

Thumbs up from Bill Goldsmith after another incident-free 1000 hours with Europa G-RATZ.



2000 HOURS TEN YEARS AND A MONOWHEEL EUROPA

Five years after reaching his first 1000 hours, *Bill Goldsmith* reports back on the qualities of his Monowheel Europa

> FIVE years ago, I wrote an article entitled 1000 hours, five years and a Monowheel Europa. In the intervening period another incident-free 1000 hours has been notched up with Europa G-RATZ (Kit 037), including an Around Britain Air Rally. I have also become an LAA test pilot, having test-flown two Monowheel and three Tri-Gear Europas, along with Tecnam Sierra and Zenair Zodiac 601XL.

In that time I have also had flights in many other types including Pioneer 300, Menestrel, Emeraude, Van's RV6, RV8 and RV9, Jabiru UL and J400, Tecnam P92 Echo, MCR-01, Maule, Bulldog, Cessna 172, TB 10 and even a flight as

P2 in a friend's Kingair to Stavanger and back. In 2007, I shared a 912-powered Rans S6ESD with my friend Eric Bentley and did 200-plus hours in this fascinating and very capable machine, and I can see myself flying microlights again in the future. Yet of all the types flown, I have yet to fly a nicer all-round aircraft than the Europa; its smile factor per £ exceeds all the other types I have been in and considering the design dates back to 1993, it is still competitive with all the modern pocket rockets.

My aircraft, for all its hours, is still in the original livery and still has all the original equipment except the tachometer, which failed in October 2008.

My high-hour maintenance (other than 50 hours and annual Permits) consists of:-

- Three sets of brake pads; third just fitted.
- Mono undercarriage bushes, replaced twice.
- New prop at 1100 hours (original still serviceable but looking tatty).
- Starter sprag clutch at 800 engine hours (this does not seem to be a life component).
- Replacement battery at six years.

On a visit to Sun 'N' Fun in 2004, I was presented at the Europa barbecue with an R/C model of a Europa for having done the most hours in the world in a Monowheel Europa, though this is open to debate.

After such positivity, tragedy occurred in 2007 with an in-flight break-up of a Monowheel,



In spite of all the hours in the air, the only new equipment here is the tacho.



Ten years on and G-RATZ still wears her original paint scheme.

killing the two people on board, including pilot William Mills, who was a personal friend of mine.

We were issued with two mandatory fixes, which involved beefing up the tail plane retention bushes and the wing drag spar pins. My aircraft showed no signs of defect in these areas and had nearly double the hours of William's aircraft. Whether the fixes were necessary or whether it was a build fault created by the original builder (not William Mills) will be debated long into the future.

My 912S engine will reach its 1500-hour TBO in about a year (weather permitting), at which point I may treat the airframe to a paint job.

My advice on handling the Monowheel has not changed, and I still treat it with the respect it deserves...

- 1 Keep it straight on take-off and landing. Do not let it wander – if it gets out of shape make an early decision to abort on take-off or go-round on landing.
- 2 Respect the crosswind and be honest and realistic about your own limits.
- 3 Take the crosswind from the right if possible (Rotax engines).
- 4 On tarmac, use lower crosswind limits.
- 5 At low hours, concentrate on take-offs and landings.
- 6 Fly the machine regularly; three or four times a month minimum to keep up to speed.
- 7 Approach speed is critical, aim for 60kts, 65kts maximum in strong wind or crosswind.
- 8 Aim to stall the aircraft as it touches

'Five years ago, I said I wouldn't be parted from G-RATZ and that still stands after ten'

the ground onto the tailwheel first.

9 Most important of all, take a proper course with a Monowheel Coach, don't just jump in with a mate or a friend of a friend because he is an "experienced" pilot. And take as many hours as it takes – do not have a premeditated number of hours in your mind.

10 If you're still not happy, buy or make it into a Tri-gear, as this is one of the best flying machines in its class you will ever fly.

Europa as a company has had good times and bad, but has never failed to support its customers and, with the takeover by Swift Aviation, hopefully the company will go from strength to strength.

Development of the kit to make it a much quicker build will put the aircraft in line with all the modern fast-build kits on the market; a factory-built VLA version is a possibility for those of you who don't want to build.

Of late, we are seeing many Eastern Block fast-build kits being brought in by "one man band" British agents, who sometimes mysteriously disappear after a relatively short period. The strength of the euro and

dollar makes many of these kits much more expensive these days and, from personal experience, the support and supply of parts when needed can be slow to non-existent. The Europa is the only British-made kit and it has always been supported by established professional companies with proper business premises. In my ten years of dealing with them, they usually have the part you require in stock or will get it for you very quickly.

In my view, there are too many kits coming onto the market, which doesn't really result in more kits or aircraft being sold, it just dilutes the market and makes it much more difficult for all the companies to survive. I'm sure many will disagree, of course.

The Europa Club continues to be one of the most successful and helpful clubs around, with fly-ins, fly-outs, a magazine and a website with technical advice, and some maintenance equipment available free to members.

Five years ago, I said I wouldn't be parted from G-RATZ and that still stands after ten years and 2000 hours. This machine has brought me more pleasure and trouble-free flying than I can describe and I hope to be writing "Fifteen years, 3000 hours and a Monowheel Europa" in the future (God and fuel prices willing).

For anyone thinking about buying or building a Europa who would like any advice, feel free to contact me. If I can help in any way, I would be more than happy to talk to you.

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