

Epic flight of the 'Southern Cross'

ACCORDING to the official report on the progress of Shannon Airport, the year ending October 31, 1964, was the most productive in the 25 years' history of Shannon International Airport, and the overall passenger traffic exceeded 374,000.

The figures are milestones in aeronautical history, and it may be of more than usual interest to recall now an epic of human achievement when the "Southern Cross" flew the Atlantic from Portmarnock Strand in June, 1930.

Pilot of the aircraft was the late Air Commodore Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, and the navigator was Captain J. P. Saul. A vivid description of the hazards met on the crossing was given by Captain Saul in a lecture he gave several years later in Limerick on the

invitation of the local branch of the Irish Aviation Club. The following account of his experiences is taken from the "Limerick Chronicle" files for 1944.

The Atlantic had been crossed several times from west to east, but with one exception in

1928, when Captain Kheel had flown from Ireland to Labrador the west to east crossing had not been made. While this for the east to west crossing from east to west, it was not officially recognised, as it had not been made from a report to airport.

On the scene in 1930 came Captain Kingsford Smith with his aircraft, the "Southern Cross." He had successfully flown the Pacific and broken the record in a flight from Australia to India and had now arrived in England with his eyes on the Atlantic.

His aircraft had been built from two planes which had been originally with Sir Hubert Wilkins' Arctic expedition. She was a single wing monoplane with three motors.

The crew consisted of the late Air Commodore Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, or "Smithy," as he was popularly known; second Pilot Captain Everett Van Dyke, Chief Pilot

of the Royal Dutch Air Line; John Stanwick, radio operator, and Captain J. P. Saul, navigator.

EQUIPMENT.

There was no inter-com system in the plane, and the pilots were shut out from the navigator and the wireless operator by a 900 gallon petrol tank. The only means of conveying messages was by passing them through an aperture on a stick. The rear compartment was very crowded with equipment, and was criss-crossed by bracing wires, making movement very difficult.

After the plane had been fitted out at Croydon with a wireless set and other technical equipment, they flew to Ireland, where for several days they had trial flights to drill the crew into a one-man team.

On June 23, orders came to stand by Portmarnock Strand had been decided as the take-off ground, as the plane, which was estimated to carry 42 tons, was actually carry 10 tons and needed a runway of at least two miles. All through the night they waited, and, despite unfavourable weather forecasts they started at 4.25.

TAKE OFF.

These were the most anxious moments of the whole flight, as there was a danger that with the heavily laden plane one little bump would mean disaster. Finally she lifted and slowly gained altitude. Within half an hour they passed over Galway and had their last glimpse of land when they saw Slyn Head vanish—in front stretched the great waste of the Atlantic.

The morning passed without event, and they came out of cloud into brilliant blue sky and a calm sea. Noon passed, and in the afternoon they listened to dance music from New York on the radio—they could already picture themselves there.

The struck low clouds later in the afternoon, but were not worried, as they were still in communication with several ships.

Gradually, however, the clouds thickened, until they were flying blind.

DANGER.

They decided to try and get below the cloud and nosed down with engines off. Suddenly the wireless operator shouted that the wireless aerial was splashing on the sea. The engines roared into life again, and they rose missing disaster by a bare eight or nine feet.

This narrow escape meant that their altimeter was faulty, but there was nothing to do but keep on. The cold became intense, and while in the back they were relatively well protected, the pilots in front were badly frost-bitten on the exposed sides of their faces.

Their next trouble was air sickness, caused by the fumes from the exhaust, and all were violently ill. The strain, especially on the pilots, was ter-

rible, as they had no automatic pilot to help them.

More trouble came when the compass in the front cockpit shook loose and fell to the floor, and the wireless set gave out.

FLYING BLIND.

While the wireless operator was trying to fix things Captain Saul saw the master compass swinging round in circles, and he passed a message forward to know what they were doing.

The reply came back that they were dead on their course with the air conductor. They then checked the conductor and found that no matter what course they set it remained dead on.

They then had to steer with a stick by tapping the pilot on the back. Finally, Captain Saul had to dismantle both the compass and air conductor and found that the trouble was due to the intense cold freezing oil on the carbon brushes of the latter instrument, to get at which was a very difficult job, as it was some 20 feet back from the cabin, in the tail of the machine.

By this time they had done 21 hours flying, and calculated they were almost there. After twelve sets of valves had blown in the wireless set, the operator got it going again and he got their bearings.

They found that they had actually only covered 100 miles in the direction they wanted to go, instead of 400, as calculated. At 8 o'clock in the morning, after seven hours blind flying, they still had 300 miles to go.

At about 10 o'clock they were still in blinding fog. Then Captain Saul passed the word along to "Smithy" to go down lower, as there was a chance that it was clear below.

ARRIVAL.

Down they went and suddenly they broke through, to see a rocky coast with a headland which Captain Saul recognised as Bull Point.

It was a case whether they would land at Harbour Grace or continue on to New York but, as they had only five hours petrol left it was reluctantly decided that they could not risk New York.

They landed at Harbour Grace exactly 301 hours after they had started, and, as Capt. Saul described it, "Smithy" came in on a violent side slip and set her down on the single runway as if he had completed ten minutes flying instead of the first successful west to east crossing of the Atlantic.

Actually, the watchers on land had heard the "Southern Cross" fly in to land at two o'clock in the morning, and turn out to sea again.

Later, they flew on to New York and received a tremendous reception on their arrival at Roosevelt Field, Long Island.

Captain Saul, in later years, became Shannon Airport's first Chief Control Officer.

When you can't decide ...



Jacob's Club Milk

a real cream thrill: cream sandwich biscuit covered by thick creamy chocolate with a delicately flavoured cream filling - Ahhh - delicious!



GOLF

ing flavour of rich dark chocolate, general a tender crunchy biscuit and a chocolate amhhh - delicious!



Jacob's ORANGE



This Kosangas Hotplate yours for only £2.0.5 down

This handsome, efficient, modern Osva 3240 Hotplate for cooking with Kosangas has fast boiling burners and shut down lid. Yours for only £2.0.5 down (with 1 cylinder of Kosangas) and 36 monthly payments of 7/5. Total hire purchase price £14.10.0 (excl. gas). Or £12.3.5 cash (incl. 1 cylinder of Kosangas).

FOR FURTHER DETAILS SEE YOUR KOSANGAS DEALER OR CUT OUT THIS ADVERTISEMENT AND POST TODAY TO: McMullans Kosangas Ltd. 1 Upper O'Connell St. Dublin 1, Tel: 40761/4

caused breakin the new statio this difficulty w

Newc woma bounc

IT appears t evidence a in the witness seems inclined aggressive, to it" remarked Sheerlin at I Court on Friday over Mrs. M. widow, Assum castle West, fo her own bond.

Defendant I moned by Aherne, also of for alleged abs ening languas dismissed a c. Mrs. Scanlan Aherne for her to lead to a br and made no i

Plaintiff, wh by Mr. P. G. said she was children and to defendant. continuously a passing remar and her family.

Cross-examir Noonan, solr, plaintiff said s to Mrs. Scanlan although the of her child occasions.

Justice Jm only fair peap should keep trol in their c

Garda J. West, said 3 very distresse plained to him by Mrs. Scanl

Mrs. Scanl denied that threatened M Aherne abused threw stones i dog never int body and she with any othe

Garda J. I Scanlan seem confary at ti

Ser naw