



The Handley Page H.P. 42 was the world's first four-engined airliner. It was also the largest at the time. The H.P. 42 made its first flight on November 17 1930. A total of eight aircrafts were built for the new Imperial Airways.

Imperial Airways was formed in 1924 by the merger of four British airlines – Instone, Handley Page, Daimler Airways and British Air Marine Navigation Company. The home base was the new airport at Croydon outside London. In the late 20s and in the 30s Imperial Airways started routes to Paris, Brussels, Basle, Cologne and Zurich and also intercontinental routes to Egypt, the Arabian Gulf, India, South Africa, Singapore and West Africa. In cooperation with Qantas, Australia's international airline, who served Singapore the route to Australia was opened in 1935.



Between 1931 and 1941 the H.P. 42 serviced the Imperial routes. There were two classes of the H.P. 42; the Heracles Class for the European routes, carrying 38 passengers and the Hannibal Class for the Intercontinental routes, carrying 24 passengers. The Hannibal Class aircrafts were fitted with toilets and galleys. Stewards were attending to the passengers serving full meals in-flight – a first by Imperial Airways and the H.P. 42. The H.P. 42 was renowned for its safety and for its outstanding comfort. The H.P. 42 never harmed a passenger fatally during the 10 years of service for Imperial Airways and the 10.000.000 miles of flight.

The flight characteristics I know nothing about but it must have been difficult to fly. The cockpit was situated so high and so far forward of the rest of the aircraft

that landings must have been tricky. Take-off and landing speed was low, though, for the H.P. 42 could land at very small airfields.



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Hannibal over Croydon Airport, the home base of Imperial Airways and the H.P. 42:s. Visit the historical [Croydon Airport Home Page](#)



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From an Imperial Airways poster – The Greatest Air Service in the World – depicting the comfort of a H.P. 42 flight with this cut-away image

Handley Page H.P. 42

Hannibal Class for African and Indian routes

G-AAGX Hannibal
G-AAUC Horsa
G-AAUD Hanno
G-AAUE Hadrian
G-AAXF Helena

Heracles Class for European routes

G-AAXC Heracles
G-AAXD Horatius
G-AAXE Hengist

Specifications

Wing span: 130 ft
Length: 89 ft
Height: 27 ft
Max speed: 130 mph
Cruising speed: 95-100 mph
Engines: Four Bristol Jupiter 550 hp
Crew: 3 flight crew + cabin crew
Passengers: Hannibal 16-24, Heracles 38

(1998-Oct)