

COMMERCIAL AVIATION

— AIRLINES — AIRPORTS —

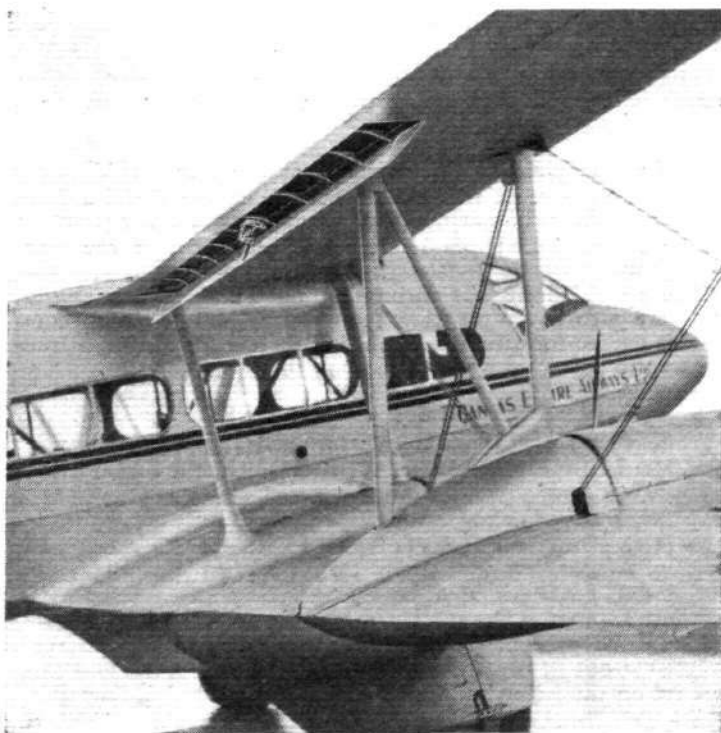
CROYDON

*Airport of Empire : Plum Pudding and Humanity Make Heavy Holiday Loads :
Railway Air Services Speed Up : The K.L.M. Accident—A Very Queer Tale*

LAST Sunday, December 30, and therefore practically welcoming the New Year, came the inauguration of the duplicated Empire air mail. Every day of the week it will be possible to see an Empire air mail loaded or unloaded at Croydon, the Airport of London, or, as perhaps we might rename it, "Croydon, the Airport of Empire."

On Sunday there will be an African mail plane inwards as well as out, and every week-day a machine will be inward or outward bound for some distant part of the Empire. In these days we are apt to awaken suddenly to find the dreams of H. G. Wells and Rudyard Kipling are realities, and to discover real significance in the motto attached to an early K.L.M. "Flying Dutchman" poster, which was: "Fiction becomes Fact." I am told that five Imperial Airways machines were in the air on different parts of Empire routes on Christmas Day, and that they were decorated and made gay for the occasion, while turkey and plum pudding were served on board. There are even rumours of a Christmas tree in one big flying boat. Ingredients for the Christmas puddings were sent out by air from England, and the crews in these remote places on the Empire's routes doubtless took an even greater interest in Yuletide ritual than did their brethren at home.

On the London-Paris services of Imperial Airways, Ltd., Christmas fare was served for a few days before Christmas and on Boxing Day; all this may have accounted for the rush of passengers which caused duplications of two services the Saturday before Christmas and of the midday Boxing Day



FLAPS FOR THE "EXPRESS": This photograph shows how the new split flaps, which are to be fitted to all future D.H. 86s, present considerable area to the flow. They are operated by oil pressure and the whole movement can be made in 20 seconds. The glide is steepened from 1 in 9½ at 80 m.p.h. to 1 in 6½ at 75 m.p.h. and the landing speed reduced by 5 m.p.h. (*Flight* Photograph).

service of Imperial Airways to Paris. On that day *Scylla* and *Syrinx*, sister ships, flew to Paris together, both fully loaded. The two British machines, a Dutchman and a French plane all approached Paris almost at once, causing some complication owing to Q.B.I. conditions.

Railway Air Services, Ltd., have speeded up services between Croydon and Glasgow by about forty minutes, as from January 1. There is no alteration in the 10.15 a.m. departure from Croydon, but the arrival at Belfast is at 1 p.m. instead of at 1.30 p.m., while Glasgow is reached at 2.15 p.m. and not at 2.55 p.m. as in the past.

The extra speed is partly due to accelerated flying and partly to speeding up on the ground at intermediate stations. I do not know how much flying speed is lost by making the trip with the ensign flying, nor do I know the exact depreciation on each ensign per trip. It is certainly a magnificent spectacle to see a machine take off gay with bunting as I did last Sunday morning.

Last Friday Sir Alan Cobham was at Croydon with the "Airspeed Envoy." He was pointing out its merits to a significant assembly of notabilities, including Major Brackley, Wing Commr. Meadows, and Mr. Quin Harkin, secretary of Railway Air Services, Ltd.

Greatness Thrust Upon Them

Messrs. Wylie and Collins, two Australians [See photograph on p. 18.—ED.], made ready at Croydon to leave for their native land with a Monospar fitted with two Pobjoy "Niagara" engines. The machine is to be used for private air route work over there. An amusing story is told of an evening paper reporter who got into touch with these gentlemen and insisted, despite their denials, that they were out to break Scott and Black's record. Their refusal was put down to the inveterate modesty (as measured by reporters' standards) of all airmen, and they were informed that they *must* be out to beat the record, because it was unheard of to fly to Australia without such intention. The story of their proposed "record-breaking" flight was duly published, I am told. Thus is greatness thrust upon the unwilling.

Everybody at Croydon who knew the pilots and crew of the ill-fated K.L.M. Douglas was deeply affected by the tragic news of their crash. Beekman was well known at the airport and his loss will be keenly felt amongst pilots of all nations. There was a strange incident in connection with the accident. At about 7 p.m. on the evening of the Wednesday, December 19, two foreigners, believed to be Dutch, asked a traffic hand whether the "Flying Dutchman" had yet crashed, and they repeated this enquiry to another traffic hand. They then had a cup of coffee in the main hall buffet and went away. The last message from the Douglas was at about midnight on December 19-20, and at 7 p.m. G.M.T. there was no reason for anyone to fear disaster. The story is absolutely vouched for by very reliable people and the whole thing is inexplicable.

A. VIATOR.

Guinea Gold

Some facts about New Guinea air freight-carrying given in "Gold Dust and Ashes," by an Australian author, I. L. Idriess, are positively staggering.

During 1931 no fewer than 581 tons were flown over the mountains from Lae to Lower Bulolo in a month—a greater quantity than the combined air transport companies of the world had carried in the previous twelve months. In three and a half years no fewer than twelve million pounds of cargo and 6,776 passengers were carried in 5,987 trips.