



WHY I FLY

Simple but oh, so special

By **Andy Rehorn**

There are days when you go for a local bumble just for the hell of it. Sometimes it is a case of just flying around the local area, to return slightly dissatisfied. Today was different. Not different in the way the flight was approached, just in the way it unfolded.

As I do when I have had a hard time of it, I rang the airport and asked them to extract the 152 from the hangar and told them I would be there at around 1700.

Taking my hi-vis vest from my rucksack I threw it around my shoulders as I walked airside, the knot in my stomach tightening as usual as I carried out the pre-flight. All normal. I squeezed into the narrow cockpit, started her up and sat organising myself as the oil warmed slowly. The engine sounded particularly sweet today, the controls light and free running; not for the first time I was grateful for owning a share in this well looked after aeroplane.

Clearance issued to taxi to K1 for runway 20, I let the 152 amble along at her own pace, running through all the emergency procedures in my head as we went. Power checks done I was given a 'Line up' with no delay, immediately followed by 'Clear take off, left turn out'.

She was feeling sprightly today. In virtually nil wind we were climbing at 800 feet a minute. I always approach these local bimbles with a 'point-it-and see' attitude (having checked notams for the area, of course) and levelled off at 1000 feet above the crystal blue sea, the waves coruscating in the late afternoon sunlight. I throttled back and she trimmed smoothly to a gentle 85 knot cruise as I admired the view passing to my left.

Brighton always makes a lovely picture postcard view on a day like this, and I was not to be disappointed.

As I passed the Marina I turned my attention to the middle distance, searching out my office, which is a few metres inland a few miles along the coast. It struck me just how clean everything looked today from up there. A couple walking their dogs waved at me as I slowly passed. A group of children excitedly pointed and frantically waved their arms – I obliged with a wing waggle and could almost hear the cheer.

I usually give the office a cursory overhead look, but today I decided to circle and see if anyone was looking up. No, not everyone does when a plane passes overhead. A friend who lives up the road was getting out of his battered yellow pick-up; blipping my engine got his attention and he waved back cheerfully.

Turning towards the cliffs again I lowered the revs and let her sink slowly in a descending turn to run along the clifftops before climbing again. I circled again above the next settlement, admiring how beautiful it looked from up here. Shame it didn't look this good when ground-bound.

I dived back down towards the sea and flew along smiling, now below the top of the cliffs. Fishing boats were in the distance, coming back into port after a long day at sea, their captains weary and weathered. OK, enough of this, let's get some height. Turning northwards I pushed the venerable 152 into a climb.

Again she responded with a hearty

**Top: coasting out abeam Shoreham, half-hidden by 'non-threatening' cloud
Right: a flyer's smile from Andy**



New regular feature

Many readers comment favourably on *General Aviation* magazine but say that when they're finished reading it they want to slit their wrists. So as a counterbalance to the gloom and doom we present "Why I fly," a new and hopefully regular feature which helps us remember why we put up with all the hassle in the first place. If you'd like to contribute, email pat@richmondaviation.co.uk.

750 feet-per-minute climb, all the way to 3700 feet, skimming between the scattered fluffy clouds, which were now turning a softer white in the gentle light of a late summer afternoon.

I played with them, teasing them, and dived in between them, circling, twisting, climbing and diving again.

Clouds still fascinate me, enthrall me, and their soft cuddly appearance delights me. Particularly these soft fluffy cotton wool clouds, nothing of danger in them, just beauty and a strange type of splendour. I want to reach out and touch them, jump out and curl myself up in them, sit on their fluffy tops and ride along with them, admiring the view below as they pass silently above farmland, woodland, beautiful old cottages, people on horseback, farmers on their clackety old tractors, children playing and laughing. All are oblivious to the pilot above them, happy and contented, free as a bird and playing with the gentle side of Mother Nature. Playing with his very own senses. Playing with the clouds, living out for real his childhood dreams.

And happy.

Something so simple, yet so enthralling. Something so few people experience or would ever appreciate. Yet I am here, almost in a dream, playing in the wide open sky. Freedom and happiness. A sense of wellbeing. Calmness and peace, at one with the world.

And happy.

The day's tribulations melt away as I turn for home, the pain of the last few months of heartache briefly dissipated as the altimeter slowly unwinds and the world becomes closer and closer again until we kiss the tarmac gently, so gently and put her to bed.

My key to freedom. Thank you my little Cessna. You may be old, you may be small and simple, but the simplest flight ensconced in your cockpit has almost bought me tears of joy. The simplest flight in a long while.

Simple, but oh, so special. One that will be etched on my memory for eternity. ■

