

RHC/sh. 7-9-76

Ken -

After waiting three months to get my hands on this book it has very little of interest.

Ran

D.

# THE SOLENT SKY

PETER T. <sup>albert</sup> NEW

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## SOUTHAMPTON'S MARINE AIRPORT AND HAMBLE

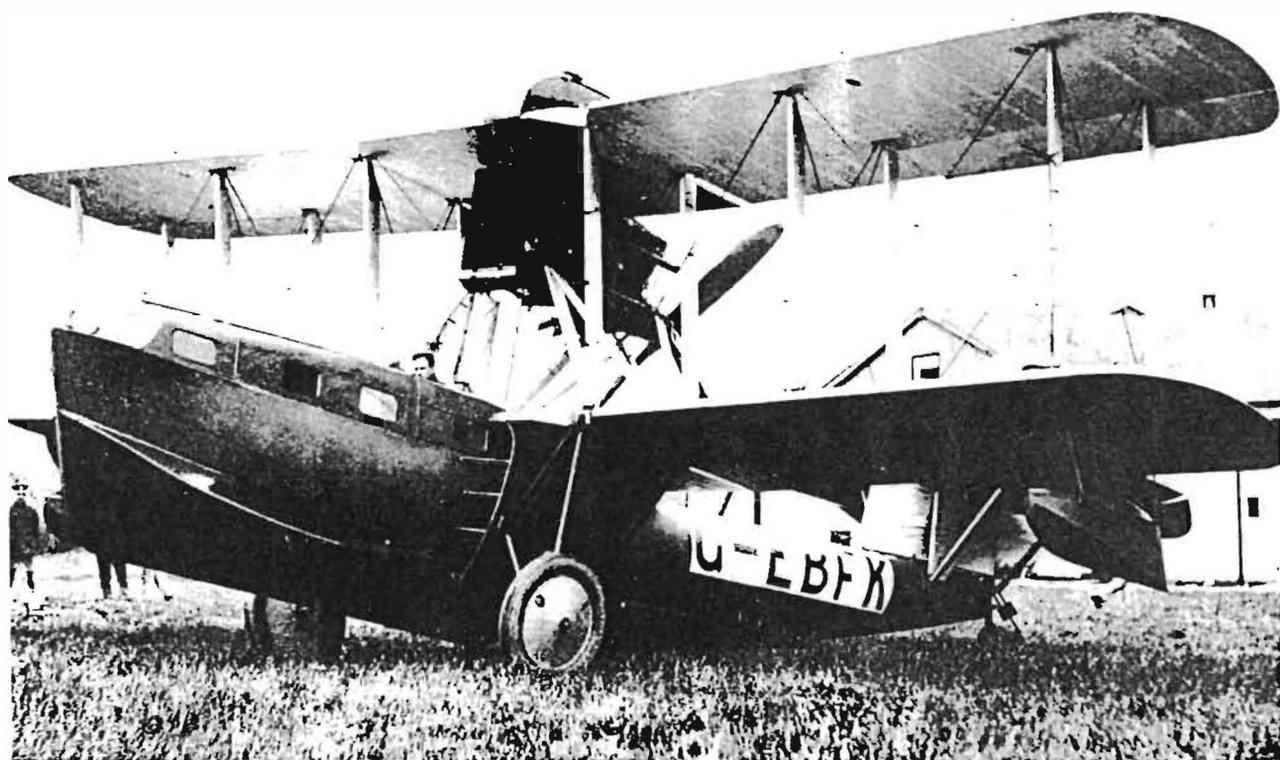
### GALLANT CAREER ENDS—SOUTHAMPTON AIR OFFICER KILLED IN FLYING BOAT CRASH

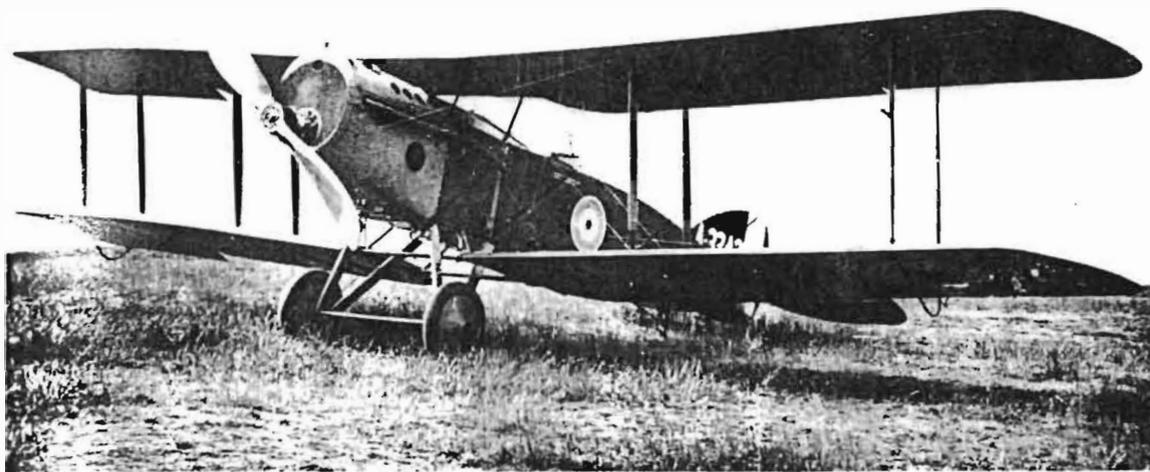
Those were the headlines in April 1920, which shocked the people of Southampton when the death of Sqd.-Ldr. Moon was reported. What began as a routine training flight from Felixstowe ended in disaster when a flying boat from No. 230 Squadron which at the time was carrying five officers and one airman, suddenly spun into the sea from a height of 1700 ft. The flying boat was airborne for about one hour and members of the crew, under the supervision of Major Moon, as he was affectionately known by Sotonians, had been practising landing on the sea. Sqd.-Ldr. Moon, who was now the Commanding Officer at Felixstowe, then took over the controls to demonstrate the aircraft's gliding ability. A sudden bump was felt on the tail and the flying boat became unmanageable. Moon did all he could to control the machine's descent but insufficient height prevented a full recovery, and even though the machine struck the water on a fairly even keel, the force of the impact submerged the craft and she instantly broke up on partially re-surfacing. Four of the crew, including Moon, were drowned and so tragically ended the life and career of Southampton's first pioneer aviator.

His body was brought to his home at Bassett and then taken on a gun carriage,

covered with the Union Jack, to the cemetery chapel. The band from the Royal Garrison Artillery, Portsmouth, played Chopin's Funeral March and the ceremony was attended by RAF detachments from Calshot and Felixstowe and included a survivor of the crash, Lt. Pakenham Walsh. The chaplain to the RAF, the Rev. G. H. Collier, officiated, and so Squadron Leader Major Edwin Rowland Moon, DSO and bar, and Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, was buried with full military honours.

At the beginning of April a development, that was looked upon with much interest, took place when Avro's and Supermarines, together with the Beardmore Aero Engine Company and Furness Withy Limited, discussed and implemented the beginning of an aviation enterprise in the Bermudas. It was envisaged that from the interest created by the giving of joy rides, that a flying school would develop and eventually, the more serious business of charter flying and photographic survey work. There were already two 504 L Avro seaplanes in the islands and these were joined by a 160 hp Supermarine flying boat shipped from Southampton via New York, and plans were in hand to send more aeroplanes if the venture succeeded. This undertaking was short-lived, but the type of Avro seaplane mentioned was inspected by a delegation of Japanese naval officers at Hamble in May. Twelve months later the outcome resulted in the sending to Japan ten of these machines to train naval pilots and the building of this type of aeroplane, under licence, by the Nakajima Aircraft Company, Tokyo.





*The Bristol Fighter - the Bristol Tourer mentioned on the next page was a development of this aircraft.*

Also in May, two other visitors to Southampton were the South Africans, Colonel Van Ryneveld and Major Brand, who returned to England to be knighted by King George V. Earlier in the year they left Brooklands for South Africa in a Vickers Vimy called the 'Silver Queen', but crashed on reaching Egypt. They continued their marathon in a RAF Vimy which took them to Rhodesia, and eventually ended up by flying a borrowed DH 9 into Cape Town. It was the Colonel who, ten years later, suggested the name 'Vildebeest' for the Vickers torpedo bomber which was test flown from Southampton Water and Stokes Bay. Major Brand was to become Air Vice Marshal Sir Quintin Brand, the Air Officer Commanding No. 10 Air Defence Group during the Battle of Britain, whose fighter stations included the Hampshire one at Middle Wallop.

During 1920 the British Aircraft Constructors held an exhibition in London with the object of impressing upon the public that flying had now progressed beyond the experimental stage and could now be accepted as a safe mode of transport. 'Aerial Motoring' was mentioned and figures quoted of 30,000 passengers being carried in flight between 1 May and 1 November 1919 without accident. Whilst spectacular flights were being made, such as Alcock and Brown's trans-Atlantic achievement, the purpose of the B.A.C. was to get the British public air minded, and this was helped by lecturers who toured the country giving talks on aviation. At the start of one of these tours, Major W. T. Blake gave a talk at the Coliseum, Southampton, entitled 'Flying For Pleasure and Profit' and stated that during 1920 the US air mail service delivered 100 million letters compared with the three-quarters of a million delivered in the UK. The meeting was considered to be of importance and the Mayor took the chair.

Figures issued in July 1920, by the Controller General showed that during the last

eleven months Civil Aviation had made 37,282 flights, carrying 67,496 passengers and 102,777lb. of freight with the loss of only one passenger killed and twelve who were injured.

As anticipated, the local aircraft firms were experiencing difficult times and every effort was made to sell their products, and the resulting publicity from aeroplane races and trials was most welcome. The Hamble-built Avro 'Baby' secured second place in the July 1920 Air Derby, piloted by Capt. H. A. Hamersley, and the 350 hp R.R. Eagle engined amphibious aircraft (G-EAVE) from Supermarine Aviation Works at Woolston, also came second in the Air Ministry's seagoing and mooring out trials on the east coast in October. The 'Eagle' was the only aircraft in the competition to complete all the tests without requiring any replacement parts. A prize of £8000 was awarded. The winner of the trials was the Vickers Viking (G-EAUK). In the IW, S. E. Saunders were constructing a 'monster' flying boat, the Vickers designed 'Valentia N126', which was to carry a crew of eight, and J. Samuel White were building 'Wasp' aero engines.

In July 1920, Lord John Sanger, Royal Circus, Lymington, advertised in the *Hampshire Advertiser and Southampton Times* for an aviation ground within reasonable distance of Southampton and suitable to land his aeroplane on Tuesday 27 July.

The *Hampshire Advertiser and Southampton Times* in 1921 published a series of excellent aerial photographs showing many different views of Southampton taken by the Central Aerophoto Company. Later, Arthur W. Hobart, of Kenley, Surrey, in 1923 and Surrey Flying Services of Croydon in 1926, also had their excellent work published in the same newspaper. The aeroplanes used for this work were based at the Eastleigh or Hamble airfields.

The RAF were also busy in this field of work, and pilots from the School of Photography, Farnborough, flew over Old Winchester Hill and elsewhere in 1922 at 2500 ft with their cameras busily clicking. This led to a number of archaeological finds, and in 1924 an Avro biplane and later a better equipped de Havilland DH 9, flown by Capt. Gaskell, photographed Teg Down, Farley Mount, and other sites in the Test Valley besides extensively covering the whole of Wessex: thus continuing Major Eskdale's pioneering work with the British Army which culminated in the photographing of Stonehenge from a war balloon in 1906 by Lt. P. H. Sharpe. It is interesting to note that in 1927 the Ordnance Office staff carried out a series of air photography experiments for map-making near Eastbourne, and some ten years later this method of map-making was continued from Southampton Airport.

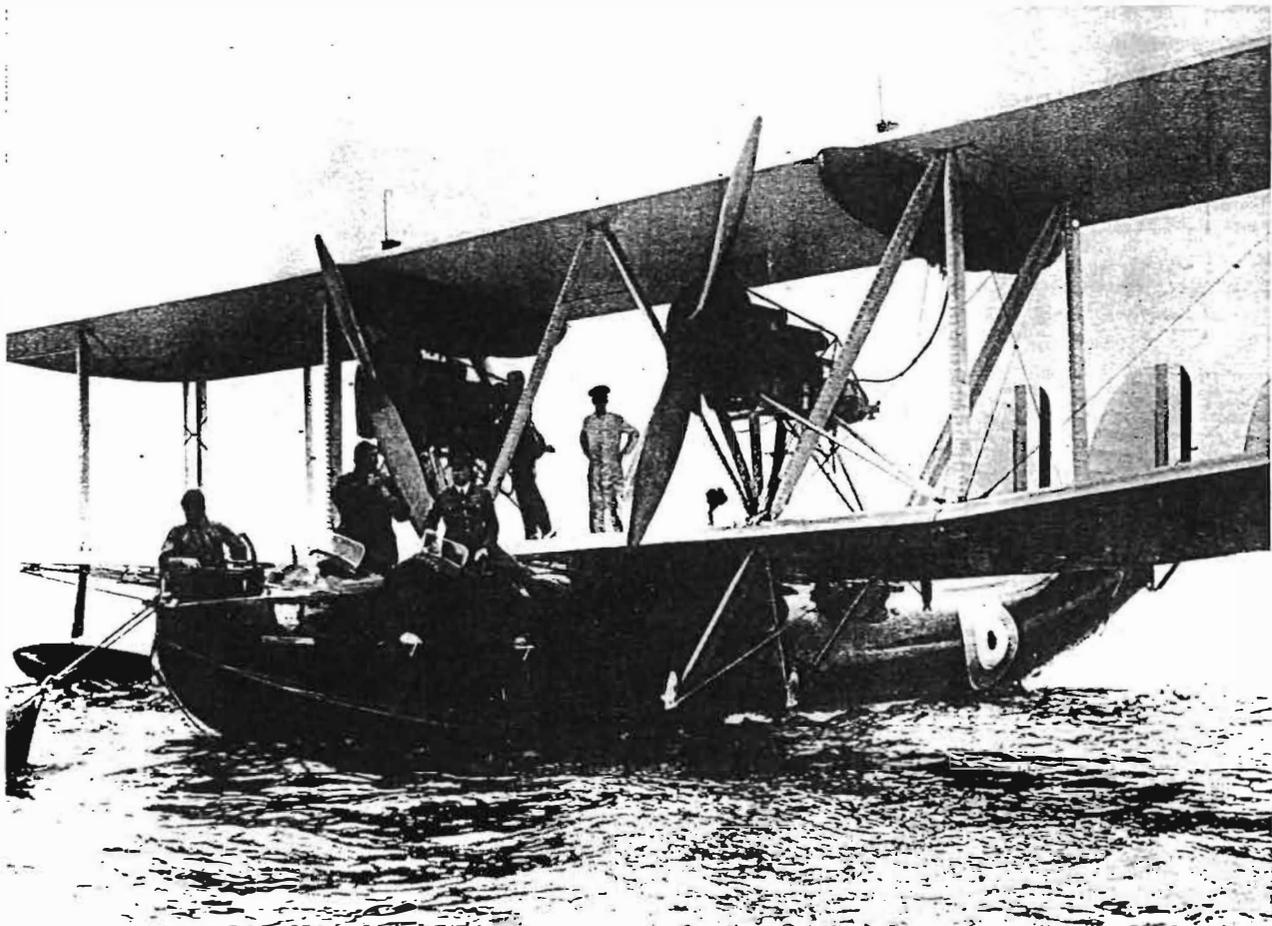
In May 1921, a Mr. Pinckney flew his Bristol 'Tourer' biplane, a development of the WW1 fighter, from Croydon to Lymington in anticipation of entertaining a number of his friends at Beaulieu aerodrome. He was the guest of his brother-in-law, Col. Curtis, Buckland Manor, Lymington. His aircraft, powered by a 300 hp Hispano engine, was brought back from Buenos Aires and was the same type that flew over the 20,000ft. high Cordilleros in South America in 1919. The day

before the meeting of his friends, Mr. Pinckney and his pilot, T. L. Tebbitt, and passenger intended to fly to the Avro Aeroplane Works at Hamble. They left Lymington, flew over Southampton Water and tragically the owner and pilot lost their lives when the aircraft crashed at Hamble. The butler of Sydney Lodge and the coachman from Hamble Cliff witnessed the accident and Mr. C. C. Perrin from the Avro Works, together with a nurse, rendered first aid. However, aviation accidents did not always end in disaster and many successful forced landings were accomplished.

The 1920's continued the 'barn storming' era of exhibition flying, and a Miss Sylvia Boyden, a parachutist from Woolston, narrowly escaped injury on landing when giving a demonstration in Paris.

Details of Supermarine's new 'air battleship' were released to the Press in July 1922 and it was specified that the new flying boat would be the eyes of the fleet and able to go through the water under its own power, unaided. A crew of twenty was mentioned, with ample sleeping accommodation. Two 650 hp engines would provide the power and its hull would be the world's largest. However, the 'Scylla,' as it was called, appears never to have been completed.

Aeroplane trials and the King's Cup air races of the early 1920's brought to the



*Supermarine Southampton (Wooden Hull) N9898*

put attention such pilots as Bert Hinkler, who was the test pilot for Avros at Hamble, and Capt. H. C. Baird, who held a similar position with Supermarines of Woolston. They flew various machines, including the light aeroplanes, Avro's 'Avis' and Supermarine's 'Sparrow' respectively. 'Sea Eagle II' won the Schneider Trophy in 1922 and this success, together with the experimental flying boat services along the south coast and the IW, enabled Supermarines to win orders for their aircraft from all over the world. Amphibians and flying boats were developed and names like 'Seagull', 'Sea Eagle', 'Scarab', 'Seamew' and 'Southampton' featured in aviation magazines and the local newspapers.

The 'Kittiwake' amphibian flying boat, built by S. E. Saunders at Cowes, was successfully flight-tested by F. Warren-Merriam in 1921. But this twin-engined biplane never went into production. Warren-Merriam built a glider and entered it for the *Daily Mail* competition in October, 1922. It crashed and then was converted into a two-seater instructional glider, but the gliding school started by Warren-Merriam was not successful and closed in 1923.

Avros in December 1922 produced a remarkable aircraft, the 'Aldershot II' (J-6852)—the most powerful single-engined biplane in the world. This machine was powered by a sixteen cylinder 1000 hp Napier engine and a four wheeled undercarriage was necessary to support its weight. Bert Hinkler took it up for its maiden flight which was witnessed by Air Vice Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond.

The RAF were now on a peace-time footing but new and modified aircraft were being received at the local RAF stations. At Gosport No. 3 Squadron were equipped with Avro Bisons and at Calshot, Felixstowe F5 flying boats manufactured by S. E. Saunders and the Gosport Aircraft Co., Ltd., were in use with No. 230 Squadron until 1925, when No. 480 Flight received wooden hulled 'Southampton' class aircraft.

The active interest in aviation matters shown by prominent members of the South Hants communities in the pre-Great War days was continued in the 1920's. Lord Montagu, in 1920, advocated six imperial air routes to India, Africa, Australia and North America, and took part in the House of Lords' debate about the RAF in July, 1922. The junior Member for Southampton, Lord Apsley, asked the First Lord of the Admiralty (March, 1923) about the present and future strength of the aircraft used by the Royal Navy. Both Members were voicing the views of many others and genuine concern was felt about the role of Britain in keeping abreast, if not, indeed, leading the world in these fields of aviation. Lord Montagu in the following year

stated more forcibly the importance of establishing an air route to India and Australia, and Lord Apsley showed his practical interest in aviation by purchasing a number of aeroplanes and was frequently to be seen flying over his home at Stockbridge, and later based some of his aircraft at Eastleigh aerodrome. On one occasion he ditched in the Solent in his Shackleton-Murray SM1, G-ACBP.

At the end of March 1924 a round-the-world flight was attempted in a Vickers Vulture amphibian, by Sqd.-Ldr. McLaren. He departed from the RAF station, Calshot, but sand and water in the petrol ended his efforts at Allahabad. The KCAR that year featured A. J. Cobham, Capt. Baird and F. L. Barnard, the finishing line being at Gosport for land planes and Lee-on-Solent for seaplanes.

A most unusual case was brought before the magistrates at Winchester in August when Thomas K. Breakell, a pilot, was summoned for flying an aeroplane at night without lights. The owner of the aircraft, Geoffrey V. Peck, was also summoned for aiding and abetting. The prosecution was under the Aerial Navigation Order of 1922, and Detective Officer Collier gave evidence that whilst on duty at Eastgate Street at 9.30 pm on Saturday evening, he heard the aircraft engine and saw the aircraft flying without lights towards Giles Hill and heard it fly back again over the Guildhall. Breakell and Peck pleaded not guilty and stated that the aircraft was not fitted with lights. They were informed that red, green and white lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise. They were fined £1—a most extraordinary case.

The development of aviation was not without its setbacks, and in August 1923 a Fairey IIID (N-9460) seaplane caught fire and dived into the Solent, the crew being rescued, and the following month the Blackburn Pellet (G-EBHF) was wrecked off Cowes after a forced landing near Calshot. A RAF Bristol fighter (F-4840) forced landed at Butlocks Heath, Netley, in September 1924 without injury to the pilot. The following year a No. 32 Squadron's Gloucester Grebe from Kenley aerodrome crashed onto a cookery school at Locks Heath, killing a girl, and an airman of No. 12 Squadron plummeted to his death at Andover when his parachute failed to open.

The 1925 Schneider Trophy was won at Baltimore by the Americans, the British pilots being Messrs Baird and Broad, supported by Hinkler. Also in 1925, because of the association of Supermarines with Southampton, a public subscription was raised to buy plaques, to be displayed on the Southampton Class flying boats made at Woolston. A visitor to the Imperial Airways station at Woolston that year was a Dornier Wal flying boat of the

*The Swedish  
Dornier Wal  
flying boat at  
the Imperial  
Airways station  
Woolston 1925*



Swedish airlines on a proving flight across the North Sea. It was a parasol monoplane fitted with two Rolls-Royce engines and equipped to seat ten passengers. This flight brought once again to the attention of the authorities the need for provision at the Docks to accept marine aircraft, but the shipowners continued their 'wait and see' policy.

Three new important aircraft appeared in 1926—the Cierva autogiro at Hamble—the forerunner of the Supermarines 'Walrus', the 'Seagull' at Woolston and the 'Fairey Fox' with No. 12 Squadron at Andover. The chief inspector at the A. V. Roe factory at Hamble was Mr. F. A. Oddie (later of Oddie, Bradbury & Cull), who worked in close co-operation with Senor de la Cierva, the autogiro inventor. One of the difficulties of getting the lift blades rotating before the aircraft took off was overcome when a direct drive from the engine was introduced in 1932. Before this they were spun in a similar manner as a toy top is made to spin. Frank Courtney was the test pilot as Cierva did not learn to fly until 1927, when he obtained his pilot's licence with the Hampshire Aeroplane Club.

As far as the Wide Lane airfield was concerned the highlight of the 1920's occurred in 1926 when the Surrey Flying Services from Croydon brought their aeroplanes for air taxi work, joy riding and the additional thrill of making a parachute descent for those who had enough courage to do so. Over 3600 passengers were carried and Mr. Joseph Dunning, a pilot member of the Hampshire Aeroplane Club, made a descent using a 'Guardian Angel' parachute. Miss D. Whitlock, of Eastleigh, who worked at the Atlantic Park Hostel, became the first woman to make a parachute jump in Southampton. She was watched by about 15,000 onlookers as she climbed into the Avro, accompanied by Capt. A. A. Anderson and piloted by Mr. Flynn. At about 1000 ft she climbed out of the cockpit, jumped and landed safely in the centre of the

flying ground. One of the passers-by who stopped to witness this event happened to be Miss Whitlock's father, who was completely unaware that it was his daughter jumping out of the aeroplane. During the summer a number of other people made their first parachute jump, but before doing so a legal form nicknamed 'a death warrant' had to be signed.

Before going any further, let us return to July 1923 when the British Marine Air Navigation Company, under Herbert Scott Paine, began the first commercial flying boat service to the Channel Islands from Southampton. The aircraft used carried six passengers and were advertised to connect with the fast trains to Waterloo, enabling one to breakfast in Jersey, lunch in London, and be able to return for dinner. The actual flying time being ninety minutes. The Air Ministry as early as June 1922 had given permission for flights from Southampton to Le Havre and Cherbourg, and in January 1923 held talks at Supermarines to discuss a commercial air link between England and the Continent.

Sir William Sefton-Branker, Director of Civil Aviation, stated in January 1924 that the Woolston Airport would be taken over by the newly-formed Imperial Airways, and Southampton would have its first airport. This became a reality in August 1924 when Capt. V. H. Garwood became the manager, operating under the Imperial Airways flag and using Supermarine amphibians. By October, the aircraft were fitted with radio and modified to accept the larger 450 hp Napier engine and capable of seating twelve passengers.

The service from Woolston to Guernsey between July 1923 and July 1924 pioneered the way for later developments and was considered successful even though the first civil amphibian G-EBFK was lost in a crash in May 1924. The negotiations with the French authorities to extend the route to Cherbourg became protracted and later, whenever an occasional flight was made from Southampton

Flight from Scandinavia, and Lindbergh's solo transatlantic flight to Paris. After a tremendous reception in Paris and London he flew his aircraft 'Spirit of St. Louis' to Gosport in preparation for it to be shipped back to the States.

McIlroys, of East Street, Southampton, celebrated their 53rd anniversary by giving prizes to the persons who guessed the correct height at which an aircraft, piloted by Mr. D. Van Dessel, would fly over their shop on the 17 and 18 May 1928.

The future of Southampton as a great airport was debated on many occasions and the competition between air and sea for the Atlantic passenger traffic was emphasized when a bi-weekly airship service was suggested. Commander C. D. Burney stated that if Southampton was chosen as the UK terminal a convenient local landing ground must be found. It was envisaged that a start could be made in 1930 and the minutes of the Southampton Corporation show that application was made by Captain Boothby RN (Retd.), Director of Air Venturers Ltd., for a site for construction, operation and landing facilities for airships at the Eastleigh Aerodrome.

The successful Hamble Air Pageant was repeated in 1928 and included the display of an Avro Gosport and Cierva autogiro. Mr. John Tranum, the wing walker, performed and made a parachute descent, the Gloster 'Gamecocks' were back to thrill the crowds once again and Lady Heath, who achieved an altitude record for light seaplanes in a Short Muttel, attended the display. The increase in traffic and visitors meant a very busy time for the police force, who were under the control of Superintendent Pragnell from Eastleigh.

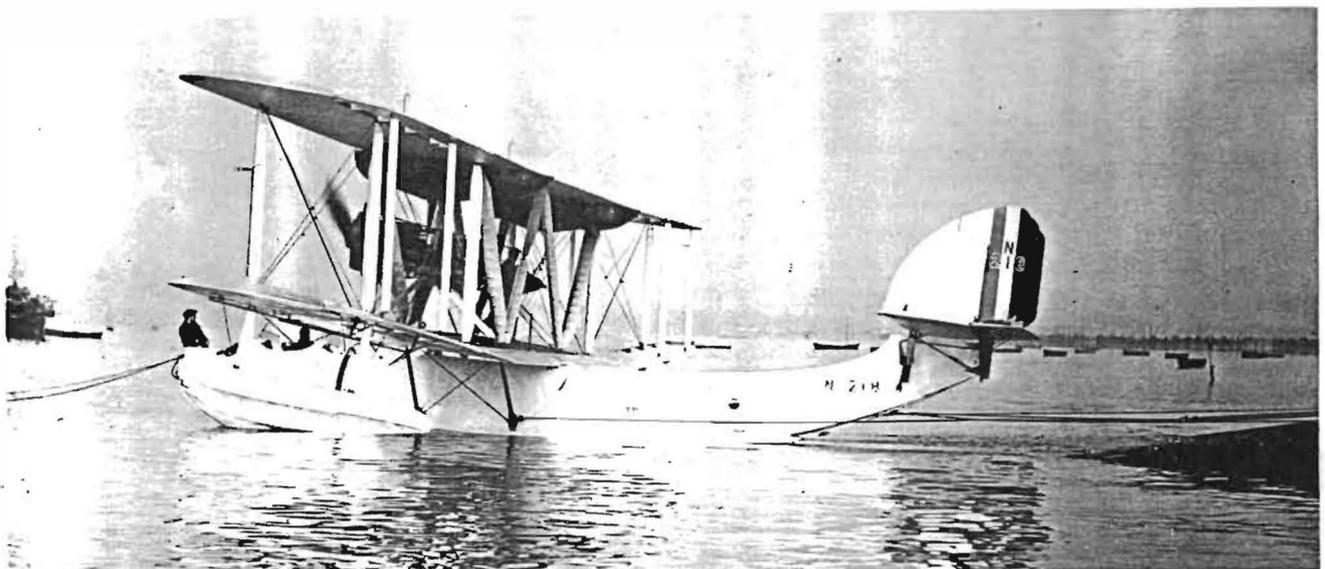
One of the highlights of 1928 occurred when Miss Amelia Earhart and her pilot, Mr. William Stultz, arrived at the Imperial Airways Station, Woolston, on the completion of their

flight from Newfoundland. Miss Earhart thus becoming the first woman to fly the Atlantic was welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress. The aircraft, a three-engined Fokker monoplane called 'Friendship', was forced down in the Burry Estuary, Wales, and so prevented a direct flight to Southampton as was planned. Later the aeroplane was sold and dismantled, the engines returning to America in the 'Olympic' and the fuselage transported to London Docks by the well known firm of Messrs. George Baker and Co. and shipped to New York in September.

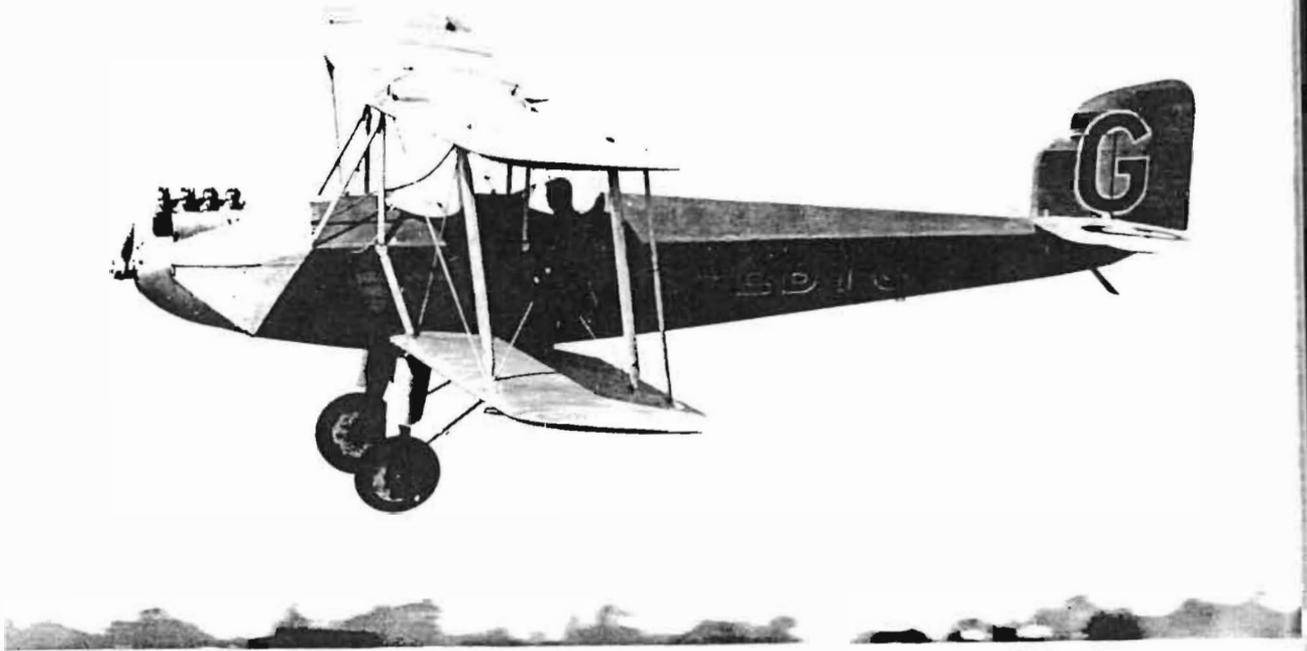
Other visitors to the Solent seaboard included a group of Spanish Air Force Officers to Woolston; an Italian airman, Col. de Bernardi to Hamble where he inspected a number of aircraft and made a flight in an Avro 'Avenger', and a Mr. George H. Storck of Seattle, who purchased an Avian fitted with floats, called it the 'Seattle Spirit' and set off for a round the world flight of 27,000 miles. (He had built an aircraft in 1908). Hamble Aerodrome at this time was a busy place, with the Hampshire Aero Club contributing to its active life. It was a favourite jaunt for H.A.C. members to fly from Hamble to the Ensbury Park race course at Bournemouth, but this was prevented in 1928 when the race course was closed down.

In the IW the indomitable Warren-Merrian, who started his Aviation Bureau in 1926, was giving joy rides in his Avro machine from the West Cowes Aerodrome during the Whitsun holiday of 1928 and was contemplating a seaplane and landplane school. The school appeared to have the necessary support required, but foundered and in 1932 the Aviation Bureau was moved to Southampton. He was joined in 1927 by Captain Vaughan whom he taught to fly in 1915. Boulton and Paul Sidstrand bombers were now flying with No. 101 Squadron from Andover RAF station.

Another new Cierva autogiro appeared at



*Supermarine Southampton II (Metal Hull - Lion engines)*



*Simmonds Spartan prototype G - EBYU 1928*

Hamble and after a 3000 mile tour of England and Scotland flew to Paris for a continental sales display.

The most significant event of 1928 which was to make a major contribution to the local aircraft industry was the appearance of a brand new aeroplane, the Simmons Spartan (G-EBYO) in the KCAR. It was designed by Mr. Simmonds, the first chairman of the HAC and was flown by F/L S. N. Webster, AFC. The aircraft was built with the help of Mr. Simmond's colleagues at Supermarines and caused much interest in aviation circles where it was considered to rank with the Avro Avian, the DH Moth and Blackburn Bluebird. This was the beginning of Simmonds Aircraft Ltd. and the old Government Rolling Mills at Weston were taken over to produce the Spartan light aeroplanes which featured, in particular, interchangeable wings.

January 1 1929 was an important day when the first production Simmonds aircraft was named 'Cirrus Spartan' by the Mayoress, Mrs. M. H. Pugh. Orders had been received from all over the world, and fully justified the comment of 'the first positive addition to British aviation for ten years'. By May, fifty-four machines had been ordered and Simmonds Aircraft Ltd. had contracts to build Blackburn Bluebirds as well. The biggest order was placed by the National Flying Services Ltd., an organisation which centrally organised those flying clubs prepared to join the scheme.

On the 1.W. S. E. Saunders received a contract to build sixty-five side by side two-seater all metal Bluebirds and talks were in progress about a possible merger with that firm and the Avro Aviation Company.

The holiday resorts of South Hampshire attracted an increasing number of 'flying firms' and Phillips & Powis Aircraft Ltd. from Reading, who built Miles aeroplanes, brought a three-seater to Naish Farm, Highcliffe, offering 5s. flights over the Whitsun weekend.

Aviation was gathering momentum and regular international flights by aeroplane and airship, together with the steadily increasing numbers of aero clubs giving more people the opportunity to fly an aircraft, brought in the golden age of flying.

At the end of 1929, the Mayor of Southampton stated that negotiations with Mr. J. E. A. Willis Fleming, of Chilworth, for the 100-acre site for an aerodrome in the parish of North Stoneham, was with the full approval of the Air Ministry. This was the outcome of the suggestion made twelve months earlier by the Air Council, who were prompted by a speech made by the Prince of Wales, that more aerodromes were needed and that every major town, like Southampton, should have its own municipal airport.

In late 1929 and during 1930 the British airships R100 and R101 made a number of trial flights over South Hants and the IW prior to their anticipated journeys to North America

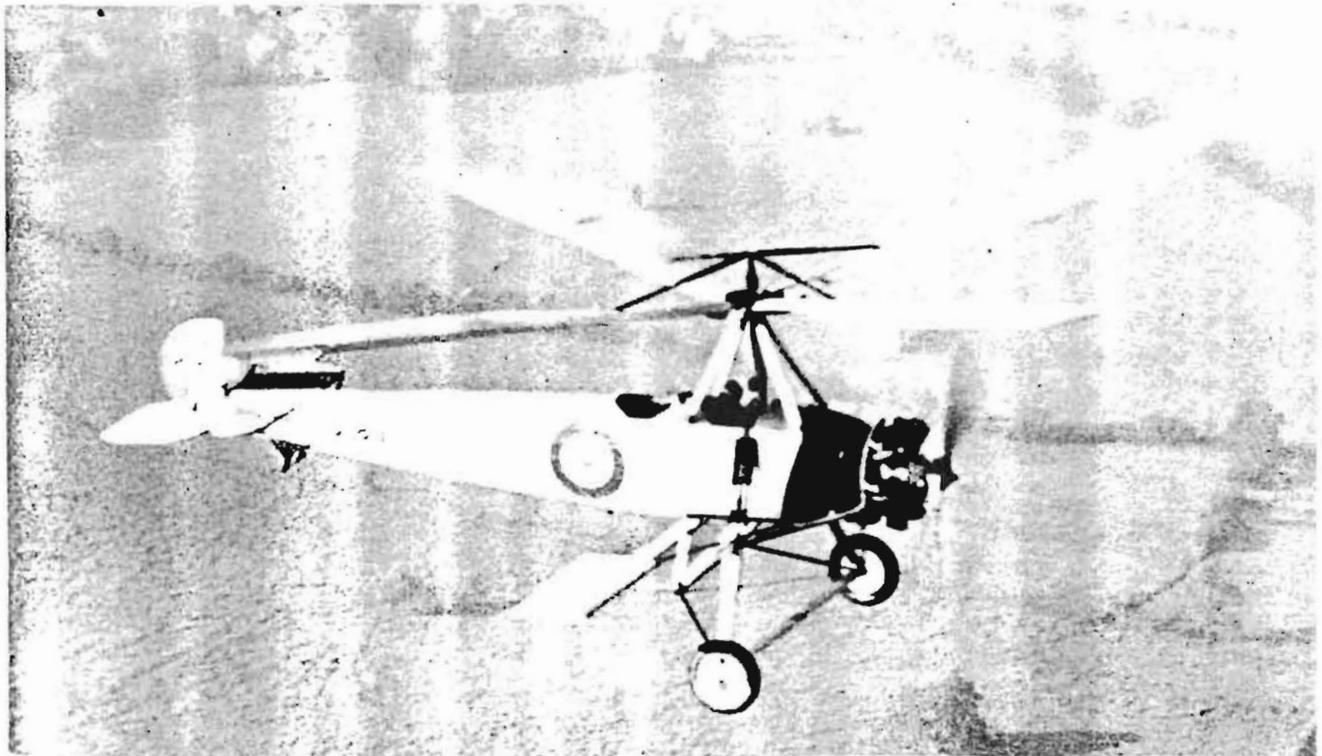
and India respectively. Much was expected from these huge flying ships which became the focus of public attention and a topical source of interest during their brief reign of glory. Therefore it was not unexpected when the Southampton-built R102 appeared and became the only dirigible to pass through the Barge. It was, of course, a large model constructed by the students of the University College to raise money during their Rag Day procession. The German Graf Zeppelin was another visitor to the Solent airspace and the sight of these large airships left an indelible print on one's memory.

The crash of the R101 in France shocked the nation and put an end to airship development in England. A memorial service was held at St. Mary's Church, Southampton, in October, and was attended by the civic authorities and representatives from the University College, industry and commerce. The local RAF embarkation officer F/L H. W. Clayton, together with F/L E. J. E. Prothero and F/O's Elliot and Whyte from Worthy Down represented the RAF.

Two Hampshire airmen were in the 'news', Mr. F. G. Fry of West Meon who flew from Croydon in his Gypsy Moth on the 14th February to arrive successfully in Kenya on March 1st, and Mr. Jack Matthews of Netley who set out on June 20th with Mr. Eric Hook in an attempt to beat Bert Hinkler's fifteen-day flight to Australia. The flight ended in disaster when the 'Dryasel', a similar machine to Hinkler's Avro, crashed into the Burmese jungle, killing Mr. Hook. After staggering

through the jungle for help Matthews was found by some natives and was taken to hospital. He eventually arrived home at Southampton in the middle of September and was greeted at the Docks by his family and his Avro colleagues, who could see that he had not fully recovered from the experience. Matthews and Hook took off from Lympe and flew into trouble right away, losing a day in France with petrol tank trouble. Leaving Lyons, behind schedule, they flew 600 miles over the sea to Caltagirone in Sicily. They found difficulty in obtaining petrol and had to wait for visas at Cairo and Basra. Arriving at Karachi with a split petrol tank they were delayed two days wait for a new one. On then to Jodpour, Allahabad and Rangoon they encountered the monsoon storms, the engine became waterlogged and they crashed into a thicket of bamboos which saved the machine from excessive damage and probably Matthews' life.

By the end of the year the HAC logged 2362 flying hours and forty-one members obtained their 'A' licence against thirty-seven in 1929. Two members who received their licences on the 1 October were Col. L. G. Bird and his daughter, who were on a two-month leave from Hong Kong. The club now boasted four DH Moths, one Avro Avian and a membership of over 400. Once a week a club instructor flew to Basingstoke to give joy rides and this was looked upon as a useful way of recruiting more members to the now very thriving and 'second to none' light aeroplane clubs in the UK.



On a local flight from Hamble in March, piloting a Spartan biplane, Miss Gladys Grace, the granddaughter of the famous cricketer W. G. Grace, was seriously injured when the aircraft got into a spin and crashed in the marshes beside the river at Bursledon. The same week a Southampton class flying boat forced landed at Bembridge, and two RAF officers, F/O E. R. White and P/O P. J. Pratt, were killed when their aircraft crashed at Worthy Down. The following month a Blackburn Ripon No. S1395 from Gosport dived into the Solent after flying past the United States Lines 'Leviathan'. The crew members of this torpedo bombing aircraft were spectacularly rescued when the 'Leviathan's' tugs sounded their sirens to draw attention to the scene. A seaplane dived from the sky to pick up one member of the crew, the other airman being rescued by a launch from Calshot which also salvaged the severely damaged aircraft.

Amy Johnson was a frequent visitor to Hamble and Bournemouth and in September attended the HAC garden party with her famous silver and green Moth 'Jason'. During three days in November more aircraft visited Hamble than at any other time of the year on the occasion of the visit to Calshot of the huge German flying boat Do X D-1929. The Prince of Wales inspected the aircraft on his return from the continent and a passenger who flew in the flying boat to Bordeaux was Capt. H. C. Baird, Supermarine's test pilot who, direct from testing the prototype 'Vildebeest', only managed to catch the plane by a fast car ride and a speed launch to the great aeroplane as she was taxi-ing to take off.

The King's Cup air race of July 1930 attracted over 100 aeroplanes, one of them, a low winged monoplane, was designed by B. Henderson, a member of the HAC. Many well known pilots, such as Capt. Barnard, Bert Hinkler, Tommy Rose, and Philip Wills, who flew a DH Moth G-EBOL belonging to the HAC, took part. The first turning point of the course was at Hamble, and by 10.24 pm over seventy aeroplanes had flown over, including the chief instructor of the HAC, Mr. Dudley, who was piloting a Spartan Arrow. Two other interesting aeroplanes taking part was that owned by Sir Henry Seagrave and built by Saunders Roe and Sir Philip Sassoon's 3-engined monoplane.

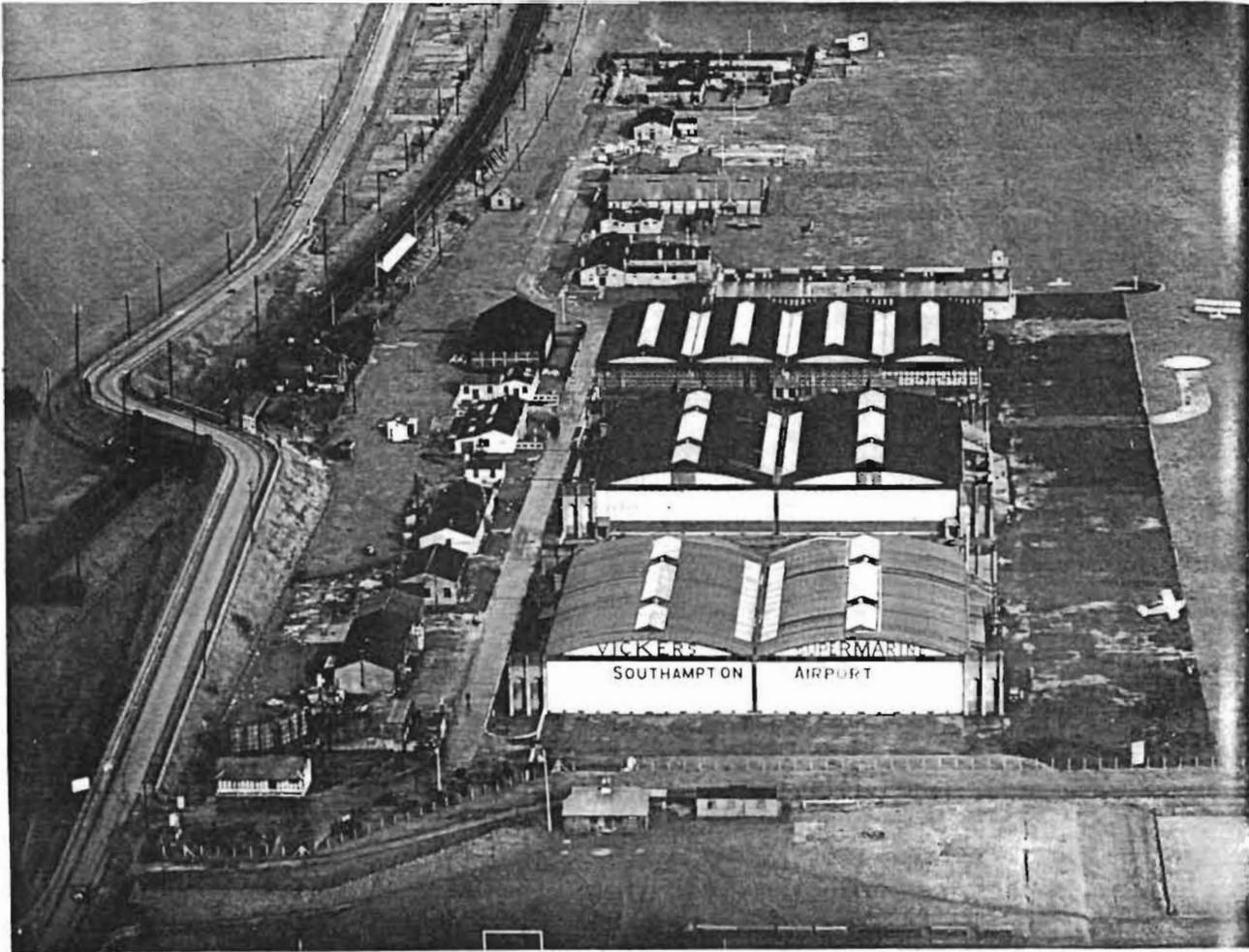
The interesting visitors to Southampton in 1930 included Sir Alan Cobham who proposed the idea of a landing ground near Lyndhurst, Squad.-Ldr. Underhill who lectured to the Master Mariners' club on air navigation and stated that the future big transport aircraft would be complimentary to the passenger liner, and Colonel the Master of Sempil who gave a lecture on the subject 'Aviation and the

Empire' and suggested that the Mayor of Winchester use his influence to obtain access to a hill outside Winchester to be used for the promotion of glider flying. This suggestion was a topical one as the German glider pilot Herr Robert Kronfeld had just completed a fifty-mile flight from Ilford, the site of the 1922 glider contest, to Portsdown Hill, where he gave a number of demonstrations.

Over in the IW a gliding club was formed, using the modified 1922-built Merriam-Newman glider and a 'modern' Lowe-Wylde glider. Sir A. V. Roe became the president and Capt. F. L. M. Boothby, RN, the treasurer; and the Saunders-Roe aerodrome at Somerton was used. The IW Chamber of Commerce proposed a municipal aviation park but this was rejected as a suitable private aerodrome already existed, the one already mentioned and another near Shanklin, where a passenger service was inaugurated and celebrated with an air display.

To return to Southampton an interesting 'ceremony' was performed in November 1930 when Alderman S. G. Kimber and Mr. E. Berry Webber launched a captive balloon from the Marlands to indicate to those assembled the height of the new Civic Centre tower. Before leaving 1930 mention must be made of the spectacular Wessex Air Display organised by Air Vice Marshal Sir John Steel, AOC, when the RAF were 'At Home' at Andover. This was a preview of the Hendon Pageant and four Fairey Flycatchers of 404 Fleet Fighter Flight from Gosport maintained the high standard set up by 403 and 443 Flights of previous years. Brilliant aerobatics were performed by Bristol Bulldogs of No. 3 Squadron when intercepting the 'invading' Horsley Bombers of No. 100 Squadron and at one time fifty-four machines were in the air together. A Bristol fighter re-lived the 'balloon hunting' days of WW1 and the fourteen aircraft in the static display ranged from a communications DH Moth aeroplane to a Vickers Virginia night bomber. A memorable aviation occasion. During the Hendon display a flight of 'Southampton Class' flying boats took off from Calshot and flew across the country to take part in the aerial pageant.

## SOUTHAMPTON AIRPORT



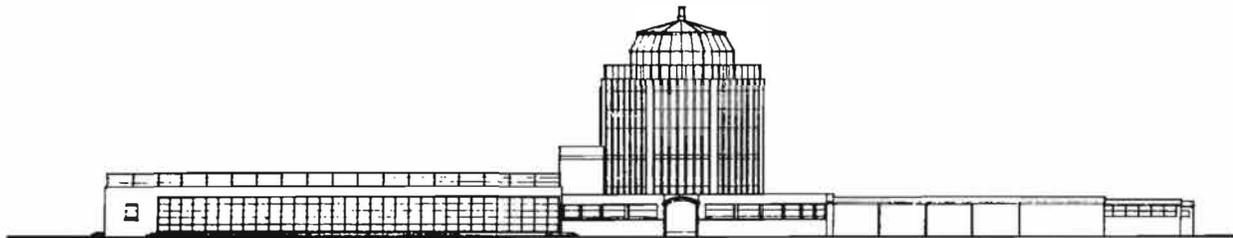
In January 1936 members of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce and their friends visited the Airport and were watching an air display when weather conditions quickly deteriorated and the airfield was swept by a snow storm. They then sheltered in a hanger and this gave them the opportunity to inspect a four-engined twenty-two seater Armstrong-Whitworth 'Argosy' and a Supermarine 'Seagull', being assembled for Australia. After having tea in the airport cafe, the weather cleared and the party was flown over Southampton in the De Havilland airliner, 'Diana'. Three months' later the Chamber of Commerce entertained Mr. G. L. Walters of the Imperial Airways, who delivered an illustrated lecture which included the showing of a film shot by a passenger whilst on a scheduled flight from the UK to S. Africa.

Today we hear much about V.T.O.L. and S.T.O.L. aircraft, and it is interesting to recall that in the early thirties Mr. L. F. Payne, the Airport Manager, when addressing the aerodrome owners' association in London, stressed the need for aircraft manufacturers to be compelled to tackle the need of combining a low landing speed with a high cruising speed. He

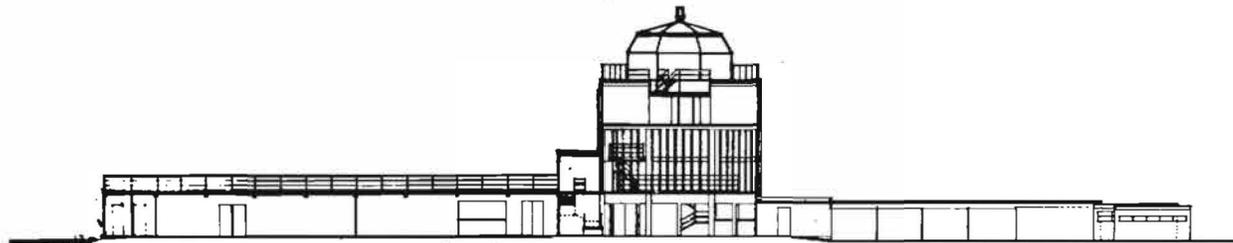
also proposed to the Airport Committee that the Southern Railway be asked to put underground that length of railway alongside the perimeter of the airfield to enable the existing 800 yd East-West runway to be lengthened, and formulated the idea of flooding the low-lying meadows adjacent to the airport by damming the river Itchen to obtain an expanse of water suitable for the operation of flying boats and to become the base for the Empire Air Services.

This fresh water lake would give the flying boats two one-mile runways in the correct direction and the retaining dam on the southern perimeter would be an embankment 20ft high, utilised as a by-pass connecting the main Bournemouth road to the Fareham-Portsmouth road at Hedge End.

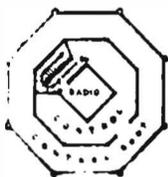
Generally the development of the airport went as planned, and the Airport Committee of the Southampton Council fully supported and implemented wherever possible the proposals outlined by Mr. Payne. Recommendations brought to the full Council Meetings were discussed amiably, but on one occasion a very heated debate ensued over the Council's deputation to visit a number of Continental



ELEVATION TO AERODROME



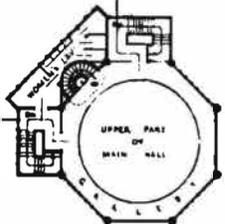
SECTION 'A.A.'



3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR

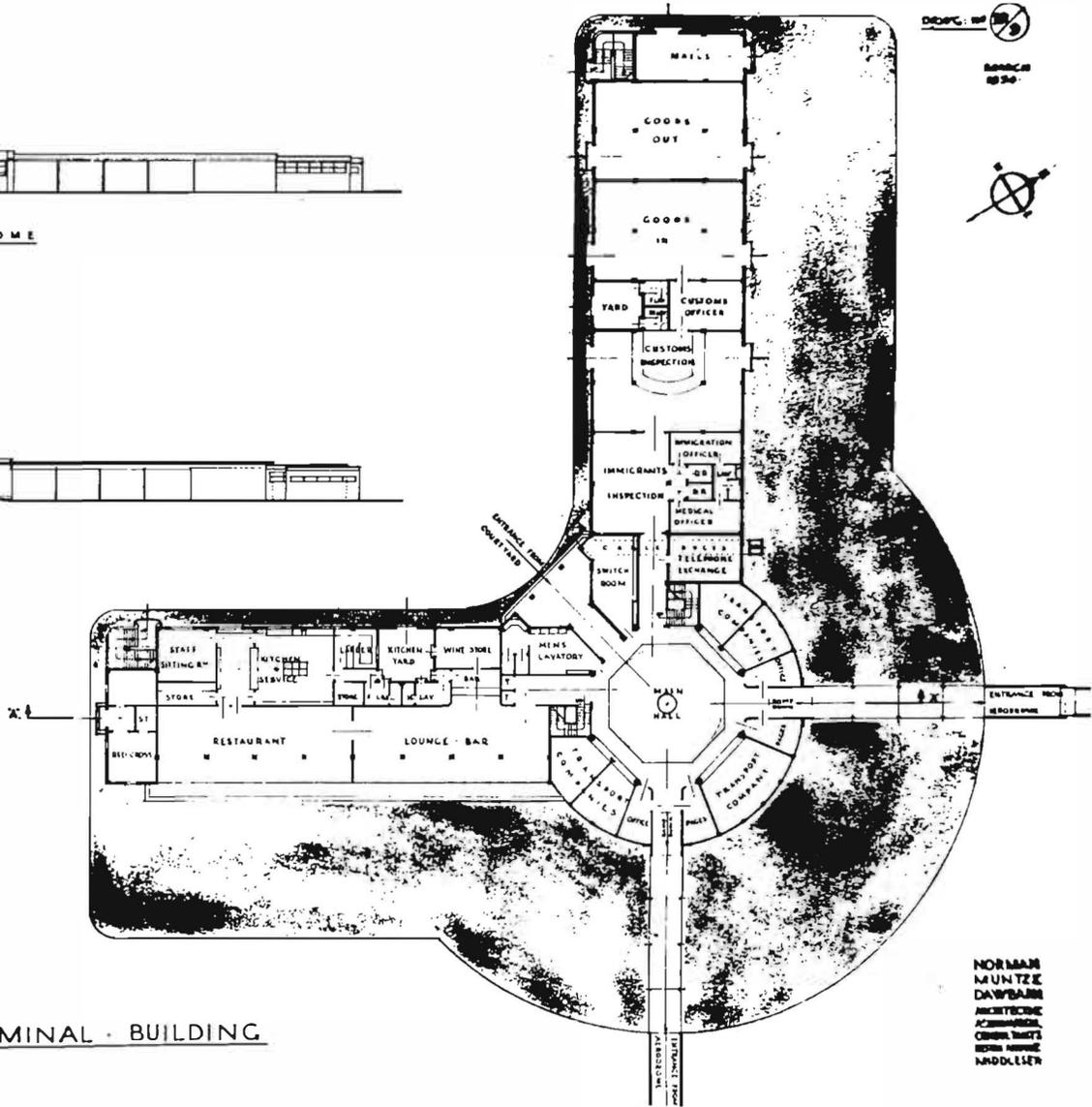


2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR



1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR PLAN.

SCALE OF FEET  
(ONE INCH = SIXTEEN FEET)



DEPT. OF AIR

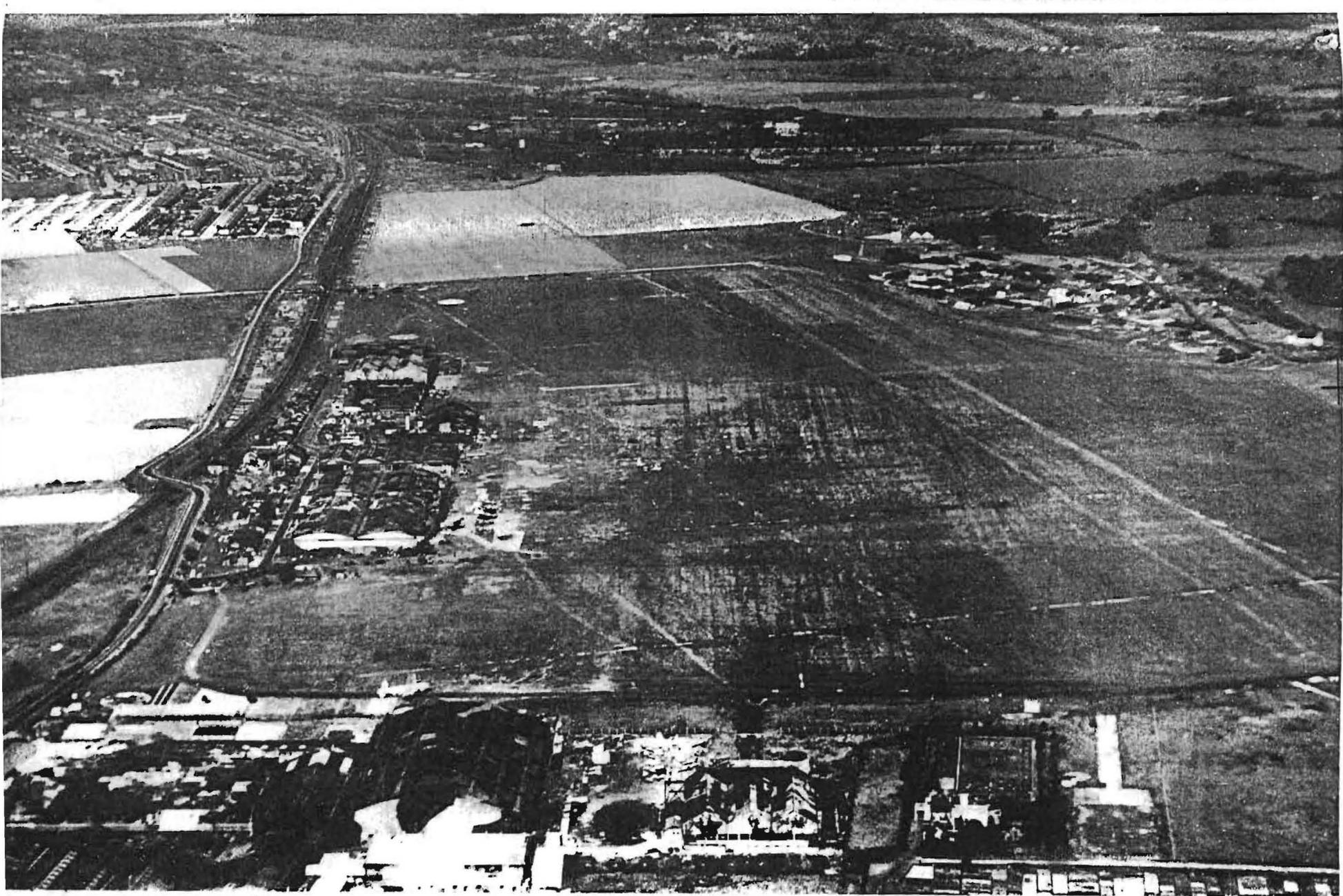
ARCHT. 1934



NORMAN MAUNTE  
DAWBARN  
ARCHITECTS  
CIVIL ENGINEERS  
10, SOUTH VIEW  
HADDLES

SOUTHAMPTON · MUNICIPAL · AIRPORT · TERMINAL · BUILDING.

*The proposed Air Terminal for Southampton Airport*



*Southampton Airport in its W.W.2 Camouflage*

## CHAPTER 10

H.M.S. 'RAVEN'

1939

After the snowstorms in late December 1938 the airport resumed operations with increased activity in January of the new year. The Speed Spitfire underwent continual testing, piloted by J. Quill and the maiden flight of C.O.A. Ltd's 'Flying Wing' coincided with the opening of their new factory and the commencement of work on the newly acquired Government contracts.

The Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood and his party paid a flying visit in the Air Council's DH 86 B aeroplane, to inspect the factories at the airport. He was shown the blue Speed Spitfire besides the production models, which were being fitted with a three-blade variable pitch airscrew replacing the wooden two-bladed one, and then witnessed Spitfires being tested by Flight Lieut. G. Pickering. A thrilling display of aerobatics, demonstrating the crafts manoeuvrability in a series of loops, upward rolls and rolls off the top of a loop and a low speed fly past over the hangers was carried out by Flying Officer J. K. Quill. He also visited Supermarines' Woolston factory where Flight Lieut. Louis, one of Vickers flying boat test pilots put a 'Walrus' amphibian through its paces at not a great height above the heads of the visiting party which included Sir Charles Bruce-Gardner, chairman of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors. On returning to the airport he met the managing director of C.O.A. Ltd., Mr. R. J. Hoyes, who escorted him around the factory, including an inspection of the 'Flying Wing'. Further demonstrations were given by representatives of the smaller firms, Mr. G. Wickner and Mr. David Kay flying their Wicko high wing monoplane and Kay Gyroplane respectively.

At this point, it is well worth while mentioning the vitally important work of test pilots and of one in particular. Flying Officer Quill came to Southampton from Weybridge in May 1938 and was one of the finest demonstration pilots in the country. His RAF experience of flying Bristol Bulldogs and Armstrong Siskens stood him in good stead when flying Spitfires. Each production Spitfire was tested for about 40 minutes and made at least three landings and take offs. During the first ten minutes any rigging adjustments were noted and dealt with immediately, then the test flight included climbing to 18,000 ft and a shallow dive at about 400 mph to 13,000 ft. After this, if time permitted, a series of aerobatics were performed and enjoyed by the pilot and onlookers alike.

The civil airliners were regularly using the airport on their normal services and it was



*Hawker Osprey*

airlines would be using the airport. A number of foreign aircraft were arriving on charter flights and when fog or bad weather prevented the schedule flights into Croydon and Heston, then the airfield was open, conditions permitting, to the continental airlines. Two unexpected British visitors in January, were the 13-ton, four-engined DH 91 Albatros and the Armstrong Whitworth AW 27 Ensign prototype built at Hamble. The DH 91 named 'Falcon', one of the Imperial Airways Frobisher class, was flying to Paris from London, but over the Channel the radio broke down and the aircraft (G-AFDJ) turned back and made for Southampton, the only suitable airport where weather conditions were good. It made a perfect landing at 12.10 pm and the passengers disembarked, waiting in the café until the relief plane arrived to pick them up. Meanwhile, the 20-ton, 200 mph prototype airliner Ensign class which had left Croydon at 12.30 pm was contacted by radio to turn back and go to Southampton to pick up the 'Falcon's' passengers. The Ensign landed at 1.25 pm. The arrival of these two 'giants' and their passengers meant a fresh custom clearance and members of the Southampton Marine base were hurriedly transferred to the airport for the purpose. The Ensign left for Paris at 2.20 pm and the Falcon stayed the night in a hanger, returning to Croydon the following day. Many passing cyclist and motorist along Wide Lane stopped to look at what was then a unique occasion—two of Britain's biggest airliners at Southampton's Airport; was this the shape of things to come? At the opposite end of the scale, two interesting ultra-lightweight aircraft flew in; an Aeronca, a high wing monoplane, seating the pilot and passenger side by side



and a Dart Kitten (G-AEXT) a single seat low wing monoplane. Both aircraft were powered by a 2-cylinder flat twin engine.

Other aircraft diverted to the airport during the first quarter of the year included a Lockheed Electra, a DC 3 of Swissair and a Junkers JU 52 of British Airways, carrying mail from Berlin after calling at Hanover and Cologne en route. The JU 52 arrived about 6 o'clock one morning with 2000 lb of air mail and left sixteen hours later with 3000 lb of mail flying direct to Berlin. An unexpected flight of three Bristol Blenheims landed one day in late February, but only stayed for one hour. The leading pilot was C. W. A. Scott, famous for his win in the England-Australia air race of 1934, and the Portsmouth to Johannesburg air race of 1936 (with Guthrie) in a Percival Vega Gull in just under fifty-three hours. He became an Atlantic ferry pilot during the war, was a lieutenant in the RNVR and died in 1946 aged 42.

Early in the month, mysterious 'phone calls had been made, threatening to 'bomb the airport and to set fire to the hangers'. The Civic Centre and Government Training Centre also being threatened. The Police searched the aerodrome but no bombs were found and it was considered to be a hoax. Nevertheless a strong guard was mounted at the RAF station for some time. This now was a time of tension and the mounting European Crisis was made very real when anti-aircraft batteries in and around Southampton were being formed and Army Co-operation aircraft (DH Dragon and Monospar) used to assist in the training, of operating, not only the guns but radio detection and range finding equipment. After dark, the neon beacon of the airport flashed out the Southampton call sign which, besides being used for civilian purposes, was requested by RAF pilots on exercise from the various military aerodromes in the South of England to assist them with their navigation on cross country night flights and other operations.

The completion of C.O.A. Ltd's new factory saw Hanger 2a being vacated, this was occupied by Vickers Supermarine Aviation Ltd. and the bungalow once the C.O.A's drawing office was taken over by Mrs. Caldicott, the restaurant manageress, who quickly made it suitable for passengers and crew members for staying overnight.

As mentioned earlier, Lockheed aircraft were being assembled at the airport for British Airways and another one was shipped over in the 'Aquitania' but this time it was for a private buyer, Australian born Major A. S. Cotten, a pioneer of aerial photography for military purposes, who intended using the aeroplane for Continental tours. Actually the Lockheed 12A aircraft were paid for by the British Secret Service and the French Deuxième Bureau for

high altitude photography. The aircraft was assembled in the new corporation hanger by B.A. mechanics, test flown by a Lockheed pilot and then flown to Heston. It was this civil aircraft, fitted out with hidden cameras, and piloted by Sidney Cotton and Canadian Bob Niven that a number of secret flights over Germany and Italy were made photographing many industrial and military establishments, such as Mannheim and the Siegfried Line. These flights were carried out in full agreement with the French authorities who, at that time appeared to be more actively interested in photographic reconnaissance than the RAF. It is interesting to recall that in 1914, No 3 Squadron RFC, under the command of Major Henry R. M. Brooke-Popham obtained a remarkable set of pictures of the defences of the IW which led to the aerial photography of the Battle of the Aisne in September 1914. Further, photo reconnaissance pictures of the enemy trenches were used to plan the Battle of Neuve-Chapelle and it was from these early beginnings that it was realised that aerial photography was vitally necessary for any military campaign. In May another Lockheed 12A arrived at the airport to be assembled for Major Cotton, his original one now being owned by the French. The new Lockheed was assembled and test flown, and C.O.A. Ltd. were asked to fit long range fuel tanks, this work being completed at Heston by Airwork Ltd. Cameras were also fitted and the aircraft painted a pale duck-egg green which was an admirable camouflage and made spotting the aircraft most difficult when flying at height. This colour later became standard camouflage for the underside of RAF fighters. In June this Lockheed, registration number G-AFTL, toured the Middle East photographing sites including Italian ammunition dumps on the Mediterranean Coastline of North Africa and military targets in Ethiopia. This work was continued over Germany and in July 1939, flying from Frankfurt, photographs of the industrial Rhineland were taken including airfields and fortifications, and Cotton's Lockheed was the last civilian aircraft to leave Berlin on August 24 before the start of WW2. Yet another 12A was being assembled (G-AGAR) and Bob Niven piloting a Beechcraft bi-plane visited the airport to see how the work was progressing. It was from this Beechcraft that Niven photographed the German ships at Wilhelmshaven a day or so before war broke out. The Beechcraft was a four-seater cabin, backward stagger bi-plane, and back in 1935, Amy Johnson became the sole agent for selling this aircraft in the UK. At the outbreak of war, all these aircraft were to play important rôles in photographic reconnaissance and Major A. S. Cotton became a Squadron Leader acting Wing Commander and head of a special unit before

it was absorbed into the RAF. G-AGAR, fitted with cameras naturally, flying from Habbaniya, photographed the Russian oilfields, Baku and Batum in March and April, 1940 and the Dodecanese in June. The pilot, Hugh McPhail, remaining in the Middle East for two-and-a-half years instead of the anticipated two weeks for this later job.

The interpretation of aerial photographs was helped considerably by using a Wild stereo plotter. At the beginning of the war only one existed in England at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton. This was soon acquired by Major Cotton. One of the girls who operated the stereo plotter, Lettice Curtis, was to follow a distinguished career as a ferry pilot in the war-time Air Transport Auxiliary. For some time she was stationed at Hamble and flew a multitude of aeroplanes ranging from Spitfires to four-engined Halifaxes. Hamble ferry pool's first CO was the designer and builder of the Wicko monoplane, G. N. Wickner.

On the night of September 19 1940, a parachute mine descended on to Heston aerodrome and destroyed many aircraft, including five photo reconnaissance Spitfires and the Lockheed G-AFTL of the Heston Flight assembled at the airport. One of the early P.R. Spitfires was delivered to the Sid Cotton Unit as early as February 1940 from the assembly hanger at Eastleigh airfield and began the long association of Vickers Supermarine with this type of work. However, let us return to the uneasy pre-war days of 1939. The airport was now a very busy place in more ways than one. Intensive training by squadrons returning from their Spring cruise from the 'Ark Royal' continued, and the sight of Fairy Swordfish taking off and landing alongside the hangars of the FAA base became commonplace. By contrast, on the opposite side of the airfield Oddie, Bradbury and Cull completed their sixth 'jump start' autogiro for Ciervas. Contradicting the peace of those pre-war days, air raid shelters were constructed in the field opposite the main entrance to the aerodrome for Vickers-Armstrong personnel and on both sides of Wide Lane for the Workers of C.O.A. Ltd. The latter being fitted with telephones and loudspeaker systems.

On a more peaceful note, a pair of robins were nesting inside the Supermarine Schneider Trophy plane S6 N248, which was stored in a hanger roof at the airport.

The Lorenz blind flying equipment installation was completed and comprised three beacons, one on the Swaythling side of the airfield, one on the Eastleigh side, 200 yards North of the aerodrome boundary by the railway line, the final one being two miles North of Allbrook, near Breach Farm. This meant

that aircraft suitably equipped to receive radio signals could be guided down a beam to safety. In addition, a direction-finding station was installed for the all-weather testing of Spitfires.

On Southampton Common, a Barrage Balloon display was used to recruit members into the local Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons Nos. 930 and 931, whose headquarters were at Houghton House, Bassett Avenue. The barrage balloon was inflated with 19,000 ft of hydrogen and flown at 1000 ft and made an impressive picture at night when the No 394 AA company RETA from Millbrook spotlighted it with their searchlight.

Back at the airport, C.L. Air Surveys Ltd. were using their Puss Moths and an American Bellanca (later sold to C.O.A. Ltd.) for aerial photography work on behalf of the Ordnance Survey Department. These aircraft were flown in straight lines at 10,000 ft and to do this, an automatic pilot was used, controlled by radio direction finding equipment beaming onto Radio Luxembourg. The 20 in wide-angle lens of the cameras were automatically operated at exposures of 1/50 to 1/200 sec by means of a fan mounted in the slip stream of the propeller. C.L. Air Survey's mathematician was Miss Lettice Curtis.

Of the many visiting aeroplanes in the first quarter of the year, perhaps the most interesting was the American Seversky fighter plane. Major Alexander de Seversky the designer and pilot of this pursuit aeroplane swapped his aircraft, for a Spitfire, with Jeffrey Quill, and spent thirty minutes putting it through its paces by performing many high speed aerobatic manoeuvres. When he landed he was full of praise for the Spitfire. Later in June, he also flew a Me.109 over Germany and was the first pilot to fly both aircraft. He thought the British aircraft the more manoeuvrable but more difficult to maintain and forecast Britain's victory over the German Air Force. The Seversky fighter was demonstrated to various interested Air Ministry and RAF personnel at a number of airfields and was developed in the USA and became the famous Republic Thunderbolt fighter of WW2.



*The American pursuit aeroplane demonstrated by Major Alexander de Seversky at Eastleigh 1939.*

A number of RAF pilots arrived at Eastleigh to collect their Spitfires, one of them being Robert Stanford Tuck of 65 Squadron who was to become a Battle of Britain Ace. A colleague of Jeffrey Quill was Alex Henshaw, the pilot awarded the Britannia Trophy for his record-breaking 1939 return flight to Cape Town in a Percival New Gull and who went on to flight test over 6000 Spitfires. He visited Eastleigh and Chattis Hill on a number of occasions but was responsible for the war-time testing of Spitfires at Castle Bromwich.

Two other interesting visitors were a Czech built Benes-Mraz Bibi and a French twin-engined Marcel Bloch 220 airliner. It was in a similar aircraft that the French Foreign Minister M. Bonnett visited the airport in May. More Lockheed 14's were being assembled and the name Atlantic Park seemed very apt, considering the amount of Anglo-American work going on. The local airport news in March, was overshadowed due to the arrival of the majestic Boeing Yankee Clipper, flying in from New York via the Azores and the news concerning the Imperial Airways flying boats which were hitting the newspaper headlines almost daily. The Yankee Clipper before alighting on Southampton Water was met by twenty aeroplanes, most of whom came from the airport and included some from the Hampshire Aero Club. The HAC were very active and now boasted eight aircraft, their latest acquisition being a B.A. Swallow two-seater monoplane. One of their entertaining and adventurous exercises was the 'dawn patrol' to Redhill. If the Eastleigh club members could land at Redhill without the Redhill club members reading their registration letters, then they could claim a free breakfast. One of the 'pupils' of the HAC, taking a refresher course in a Gypsy Moth, with the instructor K. C. Winton, was F. Warren Merriam, who was negotiating with directors of Vickers Supermarine and C.O.A. Ltd., to start a light aircraft factory near the airport. Another pupil, Miss Joy Verdon Roe, flew solo, being the third member of the Roe family to achieve their wings with the HAC.

Bill Dunning, the chief engineer at the HAC, was associated with the Roe brothers in Manchester in 1910.

Negotiations were now under way for the starting of a RAFVR observer and wireless telegraphy training unit at the airport using twelve aircraft and due to the priority testing of Spitfires, no Empire Air Day was held at the airport. The airport manager, Mr. L. F. Payne, was relieved of the additional work of organising the event and thus was able to accept the invitation to the opening of Guernsey's Airport in May. Councillor R. J. Stranger also attended, and in the afternoon an interesting display was highlighted by the immaculate

formation flying of No. 48 Squadron's Avro Ansons. This RAF squadron had been adopted by Southampton under the Air Ministry's affiliation scheme. Another impressive flyover, ten feet above the ground was made by the 24-ton Imperial Airways Empire flying boat 'Australia' piloted by Capt. D. Bennett, a member of the HAC and later to be known as Pathfinder Bennett.

In June, interest was shown in the unexpected arrival of a single seater 'gull' type glider which actually landed on the airfield, it was piloted by Mr. D. Hiscock from Aston Rowant. Another glider landed near Eastleigh, the pilot being well-known gliding expert Mr. Philip Wills, who set up a new gliding height record of 14,170 ft in July.

Amy Johnson who was now working as a pilot on Army co-operation and ferry work with the Portsmouth, Southsea and I.o.W Airways, occasionally called at the airport prior to her being transferred from Portsmouth to Cardiff. Army co-operation meant flying aircraft, day and night, on set courses to provide targets for local anti-aircraft batteries using their range-finders and searchlights.

Private firms like the P.S. and I.o.W. Airways were taken over by the Air Ministry and a new organisation was founded called National Air Communications.

In May 1939, over 800 commercial aircraft used the airport, transporting almost 40,000 lb of meat, over 250,000 lb of freight and carrying 2000 passengers. These figures exclude private, club and military flying.

Two more Lockheed 14's arrived in June and within two weeks had been assembled, tested and flown to Heston to be fitted with radio equipment. These aircraft, for the Irish Sea Airways were to be used on the Croydon, Bristol and Dublin route.

June also saw the linking of Southampton and New York by air when the P.A.A. 'Yankee Clipper' inaugurated the weekly air mail service across the Atlantic. It was with this type of flying-boat that B.O.A.C. managed to maintain its operations during WW2. Another historical event also occurred though not of the same magnitude, when a considerable number of flowers were flown from Guernsey to the airport, thus establishing the flower lift which gathered momentum after WW2.

It was announced in the House of Commons that from May 26, the administrative control of the FAA would be the responsibility of the Admiralty and Rear-Admiral R. Bell Davies was appointed to the command of the Naval Air Stations. On July 1 1939, the FAA Eastleigh came under the control of the Admiralty and was known as HMS 'Raven' and, as all naval personnel must be recorded on a ship's book, the land air station was referred to as a ship.



*DH 35 Flamingo. A sister aircraft to the one used by Jersey Airways for their Southampton service 1939.*

Rear-Admiral Bell Davies' headquarters were at Lee-on-Solent and the 'ships' under his authority were HMS 'Daedulus' (Lee-on-Solent), HMS 'Raven' (Eastleigh), HMS 'Peregrine' (Donibristle), HMS 'Kestrel' (Worthy Down), HMS 'Merlin' (Ford) and HMS 'Malabar' (Bermuda). Commander C. L. Howe, RN, became the captain of HMS 'Raven', the RAF CO, Group Captain F. H. Lawrence, MC, being appointed to another RAF Station. The second in command was Lieut. J. Sanders. All RAF officers left within a week, although some airmen remained and HMS 'Raven', under the Admiralty commenced its career as an important training base, and the number of aircraft stationed there was increased to fifty. The White Ensign now flew at Eastleigh airfield and the dark navy blue uniform became part of the airport scene.

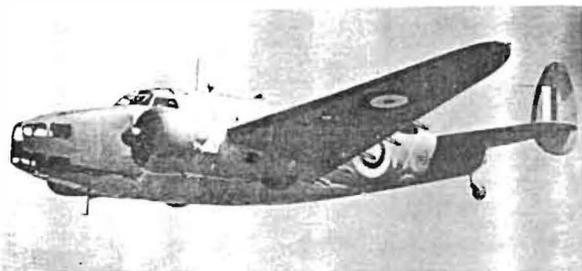
Seemingly, not to be outdone by the increase in the new naval flying activities, Jersey Airways introduced into their Channel Island air service the spanking new de Havilland DH95 Flamingo (G-AFUE), (impressed No. 24 Squadron). This aircraft raised the standard of passenger comfort and re-emphasized the pioneering spirit which existed between de Havilland and Jersey Airways for up-to-date airliners. The first aircraft used by Jersey Airways on their regular flights to the Channel Island was a de Havilland Dragon (G-ACMJ). The landing strip on the island was on the beach at St. Bre'lades Bay, and this was used until the Jersey Airport was opened in March 1937.

The Lorenz blind landing installation at the Airport was tested during the Summer of 1939 by three aircraft, a Heston Phoenix, a Lockheed 12 and an Airspeed Oxford. The Phoenix was the first high wing monoplane to have a retractable undercarriage and the particular one used at Eastleigh (G-AESV) was fitted as a flying laboratory in 1937 for the Standard

Telephone and Cables Ltd. It successfully survived the war only to crash in France in 1952. The Lorenz beam approach to an airport was developed by the German airline Lufthansa and was used during WW2 to guide German bombers to UK cities.

The airfield has always been a good producer of mushrooms and members of the public were apt to forget the dangers they placed themselves in, when trespassing on the field collecting mushrooms. One small boy was nearly hit by an incoming aeroplane and the Airport Manager, Mr. Payne, made it known that in the interest of safety for all he would apply all the rigours of the law for future offenders. Much later during WW2, when Mr. Payne rejoined the RAF as a staff pilot, semi-official mushroom pickers from the cookhouse of HMS 'Raven', in an endeavour to vary the war-time diet naturally could not see all the tender mushrooms going to waste and so helped themselves. On a number of occasions a visiting Admiral was kept waiting in the air by a frustrated naval pilot whose mutterings about the mushroom pickers cannot be expressed on these pages, and complaints for safety's sake were justifiably expressed. However, the tenacity of naval ratings is well known and mushrooms became part of the regular diet in some messes. In April 1941 two workers at the Airport were nearly involved in a serious accident by a landing aircraft, when picking mushrooms during their lunch-hour. As a deterrent they were each fined 10/- at the Eastleigh Magistrates' Court for trespassing on the airfield. The test pilot spotted them at the last moment and skilfully avoided them, thus preventing serious injury or even death.

No airfield is completely free of accidents and the airport if not accident free has only witnessed, fortunately, a very small number of major disasters in all its history. On one



occasion a minor incident occurred when an Airspeed Oxford overshot the runway and ran through the fence near the crematorium! The airport fire engines and the naval air station's ambulance race to the scene, and found the pilot, P. O. Jennings a little shocked but otherwise completely unhurt.

Strange as it may seem the most repaired vehicle stationed at HMS 'Raven' was the ambulance. The main entrance and exit to the base was over or under the level crossing by the railway signal box opposite the entrance to Doncaster Drive. If the gates were closed against the road traffic then the passage under the railway, through the tunnel, was somehow very inviting. Unfortunately only the smallest of vehicles could safely negotiate the tunnel, and the ambulance, generally being driven in haste and by a new driver was often decapitated in its attempt to pass through. However, it was such that no serious damage was inflicted upon the occupants of the ambulance which suffered all too frequently.

On 3 August two squadrons of Avro Ansons, eighteen aircraft in all, made an impressive sight when they flew in a party of OTC Air Cadets who visited Calshot before flying back to Tangmere for their camp at Selsey Bill. Also during August one of Sir Alan Cobham's Flight Refuelling aircraft, a modified Harrow bomber used the airport as a base for flight refuelling tests over Southampton Water. Earlier in April two of these 1000 gallon 'tanker' aircraft, G-AFRH and another, were embarked at Southampton on the freighter 'Beaverford', for Botwood, Newfoundland. They were used for the mid-air refuelling of the I.A. mailplanes and each carried 1000 gallons of fuel for this purpose.

August was a hectic month and civilian visitors to the airport included a three-engined Fokker of British Airways, two Taylorcraft Plus aeroplanes, a Percival Vega Gull; a Chilton lightweight, the winner of the Folkestone

Trophy Race and two giant Imperial Airways aircraft, the obsolete 'Scylla' and 'Syrinx'. Normally they were used as stand-bys for the Handley Page 42's which now in turn were replaced by the Hamble built Armstrong Siddeley Ensigns. To house the 'Scylla' in a hanger, the radio aerials had to be lowered and the tyres deflated. Other military aircraft arriving included a Bristol Blenheim, Fairey Battle, Westland Lysander and the first Lockheed Hudson, (the military version of the Lockheed 14), flying in from Martlesham. This was indeed the picture of things to come and No. 224 Squadron at Gosport were equipped with Hudsons during the Summer of 1939.

The chief control officer for the Air Ministry at the Airport was Mr. A. L. Russell, who, during the early days of WW1 flew to France with No. 4 Squadron.

An obsolete but magnificent ex-bombing military aeroplane, a Vickers Virginia, visited HMS 'Raven' in August with the object of testing the parachutes stored at the base. Three were picked at random, weights attached and when the Virginia was flown to a height of 500 ft dropped overboard. All the parachutes opened successfully and floated down onto the airfield. One of the Blackburn Sharks, of No. 758 Squadron, on a training flight, forced landed in a field between Chestnut Avenue, Eastleigh and Hut Hill. The pilot and Telegraphist-Air Gunner were unhurt.

The RAF aircraft mentioned in the penultimate paragraph were taking part in a large scale national exercises to test our defences and between August 8-11 over 1300 aircraft had been involved. On the 16-17 August more exercises were held and 200 French aircraft made a mock attack on targets in the South of England. The uneasy peace of 1939 ended and in August, No. 811 and 822 Swordfish Squadrons left Eastleigh and embarked in HMS 'Courageous' and No. 821 Squadron embarked in HMS 'Ark Royal'. Southampton Council contacted the War Office and stated they had volunteers to man the anti-aircraft guns for the defence of the airport. Mr. Payne arranged with the CO of the FAA base to assume control of all flying from midnight 1/2 September 1939 and was recalled to the RAF as a staff pilot on September 2. The same day ten Fairey Battle Squadrons were flown to France.



*Lockheed 14 being erected at Eastleigh for British Airways. Compare with the Lockheed Hudson shown above.*