The Bathurst Connection

The Centrality of Gambia to the Development of Transatlantic Air Mail

Gary Wayne Loew
Our Journey Today

• Objectives – How my objectives changed
• The Back Story – 1860s Events
• The British – Limited Transatlantic Efforts
• The French – Strategy Towards Bathurst
• The Germans – Route Development
  – Contract Negotiations
  – The Mails In Action
  – The Dream Ends
The Bathurst Connection

Expected Objectives

- Convince you that Gambia was important to the Development of DLH’s Routes to South America

Revised Objectives

- Demonstrate just how difficult it was to achieve agreements with Gambia and establish those Bathurst facilities

Overarching Theme:

The Very High Time Value of Information
(Meaning – the mails)
The Back Story – 1868-1871

- 1868 – French want Gambian
- 1869-1870 – House of Lords Debate
CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING THE

PROPOSED CESSION

OF

THE GAMBIA TO FRANCE.

Presented to the House of Lords by Command of Her Majesty.
August 9, 1870.
The Back Story – 1868-1871

1868 – French want Gambia
1869-1870 – House of Lords Debate
1870 – British Say Yes
The Back Story – 1868-1871
The Back Story – 1868-1871

- 1868 – French want Gambia
- 1869-1870 – House of Lords Debate
- 1870 – British Say Yes
- 1870 – Bismarck Shows Up
- 1870 – Franco-Prussian War
The Back Story – 1868-1871

1868 – French want Gambia
1869-1870 – House of Lords Debate
1870 – British Say Yes
1870 – Bismarck Shows Up
1870 – Franco-Prussian War
1871 – French Forget About Gambia
1871 – British Forget About the Swap
How Von Bismarck saved Gambia and DLH!
The British – Limited Transatlantic Efforts
The French – Strategy Towards Bathurst

• The French had Dakar in Senegal

• Las Palmas through Dakar to Natal Brazil – 56 Miles Shorter

• Their Bathurst Strategy – Limit Dakar/Bathurst to ship mail
DLH Route Development

Why Bother?

- Faster Service – the time value of information (mail)
- Reliable Service – avoid weather & disasters
- Cheaper Service – not so important but nice
German Route Development

- Zeppelins in South America starting 1929

- DLH Operating Mixed Mode Service via land, sea & air starting 1930 (Failed Service)
  - Berlin /Stuttgart — by train
  - Stuttgart /Marseilles /Barcelona /Cadiz — by land plane
  - Cadiz /Las Palmas — by seaplane
  - Las Palmas /Fernando de Noronha — by steamer
  - Fernando de Noronha /Natal /Rio de Janeiro — by land plane
German Route Development

- DLH Proposed Revised Mixed Mode Service via seaplane & catapult in 1931

  Berlin / Stuttgart / Marseilles / Barcelona / Cadiz — by airplane

  Cadiz / Las Palmas / Villa Cisneros (Rio de Oro) / Bathurst — by seaplane

  Bathurst / Fernando de Noronha — Natal — by catapult ship and seaplane
German Route Development

- This would save 3 days over the Zeppelin route
- And Replace DLH’s failed route
- The Catapult Ship *Westfalen*
  stationed mid-ocean
- Three “Pioneer” Test Flights
1st Test Flight
Westfalen to Bathurst aboard Monson
2nd Test Flight
Bathurst to Westfalen to Natal
3rd Test Flight
Natal to Germany via Westfalen & Bathurst
DLH Contract Negotiations

- **May 9th 1933** – DLH sends its first representative to Bathurst
- **May 19th** – Acting Governor issues permits for test flights with 2 Dornier Wals
- **June 2/6/24** – 3 Successful test flights
- **Mission Accomplished**: Serious contract negotiations begin
DLH Contract Negotiations

- **August 11th** – DLH Requests Facilities
  - Housing accommodations for six persons
  - Seaplane facilities at Half Die (hanger for two planes, slipway, crane and service cutter)
  - Wireless station for communication with seaplanes (located aboard the cutter)

- **Sept-Oct** – Looking for facilities

- **Sept 29th** – Land based wireless station requested
DLH Contract Negotiations

- **October 6\(^{th}\)** – DLH cables a request for landing rights for more test flights
  - An additional Dornier-Wal
  - A Junkers Ju 52
  - The *Westfalen*
  - 21 Pilots, crew & ground support staff
October 6th – DLH also commits to the following schedule beginning “early” 1934

Day 1 – Stuttgart to Cadiz via Junkers Ju 52 Land or Heinkel He 70
Day 2 – Cadiz – Las Palmas – Bathurst via Junkers Ju 42 See and Dornier-Wall
Day 3 – Bathurst to Westfalen via Dornier-Wal
Day 4 – Westfalen to Natal via Dornier-Wal
Day 5 – Natal to Rio de Janeiro & Buenos Aires by transfer to the Condor Syndicate service
DLH Contract Negotiations

- “Early” Dec – Bathurst issues “Special and Temporary Authority” for Jan-March 1934 landings
- Dec 11th – DLH appoints United African Company as resident agent
- Dec 28th – Aerodrome & Wireless Stations approved
1934 First Official Flights
Trans-Gambian Mails Only

Southbound
- Stuttgart – Feb 3rd
- Bathurst – Feb 5th
- Natal – Feb 7th
- Carried 46 Kg of Mail

Northbound
- Natal – Feb 9th
- Bathurst – Feb 10th
- Stuttgart – Feb 12th
- Mail quantity not recorded
### Promoting the Service

#### FLUGDIENST DEUTSCHE LUFTHANSA — SYNDICATO-CONDOR

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#### FLUGDIENST AIR FRANCE

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### POSTSCHLUSS

In und aufschiß Deutschland eilten sich nach dem Aufschlag der Flugzeuge. Letzter Postablaufsbetrieb der Sonntag, vor der Luftpost des Südamerika-Dienstes.

#### DEUTSCHER LUFTPOSTDIENST:
- Berlin: Postamt C 2, Königstraße 64, jeden Montag 10 Uhr.
- Frankfurt (A.), Postamt D Flughafen, jeden Donnerstag 10 Uhr. Letzte Auslieferungsgültigkeit 6 Uhr.

#### FRANZÖSISCHER LUFTPOSTDIENST:
- Berlin: Postamt C 2, jeden Sonnabend 13.40 Uhr.
- Frankfurt (A.), Bahnhofpostamt 19, jeden Sonnabend 13 Uhr. Letzte Auslieferungsgültigkeit 6 Uhr.

### POSTGEBÜHREN AB DEUTSCHLAND:

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<td>101 Pfennig</td>
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<tr>
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**Anmerkung:** Diegebühren gelten für jede Auslands-Freigepflicht. Luftpostzuschläge (siehe auch die gesetzlichen Auslands-Freigepflichten.)

#### POSTHALTEN AB DEUTSCHLAND:
- Brasilien, Argentinien, Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay.
- Pakete (aus Deutschland) je 250 Gramm: 1,25 RM.
- Pakete (aus Deutschland) je 500 Gramm: 2,50 RM.
- Pakete (aus Deutschland) je 1000 Gramm: 5,00 RM.
Promoting the Service
Other Significant Flights
First Acceptance – London/South America via DLH
April 13, 1934

By German Air Mail.
Other Significant Flights
First Acceptance Southbound London / Gambia
July 27, 1934

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

via 1st. acceptance
by German Air Mail.
(First All Air to
Gambia)

Mr. F. J. Field.
Poste Restante.
Bathurst.
Gambia.
Other Significant Flights
First Acceptance Northbound Gambia / London
November 9, 1934
Other Significant Flights
Normal Northbound Gambia / London
Modified Cachet
Other Significant Flights
West African Utilization of Bathurst / DLH Routes
Further Contract Negotiations

- **May 4th 1934** – DLH applies for a landplane aerodrome
- Requested use of the Gambian military aerodrome denied
- **Nov 9th** – DLH secures 59 acres of private land in Jeshwang
- **Dec 1st** – Gambia issues license
Further Contract Negotiations 1935

- Concerns about Yellow Fever - International Sanitary Convention for Aerial Navigation
- DLH requested an extension of the Jeshwang landing field
- DLH requested a waiver of import taxes
- Hundreds of pages of correspondence
The Overall Record
1934-1935

- 47 DLH flights in 1934
- 79 DLH flights in 1935 (excluding Zeppelin transfers)
- Mail averaged 100kg to 250kg per trip
- Nothing is perfect...
Aviation Disaster
Floatplane Tapajoz Crashes in Rio de Janeiro
Carrying DLH Mail – April 28, 1934
Aviation Disaster
Rostock Crashes at Jeshwang
Carrying DLH Mail – March 12, 1937
Connections Throughout South America

Asuncion, Paraguay (RR) / Buenos Aires / Frankfort
Connections Throughout South America
Washington DC / Miami / Buenos Aires / Vienna -- FDC
June 1\textsuperscript{st} 1935 – Bathurst renews the DLH licenses & landing authorities for 12 months

Identical renewals in 1936-1939

August 25, 1939 – Germany orders DLH’s equipment home
Last Flight Out
August 20, 1939
Natal / Recalled / Natal / Ostmark (at Bolama) / Las Palmas...
Incomplete Flight
August 23, 1939
Bathurst / Germany
NO SERVICE / RETURN TO SENDER
Cable from Governor of Gambia
To Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, et al

“Persistent rumours for last several days that a delegation consisting of two or more Germans and Italians would arrive or may have already arrived by Air at Dakar object to reopen Air Mail Service with South America by Luft Hanse Line.”

- No such representatives appeared
- DLH European / South American service was permanently ended
The Bathurst Connection

The Centrality of Gambia to the Development of Transatlantic Air Mail

Thank You For Your Attention!

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