

April 2020

SKYWRITINGS

Note next meeting over the internet Stay Home Stay safe

Newsletter of the *Kent Strut*



Light Aircraft Association

Editorial

Once again I have raided the archives, this time from April/May 1998. The story of a young boy's determination to fly. Without an authors name attached I think I can guess who penned it, see if you can work it out?

I have a gliding based quiz from Ron Armitage and something I found on the BBC news which should raise a few questions. Lets see if I can fit it all in.



Nigel Read - Editor

Aircraft Reflections. (or At last my Tiger Flight.)

My interest in aircraft was initiated by my father. His interest went back to the 1930's and the heyday of aviation adventure.

With the start of the second world war he took unofficial leave from his job in Persia with the Anglo Iranian Oil Company and returned to England to volunteer for the R.A.F. as a fighter pilot. On discovering his age 28 and occupation he was refused entry. Ageism is not new. Not deterred, he joined the home office on bomb reconnaissance during the Blitz.

With the end of the battle of Britain there was a need for engineers in the army, so this time he got into the services. On completion of his basic training he was posted to a unit constructing emergency runways. These runways were basically cultivated earth mixed with various materials and raked to provide a soft landing for any returning aircraft in trouble. So,

April 30th Zoom Meeting

Tony Razzell, Coordinator East Midlands Strut

Building the Menestrel

Location : Your Home 20:00Hrs

although he did not get to fly, he saw plenty of different aircraft up until he went on the D Day invasion.

When I was a young child my Father would always point to the sky when an aeroplane went over and tell me what type it was. Living in Ladywell, a London suburb, we used to see the R.A.F fly past go over, this was always a thrilling occasion with the roar of the Merlins. At school I would sometimes spend the whole break time watching a biplane sky writing. My father introduced me to model making with a F.R.O.G kit a 'V' tailed balsa and tissue rubber powered monoplane. School holidays meant trips to museums and on one such occasion my Mother took us to the science museum, proudly pointing out Jason, Amy Johnson's D.H. Moth. As a school girl, my Mother had gone to an exhibition where Jason was on display and she was lucky to sit in the cockpit, she was very proud of this. I immediately took to the look of the Moth. On returning from a family holiday at Bournemouth one year in the late 1950's, we were caught in a traffic jam. The traffic was almost stationary and as we crept along the inevitable overheat loomed. The car was an Austin Seven, which used to have to stop at the horse trough for a drink when climbing River Hill outside Sevenoaks. When on our return from a day out at Hastings, just in time a hole appeared in the hedge and there was a sign "pleasure flights". We drove in. My Father made the necessary arrangements for two flights to accommodate the whole family. The aircraft was a three seat Auster, the rear seat being over a Perspex floor with motorcycle style footrests bar.

Summer holidays were partly spent with the local church camp in the Isle Of Wight in a field above Bembridge Airfield. When all the duties were done I would walk to the airfield and sit and watch. On one such occasion a company based at the airfield that used Tiger Moths to crop spray were demonstrating their ability to spray up to the edges of fields. They would drop at a steep angle with the engine idling to the hedge at one end of the runway and at about twenty feet off the ground would open the throttle and run down the runway climbing up at the hedge the other end. This I could watch for hours. Seeing a sign for pleasure flights I enquired as to how much and as to whether I could go in the Tiger Moth. The reply was no to the Tiger and I would find a cheaper flight at Sandown airfield. Considering I was a young boy of eight or nine years old the man in the flight office was very helpful. Having discovered the cost of the flight from Sandown I returned to camp to see if I had enough money in the camp bank. Oh dear, not enough. The following day at the Bembridge air field I

noticed people were leaving money under the saucers at the cafe tables. Collecting this, I soon made up the balance for my flight. [!] The flight itself was in a Cessna which was like a luxury car compared to the family transport which was now an Austin Van, an A45 I think.

During the late fifties my father suffered his second heart attack. On being discharged from hospital he was told to go on a holiday to convalesce. This was turned into the family holiday. We spent a week in Suffolk at a place called Beccles. Towards the end of our stay my parents saw an advert for an air show at an airfield called Seething. It was organised by the Waveney Flying Group. The day was a cold and windy one with a lot of the attractions being cancelled. An attempt was made to start an air race, but one of the entrants, a Miles Magester crashed on take off. Fortunately the pilot walked away. I think the race went on. This incident reduced the demand for pleasure flights so allowing my brother and I to get a seat. The aircraft was a Miles Messenger and, according to the program which my mother had saved, it's registration was G-AILL. We flew at 110mph at a height of 2,000 feet, all for 15/-, or 75p in new money, if I have remembered my conversions.

With the coming of the sixties we moved to Ightham near Sevenoaks and I started aero-modelling with diesel power, an ED Bee, a huge capacity 1 cc. This engine went in several control line models. The first was a Keil Kraft GB racer, the last a twin boom design of my own. I joined the Local Sevenoaks aero-modelling club. The old E.D. Bee by now was getting a bit tired, so saving my paper round money, I bought an ETA 15 2.46 cc for team racing. With my next accumulation of paper round money, I bought a 3.48 cc PAW 19 for combat control line flying.

As a member of Sevenoaks aero-modelling club I was not a great success. My team racer could just about manage 80 mph, while my combat flying wing was too fast at over 95 mph. We used to do displays at local Fetes mainly combat and on one such occasion I built a design called Cleaver, a flying wing with diagonal 16th inch balsa ribs and an elevator on a twin wire boom at the back. This made it extremely responsive and, even with the addition of a lead ballast, it was still too fast and lively. The day of the Fete loomed and I entered the circle to do combat. For combat you had two or more planes in the circle with a crepe paper streamer attached to the rear of the aircraft, the idea was to cut your opponent's streamer with your propeller. Having started with three of us in the circle, all was going well as we settled down in level flight, then one of my opponents cut

across the top of the circle to go for a streamer, this seemed a good idea so I did the same; unfortunately at ninety odd miles an hour things happen quickly. Looking over to see where I was on the down side of the loop I realised that the heap of balsa and tissue paper on the ground was one month's work.

With a brief spell as reserve pit man for one of our racing teams at the nationals, I stopped modelling and concentrated on studying.

Many years later I was working on an Oast and barn conversion and discovered that the owner of the property had his own airstrip and that the aeroplanes he flew were Tiger Moths. Whilst working on the job I got friendly with the owner and, at the end of the job, asked how much he charged for a pleasure flight. With a dead straight face he informed me he did not take pleasure flights. On seeing my obvious disappointment he smiled and said "But I'll take you up as a mate". He then took me into the hanger where there were three Tigers and said which one do you want to go up in.

To date I have flown in all three as a passenger, but my first flight is the one I remember the best. I was given a briefing on the do's and don'ts and taken round the aircraft to do the checks. Then, donning the flying helmet, I was strapped into the front cockpit. The engine was started and run up to do the mag drop tests. All was well, so we taxied to the end of the downwind run way and, with full throttle applied, we started our take-off run. After thirty odd years I had realised my ambition. I was flying in a Tiger Moth.

Ron's Quiz

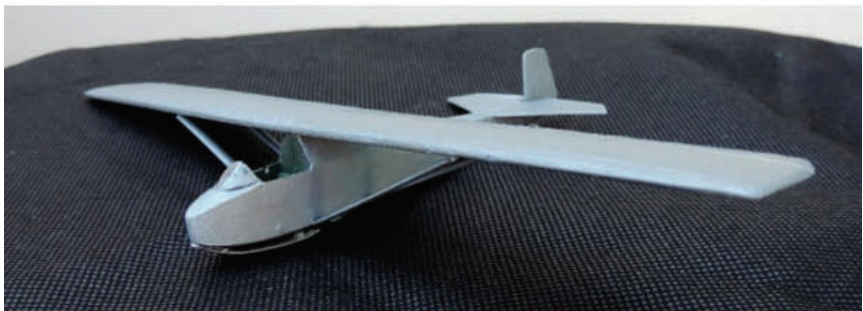
As most of you probably know, I owned and operated a gliding club for many years and, being the only full-time Instructor, I managed to accumulate an awful lot of flights. The gliders were winch-launched and I employed Mac McGowan, a very able winch driver, who was also a very experienced model maker. When he died, he left me a large collection of unmade aeroplane models and a box of 'projects', which was basically a mass of partly-made models and broken bits. Because of our forced detention at home due to Coronavirus I decided to see just what I could make from the bits in the box. This is the result of my endeavours – the spans range from 5.5 to 13.5 inches. Your task is simply to identify the five flying machines.

1. This glider was designed and first built in the 1930s. After the war it was built by a number of different companies in various countries including the UK. I was lucky enough to fly one in 1989, having rescued it from the back of a hangar, where it was covered in dust and bird droppings. I didn't ask about paperwork and was told that if I broke it (and survived) I would have to buy it!
2. Being first flown in 1936, it was modified to this standard a year or two later and was used for Air Cadet training. In those days there were



no two-seaters, which meant that the training system was quite productive of broken gliders!!! I have only flown the following Mark, which had a different wing and was subsequently developed into a two-seater (in which I have over 1600 flights) and which was used extensively by the Air Training Corps.

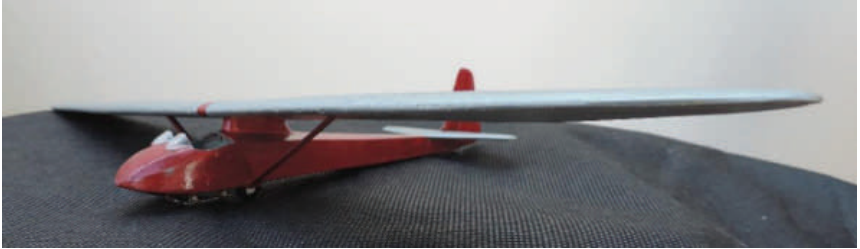
3. This type first flew in 1944 and, following some modifications, was sold to many gliding clubs and became the first two-seat glider



operated by the British 'Air Cadet' movement. I spent many years teaching sixteen-year-old cadets to fly these and getting them to achieve their Gliding brevet, which required three solo flights. I

owned one of these beautiful machines for about twenty years and have over 3,000 flights in them.

4. This glider first flew in 1956. It was most advanced for its time, being of all metal construction (apart from fabric-covered control surfaces). It has a retractable undercarriage, Fowler flaps, very powerful



airbrakes and is highly aerobatic. I instructed in them for a few years, doing about 1,500 launches.

5. Designed and built in France, this little aeroplane could be homebuilt and was produced in some numbers by a British company. I had



previously owned gliders and a motor glider, but this was my first ‘Group A’ aeroplane. Mac would have said that my results were pitiful, which is probably true, but I have done this as a little homage to him. We scattered his ashes from our Husky, but that is a story for another time – preferably over a few beers when we are released!!!



Coronavirus: Drones to deliver NHS supplies to Isle of Wight *BBC News*

Drones will be used to carry medical supplies from Hampshire to the Isle of



Wight, the government has announced.

Grant Shapps, said a planned trial of the technology would be brought forward and begin next week. In March, the government announced funding for drone tests and a new air traffic control system.

Mr Shapps said there was an "urgent need" for the trial to begin sooner than planned. Ferry crossings to the Isle of Wight are currently reduced due to the spread of coronavirus.

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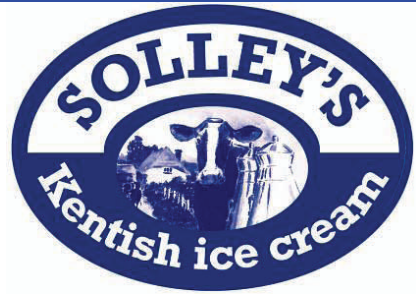
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A spokeswoman told the BBC that the first flights would carry PPE. However, in future the drone could deliver time-critical supplies such as blood and organs.

The trial will use a petrol-fuelled Windracers Ultra fixed-wing drone, capable of carrying 100kg for up to 1,000km (621 miles). However, initially the drone will not carry its maximum payload, flying from Lee-on-Solent to Binstead [?] with a safety pilot at each end. Approval is required from the CAA.

*Cargo hold of about 700 litres*

More on the technology pages of BBC News

Dates for your Diary 2020 30th April Building the Menestrel. Down load the Zoom app from the appropriate app store. John Dean will send out the meeting details, before the meeting. I.D. passwords etc.