

DEVON STRUT NEWS

The Newsletter of the Devon Strut of the Popular Flying Association. January 2006.

CO-ORDINATOR'S COMMENTS

by Christopher Howell

Well, all good members, the shortest day has passed so Hip Hip Hooray and welcome to longer days and bountiful amounts of daffodils in the hedgerows. 2006 is the 60th Anniversary Year of The Popular Flying Association and the Devon Strut has a full calendar for events throughout this memorable celebration year. Pete White, Reg McComish and Alan Crutcher from the Airknocker Squadron plan to throw down the gauntlet and fly sixty airfields in the West Country. We will then have the blueprint to offer this challenge to any pilot who wants to win a Devon Strut 60,60,60 certificate during 2006. Pete White is also the driving force behind the 60th Anniversary Hangar Bash to be held at Bodmin Airfield on 1st June. We have lots more to offer and many exciting events to mark this special year of the PFA.

A venue that has become available to us for 2006 is Plymouth Airport thanks to the hard work of Airfield Manger Terry Linge. Terry has made great strides this year to welcome back GA to Plymouth. I know initially we were all very sceptical and uneasy that a major Airport as Plymouth actually wants small aircraft back when all other large airports are trying they're hardest to get rid of these irritating amateur pilots and their aircraft. I spoke to Terry last week and he relayed that the GA hangar was filling up with fifteen aircraft now resident and a new Flying School starting work in January 2006. The funny thing was when I said to Terry that should we go to the terminal for our lunch when we have the fly in, his reply was "Crikey Chris, their prices are a bit steep. We will set you up some food in the hangar." I believe this is a mark of the genuine welcome Terry plans to offer all pilots during 2006. I have also suggested it would help if we could buy a book of tickets that would give us a reduced landing charge much the same as the system was on the Tamar Bridge crossing. I have to say that during my visit in July 2005 I found all most amiable and welcoming, apart from when I missed the way out onto the apron and set off all the alarms!!

Plymouth Airport, or Roborough as it was born, is listed as one of the earliest municipal airfields in the country. HRH Prince of Wales officially opened the airport on 15th July 1931. During the post-war years the airfield went from strength to strength. At the outbreak of war the airfield was requisitioned by the Admiralty. The airfield was operational with Gladiators and Lysanders. Eventually the Gladiators were replaced with Hurricanes which found the landing ground rather short. The largest aircraft to attempt a landing during the war was a badly damaged B17. It over ran and hit a tank trap; three crew were killed and four survived. Roborough returned to civilian aviation in 1946 and things really began to happen when Brymon Airways launched their services during 1975. During the last twenty years Plymouth has managed to hang in there despite strong local objections and next year 2006 The Devon Strut will hold their first Fly In there for many a year.

Following my grumbles last month about traffic congestion on all our modern roads I found an interesting article in The General Rule of Agriculture in Devon written in 1808, it reads as follows, "The Parish roads were bad indeed. The height of the hedge banks, often covered with a rank growth of coppice-wood, uniting and interlocking with each other overhead, completes the idea of exploring a labyrinth rather than that of passing through a much frequented country. The first impression will, however, be at once removed on the traveller's meeting with, or being overtaken, a gang of packhorses. The rapidity with which these animals descend the hills when not loaded and the utter impossibility of passing loaded ones, require that the utmost caution should be used in keeping out of the way of the one, and exertion in keeping ahead of the other. A crossway fork in the road or gateway is eagerly looked for as a retiring spot by the traveller, until the pursuing squadron or heavily loaded brigade may have passed by. In these lanes it is absolutely to form any idea of the surrounding countryside, as the size and depth of the abutting fields are only to be seen through a breach in the mound, or over a stile or gateway."

The above I found quite amazing as it was written almost two hundred years ago. Until the beginning of the 19th century travellers in Devon went about on foot or on horseback and goods were transported by teams of pack-horses. It's now our pleasure and privilege to fly over the countryside in a good old vintage aircraft with the window wide open, actively surveying the beauty all laid out like a magical carpet below, and particularly watching all the human ants scurrying about their so important tasks. Right, next month the soapbox topic will be the scourge of modern day man, the Wheelie Bin!!

Happy New Year To All Members Far and Wide.

Best laid plans.....

by Roger Lanary

Eldest daughter has just telephoned to announce her engagement! Needs a dramatic response(!), otherwise known as a pressing justification for flying. Must find an airfield near Totnes. Yes! Bolt Head, that's the place. Never made it before on a Devon Strut Fly-in; something always connived against our visit – weather, visitors, etc! So we phone "Congratulations, meet you both at Bolt Head on Saturday, darling". Briefing on how to find location follows and we're on!

All geared up, champagne and flowers on board. At the threshold; power checks: big drop on left mag. Oh dear, engine not happy! It's happened before. Those bottom plugs must have some crud on them. Standard procedure - full power, hold on the brakes and lean the engine. It usually works, but not this time (gave up after 20 minutes).

Back to the hanger to find the tools, but nothing fits. It slowly dawns that the only times that I have cleaned the plugs before is with the cowling off - then the 7/8 ring spanner fits. Where on a Saturday afternoon do you find a 7/8 deep socket? I had to settle for a 22mm version and a set of files to ease out the size of the internal hexagon. It's not an easy job when sat in Halfords car park. Yep, it eventually worked; the spare plug fitted the "adjusted" socket.

Drive fifteen miles back from Salisbury to the hanger and out come the four bottom plugs. Only cut myself three times on the cowling in the process (****!). By this time the light was fading and the temperature dropping. Cleaning plugs with a 25 watt lead light on a cold November evening is not turning out to be fun so I take the plugs home. Nothing like a nice warm kitchen to remove those lead deposits (that is providing you don't get caught!).

Tomorrow should be a doddle, whack in those pristine plugs, 15 mins max, and off we go. Bolt Head here we come!!!

Sunday morning, check the TAFs, Plymouth clearish, Exeter and Bournemouth no problems. All the fog is up at Lyneham. Should be OK. Hurrah!

Getting those plugs back in was a real sod of a job. Can't see the thread in the cylinder head. Somehow one has to work ones fingers around the inlet and exhaust pipes whilst avoiding the push rod tubes. Twenty minutes pass and I've managed only one of the easier rear plugs, a little frustration is setting in. Betty offers to help, best to humour her, let her experience the immense difficulties! Briefed to remember the copper washers she goes around the other side while I struggle on. "Have you got another plug" comes the request, "they're all the same" I reply a little tersely, "Yes I know that but I can't do the next one without the plug, can I? The penny drops and I drop my plug and washer. It finished Betty three to my one. Just to make it worse, she scored all hers in three minutes. "Err.... sorry, thank you sweetness, that was wonderful".

An hour late but undaunted we launch into a clear sky and climb to the west. The horizon's a bit hazy but what a lovely day for a flight to the Devon Riviera. Another couple of miles and 500 ft higher and it slowly dawns that what seemed to be haze is actually ground fog stretching down to the coast and as far

north as one can see. We press on for another ten miles but are now beginning to lose sight of the ground ahead. We'll make it to Bolt Head one day but not this one.

Luscombe G-BSOX

PFA Awareness Day

It has been decided to postpone the PFA Awareness Day at Turweston on the 7th January. The January issue of PF promotes this event and asks people to "turn up on the day and pay" if they cannot get in touch with the office due to Christmas Holiday. However, please advise fellow members that the event will not take place and not to turn up!!

Ray Hanna RIP (28 August 1928 - 2 December 2005)



It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Ray Hanna. Ray, who was 77 years, joined the Royal Air Force in 1949 having learned to fly in New Zealand in 1947/48. Following training on the Prentice, Harvard and Meteor he was fortunate enough to fly such piston types as the Tempest V, Sea Fury, Balliol and Beaufighter. His first operational posting was to 79 Squadron, 2ATAF flying FR9 Meteors. In the fifties, he flew nearly all the early British jets including Vampires, Venoms, Attackers, Sea Hawks, Swifts and Javelins.

Ray first led a team of four Hunters in 1957, in 1963/64 was a member of the College of Air Warfare Meteor Team and was selected for the newly-formed Red Arrows as No.3 in 1965. He remains the longest serving leader in the history of the team. Ray's leadership is widely regarded as making the Arrows the world-renowned aerobatics team they ultimately became and, in recognition of his

contribution, he was received a bar to the AFC he had previously been awarded for several feats of airmanship.

Ray retired from the RAF in 1971 for a new career in civil aviation, initially on the Boeing 707 with Lloyd International Airways followed by seven years with Cathay Pacific, again with the 707, and for two years the Lockheed L-1011 Tri-Star. In 1979 he was asked to head a private diplomatic 707 company with world-wide operations. With his son Mark, who was so tragically killed flying an Me109 six years ago, he built up a vintage warbird collection at Duxford which ultimately became the renowned 'Old Flying Machine Company.' In addition to achieving acclaim on the display circuit, the OFMC has numerous movie credits. Ray was undoubtedly one of the finest display pilots ever, and regarded by many as the best of the best. Ray, displaying his famous Mark IX Spitfire MH434, was a joy to behold, and a sight which will be sorely missed on the display circuit. Far more important, he was a fine man.



Dunkeswell, 2nd October - By now you will have seen the images and read Pete White's article in PF. Well done to all involved.

Derek Boyce

Employment Opportunity in PFA Engineering

The continued expansion of the PFA fleet has created an opportunity for an enthusiastic Aeronautical Engineer to join the team. The ideal candidate will be degree qualified and have 1 – 5 years industry experience. PFA Engineering provides engineering support to the existing 2000+ homebuilt and vintage aircraft fleet in the UK. This ranges from advising prospective builders, reviewing new aircraft designs and approving modifications and repairs. The PFA is seeking someone with a broad expertise covering aircraft design, structures and aerodynamics. Some experience of aircraft certification would be useful. A competitive salary is offered for the position, which is based at Turweston (near Brackley) Northants. For someone with a passion for light aircraft and recreational aviation, it would be difficult to find a more rewarding and satisfying career move. Applicants should send a CV with a covering letter to Graham Newby, Turweston Aerodrome, Nr. Brackley, Northants NN13 5YD graham.newby@pfa.org.uk
Closing Date: 31st January 2006

Members' News

Congratulations to Ernie Hoblyn for carrying out the first flight of replica Sopwith Pup G-BZND at Bodmin on Monday 19th December. The Pup was started and progressed by the late Brendan Goddard near Southampton and Ernie has done an exceptional job in completing the project, including the design work and installation of a new 145 hp Warner Scarab engine. Francis Donaldson has taken a close interest in the project and inspected it personally at Watchford before Ernie trailered it to Bodmin for re-assembly and testing. The f/f of 25 minutes included two circuits and confirmed the expected tail heaviness and the more than ample reserves of power from the Scarab, which needs some additional baffling to counter high CHTs . Ernie intends to complete the test flying of what he describes as “a big Currie Wot” before returning the Pup to Watchford.



Derek Boyce

Congratulations also to Steve Robson and Roger Lanary who each won £150 of avgas from the draw organised by our new website sponsor, insurers OnRisk.

Francis de Beer of Petersfield is now the co-ordinator of the Solent Strut and owns a Rans S6 116, G-BVFM.

Richard Horner is the proud new owner of the unique Piper J5C Ambulance Cub. This a/c has travelled the world (Hawaii, New Zealand and UK) as a restoration project before the unfortunate death of its previous owner. It was on display at the vintage fly-in at Henstridge in August.



MM

January Free Landings

Pilot: Sleaf, Popham, Roserrow, Bodmin, Sibson, and Sandtoft.
Flyer: Fife, Panshangar, Sheffield, Pajala (Lapland) – ask for Nick!
Today's Pilot: Bodmin, Fair Oaks, Old Sarum, Fishburn

A number of changes will be made to the UK and European low-level significant weather (Sig Wx) forecast charts (previously referred to as F215 and F415 respectively) by March 2006. see http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/aviation/news/briefing_charts/details.html

At the last Strut meeting one of the members present mentioned that he needed some **seat harness fittings** and our guest, John Beattie said he might have some. The member in question had already bought some bits from Light Aero, but needed others. John does have some harness parts but has mislaid the member's card. If you are he, please contact John on his office e.mail hfgm@yeovilton.mod.uk or his home address john@panxworth.com

Future Meetings, 2006

Feb. 9th John Evans, author and commercial pilot,
Feb. 15th Special meeting: Roger Hopkinson, PFA Chairman.
March 9th Peter Vacher - the recovery and restoration of Hawker Hurricane R4118.
April 13th Alex Kimbell, ex Army Air Corp pilot & author.

The Night Before Christmas

Anon

'Twas the night before Christmas, and out on the ramp, Not an airplane was stirring, not even a Champ.
The aircraft were fastened to tiedowns with care, In hopes that come morning, they all would be there.

The fuel trucks were nestled, all snug in their spots, with gusts from two-forty at 39 knots.
I slumped at the fuel desk, now finally caught up, And settled down comfortably, resting my butt.

When the radio lit up with noise and with chatter, I turned up the scanner to see what was the matter.
A voice clearly heard over static and snow, Called for clearance to land at the airport below.

He barked his transmission so lively and quick, I'd have sworn that the call sign he used was "St. Nick".
I ran to the panel to turn up the lights, The better to welcome this magical flight.
He called his position, no room for denial, "St Nicholas One, turnin' on final,
And what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a Rutan-built sleigh, with eight Rotax Reindeer!

With vectors to final, down the glideslope he came, As he passed all fixes, he called them by name:
"Now Ringo! Now Tolga! Now Trini and Bacun! On Comet! On Cupid!" What pills was he takin'?

While controllers were sittin', and scratchin' their head, They phoned to my office, and I heard it with dread,
The message they left was both urgent and dour: "When Santa pulls in, have him please call the tower."

He landed like silk, with the sled runners sparking, Then I heard "Left at Charlie," and "Taxi to parking."
He slowed to a taxi, turned off of three-oh And stopped on the ramp with a "Ho, ho-ho-ho..."

He stepped out of the sleigh, but before he could talk, I ran out to meet him with my best set of chocks.
His red helmet and goggles were covered with frost And his beard was all blackened from Reindeer exhaust.

His breath smelled like peppermint, gone slightly stale, And he puffed on a pipe, but he didn't inhale.
His cheeks were all rosy and jiggled like jelly, His boots were as black as a cropduster's belly.

He was chubby and plump, in his suit of bright red, And he asked me to "fill it, with hundred low-lead."
He came dashing in from the snow-covered pump, I knew he was anxious for drainin' the sump.

I spoke not a word, but went straight to my work, And I filled up the sleigh, but I spilled like a jerk.
He came out of the restroom, and sighed in relief, Then he picked up a phone for a Flight Service brief.
And I thought as he silently scribed in his log, These reindeer could land in an eight-mile fog.

He completed his pre-flight, from the front to the rear, Then he put on his headset, and I heard him yell,
"Clear!"

And laying a finger on his push-to-talk, He called up the tower for clearance and squawk.
"Take taxiway Charlie, the southbound direction, Turn right three-two-zero at pilot's discretion"

He sped down the runway, the best of the best, "Your traffic's a Grumman, inbound from the west."
Then I heard him proclaim, as he climbed through the night, "Merry Christmas to all! I have traffic in sight."

Next Meeting

NOTICE OF DEVON STRUT AGM.

12th January 2006, 7.30 for 8.00, Stowey Arms, Exminster.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of the last meeting.
3. Co-ordinators Report.
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Fly-In Report
6. National Council Report.
7. Election of Officers. (*Nominations are invited for new Safety Officer, one received so far. We have also identified the need for a PR Officer to promote the PFA & Strut events during the 60th anniversary year. One volunteer so far but nominations invited*)
8. Presentation of Strut Cup & Les Dray Trophy.
9. Any Other Business

"When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been and there you will always long to return" - Leonardo da Vinci

And a happy new year to all Strut members!
