl - quite fun! Lunch in the mess, another sortie, then back to Lyneham.

A day or two earlier I had had an even more full-on trip. The Turkish/Greek war had just kicked off, and I was

spliced onto a Hercules crew to go to Akrotiri with a cargo of ammunition and radio gear for the embassy at Nicosia. A 7 hour flight ended with the sight of gunfire on the Troodos mountains. A 3 hour turnaround and then back with a cargo of diplomats' and servicemen's wives & children. The C-130 was never designed for such a tender cargo. Apart from the eau de Elsan smell in the back, my other memory was of being allowed to pole the brute around the Mediterranean skies for a full 20 minutes. Apologies to anyone who was in the back at the time.

The following year I managed a week at 1 FTS Linton. The high spot was a night flight with a USAF exchange officer. Probably the first and last time I will endure (or probably enjoy) aeros in a JP 5 - at night!

Not that it makes paying taxes today any easier, but I thank the Queen for every hour I spent with her flying club....

Rochester Airport Hanger Dance and Open Day

The Hanger dance was very well attended and a number of Strut Members enjoyed a great evening of entertainment from the John Miller Band plus the very energetic dance company who got stuck in to encourage the dancing. Not that there was too much required as everyone seemed up for a good night. The ladies did particularly well dressing in period costume and a lot of the chaps too, so well done to all involved.

Can vegetarians eat animal crackers?

The following day, hangovers permitting saw the staff back on duty with the open day which was blessed with good weather and seemed to bring in the public in good numbers. Medway Aircraft Preservation Society welcomed the interest in their latest project for the RAF Museum namely the restoration of the unique Boulton Paul Defiant. The Kent Spitfire flew in piloted by Dan Griffiths and there were rides in a De Havilland Dragon Rapide and helicopters. Resident aircraft of course a plenty and the Essex police helicopter was evident. It goes to show that people are still fascinated by aeroplanes and when welcomed as at Rochester it must only be positive for the airport and ultimately ourselves.

Sky Sheppey July 2009

The Sheerness Times Guardian posted the following report on the weeks events

Four years of hard work finally paid off as thousands of people descended on Eastchurch for Sky Sheppey 2009. The event, to celebrate 100 years of aviation, took place over the weekend at Eastchurch Primary School and the adjoining cricket club ground. Organisers estimate each day saw more than 2,000 visitors.

It opened with a Sky Sheppey flag being raised by Cllr Kathleen Carter, chairman of Eastchurch Parish Council, and Jim Stringer, chairman of the council's aviation centenary committee.

There were vintage car shows, per-

formances from members of Big Fish Arts, the Royal Naval Cadets Gun Run and static displays of replica planes, including a Nieuport French Biplane. Local historian Bill Croydon and Cllr Ken Ingleton gave history talks on the early days of flight. On Sunday, members of the Royal Naval Association held a memorial service outside All Saints' Church in the village, before marching to the showground.

A highlight of the weekend was a fly-past of a Lancaster bomber from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, which passed over the cricket field three times.

Mr Stringer said: "Sky Sheppey has been a resounding success. "It was absolutely brilliant and everyone worked their socks off to make it a success. "The fly-past was very nostalgic - it brought a lump to the throat. "It was a most successful tribute to those early aviation pioneers." The driving force behind much of the event was the original chairman of the committee, Capt John Carter, who died in December.

There is still Sky Sheppey memorabilia for sale, including souvenir programmes and teddy bears. They are still available to buy on 01795 880790.

The committee is still counting money raised at the event, but is hoped it will be a significant total which will be distributed across the community

AIRCRAFT PARKING

Whilst there is no hangarage available at Farthing Corner, we do have space for outside parking for a couple of suitable aircraft. Reasonable rates. Please phone John on 07880 748064 for further information.

No mention of our fly in to Mike Loxtons strip in an appeal for light aircraft. Ho hum.....

PAFRA Treasure Hunt 19th July

by Nigel Read

An aerial 'treasure hunt' was devised by Martin Leusby from PAFRA and several LAA members took part despite the rough conditions - in fact I and my aircraft partner, Tom took the covers off and after some planning, tea drinking, peering at the sky and windsock put them back on without even getting the aircraft out. The cross wind on Laddingford's 29/11 being particularly bad.

I had collected an information pack from Martin at EGTO on the way - arriving in the middle of a down pour and while deciding what to do set about deciphering the clues with Tom before he retreated home to Crawley and I went back to Rochester to find a BBQ. On returning, the GY80 had just completed the course and the motor glider was about to set off. After much cajoling from Martin and a replacement for Tom being dragged out of the café I set about returning to Laddingford. The info pack consisted of an instruction sheet, a clever little ditty of not too difficult clues to get you off to each turning point a blank plog sheet and three sheets of coloured photographs representing six turning points and the treasure to locate on the various legs - but you had to spot these not knowing which leg or where on it. The task being (having sorted out the correct turning points which Martin checked were not too far out before leaving) to identify where each of these were and mark on the map plus or minus a couple of miles from the start of the respective legs.

Points were 'awarded' for getting them in

the wrong place or not so bad, missing them altogether ie the winner would have the lowest score and it would not pay to guess if you got it wrong. A tie



breaker would be the declared time overhead start to finish. Hence it was worth doing the plog properly. Normally a sensible speed would be chosen to give ample spotting time - I chose 90kts and wished I had gone for 80 considering the rough head banging ride! In the event we (Harold Martin-David) and myself missed three features out of ten, arrived within 90 secs and won a silver platter and a glass orb thingy to return for next year. (Reminded me of the glass egg in the young Tom Cruise/ Rebecca de Mornay

film 'Risky Business'.)

An example clue to start off was
*... aim yourself at Jackrells Farm
 But you're turning before you do Gat-
 wick harm
 Your first leg, it is 13,
 To where 21 & 225 meet, Point A, we
 mean...
 Turn left and track 140 Magnetic
 (Sorry if the rhyme's pathetic)*

Now it turned out to be helpful if you were a member of the National Trust as four points were their properties. One I missed was a windmill near Woodchurch. I was determined to find the odd shaped field next to a village and completely missed the distant windmill in the photo at the corner of the field. Other problems with photographs were they were taken from different angles to the track and in winter so the snow had melted and the trees were in leaf! Long shadows give an idea of orientation (I see, too late as I write this). The recommendation is to cut the photos up and stick them over the cockpit but lack of space in the Europa meant leaving them on their original sheets.

I did find another way to use the gps - despite the stronger wind than planned, just turning until the track showed matched the measured track rather than the wind corrected heading which was



used as the initial heading on each track. A particularly difficult spot was a group of warehouses amongst several others in Sittingbourne (well spotted Harold) and Martins house off the A251 which someone actually got.

Finally a dash from Rainham railway station to finish on time saw us last home but winners. Gary was heard descending into EGMF. Harold noted we had found the Europa's cross wind limit! It's probably as well he got out at EGTO as the landing on 21 back at Laddingford, booty stashed safely away was something not to be attempted too often.

Most probably recognize the castle in East Sussex at the top but how many recognize the tower with adjacent circular storage tank at the bottom (the tower was grey not white) and is not far from Bewl water.

August Meeting

On the 27th August we have a new event in the calendar. A motorised treasure hunt which will end up in a pub somewhere. The start will be at the car park at the London bound side of the M2 services near the Gillingham turn off. Please come along and support it—massive prizes will be given away to the winners. If you can't make 7pm but can come along to the pub, please phone Steve Solley on 07836 653257 after 7pm for the secret location.

If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?

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Future Events

We have an exciting range of winter events in store with, we hope, something for everyone. The Treasure Hunt for our August evening meeting should be a very enjoyable change and then from the September meeting we are back in the Golf Club for an interesting winter of lectures and talks. Not forgetting, of course, the ever popular end of season Fly-Out to Abbeville for a good French lunch in the airfield restaurant.

Whose cruel idea was it
 that the word "lisp" has an
 "s" in it?

Dates for your Diary

Aug 27	Treasure Hunt
Sep 24	Back to the Golf Club
Sep 27	Fly-Out to Abbeville
Oct 04	Young Aviators Day
Oct 29	John Thorpe—Bristol Flight Test Centre