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Association

# Bristol Strutter

Newsletter of the PFA Bristol Strut

November 2006

## NEXT MEETING - ULTIMATE HIGH



If you come along on the 9th Nov. remember to fasten your harness securely! We will be having a chat with Steve Hicks (Hicko) who is a key member of the Ultimate team and instructor of advanced flying at Kemble.

The Ultimate High organisation offer courses to PPL's who wish to progress their skills into aerobatics, or simply want to experience the

rush of flying a high performance aeroplane like the Extra 300 (shown above) or the Bulldog. All the UH team are current or former military fighter pilots, including five Red Arrows, so they know a thing or three about the subject!

If you would like a preview of the sort of experiences they specialise in, look up the Ultimate website: [www.ultimatehigh.co.uk](http://www.ultimatehigh.co.uk)

## LAST MONTH - THE AGM

We had our usual number of members attending this year - about 15 ie approx one third of the membership (where were the others?) and it was a good lively meeting well chaired by our now officially elected Co-ordinator, Steve Neale.

The minutes will be circulated to Strut members by e-mail.

Some interesting items to come from the meeting include:

*Links with Bristol Microlight Aircraft Club.* A couple of our members are heavily involved with this and Brian Finch has sent us some info which is included further in this newsletter.

*Encouraging new members.* Steve is keen to encourage new members and Graham suggested compiling a flyer to be handed around by current members to their local flying site to promote the PFA and Bristol Strut in particular. These leaflets will be available shortly so get your hands on some and lets tell other pilots about us.

*Notam Tutorial.* Dave Hall has been busy preparing this and the link can be found on page 2.

*Future meetings.* Several good suggestions were made for future speakers, and some have already been approached. We now have a full diary through to April next year, and more good things to come!

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## Notam Tutorial

All pilots know they must check notams before they fly - and sometimes it's a bit of a pain finding all the info applicable to the flight. Well, Dave Hall has developed the following tutorial which shows just how to get that vital information quickly so that you are well prepared and can get out there and fly! The software is available on the Education Strut website [www.flyers.org.uk](http://www.flyers.org.uk) or simply click the following link to get there directly: [www.flyers.org.uk/AIS/NarrowRouteBrief.htm](http://www.flyers.org.uk/AIS/NarrowRouteBrief.htm)

## The BRISTOL MICROLIGHT AIRCRAFT CLUB.

The Club has monthly meetings (1st Tuesday at 1930 ish) in an upstairs room in The Old Inn at Westerleigh.

BMAC has been in continuous existence since 1985. Its virtue and function is to bring together flyers with an interest in our form of light aviation from scattered sites all around Bristol. Members fly from The Chase, Wickwar, Charmy Down, Warren Farm, Wing Farm, Westonzoyland, Kemble, and others, and some really keen ones come from Clench Common! Sometimes we have large attendances, sometimes very small. Sometimes interesting speakers or interesting topics are the core, other times just group talking. The emphasis is on very practical, self help, mechanical interests, swapping of ideas and know-how. If one has a question then someone there can usually come up with an answer.

The type of machines operated has changed recently, with Whittakers and early Thrusters seemingly being replaced by Skyrangers and similar. Others remain less ambitious, preferring inexpensive 'pottering' machines such as mine! I suppose that a main difference is going from 2-strokes to Rotax 912s, and a quadrupling of costs.

The same applies to flexwings ('trikes'). You pay your money and you make your choice...

As you know a number of microlight aircraft types are administered by the PFA, not the BMAA, which tends to show up the likelihood of some common interests between members of the Bristol Strut, and BMAC, don't you think ??

Our Secretary is Kelvin Cobb tel 01454 - 310303 ; our Chairman is Phil Lane tel 0117 - 9373710.

Maybe we all have more in common than was realised.

**Brian Finch**

## Members news

Graham and Steve recently flew to Saint Omer in France with Golf Tango Charlie, Graham's Jodel. The mission was to ferry a member of the Jodel Club over to collect his aircraft which was stranded due to bad weather following the annual Fly-in. Steve has prepared a short report of the flight which is reproduced later in this newsletter.

The Saint Omer fly-in was attended by very few G-reg aircraft this year because of the above-mentioned poor weather, but two Bristol Strut aircraft did make it, by departing the day before it all went pear-shaped! Ron & Lyn took G-BSVE and Ian & Mary flew G-DENS across, so two Smaragds graced the turf among the Jodels that arrived. Ron and Lyn have prepared a short write-up describing the most enjoyable weekend, extended by wind and rain. Read all about it later on in this issue.

**Never fly anything that  
doesn't have the paint worn  
off the rudder pedals.**

**Harry Bill**

## Future meetings

December 14th - Strut quiz hosted by Spike Parker.  
January 11th 2007 - Roger Hopkinson.  
March 8th 2007 - CAA safety evening in room 1.  
April 12th 2007 - Francis Donaldson

## Where to go in November

Free landing vouchers valid this month are available in:

**Flyer magazine:** Enniskillen, North Weald, Old Sarum and Sandtoft.

**Pilot magazine:** Eaglescott, Leicester, Newtownards, Old Sarum, Peterborough (Connington) and Swansea.

**Today's Pilot magazine:** Eaglescott, Great Oakley, Old Sarum and Sheffield.

## THE NO-BOOZE CRUISE

*Text and photos by Steve Neale*

### **What is the magic of flying?**

**For many, it's the feeling of freedom and there can be few places that rival the UK's beauty from the air. For others the real magic is flying abroad. If we fly anywhere within 100 miles on the mainland then door-to-door it's often quicker to drive. If we cross the Channel, then suddenly we have a time machine.**

St. Omer, 15 miles south east of Calais, is an annual pilgrimage for the 'bent wing' brigade. Jodelers and their friends gather at this lovely little aerodrome hosted by the Aéro-club de Saint-Omer, for a weekend of French hospitality and good company.

Unfortunately this year's foul weather meant few people got there from the UK and some that dared were delayed returning. One such person was Rod Little, owner of a Jodel 1050 who had a pressing need to return home; so he left his aircraft in the safe keeping of the flying club.

A couple of days later he appealed for help with the recovery; the response was a pilot delivery trip, so Graham and I departed Oaksey Park over the clearing mist towards Shoreham to pick up Rod. It was VFR (of course) but still claggy, so we felt our way down to Popham aided by Farnborough Radar and then homed in on the Chichester VOR. The sky cleared at last to the forecast CAVOK at the coast. We could have cut the corner and saved a few miles using my GPS of course but (and not many people know this) Graham doesn't like them! 😊



*The airfield at St Omer showing the ex-Luftwaffe hangar and the Clubhouse, with L'hippodrome on the left.*

Our arrival at Shoreham was, well... disappointing. We were greeted with a series of yellow-jacketed officials who added nothing to our experience but hassle. For example, I didn't know that using a mobile phone 20ft from a refuelling aircraft could cause a nuclear explosion? To be safe I moved to a spot in front of the fire station just in case I spontaneously combusted and I sent my text message. From this vantage point I looked on in astonishment as the 'pump attendant' who had insisted that he -- and not Graham -- had to fuel TC, then covered the apron with avgas as it spilled out of TC's overflow. Now I understood! Graham manfully held back his natural instinct to throttle the twit as Rod arrived. Rod's local knowledge helped fend off a final assault from Shoreham; he then climbed into the back of TC and we departed much to our, and no doubt their, relief.

The Channel crossing was uneventful, apart from me sneaking a look at the GPS, only to have Graham frown at me pointing out Calais appearing in the distance almost as soon as we coasted out. My third crossing was soon over and we touched down in Calais 45 minutes after departing Shoreham.

What a difference. Not a yellow jacket in sight, park where you like and I got the impression we could have played with a flame thrower on the apron and they wouldn't have minded.

*Downwind RH for runway 24 at Calais Airport*



There was just a single friendly monsieur that thought it quaint that we offered him our passports. Graham had the bit between his teeth at this point so with just enough time for a slurp of coffee we departed. Thanks, Calais, for showing how it should be done.

Just fifteen minutes later we landed at St Omer. There wasn't a soul about except for a bunch of young kids that arrived on their push bikes: "Monsieur, est ce que dois voler avec vous, sans payer?"

The hangar doors were open and Rod's Jodel was sat snugly at the back. Graham quickly frisked the kids for Jodel parts while Rod and I dragged out his aircraft. Rod looked pleased to be reunited and we all relaxed a bit. There was plenty of time to get home and the sky was gin clear. Just ten minutes after arriving we left Saint Omer, with my heart set on returning some day soon. What a lovely place.



*Rod and Graham on the apron at Calais Airport*

Our turn around at Calais was more relaxed this time and we even had time for some photos. We said au revoir to Rod and departed to go our separate ways. Arriving over Dover 15 minutes later, it was obvious the fine weather was not going to last. The horizon began to look grey and leaden, but luck was on our side and after an interesting transit between Heathrow and Gatwick zones we arrived back at Oaksey Park less than two hours after we had left Calais.

A great trip and event-free thanks to luck with the weather, careful planning and a fine steed. For me, that is the magic of flying. Graham climbed out and stretched looking very smug. I reached behind me for the GPS, smiled, gave it a pat and turned it off for another day.

*Steve.*



*Saint Omer from the air, showing the Cathédrale Notre-Dame surrounded by characteristic red roof-tops*



*Jodel Secile Record DR1051-M1 G-BHTC owned by Graham Clark*

## Saint Omer Fly-in September 2006

By Ron Perry

Photos: Ian Leader

**Having visited St Omer several times, the occasion of the club's 50th anniversary looked very inviting. It was combined with the usual Jodel fly-in to which all aircraft types are welcome.**



*Ron and Lyn on the apron at Lydd with Smaragd Golf Victor Echo in the background.*

We booked the Friday off before the weekend, plus the following week. This always removes any problem with get-home-itis. We were to be joined by Ian and Mary Leader in their Binder Smaragd. We provisionally planned to meet I&M at Lydd as they were leaving from Garston Farm near Bath, whereas we are based on top of the Mendips near Cheddar.

The forecast did not look good as the weekend approached with some wind and rain coming in from the south west, but Friday did look at least possible. We arrived at our field to find a grey sky with a low cloud base. Conditions improved a little by 11am and we received a text from I&M that the weather was reasonable near Bath and they were setting off. We left shortly after but

were restricted to about 1300' until close to Keevil. A notam check had revealed C-130 Hercules were operating out of Keevil so we kept well north close to the Lyneham zone.

The weather improved near Pewsey as we began to outrun the grim weather behind. A turn southeast took us just southwest of Popham with the weather improving ahead. Being midweek, Lyneham handed us over to Farnborough for a useful flight information service. At Midhurst we turned due east running parallel to the south coast for Lydd. Leaving the Farnborough frequency we tuned into Lydd although still 60 miles to go. The weather ahead looked a bit doubtful so it was good to hear I&M calling Lydd. We ran into light rain approaching Lydd but landed with no problem.

At Lydd it was time to file the flight plan, order the fish & chips, pay our £10 landing fee and fuel up with cheap duty-free fuel. Lydd now supply fuel ex-duty which saves the hassle of the draw back form completion. They also have a flight planning room where you have free internet access. All very useful for watching the channel showers on the weather radar!

The weather, however, looked fine for a trip to Calais and we had good visibility all the way. We routed via Cap Griz Nez to reduce the distance over water, then along the coast to Calais port before being cleared right base for 24. G-DENS landed just behind us. Calais was deserted with the controller joking we could park anywhere we could find a space. Calais is an excellent airfield for routing into and out of France with a landing fee of just 10 euros and we always make a point of having something at the restaurant.





We then pressed on quickly to St Omer – quite a familiar airfield to us now having visited many times. We landed on 27 tarmac and taxied to the club. No other visitors were in yet, we were the first! Three aircraft from Dundee arrived shortly afterwards, and their crews went straight into town for a meal, and to sort out their hotel.

The club members made us most welcome as they prepared the hangar for the 50th anniversary of L'aéro-club. We pitched our tents on the airfield and Christian gave the four of us a lift into town arranging to pick us up in the evening after we had eaten in the town square.

Saturday morning dawned with reasonable weather but the forecast for England, other than the South East, was grim with no hope of the Devon strut contingent being able to get away. A few began to arrive from the Kent area, each thinking they were the last to have got away in front of the bad weather. We also had visitors from France, Belgium and Switzerland. The Belgian contingent returned home on Saturday afternoon leaving French, English and Swiss for the evening dinner dance.

This was the main event of the weekend with many former club members invited. The "orchestra" as promised lost something in the translation, turning out to be a very versatile band with music from heavy metal to a rendition of Ave Maria by their singer. All in all, a great night.

The wind got stronger and stronger through the night with rain, low cloud and poor visibility. It became obvious that we were virtually all going to be marooned at St Omer for the Sunday with Monday morning having a forecast weather slot. One French plane arrived on Sunday but the weather was very marginal - we lost sight of the aircraft in the circuit. Those desperate to get home were checking train and ferry times.



*Preparations underway for the Grand Cinquantenaire dinner dance in the hangar.*

About 17 planes were still there unexpectedly on Sunday night.

The club members were fantastically helpful with many tents and planes squeezed into the hangar due to the wind. They fed and watered us that night and also provided us with a fine breakfast on Monday morning – no doubt most of them should have been at work!

The Monday morning weather was much improved with the wind at last abating. We retraced our steps via Calais and Lydd and had an uneventful flight back. It was raining again, however, half an hour after we landed back on Mendip.

Roll on next year!



*The two Smaragds pegged down for the weekend at St Omer alongside the newly-acquired club-operated Robin*



*Breakfast on Monday in the clubhouse for all the stranded aviators.*