

# IBM Flying Club Newsletter - January 2001



## Clear Prop - Dave Thomas

The first newsletter of 2001, and the first newsletter of the real Millenium, contrary to all the early celebrations that took place in 1999. Perhaps if the powers-that-be had opened the Dome at the right time, it might have been a success. One can only speculate.

Please note the date for the AGM - 26/Jan. Do your best to turn up - we need a good turnout. It's always good to see both the familiar Friday evening faces, the other 'AGM' regulars, and some new faces who have joined the Club during the year. We try and keep the business as short as possible, so that we can move on to the Clubhouse for a drink or two and some social chit chat, comparing notes about flights during the past year, and also looking forward to plans for the year to come.

Talking of the business, we will need to elect a new Chairman. I have decided that after two years, I have proved to myself that I just don't have the time to do justice to the role. Much as I have tried to keep a steady flow of newsletters, I have found it impossible to even meet my original target of one every two months. In particular, now that I am spending one or two days a fortnight up in Manchester, plus a few more days in Bahrain/Saudi Arabia, plus an increasing number of customer visits, the time just isn't there to do justice to the role. Frankly, I would like to pass the role over to someone with more spare time, someone who can really drive the club, and get the membership moving. One of the common problems that I have had with previous Chairmen has been that of motivating members of the club to do something - anything! Either to organise events, or to turn up to events, or to become more heavily involved. Is there someone out there who really wants to make a difference; someone with time, drive, and enthusiasm that can instill that enthusiasm into the other members. You don't have to be a current IBM employee - retirees and/or 'other halves' can apply. Who is going to volunteer?

Paul Eathorne has agreed to continue as Secretary, for which I am very grateful, and I live in hopes that Dave Ashford will continue as Treasurer for yet another year, especially now that he really has the job under control.

We're also looking for someone to receive the trophy for that member of the club who has contributed the most to the general running of the club. Nominations to Paul Eathorne please asap.

In the last newsletter I asked for a volunteer to help with Project Propeller; so far both Clare and Bob Elliot have offered their services, so we will run with this. I will now contact the organisers and see what they need from us and hopefully publicise things via the next newsletter (Chairman permitting!).

And finally, congratulations are due to Clare, and to Graham Cogle. As many of you know, Clare has been studying and training to upgrade her PPL to a CPL/Multi/IR. After a lot of hard work, and many false starts due to aircraft going tech, a lack of examiners, the weather, and just general bad luck, last Thursday, 18/Jan, she passed the final test, and has now achieved her ambition. A superb achievement by anyone's books. Not sure how many female CPL/Multi/IR licence holders there are in the country, but there aren't many. The next challenge is to find a job - any offers? Anything legal considered.

Graham now has a JAR-FCL PPL, and *"is very relieved to have made it. As Dave Ashford says '...*

*this is just the start ...' I was never sure what I would do after I passed, I guess I have to come up with an answer now. At least I can now get up later in the day ... no more 07:30 lessons. I think my instructor was relieved as well, she looks pretty pleased in the picture ...*  
<http://www.solentflight.com/students.html> ".

Well done Graham - we look forward to seeing you on our various trips in the New Year.



## AGM - 26/January - Paul Eathorne

I've booked H015 at Hursley on Friday 26/1/01 from 19:30 - 20:30 for the AGM. In order to make life easy for me, please can you let me know if you plan to attend, so that I can provide a list for security. As usual, we shall repair back to the Clubhouse for a glass or two of sherbert.

Please turn up- your club needs you!



## Transair Update! - Phil Russell

Good News. Transair have made some changes to their Trade Discount Terms. The key ones are:

- **Single item orders now receive full discount where applicable**
- Free next day delivery on orders over 100 pounds in value (UK mainland only)
- 30 day credit from date of invoice
- Orders received by midday are dispatched the same day

If you are planning on buy anything please let me know by email so that you can benefit from these favourable trade discount terms.

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## Ferry Flight Across the Atlantic in an engine-time-expired



## Piper Seminole - Simon Lever



one of those things that had to be done - a transatlantic flight in a light aircraft. Exciting flying, truly awesome scenery and only scary if you dwell too long on the consequences of the unthinkable. Although, oddly enough, allegedly the most dangerous part of the trip is just after you reach landfall in Canada's Northwest Territories.

The trip started with engine trouble. It included great weather and very bad weather, emergency transmissions and confusion with "Medivac" flights, but ended in successfully delivering the aircraft after 36 hours of flying in three days.

A Piper Seminole is a 4-seater twin. The engines were time-expired, but the airframe was low time, hence the reason for the US company, for whom it was being ferried, wanting to buy it and go to the expense of having it flown back from Norway.

It is interesting that the well worn, North Atlantic light aircraft route is appearing to operate in a Westerly direction nowadays, having, for years, been Easterly. To put it a different way, aviation-friendly America are taking the opportunity of buying back their aeroplanes from a bureaucracy-torn Europe that seems to be set on destroying private aviation by ever increasing costs and legislation under the unarguable banner of the improvement safety. Great tactic, make it so difficult to fly in Europe that no-one does so and "voila!" no accidents and the do-gooders win again. But politics are not the subject of this article....

### **The Route:**

Torp (nr. Oslo, Norway) - Wick (Scotland) - Reykjavik (Iceland) - Kulusuk (Greenland) - Sondre Stomfjord (Greenland) - Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island, Canada) - La Grande Riviere (Quebec) - Sault St. Marie (Ontario, Canada) - Des Moines (Iowa, US) - Waterloo (Iowa, US)

### **The Crew:**

P1: Greg Cassar. CPL/IR. Veteran of some 16 transatlantic ferry flights, but only his 3rd as P1. Blessed with good luck after surviving an engine failure in a single-engined Piper Malibu during



one of his previous trips. (Managing to force land on Stornoway airfield in IMC with help from the RAF).

P2 (Hitch-hiker): Simon Lever. 550hr PPL/IMC/Night. Veteran of lots of inverted bi-plane flying. Longest trips to date: circumnavigating Ireland in a Starduster Too; Los Angeles - Grand Canyon - Las Vegas - Big Bear in a C172.

## The Trip:

**Day 1 (30th June 1999):** After meeting at Heathrow a scheduled flight was taken to Oslo. The aircraft was based at Torp airfield, 100km to the South of Oslo, so the vendor arranged transportation. The intention had been to set off from Torp to Wick as soon as possible in order to attempt to make Reykjavik by 01:00am. For some reason, never explained, the vendor decided to run the engines shortly after our arrival and whilst we were completing flight plans. Excessive mag drops on both engines were detected. Changing 16 spark plugs took a couple of hours, solved the problem, but delayed departure until the following day. It was decided that it was probably best not to prove the aeroplane's reliability at night (albeit still daylight) when Search and Rescue might not be quite so responsive. A pleasant summer's evening at a restaurant by a beautiful Norwegian fjord ensued.



**Day 2  
(1st  
July)  
Iceland  
- 9.7  
hours  
flying:**

Leg 1:  
IFR  
Flight  
plan  
filed.  
Departu  
08:00  
Local,  
Torp to  
Wick  
(John  
o'  
Groats)  
(4.0  
hours).

Opportunity for familiarisation with the aircraft, to test navigation systems but most importantly, to gauge fuel consumption and hence duration and range ready for the next (longest) leg. The three handheld GPS's proved essential as much of the trip is spent out of range of conventional radio navigation aids. Weather: VMC all the way.

Leg 2: After a quick refuelling at Wick, departure to Reykjavik (5.7 hours over water). Constant fuel consumption calculations, and monitoring of ground speed. 1 Hour out of Wick, cloud obscured the sea from view which meant the alternate airfield (Faroe Islands) would be an Instrument approach. With a fairly tricky NDB approach and very close high ground, this was to be avoided.

At a point between the Faroes and Iceland, a point of



no return is reached. Fuel reserve on arrival at

Reykjavik was estimated to be 40 minutes, and the decision to go on made. For about two hours mid Atlantic, you are out of radio contact with air traffic, so tail numbers of passing airliners were taken and messages relayed.

Arrival in Reykjavik was at about 7pm local. Reykjavik was in 8/8 cloud cover with a base of 400'. This meant an interesting instrument approach and landing which, of course, takes longer and eats into the fuel reserve. Reykjavik airport is the business airport for Reykjavik. Keflavik is the commercial one which would have been the (expensive) alternate as it is not too far away.

Having arrived in time for some relaxation before dinner, we managed to get to the Blue Lagoon (out-door volcanic spa) for a bathe before eats and sleep.

### **Day 3 (2nd July) Greenland - 14.3 hours flying:**

Leg 1: Reykjavik to Kulusuk in Greenland (3.5 hours). Reykjavik was still in cloud on departure at 09:00 local, but once over the Atlantic west of Iceland, the cloud cleared to give Greg his first view of an approach to Greenland in VMC.

Icebergs everywhere.  
Stunning.

Kulusuk is on the edge of Greenland, almost in the Arctic Circle, with nothing there except a few houses and an airfield used for fuelling and tourist trips from Iceland. This is Polar Bear country though none were seen.



It was this part of the journey that, for the author, was the main reason for going, and it was just an amazing piece of

luck that the weather was perfect. Out of 16 previous trips conducted at all times of year, Greg had not actually seen Greenland in VMC. You can see from the approach shots how mountainous the approach, and how barren the land is. Kulusuk has a population of about 50, and remember these pictures are taken in mid summer.

The Instrument approach to Kulusuk is another tricky NDB only affair and the mountains are over 3000' high. The landing strip was between the mountains and surrounded by Icebergs. Fantastic views. In fact it turned out it was a good job we could see as the radio nav-aids had temporarily given up at this point. In addition, the autopilot was not maintaining level height and was later to pack up altogether. Very tiresome.



Heaven only knows why someone would want to settle in Kulusuk, but the midsummer scenery was magnificent, and the temperature warm. The airfield tower was incredibly

well equipped for a field with grit for a runway, and oil drums for runway markers. Pity we weren't able to stay longer, but, as a veteran, Greg knew that there is no entertainment to be found for the evening, and the price for a room is exorbitant. Basically, you only stay in Kulusuk if you are trapped. No doubt the explanation for the prices. Another refuel and off across the polar ice cap.

Leg 2: Kulusuk to Sondre Stromfjord. (3.5 hours over nothing but the Greenland ice cap - flat snow with the exception of the mountains and glaciers at either end of the leg).

Flying across the ice cap was extraordinary. Greenland is the world's biggest island (no, Australia is a continent). The population of Greenland is 58,000 and the country is 80% ice cap. Much of the ice cap is also at 8000' so we had to file a flight plan at 12,000'. Flying above the ice cap, you can be forgiven for thinking that you are above cloud. There are absolutely no features, with one exception. Mid way across the island, you can see a tiny dark spec on the ice. On asking, we were told that this used to be a US radar station, and is now occasionally used for military arctic training. This base is 150 miles from the nearest civilisation with nothing but flat ice between.



Blessed again with crystal clear weather, heading towards the Arctic Circle and now becoming more comfortable with the aircraft (hah!), we discussed at what line of latitude the arctic circle actually was. Neither of us knowing, a quick call to an American Airlines 747 above us settled the discussion. (It's 66 degrees, 30 minutes). Sondre Stromfjord airfield itself is in the Arctic circle.

Leg 3: Sondrestrom to Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay, on Baffin Island in Canada's Northern Territories) (3.5 hours). More ice than you care to think about, but the icebergs are plenty big enough to land on! It's just that most of the time you are out of radio contact. As you might expect there is not a lot at Iqaluit either, but it had a decent airport terminal for some refreshment. Canadian customs, used to these sorts of flights by now, were suspicious but friendly. Another quick refuel and off we go again.

Leg 4: Iqaluit to La Grande Riviere (Quebec) (5.5 hours and arguably the most dangerous part of the trip as not only are you out of radio contact for over 3 hours but there are few airliners in the vicinity for relays and the territory is very inhospitable).

The autopilot, which had stopped maintaining height now decides to stop maintain heading too, so we are totally manual. As in all two crewed aeroplanes, the donkey work goes to P2 who was grateful for the (now) IMC practice.

There is literally no civilisation visible between Iqaluit and La Grande Riviere, and La Grande Riviere is what might be called redneck country. Population 350 - typical French Quebec - ie they don't like to speak English and didn't exactly deliver the kind of hospitality you'd normally expect of North America. Still, we'd been going for 17 hours and 14 of them had been in the air, so all we

wanted was food and a bed.

We hadn't seen another aircraft since landing at Frobisher Bay, and, would you believe it, there we are approaching to land in darkness only to get cut up by an incoming DC somethingorother which lived there. Small world.

All in all an interesting day. Magnetic variation up in that part of the world is a staggering 42 degrees west. ie if the GPS's pack up you are on dead reckoning because there are no radio aids and no features. So, say you get the wind wrong, or forget to take the variation into account, you don't just end up lost, out of contact, out of fuel and out of luck, you are in the middle of nowhere. In days before GPS's, the failure rate on these trips was rather high just for these reasons. (Hence 3 portable GPS systems).

Total distance for the day: c.2,000 miles.

#### **Day 4 (3rd and 4th July) Canada/USA - 11.6 hours flying:**

Leg 1: Return to civilisation. La Grande Riviere to Sault Sainte Marie (By the Great Lakes on the border between US and Canada) (5.5 hours).

Atrocious weather. Despite having a look at the autopilot control mechanism, it was dead, as were, seemingly, the on-board nav aids with the exception of the ILS. What a stroke of luck - we were about to fly into some grim weather.

P2, was at the controls, no autopilot and pure IMC for 4 hours (you cannot buy that sort of real experience in the UK). Unbeknown, we entered a rather large CB. The met assistance from La Grande, although good, had been the weakest we'd had due to the language difficulties, and we were not expecting the weather. Not knowing whether to go up down, left or right, the thought of diverting into a nearby airfield occurred, but the decision to plough on was taken - the correct decision as we were to find out later when we arrived at Sault Saint Marie. We popped out of the storm clouds after about 20 minutes, still IMC, still with a long way to go, and feeling like we'd been tumble dried but surprisingly unflustered.



Sault Saint Marie is on the border of the US and Canada. We had to land in Canada as our designated customs entry point into the US was Des Moines, and it would get very complicated if we had to divert anywhere else in the US in a Norwegian registered aeroplane.

Leg 2: Sault Saint Marie to Des Moines, Iowa. (5.3 hours).

The met service at Sault Saint Marie was truly exceptional, but they could do nothing about a thunderstorm some 300 miles across, sitting squarely, and virtually stationary between us and our destination. It was discovered later that this storm had, the previous night, caused significant flooding along its path. If the bureaucracy to change the customs entry point for the imported aircraft was simpler, we might have elected to go around the thunderstorm necessitating a fuel stop elsewhere in the US. Going over the weather was not an option as the met boys claimed the cloud was stretching from 200' to 50,000'. On pulling up a radar chart they estimated the turbulence to be

minimal at around 8,000' with perhaps even a layer of clear air. The decision was taken to fly through the weather at 8,000' estimating the time to be within the storm to be about an hour. This was to make the previous day's brief entry into a CB look like the motoring equivalent of driving through a puddle. US Air Traffic, as ever, were terrific, guiding us through it via the shortest route and, feeling rather shaken, the aircraft popped out after just over an hour into clear but hazy skies over Wisconsin.

During the flight, the workload had been too great to correct US Air Traffic Control on our call sign. They were getting the abbreviated call sign correct but prefixing it with "Lifesaver". If that's what they wanted to call us, then fine by us.

During a reporting transmission, the distinctive transmission sent by an Emergency Locator Transmitter was heard in the background. Tuning into 121.5 confirmed this, and we started hearing dialogue relating to establishing the location the source of the distress over the airwaves. At this point it was noticed that it was OUR on-board ELT which had decided to activate itself. Possibly this was an indication of just how severe the turbulence we had just left behind actually was. (These ELT's are activated by sudden deceleration such as in a ditching or a crash). Quickly owning up to being the source, we discovered that we could not switch it off without dismantling the door panel and cutting its power cable. Leatherman to the rescue.



The customs man at Des Moines was angry with us when we arrived, as we'd been delayed by the weather and, of course, it was the evening of Saturday July 3rd, and not only did he have a 4th of July party to get to, but he also had another unexpected additional aircraft to wait for. "Some Medivac flight, probably carrying some vital organs" he said. "In fact I was expecting them at the same time as you." he added. "I don't suppose these Medivac flights have their callsign prefixed with Lifesaver, do they?" asked Greg,

"because if they do, we're it, minus the vital organs." We wondered why we had even better than usual US ATC services. Now we knew.

Leg 3: Des Moines to Waterloo (0.6 hours, night). Final destination achieved. Aircraft handed over to the new owner, and off for some well deserved 4th July celebrations.

Total distance: c.1,300 miles.

### **Day 5: (5th July) Home**

Journeyed home to the UK via scheduled flight from Minnesota, with the only available affordable route being via Iceland. Never having been there before. Twice in 4 days was a bit of a surprise.

### **Conclusion**

A truly wonderful experience. Would I do it again? At the drop of a hat, but preferably spending more time in each destination. Despite the IMC conditions which you would expect on such a long trip anyway, we were blessed with spectacular weather and visibility where it counted. The North Atlantic looked calm when we were over it, but as we all know it can be menacing. When it looks menacing is when the trip becomes scary. We elected to not wear immersion suits and life jackets despite carrying them with us on the basis that we'd be unlikely to have a double engine failure



unless it was a fuel issue in which case we would have time to don them before swimming. We carried three portable GPS's and a very useful Halfords supplied cigarette-lighter multi-adaptor to power them. We didn't carry a short wave radio nor a ferry tank. In fact the aeroplane was totally standard. The "Little John" was used once (not by the author), and there are a couple of messages in bottles floating somewhere in the North Atlantic. I recommend it to anyone.

Simon Lever, December 2000 (copyright)

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## "A trip to the Seaside" - Julian Rees

When I made the decision a little while ago to swap from LS4 to a share in our Nimbus 3DT it had always been my ambition to use the potential of the glider to explore new areas of the country. So far this has been restricted to purely "dry land" explorations, although some of my syndicate have been much more adventurous than this, including crossing the Bristol Channel from the Welsh coast to the West country. Over the last two years Trevor Stuart has been diligently trying to inveigle a group of us into a visit to the Isle of Wight, but despite putting my name down last year no suitable weather had coincided with a scheduled "rally" date.



fly

with Ray Payne, and we only realised that the trip was potentially "on" when Trevor called us to briefing, accompanied by a tape of suitable martial music. Needless to say Trevor was well prepared, issuing us with full briefing kits - including ferry timetables and tickets for free re-lights if we were unfortunate enough to land on the island.

Ray & I elected for the longer route, taking us via Lasham and Butser Hill, but avoiding all controlled airspace - and what I thought might be a somewhat nervous trip over the New Forest. The weather at Nympsfield was slow to oblige us, with a scrappy start to thermal activity, and we eventually launched into broken thermals to 2000' at around mid-day. Hoping for better conditions

inland, we bumbled (technical term) towards Sandhill Farm and there picked up the first decent climb as the thermals broke through the 3000' level. The trip down to Butser Hill (south of Petersfield) was straightforward, with strong thermals and a rising cloudbase.

However once here the psychological factors start to come into play. We were well south of any point I'd visited (by air at least), with a panorama of coastline, blue sea and innumerable moored yachts (do they ever actually go sailing in these ?). While Ray was too polite to say anything I suspect my flying now gradually came to resemble a nervous Ka8 pilot on a silver distance attempt. Clinging to cloudbase we headed south over Portsmouth Harbour, flying over the IBM HQ at North Harbour - a place I've often visited as they happen to be my employer! Over the harbour it's easy to get distracted by the view; we see an aircraft carrier in port (and no I would not like to land a '3DT on that deck ....), plus the incredible number of marina developments and sprawl of Southsea, Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton water beyond. A glider local soaring from Lee on Solent marks a thermal, and I climb back to cloudbase above 4000' ASL (and yes - it was a weak thermal, and I didn't need it, .... but the Solent looked very cold and wet). The navigable channels in the Solent and harbour areas are clearly marked by lines of moored yachts, and we get an excellent view of circular forts offshore from Portsmouth, built in the 19th century to keep the French out! As we climb a cloudstreet develops towards the IoW, and we see another Nimbus heading north - clearly the Dunstable guys have got there first. We head across the water, watching the hydroplane ferries pass below, and in what is a very short time we are over the Island.

A couple more short meanders under lift and encounters with local gliders and we reach the southerly point with the tiny white tower of St Catherine's lighthouse below. I go beyond the lighthouse and pick up a thermal over the sea, and stop to climb and enjoy the view. This is a very unnerving feeling, for 70% of our turn we have a vista of Sea and Sky, followed by a short glimpse of the nearby coast. I feel quite disoriented at first, and then amazed by the amount of shipping travelling up and down the channel. The cloudstreet continues out to sea, but I'm not at all tempted - and we head back.

The return is into a slight headwind, the helpful cloudstreet has disappeared, and it takes a little while (still using silver C flying tactics!) to get back in position to cross what is now a blue hole between Ryde and the next thermals north of Cosham. This gives us chance to admire the IoW, which is surprisingly rural from the air, with no caravan sites or ugly developments in view. We meet up with Trevor Stuart, who we later find came the direct route over the New Forest, and head North, meeting more of the Nympsfield crowd on their way South over the water. Once back to Butser Hill normal flying tactics resume and the return is "just another flight" until we are back on final glide from Swindon to Nympsfield.

So - was it worth it ? Definitely, it's a great change from a "standard" 300 Km flight (around 350Km round trip the way we went), and actually - given the right weather - it is a good soaring task. The local airfields and the terrain offer a good variety of landing options if you are only moderately cautious. The views are stupendous, and although the crossing is fairly small by any rational standards there is an indefinable buzz you get from that little bit of water, and of course the much bigger bits you see all around.

Would I recommend it? You bet ! Pick a day with a light Northerly, good cloudbase and good visability and have a go!

The best bit ? Of course, it was the stick of IoW rock which Trevor presented us with at the "prizegiving" that evening at Nympsfield!



## Island-hopping in the British Isles - Dave Ashford (photos by James Mason)

"Hi Dave, did you have a nice weekend? Do anything interesting?" This was the question posed by a colleague last Monday morning when I arrived at work. "Yes, I went to Oban and visited the Hebrides and the Isle of Man" was my reply. The following is an account of that trip with some great pictures taken by James.

I always keep a watch on the weather around Britain and on Wednesday it looked as if a High pressure system was going to take up residence over North West Scotland,

which would mean good weather in the Western Isles. By Thursday the probability of a trip up to Scotland was pretty good, so I started the preparations. Now that Oban has a regular supply of fuel it is the perfect base for touring the Hebrides, so I made a quick call to Paul Keegan, the airfield manager, and checked that there would be no problems with landing and over-nighting there on Saturday. Everything was OK and he had plenty of fuel so I called the Oban Tourist Office and arranged a B&B for James, Neale and myself - £24 per head for a double room each with en-suite and TV!

The next thing to do was arrange for out-of-hours indemnity with the Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. A couple of faxes later and £25 poorer we had a document which lasts for the duration of our insurance and allows us to visit about 10 airfields when they are closed, which many are at the weekend during the winter months. Oban does not have runway lighting so I checked with Prestick, Glasgow and Perth for any restrictions and to see what their prices were for night landings in case we were a little later than planned on Saturday. I also called all the airfields we might visit on Sunday and there were no problems so we were ready to go. Phew! I wouldn't recommend that everyone does it this way, but I did prove that you can make all the plans in day if really want to. I left it to James and Neale to arrange for the weather to remain good, which they did exceptionally well :-).

Saturday morning we launched from Southampton just before 11:00 into clear blue skies heading for our first stop at Blackpool. Just north of Gloucester I could see a snowy peak in our 11 o'clock and suggested that it might be Snowdon. As we continued north it was clear I was right, which meant that we had visibility in excess of 100 miles - it was going to be a good weekend! We arrived at Blackpool in time for a snack in a local pub, then



pushed north over the lake district and via the west coast of Scotland, arriving at Oban at about 16:00 to be welcomed by Paul Keegan, who remembered Neale and me from previous visits - this was James's first trip to the west coast of Scotland. We refuelled and put 'ZERO to bed and headed into Oban in a car we rented at the airfield (£20 for 24 hours).

The night life in Oban is not what you would call lively in winter and after a short time it was clear that the national dish of Scotland is not haggis but curry - every other eatery was an Indian restaurant and the others were chip shops! We had a brisk walk around Oban in the sub-zero temperatures and after a brief stop for some liquid refreshment (and to thaw out) we found a restaurant and enjoyed a very good curry (when in Rome....).



We started Sunday with an early breakfast then back to the airfield to scrape the ice off 'ZERO. By 10:00 we were ready to depart for the islands and Neale flew us west along the Sound of Mull, overhead Glenforsa then north past Rhum, Eigg and Muck, overhead Plockton and into Broadford (Isle of Skye). The visibility was easily as good as the previous day with a cloudless sky which afforded us unrestricted views of the stunningly beautiful scenery. As expected there was nobody at Skye. I took the next leg and flew us south to Tiree and again there was nobody there

so I decided to overfly the airfield to see which runway to use. I couldn't see a wind-sock as we went overhead, but there was a runway 11 and the spot-wind chart Paul K had given us at Oban showed the wind was from 110, so it seemed like a good runway to choose. Boy was I wrong! On short final I was having difficulty holding the centre line, so I did a go around. As we were climbing away we could see a wind sock which showed that the wind was coming from a more southerly direction so I positioned for runway 17. Once on finals it was clear that I had got it right this time and I had no trouble staying on the centre-line. When we parked up and got out of the 'plane we could see why I'd had trouble with my first attempt to land - the wind was about 20 knots gusting 30 from 180 - I'm glad I threw away my first approach - 'ZERO's demonstrated cross-wind capability is 16 knots.



Everything was closed at Tiree so we sat in the lee of the terminal building and ate our sandwiches whilst being very lightly coated in sand! We must have been quite a sight in our bright orange immersion suits and woolly hats. It was certainly the coldest picnic I have ever had! James used his mobile phone to call almost every police station in Scotland trying to inform Special Branch of our intentions to visit the Isle of Man. Eventually he managed to leave a message with someone and we set off south, passing Mull again, Staffa, Fingal's Cave, Colonsay, Jura, Gigha and Campbeltown and across to the coast of Northern Ireland. We tracked down the Irish coast and then crossed to the Isle of Man where we landed and refuelled. A quick turn around in Ronaldsway had us heading towards Anglesey, the Dee estuary and Hawarden before it got dark. From there we routed south to Shawbury and Brize, arriving back in Southampton at 18:00.

Just over 9 hours flying, 6 airports and hundreds of miles of spectacular scenery in one weekend. I hate Mondays!



## Oban and the Western Isles - James Mason

"It is hard to describe the pleasure, satisfaction and sense of independence to be found in flying a light 'plane over the Continent in fine weather, dropping in for a meal or a night's sleep at almost any town or village that takes your fancy." ( Sir Geoffrey de Havilland, Sky Fever )

If anyone needed any convincing of the above statement then may I recommend a weekend away to the Western Isles. Our trip had been



thought about for quite a few months

but somehow the weather and free time never quite coincided, fortuitously on the weekend of 13-14 January there was a high right over Scotland with super weather over the whole country and G-ZERO, Dave, Neale and myself were all ready for a weekend trip up to Oban.

After scraping the ice from G-ZERO, we departed from Southampton to Blackpool and you just know that you are going to have a good trip when you are confronted by the sight Wiltshire looking as it does on the right.

Neale took us up over the Dee estuary and patiently orbited off Blackpool while we waited our turn for an overhead join, landing just in time for lunch.

The next leg was Blackpool to Oban flying over the top of the Lake District and then routing around the coast avoiding West Freugh and overflying Prestwick. We encountered our first clouds of the day at the Firth of Clyde and I descended below them tracking up Loch Fyne towards the island of Scarba. I now started to realise why everyone who had flown in this area was so enthusiastic about the experience, there was just so much scenery to appreciate. However I also began to realise that VFR navigation was more difficult than one would appreciate from the map where lochs, sounds and islands look a lot more identifiable. At Scarba, I contacted Oban Radio and heard Paul Keegan's friendly voice for the first time, flying up the Firth of Lorn we saw the town of Oban with the bridge and airfield to the north. I enjoyed landing at Oban with the sun low in the sky over the harbour and just one other aircraft on the apron to park next to.



After being made very welcome by Paul with coffee and jammy dodgers, we packed away G-ZERO and drove ourselves into town. It was time for a well deserved curry and some planning of the next day's flying. It was pretty cold that night dropping to -10C but obviously still warm enough for 'extra cold' Guinness to be served in one of Oban's bars! On Sunday morning, we were eating breakfast at 7:30am in eager anticipation of our morning flights to Skye and Tiree. Arriving at the airfield, a heavy frost awaited us and it probably took an hour to de-ice and pre-flight the aircraft but the tranquility of the airfield more than made up for the work.

After  
clambe

into

our immersion suits, we were comfortingly told by a local, "at least it makes it easier for the lifeboat crew to find the bodies" to which I was about to reply "but they keep us warm on draughty airfields" but I was distracted by the sight of Dave trying to manoeuvre into the aeroplane. Within a few minutes, Neale was climbing out of Oban aiming towards the Sound of Mull with Glenforsa ahead.

I must admit that I was in full rubber neck mode at this stage as I would have been without the immersion suit, the views were just fantastic and my video/camera had a job keeping up with what we were seeing. Turning to the north past Tobermory, the islands of Canna, Rum, Eigg and Muck were in full view with our track to the east of the islands up the Sound of Sleat. The bridge of Skye now came into view and Neale took us slightly north to view Plockton before making a nice landing at Skye.



It was now Dave's turn to take us to Tiree, leaving the airfield at Broadford behind we tracked out towards Rum and Eigg and on towards Coll. The islands were becoming much flatter and greener and I was quite surprised by the habitation on Tiree, the large airfield offered three runways which was probably just as well given the strength of the wind that we encountered. After landing, we tucked into our packed lunch while I phoned around the police

stations to report our next flight which was to the Isle of Man via Northern Ireland.

I think that this flight was one of my most memorable for quite a few reasons, I don't think the controller could quite get to grips with my route either as he asked for it on three separate occasions. However I think that if I heard a routing of Tiree-Iona-Mull-Scarba-Gigha-Mull of Kintyre-Cushendall ( Northern Ireland )-Ballyhalbert-Ronaldsway I'd also want to hear it again. Flying along at 3000 feet alongside these islands was magnificent even if it did prompt some 'O' level geography revision. Although we had quite strong head winds during this leg, G-ZERO just purred away and we made the trip in just under two hours.

After landing at Ronaldsway, Dave brought us home to Southampton, the last hour was in the dark and we experienced a clear sunset over Snowdonia which capped a fantastic weekend's flying.



After that experience, I am also quite happy to admit that I don't like Monday mornings either!



## **Avranches - 2001 - Dave Thomas**

I have it on good authority that the Avranches fly-in will be on 23/June this year - keep your diaries free for the traditional sheep fly-in to Avrahcnes - not to be missed if last year is anything to go by!



## **Life-raft session - Irv Lee**

No text, just a link to a picture which says it all! [www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk/raft.jpg](http://www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk/raft.jpg)

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## **Update from John Akerman**

Barry King-Smith and I still operate the Cub and Moth, the latter is for sale.

In addition Barry and I are now building an RV6 (Lycoming O360, FP prop) and are about half way through.

David is restoring an Avro 504, and helping a friend to build a Chilton. Aside from that it's a pretty quiet life, being retired (semi in my case).

*(Ed. Sounds like a hive of industry)*

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## Events - Jim Hull

Please advise any events you are planning for 2001, so that I can update the events diary for future additions of the Newsletter; dates, location and likely participants please.

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## Royal Aeronautical Society lecture - Danny Elliott

Wednesday 14/Feb - 19:30, Lecture Theatre 'A', Nuffield Theatre block, University of Southampton

'Development of the Hawker 125'

by Mr. Bob Thompson, Chief Engineer, Osprey Aviation, Southampton International Airport

More details from Danny.

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