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AUSTRALIA and the UNIVERSAL

Commonwealth Service and Civil Observers Inspect the Military Prototype

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N ROUTE for Boscombe Down, where initial handling
trials (scheduled to last about three weeks) are now
under way, the Blackburn Beverley called in at Black-
bushe on Wednesday of last week. Towards the end of the
southward flight from Brough it was taken over by Farn-borough radar and guided through the overcast into the customary Blackbushe training circuit of B.E.A. Elizabethans and Viscounts and U.S. Navy Super DC-3s.
The object of the visit was to demonstrate the Yorkshire freighter to representatives of Australian Service and civil avia-tion. Those who were waiting to inspect the Beverley included A. Cdre. A. M. Charlsworth, C.B.E., A.F.C., A.O.C. Overseas Headquarters, R.A.F.; Mr. V. E. Letcher, senior representative (U.K.) for the Departments of Defence, Production and Supply; Mr. J. E. Schofield, Civil Aviation Liaison Officer at Australia House; and Messrs. Heywood and Baker of the Australian Meat Board.

Although the Beverley is equipped as a military prototype, the Australian observers found no difficulty in visualizing the enor-mous possibilities of the projected civil version, the Universal Freighter. At present there is a 1,500-gallon water ballast tank at each end of the main fuselage, with space between for two similar containers. The Australians were particularly impressed by the spacious flight-deck and the leading-edge catwalk which provides access in flight or on the ground to the rear bulkheads of the four 2,850 h.p. Bristol Centaurus power units. The Beverley's tail-boom alone offers the capacity of a medium-sized modern airliner: it will hold up to 42 passengers, although at present the space is taken up mainly by test equipment, including two automatic observers, and five rearward-facing seats for the human observers. Two upward-folding doors in the aft floor of the tail-boom cover the hatch for parachuting or supply dropping. Since its appearance at Farnborough, the Beverley has acquired a large vibration-damping pad on each side of the forward fuselage
(see photograph); mis is a temporary measure, and on production

A. Cdre. Charlsworth (centre) is brought up to date on Beverley develop-ments by A.V-M. H. N. Thornton (right), director of Blackburn and General Aircraft, and the company's chief test pilot, "Tim" Wood.

aircraft the inner power units will be placed slighdy farther outboard.
The Beverley has now flown over 100 hours and its predecessor, the Hercules-powered Universal, is undergoing its first 400-hour inspection. At Brough, the R.A.F. production line is progressing well; there seems little doubt that the Service order for Beverleys will prime the pump for a flow of civil Universal Freighters.
It is natural that Australia should take first place among the potential markets. There are in the Commonwealth enormous areas with under-developed or non-existent surface communica-tions, and good flying weather which makes possible some of the highest aircraft utilization in the world. With a guaranteed high utilization, the Universal would be extremely cheap to operate; it is a sturdy, simple machine requiring no elaborate maintenance facilities and it is capable of flying in and out of grass strips 1,000 yd long. It can carry larger volumetric loads than the rail truck and it is contended that for some tasks it would be cheaper to buy and operate a small fleet of Universals than to build a new railway. Where rail-heads exist the aircraft could provide an economic feeder service to and from satellite communities.

Among the most important applications envisaged for the air-craft is the provision of an air bridge between the catde-breeding Northern Territory and the fattening pastures in Queensland, New South Wales or South Australia. Until now the catde industry has advocated the laying of a railway for this purpose but Mr. Frank Gannon, Blackburn's enterprising Australian repre-sentative, has won much support for his belief that Universals would cover a far wider area for a much lower capital outlay. He estimates that one Universal could lift a train-load of fat catde 200 air-miles in the course of one day's operation, and suggests the following typical payloads for single journeys of up to 700 miles: 35 fat catde or 130 yearlings (two decks); 500 sheep (three decks); or 22 tons of wool (one deck).
The attention of the Australian Government (who, it is suggested, might buy the aircraft for operation on lease by estab-lished airlines) has also been drawn to the Universal's value in such emergencies as floods, droughts and bush fires. It is also argued mat a few Beverleys would provide full transport cover-age for bom the R.A.A.F. and the Australian Army.

The operation of the
Beverley's enormous rear-
loading doors and the
positioning of one of its
two ballast tanks are illus-
trated above. At right,
the figure of a Blackbushe
marshaller gives scale to the
61-ton military prototype.

"Flight" photographs