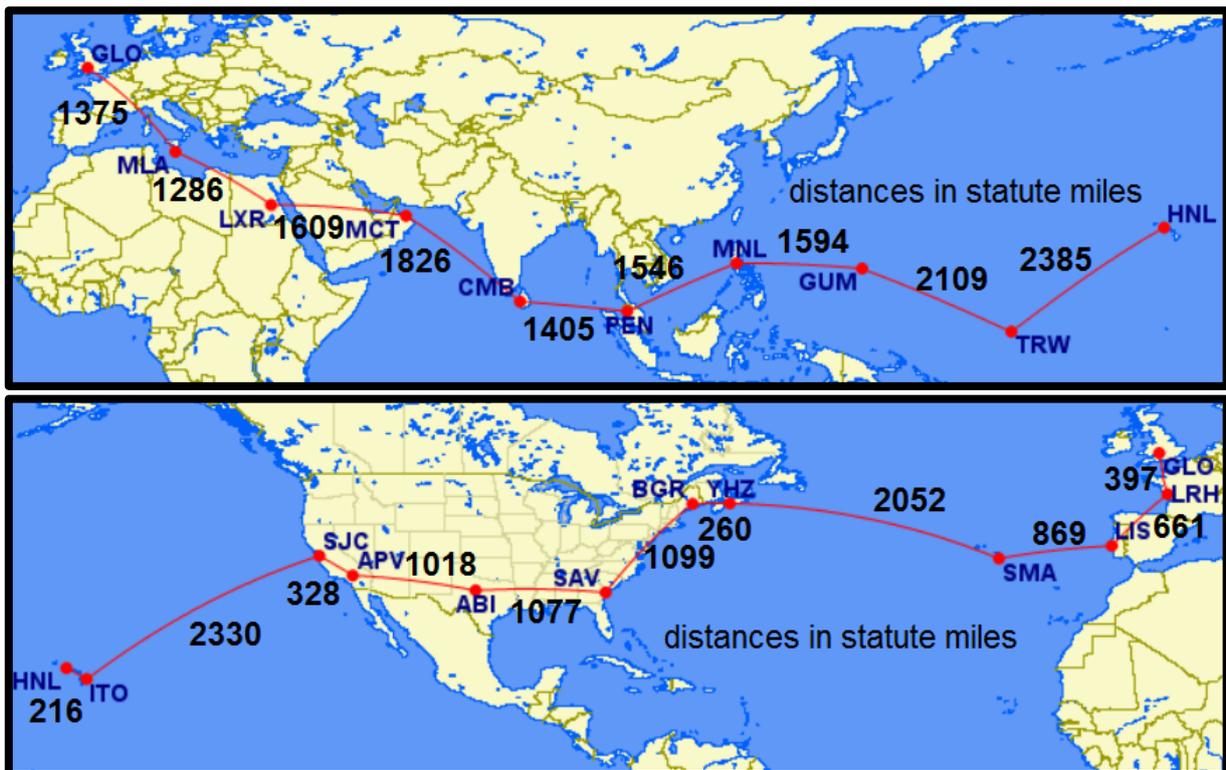


## Chasing the Morning Sun Manuel Queiroz

This was not a lecture, but more than just a presentation, as the speaker had a tale of endeavour, borne from a desire that grew from personal adversity after a battle with cancer in 1999. He started to fly in 1990, enjoyed it, and in 2006 set out to prove that, departing from his 'home' airport, he could fly solo around the world in a home-built light aircraft, and also break records on the way.

The Vans RV-6, one of the most popular home-build aircraft of recent years, is hardly a classic long-range record-breaker. He started his presentation by showing how his example was modified. He cited a gross mass of 900kg, and some 450 litres fuel capacity. The equivalent basic aircraft weighs 726kg and has a fuel capacity of 140 litres. Much of the extra fuel was in tanks on the right-hand side of the cockpit. His panel included standard blind-flying instruments, a prominent GPS map display, autopilot, with VHF and HF radio (the latter linked to an antenna that stretched between both wing tips, via the fin top). The aircraft also had an up-rated engine configured solely for single-pilot operation.

On 28th February 2006, Manuel took-off from Gloucestershire/Staverton airport and landed at Malta's Luqa airport 7hr 59min later, just before nightfall. He had by then completed 1,375 st.m of what was to be a 25,442 st.m journey. To save space this report uses two maps to show the route he took, and to present basic data. (Please refer to his web-site at <http://www.chasingthemorningsun.com> if you are inspired to read his tale in fuller detail). This report quotes what he recalled to his audience.



All data on these maps was taken from the speaker's web-site

During the stage to Luxor, ATC vectoring thwarted his desire to view antiquities on the River Nile. The following day he was in awe of the scale and extent of mountains in the Arabian desert. In order to circumvent Indian bureaucracy, he took a route through Sri Lanka and on into SE Asia. A panorama across Indonesia's Banda Aceh, where the 2004 Tsunami originated and devastated Sri Lanka within 2hrs, wasn't seen until he had flown for 6 hours from Columbo. This part of his journey was tinged with an example of the power of natural phenomena rarely seen.

In Manila he witnessed the depravity of the trafficking of young girls to tourists. He felt humiliated and desired to move on quickly. His spirits were soon concentrated on the Pacific Ocean. He hopped between islands, but the two major sectors were great distances taking 16hr 18m (Kiribati-Honolulu) and 15hr 28m (Hilo-San Jose). The durations suggest that end of flight fuel quantities would have been incredibly low, but these are side lines to the adrenalin-punch that appealed to him. He feared a GPS receiver failure (that never happened), but had time to explain his alternative navigation strategies.

American hospitality delighted him, and he crossed from California through Texas, Georgia and Maine, before launching across the North Atlantic from Halifax in Nova Scotia. An artificial horizon failure created a hold-up, and then the replacement failed too – he pressed on. Through the Azores he routed to a small airport near Lisbon, the city of his birth, and his homeland family’s hospitality was a little too welcoming as it included a bout of food poisoning. He pressed on to refuel at La Rochelle in France, and then 2hr 50min after departing there he was back at his home base. The joy of completing the journey, and yet also the sadness of knowing it was never to be like that again raised emotions he willingly acknowledged, but there was time for them to quell on the long taxiway from Staverton’s runway to the apron, and it was a composed Manuel that met his family and friends.

This was a well-planned and well-executed undertaking. He had often to take-off in the dark, watch the sun rise (the pictures were magnificent – his feelings were profound) and land late in the day, or even in the dark again. In such a small aircraft, and often in under-stated conditions – watching condensation on the canopy dripping through the structure above his instruments as the static from thundery clouds lit the droplets - he cheerily spoke of his trust in the aircraft and the people who had helped him to make this journey possible, over 39 days, and with 18 stops in 12 countries. In 2007 Mr Queiroz was honoured by the Royal Aero Club with the award of the Britannia Trophy, which was presented to him by His Royal Highness the Duke of York.



Manuel Queiroz’s Vans RV-6

The lecture was attended by about 140 people (taking attendance figure for the 9 meetings this year to around 1,400). The vote of thanks from Barry Jacobson testified to the presenter’s inspiration, and the response left no doubt that this was a unanimously held feeling amongst everyone present.

N.B. For anyone who wishes to know more about this adventure, Manuel Queiroz’s book, “Chasing the Morning Sun”, can be acquired from good book shops and is also available in electronic form from the likes of Amazon.

*Meeting notes by Mike Hirst*