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**Flight Ops 28 – February 2011**  
**Flight to Bethulie**  
**Pilot – Stephen Bowden and Henri Mestre**  
**Flight Submission by Stephen Bowden**  
**Introduction information – Ernie Alexander**

### **Introduction**

On our return trip from our Christmas vacation in early January we overnighted in Bethulie just over the mighty Orange River. Our host at Ou Velies turned out to be Peter and Annette who do community work for a local school..

Over late night homemade pies and coffee it turned out that Anette was desperately trying to collect enough funds to buy shoes for kids at the school....the kids had encouragingly requested shoes via the local Hospice as top of the wish list of needs going into the new school year.

Always on the look out for deserving charities and deserving causes where the final product goes directly to the needy and especially to kids, I decided that Rainbow Airbridge should get involved. On our return to Johannesburg, we sourced 60 pairs of school shoes as per the list of sizes Annette had given us. We were also contacted by E-Pap who had a consignment of nutritional food supplements that the charity had purchased, which needed to get to Bethulie.

Enter Stephen Bowden who had flown for Airbridge before, He needed to complete 4 hrs on a Cessna 210 as part of a training exercise and I encouraged him to fly the consignment - what a perfect match. We set Stephen up to fly into Gariep Dam the nearest strip from Bethulie early in February, but the weather played havoc. Luckily the training was held over until the next opportunity arose which was Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February.

I coordinated the pickup and drop off arrangements with Stephen, Peter and Annette and was happy to get an email later in the day to say the mission had been accomplished.

By Ernie Alexander

### **Flight**

We met at Grand Central Airport early Sunday morning with the our mission supplies; in what turned out to be the most glorious weather, to load up Henri Mestre's Cessna 210, ZS-JCM. We



carried out our pre-flight preparation and armed with some homemade flapjacks, fresh, sweet, hot coffee and were airborne by 07H30.

The flying conditions were near perfect and the air at altitude was crisp and clear with not a single pothole in the sky. Our only minor irritation was that we had a head wind which gave us a little more time to work through Henri's lunch box and gave a longer than expect view of the beautiful Fee State. Two hours later, we began the descent and were glad to see the expanse of the mighty Gariiep Dam spread out before us. The dam wall sluice gates were open and provided a great photo opportunity from the air. We joined overhead and proceeded to land on runway 28 without incident.



We were met with typical country hospitality and gratitude, in the form of two caring and genuine ladies, Annette and Marina who were armed with refreshments, homemade pies and something to take home for those who couldn't make the flight. We were not going to go hungry!! The supplies were offloaded and during our short stop over the girls organised a quick photo shoot. It was soon time to strap in and turn the prop and point the Cessna 210 back towards her home at Grand Central. We were glad to assist the needy while at the same time getting in some good flying training. Memories were made and we look forward to the next opportunity to take to the skies to do duty.



Thank you to Rainbow AirBridge for allowing us to be part of this mission as we once again realised just how privileged we are to be able to be doing some good, whilst enjoying our beautiful country from above.

By Pilots Stephen Bowden and Henri Mestre