

FIRST AIR MAIL FROM ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA.

London—Port Darwin in 15 Days.

ARRANGEMENTS have been completed between the Post Office, the Air Ministry, and Imperial Airways, for the immediate operation of two experimental return air-mail flights between England and Australia.

The first outward flight will leave the London air station, Croydon, on Saturday next, April 4, and will arrive at Port Darwin (Australia) 15 days later, on April 19. The time of a journey from England to Australia by the fastest surface transport is 28 days.

At Port Darwin the air-mail from England will be met by an aeroplane of the Australian "Qantas" Company, and flown on for delivery in Sydney and Melbourne.

Before a return air-mail leaves Australia, time will be allowed for those receiving letters by the outward service to answer them. Eight days after the arrival of the first machine at Port Darwin—that is to say, on April 27—a return flight will start from Port Darwin for England, reaching the London air-station on May 14.

A second outward-bound machine will leave England on April 25, reaching Australia on May 10, the second return flight from Australia to England leaving Port Darwin on May 17, and being due at the London air-station on May 31.

The inaugural Imperial Airways machine next Saturday, a 3-engined Armstrong-Siddeley, will ascend from the London air-station carrying not only this first Australian mail, but also the regular weekly air-mails for India and Central Africa.

This combined Empire air-mail will be carried across Europe to Athens, and then above the Mediterranean in a 3-engined Short-Jupiter flying-boat to Alexandria.

From Cairo the African mail will be flown southward to Mwanza in Tanganyika Territory, the temporary terminus of the African service, while the Indian and Australian mails will proceed eastward in a 3-engined De Havilland "Hercules" machine over existing stages via Bagdad and the Persian Gulf to Karachi and Delhi.

From Delhi will stretch the new route of the service to Australia, the inaugural mail being carried in a "Hercules" machine via Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies to Port Darwin, Australia, to effect a connection there with the waiting aeroplane of the "Qantas" Company.

The total distance of the route through from London to Port Darwin is 11,194 miles.

Now under review by the Governments concerned are proposals by Imperial Airways for a regular weekly air-mail between India and Australia, to link up with the existing weekly passenger and mail service between England and India. It is only 11 years since the pioneer flight between England and Australia was made by two Australian airmen, the late Sir Ross Smith and Sir Keith Smith, in a Vickers Rolls-Royce biplane, in 28 days; while it is now reckoned that when such an England-Australia service is in regular operation, it will be possible to carry air-mails from London to Port Darwin in not more than eleven or twelve days.

Civil Aviation in Switzerland

THE 1st of March witnessed the entry into force of the scheme for the centralisation of Swiss Air Traffic in the hands of the "Schweizerische Luftverkehrs-Aktiengesellschaft." This undertaking, which will be called the "Swissair" for short, has been formed by the amalgamation of the two principal air navigation companies in Switzerland, namely, the "Ad Astra-Aero Company" of Zurich, and the "Balair, S.A." of Basle, both of which have now ceased to exist, and whose fleet of aircraft and flying and ground organisation have passed into the hands of the new company. This change has placed Commercial Aviation in Switzerland on a sounder basis than hitherto, and is expected to have a beneficial effect on its development. Statistics published by the Federal Air

Office show that in 1930, civil aircraft in Switzerland flew 1,447,190 miles in 16,858 hours. The number of passengers carried totalled 45,756, while freight, mail, and luggage transport (the latter at paying rates) amounted to 818,630, 368,875 and 120,610 lbs. respectively. Regular air services claimed the bulk of the traffic, international lines accounting for 652,505 miles in 7,461 hours, 12,283 passengers, 512,528 lbs. of freight, 146,123 lbs. of mail, and 78,524 lbs. of luggage, and Swiss lines for 472,562 miles in 5,281 hours, 11,533 passengers, 308,744 lbs. of freight, 200,724 lbs. of mail, and 42,085 lbs. of luggage. The balance is distributed among the other branches of Civil Aviation, such as flying schools and flying clubs, private flying, aerial photography, occasional passenger flights, etc.

GROUP INSURANCE AT BLACKBURN'S

A REMARKABLE plan for the protection of workers and their dependents has come into operation among employees of the Blackburn Aeroplane & Motor Co., Ltd., of Brough, East Yorkshire, and Leeds. As the result of the installation of a group insurance plan, the great majority of the company's employees are now insured for a minimum of £100, rising to £1,000 in the case of the higher-paid staff members.

The plan, as adopted, contains many benefits in addition to the life insurance, and is on a contributory basis, that is, the company and the members of the plan contribute in approximately equal ratio to its cost. All employees are eligible to join, and no medical examination is required. This is an important privilege, because in every considerable group there are some persons who would not be able to secure individual life insurance policies because of some perhaps unsuspected disability.

For works employees, the plan provides £100 of life insurance at a cost to the employee of only 3d. weekly, the balance of the cost being paid by the company. Staff employees are divided as to contributions and benefits into classes according to earnings, as in the schedule below. Both works and staff employees have total and permanent disability benefit, as well as the straight life insurance. This means that any member who becomes totally and permanently disabled, from any cause, anywhere contracted before age 60, will receive the amount of the life insurance in from 40 to 60 monthly instalments. For works employees this means 40 monthly instalments of £2 12s. 6d. each.

The following is the schedule for the staff members of the plan:—

SCHEDULE OF BENEFITS AND EMPLOYEES' CONTRIBUTIONS.

Class	Annual Salary	Life Insurance	Total and Permanent Disability Benefit (Life Insurance in Monthly Instalments)		Employee's Weekly Contribution
			£ s. d.	mtly. for 40 mths.	
A	£150 and under	£100	2 12 6	60	0 3
B	£151 to £250	£200	3 12 0	60	0 6
C	£251 to £350	£300	5 8 0	60	0 9
D	£351 to £450	£400	7 4 0	60	1 0
E	£451 to £550	£500	9 0 0	60	1 3
F	£551 to £650	£600	10 16 0	60	1 6
G	£651 to £750	£700	12 12 0	60	1 9
H	£751 to £850	£800	14 8 0	60	2 0
J	£851 to £950	£900	16 4 0	60	2 3
K	Over £950	£1,000	18 0 0	60	2 6

In case of death, from any cause, anywhere, while a member of the plan, the life insurance will be at once paid to the beneficiary designated by the insured person. A remarkable provision of the plan is the agreement of the Blackburn Co. to continue to pay the entire cost of the insurance for life for such employees as retire from active service with the company's consent. Thus, such retired workers will have nothing to pay, but their life insurance will continue in force until they die.

The administration of this interesting plan has been placed with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. of New York, which specialises in these group benefit plans, and has in