LETTERS

Exit cuts: the reasons

why
SIR—I was astonished to read
within your columns a letter
("The case of the disappearing
exits", June 8), so rambling
and inaccurate, from the
president of an organisation
presumably purporting to
have an authoritative opinion
on aviation matters.

Mr Newman says: "It is not
only British Airways which
has plugged the (747) over-
wing exits," and: "We have no
doubt that this is a Boeing-
approved modification". He is
quite correct; in fact the
modification was initiated by
Boeing, having realised that
many of its customers were
operating the aircraft on long
routes and were unable to
exploit its full passenger
capacity. It was originally
certificated to carry up to 550
passengers with ten main and
two upper deck doors (n.b. all
747s have an upper deck ... ).
The modification has been
taken up not only by BA but
also by BCal, Cathay Pacific,
CP Air, Korean, Air Gabon,
and Varig, among others.

It was initiated not "... so
that 12 more fare-paying
passengers could be carried",
but to permit redistribution of
the existing seating, enabling
more flexible arrangements
for passenger amenities.
Licensed aircraft mainten-
ance engineers and others
know that aviation law limits
the numbers of passengers
carried in relation to the
number of useable exits. After
witnessing a successful trial
evacuation of 550 passengers
within 90sec via only five of
the ten main doors, the
Federal Aviation Authority
set a limit (approved by the
CAA) of 55 passengers per
operative main door. This
means that with doors 3 left
and right deactivated (which
were never normally used,
anyway) the new limit is 440.
British Airways has a typical
max load of just over 400. The
upper deck exits have always
been regarded only as
secondary exits.

Mr Newman continues by
saying: "We would like to see
a modified 747 be evacuated";
and goes on to make

unobjective and emotional
conjectures of various evacu-
ation incidents. In his
peroration he states: "It is our
opinion that, in the event of a
cabin fire, it is impossible to
have a complete evacuation of
all passengers", and he then
draws comparison with the
football disaster at Bradford.

The film of the original 747
trial evacuation shows that
many of the events he
visualises actually occurred.
Many of the "guinea pigs"
were elderly people or
children, but there was no
need for special training,
contortionists, or a "good
head for heights".

During the last serious
cabin fire in the UK (a BOAC
707 in 1968), two passengers
only were not evacuated, a
disabled old lady and her
companion. A stewardess also
perished in attempting to get
them out of their seats.

Such events as took place in
Bradford occurred in the
absence of such stringent
safety requirements as apply
in civil aviation, and it is
disgracefully unprofessional
to make such a comparison,
which can only add to the low
esteem in which engineers are
held in this country.
P. A. MORRIS

British Airways Engineering
Training
11 Meadow Rise
Lacey Green
Aylesbury.
Bucks HP 17 0QY

Facts on

exit

legislation

SIR—Mr Newman's over-
dramatic letter on behalf of
the "Airline Engineers
International" (Flight, June
8) requires a response to reas-
sure those as unfamiliar with
the legislation as Mr Newman
seems to be.
Fact No 1 BA's 747 aircraft
are approved for a maximum
of 550 passengers, and require
five main exits per side.
Fact No 2 BA operates with
410 passengers and requires
four exits per side.
Fact No 3 FAA approval was
based on the demonstration
Mr Newman seeks, and
assumes that the upper deck
doors were excluded (to be
considered as a secondary

escape source only). I assume
that the AEI has some
evidence to support its lightly
veiled suggestion that the
evacuation tests were
"rigged".
Fact No 4 There is nothing
new in this—it is an accepted
practice where a layout is
below the "max approved".
I suggest that the AEI reads
the relevant sections of the
BCAR and FAR—you will
find that British Airways
more than meets these
mandatory requirements, and
these, operators are as safety
conscious as the AEI.

Comparison with the Brad-
ford disaster is ludicrous. In
fact, if the football grounds
were required to meet the
equivalent standards of civil
aviation, many more people
would have escaped.
If the AEI thinks that the
passenger/exit ratio is wrong,
then it should address itself to
the CAA or the Minister and
seek a change. An emotional
outburst in Flight will not do
much good, particularly where
it is obvious to those who
know that the legislation
cannot fault British Airways
and "others" who are doing
better than the law requires.
JOHN R. FINNIMORE
Conifers

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Carshalton
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Encouraging
response
SIR—Richard Noble's re-
sponse to my humble remarks
about light aircraft in general
and his courageous ARV
Super2 venture (Flight, June
1) was encouraging indeed,
particularly when compared
with the petulant attitude of
some of the established
general-aviation manufac-
turers.

I think he has three
major design considerations
absolutely right: the light-
weight liquid-cooled engine,
the decision to aim at home
building and, not least, the
easy derigging to allow storage
on a trailer. Most modern
gliders are stored this way; it
only takes lOmin to rig them,
and as a consequence you
won't hear many glider pilots
complaining about the cost of
hangarage.

I am looking forward to the
opportunity of flying Super2.
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In fact, in a few weeks time I
will be able to return Mr

Noble's courtesy and offer
him an exchange, of rides and
notes, on my just completed
Long-Ez.
G. F. H. SINGLETON

Milthorpe Lane
Holmesfield
Sheffield S18 5SA

Cover appeal
SIR—In Flight for March 23
you very kindly carried an
article in "Who's selling" for
No 24 Squadron flown covers.

The sale of No 24 Squad-
ron's flown Royal Mail
"Famine in Africa" covers has
contributed £1,200 to Royal
Air Force Lyneham's Ethi-
opian Appeal, which now
stands at £28,000, and I am
grateful to all who purchased
the covers to make 24 Squad-
ron's project a success. (I have
a few pilot-signed covers in
stock, at £2 each).
£25,000 will finance a "Save
the Children Fund" project
in Ethiopia to build a
water/irrigation system in
Bulbuloi, a village located in
an area where the Hercules
flew in their mercy missions.
The balance, plus monies
from FDCs, prints, and
badges in stock, will partly
fund the maintenance for the
complete scheme.
MALM A. BAIN

No 24 Squadron
Royal Air Force
Lyneham
Chippenham
Wiltshire

IN BRIEF

# International Air Tattoo 85
at RAF Fairford, Glos, on July
13 and 14 will feature 50th
anniversary celebrations for
the Spitfire and Dakota and a
Sky Tanker 85 symposium on
inflight refuelling techniques.

• No 1 (F) Squadron, RAF, is
respraying Spitfire Mk 21
LA255, which the unit main-
tains as a static exhibit.
Unfortunately the canopy and
centre and upper windscreen
transparencies are beyond
refurbishment, and the squad-
ron would be pleased to hear
from anybody who can donate
replacements. Write to Fit
Sgt A. J. Chaplin, No 1 (F)
Squadron, RAF Wittering,
Peterborough, Cambridge-
shire, or telephone him on
0780-64501 ext 3404 .

FLIGHT International, 6 July 1985