

Timeline - Rhodesian Aviation

by Dave Newnham

- 5-Mar-20 First aircraft lands in Rhodesia – Vickers Vimy G-UABA “Silver Queen II” at Bulawayo.
- 6-Mar-20 Silver Queen II crashes on take-off.
- 8-Apr-20 First aviation company registered, Airoad Motors Ltd (No aircraft).
- 11-Jun-20 Avro 504K "Rhodesia" first aircraft to land at Salisbury, Thompson & Rutherford.
- 16-May-22 Rhodesian Aerial Tours Company starts operations.
- 13-Aug-22 Rhodesian Aerial Tours only aircraft (an Avro named Matabele) damaged on take-off, Rusape; presaging the company's liquidation.
- 9-Aug-27 Rhodesian Aviation Syndicate formed.
- 27-Aug-27 Dougie Mail's first flight in his DH6B "Baby Tank" for Rhodesian Aviation Syndicate.
- 17-Apr-29 Rhodesian Aviation Syndicate becomes Rhodesian Aviation Company.
- Apr-29 Salisbury Light Plane Club formed. Sandy Wynne-Eyton instructor.
- 13-Jun-29 Avro Avian, Rhodesian Aviation Company's first (owned) aircraft arrives (ex Johannesburg Light Plane Club).
- Apr-31 Rhodesian Aviation Co begins weekly Bulawayo-Salisbury service.
- Jul-31 Christowitz Air Services, Blantyre established
- 5-Aug-31 Christowitz Air Services begin regular Blantyre-Beira service.
- 20-Jan-32 Imperial Airways open Nairobi/Cape Town section of Cape to Cairo air route.
- 27-Apr-32 Imperial Airways England/South Africa air route open to passengers in both directions.
- 27-Jul-33 Rhodesian Aviation Co begin weekly passenger & goods service Salisbury-Gatooma-Que Que-Gwelo-Bulawayo-Johannesburg.
- 3-Aug-33 Christowitz Air Services begin Salisbury-Blantyre service.
- 12-Oct-33 Rhodesian And Nyasaland Airways (RANA) formed.

1-Feb-34 Christowitz Air Services absorbed by Rhodesian And Nyasaland Airways.

Apr-35 De Havilland (Rhodesia) Ltd begins flying training.

Aug-35 RANA begin Salisbury-Beira and Blantyre-Beira services.

17-Jul-35 Spencer's Air Services, Victoria Falls commences operations.

15-Aug-35 First Southern Rhodesia Air Rally held at Belvedere, Salisbury.

1-Nov-35 Southern Rhodesia Staff Corps Air Unit (1st Bat Rhodesia Regt) established; as a Territorial unit.
Flying Training by DH (Rhodesia) Ltd begins at Belvedere.

17-Jul-36 Regular Airmen join the Permanent Staff Corps of the Southern Rhodesia Defence Forces.

21-Jul-36 First group of military aircraft apprentices sent to RAF Halton (UK) for technical training.

13/15-Aug-36 First SR International Air Rally.

2-Jun-37 Imperial Airways starts Southampton/South Africa flying boat service. (via Beira)

29-Jun-37 Empire Air Mail Programme inaugurated by Imperial Airways. RANA start feeder services to connect with the flying boats at Beira.

Nov-37 Second course of SR Staff Corps pilots commissioned and start training (Including E.W.S. "Ted" Jacklin).

Dec-37 Cranborne aerodrome inspected by Colonel J.S. Morris, (OC SR Forces). Hawker Harts (SR 1 & SR 2) ready to fly.

21-Feb-38 De Havilland Tiger Moth, SR7 received by Air Unit (equipped for instrument flying).

1-Apr-38 Air Unit renamed Southern Rhodesia Air Unit (SRAU) and separated from the territorial forces.

12-May-38 First SRAU trainee pilots awarded wings.

10-Aug-38 RANA begin weekly Lusaka-Fort Jameson service.

Sep-38 SRAU airmen collect 6 Hawker Audax from Middle East and fly them to Southern Rhodesia.

Apr-39 3 Gloster Gauntlet purchase arranged.

13-May-39 No 2 SRAU Pilots course receive wings (Including "Ted" Jacklin).

Jun-39 Lieutenant Colonel C.W. Meredith AFC, appointed DCA and OC Air Unit.

Aug-39 Territorial Force members of the Air Unit called-up for full time service.

28-Aug-39 Air Unit deployed to Kenya (war station).

19-Sep-39 Air Unit renamed Southern Rhodesia Air Force (SRAF), and A & B flights SRAU (in Kenya) become No 1 Squadron, SRAF.

19-Sep-39 Southern Rhodesia Air Services (SRAS) formed.

4-Jan-40 Formation of Rhodesian Air Training Group, RAF (RATG) announced.

1-Feb-40 Personnel and assets of RANA impressed into SRAS.

1-Apr-40 No 1 Sqn SRAF re-designated No 237 (Rhodesia) Squadron, RAF. [SRAF ceases to exist].

24-May-40 1st RATG unit starts training operations; No. 25 EFTS, Belvedere.

7-Jun-41 SRAS runs weekly to: - Johannesburg, Bulawayo, Salisbury, Lusaka, Ndola, Kasama, Mbeya, Dodoma, Nairobi & Kisumu.

1-Aug-41 Southern Rhodesian Women's Auxiliary Air Services inaugurated.

15-Aug-41 RATG forms Rhodesian Air Askari Corps for defence of airfields.

20-Aug-41 No 266 Squadron RAF receives the name 'Rhodesia' after its number.

12-Sep-41 No 44 Squadron RAF receives the name 'Rhodesia' after its number.

1-Oct-45 SRAS ceases military activity, becomes a civil airline.

1-Jan-46 RATG Headquarters moves to RAF Kumalo.

1-Jun-46 National Airline, "Central African Airways" starts operations, SRAS dissolved.

1946 Airmen accepted into the Southern Rhodesia Staff Corps. They commence building an Air Force (from scratch).

15-Sep-46 Southern Rhodesia Staff Corps, "Communications Squadron" formed at Cranborne.

19-Nov-46 CAA introduce first Viking scheduled services in Africa.

1-Dec-46 RATG re-designated Air Training Wing (SR).

9-Dec-46 CAA introduce first D.H. Doves on scheduled services in Southern Africa.

12-Nov-47 "SRAF" receives first Dakota (SR25), gift from Gen Jan Smuts, SA Prime Minister.

28-Nov-47 Southern Rhodesia Air Force (SRAF) re-established as a permanent unit (Roundels and bars).

11-Apr-48 BOAC commences London-Johannesburg freight service via Salisbury (using Lancastrians)

4-May-48 BOAC commences London-Johannesburg flying boat service via Augusta-Cairo-Luxor-Khartoum-Port Bell-Victoria Falls-Vaal Dam.

10-May-48 RATG re-formed.

12-Jun-48 SRAF receives 3 Avro Anson Aircraft from RAF.

16-Aug-48 First air freight service in Africa, CAA's "Copper Trader" service starts (leased Bristol 170's).

Sep-48 Northern Rhodesia Aviation Services formed.

1-Mar-49 Lieutenant Colonel "Ted" Jacklin appointed Commanding Officer of the Southern Rhodesia Staff Corps.

May-49 First 2 Harvards purchased from the South African government arrive.

Jul-49 Auxiliary Air Force (SRAAF) formed for refresher training of experienced aircrew to man 1st operational Squadron.

1-Jul-50 CAA introduces all-inclusive package tours.

7-Nov-50 Last Solent (BOAC flying boat) flight UK-SA passes through Vic Falls.

22-Mar-51 Spitfire F.22s arrive ex 1st UK ferry, to equip first of two SRAF fighter squadrons.

25-Mar-51 CAA begin day excursion flights (to Victoria Falls).

1-Jul-51 CAA introduces low-fare night flights to Johannesburg and Bulawayo.

1-Sep-51 First SRAF Short Service course for pilots started.

27-Sep-51 No 1 Course, SRAAF receive wings (including 1st air observer pilot of the Southern Rhodesia Artillery).

19-Dec-51 SRAF Spitfire F.22s arrive ex 2nd UK ferry.

Feb-52 The Air Force operating from Kentucky.

1-Mar-52 Start of the second SRAF short service pilot training course.

1-Apr-52 SRAF move to from Cranborne to Kentucky (New Sarum).

21-Aug-52 No 1 SRAF Short Service Course receives wings at Kentucky.

Sep-52 New Sarum air base fully operational.

14-Dec-52 First fatal accident since the war (within the colony), Auster hits power cables over Hunyani river (Lt Corruthers RhA killed).

29-Mar-53 CAA's first fatal air accident; Viking VP-YEY in Tanganyika.

4-Apr-53 CAA starts "Zambesi Colonial Coach", Salisbury - London service (Vickers Vikings).

Jul-53 SRAAF disbanded.

6-Aug-53 Final graduation parade of RATG; the Royal Air Force ensign lowered for the last time at Thornhill.

1-Sep-53 SRAF renamed Rhodesian Air Force (RhAF) upon creation of Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Roundel 3 Assegai).

23-Nov-53 First Percival Pembroke aircraft arrives at Salisbury airport for RhAF.

12-Dec-53 First jet aircraft delivered to RhAF – 4 de Havilland Vampire FB.9s.

31-Mar-54 RATG closes down, RAF departs Rhodesia (Training ceases 1-Jan-54).

15-Oct-54 HM the Queen confers 'Royal' prefix and Air Force becomes the Royal Rhodesian Air Force (RRAF).
Force accepts a strategic role as part of Commonwealth defence.

24-Oct-54 Second C-47 Dakota delivered for RRAF.

4-Nov-54 First 4 RRAF Percival Provost aircraft delivered.

18-Dec-54 Last flight of a Spitfire F.22 in RRAF service (SR64).

Jan-56 RRAF squadrons increased from three to four.

5-Mar-56 Thornhill Air Base, Gwelo activated; No 4 Squadron to moves to Thornhill.

25-Apr-56 First of CAA's Vickers Viscounts arrive.

1-Jul-56 Salisbury International Airport opened at Kentucky.

1-Feb-57 BOAC introduce Bristol Britannia on London - Johannesburg service (via Salisbury).

Jul-57 Queen Mother's visit to the Federation (to open Kariba Dam).

late-57 RRAF squadrons begin annual deployments to the Middle East as part of Commonwealth commitment.

11-Dec-57 Raff Bentley lands first Vampire on the new runway at Thornhill (testing the newly completed runway).

31-Dec-57 Belvedere Airport closed.

1-Jan-58 Mount Hampden airport opened.

Jan-58 First RRAF detachment to Aden in the Middle East.

15-Mar-58 No 1 Squadron moves from New Sarum to Thornhill.

Jul-58 No 1 Squadron detached to Aden to support the British forces following a coup in Iraq.

25-Sep-58 No 2 Squadron reformed at Thornhill.

Jan-59 CAA inaugurates 'SkyCoast' Services (air and ocean liner holidays)

4-Jan-59 Kumalo Airport closed & Last CAA Viking flight.

1-Feb-59 'Skybus' services Salisbury/Blantyre introduced by CAA.

21-Feb-59 First RRAF internal security operation - in Nyasaland.

9-Mar-59 First 4 English Electric Canberra aircraft received by RRAF.

15-Dec-59 No 3 Squadron receive first Canadair DC-4M-2 (Argonaut) aircraft.

11-Mar-60 First parachute drop carried out by No. 3 Squadron with 9 African Askari's and four Europeans.

Mar-60 No 6 Squadron (Canberra) disbanded and No 2 Squadron reformed to train flying instructors and ground attack.

16-May-60 "Flame Lily" packaged holidays introduced by CAA.

Jul-60 RRAF engaged in the Congo crisis.

1-Oct-60 Last "Zambezi" Viscount service to London by CAA.

1961 RRAF Pilot training re-commenced.

14-Jan-61 RRAF Volunteer Reserve established.

14-Apr-61 RRAF General Service Unit (GSU) formed.

Jun-61 First co-operation exercises with SAAF.

30-Jun-61 AVM E.W.S. Jacklin retires from the RRAF.

5-Oct-61 RRAF Parachute Training School (PTS) formed.

28-Apr-62 First helicopters delivered (Alouette 3's), No 7 Squadron formed.

Oct-62 CAA lease a DC-6B (until Dec-65).

15-Dec-62 First Hawker Hunter aircraft received by No 1 Squadron RRAF.

31-Dec-63 RRAF reverts to Southern Rhodesia control when Federation breaks up (Roundel 1 Assegai).

Oct-64 No 4 Squadron moves to Thornhill.

1964 No 5 Squadron moves to New Sarum.

1964 Silver paint scheme changed to two tone green camouflage.

Jun-64 Air Rhodesia formed.

11-Nov-65 Rhodesia declares unilateral independence (UDI).

28-Apr-66 'Battle of Sinoia' - first notable anti-guerrilla operation by the RRAF.

Nov-66 Beech Baron C55 received from a South Africa by RRAF.

2-Mar-67 RRAF Receive first Lockheed Aeromachi AL60 B "Trojan" aircraft.

1-Aug-67 No 6 Squadron reformed as training squadron, 7 x Provost T52s.

1-Sep-67 Air Rhodesia takes over local routes from CAA (CAA dissolved on 31-Dec).

14-Mar-70 Rhodesia becomes a Republic.

8-Apr-70 Air Force name changed to Rhodesian Air Force (RhAF). "Lion and Tusk" roundel adopted.

1970 Air Force Police become the Air Force Security Branch.

24-Jan-70 First flight of locally built aircraft, VP-WDA by Rhodesian Aircraft Manufacturing Co.

28-Nov-72 Air Force celebrates its 25th Anniversary.

1973 Start of RhAF 'Fireforce' (hunter-killer) helicopter operations against guerrillas.

14-Apr-73 Air Rhodesia receives three Boeing 720-025 jet airliners. Services commence 31-Aug.

22-Jun-73 Mount Hampden renamed Charles Prince.

21-Sep-73 No 1 Squadron RhAF presented with its Standard.

31-May-74 First Rhodesian Air Force Volunteer Reserve pilots qualified as aircraft Captains.

11-Sep-74 FRELIMO takes over Mozambique.

3-Mar-76 Mozambique ban Rhodesian aircraft, flights to Blantyre and Beira withdrawn.

1977 ComOps (Combined Operations Headquarters) formed to coordinate air-land operations.

23-Nov-77 Operation Dingo - attack on Chimoio guerrilla camp in Mozambique.

3-Sep-78 Air Rhodesia Viscount VP-WAS shot down.

18-Oct-78 Operation Gatling - attack on Westlands Farm (Chikumbi) guerrilla base in Zambia.

12-Feb-79 Air Rhodesia Viscount VP-YND shot down.

26-Feb-79 Operation Vanity - attack on guerrilla base Vila da Lusa in central Angola.

3-Mar-79 Country renamed Zimbabwe-Rhodesia but air force title unchanged.

5-Sep-79 Operation Uric - attack on FRELIMO base at Mapai & bridges at Barragem in Mozambique.

1-Oct-79 Operation Miracle - attack on ZANU guerrilla camps around Chimoio in Mozambique.

18-Apr-80 Rhodesia becomes Zimbabwe: -
 Air Force renamed Air Force of Zimbabwe.
 Air Rhodesia renamed Air Zimbabwe.