

Planet

The SHORT STIRLING



First Details of Great Britain's Biggest Bomber : A Four-engined Type with Fighter Manœuvrability

ALMOST since the earliest days of flying the name of Short Brothers has been associated with marine aircraft. Short seaplanes made history even before the war 1914-18, and during that war the "Two-two-five" particularly became famous in the Royal Naval Air Service. From then onwards Shorts specialised on seaplanes, first twin-float types and afterwards flying boats. Of the latter the Empire boats, with variations, and the Sunderland are particularly noteworthy and are doing excellent work in the present war.

Landplanes

Although they specialised on seaplanes, Short Brothers did not neglect the landplane entirely. Every now and then a landplane would make its appearance at Rochester, as if to prove that the firm was quite capable of producing aircraft of that class if they were in demand. Actually, it may be said that, although all-metal marine aircraft were to become the firm's very special trade, it was with a landplane that the foundation was laid. In 1919 Mr. Oswald Short produced the first all-metal, stressed-skin aircraft, the *Silver Streak* biplane. This did not go into production as a type, but the principle of fuselage construction used in it was that which has since

been developed and now forms the basis of all modern Short aircraft. In more recent times there was the Scylla landplane, which really was the biplane wings of the Kent class flying boat mounted on a metal fuselage instead of the hull.

Until production of the Short Stirling was undertaken, the Scylla was the largest landplane built by Short Brothers. The long and successful experience with flying boats, however, was in itself a guarantee of the firm's qualifications to undertake the work of designing and building a large bomber, but to make assurance doubly sure it was decided to construct first a flying scale model of the bomber which was to become famous as the Stirling. One of our pictures shows this machine, which was a fairly faithful model. The Pobjoy Niagara IV engines were practically half-size (in scale, not in power, of course) of the Hercules engines of the large machine. The same might be said of the airscrews, so that slipstream effects were quite well represented in the model. The only thing, as Mr. Lankester Parker, Short's chief test pilot, used to say, which was not to scale was the pilot, who had to look out through a windscreen several sizes too small for him. However, the flying scale model provided the information required, and when the Air Ministry's specification for a high-speed long-range bomber was issued in 1936 the firm was ready to undertake the work.

The prototype aircraft, and the first of the production machines, were built by the

