

MICK BAKER



50 years ago we graduated and for me it was a posting to Aberdeen. An exciting place to work because of the developing oil industry. Always something new happening. A new radar, a new control tower, a new terminal and new aircraft types. It was a time when I was a family man with two young daughters. The climate was harsh for us southerners and when an opportunity arose for a posting to LATCC it was taken without second thought. Most of my remaining career was at LATCC, first at West Drayton then much later at Swanwick. Several different positions and watches later I was looking at retirement in 2009 after 40 years' service.

My hobbies included travelling, photography and private flying. I had a share in a group owned aircraft. My ATC career lasted longer than my marriage with a divorce coming in the late 90's. My two daughters and three grandsons remain close to me, and I see them as often as I can.

In the later years of my career, I accumulated a lot of days in lieu for various tasks I was undertaking. In fact it was 80 days. Together with my annual leave my last day at work was about five months before my official retirement date.

What did I do? Well I always loved travelling, so I bought a business class round the world ticket with the Oneworld Alliance. The day after my last ATC duty I arrived at Heathrow to start the journey and to make things more interesting I planned to do the trip in exactly 80 days. It was "Around the World in 80 Days in Lieu"! For the duration of this trip, I was still being paid and employed by NATS! It was and remains the best holiday I have ever done.

In retirement I made the decision to leave the UK and live overseas. My chosen place was Koh Samui, a small Thai island in the Gulf of Thailand. I'm still living there with my Thai partner and enjoying the expat community and lifestyle. I kept my house in Guildford which is now a rental house managed by an agent.

I continued with my flying, some in Asia, but mostly during my annual UK visits. Every good thing comes to an end, which in the case of my flying, ended when I lost my medical. An eye optic nerve problem. Maybe I could have got the medical back but it would have involved waiting one or two years without the same problem reoccurring. Considering my age, the lack of a general aviation scene in Asia and the medical problem it was time to retire from flying and I sold my aircraft share in 2018. Flying was a lovely hobby, and I have many fond memories which will stay with me forever.

However not everything in life is perfect as I have some health issues. I guess at our age most of us have something or other going on so it's no different for me than anybody else.

My other love of life is travelling, and I have managed to do some fantastic trips. So far, I have been to 158 different countries. There are still some destinations which I have not yet visited and would love to see. Even though I'm slowing down a bit, I hope in the years to come I can continue with this fantastic journey of worldwide travel.