



February 2013

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the **Kent**

**Remembering the better weather of
2012 and some snow!**



Light Aircraft Association

Schaffen - Revisited! *Martin Frinsted*

It's been a long time since my first visit to Schaffen-Diest, a popular 'Oldtimer' fly-in, in Belgium. I'm not sure if it's the free landings, free baguette & drink on arrival, the old aeroplanes or the fact that 'we' take over a military airfield for the weekend but there is certainly an atmosphere of upbeat contentment and achievement every time I go.

I hadn't been for 4 or 5 years, when the usual registration reminder from Guy arrived.



Nigel Read - Editor

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**28th February Meeting
Quiz Night
Cobtree Manor Golf Club,**



As I tend to specialise in introducing both qualified and unqualified pilots to touring in the UK & abroad, I mentioned it to those that might be interested. Temptation overcame the fear of the unknown for one chap who has been upgrading his skills from flex wing to a Sky Ranger Swift G-CFGO.

The microlight is based at a demanding strip at Northiam near Rye. I say demanding, not because the strip is too short at 400 metres, or too narrow, or wider than a lot of strips before the hay is cut, or because it's one way in & one way out, but because the farmer had posted a 4ft high wooden fence all the way around causing grief to more than one pilot.

The forecast was for a 15kt crosswind at 90 degrees and at all up max weight and we were right on the limits. A couple of phone calls to friends with similar aircraft still had the fence trying to psyche me out. As it happened the Skyranger just took it in its stride, without a hint of concern.

With a strong headwind, the channel seemed wider than normal, often giving us a ground speed down to 50mph. Landing at Kortrijk {Courtray} we were met by a most welcoming official, who thanked us for choosing the airfield for customs clearance & fuel uplift.

After passing Ghent the gap between Antwerp & Brussels can be a bit intimidating, but these days with GPS & moving maps life is a lot simpler.

The look of wonder on Colin's face was both satisfying and infectious as he booked in, confessing openly that the furthest he had been to date was Hastings in one direction and Ashford in another.



Clearly we had another convert!

After the complimentary lunch and a couple of beers the world was in perspective as we walked around the old cars, bikes, caravans, tractors and of course planes. Personally I'm not a camper as that ground seems a lot harder these days, but if I was going to camp, I would do so here. Everything is centred on the airfield, with good toilet & shower facilities, as well as an evening BBQ.



I like the town with its old buildings and for the weekend it has a carnival feel. The live band that played in the evening were excellent and there was not a seat to be had anywhere in the town square.

After dinner over a brandy & cappuccino in the balmy night air, there were at least two happy aviators, not feeling the slightest bit guilty that the lawn would not get cut or the car washed this weekend.

The following day after a leisurely morning chatting with some old & new friends it was time to make use of that tailwind, which had slowed us up so much outbound. This time it was Calais for customs and then home in time to light the BBQ.

Colin is generally a quite man, but just ask him what he's been doing recently, with three new airfields, 6 hours flying and so much happening in such a short space of time, be prepared for a lengthy answer.

Schaffen is one of my top 10 favourite fly-ins and very accessible from our part of the world, but due to some unnecessary Belgian bureaucracy puts off many pilots with permit aircraft. <http://flyin.dac.be>

This year is the 30th fly-in and is on 17th-18th August.





Julie Garside of the turb display team with one of the Tiger Club's Turbulents on Skis at Challock. 'Layering' is the best way to keep warm in the cold!

Nick Hampton in the ski equipped Tiger Club Turbulent also at Challock. Keeping his hand in while the RV is tucked up warm and snug!



Flying the Duine D-31 Turbulent on skis *Nick Hampton*

What do you need on a grey, freezing cold day, with snow on the ground, after one of the wettest years on record? Apart from putting your feet up, next to the fire, with a pint, is to go and play in the snow of course.

I have been monitoring every snowfall this winter, keenly trying to assess whether it is enough to get a Turb on skis airborne. After a couple of very light falls this winter, the week end of January 19/20 looked to be more promising so I wandered down to Headcorn to see if anyone else was thinking the same. A small band of hardy souls turned up, in dribs and drabs, but all had a twinkle in the eye and more of a spring in their step, than usual. One was feeling so chirpy, in fact, I thought I detected a hand brake turn in front of the Hangar. But I may have been mistaken. It was very slippery.

Glyn, Alan Garside and Sam Whatmough took a stroll down to inspect the depth covering the runway, followed by Jamie Freeman in his Volvo pulling his children on Toboggans. Happily, the consensus favoured fitting skis to G-ARNZ. Alan has obviously done this before and in no time at all the wheels were off and the skis fitted. Jacking up a Turb is fairly straight forward but fitting split pins with freezing hands is a bit more of a challenge. A natty feature, designed by Alan, are the trolleys which fit under the skis and are used for manoeuvring the aircraft in the hangar.

Mid morning, we gathered around the little dark blue turb and prepared to start it. For those who don't know, it has a 1600cc Volkswagen engine producing about 35H.P. at 3100 R.P.M. It has a choke instead of a primer, so starting in these temps can be a challenge. Alan in the cockpit, faced Glyn who was swinging the prop. Suck in. Switches on and Glyn swung the prop. Nothing. Swing and swing again. Mags off. (It actually has dual electronic ignition but to avoid confusion the traditional terms are used). Blow out then suck in and have another go. Lots of in/out movement of the choke. Swing, swing, swing. It was about zero but I swear I saw a bead or two on Glyn's furrowed brow. Others swung in turn until the "wagon of the people" spluttered in to life, before we ran out of prop swingers.

After power checks, a burst of power and the little plane moved off on to the bleak, wide open expanse of the airfield. Turning onto the runway the distinctive uneven popping noise increased in speed and volume as it began its take off run.

Apparently, the Inuit people have numerous names for all the different types of snow. The ideal type seems to be dry and powdery, minimising drag of the skis.

When my turn came I strapped in and followed the ski tracks of the others. Depth perception in virgin snow is difficult but the tracks give a reference point and help to judge height and distance. Full power applied, the aircraft picked up speed relatively slowly, very similar to flying on floats. Once it unsticks there is a noticeable increase in acceleration. What a view looking down on the fields and hills of Kent. Everything looks different and it is quite hard to make out even familiar landmarks. Once in the air, the Turb is a delight to fly, being light and predictable on the controls, whether on wheels or skis. We had the airfield and sky to ourselves. The feeling of freedom was even more pronounced than usual. What a way to enjoy flight. Eventually the cold in the open cockpit reminded me I had better give someone else a chance, so I made several practice approaches to get the feel for judging height above the large white expanse. Finally, based on advice from the experienced pilots, I made my approach in still, smooth conditions, flying the aircraft onto the snow. It felt like floating down into a very large duvet. I was only sure I was down when I could feel the de-acceleration of the skis on the snow. So very, very smooth.

Once the little V-dub has been shut down, listen to the silence, listen out for all the other delicate sounds muffled by the snow, and you will feel a warm glow inside.

One of the little band of brothers and sisters, one who flies airliners for a living, said that he looks forward to this all year. Another said that he would prefer flying these if only you could make a living out of it. It is simply an incredible amount of fun, particularly when you consider it cost me all of £18.00.

Do yourself a favour. Get down to the Tiger club and have a go in the Turb, so you are ready and prepared to enjoy the next significant snow fall.

Also, visit U tube and search for Sam Whatmough's delightful video "Ski turb".

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=I1U1JRtykcY



CAP 694 UK Flight Planning Guide

The 3rd edition of the above was issued in January. The definitive document containing all 120 pages of it! Luckily the bookmarks allow quick access to the most relevant pages for a quick reminder.

<http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%20694.pdf>

F15's at play Video

Here is another video on the web for budding Top Guns! Fighters from Langley and Oceana . Video was taken at Kadena Air Force Base, Okinawa.

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/40935850>

Strut AGM

Some 25 members, including most of the committee, attended. The new constitution was accepted, Steve Solley already on the committee took over as membership secretary, while Grahame Hammond, retiring from the post after eleven years remains on the committee. No new committee members were elected, the existing were re-elected.

Committee Contacts**Co-ordinator: Gary Smith****Tel : 01795 422426**gary.james.smith@btinternet.com**Treasurer:****John Dean 01892 822776**john@jmdean.co.uk**Membership Secretary:****Stephen Solley 07836 653257**sc.solley@solleysicecream.co.uk**Newsletter Editor:****Nigel Read 01634 362375**skywritings@tesco.net**Committee Members:****Mike Negus 01634 364396****Mark Balding 01580 851112****Brian Hope 01795 662508****Graham Hammond 01622 891466****Simon Pratt 07973 402986****Martin Payne 01474 853181****Web Master****Glen Everett 01622 858956**glen@flyingadverts.co.ukwww.solleysicecreams.co.uk

Grahame was awarded the Phil Barnard Trophy (aka, the Strut Screw).

Those of you with membership renewals in February should send remittance to Grahame as per the address on the renewal form to help ease Steve into the job.

Following on, members were entered into a free raffle, the committee being excluded.

The meeting ended with a slide show of Colin Evens photos from early days at Rochester, featuring many permit aircraft from PFA rallies, narrated by a very knowledgeable Brian Hope.

Dates for your Diary**28th Feb Strut Quiz Night**

Mike Negus will have his quiz masters hat on.

28th March Strut Meeting

Bob Ogley, local historian and writer - Biggin Hill

25th Apr Strut Meeting

Exec 162

30th May Strut Meeting

Kestrel -big cousin of ARV!

**Don't forget the quiz night—
bring along the intelligent
members of your family!!**