

Skywritings

The Kent Strut Newsletter October 2023



Editors Corner

As I finish putting this together, I'm reminded that the weather has changed and the days are much shorter, although the late afternoon autumnal flights can be just as magical as those lovely summer days.

Thank you to all those who have sent articles this month, we have our regular article from Ron Armitage on Defunct airfields of Kent which as always inspires me to do further reading into the subject. Brian Hope talks to us about the RSA Rally 2023 with some great pictures, and John Dean has written a small article on a different type of hangar.

Thank you once again for those contributions.

Our next meeting is the annual fireworks at Clippgate which was excellent last year and one not to be missed, dress warm and catch up with other strutters!

Thursday 26th October - 19.00 for 19.30

Clippgate Farm
CT4 6NS

The CAA licensing simplification work is ongoing, and you will now find most CAA forms are now online and for most rating issues you no longer need to send your licence off. Small steps, but e-licensing is going to be good for general aviation.

For those who hold a Microlight or SLMG rating issued pre 01/02/2008 I recommend reading **ORS4 1582** on the CAA website as this may impact you post 2025.

Attached to the email is a copy of the CAA safety sense leaflet on winter flying, I'm sure many of you have seen it before but as we approach those frosty flying days there is no harm refreshing ourselves on some of the guidance published by the competent authority.

Finally, if you aren't in the Strut Whatsapp and would like to be, please email the Kent strut email laakenntstrut@gmail.com and we can add you in so you're up to date with the latest news as it happens.



Defunct Kent Airfields

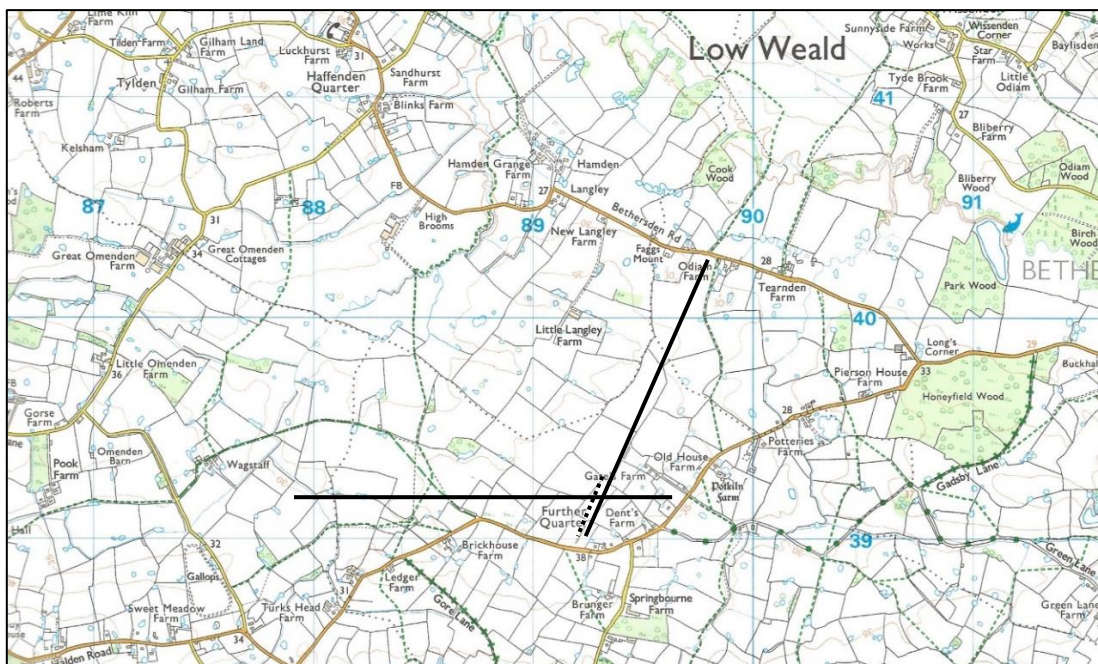
High Halden

By Ron Armitage

High Halden was a standby advanced landing ground and remained unused until the United States 358th Bomber Group moved in on 13th April 1944. Their 365th, 366th and 367th Squadrons flew P47D Thunderbolts extensively in operations in preparation for and, of course, during the D-Day Landings.



Following the D-Day Landings, the squadrons moved to France, but later in 1944 the RAF used the site as a forward operating base for its Gloster Meteor 1s from Manston on anti-diver operations. These were operations to destroy V1 flying bombs in the air. Although the Meteor had ample speed, it had been rushed into service and its armament was unreliable. It therefore accounted for only 13 of the many anti-V1 successes. The field closed and was returned to farming in late 1944. However, a very small part of the original site is now used by the Kent Microlight Aircraft Club, shown by the dotted line.



Ordnance Survey map with the approximate position of the airfields



The site as it looks today, with the KMAC runway on the left hand side

Sandra and I were very pleased to be invited by the Kent Microlight Aircraft Club to a fly-in at their new strip at High Halden on 16th September. The museum at Headcorn provided artifacts from the wartime days and there was also a fine display of period vehicles (and also, of course, a splendid barbecue).



The 2023 RSA (French Homebuilders) Rally at Brienne le Chateau.

Article by Brian Hope.

July each year sees me on an annual pilgrimage to France to attend the equivalent of our LAA Rally – the RSA Rally. The Reseau du Sport de l’Air was established after WW11 in much the same way and for the same reasons as the LAA (then the Ultra Light Aircraft Association and subsequently the Popular Flying Association) in that it likewise wanted the typical ‘man in the street’ to be able to enjoy recreational aviation. In fact, the RSA was formed a little earlier than the ULAA and assisted ‘us’ with helpful advice on gaining approval from what turned out to be our somewhat more intransigent Authority (nothing changes!).

I digress, my intention here is to enthuse the reader of the pleasures of attending the RSA Rally, my first attendance having been in 1979 when, coincidentally, my 850cc Moto-Guzzi had to find its way down to what is its current venue of Brienne le Chateau, in the Aube Department of North Central France, 25 miles northeast of Troyes. By the time of my first aerial arrival, by Jodel in 1990, it had moved down to Moulins, in the Auvergne, and has subsequently moved around France on a fairly regular basis, usually staying at a particular location for about five years or so. Whether this is by accident or design I know not but, having attended every event since, it has added the additional interest of visiting different regions of this our intriguing, beautiful and friendly near neighbour. Venues that spring to mind are Blois, Vichy, St. Yan, Nevers, Chambley and Epinal, the latter being close to Vittel, home of the mineral water, where there was a beautifully kept airstrip right on the edge of town where, having left the Rally on the Sunday, we would camp and eat in the adjacent hotel. Sadly, the strip was closed some years ago.

In the 1990s numbers of visiting aircraft were in the 600 – 800 range, with many visitors from around Europe, including the UK. But, like events here at home as well as throughout Europe, numbers have continued to fall and, sadly, too many events have disappeared altogether. What this event has always offered however, is variation, as over its history the RSA has enjoyed a much lighter touch in terms of its Aviation Authority (the DGAC). This has inspired many a creative mind to come up with all manner of aircraft, some of which are pure genius, others alarmingly strange, but all are wondrous to behold. My guestimate is that there were around 200 visiting aircraft this year.

So, I give you RSA Rally 2023 where I saw only four British aircraft – John Dean and Frank Rothera in their Jodels from Farty Corner, Tony Eastwood from Stoke (in Kent not oop naarth) in his Jodel with passenger Gary Smith, and another regular attendee, James Stringer in his beautiful Van’s RV8. James originally built a very nice RV6 which he used to race in RV races in Portugal. However, with only a 150hp O-320 it was a little under powered, so he sold it and bought an RV8 from the US with a 180+hp O-360 and is now enjoying greater success. Enough of my blethering, let’s look at just a handful of the aircraft that attended this year, a picture is worth 1000 words after all!



This fully restored Nord 1205 Norécrin was an absolute stunner. An all metal retractable, the type first flew in 1945 and was built initially as a 2/3 seater, later as a two seat military variant and also, as this one, also a 4 seater.



Whilst UK builders had the Taylor Monoplane, the French were building the Jurca Tempete. Designed by the prolific Marcel Jurca (a Romanian who lived most of his life in France) the type first flew in the mid-1950s and rather than the Mono's VW, used 60hp and up Continental and Lycoming engines. Jurca, went on to design the two seat Sirroco and a number of other light aircraft and replica warbirds.



I was unable to find out much about this rather unique machine, even the engine was so well cowled that its type was a mystery. It appears to be intended as an amphibian, the undercarriage being able to swing up, and the undersurface being a foam slab. The fuselage framework is of carbon-fibre tubing, not steel.



Claude Piel was a prolific designer, mainly known in the UK for his popular Emeraude. This slick two-seat tandem retractable is his CP1322 Saphir. Engine is a 150hp O-320 Lycoming.



The MB-04 Souris-Bulle (Bubble Mouse) is a two seat (tandem) variant of Michel Barry's single seat MB 02-2 Mini Bulle (Little Mouse) and falls into the FAI's Microlight definition. It is available as plans or a kit from Aurora Sarl. Of wood and fabric construction it has an 11.25m (36ft 11in) span and is 7.92m (26ft) in length. Power is courtesy of the 60hp KFM flat twin 4-stroke engine.



I can't go to an RSA Rally and not have a pic of a Jodel, there's always a good selection of Jodels of most variants, homebuilts and factory builts, so here's a very nice homebuilt D18. To think the Jodel format dates back to 1948 (the D9 single seater) and they remain in production to this day – there was a turbine powered DR400 variant on show at Friedrichshafen earlier this year, not that the engine choice made much sense to me to be honest!

I hope this small selection is enough to tempt your appetite to consider a visit to the RSA Rally next year. I expect the date (usually third weekend in July) will be as per usual and the location remain at Brienne le Chateau. It's only about two and a half hours each way from the south-east of England, less if you into the 120kts plus brigade although they don't have Customs so you will have to stop en route. The delightful town of Troyes has Customs available at the airfield and there's a Hotel Golden Tulip on its access road if you fancy staying a night there before hopping over to Brienne. And I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that French cuisine is far removed from chips and peas with everything!

A Different Type of Hangar

Article by John Dean

When we visit different airfields most of us like to have a look inside the hangars and are sometimes surprised at their construction and how the aeroplanes fit into them. We see many different types including WW1 hangars and ones with turntables but I came across one type I have never seen before during a recent visit to Leicester airfield.

Would you believe a Jodel owner was keeping his pride and joy inside a WW1 Tank! The front lifts up and the sides go down to reveal the aeroplane by a wonderful array of wires worked by a hydraulic pump. It takes some effort to wiggle the control lever to lift the various parts but they come down on their own when the lock is released.



Forced landings.

Article by Adam Parnell

When did you last practice a forced landing?

Fortunately, our aircraft are extremely reliable thanks to our diligent inspectors and our owners taking great pride in their wonderful machines. General aviation in the UK has some of the best safety statistics in the world per hour flown but this year we saw quite a large number of accidents over the summer.

Many of you will have seen the email from the CAA about ensuring you have enough fuel onboard which has been published in the wake of a number of fuel induced forced landings, or lack of fuel! One such incident you can read the report on the AAIB website for X'Air G-BZEJ [Link Here](#)

Over the year one of the common themes I've seen when flying with people is the lack of currency when it comes to emergencies. This is likely because thankfully we fly many hours without incident. But what is to stop you from perhaps taking an instructor with you and practicing a forced landing? Simulating an emergency?

Using our Threat and Error Management (T.E.M) tool we can consider emergencies long before we even start the aircraft. I would say around 50% of the people I fly with do a pre take off, departure of 'captains' brief before taking off. This is a great opportunity to consider the 'what ifs' before we fly. We all know 'startle factor' is a very real and the Human Information Processing (HIP) limited in capacity so our brief can help with this especially if your airfield has any challenging site considerations for example.

Should anything go wrong in the air it's important to diagnose the right problem, but first we must achieve best glide speed for our aircraft. I'm sure you all know what that speed is, but did you remind yourself in your pre departure brief? Once we have best glide and a field in mind it's time to diagnose the problem unless it's obvious what's happened.

There are many tools or acronyms out there that can help with this such as DODAR, FORDEC or DECIDE.

Even with these tools the most important thing is to fly best glide speed to a suitable field with a successful outcome.

Reading many of the reports published in the last year the time available in such an event can be quite limited, especially as we are trapped below airspace in some areas, so being on the top of our game when it comes to emergencies is crucial to a good outcome.

Whilst we're discussing currency, as an example - when was the last time you did a flapless landing (if you have flaps on your aircraft)?

GASCO published a currency card based on the Farley List to help you plan currency on those things we don't practice regularly. [Link Here](#)

The BGA also have currency barometer [Link Here](#)

When you complete your biennial flight with your instructor maybe take the opportunity to use the time and practice those things we don't do regularly and polish those skills you have.

Dates for your Diary

Please check with event organisers in advance for any changes. Please let me know of any events you think others might be interested in.

Items in green are Kent Strut events

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 26th October | Kent Strut - Fireworks at Clipgate |
| 30th November | Kent Strut – Talk by Charlie Brown – Cobtree Manor Golf Club |
| 9 th December | Kent Strut – Christmas Dinner |
| 25 th January 2024 | Kent Strut - AGM |

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