



Local interest displayed in the Hermes IV on its arrival at Nairobi

In June, 1948, an M.C.A. mission under Mr. Vincent examined the position and recommended a 400-yd runway extension, but this would be most difficult to implement either at the S.W. or the N.E. end, for the former would take in a river and the latter involves an extension towards the main built-up areas and Secretariat Hill, which neither the city authorities nor the R.A.F. would agree to. The cost might be £1 million. Eastleigh also has other drawbacks regarding runway gradient, approaches and siting of equipment for landing aids. A plan accompanies these notes.

Thus, to bring the airfield up to the standard likely to be required in a few years' time seems almost impossible, and the alternative is a new site altogether. This is not so drastic a move as it might appear, for the ground now occupied by Eastleigh would be a most valuable acquisition to the city for expansion and its sale should bring in well over £500,000 at present values. A good new site is available three or four miles away at Embakasi on the Athi plains to the south-east of Eastleigh. The real problem in the event of a move—in addition, of course, to the expense—is that of moving the many R.A.F. buildings, erection of which would cost £4 million, it is said.

The Director of Civil Aviation, Cdr. Stacey Colls, knowing how long the making of a first-class airfield can take, is most anxious to obtain a decision soon, and is understood personally to favour the Embakasi proposal. There, a preliminary survey has indicated the existence of flat ground, more than adequate space, and clear approaches. The soil and subsoil are also good for the purpose. An estimated cost for the new field and runways alone is £2 million, which, when the sum received from the sale is deducted, is not very different from the cost of extending Eastleigh.

A possible solution to the R.A.F. building problem would be their retention and the construction of a direct-access road from Embakasi to the present site. Its length would have to be about three miles.

Nairobi West.—This field is undergoing some development, especially since East African Airways Corporation started to use it as their main base; it is not, however, suitable for trunk-line aircraft in size, surface or facilities. About six months ago a new control tower was completed, and E.A.A.C., now installed in hangars on the north side, have built up good, almost self-contained, servicing facilities. International Aeradio, Ltd., also have a department, which looks after the radio needs of the local operators.

Sharing Nairobi West with the Flying Club of East Africa are several small operating companies such as Noon and Pearce Air Charters, Ltd., who have five Geminis, two Ansons and two Rapides; Campling Bros. and Vanderwal, Ltd., with Piper Cubs and Bonanzas; Clairways, Ltd., who have Ansons; Harward, Maclachlan and Co., Ltd., who have a Proctor V; and African Air Cars, Ltd., with an Anson and Proctors. The Kenya Police Force also operate an Auster V/J1.

As an example of rates charged for air taxi work, Noon and Pearce offer their Rapides at 3s a mile, Ansons at 3s 3d, Geminis at 2s 3d and, by arrangement with the owners of the aircraft, a Messenger at 1s 9d a mile and an Auster 1s 6d.

The club, operating Tiger Moths and Auster Arrows, has some 400 members, of which a hundred fly. Rates are £5 per hour dual and £3 10s solo. A pleasant clubhouse with restaurant and bar is situated at the south side of the airfield.

Several large hangars are at present used for storage purposes but may later be made available to aircraft. Nairobi West is 2½ miles S.S.W. of the city centre, and has two main runways of all-weather murrum surface (see plan). Gooseneck flares are laid out for night flying. The altitude is 5,500ft.

A description of the progress made by E.A.A.C. since its formation after the war, and of its fleet and routes, will be given in a later instalment.

After a two day stop-over in Nairobi the Hermes took off on the next leg of its journey—the flight to Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia. This was until quite recently principal town of the province.

Livingstone.—Although on a non-scheduled flight, the Hermes gave a lift to some 15 stranded passengers, Livingstone being reasonably near to their intended destination of Salisbury. The Hermes made no fuss about the Nairobi take-off and had at least 400yd to spare. The six-hour flight south to Livingstone again passed pleasantly and uneventfully. We flew higher and faster than previously.



The passenger-handling buildings at Livingstone's new airport



Livingstone's modern control tower and administrative block

Quite early, while the sky was still clear, we had a good view of Kilimanjaro on the port side, and later passed over some lesser volcanic peaks and many lakes. Soon afterwards medium cloud closed in below. Roughly mid-way between Broken Hill and Lusaka the Hermes overhauled the Solent, some 8,000ft below, carrying Lord Pakenham to Livingstone. The crew sent a message about getting a move on, and received a counter-thrust about landing gear and crowbars.

At this time the Hermes was flying at 18,200ft (cabin alt. 6,000, or -4.5 lb/sq in differential) at an indicated 167kt. Engine dials showed 2,200 r.p.m. and 37.5in boost. The density altitude was nearly 21,000ft with outside air temperature of +2 deg C. The Hercules power output averaged 1,035 b.h.p. for each unit as calculated from a torquemeter reading of 460 x r.p.m. over the constant of 963. Auxiliaries account for about 25 b.h.p. outboard and 45 b.h.p. inboard and must thus be deducted.

Before landing at Livingstone's fine new airport we circled Victoria Falls, marvelling at their beauty and at that of the upper part of the wide, island-filled Zambesi River. Below the falls the river flows in a fantastic zig-zag gorge which it has cut deep into the rock through countless years. During our stay in Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, we were accommodated at the beautiful Victoria Falls Hotel—a somewhat Irish statement, perhaps, for the hotel is, in fact, several miles from Livingstone town, and across the border into Southern Rhodesia. From the hotel gardens one may look up the gorge toward the falls with the spray rising high in the air, even at this low-water season. The roar of the water can be heard clearly.

An exceptional shot obtained by B.O.A.C.'s chief photographer as the Hermes circled Victoria Falls during a demonstration flight

