

Baragwanath

Barometer



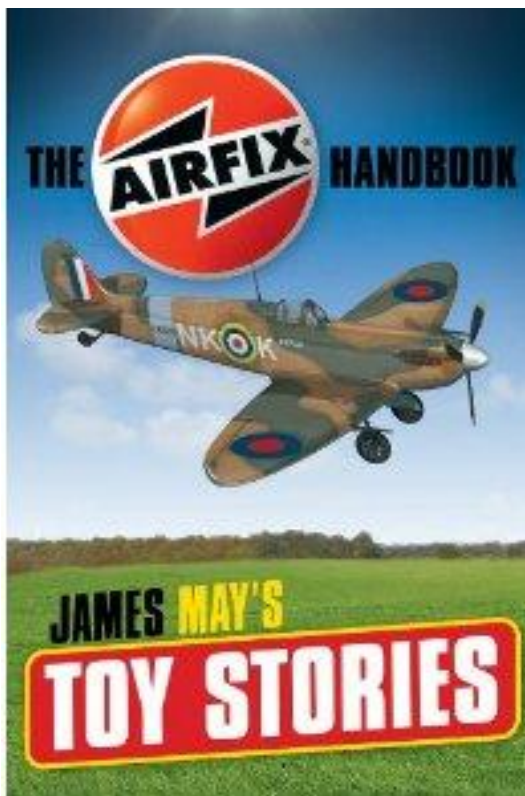
Issue 9, October 2010



## Editorial

Another month rolls by and with it the next edition of the 'Baragwanath Barometer'. Since the last issue, I have felt like I am getting drawn closer and closer to old aeroplanes. We had the celebration of a century since the first flight of the first de Havilland Aircraft, and friends have been bombarding me with the DVDs of old aeroplanes which they have recorded on DSTV.

The latest in these welcome gifts has been the series entitled 'Spitfire Ace' which, if you have not seen it, follows the training journey of a handful of present day pilots from similar backgrounds that the RAF drew their pilots from in World War 2. It's massively entertaining.



I have also been given an episode of 'Toy Stories' presented by James May, that slightly strange bloke with the long hair that also co-presents Top Gear. Anyway, in this one he gets a group of kids from middle England together and build an Airfix model Spitfire, scaled 1:1. It's inspiring stuff!

On the real flying side, I've continued to enjoy my Sunday afternoon flips in our Tiger – which by the way, seem to be that much more meaningful since the celebration of Geoffrey de Havilland's first flight.

With the advent of spring and the heat of summer, pilots have all started to creep out of the dark corners of wherever pilots go during the winter and begin flying their aeroplanes again.

Baragwanath is a hive of activity and life is good.



Thanks must go once again to those of you who have contributed to the newsletter. For those of you who haven't, any photographs, articles, stories, anecdotes or musings are most welcome. Pass them along via email to [cwatson@stithian.com](mailto:cwatson@stithian.com).

Other than that, I hope that you enjoy this edition and until next time, blue skies.

Courtney Watson

*"Why fly? Simple. I'm not happy unless there's room between me and the ground."*

*Richard Bach*





## De Havilland Centenary



On 12 September, nine Tiger Moths and four Chipmunks gathered at Baragee to celebrate one hundred years since the first flight of Geoffrey de Havilland. The weather played the game, and amidst picnic blankets, champagne and a birthday cake, pilots swapped war stories and raised a glass to one of the most prolific aircraft manufacturers the world has ever seen.

This is the story of de Havilland:

It was after receiving an inheritance of 1000 pounds, that Geoffrey de Havilland teamed up with his long-time friend Frank Hearle and bought offices in Kensington where he began to design his first aircraft, effectively the Model 1 or DH1. It was powered by a flat four engine which he designed himself.

That all happened in 1909.

At the same time he started work on an airframe and Geoffrey began looking for a suitable field to test his design. He came across Seven Barrows, where aircraft testing had been done before, and in November 1909, after construction was completed, Geoffrey trailed his aeroplane in for its first flight.



From here, there were several mechanical and weather problems, but eventually the engine runs were done, and Geoffrey decided to take his aircraft into the skies. His diary reads "...it was a mixture of impatience and sheer will power that finally got the first de Havilland Flying Machine off on its first flight. And it was crass ignorance that caused it to come back again, violently and disastrously." The pilot snatched the aircraft off the ground and in a steep climb, the wing suffered structural failure and the whole aircraft crashed in a mess of wood and wire. Geoffrey was miraculously relatively unharmed, suffering only a few bumps and bruises. After the aircraft had reached a stop, he held up his hand to signal to Frank that he was okay, and sprained his wrist of the still turning propeller. That was his most significant injury.

From Geoffrey's diary "...we did not waste time on regrets or prolonged farewells. We gave not a backward glance to the field and sheds. We would be back soon enough."

Substantial modifications were made on the initial aircraft at Fulham, and in August 1910, the Model 2 was ready to be tested. It was taken back to Seven Barrows. After more extensive engine runs and short hops, on 10 September 1910, Geoffrey took to the skies in what was the genesis of de Havilland aircraft.





## 10 September 1910

It was a beautiful evening in late summer and I had already run the machine several times fast into the light breeze, feeling my way along with the light touches on the rudder bar and gentle pressure backwards on the control stick. I pulled up alongside Frank, who had been watching the machine's behaviour keenly from the centre of the field.

"I'm going to try one more run," I called to him above the sound of the engine. "I'm not sure, but I think I'm almost leaving the ground. Anyway, I'm not feeling any bumps. Will you lie down as I go past and watch if you can see any daylight between the wheels and the grass?"

Frank agreed, and I took the machine back, up the slight slope again, turned and took a line that would pass close beside his prostrate body. I opened the throttle and accelerated towards him. I was going faster than ever before as I approached, and eased back a little more of the stick, keeping her on a straight course with the rudder bar. I must have been travelling at 25 or 30 mph when I passed beside him, and at once eased back, coming to a halt at the bottom of the field.

A few seconds later Frank ran up alongside me. He was shouting and gesticulating and I cut off

the ignition in order to hear what he was saying. "You flew all right," he told me excitedly. "You were several inches off the ground for about twenty yards. Well done."

I climbed out of the seat, exhilarated at my achievement and scarcely able to believe that I had actually flown, in an aeroplane that we had built ourselves. Those three or four inches meant more to me than the thousands of feet which separated me from the ground later when I took the altitude record. I believe this was the most important and memorable moment of my life. There was some justification for my excitement, for if I was able to take the machine up to six inches and come back safely to earth, there was no reason why I should not with equal ease rise to six hundred feet, so long as I took things slowly and carefully. But it was most important that I should keep my enthusiasm and eagerness under control. Not only was I flying for the first time, teaching myself as I went along, but I was flying a prototype experimental machine which I had built largely out of my head and with no previous experience. From our point of view this was double pioneering work and if we failed again, if I crashed and wrecked Number Two, I knew it would be the end of flying and of the career I had planned.

*(From Sky Fever. Sir Geoffrey de Havilland.)*

Baragwanath is an appropriate choice of venue for such celebrations because the 'old' Baragee was the home of de Havilland during the heydays of South African grassroots flying.

Part of the day's proceedings included judging of the aircraft, thanks to the expertise of Bob Hay and John Illsley.

The winner of best Tiger Moth was Rodger Foster and ZU-XRF; best Chipmunk went to Brian Appleton and ZU-DXP; most authentic Tiger was awarded to ZS-DHR of Classique Aviation; most authentic Chipmunk went to Davena Legg and ZS-OWJ; and best 'work in progress' to Noel Otten and ZS-CDJ.

Within a few months, Geoffrey felt confident as a self-taught pilot and took Frank Heale as a passenger, followed by his wife and their eight month old son, Geoffrey junior in her arms.

A chance meeting with Mervin O'Gorman of Farnborough fame, initiated a sale for the plans and manufacture of the DH2 for 400 pounds. Geoffrey and Frank were employed as pilots and engineers for the company. At Farnborough, however, they felt very unwelcome, the company feeling that balloons and airships were far more essential than his aircraft design. O'Gorman, however, managed to squash this attitude, and soon the company name changed from The Army Balloon Factory, to the Army Aircraft Factory, and later the Royal Aircraft Factory. With the advent of World War One, de Havilland's designs became essential to the war effort, and the DH2 was adapted into what was known as the FE-1.

And the rest, they say, his history...

...a history which we have contributed towards with our gathering of de Havilland Aircraft and subsequent celebrations.

Thanks must go to everyone who was involved in making this event a success: my brother, Patrick, fetched, carried, supported and a myriad of other things that would be too long to list. My wife, Brindy, put up with what must have seemed quite obsessive in my organising this event and I must thank her for her support. My parents, provided guidance (as always) and provided some footage from Seven Barrows in the UK where they were celebrating the anniversary. Peet ran the bar, cleaned the grounds helped so much in preparing for the event. Johan Maritz manned the radio and loaned the projector and screen. Bob Hay and John Illsley did some superb judging as well. Thanks must go to John and Roy Watson for donating books as the prizes for the aircraft. And finally, thanks to all of the pilots who made the effort and came through to what I hope











## De Havilland Centenary Comments

Dear Courtney,  
 I have been meaning to write and thank you for the thoroughly enjoyable day that my little nephew and I had at Baragwanath. You did a great job arranging the event.  
 Kind regards  
 John

Hi Courtney and Patrick,  
 On behalf of the Committee and Members of the JLPC, I would like to say "thank you" to both of you, (and I include all your helpers), for organising such a memorable day at Baragwanath on the 12 September 2010. It was a memorable and fitting occasion, not only for those of us who have a "vested interest" in Geoffrey de Havilland's aeroplanes, but for everyone who appreciates the contribution that his designs have made to aviation. Everyone I spoke to were emotionally moved by the occasion and were appreciative of the effort that was made to organise the event.  
 Noel Otten

Hi Courtney  
 Thanks so much for the day. Allow me to express my appreciation of the efforts that you and Patrick and your wives went to in ensuring that the day was a great success. And I believe that it was an understated phenomenal success, as will be evidenced by the coverage that will feature in the various aviation publications in due course. Thanks to you! Well done!  
 Kind regards  
 Rodger

Hello Courtney  
 Thank you for a wonderful day yesterday, I was also blown away that DXP won an award, really did not expect that.  
 Warm greetings  
 Brian Appleton

## Celebrations in Oz

Charlotte and Brian Zeedeberg enjoyed their own celebrations of the de Havilland Centenary at their new airfield in Australia and sent some pictures through as well. So it's clear that this milestone is truly an international landmark!





## Up-and-Coming Events

### Baragee Club Day.

Date - Sunday 17th October 2010

Time - From 11:00

Hope to see all of you there!

### Also...Christmas Braai and Camp-Out

Date - Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Arrive on Friday anytime, with your tent and sleeping bags; Saturday will be a day for socializing and flying.

Sunday will be the Barragee Christmas Braai.

Further details to follow in due course.

If you farted consistently for 6 years and 9 months, enough gas is produced to create the energy of an atomic bomb. (Now that's more like it!)

A pig's orgasm lasts 30 minutes. (DAMN IT !!!!!)

A cockroach will live nine days without its head before it starves to death...Creepy. (I'm still not over the pig.)

Banging your head against a wall uses 150 calories a hour (Don't try this at home, maybe at work)

A flea can jump 350 times its body length. It's like a human jumping the length of a football field.

The catfish has over 27,000 taste buds. (What could be so tasty on the bottom of a pond?)

Butterflies taste with their feet. (Something I always wanted to know.)

Right-handed people live, on average, nine years longer than left-handed people. (If you're ambidextrous, do you split the difference?)

Elephants are the only animals that cannot jump. (Okay, so that would be a good thing)

A cat's urine glows under a black light. (I wonder who was paid to find that out?)



## Some Worth (less) Information You Never Knew

If you yelled for 8 years, 7 months and 6 days you would have produced enough sound energy to heat one cup of coffee. (Hardly seems worth it.)

Polar bears are left-handed. (If they switch, they'll live a lot longer)

Humans and dolphins are the only species that have sex for pleasure. (What about that pig?)





## Flying and Fishing – A Story Part 2

Continued from the previous Baragwanath Barometer...

It's only really when I turn off the engine that how much I have enjoyed your flight really sinks in. When I'm flying, it's fun, intense and inspiring, but because I am constantly thinking about flying, looking for alternate landing sites, monitoring engine gauges and compensating for keeping my flight on track, sometimes it's only when the engine is turned off and the gyros are still whirring that a smile begins to spread across my face.



I felt complete isolation in that moment, and at the same time an absolute contentment. Out of all of the places in the world, this is where I wanted to be. I sat there in the cockpit for a while, the chin strap of the helmet hanging loosely and the goggles pushed up onto my forehead, just enjoying the moment.

I pulled the pin out of the four point harness, hoisted my leg out of the cockpit, put my foot onto the wing and jumped onto the ground. The grass patch upon which the Tiger Moth was resting was soft and gave way slightly under my weight. It would be a good place to spend the night.



Inside the luggage locker, I pulled out a three piece fly rod, a dry fly line and a box of flies as well as a rolled up sleeping bag. I took off the sheep skin flying jacket that I always wear for long, cold cross countries and slipped into my fishing jacket.

I left the aircraft where it was and made my way into the forest; the stream was some way beyond its branches. The forest enveloped me and dulled the bright sunlight into long fingers that stretched through thousands of particles of dust towards the ground. The smell of pine needles was fresh in my head, and the excitement of fishing in a stream where the trout were wild and swum without knowledge or fear of people made my footsteps beats faster and faster.

The forest was alive with the sound of birds, each one chattering to the other in a cacophony of confusion. The meercats that had greeted me when I landed had long since disappeared underground, but I could see traces of their presence in the filings of bark which they had scratched away while they were looking for insects and caterpillars to feed upon.

With my fly rod under one arm, extending out ahead of me like a jousting stick, I heard a flourish followed by the clatter of an alarm call. A gurgle of guineafowl shouted into the air at my presence, and after their less-than-graceful landings, they perched from the trees, looking down their beaks at me.

Soon the forest thinned out and I found myself at a riverbank that plunged downwards into a narrow





stream. Its water had been twisted and turned by strategically placed rocks that pushed the river into a frothy bubbling of rough water. In between this there were deep pools of clear water, the kind that you see in Valpré adverts. I couldn't see the bottom from where I was standing, but I knew that beneath the surface there would be a mirage of fish.

A small mayfly hatch had obviously begun a little earlier on the opposite bank, and the odd puddles of rises were developing on the surface. I could even see the mouths of one or two trout slurping them in as they fed from the surface.



Then began the ritual that I always enjoy – feeding the brightly coloured line through each of the eyes and then choosing and tying a fly onto the end of the tippet. I took out a fly which I thought would be mistaken for a mayfly and began to loop the fishing line through the hook and over itself, putting the line in my mouth to get it wet so that it could pull up tight.

Using some bushes for cover, I stalked close to the edge of the stream, trying not to scare the fish away from their erratic feeding.

And I began to fish, flicking my line from behind my head into the centre of the hatch.

It was some time before I caught anything, but on that final cast, it seemed that everything had come together perfectly. Somehow I was suddenly synchronised with nature, with the seasons, with the hatch. That whistling arc of line that twisted through the air seemed to fall at the same beat of the earth and at the same rhythm as my heart. There was a barely visible parting of the water



as the line reached out towards where the fish were feeding, and the fly landed gently, as if in slow motion in the residual puddle left by a fish that had just been feeding.

In an instant, time seemed to regain its momentum and another mouth appeared beneath my fly. The trout sucked at it, as if trying to decide whether this imitation was really food. It had made up its mind and swallowed as I struck the tip of my rod upwards.

A surge of excitement pulled my heart into my throat as I felt the fish struggle on the end of the line, diving downwards so that the rod strained and had a series of fits and it twitched this way and that. Wild trout always seem that much more perplexed when they have been hooked, and therefore, the fight is that much more ferocious and vivid. With this fish, it was no exception. At one moment, it would be diving down to the depths of the pool, and in the next it would change direction and head towards the surface. All the while, I was playing the trout, and pulling in some line, bit by bit, inch by inch.

It jumped a few times and the brown speckled colours were wet and glossy in the sunlight. She was a hen fish, and she was beautiful.

Her muscular tail whipped the water as she tried to move away, tiring ever so slightly as our little battle of man and nature ensued.



Finally I had her at the edge of the stream. I pulled her to the surface with the line and then scooped her up with the net. She wasn't the biggest fish I had ever caught, but she had given a good account of herself.

I was grinning all the way back through the forest to the aeroplane.

\*\*\*\*

As dusk began to fall, I took my sleeping bag out of the luggage locker, and began to prepare for the night. I gathered armfuls of pine needles and scattered them on an area underneath the Tiger Moth's wing, hoping that it would provide some cushioning for my sleep. I rolled out the sleeping bag and then set about making a fire. I had packed some rice which I would have eaten had I not caught anything to eat, but clearly luck was on my side and I would be snoring with a full stomach.



I felt comforted by the presence of the aeroplane. It seemed to be resting out the last embers of the day and somehow she was keeping me company.

The sun was crackling beneath the horizon and I wondered what the scene must have looked like to an outsider. The silhouette of the Tiger Moth with its yellow and blue colours must have been barely visible in the fading light. A solitary figure could be discerned as he crouched near the wing, poking at a fire with a stick. Smoke exhaled from the fire and as it cooled it misted up the pine trees and clambered slowly down the valley towards the river. The smell of roasting trout and bubbling rice would taunt taste buds, and the silence of impending night would envelop the fisherman, his fish and his flying machine.

Night dropped its paint over the daylight and slowly sprinkled stars like thousands of holes punched through the sky overhead. There was no moon, so the only light was from the stream of stars in the sky that looked down on an old canvass biplane and it's no-longer-hungry pilot.

It was a good day...

Written by Courtney Watson





## Baragee Quiz

Paul Roberts thought that having a monthly quiz would be something fun to include in the newsletter, so here is the first one...

You can have a look at the answers in the next edition of the Baragwanath Barometer...

Enjoy and thanks to Paul for his efforts!

1. 352 not out and he wasn't playing cricket?
2. On the same footing as Douglas Bader.
3. Insects buzzing around Swartkop in 1947?
4. Code name for the dam's raid.
5. Name the dams.



12. Six turning and four burning described what aircraft?



13. Formula for Mach number.
14. What does an agonic line represent?
16. Definition of frequency.
17. VOR frequency range.
18. If an aircraft is at FL 100 what is the range that the signal can be received from a transmitter 100 foot high?
19. Pressure altitude is 12 000 feet OAT is +5 °C. What is the density altitude?
20. What is Ozone?
21. Harvard's engine.

6. Code word for a dam that had been breached?
7. Triple ace in two different wars?
8. After he went missing legend had it that he flew so high he couldn't find his way down again who was he?
- 9.3 Types of Moth.
10. The four standard types of formation flight.
11. The Luftwaffe's standard formation.

22. ISA temp at MSL.
23. ISA Pressure at MSL.
24. Magicians engine?
25. What was the Swordfish nicknamed?





## Amazing Glider Accident

This is the moment when a stunt glider slammed into a runway in front of 15,000 horrified fans at an airshow. Amazingly pilot Mike Newman, 35, crawled out of the wreckage of the high performance Swift S-1 aircraft after the cockpit broke up on impact.

The former racing driver suffered three broken vertebrae in the accident, but doctors expect him to make a full recovery.

Mr Newman crashed while performing for the Swift Aerobatic Display Team at the Royal Air Forces Association airshow at Shoreham, West Sussex. Amateur photographer Rob Yuill, 62, of Hornchurch, Essex, who took the amazing sequence of pictures, said: 'He had a very lucky escape indeed. The glider was supposed to perform an aerobatic display with two powered aircraft - but it was a very overcast day with low cloud. The glider only performed for a couple of minutes before being released from its tow line. Then it flew downwind and turned to make its final approach to land.'



'As he turned, I realised the glider had stalled as its nose went down. He had lost air speed and headed straight into the ground. It was not far off vertical when it hit the runway. The nose section just crumpled. It was an awful thing to see. There was an silence from the crowd as people took in what had happened around 400 ft in front of them.'





'I felt a real sense of relief when the pilot crawled away. I had feared the worst because it was such an awful crash.'

'Two ambulances and a couple of fire engines were on the scene very quickly and he was taken away on a stretcher.'

Swift Aerobatic Display team spokesman Guy Westgate said: 'Mike is in good spirits and the whole team wish him a speedy recovery.'

Mr Newman, a gliding instructor and aerobatic coach, has been flying since 1996.

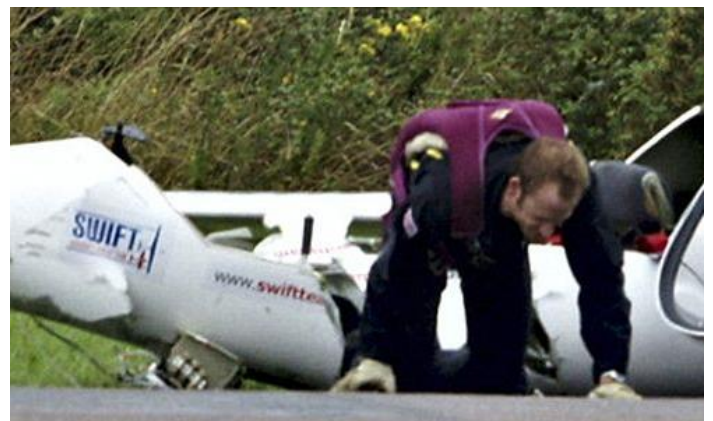


The Air Accidents Investigation Branch and the British Gliding Association have begun an investigation into the crash. Air show organiser Don Bean said: 'We are very sorry about the pilot being hurt - but it is fortunate the accident was not much more serious.'



Mercifully the glider doesn't flip over on its back, but begins to settle onto an even keel. Mr Newman who was the UK unlimited aerobatic gliding champion in 2008 and 2009 was taken to Worthing Hospital after the accident, which took place on August 23.

He has since been transferred to a hospital closer to his home in Egham, Surrey, and is said to be "'on the mend'". Mr Newman, an operations manager for an automatic door manufacturer, is having to lie on his back for the next three weeks to help his spine heal naturally.



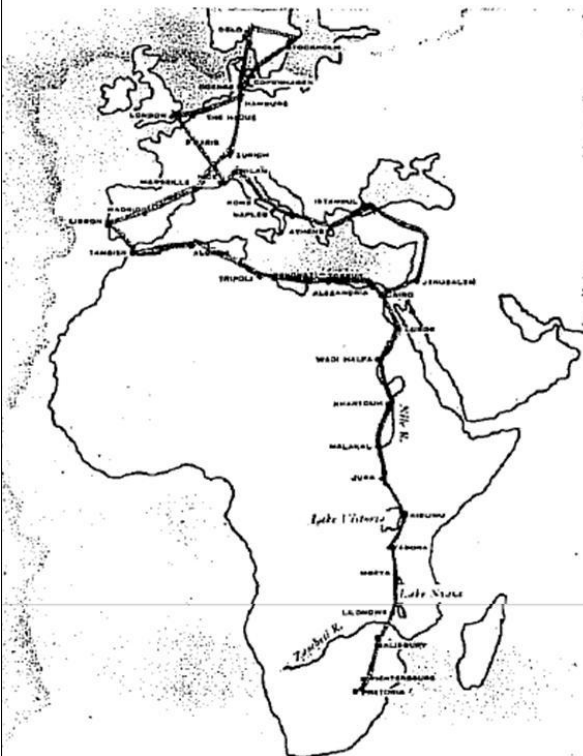




**Old Swift Article**

**AN ALLAN NOTE**

I am going to cut some things out at this point of your newsletter and try and squeeze in another Swift story from the collection of John Underwood. This article was first printed in the November 1956 issue of Flying magazine. This article describes the trip of a young couple flying their Swift from the tip of south Africa, up Africa and through out Europe, a trip of three months and 25000 miles.



**AFRICA TO EUROPE BY PONIE DE WET**

Early in 1955 LETTIE and I had to make a business trip to a number of European countries. We contemplated conventional travel, but eventually decided to fly our Swift. A special long distance tank was installed in the luggage compartment, which, together with the wing tanks, would allow safe 1,000-mile hops without refueling. The Aero Club in London partially supplied data for two suggested routes to the United Kingdom-one via Central Africa along the Nile, the North African coast, Sardinia and Corsica to Nice and London; the other from Johannesburg through the Rhodesias, the Belgian Congo, and up the west coast of Africa to Europe and London..

No information could be had on conditions in Algeria, the Middle and Near East or for that matter about any private flight through the African Continent; we decided to help ourselves.

The route we devised was a shortcut from Pretoria to Cairo, through Southern Rhodesia, Uganda and the Sudan. From Cairo, instead of braving the Mediterranean in a single-engined aircraft, we decided to go via Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Italy and France to England. From England we planned to go to the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany, returning home via Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, French and Spanish Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and thence down the continent.

Preparation started in February '55, with letters on our proposed itinerary to all airports of intended landing, to the Divisions of Civil Aviation of the countries concerned, to the Department of War in Egypt and the Near Eastern countries, to the Tourist Corporation and to the Shell and Vacuum Companies for transmission to all refueling points along the route. Emergency supplies included a first aid kit, signaling equipment, food rations, May Wests and the famous United States Air Force publication "Survival". Clothing for a journey through 22 different countries in three months had to be practical and weigh as little as possible. Nylon came to our aid. Documents included valid passports to all countries of intended visit, fuel carnets along the entire route backed by a local deposit account, and a bag of aircraft papers and logbooks. By early April our permits were all in and answers to our letters gave us good data on local facilities and formalities.

On April 30, we said good-bye to Wonderboom Airport. Weather forced us down at Pietersburg, only 160 miles from our base and next day faulty weather reporting forced deviation on the leg to Salisbury. Lettie was so upset about these initial mishaps in view of the 25,000 miles ahead, that she threw overboard a tiny silver pig given us on departure as a good luck charm. But it was not a journey to be devoid of thrills! Further bad weather in the tropics, a scare over the desert, falling out of a cloud in a flat spin near Genoa, being arrested as spies in Switzerland, shot at over French Morocco and hydraulic failure over the Mau-Mau forests of Kenya were incidents still to come-pig or no pig.

From Salisbury to Lilongwe, Nyasaland over the mighty Zambesi, one covers bushy wastelands with no civilization, although this country is mineral rich and has recently been surveyed scientifically by an American company. From Lilongwe we followed the picturesque but crocodile-infested Lake Nyasa for 300 miles to Mbeya, Tanganyika. We were here two years before when we covered all the lake regions of Africa, following the trails of the ancient slave traders. We knew the air maps were sometimes 20 miles off. Because Nyasa was last surveyed before 1900, both its large steamers, the Ilala 1 and Ilala 11





have run aground in weather, when there is little difference between a storm at sea and one on this vast inland lake. On the northwest perimeter lies Lost Plateau, an unplotted mountain region which has been crossed by only one white man, a South African, who tells a strange tale of nature untouched because of strong native superstitions. During our previous trip, we flew over it. From Mbeya to Tabora is big game country covered with thick bush and many unplotted rivers. A pilot's only checkpoint is when crossing the East-West railroad. All sidings for 200 miles are marked with a large "T" and an arrow pointing toward Tabora.

Our route now led from Tabora to Kisumu on Lake Victoria over some of Africa's most beautiful plains and grasslands where game still abound in the millions. Although Kisumu is but 80 miles from the Aberdaire region, stronghold of the Mau-Mau, there has been no incident in this quiet settlement on Africa's largest inland lake. From Kisumu, we pointed for Juba in the Southern Sudan and soon were over Uganda's vast swamp where even big planes have disappeared without a trace. The swamps look green and inviting from the air, only issuing ironical warning where the reflection of the sun shows the surface is really mud or water.

At Juba, we greeted some American Air Force people down from Wiesbaden for a spot of shooting. Next to their plane, our Swift looked like a fly. "Man, you sound just like a Texan—just like a Texan", one of the officers said. At Malakal, further North along the Nile, the settlement of 60,000 natives is practically stark nude. On the airport we met Brian Dempster and his young wife, who had just completed a motorcycle trip from London, via Gibraltar, along the North African Coast to Cairo, and from there south along the Nile to Malakal, a distance of 5,500 miles. Dempster told us they were planning to peg a hippo down in the swamp and take color films as the crocs swarmed of their prey. All this would be done with frogman equipment. They intend selling the films to TV companies in Europe and the U.S. They will earn their money. Next day at Khartoum we disobeyed tower instructions to make a main runway crosswind landing in a 50 mph gale and sat down into the wind on a short taxi strip. We were immediately summoned by the airport controller, who demanded an explanation—and got it with both barrels. Between Khartoum and Wadi Halfa, over the Nubian Desert, where one would die of exposure if stranded for more than four hours, Lettie and I saw a strange object aloft. It was flying at jet speed and shone bright silver in the midday sun. We noticed it change course and come toward us, perhaps 1,000 feet higher. When about a mile away it seemed to stop and hover. We could clearly distinguish an oval shaped front view, similar to artists' impressions of flying saucers. Excited and worried because it seemed to be watching us, we decided to proceed of course as though we had not spotted anything.

After three long minutes, the object darted off northwest at very high speed and disappeared on the horizon within 30 seconds.

At Wadi Halfa, next day, recuperating from nerves and to acclimatize to the temperature of 110 degrees, I had a chance to sell Lettie for 25000 pounds—to a wealthy desert trader. He said she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. I agreed, but made the point that she was my biggest investment. Besides—where could I find such a co-pilot? Having no co-pilots on hand, he was stumped. From Wadi Halfa we cruised low via Luxor to Cairo, to enjoy the relics of ancient empire—Abu Simbel with its rock temples, Luxor with its Valley of the Kings, and the Great Pyramid of Ghiza. While on "final" at Almaza airport, Cairo, we heard another plane vainly asking for landing clearance, and as we taxied in, the voice was still at it—now literally pleading. We saw a large twin-engined plane circling and circling. As we climbed from our Swift, we noticed red carpets out and rows of uniformed dignitaries at attention. One of them met and whizzed us out of sight in a jiffy. As I checked in at the tower, I told the controller that a twin-engine plane was begging for landing instructions. Peering out the window, the controller turned pale. He flicked a few switches, gave instructions, and the twinengine ship landed. In it was the first prince of Saude Arabia who had come for political talks with the Egyptian Government. The controller explained that we had called him on one frequencies down in order to hear us—and forgot to turn them up again!

After five glorious days in the capital of the Pharaohs, we departed via Suez and the Gulf of Aquaba to Amman in Jordan. Things here seemed to be difficult—landing, parking and take-off charges, documents galore to be signed, customs men wanting to go through everything, immigrations asking irrelevant questions, and the passport official refusing to issue a visa until I showed him a letter from a superior official, after which he wanted to charge us double. Lettie and I were fuming. Just then a smartly groomed gentleman inquired in perfect Oxford accent if he could be of assistance. We told him our story. He bellowed at the officials in no uncertain terms and ushered us to a limousine. For the next two days, our new friend showed us the works—Bethlehem, the Dead Sea, Jericho. We visited the place where our Lord was born, where the Virgin Mary is buried, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the Old City of Jerusalem which lay closer to his heart than any other city. What a wonderful friend! Next day he drove us seven miles to the airport, whizzed us through all the formalities and during final good-byes handed me a paper. On it was itemized, in typescript, everything that he did for us as from the time of our arrival. Total bill: 257.6, pounds South African currency!

The journey now took us through Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Greece to Naples, and on through Rome to



Milan whence we left in bad weather for Nice. Climbing through overcast to clear the Southern Alps, the instruments suddenly gave incoherent readings and gravity started playing havoc with loose items in the cabin. One moment we were hanging by our belts and the next pressed deep in to the seats. The plane was out of hand. We came out of the cloud in a steep diving turn and I recovered control. We found later that two of the flight instruments had worked loose from connecting hoses.

flew 25,000 miles in  
their own small plane  
on a business-pleasure jaunt.

Ponie De Wet  
and his wife,  
Lettie, at the  
start of their  
lengthy flight.



Flying in Europe was pleasant, generally speaking. We ran into unfamiliar conditions but found that common sense and good basic training did the trick. We traveled from Nice to Paris, London, The Hague, Odessa, Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Hamburg. Business kept us busy. Leaving Hamburg for the return trip on July 7 with a good weather forecast, we headed for Zurich. Further south, the weather deteriorated, and eventually forced us down the Rhine to Basel, from where our route was entirely determined by available valleys. We decided to land at the first airport and the map showed one about 15 miles ahead.

On arrival, it looked absolutely deserted and was miles from the nearest village. Immediately after landing, there was a terrific fuss. Jeeps, motorcyclists and guards stormed down on us from camouflaged quarters on the side of the mountain. We were suspected of smuggling. When they found no evidence of this the questions changed and we could sense their thoughts now focused on espionage! The plane was again searched, this time for hidden cameras, and recording equipment. Higher officials were summoned; evidence was recorded; photostatic copies

were made of our map and experts determined whether the overprint indicating the position of the aerodrome coincided with the date the original map was printed. Our map, being a U.S. Air Force issue seemed to baffle the party. That evening, we were taken under guard to a village hotel. One guard was posted outside our room while two others patrolled the hotel.

At 10 o'clock the next morning the O.C. liberated us. I told him I thought Switzerland had been at peace for 600 years, and couldn't understand the fuss about a legitimate precautionary landing. "If we do not take precautions, we may not be able longer to boast that record" was his reply. "You see, you landed at one of our secret airports, and you have no doubt deduced that we have a jet factory inside that mountain."

We loved Switzerland but time pressed so we continued to Marsilles, Madrid, Lisbon and Tangier, where we had to procure transit visas for French Morocco

and Tunisia. Street fighting had already flared up at various points, and it was only after we signed a document indemnifying French authorities in case anything happened to us in transit, that visas were issued.

Weather was down to 150 feet when we left Tangier for Algiers, and we followed the shoreline closely. Flying past one of the many forts on the north African coast between Tangier and Oran, tribesmen dashed out and fired at us. I immediately dove to within a few feet off the ground, and kept out of rifle range.

From Algiers we crossed the great Eastern Desert in a 640-mile hop to Tripoli. From there to Benghazi, Tobruk, Alexandria, Cairo and down the Nile to Luxor. From Luxor, to Wadi Halfa, to Kharuoum, we flew through the

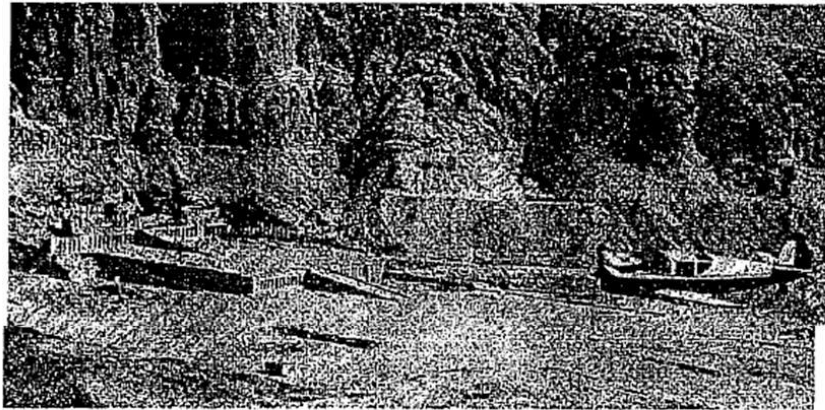




best dust storms the Sudan could blow up, and thence to Malakal and Juba that had changed from a real desert three months before, to a tropical paradise. From Juba we filed a flight plan for Nairobi but decided to fly via Kisumu, because of promised storms in the afternoon over the Rift Valley. Overflying Kisumu we saw to the south terrific thunder-storms and over the 8,000-foot mountains between Kisumu and Nairobi which stretch for 80 miles, hung a solid wall of ominous cloud, only 500 feet above the peaks. The latter held the greatest promise of reaching Nairobi, so we set course.

When we reached the Rift Valley, the clouds made a steep dive into the depths and cut off our only chance to reach Nairobi. We made a 180 turn back to Kisumu. As we turned, the undercarriage, flaps and hydraulic indicators began flashing and we started to lose altitude. We had only 400 feet to play with, so had some fast figuring to do. Evidently the hydraulic system had failed, and the wheels had come down. At that altitude, with our load of souvenirs and fuel for another four hours flying, the drag was too much for our plane. The Swift is fitted with an emergency one-way system to get the wheels out of the wells if they are stuck.

This system is not wired to get the wheels back into the wells if they should be out. To get them out, one turns clockwise on a lever. In desperation, I caught hold of the emergency lever, and started turning it anti-clockwise and it worked! We were a mere 25 feet above the jungle. We have since checked the emergency system carefully, trying to simulate conditions on that fateful day, but turning the handle anti-clockwise doesn't do the trick any more. Both Lettie and I feel that it was Providence.



But still our troubles were not over. We had no brakes or flaps and, as we approached Kisumu, the engine lost 400 rpm. Now we couldn't afford to undershoot and if we overshot, we'd run right into Lake Victoria. In this predicament we turned in on final approach. Flicking the monitor lamp to see whether the undercarriage was down, all the indicators started flashing again. In desperation, I gave the emergency lever a final make-or-break jerk, and presto, the green light came on and the other lights went off, showing that the wheels were down and locked. That night I worked on the plane until I found the trouble. It was due to the dust storms in the Sudan the previous day. The electric exciter motor which activates the hydraulic

reservoir was clogged with dust of the finest grain imaginable. After cleaning, the hydraulic system again functioned perfectly. The engine rpm drop was due to a short in one of the shielded cables. A reel of insulating tape fixed that.

Next day we proceeded via Tabora to Karonga on the northern shore of Lake Nyasa and to Salima on the southern shore where we spent a few days, to arrive home refreshed. From Salima we flew to Salisbury and on to Pietersburg for customs clearance. And exactly three months after we left home, we landed at Wonderboom the greatest thrill in 25,000 miles of flying.

Many thanks to Anton Barnes-Webb for this article, which is regarded as something of a classic by the Swift Community in the United States.

Anton still owns this aircraft and it is hangered at Baragee.





## Classifieds

Advertising is open to JLPC members – please email the editor with anything you would like featured in this newsletter.

### Aircraft Covers



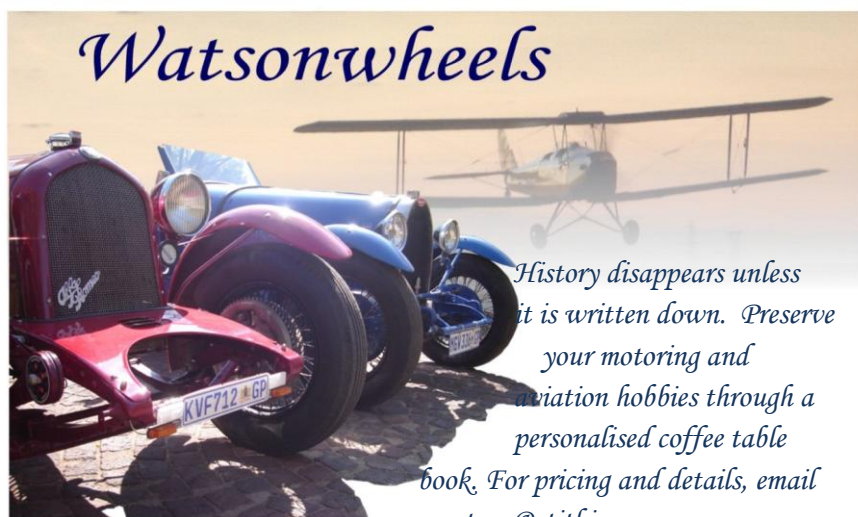
For those of you who do not have any covers for your aircraft, Michelle is able to make the most wonderful covers. This is an example – and the covers she has made for ZU-EIJ. The covers are light and washable and very easy to put on and remove. For further information, speak to Michelle or Peet at the Barragee Clubhouse, or contact Peter Skellern.

### For Sale – Sorrell Hiperlight



Unfortunately, due to funds needed for a Tiger Moth trip that is planned for 2011 across Botswana, we will be selling ZU-CMF, our Sorrell Hiperlight. This aircraft is ideal for cheap recreational flying and can be viewed at Baragwanath. Contact Patrick on 083 335 5498 for details.

## Watsonwheels



*History disappears unless it is written down. Preserve your motoring and aviation hobbies through a personalised coffee table book. For pricing and details, email [cwatson@stithian.com](mailto:cwatson@stithian.com).*





## Parting Shot

Well, I hope that you have enjoyed this one...a few anecdotes of aviation humour to keep you going until your next stint at the airfield.

I'm afraid that the parting shot is one of mine from the recent de Havilland Centenary. The bike in front is a 1923 Triumph Riccardo which I have sold to go on the Tiger Moth Botswana Safari next year. A sad sale, but what a trip it is going towards! For details of the trip, go to <http://tigermothbotswanasafari.yolasite.com>.



An old Pilot dressed up as such sat down at a Starbucks and ordered a cup of coffee. As he sat sipping his coffee, a young woman sat down next to him. She turned to the pilot and asked, 'Are you a real pilot?'

He replied, 'Well, I've spent my whole life flying biplanes, Cubs, Aeronca's, Neiuports, flew in WWII in a B-29, and later in the Korean conflict, taught 50 people to fly and gave rides to hundreds, so I guess I am a pilot.'

She said, 'I'm a lesbian. I spend my whole day thinking about naked women. As soon as I get up in the morning, I think about naked women. When I shower, I think about naked women, when I watch TV, I think about naked women. It

seems everything makes me think of naked women.'

The two sat sipping in silence.

A little while later, a young man sat down on the other side of the old pilot and asked, 'Are you a real pilot?'

He replied, 'I always thought I was, but I just found out I'm a lesbian.'

Passengers on a plane are waiting for the flight to leave. The entrance opens, and two men walk up the aisle, dressed in pilot uniforms. Both are wearing dark glasses. One is using a seeing-eye dog, and the other is tapping his way up the aisle

with a cane. Nervous laughter spreads through the cabin, but the men enter the cockpit, the door closes, and the engines start. The passengers begin glancing nervously, searching for some sign that this is just a little practical joke. None is forthcoming. The plane moves faster and faster down the runway, and people at the windows realize that they're headed straight for the water at the edge of the airport.

As it begins to look as though the plane will never take off, that it will plough into the water, screams of panic fill the cabin. But at that moment, the plane lifts smoothly into the air.

Up in the cockpit, the co-pilot turns to the pilot and says, "You know, Bob, one of these days, they're going to scream too late, and we're all gonna die."

So, until next time, blue skies, smooth landings and be safe in your flying.

Courtney Watson (editor)

