FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 108 *December 2011*

Opening Thoughts

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Cover photograph;
Sunrise at Khartoum Airport - Martin Gosling

Chairman's Ramblings

So, it is now December all over again, Christmas is knocking on the door, and towns and cities all over the country have their decorations on display (always far too early, in my view, but that is modern commercialism) to encourage us to spend our dwindling money resources. The country – indeed the whole of Europe - is in a mega financial muddle as we are reminded ad nauseam by the media. It seems fairly obvious to me; spend more than you have got and there can only be one result. We as farmers know that well enough, but governments all over Europe seem to have lost sight of the basic principles of money management. Luckily our commodity prices are holding up fairly well, although markedly down from the heady heights of earlier this year. It doesn't take long for our suppliers to adjust their prices to take account of our increased income!

We have had an amazingly open autumn which have allowed all the winter plantings to flourish – indeed I don't think I have ever seen Oilseed Rape so forward, which at least will help against the voracious appetite of the pigeons in this area. Rainfall is a potentially serious problem – we have only had one good rain of about 1" since harvest, here in Essex, which certainly allowed the crop germination to complete. We are lucky to be on good heavy land, but those on the thinner land must be seriously worried for the soil water reserves to take the crops through to next harvest. There is certainly time in the next 3 or 4 months for the rainfall to catch up, and indeed on today's news there is flooding in Scotland after around 4" of rain fell. Last year as I wrote, it was -4°c outside. Today it is +13°c and this month is on course to be the warmest ever November. Oh yes, I forgot; it must be all due to that dreaded global warming again.

We have recently had fog and lots of high winds all giving us fewer nice days to go flying, and the very short days don't help either, but we had an excellent season of visits with our Association this year, and as always your committee wants to give a very big thank you to all of those who arranged visits and tours for us to enjoy – sometimes at short notice. We can't do it without your input, so keep the ideas coming in. Our first meeting for the next season is a London meeting to the BBC on February 1st – that's less than eight weeks away, so get your applications in for that, I have a feeling it will be well subscribed. Our thanks to our industrious Events Secretary, Rick, for arranging this, and indeed all the other events he plans and coordinates for our benefit.

Your committee wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year, and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2012.

Martin Gosling

Editors Notes

The December newsletter is usually just a short one with not a lot going on over the winter months. However, thanks to our Chairman, we have a bit of bedtime reading with a 'brief' report of just the southbound journey of his epic 2 month tour to South Africa and back. The northbound report will be published in the March newsletter and if it is as interesting as the southbound, I can't wait to read it myself.

To achieve such a journey in a light aircraft takes quite a bit of nerve, faith in the organiser, an enormous amount of patience (especially with the other participants!), the ability to cope with whatever conditions arise, a lot of time and by no means least - a fistful of dollars.

Fuel problems were near the top of the list of challenges for Martin. I hope we can get a few more years yet with avgas in the civilised world, let alone in the depths of Africa.

Our new representatives at GASCo, GACC and GAAC are now all established with these organisations and sending back some very useful and interesting information. The FFA is the biggest group of airfield owners in the country, possibly the world, and it is important that our voice is heard in high places.

GASCo looks after our safety aspects, GACC is our voice with the CAA and GAAC makes sure our strips are not forgotten when the decision makers keep moving the goal posts as they are doing with planning at the moment.

Paul Stephens

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GASCo.

Since my last report I have attended three meetings on your behalf. Firstly there was a GASCo/CAA/NATS workshop at the control centre Swanwick. This was to brainstorm the makeup of the Safety Evening programme in order to better serve the target audience (ie us lot). A very full day (set off from Bagby 0630, returned 2110!) with a lot of interesting points made. Nothing specifically relating to FFA, but much about human factors at isolated strips and the need to attract pilots who are not part of a club culture.

The next meeting was a council meeting at Marshalls of Cambridge (nearly £30 landing fee, ouch). A briefing was given on an iphone application that GASCo are developing to easily predict take off performance on your phone. An excellent tool once its completed and especially useful for strip flyers, who cannot get performance indicators from other airfield users. I had a long conversation with the CAA director of Airspace policy regarding wind turbines and their safety implications, but have to say that he was not really prepared to help much, his attitude being that if strip owners don't like new developments, they should complain to the planners, and it is not a CAA matter. The other issue that was discussed at length (and I feel probably does affect FFA membership, was the trend for older pilots with extensive "A" class experience to be moving towards microlights and LSA's to reduce operating costs. No problem there but concern is being raised by the increase in "loss of control" accidents in this category, suggesting a lack of difference training by pilots who are entitled to fly these aircraft on their existing license and perceive microlights to be "easy" compared to more complex aircraft. As a microlight instructor/examiner myself I have seen this happen a few times and agree that 20+ years of piloting a PA28 et al in no way prepares you for your first gusty approach to a short strip in a microlight (and I fly both so I am not in any way biased.) So without sounding too preachy, the message from GASCo is please ensure you get some difference training (preferably on a rough day!) before swapping types.

The final meeting was the GASCo AGM at CAA house, London. The main topic of debate here was the IMC rating and the safety implications of its potential demise. Everyone present (apart from the PPL/IR representative!) felt the IMC has contributed immensely to flight safety in the UK and would mourn its passing. The EASA replacement, the EIR (en route instrument rating) will not allow departure or arrival in IMC except in emergencies (and then with little or no training or currency!) and demands that the pilot firstly affirms that arrival point is VMC before departure and secondly declares a VFR/IFR transition point prior to departure. Yes, that sounds pretty mad to me too! The full EASA IR will be easier to obtain than the JAR IR, but that is only relative and would still be a massive undertaking for a PPL. Existing IMC holders are increasingly looking like they with be subject to assessment/testing before being allowed to continue with their privileges, so if (like me) you are contemplating an instrument rating of some sort in the near future, it is hard to know where to go. The upshot of all this from the GASCo perspective is that more pilots will just "wing it" rather than bother with an official rating, with all the associated safety implications.

My next meeting is at the AAIB in February, but if any FFA members have any issues they would like raising please contact me. Also, if you (or someone you know) has had an "incident" from a farmstrip, please could you let me know. The names/aircraft reg are not of interest to me, I just would like to start monitoring whether there is any pattern to incidents amongst our members, given the nature of our flying. All info would be strictly confidential but the lessons learnt may save another member from injury or worse. Please feel free to email me direct at thorpefield@hotmail.co.uk.

Mark Badminton

GACC.

The GACC meeting at Gatwick on the 16th November 2011 was typical of many such meetings I have attended recently in that there was a degree of soul searching as to the purpose and costs of the whole exercise. When asked by the chairman, Bob Jones, (a GA pilot) for my views, I reported that the FFA were pleased at being represented at a national forum for debating the future regulation and development of General Aviation and that members felt that they were better informed as a consequence. Fortunately the present Government seem to be keen to continue with the process of consultation even though the costs are not insubstantial.

On the agenda this time, there were reports on Security for the 2012 Olympic Games, the GA Strategic Forum, the Regulatory Review, Volcanic Ash, Standardised European Rules of the Air and CAA and NATS Research Projects. The last subject was easily the most interesting as far as I was concerned as a recent convert to the excellent Skydemonlight flight planning service and user of the AWARE GPS, both of which were promoted by NATS. More of that later.

Arising from work on the Regulatory Review it has become apparent from the study of fatal aircraft accidents that instructor standards may need to be redefined. Statistically there is hardly any discernible difference between fully regulated and the less regulated sectors, suggesting that the work carried out by the Light Aircraft Association and the British Microlight Aircraft Association, amongst others, has had very far reaching and beneficial consequences in recent years. I am tempted to suggest that a lighter hand on regulation may be the way forward.

The CAA are also beginning to accept that GPS approaches have potential benefits and I predict that we will see GNSS/GPS plates being published increasingly in the next few years.

Also on the agenda is the possibility of VFR night flying on a wider scale than hitherto.

Research projects currently include the measurement of wake turbulence from wind turbines, glider (and other light aircraft) conspicuity trials, and the provision of a simple transponder to enable all aircraft to have a transponder fitted as a mandatory requirement.

The CAA have to start issuing the new Flight Crew Licences from the 1st July 2012 but, apparently the rules and regulations have yet to be accepted by the UK Government.

In the Regulatory Review the idea of new, non-expiring Certificates of Airworthiness and Permits to Fly are being planned.

In the Any Other Business section of the meeting Charles Henry from the GAAC reported that in total 200 planning applications for Wind Turbine Farms (WTF) are being submitted to Local Planning Authorities per month. After the last GACC meeting in July, Charles had asked me for my views on the GAAC draft Guidance on WTFs to which I responded, amongst other things by stating that it lacked clear advice on the need to safeguard approach and departure routes to existing aerodromes and small flying sites and that precise flight paths should be specified in a form capable of being understood by the layman.

Hopefully the final version will be of use to farmers and others contemplating or affected by WTFs.

The next meeting of the GACC is scheduled for the 6th March 2012. If any FFA Member would like me to raise a subject of interest to aviators please let me know as soon as possible. I can provide additional information on the subjects discussed at the November 2011 meeting of GACC if Members email me at 2pk@peterkember.co.uk.

Peter Kember Dip TP, MRTPI, MRAeS,

Aviation Planning Consultant to Kember Loudon Williams LLP Managing Director of Laddingford Farm Ltd.

GAAC

The GAAC are working on all our behalves to stand the case of General Aviation, not only in connection with the new National Planning Policy Framework, which will replace the Planning Policy Statements (PPS), but are also trying to make developers and planners aware of GA when they are planning windfarms through the Airspace Initiative Windfarm Working Group.

Below is a press release summing up their activities:-

GAAC Chairman (Charles Henry) met with John Howell MP at Portcullis House.

John Howell MP is Parliamentary Private Secretary to Rt Hon Greg Clark MP the Minister for Decentralisation and Localism charged with seeing through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) legislation. The NPPF contains proposed planning guidelines which could prove critical to the continued safe operation of GA airfields.

The meeting on 1st November was also attended by Nicholas Viner (John Howell's Chief of Staff) and John Broad (LAA).

Charles Henry pointed out that there was great concern at the loss of specific guidance to planners regarding general aviation contained in Planning Policy Guidance 3 but omitted in the revised PPS3. John Howell agreed that reliance on reference to 'amenity value' in the proposed NPPF document did not do enough to feature general aviation and GAAC were asked to submit suitable wording for consideration.

John Broad pointed out that Sport England's recognition of GA as a sport was not being recognised in a number of cases of threatened airfield closures and that the NPPF did not provide the same protection in this respect as PPG 3 and was also contrary to the CAA's Strategic Review of GA.

John Howell was reminded that Yvette Cooper had assured the GA community that the PPG 3 exclusion of airfields from Brownfield site development would be carried forward into new guidelines but this had not been done.

On the subject of wind-turbines it was explained that developers and planners had no clear understanding of aviation operations and that this was causing unnecessary and costly reviews. The Airspace Initiative Windfarm Working Group includes the GAAC and has almost completed a guidance document to address this issue.

John Howell thanked the GAAC Chairman for his input and undertook to take the matters raised at the meeting for further consideration by the Minister.

Anthony Kedros

AGM, Duxford, 10th October 2011

The AGM was held at an extremely windy Duxford. Our Chairman had worked fairly hard on this one, to book a good room in the Airside Suite in one of the hangars complete with buffet lunch and a free ticket round the museum.

The official Minutes of the meeting are recorded elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Chairman summed up the year by saying how successful the FFA is, thanks to the work put in by the Events Secretary, Rick Holt and the organisers of the meetings. The meetings are well attended and luck has been on our side weather wise.

He thanked Gordon Bellerby for standing in to organise a European Tour to France following the very untimely death of Bill Burton who had a trip to Finland planned.

The Treasurer brought up a good problem, which is that the FFA have a healthy reserve of money which the Revenue could look upon as being 'unused'. Various ideas came from the floor, from sponsoring a disabled pilot to supporting the Vulcan appeal.

It was agreed to keep donating 10% of the membership fees to AOPA, GAAC, GASCo and the LAA. A one off contribution had been given to the David Corbett memorial. The Committee will further consider the financial situation at their next meeting.

The Membership Secretary declared a slight decrease in numbers, which now stands at 385. There were 9 new members in the year and 18 have left the list.

For a number of years at Committee meetings, it has been debated as to whether to make a new category of membership to accommodate a few members who don't fully qualify for full membership.

This suggested change to the Articles was brought to the AGM, but fiercely opposed by the membership. In fact it was thought that a 'hot topic' should maybe be raised at future AGMs because the floor came alive and animated at the very suggestion of allowing 'outsiders' into the Association. In fact it was probably the most vociferous FFA AGM ever to be held!

Following a minute's silence in recognition of 3 members we know of who have died so unexpectedly in the last 12 months, the speakers were introduced.

First off was our member and tame solicitor Tim Scorer. He was speaking about liability issues with farm strips, having had personal experience of a claim on his own strip. He gave a very interesting talk and asked if, following the heated debate from the floor regarding 'outsiders', whether his contribution would be allowed to absolve his conscience of maybe no longer fully qualifying to be a member, as he no longer owns a strip!

Second to speak, and unfortunately a little later than planned due to the lively AGM, Martin Robinson, CEO of AOPA, brought us up to date with all things to do with EASA. Another excellent talk trying to make sense of this shambles coming from Europe.

Members didn't take too long to depart, with worries about their aircraft rocking about on the tarmac with the strong wind and the impending weather.

Paul Stephens

Since 1st August 2011

New Members

		Strip
869	Mat Boley, Weston Super Mare, Somerset	y
870	Alan Cummings, Preston, Lancashire	
870	Colin Bayles, Buntingford, Hertfordshire	y
871	Woody Wood, Leigh, Worcestershire	y
872	Nicholas Staunton, Marlborough, Wiltshire	y

The total membership is now 388

Programme 2012

Programme 2012



Some dates for next year - more to come!

1st February	BBC Television Centre
18th / 25th April	Swanwick
8th May	Bletchley Park, Turweston
1st - 9th June	FFA Tour to Ireland
20th June	Barbury Castle Estate

Other possibilities - Roche Bentley is offering to show us round the MG Car Club of which he is the founder and Chairman. Chris Cobham has offered to organise a gliding day at Lasham.

Events such as these set above are arranged by FFA members on a voluntary basis. It is accepted by those who participate that nothing undertaken by the FFA collectively or members individually shall be construed as establishing a duty of care nor in any way removing or modifying the duties, responsibilities or obligations of pilots or land owners in relation to any event and attendance thereat. All information provided in these programmes is purely advisory and should ALWAYS be verified from official sources.

BBC Television Centre, Wednesday 1st February 2012

The London visit will be a tour of the BBC Television Centre on **Wednesday 1st February.** This starts at **10.00 and 10.15**(if numbers are greater than 22) and we are asked to be 5 minutes early for a prompt start. There will be a security check and we must not bring large bags, sharp objects, ammunition, CS gas (this is what it says!).

The tour will last 2 hours and will be at the BBC Television Centre, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ. Wood Lane is in Shepherds Bush just off the A40. The nearest tube stations are White City on the red Central Line and Wood Lane on the pink Hammersmith and City Line. There is disabled visitor access.

There are restricted photo opportunities. There is extensive (charged) parking in The Westfield Shopping Centre on Wood Lane and an NCP car park off Rockley Road in Shepherds Bush. Costs are £10pp to Rick Holt with a deadline of **6th January**.

Swanwick, Wednesday 18th / 25th April 2012

Rick Holt has arranged a trip to Swanwick air traffic control centre. This is restricted to 16 persons per day.

There will be a brief on AFPEx and the Olympics restrictions followed by a general brief on Swanwick - then lunch.

In the afternoon we will be divided into two groups to be shown the London FIR and D&D.

It is proposed to use either Lee on Solent or Popham. Apart from flying costs, the charge will be £30 including transport and lunch.

These are just brief details, but please send in your reply slip so that we can get a good idea of numbers, indicating which day you would prefer. You will receive more details nearer the time.

FFA European Tour 2012, 1st - 9th June

Plans are underway for the FFA Tour to Ireland 2012. Bernard Cullen, one of our three Irish members, is putting together a tour and an insight into the Irish way of life. Maybe a little more laid back than we are sometimes used to, but should make for a relaxing trip. The plans are coming together, but here is a brief outline. (Ballyboy is Bernard's farm strip and is approximately 30 miles northwest of Dublin.)

Friday 1st June	Arrive at Ballyboy (early afternoon)
Saturday 2nd	Local tour to local historic site and a farm visit.
Sunday 3rd	Ballyboy Fly in and BBQ, (flying farmers can join in and / or do some local flights.....)
Monday 4th	Bus journey to the Irish National Stud in Co Kildare.
Tuesday 5th	Fly south to Kilkenny/Waterford, (tours/visits to be arranged)
Wednesday 6th	Fly southwest to Cork /Kerry/Limerick
Thursday 7th	Fly northwest to Spanish Point/Galway
Friday 8th	Free day/time to fly, tour, shop...or return to Ballyboy to prepare for departure on Saturday.
Saturday 9th	Farewell lunch at Ballyboy.

We can arrange to clear custom's both inward and outward at Ballyboy, and avgas is available at the field. If anyone has any requests I am sure we can look after their needs.

Please complete the reply slip and return to Paul Stephens by the 31st January 2012, who will arrange to make one payment of your deposits to Bernard in Euros to save lots of transfers.

February/March 2011

Background

It all began way back in the spring of 2009, when I received my regular copy of Pilot magazine, in which there was an advert which stated "Fly the Sahara – a great aviation adventure" and which I thought sounded quite interesting. Within a couple of hours I had a phone call from a Paul Stephens, who began the conversation by saying quite simply – "well what do you think?" I knew exactly what he meant and thus began investigations by both of us on the logistics of the trip and the background of the organiser and ended up by us joining a group of 8 fellow aviating crews for a 10 day flying journey around Libya – a fascinating, safe and immensely enjoyable trip, but which is not the subject of this article. But what it did was to confirm that the organiser, a British ex-Army Air Corps helicopter pilot now living in Belgium with his Belgian wife was reliable, efficient and extremely capable, and wasn't about to run off with our not inconsiderable deposit without delivering the goods!

So when he emailed me in the spring of 2010 to say he was setting up another adventure, this time around the entire African continent and proposing for it to take a couple of months, Annette and I decided that, given the efficient organisation of the Libyan adventure in the winter of 2009, this could well be the flying adventure of a lifetime for us – and as I had recently retired from active farming, I could afford to be away from home for such an extended time.

The plan was for all the participants to get themselves and their aircraft to Cyprus, and from there the organiser would give us a comprehensive briefing and start leading the tour, beginning by routing through Port Said, Cairo and Luxor in Egypt and then on down into The Sudan and southwards.

And so the planning began. As it was to be, like the Libyan adventure, an escorted tour whereby the organiser is part of the tour and is responsible for every aspect of it including routing, clearances between countries, fuel planning, hotels, meals and transport and all the myriad complications involved, we actually had to do very little planning individually except ensure that the plane was serviceable and the luggage for two months was able to fit within the confines of the space available and the load limitations of the aircraft – for those of you who go abroad for your holidays, you will know how difficult it is to choose what to take for a fortnight and keep within the weight limit of Easyjet or Ryanair!

Africa as a continent today does not embrace light aviation to any great extent except in the countries around the South and so fuel availability was to be the biggest challenge of the trip. Jet fuel is available everywhere, as is car fuel, but aviation fuel was not, and so had to be shipped in to each of the airfields, in barrels, from the nearest refinery. So how much were we going to need? Well, we were each given a spreadsheet of the distances between each leg of the trip and asked to calculate, at the expected fuel burn for our individual aircraft, how much fuel we would require for each leg, including sensible reserves for a possible diversion (of which there were very few available!). This was much more complicated than would appear on the face of it, because it depended upon how much you had calculated as a reserve for each leg and therefore how much you may or may not have left at the next stop, and therefore how much you may or may not need to top up with etc.etc. We could only have the fuel in multiples of whole barrels of 205 litres (44 Gallons) and as we didn't want to leave any fuel at any of the stops because it was seriously expensive when obtained in this way, you can see how difficult and yet important these calculations were. We had better get it right because once ordered and delivered, there would be no more! After several weeks of emails to-ing and fro-ing from Sam, our organiser, prompting us to try harder with our calculations with comments such as 'it must be obvious that you can't fly that distance on that fuel' we satisfied him that on the whole the result seemed acceptable – and there could always be a little fuel trading between planes if necessary – and the order was duly dispatched to the various refineries around Northern Africa to deliver so many barrels to such-and-such an airfield on such-and-such a day in 6 months time!

Christmas came and went, as did a wet and windy January, and suddenly we were within four weeks of departure in the first week of February, when the Egyptian uprising began. Now this was a tad inconvenient because if it became any worse it would badly interfere with our plans. Sam watched the situation deteriorate and 8 days before departure told us that it was no longer safe to route through Egypt and so we would now assemble in Crete and route through Libya instead, skirting the Egyptian border to The Sudan. We completed our final preparations, ensuring the plane had a deep service and was equipped with a few essential spares such as spare plugs, a spare tube for the tyre and several other bits and pieces which might get us out of light trouble should it occur. We met our two grown-up children over the weekend – who were quite apprehensive at our apparently reckless departure through darkest Africa – assured them that our wills were in order, and then we were off.

Who is Sam?

Sam joined the army in 1990 and after Sandhurst went to the Army Air Corps for eight years as a helicopter pilot reaching the rank of Captain. After a time in Germany, Canada. Northern Ireland and Central America he left the army in 1998 to drive two pink Land Rovers from London to Sydney. He set up his company Prepare2Go in 2000 with his Belgian wife Beatrice, and have based themselves in Brussels. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, author of their "Guide to Independent Overland Travel" and chairman of the Vehicle-Based Expeditions Panel.

Whether it is a 4x4 rally across North Africa, a balloon expedition, a helicopter or fixed wing safari, then Prepare2Go has done this already. For Sam, nothing is impossible; no problem exists that has no solution, so if you are setting off into the unknown with dangers lurking around every corner then you need to be with Sam.

The Group:

The group consisted of;

1) Sam, our organiser who, being an ex-army helicopter pilot, was navigator and co-pilot to William. They flew the Robinson R44 helicopter, named 'The Egg-Whisk' and had the group call sign **Fox 8** (as the slowest aircraft with us)

2) Richard and Wendy from Yorkshire in the Grumman AA5 – call sign **Fox 7**

3) Alain who had very low hours under his belt and so brought along Steve as his safety pilot for the southbound leg in their Piper Archer – call sign **Fox 6**

4) Alistair and Charlie – both from France and Charlie spoke

very little English – in their plastic kit-built MCR 4 which ran on car fuel – call sign **Fox 5**

5) Annette and myself in our Robin DR400 – call sign **Fox 4**

6) David and Angela in the twin Cessna Crusader – **Fox 3**

7) Bernhard and Derek in their very fast Mooney – **Fox 2**

8) And finally the German Helmut who was in a Turbine engine Cessna 206 in which he has flown in and around most continents in the world – **Fox 1**. He had as a passenger, Sam's sidekick, Adam a very affable and helpful young New Zealander.

Saturday February 5th:

We had loaded up the plane the day before, and at 8 am we lifted off from the runway at home into a very strong 35kt wind, which certainly was a great help in getting our very heavily laden plane airborne. We had allowed ourselves a leisurely week to get to Crete – a journey that could have been done in 3 days, but it was February and one can never be sure of the weather at this time of the year. In the event we had no weather issues en route.

The first day we ended up in Bastia in Corsica having refuelled in the middle of France at Troyes, and then again on the South coast at Le Castellet, the home of Formula 1 testing, and where the lonely girl on the desk gave us free coffee – and her name and address for some reason.



En route through Italy

The second day we ended up in Corfu, stopping to refuel in Salerno, Italy en route. We now seemed to be well on schedule and gave ourselves an extra day here to relax and perchance met another of our participants – a couple who had left Yorkshire a couple of days before we had set off and had poor weather most of the way. Wendy was one of only two other females on the trip and at this point was extremely grumpy about the difficult progress they had had so far and already wanted to go home!! We hired a car and toured the island seeking out our honeymoon hotel of 42 years previously – the aptly named Hotel Desiree.

Now the 4th day after leaving home, we completed our journey to Crete in just over 3 hours, arriving in a strong gusty crosswind and a temperature akin to what we had left in the UK – not what we had expected at all. We settled in to our hotel and the other participants all arrived in dribs and drabs over the next 48 hours to complete the transit from the UK to the start point for our adventure. We spent a bit of time with a tour guide around town and then hired a car to search out some of the more remote parts of the island. We were accompanied by Helmut, the well qualified German pilot who was frustrated during the trip by the constant delays and whose catchphrase became 'c'mon, lets go'.

Friday February 11th:

After a leisurely breakfast and a morning on our own in town, we all assembled in the afternoon for a very extensive 2½ hour briefing and we then all went out to dinner to prepare for a 4 am alarm call for a pre-dawn departure.


Market shopping - Crete

Saturday February 12th:

I had a bad night with very little sleep – no voice and lots of coughing, but the excitement of the impending adventure soon perked me up. We went through all the airport formalities in the dark and checked all out planes over by torchlight, and then we were taxiing out ready for the off. Air Traffic asked us to climb to 11,000 ft which was a bit of a surprise as we are more used to mooching around between 2000 and 4000 ft, however together we struggled up there taking about 20 minutes to do so, while watching the sun come up in a pink glow before breaking out over the horizon.

A 3 hour flight, mostly over the sea, brought us to Benghazi where our refuelling was fairly efficient, and appeared to be extremely cheap (which we were quite suspicious about, but didn't want to say anything in case they doubled the price!) but we had to wait a considerable time for clearance to fly to our next stop, Kufra. Finally clearance arrived with just enough daylight in prospect for the slowest aircraft for the long flight before sunset. Adam in the advance party was trying hard to chase up the promised fuel, but as it was military fuel they had to get permission from the Big Cheese in Tripoli for it to be released for civilian use. They had had the request for 8 days but no one had actually bothered to make the call to Tripoli! By 7 pm, still waiting and now in the dark, permission had apparently been given by the Big Cheese, but the airfield said they hadn't received it, so at 8.30 we gave up and went to our hotel (well, they called it a hotel, but it was in reality an appalling dump).

Sunday February 13th:

With the fuel now promised for 8 am, the busses arrived and we gladly left the awful hotel and returned to the airfield to start the wait all over again. About 9:30 the bowser appeared - and drove straight past the aircraft and out of the airfield. It finally reappeared at 10:40 to start refuelling, which was finally completed by lunchtime. While this was going on a frantic phone call was received from Benghazi to say that a mistake had been discovered in our fuel payments and we had been charged at a price for the much cheaper jet fuel and would we mind awfully if we stumped up the difference!

When refuelled, we were supposed to fly about 4 hours to Dongola and then a further hour and a half to Merowe for the night, but the delays meant that we would not be able to get beyond Dongola in the Sudan that day before nightfall, and as it was most definitely not a place either for us to stay the night or leave the aircraft we were forced into staying another night at Kufra in – you've guessed it – our favourite grotty hotel.

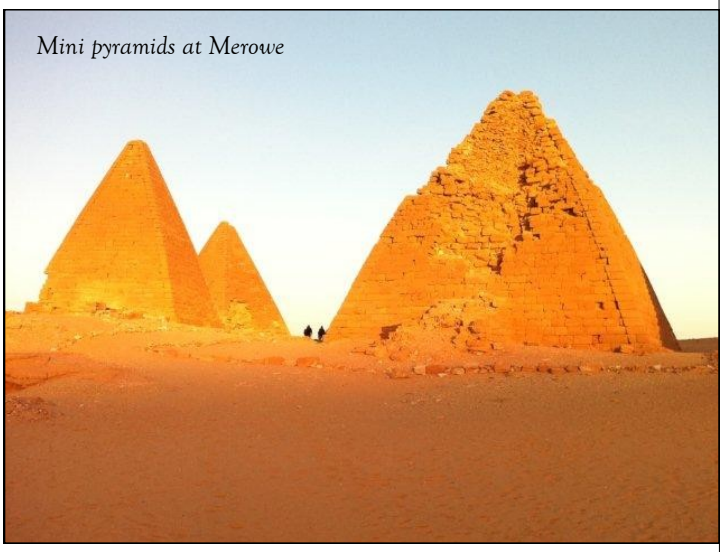
Monday February 14th:

The planned pre-dawn departure never happened, and finally

permission to enter The Sudan arrived and at 7:45 we set off over featureless desert for Dongola, our airport of entry. During this 4 hour leg, I began to notice my rev. counter needle begin to twitch, a movement which became more and more jerky, until it was moving erratically between 500 revs and 2700 revs and then with an almost audible sigh it went and sulked down on the stops and refused to take any further part in my flying until we arrived in Stellenbosch in South Africa two weeks later. Fortunately it is not overly difficult to fly fairly accurately with reference to throttle position, indicated airspeed and one's ears (although mine are pretty clapped out thanks to years of shooting!). This long leg required a dog leg to avoid the Egyptian border, which you will remember was definitely Not a Good Place to Go. Sat Navs are wonderful things and we all made the dogleg and avoided interception from Egyptian fighters and arrived at Dongola to experience our first attempt at refuelling from drums – which went quite well, if a little messily. We had all been asked to bring as part of our equipment some fuel pumps, and there were a variety of examples, from mine costing about a tenner to some very exotic examples costing many times that – but at the end of the day they all did the same job.

The usual faffing around by officials took 6 hours before we got onward clearance to our overnight stop at Merowe which has a brand new airfield about 2 miles from the original one. I carried 2 GPS's in the plane and each GPS showed a different airfield as the destination. Guess which one I went to?! As we had our passports checked, we were told by officials that Dongola had failed to stamp our passports with the correct entry stamp, and they couldn't do it at Merowe because they were not an Airport of Entry. Great, so now we are illegal immigrants with no visas! A two hour impasse followed and eventually permission was granted by the high and mighty in Khartoum with the proviso that we must return at 8 am in the morning to immediately depart for an Airport of Entry, which is Khartoum.

We now discovered that because we were a day behind schedule (remember the extra day in the grotty hotel in Kufra?) the beautiful and luxurious hotel we were to go to was fully booked with no other hotels available. The hotelier had pity on us and offered for us to bed down in a completely bare annexe that just had some bed frames and some mattresses on the floor, and gave us a large pile of blankets to share around. Annette and I, as one of



Mini pyramids at Merowe

two married couples, had a room to ourselves, but most of the others had to share either 3 or 4 to a room. The toilet sat in splendid isolation in the middle of the yard with nothing at all except a door and an aromatic hole in the ground. The cold tap outside the door reclassified it as a bathroom.

Tuesday February 15th:

8 am back at the airfield dragged on for a 10 am clearance to leave, but then Khartoum said we couldn't land before 2 pm. We thought we would go anyway and see what happened when we got there, and in the event there was no problem and they accepted us all as and when we arrived. Khartoum is an extremely busy airport which is the centre of UN humanitarian flights and our 8 aircraft were squeezed tail to tail and with overlapping wings into a space you would normally expect to park 2 aircraft. We set about drum refuelling which was quite tricky in the confined space, but every time we started the process, a little man came and told us to stop as it was his job, and no doubt was expecting a substantial payment for doing it. When he turned his back to tell the next plane to stop, the previous plane just started doing it again! Eventually he admitted defeat in the face of 8 very determined Brits and let us get on with it.

With our passports now having the correct stamps in them, we were bused to the very comfortable Assaha Hotel where we reacquainted ourselves with such luxuries as toilet seats, loo paper, towels, clean sheets, hot water and soap, and where we had an extremely pleasant dinner.

Wednesday February 16th:

Wednesday was scheduled as a rest day for the team and after a leisurely start we went to ride some horses along the banks of the Nile, but by the time we arrived the sun was beating down and it was deemed to be too hot for the horses, so we spent a pleasant hour chatting to the new leaseholders – a couple from Dorset who had only been there for 4 weeks, and happened to know my niece when she worked at a stables in Newbury. It's a small world! On our way home we stopped at a traditional brickworks – of which there are many along the banks of the Nile. The bricks were fashioned from Nile mud, fairly crude in shape and baked in makeshift kilns fired with dried dung. The unbaked bricks were dried in the sun at the river's edge and then carried to the kiln stack on a crude wooden stretcher by two men who counted the number of journeys, and therefore the number of bricks, by moving a stone from the "to be done" pile to the "deliveries completed" pile – a system probably unchanged since the time of the Pharaohs.

Thursday February 17th:

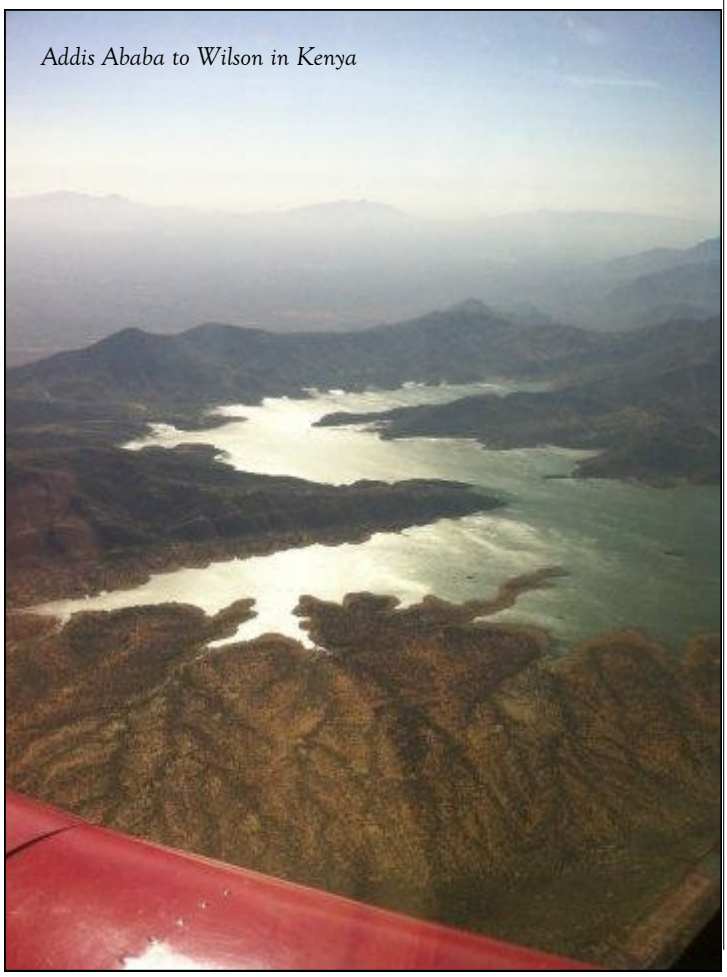
Refreshed after our day of rest, we had an early start for today's journey to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The Mooney and the Cessna had sufficient range to fly direct and would leave mid-morning. The rest of us were to route through a drum refuelling stop at Damazin in Southern Sudan. Khartoum airport is extremely busy and it was some time before Air Traffic gave our clearances. Initially I was the only one of the group to get a clearance and so I set of for the holding point threading my way through the parked aircraft to be No: 12 in the queue for takeoff. Khartoum has no dedicated taxiway, so all the big boys had to backtrack down the runway before lining up to take off, so now you may get an idea as to how long this procedure was going to take. The sun was already getting hot, and I was waiting so long at the hold that my oil temperature and all the cylinder head temperatures were way up into the red with warning lights going off for all of them – something I have seen neither before nor since. I had no option but to shut the engine down to let everything cool down. Ten minutes later I was cleared for takeoff and good airflow let the temperatures stabilise normally. The rest of the

aircraft followed in dribs and drabs as the traffic allowed.

The 2 hour flight to Damazin took us between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, which although hazy for the most part was a lovely flight. On arrival there were many important looking people hanging around waiting to welcome the British Ambassador and a UN delegation who were due in at that time – so were somewhat bemused to see 6 small British registered planes turn up! Wendy had been very unwell on the way to Damazin, and David had offered to give her a ride in the twin which was speedier and more stable than being with Richard in the Grumman, and thus she could get to Addis Ababa more rapidly to get her head down to recover.

Barrel refuelling complete, we lined up in turn to take off from the runway which was in poor condition, with a broken tarmac surface and shallow potholes. Four of us were airborne and on our way, with David starting his takeoff run and Richard waiting to follow. Suddenly Richard, in Fox 7 came on the radio the chilling words 'Fox 3 has just nose-dived into the runway on take-off'. Everyone's blood ran cold, but fortunately about 30 seconds later he gave a more sensible report that the Cessna's nose gear had collapsed just before becoming airborne and he had slid along the runway nose down stopping just before the airfield boundary. No one was hurt, but the plane was a write off and that was the end of the adventure for David and Angela. Because the runway was blocked the 4 planes that were airborne couldn't return and Fox 7, who was still on the ground, couldn't leave (and incidentally, nor could the British Ambassador and his delegation!) Sam in the Egg Whisk was able to return and land off the runway to help sort out the mess while the remainder of us continued on our way to Addis Ababa.

Southern Sudan is not the place to be in a crisis and it was a quite extraordinary stroke of luck that the British Ambassador was visiting that day, his first visit for many years, and following the referendum which separated Sudan into two countries.



Addis Ababa to Wilson in Kenya

Sam's negotiating skills were able to achieve for those affected a lift back to Khartoum with the Ambassador in his convoy of cars with an armed escort – an interesting adventure in its own right taking 8 hours on rarely maintained roads.

We, who were already airborne, took 3 hours to get to Addis and the terrain became greener but also more rugged, leaving the dusty desert behind. There are farms everywhere with shiny tin-roofed huts and dwellings, and the ground became higher the closer we got to Addis, forcing us to climb to over 10,000 feet where the air was hot and unstable. About 90 miles out we came across a totally flat plateau at well over 8000 feet which appeared to be farmed in a very organised way, separated into reasonable sized arable fields, and with no trees at all. I was intrigued as to how they logistically did the harvesting at that altitude and how they got the produce down to market.

Landing at Addis was not the problem we had imagined despite it being at an altitude of over 7500 feet – the runway was over two miles long. Takeoff with max all-up weight at the altitude in hot temperatures, where the air is so much thinner, may be another issue all together when we leave. We met up with the two other aircraft which had flown direct from Khartoum, and told them the sorry saga about the accident to Fox 2.

We now had 9 people from the group in Addis, two in Khartoum going back to the UK, two in Khartoum coming on to Nairobi by commercial and four trying to sort out the mess in Damazin. We were well spread out! The first thing we discovered in Addis was that there was no sign of our fuel supplies, and our organiser was 300 miles away in another country. We were due to fly on to Kilimanjaro and the Serengeti the next day, but as the day progressed it became more and more obvious that the promised fuel, which was supposed to have been roaded in from Khartoum to await our arrival wasn't even in the country, and as the excuses became more and more bizarre, we doubted whether it had actually even left the depot 900 miles away in Khartoum. This put us in a muddle, particularly as we had no organiser with his range of contacts.

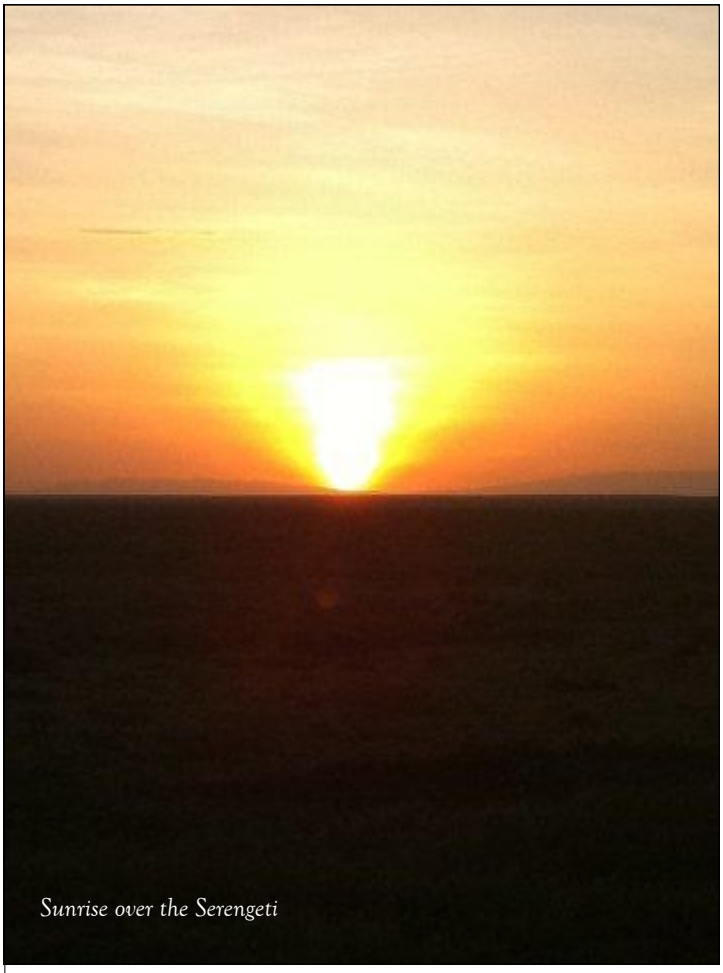
So we organised ourselves into different responsibilities; Derek in the Mooney happened to be wearing a jumper with 4 gold bars, so he was immediately put into overall charge, and others were variously given their own duties, such as officer i/c fuel procurement; officer i/c accommodation; officer i/c meals; officer i/c entertainment; officer i/c transport and officer i/c tours. It all worked very well and we became a rather good cohesive unit – which was just as well because we were to be stuck in Addis for three days. For these three days we exhausted every avenue we could to try to get fuel. We were told we would be able to buy 3 barrels from a local company and it would cost the exorbitant price of $5/litre. We would pay anything to have some fuel so we collected $3000 from the pilots and went off to get the fuel. At the depot the manager said he couldn't take foreign currency, so off went the officer i/c fuel procurement to the local bank and changed it all into Ethiopian money. Back at the depot, the manager, when offered a fist full of Ethiopian cash now said he couldn't after all let us have it because it was duty free and for the exclusive use of the Ethiopian training fleet. Even the offer to pay the duty on top of the $5/barrel wouldn't move him, so now we were at an impasse with no fuel and $3000 dollars worth of useless Ethiopian money! We had been in constant text contact with Sam, and now with three days of frustration and three different hotels, we finally said he would have to do something to help us out, and so 24 hours later he had hired a Cessna Caravan from Wilson airfield, bought 3 barrels of avgas and had flown it 4 hours up to us in Addis, arriving at 11 am on the third day.

10 Sunday February 20th:

Having offloaded the 3 barrels, frantic hand pumping got all the aircraft refuelled by soon after 12 and Sam asked us to be as quick as we could in preparing to depart so that we would make our next stop at Barclays, a private farm up in the hills of Kenya, before nightfall. At this point two of the crews mutinied and said they weren't going that day as they could see no point in probably only getting half way to their next destination and having to have another unscheduled overnight stop. Fox 2 and ourselves rapidly prepared for departure to Lokichoggio for a quick refuel there before a dash to the farm strip at Barclays, an hour and a half away in the hills before dark. The refuelling was quick and formalities completed and off we went, followed by the Mooney. The take off was uneventful, even though the airfield was at 7500 feet and it was the hottest part of the day making the air even thinner. We were at maximum weight, but there was plenty of runway available and we used less than a third of it – the Robin is a good performer.

Three hours flying saw us at Lokichoggio where we dashed around doing all the formalities of customs, immigration, getting visas and refuelling – again from drums, and just as soon as we were able we jumped in, fired up and departed in great haste for the hill strip at Barclays, about which we knew nothing except that it was grass in a grass landscape and at over 7000' altitude – and dusk was fast approaching.

The beauty of our GPS systems is that if you punch in your destination, they give a constant update of your arrival time dependant on your speed over the ground – and in this case it soon became obvious that our arrival was going to be on or just after sunset, at an unknown strip with unknown hazards at 7000 feet. There would have been no margin for error and no diversion in range with runway lighting – so we both agreed that it was better to be live cowards than dead heroes, and so returned to Loki for the night, where we stayed in the 748 camp for visiting pilots. This was way off the tourist trail and it was fascinating to drive through this small shack town with the young people waving to us, but also to see the nomadic Turkana tribesmen and women wearing coloured beaded rings around their necks stretching four to six inches under their chins. The evening was spent drinking and having dinner with Mike, a helicopter pilot who had had to make a weather diversion to Loki 3 days previously and was very good company and was fascinated by the adventure we were all undertaking.



Sunrise over the Serengeti

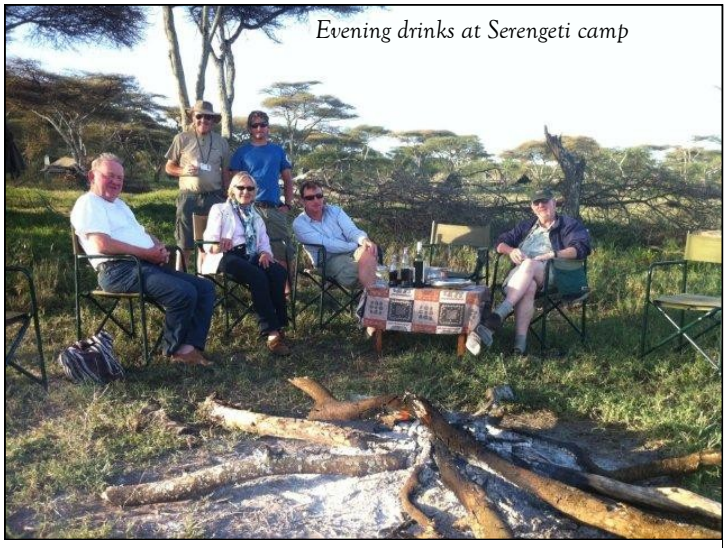


Wilson Airport Immigration

Monday February 21st:

We left Loki early next morning, by-passing our destination of Barclays due to time constraints and the desire to get to our camp in the Serengeti, for our 3 hour flight to Nairobi Wilson airfield which is the home of general aviation in Kenya, mostly over high ground necessitating FL 085 and then later FL 105, but the landing at Wilson was only to refuel, as we wanted to try to catch up on some of the lost time, and to get at least one day in the safari camp in the Serengeti Game Park. The original schedule was for two days in the camp – but those who mutinied at Addis Ababa would now be flying to Zanzibar via Wilson Nairobi, missing out on one of the highlights of the whole trip. Leaving Wilson, we had to make an intermediate stop at Kilimanjaro for customs clearance into Tanzania, and then we had a one hour onward flight routing over the vast Ngorongoro crater to one of the gravel strips serving the Serengeti. These strips must be treated with great care so as not to damage the propeller or airframe from loose stones, and very judicious use of the throttle is called for at all times on the ground.

From the strip we were driven to the camp by the aptly named Livingstone, seeing many animals en route including watching a lion making a half-hearted attempt at stalking a Zebra, and then meeting up again with Helmut, Adam and William, and swopping stories around the campfire. So now our little party, reduced to 4 for the last couple of days, has risen to 7 – but with still no leader in sight.


Evening drinks at Serengeti camp

Tuesday February 22nd:

Sleeping in individual tents with open air showers, we were woken before dawn for our early morning game drive, seeing the plains come alive as the day lightened, beginning with a cheetah padding down the road-side on a hunt for its early morning breakfast.

The most memorable sight was a herd of Wildebeest assembling for its annual migration. It would be impossible to put a number on them, but probably hundreds of thousands, as they stretched from one horizon to the other over the flat plainlands. Game drive over we had a quick brunch before returning to the strip for our departure to refuel at Kilimanjaro and then the onward flight to Zanzibar – 'The Spice Island'. At last, on our way to this coastal island, we were finally able to descend to 2000 feet – we had been manfully struggling along at between FL 085 and FL 115 for the last ten days. En route we heard Foxes 5 and 6 on the radio on their way from Wilson, and we all landed within a short time of one another. As soon as we were on the ground, Alistair from Fox 5 came over to me, pointed a finger and said "Don't dare mention the Serengeti" clearly disappointed that he had not made more effort to get there. Sam flew in commercially from Wilson, where those who had remained in Khartoum had also rejoined their own Fox aircraft – so finally the whole team was together again with a leader – Derek very happy to hand over the reins of his temporary leadership. But now the moaning and bitching of the planning and organisational failure really started – which I found most offensive.

The taxi to The Swahili Hotel stopped in the middle of the rundown district, the driver announcing that it was as far as he could go, and that we would have to walk the remaining 300 yards carrying our cases. This filled us with foreboding as to what sort of a hotel we were about to find, but having commandeered a handcart for $2, we rounded a corner and were relieved to find our hotel was an oasis of splendour in the middle of this decaying district.

Wednesday February 23rd

An early morning departure was planned for our next stop – the resort island of Barazuto off the coast of Mozambique where we were to relax for a couple of days. However our clearances to enter Mozambique had not materialised by nightfall, so we had a guided tour of Stone Town, the capital of Zanzibar which included looking around the most incredible market place I have ever seen with every type of meat and vegetables (including a room with little light, full of chickens of every description – live ones, some with no feathers on, big ones, little ones, dead ones, some cooked, others uncooked), and all accompanied by a continual swarm of flies giving the very real risk of Montezuma's revenge to unsuspecting Westerners. During the afternoon we had a so-


Mount Kilimanjaro


Zanzibar narket


Bazaruto Airfield shuttle bus


Bazaruto Island frienship

bering visit to the old slave market. The underground holding cells were small, low-ceilinged and uncomfortably hot and humid and the air full of suffering and of the ghosts of men and women for whom hope and freedom were lost forever. David Livingstone, who died in Rhodesia and visited Zanzibar twice, was appalled by the inhumanity of the slavery market, on both occasions writing to the British Government asking for its abolition.

Our guide was the chief guide on the island who spoke excellent English and was exceptionally knowledgeable with a wonderful turn of phrase. He was one of 23 children fathered from 2 wives, who then had 87 grandchildren. The more children and grandchildren there were in a family indicated a family of wealth as the children were all expected to contribute to the upkeep of the parents. Up to 4 wives were allowed for a man!

No clearance was received by lunchtime so we all spent the afternoon swimming in a tepid sea and relaxing.

Thursday February 24th:

We still had no clearances by breakfast time, but by mid-morning we heard that the clearances had been issued by the Ministry of Defence so went to the airport in anticipation. We hung around, having lunch in the airport, but the Mozambique CAA had not released the clearances, so travel that day was out and we returned to a different hotel, relaxed by the sea and had a wonderful candle-lit dinner on the beach under the stars

Friday February 25th:

Our clearances came through after breakfast, and everyone went to the airport for a rapid departure to try to make up a bit of lost time. We stopped for refuelling at Pemba, a flight of three hours and which resulted in the AIS lady charging us for everything she could possibly think of; immigration ($10), visa ($25), customs ($10), landing, parking, and navigation inbound and outbound ($50). Our plea that the only words spoken by Air Traffic were 'Runway in use 17, cleared to land' and that we had done our own navigation and therefore hardly merited $50 fell entirely on deaf ears. The night was spent in the Pemba Dive and Bush Camp, which was about as good as it sounds – pretty basic. But the braai was good and we met a couple who were sailing around the coast of Africa and had stopped off for a week or so in the camp, and told us that Somali pirates were working the Mozambique channel off the coast, which is 1000 miles South of Somalia – we all made a mental note not to have a forced landing in the area. A scorpion scuttling across the floor of our hut as we prepared for bed reminded us to check our shoes before waddling off to the loo in the night.

Saturday February 26th:

Today we are finally going to Bazaruto Island – surely! Foxes 1 and 3 both had the range to go the 600 miles direct, but the rest of us needed to refuel en route. There were two options within range, Beira which had no avgas, and Quelimane which was closer and said they had, so we flight planned there. Beyond that the nearest was Vilanculos, which none of us had the range to reach. With Fox 1 and 3 having gone direct, we, in Fox 4 became the leaders and when within radio range of Quelimane asked for landing instructions and requested confirmation of avgas. 'Negative avgas' was the reply. Somewhat taken aback, I asked them to reconfirm their reply, which was exactly the same, 'negative'. This put us in a quandary because we were therefore out of reach of any avgas and were past our point-of-no-return. On our chat frequency I passed the message back to the others and there was a palpable silence for quite a while. Sam came on the radio and asked if we would all be prepared to use mogas, and

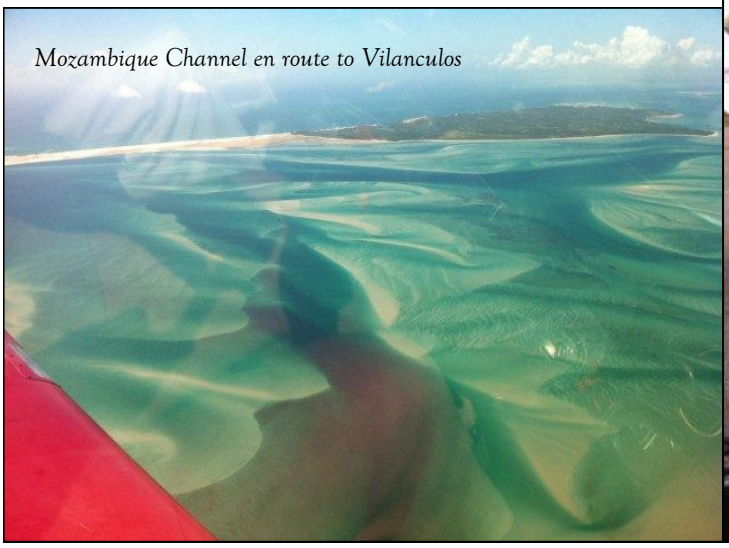

Annette and friend at Pemba

if so, to start managing our tanks so that the addition of mogas would be as near as possible a 50/50 mix. Fox 8, the Egg Whisk couldn't because he had an injected engine, but the fixed wings all said they were happy with the idea except Alain in Fox 6, the most inexperienced pilot amongst us, who steadfastly refused to have anything to do with mogas in any shape or form – his engineer said he shouldn't and anyway it would invalidate his insurance.

Foxes 4, 5, 6 & 7 all put down in Quelimane to discuss our options. Fox 8 had the range – just – to go on to Biera which, although known to have no avgas, was nearer to Vilanculos if a truck drive to collect a barrel of avgas became necessary. On the ground we had a big discussion and it was decided that we should get as much mogas from a filling station as we were able to in our spare cans and temporary bladder tanks, and share it out amongst us. Alain continued to refuse, despite our best efforts at persuasion that it really wouldn't hurt the engine in the short term, that I had done it many times in the past, that my engineer was comfortable about it and the insurance issue was irrelevant if he wanted to continue the journey. He just wasn't prepared to listen to many voices with more experience – but that was of course his perogative as captain. His frustration boiled over and he said he was now washing his hands of Sam and sorting the problem himself. He had friends in South Africa who he would contact to fly a barrel up to him.

Unable to persuade him, the remaining 3 of us shared out the 135 litres we had source from town, and completing all airfield formalities, took off on the two hour flight to Bazaruto Island, leaving Alain behind with his frustrated safety pilot Steve. Suffice it to say that the engines ran faultlessly on the fuel blend on our direct track across the Indian Ocean and overhead the potential Somali pirates and we arrived to meet up again with Foxes 1 & 3 who were happily enjoying a beer and a swim in the pool. Almost as soon as we landed, we were surrounded by a group of young black boys clamouring to invite us to have a model of our aircraft carved for us overnight. Their enterprise was rewarded by every one of the pilots agreeing to have a model made for the sum of $20 a throw. They rushed off to get some wood and a hot iron and started their endeavours by sitting on the side of the parking area and working by eye – first carving away with a sharp knife and then applying the markings by means of the hot iron burning the darker colours into the wood and then adding the registration letters.

The Egg Whisk was at Beira and Sam was just negotiating the hire of a pick-up truck to drive to Vilanculos when a Cherokee 6 landed. More in hope than expectation William wandered up and explained their predicament, when the pilot said he had a stash of avgas in Jerry cans in a shed and was prepared to give



Mozambique Channel en route to Vilanculos



Overnight model makers

them 60 litres – enough to get to Vilanculos. How lucky was that! It was great reluctance that he accepted any payment at all, such is the friendship within the worldwide flying community.

We watched Alain's daily blog and after a couple of days Steve said that he would have to leave commercially as he had a scheduled flight to catch in Johannesburg to get home by a certain date. This put Alain in a further muddle because he now no longer had a safety pilot and he was not confident enough to fly on his own. So now he needed both Avgas and a safety pilot from his South African friends of his. It would be March 4th before his rescuers finally turned up with both these items, by which time the rest of the team were taking a fortnight off before setting off Northbound.

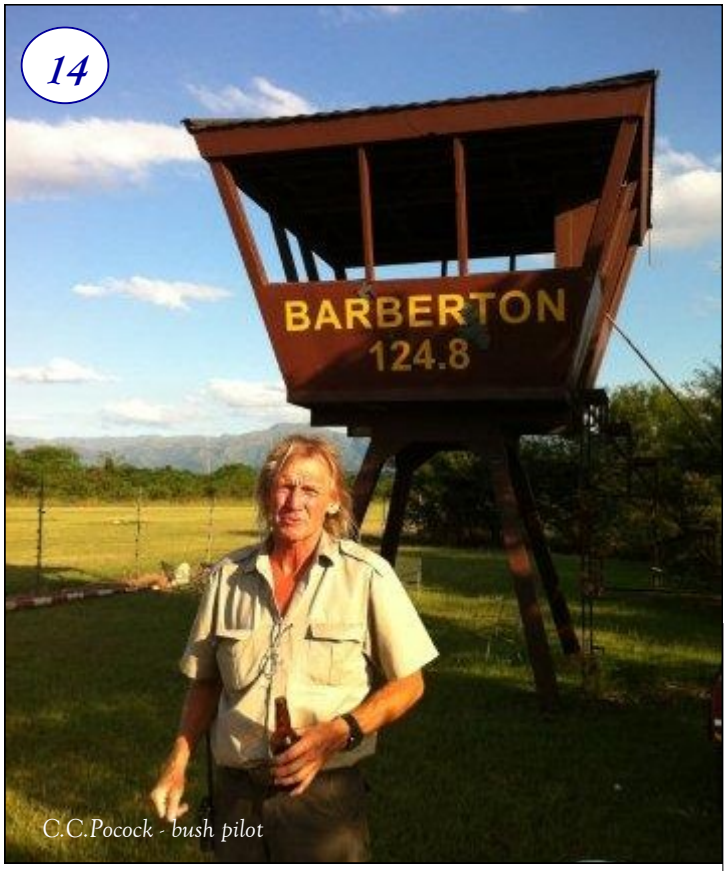
Sunday February 27th:

A day spent entirely relaxing at the resort. The Egg Whisk appeared mid-morning having refuelled and over-nighted at Vilanculos, so now we were again all together – except the grumpy Fox 6 crew stuck in Quelimane.

A meeting was convened in the afternoon to discuss all the problems of the southbound trip so far, and some pretty forthright views were expressed so as to hopefully ensure that the Northbound went more smoothly. I personally felt there were



Anal police at Kruger International



C.C.Pocock - bush pilot

some very unreasonable views expressed bearing in mind that it was Africa and that it was going to be an adventure rather than a Thompsons 5* holiday.

The enterprising boys reappeared at our hotel mid-afternoon with four models for us – all very rough and ready, but surprisingly identifiable to the real things. They now give us treasured memories of the island and those boys.

Monday February 28th:

Left Bazaruto after breakfast for the short flight across the Mozambique Channel to the mainland where we refuelled at Vilanculos. Here Sam surprisingly announced that he would not be escorting us onwards to Cape Town, but would be returning to his home in Belgium to confirm preparations for the northbound sector in a fortnight's time. So we were all on our own for the remaining 800 miles, and we all elected to take different routes and timings after we had cleared into South Africa at Kruger International. Kruger is a relatively new airport with a terminal that is rather attractively thatched, but here we met the most anal officialdom of the whole trip. We were asked to empty the plane of our entire luggage for checking, but I just wasn't about to do that. I suggested that they do it themselves if they wished, but I was damned if I was going to help them. I stood aside and watched their enthusiasm wane as they got more and more into the detritus of 4 weeks non-stop flying, until they just shrugged their shoulders and wandered off to find easier prey.

Lunch and formalities completed we flew the short 20 miles to Barberton airfield, a small grass strip which is home to C.C. Pocock, a legendary African bush pilot who trains pilots in improving their flying skills and not being afraid of searching out their aircraft's performance envelope, and also in the considerable art of tricky bush flying. He has written a book detailing in depth bush flying and its complexities. We barbecued on the porch of his clubhouse, swapping flying stories until bed beckoned. The next morning a few of us were given a half hour of C.C's time in our own aircraft to sharpen up our own skills and to be encouraged to 'explore the envelope', mostly associated with slow-flying skills

Tuesday March 1st:

'Training' over we began our last part of the journey to Stellenbosch where GOSL was to have a belated and well-earned 50-hour check. We flew past Durban for refuelling at Margate on the South Coast, and then on down the coast to Port Alfred which is the home to the 43rd Training Wing, the largest organisation for training South African commercial pilots. Here we met up with William in his Egg Whisk and spent the evening with some friends of his at a nice local restaurant, eating Springbok carpaccio and Kudu steak.

Wednesday March 2nd:

Either the Springbok or the Kudu had had the worst possible effect on me during the night and I woke up with my internal mechanism rather disturbed in both departments, and wondered how I would be able to cope with 4 hours flying to get to Stellenbosch. We decided to risk the journey and with a liberal dose of Imodium and Annette having many precautions in place for me, we routed via Mossel Bay 2½ hours away, for fuel, which was completely deserted except for a single instructor with no students, and who didn't much like the way I looked! William arrived about an hour later in the Egg Whisk having battled a 30 knot headwind giving him a groundspeed of a mere 50 knots. This gave me a little time to try to rest, but it didn't much improve the way I felt, and so we pushed on for the final hour and a half. Stellenbosch was hiding behind some hills and we had to thread our way through them on the approach with Annette becoming ever more alarmed at my demeanour, and wondering if she was going to have to exercise some untried landing skills. In the event, the landing surprised us both and we taxied up to the Stellair hangar where John Watts the chief engineer was waiting to give her a well earned service and to install a new tacho cable which had been flown out from the UK. He took one look at me and suggested I go and sit in his reception area, while asking Annette what on earth had happened to me!

And so it was that 26 days and 65 flying hours later we finally touched down at 3.30 in the afternoon at Stellenbosch to complete our southbound journey through Africa. There should have been some sort of celebration, but I still felt gruesome enough to flop into that chair in the Stellair reception and fall fast asleep.

Next episode; two weeks relaxing on our own, and then the northbound adventure.....

Martin Gosling



Awaiting 50 hour check at Stellenbosch

FLYING FARMERS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the 37th A G M

Duxford, 10th October 2011

Present: M.Gosling (Hon. Chairman), P. Stephens (Hon Secretary), A Cragg (Hon Treasurer), G.Bellerby (Committee Member), P.Young (Committee Member) and about 48 members.

P.Stephens took the minutes

The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 10:45 hrs (local)

Apologies for absence:
Apologies were received from J.R.Walgate (FFA President), R.Holt (Hon.Events Secretary), D.Keene, P.Pilch, R.Hall, N.Stops, C.Moore, G.Gibson, R.Pye, R.Knapton, A.Collett, J.Goddard and D.Bell

Signing of the Minutes of the 36th AGM held at Wymeswold on 12th October 2010:
The minutes were signed as a true and correct record.

Any Matters arising from the Minutes:
There were no matters arising

Chairman's Report:
The Chairman gave his report saying that the FFA had had yet another excellent year with good visits organized by the Events Secretary. He stressed the importance of the membership coming forward with ideas for future events.

Treasurer's Report:
The Treasurer presented the 2010/2011 accounts. Various comments were made about whether the Vulcan appeal was worth it and what other charities would be worth supporting.

Election of Committee Members:
It was the turn of Paul Stephens and Gordon Bellerby to stand down from the Committee. They were both prepared to stand for re-election. There were no new nominations and both were re-elected.

Membership Report:
The Secretary declared the total membership now stood at 385 members. In the previous 12 months 9 new members had joined and 18 had left the list. The average age of those declaring their age was now 61.4 years.

Proposed Change to the Articles to Allow Associate Members:
By means of the August 2011 newsletter, a proposal was made by the Committee to change the Articles to form a new class of membership to allow Associate Members. The Chairman explained the reasons fully to the members, but the proposal was strongly opposed and voted against.

AOB:
M.Cuttell thanked the Committee for their work and M.Pudney commented on the good quality the newsletter.
The Chairman called for minute's silence in memory of those FFA members who had recently died and lost their lives.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:52

Project Pegasus

As always, the FFA co-operate with the UK Border Agency and the Special Branch, so have agreed to publish this poster - which you might have already seen. It is in our interest to help these agencies to reduce the possibility of having restrictions imposed on our strips.

The telephone number will be different depending which county you are in. This is obviously the one for Devon and Cornwall. There is a national Hotline number which is 0800 595 000.



Aircraft Hanger For Sale

Suitable for aircraft up to 11.95m (38ft 9in) wing-span - Buyer to dismantle - £1700 O.N.O - Can be viewed in South Yorkshire - Contact Paul Burtwistle - 07836693943 - paul@burtwistle.com



