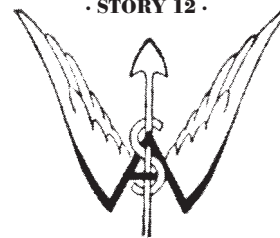




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· STORY 12 ·



ON
THE
WINGS
OF
A
DRAGON



Wearne Brothers made air history in Malaya on 28 June 1937 when a de Havilland Dragon Rapide aircraft, the *Governor Raffles*, took off from Singapore for Kuala Lumpur and Penang, inaugurating the first commercial air service between the three cities by Wearnes Air Services.

According to Christopher Fyfe's *Wheels in Malaya – The Wearne Brothers and Their Company*, five Chinese passengers took the flight either to Kuala Lumpur or Penang and on the return flight, there were two passengers. Earlier, on 25 June, a test flight had carried others, including Wearnes' executives, a family member, the press and a representative from the Post and Telegraphs Department.

The flights proved popular and within a year the air service was extended to Alor Star, Taiping, Ipoh and Kota Bahru. Fares cost about S\$30 from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, S\$30 from Kuala Lumpur to Penang and S\$50 from Singapore to Penang. The planes were also used to transport issues of the *Singapore Free Press* to Kuala Lumpur and Penang, as well as bulk mail.

Wearnes Air Services was noted for its punctuality and reliability but there was a crash when a plane went down near Rawang during a storm. But it was a rare incident in over 900,000 kilometres travelled in all, with over 4,550 passengers ferried until June 1939.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, flights came to a halt and all its aircraft were requisitioned by the government. After the war, Wearnes was approached to restart the service but, without subsidy from the government, declined.