



# Tumble drier or spin cycle?

Tom Dawson doesn't let an upsy-downsy moment spoil the usual fun and games of Fly-UK



THE beauty of flying the Shadow is its simplicity. With the central pilot position and excellent view, it's a delight. Just ask any Shadow pilot!

I often fly in a group with a SkyRanger and several Quiks, all somewhat faster than my 503-powered Shadow, so I try to

find ways of keeping up: cutting corners, flying high for a tailwind, or low to avoid stronger headwinds.

This can be a successful ploy, but may lead to exciting times, as you'll see in a moment.

This year's Fly-UK began at Sleaf, where a full English got Saturday morning off to a great start.

We headed for Strathaven through the Manchester Corridor and up the M6 to Lancaster, where the consensus was to follow the motorway east of the Lakes, as the strong westerly promised some turbulence in the hills.

I thought I might steal a few miles by climbing above the clouds to 5000ft and taking a direct line. It was much nicer in the smooth air, and all was going well until I was following the A591 through the valley beyond Grasmere when I was suddenly hit by a strong downdraught.

I was dropped violently, and although my straps held me securely, everything loose hit the canopy, and a water bottle beside my right shoulder flew round the

inside of the cockpit and hit me on the left shoulder.

Still going down fast, I backed off the throttle and balanced my power and elevator to maintain height. The turbulence gradually reduced as I headed out of the Lake District and back into sunshine for a pleasant flight over the Solway Firth, up Nithsdale and across the hills to Strathaven. Last in, and time to sort out my cockpit.

In Sunday's strong winds, we left for the Easter airfield fly-in, north of the Black Isle, then to avoid being stuck in a worsening forecast, we decided to head south to Kingsmuir for the night.

Routed out of my way by Inverness the next morning, I decided to take a straight line from Nairn though the Cairngorms to RAF Leuchars.

The good news was it saved me 15 miles, but the bad news was that at one point, with rotor from the hills, I was going up and down like a yo-yo and continually playing with throttle and elevator in an attempt to maintain a constant height



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somewhere between the clouds above and the ragged ground below.

On Monday, I teamed up with fellow Shadow pilot Adrian Jones, and we visited East Fortune for brunch and fuel, visiting the interesting Scottish Aviation Museum just a walk away.

That night, after landing at Mount Airey near Hull, in our hurry to down a pint or two we missed the chippie closing at 9pm.

The diversion out of Scotland gave us a spare day, so on Tuesday we took advantage of a morning stop at Skegness for a shower. Then, with a touch and go at Weybourne, on to Cromer. Another touch and go at Marshland, into Fenland for the night, then on to Llanbedr in Wales through the southern edge of Snowdonia.

The main group flew via Barmouth, joined overhead and flew a full circuit of the 2km long airfield before landing, and I came over the hills, joined on final and beat half of them home. Yay!

On Thursday morning, Adrian and I flew over to Sir Clough Williams-Ellis'

Italianate village of Portmeirion, and tempted by the sand, I touched my wheels down. You can see that flight on YouTube at Toms Llanbedr Adventure.

Then south through the Preseli Mountains for a flypast between the round hay bales on my field (Toms Strip Formation Low Pass on YouTube), on to Haverfordwest for fuel and chips and camping at Westonzoiland. I was last in, just before dark.

Friday was Roserrow golf course for an expensive lunch, then on to St Mary's on the Scillies, and a short taxi trip to the Garrison campsite. One evening in Hugh Town wasn't really enough. (St Mary's is this month's Airfield of the Month by Merv Middleton – Ed.)

On Saturday morning, a preflight check revealed that my exhaust was fractured. I secured it with tie-wire and arranged for a weld by a pilot at Bodmin, then set off.

With 155 miles to our destination at Sandown I climbed to 5000ft, while the group stayed at 2500ft.

The difference in tailwind was strik-

ing, and I gradually saw the others steadily drop back, giving me first place as I turned final. Wahey! □

• Thanks to all the airfields that supported us, especially Nathan Cross on the first visit of Fly-UK to Sleaf; Colin at Strathaven; Davy at Easter; Gordon and Jill at East Fortune; Jason at Llanbedr; Tara at Haverfordwest; Jay at Bodmin; Dan at Sandown; and all the other airfields visited by one or more aircraft who helped us to raise well over £7000 towards the charity, Children with Cancer.

You can see the videos by Adrian Jones by searching for adrianpjones on YouTube.

This is my last year as Fly-UK organiser, but Mat Burnham has offered to organise Fly-UK 2019. More details in January MF. Don't miss it!

#### Photos

- 1 Following the A9 in murky conditions
- 2 Tom arriving at Easter in his Shadow
- 3 The Fly-UK gang at Sandown
- 4 First night at Sleaf