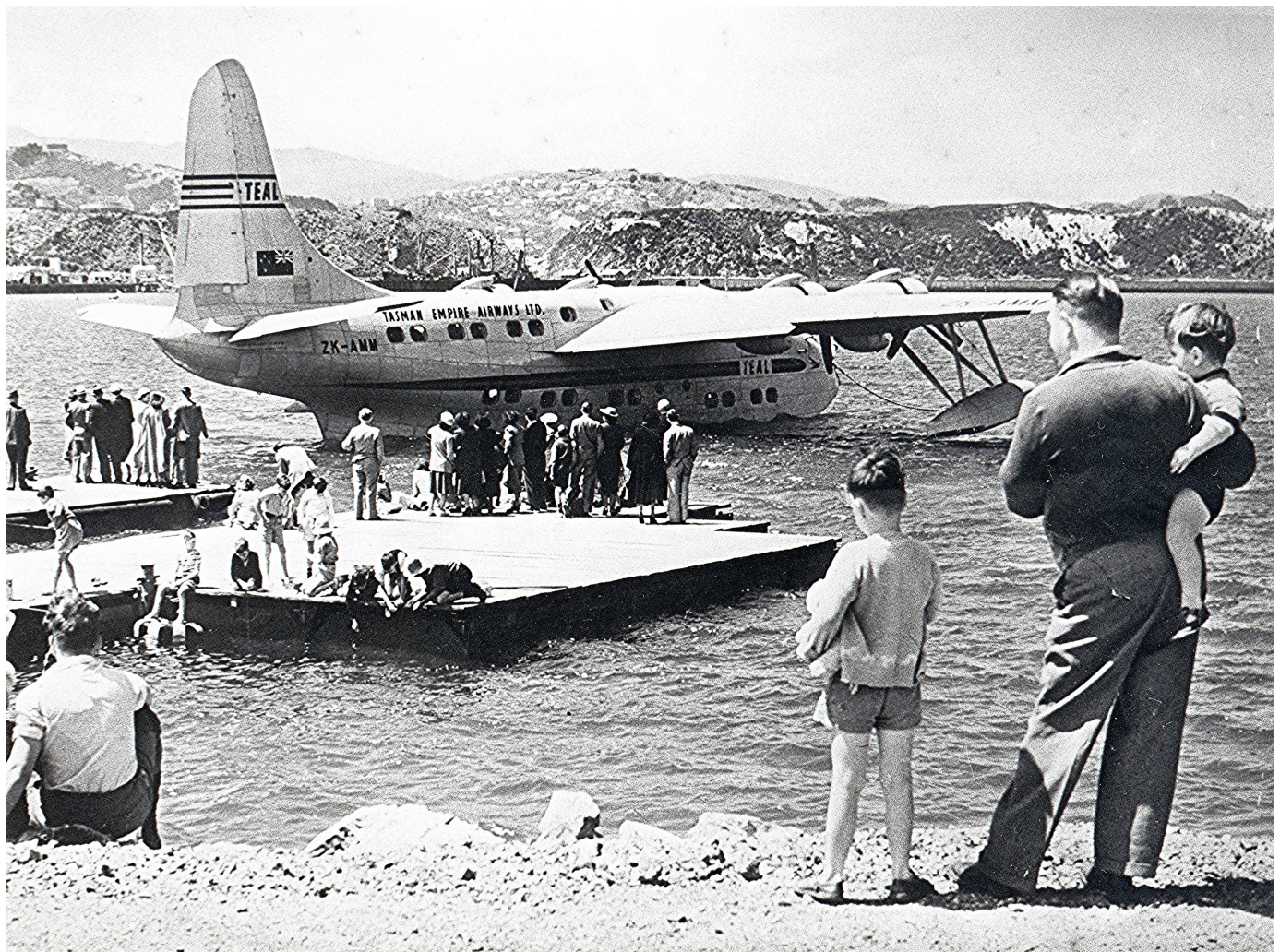




"TEAL Solent Ararangi pulling away from the pontoon at Evans Bay watched by dozens of well wishers. In the three and a half years the Solents operated from Wellington this scene was repeated dozens of times.

The Solent wears the livery of the period, i.e 1951 to 1954"

MEMORIES OF A 'MISHAP'

*How Wellington's Evening Post newspaper reported the mishap to the TEAL Solent **Ararangi**.*

Written and edited by Stephen Berry

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The inauguration of TEAL's Solent flying boat service from Wellington to Sydney in October 1950 was "big news" in the capital. Anything to do with the operation and its passengers were recorded in fine detail by Wellington's evening newspaper. Inbound passengers of note were faithfully recorded in the day's Personal Column, a sample of which can be seen below.

Evening Post 23 October 1951

Personal

Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Picot, of Khandallah, returned to Wellington in the Aranui from Sydney yesterday.

Mrs. F. J. Gough, wife of the newly appointed manager of the United Insurance Company, arrived at Wellington by Solent from Sydney yesterday accompanied by her two sons, John, aged 12, and Bruce, aged 7.

Mrs. M. M. Cunningham, of Upper Hutt, arrived at Wellington by flying-boat from Sydney yesterday.

Mrs. H. E. Holiday, was another of yesterday's Solent arrivals from Sydney. She was returning from a visit to her daughter in Melbourne.

Misses Daphne Chapman, B. Walker, I. Merry and J. Sewell, of Christchurch have been visiting Wellington for the meeting of the Dominion council of the New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Graham, and Mr. and Mrs. Goodbehere, of Feilding, were among visitors to Wellington for the races who returned North today.

Mrs. Hamilton J. Gilmer, who has been visiting Hastings, will return to Wellington tomorrow.

Mrs. P. Sissons, Hataitai, returned in the Wanganella yesterday after a nine months' trip to England.

Mrs. W. E. Herbert, The Terrace, returned by flying-boat from Australia after a visit to England to see her daughter, Mrs. Jeffrey Manning, London.

Mrs. E. S. M. McNaughton (president of the Dominion Federation of the New Zealand Women's Institutes) arrived in Wellington last night by plane from Kaitia. She has been attending district federation council meetings throughout the Dominion and will be visiting the Wairarapa area this week.

So, when the TEAL Solent flying boat *Ararangi* lost her starboard float when landing at Wellington's Evans Bay on the morning of 17 October 1951, the newspaper went into overdrive. At the time, the Solents had been on the trans Tasman service for just over a year and their individual names were known by most Wellingtonians.

Instead of reporting that a TEAL Solent did this, or did that, the papers referred to them by name, such as *RMA Ararangi*, *RMA Aotearoa*, *RMA Awatere* or *RMA Aranui*. RMA stands for Royal Mail Aircraft, in the same way as the trans Atlantic liner *Queen Mary* is always referred to as *RMS Queen Mary* (Royal Mail Ship). After all, the flying boats were ships of the air!

Evening Post 18 October 1951



WITH WEIGHTS over the port float the *Ararangi* keeps her starboard wing up at the moorings in Evans Bay.

FLOAT TORN OFF SOLENT IN GUSTY LANDING

THE R.M.A. ARARANGI'S STARBOARD FLOAT WAS RIPPED OFF WHEN IT WAS CAUGHT BY A SUDDEN 55-KNOT WIND GUST WHILE LANDING AT EVANS BAY FROM SYDNEY AT 6.59 THIS MORNING. THREE STARBOARD WINDOWS AT THE AFTER END OF THE LOWER DECK WERE SMASHED IN BY WAVES.

NONE of the 40 people on the aircraft were hurt though a Danish family got an unexpected ducking when the windows were stove in.

It is just a year and a day since the Ararangi's port float was ripped away by a heavy sea shortly after it landed in Evans Bay from Auckland.

When the Solent, piloted by Captain I. Patterson, came over Wellington at about 6.45am a 38-knot north-westerly was blowing, with 50-knot gusts from the west. Though waves off the Patent Slip were 4ft 6in those in the southern end of the bay were only 2ft.

A Clean Break

TWO minutes before the flying-boat came in to land the wind had lulled to 20 knots and the pilot had actually touched down when a sudden westerly gust lifted the plane's port wing, plunging the starboard float into the water. The impact ripped it off cleanly. Half an hour later it was washed up on the foreshore just above the Evans Bay power house.

Without a moment's delay the crew clambered on to the port wing to prevent the Solent heeling over. For the first officer (Mr. T. Brewer) it was his second experience of clinging to a wing. He was a member of the crew of the Ararangi when it lost its port float in Evans Bay on October 17 last year.

The Civil Aviation Division's control officer at Evans Bay (Mr. R. Gray) promptly ordered his control launch, with Mr. R. Turner at the wheel, under the starboard wing of the Solent to give it support and prevent the flying-boat capsizing. Later the auxiliary control launch, coxswained by Mr. C. R. FINDERUP, took over.

Towed To Buoy

THE TEAL launch, under Mr. B. Flett, went under the plane's port wing to help weigh it down and the aircraft was towed by Mr. T. Edmondson in a fourth launch to a sheltered mooring buoy.

Led by the traffic superintendent (Mr. B. Wallace) and the traffic officer at Evans Bay (Mr. A. Valois), TEAL staff were soon aboard the Ararangi helping weigh down the port wing. Most of them stood near the wing tip, but Mr. Valois took up a position on the float.

Passengers were quickly brought ashore, where Customs officers, under Mr. J. H. S. Wallace and other officials, speedily dealt with the necessary landing formalities. At the same time tea was served by the air hostess (Miss C. D. Connell).

Extent Of Damage

AN early inspection of the Ararangi indicated that the damage to the wing was not as severe as that suffered by the Solent last year, when the wing sheathing was buckled and pieces were torn out of it.

Today's outward flight to Sydney was cancelled, but passengers who were to have gone by it will leave by the Aotearoa at 9am tomorrow. This aircraft is due at Evans Bay from Auckland at 8am. The normal Friday schedule will also operate. The Aranui is due from Sydney at 7.30am and will leave on the return flight at 11am.



ARARANGI'S float washed up near the power-house half an hour after the mishap.

UNCONCERNED

PERHAPS the most casual man in the Ararangi was Mr. Jakob R. Krieg, a Swiss engineer with the Brown Boveri Company. The moment he realised there had been a mishap he began photographing the damaged wing and the activities of the waiting launches.

Prompt Action, Calm Conduct

THERE was no panic on the Ararangi when it lost its float this morning. The crew were out of the escape hatch on to the port wing as if that were their normal landing procedure and the calmness of Miss C. D. Connell, the air hostess, earned special praise from passengers.

A member of the crew of the Solent which caught fire soon after leaving Sydney for Auckland on June 18, Miss Connell was seeing to the well-being of the 33 passengers within seconds of the mishap.

She accompanied each batch ashore and helped them off the launch. Once they were all safely in the Evans Bay Yacht and Motorboat Clubhouse she was busy making tea for everyone.

"This will make you feel better," she said as she handed it round, quite unconcerned that she had been soaked by rain and sea.

'A Great Help'

"THE hostess was marvellous," said Mrs. H. Moorfield Smith, who, with her husband and their two children, Susan, aged 6, and Philip, aged 8, was arriving from Southport, Lancashire, to settle in New Zealand. "Her smiling face was a great help to passengers. Some women would have lost their heads."

"Conditions were very bumpy coming down," said Mr. Smith, "and—there was a note of disgust in his voice—it was just like English weather. There were two bumps when landing. For a moment I didn't know what had happened till I saw, after the second bump, that the float was missing."

Mr. Smith smiled when asked what he thought of his reception in New Zealand. "It's not the start that matters," he said. "It's the finish."

New Float Coming From Auckland

A NEW float for the Ararangi is being sent down to Wellington by truck from Auckland tonight. With it will come a repair crew.

It is unlikely that repairs will be carried out from the newly-installed pontoon at Evans Bay.

Though it is expected to come into use early next month it is not able to cater for flying-boats because bumpers have not yet been installed along its sides.

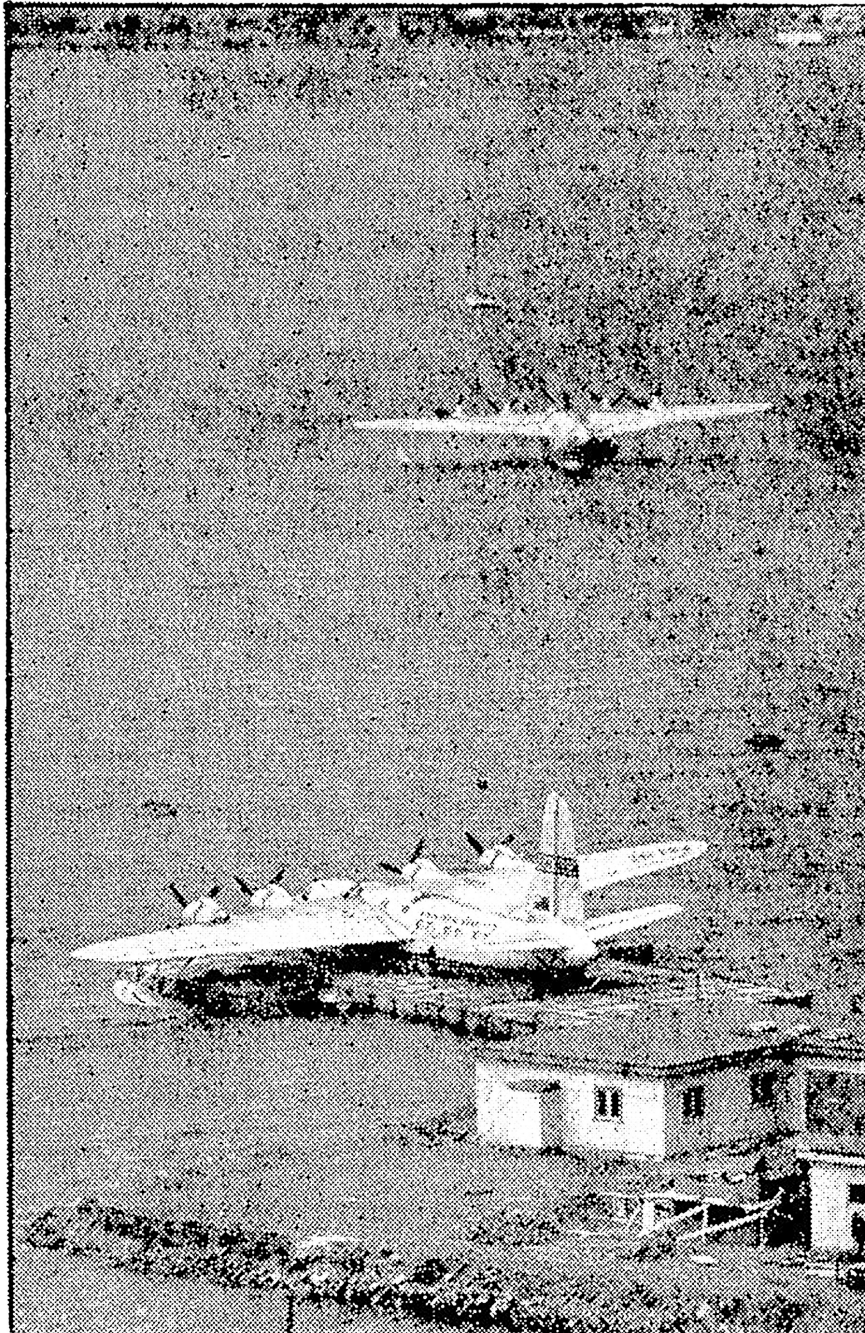
WET WELCOME



ONLY "CASUALTIES" in the Ararangi's landing mishap today were Mr. and Mrs. Fribo O. Larsen, their 16-months' old son, Beni, and Mr. Ingvac Madsen (right). They got wet when waves stove in three windows at the after end of the lower starboard deck. From Denmark, they are on their way to Henderson, Auckland, to settle permanently.

ARARANGI IN PONTOON

TEAL'S new Evans Bay pontoon is in use for the first time sheltering the damaged Solent Ararangi, which was moved in last night. This picture, taken from above the Patent Slip this morning, shows the berthed Ararangi and beyond, the Aranui, being serviced for its 11am flight to Sydney.



Tense Moments During Night Operation With Damaged Solent

TEN minutes after midnight last night the damaged Solent Ararangi was safely moored at the Evans Bay pontoon.

Carried out in the dark without mechanical aids three weeks before the pontoon was ready to receive "boarders," the whole movement operation was a masterpiece of improvisation.

There were some tense moments while the 49,850lb flying-boat was being manoeuvred during lulls in the dying northerly which had earlier been responsible for ripping off its starboard float.

Into icy water

IN the dark TEAL'S leading hand (Mr. Ted Hartley) and, later, Mr. Jim Spurgeon, fell off the pontoon into the icy water. Once their comments indicated that they had not been hurt, their workmates made the most of the comic relief they provided.

Yesterday afternoon there remained about three weeks' work to do on the pontoon before it will be really ready to come into service. Decking has to be laid, water and electricity laid on, petrol feeder pipes connected up, bumpers, gangways and winches installed and compressed air laid on for cleaning purposes.

Only the day before a conference of officials had declared that the pontoon could not come into use before November 10.

Big saving in time

IN spite of these difficulties it was decided to get the Ararangi into it. It would be safe there, it was argued, and the time needed for repairs would be cut by at least 60 per cent.

The pontoon had to be lowered to enable the Solent to get into it. This was done yesterday afternoon when members of the Wellington Fire Brigade pumped between 15,000 and 20,000 gallons of water into the pontoon's tanks. They were helped by Messrs. George Campbell, G. Little, and Arthur Rangi, of the Ministry of Works, who helped build the pontoon at Gracefield.

While this was being done TEAL's station manager (Mr. K. J. Crichton) scoured the city for old motor tyres which were pressed into service as bumpers.

In the evening the wind died sufficiently to enable the flying-boat to be towed to a buoy just south of the pontoon, at the front of which a light was hastily rigged. Rough boards which many times slipped into the sea served as a gangway from the jetty at the reclamation to the pontoon.

Final manoeuvres

DIRECTED by TEAL's assistant chief inspector (Mr. G. H. Willetts), who had flown down from Auckland, and by the station engineer (Mr. E. F. Raper), the final manoeuvres began at 11pm. By this time the northerly had lulled to a gentle breeze.

Two launches under the control of Messrs. T. Edmanson and Bruce Flett gently nosed the Solent from its moorings tail first. On the pontoon TEAL staff, who had been on duty since 6am, hauled on ropes attached to the flying-boat's tail and body. A heavy truck acted as a winch by pulling the ship some of the way, but most of the work was done by the men themselves.

Several times the wind blew the flying-boat out of position but, after 80 minutes' hauling it was finally secured at 12.10am.



TEAL Solent *Ararangi* in the incomplete Evans Bay pontoon

NOT BY ANY MEANS UNIQUE

OF course Wellington is upset that so soon after the commencement of the service such a thing should have happened in our harbour.

But Wellington need not hang her head too much, for the same thing has happened quite a few times when flying-boats have landed on roughish water. Two of Tasman's best-known pilots have had the same experience. Some of the BOAC's best pilots have lost wing-tip floats.

And the same thing happened at Auckland, to a Sandringham flying-boat, towards the end of last year, and we barely heard about it.

Still, it was extraordinarily bad luck.

Weather Stops Solent Flight

Bad weather resulted in the cancellation of the R.M.A. Aotearoa's flight from Evans Bay to Auckland today. The TEAL Solent was originally to have taken 35 Sydney-bound passengers to Auckland at 8 o'clock this morning. A 35-knot southerly with 45-knot gusts at Rongotai changed departure plans. They were put off till midday, then till 5pm, and, finally, abandoned for today.

The passengers who were prevented from leaving for Sydney yesterday because of the mishap to the R.M.A. Ararangi were accommodated at city hotels last night, and will stay at them again tonight. They will fly to Sydney from Auckland tomorrow.

The Weather Office reported today that, though there was a general tendency for the winds to decrease, they were easing very slowly. A general improvement in the weather is expected within a few hours, however.

Evening Post 18 October 1951

SOLENT SERVICE

SOLENT AT BASE.

EVANS BAY.—Aotearoa, Ararangi.

PROJECTED DEPARTURES.

TOMORROW.—Aotearoa (Captain D. Keesing), 8am, ~~the~~.

FRIDAY.—Solent (11am), Sydney.

EXPECTED ARRIVALS.

FRIDAY.—Solent (7am), Sydney.

This service between Evans Bay, Wellington, and Rose Bay, Sydney, will run as follows during October: Arr. Wellington, Tuesdays and Fridays at 7am; depart Wellington, Tuesdays and Fridays at 11am. Normally TEAL is not advised until 15 hours before they arrive which flying-boats are Wellington-bound from Sydney; therefore it will not be possible to publish their names.

Evening Post 19 October 1950

Ararangi To Fly Home On Tuesday?

THE Ararangi, which lost its starboard float and three windows when it landed at Wellington yesterday, is expected to be ready to fly to Auckland for major repairs on Tuesday.

Mr. G. H. Willetts, assistant to TEAL's chief inspector, said today that, in addition to the float and its attachments, the outside starboard propeller would have to be replaced. All its blades were bent when it hit the water. A portion of the starboard wingtip will also have to be repaired.

Slight damage was done to the starboard aileron, but it might not be necessary to renew it in Wellington, said Mr. Willetts.

The new float being trucked down to Wellington from Auckland was expected to arrive early this afternoon. TEAL staff will work throughout the weekend to fit it to the Ararangi.

Evening Post 20 October 1951

Solent Repair Going Well

Such good progress is being made with the work of repairing the Ararangi which was damaged in landing at Wellington on Thursday, that it may be possible to give the Solent a test run late tomorrow.

By tonight a new starboard float and a new propeller for the outward starboard engine will have been fitted. The three windows burst open during the landing will also be replaced this afternoon.

Once the new float has been fitted the engineers' ballast problems will be over—the port wing has to be kept heavily weighted at present—and they will be able to repair damage to the starboard wing.

Ministry of Works employees were busy today building the gangway to link the pontoon with the jetty at the Evans Bay flying-boat base and preparing for its installation.

The flying-boat is attracting much attention. Throughout the morning a constant stream of people, many of them with cameras, visited the base to watch the work on the pontoon.

Evening Post 22 October 1951

Solent's Test Flight

The TEAL Solent Ararangi was given a test flight round the City this morning and will be flown to Auckland tomorrow. A crew is coming down from the north to take it to Mechanics Bay.

Damaged while landing on Evans Bay on Thursday, the flying-boat was made airworthy during the weekend, but will have further work done on her after her arrival at Auckland. A new starboard float and a new propeller for the outer starboard engine were fitted at the weekend and the three windows broken during the landing were replaced.

The Ararangi attracted considerable attention, and hundreds of people went to the Evans Bay reclamation yesterday to see engineers and technicians working on her as she lay in the pontoon.

Besides the Ararangi which will be out of service for some days, the Awatere is also off the Australian-New Zealand run as it is undergoing its annual overhaul at Mechanics Bay.

The repairs to the Ararangi had been completed six days ahead of schedule, said Mr. G. H. Willetts, assistant to TEAL's chief inspector, today. This had been largely due to the splendid co-operation of the men at the base. All had willingly foregone their weekend to get the flying-boat in the air again and yesterday they worked from dawn till dusk.

Ararangi Leaves For Auckland

Tasman Empire Airways Solent flying-boat Ararangi took off from Evans Bay at 1.34pm today for Mechanics Bay, Auckland, and will arrive there at about 4pm for a more rigid inspection and some further reconstruction of a less serious nature.

"It is not likely that the Ararangi will be fully serviceable in less than three weeks," said a TEAL officer this afternoon.

In Auckland some of the wing sheets will be replaced and other reconstruction will be carried out to make the aircraft completely safe for passenger flying.

The Ararangi's starboard float was ripped off by a wave when landing at Evans Bay on Thursday morning. That night the aircraft was docked at TEAL's new pontoon—the first plane to use it. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday repairs went ahead, and yesterday morning a test flight was made.

Captain P. Le Couteur piloted the Ararangi to Auckland. The other two crew members flown down with him from Auckland this morning were First Officer I. A. Russell and Flight Engineer D. R. Phillips.

Tasman's assistant chief inspector for New Zealand (Mr. G. H. Willetts) was the only other person aboard the Solent.



Evans Bay, Wellington, New Zealand