

A strange affair

The deaths of two young American's

On the morning of Thursday February 21, 1935, Captain John Kirton an Abridge, Essex based Hillman Airway's pilot took off from Stapleford Airport to Paris with two beautiful female American passengers. The pair were expensively clad in fur coats and had paid for all six seats on the scheduled 10am flight to Le Bourget. Kirton was already vaguely acquainted with the pair of society girls, having flown them from Le Bourget to Abridge two days earlier with a number of other passengers.

The two girls and their single item of baggage had been alone when Picked up by the air-line motor coach at Kings Cross, London for transportation to the Essex Airport, although Hillman's had expected a party of their friends to accompany them. To trace the missing members of the flight party, the coach driver had assisted one of the girls to make a telephone call to a Romford number, but after apparently making telephone enquiries from the airport, the girls declared that they had been let down and that they were to fly to Paris alone. The younger of the two girls handed over four £5 notes and a £1 note to the agent at Stapleford and the scheduled morning flight to Paris became, in effect, a charter flight for the heavy smoking young Americans.

Settling themselves into the rear seats of the six seat de Havilland DH84 Dragon airliner, G-ACEV, John Kirton started up the twin engines and taxied out onto the grass of the aerodrome. Shortly after the aircraft left the ground Kirton concurred with a request from one of the passengers that he close the door between the cockpit and the main, six seat, cabin because of the draught.



Kirton, a greatly experienced pilot with commercial pilots and instructors licences, as well as the holder of one of only eight first class navigators certificates then issued, turned the blue and white Hillman airliner to fly south. The flight was not smooth and some minor buffeting was apparent as the airliner headed towards Kent.

Limited in capacity, the small airliners of the day could not afford either to allocate space to, or meet the cost of, a cabin attendant. Although unable to leave his seat, the pilot was duty bound to look after the welfare of his passengers. As the Dragon crossed the English Channel coast forty-five minutes later, Kirton opened the door again to check that his passengers were comfortable. He was shocked to find that the seats previously occupied by the two pretty young girls were quite empty. Ominously, the passenger entry door in the side of the cabin was insecure, being held in place only by the pressure of the slip-

HILLMAN'S AIRWAYS			
*Phone: ROMFORD 1700.			
LONDON		PARIS SERVICE.	
TWICE DAILY.			
Single fare	£3 10 0	Period return fare	£5 10 0
Special week-end, Friday to Tuesday		£4 15 0	
Passengers can be picked up at the Victoria Hotel, Northumberland Avenue, W.1.			

stream. Unable to leave his seat to investigate, as the type did not feature any form of automatic pilot, after alerting Croydon by radio he turned the Dragon around and returned to Essex Airport.

On landing back at Stapleford, it was no surprise for Kirton to learn that news of his passengers disappearance from within the cabin had already come to the notice of the authorities. An object, not unlike a paper bag, had been seen to fall from the clouds to the ground as an unseen aeroplane flew overhead by two men working on the gas supply of a new bungalow in Park Drive, Upminster. The gas fitters, George Watling and Tom Collins, rushed to the site beside Rushmere Avenue, Upminster, to find that there were two bodies of young women lying face down and holding each other. The police were called and locally based PC Strange was first to help the shocked workmen. The bodies were taken to the local mortuary.

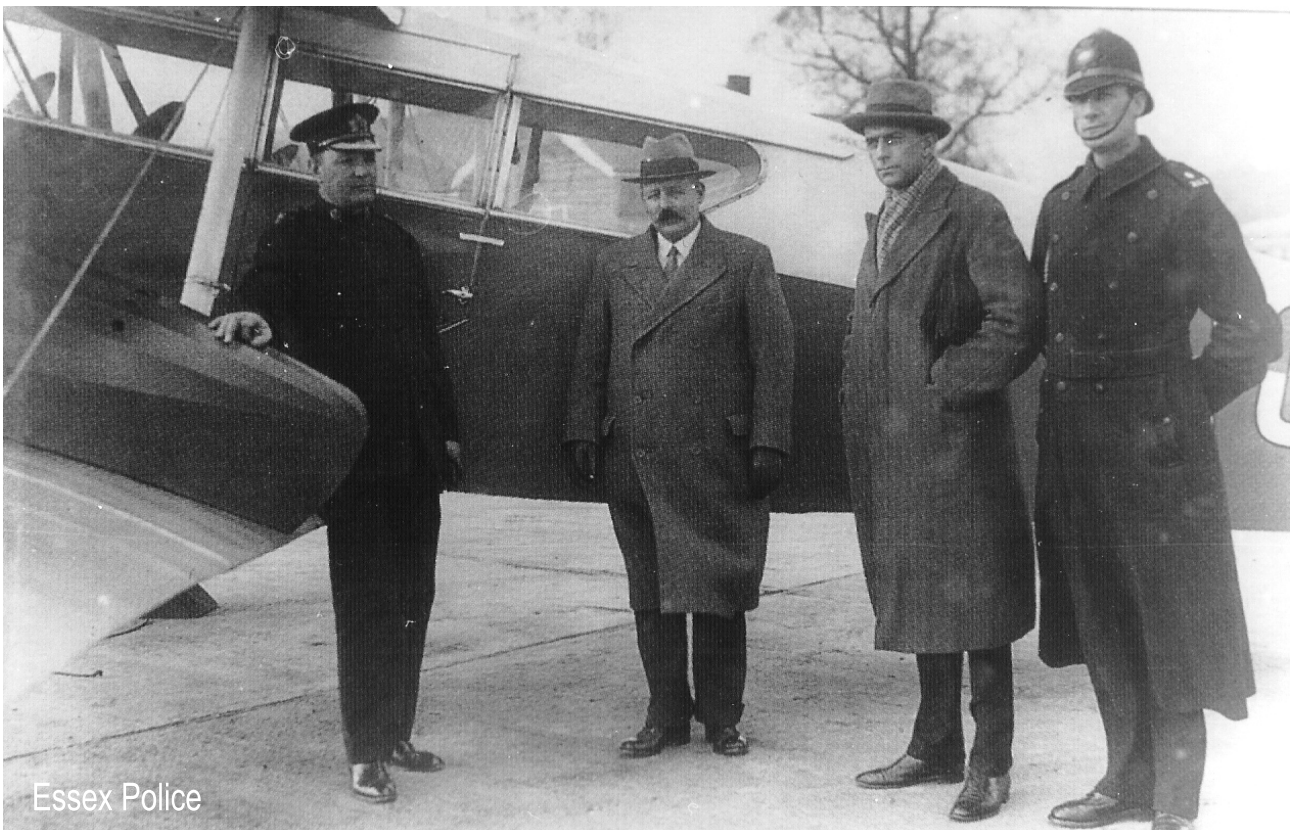


Park Lane - the bungalow as it is today



Rushmere Avenue today. The houses date from 1935

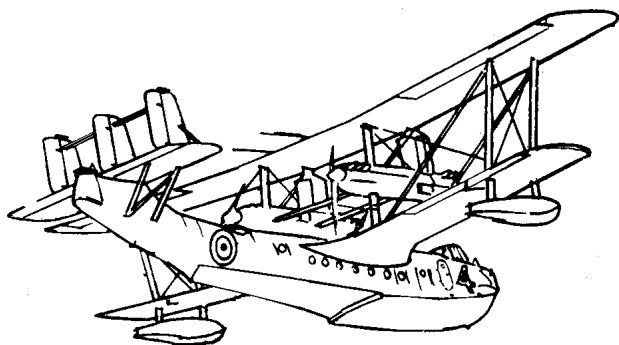
At Stapleford the cabin of the aircraft was sealed to await the arrival of more police to investigate how the pair fell to their deaths. All that remained in the passenger cabin of the airliner were a single suitcase, two pairs of gloves, two handbags, sealed letters, some cigarettes. A flask drained of whisky and, poignantly, a girl's shoe which had apparently become dislodged upon leaving. Fortunately for Kirton, as the only person in the Dragon with the two girls, it was soon apparent from the contents of the two sealed letters that the deaths were the result of a successful suicide bid.



Essex Police

It soon emerged that the two, San Francisco born, Americans were Jane du Bois, aged 20, and Elizabeth di Bois, 23, the daughters and sole children of the 55 year old American Consul-General in Naples, Italy, Coert du Bois, Councillor of the United States Consulate-General in London. As young, vivacious society girls, the pair were often to be seen travelling around seeking out entertaining company among the better off classes in a Europe barely out of a deep and damaging economic slump.

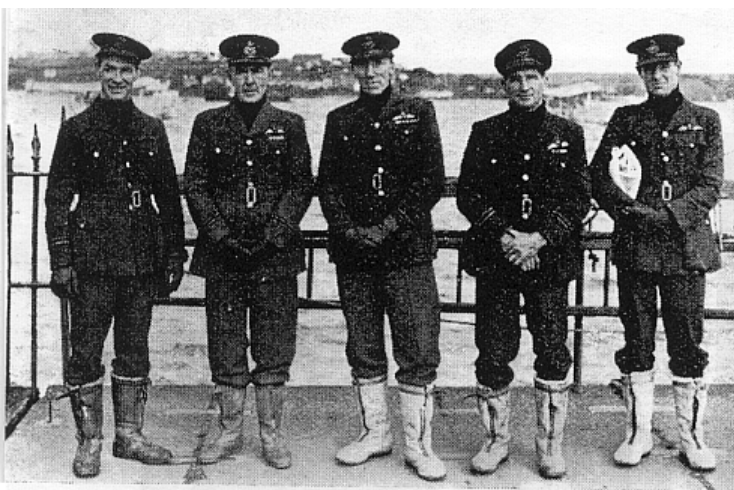
Jane du Bois suffered from chronic asthma, a condition that held out little chance of recovery. Seemingly bored by their lifestyle, the devoted sisters were reportedly regular heavy drinkers and liable to fits of depression, both having recently been found sobbing bitterly over an unknown problem in their hotel room.



The story was sensationalised by the British press, most of the tabloids carrying headlines on the story for three days. Quite early editions suggested that a recent RAF air crash might have some bearing upon the state of mind of the pair. The du Bois sisters were romantically linked with Flying Officer John A C "Charles" Forbes and Flight lieutenant Henry L Beatty, crew members of a flying boat detained for some time in Naples by mechanical problems. The aircraft was one of

four development standard Short Singapore 111 four engine bi-plane flying boats delivered to the RAF for operational training and trials with individual squadrons in 1934, almost a year ahead of a main production batch. This aircraft, serial K3595, was serving with 210 Squadron when it crashed into a mountain at San Fillipo near Messina, Sicily, on Friday February 15, 1935 killing Forbes and Beatty along with seven others in the crew, less than a week prior to the Hillman incident.

Further reinforcing the romantic loss rumour was a report, supposedly originating from some unidentified member of Hillman's staff, that Jane had been heard to say to Elizabeth "Darling, would not John love to be with us?". Others, particularly other female acquaintances of the RAF pair vehemently refuted the truth of this information. Naturally, among this group was Miss Kathleen Blakely of Park Avenue, Bedford, the fiancée of F O "Charles" Forbes. In the subsequent enquiries into the deaths the police found the recipient of the telephone call, only to find that this person had not spoken to either of the du Bois sisters and was not aware of the callers identity. They were unable to find the identity of the persons who were supposed to have let the dead women down by failing to turn up at the airport simply because they did not exist.



(Above) The Captains of the boats : Left to right : Flt. Lts. W. H. Hutton and F. J. Mawdesley ; Sqd. Ldr. A. F. Lang, M.B.E., Commanding Officer ; Flt. Lt. H. L. Beatty ; and F/O W. J. Hickley.
(Right) Sqd. Ldr. Lang at the controls during a test flight. (*Flight Photo-*

The incident was attracting a great deal of worldwide interest, this fact leading to the subsequent inquest held, on Monday February 25,. by the Coroner, C E Lewis, taking place

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W.C.B.
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 10th Street
 ST. LOUIS, MO.
 1922

Daily Herald

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1922
 ONE DENTON

Swedish
SAFETY
VALVE

SECRET SORROW OF SISTERS LOST FROM AIR LINER

5,000 Feet Death Fall Clapsed In Each Other's Arms



The secret sorrow of the women who were left behind when the liner *Albatross* was wrecked off the coast of Norway, is a painful thing to hear. The women were left behind when the liner was wrecked off the coast of Norway, and the women were left behind when the liner was wrecked off the coast of Norway.

GIRLS' FEAR OF DOOM

THROUGH ILLNESS

Grief Over Fate Of R.A.F. Friends

FIFTY-THREE young women, members of the Royal Air Force, are in a state of intense anxiety over the fate of their friends who were killed in the crash of the *Albatross*. The women are in a state of intense anxiety over the fate of their friends who were killed in the crash of the *Albatross*.



SCHOOL AGE

HITS BY PRIMER

A group of school children are being hit by a primer, and the children are being hit by a primer.

SIR JOHN LIKELY TO GO TO FLAT BRICK SINCE



Sir John is likely to go to flat brick since the flat brick is likely to go to Sir John.

PARIS TRICKED BY SCHUSCHINGO

Paris has been tricked by Schuschingo, and the trick has been a very clever one.

NO 1234567 CALLS TO FANY

No 1234567 calls to Fany, and the call is a very loud one.

NO 1234567 CALLS TO FANY

No 1234567 calls to Fany, and the call is a very loud one.

SHE CAN STAND THE STRAIN NOW

She can stand the strain now, and the strain is a very heavy one.

MUNICIPAL MIDWIFERY SERVICE URGED

The municipal midwifery service is urged, and the service is a very important one.

PAID MENUS IN ALL THEATRES TO Make Women Spend More

Paid menus in all theatres to make women spend more, and the menus are a very good one.

SUPER-CALCULATED

Super-calculated, and the calculation is a very accurate one.

REASONING

Reasoning, and the reasoning is a very sound one.

STILL

Still, and the still is a very quiet one.

STILL

Still, and the still is a very quiet one.

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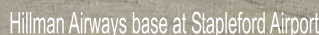
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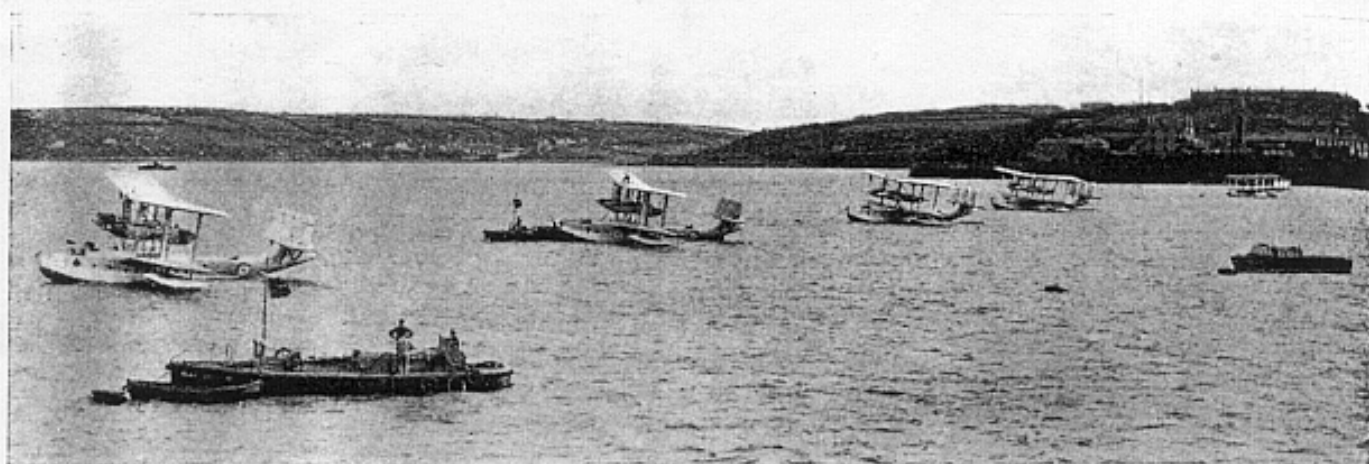
STILL

Still, and the still is a very quiet one.

STILL

Still, and the still is a very quiet one.

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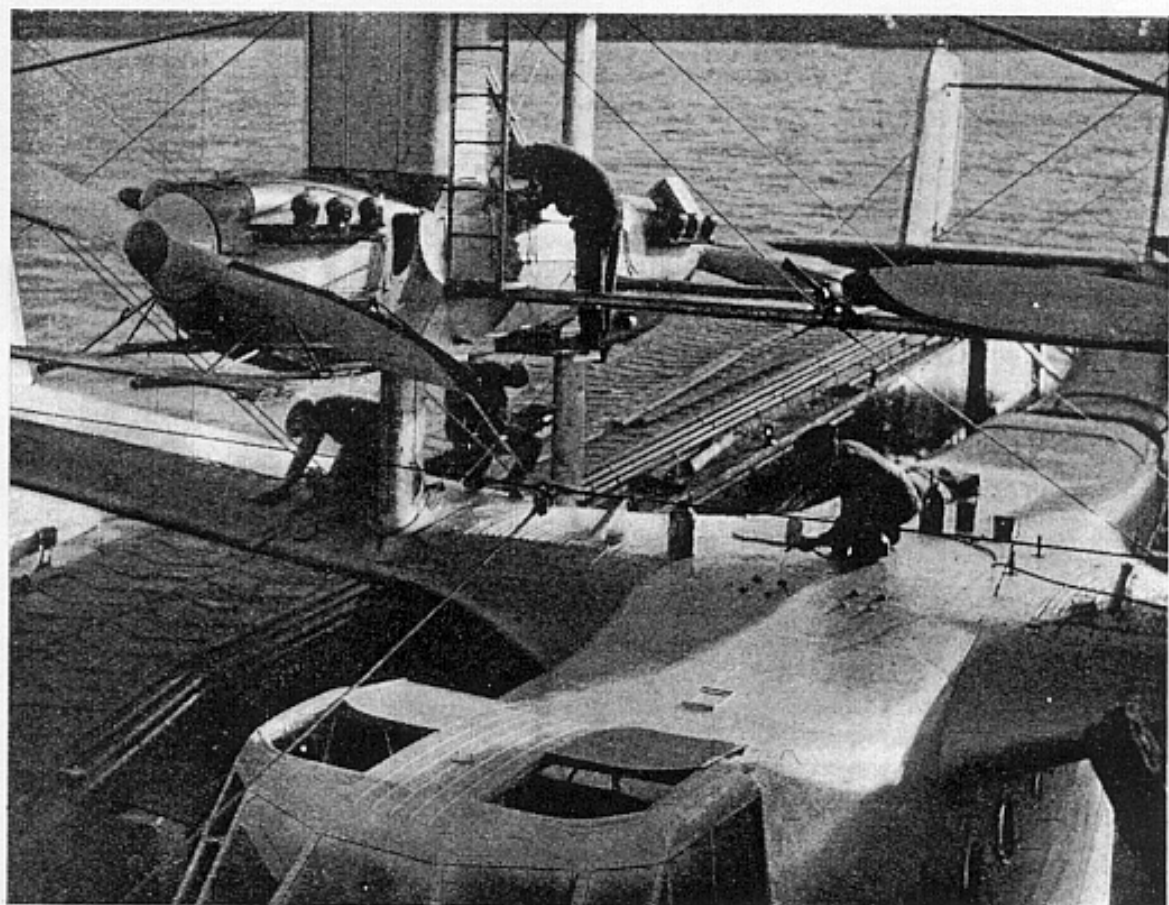
A NOTEWORTHY R.A.F. FLIGHT BEGINS

Four Short "Singapore" of No. 210 (F.B.) Squadron Leave Pembroke Dock for the Far East to Re-equip No. 205 (F.B.) Squadron

A VERY interesting flight, which has no precedent in the annals of the Royal Air Force, started from Pembroke Dock last Tuesday, January 15. It is called a Delivery Flight, and its object is to take out to Singapore Base, which is the headquarters of the Far East Command, four flying boats of the "Singapore III" type with which No. 205 (Flying Boat) Squadron is to be re-equipped.

It will be remembered that No. 205 (F.B.) Squadron came into being by making a great formation flight in four

"Southamptons" under Group Capt. (now Air Com.) H. M. Cave-Brown-Cave. The boats took off from Plymouth on October 17, 1927, and flew by stages right round Australia and back to Singapore, where they settled down as the nucleus of the Far East Command. Since then their "Southamptons" have made many notable flights to Hong Kong and other places in the Far East. The time has now come when the faithful "Southamptons" have to be replaced by something more modern, for it is extremely necessary that everything about our base



The flagship of the Squadron receiving its final attentions on the floating dock. This "Singapore III" had already done some 180 hours' flying, including taking Sir Philip Sassoon out to the Near East. (Flight Photograph.)

The Outlook

A Running Commentary on Air Topics

Safeguarding the Passenger

LAST week's Essex tragedy may lead to new and difficult regulations concerning the arrangement of cabin doors and the supervision of air passengers. It will be sad indeed for the small operator if it is ordained that a steward or wireless operator must remain in the passengers' cabin throughout all scheduled flights, but this affair was only one of several similar, but not as serious, incidents, and some action should be taken to prevent a recurrence.

One obvious solution, it seems, would be to arrange a locking device and an indicator operated by and watched by the pilot himself. Such a device would, at the same time, be a great comfort to him while taxiing away from the tarmac, for he would know for certain that all was well before opening up for the take-off. In the event of desperately bad weather, or of the possibility of a forced landing, the pilot could unlock the door while in the air in case he himself happened to be incapacitated later. If the idea of loading the pilot with yet another responsibility is resented, then the lock might be operated by some trip device from the undercarriage, so that when the machine leaves the ground and the load is removed, the door is automatically locked, and *vice versa*.

Changes at Hillman's

Last week it was announced that Capt. T. Neville Stac had been appointed air superintendent and manager of Hillman's Airways, and that Mr. Edward Hillman had left the board.

Capt. Stac's duties, which he started on Friday, do not interfere with those of Capt. Anderson, who, as chief pilot had previously been in charge of general flying operations.

Mr. J. Kirton, who was unlucky enough to be the pilot both in the recent tragedy and in the case of the lost gold is leaving the company shortly. He actually resigned more than a month ago in order to take another appointment, and his departure, of course, is not connected in any way with the two unfortunate accidents. The loss to the company will be considerable, for Mr. Kirton has had a long experience both as an instructor and commercial pilot, and holds, among other qualifications, a first-class navigator's certificate. Only eight of these have been issued.

DEATHS

ALLEN.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Leading Aircraftman Cyril Norton Allen, R.A.F.

BAILEY.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Corporal Stephen Thomas Bailey, R.A.F.

BEATTY.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Flt. Lt. Henry Longfield Beatty, R.A.F. Flight Lieutenant Beatty entered the Royal Air Force Cadet College, Cranwell, from the Navy and passed out in December, 1920. He was one of the first Cadets at the College. He was posted to No. 205 (Flying Boat) Squadron, then at Leuchars, and when the Squadron went to Singapore he remained at the Base at Leuchars. In 1926 he was posted to Calshot for a course of instruction and from there went to No. 202 (Flying Boat) Squadron at Malta then equipped with seaplanes. He was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in July, 1928, and in July, 1929, returned to Calshot. In March, 1930, he was appointed Adjutant to the Headquarters Unit in H.M.S. *Glorious* with the Mediterranean Fleet. In April, 1933, he was posted to No. 23 (Fighter) Squadron, and in September, 1934, to No. 210 (Flying Boat) Squadron at Pembroke Dock.

FORBES.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, John Alexander Charles Forbes, Flt. Off., R.A.F.—Mr. Forbes entered the R.A.F. with a short service commission in October, 1930, and was trained at No. 3 Flying Training School, Grantham. In

The Aeroplane

FEBRUARY 27, 1935

Deliberate Suicide

A FEW minutes after the Dragon G-ACEV of Hillman's Airways Ltd. left Essex Airport for Paris on Feb. 21 two young Franco-American women, named du Bois, daughters of Mr. Coert du Bois, United States Consul General in Naples, who were the only passengers, because they had booked all the seats, threw themselves from the machine near Upminster and were killed. The pilot, Mr. J. P. Kirton, did not miss his passengers until some 45 minutes after leaving Essex Airport.

One of them had asked him to close the communicating door soon after they left the ground. The weather had not been rough enough to throw a passenger against the door, but it had been rough enough to prevent him from feeling any alteration in trim when they jumped out. He flew back to the Essex Airport, where the lock of the door was found to be in order.

Letters addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Coert du Bois, which were left in the machine, were read at the inquest and indicated suicide, and the jury returned a verdict to that effect.

CRASH OF A "SINGAPORE" FLYING BOAT

A tragic accident occurred last Friday, February 15, about 9.30 a.m., when the Short "Singapore III" flying boat K3593 crashed into Mount Beloritania, near Messina, in Sicily. All the nine occupants were killed instantaneously. The wreckage subsequently caught fire. The persons on board were:—Flt. Lt. H. L. Beatty, F/O. J. A. C. Forbes, Sgt. H. J. Willis, LA/C. W. P. Wallace, LA/C. R. D. J. Rees, LA/C. C. N. Allen, Cpl. S. T. Bailey, A/C. L. Wogan, and Mr. R. J. Penn, of the R.A.E., Farnborough.

The four flying boats which left Pembroke Dock on January 15, in charge of No. 210 (F.B.) Squadron for delivery to No. 203 (F.B.) Squadron at Singapore, had been detained at the Island of Nisida, near Naples, first by engine trouble and then by an outbreak of influenza among the crews. On February 15 this boat, accompanied by K. 3592, started from there for Calafra in Malta, which was not in the original itinerary. Clouds covered the mountains round the straits of Messina, and the bad visibility was evidently responsible for the disaster. The bodies have been recovered and, escorted by British and Italian naval personnel, were placed on board H.M.S. *Durban* at Messina, carried to Malta, and buried there.

H.M. the King has sent a message of deep sympathy to the Secretary of State for Air, and other messages have been received from Signor Mussolini, from the French Air Minister, and from other governments.

September, 1931, he was posted to No. 17 (Fighter) Squadron, Upavon, and in October, 1932, he was posted to Calshot for a flying-boat course. He was appointed to No. 210 (Flying Boat) Squadron in March, 1933.

PEARSON-ROGERS.—On Feb. 12, as the result of a collision in the air off Malta, Peter John Pearson-Rogers, Flt. Off. R.A.F. Mr. Pearson-Rogers was educated at Marlborough and entered the R.A.F. College, Cranwell, in Jan., 1931. He played hockey for the College and passed out as a Cadet Corporal. He was posted to No. 23 (Fighter) Squadron in Dec., 1932, and to No. 800 (Fleet Fighter) Flight in July, 1934.

PENN.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Reginald John Penn, Royal Aircraft Establishment, Mr. Penn served with the Royal Naval Air Service and R.A.F. in the War 1914-18, and since the Armistice has been employed by the Air Ministry. He was appointed to the R.A.E., Farnborough, in 1929.

REES.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Leading Aircraftman Roland Dennis James Rees, R.A.F.

WALLACE.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Leading Aircraftman William Patrick Wallace, R.A.F.

WILLIS.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Sergeant Herbert James Willis, R.A.F.

WOGAN.—On Feb. 15, at San Filippo, Sicily, as the result of a flying accident, Aircraftman (First Class) Leslie Wogan, R.A.F.