

*East of Scotland Strut of the Light Aircraft Association
December 2022 Newsletter*



Photo Keith Boardman

Chairman's bit

I had an interesting outing with a friend who had a Mavic3 Drone. This is the one that they are finding is useful in Ukraine for artillery spotting etc.

Having unfortunately missed Colin Lourie's talk due to Covid I was in awe of this thing. Much bigger than I had expected and able to follow and take videos at the same time. Great fun. Unfortunately my wife won't rise to the £1700 for a Christmas present. Ho Hum.

Airspace consultations appeared to have dried up. We are expecting Edinburgh to get back to us with a Zoom consultation on the outcome of their consultations. Thanks must go to Ian Sweetland for his efforts in this respect.

My Europa is still not back in the air because I now have it at home and can't stop playing with it. I now have nice USB outlets in the right place to power the mini iPad and automatic trim on the autopilot. I even washed it! More fun.

Christmas is nearly on us. Last year we had no meeting at New Year and the consensus is that is a good plan so no January meeting.

See you on Monday.

Cheers

Justin

Co-ordinator's bit

Winter has arrived along with the cold, wet and windy weather so I hope you are all keeping warm and committing aviation when able.

The next meeting will be at the Harrow on Monday December 5th at 2000.

There will not be a January meeting as following the last few years it clashes with the Festive season holidays

Iain

Cover photo



A great sunset view taken by Keith Boardman as he arrived back home a few years ago.

The next meeting is on...

**Monday 5th December
at the Harrow Hotel
Eskbank Road, Dalkeith
at 8.00pm**

**There might be a
mystery Presentation!**



About the Light Aircraft Association:
www.laa.uk.com

With a history extending over 70 years, the UK Light Aircraft Association promotes safe and economical operation of sports and recreational aircraft. Representing the aviation interests of around 8,000 recreational pilots, amateur-builders and enthusiast members, the LAA oversees the operation of more than 2,500 light aircraft and the build of another 1,700, whilst providing sector-leading consultation and advocacy in aviation-related regulatory matters both in UK and Europe.

**This newsletter can also be viewed on
the Strut website:**
eos-strut.org

Bernard Hunter

Some very sad news I'm afraid. Bernard Hunter has died. He was most active in the Strut around about the turn of the century, a few years before and a few years after. Those were the days when all our Fly-ins seemed to need miles of fence building and practical things like that, and Bernard would be there being helpful, industrious, full of practical solutions and always with a big smile not far away. John Cooper worked alongside him at Napier University and he adds these thoughts.

'With great sadness I was informed recently of Barney's death.

We had known each other for over 50 years, having joined the staff of Napier in the early 1970s, he from Consett in County Durham to the mechanical engineering department.

He lived in Penicuik at the time and we last met there providentially some weeks ago. He had done National Service in the army and worked on military vehicles. In later years he became a pilot and flew a two seat flexwing from East Fortune.

His greatest asset however was his likeability. Wherever he went he was liked and popular; friendly, helpful, kind and sought after, though also reserved. This was expressed in his popularity with students and staff at Napier and his award in retirement of a teaching fellowship.

Barney's skills with vehicles led to him being sought as a member of Napier's Iran Hydrographic Expedition in 1973 for which he restored an



ancient BMC minibus as one of our two vehicles. Grossly overloaded as it was he was able to keep it on the road to Iran and back in the face of many setbacks.

On the Iran Trek, though not a foreign language speaker, his capacities paid dividends. After driving far down a dirt road with him in western Iran to a small silent mud-walled village he was able within a short time to persuade locals to provide an essential pile of chapattis for all of us. On an occasion in eastern Turkey during the night, a drunk army officer who insisted we must return with him to the barracks miles away and whose jeep lay damaged and stranded in a river, began to wave

his automatic pistol about. Barney persuaded him to be allowed to try and extract the vehicle and take tension from the situation. Also in Turkey when the BMC lost its rear differential, Barney set off down the road on foot and came back with two army privates and a set of car parts that they helped him to replace.

He persuaded the BMC to return over the Alps on three cylinders and replaced all the big-end shells by the side of the motorway in Germany.

In recent years ill health led him to dispose of the flexwing and the Austin Healey he had rebuilt, as well as being less able to attend the Strut.

I am sure we all strongly regret his absence and offer our compassion to his wife and family.' *John Cooper*

Keith Griggs goes out and about

I went down to Duxford for the final air show of the year, attached are some photos.

The Spitfire Mk 9 is owned by George Haye. Some of you will remember him flying in to East Fortune in his Maule or Issacs Fury. The Spitfire will be on the front cover of January '23 Fly Past magazine with a story about the American involvement with these Spitfires. This is the only one in the UK with the American markings. The Display being the last of the season was varied and with the weather helping out made it a good day. The Swiss air force displayed, (below), I understand the first time in the UK.





More photos from Duxford on the left. On a separate note, I visited Prestwick and this is their newly painted Bulldog in its original paint scheme.



I was also working in Oban at the NLB Base and met up with Paul who used to welcome us into the Connel Airfield with coffee and a Jammie Dodger (other biscuits are available). Though no Jammie Dodger this time I did get to see a very nice Waco.





Vans RV6A rebuild project for sale



G-RVEE had an unfortunate incident over the summer when for a number of reasons it left the runway, entered long grass, collapsed the nosewheel and overturned. Fortunately nobody was injured but the plane was deemed by the insurance company to be beyond economical repair and it has been bought back from them in its current condition. You can see it in happier times in the photo above.

Extensive damage was mainly to the front, the cockpit canopy and the fin plus several damaged panels. The good news is that the core structure remains true and all damaged parts of the aircraft are visible and can be replaced. Your choices, reflected in the selling price, will include deciding whether to go with new avionics or the existing fit, and whether to buy the existing engine (away for rebuilding) or source your own. This is definitely a big project but it would suit someone who wanted a head start on building their own RV, and at a very low price. Some photos below give an idea of what is involved but for full details email rvgem@aol.com



G-RMPS heads home

Seen here leaving Kinross, where Keith Boardman has been rebuilding it, and heading north to Scone.



Two more from Keith

Keith was wondering who the gent was eating the black ice cream. It was of course Justin doing his airshow commentary at East Fortune back in 2018.

Heading for the show was the Antonov An2 below.

Both photos by Keith Boardman



Concorde and the Lightning

David Webb sent a link to Jim Prettyman, with recollections by Captain Mike Bannister who was BA's Chief Pilot of the Concorde Fleet from 1995-2003. <https://www.aerosociety.com/news/concorde-contemplation/>

Jim forwarded this to David Cyster and mentioned that he, Jim, had a connection with the wonder-plane when he was the manufacturing manager of a company in Somerset that developed and made 6,000 journal and spherical bearings for each Concorde. David wrote back; 'I was lucky enough to take Cherry on a flight from NY to London on our 25th wedding anniversary, a special deal that the Company had for BA staff and it was superb. As a former Lightning pilot I was amazed how well Concorde was able to accelerate from .9M to supersonic flight in the climb and then on achieving M1.6 cancel the burner and continue to climb to 60k whilst still accelerating to M2+. Simply brilliant! To accelerate the Lightning we used to climb to 36k, gently bunt down to about 30k with burner as we accelerated to M1.3 when we could start the high speed climb to 60k. Quite a performance compared to the beautiful Concorde!

Two from Jim

Jim Prettyman found this item on the 1½ Strutter that the APSS have been building since the year 2000 and which is just about ready to fly. It received a flurry of well deserved attention recently in the Press and on television.

For old times sake I have dug out a photo I took in 2015 showing the immaculate woodwork before it was covered.

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/people/sopwith-1-12-strutter-lothians-volunteers-close-to-finishing-working-replica-of-first-world-war-plane-3780022?Amp>

Also from Jim comes this gem about Beverley Shenstone. He was a Canadian, born in 1906, who felt the future lay in metal monoplanes. He crossed the Atlantic to work with Junkers, the leaders in this at the time, and there he absorbed their theoretical work on elliptical flying surfaces. In the early 1930s he joined Supermarine and it was his work that led to the Spitfire's wing design. Jim notices the irony that it was conceived in Germany!

<https://airscapemag.com/2017/03/15/beverley-shenstones-spitfire/>



From John Whitfield

Three videos here resulting from John's ever enquiring mind. The first was produced in response to some strange accusations that started going around regarding the tragic collision of a B17 and a P63 at the Dallas airshow. This is a helpful, if speculative, analysis of how it might actually have happened.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sceufd1Xutc>

UFO is a discredited term no longer used because of its loose usage in the past, but here a US Navy pilot talks about something he has seen and does not understand.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsNSF7oBYSO>

Finally we enter the world of quantum physics in the form of how a wormhole was created in a quantum computer. Keep up at the back, lads!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOJCS1W1uzg>

More sad news

Ted Grossmith, longtime friend of the Strut and this Newsletter, has died in California. Ted and Jim Prettyman were both technical apprentices at DeHavillands when younger and they and their circle have kept a lively correspondence going over all these years despite being scattered around the globe.

Ted did his National Service flying the early Mk 3 Meteor and narrowly avoided being one of that machine's terrible fatality statistics. Half of the RAF pilots who flew it were killed by it, but never in combat. Ted addressed this in an article we published in 2016 and I reprint it over the next pages in thanks to a very generous, multi-faceted and interesting man.

Flying the Meteor F3

Ted Grossmith was chatting to his engineering chums over the internet, and in response to a query from Jim Prettyman he wrote the following. The mortality rate amongst early jet fighter pilots seems unbelievably high to the modern reader, but at the time, as young men, we were immortal, weren't we?

I particularly recommend that you read the last part of the article on page 8. Apart from being a humane and intelligent correspondent, Ted is a poet of quality. Andrew.



Hi Chaps, here's some memories of flying the first jet...happy days! It's a bit long but you can blame Jim for connecting me to a link of RAF fliers. None, however, cover the early Mk 3 Meteor so I was motivated to fill the void. Reckon Mk 3 pilots might be getting long in the tooth!

The Gloster Meteor Mk 3 Jet Fighter

My grandfather, Alfred Roger Grossmith, was a team member involved with building the prototype E28/39 Pioneer prototype jet airplane with the Whittle engine in the Gloster Aircraft Company's Experimental Department. The Meteor was the first Allied jet aircraft. The Meteor Mk 3 was the descendant of the prototype and the first to go into production with a batch of 210.

My experience with the Meteor twin engine jet fighter was primarily in this single seat Mk 3 version with dual training conducted in the Mk 7. This occurred at 206 AFS at RAF Oakington and addressed pilot conversion from propeller types to jets and 'all-weather' training from June through August 1952.

Our course comprised twelve pilots...three of us national service (NS) or conscripted airmen and nine WWII veteran aircrew including two Sunder-

land flying boat pilots. During these three short months we had four crashes, three of which were fatal. Much has been written of the "Meatbox" as it was known but members of our course considered flying this jet the ultimate joy and prestige one could aspire to. Today I consider flying this first jet a peak life experience which was also instrumental in forging an optimistic philosophy.

In retrospect, however, flying Mk 3 Meteors was indeed a hazardous occupation. During 1952, the last year I was flying Meteors, 150 crashed in the UK... 1953 was little better with 145 crashes. Throughout its service a total of 890 Meteors were lost with 450 pilot fatalities. None were lost in action during WW II. A total of 30 were lost by the RAAF during the Korean conflict and two in an Argentina conflict. How could 150 be lost during 1952 in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, & Ireland) which in total is less than the area of Wyoming State? What were the causes of these horrendous losses when not on active service? Below is a list of some causes.

Pilot Error:

Practically all fatalities were attributed to 'pilot error' by official circles. Little was known of metal fatigue until the two Comet airliner crashes in 1954. Perhaps the only error pilots made was to climb aboard this early Mk 3 Meteor aircraft. High speed was a contributing concern with decision-making being made in split seconds.

Ejection Seats:

The Mk 3 had no ejection seat. Once the hood was jettisoned the high slipstream pressure kept the pilot glued to his seat. The only successful bale out to my knowledge was by my old Harvard flying instructor, Squadron Leader Leonard Trent, VC, DFC, RNZAF.....New Zealand's number one WW II hero.

An old school friend, Colin, had progressed to Mk 4 Meteors in 616 London Squadron. This was the first front line squadron to be fitted with ejection seats. Colin's seat malfunctioned with the cockpit hood still in place!

Asymmetric Flight:

The two Rolls Royce Derwent engines were mounted an appreciable distance from the fuselage center axis. When one of these engines failed significant torque arose requiring the application of considerable rudder and associat-

ed leg force to maintain directional control. It was critical to maintain the correct safety speed which, if reduced, led to lack of control and the subsequent bending of metal and bones. This was the cause of many crashes in this Mk 3 and subsequent types of Meteors. After every practice I limped away from the aircraft with very fatigued leg muscles.

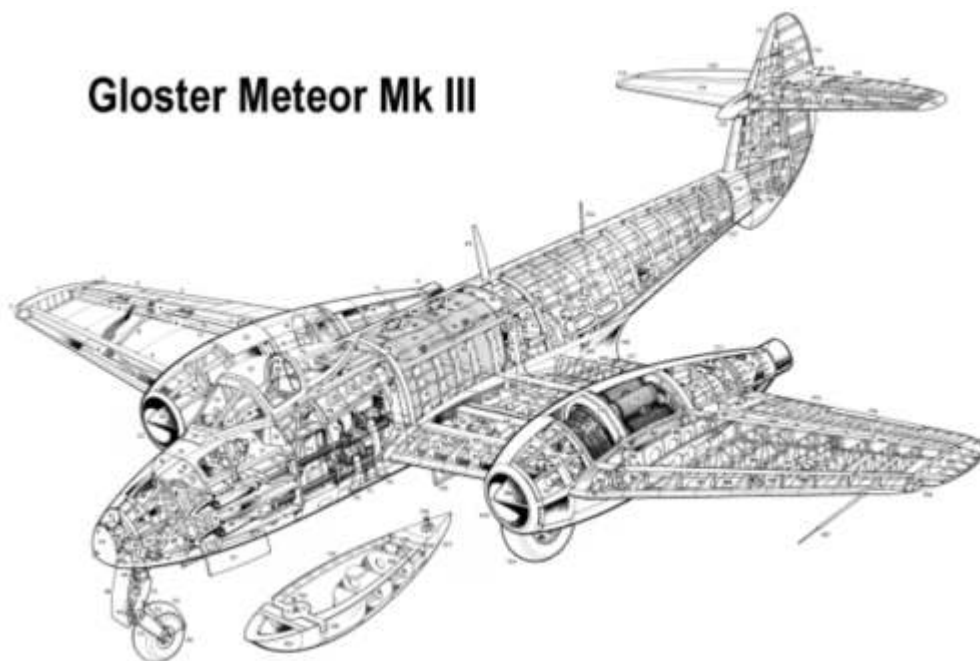
Structural Weakness:

This first real production of Meteors was a batch of 210 Mk 3s, EE230 - EE493, which essentially was designed to WWII airframe specifications. These planes were used for our training. High speeds and high Mach numbers near the speed of sound induced high structural stress forces. Although deemed "pilot error" several aircraft were known to have broken up in midair. The subsequent Mk 4 Meteors had significant structural upgrades.

Regular training exercises included maximum speed recovery techniques. At Mach 0.89 longitudinal buffeting occurred as the shock wave hit the elevators. At Mach 0.93 the port wing dropped and an earthbound plunge commenced. Recovery required throttling back, extending air brakes, and waiting for denser air below to increase the relative speed of sound. Only then could control be restored. Performing loops required ending the maneuver at the same height as entering. To hit the original entry wake we used to 'gray out' throughout the loop. These various high forces may have stressed the airframe beyond design limitations.

My friend 'Smitty' had a "need for speed" which, when I was perched on his mo-

Gloster Meteor Mk III



torbike pillion, induced the only real fear I felt in those momentous days. His last flight was a high speed run at low altitude, indeed an egregious error. I suspect his coffin, like so many others, sadly contained only sand.

Fuel Consumption:

Without a ventral fuel tank flight duration was limited to less than an hour. Many pilots ran out of fuel...sixty eight Meteor crashes were attributed to this cause in 1952. I got very close....

Meteorology:

This science of meteorology was marginal compared to today. We neophyte pilot officers took turns in presenting questionable weather data to our fellow pilots after inexpertly examining isobars, and warm or cold front data. When flying over ten/tenths cloud with no visual ground reference wind force and its direction became critical. Distance was computed by indicated air speed and time flown.

It should be remembered that flying conditions in the UK were far from optimum. Frequent cloud cover and fog were hazards...the latter more prevalent then due to domestic heating by coal fires and industrial haze. Navigation was a subsequent challenge at high speed without radar. Nine mid-air collisions occurred in 1952. I've been told WW II 8th Air Force bomber pilots feared midair collisions in UK as much as they did enemy flak!



I saw the result of two Meteors flying below very low cloud and crashing into the cliff face at Flamborough Head ...just two sets of silver rings remained, embossed by the engines.

These were shown to me by the fiancée of one lost pilot. She still wore her silver engagement ring...a sad symbol of her lover's fate. The CFI flight leader had frantically called "Up!" too late. He was the lone survivor of the flight he was leading to Driffield airfield.

All-Weather Flying:

The objective of this 'all-weather' jet training course was to insert pilots into extremely bad weather and one didn't have to wait long in the UK for such conditions. Today this would be considered not only stupid but perhaps criminal even with the benefit of today's radar, ejection seats, and pressurized cockpits. Our regular flying height was 35K feet and without pressurization. Storm cells today should always be avoided. None of our course had the jet instrument pilot rating until after the course was completed.

As I was the last to see three colleagues I was called to attend their subsequent inquests. Following the loss of Alan Patrick, my best friend, on the night flight of August 13, (see page 8), the Cambridgeshire coroner, Mr. V.O.D.

Cade, expressed his concern for the high crash and mortality rates and even for my own welfare. His report led to headlines in British newspapers on August 15...a copy of which I still have. I believe this report and growing public concern induced the Air Ministry to reduce the maximum speed limit from Mach 0.93 to Mach 0.75. Again "pilot error" was the official ruling for this latest crash and too many others.

Engine Failure:

The Derwent engines had a high level of reliability. Too rapid an application of the throttles, however, could damage the relatively low-tech turbine blades. John, my fellow NS pilot, was over London when he made this error. The

turbine blades of both engines melted down to mere stubs. He was now gliding like a brick over ten tenths cloud. Spotting just one small hole in the cloud cover he stuffed his falling plane down through it. To his great surprise there before him lay an airfield. A wheels-up landing resulted with him and just his seat at the end of the runway with the shredded remnants of the plane scattered behind. He had landed at RAF Bassingbourne where his brother was the CO! That night at the Officers Mess dining-in he had replaced his flying suit with the best blue uniform of his brother replete with its WWII service and gallantry ribbons.

Training Duration:

Were pilots being pushed through training too quickly? Sixty hours in three months now seems inadequate to conduct both the jet conversion course and all-weather flying course under the foregoing Spartan conditions. Britain was nearly bankrupt at that time so funding may well have been a concern. One could question that, however, as life in the GD Branch's Officers Mess was the most affluent I've ever experienced...a batman to make my bed, polish shoes, press uniforms, do laundry, etc. and a served luncheon menu of three choices. Dining-In night included seven different wines...no wonder the post-dinner festivities were so raucous.

Summation:

The Meteor crash rate needs to be assessed in association with crashes of other UK aircraft. During 1952 there were 507 RAF crashes of 36 different aircraft types. Those crashes exceed

today's total inventory of RAF aircraft! Of the 507 crashes, 318 involved fatalities. Only two jet types were in service at that time, the Meteor and Vampire fighters. The Meteor was top at 150 losses with the Vampire second at 83. Harvards (or AT6s) had the highest propeller type casualties at 37 due to their extensive use in the RAF advanced training program.

An interesting observation is the very high number of RAF airplane variants in the RAF service inventory. Besides the 36 different types that crashed that year there were numerous other types in service that had not crashed!

Of the total number of Meteors produced (890) 450 pilots lost their lives. WW II experience in both the UK and US saw approximately fifty per cent of military aircraft being lost in training situations. Yet nearly all Meteor losses were in training and non-combat service. Today, the loss of one plane might result in grounding all of that type. As I left the station the adjutant told me he'd forgotten to process my life insurance policy for this course!

Again, flying Meteors was a heady thrill, a euphoria which banished all thought of the calamities that might befall me or my comrades. Reliving those halcyon days still stirs my adrenaline many decades later.

The foregoing is my personal assessment after a mere three months of Meteor jet experience. I don't claim to be an experienced jet pilot after just sixty hours on Meteors. I do, however, claim to be one of the luckiest.

Reference: Crash statistics obtained via Google & the PPRuNe link.

Edward J. Grossmith, Dec. 28, 2015

It's a string of coincidences which led to this article. In November I attended my annual Poetry society's retreat. This group primarily writes haiku, a three line verse comprising seventeen syllables in a 5-7-5 rule in the classic Japanese format. Western haiku can have fewer syllables but do not exceed 5-7-5. Haiku means "aha"...or "I get it!"

One of my first haiku poems:

*a flock of pigeons
cooing on telephone wires -
a sheet of music*

Our prime speaker at the retreat was an English professor who discussed a writing format new to me called haibun. This comprises a few short paragraphs with a haiku poem at the end.

The professor was a deep-thinking chap and we got into the subject of philosophy/spirituality during which I shared an out-of-body experience, (see overleaf). He prompted me to write about this in haibun form as he thought it publishable. This resulted in the haibun on the next page.

At this time Jim let me know of the PPRuNe link for old fliers which I joined in order to find fellow Meteor pilots. In the hope of making such a connection I jotted down my memories of the Mk 3. Although there have been many hits on my site there have been no Mk 3 pilots. I'm sure too many are in the sobering list of casualties.

As an aside, included below is a link to my favourite mode of expression...haiga. This involves an image plus a haiku poem. As Nature photography is my prime hobby this becomes a happy combination. I then add music to create an annual DVD. All good fun and keeps me off the streets!

<http://youtu.be/vkJMrgnPG38>

Midnight is heavy with storm as my Meteor fighter lifts into blackness. My best friend, Alan Patrick or 'Pat', flies behind me on our navigation mission. These first jets have no radar, ejection seat, cockpit pressurization, and cabin heat...just pilots' optimism. An hour later the mission is complete...I've aced it. The mental load drops away and I survey the splendor of the night. Below stretches a shoreless sea of white cloud whose reflections from the full moon and stars well up to bathe me in light. I become the Light and in a timeless moment am seated on a balcony of stars. Euphoria fills my being... I am the moon, the stars, the earth, the Cosmos. Below my Meteor holding steady on its unmanned course.

night journey
in lofty realms
my i becomes I

Wow! In another timeless moment a new Me is back in the cockpit. I take the cold, minus sixty degree plane down into the storm cell and great blocks of ice crash against the fuselage. The plane becomes a groaning, bucking bronco. My inner core still chuckles with contentment as steady hands guide the flight controls. Below are the city lights of my last target. Banking, I land at base. Hanging up my parachute an airman dashes by yelling, "A plane has crashed." My extended hand stays frozen on the 'chute peg as cold realization sweeps over me... Pat is gone.

a meteor's flame
claimed by the night –
empty sky



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