Canopus Flying Boat by Norman Wilkinson

Norman Wilkinson

£580



REF: 83905

Christopher Clarke Antiques
The Fosseway, Stow on the Wold, Gloucestershire, GL54 1JS
clarkeltd@btconnect.com • 01451 830 476 • www.campaignfurniture.com

Height: 25.39 cm (10")

Width: 34.15 cm (13.4")

Description

A watercolour and gouache on board of the Short Brothers Canopus, the first 'C' Class S.23 Flying Boat, painted by Norman Wilkinson in 1930.

The British Air Ministry strove to be world leaders in civil aviation in the mid 1930s and through Imperial Airways (later to become BOAC), the Short Brothers 'C' Class S.23 monoplane was chosen to lead the way in connecting the Empire. The Canopus was the first of the Short Brothers successful Empire 'C' Class flying boats, the world's first passenger aircraft used for international flights and delivering mail. Canopus made its first flight in July 1936, flown by the test pilot John Lankester Parker. Its name was taken from Spartan King Menelaus' ship pilot during the Trojan War. The 41 planes that followed in production were all given names starting with a C. The S.23 had 4 Bristol Pegasus engines that enabled the flying boat to carry the 5 crew members along with 17 passengers and 4,480 lbs of cargo. The plane was a leader in its field and was manufactured for the next 4 years, finally retiring from service in 1946.

As is typical of Wilkinson with this type of illustration, the Canopus is shown in good detail with the background painted as a quick wash to keep the focus on the plane. It is marked with a RAF roundel and fin flash with a Union Jack below a crown by the cockpit. It is signed 'Norman Wilkinson 30' to the right a third of the way up the picture. Below, to the bottom edge is written 'Short 'C' Class Canopus'. The back of the board has a stuck down cutout from a magazine stating 'Canopus, the first of the fleet of 'C' Class flying-boats used on the Empire routed of Imperial Airways from 1936 onward'. The anomaly is Wilkinson's date of '30' after his signature, which is 6 years earlier than Canopus' first flight. Although it clearly looks to be a 0 its possible that the line of a 6 is missing. Circa 1936.

Eustace and Oswald Short started off in business as Balloon manufacturers in 1897. They realised that the future lay with aircrafts rather than balloons after hearing reports of the Wright Brothers demonstration in Le Mans in 1908. A third brother, Horace who worked on the development of steam turbines, was persuaded to join them and in November 1908, their business Short Brothers was registered. They became the first company in the world to undertake volume production of an aircraft design and later, their Canopus flying boat became the first international passenger aircraft.

Christopher Clarke Antiques
The Fosseway, Stow on the Wold, Gloucestershire, GL54 1JS
clarkeltd@btconnect.com • 01451 830 476 • www.campaignfurniture.com