

PFBC Archive: *Our Charity is committed to developing & maintaining its Public-Access Archive...
For the purpose of this website a brief selection of items together with information
have been provided where references in blue indicate further material is available.* Á

Part Twelve: A Compelling Swansong for the Flying Boats... 'Aquila, Artop & TEAL' © PFBC

Poole Flying Boats Celebration acknowledges the significant contribution which [Aquila Airways](#) paid to the History of the UK's Flying Boat services during some 10 years of its operations from 18th. May 1948, until 30th. September 1958. Through his entrepreneurial vision & passion for Flying Boats, former RAF Wing Commander - [Barry T. Aikman DFC](#), with the dedication of his airline staff, a marvellous swansong was added to this history during that period when the last vestiges of travel by the glorious Flying Boats were being wound-up across the world, with new airports for landplanes.

As with some of the relationship of Poole to this history, there were links with Aquila which at first glance seem slender. However, upon closer examination the research to support PFBC's public-access Archive, coupled with very important information generously provided for the Charity by an Hon. Life Member - [Norman Hull](#) (formerly of Aquila Airways), has highlighted various intrinsic connections, which now justify the inclusion of Aquila within a PFBC Website section.

The involvement of Aquila through its batch of [Hythe Class](#) Flying Boats has a certain resonance for the sterling service that the Hythes had when at Poole in operating with RAF Transport Command, - and with BOAC through to April 1948. The same also applies to Sandringham [G-AGKX Himalaya](#) that was purchased by Aquila, along with the former Seaford RAF NJ201, then as OZZA (briefly at Poole as [G-AGWU](#)), which was converted by Aquila as [G-ANAJ City of Funchal](#); as well as Aquila's eventual replacement for this aircraft following its loss, by the Solent Class [G-AHIN Southampton](#)... This had started service with BOAC at Poole, and later been brought to Lake - Hamworthy for storage until its purchase. Therefore, some 16 of the aircraft in service with Aquila, or used only for spares, were previously associated with Poole 13 Short S25 Hythe Class:

[G-AGER Hadfield](#), [G-AGEU Hampshire](#), [G-AGHZ Hawkesbury](#), [G-AGIA Haslemere](#),
[G-AGJJ Henley](#), [G-AGJK Howard](#), [G-AGJL Hobart](#), [G-AGJM Hythe](#), [G-AGJN Hudson](#),
[G-AGKY Hungerford](#), [G-AGLA Hunter](#), [G-AHEO Halstead](#), + also [G-AHER Helmsdale](#)

Short S25 Sandringham Class: [G-AGKX Himalaya](#)

Short S45 Solent Classes: [G-AHIN Southampton](#) and [G-ANAJ City of Funchal](#)

[The remainder were: Sandringham [G-ANAK](#), with Solents [G-AKNU Sydney](#), [G-ANYI Awatere](#) and [G-AOBL Aotearoa](#).]

Further connections are to be realised that PFBC's Hon. Commodore, Air: [Capt. James Peers](#) was specifically influential in the modifications in design which had provided adaptations in the arrangement of floats on the Solent 2 & 3 Classes, and which were incorporated in production by Shorts - Belfast in 1949 of a quartet of [Solent 4s](#) commissioned by TEAL. This had followed Capt. Peers identification of the teething problems experienced with the introduction of the Solent 2s and those detailed specifications which he recommended as the remedy, that subsequently proved to be most successful ! With the christening of the flagship [ZK-AML Aotearoa II](#) by H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth at Belfast on the 26th May 1949, *Capt. Peers was presented with a lovely token which denoted the considerable appreciation expressed to him by Shorts.*

As TEAL's (Tasman Empire Airways Ltd.) flagship this aircraft was to significantly renew its royal connection in 1953: For Queen Elizabeth II (accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh), as the new sovereign, made her only flight in a Flying Boat aboard *Aotearoa II* on 19th. December, by boarding at Fiji, then flying from Suva to Lautoka (returning overhead), before heading out to Tonga, with Capt. JR McGrane in command for a memorable flight of 3 hours. (*ref. A.N.Z. 2006*) This was a stage in the Royal Visit to Commonwealth countries when seaborne in [SS Gothic](#) as a temporary Royal Yacht west from Jamaica *via* the Panama Canal; and where their next journeys would be to New Zealand, Australia & Malaya.

In 1955 a pair of Solents was acquired for Aquila from TEAL, that included *Aotearoa* which was registered as [G-ABOL](#).



The Royal Party boards *Aotearoa II* at Suva



Aotearoa II with the Royal Party on board arriving in Tonga

Photos courtesy of Tongaturismo.info

The third significant dimension relating to Poole, exists in a previously under-researched fact that Aquila was contracted in support of an American broker in second-hand aircraft, [Colonel DM Miller](#) of [International Aircraft Sales](#) - who was involved in dealing with BOAC for obsolete aircraft from its former Flying Boat fleet moored off Hythe, and elsewhere. Accordingly, various of these were delivered to Lake at Hamworthy initially for storage & potential sale, or dismantling; where Aquila Airways took part in this relocation under instruction from Mentra Ltd. which commissioned this contract.

Young [Norman Hull](#) initially starting as a junior with Aquila for a 20 year career stint in Southampton's Travel Industry, was able to enjoy a marvellous experience for new staff provided by Barry Aikman, of a trip in one of the Flying Boats: *'It was usual for new members of staff a flight in a flying boat: often this happened when a test flight was being made'...*

So a golden opportunity arose for Norman on 7th. July 1953 to join with Capt. John Alcock & his crew on such a flight to Poole Harbour: It is recalled to have been in a Solent - so this is likely to have been on board [G-AHIN Southampton](#), which it is recorded was delivered to Lake and brought ashore for a period of storage, before being retrieved for Aquila ! [Captain Alcock was a brother of Sir John Alcock. His experiences have been well-described in Graham Coster's book *'Corsairville: The Lost Domain of the Flying Boat'* with the story of [G-ADVB Corsair](#) - inspirational salvage operation.]

After landing at Poole the aircraft was moored so that a launch could take out a nightwatchman, and then bring the crew from the entrance to the Wareham Channel to Poole Quay, for taxis to the railway station for the return to Southampton !



Of the dozen Flying Boats stored at Lake from 1953, only 3 of these flew again:
[G-AHIN Southampton](#)
[G-AKCO St. George](#)
[G-AKNT Singapore](#)

The other ones inevitably corroded - until there was just an option to dismantle them on site (or to relocate to Lower Ham foreshore), as this Yard of the former [RAF Hamworthy](#) was to be used by the [Royal Marines](#)

Norman describes beautifully this experience in his book *'Flying Boats of the Solent'* pub. in 2002 (ISBN 1 85794 161 6):

" It was quite an exciting experience being a passenger aboard a flying boat when it took to the air... At first, as it gathered speed, the tail would drop into the water for a few seconds, which would rush by in a mass of foam. as the nose - or should it be the bow (?) - took to the air the whole aircraft would detach itself from one element, the sea, and become part of another, the air... Touching down, the pilot had no need to lower any landing gear - the very design of the flying boat made it natural to adapt from one element to the other with the grace of a swan. There was a swishing sound when the hull first made contact with the water, and it was not long before the flying boat was either safely moored to a buoy or, as at Southampton snug in the U-shaped floating dock where disembarkation was by a gangway. "

[Barry Tomson Aikman](#) founder of Aquila Airways provides the fourth dimension within this quartet of links with Poole. In WW2 he was on 210 Squadron which became known as the Catalina Squadron and replaced 461 at [RAF Hamworthy](#).

Before 210 switched over to the Catalinas, the Squadron when at [Pembroke Dock](#) was equipped with [Sunderland Mk Is](#). Subsequent moves at the start of WW2 saw detachments to [Invergordon & Sullom Voe](#), with 210 to [Oban](#) in July 1940, at which base from April 1941 [Catalinas](#) replaced the [Sunderlands](#); before returning to Pembroke Dock in October 1942. It was on 25th. April 1941 that Acting [Flt Lieut Aikman](#) was involved in action, for which he was honoured with a DFC: With [Sunderland T9076](#) he searched for the missing Cat [AH532](#), whilst fending off an attack from a [Focke Wulf Condor](#).

A month later on 25th, May when piloting Cat [AH531](#) his aircraft was involved in the desperate search for the [Bismarck](#), but instead located the heavy cruiser [Admiral Hipper](#) (- which bore some resemblance to the 'primary target' battleship). [PFBC HLM and great supporter [June Topham](#), is the widow of G.G.Topham - Sub Lieut on one of the remarkable [Swordfish](#) from the Fleet Air Arm's 820 Squadron on HMS [Ark Royal](#) which as [Fifth Flight](#) in a second wave, successfully attacked the [Bismarck](#).]

A further log entry for 11th. July details [Flt Lieut Aikman](#) with [W8414](#) found a convoy and escorted 84 merchant vessels, then attacked a possible U-boat which was emitting an oil slick, causing greater spillage indicating its likely destruction !

Postwar he joined the Lancashire Aircraft Corp., but his love of Flying Boats and entrepreneurial spirit soon re-emerged. As a Graduate of Oxford Univ. he had a good grasp of financial matters with a significant network of business contacts... and raised the finance to set up a company for the purchase of 2 ex-BOAC Hythe Class Flying Boats at £10K each with the option if this transaction was successfully completed for a further 6 at just £4K for each aircraft (+ many spare parts).

As the final Flying Boat services operated by BOAC had come under increasing scrutiny, inevitably leading to their end, the resulting vacuum and potential niche in the market were viewed as a business opportunity by [Barry T. Aikman DFC](#). With a pedigree as a former Wing Commander during WW2 with RAF Coastal Command, who had flown Sunderlands, he was well-placed to appraise these remaining Hythe Class Flying Boats decommissioned by BOAC & made available. These were gradually taken out of service for disposal in 1948, replaced by a last batch of the Solent Classes for BOAC as converted Seafords constructed for RAF, but not required. Designated as the Solent 3s, these were brought up to the standards of BOAC's Solent 2s (the last of the UK's purpose-built civilian passenger carrying Flying Boats - by Shorts).

It was considered that a dozen Hythes were in satisfactory serviceable condition, and well-worth the low purchase price. For the most part these were moored on Southampton Water, but would require a maintenance facility other than Hythe. His independent company formed in May 1948 as [Aikman Airways Ltd.](#), was to be the last British Flying Boat Airline! Capital was raised for the immediate purchase of [G-AGIA Haslemere](#) and [G-AHEO Halstead](#) (re-registered 23.07.1948) which were put into service on the [Berlin Airlift](#): The blockade of the 3 sectors of Berlin under control of the Americans, the British & French Forces of Occupation following WW2, was started on 24th. June, and lasted until 12th. May 1949. This confrontation where Soviet Russians blocked routes across their occupied part of Germany, became a serious crisis. The only solution was to fly in all the enormous range of supplies required by the citizens in the western zones of Berlin.

This unprecedented logistical undertaking (in a little over a year's duration) was to involve more than 200,000 flights... with circa 4,000 tons moved on a daily basis. Besides 2 airports much developed at Templehof Airport and RAF Gatow, a third was eventually constructed by the French on Lake Tegel's strandline, all playing a significant role for landplanes. Also there was a Flying Boat base established on [Lake Havel](#) next to RAF Gatow. for use by up to 10 RAF Sunderlands: These Flying Boats were especially ideal to transport cooking salt which could prove highly corrosive to the landplanes.



Sunderland Mk V on 201 Squadron
- Imperial War Museum Collection



From 5th. July - 201, 230 & 235 OCU Squadrons comprised this Transport Force, with aircraft carrying 4½ tons a time. It became clear that military aircraft alone could not collectively provide sufficient capacity to meet all the requirements. A decision was taken to charter civilian aircraft as well: In total 26 Charter Companies were involved including Aquila. [Flight Refuelling](#) based in Dorset at Tarrant Rushton, provided 3 [Lancastrian tankers](#) on charter to carry vital liquid fuel into RAF Gatow. Eventually, 7 companies operated tanker aircraft in carrying a total of 92,282 *short tons* of such fuel... Up to 12,000 *tonnes* of coal, food and fuel was transported during the Airlift - flown in daily (one landing every minute).

By late Summer 1948, the RAF Sunderlands were joined by [Haslemere](#) & [Halstead](#) until the *Havelsee* froze over during mid-December. [G-AGEU Hampshire](#) was added by Aquila in Jan. 1949, but was only deployed for a handful of flights. Of the 265 flights by Aquila (earning this company £55,000 in revenue), one carried eleven and a half million cigarettes. Their loads were collected from Finkenwerder on the R. Elbe close to Hamburg, and shuttled between there & *Havelsee*.

At the end of Aquila's involvement in the Berlin Airlift, it had been envisaged that good opportunities for gaining freight and passenger charters on a worldwide basis would subsequently follow-on, yet in the event these were not forthcoming! Therefore, at the start of 1949 plans were advanced for Aquila's first holiday destination - in flying from Southampton to [Madeira via Lisbon](#) under terms of an association agreement (as with the Berlin Airlift) with [British European Airways](#).

The service commenced from Southampton on 24th. March with [Hampshire](#) and a rousing official reception in Funchal. This launch proved to be very popular: Guests as passengers included actresses Rosamund John & Constance Cumming, and later flights on this route carried Sir Winston Churchill (in 1950), [Harry Secombe](#), and the young Margaret Thatcher. Over the ensuing years Madeira was to be Aquila's outstanding achievement with 2 return flights a week in peak season,

With these Flying Boat connections and resulting publicity, [Funchal](#) as Madeira's capital proved to be a splendid resort; + for the network to be expanded to [Las Palmas](#) in the Canary Is., and for Lisbon's new Marine Terminal at [Cabo Ruivo](#). Significantly, by 1957 a third of all visitors to Funchal - Madeira arrived by Flying Boat, as Norman Hull further details:

" Out of a total of 336,573 people who visited Madeira between 1949 & 1957, some 58,345 arrived by Flying Boat... This was just over 17%, regarded as 'new business' for the island rather than taking trade away from passenger ships."

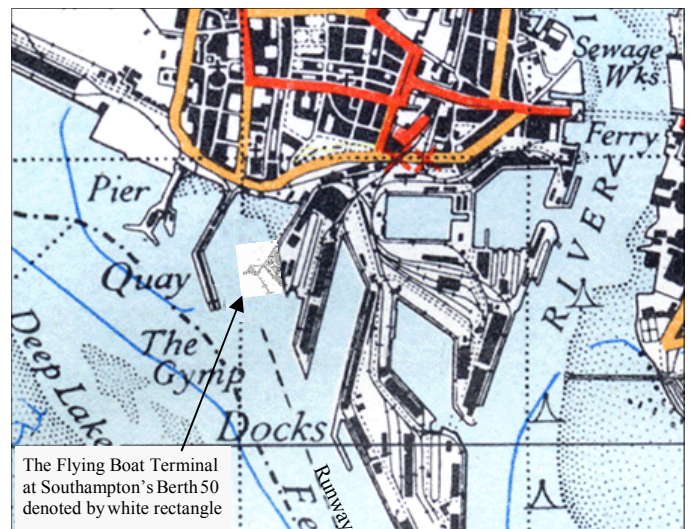
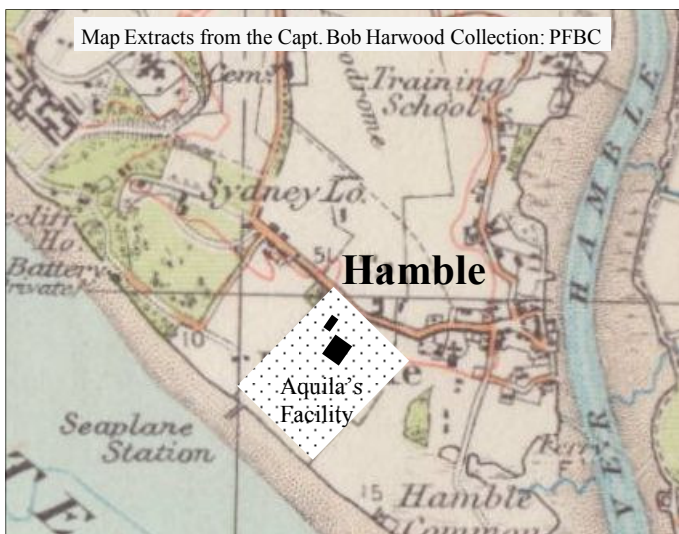


2 of Aquila's Hythe Class:
G-AGEU Hampshire (left)
 and *G-AGJM Hythe* (right)
 arriving at lovely Funchal
 in Madeira, set against the
 wonderful backdrop of its
 inland mountainous range.
 Today there is a Museum
 & Flying Boat Collection



Before services commenced to Madeira, Aquila established its London Headquarters and Booking Office for tourists at No.1 Great Cumberland Place, London W1 (~ and for the final period with Britavia at 75 Wigmore Street, London W1).

Also, after an extensive search and considerable negotiations Barry Aikman secured an Engineering & Maintenance Base by the River Hamble for Aquila's fleet of Flying Boats on the site of an old Seaplane Station developed in the Great War. These facilities were acquired from AST (Air Service Training), and located at a former aircraft factory site of A.V.Roe. From 1932 it had been used for care & maintenance, with a slipway on Southampton Water for Flying Boats /Seaplanes. After temporary reinstatement as a factory in WW2, the slipway, hardstanding & small hangar passed to Aquila in 1948.



Aquila also acquired Berth 50 the purpose-built facility at Southampton Docks, which was available after all of BOAC's former proud Flying Boat services which had been inexorably reduced, were finally terminated on 31st. November 1950. Berth 50 had been the first purpose-built facility & the fourth site used in Southampton Docks during the Flying Boat era. On the Quayside there was the Passenger Terminal, and a Shed for the handling of luggage and consignments of freight.

Built for 1948, Southampton's Berth 50 had a [floating pontoon dock](#) into which Flying Boats were manoeuvred in & out: In 1947, [HWC Jimmy Alger](#) when he was in command at Poole, had strongly advocated such a convenient arrangement. This obviated the need for those [fast passenger launches](#) which he had identified with significant costs incurred at Poole. Take-off for the Flying Boats depended upon the direction of the wind, either from a Runway on Southampton Water a relatively short distance from Berth 50, or 14 miles distant at [Calshot](#), with a flarepath of 8 dinghies set out at nighttime. If the [Runway off Calshot](#) was required then the Flying Boats were towed for an hour instead of making their own way!

The Brochure provided by Aquila for passengers gave welcome reassurance, with timely advice for first time travellers:

"Immediately prior to take-off you will hear the captain test his engines by running them in pairs to full power... We tell you this because in the past some of our less knowing passengers have got the impression that the pilot had made two unsuccessful attempts to take-off, and finally made it on the third ! At night by the way, exhaust gases escaping from the engines are clearly visible, whilst during the day you may notice oil streaks on the wings - both normal occurrences."

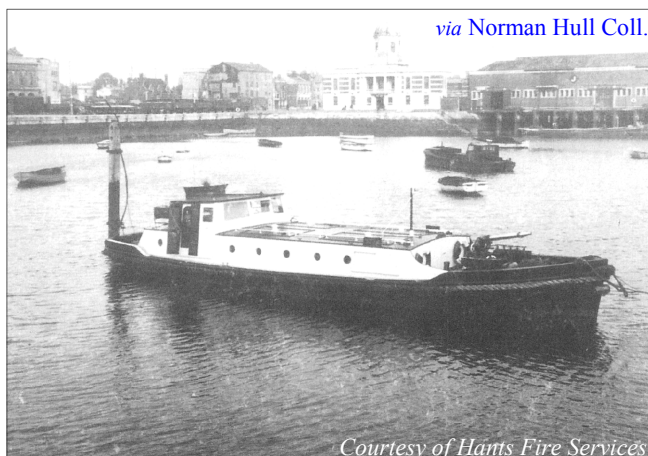
In Norman Hull's experience, the Marine Section of Aquila included the senior coxswain, 3 coxswains and 5 crew men, together with a marine engine fitter who maintained the Launches, as controlled by the Operations Manager at Berth 50. Apart from handling the Launches, the crews were also employed as stevedores in loading & unloading baggage, stores, freight + mail on Flying Boats. On inward flights they also acted as porters taking passengers' baggage to cars, taxis etc. *'A return of names & hours worked in this capacity had to be rendered each week to the National Dock Labour Board.'*

There were 3 Launches: viz a control pinnacle (likened by Norman to a floating air traffic control tower), a lead-in launch and an open workboat that was mainly used in the pontoon dock.. The pinnacle could tow Flying Boats down to Calshot. Also ever-present at Flying Boat movements in-and-around Berth 50 was the fire float of the Southampton Fire Brigade.



© Norman Hull Coll.

When Norman Hull was with Aquila its Marine Section inc. a Marine Coxswain, a trio of Coxswains, and five Crewmen... Also, there was the Marine Engine Fitter who looked after the Control Pinnacle, the Lead-in Launch for docking in Berth 50, and an open Launch. Ever-present was the Fire Float (opposite).



Courtesy of Hants Fire Services

Norman had started employment with Aquila as a Traffic Assistant, and was eventually promoted to be Traffic Officer. This higher grade required that he had to deal with freight and passenger handling for either inward or outward flights... and encompassed skilful liaison with HM Customs, Immigration and local forwarding agents, through to taxi operators; whilst dealing closely, effectively and empathetically with the comprehensive range of all Aquila's various other staff!

With 13 Hythes acquired by October 1949, Aquila also took over a great number of spare parts to keep these serviceable: *Hawkesbury*, *Henley*, *Howard*, *Hobart*, *Hythe*, *Hudson*, *Hungerford* and *Hunter* in Jan./Feb. 1949, with the cargo carrier *Helmsdale* lastly in October, joining the 3 previously at Berlin, and also *Hadfield* (*Hawkesbury* soon reduced to spares). Sandringham *Himalaya* was added in May, whilst *Halstead* was decommissioned in November after 16 months' service. Another potential second Sandringham as *G-ANAK* would arrive in 1954 for conversion from the *Sunderland V (PP162)* but was damaged beyond cost-effective repair by a November storm that hit Aquila's Engineering & Maintenance Base.

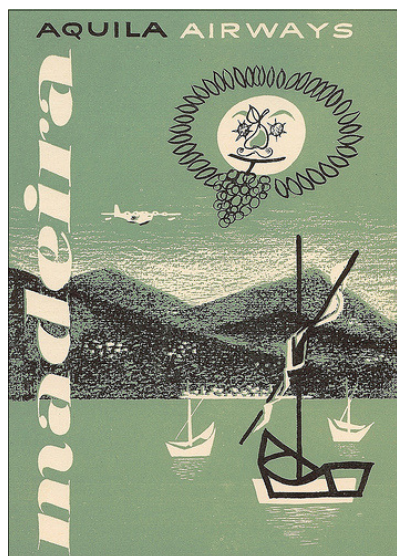
In the Summer of 1949, Aquila undertook a series of holiday flights between Falmouth and *St. Marys* in the *Scilly Isles*, which for many onlookers there, brought back fond memories of Sunderland Flying Boats during their wartime service. This was followed in the Autumn by another reawakening of former Flying Boat activity - at the Foynes Station in Eire, when a series of Aquila charter flights ferried pilgrims to the place significant to Catholic worship at *Fatima* in Portugal. The series was concluded by *Hungerford* on 17th. October, having only officially entered service for Aquila on the 1st... (Foynes ref: Garner, 2001)

Other significant charters during that year had involved the ferrying by Aquila of ships' crews between ports in the UK; outbound from Hull to Helsinki, and from Aden to UK. There were flights commissioned to Freetown & Lagos (1953).

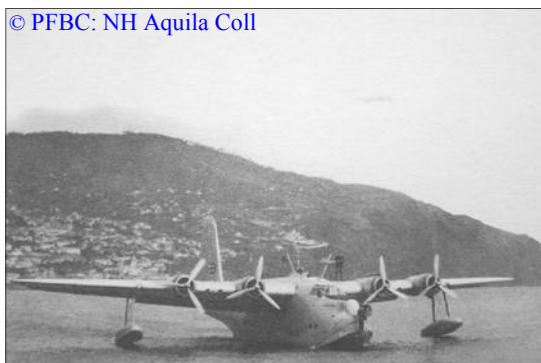
In June 1950 Aquila held a proving flight from Southampton to Scotland arriving at the Albert Dock in Leith, Edinburgh then to Greenock, Glasgow as the UK's first inter-city Flying Boat service with much publicity and twin civic receptions. In the eventuality, regular flights were not confirmed, but Barry Aikman took this opportunity to air his displeasure with the M.C.A. in denying him permission to take over *BOAC's Flying Boat route to South Africa* due to close in November.

However in contrast, scheduled services to Jersey landing in *St. Aubins Bay* were successfully inaugurated on 7th. July, and during that Summer *Las Palmas* in the Canary Isles, was added to the destination of Madeira reached from Lisbon... Barry Aikman also proceeded with his plans to purchase former *Seaford NJ207*, converted as Solent 3 *G-AKNU Sydney*, which entered service with Aquila in 1951 on the popular route to *Madeira* - with an increased capacity of 50 passengers.

Of Aquila's remaining Hythes, 6 were withdrawn during 1951/2, with *Hampshire* & its Sandringham *Himalaya* in 1953. In January of the same year, *Hudson* was written-off at *Funchal*, and *Hungerford* sank in the Solent - without loss of life. Beyond 1953 only *Hadfield* continued its longevity until July 1956 as the last of the Hythe Class (*sadly none preserved*)!



© PFBC: NH Aquila Coll



G-AGER Hadfield in Funchal Bay being maintained on the Moorings
Aquila Brochure Cover and Poster
- with Aquila Airways Ltd. Badge





In April 1952 *G-AGJN Hudson* of Aquila made the first direct flight between Southampton & Port Stanley in the Falkland Is via Lisbon, Sal - Cape Verde Is, Natal - Brazil, Rio de Janeiro and Montevideo; with the return flight departing on 2nd. May arriving back on the 8th. following the same route & stops the total flying time was 50 hours. This Charter included the carrying of airmail in both the directions so the reference to '*RMA Hudson*' was appropriate on this occasion.

The significance of this historic flight was brought back sharply into the focus of the UK's media in 1982 by the conflict with Argentina. Despite inter-connecting airmail services in this era, most post was carried by sea until regular airmail services were initiated in 1985 !

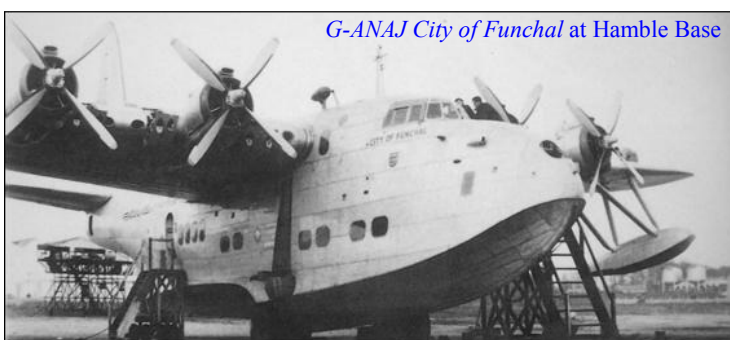
Late August 1952 Aquila's *Sydney* on charter carried British troops to Singapore via Malta, Lebanon, Bahrein & Ceylon. Other notable charters inc. transporting film crews to the making of *Master of Ballantrae* (1953) & *Moby Dick* (1955/6).

Negotiations were made over the availability of three *Princess Flying Boats* following the test flights of *G-ALUN* in 1952. Two years later a speculative bid of £1 million was made by Aquila for each of these 3 aircraft but rejected accordingly ! [This project was begun in 1946, then was put on-hold until revived albeit temporarily under guidance of *HWC Alger* .] Therefore, Aquila's option turned instead to the potential acquisition of various Solent Class Flying Boats as alternatives.

Following Aquila's merger with the Britavia Group in March 1953, it was possible to purchase a pair of TEAL Solent 4s (in 1955), and ferry these back to UK...with *Awatere* as *G-ANYI* by Capt. Andrew Evans, and *Aotearoa II* as *G-AOBL* by Capt. Douglas Pearson, via Darwin, Singapore, Ceylon, Karachi, the Suez Canal Zone & Genoa, for service with Aquila. Taken out of service in May 1954, these Solent 4s had been replaced by DC 6 landplanes - leaving just *ZK-AMO Aranui*. This pair of more powerful Solent 4s had the capability to fly direct to Madeira and also Las Palmas in the Canary Isles, but needed to be adapted at Hamble with the fitting-out of the set of cabins variously associated with the *Solent 3 Class*.

Aquila via a Solent flight to Madeira in 1956 with Capt. Jim Broadbent trialled inclusion of the destination of Tenerife... but a conclusion was reached that bays around the island were too open to provide a suitable anchorage for Flying Boats. Capt. HF Jim Broadbent (Gibbs) had boarded at school in Bournemouth and enjoyed the local beaches & Poole Harbour, before his mother, moved to Australia & married Allan Broadbent. Jim grew up there pre-war to become a famous flier, before being First Officer on *QEA Flying Boats*; moving to the UK to fly aircraft from USA on the *Atlantic Ferry* in WW2. He came to Aquila via *Silver City* (landplanes) another subsidiary of Britavia, to feature in the last chapter of FB History.

In 1956, Aquila was chartered to fly British nationals evacuated from the Suez Canal Zone to Malta, or to Southampton ! The media were taken by surprise in that year when Barry Aikman announced his resignation from Aquila (Britavia Group), which came at a time when Aquila's horizons were extended to: Marseilles, Genoa, Pollensa, and Capri (via Marseilles). Aquila now acquired ex *RAF Seaford NJ201* which had been with BOAC/MoS at Poole as *G-AGWU* for trialling 1945-46. With conversion to *Solent 4* specifications *G-ANAJ City of Funchal* went into service and made a proving flight to Capri. Flights to Capri attracted much publicity for Aquila - for these oft included Gracie Fields with husband Boris Alperovici.



G-ANAJ City of Funchal at Hamble Base



Wrecked at Santa Margherita in 1956

Photos Courtesy of Vic Pitt via Norman Hull

Santa Margherita - Italy as a holiday hot-spot was added to Aquila's routes in 1956 (and Montreux, Lake Geneva in '57). However, *G-ANAJ City of Funchal* was caught in a gale at Santa Margherita on 26th. September 1956, and was wrecked. *G-AHIO Southampton* was acquired from storage at Poole and was then towed to the Hamble for refit as its replacement, and as already noted after complete overhaul, proved to be very popular & gave sterling service right through to the end.

On 15th. November, 1957 Aquila's *G-AKNU City of Sydney* left Berth 50 at Southampton with 8 crew + 50 passengers, and took off in the late evening bound for Las Palmas & Madeira via Lisbon (including 4 newly-wed couples on board). In passing over the Isle of Wight, engine problems (No. 3 engine) were experienced, so the decision was taken to return - but shortly after manoeuvring the aircraft around - a second engine (No. 4) failed with a devastating crash afterwards ! The crash site, in the disused chalk pit upon *Shalcombe Down*, eventually claimed the lives of 45, with just 13 survivors despite the frantic & heroic efforts by rescuers, which were soon subsequently hampered as the aircraft burst into flames. This then meant that investigations were largely indeterminate in working out the causes for this significant catastrophe.

For further info see ~ http://www.bbc.co.uk/southtoday/content/articles/2007/10/30/tell_tom_plane_crash_feature.shtml

Capt. Peers in his twin capacities - by virtue of once being attached to Hythe as an Air Safety & Technical Representative when BOAC Flying Boats services were removed from Poole to Southampton Water, and his association with BALPA, was involved in Accident Investigation Legal Enquiries which *via* his efforts cleared the pilots (who had died) of blame. By this time Capt. Peers was primarily involved in flying the brand new Comets which were BOAC's flagship project, yet he derived much satisfaction that the 2 pilots: Captain F. Eltis and Mike Scarr the First Officer were duly exonerated.



Aquila Airways Ltd.
as Colourful Flights
and Destinations...

Left:
Sparkling *G-AKNU*
City of Sydney
departing Madeira

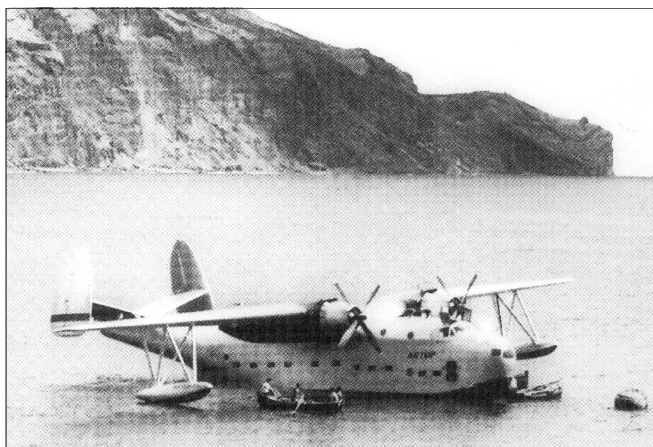
Right:
G-AOBL Aotearoa
quietly anchored at
capital Las Palmas
- de Gran Canaria,
in the Canary Isles



This tragedy proved to be a most serious reversal for Aquila which had been making a significant profit during that year despite the competition from landplanes as airstrips were being upgraded and further airports were being commissioned, for it raised concerns about the continued prospects for its fleet of now ageing aircraft and any prospect of replacements.

The Summer season of 1958 was the last for Aquila. Its parent company *Britavia* decided to terminate Flying Boat ops. At the end of September Portuguese operator *ARTOP* took over Aquila's licence for flights between Lisbon & Madeira. Appropriately, the last flight from Southampton to Lisbon followed in December with Aquila's *G-AHIN Southampton* where this, along with *G-AOBL Aotearoa* + *G-ANYI Awatere* passed to ARTOP formed by Captains Ferreira & Durval. ARTOP's Fleet also significantly included a pair of ex *US-Navy Martin Mariners* which were swiftly put into service... However, tragedy struck as early as November when *Capt. Jim Broadbent* shortly after take-off, radioed Lisbon that he was having to land in the Atlantic. Then oblivion, as none of the 30 passengers & 6 crew, nor any wreckage were found! This dramatic loss of one of its *Mariners* and an experienced captain meant that flights were curtailed and not reinstated.

ZK-AMO Aranui from 1951 was to fly TEAL's '*Coral Route*' *via* Fiji, the Cook Is. & Tahiti, *later also Tonga & Samoa*, (supported by 2 *PBY Catalinas* used mainly for training & survey) until 15th. September 1960 when Capt. JS Shephard arrived back in Auckland, with *Aranui* as the last of all the Solent Classes in service destined to be preserved at *MoTaT*. TEAL was re-formed as Air New Zealand, with an objective for DC6 landplanes to cross the Pacific through to America. The achievement of *Aranui* is recognised as finally drawing to a close the glorious scheduled services of the Flying Boats!



On Moorings in Funchal Bay, one of ARTOP's *Martin Mariners* either *CS-THA*, or *CS-THB* which was lost 9th. November 1958



G-ANYI Awatere to Portuguese Carrier ARTOP in October 1958, but lay disused alongside the River Tagus until scrapped in 1971

Former member of staff, Mrs Norma Gould recalled her experiences in '*Madeira Memories*' about the time with Aquila - which reflects the loyalty, affection and esteem that the employees proudly held for their airline as it passed into history:

"I do not believe anyone can see a flying boat land, or take off without a tremendous thrill, at the beauty & skill of it! Aquila has had a unique personality and character... Admittedly the trip could be unpredictable - last minute diversions could land us in Lisbon, Las Palmas or Gibraltar, but all these are pleasant sunny places, and so long as the passengers were in transit they stayed in the best hotels at our expense & received as personal a service as that of any airline in the world to compensate, at least in some measure, for any inconvenience..." (Reference: *Ferry News*, September 1958)

(*Aimée* - with acknowledgement to Norman Hull, also with Capt. James Peers, Douglas Cook OBE and Colin Pomeroy)