



(Left) G-ADSR, the prototype, takes the air for the first time—in January 1938.



(Right) After the second flight: l. to r., Mr. C. K. Turner-Hughes, A.W.A. chief test pilot; Mr. J. Lloyd, chief designer; Mr. (now Sir Frank) Spriggs, managing director; and Mr. O. Oliver, general manager of Armstrong Siddeley Motors.

ENSIGN CLASS . . .

captain had his own ideas about the cockpit layout (hundreds of alterations were made before the original layout was adopted), the date of delivery came and passed with the prototype only half completed. In consequence it was not until October 1938 that the first machine was finally delivered.

About ten months previously, on Monday, January 24, 1938, the prototype (registered G-ADSR) had flown for the first time. During the previous day she had been taxied under her own power from the flight shop, across Hamble Lane, and on to the aerodrome for taxiing and brake tests. The following morning saw several hundred people assembled to witness this historic event, including officials and employees of the company, Pressmen and photographers; many more spectators lined the roadway alongside Hamble Aerodrome. With C. K. Turner-Hughes (chief test pilot) at the controls and E. S. Greenwood as second pilot, the big airliner was turned round and taxied to the furthest corner of the airfield. Four preliminary runs were made, and on the fifth G-ADSR became airborne.

The undercarriage was not retracted, and everything went smoothly until the first turn was attempted. Then Turner-Hughes experienced extreme difficulty in applying full rudder and it was not until Eric Greenwood contributed his strength as well that the rudder responded. They landed safely after fifteen minutes in the air; and when Turner-Hughes' account had been heard it was decided to modify the rudder servo before any further test flying took place. Two days later G-ADSR made her second flight, when the undercarriage was retracted in the air for the first time. She was then flown to Baginton for exhaustive tests, and later to A. and A.E.E., Martlesham Heath, for Air Ministry and C. of A. acceptance trials.

On the fourth test flight, during cabin-noise and heating tests, all four engines cut dead after only one-and-a-half hours' flying. This was a crisis that demanded quick and decisive action from Turner-Hughes, as a forced-landing seemed inevitable and the A.W. technical staff on board were anxious not only for their own

A typical scene on Croydon's pre-war apron—a gaggle of Ensigns, H.P.42s, D.H.91s (Albatrosses) and a solitary D.H.86A.

safety but also for that of their expensive prototype. By an incredible piece of luck R.A.F. Bicester was within gliding range and a perfect dead-stick landing was effected without damage. On investigation it was found that the petrol balance cock was open and the wing tanks on one side closed off, which meant that the aircraft had been flying on one set of tanks only. The trouble was partly due to the very difficult placing—later modified—of the cocks in the roof between the first and second cabins.

Imperial Airways christened G-ADSR *Ensign*, and this led to the type as a whole being called *Ensign*, irrespective of individual fleet names. Two variants were built, externally identical but differing in internal accommodation, for service on the two principal routes of Imperial Airways. There were eight of the "Empire" model, carrying 27 day passengers in three cabins or providing sleeping accommodation for 20. Four *Ensigns* of the "European" model (G-ADSW, X, Y and Z) were produced, seating 40 passengers in three cabins of twelve each for short routes, with a coupé for four behind the third cabin. Furnishing was designed by L. A. Rumbold and Co., Ltd., and the interior finished throughout in green and cream upholstery. Both models carried a crew of five: captain, first officer, radio officer and two stewards on the European routes, while on Empire routes a flight clerk replaced one steward.

ONE OPERATIONAL FORTNIGHT: CROYDON TO LE BOURGET

Reg.	Dates flown	Hours to date (hr) (min)	Remarks
Week ended Sunday, July 16, 1939			
G-ADSR	Not flown	300 55	To Croydon by Eric Greenwood on 12th. Not flown again until September
G-ADSS	Not flown	17 13	
G-ADSW	11, 13, 14	82 30	
G-ADSX	10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16	170 53	11th: G-ADSW substituted on service
G-ADSY	Not flown	3 15	
G-ADSZ	10, 11, 15, 16	16 18	
Week ended Sunday, July 23, 1939			
G-ADSS	19, 20, 23	77 18	
G-ADSV	18, 19, 21	10 45	
G-ADSW	17, 18, 19	98 50	
G-ADSX	18, 20, 21, 22, 23	196 40	19th: G-ADSW substituted on service. DSX made local flight to test new starboard outer engine
G-ADSZ	18	19 48	

Ensigns first went into service on the London-Paris route in October 1938, when G-ADSR flew 27 passengers to Le Bourget in 1 hr 19 min on the 20th. C. K. Turner-Hughes piloted these early Paris runs to give instruction to Captains Horsey, Jones and Youell; and, profiting from his experience, they quickly became proficient in handling controls that were heavier than those of older biplane airliners.

Egeria, *Elsinore* and *Euterpe* were employed on the 1938 Christmas Mail run to Australia, but all suffered divers defects that caused their captains to abandon the attempt: two suffered engine trouble, while the third reached Calcutta only to retire with an undercarriage defect. Dissatisfied, Imperial Airways withdrew all five *Ensigns* and sent them to Coventry for modifications; the sixth machine, *Eddystone*, joined them later after completing flight trials at Martlesham Heath. An improved mark of *Tiger*,

