

OF MOTHS AND MARAUDERS

The biography of Roy Coull

By Alan Taylor

The arrival of van Ryneveld and Brand in the Vickers Vimy *Silver Queen II* at Bulawayo on 5 March 1920 and the landing of the first aircraft at Salisbury three months later heralded the beginning of aviation in Southern Rhodesia.

Not long afterwards attempts were made to establish local commercial aviation enterprises but they were to be met with many setbacks.

The annual RAF/SAAF Trans-Africa flights and Union Airways along with Imperial Airways establishing regional air routes helped to improve facilities and encourage local interest, most activities centering around Bulawayo, being closely linked to South Africa by good road and rail networks.

Although the capital, Salisbury was at the time largely a support center for the agricultural and mining industries but by 1929 the Salisbury Light Plane Club had been established and the Rhodesian Aviation Company had begun a weekly Bulawayo-Salisbury service.

The feats of pilots like Lindbergh and particularly those of the British Empire such as Hinkler and Kingsford Smith featured prominently in the media, record breaking flights around the world were amongst the most exciting events of the time, stirring the public imagination like few others could and for a schoolboy during this period aviation must have seemed like an exciting and promising career.

Roy Malcolm Coull was born in Salisbury on 9 February 1914; the youngest of six children. His father, John Milne "Jim" Coull, a building contractor by profession, was born in Huntly Aberdeenshire in 1876 and left Scotland for South Africa in 1896. He settled in Cape Town, served with the

Duke of Edinburgh's Mounted Rifles during the Anglo-Boer War and married Maud Gertrude Nash in July 1901. Moving to Johannesburg, he started his own business and was involved with a number of municipal works before being invited by the mining group Lewis and Marks to erect a mining plant at Lonely Mine north east of Bulawayo in 1910. He set up another construction business Coull & Sons and became a land baron, owning areas of ground around Salisbury.

The late 1920s saw an ever-increasing growth in all fields of the aviation industry and dedicated colleges were being established specifically to meet the demand for suitably qualified aero-engineers. There were no suitable training institutions in Southern Africa, a School of Aeronautics only being established at the Witwatersrand Technical College in 1936, but fortunately for Coull his parents were affluent and could afford the expense of such tuition overseas. After completing his Junior Certificate, he left for England in 1932 and enrolled at the College of Aeronautical Engineering in Chelsea, London. Opened in October the previous year, it provided comprehensive Works, Aerodrome and Administrative training over two and a half years with practical experience on the maintenance of aircraft and engines being undertaken at external organizations in the latter part of their studies under a co-operative scheme. Since the college did not offer flying training it seems likely that he had intended becoming a ground engineer but in November whilst at Air Services Training Ltd. under the co-operative scheme, he elected to transfer onto the Long Commercial Course they offered. No doubt seeing the flying activities up close convinced him that becoming a pilot instead was far more appealing.

Following the sale of Avro's interests at Hamble to J. D. Siddeley of Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft in January 1931, the Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft Reserve School moved from Whitley near Coventry to Hamble Airfield near Southampton and re-established itself as AST. It rapidly became recognized as Britain's leading flying school, offering civilians a standard of both ground and flying training hitherto only obtainable in the Royal Air Force. The school Commandant was a somewhat stuffy retired RAF Officer, Group Captain Robert Barton OBE and consequently AST was run very much on service lines. All the instructors had previously served with the RAF's Central Flying School and many of the students were in fact ex-RAF short-service commission holders who wished to obtain the necessary qualifications to enable them to find employment in civil aviation. Because of this, the atmosphere in the mess was very much like that of a RAF Station, sometimes to the bewilderment of the overseas students who formed very much a minority.

At the time flying instruction began the fleet comprised an Avro 504, three DH9Js, two Armstrong Whitworth Siskins, three Armstrong Whitworth Atlas trainers and two Avro Tutors. By the end of 1935 the fleet had expanded to 35 aircraft including nine Avro Cadets, a three-engine Avro 5 and an Avro C.30 autogiro. The course Coull enrolled for was of 3½ years' duration and covered preparation for the Air Ministry "A" and "B" pilot's licenses, 2nd class navigator's license, wireless telegraphy operator's license, ground engineer's license and the blind flying certificate. Not only were the courses comprehensive but the facilities at the airfield as well – full accommodation was provided as was a

well-stocked library, gymnasium and clubhouse. Students were encouraged to participate in both summer and winter sports and a yachting club situated on the Hamble River provided both recreation and useful water handling experience for pupils training on the amphibious aircraft.

In January 1934 a young Irishman named Eugene Esmonde who had recently left the RAF and joined Imperial Airways enrolled at AST for the wireless and ground engineer's "A" and "C" licences, returning in November to revise for the ground engineer's licence examination. He and Coull became good friends and as a Fleet Air Arm pilot was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for leading a torpedo attack during the 1942 "Channel Dash".

The 1934 MacRobertson Air Race from England to Australia caught the imagination of the British public and the preparations were followed by more than just the normal interest by the pupils since several of the participating aircraft were assembled at the airfield. At least one of the crews undertook an instrument flying course at the same time, much like Amy Johnson had done in 1932.

There were a number of trophies for which students in their various fields could compete for – one being the AST Flying Trophy which had recently been presented by R. E. Gardner, a former pupil and well known British aviator. The competition was open to pupils who had completed a minimum of 50 hours solo flying at the school and was comprised of two parts: aerobatics and a pinpoint map reading test over a triangular course. The points gained in both were added and the trophy would be awarded to the pupil with the highest aggregate.

The competition was held on 3 August and formed part of their first annual meeting, more popularly known as an "At Home". The map reading portion as well as the elimination rounds of the aerobatics had been flown in the previous days and the final lay between 4 pupils each flying an Avro Cadet. Winning by a narrow margin, Coull became the first recipient of the trophy, which depicted the school's logo of a winged sphinx.

On 7 August he was awarded "B" license no. 6278 but more than a year of further studying and flying lay ahead before he wrote his final exams and was awarded his Instructor's license on 30 December 1935 and his Blind Flying Certificate on 17 January 1936.

From the time the first DH60 Moths were registered in South Africa in 1927, De Havilland dominated the local market. Its aircraft were reliable, having been the machines of choice for many record-breaking flights and were the first practical light aircraft available at an affordable price. Being docile they were also well suited for flying clubs and played no small part in the growth of civil aviation, despite the effects of the Great Depression. In all some 75 of the DH60 Moth series were registered in South Africa, making it the most common type on the civil register before the war.

In February 1936 he joined De Havilland Aircraft Co. (South Africa) Pty Ltd., formed in 1928 and the third subsidiary of the company outside Britain, after Canada and Australia. Based at Baragwanath aerodrome outside Johannesburg, it comprised a sales office and workshops expanded from the original facilities taken over from the Johannesburg Light Plane Club in 1935.

A month later he moved to Durban to take up the position of assistant flying instructor for Natal Aviation (Pty) Ltd at the Municipal Aerodrome at Stamford Hill.

Established in July 1935 by Capt. H.N. Hawker with a single Gypsy Moth, it was a subsidiary of African Air Transport; a flying school and charter company based in Kimberley, which DH (SA) had earlier acquired as a means of further enhancing its position. Within a year Natal Aviation had a staff of ten and an aircraft fleet comprising two DH60G Gypsy Moths, two DH83 Fox Moths, two DH85 Leopard Moths, a DH87b Hornet Moth and an Avro Avian.

Capt. Noel Carbutt, a Natalian who had recently retired from the British Army and learned to fly before returning to South Africa had been appointed Managing Director. Alex Quinn, one of the most experienced aircraft engineers in the Union and a well-known wing-walker and parachute jumper, was employed as the chief engineer with D. Stoneham as assistant engineer. J. Brett served as business manager while A. Bonfa worked in the flying office and Ms Baker in the business section. J. Gavshan, later replaced by Edgar Mauritzzi, was made available to act as charter pilot thus enabling Hawker to carry on with his primary duty of instructing.

Flying had taken place in Durban as early as 1910 but only really developed when the City Council accepted a tender in May 1920 to level and reclaim 200 yards by 300 yards of the Eastern Vlei area just north of the city centre.

Due to being an ideal mosquito breeding ground, it had been declared a health hazard and was therefore decided to situate Durban's first properly established

airfield there. Completed in 1921, the Municipal Aerodrome became more generally known as Stamford Hill Aerodrome due to its proximity to the suburb of the same name.

Its early years saw little activity, the first building was a shed built from motor car packing crates big enough to house two Moths with their wings folded. The Durban Light Plane Club, which had been granted the rights to the aerodrome, built a hangar-cum-clubhouse, the SAAF used the field during the Experimental Airmail Service in 1925 while four Fairey IIDs of the RAF visited the following year after flying down Africa. In 1929 the newly established Union Airways inaugurated a mail service from Port Elizabeth using Gypsy Moths.

The Durban Light Plane Club was re-formed in 1928 with two Avro Avians, a Gliding Club was formed in 1932 and Arrow Airlines started a scheduled service to Lourenco Marques, but was not a commercial success. K. G. Greenacre and Molly Reynolds built two small hangars to house their aircraft, two of only about twelve to be registered to private owners in the whole of Natal before WW2. Union Airways introduced a tri-weekly Durban – Rand passenger service in April 1932 and in the following year transferred its headquarters from Port Elizabeth once suitable accommodation comprising stores, workshop, hangars and offices had been built.

On 1 February 1934 Union Airways ceased to exist and the assets were taken over by the government, thereby creating in its place South African Airways. Following the delivery of Junkers Ju 52s SAA found the existing facilities inadequate and the high rainfall during May / June resulted in the heavier aircraft bogging down. They moved to a new facility at Rand Airport in July 1935 and

the buildings were taken over by Natal Aviation.

The administration of the aerodrome was taken over by the City Council in September 1933 with the intention of expanding it further to a Civil Air Board stipulated size of 900 yards by 800 yards in order to qualify as a first-class licensed aerodrome. Capt. John “Jack” Davis, a veteran of the RFC who had been involved with local aviation since 1927, was appointed Manager and oversaw the expansion of the airfield by reclaiming swamps by filling them in with sea sand. In 1935 the Minister of Defence, Railways & Harbours Mr. Oswald Pirow announced that, as part of the Harbours Defence Scheme, a military training depot and SAAF unit would be based in Durban. After consultation with the City Council fifty acres of land at the southern end was granted for the construction of hangars, barracks and parade ground. It was further proposed to extend the length of the airfield from its existing 800 yards to 1 200 yards, making it one of the then largest sea-level aerodromes in the world.

A month after Natal Aviation was formed a group of local flying enthusiasts including Alfred Warner, Ralph Robinson and Rex Marshall, an enthusiastic supporter of the first flying club formed in 1928 approached Capt. Hawker with a view to establishing a flying club to replace the since defunct Durban Light Plane Club. The Durban Aero Club was soon thereafter formed with the full support of Natal Aviation whose aircraft and instructors it would use. Little more than a year later the club could boast of a membership in excess of two hundred members of which more than eighty were flying members and over twenty already qualified pilots.

As a result of the militancy of Italy in Abyssinia and similar developments in Germany the SAAF had begun an urgent expansion program in 1935. The plan, popularly known as the "Thousand Pilot Scheme", intended to have a reserve of 1 000 pilots trained by 1942. Since its facilities were woefully inadequate for the increased amount of training which would be required, civilian flying clubs and schools were invited to participate in the training scheme whereby prospective pilots would be trained to ab initio level. All pupils would be part of the Transvaal Air Training Squadron (TATS) and had to have flown twenty five hours at their own expense at an approved flying club and obtained their "A" licenses before being accepted.

This was financially beneficial for all parties since the pupil would receive a grant, a portion of which would be paid to the relevant flying school. A further two grants would be paid to pupils who completed fifty flying hours and qualified for their wings.

Such students were already undergoing instruction at Natal Aviation when Coull joined its staff and, having a civilian instructor's license, he wrote to Defence Headquarters in May 1936 inquiring about attending a Refresher Course for Reserve Officers scheduled for that August. Not surprisingly, they wrote back claiming no record of him anywhere in their files, but if he so wished could apply for an appointment in the Reserves by completing and returning the Form "A" provided.

On 8 December he wrote to the Officer Commanding of the Central Flying School at Zwartkop Air Station in Roberts Heights, Pretoria listing his qualifications and experience and stated his wish to attend the March 1937 Instructor's Course. Once again he was asked to

return the Form "A" and was informed that special conditions of appointment were being extended to qualified instructors and holders of "B" licenses with over 200 flying hours. Having mislaid the original form, he wrote and asked for another however two days later he found, duly completed and returned the said form.

In the first year of operations Natal Aviation could boast of an impressive achievement: A total of 1 876 hours had been flown which included 197 for flips, 359 for charters, 835 for dual instruction and 409 in solo flights. 4 862 passengers had been carried while 168 665 miles were flown and 4 845 flights undertaken. In addition sixteen pupils had received their "A" licenses with a further forty undergoing instruction.

During 1936 the *Natal Witness* sponsored flying scholarship classes in collaboration with Natal Aviation which proved enormously popular with about two hundred young men and women having their first flying lessons.

Another local newspaper that lent its support to aviation was the *Natal Advertiser* who in September announced that to foster air-mindedness in South Africa it was launching a competition in arrangement with Natal Aviation in which the winner would win a flying scholarship of £50. Any man or woman over the age of 17 could, for the entry fee of £1, enjoy a lesson and test flight at either Durban or Pietermaritzburg Aerodromes, it was however stipulated that anyone who had previously handled the controls of an aircraft would be disqualified from entering. Entrants would be divided into groups in order for the instructors to give them a lecture and demonstration and small prizes would be given to the best pupils in each group. At the end of the

preliminary tests the six best pupils would be chosen to contest the finals.

The winner would then receive a free course in flying including the medical examination and licence fee.

In response Payne Bros., the well-known clothing department store in West St announced that they would sponsor a similar amount to the runner-up.

On 5 December an air pageant sponsored by the *Natal Advertiser* was held at the aerodrome and despite heavy rain in the afternoon was an outstanding success. Over 30 000 spectators gathered to watch a display of thirty aircraft, seventeen of which participated in a formation flight inaugurating the display. With a wide variety of types including the SAAF's DH66 Hercules and three Hawker Furies lined up in three long rows the sight was compared to a second Hendon, the famous air show venue outside London. As part of the day's events the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs presented the two flying scholarships to the competition winner and runner-up Robert Armstrong and Harold Pope.

In January 1937 Coull received a reply stating that, subject to the completion of the accompanying contract and being passed as medically fit, approval would be given for his appointment as a 2nd Lieutenant (on probation) in the SAAF Special Reserve of Flying Officers. He would furthermore be required to attend annual refresher courses so as to qualify for his wings.

Natal Aviation had been selected as one of the eventual fourteen flying schools in the TATS Scheme and with training courses getting under way it was imperative that he be appointed as soon as possible having become Chief Flying Instructor following Hawker's return to

England the previous November. The first course was to be held between 8 and 27 February but the closing date for applications had been on 7 January. He wrote to DHQ on 21 January pleading his case but on 28th had to write back stating, that due to circumstances that had arisen, he would be unable to attend.

Natal Aviation initially did not have an instructor to relieve him during his absence but at short notice one was found and as time was running out they sent a telegram requesting his attendance. The SAAF proved commendably accommodating and since a position fortuitously became available after the withdrawal of another officer, he was requested to report to the CFS on 8 February. Lt. Henri Boshoff, who had retired from the SAAF the previous year and joined the Rand Flying Club as an instructor, relieved him while he was on course.

Reporting as ordered he was passed fit for flying at his medical and in the first week instruction was devoted to general flying and air drill, the second to Vickers gunning and the third to dive bombing. He was assessed as average but this was largely due to his unfamiliarity with military flying procedures, being allowed only two practice firings of the aircraft's guns and having no dive bombing experience. All things considered, he had every reason to be satisfied with his results and of the eleven on the course, seven were assessed as average and the rest below average.

On the 21st of February Natal Aviation suffered an aircraft accident when Gypsy Moth ZS-AFE crashed at Matatiele Aerodrome. Three Gypsy Moths, the Fox Moth and two Hornet Moths had flown there for the weekend to participate in the Aviation Day and were preparing to return

home when it took off and stalled after turning towards Durban. In the attempt to land the undercarriage collapsed and the aircraft turned over onto its back, the pilot Tempest "Archie" Archbell and his passenger emerged unhurt and returned to Durban by car while the Gypsy Moth was dismantled, subsequently rebuilt at Baragwanath and returned to service.

In the same month four aircraft, sponsored by the *Natal Advertiser*, flew to Margate to give an aerobatics display, sadly the strong wind on the Saturday put paid to any flying but the next day all four machines were engaged in giving flips. So popular was this event that Coull, having now returned to Durban, and Mauritz flew there again to repeat the exercise.

It was now the turn of Mauritz to qualify as an instructor and he was duly sent to CFS to complete the three-month course, successfully completing it in June 1937; in his absence Capt. Antony Irvine was detached from CFS to assist with instruction. Another charter pilot was now required and Mervyn Bawden joined the staff.

Undertaking flying instruction was serious work but in those still relatively early days of aviation there was nevertheless time to relax and enjoy the social element that flying could offer. For many affluent people flying clubs around South Africa were the new country clubs to be seen at and the aviation magazines of the day such as *The Flypaper* and *South African Airnews* contained society type columns filled with such observations. It was not for nothing that the byline for *South African Airnews* was "Planes, Pilots and Personalities".

The well-organized and highly popular flyaway fishing trips and weekend picnics for which Carbutt was largely responsible

became a regular feature of these columns and during May four aircraft from Natal Aviation along with his own Hornet Moth left one early Sunday morning for St. Lucia for a day's fishing. It was the first time that the new St. Lucia aerodrome had been used other than the previous week when he and Coull had landed there to determine its suitability. The Estuary Hotel provided lunch to the pilots and passengers who chartered a large motor boat for a few hours fishing up the estuary before returning home later that afternoon.

In June Natal Aviation applied to the Pietermaritzburg City Council for use of the aerodrome in order to hold an Air Pageant on the 25th. A similar event had been held some months previously and Natal Aviation offered to stage another on the Friday, being the last day of the Royal Show. Proceeds would be shared with the Royal Agricultural Society of Natal for the benefit of its funds. Though permission was granted the air show proposal fell through and application was made to hold it on the Saturday instead with the support of the *Natal Advertiser*.

Construction of the new £15 000 terminal building at Stamford Hill Aerodrome was by this time complete; built in the shape of an aircraft, the design closely resembled the one built at Rand Airport in 1935. The centre portion of the ground floor was devoted to passengers and baggage, the first floor to airport offices and the second comprised a control tower and meteorologist office.

The right wing was reserved for office accommodation for South African Airways, Natal Aviation, Post Office, Customs and a garage for a fire engine and the left wing comprised waiting rooms and a restaurant.

Davis had earlier proposed that the opening ceremonies include an Air Pageant and Air Race run on similar lines to Britain's King's Cup Air Race. The Durban Municipality accepted his ideas in principle and months of preparation and intense speculation in the aviation magazines and newspapers followed with regular editorials, articles on the proposed programme and updated lists of entrants before the official closing date of 6 July.

In its final form it described a 1 000-mile air race touching all four provinces of the Union for a trophy and cash prizes of £500, £200 and £100. In addition the *Natal Advertiser* would present a trophy and £50 for the fastest time and the *Natal Mercury* a trophy and £50 for the first Natal-born pilot to finish.

The air race was open to all aircraft with a speed of 100 mph or more while the pilot or at least one crewmember had to have at least 100 hours solo flying time. William Hulett, of the sugar farming family, had gone solo only a few months previously and entered the race, chartering Natal Aviation's DH 87b Hornet Moth ZS-AFZ along with Coull to act as his co-pilot and navigator. This was a judicious decision since having him alongside would be an enormous advantage.

One point of considerable debate was the handicap system. The success of the race hinged on the determination of an accurate Basic Handicap Speed after which handicap times were allocated proportionally on each leg with an adjustment for wind speed and direction until Bethlehem. The advantage of this system was that that the pilot who flew the best course and took advantage of any favorable wind conditions would benefit the most.

The pageant opened in the afternoon of Thursday 22 July with an Arrivals Competition, open to any pilot or aircraft flying from an aerodrome more than 150 miles away from Durban. A "zero hour" had been determined earlier by the Committee and the three pilots reaching Durban closest to that time being awarded cash prizes. All competitors were required to have landed by 5 o'clock so as to allow race officials sufficient time to complete the formalities, inspect the aircraft and conduct an air test so as to determine the starting handicap.

Refuelling had to be completed by noon on the 23rd whereafter all aircraft had to be handed over to the handicapping committee for final inspection.

On the 23rd the heats of the Inter-Club Competition and Obstacle Race took place followed by the start at 2 o'clock of the now officially named "Governor-General's Cup Air Race".

The spectators continued to be entertained by displays of aerobatics, low flying attack and supply dropping by Hawker Furies of the SAAF, civilian air displays and a Military Display.

The Inter-Club Competition was open to bona-fide ab initio "A" licence pilots from all clubs and flying schools in the Union and consisted of tests of flying skill. Each club had to select a representative to compete.

4 000 spectators watched that afternoon from a special enclosure as the Mayor of Durban Mr. Fleming Johnston addressed the pilots from the veranda on the second deck of the terminal building. After having all been wished good luck the twenty three pilots, three of the original twenty six having withdrawn, moved off to their aircraft that were lined up along the Walter Gilbert Rd end with engines idling. Using a green flag Lt-Col John Daniel

sent the first two off at 12h45, the last taking off less than twenty minutes later. After four aircraft had taken off it was the turn of Coull and Hulett, the only Natal entrants, together with another Hornet Moth and two Puss Moths. Making a right-hand turn they soon disappeared over Berea and headed towards Ladysmith, passing overhead the local aerodrome and then on to Germiston and the compulsory night stop.

The finish line at Rand Airport was indicated by two arrows placed in such a way that the pilots would not have to deviate from course to fly between them. After crossing the line at no more than 500ft they had to complete a left-hand circuit and land, reporting to the airport authorities.

The aircraft were refuelled the same day in order to be ready for the early start at 7 o'clock the next morning. Pilots were expected to report ½ an hour before the start so Coull and Hulett had given instructions at their hotel to be woken up early but when they awoke they realised that they were late and had to race by taxi to the airport.

The race continued on to Kimberley via Bloemfontein for a compulsory stop and the pilots were cautioned not to leave the airport as any time spent on the ground, for whatever reason, beyond the specified departure time would be counted as flying time. As luck would have it they were to lose a few minutes when they encountered difficulties in getting the Hornet Moth's engine started.

One of the more memorable scenes, recalled by Col. Stanley Walters years later in *Wings* magazine, was at the additional stop at Bethlehem where all the pilots sat around on the grass aerodrome waiting for an announcement of the order of departure under the recalculated handicaps.

The leg pulling, the story telling and the laughter, the butt of most of the jokes being the hardworking handicappers in Durban from who word was anxiously waited. Then the long howl of dismay from nearly all the competitors as it was all chalked up on a blackboard. He vividly recalled Bob Preller flying a Cessna with a wire-haired fox terrier puppy as his sole passenger and himself in a DH Dragonfly, both keyed up, straining to get cracking to fly the last leg with foot up on the throttle lever. Nose down, the quivering aircraft going flat out. Expecting to be neck and neck at the finish with the others, they realised that because of their time of their departure the eventual winner could not have but already finished.

The Ladysmith checking point, like at Bloemfontein was marked with a white cross on the aerodrome and the competitors had to circle over the observers at these points low enough for the registrations or racing numbers to be read.

Back at Durban Pirow officially opened the new Airport shortly after 2 o'clock, which was followed by a flypast of more than twenty military and civilian aircraft. The estimated crowd of some 50 000 had listened with rapt attention to reports over the loudspeakers about the progress of the race up to Bethlehem that had come from members of the South African Radio Relay League. Now eagerly waiting for news an announcement was made and they strained to spot what finally revealed itself to be a red and silver aircraft that had arrived over Umgeni and was following the coastline to the Bluff lighthouse for the final turn.

At six minutes to 4 o'clock, carrying the race number 15 on its tail, and with a lapsed time of eight hours and twenty five minutes the Hornet Moth flew over the finish line and turned for landing to the

cheering of the crowds and the blaring of hooters.

As the two weary men climbed out their closest rivals Johannes Slabbert in a Waco and Rhenia Slabbert (no relation and the only woman entrant) in a Hornet Moth raced neck and neck for the finish line.

Coull and Hulett had started eight minutes ahead at Baragwanath but by Bethlehem the lead had been shrunk to five minutes and the two others continued to slowly gain on them. After losing the duel for second place Rhenia, who had learnt to fly with the Durban Aero Club, regained it when she took a steep turn around the lighthouse only to lose it again as the faster Waco finished a mere three seconds ahead of her. The remaining competitors finished at varied times until the last one crossed the line almost two hours after the winners.

A unique feature of the finish was that Mr. Pirow, General Brink, the Director of Civil Aviation, Lt-Col Daniel and Col. Holthouse, Manager of South African Airways watched from on board the Imperial Airways C-class Empire flying boat *Centaurus* which had earlier participated in the flypast of aircraft. Imperial Airways had in fact inaugurated the Flying Boat Service from Britain to South Africa the month before and operated from a base at Salisbury Island in Durban Harbour.

Hulett received the trophy, designed and made by Mappin & Webb silversmiths in Johannesburg as well as the Natal Mercury Trophy from the Governor General, Sir Patrick Duncan, himself a keen aviator, on the balcony of the terminal building. He acknowledged that any credit for winning the greatest air race that South Africa had ever staged up to

that point was to Coull and Natal Aviation's chief engineer.

The Natal Advertiser Trophy was won by Otto Thaning, the Danish Consul while the De Havilland Trophy for the Inter-Club Competition was won by Alfred Warner from the Durban Aero Club.

A few disgruntled competitors had much to say in the media in the aftermath, particularly about the handicap system. The organizers were at pains to emphasize that it was intended to be a test of flying and navigational skills and not a competition between aircraft types and conceded that minor changes would be made in future races. That said it was otherwise considered in all respects an outstanding success. The fact that all the competitors returned safely from the first long-distance air race to be held in the country was not forgotten and showed the good organization of the event and high standard of pilot training in the country.

Bawden was kept busy on weekends meeting the demand for flips in the Dragon and it was noted in *The Flypaper* that the race-winning Hornet Moth drew much attention and was the centre of attraction with visitors to the aerodrome. The fishing trip to St. Lucia in May had been voted such a success that a second one was undertaken on 7 August, four Gypsy Moths and a Hornet Moth leaving that Saturday morning. Following lunch and an afternoon's fishing, the night was spent in the St. Lucia Hotel. A morning's fishing concluded, the aircraft left after lunch and flew over the Zululand Game Reserve before returning to Durban with the setting sun.

On the 15th eight aircraft, carrying twenty passengers and pilots carried out their first "Dawn Patrol", leaving Durban at 7 o'clock for Pietermaritzburg and returning

home at 10h30. The outing proved so popular that it promised to become a regular attraction.

On Saturday 11 September Archbell, who had survived the crash seven months previously, left Durban in the well-known ZS-AFZ to fly to Kroonstad via Johannesburg to visit Betty Armstrong, a girl he was courting. Accompanying him as a passenger was Robert Armstrong, owner of Armstrong's Garage on Durban Beach and the winner of the Flying Scholarship.

Returning to Durban on the Monday morning, they encountered heavy mist in the vicinity of Cathkin Peak in the Drakensberg mountains. With an average height of 10 000ft and extremely poor visibility among the maze of peaks they soon realised they were off course and it was inevitable that disaster would strike.

The Hornet Moth went into a spin and after straightening out the ground appeared a few feet below them. With no other option Archbell pulled back on the stick, applied full left rudder and pancaked; the aircraft hit with a thud and spun around on the left wing twisting the engine off the airframe before coming to rest about 60ft behind.

Flung out of the door, Armstrong found himself some thirty yards away from the Hornet Moth with a gash across his forehead and eye while Archbell was unhurt.

It was about 8h30 in the morning and with the altimeter reading 7 000ft the only clue as to their whereabouts Archbell elected to try and find a way down rather than be stranded for perhaps days. They wandered around but after covering only about six miles realised that the chances of reaching civilization were slim and retraced their steps back to the wreck.

Having a few supplies they tried to keep out the cold by closing up all the holes with items of clothing and cut the fabric off the one wing to cover the broken windscreen. Settling down for the night, Armstrong squeezed into the tiny luggage compartment while Archbell lay on the front seat.

At Natal Aviation's hangar on Tuesday morning it was feared that with the Hornet Moth overdue and having heard nothing about landing elsewhere, they might have crashed in the Cathkin Peak area.

A search party was assembled at Durban but the mist over the Drakensberg delayed the start and while they anxiously waited for any improvement in the weather, correspondents of *The Daily News* throughout the area made inquiries by telephone. Just before 10 o'clock the Ladysmith correspondent reported that personnel at the Cathkin Park Hostel had heard an aircraft in the area the previous morning.

Mauritzi had flown out to the area along with Peter Campbell whose father had offered the use of his Hornet Moth and had just returned to report that the mist had lifted sufficiently.

The search party, consisting of Mauritzi and Campbell in the Hornet Moth with Coull, Holt and a reporter from the *Daily News* in the Leopard Moth took off for Ladysmith, Carbutt in his own Hornet Moth following a little while later.

A search party from the hostel had started out earlier on foot and workers interviewed at the Government Forestry Settlement who had heard engine sounds and then silence in the Sterkspruit Valley provided clues as to the possible location of the crash site which were passed on to Coull and Mauritzi.

A heavy mist shrouded the hilltops in the Van Reenen's Pass area and air currents bounced the Leopard Moth around as they climbed to 6 00ft and flew along the length of the escarpment scanning countless ravines, kloofs and precipitous hillsides dotted with occasional farmhouses and native huts.

Having flown the whole of the north side of the road between Van Reenen and Harrismith Coull turned back, a heavy bank of cloud forcing him to fly above it. Diving through a break in the cloud they found themselves back near Ladysmith and landed where they found that Mauritz and Campbell had searched the south side of the road but had also found no trace.

Carbutt, along with a correspondent from the *Natal Mercury* had flown in via Cathkin Peak but heavy cloud and rain forced him to turn away and fly direct to Ladysmith.

The mist lifted that morning and Archbell and Armstrong climbed a nearby peak, seeing to the north what appeared to be cultivated trees in a valley; leaving all their personal effects behind in the aircraft they decided to walk there.

Slipping and sliding their way down they walked for several hours, at one stage spotting the aircraft searching for them and despite waving, they were missed, but nevertheless sure that their crashed aircraft had since been found.

Coming across a path and climbing up a hillock they were confronted by an elderly native who they thought was a Basutoland policeman but in fact was a guard who threatened them with arrest for trespassing on the Government forestry reserve! They persuaded him to take them to a lonely farmhouse instead where the two women who lived there offered them shelter and rest.

After lunch Carbutt and the *Natal Mercury* correspondent along with Coull, Holt and the *Daily News* correspondent took off and headed for Cathkin Peak which, despite the warm afternoon, was covered in a dense blue haze. The impressive sight of the peak prompted the *Natal Mercury* correspondent to try and take some photographs and shortly afterwards while glancing outside he saw something gleaming about 2 000ft below on the steep slope of a grassy ridge halfway between Cathkin Peak and the Gatberg. Thinking it might just be a house they nevertheless turned around and saw the form of a cross with two silver-grey arms bisected by a crimson stripe - it was the Hornet Moth.

Circling overhead they saw no sign of life nor any kind of path nearby but the hostel was seen some distance to the south and with nowhere to land safely they headed back to Durban.

As dusk was approaching the news was telephoned through to the hostel from Durban about the finding of the wreck and minutes later a native guide who had left early that morning to search the area reported back having also seen it but did not go close enough to see if anyone was inside. The aircraft had been reported to be badly damaged but with a chance that the occupants could still be alive if injured the search party, which had been planned for dawn decided to set out at once.

Supplies were packed and while four men on horseback went in advance a party of eight volunteer hostel guests and thirteen local natives set out on foot on a night climb to reach the site about 15 miles away, reaching it after midnight.

Just after five o'clock the next morning the utterly exhausted party arrived back at the hostel and reported that the two men were nowhere to be found but luggage and

other personal effects recovered indicated that they had been uninjured.

That morning Archbell and Armstrong set off on a six-mile walk to a neighbouring farm where the only transport available, an old mule cart had been arranged for them. After travelling about eight miles on the rickety cart they met a stock inspector who agreed to drive them into Bergville.

Coull along with Holt and Miles Barnby, the well-known Natal and Durban Rovers rugby player who had qualified as a pilot at Natal Aviation took off that morning from Durban in the Leopard Moth together with Mauritzi with Campbell in his Hornet Moth to search for the two missing men.

The news of their disappearance from the crash site had been telephoned through to them earlier from the hostel.

Coull flew back to the wreck which he had seen after following Carbutt's aircraft the day before and then flew up and down the valleys around it until coming across a small farm on the hillside; passing overhead some people came out and waved. A closer inspection showed them pointing towards a road heading down the valley and after a few minutes a car was spotted at a river crossing.

The occupants waved frantically and coming in low Coull, Holt and Barnby could clearly see Archbell and Armstrong. After little more than a half-hour of searching their work was now done and immensely relieved, turned back to Durban to pass on the good news.

The two men were driven to Ladysmith and arrived back in Durban by train on Thursday morning where Coull, Armstrong's wife and children and Archbell's father were waiting to meet them. It had originally been intended to fly them back but continuing bad weather forced a change of plans.

F. J. Brett and Quinn arrived at the Hostel on Wednesday morning after driving through the night and, after waiting a day for the search party members to rest, undertook a twelve-hour return journey on horseback to visit the crash site and inspect the aircraft.

Some of the instruments were removed and brought back while some doubt was expressed as to the feasibility of recovering the wreck.

The Hornet Moth was however salvaged and after taking a year and a half to rebuild was returned to service while Archbell, despite his inauspicious start, went on to a distinguished career in the RAF.

The first Tiger Moth to be based in Natal arrived by ship at Durban harbour on Sunday the 19th and the shipping crate was delivered to the hangar on the Tuesday.

The DH82 Tiger Moth was designed to an RAF requirement for a new elementary trainer and had first flown in 1931. A considerably improved development of the Gypsy Moth, it had a welded tubular fuselage framework as opposed to an all-wood construction and was powered by an inverted Gypsy Major which greatly improved the pilot's forward view when taxiing. Used in great numbers by civilian clubs and military flying training units it became one of the greatest and most famous training aircraft ever built.

The first examples to come to South Africa had been registered in May 1936 and amidst great excitement at having acquired a brand new one it was soon assembled. Carrying the registration marks of ZS-AJD it became a popular choice with instructor and pupil alike.

On 1 November Coull narrowly missed damaging the Leopard Moth when taking off from Dundee with McCarthy Rodway's director G. S. Lissaman on board as passenger. The one wing touched the ground and in the process slightly damaged the undercarriage but he was able to prevent further damage and they landed back at Durban without further incident.

On 5 December the Dragon flown by Bawden, the Tiger Moth, four Gypsy Moths and Carbutt in his Hornet Moth flew to Richards Bay for a day of fishing after the newly made landing ground at the Hotel had been earlier inspected and found fairly good. Flips were given to local residents including a Zulu petty chief who, after an aerobatics sequence, offered to pay for the flight in cattle as he had no money but Carbutt who had arranged the trip decided to let him have it for free!

On the 16th Coull and Mauritz flew a party of their pupils, which include Hulett and his brother Guy, to Margate for a day at the lagoon while Mauritz spent a portion of the time taking holidaymakers up for flips.

Carbutt had for a time campaigned for a network of landing grounds not only for emergencies but also for accessibility to tourist attraction. He did everything he could to get farmers and others to realise the benefit to themselves of having suitable areas cleared and set aside for this purpose, in fact since Natal Aviation's beginning at least three emergency flights had been undertaken at a moment's notice to fly injured people to hospital from outlying areas. A site had already been opened at Karkloof and Roy had begun inspecting other potential sites including

one in the vicinity of the National Park whilst he was there on holiday.

By the end of December a scheme for the further development of the aerodrome in Pietermaritzburg was being discussed and a sum of £1 800 was proposed for the construction of hangars, workshop and offices. A local aircraft company would be recommended to the City Council for equipping and staffing the aerodrome as well as operating a flying school.

As part of the £1 000 grant made by Sir Abe Bailey to promote air-mindedness in South Africa, £100 was provided in January to Natal Aviation to undertake this endeavour amongst Natal school children. The normal price of a flip for a child was 5s, meaning that some 400 could be taken up with the grant. Carbutt however proposed that he would take twice that number at 2s 6d each if the children themselves paid the half-crown extra.

A landing field had just been laid out at Richards Bay and the Durban Aero Club thought its completion worthy of celebration by the paying of a visit. Carbutt and Bawden along with passengers flew up the one afternoon and the following morning Coull in the Tiger Moth led a flight of four Gypsy Moths to the popular fishing and holiday resort for a day of fishing and swimming. The sight of so many aircraft together would always draw a crowd and that day a large number of Empangeni locals took the opportunity to have a flip.

Mauritz left Natal Aviation and at the beginning of February became an instructor at the Brooklyn Flying School, a subsidiary of AAT's branch in Cape Town. He was later appointed CFI following their

move to Stellenbosch and Officer Commanding 1 Flight TATS, Fred Spencer being appointed temporarily in his place while Bawden also left to join Wilson Airways in Nairobi, Kenya.

Having received South African Civil Aviation "B" Pilot's Licence number 513 with Instructor endorsement, Coull wished to qualify for a higher grading. An instructor from CFS carried out a re-categorization on 15 March 1938 and having passed, he duly received his "A" category instructor grading.

On the morning of Sunday 20 March eight aircraft left Durban for a picnic at Karkloof near Pietermaritzburg.

The Tiger Moth was flown by Barnby with Alistair Buchanan as passenger and being faster was ahead of the others at Kloof. Barnby decided to circle over his parent's home and his sister Grace watched as the aircraft stalled at about 100ft, went into a nosedive and struck a set of telephone wires and trees before crashing into St. Mary's Rd, fortunately missing high-tension wires on the other side of the road. The telephone wires and trees helped break the fall by lifting the nose and the aircraft landed flat, rupturing the fuel tank but the fuel dripping onto the engine cowling did not catch fire.

A doctor who lived close by helped unstrap the two dazed men and carry them to Barnby's house where he administered first aid for their facial injuries and shock before an ambulance sent from Durban arrived.

Though the damage was initially thought repairable it was in fact sufficient for it to be written off and was replaced by another three months later.

After much discussion in the local press and in *South African Airnews* the Natal Air Training School (NATS) was formed at

Stamford Hill in April and equipped with six Westland Wapitis and three Avro Tutors. It was anticipated that more aircraft would join the unit in the near future but little more than a year later world events would alter the situation considerably.

Their arrival prompted the establishment of a branch of the SAAF Reserve Club with Major Davis as chairman and its function was largely social in nature with parties and sporting events being the order of the day. Such was their spirit that members from other branches who were to undergo training or refresher courses in Durban were invited to notify the secretary so that arrangements could be made to welcome and entertain them.

In May the Durban Aero Club formally opened its new clubhouse by staging an air display which included four of Natal Aviation's Gypsy Moths and on the 14th an Air Rally was held at the Pietermaritzburg Aerodrome to celebrate the inauguration of the Pietermaritzburg Flying School and the opening of Natal Aviation's hangar. More than 4000 spectators enjoyed the day and over twenty aircraft from clubs as far away as Rand Airport visited or participated. The programme of events echoed that of many other such air shows around South Africa in those days; starting with a display of Crazy Flying by the instructors of Natal Aviation, and Pirow conducting the opening ceremony.

The Pylon Race was a handicap event open to "A" licence pilots who had to complete two circuits around three given points. An Obstacle Race was open to "A" licence pilots and partners with aircraft lined up in readiness for take off with engines ticking over, pilots at a starting point at the given signal had to cycle to their partners one hundred yards away seated in wheelbarrows and then had to

climb into the wheelbarrows and with their partners pushing, make their way as fast as possible to the aircraft, take off and fly round given landmarks. A Landing Competition was open to "A" licence pilots who were required to climb to 2 000ft where the engine would be cut and the pilots would endeavour to land as near as possible to a pre-arranged mark, points would be awarded for method of approach, general flying and proximity to the landing mark. The Inter-Club Competition was open to "A" licence pilots acting as representatives of their flying clubs and consisted of a loop, stall turn, spin and landing as near as possible to a given mark. Coull acted as one of the judges for the pylon race, obstacle race and landing competition.

A demonstration was given by three Hawker Hartbeests of the SAAF followed by the finals of the Pylon and Obstacle Races and the day ended with more "Crazy Flying" and "Bombing the Baby". A Height Judging Competition was open to spectators who had to judge the height of a particular aircraft that would fly to a specific height to be estimated at the time stated by the announcer. Four guessed the height of 1 800ft correctly and won free flips. Flipping was ever popular at air shows and that day was no exception – doing a roaring trade throughout the day the pilots could barely keep up with the demand.

In June examination papers covering armament, army co-operation, organization, and signals procedure were sent to the NATS for Coull to write.

Lt. Leslie Kinsey who was delegated to mark his armament papers and conduct the oral examinations on bombs and the Vickers gun was to meet up with him in the air less than ten months later with tragic results.

He was also tested in the sending and receiving signals and with the return of his written papers and results of the practical tests he needed only to pass regimental training – the usual flying tests not being applicable due to his existing qualifications.

For the purposes of the TATS Scheme, Natal Aviation had been designated 4 Flight in 1937. This had now become a misnomer and on 1 July the whole organization was renamed the Union Air Training Group. As Natal Aviation's Manager, following the departure of Carbutt, as well as CFI he was appointed Officer Commanding 4 Flight UATG.

Back in February it had been announced that Sir Patrick Duncan, acting as Patron-in-Chief of the Aero Club of South Africa, had consented to the presentation of a floating trophy for a future annual competition providing that it would be controlled by a recognized body representative of civil aviation in the Union. The Durban City Council, keen to have Durban as the venue for such a competition, approached the Aero Club for its patronage and support.

Many pilots appeared opposed to the holding of an air race similar to that held the previous year feeling that, while it might have been a popular subject for the media and attracted much publicity, it served no practical end in developing greater skills in any of the pilots who participated. Furthermore, attracting enough entries to make the race worthwhile would result in many types of aircraft entering, all with different characteristics and performances, necessitating a handicap race. Handicapping, as experienced the previous year was, even under the best conditions, a difficult task and guaranteed to lead to arguments after the event.

Some pilots advocated that the competition should test the skill of the pilot in a series of reliability trials.

What was overlooked was the fact that the primary object of the undertaking was to stimulate public interest in aviation and encourage a competitive spirit amongst South African pilots. The public supported a race where they could follow the fortunes of the leaders at the various control points as opposed to a competition which, it was generally felt, would be interesting only to the competitors and handicapping committee.

It was agreed that the Durban City Council would conduct and finance the event, including providing about £1 000 in prizes while the Aero Club of South Africa would appoint a handicapping committee and establish the rules of the race. Months of heated debate in the media followed before the final decisions were made to hold the air race on 22 and 23 July with all competitors arriving in Durban on the 20th for the handicapping committee to carry out their final inspections.

The course decided upon was the reverse the previous year and the distance was increased by 250 miles in order to impose a greater test of the pilot's navigational skills.

The mass start was discarded and the starts at Durban and Kimberley would be made with partial handicaps and at Baragwanath with wind adjustment. After leaving Durban the route headed to Bethlehem 195 miles away. This was a compulsory stop where pilots reported to race control who would indicate next starting time. At Bloemfontein 142 miles away pilots had to circle once around observers on the military aerodrome before heading on to Kimberley 94 miles further for a compulsory night stop.

The next morning Baragwanath Aerodrome 278 mile away was another compulsory stop where race control would again indicate starting times. 202 miles further lay Vryheid where pilots had to circle around observers and then head to Durban 144 miles away, fly around a flag on the Country Club Beacon, round the Bluff lighthouse and cross the finish line at 500ft.

Like the previous year Kimberley supported the race whole-heartedly and undertook to provide meteorological services and transport to and from the airport for pilots and passengers. A dance at the Drill Hall was also held to which all competitors were invited.

Altogether twenty aircraft took part, nine of the pilots having flown in the 1937 race. Walter Zunckel, a member of the Durban Flying Club, entered Natal Aviation's Leopard Moth ZS-AEK and contracted Coull to fly as pilot while its other Leopard Moth ZS-AEP was entered by G. K. Jones and J. Kelly.

At twelve minutes past three Carl Erasmus, a young Natal pilot in Hornet Moth ZS-AOT was first to cross the finish line, having flown the 1 200 miles at an average speed of over 120mph, 10 mph over the speed determined by the handicappers and finishing eight minutes ahead of his nearest rival. Three hours later, the Chairman of the Aero Club was forced to announce that his win was disqualified in that he had made certain modifications to the engine which had not been recorded on his entry form. The race was then awarded to Jacobus Oosthuizen in Hornet Moth ZS-AMG, Coull finishing in joint 7th place with W. F. du Plessis flying another Hornet Moth while Jones and Kelly finished a minute later.

Six aircraft did not finish – one retired at Bethlehem and three at Baragwanath,

Otto Thaning force landed near Kimberley and Victor Smith near Bultfontein.

On 3 September nine aircraft from Durban and two from Pietermaritzburg which included most of the Natal Aviation fleet flew to Lourenco Marques to take part in the Air Rally which formed part of the opening of the new aerodrome and the christening of nine aircraft belonging to DETA, the Portuguese East African airline. With seventy-three aircraft from all over the region participating, including a significant number from all the major centres in South Africa, it was probably the biggest to be held at the time in Africa.

For a large part of the month Coull and William Phillips, a former pupil of Natal Aviation who had obtained his instructor's licence in Britain before joining the company earlier in the year, flew 350 children on flips under the Sir Abe Bailey Grant provided back in January.

Over the period 31 October to 19 November he attended Continuous Training Course 4/38 at CFS and was assessed as a very keen and conscientious above average pilot. Having passed all his tests Coull was awarded his wings on 18 November and his appointment in the SRFO was confirmed.

Quinn left to take up the position as Chief Ground Engineer at the Witwatersrand Technical College School of Aeronautics and Johannes Nel was appointed in his place.

Early in January 1939 Coull assisted Imperial Airways by flying two of their engineers and spare parts from Durban to Lourenco Marques from where they flew further up the coast to Beira by DETA Airways, the flying boat *Caledonia* having

suffered damage to one of its floats after a collision with a refuelling barge.

One of the UATG pupils who began training at Natal Aviation in January was Adriaan "Attie" Botha who would follow Coull to the Bloemfontein Flying Training School before gaining his wings at Kimberley in June 1940. He would within a year become one of the SAAF's early aces, scoring five confirmed kills while serving with 1 Sqn in North Africa before being killed in action.

Flying instructors from all over the Union, including Coull, Phillips and Percy Holt from Pietermaritzburg assembled at the Johannesburg Light Plane Club headquarters at Baragwanath on 4 March to discuss their experiences with a particular bearing on the "1 000 Reserve Pilots Training Scheme". The training scheme had been revised the previous year as the Continuous Training Scheme, allocating 70 hours of flying at club level before advancing to one of the Air Training Schools. A matter of some concern however was the fact that pupil pilots from the UATG Flights were stretching the capabilities of the SAAF's organization to such an extent that military training in fields such as gunnery suffered with the result being that few pilots could be considered service qualified.

As early as October 1936 the SAAF had ordered seven Hawker Hurricanes in order to have some measure of a modern fighter force in the event of military action, the first three being delivered by sea to Durban in February. Assembled at the NATS, the first test flight was carried out on 6 March before their delivery flights to Waterkloof Air Station. The sight of these fast modern fighters attracted great attention and the programme for the

Durban Air Pageant being held in conjunction with the Governor-General's Cup Air Race depicted an artist's impression of the fighter. The organizers had no doubt hoped that one of the three delivered and assembled during the same month would make an appearance.

In March 1939 he requested an exemption from attending the annual refresher course – this was granted and he was able to arrange non-continuous training at NATS.

In the early morning of 4 April Coull took off from the aerodrome in a northeasterly direction in Gypsy Moth ZS-ACW with pupil pilot Leslie Horsfield in the back seat. Undergoing only his second flying lesson Horsfield was being instructed in straight and level flying so he turned left over the Umgeni River mouth to get over land and avoid other aircraft entering or leaving the practice area. This extended from the river north to Umhlanga Rocks with the road and the surf line forming rough boundaries. Just behind him was Gypsy Moth ZS-AOL flown by Phillips and another student. Just short of the river Barnby decided to circle over his right followed by a second until straightening out at about 1 800ft, demonstrating to his pupil by his actions the importance of keeping a sharp lookout during turns. A position over the sea about halfway down the Golf Course was selected as the surf and the horizon provided good lines of reference and after demonstrating the effects of the controls Roy informed Horsfield that he now had control.

Westland Wapiti P613 of the NATS, flown by Lt. Kinsey and pupil pilot Frederick Schoeman, who had begun a month's continuous training the day before, were at

the same time practicing landings and turning in order to get back to the aerodrome in the correct circuit for a landing. The Wapiti, in a right-hand turn passed underneath the Gypsy Moth flying out to sea at a 30° angle to the surf line.

A couple of seconds later a colossal impact was heard and for a brief moment the Gypsy Moth was out of control.

Taking hold of the controls Coull righted the aircraft and, looking to the right, saw the Wapiti below apparently flying straight and level, then rolling over and with what appeared to be a complete set of wings on one side broken off, crash into the sea about a half mile from shore just north of the river.

The Wapiti's starboard wings had in fact collapsed and folded over the fuselage and cockpits, thus preventing the two pilots from being able to escape.

Initially intending to land on the beach he found that he still had some flying control, but not knowing the extent of any damage, he turned and headed back to the aerodrome, the other Gypsy Moth passing him and landing next to the SAAF hangar. Working on the assumption that Phillips was reporting the accident, Roy flew over the landing ground a couple of times and seeing other pupil pilots indicating up to his aircraft, he realised that the damage was probably significant. Aware of the danger of fire he attracted the attention of the groundsman Stanley Hosken who was working on the smoke indicator in the middle of the landing area and waited for him to bring out the crash tender before landing.

Indicating to him where he wanted to land, Roy cut the engine and as he touched down the aircraft tipped forward breaking the propeller, Horsfield sustaining a

broken nose and Coull a cut over one eye.

Capt. Jack Mossop, Officer Commanding of the NATS had seen Roy's Gypsy Moth return without its undercarriage and was attempting to notify the terminal when Phillips arrived and informed him that it had collided with a Wapiti. He then contacted Natal Command Headquarters, the Police, the Garrison Lifesavers and the Port Captain, requesting that they send out a tug.

Coull was taken back to Natal Aviation's offices and, having washed his face, climbed into another aircraft and taxied to the SAAF hangar. Mossop had phoned to say that the Wapiti could not be seen so they took off with him flying, Roy not being allowed to have just been involved in a crash. Locating the wreckage they flew back to the Aerodrome and Mossop returned by car to the scene to assist with the salvage operation.

The tug *Otto Siedle* was sent from the Point and a dinghy was lowered but the water was too shallow and the surf too rough, forcing it to return. The Port Office was contacted and the pilot tug *Unlindi* set out from the harbour towing a flat-bottomed surfboat.

Having been informed of the accident a group of volunteers rushed to the scene by car, picking up the lifelines at the Country Club beach on the way. After running almost two miles across the Athlone Rifle Range and along the beach, six of them, led by Victor Rochford, a Natal swimmer, rugby player and pupil pilot, and John Davis, son of Jack Davis the Airport Manager, went out to the wreckage twice with a line to try and locate the crew but could find no trace. Pounded by the surf, lying upside down and still loosely anchored by the engine,

the wreckage moved with the swells. Rochford, at great personal risk, felt about for bodies in the jumbled mass of splintered wood and twisted framework until, cut about the legs, he had to return exhausted. Swimming out again they managed to secure a rope around the wreck but it was not strong enough and broke. The surfboat's crew, skilled at riding the surf, was able to fix a stronger rope to the wreckage and it was dragged the ashore by more than 50 helpers. Kinsey's body was found 100 yards further north and an examination revealed that his left arm and leg were both broken in several places and his ribs badly smashed. An extensive search was made for the engine but without success and the remains of Schoeman's body were found the next morning.

Both parachutes were found washed ashore with the harnesses released, indicating that the pilots, realizing that they were unable to climb out, undid them with the intention of evacuating unhindered by their weight and bulk after the aircraft had hit the water.

That afternoon Major Frank Elliot-Wilson, Flying Inspector for the Director of Civil Aviation arrived by air in order to carry out his investigation into the accident. First visiting Natal Aviation's hangar where the Gypsy Moth had been moved to, he instructed G. Swann, the Chief Ground Engineer, to provide a detailed report of the damage, showing what, in his opinion, was sustained in the collision and what by landing without undercarriage.

He then visited the SAAF hangar and inspected the wreckage of the Wapiti that had been salvaged before requesting the Commandant of Police to provide a staff member to assist with the taking of statements from eye-witnesses the next day.

In his statement Horsfield differed in a few minor respects to Coull, stating that at no time did he hold the controls. He also claimed to have seen the Wapiti disappear underneath their aircraft just before the impact and that the Gypsy Moth simply shuddered and continued to fly on straight until Coull turned and flew back to the aerodrome.

Both Coull and Horsfield were adamant that they were flying towards the city, but according to three otherwise reliable eyewitnesses they were in fact flying in the opposite direction!

On 20 April John Blamire, the Inspector of Aircraft arrived to carry out his investigation. Examining the Gypsy Moth he found that it had in the interim been dismantled and the engine removed for repair and installation in ZS-AFE. It was however found since removed and stored in the hangar. The damage to the Gypsy Moth comprised the tearing away of the main undercarriage (the right-hand wheel and axle were found floating in the sea by the Port Captain and returned to Natal Aviation), the bottom fuselage longerons were fractured at the undercarriage attachment points and the plywood flooring under the rear rudder bar was completely stripped. The aircraft was subsequently rebuilt at the DH (SA) workshops and returned to service by the time Natal Aviation's aircraft had relocated to the Bloemfontein Flying Training School.

The Wapiti was a complete wreck and the damage was consistent with what had been seen and reported by the eyewitnesses. Traces of red paint and wood from the Gypsy Moth's undercarriage fairings were found embedded in the leading edge of the right-hand automatic slot, which was found a few days after the accident

washed ashore about a mile south of where the aircraft crashed.

On 17 July a Military Court of Inquiry was convened at Natal Command for the purpose of allocating responsibility, if any, and to ascertain the extent of damage to Government property. In all seven witnesses were called to testify and members of the court were flown in a Wapiti and Gypsy Moth so as to familiarize themselves with the aircraft's blind spots and the effect of the early morning sun.

In its report signed on 24 July the Court found that Kinsey, who had on a previous occasion been reported by Coull for shooting-up the Tiger Moth while landing, failed to see the Gypsy Moth crossing his course due to a slight difference in heights and the blind spot created by the top main planes. In turn Coull had failed to see the Wapiti due to the angle of the sun and the blind spot formed by the Gypsy Moth's left lower main plane. In their conclusion Coull was cleared of any blame for the collision and that neither aircraft was being flown in a negligent or irregular manner at the time.

Having passed his Instructor's examinations, Jacobus Lambinon of the Johannesburg Light Plane Club took up a position as instructor at Natal Aviation in April. He had attended the same Reserve of Flying Officers Continuous Training Course as Coull the previous year and was a welcome addition as the workload on the existing instructors was becoming ever greater.

The *Natal Daily News* initiated a proposal for appealing to businesses and citizens to support a flying scholarship scheme by sponsoring bursaries of £50 for initial

training of prospective military pilots and after three days of publishing the proposed scheme forty voluntary donations had already been received. Other newspapers soon followed suit and Natal Aviation became one of a number of flying schools around the Union to launch such scholarship schemes. Testing the 445 applicants for the forty one flying scholarships kept Natal Aviation extremely busy – 107 men qualifying to appear before a selection board which would select sixty one in the same manner as air force pupil pilots would be chosen. The other twenty were to be reserves should any finalists prove unsatisfactory after five hours flying instruction.

The 1939 Governor-General's Cup Air Race was once again the subject of much debate in the flying fraternity but the list of entrants showed that six were veterans of the previous two races, and the number of entrants had increased from twenty to twenty six. The first prize was doubled to £1 000, as was nearly every other prize as well. The minimum speed limit had been increased to 115mph in order to eliminate ultra-light and obsolete aircraft types from what was after all an air race and the distance was shortened to 1 015 miles. It was now also more difficult, thereby testing the participants' navigation even further.

Starting at 10h30 on Friday 23 June, the competitors took off at calculated intervals and flew via Matatiele, circling the only official checkpoint in the race, to Aliwal North. After a lunch provided by the local town council, the first aircraft took off for Kimberley, once again the night stop. At 8h30 the next morning the course took them to Rand Airport for a compulsory stop before heading to Ladysmith for

another half hour stop. Take-offs from Ladysmith were timed in such a way that the winning aircraft would arrive sometime between 15h30 and 4 o'clock.

Prior to landing competitors had to complete a short course of a couple of laps over Durban in order to provide the 20 000 spectators further entertainment on the day during whose proceedings, which included an Air Pageant, the Governor-General presented the flying scholarships to the winning applicants.

Many had voiced the opinion that the handicapping system would prevent fast aircraft from winning the race and indeed John Dalrymple in a Leopard Moth was the first to be spotted over the Bluff but almost at the same time the sleek silver twin-engine BA Double Eagle ZS-AOC of the Aircraft Operating Company flown by Edward Brierley roared over the finish line at well over 200mph, his closest rival a minute and a half behind him.

Johannes Slabbert had raced past several other competitors in the first leg and was leading the field by such a margin that he was assured to win, unfortunately after landing at Rand Airport he tilted his Waco UIC while taxiing and broke the bottom port wing, thereby putting him out of the race. Four other competitors also retired from the race; one before Aliwal North, two at Kimberley and one at Ladysmith. Roy finished in tenth place flying Natal Aviation's Leopard Moth ZS-AEP that had been entered by Denzil Davidson. Having dominated the two previous races, the pilots of the competing Hornet Moths realised that the stiff handicapping would now make it virtually impossible to even gain a place. Accepting the situation with good grace they agreed on an unofficial race amongst themselves – each contributing £5 to a pool. Godfrey Jones

and Jacobus Oosthuizen, the winner of the 1938 race flying in the latter's Hornet Moth, finished eighth thereby winning the £25.

Once again the race was well organized and supported, the only hitch occurring at Aliwal North, which resulted in the handicapping committee having to spend the best part of five hours sorting out the errors.

The South African Radio Relay League once again stood by at the control points passing messages and information along, Shell, Intava and Wakefield provided refuelling at the aerodromes and the Kimberley Aviation Association with the co-operation of the aerodrome manager and local hotels did much to welcome the competitors.

The outbreak of war three months later meant that this would be the last air race for some time. The Aero Club wished to resuscitate it in 1949 but the Durban City Council was no longer interested in sponsoring such an event and it was not until 1954 that the race was again held.

Durban Flying Services which had been opened in June the previous year by William Reid, a Garage owner in Smit Street, with three Aeronca Chiefs absorbed much of the flying instruction that Natal Aviation was now no longer able to provide. Qualified instructors were at a premium and those he had were barely able to cope with the demand. A branch was opened at Pietermaritzburg with an aircraft operating from there twice a week and a few of the scholarship winners transferred to his school so as to be able to finish their flying training.

The aerodrome became an operational air station and Davis was appointed Command Air Force Officer, Natal Command with the rank of Major.

The NATS with its Wapitis left Durban for ZAS in August and disbanded the following month.

Lambinon left to take up a position at AAT's branch at Windhoek, which had opened in April with two Gypsy Moths. After repairs following being overturned in a landing accident, Gypsy Moth ZS-AOL was flown to Windhoek to join the small fleet stationed and housed in SAA's hangar.

The outbreak of war at the beginning of September resulted in considerable re-organization of both the operational and training elements of the SAAF in order to best utilize the very limited resources available. It was decided to close the UATG Flights and concentrate initial flying training at Bloemfontein, Germiston, Baragwanath and Wonderboom.

Natal Aviation's Pietermaritzburg branch closed and Holt began assisting the Durban branch with its busy training program.

After negotiations which had begun in March, an agreement for the transfer of the staff and aircraft from African Air Transport's branches at Cape Town Durban, Kimberley, and Windhoek to Bloemfontein at government expense was signed off by Henry Hull in his capacity as a Director of DH (SA) on 23 April and the Secretary for Defence on 7 June.

The Tiger Moth, four Gypsy Moths and the Leopard Moth left Durban on 15 November to supplement the fleet being operated by the Bloemfontein Light Plane Club; renamed the Bloemfontein Flying Training School it was the first to be formed under the new scheme but was disbanded the following April and merged with the Baragwanath Flying Training School.

Coull became Chief Flying Instructor among ten civilian and four SAAF instructors on the staff and an inspection by the Civil Aviation Authority noted that the school was well organized, had a good atmosphere and the co-operation between AAT and the SAAF was excellent.

Ellis had been temporarily left behind with two Gypsy Moths and the Hornet Moth in order to complete the training of the remaining Flying Scholarships while DH94 Moth Minor ZS-ARE, one of two imported in July as demonstrators was also utilized. It had arrived at Natal Aviation in September but suffered a mishap earlier in the new year and it wasn't until April 1940 that it was back in commission. In February Roy returned to Durban for a short while in order to assist him with the training as Phillips was away on holiday.

Proclamation 123 gazetted on 15 June 1940 suspended all civil flying with the exception of aircraft owners and operators involved in the training scheme and the Directorate of Civil Aviation announced that henceforth it would neither issue nor renew licences or airworthiness certificates. It was initially anticipated that upon completion of the pupil pilot training that the staff and aircraft would return to their original bases but two months later a Valuation Board was formed for the purpose of valuing civil aircraft, engines and spares holdings. Owners were given the option of selling their aircraft to the Government at a value determined by the board, the alternative being no access to fuel, spare parts, maintenance organizations, hangarage or airfields. Virtually all owners elected to sell their aircraft rather than suffer the expenses of long term storage, intending rather to buy another after the war.

Only about half of the 250-odd aircraft were really useful for training, others were used for communication duties or ground instructional airframes.

The vast variety of types caused problems with spares and maintenance and a rationalization policy resulted in many eventually being reduced to produce.

African Air Transport disputed the valuation of £250 for each of the company's Gypsy Moths, claiming a value of £300 instead. The Board however was not prepared to increase the valuation, as this would create a precedent and cause comment and criticism from other owners of similar aircraft. In all twenty five aircraft comprising eleven Tiger Moths, ten Gypsy Moths, two Hornet Moths, one ex-Rhodesian Moth Major and a Moth Minor were requisitioned from AAT for a total value of £16 517.

Durban Flying Services' William Reid rejected the Valuation Board's estimation for his three aircraft and sold only his Aeronca 50C. The two 65Cs spent the duration of the war stored in a partially dismantled state in his Garage and have survived to this day.

The British Air Council had approved a scheme to locate flying schools in the Dominions as early as October 1938 and in September the following year discussions were held in Canada to outline the Empire Air Training Scheme in which South Africa was invited to participate. It was proposed that while the other Dominions would be responsible for elementary training, Canada would provide advanced training. Well away from any projected war threat it was felt that they would be unhindered in training personnel for the RAF.

General Smuts declined as South Africa faced the possibility of attack from Italian forces in East Africa but in December 1939 offered facilities for the establishment of training schools for both SAAF and RAF aircrews. The initial agreement, signed on 1 June 1940 was found to be inadequate and consequently a new one, called the "Joint Air Training Scheme in South Africa, Memorandum of Agreement", was drawn up and signed on 23 June 1941. The basis of both agreements was that South Africa would provide the airfields, buildings and all facilities, while Britain would provide the aircraft, spares and items of training equipment.

He was called up for full time service at Baragwanath on 8 August 1940 with the rank of Captain, having earlier completed the forms for Officers volunteering for service in and outside South Africa and was posted to 1 Service Flying Training School in Kimberley as CFI. This unit had been formed only two months previously with obsolete Hawker Hart and Hind biplanes and due to a shortage of navigation training officers he was appointed Chief Navigation Officer by way of holding a 2nd class navigator's license.

In that November 1 SFTS was renamed 21 Air School and on 1 December he became Group Commander of the Advanced Training Squadron, serving in that capacity until 1 July 1941 when he was transferred to 23AS.

In March he applied to become a trans-Atlantic ferry pilot as he had begun to find his duties tedious – with some justification as he had logged over three thousand hours of instructional flying in four years. His Officer Commanding, Lt-Col Stanley Halse agreed and recommended a

complete change of duty. In his assessments to date he was consistently rated as exceptional so while sympathetic, Training Command could not be blamed for not agreeing to release him for other duties due to the shortage of suitably qualified instructors. He was assured however that when the situation improved he was welcome to re-submit his application.

The lot of an instructor was by no means an easy one – he would frequently fly one-hour periods four times a day and the circuits and landings, loops and spins seemed to never end. Night flying instruction also needed to be done. The work was monotonous and often dangerous, with pupil pilots apparently hell bent on self-destruction, the instructor could never afford to relax for a moment.

23AS had moved from ZAS to Waterkloof Air Station three months previously and had only just received sufficient Hawker Harts and its variants for the first course of thirty four pupils from Wonderboom to start their service flying training on 21 June, the staff and instructors themselves being mainly from the RAF.

His disappointment at the response to his application seems to be reflected in his assessment for the time of his posting until the end of the year as it describes him as "lethargic and lacking in drive". One consolation however was his marriage to Eileen Christie Taws, an attractive young socialite at St. Thomas's Church in Durban on 6 September and upon his return was appointed OC Initial Training Squadron.

He was promoted to the rank of Major on 1 January 1942 and on 1 February was posted to 62AS in Bloemfontein as OC "C" Flight. In May he became OC

Conversion Flight and on 27 June the CFI. Originally known as the Central Flying School and still referred to as such by most, 62 AS was considered somewhat of an elite unit with only above average pilots being accepted for training as flying instructors. A secondary responsibility was the compilation of Pilot's Notes for different aircraft and development work was also carried out such as the design of a steerable tail wheel for the Tiger Moth.

The different environment and challenges, as well as the opportunity to fly a variety of aircraft types must have had a positive effect on him since his assessment for the year rated him as "reliable and a first class CFI".

On 27 September he underwent a one and half hour Instructor Test on a Tiger Moth and passed as "exceptional" – earning him an upgrade of his rating to A1, the highest possible. Less than a month later the same was done on an Airspeed Oxford for the same rating on twin-engined aircraft and night flying.

By 1943 training had improved at the various air schools and problems with the availability of aircraft and spare parts had largely been rectified. The JATS was to reach its peak that year yet Coull, despite being one of the top instructors in the SAAF finally got his wish – an overseas posting.

The reasons for his request of other duties being rejected more than 18 months previously were still valid and though the Battle of El Alamein had been won the campaign in North Africa was far from over nor its outcome a certainty. Nevertheless on 9 January he reported to the SAAF Mobile Air Force Depot in Voortrekkerhoogte and on 1 February he left ZAS by air for East Africa. Four days later he arrived at Eastleigh Airfield near

Nairobi, Kenya and began operational training at the RAF's 72 OTU at Nanyuki near Mount Kenya. Originally formed in November 1941 in the Sudan it was equipped largely with old and worn out Bristol Blenheims; there were to be a number of fatal accidents and the unit was disbanded not long after Coull's departure.

After passing out at 72 OTU as above average his movements become a bit unclear – his aircrew record form states that he reported to RAF HQ Middle East on 24 April 1943 and remained on strength of that unit until 15 May, the day he was transferred to 15 Sqn. On the other hand his record card clearly states that he was taken on strength of the SAAF Base Depot (SBD) Middle East on 7 May and arrived at 15 Sqn on 10 May, with a Force Order reference to back it up. This discrepancy of five days was to prove quite important to him later on.

15 Sqn, equipped with Bristol Blenheim MkVs (commonly known as Bisleys) and part of 245 Wing of 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group, had just moved to Landing Ground 91 in the Amiriya area southwest of Cairo. The Bristol Blenheim light bomber carried a crew of three and, though technically an excellent aircraft had only an adequate performance hampered by a limited load carrying capability. By the time the last remaining Axis forces in North Africa surrendered near Tunis on 13 May the Blenheims were in the process of being replaced by Martin Baltimores, two of which had been delivered to the squadron on the same day that Coull arrived.

With Lt-Col Doug Pidsley as Officer Commanding, 15 Sqn's duties were mainly convoy escort, anti-submarine

patrols and shipping reconnaissance. Its range of operations extended to the Palestinian coast and bombing raids were carried out against Crete and targets in the Aegean Sea.

Some sixteen SAAF squadrons were available in North Africa for the invasion of Sicily and were scattered over the entire Mediterranean Command but were all to be affected by the General Service Oath introduced some three months earlier for service outside of Africa. The Africa Service Oath, which all who had volunteered to serve outside of the Union had been required to sign, was only valid for service in Africa.

15 Sqn now found itself in the position of not being available for further deployment due to having a high percentage of Africa Service Oath personnel and until the situation was rectified, would find itself in a relative backwater of the war.

A top priority among the bomber units to be brought up to a fully General Service Oath basis was 3 Wing comprising 12, 21 and 24 Sqn.

After little more than a month with 15 Sqn in a supernumerary position converting onto the Baltimore, he was posted to 3 Wing on 16 June. Reporting on the 27th to its Headquarters at Senem in Tunisia, he worked in the operations room, finding an old friend in the form of Lt-Col Jack Mossop of NATS days there to welcome him. He had been severely injured after being shot down as OC 24 Sqn and was now serving as SASO of 3 Wing.

With the end of the North African campaign on 13 May, bombers in the Desert Air Force began re-organizing into a tactical force for the assault on Italy. 3 Wing moved from El Djem to Soliman airfield southeast of Tunis and bombing of Pantelleria Island, which needed to be taken before the invasion of Sicily, began

in May and was stepped up in early June. The Italian forces surrendered on 11 June and attention was focused on Lampedusa Island, which capitulated after a single day's bombing.

3 Wing then stood down until 2 July so as to train replacement crews, give the hard pressed ground crews a chance to service and repair the aircraft, visit the beaches of Cape Bon and sample the amenities that Tunis had to offer.

Suffering heavy losses, preliminary attacks were undertaken against targets on Sicily in preparation for the Allied landings on 10 July.

On the 21st Coull joined 21 Sqn, which had served with distinction throughout the Western Desert Campaign since its formation in May 1941, as a supernumerary and at a time when plans were being made to move from Soliman to Malta, where landing grounds were being vacated by fighter squadrons moving to Sicily.

The squadron was equipped with Martin Baltimore III light bombers, which, with their impressive performance, gave magnificent service in the Mediterranean theatre and were popular with their crews. 3 Wing bombed roads in central Sicily right up to their last operational day in Africa and early the next morning on the 20th Bostons and Baltimores, with C-47 Dakotas carrying the ground personnel, took leave of the African continent and landed at Hal Far airfield on Malta a short time later.

The crews found living conditions very different to those at Soliman and were as close to peacetime standards as they could hope to find. Officers were housed in the main administrative building on the

airfield while the rest of the men were billeted at the nearby village of Berzibbagia.

Anti-aircraft shell splinters littered the airfield and damaged many aircraft tyres while the narrow runways did not suit the Wing's habit of putting formations in the air all at once. Aircraft could now only take off in pairs and the total per squadron was reduced from eighteen to twelve but with practice the squadrons were soon able to form up within eight minutes from take-off.

By the end of July 3 Wing had flown a number of missions against targets in Sicily, particularly Paterno, areas of Randazzo and Adrano, the towns of Regalbuto and Agira and Milazzo Harbour.

Coull was not to spend much time on Malta as he left on 1 August for the SBD and the long journey back to the Union. Arriving at ZAS on the 5th, he was to enjoy thirty days home leave and for the first time see his son Malcolm, born just before he left 15 Sqn almost three months previously.

On 9 September he left ZAS for Cairo, arriving 3 days later, thereafter followed two weeks of trying to catch up with his squadron. 3 Wing's stay on Malta was short-lived, as was its move to Sicily. During his absence the Sicilian Campaign had drawn to a close and the squadron bombers moved to Cuticchio near Mount Etna. The camps were prepared in attractive, cultivated countryside though intensely hot and rife with malaria. Coull rejoined the squadron on 26 September and now officially on its strength, was given command of "B" Flight just days before the German withdrawal from Naples and 3 Wing's move from Sicily to the Italian mainland

prevented any further operational flying from taking place. Settling in at Tortorella Landing Ground, part of the massive Foggia complex, it was to be three weeks before undertaking their next missions. Rain and heavy cloud began affecting sorties and the deteriorating weather would continue to hamper operations for several months to come.

Coull was transferred to 12 Sqn on 25 November. The squadron had been formed by re-numbering 2 Sqn in December 1939 and, equipped with ex-SAA Junkers Ju86s converted into bombers, moved to Nairobi in Kenya. It could claim to have undertaken the SAAF's first bombing raid of WW2 and having later flown Martin Marylands, it had since been re-equipped with Douglas Bostons.

The Boston Mk III was one of the great medium bombers of WW2; universally popular with 12 and 24 Sqn, it delivered sterling service during the North African and Italian campaigns, achieving fame for the "shuttle-service" around-the-clock bombing support during the "Gazala Gallop". One drawback was a relatively light bomb load of 2 000lb and its days became numbered as Spitfires were utilized as fighter-bombers each capable of carrying two 500lb bombs.

Now converted onto the type, his first operational mission with 12 Sqn took place on 7 December, leading the second flight of six aircraft in the formation. The target near Orsogna was obscured by cloud and the enemy position could not be bombed.

At half past nine the next morning a formation of twelve aircraft took off from Tortorella Landing Ground on a raid to bomb troop and gun positions at a crossroad near Miglianico. In the lead

aircraft Boston III no. Z2162 "O" the crew comprised Coull, navigator P/O J.M. Woodham, a Rhodesian serving in the RAF but attached to the squadron, and W/T air gunners Lt. Ralph Hutchinson and FSgt Johannes Hamilton.

Shortly thereafter Coull indicated his intention to land, the reserve took off and minutes later he landed with petrol spilling from a fuel tank cap. Five minutes later he took off again bursting the port tyre in the process and caught up with the formation, the reserve breaking away and returning to base.

After experiencing intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire over the target, the gunners discovered a fire in the bomb bay. All attempts to extinguish the fire failed and as soon as the flight had crossed Allied lines Coull gave the order for preparing to bale out, wagging his wings to indicate his intention to break away and signalled by hand to his no. 2 and 3 to open out.

Pulling up he told his crew to jump, Hamilton the bottom gunner going first. Before his parachute could fully open he struck a Boston leading the sub flight below on the wing between the fuselage and engine nacelle and then on the tail unit, being killed instantly. Woodham, still finding time to write down the time 10h30 and the word "Bale" on his log pad, heard Hutchinson report that Hamilton had baled. He then jettisoned his own hatch, reporting his doing so and after allowing time for the top gunner to bale he called to Coull "Observer baling".

Lt. David Luke, the pilot of the Boston, possibly did not see Coull's signal to break away and the damaged aircraft spun out of control and struck the ground. Three of the crew managed to bale out but Luke's parachute caught on the wing of his aircraft and he was killed either by

the fall to earth or being dragged down by the aircraft. Hamilton's body was found close by to the remains of the Boston and buried the same day in the Military Cemetery at Casalbordino. Woodham and Hutchinson landed safely and were brought back to the squadron the same night by 317 Coy. RASC.

After his crew had left Coull tried to operate his emergency hood lever but failed; the damage to the aircraft having distorted it. Standing on his seat he tried to push the hood open but as smoke was now entering the cockpit he decided to crash land on the beach near to a DAF communications landing strip. Making a successful forced landing with the wheels retracted he crawled out through the window uninjured, several RAF personnel arriving and extinguishing the fire. He was flown back to the squadron by the communication flight.

Every one of the aircraft in the formation had been holed by the anti-aircraft fire, one landing on only one engine and the last to return had to belly land after its hydraulic system had been damaged. Though the cost had been high the squadron received messages of congratulation for "splendid co-operation" from V Corps and the 1st Canadian Division.

Bad weather settled over much of Italy during the rest of December halting both air and ground operations and his next mission took place only eleven days later, leading twelve aircraft in a mission led by 21 Sqn to attack four enemy ships off the southern tip of Pasman Island. With him on board was Lt. Alexander Forrest, the top gunner in the ill-fated Boston on his previous mission. Comprising one cruiser, one destroyer and two other unidentified ships all the aircraft, except the last three,

bombed the cruiser but all the bombs overshot the target.

The last mission with Bostons was flown three days later and the squadron was stood down until 27 December when the squadron's remaining fifteen Bostons left Italy and flew to Setif on the Algerian coast near Tunisia. One Boston was left behind at Catania during their refuelling stop and another at Tunis with engine trouble, but the crews later continued with the journey and joined the rest of the squadron. Bidding farewell to their much-loved aircraft the crews left by road for Telergma and conversion onto the Martin B-26 Marauder. Other aircrew and the technical personnel flew direct to Telergma by C-47 Dakota.

At the USAAF's No. 1 Bombardment Training Centre situated in the Rhumel Valley, the crews were initially trained on North American B-25 Mitchells, smaller than the Marauder they were similar in crew layouts and most importantly, a lot more forgiving.

One particular feature of both that was absent on the Bostons was the two-pilot configuration, with one acting as commander and the other as co-pilot. The Marauder had been meant to carry a crew of seven but in the SAAF the navigator doubled as bomb-aimer. Designed as a high performance medium bomber it was a challenging aircraft to fly and early in its career earned a reputation as being a death trap. As units and crews became more experienced losses decreased and it became a formidable tactical support bomber and was used with great success by 12, 21, 24, 25 and 30 Sqns of the SAAF. With an active strength of some seventy aircraft 3 Wing became the major daylight bombing force in the British and Commonwealth Air Command supporting

ground operations on the eastern side of Italy.

Miles Barnby, who had trained at Natal Aviation and crashed their Tiger Moth in 1938 arrived at the squadron on 20 January and on 4 February was appointed Officer Commanding in the place of Lt-Col "Babe" Wellington.

The crews and the new aircraft rejoined the squadron at Tortorella by 15 February 1944 but two days later by 7 o'clock the camp had been broken down and loaded onto trucks. Just after midday the long convoy reached Campomarino (also known as Biferno due to being situated at the estuary of the Biferno River on the Italian east coast) but mud and rain hampered efforts to set up camp for the next four days. The runway itself was a mile away from the camp, consisting of PSP (pierced steel plates) laid over a carpet of hessian across a marshy tract just off the beach and the inadequate roads were to suffer further with the increase in traffic following the Marauder's arrival on the 22nd.

The first operation was scheduled for the 27th but the weather prevented any taking place until the 2nd March.

The results of the raid on a marshalling yard at Knin in Yugoslavia were fair but an investigation found the fault to lie with the new Mk XIV bombsight. It needed a lot of servicing and aircraft were even flown back to Telergma for technicians with the right tooling to set them correctly.

Teething problems persisted for three months before the squadron began to hit targets with accuracy.

On the 6th and 7th April successful attacks were made on hydroelectric plants south of Terni but that afternoon disaster struck when a 500lb bomb being loaded

into a Marauder exploded. The aircraft was destroyed as was another, the aircraft Coull had flown that morning and a third was damaged beyond repair, eight ground crew were killed and eleven injured.

Rome fell on the 4th of June and 3 Wing concentrated on targets behind the enemy lines so as to cut off any means of escape. Attacks on roads and railways were met with varying degrees of success and persistent problems with the bombsight frustrated sorties on bridges and viaducts necessitating several repeat raids to achieve the objectives.

As the acting Officer Commanding for four weeks during Barnby's absence, Coull was pleased to announce in the Routine Orders that on 11 June the squadron had completed its 1000th operational sortie on the Marauder. This had been accomplished with the loss of only two aircraft on operations, both being brought down by anti-aircraft fire.

The squadron was now tasked to return to attacking marshalling yards and enemy defensive positions and Ancona, with its harbour installations, railway network and supply dumps, became a regular target.

On Sunday the 25th Field Marshall Smuts paid a visit to 3 Wing but due to an advance party having left for Pescara the previous day the squadron was in a state of disruption and was unfortunately unable to accept the honour of entertaining him.

Pescara, was a pleasant, though war-ravaged town regarded as being on the divide between the northern and southern halves of Italy. The airfield from which the wing was to operate was littered with wrecked German and Italian aircraft while

the hangars and buildings were damaged almost beyond use.

As soon as 24 Sqn had rejoined the wing operations began and at the end of the month Barnby returned from South Africa resuming command of the squadron, while Coull relieved Capt. Jan Haarhoff, the deputy flight commander of "A" Flight.

On 3 July he flew his last mission of his tour and a week later left for the SBD and return back home for service leave. The seemingly innocuous abbreviations OTE and RTU which appeared on many a document or signal hid a meaning joyous to any aircrew combat veteran.

"Operational Tour Expired" and "Return To Union" meant having survived everything the enemy could throw and going home to spend leave with family and loved ones followed by employment in a more comfortable environment.

Both Col. Mossop and Lt-Col Barnby acknowledged that he had completed an outstanding tour of operations and recommended that he return to Training Command but the JATS had however begun to contract and a few of the schools had already closed. He was therefore no longer likely to be required as an instructor and events back in Italy would dictate the direction the remainder of his wartime service would take.

On 13 July during a bombing raid over Montevarchi, an aircraft flown by Lt. John Webb, flying off the port side to Barnby in FB487 "B" blew up, the blast and shrapnel damaging other Marauders in the box. It had appeared to explode prior to encountering any flak and eventually the cause was thought to be two of its 500lb bombs colliding and subsequently detonating. "B" went down with its nose

blown off and the port engine on fire, bursting into flames on impact. Lt. Hutchinson, who had baled from the Boston Coull was flying the previous December was the only member of the crew who managed to bale out. His luck was however to run out almost a year later when a USAAF Liberator taxied into and severely damaged the Marauder he was in whilst on the ground at Bari. On 21 August Commandant Franz Burniaux of the Belgian Air Force who was attached to the squadron was appointed acting Officer Commanding.

While back in South Africa and awaiting his next posting he received a signal congratulating him on the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross and, it having been decided that he would be better utilized back in Italy, was recommended for the position of Officer Commanding 12 Sqn. This was approved by Lt-Gen Sir Pierre van Ryneveld and on 11 September he left ZAS once again for the Middle East and onwards to the SAAF Advanced Transit Camp in Italy. He returned to the squadron on the 24th September and on 1 October received his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

During his leave the Marauders had rarely returned from operations without damage from anti-aircraft fire and for much of August the squadron could only provide six serviceable aircraft while the weather was to further restrict missions for the next three months. In mid October the Wing moved to Monsano where fierce competition was faced for the commandeering of suitable campsites, the Officers selecting the village's home for elderly women as their mess, the original inhabitants being settled elsewhere.

The Jesi airfield complex was situated three miles away and apart from the four squadrons of 3 Wing was also home to 5 Sqn SAAF equipped with P-51 Mustangs, two USAAF Thunderbolt Sqns and an RAF Repair & Salvage Unit. The harsh winter of 1944/45 closed many airfields and the Allies were forced to concentrate units on the few all-weather airfields but even here the incessant rain grounded the Marauders for almost the entire month with only three missions being flown.

In December enemy targets within the Po Valley and transport infrastructure were bombed whenever the weather permitted and the intermittent weather during January and February allowed some attacks to be made against marshalling yards in northern Italy and sugar refineries with the aim of denying the enemy accesses to fuel substitutes.

In April the squadron provided close support for the 8th Army fighting in the Po Valley and on the 16th SAAF Marauders for the first time flew a mission equipped with SHORAN (Short-Range Air Navigation), a secret automatic bombing apparatus utilizing radar and intended for use in pathfinder-led bombing raids. Previously only used by the USAAF in Italy, remarkably accurate results were achieved even bombing through cloud when the target was completely obscured. Though the tests conducted by the squadron proved highly successful it had arrived too late to be of any benefit.

Towards the end of the month they had the opportunity of bombing marshalling yards at St. Veit in Austria. On 2 May German forces in Italy and western Austria surrendered and the squadron celebrated VE Day a week later.

The squadron now made its last move northward to Udine and leave parties were accommodated at a holiday resort allocated to 3 Wing at Lake Como.

Whilst at the SBD in July before he returned home an application form had been filled in for the award of the Africa Star. This British Commonwealth campaign medal was one of a series of eight instituted for service in World War Two and as the African campaign had ended it was thus the first to be awarded. The requirements for the award of the medal included service in North Africa for one day between 10 June 1940 and 12 May 1943 while the award of the "North Africa 1942-43" clasp required service with the WDAF or NWAFF between 23 October 1942 and 12 May 1943. In terms of the requirements he was thus entitled to both the medal and the clasp, even if he had made the cut-off date by only two days.

Now informed that AG War Records in Pretoria had rejected his claim for the clasp, he pointed out that he had arrived in the Middle East on 1 May, reported to 15 Sqn on 9 May 1943 and been taken on strength the next day, a fact supported by documentation held at SAAF Administration Headquarters Middle East Forces. AG War Records replied stating that according to their records he had reported to 15 Sqn on the 15th May and therefore did not qualify but could submit a sworn statement reflecting the actual date of his arrival.

The matter was subsequently resolved in his favour and he was later authorized to wear the silver rosette denoting award of the clasp on the medal ribbon.

On 16 July he handed over command to Lt-Col John Viney, previously of 30 Sqn. On the 20th he bid farewell to the squadron and a few days later was on his

way home with thirty days service leave and two weeks vacation ahead of him.

By 1945 the winding down of the JATS was well under way with many of the flying schools having been disbanded and others, at the war's end were used as Demobilization Centers.

With no position as instructor vacant, MAFD Valhalla granted him authority to live out until assignment to a Disposal Depot for demobilization.

In September he received both a signal and a letter congratulating him on the award of a Bar to his Distinguished Flying Cross, one of only four Bars to be awarded to members of 12 Sqn and thirty in total to the SAAF during the war.

During this period of enforced inactivity he made unofficial enquiries about any position he could fill until his eventual demobilization. He expressed the desire to be involved with the Shuttle Service which had been expanded to repatriate ex-POWs and other troops back to South Africa but had no wish to be stationed in Cairo nor did he fancy Pretoria – the reasoning being that accommodation for him and his family would be very difficult to come by at most of the stations and, having been separated for so long did not want that situation to repeat itself.

He was quite prepared to be posted to Southern or Northern Rhodesia, Kisumu or Nairobi and at a push even Khartoum or Tabora but his services were obviously not required as nothing became of his inquiries.

On 20 December authority was given for the MAFD to route him to the Wentworth Assembly Area in Durban with effect from 18 March 1946 for indefinite release from full time military service on a partial

demobilization (i.e. subject to recall if required).

He made application to join the Permanent Force but whilst he was waiting to hear if he would be offered a position he was considering an alternative.

At Stamford Hill Aerodrome Natal Aviation's one hangar now stood empty and the other was occupied by AFS Congella's T-stores while the aerodrome itself was still under SAAF control though it was believed that the airfield would be returned to the Durban Municipality in due course. In March 1946 he wrote to the DGAF enquiring about the possibility of housing a couple of small aircraft in the empty hangar and being granted the temporary use of an office as he wished to re-establish a flying school on the site.

After six long years of forced dormancy club and private flying were showing signs of revival; American manufacturers such as Aeronca and Piper had now replaced De Havilland as the principal manufacturers but war surplus Tiger Moths could be bought very cheaply and remained a major type on the civil register for many years.

His venture was not destined to be since a Citizen Force element of 35 Sqn was soon to be formed there and the SAAF maintained a presence until the closure of the airfield in 1959.

Offered a position in the Permanent Force, he decided to accept it and on 1 May he was appointed as Major (on probation) in the GD (General Duties) Flying Branch with confirmation of his rank after 6 months.

He was due to report to 68 Air School in Lyttleton on 24 June for processing but tragedy struck his family when his

newborn son passed away two days after birth. Granted an extension on compassionate grounds he reported to 24 Group at ZAS on 16 July to take up the position of Staff Officer Training and OC Flying.

He had little opportunity for flying himself as administrative work and courses at the Military College kept him busy for the remainder of the year.

As civil aviation recovered from the dormant years of the war airshows around the country became major attractions for the public and the SAAF, eager to promote itself, was a willing and more often than not, a major participant. Coull thus found himself serving on the airshow committees of a number of these events in the Pretoria / Witwatersrand area.

On the morning of 30 August 1946 he was presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar he had been awarded during the war. At the time the biggest such ceremony of its kind to be held in Pretoria, some 170 decorations and medals were presented by the Governor-General G. Brand van Zyl in the gardens of Government House, but like most other veterans of the war, it would be almost nine years before would receive his campaign and war service medals.

With the drastically reduced peacetime SAAF it was decided in 1947 to revive the Pupil Pilot Training Scheme in order to provide a reserve of pilots for the auxiliary squadrons then being formed. As a result the Union Air Training Group was reformed with 8 flights eventually being established at various centers around the country, all under the control of the Central Flying School at AFS Nigel.

The first course was scheduled to begin on 1 April 1947 but inadequate advertising led to a shortage of applicants, an

improved campaign was successfully launched later in the year and the first course began in January 1948. Due to his position at 24 Group Coull was required to inspect and pass on instructions in December to the selected flying clubs at Wonderboom (1 Flt), Baragwanath (2 Flt), Rand Airport (3 Flt), Tempe (4 Flt) and Youngsfield (5 Flt). In his Officer Report for 1947 Col. Stephen Melville described him as a highly efficient and conscientious officer who was mastering the techniques of PF Administration remarkably well.

1948 was also a busy year for him as he once again carried out official inspections of the flying schools either during or after Phase 1, which consisted of fifty hours flying on Tiger Moths, and sixty hours ground instruction carried out over a period of three months.

Gloster Meteor III no EE429, the first jet powered aircraft to come to South Africa had been shipped out to Cape Town in April 1946 and in the following month began trials in the Cape and on the Highveld. After the completion of the trials in December it was transferred to 7 Wing at Waterkloof Air Station and for the next two years was a popular draw card at air shows. Some forty SAAF pilots, including Coull, had the opportunity to convert onto the Meteor before it was returned to the UK in 1949.

On 20 December 1948 he was appointed acting OC 24 Group with the temporary rank and pay of Lieutenant Colonel during the absence of Col. Melville and held this position until 31 January 1949.

In April he attended Special Administration Course no 1 at the Military College for three months and on 6 July was appointed Officer Commanding of 21 Sqn – his old unit from the North African

and Italian campaigns which had been reformed in 1946 with Lockheed B-34 Ventura bombers, at the now renamed Air Force Station Swartkop.

On 8 October he submitted his resignation, citing no particular reason save that he wished to take up a civilian occupation. It is likely that it was prompted by the discomfort that many English speaking officers felt in the SAAF following the victory of the National Party in the May 1948 General Elections. It would have been expected of him to be fluent in reading, writing and speaking Afrikaans and a language tutor was delegated to provide lessons but with little success.

His resignation was readily accepted and as he had requested took effect from close of duty on 15 October, command being handed to Capt. Matthys Uys. Approval was also given for him to be immediately transferred to the SRFO with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel for which he was eligible in view of his holding that rank for eighteen months during the war.

Now a civilian, he worked for a time at the Rand Flying Club in Germiston and, what would seem to be his last involvement with aviation, served on the committee of the Air Pageant held at Rand Airport on 27 May 1950.

Thereafter he seemed to embark on a completely new career path by becoming manager of the Durban Country Club.

Following the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 he inquired whether a post was available at 35 (City of Durban) Auxiliary Sqn as he still wished to maintain an active interest in the SRFO. In September he received a reply thanking him for his interest but politely declining the offer of his services.

He seemed to leave aviation now firmly behind him as he left South Africa in November 1954 to take up the position of manager of the Castle Brewery in N'Dola, Northern Rhodesia.

He returned in May 1958 to manage the Botanical Hotel in Pietermaritzburg, thereafter moving every two years or so to another location including the Air Force Club in Durban, the Franklin Hotel in Griqualand East, the MOTH Club, the Durban Social Club and finally the Union Club in 1970.

He retired to Uvongo on the Natal South Coast and passed away after a long illness in Port Shepstone on 27 December 1979 at the age of 65, leaving his wife and four sons Malcolm Roy, John Christie, Desmond Humphrey and Richard Walter.

Today little remains of that Golden Age of South African aviation that he was so familiar with and played such a large part in.

Most of Stamford Hill Aerodrome now lies under sports stadiums, N.M.R. Avenue and the M4 Northern Freeway and the only surviving structure is the historic terminal building; largely unchanged it now serves as the headquarters of the Natal Mounted Rifles. Railway lines now cover the site of the hangars used by Natal Aviation and the NATS though the military buildings and barracks continue to be used by Natal Command.

Pietermaritzburg Aerodrome has been developed into what is now known as Oribi Airport while Baragwanath Airfield closed during the 1980s and is now an industrial area, Aero-ton.

Rand Airport continues to be used by small commercial operators and owners of light aircraft. The terminal building, almost all of the original hangars and the Rand Flying Club's clubhouse survive and remain in use.

African Air Transport did not reform after the war but a new charter and training company with the name Natal Aviation was formed in the 1950s and though it operated from Stamford Hill Aerodrome and later Virginia Airport it had no link to the original company.

Zwartkop Air Station became Air Force Base Swartkop and, largely unchanged remains an operational SAAF air base.

21AS disbanded in February 1945 and the airfield became the main civil airport for Kimberley while the army now uses

most of the wartime buildings and hangars.

62AS reverted back to its original name of Central Flying School and continues to train pilots for the SAAF but now serves at AFB Langebaanweg, a surviving portion of the site at Tempe in Bloemfontein continues to be used by light civil aircraft.

23AS closed in June 1944 but Waterkloof Air Station, now AFB Waterkloof and much expanded, is home to the SAAF's transport squadrons.

12 Sqn was reformed in 1963 with Canberra bombers but disbanded in 1990 while 21 Sqn, renumbered 25 Sqn in 1951 was reformed in 1968; it serves today as the SAAF's VIP transport squadron at AFB Waterkloof.

Of the many aircraft types he flew examples of the Oxford, Anson, Jungmann, Tiger Moth, Hornet Moth, Dragon Rapide, Dakota, Hart Variant, Ventura and Harvard still survive in South Africa but only one is known with certainty to have been flown by him.

Of the eight impressed civil aircraft known to have survived the war and the intervening years are three noteworthy examples:

Hornet Moth ZS-ALA was imported into South Africa in 1937 and owned by Urban Campbell, Manager of Natal Estates at Mount Edgecombe. It operated out of Stamford Hill Aerodrome and the original logbooks show it was serviced by Natal Aviation and Coull would have carried out maintenance test flights and probably instruction on it. Impressed for war service it carried the SAAF number 2007 and

survived to be returned to civilian ownership in 1946.

Grounded in 1968 it remained in storage until being acquired by the SAAF Museum in 1981 and restored back to flying condition. It has since been retired from flying and is on display in the colour scheme it carried while serving with 27 Sqn late in the war.

Hornet Moth ZS-AKG, the winner of the 1938 air race and eighth in the 1939 air race also survives, though as a long-term restoration project. Having served as SAAF 1591 during the war it returned to the civil register and flew for a short time in Rhodesia as VP-YIN before becoming ZS-DIH in 1953 and being re-registered as ZS-ROY in 1973.

Hornet Moth ZS-AOA, ninth in the 1939 air race is the only other pre-war Governor-General's Air Race survivor. Having served as SAAF 1584 during the war it returned to the civil register and is airworthy in the USA as N74EC, still carrying its original South African registration marks.

Sadly not a single example of the eighteen impressed Gypsy Moths survived the war and of these little aircraft which contributed so much towards aviation in South Africa the largest component left is a sectioned engine on display at the SAAF Museum at Swartkop.

APPENDIX 1

AIRCRAFT OF NATAL AVIATION (Pty) Ltd.

ZS-ABP DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 1190

Built in 1929, it was registered in that November to Molly Reynolds of Ifafa, Natal. Subsequently sold to African Air Transport (Pty) Ltd. in April 1937 and operated by Natal Aviation. Valued at £250 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1500, serving with BFTS in 1940, then 70AS in Alexandersfontein outside Kimberley as instructional airframe IS231.

ZS-ACW DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 1888

Built in 1932, it was registered in that March to F. Beamish of Mooifontein, Lower Adamson, Cape Province before being sold to African Air Transport (Pty) Ltd. It was later marked as "I" on the rudder. Rebuilt by De Havilland (South Africa) at Baragwanath following a mid-air collision with Wapiti P613 of NATS on 4 April 1939. Valued at £250 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1498, serving with BFTS 1940, 68AS in Voortrekkerhoogte then Rhodes University Air Squadron in Grahamstown as instructional airframe IS229.

ZS-ACY DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 1895

Registered in June 1932 to DH(SA), it was the aircraft which Capt. Hawker flew to Durban to begin Natal Aviation. Crashed and written off probably early 1936.

ZS-ADH DH83 FOX MOTH
c/n: 4023

Registered in December 1932 to Capt. S. S. Halse, it was later taken over by the JLPC. Sold to African Air Transport and based at Natal Aviation during 1935/36. Exported to Southern Rhodesia and registered in February 1936 as VP-YBD, to Ted Spencer of Victoria Falls in June 1936. Registered in Northern Rhodesian in 1951 as VP-RCE. Returned to Southern Rhodesia and registered in 1954 as VP-YLS. Exported to South Africa and registered in April 1957 to Aerial Farm Services as ZS-CFP. It crashed at Oranjeville on 24 January 1958 and was scrapped at Rand Airport.

ZS-AEG DH84 DRAGON
c/n: 6030

Registered in July 1933 to Aircraft Operating Company it was sold to African Air Transport in May 1937 and based at Natal Aviation. Exported in June 1938 and registered in Southern Rhodesia as VP-YBY for Rhodesia and Nyasaland Airways. Impressed in September 1939 for service with the SRhAF during WW2 as 260 it was written off during 1944.

ZS-AEK DH85 LEOPARD MOTH
c/n: 7019

Registered in March 1934 to African Air Transport and based at Natal Aviation. It competed in the 1938 Governor-General's Cup Air Race. It was exported to Southern Rhodesia in 1939 and registered as

VP-YCH, but the marks were not taken up and it was impressed in October 1939 for service with the SRhAF as 252. Written off at Chiloani on 3 June 1944.

ZS-AEP DH85 LEOPARD MOTH
c/n: 7020

Registered in March 1934 to African Air Transport and based at Natal Aviation. It competed in 1938 and 1939 (race no. 18) Governor-General's Cup Air Races. It was transferred to the Randfontein Flying Training School in 1940 and crashed on 4 May 1940 east of Carolina en route from Lourenco Marques to Johannesburg, Mr. Stanley "Pop" People (DH Service Manager) and wife killed.

ZS-AEW DH83 FOX MOTH
c/n: 4035

Registered in Southern Rhodesia in March 1933 as VP-YAK. It was exported and registered in South Africa in June 1934 to African Air Transport and based at Natal Aviation before being sold to JLPC in April 1938. Impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1413, serving with 61 Sqn at Grand Central Aerodrome, AFS Germiston and finally AFS Zwartkop. Acquired by the JLPC in November 1946 and returned to the civil register. Exported to Kenya and registered in January 1947 as VP-KDS to Noon & Pearce Air Charters. It was written off on 15 March 1952 at Entebbe, Uganda.

ZS-AEY DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 844

Built in 1928 and registered in the UK in that September as G-EBZR to William Whiteley Ltd. Named "Safari II" for world

tour by the Vicomte de Sibour and his wife in 1928/29. Last owned by Phillips & Powis Aircraft at Woodley from April 1933. Exported to Southern Rhodesia and registered as VP-YAM. Owned by Maj. Wynne-Eaton then to C. E. R. Payne. Exported and sold in August 1934, registered in Union of South Africa to Wally Steyn. Sold to African Air Transport and based with Natal Aviation circa 1937/38. Transferred to AAT Kimberley August 1938. Valued at £250 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1499, serving with 69AS at AFS Germiston then Natal University Air Squadron in Durban as instructional airframe IS230.

ZS-AFE DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 1028

Registered in November 1929 as ZS-ABF to Nil Desperandum Aviation Co. Shabani, Southern Rhodesia. To Chritowitz Air Services Blantyre, Nyasaland 1932. Registered in November 1933 as VP-YAJ to Rhodesia & Nyasaland Airways. Exported in July 1934 and registered in Union of South Africa to African Air Transport. Refurbished at Natal Aviation and added to the fleet in November 1936. Crashed at Matatiele on 19 February 1937 and was rebuilt at DH (SA) at Baragwanath. Returned to Natal Aviation in January 1938 and marked as "6" on rudder. Sold to Pretoria Flying School (PLACO) at the end of 1939 and impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1436, serving with 70AS in Alexandersfontein outside Kimberley as instructional airframe IS215.

ZS-AFZ DH87b HORNET MOTH
c/n: 8048

Registered in February 1936 to African Air Transport. Based at Natal Aviation. Winning aircraft (race no 15) in 1937 Governor-General's Cup Air Race. Crashed at Cathkin Peak on 12 September 1937 and rebuilt. Valued at £645 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1542 and struck off charge on 1 December 1942.

ZS-AGO AVRO AVIAN IVM
c/n:

Ex SAAF ***. Registered on 12 December 1936 and based at Natal Aviation. Crashed 31 October 1937 and written off.

ZS-AJD DH82a TIGER MOTH
c/n: 3607

Registered in September 1937 to African Air Transport and based with Natal Aviation. Crashed near Kloof on 20 March 1938.

ZS-AKV DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 999

Registered in the UK as G-AAFY to Thomas Mill of Bournemouth. Last owned by Old Etonian Flying Club at Heston from January 1934. Exported and registered in January 1938 to African Air Transport. Based at Natal Aviation circa 1939. Valued at £250 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1491, serving with 69AS at AFS Germiston and 73AS at Wonderboom Aerodrome as instructional airframe IS225 in 1942.

ZS-AKW DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 1001

Registered to Aeroclub of Mozambique as C-PMAA, re-registered as CR-MAA (first aircraft on Mozambique register). Exported and sold in July 1937, registered in South Africa to African Air Transport and based with Natal Aviation. To BFTS, it forced landed on 14 January 1940 while being flown by Lt. Adriaan Botha on a test flight. It was repaired but crashed after stalling in a steep turn on 22 February 1940. The instructor Mr. Herbert Jacques was killed and pupil pilot Rochford injured.

ZS-ANV DH82a TIGER MOTH
c/n: 3672

Registered in June 1938 to African Air Transport and based at Natal Aviation, marked as "II" on rudder. Valued at £900 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1511. To BFTS 1940, 1AS 1941 and CFS 1942. Struck off charge in April 1946 and restored to Civil Register in that November to Dr. D. E. McKenzie. Destroyed by fire at Benoni/Brakpan 10 November 1956.

ZS-AOJ DH9

Ex RAF *****, ex SAAF ***. Registered in July 1938 to Natal Aviation and probably used as an instructional airframe or procedure trainer. No record of flying activities can be found and it was probably scrapped shortly afterwards.

ZS-AOL DH60G GYPSY MOTH
c/n: 1007

Registered in UK in May 1929 as G-AAGZ for Robert Boyd. Last owned by Gerhard Bouwer of Stag Lane October 1929. Exported and registered in June 1930 as ZS-ABW to Peter Falk of Windhoek then Capt. N. R. Cook of Pretoria. Exported and registered in April 1933 as VP-YAL to R. J. Nash, then to Shabani Flying Club. Crashed at Beit Bridge in 1937. Exported to South Africa and rebuilt. Registered to African Air Transport in August 1938 and based at Natal Aviation. Damaged in an accident late 1939, repaired and transferred to AAT Windhoek in November 1939. Valued at £250 it was impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1497, serving with BFTS in 1940, 69AS at AFS Germiston then 73 AS at Wonderboom Aerodrome as instructional airframe IS228.

ZS-ARE DH94 MOTH MINOR
c/n: 94005

Registered in August 1938 to African Air Transport and one of two sent to South Africa as demonstrators it was based at Natal Aviation from September 1939 to June 1940. Valued at £670 and impressed for service with the SAAF during WW2 as 1474, serving at 2SFTS, ZAS in August 1940. It became a communications aircraft with 61 Sqn, WAS and in April 1941 went to 3AS at Wonderboom Aerodrome then 25AS at Standerton in February 1942. It was written off after being hit by Harvard 7437 at Springbokspruit Landing Ground on 28 February 1944.

APPENDIX 2

AIRCRAFT TYPES FLOWN BY ROY COULL

Unfortunately Roy Coull's flying logbooks did not survive his numerous moves in later life and so specific details will now never be known. The following impressive list had been compiled from documents in

AIRSPEED AS.10 OXFORD
ARMSTRONG WHITWORTH ATLAS
ARMSTRONG WHITWORTH SISKIN
AVRO V
AVRO 616 AVIAN IVM
AVRO 621 TUTOR
AVRO 626
AVRO 631 CADET
AVRO 641 COMMODORE
AVRO 652A ANSON Mk 1
AVRO 671 (CIERVA C.30A) AUTOGIRO
BRISTOL BLENHEIM I, IV & V
BUCKER Bu-131 JUNGSMANN
De HAVILLAND DH60G GYPSY MOTH
De HAVILLAND DH 80a PUSS MOTH
De HAVILLAND DH82a TIGER MOTH
De HAVILLAND DH83 FOX MOTH
De HAVILLAND DH84 DRAGON
De HAVILLAND DH85 LEOPARD MOTH
De HAVILLAND DH87b HORNET MOTH
De HAVILLAND DH89a RAPIDE

his personal file and unit records held in the SANDF archives.

In all he flew in excess of 4 500 hours in the following civilian and military aircraft:

De HAVILLAND DH94 MOTH MINOR
DOUGLAS DB-7 BOSTON III
DOUGLAS C-47 DAKOTA
GLOSTER GAUNTLET
GLOSTER METEOR III
HAWKER HART / AUDAX / HIND
LOCKHEED B-34 / PV-1 VENTURA
MARTIN 187 BALTIMORE III
MARTIN B-26 MARAUDER II & III
MILES M33 FALCON
MILES M2H HAWK
MILES M.19 MASTER III
MONOSPAR ST
NORTH AMERICAN AT-6 HARVARD
NORTH AMERICAN B-25 MITCHELL
REARWIN SPORTSTER
SARO CUTTY SARK
TAYLOR J-2 CUB
VICKERS VALENTIA
WESTLAND WAPITI

APPENDIX 4

CITATION FOR THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Major Coull has been the senior Flight Commander in this Squadron for the last eight months, and as well as being largely responsible for the successful conversion of aircrews from Bostons to Marauders, had led the Squadron on 35 occasions.

He has led formations of Marauders 33 times with a high degree of skill and consideration; during these raids he has always pressed home his attack to advantage and has not lost a single aircraft.

His own courage and determination for which he has stood out as an example to his subordinates are exemplified in the following incident:

On December 8th 1943 he led a formation of 12 Bostons over an enemy camp at Miglianico Cross Roads; in these parts it was known that flak was extremely heavy.

On this occasion it was no exception and every one of his aircraft was holed and one was lost.

He himself was shot down just after release of the bombs, which were dropped with such good effect that two

signals of congratulations were received from Army Commanders. His aircraft was on fire in the bomb bay; he ordered his crew to bale as soon as he crossed our lines; when they were clear he found he was unable to release his own emergency hatch, as flak had distorted it. By steady nerve and very fine piloting he made a very hurried crashed landing on the beach and scrambled clear.

He returned to his Unit that afternoon, and was flying again within ten days, proof of this Officer's personal courage and high sense of duty and example.

CITATION FOR THE BAR TO THE D.F.C.

Lieutenant-Colonel Coull was appointed Officer Commanding No 12 Squadron, South African Air Force on 24 September 1944.

He had previously completed an operational tour with conspicuous success, culminating in the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross on 8 September 1944.

Since commencing his current and second operational tour, Lt-Col Coull has personally led his Squadron on twenty-four occasions, with considerable success. The results of his raids were invariably satisfactory and frequently outstanding. He has distinguished himself by his great courage and outstanding sense of duty, coupled with an unswerving determination and marked qualities of leadership which he displayed at all times.

In particular on 28th December 1944 he led his Squadron on a raid on Udine Marshalling Yards where enemy flak was

intense and very accurate.

Notwithstanding the fierce opposition, Lt-Col Coull pressed home his attack with good effect, the bombs from his formation falling accurately on the Marshalling Yards.

His aircraft was holed in 40 different places by the Anti-aircraft fire, but he brought it safely back to base without further damage or injury to his crew. The intense flak holed four other aircraft in the formation.

It was Lt-Col Coull who first led his Squadron across the Alps to bomb a Marshalling Yard in Austria, which mission was successfully accomplished under his able leadership.

During many raids on enemy lines of communication intense and accurate flak was encountered not only on approach to target but also upon the bombing run and turn off. No amount of flak, however, ever deterred Lt-Col Coull from pressing home his attacks with vigour and determination, and his magnificent example was the

admiration of all personnel under his command. His steadfastness of purpose and utter devotion to duty are among the qualities which have contributed to his outstanding

leadership, while his heavy responsibilities as a leader have been carried out with that ability and judgement which befit an Officer of his calibre.

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Yellow Wings	Dave Becker

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PILOT AND AIRCREW LOGBOOKS

T. H. Archbell	J. P. Lambinon
A. J. Botha	S. S. Urry
T. D. Catchpole	M. J. Uys
A. P. de Kok	W. J. van der Merwe
B. L. Hedding	

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES: PRETORIA

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SANDF ARCHIVES

Personal file 203104 R. M. Coull

Air Group files: box 105, 106

DGAF Group 1 files: box 240

SAAF Group files: box 32

War Diaries: 21 Air School (box 144)

23 Air School (box 146)

62 Air School (box 151)

24 Group

12 Squadron (box 25)

15 Squadron (box 28)

21 Squadron (box 38)

3 Wing (box 62)

Union Air Training Group

Waterkloof Air Station / 7 Wing

A.G.(1) box 177

SAAF MUSEUM

Documents and notes

Photographs

INDIVIDUALS – THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Betty Archbell

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Phillip Botha

Ken Smy

Jean Urry