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With all the features pilots appreciated in the original, the new ProFlight

Assessment

The winter theme this issue looks at weather, and includes interviews from Met Office forecasters and air traffic controllers who explain how their job is made doubly difficult when there is a lot of bad weather around. And, just to remember in this
digital and technical age, it is often the tone of a pilot’s or air traffic controller’s voice that conveys the most information. We also examine whether weather (couldn’t resist that) is getting worse, with so much talk about climate change.

We have our regular article about finance from Darren Williams, with some thoughts on financial planning for redundancy, and also an interesting contribution from Terry Brandon on legal issues. On the technical side, First Officer Adam Crehan-Clark takes a good look at the possibility of electric-powered aircraft, and both the maths and physics point to the gas turbine being good for a few years yet!

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Executive President’s welcome

Looking back over the year, it’s hard to believe so much could happen in such a short space of time. This time last year we were dealing with the aftermath of the Gatwick and Heathrow drone incidents, which brought misery for thousands of travellers – but brought drone safety into the public sphere. Consequently, the Government listened to BALPA’s calls for tougher legislation and acted on them. This was a positive start to the year. What followed has been a tumultuous series of ups and downs for our industry – the grounding of the 737 Max on safety concerns, industrial action in British Airways and Ryanair and, of course, the collapse of Flybmi and Thomas Cook.

Airline failures are always traumatic, but the sheer scale of the Thomas Cook collapse sent shockwaves across our membership, the travel industry and the country. Just hours after the news, BALPA launched into action to support our members. While the Government was focused on the largest peacetime repatriation effort since World War II, we ensured our members had the most up-to-date information possible, sought job opportunities in other airlines, and hosted numerous CV and interview workshops. Being a member of BALPA is not just about the collective bargaining advantages, or the legal support you receive should anything go wrong. It’s also the expertise and support our staff and reps offer in difficult times, and the feeling of community you can find across all our members. Whichever airline you belong to, be that fixed-wing or rotary, you have an army of fellow pilots behind you ready to support you through challenging times.

Safe flying,
Paul Naylor, BALPA NEC Executive President and easyJet captain

Counter-drones strategy is welcome

The Government has announced plans to introduce counter-drone technology at UK airports, nearly one year after the chaos caused at Gatwick and Heathrow last Christmas. BALPA welcomes the move, which we hope will deter those minded to do something similar, and help with the detection and arrest of those who go ahead with flying drones illegally.

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Looking ahead

BALPA members at our Flight Crew Futures event in October had the chance to understand what the current job market looks like. Held at Gatwick airport, the event offered a timely opportunity for Thomas Cook pilots, who have recently found themselves out of work. There was representation from airlines including Emirates, Wizz Air and West Atlantic, all of which are recruiting now. There were also exhibits from training organisations including Simtech, FlightSafety International, FTE Jerez and Leading Edge. The BALPA team was on hand to offer support and guidance. If you missed out, why not join us at our next one? We run it twice a year, so look out for details in BALPA newsletters and The Log.

NEC ELECTIONS

The new BALPA National Executive and leadership teams took over this month, following our annual conference. Congratulations to Captain Paul Naylor (easyJet) and Captain Tim Pottage (British Airways), who were elected as Executive President and Vice President, respectively. They will lead the newly elected NEC, to which we welcome First Officer James O’Brien (British Airways), First Officer Andrea Brezenakova (Norwegian/OSM) and First Officer Mark Keane (British Airways). We said goodbye to two long-standing NEC reps, who have worked tirelessly on your behalf for many years – Captain Rich Pullen and Captain Martin Drake. Thank you both – we wish you the very best.

BALPA’s NEC is made up of pilots elected by members, and provides leadership to BALPA’s work throughout the year. Our National Executive Council members are: Paul Naylor, John Bell, Andrea Brezenakova, Conor Connors, Andrew Hammond, Dane Handleby, Will Isherwood-Smith, Mark Keane, Leo Nugent, James O’Brien, Tim Pottage, Rods Ryan, Hugh Sheils and Simon Williams.

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ADC AWARD WINNERS

Each year at our Annual Delegates Conference, we take the opportunity to acknowledge reps – individually and as part of a group – for the outstanding support they give to members. This year, we presented five awards to some very worthy winners.

Our Company Council of the Year accolade went to our Virgin Atlantic reps, to mark the extraordinary turnaround they have achieved since a decline in membership some years ago. The reps have worked hard to recruit new members, and encourage back those who had left BALPA.

Our Rep of the Year award went to easyJet’s James Burnell, who has been instrumental in some incredibly valuable fatigue and wellbeing work, which has filtered into many of our other Company Councils.

We also presented two President’s Awards. The first went to British Airways’ Martin Drake, in recognition of his service to our NEC, his work in areas such as security, and his commitment to improving flight safety. The second award went to the Thomas Cook Company Council for the efforts it made in the aftermath of the airline’s collapse. While going through challenging times, they made a commitment to continue their rep duties to help their colleagues find new employment.

Finally, our Lifetime Achievement award recognised the outstanding work, over many years, of Dave Smith. As a former Company Council and National Executive Council rep, outgoing Chair of the Custodian Trustees, and a BALPA media rep, Dave has contributed a significant amount of time, patience and consideration to supporting BALPA members throughout his flying career with British Airways and in retirement.

We’d like to congratulate all the winners and thank them for their service to BALPA and our members.
By Brian Strutton, BALPA General Secretary

In my vast experience gained over the years, industrial action usually has an underlying cause of a general breakdown in the relationship between employees and their employer, triggered by, or focused on, a particular event, for example, frustration over those countries where it is outlawed). We have the most difficult in the UK than in any other country (with the exception of those countries where it is outlawed). We have the most difficult legal framework; we have the most hostile media; the UK has the most difficult in the UK than in any other country (with the exception of those countries where it is outlawed). We have the most difficult legal framework; we have the most hostile media; the UK has

2019: A YEAR OF ACTION

2019 saw BALPA’s industrial negotiations

In two companies – CHC Helicopters and Flybmi – the threat of industrial action enabled us to hold more meaningful pay negotiations that led to agreements accepted by our members. This was not the case in either Ryanair or BA.

The how

The process of taking industrial action is widely regarded as more difficult in the UK than in any other country (with the exception of those countries where it is outlawed). We have the most difficult legal framework; we have the most hostile media; the UK has a in-built conservatism that militates against direct confrontation.

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As a situation moves towards potential industrial action, our Company Council and its full-time BALPA National Officer will involve me as the General Secretary to try to resolve the situation.

The why

In my vast experience gained over the years, industrial action usually has an underlying cause of a general breakdown in the relationship between employees and their employer, triggered by, or focused on, a particular event, for example, frustration over high pressure and many sleepless nights for our reps and staff – it’s been a year of BALPA members saying ‘enough is enough’ and taking a stand on industrial action. At the time of writing, BALPA is still in dispute, so keep an eye out for updates in newsletters and On The Radar.

Ryanair pilots’ union sets strike dates

BA cancels ‘nearly 100% of flights’ in pilot strike over pay

Ryanair and Balpa dispute impact of latest pilot strike

British Airways cancels flights for 200,000 passengers as pilots strike

We take a look back at an extraordinary year for BALPA’s industrial negotiations

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The what

What BALPA conducted BA and Ryanair’s strike ballots in the summer. The extensive work that went into preparing for these paid off as, predictably, both airlines sought to induct those ballots in the High Court, with BA going on to the Court of Appeal having lost in the High Court. Stating the obvious, these legal challenges stall any negotiations, worsen the mood and make industrial action more likely, not less.

During the strike action, BALPA established strike centres near bases for members to attend on those days. There were incredible levels of pilot unity and solidarity against their airlines with, for me, one consistently used word summing up why everyone was there: ‘respect’. In a cynical industry, it is clearly time for a shift in management ethos. The reactions of BA and Ryanair showed exactly why ‘respect’ was the key message. Both airlines punished strikers through excessive pay deductions and the removal of travel benefits.

For the Company Council reps, supported by BALPA staff, the sheer hard work of building membership unity through meetings and newsletters, and answering emails while taking the fall from the company, should not be underestimated. This summer, we have seen that take its toll on some reps. To add to this pressure on the reps, as well as the wider membership, all of this takes place under much scrutiny from the media. The media circus can be incredibly difficult to manage, and the outrageous tone of some negative coverage can have a detrimental effect on our members, who saw themselves unfairly vilified in the national media. It is something for which we have to be prepared, and the professional PR verdict was that BALPA more than held its own.

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British Airways cancels flights for 200,000 passengers as pilots strike

It will also report to the BALPA Industrial Relations Committee for advice and, if necessary, for authority to hold a poll – an indicative ballot – among members to see if they would be prepared to support action. They will also begin preparations with BALPA’s legal team, and we start ‘cleaning’ the membership database to ensure all the information we hold is correct. Not having the correct information can lead to difficulties later on (see page 17 for the legal challenges). These are crucial steps, given the propensity of airlines to challenge any industrial action ballot on any pretext they can.

If the negotiations remain unresolved and the Company Council and members want to pursue their demands through industrial action, then the BALPA National Executive Council can – after carrying out due diligence on all preparations – authorise a formal industrial action ballot. At this point, the dispute will also become public, so a communications plan is essential. It also means that ACAS automatically contacts the parties to offer conciliation.

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2019: A TIMELINE

We take a look back at an incredibly busy year

By Charlotte Branson, BALPA Media Officer

January
The year began with us watching the dust settle after the Gatwick and Heathrow drone events. At the end of 2018, we saw significant delays – particularly at Gatwick – as a result of a rogue drone (or drones) being flown around the airports. To date, no-one has been arrested for this. However, off the back of a situation that caused misery for many Christmas travellers, there was movement from the Government on some action long called for by BALPA. In January, new laws increasing the drone restriction zone around airports, and giving greater police powers, were introduced.

Following tumultuous financial times in Flybe, the consortium Connect Airways – founded by Virgin Atlantic and AirTanker have already announced some improvements.

February
In February, BALPA launched its maternity pay campaign, Baby on Board, at Westminster. The campaign aims to bring fairer maternity pay to female pilots, in an industry where most can only expect to get the statutory minimum. While the campaign has had to take a back seat publicly, it’s still on various Company Councils’ agendas, and companies such as Virgin Atlantic and AirTanker have already announced some improvements.

March
Airlines and aviation authorities around the world took the decision to ground the Boeing 737 Max following the crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, which came less than six months after the Lion Air flight 610 crash in October 2018. A total of 346 people were killed in these disasters. Questions began to surface around the safety of the aircraft and its automation system. While investigations are still ongoing, the aircraft remains grounded worldwide.

April
BALPA announced it is to host the IFALPA (International Federation of Airline Pilots’ Associations) Conference 2021 in Manchester. We hope the event will highlight the importance of Manchester and the UK in the aviation industry.

July
July became one of the busiest months in recent BALPA history, with the announcement of strike ballots in Ryanair and British Airways. This was followed by not one but two court victories against BA, which tried to injunction the ballot, losing at the High Court and, later, the Court of Appeal. The details of both the Ryanair and BA action is detailed on pages 10-11.

August
In August, Ryanair members carried out the first of their strike days, and we also defeated the company at the High Court, after it similarly tried to have the ballot declared invalid. Strike dates were also announced at BA.

September
September saw the continuation of industrial action, with strikes taking place at BA and Ryanair.

On 23rd September, we were devastated to learn that Thomas Cook had gone into liquidation. Although it was thought that there was an interested buyer, this didn’t materialise, and the company collapsed.

The 9,000 Thomas Cook staff – including around 600 pilots – were suddenly left without jobs, and 150,000 people were stranded around the world, leading to the UK’s largest ever peacetime repatriation effort. Read more on the airline’s collapse and what BALPA has been doing to support members on page 19.

October
BALPA submitted evidence to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy enquiry into the Thomas Cook collapse. We urged the Government to question the airline’s executives on the treatment of staff and missing wages.
Reflecting on this year’s Ryanair strike, several questions come to mind: first, was it a success? I’ll come back to that. The background to our unrest is well known within the industry. Pilots at Ryanair have long felt they’ve been treated as no more than an expensive inconvenience.

We asked a Ryanair member and a BA member to give us personal accounts of how they feel about industrial action – and what it’s like to go on strike.

We have developed sophisticated problem-solving processes, and, for every BALPA member who was prepared to walk out and not speak with one voice, many voted to strike, some voted against and, for every BALPA member who was prepared to walk out and sacrifice a day’s pay, there was another pilot willing to work a day off and earn extra pay. Clearly, we need to work on unity. Pilots need to understand that the airlines that offer the best contracts are also the ones with the strongest union membership.

We disrupted the operation? No flights were cancelled, and colleagues from Europe were flown in to replace them. The company was keen to point out that on-time performance actually improved over the strike period. Did we disrupt the operation? No flights were cancelled, and colleagues from Europe were flown in to replace them. The company was keen to point out that on-time performance actually improved over the strike period.

The Ryanair member

We are simply seeking respect for our careers. Bizarrely, according to our management, the fact that other airlines are struggling with debt, or are going out of business, is seen (at least among my peers) as a reasonable position. We are not demanding political or impossible changes. We are not demanding the boss’s sacking – although many have no time for his attitude or performance. We are not demanding political or impossible changes. We are simply seeking respect for our careers.

The British Airways member

I was out of sorts – unusual for me. As an airline captain, I am selected, trained and practised at being cool under pressure, analytical and decisive. Today was different, though. Today, I was putting my job and career on the line to support my union’s call to strike, something I have never been asked to do before.

The family is quiet over breakfast – everyone is feeling the tension. I am long-resolved not to go in to work. This is not an internal battle over the decision – my mind is firmly made up. This is emotional conflict between the logical decision to support my union and the emotional desire to be all right?” as she left shortly afterwards.

I spend the day in communication with fellow pilots, supporting one another, discovering that the ‘out of sorts’ feeling was common to us all, and determined, to a person, to see it through.
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THE LEGAL VIEWPOINT

Preparing for strike action is no mean feat, especially from a legal point of view

By Charlotte Branson, BALPA Media Officer

Two airlines, Ryanair and British Airways, tried to injunct strike action. Both failed at the courts. Lawyer Stuart Brittenden, who worked with BALPA in both instances – as well as on the previous case mounted by Thomas Cook in 2017 – was a guest speaker at our ADC. He spoke about how we won both cases, as well as the legal issues surrounding industrial action in general.

One of the main points Stuart made is that industrial action takes time – at least three months, and possibly longer, depending upon what stance the employer takes. BALPA’s preference is to conduct an indicative ballot – something we’re not legally required to do, but believe is good practice. Once the result of the indicative ballot is known, time has to be allowed for BALPA and the company to reach an agreement – a month or more may have already passed before we move to an official ballot for action. We must give the employer seven days’ notice of a ballot, allow members time to vote by post and, if the vote comes back in favour of industrial action, we must provide at least 14 days’ notice to the airline of any action.

A company may then try to block strike action by asking for an injunction from the courts. However, in order to prevent this, Stuart says that preparation, preparation, preparation is needed – and from a very early stage. In all of BALPA’s wins, he praised the BALPA legal, industrial and membership teams for their help in this regard. Before a ballot can be sent to members, there is an incredible amount of work to be done to ensure that as and when that ballot is taken to court, it can stand up to legal scrutiny.

The membership data has to be thoroughly checked to make sure all those entitled to vote get the chance, but also because if a ballot paper is issued to members who aren’t entitled (because they are set to retire before the ballot closes, for example), this could be seen as BALPA potentially looking to induce these members to strike if such action is taken. This is something an airline’s lawyers would very quickly use against us. We also need to submit this data to the airline so they know how many pilots, of what rank and from which bases, may be called for strike action.

Communication is key

The Company Council and its National Officer, as well as attending countless negotiation meetings, must keep members up to date on the latest events through a variety of communications, all of which need to be legally checked. It is frustrating, and can mean that, sometimes, communications can seem slow to members, but any wrong step could undermine the whole issue.

Care has to be taken to ensure that any communication consistently describes the issues forming the trade dispute as set out in the ballot paper, and also to ensure that nothing could be construed as amounting to an inducement to pilots to breach their contracts of employment.

Stuart used an example from a case against the train drivers’ union, ASLEF, brought to the courts because of a seemingly innocuous text sent to members. The court ruled against ASLEF and, as a result, the union can never ballot members on the particular issue raised in the text because this amounted to a prior call for action before the ballot. So the stakes are very high.

Ensuring that all bases are covered, as well as drafting in expert legal help from people such as Stuart, has meant that BALPA is the most successful union in recent history at blocking threats of injunction from employers.

And whatever future challenges come our way, we will continue to prepare, prepare, prepare, so we can continue to hold your employers to account.

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We take a look at the human cost of the collapse of the oldest travel business in the world, Thomas Cook

By David Keen, Log Board member and former Thomas Cook pilot

Monday 23rd September 2019 is a date that will stay lodged in more than 9,000 people’s memories. At 2am, the UK arm of the Thomas Cook Group was declared insolvent, and the company liquidation process began immediately. At the time of the announcement, Thomas Cook’s UK fleet of more than 40 aircraft were either on the ground in the UK or on their way back to home base. Landing A330s, all on long-haul flights eastwards to the UK, were allocated remote stands upon arrival. Airport vehicles moved obstacles into place to block any movement of the incoming and already parked aircraft – a most unpleasant sight as daylight broke. No such event took place for the remaining group airlines operating in Germany, Spain, and Scandinavia, which continued to function as before, supported by prompt and EU-approved governmental aid. The 9,000 UK employees lost their jobs in...
THOMAS COOK

families with them. The number of pilot openings at Manchester is with a focus on long-haul A330 operations, which had been Thomas Cook Airlines UK operated from a main base in Manchester, life and family problems for many – both captains and first officers. But other factors have come into play, which are creating enormous differences in experience that exist between individuals in prospect of aptitude tests, having flown professionally for more than years previously. They had experienced a decline in earnings followed by unemployment as their company folded. They then re-started their careers with Thomas Cook on lower pay as first officers. In addition, a substantial group of individuals are in the higher age (and experience) bracket, meaning that their future employment prospects are, realistically, limited. Sadly, many non-EU airlines stipulate age limits and medical requirements that rule out a large number of competent and available pilots. Notable among these are the Middle East and Far East airlines, well known to us all. Perfectly understandable comments from friends in this age group were that they did not relish the prospect of aptitude tests, having flown professionally for more than 30 years. Many selection processes follow a strict format, despite the enormous differences in experience that exist between individuals in a large company. Premature retirement is proving necessary for some, with the associated financial hardship. Recently qualified pilots, with fewer than 500 hours on type, are also limited in the number of carriers to which they can apply. And, for the many pilots aged between 40 and 55, simply not holding the right type rating excludes them from serious consideration by future employers. Paying up to £30,000 for a new rating is simply not a possibility for most.

Life change
But other factors have come into play, which are creating enormous fears and family problems for many – both captains and first officers. Thomas Cook Airlines UK operated from a main base in Manchester, with a focus on long-haul A330 operations, which had been expanded significantly and successfully in recent years. Many employees had relocated to the north west, bringing their families with them. The number of pilot openings at Manchester is clearly limited. Nevertheless, Jet2 and TUI have been quick to respond, and have rapidly set up recruitment programmes to hire significant numbers of pilots for their Manchester and UK bases. In the past three years, Thomas Cook shut down bases at Stansted, Cardiff and East Midlands, and reduced operations out of Belfast. Again, many of our colleagues had relocated to other bases to continue working for the company at Gatwick, Newcastle, Glasgow, Bristol, and Birmingham. Job opportunities are limited or non-existent at some of these airports. Disruption to lives has – and will – continue to take place, for pilots and their families. The consequences are enormous. Pressures within families are taking their toll, both because of loss of income and the likely need to move home and downsize. Schooling, friendships and support networks will all be disrupted, and the psychological effects upon families are not to be underestimated. The hard facts remain – mortgages and loans need to be repaid. Once the redundancy and loss of notice payments have been deployed, there is no possibility to meet outgoings on Jobjseeker’s Allowance. Loss of hard-earned benefits, such as family medical insurance and permanent health insurance (PHI), is hitting people hard. For individuals such as Captain Jerry Ward, paralysed from the neck down after an accident down route, the news that PHI will not be paid to him beyond the age of 60 is truly catastrophic. He will now have to be on a meagre RAF pension and disability living allowance, and start to draw down his pension immediately. He has no prospect of any further employment as a pilot up to normal retirement age.

PRESSURES WITHIN FAMILIES ARE TAKING THEIR TOLL, BOTH OF LOSS OF INCOME AND THE LIKELY NEED TO MOVE HOME AND DOWNSIZE

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Playing a part
On the positive side, BALPA has sprung into effective action on many fronts, with the Membership and Careers Services team giving support on the jobs front. Alongside issuing frequent job bulletins, BALPA has donated a substantial sum to support Thomas Cook pilots working with AirlinePrep, and has also negotiated free and heavily discounted simulator sessions. In addition, videos have been prepared to help in CV and interview preparation, and a mentoring group has been set up with Virgin pilot volunteers to assist those applying to Virgin Atlantic. BALPA’s legal department is currently exploring the possibility for legal claims for protective awards, and the Pilot’s Advisory Group (PAG) is on 24-hour standby to help with confidential support and advice for the many pilots suffering emotional difficulties. A number of pilots from the Thomas Cook pilot community have sprung up, using WhatsApp and other social media. They have addressed the requirement and complexities of ‘signing-on’, a most daunting activity for many. My recent observations confirm that pilots are a resilient and creative lot: all have readily understood and accepted the need to attend Jobcentres regularly. Furthermore, the energy most have put into seeking financial support to maintain their careers has been impressive. But the pain afflicting the 2,000-plus unemployed cabin crew has been such that many remain in denial, and have not signed on. One factor that has surfaced is that sharing of assessment test details has been declared unacceptable by at least one major airline. They have stated that no job offer will be forthcoming to individuals observed to be publicising details of selection processes on social media. Given that former colleagues are now in competition with each other, this is a somewhat painful edict to follow. Again, on the positive side, the BALPA Thomas Cook Company Council is giving assistance and information on Unemployment Benefit, Jobseeker’s Allowance, and provision of financial support for attending interviews, travel, accommodation, sim prep, and medicals. The company and general website has been a great source of help for members, as have specific sections within the BALPA website. It must be stressed that the process of applying for and finding new work is a lengthy process for most pilots. One month after the closures, just a handful of the 597 pilots left had secured job offers. Even those lucky few may have to wait some months before their new contracts start. Two months after the closures, approximately 160 pilots have received firm job offers – less than one-third of the original workforce. Training bonds for those restarting on new types are commonplace with many airlines. Sadly, for a considerable number of pilots — perhaps up to 400 – Christmas and the new year will be a bleak, rather than festive, season. The adverse effects of the Thomas Cook collapse will resonate throughout the British aviation industry for a long time to come.
The Log Board would like to wish all members a very merry Christmas. It’s been a rollercoaster of a year, with our members facing some incredibly tough times. Whether with your families or downroute, we hope you all enjoy the festive season and this time of reflection. Let’s hope 2020 will bring successful negotiations, mutual understanding and effective, safe aviation.

The Log Board

Do you have something to share? We’d love to hear from you!
Email us at TheLog@balpa.org or contact us on social media

Over to you

What you’re sharing

On Thomas Cook

After the collapse of Monarch, I attended an airline prep course the day before an interview with my preferred airline. I still fly for them now, and I hope you all are flying again soon.
Daniel Soesan @dms0esan

The saddest of days for the industry, its customers and my former colleagues at Thomas Cook. Good luck to all.
Paul Naylor @Paulyn319 (BALPA Executive President)

So sad. Thoughts to all
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Merry Christmas from the Log Board

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Could the aeroplanes of the future be powered by something other than jet fuel?

Imagine this: the ground handlers disconnect the external power and give their final checks. Push and start clearance is obtained, you say goodbye to the ground crew and reverse your electric passenger jet on to the taxi line with motors in the wheels. The main engines start up, instantly, and the tax to the holding point is almost in silence. The airline is happy with reduced costs, the environmentalists are happy with the reduction in carbon footprint and, hopefully, you’re happy with a much more comfortable and quieter cockpit.

This may not be our reality, but could it be the reality for our children, who might decide to follow us in our careers as airline pilots? If so, how far away is it — and why do we not have it already?

The short answer is that the gravimetric energy density of today’s batteries is too low. We’ve all seen the groundbreaking and industry-changing work of electric automotive manufacturers, Tesla. The problem starts as soon as we add a third dimension — air — to a vehicle. This massively increases the demand on an engine. We no longer have the ground to support the weight of an engine and fuel. For aviation, a propulsion system needs not only to provide an element of forward velocity but also to counter its own weight through the generation of lift. The present generation of batteries cannot provide enough energy to be able to lift themselves, let alone provide any excess. They cannot lift themselves and the total weight required will increase in an unending and recursive fashion. Each excess iota of energy over the 1.6Mj/kg limit can then be converted into lift for the airframe itself, and further excess can be turned into payload.

Another disadvantage to a battery powered aircraft is that a charged and a discharged battery weigh the same. With a conventional fuel engine, we can take off above maximum landing weight, knowing that we will land under the weight limit as the fuel burns off; with an electric aircraft, we need to take off below the maximum landing weight.

So, weight is a limiting factor. But suppose we could design a battery tomorrow that has the same energy density as jet fuel? What about electric motors? A standard high-bypass turbofan produces between 100-150 kN (kilonewton) of static thrust at sea level, dropping to 25 kN in the cruise due to the drop in air density. This is equivalent to a power output of 6MW and the average jet engine weighs about 220 tonnes. The typical industrial electric fan on the market is 100-150 kN (kilonewton) of static thrust and weighs 10 tonnes.

The big advantage from electric fans comes from not requiring the expelling of exhaust gases out of engine, like a traditional engine needs to. The engine, fairing and its mounting position could be radically re-designed, leading to all sorts of revolutionary aircraft designs that could increase again because of the weight of the batteries and structural improvements. So, until batteries get to at least 1.6Mj/kg, they cannot lift themselves and the total weight required will increase in an unending and recursive fashion. Each excess iota of energy over the 1.6Mj/kg limit can then be converted into lift for the airframe itself, and further excess can be turned into payload.

Worth its weight

So, weight is a limiting factor. But suppose we could design a battery tomorrow that has the same energy density as jet fuel? What about electric motors? A standard high-bypass turbofan produces between 100-150 kN (kilonewton) of static thrust at sea level, dropping to 25 kN in the cruise due to the drop in air density. This is equivalent to a power output of 6MW and the average jet engine weighs about 220 tonnes. The typical industrial electric fan on the market is 100-150 kN (kilonewton) of static thrust and weighs 10 tonnes.

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Hydrogen has a much higher energy density by weight, because it is stable as a gas, it has a much lower energy density by volume, so much larger fuel tanks are required. Even though a fully laden hydrogen aircraft would weigh less, it would have a lot more drag as it would require a much larger surface area, making the shape of the aircraft more like an airship than a fixed wing aircraft. In fact, airships were filled with hydrogen until the Hindenburg disaster, but they used hydrogen as a ‘lighter than air’ lifting source rather than a fuel source.

The second problem is that hydrogen in any form is highly volatile and needs to be held under high pressure in strong, reinforced fuel tanks. They also need to be held close to the centre of gravity in strong, reinforced fuel tanks. This runs counter to our current way of carrying fuel in the wings and payload in the fuselage. So again, a full redesign of how we construct and imagine our aircraft would be required.

Hydrogen in a stable, fuel-ready state also needs to be produced, usually by separating the hydrogen and oxygen in water. It can possibly be produced by low-carbon energy sources like wind, water or nuclear, but is currently made by inefficient fossil-fuel processes. This process of making fuel-ready hydrogen is both more expensive and more environmentally damaging than the current fossil fuels we already use. Potentially, a rise in demand for hydrogen fuel would also raise more investment in the production of hydrogen, which could spur on more efficient sources of the fuel. But until hydrogen’s other problems are surmounted, it remains in a Catch-22 situation.

**Staying power**

Barring any unpredicted and significant technological leap in the near future, for now it seems jet fuel is here to stay. With aircraft manufacturers refining current jet engines and making efficiency a high priority, we are seeing more and more environmentally friendly aircraft taking to the skies. Bigger leaps in efficiency will come from restructuring airspace, so routing between destinations can be made shorter and aircraft can fly at optimum levels more regularly. A small change on a long-winded SID or STAR can make a huge difference when tens of thousands of aircraft routinely take identical flight paths. Removing step climbs and having a bilateral airline agreement to refrain from fuel tankering will also make appreciable differences.

While it’s highly unlikely any of us will be operating in a fully electric passenger jet any time soon, it’s highly likely we’ll manage to make improvements in the carbon footprint of our industry through innovation and administration. Many airlines have projects currently under way, and they are investing a lot of time and energy into finding solutions to the problems listed in this article. Depending on the outcomes of these labours, you might be getting into a renewable energy-powered aircraft sooner than you think.

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**Lighter than air**

Another renewable energy option being researched is hydrogen-powered aircraft. Hydrogen has the opposite problem to batteries: with an energy density around 134MJ/kg, it has about three times the energy per kilogram of jet fuel. This would either reduce the take-off weight required for a normal cruise or keep the weight the same, but vastly increase the range. Also, the only exhaust by-product of a hydrogen engine is water, potentially leaving a very small carbon footprint.

So hydrogen seems perfect, right? Unfortunately, just like the batteries, there are a few physical properties of hydrogen that stop it being the aircraft fuel of the future. First, while hydrogen has a much higher energy density
Is the risk of a North Atlantic mid-air collision increasing?

When flying the Atlantic, does it amaze you as much as it does me that, although we never see ships ploughing their white wake in the ocean beneath us, we regularly see aircraft really quite close to us? This is thanks to the organised track system (OTS). And, because all the aircraft are given strict instructions on track, speed and flight level, risks of mid-air collision are mitigated.

The North Atlantic Safety Oversight Group (NATSOG) uses a target level of safety (TLS), both for planning and monitoring, for the probability of a mid-air collision of $5 \times 10^{-9}$ per flight hour in the vertical domain and the same in the lateral plane. Emergencies are not considered in this figure. The IFALPA Regional Vice President, who attends North Atlantic meetings, is concerned that there is insufficient transparency, and that more attempts to achieve TLS should be made before reducing separation. The trial of 30nm tracks (rather than 60nm separation, laterally) is well under way. IFALPA supports improvements such as advanced surveillance enhanced procedural separation (ASEPS). The NATS trial of ASEPS using automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast (ADS-B) in the Shanwick Oceanic Control Area went live in April 2019, and runs until November 2020.

Growing numbers

Is this scaremongering, Luddism, or are the figures getting worse? The vertical operational collision risk for 2018 was estimated by the NATSOG maths sub-group to be $76 \times 10^{-9}$ without the strategic operational offset procedure (SLOP), and $16.9 \times 10^{-9}$ with SLOP ($10.5 \times 10^{-9}$ in 2017). This is more than three times the TLS, and growing.

Nearly half the traffic uses the centre line, while only 10 to 20 per cent use a 2nm right offset. Decimal offset can now be used with suitably equipped aircraft. The number of reduced vertical separation minima (RVSM) levels crossed without prior ATC clearance has doubled since 2017. The number of minutes spent at an unprotected flight level has increased by 50 per cent over the same time period.

The lateral collision risk for 2018 was estimated at $13.8 \times 10^{-9}$ ($12.8 \times 10^{-9}$ in 2017), nearly three times the lateral TLS. The number of minutes on an incorrect track has increased, since 2017, by 400 per cent. Three times as many tracks were crossed without an ATC clearance as a year earlier.

Conditional ATC clearances (for example, ‘climb FL 350 after 20 west’) are more likely to induce errors than other kinds of clearance, which can result in loss of separation with other aircraft or flying at an incorrect level or on the wrong track.

As flight crew, we should report all errors and our belief as to why they happened, and take particular care when receiving conditional clearances or re-routes.
The latest information and safety notices

SN-2019/008 Helicopter Operations – Guidance on Aerodrome Operating Minima for IFR Departures

This provides guidance on aerodrome operating minima and the aircraft commander/PIC’s responsibilities for helicopter flights, particularly other than CAT/PT, departing IFR from aerodromes not equipped for instrument departures. This SN supersedes SN 2016/001.

SN-2019/007 Helicopter Operations Flight Planning and Safe Flight Execution

Several helicopter events, including the accidents to Agusta A109E G-CRST in 2013, AgustaWestland AW169 G-LBAL in 2014 and AS355F1 G-CHCP in 2017, have highlighted the potential for the conduct of pre-flight planning to have a major impact on the safe outcome of a flight. Similar situations in the USA resulted in specific planning and pre-flight risk assessment requirements being introduced for Emergency Medical Service flights there. These were captured in changes to Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part-135 including new sections 615 and 617.

The purpose of this safety notice is to reinforce to operators, trainers and pilots the essential need for detailed and appropriate pre-flight planning and risk assessment before conducting any flight, but in particular those intended to be conducted under the Visual Flight Rules (VFR). The plan then needs to be executed accordingly. This updates and supersedes SN-2017/003.

SW2019/207 Call for evidence on assistance dogs

The CAA is seeking evidence to help our understanding of the issues faced by assistance dog users when travelling by air. It is also requesting evidence from airlines and airports, which are required by law to facilitate the carriage of recognised assistance dogs. The call is open until 10th January 2020 at consultations.caa.co.uk/corporate-communications/assistance-dogs-call-for-evidence.

EU exit

Please note that, in the event of the UK leaving the EU without a negotiated agreement, some CAA website content and application forms may continue to carry the EASA logo or reference the EU or EASA rather than the UK CAA in the short term. These will be updated in due course following the UK’s departure from the EU. In the meantime, the guidance provided and the application forms accessed via the CAA website portal will continue to be valid.

became law on 30th November 2019. The new drones reunited service for lost drones also launched at droneunited.uk.

SW2019/205 Night Rating completion time FCL.810

All training providers and applicants need to be aware that Amendment (EU) 2019/1747 to Commission Regulation (EU) 1178/2011, has been published, and came into force on 11th November 2019. The Night Rating (FCL.810) has been amended: “Applicants shall have completed a training course within a period of up to six months.” This starts from the first training flight. Course providers need to review their courses operated after 11th November 2019, to reflect this and ensure this timescale is met. Courses started before that date will continue to be accepted prior to 31st March 2020.


The CAA’s new Drone and Model Aircraft Registration and Education Scheme is now live at register-drones.caa.co.uk. The requirements for registration and education became law on 30th November 2019. The new drones reunited service for lost drones also launched at droneunited.uk.

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It is never fun being on strike, especially for pilots; inevitably the press is less than sympathetic. Mark Young, the battle-hardened former BALPA General Secretary, used to say that the press depicts almost all strikes as being about money; journalists fail to grasp that more complex management/staff issues are usually involved.

Just 51 years ago, BOAC pilots started industrial action that culminated in a strike lasting not days, but weeks. The issue was the entry into service of the Boeing 747, which could carry three times more passengers than a 707, plus a 707’s worth of freight. It was about more money for flying ‘Fat Albert’ but, as ever, it was also about a changing style of pilot and management dialogue.

For long-haul pilots, relations were especially tricky with crew hotels at the far end of the line. The hotels had been told to withdraw all pilots’ accommodation, but this was interpreted in various ways. The still-elegant – but then slightly run-down – Raffles in Singapore was magnificent. The manager called all the pilot crew members together, disdainfully held up a fax from BOAC management and said: “Your employer has told me to throw you all out. That is not Raffles’ style – you will all continue to stay as guests of this hotel until this nastiness is all over.”

As money pressures increased, many strikers took jobs as white van men, gardeners, painters and decorators, and even, it was rumoured, assistant zookeepers – which included muck shovelling – and undertakers’ helpers. When it was all over, stories were swapped about offers of permanent employment, apocryphally at more than some junior flying salaries. But nothing in BOAC was quite the same again.

A strike and two rejects

The North Sea helicopter article in the last edition of The Log stirred memories. OG had organised a jump seat ride from Aberdeen to a North Sea rig one blustery February day. On the way home, skirting a lively cumulus, there was an all too familiar flash and bang, while OG muttered: “Just like the tropics.” A snow shower delayed landing at Aberdeen. Later investigation showed damage to one blade, making that 15-minute hold significant. The eventful day continued on the ride back to London, when the Trident conducted two rejected take-offs before a more serviceable ‘ground gripper’ was found for a third attempt. Were the gods sending a message that day?

Locking the lockers

Videos of recent aircraft evacuations show passengers using the slides while clutching hand baggage. In a recent accident, passengers in the rear seats died, their escape delayed by those further forwards retrieving their cabin bags.

The current debate is about when – or if – the overhead lockers should be locked. But society has also changed. Back then, passengers respected crew members’ instructions. There is a fascinating, wobbly, historic 80s film of the evacuation of a 747 in a very windy Lajes in the Azores; all passengers’ hands are empty.

That event raised other issues, which are still relevant. The wind was so strong that several slides ‘flew’ before some courageous individuals went down to act as ballast.

All aircraft have certified handling and crosswind limits, but it seems that nowhere are any wind limits listed for slide use. Is it just a case of hoping the odds against an evacuation in a high wind are too great to bother with?
**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

We look at being suspended from work, and asking for a reference

**Q** Is a suspension from work a neutral act? A colleague rep has recently been suspended from work because of allegations that have been made. It looks like HR has produced a standard template letter explaining that the suspension is a ‘neutral act’, and does not imply that any outcome from the investigation has been decided.

This is an excellent question, and the recent legal position has yet to resonate with most employers. Recent case law has concluded that the suspended person is likely to be worried about what everyone else thinks about the extended and hushed absence from work; the stigma can be more damaging than an actual finding of guilt. A Court of Appeal case, Mayor and Burgesses of the London Borough of Lambeth v Agoreyo [2019], reminds us it will only be legal to suspend an employee if the employer has reasonable and proper cause. This is the test a tribunal will apply when considering whether the act of suspension breached the implied term of trust and confidence, entitling the employee to resign and bring a claim for constructive dismissal.

There are three main points that can be raised with your employer:
1. Do you have reasonable and proper cause for suspending?
2. How long is the investigation likely to last, and what is the cost to the airline?
3. What are the alternatives to suspension?

The airline should be able to demonstrate that suspension is not a knee-jerk reaction. Employers should also exercise caution, as employees can seek to bring a claim in the civil courts for conduct prior to a dismissal – such as an unfair suspension – and access uncapped losses that they could not in an unfair dismissal claim in front of an Employment Tribunal. For example, in an exceptional case, an employee could claim for significant losses arising from psychiatric injury as a result of an unfair suspension, which amounted to a breach of contract.

Obviously, suspension from work is not illegal but, in my view, in most cases it is hard to justify it being a neutral act.

**Q** I have recently left my employment with a business jet company following a disagreement with the airline owner. The owner has stated that he will not provide a reference to a new employer. What is the legal position on references?

An employer doesn’t have to give a work reference – but if they do, it must be fair and accurate. Most airlines have a standard reference that just give the facts such as date of joining, fleet and rank. It can include details about the worker’s performance, and if they were sacked; and can be brief – such as job title, salary and when the worker was employed. Once the worker starts with a new employer, they can ask to see a copy of the reference. They have no right to ask their previous employer.

If you feel that you have been given an unfair or misleading reference, you may be able to claim damages in a court. The previous employer must be able to back up the reference, such as by supplying examples of warning letters.

You will be expected to show that:
- It is misleading or inaccurate
- You ‘suffered a loss’ – for example, a job offer was withdrawn

Importantly, you will need to demonstrate your activity between breaks from work, so registering at your local job centre may be necessary. Airport passes are likely to have to be returned immediately, too. Pay slips or bank statements will demonstrate employment history, so it is worthwhile collating this evidence in case any new employer questions your employment history.

If you have a question you’d like to put to Terry or any of our other BALPA experts, email TheLog@balpa.org
Being made redundant can be very stressful, and it affects people in different ways. For some, it can be a positive experience, as they use the enforced break to reassess their circumstances. For others, it can be a testing time, and one that can lead to other life-changing questions and challenges. One of the factors that affects everybody, however, is the financial implication of being out of work, so we have set out some key issues below to help you evaluate your employment role.

1 Assess your budget requirements
Losing your job will mean your income reduces dramatically. While this sounds obvious, it is very important to consider exactly what this means. In most instances, your outgoings will remain broadly the same, so it is important to budget carefully in the short term. Look at your outgoings and try to split them between ‘must have’ and ‘nice to have’. Clearly, mortgage payments and energy bills – as well as food and insurances – must take priority. Take the opportunity to consider how important gym membership, or the full Sky TV package, is for the moment. These things can be started again once things improve, and small savings now could make all the difference.

2 Your savings/redundancy payment
If losing your job was part of a redundancy package, you may have received a redundancy payment. You need to have been employed for a minimum of two years to receive redundancy; the first £30,000 is paid tax free, with any excess taxed as income. It may be best to avoid blowing this on kitchens, holidays or a new car; this lump sum – and any further savings you have – will be needed to manage your budget. You may have an expectation of picking up a new job easily, but this may not happen. Surely the kitchen can wait until the new job is found. In our previous article (‘Throw off the financial shackles’, Autumn 2019), we highlighted the need for a rainy-day fund equating to at least three months’ income. Redundancy is unquestionably classed as a ‘rainy day’, so this asset should be used to support you. Do try to budget early on, however, to ensure your lump-sum investment lasts as long as is required – and don’t forget to top it back up again once you are in employment. It served you well once, and may need to do so again.

3 Debt management
Debt can cripple you. Credit card debt is especially expensive, so take the opportunity to pay it off if you can. If you can’t, contact the credit card company and explain your position – they can often be very helpful. It is also important to contact your mortgage provider if you have one. They may offer a payment holiday, or may simply increase the term of your loan to reduce your monthly payments.

4 Claim what you are due
If you have been made redundant, you can claim Jobseeker’s Allowance (or Universal Credit, if it has been rolled out in your area). When all is said and done, you have paid plenty of National Insurance (NI) for this very reason. It only pays around £79 a week, but it will at least provide a small element of guaranteed income. It also ensures you gain NI credit for the purposes of state-pension provision.

5 Potential early retirement
If you are over 55 (the earliest age at which you can draw a personal pension), you may think about early retirement. Losing your job may have been thrust upon you, but it may be that the redundancy provided and other assets you have are sufficient for you to consider retirement.

6 Try something different
You may see redundancy as an opportunity to try something completely different: start your own business, train for a new role, or throw yourself into the voluntary sector. This change of circumstance may be the push you need to grasp the ‘training’ nettle. If your resources allow it, this may be the chance to write that book, build that car, lower that handicap or paint that landscape.

So, is this the end of something or the start of something? That depends on your individual circumstances, but it is important to remain active, talk to your family – as it will affect them, too – listen to advice, and continue to plan. Clearly, your budget and savings will have a big say in your next move, and this could be a difficult time. But getting your finances (especially debt management) in order is a very wise thing to do, and will help you in the next stage of your life plan.
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FOR PILOTS: WILL IT NEVER CHANGE?

Keeping an airline and its staff afloat – and content – can be a tricky business.

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By Captain Mike Clarke, honorary member
The major cost that is in their control is staff. This seems to fall between the benefits available at the top of the business and those of the staff who actually generate the company’s worth. It will never happen, but the scale of decisions these boards take over the purchase of aircraft A or B are far less onerous than the decisions taken every day by the crews and engineers involved in ensuring the highest standard demanded for a safe – a very safe – operation, which the paying public expects.

My flying career of 30 years started with Sir Sholto Douglas as chairman and ended with Lord King. The five changes of chairman and highest-ranking captain was 50 per cent, this could be seen as very reasonable. Of course, it knew it’s much different for today’s CEOs. Perhaps boards should have to take into account a more reasonable ratio between the benefits available at the top of the business and those of the staff who actually generate the company’s worth. It will never happen, but the scale of decisions these boards take over the purchase of aircraft A or B are far less onerous than the decisions taken every day by the crews and engineers involved in ensuring the highest standard demanded for a safe – a very safe – operation, which the paying public expects.

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Cloud busting

Controllers have a lot to consider when a pilot asks to avoid bad weather, not least of which is how to get your colleagues out of the way. What can you do to help?

By John Ellis, Deputy General Manager, Swanwick Operations

When it comes to air traffic control, bad weather – particularly extensive and significant cumulonimbus (Cb) activity – is about as helpful as a fender bender on the M25 on a Friday evening. While flight crew may see it or have it painted on their radar, our sector controllers cannot see it.

We want our radar display to be as ‘clean’ and accurate as possible when it comes to showing aircraft, so we process out everything else – birds, for example, and weather.

Weather tends to be very level-specific anyway, so the idea of controllers having a weather overlay is not feasible, given that they can be controlling airspace sectors that are 20,000ft deep or more. Different airlines, pilots flying various aircraft types, and even crews within the same airline apply different interpretations and varying operating procedures when flying through weather phenomena. So, it would be very difficult for controllers to apply consistent judgement about – and take responsibility for – what to avoid, even if we could see weather accurately.

Controlled airspace is ordered and structured, and Damian Boyle, Sector Controller, Area Controller, at NATS, believes it is organised in the best way possible to meet the various requirements of all users.

“I imagine, as a pilot, it doesn’t always seem like this,” he says, “what with the extended routings and seemingly restrictive descent conditions. These are, however, part of the system that allows for a more predictable traffic flow – and more predictability means controllers can handle more aircraft at once, and more aircraft in the sky – safely – means greater capacity of the affected sectors until the weather dissipates. We allow safety to be affected – so the only answer is to reduce the capacity of the affected sectors until the weather dissipates. We do this by localised measures or by application of a regulation via the Eurocontrol system, which is when slots are issued.

Leaving Ipswich heading 125 degrees is pretty much guaranteed to shoot the gap between the Ockham and Biggin and disappear. “We control with a hand tied behind our back,” says Boyle. “We can’t see what you can see.”

Weather avoidance

In a nutshell, bad weather means it gets busier for the controller. We battle internally between a need for it to be less complicated (we like it busy, but we’re not masochists) and the deep understanding that “I’m busy – like, really busy – but these guys are looking out of their window at a big black cloud, dead ahead, with an internal pyrotechnics display”

We get it; we’d be concerned, too. And that tone in your voice – the one that says we really need that turn as soon as possible, London. We hear that, we just need to get your colleagues out of the way first.

“Our systems are designed to minimise the need for controllers to talk to each other; electronic communication and ‘standing agreements’ mean that we can spend more time talking to aircraft and problem-solving,” says Boyle.

Weather avoidance typically entails a request to turn off the standard route and, sometimes, impacts on descent or climb profiles. This triggers an exponential requirement for controllers to coordinate with each other. At best, aircraft enter the next sector off track or at unplanned level; at worst, they enter a sector that they were never expected to enter in the first place.

The controllers’ workload rapidly increases, but we can’t allow safety to be affected – so the only answer is to reduce the capacity of the affected sectors until the weather dissipates. We do this by localised measures or by application of a regulation via the Eurocontrol system, which is when slots are issued.

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In terminal airspace, sectors are smaller and closer together, and controllers are allowed to use prior separation because aircraft are operating at lower levels and speeds within an area of high-density surveillance coverage, which allows for more traffic in the sectors.

**Tailored response**

As a pilot, it can be extremely frustrating to be informed, as you sit ready to taxi, that there is a delay because of weather. You look out of the cockpit and see a grey, but otherwise benign sky, and the tower controllers are pushing the radar controllers to look out of the cockpit and see a grey, but otherwise benign sky, sit ready to taxi, that there is a delay because of weather. You can, because they cannot approach the hold.

The knock-on effect of convective weather is huge – not only to adjacent air navigation service providers, but also to the airfields,“ says Hogg. “If aircraft can’t depart, stands can become an issue; subsequent aircraft cannot land and the system quickly becomes clogged.”

Since 2016, meteorologists have been based at Swarmswick, 24/7, with access to the latest ground-based weather radars and modelling tools. Supervisory teams are supported with up-to-date observations and predictions, allowing a more tailored response to all types of weather – convective, strong winds, low cloud, mist, fog and snow. But what can you, as a pilot, do to help?

When asking to avoid weather, it is helpful to be given as much notice as possible – and include a clear idea of what you need and for how long. In terms of the overall management of aviation safety, controllers are aware that flying through convective weather creates a risk for the pilots, their crew, passengers and aircraft. Equally, asking to avoid weather introduces an element of risk into the ATC system, because aircraft are now potentially interacting with traffic flows with which they are not designed to interact.

It is your judgement as to the level of risk you are taking by flying through weather, but a good measure of the increased activity – and, therefore, risk – in an airspace sector typically lies in frequency saturation. And, in some cases, non-visual clues, such as the tone of voice of the controller managing it.

**Weathering the storm of ‘alternative facts’ and Cb broadcasts**

In early September, President Trump, with the aid of a precision meteorological instrument called a ‘Sharpie pen’, altered the projected track of hurricane Dorian, such that it would hit Alabama, despite the US national weather service being convinced it would track up the US east coast. Presumably, this is what would be referred to as an ‘alternative fact’ by the Trump administration.

Anyway, it goes to show that weather and climate are in the spotlight and becoming increasingly controversial. A large number of people deny global warming, for example – but, to be fair, they do acknowledge changes to the migratory patterns of birds such as clay pigeons, though that might just be because the Earth is flat, of course.

1. On the other hand, am inclined to believe in climate change, if on no better evidence than the increasing number of automated ATIS broadcasts to which we are now subjected claiming “Cb detected”. The automation of these broadcasts might not all be bad, however, because there appears to be a tendency in over-embellish where humans are involved. I’m tempted to think there is an element of ‘covering one’s six’ going on, so it appears it’s not just politicians interfering with the weather, but lawyers, too. I can’t help feeling it’s all getting out of hand.

**Flight of fiction**

Returning to the UK, an aircraft has just got within ATIS range, and at the controls are Captain Leyton Tech and First Officer Buster Level.

“Leyton, I’m back from getting the ATIS.”

“Good, I was getting worried. You seem to have been away a long time.”

“Sorry about that, but I wanted to be sure – the pre-flight met briefing did predict a tsunami at the airfield.”

“Yes, strange that, after all, Woread Guernnсход International is 600ft up, on top of a hill, and no miles inland. Didn’t the company recently change met supplier to Alternative Facts Meteorology TM?”

“Apparently so; it’s a subdivision of Trump Industries I believe. Anyway, it’s bad news I’m afraid.”

**Angry birds**

By Dash Trash

“Go ahead, Buster, give it to me straight!”

“You’re not going to like this, but… THERE’S INTENSE BIRD ACTIVITY AT THE AIRFIELD!”

“OMG! Break out the QRH and give me the non-annunciated drill for landing at an airfield with intense bird activity.”

“Here it is Leyton, the non-annunciated drill for landing at an airfield with intense bird activity.”

1. Continue to the airfield exactly as normal
2. Carry out the approach exactly as normal
3. Are birds encountered? YES/NO:
   IF YES: land exactly as normal
   IF NO: land exactly as normal.

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“ Apparently so; it’s a subdivision of Trump Industries I believe. Anyway, it’s bad news I’m afraid.”
Chris: Is it getting windier? I remember some years ago, as a new captain, operating into Brussels with the wind gusting 44 knots. That stuck in my mind as, at the time, this seemed uncommon, but over the past few years there have been numerous occasions where the wind has been that strong or stronger. Or is it just a case that we are more aware of these events because they are now named?

Darren: There’s strong evidence, presented by the Met Office, of global temperature rise since the middle of the last century. We would expect this to lead to increased moisture and, therefore, energy in the atmosphere, and thus increased wind.

Jon: This increase in the energy and moisture content of the atmosphere has other effects. More moisture means more convection, so more cirrus activity and thunderstorms – a real problem in high-density airspace, such as the London TMA. It also means the troposphere – the lowest layer of Earth’s atmosphere – is getting higher. Currently, over the UK, the tropopause – the interface between the troposphere and the stratosphere – sits at around 30,000–35,000ft, which most jet aircraft can get above. If that is not the case, it will affect flight planning and optimum route utilisation in the future. Rising temperatures at the poles, too, is causing the jet streams to creep further north again, also affecting route planning.

Darren: The current models look at wind predicting an increase in turbulence thanks to climate change. However, work by the University of Reading predicts an increase in turbulence thanks to climate change. Here at the Met Office, the current models look at wind shear potential not severity, but we are moving to a more ‘severity-based’ indicator.

Jon: We have the perception that the prevalence of easterly winds is increasing, possibly linked to a phenomenon such as the strength of the North Atlantic oscillation, but it’s difficult to be sure on the wider scale.

Chris: Is it more turbulent at altitude? When I started commercial flying, I don’t remember having the seat belt signs on in the cruise very often. It appears much more common now, but is this just that we are more sensitive to light turbulence in an increasingly litigious age?

Jon: This may be partly because there are simply more flights; more flights mean there are more opportunities to experience turbulence. However, work by the University of Reading predicts an increase in turbulence thanks to climate change. Here at the Met Office, the current models look at wind shear potential not severity, but we are moving to a more ‘severity-based’ indicator.

Jon: Also, at the moment, we use an approximately 1×1km grid which, since turbulence appears in pockets, means an aircraft can easily slip through the gaps, encountering turbulence where none was predicted, or missing it where it was. Greater computing capacity is allowing us to move to a resolution of 2×2km horizontally. Instead of the 17 vertical levels currently used, every flight level between FL250 and FL450 can be used.

Darren: Also, the format of the TAF is somewhat restrictive. While a TV forecaster may be able to use phrases such as “the situation is somewhat unclear”, that wiggle room isn’t available to us in aviation forecasting.

Chris: Are the above trends just a cyclical blip, or part of a general change in weather patterns, such as global warming and climate change? If so, what does this mean for aviation in the UK and globally?

Darren: It’s ongoing work, but we are considering things such as Tarmac standards, where increased heat may affect the surface of runways. Also, at higher airports – for example, Denver – performance may become more of an issue, requiring longer runways. At the opposite end of the scale, low-lying airports, say London City, are vulnerable to sea level change. We have seen a 1cm rise globally since the start of the 20th century, and a 16cm rise here in the UK during the same period, equating to about 1.4mm per year. Even if the airport footprint is not directly impacted, it could affect access to the airport, and drive demographic changes and effects on patterns of tourism that may significantly alter airport demand.
A brighter outlook
How did the Met Office come about?

By Captain Chris Leech, Log Board member

n 25th August 1859, the fast clipper, Royal Charter, left Melbourne, Australia, bound for the UK. On board were some 375 passengers, 112 crew, and vast fortunes in bullion – the proceeds of the Australian gold rushes. Two months later, on 25th October – having made a port call at Queenstown, Ireland – Royal Charter set sail on the final leg of the journey to Liverpool. What her crew could not know, without the availability of the synoptic charts and forecasts we would expect today, was that a huge Atlantic storm was bearing down on the British Isles.

By that afternoon, as she rounded northwest Wales, she was being battered by 100mph easterly winds which, as the evening progressed, intensified to hurricane force 12 and backed to the north, driving her towards the Anglesey coast. Anchors were dropped to halt the drift, but snapped after two hours. The captain then ordered the masts and rigging to be cut away to reduce windage and give the steam engines a chance but, in the early hours of the 26th, she went aground on a sandbank in Porth Helveti bay. Huge waves swept people from her decks, but rescue still seemed possible. However, a rising tide refloated the vessel, which sealed her fate as she was then dashed against the rocks.

Porth Helveti bay. Huge waves swept people from her decks, and broken in two. Around 40 survivors struggled to shore. The rest, including all the women and children, were drowned or smashed against the rocks.

The wreck of the Royal Charter gave its name to the storm that also claimed 115 other vessels and about 800 lives, and received great public and media attention. In its wake, a retired naval captain, Robert FitzRoy, who – five years earlier – had founded a small department to collate weather data, decided to produce meteorological charts and storm warnings, which he called a ‘weather forecast’. Thus the foundation of the Met Office was laid.

Military importance
Initially it was a civilian organisation under the Board of Trade, but the importance of weather forecasting for military operations became apparent during the First World War and, immediately after the conflict ended, it became part of the Air Ministry. This accounts for why so many data collection points are located at airfields. It became a civilian body again in 2013, and is now the executive agency and trading fund (government-speak for a self-financing unit that operates in a commercial manner) of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. With its headquarters in Exeter, it employs 1,700 people at 60 locations throughout the world and, in 1997, its supercomputer was ranked third most powerful in the world.

Met Office’s HQ in Exeter and in its regional centres at Aberdeen and Belfast.

The Met Office is a CAA-designated provider of meteorological services – including TAFs and hazardous weather warnings at airports. It is also one of only two world area forecast centres – the other is in the US – providing global forecasts of upper winds/temperatures, and SIGWX charts. It is also one of nine volcanic ash advisory centres – its remit covering eruptions originating in Iceland and the northeastern Atlantic.

Many TAFs are produced every six hours, but the length of validity depends on the type of traffic an airport receives. A Heathrow TAF will cover 30 hours (updated six-hourly) to cater for long-haul traffic, but a regional airport – such as Exeter – will get a nine-hour TAF, updated every three hours.

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Many TAFs are produced every six hours, but the length of validity depends on the type of traffic an airport receives. A Heathrow TAF will cover 30 hours (updated six-hourly) to cater for long-haul traffic, but a regional airport – such as Exeter – will get a nine-hour TAF, updated every three hours.
The ‘Santa flight’ season is upon us and, for some BALPA members, the duty of a one-day trip to the Arctic Circle beckons. The term ‘day’ should be employed loosely, as the hours of daylight at destination can be as few as two to three. Sis, an early departure from the UK in the dark, a landing at ‘dawn’, and a return flight in full darkness awaits. And, of course, the prospect of seven to eight hours to while away, either in a crew hotel or in the chill cold of Lapland.

The main destination is Rovaniemi, a town of 30,000 folk in northern Finland. Others include Kittilä and Ivalo. These trips are not generally favoured from a work perspective because of the remoteness of the airfields, the often inclement weather, and the chilling prospect of an aircraft walk-round in temperatures below -30°C. Nevertheless, there are a few sights to see and experiences to savour.

What to do

Obviously, one can pay to join the passengers and head on a bus to Santa Claus Village. The four-hour trip involves meeting Father Christmas in his office and having your picture taken with the man (an extra €20). A trip to his elves’ village is also on the agenda, along with the opportunity to buy limitless Christmas souvenir gifts, all expensively priced – as, indeed, are the drinks and food in the village. Tobogganing and sleigh rides are on offer, though warm clothing is essential for these.

Instead of seeing Santa, a trip to an ice hotel is possible for about €110. You can try sleeping for a while on an ice bed, eat in an ice restaurant, sit on ice chairs, and even visit an ice sauna. All in all, a Lappish novelty – if, again, expensive – and none too exciting. Snowmobiling is another possibility; unfortunately, as with other tours, they must be paid for in advance, so delayed or cancelled flights can be costly.

Eating out

I chose to stay at the hotel, wander around the snowy and rather dingy town in the twilight, and visit the world’s northernmost McDonald’s for a late lunch. For those with more adventurous tastes, you can eat out at a local restaurant and sample specialties such as reindeer burger or steak, grilled or marinated Arctic salmon, and cloudberry crème brûlée. Nili and Monte Rosa are two restaurants that were recommended by locals at the hotel. Sadly, no beer or wine can be taken to wash down the local food and, again, prices are on the high side.

In summary, the day trip is a long one, but particularly useful for practical familiarisation with winter ops (see www.ifalpa.org/publications/library/winter-conditions-at-northern-finland-airports–3217). It also offers the opportunity to immerse yourself in the manuals or enjoy a good book in your hotel room.

By David Keen, Log Board member

Illustration: Tom Woolley

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Night and day

Late night, early morning? Here are some products to help make life easier

1. Belkin Boostup wireless charging dock, £149.99
Compatible with the Apple Watch Series 4 and iPhone 8 and up, this neat device charges your Apple essentials simultaneously without a tangle of wires. What’s more, it supports Nightstand mode for the Apple watch, so you can use it as a bedside clock and alarm. Available from www.belkin.com

2. Amazon Kindle Oasis 2019, £229.99
If you need to read before you drop off at night – but your partner doesn’t want the light on – the Kindle Oasis eReader might be the answer. It features a colour adjustable light that gets warmer as the sun sets, and allows you to filter out blue light at night. You can also stream audiobooks to Bluetooth headphones. Available from www.amazon.co.uk

3. Ultimate Ears Wonderboom 2, £89.99
This portable Bluetooth speaker lets you listen to music anywhere – even in the shower. It’s waterproof, packs a punch in terms of sound, and has an impressive 13 hours’ battery life. Available from www.ultimateears.com

4. Nanu personalised pillow, £35
For that perfect night’s sleep, opt for a personalised pillow. Online, select your preferred firmness using a slider, describe how you sleep, then add your height and weight so the perfect pillow can be created for you. Available from nanusleep.co.uk

5. Smarter Coffee, £149.99
Love fresh coffee, but don’t like having to wait? This smart coffee machine will start brewing via voice command (if you have an Alexa), or you can remote brew it via your smartphone, leaving you to get ready. There’s also a ‘wake up’ and ‘home’ mode, so you can always have fresh coffee waiting for you. Available from store.smarter.ai

6. Gillette Heated Razor, £199
Why put yourself through a cold shave in the early hours when you can enjoy the soothing warmth of a heated razor? The starter kit includes a magnetic dock and wireless charging, and the razor is waterproof so you can use it in the shower. Available from www.gillette.co.uk

7. Lumie Bodyclock Shine 300, £129
Why get pulled from your sleep by a screeching alarm when you can wake up gently with a glowing sun? The Bodyclock features 14 sleep/wake sounds to complement the fading sunset and sunrise alarm, while you can choose the light intensity to create your ideal sunrise. Available from www.lumie.com

8. Gravity Blanket, £149.99
Said to help improve sleep quality as well as reduce stress, anxiety and sleep disorders, this plush, weighted blanket is the ultimate in cosiness. The weight of the blanket should be about 10 per cent of the user’s body weight. Available from gravityblankets.co.uk
in the last edition of The Log, I wrote about the first part of my journey to visit all 50 state capital buildings of the USA. In that feature, we broke off after 24 days and 36 state capitals, as I was travelling through Wisconsin.

On day 25, I spent a pleasant morning in St Paul, Minnesota, and it was then that I encountered snow again. A night in a small town called Alexandria was followed by a couple of days traversing the flat, wide-open and snowbound Dakotas. It seemed that the biggest buildings in these rather unscenic northern states were the grain silos dotted alongside the highway. However, the largest building I encountered in North Dakota was the state capital in Bismarck: a very tall, plain, concrete office block attached to a smaller, plain, circular concrete building.

Next was Pierre, South Dakota, with a population of around 14,000 (only three times that of my village), at least the capital was a little more classical in its design.

In the early morning of 24th March (day 27), I set off for one of the monuments I had been looking forward to seeing since I started planning the trip: Mount Rushmore. As I arrived Rapid City, the weather got worse and, continuing up the Black Hills, I was in thick fog. Ambling at Mount Rushmore, visitability was less than 500 yards, and snow was forecast for late afternoon and evening. I didn’t want to get caught in the area, so after five hours of waiting and watching – and having caught only a fleeting glimpse of George Washington – I had to move on. With disappointment hitting hard, I decided not to head south to Cheyenne, but instead go north and visit the site of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

While investigating where to stay that night, I came across a place called the Sheridan Inn, Wyoming. It was once managed by Buffalo Bill Cody and turned out to be an inspired choice of accommodation. During his tenure in Sheridan, Buffalo Bill would audition acts for his Wild West Show as they passed the hotel on flat-bed trucks of the trains that ran directly in front of the building. Each room in the hotel is named after a real character from the Wild West; I was in the Walter E Scott, aka Death Valley Scouty room.

Next morning, my route to Little Bighorn was complicated, as the I90 from Sheridan to Hardin (just after the national park) was closed because of flooding. Fortunately, the alternative route was a pleasant introduction to Montana. Having been to Isandlwana and Rorke’s Drift in South Africa, and various battlefields in Flanders (my grandfather spent his 18th birthday on the Somme), the battlefield area struck me as another example of man’s stupidity and arrogance. A very sobering introduction to Montana. Having been to Isandlwana and Rorke’s Drift in South Africa, and various battlefields in Flanders (my grandfather spent his 18th birthday on the Somme), the battlefield area struck me as another example of man’s stupidity and arrogance.

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on the 52nd day of my hire, having completed 13,170 miles; driven iconic of all passenger aircraft. had the pleasure of flying during my near 20-year stint on that most to see where they built the 747s (-100, -200 and -400 series) that I’d final (for now) capitol building. The fun wasn’t over, however, as – early housed – a morning truly well spent. many other wonderful aircraft, Howard Hughes’ Spruce Goose is state capitol.
The Oregon Pioneer, also known as ‘Gold Man’, is an eight-and-a-half- and the great Augusta roar could be heard all over the course. of those watching on TV. There was even a hole-in-one at the 16th, crowded, and the mud was painted green so as not to spoil the view I could manage on the roads around Atlanta and Augusta. The following morning, I indulged another long-held wish and went to Evergreen Aviation Museum in McMinnville. This is where, among many other wonderful aircraft, Howard Hughes’ Spruce Goose is housed – a morning truly well spent.

I then continued to Olympia, Washington State, for my 48th and final (for now) capital building. The fun wasn’t over, however, as – early next morning – I was off to Everett, and a visit to the Boeing factory to see where they built the 747s (-100, -200 and -400 series) that I’d had the pleasure of flying during my near 20-year stint on that most iconic of all passenger aircraft. This was day 48. Next morning, my wife flew out from the UK for the final leg of the trip. I headed the Tucson back at 0600 on the 52nd day of my hire, having completed 13,170 miles; driven through torrential rain, fog, snow and bright sunshine; spent countless hours on flat, uninteresting roads; sat in traffic jams; and traversed vast mountain ranges. Not once did it complain or give me cause to curse it. I drank numerous cups of coffee and bottles of water, and had the occasional snack along the way, while ‘in the cruise’.

“How was it?” asked the rental clerk.

“Wonderful!” I replied.

“Do you want to buy it?”

“With that mileage? Not on your life!” I grinned, as I walked away.

At Dahu island, Hawaii, we had a three-night stay in Waikiki and enjoyed being kept awake until 0330 by the partygoers, spring breakers and general revellers. Our more sedate trip included a visit to Pearl Harbor and a boat out to the Arizona Memorial, plus a couple of hours looking round the battleship Missouri, another sad event in mankind’s violent history.

The main reason for being there, though, was to visit my 49th state capital building. The newest state of the Union (hence, Hawaii 5-0), Honolulu has an unusual capital – an open square that symbolises various aspects of Hawaiian culture. It is right next to the only true palace in the USA – Iolani Palace – where King Kamehameha built his residence in the late 19th century. The Hawaiian flag boasts the Union Jack as part of its design, another throwback to when we were thought of more kindly by some. The two days that followed, relaxing on the island of Maui, were definitely needed after the previous eight weeks of activity.

On day 60, we headed back to the mainland for a couple of days in Vancouver, where we met up with Martyn (who I’d been with in Augusta) and his wife, Chris, who were joining us for the cruise to Alaska and the 50th – and final – state capital.

The cruise started on 29th April and the first stop was Juneau. Standing outside the Alaskan state capital was almost surreal, because it is the least used of the 50 capital buildings, with access to the town by sea or air only – but, for me, it was the culmination of 65 days of travelling. It still had nearly a week left of my journey, but I had now completed the task I had set myself.

Alaska is a beautiful place. Although the weather we encountered was quite benign, the grandeur of the scenery and bleakness of the land, just away from the coast, gave an indication of the harshness that the early pioneers must have encountered. The abundant and varied animal life was also an absolute treat. I saw some wonderful things during the trip: giant turtles up close in Hawaii; beautiful scenery; glorious sunsets and sunrises; lovely towns and cities – and I met most very friendly and helpful people throughout the USA. Among many, many signs and billboards, the official town sign for Cottonwood made me do a double take: “Population 99” (there are four times that many people living in my street of 15 houses). A sign in Montana, meanwhile, read: “Rocky Canyon, beware of falling rocks.” I intend to return to revisit Mount Rushmore, spend time in Montana and at Yellowstone Park, and perhaps enjoy a leisurely train journey through the Rockies. In the meantime, a couple of quiet years visiting some beautiful European cities lies ahead of me – I hope.
OBITUARIES

JOHN LESLIE RICHARDSON (1925-2019)

John was a former deputy chairman at BALPA in the 1970s. He was a captain at Britannia Airways for 20 years, before retiring in 1985. Born in Oswestry, John attended school in Glasgow. He joined the RAF aged 16 as an apprentice based in Halton, and graduated to flying school where he enjoyed many tours in Europe, the Far East and Africa, flying the Vampire jet among other aircraft.

Prior to Britannia, John flew for BWIA (British West Indian Airways) based out of Port of Spain, Trinidad. Here, he met his wife-to-be, Elsie (née Beckett, 1929-2014) who, at the time, worked as a stewardess. Here, he met his wife-to-be, Elsie (née Beckett, 1929-2014) who, at the time, worked as a stewardess. John joined the RAF aged 16 as an apprentice based in Halton, and graduated to flying school where he enjoyed many tours in Europe, the Far East and Africa, flying the Vampire jet among other aircraft.

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Graham Wright (1946-2019)

I first met Graham when I transferred to Birmingham in the mid-1980s, where he was a neighbour, my BALPA rep, and a highly respected training captain. In his quiet, non-ostentatious way, he was a remarkable man and yet BEA very nearly didn’t get him.

Graduating from Halton could be a lottery as the wildly varying pass rates would testify and, by his own admission, Graham survived ‘grey bracket’ winning the Vivien Trophy for determination and hard work in the process.

His career took him onto the Vanguard, and from there to Airbus to fly the A380, taking a command on the Viscount before transferring to Birmingham on the BMC 1-11. It was then back to London to fly the 707 and 767, completing his career in 2001 on the Triple 7.

Thanks to the people, British Airways, Birmingham, was a privileged place to work, and it suited Graham’s style perfectly. Besides chairing the local BALPA council, he was also the trusted rep and respected SEIMA rep, where he interfaced between the company and crews when flights had strayed outside the normal operating envelope. It was a brilliant innovation, and only worked because both sides had confidence in the person chosen to fulfil the role.

AERO-NEUROSIS: PILOTS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LEGACIES OF COMBAT

by Mark C. Wilkins (published by Pen & Sword, £19.99)

As aviation took off in 1914, it was predominately young men who flew and fought on both sides during the war. There was a technological advance with these new aeroplanes, and many pilots who survived felt that normal life was nothing in comparison to their time as a fighter ace. Many gigantic advances were also made in the medical profession during this time, mainly thanks to high-powered weapons on both sides. These caused damage to humans that had not been seen before, which then resulted in medics becoming more experienced in dealing with serious injuries and high numbers of casualties. The flipside of military technological advances in weapons was that better medical methods were developed to assist those injured in war.

This fascinating book charts the story of Bill Innes, brought up as a foster child in a thatched cottage with no electricity or running water on the Scottish island of South Uist. His flying experiences were with Glasgow University Air Squadron, and from there he completed national service flying T33s in Canada, and then joined BEA with the Scottish Highlands and Islands services.

The stories he tells about flying in the highlands and islands are frankly mind-boggling, especially those concerning the avoidance of low-level cloud – put simply, stay below it for the entire flight, even if it does mean climbing to avoid sand dunes.

FLIGHT FROM THE CROFT

by Bill Innes (published by Whittles Publishing, £18.99)

This book tells the story of how the aeronautic cottage was built, the moments of terror, and the amazing engineering and craftmanship. Bill went on to become one of the first pilots to fly the iconic Comet, and latterly Boeing 757s and 767s with Air 2000, Canada 3000 and Alitalia.

This book is generously illustrated with many personal photographs, and is an engaging and delightful read.

Review by Captain Andy Brown, Log Board member

Would you like to review a book for The Log? If so, simply email TheLog@balpa.org

BOOK REVIEWS

Our pick of the best flight-related tomes this issue

By Ron Ball
WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT

By Dale Mudie, nextGen Steering Group Chair

One pilot recalls the difficulty of training to be a pilot while holding down a full-time job.

Embracing on pilot training is no mean feat, regardless of which route you choose. It is an all-consuming journey that, at times, will leave you questioning why you started in the first place. Some need to remain in full-time employment while undertaking their training — and finding a way to manage their workload takes careful planning.

After coming home from a 10- or 12-hour shift at work, the last thing I wanted to do was open the books and study. By doing so, however, I took myself from pounding the beat as a police officer to flying for my dream company within four years. But it wasn’t an easy journey, by any stretch of the imagination.

It took me two years to gain my private pilot’s licence (PPL) because of several factors that were out of my control. I’m one of those people who can always find something better to do than study, and the only way I maintained discipline was to set myself strict timescales. This allowed me to structure my training and to better predict the industry’s requirements when I planned to qualify.

I wrote down all the courses I would need to complete to achieve my frozen airline transport pilot’s licence (fATPL). I then wrote down a rough cost and timescale for each element and where I’d like to complete it. This allowed me to research my training options, finances and timescales further, to create an idealistic timeline for my training.

With this plan in mind, I quickly got on with studying for, and sitting, the ATPL theory exams. For a solid nine months, I committed four hours a day to studying. I structured my days off to take advantage of the better weather for flying and, on non-flying days, I’d do extra hours of studying. It made me feel physically sick at times, and it was fatiguing, especially when I thought about the task I was undertaking.

Once the exams were over, I had about four weeks to complete the remaining 20 hours of flying. Securing this time off didn’t come without its challenges — my employer denied my requests for unpaid leave and a career break. Being very strict with my timeline, I was left with two options: remain in employment to the detriment of my plan, or leave the police force. After ensuring I had enough finances to tide me over for a few months once my training was complete, I chose the latter.

I went to Dublin for 10 days to complete an MCC/JOC course and, at the end of all that, I was about two to three weeks ahead of schedule. By the time I reached the end of my initial timeline, I had several job offers on the table and a handful of invitations to assessments.

The hardest part in all of this was maintaining my other commitments, such as family life, socialising with friends, and keeping myself fit. I continually repeated to myself: “Short-term sacrifice, long-term gain.”

In summary, I recommend setting timescales and sticking to them, because — without these — even the most disciplined individual will start to waver. Structure your training to work for your circumstances — and don’t be scared to be selfish.

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