



March 2010

# SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

## Learning to Fly in France

Last summer I was getting really bored with my life, getting a bit fed up with bikes (because I found one that suited me perfectly, fat *and furious*.....Oi!!!! CHEEKY, I meant the bike *Goldwing*). Cars were losing too much money. Decided to build a model Helicopter, did that and then decided I didn't want to see it all smashed up so I didn't fly that any more.....Now what shall I do, I thought?

Then the "fickle finger fate gave me a prod. My Friend Neil who had built my house with me, said he had a friend that was going to do the same

By Martin Payne



Nigel Read—Editor



*First Solo!!!*

### March Meeting

Thursday 25th March 2010

AOPA CEO Martin Robinson

thing and wondered if he could bring him around to see my house. "Yes, of course you can", says I. This person was Mike Tooze. He loved the house and wanted to see the garage, "Wonderful garage, is that your helicopter? Can you fly it?" He tells me that he built his own aeroplane many years ago and is still flying it. My brain immediately engaged first gear and smoked my tyres!!!! Screeeeech!!! I explained that I've always been fascinated by heli's and 'planes. "Why don't you learn" said Mike, "Who me?" brain in second gear.....There's a thought. He finished off by explaining about the Mid Kent Strut, "We are meeting up tomorrow evening in Maidstone Golf Club, Why not come along".

I did go along, talked to a few people, and met Gary Smith, Strut Chairman, "Why not come up to Farthing Corner and have a look around and meet some like minded people (now I know, its skint minded people, as all their money goes in the hanger in one form or another).

I've since met some really, really nice, kind guy's (and Gall's), really polite, when I keep asking all these questions. So, off I go to learn to fly.....Where do I go to learn, who's good, who isn't? What's it going to cost? All the special deals look about the same. So, I decide to learn at Biggin. Put down a lot of money after some two weeks, I get told that's all gone..... I seem to think that was going to last for about 15 hours, I've only done about 8!!!!!!

I didn't realise, on top of that you've got fuel surcharge, landing fee, Blah, Blah, Blah. Then my instructor went "Tech." Medical not compatible with

the tablets he was on, etc. Then I looked at going to the USA to finish, very mixed reports about poor aircraft.....getting licence, but still not being able to fly properly.....

Then I found an advert for "Nearly Heaven" in Limoges. I phoned up and spoke to Sue Virr the instructor. She said, no problem come down and get some hours in, although the weather was a bit cold. I needed a bit of break from work as I hadn't had a holiday in 2008.

What a lovely atmosphere in the club, really relaxed way of life down there. Still quite strict as you are in an International Airport with "Class D" airspace, make no mistake. So, I ended up with 12 hours - soloed - (did the obligatory "Oh my God!!" when you realise you're up there on your own, it's up to you to bring it down...) First solo greaser!!!!!! Well Good!!!

Came home finished all my exams at Biggin. When the weather improved looked for another club in Kent with an all inclusive rate. Went to Manston with T G Aviation. I think every lesson I had a different instructor (not my choice or decision), but never really gelled with any. Got a little bit disillusioned then. Sue emailed me to find out how I was getting on, when I told her, she said "save up and come back in the early autumn".

#### Saturday 10 October

Caught 07:45 Ferry, decided to take cross country route to Limoges, did first

**Committee, an organisation  
to keep minutes  
but waste hours.....**

stretch from Boulogne to Abbeville on autoroute as there's not much alternative at a cost of €8.00, this turned out to be the one and only toll I paid.

I picked a direct route which took me to the East of Rouen, started off really well on the RN roads, but then while descending into the Seine Valley, it said to turn right, I slowed down to look, then I see this tiny almost vertical, well, alley really, wasn't big enough to get a car down... It was at this point I realised that there was a hidden vehicle setting in my Garmin Sat Nav..... not car/bike, not coach, not truck, but "Mountain Goat" mode. You're having a laugh, I thought to myself as I giggled.

On the whole I had picked a cracking route, and all on deserted roads, I averaged about 60mph, thought I'd caught up with Sebastian Loeb in his WRC Citroen on one muddy stretch of lanes, what a scream (good job I cleaned the side windows on the Scooby, at least I could see where I was going).

### Sunday 11 October

After a really good sleep last night, woke up to thick fog!!!! Hope this isn't a sign of things to come. It took until about 11am for the fog to lift. Get the aeroplanes out the hanger, feels just like Farthing Corner, I thought, at least I get to fly this time though. Spent an hour doing a bit general handling steep turns PFL's, EFATO's, Glide approaches, Flap-

**A chap I know was sacked from his job operating the dodgems. He is claiming unfair dismissal.**

less landings, with about 5 circuits, and greased every one of them. "Well you certainly haven't lost anything, Back to solo tomorrow". Yippee!!!.

### Monday 12 October

Up bright and breezy and out at 9am as there was a little bit of mist, but that burnt off really quick, off to Belgarde, aeroplanes out etc. Filled them all up.....glad I didn't have to pay for that @ \$1.85 per litre.

Wind was really gusty, 17knots gusting 25, about 30° to the runway. I had one landing where the training just kicked in, coming all set up, nice..... flared, just touched down, wham....have a big gust, up we go.....firewalled the throttle, and around we go! Quick call to the tower to let them know, tower replied "Gusting to 30 knots". Another particular event worth noting occurred just as I was about to touch down for a "touch and go", the tower called "FOX, DELTA, DELTA, FULL STOP LANDING, DO NOT TAKE OFF, REPEAT DO NOT TAKE OFF", I thought oh dear what's happened, has something fallen off the plane, requested permission to return to the apron, they refused and said to stay on the runway. Just then two Mirage Jets whistled over the top, about 200ft AGL at 400Kts, it frightened the living daylight out of me, the noise!!!!

The tower came on the radio and apologised, and said sarcastically, "Many thanks for your brief visit, Fast jets!!" That was a bit close.

### Tuesday 13 October

A nice crisp morning met us with a

2°C and ice on car windscreen. Sat down in Aeroclub and completed planning for Cross Country as per QXC. 2hrs it took, touch and go at Angoulême (will be full stop tomorrow, difficult for signature with T&G), and on to Poitiers. Sue checked all my calcs. Had a great seafood buffet and dessert for lunch at airport restaurant (thoroughly recommended). Then back to Limoges, all timings and headings were spot on, pass-overs to different FIR regions, Towers and FIS, really pleased with myself.

### Wednesday 14 October

Well that's that milestone completed, Now done my Qualifying Cross-country. The nerves set in this morning; everything seemed to be going through my mind, what if this happens, what if that happens. "Just go and do it" said Sue

Oh I feel sick, tum's doing summersault, go to the loo.....well I thought I wanted to go...Never mind. Let's get going. Once I was off, it all seemed to come quite naturally, I was a little bit off track after about 10 minutes, but only about a mile too far south, so I gently eased over to the right a bit, within a minute I was bang on track again. Angoulême appeared and set myself up for landing, nice, go and park up. Paid landing fee and gained a signature, right off to Poitiers. Landed

The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly, is to fill the world with fools

at Poitiers, I was told to park on the Apron next to the other GA aircraft.

### Friday 16 October

Brrrrrrrr even more, -4°C this morning. Another XC in the north like yesterday, right where the examiner lives. By all accounts the examiner likes to see your preparing for the test....."C'est Bizarre", alores! Everything went according to plan today, only point to mention I was told I hit windshear when I explained what did happen on the route, I did the whole route at 3000 feet.

### Monday 19 October

This morning it looks like the weather is starting to turn for the worse. It's getting very blustery. Decided to do 2 touch and goes at a grass strip at Couhe, they were good, bit bumpy, and reminded me of Farthing Corner again. Then, foggles on and doing steep 360's and rate one turns on instruments - all OK. Touch and go at Angoulême, fine with that. Off to St. Junien for short field approaches.

### Tuesday 20 October

It was very blustery today, gusting 27knots on Runway 21 directly from the South (30 degrees from the left). We flew from Limoges to Poitiers for lunch, good flight there bit bumpy coming into Poitiers had a very good meal. Back to Limoges with some PFL's and engine failures and then landing at Limoges.

### Friday 23 October

Up early all ready and the most thickest "pea soup" you ever did see!!

At least there was some good news, I heard from Graham Smith to say that my aeroplane was arriving tomorrow at Maypole, just got to get it home??!!

It looks like I will have to come back for

a weekend when the weather is better, hopefully in November, probably via Ryanair.

### Wednesday 18 November

Was the day I returned to Limoges, for my test - goodnights sleep ready for tomorrow.

### Thursday 19 November

Finally, off we go. At the aero club, all planning, notams, meteo, etc. Have briefing with Mike (examiner). Lets' go and do it. Everything was going fine until the diversion bit came up, wasn't sure exactly of position, a lot of erring and umming, but managed to sort it out. And finally a pass.

Now I'm building an aircraft!

## Nigel's Natterings

With two new committee members we thought it time to introduce each of the committee. However, Glen Everett will now be known to those who attended the last meeting when Glen spoke about Ballooning and Martin Payne has written about his experiences learning to fly at a number of locations around the world. We can expand on this in latter issues.

On the subject of what the committee do, putting this newsletter together involves Graham Hammond printing the address labels and sticking these and the stamps on the envelopes, John Dean lays out the copy, adds the witticisms, prints the hard copies and emails to those who receive it electronically, I collate all the good stuff I'm send before sending to John and it seems the editor puts the copies into the envelopes and takes them to the nearest post office.

A couple of points here, the snail mail would have arrived after the RAeS meeting I listed last month but the email was sitting in inboxes in time to notify of the Airbus Flight testing talk. I also couldn't help noticing about two thirds of members choose the printed copy, as I did until recently, using it as a useful reminder of the last Thursday of the month but the electronic copy does save the strut money and second class postage goes up to 32p in April (so buy some before!) If you would like to receive it by email let one of us know.

## German Trip

A number of strut members went to Peenemunde last year and Martin from Farthing Corner has suggested a flyout to Ballenstedt between Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May and Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May. The airfield is about 3km north of the town at the foot of the 3000' Harz Mountains in the region Saxony-Anhalt. Martin has made many trips across the briny and has also recently qualified as a CRI and would be happy to help out with any foreign planning and if necessary accompany someone for that added bit of confidence. Contact Martin at

[farthingcorner@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:farthingcorner@yahoo.co.uk)

Details and registration form at [www.govfr.com/holzflugtage2010](http://www.govfr.com/holzflugtage2010) (that's goVFR nothing to do with French government)

Suggested timetable:-

### Thursday

Arrivals from 12:00 local as part of the 'Flugtag', Welcome / Camping / Hotel / Transfer.

Evening: Hangar chat and B-B-Q

### Friday

09:00 Breakfast

Optional program - visit world heritage town of Quedlinburg.

Evening:

Dinner on Burg Falkenstein

Saturday

90 min flight to Rechlin and visit museum (see below).

20 min flight to Kyritz with dinner at the airfield restaurant.

Sunday - Depart

### Rechlin during the Third Reich

In 1935, the airfield became the official testing ground of the newly-formed Luftwaffe and was expanded by constructing two more airfields in nearby Roggenthin and Lärz. Construction work on the airfields and the accompanying barracks was partly carried out by forced labour from nearby Ravensbrück concentration camp. Many of the Luftwaffe's new planes were test flown at the Rechlin facilities; Battle Wing 200 with its array of captured planes was a regular guest at the airfields. After several Allied bombing runs on the Rechlin and Roggenthin airfields in 1944, testing of late-war planes was shifted to Lärz. On April 10, 1945, a final bomber attack by the US Air force almost completely destroyed the airfields; what was left was blown up by the German garrison before Soviet troops arrived at Rechlin on 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

### Post War History

In 1946, the Soviet Air Force established a permanent presence at the airbase. An attack fighter squadron and later a helicopter squadron were stationed at Lärz; the airfield at Rechlin was used by the National People's Army (NVA). Military usage of the airfields continued until 1993, when the last Russian air force units were moved home. The Rechlin air-

field was reopened for civilian use in 1994.

### February Meeting

Glen Everett gave a fascinating talk on ballooning, bringing along a one man balloon to show us and a slide show of his diverse overseas exploits such as India and Cambodia. Ballooning over Phnom Penh in a beer bottle shaped balloon to advertise Tiger Beer (with highly successful sales results) he was advised to wave at people on the ground as most had never seen a balloon would probably shoot at it especially if they passed over the Royal Palace and by the way don't land in nice green fenced off fields as they are mine fields.

The 'beer bottle' is twice the height of a normal balloon and presents additional handling difficulties, there being only one shot at landing by dumping air from the side, conventional balloons can reseal the vent at the top. Even a conventional advertising balloon costs about £20,000 and has a life of around 300 hours; fuel burn is 60 - 100 l/hr. A second hand balloon with about 100 hours left would be much cheaper - around £5000. Construction materials on the envelope start with Nomex at the bottom, rip stop nylon then polyester at the top. If the flame touches the nylon it is burnt in 1/10<sup>th</sup> second, the Nomex fairs better lasting nearly 3 seconds!

Last night I dreamt I  
wrote Lord of the Rings...  
I was Tolkien in my sleep.



*The red handle provides a hot flame via the condensing coils, the blue a cooler but bright yellow flame, impressive a dusk, lighting up the inside.*



*Gary tries out the seat for size.*

## Nick Hampton's RV

It was a small "flight" for an aeroplane but a large leap for "aeroplane kind" when Nick Hampton moved his RV fuselage in late January. Those expecting the full flight test will be disappointed at this stage since the "flight" was actually the fuselage "flying up into the back of a 7.5 ton lorry on the hydraulic tail lift. There was air under the wheels (sort of) but it marks a major step forwards in Nicks project as the fuselage and wings were brought together for the first time. RV8 builders will know that a considerable amount of time is required at this stage to get the wings straight and angles correct before drilling the rear spars, followed by fitment of the flaps and construction of the wing bands.

Once the wings have been fitted Nick will only have the engine to fit and the painting to do before drafting out the flight test schedule, this summer perhaps?



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[www.solleysicecreams.co.uk](http://www.solleysicecreams.co.uk)

**May Meeting**

Talk on airspace infringements by Jonathan Smith, NATS.

**June Meeting**

Tea at Ripple. Fly or drive.

**Brian Hope**

Congratulations to Brian on receiving The Royal Aero Club Nexus Trophy for his journalistic skills but of course we know Brian has worn several PFA hats over the years, some simultaneously! Presentation by Prince Andrew on 27th April. More in March LA p11 if you missed it.

**Dates for your Diary**

Mar 25 Martin Robinson, AOPA  
 Apl 29 TBA  
 May 27 Jonathon Smith NATS  
 Jun 24 Tea at Ripple