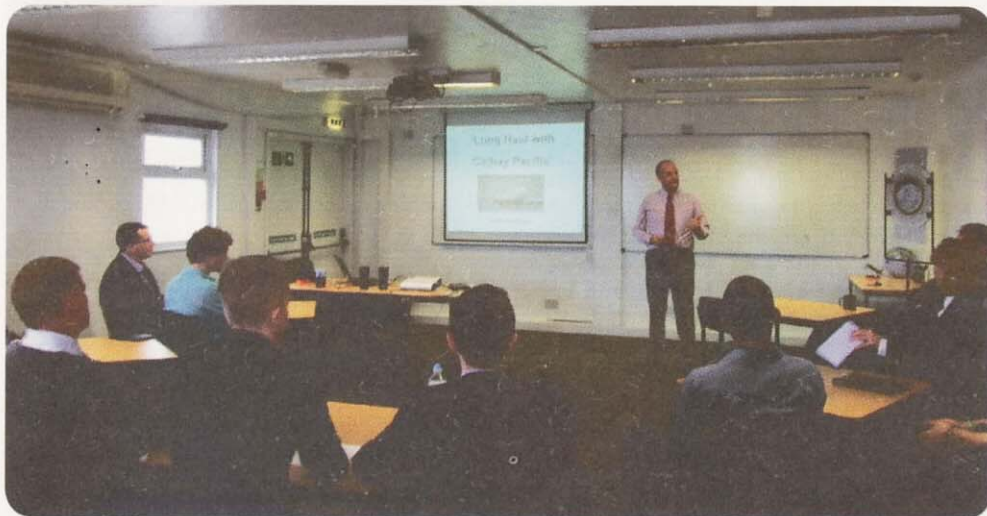


# Gaining perspective



Captain Alan Newton provides ProPilot students with a valuable insight into long-haul operations...



... while Captain David Lucas describes what life flying the line as a charter pilot entails

It's quite easy to lose track of one's goal when undergoing intensive training, so regular reminders of why one is putting oneself through so much hardship can be a valuable asset in maintaining high levels of commitment.

Taking a day out from their ATPL theoretical knowledge training courses, being undertaken with ground school specialists ProPilot based at Coventry Airport, a group of students were recently treated to a day of presentations by professionals working in the aviation industry. These regular events are free to attend and are part of the school's ongoing Professional Development Programme, designed to give students

their hands up, but it was nonetheless clear that Alan's presentation had made an impression on them and brought them face-to-face with some long-haul flying realities that they may not have considered before.

If life as a long-haul pilot doesn't turn out to be one's ideal profession, then perhaps a career operating air taxi and charter flights could be a more desirable option, and for an insight into this side of the aviation industry ProPilot asked David Lucas, a line training captain working for charter airline Flairjet, to share his thoughts.

David, who is one of several airline pilot Associate Lecturers at ProPilot, currently flies the Embraer Phenom 100 for Oxford Airport based charter firm, Flairjet. The Phenom 100 is a business jet capable of carrying up to five passengers and has a maximum range of

instructors in the RAF was none other than Alan Newton. "It's a particularly small industry and it is advisable to treat every day as an interview day and everyone you meet as a potential employer," advised David.

A third presentation was given by Mike Searle, a ProPilot distance learning student whose day job is that of Air Traffic Controller for NATS at Swanwick. Mike's highly amusing presentation (David took Mike's description of airspace-busting business jets with the good humour in which it was intended) provided insight into what goes on at NATS and the Swanwick control centre where a crack team of controllers manage 6,000 flights per day across three million square miles of UK airspace. Mike's presentation informed his fellow students about

an aspect of the wider aviation industry, illustrating the breadth of ProPilot's Professional Development Programme; understanding what is involved in keeping UK airspace operating at a maximum levels of safety and efficiency is vital information for future airline pilots and it appeared to go down extremely well. So well in fact that ProPilot advise that they are looking into a day-trip to Swanwick for their students in the near future.

Meantime the students were highly complimentary about the presentations and the professional development they receive from ProPilot. They now feel more able to apply ATPL theory to the industry they will be joining and knowing how to maximise their chances of gaining their dream jobs.



and graduates a comprehensive pilot education in preparation for their future careers, rather than just helping them pass their exams.

Alan Newton, a long-haul captain with Cathay Pacific and Director/Head of Training of On-Track Aviation - a flight instructor and flight examiner specialisf flight school - asked his audience at the beginning of his presentation for a show of hands as to how many were looking to become long-haul pilots during their careers. A high percentage of hands were raised. Alan took the count and suggested that the figure might be somewhat different after his presentation.

The long-haul pilot's biggest adversary is his/her body clock, confirmed Alan. Having just returned home the night before from a busy programme of flying the line in India and the Far East, Alan appeared surprisingly energetic, but then again he's had many years in which to adjust to the lifestyle of a long-haul pilot. Flying from Heathrow to Hong Kong, Alan and his crew are permitted under current Flight Time Limitations (FTL) to operate for up to 21 hours, and when factoring in delayed departures, re-routes or any number of other unforeseen factors, it's not uncommon for the full 21 hours to be required. Arriving in Hong Kong 21 hours later, after a 7am start on the ramp at Heathrow, Alan and his crew are then expected to be able to get eight hours sleep during a 10-hour rest period - not the easiest thing to achieve when one's body clock is telling one half-way through the rest period that it's time to get up. The next flight could then depart out of Hong Kong at a civilised-sounding time of 9am local, but with one's body clock being eight hours behind this effectively means a less inviting 1am departure time for Alan and his crew. Do this for a few days, throw in the odd typhoon and down-route drama and the picture soon becomes clear; if you're someone who struggles to operate at peak performance levels during the wee small hours of the morning then a career as a long-haul pilot probably isn't one for you. Asking for a show of hands again at the end of his presentation, the same individuals resolutely stuck

1178nm. This means that time zone differences don't contribute to fatigue levels as significantly as for long-haul pilots; instead they are subject to different demands on their energy reserves. The most significant difference between air charter and scheduled airline flying is managing customer expectations, said David.

While a scheduled flight does what it says on the tin, charter operations in light jets have to pay even closer attention to load factors and aircraft range, meaning that sometimes it just isn't possible to get a flight from A to B despite a customer's insistence that this what he is paying for. Careful planning is required therefore, and David confirmed that filing a flight plan is more often than not a last minute business. Changing flight plans down route is also not uncommon, as business passengers in particular often need to divert from their intended destination as their working day progresses. The destinations can vary tremendously as well, said David, with a departure out of a major international airport such as Heathrow often followed by a landing at a small GA airport with limited nav aids. A more flexible approach and an ability to react quickly to changing demands are therefore essential prerequisites for a charter pilot, advised David.

Commenting on how he got to his current position, David then spent some time explaining his route to the right-hand seat, and re-iterated a comment that Alan had made during his presentation - that it's a surprisingly small industry and getting one's face known (for the right reasons) is a goal that pays dividends further down the line. Prior to working for Flairjet, David spent time as a charter pilot for Air Atlantique, flying Metroliners and ATRs, and as a first officer on the B737 for now defunct airline bmibaby. All of these jobs, says David, were secured not just by sending off his CV to the recruitment department, but through personal contacts. He advised that the student sitting next to you today could in ten years time be the head of recruitment for the airline you're about to apply to. Illustrating this point nicely was the fact that one of ProPilot MD, Jacqui Suren's former