

# A SHARED JODEL



This month we meet Martin Charlick, who shares a Jodel Mascaret with friend Dave Gibson and flies out of Henstridge

**T**ell us about your working life  
I recently retired after 35 years as a chartered loss adjuster, handling major industrial fire and flood damage, specialising in business financial restoration after catastrophic events.

The work has taken me to various overseas locations including the Caribbean (hurricanes), West Africa (gold mines and oil field fires), Gibraltar (storm damage on the Costa del Sol) and Italy (bank heists and energy plant construction failures). I also set up a property marketing company from 2000-2007 and have been involved with other start-ups.

**What started your interest in aviation?**

Reading comic books and stories about the wartime aviators when I was a boy. I also

**Owning a half share in Mascaret G-BHVF has greatly increased Martin's annual flying hours; he now wishes he had bought into an aircraft much sooner.**

became a prolific Airfix kit builder, all hung off my bedroom ceiling. I used to cycle to my local airfield (Stapleford Tawney in Essex) on those long hot summer days we always seemed to have back then, and watch the planes take off and land from the airfield boundary.

**Where, when and in what type of aircraft was your first flight?**

A K21 two-seat glass fibre glider during a two-week holiday course at Dunstable Downs

in 1984. My first solo was in a K18 single-seat glider after about 15 hours flying. I then went on to take lessons at Stapleford Flying Club in Cessna 152s and gained my PPL in 1985. I have subsequently been a member at Southend Flying Club, where I completed an IMC rating, and having moved to Shaftesbury in 1998, Compton Abbas and Old Sarum flying clubs.

**How many hours have you amassed and have you flown many different types?**

I have 17 distinct types, mostly of the Cherokee 140/180 and Cessna 152/172 variety, and roughly 250 hours total time. That's been over almost 30 years, with a number of spells of inactivity. I have had to retake the GFT about four or five times to regain currency! I now

have about 75 hours tailwheel and having a share in the Jodel means I now fly much more regularly.

### Do you have any particular favourite type you have flown?

Not really, although having moved on to the Jodel in recent years I am enjoying the lighter handling of a wood and fabric machine. Last June I had to do an SEP revalidation flight back at Compton to get my paperwork and hours sorted. The flight test was in their club Warrior, a type I have not flown for 10 years, and it felt like driving a heavy truck around the sky in comparison.

I have sampled 30 minutes in a SV4C Stampe, my only open-cockpit biplane experience which was magical, and I flew a Polish-built Aero AT-3, a small two-seat low-wing metal light sport aeroplane with Rotax engine and free-castoring nosewheel, which made take-offs somewhat testing.

### Do you currently own your own aeroplane? If so, what type is it?

Yes, Jodel Mascaret D150 G-BHVF, which was built by SAN (Bernay) in 1963. Dave Gibson and I have a half share each and we're based at Henstridge.

### What has been your most memorable aviation moment?

I really enjoyed the challenges of training for the IMC rating (sadly long expired) for which I flew cross Channel flights between Southend and Calais (one hour each way plus duty frees...). The achievement of dancing down the ILS at Calais in snow showers (on one flight) and finally mastering the NDB approach back at Southend in all winds was fantastic. The Cherokee 140 was very robust for this role (as was my instructor), landing sideways in strong crosswinds.

From a commercial flying point of view, I was lucky enough to experience a night-time arrival in a Cathay Pacific B747 into Hong Kong Kai Tak airport, obviously before it closed, the one where they aimed at a red and white checkerboard on the mountainside before turning final and descending through the tower blocks of Kowloon.

### Do you have any non-aviation hobbies or interests?

I was a member at Lagos Yacht Club during my time in Nigeria and we used to race two-man 14ft sailing dinghies at weekends. I quite fancy taking it up again... although not in Lagos.

### Tell us about your aviation heroes

Pierre Clostermann was one of the greatest Free French pilots who flew for the RAF from 1942 until the end of the war. His book *The Big Show* is based on his wartime diaries and is, in my opinion, one of the best military flying accounts to come out of WWII. As a boy, I read and re-read the 1952 paperback edition endlessly until it eventually fell to pieces. That was an 'abridged' version because of paper shortages at the time, and it was still subject to censorship. I now have the complete unabridged version, published in 2004 shortly before he died. It's an astonishing personal perspective not just for the drama and in-cockpit action, but showing the immense stress and attrition of simply going out on ops day after day.

In the modern update, there is an amazing revelation, a history-changing action his squadron was involved in during one of their sorties in July 1944 (following D-Day), excluded from the 1952 account by the censors and I believe unknown to the participants until long after the war on release of archives in 1975. This edition also includes a brief retrospective introduction written by Clostermann in 2004, providing his final thoughts looking back on the war and the loss of many friends, which was a profound (to me) and very emotional contrast with the flying action and my memories of reading the book as a boy.

### Any 'hairy' moments and lessons learned?

I remember joining a formation trip to France with three club Piper Cherokees out of Southend, which started very badly. I went along with an instructor, but had never flown formation and received no briefing so was unprepared for the need to adjust throttle on climb out to maintain position (three aircraft starting line abreast on the runway). As a

student, you're taught to max the throttle all the way up and keep it there. A very close inspection of the underside of the adjoining aircraft ensued.

It got worse when we encountered low cloud and descended towards the scenery with no visibility and no view of the other aircraft, plus there was a high mast somewhere in the vicinity. The instructor 'took over' and started talking to the other instructors and ATC whilst contemplating a turn back. I watched as his attention to 'aviating' waned and the artificial horizon tipped over. He was too busy for me to interrupt and offer to help with the flying whilst he did the thinking and talking, and anyway I was just an inexperienced student. I think we were lucky to avoid a collision and it served to illustrate the dangers of being overawed by greater experience or authority.

### Do you have an aircraft or vehicle wish list?

Apart from the obvious Spitfire/warbird action (which might be a possibility with the Boulton Academy), I would love to have a seaplane or floatplane. There seem to be almost no opportunities or facilities in the UK, although Scotland and Ireland appear to offer limited scope for training, but weather and sea conditions are often not conducive. The possibility of a light sport runway and water capable amphibian, such as the Rotax-powered Searay operating out of Henstridge, intrigues me though.

### What advice do you have for fellow pilots?

I wish I had bought into a share of an aircraft much earlier. My flying career involving purely renting club aircraft has been characterised by minimal hours, long layoffs and re-tests, either because of 'insufficient funds' or lack of access to club aeroplanes when the weather finally behaved itself. Difficulty of maintaining confidence coupled with currency averaging little more than eight hours per annum has a highly discouraging effect, and I had almost given up returning to flying. Having been kindly invited to buy into Dave's lovely Jodel Mascaret at the end of 2013, I have since got my tailwheel ticket and flown 30+ hours in 2014. I am looking forward to expanding both my hours and horizons. ■

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