

Le Touquet 24 September 2003

After a false start the week before, Steve, Des and I were ready to do our cross-Channel check in SY after Steve's student was cleared. The plane checked out fine, though we had a "moment" when it fouled its plugs during the engine checks at A3. The day was hot dry and with almost no wind at all, very promising for two cross-Channel rookies!

Exiting from 02, even by Bishops Waltham the air was so bouncy with thermals coming from the ground, that we decided to head for the coast to get over water to make the trip comfortable. With great visibility we decided on a flight level and headed as high as we could go under the Worthing CTA to avoid the bouncy air. Flying along the south coast we were wondering what it was we could see to the north, before realising it was a clear view of the jets going into and out of Gatwick. With the high pressure we estimated about 6 thousand feet agl just off shore Brighton. We could see Dover in the distance, and our next waypoint of Seaford, though about 25 miles distant, looked touchable.

Turning at Seaford and calling up London Information we were told to look out for the considerable traffic over the channel. Seeing nothing in any direction, except ships, none of whom ever waved back as we passed, we began a slow descent towards the French coast. Listening to Le Touquet as we approached we were (well at least I was) heartened to realise the controllers English was much better than my French! After an interesting moment as a Cessna did an aborted NDB approach in front of us, we were told to report downwind right hand 32. The area just north of the field is higher than the valley in which the field lies, and so at circuit height the hills and water towers to our left appeared above us as we flew downwind. The view ahead was surprisingly brown and barren in comparison with Southampton, but the runway is wide and long, so after quite a float in the warm air, we landed and made our way back to the apron.



We did not have much time on the ground so, after settling the fees, a tea and a pee we were heading back to the aircraft. (That was a bit of licence, we all had coffee actually). Des remembered the photos so, after a quick grimace at the lens, we all climbed back into SY and began the journey home. The controller seemed to forget about us down at the far end of 32 awaiting other traffic and so we sat there looking at the scenery which, at that part of Le Touquet, is not a romantic sight! Finally getting clearance we were off back across the Channel, this time with me in the back and taking photographs. Le

Touquet beach looked pretty good as we flew over, probably well worth a second visit.



Coasting in at Seaford, the visibility was still amazing and photos along the coast were all great. At Newhaven the port and B&Q came up at you as you looked down. Amazing how B&Qs provide such great navigational aids ! Off shore Brighton again and Bournemouth and all of the Isle of Wight were easily visible, and Southampton airport was visible to Steve, though nobody else !

Flying west along the south coast, Shoreham was an obvious landmark, and the harbours at Brighton Marina, Bosham, Pagham and Portsmouth were so clear. Commencing a gradual descent from abeam Goodwood, we were soon bouncing around again as we headed towards Bishops Waltham, and were sent to Left base for 20 and a creamy landing.



Both Des and I were pleased to receive signatures from Steve in our log books to confirm a satisfactory conclusion to our cross channel checks. Here's to many more overseas sorties!

Another good day in the air!