

Skywritings

The Kent Strut Newsletter December 2023

www.laakentstrut.org.uk



Editors Corner

With 2023 coming to an end shortly it's great to reflect on this years flying, the events the Kent Strut has undertaken, and getting refreshed ahead of some instrument flying this winter season.

The Manston flyin was a great success thanks to a small band of volunteers and the event made it to the national LAA magazine.

As always, this edition we have an excellent article from Ron Armitage on his flight into Brooklands, some silliness at Beccles and another wonderful Defunct Airfields story.

Martin Leusby has an article advertising Air Search – worth a few minutes of your time to sit down and learn more about what they do.

Some events for your calendar:-

January Strut AGM 2024

A chance for you to have your say and take part in a lively 'round table' discussion on things aviation.

Date - 24 January 2024 - Wednesday evening - 19:30 for 20:00

Venue - Old Control Tower, Rochester Airport, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME5 9SD

February Strut Meeting

Speaker - GASCO, Safety Evening

Date - 29 February 2024 - Thursday evening - 19:30 for 20:00

Venue - RAF Manston History Museum, 821 Manston Rd, Ramsgate CT12 5DF

Have you nominated someone for one of the Strut Awards?

Date - submission extended to 31 December 2023

Venue - presented at the Strut AGM - January 2024

Action - send nominations to laakentstrut@gmail.com with AWARDS in Subject box

Nominees name and brief reason, in the Text area, for:

Phil Banyard Memorial Trophy - for services to the Strut

Richard Warriner Award - for Promoting Fun in Flying

Finally, the CAA are fast working to remove the need for paper forms and digital forms are taking shape, e-licensing will be a great thing when fully implemented.

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

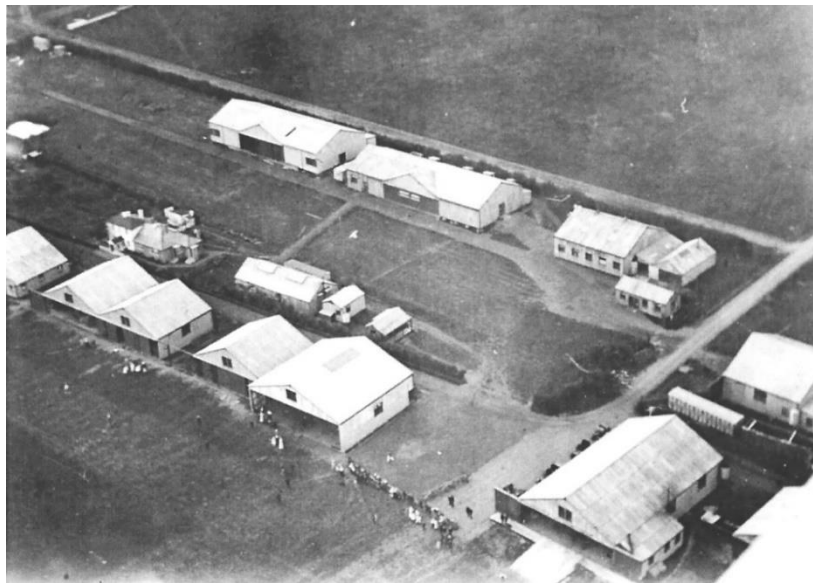


Defunct Kent Airfields

Eastchurch (HMS Pembroke II)

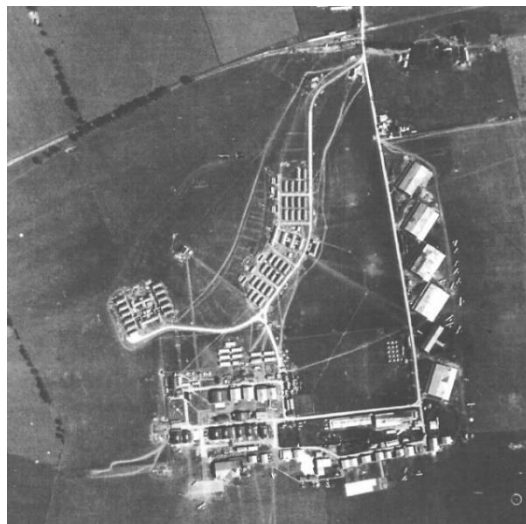
By Ron Armitage

In 1908 Charles Rolls flew a glider, built by Oswald and Eustice Short, from Standford Hill, Eastchurch, some three or four miles to the north-west of Shellbeach, where the following year he and his friends and colleagues, who had been experimenting with powered flight, formed the 'Aero Club' with a base at Mussel Manor. However, Frank McClean, one of the founders of the (Royal) Aero Club, was unhappy with the 'landing ground' at Shellbeach and purchased a large area of land south of Standford Hill, near Eastchurch (Stonepits Farm). This he rented to the Aero Club and they moved there in 1910, along with all their aeroplane sheds and equipment. Other enthusiasts moved to the site, and Short's also moved their 'factory' buildings from Shellbeach.



Aero Club site 1910. Short's factory at top with members' sheds below

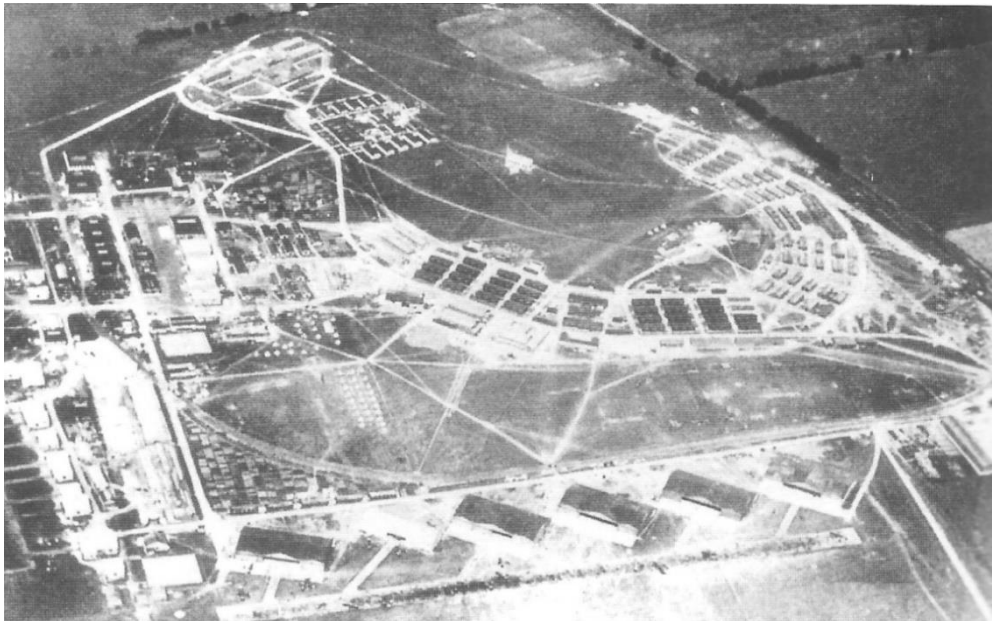
Many officers from the Naval Dockyard at Sheerness came to watch the aeroplanes. Frank McClean, having realised that the aeroplanes could be of great advantage to the Navy, offered them the use of two of his machines for the flight training of suitable officers. Four officers were initially taken on for training and by the end of the following April they had all obtained their Pilot Certificates.



Eastchurch Airfield 1915, Aero Club sheds and Short's factory bottom right

Following on from this, a Naval Flying School was started on land adjacent to the Aero Club and very quickly expanded to become the Royal Naval Air Service. In 1913 the site became known as HMS Pembroke II. With the start of World War I, Government decreed that the RNAS would take over Home Defence and the Royal Aero Club grounds and buildings were requisitioned. The site continued to expand significantly.

HMS Pembroke II became a major training camp and in 1916 a spur was taken from the local light railway line to provide access into the camp, as can be seen in the 1918 photograph below.



Following World War I, Eastchurch remained a major training centre along with Leysdown which had become a subsidiary site in 1917. The Armament and Gunnery School remained at Eastchurch with other training units, but when war was declared in 1939, they were relocated to sites further from the enemy and the site was reduced to 'Care and Maintenance'. The Germans, believing that this was a front line airfield, bombed it mercilessly, causing major damage. In 1941 the airfield was transferred to Technical Training Command. In preparation for the D Day Landings, Eastchurch provided Rocket Firing courses at the Leysdown Range.

The airfield closed in 1946 and became an 'open' prison. More secure units were built and opened in 1988 and 1992.



The site today, which houses a splendid little museum as shown below

EASTCHURCH AVIATION MUSEUM

A Transport Trust Transport Heritage Site

Visit us to discover the fascinating story of Sheppey's involvement in and contribution to the pioneering days of British aviation.



Find out how the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) was founded at Eastchurch and played a vital role in WW1 before joining with the Royal Flying Corps to form the RAF.



Learn about the Gordon Bennett Aviation Race held at Eastchurch in 1911. Discover Sheppey's connection with the Wright brothers, the Short Brothers,



Winston Churchill, Earl Mountbatten, Charles Rolls, JTC Moore-Brabazon, H.G.Wells, James Herriot, and Biggles!



How to find us



Opening times
10am—3pm every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and some Bank Holidays. Check website for details. Phone 07450621217

Address
Wright's Way
off Brabazon Road
HMP Stanford Hill
Eastchurch
ME12 4AA

www.eastchurchaviationmuseum.org.uk

Wanted - We are always looking for new exhibits for the museum and for any information about anyone who served at Eastchurch. Can you help?

Volunteers Wanted - Let us know if you want to join our team and help run the museum.

Funds Wanted - We always need donations and sponsorship to improve the museum and its work.

Education and group visits welcome by appointment. This can be arranged outside of normal hours.
For more information visit our Facebook Page :- 



And, of course, Mike Loxton's beautifully kept strip is at Parsonage Farm, just a short distance away.



Air Search!

WANTED! Kent-based Pilots & Aviation Enthusiasts who would enjoy learning new skills, giving and receiving banter, and possibly being heroes (or heroines).....for absolutely no reward!

This “advert” is going out to members of PAFRA (Pilots and Friends of Rochester Airport) and the Kent Strut of the LAA (Light Aircraft Association). Some of you may be members of both, as we are, so apologies if you see it twice!

Many of you will know of Air Search but may not know what we do. We are a voluntary group of Pilots and Observers who currently meet twice a month (usually first and third Tuesday of each month at Rochester) where we complete flying exercises or if the weather gods don’t play ball, we have desktop exercises to complete.

This training allows us to help serve Kent via the Kent Voluntary Sector Emergency Group, which is the local resilience forum and probably the best of its kind in the country. We can be asked to do all manner of tasks – whether photographing fires, floods, traffic incidents, assisting with their exercises, e.g. pollution control, evacuation scenarios – anything that can be observed from the air, we can help with, including as our name implies, searches. If you’ve never done a “creeping line search” now is your chance – we’ll show you the skills!

Pilots normally need to have access to their own aircraft (or group share) as we wouldn’t expect anyone to be paying rental prices, although you could. Observers can simply be enthusiasts, ex-pilots, or pilots currently without an aeroplane – anyone who wants to get airborne with a purpose.

In the past, people have worried about whether they need to be uniformed, but that is a thing of the past, there is no obligation (but we do have a snazzy line of polo shirts, if you wish 😊). The whole group is democratic, with no authority structure, but the more experienced members are there to help with new skills you might want or need.

If you have any interest please register it with Martin (martinleusby@outlook.com or call/text 07788 565314) or Ron (ron_armitage@lineone.net or call/text 07802 157141) and we’ll guide you through what is involved to help you enjoy your flying more than just going for that £100 hamburger.

And just because photos can help attract attention, here’s a picture of six out of the ten-strong team that were awarded Certificates of Merit at the Counter-Terrorism Awards Ceremony in September – you could be the next hero/heroine.....



Silliness

On a recent fly-out to Beccles in north Suffolk a picture was taken of a couple of Strut pilots...



... If you look closely, you will observe that David Smith had to hang on (to stop falling over) and that Ron Armitage was sending a message ... possibly to the photographer!!

A message from Mike Tooze



You could build and fly a plane like this - as I did! Read my story.

[See my Amazon paperback.](#) – ISBN: 9798388898111.

Brooklands Museum

By Ron Armitage

Several times a year the good folks at the Brooklands Museum at Weybridge allow a few aviators to fly in. The landing area is now the small remaining part of the old runway, which is normally used by Mercedes-Benz World as a part of their skid pan.

Twice this year Sandra and I have been privileged to be invited in to the event and have been treated royally. We hope the attached photographs will give you a good idea of the ambience.



London Bus Museum



Car and bike workshop



Milly Tant – National rescue off road recovery unit



Vickers Vimy replica



Member Services

Drop the editor a line if you have a service or product, you'd like to promote including any items you may have for sale.



Solleys Kentish Ice Cream Amazing choice of flavours, tubs, cups, scooping kits.

FREE delivery service for most of Kent

Stephen Solley 07836 653257
sc.solley@solleysicecream.co.uk



If you are looking for new aircraft radios, transponders, GPS or spares, don't hesitate to contact
Glen Everett 07801 639489 office@flyingadverts.co.uk

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