

Film Archive Online

On 30 May 1935 a particularly distinguished audience gathered at the Science Museum in London to listen to Donald Wills Douglas – founder of the Douglas Aircraft Company – deliver the Royal Aeronautical Society's 23rd Wilbur Wright Memorial Lecture entitled 'The Development and Reliability of the Modern Multi-Engine Air Liner'.

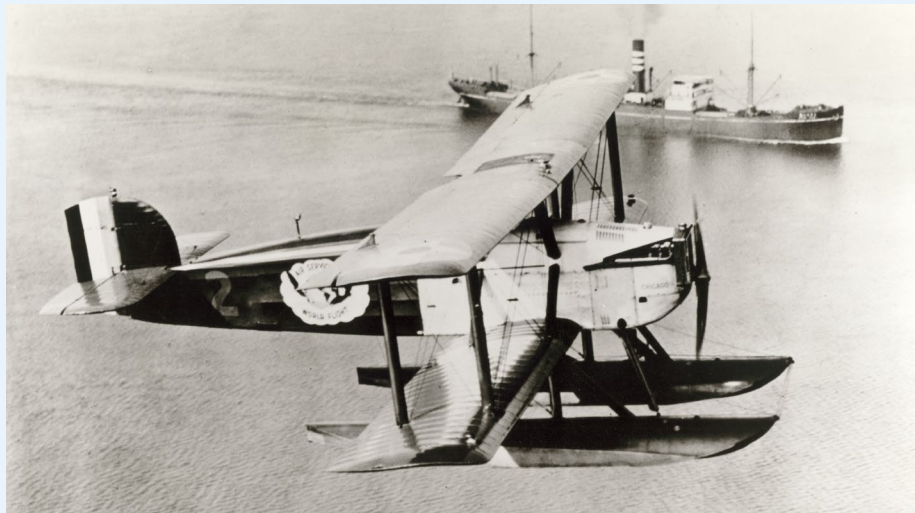
The lecture did not begin until 9.15pm in the late evening – as it had been preceded by the annual Council Dinner – and following the lecture Mr Douglas showed a film which as recorded in the Society's Journal of November 1935 he described as follows:

"... I am hopeful that the moving picture film I am about to have shown you will so engross your attention that any defects in my talk will be unnoticed. As might be said in Hollywood, film by Fox, Warner and others – sound effects by Douglas!

The film to be shown is somewhat historical in that we shall see at the start the first really successful airliners, namely, the early Fokker and Ford tri-engined planes"

Entitled 'Principal Air Transports in America ... Prepared for Donald W. Douglas' the two-reeler 20 minute black-and-white silent film began with film footage of Fokker single and tri-motored aircraft including the Fokker F.VII 'Josephine Ford' Byrd Arctic Expedition, 1928 Pan American Airways US/ Cuban Mail Delivery Fokker F-10 'De Luxe' (with Charles Lindbergh), 1928 Richard E Byrd's Antarctic flight, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's 'Southern Cross' aircraft and Ford Tri-Motor of Scenic Airways. The film then proceeded with various Lockheed designs, including the polar flights of Sir Hubert Wilkins and Wiley Post's round-the-world 'Winnie Mae' flight and Lockheed Vega (with brief glimpse of Amelia Earhart), the Burnelli UB-20 NR397N aircraft transporting a car and aircraft designs of Northrop (including Frank Hawks Gamma 2A 'Sky Chief' and the transantarctic polar flight of Lincoln Ellsworth in the Northrop Gamma 'Polar Star'), Vultee Transport monoplane and Boeing.

The second part of the film included footage of the Curtiss-Wright Condor and its sleeper bed, Lockheed Electra, the Pan American Airways Sikorsky Clipper and Martin M-130 flying boats and of the Douglas DC-2 operated by Eastern Air Lines (NC 13734, NC 13736, NC 13738) and American Air Lines (NC 14283) including scenes from the first inflight movie 'Baboona', concluding with film footage of the round-the-world flight of the 1924 Douglas World Cruisers.



Above: Douglas World Cruiser. The 'Chicago' photographed over Asian waters during the historic 1924 flight circumnavigating the globe.

Right: A screen shot of the Miles M39B Libellula from the film 'The Miles Libellula – a New Basic Design'.

Below: Donald Wills Douglas Sr, 1892-1981, c.April 1939. RAeS (NAL).



This very film – which has lain unseen for over 80 years – has recently been digitised by the National Aerospace Library and is among many highlights from its historic film archive which can now be viewed via www.aerosociety.com/movies

Arranged by suggested 'Playlists' viewers can watch aviation history come 'alive' in black-and-white and colour from educational films showing animations of the early days of ballooning and the pioneering work of the Sir George Cayley and Henson and Stringfellow through to modern times as aviation pushed the boundaries in the jet age – the tumultuous reception given to Charles Lindbergh in New York following his epic 1927 solo transatlantic flight, a day in the life of Croydon Airport and how the tandem wing Miles Libellula actually flew are among the highlights that can be seen in a collection of over 30 films that have not been watched for over 50-60 years.

The digitisation of the Library's historic film archive – arranged through the MAX company with the work being undertaken by Mark Rance of Watchmaker Films – was funded by the Royal Aeronautical Society Foundation.

For any enquiries about the National Aerospace Library Film Archive please contact the librarians (E nal@aerosociety.com).

The Society's Chief Librarian Brian Riddle would like to acknowledge the assistance of Jane Poyner (Shell Film Services), Ben Mayfield (BP Video Library), William Raillant-Clark (ICAO), Simon Brooks (Lockheed Martin Corporation), Heather Anderson and Michael J Lombardi (The Boeing Company), Kevin Rhoney (Eastman Kodak Company), Chris Singley (American Airlines), Dan Libertino (Igor I Sikorsky Historical Archives) and Robert Bruce Arnold (grandson of Donald Wills Douglas) among others to enable these historic films to be shared with the world.

More content will be added to the site as permissions are arranged.

It is the latest of the National Aerospace Library's digital online resources via which we have made available in an extensive number of historic items held in our archives, including the web-based catalogue (www.aerosociety.com/nal), images collection (www.aerosociety.com/printsandposters), heritage collections (www.aerosociety.com/heritage) and the National Aerospace Library Sound Archive (www.aerosociety.com/podcast) attracting a number of favourable comments/interest via social media from around the world.



Above: Jensen Model 21, NX31224.

Right: A screen shot of the Jensen Model 21 from the film 'Rotary News' No.1 – Helitone News in Glorious Rotorcolour. September – November 1948.

RAeS (NAL).



Left: A screen shot of a Martin M130 from the film 'Air Transport in America ... Prepared for Donald W. Douglas. Part 2'.

Below: Martin M130, NC14716, of Pan American Airways.

RAeS (NAL).

