

Airport News

CROYDON

THE end of the week, no less than the end of the year, was saddened for everybody, both British and foreign, at the Airport of London by the terrible disaster to the Imperial Airways' air liner *Apollo* in Belgium on New Year's eve. Mr. J. M. Gittins and Mr. H. G. Loch were officers well known and liked by all of us, and their loss will be keenly felt. Everyone who has to do with the practical side of air route operation during periods of fog will sympathise deeply with the management of Imperial Airways, Ltd., for no care and no attention to every tiny detail which can make for safety has been omitted by the company, and this disaster must be put down to sheer bad luck, and a bad luck at that which Imperial Airways, Ltd. have done nothing to deserve.

The tall wireless mast at Ruysselede was a necessity in the particular position it occupies, but this accident shows how monstrous it is to allow local authorities to erect tall power cable pylons all over the air routes without reference to the Air Ministry, as they have done in the past. I would also repeat what I said last week about the danger to air traffic in fog, of the radio-beacon mast on the aerodrome at Croydon. We have had one accident owing to a tall mast during the past few days. Are we to wait for another one on our very doorstep before the authorities take action about the radio beacon? The responsibility lies with them. It appears to be a grave one.

Early in the week K.L.M. had a stretcher case accompanied by a doctor from Croydon to Malmo by the 8.20 a.m. Scandinavian Air Express. Owing to the provision of the wrong sort of stretcher, the service was delayed for ten minutes. Just as it had departed a passenger for Malmo arrived, and as his business in Scandinavia was imperative, he was obliged to take a special aeroplane from Imperial Airways. The journey to Malmo cost him somewhere around £200 instead of about £12. A useful lesson in the virtue of punctuality when travelling by air! Imperial Airways were considerable gainers by the incident, and the Dutch company lost nothing, for no refund of passage money was due to the passenger.

A ridiculous and annoying statement in a daily newspaper last week was to the effect that Man Mohan Singh, chief pilot to the Maharaja of Patiala, was missing on his attempted record-breaking flight to Capetown. Both pilot and aeroplane were snugly housed at Croydon at the time of this "canard," as a ring on the telephone would easily have established. Such carelessness causes considerable alarm to friends and relatives, and is the more to be deplored because it is so easily avoidable.

An arrangement between Imperial Airways and the Dorchester Hotel resulted in plans for a number of the hotel guests seeing the New Year in from the air over London in an Imperial air liner. There was to be the popping of corks and "Auld Lang Syne" was to be sung.



Imperial Airways machine crashes in fog

WE regret to record the tragic news that on Saturday, December 30, an Avro 10, the *Apollo*, belonging to Imperial Airways, crashed in a fog at the wireless station of Ruysselede, Belgium, and the two pilots and eight passengers all lost their lives. The chief pilot was Mr. J. M. Gittens, and his assistant was Mr. H. G. Loch. The machine left Haren aerodrome, Brussels, at 12.20 p.m. bound for Croydon, and afterwards met heavy fog, which resulted in the pilot getting off his course. He sent a wireless message to Evere asking for his position, but before the answer could be received the machine hit either a cable or a pylon of the wireless station. The impact tore off part of one wing, and it broke the pylon off 250 feet above the ground. The machine nose-dived into the ground, and the impact must have killed all inside it. The staff of the wireless station rushed up and began to try to get the bodies out, but about two minutes later

Exactly how a dark-haired man was to step over the threshold on this occasion has not yet been revealed.

Mr. Thorne, the able manager of Imperial Airways' catering department, who is responsible for the good food and wines obtainable on board "Heracles" class liners, has left for a business tour of the Empire routes.

Several of the air traffic companies' freight department officials have heaved a sigh of relief now that the Christmas traffic of presents is over. These often contain small amounts of half-a-dozen dutiable commodities in one parcel, and are most troublesome to clear through Customs.

A. VIATOR.

FROM HESTON

AN interesting but rather unrehearsed test on the Comper "Mouse" took place at Heston on Christmas Eve. Flt. Lt. Comper and Mr. F. R. Walker were engaged in measuring speeds of the Comper "Mouse" with wheels retracted. At the conclusion of their tests a normal landing was made with wheels in landing position. A somewhat hastily installed telltale device showed the wheels locked home when in fact they were not properly secured, and to the occupants' astonishment the first contact with ground gave adequate proof of a sales point of really true value. Even when the wheels are retracted they will still revolve and carry the weight of the aircraft, so a perfect, though somewhat unconventional, three-point landing resulted (the third point being the exhaust manifold). Because this test was unexpected the airscrew had not been stopped, and this, therefore, was the only damage to be found. After this bad-mannered "Mouse" had been jacked up and a new airscrew fitted, it was quickly re-installed in its normal dignified and entirely serviceable condition for further flying tests. Two separate telltales are now fitted, and the few who saw this exploit appreciate that here is an aeroplane which in emergency may be landed on impossible surfaces without any chance of turning over on its back.

On December 22 the first all-British Klemm aircraft—the new "Swallow" type, fitted with a 75-h.p. geared Salmson engine—was demonstrated at Heston by Mr. Hordern, the test pilot of the British Klemm Aeroplane Co.

Capt. W. P. Crawford Greene and Lord Apsley, both Members of Parliament, returned from Australia on Tuesday after a charter flight lasting over two months, which it will be remembered, started from Heston on October 9.

"Shine, Please!" may soon become a frequent request at the aerodromes, for the first chromium-plated registration letters have just been fitted to an aeroplane. On December 29 at Heston they were fixed on to the first production "Leopard Moth," which has just been delivered to Mr. Nigel Norman, Chairman of Airwork, Ltd. We look to our leading lights of the stage and screen for the first all-chromium-plated aeroplane, which would lend a literal turn to the sought-after status of a "Star."

the petrol which had escaped from the burst tanks caught fire, and some of the rescuers were badly burned. The King sent a message of sympathy to Sir Eric Geddes, Chairman of Imperial Airways, to be conveyed to the relatives of the dead, and Lord Londonderry, Secretary of State for Air, also sent a telegram of sympathy from Aswan.

Southend shows the way

SOUTHEND TOWN COUNCIL appear to be the first to take action on the Prince of Wales' speech at the opening of the Airport Conference. The Council have agreed to purchase, for a sum of £20,000, a site of about 150 acres on which to develop a municipal airport. The site is about ten minutes by bus from the centre of the town, and will adjoin a proposed new by-pass. It is the site of an old wartime aerodrome and lies between the Club aerodrome and the town. The L.N.E.R. runs past it and the railway company propose to build a station for the new aerodrome.