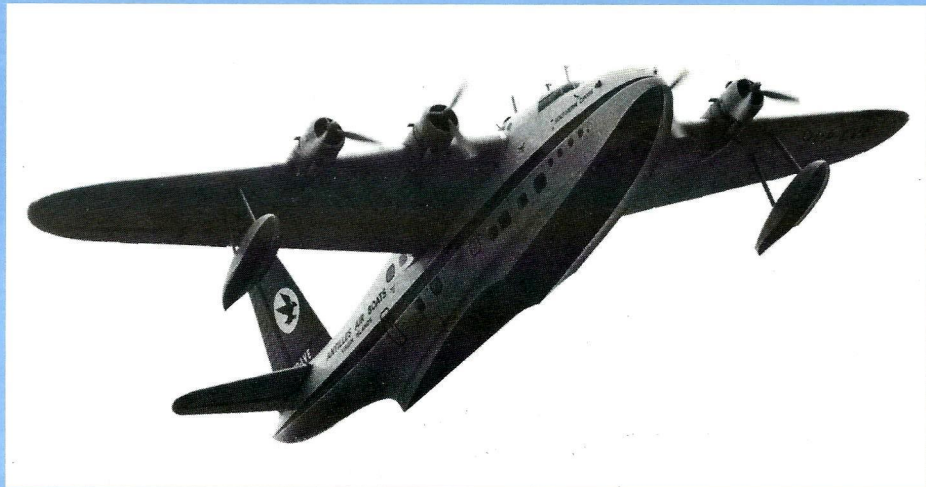


"Beachcomber"

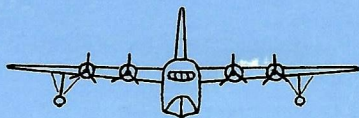
- the story of a Sandringham



and

SUNDERLAND CIVIL CONVERSIONS

OPERATED IN AUSTRALIA

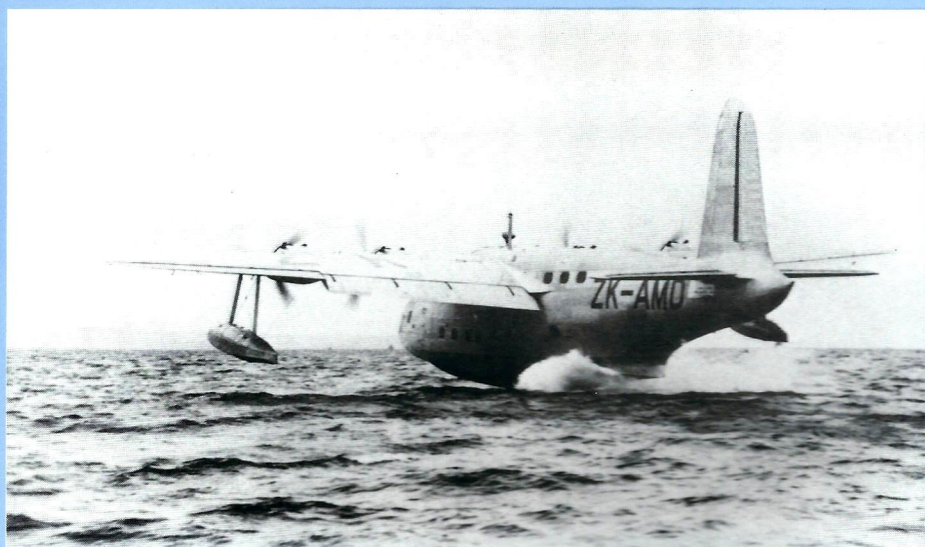


Vic Hodgkinson

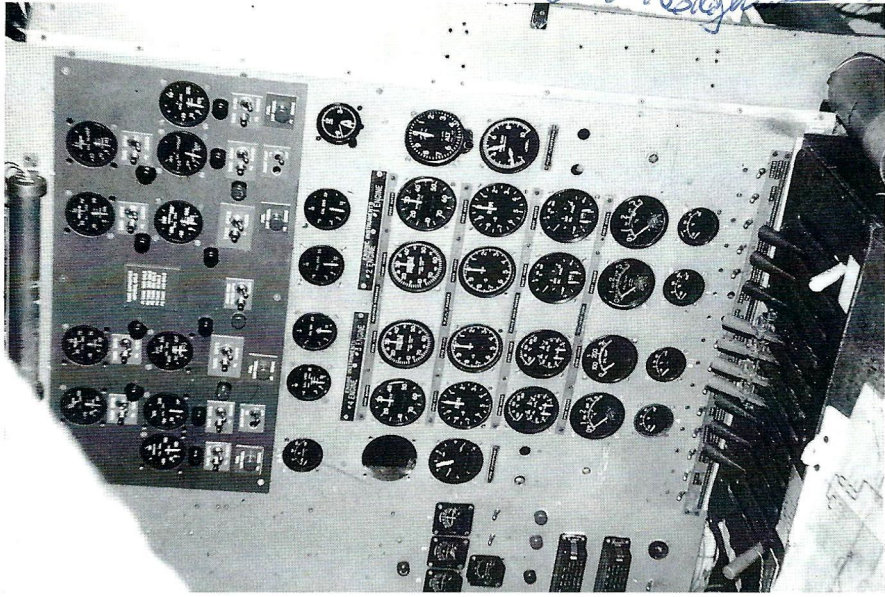


Above: Short 'Sunderland V' ML778 (1945)

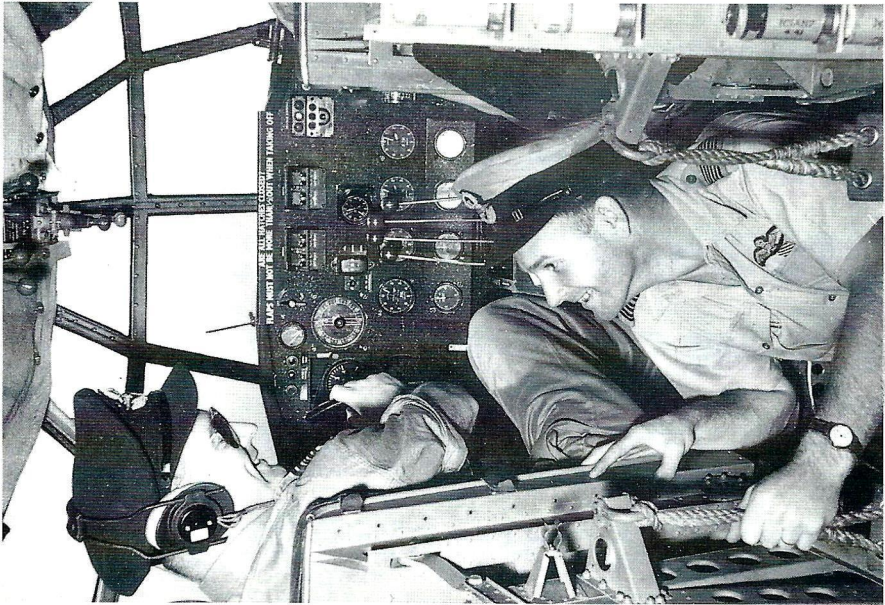
Below: Short 'Sandringham IV' RMA "AUSTRALIA" of TEAL, sister 'ship' to "AUCKLAND" (1947)



Cover: "SOUTHERN CROSS" flying over Lepe, Hampshire, September 6 1977
(Martin Williams)



The Flight Engineer's instrument panel on "BEACHCOMBER"



The pilot's instrument panel on a Sunderland III. Wing Commander V A Hodgkinson (right) when he was commanding 40 Squadron RAAF in 1945, the only Sunderland unit based in Australian waters.



Top aft cabin of "BEACHCOMBER" in the Southampton Hall of Aviation

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Type of Aircraft <i>Sunderland</i>		Mark <i>IV</i>	R.A.F. Number <i>J.M. 715.</i>	
Contractor <i>Short Bros. Rochester</i>		Contract No. <i>78939/4</i>	Engine Installed: — Maker's airframe No.:	
Unit or Cat'y/Cause	Station or Contractor	Date	Authority	41 or 42 Gp. Allo
	<i>RAF SA</i>	<i>8.7.43</i>	<i>69 107</i>	
<i>X</i>	<i>57 m.u.</i>	<i>8.1.44</i>	<i>165 101.44</i>	
<i>RAF Com</i>	<i>Serial 49</i>	<i>6.4.45</i>	<i>CRO</i>	
	<i>RAF Com</i>	<i>26.7.45</i>	<i>elt</i>	
<i>30.7.45</i>	<i>57 MU</i>	<i>3/8</i>	<i>100</i>	
HOME CENSUS MARCH 1945.				
<i>30.4.47</i>	<i>S. HARRLAND</i>	<i>150481/2</i>	<i>5.47/11.9/10.4.09.4</i>	
	<i>FREE ISSUE</i>			
	<i>for delay to Tasman Airways</i>	<i>CH Sale</i>	<i>(A.P.C. 405)</i>	

JM 715s "P78" showing its wartime movements and sale to Tasman Airways in 1947

Built as a SUNDERLAND MkIII by Short Brothers, **1943** Rochester, Kent, UK, with Bristol 'PEGASUS XVIII' 1050hp (take-off) engines and DeHavilland Constant Speed (no feathering) Airscrews. RAF Serial No. JM715. Flown to RAF Wig Bay, Stranraer (Scotland) and received by No.1 Flying Boat Servicing Unit on 8th July 1943, then on 8th January 1944 to No.57 (F/B) Maintenance Unit, Wig Bay. Kept in reserve - not used on operations.

Flown to Flying Boat Modification Unit, Cairds Yard, **1945** Greenock (on behalf of SAROs by Scottish Aviation Ltd.), April 1945 for conversion to SUNDERLAND MkV - ie., re-engined with 4 American Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90B 1200hp (t/o) Twin Wasp 14-cylinder, two row, radial, air-cooled engines in NACA-type cowlings with controllable flaps, and Hamilton standard three-blade fully feathering metal airscrews of 12'9" diameter. It returned to RAF Wig Bay on August 3 for storage.

Surplus to Ministry requirements, this Sunderland **1947** was transferred to Short & Harland, Belfast, N. Ireland, arriving 30 April. All those Sunderlands transferred to Belfast around this time were taxied across the Irish Sea (approx. 50 miles) because, on preflight inspection of the first aircraft by the ferry crew, an elevator "fell off" and the crews considered it lethal to chance providence, having survived the war.

Converted to SANDRINGHAM IV (known as the TASMAN CLASS) with Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92C engines, together with 3 others to replace the long-serving SHORT 'C' Class boats of TASMAN EMPIRE AIRWAYS LTD (TEAL) on the New Zealand-Sydney route. This aircraft was registered ZK-AMH and named RMA "AUCKLAND", its conversion number at Belfast being SH.55C. The other three were ZK-AMB "TASMAN", ZK-AMD "AUSTRALIA" and ZK-AME "NEW ZEALAND", which flew to New Zealand in the latter half of 1946.

Main conversion details were:- Removal of armament; fitting larger passenger windows; replacement of Sunderland windscreens with curved screens; fitting of 30 passenger seats (similar to the 'C' Class F/B type); removal of bow and tail sections of hull, replacing with streamlined sections; fitting trim to passenger cabins and galley; fitting aft upper cabin in form of bar and galley.

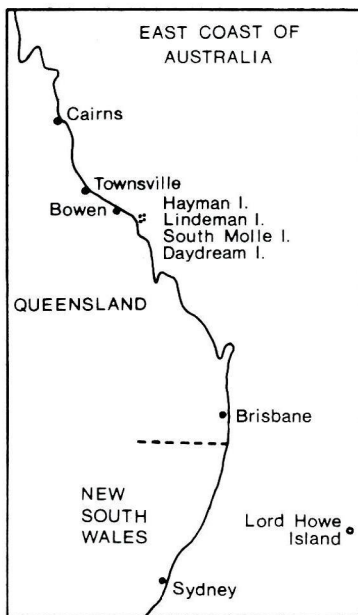
On the 15th October, 1947, (quote): "Capt. H. J. (Tommy) Rose of BOAC finished his cockpit checks before opening the throttles to take the now Royal Mail Aircraft "AUCKLAND" away from Poole Harbour, Dorset, on the first leg of a delivery flight to Auckland and TASMAN EMPIRE AIRWAYS Ltd. Just under 3½hrs. after leaving Poole, "AUCKLAND" settled down at Marseilles (Étang de Berre) before flying on to Augusta (Sicily), Cairo, Bahrein, Karachi, Calcutta, Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore, Sourabaya (Java), Darwin, Bowen (Queensland) and Sydney, completing a little over eighty-seven flying hours during fourteen days before landing on the waters of Mechanics Bay, Auckland on the 28th October 1947."

These four "TASMAN CLASS" Sandringhams operated the Auckland / Wellington - Sydney (Tasman) route.

Overheating of the Pratt & Whitney engines caused problems and the aircraft were withdrawn for investigation and comprehensive overhaul and returned to service. This problem was not solved and the four Sandringhams were replaced by the larger and more powerful Short 'SOLENT' Class of flying boat - four 'Solent 4s' in 1949 and an ex-BOAC 'Solent 3' in 1951.

"AUCKLAND" and "NEW ZEALAND" **1950** were sold to BARRIER REEF AIRWAYS of Australia and "AUSTRALIA" and "TASMAN" to QANTAS (Sydney). "AUCKLAND" was renamed "BEACHCOMBER", registered VH-BRC, and "NEW ZEALAND" became "PRINCESS OF CAIRNS" and registered VH-BRD.

"BEACHCOMBER" was placed in storage and VH-BRD ("PRINCESS OF CAIRNS") operated twice weekly services between Brisbane (their base) and Townsville, Cairns, Lindeman, Daydream and South Molle Islands until it was badly damaged while at moorings on the Brisbane River, at night, by a ship, prior to its departure on service, and sank on the 10th September 1952. It was salvaged and purchased to



become a night club at Coolangatta. While under tow, in an unseaworthy condition, it capsized at sea and sank off the coast approximately opposite the border of New South Wales and Queensland. It was not recovered.

VH-AKP "TAHITI STAR" was chartered from TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS until "Beachcomber" was recommissioned to carry on the services from 27th December 1952.

Ansett Airways of Sydney acquired BARRIER REEF **1953** AIRWAYS and "Beachcomber" plus two Catalinas (PBY5), naming the subsidiary airline ANSETT FLYING BOAT SERVICES. "BEACHCOMBER" was converted to 41 Passenger plus 3 Cabin Crew by fitting 16 seats to the upper deck.

The engine overheating problems were overcome by the fitting of carburettor intakes above the cowlings (originally between the cylinders) and cylinder baffle plates to ensure cooling air passed around the cylinders - especially around the rear bank.

"PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN" (ex ZK-AMD, "Australia", VH-EBX of QANTAS) was later bought from QANTAS and became VH-BRE "PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN".

Initially services were operated from Brisbane to Townsville, Cairns and Hayman Island. Later, both aircraft operated the Sydney - Lord Howe Island scheduled tourist services.

"PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN" broke moorings at Lord Howe on the night of 3rd July 1963 during a violent storm and capsized. It was salvaged but, being in a non-repairable condition, it was stripped of serviceable equipment and sunk outside the reef.

To maintain the services it was necessary to replace "PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN". As no Sandringham or similar flying boat was available, a Sunderland V of the RNZAF (ex ML814 which had served during the war with 201, 422 and 330 Sqdns RAF, then sold to the RNZAF to become NZ 4108) was purchased from the RNZAF and converted to a 42 seat (passenger) aircraft (not to Sandringham specification) by ANSETT at their Rose Bay base, Sydney. This aircraft was named "ISLANDER" and registered as VH-BRF.

Ansett mainly operated the Lord Howe Island services with these two aircraft, but also chartered them for flights to Lake Eucumbene (Snowy River area), Hayman Island and Tahiti.

Lord Howe services were subsidised by the Australian Government. The departure times from Sydney were governed by the state of the tide and the weather at Lord Howe. Operations on the lagoon at Lord Howe were restricted to within the period two hours before high tide to two hours after, due to the depth. Also at certain times of the year the area was subject to severe tropical storms. As no refuelling facilities were available on the island, fuel had to be carried for the round trip. The island is approximately 480 nautical miles from Sydney. Sydney was also the alternate base and the approximate flight time each way was 3½ hours.

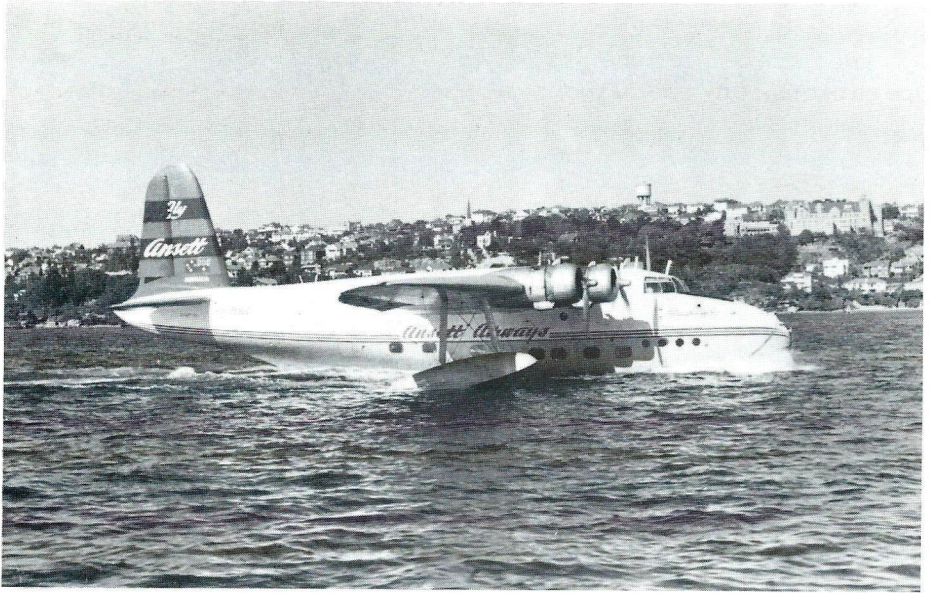
Over the years some eight marine aircraft suffered damage due to weather at Lord Howe. The first was the DH Gipsy Moth 60 Seaplane of Francis Chichester which capsized at moorings during a gale. He was flying the first (solo) crossing of the Tasman Sea (via Norfolk Is) in 1931. The second was the RAAF Catalina PBY5 A24-33 which parted moorings during a gale (90 knots) on the night of 17th September 1943. It was washed ashore on the beach and was not damaged. (Captain was W/Cdr V. Hodgkinson, the author of this history).

The others were:- an RAAF Catalina PBY5 which hit the hills on the north end while attempting a landing in poor weather at night (2 crew survived); Trans-Oceanic Airways' VH-AKO (converted Sunderland III) - 27-8-47; QANTAS Catalina VH-EAX - 23-6-49; "PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN" - 1953; "ISLANDER" - 1965 and "BEACHCOMBER" - 1974.

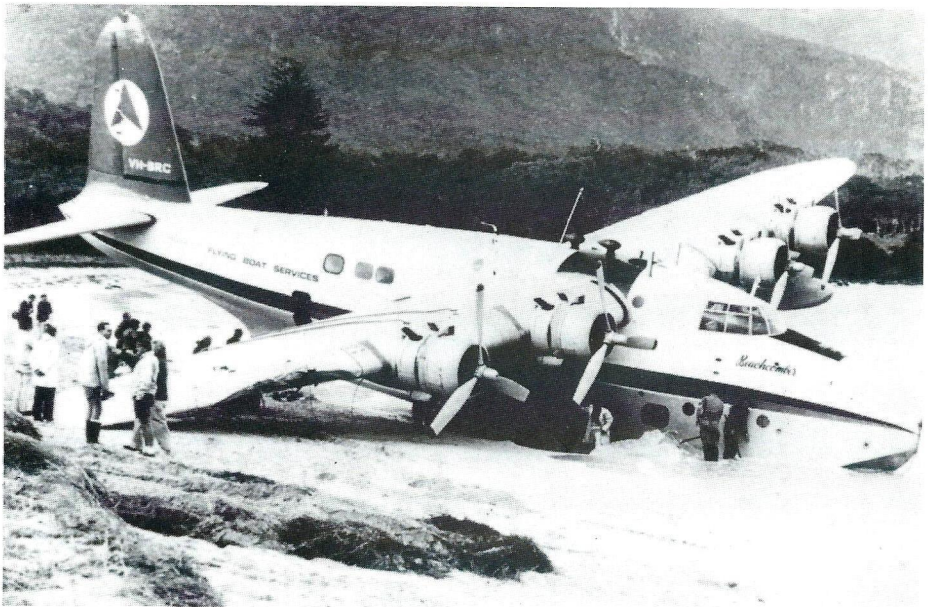
With the construction of an airstrip at Lord Howe, **1974** the flying boat operations to the island ended.

ANSETT FLYING BOAT SERVICES folded up and the two 'boats were sold to Captain Charles Blair of ANTILLES AIR BOATS, Virgin Islands, West Indies.

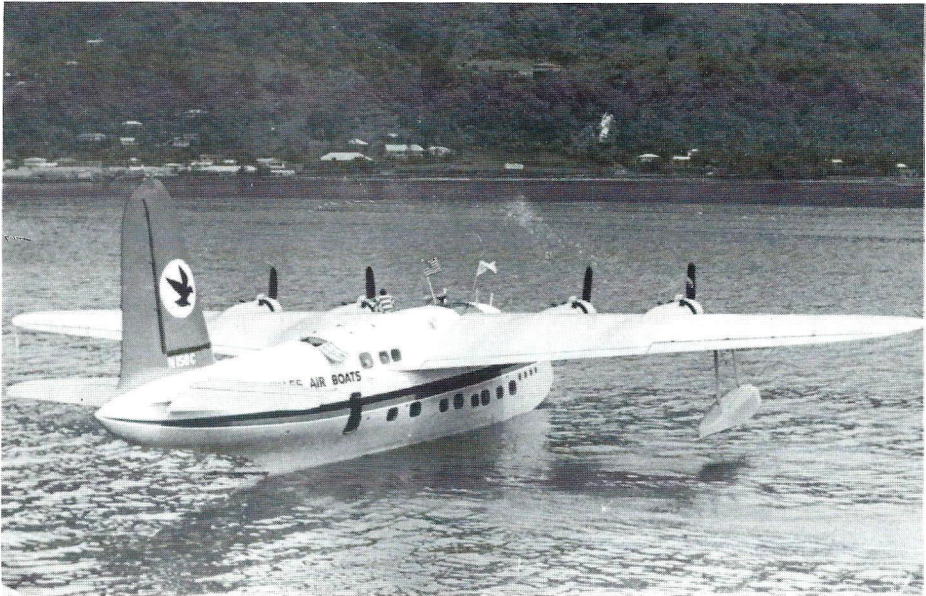
The last scheduled flight to Lord Howe was to be made by "BEACHCOMBER". It was intended that "ISLANDER" depart from Sydney to the Virgin Islands on the 17th June on its delivery flight and that "BEACHCOMBER" remain to operate a token service until completion of the airstrip. However, "BEACHCOMBER" was chartered by the Australian Dept. of Environment & Conservation on the 8th June for a group to examine the impact of the new airstrip on the island's beauty. On the night of the 9th this aircraft



"BEACHCOMBER" VH-BRC at Rose Bay, Sydney, in early Ansett livery (1952)



"BEACHCOMBER" ashore at Lord Howe Island, June 9 1974
(from Sydney Daily Telegraph - courtesy Peter Smith)



"SOUTHERN CROSS" N158C in transit Sydney/West Indies,
November 29 1974 (courtesy Keith Sissons)



"SOUTHERN CROSS" VP-LVE on Lough Derg, Eire, 1976 (courtesy Keith Sissons)

suffered the fate of its predecessors by breaking moorings during an 80 knot gale and running ashore on the beach. It sustained severe damage to the starboard mainplane, the float and the hull, etc.. This was temporarily repaired and the aircraft flown to Rose Bay for major repair.

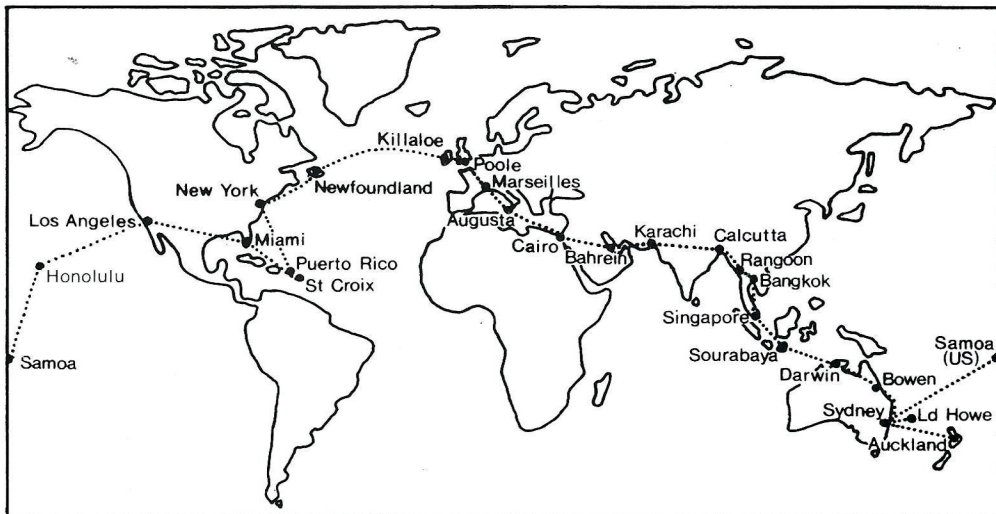
"ISLANDER's" departure to the West Indies was delayed and four days later it flew the charter passengers back to Sydney.

After repairs to "BEACHCOMBER" and a test flight on the 29th August, it had the distinction of operating the LAST flying boat service from the island on the 10th September. "ISLANDER" had already made its last 'Official' flight to the island on the 15th August.

The Australian flying boat era drew to a close when, on the 25th September 1974, "ISLANDER" departed Sydney as N158J, renamed "EXCALIBUR VIII" (Blair named most of his personal aircraft EXCALIBUR), for its new home in the Caribbean. Blair subsequently returned to Sydney and piloted "BEACHCOMBER", in its new markings - N158C "SOUTHERN CROSS" - from Rose Bay, Sydney to its base in the Caribbean on the 28th November 1974. Both aircraft retained the Ansett livery with ANTILLES AIR BOATS markings.

"SOUTHERN CROSS" was re-registered under the Virgin Islands, becoming VP-LVE. It was used on odd charter flights around the West Indies in conjunction with Blair's Grumman Goose amphibians. The American authorities refused to grant a Certificate of Airworthiness to "EXCALIBUR VIII" as the conversion from Military to Civil, carried out by Ansett, was not a 'factory conversion'. It was laid up and used for spares.

"SOUTHERN CROSS" was flown to Lough Derg, Eire, **1976** under command of Captains Blair and Ron Gillies. Blair's wife, actress Maureen O'Hara, had a summer residence near Bantry Bay. The Atlantic crossing took 28 hours. Some local charter flights were made and, on the 23rd August, the aircraft arrived at Poole, Dorset. This trip completed the 'Round the World' flight started on its initial delivery flight some 29 years earlier. The harbour authorities refused operations out of the harbour, so it was moored and flown from Studland Bay, outside the



"BEACHCOMBER'S" 29-YEAR ROUND-THE-WORLD FLIGHT

harbour, on local passenger flights during its stay. The last night, on moorings, vandals removed some of the inspection plugs from the top of the starboard float, allowing water to fill some of the watertight compartments. On arrival of the crew the following morning, this float was almost submerged and the aircraft

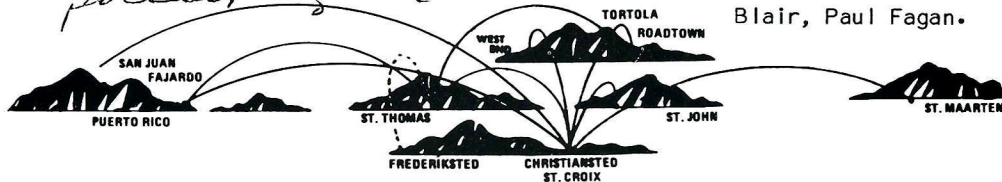
at the point of capsizing. The aircraft was hurriedly taxied to the safety of the harbour and the problem rectified. After refuelling, it departed on August 28th, having operated nine flights over three days.

"Antilles Air Boats, the world's largest seaplane airline and the Virgin Islands' major air carrier, links downtown St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, Tortola, Fajardo, St. Maarten and San Juan with over 120 daily flights."

Noreen Gillies C.3.
Noel Hollé
Charles Blair Paul Fagan



Postcard signed by crew of SOUTHERN CROSS during 1976 visit to Poole. (Unknown), Noreen Gillies (in copilot Ron Gillies' absence), flight engineer Noel Hollé, Captain Charles Blair, Paul Fagan.



Visit to Lough Derg as before with the same crew, **1977** but this time the aircraft visited Calshot, the old RAF flying boat base near Southampton, operating 17 passenger flights from September 5th to 9th. They encountered the same opposition from the Southampton and Solent Authorities as at Poole and were not permitted to fly from Southampton Water, where BOAC had operated until 1950 and Aquila Airways until September 1958. They were restricted to an area off the mouth of the Beaulieu River (in the Solent) some 4 miles from the moorings at Calshot. The only problem, apart from this, was obtaining the correct engine oil. The port inner engine had developed a bad leak.

Captain Blair had lost his life in an accident on **1980** 2nd September 1978 when flying one of his Grumman 'Goose' amphibians near the island of St. Thomas. An engine cowling opened in flight and he crashed into the sea. Shortly afterwards his ANTILLES AIR BOATS went out of business.

Both flying boats became derelict and the local authorities threatened to convert them to scrap to pay for the overdue base charges. Captain Ron Gillies (ex Wing Commander RAAF who had spent the bulk of his flying life since the War on these 'Boats), Chief Pilot of ANTILLES AIR BOATS, took over the two aircraft to find buyers. "EXCALIBUR VIII" was bought by Edward Hulton, the English millionaire, and is at present (1989) at Chatham, UK, under maintenance to flying condition as G-BJHS. "SOUTHERN CROSS" was offered to the Science Museum in London for approximately £100,000. The museum authorities said they would consider this provided it was delivered to the UK.

Ron Gillies, Mike Coghlan and some other enthusiasts attempted to raise the finance needed for the preparation and costs of a delivery flight, but had to raise further capital from a financier.

The aircraft was repaired to a serviceable condition and left San Juan, Puerto Rico, in October to fly through New York, Gander Lake (Newfoundland), direct across the North Atlantic to Killaloe, Eire. The last sector took around 15 hours. It was delayed at Killaloe for over 3 months before the UK authorities granted permission for its entry and it arrived at Calshot on February 2nd, 1981, where it was beached. Airframe hours approximately 19,500 - the highest of any Sunderland type.

The Calshot authorities (Calshot Activities Centre
1981 and Hampshire County Council) requested its removal from this base and as the Royal Navy Base, HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent, on the other side of Southampton Water, had kindly offered a berth, the aircraft was launched on the 6th July, taxied across on 2 engines and beached on the 7th with the assistance of the Navy. During the launching in a Force 6 wind by four of us (normal crew was around 10) the tail trolley broke away and was lost. It was in poor condition and we had secured it to the hull with ropes, in addition to the normal attachment fittings. Despite a thorough search by the RN divers then, and a day after, it was never found. In order to beach the aircraft the following day the beaching trolley from the Sunderland at the RAF Hendon Museum was borrowed. Another trolley was subsequently made, which now supports the aircraft at the Southampton Hall of Aviation. The Museum of Science & Technology of Auckland, NZ, generously sent two beaching legs and part of a Solent tail trolley which were flown to the UK by the Royal New Zealand Air Force. These were greatly appreciated.

A sum of £85,000 was agreed and paid by the
1982 Science Museum (£40,000) and the National Heritage Memorial Trust (£45,000). It was intended to store the aircraft at the Science Museum's hangar at Wroughton, Wiltshire, some miles inland. Both the Rochester Council, where the aircraft was built, and the Southampton City Council offered to build a museum to house it. The aircraft represented the 'Plymouth type' Sandringham which were flown by BOAC from Southampton to Hong Kong and Johannesburg during the latter half of the 40s and serviced at Hythe across the water. Southampton won the day and a new Aviation Museum was constructed to house this aircraft, the R.J. MITCHELL Museum, and other artefacts concerning aviation in the Southampton and Solent areas. The local Air Training Corps was also housed in this building.

On March 1st the aircraft was transferred from Lee
1983 to the Eastern Docks of Southampton on a large self-propelled Army Barge of the 17th Port Regiment, Royal Corps of Transport, Marchwood. Due to delay at Lee, high tide at Southampton was missed and it was brought

ashore the following morning. While the £403,000 Museum was being constructed, the aircraft was placed in a secure compound and the engines, rudder sections, tail plane sections and mainplanes were removed and transferred to a large unused Customs Shed for cleaning, restoration and painting. In disassembled state all the components were moved into the partially completed museum on the 27th and 28th August and there reassembled and restored to its former glory in ANSETT FLYING BOAT SERVICES livery. It was reinstated to VH-BRC "BEACHCOMBER", as it had spent the major part of its active flying life as such. Also there was much displeasure expressed by visiting Australians to it being named "SOUTHERN CROSS", a name sacred to the memory of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith.

1984 Southampton's 'Hall of Aviation' opened on May 26th.

Vic Hodgkinson, 1989

Acknowledgements

17th PORT REGIMENT, ROYAL CORPS OF TRANSPORT, MARCHWOOD, HAMPSHIRE
(Assistance by personnel and Mexeflote Powered Barge)

ROYAL NAVAL AIR STATION, HMS DAEDALUS, LEE-ON-SOLENT
(Storage and assistance beaching and loading on to Army Barge)

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS, SOUTHAMPTON
(Use of secure compound, facilities and large shed)

No. 424 (SOUTHAMPTON) SQUADRON, AIR TRAINING CORPS
(Officers and cadets who carried out the bulk of the initial restoration)

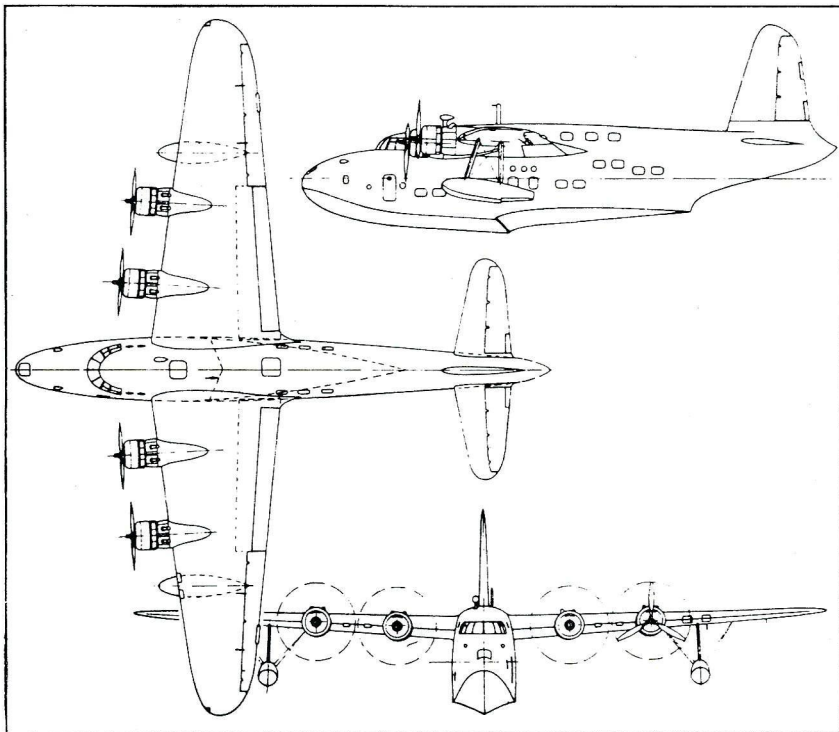
MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT & TECHNOLOGY, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND and RNZAF
(Museum presented two main beaching legs and part of a Solent tail trolley.
The RNZAF flew these to RAF Lyham, UK)

Vetted by DICK FROGGATT - ex ANSETT Flight and Ground Engineer (F/Bs)

All unacknowledged photographs from the author's collection

Layout, maps and word processing by ANGELA SMITH

(Compiled from available information)



PLAN OF SHORT S.25 SANDRINGHAM VII

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF SHORT S.25 SANDRINGHAM IV

SPAN: 112' 9½" (34.3m) LENGTH: 86' 3" (26.3m)
 Area of MAINPLANE: 1,687 sq.ft. (138.1 sq.m.)
 Height of FIN (RUDDER) from ground: 31ft
 Engines: Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R-1830-92C. 1200hp.
 Propellers: Hamilton Constant Speed, fully feathering. 12' 9" diameter.
 EMPTY WEIGHT: 41,000 lb (18,600 kg) ALL-UP WEIGHT: 56,000lb (25,400kg)
 MAX. SPEED: 206mph (179 knots) CRUISE SPEED: 150mph (130 knots)
 RANGE: 2,400 miles (approximately)
 ENDURANCE: 13.8 hours without trailing edge tanks (15 hours with)
 FUEL CAPACITY: (100 Octane) 2,550 gallons (imperial)
 CRUISE ALTITUDE: Not above 10,000 ft with passengers. (Not pressurised)
 CREW: Captain, First Officer, Flight Engineer, 1 Stewardess,
 1 Steward (also attending to slipping and mooring A/C)
 PASSENGERS: 42 (44 passenger seats, 2 for cabin staff)

**SHORT 'SUNDERLAND' CIVIL CONVERSIONS
OPERATED IN THE AUSTRALIAN AREA**

SUNDERLAND III (S25) (Bristol Pegasus XVIII engines)

TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS bought 5 surplus ex-No.40 Sqn. RAAF Sunderlands after the war. Two were scrapped and the other three were put into service flying the inaugural Lord Howe Island/Sydney services (February 1947), Sydney/New Guinea route and charter flights. These three were converted to passenger/freight and became:-

VH-AKO (AUSTRALIS) (ex ML733) - broke moorings at Lord Howe Island and damaged, 1947. Scrapped 1952.

VH-AKP (TAHITI STAR) (ex ML734) - chartered by BARRIER REEF AIRWAYS to fill gap until VH-BRC serviced (see BEACHCOMBER 1952). Scrapped 1952.

VH-AKQ (PACIFIC STAR) (ex ML731) - scrapped 1951 due to spar corrosion.

In 1944 four new transport Mk.III Sunderlands were delivered to the RNZAF, operating under the Flying Boat Transport Flight until November 1, 1947. 3 of these were handed over to the New Zealand National Airways Corp. for a weekly service Auckland - Suva (Fiji). The aircraft were NZ-4102 which became ZK-AMF, NZ-4103 - ZK-AMG (MATAATUA) and NZ-4104 - ZK-AMK (TAKITUMU). Only the latter two were certificated. They ceased operating in June 1950 when the route was taken over by the TEAL Solents.

SUNDERLAND III (S25) 'HYTHE' CLASS

Most of the 19 aircraft in this class, operated by BOAC, flew the Australian route (as well as the Johannesburg and Hong Kong/Iwakuni (Japan) services). The Australian sector covered Darwin, Bowen and terminated at Rose Bay, Sydney. In the 1945-6 period the section between Singapore and Sydney was crewed by QANTAS personnel.

SUNDERLAND V (S25) (Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90B engines)

Built as Mk.III by Short & Harland, Belfast, N. Ireland, S/No. ML814, in 1944. Served in war with 201 Sqn RAF, 422 Sqn. RAF (Canadian), was converted to Mk.V and served in 330 Sqn. RAF (Norwegian). Overhauled by Shorts

at Belfast and stored at RAF Wig Bay, Stranraer.

Sold to RNZAF in May 1953 to become NZ4108 of 5 Sqdn. RNZAF, Hobsonville, Auckland. Sold late 1963 to ANSETT FLYING BOAT SERVICES to replace loss of VH-EBX (PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN) (see BEACHCOMBER 1953) and converted to 43 passenger aircraft at Ansett's Rose Bay base becoming VH-BRF (ISLANDER). The conversion retained the blunt shape of the Sunderland bow, having the nose turret removed and the space faired over, and removal of the tail turret with this area streamlined. It was not identical to a Sandringham-shaped hull and the internal passenger configuration was different. Broke moorings during a gale at Lord Howe Island in June 1965 and damaged.

After end of Ansett's flying boat services it was sold to Capt. Charles Blair, ANTILLES AIR BOATS, Virgin Is, West Indies and departed Sydney across Pacific on 25-9-74. Became N158J (EXCALIBUR VIII) but was not operated by Antilles as the US authorities would not grant a C of A because it was not a "factory conversion".

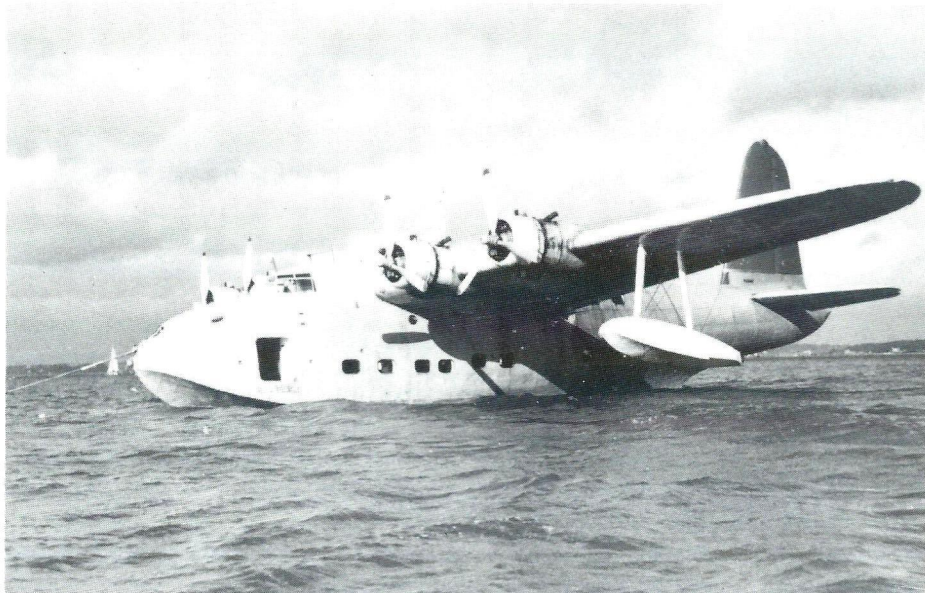
It was bought by Edward Hulton in 1979 and, after extensive repairs flown to Calshot, arriving May 1981, en route to Marseilles for preparation of British C of A, and became G-BJHS. It returned to Calshot in 1982 and flew to Chatham (near the original Short Bros. works in Rochester) in 1984 for further maintenance. Damaged by hurricane in October 1987 while awaiting test flight. Starboard wing (outer), float and aft step major damage. Repaired and, at time of going to press (June 1989) due to become exhibit at a new maritime and aviation museum in Foynes, Eire.

SANDRINGHAM S25

Sandringhams were offered in seven types. The Mk.I was the prototype fitted with Bristol Pegasus 38 (1050 hp) engines and developed from Sunderland III 'Hythe' class G-AGKX (ex ML788). It was rebuilt at Short's Rochester works and emerged in November 1945 as Sandringham I HIMALAYA. The main differences were the replacement of the bow and tail turrets with streamlined sections.

The Mk.II (3 converted) were sold to DODERO, an Argentine operator, accommodating 43 passengers. These were converted from Mk.V Sunderlands, being fitted with Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92B engines.

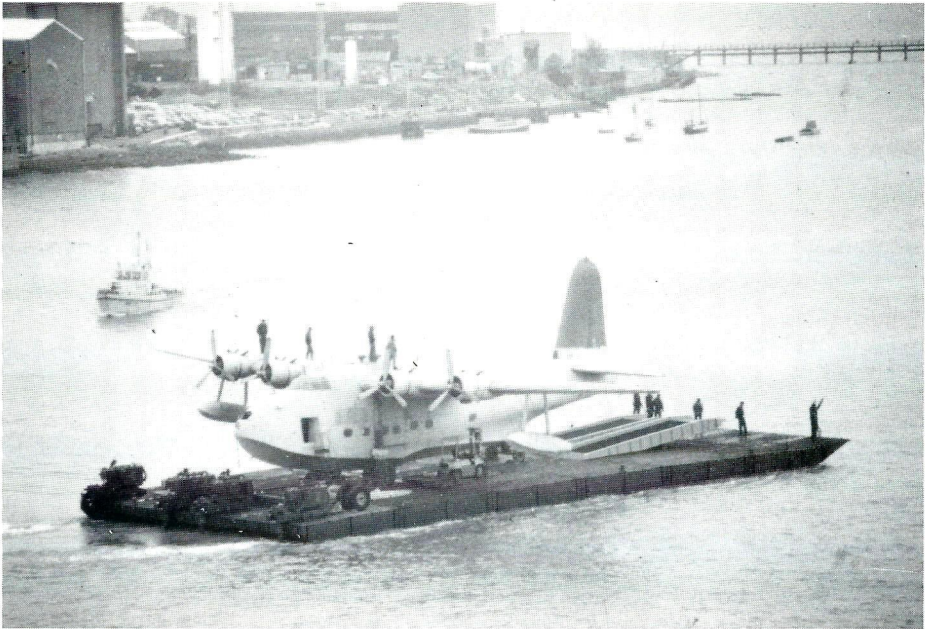
Mk.III (2 converted) went to the same airline, but were later changed to Mk.II to seat more passengers.



"SOUTHERN CROSS" after arrival at Calshot, UK, from West Indies, February 1981. In green primer coat with blue fin.



"SOUTHERN CROSS" crossing road on slipway at Lee-on-Solent, July 8 1981



Above: "SOUTHERN CROSS" in transit Lee-on-Solent to Southampton Eastern Docks, March 2 1983

Below: "BEACHCOMBER" in the Southampton Hall of Aviation



The Mk.IV (4 converted) were sold to TASMAN EMPIRE AIRWAYS LTD (TEAL), based in New Zealand (TASMAN class). They had a longer range, being fitted with Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92C engines, and accommodated 30 day passengers.

ZK-AMB (TASMAN) (ex ML761) - delivered 17-10-46. Sold to QANTAS 18-4-50 and became VH-EBW (no name). On 4-4-51 lost starboard float landing at Rose Bay, Sydney, and damaged mainplane. On 10-6-51 struck uncharted coral head prior to take-off at Vila (New Hebrides). Aircraft a total loss.

ZK-AMD (AUSTRALIA) (ex NJ255) - delivered 5-8-46. Sold to QANTAS 13-4-50, became VH-EBX (PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN). On 3-9-51 port wing severely damaged, after landing, in collision with DCA safety launch at Rose Bay. Sold to ANSETT FLYING BOAT SERVICES 10-12-54 as VH-BRE (PACIFIC CHIEFTAIN) to replace VH-BRD. Broke moorings during gale at Lord Howe Is. on 3-7-63 and severely damaged. Aircraft a total loss and sunk outside reef, after stripping.

ZK-AME (NEW ZEALAND) (ex NJ179) - del'd 4-9-46. Overheated engines mid-Tasman Sea and returned to Sydney (baggage and mail jettisoned) on 3-12-47. Last Tasman flight 19-12-49. Sold to BARRIER REEF AIRWAYS 1950 and became VH-BRD (PRINCESS OF CAIRNS). Sank Brisbane River 1952 on moorings after launch collision (see BEACHCOMBER 1950).

ZK-AMH (AUCKLAND) (ex JM715) - delivered 28-10-47. Sold to BARRIER REEF AIRWAYS 1950 and became VH-BRC (BEACHCOMBER). Taken over by ANSETT FLYING BOAT SERVICES 1953. Sold to Captain Charles Blair, ANTILLES AIR BOATS, West Indies, 1974. Became N158C (SOUTHERN CROSS), later VP-LVE. Sold to Science Museum, London, 1982. Renamed VH-BRC (BEACHCOMBER) and now displayed in Southampton's HALL OF AVIATION, UK. (See BEACHCOMBER history).

The Mk.V (9 converted) were sold to BOAC and known as the "PLYMOUTH" class, fitted with Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92D engines. The following were sold to QANTAS after BOAC's termination of flying boat operations. They could carry 22 day passengers when sold.

G-AHZD (PORTMARNOCK) (ex NJ257) - sold to QANTAS 15-7-51. Became VH-EBV (PACIFIC WARRIOR). Withdrawn 6-6-55.

G-AHZF (POOLE) (ex NJ188) - sold to QANTAS December 1951. Became VH-EBY (PACIFIC VOYAGER). Damaged on bad take-off run at Rose Bay, 31-1-52. Withdrawn 5-7-55.

G-AHZG (PEVENSEY) (ex ML828) - sold to QANTAS 15-7-51. Became VH-EBZ (PACIFIC EXPLORER). Withdrawn 23-6-55.

All were broken up at Rose Bay, Sydney, August 1955.

Mk.VI Five of this mark were sold to the Norwegian airline D.N.L., one being resold later to Argentina.

Mk.VII (3 converted). Sold to BOAC to operate the New York - Bermuda services. Due to the introduction of land plane services on this route they joined the Southampton to Johannesburg / Hong Kong / Japan services. The HYTHES maintained the Sydney services. These three were known as the 'BERMUDA CLASS', and fitted to carry 30 passengers. Two decks with bar. G-AKCO (ST GEORGE), G-AKCP (ST DAVID) and G-AKCR (ST ANDREW).

G-AKCO (ST. GEORGE) (ex JM719) - sold to Captain Sir P Gordon Taylor (P.G. TAYLOR Pty. Sydney) and left Cowes, Isle of Wight, November 1954 after refit. Became VH-APG (FRIGATE BIRD III). Flown on charter flights from Australia to western Pacific islands. Sold May 1958 to RÉSEAU AÉRIEN INTERINSULAIRE (RAI), Papeete, Tahiti and became F-OBIP (unofficially named BERMUDA). Then operated for TAI (1958), RAI (1963) and POLYNESIE-RAI until 1970. Lay abandoned at Papeete for many years and threatened with scrapping when, in 1975, purchased by Douglas Pearson (son of Commander Pearson, former captain of the A/C) and presented to the MUSÉE DE L'AIR, Le Bourget, Paris. It was dismantled and shipped to Brest in July 1978 by the French navy T.C.D. "OURAGON", towed to Le Bourget, arriving November, and restored. Now on display at this museum.

The main differences between the Marks were the number of passenger seats, number of decks (Mk.Vs had a single deck to carry 30 passengers, most others had two decks) and internal arrangement of passenger facilities. All featured the Pratt & Whitney engines, the aerodynamic bow, with the tail turret replaced by a tail cone smoothly faired into the stern of the hull.

SOLENT S45A

This type began life as the Mk.IV SUNDERLAND in 1945 at Shorts, Rochester. It was intended to become a bigger and better Sunderland and be fitted with the more powerful BRISTOL 'HERCULES' 130 1800hp Sleeve Valve engines, have greater range and all-up weight, plus heavier armament - .303, .5 Brownings and 20mm Cannon. The hull was lengthened by approx. 2' 6" with an increase of 1' to the beam. As tests revealed not sufficient improvement on the Sunderland performance, and with the success of the Mk.V developed by No.10 Sqdn. RAAF in the UK, it was rejected by the RAF. Eight were built and known as the 'SEAFORD'.

Six were later converted to civil aircraft, similar to the Sandringham shape, and joined the BOAC fleet. They were rented from the Ministry of Supply and were Mk.III types fitted for 39 passengers and known as the "SOLENT" class. After the BOAC termination of flying boat services, one of these 'boats was sold to TEAL and two to TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS.

A further 16 Solents were constructed, 12 for BOAC (Mk.II) (two of which were later resold to TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS) and 4 for TEAL (Mk.IV). Howard Hughes' SOUTH PACIFIC AIR LINES of Oakland, California acquired 3 Solents (overhauled but not used) - two broken up, one on display by HALCYON at Oakland Airport, San Francisco). Of these, G-AKNT (ex BOAC "SINGAPORE") came from storage at Belfast, G-AKNP from TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS, Sydney (ex VH-TOB) - both Mk.IIIIs - and G-AHIO (Mk.II) from the same company. VH-TOB, ex G-AKNP became N9946F (ISLE OF TAHITI) with SOUTH PACIFIC AIR LINES in 1954. N9946F was bought by the Grant brothers in 1976 and is stored at Oakland Airport, San Francisco, for restoration, named HALCYON.

AQUILA AIRWAYS LTD., UK, later acquired two ex-TEAL Mk.IVs and two ex-BOAC Mk.IIIIs.

Mk.II (ex BOAC) - Bristol Hercules 637 engines (1690hp)
G-AHIV (SALCOMBE) - sold to TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS January 1951 and became VH-TOC. Hit dredger on take off Brisbane River, October 1951, and was total loss.

G-AHIO (SOMERSET) - sold to TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS November 1951 and became VH-TOD. Sold to SOUTH PACIFIC AIR LINES 1953 and became N9945F. Scrapped 1974.

Mk.III (ex BOAC) - 6 converted Seafords.

G-AKNO (CITY OF LONDON) (ex NJ202) - sold to TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS and became VH-TOA. Lost float on take-off at Malta on delivery flight, 28-1-51, and was write-off.

G-AKNP (CITY OF CARDIFF) (ex NJ203) - sold to TRANS-OCEANIC AIRWAYS January 1951. Became VH-TOB. Sold to SOUTH PACIFIC AIR LINES 1954 and became N9946F (ISLE OF TAHITI). Sold to Rick and Randy Grant 1976 and renamed HALYCON. Under restoration in San Francisco.

G-AKNR (CITY OF BELFAST) (ex NJ204) - sold to TEAL 1950 to enlarge fleet. Became ZK-AMQ (APARIMU). Scrapped 1957.

Mk.IV Built for TEAL, accommodating 42 passengers. Fitted with Bristol Hercules 733 engines (2040hp).

ZK-AML (AOTEAROA II) - named by Princess Elizabeth at Belfast 26-5-49. Delivered November 1949. Used by Queen and Duke of Edinburgh during New Zealand tour in 1953. Sold to AQUILA AIRWAYS 5-5-55 (G-AOBL). Sold in Portugal 30-10-58. Abandoned by River Tagus, Lisbon, 1958. Scrapped May 1971.

ZK-AMM (ARARANGI) - sold to TEAL 29-9-49. Broken up after fire damage 1955.

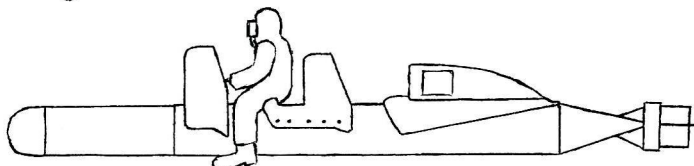
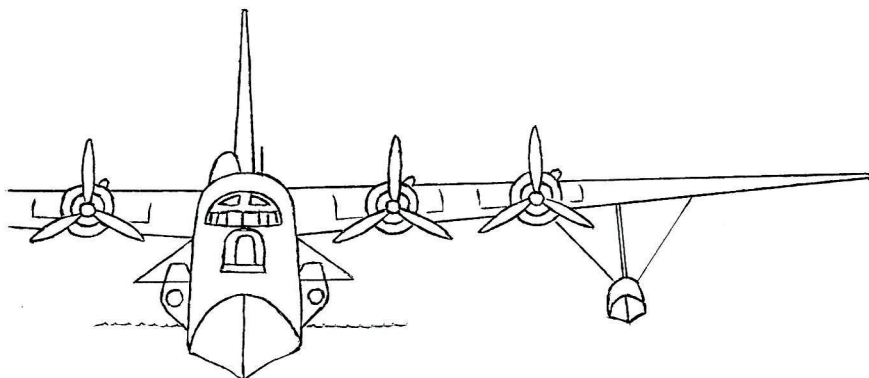
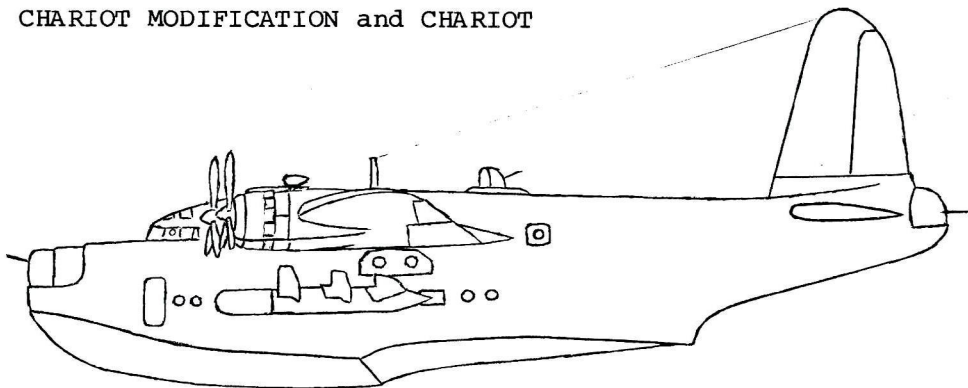
ZK-AMN (AWATERE) - delivered 23-10-49. Sold to AQUILA AIRWAYS, UK, 1955 (G-ANYI). Last flying boat to operate commercially from UK, returning to Southampton on 30-9-58. Sold in Portugal 30-10-58. Abandoned by River Tagus, Lisbon, 1958. Scrapped August 1971.

ZK-AMO (ARANUI) - sold to TEAL 30-11-49. From 1960 preserved at MUSEUM of TRANSPORT & TECHNOLOGY, Auckland.

All TEAL 'SOLENTS' operated Auckland / Wellington - Sydney and western Pacific island services.

PROCEEDS TOWARDS THE MAINTENANCE OF "BEACHCOMBER"
at the SOUTHAMPTON HALL OF AVIATION

CHARIOT MODIFICATION and CHARIOT



(AJS 8/92)

Vic Hodgkinson

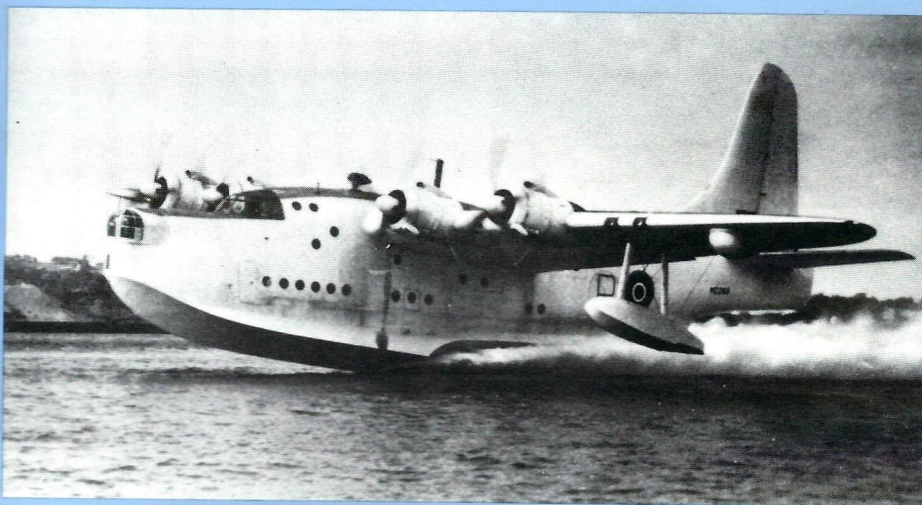
ADDENDUM

Page 10: The "unknown" signature on the postcard belongs, in fact, to Ron Gillies.

Page 16: The plan to exhibit and operate SUNDERLAND G-BJHS in Eire in 1989 failed to materialise and the aircraft returned to its former base at Calshot in September 1989. Two years later it was auctioned at Sothebys but did not reach its reserve price and was withdrawn from sale. As at August 1992 it remains at Calshot with an uncertain future. Inside back cover: Caption to lower photograph should read "MZ269 was the prototype 'Sunderland IV'".



BOAC Short 'Hythe' "HAWKESBURY" G-AGHZ (ex ML727) (1946)



Short 'Seaford' MZ269 taking off on the Medway at Rochester. MZ269 was the prototype 'Sandringham IV', later designated 'Seaford', first flown 30-8-44 and scrapped in 1947.



Above: Short 'Solent II' "SOMERSET" G-AH10 (later VH-TOD of Trans-Oceanic Airways) arriving at Southampton (A Smith collection)
Below: Short 'Solent IV' "AOTEAROA II" ZK-AML of TEAL (1949)

