

BRITAIN CALLING



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Great Britain has lost the most famous aeroplane in the World—the original Wright biplane in which the Wright Brothers made the first powered flight on a heavier-than-air craft on December 17, 1903. Since 1928 this historic machine has held the place of honor in the Science Museum at South Kensington, except during the war, when it was dismantled and stored in a deep underground shelter in the west of England. Now, in accordance with the wishes of the late Orville Wright, it has been taken down and is to be returned to the United States where it will be preserved by the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. In its place at the Science Museum is a replica (except for a wooden engine) built by the de Havilland Technical School.

Brabazon Costs

From the Wright Brothers biplane with its span of 40 ft. and 12 h.p. engine to the Brabazon I with its span of 230 ft and eight engines, each developing 2500 h.p.—such is the progress of aviation in 45 years.

First flight of the Brabazon I, now nearing completion, has been postponed until 1949. Although it had been hoped that the Brabazon would fly this year, the postponement is not unexpected and now that the season of rain and fog has descended upon us, it seems only reasonable not to push the final assembly but to wait another few months. In any case, delays in a project of this type are inevitable.

G. R. Strauss, Minister of Supply, who recently visited Bristol and inspected the Brabazon, gave the latest estimate for all-in cost of the first two prototypes as £12,000,000. This sum includes £5,600,000 for the assembly hangar and runways at Filton. The

ultimate figure will probably be still higher than the present £12,000,000 million; if only because of the persistent trend towards rising costs in everything

Airline Losses

British Civil Aviation is an expensive business altogether. Twelve million pounds seems an enormous sum for two prototype aircraft, but it is little more than the losses expected from the three British airline corporations. The reports and accounts of the three corporations for the financial year ended March 31, 1948 are to be presented to parliament in November. Combined losses of B.O.A.C., B.E.A.C. and B.S.A.A. are expected to be some £11,000,000. In 1946-47 B.O.A.C. and B.E.A.C. had total losses of £10,214,274 and B.S.A.A. showed a small profit. This year all three lost money and drastic action is expected to be taken to reduce overheads.

B.O.A.C. and B.E.A.C. have been re-organizing for some months and have made some reductions in staff.

Now Lord Pakenham, Minister of Civil Aviation, is understood to have represented strongly to the Boards of the two corporations the need to reduce overheads and staff at all levels. In addition, he has nominated Sir George Cribbitt, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, to be associated with B.O.A.C. and F. T. Bird, head of the Economic and Intelligence Division of the Ministry, to be associated with B.E.A.C. in the overhaul of their organizations. Drastic measures are expected—and needed.

As mentioned last month, in his Fourth British Commonwealth and Empire Lecture, P. G. Masefield (Director General of Long Term Planning and Development, Ministry of Civil Aviation) estimated that overheads at present averaged between 40% and 70% of the total costs of the main airlines of the World. Both B.O.A.C. and B.E.A.C. are believed to be in the higher ranges.

All three British corporations had operating difficulties in 1947-48 and those difficulties have not been eased for 1948-49. The move of B.O.A.C.'s base from Montreal to Filton and the consequent reduction in Constellation services across the Atlantic will affect operations adversely. B.S.A.A.'s holdup with Tudors this year will probably account for most of its losses. Difficulties such as these are likely to continue for another year or two, hence the necessity for drastic reduction of overheads and streamlined organizations wherever possible. Latest figures for the staffs of the corporations are: B.O.A.C., approximately 20,000; B.E.A.C. about 7,000; and B.S.A.A., some 1,700.

EXPERIMENTAL JET AIRLINER



The Avro Tudor 8, the world's first experimental four-jet airliner made its initial flight during September. Powered by four Rolls-Royce Nenes, the Tudor 8 has a service ceiling of 44,000 feet and a maximum cruising speed of 350 mph at 25,000 feet. Its length is 85 feet 3 inches, span 120 feet, height 24 feet, and all up weight 80,000 lbs.

The Berlin Air Lift

Detail specification of the freighter version of the Tudor which B.O.A.C. is to use, and which is to be given a new name, is expected to be completed shortly. Meanwhile Avros are continuing production of other Tudors, including a small number of Tudor 8's for the Ministry of Supply and six Tudor 5's. The prototype of the latter has been bought by Airflight Ltd., Air Vice-Marshal Bennett's company, and five others are to be used by B.S.A.A. on the Berlin Air Lift.

B.O.A.C. has also joined the Air Lift, seconding seven Dakotas and twenty-five flying crews, together with ground staff, under the command of Captain Nigel Pelly, one of the Corporation's most experienced pilots.

Latest recruit to the Air Lift is the Handley Page Hasting, newest, biggest and fastest R.A.F. transport. No. 47 Squadron Transport Command, first squadron to be equipped with the Hastings, was scheduled to leave for Germany at the beginning of November, to be followed by a second Hastings squadron later in the month.

New Jet Fighter Variants

The D. H. Vampire has appeared in new form as the Mk. 5 ground attack fighter. Basically similar to the Mk. 3, it has clipped wing tips and provision for removable bomb gear and rocket projectile fittings under the outer and inner mainplanes. It is armed with four 20 mm. guns, and can carry eight 60 lb. rocket projectiles, two 500 lb. bombs or two 100 gal. fuel tanks, or two 1,000 lb. bombs. The military load has little effect on the performance of the Vampire which looks as if it would become as versatile as its forebear, the Mosquito.

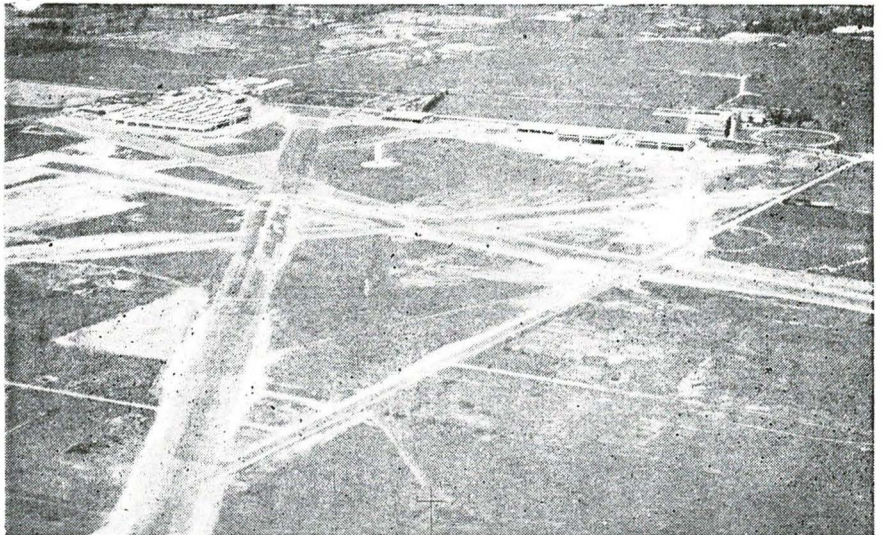
The Mk. 5 is generally similar to the Vampire Mk. 6 and 50 which are being supplied to Switzerland and Sweden, except that the latter have D. H. Goblin 3 jet units, instead of the Goblin 2 of the Mk. 5. The Goblin 3 is rated at 3,300 lb. S.T., 300 lb. up on the Goblin 2, hence the "export" versions of the Vampire have a slightly higher performance top speed of 546 m.p.h.

A new version of the Gloster Meteor, the Mk. 8, is expected in service soon. With the long-nosed fuselage and clipped Wings, it will be equipped with an ejector-seat and will be the first British fighter in regular service to incorporate this feature.

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