



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005

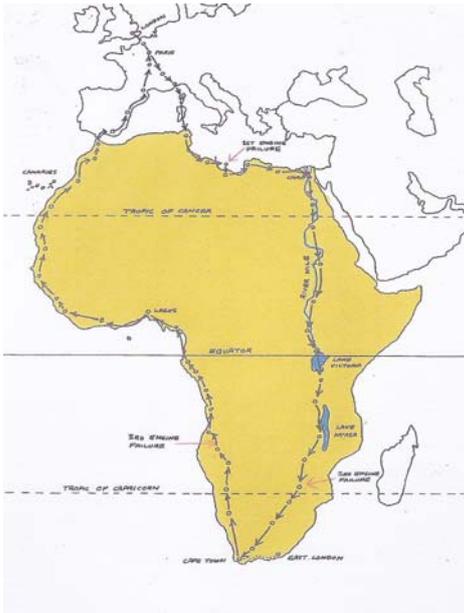


CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS
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BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT SOCIAL CLUB LTD
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FLYING IN AFRICA TODAY:



The Harris / Parker flight across this continent 50 years ago was epic and skilful to say the least. Some of the pitfalls they encountered still exist, even today. e.g the 'General Declaration' form as archaic in effect as ever today.

TODAYS LIGHT AIRCRAFT

Are better suited, to this kind of journey, particularly those with 260 / 280 HP engines. Speeds of 150 / 180 kts and a standard range between 1100 / 1300 nm are a definite plus.

Range is critical, 100LL aviation fuel is difficult to find in Africa today and should be requested with your estimated upload / quantity.

Bearing in mind that some places fuel is supplied from a sealed 200 ltr drum and if you want 350 ltrs you may have to pay for two drums – be warned.

In this situation, if you don't want to give this fuel away all you have

to do is reduce the previous fuel uplift. Is it not wiser to have a full tank of fuel than begrudge someone a little fuel for his motorcycle? He will be there next time you pass this way with two sealed drums.

Flying clubs are scattered across the continent of Africa but any fuel they have is not for re-sale as it is difficult enough for them to obtain.

KNOWLEDGE IN AFRICA



Bujumbura Flying Club. Due to bad weather at Kigali, Rwanda (94nm away) the editor (JB) diverted here to await a clearance. Bujumbura was listed as not having any 100LL this was a fact. This visit, lead to a chance meeting with the President of the flying club at Bujumbura who was in turn a Professor at the University of Burundi.

Mr Verbanis, whose domicile was in Bruxelles, in Belgium.

He asked how often I came this way, and if I gave him reasonable notice he would have 200 litres waiting for me.

We remained friends for a long period and I never had a fuel problem at Bujumbura again.

The flying club had 3 Cessna 150 aircraft fitted with 180 HP engines

because of the very high mountains nearby enabling them to climb to altitude.

The advantages of Bujumbura was its position at the very north of Lake Tanganyika at 2,582ft amsl where the cloud apparently never went below 2,000ft aal.

This airfield is always open.

RWANDA: KIGALI AIRPORT



Nice friendly airport, plenty of fuel BUT, 4892ft amsl and being almost on the equator has a very humid climate, daily rain and heavy cloud, surrounded by higher ground and is 94 nm from Bujumbura, who needs to get wet feet for no reason.

Bujumbura became my haven of safety with friendly Belgian pilots.



The sunset at Kigali can be quite dramatic whilst the early morning mist paints a daunting prospect for

engine failure with the ground sloping at an angle of 45 deg angle.



This is also Gorilla country. Wow!



Kigali, when it is dry is quite nice.

RWANDA/BURUNDI BORDER



It is also easy to tell when you reach the borders of Rwanda and Burundi because these people cultivate their land right up to the top of the mountainous border of Zaïre, beyond this line, there is only, uncared for, jungle.

Unfortunately these people (*the Hutu and Tutsu*) fell out with each other a few years later leading to a helicopter being used along mountain border shooting and killing a lot of people

NO PARTICULAR ORDER:

These small nuisance incidents only happened occasionally and were often avoided with a bit of quick thinking without losing ones cool. Appear respectful with those who like to be recognised as important. They all have relations in the police.

They may be useful one day to help solve a problem.

Stay friendly, get their name and phone number; don't forget the country code.



The active volcano of Nirangongo near Kigali rises to 11,384ft.



Another day around Kigali with the active volcanoes of Nirangongo, Kirimbi and Mwenso all towering toward 11,000ft all active.

AFRICA IS A LARGE PLACE:

No two journeys are the same, today is today, a few months down the road it will be totally different a surprise to your past experience. How can this be? *'this is Africa'*, ask anyone who has experiences of this vast land, the answer is always the same.

A photographic paradise, but be careful where you point your camera, especially near an airport. or local women.

A small story from Kigali – my colleague who accompanied me on a 22 day sales tour of Africa decided to have six shirts laundered at our hotel to be ready by the evening. No shirts that evening, but they would be ready tomorrow morning before we left.

Morning dawns no shirts, someone has just inherited six quality shirts.

This is Africa..!!

Six months later a brown paper

parcel arrived tied with string at my colleagues desk at the Paris office of SOCATA a bit tattered with six shirts neatly ironed.

It is hard to imagine the journey these items had travelled from Kigali in Rwanda probably by many devious routes.

KISANGANI (BANGOKA).

Our diary for today is to depart Bangui in Central Africa for Kisangani and a rendezvous with a Belgian agent.

We are not too sure of fuel supplies here, but we carry sufficient for Kigali in Rwanda, our next point.

The distance to Kisangani was 425 nm with a further 297 nm to Kigali.

We converge on the Congo river leading to Kisangani with a heading of 125 deg as the river flows.



Flying low over a large river such as this needs some caution as there is a reflective layer akin to a mirage and it is difficult to judge height, similar to the Gold Fish Bowl across the English Channel under certain conditions of humidity.

It is wise to climb back to a safe height and enjoy the rest of the leg and its beauty.

This huge river has carved many islands on its long journey.

It is surprising how many people live on sandbars in the middle of this very large flowing waterway. The Congo is one of the longest rivers in the world, over a mile wide and some places 700ft deep. It also flows at an incredible speed, perhaps 10 - 15 knots or more..!!



Arriving near Kisangani we make the mandatory radio calls, only to be greeted by absolute silence, no response at all.

We chose to land at this airport as the other was marked on the USAF topographical chart as unusable

This airport 'Simsini' looked inviting and quite tidy.

We landed and rolled to the other end to be surprised by a platoon of soldiers on parade with their rifles at the slope and wide eyed.

Without hesitation we made a 180 turn and applied full power and left, climbing to 5,000ft.

We decide that we may as well have a look at the other airfield as we are in the vicinity, but still no response from the tower.

We could see some DC3's on the ground and reckoned fuel was available so we landed as we had an agent who was meeting us we felt we would be safe.

Entering the base of the tower we were greeted with rows of pearly white teeth. They explained that there was a massive power failure, hence no radio response, and best of all the telephones were out so we reckoned no one would call

from Simsini where we had previously landed and departed.

The Terminal building had been built by the Belgians and had water pouring from the first floor and had been so for the past week.

Nobody seemed to care, *'this is Africa'*.

Our agent duly arrived and it was then that we found out there was no Avgas 100LL, but we could try and syphon some from the DC3's.

We didn't think that was very friendly, so declined the offer.

Our standard range was 1,100 nm, we had done 452 nm which included a landing and sudden take-off with 15 minutes of loitering whilst we surveyed the area of the airport below, left us with 600 nm for sure.



KISANGANI (BANGOKA):

This was 1982 – This airport is still a mess with little improvement whereas Simsini runway is still there, but they have built houses all around it right up to the runway.

Back to the main story – we eventually go down town with the generosity of our Belgian friend to book in to a hotel

They do not accept credit cards at all, cash only – local currency. The bank is closed and had been for some time. The local Government was in a state of collapse at this time.

The hotel suggested we go to the local monastery to see if they can help.

We are greeted by a Father who is in the middle of his evening meal. (typique Francaisé). Can we wait? He appeared after his meal asking how he could be of assistance. We explained our financial problem, whereupon he invited us into his

office. We were flabbergasted, this room was full of elephant tusks, stacked to the ceiling. My French colleague purchased one for 800FF. I declined the offer as the importation of ivory was prohibited into the UK.

We duly flew back to France with the tusk aboard where the Customs didn't bat an eyelid.

WEST COAST OF AFRICA



This coast line route to Senegal is quite suitable for a light aircraft journey where fuel is available.

However a formal request for fuel is strongly advised for security.

This is a good route for a first time flying adventure from Biggin Hill to Dakar 2,564.93 nm, one way.



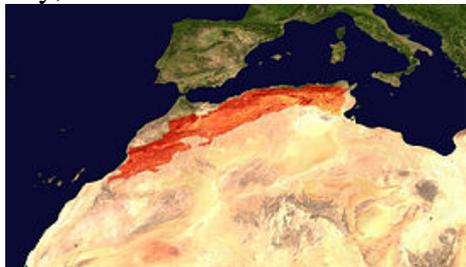
Tetmillil airfield above, in Morocco. There are several airfields along this coastal journey. Casablanca with its Palms lining the streets and cars forever,



The Atlas Mountain range rising to 13,665ft at Torbkai further inland as one approaches Agidir airfield'



against the Atlas mountains which proceed inland as far as Algiers city, and Tunisia.



From here you will pass Laayoune of the Western Sahara, best to be avoided.



Having refueled at Agidir, this journey heads south to Nouhadibou, Nouachott and Port Etienne.

APPROACHING DAKAR:

The hazy conditions that prevailed to the north vanish to a lush green surrounding Dakar airport.



Overhead Dakar, with the original airfield top right.

Below: the original airport Dakar.



No problems extending airfields here, *'this is Africa'* the bits between the old runways become building sites without complaints from any of the residents about aircraft noise.

Dakar has a large flying club with mainly good weather / showers.



Dakar is probably the furthest most Western point of Africa at 15W and 15N with generally fine weather, good swimming, sailing wind surfing, and of course sun bathing and a friendly flying fraternity.

SIGNAL HILL AT DAKAR has a very nice restaurant, situated

in the large building visible at the bottom of the hill. It is recommended that one does not walk in the long grass which hides many poisonous snakes.



FLIGHT CLEARANCES

You will need to arrange flight clearances with dates, estimates for each port of call and requests of fuel (uplifts) at each aerodrome.

All requests and request answers should be glued into a simple folder in consecutive order so that they are not lost or mislaid.

This way you appear efficient and in control. The clearance numbers are important and often asked for during flight, have the folder at the ready, an immediate response will impress them, because they have the numbers already. You will not be bothered further. (tricks of the trade).

For flights around Europe usually a flight plan is your clearance, but Italy / Greece can require flight clearance request and fuel request. Be safe, ask around.

RAIN PLUS - RAIN EQUALS:

Very wet land all over the UK, flooded houses all built below the water table, i.e. built in low lying areas which are technically below river level and should probably have never been allowed to have been built by the local authority.

Luckily for the population of Biggin Hill we shouldn't flood, but how come the water comes out of the ground at the highest point and only floods at the lowest point. Answers please..!!

The rains of Africa are a welcome relief from the heat, not so the miserable conditions of the UK...!



BUILDING TOWER BRIDGE
Sent in by one of our readers:

These remarkable pictures were found dumped in a skip, were rescued, wrapped in brown paper, then placed in a carrier bag where they remained under some ones bed for many years.

The construction started in 1892 and took 8 years to complete. No modern building equipment in these far off days. It is not known how many people were involved in this construction.

What a target for Health and Safety no Hi-viz Jackets, Hard Hats, Safety boots with steel toe caps No Canteen or healthy food. Sick leave, lateness, had not been invented, nor migrant labour.

We at the Bugle have just noticed the bridge tower on the South side of the river is a little off vertical..!! Maybe the foundations are being undermined by all the recent flood waters caused by the recent continuous rain in the UK.

If the rain we have experienced of late continues we will need more bridges like this one, solid and secure. Tower had 11,000 tons of steel used in its construction.

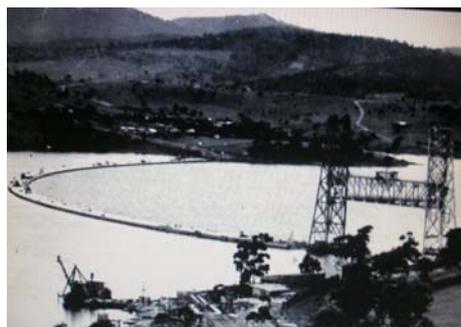
TASSIE FLOATING BRIDGE

A floating bridge on the Derwent River near Hobart Tasmania was really worlds apart, but a unique design. Built in 1943 it lasted for 21 years before it was replaced with a more conventional bridge.



This curved floating bridge was constructed with a series of concrete pontoons weighing a 1,000 tons each. The idea of the curve was to alleviate the need for anchors which were used in straight designs

The editor used to ride his motorcycle over this bridge, which was quite interesting on rough days as the bridge would rise and fall and the surface would twist and lean. This of course had an effect on the steering of the motorcycle as it weaved from one side of the road lane to the other. Watching cars approaching left you trying to anticipate which way you may be left steering, often wondering if you would miss each other.



The gantry was placed at one end to allow the passage of shipping passing up and down the river.

The editor will leave Bridge building to the experts and hope you may have enjoyed this diversionary information.