



The tail having been depressed to clear the hangar roof, the de Havilland Comet is pushed out onto the tarmac.

THE COMET EMERGES

Preliminary Examination of De Havilland's New High-speed Jet Airliner

Illustrated by "Flight" Photographs and Sketches

FEW aircraft have excited so much interest during their period of design and construction as the D.H.106 Comet. The fact that all details have hitherto been kept a closely guarded secret has intensified the interest, especially abroad, where competitive concerns naturally wished to learn all they could. Only three years since the decisions regarding the design were taken, the first aircraft has been pushed out in readiness for taxiing trials and the first flight. This is a very creditable achievement and will come as a surprise to many who did not expect to see the Comet emerge until the end of the year.

Glancing back briefly over the Comet's gestation period, it may be recalled that the aircraft was first mentioned publicly in Parliament about two years ago; the name "Comet" was announced in December, 1948. The aircraft is based on a private venture design conceived before Lord Brabazon's Committee made its recommendations, and it followed an earlier design study for a jet-powered Atlantic mailplane. The Brabazon Type IV was for a 90,000 lb turbojet-propelled passenger landplane intended to carry 24 to 32 passengers over Empire routes. The Comet is designed to carry 36 passengers and a crew of four, and the weight is in the region of 75,000 lb.

Because the D.H.108 research aircraft was known to have as one of its purposes the provision of information for the Comet it was at first generally assumed that the 106 would have pronounced sweep-back and would be without horizontal tail surfaces. Such a design was, in fact, envisaged in the first place, but experience with the 108 and closer examination of such factors as the structure weight of sharply swept wings, led to a revision. Thus, the Comet now has a conventional empennage and wings with no more than moderate sweep-back. The wing area is seen to be quite generous, and the wing loading is stated to be lower than some conventional airliners now in service. It is, in our opinion, a great advantage that the de Havilland company have been able to meet the high-speed, high-

altitude performance figures without resorting to unconventional layout or abnormal wing loading. The Comet



John Cunningham, right, who will make the first flight on the Comet, watching it leave the hangar. With him is John Brodie, director of the de Havilland Engine Co. Ltd.