

This replica cannon sits on the porch of the Gun & Spitroast Inn.

machines. In 1892 the Hawkhurst branch line of the South Eastern Railway was opened as far as Goudhurst (Hope Mill Station) and extended to Hawkhurst a year later. It was especially busy at the end of August, when hordes of hop-pickers poured into Kent from London's East End for their annual working holiday. Of all the stations on the line, only that at Horsmonden was really close to the community it served. Just north of the village was a tunnel which went under the Lamberhurst Road, one of only two tunnels on the whole line. Horsmonden Station, a simple one-storey building, boasted just one platform, but a loop on the line served a nearby fruit-picking station. The incline from Church Lane Crossing to the station brought many a 'hop-pickers' special' to a grinding halt, which meant that firemen had to walk along the track to Horsmonden to secure help in the form of a second engine. In its last days the branch line was well patronised by children travelling to school in Tonbridge, but declining traffic led to the closure of the whole line to Paddock Wood in 1961. Horsmonden Station was later converted to a car repair garage, known as Old Station Garage, and the stationmaster's house became a private dwelling.

Centuries ago, Horsmonden had its own fair, held on the Heath (the village green) on St Swithun's Day. Here, cattle dealers haggled for bargains and pedlars and toy-makers sold their wares. A modern equivalent, the Horsmonden sheep sales, take place every July on local playing-fields, attracting livestock dealers from all over Britain. Another link with the past is the quaintly-named Gibbet Lane, where an eighteenth century smuggler, William Fairall, was hung in chains after his execution for taking part in various infamous deeds and smuggling runs. But the bygone prosperity of Horsmonden is best represented at the Gun & Spitroast pub, formerly the Gun Inn. Named after the guns manufactured at Browne's foundry, the inn was licensed as a forge in 1618, and Manor Courts were held there for many years. Above the entrance porch is a miniature cannon, replica of a gun made by John Browne, which now has a place of honour in the Tower of London.

FIRST WAR LANDING GROUNDS OF THE 6TH BRIGADE

By John E.C. Viner

By 1918 the 6th Brigade of the Royal Flying Corps, having seen duty in France, was engaged largely on anti-zeppelin duties, patrolling various sectors over Kent and Sussex. The unreliability of these early fighting aeroplanes meant a need for a large number of available landing grounds, some serving as home bases for squadrons, others being used for ground firing and bombing trials and serving as emergency or dispersal landing grounds. Brigade HQ at Harrietsham issued the following list to pilots. Some of the airfields are readily identifiable today, such as Bekesbourne which was used as an aerodrome for long after the Great War and where a hangar remains, or Throwley which, although long turned over to agricultural use, retains the essential characteristics of an aerodrome. Others are not so easy to place; Broomfield, near Herne Bay for example, or Frinsted.

South Ash (Wrotham) Second Class Landing Ground

Three miles north of Wrotham, 500 feet above sea level, 600 yards long by 300 yards wide.

The ground slopes to the east and is bounded by low hedges. Surface is fairly smooth. There are obstacles approaching the ground but they are some distance.

Ground signals are placed near the guard hut at the west side of the ground. Good landings can be effected from south-west or north-east by night or from the east by day. Distinguishing flares are set out as this ground is 500 feet above sea level.

Rye Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is one mile east of Rye town and railway station, and is ten feet above sea level. 600 yards long by 250 yards wide.

The ground is flat, with no slope and bounded by low hedges except on the west side. The surface is smooth and sown with clover. There are no obstacles.

The ground signals are placed near the guard hut in the north-east corner. Landings can be effected from the north and south by night and by day. The ground is somewhat soft in the winter months.

Leigh Green (Tenterden) Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is 1½ miles east of Tenterden village and railway station. It is 170 feet above sea level and is 700 yards long by 250 yards wide.

The ground slopes down its length slightly towards the east and is bounded by low hedges. There is a pit marked by a red flag on the south side of the



A flight of DH-4s.

ground. Surface smooth. Obstructions are Tenterden village to the north-west and buildings and trees to the south-east.

The ground signals are placed near the guard hut on the north-east side. A landing can be effected from the south-east by night and from the north-east by day.

Sole Street (Crundale) Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is three miles south-east of Chilham, is 480 feet above the sea and is 300 yards long by 300 yards wide. The nearest railway station is Chilham.

The ground is flat with no slopes and has no boundary hedges on the east, south or north-west sides. The surface is smooth. The obstacles are buildings on the north boundary and a spreading bank at the east corner.

Ground signals are placed near the guard hut on the north side of the ground. A landing can be effected from the south-east by night and in any direction by day.

Pett (Hastings) Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is one mile from the coast, five miles east of Hastings. The nearest railway station is at Winchelsea and it is fifty feet above the sea level. 300 yards long by 300 yards wide.

The ground slopes considerably towards the north and is bounded by low hedges. The surface is fairly smooth, there is no circle on the ground. There are no obstacles approaching the ground.

Ground signals are placed near the guard hut on the north side of the ground. A landing can only be effected from the north east by night and from the north by day. A lighthouse is now erected.

Frinsted Second Class Landing Ground

This ground is 4½ miles south of Sittingbourne. The nearest railway station is at Harrietsham. It is 530 feet above the sea level, 600 yards long by 350 yards wide.

The ground is flat and is bounded by low hedges. The surface is good.

Ground signals are placed near the guard hut in the north-east corner. Landings can be effected from the north-east, south-west and east by night and to any direction by day. There is a wire fence on the north boundary. A distinguishing flare is set out as this ground is over 500 feet above sea level.

Detling Sea Flight Station First Class Landing Ground

This ground is four miles north-east of Maidstone, 600 feet above sea level, 800 yards long by 500 yards wide.

The ground slopes towards the north-east, bounded by low hedges and woods. A bare patch towards the west side of the ground should, if possible, be avoided and men are sometimes at work on it. The surface is smooth, the obstacles are hangars and buildings towards the south-east corner of the ground.

Ground signals are placed near the buildings. Landings can be effected from the north and east by night and from the west by day.

Pluckley Second Class Landing Ground

This ground is half a mile west of Pluckley village, is 170 feet above sea level, 750 yards long by 350 yards wide. The nearest railway station is Pluckley.

The ground slopes towards the north and south, is bounded by low hedges. The surface is rough and somewhat soft. Pluckley village, standing high on the east, proves an obstacle.

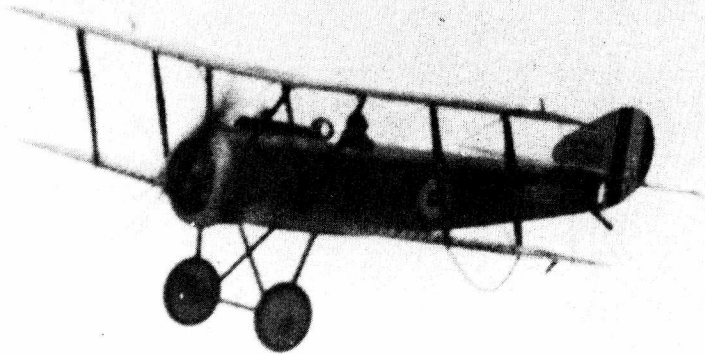
The ground signals are placed near the guard hut on the south side of the ground. A landing may be effected from the south-west by night and from all points by day.

Swingfield (Denton) Second Class Landing Ground

This ground is five miles north of the port of Folkestone, is 480 feet above sea level, 700 yards long by 450 yards wide. Nearest railway station is Lydden Halt.

The ground is flat with no slopes and is surrounded by low hedges. The surface is fairly rough. The only obstacle is a small bunch of high trees around a farmhouse at the south corner.

Ground signals are placed near the guard hut at the south corner. Landings can be effected from the north, south-east and north-west by night and from all points by day. Caution should be exercised in landing towards the centre of the ground which is the worst part of the surface. There is a bank crossing in each direction.



Sopwith Pup

Kingshill (West Malling) Second Class Landing Ground

This ground is one mile south of West Malling, is 270 feet above sea level, 650 yards long by 350 yards wide.

The ground is flat with no slopes and is bounded by low hedges and woods and a low wire fence on the south side. The surface is smooth, with a slight dip at the east end. The obstacles are a workhouse 500 yards north-west and oast houses 350 yards south.

Ground signals are placed near the guard hut. Good landings may be effected from the north and south-east by night and all points by day.

Throwley (Faversham) First Class Landing Ground

This splendid ground is five miles south of Faversham, is 400 feet above sea level, 800 yards long by 500 yards wide. Nearest railway station is Faversham, five miles.

The ground is flat and bounded by wire or low hedges. The surface is very good, the obstacles are the hangars, north corner, and farm buildings, east side. Very safe landings may be effected in any direction by night or day.

Bekesbourne (Canterbury) First Class Landing Ground

The ground is three miles south-east of Canterbury with Bekesbourne railway station half a mile from the ground. It is 170 feet above sea level. 1,000 yards long by 450 yards wide.

The ground has a dip across the centre and slopes on the east end. The surface is good. The obstacles are the hangars at the west end, and a windmill 500 yards south. The boundaries are low hedges or fences. Good landings may be effected in any direction by night or day.

Allhallows (Sheerness) Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is six miles west of Sheerness. The river Medway lies in between. It is 650 feet above sea level, 400 yards long by 170 feet wide.

The ground slopes down slightly towards the east. The surface is rough and covered with weeds. The only obstacle is a cottage outside the north-east corner. The ground is bounded to the north and west by ditches with corn crops on the south and east.

Ground signals are put out near the guard hut to the north-east. Landings may be affected from the east and north by night and day.

Broomfield (Herne Bay) Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is two miles south-east of Herne Bay town and railway station, is 115 feet above sea level, 400 yards long by 300 yards wide.

The ground is flat, the surface is smooth. The obstacles are farm buildings at the south-west, and a ventilation post at the south-east corner. There is a wire fence on the north-west approach but no other boundaries.

Ground signals are put out at the south-west corner. Landings may be effected from the north-west and south-east by night and from all directions by day.

Broad Salts (Sandwich) Second Class Landing Ground

This ground is one mile north-east of Sandwich town, is ten feet above sea level, 800 yards long by 400 yards wide.

The ground is flat and bounded by ditches. The surface is good. The obstacles are a wireless station to the east and factory chimneys to the north-west. The ground slopes towards the farm buildings at the south-east. Good landings may be effected from the south-west and north-east by night and all directions by day.

Marden Second Class Landing Ground

This ground is seven miles south-east of Maidstone, with Marden one mile. It is 90 feet above the sea level, 900 yards long by 350 yards wide.

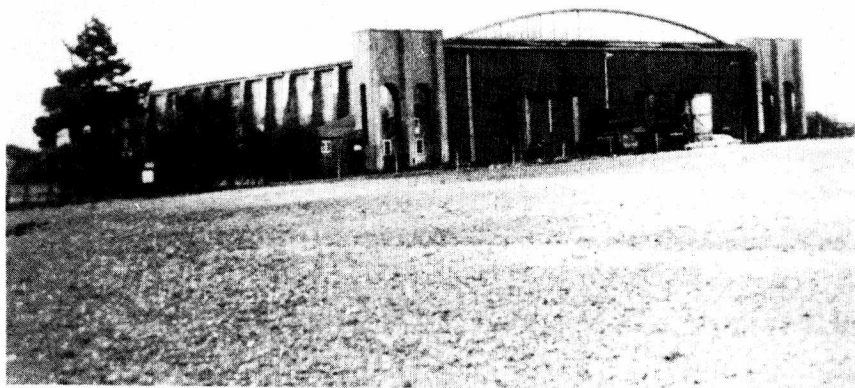
The ground is flat and bounded by low hedges and a fruit plantation to the east. The surface is good. A Bessonaux hangar is erected at the south-east end.

Ground signals are put out near the hangar. Good landings may be effected from the east and west by night or from all directions by day.

Harty Third Class Landing Ground

This ground is situated one mile north of the River Swale (sic) on the south-east corner of the Isle of Sheppey. The nearest railway station is Harty Halt. It is 76 feet above sea level, 500 yards long by 270 yards wide.

The ground is flat but somewhat soft. Work will be in progress during the next few weeks (spring 1918). There is no slope at the present. The south end of the ground can be landed on.



Bekesbourne Aerodrome — the hangar in 1968.

(D.G. Collyer)

The following note was added in red:

'NOTE: pilots are reminded that sheep and cattle are being grazed on most landing grounds and that therefore they should circle round to make sure they are clear before landing. Pett should not be landed on in the daytime.'

And a handwritten addition reads.

'Swingfield and Sole Street are 480 feet above sea level and have no height flares.'

Most of the descriptions of the landing grounds are good enough to place them, often with some accuracy, on a modern ordnance survey map. Night landings must have been quite hazardous and the directions given allowed both for the safest approach and for the setting up of a flarepath. A Flare Party comprising one NCO and one airman from each flight would set up the pattern of flares and lamps were shown to allow the pilot to judge his landing alongside the line of flares. The addition of wireless telegraphy during 1918 enabled further advances to be made in guiding aircraft, although the wireless procedure was so cumbersome that many pilots found it more trouble than it was worth.

Today, with the exception of West Malling, none of these landing grounds exists. Had they remained and had Sir Alan Cobham's efforts to establish regional airfields during the 1920s and 30s borne fruit the position of general aviation in Great Britain would have been far more widely accepted than it is.

TRAFFIC ON THE A.25 IN WEST KENT

By Annis Cumfrey

Not long ago newcomers to the village — they certainly had not lived here for more than eight years — told me that the volume of traffic along the A.25 from Chipstead Corner and out beyond Westerham was now as heavy as it had been before the M.25 was opened. I said I doubted this and, anyway, we were spared the huge, mainly Continental vehicles which were as large as a terrace of three cottages. I added gently that the road had always carried a heavy load as, since post-mediaeval times at least, it had been the main east/west route through this part of Kent to the south of London. My remark clearly irritated and they firmly told me that there had been little traffic this way until well after the last war.

I thought back to the very early 1930s on Sundays during the summer when it was impossible to cross the road in the village. There were no pedestrian crossings and very few traffic-lights and all cars clearly believed, with good reason, that nobody would dare to dispute their right of way. My parents were certainly not unduly fussy or overprotective but I was never allowed to cross the busy village street by myself until I had reached what seemed to be a quite inordinately mature age — actually I suppose about eight or nine years. I was allowed great freedom to go about, visit and play always provided I said where I was going and, if necessary, was 'seen across the road'. Sometimes the tail back from Riverhead stretched for more than a mile in all directions and I never pass that way without a blessing on the man who thought up the island system which keeps things moving so well now even at rush hours.

One of my earliest recollections is of the family trying to get back through Maidstone after a trip to the Kent Coast. I was just about three at the time and we spent such a long time stationary in a petrol hazed jam without moving at all that I was terrified, thinking I would spend eternity in the car and never see my home again. Fortunately I was so frightened and desolate that I just sat quietly with tears running silently down my cheeks. What life must have been like for anyone 'living over the shop' in Maidstone through the long years until the town was by-passed hardly bears thinking about!

When I was little in the late 1920s and early 1930s my brother was in the motor trade and at weekends we always had some sort of vehicle available. This might be anything from the magnificently designed coach-built Bentleys, Alfa-Romeos or Lagondas of the period to a clapped-out old bullnosed-Morris and in these we made many trips to the seaside. I acquired a taste for high speeds at an early age and sometimes shock the very young when I confess this weakness, speaking nostalgically of doing eighty-five to ninety-five m.p.h. on stretches of road between Sevenoaks and the coast. Several young persons have expressed utter amazement that cars could travel at such a rate when I was a child and more than one has