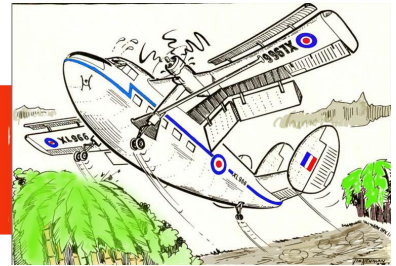


# Scottish Aviation TWIN PIONEER



Newsletter Number Nineteen November 2005

In this Issue:

- Boy! It's cold out there – but who is this man?
- The second part of Vic Dabin's story - 'longhaul' to the Far East



G-AOEN at Seven Islands in January 1957 - who is this man?

Scottish Aviation Ltd

In Newsletter Number Six, the main story was of the ferry flight of Twin Pioneer, G-AOER, to a new customer, the United Nations, for geophysical work in Mexico. Ian Adams had browsed through his back numbers of SALVO, the SAL staff newspaper, and found the story. Noel J Capper, SAL's Chief Test Pilot, was the author and he reported that G-AOER was not the first Twin Pioneer to cross the Atlantic, he noted – 'It was not the first time a Twin had been there (at Keflavik) because Clyde Pangborn had taken G-AOEN through in 1957....'. Keflavik Airport is 50 kilometres south west of Reykjavik. Noel Capper took up his pen again and his story of his sales tour of South America appeared in Newsletter Number Seventeen. Now Bert Hart, the source of all knowledge on matters of Twin Pioneer sales, has written to Anorak with information about the start of the South American Tour.

This Newsletter has no other purpose than to provide a bit of nostalgic fun for a few people who believe that the Twin Pioneer, in some way, had an involvement in their lives. It is published in a liberated way by Ron Tannock in New Zealand.  
Contact him at [r.tannock@xtra.co.nz](mailto:r.tannock@xtra.co.nz)

# Preparations are over - Vic, his crew and 962 are ready for Take Off power...

**After** starting, we rolled off chocks at exactly 0830 hr and after the usual engine power checks we lined up on runway 23 to depart at 0840 hr. We had full fuel, 362 galls enough for about eight hours plus, but no load except the crew and spares so we weighed about 13,000 lb and therefore we were airborne in about 400 yd. After completing the Lyneham departure procedure Bill gave me the course to steer to make good the track that we had decided on; this would take us over the Isle of Wight, Le Havre, 50 miles west of Paris, Nevers, Dijon, Lyons and then down the Rhône valley to Orange, hopefully clear of any high ground. Most of the larger towns en route had airfields with beacons on them that we could use for track and ground speed checks.

## The journey begins

As we settled down on heading we went into cloud at 3000 ft. As we were not going to fly in controlled airspace I said goodbye to Lyneham and changed to Sopley Radar for surveillance as we crossed southern England. I noticed that Bill had started an air plot and Chalky handed up the 0900 hr actual weather reports and forecasts for airfields on route, which I may have to use in an emergency; the reports for Orange and the south were good, but Northern France seemed pretty socked in.

I set cruising power - 2200 rpm and 0 inch boost, at this weight and temperature, the Economical Cruising Boost (ECB) for the Leonides - and trimmed the aircraft out straight and level. The IAS settled at 95 kt and Bill announced that our TAS was 110 kt, ground speed 95 kt, a slight headwind; we would burn about 40 gallons per hour in the cruise, and we should be at Orange by early afternoon - 1400 hr.

We cruised along on instruments and I tried the simple automatic pilot fitted to the Twin, it was not working. John, who heard my imprecations about the kit, advised me that it had been removed. Great! That meant I had to hand fly the aircraft all the way to Singapore!

Sopley advised us that we were now over the Channel, there was no known conflicting traffic and that we should now change to France Radar. After checking in and stating our intended route we were cleared to proceed maintaining 4000 ft. Even though I couldn't see anything I was happy with the height as it was above the safety height for the surrounding area. At about this juncture, John handed out teas all round - very welcome. In fact, for the rest of the ferry trip he became unofficial steward/loadmaster.

After about an hour and a half, the cloud started to thin and we were flying between layers; then, just as we were passing abeam Paris, we shot out into a clear blue sky peopled by little tufts of white cloud. I advised the radar service that we were now in VMC (Visual Meteorological Conditions) and reduced to 3000 ft.

Looking back into the cabin I could see Chalky hard at it with his key telling all and sundry of our position and ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival) at Orange. John was preparing our lunch from the very adequate rations he had obtained from the Flight Catering Section at Lyneham.

## Pork pie over France - How British!

Bill and I sat musing up front eating a pork pie and hard-boiled egg. The centre of France was slowly unrolling beneath

us at just over a mile and a half a minute as we travelled sedately along. We skirted the high ground to the west of Lyons then headed due south with the River Rhône pointing the way to the Mediterranean. It was a little too late in the year to expect a Mistral to give us a push down the Rhône valley. The visibility was very good and shortly after 1330 hr we could see Orange in a bowl of hills. The tower cleared us for a right hand base for the duty runway and we landed at 1400 hr - 5hr 20 min after take off from Lyneham.

We were marshalled to a visiting aircraft pan and as the engines stuttered to a stop I was gratified to see John hurrying round busying himself with chocks and arranging for ground power to be plugged in. As Bill and I got out of our seats the bowser arrived to refuel. An RAF liaison officer met us at the door and outlined the details for our night stop. I checked with John on the amount of fuel required and worked out that our consumption had been about 42 gallons an hour, on that figure, with full tanks at take off, we could stay airborne for about nine hours if necessary.

Leaving John to carry out the post flight checks and to put the covers on, Bill, Chalky and I repaired to the transit accommodation. John would be picked up later when his chores were complete.

Next morning, having completed all the usual pre-flight procedures and checks, we clattered off at our appointed take off time of 0830hr local. We had had a quiet and restful night stop and the transit element at Orange had looked after us very well. We flew south skirting around the foothills of the Maritime Alps and coasted out over the Mediterranean just east of Toulon. We followed an easterly track passing north of Corsica - we had no clearance to cross it - and with the coast of Italy ahead, we turned slightly east of south to follow the coastline down flying over the Tyrrhenian Sea.

It was a glorious spring day with tremendous visibility and a limitless blue sky. We watched Elba pass under us then we were abeam Rome sauntering along at our majestic 100 kt with the beautiful Italian Riviera on our left hand side, occasionally we had to divert inland to avoid the various danger areas that are prevalent on this coast. John served a cold meal that included coffee and fresh fruit supplied by the Orange in flight catering section.

Except for the occasional call to the Italian air traffic services and flight watch services the workload was light on the flight deck. A glance back in the cabin saw John now fast asleep on his airbed and Chalky deeply engrossed in a paperback book. Every hour, on the hour, he produced a list of weather actuals and forecasts for en route airfields and the destination, Naples. All were CAVOK (Clouds and visibility OK). Once in VHF range of Naples Capodachino, I called them and verified that the weather there was good and that they were expecting us. We landed after five hours flying and were directed to an area of the airport set aside for the US Navy. We parked on a very congested pan and left John to refuel and put the aircraft to bed. Looking around it appeared that everyone had lost interest in us and it took a little forceful persuasion to get transport to the transit accommodation. We had ordered our Met forecast, handling crew and in flight rations at the Flight Dispatcher's Office and, although we eventually got everything we asked for, the whole response appeared reluctant and tinged with inertia. Perhaps it was my first taste of the laid back attitude of some American servicemen.

As the next leg to Malta was relatively short, we took off at a later time than the previous two legs. This also ensured that we missed the morning rush of departures from Capodachino. After take off, we headed southwest passing over Capri. We followed the Italian coast southward and passed between Sicily and the mainland over the Straits of Messina. The weather was fine throughout the flight; in early VHF contact with Luqa, I was advised that the weather there was good with the landing direction to the southwest. We landed after a flight of 3 hr 40 min and were directed to the Transit Aircraft Park. Now that we back amongst the RAF, the service was superb! The movements and engineering staffs were energetic in making our short stay as pleasant as possible.



### Cheap booze and fags – right ho!

We were accommodated in our various messes overnight and as I walked on to the Transit Aircraft Dispersal next morning to see that all was well, I was surprised to see a lorry from the licensed victuallers, Saccone and Speed, backed up to the aircraft! The Nav and Siggie were busy supervising the on loading of much duty free booze and cigarettes from lorry to aircraft. When questioned, it seems that the arrangement had been made some time before we arrived! I congratulated them on their initiative and promised to help them reduce the aircraft payload at the subsequent night stops down route. They said that was fine, but my share of the kitty would cost £10!

There were a couple of administrative points exercising my mind by this time. As the temperature was now rising and likely to get hotter for the rest of the journey I decided that for the remainder of the ferry we would change from RAF blue to KD and instructed the crew the night before to change to KD from now on. My KD, and John's, were presentable as we were both serving in a theatre where it was the norm and local tailors had produced a very smart, well fitting uniform. When I saw what Bill and Chalky were wearing that morning, I almost fell about laughing! They looked like fugitives from some dated Beau Geste film. The uniform shorts were down to their knees and were a different shade of khaki to the shirt. The socks with which they had been issued in the UK were very dark and woolly and looked as though they had been issued at El Alamein! (It ain't half hot, Mum! Editor) As we would be passing through some sensitive countries I made the decision that we would, henceforth, move from aircraft to accommodation and back in respectable civilian attire. The troops liked that decision!

The other aspect was the splitting of the crew at RAF staging posts between three messes. Not only was the crewman cut off from the rest of the crew, it could make communication difficult between us during night stops. Therefore, I promoted John to acting unpaid sergeant for the rest of the ferry so that he could go into the Sergeants' Mess with the two master aircrew. This cut the communication problem and served us well as we traversed through the Middle East where the majority of RAF staging posts were situated. I never referred this to higher authority being of the opinion that the Nelson Touch was called for in the interests of crew efficiency.

### It's a lot of water

The leg Malta to El-Adem was to be our longest sea crossing so far. The Mae West lifejackets were hung near individual seats and the crewman checked the wing dinghy stowage. Air Movements at Luqa provided us with our rations for the leg and we left, on time, turning on to a heading just south of east to make good a landfall to the north of Tobruk, which is just north of El-Adem. We intended to keep Benghazi to the south of us and to skirt north of the higher ground before coasting in just to the east of Derna.

Up until now we had cruised along at 3000 ft, but because of the long sea crossing and to give us more time to set up for a ditching in an emergency, we flew this leg at 6000 ft. It was cooler there and we would see the North African coastline sooner. Bill kept the radio compass on Luqa beacon until it

was below our western horizon, and then switched it to El Adem. Although it was a very powerful NDB we didn't pick it up until we were about 150 miles away. Meanwhile Chalky was busy on HF and CW telling the world, including Tripoli, Cairo and UK, of our position and ETA at our destination. The forecasts and actuals he obtained showed that we should have a trouble free transit and arrival.

At about the time that we managed to raise the El Adem beacon, I noticed a long brown smudge right across the distant horizon ahead. As we got closer to the coast I could see that it was a dust/sand inversion under which the visibility would be quite poor. As soon as we were in VHF range of El Adem I asked them about the visibility, and they advised me that the coastal area was clear - the haze was over the desert to the south.

During the flight, the crewman told me that a Primary Inspection on the aircraft would need to be carried out at El Adem before we moved on. He did not anticipate any delay as Chalky had signalled ahead, and given the help normally available from ground engineering at RAF Staging Posts, John expected to have it wrapped up before nightfall. Not for the first time, I realised that I was lucky to have a professional crew not afraid to use their initiative. However, being of the fraternity of 'if it ain't busted don't fix it' I told John that we could carry any minor snags discovered on the inspection. It was then that he told me that he suspected the port engine starter drive was loose; he would confirm it when he could get a close look at it.

We landed at El-Adem after a flight of 5 hr 20 min and taxied in to the transit parking area at about 1500hr local time. The Chiefy was there to meet us as we got down from the aircraft with ringing ears, pulling at our flying suits where sweat stuck them to our bodies. It was very hot. He seemed surprised at our shirts and slacks as we changed from our flying suits but made no comment.

### The 'Sumpies' get their say!

He said that he would get the refuelling done immediately and start the Primary so long as John could help his team. Bill, Chalky and I went to Operations, sent our Transarrival signal, ordered a Met forecast for route and destination for the morning, and our in flight rations. We then retired to the transit mess for a cold beer or three. After tea, the crewman phoned to say that the inspection would be finished in plenty of time for our planned departure next day. He was right about the engine starter, but El Adem didn't have the tools necessary to fix it. However, it was his opinion that it would last the next three starts necessary before we reached Aden where there was a Twin Pioneer Squadron and they would definitely have the tools on their second line servicing line. We carried on with our 'running down' drinks session.



RAF El-Adem

Photograph by kind permission of the Friends of The El-Adem Radio Station

We spent a comfortable night and when we reported to the transit parking area next morning, after the usual planning procedures, we found that the Catering Section had been very kind and thoughtful by providing us with bulk rations to see us through Egypt and the Sudan. The route weather was forecast as good with poor visibility over the desert, but fair conditions at Luxor. Having thanked all concerned for their help and service, we started up without any problems and took off at 0800 hr local. Our chosen route was to follow the coast along until we reached Egyptian airspace at Sollum then

to head slightly south of east across the Qattara Depression to turn south and follow the Nile Valley after joining it south of Cairo. This was what our Dip Clears specified and it was most important that we crossed into Egypt at the correct time. Chalky was shouting down the HF as soon as we were airborne giving Cairo and Khartoum our ETAs for border crossing and destination. He also backed it up on CW sending Morse at a prodigious rate!

When we settled at our cruising height of 5000 ft we could see nothing around us for the dust haze; the ground was only visible vertically below. At our sedate speed it caused no problems in navigation, Bill kept the El-Adem NDB on the radio compass until it faded with distance and then switched it to Cairo West, but it was some time before we started to get a reliable reading so we chugged along using dead reckoning navigation. Bill had restarted his air plot, and seemed very confident of his position and gave an ETA for Luxor of 1600hr local time. Actually, we cheated a bit by following the northern coast road and railway for a good distance before cutting across to the Nile Valley. We told Cairo what we were doing and they acknowledged it with 'OK Sir!'

Up until now I had found it not too trying to be without an autopilot and flew the aircraft hands off re-trimming as necessary controlling direction with slight rudder pressures. However, the air over the desert was quite turbulent and made the Twin wallow and pitch requiring it to be flown 'hands on' all the time.

### 'We just bogged on...'

Turning to the obvious matter of toilet relief during the ferry, I cannot remember how I coped. The other crewmembers could use the Elsan fitted at the rear of the aircraft; as the aircraft wasn't fitted with dual controls I couldn't ask Bill to look after the shop whilst I dashed down the back! Moreover, there were no pee tubes fitted. I can only say that I must have had a much stronger bladder than I have now!

As we traversed the Western Desert towards the Nile Valley the visibility slowly improved. The hot, brassy sun glared down and the odd, turreted cumulus cloud began forming around us. However, once on a southerly heading passing over El Minya and Asyut, the air smoothed out and we enjoyed the view whilst following the Nile and railway to Luxor.

After landing at Luxor it became evident that no arrangements whatsoever had been made for us. After much form filling in and cajoling of immigration officials, two rooms were obtained at a mediocre hotel in the town. As taxis seemed to be in short supply, we waited whilst the crewman completed his tasks, made all the necessary arrangements for an early departure next day and then with our overnight luggage joined the heaving crowd fighting for cabs outside the airport. A taxi was eventually secured, but I took the precaution of promising the driver his fare only after he picked the crew up next morning at the hotel taking us to the airport. To my amazement he agreed!

We made a dent in the duty free that night, which Bill had managed to bring off the aircraft, and next morning got to the airport more or less at the time intended. I ran into a maelstrom of form filling. Departure was delayed, as various officials demanded that their particular forms be completed. The bombshell was that a charge of fifteen pounds was being levied by United Arab Airlines for handling fees! No one from that company had been near the aircraft or us; John having done everything. There was nothing for it but to pay up. As travellers' cheques had been cashed to pay the hotel bills, taxi and various airport charges, a sum of money was left over. This caused a furore when declared on the departure form, as it was illegal to export Egyptian currency. After much haggling and writing on pieces of paper, the money was left, with a receipt taken for safe keeping, until a letter could be sent from the British Embassy in Cairo to claim it. The amount was three pounds! It was with great relief that the aircraft started without problems and we were able to depart just thirty-five minutes late after all the bureaucracy.

We cruised southwards at 5000 ft aiming to pass through the gap in the high ground on the Red Sea coast just on the Sudanese border at Mirear Island. Once in Sudanese airspace we followed the road and coastline down to Port Sudan keeping the high ground on our right.

After a shorter leg of 4hr 35 min, we spent a restful night at Port Sudan with Sudan Airways looking after all handling and accommodation matters. We had an early night at the hotel to make up for the carousing on the previous night, although John had made the most of his airbed on the way down from Luxor.

Next day, the port engine started without trouble, and we were away on time. The Nav and I had discussed this leg in detail as it was the longest on the ferry, passed over the most inhospitable terrain of the route and our track skirted the Yemen, which was hostile to anything British at that time. We intended to fly right down the west coast of the Red Sea, passing abeam Massawa, then flying over the water, head for Perim Island at the bottom of the Red Sea before turning east and following the Arabian coast for 70 miles or so to Aden.

We flew the leg at 5000 ft following the planned route. Chalky had sent our Transdep signal by CW to Aden at top of climb after take off and received an acknowledgement, so they knew we were coming and could compute where we might be should it become necessary. As we progressed, our times for passing various points e.g. Massawa, showed that we were picking up a headwind. The weather was fair, but the visibility poor, but good enough for us to proceed using the Mk 1 eyeball as our main navigational aid. It was with some relief that we turned the corner at Perim Island realising that our fuel state would be adequate for the remaining distance. We landed at Khormaksar after seven hours flying.



**Trainspotter's  
Corner**  
by  
**Anorak**

### **Bert Hart writes -**

The flight was in January 1957, departing Prestwick and via Benbecula; Reykjavik; Sondre Stromfjord; Seven Islands, to Montreal.

Clyde Pangbourne was engaged to undertake the ferry and was accompanied by Hughie McLaren, of Scottish Aviation's Service Department. Clyde Pangbourne, an American, is well known for his record breaking flights, often over open oceans, including the first non stop flight from Japan to the USA in October 1931 flying his single engine Bellanca Skyrocket in 1931. I understand it was his practice to provide buoyancy for the event of ditching, by filling the wings with ping-pong balls. For this ferry, Scottish Aviation had supplied a six-man dinghy for Clyde and Hugh. On his return, Hugh told me that Clyde had his own survival pack consisting of a large bottle of Scotch and a pack of heavy-duty sick bags. The sick bags were worn over the head in extremely cold with holes torn out for the eyes. They could possibly be worn to scare off Polar Bears but I think not!

A throwaway ferry fuel installation was supplied consisting of a DC 3 wing tank and two 40-gallon drums, interconnected and feeding into the aircraft fuel system via an electric fuel pump. Hugh controlled this pump when the main system required topping up. Severe cold and icing was encountered on the approach to Seven Islands. Both engine breather vents on the nose ring cowlings froze up. This developed into engine backpressure, pressurising the breather system, which included the oil tanks. At some point the tanks split along a seam and the nacelles were seen to be covered in engine oil. A safe landing was made at Seven Islands where it was found to have 67 degrees of frost. It was learned that frozen breathers was not uncommon in these climes and local aviators had a simple and effective cure. They cut a slit in the breather flex hose between engine outlet and cowling. This served as a simple and effective pressure relief valve.

In addition to replacing the damaged tanks, Hugh was required to change a number of hydraulic and shock absorber seals for winterised equivalents before they continued the flight to Montreal.