



January 2020

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



Note next meeting date!

Strut AGM

The AGM will be one week early this month, which means it will not clash with the CAA/GASCo safety meeting on the 30th January at the Bridgewood Manor Hotel ME5 9AX 19:30 which is just up Bluebell Hill from our usual meeting place, head towards Walderslade from the lower (Borstal) roundabout and it's just before the bend.

Rougham Fly-in Ron Armitage

Over the weekend of 14th and 15th September the Marshalling Team from North Weald held their annual fly-in at Rougham, near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. What a super event it proved to be with eighty-three aircraft flying in on the Saturday and a further sixty-three on the Sunday. The gazebo, run jointly by the Suffolk Coastal LAA Strut and the Vintage Aircraft Club was providing a lot of useful publicity to pilots and general public alike, and was even giving out FREE cakes and biscuits. Naturally, the gals and guys from Maypole took full advantage of this generosity.



Nigel Read - Editor

Contents

Rougham Fly-In	pp 1-2
Uxbridge WWII Bunker	pp2-5
What's that Banging?	pp5-6
Aerial photos	pp6-7
An American Adventure	p7-8

23rd January Meeting

AGM and social

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

www.laakentstrut.org.uk

Photograph taken from the Second World War Control Tower, which is now a very interesting museum



A view of visiting aircraft as we left

Things to do when retired Mike Negus

As a newly retired personage, keeping oneself occupied is very important to keep the grey matter ticking along as it should do, at least for the time being.

What to do, well one thing is to return to employment as a freelancer to enjoy a second bout of work but on your terms, the other thing is to meet up with friends and go visit places that are familiar but untrod, particularly

in the winter months. Take the Cutty Sark for instance, driven past it no end of times until a couple of my old properly retired work mates suggested a visit which we did last December and what an interesting day, a real slice of history but of course we are aviators and like to see things with wings. There are of course other aviation related sites to seek out and the aforementioned friends and I decided to visit the bunker at Uxbridge. To be fair it is a bit of a trek being at the end of the Metropolitan line on the London Underground and about an hour's ride from the main line stations serving the South East, a taxi will cost between £5 / £10 depending if it is a black or Uber cab.

The Battle of Britain Bunker is an underground operations room at RAF Uxbridge, formerly used by No.11 Group Fighter Command during the Second World War. Fighter aircraft operations were controlled from there throughout the War but most notably during the Battle of Britain and on D-Day. Now to be fair this wouldn't have been high up on my lists of sites to visit, I mean how much is there to see in an underground bunker, well quite a lot actually.

On arrival there is a smart new visitor centre with a very nice clean and friendly Café front and centre with a small gift and souvenir section. After our trip refreshments first. Visitors learn the key moments of history that shaped Britain's air defence and led to the construction of the bunker. They can listen to first-hand accounts from people that worked in the bunker during its finest hour in 1940. They can see real artefacts including aircraft wreckage, uniforms, and telecommunications equipment used by the RAF to defend the nation.

What was a delight was meeting a wartime veteran who had served in the Royal Navy during the war on Arctic convoys and actions in the Mediterranean who took great delight in telling of some of his exploits before giving us all a personalised message on a handout giving details of his service and awards. After a good look round this part of the exhibition we were introduced to our guide for the next hour or so who escorted us into the depths of the bunker next door. Two replica aircraft, one a Spitfire and the other a Hurricane stood guard in the nearby garden area.

Now, anybody that has seen the 1969 Film Battle of Britain will have seen scenes of the plotting room and it was all I expected to see. So, down we went into the operations room which is quite compact and dominated by the large plotting table covering South East England No.11 Group, East Anglia and the Midlands No.12 Group and the West Country: No.12 Group

had their own Group Controllers. This is overseen by the raised observation area in which sat the various assistants covering the Observer Corps, AA batteries, Royal Navy etc.

On the wall covering the whole length were the squadron details giving their numbers available, showing their various states of readiness, airborne and contact with the enemy and refuelling. Our guide gave a comprehensive account of the running of the operation including the day Churchill turned up and asked the question 'what reserves have we' to which the reply was 'none sir'.

We were then allowed to the upper level where we could then see the plotting table from above to get the controllers eye view and allowed to sit in the hallowed seat for a photo op. Even here there are fascinating artefacts and documents to keep you occupied until it was time to return to the surface and a welcome pot of tea. It is a fair way out and we always combine these visits with a mucky night out in London with a meal and a few beers but even if the latter does not appeal and you decide to take in a show or God help us, shopping, it is very well worth the effort to sample the experience of a genuine piece of history.



<https://tinyurl.com/yfkfo24t>

Back in October 2009 there was a strut drive out to the bunker, then an active RAF station, we had to show passports to gain entry: some pictures from then (Ed)





Aviate - Navigate - Communicate Report from Ron Armitage

We were flying at about 4,500 feet over the south coast. The air was smooth, visibility was great and Sandra was taking photographs for future Air Search exercises . . . but something seemed wrong. I could hear a constant tapping noise, which I initially thought was coming over the radio (we had been plagued by all manner of so-called aviators who think that Safetycom is a chat line and that the rest of the world is interested in their activities). But I digress... Changing channels and turning the radio down only made the noise more obvious, and it was now increasing in volume! As the nearest airfield of any size was our home base at Maypole, we pointed in that direction whilst trying to identify the problem. All engine instruments were reading correctly, temperatures and pressures all okay. Carburettor heat working normally and no apparent problems with any of the flying controls. But the noise was increasing and, on opening the window, was even more pronounced. So I shut the window. With the excellent view from this aeroplane, we could determine that there was no obvious damage to the underneath of the wing or the undercarriage, but of course we couldn't see the back end or the underneath of the fuselage. The noise continued to increase and, although

there was no reason to suspect an engine problem, we maintained height until we were overhead the airfield in case we needed to shut the engine down. I called on the radio to let the locals know that we were rejoining.

Putting the propeller into fine pitch and configuring the aeroplane for landing caused a further increase in noise, which was, by now, more of a constant banging. But all controls continued to work as expected. We generally make a pretty tight circuit and this would be no exception, but a further increase in the banging on base leg caused an immediate increase in concentration and one of my gentlest landings ever!!

On leaving the aeroplane, there seemed no obvious reason for the problem, but it soon became evident that the port bungee fairing cover (underneath the fuselage between the legs) had suffered a severe fatigue fracture. This had caused it to flex, further propagating the crack and allowing it to beat against the fuselage (hence the noises which we had heard). Needless to say, the offending item has now been replaced.

We aviated – navigated – communicated.



Weekend 30th November - 1st December 2019 Ron Armitage

With so many grass airfields closed for operations due to waterlogging, members of the 'East Kent section' of the Kent Strut decided it would be a great opportunity to practice their formation flying. With such beautiful flying weather, they also thought it would be a good idea to hone Sandra's photographic skills with some air-to-air photography from the Husky. A sample are attached for your perusal.



*Steve Hoskins' Tecnam Sierra
G-RLMW*



*Martin Booth's Rans S6 Coyote
G-BZVM*



*John Tiley's Sportcruiser G-CGJS On taxiing
trials following its recent rebuild*



An unexpected Ballooning trip

With about a weeks notice your editor received a call from fellow strut committee member Glen Everett, "would I like to go to the

states for about a couple of weeks with a hot air balloon". Well with ten more years experience of being retired than the afore mentioned Mike Negus a swift glance at my Ipad diary revealed not much on apart from the River Oak meeting which I knew would get admirably reported on by Peter so basically didn't take long to say ok. There was a rushing about getting Dollars, International Driving Licence and some Black shirts and trousers (to become sort of invisible).

This was all going to be paid for by Mr. Amazon!

Glen, with other half Liz, some of you my know has a balloon advertising company called Flying Adverts. Some five years ago, working with an event management company CSM Live, they developed a hot air balloon fitted with a LED screen, not just attached to the basket but all around the envelope, groups of LEDs in long strips Velcroed to the balloon.

The US launch of "The Aeronauts" film provided the perfect opportunity for the balloon's first outing. Setup in the Cardington Hangar, a video convinced Amazon it was right for just a couple of dates in Pasadena and Phoenix. Someone dropped out, which is how I ended up going without any prior knowledge of the endeavour!

I quickly found out how the balloon is inflated, initially with cold air from two petrol driven fans whilst the mouth is held open then with the basket and burner on it's side the burner is lighted. As the hot air lifts the envelope off the ground the basket becomes upright. The LED was controlled from the ground powered up by a generator the basket stays firmly earth bound, tethered to massive RAM trucks (probably doesn't need

Committee Contacts**Co-ordinator: Gary Smith**

Tel : 01795 422426

gary.james.smith@btinternet.com**Treasurer:**

John Dean 01892 822776

john@jmdean.co.uk**Membership Secretary:**

Stephen Solley 07836 653257

sc.solley@solleysicecream.co.uk**Newsletter Editor:**

Nigel Read 01634 362375

nread52@yahoo.co.uk**Committee Members:**

Mike Negus 01634 364396

Brian Hope 01795 662508

Uttam Chakravorty 07802 413043

Frank Lissimore 07798 900220

Peter Huxley 07899 015287

Glen Everett 01622 858956

Kevin Marks 01622 850939

Co-opted

Steve Hoskins 07768 984507

Remember to check and clean those
drain holes especially if parked in
the rain.

www.solleysicecream.co.uk

such big old lumps of US automotive extravagance). Fun jumping in them to take up the slack though. Three evenings of flying in Pasadena but none in Phoenix due to heavy past rain in the desert! (sounds familiar)

The whole show revolved around a C19th fayre with original film costumes on show. An American balloon, similar to that in the film but not gas gave tethered rides. The LED screen had three screens to show the film from all directions, along with giant flat screens. They also used it to promote *prime video*.

**Dates for your Diary 2019**

26th Jan Strut AGM + Social
30th Jan GASCo safety meeting, Perception vs Reality, recognising hazardous attitudes

27th Feb Frontier Engagement,
Rachael Marshall.