

SIXTY YEARS AGO - FERRY NEWS 1957

A Letter to The Editor

It occurs to me that, in the not too distant future, a modified Lamson Message Tube System will oust traditional lift travel with a new and startling mode of travel from A to B. I can think of nothing better than ridding ourselves of the frightful crush in lifts; imagine the joy of "private" travel in a Lamson tube of one's own!

Radio telephone could be installed on the longer journeys, for why not have this system for public travel in place of buses, trains and cars? The comfort of sitting in your own little tube with telephone to hand and, of course, air conditioning, would be of immense value.

What do they do there? (Paris)

The Group decided to establish an independent Paris office early in 1954 and chose for its position a former fashion salon just at the beginning of the Avenue Bosquet, which, for those who know their Paris, is just across the Pont de l'Alma, and within a shadow's length of the Eiffel Tower. The office is probably the only one in Paris outside which one can always park a car, a rare luxury and one reason for the choice of location.

The offices are decorated with a delicate fig leaf motif wallpaper with one wall adorned by a somewhat allegorical wall map done by an impecunious student anxious for patronage. The basement provides a small flat for the manager to live in, a facility offered by no other station. George Gauntley, an energetic Frenchman who goes rowing on the Seine every morning before breakfast, has been in charge from the start, with a small staff never exceeding half-a-dozen.

From The Ferryman's Diary

Winging It

A pilot and navigator were night-stopping with the new delivery aircraft at Keflavik and, having carefully bedded the beast for the night, were shocked to find the next morning that a truck had hit it and a wing change was necessary. A cable was immediately despatched with full details – in fact, it was so lengthy it could have been a letter. The crew sat back with innumerable coffees, very satisfied with their work. Late that afternoon came the reply: "Which wing?"

Quick Work

It is seldom that Blackbushe has a chance to really be in at a "red-hot" operational requirement, but a case occurred recently which should not go without mention. The occasion arose when equipment was urgently required to be assembled and moved to Eastleigh for the salvage of the "grounded" flying-boat at Majorca. Floating gear, all available dinghies and pumping equipment had to be assembled at Eastleigh with the minimum of delay, to be ferried by a Bristol Freighter to Las Palmas.

The pumping gear was hired from a local contractor, but a trial run revealed that the Diesel engine was delivering far from its maximum power. It was loaded onto the Austin lorry, however, and the overhaul commenced while the remainder of the equipment was being put aboard. M/T Fitter Frank Wilson was alone in the back of the vehicle and carried out a top overhaul of the engine whilst passing through the leafy Hampshire lanes, fortunately in brilliant sunshine. The engine was in shocking condition but Frank persevered and before Eastleigh was reached a halt was called and the engine purred sweetly into life on the first swing of the handle.

Black Bushe-Telegraph

It is reported in *Interavia* that the Fairey Rotodyne, on which our design and drawing office are engaged, is arousing real interest in several countries, including the United States. As with the Viscount, it looks as if this country may once again poach on another American aviation preserve – the helicopter field. This project now has the blessing of the Ministry of Supply and the prototype is supposed to be very near the flight test stage. Who knows - in the not too distant future we may even see one with Silver City painted on its fuselage!

Tony Britton films at Ferryfield

TV and stage star Tony Britton has his first star role in the new Jack Whittingham film, "The Birthday Present". The film is the story of an unsuccessful attempt at smuggling by a young businessman, played by Tony Britton. It includes scenes of his arrival at and departure from Le Touquet and his arrival at Ferryfield, all of which were shot at Ferryfield during the early part of January.

Ferryfield Junior Controller, Peter Ford, was dressed as a French Customs Officer for one of the Le Touquet shots and artistes for the crowd scenes were drawn from the Ferryfield staff.

The Britavia Ferry Unit

Early in 1953 the company took a further progressive step in selecting two pilots to undergo conversion to jet aircraft initially covering a contract for Canberra deliveries to Venezuela. The conversion courses were carried out on Meteors and Canberras at RAF stations.

The ejector seat was then the new thing and to sit in discomfort in tight parachute and restricting oxygen gear on top of the terrifying object seemed, to us, the height of folly. At this time jet flying was still little known to civilians and it was considered a trifle Dan-Dareish. The RAF mechanics must have relished the job of giving an extra heave on the harness then, leaning over to pull out the safety pin from the seat, at the same time asking, "Are you comfortable?" and "Safety pin out, sir."

Later, on the Canberra, we decided to modify this drill. The crash axe was moved nearer and when the mechanic leaned over to pull out the pin, we took the axe in hand and, before he could say his piece, got in first with "If you take it out I'll chop your hand off."

Britavia Traffic

Most readers of this article will be familiar with the functions of Traffic departments, although procedures vary slightly according to local conditions and the type of airlines. We are responsible for the welfare of the passengers from the time they arrive at the Airport to the moment the chocks are removed from the aircraft.

A Traffic Officer is reputed to have used a passenger to demonstrate a lifejacket, which had not, unfortunately, been inflated previously. When the cord was pulled the jacket inflated, and no-one knew how to deflate it. One passenger thus departed slightly more prepared for an emergency than any of the others.

Prior to being blessed with a Reception desk, it was our policy to call out the names of passengers in the lounge, and distribute the tickets personally. On one occasion a ticket was made out to A/C Jones, but no Aircraftman Jones answered our call. On being asked if anyone had not yet received their ticket, a red-faced Air Commodore Jones at once rose to his feet; I have never been sure what the abbreviation for Air Commodore should be.

Saigon to Solihull

M. Jean Cloitre arrived at Ferryfield on June 19 on the last leg of a 12,000-mile overland journey from Saigon to Solihull in a standard 88in. wheelbase Land Rover. M. Cloitre, who is the 32-year-old French manager of a rubber plantation in Vietnam, made the journey, which took him three and a half months, of which 62 days were spent motoring, as a sight-seeing tour of Asia and Europe.

His route took him through Malaya to Singapore, by boat from Singapore to Calcutta, and thence to New Delhi, Pakistan, Lahore, Peshawar and through the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan. After a detour round the Russian border, he continued through Persia to the Caspian Sea, Istanbul, Greece, Yugoslavia, Germany and Paris to Le Touquet for the second sea crossing in this eventful Journey, after which he drove from Ferryfield to the Rover works at Solihull.