



Citation for submission to FAI / CIMA

The Royal Aero Club of the **United Kingdom**

NOMINATION FOR THE COLIBRI DIPLOMA

Richard Foster and Richard Bird

Richard Foster and Richard Bird decided, more or less on a whim, to fly from their airfield historic at Goodwood in Sussex, England, to Capetown and back in a microlight. They took off on 26 Feb 2014 and arrived back home on 14 May, flying a Comkco Ikarus C42/B. Of the 77 days elapsed, 39 were spent in the air. Their route took them via France, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Crete, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Namibia.

Although microlights have made many long-distance flights, this is the first return flight by microlight to Capetown. The outward journey was 7602Nm long and took 21 flying days to complete. The return journey was only 7245Nm and was completed in 18 flying days.

The longest single flight was a bum-numbing 7 hours, and the furthest distance covered was 518Nm.

Perhaps one of the most surprising things about the trip was the speed with which it was organised; generally speaking a complex trip like this will take a year or more to organise all the permissions, visas, flight planning, maps, and so on. But Richard Bird mentioned it in passing to Rich Foster on New Year's Day, and by 26 Feb they were off, stopping at the Comco factory in Mengen, Germany to pick up a specially equipped long-range aircraft. Even today, there are risks associated with every phase of a journey like this, but they found that the desert and in particular the mountains of Africa were the scariest parts of the journey.

But, thanks to their excellent organisational skills, there seem to have been no genuine emergencies, the most troublesome leg being that from Addis Ababa to Lokichoggio. They landed in open country miles from anywhere to transfer fuel from jerry cans and were astonished when they were suddenly surrounded by a large crowd of friendly and curious locals. After clearing the locals from their improvised takeoff, they decided not to stop at Lokiaung for the night as it seemed unsafe, and carried on to Lokichoggio, which required a night landing, assisted by truck headlights positioned at the end of the runway.

The Colibri Award is for an 'outstanding contribution to the development of microlight flying.'

They are modest about their achievements, but it is one of the great long-distance flights in a microlight, and more than meets the requirements of this award.

Submitted by the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom

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Dave Phipps
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