



July 2004

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent Strut* of the



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Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Alderney Rally 2004

July
Meeting –
Come and
Enjoy

BBQ
At
Rochester

Exciting things to read this month

- Outing to Alderney
- Pictures of Strut Aircraft particularly needed
- Please let Editor Mike have your articles for inclusion in the Newsletter



The Rally Judge at Work

Well the forecast didn't look too bad, according to the BBC that is, when Paddy and I met at Farthing Corner to set off to Alderney. Due to the wind prevailing at the time of departure and being a Friday an 'all the decision was to meet up at Rochester having filed the flight plan earlier by telephone to Heathrow and depart initially to Dieppe and

then on to Alderney in time for tea and a jolly good slap up meal. A smaller representation from the strut this year Brian Hope, Martin Ferrid and co pilot Sue in their Jodel and us in the Luscombe going same way same day. We also anticipated meeting Steve Solley on the way and possibly one of two others.



Alderney Airport



“ After a steady hour, we had not reached halfway”



Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel le Ferneoung



Apart from a little brake problem reoccurring, the radio proving troublesome and the GPS showing poor coverage it was off to the coast for the Channel crossing and routing down the French coast.

Brian had taken pains to ensure that we knew about the recent activation of danger areas to power stations and the like which hadn't shown up on my 1999 vintage map so purchase of a new one was deemed appropriate. Due to the threat of unpleasantness surrounding the visit of foreign dignitaries for the 60th anniversary celebrations of the D Day there had existed the distinct possibility of routing a lot further south to avoid the exclusion zones in place or the direct route from the Isle of Wight.

As luck would have it we were informed by the Alderney organization (what a helpful bunch) that all restrictions were to be lifted, but to check when landing in France to clear customs, obviously at airfields outside the zone, for us it was Dieppe.

It soon became evident that factors were coming in to play which threatened to put the tine hat on it anyway.

Making landfall at Cap Gris Nez the cloud cover on that side of the Channel, although low level, was blanketing the coast and for some way behind for as far as the eye could see down to the west. The good thing was that Calais still basked in sunshine. My erstwhile colleague and I had a bit of a discussion and on hearing aircraft reporting joining the circuit at Le Touquet below 800 feet with reports filtering over the airwaves of conditions worse down the coast we diverted to Calais only to find Brian was already there with his Jodel and were soon to be joined by Martin and Sue having come to the same conclusion.

Several hours passed talking to other flyers, some of whom decided to head up to Ostend for the night and others who were off Denmark anyway, lead us to the decision to go south to St Omer, the airfield of which is much closer to the town and a much nicer place to spend the evening.

Not having flown a great deal in the past year, I was loath to push my luck, my track record on the “Road to Alderney” has not always been, shall we say, without incident. Our traveling companions being quite relaxed about the whole thing went with the flow but it was quite obvious as we took off from Calais the weather just did not seem to bear out what was showing up on the forecast and this was borne out when Martin

later spoke to Dieppe who confirmed a more optimistic actual. However, on landing we managed to cadge a lift in to town where Martin displayed his acumen for the French “as she is spoke” and Brian, Paddy and I cohabited for the night in one room whilst the others did likewise. A pleasant meal was partaken and after we in our room had awoken from the communal snoring competition that passed for a nights sleep, it was back to the airfield, a reasonable forecast and off we went..... in to the teeth of a twenty knot headwind eventually arriving at Dieppe with a stonking crosswind. Things looked much better though as we filed for our destination and we set off again routing to avoid the danger areas on our brand new 2004 map still in to the headwind which showed no signs of abating.

After a steady hour which we look at as half a two hour leg, we had not reached halfway and after Caen the options dropped away somewhat and not wishing to buttock clench the last fifteen minutes across the water, discretion once again became the better part of valour. And so Caen it was to the grass and another thumping crosswind. Luckily the grass runway is quite wide which gives one a fighting chance. Uplifting fuel which of course turned out to be not as much as we were expecting, then off again but not before a pleasant natter with a recently landed 737 pilot who was taking more than a passing interest in the Luscombe. We were quite touched when on taking off he gave us a cheery wave from his office in the front of the Boeing then once again into the perishing headwind. Converging with the coast and overflying Omaha Beach across the peninsular and at last, Alderney. First on downwind for the hard, a late redirection for the grass, a slightly entertaining heading change to get on finals and we were down.

Brian, Sue and Martin having of course arrived previously had sportingly awaited our appearance having guessed what had happened and after registration Martin went off for his hire car whilst I trailed in the masters footsteps as Brian carried out his part of

You know you've landed with the wheels up when it takes full power to taxi.

the judging for the awards later in the evening.

Down to the harbour bar for a swift half we met up with others from the Strut and of course heard of those who had got into Le Took with "there I was with nothing on the clock but the makers name" tales. I think we made the best decision. Nonetheless it was off to our accommodation for what was to be a very truncated stay, a freshen up and back to the harbour for a very fine fish meal which was nearly the end of a long day but it was not over yet. Paddy and I went to the final hours of the hanger bash where some alcohol fuelled badinage was going on until bed beckoned and a convoluted walk back under a crystal clear night sky revealed myriads of stars the like of which we no longer see at home. But as I said to my mate Paddy, that wind oh yes that wind is going to give a good kick back to base on the morrow. Oh yeah!



On the way to Alderney

After a particularly fine bacon and egg breakfast it was back to the airfield after farewell to our hosts, collect the duty free, find some oil and prepare to take off as usual an hour later than planned straight in to WHAT ! a 25 kt headwind . Unbelievable it had swung round 180 degrees overnight.

This time we had planned to clear customs at Caen, about three quid to land at a full blown regional airport, good value or what? Yet another crosswind but what the hell we are starting to get a little more used to these, and after checking out it was off to another favourite waterhole for lunch, Bernay and yet another crosswind landing. Over lunch a few phone calls confirmed that we could get to

Good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment.

Abbeville in time to refuel and depart before the airfield closed for the day and so it came to pass but joy although the headwind persisted we landed almost smack in to wind. Finally off on the last leg to Blighty and unbeknown to us at the time 3 Austers whose crews included the redoubtable Messrs Jubb,Ladd and Lipman were also tramping up the coast having been to the Veteran Flyout at Cherbourg also part of the D Day celebrations, which I discovered had particular poignancy for Al Jubb.

Once across the Channel the wind became more benign and lead to an uneventful return to good old FC. When all was added up we did about 11 hours which was over 2 more than Bruce and Paddy did last year, but at least we honed up our crosswind landings and enjoyed the views over France for more than we would have.

Thanks to our travelling companions for the, as always, pleasant and entertaining company and not a little assistance where needed which to me embodies the benefits of operating within the Strut system of the PFA. Gentlemen and lady I doff my cap.

Mike Negus

Last Months Sillicisms

Malcom Moulton for it was he who gave our talk in June, took the occasion to sell some of his books of 'pomes' about birds and other observations, however he was there mainly to give an update on current events within Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Ltd which is, as is well known, based at Rochester and as such wishes to be part of the scene as development there unfolds. There are as we heard plans for a museum/workshop which would no doubt be a terrific visitor attraction should it ever come to pass, but in the meantime they offer a restoration facility second to none as museums up and down the country testify.

A student became lost during a solo cross-country flight. While attempting to locate the aircraft on radar, ATC asked, "What was your last known position?"

Student: "When I was number one for takeoff."



Bob Sharpe's Foxbat



"Nothing on the Clock"



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Dates for your Diary

Jul 29	BBQ at Rochester
Aug 1	Fly-Out to Bembridge
Aug 26	Dinner Meeting at Horizon
Aug 30	Fly-Out to Popham
Sept 12	Strut Fly-in at Laddingford

**BAR-B-Q Rochester
Airport. 7.00 pm
Thursday Evening 29th
July**

July Strut Meeting will take place at Rochester for the Annual Bar- B - Q which in the past has always been a popular event for members family and friends to attend and this year catering will be carried out by the Horizon Café which will allow those members who usually perform this function to enjoy the social intercourse the evening allows. Say no more .We may be lucky for some members to fly in but we are in any event to be entertained by model aircraft flying which is always worth watching.

Obituary : Barry Birchall

It is with very great regret we record the passing of one of our long standing Strut Members Barry Birchall who with his brother Roger built a CFM Shadow which they flew regularly from Headcorn. Barry died on April 26th after a long illness and we extend on behalf of the Strut Members heartfelt sympathy for their loss to his widow , family and friends , he will be missed .

Dates For The Diary

As part of our on going programme for places to go as a same way /same day trip for Strut Members here are a few suggestions:

1st August -- Bembridge IOW This gives the chaps with non grass airfield capability a chance
30th August - Popham Always a popular run out.

12th September—Laddingford for the Strut combined Fly-In with Laddingford details in future Newsletter

September—Date to be firmed up end of season Fly out to Abbeville
October - Date to be confirmed a car run out to the Brooklands Museum , very worthwhile if you have never been.



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Zeppelins Over Rochester- No!

Oh yes , did you see the Zepp that was on a proving flight before going off to its permanent home in Japan where it is destined to provide tourist flights .It passed over Rochester on their Wings and Things Sunday. At 247 feet it is considerably smaller than its ancestors who visited London between 1915 and 1918 and the Hindenburg whose demise at New jersey in 1937 effectively put a stop to commercial airships until recently at least as far as regular passenger service is concerned.

**See you at
Rochester Airport on
Thursday 29th July
at 7pm for the
Summer BBQ.
Professional Catering
this year!!**



Polishing at Alderney

**Hovering is for pilots who
love to fly but have no
place to go**