



Britain Calling

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The record-breaking flights of the DH Comet to Rome and Copenhagen and the tour of European capitals which the Vickers Viscount is making, are convincing demonstrations of Great Britain's lead in this field of air transport. On its record flight to Rome (in one hr., 59 min., 37 secs.) the Comet carried 11 passengers and to Copenhagen (which it reached in 1 hr. 18 min. 36 secs.) 18 passengers, both times including members of the Press. All have been enthusiastic in their reports on their flights. The Comet has now completed more than 220 hours' flying.

Before the Viscount left on its European tour an opportunity was given to members of the Press to confirm their earlier impressions of the World's first turbo-prop air liner while others, who had not yet flown in it, were given a chance to do so. As one of the latter I have now experienced the remarkable reduction in noise and the absence of vibration on which everyone who has flown in pure jet and turbo-prop aircraft comments. Really to appreciate these features, they have to be experienced.

Even in that part of the cabin which is normally the noisiest in piston-engined types amidships—the quietness of the Viscount is amazing and one can converse with one's neighbor, and with those sitting across the aisle, in normal tones. Farther aft in the cabin the quietness is even more marked. The production version of the Viscount, the Viscount 700, which British European Airways will use on its routes, will be even quieter as the Rolls-Royce Darts will be a foot or so farther from the fuselage.

A new standard of passenger comfort will certainly be introduced by the Viscount when it goes into service early in 1952. Meanwhile its visits to the European capitals, in attractive BEA insignia and flown by Captain W. Wakelin of BEA, the first air line

pilot to have his license endorsed for turbo-prop aircraft, should arouse much interest.

The Universal Freighter: Meanwhile details have been released of the Blackburn-General Universal Freighter which was expected to fly sometime in April or May. One of the biggest freighters yet built and the second biggest landplane to be built in Great Britain, it has a span of 162 feet, length 99.17 feet, height of 33 feet, and an all-up weight of 105,000 lb. Designed, as its name implies, primarily as a freighter, the Universal is intended for world-wide operation and for safe operations from airfields with minimum landing facilities.

Powered by four Bristol Hercules 251 engines driving four-bladed reversible-pitch Rotol airscrews, it has a fixed tricycle undercarriage and take-off run, fully loaded, is expected to be some 585 yards and the landing run 225 yards. Using the SBAC Standard Method, its total direct operating costs, based on a mean cruising speed of 175 mph and an annual utilization of 2,500 hours, work out at 10¼d per ton-mile carrying 15 tons over a stage

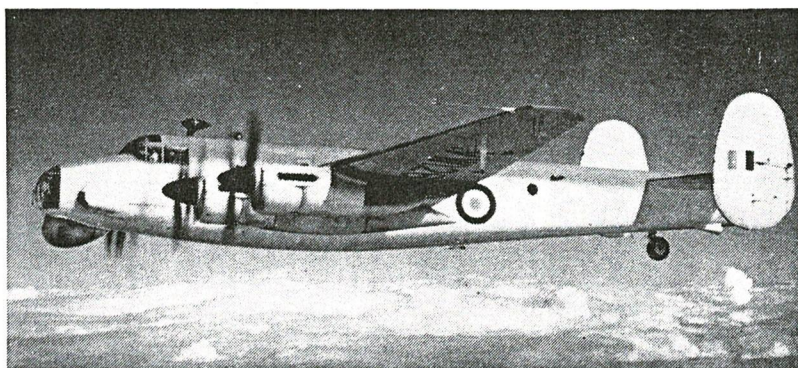
length of 250 miles.

Designed for Cargo: The Universal is a high-wing monoplane with a large fuselage capable of giving a cargo space of 5,740 cubic ft., the main freight compartment being 36 ft. long, 10 ft. across and 10 ft. high. Entrance to the cargo hold is through large hatch doors under the high-set tail, which has twin fins and rudders. Easy and quick loading is made by a hydraulically-operated, built-in loading ramp at the rear of the compartment. The non-skid floor is reinforced to take loads as high as 250 lb./sq. ft. and the floor panels are removable, in sections, to provide easy drainage facilities for cleaning after dirty loads.

The crew of four are accommodated in two compartments on the flight deck and special care has been taken to ensure maximum comfort and all-round view for the crew.

The large fuselage gives ample scope for operators to arrange it for their particular needs, for example — for mixed freight and passenger traffic an upper rear deck can be installed. With freight assuming more and more importance the advent of the bulky and practical Universal should be of interest to operators throughout the world.

The Air Estimates: Whereas the civil side of aviation in Great Britain is full of hope at present, the Air Estimates presented recently in Parliament have caused some dissatisfaction. The net total sum required for the Air Force is \$685,000,000 an increase of \$47,585,000 over last year and the most substantial increase is the vote for aircraft and stores. The main changes



COASTAL COMMANDER: A recent flight photograph of the Avro Shackleton shows sturdy practical lines. Powered by four RR Griffon engines driving six blade de Havilland contra-rotating propellers, the Shackleton is capable of operating in any part of the world on maritime reconnaissance duties, including shadowing and striking at underwater or surface vessels. Dome under the nose contains radar.