

September 2016



# SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



Light Aircraft Association

## Peddling view

Tour de France 2016 Mike Tooze

As our trip stories have been rather 'weather orientated' lately I thought I'd offer our effort to see some of this year's Tour de France.

Pictured very young on my tricycle, blocks on the pedals, I progressed to bicycles and the enthusiasm has never lost me. Jan has always followed the Tour de France; so in discussion at Christmas my daughter, Emma and her partner Chris, invited us to stay with them, watch the last three stages set around Megève and draw in the atmosphere of the occasion.

Being an old and by definition a not too bold pilot I was hence wary of flying to a definite date; we decided to fly our Vari from Biggin to Troyes and book a couple of days there. The intention was to spot a good weather



Nigel Read - Editor

### Contents

*A flying visit to the Tour de France*

*Rally Pictures p7*

**END OF SEASON  
ABBEVILLE FLY-OUT  
SATURDAY 1ST  
OCTOBER**

Next Strut Meeting September 29th at 20:00

Cobtree Manor Golf Club

Conspicuity and self certification.

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

window to get into Annecy. Annecy sits in a valley beyond the Jura at the foot of the Alps so a 6.5k cloud base or, better, clear skies is what we flat earther's prefer to safely arrive at destination. So that was the plan.

We set off on Saturday, 16/7, arriving uneventfully at Troyes just after lunch. We had booked the hotel next door to the airfield and arrived spot on time. Sunday was spent looking around the old town having checked that the best weather for getting into Annecy was indeed Monday.

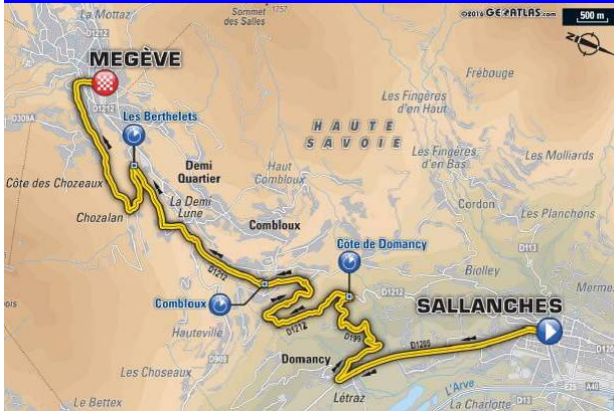
Monday we strolled to the plane and were off by mid morning. We had fuel from Biggin so didn't refuel. Now SkyDemon (SD) is very helpful but I don't put all my eggs in one basket so had my Garmin route entered to exactly cover the SD route that took us around parachute zones and over active mil routes. My self-prepared plog and standard DR instruments all added to the nav. 'overkill'. Routing via DEPUL I avoided Lyon airspace; Lyon Info clear and as friendly as usual. A brief call to Chambéry Approach then to Annecy Tower who gave me a helpful 'straight in for 04'. All I had to do was arrive at the threshold by losing 5,000 feet and 100 knots. I had been concerned about airspace restrictions for the Tour and even limits into Annecy - but there were none. We met the manager who said that she was expecting many flights in for the Tour. She was surprised when we said that that's why we're here! Also fearing a shortage of hire cars I had booked weeks ahead, again this made me wary of pushing the limits. As it turned out we arrived to claim the car about an hour early.

All had gone well thus far. We decided to spend an easy afternoon crossing over the mountain route (part of the Tour) from Annecy into Megève. Descending down to Flumet and the main road to Megève, the road passes through a few short tunnels. Just before we got to the last one a lorry shed its load blocking the entire tunnel except for cyclists. First on the scene we turned back, I retraced our route while Jan worked on an alternative. We chose back up to Thônes and down to near Ugine. An hour or two later we finally found the main road into Megève, just a bit further away than before. Within a couple of miles the main road was 'Barrier' with a diversion that took us back up all around the local peaks. Hours later we arrived in Megève - it had taken us far longer to drive from Annecy to Megève than in flying from Biggin to Annecy! We left the car in the under-apartment car park only using it for a short shopping trip and the return to Annecy.

Tuesday was a Tour rest day so we picnicked up on Mont d'Arbois. We hiked down surveying a route intended for Friday's return after the finish over on the other side of the mountain at 'Le Bettex'.

Wednesday the Tour was away out towards Berne so nowhere near us. A.M. my daughter arrived into Geneva and was collected by Chris. So by the afternoon we were all together for a walk from the altiport up to a cafe further up. Hot and very good exercise! Fairly novel for our hosts too as they are used to seeing the whole area completely covered by snow.

Thursday was the time trial. This was from Sallanches way down in the valley to up to near our apartment and then dropping down to the finish in Megève. We were able to walk along to the top of the murderous climb. We guessed how long it would take for the 17km. One said an hour, I though 45mins, not one of us thought less than that. Chris Froome won it in fewer than 31 mins! It was a brilliant day and



we could see every competitor individually as they came through.

Friday's stage was to finish at Le Bettex. This is at the meeting of two ski lifts. One goes down to St Gervais les Bains while the other goes on up to near where the Mont d'Arbois lift goes down on the other side of the mountain to near Megève. So you can see our cunning plan. To go up in the Mont d'Arbois

lift in the morning, walk down to Bettex, watch the finish of the stage, grab the last Bettex lift up to the top and walk down to home. As it turned out rain started as the race approached. We were able to watch it all unfold on a giant screen (I'd never been at one before) *and* directly see the riders cross the finishing line. What

an atmosphere! As soon as the race ended there was a massive rush to the lifts. Hundreds poured up the steps to the lifts, Jan and I could hardly keep up.

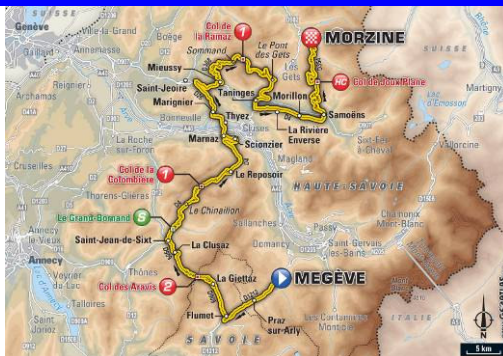
Then, saved, there was a man holding open a small barrier, calling 'Megève'! The torrent stormed on by for the down lift to St Gervais. Suddenly we were left, quiet, less than a handful, for the last gondolas to the top. At the top the intended walk down was abandoned as thunderstorms approached, so a quick walk along the ridge saw us just in time for the last Mont d'Arbois down lift. To cap it all on arrival a (free) bus arrived to run us down to the apartment rather than take the short cross-country hike. An unbelievable day and home before the traffic jam had even started on the other side of the mountain.



The next day Saturday the Tour was to start in Megève off away to the west, returning in the mountains and over the route we had driven in the car. Hopefully all tunnels were now unblocked! Finally down a treacherous descent into Morzine. We decided to walk down to beyond the start to see them go through en masse; then back up and watch the race on TV. This turned out to be a good move as later it poured for most of the day and the danger of the descent negated the race for all, except perhaps the winner, keeping the riders safe for the Champs-Élysées on Sunday. That evening, Saturday, our balcony was in prime position for the firework

show set across the valley opposite, celebrating the conclusion of Megève's part in the Tour.

Back to flying and how do we get out of here? Tuesday looked the best for weather so thinking of the time that the journey from Megève to Annecy can *and did* take we opted to drive back to Annecy on Sunday, so have Monday in Annecy ready for an early start back on Tuesday. Back over the mountain route, still with fans lingering from the tour that had passed the day before, we got the Avis car back into their car park by Sunday midday, a day early, and were in the Ibis Styles hotel in time to see the Tour start into Paris.



The return from Annecy did not start well. The Vari had been standing in how many thunderstorms and although shipping no water must have ingested some pretty saturated air. The radio barely operated. We made a short back-track on 04 following a garbled 'ok'. As we progressed the radio improved such that Seine Info was loud and clear. Nobody could locate my flight plan, not necessary but nice to have over rough ground. At Troyes, perfect reception/ transmission a few days before, the controller acknowledged my approach and I made an uneventful landing. We refuelled. The controller said he couldn't hear me - he wasn't too readable either. Up in the tower I could see that he was over modulating as the speakers crackled every time he transmitted. We waited for customs, (who never come), and after some discussion with the controller we set off for Biggin. I could just about hear him for a backtrack for 35, - the other aircraft were loud and clear. (Maybe something to do with compatibility of the new 8.33kHz radios v the older 25kHz's?) Again no one could find or activate the flight plan I filed through SD the day before.

The radio was immediately working fine now with Seine Info, Paris Info and then Lille Info, all 5's. Lille said that as they couldn't find my flight plan I should either call London Info or land at Le Touquet for customs. As they seemed to be having some problems with their security over there I thought it best to divert to Le Touq. On landing there were a bunch of customs men to check our passports, despite that we were from Troyes in France and not inbound. They said we didn't need to see them on our way out, so I gave them a cheery wave after sending a new flight plan and checking with the tower that he had received it.

Lessons learned: Keep my radios dry, don't rely on SD filed flight plans in France, (SD later suggested that the French are restructuring their flight plan arrangements so this may have caused the trouble), never trust a French restaurant to serve a good steak - my daughter purchased steak from her butcher, is a brill cook and served a wonderful steak dinner. So it's available but they sometimes don't serve it to the Brits.

Overall, a fantastic holiday, visiting my daughter and Chris, Le Tour and its



international fans, hiking in the Alps, Megève in the summer, five flights, distance flown 902nm in six hours fifteen mins.



Mont Blanc - what a backdrop for our holiday!



The start in Megève, Froome in the yellow jersey, Brits all around the course.



Top of the time-trial climb - Degenkolb



Chris Froome  
at the top of the  
time trial climb



LAA 70th Anniversary Rally Pictures



*Talos from Greece runs all these displays. £499. GPS antenna on left, OAT on right, magnetic compass & attitude sensors built in, static and pitot ports.*



*Dart Kitten designed in 1936 by A R Weyl and built in Dunstable by Dart Aircraft with a 36 hp JAP two cyl. engine*



*The Turbulent flown by HRH Prince Philip under restoration*



*Comper Swift with very coarse pitch prop.*



*A US built example of the Taylor JT1 Monoplane*



*2 and 3 wheel display*

**Committee Contacts**

**Co-ordinator: Gary Smith**



Tel : 01795 422426  
[gary.james.smith@btinternet.com](mailto:gary.james.smith@btinternet.com)

**Treasurer:**

John Dean 01892 822776  
[john@jmdean.co.uk](mailto:john@jmdean.co.uk)

**Membership Secretary:**

Stephen Solley 07836 653257  
[sc.solley@solleysicecream.co.uk](mailto:sc.solley@solleysicecream.co.uk)

**Newsletter Editor:**

Nigel Read 01634 362375  
[skywritings@tesco.net](mailto:skywritings@tesco.net)



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

**Committee Members:**

- Mike Negus 01634 364396
- Mark Balding 01580 851112
- Brian Hope 01795 662508
- Uttam Chakravorty 07802 413043
- Frank Lissimore 07798 900220
- Peter Huxley 07899 015287
- Glen Everett 01622 858956

*The Sling 7 day build on Sunday*



*Also from Greece with step ladder access*



*The Swiss Risen- Stall with flaps 30kts, 75% cruise 157 kts, Vne 189kts  
Max climb 1476 ft/min, Glide 1:23 @ 86kts*



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

Regretfully Air Commodore Croydon is unable to give us his talk this month

Next month Skywriting will include Steve Solleys account of the round Britain tour