

THE FLIGHT TO AUSTRALIA

In our last issue we published scale drawings and brief descriptions of the machines entered by Messrs. Vickers, Ltd., and by Messrs. Martinsyde, Ltd., for the flight to Australia. Also a brief description of the Alliance machine. Scale drawings and a description of the Sopwith machine were published in our issue of October 16, 1919. This week we are able to complete the list by giving particulars and scale drawings of the remaining machine—the Blackburn "Kangaroo." The only machine to start so far is the Sopwith "Wallaby," which left Hounslow on October 21. This machine had to descend at Cologne, from which town a start was made again on October 31. Since then no news has been received from Capt. Matthews, but it is thought that he is weatherbound somewhere, far from any telegraph office, and no anxiety is felt for his safety.

Of the five machines entered for this flight three are of the single-engined tractor biplane type, while the other two are twin-engined machines. Whether or not any of the machines succeed in winning the £10,000 prize offered by the Australian Government—the conditions for which stipulate that the flight must be completed inside a month—some very valuable data should result, and it will be interesting to see which type of machine acquits itself the better, the single-engine or the twin-engine type. Both have their champions, who are convinced of the superiority of their own class of machine. The "twin-engineites" consider that two engines tend to more reliability, since in the case of one breaking down it only means one-half of the power plant out of commission. The other faction contends that a twin-engined machine cannot fly satisfactorily on one engine only, and that therefore no such safeguard is provided by fitting two engines, while they claim greater efficiency for the single-engine type. Time will show which side is right, although there is such a great element of luck in a flight like this that failure on the part of one type and the success of another will not necessarily be conclusive proof of the superiority of one type over the other.

The Blackburn "Kangaroo."

Except in a few minor respects the Blackburn "Kangaroo" entered for the Australia flight is similar to the standard machine of that name. The tankage has been increased so as to give the machine a greater range of flight. This has been made possible by the fact that whereas the standard machine (commercial) carries eight passengers with its normal complement of tanks, the Australian machine carries a crew of four. The petrol system has been redesigned for gravity feed so as to minimise the risk of engine trouble arising out of failure of the petrol system.

The two 275 h.p. Rolls-Royce Falcon engines are mounted on the lower plane, each driving a four-bladed tractor airscrew. The large petrol tanks are mounted inside the main fuselage, in the space ordinarily occupied by the passengers in the cabin type of machine. The landing wheels are exceptionally well sprung by telescopic struts and rubber buffers, and the machine is expected to be able to alight safely on grounds none too suitable for the purpose. Certainly, at the

E.L.T.A. aerodrome at Amsterdam, on the occasion of the recent aero show there, the Blackburn "Kangaroo" made light of the soft condition of the ground, which was such as to worry much lighter machines.

Needless to say, a number of smaller spare parts are being carried on board, and the machine is not altogether unarmed, should natives show signs of hostility.

No actual figures as to range, speed, etc., are available, but the passenger type of machine has a speed range of 97 to 51 m.p.h., a flight range, with normal tanks, of 580 miles, and carries a load of eight passengers or 1,540 lbs. By decreasing the number of passengers to four, and increasing the tank capacity, the flight range can, of course, be very materially increased.

The Route

The route followed will probably be as follows, although should conditions demand this may be deviated from: Hounslow to Paris, Marseilles, Nice and Pisa to Rome. Thence to Cattania, Malta, Benghazi and Sollum to Aboukir. Ramleh, Bagdad, Basra, Bushire to Bandao-Abbas. Charbah, Karachi, Nasrabad, Allahabad to Calcutta. Rangoon, Don-Muang, Sengora, Penang, Kuala-Lumpur to Singapore. Bandoeng, Bima, Kupang to Port Darwin. Thence *via* Brisbane and Sydney to Melbourne. Petrol supplies are being arranged for by the Air Ministry and foreign Governments as far as Calcutta—thereafter the arrangements are in the hands of the Asiatic Petroleum Co.

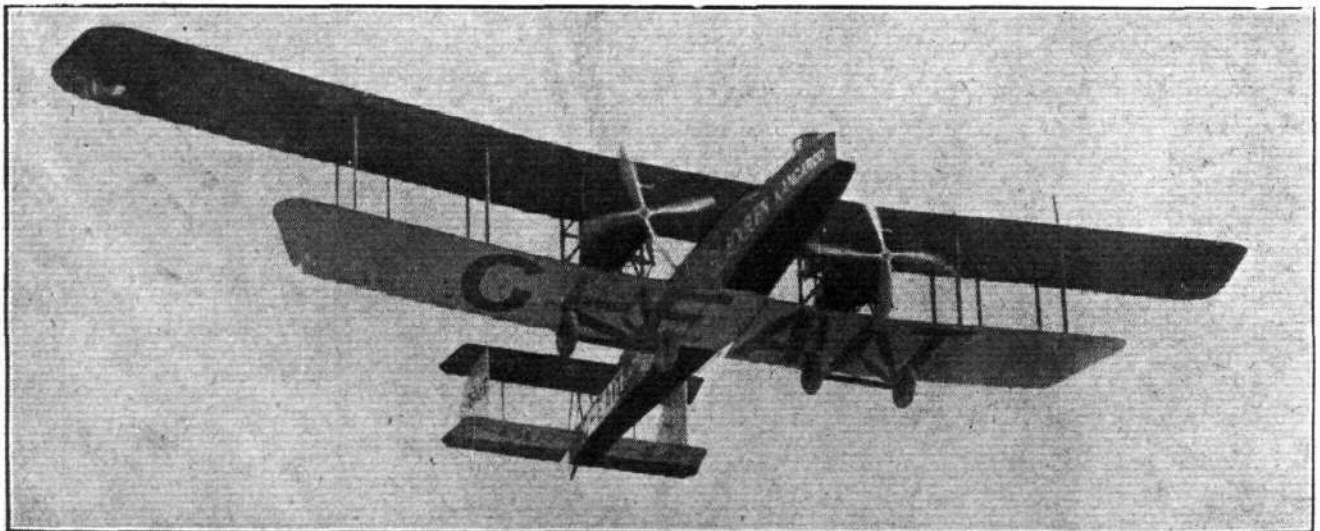
The Crew

Capt. Geo. H. Wilkins, M.C. and bar:—Commanding officer and navigator. Second in command of the Stefanson Arctic expedition, 1913-1917. Engaged with Historical Section, Australian War Records, as official photographer, A.I.F., France, Gallipoli and Palestine from 1917. War correspondent with Turks in Balkan War, 1912-13. Three years as Temp. Commander, Canadian Naval Service. Is under agreement as Chief of Scientific Staff of the Cope British Imperial Antarctic expedition, which will leave England about the middle of 1920. Has personal knowledge of practically every country in the world.

Lieut. D. R. Williams:—Second pilot. Fourteen years' experience as automobile engineer in N.S.W. Instructor at the flying school at Richmond, N.S.W. Ferry pilot and instructor with A.F.C.

Lieut. G. H. Potts:—Engineer officer. Son of the Principal, Hawkesbury Agricultural College, Richmond, N.S.W. Electrical engineer with the Australian General Electric Co., Sydney. Gunnery officer, A.F.C., served with No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C. in France.

Lieut. Val. Rendle:—First pilot. Son of Richard Rendler, F.R.C.S. (Eng.), of Brisbane. Assistant electrical engineer with the Australian Meat Export Co., Balmain, Brisbane. Joined Queensland Volunteer Flying Corps, founded by T. Macleod in 1915. Came to England and enlisted (March, 1916) as air-mechanic, R.F.C. Commissioned to R.F.C. in 1917, and served in England and France as instructor test pilot and ferry pilot.



THE FLIGHT TO AUSTRALIA: A Blackburn "Kangaroo," similar to the machine to be used, in flight.