

Anniversary of Courageous Flights When Alcock and Brown Flew Atlantic

This Early Conquest of the Atlantic Outstrips Lindbergh's Performance So Far As to Make Comparison Farcical

KING BORROWS SWORD

In the "Montreal Standard," Charles Harrison Gibson, a Canadian writer and aviator of note, tells of the epoch-making flight which established a record for speed and performance never equalled in flying, at a time when aircraft were in their infancy. His tale in part is as follows:

Inauspicious Start
The publicity value of the big race in his view had petered out. "The edge is off it," he growled—"Public's fed up."

In large degree he was right. Having been all keyed up with emotion for exciting days, while Harry Hawker and his mate Grievé was "missing," the audience had relaxed. Its flicker interest for the time being was lost completely; and for the full front pages Hawker's unlucky and ill-vised trial had commanded, Alcock, the victorious, was lucky to get scant columns. In world attention, his great achievement even at the time suffered as cruel neglect as it has in the after years.

If Hawker and Grievé had not mysteriously lost themselves just long enough to invest their dramatic experience with universal human interests, and if American seaplanes had not in their own leisurely fashion, testing out their Liberty motors, accomplished a first relay aerial bridging of the northern ocean, the spyrlasses of the world would not suddenly have lost focus upon Newfoundland and the great achievement to be entered to the glory of Captain John Alcock, D.S.C. and navigator Arthur Whidden Brown.

"No doubt about it," the former grumbled, between pulls at a consolatory cigarette. "We're about as interesting to the public now as Dr. 'Ananias' Cook. We can go ahead and make it—yes, and win the coin. But the audience isn't going to be impressed by our performance. Their hands are so billeted clapping for Harry Hawker they'll be lucky to get a languid hand."

And the record shows that the air conqueror of the Atlantic wastes in this was psychic.

Alcock-Brown Conquest
The Alcock-Brown conquest of the Atlantic in so many ways differed from the later Lindbergh performance that comparisons are farcical. Alcock was in a race that began in land preparations for which he and no one else was responsible, and with a limited business man's expense allowance to work upon.

Planes were even more primitive things then, as compared with the "Spirit of St. Louis," than a twenty-year-old automobile would be now in company with the 1930 models.

Radio was in its infancy and there were no dependable meteorological data or air or current charts or proven air navigation instruments. It was in that day a gamble with fate, a gamble backed by high courage, rather than the facing of a problem with the resources of fairly exact sciences. There was all the worry and nerve strain of keeping one eye on a bunch of dangerous rivals to escape having one put over. All the worrying details of racing intruded on Alcock, whereas Lindbergh's flight was a private one against time.

Historic Flight
To go back to the genesis of the Alcock-Brown achievement, it was scored in competition for a £10,000 purse offered by the London "Daily Mail" as far back as in 1913—but which, to the honor of the winged gaud, no airman sought to win during the years of war—a competition open to the flight men of all countries save and except the enemies of the Entente powers. The prize was for a land-to-land flight, not excluding, however, such craft as flying boats, which might under the rules alight on the water on voyage. To win, the flight had to be made not only first but within an elapsed time, from start to finish, of seventy-two hours, from Great Britain's Royal Aero Club, and the American Aero Club on this side, jointly supervised and directed the race. Major Partridge R.A.F., represented the former organization at St. John's as official starter, having previously rendered invaluable service to all and sundry contestants by arranging with the United States authorities a co-ordination of meteorological reports from British and American observers.

A Coming Winner
There was no question in the minds of the flight contingent assembled in Newfoundland a decade ago that one or other of the racers then there was a coming winner, and that the big prize would be won before Canada next celebrated her Dominion Day. Hawker was, unluckily, out of it. At Pleasantville, three miles out of the ancient colonial capital, the rebuilding of Ratham's badly wrecked Martinsyde went forward night and day, the task of the workers being somewhat like taking a perfectly good radiator cap and fitting a new motor-car motorcar to it.

He had smashed while injudiciously trying to follow Hawker out, Morgan, his navigator, who already had lost a foot in the war, sustaining in this mishap injuries through which he lost his sight. Kerr and the Handley-Page were at Harbor Greece forty odd miles away as the crew and the airman fly, tuning up and almost set.

Alcock, at St. John's, was ready. The three outstanding rivals in the test had raced for a hectic week in the work of getting ready, each spurred by ambition to complete installations and try-outs and steal a march on the others.

And all, scorning the most sacred superstition of orthodox sailormen, aspired to sail, if possible, on that particular day, the 14th, with the benediction of the full moon.

The outstanding significance and purpose of that maiden trans-Atlantic flight even yet is but superficially grasped by the lay public. It was a test of navigation skill and resourcefulness under wholly unfamiliar conditions—a test in navigation rather than aviation, as Alcock contended. The war had already fairly well determined the ultimate possibilities of all types and classes of aircraft, but as to trans-ocean navigation, unproven theories and undemonstrated aids and contraptions were all the pioneering air navigators had to go upon.

Thus the distance cruise of the American seaplane did not parallel or conflict with the more ambitious and adventurous plans of Hawker and Kerr et al. The crossing of the Atlantic in a series of hops by the convoyed N.C.'s was a trial of motor under sustained and extreme demands upon it. Their voyaging over convoys in series, with which ships they were in continuous touch telegraphically, could accomplish little or nothing in the solution of air navigation puzzles such as must confront the skipper of hurtling overseas liners of the new era.

Place of the Sextant
Could the air navigator place reliance on the faithful sextant of seafaring days if deprived of his horizon line on which to base his metaphysical calculations for determination of his position?

Could the unlogged speed be even closely approximated? Would the drift indicator show dependably the deviation from course attributable to side-setting currents of the uncharted air?

How far might reliance be placed on the wireless direction-finder and triangulation on the known positions of sending stations or ships, for the fixing of the position of speeding aircraft in the great void overhanging the unseen seas?

These and a score of other related questions of vital import to students of the new problems of navigation awaited answer out of the to-be-chronicled experience of those shaping the courses for the first of ocean flights.

The very essence of the problem, as well as their extent and seriousness, could only be disclosed by daring experimentation. And the experimenters had to be dauntless men.

Bidding Alcock Good-Bye
It was as I was bidding Alcock good-bye and wishing him all the world's good luck, that I asked a favor of him. When I had hoped to be of the winning team in crossing the Atlantic by a bridge of air, I had had entrusted to me by President Beatty of the Canadian Pacific Railway three greeting letters—to Rt. Hon. Lloyd George, then Prime Minister of Great Britain; Sir George Perley, Canadian High Commissioner at the seat of Empire; and Sir George McLaren Brown, at that time the C.P.R. chief executive in old London. I wasn't going that time, so I could not myself make delivery. I explained the situation to Alcock. He held out his hand, "Give them to me if you like," he offered. "I'll undertake to post them as soon as we make land."

He wrapped them up carefully in a bit of oiled paper and tucked them in a pocket. Nor did he forget, but posted them at Clifden, Ireland, the next day, and each and all reached the addressees.

land, she had 20 odd gallons left. She was twin-engined by Rolls-Royce, 700 h.p., and under full power developed a maximum 103 miles an hour, or under throttle an average 90-mile cruising pace. A marvel of the trip she made with Alcock at the stick is that, with the following gale's assistance, she made the run in still unbeaten time, at an averaged hundred and twenty-six miles per hour, twenty-three miles an hour better than her best possible power performance. Her structural peculiarity was that her two seats, for pilot and navigator, were placed side by side instead of tandem, a minimum of discomfort, through cramping during long flights thus being sought and gained.

"It's a curious coincidence," remarked Alcock, chatting one day at the Crosbie House, that while my Vimy is of the type of Vickers bomber mobilized at Bedford for a bombing raid on Berlin just before the Armistice, that Handley-Page of the Admiralty is one of the very machines fitted out in London for a similar expedition and the same objective."

"Quite so," the Admiral smilingly agreed—"only, of course, we weren't getting ready to bomb Berlin, you know—just military works in and about Berlin."

Captain Alcock and Lieutenant Brown were officers with picturesque careers and dramatic war recollections, the former enjoying unique distinction as an inventor and builder of aircraft of his own. He was, in fact, the only pilot in the air services of the Allies to have designed and constructed a machine of his own, distinct from the original in its outstanding features, while of decidedly active service. This was in 1916, the Alcock fighting scout by-plane being conceived and given actuality in off-duty intervals between bombing expeditions from the Madros base directed against Adrianople and Constantinople.

"The Alcock I. was the fastest little fighting scout of her day," the proud fighter boasted. "Her feature was unobstructed visibility in all directions, and she was a hit if I do say it. All the scouts we've been building since have followed her basic principles."

Captain Alcock at that particular time was with the R.N.A.S. of Great Britain. It was his pleasant part to go up every day either with a Handley-Page bomber to drop explosive calling cards on Turkish military de-

pots or else with a scout machine to engage one or more of Fritz's air fighters lending their machine-gun and immoral support to the Turkish partner. He was one of the first pair of aviators to bomb Adrianople and Constantinople, besides which he was officially credited with having satisfactorily accounted for seven Hun machines, thereby winning his D.S.C.

His last duel in the clouds he wasn't likely soon to forget. For just as he had crashed his not inconsequential antagonist and was on the point of calling it a day and speeding haphazardly, his propeller burst and his machine fell from the 12,000 foot level with himself and his companion in hard luck, Captain Hugh Aird and Engineer-Lieutenant F. J. Wise—plump into the Gulf of Saros.

None of the trio was injured in the graduated descent and the plane kept afloat for somewhat better than two hours, during which hopes of rescue ran high. Then the plane, without warning and very inconveniently, simply left them. The inhospitable enemy short was a mile away, and in every other direction was water and yet more water. And this at the end of a perfect day.

As a choice of alternative evils, the shore call won. All three swimmers made it, cold, exhausted and desperate. Then they spent fifteen hours dodging Turco soldiers and citizenry, while searching for anything remotely resembling food. It didn't seem to exist in those parts. So they reluctantly gave themselves up and the hospitable Turks expeditiously introduced them to the civil jail, in which they were afforded every opportunity for entomological research. Filth, vermin and low diet are outstanding characteristics of Turkish jails. To vary the low pressure monotony, military prisoners, under excuse of reprisals, were not infrequently transferred to the dark, dank dungeons, where they as not infrequently died miserably and speedily.

Alcock and his companions, after a month or more, succeeded in getting transferred to an internment camp, where conditions, by comparison, were heavenly. There they stayed until repatriated on the signing of the Armistice.

Lieutenant (now Sir) Arthur Whidden Brown had his first war experience with a Manchester line regiment, from which he was transferred to the air force as an observer. He was shot down, badly wounded and sent to Ger-

Land of the Viking to Attempt Her Pioneering Voyage



PLAN A TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHT FROM SWEDEN
The Sverige, in which Capt. Albin Ahrensberg plans to fly from Stockholm to New York in June, arrives at Stockholm from Dessau, Germany, where it was built.



EXPLORER MAKES TOUR
Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Arctic explorer, will make a lecture tour of Western Canada, following Aero Convention at St. Louis.

Nansen's Arctic Plans Changed

American Base at Fairbanks Rather Than at Nome

Oslo, Norway.—Fridtjof Nansen, famous Norwegian explorer who plans an Arctic flight in the dirigible Graf Zeppelin next year, announced, recently, certain changes in his flight bases in Europe and Alaska.

The European base will be at Finmarken, on the northern coast of Norway, instead of at Murmansk. The American base will be at Fairbanks, rather than at Nome, as first announced.

Nansen said mooring masts would be erected at both places immediately. The flight is scheduled to start next spring.

The principal aims of the expedition will be to fix the boundaries of the deep Arctic Ocean and to seek possible landing places for dirigibles in the northern ice fields.

There also will be a tour of the North Pole area, and later a photographic trip along the Siberian coast. The expedition is scheduled to complete its work in three weeks, probably late in April.

The Graf Zeppelin will carry a double crew on the trip.

Lord Lansdowne Quits Irish Senate

Two Vacancies Are Now to Be Filled—Four Women Already in the Field

Dublin.—The Marquess of Lansdowne has resigned his membership in the Irish Free State Senate. This now leaves two vacancies, that of the late Mrs. Stopford Green having not yet been filled. Already four women candidates are in the field—Mrs. Cosgrave, vice-chairman of the Dublin County Council, and head of the Irish Women Citizens' Association who, by the way, is no relation to the President; Mrs. T. M. Kettle, chairman of the Rathmines Urban Council, Mrs. O'Donovan of Rathmines and Miss Kathleen Brown of Wexford.

It is highly probable that the Senate will favor the appointment of one of the women candidates in Mrs. Stopford Green's place, although two men also are standing for election—J. J. Brady, former Senator, and Laurence O'Neill, former Lord Mayor of Dublin. The latter will no doubt be nominated to succeed Lord Lansdowne. The elections will take place on June 19 and 20.

Russo-British Relations

E. F. Wise, C.B., in the Contemporary Review (London): The principles and ideas represented by London and Moscow are in bitter and dangerous competition. The rivalry of England and Russia in Asia is no new phenomenon. Before the war it was a struggle of rival Empires for territorial expansion and commercial advantages. It has since taken a different and more dangerous form. Soviet Russia stands now as the upholder of the rights of Asiatic nations to self-determination. She offers herself as their champion in their struggle for freedom from European interference and exploitation. England is inevitably regarded on account of her vast territorial influence in Asia as the defender of the status quo—of rights and privileges acquired by conquest in the nineteenth century. . . . In the Asiatic countries in the next decades there will be constant friction between England and Russia leading inevitably to conflict dangerous to the peace of the world unless somehow or other friendly relations can be maintained on a wide basis of co-operation between the two countries.

Fear

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its power of acting and reasoning as fear; for fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever, therefore, is terrible with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be ended with treatment of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything a striking or contemptible, that may be dangerous.—Burke.

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Chicotmi Progress (Ind.): Mr. King has spoken in high praise of the Bilingual Bill. These flattering words are doubt very pleasant to us to hear. In the past declarations, we should have been more than ready to accept the Bilingual money for Mr. Robb, the Minister and member for a province, and a measure to have the country.

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