

June 2015



SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



Light Aircraft Association

Royal Aero Club Recognition

Bronze medal for Gary Smith

An association like ours relies heavily on volunteers, without them many of the activities we enjoy simply wouldn't happen. It is only right that every now and again we recognise the efforts of those volunteers and in the world of recreational and sporting aviation, the UK's highest accolade is an award from the Royal Aero Club. It is therefore a great pleasure to note that Kent Strut's very own Gary Smith was presented with a Bronze Medal by the RAeC at its Awards Evening at the RAF Club in London in May for his contribution to recreational aviation. We all know Gary as our Strut Coordinator but he is also an LAA Inspector and LAA Educational Trust Metalwork course tutor, both roles in which he passes on the vital skills members require to safely build and maintain their aircraft. Well done Gary

on a much deserved award.

(Brian Hope)

*Ripple BBQ
by Road*



Nigel Read - Editor

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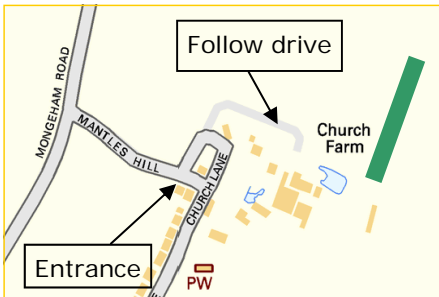
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**25th June Meeting
Fly or Drive, Ripple BBQ
Steve Solley's strip 18:00hrs**



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Gary receiving the medal from Andrew Haines, Chief Executive, CAA



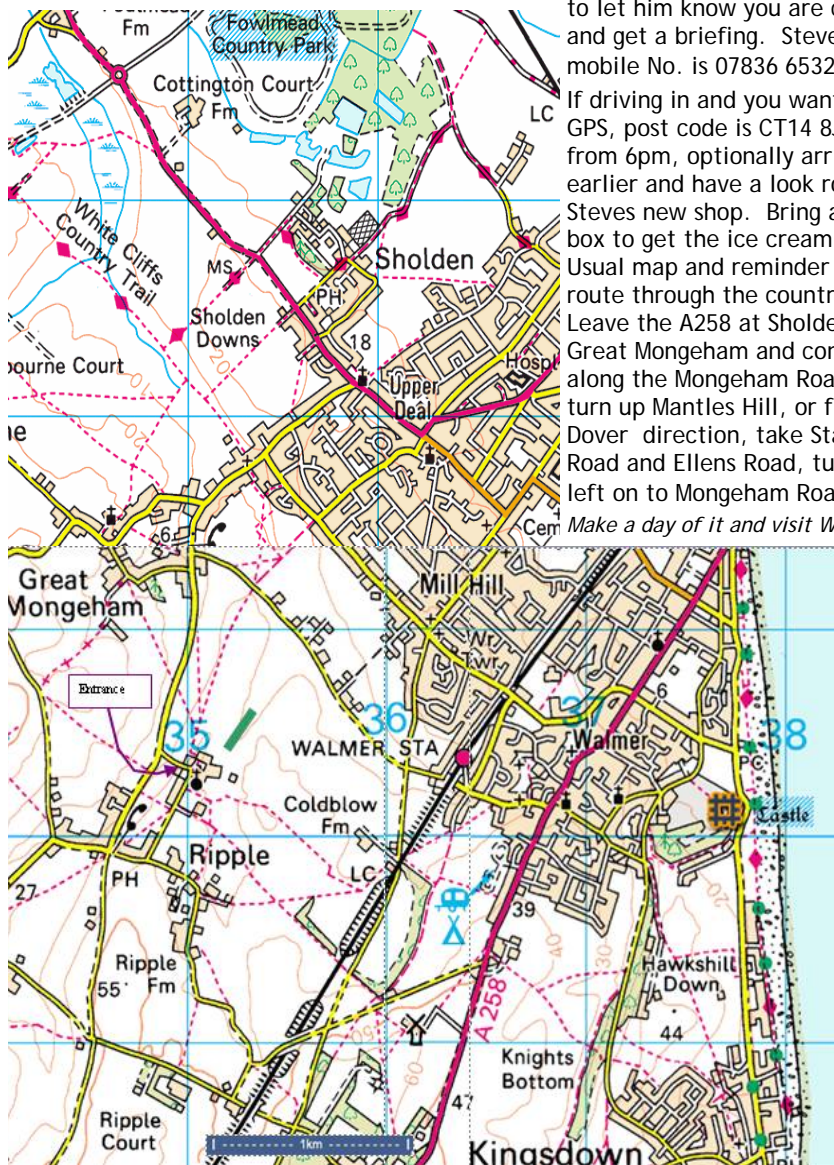
June Meeting

We leave the golf club for our three summer meetings starting with our annual fly-in to Steve Solley's 350 metre strip at Ripple near Deal. For those who can't use a short strip or want to bring the family we can drive in for a BBQ finished off with Solley's Ice Cream.

If flying in, bear in mind the strip is only 350 metres long and you should call Steve

to let him know you are coming and get a briefing. Steve's mobile No. is 07836 653257.

If driving in and you want to use GPS, post code is CT14 8JL. BBQ from 6pm, optionally arrive earlier and have a look round Steves new shop. Bring a cold box to get the ice cream home! Usual map and reminder of the route through the country lanes:- Leave the A258 at Sholden for Great Mongeham and continue along the Mongeham Road and turn up Mantles Hill, or from Dover direction, take Station Road and Ellens Road, turning left on to Mongeham Road.



Make a day of it and visit Walmer, Deal or Dover castles, The Battle of Britain Museum at Hawkinge or B.o.B memorial at Capelle-Ferne

CAA GA Annual report 2015

The CAA have published an annual report on General Aviation detailing progress since the GA unit was set up (in response to the government red tape challenge) and key points to pursue in the coming months. A 28 page pdf is available from this link. <http://tinyurl.com/oqk62pn>

(Lots of full-page pictures so not too weighty to wade through).

Reports from and about some of the 35 staff that make up the unit and quotes from Philip Hall and Roger Hopkinson from the LAA and others involved in GA including Gliding on what they think of the GA unit so far and the forging of closer ties between stakeholders and with EASA.

First Find a Plane Part 1 by Peter Huxley

Many of you reading this will already have gone through this process and for quite a few it will have occurred several years ago. Perhaps for a few it will have been fairly simple in that the finances allowed you to buy whatever took your fancy but for most the cost of an aeroplane required some, or a lot, of filtering to find something that balanced your need or desire with something you could afford. I would be included in that category but also with all the other related costs, a group ownership was the only viable choice. With nothing appropriate within a sensible distance from my home, I looked for like-minded individuals to join in forming a group. Some expressed an interest but so far only one has made any commitment and so David and I are looking for something together. David is building a Vans and needs an aeroplane for a relatively short term in order to keep current for a lot less money than the cost of hiring. I, on the other hand, plan to stay within a group and find new people to join as and when the occasion arises which will not only keep the costs manageable but also ensure that the aeroplane is used frequently. I'm not a trained engineer but I do know that leaving any machinery unattended for long periods is not the way to promote longevity or reliability. We have agreed that the sort of thing we are looking for will be on a Permit, tailwheel and preferably low wing, which mostly leads us to French-designed, wood and fabric types.

Having previously been in a group when I lived in Dorset this was no hardship, in fact quite the reverse as I was part of a syndicate that ran a Rollason-built Condor. It was an easy to fly aeroplane with no vices although it could be a bit twitchy on landing as I discovered on my first solo landing. Fortunately no damage was done but made me aware how important my feet were! From that experience I learned very quickly and had no more problems. The pleasure I got from that aeroplane and the satisfaction of maintaining it cemented my appreciation of the permit system and the types available, so looking for something similar was going to be a pleasure.

Pleasure was not, perhaps, the first emotion once we started looking as finding something affordable, capable and in the right condition proved not to be so easy. Our first attempt at viewing was lucky in that we saw an advert for a Jodel D112 which although fairly high hours, had only recently been completely re-covered and re-sprayed and also had some re-furbishment in the cockpit. I asked Gary Smith to

fly me to its home base, as not only would it be a quick journey but as an inspector, Gary was well placed to assess the overall condition. That shouldn't have been a problem anyway as the aircraft was regularly flown by Ken Craigie but it's always nice to have your own confirmation of the situation. It was a very windy and gusty day when we went to see the aircraft so I couldn't fly it but Gary's brief inspection of it plus perusing the logbooks told me that it was all it appeared to be, a very pretty and well-presented aeroplane that was worth the asking price. However, problems arose when David went to see it. Firstly, the size of the cockpit meant that headroom was a serious problem which would only be partially resolved with a thinner seat cushion and secondly that with David and Ken aboard there was only sufficient payload remaining for a small amount of fuel. In the prevailing weather the climb rate was marginal so that effectively for David, it would be a single-seater. The aircraft only had the C-65 engine, so another variant with a larger engine would be more practicable but the problem of headroom still remains.

Further searching revealed a Rollason Condor which I knew would be a better proposition although there could still be a question mark over headroom but before a viewing could be arranged an advertisement for a Scintex-built Emeraude appeared which was top of the wish-list for both David and me. It seemed to be in reasonable condition, although comparison with the pristine Jodel we'd looked at was always going to colour our judgement and David's first look seemed to confirm this. Even without that inevitable disappointment we both had doubts about the asking price, not only from the point of raising the money with only the two of us as confirmed syndicate members but also concerning the possibility of the need for some major fabric work in the not too distant future. With these doubts in mind we agreed to continue to look for another plane, especially after our offer was immediately rejected as being much too far from being a sensible offer. Obviously any aeroplane or anything else is only worth what someone is prepared to pay for it but judgement of that from the buyer's point of view is also coloured by the thought of what he can get away with!

Our first discovery of an alternative was through the LAA magazine with an advert for a Jodel D120. For various reasons, David decided to make a visit by road, which was a brave decision given that the aeroplane was based near Perranporth in Cornwall. The visit proved two things: First, that Perranporth is a long way from Chilham! Secondly, that descriptions in adverts can't always be trusted. The degree to which the second fact is true, was in this case a considerable disappointment. First appearance is important and in this case, by David's description, it looked scruffy with patches of irregularly applied paint. Questioning the owner gave no particular indication that the importance of rigorous maintenance was fully understood, so David left without further investigation, slightly disillusioned and leaving him and subsequently me, with the feeling that we were chasing our tails in the search for our goal for an aeroplane to own and fly. Still, *nil desperandum*, something would turn up and hopefully it wouldn't be so far flung as Cornwall.

We are getting closer, I hope and will relate more of the story in part two.

Haveningham Hall

Country fair takes place on Saturday and Sunday, 11th and 12th July.

Classic vehicles, Clay Shooting, Sheep, Ferrets, Alpacas, Dog show, flower show, Silence Twister Aerobatics, Wing Walking, 4 x4 driving, Zip Wire, water sports, all sorts of things you can happily watch other people doing! They are expecting over 100 aircraft, so to be one of them...

Information on flying in, from Flying Director John Hill :-

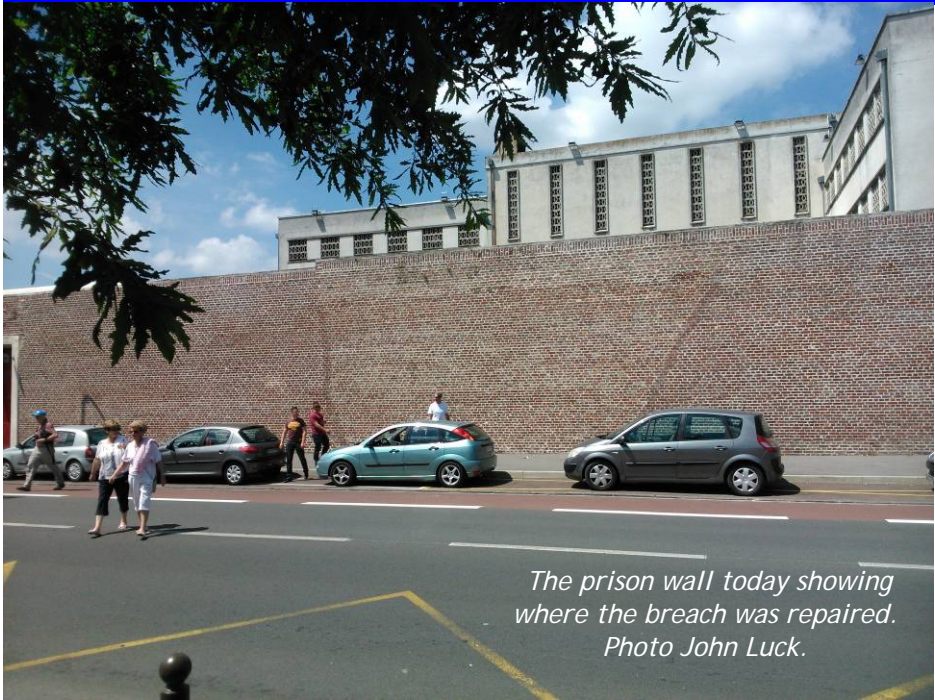
by email john.david.hill@btinternet.com

or by phone 07796 878052 www.countryfair.co.uk/attractions



Last month's meeting

Peter Geldard gave us his talk on Operation Jericho, the low level bombing raid on Amiens prison on 18th February 1944. Many unanswered questions remain as to who ordered the raid and the reasons behind it. Several books have been written on the subject, exploring different theories. Peter draws comparisons with the Dambusters raid in that a year was available for perfecting the technique and the outcome was made public the following morning, whereas Jericho had only a few weeks and a week before the raid the leader was changed from Air Vice Marshal Basil Embry to Group Captain Percy Charles Pickard, who had become famous from an earlier proper gander film unfortunately becoming one of the casualties when a FW 190 shot off the tail of his Mosquito. No reports were issued until the following October.



*The prison wall today showing where the breach was repaired.
Photo John Luck.*

The reason given for the raid was that 100 resistance were to be executed the following day but proof of this was not found. A theory that an inmate may have had information about the planned D Day invasion was put forward, the plan being to breach the prison wall and destroy the guard house at midday when the guards were eating. This was also the reason for switching leaders as Basil Embry had been involved in D Day preparations. Had the first wave of bombers flying at 50 feet down the main Albert to Amiens road using 11 seconds delay fuses failed then a second wave was to be called in by Pickard to destroy the prison having given the prisoners a fighting chance to escape.

A diversion raid on the railway station held up German reinforcements for a couple of hours but about most of the escapees were recaptured within two days.

There was a considerable delay before the British public were informed of the raid, possibly they were waiting for confirmation that an objective had been achieved. Film shot at the time from a photo reconnaissance Mosquito was shown in news-reels.

The raid took off from RAF Hunsdon in Hertfordshire in appalling weather, with Typhoon escorts coming from Manston. Several did not get airborne or turned back leaving nine aircraft for the main attack and four in reserve.

The raid may have been requested by the Special Intelligence Service as a letter

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from their head 'C' turned up thanking the RAF for their involvement. Aircraft from the New Zealand and Australian air forces also took part.

Coming Soon...**Dates for your Diary**

25th June Fly-in/Drive in BBQ Ripple

11th-12th July Haveningham Hall

Note: there is no meeting on Thursday 25th June, replaced by:-

2nd August (*Sunday*) Strut organised LAA Rochester Pancake Fly-in

27th August Strut Evening BBQ at Rochester

24th September Strut Meeting at Golf Club

20th October Strut Meeting