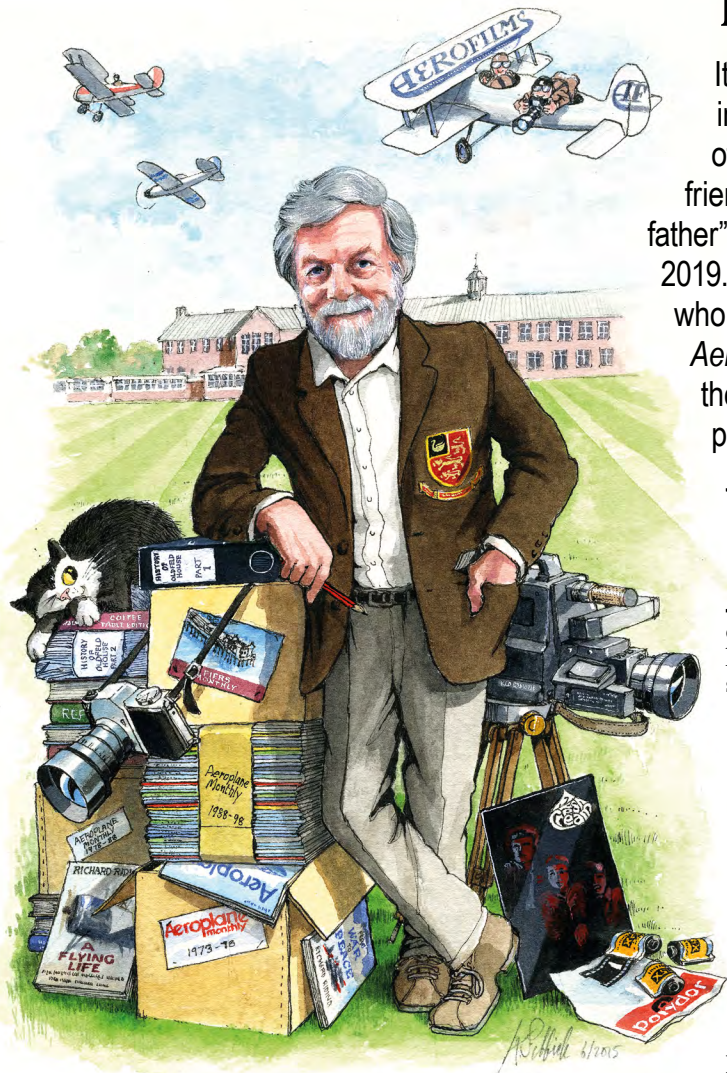


Richard T. Riding

1942–2019



1942 Born March 25, at Hayes, Middlesex
1953–58 Educated at Swanage Grammar School
1958–62 Aerial photographer, Derby Aerosurveys
1962–71 Freelance photographer
1971–73 *Flight* editorial
1973–98 Founding Editor, *Aeroplanes Monthly*
1989–91 Editor, *War in the Air*
1984–95 Editor, de Havilland Moth Club (deHMC) magazine *The Moth*
1992–2019 Freelance writer, Editor of National Piers Society magazine *Piers* and Swanage Grammar School Association magazine *The Swan*
2016–19 Director, deHMC

It was with profound shock and immense sadness that we heard of the death of former colleague, friend and *TAH's* "honorary grandfather" Richard T. Riding, on January 5, 2019. Managing Editor **MICK OAKLEY**, who worked alongside Richard at *Aeroplane* for 15 years, celebrates the life of this complex but deeply passionate publishing pioneer . . .

HOW TO SUM up Richard T. Riding? It's far from an easy task — and I worked as his right-hand man for 15 years, so I had plenty of time to fail to figure him out. But here goes, a first-paragraph-of-the-story summary: he was a mercurial maverick who brought his diverse interests, talents and experiences to bear on aviation-history journalism, and did so with great humanity and absurdist humour. He was cultured and "proper", but also a fountain of scatological jokes. He could be the life and soul of the party, and equally he could be withdrawn and reclusive. Above all, he was unquestionably life-enhancing.

This is going to be a very personal perspective on Richard — or Dicky, as so many friends and family called him — from the angle of a long-time close colleague, so I must apologise in advance if I omit any aspects of his life. I only ever called him Richard to his face (as he was my boss), but often referred to him as "Uncle Dicky" behind his back (he wasn't my uncle, but, as many people will attest, he could be most avuncular).

Making a true believer

Born on March 25, 1942, Richard Trevor Riding had aviation — and journalism, and photography — coursing through his veins from the start. His father, E.J. "Eddie" Riding, was



LEFT With model monoplane in hand, the seven-year-old Richard displays characteristic glee in this photograph taken, probably by his father Eddie, at the family home at Hendon during the Christmas of 1949. Although the establishment of the RAF Museum at Hendon was still several decades off, the aerodrome remained in use as an RAF station until late 1957.

RICHARD T. RIDING COLLECTION

OPPOSITE PAGE A wonderfully affectionate portrait of "Arty Ar" (as he often signed off correspondence) painted by KEITH SIBBICK in 2015. Commissioned by the Swanage Grammar School Association, it ingeniously brings together most of the various passions Richard pursued throughout his life, including aviation, photography and local history.

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Production and then at de Havilland. The access afforded by Eddie's job meant that Richard got to watch Mosquito engine-runs at close quarters — a powerful influence on the young enthusiast.

Another formative time for Richard began in early 1946, when Eddie left the AID and went to work for D.A. Russell (owner of *Aero Modeller* and Harleyford Publications) at his fabled aeromodelling Mecca, the Model Sportsdrome at Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire, which was about to open. "Naturally there were model aircraft all over the place", recalled Richard years later, "and my dad's office was a real glory hole, with photographs, books, magazines and large drawings all over the place. I used to spend time in the darkroom with dad and this sparked off a lifelong interest in photography". Eddie continued to create fine scale-drawings, model plans and photographs; all-in-all setting new standards of accuracy and detail in aeromodelling journalism — standards that his son would seek to emulate in his own photographic and aviation-magazine career when he grew up.

Early tragedy

Before all that could happen, though, Richard's life changed forever — just a fortnight after his eighth birthday.

On Good Friday, April 7, 1950, Eddie Riding died in the crash of Auster J/5B Autocar G-AJYM at Boston in Lincolnshire, where he had gone to report on the opening of the local flying club. Artist Stanley Orton Bradshaw was piloting 'YM, and was demonstrating the aircraft's slow-flying capabilities when it dropped a wing, entering a spin. Bradshaw took recovery action but it was too late, and the aircraft hit a high bank bordering the airfield, killing the occupants instantly. Eddie was just 34 years old.

Unsurprisingly, Richard used to describe the Autocar as his "least favourite aircraft type".

Despite this tragic blow, Richard remained in the grip of the aviation bug, immersed in his father's collection of books and photographs. Marion, one of Richard's two sisters, recalls him

an aircraft engineer more widely known as an aeromodeller, photographer, and draughtsman of scale drawings for *Aero Modeller* magazine and the Harleyford/Harborough series of books, including the multi-volume *Aircraft of the Fighting Powers*, published throughout World War Two. Eddie had begun photographing aircraft when aged 15, in 1932, and in the absence of easily obtainable colour film at the time he presciently included colour-scheme details in his notes, alongside dates and locations.

Thus Richard had a powerful role-model in his father, and spent his early years in close proximity to aircraft: he was born at Hayes, Middlesex, a stone's throw from what is now Heathrow Airport, where Eddie worked as an Aeronautical Inspection Directorate (AID) inspector, attached to the Fairey Aviation Co. Before Richard's first birthday the family moved to Hendon, where the RAF station (and former pioneering pre-World War One aerodrome) was a mere street or two away, and the frequent sound of aero-engines would promise a sighting of something interesting in the sky.

It wasn't just conventional aeroplanes, though. One of Richard's earliest memories was of V1 attacks on London in the summer of 1944. While everyone else's first instinct was to sprint for the air-raid shelters, Richard would toddle into the garden — doubtless giving his mother Marjorie a heart attack in the process — in the hope of spotting one of the flying-bombs overhead, shouting with glee, "Look, here comes another ruddy Doodlebug!".

Meanwhile Eddie had been posted from Fairey to Leavesden, working first at London Aircraft