

BNAPS News Review

Issue 7

May 2025



PRESERVED AIRCRAFT ON THE MOVE



In this issue of BNAPS News Review:

- THE SHERIFF RETURNS TO IOW
- G-RLON MOVES TO SOLENT SKY
- EARLY DAYS OF THE FIRECRACKER
- FACEBOOK ROUND UP



BNAPS CHAIRMAN UPDATE



Dear BNAPS Supporters,

We were all saddened by the sudden death of Peter Graham, on 30 January 2025. Peter played a pivotal role in the recovery of B-N Islander number 3 G-AVCN, as one of the founders of BNAPS in 2000 and was BNAPS chairman until 2014. As a BNAPS Trustee Peter was always ready to provide encouragement, counsel and support to BNAPS and the restoration work. A tribute to Peter is included in this issue of BNAPS News Review.

As anticipated 2025 has proved to be a busy time for BNAPS with the transfer of Britten Sheriff G-FRJB from East Midlands Aeropark, assisting Solent Sky Museum in getting Trislander G-RLOK prepared for transport from Solent Airport Daedalus to the museum and preparation for BNAPS 2025 Spring Open Day and advance planning for "Islander 60" in June. Further details of these activities are in this issue of BNAPS News Review.

Thanks go out to all who supported BNAPS Spring Open Day at the Wight Military & Heritage Museum near Cowes, Isle of Wight, on 26 April. The event was well attended and attracted much interest.

Following on from the successful publication of the "Saving Charlie November" book, it has been possible to resume activities related to the planned history of a new book recording a comprehensive history of the Britten-Norman company. As at present conceived, the book will be compiled and edited by BN Historians in conjunction with BNAPS. The aim is to produce a fully illustrated and formatted draft for submission to Air Britain's editorial board for review in an agreed time frame. When approved the book would be published by Air Britain, with special arrangements for discounted pricing for sales through BN Historians and BNAPS. More details of the arrangements and progress will be reported as work proceeds.

Thanks go to all our loyal BNAPS supporters and all who have supported and continue to support BNAPS in various ways. BNAPS Trustees are still looking at what the future holds for the society and its variety of activities with the most pressing need being that of bringing new trustees and volunteers on board. Anyone interested in offering their services or would like to discuss the possibility becoming a Trustee, please contact BNAPS Chairman in the first instance.

Bob Wealthy, **BNAPS Chairman**

Celebrating "Islander 60"

It is remarkable that 60 years after the maiden flight of the BN-2 prototype c/n 001, G-ATCT, on 13 June 1965, from Bembridge Airport, production of new build aircraft of the type has now returned to Bembridge.

To celebrate this achievement BNAPS has invited current Supporters Club members to meet up at the Propeller Inn, Bembridge Airport on Saturday 14 June 2025. In the morning arrangements have been made for a guided tour of the new production facility by kind permission of Britten-Norman Aerospace.

Tour places are limited and it was decided that they would be available to BNAPS Supporters Club members, pre-booked on a first reserved basis.

Food and light refreshments are available from the Propeller Inn for those who wish to spend the afternoon socialising.



G-ATCT at Bembridge Airport on 13 June 1965, taking on fuel for the maiden flight (Brian Robinson)

Cover pictures:

(top) The Solent Sky Trislander arriving at Southampton on 19th April 2025 (Ian Haskell)

(bottom) The Sheriff at Wight Military and Heritage Museum on 26th April 2025 (Allan Wright)

Britten SA-1 Sheriff - back on the Isle of Wight!

Sheriff G-FRJB arrived safely at the Wight Military & Heritage Museum at 13:00 on 3 April 2025. Thanks to help from Reynolds & Read Manitou mobile lifting vehicle and driver, transport vehicle driver, BNAPS team and museum volunteers all parts were unloaded without incident. The Sheriff fuselage was moved to a specially cleared space in the museum hangar alongside Islander G-AVCN, where it will be on show pending release of more space that will allow the Sheriff to be reassembled.

As we reported in the last issue of BNAPS News Review, the Britten SA-1 Sheriff has been acquired by BNAPS for display at the Wight Military & Heritage Museum. The project has moved forward and the Sheriff was dismantled at the East Midlands Aero Park by 31 March, ready for collection and transporting to the Isle of Wight.

On 1 April, the project made a significant step forward. Thanks to the help from Graham Vale and members of the Aeropark Volunteers Association, the Sheriff was successfully loaded on to the transport vehicle and taken to the Reynolds and Read premises near Ryde.

Below the pictures show the dismantling and loading at East Midlands Aeropark on 31 March and 1 April. Bottom right shows the team posing by the successfully loaded aircraft. (Graham Vale)





G-FRJB on the Reynolds and Read transport on board the ferry to the Isle of Wight.
Below: Arrival and unloading at the Museum. (Reynolds & Read)



On Thursday 3 April the truck arrived at the Wight Military & Heritage Museum and the Sheriff was off-loaded.

In the meantime, pending the availability of additional space adjacent to G-AVCN, the Sheriff wing is stored outside at the back of the museum and will be covered with a tarpaulin. Smaller airframe parts are temporarily stored in space between starboard side of G-AVCN and the side wall.

Very many thanks have gone out to all who have supported BNAPS in this new venture with generous donations towards transportation costs.

Next we plan to fit nose cone and, if possible, the tail section to the fuselage, and see what can be done to move the wing from the present position on the hard standing.

Wight Military & Heritage Museum Activities May 2025

BNAPS restoration team members have continued to meet up at the Wight Military & Heritage Museum as usual every Thursday with occasional visits on other days to meet up with special visitors. Work has continued to maintain and support G-AVCN with the main activity concentrated on progressing the “Islander Experience” flight simulator.

Efforts are ongoing to sort out the area around G-AVCN and making decisions whether to use, store or dispose of fixings, tools, various bits of kit, a selection of inherited fire extinguishers and surplus materials.

Islander G-AVCN maintenance

Apart from clearing an accumulation of dust on the airframe from time to time the only activity of note was to implement a wheel turning exercise on the day the wing stands were taken away for use at Solent Sky to help with the planned move of Trislander G-RLON (see related article in this issue of *BNAPS News Review*). Arrangements are now being made for the wing stands to be returned.

“Islander Experience” Flight Simulator

Following the decision to repaint the “Islander Experience” fuselage section in the colours it wore as VQ-SAC, all the internal side wall and door trim panels and windows were removed so that surface preparation could get under way. After a false start with application of undercoat that did not give an acceptable finish, Mark Porter, Guy Palmer, Bernie Coleman and Maury Dyer removed the undercoat and all old paint. Best efforts were applied to smooth over some of the small indentations and after much effort had been expended the



Undercoat painting by Maury Dyer (left) and Guy Palmer in progress.



Bernie Coleman undercoat painting the pilot's door.



Undercoat painting by Mark Porter in progress. (right) View of fuselage section starboard side after topcoat painting.





Avionics bay cover, nose cone and door after topcoat painting.



Test rig/display of flight simulator components on show at 2025 Spring Open Day

surface was judged to be as good as it could be so that undercoat and topcoat painting could be started.

At one time spray painting was considered, but this would have required the fuselage section to go off site. A trial of roller paint application worked well so it was decided to go ahead with this method with very pleasing results.

As a result of a decision to make the “Islander Experience” more representative of a real Islander, Mark Porter has produced a set of instruments that are driven from the flight simulator PC rather than using a screen display. An Islander throttle box has been adapted to allow engine controls and elevator trim functions to be actioned. The components are being progressively tested as work proceeds and the complete flight simulator installation will be linked up and tested before installation in the fuselage section.

Sheriff Project

Thanks go to WM&HM trustees and management for making additional space available for accommodation of the Sheriff fuselage. Also, many thanks go out to all at the museum for help with unloading when the Sheriff arrived on 3 April.

Work on the Sheriff will be phased in as soon as team members can be released from work on the “Islander Experience” flight simulator. From an initial survey of the Sheriff it is evident that although the airframe is in generally sound condition, all the Perspex windows have developed varying degrees of internal crazing. The implications of getting a replacement set of windows made and costs involved are under investigation.

An immediate task is to make the gull wing doors safe to use. The doors are normally held



Sheriff fuselage is seen here positioned adjacent to VCN display area, nose cone has been temporarily installed.

open by gas struts which no longer function, and suitable replacements are being sought. The door closure mechanism does not move freely and will be investigated. Once the doors are safe to use the interior will be cleaned out for viewing. Condition survey of the wing, tail section, engine cowlings, dummy engines and propellers will be continued and a work plan and priority task list compiled.

Museum Space Way Ahead

Completion of work on the flight simulator will mean that further attention can be given to progressing clearance of various items and materials left over from the main restoration work. The wall mounted framed prints put in place for the Spring Open Day will be retained. A new information display about the origins of the flight simulator fuselage will be prepared together. The possibility of a “Tools of the Trade” display has been under discussion for some time and this is something that is worth bringing together.

Engine Instrument Cluster Test Set donated by FIGAS



Kurt Whitney from FIGAS has recently donated a piece of test equipment for Islander/Trislander engine instruments that would be a useful addition to the display.

Once more space around G-AVCN is cleared it is possible to consider having some aircraft parts on show. Although only a nose landing gear leg, propeller blades and avionics items are to hand, no doubt other parts may turn up over time.

Another addition being considered is a “How an aircraft flies and is controlled” exhibit. This is envisaged as a tutorial on aircraft controls and would

show how a pilot is given information about the results of control actions by instruments on board, both in “round dial” form and how this would appear on present day digital displays.

BNAPS 2025 Spring Open Day Report - 26 April

Thanks go to WM&HM trustees, manager, staff and volunteers for the use of museum facilities to support BNAPS 2025 Spring Open Day and help in registering BNAPS visitors on the day. The open day was an opportunity for BNAPS restoration team members to meet up and welcome visitors

Restored Islander G-AVCN’s electrical system was demonstrated several times during the day and the freshly painted "Islander Experience" flight simulator Islander VQ-SAC fuselage was nearby.

(below) Restoration Team members meeting visitors and (right) Bryan Groves (left) with visitor Ashton Norman (centre) B-N Customer Support Co-ordinator





(top left) Newly painted VQ-SAC (top right) With the external 24 Volt DC power supply connected Islander G-AVCN's lighting and flap operation was demonstrated during the day.

Visitors were also able to view the fuselage of the recent arrival, Britten SA-1 Sheriff G-FRJB, which was parked next to the main display area. An information board alongside served to give a summary of Sheriff's origin and history.



Controls and instruments for the simulator, newly designed to be a faithful representation of a "real Islander", were on show and are now being tested in preparation for installation.

"Islander Experience" flight simulator instruments and controls made by Mark Porter on show. On the left is the radio-controlled Islander model that Maury Dyer used to demonstrate how an aircraft is controlled in the air.

Other display items of note were a demonstration of aircraft flight controls using an RC Islander model, a selection of Islander and Trislander models, video of the Saving Charlie November story, all accompanied by the ever-popular BNAPS merchandise sales stand.





Norman Hobbs set up and managed the BNAPS sales stand



(above left) BN-2 models and framed prints were set up for the open day and (above right) a TV playing Saving Charlie November video alongside information boards telling the story of Islander G-AVCN's recovery and restoration.

Thanks go to BNAPS open day support team and to all the visitors who came along and helped make our 2025 Spring Open Day an enjoyable and successful event.

A group picture at the Open Day: (from left) Bob Wealthy, Allan Wright, Mark Porter, Ashton Norman, Tim Barton, Alberto Quintana Carill, Maury Dyer, Norman Hobbs, Paul Brook, Bryan Groves, Bob Wilson, Guy Palmer. (Yvette Wright)





G-RLON on approach to land at Solent Airport Daedalus 5 April 2017 (*Graham Spiller*)

Trislander G-RLON – Now Resident at Solent Sky Museum

Introduction

(All pictures by Ian Haskell unless stated)

Following the end of its service life on 28 February 2017 Britten-Norman Trislander c/n 1008, G-RLON, was donated by Aurigny Air Services to the Solent Sky Aviation Museum at Southampton. The aircraft was built at Gosselies in Belgium where it was first flown in 1975. It served with several operators before joining the Aurigny fleet in 1991. During its long service life it accumulated more than 32,600 flying hours and made 105,130 landings and is believed to be the highest time example of all the Trislanders built. As is well known, after arriving at Solent Airport Daedalus on 5 April 2017 it has been somewhat reluctant to leave.

Efforts to create under cover exhibition space at Solent Sky were thwarted by planning regulations and lack of funds. However, space in the museum car park was recently prepared to accommodate G-RLON as a result of demolition of a building that was formerly part of a rifle range dating from the time that the Air Training Corps shared the site with the museum. Work to dismantle Trislander G-RLON got under way in late February 2025 and the aircraft was transported to Solent Sky on 19 April 2025.

BNAPS was pleased to assist Solent Sky with move by providing a briefing on similar operations during the restoration of Islander G-AVCN and loan of a fuselage support frame, a pair of adjustable wing stands and a set of wing profile boards.

The convoy departs from Solent Airport on the way to Solent Sky Museum on 19 April 2025. (*Solent Airport Operations*)



Solent Sky's connection with the heritage of Britten-Norman

Britten-Norman's origins can be traced back to 1949 when John Britten and Desmond Norman collaborated in a venture to design and build an aircraft suitable for home construction. The aircraft that was built at Bembridge and officially flown in May 1951 was the BN-1F, G-ALZE. This aircraft has been on show at Solent Sky Aviation Museum for more than 20 years as an important and unique exhibit that reflects the heritage of Britten-Norman.

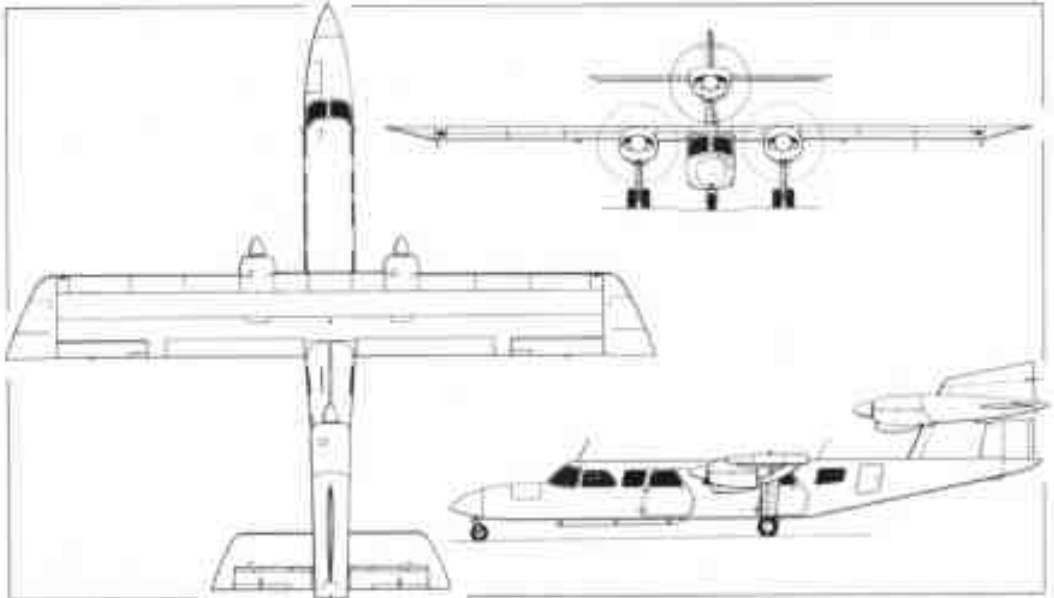
The Britten-Norman Company is an important part of the UK's aviation heritage and in particular the Solent region. The BN-2 originated in the early 1960s from the technical and marketing vision of John Britten and Desmond Norman to define and build their own design for a light transport utility aircraft that they felt would fill an apparent gap in the market for this type. The BN-2 prototype made its maiden flight on 13 June 1965 and within a couple of years proved to be an outstanding sales success. Recognition of this success and as a tribute to its originators and all who helped make the BN-2 the most successful European aircraft in its class is something that Solent Sky Aviation Museum is well placed to present to visitors. The arrival of Trislander G-RLON has substantially enhanced the museum's ability to tell something of "the B-N Story".

Although not built in large numbers, the Trislander was originally conceived to suit the needs of Aurigny Air Services in providing convenient, reliable "walk on, walk off" air services in the Channel Islands for residents and tourists and for businesses on and off the Channel Islands.

There is a strong connection between Aurigny Air Services and Southampton as the stepping off point for air services from the UK mainland to the Channel Islands. It is fact that from October 1971 until the end of May 2017 all Aurigny Air Services Trislander flights on the Alderney to Southampton route will have passed over the Solent Sky Museum either on approach to Southampton (Eastleigh) Airport or on the way out.

History of Trislander G-RLON

Trislander G-RLON, was built in 1975 as a BN-2A Mk.III-2, construction number 1008, at the time of B-N's ownership by Fairey SA at its factory at Gosselies in Belgium.



Trislander BN-2A Mk.III-2 general arrangement diagram

An illustrated history of Trislander c/n 1008 is presented below based on information from BN Historians BN-2 Production History data file:

G-BCXW First flight 2.6.75 at Gosselies, registered to Britten-Norman (Bembridge) Ltd. Arrived in UK 4.6.75.

(BNH Collection)



DQ-FCF Air Pacific, Suva, Fiji. Delivered 27.6.75.

DQ-FCF Air Investments, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. 1.80.

(Rich Tregear)



VR-CAA Cayman Airways, George Town, Cayman Islands. 21.1.80. Named "Cayman Unity".

"G-OLPL" Aviation West, Bristol, Avon. Not taken up. 1987.

G-OCTA Octavia Air, Staverton, Gloucestershire. 14.7.87.

G-OCTA GB Airways, Gibraltar. 23.5.89. Named "Yogi Bair"

(BNH Collection)



(BNH Collection)



(BNH Collection)



(BNH Collection)



G-OCTA Aurigny Air Services, Alderney, Channel Islands. 7.6.91. Named "Snowy" whilst in all temporary white colour scheme. (top picture) Later painted in standard yellow scheme, and fitted with 3-bladed propeller on wing engines 10.93. (centre picture)

G-ITEX Aurigny Air Services, Alderney, Channel Islands. 21.6.00, Initially in ITEX scheme as G-OCTA from 21.4.97. (lower picture)

Re-winged 9.01 and ITEX scheme removed. Re-registered as G-RLON Aurigny Air Services, Alderney, Channel Islands. 26.4.02. Painted in Royal London corporate colour scheme.

Painted in standard Aurigny colours at Bembridge 4.09.



Withdrawn from use 28.2.17. Final flight to Lee on Solent 5.4.17; donated to Solent Sky Museum. Stored at Solent Airport April 2017 to March 2025.

Trislander G-RLON on the Solent Airport ramp after arrival on 5 April 2017



In initial parking place alongside Bellman Hangars on west side of Solent Airport.



On show at Daedalus 100 event June 2017



In 2019 with engines removed (Michael Surcombe)



Parked on ramp at B-N Hangar 5/6 at Solent Airport May 2022



Back parked alongside Bellman Hangars 4 February 2024





CAV Aircraft Services was engaged in dismantling work and preparation for the move, seen here under way in March 2025.

Moving Day 19 April 2025

The move took place on Saturday 19th April starting at 8:30am when two transport vehicles and a tractor unit with HIAB crane arrived at Solent Airport. Despite a wet windy and cold start to the day, the weather soon improved and good progress was made such that the wing and fuselage had been loaded by 12:00, arriving at Solent Sky at 12:45.

Loading at Solent Airport Daedalus

The sequence of the loading process is shown in the images below:



K R Joyce and Sons Transport vehicles and (right) the All Day Services HIAB and tractor unit



Wing being lifted from fuselage for loading, and (right) being secured on to the truck



Fuselage being lifted ready for loading, and (right) being loaded at an angle to ensure overall load height was kept within applicable road transport regulation limit of 16 ft 6 ins (5.03m)

Loading complete and transport vehicles ready to depart for Solent Sky



Unloading at Solent Sky

Having unloaded the fuselage and positioned it in the car park compound at Solent Sky, where the Trislander will be on show, the wing was unloaded and positioned over the fuselage. Final adjustments were made using special wing stands and by 15.30 the wing and fuselage had been successfully rejoined and Trislander G-RLON was standing on its wheels. Solent Sky will now undertake a detailed work programme to re-install internal trim, seating, engines and tail plane to get the aircraft ready to go on show at the museum.

The following images show the vehicles arriving at Solent Sky and the unloading sequence:



Fuselage arriving at Solent Sky for unloading and (right) the transport vehicle carrying the wing arriving at Solent Sky. (below) Fuselage being lowered back onto the support frame located in the planned display area





(top left) Fuselage ready for wing unloading and positioning, (top right) the wing being lifted from transport vehicle, (bottom left) and being lowered in position to enable wing and fuselage to be re-joined. (bottom right) Wing and fuselage secured after fixings aligned using adjustable wing stands.



Trislander G-RLON after unloading on 19 April 2025, now on its wheels and ready for next stages of preservation.

Britten Sheriff SA-1 – the story so far



Painting of the Sheriff by Cavendish Morton

Introduction

On 3 April 2025 Britten SA-1 Sheriff G-FRJB arrived at its new home on the Isle of Wight from East Midlands Aeropark at East Midlands Airport, where it has resided since leaving the Isle of Wight in 1986. BNAPS had been offered the opportunity to be the new custodians of Britten SA-1 Sheriff G-FRJB, an offer that was accepted by BNAPS Trustees.

Transfer of the Sheriff from East Midlands Aeropark was made possible thanks to a generous response to BNAPS' appeal for help to cover the cost of transporting the aircraft to the Isle of Wight. Also, there was a good response from those who wished to register their interest in the Sheriff Project. BNAPS is keen to make contact with anyone interested in helping to get the Sheriff assembled and on show when suitable display space has been organised.

Following Sheriff G-FRJB's return to its "Isle of Wight home" it is now in safekeeping at the Wight Military & Heritage Museum. BNAPS is now conducting a detailed condition survey and has initiated restoration work with the objective of having the aircraft reassembled and on show when suitable exhibition space becomes available. The Sheriff is perhaps not that significant in a national context, but is of considerable significance for the Isle of Wight's aviation heritage and as part of the Britten-Norman story.

The Sheriff represents the continuing aeronautical engineering work that John Britten applied himself to after moving on from B-N in 1976 and remains as a testimony to his technical ability in aircraft design, his belief in aviation and perseverance in taking forward his ideas for a new type of aircraft.

When the Britten SA-1 Sheriff was revealed in 1977 it was recognised for its innovative concept and showed great promise. Sadly, John Britten's untimely death in July 1977 was a major setback and the project was carried forward by John's brother, Robin Britten. However, despite great efforts of a relatively small team that brought the aircraft very close to being flown, in 1983 the project was hit by financial problems, the team was disbanded and Sheriff G-FRJB was abandoned at Sandown Airport.

Britten Sheriff Background and Origin

The Sheriff originated from an idea, inspired jointly by John Britten and Denis Berryman, for a low-cost twin engine light aircraft powered by converted Volkswagen engines. The concept no doubt owed much to the Miles Gemini, examples of which had been owned by B-N in the 1950s, and to Denis Berryman's design work on light aircraft during the earlier part of his

Some of the team that built the Sheriff with visitors from Romania at Sandown Airport
(James Morton)



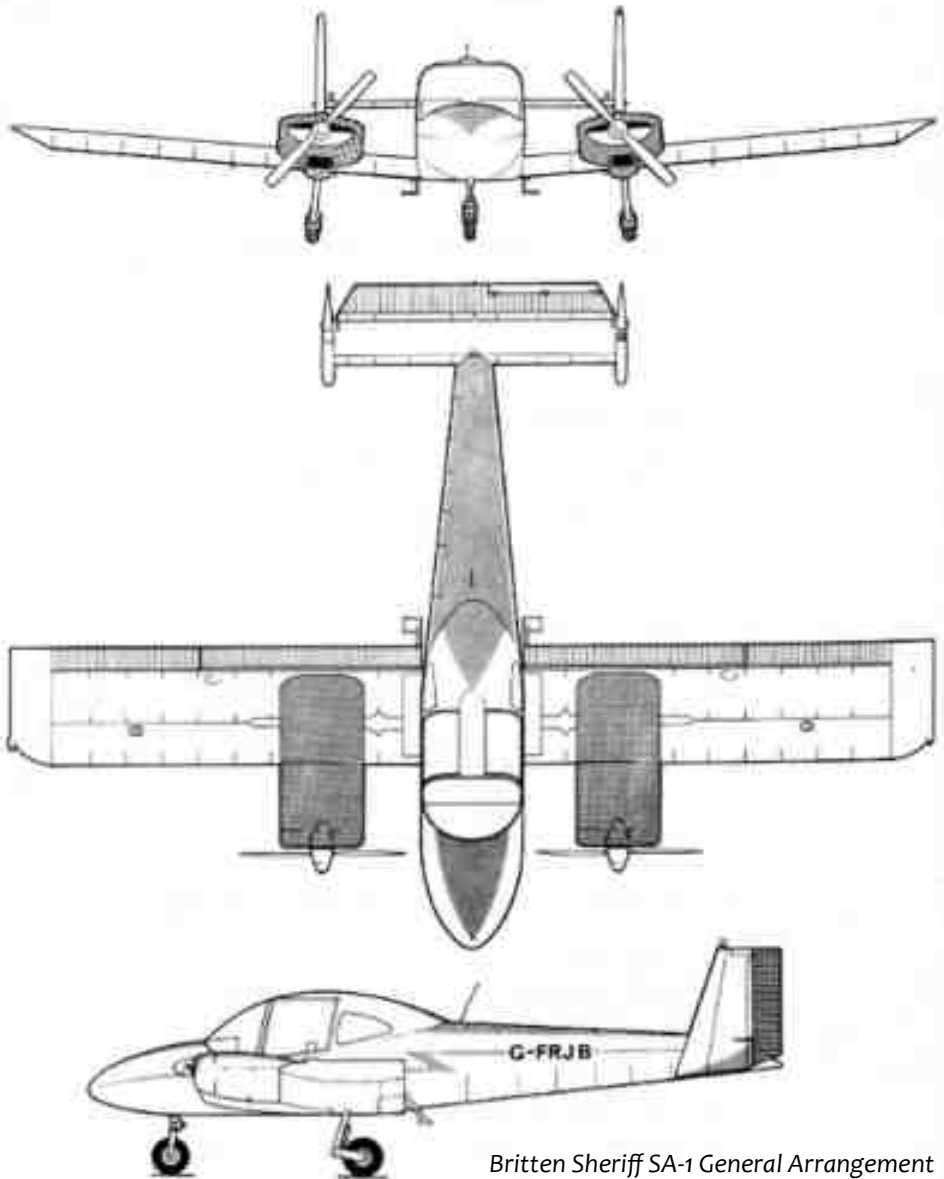
Shortly after the Britten Sheriff had been publicly revealed as a new twin engine light aircraft, on 7 July 1977 John Britten died suddenly at Bembridge. From that date the Sheriff project was quietly continued by a highly experienced team, most of whom were originally involved in the Islander, and were able to spend time on the project by working in the evenings and weekends. Denis Berryman and Robin Britten, John Britten's brother, jointly led the Sheriff project team and John Britten's nephew, James Morton, was appointed general manager and responsible for the technical draughting work and production drawings.

By early 1983 the prototype Sheriff had been assembled at the Sandown Airport works and was reckoned to be about 3 months away from its maiden flight. Unfortunately, financial support for the Sheriff work was unexpectedly terminated with barely six weeks to go to the planned first flight, and with two more fuselages and a number of wing sets in an advanced state of construction, the project came to a halt. Spiralling costs after spending almost £1,000,000 during 6 years of work on the project resulted in the company running out of money. By early 1984 the receiver Thornton Baker had been called in.

Despite the fact that work on the four-seat Sheriff prototype was more than 90% complete, and the marketing prospects remained positive, no buyer was found. The Sheriff prototype was stripped of its engines and useful components and the bare airframe left in the open at Sandown. Airframe components intended for another Sheriff, for which the registration G-BPOP had been allocated, were similarly left in the open.



Prototype Sheriff G-FRJB at Sandown Airport in early 1983 (Mike Hooks)



Britten Sheriff SA-1 General Arrangement

career with Miles and BEAGLE at Shoreham. The name Sheriff was derived from the fact that, at the time, John Britten was serving as High Sheriff of the Isle of Wight.

As conceived by John Britten and Denis Berryman the Sheriff was a new British aircraft aimed initially at the lower end of the light twin requirement. Market research at the time showed a worldwide need for an aircraft capable of significantly reducing the costs of twin-engine pilot training. Designed for rugged operation and simple maintenance with minimal facilities, the Sheriff was aimed at meeting this requirement. At a basic 1977 list price of £31,700 (\$58,650), the Sheriff avoided direct competition with any of the current twin engine models in production and was intended to be equipped with sufficient avionics for club training etc. This version of the Sheriff was expected to show a saving of some \$25,000 on other light twin aircraft.

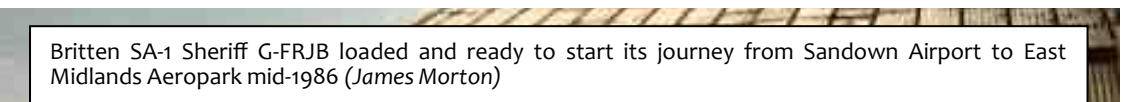


Sheriff G-FRJB at Sandown Airport December 1985 “put out to grass” (Peter R March)

By the time the receiver had been called in there were only 3 full time employees. Some of the Sheriff design team were recruited by ARV Aviation, another aircraft company that had been formed at Sandown Airport to manufacture the ARV Super 2 light aircraft under the overall direction of Richard Noble of Thrust 2 fame. Financial problems had once again thwarted the efforts of all involved and another promising British light aircraft project came to a sad end.

The incomplete Sheriff aircraft languished in the open at Sandown Airport and it appeared that it was inevitably destined for the scrapyards. Somehow good fortune intervened as related by a correspondent “Shortfinals” who had been appointed as Assistant Keeper, Aviation in the Leicestershire Museums Service, and then in 1983 was seconded to the East Midlands International Airport, where he was to construct an Airport Visitor Centre and establish an aviation collection on a 12 acre site, immediately to the south of the threshold of Runway 09. This collection was to be the first of its kind on an international airport in the UK and became known as East Midlands Aeropark.

Work got under way and went well to design displays, plan the education facility, construct an aircraft viewing mound and recruit staff - but what was to be done about setting up an aircraft collection? Over the next year or so, the Leicestershire Museum Service and the volunteer body that had been set up, the Aeropark Volunteers Association (AVA), put together an aircraft display/collection which included an Avro Vulcan bomber and a Vickers Varsity trainer. Although the collection was located on a civil airport, the theme was predominantly military. However, this was deemed acceptable as the airport had originally been an RAF Operational Training Unit (equipped with Wellingtons) during World War II. However, it was felt that more civil aircraft were needed and this is where there was an immense stroke of luck. Sometime around mid-1986 word had come through that the part-



Britten SA-1 Sheriff G-FRJB loaded and ready to start its journey from Sandown Airport to East Midlands Aeropark mid-1986 (James Morton)

completed Sheriff was sitting in the weeds at an airport on the Isle of Wight and that it was going to be reduced to scrap if someone didn't move fast, like within the next seven days! Urgent arrangements were made to authorise a reconnaissance trip to the Isle of Wight. It was decided it was well worth saving and a low-loading truck was organised to collect the new 'toy' for the Aeropark's collection.

On delivery the Sheriff was parked in an open area as received. The fibreglass nose was still its natural green colour, the front fuselage was chromate green, and the rear unpainted. There was nothing ahead of the nacelle firewalls, which meant that engine bearers, 'simulated' engines and cowlings and two-bladed propellers would have to be mocked up. It had no instrument panel or instruments. Seats were fitted but the only controls that remained were the rudder pedals and the aileron and elevator chain drive linkages. Some of the exterior panels were dented and there was some corrosion but this was not serious.

Initially Aeropark Volunteers Association (AVA) member Brian Laurence gave the Sheriff a coat of white paint in 1986 to provide the airframe with some protection from the elements. After being on display at the Aeropark for around 12 years, a decision was made that a comprehensive restoration programme for the Sheriff should be undertaken.

The plan was to complete the restoration to a stage where the Sheriff would be suitable to go on static display. The Sheriff restoration work was undertaken by a dedicated team of volunteers in their main workshop area at the Aeropark.



(above) Sheriff G-FRJB on display at the Aeropark "as received" August 1986 (Stephen Pender)
(below) After receiving a covering of white paint for protection December 1986 (Derek Heley)





Sheriff fuselage seen being painted in the Aeropark Workshop in November 2008. (below) a view of the reconstructed instrument panel and control box.

At this point in the Sheriff story our correspondent “Shortfinals” moved on when the East Midlands International Airport, which had been owned by the Counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham, was privatised under a central Government edict. The original Visitor Centre and Aeropark site was built on, and the collection displaced to a remote site elsewhere on the north side of the runway.

Work gathered pace in 2007 when the airframe components were brought together at the Aeropark. All the old paint was stripped by John Manners and Jack Sandland and the fuselage painted and fitted out. A new instrument panel was made, based on technical details provided by BNAPS, and fitted out with representative instruments to replace the original panel that was missing.

Re-assembly of the fuselage with the wing structure followed on with more help from AVA volunteers Barry White and Chris Fairhall and by the summer of 2010 the Sheriff was standing on its wheels with

dummy engines installed and representative propellers fitted. Fabrication of the engine mounts and associated welding has been undertaken by AVA volunteer Tony Pike and work continued to complete fabrication and installation of new engine cowlings.



G-FRJB at the East Midlands Aeropark, May 2011





G-FRJB at the East Midlands Aeropark in 2023 (James Morton)

More recently the Sheriff has been re-painted and James Morton visited in 2023 to deliver a set of Sheriff drawings that he had retained since the demise of the project in 1983.

Recent Developments

For some years long standing BNAPS Supporter and retired Wight Aviation Museum Director, John Kenyon, had been in touch with Graham Vale, his Aeropark Volunteers Association contact at the East Midlands Aeropark, regarding the possibility of the Sheriff being released to go on show at the Wight Aviation Museum. Wight Aviation Museum Directors decided that the Sheriff cannot be accommodated at Sandown Airport, hence John alerted BNAPS by email on 9 November 2024. Following further discussions with Aeropark contacts the Sheriff was offered exclusively to BNAPS.

With help from James Morton, who managed the draughting work for the Sheriff project, it is understood that the Sheriff was assigned to the Aeropark under a loan arrangement set up in conjunction with Nick James, John Britten's cousin, who had helped finance the Sheriff project and was a director of Britten Aviation

Subsequent to the email of 9 November 2024, a further email was circulated on 11 November 2024 to BNAPS Trustees with a view to discussing any interest and possible involvement in the Sheriff Project.

Getting the Sheriff Project Started

Following formal confirmation by BNAPS Trustees that the Sheriff Project is considered to be of sufficient significance and importance to justify the time, effort and cost involved in getting the aircraft back to the Isle of Wight, resulted in initiation of the following key actions to get the project under way;

1. Carry out detailed survey and measurements of proposed storage space at the WM&HM to establish a viable arrangement for accommodation of some or all of the dismantled Sheriff's component parts
2. Discuss and confirm storage arrangements for the dismantled Sheriff at the museum with WM&HM manager and trustees;
3. Promote the existence of the Sheriff Project to help attract new recruits for BNAPS;
4. Initiate a fund-raising effort to cover transportation costs of getting the aircraft to the Isle of Wight;
5. Confirm arrangements for dismantling and preparation for transport with the Aeropark Volunteers Association contact at East Midlands Aeropark.

Progress on "The Sheriff Project" will be reported as and when by email to BNAPS Supporters Club members and in future issues of BNAPS News Review.

Peter Graham



In the last issue of *BNAPS News Review* we reported the untimely passing of Peter Graham, aged 78. Peter was the key to the recovery of Charlie November from Puerto Rico in 2000. His company Airstream International funded the operation, and Peter was one of the four-man team who travelled to San Juan to dismantle the aircraft for the journey back home.

Peter first became aware of the Islander in late 1964 through an article in *Air Pictorial*. He saw the announcement of a new twin-engine, 10-seat aircraft being designed by a relatively unknown company, Britten-Norman (B-N), which was to be built on the Isle of Wight as successor to the de Havilland Dragon Rapide. It was aimed at the market for an unsophisticated, rugged, easy to fly and maintain, commuter aircraft for areas of the world where developed and paved runways were in short supply.

He rightfully thought this was a great concept and from then on followed the project in the aviation press, and first saw the BN-2 Islander at the Farnborough Air Show in 1966 where the prototype Islander, G-ATCT, and Islander G-ATWU, that was at the time the first production aircraft, together gave an impressive display in public for the first time.

By then he had started a career in the aviation industry as an apprentice at BAC Weybridge combined with studying for a degree at Southampton University. In his final year at university he was living in Woolston and saw a stream of new Islanders clearing customs at the nearby Eastleigh Airport.

This rekindled his interest in the aircraft and he began to think of B-N as a potential employer once his apprenticeship ended. Peter wrote to B-N in 1969 and was called for an interview with Denis Berryman, then Technical Director, and saw at first hand just how busy the factory was at Bembridge.

That visit didn't come to anything, but in late 1970 B-N advertised the role of 'Assistant to the Commercial Director', and this time his application was successful. Peter joined B-N in June 1971 and over the years rose to the position of Commercial and Contracts Manager and, after Pilatus bought the company, became Overseas Production Manager to oversee the production lines in Romania and the Philippines.

Peter left B-N in early 1983 to join Shorts, where a number of ex-B-N salesmen were working and then founded Airstream Finance with a business friend in 1989, initially as a subsidiary of the merchant bank, Kleinwort Benson. He built a business arranging aircraft finance and managing a fleet of British Aerospace regional jets and turboprops, selling off the management side to them in 1999, whilst acquiring the shares in Airstream held by Kleinwort Benson.

Around this time BN Historians discovered that the first Islander to be delivered, build number three, the one time G-AVCN of Aurigny Air Services, still existed in Puerto Rico. After a quick conversation with Peter it was agreed that Airstream would purchase the aircraft and fund its dismantling and return to the UK. When Peter retired, he arranged for the aircraft to be given to BNAPS.

Peter was a BNAPS Founder Trustee and Chairman from 2000 to 2014, when Bob Wealthy took the Chair. Peter remained as a Trustee.

He was also a member of Air Britain, and was actively working with Air Britain and BN Historians to bring to print a book about the history of Britten-Norman, and only days before his passing had been present at a meeting at Solent Sky to discuss the project. The book project will continue, in Peter's memory.

BNAPS, and all supporters, sends condolences to Peter's wife, family and friends.

B-N Aircraft News *from BN Historians*

60 (BN-2A-8) HP-639PS Air Panama, Panama City. To My Flight Corporation, Panama City as **HP-639MF**.

212 (BN-2A-27) C-FGAQ Villers Air Services, Fort Nelson, British Columbia, Canada. Lost power on take off and substantially damaged on landing at Lower Prairie airstrip 15.9.24.

333 (BN-2A-27) C-GHRK Air Tuvalu, Funafuti, Tuvalu. 3.24. Will become **T2-TV1**.

408 (BN-2A-21) RP-C1262 ChemTrad Aviation, Manila, Philippines. Written off at Laoag City, Ilocos Norte 23.6.03. Noted 9.24 at DPR Aviation College, Plaridel, Philippines, being used by engineering school.



PCG-4177 (c/n 462) Philippine Coast Guard in November 2024. (BNH Collection)

462 (BN-2A-21) RP-4177 Integrated National Police Force, Manila, Philippines. To Philippine Coast Guard, Manila, Philippines. 2024 as **PCG-4177**.

480 (BN-2T) IN127 Indian Navy. Displayed at Naval Institute of Aviation Technology, Ernakulam, Kochi (Kerala).

506 (BN-2T) IN129 Indian Navy. Preserved at Sainik School, Kazhakootam.



New to the SXM Airways fleet is PJ-STM (c/n 919) ex VP-AAC seen landing at St. Maarten 29 January 2025 (Richard Vandervord)



VP-ANG (c/n 533), seen landing at St. Maarten on 7 May 2025, has recently entered service with Redy Air in Anguilla. It was formerly a Belgian Army aircraft. (Mark Griffiths)

533 (BN-2B-21) N533BN Valair, Ogden, Utah, USA. Flew to Anguilla 16.10.24. N533BN cancelled 12.11.24 to Anguilla. To Redy Air, The Valley, Anguilla as **VP-ANG**.

553 (BN-2A-21) OY-CKS Copenhagen Airtaxi, Roskilde, Denmark. To SAS Pixair Survey, Vemeuil-sur-Avre, France. 6.24. Will become **F-H...**

719 (BN-2A-26) VH-IZH Torres Strait Air, Horn Island, Queensland. To Colville Aviation Services, Atkinsons Dam, Queensland. 31.3.25.

739 (BN-2A-21) RP-C1801 Fliteline, Plaridel, Philippines. To Philippine Coast Guard, Manila, Philippines 22.4.25 as **PCG-829**.

895 (BN-2A-26) HP-76JL Amazon Aviation, Panama. To Vieques Air Link, Vieques, Puerto Rico 12.24 as **N909VL**. Registered to Blue Waters Air Charters LLC 4.12.24.


919 (BN-2A-26) VP-AAC Anguilla Air Services, Walblake Airport, Anguilla. To SXM Airways, St Maarten, Netherlands Antilles. 2024 as **PJ-STM**. First noted 22.12.24

2146 (BN-2T) 6V-AHW Senegal Air Force, Dakar, Senegal. Damaged circa 2016 in a ground collision and withdrawn from use. Now a gate guardian at Dakar-Ouakam Air Base, Senegal.

2175 (BN-2B-26) G-OSEA Islander Aircraft, Cumbernauld, Scotland. 14.6.22. Arrived at Bournemouth (via Blackpool) 15.2.25, presumably for painting. Noted outside all white 19.2.25, and returned northwards on 1.4.25.



N909VL (c/n 895) of Vieques Air Link at Vieques 21.4.25 (BNH Collection)



9M-BTP (c/n 2280), formerly PK-FLY, seen in open storage at Kuala Lumpur in 2024 is now returning to the UK as G-BVND. (BNH Collection)

2197 (BN-2B-26) P2-SAM North Coast Aviation, Lae, Papua New Guinea. 2015. Written off 32 nm East of Nadzab 22.12.24. The aircraft departed Wasu Airstrip with four passengers on board at 10:12. Last radio contact made was at 10:14, when the pilot was instructed to contact Nadzab approach; at 10:30 a distress signal was received. The wreckage was discovered the next day, and sadly there were no survivors.

2212 (BN-2B-26) D-ILFH FLN - Frisia Luftverkehr, Norddeich, Germany. To Daniel Brem-Wilson (dba Air Alderney), Biggin Hill, Kent. 6.5.25 as **G-BPXS**.

2253 (BN-2B-26) D-IEST FLN - Frisia Luftverkehr, Norddeich, Germany. To Daniel Brem-Wilson (dba Air Alderney), Biggin Hill, Kent. 29.4.25 as **G-BTLY**.

2280 (BN-2B-20) 9M-BTP Orient Pacific Coast Air, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. To Caledonian Aircraft Spares, Thornhill, Stirling, Scotland. 10.4.25 as **G-BVND**. Likely to be at Cumbernauld with Islander Aircraft.

2290 (BN-2B-20) D-IFKU FLN - Frisia Luftverkehr, Norddeich, Germany. To Islander Aircraft, Cumbernauld, Scotland. 6.2.25. as **G-BVXY**.

4005 (BN-2T-4S) G-SURV Registered to Britten-Norman Aerospace, Bembridge, Isle of Wight. 3.1.25. Allocated to Xen Aviation, Georgetown, Guyana.

4009 (BN-2T-4S) G-BWPO, **4010** G-BWPR, **4014** G-BWPX, **4015** G-CEIO, **4016** G-CEIP, **4017** G-CEIR and **4018** G-CGVB all registered to Britten-Norman Aerospace, Bembridge, Isle of Wight. 13.12.24.



D-IFKU (c/n 2290) has returned to the UK as G-BVXY following LFH's recent decision to stop using Islanders. (BNH Collection)

FROM THE ARCHIVE

DESMOND NORMAN'S AVIATION EXPLOITS POST B-N

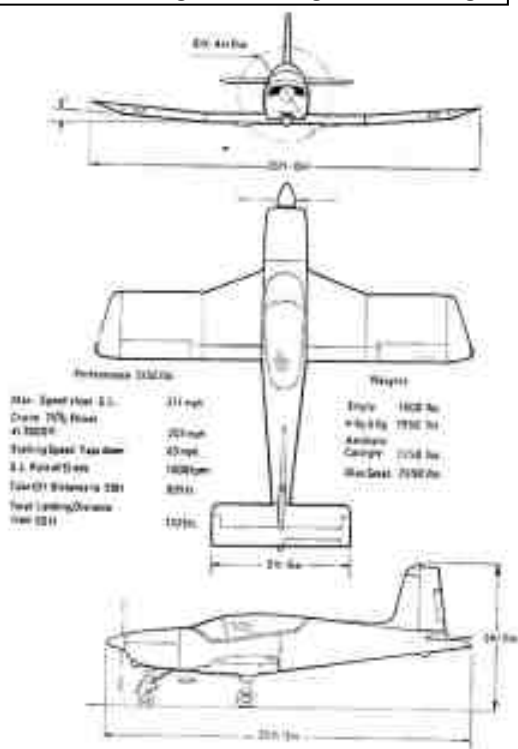
Desmond Norman's aviation exploits after departing from B-N in 1976 continued until his passing in 2002. This work involved the design and construction of three different aircraft types together with a number of different design proposals that all exhibited varying degrees of inspiration, inventiveness and innovation. It is planned to recount this story in this and future issues of *BNAPS News Review*. In this issue we focus on the Firecracker and benefits from new information about the origins of the project that has only recently come to hand. This will be followed by the story of how the Firecracker project evolved to compete with major players in the field for the contract to provide a new advanced training aircraft for the Royal Air Force in 1984.

Desmond Norman's Firecracker – The Early Days

BNAPS was recently contacted by Phil Morris regarding background information on the Firecracker to help with research on the Firecracker project by his late brother, Rob Morris. Rob, who sadly died at a young age, was an exceptionally talented aircraft engineer and worked with Desmond Norman on the construction of the prototype Firecracker in the barn at Kingates Farm, near Whitwell, on the Isle of Wight. This was Desmond's residence and where much of the work on the Firecracker took place before the operations were moved to Goodwood in March 1977 for final assembly and flight testing. Phil Morris has kindly allowed BNAPS access to a number of photographs taken by Rob of the early days at Kingates Farm and at Goodwood.

In addition to this, a further source of new information became available when BNAPS

(left) Front cover of the 1976 brochure (right) 1976 NDM-1 Firecracker general arrangement drawing



restoration team member Steve Cooley donated a briefcase of papers that had come from his grandfather who at one time worked with Desmond Norman. Apart from a number of airframe drawings dating back to 1974, the papers included a copy of an early brochure titled "NDM-1 Technology Transfer Programme" dated May 1976. The brochure gave a full description of how the Firecracker and transfer of associated technology and experience could become the basis of an aircraft industry element for developing countries.

As referenced in an article titled "Firecracker" in *Flight International* issue of 23 July 1977, author not known, the idea for the Firecracker can be traced back to the beginning of 1974 when Desmond Norman's friend Norman Marsh showed interest in buying a Siai Marchetti SF.260 aircraft. Desmond suggested designing an SF.260 equivalent, with competition aerobatic capability and enough range to fly to Italy. The Firecracker was initially conceived as a sporting aeroplane, but when the very un sporting costs of the project were realised it was decided to go commercial as a partnership arrangement between Desmond and Norman Marsh, hence the "M" in "NDM". The NDM-1 Firecracker featured tandem seating, weapon carrying ability and, as far as possible, some of the characteristics of a modern jet trainer were incorporated when the technology transfer concept was finalised.



NDM-1 Firecracker artist's impression from 1976 brochure

In early 1977 Desmond moved the project from the barn at Kingates to hangar space at Goodwood, near Chichester, for final assembly and flight testing. When Desmond Norman took off from Goodwood in the Firecracker c/n 1 G-NDNI on 26 May 1977 it was no less than his fifth maiden flight in a prototype of his own design. The others were the BN-1F ultra-light, followed by the Islander, Nymph and Trislander, all conceived in partnership with the late John Britten.

The NDM-1 designation was changed when a new company, NDN Aircraft, was formed. Desmond Norman called the NDN-1 an "unashamed Harvard replacement". As a former RAF fighter pilot, he was trained on the Harvard and regarded it as the best trainer of its day and for many years after World War II. Most current trainers in the Firecracker class were, he claimed, either already obsolete or adaptations of touring aircraft.



(top left) Rob Morris, in the centre with dark hair, working on the wing of the prototype Firecracker at Kingates Farm barn workshop mid - late 1976

(top right) Trial assembly of prototype Firecracker airframe at Kingates Farm barn workshop late 1976/early 1977

(lower left) Prototype Firecracker airframe parts in the hangar at Goodwood – early 1977

(lower right) Prototype Firecracker G-NDNI with design and production team members at Goodwood – early 1977. Rob Morris is 3rd from left in back row, Firecracker co-designer Andy Coombe is in the front row on the left (all pictures: Rob Morris via Phil Morris/NDN)

The Firecracker was clearly a purpose-built trainer in the military style and designed from the outset for manufacture without the plant and equipment characteristic of an established aircraft industry. Thus all the shaped parts could be cold formed by hand with no need for presses or heat-treatment ovens and no forgings or extrusions required. The whole airframe was built from readily available light alloy or sheet-steel and bar stock. Instruments and other equipment items were mainly chosen from parts in common use in the aviation industry. The engine was the well proven Lycoming AEIO-540, to which a Christen inverted system was added.

In 1977 the maiden flight of a new British aircraft was a rare event. The unveiling of the NDN-1 Firecracker, now with the UK registration G-NDNI, just before the Paris Air Show was remarkable in other ways. Far from the madding crowd of conventional light aircraft, the Firecracker was intended almost from the outset as part of a “technology transfer programme” from which a whole light aircraft industry could be established.

The Firecracker was a robust and long-legged aircraft design. Load factors were better than +6g/-3g at its aerobatic weight of 2,650lb, and +9g/-6g at its competition acrobatic weight of 2,150lb. It was regarded as a tough aircraft designed for uncomplicated construction with external doublers and mushroom-headed rivets over the airframe. Absolute no-reserves



(left) Prototype Firecracker G-NDNI at the Paris Show June 1977
 (below) Prototype Firecracker G-NDNI now camouflaged with Rob Morris in attendance – late June 1977
 (both images : Rob Morris via Phil Morris/NDN)



range was reckoned to be over 1,500 miles, with a 75 per cent cruise at 7,500ft of around 200mph TAS.

The three-section wing had dihedral on its outer portions, and the wing section was a modified NACA 23012 with a thickness/chord ratio of 12 per cent, decreasing at the root. The Hoerner tips were similar to those of the Islander. The outer wing was of constant section, and the rib section behind the main spar was constant for the whole of the span.

All of Firecracker's 94 gallons of fuel was carried in four wing tanks, making for a virtually wet wing except for the main wheel bay and an inner bay in each wing root. Hardpoints were situated under the second and fifth bays outboard of each wing crank. The ailerons were symmetrical and the electrically operated slotted flaps had a maximum deflection of 43°. The lower parts of each main landing gear assembly came from the Piper Cherokee Arrow, with the upper parts and struts built by NDN. The nosewheel was steerable using a mechanical linkage.

A feature of Firecracker was the speed limiting airbrake mounted under the centre section, seen by its designers as very worthwhile on a military trainer. Elevator and ailerons were operated by pushrods; only the rudder was cable operated. The two large, military-style cockpits were covered by a one-piece canopy. This was hinged on the right and was planned to be jettisonable on production aircraft.

The next stage in the life of Firecracker G-NDNI involved a move back to the Isle of Wight where an existing hangar was used. This part of the story and further developments Desmond Norman's NDN Aircraft Company will be covered in future issues of *BNAPS News Review*.



FACEBOOK GROUP ROUNDUP *by Allan Wright*

BNAPS have a thriving community on our Facebook Group page (www.facebook.com/groups/BNAPS) - if not a member, we encourage you to join!

Here we feature some of the more interesting pictures posted.



17th March - An intriguing picture appeared on Facebook and many other social media platforms of a new drone “developed” in China. The TP1000 from Yiting UAV has a remarkable similarity to the BN-2T Islander. The Chinese UAV is designed for cargo, and the first flight is expected later in 2025. Clearly Britten-Norman are investigating and we will follow developments with interest.



21st March - Air Alderney posted an interesting picture of three Islanders parked at Manston - under the heading “Exciting things are happening...”. The aircraft, G-ILFA (c/n 2243), owned by Daniel Brem-Wilson (dba Air Alderney), with FLN Islanders D-IEST (c/n 2253) and D-ILFH (c/n 2212). FLN have made the decision to dispose of their Islander fleet, and the two German

Islanders have been acquired by Air Alderney, and have now been re-registered G-BTLY (c/n 2253) and G-BPXS (c/n 2212).



25th March - A post about Islander c/n 17 T7-IGF resulted in much interest. The aircraft has been parked at Port-au-Prince, Haiti

since the Pandemic, and the owner is looking to find a buyer. This aircraft first flew on 2 March 1968 as G-AWBY, and was initially delivered to Aurigny Air Services in April 1968 (their second Islander). In 1972 it was traded in to B-N and sold in Italy as I-LACO, where it operated until 2011. In 2014 the dismantled aircraft was seen in Florida, and then rebuilt as T7-IGF by the end of 2016, for GoFly Tours. It briefly became N70GF, but reverted to T7-IGF in June 2017. It last flew in 2021, and is now for sale.



6th April - The only NAC-2 Freelance was photographed flying at Henstridge (Somerset) on 5th April, by Mike Phipp. The NAC-2 was a development of the NAC-1 (based on the BN-3 Nymph) by Desmond Norman's business Norman Aircraft Company. He took the design with him to his new company NDN Aircraft, and planned to build and sell the Nymph with a lengthened cabin as the NAC-1 Freelance. The reworked Freelance first flew on 29 September 1984. Desmond had also formed the Norman Aircraft Company (NAC) and in 1985 components and fuselage sections for six aircraft were built. Following the failure of the company to win a military order with the NDN Firecracker military trainer the company was closed down. The NAC-1, G-NAC1, is also operational.

30th March - Michael Field posted a picture of his Aircraft spotter's log book from Southampton, Eastleigh from 27 February 1980. This was not long after the Fairey, Belgium production line of BN-2 Islanders and Trislanders had closed down due to Fairey becoming insolvent. Most of the partially built aircraft were shipped to a hangar at Eastleigh for storage. The notebook shows 39 Islanders and 13 Trislanders. Most of the aircraft noted were completed and delivered in due course. Interestingly the list includes the 11 Trislander fuselages that were never completed. These components became well travelled and have been seen in Florida and Australia, but were not completed! (We will cover their "adventure" in a future issue).



9th April - Britten-Norman announced that if you're going to The Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire 18 to 20 July 2025, look out for the Channel Islands Air Search Islander N70AS (c/n 2314), which will be in the static display as part of its 'Eyes in the Skies' theme. Known as 'The lifeboat's eyes in the sky', Channel Islands Air Search's



© South West Aviation Photographers 2025

Islander provides a vital search and rescue service with its crew of 20 volunteers in Guernsey. Members of the B-N team will be attending the show on Friday 18 July.

B-N AIRCRAFT NEWS

NASA Engineers Test Embedded Aerogel Antennas on a BN-2

NASA engineers are using one of the world's lightest solid materials in an antenna that could be embedded into the skin of an aircraft, creating a more aerodynamic and reliable communication solution. The ultra-lightweight aerogel antenna is designed to enable satellite communications where power and space are limited. The aerogel is made up of flexible, high-performance polymers. The design, 95% of which is made of air offers a combination of low weight and strength. Researchers can adjust its properties to achieve either the flexibility of plastic wrap or the rigidity of plexiglass.

“By removing the liquid portion of a gel, you’re left with this incredibly porous structure,” said Stephanie Vivod, a chemical engineer at NASA’s Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, USA. “If you’ve ever made Jell-O, you’ve performed chemistry that’s similar to the first step of making an aerogel.”

Engineers sandwiched a layer of aerogel between a small circuit board and an array of thin, circular copper cells, then topped the design off with a type of film known for its electrical insulation properties. This innovation is known at NASA and in the aviation community as an active phased array aerogel antenna.

In addition to decreasing drag by conforming to the shape of aircraft, aerogel antennas save weight and space and come with the ability to adjust their individual array elements to reduce signal interference. The antennas are also less visually intrusive compared to other types of antennas, such as spikes and blades. The finished product looks like a honeycomb, but lays flat on an aircraft’s surface.

During summer 2024, researchers flight tested a rigid version of the antenna on BN-2A Islander N881GL (c/n 84) of ABSI Aerospace and Defense at the US Navy at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland.

The ultra-lightweight aerogel antenna is designed to enable satellite communications and is made up of flexible, high-performance polymers.

When modern aircraft communicate with stations on the ground, those signals are often transmitted through satellite relays, which can come with delays and loss of communication. This NASA-developed technology can ensure these satellite links are not disrupted during flight as the aerogel antenna’s beam is a concentrated flow of radio waves that can be electronically steered with precision to maintain the connection.

New types of aircraft, including unmanned autonomous BVLOS (Beyond Visual Line of Sight) drones and eVTOL aircraft will be more dependent on communications links than existing aircraft.

Picture from NASA





“If an autonomous air taxi or drone flight loses its communications link, we have a very unsafe situation,” Schoenholz said. “We can’t afford a dropped call up there because that connection is critical to the safety of the flight.”

Schoenholz, Vivod, and others work on NASA’s Antenna Deployment and Optimization Technologies activity within the Transformational Tools and Technologies project. The activity aims to develop technologies that reduce the risk of radio frequency interference from air taxis, drones, commercial passenger jets, and other aircraft in increasingly crowded airspace.

(above) The ultra-lightweight aerogel antenna is designed to enable satellite communications and is made up of flexible, high-performance polymers (NASA)

BRITTEN-NORMAN NEWS



SUCCESSFUL DAY FOR THE ISLANDER OPERATOR FORUM

On Wednesday 30 April, Britten-Norman hosted the Islander Operator Forum at their Bembridge Production Facility. They welcomed 28 guests from over a dozen European operators and partners on a beautiful sunny day on the Isle of Wight. Attendees travelled from across Europe – including Channel Islands Air Search and Air Alderney who flew directly into Bembridge in their Islanders N70AS (c/n 2314) and G-ILFA (c/n 2243). The forum

(Britten-Norman)



provided a valuable opportunity to connect face-to-face with operators, share important updates and strengthen relationships. The day featured a series of presentations covering recent developments across the business, including improvements to aftermarket service, strategic changes under new ownership, and a look ahead to future plans. Guests also had the opportunity to tour the new build production line. Feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive and plans are already in development for the next Islander Operator Forum, which will take place in the Americas later this summer.

NEW CNC ROUTER OPERATIONAL AT BEMBRIDGE

A new CNC router at the Bembridge Production Facility is now fully operational, marking a significant step forward in manufacturing capabilities. This cutting-edge router brings major improvements in both efficiency and precision, enabling the Britten-Norman team to automate complex cuts and reduce manual workload, all while enabling more intricate and detailed designs.

NEW RECRUITMENT DRIVE LAUNCHED

Britten-Norman has announced a period of significant growth at the Bembridge production site on the Isle of Wight. Over the next two years, the company will be creating up to 60 new skilled jobs, bringing exciting career opportunities back to the island and expanding its

world-class team. As one of the UK's most successful aircraft manufacturers, they're committed to excellence – and that starts with people. B-N are looking for passionate, skilled individuals to join them in a wide range of roles.

GARNET RIDGWAY SHARES FLIGHT TEST INSIGHTS AT THE ROYAL AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY

On Monday 12 May, the Royal Aeronautical Society's London headquarters hosted an evening lecture delivered by Head of Flight Dynamics, Garnet Ridgway. Titled "Flight Testing the Britten-Norman BN-2T-4S Islander – Adding New Capabilities to a Modern British Utility Aircraft." Garnet's talk introduced the Britten-Norman story and the Islander platform before walking the audience through the BN-2T-4S flight test programme for Project Skymast – a forward-looking initiative focused on delivering airborne 5G connectivity. For those who couldn't attend in person, the talk will be available soon on the Royal Aeronautical Society's YouTube channel.

B-N TEAM COMPLETES EPIC WALK THE WIGHT CHALLENGE

On Sunday 11 May, six Britten-Norman colleagues took on the full 26.5-mile Walk the Wight challenge in support of Mountbatten Hospice. Ashton Norman, Emma Steele, Sam Bishop, Paulina Samborska, Jamie Woodford, and Grahame Stone joined 9,300 other walkers (plus 1,000 dogs!) for the cross-Island route, climbing over 3,100 feet along the way. After nine hours on their feet, they crossed the finish line – tired, but with a real sense of achievement. The event has already raised over £410,000 for the Mountbatten Hospice, and the team have added £730 to the total, so far. A brilliant effort – on the ground and in fundraising.



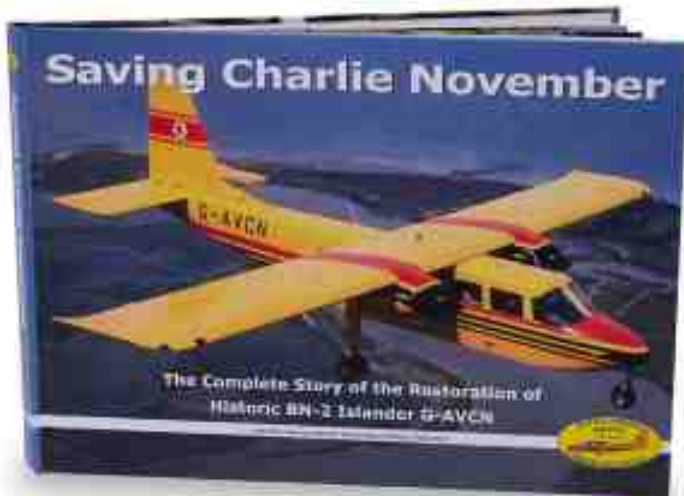
(Britten-Norman)

AIR INTERNATIONAL FEATURE B-N AS COVER STORY

Britten-Norman has been featured on the cover of the April 2025 edition of AIR International. The article, titled "Rugged, reliable, and relevant: Britten-Norman's BN-2B Islander – back in the UK", explores the company's recent investment, highlighting its commitment to strengthening UK-based manufacturing and increasing Islander production. Chief Executive William Hynett met with Editor Glenn Sands to discuss the strategic decisions behind relocating production back to the UK, securing long-term investment, and ensuring the Islander remains a key player in subregional aviation.



“Saving Charlie November” Book



Our new book was published in July 2024. The hardback book is A4 landscape format, and in full colour throughout the 180 pages. Price is £30, plus carriage at cost. **Only a few left, so order sooner rather than later!** To order please email: savingcn@bnaps.org.uk and we will send you a payment link and carriage quote.

Supporting BNAPS to preserve B-N Islander G-AVCN

SAYWELL, **NORVIC Aero Engines LTD**, **B-N Britten-Norman**, **proptech** An Atrego Group Company, **HARTZELL**, **AIRFRAME ASSEMBLIES** AIRFRAME RESTORATION FOR AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS SPECIALISTS
Skybus, **CORMACK ISLANDER AIRCRAFT**, **Loganair** Scotland's Airline, **GREAT RIVER AIR** YUKON, CANADA, **AIRSTREAM INTERNATIONAL GROUP LIMITED**
ANGLO NORMANDY AEROENGINEERING, **FLN**, **AEROPLASTICS & STRUCTURES** AIRCRAFT PRODUCTS, **Wight Fire & Security** for all your safety needs, **DELTAIR AEROSPACE LTD.**
REYNOLDS & READ Ltd. PLANT HIRE, TRANSPORT, SKIPS & RECYCLING, **B-N HISTORIANS**, **WIGHTLINK** ISLE OF WIGHT FERRIES, **RORAIMA AIRWAYS**
DEBEDEE BALLOONS, **Red Box REDBOX INTERNATIONAL**, **JL AVIATION** AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE, **EVAN BERRYMAN direct**, **PAUL STEAM & MOTOR WORKS JERSEY**, **KEDEK**
Rotable Repairs, **indigo GRAPHICS**, **AQS LTD**, **HR Smith (Technical Developments) Limited**, **CHELTON**, **HEROUX DEVTEK**
Bembridge Heritage Society, **H.J. BENNETT** EST. 1966, **SWIMEX UK** POOL ENCLOSURES, **Rainbow**, **Welcome** in partnership with southern co-op
tracware, **Bill Mason & Son**, **FIGAS - FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT AIR SERVICE**, **THE PROPELLER INN**

BNAPS News Review (BNR)

We are always looking for news and feature articles for inclusion in BNR. If you would like to submit anything regarding B-N aircraft, past or present please contact the Editor. We'd really like to see pictures of BN aircraft from where you are, or where you travel to!

Latest BNAPS Postcard



The latest addition to BNAPS postcard range depicts Trislander G-RLOK landing at Solent on its last flight 5.4.17.

This postcard is now available at £1.50 plus postage at cost.

We are able to publish bespoke aircraft postcards, from your own image if required. Minimum quantity is 5 postcards with text and logo at no extra charge.

For postcard enquiries and orders, please email:
norman@bnaps.org.uk

BACK IN STOCK! B-N Caps

Caps are dark blue and carry original style B-N logo stitched in yellow.



Caps are priced at £12.50, including UK carriage of £2.50.

Overseas carriage will be quoted at cost.
To order email sales@bnaps.org.uk

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 at membership@bnaps.org.uk

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.

Viewing G-AVCN

If you are planning to visit the Wight Military & Heritage Museum, there should be BNAPS people present every Thursday from 10am until 2pm. For Museum details see wmahm.org.uk

BN-2 Production History

BN Historians produce a “printed to order” version of the BN-2 Production History in loose-leaf A4 format. With full indexes this will be the most up to date data available - direct from the BNH Database.

Price - printed version **£45.00** plus carriage, or you can order as a PDF file for only **£40.00** - no carriage necessary and will be emailed after confirmed payment.

You can also choose your own cover picture - let BNH know which BN-2 you would like and, if possible, it will be your cover picture.

Email BNH for more information:
enquiries@bnhistorians.co.uk



BNAPS

BNAPS has a very active Facebook group page. We encourage you join - search for “Britten-Norman Aircraft Preservation Society”.

BNAPS is represented on line at: bnaps.org.uk (an updated web site is in our future plans).

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.”

BNAPS registered address is:

7, William Close, Fareham, Hampshire. PO14 2PQ

Trustees: Bob Wealthy (Chairman), Bob Wilson, Guy Palmer, and Allan Wright.

Please note:

Whilst BNAPS has contact with Britten-Norman from time to time, as a charitable trust BNAPS is an independent organisation.



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