

Pacific Ferry Flight: DA42s arrive from Canada

MOST news-aware aviators in New Zealand know that Massey University's School of Aviation recently purchased 12 new Diamond DA40 and 2 new DA42-L360 aircraft in a deal signed with Hawker Pacific at Avalon in March. The DA40s have all arrived by container and been reassembled by Hawker Pacific at Ardmore. It was a different story for the DA42-L360s though, with these two aircraft being flown to New Zealand in September all the way from the Diamond factory in Canada. Most notably, the route crossed the Pacific with the longest leg (over water from California to Hawaii) taking some 13 hours to complete. KiwiFlyer caught up with Garry Mitchell and Ben Glattstein from Australian Air Ferry on the day they landed at Ardmore.

Preparing for an 8100 nautical mile journey

Australian Air Ferry (AAF) are professional ferry operators and can have up to four aircraft in the air at any one time. To some extent, an adventure such as this is all in a days work for Garry and Ben.

Garry explains that the real job is about logistics, a job that is done and finished the moment they leave the ground. A lot of equipment is involved, some \$20000 of which travels with the pilots to, and then on the aircraft being ferried. This can include ferry tanks and pump boards, HF radio (a special modular and transportable design), satellite phones, life rafts, additional safety gear, and more.

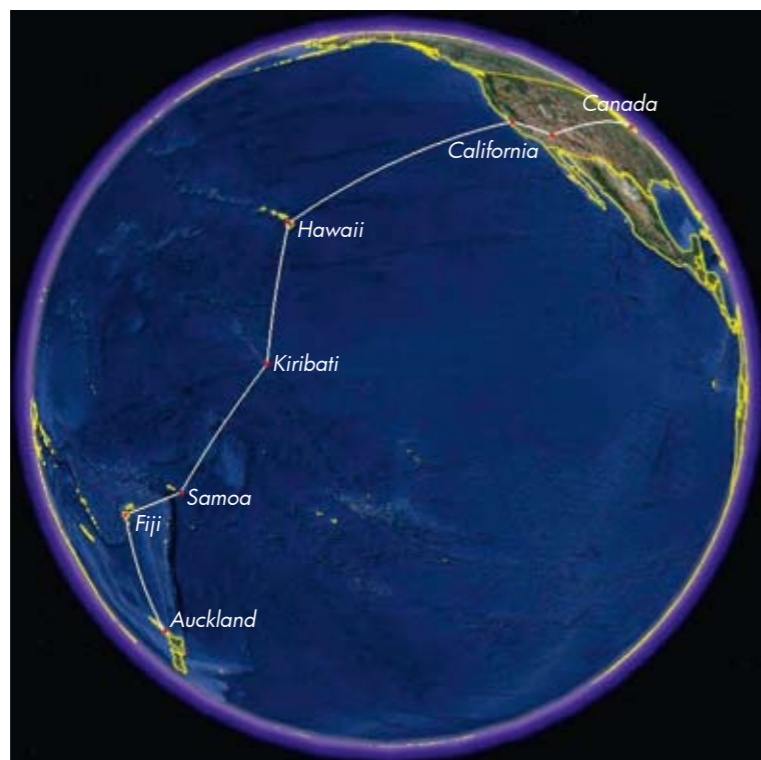
For the DA42's AAF designed a ferry bladder tank that would top up the existing fuel tanks in flight. This enabled them to fly the leg from California to Hawaii with comfortable reserves using tried and proven systems along with AAF's philosophy of not altering or interfering with any existing fuel system on the aircraft. Garry acknowledges a lot of assistance with the project from the Diamond factory in conjunction with Auto Avio Design in

Australia who handled the engineering orders. The aircraft were Australian registered for the flight.

All of this was a start from scratch exercise, there not having been any similar



Garry Mitchell from Australian Air Ferry cruising the Pacific at 10000 feet. Ben Glattstein took the photo from the second of the two aircraft they delivered.



The DA42's left the factory in Canada and flew to California for ferry tank fitouts. Then on to NZ via Hawaii, Kiribati, Samoa and Fiji. Google Earth image.

long ferry flights of these particular aircraft. In fact, Canadian certification of the DA42-L360 (ie. the new Lycoming engined version) was only received four weeks prior to departure. As well, this was the first flight of any type of DA42 across the Pacific Ocean.

The Trip

Ben's flight logs for the trip show a total of 57 hours airborne for the flight from

factory to Auckland. The longest leg was the one from California to Hawaii, some 2100nm over water. That of course means that at the half way point, one is 1050nm from an airport in any direction. A long way! Garry says it is the first half of such journeys that always seem very slow. "Once you cross the half way mark, you start to feel you're getting somewhere and the time always seems to go faster".

The trip however, began in London, Canada at the Diamond delivery centre. They then flew across the Great Lakes to York in Nebraska. The next leg took them across the Grand Canyon and on to Bullhead City on the Arizona / Nevada border. Garry notes that this is a place full of RV motorhomes and elderly ladies. He says the younger ferry pilots are unimpressed on being told to stop there "but the accommodation and fuel are very cheap".

Then it was on to California and the fitout for the ferry flight. AAF have a base there on what is a familiar route for them, as they frequently ferry other new aircraft for Hawker Pacific in Australia. Next stop was Sacramento to obtain FAA approval for the ferry flight and then on September 20th, a five day flight from California to Auckland began.

It was important to wait for the 'perfect day' as it was a critical safety consideration to avoid even a slight headwind. The actual conditions on the day were 7kts on the wingtip turning through to a 20kt tailwind as the flight progressed.

They left at 7am California local time and landed at 5pm in Hawaii with ample reserve after a 13.3 hour flight.

The next day saw the pair fly to Kiribati and the day after that to Samoa. They had planned the final leg would then be from Samoa to Auckland however a forecast for 40kts of wind on the nose made a diversion to Fiji a sensible course to take.

The trip then continued on to Auckland, a 7.5 hour leg with a crosswind of 55kts



Pilots Garry Mitchell and Ben Glattstein at the Hawker Pacific hangar after arriving at Ardmore.

The Ferry Flight Log

- 07/09/09**
London, Canada to York, Nebraska
- 08/09/09**
York to Bullhead City, Arizona
Bullhead City to Hollister, California
- 20/09/09**
Hollister to Kona, Hawaii
- 21/09/09**
Kona to Kiribati (Christmas Island)
- 22/09/09**
Kiribati to Pago Pago, American Samoa
- 23/09/09**
Pago Pago to Nadi, Fiji
Nadi to Auckland, New Zealand
- 25/09/09**
Auckland to Ardmore



The two DA42's ready to taxi from the Diamond acceptance facility at London, Canada.

and a tailwind of zero.

Weather had been kind for the entire trip and it was only in the last hours to Auckland that it began to deteriorate. After arriving and dealing with paperwork, then waiting for a gap in the now dreadful weather, the two aircraft logged a final 0.4hrs for the leg to the Hawker Pacific hangar at Ardmore on September 25th.

Pilot impressions

Garry says that by the time he got to California, he knew that this was going to be an aircraft he didn't want to give back and this is a praise he rarely gives. He is a big fan of the Garmin G1000 glass cockpit and considers the DA42 to have stand-out appeal as a brilliant trainer. Phrases such as a pleasure to fly, very responsive, nice to land (every time in all conditions), great visibility, and more all roll off the tongue. Garry notes that the design is futuristic and loaded with new concepts that all work very well. With some experience now at "pulling it to pieces" (to fit the ferry equipment), Garry also comments that the aircraft is very well constructed and that "nothing looks cheap". Suffice to say he liked it a lot.

More information

Visit www.australianairferry.com to learn more about Australian Air Ferry's capabilities. For more information on the DA42, contact John Oppenheim at Hawker Pacific. Phone +61 2 9708 8566 or email: john.oppenheim@hawkerpacific.com



Now at the Australian Air Ferry hangar at California, being kitted for the Pacific crossing.



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