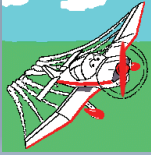


February 2019



SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the **Kent Strut**



Flight of the photographer- or what the passenger saw

**Flying with Geoff Collins, the Bearded
Photographer.** Gary Smith

The Kent Strut occasionally call upon talented members of our group to entertain us and pass on their knowledge and the Thursday meeting Nov 2017 was no exception. Geoff Collins, the bearded photographer as he is often known, gave us a riveting talk about some of his air to air assignments and offered us tips to achieve better pictures of our own.

Some months later Geoff was at the strip (Farty Corner) with his camera, I had a spare seat so we went "up sky" to take some pictures. A trip to North Weald is fairly routine but with an extra pair of eyes and Geoff's mega camera clicking away it is amazing what you miss.

We spotted an unexpectedly large ship next to Old Tilbury power station, Geoff thought it would be a great place for a spot landing competition, what do you think?



Nigel Read - Editor

*The Editor's Europa,
two years ago, with
new engine and new GT
prop following an
earlier prop strike.*



February Meeting

Medway Aircraft Preservation Society

John Gosden

Cobtree Manor Golf Club, ME14 3AZ 20:00hrs

www.laakentstrut.org.uk



*SERTAO Drill Ship, Gross tonnage 60316, 227.8m x 42m.
The ship can drill to 40,000' in 10,000' of water. marinetraffic.com*

Just east of Tilbury docks (on the North side of the Thames) is Fort Tilbury (post code RM18 7NR). It was built in 16th Century by Henry VIII (more likely his builders than Henry himself) to guard the mouth of the river from invaders. A view from the ground does not do it justice but from the air its design is magnificent. It is well worth a visit by car and is in remarkable condition.

The Fort has been used for a number of film locations including Mike Leigh's Peterloo, Taboo, Wonder Woman and Batman Begins.

Further east from Fort Tilbury is Coalhouse Fort (post code RM18 8PB). It is in the shape of a horse shoe, built around 1860 and again was commissioned to guard the lower Thames. The story goes it took so long to construct on the boggy ground that its intended guns were out of date when it was finally completed. The "pea shooters" were replaced with fast firing guns for WWI and WWII to deter raiding parties entering the estuary and soon after the war was over it fell into disrepair. Now looked after by volunteers it should open again on Sunday 31st March 2019. It doubled as Bhutanese prison in Batman Begins.



Tilbury Fort, Gravesend on the other side of the Thames, where the Sikh temple can be seen

Opposite Coalhouse on the South side of the river is its companion bastion "Fort Cliffe". Between the two gun batteries the river sweeps around to the North and mudflats on the outside of the bend have acquired a fair quantity of junk over the years. It is rumoured that dust (rubbish) ships coming out of London (late 18th Century) bound for the brick fields of Sittingbourne would dump their waste there but Geoff's camera spotted something much more industrial.

The large "Oxford cross" shaped object mid picture is in actual fact the base of a Maunsell fort, the kind you can see off the North Kent coast, the Shivering sands or Red sands towers. A third set of forts were installed in shallow water off Sheerness but were uncomfortably close to the Thames Estuary shipping lanes. Apparently one foggy night in the 1950's a foreign freighter bumped into one of the forts and knocked the box clean off of the top. The government decided these particular forts should be lifted and one of the bases made it to the Cliffe Fort shallows, in almost complete condition. The final picture shows the Maunsell forts above water, Geoff's picture shows what was going on below!

"Its amazing what you can see if you look hard enough" said Geoff and I had to agree.



Coalhouse Fort



Maunsell Forts

Maunsell Fort base. On Google maps, zoom in south of Cliffe Fort and west of "Alpha Pool" to get an idea of scale, about 80'x 80'





Steve Solley's "Hard Day at the Office"

The Editors Aircraft or Flying's Fun

Most of you probably know I have a Europa monowheel but have not filled the pages of the newsletter with my exploits for some months. That's because there haven't been any to speak of.

In an attempt to track down the source of a strong fuel smell we (Tom my flying partner) removed a boxed in section of the baggage bay which was covering the filler connection to the tank, finding nothing wrong with the rubber hose but did discover when the tank is full above the filler spigot in the rear face of the tank fuel would seep out and run down the back of the seats/front of the baggage bay, as its possible to reach behind from the P1 seat and return with wet fingers.

On the face of it, there is not much that could go wrong with a hose and Jubilee Clip. Numerous things were tried, reposition the clip, new clip, wrap glass fibre around the spigot to make a tighter fit, look for cracks with a camera, sanding it smooth and finally purchasing an aluminium

angled tube from a Europa builder in New Zealand and connecting it with Samco Profuel hoses (an approved LAA mod). The original rubber hose supplied by Europa now has to be checked every year since one was found to be disintegrating—nothing wrong with ours but since removal has now gone quite hard.

It still bloody leaked!

I've lost count of the number of times the tank has been drained and refilled.

Last weekend I removed the hoses again to check for any assembly damage but found none, but did feel a slight ridge on the spigot, now sanded smooth and most of the glass wrapping removed, two things stopped a test, fuel level not high enough and the airfield too soft to risk getting stuck. So that test awaits. (shaking on the ground doesn't show up a leak, it has to be taxiing or flying).

While all this was going on, since the middle of 2017, a ground loop occurred during take off in the November of that year, departing the runway at 90° just as we were about to leave the ground, (outrigger caught in long grass after getting too close to the edge of the runway) the worst bit being the drainage ditch alongside that part of the runway.

The GT prop which had been previously returned to GT, was well and truly dinged, as we crossed the ditch, splitting right up to the hub!

Subsequent strip down of the engine, which only had about 50 hours on it, revealed a crack in the crankshaft, emitting from an oil hole.

The outrigger required some replacement parts along with the pitot, which now includes a static, replacing the fuselage one that was less accurate near the stall.

It's all back in permit now with our spare Arplast ground adjustable prop but the replacement GT prop is a slightly different specification being slightly coarser but smaller in diameter.

There is now a full test programme to follow for approval, assuming the filler has finally stopped leaking!



Left, prop lost a part of the reinforced LE and had pitch errors, so was returned to GT who replaced (or repaired) and returned repainted, Right.



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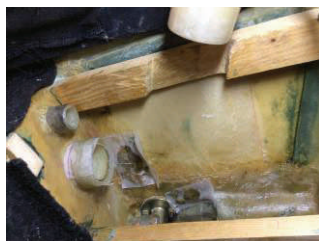
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www.solleysicecream.co.uk

*The fuel
filler to
tank spigot,
hose
removed.
Vent is the
smaller.*

Dates for your Diary

28th February MAPS John Gosden

28th March "Amy Johnson"

Geoff Collins

25th April Talk on Meteor crash and
WW1 / Port Richborough

30th May Aviation talk tbc

27th June BBQ Ripple

25th July Talk on cross channel tbc

27th July Saturday! Fly out tbc

August no meeting - Rally

26th September Microlight talk tbc

31st October tbc

28th November tbc

Christmas Dinner December TBA