

BRITANNIAS JOIN B.O.A.C.

*Baker Charlie and Baker Dog now
with the Corporation*



"Flight" photograph

SHORTLY before 10 o'clock on the morning of December 30th, 1955, Mr. J. D. Profumo, Joint Parliamentary Secretary, M.T.C.A., signed the Certificate of Airworthiness for the Bristol Britannia Mk 100. This welcome news was promptly flashed to the maker's airfield at Filton, where, just 90 minutes later, two Britannias took off on their delivery flights to B.O.A.C. at London Airport.

These aircraft, to be joined in course of 1956 by 13 more Britannia 100s ordered by B.O.A.C., were formally handed over to Sir Miles Thomas, the Corporation's chairman, by Sir Reginald Verdon Smith, chairman of the Bristol Aeroplane Co. "We are very glad," said Sir Miles, "to have possession of these first two Britannias—the largest, fastest, steadiest and, I believe, the most economical turboprop aircraft in the world." B.O.A.C., he continued, would push ahead rapidly with the rest of their training programme and would lose no time in starting their route to Johannesburg and, later, to Sydney [Colombo, Ceylon, and other Eastern cities are also on the Britannia's "map"]. One of the three weekly services to Johannesburg, Sir Miles disclosed, would be a two-stop service, calling at Cairo and Nairobi only.

The Britannia's C. of A., which is unrestricted, comes three years and four months after the first flight of the prototype (on August 16th, 1952). This period is not, as has sometimes been inferred, unduly long for such an aircraft. The award of the C. of A. was delayed, however, by the decision—taken at a relatively late stage of the development programme—to subject the aircraft to water-tank testing and to a series of intensive route-proving trials. Britannias now have to their credit over 2,700 flying hours and 20,000 "tank hours," and Bristols have fairly claimed that the test and development programme has no precedent in world aviation.

The two aircraft delivered last week were G-ANBC and

G-ANBD, third and fourth respectively to leave the assembly line at Filton. One, "Baker Charlie," was furnished as a 90-passenger tourist aircraft (the Britannia 100 may well perform the bulk of its revenue service for B.O.A.C. in this form); its companion, "Baker Dog," was fitted out as a first-class 54-seater. Their journey provided the first opportunity for us to experience the majestic comfort of travelling aboard fully furnished and soundproofed Britannias.

In Baker Dog. The Associate Editor, who flew in G-ANBD, the first to be delivered, gives these impressions of the journey:

So gracious and spacious did the 54-seat interior (with its lounge bar between the two cabins) appear to us on entering, that we were instantly reminded of the Empire boats. Our host, Peter Masefield—who is now managing director of Bristol Aircraft, Ltd.—greeted us with the news that an unrestricted C. of A. had been granted only a few minutes before we stepped aboard, and he told us something of the final month of effort exerted by all at Bristol to get Baker Dog and Baker Charlie into B.O.A.C.'s hands before the year's end. These machines, he believed, attained higher standards of serviceability and acceptability than any others of their kind yet delivered in new form, either in Britain or the U.S.A. He referred with evident pride to the recent tailplane icing tests, which had entailed the fitting of a rig between two of the engines and the spraying of the tailplane with water to build up ice and thus to prove the thermal de-icing system and establish flying qualities in the event of system failure. Both objects were achieved to the satisfaction of the A.R.B.; the aircraft handled as required with more than 5in of ice on the leading edge of the tailplane, and when the thermal de-icing system was applied the ice vanished inside 15 sec.

Up-front we had two B.O.A.C. captains—S. W. Walton and T. Marsden—and when their cockpit checks were complete the Proteus were successively brought to life and the Britannia swung on to the runway. When the brakes were released she thrust forward with a throbbing hum, was off in about 20 sec and nosing up in a 3,000ft/min rate of climb at 200 kt. Take-off weight was 130,000 lb and we carried 2,000 gallons of fuel—sufficient to get us to Rome.

Off-hand assessment of noise levels is of dubious value, especially so as individual machines of a batch may vary considerably in degree of quietness. But we would personally judge that the overall level of noise in the Britannia's cabin is of the same order as in the Viscount, possibly better, and without the characteristic whine. As Dr. Hooker reminded us, however, we were flying at a relatively low level (6,000ft) and were taking quite a lot of power out of the engines, whereas at the level and power setting for normal cruising (20,000-plus feet) an improvement could certainly be expected.

Our schedule went to pot when we were stacked over Watford, but we were cleared at length to land on L.A.P.'s Runway 33. The undercarriage came down with a noticeable thump and bogie wheels kissed the runway at a circumspect 90 kt. This, Mr. Masefield assured us, was a shade higher than usual. Reverse thrust put an uncompromising curb on the proceedings and we drew to a halt to await Baker Charlie. At length the pair of us advanced to the vast B.O.A.C. hangar, where a dais was brought forward and Sir Reginald Verdon Smith and Sir Miles Thomas voiced the sentiments of the builders and operators respectively, and Sir Reginald handed over the two log books. A photograph of the ceremony appears on page 27.

Aboard Baker Charlie. Our observer in the second of the Britannias to reach London Airport (in the hands of Capt. A. S. M. Rendall, flight superintendent of the Britannia Fleet) was perhaps even more impressed by the spaciousness of the aircraft. Though G-ANBC carried a full complement of 90 passengers, there was no feeling whatsoever of crowding, and it was possible to roam the length of the cabin without undue difficulty. "Tube effect" is absent, for two reasons: the great girth of the fuselage, which permits six-abreast seating; and the installation of an amidships bar. Space remains for a large galley and four toilets.