



October 2015

# SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*

## ...Up and Under

*With apologies to Eddie Waring*



### Editorial

This month we get up with reports on short trips with a stay to explore, the Abbeville fly out and Lea on Solent fly-in plus a member of the Solley family has been busy with Photoshop and our coordinators RV9.

Finally thanks' to Brian for finishing off last month's newsletter.

### Amiens Summer 2015 by Mike Tooze

A few days in Amiens in Northern France...

Chatting with Gary at the Rochester barbecue we agreed that some fliers don't get all they could from their exploits. This note hopefully will give some ideas, not necessarily for Amiens but to encourage guys and girls to fly out to stay a while and enjoy the area whereabouts you land.

Our Vari Eze has taken us over Europe, from Corsica, to Scandinavia to Portugal but this article is to show, perhaps newcomers, that you don't have to venture far to have an enjoyable flying holiday. We generally don't just visit airfields only for the flight but stay a few days to explore the countryside and the host town. Earlier this summer we tripped off to Amiens on the River Somme. Some of the Strut have day-tripped into town and enjoyed the restaurants along the old harbour front, another said that it was just an old dilapidated cathedral and not much else. Well, we were going to find out for ourselves.

I had flown the Eze into Amiens airfield before, once for the eclipse and another time when a fuse blew and I nipped into the nearby shops for a replacement - but never into Amiens itself. Leaving on Sunday we stopped off at Le Touquet for lunch in L'Escale and on to our destination. Flying, about an hour in all. (Customs is available on request at Amiens but coming via Le Touq we didn't need them.)

There is no tower at weekends but there is always a friendly helper or two when it



Nigel Read - Editor

**October Meeting TUESDAY 27th**

**Talks on Trips to Italy and Portugal**

**Cobtree Manor Golf Club, 20:00hrs**

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

comes to calling a taxi and bedding down the plane.

We rarely book hotels but this time had booked-ahead. Our hotel sounded just about sumptuous enough for us - The Hotel D'Univers! The taxi zigzagged through a pedestrian area to land us at the entrance. It is an old Victorian building with an atrium before atriums were invented. Centred around this were balustrade landings for the four floors with a fine wide winding oak staircase at one end. All very clean and with helpful staff. Ours was a spacious room on a corner of the second floor overlooking the marbled pedestrian precinct. Pretty comfortable for a few days.

Walking down the shallow hill, marble paved, to the 'centre de ville' we passed by the cathedral, apparently the tallest in Europe but not one for cathedrals I moved on, noting the extensive restoration work. The canalised Somme runs right through the centre with a vast range of restaurants and bars facing us from the other side as we approached. We found a place for soft drinks and excellent ice cream, which gave us a chance to look around. This was once a thriving port with barges, quays, and warehouses, served by an unfathomable network of canals.

Today, Amiens although well inland has a surprisingly 'resort' atmosphere. Studying the map we decided that the park to the north-east of us bordering the Somme and the zoo to the west, were worth a go.

Next morning we set off for the park after a good breakfast, well worth booking in advance as B&B, this saved both time and euros. We normally walk in the open countryside however the park is enormous - different, but with all sorts of interest. From sitting watching the



Somme water traffic to bird watching around a huge lake there was always something going on. After lunch more locals appeared, some quite shapely jogging round the lake. Elsewhere the park shares with a plethora of old cottages and narrow waterways. Each cottage has its own gated humpback bridge allowing for the now extinct canal traffic to pass-under and forbidding access to sightseers. These cottages with their stunning gardens, boat displays and even a barge/houseboat,

were attractions in their own right.

Mind you, all this totally pedestrianised, even in the town where traffic threaded through it felt unusual, coming from Britain, to have cars await you to cross ahead. Not the "Knocked over another careless cyclist/old guy/you name it, today dear" attitude in the UK.

Next day to the zoo. Now I know that zoos are, to many, not pc but stay with me. Passed the shops this gave a view of the main frontage of the cathedral, - I defy anyone not to be in awe of the staggeringly high entrance/doorway or whatever is the correct term. Carrying on along the boulevards created when they demolished

the town walls we soon found the extensive zoo to one side of what were once the grounds of a large chateau. It is threaded, as the town, by its own maze of canals and islands. Inside, just €6 each, I was amazed to find the animals often bounded only by few feet of water, clearly, actually enjoying their habitat. A gibbon



performed for a small crowd, seemingly able to swing out and off his island at will but he and his family were quite happy to stay put. We found a quiet spot for lunch near some antelope as, again, the locals began to appear.

where they connected. The canal network I found intriguing and quite difficult to work out from where the channels started and to where they connected. Walking out down the Somme to about level with the zoo is a two-tier lock system under restoration. It drops about thirty feet. I found it fascinating as, could I work out where that thirty feet was gained between the base of the locks and back at the town centre when the Somme, at the town centre and by another route appeared at the top of the locks!! Oh well, half paid for by the EU too, nice to know where our money goes. Perhaps it was an analogue model of the EU.



So one doesn't need to go far for a foreign holiday experience, I'm reminded of Laval, one of our first away-stays, where the man in the aero club greeted 'Welcome', he paused, 'But why do you come to Laval?' - No one comes to Laval! How nice, that stay turned out to be pretty eventful in the least. There was an arrest outside the hotel the guy being marched off in handcuffs, next day a diving team were looking for a car in the river, and finally, peace, off watching the kingfishers on Le Mayenne when a gentle, chug, chugging gradually got closer. Appeared the most enormous barge seemingly filling between the banks. A little further west and you may find to your liking Bagnoles de L'orne a thermal spring town. It is on the watershed heading E/W where the Roman way is broken by a deep gully. Walking along these paths, wildlife everywhere, I've never been so close to a red deer. Unaware of us it went straight past as we sat watching a goshawk.

Anyway, back to Amiens. The weather was fine during the days but one night we had a really good thunderstorm on its way up to Britain. One clap was right in the town, somewhere. The next morning I looked out at the cathedral, it was still there, ok, its spire slightly 'wonky' from previous hits or a slightly giddy builder.

We planned to whiz direct back to Biggin using the SkyDemon to file the flight plan and other form. Unfortunately, I misjudged the time needed to get out of the hotel and airborne - way too early and ran into a morning cloudbank to the deck barring the Channel. Unsure that if I went on top whether it would be clear enough at the other side to descend before the London TMA, I diverted into Le Touq. After a while we departed to arrive at our original ETA - shouldn't have been so eager to get home!

So there you are, a few ideas for northern France - and Brittany awaits those who can fly a bit further to appreciate Atlantic rollers and good seafood.

## Meetings

**September**— We had an update on Stow Maries from Russell Savory and Dennis Stretton based at Stow and an approved Quad copter operator.



Stow Maries is now a charitable trust with 7 trustees, Russell being one. As well as operating as an airfield, managed by Russell, they also use the site to educate children. Grants to Stow Maries (£1,5m from Libor and £250k from WREN—funded by landfill tax) allowed Russell's partner in the original business to be bought out and Russell subsequently gifted his part to the trust, set up to maintain and further

restore the WW1 buildings, four being earmarked plus a new hangar based on RFC design. These could bring in money from film work. After some considerable negotiating down of the cost to remove the power cables across runway 15/33 this has now been achieved. Russell is still the man to contact regarding flying in.

Aero modellers have been operating at Stow since the 1970's and Dennis Stretton, having moved on from model helicopters to drones discussed the legal aspects of operating them, bringing with him two examples. To operate commercially a test and permit is required from the CAA. Professional drones have GPS/GLONASS that prevent them operating within 2nm of an aerodrome. Sizes are up to 7kg and 7-20kg. Notams need checking, site inspections, railway lines, congested areas, line of sight, height and distance from people are all covered by rules. The smaller example was demonstrated in the lower part of the golf club having sent us behind the glass doors to watch from the bar area. He demonstrated the gyro stabilised camera mount and the image he received in real time on an iPad mounted on the controller, called first person view. After flying around the hall with remarkable precision, sounding like a swarm of angry bees, Dennis simply reached up and

grabbed it in mid air.

He related a story of filming a speed boat on Loch Ness (no he didn't see Nessie) following on in another boat. He forgot the rather clever electronics include an automatic return home function, home being where it took off. Cleverly it



*Small quad copter showing the stairs down to the 'demo area' on the iPad*



Larger and more expensive (15K) model with retracting u/c for full 360° camera rotation

knows how much battery is remaining and when it has just enough to return to the takeoff point, it does just that. Boats going one way, drone using GPS to go the other. A six motor drone can even compensate for the loss of one motor.

He used a £20k drone with a £45k camera mounted on it to film sequences for 'Mission Impossible'.

At Stow, having been a member of the model flying club that met there he thought he could combine the UAV with filming the wild life Russell has encouraged to inhabit the airfield and surroundings, spending a vast amount of time to capture a few seconds of a hare speeding across the fields.



### Don't tell the FAA!

From *William Morrison*

### Save the Jodel Fly-In Lee on Solent— *Mike Negus*

As is well recorded elsewhere Martin Ferid and his Jodel had the misfortune to divert to the only available airfield available due to deteriorating weather a situation which has befallen a number of pilots. The difference here was that it was Roborough (Plymouth) which had ceased all operations on 23 December 2011 and was therefore closed.

The lease holders Sutton Harbour

Holdings PLC, refused to let the aircraft takeoff from the airport's runway, citing safety concerns and Martin's aeroplane was effectively impounded until intervention from a number of parties coupled with bad publicity for the current owners allowed common sense to prevail. On August 28 he was allowed to fly out but by then his case had attracted a lot of local and national interest which reignited the case for re opening the airport as a going concern.

FlyPlymouth are a local body having canvassed business and the community about reopening to favourable opinion and are mounting an active campaign to buy out the lease from SHH PLC.

As a thank you for the support given, Martin hosted a fly in at Lee on Solent which given its geographical location is kind of central made a nice run out except for a 23 knot head wind going which took Colin Evans and I nearly 2 hours to get there. A number of aircraft flew in, one all the way from France, to a half price landing and free bar b q. Incidentally the runway recently resurfaced (by my company I am pleased to say) is first rate and the airfield is very keen to attract more visitors. It is in a stunning location with a view of our RN Dockyard and what looked like most of the navy in there and of course the Isle of Wight just across the Solent. It is PPR though and you have to go on line to register. A team from FlyPlymouth were on hand to further explain their ambitions and if Plymouth re opens I think Martin's experience could well mean something good coming from a bad situation!

See [www.flyplymouth.com](http://www.flyplymouth.com) and help support the cause. An airfield coming back from the grave is a rare event and must be worth championing.

### Abbeville Gary Smith

The Kent strut committee have tried to organise a "fly-out" following every monthly meeting and the September event has traditionally been to Abbeville in France (approx 1:15mins each way). It normally marks the end of the foreign flying season, as winter approaches, and its success depends upon what weather the gods deliver on the day.

Planning a trip to France used to be simple back in the 90's when the whole process of immigration and flight planning was relaxed. It became more involved in 2000's with the introduction of the mandatory GAR form (General Aviation Report for Foreign flights), 4 hours notice of your return, getting your head around the AVPEX flight planning system and faxing your immigration requirements to Abbeville. With the arrival of flight planning software like Sky Demon things have become easy again and by describing the improvements I hope a few more people will be encouraged to make the crossing next year.

If you are using *skydemon* there are a few things to do in preparation. You will need to define your aircraft within the settings, such as air speed, aircraft type, registration etc. You will need to have purchased some flight plan credits from their website (£10 buys 20 credits). You will also need to have pre entered your



personal details and those of any passengers [If you try to submit a GAR an options box appears where a persons details can be entered]. Since this is only a day trip most people file both the outbound and return flight plan (3 or so hours later) at the same time from the comfort of their armchair the night before, thus saving the embarrassment of not being able to get a network connection while in France.

So plan a new route from Rochester to Abbeville, pull the line out to the BNE VOR (behind Boulogne) and save the route. Go into flight details and be sure to set the correct time and date for the flight as this will be used in the flight plan later.

[Remember flight plan times are in Zulu (UTC) so a UK departure at 10:00 BST is 09:00Z). The software detects you are going foreign and provides a box at the top of "Flight details" called "Flight plan". Select the box, check the time is correct, then send. All of the addressing / way points are entered automatically and your flight plan is now in the system. You can make a route for the return journey (3 hours later of course) and file this in the same way. How unbelievably easy is this compared to using the old AVPEX flight planning system.

You only need a GAR form for the flight back into the UK, submitting this the night before ensures the authorities get their 4 hours notice. After submitting your return flight plan there is a box at the top of "Flight Details" called GAR. By selecting this the system will pick the necessary details from the return flight plan, you select the people you wish to include (their details have been previously loaded) and press send. That's now how easy doing a GAR form has become.

The final simplification is that Abbeville have now an e-mail address (instead of a fax) for immigration requests ([ae2ab@orange.fr](mailto:ae2ab@orange.fr)) so just e-mail the Aeroclub all of your flight / personal details (English or French).

Once airborne your base airfield should activate your flight plan or you can do this yourself with "London Information" on 124.6MHz. If you can't get much sense out of Lille on 120.275MHz then don't worry, their radio is very flaky at the best of times.

When you land at Abbeville the airfield controller should close your flight plan with Lille but he is often away at lunch. The French are adamant you close your flight plan by telephone so call Lille (in English) on 0033 3 20 16 19 66 or 0033 3 20 16 19 65. The Airfield Restaurant at Abbeville's details are 0033 3 22 24 11 91 or [relaisdeleurope@wanadoo.fr](mailto:relaisdeleurope@wanadoo.fr) but it really is not necessary to book (we think he may close on Mondays though).

Eight of us sat down to a splendid meal and were entertained afterwards by a WWI biplane doing extremely low "fly-by's" over the airfield. When the bill had been settled Ron and I taxied out behind Mike Tooze in his composite Long-eze hoping to do a bit of formation flying on the way home. Despite the Long-eze having just



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*Send deposits for Xmas  
dinner to Peter, not Gary!*

*Next meeting Tuesday  
27th October*

[www.solleysicecream.co.uk](http://www.solleysicecream.co.uk)

90hp it's a bit of a greyhound. We were visual for about 30 seconds, then he pulled away like we were standing still. We will try again next year but with a bigger head start!

**Advance Notice  
CAA Safety Evening**

Holiday Inn ME5 9SF

Next to Rochester Airport Thursday 7th

January 2016 at 19:30

**Southend Runway Changes.**

On the 28th October 2015 the runway designator numbers will change from 06/24 to 05/23

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

[LsaAirfieldOperations@southendairport.com](mailto:LsaAirfieldOperations@southendairport.com)

01702 538558

**Dates for your Diary**

27th October Talk on our Travels

26th November LAA CEO

12th December Christmas Dinner ...

**Peter Huxley will be collecting deposits:-**

Peter Huxley, Flat 13, Trumpet House,  
Godfrey Walk, Ashford, TN23 7XQ