



ROGER

DAYS WITH TROPIC AIR
March 2011 - August 2015

Tribute

At day break on the 30th January 2016, we got news of Roger's death. Details trickled in throughout the weekend, and the reality was hard to believe. Anti-poaching flying, as Roger had done so many times before, is something we also regularly undertake in Northern Kenya. By nature it's dangerous, and we are all highly trained with expert teams. The helicopter is essentially the most effective and valuable platform to track people that are armed and to mobilise anti-poaching teams into hot spot areas.

Roger was flying for a cause he greatly believed in, and has been called a 'true hero' by many. We have watched as Roger's story has gone viral around the world, making a massive impact on ivory poaching awareness, and bringing to light the bravery and dedication of so many individuals and conservationists.

We are devastated by the loss, and are grateful that we got to know Roger well during his 4 and half years at Tropic Air, firstly as a line pilot and then as Chief Helicopter Pilot. We watched him flourish as a pilot and as a person.

It always amazes that Roger started his working life as an accountant in the UK, a far cry from being a bush pilot in the African wilderness! However his accounting background was never amiss – he often stepped into our accounts office to lend a hand, or cast his eye over some new accounting legislation!

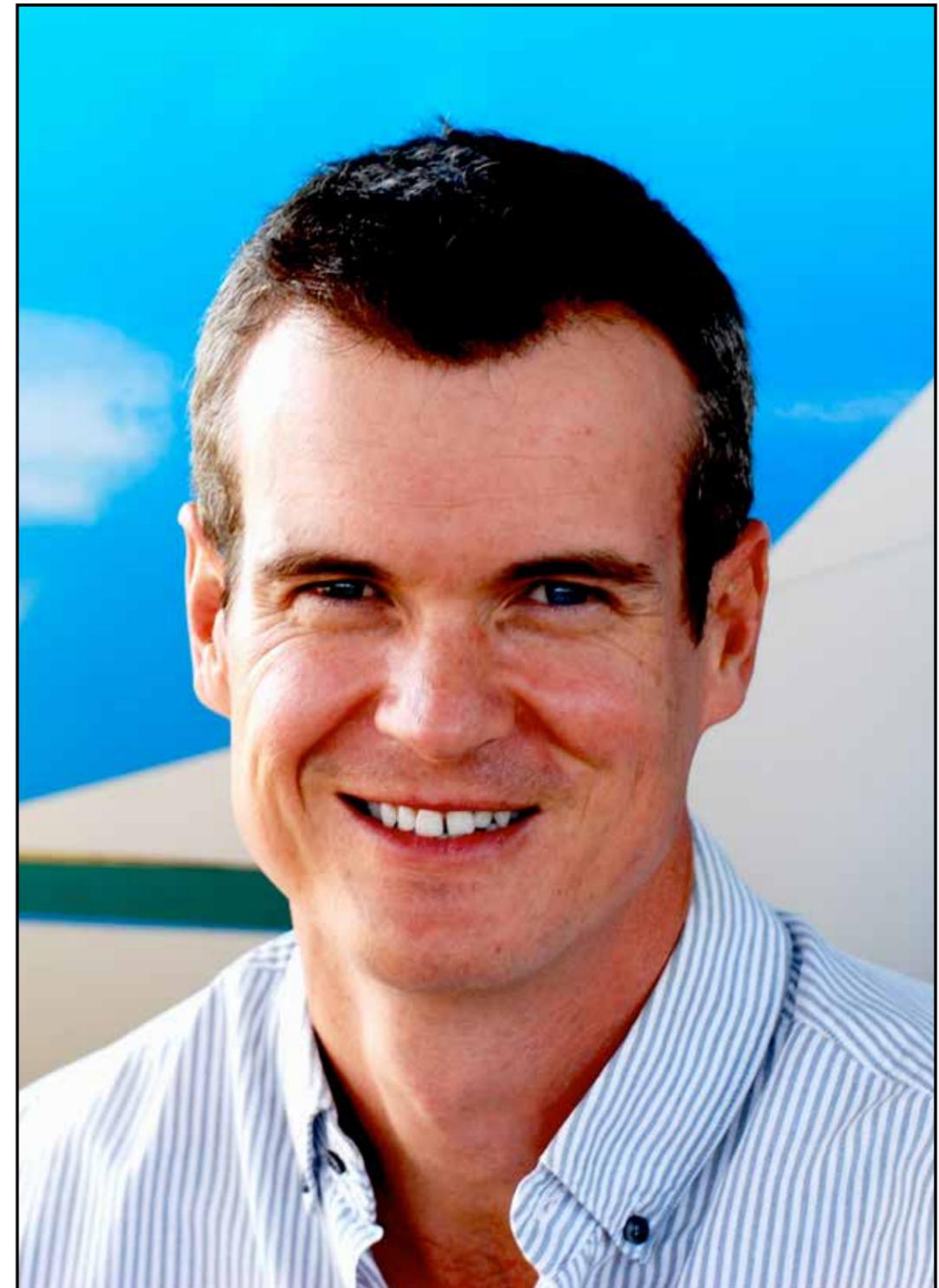
Much of the flying that Roger did with Tropic Air involved locating to remote destinations (and countries) for days and weeks on end, providing much needed helicopter support for special tasks. It included anything from backing the British Army Training Unit in Kenya (BATUK) with rangeland aerial clearance, to medical evacuations, oil and geological support in corners of Ethiopia that no-one has ever heard of, and pilot-guiding helicopter trips all over East Africa.

When Roger announced that he wanted to leave Tropic Air to pursue his flying career in Tanzania, our paths would still cross we all knew. In early January, sure enough, Rog was back with us for a week, piloting on one of our heli safaris in northern Kenya. He was elated and we spoke about doing more of the same ad-hoc flying when things got busy and his own commitments allowed.

We will remember him for his exceptional talent as a helicopter pilot, his great sense of humour, and the tragic way he lost his life whilst making a significant impact on elephant poaching awareness in East Africa. Our thoughts are with you, his family.

From us all at Tropic Air,

Jamie Roberts



These are some of Roger's profile pictures that we used on the website and in our marketing during his days with us. He always had something to say about his picture!

This was the very first profile picture - taken at Nanyuki Airfield - June 2011.

Profile pics



Email from Roger - October 2012

'I found myself in quite an interesting spot this morning so had a crack at getting a picture for my bio on the website. It's a nice shot scenery and heli wise. I look rubbish (I felt like a bit of an idiot - should have smiled more) but when it is cropped and reduced to the size required, you can't really see my face anyway so I was thinking it might do for the time being. See what you think. It's taken on a rock feature on the army range - army people in the heli.'

January 2014

This picture was taken by a friend- Julian Wright, as Roger flew over the peaks of Mount Kenya.

We used this picture a lot in all our promotional marketing material.



January 2013

Taken by Jamie Roberts whilst on a scenic helicopter excursion in the north of Kenya. The Suguta sand dunes are found just south of Lake Turkana and are part of the Gregory Rift Valley. This is one of our favorite places in Kenya. Not many people know that it even exists, and its only really accessible by helicopter.



June 2015 - this picture was taken shortly before Roger left Tropic Air, by Cinematographer, Dru Mungai.

Lake Turkana, July 2013



Kenya

In January 2016, Roger came back to help us with a safari.



Mathews Range, ancient Cycad forests



Southern end of Lake Turkana - Nabuyatom Crater



On the Suguta sand dunes



Through the 'hoodoe valley' in the Suguta - Gregory Rift Valley



Southern end of the Suguta - saline wetlands



Low level through one of the gorges in the Suguta



Pokot dancers - Roger (left) Jamie (right)



Flying over the Ewaso Nyiro River that bisects the arid Samburu landscape



Roger was piloting one of Tropic Air's Eurocopters. The other chopper was flown by Jamie Roberts, and these photos were taken by Richard Roberts (Jamie's nephew) who was the professional guide on the safari.

Photos that Rog shared with us!



Above photo: 'The crowd was well behaved so we invited one of them to sit in the helicopter using the policeman as a translator. We put her in the passenger seat and played some music through the headsets. Was quite fun.' (Email dated Feb 2014, Arba Minch, SW Ethiopia, geological oil suvery)



'Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return.'

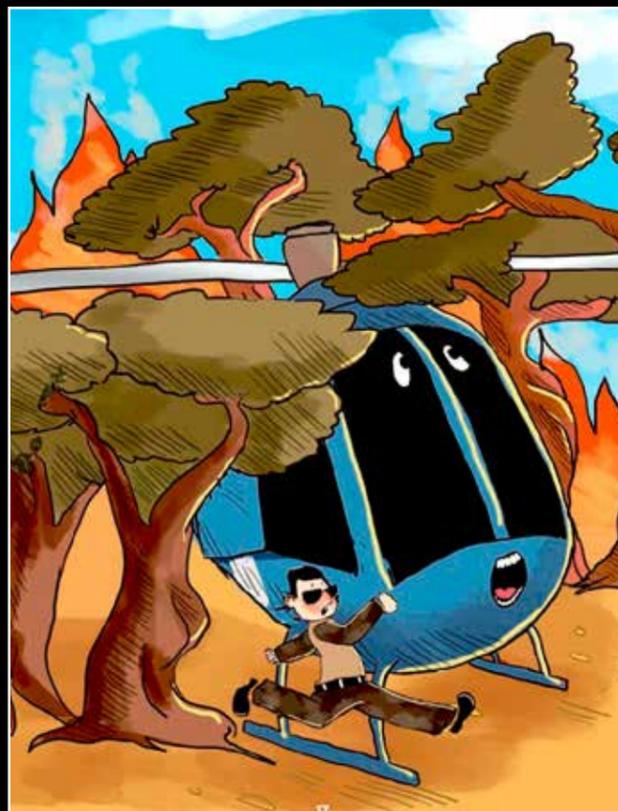
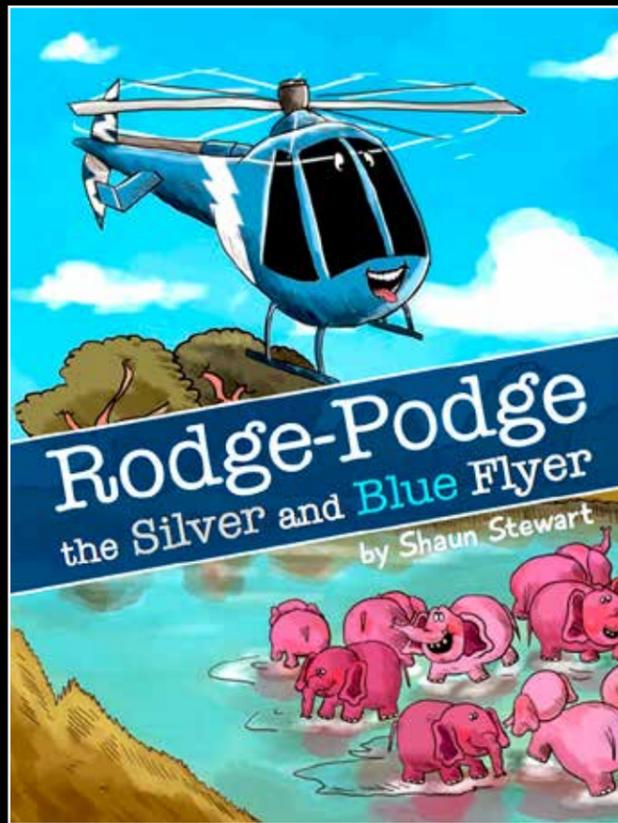
Leonardo da Vinci



Georgina Goodwin, professional photographer, joined Roger and Mario (fellow pilot) on the Hui family safari in Kenya, in July 2013. The Hui's are generous supporters of conservation in East Africa.

'Roger was skillful and careful with the doors open over Lake Logipi, knowing exactly what was needed to get a good shot. He spent a lot of time playing with the kids, and took responsibility for cleaning up. He was professional, young and full of energy. I will remember that always about Roger.' Many of Georgina's photos are used within this presentation, including the cover photo, double page spread and back photo.





'Rodge-Podge the Silver and Blue Flyer came about after a dare by my wife, who has also written children's books, followed by flying with Roger Gower, the real Rodge-Podge. My friend Roger is nicknamed Rodge-Podge by his nieces and isn't a smiley helicopter. He is a pilot. Roger and I have occasionally worked and played golf together since 2011 in Kenya. Rodge-Podge is fiction with one exception. In summer 2012, Roger really did land his helicopter on a mountain with trees inches around him on all sides. It was the most brilliant action I have ever seen performed and his skill that day prevented children inside a military training area from getting harmed.' SHAUN STEWART

Roger Gower aka Rodge Podge, Humpty and many other aliases

Roger absolutely thrived in being part of a team. He brought a lot of energy with him into the Tropic Air family and was always finding something fun and competitive for us to do. He was the master of turning boring moments into some trivial totally irrelevant conversation or a fun, time-passing game.

He would instigate random or quirky competitions, like asking how much money you would have to be paid to eat all the pizzas on the menu at Barney's restaurant in one sitting. Instead of playing a traditional game of darts or boules, he would always reinvent the rules for maximum fun and general oddness. He loved to invent insane ball-throwing games on the sand dunes in the rift valley, on the shores of Lake Turkana, and hour-long games of bouncing a ball into a bucket in our apartment in Addis.

If we were doing a mundane desk course (something us pilots will go to great lengths to avoid) Roger would bring along a bunch of sporting equipment, so at break times he would get everyone involved in chucking or kicking balls around and he would even try and get the lecturer involved to maximize our breaks.

His sense of humor was certainly unusual. A good example of this was when Tropic Air built parking bays for all of its staff-members' cars. Very quickly we noticed there were plenty of cars not belonging to Tropic Air staff occupying our bays. In true Roger style (he was ever the loyalist) he took great offense to this inconvenience and took it upon himself to write a warning poster:

THESE PARKING BAYS ARE FOR
TROPIC AIR STAFF ONLY! ALL OTHER
VEHICLES WILL BE TOWED AWAY
AND BLOWN UP!

It proved to be very effective.

Roger's flying capabilities were excellent and with his instructional skills he imparted a great deal of flying knowledge and techniques to many of us here at Tropic. Most of all, with his child-like sense of fun in the work environment, we appreciated being around him.



Roger, we will all miss your strength, loyalty, stubborn attitude, sense of fun and your truly unique personality. You are a huge part of Tropic Air and your memories will always bring a smile to our faces.

Fly high and keep an eye on us down here!



Hamish Rendall, Chief Helicopter Pilot

.. and the things that made us smile!

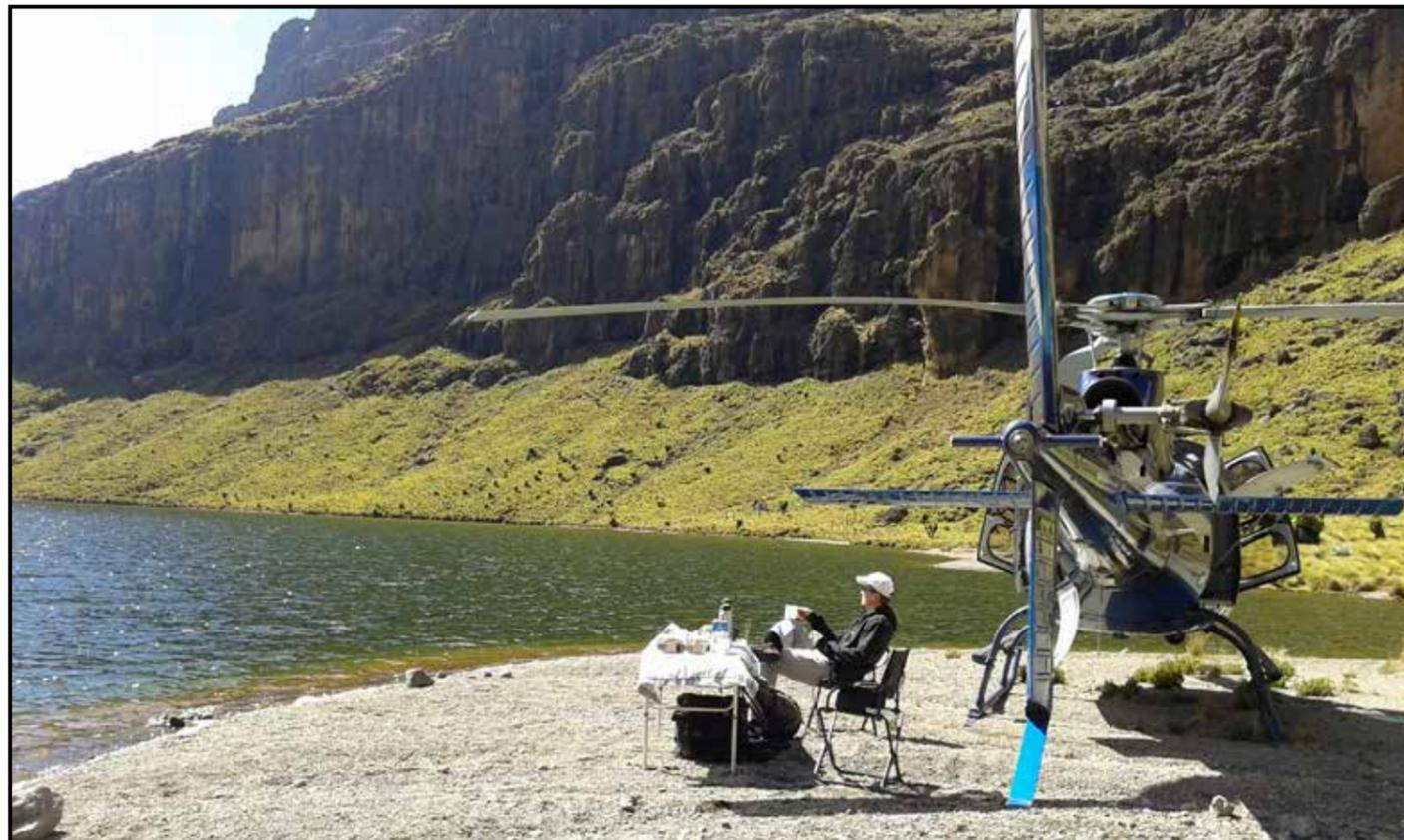


Kyle Lucas, Tropic Air, Chief Fixed Wing Pilot at the time

Photo taken in the National Museum in Addis Ababa, 2013

'What a character, from hours on end deciding what colour Nike shoe he was going to buy next, to betting 1 dollar online just to prove he was right. Jumping out of moving taxis in the middle of the night in Addis because they were simply not road worthy! Endless games invented by him to keep us occupied at our little flat in Ethiopia. Refusing to call my daughters Tatiana and Mikaela but by Tequila and Mikila.'

In true Gower style, Rog enjoying his last heli excursion at beautiful Lake Michaelson on Mount Kenya. He did later admit the scene was slightly staged by his fellow pilot and friend Hamish Rendall. August 2015



'Rog's signing off characterizes him best'

Ben Simpson, Director of Helicopter Operations

As you were,
Roger

At ease,
Humpty

All for one,
Roger

See you next week,
Rupert the Bear

You're up to date,
Humpty

All for one,
D'Artagnan

As you were,
Captain Saeed, Spider Regiment

Stay strong,
Rog

That's about the size of it,
Ronald McDonald

& OF COURSE ..

**Strength and honour,
Rog**



Mike Kibe - Fixed Wing Pilot

A couple of pictures here of Kev and I hanging out with Rog at his place. It ended up being his first time smoking a shisha pipe .. haha.

I will always remember Rog for not being able to pronounce my second name, and thus knighting me with my official Tropic Air nickname - Kyb.

He was a real dude. I truly miss him.



Email to Phillipa Bengough - July 2013

I've just been checking out the new look of the website - it looks great. I noticed my name is spelt wrong in the bios though - it should be Gower, not Grower I'm happy to say. School may have been tough being called Grower. Rog



Impressions of a Pilot

Flight is freedom in its purest form,
To dance with the clouds which follow a storm;
To roll and glide, to wheel and spin,
To feel the joy that swells within.

To leave the earth with its troubles and fly,
And know the warmth of a clear spring sky;
Then back to earth at the end of the day,
Released from the tensions which melted away.

Should my end come while I am in flight,
Whether brightest day or darkest night;
Spare me no pity and shrug off the pain,
Secure in the knowledge that I'd do it again.

For each of us is created to die,
And within me I know,

I was born to fly.

Gary Claud Stokor



[#flyhighcaptainroger](#)