

October 2019



# SKYWRITINGS

**Note next meeting date!**

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*

**Bumper issue this month!**



**Lucy's Landings** Mike Negus (with Simon Pratt)

Over the last few years Lucy the Luscombe has gone flying round various parts of France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Austria not to mention Belgium. These trips have normally been in June or July but this year due to not being allowed out to play until the newly purchased house had at least a usable bedroom and bathroom the trip had to be put back to September.



Nigel Read - Editor



Due to the withdrawal of customs facilities from a lot of airfields in France and most of the remaining ones being inside class D airspace, plus the amount of TMZs around, conversations were had regarding the fitting of a

**October 24th Meeting (One week early, to avoid the witches flying about)**

**Paul Caternach (part 2)**

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

transponder. The Trig appeared to fit the bill as it has low power usage and Lucy doesn't have any proper power supply. The engine was using oil and compressions, although passable, were showing signs of reduction so a top end overhaul kit of 4 brand new cylinders was fitted, transponder went onto a back burner, maybe next year.

Mike likes his military history and we had heard about the fly in at Hahnweide so the intention was to go there. Looking on t'internet indicated that there wasn't a lot of accommodation available in the area and what there was expensive plus Mike didn't think the lineup included much that he wanted to see. We decided to go to France instead and aimed for a tailwheel fly in at Châtelleraut. September 12th was decided on as getaway day aiming to be back on 16th. The weather was looking to be improving as the date got closer so all was looking good. Previous trips have meant leaving early and getting as far as possible as soon as possible but this year was different. Lucy left Farthing Corner for Calais at 10am and had a good flight over the Channel landing less than an hour later to be met by 2 young ladies with guns asking to see our passports. Douanes satisfied, the next stage was to get coffee. One of many on the trip as it turned out. The plan from here was to go to Dieppe for fuel and continue to Alençon for an overnight stop. The journey to Dieppe started well but the closer it became the worse the weather was. There was no reply from Dieppe on the radio so blind calls were made and we landed. The place was pretty much deserted but there was a woman in the flying club who arranged fuel. Just next to the fuel pump there's a hangar from which a man called Paul emerged and dispensed the fuel at the small cost of 2.80 euros per litre. Paul explained that the high cost was due to it being a small airport without much income. There is also no longer anybody in the tower due to cost cutting. Incidentally Paul was working on a full size Stampe replica, Rotax powered, which looked incredibly like the real deal, very impressive. Coffee was taken, another aircraft arrived, weather worsened. We waited around for an hour and decided to see what it was like aloft, as did the other aircraft. The weather was indicated as improving along our route. The other aircraft took off first, they were from a field not far away and then we took off. 15 minutes later we were back in Dieppe looking on [booking.com](http://booking.com) for somewhere to stay. Soon afterwards

### *Soggy Dieppe and the Canadian cemetery and Alençon*





the others returned also. An economically priced 2 bedroom apartment was found in the town and Paul was kind enough to take us down in his van. Sitting there eating dinner in the evening we could see stars twinkling in the sky so all was looking good for a morning getaway. After a restful night we awoke to a damp, low cloud, misty morning. The decision was simple, get some breakfast. While eating croissants and drinking coffee we heard 4 English women looking at the menu and wondering whether they should get breakfast from a different establishment so we let them know that they weren't going to get a full English around there and they settled for the same as us. We took a bus to the airport, or at least 2 kilometres from it and decided to make a decision after lunch.

We started walking back towards a small industrial estate come business park which had a Brasserie but looking for somewhere a little more simple (cheap) we continued our hike. We had observed the sign for the CWGC sign for the Canadian Cemetery as in August 1942 the abortive landings in Dieppe the brunt of which was borne by the Canadian Army. We eventually found the cemetery and paid our respects to the souls lie buried there. We think it is always a salutary reminder of the sacrifices made and believe the French still hold the memory in high regard.

Mid afternoon saw the weather starting to improve so we made a break for it towards Alencon and the weather gradually got better as the journey progressed. Landing at Alencon we refuelled and looked up accommodation, a favourably priced hotel was found but 20 minutes' walk away, so after replacing some body fluids (beer, made a change from

coffee) off we went. Before we left a nice man offered free overnight Hangarage which we gratefully accepted. Interestingly this seemed to be the home of the majority of Dassault Flamants in the world the Amicale Alençon has six of the nine in existence and are airworthy. These were a 1947 design used as navigation trainers and for transport duties.

The hotel gave us 2 rooms on the top floor, no lift. After a short rest and freshen up it was time to walk into Centre Ville. There's not a lot to see in Alençon although it holds the distinction of being the first French city to be entered by the Free French Army led by General Leclerc who later went on as part of the force that liberated Paris. After dinner next to the church it was back to the hotel for a nightcap. The hotel owner Bibi is an Algerian and very vocal about the UK and Brexit in a positive way and seemingly not a great fan of the French understandable given he had lost seven members of his family including a brother in the war of independence in the late 1950's early 60's which we do not know too much about but 1.5 million Algerians lost their lives during the 6 years of conflict. Mike had been to Oran in Algeria in April the previous year which warranted him giving us another beer on the house. This time waking up and looking out of the window we saw a clear blue sky. The breakfast included croissants, bread, jam, coffee, orange juice and as much as we wanted, then Bibi drove us to the airport.

Today was to be a short flight to the fly in at Châtelleraut and so it transpired. Being a fly in with lots of aircraft approaching from all directions meant that the tower didn't say anything and we just had to keep a good lookout and try to understand the French babbling that was going on over the radio. I know the French phrases for circuit positions so we were soon on the ground and taxiing. There were quite a few aircraft in attendance and lunch was supplied at a cost of €20. Lunch had various choices including Andouillette but we both selected other options. Given we were the only Brits with a rare machine there did not seem to be much interest, not saying they were unfriendly but.... After lunch we took off for the next leg to Sarlat-la-Canéda on the Dordogne.



*Fly in at Châtelleraut*





### *On the way to the Dardogne*



Another good flight in lovely weather. Sarlat airport is on the top of a hill at 970 feet so easy to find. Refuelling complete and back onto [booking.com](http://booking.com) found a 2 bedroom cabin 800 metres from the town centre. Trying to get a taxi proved impossible but we were offered a lift into town by the 'barman' of the Microlight school on the airfield in

his AMG Mercedes. Now the barman, Nicolas, turned out to be a bit of an enigma having left his home town of Sarlat he went to Martinique where he bought and operated a seaplane for tourists and did this for a number of years before operating aircraft in Chad until selling up that operation. He now has business interest both on the airfield and in Switzerland where he operates at Beech King Air. Serious toys but a nice unassuming bloke. His 19 year old son was there flying the family owned immaculate Piper L4 on route to his CPL.

The owner of the site where we staying for the night, offered us a lift into town which we gratefully accepted as time was getting on due to the earlier transport difficulties from the airfield. Sarlat-la-Canéda is a medieval town with lots of eateries and we found one where we sat outside and people watched while eating foie gras and duck a l'orange and listened to a singer/guitarist street performer. The walk back was more like 1200 metres which is ok but it was also up about a 45 degree slope in the dark. Breakfast was similar to the previous hotel and a taxi had been ordered the previous evening. We asked the taxi to stop for 5 minutes in Domme which is another



### *Domme overlooking the gorge*

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medieval town on the top of a hill with really good views over the Dordogne river. Unfortunately Sarlat town is quite a distance from the airport so the fare was €60.

By this point Mike was feeling homesick for Troyes. Those who have read about previous trips will understand why. First we needed to plan for fuel as Troyes was a leg too far so Nevers was selected as a

likely stop en route and so it was. A tidy, small municipal airfield with hard runway, flying club, gliders and a parachute club but more importantly an executive jet shortly departing for Germany. What good luck as the airfield was normally closed on Sundays and had only opened to allow the jet to take off! Fuel uploaded and a cold milk shake taken in the adjacent Burger King (don't ask it was over 30 degrees) we set off.



*Sarlat residents*



On arrival at Troyes we managed to book into an apartment which we had previously used just on the edge of the old town. After a good nights rest we again woke to a clear blue sky which was a first for Troyes in our experience. The next leg was going to be a long one to Calais. Everything was good, although there was a bit of a headwind, until about

Albert where it started to get a bit misty then we were in and out of cloud and got down to about 900ft for a while but it got better around St Omer and we got into Calais ok. There was a Bucker Bestman and a Harvard parked in front of the pump but we squeezed in front of it and refueled then went to lunch. In the restaurant was a group of Englishers on their



way to Leicester from Hahnweide, the Harvard left before the others and called them to say that they had zero vis over the Channel at 1800ft and had diverted into Stapleford as going further north the weather deteriorated. Phoning Dover coastguard they informed us that they could see about three quarters of the way to France and after a

while we decided to see what it was like ourselves as there were aircraft in the Calais circuit. We coasted out at Cap Gris Nez at 900ft but reduced to 600 a little way out then the base of the muck began to lift and England was in sight before mid-Channel. The rest of the journey was uneventful and we landed 5 minutes before the rain started.

Those who know Mike will be aware of his reluctance to spend much time over water. He said to me 'How about the Scillies next year?' All I could reply was 'How far is the sea crossing?' It may be a goer, who knows? Watch this space.....

#### Weather gods and the LAA rally. Gary Smith

"Do you believe in weather gods" I was asked at this years LAA rally. I replied that "I liked it to rain during the week so statistically it should be nicer at the weekend, but weather gods?"

This got me thinking. I had flown to the rally in nice weather this year (2019) and it looked like it would be nice on the way home too. Last years rally had good weather, the year before was a blur in my mind but strangely I could not remember a rally I had not flown in to. Back at base I pulled my flying log books (now comprising four volumes), did some reminiscing about bygone events and wondered if others had similar memories.

The first rally I flew into was 1995. Our Piper Vagabond had just been completed after a 3 year rebuild, the permit arrived Saturday morning and Barry Webb (pilot) and myself flew to Cranfield for the rally in the afternoon. I think the weather was poor on Sunday and another group member had to collect the aeroplane later in the week, but this was my first "flown into" rally.

Now that Barry had shown me the ropes I took camping gear in the Vagabond and made the annual pilgrimage to Cranfield from 1996 to 2000. We became regulars at the Leather Bottle pub in the village and would take a short cut across the airfield in the dark to find our tents (getting wet shoes, sprained ankles etc in the process). Returning from one of those rallies I remember being trapped to the north and south by thunderstorms as I flew past Redhill routing east. Colin Ladd, following 30 minutes later



*Murky trip home across the channel*

in his Auster was not so lucky. The thunderstorms closed up in the Heathrow / Gatwick gap and left him trapped with no where to go. A precautionary landing was made on Sandown Park race course and he collected his aerial carriage the next day after the horses had been exercised.

2002 was another successful rally at Cranfield and this year I took Kate. We initially parked way down in the aero park but as the visiting aircraft thinned out Kate asked if we could move closer to the facilities and I obliged. For the rest of the weekend we got pestered by people wanting to buy the Vagabond as I had inadvertently moved into the "for sale" line.

2003 the rally moved to Kemble, a new destination and a new route to plan. This might have been the event where 14 aircraft on finals were considered unsafe and there were a few close calls.

2004 We decided to be helpers and drove to the rally instead. I recall there being a dog loose in the exhibitor arena and whilst trying to catch it the "spectators" were giving helpful advice like "I should keep my dog under better control". It was not actually my "Staffordshire bull terrier", I was only trying to help without getting bitten!

2005. Kate and I chose to fly to Kemble and do our volunteer helping again. The Vagabond was well loaded with camping gear as we departed Clipgate Farm with the intention of fuelling up at Headcorn. With an empty fuel tank up front and a boot full of clobber we were properly tail heavy and had to land with a huge amount of forward stick pressure (which is a recipe for disaster in a tail dragger). Lesson learnt, but we survived.

2006 was the mega poor weather year when it rained for the week leading up to the rally, throughout the weekend and for about a month afterwards. We drove, like many others but did not stay long. The LAA made a big financial loss and it was decided they would run regional rallies for 2007 and 2008 instead. We did our bit and attended where we could but it was not the same as having our annual mass gathering.

The national rally was resurrected at Sywell in 2009 and the location and facilities were first class. I had an early morning slot, took the RV9 and the weather was kind both ways.

Now back to those weather gods. One of the principle rally organisers is strut member Brian Hope and I think he has a hotline to the weather gods from his home town :- the Isle of Sheppey or to give it its proper title "Kent's Paradise Island".

I was amazed to look through my log book and find I had flown to and from the last eleven rallies at Sywell without a weather hitch. I managed to hit every arrival slot on Friday morning (sometimes within 45 seconds) and returned home unhindered. Surely such luck with the weather can not be a coincidence.



So over the last 24 years there have been 22 national rallies and amazingly the weather has allowed me to "fly in" to 19 of them. Long may our weather blessing survive as I am looking forwards to next years rally already.

### Meet the members day

The LAA "Meet the members day" took place at Headcorn Saturday 28th September. The Kent Strut marquee was transported to Headcorn on Friday afternoon and erected between some vicious showers. The Met Office forecast indicated a windy evening through to the morning, so a robust tie down was completed. As one member quipped, 'we don't want it taking off and busting the TMA, especially as it doesn't have ADSB'. Saturday morning saw the LAA Head Office Staff set up their stands and promotional material with the help of some Kent Strut members who drove in. Unfortunately the Met Office warnings for Saturday's weather proved to be true. Whilst Headcorn had sunshine and winds of 12kt gusting 25kt from the south west, the rest of the Country was under an Amber Warning for heavy rain and strong winds. So there were not many arrivals by air, although on the ground at Headcorn it was rather pleasant. Those who braved the bracing conditions and flew in were Richard Warriner in his trusty Rans S6 from Heathfield and Gary Smith in his RV9 from Farthing Corner. Gary later remarked the inbound leg took him 12 minutes but the wind assisted return was completed in only 7 minutes 48 seconds!



*Pictured L to R  
Jerry Parr, Brian Hope, Andy Draper and  
Steve Slater.*

At least the day was dry and sunny. This encouraged a number of people to Headcorn and into LAA/Kent Strut marquee. The Strut recruited two new members and did a good job of increasing its' profile amongst both visitors and staff at Headcorn.

Kent Strut members had a great opportunity to speak with the LAA Staffers and each other. A number of lively discussions, ranging from proposed overseas trips for next year to the latest in carbon fibre props took place. In the early evening the marquee and stands

were dismantled, stowed away and packed for transportation. An excellent day, despite the conditions.

If you missed it, keep a look out for next year's event. Hopefully the weather will also turn up.

### The Condor Ron Armitage

Looking through a recent copy of "Light Aeroplane", I was very pleased to see that the Rollason Condor G-AWSP has been restored and is now flying again. This is the very aeroplane in which I did my first solo flight. My instructor was the famous Derek Wright, who was, of course, always known as 'Wilbur' and was a true gentleman.



I learnt to fly aeroplanes in the early seventies with the Brighton Flying Group at Shoreham, which had a fleet of 'Condor' aeroplanes manufactured by Rollason Aircraft and Engines Ltd (in the UK!!) I did most of my training on G-AWSP, but also flew G-AXGT and G-ATOH (seen below with a young me and sons).



G-ATOH no longer exists, having been badly broken in 1992 (not by me), but the other two are still in regular use. The 'Condor' is a beautiful aeroplane to fly. If you get the chance to fly one, go for it.

*(I did spins in G-ATAU back in 1971 with Ross Skinner, Ed)*

Strut Merchandise

Steve Hoskins has been investigating purchase of strut polo shirts and you may have seen these at last months meeting or the meet the members day. Steve arranged for some to be modeled for us.



Any colour you want as long as its green or blue, optional, add your registration letters. S, M, L & XL £17 ea.

Size Chart - Body Measurement	S	M	L	XL
Chest To Fit (Inch)	38-40	40-42	42-44	44-46
Chest To Fit (Cm)	92-97	97-102	107-112	112-117

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Christmas Dinner will be at the Newnham Court Inn, Bearsted Rd Weaving, ME14 5LH 18:30 hrs  
Book via Peter Huxley

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

*Also at the Headcorn meeting  
were L to R*

*Tony Eastwood (Jodel), Colin  
Evans (Usually with a Camera),  
Richard Stone (RV12) and Gary  
Smith (RV9)*

**Dates for your Diary 2019**

**24th October** Paul Caternach,  
Adventures of a commercial pilot  
**28th Nov** Microlights—venue Red  
Lion, Bridge Canterbury - Paul  
Brooker

**7th Dec** Christmas Dinner  
**30th Jan** AGM and Social