

August 2016



SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



Final BBQ of the season and more Luscombe travels

Repatriating the Luscombe (the sequel). Gary Smith

When a "hanger chum" is a few hours late returning from a foreign trip there is normally an interesting story to follow but when hours become days it's a serious worry.

Simon and Mike from the Luscombe group (Farthing corner) had been planning a four day tour around France in late May, their Thursday departure had been fine but it was now Tuesday and the aeroplane was still not back.

An e-mail from them described how the "weather fairy" had cut their trip short forcing them to "train it" home and the mention of there being a "twist" to getting the aircraft back made me reach for the phone.

Some football event in France (might have been the world cup!) had prompted the authorities to place a 150nm diameter restricted zone across Northern France and whilst its size was intimidating the circle simply encompassed a collection of much smaller forbidden zones that were only active on specific days. So you could meander in the zone - with caution - but you needed to carry a Transponder. The Luscombe came from an era that had only just seen the invention of



Nigel Read - Editor

Contents

Return of the
Luscombe
p1-p3
Old Timers
p3-p6
Goodwood
p7-p8

August 25th Meeting
BBQ at Rochester Airport
ME5 9SD 19:00hrs

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electricity, a hand held radio was a modern installation but powering a transponder was out of the question. As they walked away from the aeroplane on the apron at Troyes (100nm south east of Paris) the 150nm diameter "transponder mandatory zone" became active, the "twist" being the fact it would be active for the next FOUR WEEKS. A begging phone call to the French authorities for a transponder exemption was refused, so the "twist" was really a major problem.

I am not sure at what point during the telephone conversation I let down my guard, but within 10 minutes I had agreed to fly one of the guys back to Troyes and "shepherd" them out of the zone in my transponder equipped RV. The flying community is a small affair where we try to help each other and I have accepted lots of assistance over the years. Helping the Luscombe get home was a small way of repaying some of my dues back to the flying world and earn some credits back.

Not wishing to leave the aeroplane at Troyes any longer than necessary a plan was formulated to take Mike directly to Troyes on Saturday and route home via Abbeville the same day. Following the weather trend of early 2016 we all opened our curtains on Saturday morning and it was "pants". Mike could not fly the next day and we were too late to re-arrange direct immigration into Troyes, so only needed a total rehash of the plans and a new ferry pilot.

Sundays attempt was much better. Simon and I had to land at Abbeville for immigration but within two hours were on the ground at Troyes. Their guys had pushed the Luscombe out of their hanger and with bills swiftly paid we were ready to go. The trusty Luscombe fired up first swing, the RV was running and we were ready to go..... sort of.

Simon taxis along side and with his best "charade" through the rather small window gesticulates his radio has gone u/s. I call the tower for taxi instructions, now as the "RV formation" and we manage to make it to the threshold using unorthodox hand signals, much humour and lots of common sense.

Simon had the easy job of following in 50nm visibility and I was up front transponding and talking to everybody who cared to listen, we were having a great time watching the world glide by. There Luscombe and RV are not brilliantly matched for speed, Simon was running at max cruise RPM while I was on the edge of the stall working hard to keep the RV "afloat".

Abbeville came into sight and we were soon having our second drink of the day with Daniel, the airfield manager. After a leisurely turn around we departed on our last sector. I reckoned that Simon knew his way home from Abbeville, so opened the throttle on the RV and was back at the strip within the hour. I boiled the kettle, found some biscuits and waited to celebratethe "repatriation of the Luscombe".

Meetings

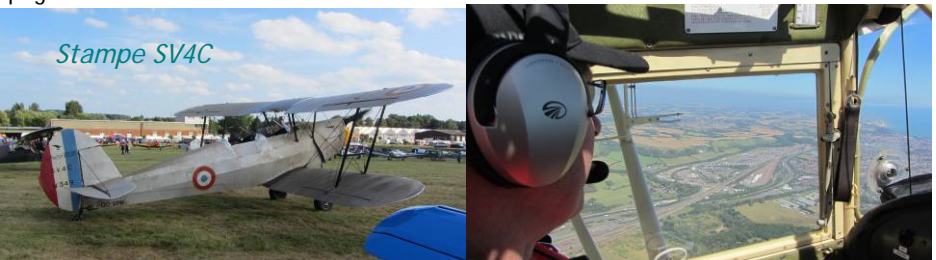
Coming up in September we have a talk from Air Commodore Bill Croydon. Bill has given the strut interesting talks in the past with a keen interest in the history of aviation, in particular East Church on the Isle of Sheppey.

Pictures from before it all went wrong



Old Timer Fly-In Schaffen Diest account and more pictures following pages....

Stampe SV4C



Old Timer Fly-In Schaffen Diest 12th-14th August 2016— Mike Negus

Not having been to Schaffen for quite a number of years an opportunity arose to go with my old chum Colin Ladd. The Luscombe was going to be unavailable potentially, more of this later, so when a seat was offered by Colin I jumped at the chance. Never having even sat in an Auster before it seemed a good way to get Austerised by going Foreign.

We had arranged on Friday to meet another couple of Auster men from Popham, Mike and Dave, at Headcorn in their J1/N. As always a sandwich and a cup of tea, preflight planning and a nervous pee saw us emplane and head across the Channel under beautiful conditions. Landing at Kortrijk a quick pass through customs, very welcoming, fuel up and on to our destination for the weekend.

Coming in on finals, I noticed a lot of standing water in the fields and it transpired that this part of Belgium had received several days of rain. On taxiing to our spot and dismounting it became evident just how wet it was. Nonetheless after pitching our tents in the least soggy spot and having booked in this left us free to wander over to the hangar for a nice cold beer, why does that first one always slip down so quickly? The sandwiches were all gone so we bought our vouchers for the evenings cold supper and the Bar B Q on Saturday night.

We met our host Guy who was obviously relieved that the weather was chirping up and so it proved, the weekend in general was lovely and sunny with just some cloud cover at times. The evening supper was taken with more beer until we were asked to vacate the premises at the early hour of 10 pm so we adjourned to the Flying Club over the road for more beer, stronger stuff this time. Having said our farewells to the locals and the (very) friendly barmaids it was time to retreat to the tents for bed.

After a reasonable night and a hot shower it was time for breakfast. Now these Auster types camp a lot as they have the carrying capacity and whilst not quite the kitchen sink but pretty much everything else, cooker, water bottles, kettle, eggs,



bacon, sausages, well, you get the picture! Mark a German Robin pilot adopted us so with the other chaps 5 of us sat down to eat a splendid repast.

Over the course of the day some of the Farthing Corner troops arrived, Frank being the early bird followed by Gary and Tony. Two of the ex residents Paddy and Keith Scott also made themselves known and pleasantries exchanged. It had transpired that the Luscombe had become available so Simon made his way over for the evening.

An interesting day watching the comings and goings, aeroplanes, cars, motorcycles, wooden caravans and a sprinkling of military vehicles gave us plenty to look at. Then all too soon it was the evening and the Bar B Q (and beer). I have to say the food was excellent and the beer chilled and all consumed as some of us by now were quite peckish. An ice cream went down a treat and the evening ended at the Flying Club which was less populated than before and after a swift half we retired. The moon was high and the mist was lying in the hollows giving the field a surreal look topped with the ever expanding vapour trails high in the clear dark sky.

The next morning dawned a little murky but by 09.00 flying activity was evident and following another resplendent repast, this time for six, a final perambulation of the field taking in the car arrivals and the mini air show from the Belgian 'Red Devils' in their SF260's giving a very tight display more or less completed proceedings. Simon departed about 11.00 in to the haze and we followed about 14.00 returning via Kortrijk and over one of the best channel crossings I have ever had with a gin clear view from Beachy Head to North Foreland.

Landing at Headcorn around 17.45 I cleared my gear from the Auster and we four repaired to the Wings Restaurant where Dave treated us to an ice cream. I thoroughly enjoyed this trip and as always at Schaffen you meet a lot of interesting people, aeroplanes and cars. Although the attendance was less than I remember from all those years ago, the Brits still formed a significant presence. No less than 4 Ercoupes, a type which had slipped from consciousness reminded me of just what a pretty little aeroplane it is and the fact that a Swedish registered example won



1949 ERCOUBE G

MILES M38 MESSENGER 2A



HB21/2400B



Pair of Dutch Military types (Fokker S-11 Instructor)



the longest distance prize shows that these older types still hold up well against the more modern types.

So thanks to Colin and his J1/N I finally got to fly in one of our British Classics.

Do you know what, I am stating to think about next year's event.

US Classics Fly-In Goodwood August 6th 2016— Mike Negus

The day dawned bright and clear, how wonderful to espouse this phrase after the dodgy June which caused so much disappointment and disruption.

Rob Brown and I partnered up for the day and we embarked in the Luscombe for the trip to Goodwood after our PPR call requested for the event. The trip down was quite uneventful, not so the take off from FC due to lack of wind and the indecisiveness of direction when there was some. However we were up and away. The South of England was busy on this weekend with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight active in the region so NOTAM's were duly absorbed.

Despite the possibility of congestion with aircraft coming in for the Fly In there was no hold up and we landed on 32 and due to some confusion (on the pilots part) we parked away from the main event.



Not as many aircraft as I was expecting but a selection of Cubs, Aeroncas, Piper Colts and derivatives, Stearman and of course a sprinkling of Luscombes including my first mount from 25 years ago, looking as pretty as ever and in good hands as we discovered chatting to the current owner. Enough to make an interesting gathering all the same. A burger and tea was followed by an hour or so watching the saloon

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Thanks to the “Luscombe boys” for providing copy for the newsletter again! Always looking for articles from different strut members.



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car time trials which for the petrol heads was a chance to have a thrash round.

After a final look round it was back to the aeroplane and a nice gentle flight home, Goodwood really is becoming a destination of choice, free landing for classics and a new café facility to look forward to.

Dates for your Diary

25th August BBQ Rochester EGTO

29th September Golf Club

Air Cdre Bill Croydon

1st October Abbeville fly-out

27th October Talk by Strut members

24th November Pete Kynsey

Christmas Dinner December TBA