



BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT BUGLE

News from our Airport at Biggin Hill - established 2005



CLUB AND AIRPORT NEWS

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A TIME FOR MORE TRAVEL



Flying over the many small canals of Holland on our way to Groningen to rescue one of our aircraft which had landed at Oosterweld, an air field being used for crop spraying aircraft.

After landing, there was an unseen ditch, into which this aircraft taxied into, damaging the propeller and a possible shock load to the engine.

We decided to take a spare engine, plus propeller in one aircraft, a mechanic, plus tools in another aircraft.

The damaged aircraft could carry its own engine out by one of the pilots and ferry it to Groningen.

The rest of us would return to Groningen in the van we hired to carry the engine plus etc,. Finding Oosterweld by road was another story!!

HIRED VAN AT GRONINGEN



Richard Gibbons, John Bryan, Baxi our mechanic and Dave Stacey pose for a picture prior to loading tools, engine and propeller.

We stayed the night at Groningen which had accommodation and a restaurant, a very friendly place.

OTOMIUM BRUXELLES 1958



Not quite sure, or why I ended up going to Bruxelles soon after the previous trip to Holland.

This structure was built in 1958 for a large trade fair and is still standing today, some 59 years later with some additional buildings surround it today.



As a matter of course, I climbed up every stairway of this Molecular Structure. It was quite small inside, whilst the outer appearance is deceptive. This visit was my first and last, although I have viewed it from the air several time as the country of Belgium is rather flat for miles around.

TOUSSUS LE NOBLE NEXT

I had no sooner arrived than I was approached by one of the aviation magazines and taken for lunch and



stayed for the whole weekend as it was Aerospatiale's air show which had a lot of Socata representatives in attendance, which was quite handy when flying around France, as there was always somewhere to go knowing you could be sure of a good hotel and restaurant nearby.

France had many rep's across the country compared to the UK, that had only one based in the South East corner of England. The French didn't quite understand why there were no representatives, in the sparse land north of Biggin Hill.

BIGGIN HILL SHOW TIME



Looks like Biggin again with the fair ground behind, Following this event a team of us were chosen for a trip from Tarbes to Benghazi in Libya, sounds interesting as this sale had been going on for several weeks with the backing of the unstable regime of the self appointed Colonel Gaddafi and his side kick Major Riffi. who was in charge of the light aircraft division training school for the Libyan Army.

THE LIBYAN RALLYES



The aircraft lined up prior to departure on the tarmac at Tarbes for final Customs clearance, with Jean Auffrey (top) Team Leader and John Bryan (below).

The aircraft consisted of...

Rallye 235 X 1 + 200 Ltr Ferry

Rallye 180 X 2 + 200 Ltr Ferry

Rallye 150 X 1 + 100 Ltr Ferry

The weather was somewhat cloudy and two of the team were saying we should follow the coast on our way to Ajaccio.

JA and JB suggested a direct track was the best solution. Avoiding the weather, Jean had the Rallye 150 + 100 Ltr Ferry. He assured me he had enough fuel for this direct track

The other two said they would go the longer way around, low level. They departed ahead of us, whilst we climbed to FL060 and came out on top of the cloud, I stayed in formation with Jean at reduced power as I had a 180 HP.

We were subject to some strong wind on our journey as his fuel diminished, but we seemed to be OK and of course we were visual, no cloud.

Suddenly his engine slowed then picked up, I asked are you on the last of your fuel, affirmative !

I think I will land on the beach here

OK, I said, I will follow you down and make sure you're safe, but we are only 5 miles from Ajaccio, but the coastline is very rugged and I know this place, it was where I spent my honey-moon here
OK give me a call at my hotel in an hour.

A short while later I land at Ajaccio and reported the landing incident, and they said it was a safe landing, no damage, all OK!

The other two aircraft had landed at Marseille.,

I called them on the phone, and they asked what should they do? because their weather was still poor

I said stay the night and leave early for Ajaccio in the morning, but I said nothing about the beach landing.

Jean said he would catch me up in the morning as he was in the middle of a big celebration and they had a tractor with a blade and they were preparing a small strip on some hard ground just off the beach. Whilst Cargese was only 5nm in a straight line, it was 25 miles by road as I found out on my way with some fuel, early the next morning.

I was the only one to make the Castel Vecchio, Hotel a Ajaccio.



Moving the aircraft from the sand onto solid ground.

For the very short flight to Ajaccio, JB returned with the hired taxi.

LFKJ DAY TWO AJACCIO

Having basically lost a day we were back to our planned schedule, we were fuelled ready to go and were waiting for the other two to arrive and refuel.

We decided not to mention the Cargese - incident, because we hadn't informed Socata and it was better they didn't know.



Phillip Petit formats on me as we approach Djerba, Tunis.

This is our fuel stop before Tripoli.



Tunis was a bit of a turbulent place at this moment in time so Jean our leader took our passports and cleared immigration whilst the rest of us refueled the aircraft etc.,

We left Djerba for Tripoli where we made a technical fuel stop and cleared passport control and finally departed for Benghazi arriving at sunset.

After handing over the aircraft to the new Libyan owners we were driven to a large wooden house reputed as belonging to the exiled King Farouk of Egypt.

I don't recall being given any food on arrival at the Terminal at Benghazi, our next object was to get back to Tripoli, tomorrow.

THREE FRENCH PILOTS

The next morning we were transported to Benghazi airport and left to make our own arrangements in getting back to Paris, there were no flights today, and no one could confirm anything for tomorrow.

Fortunately we bumped into three French pilots with a Piper Seneca. They offered us a lift to Tripoli, but we were four!! Plus light luggage. After some careful calculations of weight and balance we decided we could squeeze in one more.

On arrival at Tripoli I went to the ticket desk to make arrangements for flights, someone closed the glass door behind me, and wouldn't let the others in. There ensued an argument as to how the others were on the wrong side of the barrier to me and weren't allowed to enter my side, which, was the side where you bought your ticket. Then, having bought a ticket were you able get on the other side of the of the errant glass barrier, aah ! I think I understand. We arrived late in the afternoon in Paris. The other three went to their homes whilst I went to a local hotel as I had to go to Socata in the morning.

The 'Cargese Incident' was revealed as I entered the building of Socata to hear a voice from the corridor.

Aah!! Ici e' Capitaine Haddock'



Yes! You have made the tabloids.

FROM THIS MOMENT ON !

Wherever I went in France the name traveled ahead of me.

Our next mission were five Rallye 235's from Tarbes to Jo'Burg, plus our roving mechanic, Francis Curville from the factory.

5 X 235's TO JOHANESBURG



The aircraft have been prepared and ready to leave Tarbes for Corfu and they left one by one (a bit like Noahs Ark).

Everything seemed to be going alright when there was a garbled message that one of our number Genevieve Gilbert had diverted to Marseille with a damaged canopy. We decided that we should all land as we were not too far from the factory, however our trusty traveling mechanic had contacted the factory and they told us to see the Rallye agent at Marseille.



The damaged canopy stands beside Genevieve's aircraft, apparently her case dislodged when she hit some turbulence and it slid down between the seat and plexi - glass pushing it out.

The agent at Marseille found a matching canopy from another aircraft and helped fit it, assisted by our mechanic.



Capt. Jacques Dufour, a jovial character whom I would meet some years hence at Yaounde, Cameroon whilst we were on separate missions.



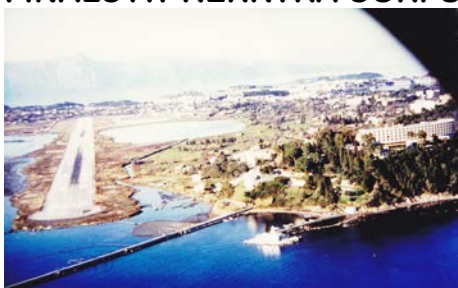
The canopy is fixed, JB is snapped before we head-off to Corfu.

We will make this a re-fuel only, although each aircraft is carrying a 200 litre ferry tank on the rear seat. This gives each one 12hrs 30 mins range 1565 nm.

THE ISLE OF CAPRI BELOW



FINALS AT KERKYRA CORFU



This was a good airfield for the ferry pilot, everything was close at hand, even a very nice old worldly hotel Britagne just three hundred yards from the airport for \$12 dollars, fantastic. (but the prices have escalated – special rate for pilots, if you phone ahead.)

I used it for many years as my 1st stop. It was a good stepping stone for many of my long journeys making sure everything is working



Next day we are Genevieve, Jean-Claud Ettiene and John Bryan with



Capt. Dufour ready at Heraklion for the next stage to Egypt.

APPROACHING CAIRO



The early days at Cairo were quite hectic, and required an agent who would guide you around the airport at the speed of a gazelle running from a hungry lion.

Eventually it became prohibitive to even attempt to navigate the terminal and the various offices. Anyway we have a visit to the French Embassy downtown Cairo.



The view from the balcony of the French Embassy, Cairo (7 floors). On arrival the lift wasn't working so we told the taxi driver to wait downstairs. BUT, he insisted on carrying our bags upstairs. He soon found out he had to carry them down because we weren't living here, our hotel was the Sheraton visible in the distance to the right.

TAXI DRIVERS AT CAIRO

The taxi drivers are something else around the airport because they have to pay a fee to gain access to the taxi rank, you the passenger, pay a set charge for which you get a receipt for transport to your hotel in the city of Cairo. Once you leave the airport in his taxi you are subject to his begging reteric about his five daughters, (they never have sons) (strange) and slow driving technique, until he realizes he is getting any bac-shish!!

Then you will be subject to the worst erratic experience of your life as he aims at every pedestrian that happens to be trying to cross the road, you will gain some of your first grey hairs, whilst the pedestrian flip flops, are left in the middle of the road.!!

LEAVING FOR SUDAN

Relief as we leave Cairo for Sudan with the sun rising on our left as we take up a south bound heading.



THE DESERT OF SUDAN

Flight conditions were quite hazy today when it is difficult to tell where the ground finishes and the sky merges, the higher you get the worse it becomes and you need to use your instruments cautiously. It is not unusual for very high arials supported by thin wires to confront you suddenly out of the blue (so to speak).

KHARTOUM AIRFIELD



We arrive at Khartoum amid a lot of shouting over the radio from a Sudanese pilot in a Mirage saying he can't find the airfield and is lost. Air Traffic ask us to keep a good look out saying he has no radar and unable to assist

This pilot continues to shout as he continues with white knuckles and hasn't thought of slowing down, so

he can catch up, or indeed slow down a bit so his brain can catch up with the real world..

The Mirage was fast and dangerous and way beyond some of these pilots capability, resulting in many fatal outcomes.



The ground controller seemed know what he was doing advising us to proceed with caution to land.

We never did find out where the Mirage went.

Paying landing charges, and filing flight plans was done via a grilled window where you slid your money and documents underneath.

FINDING A HOTEL

This was a bit of a problem until I spotted a British Air Crew leaving the hotel, so I asked if their rooms were empty, but they weren't sure.

In the meantime, I would guard the luggage while the others went looking for a hotel. **Good idea !!**

By the time they came back without success, I managed to come to a deal with the British Airways Hotel man at reception and he found a couple of rooms and some beds, so we were secure for the night.

NEXT STOP MALAKAL



Nice place, 41 years on it has been destroyed, town, airport by rebel activity.! Crazy

Arrival at Malakal we were greeted by three South Africans ferrying three Cessna 150's to Lanseria.

Between us we exhausted the fuel supply of 100LL.

Whilst we had enough fuel for the next leg to Juba, we could not have less than full tanks.

At our hotel, I met an American who said he could get us 400 litres of fuel for cash.

He said he would come back after dark and we could confirm the quality and correct fuel.

We made a deal returned to the airfield and transferred the fuel to our aircraft and some for his trouble.

JUBA SOUTHERN SUDAN



Two aircraft follow downwind as we arrive in a very heavy rain.



When it rains here it rains. This is as far as you go in Southern Sudan.

'Whickers World BBC' Alan said of this place during one of his many broadcasts of remote places.

"If the world convulsed, not one ripple would be felt here"
This was way back 41 years ago!

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