



Newsletter - January 2002



Clear Prop! - Dave Ashford

First and foremost Happy New Year to all our readers and a quick reminder about the AGM, which will take place at 19:00 on Friday 25th January in IBM Hursley House room H015. All IBMers, IBM retirees and their families are invited to join us for a quick review of last year and to hear about some of our plans for next year. You will need your IBM ID badge to enter the building - guests will only be admitted when accompanied by the holder of a valid IBM badge. The parking area outside the House is closed, so please park in one of the near-by car parks (not the crescent outside A block).

Following on from our bumper Christmas Newsletter, this month's offering is somewhat more compact but no less interesting. For those of you who were at the Clubhouse on Friday night this is an opportunity to read more about Brian and Chris's ferry flight to Japan. For those of you who couldn't make it on Friday, here is a chance to read about how a couple of our intrepid flyers choose to spend some of their time. A big thank you to Brian for a great talk on Friday and to Chris for committing it all to electronic paper.



Wishing you Blue Skies and Safe Flying.



By Islander to an Island! - Chris Thompson



(or "The Ultimate Mellor Master Plan")

The following text is a random set of jottings relating to our recent trip in an Islander to Japan.

Please excuse any disjointed sentences as so much happened that it would take a book to get it all written down properly.

Thursday 6th December 2001

Brian called without warning at 5pm. (I was not expecting him back from Spain until the next day). Did I get his e-mails? - No. (It later turned out that he had an incorrect e-mail address for me!) Anyway, he told me that the Japan trip was back on to deliver an Islander from Bembridge to a customer in Yao (no idea where it was other than somewhere in Japan) Did I want to go? I deliberated for 3 nano-seconds and grudgingly agree. When? Monday 10th! “*****” No Christmas presents bought yet, no cards done, what will “her indoors” say? Need visas? Money? Anyway, still awaiting final confirmation of arrangements from John Ayers of B-N Group.

Apparently this was a brand new aircraft and had to be in Japan without fail for acceptance testing and delivery to the customer on Thursday 20th December.

Lynn arrives home at 7pm. I casually mentioned that Brian had phoned and the trip is “on” for Japan and then dropped the bombshell that we had only two days to prepare. She threatened death/divorce if we were not back by Christmas (I later learned that Eileen had apparently said the same to Brian!)

After several phone calls late into the evening we ascertained that we only needed Indian visas and arranged to go to the Indian Embassy in Aldwych the next day to try the “while you wait” deal. I started to get our “ferry” gear together. Brian told me the “outline plan” and approximate flight times as follows:

Mon 10th Bembridge - Kerkyra (Corfu) 9:56 hrs
Tue 11th Kerkyra - Luxor (Egypt) 8:24 hrs
Wed 12th Luxor - Bahrain 7:28 hrs
Thu 13th Bahrain - Muscat 3:43 hrs
Fri 14th Muscat - Mumbai (India) 6:39 hrs (formerly Bombay)
Sat 15th Mumbai - Calcutta/Dakar 7:03 hrs
Sun 16th Calcutta - Bangkok (Thailand) 7:10 hrs
Mon 17th Bangkok - Brunei 7:51 hrs
Tue 18th Brunei - Manilla (Philippines) 5:37 hrs
Wed 19th Manilla - Kagoshima (Japan) 7:20 hrs
Thu 20th Kagoshima - Yao 2:40 hrs

Apologies for the following map but it was scanned in directly from the Japan Airlines in-flight magazine and was the best I could find under the circumstances. I have tried to draw our circuitous easterly route in red but obviously could not erase all the JAL routes already on the page.



On the way the plane would require a 50-hr check somewhere around Bangkok and a BN engineer would fly out on a commercial flight to meet us for this. We carried all the S80 oil we needed for the new engines on the trip and also new filters and W80 oil for the service.

Friday 7th December 2001

I got away to a late start due to many things to do and got up to the Indian embassy in London and filled in several forms. Two-and-a-half hours later I emerged with the said Visa in my passport and 30 quid short in my pocket. All the moaning I said about paperwork and unnecessary administration this morning I now wholeheartedly withdraw as it was nothing to the dealings we were to experience later in India itself!

Saturday 8th December 2001

Brian's "do" at Hursley Clubhouse. We chatted at length about the trip to all the pilots who seem fairly amused that we still did not know at this stage exactly where Yao was located. Brian collected borrowed immersion suits to add to his packing.

Sunday 9th December 2001

Final packing - had I got all the bits and pieces I needed? My "Ferry" equipment, radios and tool kit etc. was resurrected from the previous transatlantic trip in the Duchess. Arranged to meet Brian at

Portsmouth Harbour Station at 07:50 the next morning to catch the Whitelink Catamaran to the Isle of Wight.

Monday 10th December 2001 Bembridge - Bastia (Corsica, Z + 1 hour)

Approximately 800nm.

Brakes Off 10:55 - T/O 11:12 - Land 17:05 - Brakes On 17:12 (Total 6:17hrs)

Met Brian on time and caught the boat to Ryde on a clear cold morning. John Ayers of BN Group met us and we drove to Bembridge. Seeing the plane for the first time G-BWNF is a new BN2-B gleaming clean in the hangar. I have never flown a brand new aeroplane before! I phone Lynn to tell her the temporary aircraft registration, as up to this point even we did not know what it was. The ultimate Japanese registration of JA02TY was painted on top of the wings and the British reg. was applied with special stick-on letters. All the seats and carpets etc. were stowed in the rear and we were carrying four 50-gallon drums for Avgas in the cabin giving us a range of 11.5 hours to fumes. The dashboard cover was also removed to allow the installation of the HF radio. Brian went off with John to do admin and get a pile of real \$\$\$ and I start to install our ferry kit, GPS's etc. only to discover that the cigar socket that they have fitted for us does not work correctly with our plug. The BN electrician quickly rectified this and I was able to wire in our 28/12v converter and bird's nest of plugs for our all our kit. The plane was fitted with a nice set of dual King avionics, slaved HSI, RMI (switchable to VOR 1,2), DME, and pushbutton transponder. Unfortunately no autopilot was fitted so this trip would be hand flown all the way.

The plane was wheeled out into the cold morning and then the BN bowser would not start! After a lot of hassle they discovered that it was out of diesel. They drained diesel from the JET bowser and finally filled our plane up with Avgas. The Bowser then broke its clutch as they tried to drive it away! By now we were considerably delayed and filed a VFR flight plan to Bastia just to get away, finally starting engines at 10:55 and getting airborne off Runway 12 at 11:12. On the way we experimented with the ferry tank system and all seemed to work fine. Brian also experimented with the HF and got no joy at all trying to get random Volmet broadcasts. This was a little worrying and we made a note to speak to the avionics guys at Bembridge on our next contact with home.

Our route took us direct to Deauville (using Plymouth Military) then down over the middle of France, over the Alps, out over Nice to Bastia, where we made a VOR/DME approach into Runway 34 in the dark, landing at 17:05Z and brakes on at 17:12Z, a total flight time of 6:17 hrs. The whole flight was done in good VMC.

We were hoping for a quick fuel stop to go on to Kerkyra but this was dashed when we were informed that Avgas was not available as the man had gone home. This meant an impromptu stop in a local hotel, which was very plain and simple. Brian used the last of his French francs on the short 1km taxi ride.

A good meal and a few beers sorted the pangs of hunger and we retired early to be ready for the next day. Brian filed the Flight Plan by telephoning Heathrow to make sure that it was in on time because we did not trust the French ATC to get us away early. We used this routine quite a lot even in the far foreign lands.

Tuesday 11th December 2001 Bastia - Kerkyra (Corfu) - Iraklion (Crete, Z +2 hours)

Approximately 1024nm.

Brakes Off 06:06 - T/O 06:20 - Land 10:27 - Brakes On 10:30 (Total 4:24hrs)

Brakes Off 13:22 - T/O 13:30 - Land 16:47 - Brakes On 16:53 (Total 3:31hrs)

We arranged for a taxi at 05:00 local to make an early start to try to catch up. The lack of available fuel in Bastia had cost us one night we decided to modify the planned route slightly and go Kerkyra in Corfu and then go on to Iraklion in Crete the next day to get us further down the planned flight path towards Egypt.

The taxi driver arrived on time but would not accept dollars and so he almost frog-marched us to an ATM in the terminal to give him an extortionate FF100 for the 1km drive to the airport. The French refuellers also had other ideas about us leaving as when we taxied to the pumps we were informed that they did not open until 08:00 local. We would have had enough fuel to get to Kerkyra but we had inadvertently left one of the ferry fuel taps on and all the fuel from the left wing had siphoned back into the forward No. 2 ferry tank. We could not take off without any fuel in the main wing tank so a small uplift of around 100 litres in the left wing was definitely required. Eventually we persuaded the JET A1 guy to grudgingly serve us and then had a problem with a fouled plug with the right engine losing 350rpm on the Mag check. We decided that as it was dark, the airfield was deserted, and there was no one to help us we would press on Kerkyra and we eventually departed at 06:06Z.

The problem of always losing “real” time each day travelling East was always going to give us problems with shorter days and seemingly even shorter nights to meet the required early morning departures. If you look at the GMT departure times you will note that they are fairly early. If you then add the time offset you will find they are even earlier for our body times!

The pre-flight checks were done in the dawn rain and as usual I was delegated “Engineer” in charge of all the greasy bits. Checking the oil on this old girl involved a good head for heights and good eyesight as the oil never really got dirty! The plane had been filled with 13 quarts a side in Bembridge and had blown quite a bit out on the first leg. I decided to run with 9 quarts and this seemed to cut the consumption to about one every seven hours, which was not too bad.



in the descent. We “lost” another hour time change and took about a two-hour break to re-fuel and get a dry sandwich and a coke in a wet deserted airport. There was no maintenance at Kerkyra and a call to Bembridge reassured that the mag drop was acceptable to continue. In fact the suspect plug never cleared until the 50-hour check was done in Bangkok.

The weather ahead did not look too promising and it was still p*****g down outside. We debated with the Met people whether to fly or not and decide that we will take the Met man’s advice and leave Kerkyra while we still could or possible get stuck there for three days. The CB activity forecast for the first couple of hours of the route was correct but the aircraft was fully de-iced with boots and electric props and handled it very well. The whole low weather system was centred just south of Greece and the onward destinations looked fairly good if we could just get away. After take-off we climb to FL110 (incidentally the maximum height we could make for the whole trip due to our weight) picking up ice and manually flying through quite a bit of turbulence. Brian did a VOR/DME into R27 into Iraklion in hissing rain in the dark and we joke with the handlers about the holiday weather in Greece not being up to much. A total of just under eight hours in the air today.

Wednesday 12th December 2001 Iraklion - Luxor (Egypt, Z + 2 hours)

Approximately 800nm.

Brakes Off 06:23 - T/O 06:42 - Land 12:31 - Brakes On 12:34 (Total 6:11hrs)

An early start in the dawn rain looking forward to CAVOK in Egypt. As we backtrack the runway for departure we pass a large bird lying in the middle of the runway centre line not feeling to well after probably being hit by the previously departing B737. ATC sent a man with a truck to clear it up as we waited for our clearance. We climbed away and the de-icing seemed to work ok but with our early weight the plane slowed considerably until the boot cycles were able to blow it off.

After about two hours we gradually came out of the clouds and became clear on top with the weather clearing for a clear view of the African coast. The Sahara was spectacular with miles and miles of nothing to see. We did pass two very large, deserted (probably military airfields) that were not on the charts in the middle of no-where, settling into a routine where we were flying for about an hour each. Later in the journey we developed a system of using the aircraft clock. If the big hand was pointing to Brian’s side of the face then he should be flying and if it was on my side it was me! I tended to do the initial climb out to FL110 while Brian worked hard at the timings of the sectors to the next waypoints. I usually did the initial descent for the approach while Brian got all the approach plates ready then we swapped again for the landings.

As we came up on the Nile valley the desert changed from brown to rich green. We were given vectors for a VOR/DME with an offset approach into R02 that would have looked very familiar to anyone who was used to the Southampton R02 VOR/DME arrival! We were met by two small Egyptians (one called Mohammed) who were our handling agents and they got us refuelled and through the temporary Visa and paperwork formalities for the now usual load of \$\$\$\$. They then bundled us into an ancient Peugeot 405 taxi to go via their office (to pick up the fax with the next day’s Saudi over-flight clearances) to the hotel. On the way down the airport drive we stopped and picked up one of the agent’s mates because the agent explained that it was Ramadam and he had had nothing to eat all day! Their “office” was located in some of the most dreary and dirty slum back streets of Luxor where the words “give way” obviously did not appear anywhere in anyone’s driving code. However the fax seemed to appear ok with our next over-flight clearances and we were then dropped off at a very nice hotel on the banks of the Nile.

Thursday 13th December 2001 Luxor - Bahrain (Bahrain, Z + 3 hours) - Muscat (Oman, Z + 4 hours)

Approximately 1300nm.

Brakes Off 04:47 - T/O 05:00 - Land 11:30 - Brakes On 11:35 (Total 6:48hrs)

Brakes Off 13:05 - T/O 13:11 - Land 16:36 - Brakes On 16:45 (Total 3:40hrs)

The next morning the two handlers were waiting for us in the hotel lobby as we checked out. Brian asked if the Flight Plan was filed satisfactorily and Mohammed pointed to his partner and said "Yes, he did it all by himself" - not quite sure what this really meant (was it the first time he had done it?).

I did a check on our location and the GPS informed me that Popham was 321 degrees and 2179 miles so it seemed to confirm the belief that we were actually in Luxor. A lot of night planning resulted in the decision to try to make two flights tomorrow to endeavour to get back on schedule even though we would "lose" a lot of hours due to the easterly track.

We made a reasonable departure until given instructions to climb to FL130, which as mentioned before was impossible for us to achieve with our load. ATC seemed quite happy for us to plod along under the airway VFR using all the IFR reporting points with the inevitable loss of communications after about 100 miles. Crossing Saudi we relayed via Saudia 7168 and at one point were talking with a US controller. There were numerous American military aircraft on frequency using the callsign "Reach XXX" probably all going to the Afghanistan area. We also heard the callsign "Whistler XXX" which later turned out to be used for the F16's.

At one point there was some high cloud ahead and Brian bet me a beer that we would not be in it. We were even though he scrutinised my altitude to try to wriggle out of it, we did go IMC so I looked forward to him paying up that evening.

We obtained vectors to another VOR/DME into Bahrain and got fairly efficient handling. Fuel and food became a larger problem, as we wanted a quick turn round to get on to Muscat. The 24-hour canteen was closed because of Ramadam and we had to make do with a couple of apples and bananas previously taken from last night's hotel. The fuel had to be brought in a pick-up in 50 gallon drums, pumped by hand into the trailer bowser and then pumped by hand into the aircraft which took some considerable time (see below!). It was however very pleasant temperature-wise and we looked at the big US military jets and helicopters across from us on the ramp.



As mentioned we had decided to do two legs today to try to catch up to our original schedule. Leaving Bahrain we cross Saudi airspace and also UAE airspace. Approaching Abu Dhabi we were

held in the dark because we could not make the requested altitude (FL150). We were working a very helpful Australian controller and we told him that we could take a slightly longer airway that did not have such high minima (FL90). After some debate it turned out that the alternative route requested was a one way system and we are not allowed to use it in our direction. We finally got clearance to climb to FL115 and we staggered up a little and after a short while were given a direct routing to MCT. Brian keyed it into his GPS and it told him that Manchester was about 2800 miles away. He messed about for ages to find the correct MCT while my old trusty GPS55 has the correct Oman MCT VOR in seconds much to his disgust!

In Muscat we ran in to the first stages of bureaucracy when we were asked to wear our crew ID badges. Brian had taken his BAA Southampton pass and luckily I had made up a badge on my word processor with my picture and the word "CREW" with the airline "South Hampshire Airways" looking very official and sealed it in a Popham membership wallet. These badges were to stand us in good stead over the rest of the trip! No one queried South Hampshire Airways (although to be fair it has been in existence since 1981), and as you all know the entire fleet consists of one aged Auster G-ARLG. My personnel number is my old IBM staff number!

The handling agents in Muscat were reasonably efficient and we were soon in the Muscat Seeb Novatel. At dinner Brian then managed to wriggle out of the beer he owed me because the hotel did not serve beer during Ramadan!

Friday 14th December 2001 Muscat - Mumbai (India, Z + 5.5 hours)

Approximately 850nm.

Brakes Off 05:43 - T/O 05:55 - Land 12:38 - Brakes On 13:09 (Total 6:43hrs)

Another dawn start with some delay in getting refuelled again. As we climbed away on track for Mumbai we switched to the ferry tanks in the climb as usual and suddenly got wildly fluctuating fuel pressures. This had happened mildly before but never as bad as this. I continued to fly the aeroplane and Brian tried all sorts of valve combinations with the ferry system. It eventually appeared that there may have been some sort of airlock and after numerous on/off combinations the fuel pressures eventually settled down. The engine pumps would pull the fuel through but the flow was obviously very variable.

We eventually levelled at our "normal" cruise altitude of FL110 and flew below the airway across the sea to Mumbai (the new name for Bombay). There was very little to see and were well settled into our usual routine when an F16 buzzed right across the front of us! We asked the controller if he had any knowledge of other traffic and the answer was negative! When we informed him of our company traffic he simply replied that the military did not talk to him! We think that the F16 probably came up on a practice intercept, as there was no way he would have been in the middle of nowhere at our low level otherwise.

The cockpit was really quite warm at this time and Captain Mellor delegated me (as flight engineer) to practice my origami skills and make a cover for the HF radio which I dutifully did out of an old flight plog.

We had to get a relay transmission to Mumbai for our first contact and this was done via a helpful UPS6768 somewhere up above us. The traffic into Mumbai in the early evening rush hour was horrendous and we were given number 9 to the ILS. The ATIS was giving 1200m in smog with wind calm and it was getting dark so it was always going to be a tricky approach. ATC held us at 9000ft for ages and then expected a dirty dive at the last minute. We got the ground at about 1000ft but with no forward visibility and even at this height it started to smell! The controller never realised that we would slow up to 70kts on the approach and started shouting at an Airbus behind us to come back to minimum approach speed (which he was already at and was not at all happy!) We got the

runway at about 1300m and landed into the smog, turning off immediately at the first junction and the Airbus landed seconds behind. We were then turned off on to taxiway B2 and forgotten!

Imagine landing at an airport the size of Heathrow and then being left in the middle of the rush hour with big jets thundering past every minute! We had no nominated handling agent and we were sent all round the airfield without a clue as to where we were supposed to be. Eventually they sent a "follow me" truck and we thought our troubles were over - WRONG! - They were only just beginning.

"Followme2" (lights obviously optional!) took us all round the airfield, got a bollocking for taking us on to the main runway again with an Airbus waiting to take off. Brian got fed up with taxiing around in the middle of nowhere and just stopped on the ramp on the basis that we were in the wrong place anyway so we would obviously have to move again. We had been taxiing for thirty minutes before we shut down when "Followme2" driver jumped out of his truck and then informed us that he was not qualified to marshal aeroplanes!

We were now in the darkness of the old airport ramp with no handling agent, three million mosquitoes, and big jets thundering out of the murky smog just behind us. Eventually a handling agent arrived in a "modern" 1930 jeep along with soldiers with guns to guard the plane and we trucked off round the peri-track about four miles to the terminal where we then got the third degree from one of the most arrogant fat Customs man we were ever to meet. They then went back and sealed the aeroplane in typical stupid fashion. When they could not find and even number of doors on each side so they placed seals over riveted sections of the fuselage where no door existed!

We then had to calculate how much fuel we had left in the aircraft and we had to apparently pay import duty on it! We decided that it was worth the risk to bend the truth and not give anything away and settled on 125 litres because we did not know how much was in the ferry tanks anyway. We assumed they would not go all the way miles across the airfield to try to look at the main gauges of a sealed aircraft. After numerous interrogations we finally got to the door of the Customs Hall when the aforementioned Customs Fatso demanded to see all of Brian's money (\$10,000) in front of all the exiting people. Many passing Indians were open-mouthed as they had had never seen so much money in their life out on display in the exit hall. Three hours after landing we finally fought our way out into an ancient smelly pre-paid Fiat taxi and were driven through totally mad traffic to the Hotel.

Saturday 15th December 2001 Mumbai - Calcutta (India, Z + 5.5 hours)

Approximately 923nm.

Brakes Off 03:10 - T/O 03:15 - Land 10:07 - Brakes On 10:14 (Total 7:04hrs)

The next morning were up early and arrived at the Air India desk at 06:30 as arranged, marching unhesitatingly past numerous guards waving our "Crew" badges. The Air India office behind the check-in desks was closed so we let ourselves in (door lock was hanging off anyway) and I turned on the lights only to find a man sleeping on the desk. He got up and rolled up his bedding as we stated who we were. He then proceeded to put on an Air India shirt and trousers (no washing or cleanliness of any kind of course) and was then directing all the arriving personnel, eventually delegating someone to look after us! Brian got a shot of a mouse running away into the rubbish in the corner of the office. The whole place was a complete dump with years of filth everywhere.

We were taken on long walkabout to all sorts of gloomy offices to get our weather and also our flight plane validated. This involved talking to at least six very important people whose empire only existed about two feet beyond their desk, lots of shouting and arm waving, and parting with lots of

money. Most of the areas took dollars but Brian had to get Indian money for one guy while I got a bollocking for not having any money at all. In the UK you normally put in an IFR flight plan about an hour before you need to leave. Here you go around and get numerous stamps in the section on the form that says "not required" and pay all the money then and only then is the flight plan entered into the system whereupon you can apparently leave immediately! Brian should really frame this Flight Plan when he gets time, as it would make a great picture summary of the totally unnecessary administration involved. The whole departure process took around another two-and-a-half hours before we finally climbed into the brown smog bound for Calcutta.

VHF communications across India left quite a lot to be desired and the HF was the main contact to ATC with numerous relays on VHF 123.45 via the big jets above us. It was reassuring to hear them having communications trouble as well. We relayed to several Speedbirds all of whom were very intrigued when they found out what we were doing. Amazingly, one of the Speedbirds we spoke to turned out to be captained by Bob Grimstead of "Pilot" magazine fame and we spent quite a while chatting about his experiences in Islanders! At one time we even managed to relay for Fedex 5080 (a first for us). When he asked where we were going he said he would follow us in not knowing that he was talking to an Islander!

In addition several of the en-route VOR's appeared to be unserviceable so the GPS again became the main navigation aid. Mosquitoes (gathered from Mumbai the night before) pestered us for a while and then they seemed to disappear so we developed the advanced biological theory that they could not fly at FL110.

The landing Calcutta ATIS was giving 1200m in Smog and we descended into a much greener environment and a much more peaceful airport than Mumbai. At 1500m range on the ILS with no runway visible all the mosquitoes appeared again thus refuting our theory that they had all expired at altitude! Unfortunately the paperwork and administration turned out to be just as traumatic as Mumbai and all we could do was laugh at it or we would have gone slowly mad. Once again the Customs required the plane to be sealed but this time they had no official labels and had to make them up out of scrap paper and stick them all over our nice new plane with grey stationery glue. Another two hours of hell finally saw us out into the town and yet another hotel.

Sunday 16th December 2001 Calcutta - Bangkok (Thailand, Z + 7 hours)

Approximately 975nm.

Brakes Off 03:40 - T/O 03:46 - Land 10:59 - Brakes On 11:10 (Total 7:30hrs)

Some two hours of departure administration again and some random weather advice saw us ready for an early departure. A KLM 747 had already arrived having diverted from Islamabad. We felt sorry for the passengers having to sit it out in a dump like this. The RVR was being given as 800m and the controller demanded to know what were our minima. Brian replied that this was a British aeroplane and departure minima were at the pilot's discretion. This did not satisfy the controller and so we just told him that our take off minima was 300m! As the wheels left the ground Brian let out a great big yell of delight knowing that we would not be returning to India if we could possibly help it.

This leg was uneventful and we were about half way across India when Brian's Magellan GPS informed us of the very valuable information that the fishing was excellent in this part of the world from 0635 to 0835 but could not actually tell us where we were! With all the usual communication relays to planes above we arrived on schedule in Bangkok in the early evening to be greeted by Andy Howe the BN engineer who was going to be doing the 50-hour check. He was delighted with our progress and the general state of the plane and we left him working with the Thai engineers as we got sorted in the airport hotel, which was a short walk across the footbridge from the terminal. The handling in Bangkok was superb and also the weather service was excellent. They had a brand new weather modelling system and we spent some time with this, as our next leg was critical as regards

any headwinds to get to the Philippines the next day. We were the first pilots to be shown the new weather modelling system and spent some time playing "what if" games with it as we could really only stand 10kts on the nose or we would be out of range and then have to go via Singapore and Brunei.

Later that evening Andy reported that the maintenance check had gone well and he had cleared the faulty mag drop. We ordered a couple of sandwiches and drinks from the handling agent the retired early after I refuelled the plane ready for our anticipated long trip tomorrow.

Monday 17th December 2001 Bangkok - Clarke Field (Philippines, Z + 8 hours)

Approximately 1365nm.

Brakes Off 00:15 - T/O 00:25 - Land 10:44 - Brakes On 10:50 (Total 10:35hrs)

This was the first time a plane as slow as an Islander had tried to make this long flight. Once more we got an update to our extensive weather briefing and decided that it was just possible. We were informed that there would be headwinds to start but these would change in our favour the further we got in to the trip. Just before we left a catering truck arrived and the "couple of sandwiches" we had ordered turned out to be 24 rounds of ham, 24 rounds of Beef, 24 rounds of ham and cheese, and a large box filled with about a dozen litre cartons of fruit juice! We just thanked them and stowed in the back!

After take off and starting the slow climb to F110 I put my GPS on our destination and got the gloomy news that the trip time was estimating at 11:20hrs. As we had only 11:30 duration to fumes this was a no-no. We were only making about 109kts ground speed and this would not be sufficient. We knew that the winds would change but in the interim there were numerous calculations done to find the point of no return. At one stage we actually made the decision to try for a technical stop in Ho Chi Min but this request had to be made on the unreliable HF. After some thirty minutes of unsuccessfully trying to raise anyone our ground speed had slowly picked up to our required minimum of 120kts and the destination was now showing a total flight time of 10:15hrs. This would give us our required one-hour reserve so we pressed on still making numerous "point of no return" calculations. Our alternate was Subic Bay that was some 12 minutes nearer than our required destination and as we got nearer the ETA became more accurate. We finally got in to Clarke Field in the Philippines, a deserted ex-US air force base late in the evening after a marathon flight of ten hours and twenty minutes, having crossed Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. We later found out that we were the first light aircraft to have achieved this but as mentioned it had been very wind/weather dependant.

Tuesday 18th - Wednesday 19th December 2001 Clarke Field - Kagoshima (Japan, Z + 9 hours)

Approximately 1200nm.

Brakes Off 14:54 - T/O 15:05 - Land 00:05 - Brakes On 00:10 (Total 9:16hrs)

Once again staring at dawn I left Brian doing admin and flight plans while I got on with my usual engineer's task of refuelling the plane. The engineer's job is never done! I was getting quite nimble at mountaineering to the roof of the Islander without steps to check and top up the oil by now.

Fuelling turned out to be as complex as any previous time as the Avgas was in 50-gallon drums located on the other side of the airfield in the GA flying school. There was no way to taxi across as there was a fence blocking the route all the way. I therefore had to drive with the handling engineer in an ancient pick-up, loading three full 50 gallon drums (as much as it would carry without sitting on its tail) and driving (rattling!) back at 10mph to the plane. The drums were then manually unloaded, wheeled to the plane and pumped in to the tanks via a leaking hand pump with a split

nozzle. Then the whole task had to be repeated, as we needed to uplift around 1000 litres. They then tried to charge us for 50 US gallons per drum but I had noted that the drums only contained 190 litres each so we had some discussion over that. In addition there was no metering process and the amount in the last barrel had to be determined by using the hand pump as a dipstick. While all this was going on Brian came over to say that there was now no hurry (just as well!) as he had been on the telephone to Japan and our entry clearance was not valid until tomorrow! The fuelling took around three hours and we bribed the handlers with the excess sandwiches and drink obtained in Bangkok. They seemed very happy, as the wages there were obviously very poor. We later learned from the airport manager that the girl handing agents only earned around \$120/month.

We then went back to the hotel to take a break, re-planning our departure for 2300 local such that we could fly overnight and land in Kagoshima at 0900 local the next morning. Captain Mellor amazed the natives when he produced a swimming costume and splashed around in the pool for a while and I stayed in the warm and dry bar drinking a coke. The Philippines was very pleasant and very cheap with a Filet Mignon steak only costing £3 and the whole evening meal for the two of us coming to about £12 with no expense spared on beer etc. The Philippines islands are now on my list of places that I will make an effort to go back to at some time.

We returned to the deserted airport at around 21:30 local and took off into the dark on the last overnight leg to Japan wondering what sort of greeting we would get from the very efficient Japanese the following morning.

As we nearer Japan the ATC was very good but we started to pick up a lot of ice and had to descend to 7000ft for the last hundred miles or so, passing numerous small islands and running into light turbulence.

I had really no idea of what to expect of the Japanese landscape but the southern islands were a surprise. There seemed to be many semi-active volcanoes with smoke coming from the craters and some of these islands were very rocky.

Below was our first glimpse of one of the most southern islands of Japan. Note the small dirt airstrip on the right hand end of the island. We were running at 7000ft to keep out of some bad icing at the time with the outside temperature at about minus eight for the first time since Greece.



building.

Much to our surprise there was not a sole to greet us - no marshaller, no handlers, no customs, no admin, nothing! Having been flying all night this was most disappointing. We had left the Philippines in 30 degrees and Japan was cold and damp with a biting wind. Brian had taken the trouble to put on his white pilot shirt complete with black tie and full dress trousers just to impress the natives all for nothing as we quickly had our coats on to combat the cold.

About ten minutes passed with no sign of any activity at all when a single little Japanese man walked over to us and bowed profusely. Hardly communicating we managed to ascertain that we were now in quarantine and some inevitable forms had to be completed and the little man walked away leaving us on our own on the ramp again! After a further five minutes a whole delegation of Japanese walked up to us and we were introduced to Ken Yanai who turned out to be the CFII advisor to the company intending to purchase the aircraft.

Much bowing and nodding and photographs then ensued with little or no English being spoken. It turned out that Ken had flown to Kagoshima to meet the plane in the expectations that there would be a spare seat and was quite dismayed to find that I was occupying it as they had not been informed that we were a two pilot crew.

We were then ushered in to the Terminal where one of the Japanese apparently paid our import duties. Ken rushed off to help Brian change some dollars as the refuellers only took Yen, whilst I went back to the plane to do the refuelling for the last leg to Yao. I had just finished the refuelling with great language difficulties as we only wanted to uplift enough for the short flight to Yao when I noticed Brian waving furiously at me from the landside of the fence (I was of course airside). Apparently he had gone to change his dollars and the cashier had rejected a lot of them as being old and dirty as they would not pass the checking machine. Luckily I had been frugal with the fuel and we still had enough Yen to pay. Ken then rushed off to catch a commercial plane back to Yao and I walked the length of the Terminal to get back landside to meet Brian. The only way to do this was to go in to the main CAB (CAA to you) office, go up in the lift to the fourth floor, cross the hallway to the Flight clearance office and go down on their lift on the other side. All this with not an English sign in sight nor anyone even in flight planning communicating in English!

We made our way to the cafeteria and were then confronted with a menu in Kanji and no one speaking English and this in an International airport. We finished up having to point at items in the display case, Brian taking a sandwich and I got some sort of noodle dish which tasted fine as we had not eaten anything since the night before in the Philippines.

Wednesday 19th December 2001 Kagoshima - Yao (Japan, Z + 9 hours)

Approximately 300nm.

Brakes Off 03:46 - T/O 03:56 - Land 06:13 - Brakes On 06:15 (Total 2:29hrs)

We had been told by Ken not to arrive too early in Yao as he was taking the commercial flight back so we tried to time our arrival for 16:00 local. This was a straightforward short hop by our recent standards and we got vectors to a visual approach to R27 at Yao. We had no idea what we were expecting to see and the airport was difficult to spot as it lay right on the middle of the built up area of Osaka.

We joined downwind behind a couple of Cessna's and were then given a go-around as we managed to line up on the wrong runway! After landing we were directed straight on to the hangar where the plane was descended on by about ten mechanics that started ripping tanks and pipes out of it like there was no tomorrow. It was very evident that they had been desperately waiting to get the plane to get it ready for the customer acceptance trial the next day. We unloaded all our gear and were left hanging around and no one seemed to want us any more as the mechanics slaved on the aircraft (see

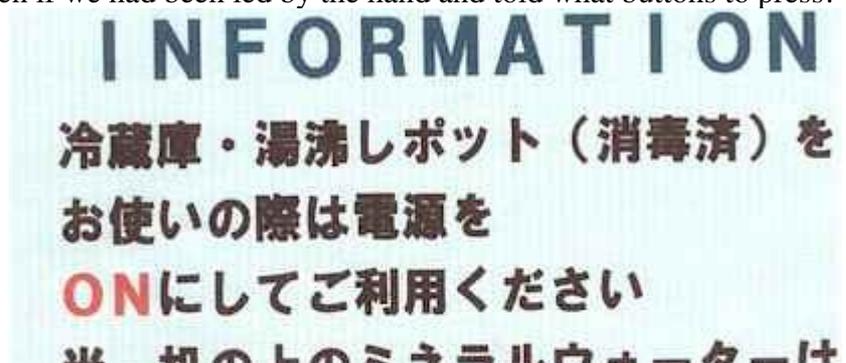
below). We elected to pack a lot of our gear with the BN tanks and equipment that would be shipped back to Bembridge as we had no intention of carrying all the additional stuff with us on the commercial flight home. AT some point in the future I will take the Auster over to Bembridge and collect our belongings but this was very low priority at this point in time.



had to wait for Ken to arrive. He was late because he had gone to pick up Andy the BN engineer. Eventually they put us in a taxi to some part of town that we knew not where and we thought that we could at least get organised.

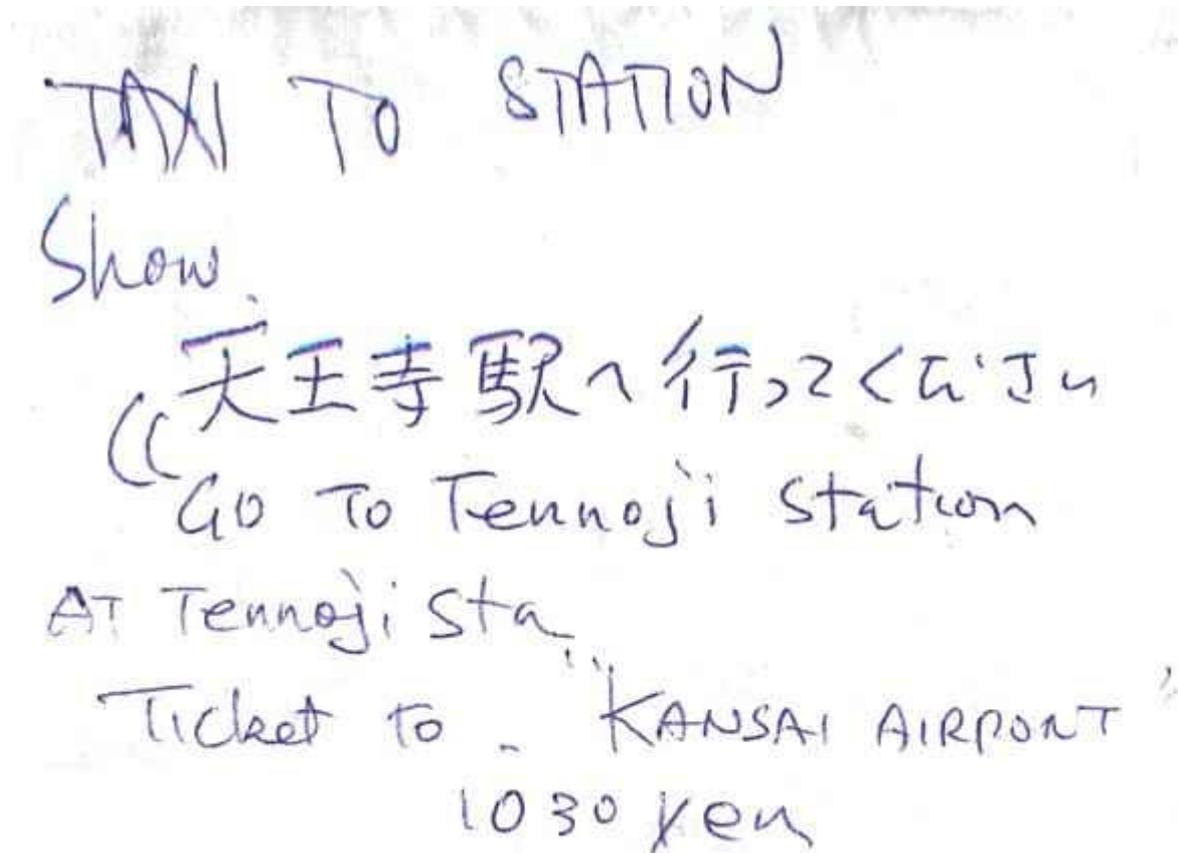
Wrong again! It was a small Japanese business hotel and nobody, not even the receptionist spoke English and they did not change money either. So here we were, stranded with no money, no way to communicate and not really even knowing exactly where we were or even where the main airport was. I left Brian in his room to try to telephone Bembridge to see if they could help while I went to the lobby to try to get directions to the main airport and also try to find where there might be an ATM to get some money. After thirty minutes of sign language I managed to obtain directions in kanji that were absolutely useless. The picture below was the only English word to be seen in the hotel. I also managed to obtain a similarly useless set of directions to the nearest ATM but I am sure we would not have recognised it even if we had been led by the hand and told what buttons to press!

I returned to Brian's room to find that the secretary at Bembridge had managed to get two bookings on the JAL flight to London. I could leave the next day and Brian had to stay for one more day to complete the acceptance trials with the local pilot. Ken and Andy then arrived



and we were invited out for a

Japanese pub dinner that was very interesting and a total madhouse with lots of shouting and alcohol. Several beers later, Ken changed \$50 that I borrowed from Brian into Y6000 for me and I asked him to write down "I need a taxi to Tennoji Station" and "I need a train to Kansai Airport" in Kanji. He informed me that the train fare would be Y1030 so I would "have plenty of money" for the next mornings trip to the airport. See the in depth instructions below!



Thursday 20th December 2001 Osaka - LHR

Approximately 6000nm.

Brakes Off 03:26 - T/O 03:35 - Land 15:47 - Brakes On 15:51 (Total 12:12hrs)

The taxi dutifully arrived at 0700 which I was assured would give me plenty of time to catch the 1200 flight. The taxi driver could not then read the above directions in Kanji that Ken had written but after some debate with the hotel receptionist he cried out something that sound like "Ahh - Station" which just about sounded ok to me and smiled at me we set of to "the station". I had no idea where we going or how far it was going to be. It turned out to be an equivalent ride of say Woking to Waterloo in the rush hour. The meter was happily racking up at Y80 each time having started at Y660. As we got further and further into town the traffic built up badly and I was getting more and more nervous as the meter got to Y4000, knowing that I needed Y1030 more for the train and having absolutely no way of getting any more Yen. We finally made the station on Y4100 and I then managed to master the ticket board to get a ticket to the airport in the middle of millions of people going to work in the rush hour. Waiting on the platform I watched the indicator boards until the Kansai Airport train arrived and piled on with a few hundred other people. After a few stations I had located an LED indicator board on the train wall that said only the first five coaches were going to the airport and the rear three were going somewhere else! I had no idea where I had got on the train and so had to fight my way through the packed carriages towards the front on the hope that I was now in the correct part of the train.

Eventually getting to the airport I reached a civilised JAL desk where the girl informed me that although they did have Brian's and my names they had no more information about us and I therefore had to pay for my ticket. I was still wearing my "crew" badge and this again seemed to work wonders as the operator entered lots of data into her computer and came up with the cheapest return which was about half the price of a single. I had got this far and there was no way I was going to miss the flight so the magic plastic swung in to action and I finally emerged with a ticket and checked in with enormous relief. I was also then able to confirm Brian's details for his flight tomorrow.

Never have we felt so helpless as we were in Japan, having no idea at all where we were, no realisable money, and no knowledge of the language, and no chance of being understood as the Japanese do not even recognise our Latin writing even if we say nothing. It was a very strange feeling.

The trip home on the big 747-400 (JAL flight 421, Registration JA8906 for Bob Elliott's information!) was pleasantly relaxing even though it was over twelve hours. All the equipment worked and the food and service was fine. I telephoned Lynn from the on-board satellite phone to give an ETA as at that stage she did not have any idea when she would see me. The plane even had a camera in the nose and belly so you could look at where we were going and what we were flying over without straining out the window. The captain also left the nose camera on all through the landing right up to the gate at LHR.

I was resigned to getting the rail/Air link to Woking and a train home and was very pleasantly surprised to find Lynn waiting to greet me at LHR as her boss had given her time off for the special occasion.

As a short summary it was a very successful trip even though the days were long and the schedule very hard to maintain. We were very lucky with the weather with most of the flights being good VMC with only the odd sessions of rain hail and ice. I have probably missed quite a few additional small stories but just typing this has worn out my fingers and I hope it has not bored you too much!

We travelled just under 10,000nm in 75 hours of flight time in ten days plus 12+ hours on the 747 home - just a wee cross-country to add to the logbook!

