



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

FAI celebrates the 110th anniversary of Louis Blériot's historic Channel crossing

Lausanne, Switzerland, 25 July 2019 – **Exactly 110 years ago, just after sunrise on 25 July 1909, the French aviator Louis Blériot took off on what was to become the first ever flight in an airplane across the Channel.**

The feat allowed him to claim a £1,000 prize offered by the Daily Mail newspaper – an incentive that prompted him to attempt the journey and beat rival French aviator Hubert Latham.

Flying at approximately 72km/h and at an altitude of 76m above sea level, he piloted his 25-horsepower monoplane from near Calais in France to the English coast, arriving in Dover some 36 minutes later.

Blériot, who had no compass or other instruments to chart his course, landed close to Dover Castle after being slightly blown off course by the wind.

He had to make a “pancake” landing due to the gusty conditions, but was unhurt in the event and was quickly taken to Dover harbour where his wife and the world’s press were waiting to greet him.

The spot where he landed is now marked with a memorial: the Blériot Memorial.

The historic flight was also discussed at the 1909 FAI General Conference in Zurich, Switzerland.

FAI Secretary General at the time Georges Besançon said: “In just a few months, mechanical flight has achieved feats even optimistic aviation fans believed would take years.

“In France, which has the privilege to be a world leader in aviation at the moment, the capabilities of the monoplane have been illustrated by Louis Blériot and Hubert Latham’s unforgettable, historic performances.”

About Louis Blériot

Born in 1872, Blériot was an inventor and engineer, as well as a keen aviator.

He developed the first practical headlamp for cars and used much of the money he made manufacturing them to finance his experiments in aviation, which included founding an aircraft manufacturing company.

He was also the first person to combine a hand/arm-operated joystick and foot-operated rudder – a basic control set up that is still in use today. He died of a heart attack in 1936.

Notes for editors

FAI logo: bit.ly/FAI_logo

About FAI

FAI, the World Air Sports Federation, is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic activities and Space records.

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For more details, please contact the FAI:

Faustine Carrera
Communication Manager
0041 21 345 10 70
communication@fai.org

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