

# BNAPS News Review

Issue 8

September 2025

## B-N FACTORY VISIT

# 29 by '29!

In this issue of BNAPS News Review:

- ISLANDER 60 REPORT
- FACEBOOK ROUND UP
- WINDWARD EXPRESS AIRWAYS
- THE FIRECRACKER STORY - part 2



# BNAPS CHAIRMAN UPDATE



Dear BNAPS Supporters,

BNAPS Islander 60 held on 14 June went well thanks to Roxy, Rick and crew at the Propeller Inn and to Britten-Norman Aerospace Ltd for kindly arranging for two groups of BNAPS supporters to take a tour of the new production facility at Bembridge conducted by B-N's Pete Dowers. Once booked in for their tour attendees were conveyed from the Propeller Inn to the B-N site thanks to the IoW Bus & Coach Museum's 1956 vintage open top double-decker bus that was brought over from Ryde for Islander 60. A full report on Islander 60 is included in this issue of BNAPS News Review.

At the Wight Military & Heritage Museum work has continued to assemble and commission the "Islander Experience" flight simulator together with initial work on Britten Sheriff G-FRJB. More about the current work is also included in this issue of BNAPS News Review. For the Sheriff the main emphasis has been on removing window transparencies as these have suffered varying degrees of internal crazing due to age and exposure to sunlight for many years. The way ahead to enable fabrication of replacement transparencies is under investigation with the aim of assembling a cost estimate for the work. It is anticipated that a fund-raising campaign will be initiated as soon as these costs are known.

BNAPS "Saving Charlie November" book has been a great sales success and has received much favourable comment together with a 4 star book review by Denis J Calvert in *Aeroplane* magazine. If anyone has yet to buy a copy of the book, please do not delay as at the time of writing there are only a handful of copies left. Thanks to the efforts of Allan Wright as editor and sales co-ordinator, and all those who contributed write ups for the book this time last year, publishing the book has made a significant and welcome contribution to BNAPS funds.

BNAPS has recently received indications from three people that they would be willing to serve as a Trustee. At present the BNAPS board of Trustees is drafting a letter of invitation together with briefing notes about what is expected of a Trustee. The way ahead for BNAPS and introduction of new Trustees, once acceptance has been formally confirmed, will be included in a later issue of BNAPS News Review.

Just a reminder that at Solent Sky Aviation Museum in Southampton former Aurigny Air Services Trislander G-RLON is in the process of having engines and propellers re-installed followed by refitting of the interior trim and seating and can be viewed by visitors when accompanied by a volunteer museum guide. Also on show at the museum is a walk around exhibition room covering the history of Britten-Norman from 1954, when it was first formally registered, through to the present day.

We all no doubt look forward to exciting times ahead for Britten-Norman and it is anticipated that the future prospect of resumed UK manufacture of BN-2 airframes may well encourage increasing interest in the heritage of B-N. BNAPS will continue with increased resolve to promote the advantages and benefits of joining our supporters club to ensure the society has a sustainable future. If anyone is aware of someone having an interest in B-N and would like to know more about BNAPS please contact [bob@bnaps.org.uk](mailto:bob@bnaps.org.uk) for more information or [membership@bnaps.org.uk](mailto:membership@bnaps.org.uk) for membership details and an application form. Many thanks for your continuing support and I hope that you will enjoy reading this issue of BNAPS News Review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any B-N heritage related questions or possibly have a story or photographs that could be considered for inclusion in a future issue of BNAPS News Review.

Bob Wealthy, **BNAPS Chairman**

**Chairman on the Radio!** Bob Wealthy was recently interviewed on Vectis Radio 104.6fm. You can hear the interview in a podcast on line at [www.vectisradio.com/podcast/catch-cast-with-mark-ovenden/](http://www.vectisradio.com/podcast/catch-cast-with-mark-ovenden/) It is podcast No. 18, and about 24min long, and Bob talks about G-AVCN.

Cover picture:

Construction of Islander BN-2B-26 c/n 2317 at Bembridge on 14.6.25 (Allan Wright)

## BNAPS HOLD 60th ANNIVERSARY EVENT AT BEMBRIDGE:

On 13 June 1965 the BN-2 prototype took to the air for the first time from Bembridge airfield on the Isle of Wight. So started 60 continuous years of production. To commemorate this event BNAPS held a low-key Supporters event to mark this significant anniversary, at the Propeller Inn, Bembridge.

To coincide with the event two tours were arranged around the Britten-Norman factory to view the current progress on constructing the first Islander to be entirely built in the UK in nearly 50 years. Up until recently the aircraft were built in Romania by Romaero and then shipped to the UK to be completed and delivered.

The tours commenced at the Propeller Inn and guests were shuttled across to the factory on a vintage open topped double-decker Bristol bus - courtesy of Derek Piddle, from the IoW Bus & Coach Museum.



At the B-N factory they were welcomed by the new owner Tim Frost and shown around by Pete Dowers, who has worked for B-N for 47 years! Also present was B-N Production Director Graham Stone, who was keen to answer the many questions asked by the tour group. Since the change of ownership late in 2024 a lot of progress and investment has been made. Many of the Romanian jigs are now at Bembridge with the rest to follow by the end of the year. Complete construction will then be possible in the UK with the aim of building 29 new aircraft by 2029.

The new production line is currently in development. At this stage, B-N is working with the CAA to demonstrate their capability to manufacture new aircraft in the UK. They are targeting A2 Production Organisation Approval later this year.

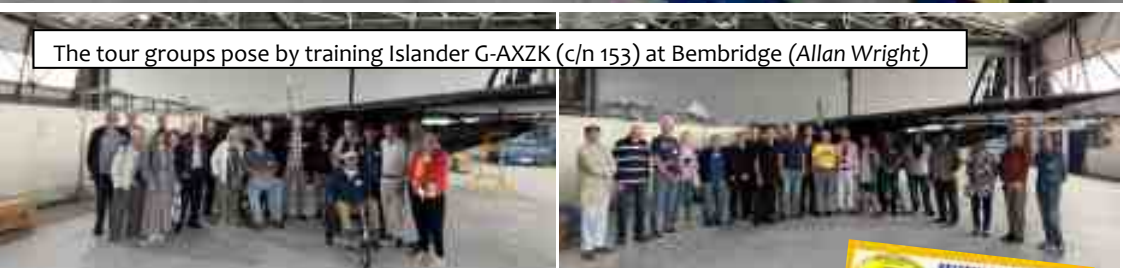


Pictures from the hangar at Bembridge on 14.6.25 during the tour. (Allan Wright)





The centre fuselage under construction. (Allan Wright)



The tour groups pose by training Islander G-AXZK (c/n 153) at Bembridge (Allan Wright)

The Islander currently under construction is c/n 2317 and will be delivered to the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS) .

Bob Wealthy, BNAPS Chairman, shared the following: “On behalf of BNAPS Trustees and Supporters I would like to convey our sincere appreciation and thanks to all at Britten-Norman for making Islander 60 a most memorable day. I think without exception all who went on the excellent guided tours of the production facility were most impressed and encouraged by what was on show.”

Following the tours, guests were offered a cold-buffet lunch and spent time in the Propeller Inn chatting and reminiscing. A souvenir brochure was produced and sold for £3.

*There a few available; please email [sales@bnaps.org.uk](mailto:sales@bnaps.org.uk) to obtain a copy.*



# Wight Military & Heritage Museum Activities June - August 2025

Main activities undertaken during the period have involved re-assembly of the “Islander Experience” flight simulator and initial work to remove windows and doors from Sheriff fuselage.

BNAPS was pleased to welcome Supporter Keith Anderson and his wife on 6 June when they visited the Museum to see Islander G-AVCN. Keith was with B-N on the finance side in the 1970s and has taken a keen interest in the restoration project and made several generous donations. Most recently Keith kindly made a donation towards the cost of bringing the Sheriff to the Isle of Wight earlier this year.

## Islander G-AVCN Care and Maintenance

Routine wheel turning operation was completed using the wing stands that were returned from the mainland after being on loan to Solent Sky Museum to assist in the move of Trislander G-RLON from Solent Airport to Southampton.

## “Islander Experience” Flight Simulator

Thanks to the efforts of Mark Porter, Bernie Coleman, Guy Palmer, Maury Dyer and Paul Brook the Simulator fuselage has been stripped back to bare metal and repainted, albeit



Avionics bay cover and passenger door painted and ready for installation.



Ceiling mounted fuel control, rudder trim and upper instrument panels have been installed.

with a small setback with regard to the primer originally used. Good progress has been made with re-installing controls, instrument panels and trim. This time around three main design changes have been introduced since last year:

1. The instruments are now custom built representation of real ‘round dial’ instruments with moving pointers that are fed their status from the flight simulator software. This replaces the internal monitor screen used previously.
2. Doors will be fitted making the simulator more representative and also adding an element of security.
3. The external view will be presented on an array of screens mounted just forward of the windscreen. This will provide a panoramic view - a great improvement over the single screen in the earlier simulator configuration.



The windscreens and fixed side windows have been refitted. An alternative starboard windscreen section has been fitted as its edge and area around its fixing holes was in better condition than the one it replaces. However, it has required a considerable amount of polishing to remove grazes and scratches. All of the transparencies have been polished, but more work is required to complete the process.

The door surrounds have been refitted, which will allow the doors to be offered up and checked to see if any more material needs to be removed to achieve a satisfactory fit. The port door hinges made by Bob Wilson are in place and when alignment work is complete will be secured in place.

The speaker cables have been rerouted so that they will be less vulnerable to damage and disturbance.

A new instrument panel has been built and fitted. This contains a working blind flying panel "six-pack" and ADF. The other instruments are currently dummies, but it is proposed to replace some of these with working instruments such as the RPM gauge. The yoke has been refitted, and the forward end is secured with a new frame fabricated from aluminium.

The throttle box parts that were acquired during earlier restoration work on G-AVCN have enabled build of a representative throttle box, which is essentially complete with a complete set of moving levers, thanks to the efforts of Maury Dyer. Work is in progress to design and build an internal mechanism whereby lever movement moves potentiometers which will then be connected to the simulator. The trim wheel, trim indicator and flap switch will also be added.

The coaming has been cleaned and painted matt black and will be fitted when work on the instrument panel permits at a later stage.

Rudder pedals provided by Guy Palmer will be refitted. The rudder pedal assembly will be made secure and a scheme involving two rails on which the assembly can be mounted secured with T-pins to allow adjustment for leg length. A seat back cushion will also be provided as this is thought to be necessary for younger "pilots".

*Right:* View of the control yoke mechanism located behind the instrument panel.

*Below:* View of the instrument panel with instruments and throttle box installed.

*Below right:* The arrangement of controls and instruments is intended to be a close representation of the Islander. Instruments are driven from the flight simulator software via USB ports to present the results of control movements to the flight simulator "pilot".





Bernie Coleman installing an attachment bracket for external screens support frame.

### Sheriff Project

With assistance from WM&HM Trustee Martin Thorn and volunteers the wing joining plate fixings were freed up, the plate detached and the wing sections separated. This made it easier to handle and store the wing that is now supported on trestles in outside storage. The work was done during a spell of good weather and helped WM&HM organise their space outside. This will make movement of the wing more manageable once additional Museum space becomes available inside to allow re-assembly of the Sheriff to proceed.

The front windscreen structure was de-rieveted by Mark Porter after which the windscreen came out easily. This is stowed and will be used as a template for a replacement part.

Thanks to the efforts of Dave Emery and Glen Finch good progress has been made on removing the doors and windows. The two side doors have been removed and their windows removed, once the retaining structure was de-rieveted. The rear side windows have also been removed. These were held in with automotive rubber seals which appear good enough to reuse.

The result of this work is that we have the complete set of transparencies removed from

Following removal of the wing spar joining plate, the wing sections are now stored outside. Rearrangement of the area behind G-AVCN together with disposal of miscellaneous unwanted items and materials will allow the wing to be brought inside for storage before the onset of winter.





The wing spar area following removal of the joining plate. This area will be cleaned and painted before re-assembly.



Windscreen surround has been de-riveted and the windscreen successfully removed.



Door and side windows after being successfully removed.



Door after removal and in work to free up door latch mechanism and general refurbishment.



View of fuselage nose section following removal of doors, side windows, windscreen and coaming.

the aircraft, cleaned, and ready for a contractor to use them as templates for replacements.

The port-side door locking mechanism has been freed up and lubricated. The door has had a trial fit against the aircraft to ensure that the mechanism works correctly. The starboard-door mechanism still needs more work to get it into working condition. It is currently soaking in penetrating oil.

The dashboard coaming has been removed, giving access to the flight controls.

The control yoke mechanism has been freed up with the aid of penetrating oil and much effort by Mark Porter.

## Solent Sky Trislander News

This is not officially a BNAPS project, but as our Chair, Bob Wealthy, is actively involved as a Solent Sky volunteer, we will feature updates of the restoration of Trislander G-RLON in BNAPS News Review.

### Re-installation of Engines

On Saturday 23 August all three engines were installed successfully. Mark Masters of CAV Aircraft Services, assisted by trainee aircraft engineer Reece, led the activity. Thanks to the expert handling of the HIAB lifting equipment by Danny from All Day Services, the lifting operations went ahead without a hitch. Having arrived on site at 8:45 am, the HIAB was set up for lifting to begin by 9am and just over an hour later all 3 engines had been installed - a job well done. Solent Sky volunteers Trevor Morecraft and Bob Wealthy were also in attendance to help where required.

(left) Tail engine lift underway

(right) Tail engine in process of being secured during installation



G-RLON with all three engines installed.



## 29 by '29 Mug spotted at the Museum!

Pictured by Norman Hobbs at the WM&HM recently was a mug created for B-N employees with the B-N slogan "29 by '29", endorsing their commitment to construct 29 new Islanders by 2029.



# CARIBBEAN STOL

Words and pictures by Mark Griffiths

## JUST WHAT THE BN-2 WAS DESIGNED FOR!

*“We wouldn’t have made it to 25 years had it not been for the BN-2”* Jean Halley

1 June 2025 marked 25 years of BN operations for Windward Express.

I travelled to St. Maarten to meet business owner and chief pilot Captain Jean Halley for a round trip to the island of Saba and a landing on the world’s shortest commercial runway.

The small Dutch Caribbean island of Saba lies around 30 miles to the southwest of St Maarten, in the Leeward Islands. It is a mountainous volcanic island with terrain rising up to 2900ft above sea level. In 1963 a

short runway of just 400 metres was opened on Flat Point, the only area just large enough for a runway anywhere on the island. With only basic medical facilities available this runway provides a lifeline for urgent medical care to residents and visitors. Windward Express operates a contract for the Dutch Government to provide both scheduled and unscheduled medical flights from and to Saba using a single BN-2B-26, PJ-WED (c/n 2153).



[www.cestee.com](http://www.cestee.com)



I met operations controller Elizabeth in the International Terminal at St. Maarten shortly after 6am. St. Maarten gained part independence from the Netherlands in 2010, but as Saba is still a Netherlands Special Municipality then this is essentially an international flight. I am therefore issued with a boarding pass to exit through immigration. Waiting at the boarding gate, I met the two passengers for this outbound sector. A doctor who will spend the day at the island clinic, and a local resident of Saba who has been visiting her husband in hospital in St. Maarten.

We board a minibus for the short drive to the eastern ramp where Windward Express is based. The other St. Maarten based BN-2 operator, SXM Airways, uses the same apron. On arrival, chief pilot Jean Halley, greets us and tells the passengers where they are going to sit. Weight and balance is crucial on a lightly loaded BN-2, especially when landing on such a performance limiting runway as there is on Saba.



Jean Halley poses next to PJ-WED.

After a safety brief, we are starting the engines and getting underway. PJ-WED is fitted with 2 Lycoming O-540, horizontally opposed, but not fuel injected. Jean is not a fan of fuel injected engines, “they simply do not perform well with short turnarounds in the heat of the Caribbean”, he explains. We taxi out to depart from intersection F, Runway 10 (magnetic heading roughly 100°). At St. Maarten, all Windward Express take offs are performed from the intersection and all landings are short to ensure pilots keep their short field mindset. Saba (and the other nearby island of St.

Barthelemy) is no place for a complacent pilot to operate.

We are airborne in no time and begin a climbing right turn out over Cole Bay. Due to the light load this morning we cruise at 2500ft. The visibility is excellent and the island of Saba comes into view. The population has grown in recent years to around 2,000 people, the majority live higher up the mountain where for most of the year the temperature is more pleasant than at sea level.



Climb out from SXM.

finals to Runway 12 followed by a textbook touchdown. So challenging is this airport to operate into, pilots must get special authorisation to be able to land here. It does not appear on pilot GPS units for this reason. The threats are obvious, not only is the runway very short, but there is a shear cliff face at either end. Runway 12 has a downslope meaning there is a tendency for a pilot to float as the land falls away from the aircraft. The opposite end, Runway 30, has an upslope giving an optical illusion and a tendency for a bounced landing. Add in strong downdraughts from the terrain and regular showers making the runway wet and potentially slippery, it is not hard to understand why only the very best ‘bush pilots’ are authorised here.

After just a few minutes of level flight, it is not long before we start our descent with a curved visual approach from the north. Jean establishes PJ-WED on short

Left base runway 12 for Saba.



The Dutch Authorities publish a wind chart



PJ-WED at Saba Airport.

showing the maximum wind speed and direction for landing at Saba. Jean recalls one approach in severe downdraughts where he had full power on and was still sinking just before touching down. Not a situation any aviator ever wants to find themselves in. All pilots must operate into Saba within 30 days or their 'currency' expires. They then need to revisit as a co-pilot before they can operate as 'pilot in command/captain' again.

Just as we arrive, the night-stopping Winair Twin Otter is starting engines. We wait for this aircraft to taxi before parking up outside the small colourful airport building. Our passengers for the return sector are waiting to board, most are medical patients who are visiting the hospital in St. Maarten for regular treatment such as dialysis. Jean knows most of them by name and provides a friendly welcome as they walk up to the aircraft to be allocated a seat, whilst introducing myself.

We are soon ready for departure and I ensure I am not a distraction as Jean goes through his pre-take off checklist. He checks and double checks that take off flap is selected, applies the



About to touch down SXM runway 10.

toe brakes and sets full power. Only when he has checked the engine instruments and is confident of the power output does he release the brakes and we begin our acceleration. The threshold markings at the end of the runway quickly come into sight as he gently eases PJ-WED into the air. We are notably heavier now climbing at a lower rate but still achieve a short cruise at 2,500ft. There are some isolated shower clouds in the vicinity of St. Maarten but other than those it is another



Saba Island

beautiful day in the Caribbean. St. Maarten airport has yet to get busy for the day, most jet arrivals from North America and Europe begin to arrive from 1100hrs. It is still relatively early as Jean carries out another textbook touchdown on Runway 10 and a short taxi into the apron. Our passengers disembark, many will be returning to Saba later that day on the 14:30hrs flight.

The medical contract provides two flights a day Monday - Saturday. Between these the day is filled with charter flights to Saba, St. Barts and other islands. Jean recalls one very wealthy gentleman who arrived behind schedule in his Gulfstream executive jet one evening into St. Maarten. Jean was just starting the engines on the BN-2. Having missed his connection with another operator, he ran over to the BN-2. Jean had one spare seat, so managed to squeeze him in and he paid for the whole cost of the charter. The gentleman became a very important regular customer for many years afterwards.

Jean is a true bush pilot who clearly loves his job. He trained in Trinidad back in the 1990s when UK based Oxford Aviation Training owned a flying school there. He has amassed over 20,000 flying hours and an incredible 15,000 of those on the DeHavilland Twin Otter when flying for St. Maarten based airline Winair. He stepped down as Chief Pilot of that airline to set up Windward Express 25 years ago. "We wouldn't have made it to 25 years had it not been for the BN-2" Jean tells me. "The success of our story is the BN-2".

Sadly two other BN-2s are no longer flying, PJ-WEA (c/n 659) was destroyed during Hurricane Irma 6 September 2017. It was in the strongest hangar at Anguilla airport where it should have been safe from the storm but a tornado ripped through the building, the aircraft was



PJ-WEA (659) operated from 2000 to 2017



PJ-WEB (2208) operated from 2002 to 2023

(Both pictures from the BNH Collection)



completely destroyed and the tail has never been found. PJ-WEB (c/n 2208) was damaged 13 February 2023 during a landing at Saba in very challenging weather conditions. Jean may rebuild this aircraft in the future if the market dictates, but for the time being it is in safe storage at St. Maarten airport.

Longer range flights are flown using a Cessna 414. A number of years ago he considered replacing the BN-2 with a Cessna Caravan. But he found it very hard to convince his regular passengers that a single engine turbine powered aircraft was as safe as a twin engine piston one such as the BN-2 so decided against it. As is common with most BN-2 operators, retaining pilots is a challenge. Two have recently left to join other airlines, leaving just one other pilot working alongside Jean. Aviation is very cyclical, in the good times such as now there is a pilot shortage. It has always been the case that small operators lose pilots to larger ones during such times. Jean does not plan to replace them yet as it is now the low season when demand for charter flights reduces. Engineering also presents challenges working with highly utilised aircraft with short turnarounds in high temperatures. Highly experienced engineer Alan is kept busy; his hard work ensures it is very rare to cancel a charter due to a technical issue. He keeps both the aircraft in pristine condition, only recently all seats in PJ-WED have been fully reupholstered in leather.

Through the hard work of a small team, flying an immaculately presented BN-2, operating into some of the world's most challenging runways, Windward Express has a tried and tested formula. Like so many similar operators, the success really is down to the trusty Islander. Reliable, flexible, robust - it simply does what it says on the tin. There is no doubt in my mind that these workhorses will be providing vital links between isolated communities for many years to come.

Very many thanks to Captain Jean Halley and the Windward Express team.

#### **Fleet Details:**

**PJ-WEA** (c/n 659) BN-2A-26 operated from 4.00 to 6.9.17. Ex N659CM, N40UC, N9857C, D-IAJW, G-AYXK. First flight 3.9.71.

**PJ-WEB** (c/n 2208) BN-2B-20 operated from 12.02 to 13.2.23. Ex 8P-TAG, (8P-SCA), N32GM, B3903, G-BPLP. First flight 25.5.89.

**PJ-WED** (c/n 2153) BN-2B-26 operated from 12.9.13. Ex PZ-TBL, N633BB, EC-EBC, G-BKEH. First flight 22.10.82.

# FROM THE ARCHIVE

## DESMOND NORMAN'S AVIATION EXPLOITS POST B-N: THE FIRECRACKER STORY PART 2

Test flying of Firecracker G-NDNI (c/n 001) continued from Goodwood and made good progress that led to certification in June 1979 in time for an appearance at the Paris Air Show. In the lead up to the Paris Show, Aviation Week and Space Technology, April 1979 issue, featured a Pilot Report by Editor David E Brown on the Firecracker. Following a briefing by NDN's Chief Pilot Peter Phillips, David Brown conducted an extensive evaluation of the Firecracker's flying capability as a military style training aircraft with very favourable results. Also mentioned in the report was the fact that the Firecracker had been equipped with an inverted flight fuel system and that NDN expected to receive UK airworthiness certification in time for the Paris Show under BCAR Section K, Issue 6, for a fully aerobatic aircraft. Static testing to +7g and -3.5g had been undertaken which was more than necessary for certification, but was done in anticipation of military requirements.



*Selected pages from NDN-1 Firecracker sales brochure circa 1978*

In March 1979, just under 2 years after Firecracker G-NDNI, had made its maiden flight at Goodwood Aerodrome on 26 May 1977, Desmond decided that the whole NDN Aircraft operation would move back to the Isle of Wight. Several key team members had to commute from the Isle of Wight daily and with anticipated build-up of further production work on the Firecracker, together with other projects in mind, expansion at Goodwood was not an option.

At the end of 1979 a planning application was submitted to construct a hangar and landing strip in an area where crop spraying aircraft had operated near a chalk pit at Arreton. However, this was refused by the local planning authority and Desmond's attention then turned to setting up a new base at Sandown Airport when plans for a new 7,000sq ft hangar were revealed in early 1980. In August 1980 details of the NDN-6 Fieldmaster agricultural aircraft were released with the aim of getting the prototype to its first flight in 1981.

At the time work on construction of the prototype Fieldmaster was underway at Goodwood. This work, and development of the Firecracker, would be transferred to the Isle of Wight at the end of 1980 to move into the new facilities at Sandown Airport when ready in mid-1981. Also, with the prospect of submitting a bid to the UK Ministry of Defence for a new training aircraft for the Royal Air Force, design work was already under way at



*Artist's impression of NDN's new Fieldmaster agricultural aircraft, August 1980*

Goodwood for a new version turbo prop powered version of the Firecracker. This was designated as the NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker and would clearly be aimed at meeting the technical requirements laid down by the MoD.

It is of some interest to note that Firecracker G-NDNI was subject to a comprehensive evaluation by the RAF Central Flying School in early 1979 and the results were issued in report reference CFS/101/AIR dated 22 March 1979. The flight characteristics of the aircraft received favourable comment together with constructive suggestions as to how the aircraft might be modified to suit potential service use for pilot training.

With NDN Aircraft having only a small team of about 20 people, this was no doubt a very busy and demanding time for all at the company, with new aircraft designs under way and the move from Goodwood to contend with. Late in 1980 work on the Firecracker had been relocated to occupy an existing hangar at Sandown Airport as the new NDN hangar was in the final stages of completion and therefore unavailable.

On 30 January 1981 all were saddened by the death, at the age of 46, of Andy Coombe, NDN Technical Director with responsibility for design, development certification and testing of the Firecracker and Fieldmaster aircraft. NDN Managing Director and founder Desmond Norman paid tribute to Andy Coombe as part of a news report in the 6 February 1981 issue of the Isle of Wight County Press:

“Andrew Coombe's talent for meticulous application of theory and practice to the design of aircraft, coupled with his immense experience of flight test engineering and his love for it, made him almost unique among designers of modern aircraft in that he was able personally to integrate each step from theory to practice.

“Notwithstanding his formidable professional grasp, his unfailingly cheerful manner endeared him to many, including countless owners and operators of aeroplanes throughout the world, who knew that they could rely on him for prompt and enthusiastic technical help when required. He leaves a legacy of applied aeronautical expertise which will be in evidence around the world for years to come.”



BNAPS archive collection

Andy Coombe, right, at the 1977 Royal International Tattoo at Greenham Common briefing several visiting pilots about the attributes and features of Firecracker G-NDNI



View of the NDN hangar at Sandown in mid-1981 with the prototype Fieldmaster G-NRDC under construction. Firecracker G-NDNI is parked outside on the left (Rob Morris via Phil Morris)

Work on getting the prototype Fieldmaster G-NRDC completed now took some precedence over the further development of the Firecracker. The maiden flight of G-NRDC took place at Sandown Airport on 17 December 1981. Firecracker G-NDNI was used as a chase aircraft for some of the early flights.

Thanks to several photographs taken by Bert Visser, during a visit to Sandown in July 1983, of work under way in the NDN Aircraft hangar, more of the story can be related taking it to the time when the NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker came into being. This led to the construction of three NDN-1T examples, and a period of intense marketing, flight demonstrations and lobbying activities to promote the aircraft as a serious contender in the bid for the RAF's new training aircraft.



*Firecracker c/n 002 is seen here in one of the existing hangars in temporary used by NDN at Sandown. It is believed to be the structural test airframe originally built at Goodwood. Firecracker G-NDNI is on the right of the picture.*

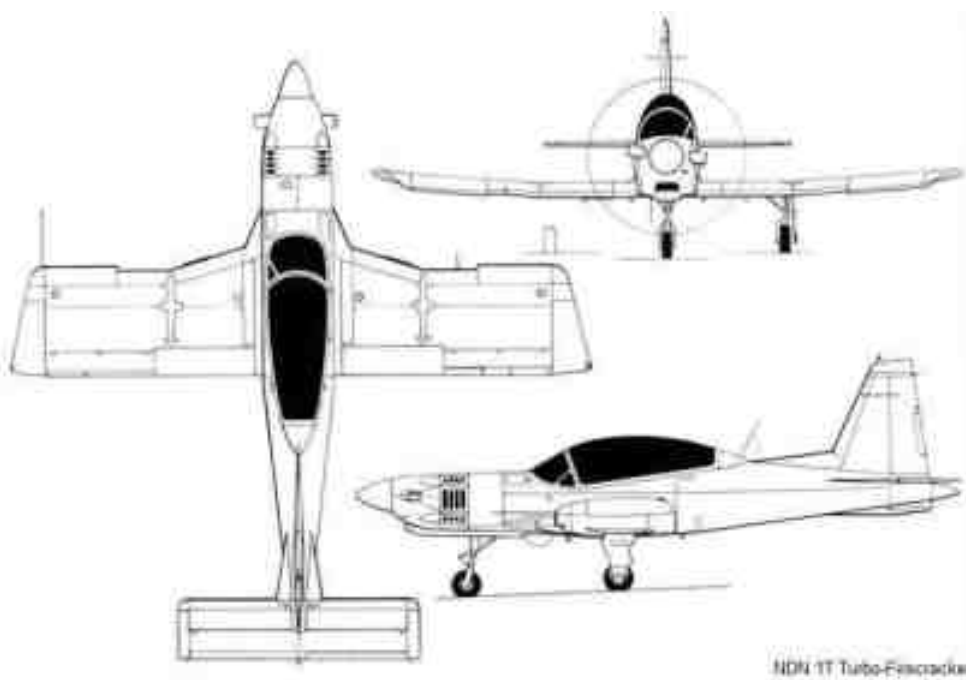


*This view shows extensive work in progress on Firecracker G-NDNI with a major overhaul and preparation for painting.*



(above) Another view of work in progress on Firecracker G-NDNI. (below) Airframe c/n 003 in process of being built as the first NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker. It is believed that c/n 003 was originally laid down as the second NDN-1 Firecracker. It's likely the c/n 003 identity was superseded and not allocated, as the prototype NDN-1T, registration G-SFTR, is c/n 005 according to the CAA G-INFO database, and c/n 004 seems to have been allocated to Fieldmaster G-NRDC.





NDN 1T Turbo-Firecracker

Again the NDN team had another challenge on their hands with work now building up to produce further examples of the NDN-1T and continuing work on Fieldmaster production.

NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker G-SFTR (c/n 005), made its maiden flight from Sandown Airport on 1 September 1983 crewed by Desmond Norman and Squadron Leader John Davy, managing director of Specialist Flying Training.

NDN Aircraft engineer Bryan Groves was there on the day and recalls the occasion. “The first flight had been held up all day by technical fuel system problems and aircraft was finally ready at dusk. Desmond and John Davy decided to get the initial ground test runs completed ready for an early morning first flight the next day. They taxied out and after few basic test runs, much to everyone's great surprise, took off and disappeared into the night. Some half hour later they executed a very low pass over the anxious team who had to quickly get some car headlights to mark the runway. Apparently Des and John could have done with a torch

*Turbo Firecracker G-SFTR (c/n 005) roll out at Sandown late August 1983*

BNAPS archive collection





BNAPS archive collection



BNAPS archive collection

(top) NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker G-SFTR, believed to be on a test flight 2 September 1983, the day after its maiden flight in the evening of 1 September. Note landing gear is not retracted.

(above) NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker G-SFTR, on a later test flight.

as the panel lighting had not been completed, but they survived by using the fin top flashing white strobe light to momentarily illuminate the instrument panels - all exciting times."

The first flight of the Turbo Firecracker attracted much attention from the local press as recounted in this extract from the Isle of Wight County Press, 9 September 1983 issue:

*A British plane that aims to beat the world was unveiled at Sandown Airport on Monday. The Firecracker could become the aircraft selected by the RAF to train its pilots. The turbo-prop plane was especially produced for this purpose by NDN Aircraft Ltd of Sandown who also have premises at Lake. It simulates the characteristics of the latest fighter and is the only British contender in the race to replace the ageing Jet Provosts used at present for RAF training.*

The Firecracker was designed by Mr. Desmond Norman, vice chairman of Firecracker Aircraft (UK) Ltd. who was involved in designing Britain's best-selling light transport plane, the Islander. He said that at between £450,000 for a basic Firecracker and £660,000 for a more complex model, the product was substantially cheaper than the chief opposition from Swiss and Brazilian aircraft.

As well as British market plans there was excellent export potential which was good for local employment. Partnership with a large British aerospace company would be formed in the event of major orders.

Mr. Norman described as 'superb' the staff of 71 (including British Hovercraft Corporation employees) who were involved in manufacturing three Firecrackers for Specialist Flying Training Ltd (SST). The men gave up their summer holidays to work on the project.

"They have been sweating their guts out day and night for a very long time," he said. "On the Island there is available a highly-skilled aeronautical manufacturing workforce.

"This talent was not limited to the Island", he added. "We in the country are sitting on a nugget of aero-technical and aerospace manufacturing capability that is drastically under-exploited", he said.

He and Squadron Leader John Davy, managing director of SFT, were the test crew on Firecracker's first flight. Squadron Leader Davy said he did not feel threatened by the opposition for the RAF contract.

"This is a truly. British product. If it's the right quality at the right price I can hardly see how they can go 'offshore'," he said.

A private investment of £15m has been staked to get the Firecracker off the ground. The RAF will be needing 150 new planes between 1986-89, and if the Firecracker does not get this order the company will find it hard to attract export customers. However, Air Marshal Sir Peter Wykeham, chairman of Firecracker Aircraft, was confident. "In the complete envelope of flying characteristics we are superior to the competition." he said.

This set the scene for an intense marketing campaign led by Desmond Norman to present a convincing case for selection of the NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker as the best choice to satisfy the RAF's new training aircraft requirements. The Firecracker story will be continued in the next issue of BNAPS News Review.

Thanks go to Bryan Groves and Bill Morris for their help in relating the Firecracker story from their detailed knowledge of the project and recollections of their time working with Desmond Norman/NDN Aircraft. Also thanks go to Bert Visser for the photos taken during a visit to Sandown in July 1983; these photographs were a great help in piecing together the history of the Firecracker builds.

G-SFTR NDN-1T Turbo Firecracker at Farnborough Air Show in 1986 (BNH Collection)



# LAST FLIGHT TO KAMARANG by Alva Solomon



George Grandsoult poses in front of his new Islander 8R-GDJ, which replaced his Cessna 207, bearing the same markings.

*This is the intriguing story of the disappearance of George Grandsoult and his co-pilot who went missing on a Cessna 206 flight in Guyana in 1986. George was the first person to own a BN-2 Islander in Guyana; BN-2A 8R-GDJ (c/n 148) delivered new to Guyana Aviation Services, Guyana, 8.6.70. Guyana has operated around 40 Islanders and 5 Trislanders. A BN-2T-4S (c/n 4005) which is due to be delivered to Xen Aviation in Guyana later this year.*

*This article first appeared in the Guyana Chronicle 24 December 2017*

## **The Disappearance**

The day was 26 November 1986. Air Traffic Controllers at Timehri were alarmed when a Cessna 206 (8R-GAG) failed to land at Kamarang on a flight from Ogle. Today, more than three decades later, the memories still haunt the relatives of George Alexander Grandsoult, an experienced pilot who was never heard from again after his midday transmission that fateful day in 1986.

Co-pilot, Emile Khan, who was married and was the father of a 6-month old baby at the time, was also on board the Cessna 206 Super Skywagon. It is believed that bad weather may have played a role in the disappearance of the aircraft and according to reports at the time, Grandsoult's last position report was some 18 minutes prior to his destination. He was last heard from around 11:57hrs that Wednesday.

## **But did George's aircraft crash or were the crew held captive somewhere?**

In April 1987, four months after their disappearance, George's wife, his son Maurice and other siblings had a letter from the Venezuelan embassy; the family was told that George landed his aircraft in Venezuela and was later held captive by soldiers there.

The family said that in March 1987, the captain of Kamarang village, Albert Reed, reported that he received information from persons in Venezuela that George was seen with an “Indian man”, said to be Emile Khan, at a military airport base near the Rio Apongua (Apongua River) 74 kilometers north of the village of Santa Elena in Venezuela.

The village captain’s sister-in-law, Joyce Hunt, who was interviewed by broadcaster Naim Chan for the then Guyana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) in April 1987, recounted that in December 1986, a month after George and Khan disappeared, she travelled into Venezuela from the border village of Kaikan to spend Christmas. She said she was told that an aircraft had circled four times over the Rio Apongua area and later landed during bad weather.

Locals said a tall, white-haired man with a “limp” and an “Indian man” came out of the aircraft. The descriptions fitted George and his co-pilot. The relatives reported that the Venezuelan soldiers assumed the airmen had ran out of gas. Later, the residents said the two were placed in a “soldier house”, which they suspected was a prison. It is unclear if the concerns of the family were ever addressed.

### **Memories of George**

George is described by today’s generation of pilots as the true pioneer of aviation in Guyana. Some describe him as the man who taught many, not only to fly, but the general know-how of aircraft. His daughter, Dinah Hooker, has been safe-keeping newspaper clippings of the stories on her father’s disappearance ever since he disappeared.

Dinah remembers the day like it was yesterday. It was mere days before her graduation from the St Joseph’s High School, that her father George was never seen or heard from again.

She told the Guyana Chronicle from the UK where she resides , those memories of her father are etched in her mind and almost daily she would think of his kind and cheerful character. “He loved his head being rubbed with Limacol. Nobody got away from doing it. He loved animals too. Hence we had so many dogs,” she said.

“Dad went missing on 26 November 1986. It was my Mom’s birthday on the 17 November. I was due to graduate on 11 December 1986,” Dinah said, noting that while she attended her classes’ graduation ceremony at the St Joseph’s High School, she chose not to part take in a dance item “as a mark of respect.” She was 16 at the time.

### **Experienced airman**

Grandsoult, born in Guyana, whose parents had UK roots, is said to have been the first person to own a Britten-Norman Islander twin engine aircraft in Guyana. The model is still widely respected for its durability. He acquired the BN-2 aircraft after years of flying his first aircraft, a Cessna 207, across the country.

That Cessna 207 crashed at Ekereku Bottom in Region Seven (Cuyuni/Mazaruni) during his early years of flying here. While information on that crash is sketchy, the remains of that



aircraft are said to be visible at Ekereku today. George then acquired the BN-2 Islander and he transferred his famous registration “8R-GDJ”, known as “Delta Juliet” in aviation terms, from the crashed Cessna to his Islander aircraft.

### **Kenya crash and the RAF**

At the time of his disappearance, the 62-year old pilot had some 20 years experience flying with an accumulated log of 14,000 flying hours. He was described as a capable and veteran jungle pilot by fellow flyers and others in the aviation world. He was well known for navigating harsh weather and flying below the clouds was one of his best known traits.

George started his aviation career as an engineer in the Royal Air Force during World War II. He flew in many other countries prior to setting up his own company here which traded under the name “Guyana Aviation Group.”

“He was a true bush pilot and a pioneer. Training many pilots and also finding those who may have crashed,” his daughter noted.



George refuelling the 8R-GDJ at Manari in the Rupununi.

Hooker said that indeed her father walked with a “limp” and she said he may have sustained the injury from a plane crash in Nairobi, Kenya in 1960. According to the family, it was in Kenya where the airman honed his skills as a well-known “bush pilot”. His daughter recounted that after the crash in Kenya, a metal pin was placed in his hip and according to her he was very uncomfortable walking with the metal in his body.

### **Incident in Brazil**

The Daily Chronicle of Wednesday 12 June 1974 reported that Grandsoult and several others, were in the custody of the Brazilian authorities while his Britten-Norman Islander was grounded after he allegedly landed there without permission.

The pilot and passengers travelled to Lethem on an outing; onboard were well-known lawyer, Donald Robinson, an engineer, a rancher, Frank Eagle, a naturalized Guyanese and Grandsoult. The incident was said to be a mix-up in information on the Brazilian side and the crew and passengers were allowed to leave while the aircraft was impounded. It was later released.

### **Incident at Lethem**

Dinah recalled an incident at Lethem in which her father experienced a “hard landing”. “Dad circled the runway. No way to tell if either was closed. The left strut hit a pile of sand and dented the left wing,” she recalled. She said her father then flew to a ranch which he operated at Crystal Springs. He left for Ogle without her to fix the aircraft. Sometime later, an army Skyvan was in the area and she was able to travel back to Georgetown. It was a few months after that incident that George “went down” at Kamarang, she noted.

### **Day of Disappearance**

The Guyana Graphic reported at the time that on the day of George’s disappearance, the



Cessna aircraft departed the Ogle Aerodrome at 10:53hrs that Wednesday morning for Kamarang with fuel on a routine flight. Air traffic controllers said they were in contact with the aircraft up to 11:57hrs.

At the time Civil Aviation Department (CAD) officials recalled that George was just about eighteen minutes before he should have landed at Kamarang when he last transmitted from the aircraft. CAD Officials described weather conditions as extremely rough on the day of incident.

After George failed to file a landing report, a search-and-rescue operation involving the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) aircraft from Ogle and the Guyana Airways Corporation (GAC) failed to turn up any clues about the aircraft and its occupants. Subsequent fly-overs of the dense jungle also proved futile.

Dinah noted that her brother Maurice, an engineer with Bell Textron in Texas in the United States, even attempted to scour the area with a heat-seeking device. However, that exercise also proved futile. The family remains hopeful that one day, someone somewhere may be able tell the family about the disappearance of George, his passenger Khan and the Cessna.

8R-GDJ (c/n 148) at Gatwick prior to ferry to Guyana in June 1970. (BN Historians Collection)



# OBAN INTERLUDE

Words and pictures by Ian Haskell



*BNAPS Supporter Ian Haskell recently had an opportunity to fly with Hebridean Air Services from Oban in Eastern Scotland, gateway to the Hebrides. Here is his account:*

We were on holiday on a 17 day road trip to Scotland. We were staying very close to Oban airport and looked on the Hebridean Air Services website for the possibility of a flight with Hebridean and noticed as well as the inter island flights they also offered local thirty minute sightseeing flights around the local area. Although I have flown on a few other Islanders in the past I had never flown from Oban airport so was a chance to get a new airfield in my passenger log. I booked the flight a few weeks in advance for £90 and kept my fingers crossed for the weather. The flight was booked for the 11:00 on 11 June 2025. We were staying at a hotel for a few days about a mile away from the airfield, so very convenient.

I arrived at the airport to check in about 10:10 for the 11:00 flight. There were no aircraft on the apron when I arrived, so reported to the small desk in the terminal building and waited a short while when the sound of a BN-2 Islander could be heard approaching. I was hoping to fly on one of the yellow Hebridean fleet G-HEBO (2268) or G-HEBS (2267), but the aircraft that arrived for my flight was in an overall white colour scheme with Hebridean titles on the lower fuselage. It turned out to be the recently acquired aircraft G-BLNI (2188) which I had already flown on when operated by Air Alderney on a local flight from Shoreham in March 2022. After the aircraft was refuelled myself and six other passengers were escorted to the aircraft by Captain Dean for our local scenic flight taking in the sights around the local area. We were airborne at 11:10 and landed about 11:40 after an enjoyable flight.

G-BLNI (c/n 2188) landing at Oban.



(above) Oban harbour area.  
(below) The Terminal at Oban Airport.

# B-N Aircraft News *from BN Historians*

**553** (BN-2A-21) OY-CKS SAS Pixair Survey, Vemeuil-sur-Avre, France. Re-reg **F-HPXA** 26.6.25. Noted flying with Pixair over France 17.7.25.

**847** (BN-2A-26) Ng7TS Caribbean Executive Air Charter, Aventura, Florida. To Air Charter, San Juan, Puerto Rico. 16.6.25. Operated as Air Flamenco. Will become **Ng06GD**.



N97TS (c/n 847) Air Flamenco's newest Islander at Isla Grande. (BNH Collection)

**858** (BN-2B-21) N678CC Islander CC, Miami Beach, Florida. Damaged in a storm at Fort Lauderdale Executive 24.5.25. Withdrawn from use; but will be repaired.

**884** (BN-2A-26) N27MR Island Air Service, Kodiak, Alaska. Withdrawn from use at Penticton 2024.

**2168** (BN-2B-27) VH-ZOU Airlines of Tasmania (Par Avion), Cambridge, Tasmania, Australia. To Colville Aviation Services, Atkinson Dam, Queensland. 25.7.25.

**2175** (BN-2B-26) G-OSEA Islander Aircraft, Cumbernauld, Scotland. For Cape Air, Hyannis, Massachusetts, USA as **N570BN**. G-OSEA noted at Cumbernauld 6.6.25, in special Cape Air colours also showing N570BN. N570BN registered 20.8.25. Delivery flight started 28.8.25, routed Narasarsuaq - Goose Bay. Noted at Hyannis 12.9.25.

**2201** (BN-2T) N700FK Florida Keys Mosquito Control District, Marathon, Florida. To BHH Leasing, Pensacola, Florida, USA. 5.6.25.

**2244** (BN-2B-20) N345CP Oberman Aviation, Camarillo, California. To CAT Aviation, Doral, Florida. 25.6.25. Flew Camarillo-Sedona-Albuquerque 20.6.25, Albuquerque-Dumas-Wichita 21.6.25, Wichita-Pine Bluff-Crestview 24.6.25 and Crestview to Bartow, Florida, and then Fort Lauderdale Executive 25.6.25. CAT Aviation is the same owner as c/n 858, and this is a replacement for the damaged N678CC.

**2317** (BN-2B-26) G-.... Britten-Norman Aerospace. Noted under construction at Bembridge 14.6.25. For Falkland Islands Government Air Service.

**4009** (BN-2T-4S) G-BWPO Britten-Norman Aerospace. For ECT Aviation, Lyon, France. Flew Solent-Aldergrove, Belfast 2.7.25 for refurbishment by Woodgate Aviation.

# OPERATOR NEWS

## AURIGNY TIE UP WITH SKYBUS

Aurigny Air Services announced on 18 June that it has been awarded a multi-year extension to its Public Service Obligation contract, further securing the future of air services between Alderney and Guernsey, as well as Alderney and Southampton.

As part of the airline's proposals to make its services more financially sustainable and to increase service resilience, it proposed teaming up with Skybus, the airline of the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company, which has over 40 years of experience serving remote communities. Skybus will provide aircraft, maintenance, crew training and insurance to Aurigny. Skybus has a fleet of 3 Islanders G-SSKY (c/n 2247), G-BUBN (2270) and G-SBUS (3013), plus 4 DHC-6Twin Otters

From 1 November 2025, two additional Twin Otters will join their fleet, and operate in Aurigny colours to and from the island of Alderney. The aircraft will also play an integral role in delivering air ambulance, mail, freight, and pet travel services to and from Alderney. Dornier 228 pilots at Aurigny will be provided with the opportunity to re-train to operate the new Twin Otter fleet or transition onto the ATR72-600.

Skybus will also provide replacement aircraft (possibly Islanders...?) from within its fleet to cover periods of maintenance as part of the agreement. Aurigny will continue to provide Dornier 228 capacity until the end of the year, to ensure a smooth transition. These steps will be important factors in delivering a high level of resilience for Alderney's air links.

The move allows Aurigny to simplify its procurement and maintenance operations by focusing on its ATR fleet, improving efficiency across the wider Guernsey network.

Nico Bezuidenhout, Chief Executive at Aurigny, said: "The new air service model is a win-win for the Bailiwick – it strengthens Alderney's vital air links with more resilience in the fleet while also delivering better long-term value - helping to secure the future of these vital air services for our communities. Skybus have an in-depth understanding of the importance and complexity involved in delivering air services to small island communities, operating in challenging environments very similar to our own. Their proven expertise makes them an excellent fit to support Aurigny in delivering safe, reliable services for Alderney."

Jonathan Hinkles, Managing Director at Skybus, said: "We're delighted to be working with Aurigny to deliver Alderney's vital air services under this exciting agreement."

G-AXDH (c/n 70) was the last Islander operated by Aurigny from 1987 to 1990. Could the new agreement between Aurigny and Skybus see Islanders on Aurigny routes again?



## LOGANAIR UPDATE

by Fred Silver, editor [welovestornoway.com](http://welovestornoway.com)

Islanders in Scotland could be flying back and forth in aircraft with electric or hydrogen powered aircraft in 10 to 15 years' time as Scotland's airline Loganair is flying towards a far greener future for aircraft – but points out that while its suppliers may be in a position to provide electric or hybrid-electric aircraft by 2029, there needs to be a whole range of changes to facilities on the ground before they can be used.

In January 2025, Loganair, was again appointed as the official transport provider for the inter-islands air service between Kirkwall, Orkney and the islands of Papa Westray, North Ronaldsay, Westray, Sanday, Stronsay and Eday. It provides the service with two BN-2B-26 Islanders, G-BLDV (c/n 2179) and G-BPCA (c/n 2198).

Their schedule includes the shortest commercial passenger sector in the world, between Westray and Papa Westray. Flights on this route are scheduled for one-and-a-half minutes, although the actual flying time in an Islander can be as little as 53 seconds.

Loganair describes the Islander as "reliable and versatile... renowned for its ability to operate in challenging conditions and on short, unprepared airstrips. With a spacious cabin and impressive payload capacity, the Islander is ideal for regional flights, offering efficient service to remote and island destinations with a high level of comfort and reliability."

Loganair CEO Luke Farajallah recently spoke with the Stornoway-based news website [welovestornoway.com](http://welovestornoway.com) saying that the airline expects that aircraft powered by both hydrogen fuel and by electric batteries will play a major role in the future.

Loganair reached a deal with USA based Heart Aerospace in September 2024. As part of the agreement, Loganair and Heart Aerospace will collaborate on establishing a case for hybrid electric aircraft within Loganair's extensive Scottish and UK network. Loganair is now the UK's largest regional airline, with flights reaching Southampton, including recently announced direct flights to Jersey.

The ES-30, a hybrid-electric aircraft being developed by Heart Aerospace, is the centrepiece of the two firm's collaboration. With the capacity to carry up to 30 passengers, the ES-30 has the potential to significantly reduce carbon emissions while offering cost-effective and accessible air travel. Luke Farajallah said Loganair's routes and size of aircraft made it ideal for the size of sustainable aircraft being developed. The Heart Aerospace aircraft which is being tested at present "currently has four tonnes of batteries on it which limits the capacity 30 passengers but actually 30 passengers on some of our routes is OK."

Loganair are also working with ZeroAvia, Cranfield Aviation and others. The time scale for introduction of the aircraft is, realistically, 10 years to 15 years.

[welovestornoway.com](http://welovestornoway.com)  
[heartaerospace.com](http://heartaerospace.com)  
[loganair.co.uk](http://loganair.co.uk)



CEO Luke Farajallah (Loganair)

Graphic of the Heart Aerospace ES-30 ([heartaerospace.com](http://heartaerospace.com))



## LOGANAIR ALLOCATED FUNDS FOR A NEW ISLANDER

Orkney Islands Council has unveiled a £2m package of strategic capital investments aimed at enhancing the resilience and sustainability of the county's vital inter-island transport links. The proposals - backed by £2m of one-off ScotWind funding from the Scottish Government - will include supporting the purchase of a Britten-Norman Islander aircraft to boost capacity and reliability on the inter-island air service.

The Council is also set to purchase a landing craft vessel to provide flexible support across the internal ferry network and a runway roller/compactor to improve the maintenance of island airfields.

The new aircraft will provide resilience for the islands as well as additional capacity by reducing the number of shared flights, while the landing craft will provide essential cover during ferry outages and peak periods. The roller/compactor will enable in-house teams to maintain airfields, ensuring compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The full package is aimed at ensuring continuity for island residents and businesses, reducing service vulnerability and mitigating operational risks.

With the proposals for the purchase agreed by Elected Members at Full Council in July, the Council can now move to procurement and consulting with North Isles communities on the inter-island air services timetable based on a three aircraft operation.

Council Leader Heather Woodbridge has welcomed the backing of her fellow Elected Members on the proposals, describing the decision as an 'historic moment' for Orkney Islands Council in its ongoing work to meet isles connectivity challenges.

She said: "This investment represents a vital step forward in securing the future of our lifeline transport services. By taking a proactive approach, we're not only addressing current challenges but also building resilience for the years ahead.

"These assets will help ensure that our island communities remain connected, supported, and sustainable. The support from the Scottish Government in meeting these aims is hugely welcomed and testament to the good work that is taking place through our meetings with ministers and officials. Together these positive relationships and effective collaboration means we can tackle the challenges our communities face across our transport networks.

"The decision by Elected Members to use the funding in this way and take the huge step of purchasing an aircraft is an historic moment for this Council and I'm proud that we are making smart use of this one-off funding to deliver real, lasting benefits for Orkney."

Scottish Government Finance Secretary Shona Robison said: "We recognised the unique challenges faced by island communities and the importance of targeted support to improve connectivity for people in Orkney. This funding helps the local community to develop solutions to these challenges whilst delivering on the ambitions of the National Islands Plan."

*Orkney Islands Council 18.8.25 (www.orkney.gov.uk)*

Loganair has two BN-2B-26 Islanders in its fleet: G-BLDV (c/n 2179) a pre-owned aircraft delivered 12.7.96 and G-BPCA (c/n 2198) delivered new 25.2.88.

It will remain to be seen if the third aircraft will be new or pre-owned.



(above) G-BLDV at Biggin Hill after repainting in the current "tartan" colour scheme 23.5.23 (David Miller)  
(below) G-BPCA at Papa Westray 6.8.21 before the current scheme had been applied. (Allan Wright)



# PILOT OF WORLD'S SHORTEST FLIGHT RETIRES

Mary McCool and David Delday adapted from BBC Scotland News 5/6 September 2025

Loganair pilot Capt. Colin McAllister has witnessed some of the most spectacular sights from the air that the world has to offer - he says Orkney's coastline is among them. Colin, aged 59, is retiring after 21 years of flying a B-N Islander around the Scottish archipelago, which he likens to the clear waters and white sands of the Caribbean. His tens of thousands of journeys with Loganair include the world's shortest flight - a two-minute commute from Westray to Papa Westray, which are 1.7 miles apart. In September he landed his final commercial flight at Kirkwall, ending a career he says he was fortunate enough to love - but it was the people, not just the scenery, that made it so enjoyable.



The Islander was first built in 1965 - well before commercial planes were fitting with computers - "There's so much that I like about this job," he said. "Flying with the passengers, the intimacy of the relationship - I'm not locked behind the flight deck door." I get to share the emotions, I hear the laughter, I hear the sobs, it's quite an immersive job. I don't just fly the aircraft. I do a bit of baggage handling, getting folk on and off the plane, I'm cabin crew as well as the first officer and the captain. It's absolutely everything - you get involved with the whole job when you fly an Islander." Colin said he loved the stunning scenery of Orkney - as well as chatting to passengers

Colin's route to becoming a pilot is about as romantic as they come. It was a boyhood dream, one that he decided to make a reality while he was travelling in Nepal in his late 20s. He had taken a light aircraft flight over the foothills of the Himalayas - an awesome sight that gave him his 'lightbulb moment'. From there, he secured his licence and went on to fly in New Zealand and memorably, in Botswana's safari industry. "Botswana was African nirvana - it was beautiful," he said. "The wildlife in the bush is incredible. To land at the airfields I'd be chasing off herds of elephants and giraffe. But you can't live in paradise forever. I'm Scottish and my heart was being pulled back to Scotland."

Initially Colin returned to his home city of Glasgow, where he joined Loganair in the early 2000s. Six months later, he moved to Orkney to fly the air ambulance as well as scheduled services between the isles on the Islander. Colin believes the Islander to be an 'absolute classic'. "It's like a time-warp machine; just an incredible work horse - it's like a tractor of the skies essentially. You can fix it locally, we've got the engineering know-how here."

Colin estimates he has flown more than 40,000 journeys for Loganair - around 9,000 hours of flying. He says the routes attract a lot of tourists and aviation enthusiasts who want to experience the world's shortest flight. For the most part, Colin's passengers are ordinary islanders whom he has grown to know very well in the last two decades. As he reflected on his time serving Orkney before his final take-off, Colin's emotions were mixed - but undoubtedly positive. "I'm happy I've got here, happy I got to retire. Not everyone gets a chance to retire from a job they enjoy. I'll miss it without a doubt. When the plane goes to the hangar... I'm going to stand at the bar with a glass in my hand and a grin on my face, and I'll be there until the airport closes."





## FACEBOOK GROUP ROUNDUP *by Allan Wright*

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



**12th June** - Not often seen online - a series of pictures posted by Roland Büsser of the former Circle Rainbow Air Islander aircraft, operated in Hawaii, who operated up to 7 Islanders from the late 1980s to late 1990s. This picture shows N29MR (c/n 885).



**2nd July** - Tony Dann photographed BN-2T-4S G-BWPO (c/n 4009) at Solent taxiing out for a flight to Belfast-Aldergrove. The aircraft is now without the fuselage modification that was added last year as part of an advanced airborne 5G connectivity system. This will be the first aircraft for ECT Aviation, due for delivery later this year. (see p37)

**11th July** - Hebridean Air Services, announced that they are now operating Scenic Flights from Stornoway.

Operating every Monday, Tuesday & Friday at 12:00, this 40-minute aerial adventure offers a breathtaking new perspective on the Hebrides. Tickets are £140 per passenger - call 0845 805 7465 or email [enquiries@hebrideanair.com](mailto:enquiries@hebrideanair.com) to book. (Flights subject to suitable weather conditions). We suggest you don't miss this chance to fly in an Islander and soar above some of Scotland's most beautiful and historic isles!



**16th July** - Jeremy Boyd posted a rare picture of Islander VP-WHX (c/n 192) taken at Harare, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1978. At the time it was operated by Rhodesia United Air Carriers. On independence in 1983 this became Z-WHX of United Air Carriers, and continued in service until 2004 when sold in Zambia as 9J-WHX. It was withdrawn from use in 2013, and was seen derelict at Lusaka in 2024.



**3rd August** - Dave Thompson posted from Denison, Texas. He is the owner of BN-2T N770FK (c/n 2144). which had been sold to REB Technologies in June 2024. It was previously operated by Florida Key Mosquito Control since 2001, and prior to that was G-PASU with Police Aviation Services in the UK. Dave posted "This is the aircraft that



circumnavigated the globe with two Chipmunks [Summer 1997, Exercise Northern Venture, a circumnavigation of the Northern Hemisphere lasting 64 days, covering 16,229 miles and visiting 62 airfields along with two RAF Chipmunks] and has a wealth of BN history behind her! I am heartbroken not to be able to fly anymore and now need to sell her. I completed the annual in March 2025. Full independent engine report available (all serviceable). The interior is tired but she flies so well... bit like I used to!! Please may I reach out to the [BNAPS] group to help find a new home for her? She is reasonably priced and in serviceable condition. I need to move her on asap. Please contact me at david@rebtechnvg.com."

## CAPE AIR ACQUIRE A FIFTH ISLANDER



*(Photograph from BN Historians Collection)*

Spotted at Cumbernauld in July is BN-2B-26 Islander G-OSEA (c/n 2175) painted in a Cape Air special colour scheme. It will become N570BN. C/n 2175 is a 1984 built aircraft, first flying 6.9.84 at Bucharest, Romania as G-BKOL, arriving in the UK 11.12.84. Re-registered G-OSEA 27.8.85, and

delivered to South East Air, Biggin Hill 25.9.85. It operated for 2 years, returned to B-N in 1987, and leased to Loganair 6.9.87 to 28.2.88. Fully refurbished G-OSEA was then acquired by WT Johnson & Sons, Huddersfield 11.8.89, where it was used until sold to Islander Aircraft at Cumbernauld 14.6.22. It will now become Cape Air's 5th Islander. N570BN registered 20.8.25, and delivered 28.8.25.

Cape Air have a fleet of 4 Islanders, N510BN (2239), N520BN (2240), N530BN (2209) & N540BN (2207) all acquired from Islander Aircraft between 8.13 and 6.14.

# Britten-Norman BN-2s Worldwide

A new book is in preparation containing photographs of BN-2 aircraft that have been sold or operated in ICAO countries or dependencies from 1965 to 2025. Written by Mike Drye, and published by BN Historians, it is anticipated to be out later in 2025 or early 2026.

BN-2 Islanders, Trislanders and Defenders have been operated in 178 countries or dependencies over the last 60 years. The book aims to show a picture of a BN-2 representing each place and will be divided into 3 sections: BN-2 Islander, BN-2 Trislander and BN-2 Military . More details of the book will be announced in the next *BNAPS News Review*.

Inevitably there are some gaps - maybe you can help? Do you have a picture of any of the following? Let us know by emailing [allan@bnaps.org.uk](mailto:allan@bnaps.org.uk)

## Islander:

TL-AAQ Central African Republic (c/n 647) 1973-1979  
9G-AEY Ghana (c/n 2229) 2012 (or 9G-AEV, 9G-AEW, 9G-AEX)  
OD-MIK Lebanon (c/n 166) 1989 - 1990  
CN-TCC Morocco (c/n 673) 1982-2003  
F-GBTV Reunion (c/n 651) 1987-1991  
9XR-KA Rwanda (c/n 662) Air Rwanda 1991  
S9-TAM Sao Tome (c/n 53) pre 1982  
9L-LAV Sierra Leone (c/n 767) 1981-1989

3D-ADO Swaziland (c/n 396) 1984  
CR-TAP Timor (c/n 713) 1974-1976  
T2-TV1 Tuvalu (c/n 333) 2024-  
RP-C2141 Vietnam (c/n 452) 1990s leased

## Trislander:

J8-VAG St Vincent and the Grenadines (c/n 1037) early 1980s

## Military:

1270 Haitian Air Corps (c/n 410) 1983-1988  
330 Royal Jordanian Air Force (c/n 861) mid 1990s  
9T-BHB Zaire Air Force (c/n 631) 1981-1997

**Kingdom of Tonga** A3-PAS  
BN-2A-26 Islander c/n 159  
Real Tonga, Nukualofa, Tonga  
Photo by Paul Hankonen 19th November 2018 (via airliners.net)



**Republic of Suriname** PZ-TYD  
BN-2A-26 Islander c/n 3009  
Suriname Airways Commuter, Paramaribo, Suriname  
Photo by Xavier van Ravenswaay at Zorg en Hoop 23rd March 2013



**Republic of Palau** T8A103  
BN-2A-26 Islander c/n 2042  
Belau Air, Koror, Palau  
Photo by Dave Wilson at Dunwich, Australia 21st April 2007  
(via jetphotos.com)



**Republic of Niger** 5U-AA5  
BN-2A-9 Islander c/n 744  
Transniger, Niamey, Niger  
Photo by Mike Drye at Bembridge 1975



**Emirate of Abu Dhabi** 202  
BN-2A Islander c/n 47  
Abu Dhabi Defence Force  
Photo by Peter Bish at Bournemouth 24th February 1969



**Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** YV-872C  
BN-2A Mk.III-2 Trislander c/n 1034  
El Sol de America CA, Chacao, Venezuela  
Photo from the BNH Collection



# ARV SUPER2 FLY-IN by Norman Hobbs



To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the maiden flight at Sandown Airport of the prototype ARV1 Super2 c/n 1 G-OARV on 11 March 1985, a fly-in was organised by Stuart Allen.

As well as resident Super2 c/n 6 G-BOGK, five Super2 aircraft landed at Sandown between 11 and 13 July 2025. ARV Aviation Limited manufactured 35 kits and completed airframes of the ARV1 Super2 at Sandown. Some of the workforce were experienced ex-B-N employees.



*A more detailed report will be published in the next issue of BNAPS News Review.*

## B-N MARKS 60 YEARS OF THE ISLANDER



In June, B-N celebrated a major milestone, 60 years since the maiden flight of the first variant of the Islander aircraft. First flown on 13 June 1965 from Bembridge Airport, the Islander was the result of a bold vision by John Britten and Desmond Norman to create a



reliable, rugged aircraft that could go where others couldn't. To mark the 60th anniversary, the B-N production team at Bembridge gathered for a commemorative photo alongside the new aircraft production line. A special anniversary logo was released to mark the occasion.

## BEN SMITH APPOINTED AS HEAD OF AFTERMARKET

B-N has appointed Ben Smith as Head of Aftermarket to lead its global support strategy and drive aftermarket growth. Ben joins with a decade of experience in technical sales, digital services, and aviation support, having previously led Garmin's UK and EMEA aviation sales efforts. During his time at Garmin, he worked closely with B-N, supporting avionics integration programmes while working with a wide portfolio of fleet operators, OEMs, MROs, and government clients.



As Head of Aftermarket, Ben will lead B-N's global strategy across spares, repairs, upgrades, and operator support. His priorities include modernising internal systems, boosting responsiveness, and delivering customer-focused solutions that maximise the lifetime value of the Islander fleet.

"Joining Britten-Norman at such a transformative time is a real privilege," said Ben Smith. "This is a brand with deep aviation heritage and an exciting future. I'm looking forward to working with the team to elevate the aftermarket experience, strengthen our relationships with operators worldwide, and help shape the next chapter of the Britten-Norman story."

Ben is a licensed Private Pilot with a First-Class Honours degree in Aerospace Technology. He is also an alumnus of the RAF's University of London Air Squadron, where he gained early exposure to military aviation and leadership. With his engineering background, flying experience, and commercial knowledge, Ben understands the challenges operators face and is focused on delivering practical solutions that meet their needs.

## B-N CEO TRANSITION

Following over 20 years of leadership, CEO William Hynett OBE will transition from his executive responsibilities to take up the role of Non-Executive Director to the Board, focussing on business strategy. Since joining B-N, William Hynett has led the company through significant transformation - including major investment in infrastructure, manufacturing, and customer support - while staying true to the company's heritage of producing the BN-2 aircraft.

## RUBBER DIE PRESS RECOMMISSIONED

The rubber die press at Bembridge has been officially reopened following extensive repair, returning its capacity for complex part forming to our production process. To mark this milestone, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on site, with Alison Rankin Frost, Chair of the B-N Board, formally unveiling the newly restored press. The press



will replace previously labour-intensive methods with a faster, more precise process that will significantly improve productivity – critical to B-N’s goal of building 29 new Islanders by 2029. Believed to be around 100 years old, the rubber die press was converted for aerospace use in the 1960s when Islander production began.

## **NEW FLAP ACTUATOR PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCED**

B-N is pleased to share news of a new partnership with Olsen Actuators and Drives, who will be supplying new electro-mechanical flap actuators from early 2026. A flap actuator controls the wing flaps. The wing flaps are high-lift devices that enable the aircraft to fly slowly for take-off and landing, a key performance characteristic of the Islander. The new actuators, designed and manufactured in the UK, will resolve a longstanding obsolescence challenge for BN-2 operators. The systems will be applicable across all BN-2 series aircraft and form part of B-N’s ongoing commitment to supporting operator fleets.

## **OPERATOR FORUM TAKES PLACE IN PUERTO RICO**

In July, B-N hosted the second Islander Operator Forum of 2025 at the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico bringing together a vibrant mix of Islander operators from across Central, South America and the Caribbean. The B-N team welcomed 25 delegates from 12 operators, who manage a combined fleet of 43 Islanders. Building on the momentum from the company’s May forum in the UK, this event offered another fantastic opportunity to engage directly with our customers, share updates, and explore what’s next for B-N.

## **FLIGHT TEST TEAM REPOSITIONS BN-2T-4S TO BELFAST**

On Wednesday 2 July, Graham Tomlinson and Garnet Ridgway from B-N’s Flight Test team successfully repositioned former UK armed forces BN-2T-4S Defender G-BWPO (c/n 4009) from the company’s Solent site to Belfast. The aircraft, which is undergoing a full OEM refurbishment, departed at 10:30am, flying south over Bembridge before turning north under instrument meteorological conditions, with poor visibility through thick cloud cover. After approximately 40 minutes, the skies cleared to reveal spectacular views over North Wales. Cruising at 3,000 ft and 130 knots, the aircraft crossed the Irish Sea in just 30 minutes, dodging a few rain showers before landing safely at Belfast International Airport.



*A short video of the flight can be found on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/share/v/1AaVZ55WTc/](https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AaVZ55WTc/)*

G-BWPO is being prepared for Republic of Ireland based ECT Aviation, expanding its operations into dedicated cargo services between Europe and North Africa. The aircraft will be deployed on high-frequency freight routes, notably linking Lyon Saint Exupéry Airport (LFLL) with key North African destinations. Flights will be operated in partnership with aviation services provider AVICO, with a focus on high-value, time-sensitive cargo including pharmaceuticals, artwork, precious metals, and critical documentation.

Based at Lyon Bron Business Airport (LFLY) and registered in Dublin, ECT currently operates a Pilatus PC-12 for business aviation and MEDEVAC across Europe. The BN-2T-4S will mark the

company’s entry into scheduled freight operations, with service launch expected by late 2025. Operations will be conducted under a German AOC via Pro Air.

In addition to this initial purchase, ECT has signed a Letter of Intent for a second BN-2T-4S Islander, scheduled for delivery in 2026.



# 2026 BNAPS Desk Calendar

**£10 including UK carriage - overseas carriage charged at cost**

Our hugely popular BNAPS desk calendar will be available in October. The 2025 version was sold out so please do not delay placing your order!

This time we are offering a **10% discount** for orders received by **30 September 2025**.

No need to pay in advance - we will request payment after safe delivery.

To place your order please contact [sales@bnaps.org.uk](mailto:sales@bnaps.org.uk)



## Supporting BNAPS to preserve B-N Islander G-AVCN

### 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 BNAPS postcard depicts prototype Islander c/n 1 G-ATCT on the beach at Bembridge Harbour, on 26 September 1966, after its flight from

Bembridge School with a full load of young children on board. Photo courtesy of Tony Sawkins who happened to be on the beach and was able to take this remarkable photo of G-ATCT.

*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](mailto:norman@bnaps.org.uk)**

### B-N Beanie Hats

Beanie hats are French Navy Blue and carry original style B-N logo in yellow.

*Hats are priced at £15, including UK carriage of £5. Overseas carriage will be quoted at cost.*

To order email [sales@bnaps.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://wmahm.org.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](http://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.*

## 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 chose 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](mailto:enquiries@bnhistorians.co.uk)**

