



## Bristol Strut Young Eagles Day – 25<sup>th</sup> September 1999

After yet another week of uncertain weather, the event finally took place! We had planned to fly on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>, but from the Wednesday before it was quite obvious that the deep depression over the South West wasn't going to budge. The decision was made to shift to the following weekend in the hope that conditions would improve by then. As it happened, the forecast for the 25<sup>th</sup> was still threatening showers, but the strong winds of the previous weekend were not predicted so we decided to go for it.

It turned out to be a good move, because a great time was had by all! As in previous years, we approached Tutors at a couple of local schools offering free flights to those students who wished to research and prepare a simple project on aviation. This technique has worked well for us in the past, as it identifies the youngsters who have a serious desire to fly, and is somewhat self-regulating with regard to the numbers that eventually come forward. Thus we're not overwhelmed with demand, and our volunteer pilots have reasonably air-minded passengers who will benefit most from the experience.



In addition to the schools, we approached the Bristol Children's Hospital through connections established over previous years. Previously, a group of Cystic Fibrosis patients had flown with us, but this time a dozen or so youngsters from the oncology department came along to experience the joy of flight. We were aiming for a total of 30 - 35 Eagles, and, to share the load and avoid unnecessary waiting around, our visitors were invited by telephone to arrive either morning or afternoon.



With the shift of date came the problem that some pilots who had volunteered for the 18<sup>th</sup> could no longer make it. However, we found others that could, and finished up with offers of ten aeroplanes, and another to park on the grass as a static display. As organisers, we are always overwhelmed by the generosity of PFA members prepared to donate their time and aircraft to support a good cause. We are deeply grateful to them all.

Our visitors started to arrive after 10:00 am as expected, but news came through that four aircraft based on a local farmstrip were unable to get off the ground because of low cloud and poor visibility. This caused much frustration because conditions at Filton were wonderful by comparison - blue sky patches and broken cloud. However, one aircraft from another base did get through, and we started Eagle Operations soon after 10:15.

It wasn't long, though, before the others arrived and the small backlog of passengers were assigned seats and waved off on their very first flights. As on previous Young Eagle events we managed to ensure that every invited youngster had a front seat, and where appropriate a short 'hands-on' session. Our intention has always been to focus on *quality* rather than *quantity*, and to that end our pilots took time to chat about the Eagle's project and what to



expect before they went up. Some our strut members shared the duty of acting as escort to and from the aeroplane, and after each flight the same person escorted the family back to the aeroplane where time was taken for photos and certificate signing.

This pattern continued steadily throughout the day, and to everyone's relief the bad weather held off. Many happy faces were recorded on film that day, and everyone will remember the experience for years to come! It is gratifying to note that one of our past Young Eagles has been so inspired that he has now become a Strut member, comes to meetings and has recently taken his first flying lesson of a PPL course.



We finished the day having flown 30 Young Eagles, comprising all the invited Eagles plus a number of brothers and sisters, also a total of eight Older Eagles (mums, dads and helpers.) The Bristol Strut is indebted to all the Filton staff for making it all possible, especially the chaps in ATC and Gavin in Flight Operations. Our thanks go to them all for the use of their wonderful Airfield!

Aircraft which took part in the Bristol Young Eagle event were:

AIRCRAFT	REGISTRATION	PILOTS
PA38 Tomahawk	G – BWNU	Peter Hill
Hughes 500	G – DADS	Peter Turner
Jodel DR1050	G – AYYT	Chris Turner / Steve Kent
CP301 Smaragd	G – BSVE	Ron Perry
Mudry Cap 10	G – CZCZ	Paul Moorhead / Ed Hicks
Stinson 108-2	G – BPTA	Martin Ryan
PA22 Tri-pacer	G – TJAY	Dave Saint
Robin HR 200/100	G – BCCY	Graham Blower / Simon Vowles
PA28 Warrior	G – BCDJ	John Shufflebottom

Ian & Mary Leader  
PFA Bristol Strut

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