

# FLIGHTS BY FOREIGN CIVIL AIRCRAFT TO SOUTH AFRICA

## INTRODUCTION

Legislation enabling effect to be given to the International Convention for regulating air navigation, and to make provision for the control, guidance and encouragement of flying within the Union of South Africa and for other purposes incidental thereto, for all purposes known as the **Union Aviation Act** [No. 16 of 1923], was passed on the 23rd of May 1923 to allow effect to be given to the International Air Navigation Convention of 1919, and to make the provisions referred to above.

This Act came into force on the 1st of July 1942 and not only provided for the adoption of the abovementioned Convention, but also made provision for —

- a. the issue of proclamations to give effect to the Convention;
- b. the ratification of and giving effect to amendments; and
- c. the application within South Africa of any of the provisions of the Convention.

Section 3 provided for the making of regulations which covered, *inter alia*, the licensing and certification of personnel, aircraft and aerodromes, the registration of aircraft, the safety and security of persons and property, the holding of accident inquiries, the conditions under which aircraft might pass, or goods or passengers might be conveyed by aircraft into, within or from South Africa; and the areas within which, or the aerodromes at which, aircraft coming from any place outside the Union of South Africa had to land, as well as the areas within which or the aerodromes from which aircraft had to depart to any place outside South Africa, etc.

Section 4 of the Act provided for the appointment of a Civil Air Board to advise the Minister. Administrative matters were dealt with by the Department of the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, and any technical assistance and advice was rendered by the then Union Air Directorate.

The administration of the Act was assigned to the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. In terms of Section 4 of the Act, a Civil Air Board was appointed for a period of three years with effect from the 1st of July, 1924, with the following personnel:

H. J. Lenton, Postmaster-General, Chairman; Brig.-Gen. A. J. E. Brink, D.T.D., D.S.O., Chief of the General Staff, Union Defence Force; Col. Sir H. A. [Pierre] van Ryneveld, K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Director of Air Services; Maj. A. M. Miller, D.S.O., M.L.A., G. Owen Smith, I.S.O., Commissioner of Customs and Excise; Lt.-Col. F. R. Collins, D.S.O., Chief Mechanical Engineer, South African Railways; W. C. van der Sterr, Director of Trigometrical Survey; and P. L. Lindup, Secretary.

In 1928 — 1929 the Board consisted of the following: The Hon. H. W. Sampson, O.B.E., M.L.A. (Chairman); H. J. Lenton, Postmaster-General; Maj.-Gen. A. J. E. Brink, D.T.D., D.S.O. [Chief of the General Staff]; Col. Sir H. A. van Ryneveld, K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C. [Director of Air Services]; Lt.-Col. James Dickson; Wing Commander W. D. Beatty, C.B.E., A.F.C.; and Maj. A. M. Miller, D.S.O.

Consequent upon the decision of the then Union Cabinet, the control of Civil Aviation was transferred from the Department of Posts and Telegraphs to the Department of Defence with effect from the 7th of September, 1931. In consequence of the abolition of the office of Director of Air Services on the appointment of Brig.-Gen. Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, K.B.E., D.S.O. to Chief of the General Staff, Lt.-Col. J. Holthouse, O.B.E., Officer Commanding Aircraft and Artillery Depot, was appointed Director of Civil Aviation as from the 1st of May, 1933. At the same time the Civil Air Board was disbanded.

## 1. APPLICATIONS FROM ABROAD

In cases where foreign civil aircraft undertook flights which as part of the flight plans entailed entering the air space of South Africa and the use of its airfields (civil or military), it was the procedure to obtain official sanction, usually in the following way —

- a. where British civil aircraft were involved, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, advised the South African Department of External Affairs [as it was then known] of the proposed flight.
- b. as far as civil aircraft of other nationalities were concerned, the official representative in South Africa of the country concerned, i.e. an Envoy or Consul-General would approach the Department of External Affairs with full details of the flight proposed.
- c. In both cases the following information was conveyed to both the South African Secretary for Defence and the Civil Air Board by the Department of External Affairs —
  - i. The name[s] of the pilot[s], crew[s] and passenger[s].
  - ii. Details regarding the relative aircraft.
  - iii. The intended flight route including the part thereof affecting South African air space.

## 2. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED (1927 — 1931)

The following applications were received by the South African Department of External Affairs from 1927 to 1931 and were finalised by the Department of Defence in the person of the Chief of the General Staff —

### a. 6 July, 1927

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, on behalf of the Netherlands Government acting for the "Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij" (K.L.M.) in respect of a flight proposed to South Africa.**

This application is interesting as it relates to an agreement between the British and Dutch governments regarding civil flights over the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland. The provisional agreement signed on 7 January, 1925 did not include the British dominions and colonies of that time or the Dutch colonies in the Far East.

As the Dutch Government had, however, promised sanction for British flying boats to enter the air space of the Dutch colonies in question, the British Government, as a result of a request from the Netherlands Minister in London (Jonkheer R. de Marees van Swinderen) dated 1 April, 1927 and addressed to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, promised to approach India, the British Dominions, the British Colonies, the protectorates and mandated territories [and also Irak] with a view to granting reciprocal privileges.

On 17 August, 1927 the Union's Minister for External Affairs (at that time Gen. J.B.M. Hertzog) replied *inter alia* that —

**I have the honour to inform you that His Majesty's Government of South Africa will always be pleased to afford such facilities as may be possible in Union territory and in South West Africa, to Netherlands aircraft when desired.**

This authority related to civil aircraft and accordingly covered the flight which K.L.M. visualised would commence in Amsterdam at the beginning of May 1928 and would culminate in Cape Town.

The following route was visualised Amsterdam — Lyons — Naples — Brindisi — Athens — Sollum — Cairo — Assuan — Khartoum — Malakal — Mongalla — Kisumu — Tabora — Abercorn — Broken Hill — Bulawayo — Pretoria — Bloemfontein — Beaufort West — Cape Town.

Mr. J. B. Hubrecht in a letter addressed to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs on 28 February 1928, furnished the following additional details —

**A Fokker machine will be used, type VIIA, carrying the nationality and registration marks H-NADR, provided with three Titan motors of 240 hp each, of the**

**factory of Messrs Gnome and Rhone, Paris. The crew will consist of the pilots G. J. Geysendorffer and J. C. Scholte and the mechanic M. Veenendaal, all of Netherlands nationality. The passengers will be Mr. W. van Lear Black and presumably his servant L. Baline, both American citizens.**

In regard to this machine, its crew and passengers, authority had been sought to fly over British territories and to use airfields falling under British control.

On 5 April, 1928 the Chief of the General Staff, Brig.-Gen. A. J. E. Brink, D.T.D., D.S.O., advised the Secretary for External Affairs and the Secretary of the Civil Air Board that Zwartkop Air Station and all its facilities, including the retention of spares, would be placed at the disposal of the flight.

On 24 May, 1928 the Netherlands Consul in London advised the British Minister of Foreign Affairs —

**I have the honour to inform you that according to a telegraphic communication just received from the Netherlands Government, the flight to South Africa of an aeroplane the Royal Netherlands Air Navigation Company has been interrupted (cause not stated but will in all probability be continued in another aeroplane.**

This message was conveyed to the Chief of the General Staff by the Secretary for External Affairs on 9 July 1928.

In regard to this flight it has been established that Mr. Van Lear Black and four travelling companions/crew members undertook the flight between 11th February and 5th March 1929.

#### **b. 25th February, 1928**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, in respect of a flight proposed by the daily, "Le Petit Parisien" from Paris to Cape Town.**

The flight relating to "Le Petit Parisien" would commence on 20th February, 1928 according to an advice addressed to the British Govern-

ment by the French Ambassador in London. Broken Hill would be reached on 2nd April and from there the flight would continue via Livingstone, Bulawayo, Palapye Road, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Victoria West, Beaufort West, and thence to Cape Town. Authority was sought to follow this route in South Africa and to take cine films.

On 2nd March, 1928 the Chief of the General Staff informed the Minister of External Affairs and the Secretary of the Civil Air Board that the French pilot might use landing facilities at Roberts Heights [presumably Zwartkop Air Station] and that the Civil Air Board which controls civil aviation and airfields, might itself decide what other facilities could be placed at the disposal of the pilots and aircraft in question.

The pilots were named Mauléve and Baud and were flying a Cauldron biplane, AFMEC, Type C 128 with a 120 H.R. Salmson engine. The first part of the route included Bingerville — Accra — Cotonou — Lagos — Akkassa — Douala — Elizabethville — Broken Hill.

Authority to take cine films from the air in South Africa was sought and extended to the airmen by the Chief of the General Staff.

#### **c. 15th March, 1928**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, in respect of a flight proposed by Capt. G. D. Barnard and Mr. R. H. McIntosh from England to Cape Town and return.**

On 15th March, 1928 the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, advised the Secretary of External Affairs of this country that Capt. G. D. Barnard and Mr. R. H. McIntosh, accompanied by a mechanic, a cine photographer and the Duchess of Bedford as passenger, would leave Croydon early in April, 1928 in a Fokker F VII — aircraft reflecting the registration letters G-EBTS and equipped with a Bristol Jupiter engine of 425 H.P. and would fly via Tunis, Benghazi or Tobruk to Cairo. The aircraft would arrive in the Egyptian capital on or about 8th April, 1928 and continue on to Cape Town along the "usual route."

It is interesting to note that this return flight London — Cape Town — London was actually



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completed between 10th and 30th April, 1930 in the new record time of twenty days.

d. **20th March, 1928 (approx.)**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, in regard to a flight which Lady Bailey wished to make from England to South Africa.**

Regarding the flight of Lady Bailey a letter dated 20th March, 1928 was addressed by the Secretary for External Affairs to the Chief of the General Staff saying that —

**Information has been received that Lady Bailey is carrying out, unaccompanied, a flight from London to Cape Town and back, in her own De Havilland Moth aircraft G-EBPU (Cirrus Mark II engine). She left London at the end of February last. No wireless or photographic apparatus is being carried on the machine.**

During her flight Lady Bailey planned to touch at Bulawayo, Palapye Road, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Victoria West and so on to Cape Town.

On 11th April, 1928 the Secretary for External Affairs requested the Minister of Defence, as a result of a request received from our High Commissioner in London, to arrange some sort of welcome to Lady Bailey. As a result of this it was decided that a South African Air Force flight should meet her and escort her to Pretoria.

On 17th April, 1928 the following telegram was accordingly sent to Lady Bailey in Bulawayo—

**AF 581 Please telegraph time you propose to leave Palapye Road. Three South African Air Force Aeroplanes will proceed to Krantzberg approximately hundred miles North-west of Pretoria on your direct course to meet you and escort you to Pretoria. They will wait there for half an hour but if they do not meet you within that time will return to Pretoria.**

This flight of Lady Bailey, the wife of the well-known South African sportsman, politician and millionaire, Sir Abe Bailey, created

a great deal of interest at the time [Lady Bailey had in fact already attracted attention to flying, when she, prior to the departure of the S.A. Air Force pilot Lieut. R. R. Bentley, M.C., A.C.F., from Stag Lane, England, in a De Havilland Star Moth on one of his flights, had named the aircraft "Dorys"]. Lieut. Bentley left England on 1st September, 1927 in "Dorys", intending to reach Cape Town within two weeks. He only reached Malta on 11th September, 1927 and due to engine problems in both Sudan and Kenya, where invaluable time was lost, only crossed the border of South Africa on 26th September, 1927. He was later escorted from Pretoria to Johannesburg by S.A. Air Force aircraft and welcomed, amid great excitement, in the Golden City. The "Star" had actually financed the flight. On 28th September, 1927 he landed in Cape Town and was presented with the "Britannica Challenge Trophe" as a result of his flight.

Lady Bailey in her solo flight from England, which commenced on 8th March, 1928 was the first woman to attempt this round flight. She succeeded in her quest and landed back at Croydon airfield on 16th January, 1929, where she was met by, inter alia, Sir Sefton Branker, Sir Alan and Lady Cobham [some readers may remember the remarkable air displays given by "Cobham's Flying Circus" in South Africa] and Capt. G. de Havilland. On her forward flight Lady Bailey had to make a forced landing at Tabora, as a result of which her aircraft had to be replaced. Maj. H. Meintjes of the S.A. Air Force actually ferried the replacement aircraft to Tabora. The flight by Lady Bailey was then resumed and she landed in Cape Town on 28th April, 1928. On 21st September, 1928 she commenced the return flight via Rhodesia, the then Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, Nigeria and the Sahara to win in her turn the "Britannica Challenge Trophe."

In 1931 Mr. Woods Humphrey, at the time the Managing Director of the Imperial Airways Company, referred to this solo flight of almost 29 000 km by Lady Bailey, as "one of the most noteworthy in the history of aviation."

e. **15th November, 1928**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, in connection with a round flight England — Cape Town —**

**England proposed by Squadron Leader F. E. Guest, P.C., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.P.**

In regard to this application the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, advised the South African Department of External Affairs on 15th November, 1928 that Squadron Leader the Right Honourable F. E. Guest, P.C., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.P., proposed to undertake a private civil flight from England to Cape Town and back in a Junkers F13 type aircraft, G-EBZV, fitted with a 320 H.P. L5 engine and that the flight was due to commence on or about 10th December, 1928.

The aircraft, provided with "wireless apparatus" would be piloted by Flight Lieutenant The Honourable J. N. B. Rodnay, M.C., and the passengers were due to include Maj. N. Holden, a mechanic, R. J. B. Jackson and a wireless operator, still to be nominated.

At the same time it was mentioned that the Junkers aircraft would be accompanied by a second aircraft, a de Havilland Moth (G-HAKB) fitted with a 80 H.P. — Gipsy engine, but that the pilot had not yet been selected.

Squadron Leader Guest furthermore intended to take along a Rigby rifle, two other rifles, four automatic revolvers and a pistol with the intention of participating in hunts in Central Africa. The party would also have a cine camera in their possession.

The flight route was given as Croydon — Paris — Bordeaux — Burgos — Madrid — Malaga — Cassablanca — Fez — Oran — Algiers — Tunis — Tripoli — Sirte — Benghazi — Solum — Aboukir — Heliopolis (Cairo) — Amman — Heliopolis — Assuit — Assuan — Wadi Halfa — Atbara — Khartoum — Renk — Malakal — Mongalla — Jinja — Kisumu — Nairobi — Mwanza — Tabora — Abercorn — N'dola — Broken Hill — Livingstone — Bulawayo — Pretoria — Cape Town. It was planned to commence the forward flight on or about 10th December, 1928 and the return journey during late February, 1929.

On 27th December, 1928 the Chief of the General Staff advised the Secretary for External Affairs that as far as the S.A. Air Force was concerned, the usual facilities would be made available.

The relative Defence Department file contains only one further intriguing document in regard to this flight. It takes the form of a

telegram sent on 22nd January, 1929 from De Aar to the Secretary for Defence Cape Town and reads: "Please inform me date arrival Honourable Guest Under Air Secretary — Bovill De Aar" a note appears on the document to the effect that no firm date had yet been established. The very lack of further information leads to a series of unanswered questions the prime query being "what did in fact happen to this party with its two aircraft and arsenal of arms?"

**f. 24th June, 1928**

**From the Swedish Minister Plenipotentiary, Cape Town, in respect of the proposed flight by Gosta Andree from Stockholm to Cape Town and return.**

The Swedish pilot Gosta Andree intended flying a single seater Moth SE-ABS called the "Sandviken Sweden" leaving Stockholm on or about 25th July, 1926. The last part of his flight would take in Livingstone — Bulawayo — Palapye Road — Pretoria — Johannesburg — Bloemfontein — Beaufort West — Cape Town. He intended furthermore to return by the same route.

On 28th June, 1929 the Chief of the General Staff advised that gratis use could be made of landing facilities at Roberts Heights. He pointed out that except for the latter airfield and at Maitland, all other landing facilities were controlled by the Civil Air Board.

**g. 3rd January, 1930**

**From the Italian Minister Plenipotentiary, Cape Town, regarding a flight which Count Ferdinand Collumbiani wished to make from Italy to Cape Town.**

This Italian pilot was intending to fly from Italy to Cape Town in a Fiat engined aircraft and said he could be expected in Cape Town at the end of January, 1930. On 10th January Maj. Gen. A. J. E. Brink, D.T.D., D.S.O., authorised the usual facilities at Roberts Heights.

**h. 10th April, 1930**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, in respect of the proposed flight of Capt. C. D. Barnard from Lympe (England) to Cape Town and back.**



In a letter from the Secretary for External Affairs to the Secretary for Defence, dated 10th April, 1930, it was advised that Capt. Barnard, who would pilot the aircraft, would be accompanied by R. Little [navigator] and the Duchess of Bedford [passenger].

They were due to leave England on or about 5th April, 1930 and would be flying in a Fokker VIIA, fitted with a 450 H.P. Bristol Jupiter engine and with registration markings G-EBTS. They would not have any wireless equipment in the aircraft, neither would they be in possession of cameras or weapons of any sort. Capt. Barnard would make his own arrangements in regard to supplies of fuel and oil along the route.

The flight was recognised as a record attempt. On 10th April, 1930 they left England and reached Cape Town on 19th April, 1930. The return flight was undertaken on 21st April, 1930 and they returned to Croyden on 30th April, 1930. They broke the record in both directions and bettered the time for the round flight of approximately 30 000 km.

The aircraft was called "The Spider" and was the same machine in which they had flown from England to India and back, a year earlier in the record time of under eight days.

#### i. 30th May, 1930

**From the German Consul-General, Pretoria, in regard to a planned flight by Kurt Bruegmann from Berlin to Cape Town.**

The application of Kurt Bruegmann, which was passed on by the German Consul-General, Pretoria to the Secretary for External Affairs on 23rd May, 1930 advised that the applicant would be using a Junkers aircraft [D 1821] type A 50 [Junior]. The aircraft number was 3528 and had an Armstrong Siddeley Genet engine (No. 4396). The flight was billed as a "sporting flight, Berlin to Cape Town."

The intended route would be Berlin — Athens — Cairo — Kisumu — Tabora — Abercorn — N'dola — Broken Hill — Livingstone — Bulawayo — Palapye Road — Pretoria (Johannesburg) — Bloemfontein — Beaufort West — Cape Town.

The aircraft was not fitted with radio equipment but the pilot for personal safety, would have in his possession, a "magazine rifle"

(Mannlicher-Schoenauer), an automatic 6,5 mm pistol, as well as ammunition. In addition he intended taking ground photographs with a Leica (35 mm) or Ikanette camera (6 x 6 cm).

On 24th June, 1930 the Chief of the General Staff confirmed that no objection would be raised in regard to the flight, the weapons or the photographic equipment. In the same letter to the Secretary for External Affairs he said, however, that the weapons could on no account be sold in South Africa or be used for any other purposes than self-defence. If Bruegmann wished to use the weapons for other purposes while in South Africa, the weapons would have to be licensed.

#### j. 25th September, 1930

**From the Italian Minister Plenipotentiary, Cape Town, on the proposed flight of Francis Lombard, Franco Mazzotti and Mario Rasini from Italy to Cape Town in three aircraft.**

In regard to this application the Italian Consul advised that the registration marks of the three aircraft were respectively A AAVS 1, AA VQ 1 and AA VR and that in addition to the three pilots Mario Rasini, Franco Mazzotti and Francis Lombard, there would be two passengers on the flight from Italy to Cape Town. Authority was also sought to carry pistols, cameras and films.

The Acting Chief of General Staff approved of the request on 29th September, 1930 on the same conditions as applied in the case of Kurt Bruegmann [see previous sub-paragraph].

According to information furnished by the Secretary for External Affairs the aircraft could be expected in the Union during the first 10 days of November, 1930. They would land at Pretoria and Beaufort West after leaving Livingstone and prior to landing in Cape Town.

The Chief of the General Staff informed the Director of Air Services on 11th November, 1931 that the aircraft could use the Maitland Aerodrome in Cape Town and not the Wynberg Airfield which was considered too small to allow the Italian aircraft to land and take off safely.

k. 30th October, 1930

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, in connection with a flight proposed by Gilbert Lane and Nicolas Silderbaum from Paris to the Cape.**

These French airmen intended leaving Paris on 10th November, 1930 and planned to land inter alia at Livingstone, Bulawayo, Mafeking and Kimberley en route to Cape Town. They would be using a Farman Type 190 aircraft with a Hispano-Suiza engine of 250 H.P. The aircraft registration was EA GID.

The flight never took place, however, as the unfortunate airmen both lost their lives in a flying accident in the vicinity of Paris before the flight to South Africa was commenced.

l. 11th November, 1930

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, regarding the flight of Abdul Mohammed Morad from Calcutta to Cape Town.**

The Acting Secretary for External Affairs advised the Secretary of Defence on 11th November, 1930 that the Indian pilot Abdul Morad wished to attempt a flight from Calcutta to the Cape. He proposed to use a De Havilland Moth, VT AB, fitted with a Gipsy engine of 85 H.P. He would have no radio but would be in possession of an automatic pistol and ammunition. His intended route as it affected the Union of South Africa would be Livingstone — Bulawayo — Palapye Road — Pretoria — Johannesburg — Bloemfontein — Beaufort West — Cape Town.

The Acting Chief of the General Staff confirmed on 30th November, 1930 that there would be no objection to such a flight but that a licence for the pistol had to be handed to the pilot on landing at Zwartkop Air Station.

m. 19th November, 1930

**From the South African High Commissioner, London, relative to the proposed flight of George Miller from England to Cape Town.**

On 19th November, 1930 the Acting Secretary for Defence was addressed by the Department of External Affairs in regard to a flight by George Miller and his passenger Miss Worth from England to South Africa. They would take off in England on 22nd November, 1930 in a Mono Coupe machine fitted with an Eckwith Lambert engine of 90 H.P.

This flight was authorised by the Acting Chief of the General Staff on 20th November, 1930.

n. 19th November, 1930

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs London, in regard to the flight of Miss W. E. Spooner and Flying Officer E. C. T. Edwards from England to the Cape and back.**

In the normal course of events in such a case, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, approached the Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria [this time by telegraph] to gain authority for the flight in a Descutter cabin type monoplane [registration letters G-ABCU] fitted with a Gipsy engine of 105 H.P. from England to the Cape. No fire-arms would be carried but they would be in possession of a camera. The landing points would include Broken Hill and Johannesburg. The intention was to land at Johannesburg on 4th December, 1930 and to fly to Cape Town the following day.

The telegram from the Secretary for Dominion Affairs to the Secretary for External Affairs also included the following request —

**I should be grateful if at all possible facilities may be granted and as aircraft may on outward flight arrive at Johannesburg at night and on return flight may leave Cape Town before dawn, I should be glad to learn whether arrangements can be made for aerodrome to be lighted.**

The Acting Chief of the General Staff sanctioned the flight on 20th November 1930, subject to the usual provisos.

o. 3rd December, 1930

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, relating to the flight of a pilot by the name of Aspy from Karachi to the Cape.**



On 3rd December, 1930 the Acting Secretary for Defence was approached by the Acting Secretary for External Affairs who advised that an Indian pilot Aspy wished to attempt a flight from Karachi to Cape Town. He would be using a Puss Moth [VT-ACD] Gipsy II aircraft without radio equipment. He intended carrying a revolver and ammunition and proposed to touch at Broken Hill — Bulawayo — Johannesburg — Victoria West, among other places en route to Cape Town.

The Chief of the General Staff authorised the flight on 5th December 1930 and instructed that a permit for the fire-arm be handed to the pilot at Zwartkop Air Station.

**p. 3rd December, 1930**

**Also from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in regard to a flight planned by a certain R. B. Waters and Miss D. Reynolds from Southampton to the Cape and back.**

After the Minister of External Affairs was advised of the proposed flight by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the former approached the Acting Secretary for Defence, advising him that Waters and Miss Reynolds intended using a Blackburn Bluebird Seaplane

G-AB-F powered by a 105 H.P. Gipsy engine. They would have fire-arms and ammunition in their possession but no radio equipment. The relative route included Mossamedes [Angola], Walfish Bay (8th January, 1931) and Luderitzbucht [9th January, 1931] proceeding to Cape Town during the following day, 10th January, 1931. The same return route was visualised.

The Chief of the General Staff gave his blessing to the flight on 9th December, 1930. The planned flight did not take place, however, as is indicated by the following message from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, to the Minister for External Affairs, Cape Town, on 2nd March 1931 —

**My telegram of 29th November No 149. W. G. Pudney will pilot instead of Waters. Probable time-table changed to Mossamedes 9th March Walfish Bay and Luderitzbucht 10th March and Cape Town 11th March returning from Cape Town 17th March.**

**q. 31st March, 1931**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion, London, Affairs in connection with the proposed flight of Jean Ghica, Maj. E. M. Ionescu and Lieut. Octar Ocoleanu from Rumania to South Africa.**

According to the Rumanian Chargé-d'Affaires, London, in his approach to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the three Rumanian airmen intended flying to South Africa in April, 1931 in a Rumanian civil aircraft.

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in his turn sent a telegram to the Minister for External Affairs, Cape Town, informing him of the intended flight and adding that the aircraft would be an Emsco Monoplane Super-Bidon 3-seater [registration CV GO] powered by a Pratt and Whitney Wasp Engine developing 575 H.P. The Southern leg of the flight would be via Abercorn — Salisbury — Durban.

After the Chief of the General Staff authorised the flight on 7 April, 1931 the information was conveyed to the Officer Commanding No. 3 Military District, Durban, on 19 May, 1931.

**r. 11 April, 1931**

**From the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, relative to the flight of d'Estailleur Chanteraine from France to Cape Town and Lourenco Marques.**

On 11 April, 1931 the Secretary for External Affairs, Cape Town, advised the Secretary for Defence that the foregoing airmen accompanied by Lt. Col. Weiss, Sergeant Pilot Giraud and Mechanic Mistrot planned a civil flight from France to South Africa via Mossamedes — Port Alexander — Walfish Bay — Cape Town — Port Elizabeth — Durban — Lourenco Marques.

The flight over South African territory was approved by the Chief of the General Staff on 21 April, 1931. On 18 June, 1931 the pilot, d'Estailleur Chanteraine, over the designation of "Head French Air Mission" addressed a telegram to the Governor-General of South Africa in the following terms —

**Regret not having honour of meeting Your Excellency. Wish to express message of goodwill French Air Service and Colonial Department.**

The Secretary of the Governor-General sent the following reply —

**His Excellency desires me to acknowledge your kind telegram and to express to you his sincere regret that he is prevented from meeting you and the other members of your Mission. He highly appreciates your message of goodwill expressed on behalf of French Air Services and Colonial Department which he heartily reciprocates.**

s. 5 June, 1931

**From the German Consul-General, Pretoria, relative to flight of the Egyptian Mohamed El Gibri from Berlin to Cape Town.**

On 29 May, 1931 the Acting German Consul-General, Pretoria, advised the Secretary for External Affairs that this airman who was in possession of a German flying licence, intended to undertake a "sporting flight" in a Junkers aircraft [D 1828] to South Africa.

The aircraft was owned by a German national and the planned flight would take in Cairo. The pilot would cross the South African border from the direction of Lourenco Marques en route to Durban — East London — George and thence to Cape Town. The Secretary for External Affairs recommended that the required sanction be given.

On 5 June, 1931, the Chief of the General Staff gave his permission for the flight. The Officer Commanding No. 1 Military District, The Castle, Cape Town, on being appraised of the approval enquired whether the Chief of the General Staff had any objection to the use of the Maitland Aerodrome, as well as the hangar at such aerodrome. The reply was in the negative and both facilities were placed at the disposal of the pilot.

t. No date given

**From Mrs. Westenra regarding a flight due to commence on 28 November, 1931 from Livingstone to Cape Town via Johannesburg.**

The only record of this flight is in the form of a telegram received by the Department of Defence, Pretoria, on 28 November, 1931, stating that —

**Mrs. Westenra left Livingstone 8 hours 28th in Puss Moth GAB 70 — Proceeding Johannesburg — Cape. Grateful Assistance. Proceed.**

A copy of this telegram was used on 30 November, 1931 as a confirmation of the telephonic discussion between the Chief of the General Staff and the Director of Air Services and was sent to the latter on the same day. From another source it has been established that Mrs. Westenra and a Capt. R. H. McIntosh in fact completed a round flight from England to Cape Town between 6 November, 1931, and 2 December, 1931.

u. No date given

**At about this time (1931) a flight from Paris to Madagascar and back was undertaken by Mademoiselle Maryse Hiltz.**

Unfortunately no further details are available.

### 3. LT. COMMANDER KIDSTON'S ACCIDENT

The records in possession of this department include an undated application from Lt. Commander G. Kidston to enter the air space of the Union of South Africa, but has a note appended that the application was withdrawn. This has led to further research and it has been established that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs approached the Minister for External Affairs in a telegramme dated 14 January, 1931, saying —

**G. Kidston with O. Cathcart-Jones co-pilots and L. E. Johnston mechanic propose to carry out civil flight from London to Cape Town and back in Lockheed Vega Monoplane — G-ABGK 425 hp Wasp engine starting on or about 29th January reaching Bulawayo 2nd February and Cape Town 3rd February returning same route next day. Airmen propose to carry cine camera for photography from air and wireless apparatus for transmission and reception on wave length 600 to 900 metres.**

On 15th January, 1931, the Secretary for External Affairs advised the Secretary for Defence of the intended flight and on 20 January, 1931, the Chief of the General Staff gave his official sanction. Lt. Commander G. P. Glen Kidston was a British millionaire and sportsman. He was accompanied by Lt. O. Cathcart-Jones when on 31 March, 1931, he took off from Netheravon airfield in the Lockheed Vega monoplane.

The intention was to demonstrate that England was not keeping pace with the development of commercial air services. In addition Lt. Commander Kidston wished to show the advantage which would accrue if passengers and airmails were separated on British Air services to South Africa. He visualised that the airmails could be conveyed on faster flights than those applicable to passengers. By this means, he argued, far greater benefits would be derived by commercial interests in South Africa.

His outward flight was via Naples — Cairo — Malakal — Kisumu — Bulawayo — Lichtenburg [forced landing] — Pretoria — Cape Town. The whole flight was completed in six days and eleven hours [56 flying hours] and a few postal items were conveyed in the aircraft as curiosities for collectors.

For some reason the return flight was not undertaken immediately and Lt. Commander Kidston began investigating the possibilities of expanding commercial aviation in this country.

During a flight from Johannesburg to Pietermaritzburg on 5th May, 1931, he and Capt. T. A. Gladstone, A.F.C., crashed into the Tandjesberg near Harrismith in the Orange Free State with fatal results.

To commemorate this tragedy in which Lt. Commander Kidston and Capt. Gladstone met their deaths, and on the matter enjoying the support of **The Cape Times**, money was collected to erect a permanent memorial. Funds were also received from other sources.

Designs for the monument were completed by Messrs. Walgate and Elsworth of Cape Town. A few designs were submitted to Col. Sir Pierre van Ryneveld and he selected the monument which he thought most appropriate and which was described in the following words —

**The design selected contemplates marking out on the ground by means of a stone wall, two feet wide and one foot**

**high, in the shape of an aeroplane in plan. In the centre of the design a stone cenotaph is to be erected some seven or eight feet high. Col. van Ryneveld suggested that the cenotaph be surmounted by a polished dome so that it might act as a daylight beacon to airmen using the route to Durban.**

Professor Dr. Haliday of the University of the Witwatersrand calculated the radius of the curvature which would allow of the most effective reflection of sunlight, while Associated Engineers Company of Johannesburg suggested that stainless steel would be the best metal for the construction of the dome.

A suitable site was selected by the local monument committee in Harrismith, about three km from the spot where the tragedy had occurred. About one morgen of ground was donated to the State, for erection of the monument. On 6 December, 1934, the Department of Public Works undertook to maintain the memorial in the name of the State. The monument was in fact completed in the same month.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This article confines itself mainly to civil flights by nationals of other countries which were planned for the period 1927/31 and were due to commence from beyond the borders of this country but which would imply or possibly imply entry into our air space and the use of aviation facilities [both military and civil] in South Africa. In each case the prior authority of the Union Government was sought and granted before these aircraft crossed our borders and there is no doubt whatsoever that the favourable attitude adopted by our military authorities and, in particular, the then Chief of the General Staff, Maj. Gen. A. J. E. Brink, D.T.D., D.S.O., who by his actions did so much to promote the interests of international civil aviation during the period in question, and at the same time to draw the attention of the outside world to our traditional hospitality, did great credit to all concerned.

South Africa remained in the forefront in regard to the development of civil aviation during the years covered by this article, as is amply illustrated by the flight of Capt. R. F. Caspareuthus from England to South Africa during October, 1930.



While this South African Air Force officer was on vacation leave in England he carried out a commission to purchase a DH Puss Moth cabin monoplane for a friend and decided to deliver it personally.

He left Lympne on 5 October and landed in Cape Town on 13 October, 1931, after 76½ flyinghours. This record remained standing for the following five years which is in itself sufficient testimony of its value. It is interesting to note that a few letters conveyed to

Cape Town by Capt. Caspareuthus were personally signed by the pilot. In regard to this historic flight by a South African as well as the other pioneer flights it is fitting to close with the following thoughts of Maj. Gen. K. R. van der Spuy, C.B.E., M.C.

**The challenge was met and it is in large part due to those pioneer flights that the barriers of time and distance with which Africa opposed the traveller, have been conquered.**



**The memorial to the 3rd Cape Yeomanry, Magennis Park, Uitenhage.**

Photograph: C Doc S