

October 2016

# SKYWRITINGS

*Background from the Abbeville trip—Gary Smith*

*Newsletter of the* **Kent Strut**



**Round Britain Tour 2016.** Steve Solley



Nigel Read - Editor

**B**ack in April while I was flicking through my LAA magazine there was one page that stood out. It contained a map of Great Britain with lines written all over it. A quick glance and moved on. Periodically over some days I went back to this page and started thinking there could be a possibility of giving it a go. I was prompted the following month and felt that it might be a good challenge even if I were able to only do part of the route.

I discussed it with my wife who was happy for me to take up the challenge.

**October 27th Meeting**

**Touring N Europe Johannes & Emily Woolard  
Cobtree Manor Golf Club, ME14 3AZ 20:00hrs**

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

I must point out that my touring experience was virtually nil as I have always enjoyed my local flying and only visiting local strips. After our discussions I wanted to find out if anyone else was taking up the challenge. Yes there was one, Gary chose to join me and offered to help and guide me. I was now committed!! Sometime later Kevin and Sally in their Maule who joined the strut earlier this year and Tug a new member joined the trip at the last minute.

There was quite a lot of preparation. Making sure EO was in good shape, the route was properly planed and accommodation was organised. I was determined not to stay in a tent! Luck was on my side.

August 27<sup>th</sup> came, the weather not the best for the first leg into Duxford but after a short delay I was under way arriving straight after Gary. Our first night stop was at Sherburne in Elmet. With the weather deteriorating we found ourselves arriving just in time. On arrival we were given a warm welcome by the local Strut.

Errors in overnight accommodation I thought I would have to succumb to a tent which I erected with difficulty and departed to the club house were we had a de-brief on the days flying.

The club had laid on a steak night which was well received. During the evening a local couple overheard our conversation re my booking and offered me a room. What joy!!

The following morning after breakfast the days briefing consisting of recommending routes and weather etc. This was very informative and a great help for my confidence all be it I had Gary with me all the time.

Departure on the second day was delayed until the afternoon due to a weather front going through. Our target was Eshott but due to the weather not behaving itself Gary had pinpointed Fishburn. We went in with the weather chasing us. We waited for a while, refuelled and on our way.

The weather improved as we approached the east of Newcastle giving us a good view of the coast line.

Eshott was to have been a stopping point for fuel and refreshment, but stopping only a short while ago we fuelled so allowed us a straight run to Perth.

We crossed the Forth at North Berwick with a hazy view on our left and a straight run into Perth. There was no time wasted as the weather was closing in again.. After landing and parking up the rain had arrived. A quick cover up and into reception and another warm welcome. At this point we parted with the main group to stay at Blairegowrie with my wife's cousin.

After a wonderful Scottish breakfast we returned to Perth. Another briefing with suggestions of routing and weather and managing to get away just before 11am. It was decided that we would go straight over the top at 6000ft plus and turning at Inverness, down The Great Glen and into Oban. What a trip, with beautiful views of Loch Ness and the surrounding mountains.

Oban I don't think were ready for us but after a while we were re-fuelled and on our way south. Carlisle was our next stop. For some unknown reason I don't



remember much about apart from the RT controller who insisted I repeat everything he said. I as usual kept fumbling which he didn't approve of!

The weather was improving all the time with the clouds breaking and rising were able to see the coast of Morecombe Bay, Blackpool Tower and Sellafield PowerStation.

Barton Manchester was to be our next stop and a stay for the night. We arrived just before 6pm. Re-fuelled and parked up for the night. Here we met up with Kevin and Sally who came up from Lydd starting their tour from Barton.

With the weather improving we were given a barbeque by the local strut. Couple of beers and away we went to a local hotel. Just over 4.5 hrs flying time and I was ready for bed.

Back in the morning and after a good breakfast a route was worked out being careful going south through the low Corridor to Shobdon.

The weather was slow to clear so didn't get away very early. This gave me more time for forward planning of our route. Up and away and straight into the low Manchester corridor going south, leaving Manchester behind us. We followed down the western side of the valley which brought us straight into Shobdon for lunch. From here into Henstridge for the night. There is a saying here "*You don't go hungry at Henstridge*". They are right. The ladies fed us very well with a threat that if it was not cleared the remainder would be brought out at breakfast.

Gary, at this point returned home to prepare for the LAA rally. There were 33 planes at this point so talking to many of the pilots carrying on was not a problem. The weather was not good in the morning so waited till later in the day to try for Bodmin. Regrettably it wasn't to be. So later in the afternoon we all went direct to Dunkeswell.

Another warm welcome by the Devon Strut. Here we had a very nice carvery followed by a celebratory cake. I think there were 34 planes at this point. Some were hoping to try again to get to the west country.

I chose to head for home via Sandown. Dunkerswell being high (900ft) meant it was not an early start. The cloud cleared by mid-day, so a run down to Sandown for a bit of lunch then to Rochester by 3.15pm was a good run.

I was met by Colin with his friendly face who explained where to go and informed me of what was going on. Gary was there and Kevin and Tug had called in to help any flyers who wanted a lift into town. I had been with them at Dunkerswell that morning, because they have a greater range than me they did not have to stop on route.

After debriefing with Gary it was time to head home. I could have stayed at Rochester but for an extra 40mins each way it was well worth going home.

Friday morning up early checked the weather plotted the route to the rally at Sywell. Yes, finding it was straight forward and all my worries unfounded.

Having arrived at Sywell that completed my trip round Britain, although not being able to get to Landsend. It does mean I can still look forward to try a southern route which will get me there another day.

Most important is to say Thank you to Gary for the help and encouragement he gave me. I have learnt a lot and it has given me the confidence to travel a bit more. He also flew at a relatively slow speed so that I could keep up with him.

Also a thank you to Neil Wilson from the LAA who organised the whole trip.





*Arundel, castle, river Arun and A27*



*Gary still checking that Steve is following!*



## LAA Around Britain tour - the wingman's view. By Gary Smith.

Steve Solley has already outlined the “LAA Around Britain Tour”, so this is a “wingman’s view” of our adventure. Having your own strip at the bottom of the garden is most people’s idea of “heaven” but it comes at a price. If getting into the air only takes 10 minutes the temptations is to fly on calm clear days; why depart in challenging weather when tomorrow may bring something better?



The other problem being the only aircraft on the strip is you lose the opportunity to discuss ideas and experiences with fellow pilots thus not expanding your boundaries and abilities. Before long your log book may become full of local flights in fine weather, but you never seem to go anywhere. Steve felt he needed to expand his cross country flying experience (hence the desire to do the tour) and if I tagged along (with my experience) he would feel in a safe environment. No pressure on me then!

We made our way to Duxford individually but landed within minutes of one another, a good omen straight from the start. The weather up the country did not look great and was deteriorating so we shelved the museum visit for another day and made a swift departure.

The 160Hp RV9 and 90hp Jodel are not well matched for speed but we agreed to stay together. Such is the RV’s versatility I was able to come down from 130Kt to match Steve’s 85Kt without too much discomfort. Our technique was for me to take the lead for the first few days, Steve to follow 300m behind to my left at fixed throttle and I would make speed adjustment to maintain our separation. Unfortunately this necessitated a lot of looking over my shoulder and sometimes (in bad weather) this was literally a pain in the neck.

The weather held out over Norfolk and Lincolnshire but 10 miles from Sherburn it took a turn for the worse. Steve followed my strobe lights and I think it’s the first time the Jodel has felt rain in a very long time.

I carry my full camping gear when touring so upon discovering our accommodation was actually miles away I simply pitched my tent. Steve had borrowed his equipment from his son who inadvertently left out the tent pegs and included the wrong tent cover, so it was fortuitous he found a room with some local folk. To be honest I don’t think he was upset about not having to camp!

Sunday afternoon we headed north and diverted into Fishburn (just north of Middlesborough) due to reducing visibility (Steve was used to following my strobe lights by now). The pilot of a Eurostar followed us in but was keen to keep going so departed within the hour. We agreed that if he did not return the weather was

either a) improving (in which case we would leave too) or he had crashed (and we would probably leave anyway).

Once past Newcastle I was on uncharted territory myself and my first tour up the Northumbrian coast was fantastic. Passing over the Firth of Forth we met up with two other aircraft on the tour and simultaneously “clocked” the huge thunderstorm north of Perth airfield - coming our way. I knew the four of us would only have one chance to land so I called the runway, positioned for short finals and fast taxied to the end, mindful not to make the other three aircraft go around. Safely down the



*Loch Ness*

four of us simultaneously back tracked the runway and sat outside the control tower for 20 minutes in the teaming rain. Things could have easily turned out very different.

Monday. The weather was kind as we headed north towards Edinburgh, the start of our flight down the *Great Glen*. If you are ever in Scotland I would thoroughly recommend adding this flight to your “bucket list”. The run down the Great Glen is of course over Loch Ness with Ben Nevis at the bottom. You have more

chance of spotting a dingy full of immigrants in the Channel than you do of seeing the Loch Ness Monster from 4000ft so we just admired the view.....and what a view it was.

Oban - Why did god plant a mountain on finals? Be careful not to land in the water as you enjoy the spectacle.

What a great place to get in your log book, not only the challenge of landing but the view across the bay.

Carlisle. This is one of Stobarts airports, its quite official and you need to do things right. Abandoned on the grass behind me was a slightly unloved green Cessna 152 which looked strangely familiar. Upon returning home I checked my log books and it was the second aeroplane I ever soloed when it belonged to TG Aviation at Manston (circa 1994).



*Departing Oban, note mountain in background (on final approach)*

The flight from Carlisle to Barton (Manchester) was memorable for several reasons. The weather was now brilliant, few at 5000ft, light winds, >30K vis. We felt going around the rather large Glasgow control zone would eat unnecessarily into the Jodels 2.5 hour endurance and took a chance asking for a zone clearance (thus



### *Celtics football stadium in Glasgow*

saving about 30nm). I don't think they get many "GA customers" so were delighted to route us down the "Clyde" not above 1000ft to the Erskin bridge. We took a look into Celtic's Football Stadium and got a birds eye view of the city before heading south over the lake district. Fantastic.

Morcombe bay, Sellafield Nuclear power station, Isle of Man and Blackpool tower were all spotted before we reached the famous Bolton Mast (8nm north of Barton). This beauty is 2400ft AMSL, a monster aerial that is there to be admired and not flown into.

Steve had been concerned about using the Manchester low level corridor to route south, but in reality it is a non event. You must keep on track, keep below 1400ft, dial up a listening squawk of 7366 and listen to Manchester approach on 118.575MHz. ATC will make a blind call to all aircraft squawking 7366 with an approximate position if they need to contact an aircraft, if the location looks like it may be you then simply call them back.

At this point I let Steve take the lead (as my neck was getting rather stiff from 3 days looking over my shoulder) and I discovered how tricky it was holding a position 300m back and to one side. Basically if the trailing aircraft positions such that he can see the lead pilots head the leader gets a much easier life when doing his lookouts.



*The 'Old' Severn Bridge, 50 this year! See 'Timeshift' Bridging the gap on BBC iplayer*

Shobdon and Henstridge were easy as Steve was now taking the lead and it was my turn to sit at the back. I let Steve continue to Dunkeswell on his own as I needed to get back to Kent and thoroughly enjoyed the legs I had flown. The aim for those taking part was to fly into the LAA rally on the Friday morning as the grand finale. Past stories of "14 aircraft on finals" had always worried Steve, he had never flown in and was happy to finish the event early and go home. I explained how the arrival "slot" system worked and with one arrival every minute he was unlikely to see more than two other aircraft in the circuit. Imagine my surprise when we bumped into each

other in the Rally homebuilders tent. With a beaming face he announced he had just flown into his first ever LAA rally, 25 years after getting his licence - what an achievement.



The trip had rekindled his appetite for flying and brushed his flying skills up so he could get past the hurdle of flying in to the rally. Several days later Steve went on to make a trip to Calais on his own, the first time for many long years, so he really was on a roll.

I hope our adventure has shown what can be done with small aeroplanes and a large amount of imagination. How far will your imagination let you go in 2017, the aeroplane knows no limits.

*Manchester ship canal*



*Shobdon (good if you want a car!)*



*Oil Rigs in the Firth of Forth*



*Tall ships in Harbour at Blythe (Newcastle)*

**Abbeville fly out on Sunday 2nd Oct.** By Gary Smith. Photos Colin Evans

Our traditional "end of season flyout" to Abbeville for lunch was a success again in 2016. The "Strut committee" weather experts made an interpretation on Thursday evening and decided to postpone the event until Sunday. This turned out to be a wise decision as Saturday delivered a low cloud base, showers and wind, which are fine if you want to go shopping but not if you want to go flying. Sunday was better but the cloud base failed to lift at Biggin Hill in time, thus forcing a few of our regulars to stay behind.

There was a fair westerly wind blowing which made departing Farthing corner somewhat "sporting" but with reduced winds in France and it forecast to ease in the UK in the afternoon we made a dash for the channel. The cloud was a thin layer (4/8) at 3000ft so we chose to climb above it at 5000ft and could hear fellow strut

members opening their flight plans with "London Information". These smooth conditions did not last long and by mid channel we started a cruise decent to 1500ft as the cloud began to close up into a layer. The remainder of the trip to BNE and Abbeville under the layer was uneventful (if not a little bumpy) and the tail wind we had been enjoying over the water had halved to about 15kt. Nick and Sean reported a ground speed over the channel of 200kt in their RV8.....wow, and they claim that was throttled back!

The restaurant was busy feeding a group of classic car enthusiasts who had dropped in for lunch, but Pascal found us a table in the bar and we were suitably dined. After lunch we took time to survey the "classic exhibits" in the car park and were so enthused by their unusual modes of transport we forgot to take pictures.

There were six aeroplanes and 10 for lunch.

*Piper Sport Mark Lhmette +1*



*Sports Cruiser Tug Wilson*



*view from BNE back towards UK (you could see the white cliffs)*

If you manage to come along next year then remember to bring your camera, we had a great time and hope 2017 will be the year you join us.

*cloud over the channel*



*Gary and Colin Evans*



*Peter Kember's Europa*

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

*Steve on route to Edinburgh*



*Steve over Northumberland*

**Christmas Dinner**

See separate menu and return to  
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**Dates for your Diary**

27th October Strut Members talk

24th November Float Planes

10th December Christmas Diner

Newnham Court Inn