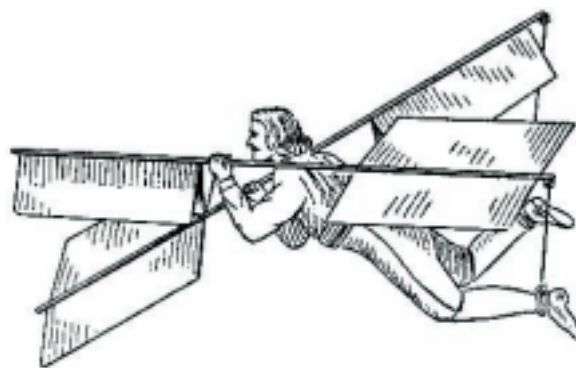


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Another milestone in flight



From the earliest days, man has dreamt of flying. From drawings on stone pyramids and Icarus' demise in Greek mythology to Leonardo da Vinci's prescient drawings of flying machines, we have been preoccupied by flight.

Then at the dawn of the 20th century, man's dream became reality. Brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright finally got off the ground in machines that were heavier than air. Their first flight in 1903 covered just a few feet and lasted only a few seconds. Little could they have known how significantly their invention was to change the world.



Six years later in 1909, attracted by a £1000 prize offered by the London Daily Mail, Louis Blériot made the historic flight across the English Channel in 37 minutes in what was his fourth monoplane and first truly successful aircraft, the Blériot XI.

Another ten years of development saw Alcock & Brown make the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic from Newfoundland to Ireland in June 1919. Their flight lasted 16 hours and 27 minutes in their adapted Vickers Vimy twin engine bi-plane.

The news of the adventure spread like wildfire and the two men were received as heroes in London. For their accomplishment, Winston Churchill who was then Britain's Secretary of State presented them with Lord Northcliffe's Daily Mail prize of £10,000. A few days later King George V knighted both men at Buckingham Palace in recognition of their pioneering achievement.

Another eight years passed until in May 1927 Charles Lindbergh gunned the engine of the "Spirit of St Louis" and aimed her down the dirt runway of

Roosevelt Field, Long Island. Heavily laden with fuel, the plane bounced down the muddy field, gradually became airborne and barely cleared the telephone wires at the field's edge. The crowd of 500 thought they had witnessed a miracle. Thirty-three and one half-hours and 3,500 miles later he landed in Paris, the first to fly the Atlantic alone.

Working as a mail pilot a year earlier he heard of the \$25,000 prize for the first flight between New York and Paris. Backed by a group of St. Louis businessmen, Lindbergh supervised the building of his special plane and set out after the prize. Other teams were attempting the feat - some had met disaster. Lindbergh equipped himself with four sandwiches, two canteens of water and 451 gallons of gas. Midway through the flight "sleet began to cling to the plane.

On the evening of May 21, he crossed the coast of France, followed the Seine River to Paris and touched down at Le Bourget Field. The waiting crowd of 100,000 rushed the plane. He became an instant hero, "the Lone Eagle." New York City gave him the largest ticker tape parade ever; the president awarded him the Distinguished Flying Cross. His feat electrified the nation and inspired enthusiastic interest in aviation.

Travelling in an unpressurised cockpit Lindbergh had had to fly the entire distance 'below the weather' and it was to be another ten years before the world saw the first ever pressurised airliner, the Boeing 307 Stratoliner, go into service in 1938

The invention of the jet engine in the late 1930's brought incredible changes, but more than ten years passed before the British de Havilland Comet took to the air in 1949 and went into commercial service in 1952. More dramatic changes in the way we travelled the world took place in the following decade, the Boeing 707 entered regular service and flight boundaries were pushed to new limits.

The 1960's saw man in space. In the spaceship Vostok 1, Senior Lieutenant Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin orbited earth one time at an altitude of 187 3/4 miles (302 kilometres) for 108 minutes at 18,000 miles an hour.