

## FLYING IN 2003

by Edwin Shackleton

My flying year, 2003, started with a surprise phone call from Polly Vacher to offer a promised flight in her "round the world" Piper PA28 Dakota. She flew into Filton to take me for a scenic flight over the Severn then north as far as Ross-on-Wye. Her Piper looked quite different in a new paint scheme - black and orange - for her forthcoming global flight over the North and South Poles. A second phone call of the day was from Peter March offering a flight in the Cessna 172 to Henstridge but, with a little adjustment and agreement, we set off for an air to air photo session of Polly's aircraft after both aircraft departed Filton. Henstridge was busy with 20 aircraft booked in on this unusual day.

February started with another flight in the Cessna 172, this time to Haverfordwest against quite a headwind and well north of the Cardiff Control Zone. The return flight over the Welsh valley scenery was almost 20 minutes quicker. Next flight was in a Diamond DA 40 Star from Enstone. This Austrian built machine had been the UK demonstrator (five now in the UK) but is now privately owned. Access was forward of the wing via a fixed step to the roomy cabin with a really wide field of view. Take off with the 180hp Lycoming was rapid and we climbed through the lowish cloud to cruise at 130 knots in the sunshine en route to Wellesbourne. The museum Vulcan was on the cross-runway for engine runs and taxi but we departed after a snack break for a lower level return flight in this really attractive touring four seater.



*Diamond DA40 Star*

I had been hoping to fly in the Swiss designed, German kitplane Ikarus C42 that had been at a couple of PFA Rallies shown by the UK agent, Barry Bayes, but the opportunities faded when it went off to Iberia under new ownership. Much to my surprise, I found that it had returned to the UK and was Old Sarum based. I fixed up for a half hour trip in mid March and was able to enjoy a flight to Stoney Cross after such frustrating attempts.



*GAF Nomad*

I was tipped off that there was a GAF Nomad at Hinton-in-the-Hedges with the local parachute club. After a series of telephone chats with the club manager, agreement was reached that I could go on a parachute flight in this Danish owned/registered, Australian light transport (like was used with the Flying Doctors). Soon we were aboard, the co-pilot having vacated his seat for me and 14 'jumpers' were in the main cabin. Under the power of the two Allison 250 turbines, we climbed to 12,000ft with an airways requested hold at 10,000ft. It took 23 minutes to climb and 9 minutes to descend in a type that I thought was not attainable for me. Just quite remarkably, it was exactly sixty years since my first flight when I was an ATC cadet. As an extra celebration, and as Enstone was near, I made arrangements to have another flight, this time in a SOCATO TB20 Trinidad. This time, we headed west and circled over the southern end of the Malvern Hills to end an exciting day.

April Fool's Day was the start of another adventure with my 4th visit to Sun 'n Fun at Lakeland, Florida. I met up at Gatwick with a group of 14 enthusiasts for an 8-day break, organised by Ian Allan Travel. Soon we were boarding our Continental Airlines Boeing 777 Series 200 for a 7 hour 11 minute flight taking us on a southern route over Lands End and across to the south tip of Newfoundland to land at Newark at lunch time. The linked flight to Orlando was in a Continental Boeing 767 Series 200, which looked amazingly small compared with the 777, despite being twin aisled but was 7 abreast instead of 9.

It was just two hours to Orlando, our base for six whole days. The first day at Sun 'n Fun started with a general look around and photography but by mid afternoon, I took the bus to South Lakeland air ranch to try my luck. I managed to fix a flight with a feminine instructor in a Flightstar SL (Thruster configuration) to start my week log of new types. I was able to have another trip, this time in a Sabre Wildcat tandem seated flexwing with a very chatty pilot taking in circuits over a cattle pasture seeing a pair of sandhill crane and chick as well as my first ever sight of a coyote which had spooked the cattle!



Next day at Paradise City, the Lakeland ultralight field, I flew in the Italian designed Jet Fox 97, a really attractive high winger with the Rotax 912 neatly nacelled over the wing leading edge with the propeller in line with the nose. We flew in the prescribed circuit away from Lakeland, which took just 5 minutes. In absolute contrast, I then flew in an ICP Savannah (Rotax 912), which is the same as the UK marketed Sandtoft Savannah. With no chance of winning a beauty contest, its performance shone and we had an interesting half hour sortie with several demonstrations of the stall below 30mph. Next day was the "Splash in" at nearby Lake Parker where some 78 seaplanes were seen. There were several opportunities to fly and my first trip was in a Polaris Flying Boat. Some 1200 of these flex wing machines have been built. The body is virtually a rubber inflatable with the appropriate structure to mount the tandem seats, engine and wing support structure. Take off was interesting and I can imagine that take offs in windier conditions would require some adequate water protection. But it was a quite different experience!!



ICP Savannah



Rans S7 Amphibian

A pre-arranged trip was in a Rans S7 floatplane amphibian. We boarded from the park lawn and taxied down a steep ramp into the creek towards the lake. Take off with the Rotax 912 was much quicker than I expected and Dennis Boden did a couple of touch and go demonstrations to prove the point. Another flexwing ultralight flight was in a Wet Trike with a very sophisticated fibreglass fuselage which incorporated sponsors to house the mainwheels, a slot with pivot point for the nosewheel and tandem seating. Boarding this time was from a beached location. Soon we were taxying down the same creek for a wide circuit of Lake Parker and wonderful views of the assembled seaplanes. My third and last flexwing flight was in JU Ultralights SeaWing. The fuselage frame straddled wide twin Full Lotus rubber floats to the wide track undercarriage. The tandem seats between the floats were protected by a nacelle gaily painted in shark representation. Boarding was again from the park lawn and the flight was abbreviated due to time problems but still enjoyable. Fifth and last seaplane flight was in the Piaggio P136L Royal Gull owned by John Mohr. Coincidentally, I had met John on the previous day and he was receptive to flying me at Lake Parker. There was not time, due to his late arrival for a local flight but I was really lucky to fly back to Lakeland as fifth occupant. The P136 has two 320hp Lycoming engines on an inverted gull wing. Some 63 were built in Italy and the Royal Gulls were USA assembled up to 1967. John flew his amphibian to the Seawings event at Southampton in 2000. That was certainly a star flight. We parked on the flightline in time for John to fly his Stearman in the afternoon show. Next day was the last of our visits to Sun 'n Fun at Lakeland and my only trip was in the pleasure flying Sud Alouette 2 helicopter, not a new type, but a quick opportunity to get some airfield photos and a surprise view of the twin float amphibian Dakota that I didn't know had actually arrived there. On the penultimate full day, we all went to Kermit Weeks Polk City museum before continuing to Jack Brown's seaplane base. There were six Cub seaplanes and also a Maule MX7 seaplane so I asked if three of us could fly in the Maule. Fortunately this was OK and soon, we were taxying out for our half hour flight, piloted by John Brown. We flew over the lake dotted area and landed briefly near Cypress Gardens then headed for Polk City. A smooth landing on the adjacent water and a quiet 'drift' preceded the return take off to complete our flight with a veteran seaplane pilot. The last full day was centred on a visit to the Kennedy Space Centre where I had no wish to fly at all !!!

All too soon, the Florida visit was over and we were homeward bound in a Boeing 757 Series 200 on a 2 hour flight to Newark where the ground was snow covered - quite a contrast to the 80 to 90 degrees at Sun 'n Fun. The linking overnight flight to Gatwick was again in a Boeing 777 and a chance to look back on a really busy schedule and adding another 10 new types to my list.

Airbus UK treated me to a special flight in mid April, which was in an Aerospatiale SN601 Corvette eight seat executive jet. This small jet is a regular visitor to Filton on the shuttle flights from Toulouse and I had been tantalised by seeing them regularly from my window or as I passed the airfield. My hopes were rewarded as I boarded for a late afternoon flight to Toulouse. When settled into the cruise, I was surprised to be offered champagne and cakes, all very acceptable and a nice way to celebrate my 777th type. Take off for the return flight, in the same aircraft with the same captain was just after 8am. Start Point in Devon seemed to appear quickly and 33 minutes later, we touched down at Filton. My penance was to be featured in a later edition of Airbus News.

Quite by coincidence, my next flight was in another executive jet, the Raytheon Premier. This six seater had flown in from Wichita, Kansas and was heading for the Business Aviation Convention in Geneva. It came to Filton for a flight assessment by Peter Turner and I was privileged to be able to fly in number 39 off the line. The fuselage is made of a carbon fibre filament wound, sandwiched over a lightweight honeycomb. The machined metal wing is set low to give full cabin depth. Power is from 2300 lb thrust Williams turbofans. My flight comprised three local circuits with a touch and go landing and then a wheels up low pass for ground shots but it was ample to appreciate this attractive light jet transport - and my 10th executive jet flight.



*Raytheon Premier*

During May, I had two trips in the Cessna 172 with Peter March. First trip was a double with visits to Fly-Ins at Popham and Old Sarum then three weeks later to Bembridge for their vintage aircraft weekend.

Towards the end of June, Dave Stokes flew his Jodel D112 to Garston Farm, Marshfield, and we had a pleasant one-hour flight to the Devon Strut at Eggesford where there were about 40 visiting aircraft - and some good catering! Amongst the visitors was a Cessna L-19E Bird Dog owned by Ray Trute. It had been operated by the French Army (ALAT) but it had been re-painted in US Marines scheme in red and white. Ray took me for a short flight, my second in the type. Early July, I had a pleasant sortie from Popham when Mike Holmes flew me in a Jabiru engined Thruster T600 Sprint of the Microlight Aviation Club. We set off to find a crop circle near to the A34, took some photos and then flew to Mike House's strip at Brimpton quite near to Aldermaston then returned to Popham.

The 2003 PFA Rally at its new venue at Kemble was really successful with a high attendance, three visiting aircraft from the USA and fantastic weather. Personally, it was the first time since the "wet" Wroughton of 1992 that I did not fly in a new aircraft type. However, I did manage to sow a few productive seeds!! First new type was the Alpi Pioneer 300 which Frank Cavaciuti was UK marketing and which had made its debut at Cranfield '02 with a six-aircraft arrival. Frank flew me from his airstrip near to Abergavenny. The Rotax 912S powered Italian side-by-side two seater was airborne remarkably quickly, wheels up and climbing for a circuit around the town and the Sugar Loaf Mountain and a 500 ft flight by the field for photos. Looking like a small Falco, it should do equally well.



*Alpi Pioneer 300*

The MW Club Fly-In at Small's Farm, Charterhouse on Mendip coincided with the August heatwave. I was hoping to see a 'new' MW6 and to be able to fly in it. John Ewing's Newton Peveril based MW6S G-BYTX flew in and I was soon able to fly in it. At Graham Hawkin's request, we did an air-to-air photo shoot of Graham's Kitfox. That was my 19th MW6/6S. Then I flew in Graham's Denny Kitfox Model 3, G-FOXC, 'FOXC LADY' which is Rotax 912 powered. Another photo session, this time of the MW6S, was successfully completed. As a nice finale during the afternoon, Kim Willcox flew me in Ian Bishop's Whittaker MW6 G-MYPS that Ian had flown in from Bicester. That was my 20th MW6/6S in which I had flown, completing a long-standing target of flying in 20 MW microlights.

Mid August, I flew with Peter March in the Cessna 172 to Little Gransden where Nick Bloom was doing a flight evaluation for Pilot magazine of an Antonov An2 which is owned by Will Hanekom. I flew in the Lithuanian registered An2 during a photo session with Mark Jefferies at the controls and Nick Bloom in the right seat. The big Antonov was sumptuously finished in white leather seating and internal trim with luxurious additions. The August Bank Holiday weekend started with a flight in the Cessna 172 to a Vintage & Classic Fly-In at Henstridge with a good attendance despite marginal weather. I had a surprise return flight home with Jim Buckingham in the Miles Gemini 1a. After a sedate take off, Jim took a tight turn back down the runway, flew at low level and banked steeply past the visitors. The final approach to home base at New Farm, Felton was directly across Bristol International approach under the local air traffic guidance. (Just checked, and I flew with Jim from Badminton in the Gemini just over 24 years ago!!) Next day, I set off with Nigel Hitchman in the Vans RV6 from Garston Farm, Marshfield, for a fly-in at Bodmin. However, poor visibility restricted our flight beyond Glastonbury but we enjoyed our half hour excursion.

I had been to Long Marston where the World Microlight Championships were being held, and on Bank Holiday Monday there were 2 visiting Dutch registered, Czech designed Kappa KP2 two seaters. I managed to fix a short flight just before their planned return to Holland. It was a super machine - low wing, retractable u/c, staggered 2 seats like the Topsy B, Rotax 912 powered and the very sloping nose with the large canopy gave the impression of the Italian Sky Arrow. On the same day, I had been invited to a barbecue at Spence Airfield, English Bicknor, and arrived from Long Marston well after mid-day.

I was surprised to see 3 Israeli registered machines (two Maxair Drifters and a Tecnam Echo) who were pals of two Israeli competitors at Long Marston. I managed to make contact with a Drifter pilot and enjoyed an 'open-air' flight in/on the tandem 2 seater.

My highlight visitor to the PFA Rally at Kemble was the canard configured, four seat Velocity 173RG that Denis Wood and Jack Berkin had flown from the USA via Greenland and Iceland after a 5 year build programme. So I was particularly delighted when Denis and Jack flew it into Filton to take me on a local flight. Immediately after the end of the World Microlight Championships at Long Marston, I flew in an Aviasud Albatros (French built, Dutch owned), which had been a competing machine. It is like a T-tailed Kolb Twinstar but with side-by-side seating. The powered parachute contests had started in the early evening so we took off and landed on the drag car runway, keeping clear of their flight area. Next morning, I managed a final new type at Long Marston, which was in another competing machine, a German owned Ikarus C22 (similar lines to a Thruster) and our flight finished with a really short landing using specially designed brakes for the contest.



*Velocity 173RG*



*Ken & Edwin on Wallis WA-122*

September started with a really special flight, which was with Ken Wallis in his "other" 2-seat autogyro from Shipdham, Norfolk. I had previously flown in his lightweight WA-116T powered by a 72hp McCulloch drone engine while the newer WA-122 has a 130hp RR Continental 0-240. It first flew in 1980 but the permit had lapsed over the last 5 years. Soon I was strapped in, 87 year old Ken swung the 4 bladed prop, checks completed and we were quickly airborne for 3 low level photo runs. It was not far to home base at Reymerston Hall and after a couple of circuits, we were touching down and stopped with virtually nil run. We taxied in, rotor blades stopped, through a tunnel under the trees to the museum hangar where 'GW' was to rest with 18 other Wallis autogyros.

On the way home, I called at Lower Upham for the Wiltshire PFA Flyers (ex Swindon Strut) Fly-In. I flew with John Potheary in his 1943-built Auster 1, built as an army observation aircraft but operates as a Taylorcraft Plus D, which was the pre WW2 designation. We went south to Marlborough on a scenic flight. Next flight was in a unique aeroplane, which was Abe Lincoln's Piper AE-1 from Henstridge piloted by Justin Cox. This was one of a batch of 100 ordered for the US Navy as ambulance aircraft based on the Piper J-5c with a 115hp Lycoming but with a hinged upper rear fuselage to carry a single stretcher. It saw naval service in Guam before returning to Honolulu at the end of WW2 where Abe bought it in the mid 80s. He took it to New Zealand then to the UK where a careful restoration ensued. As the sole example of the type in Europe, I was particularly delighted to fly in this AE-1.

Helitech at Duxford in late September was particularly rewarding as I flew in the Sikorsky S-92, which was on a European tour. This was the 4th machine out of 5 built to date and was fitted out in passenger configuration with 18 lightweight seats. After a combined dual engine start and checks, initial lift off was at 3200fpm despite being almost at max AUW of 26,000 lb. Heading to Marshall's Cambridge airfield, reaching a cruise of 154 knots, the 'customer' pilot did a series of hovers and manoeuvres under the eyes of the Sikorsky captain. General impression was of a really roomy machine but not a greatly smooth ride. Two days later, I had another vertical take off but this time in a hot air balloon.



*Sikorsky S-92*

This was a Cameron A300 built this year and operated by Go-Ballooning. Take off for the evening flight was from Victoria Park, Bath, with 16 aboard, heading north, just to the west of the A46 taking us quite near to Garston Farm, Marshfield. Unusually, we saw 2 fairly close aircraft (quite safe), firstly the locally based Renegade Spirit G-NINE then a Saab 2000 inbound from Germany to Filton. After 54 minutes, we did an upright but slightly abrupt landing, nicely timed before dusk.

The Reality Escapade gained its full permit in early October and I was pleased to be invited to their first sales demonstration day at Old Sarum.

It is a cosy side-by-side machine powered by a smooth, quiet 80hp Jabiru engine, which lifts the Escapade very spritely into the air. The first 8 kits are already sold and the next batch is due in the UK very soon.



*Reality Escapade*



*Piper AE1*

November saw the "Holiday of a Lifetime" with a Naturetrek visit to the Falkland Islands. There were eight of us plus the ornithological leader and our departure was from RAF Brize Norton in a Royal Air Force Lockheed Tristar C2, one of a trio bought from PanAm just 19 years ago and still in full passenger configuration. After an overnight flight of nearly 9 hours, we landed at Wideawake Field on Ascension. We were confined to a fenced area with adequate facilities during refuelling and crew change. Airborne after 2 hours, it was another 7 hours to RAF Mount Pleasant in East Falkland but we had a fantastic surprise with a Tornado escort at each wing tip to complete our 8000 mile journey - almost to touchdown. Our 15 day schedule took us from Port Stanley in East Falkland to Port Howard in West Falkland then Pebble Island, Saunders Island, Sea Lion Island and back to Port Stanley. The Falkland flights were in Islander 10-seaters of the Falkland Island Government Air Service (FIGAS) and they operated faultlessly in the strong winds, sometimes very strong, with schedules only being cancelled by fog. Strips were mostly grass moorland but a couple were skimmed of peat to the hard sub surface. Sectors varied from several of 10 minutes to the longest of 43 minutes. I flew in 3 different Islanders with a total time of 2.5 hours in 7 flights. All too soon, after brilliant birding success, excellent accommodation and food, we were homeward bound to the UK in the same Tristar C2 carrying about 150 passengers on the south sectors and nearly 200 on the UK-Ascension-UK flights.

December 17th saw the 100th anniversary of powered flight and I was able to mark the occasion, as did many others worldwide. I had booked a flight in a Zlin 242L at Aeros Flying Club at Gloucestershire Airport and was airborne by 9.40 am and heading for Eastbach Farm where I had enjoyed many flights with Tony Liddiard and his friends. We circled the top field, seeing some early activity then we headed back within the specified half hour. The Zlin 242 was my 790th type. After a drive to Croft Farm near Defford, I had arranged to meet up with Rick Holt to fly in his Stoddard Hamilton Glastar taildragger. Soon we were off, setting course at about 105 knots in beautiful clear conditions for the Fly-In at Turweston, joining the very busy circuit on this special day. I had flown with Rick in his newly built Avid Flyer over 9 years before but the Glastar was a distinct upgrade in comfort, cruise and range. Some 70 machines eventually arrived with a high proportion of homebuilts paying their respects to the recently installed PFA headquarters.

Flying opportunities this year were enhanced by superb summer weather and I was able to add 28 new aircraft types to my total, which is now 790, but also thanks to many kind and cooperative pilots, owners and operators.

Edwin

In December, Edwin's story was published in the Daily Mail. He sent us this clipping in case you missed it!

# Daily Mail

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2003

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 40p



opposite Aldgate East tube station. The photographers se, post-bone marrow trans- consultations? A four-year jail sentence won't make except from a male friend who did my shopping when I disease and a minor stroke. At first, I couldn't cope

## Every picture tells a story

*THIS feature offers you the chance to submit your photographs. They can be previously unseen, of interesting features*

*and events, fascinating insights into famous people or occasions, or a little history you were able to witness, for publication here.*

**BRIAN GOULDING'S** story, in which he talks of the many airfields he has visited, was fascinating. My interest is being flown in as many different kinds of aircraft as possible, and in 1990 I was accepted as record holder by the Guinness Book of Records for a total of 314 different types. My total now, aged 76, stands at 789. These include many light and ultralight machines, most of the current airliners, as well as 54 different helicopters, ten autogyros, 33 hot air balloons, one gas balloon, five different airships, three powered parachutes and 30 gliders/sail-planes.

It is difficult to pick out my favourites among so many, but I was delighted to fly with Nick Grace in his two-seater Spitfire at Badminton Air Day in July 1985, and was presented with a commemorative plaque by the Duke of Beaufort for my 200th flight. Recently, I flew with Wing Commander Ken Wallis who designed, built and flew 'Little Nellie', the autogyro featured in the Bond film *You Only Live Twice*. He flew me in his newer WA-122 from Shipdham airfield to his home at Reymerston Hall. This year, I have added 27 new types and also celebrated the 60th

anniversary of my first flight as an ATC cadet. I was fortunate to fly in an Australian designed and built Nomad in the morning and then went to a nearby flying club to fly in a French Trinidad to make it a double celebration. I have yet to fly in a couple of airliners — the SAAB 2000 and the Dornier 328 JET — and would love to fly in a Harrier and a Merlin helicopter. I have met many helpful people along the way, but I would like to thank, in particular, Peter March, an aviation journalist and friend for 50 years.

*EDWIN SHACKLETON, Filton, Bristol.*



*High fliers: Ken Wallis and Edwin Shackleton (also inset)*

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