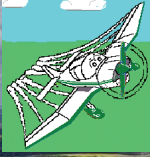


May 2015



SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*

Lovely flying weather ahead!



Meetings

Next Meeting

Last October we had a very interesting talk on RAF Tempsford from Fr. Peter Geldard, clearly very keen and knowledgeable on the subject and he has completed a new talk on the raid on Amiens Jail. Peter flies an Arrow from Rochester and is Chaplain to the University of Kent.

Last Meeting

Air commodore Bill Corydon gave a talk and slide show on Eastchurch WW1 Airfield and history of some of the officers and operations of units that formed there, covering the formation and development of the Royal Flying Corps into the Royal Air Force and Royal Naval Air Service.

In 1912, the Admiralty sent officers from Eastchurch to find sites around the east coast. The Navy had a total of 22 officers with flying certificates. By the end of the year, proposals were submitted for an aircraft carrier and there was a seaplane station on the Isle of Grain and an airship base is started at Kingsnorth.

The following year, more stations are established by Eastchurch men, HMS Hermes has a flying platform and



Nigel Read - Editor

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*Bill
Corydon*

29th May Meeting

Fr Peter Geldard, Operation Jericho

Cobtree Manor Golf Club, 20:00hrs

www.laakentstrut.org.uk

by July the Navy have 22 landplanes, 10 seaplanes but only half are airworthy! December 30th, HQ Naval wing of the RFC was transferred to a central Air Office Sheerness, with a Captain Scarlett in charge.

In 1914, a Tramp steamer under construction was purchased by the RN as a seaplane carrier, along with three Southeast and Chatham packet boats *Empress*, *Engardine* and *Riviera* adapted to carry four seaplanes that would be hoisted on and off the ships by crane. 1st July, the Naval wing becomes the RNAS.

On the 1st August 1914, Germany declares war on Russia then France. Three days later Belgium is overrun and as a result of an 1839 treaty between Britain and neutral Belgium, Britain declares war on Germany. By now the RN has 40 landplanes, 52 seaplanes and 7 airships but only two aeroplanes and one airship have machine guns but still only half the aircraft are serviceable. One of the original airman pioneers, Frank McClean donated his 13 aircraft and house at Eastchurch to the RN.

Germany meanwhile has 24 Zeppelins, ten of which are ready for action.

By 1915, the responsibilities of the Royal Naval Air Service include all land and seaplanes, Airships and Balloons, seaplane carriers, even armoured cars and trains, Motorcycle machine gun units, Gun units, Anti Aircraft batteries and searchlights.

Turkey blockades the Dardanelles sea route to Russia via the sea of Marmara and the Eastchurch Squadron is sent to the eastern Mediterranean arriving on 24th March with 3 BE2's, 2 Sopwith Tabloids, and one each Breguet, Henry Farman and Nieuport. More Henry Farmans are delivered but are rejected still in their crates as underpowered by CR Samson, now officer commanding and one of four original naval officers accepted for flying training. (He was the first to fly off a moving ship and eventually was promoted to Air Commodore). Six 'Folders' arrived on Arc Royal and after swamping aircraft with a French squadron had 22 aircraft – just 5 of them operational, two with machine guns and able to carry four 20lb bombs.



Eastchurch Café / Museum

A small café and museum have opened on the site of Eastchurch airfield, which is now Swaleside prison. You don't need to commit any crimes to visit, just drive into Wrights way from Brabazon Road and it's the brown roofed building on the left about 130 metres along the road. Staffed by inmates during the middle part of the day. I believe you can park alongside.

Visitors to Farthing Corner Pictures from Ron Parker



Martin F flew in from frinsted in his Jabiru 3300 powered Sport cruiser



Steve Roger's flew this Bulldog into Farty

How good is your Nav?



Peter Kember took this picture recently stating the colours this year are as stunning as he can remember. Where do you think it was taken? Can you find the name of the village bottom right on Google? Clues at bottom of the following pages.

Answer on back page.

Note: PAFRA's Navex is on 20th September with money prizes all set by Martin Leusby. If you think you can spot places on the ground from supplied photographs around a chosen route have a go!

Bristol frequency monitoring

Another SSR code 5077 on 125.650. May be used up to 40nm range.

Glasgow frequency monitoring

Going as far as Glasgow? They also have a squawk code 2620. Glasgow Approach, 119.100

Clue 1: Peter was flying from Wing Farm to Laddingford and about 10 minutes into the flight.

One small “step” for aviation, but one large “step” for Pietenpol-kind.

By Gary Smith.

Owning a modern factory-built aircraft is way beyond many people’s budget and those still wanting to fly have looked to the LAA for inspiration and assistance. Before the advent of the “kit aeroplane” people had to build from plans, making every single component as they went and it is no surprise that builders often took 10 to 20 years to complete their project, if they got finished at all.

The vast majority of LAA aircraft you see today have been assembled from



a kit of pre-made parts and while one may think this “assembly job” is labour intensive the additional work required when building from plans is enormous.

Back in 1998 Strut member Ian McLeod decided he needed a retirement project to keep him occupied during the week. Bucking the modern trend he looked at the older designs and chose to build a Pietenpol Air Camper... which could only be built from plans. For those not familiar with the older types, the Pietenpol (originally designed in the 1920s, and first flown in 1928) could best be described as a Tiger Moth with no bottom wings.

Ian made good progress and gave us an update at one of the Kent Strut builders evenings back in the mid 2000’s. He reported to be at the tentative stage of 90% complete with 90% left to go and was hoping it would be flying “soon”.

The engine of choice was a Subaru EA81 car engine with a belt reduction drive turning a wooden prop similar to that of a Piper J3 cub. Unfortunately it took a few years to iron out a list of niggling little engine

Clue 2: Runway 35 and adjacent taxiway is just below the Horizon.

problems but finally, thanks mainly to Ron Parker, it made its maiden flight in April 2012. Whilst the engine / reduction unit is a recognised conversion LAA still required it to complete 25 trouble free hours and Jim Stevens duly pottered around Kent last summer to clock these off.

The CAA swiftly dispatched the documents stating G-LEOD was now a proper aeroplane (July 2014). All it needed now was to be flown.

Ian invited one or two people to take his little yellow bird to the air but until now every flight had been to and from Farthing Corner airfield. The radio had initially been a bit quiet so before taking it away I converted a set of “Walkman” headphones (which puts the sound right in the ear) to wear under my flying hat and placing the standard head set over the top just shut out the noise. This worked brilliantly well. Note: it has a silencer but is open cockpit flying.



*After the epic flight,
Ian standing along side*

So on Friday 24th April I decided it was time to make that “small step for aviation but a big step for Pietenpol-kind” and fly the Piet all the way to Rochester (about 4nm). Sure, there have been more monumental flights but not for this aircraft ... it’s very first land-away.

It has landed at Clipgate Farm since and hopefully will be seen at a few more airfields and events over the summer. It’s not quick but it is BRIGHT yellow so you should not be able to miss it.

The workmanship Ian has put into the aircraft is superb, it was a shame it had to be covered up with fabric. Ian has also been known to make the odd violin. What would a Stradivarius aircraft fly like? Or sound like?

Clue 3: The light coloured field next to the village is shown half green on Google satellite view. Martin uses pictures from different seasons too!

A rare visitor to Laddingford photo Peter Kember



This Heliopolis Gomhouria 181 Mk6, G-TPWX is an Egyptian made Bucker Bestmann, a type used by the Luftwaffe in the 1930s and 1940s, hence the wartime markings. Built in 1966, c/n 183 previously D-EECW it has a Continental O-300 and two seats.



Clue 4: The line of trees in the adjacent field should confirm the location. But surely you've got it by now!

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**Dates for your Diary**

28th May Operation Jericho
 25th June Ripple fly/drive in BBQ
 2nd August Sunday fly-in at EGTO
 Replacing July Thursday
 meeting
 27th August Rochester BBQ
 Back to Golf Club:-
 24th September Strut meeting
 29th October Strut meeting
 26th November Strut meeting