



AERODYNAMIC BEAUTY of the de Havilland Comet 4 is apparent in this above-the-clouds shot. Deliveries of a 67-passenger version to BOAC begin this year.

Comet Has 50,000 Hours

By Oliver Stewart

Successful flights by the new de Havilland Comet 4 at the end of April and the beginning of May resurrected the old controversy about whether de Havilland have been right in sticking to the name "Comet." There are some who argue that, because of the accidents to the Mark 1, a new name should have been given to what is, after all, a new aeroplane.

Personally I agree with the de Havilland decision. I believe that they are right to keep to the original name. It is a sign of their determination to overcome by sheer merit of the aircraft all doubts and criticisms.

The first of the Comet 4 flights was on April 27. The pilot in charge was, of course, John Cunningham.

Nineteen Comets with Roll-Royce Avon R A 29 engines are being built for BOAC, with deliveries to begin at the end of the year. The 4 takes up to 76 passengers, but BOAC arrangements include a mixed class version with 24 first-class and 43 tourist seats.

In all discussions of the relative qualities of the Comet 4 and the other jet air liners which will be its operating contemporaries, it should be borne in mind that more than 50,000 hours of flying have gone into the development of the 4. It is by far the most completely studied jet air liner in existence.

An entirely new strike technique is at the root of the Blackburn NA 39, which made its first flight successfully

from the long runway at the Royal Aircraft Establishment station at Bedford.

At first it may seem strange that the newest military aircraft to be built in Britain should be transonic and not fully supersonic. The point is that the NA 39, powered by two de Havilland Gyron Junior turbojets, can go supersonic for brief periods at low level. It is in fact designed expressly for high speed, low level attack—the form of attack which most experienced officers say is the most difficult to counter.

Achievement of speeds around Mach 1 with a big load and a good range when flying not much above tree-top height is a special problem. The aircraft must fly in turbulent air and be able to penetrate it without too much loss of speed and without over-stressing the structure. The wing loading must be high, yet the aircraft must be able to operate from carrier decks and from normal length runways.

Boundary layer control—or more precisely a form of energized circulation—will give the NA 39 good field performance as well as the attack capabilities which have been outlined. It is a particularly interesting machine; a reminder that all advances in military aircraft are not necessarily absolute advances in speed and rate of climb.

S. F. Cody is believed by a great many people to have been the first man to fly in England. But he was not the first Englishman to fly for at the

time he was still an American citizen.

It has always been believed that he made that first flight in May, 1908. But now, as a consequence of a good deal of research among old documents, Dr. George Gardner, Director of the Royal Aircraft Establishment, and Mr. Charles Gibbs-Smith, the aviation historian, say that Cody did not make anything that can be described as a "flight" until October, 1908.

If that be so, then the late Sir Alliott Verdon-Roe might have claimed to be not only the first Englishman to fly, but also the first man to fly in England. His towed flights at Brooklands and his first short powered flights were made in June, 1908.

Of course, there are disputes about whether Roe flew or not which hinge on what is meant by the word "flight." However, Roe had good witnesses and, as he was using an aeroplane which was a scaled up version of his highly successful model, there is no reason to doubt his own statements that he did achieve short, level flights.

Lord Brabazon was without question the first Briton to make an **officially observed** flight in England and he is universally given credit for that feat. But A.V. Roe's efforts should not be discounted. He was a personal friend of mine and I dislike the attempts that are sometimes made to belittle his 1908 work at Brooklands.

Defense Policy

There have been some second thoughts about the government's defence policy, largely as a result of a statement made by Mr. E. C. Bowyer, Director of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors.

He pointed out that the defense White Paper had not in fact said that no more manned aircraft would be ordered for the Royal Air Force. It merely made references to the future of manned fighters and did not specify that the RAF would give them up by any definite date.

In fact the time scale for the transfer of emphasis from manned aircraft to missiles for interception and attack was not indicated in any way. Further, the need for full military transport facilities to reach as far into the future as can be foreseen were acknowledged.

In spite of these reassuring statements, there is still anxiety about the amount of government money that will be available in the future for research and development. This is the thing that worries the British aircraft industry most. For its future, and the future of its export market will depend upon the amount of research possible and the energy with which it is pursued.