

The Baragwanath Barometer



Issue 11, June 2011



Editorial

This month has been a technological nightmare for me. My computer has crashed twice and I have been fighting with everything electronic. It turns out that the gods of Windows are punishing me for going on a trip through Botswana using somewhat primitive aircraft when it comes to technology.

Anyway, I've managed to beat away the demons of cyberspace but unfortunately I've lost a whole lot of information along the way. To those of you who were regular contributors to the Baragwanath Barometer, I'm sorry that I have not included your work, but unfortunately it got eaten by the computer gremlins along with most of my emails. Please pass along your details and I will include them in the next edition.

So that is the reason why the second publication of 2011 has been dragging its heels so much. The work was there, but it was lost twice...so third time lucky.

As many of you are aware, I spent a large portion of the past year and a half organising a trip across Botswana with a whole squadron of de Havilland Moths. We completed the journey at the end of May and hopefully through the pages of this humble newsletter, you will see the reason why this adventure has been such a milestone in my life.

So, here goes with the Botswana Tiger Moth Adventure themed Baragwanath Barometer.

Courtney Watson

Editor



Aviation Clichés

- *Aviate, Navigate, Communicate;*
- *Truly superior pilots are those who use their superior judgement to avoid those situations where they might have to use their superior skills;*
- *Fly it until the last piece stops moving;*
- *Speed is life – altitude life insurance;*
- *Good judgement comes from experience , and experience comes from bad judgement;*
- *Aerobatics is like having sex and being in a car crash at the same time;*
- *Airspeed, altitude and brains – you always need at least two.*





An Out of Africa Experience

The Great Tiger Moth Botswana Safari of 2011



G-AOJK
Bob Willies and Stuart Beaty



A2-PIX
Brett and Stan Warren



G-ANEL
Jaap Niestadt and Evert Louwman



ZS-OSS
Martiens Steyn and John Peters



G-AJVE
Ron and Valery Gammons



ZS-UKW
Roy, Courtney and Patrick Watson



G-ADLY
Henry Labouchere and Josine Louwman



ZU-ECP
Roy, Courtney and Patrick Watson



ZU-FLF
Brian Appleton



ZS-FSH
Brian and Mike Zeedeberg

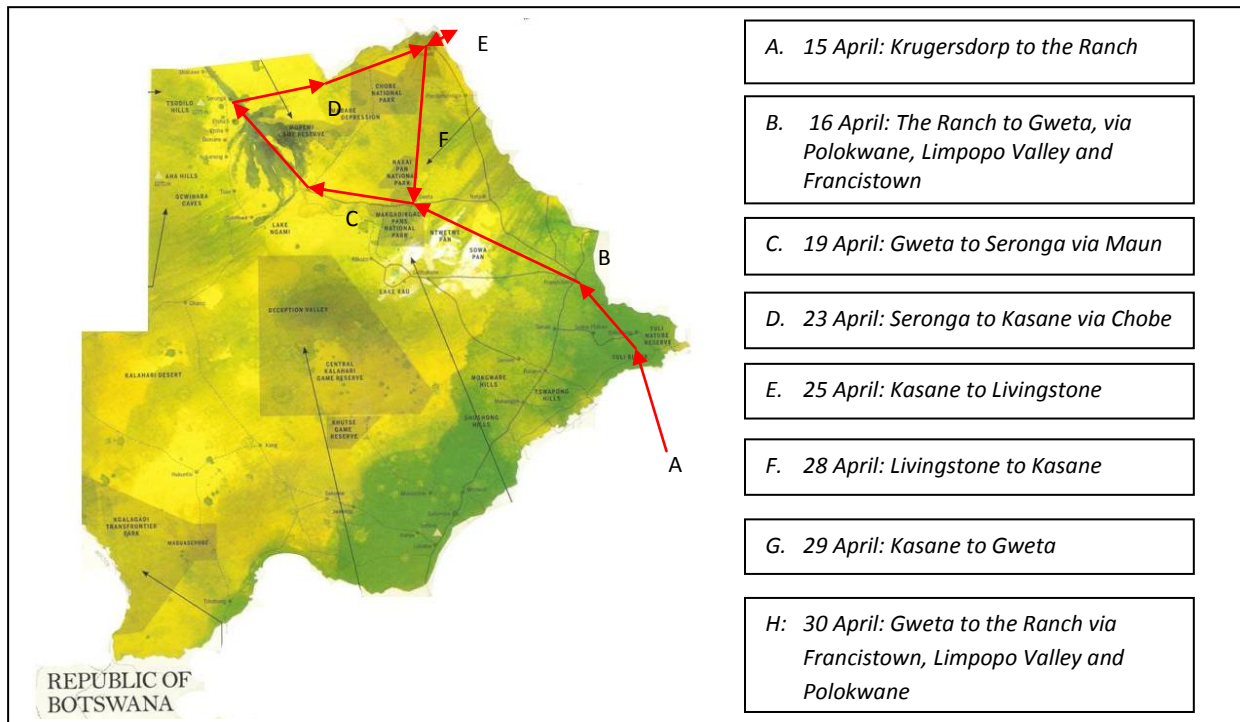


ZS-WLO
Greg and Veronique Conley

It all started some fifteen years ago in 1996. Andre van Rensberg put together a trip across Botswana with four Tiger Moths. I was sixteen years at the time, and the story of this trip really inspired me. Our Tiger Moth was gathering a bit of dust in the back of our garage as it was busy being rebuilt by my father, my brother and I. So we weren't able to join the pilots on this epic adventure, but ever since watching their DVD, I was enthused to take part in a similar sort of trip. I remember coming home after school and climbing into the wingless airframe, imagining myself twisting and turning through the clouds with the wind in my face and world at my feet. Someday I would fly over an untamed wilderness, over stampeding buffalos and trumpeting elephants. My imagination was invigorated.

Time went by and eventually our Tiger Moth took to the skies, making her way through all of the red tape of test flights, engine runs and paperwork. I finished school and slowly climbed the aviation ladder from student pilot, to private pilot, to Tiger Moth pilot. When I flew ZS-UKW for the first time on my own, a whole new world of flying opened up in front of my eyes. I felt more of a part of the air in which I was flying, and closer to the free flight of birds than ever before. It suddenly became clear how impressive the flights of those pioneering explorers like Victor Smith and Alcock and Brown really were. Every bit of turbulence, every gust, every smell and every sensation of being in the sky assaulted my senses when flying the Moth. My imagination was reinvigorated and we began to talk in earnest about a trip through Botswana.

These were the musings over a beer at the airfield; the sorts of plans which are made but never followed, but eventually our assertions changed from pipe dreams to real plans. I called a meeting with members of the Tiger Moth Club of South Africa and soon we were thrashing around ideas of where to go, when to fly and how to go about a trip from Johannesburg to Victoria Falls and back.



That was a year ago.

Since then the three pilots in our family have spent hours at the airfield preparing our Tiger Moth and Cessna 140 for the trip. We have been through the mechanicals of the engine, fuel system and controls. We have gathered up spare parts, changed spark plug leads, fixed radios and practised our formation flying. The logistics of the trip meant that fuel was not always available at every airfield we would be stopping off at, so with the help of Brett Warren we had to organise oil and fuel to be brought in by road. We had countless evening meetings, and eventually we settled in on a route from Krugersdorp to the Ranch Hotel and then Polokwane International Airport. From there the lines on our maps led us to Limpopo Valley, Francistown and Gweta where we would fly above the wide open spaces of the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans. We would fly to Maun and Seronga in the Okavango's panhandle and then on to Kasane via Chobe Airfield. We would then leave Botswana and enter Zambia en-route for Livingstone and a diversion over Victoria Falls. Our homeward journey would take us back to

Kasane, then Francistown, Gweta on the same path to Krugersdorp via the Ranch.

The red pen line that we drew across the map along with the dates that we inscribed next to each airfield was an assertive statement of our intentions, but flying in aircraft that are over seventy years old, any number of things could change those plans.

Word of our adventure spread and I received phone calls and emails from all over the world. Pilots were drawn to the 'Out of Africa' experience of flying over untamed wildernesses and animals and I was amazed how the bond of flying was able to bring so many people together from so many different backgrounds.

Eventually the participants of our trip were confirmed. Enthusiasts from six different countries would join us; from Holland, France, England, Australia, Botswana and of course South Africa. The European contingent brought three Tiger Moths and one Hornet Moth across the seas via container ship, and as our departure date drew closer, they arrived in Durban to be reassembled.



We rushed around frantically the week before we left; sorting out all sorts of minor details until eventually the 15th April arrived. We sat outside the Krugersdorp clubhouse waiting for the weather to clear, each pilot pacing uneasily back and forth scowling at the grey clouds above us. It took quite a few piping hot coffees before we were able to leave, and in two flights of de Havilland aircraft, we took to the skies, the ominous clouds just above our heads. Our route took us on a bumpy flight over Hartebeespoort Dam where we were joined by a number of vultures that regarded us with undisguised suspicion. The rain had held out, and soon we were overhead the N1 en-route to the Ranch near Polokwane.



G-ANEL and G-AJVE below the poor weather

As we approached the Ranch, the weather began to turn and the cloud descended over the mountains that were dotted around the field. The ominous grey began to change into a threatening black and I realised that we needed to get down on the ground as soon as we could. I came overhead the grass runway at the Ranch with Dad flying from the back seat of the Tiger Moth and Patrick piloting the 140. The ground was still dry, and we managed to land, taxi and put a cover over the cockpit just before the clouds opened up and the heavens drenched all of us. The rest of the aircraft managed to get on the ground with seconds to spare, and while we all looked like drowned rats, the aircraft were on the ground in one piece. A stiff drink at the bar warmed us up again and soon we were in good spirits, bantering back and forth with flying stories.



Moths and MGs at the Ranch

The MG Car Club joined us at the Ranch and as the sun began to set, the weather steeled as well. The rain stopped and in between the clouds the last light of the day spread its fingers across the silhouettes of the biplanes that were lined up along the verge of the runway. In the distance, we could hear lions calling and I took all of this as a good omen for the rest of the trip. There is a firm connection between Morris Garages (or MG) and Tiger Moths, as a large portion of the aircraft were built in the MG factories that were converted into aircraft manufacturing facilities between the First and Second World Wars, so it was a touching tribute that the MG Club decided to join us.

The next morning we left for Botswana, an early start turning into a much later one with the resurfacing bad weather. Eventually we had successfully left the Ranch and were on the ground at Polokwane International where we would clear customs. To our dismay, the customs officials required that we trudge all of our baggage through the x-ray machines in the terminal building.



ZS-OSS at Polokwane International Airport



It was with a clutter of paperwork, passports and hundreds of small bags that we managed to leave Polokwane, thankful that we had left officialdom behind us. The control tower was very accommodating, though, granting us permission to take off from the taxiway. We would have spent a lot of time navigating the airfield and burning off precious fuel if they had not allowed us to expedite our departure and it was a nice way to leave South Africa.

As we approached Limpopo Valley in Botswana, the landscape below us migrated away from populated towns and villages to open plains dotted with thorn trees. Some larger baobabs twisted incongruously up from the ground, and in their shadows we saw all sorts of game, from zebra to elephant. With the tarred Limpopo Valley airfield in sight, we turned on downwind over a herd of elephants enjoying a mud bath close to a waterhole, and I felt a twinge in my stomach; we were really doing this!



G-ANEL overhead the yellow trees near Francistown

The airfield is owned by Mashatu, the local game reserve, and Peter le Roux was kind enough to provide some coffee and snacks for us as we went on our way. The customs official stamped our passports with a smile and unlike the officials at Polokwane, he didn't see the need for us to pack and repack our luggage lockers just so that he could inspect our baggage. It was safe to say that I liked Botswana right from the beginning. It was also good to see Solomon, Brett Warren's driver waiting for us with his bakkie and four

drums of fuel. I had never met Brett and his promises over the telephone of providing fuel almost seemed too good to be true, but he had delivered on his intentions and with a hand pump, we filled up each of the aircraft before heading off towards Francistown.

The land changed again and the sparseness of the bush began to flesh out with bigger trees and more baobabs. With the autumn weather, the trees were a scattering of different colours, and we flew over shades of yellow and brown that looked as if they had been painted on the landscape below us by a talented artist.

Francistown was an impressive airfield with a wide tarred runway and no-nonsense terminal buildings and hangars. As we landed in our Tiger Moth, I noticed a crowd of faces peering through the fence surrounding the airfield and taking pictures of our arrival. Apparently word had got out about our arrival and we were a spectacle that the locals had not seen before. Because of our late departure from the Ranch, time was running out, and we were unsure whether we would make our destination at Gweta or not. We had a two hour flight ahead of us with only two and a half hours of sunlight left. It was a formula one fuel stop, and within twenty minutes we had all of the aircraft refuelled and Patrick had managed to persuade the control tower to allow us to use one flight plan for all eleven aircraft! I chatted to a Medivac pilot who had arrived at the same time as us, and he was kind enough to contact the lodge to tell them about our possible late arrival at Gweta.



ZS-UKW and ZS-OSS over the Makgadikgadi



With the sun dipping closer and closer to the horizon we raced towards Gweta. Our alternative would be Sua Pan, an airfield en-route, but hopefully it wouldn't get to the point of having to stay there. Beneath us, the huge trees began to get smaller and eventually they thinned out until there was only a scattering of small shrubs punched out from the undulating brown grass. Eventually even this petered out and we found ourselves over the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans.



G-AOJK flying low over the pans

The pans were a vastness that I have never experienced before and I watched as we chased our shadows over an unimpeded flat whiteness that stretched out towards the horizon. I was glad that we were travelling in a group, because having an engine failure over this area; I was convinced that we would never be found. Miles and miles of nothing stretched out beneath us, and the featureless landscape was only a glimmering white without any sign of animal or man.

The night began to drink up the last rays of sunlight as we saw the dirt Gweta runway. The pans had given way to a few small trees and the runway seemed to be scratched out of the earth as if someone had taken a well-placed razor blade through the bush to create a place where we could land. The tyres touched down with a crunching of gravel and when the engine stopped, the only sound to punctuate the silence was the blipping of other Gypsy Major Engines as the rest of the aircraft arrived. Greg and Veronique who

were flying a Baron as a support aircraft had arrived some time before us, and knowing that we had flown for over six hours through the elements, welcomed us with a crate of ice cold beers. They handed a Windhoek to me while I was still in the cockpit and I drained the refreshing liquid, the vibrations of the Moth still freshly rattling my hands. It was hard work flying all of that way under time pressure, and we were not yet flying fit, so I felt exhausted after the flight. My skin stung from the wind burn and my hair was an uncomfortable tangle from the helmet, but I couldn't stop grinning. We had flown over the most spectacular landscape, a flight that we would never forget, and as I thought it couldn't get any better than this, the rest of the trip would prove me wrong.



Gweta Airfield

Our time at Gweta was spent relaxing in the mud rondawels of Planet Baobab that were our accommodation, or lounging in hammocks spread beneath the branches of baobab trees. We refreshed in the huge pool and drank St Louis beer at their pub. We also spent some time inspecting the aircraft to ensure that everything was still in good working order after their long legs of flying the previous day. It turns out that the only problem was a puncture that Bob Willies picked up at Gweta Airfield. We rolled our eyes, wondering if we would be able to find someone who could change a Tiger Moth tyre in the one-horse Gweta town. In Johannesburg it is difficult to convince anyone to change one of these wheels, so we were not getting our hopes up. It turns out that we



were wrong, though, as bush mechanics is quite an art in Botswana and after an hour of twisting and pulling, we had the puncture fixed. This was courtesy of a local 'fitment centre' that worked using a converted cement mixer as their wheel changing machine and charged for compressed air. The same afternoon, Henry Labouchere, who was flying the Hornet Moth, took to the skies in Brett's Tiger Moth for his 110's flight in a Tiger. This is quite an impressive feat considering just over 300 were ever built!

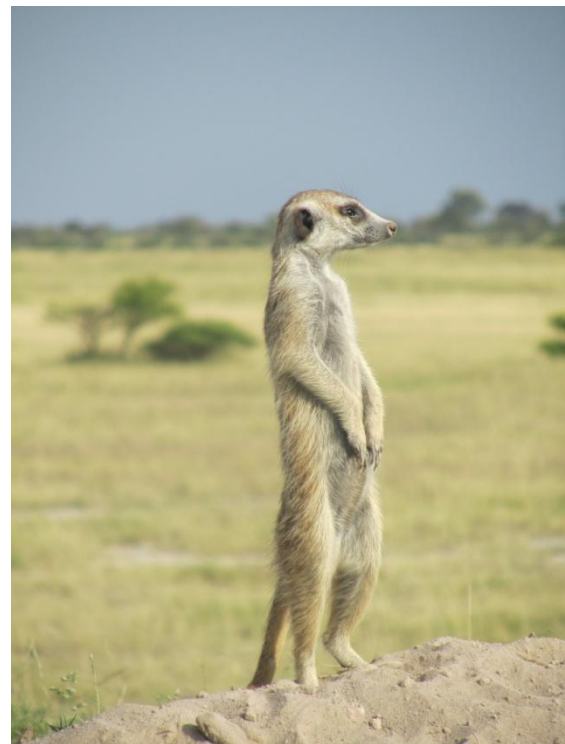


Henry Labouchere's 110th Tiger Moth Flight



The Baobabs at Sunset

On one of the days at Planet Baobab we went on an excursion through to the Ntwetwe Salt Pans, and interacted with a family of meercats. These small animals were very human-like in their characteristics, and always seemed intent on being active with something, even if they were not sure what that something was. They were either standing up on their hind legs looking out towards the sky and the horizon or they were foraging in the dirt looking for things to eat. We got a few feet away from them, and the meercats seemed completely unperturbed by our presence.



Curious Meercats at Ntwetwe Pan

Afterwards, we headed out in the game vehicles to the centre of the pans for a breakfast of coffee, muesli and yoghurt. It was a different perspective being on the ground and although the wind picked up quickly along the flat landscape, the silence was deafening. As far as we could see there was the whiteness of the salt with a single track left by our 4x4. The ground also allowed us to play with the optical illusions created by its vast distance, and Patrick and I took some fun photographs by manipulating this perspective.



Patrick holds me by the head at Ntwetwe Pan

On the way back to the camp we stumbled across the carcass of a cow that was being torn apart by about thirty vultures. They took to the skies when we approached on foot, and although their take off was lumbering, it was impressive to watch their flight change as they became graceful once they found a thermal.

When we left for Maun everyone was eager to see the Okavango Delta. For me, this was one of the reasons for putting the trip together, and I had spent countless hours reading up on this last untamed wilderness of Africa. Maun is one of the busiest airports for little aeroplanes that I have ever seen. There was an array of different types of Cessna's, all with A2 registrations followed by CUB or KDU or BOK. The pilots were also very friendly, and some of the staff from Sefofane were helpful in getting the Zambian clearances together. That was my job – while everyone else was having a late breakfast at the Bon Voyage cafe, I was trying to negotiate the Zambian Air



A2 CUB, BOK and OWL at Maun Airport

Force's uncooperative email and fax system (they have a yahoo email address – go figure!).

And then began one of the most impressive flights I have ever experienced. I was flying the Cessna 140 taking photographs of the journey, and I'm not sure how I managed to pilot the aircraft and shoot as many snaps as I did. The landscape beneath us was a cacophony of marshland.



G-ANEL and G-ADLY overhead the Delta

Different shades of green weaved between thousands of tiny rivulets beneath us. Tall papyrus that had been trampled flat by elephant and hippos made trails that criss-crossed through the delta. The radio was a chatter pointing out different game that we saw along the way. Fish Eagles soared beneath our wing tips and shy Lechwe and Sitatunga dived beneath the water lilies when they heard us approaching. We flew over drinking buffalo and herds of zebra. The ground was a waterlogged marshland with a few sandy islands where palm trees had taken root.



A Kudu Splashed along the wetlands



ZS-UKW over sandy islands



ZS-OSS and ZS-UKW over the winding rivers of the Okavango

I watched a Kudu sending pools of spray in its path as it ran from one reed bed to the next. The Okavango was absolutely spectacular, and I still struggle to find the adjectives to describe what it was like to fly over such unspoilt beauty.

Too soon we reached the Seronga Airfield where the aircraft would stay for the next few days. The flight felt like it had lasted for only a few moments, but when I looked at the

tachometer it registered an hour and a half. I had said to myself that the salt pans were the most spectacular flight of my life, and I had just been proven wrong. On the ground, everyone was ecstatic and I will remember that flight forever.



A formation of four over Guma Lagoon

We were met by Mark and Pippa from Guma Lagoon camp who introduced themselves and then helped us carry our baggage down to the river where we boarded some steel boats that would transport us to the lodge. We worked out that it would take us five or six minutes by air to reach the camp, but on the river it took an hour and a half. We sped through the reed beds, snaking through channels that were lined by papyrus too high to see over. I have no idea how the drivers navigated because I lost my sense of direction as we rumbled from one channel to the next, eventually ending up at a huge lagoon.



The Seronga Boat Trip



On the way we were disappointed at not seeing the big game that we had hoped for; most of it moving to more solid land because of the Delta's unusually high water level. We did spot vervet monkeys and all sorts of birds on the way, though. The ecosystem supported by the river lends itself to an array of wildlife and we saw kingfishers, bee eaters, jacanas and fish eagles.



African Fish Eagle

As we approached the lodge, we were welcomed by a wooden deck that stretched out into the lagoon and huge trees making the rest of the camp invisible from the water's edge. Guma Lagoon was something special; it was the sort of place that I wish my wife was there to share with me. The tranquil beauty was breathtaking and the homely attitude of the staff made us feel like we were friends of the family rather than paying guests.



1.5 kg of Tiger Fish

Our time was spent on the river, fishing for Tigers and being poled on mokoros. We were out of season for the fishing, and almost everyone was unsuccessful in their angling pursuits. I was lucky enough to hook a Tiger, though, my first one ever, and I found out the reason why they call it the Striped Water Dog. The fish thrashed the hook as if its life depended on it, much like a dog trying to steal a bone that someone isn't willing to give away. The fish was stunning, with the fiery red fins and long tiger lines; ferocity combined with beauty.

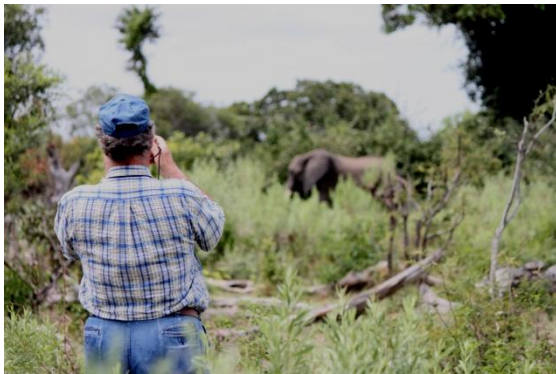


Mokoros and water lilies

The mokoros were another hallmark experience. We gathered ourselves up in these small wooden boats, just wide enough to hold our hips, and being just a few inches above the water, we were guided by local polers through the wetlands. It was just like being with one of those punters in Oxford except that we were very unstable, susceptible to being tipped over by crocodiles and hippos and without the austere cultural atmosphere associated with the English pastime. Actually, come to think of it, it was nothing like punting in Oxford. We heard hippos but never saw any and were instead mesmerised by the variety of small wildlife that followed our path through the reeds. As we disrupted the stems of papyrus, tiny frogs no more than the size of a fingernail fell into our boat. We were followed by dragonflies that were black and red and orange in their colours and often we disturbed a heron's fishing or the tentative movement of an



African Jacana. We stopped on one sandy and ant hilled island for lunch where rumour had it that there was a bull elephant. We searched for him on foot, and with the wind in our favour, eventually managed to track down this enormous beast.



Roy Watson photographs a bull elephant

It turned to face us at one point, its ears stretched out to listen for any movement. We stood there in awe for some time until we decided to move off and allow him to enjoy his lunch on his own. It is an impressive feeling being less than twenty meters away from a wild elephant and although I appreciated its majesty and dominating presence, I had a number of escape routes planned up nearby trees just in case.



The balcony at Guma Lagoon Lodge

We left Guma all too soon, and it was without doubt my favourite place on the trip. The basic luxury of the camp is something that I will return to one day...with my wife in tow. We said our goodbyes to the staff and after refuelling courtesy of Solomon, a woman by the name of Debbie Peak introduced herself.

Imagine our surprise when she told us that her great grandfather started a company which made these aircraft and it turned out that Debbie was Sir Geoffrey de Havilland's great granddaughter. She lives in Seronga and after hearing the aircraft flying from the airfield, she thought that she would come to meet us. What a co-incidence!



Stan and Brett Warren, Henry Labouchere and Debbie Peak (Geoffrey de Havilland's Great Granddaughter)

After swapping stories with Debbie we took off for Chobe. Our route took us through the Selinda Spillway, a river that meanders from the Okavango panhandle towards Chobe in the centre of the Caprivi Strip. We saw more game than I can recall, and all it took was our following the course of the river in a loose formation of biplanes. Beneath the trees we saw herds and herds of elephant and bundles of buffalo that were packed tightly together as they grazed on the greener grass. The waterways of the Okavango disappeared and we were left with huge trees that sheltered all kinds of birds and wildlife.



A herd of elephant along the Selinda Spillway



Eventually we came upon the Chobe Airfield, where we dodged elephant dung as we landed on the dirt runway. This airfield was largely inaccessible by road, and Solomon was not going to meet us there. Instead Brett arranged Mike Chase from Elephants without Borders to deposit a few drums of fuel underneath some trees at the edge of the airfield for us to use.



Fuelling up at Chobe

We spent some time scouring the airfield until we found three black drums camouflaged by a few branches from dead trees. Feeling the pioneering spirit of the aviators before us, we unloaded the hand pump that Brian Appleton had kept in his Jabiru and began to pump full each of the aircraft. Mike Chase really went above and beyond the call of duty for us, and we were privileged to give something back to his charity. Elephants without Borders is a non-profit organization that works in the parks of Botswana and surrounding countries in order to manage elephant movements. Before fences, elephants would move to wherever the best environment for them was, and this was what Elephants without Borders encourage.

Full of fuel, we took to the skies again, the rumble of Tiger Moths filling the air as our gaggle of aircraft pressed onwards towards Kasane. The flight there was fairly uneventful with the exception of two things. The first was that en-route we saw more herds of elephant than we had seen up until then, each family lining the banks of the expansive Chobe River

as they bathed, wallowed and drunk. The second thing happened during my take off while I was flying the Tiger Moth. As I eased the tail up by pressing the stick forward, the GPS that I was using fell to the floorboard. I bent down to retrieve it and at the same time I hit a small uneven patch on the runway. I checked to see what the bump had dislodged, only to find out that the fuel indicator needle had disappeared. Apparently the jolt had persuaded the float to come unstuck from the needle, and I was left knowing that I had a full tank of fuel, but unable to see exactly what my consumption was. It took all of my fingers and toes to work out how much fuel I was using, and eventually we made it to Kasane in one piece; my nerves a little shaken.



Warthogs at Kasane Airfield

At Kasane we were welcomed by a family of warthogs that darted in front of the terminal building, their tails up in the air as if they were remote controlled. The real reason their tails are raised vertically when warthogs run is because their skin is so tight that when they close their eyes while running through the long grass, the taughtness of their skin pulls their tails up as well. It's an old story that was put down to being myth because there was no grass on the airfield where they were running. Anyway, we tied down the aeroplanes and then headed to the departure lounge where the Chobe Safari Lodge vehicle would collect us.

The lodge was in opulent surroundings, a stark contrast to the more homely environments that we were used to at Guma.



We spent the next two days on the Chobe River and in the Chobe Game Reserve spotting animals and birds. This place was quite unbelievable, and seemed to be a Mecca for wildlife. It was here that we had the best sightings of elephant I have ever experienced. Along the banks of the river, we watched families of five or six splashing in the water or pelting mud over themselves in an effort to keep cool. We were lucky enough to witness two siblings fighting over a mud bath, and their bolstering argument reminded me of how similar animals and people really are. I used to fight just like them with my brother when I was a youngster.



Young elephants tussling over a mud bath along the Chobe River

On one of the trips along the Chobe River, from the boat that we rented we sidled up to Fish Eagles, crocodiles and hippos. The bird life was exquisite with Pied Kingfishers pin dropping into the water as they caught fish and Open-Billed Storks gently flapping from one roost to the next.



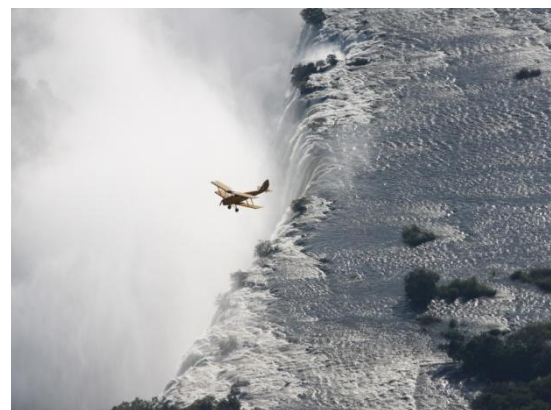
Remember the old 'Chomp' advert?

The hippos gathered in pods and besides for the odd open-jawed annoyance, they languished in the cool water together. This was a remarkable place, and if it were not for the droves of people that it attracts, the Chobe Game Reserve would be another unspoilt piece of Africa.

The day we left Kasane the excitement could be felt like sherbet in the air. We were heading to Livingstone, and hopefully we could get permission to overfly Victoria Falls as well. The Falls area has its own set of special rules, and aircraft not involved with sightseeing tours would have to be 3000 feet above the spray. We hoped to get a little lower than that, but we would have to see what happens. Our leg to Livingstone took us over the confluence of four countries at the Kasangula Border post; Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. We flew over the Zambezi River and as far as fifteen miles out, we could see the spray from the Falls.



G-AJOK approaches Victoria Falls



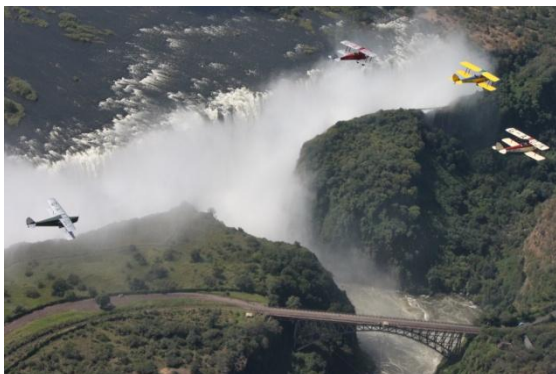
ZS-OSS overhead Victoria Falls



My heart skipped a beat. As we got closer, we saw that nobody was flying over the area, so we descended a bit lower and eventually found ourselves as a formation of three Tiger Moths and one Hornet Moth over one of nature's most spectacular displays of power. Water cascaded down the drop, boiling in a pot of froth in the bottom. Rainbows were formed by the spray, and I felt like a kid playing in a sprinkler as we flew over the most awesome majesty I have ever seen.



ZS-UKW over Victoria Falls

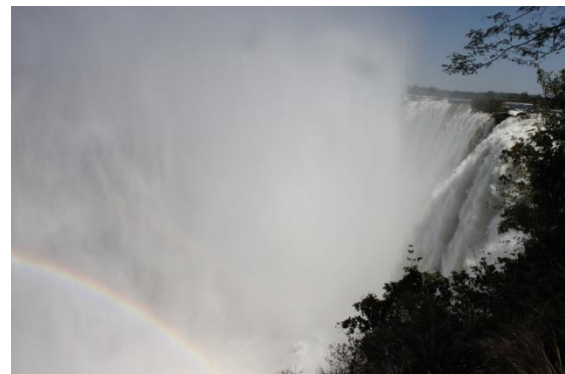


G-AOJK, G-ANEL, GADLY and ZS-UKW over the Falls



G-AOJK, ZS-OSS and ZS-UKW over Victoria Falls

This was what it was all about, and Victoria Falls did not disappoint. On the ground at Livingstone, we were reduced to schoolboy enthusiasm trying to regale what we had just seen. The Falls were just as impressive from the ground, and what struck me about that place was the thunder of it. Mosi-oa-Tunya, The Smoke that Thunders really deserves its name, and because of the high water level, we were engulfed in spray wherever we walked. It was like being in a cloud as the water cascaded in every direction, manipulating light into rainbows and obscuring the foliage around us.



The park around Victoria Falls

Troops of baboons have made this area their home, taking up the most impressive real-estate in Southern Africa. I was disappointed in the rest of Livingstone, though. The poverty of the locals is far more apparent than anywhere else that we had been which was particularly harsh as it was in stark contrast to the over-indulgent overseas lodges which line the banks of the Zambezi and draw tourists from all over the world. Wherever we went there were locals trying to sell something or beg for money and I was saddened by the fact that it looks like the locals are not benefitting from what tourists the area attracts. Instead, money seems to go to overseas pockets.

We flew a number of times over the falls and each experience was as unique as the first time we flew over. Its beauty was breathtaking. On our final sortie, we found out that the President of Zambia had landed in Livingstone to open a local police station



and was heading back on his private jet, Zambia One, from Livingstone Airport. We were advised by the control tower to be back before 16:50 as the airport would be closed after that point for the President's departure. When we returned to the airfield and 16:30, I was cleared in to land as number one and when I was a few meters short of touching down, I was told that the airspace was now closed and we needed to depart the area immediately. Grumpily, we flew ten miles away from the airfield, and without any responses from the tower, it was more than forty minutes later that we were eventually cleared to join and land. Without a fuel indicator I was not impressed having to fly double what our sortie had taken.

Suffice to say I was happy to leave Zambia and head back to Botswana. The people seem to be friendlier there, and Botswana was our home away from home; it was good to be back. We spent the remaining day back at the Chobe Safari Lodge and the following morning we flew back towards Gweta.



ZS-UKW and the early morning Makgadikgadi light

This was the beginning of the homeward stretch and after a relaxing night at the Gweta Lodge, we had a sunrise take off towards Francistown. The pans were beautiful in the early morning light as silhouettes of open biplanes dotted the skies in dark patches. The air was absolutely still, and the first rays of light shimmered like a mirage off the white salt pans. The African sky is always something special and we had seen some spectacular sunrises and sunsets during our sixteen days

in Botswana. The colour of the sun seems to have a more vital hue in this place; reds, yellows and oranges breaking the clouds as if they intend to wrench the day and night apart instead of simply mark their passing.

We flew through Francistown without a hitch en-route to Limpopo Valley. The airwaves were more subdued and the boisterous banter that became a familiar comfort over the headsets began to dissipate as everybody realised that they were reaching the end of our adventure.



Ian Khama at Limpopo Valley

At Limpopo Valley we noticed a military twin engine aircraft parked on the tarmac. It turned out that the President of Botswana, Ian Khama was staying at one of the lodges in the Mashatu Reserve, and he had heard about our trip. The President wanted to meet us, and all of our party was impressed by his modesty and interest. He told us that tourism is one of Botswana's priorities and events like the one we had undertaken serves to expose the beauty of the country further afield. To say he left a lasting impression was an understatement. We also met Derek and



Beverly Joubert of National Geographic fame who have produced award winning documentaries such as 'Eye of the Leopard'. We could not have asked for a nicer way to depart Botswana and I know that everyone who was a part of the trip will not hesitate to revisit this beautiful country again in the future.



Toasts of champagne ended the trip at the Ranch

Before we left Limpopo Valley we said our goodbyes to Brett who was leaving us for his home in Gaborone and then with a flypast of Moths over the control tower, we headed south towards Polokwane. After clearing customs it was on to the Ranch where champagne was waiting for us. We flew once overhead, noticing a sign that Patrick and I had painted months earlier drawn across front of the Baron. On the ground we toasted to our successful end of a journey which we will never forget.

It was a trip that took over a year in the planning and I still cannot believe that it is over. Seven aircraft that were over seventy years old built up just over thirty hours of flying over the seventeen days of our adventure, and the only problem was a puncture from a single thorn. I think that those figures speak for themselves and are a testament to the virtue that Geoffrey de Havilland built into these aircraft.

At the same time the trip was more than just a dream come true for me. It is 45 years since my father's first flight in our Tiger Moth, ZS-UKW, an aircraft that also has her 70th Birthday this year. 2011 marks 10 years since I achieved my Private Pilots License, 80 years since the production of the first Tiger Moth. Since the last Tiger Moth Trip which took place in 1996, I have yearned for this sort of adventure.

And we did it.

This has been an experience of a lifetime, not only because of the flying which was breathtaking to say the least, but also because of the friendships that we have made along the way. Aviation is a really close-knit community, and on our Botswana Safari, we had so much help along the way.



(From left to right)

Back:

Greg and Veronique Conley

Middle:

Ron Gammons, Henry Labouchere, Bob Willies, Jaap Niesdadt, Patrick Watson, Brian Appleton, Evert Louwman, Val Gammons, John Peters

Front:

Stuart Beaty, Martiens Steyn, Roy Watson, Josine Louwman, Brian Zeedeberg, Courtney Watson, Mike Zeedeberg



Without people like Brett Warren and Michael Chase, we would not have been able to fly to the wilderness airfields that we went to. My brother, Patrick, was my second-in-command who ensured that each leg of the trip was carefully planned, and who also smoothed out the paperwork that was required for each of our flights. To the pilots of the support aircraft, Greg and Veronique Conley, Brian and Mike Zeedeberg and Brian Appleton; you carried our 'excess luggage' and spares that we were eternally grateful you kept close by. Veronique also managed to create order out of all of our finances along the way – something which I could never have done. Martiens Steyn organised that hangarage at Krugersdorp as well as all of the little things during our late night discussions prior to the trip. Roy, my dad, has imparted his passion for aviation that has sparked the love of flying in both my brother and I.

The overseas participants were integral in making this trip possible, and it would not have been the success that it was without their enthusiasm that brought all of their aircraft from Europe to join us.

Back at home, I am finding that my mind continually flies to fragments of our trip – from the spectacular isolation and vastness of the salt pans, the overwhelming wildlife amongst more shades of green than I thought existed in the Okavango and the herds and herds of elephants along the Chobe River. I keep thinking about our banter on the ops frequency or at the pub after a long flight, and of course the enormity of Victoria Falls is emblazoned in my memory.

I have learnt so much along the way and this experience has further quenched my thirst for flying. Thank you to everyone who has shared it with me.

Courtney Watson





Beautifully Restored P-40

It only took three days to put her all back together and everything works!

We pulled P-40E AVG #67 out of Hangar 79 at about 4:00 PM local time yesterday to a growing crowd of starry eyed onlookers. It looks beautiful out on the grass next to "The Ford Island Tower."

All this would never have happened if it were not for the generosity of Mr. Fred Smith of FedEx. The crew of John and Cory from Fighter Rebuilders LLC; Tom Camp a former owner of this P-40E; John W. Hazlet, the last guy to fly it, and David Sutton from FedEx. What a delightful group of guys, but then again, if you love airplanes it is sort of in your blood.

As for things this P-40 is famous for it was the P-40 John Belushi used on the movie "1941" and in the movie, "Tora-Tora-Tora". Everything works, the engine only has 50+ hours since new in 1944, the landing gear works as do all of the electronics. It will remain in flyable condition from now until I'm long gone.

To say that I am having the time of my life would not be an exaggeration. The staff that I work with are some of the greatest people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, and every one of them are characters in their own right. I fit right in!

Jim Goodall
Pacific Aviation Museum





Spitfire Around the World Challenge

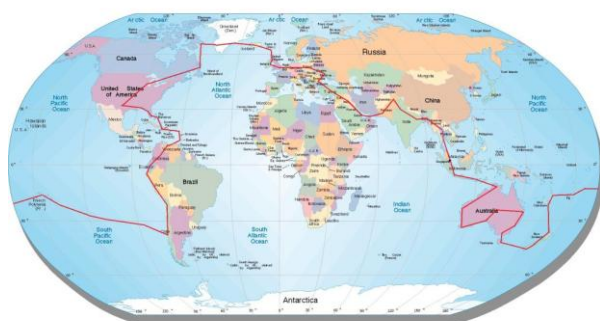
THE CHALLENGE

A Father and son are to fly around the world in a Spitfire. Their flight will cover approximately 30,000 nautical miles in order to raise £1,000,000 for the International Children's Heart Foundation.

ROUTE

This is a list of the countries that we will be visiting during their 3 month trip:

Germany (Berlin), **Poland** (Warsaw), **Ukraine**, **Romania** (Bucharest), **Turkey**, **Iraq** (Baghdad), **Kuwait**, **Saudi Arabia** (Riyadh), **Qatar** (Doha), **United Arab Emirates** (Abu Dhabi and Dubai), **Pakistan** (Pasni and Islamabad), **India** (Delhi), **Nepal** (Kathmandu), **Thailand** (Changmai, Bangkok and Phuket), **Malaysia** (Kuala Lumpur), **Indonesia** (Jakarta, Bali and Timor), **Australia** (Visiting approx 10 cities), **New Zealand** (Invercargil, Christchurch and Auckland), **Norfolk Island**, **Vanuatu** (Port Vila) **Fiji**, **Samoa**, **Bora Bora**, **Mangareva**, **Easter island**, **Chile** (Concepcion, Santiago, Antofagasta), **Peru** (Lima), **Equador** (Quito) **Colomia** (Bogota), **Venezuela** (Caracus), **Caribbean Islands** including (Grenada, Antigua, Haiti, Bahamas), **U.S.A** (Pensacola, Texas, Oshkosh), **Canada** (Toronto), **Greenland**, **Iceland**, **Faroe islands**, **Ireland** (Dublin) and finally back to the **United Kingdom**.



The route



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S HEART FOUNDATION

It is every child's right to be born into a world where he or she can thrive, grow to be strong and make their parents proud. It is not, however, every child's destiny. One in every 100 children born in the developing world will never see their first birthday because of congenital heart disease. Their parents will mourn the loss. They are powerless to save them because the resources required to treat and cure congenital heart disease are not easily accessible in developing countries and remote regions. Medical team skills, money to transport and house patients and their families, medicines, equipment and facilities are scarce.

The mission of the International Children's Heart Foundation (ICHF) is to bring the skills, technology and knowledge to cure and care for children with congenital heart disease to developing countries. Their goal is to make the need for ICHF obsolete. They will work toward this goal through their mission trips where they operate and educate local health care professionals, and provide equipment and medications.

CREW

Hello. My name is Justin Collins. I'm 38 and I've held a private pilot's licence for more than 2 years. I am also the father of a wonderful 16-year-old boy called Thomas (otherwise known as TJ). Thomas was born with major congenital heart defects. I came up with this idea one rainy morning while flicking through an aeroplane magazine at my local flying club



in Earls Colne, Essex. Because of Thomas's health problems, we'd learnt about an amazing charity called Babyheart.org which provides life-saving care for children in developing countries throughout the world. I am very keen to help them by raising money through my flying. In fact, I had this crazy idea to do it by flying round the world in a Spitfire! One small problem, though: I didn't have the money for an original one – they cost millions! Then, by pure chance, I turned the page of the magazine and stumbled on a story about a new company that's started making 90% scale versions. It was fate!



THOMAS'S STORY

Thomas was born with complex congenital heart disease. When he was delivered, he was very blue and doctors discovered he had a heart murmur. He was immediately transferred to the special care baby unit for close-monitoring before going by ambulance to a specialist heart unit at London's Royal Brompton Hospital. After several tests, we were told he had Transposition of the Great Arteries, VSD, ASD and Severe Pulmonary Stenosis. He also developed Jaundice so needed UV treatment.

We were allowed to take him home after a few days but the doctors told us he'd need surgery in two months' time. Up until then, we'd have to take him for weekly check-ups at our local hospital. As you might imagine, those two months were a nerve-wracking time and did not pass quickly.



Justin Collins

When the big day came, Thomas had a Blalock Taussig Shunt put in. This increased his oxygen saturations slightly, but a month later, he needed something called a Balloon Septostomy via Catheter. He had to have the same thing again at 4 months old. After that, he had numerous admissions to hospital including his first Christmas (Santa visited him in hospital) when he'd developed RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus). He was in for two weeks and needed oxygen and physiotherapy. We had open access to our local hospital as the visits were becoming so frequent. The next surgery was at 21 months, when Thomas had another Blalock Taussig Shunt. During the operation it was found that his first shunt had become almost completely blocked, so this was a life-saver. After that, the hospital admissions continued regularly.



Thomas Collins



Brave little Thomas had two further bouts of RSV and then, when he was two, he developed pneumonia and was very poorly. He needed physiotherapy and daily nebuliser treatment. After 2 1/2 weeks, he was discharged with a portable nebuliser to use at home.

Because of the low oxygen saturation levels in his blood, Thomas had a lack of energy and was a very poor feeder and so he didn't grow much or gain weight. He found it difficult to climb the stairs and couldn't run around like healthy children of the same age.

When he was four, we took Thomas to Euro Disney to see Mickey Mouse. It was a month before his next planned open-heart surgery, which was the big one. We all had a fantastic time and it took our minds off what was to come.

When the day came, Thomas was to have the Rastelli Procedure. He was very upset going down to theatre and clung onto his teddy bear. It was heartbreaking but we knew we had no choice. It was a very long five hours, but we got the call to say the operation had gone well and Thomas was in recovery. When we got to see him in the intensive care unit, he was pink for the first time in his life. The doctors kept him sedated for a while and his arms were in splints so he couldn't pull out any of his wires.

The next day, the nurses tried to remove the tube that was breathing for him, but they quickly found he was having difficulties. It was clear he was struggling and as we sat helplessly watching his oxygen saturation levels dropping, he went into cardiac arrest. The worst fears raced through our minds, but thankfully the doctors and nurses brought him back from the brink. He needed to go on CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) for several days, which forced oxygen into his lungs. He was then transferred to high dependency unit and after a few more days he was allowed home.



Thomas a few days after the surgery

Slowly he gained more and more strength and it was wonderful to see him run around with his friends without getting blue and tired out; although he remained a poor eater and was very small for his age. He still had regular 6 monthly check-ups with his cardiologist and 3 monthly appointments with the local paediatrician, but the hospital admissions were not so frequent.

When Thomas was 13 and the hormones kicked in, his appetite increased, he started to grow and his immune system got stronger. Things looked good; but then, slowly, he started to tire and at 15 years it was decided he needed more surgery. Surgeons had developed a new procedure which involved inserting a valve within a stent through a catheter via the groin. If Thomas could have this, it would help him enormously. Without it, he would need more risky open heart surgery.

It was decided Thomas was an ideal candidate and in August, 2009, he went into the Royal Brompton Hospital. This was the first time the hospital had ever performed this procedure so an expert from Great Ormond Street came over to assist. The procedure went well and Thomas was discharged the next day. And even though he had a sore groin, he was out riding his bike a week later!

Where are we now? Well, Thomas still has to have regular check-ups because this was a new procedure and we don't know how long it will last.



And he will inevitably need more procedures and surgery throughout his life - at the moment, they say between every five to ten years.

In the meantime, Thomas is planning on taking things easy; with the blessing of his consultant cardiologist, he's doing a sky dive in July for charity.

Chairman's Message

To those of you in particular who attended our last AGM on the 11th June 2011, held at the clubhouse at Baragee Airport, and who made it such an overwhelming success, thank you very much for your support and the committee look forward to taking your mandate of the running and future developments very seriously.

As discussed at the meeting, we are now going to drop the electricity levy from all hangars and replace it with an 'Airport Maintenance Levy'. This levy will be introduced to all hangar renters, ground lessees and aircraft owners. However, obviously the first aeroplane in every hangar will be free. As we have not yet set the new levies, which will be revised shortly, we are going to introduce this fee at exactly the same rate as the previous electricity levy.

Therefore, most of you will not incur any extra expenses at present. The larger hangars will however, be metered and they will also be charged for their actual usage of electricity. By implementing the above, we are trying, as discussed at the AGM, to make it more unilaterally fair that everybody who uses the airfield, should contribute more equally towards the running costs of the airfield, because most of the electricity used, is used by the clubhouse, security lighting etc. of which we all derive a benefit and not just those people who happen to have an electrical point in their hangar/s.

We, as a committee, have listened to your requests for fairness and transparency and we trust that the above arrangement will meet with your approval.

Once again, thank you for your enthusiasm, encouragement and overwhelming support for the changes that have already, and shortly will be, taking place in the future.

Peter Skellern
JLPC Chairman



Condolences

This message is well overdue, but as you are all aware at the start of the year Peet Taljaard, the caretaker of our airfield passed away. He is survived by Michelle and his children. Peet made a long-lasting impact on Baragwanath, and his humour and willingness to help with anyone and everyone will be missed.



Forthcoming Events

2 JULY FUN RALLY

Keith has requested special condolence on the SAPFA joining fee for JLPC members – she has agreed that it will be waived for this rally, and entrants that are not SAPFA members, will pay the standard R200 entrance fee, plus R50 hire for the logger.

Gerhardt will provide breakfasts: - egg, bacon, tomatoes, mushrooms and toast with coffee at R50 per head.

Mary will be there early on the day to brief “newbies”.

Let’s make this one of the most successful rallies and help put Bara-g on the map.

AGENDA:

07h30	Arrive and Breakfast
08h30	Briefing and Map Preparation
10h30	First Aircraft off
14h00	Last Aircraft lands
14h30	Prize Giving
15h00	Home Jerome

Please do what you can to support this sport. A lot of effort goes into making it happen, but unless we have at least 10 entries, it is not a viable event. We need to print and prepare all the documents so it is important to let us know if you are flying or not.

Should you want to learn a bit more about the sport of Fun Rally Flying, please email Mary de Klerk a request and she will send you some further details to read up on. Please enter online at www.sapfa.org.za

Mary de Klerk





The Parting Shot



I'm afraid that I just had to use one from the Botswana Trip as our parting shot. This was taken by Brian Appleton from the Paternavia that Brian Zeedeberg was flying (co-incidentally belonging to Chris van Hoof). Flying low level over Victoria Falls is really something special.

I hope that you enjoyed the latest Baragwanath Barometer, and don't hesitate to pass any more material on to me at cwatson@stithian.com

Until the next issue (unless I see you around the airfield) blue skies and safe landings.

Courtney Watson