



October 2018

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



Écuwillens 2.3

Simon Pratt and Mike Negus

Lucy looking nice and shiny was sitting there ready to take us away on the annual long weekend. Now that Mike has retired it means that it's only Simon who needs to take time off work and make sure he's back in time.



Nigel Read - Editor

Due to the problems in previous years resulting in becoming intimate with Troyes, discussions were had resulting in the decision to make it a little later in the year when the weather might be more reliable, the usual date of departure being on the last Thursday of June thereby unfortunately missing the Ripple bbq.

The next decision is where to go. Mike spotted that there was a fly in at Ecuwillens in Switzerland, where we've been a couple of times before. When is it? Asks Simon. 23rd 24th June! Says Mike.

Has anybody else noticed? That's earlier than usual.

Ok we'll go there then, but we can't go straight there, that's boring, where can we go via?

How about somewhere different? Czech Republic? Austria?

Looking at maps found a few airfields that appeared within reach but it was decided to take it a bit easier than in the past rather than spend every last available minute in the air.

Freiburg in Germany was a stopping point in the past so a couple of nights there should be good.

October 25th Meeting
Arado 234 WWII jet bomber
Cobtree Manor Golf Club, ME14 3AZ 20:00hrs

www.laakentstrut.org.uk

Planning was next. Getting to Freiburg should be possible in a day, it works out at about 5.5 hours flying time plus refueling stops. As usual the routing is partially dictated by available airspace and this now means that we have to go to Calais for *Douanes* (customs) as the other airfields within range which are entry ports are surrounded by class D airspace, (although I did spot in the notes on Skydemon that Le Touquet class D isn't normally active on Tuesdays but could be reactivated by NOTAM).



Aeroplane out and checked, fuel installed, life jackets on, equipment checked, flight plan filed the night before, ok we're ready to go.

The leg to Calais is a straight line and all went well. Speaking to Lille Information and getting a reply was a novelty but they were very helpful even to the point of letting us know that Le Touquet had crosswinds gusting to 25knots, the arrival at Calais was only about 15 knots but at 90 degrees to the runway. Calais now has a GAR form which needs to be completed online at least 2 hours in advance of arrival from or departure to the UK.

Passports checked, fuel topped up, landing fee paid, cafe closed.

Next stop is planned to Charleville where we have been assured that there is always fuel available, this was chosen over Sedan as it can be difficult finding anybody at Sedan.

After dealing with the 90 degree crosswind on landing and taxiing to the pump the next thing was to find a human. The only life was three young men in the departure lounge but they were just visitors. They told us that 2 men left about 20 minutes before and they expected that they'd be back soon. The 3 asked if they could look around the Luscombe which we were pleased to show them. When asked how it was that they spoke such good English they said that they were all from Charles de Gaulle ATC. There was some incredulity at how basic the Luscombe is as they've all only ever flown with a full panel and complicated things like starter motors.

After another 45 minutes we managed to get fuel and resume our journey. Moral of the story is not to expect anything at lunchtime in France.

Next stop Germany. This was an interesting one; Zweibrücken. Having contacted them a few days before to get PPR they



knew we were coming, 2675 metres of concrete runway should be enough for anybody.

The journey to Zweibrücken seems simple until you see that the whole of the METZ TMZ is notamed from ground to higher than nosebleed altitude. The only option was to go a bit further north through Belgian and Luxembourg airspace. This all went well and Zweibrücken hove into sight. Left hand circuit at 2100ft and guess what, a 90 degree crosswind. You would think that at something approaching the size of Gatwick where you need to PPR with noise certificate and your VAT number, where they don't bill you on site they send it to you later, there would be more than a Luscombe from the UK disturbing the peace, but no sign of any other movements. When asked, the refueller said that they don't have many visitors.

Crosswind takeoff again but it appeared to favour the other runway a little but that was just trying to fool us.

On the last leg of the day now down to Freiburg. Landed at Freiburg at 1710 UTC after 5 hours and 35 minutes flying time which started at 0735 UTC. Guess what the wind was doing, straight down the runway. We came here 4 years ago and after printing out a stack of photos of the prescribed circuit they let us do a straight in approach. This time we got to do the proper circuit which flies along the road next to the river then left at the crossroads towards the church then over a tall hotel and then left onto final. It's worth looking at it online or Mike has a 5 min video on facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/mike.negus.18/videos/2578742718818150/> or, <https://tinyurl.com/yal6sxtt>

Freiburg from the video



The plan was to try to get to Austria and back on the following day so a flight plan would need to be filed, or so we thought. No flight plan was needed but an ELT is, we have a PLB and this was acceptable.

Taxi to town, hotel from booking.com and dinner, before retiring for a well earned sleep.

Day 2 started with a leisurely breakfast in the hotel followed by a walk to the bus station where it looked as if the next bus would be about 45 minutes so a taxi was taken to the airport.

Just behind Freiburg airport there are little hills of a bit over 4000ft and as the airport is at 799ft it was a simple matter to get the super powered Luscombe over them. The chosen destination was Hohenems in Austria and the route could either be over loads of hilly stuff or along Lake Konstanz. The lake won. This didn't mean flying any lower as Friedrichshafen has a section of airspace up to 4500ft covering a section of the lake. After flying along almost the complete length of the lake it was a matter of a 90 degree right turn and 10 minutes to a little macadam strip. This was over 1300ft but as everything is high it looks like sea level. Interesting lunchtime conversation with a German gyrocopter pilot also visiting. (*ask Mike at the next meeting ed*). This airfield as with many we flew near on our trip offer gliding and parachuting.



Day 3 and off to Switzerland and Ecuwillens for 2 days of air and ground displays. This was the 7th country visited, all be it 2 were only airspace. They were very hospitable and gave us free lunch with 3 drinks each (sans alcohol). The classic and vintage cars and aircraft brought in 11000 visitors over the 2 days. It really is a picturesque area which attracts a number of aircraft from the heavier Corsair, Avenger and P40 Warhawk but they don't get much heavier than the

display on Saturday by a Swiss Air Force F18 Hornet making its presence felt (free ear plugs available). There were a couple of UK Jodels present kept well away from the old timers line up as befits their station and we managed to catch up with one of the crews, a retired couple from Devon coincidentally they were stopping in the same hotel as we. For the second time our Luscombe formed the backdrop for a photo shoot with some rather attractive models in 1940's costumes including seamed stockings, oo-er missus.





Photographed by Mike during the trip





Day 5 is homeward bound. Due again to the French bureaucrats this means a 2 hour hop to Troyes for *Douanes*. Customs at Troyes at the weekend and Monday is not available without prior notice, prior notice being Friday, the actual time stated on Skydemon is 1600 (no indication whether local or UTC) but a notice in Troyes airport states 1700 local. This was done from Freiburg.

What could be easier? Send an email with necessary details and ETA to customs? No. Tried that and got a reply that the proper form must be completed. Being unable to locate the form I phoned them and asked where it could be accessed online, it can't. "Can you send it to me?" "Yes ok"

Form attached to email, can't be completed and has to be printed out and filled in. As the tower was unable to scan it to their computer, this meant photographing it with the phone and attaching the photo to an email. The reply came that they couldn't print it but then another message came to say it was accepted. Was anybody at Troyes to greet us after all that, was there #d*@'.

Next stop Abbeville for fuel where we heard about how badly they have been affected by the withdrawal of customs facilities and the English not going there much. The hotel has been sold and fuel sales are way down. There is a rumour going round that if the airport was fenced so that access to and from airside is restricted they may be able to regain customs.

Landing at Calais was like the *Mary Celeste*, all locked up and deserted. We stayed there for 15 minutes then took off back to Blighty.

To sum up after the two disappointing trips ending at Troyes two years running it was a joy to experience almost perfect weather, save for the crosswinds on the way out and if anyone is thinking of a destination Écuwillens should be a contender.

Last Months meeting

Peter Terry, a retired airline pilot and now a simulator instructor gave an interesting talk on his time with a number of different airlines flying quite a variety on aircraft describing how much more reliable airliners have become having had several engine failures to how good simulators now are to the point the first time a new pilot actually flies a real aircraft there are passengers in the back. On one occasion, after a warning light appeared for real his companion asked, "we're not in a simulator are we". Peter is a distant relation of our membership secretary.

Goodbye/Hello

Farthing corner resident Jordan Jennings has gone up north to do his commercial, for the time being leaving his Jodel at Farty. We saw him off at the Bredhurst Bell and wish him and Paige good luck, perhaps one day being flown off on holiday by him. He was presented with a model biplane.

We haven't completely lost Jordan as he will keep in touch but have gained a couple of new members, John Lowrey and Phil Church.



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Dates for your Diary 2018

25th October WWII jet bomber

Mike Negus talk

29th November Brendan O'Brien

Flying Circus

Christmas Dinner 8th December

Newnham Court Inn, next to
 Notcutts and Junction 7 of M20



www.solleysicecream.co.uk

End of Season Fly out to Calais 6th October

Morning fog and rain at mid day prevented anyone going!

Christmas Dinner 8th December

As before, we are going to the Newnham Court Inn next door to Nutcutts. Close to junction 7 of the M20 it is easy to get to, just one junction along from the golf club. See the attached menu, and let Peter Huxley have deposits. 18:30 for 19:00 24 places have been reserved based on past interest.

LAA autumn / winter courses

Courses on aircraft woodwork and Metalwork are available. Places fill up quickly, electrical and air-ground radio operators were already fully booked but there may be later courses if you contact the LAA and advise them of your interest.

<http://www.lightaircraftassociation.co.uk/Courses/courses.html>

Gary Smith runs the metal bashing course!

Or for less typing:-

<https://tinyurl.com/y9nr676d>