



December 2020

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the **Kent Strut**
Produced by the **East Kent Flyers**



*We wish you all a Happy Christmas
and a healthy and peaceful New Year*

Ripple Air Strip

Stephen Solley

It was in 2002 when I first landed on my strip at Ripple. I was finally based at home.

We had sold our dairy cows, meaning we no longer needed grass for them to graze on. The ground for the strip was worked on to make it level and then sown with old grass seed, which would only have been thrown away. I then rolled it with a heavy roller and then we were away.

Maintenance is not too arduous. In the peak season it is mowed twice a week and in the winter for about six weeks we “borrow” about 40 sheep and they eat the grass, making it very short. It is then rolled again ready for the new flying season.

Little did I realise what other uses the runway would have.

It’s been used as a car park for about 400 cars, a rugby training ground for two young grandsons, dog training and a walking circuit. Wildlife also make use of it. Badgers are particularly fond of searching for worms and manage to roll the grass back as if it was a carpet.

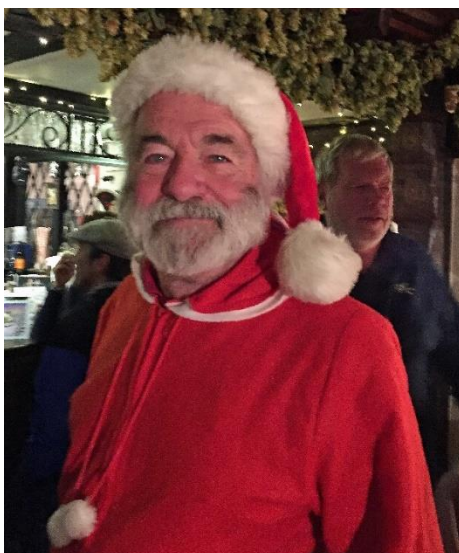
What I find most satisfying is the amount of visitors we have. Be it fly-ins for breakfast or ice cream or classic cars mixed with aeroplanes.

Let’s hope we can get back to doing all these things in 2021 when eventually life will be a little bit more normal. With more barbeques, ice cream, tea drinking and chatting.



Strut Christmas Dinner

As you probably know, it was the turn of the East Kent Division to organise the dinner this year and it was with huge regret that this had to be cancelled due to the COVID regulations. We had great plans for the evening and some pictures of last year's event are here to give a flavour of how it could have been.

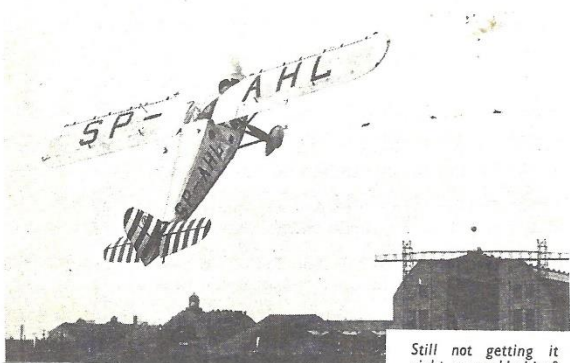


Plans for next year are already underway. It will be a splendid event.

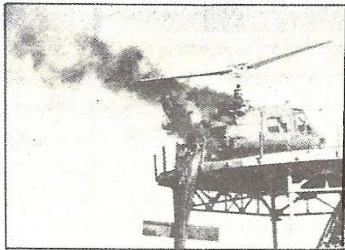
Steve Hoskins

We are very pleased to be able to tell you that our own Steve Hoskins became a Class Rating Instructor back in October and is now available for Biennial Flight Review, Medical Flight Reviews and the like (or whatever they are now called in this constantly changing environment). I know that he has put an awful amount of effort (and money) into acquiring this rating and I feel privileged to have been his first victim. Many thanks must go to our old mate Richard Warriner for leading Steve down this path and to Nic Orchard for providing additional encouragement. However, as you will see from the next page, he has not always been this good. (Many thanks to Flight Magazine and Roger Bacon.)

⊕ Straight and Level ⊕



Still not getting it right, are we Hoskins? . . . (aftermath of a small cloud that recently passed over some Super Cubs on Wilson Aerodrome, Nairobi)

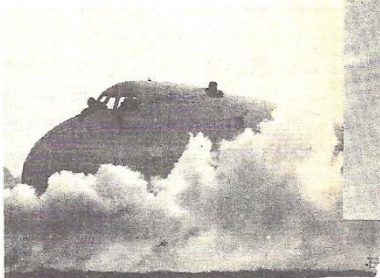


Still not getting it quite right, are we Hoskins? . . . US Army UH-1 test target after a Stinger missile hit at the USAF White Sands Missile Range

Bit late on the collective again, Hoskins . . .



It's no good Hoskins, we shall have to get the altimeter fixed . . . (from the "Oxford Mail," ex-RAF Argosy in an emergency rescue exercise near Henley-on-Thames)



Still not getting our crosswind landings right, are we Hoskins?

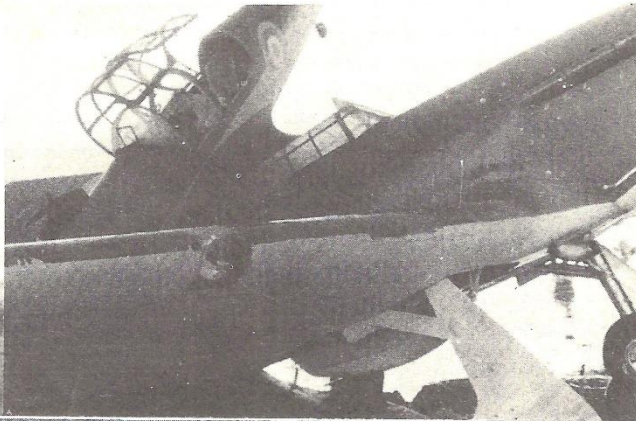


Bit late on the roundout again Hoskins

Left: Still too early on the round-out, Hoskins . . . (Karpinski's RWD6, short take-off test, Berlin)



Still not getting it right, are we Hoskins? . . . (79 Sqn Hawker Hurricane and a Miles Master of No 3 FTS at Sealand in mid-1940. "Today it would have been called an aquaplaning accident," says the reader who sent this in; "in those days we called it finger trouble")



Maypole Airfield

The flying community has lost yet another airfield. On Wednesday 9th December all the Maypole flyers were given notice to quit the site (aeroplanes and all equipment) within 30 days. Naturally the owners tried to put a bit of 'spin' on the situation – it's one of the things they are good at, but the letter from their lawyers, reproduced below, shows the true picture.

Dear Mr Armitage

Re: Your informal licence relating to the storage of your aircraft at Maypole Airfield.

We act for Andrew and Sally Haigh who as you know are the owners of Maypole Airfield and we hereby give you formal notice that the airfield will close on the 10th of January 2021. You are therefore required to ensure that your aircraft is removed from the airfield by that date.

If you are unable to fly your aircraft from Maypole Airfield prior to 11 January 2021 which is when the runway will close, you must make arrangements to remove your aircraft before that date by other means.

Please ensure that all of your belongings and any of your rubbish are removed from the airfield. Any items remaining at the airfield on 11 January 2021 will be deemed to have been abandoned by you and our clients will dispose of them as they see fit.

Yours faithfully



Girlings

And this at a time when the field is unusable by some aeroplanes due to waterlogging, Christmas and New Year are imminent and **we are under COVID Tier 3 regulations**. Of course, the owners are able to sell to whomsoever they please, but is this really the way to treat customers of many years standing? And in these dark times?

In contrast to this, the help and fellowship that has been given by our many **real** friends in the aviation community has been amazing. There is no room here to list them all and some would be embarrassed if we did so. They know who they are. Thank you so very much.

The aeroplanes are now dispersed with most being at either Headcorn or Clipgate, thanks to the endeavours of Jamie Freeman and Bob Akehurst, the airfield owners. The Husky is wintering in a nice warm hangar at Thurrock, where there is a lovely tarmac runway. We are, of course, anxious not to disrupt their business, but have just received a message saying, "You will never be a nuisance and we are happy to help you. If you want to go flying, let me know and I will arrange for extraction from the hangar." In January, February and March this year we were only able to fly twice due to the awful condition of the runway at Maypole.

What you probably haven't known is that, down here in East Kent, we have a bard in our ranks. Nic Orchard has produced the following for your delight and delectation.

The Maypole refugees will prevail.

The aeroplanes were gently snoozing
As their people were out in boozing
All wheels and feet upon the floor
When night and weather said 'no more'.

The tailwheels dreamed of bimbbling slow,
Chasing trains, down very low,
Finding sights missed by the rest
And chortled quietly 'We're the best'.

That woke the Tecnam, rather snorty
'Call that flying? Being naughty?
You'd take a week for what I've seen
In just one day, since morn I've been
To Perth for lunch, then tea near Usk
And down the Rhine and back by dusk'.

The yellow Husky interrupted
'Excuse me, you've been corrupted
By that tin foil in the next hangar
Sport cruising fast like Ayrton Senna.
If you slowed down, things below
Would please your person more, you know.'
'We have a blast', the Tecnam said
This affectation's in your head
We fly a lot and have such fun
My wings get warm nearer the sun.'

Behind her someone coughed politely
The Acrosport: 'Arguing so forthrightly
Is not like you and demeans your renown
Adding so sweetly 'You've flown upside down?'



'Let's change the subject' said Husky at speed
'I wonder if Santa will bring what we need.
I'd like a good cover, those birds are a pain;
There are big holes in that old counterpane.'
The Champ in her coat then seemed to grunt
'Wings get so chilly sitting here at the front.
A door on the hangar would be so nice
And a cat to deter those pesky mice.'
'By the way', added in that American drawl
Did y'all hang your stockings, two main and one small?
Mine are of parachute silk, made with care
But as I wear trousers they get little wear.'
There was one on each wing root, one by her tail
There's nothing like hope in the rain and the hail.

Before they could answer a noise was heard
An owl? No not that, nor even a bird.
A swish of damp tyres and blocking their view
Rolled the Bristell and Rans, both looking blue.
'We heard all your chatter, thought we'd join in.
Our lot are still sleeping and making a din.
The Jodels are snoring - in French, if you please –
We reckon they're dreaming of garlic and cheese.
Or that's the most likely sanitised version
Those furriners may be full of perversion.
Did we hear you wishing that you had a door
On your hangar? All we want is a floor!
That gravel is vicious on tyres, quite absurd
Oh, for some concrete – we think that's the word.'

As they pondered their plight they started to doze
A stocking hung limply from the Rans' nose.
All spinners were still, the sky without cloud
In the stillness a leaf drop would be very loud.

A swooshing, a rustling from the dark runway
Was heard by no one and then faded away.



The sun shone brightly, people still yawning
Found strange lumps at the 'field next morning
A big coat, a vast hangar door, beside that
A huge concrete mixer, some sacks and a cat.
'Merry Christmas' was shouted, 'It looks good up there.'
The aircraft said nothing. Such magic is rare.



And that, one might well have thought, was it
All well, all calm, then, such sh!th, the bit
That follows isn't seasonal, nor even polite
But don't let that interfere with a soundbite.
The Haighs gave us notice, despite having known
Before then that imaginary doors we'd be shown.
No pressure, no panic, so it's easy for all
Secure hangarage for you, (just a floor, roof, no wall
And not ready yet), we Haighs, the good guys
Are publicly proud of our work, claim the prize
For humane interaction with residents
For that there are really no precedents.



Bitter and twisted? And full of ire?
And hoping to drop them both in the mire?
You bet we are angry, and full of spite
We'd do all we can if it helped our plight
The results would be such a glorious sight
Karma, revenge, justice and right is might.
'Til then it is vital there is no doubt
We're in together until we're all out.



When life deals lemons, forget lemonade
I've been baking, lemon drivel I've made
When we are regrouped, and we will be again
It's tea, cake and laughter that there will reign.

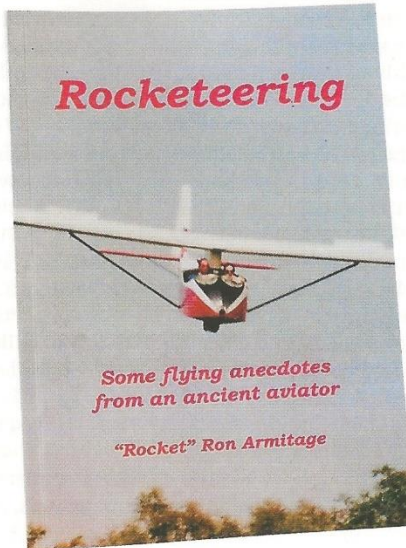


The two books below, written by local pilots, would make great stocking fillers and the wonderful Solley's ice cream is always delightful.

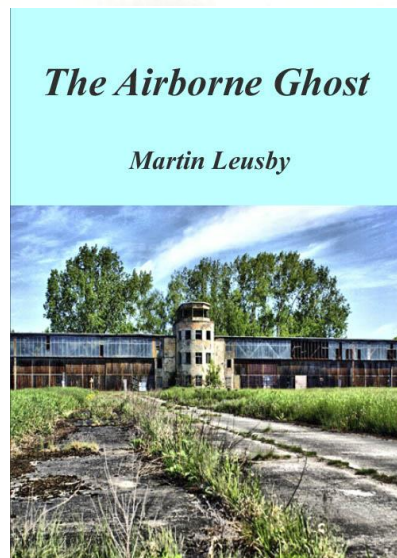
'Rocket' Ron's entertaining yarns

Rocketeering - Some flying anecdotes from an ancient aviator by 'Rocket' Ron Armitage, available from the author at Holly Tree Cottage, Waldershare Road, Ashley, Dover, Kent CT15 5JA £5 plus £1.50 p & p

I am glad 'Rocket' Ron Armitage sent *Pilot* a copy of his self-published book and that he took 'the liberty of signing it', because it is a very entertaining and amusing read. Essentially a collection of vignettes from the author's long career in aviation, much of it spent as a gliding instructor, it comes across as a series of bar room tales of the best kind – the ones that are both genuinely witty and substantially true – the kind of thing you want to dip in to and savour, rather than being in too much of a hurry to arrive at the end (it's not a long book). Any profits go to volunteer organisation Air Search, for which Rocket Ron is the Training Officer. **PW**



60 | **Pilot** September 2020 | pilotweb.aero



Martin Leusby has just published his first novel (or novella - as it is a 19,000+ word paperback). It is described as "An aviation tale of our times" and is very relevant to the situation we find ourselves in today. Starting at Rochester, most of you will recognise many of the characters and (*author's note*) hopefully enjoy the adventure. If you would like a copy, please contact Martin by mail to martinleusby@outlook.com. Each copy is just £6 plus £1.50 postage.



This is a 'one off' newsletter from the East Kent Flyers of the LAA Kent Strut, produced by their scribe, Ron Armitage with massive help from the contributors. Of course it would not have been possible without Sandra's magic with all the technical stuff to produce it, which I don't understand.