

# CORRESPONDENCE

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## The Felixstowe Flying Boats

MAY I add a few notes to the correspondence which has been following the publication of the excellent series of articles by Mr. Bruce on the Felixstowe boats? I think you will find that the Fury was flown for the first time on Armistice Day, November 11th, 1918; the pilot was Major Arthur Cooper. The Fury was written-off in the spring of the following year when taking-off at the highest all-up weight to date—the occasion was an attempted non-stop flight from Plymouth to Lisbon.

Regarding the Curtiss triplane flying-boat mentioned by Mr. Bruce, I had some information on this machine sent to me some years ago by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. In an unusually restrained account, the letter said that the machine, the Curtiss Model "T," was constructed for the British Government in 1916 and sent across by boat in sections. After assembly the Model "T" was flown with several different engine installations, and Curtiss's say that it was the biggest flying-boat, or, for that matter, aeroplane, ever built at that time and remained so for a number of years.

The Model "T" in its original form had four 250 h.p. Curtiss engines, a span of 134ft, and an all-up weight of some 25,000 lb. Only one was built. Incidentally it is freely acknowledged in the same letter that the British orders for flying-boats put the Curtiss corporation on its feet.

Bold, Lancs.

ERIKA ZAHN.

## Airliner Utilization

THE article "Thoughts on Airliner Utilization" in your issue of January 13th was particularly interesting, and illuminated a number of important points.

There seems to be some ground for Mr. E. T. House's strong view that "insular British . . . hate the thought of foreign travel" when one realizes that only 1½ million of the ten million who can afford to travel abroad actually do so.

As regards winter sunshine-seekers, however, I am afraid that Mr. House is blaming the wrong source. The problem this winter (and 1954-55 was nearly as bad) is not to find the travellers, but to find a place to send them. With so many desirable spots writing themselves off by political trouble, terrorism, or revolt, the congestion at Madeira and the Canary Islands is fantastic. Last winter, Madeira's seven hotels were full for the entire three months' season; and this year I have reports that camp beds are being placed in bathrooms and on sheltered balconies in an attempt to accommodate at least some of the travellers.

London, S.E.25.

K. WESTCOTT JONES.  
Travel Correspondent.

## Late Salvage

WHILE "Luftwaffe Redivivus" is now in headlines, it may be worth mentioning that I recently witnessed the salvage and removal of what was most likely the last German winged relic in the old battlefields of Libya—a Heinkel 111 which crash-landed some 25 miles north of El Gfiof after a raid on Kufra Oasis in 1942.

I enclose two photographs which I took. The larger one [reproduced here—Ed.] shows the Heinkel with the Libyan salvage team, crossing the dunes some 20 miles south of Bir Bu Zerreich desert well.

Tripoli, N. Africa.

STOJAN LJ. PETRIC  
(P/O., late R.Y.A.F.)

The wreckage of the He111 (see letter above).



## A "Paddle Steamer" Helicopter

ON turning the pages of a pre-war aviation encyclopedia recently I came across a description of a most interesting rotary-wing design by Rohrbach-Roland, in which the aerofoils were disposed in a similar way to the blades of a paddle steamer, on either side of the fuselage and rotated about a horizontal axis at right angles to the direction of flight. The blades were parallel to this axis.

Lift presumably followed as a result of the airflow over the blades due to their rotation, the angle of attack being reversed in the lower part of their sweep by means of a cyclic-pitch alteration. I imagine this was also designed to allow a forward-thrust component for translational flight, as required.

On the face of it this layout would seem to possess the following advantages over the conventional helicopter—

- (1) The lift would always be symmetrical about the axis of flight.
- (2) No vibration troubles; simpler stressing.
- (3) No unbalanced torque in the horizontal plane.
- (4) Probably a higher possible maximum speed.
- (5) The complications of the conventional rotor hub, except for the cyclic-pitch change, would be avoided.

Your readers may be able to think of others. It would be interesting to hear what caused this project to languish. Perhaps the lift in hovering flight might not be as good as in the case of the helicopter? Even so, its other advantages might justify its addition to the World's aircraft types.

Southsea, Hants.

F. P. U. CROKER.

## Britain's Airliners

DURING the past few weeks there have been many discussions about the future of British aviation. For example, the Air League published a memorandum claiming that Britain is "stumbling into the Air Age," and implying that the present political direction is vague and harmful. In the course of some of these discussions B.O.A.C. has come in for criticism, on the one hand from the manufacturers' viewpoint for not ordering such aircraft as the Vickers 1000, and on the other hand for not keeping abreast of its foreign competitors by ordering American jets.

The threat of the Boeings and DC-8s, of which about 200 have been ordered, is very real. The chairman of B.A.L.P.A. has pointed out that 36 of them might carry across the Atlantic as many passengers as all airlines and shipping lines do at present. Thus they threaten B.O.A.C. with inability to compete on the route, and could cause redundancy amongst its staff. There is nothing hysterical about that statement of fact; such a development would be closely akin to what has happened on the South American routes, where we no longer operate any of the seven services a week we used to send to the largest cities of the Southern Hemisphere.

Before we decide whether such a retrenchment would matter or not, it would be worth while considering what the purposes of B.O.A.C. really are. The Corporation has many functions, and amongst them would appear to be the following requirements:—

- (1) To provide employment.
- (2) To earn money by carriage of passengers and mails.
- (3) To provide a strategic national reserve of aircraft and flying staff.
- (4) To provide a British air link with Dominion and other countries.
- (5) To "show the flag."
- (6) To develop and use British-built aircraft.

These aims are obviously incompatible, and success is judged by the balance that is struck. Thus the public does generally consider B.O.A.C. successful at present, even if it has lost ground to competitors, because it has made great efforts to develop British aircraft and has succeeded in its other objects. But its catalogue of functions makes the Corporation unique, and I would contend that it forces it into an untenable position. The taxpayer of course, as the ultimate shareholder, is entitled to decide policy, but I suggest that he would get more for his investment if B.O.A.C. had more political freedom and simpler aims.

Considering again the responsibilities of B.O.A.C., it is the requirement to develop and use British aircraft which gives so much trouble. During the years when it should have been growing and consolidating, the Corporation has expended tremendous efforts in attempts to use British aircraft which have proved unsuitable. In December the Minister of Supply admitted the fabulous cost to his department of these aircraft, but did not say what their cost had been to B.O.A.C. In any case the direct cost would be only a fraction of the indirect cost, in that B.O.A.C. has been hampered to an extent which would seem grotesque to an American operator. One magazine puts the blame for these "expensive and galling flops" on the Ministry itself, which "lacks expert knowledge," and it must be remembered that it is this