



February 2008

SKYWRITINGS

Newsletter of the *Mid Kent*



Light Aircraft Association

Mike's Mutterings

Mike Negus -
Editor



Flying the Embraer Legacy

by Steve Pearl

The Embraer Legacy has thirteen passenger seats, a maximum take off weight of 22.5 tonnes and cruises at Mach 0.78, so it's not the sort of aeroplane that tends to feature on the pages of Skywritings very often! However, despite the differences in terms of the aircraft and its capabilities, many of the trips which I make in the Legacy in the course of my work have the same sense of excitement and adventure about them as the trips I've made in smaller aeroplanes.

In this age of crowded airport



G-SIRO at Luton Airport

February Meeting - 28th February 2008
Golf Club at 8pm
Wartime Glider Operations

terminals, long queues at the check in desks, frequent flight delays and ever more oppressive airport security, it's little wonder that so many of those who can afford it are choosing to travel by private jet instead of joining the rest of us on the regular airlines. The appeal of the discreet, personal nature of the service, and an aircraft that waits until its passengers are ready instead of the other way around, is making the cost of chartering an aircraft seem like increasingly good value to many busy executives, VIPs and celebrities with tight schedules to keep to, and wealthy families are also choosing this method of travel for their holidays in ever greater numbers. Actually, if there are enough passengers, the price per seat can compare very favourably with the cost of airline business or first class tickets.



Flight Deck

It's the sheer variety of types of passengers and their requirements that make the job so varied and exciting for those of us lucky enough to fly these aircraft. We can wake up at home on the morning of a standby duty, not knowing what the day has in store for us, and then end up somewhere completely unexpected by the evening,

which of course has its problems as well as its rewards! We might be required to make a long haul flight to a distant destination (with a range of over 3,000 nautical miles, the Legacy is capable of crossing the Atlantic or making it to the Middle East in one hop), or to simply reposition the aircraft from one London Airport to a neighbouring one in order to pick up its next group of passengers, involving a flight time similar to that of a circuit in a light aircraft! One day we can be basking in the sunshine amongst all the other private jets in Nice or Cannes, the next we might find our sleek jet sharing the rough apron of a remote airport in Kazakhstan with battered Russian helicopters and An-2 biplanes in temperatures of minus ten or lower.

The huge variety of destinations we get to fly to is one of the things that makes the job so interesting and enjoyable, but it can also make it quite challenging on occasions. Many of the most interesting airports we go to are the small ones not served by the regular airlines, some of which are less well equipped than others in terms of their runways, navigation aids and other facilities. It's when we're finding our way into an airport like this on a dark night, in bad weather, and with the inevitable strong crosswind, that we really earn our pay. In good weather, it's not uncommon for us to fly visual circuits into these airports if the weather permits, possibly sharing the circuit with light aircraft, which must make ATC's life

Real planes use only a single stick to fly. This is why bulldozers & helicopters -- in that order -- need two..

interesting. At the other end of the scale, we frequently visit some of the world's biggest and busiest airports, where finding our way along the taxiways from the runway to our parking stand after landing can sometimes seem far more challenging than the flight itself!



Descent over Moscow

While we have the support of our Operations Department at the end of a telephone at all times, once we embark on a trip it's largely down to us as a crew to 'keep the show on the road', as we'll be the only representatives from the company who are on the spot to deal with all of the requirements of our passengers, our aircraft and ourselves down route. This can mean dealing with handling agents, refuellers, caterers, baggage handlers, customs and immigration officials, security staff, de-icing technicians and the many other individuals who often seem to swarm around the aircraft on its arrival, some of whom have a limited command of English (although still probably far better than our command of their language!), all whilst trying to get the flight deck set up and the walk round done ready for the next sector. Our cabin crew generally take responsibility for arranging the catering, which can

involve some challenging requests - think of some of the outlandish requests for food, drink and other items which you may have heard of celebrities making and you'll have an idea of the sort of things they're often expect to come up with. I remember one of our cabin crew spending almost the whole afternoon on her mobile phone in Kiev trying to find somewhere to supply a very specialised type of sushi, and we've even had hard-to-find varieties of mineral water specified in place of the well known brands! We the pilots often have to act as our own baggage handlers, and although the Legacy's hold is actually quite a good size, our passengers still often manage to put us to the test, either with the sheer quantity of their bags, or alternatively with items such as original paintings or other fragile and expensive objects, or in the case of one pop group, their own TV, fridge and microwave oven! As in all types of aviation, the weather plays a major part in how easy or difficult a trip can be. There's actually not much weather that's bad enough to stop us going flying: only widespread very dense fog, strong winds in excess of the aircraft limits and similar extreme weather would force us into making that decision. However, a careful check of the weather is necessary to make sure that we're able to meet our legal requirements with regard to the availability of alternate airports, to assess what the flying conditions will be like on our route, and to help us plan how much fuel we need to take. Good weather definitely makes life easier, and besides, flying's a lot more fun when you can see what you're flying over,

particularly when crossing spectacular scenery such as the Alps. A bit of bad weather every now and then keeps life interesting though, and if we don't get it for real then we certainly will in our six monthly simulator checks!

So what's the Legacy actually like to fly? Well, I enjoy flying it a lot, but I have to say that flying IFR in our highly complex and automated aeroplane isn't quite as much fun as flying around VFR in a light aircraft in my personal opinion. But, of course, this aeroplane wasn't designed for having fun flying around the local area on a sunny afternoon, it was designed to reliably, comfortably and efficiently cross large distances in almost any weather, and it does this very well. Its hydraulically powered controls with artificial feel units are comparatively heavy, and although we do sometimes hand fly departures and approaches, both to keep in practice and also for the enjoyment of doing so, in busy airspace it's often best to let the autopilot take the strain so we can devote all of our attention to making sure we follow the flight profiles and air traffic control instructions accurately. Once we're established in the cruise, simply maintaining a constant heading and altitude by hand for long periods of time wouldn't be particularly rewarding, and is in fact generally not even allowed in the Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum (RVSM) airspace above Flight Level 290 where we spend a great deal of our time, so here it's definitely best to leave the flying to the autopilot, allowing us to concen-

Flying is a hard way to earn an easy living.

trate on managing the aircraft systems and navigation. The thing that struck me most about the aeroplane when I first flew it was how much performance we've got available to us: after take off we'll often seem to reach our first level off altitude almost before we've had time to clean the aircraft up, and once we're flying level the thrust has to be reduced smartly to avoid blasting through the 250 knot speed limit below 10,000 feet. It's important to try to keep thinking ahead of the aeroplane at all times, and it initially took me a little while to shift my brain up into the higher gear necessary to do this. Even though I'm now more used to the speed at which everything happens, it still always gives me a thrill to look out of the windows whenever there's a bit of spare time after take off, and marvel at how quickly we're climbing into the sky and making our way across the landscape below.

So, despite all the unpredictability of the lifestyle, the early starts and late finishes, the tedium of spending long periods flying straight and level on some flights and the mad rush to get everything done in time on others, and the waiting around which so often seems to make up a large part of our working life, we get to fly a great aeroplane to some memorable destinations, to meet some great people, and to have some great adventures! No wonder this type of flying is often referred to as one of the best kept secrets in aviation!

Both optimists and pessimists contribute to the society. The optimist invents the aeroplane, the pessimist the parachute..

Venice, but no Gondolas. Jo Derrick.

An unexpected lull at work, a couple of cancelled appointments and it looked like the kids and I could squeeze a week away and be back before Christmas. It's not the easiest time of year to get away but the internet has taken a lot of the slog out of it.

Everybody enthuses about the splendours of Florida, with good weather, Sun 'n' Fun and many British pilots learning to fly there, it has become an aviation Mecca. A couple of days at Disney should keep the kids amused and as our hotel was about 15 minutes from Kissimmee airport, I would be happy enough, all I would have to do is sort out a 'culture' day.

I had read about the war bird flying and thought about a seaplane rating but really fancied a bit of 'Top Gun' stuff in a Sia Marchetti. Apart from the cost, there wasn't really enough time to get things organised, so I settled for a PA28 and a day out somewhere for lunch. As there were only about two weeks before departure their CFI said there wouldn't be enough time to sort out a US validation, but I could fly with an instructor for £58.00 per tacho hour.

It was almost refreshing that on arrival at the aero club, there was the same confusion that you find at many British clubs, who was flying with whom? Not enough aeroplanes etc. The one good thing was that when I looked out of the window, the visibility was endless and the forecast was great! We were due to fly with a female instructor, who didn't feel well enough for a whole day out. I wasn't sure if it was

because of me or the sight of the kids. They did have a young instructor available who had never actually worked for them, but in view of the fact that I had more hours than the instructor, they were happy for us to fly with him. My young daughter seemed especially keen as she said he looked 'fit'.

After a certain amount of re-arranging we were finally allocated N-1326P, on climbing aboard we found that it wouldn't start. Eventually with a jump-start we got it going with a warning from the CFI that we may have to swing it to get back again. - All very familiar? After only two hours of hanging around we had a working aeroplane, someone to go with us, which kept us legal and were now airborne headed for Venice. This Venice is nowhere near Italy but on the coast on the Gulf of Mexico and on taking local advice we were going to eat at 'Sharky's' a fresh sea food restaurant a short taxi ride from the airport.

I had heard a lot about the thunderstorms and turbulence encountered in this part of America, particularly in the afternoon, but we had none of it, just a boring old CAVOK day, with winds of about 10kts. We are all aware that everything in the US is bigger, well the airports are no exception and Venice has an enormous runway, but with no one around it felt quite desolate. We managed to call for a taxi, which arrived to take us the 10 minutes or so to the restaurant. He must have used the same car for banger racing in his spare time as the door panels were hanging off, it was covered in rust and the car looked a wreck. Much to the amusement of the kids, the driver looked as if he was straight out of the Hillbilly cast of 'Deliverance', I am not sure what his name was, but we called him Elmer.

The people at Sharky's were pleasantly normal and the fresh seafood was excellent costing about £25.00 for the four of us. After lunch, at the boy's insistence we had to go for a swim, more than a touch refreshing in December.

The same driver arrived to take us back to the airport and I could swear that I heard Duelling Banjo's playing in the background, what was more frightening was that he said that his family had originated from England. The plane started ok and we took the scenic route back. In general there are no landing fees in America so we stopped at Port Charlotte and Lakeland, just for fun.

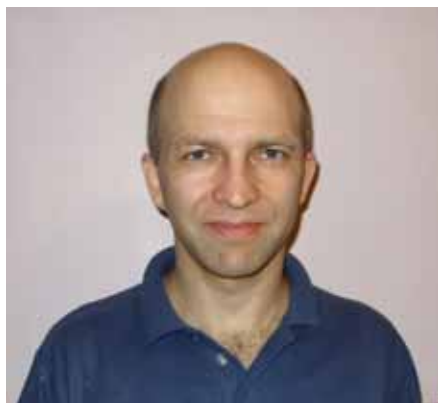
As the visibility was so good and we had map and compass, the fact that we had no GPS wasn't even a consideration and we knew Kissimmee was right next to a lake. Neither of us had had to find the airport before but on our return there seemed to be hundreds of lakes. After aimlessly flying around for a while the only answer was to get a definite fix, so we flew back to Winter Haven and did it the old fashioned way. On joining the 'pattern', whoops! We got it wrong again by missing the radio call overhead their VRP, which wasn't a major problem with my accent but Rory, a New Yorker told ATC he was an instructor and that it was his first flight from there; bad move, the CFI was listening on a loudspeaker gave him a ticking off after we landed, not so much for the missed call but for his public admission.

Son, you're going to have to make up your mind about growing up and becoming a pilot. You can't do both.

All in all we had a great day; it certainly made the holiday for me. It cost me more than I had expected, mainly due to the leisurely route back and the fact that we became temporarily uncertain of our position. I suppose it was lucky for Rory that his first flight in his new job was not with a real 'student'.

Unfortunately, the nearest we got to a 'culture' day was going to a 'Longhorn steak house', instead of the 'Hardrock Café', which served the biggest and nicest steak I had ever eaten.

Annual General Meeting Thursday 31st January 2008



Gary Smith—New Co-ordinator

Meeting took place on the above date and the existing committee were returned with one significant change. Derek decided to step down after two years as Strut Co-ordinator and we welcome Gary Smith in to this position. A vote of thanks to Derek was proposed and seconded for his dedication to the task which was a hard act to follow from Jaqui Clarks tenure over the preceeding years. Derek

showed himself to be a tireless and unselfish leader and we on the committee repeat our thanks on behalf of the membership for a job well done.

The new strut coordinator has a few words to say himself :-

AGM night is not the most exciting event in the Mid Kent Strut diary but many thanks to those who turned out. Having cleared the formalities, Derek Browning thanked the committee for their support over the last two years and announced that due to work commitments he was unable to continue as coordinator.

Having shown a small interest in joining the committee as tea maker and cup washer (about 12 months ago), I arrived at AGM with my tea mugs and Jay cloth, ready for action. It appeared that my "small interest" had been over interpreted and before those present could put their hands down I was sitting in the front of the assembly as the your new strut Coordinator. In order to get off on the right foot I am hereby delegate the responsibility of making the tea and washing the cups, did I hear somebody say they were showing "just a small interest!"

So for those who do not know me I have been flying since 1992, was involved in rebuilding the Piper Vagabond G-BTBY in 1995 and flew 750 hours in it during the following 12 years. I recently completed a Vans RV9 (April 2007) and now believe the essence of flight is pure speed and not hours in the seat, as I used to think.

Many thanks for your support, and may the Mid Kent Strut continue to prosper.

Next Meeting Thursday 28th February Wartime Glider Operations

This is truly a unique opportunity for us as Strut Members to hear first hand from a member of the Glider Regiment which operated from 1942 - 1945 so a very short but illustrious existence.

Des Paige will be giving us a talk on what it was like to drop not once but twice in to enemy held territory having landed at Arnhem with Operation Market Garden in September 1944 and having survived this ill fated drop went on to land over the Rhine with Operation Varsity in March 1945 . I think we are in for a fascinating evening.

March 27th Meeting - Quiz Night

Transponder Information

from Mike Tooze

It appears that at short notice the CAA have issued a Form, see link below, that enables us to claim exemption from the use of Mode S in our sort of airspace till around 31st March 2012. - Provided you already have, or get it quick, a Modes A and C transponder.

All the guff is in the links. All I did was to fill in the form and it automatically returns the exemption dated stamped and numbered. Print out and add to the already heavy pile of stuff you carry with the plane (although they don't actually say to carry it with you).

Hope this is in time for the newsletter etc., helps a few of us out and it isn't

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www.solleysicecreams.co.uk

some sort of trap to catch the wayward fliers who don't like squawking - you have to enter a phone number..

Links:

Info from:

<http://tinyurl.com/2fcj29>

Registration form at:

<http://tinyurl.com/2e3kum>

Have a look yourself and thanks to Mike Tooze for bringing the matter to our attention

**Flying is a great way of life
 for men who want to feel like
 boys, but not for those who
 still are.**

Dates for your Diary

Feb 28 Des Paige, Gliders
 Mar 27 Quiz Night
 Apl 24 Ken Craigie, LAA