IMPERIAL AIRWAYS BULLETIN

Flying the Famous. A young Gary Cooper waits for take-off

The "City of Glasgow" brings the Prince of Wales (who became King Edward VIII) and Prince George (late the Duke of Kent) to Windsor Great Park from Paris in 1931. Prince Edward is second from the left below.

Evelyn Laye and Ronald Colman with Captain Travers

Birth of an empire in the sky

MONDAY is the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Imperial Airways, the forerunner of BOAC and BEA.

This souvenir eight-page Imperial Airways Bulletin tells how the airline lived up to its name and built an empire in the sky.

The story is told through the eyes of three of the pioneers — Sir Keith Granville, Deputy Chairman of British Airways, Charles Abell, Engineering Director of Overseas Division, and Ian Scott-Hill, Director of British Airways — Channel.

Imperial Airways was formed on April 1, 1924, by the merger of The Daimler Airway, British Marine Air Navigation, The Instone Air Line Ltd., and Handley Page Transport Ltd.

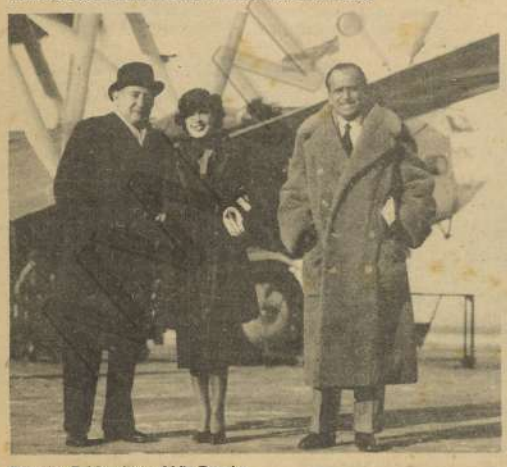
The first flight got off the ground on April 26.

Today is also a sad day because some of the old "Imp Club" men will be leaving. One is Phil May, Overseas Division's longest-serving employee. He joined 46 years ago.

He remembers vividly the time he flew in an open cockpit with the legendary Captain O P Jones — and how he was handed a leather to clean the outside of the windscreen before they started the descent.

We would like to thank all those veterans who sent us photographs and other material. Only space prevented us from using much more — TREVOR NASH

Millionairess Barbara Hutton (first on left) and friends



Douglas Fairbanks and Lily Damita

Phil May . . . the longest serving member of British Airways

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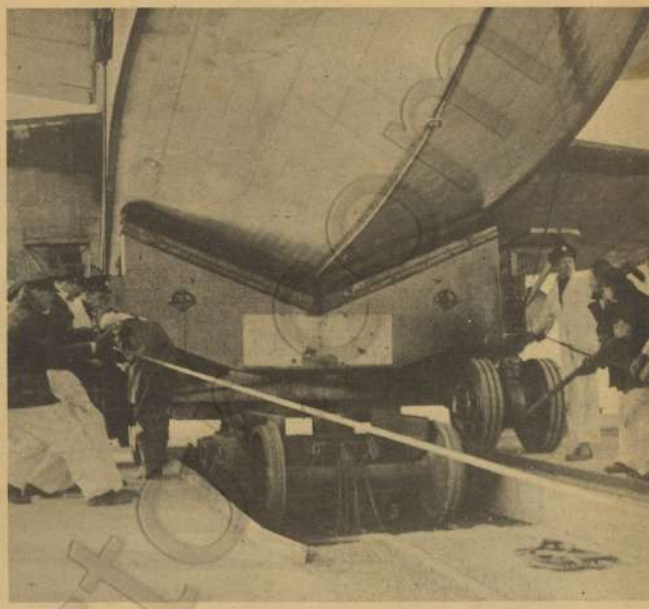
A ticket for Imperial Airways' first flight on April 26, 1924. Daimler tickets were still used.

Breakfast in bed for the passengers.

Together: Abell and De Havilland 86.

Togetherness: Maintenance staff with Connie 049.



All together now: B314 is hauled from water on its beaching trolley.

Hustle on Croydon night shift

THE fifty years that have passed since Imperial Airways was set up, have covered a fascinating story of the development of aeroplanes from machines made of fabric and wood, with open cockpits, struggling to reach 80 miles an hour, up to the present supersonic age.

A man who has lived with these aeroplanes through the past 40 years is **Charles Abell**, [illegible] Division, who retires on Sunday.

Here BILL MACKLIN reports on the growth of the aeroplane — and Charles Abell's part of it.

Not many people remember it now, the night shift at Croydon. That was where all the work was done, in the twenties and thirties, to keep those lumbering machines of Imperial Airways ready for the next day's work.

Every night was a fight to have the aircraft fit and ready to fly by morning, overcoming snags and breakdowns of a frequency quite unknown today. But it was a fine training ground and some of the best aeronautical engineers in aviation today learned their skills the hard way on the night shift at Croydon.

One such was Charles Abell. A youngster of 24, he joined the night shift as a mechanic and worked at first on the three-engined Argosy, repairing the damage caused as they shed their push-rods all the way across the Channel.

Now, 40 years and a few promotions later, Charles Abell retires this month as Engineering Director and a member of the Board of BOAC.

Bumpy

When he started on the Argosies, in 1934, they were already on their way out. And on the way in, from the De Havilland factory, was the DH86.

Imperial Airways operated some of them on behalf of Railway Air Services, a consortium of railway interests, and Charles Abell, after a course at the factory, found himself working on DH86s.

He recalls the inaugural of the Renfrew, Isle of Man, Liverpool, London service, rather different from today's jet-smooth affairs. The directors were on board in force, but the weather had no respect for their dignity.

The aircraft was barely able to get into the Isle of Man, one of the directors lost his top-hat through the roof escape hatch, and they all gave up at Liverpool and finished their "flight" by train.

Another type of that time, remembered by Charles if not with affection then certainly with amusement, was Scylla and Syrinx.

He said: "I believe we had had an argument with Handley Page. We wanted some more big aircraft but wouldn't have them from HPs, so we asked Shorts and they built us a big box body and wheels on the wings of their Kent boat.

"They were ungainly monsters, and one day one of our captains — I believe it was Wilcockson — turned one over on its back and wrecked it. His colleagues presented him with a shield engraved 'for services to aviation'."

Hectic

After several months of pretty basic engineering, Charles was posted to Karachi to work on the Atalantas with Serval engines that operated the sectors of the route to Australia between Karachi and Singapore.

From Singapore Qantas operated to Sydney with DH 86s, while in the other direction, HP42s operated as far as Alexandria.

But business got hectic at peak times, particularly before Christmas when the mail load was heavy, and the HP42s could not cope alone.

So Atalantas went on as far as Sharjah and if, as sometimes happened, Qantas had trouble, then they flew the outward journey too, through to Darwin.

Charles said: "We used to catch sight of our aircraft for just a few minutes as they passed through."

Maintenance work was carried out in the enormous hangar which had been built at Karachi to house airships of the R100 class that were intended to operate between Britain and India.

After the fearful crash of R101 on its maiden flight to India, airships were withdrawn. So large was this hangar, Charles remembers, that when on one occasion an HP42 caught fire and was burnt out while inside the building and the flames did not even reach as far as the walls or roof.

After three years in India, Charles Abell was posted back to Hythe to become an inspector, working on C Class flying boats which had been coming off the production line for about a year.

Those were days of ambitious development. Mercury and Maia, the flying boat with a lighter seaplane launched from its back in flight, were undergoing their trials. During this time, Mercury, the upper component, made its record-breaking attempt, flying from Scotland almost to Capetown. Long-distance flights on the Atlantic, too, were being developed.

With the outbreak of war, Charles was sent to America as inspector in charge of the unit that was to operate the newest and biggest addition to Imperial Airways' war-time fleet — the Boeing 314 flying boats.

He set about working out the maintenance plans and inspection schedules and generally setting the standards for the operation of these new machines.

He said: "They were more sophisticated, particularly in their electrical systems, than anything we had ever had before. But we had awful trouble with the engines — Wright Cyclones.

"We never seemed to be able to get them to work properly, and later they built these same troubles into the Cyclones in the Connies we flew after the war."

But these flying boats had one big advantage. Their wings were so deep that the flight engineer could reach the engines from inside the wing, stop the engine, rectify a fault and re-start — all in flight.

The aircraft was at a marked disadvantage when being turned slowly, for it had no wing-tip floats, only stubby sponsons projecting from the hull. And with any cross-wind it was liable to dip a wing-tip.

When the wing dipped, of course, it took in a lot of water. And when the aircraft righted itself, this water poured back inside the wing and emptied itself all over the first-class dining saloon. "It made a hell of a mess", Charles recalled.

Connies

The boats were based at Baltimore under Captain Kelly Rogers. When he moved to Montreal, Charles Abell was put in charge at Baltimore, managing both engineering and operations.

The war was now nearing its end and in 1946 BOAC — as Imperial Airways had by now become — ordered five Constellation 049s. In readiness for the operation, the Baltimore base was moved up to Montreal.

The Connies were BOAC's first pressurised aircraft, and there were problems. Charles said: "We had endless trouble with the compressor drive shafts but we modified them in the end. Despite a grounding following accidents to other operators' aircraft, we got quickly into operation.

"Then we had engine troubles — carburettor fires — and eventually we modified them to do away with the carbs and have direct fuel injection."

When Captain Kelly Rogers moved to Aer Lingus, Charles Abell was made manager of the unit, now called No 3 Line. He was the first and, so far, the only engineer to be put in charge of both engineering and flight operations, too.

He held the appointment until 1951, when a centralisation of the organisation of the airline put him in charge of the whole engineering and maintenance function for BOAC.

With the Connies in operation, BOAC was now looking at its next transatlantic machine, the Boeing Stratocruiser, of which six were on order. But before they could be delivered, No 3 Line Montreal was ordered briskly back to England in a bid to save the dollar drain of that period.

Difficult

To find suitable hangarage was extremely difficult, but eventually Charles Abell and his staff settled down in a rented bay of the Brabazon hangar at Filton, Bristol, and waited for their first Strat to arrive.

Almost simultaneously with them came a fleet of five Connie 749s, improved version of the earlier ones, purchased from Aer Lingus when they decided not to go on with their proposed Atlantic services. These Connies were put on the Australian route where they did sterling service.

Maintenance and economics, meanwhile, were getting more sophisticated and the 749s achieved an average of seven hours a day year round, a remarkable achievement for that time.

In 1951, BOAC set up its centralised system of control with one man in charge of operations — Deputy Operations Director (Operations), Captain Jackie Harrington — and one man in charge of engineering, DOD(E), Charles Abell.

Technical Block A was being built at that time and the minor maintenance of 3 Line at Filton was carried out at London Airport, in hangars 2, 3 and 4. Three Line were celebrating their success at a dance when one of the hangars caught fire and was burnt out. The dance ended abruptly and planning started to overcome the loss of valuable equipment and spares.

Charles Abell then became involved with the procurement, development and introduction into service of two prominent British aircraft, the Britannia and the Comet.

The Comet deserves a story to itself, but most people know of its triumphant operation as the world's first jetliner, followed by the tragic accidents caused by hitherto-unsuspected fatigue, its re-design and re-building as the Comet 4 and its successful subsequent career.

The Britannia too, was an aircraft beset by technical troubles and so delayed that its useful commercial life was not as long as it might have been.

Charles said: "The first aircraft I was really involved in from scratch — specification, contract, the lot — was the 707.

"The lessons we had learned from the Comet were extremely valuable, and not the least of these was the fuel situation. Kerosene fuel used to solidify in the tanks and freeze at the filter in low temperatures and Boeing said we would have to use a more volatile fuel — a JP4 equivalent.

"But Shell had worked with us and had produced a kerosene with a —50 degree freezing point. We demonstrated that this kerosene could be used and after many battles we got our way. That's how JP1 started — a valuable fall-out from Comet experience."

Concorde

Since then Charles has been involved with the VC10, the Boeing 747, the Lockheed 10-11 and, of course, Concorde.

He said: "I think SST is inevitable but I do not think anyone yet knows how to do it properly. Concorde will operate but it makes a lot of noise and is not sufficiently economic particularly with the cost of fuel today."

What, looking back, does Mr Abell regard as the most significant changes in 10 years?

First, the enormous technical developments on all fronts of the aviation industry in one lifetime — faster than any other industrial development.

The price to the customer has been held down.

The working life of aircraft has been enormously increased.

Methods of maintenance and reliability of aircraft have been improved out of all recognition.

The number of aircraft flying hours per day has been nearly doubled compared with piston engined machines.

Which is not a bad record of achievement for one working lifetime.

The Young Ones: Ross Stainton (left) probably when Manager North America; Dennis Peacock, later Flight Operations Director; and Charles Abell.

I started with a bowler which had a red silk lining

By Sir Keith Granville

VIVIDLY I remember the day I went to get a job with Imperial Airways. It was in 1928 and I'd bought a bowler hat — my first bowler. I can remember waiting outside a room in the London Office for a very long time in a cold sweat looking at the lovely silk lining of this bowler hat. It was a very nice shade of red.

I kept that hat for years and years and very often later — some twenty odd years later — I would carry it in my hand on those delightful occasions when one had to be present for royalty leaving or arriving on our aeroplanes.

How did I come to be outside that room? I was about to leave school, Tonbridge, and up to that point my career was going to be the army and I was due to take my entrance examinations at Sandhurst in the autumn.

Fortunately for me, a lecturer from the then Air Ministry, Wing Commander Blake, came to Tonbridge and talked about the future of air transport in the British Empire. He portrayed maps of the world showing how these air routes were likely to develop and, of course, there were none at that time.

The only air routes in the British sphere were in Europe between London, Paris, Basle, Zurich and Brussels and Cologne. A very trivial network but an important start.

An impressive lecture, showing possibilities of playing some part in seeing the world and helping air transport to develop. I had a contact to the Chief Engineer of Imperial Airways at Croydon, "Daddy" Hall, and he was good enough to see me. I was then a ripe 18 years of age.

In a room in a hangar at Croydon, he said: "Well, if you want to be an engineer this is the place to come to. Do you want to be an engineer?" I said: "No, not likely."

He was rather shaken by this but being very kind, he said: "Well, tell me what you want to do." I said: "I don't know enough about life to tell you, but I certainly don't want to be technical because I don't think that's my bent — but if there's anything on the commercial or administrative side or you want somebody to manage the airline, I'm the chap."

He took this well and passed me on to Dennis Handover, the Imperial Airways Traffic Manager in London.

I went to see him. Although the wait outside his room seemed endless the timing was absolutely right from my point of view because they were considering how they could take some young men in to train them in the business to provide management for the future. They had decided to take two people and they had a number of applicants.

Needless to say, he could not give me an answer on the spot. As I was uncertain whether I would get into Imperial Airways or not I looked around elsewhere for jobs and I contacted ICI.

There seemed to be a very attractive possibility of a job, particularly when they knew that I'd been making a lot of runs at cricket, but finally I think I was turned down probably because although I was quite a good bat they were badly in need of a slow left-hand bowler, which I was not.

Then I heard from Imperial Airways. The two successful applicants were John Brancker and myself and if I remember rightly we were not originally intended to be taken on as employees but as articled apprentices. In other words our parents would have had to pay indenture money, I think it's called, of say £500 a year for the privilege of working there and being trained.

Fortunately for everyone, this policy was abandoned before I joined and so I went on the payroll immediately at ten shillings a week.

Looking back on it, of course, it was really quite laughable to think that one was going to get a training from those absolutely marvellous people who were running the airline. They were learning themselves through working and experience.

They had nothing on which to base the principles of management of an airline and we all picked up our knowledge as we went along.

I've been in the airline business for 45 years and have never been on a formal course of instruction anywhere, at any time, and now I never shall.

However, the experiment of the trainee system with John Brancker and myself could not have been a complete failure because later it was developed on a much larger scale and there are many people still serving in British Airways who were original Imperial Airways trainees. Those trainees dine once a year together and are usually fortunate to collect some interesting guests from the aviation world whose qualification has always to be that they have contributed greatly to the success of the industry.

The head office and the terminal in London were at Airways House, Charles Street, just off Haymarket. Buses ran to Croydon, taking about 20 minutes I think in those days, and a very busy place it was. The main hall, just like any other air terminal now but smaller, had a reservation office or a booking office down in the basement. Half a dozen telephones and a direct line to Cooks.

Our managing director, George Woods Humphery, and the very few top executives of the airline were up on the first floor except those, such as the chief engineer and the air superintendent, who were down at Croydon with the technical men.

Sir Eric Geddes, the Chairman, was housed in his own offices over at Dunlop of which company he had been chairman for some time. He was the famous Geddes of the Geddes Axe, so famed for his government work after the 1914-18 war.

After I'd been with Imperial Airways for just a few weeks, I was attached to the deputy managing director, Mr. Harold Burchall, at Airways Terminal.

There was no suitable place for me to sit, so I was put into the board room and had the board table as my desk. What I was supposed to do I'm not sure, but I remember drawing charts of aircraft movements and also reading reports that came in from overseas managers.

That board table moved around the company over many years and was at one time, I believe, down at Filton with our engineering base when Charles Abell was manager. About twelve or fifteen years ago I acquired it for my own use as a desk and it has remained so until today. Not a very big table but it really has quite a history.

The services which we were operating ran to a very high load factor in those days, something like 71 per cent, but everybody's attention was really on what was going to happen next. The route to India had been planned. Part of the route had been operated under experimental conditions between Cairo and Basra and in March, 1929, the first London to India air service was started.

It really was the beginning of a great development in air transport, probably the greatest in the world. If I remember it right, I had a hand in weighing the passengers and their baggage at departure time at the terminal. Even more clearly do I remember that with the aid of two or three other people the tickets were written out.

Tickets in those days were not simple documents as today. There was a ticket for every sector of the journey and a voucher for every meal or cup of tea or hotel accommodation that a passenger was likely to have.

On the London to India route, the maximum range of any flight was about 250 miles so you can imagine the number of ticket segments that had to be made out and the number of meal vouchers, night accommodation vouchers, and so on. A simple ticket to India was about three quarters of an inch thick.

This system, of course, was abandoned pretty soon after the start of the service but that's how it began. My handwriting was as bad then as it is now. I can't think that all the vouchers that I made out were ever capable of being checked by the finance department or whoever the people were who were supposed to benefit by this experience.

Meantime, in the European Division they were working very hard to educate the public to fly. We had in the summer tea flights over London. These lasted about an hour.

You took off from Croydon, were given tea and scones and cream and jam — crumpets, I dare say — and you flew round London and, of course, it was marvellous experience for people in those days. These did well.

Then there were the weekend excursions at Le Touquet for golf and they were probably the first inclusive tours to be operated by air.

Another one which did well was a flight that left in the early evening, about four o'clock, for Paris. The flight ended by getting back to London at about six or seven in the morning.

This was an all-dinner jacket and evening dress affair, rather like Glyndebourne, and you were given a great deal to drink on the way over on the aeroplane and in Paris you were taken to dine at one of the best restaurants and then on to night clubs.

Then you were left on your own for an hour or two with a rendezvous at which to pick up the car, or the bus, back to the airport to fly to London. It really was rather fun seeing these rather rich, very bedraggled people turning up in the early hours of the morning back in London in their rather scruffy, by then, and dirty-fronted dinner jackets.

There were no soft shirts, people wore those stiff, starched affairs. Really quite remarkable nonsense when one thinks back on it.

Airmail was, of course, one of the most important features of the development of air services throughout the empire. To get your mail speeded up from, say, a month to India to less than a week was really going to do big things for business and the first flight covers from that England to India route are now, of course, of very great value. Unfortunately mine was burnt up during the war.

The route to India was duly opened and there were political troubles. The Italians refused us permission to continue our operations across their country so a large part of the journey to Europe had to be done by train — from Paris and Basle to Genoa.

This I know well because I was sent to Genoa in my first overseas posting to be one of the two people, Floyd Taylor was in charge, to manage the flying boat base.

We had Calcutta flying boats first of all, then Kent flying boats operating between Genoa, Naples, Corfu, Athens, Crete and Alexandria. We would take passengers off the train very early in Genoa, give them breakfast then put them on the flying boats and away they went.

And the reverse: they came into Genoa in the evening, we put them on a night train up to Basle or Paris, whichever was the most convenient, and they were then flown on the remaining sector connecting with London.

This was going for about nine months or so when the Italians again got rough and we were stopped from operating at Genoa. However, we were allowed to operate from Brindisi, so we moved all the equipment, the spare engines and everything down there and then the train journey became even longer. But the same drill was carried out with Brindisi as the terminal and on they went by air across the Mediterranean.

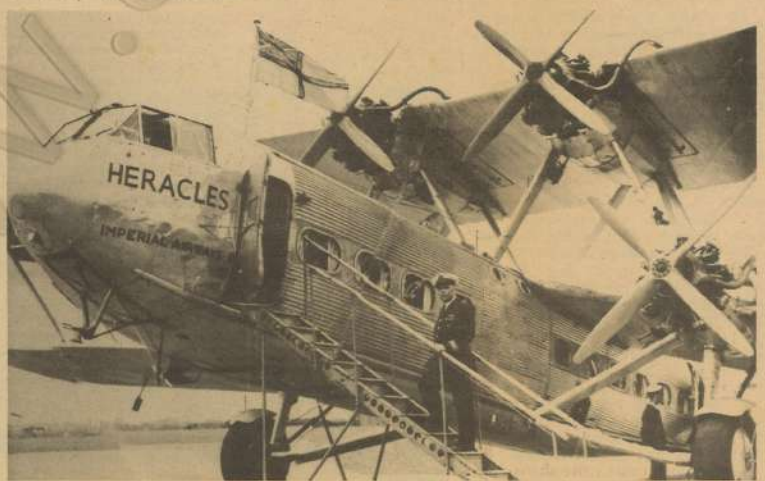
Passengers loved it, it was a great experience. Nobody was in all that much of a hurry although, of course, they were trying to save time as compared with shipping but that wasn't difficult to do.

I did two stints in Italy and then came back to London to continue my training, but was sent out again in an emergency to relieve somebody who had gone sick. I was told I wouldn't be away more than two weeks. I was away for three months and then got instructions to go on to Iraq, at which I rebelled.

In my discussions before

Continued on next page

Ticket, sir? This was the air terminal near Victoria station in the late thirties.



Showing the flag! HP 42 Heracles flies the Civil Air Ensign at Croydon

My battles with the white ants of Africa

From previous page

leaving London, it was quite clear that it was only a temporary posting and that my real future was going to be on routes to Africa. I'd felt that this sudden posting to Iraq was rather high-handed, without any explanation as to why I was going to the Middle East instead of Africa, so I demanded to come home to discuss.

Permission refused, but I returned to England to the astonishment of my bosses there. However, they were impressed with my determination to serve in Africa and after some discussion they did admit that I had been treated rather high-handedly but wasn't that what little boys were for! I said: "Yes of course it was, but not please for me."

I was then lucky enough to be posted in London to work with those who were plotting the African route. There had been a survey carried out by Captain Wolley Dod and then Mr. Frederick Tymms, later Sir Frederick Tymms, DCA of India.

They had recommended the actual routeing and the exact stopping places. They had entered into agreements in some cases, negotiations in others with governments about support, including subsidy, and there were most marvellous reports for me as a young man to read and to help others to take action on.

This was one of the highlights of my whole career. The result was that I was selected to be among those to go out when the second half of the African route was to be opened.

The first half of the African route was the extension down from Egypt to Kenya, to Kisumu, with a mixture of flying boat and land plane operations.

I was to go out in time for the extension period when the terminal was being moved from Kisumu to Nairobi and then to be extended Nairobi — Moshi — Dodoma (to which I was to be posted) — then on to Mbeya and Mpika — Broken Hill, Salisbury, Pietersburg, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Victoria West and Capetown. All very short stages, as you will understand.

So I found myself, just 21, on my way to Tanganyika, never having seen anything of Africa at all before.

I spent a few days at Kisumu on the way out with my old friend John Brancker and had a very exciting and amusing time. I then arrived at Dodoma which was on the crossroad, if you can call it that, the north-south road down Africa and the railway which ran across from Dar es Salaam to Tabora and on to Mwanza on Lake Victoria.

Its importance as a place was merely that it was geographically well situated for us to land at, but it was a provincial headquarters, agricultural area, sisal and things of that kind.

There were twelve Europeans only in Dodoma when I arrived and I made thirteen. They were, except for a chap who ran some motorcars there, all government employees of some kind or another, mostly agricultural.

I arrived about January. The air service was due to start fairly soon after that but I had to complete some plans that had to be made for a very small house to be built on the edge of the airfield. Also, I had to take over the day-to-day maintenance of the airfield which was really a task.

The Public Works Department had done a very good job of clearing it but even they couldn't get rid of all the white ants and the habit of white ants is to produce a three-foot tower overnight and very tough, hard soil they do produce. Hard enough if a wheel of an aircraft of the type we were using in those days hit one to do considerable damage.

The end of a test mail flight from Australia. The captain, Jim Percy

So one had a job of continually maintaining this airport, this airfield rather, and keeping it in a state that could make it possible to be used.

The introduction of the service was delayed somewhat, for technical reasons in the United Kingdom, and I found myself in a very short time there without any money and no means of getting any.

There wasn't a bank; there was absolutely nothing. There was no way of being sent any money at all. So I was financed — for about two and a half months by the Greek hotel keeper named Georgio, who very kindly produced money until the day when the first aeroplane arrived and I was able to repay him.

He ran a most extraordinary hotel with the most uneatable food I've ever come across, but that was Africa in those days.

My little house had a refrigerator: the only one for a radius of about six or seven hundred miles. This meant that my iced beer and bits of ice for the whisky were very, very popular.

It nearly bankrupted me and I was delighted after three or four months, when the damn thing broke down and we got to living as most people did in Africa in those days drinking warm whisky.

The first service duly arrived, spent the night at Dodoma — can't remember why, because I'm sure it wasn't scheduled — I got some guards to stand around the aeroplane to protect it from other people and spread the half dozen or so passengers among Georgio's hotel, a provincial commissioner and one or two people who had a spare bed.

Then back to the airport to make sure the aeroplane was all right. The police askaris were sitting cooking their supper. The only problem was they'd lit the fire right underneath the wing of the DH-66 and that aeroplane was, of course, made of wood and fabric.

Fortunately it hadn't caught light by the time I got there but it damn soon would have done, and it was awfully hard to explain to the African that he oughtn't to do things like that. After all, he'd hardly seen an aeroplane before and didn't see why he shouldn't cook his supper somewhere near it if he wanted to.

A few months in Dodoma was an experience which really did make one grow up. One had to provide arrangements on the ground for the small number of passengers two or three times a week; one had to provide met facilities, primitive as they were; one had to see that the airfield was all right.

One also had to lay night landing arrangements and put out flares which were bucketfuls of paraffin with a kind of asbestos thing in the middle that provided the flame. And one had to know how to lay them. There was no conversation between ground and air.

If the pilot saw those flares, he had to be absolutely certain that they had been laid so that he didn't come in over a tree or something of that kind.

The amount of responsibility put on to young men in those days, including not least of all the young men who were flying the aeroplanes, was really quite enormous.

After a few months there, I was lucky enough to be moved south to Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia, as it was then known, and aircraft types were replaced on the route.

The Atalantas came on and we had a visit by the Chairman, Sir Eric Geddes, with Woods Humphery, the Managing Director.

Again, we had a fairly primitive airfield with no telephone. I received a telegram from Sir Eric which said: "While I'm there in my short transit would you please get me Sir Rondald Storrs, the Governor of Northern Rhodesia in Livingstone, on the telephone so that I may speak to him."

Well, there wasn't a telephone, so I had to take him up the road to a public call box and get a call through to Livingstone. That was quite a feat anyway!

But Sir Eric was a pretty big man and I remember him trying to speak on the telephone because he couldn't get in the box. The wire on the earphone was long enough to get him but he couldn't get anywhere near the bit you speak into and he had a hell of a time. I think that probably set my career back quite a number of years.

Our headquarters were in Johannesburg but that seemed almost as remote as London. A few years in Bulawayo and then I was sent up to Broken Hill, in Northern Rhodesia, to take charge of that. Interesting mining area, with its own mines in Broken Hill but, of course, one never had any money at all and certainly never had much time to think about that kind of investment.

This was fly and mosquito country and one had to take enormous care. I got malaria up there. The reason was that although one slept with mosquito nets the beds provided were only two foot six wide and, of course, your arms were bound to touch the net during the night. You might just as well not have had one for the mosquitos came and made a meal out of you.

Before I came out I had, in fact, worked with Air Commodore Fletcher in provisioning the rest houses that we were building and it was probably my own fault that the beds were two foot six and not three foot six.

After getting malaria very badly, I came back to England on leave. There was no room on the Imperial Airways air service for staff to travel — that would have been a sheer waste of money — so we had to come by sea, which was really rather fun.

I went down to Capetown and came back on Armadale Castle just before she was broken up. After a year or two in London, I then was lucky enough to be sent out to Cairo to be Station Superintendent at Heliopolis, which was the terminal and junction at that time of our eastern and African operations.

By then the airline was really beginning to develop. Frequency of operations was considerable. The aeroplanes were becoming bigger in size, the HP-42 was operating, that's the old Hannibal class.

The flying boats, the Kents, had been replaced by the Empire flying boats and it really was a very modern and competitive airline, because it was way ahead of any competitors.

It knocked everything else into a cocked hat and we really were doing very, very well, indeed.

Back to England again for a short time, then out once more to Egypt and Alexandria's Ras-el-Tin flying boat base, and the land airport at Dekheila, which was just a few miles outside. We then had aeroplanes whizzing backwards and forwards with considerable rapidity and trade was booming.

The margins of safety in those days were not all that high. Fuel reserves were minimal. Knowledge of carburettor freezing, icing on wings and so on was extremely limited but, of course, flying was not at high altitudes.

It was all unpressurised and the skill of the chaps who did it was really quite enormous. Their aids were minimal, they knew their job and they were extremely responsible.

One of the features in those days was that when the Kent flying boats were operating, and later when the Empire boats were introduced, the captain, first officer, engineer and stewards all remained attached to one boat, so that if it was Canopus we knew it was Captain Bailey. If it was Cassiopeia, it was Captain Travers. They kept their own ships.

Utilisation was high and arduous. Flying was manual and "George" only came along, I think, in primitive form with the C-Class flying boats. It was a very "minor" George.

I was working in London at the time the Empire flying boats began to come off the production line and I well remember the great occasion when the Chairman had invited the Minister, a whole host of government officials, customers, and everybody who mattered in the air transport world to go down to Rochester in a special train to see a demonstration of two of these magnificent flying boats which were going to show their paces.

It was a nice, bright day fortunately and we stood along the river bank just in front of the Short building. What was supposed to happen was that four engines of each of the flying boats were to be started up, then taxi out in turn, take off, fly past us, fly up to Rochester and Chatham, then down the Kent coast and then back and after they'd landed we would all be taken out to be given a sight of the flying boat.

Well, we stood there for something like two hours during which not one single engine would start.

Shorts, with great initiative, rustled up more liquor supplies and we were taken into the shed and given guns and ammunition and sandwiches, and lunch and so on, and then we were put back on the special train to London, not having seen even one aeroplane move from its moorings.

It was a humiliating occasion. I never really found out what had happened. I wasn't important enough to be told these things.

I've seen Chairmen from time to time being rather cross but this was a unique occasion when Sir Eric justifiably nearly had apoplexy.

Really bad luck on everybody because they were magnificent flying boats and did do a fine job for the company and for the country.

They were the forerunners of the flying boats which were developed for us and for the Royal Air Force: the Sunderland, the Solent and the Sandringham, which did valuable service during the war and afterwards.

These Empire flying boats were not launched until 1936. Long before that there had been some very important developments; 1934 for instance was a very big year. I was serving

Action station . . . The flying boat base near Alexandria about 1937 with Calcuttas and Kents

Origin of a quick cuppa?

Far from home. DH6

of Delhi" was used on the Cairo — Karachi run

The composite aircraft Mercury (upper) and Maia (lower) prepare for flight.

What passengers were leaving behind them.

'A fridge nearly bankrupted me – I was delighted when the damn thing broke down'

Africa at that time when one only heard a little on the grapevine of what was being planned for the rest of the world.

In the beginning of 1934, Qantas was formed and this was made up of equal parts of capital provided by Qantas, the Australian airline and Imperial Airways, the British airline.

Plans were made for a through mail service to Australia which started in the December and in April '35 the first through passenger operations were going in both directions.

That's only 40 years ago but, of course, since then the route has developed enormously. Qantas a few years later became independent from us but has always remained a good steadfast partner and friend with BOAC which succeeded Imperial Airways.

Another important job in 1934 was the planning of the proposed Empire airmail scheme called the "All up scheme." It meant that all first class mail to any part of the British Empire, colonies and the like, were going to be moved by air at a very modest postal rate.

The volume of this was to be looked after by the Empire flying boats which were coming on with much bigger capacity than anything we had had before.

In fact, an under-estimate was made and we had to remove quite a number of passenger seats on some routes for those flying boats to get the mail aboard. The Empire airmail scheme didn't start until June 1937, but the plans had been laid well before.

The years I spent in Egypt were again amongst the most enjoyable — one worked hard. Aeroplanes always seemed to operate in the early hours of the morning and late at night.

It was a fine country, fine climate, lots of work to do and lots of pleasure. But I was brought back to the United Kingdom around 1936 to work in the Traffic Manager's office which was the central fount of the whole operation of the airline.

The planning, the operational schedules, the fleet plans, the agreements with governments and post offices were all co-ordinated in this office. It was a fine place to really learn something about how an airline works.

A new competitor had arrived by then — British Airways — which was an amalgamation of some other private companies, including Hillmans. It introduced Lockheed Electras on the London-Paris route in 1937 which were fast, small aeroplanes and had a very big public appeal compared with our comparatively large but rather slow HP-42s, Ensigns, and aircraft of that kind.

This was the beginning of the totally private enterprise nibble into our affairs which led eventually, after the Cadman inquiry, in 1939 to the amalgamation of British Airways and Imperial Airways into BOAC. But more of that later.

Plans were still going on and one was lucky enough to be playing some small part in these. The survey had started for North America. Caledonia, which was one of the C-Class flying boats, operated a return transatlantic flight in the middle of 1937. I think there were five of these flights by Caledonia and Cambria.

The Government set up the Cadman Committee in November 1937 to review the future of air transport and to inquire into its efficiency. They reported early in 1938 and the result was that later that year the British Government announced the intention to merge Imperial Airways and British Airways and to form BOAC.

The report is an interesting document for anybody to read. One of the outstanding features of it was, of course, criticism of the then managing director George Woods Humphery who so far as the company was concerned was idolised.

He was a very tough boss, very demanding and determined that we should be the best airline in the world as we believed we were.

He did not however get on with government very well and, if my memory is right, the Cadman Committee records that in his negotiations with government he took "a commercial view of his responsibilities that was too narrow."

He, of course, left before the merger actually took place and this was a great loss to British air transport.

Another great development of 1938 had been the first commercial crossing of the North Atlantic by Maia and Mercury. This was the pick-a-back experiment in which Captain Wilcockson was flying the heavier part and Captain Don Bennet the one on top which did the actual crossing.

During the war years BOAC was placed at the service of government. All our services were operated on controlled basis, the capacity belonged to a priority board which allocated seats.

You couldn't buy them in the ordinary commercial way and we acted as a support to the Forces and for diplomatic purposes such as our continued operations to neutral countries like Portugal.

Our routeings had to be modified as the war developed. The Mediterranean was closed. We operated down the West Coast of Africa to Johannesburg and Durban and we kept the flying boats operating then from a base at Durban up Africa and around to India, known as the Horseshoe Route.

At the time of the Burma Campaign, I was sent out to India for a short time to work with transport command. Then, after a brief spell back in the United Kingdom, my posting was to the Middle East as Manager of the region to start to convert it from a war footing on to a peace-time footing.

Our set-up in Egypt in those days was enormous and we had a fleet of aeroplanes based there, Lockheed Lodestars and Dakotas.

We had a huge staff of engineering, commercial and flying and gradually this had to be reorganised, redeployed and generally pruned. It took many years to achieve.

I only spent a year or two at this work and was succeeded by Malin Sorsbie, Dick Hilary and others who completed the task with great competence.

Organisationally in those days we had great independence overseas. The regions were big and powerful. Mine, for instance, extended from Libya on one side, to the borders of India in the east, Turkey in the north and down to the bottom of the Sudan in the south. It took me several days to fly round my own territory in a private aeroplane.

However, all that deployment of authority had to stop as the airline became centralised, as aeroplanes became based in the United Kingdom and for economy reasons.

By this time, all of us in Imperial Airways were struggling to become a really commercial airline again. During the war we had no real commercial activity.

It wasn't easy to get back on to a proper businesslike footing. Part of the system for doing this was a re-arrangement of the organisation and London-based divisions were set up. One for the Far East, one for the Atlantic and one for Africa with a job in the middle in the United Kingdom — all these were commercial posts.

I was lucky, after doing a short stint as Manager United Kingdom region, to become a divisional manager for Africa and the Middle East.

This, of course, was very much to my taste as I had always had this affection for Africa and wished to work in its atmosphere. It was a time not only for our own development but for airlines in Africa, too.

South African Airways had become a big airline in its own right but other countries, the East African countries for instance, and the West African countries, were still operating on a small scale supported by us.

Gradually we helped them to develop until the time came many years later for them to operate international services ultimately in their own right but in the first instance supported by us.

The amount of development work that Imperial Airways and later BOAC has done throughout the Commonwealth is sometimes overlooked.

We had a part in formation of Qantas which I mentioned earlier, we had participation in New Zealand, we took part in the joint exercise of New Zealand, Australia and the British in British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines which operated across the Pacific.

We purchased a little company in Rhodesia in the early 1930s when I was down there, called Rhodesian Aviation Company Ltd. We developed that into Rhodesia and Nyasaland Airways Ltd., which became quite big, and ultimately it became Central African Airways Corporation, or now Air Rhodesia of course. We mounted services between Rhodesia and Europe for CAA.

In West Africa, much the same sort of thing happened. We set up a local airline, made it work well and then helped them to develop on to the international routes to Europe and the United Kingdom.

All these developments were done, I suppose partly for the benefit of ourselves to make sure that we had strong partners at the other end of our international and commonwealth routes but they were really done as part of national aid.

I daresay if the accounts had been properly kept there was a certain amount which we contributed — not only "know-how" and skill and labour and men — but financially, too, in the early pools that were arranged.

However, all this was a good investment. It helped to develop British air transport throughout the Commonwealth. They don't all remain close partners of ours now, but on the whole the links forged in the early days still stand us in very good stead.

The reconstituted Board of BOAC towards the end of the war had very little flying experience and I was told to organise a trip in a Frobisher for them to Shannon so that they could experience together the joys of flying by BOAC.

This was done but, alas, as we were approaching Foynes, or Shannon Airport, a flap came off and we landed in a field with all four engines out of the aeroplane — petrol pouring around — but fortunately nobody was hurt.

It was a pretty alarming experience because aeroplane windows were blacked out as a protection against being spotted by enemy aircraft by lights in the cabin.

So although we knew that we were in a distressed condition — the aeroplane was rocking from side to side and the captain had told us we were going to make an emergency landing — we just didn't know what the devil was going on.

Very frightening, but everybody behaved extremely well and the Board really felt this was an extraordinary introduction to their appointments to this very great airline.

I recall that among the new board members of that time was Sir Simon Marks, later to become Lord Marks, and our first woman board member, Pauline Gower.

She incidentally was the only one who had a brandy flask — or was it whisky — in her bag which was a great help to us as we stood and watched this broken-up Frobisher lying in the Irish bog.

On the way back from that flight, I travelled in an Anson flown by our chairman, Gerard d'Erlanger. I suppose it belonged to ATA the aircraft delivery company of which he was the head as well as being our chairman.

This was also an equally exciting journey because our flight plan obviously had not been properly warned to the anti-aircraft batteries on the Somerset coast and they opened up at us in broad daylight. Fortunately their aim wasn't very good.

The great event of the introduction of the first pure jet services in the world came when we took delivery of Comet 1s in 1951 and opened up service in 1952 with a route to Johannesburg.

We were then many years ahead of any airline in the world and our heads were very high. We extended Comets to Colombo and Singapore and Tokyo and then in 1954 came the Comet disasters.

By April of that year, after the Elba accident and the Naples tragedy they were withdrawn from service not to reappear again until 1958 when the Comet 4 came into existence.

Rather larger than the Comet 1, structurally different and they had a fine record up until very recent days when they retired from service from BEA. We used the Comet 4 in 1958 to operate the very first pure jet service across the North Atlantic.

We got in a day or two ahead of Pan American who then had Boeing 707s specially designed for this purpose.

The Comet service was not maintained for very long because the aeroplane wasn't really designed for that job, but we got a first.

All this time we were continuing to struggle to make ourselves commercial, become profitable, but we had a really uphill job because our equip-

Continued on next page

The day we shed our 'do good' image

From previous page

ment was no longer the most competitive. The Americans had got ahead of us with their Boeing 707s.

They'd had the manufacturing industry during the war; Britain had not and our ability to buy foreign was limited.

It was in 1958 that we signed our contract with Vickers for VC10 aircraft, which turned out to be such successful passenger vehicles, and later in the same year I was invited to join the Board.

The VC10 has, of course, been a great story in BOAC and one of our most successful ventures. In fact, in 1958 we ordered too many of them — 35. No airline could absorb that number of aircraft in the late fifties and the early sixties, it was just impossible.

No expansion could take place at that rate, and it was necessary in the early 1960s to cut back on the order for VC10s.

This has always been held against BOAC. In fact, it was a very wise decision. It had no adverse effect on sales of VC10s to other operators. After all, we were maintaining a very big fleet of these aeroplanes.

Nevertheless, it was a decision which with hindsight ought to have been handled perhaps a little more gently and with more understanding by the government, by the manufacturers and, indeed, by us.

We took delivery of some Boeing 707s in 1960 and although we struggled and tried very hard to become commercial we didn't completely succeed. In 1963, there was a bit of a row between BOAC and the Government.

There was a specially commissioned report the result of which, a government White Paper, the Financial Problems of BOAC, was published at the end of 1963. A shake-up of the Board stemmed from this and we had a change of Chairman. Sir Giles Guthrie came in and for the first time government set out clearly the task that was expected of BOAC.

They made it absolutely clear that we had to be totally commercial and take no other considerations into account.

This was healthy for us because as I've said, although we'd tried very hard to be commercial before that, we were carrying history on our shoulders. History of development of our own airline, history of helping to develop other airlines, having big shareholdings in small subsidiary companies and the like.

We were a very do-good organisation for the rest of air transport in the world and we hadn't been able to shake the shackles off until we got this very clear direction from the Government under Giles Guthrie's chairmanship.

From that moment on, of course, things changed enormously. We were more ruthless than we had ever been before in all our decisions and we became a very profitable airline.

Profits are unimportant in themselves; it's what you are able to do as a result of it and, of course, the staff benefited.

It meant expansion, it meant better paid jobs, it meant the confidence and satisfaction of being in a successful business which was held in very high esteem throughout the world. And so it has remained.

Because of our successful trading, we were able to invest in things that were really necessary for the airline . . . the Boadicea computer complex . . . the Boeing 747s which have played such an important part in maintaining our standing as one of the world's most successful airlines.

My service on the Board during these years has given me experience of every important aspect of our business and not least of all of the International Air Transport Association, which plays a very important role in the activities of all major airlines of the world.

I was lucky enough to be chairman of traffic conference and to sit on the traffic advisory committee and later on, after Giles Guthrie's retirement, I was appointed to the executive committee.

I've always been an IATA man — I think it's an organisation which airlines need. Whenever it falls short of perfection, and it does sometimes, it's rarely the fault of the association, it's usually the fault of the airlines who are members. It's a service organisation and it can only do as well as the airlines are determined it shall do.

On the whole, its record is very high but selfish attitudes by some airlines — ours included from time to time — have prevented the best co-operation coming out of this unique international organisation.

It isn't only the work on fares and rates that matters, important though it may be. The technical work, financial work, legal work is something that we just could not replace by any other method.

After I'd become Chairman of BOAC in 1971, I continued to serve on the Executive Committee and was very proud to be the President of IATA during the year 1972-3 and to have the annual general meeting held in London.

In a few days, I will no longer be Deputy Chairman of British Airways. Of course, life is going to be different but I will at last be able to spend even more time and do more things together with my wife, Truda.

We are family people, as we need to be with eight children. I am very proud of them all. Now we will be able to see much more of them.

However, don't get the impression that this means retirement. It does not, as I said when I announced that I was leaving in January. I am still fit and people both inside and outside the industry believe that I have something still to offer.

Now a final word. It has been a tremendous privilege for me to have spent my whole working life with the airline and to have served with the people who have worked for it.

I am grateful to all my colleagues in the business — many thousands over the years. It has been both hard work and fun. I wish success to everyone — and good fortune to British Airways.

Out of the past ... The Argosy's passenger cabin.

Earning 15 bob apprenticeship

"A NEW air route calls for more than the provision of aeroplanes and pilots" said the *Sunday Times*, in an article on April 13th 1930, "and Imperial Airways Ltd has adopted the apprenticeship scheme long employed in engineering" for the recruitment of embryo station superintendents to meet rapid route expansion through Africa and the Far East.

Lured by the unexpected promise that "Apprentices will receive a salary from the very first", I joined the Class of 1933, and thereafter never had time to look back.

As an aviation "nut" from birth, in the De Havilland Stag Lane circuit, it was my kind of scene from day one at Croydon Airport.

Despite being brazenly exploited as cheap labour and the fulsome prospectus of courses in the technical and commercial mysteries of air transport, which were almost wholly illusory, the experience was satisfying in all but financial rewards.

The three-year course provided an annual increment — "subject to proficiency bar" (in today's language) — of 15 shillings a week less National Insurance deductions. First year basic was 15 shillings a week and no pension scheme.

Hard working attachments, mainly on shifts involving most weekends, at Croydon Airport, Victoria Airways Terminus (Hudson's Place) and Sales Office (Haymarket) passed swiftly under the always critical eyes and tongues of Traffic Manager Dennis Handover, and Managing Director George Woods Humphery.

Highlights, the issue of first uniform with midshipman type flashes after one year, and a temporary posting to Brussels Airport for the Expo' 1935 season.

Rebates

There, the uniform brought unexpected financial benefits in the form of rebates on all public transport, and gloriously, on "rides" in the Expo' Fun Fair.

It seemed hard to confess to a generous State that one was neither "enfant, invalide, or militaire", so one kept the change.

Clearly briefed that one was only "half-baked", posted to Cairo (Heliopolis) as 3rd Year Trainee with overseas allowance of £250 p.a., topee, shorts, and ample medical advice on how to avoid the dreaded ailments on taking up the white man's burden.

However, thanks to the outstanding advice and leadership of Station Supt. Keith Granville, such pitfalls were largely avoided.

Not for long though, because a posting to sweltering Khartoum produced a welcome new experience, coupled with the problems of life as an underpaid "box-wallah" in a land of high social living set by a majority of expatriate subsidised gentlemen from the U.K. Forces and Sudan Civil Service.

After a breather in Alexandria, again happily under Keith Granville, 1937 found me a fully-baked Station Assistant (2nd Class!) resplendent with two quarter-inch gold stripes, serving as Station Superintendent Juba, Southern Sudan.

The objective was both exciting and sad; to prepare for the closure of the landplane route after seven years of air service, the Nile at Juba being considered unsuitable for flying-boats of the Short Empire Class about to take over in Africa.

Closed the station sadly and departed ignominiously by steamer — a five-day trip to Malakal and air transport to backhaul me south again to next posting in Kenya.

Marriage

Home leave in 1938, foreshortened by the Munich war scare, was long enough to get married with the company's blessing (then, incidentally, denied to all with less than three years' overseas service).

Then back to Kisumu with thoughts of war and a merger with British Airways Ltd. foremost in mind. It was indeed hard to decide which was the more menacing.

The war arrived ahead of the merger in the event and some highly inaccurate Italian air raids on Nairobi served to distract attention from the first metamorphosis which occurred on the night of 31st August 1940. To sleep that night in Kampala Imperial Airways, and awoke BOAC.

The significance of this considerable change was very soon obscured by the gravity of the war news from most fronts, and particularly, from an African viewpoint, the effects of the Mediterranean closure.

There followed a Congo flying-boat route survey by road and river from Nairobi to Leopoldville, and later to many other exotic parts of Belgian and French West Africa for nine eventful months.

The trans-African flying-boat route was established and the U.K. was once more linked with the Durban-Cairo-Karachi "Horshoe Route" at Kampala.

At the same time, the isolated SABENA Congo Division fleet of Junkers 52s was joined to the BOAC war effort on the Takoradi, Cairo aircraft re-force route to the Allied Desert Air Force.

At Leopoldville, there was just time for a little cloak-and-dagger stuff, arranging clandestine meetings between Free French and Vichy officers in a moored

Into the future . . . Keith Granville in Concorde with Jimmy Andrew

a week in the 'Class' of 1933

Empire flying-boat. This contributed to the rallying of the Chad and French Congo territories to General de Gaulle.

Invalided out of Lagos to the Levant, the next four years, based at Jerusalem, revolved round a continuous pattern of regional route development within the Middle East in support of the war effort.

First, the front with Vichy Syria-Lebanon required the withdrawal of flying-boat operations from Galilee to the Dead Sea.

Then followed the setting up of the first and last flying-boat alighting area in Jordan, at El Lisaan on the south end of the Dead Sea.

Meanwhile, landplane routes were started to Nicosia, Adana and Damascus, all of which stations were to feature on the post-war air map of the Eastern Mediterranean, together with Palestine's main civil airport of those days, Lydda, today's LOD.

Home at last, in summer 1945, to a war-weary U.K. not seen for seven years and in time to celebrate V.J. Day in, to me, the new Airways Terminal, Buckingham Palace Road.

An almost immediate posting to the BOAC "shadow" European Division offered a foretaste of the new BEA Corporation, which politicians said was imminent.

A bed in Brussels, this time, was the scene for my second midnight metamorphosis from BOAC to BEA on 31 July, 1946.

I accepted the key to Europe with gratitude and immersed myself in Viking promotions, SABENA liaison and trying to find Ruislip on the phone, on the map, and sometimes on foot.

Winter 1947 found me there as Traffic Manager at my first Head Office desk after 14 years in air transport. Not an auspicious homecoming to an unheated Keyline House, frequently either fog or snowbound, without a Central London line station — and with rationing of almost everything except enthusiasm.

Frustration

To our mixed fleet of aircraft and makeshift airport arrangments at Northolt, growing early losses added further frustration which at times seemed overwhelming.

There were moments when trying to be the only shorthaul airline in Europe seemed an impossible objective. But in 1949, Lord Douglas of Kirtleside and Peter Masefield came among us with a combined force of leadership, inspiration and planning which transformed all that was BEA. We ordered and launched the wonderful Viscount, which became truly the "Key to Europe" in the fifties.

We opened our own Town Terminals — Kensington and Waterloo — our own Sales Shop at Dorland Hall and even Northolt, in its last days, seemed to take on a new dignity as a real London Airport and not an RAF Camp.

The BEA of the fifties and sixties was full of energy and innovation, anyway among the European airlines. First to abolish passenger manifests, first to introduce "open sales" booking methods, first to introduce apron control/despatch systems.

Advocate to reluctant authorities of airport pier and gate design, airside lounges, Power Operated Gangways (POG) and Taxy-in and Push-Out (TIPO).

All these innovations together with all the others in Engineering & Flight Operations and Accounting contributed to BEA's reputation for leadership in European air transport.

Surprisingly, we still found time for some real outside activities which added some lustre to our P.R. image and gave much personal fun.

Prestige

The 1953 London-New Zealand Air Race, in which our Viscount entry distinguished itself, is an outstanding memory, because I was fortunate to be involved with the planning, including a reconnaissance visit to Australia at Her Majesty's expense. It certainly helped to sell more Viscounts as well as earn BEA some world prestige.

The 1959 Daily Mail Bleriot Anniversary London-Paris Air Race was a wonderful launch for the Comet 4B introduction into service as BEA's first-ever jet.

Personal involvement here was total within the Bealine Syndicate, which won £1,000 initiative prize for its bowler-hatted Bus-Rail-Air-Taxi dash from Marble Arch to the Arc de Triomphe.

My personal clocked time of 1hr. 1min. 53 seconds for that ride is probably the finest conversation stopper I shall ever acquire, unless I survive in British Airways to participate in a Concorde entry for some latter-day Daily Mail Race.

And so to metamorphosis No. 3; this time in a bed in my own beloved London at midnight on 31st March 1973. Goodnight BEA, Good-morning British Airways. "They've done it to me again", I muse, and try to feel different.

But no, all is as before, only the score sheet changes. Airlines served, 4. Chairman served, 10. Chief Executives, 12. H.M. Government Reports affecting livelihood, 3. Stations & Posts served, 17. Aircraft types handled, 37.

Ministers of Crown involved . . . I am falling asleep counting . . . Regional Division starts tomorrow . . . Plus ca change . . . Must get some sleep . . . Goodnight.

Ian Scott-Hill
Director,
British Airways — Channel.

IMPERIAL AIRWAYS

Proud pioneers on Paris run

I WELL remember some of the pioneers of the first operational flights from London to Paris, although I did not join Air Transport and Travel until just before the transfer to Croydon.

The company moved to Croydon because Hounslow was unsuitable for flying on account of weather conditions and that Croydon was nearer to London — and Paris.

The first person I met was Bert Woodhams, the Chief Engineer and holder of Ground Engineer's licence No 2. He later became managing director of Armstrong-Siddeley Company.

I had a silver-plated nut and eyebolt taken from the first aircraft that flew from London to Paris. Bert was very proud of this.

Then there was Captain Jerry Shaw, the first pilot to operate the very first service to Paris, and became our Chief Pilot.

One of our aircraft landed with engine trouble at Penshurst in Kent and burst a tyre. Jerry told me to get a spare wheel and take it down to Penshurst in an old Avro 504K, which we kept for passengers who wanted to try the feel of the air before booking. We placed the wheel on the passenger seat and my tool box on top. With no place for me to sit, Jerry said: "You sit on top of the fuselage and I'll strap you on with this webbing."

He climbed aboard and opened up the old rotary engine. On arrival at Penshurst we found the field covered with sheep, but one shot from the Very pistol and out came the farmer with his dog. He leaned over the gate and watched the dog collect the flock and pass them through the gate before we landed.

Another personality was Captain Bill Lawford, who did more flying on those first trips than anyone. He always called everyone from the management downwards, "Old Man".

After the passengers were loaded everyone would be looking for the pilot. Then Bill would walk up to the DH 4a wearing a bowler hat and umbrella, climb aboard, place his hat under the seat, put on his flying helmet which he produced from an inside pocket, run his engine up, shout "Chocks away, Old Man" and at 90 miles an hour the world was his. — Leslie Pace, Late Recruitment Manager, BOAC, Founder Secretary, 25 Club.

A tip for the pilot...

AS a flight mechanic (then called) 1924-1927, I received 3d an hour flying pay. On a London — Paris return I averaged 2s 8d.

The duties and highlights:

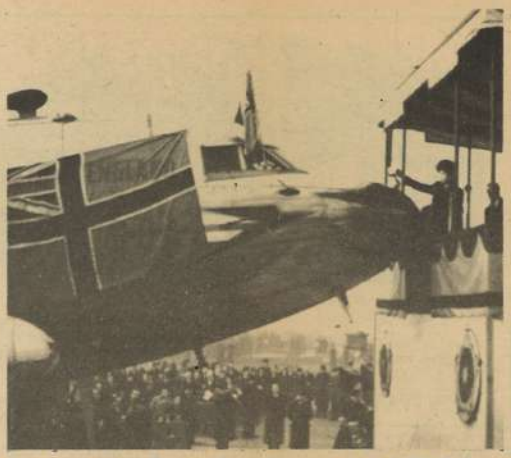
On intermediate stations, through strong head winds, land and refuel using four gallon cans, running up and down a 20 ft ladder to pour petrol into a chamois leather covered funnel;

Hand out to the passengers half way across the Channel a luncheon carton containing 1 roll and butter, cooked chicken leg, 1 cake, 1 apple, 1 orange;

Engine changes, either by failure or time expiring, entailed a compass swing — manually moving the aircraft around the various points of the compass;

Prior to service departure, all aircraft doors were sealed by the Customs officers;

A flying suit and helmet on all flights (open cockpits), summer and winter; and often at the end of a flight presented with 2s 6d tip, and 2s 6d for the man in the front (the pilot). — C. H. Pearson, Wimbourne, Dorset.



Into a new era ... Princess Elizabeth names the first BOAC Tudor aircraft "Elizabeth of England".

Straight and narrow across the desert

A WIRELESS operator in Royal Engineers Signal Service in 1920, I found myself in 1922, in a small unit on the West Bank of the River Tigris, Baghdad where I was to witness the inauguration of the ploughed furrow across the desert from Baghdad to Amman.

A blessing I was to be very thankful for when in later years — as wireless operator plus a fitters toolkit — with Imperial/BOAC — I was to fly many many weary hours staring down most times from a height of under 5000 feet.

By 1928 I had nearly terminated my army service and through Ted Hatchett, Imperial Airways, Heliopolis, was engaged as wireless operator.

After 5,000 hours on many types I assisted, in an Atalanta-type circraft, Captain Wilson, in the delivery of the first Australian airmail to Charles Smith who had already pioneered the route with Captain Alger and Wireless Operator Jock Sang, through Kopang.

In 1935 I relieved Ted Hatchett in the B.E. Base, Heliopolis and assumed control of a department which eventually became the radio maintenance section for the whole of the Middle East. — H. Bourne, Southall.

Atalanta before flying boats

REMEMBER the Atalanta? — the Armstrong Whitworth A.W.15, of which there were four in Africa, operated the route from Cape Town to Kisumu, on Lake Victoria, from 1933 until the flying boats started operating from Durban in 1937.

The Atalanta was a high wing monoplane with a covering of plywood and fabric over a metal structure built up of high tensile steel strip. It was fitted with four Armstrong Siddeley Serval engines.

I imagine there are few people these days who have ever heard of a Serval engine. It had a diabolical contrivance for starting the engines known officially as the "Viet" starter. It worked on compressed air, and the air accumulator was supposed to be kept fully charged by a minute compressor about the size of a thimble.

If, after having pumped on this thing for about an hour, and your right arm was completely paralysed, you had manage to shift the pointer of the pressur gauge off its zero mark, you wer doing fine. In these days tarmac runways and taxi strips is a little incongruous to think an aeroplane fitted with mud guards, but the Atalanta wa and believe me, they wer frequently necessary.

Life with the Atalanta wa seldom a bed of roses.

We had our lighter moment There was the time when certain First Officer arrived f departure with his "tool kit", large board to which he ha affixed sundry gadgets of his ow invention, the centre piece which, I seem to recall, was lavatory dip-stick.

There must be many who wi recall those days with nostalgi and maybe a little pride. The fla we raised has been a bit tattere and torn by the "Winds Change", but then, we a getting a bit dog-eared ourselve anyway — F. G. King, Prospec Salisbury, Rhodesia.

Under false colours

I JOINED Imperial Airways as a Radio Officer in 1939. At Croydon, I was told to report at the airfield at 7 a.m. each morning when there might occur an opportunity to go up in a real aeroplane as supernumery on a 'level flight'! just for the experience.

On the fourth morning the weather was perfect, but it so happened that the senior radio officer was absent due to sickness. The admin. staff said as the weather was so good it only required the formality of an R/O being on board so if I cared I could go up on my own. I jumped at the idea.

I borrowed the absent R/Os overalls with TWO stripes on the shoulder and with Capt. Bailey we set off. Over Gravesend a TTT signal advised dense fog i the Croydon area and about minutes later we started to f into it.

Croydon advised a ZZ Landing. had learned it only two week previously at training school . . keeping this to myself I told th Captain about Croydon's i structions. He calmly require "O.K. you know what to do".

On touch-down Capt. Baile turned to me thanking me for th smooth execution of the Z procedure and added: "Not tha I would have expected anythin different, you are obviously senior R/O by your stripes Where are you from?" Imagin his reaction when I told him was the very first time I'd eve been in an aeroplane. — P. R. H Neves, Bedfont, Feltham.