



BNAPS News November 2020

BNAPS News Vol 10 Iss 6 – November 2020

Islander G-AVCN's Move to a New Home Delayed

Plans for moving Islander G-AVCN to a new home once more had to be put on hold due to UK Government restrictions announced in late October. Our workshop activities were suspended from 5 November but an extra working day was set up on 4 November so that planned work to dismantle the aircraft could be done before the shutdown came into effect. At the time of writing it is anticipated that work can be resumed and best efforts will be applied to complete the dismantling work and other preparations so that Islander G-AVCN can be moved to the Wight Military and Heritage Museum in the latter part of December.

In the event that the restrictions continue to be in force after 2 December, BNAPS is fortunately able to extend the period of occupancy at the Brickfields workshop to ensure safekeeping of Islander G-AVCN. However, the possibility of this additional expenditure on rental together with the fact that the project has lost something like 5 months use of the workshop since early March this year, combined with a peak of expenditure associated with the move, is all of serious concern and has placed a considerable strain on the project's finances. BNAPS Trustees have made special financial arrangements to ensure that the project can continue without delay at this critical time when circumstances permit.

So that best use can be made of an early "window of opportunity" for the move some of the remaining restoration work will now be carried forward and completed alongside the re-assembly activities at the museum. This work includes application of the black fuselage lining together with painting the red and black lining on the engine cowlings and associated red areas on the upper wing surface and completion of fuselage door surrounds and ceiling panels.

BNAPS 2021 Desk Calendar Now Available

The 2021 BNAPS Desk Calendar is now available at £5.00 + £1.50 UK p&p, postage of bulk orders and overseas sales will be charged at cost or as otherwise arranged with the purchaser. As stocks are limited please do not delay in placing an order. To place your order please contact Rita at sales@bnaps.org

The calendar is in the usual fold out CD case style and features images, kindly provided by BN Historians from their photo archive, of the 12 oldest B-N Islanders that are still in regular use in various parts of the World.



In this issue of BNAPS News:

Trislander Flight Test

Hampshire Police Air Support Unit 1933-2010

18 Years of Flying with B-N

Trislanders on Postage Stamps and Flown Postal Covers

Plus more news of Islanders and Trislanders around the World

BNAPS Chairman's Update – November 2020



Dear BNAPS Supporter,

Just a month or so ago it looked as though Islander VCN would by now have been on the move to the place on the Isle of Wight where it would eventually be on public display. It looks as though we were on borrowed time since resuming work on 9 July and as news reports that a second wave of the pandemic was likely it was not a great surprise when it was announced that there would be a second lockdown and that, from midnight on 4 November, our work on Islander G-AVCN would once again be interrupted.

Restoration work and preparations for moving Islander G-AVCN will be resumed at the earliest opportunity. If work can restart on 3 December there is a good chance of being able to accomplish the move in the week beginning 14 December. If the restrictions are extended then Islander G-AVCN will remain in safekeeping in the Brickfields workshop.

The main issue in this circumstance is the need to continue to pay rent and for how long. Since moving to Brickfields in early 2016 BNAPS has spent something over £35000 to have the benefits of the larger space that allowed the work of rebuilding and spray painting the wing to be completed and the follow-on activity of having Islander G-AVCN fully assembled.

At the end of October BNAPS Trustees submitted a grant application to the Isle of Wight based Daisy Rich Trust to help cover the costs of specialist services to apply the black cheat lines to the fuselage and for transporting Islander G-AVCN to its new home. Notification has just been received from the Trust that our application has been successful. I am sure that all will be most gratified that our restoration project has been recognised as worthy of continuing and generous support from the Daisy Rich Trust.

For all, and the restoration team in particular, the current situation of not being able to move the project to the next stage is exceptionally frustrating. We are better off than many that are affected by the crisis and therefore, we must be resolute and patient and just carry on the best we can.

The project has been undertaken with a combination of generous support, optimism that what we set out to do in 2010 could be achieved and the skills and dedication of the restoration team and hopefully this will continue to be the case and see the project through to where it wants to be in early 2021.

BNAPS is anxious to make the most of the opportunities that will be presented when Islander G-AVCN goes on public display and we want all those who have supported the project to continue to be involved. Apart for the interest generated by Islander G-AVCN as an historic aircraft exhibit, we will be looking at educational aspects, income from merchandise sale, special events and developing a plan for a BNAPS Archive – more about all this in later issues of BNAPS News.

For now, on behalf of BNAPS Trustees, I would like to send all best wishes for Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year to all BNAPS Supporters and to all the people and organisations that have helped the project along the way.

For more information regarding the above please contact BNAPS by email bob@bnaps.org.uk or Telephone 01329 315561.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Wealthy,

Britten-Norman Aircraft Preservation Society Chairman

G-AVCN Restoration Progress – September-November 2020

Restoration work has progressed through the period but was brought to a halt on 5 November when the new pandemic restrictions came into effect.

Progress of the main activities undertaken are summarised below:

1 Wing stands now have been painted by Keith Winter. Trial fit of wing stands, profile boards and wing profile completed by Paul Thomasson and Keith Winter with satisfactory results.

2 Port side of fuselage red lining has been applied by Bob Wilson, Guy Palmer and Patrick Gallagher.

3 Mark Porter completed the repair and preparation of the second set of engine cowlings. The cowlings have now been spray painted by Bill Mason. Transport of the cowlings from the workshop to the spray shop and back was courtesy of Bill Mason.

4 The starboard top cowling was installed and Bob Wilson masked up the black and red cheat lines on the upper cowling and rear fairing and the red painted area on the upper surface of the starboard wing aft of the upper cowling.

5 Paul Brook completed installation of interior trim in the cockpit area to shortage level. A starboard side window trim section that was kindly donated by Aeroplastics in Australia has now been delivered.

6 Paul Thomasson has made a set of door surround trims using straight right angle section UPVC material. The material was formed to the required shape by gentle application of heat using a former made by Paul. The work required much patience and skill as each surround had to be curved to accommodate the curve of the fuselage sides as well as to fit the door apertures. The new door surrounds are almost ready for a trial fit.

7 Activities under taken in preparation for the move include:

- Removal of flaps;

- Removal of elevator and trim tab;

- Removal of engines;

- Disconnection of electrics at wing/fuselage junction;

- Disconnection and securing of aileron control cable;

- Wing stands upper profile boards removed after trial fit check;

- Covers were replaced over the wing to avoid further dust accumulation.

The next activity when work is resumed will be to tilt the aircraft back on its tail to enable access for removal of rudder, fin and tail plane.

8 Steve Cooley, Bernie Coleman and Maurice Dyer have continued with work on the flight simulator fuselage section. Internal sidewall and door trim panels have been adapted for use. Windows and window surrounds have been identified and are being made ready for installation.

9 Thanks go to George Cormack for donation of a number of missing parts - a much sought after spinner backing plate, a starboard side straight exhaust section and an alternator bracket.



View of the exhaust pipe, backing plate and alternator mounting brackets donated by George Cormack.

**G-AVCN Restoration Progress – September – November 2020
(continued)**



The starboard side engine cowling lower section is seen here after it had been returned from the spray shop.



Port side engine cowlings after spray painting. Prior to painting Mark Porter prepared the cowlings and installed edging strips where part of the glass fibre was chipped.



The port side engine cowling was installed for a trial fit check.

**G-AVCN Restoration Progress – September – November 2020
(continued)**



The positioning of the cheat line on the port side of the fuselage was measured and masked off ready for painting using spray cans.



View of the port side red cheat line looking aft.



View of the port side red cheat line looking forward.

**G-AVCN Restoration Progress – September – November 2020
(continued)**



Wing stand with profile boards fitted was positioned for a trial fit with satisfactory results.



Paul Thomasson, Steve Cooley and Mark Porter are seen here setting up the engine hoist ready for removal of the starboard engine.



The starboard engine was removed without any significant difficulty.

G-AVCN Restoration Progress – September – November 2020 (continued)



The starboard engine is seen here being lowered onto a cushioning material. Later it will be secured on a pallet fixed to a wheeled base for ease of handling.



The port engine in the process of being removed by Paul Thomasson and Steve Cooley.



The port engine was also placed on cushioning material and left suspended from the engine hoist ready to be loaded onto its transportation pallet at a later stage.

VQ-SAC Fuselage Section Progress – September - November 2020



View of the port side of the fuselage section after being painted. It was decided that the results using emulsion paint applied with a paint roller would more economic than spray painting with cans and would give an acceptable result.



View of the starboard side of the fuselage section after being painted.



The nose cone and hatch cover have been painted with Oxford Blue emulsion. Later a blue stripe will be painted along each side of the fuselage.

G-AVCN Restoration Project Work Items to Completion-

The work items now scheduled after the move are summarised below:

Islander G-AVCN Restoration Work Items

1 Wing and Engines:

- 1.1 Paint engine cowlings and fairings with red and black "cheat lines".
- 1.2 Paint red areas on upper wing surface adjacent to top engine cowling.
- 1.3 Fabricate and install fairings that fit between the inboard side of the top engine cowlings and wing leading edge droop.

2 Fuselage:

- 2.1 Install door trim panels and ceiling panels.
- 2.2 Apply transfers for black cheat lines along port and starboard sides.
- 2.3 Paint black lining around nose cone.

3 Aircraft Re-assembly

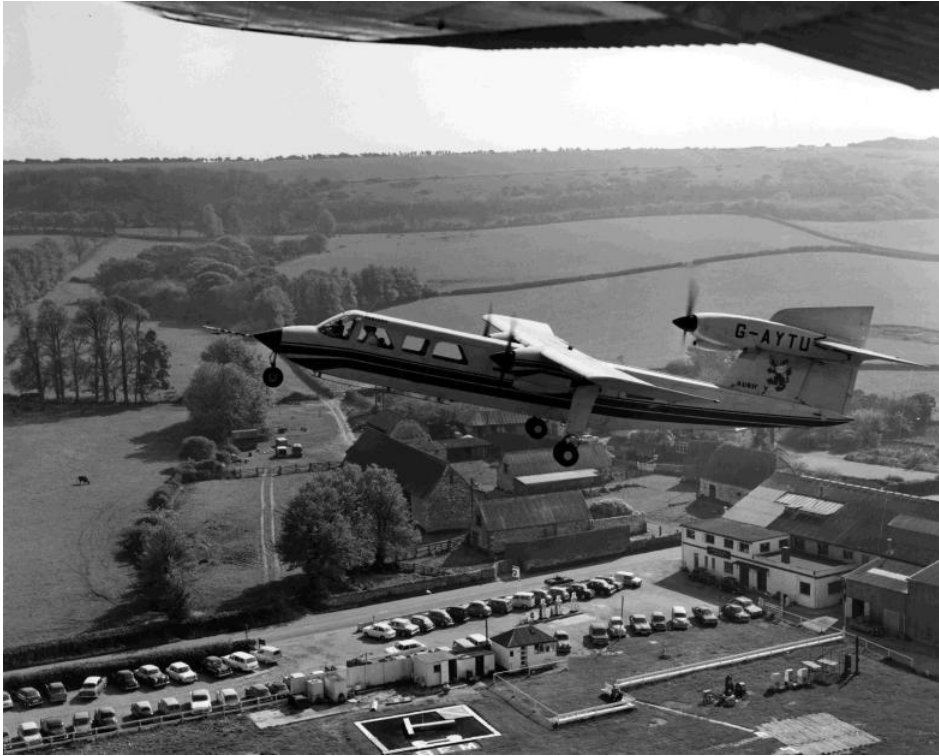
- 3.1 Join wing/fuselage.
- 3.2 Connect aileron control cables.
- 3.3 Connect electrical wiring in area of wing to fuselage join.
- 3.4 Install flap drive motor and indicator.
- 3.5 Tilt aircraft and re-install fin and rudder, tail plane and trim tab.
- 3.6 Fit wing to fuselage fairings.
- 3.7 Install engines, fit air boxes, alternators and accessories.
- 3.8 Install propellers and spinners.
- 3.9 Install engine cowlings.
- 3.10 Install wing to fuselage fairings.

Islander VQ-SAC Fuselage Section Work Items:

- 1 Fabricate door hinges and door catches and install doors and windows and associated trim.
- 2 Install electrical earthing connection for fuselage structure.
- 3 Install and commission Stage 1 desktop flight simulator equipment.



Following on from the coverage of the Islander Mk.III and the Trislander in the July and September issues of BNAPS News, this issue includes an article about what the Trislander was like to fly. What follows is an adapted version of a flight test report "Third Engine, Third Level" by Hugh Field from the 15 July 1971 issue of Flight International. Thanks go to Flight International for granting permission to BNAPS for the original article to be re-purposed in BNAPS News.



Production Prototype Trislander, G-AYTU, c/n 245, was flown by Hugh Field for the flight test report and is seen here climbing away from Bembridge Airport (Aviation World/ Key Publishing).

Third engine, third level

By Hugh Field: Number 256 of the series

With an unusual lack of preliminary publicity, Britten-Norman sprang one of the biggest surprises of the 1970 SBAC Display at Farnborough when the Trislander prototype arrived to take its place in the static aircraft park.

To use the expression in its literal sense, the cutting of metal had started a mere eight weeks before the first public presentation and it was the faithful Islander prototype revamped-some might say "hacked about"-which appeared with a bright yellow paint scheme to cover the surgery to which it had been subjected.

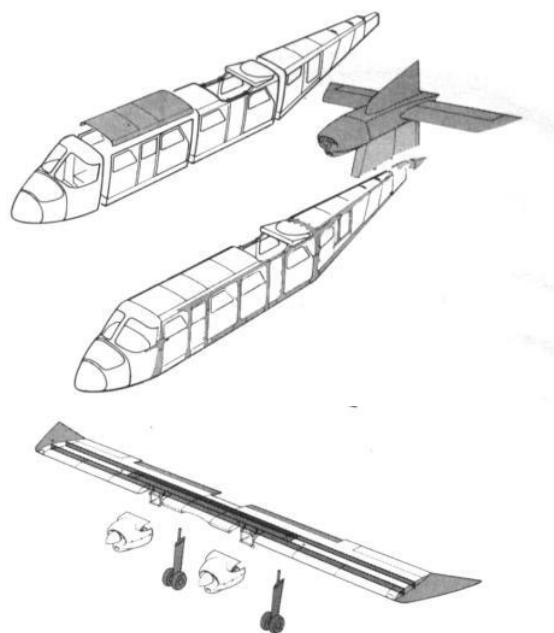
The philosophy of the Trislander is so simple that one wonders why something of the kind has not been done before. Use the maximum number of parts of an existing simple design virtually to double the capacity and thus offer proven capability in a completely new market. It is only when this background is appreciated that the reason for the third engine being placed in such an unfamiliar location becomes obvious-any other configuration would have involved redesign of undercarriage components, forward fuselage, flight deck et al. By placing the third engine on the fin John Britten and Desmond Norman again showed their uncanny flair for the simple solution; the basic structure of the aircraft

is remarkably little changed from the basic Islander.

Probably the conventional solution to the need for greater capacity would be to replace the existing two Lycoming engines by four power units of, perhaps, slightly lower rating, but this concept did not appeal at Bembridge. It was felt that not only was this likely to make an undesirable increase in basic weight but, and this consideration was overriding, the first cost of the aircraft would be forced unnecessarily high by the installation of four engines, propellers and associated ancillaries.

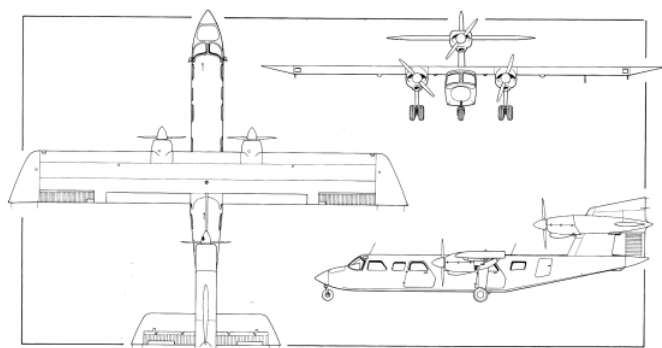
After proving the basic sense of the design, and particularly after flight development had evolved the desirable fin area, the prototype was grounded in order to become a structural test fuselage. The basic construction of the Islander family is centred on four main longitudinal beams, along the corners of the box-like fuselage, and consequently there were no fears that the large number of cut-outs (five doors) would seriously weaken the structure. Nevertheless, a critical condition centred around the inertia of the top engine installation in the landing case; an abrupt arrival, while within the capacity of the undercarriage, would impose a severe bending moment and it was necessary to test to destruction to evaluate this condition. In the event the fuselage structure failed at 105 per cent of ultimate design load and the failure took the form of skin corrugation rather than rupture.

fuselage length is achieved by "cut and fill"; a centre fuselage section is given a new upper surface and grafted on to the existing section, the forward bay of both being removed. Fin and tail plane structure is entirely new



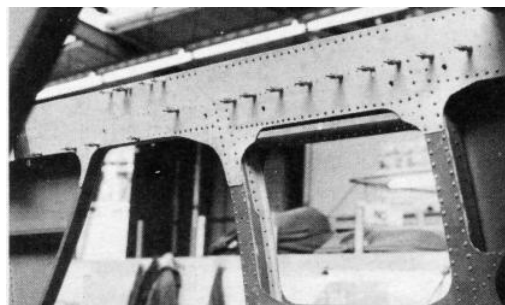
Above - shaded areas identify new or strengthened areas of BN-2 Islander fuselage and wing.

Below- Local stiffening of upper fuselage structure and additional stringers inserted into the fuselage to cater for additional wing loading.



Trislander BN-2A Mk.III general arrangement diagram

The large windscreen area allows excellent visibility for the Trislander. The additional



'TWU had been a typical hand-built prototype based on an airframe which had already seen long service. Its successor was to be as near as possible a definitive production Trislander, made by the same process of surgery from a brand new Islander airframe and painted, if only as a matter of courtesy, in the colours of Aurigny, the first customer. This machine (G-AYTU, c/n 245) was the vehicle for certification; it was never a true demonstration aircraft because of the need to incorporate control movement monitoring devices and ballast stowage.

My visit to Bembridge was made shortly before the Paris Air Show when the first production aircraft was being painted and finished; it was obvious that very few changes had become necessary during certification. Britten-Norman had intended that I should fly the production aircraft but our respective schedules did not fit and so I flew 'YTU. I mention this only because this report will contain no comments about noise or passenger appeal in the air.



Interior view looking forward showing passenger seating arrangements.

The Trislander cockpit is home ground to anyone familiar with the Islander, one of the biggest changes being the new pilots' seats. The layout is orientated for single crew operation but an example of the way ergonomic fashion changes is that the turn and slip indicator has been relegated to a position to the right of the panel centre line. This is to allow the VOR/ILS indicator

to feature in the "basic six" display in front of the pilot. This strikes me as misapplied flight director thinking which may not be popular among operators in areas short of navigation aids.

In order to accommodate three throttles and three r.p.m. levers within a sensible width of quadrant, the mixture levers have been raised to a position immediately below the glare shield where they operate in a push-pull sense. Manifold pressure and r.p.m. gauges are grouped in triangles with, logically to me, the top engine reading being given by the top instrument—there was a lot of debate apparently about this layout.



View of instrument panel and controls. Note mixture controls now positioned at the top of the instrument panel and adoption of moulded style control wheels.

The opportunity has been taken to re-design the Islander control column and the new shape falls comfortably to hand. It is smaller than its predecessor but it allows aileron to be applied with less effort on the wrist.

In most other respects, the panel layout is familiar with the circuit-breakers ranged on the starboard knee panel and the engine temperature and pressure gauges immediately above the pilot's left knee. An unfamiliar bank of five red lights at the extreme left of the panel below the glare shield gives warning if any of the doors are open—an important safety check since the

pilot cannot walk back along a centre aisle to check such matters for himself.



BN-2A Mk.III Trislander G-AYTU at Bembridge Airport.

I was to learn quickly one of the tricks of the Trislander for Jim Bernie started only the top engine for taxiing, pointing out that this was a practical way of ensuring that passengers were not sliced by propellers during quick turn-rounds. It is a good idea but the Trislander has the same electrical system as the Islander without benefit of an additional generator on the top engine so at night the batteries might suffer. There is also no suction pump on the top engine so the gyro instruments are not on line if this technique is adopted.

We were loaded to a forward c.g. at 8,750lb, 3,970kg all up weight which gave VR at 64kt and V2 at 66kt. Flaps are normally used for take-off and the scheduled distance at sea level and in ISA conditions is 740m. Rotation needed a firm force as would be expected at our loading and as we accelerated to 80kt and raised the flaps there was a small amount of sink accompanied by a mild nose-down change of trim.

Once settled in the climb we held 80kt and the rate of climb showed a healthy 1,300ft/min. Thus, set we went to 5,000ft to look at a typical cruise condition followed by stalling. My first impression while turning in the climb was that the ailerons were heavy and in discussion after the trip John Britten agreed that there might be some advantage in increasing the size of the geared tabs. In the event it was found that production aircraft showed a

considerable reduction in the friction of the aileron control and the improvement is sufficient to obviate the need for modification.

At Flight Level 50 I set 75 per cent power, using 24in manifold and 2,400 r.p.m., at which setting it was possible to weaken the mixture. The IAS settled at 141kt which equated to 148kt TAS after allowing for 4kt position error. This speed is a few knots less than the original brochure expectation and is creditable for an aerodynamically dirty development aircraft hung about with such extras as a nose probe with yaw vanes.



BN-2A Mk.III Trislander G-AYTU in flight.

Stalling the Trislander was a contradiction in terms since the elevator travel is limited to the extent that the aircraft never achieves a pitch down. Approaching the stall with the flaps up and the aircraft trimmed at 85kt the warning horn sounded as the speed reduced through 68kt. Further reduction of speed called for a heavy stick force and I arrived at the stops with 56kt showing but with no tendency for a break about any axis; I still had ample aileron control and presumably a fair proportion of the wing was still unstalled.

With 25° of flap selected, the approach to the stall was clearly marked by the onset of buffet. The trimmed speed in this condition was 76kt and full elevator was reached at 54kt. Using approach power in this configuration I achieved a very high nose attitude and the indicated airspeed reduced

to 44kt; there was a tendency for the left wing to lower in this condition. Some idea of the rate of descent which the Trislander can achieve in the mushing state can be gained from my figure for the full-flap, power off case; 51kt was the sustained speed and we had 1,300ft/ min descent indicated.

If there is one question above all others that has been asked about the Trislander it is "What happens when the top engine fails?" The answer is remarkably little. The top engine is tilted downwards some 3° and this is a deliberate measure to reduce the likelihood of untoward behaviour in the failure case. I found that practice cuts could be made at speeds down to 55kt with all engines at full power and there was only a very slight nose-up trim change which was not at all demanding. One requirement for certification was that a top engine-failure warning light should be incorporated in a prominent position on the glare shield. The reason for this was that the trim change is so small that it would be disguised if the engine failed during take-off from a rough field or one with puddles of water; the cut case really is innocuous.

In general, the engine-out behaviour was stall-limited rather than rudder-limited and at 4,000ft and ISA+6°C 200ft/min climb was readily available regardless of which engine had been cut back. The VMCA is an almost academic 37kt IAS so rudder forces in the working range were understandably not very heavy and I felt that overall the aircraft was docile and undemanding with any engine out.

In general, the Trislander felt to me to be just right for a light transport but it was nonetheless possible to fly some spirited curved final approaches that would have

been to the credit of somewhat lighter aircraft. A downwind or pattern speed of 105kt was comfortable and needed 15in manifold with 2,400 r.p.m.; taking flap at 90kt produced a gentle nose-up trim change and the speed could comfortably be allowed to taper away to cross the threshold in a natural landing attitude at 65kts.

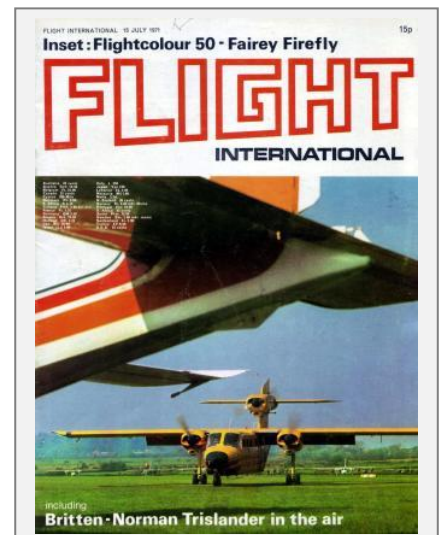
On one circuit I asked Jim to give me an engine cut at V2 and he chose the worst case of the port engine failing. The initial indication was of yaw with little accompanying roll and the aircraft was easy to hold for a climb away at 66kt; similarly, a simulated baulked landing and overshoot on two engines presented no control problems and with anticipation it required only a small loss of height to establish the overshoot even when full flap had already been taken.

I have tried to show that Britten-Norman has made as few changes as possible in upgrading the Islander to three engines. The company has thus ensured that the reputation for rugged reliability, which has grown round the 287 Islanders so far delivered, will read across to the Trislander. No Islander pilot is likely to have the slightest problem converting to the Trislander which thus offers operators an immediate increase of capacity with the minimum of logistic effort.

Hugh Field
Bembridge Airport
July 1971

BRITTEN-NORMAN BN-2A Mk.III Trislander

Span: 53ft, 16.1m
Length: 43ft 9in, 13.3m Height 11ft 2in, 3.4m
Max weight: 9,350lb, 4,240kg
Zero-fuel weight: 8,700lb, 3,946kg
Engines: Three 260 hp Avco Lycoming O540-E4C5
Propellers: Hartzell, 80in, 2m diameter
Fuel: Four integral tanks. Total 164 Imp gal, 197 US gal, 745 lt
Speeds: V_{NE} 179 kt; V_{MCA} 37kt

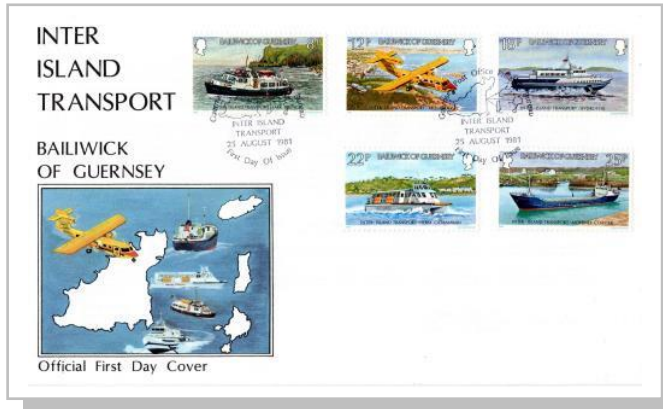


Aurigny Air Services Trislanders on Postage Stamps and Postal Covers

Thanks go to BNAPS Supporter Norman Hobbs for compiling a selection of Trislander postal covers and postage stamps from his collection

Guernsey Inter-Island Transport August 1981

The first Channel Island featuring a B-N Trislander was issued by the Guernsey Post Office Philatelic Bureau. On 25 August 1981 five stamps and a first day cover were released, entitled Inter Island Transport, and the 12p stamp (Stanley Gibbons ref: SG241) depicted Aurigny Trislander, c/n 319, registration G-AZLJ.



The maiden flight of this Trislander, with registration G-51-319, took place at Bembridge on 13 January 1972. At the end of that month, then registered G-AZLJ, it was delivered to Aurigny Air Services and remained in their fleet until March 1985.



*Trislander G-AZLJ
in service with Aurigny
Air Services on the
ramp at Southampton
Airport
(Barry Friend).*

Apart from a brief period when it was leased to Athens Air in Greece in 1994, with registration SX-CBN, it was operated by a number of UK regional airlines and charter companies, sometimes with personalised registrations G-OAVW (Aviation West) and G-OREG (Regency Airways). According to CAA records the last registered owner was Highland Airways, then part of the Coventry based Atlantic Airlines Group. However, it was seen languishing in a hangar at Lydd in 2004. It is believed that Atlantic Bridge Aviation were using some components to keep their other Lydd Air Trislanders airworthy.



Athens Air Trislander SX-CBN at Hurn (NH Collection).



*End of the line, Coventry Airport 2000,
(Brian Bickers).*

Jersey Airport 50th Anniversary March 1987

On 3 March 1987, as part of their Aviation History series, the Jersey Post Office issued five stamps and a first day cover to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of Jersey Airport. The 22p stamp (SG411) featured both an Islander and a Trislander. To date this is the only time an Islander and Trislander have appeared together on the same stamp.



Jersey Airport 75th Anniversary 2012

On 10 March 2012 Jersey Post issued another set of aircraft postage stamps to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the opening of Jersey Airport. The 79p stamp (SG1647) featured Trislander, c/n 262, registration G-AYWI, Aurigny Air Services first Trislander.



Trislander G-AYWI in primer at Bembridge in May 1971 (BN Historians Collection).



Trislander G-AYWI in its original style Aurigny Air Services colours. It was given the name "John Possnicker" (NH Collection).



Aurigny Air Services first General Manager, John Possnicker, (Chris Unitt).

This was the first production Trislander built and the maiden flight took place at Bembridge on 29 April 1971. It was delivered to Aurigny on 29 June 1971 and was named "John Possnicker", after the first General Manager at Aurigny. G-AYWI remained in service with Aurigny until 26 March 1985 when it was sold to Lulsgate (Bristol) based Avon Aviation Services Limited who traded as Aviation West and Air Camelot. They had taken over the Isle of Man Postal service mail contract from Telair and the Trislander was immediately positioned at Speke (Liverpool) to commence operations to Ronaldsway, still in Aurigny colours. In May 1986 c/n 262 was repainted white with Aviation West and Air Camelot titles and registered as G-OCME to reflect the airline code CME of Air Camelot.

On a mail flight from Speke on 9 February 1987 the pilot was unable to see the Ronaldsway runway by the decision height of 460 feet and he decided to abort the landing and return to Speke. Due to fuel starvation the pilot made a forced landing in a field near Hale Village, some two miles short of the runway.

Fortunately, the pilot was uninjured but the Trislander was written off as it had come to rest in a brook. Stephen Shakeshaft, from the local newspaper the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo, was quickly on the scene and some of his photographs were printed on postcards (see examples on the right). As with c/n 319, some parts from c/n 262 were salvaged and used as spares.



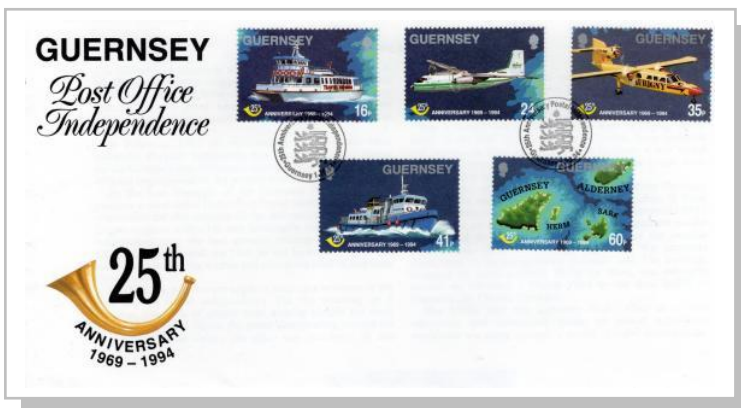
Left: Mail bags are unloaded from the stricken Aviation West Trislander G-OCME (via Norman Hobbs).



Right: Aviation West Trislander G-OCME after its forced landing (via Norman Hobbs).

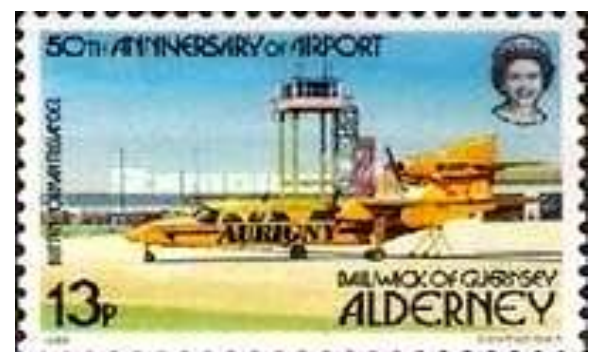
Guernsey Post Office Independence 25th Anniversary 1994

A postal cover and a set of five stamps showing a map and various forms of transport were issued by Guernsey Post Office on 1 October 1994 to celebrate 25 years of independence. Trislander G-JOEY, c/n 1016, featured on the 35p stamp (SG647). Previously registered G-BDGG and C-GSAA when in service with Simpson Air, it remained in the Aurigny fleet until it was retired on 28 June, 2015.



Alderney Airport 50th Anniversary 1985

Trislander G-JOEY, c/n 1016, featured on a 13p stamp (SGA19) issued on 19 March 1985 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of Alderney Airport. Trislander G-JOEY also featured on a commemorative postcard that was released for the anniversary.



Trislander with Auxiliary Rocket Motor

A recent post on BNAPS Facebook page by Scott Taylor about a Trislander with a tail mounted rocket booster prompted a search for a bit more information about the somewhat unusual modification.

The reason for the modification was an attempt to meet US FAA regulations as applied to the Trislander in the event of an engine failure at a critical stage when taking off with a full load. This version of the Trislander was given the reference BN-2A Mk.III-4.



Trislander G-BDTR is seen here on static display at the 1976 SBAC Show at Farnborough in September 1976 (via Norman Hobbs).



View of the tail section of Trislander G-BDTR showing the rocket motor installation in tail engine pod/tail fairing (BNAPS Archive).

Trislander c/n 1029 was built at Gosselies as a BN-2A Mk.III-2. It was first flown on 25 May 1976 and registered a G-BDTR. It arrived at Bembridge on 2 June 1976 and in August 1976 it was converted to a BN-2A Mk.III-4 through incorporation of a tail mounted rocket motor installation.

The rocket motor was supplied by Canadian Bristol Aerojet, motor type 12NS-350CBA. The motor weighed about 60 lbs and gave a thrust of 350 lbs. The rocket motor assisted take-off was tested at Farnborough on 18 October 1976.

In December 1976 Trislander G-BDTR was converted to a BN-2A Mk.III-3 configuration and delivered to Jonas Aircraft, New York on 21 December 1976. Now registered as N403JA it was delivered to STOL Air California on 1 August 1977. It later served with WestAir Commuter Airlines, California and Channel Islands Aviation, Camarillo, California.

In June 1980 ownership was transferred to Turks and Caicos National Airline, Grand Turk and registered as VQ-TAD. Reported at Opa Locka, Florida in 1990 as having been withdrawn from use, on 23 June 1993 it went to PRALCO, Rio Riedras, Puerto Rico and took up the registration N605LP. At this time the auto feather function was removed and the type designation became a BN-2A Mk.III-2.

On 15 December 2008, Trislander N605LP, now owned by Linea Aerea PuetorrIquena (LAP), was on a charter flight from Santiago (Dominican Republic) to Mayaguana (Bahamas). It departed the Dominican Republic at 4:05 local with 12 people on board and disappeared from radar about 35 minutes into the flight, after the pilot had radioed a Mayday call. The US Coast Guard launched a search and rescue operation early the following day with two helicopters and 7 ships with 100 rescuers involved, but no trace of the aircraft was found.



Trislander G-BDTR is seen here on test flight September/ October 1976 over the Isle of Wight with the rocket motor in operation. This could have been a test to ensure the system was fully functional before a demonstration at Farnborough on 18 October 1976 (B-N).

Hampshire Police Air Support Unit (HPASU) 1933-2010

By Bob Wealthy

Introduction

The Hampshire Police Authority Air Support Unit (generally identified as the HPASU) took up residence at Royal Naval Air Station, HMS Daedalus, at Lee-on-Solent in 1985. The HPASU continued to use the airfield following the departure of the Royal Navy in 1996 until a re-organisation of UK Police air services took place with the result that the HPASU ceased operations in 2010. As one of the main users of the airfield Hampshire Police Authority took up a lease for use of the airfield, after its closure as a Royal Naval Air Station, and acted in an advisory role from 1996 until 2010 to co-ordinate other air operations at Lee with its HPASU operations.



B-N Islander aircraft G-HPAA, c/n 2244, is seen here in front of the Lee-on-Solent airfield control tower which was used as the HPASU operations centre (Pete Stanton).

Over the years the HPASU built up an enviable reputation for the effective conduct of airborne policing operations and gained wide experience of the setting to work and integration of a number of surveillance and communications systems both in the air and on the ground.

Origins of Hampshire Police Aircraft Use (1933-1983)

The Unit's origin can be traced back to July 1933 when Hampshire Police used aircraft from the Hampshire Light Aircraft Club as aircraft became more and more useful for police operations. In the 1950s Hampshire Police used aircraft types such as Chipmunks and Auster AOP9s of the

Services as part of a civilian aid scheme. Helicopters were first used during the mid-1950s with types such as Bristol Sycamore and a Westland Whirlwind from British European Airways.

Throughout the 1960s and 70s various different fixed wing and helicopter aircraft were used and after a brief involvement with Wallis Autogyros as part of a home office trial, it was not until 1979 that a more settled period ensued with the use of Cessna aircraft from Southampton Airport. Having proved the benefits of aerial policing the next stage involved the selection of a more suitable aircraft type and operating base.

Optica Aircraft Trials and the Move to Lee (1983 -1990)

In 1983 the Home Office became aware of the potential advantages of the Edgley Optica aircraft for airborne police work and an Optica was used for initial trials in September 1982. The Optica was of novel design and featured a large bubble-shaped cockpit, set ahead of the wings and engine, providing excellent all-round vision. Only helicopters could rival this type of view from a cockpit, but with vastly more expensive operating costs than fixed wing aircraft.

Development of the Optica was at an advanced stage by Edgley Aircraft, based at Old Sarum in Wiltshire. As Hampshire Police had a wealth of experience in fixed wing air operations, the HPASU was chosen to carry out the evaluation work. At the same time the decision was made to move the HPASU to HMS Daedalus and a new Optica G-KATY was formally handed over to the HPASU on 14 May 1985. Tragically, the next day disaster struck as the aircraft crashed into woodland near Ringwood, killing both on board. AIB investigations could not determine the ultimate cause of the accident.

Government approval was given in 1987 for the HPASU to resume Optica operations and an Optica Scout, G-BMPF, was delivered in June 1987 and took part in an extended trials programme over the summer. Use of the aircraft proved very cost effective and approval was given to purchase a new Optica Scout, suitably modified as a result of the trials.



Flight Observer Tony Austin, is seen here with Optica G-BMPL. In 1965, Tony evaluated the prototype BN-2 Islander for parachuting purposes. He later joined Hampshire Constabulary and during 1987/88 became an HPASU crew member (Tony Austin).

A new Optica Scout, G-BMPL, was delivered to the HPASU in December 1987 and Hampshire Police continued to build up experience in police air operations. A fan blade failure during a take-off from Lee caused the Optica Scout to make a forced landing. Over a period of time a new fan was certificated. However, although the merits of the Optima were well appreciated by the operations team, there was a need for an aircraft that could carry more mission equipment, provide the necessary electrical power and have sufficient space for two observers rather than just one.

B-N Islander Replaces the Optica (1990)

The Pilatus Britten-Norman demonstrator BN-2B-26 Islander G-TWOB, c/n 2159, was leased for evaluation in May 1990. This began the unit's association with the Islander. Crews quickly converted to the Islander and by June 1990 full operations were resumed, whilst continuing the evaluation of the aircraft



B-N Islander G-TWOB, c/n 2159, with Hampshire Police Air Support Unit crew members when the type under evaluation as a replacement for the Optica (BW collection).

It very soon became apparent that the islander had a number of major advantages. It had two engines, giving a greater degree of safety for low level and over water operations. There was a greater range of speed, allowing quick response times and a lower speed during surveillance. As an Islander can seat up to 10 people this greatly increased the number of tasks the aircraft could be used for, in fact everything the Optica could do and more.



HPASU Islander G-HPAA at Lee in 1993 in its original configuration as a BN-2B-26 with 260hp engines. It was later converted to a BN-2B-20 to take 300 hp engines (Pete Stanton).

As trials continued into 1991, it was becoming increasingly evident that the Optica's fatigue problems were not going to be overcome, it was decided to purchase a new Islander, built to HPASU specifications. This aircraft, registration mark G-HPAA, c/n 2244, was delivered in December 1991 and G-TWOB returned.



HPASU Islander G-HPAA over the Hampshire countryside showing clearly the special features and equipment incorporated for police use.

These include the nose mounted infrared imaging system, a variety of communications and navigation aerials and a sliding side door for to provide a clear view for air to ground observation (Tony Abrams).

The new aircraft, a BN-2B-26 260hp Islander model, had a sophisticated equipment package, including a communications system with access to all Police VHF AM/FM and UHF frequencies, as well as other rescue organisations. Flight and navigation systems include autopilot, radar altimeter, VOR, ADF, DME, ILS and a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver. In 1993 a nose mounted gyro stabilised camera platform was added. This caused extra drag, and reduced fuel economy and the decision was taken to improve the aircraft's performance by upgrading the aircraft to a BN-2B-20 variant with 300hp Lycoming engines.

Hampshire Police Authority has pioneered economical fixed wing air support at a time when most other air support units were using helicopters. This experience has shown that fixed wing aircraft could cover 90% of a helicopter's capability for around a third of the cost.

B-N Group Defender 4000 Selected to Provide Increased Capability (1999)

As HPASU operations developed it was found that the Islander used was becoming limited in internal space and the sound of its piston engines was not always popular with local residents. Feasibility studies and competitive evaluations were carried out and in 1999 approval was given for the HPASU to purchase a BN-2T-4S Defender 4000.

The Defender 4000 retained all the well-known benefits of the standard Islander but in addition it had a larger cabin and with quieter and more economic turbine engines, offered noise and cost reductions. Bob Ruprecht, Hampshire Police Air Support Unit manager, commented at the time on the decision: "The Defender 4000 is an ideal size for two or three observers, with a good mix of TV, infra-red and photographic sensors and other equipment. It represents a significant enhancement over the piston engined Islander with which we have been very pleased. We are sure that this highly capable aircraft is going to make a really worthwhile contribution to the fight against crime in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in the years to come."

Defender 4000 Delivery and Handover at Lee 26 February 2001

The BN-2T-4S Defender 4000 aircraft was handed over to the Hampshire Police Authority on 26 February 2001, with B-N group taking G-HPAA in part-exchange.



Handover of Defender 4000 G-SJCH, c/n 4006, February 2001 with, left to right, B-N Chairman, Alawi Zawawi, Hampshire Police Authority Chairman, Ron Culver, Hampshire Police, Chief Constable Paul Kernigan, and former Hampshire Police Chief Constable, Sir John Hoddinott (Hampshire Police).

The new aircraft carried the name Sir John Charles Hoddinott and the registration letters G-SJCH, Sir John was Chief Constable for the Hampshire Police from 1988 to 1999. Delivery was originally scheduled for December 1999 but was delayed due to the financial problems and eventual receivership of Britten-Norman Ltd. The company resumed normal trading as the B-N Group a few months later and the contract for the Defender 4000 was reinstated.

At the official handover ceremony, B-N Group Chairman Alawi Zawawi presented the keys of the new aircraft to Hampshire Police Authority Chairman Ron Culver and Chief Constable Paul Kernaghan. Also present was Colin Cooke the HPASU chief pilot.

As the new aircraft had already been fitted out with the necessary surveillance and communications kit it was immediately ready for service with the Air Support Unit, following completion of Certificate of Airworthiness formalities.



HPASU's Defender 4000 G-SJCH was a familiar sight in the Solent Region in its 10 years of operation from Lee (Tony Abrams).

HPASU Operations with the Defender 4000 (2001-2010)

Delivery of the new Defender 4000 aircraft to the Hampshire Police Authority, provided the benefits of an increased mission capability together with the environmental acceptability of turbine power, and opened up a further era for the HPASU.

Although the HPASU operations were highly successful, conflicts arose from time to time with other users of the airfield facilities at Lee. At one time it was proposed that GA use would not be permitted and resulted in formation of the Lee Flying Association as a pressure group to represent the views and interests of the local GA community and GA visitors.

UK Government policy changes and arrangements for funding UK Police air operations resulted in HPASU operations ceasing in 2010. The Defender 4000 was sold and a joint arrangement for air support was introduced using helicopters in conjunction with neighbouring Police Authorities in Sussex and Dorset as the South East Air Support Unit. The Unit was formed in October 2010 with its Police Air Operator's Certificate becoming effective from 1 April, 2011.

Recollections of HPASU at Solent Sky Aviation Museum

Solent Sky Aviation Museum at Southampton accommodates the Hampshire Police and Fire Service Heritage Collection. As part of the Hampshire Police exhibits, the HPASU and its operation is presented by means of information boards and a large-scale model of the HPASU B-N Islander G-HPAA.



Large scale model of HPASU Islander G-HPAA in the Hampshire Police and Fire Service Heritage Collection at Solent Sky Aviation museum (BW).

(The background to the construction of large-scale Islander model and how it eventually went on display at the Solent Sky Museum was covered in a news report in the July 2017 issue of BNAPS News).

History of HPASU Islander G-HPAA and Defender 4000 G-SJCH.

Islander c/n 2244 First flight as a BN-2B-26 17 May 1991, delivered to Hampshire Police Authority 20 December 1991, converted to a BN-2B-20, first flight 25 July 1995, returned to service 28 August 1995. Traded in to B-N and sold to Calcasieu Parish Mosquito and Rodent Control, Lake Charles, Louisiana, delivered 12 November 2001, registered N345CP, current.

Defender 4000 c/n 4006 Initially constructed as a BN-2T-4R but was not completed. Rebuilt as a BN-2T-4S, first flight 20 December 2000. Delivered to Hampshire Police Authority 26 February 2001, registration G-SJCH. Placed in storage in 2011 at Lee-on-Solent. Sold to Institute for Environmental Solutions, Latvia, in 2014, registration YL-FBI. Reported as being offered for sale c 2018/2019.

Thanks go to Hugh Townend for sharing his intriguing insight into his time with Britten-Norman as a pilot and in sales management.

18 Years of Flying for Britten-Norman

By Hugh Townend

The Aviation Centre

My association with Bembridge, Britten-Norman and the Islander started in February 1974 when I joined the Bembridge Aviation Centre as Chief Flying Instructor, with a brand new Commercial Pilot's Licence with Instrument Rating. Flying prior to this had been as a PPL Instructor at Lympne Airport in Kent to gain the necessary 700 flying hours (to exempt one from the expensive Approved CPL Course). Britten-Norman had been bought by the Fairey Group in 1972, with the shares held by an intermediate holding company, Fairey Britten-Norman (FBN) and was operating as Britten-Norman (Bembridge) Ltd.



Cessna 150 G-BABB at Bembridge in 1974 (Barry Friend).

I believe the original idea for a 'Bembridge Aviation Centre' was for it to be a shop window for the BN-3 Nymph, a four-seat, high wing, single-engined aircraft - Britain's answer to the Cessna 172. Due to the receivership, the Nymph of course never entered production and the Aviation Centre

idea didn't go ahead until 1973 when it initially operated two new Cessna 150's from April (G-BABB and G-BABC) and a four-seat Cessna 172 (G-AWRL) from July and was a normal flying school offering flying lessons to the general public managed by Wreford Fisher.

Fairey Britten-Norman Air Services

In April, 1974 all the aircraft operating interests of the Fairey Group were brought together under Fairey Britten-Norman Air Services (FBNAS) with Reg Caudle as a director and General Manager. This encompassed Fairey Surveys at White Waltham (where Reg was working at the time), Fairey's aircraft maintenance facility at Stockport (managed by my father, Bob Townend) and the Aviation Centre. Reg moved from his office at White Waltham to the Island in July, 1974 and was based in the Aviation Centre. Wreford on the other hand left under a cloud in early 1975. FBNAS was also granted the dealership for B-N aircraft and a lot of Reg's time was spent on sales activities.



Cessna 150 Aerobat G-BBTB at Bembridge in 1976 (Keith Sowter).

The Centre gradually grew as it became a CAA Approved Flying School which allowed bidding for "Cadet Contracts" as they were called, the training of Air Training Corps cadets who could obtain a subsidised Private Pilot's Licence, paid for by the MoD. In May, 1974 we obtained a Cessna 150 Aerobat (G-BBTB) so that we could offer an aerobatic aircraft and in July, 1975 disposed of one of the regular 150's, G-BABC. The original Cessna 172 had been sold the previous April and was replaced

with another Cessna 172 (G-AWLF) in September. I don't remember why this happened but wonder if it had to do with the fact that the first Cessna 172 had been acquired from Wreford.



Cessna 172 G-AWLF at Bembridge in 1976 (Keith Sowter).

FBNAS was only to last as a company for about eighteen months when the component parts reverted to their original ownership. Reg stayed on at the Aviation Centre until he moved to Belgium in October, 1975 as head of B-N's spares operation located in Marchienne near Gosselies, returning to the Sales Department at B-N in mid-1976 when Graham Rock took over the role. When Wreford departed I took over the role of managing the Aviation Centre whilst remaining CFI and reported to Reg. When FBNAS disappeared and Reg left for foreign parts I reported, somewhat distantly, to Ken Mills.

Flying the Islander

I became type-rated on the BN-2 and started flying the aircraft on a regular basis as it was at this time that sales of the aircraft were steady and increasing, reaching a maximum of around 120 aircraft per year - oh, those were the days! As a result of this number of aircraft sales there were many visitors to Bembridge and the Aviation Centre was busy picking them up from various locations (White Waltham being the most frequent) and bringing them to the Island.

The Aviation Centre grew and at its height operated or maintained a fleet of around ten aircraft and three engineers (John Dewson, being the Chief Engineer) to look

after them. The level of work in the production facility was such that Aviation Centre engineers used to carry out maintenance on G-AWVY, c/n 48, ("The Shuttle") and G-AVKC, c/n 4, to allow the "Production Hangar" to concentrate all its efforts on producing aircraft.



BN-2A-26 Islander G-AWVY, c/n 48, in 1975 (Bill Sheridan).



BN-2A-21 Islander G-AVKC, c/n 4, with camera floor installed (Bill Sheridan).

Islander G-AWVY took part in a "Breakfast Patrol" where home based aircraft try and identify the registrations of incoming aircraft during a certain publicised time period. Those that escape identification receive a free breakfast on landing. Well, this particular patrol was a runaway success in that it seemed to attract light aircraft from every flying club along the South Coast and also those a good way inland! I have never seen so many light aircraft in the skies around Bembridge and a lot of free breakfasts were given away. The Aviation Centre phone was red-hot; some calls were complaints and others of congratulation. One memorable call was from a 2nd World War fighter pilot who

"thought it was marvellous. Seeing so many aircraft reminded me of the 1940s!"

Our CAA "Air Operators Certificate" was extended to cover VY and she was used for pleasure flights during the summer months (when not required for Bembridge - Charleroi shuttle flights). This use peaked one summer on the occasion of a Fleet Review when over 700 people were carried over a 2 day period. Everyone joined in "loading and unloading" the passengers - including Clive Dove in his white coat!

Even establishing an "Isle of Wight airline" was talked about in very, very loose terms but enough for BBC Radio Solent and BBC South Today to run articles to the embarrassment of the Production Director Ken Mills, who had to pour cold water on the whole thing!

Nasty Nasty

Desmond Norman was still with B-N during the first few years of the Aviation Centre and was a fairly frequent user of our aircraft. When booking an aircraft, his secretary Hazel always asked that we supplied "a map and a headset" for Desmond, which were never in the aircraft after he had returned it. There were eventually no longer any more headsets or maps and one of the instructors went across to Desmond's office where, with the help of Desmond's secretary a large number of headsets and maps were found in a cupboard.

One of Desmond's favourite aircraft was Cessna 185 (G-AYNN), known as "Nasty Nasty" because of its tail wheel and tendency to veer off line during take-off and landing. A fairly powerful engine gave it a nippy performance when airborne but it could be handful during a crosswind landing! This had been traded in in 1970 against a new Islander sale in Guyana and was an early member of our fleet.

The aircraft had been up to the FBNAS Manchester facility for an annual check and Desmond had volunteered to fly the aircraft back via Weston Super Mare to drop off Bob Holder, Chairman of the Fairey Group.

On arrival back at Bembridge, he rounded upon me and said that here was something wrong with the aircraft's compass "and it was not the sort of thing that he expected from an aircraft fresh off its annual check".



Cessna 185B G-AYNN (Nasty Nasty) at Alderney in 1976 (Dick Gilbert).

After leaving Manchester they had set off but ended some way off track in the foothills of Wales - Desmond, we suspect had been busy chatting to Bob Holder and not paying too much attention to his navigation. I took this a little personally as my father managed the Manchester maintenance facility, made a quick phone call to him and he checked the compass swing results, which were perfectly correct. However, we had noticed that when the aircraft had landed at Bembridge there was a headset "hooked" around the magnetic compass.

Another quick phone call to Manchester revealed that the headset had been in exactly the same place after Desmond accepted the aircraft. Placing the headset next to the compass caused around a 30 degree deviation; this error applied to the track from Manchester to Weston does indeed take you into the Welsh hills. A discrete phone call was then made to Desmond's secretary saying that the compass was perfectly correct, but not when a headset was placed next to it (headsets have quite strong magnets in them as part of the actual earpiece!)

The Shuttle

The Shuttle was a daily flight from Bembridge to Charleroi, leaving at around

8 in the morning, routing through Gatwick for Customs clearance and arriving in time for lunch at the Fairey plant at Gosselies. The return flight arrived back at Bembridge at around 4.30. The regular pilot was one Geoff Boston (an ex-Boscombe Down test pilot who remained with B-N until the 2nd receivership) - the shuttle carried people, parts, engines etc etc between the two production lines to keep the lines in Belgium and Bembridge running smoothly.

Various non-aviation bits of freight were carried - turkeys out at Christmas to the UK expats working for Fairey Gosselies (people such as Graham Rock, Keith Anderson, Peter Graham and Jack Griffin, all of whom had moved from Bembridge), bread brought back to the UK when there was a bakers strike.

Apparently, there is in Belgium a patron saint for engineers and this saint has a saint's day. I happened to be flying the shuttle and arrived in Gosselies on this particular day. All was fine before lunch and the aircraft was unloaded. Lunchtime was when the festivities obviously started and after lunch it became very apparent the loading crew had celebrated with a vengeance! There were empty wine bottles everywhere - in fact, the whole place looked as though a Roman orgy had taken place!

The return freight was two Lycoming engines which were wheeled towards the aircraft in a somewhat erratic fashion by the loading crew who then endeavoured to load them through the left rear door. Only my intervention saved the aircraft from being punctured by the fork-lift truck but eventually the engines were manhandled into the aircraft and the loading crew departed without lashing them down. The "head" loader was found and asked to provide lashings which he thought was not really required as "the engines were heavy enough not to move by themselves". It was explained to him that being chased round the cabin by a couple of Lycomings during the return 1.5 hour flight was not my idea

of pleasure. Grudgingly the engines were secured!

Romanian Visitors

Occasional visitors to Bembridge were staff from the Romanian production line. At this time it must be remembered that Romania was still firmly under Communist control and any staff members visiting Bembridge from Romania were accompanied by a "Politburo" person. It had been my job to pick the Romanian contingent up from White Waltham and we duly landed at Bembridge and unloaded the passengers. By inference I had picked up who the Politburo person was, a person with bright ginger hair wearing the most atrocious and obvious toupée ever seen.

Whilst unloading the passengers there was another Islander ahead of us with its engines running when muffled laughter broke out in the cabin behind me. Turning around I could see that one of the passengers was chasing what looked like an orange coloured floor mop being blown across the airfield, attempting to stamp on it and arrest its progress. Eventually he did bring it to a halt and then in full view of all his Romanian "charges" he had the unenviable task of replacing his hairpiece. Yes, it was the Politburo man whose wig had been blown off! Much muffled laughter from the remaining Romanian passengers behind upheld hands!

Another embarrassing incident occurred when a Romanian pilot had been sent across to be checked out as a potential training captain and be brushed up on his teaching skills. Sadly, the candidate was way below any acceptable standard which culminated during an engine fire drill (at a safe altitude) when, having shut down the engine that was supposedly on fire he then proceeded to switch off the remaining live engine - brief deafening silence before we switched the mags to live on the "good engine"! A diplomatic meeting with the then MD, Dr Gordon Watson, followed when the poor Romanian pilot was sympathetically told that "it was very unfair on him that he had been sent across

without adequate training" and that Dr Watson would let the Romanian authorities know of the situation. Phew!!!

Receivership

During the period of the Gosselies production line the pound halved in value against the Belgium Franc and so in pound terms the net price of the aircraft doubled. This, I believe, led to the financial problems that Fairey SA and then the Fairey Group experienced and so in 1977 the receiver was called in.

One immediate and very sad outcome of this was that the Aviation Centre, although successful and profitable, was closed down and all the staff laid off with the exception of myself. I believe the Receiver was guided to this conclusion by one of the directors, who for reasons unknown, had a strong dislike for me. Anyway, Aviation Centre operations ceased, the training aircraft were sold off one by one and what had been a very prominent part of the airfield's life was no longer.

Receivership saw me move into the Flight Test Office with John Neilan, assisted on a part time basis by Hugh Kendall. Geoff Boston left the company not long after the beginning of the receivership, leaving John and myself as the only two full-time pilots. John then trained me to be a production test pilot, a process which I thoroughly enjoyed as I did when conducting the actual production test flights. Prior to coming to Bembridge, John had been Chief Test Pilot for British European Airways.

One memorable occasion occurred when sitting in the Flight Test Office with John and Hugh, I asked if either of them during their test flying careers had ever had to resort to using a parachute. John admitted during the war to having to leave a Slingsby Hengist glider when, during a test dive to 200mph, the wings parted company with the fuselage. At this point in the conversation, Hugh went very quiet and pale. When asked why, it transpired that he had been the stress engineer who had done the stress calculations on said glider! I'm

glad to say that John didn't hold it against him.

As far as I know Hugh wasn't a member of the Caterpillar Club but he did regale us with stories of delivering one light aircraft from the south to the north of England which involved two if not three forced landings. The landing on each occasion was successful, the failed part removed and taken to a local garage for rectification, re-installed and the flight continued!

Generally, the production test flight routine was followed and after a few tweaks the aircraft was put before the CAA for its Export Certificate of Airworthiness and all was fine. My main memories of production test flights were of endless hours droning around on one engine trying to achieve the required single engine rate of climb. Invariably the aircraft passed this with flying colours a year later during the next test. Why? - the engine had "eased off" and was producing its full power.

I did learn one little trick from one of the two senior test pilots (probably John as he was a pre-War record holding glider pilot) - the hills around St Boniface Down produced quite a good thermal which could be used to one's advantage on a hot summer's day! I remember that during one test flight with Peter Ward as my flight test observer, we were struggling to get the aircraft towards its VNE when we both realised that perhaps bringing the flaps up might help!

Finally, I have memories of Trislander autopilot trials at Hurn - round and round we went. A lot of fore and aft movement was required with the Trislander to achieve pitch changes; fine and no problem for manual flying but the poor old autopilot struggled to keep up. When chasing the glideslope, every time the autopilot thought it had caught up, it was already many seconds behind the aircraft which was then moving in the other direction. To anyone watching on from the ground it must have been a remarkable sight, as this aircraft "porpoised" its way towards the ground!

The Long Walk

During the early part of the receivership a number of the Directors parted company with B-N and the way this was carried out was for the Receiver to take the unfortunate victim for a walk out on the airfield and impart the dreadful news. This ritual normally seemed to take place around lunchtime and the office windows were lined with faces to see who the poor victim was as he returned from the "walk".

One day Roger Downer (the Flight Shed inspector) and I thought we would have a little fun and walked together out to the far end of the airfield. Sure enough, by the time we had reached the end of the airfield and turned around, all the office windows were filled with faces! As we came closer and people could actually recognise who we were, the windows emptied of faces and we were met by a number of people calling us other than wholly complementary names!

Life continued much unchanged in receivership - aircraft to be test flown, occasional trips to Gosselies as well as the normal taking aircraft to and from paint shops and other facilities. All flying though had to be approved by the Receiver's manager at Bembridge.

Before finishing this "chapter" mention must be made of two Gosselies occurrences. One was an aircraft that was flown back from the Belgian factory to Bembridge where an inspection revealed that the aileron controls had been crossed twice, the second time because they went in the wrong direction the first time. Secondly, the Belgian test pilot whose name now escapes me was a keen aerobatic pilot and owned his own Pitts Special. Walking through a hangar at Gosselies one day I came across said Pitts Special in rather a sorry state with the upper main plane split open and containing rather a lot of grass and soil! Over lunch the Belgian test pilot was questioned as to what had happened, he replied "I am doing ze inverted pass and I go a little too low!", Yes, he had flown into the ground whilst inverted but luckily had escaped unhurt!

There was also a slight difference in attitude to alcohol and flying. Said test pilot would happily have wine with lunch and then go off and fly. Some of the post lunch flight test reports made interesting reading. One comes to mind where the auxiliary fuel pumps were "ticked" as being serviceable only to be found on inspection at Bembridge not to be connected at all!

Keeping Up Appearances

As a way of keeping the Britten-Norman name in the public eye we attended many air shows, both in the UK and Europe. Two spring to mind, one being at Old Warden (the home of the Shuttleworth Collection) - we displayed two aircraft and I flew a number of staff members up in a Trislander.

During the course of the display a very loudly spoken Aussie spectator was pouring scorn on the Trislander - "must be experimental" - "couldn't understand how it flew" - "what a funny looking aircraft etc etc"! So, we played along and indeed said it was experimental and were indeed concerned as to whether it could actually take off from Old Warden. When the time came to take-off (which the Aussie had told me he was going to watch with great interest), I held the aircraft on the ground long after the take-off safety speed; the boundary fence was fast approaching when we finally rotated and of course, the aircraft literally shot into the air and climbed very steeply. Oh, I wish I could have seen his face!

The second occasion was at the Helsinki Air show where we performed the normal Islander show routine of STOL landings, take-offs, slow flying on two and one engine. After this we landed and a few slots later watched a restored vintage Finnish single-engined trainer give its display. Sadly, the pilot was not too well versed in display flying and in attempting to carry out steep turns in an under powered aircraft over the airfield, managed to stall the aircraft over some tallish pine trees. Having completely run out of flying speed the aircraft gently descended into the trees

and came to rest (luckily with the crew unhurt) resting on some branches, some 40 feet above the ground. Pilot and passenger then had the embarrassing and unenviable task of climbing out of the aircraft and down the various branches to the ground, in full view of the crowd.

Finally, two comments arising from the receivership which might bring a smile to people's faces. The first, overheard on the shop floor, was "These Receivers aren't nearly as good as the first lot!" and the other was made by the Receiver himself after hosting a meeting for B-N Distributors (to re-assure them that B-N would emerge as a going concern) - "the one thing I have learnt about aviation is that people in this business seem to drink a great deal! "

Pilatus

Pilatus Aircraft of Switzerland bought B-N from the Receiver in 1979 and we became Pilatus Britten-Norman Ltd or more simply "PBN". This led to a number of changes, both personally and to the business.

I came to know and like the new MD, Dietrich Klöckner. He held a PPL and I took him through his twin rating on the Islander. I remember well one evening as he was flying back to White Waltham to go home he asked me the question "Why does Bembridge not have a hard runway". Well! - during the, sometimes, long days of Receivership I had written a paper, I think entitled, "The Need For a Hard Runway at Bembridge". He asked for a copy and, as they say the rest is history, the hard runway was built.

A little time after this I was asked whether I would consider joining the Sales Department as a Regional Sales Manager. I was a little taken aback at this suggestion as I had never considered myself as a "seller". Anyway, the terms were that I if didn't like it I could return to production test flying etc. and so I said yes.

Demonstration Tours

The Pilatus take-over prompted activity in the Marketing Department which had

previously been frozen by the action of the then Marketing Director who had stopped Sales Managers travelling unless there was going to be a firm order at the end of their visit. The net result of this was a marked slowdown in orders received. If Sales Managers are not out prospecting, then they won't sell.

Many important operators of the Islander had not seen a Sales Manager for years. For my part getting to know "my patch" of Europe and being able to fly and demonstrate the aircraft was a double bonus. I don't think that anyone believed me when I reported back to Reg Caudle, the Marketing Director, that I had found a customer for the first Turbine Islander. And yes, an order was placed by GKN for a BN-2T to support a large African mining contract in Zaire. To use Norman Tebbitt's phrase "getting on my bike" brought about an order.



*GKN BN-2T G-KEMZ, c/n 2030,
(Wingnut).*

During the contract negotiations the GKN representative amused us with tales of refurbishing steel mills in Poland for which they had to accept a proportion in countertrade. The latter was in its early stages and rather than use a countertrade agent they did it themselves. The result of this was GKN having warehouses full of light bulbs (some of which did indeed explode!) and soup ladles, of which they couldn't dispose! The lessons about countertrade were to come in useful later.

Visits to Loganair brought about further orders to replace their older aircraft as did visits to Germany and Scandinavia.

The 1000th Islander

This aircraft was delivered to the Cyprus National Guard (CNG) with "yours truly" sitting in the right hand seat looking after the CNG pilot. Although the aircraft was still on the British register, it was interesting to note the behaviour of the CNG pilot as we overflew Rhodes and headed out along the airway towards Cyprus. The airway brings you relatively close to the Turkish mainland, which prompted an almost hysterical reaction from the pilot who wanted to turn 90 degrees to the right and fly south until we could no longer see Turkey. I very forcefully had to make it clear to him that we were in a British registered aircraft on a perfectly legal international flight planned along an international airway! He gradually calmed down.

Other Demo Tours

Other demo tours took me to Morocco in dear old G-BCMY, c/n 419, the Maritime Defender demonstrator, which also took me to Finland. It was high summer in Finland and the Finnish Border Guard were evaluating the aircraft for use as a maritime patrol aircraft over the Baltic.



BN-2A-21 Maritime Defender G-BCMY, c/n 419, (Ray Barber).

The demo lasted about three days during which time the Border Guard officers flying the aircraft seemed more interested in looking at young women in various states of undress lying on the decks on the many and varied yachts we overflew, than any serious counting of fishing boats and the like.

A last sales effort with the Trislander took us across the US to Phoenix and back through the southern states and the Bahamas. During this tour the damage that a poor or unprofessional demonstration can do was revealed when we called in at Wings Field, Blue Bell just to the north of Philadelphia. A local airline operated the Islander very successfully over a 10 minute sector into the major airport which took one hour plus by car. They had expressed interest in the Trislander but had experienced a demonstration which had left them badly frightened. The runway was indeed quite long enough for a fully laden Trislander to take-off with ease. I took the Chief Pilot slowly and methodically through the Flight Manual and he eventually agreed that the aircraft could safely take-off together with the Take-Off Safety Speed (TOSS) (the speed at which you pull back on the stick and rotate the aircraft into a flying attitude). He was still not totally convinced and positioned one of his staff on the side of the runway where the aircraft should become airborne.

So, we loaded the aircraft with volunteer passengers and taxied out to the runway threshold. To make the Chief Pilot feel a little better, we lined up and ran the aircraft up to full power against the brakes. Off we went and as we reached the TOSS I called "Rotate" but the Chief Pilot was of the old school who thought that he should allow the aircraft to fly off the ground when it was ready. So, I pulled quickly back on the control column and the aircraft, as I knew it would, left the runway with many yards to spare! One very happy Chief Pilot who now believed in the Trislander!

BN-2T Demos

The arrival on the scene of the BN-2T necessitated a number of demos and the aircraft ranged far and wide. From the Netherlands where the sale to the Dutch Police took 5 years, down into Africa through Senegal, Sierra Leone and onto Gabon and back through Mauritania.

An amusing interlude took place in Gabon. The British Ambassador had been invited to

attend the opening of a new palm oil mill way "up country" and about a 2 day drive – "was there any chance of a lift in the BN-2T?" So, a few days later we found ourselves armed with only a sketch of where they thought the landing strip was – "you can't miss it. It's just beyond the biggest bend in the river". Well, from the air all the bends in the river looked big and we searched and searched with all eight of the Ambassador's party also searching! As ever, as we were about to give up, the strip was espied and we landed. On landing, the Ambassador asked what time I would like them back at the strip. "How about 3.30 pm" – "No problem" and we took off for the half-hour flight back to Libreville (in case you are wondering why we didn't stay at the strip, it was literally a strip in the middle of the jungle. No buildings, no shade, nothing! With a midday temperature of 100F+, the hotel pool was a much better place to wait!)

On returning to the strip at the appointed hour we found on landing, to our astonishment, a neat line of assorted ambassadors already waiting for our arrival. They were in the aircraft quickly and basking in the air conditioned cabin, faster than you could believe! When I expressed surprise as their punctuality, the British Ambassador told me that you only ever get caught up country once with a two day journey back – if the pilot says 3.30, you're there at 3.30!

The Ambassador had reason to return the favour when the French Regional Sales Manager (for whom I was flying the aircraft) managed to lose his passport on Sunday. We were due to take off on the Monday and start the long trek back home. The French Embassy was closed and there was no "out of hours number". A call to the British Ambassador was made who called his opposite French number. "Tell your man to be at the French Embassy at 8.30 tomorrow morning and you'll make your 10.00 take-off". Sure enough to the utter amazement of the somewhat partisan French Sales Manager, he was issued with a new passport as arranged by the Brits!

We had stopped in Mauritania on the way out to demo the aircraft to a French mining company. There was a positive response and a call for the French Sales Manager to return and so we dropped him off "on our way past" and a sale was achieved (BN-2T c/n 2144).



BN-2T 5T-BSA, c/n 2144, formerly with the Soc. Nat. Industrielle de Miniere, Mauretania (Adrian M Balch)

The contrast between leaving the sandy wastes of Mauritania and 3 hours later arriving in Las Palmas could not be more apparent. From sandy wastes and a hotel that was rudimentary to say the least, to clean, ironed sheets in a 4* hotel in Las Palmas and the joyous sight of the waiter carrying two glasses with ice cubes and two bottles – one containing gin and the other tonic!

Giveaways

It was during the demo tours of Africa that the usefulness of "giveaways" – i.e. logo'd caps, biros, keyrings etc etc. On our outward stop at Casablanca we gave a few to the refuelling crew to their obvious delight. On our return journey no sooner had we landed than the fuelling bowser appeared hurtling across the apron towards us. Grinning refuellers had us filled and we were on our way in no time at all – all thanks to a couple of 5p biros!

We also discovered that were very popular with the re-fuellers in Sierra Leone. Why – well, burning Jet A1 the standard airliner refuelling bowser came to us and they had to fit a reducing pipe so that the fuel could be put through the small opening in the top of our tanks. At the end of our refuelling

the reduction pipe had to be drained of fuel which could not be accounted for and so was carefully drained into a 5 gallon drum which, apparently, provided enough cooking fuel for a family for a considerable period! During our stay in Freetown we became very popular with the re-fuelling crew and received excellent service!

The Middle East

With Avgas often being not readily available in the Gulf states, the BN-2T solved this problem and so an extensive tour was arranged through Bahrain, UAE and Oman. Out through Cairo and then follow the Nile, overhead Luxor and then refuel in Jeddah and onto Bahrain. Our main target was the Bahrain Defence Force who operated a fleet of helicopters from a custom-made heli-base.

Although the runway at this base was short, it was plenty long enough for the 2T and so we were invited there the next day. We landed and were immediately asked by the Tower to take-off and land again; not only once but three times. Eventually we met with the Commander of the Defence Force and his aides. I questioned one of them about the three take-offs and landings. The reply was "The Commander reckoned that if you did it three times then it was safe for him to fly in your aircraft!"

So, with the Commander in the left-hand seat off we went for a flight around his "territory". At the southern tip of Bahrain Island, there are salt pans and as we overflew them the Commander asked "Can your aircraft land on these salt lakes (or pans). Moment for quick thinking! "Do you exercise in this area?", I asked. "Oh, yes we drive our Bedford trucks all over the place". A fully laden Bedford truck I estimated weighed about the same as a BN-2T and so we safely did a touch and go. Not the kind of challenge that a BA pilot faces!

We returned through Jordan, landing at Amman and awoke the next morning to see snow on the ground. Our purpose was to try and interest their parachute team,

which then operated a piston Islander, in the 2T. Our intention was to try and overfly Syria en-route Cyprus which was considerably quicker than routing down the Dead Sea and then back up over Cairo and on to Larnaca.

To try and arrange this, we were advised to visit "Amman Control" which controlled the then busy overflight route to and from SE Asia. Having found the correct office we were somewhat nonplussed to see a young lady, probably in her early twenties and complete with knitting, operating the R/T and issuing overflight clearances to the many large passenger jets using "her" airspace. If only the pilots knew!

UK BN-2T Sales

Although the BN-2T demonstrator (G-OPBN, c/n 2034) roamed through Europe and Africa, rich pickings were also to be found close at home.



*BN-2T Demonstrator G-OPBN, c/n 2034,
(BNAPS Archive)*

MAFF

The then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) were evaluating aerial surveillance as means of policing the UK's fishing grounds. This was at a time when fishing quotas were being implemented and the MAFF realised that they had little or no knowledge of day to day activity in UK fishing grounds. So, the BN-2T was offered for evaluation and much time was spent over UK waters at heights of around 500ft – at the end of a surveillance mission climbing up to 2 to 3000 feet for the flight back to "land" made you feel positively dizzy!



BN-2T G-MAFF, c/n 2119, operated by Flight Refuelling (Brian Johnstone).



BN-2T G-WOTG, c/n 2139, RAF Parachute Association (BNH Collection/Trevor Bartlett).

However, the evaluation proved successful and the MAFF bought a BN-2T fully equipped for maritime surveillance which was operated on their behalf by Flight Refuelling.

BN-2T as a Parachute Dropping Aircraft

A quiet day behind the desk looking at a BN-2T Flight Manual revealed that it's rate of climb must make it an attractive alternative to the piston Islander for parachuting as the 2T offered a doubling in the climb rate. In economic terms the 2T was more economically efficient for dropping parachutists at a busy centre, than either the 2A or 2B.

Demonstrations followed to: The Joint Services Parachute Centre at Paderborn, Germany, the Royal Air Force Sport Parachute Association, the Army Parachute Association at Netheravon and the Red Devils. Sales resulted to all four.

One memorable demo to RAFSPA at Weston on the Green involved the President (I think) of the Association who was an AVM who asked if he could fly the aircraft. "Of course" was the reply and off we set, complete with wives in the back. He was thoroughly enjoying himself as we went around and round the circuit and completely forgot the time and lunch. He was "brought back to earth" as he was struck between the shoulder blades by his wife's hair brush wielded by her sitting in Row 2 – the only way she could attract his attention!

One unfortunate incident happened to the JSPA 2T G-WOTG brought about by the overzealous pilot who, it is believed, ignored the torque limits when climbing the aircraft. This resulted in the engine being over-tempered and a small explosion over Paderborn airfield one day when the "cooked" engine finally had enough and scattered turbine blades hither and thither. The Major who ran JSPA and whose name I forget, witnessed this and with classic understatement uttered the lovely phrase, "Oh dear, I think I'd better sit down and have a cigar". Thankfully no one was hurt and the aircraft suffered little damage.

BN-2T as a Police Surveillance Aircraft

The quietness of the 2T compared with the piston Islander plus the ease of view resulting from the high wing made it very attractive as a police surveillance aircraft. Demonstrations were given to the Dutch Police who at the time were probably the leaders in police aviation. After a protracted sales period, a contract was placed for two aircraft.

Demos were also given to the West Midlands Police for whom, I believe, Police Aviation Services operated a 2B and sadly not a new one. Very enjoyable and interesting low level flying.

During our demonstration we positioned a 2B at Birmingham Airport where it was being compared with a helicopter. In the temporary office was a status board with two boxes titled "Islander Arrests" and "Helicopter Arrests". To begin with on

visiting this office the PBN Sales Manager received much joshing as the helicopter had aided in 4 arrests. However, the next time the Sales Manager visited, the status board read "Helo 4 arrests". "Islander 48 arrests".

Fascinated, he asked for an explanation and was told that police HQ had received a phone call from a distraught garage owner in whose forecourt had stopped a coach full of drunk football supporters. Whilst the coach was taking on fuel the supporters ransacked the shop attached to the garage, taking all the car spares plus anything else they could lay hands on. The garage owner was able to give a full description of the coach and thought that it was heading up the M5 toward Birmingham.

The Islander took off and quickly managed to find the coach on the motorway. Traffic police cars were alerted and they trailed the coach. Assuming that the supporters would need the "services" at the next motorway service station, more police headed to this location. Sure enough the coach pulled in and was immediately surrounded and the still drunken supporters got off, many with wiper blades and other motor accessories in their hands, straight into the waiting arms of the Police!

BN-2T Speed Memories

Flying the 2T was rather like going from an underpowered Ford Escort into a Mini Cooper. Vastly improved rates of climb, increased True Air Speed (160 knots) at the preferred cruising altitude of 12,000 ft. One memory remains etched in the brain. Gatwick was used to clear customs (before the days of the more lenient requirements that allowed direct clearance from Bembridge) and when flying the piston Islander on final approach, Air Traffic were always asking you to go as fast as possible in an endeavour to keep up with the jet traffic ahead on the ILS. And then one day, flying a 2T into Gatwick I heard those magic words in my headset from ATC "You're catching up the traffic ahead - could you slow down!!"

Another memorable occasion was returning from a demo tour and inbound to Southampton from over the Channel Islands with about a 50 knot tailwind and showing 210 knots on the DME. As we entered UK airspace I was put over to Southampton whereupon I asked for descent "What on earth do you want to come down this early for", was Southampton's answer. "How about 210 knots on the DME!". "Oh, I see what you mean" and descent clearance was given.

Other Demo Memories

Mariehamn

Although the prior chapters might give the impression that it was always 2T, 2B sales continued into Germany, Denmark and Mariehamn, an island between Sweden and Finland. We (the other member of the sales team shall remain nameless for reasons that will become obvious) had demoed the aircraft to the Mariehamn local government and as we were setting off early in the morning back to Copenhagen, I had excused myself and headed off for an early night. The other member said he was going to the virtually empty bar for one beer.

Unbeknown to us, the overnight ferries from Stockholm to Helsinki stopped for a period at Mariehamn for the passengers to use the casino (attached to the hotel in which we were staying) and also to stock up on the duty frees. Anyway, shortly after I had retired, the bar filled with Scandinavians intent on drinking their purchases. My colleague was roped in! Well, the phrase "a human wreck" was a polite description of the shambles that appeared for breakfast the next morning. I have never seen anyone in such a state - totally and utterly exhausted and hardly capable of speech.

Breakfast was totally beyond him and so we set off for the airport where I bundled him in the back of the aircraft and left him to sleep it off as I flew the aircraft to Copenhagen.

Loganair Scheduled Service Anniversary

20 years of the Islander in scheduled service was celebrated by a splendid dinner held in Kirkwall which I had the pleasure to attend. Most sales visits can be pretty hard work – you are either making excuses for late delivery or something else which has gone wrong. However, on this occasion during the after dinner speeches mention was made that a representative of PBN was present whereupon there was loud applause! A very definite first.

The other noticeable fact about this dinner was the lasting powers of the other diners – I excused myself at a reasonable hour as I was flying the aircraft back to Glasgow the next morning and left the party which was in full swing. I appeared at breakfast the next morning expecting to be the only person at the table. Wrong – all those attending the party last night were already there getting stuck into porridge, bacon and egg etc. Not a hangover in sight!

Leasing

As new sales became harder to achieve, some leasing offers were made. One in particular to the Canary Islands for Tenair who wanted to start a scheduled service between Gran Canaria and Gomera, a small island to the south only accessible by ferry. Gomera is for the want of better words, a volcanic outcrop with an 800 metre landing strip perched on one corner of the Island. The strip is about 1000 feet above sea level – a comforting thought if you had engine failure on take-off; plenty of time to sort things out!

Sadly, this venture failed and the two aircraft returned to Bembridge. The owner of the start-up airline was a divorced Englishwoman of strong views. She decided that the uniform for the pilots would be canary yellow (yes, real canary yellow) shirts and green trousers. This did not appeal to the Spanish macho pilot – totally the wrong image as far as they were concerned!



*BN-2B-27 Tenair EC-DYF, c/n 2136,
(Francisco Andreu).*

A Promotion

Having been the Regional Sales Manager for around 5 years I was then made "Head of Civil Aircraft Sales and Deputy Marketing Director". This happened at the same time as the then Marketing Director was removed from his post. This was in response to the Sales Department effectively being split in two – military and civil. The military were to pursue sideways looking radar versions of the Turbine Defender as well as other military derivatives

The Final Straw

Having led a civil sales team that had achieved success, it was perhaps natural to cast one's eyes at the possibilities of the top marketing job. It came as something of a shock to learn that a retired Major from the Army Air Corps had been selected and was being groomed for the job. I later learned that I was not considered "because I did not have a degree! – nor did any of the other Directors but that did not seem to matter. With no promotion on offer it was time to leave. And so, an 18 year association with B-N came to an end; for the most part very enjoyable with challenging flying, perhaps unmatched elsewhere.

Hugh Townend

Lymington April 2014

FIGAS Islander VP-FMC Ferry Flight

Following transfer of ownership from B-N to FIGAS on 12 November, Islander VP-FMC departed from Solent Airport on 16 November at 1004 local time to start its 9000 mile ferry flight to the Falkland Islands. The flight routing was initially via Wick and Reykjavik.

The flight had been delayed since early this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions

A report on the ferry flight will be included in the January 2021 issue of BNAPS News.



FIGAS Islander G-CLHR/VP-FMC in B-N's Final Assembly Hangar at Solent Airport September 2020.

Channel Islands Air Search - Islander Training Flights

Channel Islands Air Search (CIAS) recently shared photos taken during an afternoon training flight. The team searched the south coast of Guernsey at various heights, including very low level 180 – 200 ft, then North to South at around 200 ft down the west coast, staying just over the water whilst paralleling the beaches.

Channel Islands Air Search conducts lifesaving work in the 4,000 square miles of water surrounding the Channel Islands. The Islander's versatility and advanced capabilities help to provide a rapid response search time in the wake of emergencies.



Above: CIAS Islander 2-CIAS is seen here being made ready for a flight (CIAS).

Right: View of a coastal village on Guernsey during low level operations (CIAS).



Above: View of the Guernsey coast from the right hand seat (CIAS).

Channel Islands Air Search is a voluntary service operating on a 24 hour, 365 day basis in all weathers to provide a rapid response airborne search and rescue service in Channel Island waters. The CIAS Islander is equipped with search radar, night vision, smoke floats, radio homing and loud hailer system, and an air droppable life raft. It operates in conjunction with Lifeboats, SAR helicopters and other rescue craft.

The funds required to equip and run the aircraft are raised almost exclusively within the Channel Islands.

For more information see the CIAS Facebook page or the website <https://www.ci-airsearch.com/>

B-N Islander G-AXUB Refurbishment News

Following on from earlier reports that Headcorn Parachute Association's long serving Islander, G-AXUB, c/n 121, had been acquired by B-N for use as part of its aircraft leasing operation, (see news item in BNAPS News January 2020 issue), a recent B-N news release provided an update on the work to completely refurbish the aircraft.



The B-N news release included an image (left) of work in progress at B-N's Solent Airport hangar:

"We buy Islanders as well as selling them. This aircraft was recently purchased from an operator who has owned it for 40 years. It needed some TLC so now it is going through our refurbishment programme, with all maintenance and SBs, new interior and refinish as well as a Garmin cockpit. First in service 50 years ago, it will soon look like it is leaving the factory new."

Islander G-AXUB is currently the second oldest Islander on the UK register. It was assembled as a BN-2A at Bembridge and made a first flight on 13 October, 1969, as G-51-47. It was given the registration mark G-AXUB in January, 1970, and later acquired by Bristow Helicopters on 3 April 1970. It was used to support Bristow's oilfield operations in Nigeria and took up the Nigerian registration mark 5N-AIJ on 22 April, 1970. After 10 years operation in Nigeria it returned to the UK and reverted to its previous UK registration mark, G-AXUB, on 6 May 1980. On 5 May 1981 Headcorn Parachute Club took up ownership. The aircraft was based at Headcorn Aerodrome, Kent to support the club's parachuting operations. Islander, G-AXUB, was acquired by B-N and arrived at Solent Airport on 30 April, 2019 (see news item in BNAPS News May 2019 issue).

B-N Announces "Autonomous Pilot" Partnership

B-N recently announced that in partnership with Blue Bear, a specialist company in unmanned systems and the UK's foremost leader in air autonomy, it plans to make autonomous flight a reality by the mid 2020's.



Starting in October 2020, Blue Bear and Britten-Norman will work together to automate the operation of a Britten-Norman Islander.

The project's first milestone will be to demonstrate single pilot operations assisted by an "autonomous co-pilot". This is expected to be ready to enter service in the mid-2020s and would present a significant efficiency increase and cost saving for regional air operators.

Further developments are focussed on improving the efficiency of regional air transport that is currently underdeveloped and often forced to rely on subsidy to be economically sustainable due to high operating and maintenance costs. Autonomous technology, as applied to regional air transport, has the potential to make operations affordable and scalable and, in conjunction with new and evolving propulsion technologies, could give air transport a more sustainable future into the 2030s.

Recollections of Brian Robinson from 55 years ago.

Having seen a photo of the first prototype Islander, pre Paris Air Show, in the May 2015 Islander 50 special issue of BNAPS News, Brian Robinson was prompted to get in touch with BNAPS to recall his time working at Bembridge in 1965 on the prototype BN-2 Islander, G-ATCT:

I am Brian Robinson and I'm the chap standing on the steps by the engine cowl (did we really wear white shirts in the office then? It would be jeans and sweat shirts now). I can't be precise as far as a date is concerned but the time frame was tight between first flight, in primer, gaining the required number of flying hours before being allowed into the Air Show and doing the paint job, I've a feeling that was done at night. I would guess at either the 16th or 17th June 1965.as on the 18th I was on my way to Paris).



BN-2 prototype at Bembridge Airport on 16 or 17 June 1965 being prepared for departure to the 1965 Paris Air Show. Brian is standing on the steps to check the port engine cowlings (BNAPS Archive).

My involvement with B-N and the Islander and how I came to be there is, as far as I can remember, that I started during the early design stage of the Islander development. The Britten-Norman (B-N) company had approvals for aircraft construction but did not have design approval. This cover was provided by George Miles until, I believe, around about the time of the Paris Air Show when approval was gained by B-N.

Previously a number of design office staff employed by F G Miles Ltd had been made redundant following the merger with Beagle Aircraft, several of these were re-employed

by another of the Miles companies (Miles Engineering) and, of those, six became part of the design team on the Islander project. Those six were Mike Benjamin, Dudley Kell, Denis Berryman, Ernie Perkins, Ron Dack and myself, Brian Robinson, and were all still employed by Miles. We had all worked together developing the Beagle M218 aircraft and as such provided a team bringing a certain amount of experience to the project.

I am not sure at what time the various members of the team arrived at B-N but I joined the team at the end of August/beginning of September 1964, following a year at BAC Hurn on the 1-11 aircraft. My work at Miles had been power plant installation and thus it was a natural progression for me to take on the prototype Continental Engine installation, engine mounting, exhaust system, cooling, engine cowling, firewall etc. etc.

From memory Mike Benjamin did the fuselage, Ernie was on wings, Denis did the flying controls, Electrics were covered by B-N employee Andy O'Connell. Another F G Miles employee works foreman Jack Sullivan joined B-N to oversee the prototype build.

This period of my life was fairly hectic, on Saturday 5 June 1965 I married Susan in Lancing, West Sussex, a rather 'last minute' decision which is yet another little tale revolving around B-N that I won't go into now. On Sunday 6th I was back in the office preparing for engine runs, ground trials and first flight.

Following Paris and further test flights it became apparent that the Continental engines did not provide sufficient power and Rolls Royce Light Aircraft Engines division, then part of Rolls Royce Cars, were slow to respond to request for a solution to achieve more power unlike Lycoming who were keen to be involved with the project and the rest, as they say, is history.

As for the Miles employees, Denis and Ron had become B-N employees, Dudley Kell returned to Miles Engineering where there was now an aircraft drawing office, Mike

Benjamin went to the USA and for me it was decision time. We wanted to buy a property and settle down. At the time we were living in rented accommodation in Howgate Lane, Bembridge, and there was work for me back at Miles. Taffy Lloyd had joined B-N and took over the Lycoming Installation, and so at the beginning of September 1965 we left the Isle of Wight leaving with fond memories of those exciting times.

However, my involvement with the Islander was not to end. The aircraft section that I returned to became Miles Aviation set up by George Miles at Ford Aerodrome. Here I worked on the crop spraying Islander project and a project for Rolls Royce installing turbocharged Continental Engines in Islander G-AVUB.



Islander G-AVUB with Continental Turbocharged engines installed.

Also, during our time at Ford Islanders were flown in for various equipment installations and it was then that I got my overalls on and installed the 'long range fuel tank' system on Islanders being

delivered to far flung places. After a move back to Shoreham Airport we had the contract with Dowty Rotol to install their ducted fans on the Islander that became G-FANS.



Islander G-FANS with Dowty Rotol Ducted Fan Propulsors installed.

During the Beagle Days all of the Miles design team worked on the M218 project in the original Miles Design Office. The Beagle company built new offices for their staff and when the time came to integrate the two the Miles staff were made redundant. The aircraft section at Miles Engineering was transferred to Miles Aviation and Transport (R & D) Ltd at Ford which George Miles set up in 1967. At that time we were short of design work at Ford and I left and joined Link Miles on Flight Simulators to return a couple of years later after the move to Shoreham.

Incidentally a few years ago I visited the Historical Centre at Shoreham Airport and saw that they had the original B206 prototype and were doing a similar job as BNAPS with Islander G-AVCN.

Brian Robinson, Findon, West Sussex, 2015

Brian Robinson 13 December 1939 – 13 October 2020

Brian Robinson sadly passed away on 13 October 2020. Our sincere condolences go out to Brian's wife Susan, family and friends in respect of their sad loss.

Brian was very proud of his work on the prototype Islander and took a great interest in the restoration of Islander G-AVCN. Brian very kindly helped the BNAPS Islander 50 event in June 2015 with copies of a unique selection of photographs depicting the BN-2 Islander prototype G-ATCT first flight preparations and its first flight in June 1965.

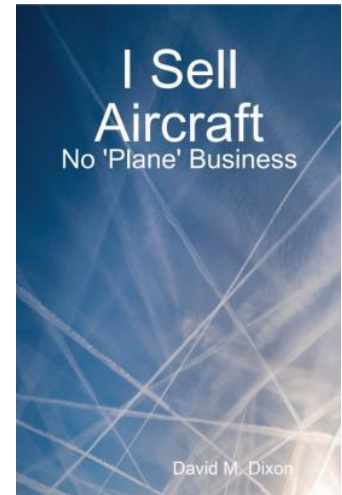
During a holiday trip to the Isle of Wight, in June 2015, Brian and his wife Susan paid a visit to BNAPS workshop Harbour Farm, Bembridge to take a look at Islander G-AVCN under restoration.



Book Review "I Sell Aircraft – No Plane Business"

Thanks go to David Dixon for providing BNAPS with a copy of his book "I Sell Aircraft – No Plane Business". It gives an informative, intriguing and sometimes colourful account of his varied experiences during a 48 year career of selling aircraft. David started his career with Britten-Norman as one of a band of young men recruited to take the world by storm selling the B-N Islanders and Trislanders. From his earlier travelling days David was immediately involved in sales campaigns in Africa and South East Asia.

David's book is highly recommended both as a good read and the unique insight it gives into the all-consuming role of the aircraft salesman – some episodes could well be as something like an extract from a James Bond film script when having to deal with political intrigue and larger than life characters that indulged in "behind the scenes" string pulling and influence that often defied comprehension during sales negotiations and meetings.



The book is priced at £11.95 and is available from <https://www.lulu.com/en/gb/shop/david-dixon/i-sell-aircraft-no-plane-business/paperback/product-696866.html>

BNAPS Sales

Please contact Rita Edgcumbe at BNAPS Sales to order items from the BNAPS Sales catalogue; sales@bnaps.org.uk

BNAPS on the Internet - information and back issues of BNAPS News go to www.bnaps.org.uk
Facebook - Look out for latest posts and news on the BNAPS Facebook page

More BNAPS Supporters Needed

If any BNAPS Supporters Club member knows of someone who would be interested in joining please pass on contact details to our BNAPS Membership Secretary, Rita Edgcumbe at sales@bnaps.org.uk

The principal aims of the BNAPS Supporters Club are:
"to assist BNAPS to preserve the history and aircraft of Britten-Norman through member donations and to provide assistance with the day-to-day operations of the charity"
Anyone with an interest in local aviation heritage is welcome.

As a point of clarification, whilst BNAPS has contact with B-N Group from time to time, as a charitable trust BNAPS is an independent organisation.

BNAPS

BNAPS is a Registered Charity, No. 1100735, set up to "preserve the history and aircraft of Britten-Norman with the support of members' subscriptions, sponsorship and donations"

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Trustees are Peter Graham, Bob Wilson, Guy Palmer and Bob Wealthy.
Bob Wealthy is currently the Trust Chairman.

Forthcoming BNAPS Events

Due to the present emergency situation restrictions there will be no workshop open days or opportunities for group visits until further notice.

If anyone needs more information about BNAPS and what is happening please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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