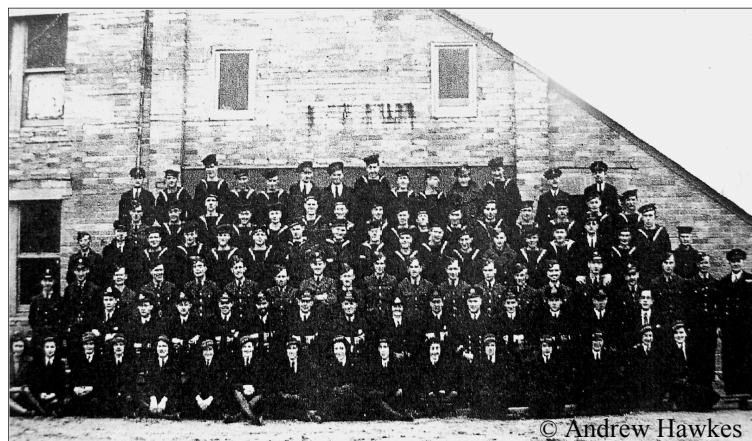


PFBC Archive: *Our Charity is committed to developing & maintaining its Public-Access Archive... For the purpose of this website a brief selection of items together with information have been provided where references in blue indicate further material is available.* A

Part Three: 'Newcomers' and New Beginnings at Poole 'Also the RNAS Sandbanks' © PFBC

The residue of the Flying Boats of BOAC at Poole on the Foynes Shuttle had to share Harbour Waters with newcomers:~ From July 1940, the premises of the [Royal Motor Yacht Club \(RMYC\)](#) and various other nearby locations were acquired by the Fleet Air Arm for a base officially as '[Daedalus II](#)' but referred to as [Royal Naval Air Station \(RNAS\) Sandbanks](#). Surgeon Lt Ronald Pitts Crick with 2 Commanders from HMS Daedalus arrived at the RMYC to reconnoitre this facility, followed by an advance party of Commanding Officer Lt Cmdr Humphreys, Petty Officers & Ratings on the 8th. August. By the 26th. all was ready to commence Operations (inc. [Air Sea Rescue](#)), with 12 Seaplanes belonging to 765 Squadron.

[Royal Naval Air Squadron 765 - Seaplane Training](#), + a sister Squadron 764 (which went to Lawrenny Ferry, Pembroke) were relocated from HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent to free up space. In Poole, Daedalus II became popularly known as *HMS Tadpole* to accompany the R.N. Base [HMS Turtle](#) at Hamworthy, which was also spread across several Poole sites, and viewed as Seaplane *tiddlers* when compared to those much larger Empire C-Class Flying Boats belonging to BOAC. 766 Squadron was also allocated to Daedalus II where its 6 Seaplanes were pooled in advance of its formation elsewhere.

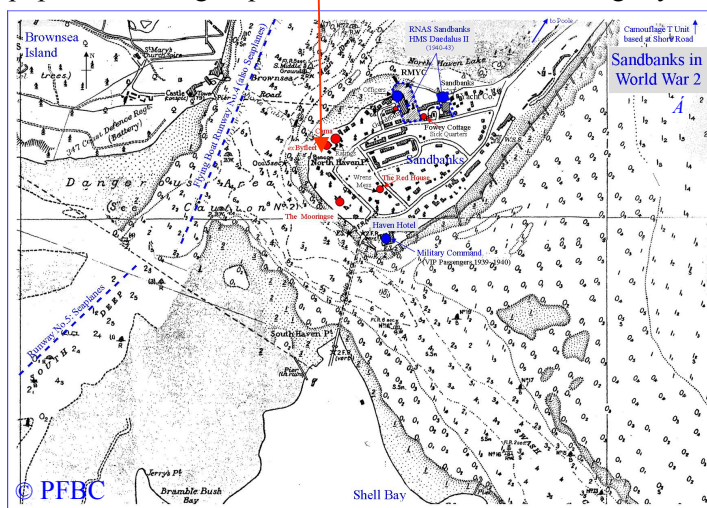


Picture: Complement of HMS Daedalus II of the Fleet Air Arm - outside the Hangar, at the Royal Naval Air Station Sandbanks: 765 Squadron Seaplane Training and ASR
(Courtesy of the Andrew Hawkes' Collection)

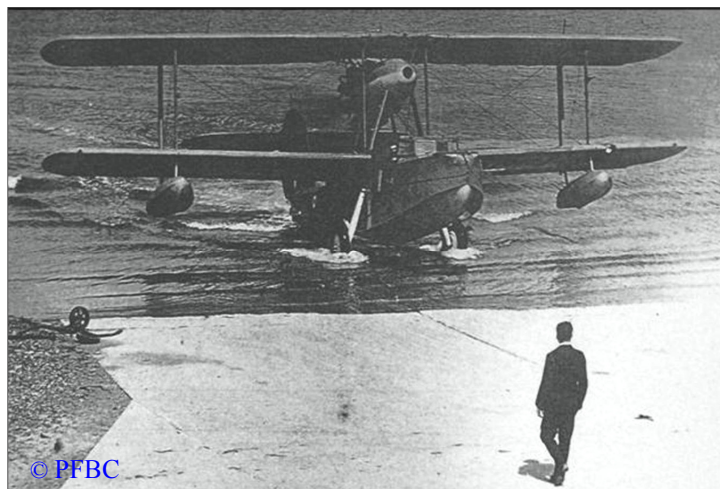
With a ship's company of 120 Officers and Ratings, besides the RMYC, there were facilities at the Sandbanks Yacht Co. where its boatshed had been cleared (except for Billy Cotton's boat) for the storage of 14 Seaplanes - with wings folded. [Sir Bill Cotton recalled that his father's boat was made available to the Officers for limited recreational use at Poole.] The Boatshed at the RMYC was used for maintenance & repair, whilst the Parade Ground was in front - today's car park. 'Fowey Cottage' became the Sick Bay, and No. 10 Coastguard Cottages - a Guardhouse with its Lock up, by Gin Alley ! 'Immobile' Wrens were recruited and lived at home (issued with bicycles) ! *OinC* was Esme Cameron who had her billet locally, and an office at the [Red House](#) in Brownsea Road, which was also used as a Mess by 15 members of the WRNS.

The Officers had their wardroom in [RMYC Mountbatten Room](#); Mess & kitchens; with the cabins where these still exist. The Petty Officers' Mess was located at 'Belle Holme' in Panorama Road... An old garage housed the base's fire engine. RN Ratings were put up at 'Byfleet' 100 & '[Cama](#)' 98 Panorama. In the grounds of 'Byfleet' an air-raid shelter was built and another at the RMYC. Thankfully the Ratings were away from 'Byfleet' when this received a direct hit by a bomb ! 'The Moorings' 118 was used as Quarters for the 8 pupils in training as pilots, where there was a fortnightly turn-around.

Map: Showing Sandbanks + Poole Harbour - together with Brownsea Is. and Shell Bay, with the Royal Naval Air Station Sandbanks and some of the associated locations nearby in the period of HMS Daedalus II (1940-43)
(From Poole Flying Boats Celebration Archive)



In his booklet, HLM [Martin Hale](#), details 16 incidents 1941-43 which befell 765 Squadron Seaplanes when at Sandbanks: These ranged from the clipping of buoys & jetties, through to collisions with boats: Upon return to base, during training, aircraft which had collected assorted debris hanging from the wings - were remarked as being 'decorated for Christmas' ! Further incidents were recorded as crash / forced landings, clipping the mast of a yacht, running aground & capsizing etc. Sadly too, casualties occurred off the Dorset coastline during the rescue attempts of downed aircraft due to enemy action. Just six weeks into the period at Sandbanks, 765 Squadron suffered the loss of two lieutenants on Air Sea Rescue (ASR) shot down off Anvil Point 7th. October:- Mike Hoskins + 'Tim' [Rose-Richards](#), who pre-war was a famous racing driver.



Picture: 765 Squadron Supermarine Walrus at the Royal Naval Air Station Sandbanks - in coming ashore at the Boatshed Slipway.
(Courtesy of the Fleet Air Arm Museum Coll.)

The most numerous Seaplane type here was the amphibious [Supermarine Walrus](#) (40), popularly known as the 'Shagbat', which was used for training and for ASR work. There were 4 [Fairey Swordfish](#) / 'Stringbags' - a torpedo carrying biplane, and 10 single float [Fairey Seafox](#), until phased out with the introduction of 6 US [Vought-Sikorski Kingfisher](#) late 1942-3. K8854 the prototype [Supermarine Sea Otter](#) - a long range development of the Walrus, entered service here in June 1943.

Perhaps the most intriguing story - concerns the [Marcel Besson Seaplane MB-411: Petrel](#) which had been attached to the Free French Submarine Battle Cruiser [Surcouf](#), moved from Plymouth to Poole (issues of security), during Autumn 1941. It then sailed to be involved in the liberation on 24th. December 1941, of St Pierre et Miquelon - French isles off Canada. *Petrel* was left at RNAS Sandbanks for uncertain purposes - but was scrapped at RAF Mount Batten when spares ran out. The later fate of *Surcouf* is one of the great mysteries of the sea which give rise to fascination, speculation & accusation !



Picture: Marcel Besson MB-411 Seaplane, formerly of the French Sub. Battle Cruiser *Surcouf*, when placed with 765 Squadron at the Royal Naval Air Station Sandbanks, in the Winter of 1941, and renamed *Petrel*

1941, Enid Blyton penned a first book in her series about the 'Adventurous Four' which includes references to Seaplanes and it is known that Enid during a 20 year association with the Purbecks, holidayed in the area witnessing the runway in Poole Harbour which was set aside for training/practice. The Runway was in addition to 5 main Runways in the Harbour. Seaplanes were also able to use the Runway (No.4) running from North Haven Pt. parallel to Brownsea Island but not for 'circuits + bumps'. There were at least 2 areas as moorings: in the lee of Harry's Pt. at Brownsea, and by Wych Channel that was close by, and with a holding zone - 100m away from RNAS Sandbanks before North Haven Pt. - for anchorage. In 1940 the Wych Channel Moorings were unavailable, when these were taken by refugee boats from the Low Countries, as a camp of wooden huts and tents was built on Brownsea for processing those families who escaped the Nazi advances.

Local schoolchildren, including those evacuated from Southampton, recall lasting memories of the noise made by Walrus though several miles away was so loud that lessons were often interrupted. 765 Squadron was disbanded 25th. Oct. 1943. Most servicemen & women who served at RNAS Sandbanks during WW2, later recalled it as being a very good posting ! During WW2 considerable care had been taken to look after the [RMYC Clubhouse](#) etc.: So that when the premises were eventually handed back to the RMYC on 31st. July 1945, these were readied for club members by the start of September. [Instructions for stowage of the Seaplanes](#) still remain on a boatshed wall, now again part of the Royal Motor Yacht Club.

Picture:
Vought-Sikorski
Kingfisher *BL3P*
when flying over
Poole Park Lake,
Lower Parkstone
heading to Poole
and the Stadium !



Note: The railway
mainline, London
- Poole (along the
foot of the photo),
and former SDJR
line north to Bath
(left, snaking past
Poole's Stadium).

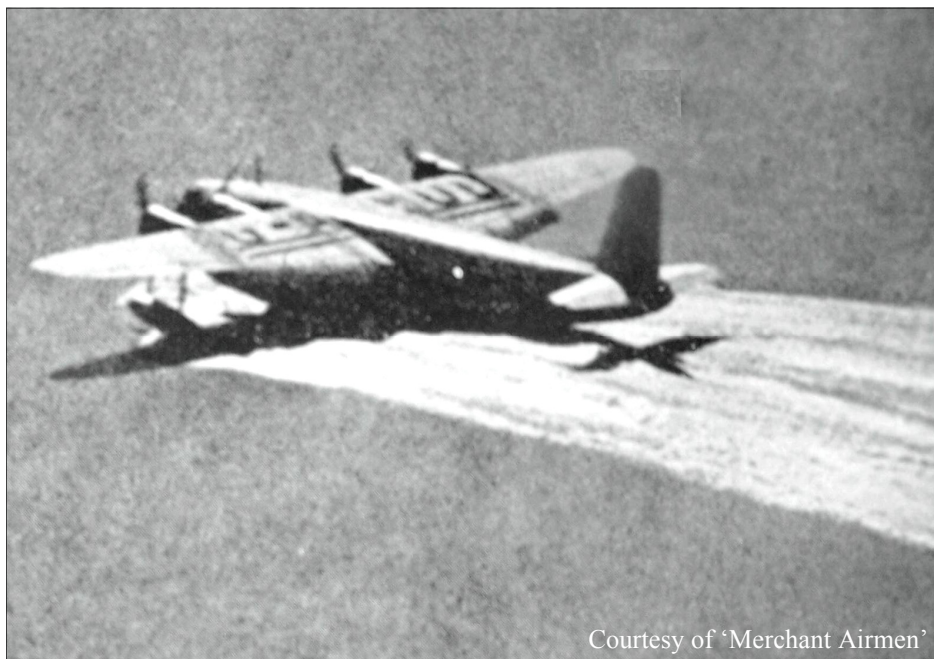
© PFBC

As the Battle of Britain raged overhead, another newcomer to the Harbour is reputed to have been the Consolidated PBY Model 28-5 designated by the RAF as Catalina 1, trialled at MAEE Felixstowe this was deployed by an elite flight crew. *N9630* was brought to Poole in the Dark Days of 1940 for covert operations to France & Portugal for 'special collection'. [Some small Seaplanes & others of German-build brought over to the UK by RNLAf, were also used in SOE missions.]

Clare and *Clyde* were prepared for Transatlantic Flights with Captains Kelly Rogers & Harrington to depart from Poole: Capt. Kelly Rogers had been involved in the salvage of *G-ADVB Corsair* from its muddy trap in Africa in January 1940. Now he would be subsequently featured in a resumption of Transatlantic flights from Poole during the Autumn of 1940, and his high profile in Eire would be of great assistance with that Government, and the Irish community living in the US. Britain in the Blitz and the bravery of the people in London had been the subject of news-reports from Ed Murrow (CBS) who was influential in swaying US public opinion firmly for the Allies. A resumption of flights would further help this !

A further option of a proven Transatlantic capability, was the opportunity held in reserve for evacuation if it was needed !

Picture:
G-AFCZ Clare
- 'on the step'
moving to the
Runway No.4
at Poole, ready
for take-off on
13th.Sept 1940
her fourth /last
Transatlantic
crossing to US



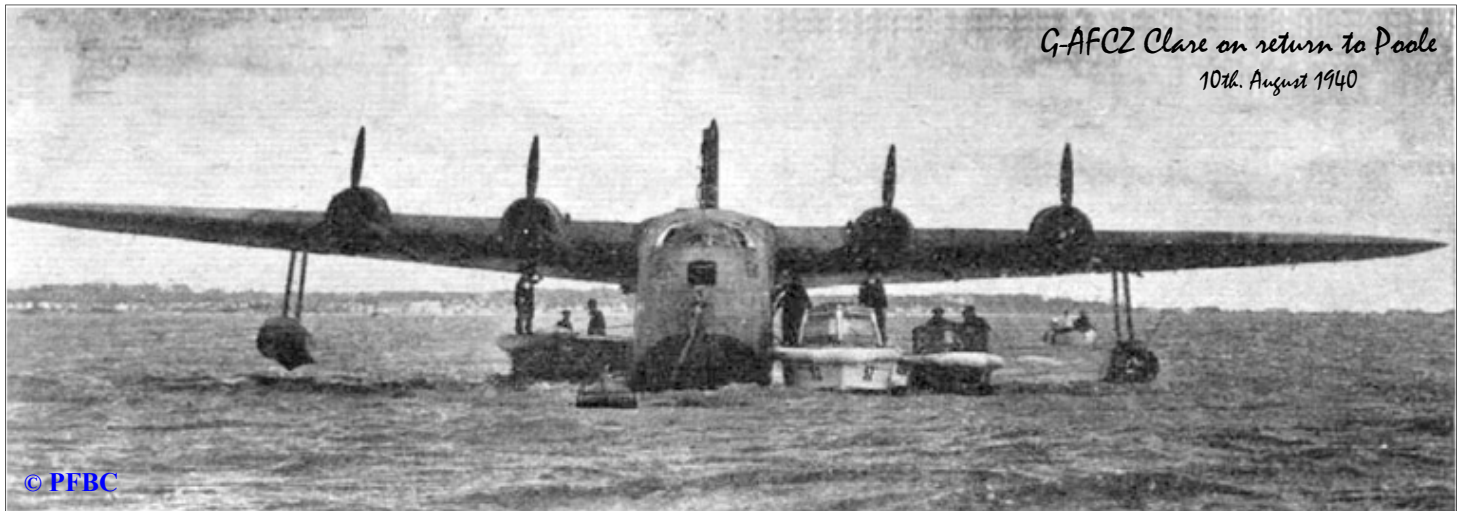
Courtesy of 'Merchant Airmen'

Capt. Kelly Rogers lifted off *Clare* from Poole on 3rd. August, witnessed by the top-brass from the Ministry and BOAC. The papers reported the flight *via* Foynes, Botwood, and Montreal to La Guardia NY, as being from 'a South Coast port', (or from 'the Thames Estuary near London') with *Clare* freshly painted in camouflage: The arrival caused much interest.

The return flight was on 8th. August & included (with officials) 4 US pilots volunteering for the Air Transport Auxiliary: A.A Crane, L.S King, S.W Morgan & F.W O'Hanlon; who were well-received on transfer to Poole Quay (10th. August)! A good photo-shoot for Maj. Carter who had allocated his Pottery Buildings for Reception and was in charge of Security.

Turn-round was in just 4 days with *Clare* heading out with Capt. Kirton, and VIPs on a mission; also Harold H Balfour - with Wavell Wakefield, where it was reckoned that an *ad hoc* deal was brokered to purchase 3 Boeing 314As for BOAC.

The return as usual *via* Montreal & Botwood was to Foynes - arriving on 19th., then back to Poole for the next afternoon. The third crossing on 26th. August encountered delays at Foynes, which held up the schedule, arriving back on 6th. Sept. The fourth was on 13th. September, which was final Transatlantic crossing by *Clare*, arriving back at Poole on the 23rd. On arrival, Canadian Great War fighter ace Billy Bishop was quickly whisked off to London to meet Winston Churchill !



Next up was *Clyde* on 4th. October: *Clyde*'s return flight departing 11th., also included [RAF Mount Batten](#) before Poole. In the eventuality, this fifth flight in the series was to be the last Transatlantic crossing undertaken by an Empire C-Class.

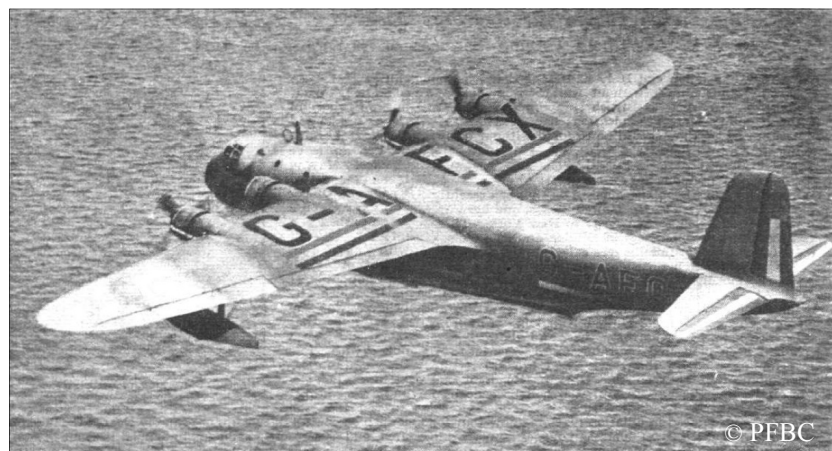
On 5th. August *Clyde* was prepared to be taken out by [Capt. A.C Loraine](#). Though the crew were reporting in for another Transatlantic flight, the true nature of the mission and destination were kept 'top secret' for fear of a leak of information: This was seemingly scheduled for a Transatlantic crossing - but the flight plan for Tony Loraine indicated a journey *via* [Lisbon](#) to W. Africa. With Portugal's neutrality, this would be the first Empire Class through-flight in WW2 *via* Lisbon ! It also applied to this flight involving British W.African territories, & those of France controlled by Vichy French forces. The circumstance was tense, for on those occasions when [General de Gaulle](#) (leading the Free French) had been at Poole, there had been air raids which threatened the port, and that seemed to indicate a serious threat of spying within the area !

Departure from Poole was next day: Cpts. Loraine & May, and Radio Off. Cheeseman (*also Eng. Off. Rogers at Lisbon*), with a Free French delegation headed by [Colonel de Larminat](#) tasked to persuade the Vichy to switch to the Allies' cause. Lisbon was full of intrigue, spies & double agents (which according to [Harry H.Pusey](#) was rife in his time there in 1943), which involved a risky late evening's take-off to avoid the Luftwaffe, for a long hop to Bathurst (Banjul) in The Gambia.

The next stage was from Bathurst to Freetown in Sierra Leone, then on to Lagos where the delegation was to disembark: However, with the *no show* of transport for the forward journey, orders were received to fly onwards to the River Congo, where an alighting area & moorings were hastily prepared at Leopoldville which lies opposite Brazzaville in Vichy-held French Equatorial Africa: The outcome was successful with a coup d'état in favour of the Free French, and so providing routes for Allies from W. Africa through to central Africa - with the Flying Boats to link with the [Horseshoe](#) at [Port Bell](#). The delegation, and *Clyde* were to return triumphant to Poole, but Capt. Loraine was very unwell with a bout of malaria !

Picture (- above): *G-AFCZ Clare* after a triumphant return flight, when moored at Poole Harbour with four BOAC MCU vessels in attendance, 10th. Aug. 1940

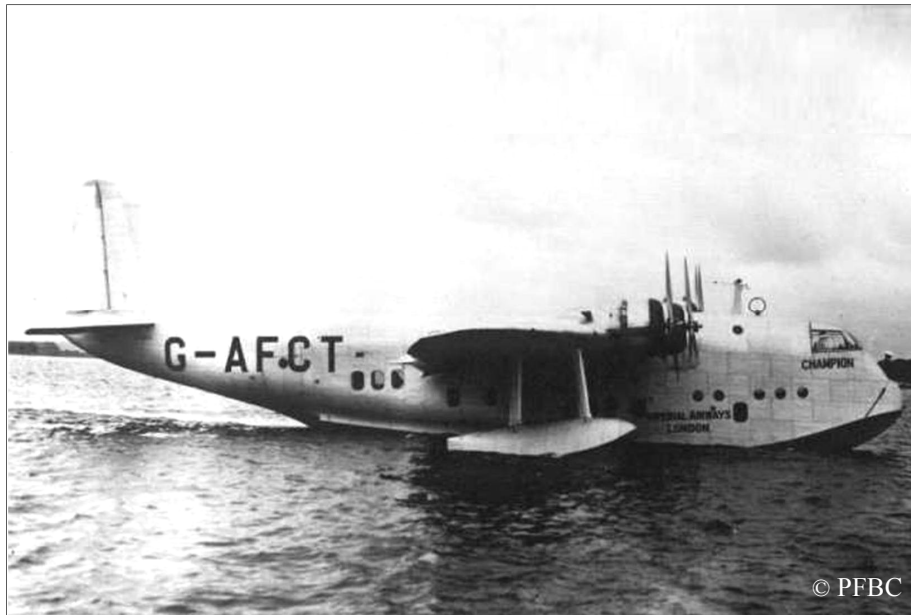
Picture (- right): *G-AFCX Clyde* in rising above Poole Harbour, - on departure for West Africa with a Free French Delegation, setting out on 5th. August 1940



This immediately opened up a significant opportunity for BOAC at Poole to send out 3 reinforcements for the Horseshoe. Rather than leaving together *G-AEUF Corinthian* (stripped out and fitted with extra fuel tanks) departed 23rd. September with [Capt. Harrington](#), followed by *G-ADUX Cassiopeia* with [Capt. Davys](#) for Lisbon, then [Las Palmas in The Canaries](#), having left Poole just 4 days after *Corinthian*. Just another 2 days later, the third modified S.23 was ready for departure. Their respective destinations had been filed - and given (somewhat misleadingly) as Leopoldville, Lagos, and Bathurst ! So finally, *VH-ABF Cooee* (- later to be changed from QEA register to BOAC as *G-AFBL*, June 1942) with [Capt. Bailey](#), then also journeyed up the River Congo, mooring overnight clear of problems, and finally the further stop at [Stanleyville](#).

G-AFKZ Cathay was switched from the Foynes Shuttle - and used on connecting flights to Lisbon from 18th. September, where PanAm was routing some of its Transatlantic Flights out of the improved, specialist facilities at ice-free Baltimore. With *Clyde* + *Clare* operating the W. African route to Lagos, also the other S.30s *G-AFCT Champion* + *G-AFKZ Cathay* were responsible for the Shuttle to Foynes, an equilibrium was achieved for Winter of 1940 - but this was set to change !
[Moreover, in April 1941, Cambria + Coorong were involved in an heroic evacuation of the British Forces from Crete.]

Picture: At Poole
G-AFCT Champion
 a stalwart servant
 on those services
 to Foynes in WW2



Late in 1940, BOAC Operational Headquarters were moved from Hythe to Poole in anticipation of Services to W.Africa and [Transatlantic](#) - via Foynes & Botwood, to Montreal & to New York as the [northern route](#) during the Summer months; in Winter due to weather /icing there was to be a [southerly route](#) via Foynes, Lisbon, (+ Azores), Bermuda, to Baltimore.

Return would be more direct: Baltimore to Bermuda (via Lisbon in bad weather) and Foynes to Poole *[in 28 hours only]*; with further options via Foynes to Lisbon, to Bathurst or Takoradi, to Natal, Belém, Trinidad, & Bermuda, to Baltimore. This would require other aircraft with long-distance capabilities, and larger capacity than BOAC's upgraded C-Classes... Short Bros at Rochester had constructed three larger [S.26 G-Class](#) (aka Grenadier Class) with the intention to trial these - but the prototype *G-AFCI Golden Hind* operational from July 1939, and the others designated as *G-AFCK Golden Horn*, + *G-AFCJ Golden Fleece*, were impressed with prior arrangement by the RAF in July 1940 (as X8275, X8273 + X8274).



Picture: *G-AFCI Golden Hind* was to be left behind on the moorings in Poole Harbour when the BOAC Flying Boat Fleet was relocated to Southampton for the 1st April 1948

The solution was to look to the US with its vast aircraft manufacturing industry for the Flying Boats to meet requirement. This was to involve not only the three large [Boeing 314As](#) (as earmarked), that had been under construction for Pan Am, but also the widely used [Consolidated PBY](#) types nicknamed as [Catalinas](#), which were ideal for their multi-purpose roles. With the demands of production, one had to be urgently sought (sourced from elsewhere) when a difficult situation arose. This was through a loss of a S.30 on 15th. February 1941. For at Lisbon storm force winds tore *Clyde* from the moorings, and despite efforts to retrieve a dreadful situation, when righted there was extensive damage ~ fit only for salvage parts !
[Clyde had ridden out 100mph winds until debris punctured a float - sadly a Portuguese Nightwatchman was drowned.]

Available for purchase was PBY *Guba II* as *NC 777* which had been previously used in scientific survey in New Guinea. Immediately, *Guba* as *G-AGBJ* was put on the W. Africa route as the replacement to make 2 round journeys out of Poole, before engine troubles intervened. This suggested that due to *age & condition* the Shuttle to Foynes was a better option ! Redeployment meant that *Champion* could be freed up from the Foynes Shuttle, and further PBY acquisitions for BOAC meant that these could operate effectively on the Shuttle which was assuming ever-greater significance during 1941/2/3. Also, that *G-AGDA* (known as Dog-Able) could join with *Clare* and RAF Sunderlands in the *Relief of Malta in 1941-42*. BOAC was able to take advantage of the British Government's terms of Lend-Lease with the US for aircraft & arms etc. possible with the Lend-Lease Act of March 1941: *BOAC Flying Boats took the 3 Boeings, 6 PBY 'Cats' & 2 Coronados*.

Clare was further used to re-open a flight path for BOAC via Lisbon, Gibraltar and Malta to *Cairo* on 12th. October 1941. The S.30s were responsible for this risky operation, with one flight a week which was significant to Malta in that Winter. The release by the RAF of *Golden Hind* + *Golden Horn* back to BOAC at Poole in December 1941 now greatly assisted ! These augmented the remaining three hard-pressed S.30s. *Golden Fleece* had been lost off Cap Finisterre earlier in June. When returning from Lagos on 14th. Sept. 1942, *Clare* was destroyed by fire (off Bathurst) and no survivors were found. Also, shortly after returning from its last West Africa run, *G-AGDA* was involved in a dreadful accident in Poole Harbour - in training 6 experienced personnel on 3rd. March 1943, with the loss of RO Martin, RO Mitchell & Eng. Off Loweman.

On 11th. May 1941 there was the first loss of a Flying Boat when at Poole Harbour due to the action of a Heinkel - HeIII: *Guba* was seriously damaged in the raid that destroyed *G-ADHK Maia* - which was on an adjacent mooring off Salterns. Prompt action rescued *Guba* which was got airborne to fly to Hythe for essential repairs & just about arrived there safely. However, the long-serving *Maia* had sunk, and despite the efforts by stevedores working on another Flying Boat close-by it was reckoned that actions in cutting access inadvertently allowed the waters to drown the Nightwatchman - F.S Smith ! This HeIII *GI+ES* was also destroyed when shot down by the gunner on a Norwegian ship moored at Poole's New Quay (coming in for a 2nd attack), causing it to break up, which resulted in the death of 3 crew, with rescue/capture of 2 others.

BOAC Transatlantic Flights into Poole were resumed by the trio of Boeing 314As:~ *G-AGBZ Bristol*, *G-AGCA Berwick* and *G-AGCB Bangor* acquired from the US as being surplus to a total of 12 (of both 314s + 341As) ordered for Pan Am. In new camouflage paint but with a resplendent prominent Union Jack *Bristol* arrived at Poole with Capt. Kelly Rogers and FO T.H 'Tommy' Harnsworth from Baltimore via Bermuda, Horta in The Azores, Lisbon and Foynes for May 1941. Next was *Berwick* from La Guardia, and later *Bangor*: They were deployed on the W. Africa run to prove their potential. The first run was by *Bristol* with Capt. Kelly Rogers, leaving Poole on 22nd. May for Foynes, Lisbon, Bathurst & Lagos.

The first Transatlantic Crossing made by a British Prime Minister, was on 16th.-17th. January with Winston Churchill in *Berwick* again piloted by Capt. Kelly Rogers to Poole, but where the PM was delivered at Mount Batten for extra safety ! Due to the Dieppe Raid, BOAC's Flying Boat operations at Poole were moved temporarily to Pembroke Dock in August. Transatlantic Crossings were introduced on an *ad hoc* basis in December 1942; with specialist maintenance at Baltimore. PFBC stalwart *Vic Pitcher - Navigator on 314As*, recalls challenges on these Crossings, which the *Speedbird Class* met ! Postwar these became scheduled services until the Speedbirds relocated from Poole (the last *Bristol*, left in March 1946). Between them, each completed over a million miles: *Bristol* 203 Transatlantic Crossings, *Berwick* 201, and *Bangor* 196.



[*See Part 5 for further information.]

Picture: Speedbird *G-AGBZ Bristol* in Poole Harbour awaiting a launch to board passengers for New York, in 1945 (Sandbanks on left horizon): BOAC's three Boeing 314As were registered British Airways (Atlantic)

During this period at Poole, VIP passengers for early morning departure now stayed overnight at *Harbour Heights Hotel*: Another feature famously associated with Poole, and in particular the era of the Boeings, were the *Seawomen of BOAC* ! For with pressing demands on the Royal Navy - *MCU personnel* eligible for service were called up /enlisted during 1941. This left a void which was filled by the 18 replacements as Seawomen who joined BOAC's new *Marine School at Poole*. Recruits came from a variety of backgrounds but with common interest in boating and were the subject of media photos !

(*Aimée* - acknowledgement to Mike Phipp also Martin Hale, Andrew Hawkes, Mike Roussel, Vic Pitcher & Vic Tridgell, with The Fleet Air Arm Museum and the Royal Motor Yacht Club)