

# *Eclipse Flight 11th August 1999*



## **Trip Report:**

Jill and I took a Cherokee out of Southampton, (complete with 'kidnapped' re-fueller Ray Thompson from Southampton who was in the right place at the right time, and suddenly found himself donning a lifejacket and getting a free ride). 50 miles due south and 8000 feet up, with only two other aircraft nearby, we had the most amazing experience mid-Channel, which makes us 3 of a very small band (low hundreds, perhaps?) who saw the whole Total Eclipse from start to finish whilst still in the UK.

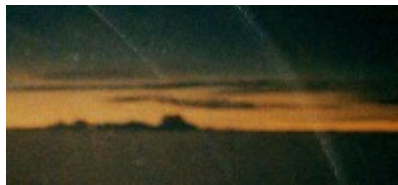
Armed with IMC privileges and still in UK Airspace, we climbed through 500' thickness of cloud at 7000' and settled ourselves at 8000 feet in the centre of the predicted path, with 5 minutes to spare. At this altitude, due south of the Isle of Wight, there were clear blue skies above and a thick white blanket below, which provided the perfect background for the shadow racing towards us from Cornwall. Photo shows just before shadow hit:



The whole "2 minutes plus" was just awesome, a word which now has to be removed from our future vocabulary - it can't be used again after this. Photo below doesn't really do any justice.



All the effects, Bailey's Beads, the Corona, the planet Venus, and finally the Diamond Ring were there, but the rich 'colour' of darkness provided an unexpected extra. The horizon was in bright sunlight, and the light from afar reflected across the white cloud below to give deep purples, dark blues and clarets rather than pitch black.



**After an unmeasurable two minutes or so, it was time to start a long descent to land in Sandown for lunch, and sit there hardly able to believe what we'd seen.**



**An appreciative word is due for the Radar Controller at Plymouth military. How many aircraft left the frequency afterwards without a word at all, not even a "frequency change" call? A reasonable number left without a short 'thanks' for the superb service over the previous 30 minutes, even if such a "thank you" is not 'standard radio procedure', to quote a phrase some of us heard just as the eclipse hit. Is anyone prepared to identify the lady pilot/co-pilot who transmitted a 3 second scream of pleasure as she had her 'total experience' somewhere off Berry Head? A lady controller on 124.15 MHz might have been more sympathetic, but our man on Plymouth Military with all his radar blips swarming was not amused, but who can blame him with his responsibilities at the time, and everyone else having fun. Thanks again from G-AZWD, anyway, whoever you were.**

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