



March 2011

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Kent*



Strut Drive Out 13th March Mosquito museum



Nigel's Natterings

After some abysmal weather we can only hope our grass strips dry out soon. I've only managed to fly on four days since our trip to Abbeville which seems such a long time ago. The winter period has been supported by various lectures from PAFRA, Royal Aeronautical society and safety evenings and our season of meetings got off to a good start with a talk from Dave Watts on his travels around the far flung corners Europe and touching North Africa. At BAE Systems, Wing Commander Ken Wallis gave a riveting talk on his life time achievements from building cars, speed boats, models, his career in bomber command and later armaments and trying to destroy jet engines which left him with a supply of starter engines for his speed boats and then getting into autogyros. After talking non stop for an hour and a half it suddenly became too much for the 95 year old but he was fine the next day and was able to visit Medway Aircraft Preservation society and talk to the local Skywatch group. A few years ago the strut arranged a visit to his home and visited his collection of autogyros. By coincidence a recent episode of BBC's Escape to the Country visited Norfolk and took a look round the collection.



Nigel Read—Editor

Coming up shortly is a strut visit to the DeHaviland Museum near Junction 22 on the M25. Planned for 13th March, Contact Gary Smith for details.

By the time you get this, the seemingly endless rounds of award ceremonies, and tearful thank you speeches will be over but I forgot to mention in the last newsletter we had our own mini presentation at the AGM – minus any red carpet – The 'Strut Screw' based on DaVinci's aerial screw design was awarded to John Dean and Auto Gyro Instructor Marc Lhermette received the Ken Wallis Trophy for Best Homebuilt Gyroplane at the Rally. Well done to them.

**31st March Meeting—Glyn Richards
The Tiger Club**

www.kentstrut.co.uk

Antwerp - by Joseph Derrick Jr.

Belgium is not renowned for much apart from beer, chocolates & Poirot and the Belgians don't make it easy to visit this beautifully historic city. If you have a permit aircraft you may well need permission and landing/handling fees make it difficult for the pecuniary disadvantaged.

My own visit was on the way back from an East German event and especially for the Stampe fly-in so landing and parking fees were free.



In total 940 of the Stampe or SV.4 were built; it was designed by George Ivanov and built by Stampe et Vertongen near to Antwerp. At a quick glance it looks like a Tiger Moth but I am told it is a superior aircraft with better handling.

A look at the Antwerp joining procedures can be quite daunting, but in reality it was very straight forward. I was given a right base join for a runway that seemed to go on forever. The members of the Stampe Club itself appear very much like our Tiger Club members, with a focus on aerobatics.

I had planned to return later the

same day, with an early evening flight across the channel. The weather was as nice there as it was here, but not so near the coasts and across the sea. So after a pleasant day around vintage aircraft, a room was arranged on the outskirts of the city which meant a tram ride to visit the town. For future reference rooms can be found cheaper right in the old part of the city, where the architecture is quite remarkable.



*Brabo fountain in the town square.
The statue was made by sculptor
Jef Lambeaux in 1887*

The next morning the weather was fine with a bit of low cloud. Initially they wouldn't accept a flight plan to the UK due to volcanic ash and just as I was about to submit a flight plan for Calais with UK airfields as diversions, I was told the restrictions had been lifted and I could file direct.

Security is as you'd expect at a major airport and you won't get airside without your passport and licence.

Due to the low cloud base and runway in use it meant that I had to fly over the whole of the city barely above the skyscrapers, with really

nowhere to go in the event of a problem.

Given the time difference I was back at the strip for elevens', making it easy even for a day trip.



Visitor to the Stampe fly-in

Engine clean up!

Permit time for the old Luscombe highlighted the usual fiddly jobs but our inspector thought he could see a crack in the engine casing. Not wishing to point out the dirt on his glasses it was decided that the engine could do with a clean and repaint and the problem could be investigated further when it was back to bare metal.

The group did not want to strip or remove the engine and thought the "wire brush and solvent"

Get 'em young A group of seven to eight year olds visited Laddingford recently for an introduction to flying machines. They learnt about aircraft controls, engines and how an aircraft flies. Peter Kember's daughter-in-law teaches at the American School in St Johns Wood and brought 20 or so of her pupils to the airfield to look at and sit in a Europa and a Jodel. Peter will be giving our April talk. So any questions.....



Is that a suspicious unattended package?

technique would yield less than satisfactory results. Luckily idle hanger chat provided a solution when Ron Parker, a relatively new member of the strut, proceeded to tell us about his profession in "blasting" and that this was right up his street.

Some days later Ron rolls up with his mobile air compressor, which made normal road drill compressors look like a toy from ASDA and gets all set up to do his thing. The engine was previously degreased and all holes were carefully taped up. The modern blasting medium is bicarbonate of soda, yes the stuff you cook with. It is the most gentle of blast medias and due to the sonic wave it produces as it encroaches on the surface it removes the paint without disturbing the surface. It is simple to rinse off when the job is done and leaves no pollution.

When blasting with lead shot you need to collect the used material and this makes the job more complex. Blasting with sand leaves tiny grains embedded in the

aluminium and can cause premature engine failure if it gets into the engine. The other problem with heavy blasting mediums is they tend to "peen the surface" and close up any cracks or defects; soda does not do this so you see the full picture when you are finished.

The soda is fine to fire at soft items like rubber hoses, bearing seals, wiring, fibre glass etc, so dismantling the engine prior to work remains at a minimum.

Once the preparation had been completed the actual job of blasting took just minutes and the result was truly amazing. If you want to know what it could do for you see sodablasters.co.uk and Ron is your man.

Incidentally, once the engine had been cleaned it was fine, not bad for an elderly engine. (The engine was replaced in the late 1950's but was that already knocking on a bit? - Ed)



Before..

73 & 76 Numbers on rocker covers are compression check figures.



..During

Masked and suited up!

After..

Ready for inspection.



February meeting

Dave Watts who keeps his Europa Monowheel at Laddingford, where he is also the manager for the ten owners has flown far and wide in Europe and illustrated his adventures with a slide show.

Problems with getting fuel in Spain solved by producing a VAT number, advice on taxi fares from a Moroccan policeman and always keeping an escape route from less than ideal weather were all covered along with favorite destinations and some not to return to.

“Italy Aerotouring Flight Guide” from Transair proved invaluable in listing airstrips and places to visit in



Dave & Marion Watts in Gibraltar



Ireland's scenery



ALL 3 built by Dave (& Log Cabins!)

Italy and in April a German version is due to be published.

Planned DeHavilland Museum visit. 13th March

Paddy Jordans notes from a previous visit:-



I have always wanted to visit the Mosquito Museum as one of the wartime stories my Dad told me was related to the Mosquito.

At the outbreak of WWII my Dad tried to join the RAF as he had always been interested in flying. He had no luck as he was only 5'2", was 29 years old, did not want to be bomber crew and besides they discovered he was in a reserved occupation.

So he had to content himself with bomb reconnaissance for the home office. But as time went on they needed people with his technical ability so it was that he found himself building emergency runways. While completing one of these a new type of aircraft needed to use it, every one was told not to look, so every one did. It was a Mosquito, and so started my dad's love affair with the “Wooden Wonder” which I can not help was to do with him being a carpenter joiner by trade. His enthusiasm and interest was passed on to me, so when Mark Balding chose the de Havilland Aircraft Heritage Centre as a strut

outing I phoned. I was looking for someone to share the drive with as my truck is getting on. I asked around at the strut night and found Nigel Read. Meeting at Nigel's house I had a tour of his "Europa".

The drive to Salisbury Hall was via the M2/A2/M25 and being Sunday was reasonable.

On reaching the museum and having paid entrance fee we decided to follow the suggested route. First on the route was the Comet 4 flight simulator nose cockpit section, what struck me was the limited forward vision on a par with the Luscombe. Next was the Halford Hall which houses a picture board potted history of the aircraft company also a family tree. The tree had surprises one being Olivia De Havilland the actress as part of the family.

From Halford Hall we entered the Dove G-AREA. Sitting in the pilots seat it was very cosy for a plane of its size.

Next the main Hanger with an example of a Mosquito, Queen Bee, Moth Minor, Humming Bird, Vampire, Chipmunk, and various engine bits.

We stopped in the main hanger for a cup of tea and biscuit as it had started raining outside.

Parked outside on route to the Mosquito Prototype hanger are various examples of de Havilland's Trident fuselage section, a four-engine piston which I think is a Heron, Sea Vixen another Dove, and twin jet executive. As you enter the Prototype hanger there is a Cierva Autogyro the only one to be built by de Havilland's, and there in bright yellow is the Mossi prototype; at present it is undergoing refurbishment. Around the Mossi are various exhibits, a Moliners 6lb cannon that was fitted for anti submarine work. At the back of the hanger is a section of a Horsa glider fuselage and cockpit, complete with a paratroopers folding bike.

They were still developing the site so the proposed memorabilia section was not yet open so our last section was the workshop.

In the workshop they are rebuilding for flight a DH 89 Dragon Rapide and for static display a DH88 Comet racer, an ex-film prop. On chatting with one of the restorers he told us that since

A couple of images from the BBC iPlayer. Escape to the Country, series 11 broadcast on 24th February. Featuring an interview with Wing Cdr. Ken Wallis and a look at his Autogyro collection. You may have to wait for the repeat as it is only available until 3rd March. If you don't want to watch the whole programme, nudge the slider along to about 36 mins!



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the Shuttelworth's "Grosvenor house" landing accident it was highly likely that it too would become a static display as the CAA had condemned the undercarriage as unsafe by design? The catering facilities being limited we decided to drop in to Stapleford on our return for a bite to eat. Good idea but have you tried to get to it from the M25! We finished up in Dagenham at a Pub where we settled for roast turkey and a pint. All in all it had been a very enjoyable day out.

**Dates for your Diary**

March 13th Visit to Mosquito Museum—Gary Smith

March 31st Tiger Club talk—Glyn Richards

April 28th Airfield Planning—Peter Kember