



Night & Winter Operations

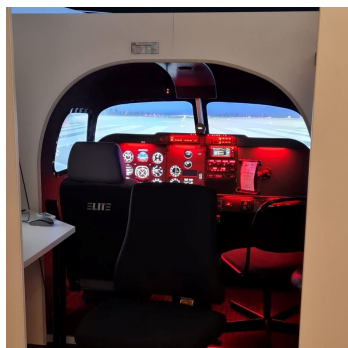
Happy New Year! We hope you've had a good start to 2025.

I've just returned home from Teuge where I spent the last 2.5 weeks at MATC (Mission Aviation Training Centre). The aim of this visit was to obtain my Night Rating and complete some more Guided Experience Building (GEB), but unfortunately, the weather wasn't quite on my side. As my flight from the UK was on final approach to Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, we descended into a dense layer of fog that was blanketing the entire of the Netherlands. I didn't realise then that it would be more than a week until I got to see the sun again, and that this weather would prevail for the majority of the time that I was there.

My first morning back at MATC was really enjoyable. After catching up with the instructors and some of the other students over coffee and speculoos biscuits, I was straight into the simulator with Jeroen, the Head of Training, to begin preparing for my Night Rating. This involved exposure to various types of weather and terrain so that I could experience, in a controlled environment, some of the sensory illusions that accompany flying at night. However, the refresher flight I had scheduled for the next day with one of the other instructors was eventually cancelled due to the fog. A combination of low clouds and rain meant that my Night Rating was postponed the following night too. As a result, I spent the majority of my first week back in the Netherlands in the Briefing Room at MATC working on my ATPL (Airline Transport Pilot Licence) theory, whilst hoping and praying that the weather would eventually improve.

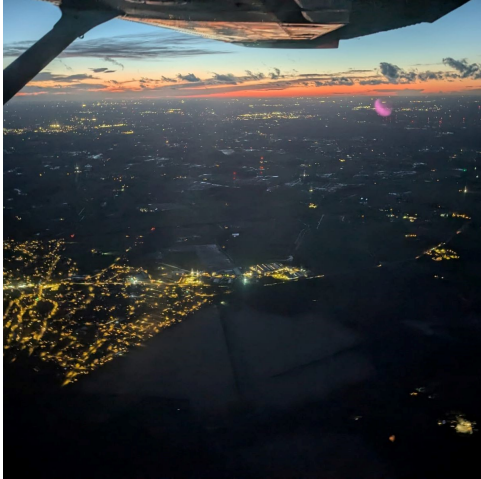
Despite the less-than-promising start, the weather did begin to improve towards the end of my first week. I was able to squeeze a 1-hour refresher flight in with an instructor until the arrival of a weather front forced us to return to Teuge earlier than originally planned. However, it was great to be back in the cockpit after 6 months away, even if I was a bit rusty at first. I found the additional instructor oversight and teaching helpful after such a long time away.

Although my Night Rating had originally been postponed until Wednesday of week 7, the weather forecast and conditions improved quite suddenly on Monday afternoon. Therefore, at 4 pm Arwin (one of the MATC instructors) and I made a last-minute decision to attempt the Night Rating that same evening. This resulted in a flurry of activity as it gave us less than an hour to prepare some food and an overnight bag, refuel and preflight the aircraft, and submit our flight plans for the night ahead. We ended up taking off from Teuge shortly after sunset, exactly 1 minute before the runway closed for the night.



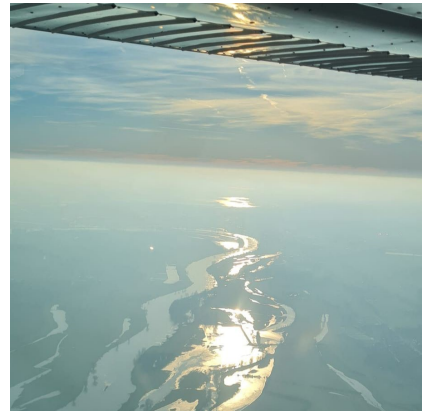
Above - the simulator at MATC and my view of the overcast weather from the Briefing Room.

The flight took us to Münster in Germany, where we completed 11 'touch and go' landings before stopping for a short break. We then set off for a cross-country flight down to Dortmund, before heading east over to Paderborn and returning to Münster where we arrived back just before 2 am to spend the rest of the night in the crew rest room. Despite the tiredness, it was an amazing experience and the clear skies gave us fantastic views of both the night sky above us and various towns and cities lit up below. The only downside was the crosswinds, which although great from an overall training perspective, were too strong to enable me to complete the 5 solo night take-offs and landings I needed to finish my Night Rating. I am planning to complete this when I return to Teuge in the spring instead.



Above - sunset over the Netherlands and parked next to a Lufthansa jet in Paderborn.

Throughout the remainder of my time at MATC I was able to complete 2 local training flights by myself to focus on airwork (namely stalls, steep turns, and emergency drills). I was also able to perform a longer return trip to Valenciennes in France - a 2-hour 10-minute flight in each direction that involved briefly entering German airspace before flying across the entire of Belgium and its complicated airspace structure. Although difficult to plan, this flight did prove to be a useful learning experience. The fog that persisted at a low level across the entire route presented visibility challenges throughout, and it meant that I had to be mindful of the risk of airframe icing (something I've not had to consider before). The length of the flight also meant that available daylight added to the overall time pressures, as did the language barrier when refuelling in France.



*Top row - ready to depart Teuge and fog over Belgium.
Bottom row - on the ground in France and racing the sun back to Teuge.*

Back in the UK, Bekah and the girls were able to enjoy a week-long holiday in Wales with Bekah's parents which inevitably included trips to multiple play cafes and soft play centres to keep T, our eldest daughter entertained. She seems to be on the verge of dropping her post lunch nap, which has been something of a respite for us in this period of newborn-induced sleep deprivation. We are also planning to start potty training in earnest with her in the coming days!

Our youngest daughter, A, turned 3 months old just a few days ago. She continues to grow at an alarming rate and will be moving into her 12-18-month clothing any day now!



Above - family photos from January, including a colour coordinated A & T.

What's Next?

I am continuing to prepare for my next round of ATPL exams that I will hopefully be sitting in either March or April. We will then be returning to MATC for a longer period in the spring, this time as a family, to complete some additional Guided Experience Building. I am also due to attend a MATC flight camp in Germany to receive specialist training on short and soft field (grass) runways, and I will hopefully be able to complete my Night Rating as well.

Praise Points

We are hugely grateful to God and to you, our family and friends, for the following answered prayer since our last Prayer Letter:

1. For a valuable period of winter and night flying at MATC for Jordan. I was also surprised at just how quickly I was able to get back into the routine of flying again.
2. For the enjoyable time that Bekah and the girls had on holiday in Wales.
3. For God's provision as we build support, both in prayer and financially. We have had such an encouraging response in this area, including from many people who we've never even met before.

Prayer Requests

Please pray:

1. For Jordan as he continues studying for his Module 2 ATPL exams. This round includes some particularly difficult topics including Flight Planning and Performance, and Radio Navigation.
2. For T (and parents!) as she begins potty training in the coming days and looks set to drop her naps.

Support Us

All MAF overseas staff are asked to build a team of partners who will accompany them in the work God has called them to do through prayer and financial giving. This is based on the Biblical example of people combining their different individual callings (to go, to give, and to pray) to serve isolated communities. Would you consider supporting us in this way?

Please do get in contact with us if this is something that you would like to do. Alternatively, you can also set up a regular or one-off donation via our Staff Support page on the MAF UK website. www.maf-uk.org/overton-cox

All donations go directly to MAF UK and are used to offset the costs of the training and help MAF achieve its mission of bringing help, hope, and healing through aviation.

And finally, we want to say a big thank you to all of you for your continued support to us as a family as we continue on this journey together. It really would not be possible without you all.

It has been really encouraging to know that so many people are praying for us. Do let us know how we can be praying for you too!

If you have any questions about MAF or the Future Pilots Programme (FPP) you can contact us at any time by clicking the 'Email Us' button above, or by reaching out to us directly.

With love, The Overton-Cox Family