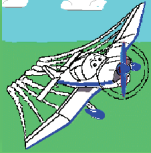


August 2015



# SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



## Last BBQ coming up!

**RV's to Portugal 2015** by Gary Smith and Ron Parker

In 2013 a group of 12 Vans RV aircraft visited Italy in search of “The perfect Pasta” and returned to Rome in 2014 to get their money’s worth out of the maps. The success of the trips reverberated around the internet and eventually Vivien West was persuaded to organise another one of her great “Fly-in’s” at Portimão in Southern Portugal for 2015.

Whilst Vivien and Richard live in southern Portugal the organisation was particularly troublesome since they actually live 50 miles from their local airfield and flying is not the easy, administration friendly pleasure we experience here in the UK. The initial response had 30 aircraft sign up but as the time drew near people dropped out and the dedicated hard core flyers got down to the heavy business of planning routes and getting permission to enter Spain and Portugal. Obtaining paper maps for Iberia (Spain / Portugal) was a problem since last year’s maps were generally out of stock and this year’s were yet to be printed. In the end everybody used a rather poor 1million scale map backed up with the SkyDemon software on a “computer tablet”.

We left the strip on Thursday morning (21<sup>st</sup> May) and routed directly to La Rochelle. In years gone by this would have been a 2 day epic in the Piper Vagabond but now it was considered “just the morning flight”. The mid-week restricted airspace in the south west corner of France appeared quite daunting we but followed the trick



Nigel Read - Editor

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**17:30 hrs**

**[www.laakentstrut.org.uk](http://www.laakentstrut.org.uk)**

of flying in the bottom of the airways. A normal VFR flight plan was submitted but in the route we nominated a VOR beacon as a joining point followed by the airway to the next VOR beacon and so on to the destination. For height we declared flight level FL095 (i.e. 500ft below the start of the proper airways at 10,000ft) and off we went. Apparently the French are happy with this procedure and it took so much pain out of navigating around the restricted zones.

So we departed La Rochelle, climbed to the bottom of the airway, found the VOR then flew down the “motorway-in-the-sky”, simple as that. Bordeaux international airport passed underneath followed by the western end of the Pyrenees and off we went to Spain.

There were just five aircraft on the apron at Burgos, all British RV's. The airport was the size of Luton, there were no commercial flights and with the exception of ourselves the place was devoid of aircraft. Amazing, how does that work financially?

A nice evening meal was followed by an early return to the hotel but unfortunately we selected the window blinds to their “black out” state. The knocking at the door the following morning was not our chums calling for breakfast, but was the maid wanting to turf us out - it was 12:30 and we had monumentally overlaid - woops. Luckily we had fuelled the previous night so made a rapid dash for the airport, filed a flight plan and departed for Coimbra in Portugal.

2 hours of flying (west) over the barren rocky landscape brought us towards the Atlantic coast and things began to get green again. Coimbra was pleasant enough, quaintly perched on a little plateau with a nice clubhouse and an ambience to match. Roger Hopkins was about to depart in his RV10 so we had a leisurely lunch whilst waiting for our flight plan to “go” and followed them for the one hour flight south to our destination.

Note. Every flight in Spain and Portugal must have a flight plan, even for circuits. Having just flown 2 hours over barren rocky countryside you begin to understand why.

We were the 21<sup>st</sup> RV to land in Portimao, quite a feat of organisation by anybody's account. Our hotel was a mere 10 minute walk up the hill and after a freshen-up we were hungry for our evening meal. We had drastically out grown the taverna's in the local village so made our way (by car) to the only place in Portimao town that could seat the 47 of us.

I could not face the stigma of overlaying again so was in the hotel's swimming pool at 7am the next morning. A group of us took a cheap taxi into town for breakfast and played “tourist” until evening when it was time to return to the airfield. The party had gained a few locals from the aero club and a splendid evening's entertainment was laid on, including a superb al-fresco buffet, a most unusual lucky dip, flying model aeroplanes etc. and a fantastic party atmosphere. All too soon it was time to retire to our hotel with filled tummies and hands full of goodies for everyone.



Sunday morning started with breakfast at the beach followed by a walk along the sea front. The water looked most inviting but waves from the “deep Atlantic” meant you need to break the ice before jumping in (it was flipping freezing).

Sunday afternoon saw 17 of us depart for the local go-carting track. The circuit had been built alongside the Portuguese Formula one track and the whole facility was barely a few years old. Having initially qualified in 6th position I relegate myself to last within the first lap due to “excessive use of the controls”. With a bit of help from my team mate Ron (who nudged a few carts out of the way for me) I managed to claw my way back to a credible third place and won a bottle of pop on the podium.

The majority of people were in no rush to return home and there was much talk of visiting either Tangiers (Morocco) or Gibraltar. Whilst some people did manage to land in Africa the paperwork involved was mind boggling - totally over the top and not something I was prepared to suffer either mentally or financially.

We departed Portimao on Monday and routed to the most south westerly point of mainland Europe....because we could. Returning past the airfield we waved our hosts good bye and continued east behind Faro CTA zone to the Spanish border. At Cadiz we watched several C130 transport planes pass underneath (most of our flying was at Flight level FL065) and soon we were at the mouth of the Mediterranean. I had waited a long time for this view and finally we were there:- to the right was the coast of Africa with Tangiers runway in the haze, to the left was the most southerly point of Spain and we were flying down the straights of Gibraltar looking at the cloud sitting over “The Rock”. Amazing.

Air traffic vectored us straight over Malaga International Airport (imagine getting a clearance over Heathrow at FL065) and along with two other aircraft we landed at La Axarquia for fuel and a spot of lunch.

Fuelled up we departed for our two hour tour up the coast to Muchamiel (4nm north of Alicante). The airport sits 5nm back from the coast and the ground slopes away thus providing a fantastic view of the surroundings. The area is very tourist orientated (particularly towards golf) and there was no problem finding a hotel. It would have been nice to have stayed a few days but this was to be a single night stop only.

Tuesday we headed further up the coast and dropped in to Sabadell, just inland from Barcelona, and were met by increasing head winds. Our departure from Sabadell took us up the coast past Calella-del-mar where my aunt lives in a sea front tower block. It seemed wrong not to give her a fly-by so we dived in from 6500ft to a “touch” less than 500ft and waved in her front room windows at 170Kt.....astounding.

The remainder of the leg to Albi (in France) was less forgiving. The strong head winds forecast in the Carcassonne valley were spot on. At one point we had 130Kt air speed, 80Kt ground speed, and were pushing into a full 50Kt head wind for more than 30 minutes. Luckily the wind strength dropped two magnitudes as our three aircraft approached the airfield and everything was good again. The historic town centre is rather unique since all of its buildings are made from red brick instead of

traditional white stone and I would thoroughly recommend it as a good stopping off point.

Wednesday we said our farewells to the other two aircraft who were heading home and continued north to Saumur on the Loire for the last day of our adventure. I have visited the town before, the chateau is still remarkable, the river is still beautiful and the town has lots to do. I remembered there being a WWI / WWII tank museum in the town and took Ron for a visit, he was in engineering heaven. It's worth noting that Saumur airport have been sensible with their fuel pump installation and it accepts visa / master card (not one of those daft Total petrol cards only the French can have) so is therefore open 24 hours per day.

Thursday was time to come home, so we dropped into Caen to file our flight plan and within the hour were drinking tea back at Farthing corner. The trip was tacho 20 hours and put another country and many more airfields in my log book.

Most aircraft are capable of touring, some may only manage short legs while others may not be so quick but the biggest limitation is the imagination of the pilot. I hope fellow pilots get inspiration from seeing what is possible.

If you would like more information then feel free to contact me or others on the Kent Strut committee as many know a lot about foreign touring. *Happy flying, Gary Smith and Ron Parker.*

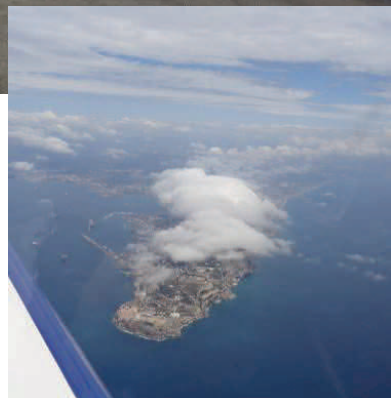
*La Rochelle harbour showing submarine pens*



*Half of the RV arriving at Portimao*



*Gibraltar wearing a hat of cloud*



*The most south westerly corner of Europe*



Chateaux at Saumur

### Rochester Sunday Fly-in, 1st August



The July Thursday meeting was changed to a Sunday fly-in, similar to last year's weekend but it was decided to make it a one day event only. The weather could not have been better and a last minute addition was the Rolls Royce owners club turning up as they did last year, setting up their tables and chairs to settle down to an up market, civilized picnic.

With the strut's giant gazebo set up and gas urn and barbie fired up, the strut took over eastern parking area with access via the hotel car park for those driving in. Fourteen visitors from as far afield as Goodwood and Great Oakley as well as 'local' strips, Maypole, Laddingford, Clipgate, Woodchurch and Headcorn. Redhill and Heathfield were also represented. Utam flying a Rochester based aircraft dropped by in the afternoon. Pancakes hot enough to melt the plastic plates (serviettes made an effective thermal barrier) were cooked up by Mike Negus and Simon Pratt for a £1 alongside the usual BBQ fare. The strut banners announced to any passing aircraft who we were and Kelvin brought a couple of plane loads over for food, the café having closed.



*RV7, first in from Laddingford*



*Ron and Sandra's Husky from Mapole*



*First Rolls Royce to arrive, Peter Kember's Europa in the background*

*Rans S6-116 Coyote II*



*Aeronca 7BCM Champion from Goodwood*





Aeronca 7AC Champion



Stampe SV4C





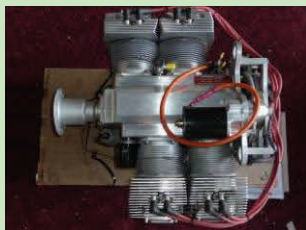


Bentleys were amongst the Rolls Royce's. Cessna 150 amongst the Tecnam, RV's, Europa and Husky.

Hope you enjoyed the pictures and if we don't have one of your aircraft on the web site yet send us one.

### Next Strut Meeting

**B**ack to our usual last Thursday of the month but still at Rochester Airport for an evening BBQ, located outside the control tower, catching the last of the evening summer sun!

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Don't forget, if you have been somewhere interesting or have an interesting story you would like to share, write it up for *Skywritings* and send to the editor—the newsletter relies on contributions from strut members to fill these pages. It would be nice to read articles from some different contributors.

**For Sale**

The editors Jabiru 2200A engine is still available for £3500 for the basic engine with some new parts additionally available that we do not require from the new engine. 500hrs, overhauled and shock tested by Skycraft.

**Dates for your Diary****Strut Meetings****27th August Rochester Airport BBQ****29th August Shuttleworth event****24th September Damyns Hall TBC****27th September Abbeville fly-out****29th October Stow Maries TBC****26th November****Talk on Strut Flying****Expeditions****Christmas Dinner December TBA**