

## **BELGIAN VISCOUNT**

Driving home to the ferry after a Holland and Belgium trip last month I saw the unmistakable shape of a Viscount looming up ahead. I pulled over and noted the registration, G-AZNA still visible under the wings and on the rear fuselage and the name 'Viscount Banjul' under the cockpit. It is mounted with its undercarriage lowered, in an all-white livery, on three poles next to 'Kokoriko' nightclub in the town of Zomergen, Belgium.



This V.813 series Viscount was built in 1958 for South African Airways (SAA) and registered as ZS-CDX 'Wildebees'. It first flew in December 1958 at Hurn airport, powered by four Rolls-Royce Dart 525 engines. In 1972, the Boeing 727 replaced the Viscount in SAA services, and so after operating the last SAA Viscount services with sister aircraft ZS-CDY, it returned from South Africa to England. It was then sold to British Midland Airways (BMA), reregistered as G-AZLU and then operated from 1972 to 1982.



In March 1974 G-AZLU landed fast and steep at Newquay Airport, St Mawgan, Cornwall, on a service from Heathrow Airport resulting in the collapse of the nose undercarriage in a rearward direction. Captain Monty Rogers, his crew of 3 and 21 passengers all escaped without injury. The aircraft was recovered by a crew from RAF St Mawgan but they chopped off the nose undercarriage doors as there was an urgent need to clear the runway to allow the RAF Avro Shackletons to continue their maritime patrols. BMA tried to get the use of a hangar to carry out temporary repairs but this was not available so they made up a scaffolding frame to support large canvas sheets in a dispersal area near the terminal building. After repairing the nose undercarriage the aircraft was ferried back to East Midlands Airport for further repairs flown by Captain David Court and crew. The undercarriage was left locked down.

From November 1982 to October 1984 it was operated by Manx Airlines as G-AZNA then transferred back to British Midland Airways from November 1985 to 1986. In February 1988, G-AZNA operated the final Viscount service for BMA to the Channel Islands. In November 1988, the nose wheel collapsed again during landing at Gatwick Airport, after a ferry flight from Southend Airport, ready for a charter flight to Jersey.

It was back to Africa from late 1988 to 1990 operating for Gambia Air Shuttle. Finally withdrawn from service in October 1990 after 32 years of flying, G-AZNA was then stored at Southend Airport. Sold in September 1992, it was ferried by road to Belgium. Interestingly, 80% of the 445 Viscounts built were for export customers.



**Any newsletter contributions, ideas or comments to:**  
**Chris Gilbert-Norton, 12 Meadow Close, Burley, Ringwood, Hampshire, BH24 4EJ**  
**Home number: 01425 403547 Mobile number: 07977 721503 E-mail: gilbey66@gmail.com**