



NEWS SHEET

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Editor: Many thanks to those who have sent in articles. As I have time I will send these out to those members on email and for those only on 'snail mail' I will send them one a month. If you live near someone like that please run them off a copy if you can. The first story comes from the member who suggested the idea so here is **Steve Wilson's** first offering.

My First Overseas Air Journey to Kenya

At the end of my degree course in Geography and Geology at Reading University, I and six other members of the Reading University Mountaineering Club travelled to Kenya, in the summer of 1972, with a view to climb Mount Kenya, the second highest mountain in Africa at 17,057 feet.

With the exception of a brief up and down flight experience with British Eagle, in a BAC 111, this was my first journey in an aircraft. We flew from Heathrow to Nairobi, nonstop, in a Boeing 707. Arriving without incident we spent the first six days getting organised with food (for a month on the mountain) and cooking equipment, to accompany our tents, climbing gear and clothes, which we had taken with us.

Having travelled to the base of the mountain, we hired a driver and a Landrover to ferry us and our equipment to a point 10,600 feet up the mountain. Acclimatisation at different levels was important and it would take a week to reach the main summit camp site. We were carrying about 100 pounds weight per person so without porters we had to move it up a bit at a time, first to 12,400 feet and then to 14,600 feet.

Mount Kenya is an extinct volcano, which I usually describe as being like a Christmas pudding with a spike in the top. Despite being right on the Equator, it snows above 13,000 feet and it has a number of small glaciers, about a half of which have melted since our visit because of climate change.

We did a lot of climbing and walking around the summit area before our attempt to reach the top. Four of us, climbing as two ropes of two, set off at about 5.00 am,



passing the remains of a small helicopter which had crashed, killing the pilot, during a rescue attempt two years before our visit. Climbing for 12 hours we reached two ledges about 400 feet below the summit. After a freezing night in a bivouac bag, one of our number had developed slight frostbite and come morning it was judged unsafe to continue, so we retreated back to camp, abseiling most of the way.

Three days later we sent our two best climbers to try again. They succeeded, so that Reading University was back on the top of the mountain that had first been climbed in 1899 by Sir Halford Mackinder, the first Professor of Geography at Reading University.

Our final retreat from Mount Kenya was not without incident but to move on with the story, all seven of us



got back to Nairobi. At this point we said good bye to Ruth, who flew off to Botswana at the start of her two-year VSO, and to Tony, who went off to Uganda to be interviewed for a Maths Lectureship at Makerere University. Myself, Rob, Ken, Jean and Graham set off to Mombasa where we set up tents on a beach to have a nice relaxing time for a couple of weeks.

However, our story took an unexpected and unpleasant twist. One morning we read the front page of the East African Standard. Idi Amin had started throwing the Asian community out of Uganda. There was a certain amount of fighting going on and people were being killed. The story was taken from the Times of London. It also included a piece about a British man who had been beaten up in a police prison and was in a cell with Sandy Gall and a number of other reporters. It was clearly our Tony. He managed to get out with his life and escaped back to Nairobi, where we found him badly bruised from rifle butts and his hair full of congealed blood, which we had to clean. Despite reporting from the likes of Vietnam and Afghanistan, Sandy Gall, in his autobiography, describes the three days in that prison cell as the most frightening time of his life. Tony escaped because they thought he was a journalist too.

The day came for us to leave for home but it had another twist. Instead of the planned BOAC flight, we were transferred onto an East African Airways VC10. The delayed flight was going to Heathrow, but via Entebbe in Uganda. Great! Tony had just escaped from there. Flying in over Lake Victoria, it was evening time and it looked like we could see some gunfire flashes. Part of the runway was piled high with bags and cases, which we assumed were the belongings of many Asians. We were on the ground for several hours, despite only a few people joining the flight. It turned out that there was an argument about fuel, because the tankers carrying the fuel had



to cross the border with Kenya, which had been closed. Eventually we took off with enough fuel to cross the Sahara and landed at Rome, where a refuel allowed us to get back to Heathrow. Relief!! Not bad for your first journey.

Six of us have met up since that expedition and five of us attend a reunion with other members of the climbing club every two years. As for Tony, since leaving the plane at Heathrow, none of us saw him again or indeed know what became of him.

Footnote:

Roy Briggs' son Roger collected me from Heathrow and took me to a grand residence in Windsor Great Park, where I was to attend a three-day induction course for new postgraduate students in the Geography Department at University College London. Roger had brought a case of fresh clothing for me to wear and was going to take my smelly old stuff back to my mum in Hemel Hempstead. Standing there in my horrible clothes, having just escaped a near war zone, I was greeted by a butler. He asked me for my name and showed me to my room. After a shower, I went downstairs for afternoon tea and cakes. Nothing could have been more different to my previous two months!!

Goodbye to 747's

This weekend, KLM and Qantas will operate their final Boeing 747 passenger flights, bringing an end to nearly 50 years of service with the airlines. The 747's were scheduled to exit the fleets in the future but the impacts of COVID-19 flight restrictions and plummeting passenger demand have forced them to move the schedule forward.

We still take them for granted but I remember flying a BOAC 747 to the Far East to start my tour in Brunei in 1973 and my return journey 1st Class with Qantas in 1975. Certainly a wonderful work horse for many airlines around the world. See P3 for more about Qantas



Repatriation Flights

Ed: Thanks to Andrew Bourne

Over the past few weeks some airlines have been



carrying out repatriation flights from all over the world. One such airline is Qantas with over 30,000 people wishing to return to UK.

Obviously the airline did run regular flights from the major cities in Australia to UK, but as countries enroute closed their airspace and airfields, this exacerbated the problem. Qantas has been pioneering long range flights with its Boeing 787, taking Qantas staff and doctors, together with flight crews on these 19 hour sectors, monitoring their general health and brain activities.

But now it is for real using Airbus A380's on direct Australia to UK flights from Darwin to London Heathrow. They normally refuel at Singapore but because of Covid 19 Singapore has closed Changi to International traffic. After much work by their operations staff Qantas has come up with Sydney - Darwin - London/Heathrow. It, of course, is not a simple matter of the route but also what airfields are open for diversions, as some countries have physically closed major airfields. Now the route is



settled they are running a daily service just for repatriation purposes. Darwin is a city with a population of only 132,000. It is the capital city of the Northern Territory and has a reputation as a freewheeling frontier town. Its airport normally sees flights to Indonesia, Singapore, Dili, and around Australia. London will be a glamorous new addition to Darwin's departure board.

The expected flying time between Darwin and London for QF1 is 16 hours and 20 minutes. The return flight QF2, pushing into the winds, will be a slightly longer 16 hours and 45 minutes. Qantas thinks this is the first time there has been a nonstop commercial flight between Darwin and London. Normally, the Qantas A380 would be parking alongside quite a few other planes. Darwin Airport has an unusual midnight rush hour. Domestic airlines send flights north to Darwin to utilize aircraft after the busy early evening peak down south. Between midnight and 02:00 a number of flights arrive and depart. The returning red-eye flights south make their destinations in time to join the morning peak.

But things are quieter at Darwin Airport these days. The two major domestic airlines in Australia have slashed flights, heavily impacting on regional airports like Darwin. The reduced schedule is likely to be cut even further this week. The Northern Territory government has closed their borders and is now imposing a mandatory 14 day self-isolation period on all arrivals, decimating remaining demand for flights into the Northern Territory.

Darwin only hosted the A380 for a week. Qantas is shut down its scheduled international network back at the end of March. The informal advice is that flights may be down for several months. Qantas is in discussions with the Australian government regarding operating some ad hoc strategically

important international services after this date, but this has not yet been nailed down.

In the meantime, the Qantas A380 will make for an unusual sight at Darwin Airport and the London flights will mark a new footnote in aviation history – only the second-ever Australian city with a direct link to London.

Despite running these flights, like many airlines Qantas are putting most of their fleet in storage, whilst still ensuring that if needed their aircraft will be able to fly again quickly, if needed. This is a fast moving situation and the airline needs to be able to resume all or some operations quickly.

Ed: *Certainly things overhead Prestwood are a lot quieter than usual, the normal dozen or so holding aircraft have disappeared completely. Out for our exercise all you can hear are the birds, not the jets overhead and outbound from Luton.*

Birthday Celebrations

Some of our members have had to celebrate their birthdays whilst in lockdown, so I thought we ought to remember them here, particularly as some are very significant ones:

Rob Garrett, Dusty Miller, Ian Mason, Peter Roberts and Rhys Woodward have all celebrated Birthdays. Now to some more significant ones:

John Bourne celebrated his 90th on 4 April but just before that on 29 March Roy Briggs celebrated his 95th and apparently starred on the website of the International Bomber Command Memorial at Lincoln.

Finally and certainly not least comes our President. Geoff celebrated his 97th on 28 March and I will leave him to describe what he has been up to in Lockdown:

Currently in isolation in Oakley, Bedfordshire, my daily walk, on occasions takes me through the graveyard of St Mary's church where I scrutinise the faded headstones in search of a Hulett. Hereabouts Hulatt was a popular name around 1850 and church registers show a wide variation of the spelling of the name including just one Hulett. My purpose is to discover any connection with my family and if so, why it moved to Yorkshire. The time in isolation may be insufficient!

Geoff celebrating his Birthday on 28 March - but where is the whisky?

Welfare

David has been phoning round and so I am glad to



say have others. Ron Doble has been active on the phone and when he spoke with me he sounded in reasonably good form. Tom Payne is also as cheerful as ever despite being in his care home without visitors.

It is very important during this period we look after each other so I make no apologies for repeating the request I made in the last News Sheet, that you all try and ring a few friends or the next three on the membership list - your calls will be most welcome. If anyone has a particular problem then please get in touch with any committee member. Talking of the Committee, poor Bill George was in the garden the other day when he fell twisting his ankle. Apparently he was not demonstrating how he did a stall turn in his Meteor, but with similar poor results.

Spare a thought for Ian and Jean Stewart, who sadly lost their son after he spent 9 weeks in ICU's at Milton Keynes, John Radcliffe and the Churchill in Oxford, sadly passing away less than 48 hours after a major operation. Of course it was made worse by the fact Ian and Jean were unable to visit towards the end. Our condolences go out to all the Stewart family.

Gulfstream G700

Ed: *I am indebted to our Chairman for spotting this. It is indeed encouraging to see a company still going ahead with production when much of the industry is cutting back.*



The new Gulfstream G700 achieved first flight recently, departing Gulfstream Aerospace's headquarters at Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport at 1:19 p.m. and landing back at the Georgia airport two hours and 32 minutes later. Piloted by Jake Howard and Eric Holmberg, with flight-test engineer Bill Osborne, the first flight-test G700—T1—operated on a 30/70 blend of sustainable aviation fuel.

“This first flight is a momentous occasion and the next step forward in Gulfstream’s vision for the future, a vision that has been guided by the strategic leadership of our parent company, General Dynamics, and the innovation of the Gulfstream team,” said Gulfstream president Mark Burns. “As the market leader, Gulfstream is moving the entire business-jet industry forward with advanced safety features, tomorrow’s technology and a cabin purposefully designed to exceed our customers’ expectations for comfort.”

The G700 was introduced as the company’s latest flagship in October at NBAA-BACE, where Gulfstream displayed a full-scale cabin mockup and showed video of the first test aircraft taxiing under its own power. Five flight-test aircraft have already been manufactured, and a structural test article has completed load testing.

T1 will focus on envelope expansion, flutter, stalls, flying qualities, flight control, and ice shapes; T2, cabin development and static test; T3, loads/PID, engine/thrust-reverser operation, field performance, and climb performance; T4, environmental control system, mechanical systems, flight into known icing,

and cooling/vent; T5, avionics and level-D sim data. A sixth G700 will also serve as a production test aircraft, according to a Gulfstream spokeswoman.

Powered by a pair of Rolls-Royce Pearl 700 engines, the Mach 0.90, 6,400-nm G700 features a five-living-area cabin with 20 panoramic windows. It also includes the Gulfstream Symmetry flight deck with electronically linked active control sidesticks, touchscreen controls, and a predictive landing performance system for enhanced runway safety.

Service entry of the twinjet, which is a stretch derivative of the G650ER, is scheduled for 2022.

Ed: *I suppose it is too much to hope that the RAF may order some for VIP use?*

B-17 "All American" (414th Squadron, 97BG)

In 1943 a mid-air collision on February 1, 1943, between a B-17 and a German fighter over the Tunis dock area, became the subject of one of the most famous photographs of WW II.

An enemy fighter attacking a 97th Bomb Group formation went out of control, probably with a wounded pilot, then continued its crashing descent into the rear of the fuselage of a Flying Fortress named "All American", piloted by Lt. Kendrick R. Bragg, of the 414th Bomb Squadron.



When it struck, the fighter broke apart, but left some pieces in the B-17. The left horizontal stabilizer of the Fortress and left elevator were completely torn away.

The two right engines were out and one on the left had a serious oil pump leak. The vertical fin and the rudder had been damaged, The fuselage had been cut almost completely through connected only at

two small parts of the frame, and the radios, electrical and oxygen systems were damaged. There was also a hole in the top that was over 16-feet long and 4 feet wide at its widest; The split in the fuselage went all the way to the top gunner's turret.

Although the tail actually bounced and swayed in the wind and twisted when the plane turned and all the control cables were severed, except one single elevator cable still worked, and the aircraft miraculously still flew!

The tail gunner was trapped because there was no floor connecting the tail to the rest of the plane. The waist and tail gunners used parts of the German fighter and their own parachute harnesses in an attempt to keep the tail from ripping off and the two sides of the fuselage from splitting apart. While the crew was trying to keep the bomber from coming apart, the pilot continued on his bomb run and released his bombs over the target.

When the bomb bay doors were opened, the wind turbulence was so great that it blew one of the waist gunners into the broken tail section. It took several minutes and four crew members to pass him ropes from parachutes and haul him back into the forward part of the plane. When they tried to do the same for the tail gunner, the tail began flapping so hard that it began to break off. The weight of the gunner was adding some stability to the tail section, so he went back to his position.

The turn back toward England had to be very slow to keep the tail from twisting off. They actually covered almost 70 miles to make the turn home. The bomber was so badly damaged that it was losing altitude and speed and was soon alone in the sky.

For a brief time, two more Me-109 German fighters attacked the All American. Despite the extensive damage, all of the machine gunners were able to respond to these attacks and soon drove off the fighters.

The two waist gunners stood up with their heads sticking out through the hole in the top of the fuselage to aim and fire their machine guns. The tail gunner had to shoot in short bursts because the recoil was actually causing the plane to turn.

Allied P-51 fighters intercepted the All American as it crossed over the Channel and took

one of the pictures shown. They also radioed to the base describing that the appendage was waving like a fish tail and that the plane would not make it and to send out boats to rescue the crew when they bailed out. The fighters stayed with the Fortress, taking hand signals from Lt. Bragg and relaying them to the base. Lt. Bragg signaled that 5 parachutes and the spare had been "used" so five of the crew could not bail out. He made the decision that if they could not bail out safely, then he would stay with the plane to land it.

Two and a half hours after being hit, the aircraft made its final turn to line up with the runway while it was still over 40 miles away. It descended into an emergency landing and a normal roll-out on its landing gear

When the ambulance pulled alongside, it was waved off because not a single member of the crew had been injured. No one could believe that the aircraft could still fly in such a condition. The Fortress sat placidly until the crew all exited through the door in the fuselage and the tail gunner had climbed down a ladder, at which time the entire rear section of the aircraft collapsed.

This old bird had done its job and brought the entire crew home uninjured.



Ed: *Again thanks to our Chairman for forwarding this one.*

Coronavirus around The World

Ed: Thanks to Ron Hedge for sending this in.

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent virus threat and have therefore raised their threat level from “Miffed” to “Peeved.” Soon, though, level may be raised yet again to “Irritated” or even “A Bit Cross.” The English have not been “A Bit Cross” since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. The virus has been re-categorized from “Tiresome” to “A Bloody Nuisance.” The last time the English issued a “Bloody Nuisance” warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the Spanish Armada.

The Scots have raised their threat level from “Pissed Off” to “Let's Get the Bastard.” They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.

The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its alert level from “Run” to “Hide.” The only two higher levels in France are “Collaborate” and “Surrender.” The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability.

Italy has increased the alert level from “Shout Loudly and Excitedly” to “Elaborate Military Posturing.” Two more levels remain: “Ineffective Combat Operations” and “Change Sides.”

The Germans have increased their alert state from “Disdainful Arrogance” to “Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs.” They also have two higher levels: “Invade a Neighbour” and “Lose.”

Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels.

The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy.

Australia, meanwhile, has raised its alert level from “No worries” to “She'll be alright, Mate.” Two more escalation levels remain: “Crikey! I think we'll need

to cancel the barbie this weekend!” and “The barbie is cancelled.” So far, no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level.

David Bray reports Ron is doing well with RAF, RAFBF, British Legion local volunteers as well as son and daughter making sure he is well looked after.

Now some Lockdown Limericks

Flight Radar 24

I expect many of you are familiar with this website or a couple of very similar ones. One regular subscriber highlighted this a few days ago, just as

Lockdown Limerick No1



There was a young pheasant called Claude
Who found he was dreadfully bored,
With few cars to be dodged
And risk being splodged,
T'was a mystery that had him quite floored.

This is the first of a series to while away the lockdown days. If any of you have any Limericks concerning the Lockdown, please send them to me and I will get our ‘Resident Artist’ to do the cartoon to go with them.

Graham

Flight Radar 24

I expect many of you are familiar with this website or a couple of similar ones. One regular subscriber highlighted this a few days ago, just as the USA topped the poll for the highest number of Corona virus cases and deaths from it.

Firstly we look at air travel in Europe, which has almost ceased. Many of the contacts are in fact 'freighters' carrying essential supplies but very few are passenger carrying flights.



Now have a look at the USA at the same time on the same day, is it no wonder at the statistics!



The East coast and Florida are flooded with aircraft. Some American airlines have laid up some of their fleets but obviously there is still an incredible amount of air traffic, and no amount of 'testing' is going to keep up with this amount of the travelling public.

When will TPOTUSA learn!!!!

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Please, if you have any problems do not hesitate to get in touch with any member of the committee.

In the meantime, stay safe and our best wishes to you all. I will try to get another issue out before too long