

CIVIL AVIATION

THE COMET'S JOHANNESBURG FLIGHT

REPRODUCED below are some extracts from a letter which we have received from Mr. Martin Sharp of the de Havilland Company, who was a passenger in the Comet on its recent flight to Johannesburg, via Cairo and Entebbe. The total distance of the outward journey was 6,212 statute miles, and the overall time, chocks, Heathrow, to chocks, Johannesburg, was 17 hours 33 minutes, giving a speed, including halts, of 354 m.p.h. Times and speeds for each leg are tabulated. At Cairo, the Comet took on 4,900 gallons of kerosene and its take-off weight was 104,060 lb, while at Entebbe 4,000 gallons were supplied, and the take-off weight was 98,502 lb.

In view of the considerable period which frequently elapses between starting up and taking off, and between landing and cutting engines, the following times for the Comet in the order chocks away to take-off, and touch-down to chocks, at Heath Row, Cairo, Entebbe, and Johannesburg respectively, are well worth recording: 1830—1837; 2345—2348; 2445—2451; 0559—0602; 0729—0735; 1201—1203.

Comet (London-Johannesburg) Flight—July 17th to 18th, 1951

	London Airport-Cairo	Cairo-Entebbe	Entebbe-Johannesburg
Distances (miles)	2,280	2,082	1,850
Airborne times (Take-off to touch-down hr min)	5 8	5 8	4 26
Chock times (hr min) ...	5 18	5 17	4 34
Airborne speeds (m.p.h.)	442	405	418
Ground times at chocks	57 min (Cairo)	1 hr 27 min (Entebbe)	—

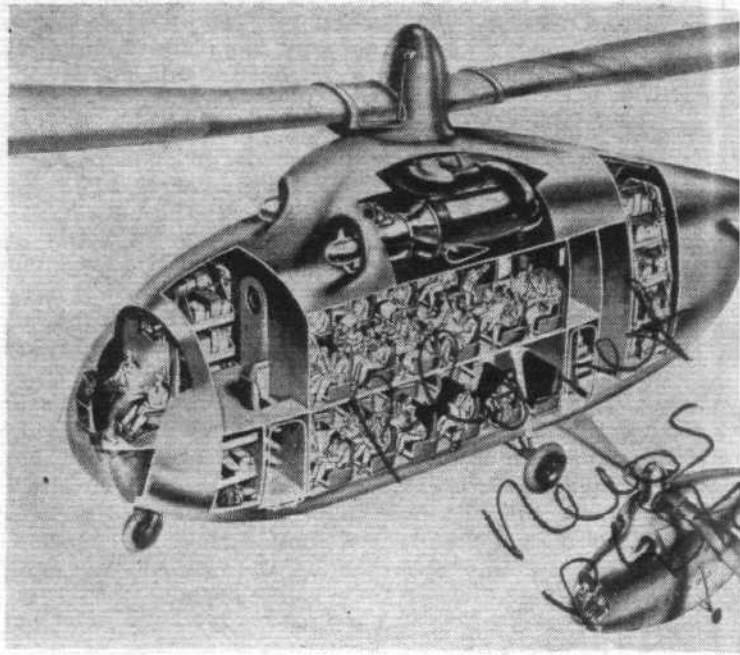
Mr. Sharp writes: "This flight has demonstrated that the London-Johannesburg route can be worked economically and well with the Series I Comet. Entebbe runway has been a pleasant surprise. Its contour includes a stretch of downgrade which is worth some thousands of pounds of take-off weight to a jet aircraft. The result is that Comets can do the outbound trip regularly with full payload (B.O.A.C.'s 36-passenger version with 12,500 lb), with only the two halts at Cairo and Entebbe, in under 20 hours as a regular thing. We did it comfortably in 17 hr 33 min. Homeward, the Comet will probably have to call also at Livingstone and Rome, because Johannesburg is too hot and high for a full payload take-off to Entebbe, and Cairo is too hot for a full payload to London at all seasons because of westerly winds. In practice B.O.A.C. will probably work the Johannesburg line with four halts both ways—Rome, Cairo, Entebbe, Livingstone—so as to give a balanced public service.

"What really does tell is that 5 hours (2,000 and more miles) in a Comet doesn't tire the passengers or crew, and a continuous 6,000-mile journey like the one we have done doesn't either. It is the absence of vibration. You feel unstressed, somehow. This Comet (OZ) has a 28-seat compartment furnished and is quieter than a Connie. We plan to return home via Livingstone, Entebbe, Khartoum, Cairo, Rome. To-morrow we shall be trying out at Pietersburg."

SORTING OUT THE SUBSIDY

THE C.A.B. is now planning to introduce an arrangement by which airmail pay can be satisfactorily separated from Government subsidies to airlines. In a recent letter to the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, Mr. Donald Nyrop, chairman of C.A.B., disclosed that new agreements on airmail pay have been reached with the four largest U.S. operators, A.A., E.A.L., T.W.A. and U.A.L. with whom discussions along these lines have been in progress for more than a year.

As a result of these conferences, the four carriers have agreed to accept a mail rate of 63 cents (about 4s 6d) per ton-mile for the period from the beginning of the proceedings until December 31st, 1950, and a compensatory rate of 45 cents (about 3s 4d) per ton-mile from January 1st, 1951. On the same issue, the Senate's Small Business Committee has called for a new government policy towards non-scheduled airlines: it has requested that the C.A.B. should cancel its order restricting the number of flights made by these smaller operators. The committee is of the opinion that the present arrangement merely results in the use of a subsidy



TOMORROW'S HELICOPTER: This artist's conception of the Howard Hughes 205 twin-turbine-powered helicopter represents a stage in rotor-craft design which may be much nearer than we think. It would have a seating capacity for 70 passengers, a range of 200 miles and would cruise at over 100 m.p.h. A "skeleton" prototype began its trials last year. A revolving lift is installed aft, for baggage stowage.

to provide expensive luxury services for a small part of the population. It is thought that an immediate large-scale expansion of low-cost "coach" travel is needed. Recent operations by non-scheduled companies are cited as proof of the large potential which exists for this type of travel.

Most of the largest American operators, incidentally, have this year enjoyed the best six-month earning period in their history. New traffic records were established almost continuously from the beginning of the year. June produced an all-time record for all major operators, with the exception of United who were seriously affected by their 11-day strike. An estimate of the total traffic puts the passenger-mileage figure at over 5,000 million, an increase of 45 per cent over the corresponding period of last year; air cargo rose by as much as 130 per cent.

The main result of this extensive traffic improvement is that, in spite of high taxes, there has been a sharp rise in net profits. Although at the moment American Airlines is the only large carrier subject to excess purchase tax, it is thought possible that other companies may become so liable this year. Mail rates, however, are being lowered slightly and costs are moving slowly upward. It is thought that a truce in Korea might reduce the movement of passengers to and from the west coast but that traffic during the remainder of the year will continue at a highly satisfactory level.

B.E.A.'s UPS AND DOWNS

ALTHOUGH having to combat more than its fair share of troubles in the form of crew and aircraft shortages, B.E.A. has this year enjoyed a very considerable increase in business. The Corporation carried its millionth passenger recently, an achievement which has only been equalled by six other airlines in the world, all of them American. Costs, however, have continued to rise this year, and in May amounted to almost £1,000,000. The deficit for May (£44,856) was actually £20,000 less than the corresponding period of the previous year, although the loss for April-May was slightly larger than in 1950. B.E.A.'s most urgent need, of course, is for larger-capacity aircraft, and the news last week that the Elizabethans have now been awarded a full C. of A. carries with it the promise that these aircraft may now be available rather sooner than recent forecasts have intimated. It is thought, in fact, that the first Elizabethan will be delivered into B.E.A.'s hands in about a fortnight's time.

Having struggled manfully against many difficulties this year, it is particularly unfortunate that just as traffic is approaching its summer peak a number of services have had to be cancelled because