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Part Five: BOAC Poole...and visitors 'Momentum for the Postwar Era at Poole'

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On 30th. March 1948 BOAC ceased Flying Boat operations at Poole and transferred its Marine Terminal to Southampton. BOAC's new passenger facility of Berth 50 at Southampton (where Flying Boats could dock) was opened on 14th. April. Members of the Marincraft Unit of BOAC based at Poole were no longer required and their employment was terminated. Premises once requisitioned at Poole were relinquished; with the former [Marine Terminal at Salterns](#) returned to yachting.

This brought to its conclusion, the fascinating, busy postwar period at Poole, when the network of BOAC's Flying Boat passenger routes had been restored, some had been extended (- or modified), and other new destinations had been added. It had been an era when the increased Flying Boat services had to contend with the popularity of sailing in Poole Harbour and the tourist trade which had been gathering pace postwar, whilst costs of BOAC's labour force had also been growing!

During 1945 BOAC's trio of Boeing 314As continued their Transatlantic services but the composition of their passengers then passed from the military personnel out of uniform, those government officials on their 'duties of state', and refugees; to scientists, businessmen and entrepreneurs focussed upon negotiation & reconstruction; with also entertainers & celebs. Yet this postwar passage was relatively short-lived at Poole - with Transatlantic flights switched to Landplanes July 1946, so *G-AGBZ Bristol*, *G-AGCA Berwick*, + *G-AGCB Bangor* were next to operate mainly between Bermuda and Baltimore. Aircrews retained the distinctive American-style uniforms which still marked them out from their other BOAC colleagues.



*Courtesy of Bev. Smith
Harbour Heights Hotel*

Picture: BOAC Boeing 314A *G-AGBZ Bristol* taking off from Baltimore on a Transatlantic Crossing, en route for Poole

The [Shuttle Services to Foynes](#) which had operated from Poole through the critical years of WW2 by BOAC's mixed fleet of Empire C-Classes (inc. the converted *G-ADHK Maia*) in being separated from the remainder on the Horseshoe Route, and two G-Class from Dec.1941, together with a batch of Catalina PBYS - significantly *G-AGBJ Guba* and then *G-AGDA*, had provided an essential interface with the Pan Am Clippers. Foynes also facilitated a wide berth for BOAC Flying Boats away from enemy aircraft, for those heading westwards out into the Atlantic, or turning due south towards *new horizons*...

When recently returned from Gibraltar *G-AGDA* [crashed on landing](#) during a training flight at Poole on 23rd. March 1943. All six BOAC crew were well-qualified: Sadly [RO Reg Martin](#), RO Fred Mitchell and Eng Officer Loweman were killed. *G-AGBJ Guba* finally returned to Poole after an intended to flight to Lagos which would have been the last by a Catalina on the West Africa route on 5th. April 1943, and after years of sterling service was passed to Saunders Roe at Beaumaris.



Picture: Very forlorn remains of G-AGDA (aka 'Dog-Able'), when brought ashore at RAF Hamworthy within the Lake area of Poole, 1943

Two of the trio of other BOAC Catalinas latterly in use for a short period on Foynes Shuttle services *G-AGFL* & *G-AGFM* were prepared for long distance flight from Poole with BOAC crews in heading out on a journey to Trincomalee ~ Ceylon. These were required for proving flights by the RAF to potentially link Ceylon's Koggala with Perth in Western Australia, as the Eastern section of the Horseshoe Route had been broken by the Japanese advances in taking Java, and then Burma.

G-AGFL left Poole on 11th. April and *G-AGFM* on the 17th., followed by the third of this trio *G-AGIE* on 24th. August. This was preceded by *G-AGID* on 18th. August 1943; and finally reinforced by a fifth *G-AGKS* on the 7th May in 1944. The route Perth to Koggala became well-known as the *Double Sunrise* due to flying time ~ and was extended to Karachi...

Focus had been switched to routes established through Lisbon, the Canaries, West Africa to link with Transatlantic flights; and then along the River Congo to Port Bell (for Durban), or to Juba (for Cairo), in connecting with the Horseshoe Route. Also there had been passage via Gibraltar to Malta in participating with the relief of that George Cross island (early 1942), whence flights from Poole via Lisbon across the Mediterranean to Cairo's Rod-el-Farag Airport, were eventually instated.

With loss of *G-ADHK Maia* on 11th. May 1941 by enemy bombing, and *G-AGDA* on a training exercise in Poole Harbour 23rd. March 1943, together with *G-AFCX Clyde* wrecked at Lisbon 15th. February 1941+ *G-AFCZ Clare* 14th. Sept. 1942 in heading homewards out of Bathurst, the challenges for BOAC at Poole in maintaining operations remained significant!

This was compounded by the accident to *G-AFCK Golden Horn* on 9th. January 1943 - when on approach to the R.Tagus in returning to Lisbon after trials following an engine refit there (necessitated during its flight from West Africa to Poole). In effect it meant that of the Empire Classes at Poole only *G-AFCT Champion*, *G-AFKZ Cathay* and *G-AFCI Golden Hind* saw out the war years, though towards the close of this period even these stalwarts had been mainly operating out of Cairo. *G-AFCI Golden Hind* was the first back at Poole in July 1945 - then on regular services via Augusta to Cairo (Sept. 1945).

Flying Boat visitors to Poole, included American Export Airlines *Vought-Sikorsky VS-44 NC41882 Exeter* (22.05.1944) when piloted by *Capt. Charles Blair* who was reputed as noting that there was the hazard of barrage balloons still in place. A *Grumman Goose G.21* used as a transporter called, also another US-built flying boat - a *Consolidated PB2 Coronado*.

Picture: Vought-Sikorsky VS-44A NC41881 *Excalibur* in flight 1942 owned by American Export Airlines. Currently this VS-44A is preserved at the New England Air Museum...



Courtesy of Flight

From March to April 1944, a further *Coronado JX496* was trialled with BOAC at Poole as a potential addition to its fleet (following the success of the Boeing 314As & Catalinas).

Postwar, US Clippers flew weekly services into Poole until Pan Am Flying Boat operations were terminated in Oct. 1945.

Most notable development at Poole was the introduction of a set of Sunderland Mk III converted for Transport Command: The first batch of six of these S.25 Sunderland Mk IIIs (*JM660 - JM665*) was commissioned by RAF Transport Command being converted in 1942 for passengers & cargoes, with corresponding registrations consecutively from *OQZR* to *OQZW*. Though not based only at Poole, from January 1943 these variously operated *eg* in support of the route to West Africa etc. Tragically *OQZS* as *G-AGES* crashed on Brandon Head killing 10 from its 7 crew and 18 passengers on 28th. July 1943, when flying to Foynes (en route to Poole) with 30,000 letters from the prisoners of war within Java held by the Japanese. [Another one of this original set of Sunderland Conversions *OQZT / G-AGET* was later written off at Singapore in 1946.]

Next operated by Transport Command with BOAC, these were upgraded as the **Hythe Class** to provide individual seats instead of their temporary hard benches, and deployed as transporters /mail carriers on the Poole - Lagos - Calcutta route (with room for 6/7 passengers in the seats - still without sleeping berths), *OQZR* before then passing to BOAC control as *G-AGER Hadfield*; *OQZU* as *G-AGEU Hampshire*; *OQZV* as *G-AGEV Hailsham*; and also *OQZW* as *G-AGEW Hanwell*. From October, these Sunderland conversions were switched to the services from Poole to Karachi via Gibraltar and Cairo. These were then joined by a dozen more to bring the number up to 16, to make for 2 losses, and to consolidate operations.



Courtesy of Flight

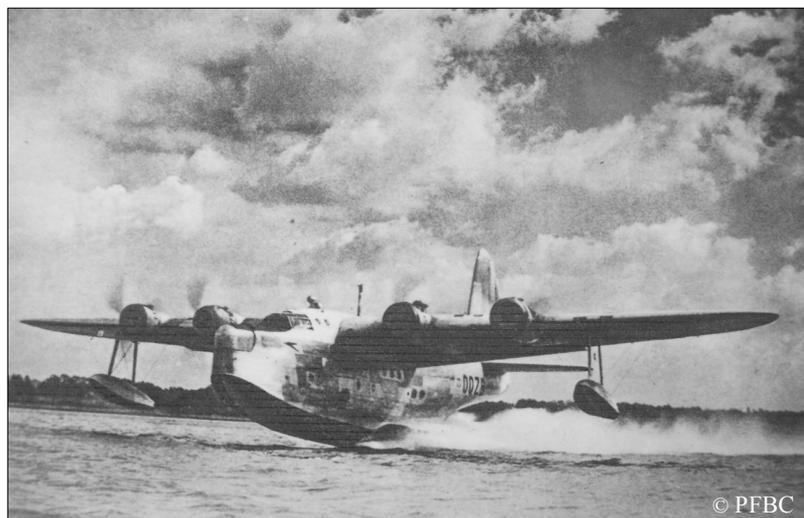
Picture: When riding out a storm at Poole, Sunderland Conversion Hythe Class *OQZC* in the postwar era became *G-AGHW Hamilton*...

The next additional set were more sophisticated conversions right from the outset with accommodation for 24 passengers that included 16 sleeping berths. The earlier versions were upgraded, and further modifications were progressively made. In total, Transport Command with BOAC had held responsibility for 29 Sunderland MkIII conversions mostly as Hythes, although *G-AHER Helmsdale* was specifically retained primarily as a cargo carrier as the latest to join this fleet at Poole... Loss of *G-AGIB* is recorded as being in the Libyan desert on 6th. November 1943; the remainder survived the war years.

(see separate pdf regarding the heroism of Capt. Ralph Mountain)

These became: *OQZB* 'B for Bertie' as *G-AGHV Hamble*; *OQZC* as *G-AGHW Hamilton*; *OQZX* as *G-AGHX Harlequin*; *OQZA* as *G-AGIA Haslemere*; *OQZJ* as *G-AGJJ Henley*; *OQZK* as *G-AGJK Howard*; *OQZL* as *G-AGJL Hobart*; *OQZM* as *G-AGJM Hythe* (the class leader); *OQZN* as *G-AGJN Hudson*; *OQZO* as *G-AGJO Honduras*... then joined by 6 others: *OQZD* as *G-AGKV Huntingdon*; *OQZE* as *G-AGKW Hotspur*; *OQZF* as *G-AGKX* (~ soon to become the Sandringham 1); *OQZG* as *G-AGKY Hungerford*; *OQZH* as *G-AGKZ Harwich*; *OQZI* as *G-AGLA Hunter*...with finally *G-AHEO Halstead*; + *G-AHEP Hanbury*... In total, comprising BOAC's 24 Hythe Class FBs which served on routes from Poole during 1946. [Also Sunderland *GR.V SZ573* was used for crew training from November 1945, until replaced by *SZ584* in May 1946*.]

Picture: *OQZB* taking off at Poole from Runway No.3N by Salterns ! 'B for Bertie' appeared on Poole's first postwar Town Guide in 1945



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However, *G-AGHV Hamble* prominent on Poole's first postwar Town Guide as 'B for Bertie' later sank at Rod-el-Farag ! [*G-AGEV Hailsham* was lost at Poole 4th. March 1946, + *G-AGHW Hamilton* on the IoW en route from Soton Nov. '47.]

The further Hythes had allowed BOAC to augment its fleet of Flying Boats at Poole and also to greatly extend horizons... These aircraft enabled twice weekly flights from Poole to West Africa, to be increased to 3 times a week in each direction.

From 13th. January 1944, 116 Wing of Transport Command as M Flight (BOAC) took over operations Poole to Karachi. Military markings had to be carried as Egypt was declared a military zone - whereby civilian aircraft could not over-fly. *G-AGER*, *G-AGET* and *G-AGEU* were mainly deployed on the Shuttle services between Poole and Foynes (R.Shannon), along with *G-AFCI Golden Hind*, in the period prior to when the service was eventually discontinued in February 1944: These were replaced by landplanes - Dakotas flying from Croydon to Rineanna (on the opposite bank, upriver of Foynes). There was to be a brief respite for BOAC at Poole Harbour in May 1944, when during the build-up for Operation Overlord and D-Day (6th. June 1944) its fleet was relocated to Pembroke Dock then to recommence Poole operations by September.

On 18th September 1945 [liberated prisoners of war](#) formerly held by the Japanese were returned to Poole by Flying Boats. The majority of the *PoWs* were in poor health - despite having been treated for injuries, deprivation, and tropical diseases. Over the coming months the *mercy flights* from the Far East were to arrive at Poole and Hurn as almost a daily occurrence.

An unusual arrivee from the Far East 11th. May 1946, was giant panda Lien Ho aka [Miss Unity](#) destined for London Zoo !



During November, the first of newly converted Sunderlands, much improved & civilianised as the Sandringham Classes, began arriving at Poole. These were destined for the Buenos Aires and Compañía Argentina de Aeronavegación (CAA)... These new Sandringham 2s have improved passenger accommodation etc. and undertook further trialling at BOAC Poole: [G-AGPZ Argentina](#) was followed by *G-AGPT Uruguay*, and then by 'Sandy 3' *G-AGPY Brazil* with *G-AGTZ Inglaterra* which left Poole for delivery in S. America late in February 1946 for the same outfit nicknamed 'Dodero' after the owner. A fifth Sandringham (also a 'Sandy 2'), *G-AHRE Paraguay* was to join the first batch in November 1946 again via Poole. [Also two civilianised Sunderlands *G-AGWW* & *G-AGWX* were sold to Compañía Aeronáutica Uruguayana SA ([CAUSA](#)); these all-white aircraft arrived in Poole on 26th. March & 3rd. April respectively: *G-AGWX* then passed to CSSdeSA SA].

Picture: [G-AGPZ Argentina](#) with Captain Dudley Travers left Poole on 21st. Nov. 1945 for the delivery to Argentina, arriving there four days later.



[G-AGPZ Argentina](#) as *LV-AAO* + *G-AGPY Brazil* as *LV-AAR* were deployed on services between Poole and Buenos Aires which commenced on 17th. June 1946: Prime Minister Clement Attlee (1945-51) visited Poole 10th. June, & on the 17th. he was shown over *LV-AAQ*. Later these aircraft were sold to Aerolíneas Argentinas - but further service was short-lived, although the company purchased two new Sunderland 5s as *LX-AHG* + *LX-AHH* (whereas *CX-AKR* had gone to CAUSA).

Another Sunderland variant arrived at Transport Command and BOAC Poole in December. This was the [Seaford 1 OZZA](#) delivered as an unarmed transport /trainer for evaluation, which was then registered as G-AGWU & stayed until February. Trials included a series of flights between Poole and Hythe and included pilots [Capt. Tommy Rose & Capt. Bob Harwood](#). Reverting to NJ201 this Seaford joined NJ200 at MAEE Felixstowe, which remained throughout for further development, before it was modified as a Solent 3 then sold to Aquila in May 1954 as *G-ANAJ City of Funchal*, sadly lost in September.

BOAC took SZ584 *G-AHJR* (* see above) for crew training: Piloted by [Capt. Lewis Carey](#), [Capt. Taffy Barrow](#) & others, through a 2 year period 1946-48, and became one of its last Flying Boats moored up until it was acquired by the RNZAF. *[This aircraft served with the RNZAF's No.5 Squadron to 1966. It passed to the 'MoTaT' at Auckland as a static display.]*

Sandringham 1 *G-AGKX Himalaya* upgraded from *ML788* as Hythe Class *OQZF* having passed from Transport Command to BOAC, returned to service with BOAC at Poole in January 1946 with increased capacity, passenger facilities and range.

In February 1946 *G-AGJM Hythe*, made its 35,313 miles route survey from Poole to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Japan in 206 flying hours. *Hythe* was the first British civil flying boat to visit China and significantly Japan. 12th. May *Hythe* inaugurated services to [Sydney](#), and 24th. August *G-AGHW Hamilton* the [Dragon Route to Hong Kong](#) !

Another batch of Sandringhams (4s) initially termed the Dominion Class arrived at BOAC Poole from Short Bros in 1946: On 5th. July *ZK-AMB Tasman* was first, followed by *ZK-AMD Australia*, *ZK-AME New Zealand* & *ZK-AMH Auckland*. Renamed the Tasman Class, these underwent *proving* before being delivered to Tasman Empire Airways Limited (TEAL)



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Picture: [ZK-AMB Tasman](#) was delivered from Poole to Sydney by [Capt. Dudley Travers](#), then to Auckland by [Capt. Jury](#)

The immediate postwar era for BOAC at Poole was very busy & dynamic, with the challenges of securing new horizons. BOAC's Aircraft at Poole totalled 5 million miles a year; WW2 passenger nos. doubled consecutively during 1945/6/7 ! From the 1st. Jan.1946 BOAC operated exclusively at Poole with the former Poole Harbour Club as its Marine Terminal - whereas previously this came under the remit of the [Ministry of Civil Aviation](#) with only some BOAC facilities there... From this date civil flying was also again permitted in Great Britain, with Poole being designated an unrestricted airport. Moreover, the majority of BOAC landplane services were focussed on [Hurn airport](#), at first with staff drawn from Poole, with the Station Manager responsible for both airports. In March [BOAC No.4 Line](#) Headquarters were moved to Hythe.

It was also a time for reviewing procedures, streamlining operations - and for modified aircraft with greater capabilities. BOAC decided to retire the thirteen Empire C-Class which had survived WW2, and looked to replace them accordingly.

Such withdrawal, where the majority had been systematically plying the Horseshoe out of [Durban](#) (their WW2 Terminal being at [Congella Basin](#)), gave an opportunity to withdraw staff from Congella, and various bases as these were closing. So the C-Class came home to UK - some returning to Poole for the first time since their earlier period here in the fraught and dangerous months which had ensued since the outbreak of war - before they were detached to the Horseshoe Route.