



"Line astern" by Hampdens as seen from the lower gun position on a machine of the same type.

THE "O/400" TRADITION

With the Hampden Bombers

By H. F. KING

(Illustrated with "Flight" Photographs)

THE official history of Great War No. 1 records numerous night attacks on enemy centres by Handley Page O/400 bombers. A typical mention reads "Two Handley Pages of No. 215 Squadron left their aerodrome at 8 p.m. on the 25th August on the first attempt to be made by the Squadron to attack the Badische works. One pilot approached the target from the north-west, through a searchlight barrage and under gun-fire, and, gliding down from 5,000ft., made his attack from a height of 200ft. The lights in the works had been put out, but the searchlights, in their attempts to find the bomber, were trained almost horizontally, and they clearly illuminated the works for the bombing crew. Many of the bombs (sixteen 112-lb. and ten 25-lb.) were seen to explode among the buildings, and when they had been released the pilot continued to fly low for some minutes while the machine guns from the Handley Page traversed the area. The second pilot came in close behind the first and made a somewhat similar attack from 500ft."

Such exploits by the O/400s (the war finished too soon for the later and larger V/1500s to prove their real worth) resulted in the popular association of the

name Handley Page with big bombers. To-day Handley Page bombers are again flying over Germany but they are far removed from the awkward-looking O/400s; they are the slim Hampden monoplanes of a Bomber Group in the north country. The following figures for the Hampden and O/400 are not without interest:—

	O/400	Hampden (in overload condition)
Span	100 ft.	69 ft. 2 in.
Wing loading	8.5 lb.	31.43 lb.
All-up weight	14,000 lb.	21,000 lb.
Disposable load	5,800 lb.	9,220 lb.
Top speed	97 m.p.h.	265 m.p.h.
Range at economical speed	720 miles	870 miles
Armament	3 machine guns	6 machine guns

Until the big raid on Sylt on the night of March 19 few major operations had fallen to the lot of the Hampdens, but on that occasion, in conjunction with other aircraft of the Bomber Command, they gave the German base a hammering which