

DEVON STRUT NEWS

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

CO-ORDINATOR'S COMMENTS

by Christopher Howell

Plymouth City Airport was the location of the first event on the Devon Strut calendar for 2006. This was the first event at Plymouth for many a long year. The weather was good during the day with early morning and late afternoon fog. There were many logistical problems to overcome on the lead up to the event. On the day feedback was mixed, as a city airport may not be seen as an ideal venue for a fly-in.

There was certainly an opportunity to put Plymouth in pilots' log books and many people enjoyed a good day out. The Youth & Education Build-a-Plane Rans S6 was on display and reflected many months of hard work by groups of young people all over the country that built it. The Rans travelled to Devon in a custom converted coach; many thanks to owner Stewart Luck and volunteer custodians Dave Hall and David Millin.

Fly-a-Teacher, a PFA youth initiative was launched at Plymouth and hailed a great success. On reflection, the complicated ATC departure procedure created much hard work for Dave Silsbury and Jim Gale and feedback suggests that this would be much better flown from a quieter strip away from a city airport environment. Pilots' time was very much appreciated, with sincere gratitude to Dave Silsbury, Jim Gale, Peter Gristwood, Steve Robson, Paul Aston and John Crabb.

Marshals carried out sterling work and without their help this event would not have been possible. Thank you John Havers, Alan Faupel, Maurice Wickstead, Brian Murray, John Kempton, Ian Walsh, Keith Wingate and John Pearce. We thank also Derek Boyce for recording all with his camera (see below). Following some prior promotion by Steve Robson there were many newspaper reports about the event and even a picture in the Western Morning News of John Pearce in front of his gyroplane, basking in the sunshine!

The MG Car Club displayed 25 vintage and classic cars. Many thanks to Ted Lawrence and his members for their hard work in organising the car park and barrier.

A raffle was held with three prizes; two return tickets to Jersey won by Bill Chubb, a trial lesson with Plymouth Flying School won by Bernie Steed and a collection of wine won by Ray Blatchford. All funds went to Heartswell at Derriford hospital.

Compression and sticky valves have been topics of conversation this month. Watching the dials go up during a compression test and hoping for a reading that at least reaches 74 is always a bonus. Congratulations to Roy Young. Following work on his lovely Europa, the six-cylinder Jabiru engine is purring sweetly again, Oh, Mark helped as well!

Late May weather has gone somewhat pear shaped with gale force winds and heavy rain. Fingers crossed for the G-VFWE weekend and let's hope for better weather compared to last year when the Aeronca mob battled through strong winds and heavy showers, closely followed by Tug in his Pietenpol, to make a strong Bodmin and Cardiff presence.

Happy Flying.
Chris Howell.

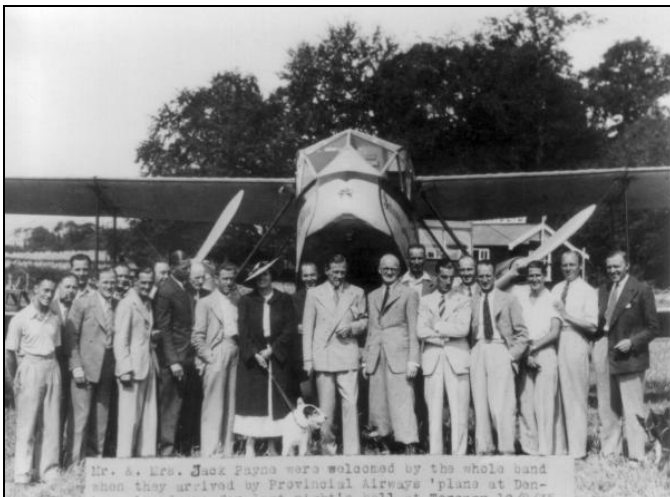
Forgotten Fields: Denbury

by Maurice Wickstead

Early in 1935, private enterprise had proposed an aerodrome to serve Torbay, located at Drumbridges, mid-way between Newton Abbot and Bovey Tracey, but this scheme was overtaken by the creation of a facility at nearby Denbury. Billed as 'Torquay Airport', this came into use in the spring of 1935 on the initiative of Provincial Airways, who required a more reliable local landing ground as an alternative to Teignmouth's Haldon with its often poor weather and poorly sited electricity pylons. (see Devon Strut News, May 2006)

Thus, an area of land near the village of Denbury, 1.5 miles SW of Newton Abbot, was rented from Mr J Short and levelled to provide two grass landing areas of 2,250 ft E/W and 1,200 ft N/S. Basic passenger facilities were catered for by a small wooden building. On April 26th, 1935, the new 'aerodrome' was officially opened by the Mayoress of Torquay, while MD Harry Kent and fellow director Air-Cdre Peregrine Fellowes represented the airline. Fellowes was notable for having led the team that successfully completed the first high-altitude flights over Everest in 1933 and in his stirring opening address urged Devon's citizens "to take to the air in the same way that their seagoing forefathers had sailed forth to help establish the Empire". Another distinguished airman, Capt. Norman Macmillan, former test pilot of Fairey Aviation, spoke in similar vein, emphasizing the need for the people of Devon "to embrace aviation much as European countries had already done". The opening gala attracted some twenty visiting aircraft, amongst which were the previous year's King's Cup winner GAL ST-10 Monospar (G-ACTS) and Shell-Mex's Miles Hawk Major (G-ADCF) flown by R R 'Dick' Bentley, who had already accomplished four flights to and from the Cape. Crowd pleasing demonstrations included aerobatics and crazy flying, but Mr. A. I. Harris's parachute descent ended unceremoniously when he landed in a copse adjoining the field.

Commercial flying had already got underway on March 1st with the opening of Provincial's summer timetable connecting Croydon with Plymouth via Southampton. They were joined by Railway Air Services from May 27th, whose DH Dragons plied twice-daily on weekdays between Nottingham, Birmingham, Cardiff and Plymouth. The halt at Denbury was only ever a "request stop", with aircraft over-flying at low-level looking for the signal that would require the pilot to land. Nevertheless, the aerodrome proved popular with summer visitors to nearby Torquay as exemplified by the arrival on August 10th, 1935, of dance band leader Jack Payne, to fulfill an engagement in the resort.



In the same month, Alan Cobham's National Aviation Display made a brief appearance before a crowd of a thousand or so local spectators. Among the delights on offer were a display by a Cierva Autogiro, a parachute descent by Naomi Heron-Maxwell and a gliding demonstration by Geoffrey Tyson, later to become a well-known test pilot with Short Brothers and Saunders-Roe.

But after just a single season Denbury fell into disuse after Provincial closed down its West Country

service at the end of September. The airline was subsequently declared bankrupt and liquidated early in December 1933. As for the site, it reverted to grazing land until 1939 when a military camp was established. Today the location of the former aerodrome is occupied by HM Prison Channings Wood.

In Search of the Ultimate Breakfast, Episode 1 (Perranporth Mon. 1st May)

By Steve Robson

Searching for the best ‘All Day Killer Breakfast’ is nothing new but it does give us an excuse to go flying and visit somewhere different. The breakfast criteria for me are that it must have enough cholesterol to kill a rhino and they have to be prepared to deep fry the cornflakes.

Normally, bank holiday weather seems to follow a pattern of gale force ridiculous, minus nasty and horizontal rain. This was a reasonable description of the weather on the previous day but, for some reason, was not the case on the early May Bank Holiday Monday. St. Mawgan Met were giving 280/15kts, all the 9s with “few” at 1,200 ft and scattered cu, base 2,500. I’d flown past Perranporth on a few occasions but never landed and the bank holiday combined with their fly-in was too good an opportunity to miss. So with a blue sky dotted with some attractive looking cumulus cloud and a brisk north-westerly blowing straight down the short strip at Watchford, together with Mike Mold in his Jodel D112, and Louise to keep an eye on him, we launched in the late morning. (*Late morning because Steve has been bitten by the Hoppy/ Reed bug of washing every fleck of sheep s!*\$ off the Condor before he hits the switch!*)

We decided to route more or less into wind and headed due west over a thermic Devon landscape to hit the Cornish coast south of Bude. A left turn left brought smooth air over the surf and a sigh of relief from Louise. And so on past Boscastle, Tintagel and Polzeath (Rosarrow). St Mawgan were very helpful and gave us MATZ penetration before we switched over to Perranporth for a slight cross wind landing on runway 27. An hour and a half after leaving Watchford we were all basking in the afterglow of a wonderful flight whilst booking in to Perranporth where everyone was helpful and friendly.

The fly-in offered a free meal ticket for visiting aircraft and this we cashed in for an ‘everything burger’ which was a new one on me. Basically it was a bap filled with everything that was fry-able including a burger, bacon, tomatoes, onions and a fried egg. The dilemma was how to get your teeth around it. I’m not really a burger fan but this was a very tasty lunch and well worth grease and egg stains on my sweatshirt. Score 8.9! (*Louise, too, said it was a burger to die for – (or was it “from”?) but she also said her enjoyment was offset by being confronted by two pilots attacking the food like it was their last!*)



There was not a huge crowd but the 30-odd arrivals included an ex-Swedish RV4, a Pioneer 300 and N-reg Cirrus go-faster machine. Plus a few familiar strut faces; John & Trish Kempton, Tony Knowles, John

Holden (in his much travelled Eurostar) and a couple of ravers from the past in Pat Crawford & Mike Bennett. After the “regulatory” gossip, line-shooting and a walk around the parked aircraft, the time came to leave.



Despite the brilliant sunshine, the cool 10-15kt westerly was giving turbulence over the cliffs so take-off was on RW 23 to avoid the said curl-over. Rather than rollercoaster our way home through the still active thermals we elected to go to 6,500 ft, “on-top” of the now thinning cumulus cloud. It’s a different perspective from over the top of Roadford Lake when you can see Okehampton, Crediton and Tiverton all in a row; a memorable sight. The tail wind took a good ten minutes off the flight time to Watchford and we arrived back in the late afternoon feeling very contented. A grand day out!

(Several days later Steve was surprised and honoured to receive the recognition that’s becoming regularly bestowed on Strut members at fly-ins around the country – the fly-in concors d’elegance trophy from Perranporth – a veritable Condor moment! – and well worth the pre-flight vital sheep-removing actions.)

Plymouth Impressions

by Mike Mold

The day got off to an inauspicious start with the ongoing oil leak from my temperature sender being attributed to a cracked adapter fitting, between the capillary bulb and oil screen. No amount of instant gasket was going to stop this one! This scuppered my intentions of flying a teacher but thankfully Mike Wells helped me push ‘NL back into the hangar and we climbed aboard his D112 for the trip to Plymouth.

Steve Robson and Les Dray had departed ahead of us, having telephoned for the required prior permission and were surprised to have been allocated slot times (specifically ruled out by Chris Howell in his pre-event discussions with the airport.). Passing South Brent, the radio crackled into life as we heard Peter Gristwood call up, giving an estimate for Ivybridge. Many pilots were to see a lot of Ivybridge and the residents of Ivybridge, a lot of aeroplanes! Having been cleared, in turn, to join the circuit, we were surprised to hear the circuit was full (we counted 4!) and we were instructed to hold over Lee Moor. (Holding, both in the air and on the ground, was going to be a familiar activity). Maurice Bush was clearly visible ahead of us in his flexwing and as he turned from base to final we were again required to a hold. (Mike’s anecdotes from the recent Popham microlight event, with over 500 visitors, put this juxtaposition of “control” vs “airmanship and good discipline” into sharp contrast.)

The airport was indeed busy and with over 60 arrivals (including PFA Chairman Roger Hopkinson and CEO Graham Newby in Roger’s RV6a G-HOPY) it was a successful fly-in but, from the tone of the transmissions, it was clearly a shock to the ATC system, not helped by an intermittent fault with the airport’s radio kit. The numbers must also have been a surprise to the staff of the Plymouth Flying School, who, having been billed as looking forward to and welcoming our attendance, clearly thought better of it!



Finals for 13 with many visitors already on the grass



Roger Hopkinson's RV6A

The teacher flying was in full swing... well, it was happening... slowly. The ATC procedures required pre-start-up calls to be followed by protracted periods of holding with engines running before receiving approval for taxi-ing, which added hours to the day's activities and tested the patience of those pilots involved. On the positive side, the teachers enjoyed their flights and have already given lessons based on their experiences, including map-reading and the use of the aerial photos they took (whilst holding over Ivybridge, waiting to return!)

Added interest came in the shape of the BaP Rans S6, the Harrowbeer Interest Group's display and the impressive line up of MGs, Jags and various other vintage cars.



Jim Gale briefs the teachers about the RV7



Peter Gristwood with a happy teacher



David Millin and the BaP Rans display



Mike Wells & Chris Fitton admire a Jaguar XK140



Tony Knowles and Pat Crawford in Tony's Super Cub



Keith Wingate cooking whilst waiting for taxi clearance

On the theme of the search for the all-day killer breakfast, the local venison and pork burger came a close second to the “everything you can possibly fry and squeeze into a bun” at Perranporth. Pity that the time delays in getting the teachers into the air denied them the chance to enjoy the buffet that the Strut laid on for them in the airport restaurant. Still, someone had to test the sandwiches...

As the afternoon progressed we became aware of the sea fog creeping up the Tamar, prompting people to make an orderly run for it! Chris said he just got into Halwell before it was socked in. The coastal fog bank was evident all the way across the South Hams, Torbay, up to Teignmouth and along parts of the east Devon coastal strip. Our return to Watchford followed the A30 and, of necessity, we routed to the west of Exeter to avoid the lowering cloud base over the Haldons, then via Cullompton and to the north of Dunkeswell where the air was still relatively free from the moisture blown on the southerly breeze.

The success of the day was again down to the dedicated band of willing volunteers who gave their time and effort to make it another enjoyable Devon Strut event. Thanks, guys.

(Photos by Mike Mold & Derek Boyce)

Oil Pressure in Small Continentals

(via the Jodel Club Newsletter)

by Austin Straw, Quebec, Canada

Recently, I read a Jodel article, in which a lack of oil pressure on start-up was solved by changing the rear case with its gear pump. Humpf! My Jodel D112 with its A65 suffered a complete lack of pressure on start-up, some eight years ago, at 350 hours, on a rebuilt engine including new oil gears. It now has a total of 800 hours, without changing the gear pump and the failure to obtain pressure happens several times each year. *(This story has passed into Continental folk-lore but is worth relating for those who haven't heard of it – Ed)*

Story: On the first failure, I did all that the Continental Manual suggests - a lot of work – Useless! No joy. I substituted an auto supply gauge: no joy. Not really knowing the A65, I then thought that the oil galleries might be empty, and made a rig with a head and so filled the galleries via a line to the pressure gauge takeoff. Wonderful - I had pressure on start-up and flew.

Pondering deeply, somewhat perplexed, only two days later I saw a visiting Champ being hand-swung by its pilot, and closed down almost immediately. The pilot walked to the rear and, much stronger than I, lifted the tail shoulder high for a minute or so. He then repeated his start-up and seemed satisfied about something. Flash of inspiration! I enquired "Oil Pressure?" "They all do it", said he and flew away.

I am now an authority on the subject and have obtained pressure in many a small Continental which has failed to produce pressure on start-up. The Champ man was right: they all do it, 65's, 75's and 85's.

The gear pump loses its prime, usually when the prop is turned backwards or forwards when listening to compression, or working on the engine or just mild curiosity. If the pressure fails after a hot oil charge, or when the tail has been lifted for work, then lifting the tail alone may not work-: an addition of oil from a can through the oil temperature bulb housing is needed. The explanation is simple: on a tail-wheel aircraft, the oil screen housing slants down, and behaves as a reservoir for a little oil. Tilting the reservoir allows the oil to run directly onto the top of the gear pump, thus priming it.

Switches off, prop horizontal, brakes on and no chocks, or chocks in position and no brakes, lift the tail high using the tail wheel spring (a work- glove helps), wait a minute, lower, and then your normal drill from the beginning.

So far, voila each time! Thank goodness my Jodel is tail light. (*I'll drink to that! – Ed*)

60th Anniversary Bodmin Hangar Dance, 1st July.

Aerodance tickets are still available from Pete White. They cost £20.00 per person and cheques should be made payable to Cornwall Flying Club Ltd. To save him and the strut some money you should send him a SAE when writing for tickets. Alternatively, phone CFC 01208-821419 and they'll take your credit card details. There is still a demand for the tickets and the event is fast approaching!

60 Aerosite Challenge

by Pete White

On Saturday 29th April, two Aeroncas, G-IVOR containing Reg McComish and myself with G-BRWR flown by Alan Crutcher and Derek Boyce as photographer, zig zagged around the West Country locating (by eye), photographing and logging 62 aeronautical sights for the Devon Strut 60 Aerosite Challenge. We started from Bodmin and travelled anti-clockwise from the north coast of Cornwall weaving our way to Lands End for a fuel and coffee stop. Then off round the Lizard peninsular, tracking down airfields of yesteryear and present day and then back to Bodmin with 43 sites logged. After more fuel and coffee we headed north and reached our target by landing at Eggesford our 62nd site of the day at about 18.00 hours. More fuel and beverage and it was time for the weary flyers to head home, Alan to Cardiff and the crew of IVOR to Bodmin for a very welcome glass of the black stuff.

Our flying time was a little under 6 hours and we successfully located and logged 62 of the listed 200 plus aerosites. This Challenge is best tackled with 2 people in the aircraft due to the workload involved but for the more modern minded pilot a GPS would probably be useful to find some of the sites. We really enjoyed the day which has left us all a little tired and spreading the task over a longer time would be beneficial and wise for all entrants. By spreading the area eastwards past Dorset, this gives more choice of 'targets' and for the faster aircraft they will easily find 60 larger sites spread over the whole region. Plus those living in the east don't have to travel so far. St Mawgan are very touchy about photography and when I contacted them they quoted that 'they have based agencies that are very security-sensitive' whatever that means! Use your imagination but do talk to the various ATC units in the interest of safety. Keep a good lookout and most of all enjoy it.

Have fun, Pete White

Members' News

Congratulations to Jenny Dalton who successfully completed the skills test for her Microlight PPL on Friday 12th May at Bodmin and is now waiting for that all-important certificate. Jenny has also volunteered to help at the Scout Aerocamp.

Congratulations to Les and Beryl Dray who got married on 19th May.

More About Haldon

by John Prowse

Thanks be to Maurice Wickstead for “Forgotten Fields” (D.S.N., May ’06) thus increasing my knowledge of Little Haldon airfield by several hundred percent. It was from there, as an ATC cadet, that I left the ground in a flying machine for the first time (and the next twenty–odd for that matter).

The machine in question was a Dagling glider. Towed by a Beaverette armoured car, it was used for everything up to the low hop stage, at which it became reasonably controllable. Its main advantage was its considerable and much needed strength! The other half of the flying equipment consisted of Kadet MK.1s, which were launched by barrage balloon winches.

Most of the instructors at Little Haldon had been members of the pre-war gliding club. I remember two of them fighting a mock duel with Very Pistols, their only concession to health and safety being their use of a high trajectory. When I started going to the airfield it was only a month after the War and the field was still under FAA control, guarded by a solitary able seaman. His leisure activities included knocking tin cans off a couple of fence posts with his 303 rifle and frightening passing motorists. There were not many of the latter of course, but the number of riddled cans suggested that there was no shortage of ammunition. I was once delegated to patch a hole in the rudder of a Kadet, after a stray bullet had passed through the hangar on its way to who knows where.

The airfield sported a couple of dormitory huts as well as two hangars, each with its complement of stores and spares. There was also a rather nice little building known as the chalet where we used to have our hot soup. No doubt it was part of the pre-war golf club. I recently had a mooch around to see what I could recognise of the old buildings. The “chalet” had seen better days to say the least and I was not able to work out where any of the other buildings had been.

My association with Little Haldon finished three months after it began, when the whole operation was transferred to Exeter Aerodrome. There, we had the use of a hangar on the north side and sleeping quarters in a dispersal hut which I believe is now part of the antiques export complex.

Hey... I hope somebody has told that sailor he can go home now!

Welcome to New Member

Mark Collett of Whitchurch, Bristol, BS14 0EG. Mark flies Jodel D120 G-AZLF

Petrol Prices

For those who have yet to hear about the UK’s Money Saving Expert, we must introduce Martin Lewis. A journalist with credits on radio and TV, he runs his own eponymous website, which includes promotions at <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/cgi-bin/viewnews.cgi?newsid1136559784,69078> for two fuel related sites petrolprices.com which tracks the cheapest petrol prices at the pumps and is searchable by postcode and pipelinecard.org which is campaigning to recruit enough people to negotiate a discount off fuel prices via a free discount card.

June Free Landings

Pilot: Enniskillen, Fair Isle, Huddesfield, Kirkwall, Lashenden, Panshangar.

Flyer: Bodmin, Derby, Sturgate, Sandtoft

Today’s Pilot: Bodmin, Fishburn, Derby, Islay

A man goes skydiving for the first time. After listening to the instructor for what seems like days, he is ready to go. Excited, he jumps out of the airplane. After a bit, he pulls the ripcord. Nothing happens. He tries again. Still nothing. He starts to panic, but remembers his back-up chute. He pulls that cord. Nothing happens. He frantically begins pulling both cords, but to no avail. Suddenly, he looks down and he can't believe his eyes. Another man is in the air with him, but this guy is going up! Just as the other guy passes by, the skydiver -- by this time scared out of his wits--yells, "Hey, do you know anything about skydiving?" The other guy yells back, "No! Do you know anything about gas stoves?"
