

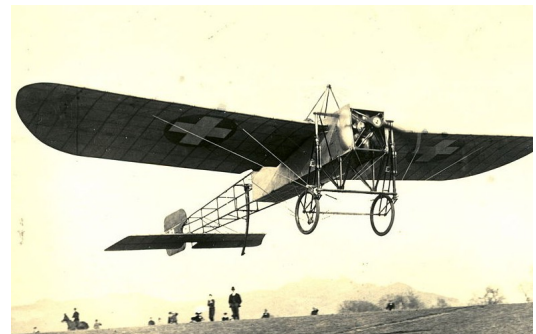
Air Mail



Gustav Hamel was the son of a London Doctor. He loved flying aeroplanes. He was good at it. In those days flying planes was very difficult. They were a new invention. Very few people had flown before.

Gustav took off from London Aerodrome at Hendon on a flight to Windsor Great Park. He was making the first flight of the first regular air mail service in Great Britain.

Post by aeroplane! What a good idea! People were interested. Aeroplanes were fast and new. A large crowd came to see Gustav take off. The start had been planned for three o'clock in the afternoon. Everyone was ready but it was a windy day and the flight was put off again and again. Aeroplanes in those days were very light. Their engines were not very powerful. They could not take off in high winds. But the wind dropped. At ten to five Gustav climbed into the cockpit and set off. He had about 9 kilos of mail on board. He reached Windsor Great Park in 13 minutes at an average speed of 105 mph. The wind helped him now: it was behind him and blew the plane along fast. The air mail service only lasted a few days. Sixteen loads were carried from Hendon and four from Windsor but it was a very expensive way of carrying mail. Railway trains were still far better and cheaper.



Letters had, of course, been carried by air before and even by hot air balloon. In India a special air mail flight had been held to raise money for charity. Gustav's flight in 1911 was the first attempt at a regular air mail service. You can still send an air mail letter today.



