



British enterprise and achievement in 1946 are exemplified by the Rolls-Royce Nene, the Miles Marathon, the D.H. 108 and the raising of the world's speed record by G/C Donaldson.

## Record Flights and Great Expectations : Technical Preparation for Tomorrow : Air Transport is Nationalized

*IN the records of aeronautical science, the year 1946 will be adjudged a memorable one, abundantly fruitful, yet full of promise. It was not a period of monumental developments, though some important aircraft made their first flights, but one of consolidation, development and especially research.*

*The true significance of a year's progress lies not so much in the yield of new aircraft but in the discoveries and decisions made, vital studies undertaken and lessons learnt. Thus, in 1946, though new and spectacular Service machines were much in evidence (this being the year of the historic Farnborough and Radlett displays) and though the ruffled tide of civil development was inexorably on the turn, it was the development and flight-testing of unorthodox research aircraft which distinguished it. Not until 1946 did the aeronautical community become truly conscious of the ultimate benefits promised by tailless aircraft, swept-back surfaces, rocket propulsion, compounded power plants and—less spectacular, but of greater immediate importance—gas turbines in civil aircraft.*

### HIGH LIGHTS OF 1946

**F**ULL as 1946 has been of outstanding events and meritorious achievements in the world of aviation, there can be little argument as to what constituted THE aeronautical high-light of the past year. It was the setting of the World's Air Speed Record at a fraction over 616 m.p.h. by Grp. Capt. E. M. Donaldson in the Gloster Meteor IV, E 549, on September 7th.

It is a matter for some national satisfaction that this most prized of all flying records should be held by Britain, but in fairness it must at once be added that the long-distance record set up by the U.S. Navy's Lockheed Neptune, *Truculent Turtle*, was, from the technical point of view, an almost equally notable achievement. As will be remembered, this P2V took off from Perth, Australia, on September 29th, and flew non-stop to Columbus, Ohio, where it landed at just after noon on October 1st, having covered a distance of 11,236 miles in 55 hr 18 min.

But it is in the nature of man to be more impressed by a flash of breathless speed (This-is-Littlehampton-that-was!) than by a sustained and therefore less spectacular effort; and it has also to be remembered that the present approach to the speed of sound has a special significance, both technical and dramatic.

There have, of course, been a number of other record flights, and a number of "firsts" of one kind and another of varying importance. In March, for example, a Lancastrian of R.A.F. Transport Command flew from Northolt to Wellington, New Zealand, and back in the record time of 6½ days, covering the outward journey in 62 hr 5 min and the return trip in 61 hr 28 min. But even this clipped time for the outward flight to New Zealand was improved upon in August by the Empire Air Navigation School's streamlined Lancaster *Aries*, which got there in 59 hr 51 min, and collected a brace of intermediate records on

the way. From Blackbushe it reached Karachi in 19 hr 14 min, and Darwin in 45 hr 3 min. The same aircraft, incidentally, had lowered the England-South Africa record in January, when it flew from Portsmouth to Cape Town in 32 hr 21 min, captained by Wing Cdr. C. M. Dunningcliff. The distance was 6,900 miles and the time beat the previous fastest—Alex Henshaw's Cape record set up in 1939 in a Mew Gull—by no less than 7 hr 4 min.

#### With and Without Engines

Before leaving the subject of records set up during the past year one more of a different kind should be recognized, namely, the British altitude and sailplane records annexed by Lt. Cdr. (A) J. S. Sproule and Lt. (A) Sothers during the first week-end in July. In a German Kranich sailplane they flew from the Naval Air Station at Hinstock (Shropshire) to Princes Risborough, a distance of 102 miles in a straight line, and during the flight reached a height of 5,600ft. Finally there was one other outstanding event which, though not exactly a record in the narrow sense, was still a "fastest ever," and that was the Lympne High-Speed Handicap Race at the Folkestone meeting organized by the Cinque Ports Flying Club on August 31st-September 1st. This race was won by Bill Humble in a Fury I at 342 m.p.h., but the fastest competitor was Geoffrey de Havilland who came home second at a speed of well over 400 m.p.h. This was the world's fastest air-race and the first post-war air race meeting in Britain.

All kinds of other "firsts" and "firsts since the war" might qualify for inclusion, but space limits us to the selection of but one or two of the more important. On January 1st, for instance, Air Vice-Marshal D. C. T. Bennett left Heathrow in a Lancastrian on the first proving flight for British South American Airways' service to Buenos