



# BNAPS News May 2012

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## VCN Restoration Project Moves into the Next Phase

During April the false floor at the East Wight Workshop has received additional coats of paint and the majority of VCN components transferred from temporary storage at Nettlestone. The racking obtained under the BBC Radio Solent Community Chest award has now been re-assembled in the workshop, the wing shifted to provide a clear workspace around the fuselage and the main components such as fin, rudder, tail plane and control surfaces stowed away to make best use of the available workspace.



*Recent view of the restoration workshop that shows the fuselage positioned to give a clear workspace around it for access.*



*BNAPS Engineering Team members Paul Thomasson, Keith Winter, Tim Barton, Guy Palmer and Bob Wilson in the workshop mid April 2012*

Work benches, tools, cupboards, first aid kits and many other things needed for a suitably equipped workshop are now set up and the current plan is that the airframe work will commence by early May 2012, initially concentrated on the fuselage.

Other recent developments include an offer by the propeller overhaul and repair specialist PropTech, based at Portsmouth, to build a pair of representative propellers for incorporation into VCN's static restoration. Support from the aviation industry is most welcome and a number of other prospects are being investigated, particularly in respect of sourcing replacements for missing and unusable parts identified from the survey and cataloguing activities.

## **New book "The Last Great Adventure in British Aviation?" by Derek Kay, now available from BNAPS**

Derek Kay has kindly offered BNAPS a special price for copies of his book about his time running the technical publications department at B-N. If sufficient advance orders are forthcoming a batch of books will be ordered and supplied at £1 off the list price of £9.99. Arrangements have been made with Derek to include a signed insert in each book supplied by BNAPS.

A batch of 26 books will be ordered once we have at least 15 advance orders confirmed. If you would like to obtain a copy of the book please contact Bob Wealthy on 01329 315561

## **News of B-N Islander Operators – Isles of Scilly Skybus**

Isles of Scilly Skybus has operated B-N Islanders for over 28 years between Lands End Airport and the Isles of Scilly. The Islander offers a unique degree of rugged dependability that has made it somewhat irreplaceable on this route. The type of service provided by Skybus relies not only on having the right aircraft but also the right people and Mike Vigar, Skybus Commercial Manager has played a pivotal role in the airline's continuing success. Mike was the first ever Skybus employee, has recently retired from the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company, which operates the airline, after 28 years of service. From managing the first ever Skybus flights from Land's End to St Mary's to heading up operations for the airline's route network and scheduling, Mike has seen the airline grow from one B-N Islander to a fleet of six aircraft, comprising of three B-N Islanders and three DHC6 Twin Otters.

Mike began his career with Skybus in 1984 when the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company first began to operate commercial passenger flights. Having previously been based in Manchester working for Lufthansa and British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), Mike was planning to semi-retire to his family home in Sennen, Cornwall when he heard the Steamship Company was considering starting flights to the Isles of Scilly. He started the job a week before the first Skybus aircraft, a B-N Islander, was delivered to Land's End Airport.



*One of the current fleet of Isles of Scilly Skybus Islanders appropriately registered as G-SBUS is seen here at Lands End Airport*

From having just one aircraft and one pilot flying from Land's End to St Mary's in the 1980's, Skybus now operates flights from a network of five UK airports to the Isles of Scilly. The company now has six aircraft, 17 pilots and more than 50 airline staff, carrying approximately 60,000 passengers every year and reaching the one millionth passenger milestone in 2011.

Joining Mike in his retirement is his wife Jan who has also left the company after 25 years of working in the Travel Centre, handling reservations on either Skybus or Scillonian III services. Jeff Marston, chief executive of the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company said: "Mike and Jan have both made a tremendous contribution to the business. I'd like to personally thank Mike for his enthusiasm and 'can do attitude' which he brought to the company."

***B-N Historical Milestone*** On 13 May 1957 Druine Turbi, G-APFA, the first official B-N built aircraft, made its first flight at Bembridge in the hands of Harold Best-Devereux. 55 years on this aircraft is still in existence and is based in Devon.

***BNAPS on the web***-The following links give access to information that may be of interest:  
[iwcp.co.uk/news/news/flight-salute-to-island-aircraft-34589.aspx](http://iwcp.co.uk/news/news/flight-salute-to-island-aircraft-34589.aspx)  
[woottonbridgeiow.org.uk/social/?cat=69](http://woottonbridgeiow.org.uk/social/?cat=69)  
[asp-gb.secure-zone.net/v2/index.jsp?id=58/112/2749&startPage=23](http://asp-gb.secure-zone.net/v2/index.jsp?id=58/112/2749&startPage=23)  
[bnhistorians.co.uk](http://bnhistorians.co.uk) (note that back issues of BNAPS News can now be viewed on the BNH website)  
[islandheartcareclub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/tickertape/tt0701.pdf](http://islandheartcareclub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/tickertape/tt0701.pdf) Article by Peter Ward  
[bwavg.co.uk/The Islands Oldest Islander on the Move BNAPS News Release 2010 001 V2a.pdf](http://bwavg.co.uk/The_Islands_Oldest_Islander_on_the_Move_BNAPS_News_Release_2010_001_V2a.pdf)  
[islandairways.com/](http://islandairways.com/)

## BNAPS Talk Evening 22 May - "Ryde Airport and the Spithead Express Air Service"

The next Britten-Norman Aircraft Preservation Society social evening will be held on Tuesday 22 May 2012 at the Propeller Inn, Bembridge Airport. Doors will be open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start.

The evening will feature a talk by BNAPS Trustee Bob Wealthy about local aviation in the 1930s titled "Ryde Airport and the Spithead Express Air Service" operated by Portsmouth, Southsea and Isle of Wight Aviation (PSIOWA).



*Ryde Airport Terminal Building  
around 1934*



*Pride of the PSIOWA fleet was G-ABVB, a  
special version of the Westland Wessex*

In the early 1930s, despite severe worldwide financial problems after the Wall Street Crash, there was a surge of interest in aviation with increasing ownership of light aircraft, aviation exploits such as speed contests and record breaking flights and promotion of "air mindedness" by personalities such as Alan Cobham with his National Air Days.

In 1932 the Isle of Wight came to the fore with the initiative of Lionel Balfour and his plan to set up a regular air service to the Island. Located at the new Portsmouth Airport as the main operating base a company PSIOWA was formed to operate the service and flat ground at Barnsley Farm on the outskirts of Ryde was chosen for the site of a new airport as the Ryde terminal. The first flight of the new air service took place on 27 June 1932 with PSIOWA's new Westland Wessex G-ABVB.

By 1934 a neat terminal building had been constructed at Ryde and the service operated successfully until the airlines aircraft were requisitioned at the start of WW2. Although efforts were made to re-start the services in the post war era, these were not successful and after a short period of use from 1947-1950 Ryde Airport was abandoned. The terminal building survived for many years until overtaken by major re-development of the old airport site with the main part of the original landing ground turned into a golf course.

### Ted Sothcott Tribute

16 May 1920 -  
15 Feb 2012



*Ted as a young  
man*

Ted made many friends during his working life in the aviation industry. From his early days he was well liked and quickly matured into a highly respected colleague and foreman.

Ted was born in Ryde on 16 May 1920 and was the last surviving member of seven siblings. After leaving school at the age of 15 he served an apprenticeship at Saunders Roe, training to be an aeronautical engineer. During the war Ted served with the Fleet Air Arm repairing aircraft and after the war he returned to Saunders Roe and worked on the Princess Flying Boats. He stayed with Saunders Roe at East Cowes until 1952 when the Princess Flying Boat project was cancelled. He then joined the Saunders Roe Division at High Down, Alum Bay and worked on the Black Knight Rocket and so was one of those involved in the very early days of space technology. Ted's skills and capabilities were recognised and by 1957 he had been promoted to Chief Foreman, a position he held until 1967 when the contract was ended by the government. He then returned to Saunders Roe at East Cowes and worked on the "Cockerell" Hovercrafts for a couple of years or so before moving to Britten Norman at Bembridge Airport.

Ted rapidly became a highly respected Foreman at Britten Norman and played a key role in the manufacture of initially the Islander and then the Trislander. This included visiting Romaero in Romania to assist them in establishing an Islander manufacturing facility. He stayed with B-N until he retired in 1985 bringing to an end a remarkable career in which he had played a prominent part in so many important Island engineering enterprises. Even after he retired he was frequently telephoned for help with manufacturing queries.

A truly lovely man and a highly respected aircraft engineer.

## **BNAPS Items for Sale - Price List May 2012**

1. Trislander 40<sup>th</sup> book (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) @ £3.50\*
2. Islander VCN restoration book – "The Story So Far" (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) @ £3.50\*
3. Nymph and Freelance book (1<sup>st</sup> Edition) @ £5.00\*
4. Britten Sheriff book (1<sup>st</sup> Edition) @ £3.50\*
5. BN-1F Finibee book (2nd edition) @ £3.50\*
6. Trislander lapel pins @ £2.50
7. Aviation at Bembridge book (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition planned for late 2012) @ £6.50
8. BNAPS "Charlie November Restoration" mug @ £6.00\*
9. Postcards depicting B-N Islanders and Trislanders @ 50p each or 3 for £1.00
10. Islander 40th pens @ 50p
11. BNAPS enamelled lapel badges @ £2.00
12. BNAPS sew on patches @£1.50
13. Islander 40th key rings @ £1.00
14. Islander 40th mugs @ £2.50
15. Islander VCN A3 colour print @ £2.00
16. B-N Caps (original style logo) @ £3.50
17. BNAPS polo shirts blue or grey L, XL £15.00 each

Items marked \* are available to BNAPS Supporters Club members at 50p off marked price

*Above items are normally on sale at BNAPS events or place an order by e mail or by writing to the BNAPS contact address below. UK post and package will be in addition to prices shown above.*

### **More BNAPS Supporters Club Members Needed**

If any BNAPS Supporters Club member knows of anyone who would be interested in joining please pass on BNAPS contact details as given on page 4. Anyone with an interest in local aviation heritage is welcome.

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

### **Forthcoming BNAPS Events**

BNAPS Social Evenings will be held at the Propeller Inn unless otherwise advised, please arrive by 19:00 for a start at 19:30. Talks will generally finish by 21:00. Entry charge for is £1.00 for BNAPS Supporters Club members and £2.00 for visitors.

22 May - BNAPS Social Evening – talk "Ryde Airport and the Spithead Express Air Service"

4 June - Bembridge Street Fair. BNAPS will have a sales stand in the driveway of St Denis in the High Street courtesy of John Kenyon

30 June/1 July - Vintage Aircraft Club Fly-in at Bembridge – subject to confirmation BNAPS plan to support this event

Events later in 2012 are at the planning stage and will be announced in due course.

### **BNAPS Trust**

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:

The Great Barn,  
Five Bells Lane,  
Nether Wallop,  
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Hampshire,  
SO20 8EN

Trustees are Peter Graham, Bob Wilson, Guy Palmer and Bob Wealthy. Peter Graham is chairman of the board of trustees.

### **How to contact BNAPS:**

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