

November 2012



SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent*

Merry Christmas (Dinner)!



Light Aircraft Association

Welcome to the last Skywritings of 2012

This month's meeting is Piloting the Kent Air Ambulance which is this year's charity but no meeting in December, however don't forget about the Christmas dinner on the 8th at our new venue of Newnham Court Inn which is near Junction 7 of the M20, just one junction on from the usual Bluebell Hill at the A249. Head towards Maidstone and left at the roundabout towards Bearstead. Newnham Court Shopping Village is next left and the Pub is to the right as you enter. If coming from the east on the A20 and Bearstead Road there is no right turn into Newnham Court, so double back at the roundabout. Likewise when leaving you have to turn left and double back at a small roundabout at the junction with New Cut Road to return to the M20. If you haven't returned your menu to Gary—do as soon as you finish reading *Skywritings*! Map on page 7.

Don't forget if you are still receiving a postal copy of *Skywritings* this is the last one. Some printed copies will be available at meetings but if we still do not have your current email, we cannot send the email version. If anyone wants to print their own paper copy in the same format—double sided on two sheets of A4 and can reload the paper the right way round(!), let the editor know and that format is possible. Otherwise it's the internet cafe or library for old copies.



Nigel Read - Editor

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29th November Meeting

Kent Air Ambulance

Cobtree Manor Golf Club, 20:00hrs



Aerial Draymen

During the war, the Heneger and Constable brewery (or possibly Henty & Constable of Chichester) donated free beer to the troops. After D-Day, supplying the invasion troops in Normandy with vital supplies was already a challenge. Obviously, there was no room in the logistics chain for such luxuries as beer or other types of refreshments. Some men, often called sourcers, were able to get wine or other niceties from the land or rather from the locals. RAF Spitfire pilots came up with an even better idea.

The Spitfire Mk IX was an evolved version of the Spitfire, with pylons under the wings for bombs or tanks. It was discovered that the bomb pylons could also be modified to carry beer kegs. According to pictures that can be found, various sizes of kegs were used. Whether the kegs could be jettisoned in case of emergency is unknown. If the Spitfire flew high enough, the cold air at altitude would even refresh the beer, making it ready for consumption upon arrival.

A variation of this was a long range fuel tank modified to carry beer instead of fuel.

The modification even

received the official designation *Mod XXX*. Propaganda services were quick to pick up on this, which probably explains the official designation.

As a result, Spitfires equipped with *Mod XXX* or keg-carrying pylons were often sent back to Great-Britain for maintenance or liaison duties. They would then return to Normandy with full beer kegs fitted under the wings.

Typically, the British Revenue of Ministry and Excise stepped in, notifying the



A staged shot of the Mod XXX tank being filled.

brewery that they were in violation of the law by exporting beer without paying the relevant taxes. (Leave it to government civilians to figure out a way to harass the fighting troops) It seems that *Mod XXX* was terminated then but various squadrons found different ways to refurbish their stocks. Most often, this was done with the unofficial approval of higher echelons.



In the lighter moments of World War II, the Spitfire was used in an unorthodox role: bringing beer kegs to the men in Normandy.

In his book *Dancing in the Skies*, Tony Jonsson, the only Icelander pilot in the RAF, recalled beer runs while he was flying with 65 Squadron. Every week a pilot was sent back to the UK to fill some cleaned-up drop tanks with beer and return to the squadron. Jonsson hated the beer runs as every man on the squadron would be watching you upon arrival. Anyone who made a rough landing and dropped the tanks would be the most hated man on the squadron for an entire week.



Not the most aerodynamic of loads

Kent Battle of Britain Museum—October's meeting

David Brocklehurst, the chairman of the museum gave an enlightening talk on the work of the museum, involving searching out aircraft wrecks from the battle anything between 15' and 40' down subsequently researching into the history of the crash and the pilots involved. He explained that it is not so much a museum of artifacts, although there are certainly plenty of recovered items but a permanent record of the men involved in the battle. Many surviving pilots became friends of the museum but their numbers are diminishing. Having visited on the way to the Ripple BBQ this all made more sense. If you haven't visited yet it is well worth a visit but you will have to wait now until the museum opens again next year on Good Friday.

More Museums...

The V2 used by the Royal Engineers for training (did they expect to find an unexploded one?) has gone on display in their museum in Gillingham, aimed over sections of the Berlin Wall.



CAA News

"London Centre" is the call sign for all D & D calls from 12th Dec with the closing of Prestwick D & D cell.

Information Notice **In-2012-179** has been issued covering use of Unleaded Fuel (google bold text for more).

Early next year the CAA will cease production of the GASIL safety leaflet and make changes to the way safety information is distributed. They intend using specialist aviation media and *Clued Up*. *Safety Sense* & *Airprox* Leaflets will be affected.

Project News

After much delay on the part of the CAA involving lost paperwork and resubmitted papers after an engine upgrade Dr Bruce Alexander has finally seen his Exec 162 fly. Pictures from a video of the event in which it did not fly higher that the pilot seems prepared to fall!



Dr Bruce Alexander's Rotorway Exec 162F G-ZHWH finally flies in the hands of a test pilot.



Zero/Zero by Charles Svoboda

It happened sometime in 1965, in Germany. I was a co-pilot, so I knew, everything here was to know about flying, and I was frustrated by pilots like my aircraft commander. He was one of those by-the-numbers types, no class, no imagination, no "feel" for flying.

Every time he let me make an approach, even in VFR conditions, he demanded perfection. Not the slightest deviation was permitted. "If you can't do it when there is no pressure, you surely can't do it when the pucker factor increases," he would say. When he shot an approach, it was as if all the instruments were frozen - perfection, but no class.

Then came that routine flight from the Azores to Germany. The weather was okay; we had 45,000 pounds of fuel and enough cargo to bring the weight of our C-124 Globemaster up to 180,000 pounds, 5,000 pounds below the max allowable. It would be an easy, routine flight all the way. Halfway to the European mainland, the weather started getting bad. I kept getting updates by high frequency radio.



Our destination, a fighter base, went zero/zero. Our two alternates followed shortly thereafter. All of France was down. We held for two hours, and the weather got worse. Somewhere I heard a fighter pilot declare an emergency because of minimum fuel. He shot two approaches and saw nothing. On the third try, he flamed out and had to eject. We made a precision radar approach; there was nothing but fuzzy fog at minimums. The sun was setting. Now I started to sweat a little. I turned on the instrument lights. When I looked out to where the wings should be, I couldn't even see the navigation lights 85 feet from my eyes. I could barely make out a dull glow from the exhaust stacks of the closest engine, and then only on climb power. When we reduced power to maximum endurance, that friendly glow faded. The pilot asked the engineer where we stood on fuel. The reply was, "I don't know--- we're so low that the book says the gauges are unreliable below this point. The navigator became a little frantic. We didn't carry parachutes on regular MAC flights, so we couldn't follow the fighter pilot's example. We would land or crash with the airplane.

The pilot then asked me which of the two nearby fighter bases had the widest runway. I looked it up and we declared an emergency as we headed for that field.

The pilot then began his briefing. "This will be for real. No missed approach. We'll make an ILS and get precision radar to keep us honest. Co-pilot, we'll use half flaps. That'll put the approach speed a little higher, but the pitch angle will be almost level, requiring less attitude change in the flare." Why hadn't I thought of that? Where was my "feel" and "class" now? The briefing continued, "I'll lock on the gauges. You get ready to take over and complete the landing if you see the runway - that way there will be less room for trouble with me trying to transition from instruments to visual with only a second or two before touchdown." Hey, he's even going to take advantage of his co-pilot, I thought. He's not so stupid, after all. "Until we get the runway, you call off every 100 feet above touchdown; until we get down to 100 feet, use the pressure altimeter. Then switch to the radar altimeter

for the last 100 feet, and call off every 25 feet. Keep me honest on the airspeed also. Engineer, when we touch down, I'll cut the mixtures with the master control lever, and you cut all of the mags. Are there any questions? Let's go!"

All of a sudden, this unfeeling, by the numbers robot was making a lot of sense. Maybe he really was a pilot and maybe I had something more to learn about flying. We made a short procedure turn to save gas. Radar helped us to get to the outer marker. Half a mile away, we performed the Before Landing Checklist; gear down, flaps 20 degrees. The course deviation indicator was locked in the middle, with the glideslope indicator beginning its trip down from the top of the case. When the GSI centred, the pilot called for a small power reduction, lowered the nose slightly, and all of the instruments, except the altimeter, froze.

My Lord, that man had a feel for that airplane! He thought something - and the airplane, all 135,000 pounds of it, did what he thought. "Five hundred feet," I called out, "400 feet...300 feet....200 feet, MATS minimums....100 feet, Air Force minimums; I'm switching to the radar altimeter..75 feet nothing in sight...50 feet, still nothing....25 feet, airspeed 100 knots," The nose of the aircraft rotated just a couple of degrees and the airspeed started down. The pilot then casually said, "Hang on, we're landing. Airspeed 90 knots....10 feet, here we go!" The pilot reached up and cut the mixtures with the master control lever, without taking his eyes off the instruments. He told the engineer to cut all the mags to reduce the chance of fire. CONTACT! I could barely feel it. As smooth a landing as I have ever known, and I couldn't even tell if we were on the runway, because we could only see the occasional blur of a light streaking by "Co-pilot, verify hydraulic boost is on, I'll need it for brakes and steering." I complied. "Hydraulic boost pump is on, pressure is up." The brakes came on slowly---we didn't want to skid this big beast now. I looked over at the pilot. He was still on the instruments, steering to keep the course deviation indicator in the centre, and that is exactly where it stayed. "Airspeed, 50 knots." We might make it yet. "Airspeed, 25 knots." We'll make it if we don't run off a cliff. Then I heard a strange sound. I could hear the whirr of the gyros, the buzz of the inverters, and a low frequency thumping. Nothing else. The thumping was my pulse, and I couldn't hear anyone breathing. We had made it! We were standing still!

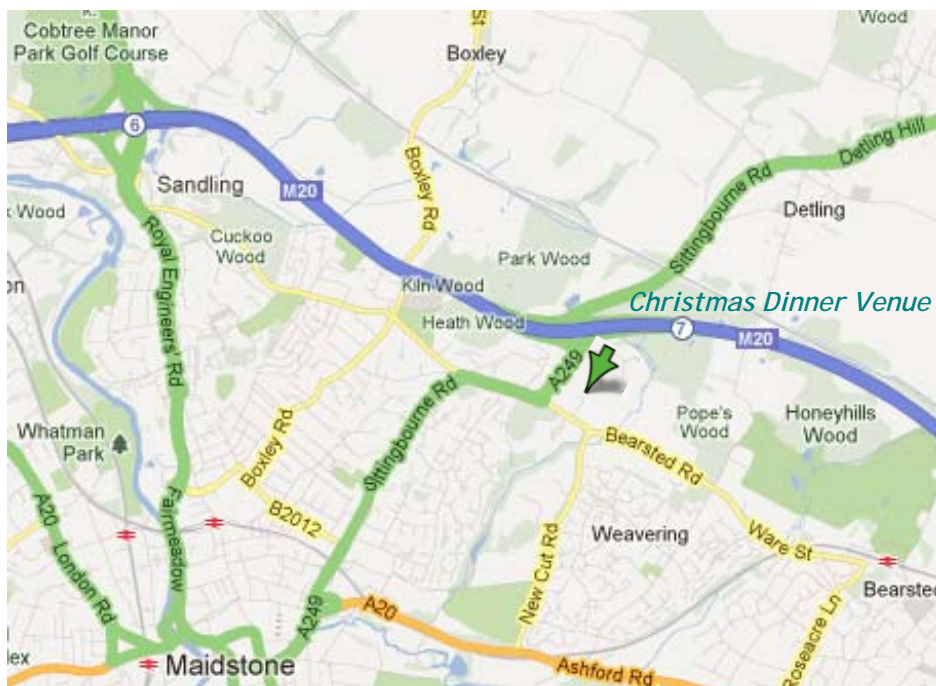
The aircraft commander was still all pilot. "After-landing checklist, get all those motors, radar and un-necessary radios off while we still have batteries. Co-pilot, tell them that we have arrived, to send a follow me truck out to the runway because we can't even see the edges." I left the VHF on and thanked GCA for the approach. The guys in the tower didn't believe we were there. They had walked outside and couldn't hear or see anything. We assured them that we were there, somewhere on the localizer centreline, with about half a mile showing on the DME. We waited about 20 minutes for the truck. Not being in our customary hurry, just getting our breath back and letting our pulses diminish to a reasonable rate. Then I felt it. The cockpit shuddered as if the nose gear had run over a bump. I told the loadmaster to go out the crew entrance to see what happened. He dropped the door (which is immediately in front of the nose gear) and it hit something with a loud, metallic bang. He came on the intercom and said "Sir, you'll never believe this. The follow-me truck couldn't see us and ran smack into our nose tyre with his bumper but he bounced off and nothing is hurt." The pilot then told

the tower that we were parking the bird right where it was and that we would come in via the truck. It took a few minutes to get our clothing and to button up the aeroplane. I climbed out and saw the nose tyres straddling the runway centreline. A few feet away was the truck with its embarrassed driver.

Total damage—one dent in the hood of the follow me truck where the hatch had opened onto it. Then I remembered the story from *Fate Is the Hunter*. When Gann was an airline co-pilot making a simple night range approach, his captain kept lighting matches in front of his eyes. It scarred and infuriated Gann. When they landed, the captain said that Gann was ready to upgrade to captain. If he could handle a night-range approach with all of that harassment, then he could handle anything.

At last I understood what true professionalism is. Being a pilot isn't all seat-of-the-pants flying and glory. It's self-discipline, practice, study, analysis and preparation. It's precision. If you can't keep the gauges where you want them with everything free and easy, how can you keep them there when everything goes wrong?

Christmas Dinner—8th December Newnham Court Inn



What am I getting for my membership?

Having not increased subs since 2004 a motion was passed at last year's AGM to increase subs by £5 - 4% per year which will see us into the future. Regretfully the committee also made the decision to save on postage (blame the PO) by going to all

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Stow Maries Airfield has been awarded an Angel Award by English Heritage and the Daily Telegraph. Details and pictures on:-
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/angel-awards/>

Owner Russell Savory gave us a talk last April

www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

email newsletters. The golf club has asked us to pay more for room hire and we are getting more interesting speakers which will all add to greater expenditure with expenses and possibly accommodation to pay for. Often this has included volunteer projects and charities such as Medway Queen & Kent Battle of Britain Museum. How many clubs offer eleven newsletters a year and monthly meetings for less? We have had interesting talks on Stow Maries & Peter Gorman's flight to Cape Town. The treasure hunt with food laid on could have been better attended and the Rochester fly-in was washed out making a loss. So please don't miss out on meetings and newsletters!

Dates for your Diary29th Nov Strut Meeting *KAA pilot*

8th Dec Christmas dinner

15th Jan GASCo Safety Evening
Holiday Inn Rochester16th Jan GASCo Safety Evening
Biggles Bar, Lydd Airport31st Jan AGM *and Raffle**Medway RAEs Meetings BAE Systems 19:00*

21st Nov F-35BJSF Fighter

12th Dec Rochester Avionic Archives

16th Jan 55 Years of flying fun

29th Feb Active Sticks

20th Mar Chasing the Morning Sun

17th Apr Kept in the Dark

22nd May AGM & A day @ Rochester
Airport



Light Aircraft Association

Kent Strut Annual Dinner

Newnham Court Inn (Notcutts)

Bearsted Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5LH

Saturday 8th December 2012

7.00 for 7.30 pm

**Merry Christmas Mushrooms served on Garlic Bread
King Prawn Cocktail served with Brown Bread
French Onion Soup served with Baguette and Butter**

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**Christmas Turkey and all the Trimmings
Traditional Roast Beef
Brie and Cranberry Pie
Salmon Supreme
Selection of Seasonal Vegetables and Potatoes**

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**Traditional Christmas Pudding
Chocolate Mint Ice Cream Cake
Melting Christmas Cookie
Cherry Bakewell Cheesecake
Selection of Cheese and Biscuits**

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Coffee and Mince Pie

Please make your reservation no later than the 1st December 2012 together with your remittance of **£15 per person to Gary Smith Tel No : 01795 422426 or 7, The Crescent, Kemsley, Sittingbourne, Kent.ME10 2SA**

Members Name :

	Starter:.....	Main:.....	Pud:.....
Guest 1:	Starter:.....	Main:	Pud:.....
Guest 2:	Starter:.....	Main:.....	Pud:.....
Guest 3:	Starter:.....	Main:.....	Pud:.....