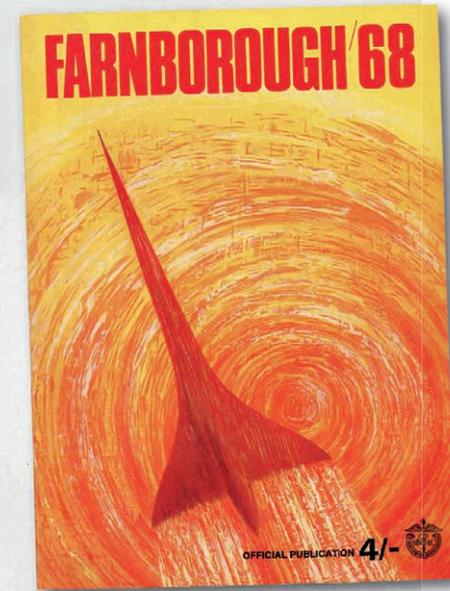




THREE DEADLY MINUTES

THE BREGUET
ATLANTIC TRAGEDY
AT FARNBOROUGH, 1968



ABOVE The 26th SBAC show was held at Farnborough during September 16–22, 1968, and, as the programme (as seen here) noted, was marked by the public debuts of several new British types, including production examples of Hawker Siddeley's Harrier and Nimrod, the Handley Page Jetstream and the Beagle Pup.

MAIN PICTURE With the propeller of its port Rolls-Royce Tyne engine feathered, and the undercarriage extended, *Aéronavale Breguet Atlantic* serial "43" was captured by the author performing its final, fatal display routine on September 20, 1968. Moments later the aircraft lost all flying speed and sideslipped into the Black Sheds at the eastern end of Farnborough's runway.

In September 1968 **RICHARD T. RIDING** was plying his trade as an aviation journalist and photographer at the SBAC show at Farnborough when, to his horror, in the middle of its display, the Breguet Atlantic plummeted into the airfield's famous Black Sheds. He digs deep into the archives to reveal a catalogue of errors made by a pilot who committed the cardinal error of deviating from his own plan . . .

HELD LATER THAN usual to avoid clashing with a bank holiday, the 1968 Society of British Aircraft Constructors (SBAC) show at Farnborough took place during one of the wettest Septembers on record. Such were the downpours that the nearby Basingstoke Canal broke its banks, and it was reported that fish had been caught on Farnborough's runway!

The once-annual show had become a biennial event in 1964 and, two years later, less parochial when foreign exhibitors were welcomed for the first time, provided that their products incorporated a substantial amount of British equipment. Thus the 1968 show included many foreign aircraft, among them Japan's NAMC YS-11A turboprop airliner, making its European debut, the single-seat Soko Jastreb light-attack jet and two-seat Galeb trainer, from which it was derived, built in what was then Yugoslavia, and the Fokker F.27 Friendship in an eye-catching orange paint scheme. It was a French participant, however, that hit the headlines late on Friday September 20 — and for all the wrong reasons.

THE ATLANTIC

The Breguet Br 1150 Atlantic long-range maritime patrol aircraft was a Nato replacement for the Lockheed P-2V Neptune anti-submarine and reconnaissance aircraft. The prototype Atlantic made its maiden flight at Toulouse on October 21, 1961, deliveries to the French and German navies beginning in 1965. The installation of two Hispano-built Rolls-Royce Tyne RTy 20 Mk 21 turboprop engines were its qualification for participation in the SBAC show, and in July 1968 the *Aéronavale* base at Nîmes-Garons was instructed to provide an example for demonstration at Farnborough.

Initially, *Capitaine de Corvette* (CC) Hervé Chevalier, Commander of No 22 Flotilla, was selected as the aircraft's captain for the entire week, with CC Jean Saint-M'Leux, former Commander of No 21 Flotilla, as second pilot. In the event Chevalier was available only for the first few days of the show, Saint-M'Leux being scheduled to take command from Thursday September 19. Although Saint-M'Leux had not flown since July that year he had amassed 6,763 flying hours — including some 2,550 hours on the Atlantic — having performed most of the type's *Aéronavale* acceptance trials. Saint-M'Leux was also no stranger to Farnborough, having displayed the Atlantic there during the 1966 SBAC show.