

SIXTY YEARS AGO - FERRY NEWS 1959

The 'Daily Mail' Air Race

In July 1959, various events were held to mark the 50th anniversary of the cross-Channel flight by Louis Bleriot in 1909, including a Daily Mail prize for the fastest journey between Marble Arch and the Arc de Triomphe – or vice versa.

Over a dozen competitors in this highly-successful race made use of Silver City services in one way or another and we congratulate them all – and those many members of the company's staff who made their efforts possible – on their achievements which proved beyond doubt the efficiency and flexibility of the Air Ferry organisation.

One of the first to leave Marble Arch and the pioneer Silver City entry was Stirling Moss, who drove a Renault Dauphine saloon in both directions accompanied by the Chairman, Mr. Eoin C. Mekie. His times were 2hr 45min 56sec (Arch to Arc) and 2hr 42min 7sec (Arc to Arch). Fastest time ever recorded by a single vehicle travelling between the two capitals was set up by John Webb, driving a Jensen 541R saloon. His London-Paris time was 2hr 27min 17 sec.

Most luxurious entry was that of Raymond Mays, who drove his own Rover Three-litre Saloon accompanied by Silver City's Joint Managing Director, Mr. H. C. Kennard, and, from Lydd, by Alderman G. T. Paine, the Mayor of Lydd. Despite being held up twice on his route from London to Lydd – once by a flock of sheep and again at a level crossing – his overall time between the capitals was 2hr 45min 13sec. One of the few female entrants and the only one to transport her car by rail on the first part of the journey was Miss Sheila Mekie, daughter of Silver City's Chairman. Miss Mekie's car was carried aboard a Superfreighter from Manston to Le Bourget. Her time over this original route was 3hr 8min 29sec.

Scooterist Artie Shaw rode to Lydd on his 150cc Vespa machine, took a normal air ferry service to Le Touquet and rode on to Paris. His time was 6hr 28min 35sec. Most courageous entry was veteran aviator Jean Salis who flew his Bleriot replica – which he constructed himself – from Calais to Lydd and covered the road mileage between Paris and London in a 1909 Humber car. His overall time was 12hr 17min 22sec.

International Status for Blackpool Airport

Squires Gate Airport, Blackpool, will take another step forward in its development as an international airport on May 15, on which date regular direct passenger services to Dublin will start, providing a feeder link with services to the United States. The services will operate on Saturdays and Sundays from May 15 to June 1 and throughout October, and during the peak holiday season from June 1 to September 30 there will be additional flights on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The flying time for this new service, for which bookings may be made at any Aer Lingus office in Eire and, for Dublin-bound passengers, through any travel agent and office of B.E.A., Aer Lingus and Silver City Airways, is 60 minutes. Return fares will be £6 15s for any weekday in May, June, September and October, and for Wednesday services during July and August. During peak season weekends in July and August the return fare will be £8 17s.

Cherbourg Air Ferry Service Re-Opens

Silver City's vehicle and passenger services to Cherbourg re-started this year from Bournemouth (Hurn) Airport instead of Eastleigh Airport, a few miles from the centre of Southampton. This was because the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, owners of Eastleigh Airport, decided to close that airport for a period of about seven weeks to enable repairs to be carried out to the main landing strip.

But, exactly on schedule, on March 11, Silver City's air ferry services to Cherbourg began. Three vehicles, two smart Austin cars and a versatile Bedford Dormobile, drove into Hurn a few miles from Bournemouth to be air-lifted to the Continent. Shortly after 10.30 hrs, the aircraft "City of

Aberdeen” started up and taxied out to the runway. At the controls were Flight Captain George Hogarth, Silver City’s senior pilot on the Hampshire-to-France routes, and Captain Kenneth Barnes. Three Bristol Britannias, all engaged in crew training, pulled off the runway on to the perimeter track to give a priority take-off to the Silver City Superfreighter on its scheduled service.

Direct Car Ferries to Germany & Central France

Aerial car ferry services running deep into the hearts of France and Germany are the subject of air route licence applications announced this month by Silver City Airways. The new applications are for flights between Ferryfield or Manston (Kent) and Cologne, Paris and Auxerre.

During the autumn, winter and spring services will operate during the daytime and during peak summer months at night. It is anticipated that fares on the new Silver City deep inland services will be sufficiently low to make only direct driving the cheapest alternative. The 300-mile Cologne service will take about two hours and set the motorist down amidst the fast autobahn network of Western Germany.

Paris will be served through Cormeilles, an airport some 40 minutes to the north-west, and the journey from the English coast will take only about an hour. Auxerre is about 100 miles south of Paris on the road to Lyons, Switzerland and the Mediterranean. It will be reached in about 100 minutes from England and will make it possible for a tourist to be in the south of France, with his car, less than twelve hours after leaving the Channel coast. If the new licences are granted in time Silver City hope to start operating the Paris service in September this year. [*It didn't happen!*]

An Air Ferry Jigsaw

We have just been playing with the new jig-saw entitled “The Air Ferry” and produced by the Tower Press, one of the biggest manufacturers in the country. By a curious coincidence it is number one in their new “Wayfarer” series.

The new jig-saw portrays a busy loading scene on the tarmac of an imaginary airport. As the puzzle is aimed at the mass popular market, and this requires a lot of detail, colour and life, it has been necessary to use a good deal of artistic licence. One quails, therefore, at the thought of what certain people at Ferryfield and Southampton will say when they find that the main feature is a new A40, two Prefects, a combination and a motor-cycle being loaded on to one Silver City Superfreighter – and driven up the ramp, what’s more, by the owners themselves with their families on board!

Nevertheless, despite this artistic licence, the draughtsmanship is beyond praise and of a much higher standard than one would expect in a popularly-priced jig-saw of mass appeal. The 400 pieces are mounted on good-quality stiff card, interlock well and come in a substantial box. When complete the puzzle measures 19in x 14in and at three shillings and sixpence it is remarkable value for money. [*Does anyone out there have one of these puzzles?*]

Help Us to Design The Ideal New Car Ferry Aircraft

*The company started a competition for suggestions about features to be incorporated in possible new car ferry aircraft. This prompted a letter from a member of the public (a Mr A. E. Turner of Littlestone-on-Sea) in which he said: “One suggestion which I feel would be welcome to many fellow sufferers like myself who reside in the direct line of flight from Ferryfield. **NOISE.** Can something be done, please, by way of the introduction of silencers to abate to some extent the terrific earsplitting racket to which we are subjected as the Freighters climb to gain height after take-off.”*

On a Lighter Note

A Silver City pilot is seen talking to an attractive young lady passenger. Pilot: “On twin-engined aircraft we get some swing on take-off, you know”. Passenger: “Good gracious – music while you work, too!”