



Joe Bolger & Tom Delaney's Wassmer Piranha WA-81 EI-FKM departing the ILAS Fly-In in September

***Welcome to the Autumn 2023 issue of the ILAS Newsletter.***

Welcome back to the ILAS Newsletter!

We have missed a few issues simply due to a lack of content submitted. Hopefully going forward we can keep a steady flow of input for inclusion. This is your newsletter to share experience and experiences with other members, let's keep it going and full of interesting content.

With a large number of the planned flying events this summer cancelled, in this issue we report on the few flying events for which the sun shone through and the wind behaved itself. Events in Birr, Ballyboy, Abbeylax and ILAS Field brought out a great collection of aircraft and indeed gave members welcome opportunities to reconnect "over a cup of tea". Hopefully we will see a more fruitful summer in 2024!

We hope you will enjoy the content in this newsletter. As ever, I am continually looking for input so please send me what you can on your aircraft or project, articles, photos, questions, letters, items for sale, or anything you think would be of interest to ILAS members.

Please send your contribution to me at [editor@ilas.ie](mailto:editor@ilas.ie). I would like to get the next issue out for Christmas so please send any input to me by December 10th.

All the Best,

Cathal O'Connell

## Chairman's Welcome

Noel Maher

Welcome back to the ILAS Newsletter! This is our belated Autumn issue, which, as you may be aware, is the first one produced since late last year due unfortunately to a lack of content and, to be honest, we will continue to struggle unless more contributions are received. However this is the 10th edition since relaunched in electronic format commencing with the Winter issue in 2020 and it would be a shame to throw in the towel at this stage !

Our colleague Cathal O'Connell kindly took on the unenviable role of editor three years ago and is willing to continue, but clearly more content is essential if we are to recommence quarterly publication and we would ask that a real effort be made by all to submit articles, photos & news items etc to Cathal at [editor@ilas.ie](mailto:editor@ilas.ie)

Also, feedback would be very welcome as to how the Newsletter might be improved with additional content or topics that could be of interest to Members, one previous suggestion was to include a roundup of news items from airfield locations around the Country, but no input so far!

In terms of Fly-In activity, Summer 2023 must rank as one of the most disappointing in terms of unsettled weather conditions. However, despite countless postponements and with much perseverance, sizeable events did take place in Birr, Ballyboy, Abbeylaxey & ILAS Field, by grabbing the few suitable weekend weather windows that arose during the year.

Taking advantage of one such window, our own two-day ILAS Harvest Fly-In took place in welcome sunshine on Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September and while we got off to a slow start due to low cloud and mist on Saturday morning, conditions were idyllic by the afternoon, which continued all day Sunday providing a most enjoyable event to finish off the season on a high note.



Much thanks to Aidan and his team for making arrangements for the weekend and maintaining the field in such excellent condition. Hospitality was at its best and the food was up to its usual high standard, thanks to the efforts and catering skills of the 'Ladies Committee'. Many thanks to all who contributed to the success by attending the Fly-In, some on both days ! A selection of photos from the Harvest Fly-In and the other fly-in events around the country appear elsewhere in this issue.



A notable feature of our fly-in this year was the number of Gyroplanes in attendance, whose operators came together and camped overnight to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first successful 'Autogyro' flight by its inventor Juan de la Cierva, near Madrid in 1923. We are hopeful that our gyroplane colleagues will continue to join us at future events at ILAS Field and indeed are welcome any time during the year, as are all members, subject to the usual PPR from Aidan Power.



Certainly, the weather put a dampener on overall flying activity this year, however we are delighted to report a noticeable increase in completed build and restoration projects, resulting in a welcome number of first flights and new permits issued during 2023. Some photos are featured elsewhere in this issue and we offer our congrats and best wishes to the proud owners on their respective achievements.

It is very encouraging to see such growth in the ILAS 'fleet' which now stands at 85 active aircraft with current flight permits, representing circa 50% of the category on the EI-register, so there is great potential for many more 'first flights' in the months and years ahead and no doubt a little more effort could easily see the 'fleet' size reach the magic 100 waypoint in the near future. Please let us know if you need any support or advice with your project, as the Committee will be delighted to assist at any time.

By way of rounding off the season, we had a very enjoyable and interesting visit to Baldonnell Aerodrome and the Air Corps Museum on September 18th courtesy of our colleague Captain Tadhg Firman and with the kind permission of the GOC Air Corps, Brig Gen Rory O'Connor which was much appreciated.

In the meantime, we hope you find this Autumn issue of our Newsletter interesting, so enjoy and safe flying!

Best Regards,  
Noel Maher,  
[chairman@ilas.ie](mailto:chairman@ilas.ie)

## New Permits - 2023

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We have seen no less than nine first flights of new permit aircraft so far this year.

1. EI-HHE / Vans RV-8 (Frank Lawless) 06/01/2023



2. EI-GYR / Magni Gyro M24 (Dermot Crombie) 17/01/2023

3. EI-FKM / Wassmer Piranha WA-81 (Joe Bolger & Tom Delaney) 22/02/2023



4. EI-HJU / Magni Gyro M16 (Alan Grattan) 27/03/2023



5. EI-AEW / Stampe SV 4C / (Eugene Larkin) 05/04/2023



6. EI-AEP / Cessna 170B (Enda McNeill & Jim Halligan) 06/04/2023





7. EI-XIV / Vans RV-14 (Ian Condy) 15/06/2023



EI-XIV / Vans RV-14, first engine run with Leo Murray, John Kent (inspector) & Ian Condy performing XIV's first engine runs and before painting (see "before and after" photos below).



8. EI-GST / Little Wing Gyro (John Todd) 03/07/2023

9. EI-CFG / Piel Emeraude (Frank Doyle) First Flight on 5th Sept, permit application pending—



## Permit Activity

Charles O'Shea

In addition to the first flights detailed above, the following aircraft had permit and extensions in recent months:

### Renewals:

EI-SDK, BJB, DJF, FNE, GRV, BHV, PWC, EHK, AHI, CKH, AEH, BBE, GPM, COY, AEI, DGP, AFZ, BCJ, BAV, AET



### Extensions:

EI-AEN, BAJ, CFH, BKC, DTT, BKC, FAD, FEP, GRV, SMK, VII, DIY, EEO, EXY, FEU, FSA, BUC, GRW, ELN, VLN.





## Gyro News

Shay Brennan

A bit of history in Ireland:

ILAS member Yvonne Devereux completed her conversion from UK PPL-G to an Irish PPL-G making her the first female pilot to acquire an Irish Gyroplane licence.

Derek Doyle (Examiner) and Yvonne Devereux in Photo.



Ronan MacNicholls also completed his conversion from UK PPL G to Irish PPL-G and is seen here with Derek Doyle (Examiner)

Alan Grattan's Magni Gyro / EI-HJU on the 4th March below, a lovely gyro imported by Alan from Sweden. Pictured are Shay Brennan (test pilot), Alan Grattan and Mike Concannon (aircraft inspector).



## Baldonnel Visit

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Noel Maher

ILAS members enjoyed an interesting visit to Baldonnel on September 18th with about 25 attending with ILAS colleague Tadhg Firman (Capt) acting as host. The trip was planned to visit the on-site military aviation museum, followed by the Flying Training School hangar, PC-9 Simulator, the Heli hangar and others.



## New Arrival

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Congratulations to ILAS member Gareth Brady on importing Jungmann F-AZZF, now based at Ballyboy airfield. 'ZZF' is a CASA 1131 Jungmann, the Spanish production version of the Bücker Bü 131 Jungmann made by Bücker Flugzeugbau and used by the Luftwaffe during World War II.

Designed by Swedish engineer Anders J. Anderson, the Jungmann first flew on April 27, 1934. The production version was used in flight schools and the Luftwaffe, and was particularly liked because of its excellent flying qualities, especially in aerobatics. Bücker produced around 3,000 of the type and another approximate 2,000 were built in Spain until the early 1960s under the name CASA 1131. The Jungmann was used for ab initio training of pilots in the Spanish Air Force until 1976.

Gareth's aircraft, serial 2128, left the factory on December 21, 1957 and joined the Spanish military aviation as E-3-B-502. It was withdrawn from service at the end of 1976 and then sold for 421,600 pesetas (around €2,500) to Jose Vicente Martin, who transferred it to the United States. It was bought there as a restoration project in 2008 in the USA and returned to Europe, based in France until its recent move to Ireland.



## Destination .. Capetown

Peter Gorman (This article is based on one originally published in the LAA magazine 11 years ago )

It was a damp day many years ago; I was socked-in at Abbeville – not for the first time. Between meals at the hotel and the need to take some needed exercise, I wandered down to the aero club and got talking to Serge Weibel. Serge told me about a trip he made to South Africa some years previously in a Robin. It sounded intriguing, lots of exotic places, the ultimate fly-out; I subconsciously filed away the guiltily-tempting thought .....

Some time afterwards I flew my RV-6 G-RVIB to Southend along with Bryan Sheane's RV-7 EI-VII. We were bound for the LAA Sywell rally, and made a side-trip to Southend to watch Steve Noujaim arrive back after his record-breaking flights to/from Cape Town.

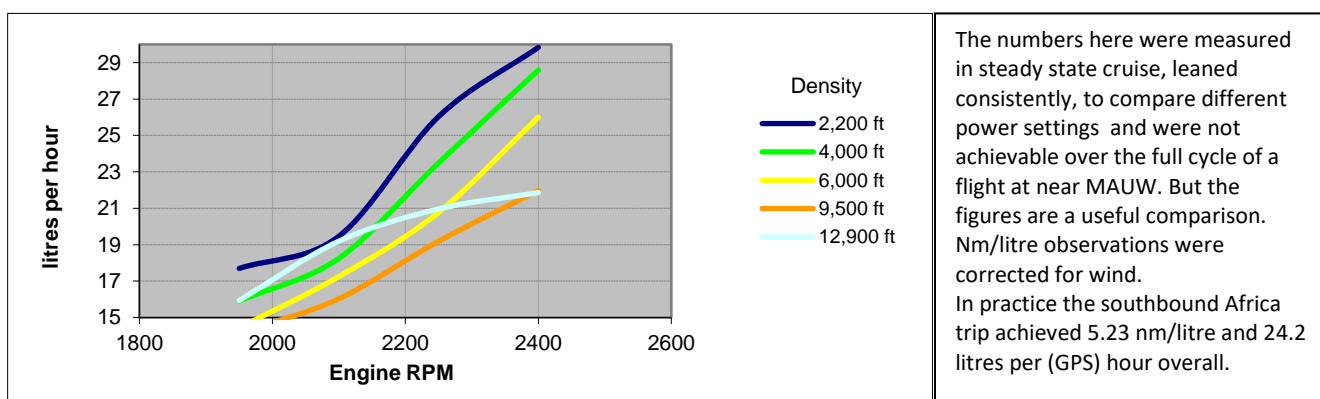


Ah, *Cape Town*: now there's a thought again. We arrived at Southend a bit early and went down the road to the nearest greasy spoon. Over bacon and eggs we wondered how *slowly* one could fly to and from South Africa. Was this totally ridiculous? Gradually the idea germinated into a practical investigation of possible routes, fuel, visas, permits etc etc. My friend Essam Bishara and I agreed to attempt this trip. We faced a daunting list of practical issues!

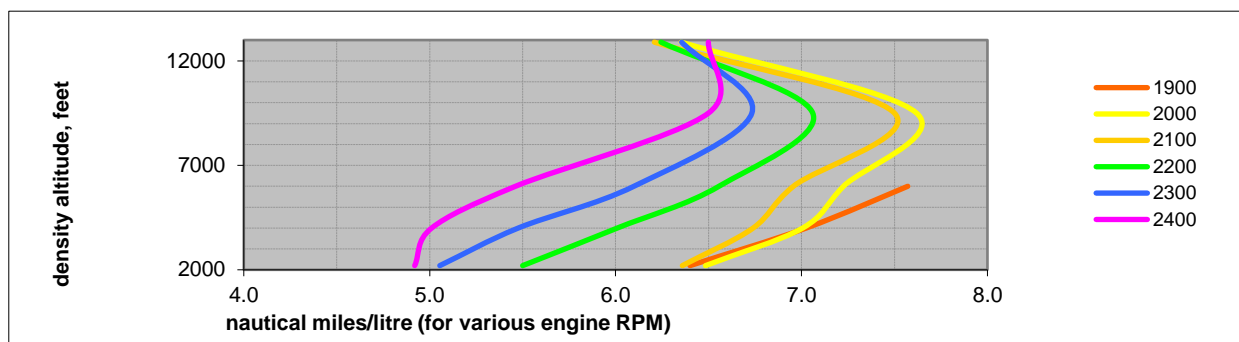
### RANGE ?

My Vans RV-6 with a 150 hp Lycoming O320-E2A, carburettor, fixed-pitch prop and at this time had standard 144 litre fuel tanks. In order to establish a prudent maximum range I experimented with the fuel flow at different powers and altitudes (this appealed to my inner aero-nerd!). It was evident that while as expected the optimum altitude was approximately in the 8,000 – 9,000 ft range, performance dropped off rapidly above say 10,000 ft.

In general the lower the power setting the greater the range, down to a speed that would be impracticable for cruising. It was apparent that maximum range would be at very low power settings, which accords with standard theory<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> My calculated cruise speed for maximum range at MAUW was around 98 knots. The type's Carson's Speed is around 120 knots.



Later I changed to a more rain-proof Catto 70x72 cruise prop, with more pitch, and repeated the tests. An interesting empirical result of all the prop testing was that the cruising miles per litre at any given *indicated* airspeed was approximately independent of altitude. So we could choose an IAS that would be good for all altitudes and fly fairly high. At 8,000 feet, cruising at 115 kts IAS would represent a true airspeed of about 132 knots. At that speed and 25 litres/hour or less, over 5 nm per litre was achievable at MTOW with careful leaning, this would give a no-wind range of at least 700 nm. We decided therefore to use 500 nm as the maximum leg distance.

The 500 nm criterion was tested in the summer of 2011 by flying from Newcastle EINC to Troyes LFQB, which was 535 nm at an achieved 22.4 litres/hour and 5.8 nm/litre (albeit with a tailwind); no problem. So far so good.

### CHOOSING A ROUTE?

Start with a map of Africa! Two routes appeared to exist from northwest Europe to Cape Town with legs limited to 500 nm: the eastern route via Egypt, and the western route around the coast of west Africa. Both routes were about 8,000 nm each way, through many exotic-sounding places.

#### Eastern Route?

The eastern route ran through Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, then via either Botswana or Mozambique to South Africa. There were a number of major obstacles along this route:

- getting avgas in Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia;
- getting a permit to fly through Sudan;
- security concerns about flying over southeast Sudan;
- high mountains in Ethiopia, density altitude at Addis Ababa;
- etc.

Talking to a number of experienced East Africa pilots, it seemed that if we reached Kenya the route southwards from there should be relatively straightforward. So that part of the trip planning was put on the back burner for later. Anyhow, just getting to Nairobi would be an achievement.

Weather was going to be an issue at any time of the year, Bryan Sheane prepared a summary:

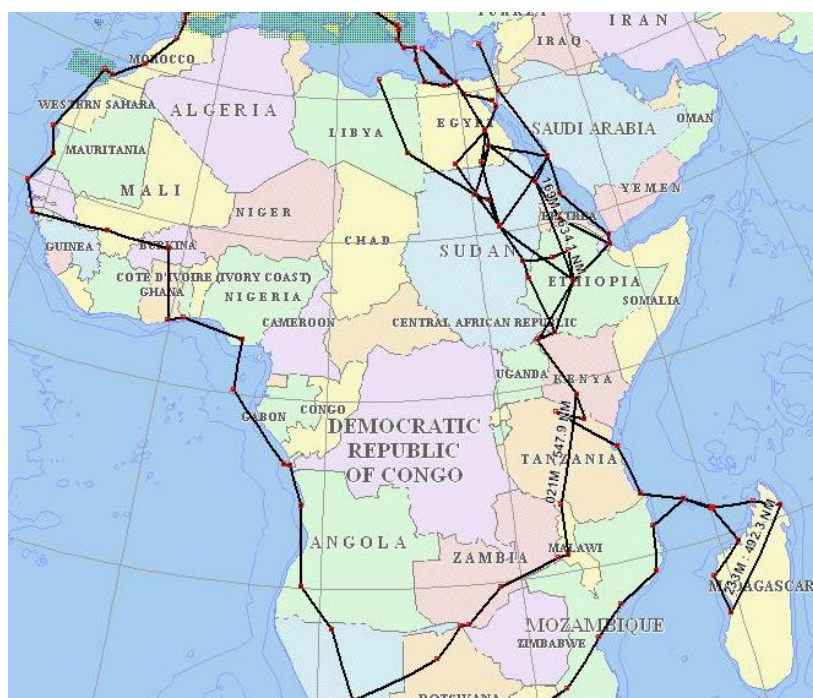
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egypt							Hot					
Sudan		Hot but OK humidity					Hot & humid			Hot		
Ethiopia			Some rain				Wet & humid					
Kenya				Rains							Little rains	
Tanzania				Rain, humidity							Little rains	
Mozambique		Rain, hot	Hot			Hot, lower humidity				Hot, humid, rain		
Zambia		Rain, hot, humid								Hot		Rains
Botswana			Hot, humid, little rain									
Pretoria, SA	Rain	Wet, hot										
Cape Town, SA												



There was no time of the year that was green everywhere in this analysis! Initially we decided to depart in mid-September. Later following discussions with various people in Africa and especially needing to avoid bad weather in Addis Ababa we delayed this to late October. It seemed safest to be altogether outside the rainy season when arriving at Addis.

Climate data for Addis Ababa													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Average high °C (°F)	23.3 (73.9)	24.3 (75.7)	24.8 (76.6)	24.2 (75.6)	24.4 (75.9)	22.8 (73)	20.6 (69.1)	20.6 (69.1)	21.3 (70.3)	22.3 (72.1)	22.6 (72.7)	22.8 (73)	22.8 (73)
Average low °C (°F)	9.0 (48.2)	10.3 (50.5)	11.6 (52.9)	12.0 (53.6)	12.3 (54.1)	11.2 (52.2)	11.3 (52.3)	11.2 (52.2)	11.0 (51.8)	9.9 (49.8)	8.7 (47.7)	8.1 (46.6)	10.6 (51.1)
Rainfall mm (inches)	16.8 (0.661)	36 (1.42)	68.2 (2.685)	88.8 (3.496)	76 (2.99)	123.5 (4.862)	259.4 (10.213)	278 (10.94)	174.1 (6.854)	41.1 (1.618)	83 (0.327)	10.2 (0.402)	1,180.4 (46.472)
Avg. rainy days	3	5	7	10	10	20	27	26	18	4	1	1	132
Source #1: National Meteorological Agency —													
Source #2: World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) —													

## Western Route ?



We also studied going via west Africa, around the coast to Nigeria. Going in a straight line over the Sahara, would miss out some possibly “interesting” countries in west Africa but have problematic leg lengths.

A route around the coast of west Africa had some attractions, i.e. no high mountains, no Sudan, and no intractable Ethiopian problems. Use of mogas might be more acceptable when flying at lower altitudes. But there were other issues with the western route. We would either have to pass through Mali and Burkina Faso, not known for stability, or the Ivory Coast, scene of a recent civil war. Shipping 200 litre barrels of

avgas to places where we could probably upload only 100 litres did not sound attractive.

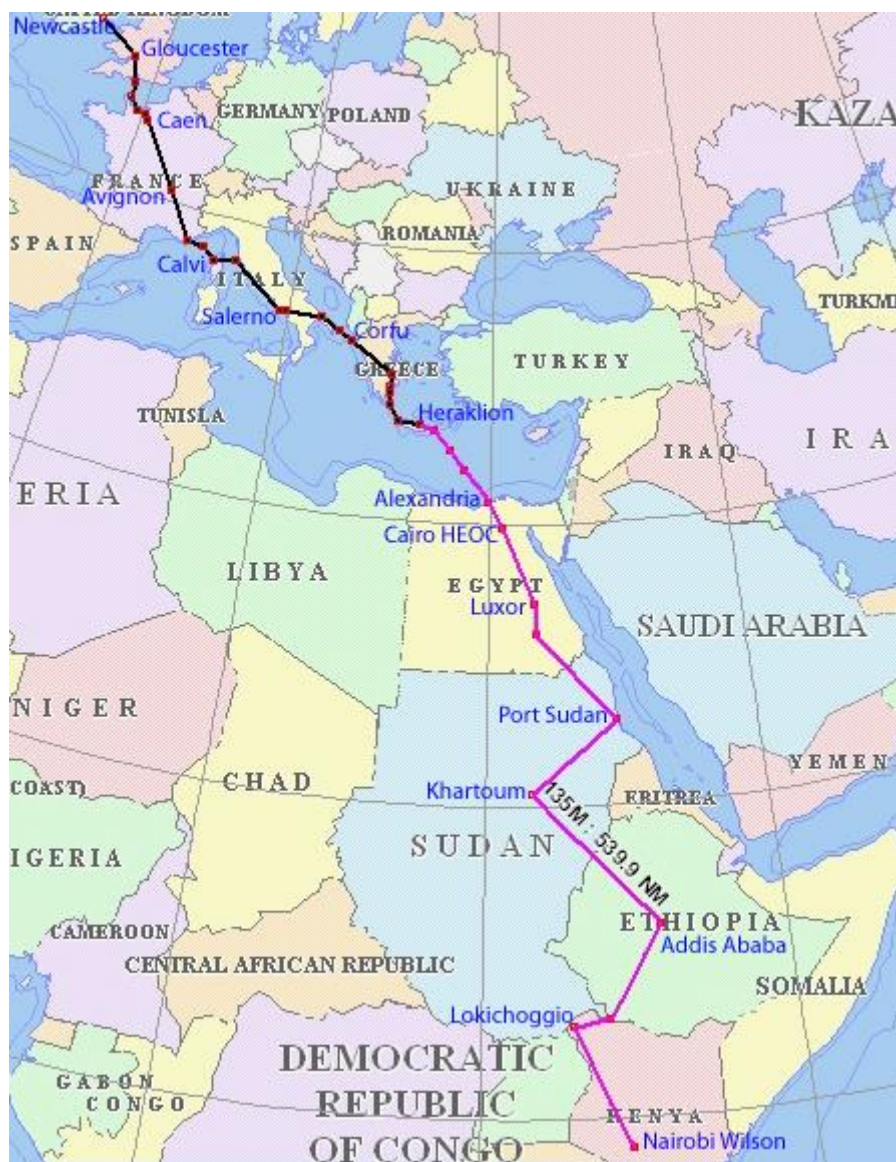
The weather on the west coast route looked more challenging, especially in the region of the equator with the dodgiest countries, and in the end that was the main deciding factor.

## Route Decision

Thus we opted for the eastern route. As planning was very time-consuming, we accepted that if we came upon some impossible obstacle on the eastern route, that would be the end of the project for

the time being. We hoped that at least we would get to Egypt. Upheavals in Egypt following the overthrow of the Mubarak regime gave us something else to worry about.

Originally we intended that the southbound trip would be conducted in a leisurely manner over about a month, with plenty of sightseeing and side-trips, and the northbound return would be done on an “express” basis. However business and personal constraints put pressure on the timetable; so we scheduled just over three weeks each way, with some sightseeing combined with a minimum prudent number of rest and maintenance days. Madagascar was regrettably deleted!



This was the final planned route to Nairobi, at the time we set off. The schedule was 14 days to Nairobi. Breaks were scheduled for Heraklion, Cairo, Luxor, Addis and Nairobi.

If we succeeded in getting to Nairobi, after a 2-day break there, the remainder of the trip to Cape Town was scheduled to take a further 6 days .....

## FUEL ?

Avgas was then (and is now) available at only a few Egyptian airports. Since you must arrive/depart through a customs airport, many without avgas, it was a puzzle to work out a feasible route. We considered numerous ways to get from Luxor in Upper Egypt to Khartoum in Sudan, about 620 nm and thus too far for a direct flight. We made fruitless enquiries about getting fuel shipped by road to Aswan or Abu Simbel, so as to be in range of Khartoum, and considered using a Turtlepac fuel container to shuttle fuel ourselves with solo flights between Luxor and Aswan, a sort of fuel tank tanker. Eventually Nova a company in Khartoum agreed to supply us with avgas in Port Sudan, 468 nm from Luxor. One item ticked off the long, long to-do list.



Ethiopia was a bigger fuel challenge, futile attempts to find an avgas supplier in Addis Ababa occupied much of the summer of 2011. We agreed we would not use mogas in the high altitudes there. We made innumerable phone calls; several fuel suppliers in Addis said at first they had avgas and then later changed their stories. We investigated shipping avgas from Belgium by air freight, but necessary special containers were not readily available. Ethiopian Airlines keeps some avgas at Addis for its own training aircraft but we could not establish whether it would sell us any.

Due to the problems pinning down avgas in Addis, we looked at many other possible route variations. For example Jeddah – Asmara – Djibouti. But Asmara seemed to be a somewhat unsafe place with even less hope of fuel than Addis.

Having spent months investigating many blind alleys, and with the itinerary beyond Egypt in jeopardy, we asked Sam Rutherford (Prepare2Go) whether he could arrange fuel at Addis for us. Eventually, about 10 days before our scheduled departure, Sam sent us a price quote for avgas in Ethiopia.

Chris Hardisty promised to get us avgas in Lokichoggio in northern Kenya.

**IF** these arrangements worked out ok we would have cracked the main fuel issues.

### FLIGHT PERMITS?

Following discussions with several flight clearance companies we asked Mike Gray at White Rose to do all permits except Egypt, for a fixed price.

For Egypt we engaged the enthusiastic services of Eddie Gould and Ahmed Hassan, and they helped us greatly in establishing a feasible routing through Egyptian airfields with customs and avgas (often one or the other, not both, and not always open). Eddie also gave us calm updates about conditions in Egypt following the recent overthrow of the Mubarak regime, when any rational intending visitor to Egypt would have cancelled!

At Ahmed's suggestion we composed a letter "To Whom It May Concern" from Noel Maher, chairman of ILAS (Irish Light Aviation Society), expressing fraternal goodwill to the people and aviators of Egypt and trusting that the Egyptian authorities would exempt us from various landing fees etc. in accordance with certain obscure provisions of the Egyptian AIP. Ah, local knowledge!

For Sudan, it was unclear whether we would be issued a permit, others had been refused without any obvious reason. Mike was reasonably optimistic of success. However, we would not know for sure until shortly before arrival, so we would have to set off from home before getting confirmation of our permit.

South Sudan became an independent country in July 2011. If it were possible to fly from Khartoum through South Sudan to Lokichoggio, we could avoid the high mountains (and weather) of Ethiopia altogether. But South Sudan was reported to be unsafe and to be avoided. Our direct Khartoum to Addis route crossed some allegedly dodgy areas of eastern Sudan, albeit at high altitude (we hoped). A professional security consultant for Diageo gave us very negative reports of the situation. This disconcerting assessment was however contradicted by an Irish lady living in Khartoum. Hmmm.

Ethiopia: As the departure date approached, the CAA in Addis had not issued our flight permit. Mike Gray told us not to worry - so we added this to our long list of worries.

Kenya: Permit issues arose very surprisingly in Kenya. In fact the Kenya CAA refused our application; the alleged "logic" being that since Kenyan homebuilts cannot fly outside Kenya, foreign homebuilts should not be allowed to fly in Kenya. This was eventually sorted out with difficulty by Chris Hardisty, chairman of the Aero Club at Nairobi (Chris is one of the heros of this trip). Chris has built an RV-7A and offered us great support. I imagine when he first got an email from me he was pretty sceptical that anything would ever come of our plans!

For countries beyond Kenya Mike told us not to worry, he would sort it out. Fingers were crossed, and we had more than enough other things to worry about.

#### EQUIPMENT & WEIGHT ?

The loading arrangement of the aircraft required very careful attention so as to have the centre of gravity in a comfortable position. The CofG situation you can see by looking over your shoulder at the position of the elevator horn in flight. With the horn level with or say ¼" above the horizontal tailplane, G-RVIB flies pleasantly. Aft of an optimal CofG you get pitch instability, especially with low fuel, and then an inefficiently fluctuating engine speed and fuel flow.

Various straightforward steps were taken to move weight forward, with supplies stowed in the cavity forward of the instruments. A plastic storage box fitted exactly along the central floor between the occupants' legs, abutting the firewall. The box was used to store heavy items, including most of the tools, tie-downs, spare oil and filter, spare GPS, numerous cables, medical kit, etc. Charts were stored under the seats.

While it did not assist the CofG, over 10 lbs were saved at the front end with a new starter and alternator, more than offsetting the 5 lbs extra weight of the Catto prop.

Ethiopia was also important for performance planning, i.e. Addis Ababa airport is 7,656 ft AMSL with expected density altitude heading towards 10,000 ft, and we needed to take off with a full fuel load from its 12,500 ft runway. Our destination would be Lokichoggio, the only customs airport in Kenya that was within our 500 nm range. I was confident that the takeoff from Addis would be all right with lots of runway, but there was no available way of proving this. I had previously flown this RV-6 to over 18,500 feet, albeit in cool air over Rosslare and with a light load. Plan B would be that one of the occupants would have to take a commercial flight to Nairobi

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Shortly before scheduled departure everything was weighed, and it came to a very alarming total. This started several rounds of an emergency weight reduction campaign. We went through the toolbox again very carefully to justify each item's inclusion, removed some items and one fuel container, and cut back the clothing allowance again.

We made arrangements to leave our life raft and life jackets in Cairo, so as to reduce weight while in Africa. [This decision later proved to have some unanticipated downsides.]

#### Equipment included

- 3 x GPS plus Ipad with GPS
- Satellite phone
- Computer with FliteMap, Acukwik, full tech details of airframe & engine, etc etc
- Hand radio with external antenna
- Cowl plugs
- Roll of duct tape in case of sand storms
- Hand air pump, expensive model with a good non-return valve
- Spare inner tubes x 2
- Vans angle-iron clamp and ratchet strap for lifting gear leg in case of puncture
- Reel of light rope
- Mr Funnel filter, fuel tester, ethanol tester
- Disposable cans of oxygen
- Spare air filters x 2
- Cleaners, paper rolls
- Canopy cover and elastic cords
- Whole-fuselage cover for longer term parking
- Fuel siphons
- Tiedowns with spikes, rope, mallet
- Fabric softener disposal bottle (very useful for quick evacuation after landing)!
- "Stadium Buddy" external catheter
- Medications for malaria etc. etc.
- Mosquito coils & nets
- Insect repellants
- Impressive pilot shirts
- etc. etc.

*No cleft sticks!*



**Visas:** A lot of effort was wasted trying to get visas for key countries including a trip to the Sudanese embassy in London. We did obtain visas for Kenya and Ethiopia. Two visits were made to the Ethiopian Ambassador in Dublin, a charming friendly lady, to try to wangle some support in getting Ethiopian Airlines to agree to give us avgas in Addis. The Ambassador, as she explained patiently to us over cups of jolt-inducing Ethiopian coffee, is focussed on encouraging trade relations and though she did make some calls on our behalf these did not advance matters.

**Health:** After a consultation with a Chinese doctor at the local Tropical Medical Bureau, followed by several expensive follow-up visits involving assaults on my person by a white-coated amazon brandishing a very sharp weapon, I got a yellow document with lots of scribbles and stamps. Essam avoided most of this, claiming that his Egyptian heritage immunised him. I wonder!

**Insurance:** At an early stage I called my broker Crispin Speers to enquire about getting the insurance extended to cover a list of African countries. I fully expected a sharp intake of breath possibly followed by an uneasy silence. But no, there was no problem other than an extra charge that was not exorbitant. Further countries were added later at no extra charge. A slight complication was that there was a “no passengers in Africa” condition, which was later amended, after some discussion, to exclude South Africa; there was also a “no aerobatics in Africa” condition, the logic of which was questionable but of no practical consequence.

**Communications:** I tried to install a system to get internet weather data while in the air, with a Thuraya satellite phone attached to a 10 inch laptop and an external touchscreen monitor. In the end there were many problems with this setup and I ran out of time to complete it. The satphone could however be used to send text messages from the air, and to receive texted TAFs/METARs. The laptop had loaded on it various indispensable software items, e.g. Jeppesen FliteMap with all the African airport terminal charts and Acukwik with airport details, phone numbers for fuel, etc.

**GPS:** As a useful complement to the main Garmin 296 GPS I also had a HP iPaq which ran Skydemon; this included some new African coverage, I supposed at that time not many of Tim Dawson’s customers had used these in anger! To minimise paper the VFR charts for France were loaded on Essam’s iPad.

**Charts:** A set of Navtech IFR charts covered most of Africa. We searched worldwide on the internet for the out-of-print 1:1 million ONC topo charts, and tracked these down from various sources. Some we got as huge downloaded TIF files, which we had printed and laminated after cutting off parts that we would definitely not be flying over (e.g. the sea, Congo!) to reduce weight.

**Money:** We got large numbers of small-denomination US dollar bills for fuel costs, for oiling the wheels of commerce and easing the burdens of local administration in Africa. As you can imagine, this money weighed quite a bit. I planned to hide some bags of notes in hard-to-find places in the airframe. But I couldn’t bring myself to actually implement this, as the thought of losing the cash as well as the plane, if we had to ditch, put me off ... *[yes, yes, this was not entirely logical!]*

**Maintenance:** The whole round trip to/from South Africa, if completed in full, would involve around 140 hours of flying so three oil changes. Chris Hardisty very kindly offered to provide facilities at Nairobi Wilson airport where we planned to change the oil when southbound and again when northbound. We assumed that facilities would also be available if we reached South Africa. We brought a spare oil filter in case of availability issues and 5 litres of oil.

**Fuel transfer:** A method was needed to get avgas from barrels into the wing tanks. Two types of hand operated fuel pumps were tried, but neither was satisfactory and they were too heavy. So we packed two 22 litre plastic fuel containers and siphons to transfer fuel into the containers, which could then be poured through a filter into the wing tanks. The fuel containers had the added benefit, when stowed against the rear bulkhead, of pushing the baggage forward for CofG purposes.

## DEPARTURE DATE LOOMS

As the scheduled departure date approached, concern about the known unknowns – the unresolved issues that we knew about - was mixed with worry about unknown unknowns, vital matters that we might have overlooked altogether! But Essam and I agreed that even though there were many permits still missing and question marks over fuel availability, we would set off anyway in the hope that at a minimum we would get to Egypt - we had no assurance at all that we would get beyond Egypt. If we could not go beyond Egypt, well, that would be disappointing but we would make the best of it by sightseeing there! Plan B.

John Nugent, the operator of Newcastle airfield, regularly discomfited me as I prepared the plane by introducing me to visitors in the hangar as the fellow who is going to fly to South Africa “in this plane here”, in a tone that invited wonderment – or more likely disbelief - in the listener. I did not comment, it actually sounded pretty farfetched to me too. John is well known for his jesting!

Conducting final, final checks after a 100-hour inspection and before putting the cowls back on for the last time, a week before departure, I spotted with dismay ..... a small crack in one of the engine mount welds. Aaaargh! Ignoring friends’ advice to “just keep an eye on it”, I rushed to Abbeyshrule where Mike Skelly and Matt Tormey did a careful repair. Thanks guys.

## TO BOLDLY GO ....

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011, scheduled departure date:

The weather inevitably turned out worse than forecast. At Newcastle airfield we stood around looking up at the uniform grey 500 ft + cloudbase, waiting for improvement. Weather reports for Wales and England were a bit better. So instead of going straight to Caen as intended, we changed our flight plan to Gloucester.



So at last, with many unanswered questions, we said our goodbyes and departed ..... final destination unknown!

*[What happened next? Part 2 will follow .....! ]*

## Summer Events

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This summer must be on record as one of the most disappointing as regards flying weather in recent years, with most planned events postponed or cancelled due to unsuitable weather conditions. However, a number of events found a suitable window in the weather, giving us all a chance to stretch our wings after the long winter.



### Birr Breakfast Fly-In, April 15, 2023



Of the events which did take place, the first, and indeed the biggest, of the year was the Birr Breakfast Fly-In on April 15<sup>th</sup> in aid of St. Vincent de Paul which was well-attended by ILAS members getting active again.

Well over 100 aircraft attended this event from all across the country, making it one of the largest general aviation gatherings ever held in Ireland.

### Ballyboy Charity Fly-In, May 28, 2023

The Ballyboy Charity Fly-In returned this year with its event on behalf of the Athboy SVP held on May 28<sup>th</sup> in excellent summer weather, with many ILAS and vintage aircraft in attendance. Visitors were treated to the usual excellent Ballyboy hospitality and it turned into a fantastic post-pandemic reunion in the afternoon Meath sunshine.





## Abbeyleix House & Farm Annual Family Open Day

This year's Family Open Day at the De Vesci Estate in Abbeyleix on June 3rd featured motor and aviation-themed attendance with the Gordon Bennett Run celebrating its 20th anniversary with a rally of over 100 classic cars attending for the afternoon and parking up beside a wide range of visiting classic and vintage light aircraft from the same period. In addition to family- and food-oriented activity across the estate, the event included displays from the IHFF, Eddie Goggins, Andrew Fenton and Gerry Humphreys. The Portlaoise Plane team also attended with an exhibition on their build of the Aldritt Monoplane which was the subject of an ILAS visit last year.









## ILAS Harvest Fly-In, September 2/3 2023

After the cancellation of the ILAS midsummer events due to weather, the sun gods shone on ILAS Field for the first weekend of September for the 2023 ILAS Harvest Fly-In. Aidan and the team had the field in great condition for both days and, as ever, the catering was first class. We had a great attendance from members over both days with fantastic sunshine throughout.





