



Airlines: Charting Air Transport History with R.E.G. Davies

Christopher H. Sterling

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R.E.G. Davies worked in the commercial aviation industry from 1948 to 1981 and then moved into the academic world of air transport history as Lindbergh Professor of Air Transport History at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. After holding this post for 2 years he was appointed Curator of the Aeronautical Department at that same museum, where he developed and maintained the air transport archive, curated exhibits, gave lectures, and in his final decade, completed his last book "Airlines of The Jet Age: A History". He retired in 2011, returned to his native country, England, and died in July 2011. Ron Davies, as he was known to his friends and colleagues, was a market research analyst for various aviation companies for thirty years, compiling challenging reports and creating innovative ways of forecasting with his own style of maps and charts, before joining the National Air and Space Museum's Aeronautical Department at the age of 60. Throughout his professional career he also wrote 25 books on airlines and their history, including textbook histories such as "The History of the World's Airlines" and "Airlines of the USA", a pictorial series of airlines and their aircraft covering airlines such as Pan American, TWA, Delta, Aeroflot, British Airways, and Lufthansa, and associated subjects such as "Rebels and Reformers of the Airways". He co-authored books on the Berlin Airlift and Howard Hughes. Not only was he a prodigious author in his field, he amassed valuable collections of airline information in dossiers which are now housed in the Smithsonian archives and collected a huge number of airline timetables while travelling the world (to over 120 countries) which he donated to the National Air and Space Museum. He lectured widely and wrote regular articles for journals such as "Airways". This celebratory volume hopes to cover Ron Davies's wide and varied, while focussed and intense, life and career and the central part of the book is therefore a collection of pieces by Ron himself - reports, articles, lectures. A Foreword by NASM curator Peter Jakab opens the book and describes what the editors have attempted to achieve in this collation, and the book finishes with personal remembrances from friends and colleagues. The book includes a biographical article adapted from an original by author Valerie Lester that outlines his life as well as his career, from his British Army days to his final airline history. Enhancing this eclectic volume, there are four original articles on different aspects of air transport, also by friends and colleagues of Ron Davies, on subjects that would have been dear to Ron's heart. Altogether, this book does not purport to be anything other than a tribute to a great historian, an author of singular talents, not least his inimitable hand-drawn maps which illustrate every book he wrote. A polymath world-traveller with geographical, historical, and photographic interests, a member of three British Royal Societies, the Cosmos and Explorers Clubs in Washington D.C., and other societies around the world, Ron Davies was nevertheless utterly focussed on his work as a recorder of air transport history and it is as an airline historian he will be remembered. This book hopes to do justice to his life and work.

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