

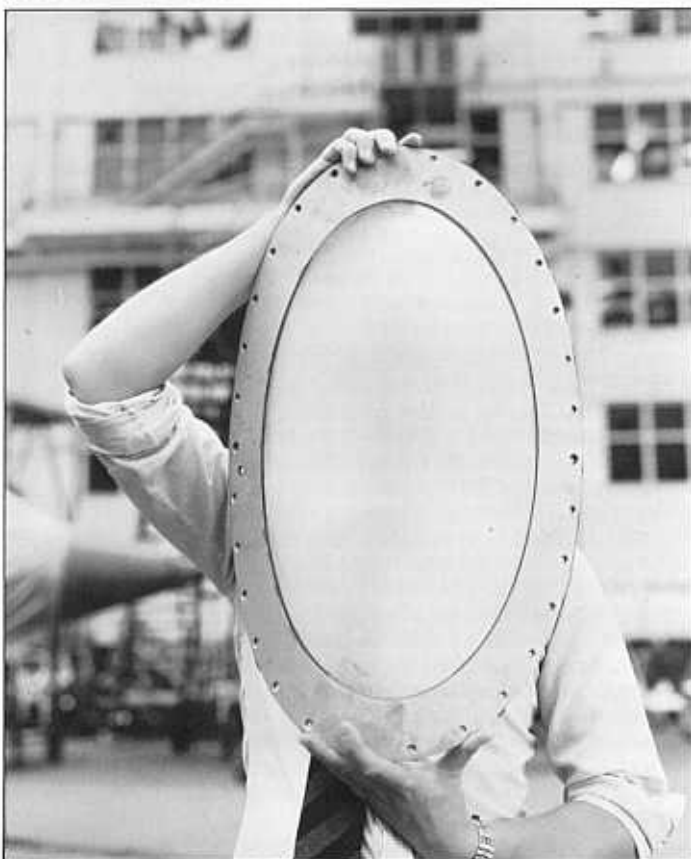
Route of aircraft

his oxygen mask. Graham Skinner could not understand Eric's words, but he realised that his presence on the flight deck was not helping matters, so he nodded, and returned to his job of helping the passengers.

It was about this point that Eric started to consider the awesome consequences of attempting a deadstick touchdown on the sea at night. His father had taken him, as a child, to Hythe pier to watch the flying boats land. He knew that flying boats did not fly at night because of the difficulty of judging height above water. He remembered, with some amusement, a training film made by British Airways which simulated a ditching at sea. The Captain playing the role (no actor) had used the phrase 'it's not our day' in passing the bad news on to the cabin crew. This reverie was interrupted by sounds of jubilation from the other two crew members as number 4 engine started. (This was the engine which had first run down and the success amply repaid Eric's gamble in trying to start it). The other three engines started, an almost interminable, 90 seconds later. They were at 12,000 ft.



13.57z "Speedbird 9. We're back in business. All four running, level 12,000."



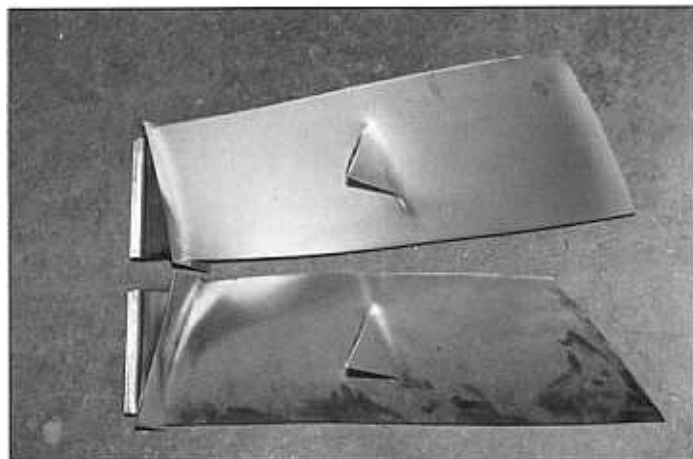
The effect of sandblasting on landing light cover

They immediately requested a climb to a height which gave them more clearance over the high ground ahead of them and asked for clearance to Jakarta. They climbed to 15,000 ft. and at about this height there was a resumption of the St. Elmo's Fire. When the throttles were pulled back to level out the Number 2 engine surged continually. It felt as though it would shake the aircraft apart, so it was shut down, but not without great reluctance. At this point Eric suspected that the St. Elmo's Fire, above 15,000 ft, was somehow connected with the engine problems and concluded that the engines themselves were severely damaged. He decided to descend to get away from the strange atmospheric effects but resolved to leave the throttles in their present position and to control the aircraft speed and descent by the use of speedbrakes, flaps and undercarriage. This required a leap of the imagination as up till then they had strong suspicions that the engines had failed because of an oversight, or an error, by the crew. They were cleared to Jakarta Airport where the weather was fine, with calm wind and good visibility. The only added complication was that glide path information was not available for Runway 24.



14.21z "This is Speedbird 9, could you turn runway lights fully up please."

While the aircraft was on the base log for runway 24 the crew had great difficulty in picking up any lights on the ground and, in particular, in picking out the runway lights. Eventually the runway was spotted to the right of the aircraft out of the co-pilot's side-window. When they lined up with the runway the lights again disappeared and the crew realised that their front windows were almost opaque. The final descent, to touched



Wear on blade tips

down, was made using the localiser, to stay on the centreline, and by peering through the outer edge of the left hand front window, which was still clear, Eric was just able to make out the lights of the VASIs on the left of the runway. The other two crew members called out the radio altitude and DME distance to help in judging the descent. When they were over the runway the whole of the front windows were filled with a diffuse glare of light. This was comforting in that it proclaimed the general proximity of the runway, but the delay before the wheels touched down felt like minutes rather than seconds. The landing itself was smooth, Eric felt that the earth seemed to gather them up; downstairs in the cabin spontaneous cheers and clapping broke out from the passengers.

The crew taxied the aircraft off the runway towards the terminal building. The glare of light from the parking area again filled the front windows with a blinding glare. They decided to call it a day and parked the aircraft.



14.31z "Speedbird 9, I can't see with the light in my eyes. I'll hold it."

**Conclusions**

It was two days before the crew got confirmation of the cause of the incident. Barry was convinced that it was caused by an