

The Recovery of the Jetliner From London's "Cabbage Patch"

Slowly but surely was the motto of the group of Company engineers from Montreal, when, within a few hours of their arrival in London, decided to salvage the Company's valuable Pratt & Whitney powered DC-8 from the "cabbage patch" at Long Breakfast Field, 700 yards from the end of the runway at London Airport, where it came to rest on the night of November 6, 1963.

Immediately workers were recruited, while heavy equipment of varying types converged on the cabbage field to begin the largest and most complicated salvage operation of a jet ever known in the United Kingdom.

At snail's pace the huge jet now stripped of its seats, undercarriage, engines, and fuel tanks drained, but still weighing over 40 tons, was lifted on industrial balloons while track bogys were slipped under the wings and tail

Tough Job

Because of the mud hampering straightforward towing of the jet, a method was evolved whereby heavy duty airport recovery vehicles fitted with powerful winches and themselves anchored to large bulldozers were used. More than 7,000 tons of hard-core material were laid along the route back to the perimeter track. This involved removal of the top soil to reach the firmer ground, to give better gripping power to the bogys.

After several days of very careful salvage operations, when almost all the equipment was checked. The heavy gauge hawsers were checked. The aircraft was not towed but hauled by the winches. Several times these vehicles had to be moved back, anchored down again, the hawsers let out and the winching begun again. This process was repeated several times.

Attracts Attention

From a technical point of view the operation attracted a number

of airline engineers interested in studying the method devised for such a huge salvage job.

The Army engineers helped during one had muddy patch by laying a strip of metal roadway. The Royal Air Force brought down a team of engineers to see if they could be of help.

Combined Effort

Under the guidance of Company engineers, the job of salvaging one of the Company's more than \$6 million jet liners became a combined effort of airline staff and airport authorities and contractors.

The fire services and civil police, who were stationed at the site 24 hours a day, remained at the aircraft until it disappeared into the BOAC hangar.

(See story praising those who helped to recover the aircraft, by Senior Vice President — Operations, Herb. W. Seagrims, elsewhere on this page.) Editor.

The Montreal 240

Negotiations have been completed for the repair of 813 by Douglas Aircraft Company. This will involve the aircraft being completely rebuilt, with damaged parts being replaced by new. To this end, major assemblies are now coming out of the Douglas Long Beach plant and arrangements have been made for them to be air-lifted to London in a M.A.T.S. cargo plane, which is the only vehicle large enough for the purpose. Twenty-five key Douglas men are on their way to London to commence the job and they will employ BOAC assistance as required.

AFTERMATH OF "CABBAGE PATCH" ACCIDENT DRAWS Sr. VICE PRESIDENT SEAGRIM'S PRAISE

Word was received in Montreal about 5:00 p.m. on November 6 that Flight 861 bound for Montreal out of London International Airport had abandoned take-off and overshot the end of runway 1028 at London and skidded into a "cabbage patch" with serious consequences. Emergency procedures, recently developed by the Flight Safety Group, headed by Ian Macdonald and Cliff Seddon were placed into effect. Within five hours of the accident, a team of some twenty experts were en route to London from Montreal aboard a DC-8 ferry flight. Included in the group were representatives from Flight Safety, Flight Operations, Maintenance, Engineering Douglas Aircraft, Claims, Canadian Airline Pilots Association, and Overseas Regional management.

It turned out that there were no fatalities or serious injuries amongst the passengers and crew, but the aircraft was substantially damaged. It will be rebuilt probably by a Douglas Aircraft repair crew at London, and it is expected that the job will take six months. The cost will be between three and four million dollars.

Seagrims Statement

In an interview with the Editor of *Trans-Canada Air Lines*, Senior Vice President W. Seagrims, made the following statement: "Although it is never a good thing to have an accident, the human element, as so often happens, provided a bright side to the affair at London. Commendations have poured in from all quarters concerning the efficiency of TCA people in relation to events following the accident. Passengers for example, are loud in their praise of the flight crew members due to the manner in which the aircraft was

evacuated as it came to rest during the fog and darkness in the now infamous 'cabbage patch'.

"Personnel of the Sales Department, London Station, Cairns, Overseas Regional headquarters and Public Relations have been the object of most favorable comment by passengers in respect to the provision of medical attention, ground transportation, hotel accommodation, replacement of personal effects, onward transportation, etc. Maintenance, Overhaul, Engineering and the Douglas personnel remain the unsung heroes in their assessment of damage, investigation of mechanical systems and removal of the aircraft from its resting place in the mud. The Flight Safety Group, with particular assistance from Flight Operations, Passenger Service and C.A.L.P.A. have gained the confidence and respect of the British Ministry of Civil Aviation for their contribution to the formal process of investigation being undertaken by the Accident Investigation Branch of the Ministry. I mention the London accident in some detail because the fact that no fatalities took

place leaves us more freedom for reflecting on the bright side. Moreover, it exemplifies what happens when we get into bad trouble.

Investigation of the accident is still in progress and since the Accident Investigation Branch has not yet published any statement as to cause, it would be improper for TCA to comment.

However, following the accident, it is safe to say that Company personnel came through with flying colours, thus adding to TCA's prestige even in the face of the near disaster which took place.

Sr. "herse Tragedy"

"At St. Therese however, the stark tragedy of the affair," Seagrims continued, "overshadows everything else and will continue to do so for a long time. There are still many areas of uncertainty to be resolved concerning this accident, but one thing stands out unmistakably and this is the incredible devotion of our people, far beyond the call of duty, both at the crash site and behind the scenes," concluded Seagrims.



THIS HANGAR will be the jetliner's home for the next six months while mechanics and engineers ready it for the air once more. A number of men from BOAC and Douglas will be on duty in London until the giant job of repairing and rebuilding the aircraft has been completed.