

Skywritings



Newsletter of the Kent Strut of the

October 2021



Happy 75th Birthday to
Nic Orchard's Aeronca
Champ G-TECC !

Pooley's Dawn to Dusk Competition

Ron Armitage

The 50th International Dawn to Dusk Competition presentation dinner was held at the Royal Air Force Club on 15th September and what a grand affair it was. Making the evening extra special for us was our Committee member, Nic Orchard, receiving not just one but two prestigious awards:

The Pooley Sword for the best presented report and log (in fact a splendid book called 'The F Word' – in this case the F standing for Follies).

The Icarus Trophy for the best solo entry.



The evening was concluded with a very convivial and informal get together in the Running Horse Tavern, very conveniently located in the Club basement.

Community Policing Volunteers (Aviation)

Ron Armitage



On 21st September at Rochester Airport four Kent Strut members were delighted to be presented with their accreditation as fully-fledged Community Police Volunteers (Aviation). All are current members of 'Air Search' and, along with other members of the organisation, are the very first holders of this title in the UK. Matthew Scott, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, presented the awards and said:

“Kent Police is very fortunate to have such a high calibre of staff who commit their career to working for the Force and serving the public and I am pleased that you will be joining this wonderful group of people who are truly passionate about their jobs.

The greatest asset that the Force has are the people who work for it, they provide the quality service that local people deserve and expect and that is what gives Kent Police its excellent reputation, which is now in your hands. The fact you volunteer your time to assist police in relation to searching, recording, photography and assisting with investigations from the sky above is inspirational. Volunteers are the backbone of this country, which has also been evident throughout the pandemic – this is no different to the Force; without people like you the Force would not be able to provide the continued first-class service it does.

I wish you all the very best as you progress in your career and I hope that your time with the Force is all you hope it will be. Thank you for your patience and resilience waiting for this moment to arrive.”



The four Strut members are Steve Hayman, Peter Stretton, Sandra Davis and 'yours truly'. Our Strut Coordinator, Steve Hoskins, has joined Air Search and will hopefully become a CPV (Aviation) following the mandatory vetting.



Kent Resilience Forum



PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES IN KENT AND MEDWAY

Wanted – Kent-based Pilots with own (or shared) aircraft

Whether you are a Group A, Microlight, gyrocopter or helicopter licensed pilot you can learn new skills, enjoy the company of fellow pilots, and help make Kent a safer place to live and work.

The only reward is to gain experience and the satisfaction of helping others, working with the council-based Kent Voluntary Services Emergency Group and the Emergency Services generally. No matter where in Kent you are based, we need you!

For information and details of the role, please email airsearch2@outlook.com

Wanted – Observers to assist in the above role

If you do not have a licence yet, or just enjoy flying and aviation generally, there is a role for you too. We need airborne Observers and can teach new skills around aviation, map-reading, observation and reporting. Qualifications are not required, just enthusiasm for aviation and willingness to be a useful member. If you have good camera skills, so much the better!

Again, for more information, please email airsearch2@outlook.com

LAA Meet the Members Day Headcorn 18th September 2021

Peter Huxley

The forecast for the day was perhaps a little uncertain and it started rather dull but soon cheered up, not entirely unusual for September.

Various members arrived at 09.00 to start setting up the gazebo, a couple of tables and some chairs ready to receive the hordes of visitors. Steve Slater from the LAA came to join us having been waiting in the car park for nearly an hour, his journey to south of the river having been quicker than expected. Also joining us was Stewart from Pooley's who set up a table next to us to show his wares.

One or two people started arriving by road to see what we were up to and a few came to see us from the ranks of those who were waiting to see their friends jump out of an aeroplane that was perfectly serviceable! They were usually led by a small boy who dragged his parents or grandparents along so that he could get more information about our wonderful hobby and went away with as many magazines and leaflets as he could carry. It may be many years before he can join the fun but perhaps the seed has been sown.

As the weather improved, turning to a hot, bright day with little wind, more visitors arrived, this time coming by air. Some were from fairly near airfields like Deanland or farm strips of a similar distance.

Some were Strut members, like Steve Solley or Kevin Marks and some came from farther afield. Quite a few are, of course, based here now following the closure of Maypole Airfield.

There were some who arrived by road because they hadn't yet got an aeroplane but were keen to meet people who perhaps could help them or just to chat to like-minded enthusiasts. One man was learning to fly but was also ready to start building so that when he had his licence he would already have the tool with which to exploit his new-found skill.

It was perhaps a little disappointing that the average age, as mentioned in Steve Slater's column in Light Aviation was not that young. Given the cost and commitment required to fly for fun it is not entirely surprising but the number of small boys who came to see us and get some information might show promise for the future. Perhaps too, it was unfortunate that no girls or young women were in evidence. In that respect it is fortunate that engineering is no longer seen as a principally masculine preserve and there are indeed, many very competent female engineers and pilots filling the ranks of aviation enthusiasts. There must be many of them in Kent and hopefully more events like this one will encourage them to join us.

The day was a great success with a good many visitors by road and air. It might be the last official event of the season but there will be other less formal gatherings as well as strut meetings on the last Thursday of each month and here's to the next time.



Rougham

Ron Armitage

Whilst most Strut members were working at Headcorn, Sandra and I snuck away for a few hours to meet up with old chums at Rougham (near Bury St Edmunds). The occasion was the annual fly-in organised by the North Weald Marshalling Team and it proved to be very successful, with over 100 aeroplanes arriving over the course of the day.

Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in winning the 100 litres of Avgas in the prize draw, but were happy to meet up with old friends from the local LAA Struts, the Vintage Aircraft Club and the Tiger Club. Below are photographs of some of the more unusual types to fly in.



Miles Gemini



Avro Anson



Druine Turbulents



Rearwin 175 Skyranger



Beagle-Auster J5G (Cirrus Autocar)



Leaving early to get back to the LAA Day at Headcorn

Lament of an Aviation 'Widow'

As an aviation 'widow'
I'm out there in the cold
While the old man's up among the clouds
Pretending that he's bold.

He's been up there four times this week
Flitting about the sky,
And when I have a go at him
He sits and wonders why.

Is he heading for Beccles,
Or maybe the Isle of Wight?
He's off for another breakfast,
To me it's just not right.

Wherever the hell he's going
For his regular breakfast bash,
I hope they overcook his food
And give him a plate of ash.

Each time he goes I'm home alone
Left to clean and dry
While he's up there with all his mates
Rambling round the sky.

If I'd known he was obsessed
Before we tied the knot,
I'd have told him he could stick it
And left him there to rot.

When we were wed we made a pledge
For better or for worse
But Better left the runway
And I finished up with worse!

Anon (but probably Roger Pearson)

Lydd

Kevin Marks

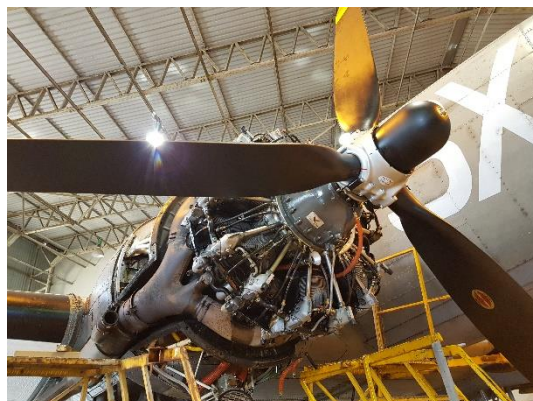
It has been a busy month at Lydd, mainly due to the Coastguard Navajo, SAR helicopters and Border Force drones departing and returning for their Channel patrols. As usual, Lydd ATC manage all the movements really well and we GA residents are getting used to the 'four mile spacing due to wake turbulence' instruction.



Charlie Apron, front row, 'twins only'

Coastguard Navajo, local Navajo Chieftan and visiting USA Cessna 340

The two DC3s have been out and about and treated to some engine maintenance.



DC3 Pratt and Whitney de-cowled

Unfortunately the café remains closed for the foreseeable future, although FAL now have a broader range of hot and cold drinks, snacks and microwave offerings at the airside reception.

Notes from Farthing Corner

Mike Negus

Weather is remaining mixed but at least we were able to complete some trips in the Luscombe including the LAA Rally which was booked for an early slot, 09.17, for the Friday. Always tricky as sometimes early morning mist or cloud can delay things, however despite a ceiling forecast of 1200 feet the visibility was promising so Ron and I got airborne at about 09.00 and heading out over Essex we were able to gain another 400 to 500 feet with the forward view improving all the time until within a few miles of Sywell, when a bit of fluffy low level stuff was picked up, but soon we were through. Having established at Pitsford and making use of our new SkyEcho, we picked our way round the circuit for an uneventful arrival which is a bit of a misnomer as flying a Luscombe cannot be described as uneventful, it's always an event! Pleasing to report there were 9 examples in attendance over the weekend including one from the Emerald Isle. The flight home was a real treat and with a tailwind to boot, we scurried home in an hour and 5 minutes so we both agreed it was a GOOD day. The following weekend saw the pair of us flying into Kittyhawk Farm for a barbeque which was well attended including several Strut members from various strips.

One event at Farthing Corner brought cause for concern on the weekend of the military show at Detling with the unscheduled arrival of a Piper Cub on the Sunday, group-owned from Essex. Farthing Corner is strictly PPR but was ignored by this chap who was met by somebody not known to us and presumably whisked off to the show. To cap it off, one of our residents was flying in the afternoon and observed the Cub making its way across the freshly mown silage area which is not part of our operation, no calls on Safetycom, and to finish flew on 06 straight across the farm. Poor show all round! The miscreant has been sent a bill for landing and a ticking off in no uncertain terms. Pity because it was a rather lovely example of its type.

Finally, happy to report the Strut supported 'Meet the LAA' was held for a change in fine weather and anyone that flew in was generously treated to a £5 landing fee thanks to Jamie, plus we had the opportunity to catch up with members old, new and prospective which is what it's all about.

Ripple Strip

September has been a quiet month. The ice cream parlour closed on the 12th September for the winter and will be opening again next Easter.

Ripple Strip runway will stay open throughout the winter, only closing while the sheep have a clean-up or the weather is too bad. I can always put the kettle on if you want to visit. Hope to see some of you at the Ripple Classic Car Meeting on Sunday 26th September.



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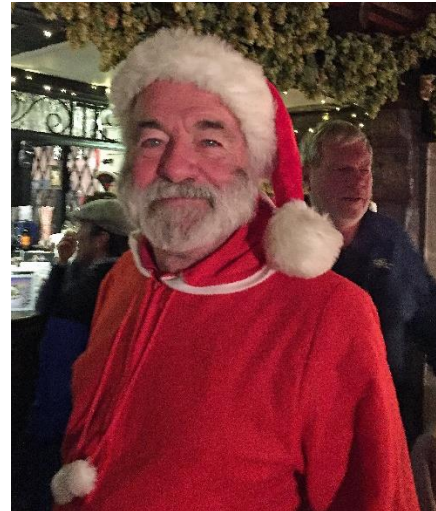
Simply go to: www.solleysicecream.co.uk

Strut Christmas Dinner Please put Saturday 4th December in your diary now.

This is the date for the Strut Christmas Dinner which, this year, will be held at The Black Pig, a quintessentially English country pub. Full details, prices and menus will be in the next edition of 'Skywritings', but to give you a 'taster', here are some photographs of the pub and a previous Christmas party there.



*The Black Pig, Barnsole Road, Staple, CT3 1LE
with suitable adornment*



*The presence of Father Christmas
is not guaranteed*

Monthly Strut Meetings

After an eternity of Zoom meetings, we are pleased to invite you all to an **ACTUAL** meeting. Jeff Pacey, one of Southend's Air Traffic Controllers, has kindly offered to give us a talk and we are sure it will be a most interesting evening. We are also sure that you will have plenty of questions for him. He will be accompanied by Henry Spurgeon, who is a Tower and Radar Controller and ATC Instructor.

PAFRA members (Pilots and Friends of Rochester Airport) have also been invited and so it will also be an opportunity to meet some old friends.

Venue: Cobtree Manor Park Golf Club, Chatham Road, Maidstone, ME14 3AZ

Date and time: Thursday 30th September 19.45 for 20.00 start

Monewden

Ron Armitage

Boxted, near Colchester, is the site of a WWII airfield and, although most of the land has reverted back to farmland, there is a small museum there, which is well worth a visit. There is also a small area of grassland which the farmer permits the Suffolk Coastal Strut of the Light Aircraft Association to use for a fly-in and BBQ once a year. This has been regularly supported by members of the Kent Strut. The Suffolk Coastal Strut and the Boxted Airfield Historical Group even put a stamp in your log book to prove attendance!



This year it was felt that the surface of the site was not in sufficiently good condition for most aeroplanes and a decision was made to have the fly-in at the delightful little airfield at Monewden. We were not able to attend but, following the relocation of our Husky to Headcorn, we were able to visit on 29th August. The occasion was a fly-in organised by the owners Steve and Linda Eustace to benefit the Childhood Eye Cancer Trust.



Turning Crosswind to land

As well as inviting aviators, they encourage local villagers to attend and (suitably accompanied) inspect the aeroplanes and talk to the crews. It is great to see how the locals interact positively with the aeroplane owners and how the children enjoy the aeroplanes as much as they do the face painting, colouring, and tractor 'train' rides. The local car clubs provide an interesting array of vehicles, which this year included a Bond Minicar, which instantly reminded me of when I was very, very much younger (but that's another story).





The beard might have to go! Photograph courtesy of Strut member 'Grasser' Brown, who can be seen lurking behind the left hand strut.

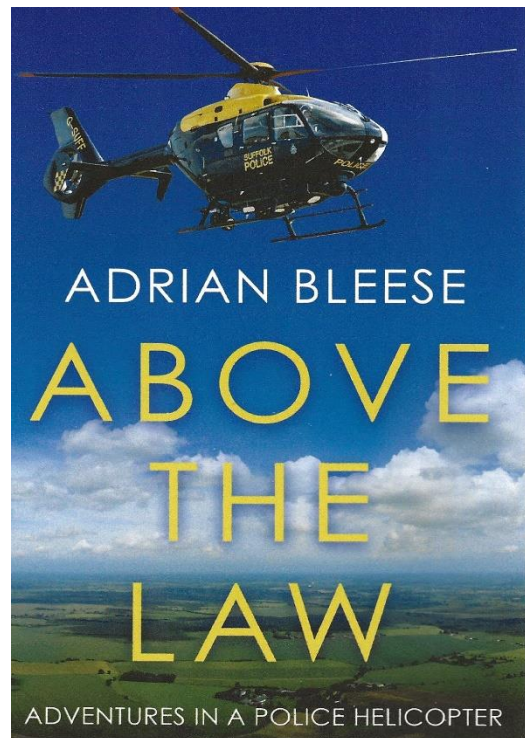
All in all a super day, a great advertisement for our sort of fun flying, a day out for the locals and over £5.000 raised for a very worthwhile charity.



The museum at the old Debach Airfield just a couple of miles away. Such a shame we can no longer fly in as the little grass strip is now cultivated

Whilst we were at Monewden, we were able to chat with Adrian Blease and his wife, Sharon. For twelve years of his life, Adrian was a Civilian Air Observer working with the Suffolk Constabulary and latterly the National Police Air Service on their helicopters.

He has written a terrific book about his many experiences, which I found totally fascinating, particularly as I know his area of operations very well. What is disturbing, however, are his stories of the National Police Air Service taking over operations to the detriment of the Police Service and taxpayers alike. This is a “must read” book. You won’t be disappointed. For those of you who would like to buy a book or meet up with the author, he will be at the Hinderclay Meadows fly-in on 2nd October. Hope to see you all there.



Kittyhawk

Ron Armitage

Having heard that there was a fly-in at Kittyhawk on 11th September, it seemed churlish to refuse. Not, of course, that we were in any way influenced by the availability of cake, ice cream, Lebanese chicken kebabs and Butcher’s burgers. We had been warned that there was a risk of windshear on the approach to Runway 28 (which was the runway in use) and were grateful for the information. There was a splendid turnout and we not only met Strut members, but friends from PAFRA, KMAC and numerous local airfields. I hope the photographs reflect the ambience. Thanks have been sent to Olly and his band of helpers for a great day.



Toys for the boys!!



Strut and KMAC members get together



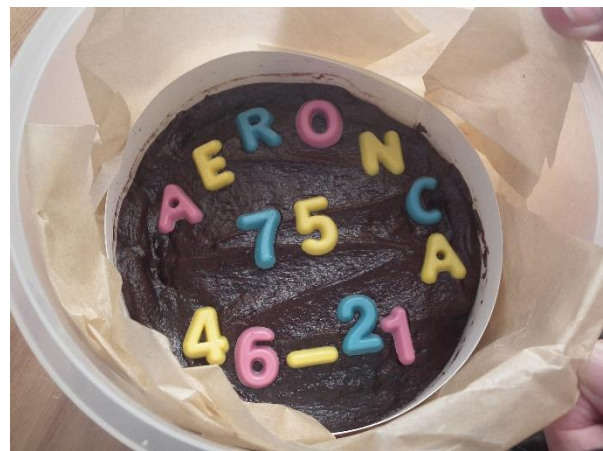
Olly, our host – doing the rounds



A few of the visitors



The Editor boring Dave and Caz.....



who made G-TECC's birthday cake

Lasham – A Visit to the Gliding Heritage Centre

Ron Armitage

With my background in gliding it was a double pleasure to be offered a chance to fly in to Lasham, the UK's premier gliding centre. This had been made possible by Martin Leusby, working with PAFRA and the folks at Lasham, and so, on 13th September we left from Headcorn and took a route to the south of the Gatwick zone. The guys from Rochester took the direct route and enjoyed rather better visibility. However, we all landed within a few minutes of each other on the grass strip right alongside the clubhouse, bar and restaurant.



Downwind, about to turn base for the grass strip

The Heritage Centre is on the other side of the airfield and, following suitable refreshment, we were taken there by car, which was just as well as the airfield is vast and I certainly would not have made it on foot.



En route, we pass through the Engineering Centre for bigger “stuff” (once Dan Air’s maintenance base)

The Gliding Heritage hangars are spectacular and filled to the brim with historic gliders, preserving the history of gliding in Great Britain. Lack of space prevents me from listing them all, but the photographs will give you an idea and their website is well worth a study for anyone interested in gliding.



Many of the gliders have been restored by the Lasham team and their new state-of-the-art workshop will ensure many more are rescued.



Heritage Centre on left of photograph

I took along my last glider log book (number 22), hoping to impress their very experienced people with the fact that, to date, I have accumulated 37,450 launches (and that's only those I logged). Initially they were suitably impressed and they couldn't find anyone who had done anywhere near that number of flights. Unfortunately for me, one of their brighter people worked out that my average flight time on gliders was under 7 minutes. Any instructor brought up with ATC gliding and doing basic training on the winch launch will understand (especially when real and simulated cable breaks were commonplace). Nowadays, with the incredible capability (and cost) of modern gliders, things are rather different. I have, in fact, flown eighteen of the types in the collection. If I was really old, I would have flown even more of them!!

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Dates for your Diary

Thursday 30th September
Saturday 4th December

Monthly Strut Meeting at Cobtree Manor Park Golf Club
Christmas Dinner at The Black Pig

One Evening in September. The Final Combat of Werner Voss September 23rd 1917

Mike Negus

Werner Voss was born in 1897 in Krefeld, Germany into comfortable circumstances, his father owned a dye factory and the family had Jewish origins. Initial service as Germany entered the war at the age of 17 was to join Westphalia's 11th Hussar Regiment where he saw service on the Eastern Front. Voss transferred to the Luftstreitkräfte (German Air Service) on 1 August 1915 where he progressed with his training until he became the youngest flying instructor in German Service. On the 10th March 2016 he was transferred to a bomber unit before being posted to Jagdstaffel 2 (Fighter Squadron 2) on 21 November 1916. Here Voss met Manfred von Richthofen. The two became good friends and soon they began to amass a considerable number of victories.



Werner Voss

On 30 July 1917, Voss moved to his permanent command of Jagdstaffel 10 in Richthofen's Flying Circus, Jagdegeschwader 1 (JG I) In late August 1917, the Fokker F.I prototype was assigned to Voss as his personal aircraft - it was easy to fly with light controls, could out-manoeuvre any previous aircraft, mounted twin machine guns, and had a greater rate of climb than most types of single seat scouts at the front. Voss was impressed with the qualities of the machine. Only 3 examples were in limited use at the front currently with the full production Fokker Dr 1 to follow shortly.



Werner Voss with the Fokker F 1

By 11 September 1917, Voss had raised his victory total to 47, second only to the Red Baron's 61 but had the closest brush with death when after shooting down six-victory ace [Oscar McMakin](#), he had in turn been attacked by Captain [Norman Macmillan](#). Macmillan dived his Sopwith Camel within six meters (20 feet) of Voss, machine guns spurting tracers that flew near the German's head. An RE8 observation machine blundered across, nearly colliding with the Camel which enabled Voss to dive away. The following day he went on leave, returning on the 22nd September.

On the morning of the 23rd September Voss flew on patrol downing an Airco DH4 bomber at 09.30 and returning to base, his two brothers, Max and Otto Voss, arrived at Jasta 10 for a visit. Voss was fatigued and told his brothers he was looking forward to more time off. He ate lunch with his brothers: soup, black bread, coffee, and cake. His brothers noted his haggard appearance, apparent in his final photographs.

On the other side of the lines, 56 squadron were mustering for a late afternoon sortie with B flight led by the redoubtable ace, Captain James McCudden in his SE5A, together with 2 other aces, Captain Keith Muspratt and Lieutenant Artur Rhys-Davids. Three other pilots were also attached to B Flight for this sortie: Lieutenants V. P. Cronyn, as well as R. W. Young, and Charles Jeffs. Also mustering for patrol was the Squadron's 'C' Flight, led by Captain Geoffrey Bowman. His SE5a was followed by

Lieutenant Reginald Hoidge. A third ace, Lieutenant Richard Mayberry was also in 'C' Flight. Lieutenants E. A. Taylor and S. J. Gardiner filled out the flight's roster.

Both flights took off at 17.00 hours and, after passing through a thick cloud layer, crossed the lines at 8000' at Bixschoote in the Battle of Passchendaele zone. At least 8 other RFC squadrons were operating in the area during this time. German anti-aircraft fire was noted as heavy and accurate, as 'B' and 'C' Flights diverged onto separate patrol routes at Houthoult Forest. As 'B' Flight's patrol continued, McCudden swooped on a German DFW and shot it down at 18.00 hours; Rhys-Davids giving it a parting burst of machine-gun fire as it fell past him earthbound.

At 18.05 on the German side, Voss took off in his Fokker Triplane with two wingmen flying the slower Pfalz D111a's, shortly followed by an Albatros DVa and a further 3 Pfalz's, none of which caught up with their Staffelführer. The chasing group of aircraft then found themselves caught up with Sopwith Camels, Spads and Bristol Fighters, leaving Voss out on his own. Voss then was attacked by two aircraft from 60 squadron also flying SE5a's and succeeded in damaging them so badly they had to leave the fight.



Major James McCudden VC

Enter B flight from 56 squadron who fell upon Voss trying a pincer movement with McCudden from the right side and Rhys-Davids from the left. Muspratt trailed them down, while Cronyn brought up the rear. Jeffs and Young held high as top-cover in case Voss climbed. Voss now found himself boxed in from above and below, with assailants pouncing from either side. To further worsen Voss's situation, there was a British fighter patrol beneath him. Voss did not attempt to escape but turned the triplane into a flat spin firing at his attackers in a head on pass, holing McCudden's wings before he riddled Cronyn's SE.5, putting him out of the fight and causing him to throw his aircraft into a spin to escape.



McCudden and his SE5a

At this point 'C' Flight arrived. As it dipped down through the overcast toward the dogfight, Gardiner and Taylor went astray. Mayberry was attacked by a green Pfalz D111a but Hoidge's counter-attack foiled the German. Bowman and Mayberry remained to join the attack on Voss. Hoidge, having broken off his pursuit of the falling Pfalz, changed the drum magazine in his Lewis gun and climbed to join battle. Voss in his triplane zigzagged, yawed, and bobbed among his multiple attackers, never holding a straight course for more than seconds, evading British fire and spewing bullets at them all individually. The combat now became so frenetic that the surviving pilots later gave widely varying accounts. Muspratt glided away with a Spandau bullet through a cooling pipe with the engine threatening to seize. At another point, Voss was caught in a crossfire by at least five of his attackers but appeared to

be miraculously unaffected by the fire. At about this point, Maybery withdrew with his aircraft's upper right-hand longeron holed in several places.



Voss continued with the fight although at times holding the height advantage, and using the triplane's manoeuvrability to advantage, he swooped back into the melee. Then, after flying at McCudden in a head-on machine-gun firing merge by both pilots, Voss's aircraft was suddenly struck by a starboard broadside burst of machine-gun fire from Hoidge, who was probably unsuspected by Voss at that moment, and after this it was noticed that Voss stopped manoeuvring and flew level for the first time in the engagement. At this moment,

Rhys-Davids, who had pulled aside to change an ammunition drum, re-joined the battle with a 150-meter (500 foot) height advantage over Voss's altitude of 450 meters (1,500 feet), and began a long flat dive on to the tail of Voss' triplane, which Voss's aircraft failed to react to. At point blank range he raked Voss's aircraft with his machine-guns before breaking off. A few seconds on, Voss's aircraft wandered into Rhys-Davids' line of flight again in a strangely becalmed slow westward glide, Rhys-Davids again firing an extended burst into it, causing its engine to stop, the two aircraft missing a mid-air collision by inches. As the triplane's glide steepened, Rhys-Davids overran him at about 300 meters (1,000 feet) altitude and lost sight of Voss's aircraft beneath his. From above, Bowman saw the Fokker in what could have been a landing glide, right up until it stalled. It then flipped inverted and nose down, dropping directly to earth.

Voss had fought the British aces for around eight minutes, eluding them and achieving hits on nearly every SE.5a. His stricken aircraft crashed near Plum Farm to the North of Frezenberg in Belgium at about 18:40 hours. The 56 Squadron mess atmosphere that night was muted, with speculation about the identity of their fallen opponent. The names Richthofen, Voss, and Wolff were mooted. Rhys-Davids was besieged with congratulations, which he received modestly with a disclaimer of, "If I only could have brought him down alive." A standing toast was drunk to their gallant fallen foe. When it was possible to examine the wreck and the dead airman it was found he had been struck by three bullets and would have died within a minute of being shot. In common with practice at the time he was buried next to the wreck but with war raging all around the area the wreck and grave disappeared. Today, because his grave site was lost, Werner Voss is one of 44,292 German soldiers memorialised in the Langemark German Cemetery near Ypres in Belgium.

When the British aces of 56 Squadron learned their fallen foe's identity, they were quick to pay public tribute to him. The leading British pilot he fought that day, James McCudden VC, expressed sincere regret at Voss's death: "His flying was wonderful, his courage magnificent and in my opinion he was the bravest German airman whom it has been my privilege to see fight."

Thanks to Wikipedia for assistance with the text

Recommended reading: 'September Evening' The life and final combat of the German WW1 ace Werner Voss by Barry Diggins.

Police Bulletin on Terrorism



Dear All,

As a result of the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, it is likely to have emboldened UK terrorists. The threat won't change overnight, but there could be a morale boost to those who wish us harm. The terrorist threat to the UK is a real and enduring thing. The 20 year effort to reduce the terrorist threat from Afghanistan has been largely successful. However that is likely to change, and we should all be alert to the fact that the UK could be at greater risk in the future.

We need to be vigilant both for the increase in inspired terrorism which has become a real trend, alongside the potential regrowth of al Qaeda-style directed plots.

With that in mind we would like to say to our Aviation and Maritime communities that the aim of our campaign is even more significant now so please, if you see anything out of the ordinary:

“Don't Ignore it, Share it”

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

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CT Border Engagement Team
Kent Police
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WE HOPE TO GET THE NEXT ISSUE OF SKYWRITINGS T YOU BY 26TH OCTOBER

Can you please send your articles to the Editor to arrive by 19th October.

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Never mind your heading, Hoskins.....



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With thanks to

Roger Bacon

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