

Skywritings



Newsletter of the Kent Strut of the



December 2021



*We wish our flying friends everywhere
a Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy 2022*



Looking at the Luscombe in the last newsletter – and responding to your appeal – is attached a photo of our group Cessna120. It was built in 1946 – so it's only 75! Nice to know she's so young!

Geoff Rishman



The Luscombe seems to be the oldest Strut aeroplane, having turned 80 this year please send the Editor a picture of YOUR aeroplane for the others to admire.



THE STRUT CHRISTMAS DINNER IS NEXT SATURDAY – 4TH DECEMBER.

IF YOU HAVEN'T YET BOOKED, TALK TO STEVE HOSKINS

NOW

Defunct Kentish Airfields

Ron Armitage

Ramsgate

In the nineteen thirties prominent local councillors campaigned for a local airfield and in 1935 their efforts bore fruit and flying was started on the site. Within a month, customs services were provided and a number of airlines provided scheduled (and ad hoc) services. In 1937 the terminal building (pavilion) was opened, having been designed by the prominent Art Deco architect David Playdell-Bouverie, and is shown below. Hangars followed.



In the years before WWII the airfield continued to operate normal services, but also hosted air races and a number of aviation camps hosted by the Civil Air Guard. With the coming of war, all civil aviation was banned in the UK, but the airfield was used as a satellite for RAF Manston during the Battle of Britain. The airfield was then closed and not reopened until 1953. It closed forever in 1968 and was developed into a factory estate (Pysons Road, Broadstairs).

(Many thanks to Chris Knight for forwarding the photograph which appeared in the October edition of 'Kent Life'.)

The aeroplanes are a BAC Drone and a BA Swallow.

A little tale of the Dirty Pig, the Filthy Cow and the Crab.

Nic Orchard

'Where are you going to, my pretty maid?' was what he didn't quite ask. 'Up', I replied, as Up is a destination I like to visit often. 'And maybe Along a bit too'.

One thing led to another and it was a total of five aeroplanes that flew towards the same airfield, where tea and chocolate hobnobs proved it was a Good Idea.

They, The Men, wanted more. There's no cafe at the Good Idea, but there is, five minutes away, a Cafe. In the middle of the industrial estate.

'Did you make a booking?' is not the sort of greeting one would expect in such surroundings, but the cafe in the industrial estate is the epitome of industrial chic. It must figure in the 'secret places to



eat in town' articles that local papers love.

We were allocated a table, anyway. A recycled, paint-spattered, scrubbed table in keeping with everything else inedible there. There is also seating outside, with heaters and atmosphere. Menus appeared. It owes much to America Stephen and John chose the Dirty Pig and the Filthy Cow. Pulled pork and brisket were involved, as were a pile of proper chips. Steve had fish and chips. Plank chips. I had a Thai fishcake that sat on a green curry. It

was piping hot and toothsome indeed. The menu owes much to America (tempting: a stack of pancakes with maple syrup) but seems to avoid their corporate mistakes. No 'French Fries' or long list of salad dressings. We pronounced it Splendid.

Purely in the interests of journalism, I took a photograph of my meal. I followed this with several Hail Marys and a grovel but without religion, there's no atonement. The Men declared themselves sated. Pity. I wanted someone to tackle those desserts that leapt out from the menu before I saw anything savoury. Yet it was becoming winter and we needed to get back before iffy o'clock, so did not linger.



We departed into the same patch of sky, finding five separate routes to go to much the same place. We like to confuse the enemy.

Why don't I know of this? you ask. You do, but like many, didn't venture beyond the airfield fence. This is Rougham. Lovely people, always welcoming, whether it's a fly-in, when most folk visit, or on an ordinary day, when the weirdos turn up. They have fuel now, too, officially. Cafe Ice has a website.

The Men are probably hungry again by now. Where's the next secret to be divulged?

The young lady training there made a point of admiring one of our aeroplanes. Shan't say which.....



The Strut Notice Board at Rochester Airport

Ron Armitage



As some of you may know, the Strut has a notice board at Rochester Airport. As it was getting tatty, I have taken the liberty of sorting it out and I am pleased that people seem to be taking the advertising material.

A Quiet Afternoon (or my first flight in a DC 3)

Ron Loveday



Archive photograph of Saudi Arabian Airlines Dakota

1974 found me working for 'Saudia' (Saudi Arabia Airlines) in the hangers in Jeddah. We oversaw, hands on, the local labour as we conducted 'C' checks on the fleet - two 707s, two 720s and a bunch of new 737s. The Convair 340s were being phased out in favour of the AWD(!) 737s. These aircraft had been modified to handle gravel runways. The DC3s (5 of them) were still being used for some of the towns in the boondocks.

At the time, Saudification was not happening as the airline was run by TWA and it was a real money spinner for them. Oh sh*t - we bought 10,000 too many widgets! No problem, sell them to the Saudis with a 10% mark up!! This even extended to personnel who were deemed not to be up to scratch back home!

By now, some of the Saudis were complaining about this. It was decided that when the next DC3 major was due it would be an entirely Saudi-run operation. The day arrived and the check was done with one or two hiccups which we got involved in, but it was a 90% Saudi op.

As normal there would be a test flight before release to service. The day arrived for this flight and, as not much was happening that afternoon, I asked if I could tag along. Given the OK, I approached the captain and asked him if it was OK. He just looked at me and said "You're f**king mad!"

The crew consisted of two American pilots, one inspector, Felix, a nice American and yours truly. I was a little surprised no one else wanted to come along! The cabin had not been fitted out at this time but there was a pair of seats. I took a seat for the take off and as we accelerated down the runway I was fascinated by a small inspection panel flapping in the wind. It soon left the aircraft!

We climbed out north and followed the Madinah road, the only landmark visible. As we climbed out, the crew performed handling checks, and all seemed normal. By now I was standing at the back of the cockpit, no 2nd jump seat! By now we had left civilization behind with just the road disappearing into the haze ahead. The turning point would be Rabigh, about half way to Madinah. With around 45 miles behind us and at around 6,000 feet, the next checks were engine related. The plan was to 'feather'

one engine, perform some more handling checks, and do a restart and repeat these checks on the other engine.

Power was increased on the starboard engine and the port feathered. The checks were made and all looked good, until the unfeathering and restart. It would not start!! Several attempts were made, but the bugger refused to cooperate!! To add to the problem, the windmilling prop was causing a lot of drag and the starboard engine was now running at maximum power allowed. The aircraft was in a slow descent. The captain decided to return to Jeddah with the port shut down. A 'Pan' was declared and the reply was 'Keep the Madinah road to your left and stay out to sea.' With this, the captain cursed, and turned to me to check how many life jackets were on board. I noticed both crew seats had jackets, so I went back to the cabin to see if there were any. I found none! I advised the captain he and his mate were OK but Felix and I were swimming. At least the captain said 'That's not happening', and radioed Jeddah he would remain over land.

Suddenly there a rapid pop, pop, pop, and the port engine started to run rough. This grabbed the attention of all of us. The crew noticed the oil temperature was high, but could see no other major problems apart from the fact that it was working hard. Further attempts were made to start the port engine, but again it was not interested.

The tension was now running high, we were at around 3,500ft with no visual on Jeddah. We were yet to pass the 'Creek' which is around 20 miles out. Finally the Creek came into view, but we were now at around 3,000ft. The captain said, 'Let's try again', the co-pilot protested, 'If the engine does not start, we won't make the airport'. The captain's reply, "F**k it, we're not going to make it anyway!!" An added problem was if a forced landing was made in the area we found ourselves in, there were no guarantees as, although it looked barren from the air, you could not see the plot markers which usually consisted of concrete blocks 2 x 2 x 3 ft high, and there were lots of them!

The restart was attempted and at first no joy, and the aircraft was descending at a rate of knots, but now the crew knew it was the only option in town! Miraculously as the aircraft passed 2,000ft, the engine spluttered into life. You could sense we were all willing it on. After what seemed forever, the engine picked up and ran quite normally.

We landed to the expected greeting of most of the airport's fire trucks and taxied back to the hangar. Of course we were overrun by concerned individuals wondering who had 'cocked up'.

After all this had died down, I went up to the captain and thanked him for an exciting afternoon. His only reply was, 'I told you that you were f**king mad'!!

PS. The cause of the problem was put down to the mixture being too lean and that the air density at altitude prevented a restart. It was not until we got low that we had sufficient air mix to enable a restart(??) I looked at the aircraft some weeks later and found that the inspection panel that I saw fly off was still missing!



Solleys Kentish Ice Cream

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Ripple Strip

Stephen Solley

Sometimes local flying can be rewarding. Early in the month I took off and headed towards Romney Marsh, allowing a gentle climb to 3500ft.



I soon found I was close to the ranges, so turned gently towards Ashford and back towards Thanet. The vis was very clear so was able to see into London and surrounding areas.

By the time I reached Manston it was time to turn towards home. France was now in full view, making the Channel look like a wide river and wishing I was there.

I now set myself a descent to arrive over Ripple at 1000 feet and got it right, and was able to swing round and slip on to 20 without having to alter anything apart from carb heat.

That took me about 50 minutes of pure enjoyment. Not many days you get with very clear vis and next to no wind. What a pleasure.



Notes from Farthing Corner

Mike Negus

After a comparatively balmy November with temperatures 4 or 5 degrees above normal the long heralded cold snap appears to be on us. Skies have led to good visibility but often under low cloud, but on the days when they are clear evidence of general and commercial aviation getting back to something like normal is there for all to see. At Farthing Corner things are changing, the owner wishing to take back the use of what we call the 'maintenance hangar' in order to make the operation of the airfield more viable, whilst increasing the rent for the aircraft owners. To be fair we had not seen an increase in rent for some years and this was accepted as part of the deal to keep the airfield operational and, having seen what happened to others recently, was a good option. John Dean and John Luck handled the negotiations between the two parties, which required a deft touch and we are all grateful that the outcome we have was achieved. Some reshuffling to accommodate as many aircraft under cover has been necessary but the nett result is seen as a good compromise. One spin off is that a long overdue sorting out of the accumulation of 'stuff' in the hangar to be vacated has led to a comprehensive clear out with some difficult decisions on what to keep and what to lose. Farthing Corner has long been the store for Kent Strut equipment so that has required to be relocated to a new home. What we need now is a period of consolidation to settle in to the new arrangement.



For Sale

**Surplus to requirement: 1 x Continental A65 engine complete with logs
pulled from Luscombe G-BSNT**

**1 x Continental A65 engine believed to be from a Piper Vagabond,
no logs, bottom end complete and not split, but only 3 cylinders.**

**Photos available, currently at EGMF. Contact Mike Negus for more information
mike.negus8@blueyonder.co.uk**

Open to sensible offers.

The Editor's Christmas Quiz



Yes, it was the Popular Flying Association logo.

1 Who does it represent now?



2 Name the lady featured on this American stamp.

3 What was her main claim to fame?

4 What kind of aeroplane is it?



5 This twin-engined machine is based on what glider?



6 What type of aeroplane?

7 What is the lady's name?

8 There is one remaining aeroplane of this type. Where is it?



Both of these aeroplanes had names.

9 What was the name of the aeroplane on top?

10 What was the name of the aeroplane at the bottom?

With the following pictures, all you have to do is identify the aircraft types.



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12



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This competition is open to anyone reading Skywritings and the person sending the Editor the most correct answers by 21st December will be receiving a fine bottle of hooch.

Kent Strut Awards

Just in case you didn't see this in last month's edition, this is a reminder to respond.....PLEASE.

We have two Strut awards which will be presented to the lucky recipients at our AGM, which is on Thursday 27th January 2022.

- 1 The Phil Banyard Memorial Trophy. This award is given to the Strut member who, in the opinion of the membership, has given the most outstanding service to the Strut.



- 2 A brand new award in memory of Richard Warriner: The Richard Warriner Award for Encouraging Fun in Flying. In other words, who in your view is the Strut member who has done the most to demonstrate, assist with, or promote **FUN** in flying. A deliberately broad definition.

The Richard Warriner Award

YOUR TASK

Will each member please nominate a suitable recipient for each award, giving a brief reason for their choice.

Nominations for both awards may be made via the Strut email (laakentstrut@gmail.com) or via any Committee member before 31st December 2021.

The World Pedal Plane Gathering 2021



Wednesday 29th December 2021
@ 12:00

Shuttleworth Trust

Old Warden Aerodrome,
Hill Lane,
Biggleswade SG18 9DX



SHUTTLEWORTH

<https://www.shuttleworth.org/>

With grateful thanks to the Shuttleworth Trust for all their support

World Pedal Plane Gatherings

The UK has an annual competition of gathering as many pedal planes together in one place as possible, with our esteemed colleagues in the USA - the EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association).

The UK first set the trend going in September 2015, when YES (Co-ordinated by Andre Faehndrich) gathered 15 pedal planes at the Brooklands Museum Aviation Day.

With no event in 2016, YES upped the ante in October 2017 with 24 pedal planes.

The EAA then joined in and at Oshkosh in July 2018 they gathered 28 pedal planes. In September 2018, YES then gathered 31 pedal planes together, and took the record back.

The EAA then tried for a Guinness World Record attempt at Oshkosh in July 2019, and gathered 53 together, so the record then remains with the USA.

YES then managed 19 in Brooklands in September 2019.

With COVID, both the Oshkosh July 2020 and later that year, the UK attempts were both postponed. Covid continued to cause disruption and once again Oshkosh 2021 and a possible attempt at an Australian record at the Australian International Airshow and Aerospace & Defence Exposition in Avalon on 23rd to 28th November 2021 also fell victim to continued restrictions.

Latest News -

The UK will take on and hopefully beat the current record gathering of 53 at Old Warden on Wednesday December 29th, in another combination YES/The Plane Guy event.

Having the UK gathering in December, means that in future, each side of the Atlantic retains their record for 6 months each, rather than 9-10 months (for the UK) and 2-3 months (for the USA) previously.

Andre reckons there are approximately 70 to 75 pedal planes active in the UK, and so if you want to come along to help bring the record back to the UK, then please contact Andre Faehndrich directly by e-mail on andre.faehndrich@ntlworld.com

Andre would like to thank Mike Clews and The Joystick Club (www.joystickclub.co.uk/) at White Waltham for their huge support at the UK events over the years and we look forward to taking the record back to the UK on **29th December 2021 @ Shuttleworth Trust, Old Walden Airfield.**

CONTACT THE PLANE GUY on 07952-711869

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"Still not getting it quite right, Hoskins."

With thanks to

Roger Bacon

and



and Headcorn Aerodrome