

LONDON TERMINAL AERODROME

Monday, June 12, 1922.

AIR passenger traffic shows no signs of improvement. It is in fact, if anything, rather on the downward grade. What makes it seem really worse than it really is is the comparison with last year, when machines were daily carrying full loads, while now there are so many machines running daily that, although the passenger traffic is almost the same as last year, there are very few travellers per machine, and the illusion of only a dribble of traffic is created. I am informed that the Handley Page Transport are, in fact, carrying a record number of passengers, but as they are running twice as many machines as at any previous time in their existence, their machines are by no means full.

The air-station is fairly seething with indignation against adverse articles in the daily Press; but there are a thinking few who are of the opinion that good will come of these articles in the long run, as they are bringing skeletons out of the cupboard, and may probably hasten remedial measures.

It is interesting to note that one day last week there were no fewer than 28 machines in and out between London and the continent, and the total of passengers for the day was only 27. There were, of course, mails and goods in addition.

London-Amsterdam Goods Service

THE goods traffic between London and Holland is developing rapidly, and the daily load is now in the neighbourhood of three-quarters of a ton. Passengers are really quite a sideline of this service, but even these have been increasing slightly. There is now a regular daily consignment of freshly-cut flowers arriving in London by air from Amsterdam, and on several occasions recently this traffic alone has been almost sufficient to fill one of the F. 111 monoplanes. Quite a novelty in aeroplane cargoes was a consignment of queen bees that arrived from Amsterdam on Thursday. Each queen bee was packed in a special container, a little larger than a matchbox, and with a perforated top to allow fresh air. They were immediately passed through Customs and motored to London where they were placed on the first express train to Dumbarton in Scotland.

With the gradual increase in the goods traffic the Customs officers have found their office accommodation rather cramped, and alterations which have given them another and pleasanter office, in addition to the old one, are now completed. In common with the rest of the Government staffs on the aerodrome, they have now to keep a constant attendance from before 5 a.m. almost to dusk.

The weather has been reasonably good all the week, with the exception of Friday morning, when the early-morning machines were unable to get away, and those leaving before nine o'clock were held up on the route to the coast.

Mr. Cobham's Flight from Belgrade

It was unfortunate that this should have happened on this particular day, as Mr. Alan J. Cobham was expected to arrive after a particularly fine flight from Belgrade. Mr. Cobham is always departing to, or arriving from, some remote part of the map, so that his comings and goings do not now excite much attention; but on this occasion the details of the flight were exceptional. In order that *The Daily Mirror* should pander to the taste of its numerous women readers for wedding pictures, Mr. Cobham had undertaken to bring photographs of the royal wedding in Belgrade to London—a distance of nearly 1,200 miles—in a flight which, apart from the necessity of alighting for petrol, was practically continuous night and day. He was expected to arrive at the air-station between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. on Friday morning, but after a ceaseless struggle with the weather, from Strasburg to south-east England, he was forced to descend finally at Penshurst at 8 a.m. and bring the pictures to London by motor, afterwards returning to Penshurst and, when the weather had cleared, flying his D.H. 9 back to Stag Lane.

The Daimler Airway still continue to run their one machine twice a day between London and Paris, and, in spite of its constant 1,000 miles a day, the regularity of the service is such that the arrival of "the red machine" over the aerodrome in the evenings gives workers in the gardens and allotments round about a very good idea of the time.

Vickers "Vulcan" on the Airways

THE Vickers "Vulcan" is now running regularly on the Instone Air Line services to Paris and Brussels. The Instone pilots have been making trial flights in the machine in order

to get it on their licences, and on Saturday Mr. Powell, with seven passengers on board, in addition to goods and baggage, took the machine off in 14 seconds! The Instone Line have now arranged a round trip by air between London, Brussels, Paris, and back to London again.

Quite the most interesting event of the week was the night flight from Paris to London, and back, made by one of the Farman "Goliaths" of the Grands Express. Piloted by M. René Labouchere, and carrying eight passengers, the machine left Paris at 10.22 p.m. on Wednesday evening, and for the first section of the night flight had to contend with thunderstorms, and intermittent heavy rain and hail showers. M. Labouchere told me that at Beauvais the weather cleared somewhat, and by the time Abbeville was reached the conditions were perfect. The "cone-light" at Lypne was picked up when the night-flyers were still over France, and the lights at Croydon could be seen from Tonbridge.

The "Goliath" arrived at the air-station at 1.12 a.m., appearing over the aerodrome at a height of 8,000 feet. The navigation lights on the machine were plainly seen, even at this height, and the two headlights fitted below the fuselage were quite brilliant. M. Labouchere alighted on the aerodrome with the aid of the ordinary paraffin-flares and his own headlights. After an impromptu supper at the Trust House, the passengers embarked again in the machine and flew back to Paris, although the meteorological reports stated that the weather on the French side was becoming steadily worse.

This particular Goliath is not only fitted with navigation lights, but is also the only foreign machine on the airways fitted with wireless, while, in addition, the Aveline stabiliser is also installed. M. Gastou acted as relief pilot during the return night flight.

This flight is memorable as an indication of how near we now are to regular night flying. I understand, in fact, that the only thing that is stopping regular night operation on the airway is the attitude of the insurance companies, who are quoting very high premiums for the insurance of machines which are to be used at night.

Captain Muir, of the Surrey Flying Services, has been quite busy during the week-end with joy-riders, who now seem to be coming along in good numbers. During the week Captain Muir was again carrying out flights for the testing of a new type of parachute. I understand that the Surrey Flying Services are shortly sending out a joy-ride machine for a tour round England; or, alternatively, they may locate it at some popular spot where joy-riders are likely to be a paying proposition.

Mrs. Vernon Castle, the well-known dancer, hired a special Handley Page W 8 the other day in order to fulfil a dancing engagement in Paris, and she paid the Handley Page the compliment of saying that, had one or two chairs been removed, there was such steadiness in the machine's flying that she could have danced in the saloon while in the air.

Apropos the flower consignments from Holland—mentioned earlier in these notes—the interesting fact now transpires that flower-sellers in places other than London are beginning already to avail themselves of the speedy transport afforded by the air carriage from Holland. At the K.L.M. offices on the aerodrome, for example, a trunk call came through on Monday morning from Birmingham, asking that certain cases of flowers, from among the consignment due in on the machine arriving from Amsterdam at midday, should be so labelled that they could catch a train early in the afternoon at Euston for Birmingham—where the flowers would, in fact, arrive fresh that same evening, having travelled through all the way from Holland in a single day.

The K.L.M. are, by the way, putting on a special 6 a.m. monoplane on Wednesday to take newspapers over to Holland in connection with the European economic conference which, following upon the deliberations at Genoa, is about to open in the Peace Palace at the Hague.

The Avro Company has, it seems, received an order from the Russian Soviet Government for an Avro "Baby." The machine, while *en route* by air for Moscow, has apparently been delayed somewhere in Germany with engine trouble, and the other day Mr. Bert Hinckler went over by the monoplane service to Holland with a view to travelling on by train to the point where the machine was hung up, and dealing with the trouble, whatever it is, from his expert knowledge in the handling of this machine.

An All-Metal Spad Monoplane

FROM Paris it is reported that M. André Herbemont, the famous Spad designer, has just completed loading tests

of a new all-metal monoplane. No details are available, but we understand that the tests indicated a factor of safety of 13.5.