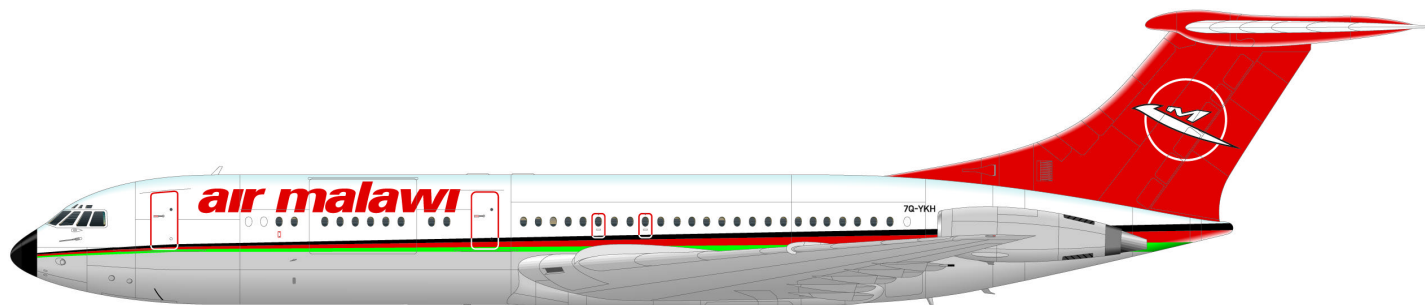


AIR MALAWI



Malawi, a small land-locked African nation with a large UK expatriate community, was serviced by Air Malawi which was formed as a subsidiary of Central African Airways (CAA) when Malawi became independent from Britain in 1964. When CAA was dissolved in 1967, Air Malawi emerged as Malawi's national carrier, owned by the Government.

In 1965 work began on Chileka's main runway to enable the operation of the newly acquired BAC 1-11 and also Comets and VC10s flown by East African Airways and BOAC. By early 1966 Chileka had become an international airport able to handle most of the then, first generation jets although crews found the runway difficult to land on, with night landings being the hardest to achieve as the runway was exceedingly narrow and not well lit. Chileka gradually became a major hub of VC10s over the next few years and is considered to be one of the few airports in the world that has played host to such a variety of VC10 liveries. BOAC, BA, EAA and Air Malawi all flew VC10s to and from Chileka, and BUA also ran sanction busting flights from Chileka whilst unable to fly to Rhodesia when British sanctions were applied to bring the self declared independent country back into the UK fold. For Christmas 1968, the MOTH club of Malawi chartered a BOAC VC10 to take 100 holidaymakers to the UK for a month. This was the first VC10 charter from Malawi and the first

organised by a social club - the Memorable Order of the Tin Hats was the affectionate title given to Malawi's ex-Servicemen's Club.

In February 1974, Air Malawi began VC10 services to Gatwick using BCAL Standard VC10s in full BCAL livery but using Air Malawi flight numbers then, on 27th November 1974, BCAL's Standard VC10 G-ASIW was sold to Air Malawi and re-registered as 7Q-YKH. Four Air Malawi crews were trained to operate the VC10 and flight training was organised by BCAL using Prestwick as the training base. BOAC simulators at Heathrow were also used to train Air Malawi pilots and route training included three trips to the UK and Johannesburg under the supervision of a BCAL Training Captain. On the second trip to the UK, Air Malawi Pilot Soccie Van Rensberg found himself over Abbeyville with the weather in France and the UK below the accepted minimum. He opted to land at Heathrow airport and, on the approach, he broke cloud at 200ft unaware that his VC10 was the first and last aircraft to land at Heathrow that morning. On a later flight, 7Q-YKH was one of thirteen aircraft stacked over Lydd as the cloudbase at London was again below minima when the Navigator asked for permission to try to land at Stansted because the aircraft was low on fuel. Permission was granted and the VC10 was only one of three aircraft able to land at the airport that morning.



Newly painted in Air Malawi's full colours, 7Q-YKH is towed across the apron at Gatwick Airport on the occasion of the first service to Chileka Airport, Blantyre, Malawi, which was to take place on 3rd December 1974.