

AVIATOR RESUMES GLOBAL MISSION

Ross Edmondson, the British aviator whose round the world fund-raising adventure came to an abrupt halt in Auckland in March, has resumed his epic journey.

With New Zealand going into lockdown over the Covid-19 pandemic, Ross, a 36-year-old gas engineer found himself stranded at Ardmore Airport with his Cessna 182.

Leaving his aircraft behind, Ross flew home to join his fiancé Elsa in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for a while before returning to New Zealand in July. He spent the next couple of months touring New Zealand in the plane he's nicknamed "Planey McPlaneFace".

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association awarded him honorary membership so he attended some of their events. In the Canterbury region for instance, Ross took part in a fly in, landing on about 11 airstrips as he waited for overseas borders to re-open.

After Australia gave the green light to foreign private aircraft last month, Ross, decided to set out on the next leg of his circumnavigation, a project which began in Pittsburgh in May last year.

He flew from Ardmore to Invercargill, hoping to use Southland's airport as a launching pad for a direct flight to Tasmania. Officialdom ruled he could fly there, but via Sydney instead. His flight on November 2nd took more than eight hours. With its extra fuel tanks, his Cessna has a maximum range of 5000km.

Ross told the *Ardmore Flyer* he planned to spend time flying around Australia before putting his mission on hold, leaving his aircraft in Sydney and flying to Europe to work and earn some money.

He's waiting for Kiribati authorities to give their permission for him to refuel on Christmas Island, the only decent landing place between there and Hawaii.

Ross said officials suggested he use Kiribati's Bonriki International Airport instead as a staging post for his Pacific Ocean flight rather than Christmas Island where they had inadequate aviation supervision. But Ross wanted to bypass Bonriki, 3500km from Christmas, because avgas supplies were not available there for prop-powered aircraft like his.

If Kiribati officials stuck to their guns, said Ross, then he'd consider an alternative route to Hawaii via Japan or Russia. "My trip may take many more months," he said.

Asked about his New Zealand experience, Ross said: "I would place New Zealand a close second to the United States in terms of aviation out of the 60 countries I have been to."

Ross, whose mother Anne was born in Auckland, is raising funds for African Promise, a small charity aiming to improve education standards in Kenya.

A rundown of Ross's circumnavigation, including photographs, can be viewed online at:

www.katamarino.co.uk



Ross Edmondson



Ross at Ardmore Airport as he prepared to resume his mission.

— By John Andrews