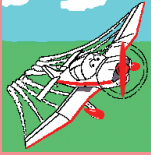


November 2018



SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the **Kent Strut**

**Merry Christmas and a Happy
New Year from the committee.
Last newsletter of 2018**



**RSA at Brienne Le Chateau. The French Home
builders Rally 2018.** By Gary Smith.

It goes without saying that every country in Europe has its own "Home built aircraft association" and the French are no exception. The French RSA has roots back to 1946 and many great aeroplane designs have emerged from their system, but despite their extensive land mass and great enthusiasm they only muster a membership around 1/3 of our present LAA head count.

The RSA organise an annual summer "Rally" similar to ourselves and it has been hosted at various airfields over the years. My first visit (as a passenger) was to Moulins in the centre of France. The technique in those pre GPS days of the early 1990's was to track down the Northern France map until you ran off the bottom, then follow the river for a further 30 miles until you found the airfield. On later occasions we had a photocopied section of the southern map for the remaining journey – luxury. Money was tighter back then and to buy a map of Southern France to use just once was considered extravagant.



Nigel Read - Editor

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some more history**

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**29th November Meeting
Brendan O'Brien's Flying Circus
Cobtree Manor Golf Club, 20:00hrs**

www.laakentstrut.org.uk

The town of Moulins was fair sized and a brief taxi ride could place you in reach of good hotels and restaurants. The rally resided there for three or four years then moved east to Epinal Miercourt, (near Nancy). The ex-military base had plenty of runway and parking but minimal on site facilities. French pilots were lodging at neighbouring airfields and flying in for the show so the following year we followed suit.

After several years the organisers recognised the short comings and in a surprising move relocated to St Yan.... that was even more isolated! Vichy Charmelle was the next host airport with huge runways and parking for 1000+ aircraft and a city centre just 3 miles away. We were now well versed with flying deep into France, GPS had become affordable and with new maps of the whole country the flying part of the adventure had actually becoming quite easy.

Vichy is located by the Massif Central and the combination of hot summer days and high ground to the south makes a great recipe for thunderstorms. In 2016 bad weather on Saturday evening damaged exhibition tents and several aircraft and the aftermath deterred many aviators. 5 years of truly great rally's and it was time to move on again.

There had apparently been a steady decline in visitors from Northern Europe too, so the RSA committee decided to move further north away from the high ground and return to Brienne Le Chateaux, a site used back in the 1980's, just 80nm south east of Paris.

The show normally falls on the second weekend of July and careful planning is required to avoid practice flights for 14th July air display over Paris. This year it was scheduled for 3rd to 5th August so very straight forward. Maps showed the town of Brienne to be quite small so we chose Calais for immigration, down to Abbeville for lunch then on to Troyes for Friday night. For those that recall we were experiencing a heatwave and Friday evening in town it was still +30 C at 8pm.

Saturday morning brought perfect weather, the taxi driver made a wrong turning but still managed to get us to the airport of Troyes for 9am and that's when the fun started. The airport computer had broken and it was apparently "impossible" to let us leave without printing everybody an invoice. He agreed to let the three Jodels depart for the 20nm trip to Brienne if I would stay (with the RV9) and collect the paper work. After 30 frustrating minutes I was done struggling in French so resorted to miming. I placed 40 euros in his hand, gave clear direction where he should put the invoices if they ever printed, waved farewell and departed.

The rally itself was quite humble in size compared to our LAA rally back home, but there was no shortage of innovative and quirky flying machines. Tony and I managed to get a room cancellation at the airport hotel (jammy eh!) and we were given a lift into town for a splendid evening meal and

catch up. Sunday it was too hot to sit out in the sun but finally we made tracks back to Calais and eventually to Farthing corner in time for tea.

I wonder where they will have the rally next year, whatever happens I will be there and it will be great to catch up with old friends again. Hope you can make it too.



*Louciel with 2 cylinder
Briggs and Stratton Engine*



Unknown French Homebuild

Three Jodels and RV9 at Troyes



RV9 at Brienne RSA rally





Brienne Le Chateaux ex military airfield



Carousel in Troyes town centre



Calais harbour and town



*Calais airport
(with the Channel in the background)*

Old Warden and Otto Kissenberth by Mike Negus



What is the connection, well let me take you back a couple of weeks ago when Simon and I took the Luscombe up to Old Warden to visit a rather special new arrival that I was keen to see. As it turned out there were not one but two surprises.

Old Warden is hosting an Albatross DVa First World War fighter which has been delivered from New Zealand as part of the WW1 Aviation Heritage Trust's (WW1 AHT) Collection of WWI aircraft but is owned by Oliver Wulff. It will be based at Stow Maries, from where WW1 AHT already operate a BE2e, with two more aircraft, an SE5a and a Fokker DVII, expected in the next 12 months.

This aeroplane is not the first to arrive on these shores as there is a similar aeroplane constructed by the same company at the RAF Museum, Hendon which flew briefly several summers ago before being grounded, disappointingly, at least for the foreseeable future. Having seen it fly in company with an RE8 at Duxford, a sight not seen in Europe for close on 100 years it was truly memorable. Both machines are now together at Hendon.

These and the Albatross which is the subject of this short piece were constructed by The Vintage Aviator Ltd based in New Zealand and the operation is the brainchild of Sir Peter Jackson who recently released his remarkable film 'They Shall Not Grow Old' as part of the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1. If you haven't seen it please try and do so.

The builders <http://thevintageaviator.co.nz/> do not merely construct replicas, these are for all intent and purposes the next off the production line with all the period build techniques incorporated and including where

possible original engines or if not available they will be reverse engineered from non-airworthy items.

I was particularly keen to see the new example at Old Warden as it had been repainted from the scheme it bore when manufactured in 2017 now bearing the striking motif of the large Edelweiss on a black fuselage which Otto Kissenberth adopted on several different types including a captured Sopwith Camel. He would run his victory tally to 20, downing his final victim using the Sopwith Camel on 20 May 1918. Nine days later, a crash



while flying the Camel ended Kissenberth's combat career. His injuries were severe enough he was not returned to combat, instead being assigned to command Schleissheim's flying school. Although Otto Kissenberth survived the war, he died soon after in a mountaineering accident on 2 August 1919. He also had the distinction of being one of a number of pilots of the era who flew combat wearing spectacles.

Oh, and the second surprise was seeing a second SE5a privately owned and built in the UK, Shuttleworth Trust of course have their own example,

I have still to find out more on this but if anyone can enlighten me I would be pleased to hear.

Next year is lining up to have some memorable vintage flying in more ways than one and with Stow Maries now going from strength to strength is fast becoming the spiritual home for WW1 aviation.



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www.solleysicecream.co.uk**Dates for your Diary**

29th November Brendan O'Brien

Flying Circus

Christmas Dinner

8th December

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

31st January 2019 AGM