



# The Rotating Beacon



## De Havilland Mosquito

Enjoy our reports insides from around UK, Europe and USA  
Help us make membership to IFFR awesome

*You provide the transport, we provide the refreshments and the sights!*

### In this Issue

- From your Editor
- Around Africa Part 3
- IFFR Fly-ins
- IFFR Italia
- RAF Club Lunch
- 2025 Events

# Contents

From the Editor.....	3
A word from the Chairman Kevin Doyle.....	3
Around Africa Part 3 by Robert Limb.....	4
IFFR fly ins to Wellesbourne and Elstree/De Havilland Museum.....	25
IFFR Italia – Reggio Calabria – September 2024 by George Ritchie.....	26
Italy September 2024 Reggio Calabria by Mike Cromati.....	28
The joys(?) of owning a 48-year-old Piper Cherokee by Rotating Beacon Editor Tony Flinn.....	31
RAF Club lunch.....	33
Members.....	33
2025 events.....	35
Obituaries.....	35
Committee.....	36





## From your Editor, Tony Flinn

We have a bumper issue to kick off 2025: Reports from various visits, Robert Limb's round Africa journey Part 3 and listings of future events. Our one technical article this month is by yours truly on the joys of owning a 48 year old aircraft.

### **Always looking for more technical articles.**

Don't wait until I have to press the flesh!



## A word from the Chairman Kevin Doyle

Warm welcome to this Spring edition on behalf of all the committee.

Now the official meteorological spring has arrived, let us hope for some decent flying weather.

Winter has proven to be a wash out with most grass airfields being closed due to water logging.

Once you have taken in this edition you will find a great programme of events planned for 2025, following a good 2024. My thanks go to all those who have put in a lot of work behind the scenes to organise our fly ins and produce this magazine.

Please support these events and invite along others who, after meeting the rest of us may wish to consider joining. To me, our membership should encompass all aspects of aviation, not just aircraft

owners. Flight simulator enthusiast, UAS operators, engineers or any Rotarian who is fascinated with flight in any format.

In summary: Anyone who has a passion or interest in aviation and wishes to have the company of others who have the same disease!

Here is to a (fingers crossed) good flying season and hope to see you around the country.

[chairman@iffr.uk](mailto:chairman@iffr.uk)



Visit our website [www.iffr.uk](http://www.iffr.uk) for application form

# Around Africa Part 3

Robert's African Adventure flying a twin Comanche around Africa.



## South Africa 2nd to 12th March 2012:

Having landed at Cape Town International on Friday 2nd March and the aircraft safely parked at Executive Jet for the weekend amongst the Global Expresses, Citations, PC12's and the like. The twin Comanche looks rather like a later day Fiat 500 in this company! I am quickly in my taxi via an ATM to my favourite hotel in Cape Town, the Commodore Hotel in the Waterfront Area. It may not be the swankiest hotel in town, but it has character and a buzz. I spent the weekend chilling out and meeting friends and on Monday headed back to Executive Jet. The service was impeccable and with a bill to match £700 for parking and handling of which £400 was for all the associated charges from the airport – it is like landing at Heathrow or Gatwick so no real complaints. The challenge when you are coming from overseas is that you must use “Airports of Entry” which are generally the major airports. Next time I make a trip to South Africa I will clear customs and immigration at Oranjemund by Alexander Bay and then go straight to a small GA field. As it happens, Executive Jet is right next to Thunder City and they were preparing a Jet Provost for an outing. I understand from local sources that it is about to get new ownership and restart some of the more exotic operations again. Let's hope so.

Monday morning with the flight plan filed for the 10nm trip to Stellenbosch I was soon airborne with an immediate left turn out and within 5 minutes was downwind to land on runway 19. After landing I taxied over to Stellair, the maintenance organization that Simon Abbott had kindly helped arrange, to perform the 50-hour check. I met the team John and his son Gordon, Jonny and their helpers and the engine cowlings were soon off, and the engine oil was being drained while it was still warm. Fortunately, there are three other Twin Comanche's at the airfield which they also maintain, and it soon became apparent that they would prefer to be left in peace.

I then went to meet the administration ladies who for a ZAR 50 fully refundable deposit gave me an electronic card for all the gates etc. I was quickly in the bar/restaurant and Jim the manager soon had me signed up for the Tuesday night members social. I then went to the excellent flying shop next to the flying school and the lady in charge (Rebecca?)



sorted me out with maps and the “Pooleys” equivalent for all Southern Africa, this provide to be invaluable.



*The maintenance team at Stellair  
in Stellenbosch airport*

In my opinion Stellenbosch is the jewel in the crown of airfields and everybody was friendly and welcoming. I then got a call from my old friend Findlay Smith who came over to join me for drinks in the clubhouse and we were soon discussing what I should do during my tour of South Africa this proved to be extremely helpful. Findlay owns a flying school at Frisantekraal airfield near Cape Town and currently get's his aircraft maintained by Stellair. We then jumped into Findlay's new Porsche GTS and he very kindly gave me a lift over to Penelope's Guest House where I was staying while in Stellenbosch.



*Stellenbosch Airfield*

The guest houses in South Africa are amazing and if you are visiting South Africa I thoroughly recommend that you use them. At £45 to £50 per night including a full English breakfast they are excellent value.

In the evening Penny's son Edward gave me a lift into the centre of Stellenbosch. He is in his 3rd year studying Electrical Engineering at the University and soon pointed me in the direction of the bars and restaurants. Despite it being a Monday night, it was very busy, and I had to sit at the bar for a few minutes tasting the local wine before a table “Al Fresco” became available. All the waitresses were students and the young lady taking care of me was from Durban and studying for a teaching degree. I had a tasty curry with several glasses of the local red and then was persuaded to try the desert; this was a local equivalent of sticky toffee pudding, no more said. After dinner I had a wander around the town which is an attractive mix of old style Dutch Colonial buildings with lots of art and antique shops. I then tried to find a taxi – nothing. In the end, I went to another bar/restaurant (Arpeggio's) where the owner Ryan organized transport for me. While I was waiting for it to arrive we got chatting and by coincidence Ryan travels all over South Africa in his friend's Piper Arrow. Once again, I had more great suggestions of places to visit. I would now need an additional three months in South Africa alone!!!

The driver (Alan) soon showed up and we quickly struck up a partnership and he provided me with transportation during my stay in Stellenbosch – he was also very keen on aviation. On Tuesday morning I went back into Stellenbosch to visit the

bank and explore the town in the daylight and then in the early afternoon Alan ferried me to the airfield. I checked how the work on N7EY was progressing, the 50-hour check being almost completed, and they were just about to do the ground check. It was arranged that I could collect the paperwork at 8 AM in the morning.

I then proceeded to the clubhouse for a drink and was soon engaged by the ex-CFI and his friend Kevin Bell. Small world, Kevin knows Nigel and Cathy from White Waltham and asked me to pass on his apologies for missing me during their recent visit to SA. We spent an interesting couple of hours chatting and they regaled me with their travels across Africa over the years. The CFI had flown to Dusseldorf and back in a Cessna 210. As we sat around people started arriving for the social evening and I was soon at a table with several of the local pilots watching the sun paint the mountains a beautiful orange colour and the stars including the Southern Cross appear. I had a great evening and most notably met Graham Smith who is ex-RAF, SA Airways, ex-747 training Captain for Air Mauritius and the senior local examiner for the SA CAA. There is not much that Smithy has not done or flown – he even instructs on the Jet Provost and other aircraft at Thunder City and by coincidence had taught my friend Findlay to fly the JP. I gleaned much useful advice, tips and even more suggestions of things to do and see – 6 months in SA now required.

Wednesday morning, I was picked up by Alan at 7:45 AM and soon at the airfield. I collected the paperwork for N7EY and loaded her with my chattels. I thanked the Stellair team for all their help and headed to the pumps for fuel. William, who has been at the airfield from the very beginning, refuelled the plane and told me

of all the improvements including clearing the scrub for the original dirt runway etc. South Africa must be close to flying nirvana as it gets: AVGAS £1.25 per litre; parking, landing, temporary club membership etc. for 3 days £18.64. I filed my Flight plan on-line at [file2fly.atns.co.za/aes/login.jsp](http://file2fly.atns.co.za/aes/login.jsp) a free version of homebriefing that includes FPL, MET and NOTAMS, these South African's have got GA sorted.

I was soon on my way, climbing to 3500 ft into a very blue sky and soon heading East towards George. Approximately every ten minutes I report my position on the Cape Town East information frequency and as I approach George I talk to them and descended to 1500 ft to fly along the coast past Mossel Bay and onto Plettenberg Bay the coastline is pristine and the visibility is generally good with a thin smattering of clouds along the coast at around 1000 to 1500 ft. I am soon in communication with Port Elisabeth and they ask me to join downwind right hand for Runway 26. Shortly thereafter I am parked at the Sheltham FBO. The fuel is closed for the day but as always everyone is very helpful, and they soon organise a taxi. While I am waiting a L39 Albatross is rolled out for testing, very noisy but great to see. Reg: ZS-JET



*Flight along the coast  
from Stellenbosch to Port Elisabeth*

Once again, the guest house is superb, and I am soon having a very welcome cup of tea sitting by the pool in the sunshine. I file the FPL for the flight to Durban in the morning and then head into town. This is a big seaside resort with a beautiful beach with a park right behind it including jogging tracks and refreshment kiosks. On the recommendation of the taxi driver I head towards the Casino and its associated bars and restaurants. I am soon in a bar talking to William the barman, he spent several years in Brentwood in Essex and is married to an Essex girl! He's an Arsenal supporter and we are soon talking about sports. On the TV the 20:20 cricket in Jo'burg has been rained off due to heavy rain but they are showing replays of cricket and then rugby. We are soon joined by Joerg, who comes from George, he works for a plant hire company and spends his weeks in Port Elisabeth he joins me for dinner and we have some more beers. After dinner I bid my new friends farewell and head back to the guest house.

Next morning, I am up bright and early and after breakfast proceed to the airfield for a planned 10 AM local time departure. The

apron at the FBO is a hive of activity. I pre-flight the plane and go and pay the landing fees £15.00 and no parking charge at the FBO if you buy fuel. I am in queue for the fuel station, that's why I normally try to refuel soon after I land. I eventually get served but while I am waiting I have a chat with the Chief mechanic who wants to know about working in the UK – I try to dissuade him. I am then ready to get on my way and start the engines as I go thru' my checks I see the left-hand engines alternator light is indicating it is off-line. I slowly recheck everything and eventually discover that I have inadvertently turned the left alternator switch off, this must have occurred when I turned the pitot on and off during the A check. What a relief, I call for taxi and clearance and fortunately today we are on runway 08 which is in the direction I am heading.

I am cleared to the holding point and am soon climbing out on the runway heading to 1500 ft and then re-cleared to 3500ft direct track to Port Alfred. The coastline is beautiful in the morning sun. I am soon talking to East London who asks me to route slightly offshore around the edge of



L-39 jet at Port Elisabeth

their TMA as they have a lot of jet traffic all very straightforward. After East London I am heading along the “Wild Coast” with my track taking me over Port St John airfield which is perched on top of a plateau with a 1500 ft drop over a cliff at each end of the runway, not for the faint hearted. There is a lot of traffic on the information frequency and I see several aircraft both visually and on my TCAS. I soon leave the Cape Town FIR and contact Jo’burg East who asks me to report my position on the common traffic frequency and monitor their frequency.

I am now over the Transkei which is very hilly with lots of villages consisting of round mud huts. There are deep gorges and several tea plantations. Clouds are starting to build over the hills, so I head slightly offshore to remain VMC. As instructed I contact Margate Airfield and the controller is very helpful and gives me a quick briefing on the process to get to Virginia airfield in Durban. It is on the beach right next to the international airport! It all works as instructed and I proceed up the coast to Durban at 1500 ft (Northbound – Southbound at 1000ft) as always, I report my position at several VFR reporting points and finally at the harbour entrance I call Virginia who clears me for the straight in approach #2 to the Cessna on short final. The airfield is literally on the beach, with the short final very low over a links golf course. After landing I taxi to the pumps. Actually, there are two stations next to each other both dispensing AVGAS and JET-A1 and both are giving marshalling signals clearly competition is very fierce at this airfield and once the engines are stopped the service is outstanding. I am great believer in competition and this why. After refuelling I go and pay my landing and

parking fee which is £18.00 and after parking the pre-arranged taxi is there to meet me and takes me to the guest house.



*Durban Harbour and City*

Renay who owns the guest house is very welcoming and soon has me settle in my room and leaves me the keys for the bar in case I need a beer. Her son is a Puma helicopter pilot for the UN in Afghanistan and a director of Heavy Lift, the air transport Company. The guest house sits on top of a hill overlooking Durban and is surrounded by fantastic mansions with floodlight tennis courts and massive pools with high gates and walls topped with electric fences!! Despite this I walk to the local parade of shops and find a pleasant restaurant for dinner. On the way back, I say hello to all the servants and gardeners who are sitting on the street corners chatting in their uniforms. Not much seems to have changed from the old South Africa in this neighbourhood! When I get back to my room I am entertained by some wonderful singing from the huge church which is at the back of my room. To my surprise the hymns are all in English and the congregation all appear to be white. Next morning, I have a delicious breakfast in the dining room looking at the ships coming and going into Durban, South

Africa's busiest port. The driver runs me to the airport which is ten minutes away. I pre-flight the plane then visit the flying school where I ask for advice on my departure from Virginia airport due to the proximity of the international airport. The CFI is very helpful, and it is as I planned with a warning to be careful about my height as I will pass directly under the ILS of the main airport. I am soon on my way, harbour entrance at 1000ft and then step climbing to 5000ft at Alverston Mast a VRP to the West of Durban. I am soon in contact with Jo'burg East and flying over the striking landscapes of Kwazulu Natal. No wonder Michael Caine and the troops had problems fighting the Zulu's. The terrain alone would kill you, simply trying to walk up and down the hills in your red tunic carrying your sword and rifle would cause a heart attack even before the battle started.



***Kwazulu Natal***

I climb to my cruising altitude of 8500ft and with a brisk tailwind I am soon approaching Kruger. I vector around the International airports TMA over a cloud layer at 5300ft and once I am sure of the terrain below I start my descent and soon pop out of the cloud layer at 4500ft with the whole Kruger Park before me. I head for the Sabi-Sabi VRP 10 miles to the West

of the airstrip and call the lodge and descend to 3500ft. As I circle over the airfield I see the ranger making a quick sweep of the runway for animals and start my approach. The lodge confirms I am clear to land. The runway is excellent, and I am soon parked next to the ranger's Land Rover.

Alistair the ranger introduces himself and helps me put the plane to bed. We then jump in his vehicle and head towards Selati Lodge where I will be staying. Alistair is a great guy and worked at St Paul's school teaching sport in his gap year and stayed in Barnes he had a wonderful time in London. After completing his University Degree in Marketing, he became a Ranger, the only job he had ever wanted to do. He's now been a ranger at Sabi-Sabi for 7 years and proves to be very experienced and knowledgeable.



***Sabi-Sabi Game Reserve Airport  
Kruger National Park***

On the way to the lodge we pop by a couple of Lionesses who have killed a Cape buffalo the previous evening. Amazingly we are within 6 feet of them. We drive along bush tracks for about 30 minutes and pass many Antelope and Wilder Beasts. Once at the lodge I am shown to my room. The lodge manager Elaine tells me I have been

upgraded to the Presidential Suite!! I get a tour; the bathroom is the size of a double garage and I have my own pool and veranda looking across the park. It's then time for lunch and I meet the other guests, a doctor and his wife from Woking and a couple with their daughter from BA, Argentina. Everyone is very engaging, the Argentinean's have just arrived like me and the couple from Woking arrived the previous afternoon, they're very excited about the game drives they been on.

After tea at 4PM we set out on the game drive and I am sat next to Alistair in the front of the Land Rover with Mike the Tracker on a seat mounted on the passenger side bonnet. The rifle is on the top of the dashboard in front of Alistair and me. We see lots of Antelopes, Buffalo and then a big Giraffe. Just as the sun is setting we stop on a ridge for a sun downer, what a life. After the drinks are consumed it's getting dark and we head off in search of lions. We are soon up close and personal with the whole Pride as they hunt Antelope. We sit on a track and the whole Pride passes by my door they are just 3 feet way!! After an hour or so with the lions we head back to the Lodge passing a couple of Rhino's on the way – 3 of the big 5 in just a couple hours.

Next morning, we leave the lodge at 05:30 and are soon with lions once again. Overnight they have joined the couple of lionesses with the Buffalo kill and they are all looking fat and happy, there's not much left of the Buffalo. Next, we see a large Bull Elephant, Zebras' and then a Leopard. The safari continues like this for the next couple of days and all too soon it's time to leave. Alistair drives me to the airstrip and I pre-flight the plane while he checks the

airstrip for animals. A Beech19 departs just before me. I am soon taxiing out and climbing to 3500ft on my way to the Westerly VRP before being cleared direct to Polokwane at my cruising level of 8500ft. Within an hour I am landing at Polokwane and soon get refuelled and parked. As I exit the terminal building the forecasted thunderstorm hits, lighting bolts all around and it rains very heavily. I am very glad to be on the ground. 30 minutes later I am in the taxi and heading to the hotel. Tomorrow (Monday) I will be leaving South Africa and heading to Malaw.



*Alistair my Ranger at Sabi-Sabi*



*Crossing the Sabie River  
after departing Sabi-Sabi*

## South Africa to Kenya 12th to 19th March 2012:

After a good night in Polokwane at the Landmark Hotel, Flight Plan filed online, Met and Notams reviewed I am ready for my 05:30 pickup. The taxi driver, who dropped me off the previous afternoon at the hotel, quickly transports me the 20km to the airport terminal at Polokwane "Gateway to Africa" Airport and we unload the bags. It now 06:10 and the security screening people are ready waiting, but no Customs people are present even though they are supposed to start work. at 06:00. After a 25 minute wait they eventually saunter into the terminal building and in no time, I am through the system and on my way to the aircraft with three customs men in tow. They look at the plane and take photographs standing next to it but the inspection for my departure from RSA is quietly forgotten and I get on with the pre-flight checks as a King Air arrives and a Fokker regional jet departs. The morning is bright and clear with no wind. Checks completed, and flight plan loaded into the Garmin database I call the tower on my Icom handheld radio for start and taxi and get and immediate response "taxi for holding point Echo runway 05 and report when ready for departure QNH 1020".

As per normal the engines start straightaway and I am soon taxiing to the holding point as instructed. As I taxi out the tower gives my clearance, and which is to climb runway heading to FL070 and then contact Makhado AFB approach. I am soon passing FL070; Polokwane Airfield is at 4100ft elevation and bid farewell to the Polokwane controller and contact Makhado. A very cheerful lady instructs me to continue my climb to FL130 direct to the

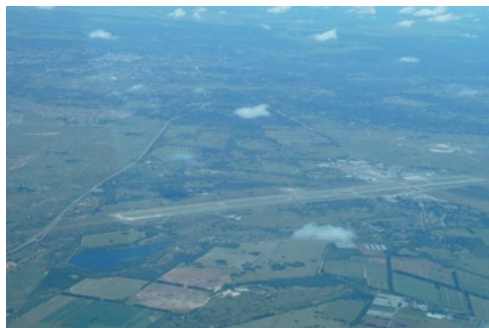
Greefswald (GWV) VOR, no traffic. I put on my oxygen and switch on the Mountain High Electronic Pulse-on-Demand controller and set it to auto-regulated above FL100. After 20 minutes from takeoff I am levelling off at FL130 and reset the throttles, mixtures and props for the 55% power long range cruise. I close the cowl flaps switch to the tip tanks and we are soon recording a ground speed of 165kts thanks to a 15kt tailwind. 20 miles from GWV I am instructed to contact Harare Control on 125.10. I call Harare but no response, so I check by SP02 % using the Oximeter and its reading 96%, all good. I then pass over a huge open cast mine.

This is De Beers Venetia Diamond mine, the most productive in South Africa. It is now reaching the limits of opencast mining as the pit is almost 400 metres deep and they will start conventional underground mining within the next several years [http://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de\\_beers/](http://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de_beers/)

As I approach the Zimbabwe FIR boundary on the Limpopo River I re-contact Harare and eventually a very bored sounding controller responds. After multiple repeats he finally get's my call sign correct and I pass other requested details. He then gives me several frequencies to contact including BEIRA and TETE Radio in Mozambique. I try all the frequencies but get no response and go back to him. It must be breakfast time and he just wants to get rid of me and anyone else who wants to talk to him. I eventually suggest that I might call Masvingo Approach, if he is agreeable, as it's on my routing. He leaps at the suggestion and I am soon in contact with the new controller who asks for my

estimates for the Masvingo VMV VOR and Harare VSB VOR, neither of which are operational! I give my estimates and am told to maintain my level and report when I am 15 miles North of VMV, no traffic. On reporting 15 miles North of VMV I am instructed to contact Harare Approach. I do this and repeat my estimate for VSB VOR. There are several jets arriving at Harare and they all conduct Visual approaches I suspect the ILS is also not working.

I am instructed to report overhead VSB and maintain FL130 as I turn over the VOR a Citation Jet is requesting decent I realise that he is on a reciprocal track to mine. The lady controller asks him to descend to FL140. I then tell her that I passed the VSB at 07:43 and I am maintaining FL130 on 041 radial from the VOR and just passing 8 DME (that part seems to work!!). Message past to the Citation and they tell the controller they are descending through FL170 for FL140 and currently at 22 DME from VSB. Good we all know where we are as there is no Radar. I switch on my landing lights and see the Citation on my TCAS. He soon passes overhead about 100m to the right of my track. He must have seen me as he requests further descent which the controller rejects. I then tell the controller that I was visual with the traffic and that he has passed me. She then clears him to descend to join downwind. The Citation crew read back the clearance and then thank me for my assistance. I believe I am starting to get the idea of how the Africa flying system works – Pilot to Pilot.



*Harare Airport, Zimbabwe*

My speed has gradually been slowing as the tailwind turned into a 5kt headwind and I am now making around 145kts across the ground despite this I am soon 50 miles from Harare which is the edge of their TMA and I inform the controller of this. She instructs me to contact TETE Radio. I am soon in two-way communication with a friendly Portuguese sounding controller. He asks me for my estimates for KOBOD and ELEPA which are the Mozambique FIR boundaries. I pass these on and as usual am instructed to maintain FL130, no traffic.

Not long after passing the FIR Boundary I spot the mighty Zambezi River and the huge lake behind the Cobora Bassa Dam which bisects the river as it enters a large canyon. This is the biggest hydroelectric power plant in Southern Africa and consists of five 415Mw turbines. Construction started on the project in 1969 when Mozambique was still a Portuguese colony and the lake started to be filled in December 1974. Unfortunately, during the 16-year civil war that raged after independence much of the transmission infrastructure was sabotaged. This has mostly been repaired since the war ended in 1992 but the dam and associated infrastructure continues to be a target in



this volatile part of Africa. As I get closer the clouds beneath me begin to thicken so I can't see the full extent of the lake which covers some 2,700 km<sup>2</sup>.

I am now getting close to the Lilongwe TMA and the Malawi FIR boundary and the TETE controller instructs me to contact Lilongwe approach. I do this immediately as I am coming up to ELEPA which is only 80nm South West of the airfield. The controller tells me to expect the UTASI 1A STAR followed by the RNAV approach for Runway 14 and to proceed direct to UTASI and report when ready for decent to be at UTUGA at FL70. He then reads me the latest weather. I load the arrival and approach into the Garmin 530 and program the required VNAV profile which calls for me to start my descent in about 7 minutes. On reaching the Top of Descent (TOD) point I am cleared down to FLO70 and throttle back and start my way down. It's quite bumpy as the forecasted afternoon CB's are starting to form and I have dodge around the worst ones. Fortunately, as I reach FLO70 and the Initial Approach Fix (IAF) for the RNAV Rwy 14 I am below the clouds and it becomes much smoother. I am then cleared to make my approach and cleared to descend to 5700ft the airport is a little over 4000ft elevation. I leave the autopilot engaged as it's an 11nm run to the runway threshold and at 5 miles lower the gear and shortly thereafter the flaps as required. It's a very clear approach onto the 11,614 ft long runway and the wind is straight down the runway. The countryside is very green, and, in the distance, I can see the mountains that mark the edge of the rift valley and Lake Malawi.



### *Kwazulu Natal*

I am instructed to park next to the Seneca and very soon the fuel man arrives all very efficient. The best surprise of all is that fuel here in the middle of Africa is only US\$2.31 per litre which is 30% cheaper than back home in England. Refuelling completed I am soon through immigration and in a taxi to my hotel in the centre of the old part of Lilongwe which is about 25km away. By the time I am checked in its late afternoon and head to the bank to change some money before they close.

The countryside on the way into town is very verdant and cows with herdsman wander along the road as we drive along causing some holdups. There are huge queues outside every garage for petrol and the taxi driver tells me it can take up to 4 days to get the car filled up. I come to understand that most people are very fed up with the President and on the radio some government official is making a long a tedious diatribe railing against those who spread disinformation and criticise the high office of the President which is against the constitution and will not be tolerated blah, blah, blah. It sounds to me like they are losing the plot and some of the posters along the road praising His Excellency the President for this and that great

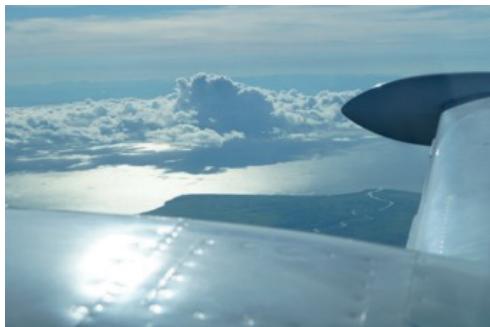
achievement only reinforce this view. This is one of the poorest countries in the world, officially 12% of the population are HIV positive and malnutrition is a significant issue. Life expectancy is 43 years old and over 50% of the population is under 15 years old. Despite all this the people I meet at the hotel and on my walks around the old part of town during my two-day stay are very welcoming. There is a distinct lack of basic infrastructure in most of the town and many beggars and poor people sit around the street corners. The mosque is one of the most impressive buildings in this part of town and there is also a very modern shopping centre with fast food stores etc. which seems totally out of place. The new stores are clearly out of the financial reach of most of the local population and seem to be frequented by the many Western missionaries and aid workers. So as not to create a problem I leave my camera and other valuables in the safe in my room. It doesn't feel particularly unsafe, but I don't wish to provide too much temptation as my Africa Lonely Planet guide warns to avoid some areas of town if alone.

On the Wednesday morning I get up at 4 AM local time and as arranged previously the taxi driver who picked me up at the airport is at the hotel at 5 AM with fuel to run me back to the airport. We proceed with caution through the town as it is just starting to get light and the roads lack illumination, but the sun comes up very quickly as we are heading through the countryside along the road to the airport. After about 35 minutes we arrive at the terminal building and the taxi driver has organised for one of the soldiers in the terminal to show me to the control tower. I am assured that no immigration or customs are required and once I have filed

my flight plan, got Notams and weather and paid the US\$180 for navigation, landing and parking I am shown the way to the apron and my plane. No handling and everything seems to be very straightforward. I do the usual checks and by 6:55AM local time (0455 UTC) I am requesting start and taxi. I am cleared to the holding point for runway 32 and as I taxi out I get my clearance which is to climb to 6000 feet then turn right on track to UTIDA and climb FL110. Power checks completed I back track to the runway threshold and am cleared for take off. Approximately 15 minutes later I am levelling off at FL110 and once I have set the aircraft up for the long-range cruise reach the edge of Lake Malawi which seems completely still with not a boat in sight and just a few clouds reflecting in the water.

As I start across the lake the controller at Lilongwe asks me to contact Dar-Es-Salaam Control. The new controller instructs me to maintain FL110 and route as filed. I also provide him with my estimate for Dodoma and Nairobi-Wilson Airport. I reach the Tanzanian side of the lake and pass over a small settlement on a river which flows into the lake and it soon starts to get quite mountainous with villages dotted around the valleys and on the slopes of the mountains. I believe there are quite a lot of Tea and Coffee plantations in this region as well as significant coal deposits. It's also strange to think that I am passing over one of the key areas that we believed is responsible for the start of human evolution more than 2 million years ago. I am also starting to intersect the Rift Valley which will be a significant geological feature for the next 3000 miles of my journey. As I pass over

this mountainous area at the Northern end of Lake Malawi I also run into some light rain showers and the weather looks significantly more threatening fortunately much further to the West of my track to Nairobi.



### *Early morning over Lake Malawi*

A little over 3 hours from take off and 470nm distance I am approaching Dodoma in Central Tanzania. Dar-Es-Salaam ask me to contact Dodoma approach. There has been a steady stream of aircraft on frequency flying in and out of the various towns along my route. About 15 minutes early I had listened as a Beech 19D make his approach into Dodoma and he was now on the frequency lining up for take off for his short hop to Kondoa as he made his “milk round” stops. He is cleared to FL090 and is requesting higher I can see him on my TCAS about 2 miles ahead of me and pick him up visually. I inform the controller of this then have a discussion with the Pilot I am making 145kts and he can climb as 150kts ground speed. I let the controller know I am happy for him to climb thru’ my level and he climbs to FL150 and gradually edges ahead of me after he levels off for the cruise. The pilot thanks me for my assistance.

After a further hour I am getting close to the Kenyan FIR boundary and I am soon requested to contact Nairobi Control. They are very busy and despite repeated tries I am unable to raise them. I am close to some very high terrain (Kilimanjaro 19,000+) and there are mountains at 9000 ft or so that I must fly over to reach Nairobi. I keep following my filed route and about 10 miles before the start of the Nairobi TMA I am able to establish two-way communications. I am requested to proceed direct to IBRAT for a Radar Vected Visual Approach to Runway 07 at Nairobi-Wilson (HKNW). About 15nm before IBRAT I am requested to descend to FL090 and shortly thereafter to 7000ft. Nairobi-Wilson is on your left at about 7nm report when visual. It’s quite hazy but I eventually spot it and am told to contact the tower who clears me Right Base number 2 to a Caravan on a 1 mile final. I see the traffic and I requested to expedite my approach which I do. Nairobi-Wilson is 5537ft elevation and the landing speed is noticeably higher than at sea level with the density altitude well more than 6000ft. Runway 07 is only 4800 feet in length and I exit at its far end onto the Apron and contact ground. This is a very busy almost manic place. There are so many aircraft and vehicles dodging around that I proceed with great care.

I request taxi to the pumps for fuel and must hold to cross runway 14. I also notice that the engines are running somewhat roughly and decide to lean them a little as I suspect they are running a little rich. After several minutes waiting and getting hotter I eventually reach the Shell refuelling area and shutdown. A yellow car approaches and I get out and have a discussion with

the driver (Moses) he eventually asks me what I want, and I explain parking for three days and to refuel. He talks to Shell who say they have no AVGAS – strange as I spoke to them on the phone yesterday and they said it would be no problem they were also just finishing off refuelling a Cessna 152. Moses tells me to sit tight for a few minutes and he will sort everything. He is soon back having arranged a “Safe” parking place for me and gives me instructions on its location. I restart the engines and request taxi and after several minutes I re-cross runway 14 and soon see Moses and a marshaller guiding me between a King Air and an ATR72 almost under their wings. I shutdown the engines and we move the plane into its final parking spot by hand.

Moses tells me that Total also have AVGAS, so we jump into his car and proceed to their yard. On the way I find out more about Moses he is head of security at the airport but also has a sideline in handling – we agree a deal and he’s happy to help me. We arrive at Total which is close to the threshold of Runway 07 on the other side of the airport. They are happy to assist, and I calculate how much fuel I need at US\$2.49 per litre. I need \$700 so we go back to plane to get the cash and eventually return to pay them. They have a machine to verify the banknotes, luckily the ones I have are new and except to two \$20 bills are OK and I replace them with notes that pass the test. We then head back to the plane and await the bowser which arrives in due course and we top off the tanks. While we a refuelling Moses takes my passport and arranges my customs clearance. Finally, after covering and securing the aircraft we walk through the

security gate and Moses sorts a taxi to take me to the Ole-Sereni hotel which is just on the other side of the airport looking out onto the National Park.



*The ill-fated LET410FG*

I pay Moses \$200 for his help with a promise of a further \$200 when I return, and the plane and fuel are all OK. He is happy with the arrangement and we agree the plan for Saturday’s departure. I check in at the hotel which is excellent and very soon I’m showered and, in the bar, overlooking the park with a large cold bottle of Tusker Beer which is quickly followed by another. Back to the room for a nap and then down to dinner on the hotel terrace for a Chicken Teriyaki with Won Ton Soup and a glass of wine. After the beverages a good night’s sleep was not a problem. I awake refreshed at 9:00 am and go down to breakfast where I am sitting opposite some pilots discussing various aviation things. I decide to ask their advice about Wilson Airport etc. and very quickly they invite me to join them. Csaba (CL) and Jorge are in Kenya to pick up a Swaziland (3D) LET410FG and ferry it via Cape Verde Islands to Buenos Aires for a parachute club. It’s quite an adventure and Csaba who is a Hungarian American has been in

Nairobi for 5 weeks trying to sort everything out. Jorge a Columbian American arrived a week ago. We soon strike up a great friendship and I help Jorge with his Garmin 496 which is playing up. They also have a driver and are very happy for me to use him. Jorge and I eventually head to the airport to check on things and visit the Avionics shop which is working on a panel mounted GPS for their flight.

After a fun afternoon looking at aircraft and meeting various people around the airfield we head back to the hotel for the obligatory "Sundowner" on the terrace. Csaba is already there. After several hours of pilot chat, we order dinner and finally at 0200 when the bar staff are closing around us we shuffle off to bed. Csaba has flown everything from F4 Phantoms in Vietnam to MIG's in Serbia and Hungary and 747's for a living in the USA. He returned to Hungary two years ago from La Jolla in Southern California where he had lived since escaping Communist Hungary at age 15. He is keen Yak 52 Pilot and now having reached 65 does some ferrying flights and was helping his friend Jorge. Jorge has owned an airline with several MD80's and now has helicopter support and training businesses in Columbia and Costa Rica. His passion is flying the big Russia helicopters like the MI18-MTB and MI-171.

Next morning, we all meet up for breakfast on the terrace. Jorge has decided to head down to Swaziland because the lawyer working on all the paperwork they need for the ferry flight is not progressing as rapidly as required. After breakfast I head back to my room to sort out the final arrangements for my trip to the Masai Mara and organise my hotel in Lokichogio for the following

Monday evening. I then meet Jorge and we go with his driver to get money from the bank once that's done we proceed to the airport to finalise my arrangements for tomorrow's departure to Masai Mara and purchase some VFR charts. This completed we go to the East Africa Aeroclub for lunch. The club is a pleasant old colonial style set up and looks over the airfield. It is very reminiscent of the clubhouse back home at White Waltham with many interesting old photographs and flying memorabilia adorning the walls, including the obligatory propellers attached to the roof beams.

It's Friday evening so we rendezvous in the bar for some drinks followed by dinner. I then get an early night as I must depart for the airport at 06:15 in the morning for my flight to Kichwa Tembo in Masai Mara. Jorge and his driver will drop me off at Wilson and Jorge will then head to Jomo Kenyatta Airport for a commercial flight to Jo'burg and onto Mbabane in Swaziland.

After breakfast on Saturday morning I check out of the hotel and I am soon at the security gate at Wilson airport. I bid farewell to Jorge and wish him all the best for his upcoming ferry flight to Argentina. I am then met by Moses my handling agent and we are quickly through security and at the plane. Moses has already paid the landing fees and parking all I need to do is file the flight plan for today's flight and Monday's flight on to Lokichogio in Northern Kenya. I fill in the appropriate forms in the Kenya CAA dispatch office and then wait for approval to depart. After several minutes the friendly lady tells me that there is a problem with my clearance to fly in the Nairobi FIR. She then discusses the details with an older

gentleman in the office and he is soon on the phone to the main flight centre. After several calls and some problems logging into their computer system the lady tells me that my overflight clearance will only permit me to fly from Nairobi to Lokichogio, but she is trying to get hold of the manager of the CAA to get his permission for my detour via Masai Mara. Everyone is very helpful; the lady makes many calls and the older man also tries to persuade someone at the head office to give me approval. After an hour of trying the lady apologises but tells me they cannot get hold of the manager and no one else can give me the necessary approval.

During the time I have been in the office several flight crews have been in and out to file their flight plans etc. I finally head back to the plane and meet Moses and explain the problem. As I am securing everything again for parking until Monday a couple of Kenyan pilots (Jonathan and Isaacs) come up to me and ask about my plane and trip. Moses explains the problem I have and next thing I know they are offering to drop me off in their Cessna Caravan at Kichwa Tembo. Evidently, they are taking several passengers to another lodge about five miles away, they also very kindly offer to pick me up on Monday morning as they will be collected several people in the Masai Mara and returning them to Wilson. Thirty minutes later we are taxiing out in the Caravan and soon on our way across the Rift Valley to Kichwa Tembo which is on its Western flank. The other passengers are a family from Louisiana with their two children and the lady's parents who are visiting from the USA. They family live in Nairobi and are making their first visit to the Masai Mara. Commercial flying in Kenya

seems to be very relaxed and we seem to spend most of our time ridge hopping about 50ft above the ground. We fly over several Masai farms and after about 35 minutes we start our approach to the lodge to drop off the American family.

We are soon in the air and now the boys are really flying low. No more than 30 feet off the ground at about 140 knots. This is fun. Jonathan then points out some Giraffes which we quickly dodge around before making a curved approach into Kichwa Tembo airstrip. The Murram surface is good but quite rough, I am somewhat glad that I did not land on it in the Twin Comanche especially as the loose gravel could have damaged the propellers. I thank my pilot friends for the excellent flight and then meet the people from the lodge who have a much-needed welcome drink.

The game drives in Masai Mara are excellent and the Ranger guide Protus is very knowledgeable being from the region. My companions on the drives are a great couple Oscar from Valencia and his wife Asmara from Casablanca. They are on their honeymoon having just come from a few days in Dubai for a couple of nights in the Masai before heading to Tanzania and then onto the Seychelles. Oscar lived in Singapore at the same time as we did so we have much in common and Asmara went to University in Brighton for two years. Oscar has recently set up an agricultural business which exports fruit and vegetables from Morocco to Europe primarily Spain. They plan to live 50% of the time in Morocco and 50% in Spain.

The animals in Masai Mara are wonderful and we see the big 5 and much more besides. With so much space and a feeling

of tranquillity the environment is very different from that I experienced in Sabi-Sabi in Kruger. I would recommend both as each are unique.

After an excellent weekend with great hospitality and food it's Monday morning and time to head back to Nairobi and onto Lokichogio. At 10:30 AM we say good bye to the staff and head to the airstrip in our Land rover. As promised at 11:00 am the Cessna Caravan arrives and without shutting the engines down I hop on board and we are soon on our way to the North part of the Masai Mara to pick up several groups of people from different airstrips. Once everyone has been collected we make the 35-minute flight back to Nairobi Wilson Airport. As soon as we land I am met by Moses. I once again thank the pilots for their assistance and give them \$50 to have dinner on me. We then walk the 100 metres to my plane. Moses has completed all the formalities and I have the approved flight plan, Notams Met etc. With the assistance of the ground crew and their supervisor Patrick we move the aircraft to a clear spot on the apron and I perform all the pre-flight checks with great care. The density altitude at just after noon is 9000 feet (the airport elevation is 5540ft OAT 36 Deg C). From the performance calculations I will require a good deal of the available 5200-foot-long runway to take off. I will also be well above the single engine maximum altitude of 5500ft so little room for problems or error.

I request start up and I am soon given clearance to taxi the 200 metres to the holding point for runway 14. Power checks are completed, and I am then cleared to line up and wait. A Dash lands on the crossing runway 07 as soon as he is out of

the way I am cleared for take off. I power up the engines and hold on the brakes for a final check, happy I release the brakes and we accelerate quite rapidly down the runway rotation is at 90MPH indicated airspeed which is a ground speed of about 105MPH it definitely feels quicker than normal. Once clean and climbing at 500 ft/min I make a gentle right turn as requested and am then cleared to my cruising level of FL100. As the flight is relatively short I have filed VFR. I am instructed to contact Nairobi Approach but cannot raise them. After several frequency changes given to me by Wilson I finally get in contact with Nairobi Control. I give them my estimates for NAK and LOV VOR's and for Lokichogio. The lady controller then asks me for something, but I do not understand her request as she has a quite strong accent. After several further attempts a male voice comes on and I can understand him. Please report your position to us at 13:30 UTC. I respond with WILCO – all understood.



*Moses and Patrick at Nairobi Wilson*

I am now flying up the Rift Valley, the visibility is quite poor due to haze, but I can make out several lakes which appear to be in old calderas. The steep edges of the valley are quite impressive, and I can also see Mount Kenya off to my right some 50

miles or so away. The VFR charts I obtained from the flying school make the trip more interesting. I am soon reporting my 13:30 position and I am requested to contact them when I reach Lodwar and if unable to call Lokichogio Tower.

At Lodwar; the green of the lower part of the Rift Valley has now been replaced by dry rocks and scrub. I bid farewell to Nairobi Control and call Lokichogio. The controller clears me to enter Danger Zone which runs along the Sudanese boarder, gives me the latest weather and airfield information and asks me to call when ready for descent. About 25 miles from Lokichogio I request descent and I am cleared to join downwind right hand for runway 09. The airfield is only at 2000ft elevation. I am soon on the ground and the fuel man Stephen marshals me to my parking spot next to the terminal building and fuel depot.

Engines shutdown and paperwork completed I say hello to Stephen who goes to get the single 55-gallon drum I will need to refuel. While he's doing this, I get out the hand pump, filter and hose and start to

assemble them. Very soon we are refuelling the plane and it is completed with about 5 litres left in the barrel which is perfect. Stephen and I disassemble the refuelling set up, clean and restow all the items and cover up the plane for the night. It's very hot and I am soaked in sweat. Stephen then organises the filing of the flight plan for the morning, paying the various fees and the other paperwork which is soon completed and total cost for landing and overnight parking is \$25. I had already prepaid for the fuel. Everyone is very welcoming, and they explain that the airfield is very quiet since the UN largely moved into South Sudan following independence. They are primarily supporting two aircraft which work for Medecins Sans Frontieres. With everything completed the driver from the hotel I am staying at arrives in his Toyota Jeep and we head off towards the town. It's very poor with sand for roads and mud huts and the odd basic shop on either side of the street. We stop at one shop and I help load some boxes containing water bottles onto the flatbed. We also give a lift to a young lady who works at the hotel.

### Lokichogio Airport



We arrive at the hotel which is a compound with round huts with straw roofs and a large open bar/restaurant with a pool table and TV it's all very lively. I am soon shown to my room (hut) which is clean but somewhat Spartan. A quick shower, cold water only, but somehow very refreshing then I am dressed and back at the bar having my first beer of the evening. It's dark now and several of the guests arrive for a drink/dinner. The clientele are mainly UN people. There's a teacher from the UK and she is discussing with other local UN people how they can improve the training for the teaching assistants. It seems quite a formal meeting. The pool table is fully occupied by the local boys who seem to be having an enjoyable time. I say hello to an American lady who I had seen at the airport. I understand that she is a Doctor and has like me an early flight in the morning. I get another beer and then I am asked what I would like to eat. As it turns out there is only one thing on the menu and that's chicken. OK I'll have chicken. It's quite tasty with a spicy sauce with rice and vegetables. I order my third beer and finish my meal. I ask the waiter what time the serve breakfast and he tells me it starts at 05:30AM which is perfect. I look at the weather on my IPAD thanks to the United Nations they have a good internet connection. I even found and booked the hotel through a link on the UN webpage. It seems that Lokichogio is a UN staging post. After reviewing the Met, Notams etc. for tomorrow I turn in for the night. The bed has a Mosquito net and a spray can attached to the wall which I activate. There is no air-conditioning, but the fans seem to do the job. Tomorrow I'll be leaving Kenya and heading to Sudan and into the Arab part of Africa.

## 20th to 30th March 2012:

Awaking before dawn in my mud hut in Lokichogio I dive in the cold shower and I am soon dressed and heading for breakfast which is in an open sided hut and consists of toast jam and coffee. The lady doctor who I saw at the airport comes to breakfast just after me and I wish her good morning. I pay the bill which includes dinner, drinks, transportation and the room and round it up to \$50 including a tip. I get my bags from the room and at 06:00 head to the airport and as we pass through the town it is beginning to stir as dawn breaks. At the airport I am waved through the security hut and walk to the plane. The support team for the Medecins Sans Frontieres Caravan are at work and a Russia Cargo aircraft has just started its engines and is taxiing down the runway for take off. Quite a bit more activity than I had been led to expect. I pre-flight the plane and load the flight plan into the Garmin database and check it against my PLOG and the airways chart for correctness. You don't want to be off course in Sudan as they will shoot you down with a missile or something similar. And I must fly at or above FL120 because of potential targeting from the ground – not a particularly comforting thought.



*Medecins Sans Frontieres Caravan*

I am soon ready to go and call the Tower on my handheld radio for start and taxi which is given immediately. I proceed to the edge of the apron for power checks and once complete I am given the latest weather and cleared for back track down the runway. Take off must be towards the East and I must fly about 70 miles in Easterly direction before joining the airway and flying North because of the military area on the border with Sudan. As I back track down the runway the Tower gives me my clearance which is climb on track ANTAX (which is in an ESE direction) and when passing FLO70 to contact Nairobi Control on 121.30. He also gives me a squawk. Once I have turned around at the end of the runway I am cleared for take off and soon on my way into the clear morning sky. Loki tower confirms my take off time as 04:05 UTC. I am climbing directly into the sun, so I can't see too much but very soon I am passing FLO70 and bid Loki goodbye and contact Nairobi Control who clear me to my final level FL120 and ask me to contact Addis Control on reaching the FIR boundary. Although I am entering Sudanese airspace this part of airway A727 is under the control of Addis Center. I put on my oxygen and set the controller to auto-regulate above FL100. After 40 minutes I reach the FIR boundary. I call Addis and get a quick response and pass the usual estimates and am asked to report AMATO and maintain FL120. There is quite a lot of communications on the frequency but its mostly high-level jet traffic on its way to Nairobi and elsewhere further South from Europe.

My ground speed is around 135kts as I am experiencing a 15kt headwind as I fly over the Ethiopian highlands. About 80 miles

before I reach the reporting point Adono Addis asks me for my latest estimate for Khartoum which is now 20 minutes later than I had originally calculated at 09:40 due to the stronger than predicted headwinds. A little later Addis tells me that Khartoum airport is closing between 09:00 and 13:00 UTC and had I not read the NOTAMS. I respond that I have the NOTAMS given to me in Lokichogio and there is nothing about Khartoum closing today. After a further wait Addis calls me back and tells me that Khartoum cannot accept me until after 13:00 which is in about 6 hours time and what do I plan to do?! I tell him to standby. I way up my options: I can proceed to Dongola which is my Alternate, but they may not have fuel and It would be very tight to return to Khartoum after getting their. I have landing permission in Sudan but not in Ethiopia and I doubt if Addis has AVGAS anyway. Looking at the airfields in Sudan I have two viable options: Malakal which is 136 Nm to the West of my track and 364Nm from Khartoum and El Obeid which is 366 Nm away and a further 201 Nm from Khartoum. I get out the plates for both options and they are both suitable airports. I elect for Malakal as the nearest to my planned route and the shortest overall distance to Khartoum. I contact Addis and explain I plan to divert to Malakal which they relay to Khartoum.

I am now approaching the AVONO intersection and the airway runs straight from AVONO to Malakal, so I reprogram the Garmin and on reaching AVONO set course for Malakal. I bid farewell to Addis and contact Malakal Information they pass me their weather which is hot 43 Deg C and quite windy 330 with 17 kts gusting 28 kts

they are using runway 04. They ask me to report at 50 Nm which I do, and they then ask me to report when ready for descent. At about 40 miles I start my descent and they ask me to report downwind right hand for runway 04. As I get closer the visibility is quite good and I can see the airfield which is right next to the White Nile. I report downwind and turn base leg and set up my final approach over the Nile to land. It's quite turbulent with the gusting wind. The airfield is at 1290ft elevation and the runway is 6562 feet in length. I touchdown smoothly and keep the aircraft straight in the gusty conditions but as I lose rudder authority at about 40 kts I get caught by a strong gust and I touch the brakes and use the nose wheel to keep on the centreline of the runway as there is quite a bit of rubble at the edges of the runway even though its reasonably wide.

I must have hit the brakes rather too hard because as I finally slowdown for the runway exit on my right to the apron I realise I have a flat tyre. Fortunately, I can clear the runway and move to a suitable parking place on the very wide apron. I shutdown the engines and complete my paperwork then get out to have a look at the tyre. It is completely flat. Very quickly about 15 people show up in a pick up and by foot and I explain I have a flat tyre and need a jack as I have a spare tyre and inner tube. Almost immediately a man appears with a truck jack and some breeze blocks. He is speaks good English and I show him the jacking point under the wing. We discuss how far I need to jack the plane up and then he slowly starts to organise everything. He seems very knowledgeable and tells me he is a driver and a mechanic,

he even makes sure the good wheel is chocked. In a few minutes we have the aircraft jacked up and I have got the tools and spares from the baggage compartment. I show them how to take the wheel off and we soon have it free, but the brakes pads are still around the disk. After some further discussion someone unscrews the hydraulic line and the wheel is free but hydraulic oil is starting to leak out of the hose which I try to plug with a rubber glove.

The mechanic (Blair) soon has the wheel halves apart and the new tyre and inner tube installed. As we are doing this a South Sudan 737 arrives, and I wave at the pilot to be careful with his jet blast as the jack is OK but not fantastic. He is not as careful as I would like, and many people grab the wing to stop the jet blast knocking the plane off the jack. The 737 is soon pointing away from us and he shuts the engines down. Blair the mechanic apologises but must race off to ferry some people from the UN he returns about 20 minutes later. In the meantime, I and another helper have got the wheel with the new tyre installed on the axel and are in the process of fitting the brakes. We still need to inflate the tyre which I should have done before fitting it to the axel, but I was concerned about the ground clearance. After a little messing around we get a truck and use its air supply inflate the tyre to the correct pressure. We now need to bleed the brakes. I have a small quantity of the correct hydraulic oil but despite valiant efforts by Blair using a redeployed Oxygen Canular hose to act as a hydraulic line to the bleed valve we are unable to get all the air out of the line.



The right brake on the unaffected tyre is fine but the left brake is soft due to the trapped air. I now have two good tyres but only one fully working brake. The team must race off again to meet another UN flight before they leave I give Blair \$200 and ask him to buy a meal for everyone who helped me. He initially refuses the money, but I insist he takes it.

I decide to repack the plane and prepare the PLOG and program the Garmin for the flight to Khartoum. It is now around 12:00 UTC and I would like to leave in the next 30 minutes. I call the handling agent on my Satphone and give him a revised ETA for Khartoum. I also decide to empty the two jerry cans I have with additional fuel into the tanks just in case. As I am getting ready to leave Blair and the UN WFP (World Food Program) team return with drinks which is most welcome. I also have a chance to

thank the operations manager (a very well-educated Ugandan) and his assistant for allowing his people to assist me. He is very gracious and says, “that’s what they are here for”. He is also keen to learn to fly and has relatives living in the UK, we exchange e-mail addresses. Without the help of the UN WFP folks I would have been in trouble they were extremely helpful, and Blair was an excellent mechanic. After thanking everyone and taking lots of photos I call the tower and request start up and taxi. I had previously asked using my handheld radio if I needed to file a new flight plan, but they said that it was not required.

***The Final Part of Robert Limb’s epic journey will appear in the next Rotating Beacon Issue.***



# IFFR fly ins to Wellesbourne and Elstree/De Havilland Museum

Last year the IFFR UK section had two further day visits. The first was to the busy airfield at Wellesbourne. Several members flew into the airfield for lunch and a tour of the Vulcan. Vulcan XM655 was third from last of the Vulcan bombers produced for the Royal Air Force, being delivered in late 1964, and was part of the UK's nuclear deterrent force throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It is now owned by Wellesbourne Airfield and is looked after by 655 Maintenance and Preservation Society (655MaPS) which is a volunteer organisation of Vulcan enthusiasts.

XM655 is one of the few Vulcans remaining in ground running condition, the only one with the most powerful of the engine variants (Bristol Olympus 301s) and 655MaPS aim to keep it running for as long as possible. Members were able to observe the cockpit, the bomb doors opening and Flaps & Ailerons moving. The last of the 2024 fly ins was to the De Havilland Museum. Only one member flew into the neighbouring Elstree Airfield (your Editor) and was kindly taxied in by Past World IFFR President George Ritchie to the museum. A well-attended meeting and leisurely lunch was followed by an extensive tour of the museum. Geoffrey De Havilland was instrumental in designing and building a large number of very important aircraft. The reader is

referred to the museum's website at <https://www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk/about-us/de-havilland-history/> for more information.





Notable aircraft include the BE.2, DH bombers, Tiger Moth, Dragon Rapide, the world beating wooden WW2 wonder, Mosquito, the Vampire, Venom, Chipmunk, Sea Vixen and the Comet Jet Airliner.

## IFFR Italia - Reggio Calabria - Sept. 2024 by George Ritchie

Our second IFFR section meeting in September 2024 was hosted by IFFR Italia, in the southern city of Reggio Calabria, on the weekend of 13th to 16th September. With participants including IFFR World President Mike and Sali from Australia, and Craig and Ruth-Ann Bledsoe from Alaska, all 3 IFFR Regions were represented. Located on the very toe of Italy, looking out over the Straits of Messina to Sicily, it was too far for most to fly themselves, so congratulations to Michael Bock and Beate Thomsen from the French section for making the long journey from the West Coast of France in their Pipistrel Panthera. For the UK contingent, Caroline and I, Mike and Margaret Cromati, Bob Field and Brian Harvey, it was an easy journey from London City airport via Milan to Reggio Calabria.

Most folks arrived on the Thursday evening, and after a couple of cold beers on the seafront, we adjourned for dinner



in an excellent fish restaurant. After a leisurely Friday morning exploring the city centre, we were ready for the IFFR Italia meeting which started with a casual lunch of Arancini stuffed Italian rice balls. We then enjoyed a personal open top bus guided tour of the old part of the city which is steeped in both Greek and Roman history – RC having been an important trading post for many centuries. After a quick visit to the castle, from the ramparts of which one can clearly see Mount Etna volcano, we were ready for our evening out. We were bussed to the



picturesque seaside village of Chianalea between Scilla and Charybdis, with the intention of a waterfront outdoor dinner – but the weather did not play ball and so, with waves crashing over the terrace, we dined inside instead – a fine 5 course feast.

On the Saturday, most of the pilots went out to the aeroclub, but sadly the weather that had arrived the previous evening continued and so it did not permit for any sightseeing flights. But pilots can always fly barstools over a coffee and cake. We returned to the city in time for a 3 course lunch, after which we had a tour of the MArRC National Archaeological Museum.

One of the most prestigious archaeological museums in Italy, it houses the Riace Bronzes and material from Prehistory to the late Roman Age. We then had time to prepare for the Gala dinner – another 5 course feast - at the "L'A Gourmet L'Accademia, held jointly with the Rotary Clubs of Reggio Calabria Est and Reggio Calabria Sud, and in the presence of Rotary District 2102

Governor Maria Pia Porcino – all of which made for much exchanging of banners!

Up in good time on Sunday, we enjoyed a scenic bus journey through the Aspromonte National Park to Gerace, nestled high in the hills on sandstone cliffs. After another multi-course lunch in a nearby farmhouse, we returned back to the city. Our final evening was another super enjoyable casual evening at pizzeria Piro Piro on the waterfront, our pizzas washed down with a celebratory IFFR cake and Prosecco.

For most of us, Monday morning was time to head home. But Mike and Margaret Cromati, staying on for a few more days, were able to enjoy a scenic flight in the flying club PA28 with IFFR member Enrico Paratore. I understand it was well-equipped with “inop” stickers, but Mike says it was still fun to fly.

Thanks to Guido Guidi and all the IFFR Italia team for this great weekend which brought the 2024 series of European weekend meetings to an end.

# Italy September 2024 Reggio Calabria

by Mike Cromati

This year the Italian meeting was immediately after the French meeting which was right down in the south of Italy along the Messina Straights in a place called Reggio Calabria.

As we had as usual left the booking a bit late, so we could not get in to the official hotel as it was fully booked so we decided that we would go a day early and stay on a few days after the event. So, we booked an Apartment for eight days 15 min walk from the hotel along the seafront over looking the Messina Straight and Scissile.

The only way to get there directly was to go with Air ITA with a flight from London city to Milan for an hours stop over for the connecting flight to Reggio Calabria (as the cost in fuel for the Aztec would have been horrendous along with the problems with getting AVGAS in Italy). Then a short

Taxi ride to the apartment, Quickly, dumping the bags and then meeting up with everyone else who came a day early at a seafront restaurant.

The following morning Friday we had a wander round the town to ger our bearings before meeting up with the others for lunch. Whilst waiting for the other participants to arrive and get checked in.

Once everyone was checked in we had an open top bus tour of Reggio Calabria.

In the evening, we all met at the hotel and boarded a coach to go to the seaside village of Chianalea for a trip through history and myth. All the houses were built on the rocks and we were supposed to have dinner outside in a restaurant' terrace over the water. But the weather had other ideas as the wind was over the tide and the waves were crashing over the decking, so we were resigned to being inside.



*The view from our apartment*

On Saturday those that wanted to were invited to the Aero club for panoramic flights along the coast, But the weather had other ideas again, so that was a no go, but it was nice to meet the other members and committee of the aero club.

As myself and Margaret were staying on, we had a flight along the coast on Monday evening, and the weather was perfect along with a stunning coastline and views of Mount Etna/ Stromboli puffing out steam. See the pictures at the end.

On Saturday afternoon we all met to go to the MARRC National Archaeological Museum to see all the Arte fax that had been discovered along with the world famous Riace Bronzes.

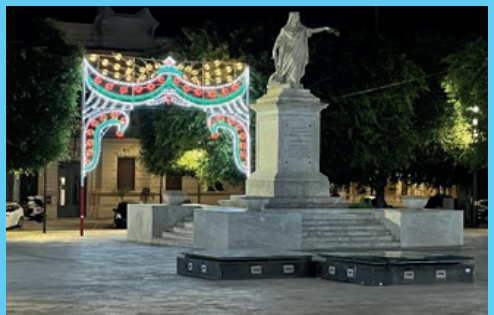


(They were big boys) In the evening we all went to a lovely restaurant in the town With the Rotary club of Reggio Calabria and being carnival week in the town we had a firework display from the balcony.



On the Sunday we all boarded the coach for a trip up into the hills to visit Mont Sant 'Elia Belvedere and then off to the village Gerace for a traditional Italian Buffet lunch. Returning to the hotel at 17.00. arranging to meet at the restaurant on the water front at 21.00 for Dinner.

On Monday after breakfast, it was time to say goodbye to every one as they all departed. Margaret and myself went to the airport to say goodbye to everyone and hire a car, as our intention was to go to Sicily the following day. So after picking up the car we went and booked our tickets at the ferry terminal and then went back to the apartment, having arranged to meet Enrico at the aero club to go flying in the club PA28. As we taxied out, we saw Mikes and Sallys plane still parked on the runway as they had had a long delay. (we did wave). We could not have picked a better evening to go flying it was spectacular with stunning scenery.





That night we went out for dinner at a Lovely outside restaurant in the town, which was my big mistake as for the next two days, I spent in the apartment inspecting the porcelain. The car stayed in the car park and only got driven back to the airport, so we never got to Sicily or anywhere else, if anyone wants two cheap ferry ticket let me know. Margaret went out shopping to keep out of my way as

she did not want to get it. So I was home alone.

Our thanks to all of the Italian section for putting on a lovely event in a stunning part of Italy along with great fellowship.

Mike & Margaret Cromati.



# The joys (?) ... of owning a 48 year-old Piper Cherokee

by Rotating Beacon Editor Tony Flin

I got into flying in 2014 learning with Aerobility at Tatenhill with the late Craig Knott. I am totally paralysed from the chest down hence need an adapted aircraft, and hence Aerobility. However, the 90+minute drive each way to Tatenhill started to rankle but the CFI at Sandtoft, which is only 5 miles away from my home offered to teach me there. No adapted aircraft existed at Sandtoft. As I had flown a PA28 at Tatenhill, I subsequently acquired an ex-flight school PA28 181 that was first registered in 1977. It took a tedious 18 months to fit a CAA approved hand rudder control before I finally could go solo.



*The Rudder hand control attached to the P2 pedals. For those curious, on the right is my CO detector hanging from the P2 yoke and a dog lead is strapped to the hand brake (my only means of braking)*

I was now able to fly with up to 3 passengers and later completed Instrument (IR(R)) and night Ratings. In the 10 years since starting to learn to fly I have had lots of fun flying to various places and have now logged a modest 700 hours, 95 airfields and 9 countries visited, usually with my wife Rosi as 'assistant navigator.' Importantly, much of this has been with IFFR for which I highly value the organisation's fellowship.

An old aircraft doesn't come without its issues however and I am grateful that I have had excellent engineering backup from Sandtoft. A relatively modest initial purchase has been blown out of the water with the additional costs. GBOMP needed new carpet, seatbelts and internal ceiling trim. The latter, being plastic had deteriorated. The first thing however was replacement of the walkway which had come loose and re-ripping the skin and spars.



*Access to the cockpit via shuffling up the wing from my wheelchair.*

Tyres do need replacing from time to time:  
Two legged GBOMP



I have improved the aircraft's avionics with the purchase and installation of a Garmin GFC Autopilot and G5 Electronic Flight Instrument. The Autopilot is so useful especially on longer flights. Several Air Traffic services couldn't see my Mode C transponder so we subsequently upgraded to a GTX335 Mode S transponder.

In 2022 I needed new cylinders after finding out that the current ones couldn't be repaired. It took 5 months to purchase 4 new cylinders from Piper! More expense!

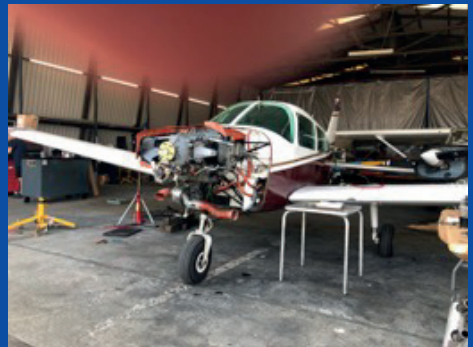
More recently I have been advised that I need a front wheel fork due to corrosion. So do thousands of others, waiting for Piper to get their act together. Luckily, the recent Airworthiness Directive from the US FAA requires calculated service hours to inspect cracks in the lower main wing spar bolts doesn't apply to GBOMP for several hundred hours, otherwise it would have meant mega bucks!

The maroon paintwork has seriously 'chalked' and to be honest the aircraft needs a complete respray. I'm putting off that expenditure till sunnier times! Despite the costs, we have had some marvellous times including taking daughter and granddaughter flying:

*Tony is a Past President of IFFR UK Section*



Repairing the walkway & riveting.



GBOMP undergoing new cylinder fitting.



## RAF Club lunch

IFFR UK have once again celebrated with their traditional Christmas Lunch at the RAF Club in Piccadilly, London. A truly international get-together, with UK members being joined by IFFR European Region Vice-President Kris De Keyser and fellow Flying Rotarians from Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Norway. Pre-lunch drinks were served in the Churchill Bar, before we lunched in the Sovereign's Room. After the meal, we heard from Martin Robinson, CEO of the UK Section of AOPA: your freedom to fly on his journey into aviation, the challenges and successes of AOPA UK in the last few years, and the opportunities still to come. IFFR UK Section Chair Kevin Doyle presented the Flyer of the Year Award to



stalwart members John and Diana Davy for their many years of keeping IFFR UK flying high, both with the flying to events all over Europe, and for organising the Christmas Lunch for many years now. As is customary, after the formalities, many of us adjourned to the Running Horse pub underneath the RAF Club to continue the celebrations.



**ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB**  
— FOUNDED 1918 —

## Members

IFFR has strong links across the world. Ex Brit **CHRIS SNELSON** from New Zealand is one of worldwide IFFR members. Chris was born in Guernsey, Channel Islands and his family emigrated to New Zealand in 1955. According to Chris: I lived in Christchurch, NZ, for school years and graduated Dunedin University with a Diploma in Land Surveying.

Worked in the South Island of NZ for Lands and Survey Dept before moving to Auckland and into private Survey



Practise. Two children, Carmen and Dean born in Auckland and undertook 6 months European tour with them as youngsters in a Camper Van.

My interest in Flying got the better of me and purchased a C172 to obtain Private Licence and progressed through to CPL and Instructor Rating at Ardmore Airport. I Joined NZ Warbirds Association in 1990 and was involved with purchasing and syndicating a Harvard, Vampire, Beaver, CT4 Airtrainer, T28 Trojan and PBY5A Catalina Flying Boat. ( Of note- NZ Warbirds Assoc exists with a number of Aircraft that are syndicated with up to 20 members owning and flying them with appropriate ratings of course)

The first Catalina we purchased unfortunately suffered engine failure while being ferried from the USA to NZ and had to ditch in open sea at night and subsequently sank in 10,000ft north east of Christmas Island. All crew were safely picked up by Container Ship some 10 hrs later. The second Catalina we purchased from Africa (had been doing safari trips throughout the continent) and I was fortunate enough to be on the successful ferry flight back to NZ in 1994. This ferry flight took us two weeks and 90 hrs flying with around \$70,000 being spent on fuel. The Catalina uses some 400 lts/hour and 1 gal oil for the two Pratt and Whitney radial engines.

We have continued to operate the Catalina in NZ for 30 years completing Safaris, Water Operations, Training and attending Airshows throughout this time.

I have been a Rotarian for some 20yrs now coming through a local Auckland Club to president and then joined The Rotary e Club of aviation after moving to Tauranga NZ.

A little known fact in Rotary is the Fellowships one can become part of as a Rotarian which span from Cricket through all

sports and hobbies to Aviation and the flying Rotarians are one such fellowship. Many of our members of Rotary e Club of Aviation belong to IFFR as well.

Coming from the excitement of travelling in Outback Australia for many years my business partner and I Import Off-Road Camper Trailers, assemble them ourselves and sell them throughout NZ to like minded people. I also continue my Surveying Career two days a week now and in spare time operate a lime and Avocado Orchard.

Recreation time is spent with family and Grand Kids in between a bit of jet skiing ( Yamaha 1800) and flying (Cessna R172K) at Tauranga in the sunny Bay of Plenty NZ.

*(Chris will be submitting an article on the Catalina for a future Rotating Beacon issue)*



# 2025 Events

There are a number of UK and European events scheduled which should attract members or guests whether to travel commercially or by GA.

## UK Events

<b>11th April</b>	(Provisional Date to be confirmed) Drive in meeting for a Visit to <b>Nats</b> at Swanwick Near (Southampton) to visit air traffic control.
<b>18th -21st May</b>	IFFR UK Meeting @ York.
<b>18th June</b>	Fly or Drive in to Biggin Hill organised by Alan Peaford. (Free Landings & Parking) lunch and a look around the heritage hangars. Registrations nearer the time.
<b>19th July</b>	Fly or Drive in to Enstone organised by David Sibthorp. More details nearer the time.
<b>20th August</b>	RAF Syerston Airshow
<b>4th October</b>	Drive in meeting to RAF Museum (North Holt) for the Battle of Britain guided tour and the Bomber command tour. Each tour is 1hour with lunch in-between

## December Christmas Lunch @ the RAF Club.

## Mainland European Meetings

<b>21st April</b>	Korkrijk/Wevelgem day BBQ
<b>1-4th May</b>	Duesseldorf
<b>30th May – 1st June</b>	Namur (Benelux)
<b>6th-10th August</b>	Latvia
<b>5th-8th September</b>	Dijon
<b>19th-21st September</b>	Wroclaw (Poland)



# Obituaries

Brian Midgeley has sadly died. He was a longstanding and active member of IFFR UK. Brian was a committed Rotarian. As a past District Governor, he was involved in Africa providing polio vaccines. He maintained a special interest in aviation having done his National Service in the RAF in the 50's. He had a keen interest in Motor Sport in the trials area. He has bequeathed his number plate B7RDA to the British Trials Association. This will be used by successive Presidents of the association.

# The International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians (UK Section)

## COMMITTEE

### Chairman

Kevin Doyle  
kevin@kd-insurance.co.uk

### Editor

Dr Tony Flinn  
Tonyflinn58@gmail.com

### Treasurer

Kevin Doyle  
kevin@kd-insurance.co.uk

### Membership Secretary

Rodney Spokes  
membership@iffr.uk



# Aviation Enthusiasts

If you enjoy this magazine, why not join our fellowship.  
Full membership is open to all Rotarians.

Organised events are held throughout the flying season and valuable help is on hand from members if it's your first time anywhere.

Just visit our website for more information

**[www.iffr.uk](http://www.iffr.uk)**

*We look forward to meeting you!*

**Disclaimer:** The International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians is a group of Rotarians dedicated to promoting aviation as an opportunity for fellowship and service.