



Young Eagles at Bristol - 16th September 2000

The sun was barely over the horizon when Delta Alpha Victor India Delta woke up on Saturday the 16th. He had heard about the Young Eagle event when his Head of Year made the announcement in school assembly, and thought it was a dream come true. He had always been fascinated by aircraft, and had already become Captain of the B737 on his version of Flight Simulator. To actually be able to fly a *real* aeroplane seemed too good to be true, but there it was – and it wouldn't cost a penny! All he had to do, said the teacher, was to create a small project about aviation, and say why he would like a short flight. Easy!

David set about his research, and soon the project was finished complete with photos and extracts from the PFA Bristol website just to give an extra edge. He even spelled his name using the phonetic alphabet to show he knew all about it. David couldn't wait to hear the results of all this, but very soon came a phone call from Mary Leader confirming he would indeed qualify for that special flight from Filton.

Soon there was only a week to go, but then, disaster! Certain events throughout the whole country made petrol very scarce, and Dad's car very soon ran low on fuel. It seemed there was a very real possibility that David wouldn't get to Filton after all, even if the Young Eagle day wasn't cancelled! He had heard that even aeroplane fuel was difficult to get, so there may be few aircraft available on the day. That week was probably the worst he could remember, but when Friday came his Mum rang the contact number on his parental consent note, and was told that all was well and there was now enough petrol around to allow the event to go ahead. Even the weather was just right, since they had asked [Richard Angwin](#), the local BBC weatherman to fix it for them! Immense relief!



So it was, Saturday came and David's dad followed the directions to Filton airfield, where he and his younger brother were duly registered and given sticky badges with 'PFA Young Eagle' and their names printed on them. He was introduced to a Real Pilot who was actually very friendly, and talked to him about his project and told him all about the many dials and switches in the aircraft. They looked just like the Flight Simulator on his computer, so David felt remarkably confident as his safety harness was tightened and the engine started up. However, the take-off was nothing like the Simulator! This time he was really there. In the air! The ground dropped away and he could see for miles – right across the Severn estuary and over to Wales. It was breathtaking, but the best was yet to come because the pilot's voice then came through his headset and asked if he would like to take over. Me?? Fly the aeroplane? Of course, he had done this a hundred times before on his computer so he knew just what to do.

David took a gentle grasp on the joystick, and felt the slight resistance to his movement. Almost instinctively he corrected as the wing started to drop, but then the nose started to rise above the horizon. However, his pilot was prepared for this, and suggested a gentle forward pressure would be a good idea. In no time at all, David 'got the feel' of it and suddenly realized *he was actually flying!* It was much better than the computer, though, so responsive and alive.

The following twenty minutes were the best he ever spent. When the aeroplane landed back at Filton, he was still on cloud nine. His dad came over to meet them accompanied by the PFA marshaller, who had a smart certificate with his name printed on it, which his pilot signed and presented to him. David's brother also had a flight later that day, and so did his Dad who was looking on enviously.



All together, a total of 35 boys and girls had their first flights, and another eight Mums and Dads flew as well. They were presented with 'Older Eagle' certificates so they would not be left out! There were 11 aircraft operating Eagle flights, and 15 pilots generously volunteered their services. We are immensely grateful to them all. Members of the PFA Bristol Strut served admirably as marshalls, escorting Eagles and their families to and from the aircraft. The staff of British Aerospace were superb as in previous years; special thanks are due to Roy and Rob who manned the Tower, Jill on the Operations Desk, and the security team who rallied together to open the gate and marshall the aircraft. We thank them all for the use of their fine airfield.

David arrived home really happy that evening. He still couldn't believe what he'd just done. One thing was for sure, the Flight Simulator would never be the same again!

Footnote: The above narrative is not strictly based on any one person, rather it is an attempt to illustrate what it is like to be a Young Eagle in Bristol, by combining the experiences of several.



Aircraft participating at Bristol Young Eagles 2000 were:

Robin HR200/100	G-BCCY	John Lovell, Graham Blower, Simon Vowles
PA28-180	G-DLTR	John Shufflebottom
CP301s Smaragd	G-BSVE	Ron Perry, Daryl Mansfield
Stinson 108-2	G-BPTA	Martin Ryan, Fran Snell
Mudry CAP10	G-CZCZ	Ed Hicks
Robin DR400-180	G-DUDZ	Dudley Pattison
Luscombe 8F	G-BRDJ	Spike Parker
Jodel 1050 M1	G-AYYT	Steve Kent
Renegade Spirit	G-NINE	Frank Bond
PA22 Tripacer	G-TJAY	Dave Saint

Robin HR200/100	G-BVMM	Brian Oke
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*Report by
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