THE NEW COMET

FLIGHT trials of the de Havilland Comet Series 3 began promisingly last week at Hatfield with three separate trips totalling 2 hr 35 min. The first, of 85 min, was on the evening of July 19th, when the air photograph reproduced on this page was taken from a Dove. In terms of performance and capacity, the new Comet marks an appreciable advance on its predecessors, being designed to carry 58-76 passengers on stages of up to 2,600 miles. Corresponding figures for the Comet 2 are 44 passengers and 2,200 miles. Firm orders for Series 3s have been placed by B.O.A.C., P.A.W.A. and Air-India International.

Some of the more important features distinguishing the Comet 3 from earlier models are apparent in these photographs. Most noticeable is the long, shapely fuselage, measuring 111ft 6in from nose to tail, and 15ft longer than that of the Comet 2. Wing spread remains unchanged at 115ft (although area has been increased); the tailplane is altogether larger. Cabin windows are now circular instead of square.

The engines are four Rolls-Royce Avon 521s, each providing 10,000 lb thrust, compared with 7,000 lb from the Avon 503s of the Comet 2. Fuel capacity has been increased from 6,900 to 8,050 Imperial gallons by the addition of “pinion” tanks, externally mounted on the leading edge of the wing. These tanks contain landing lights, as illustrated here. The new “drooped” leading edge adopted for the Comet 2 at a late stage of production is incorporated as an integral part of the Series 3’s wing section. Flap area has been greatly increased, and in addition to the wing flaps there is now a large split flap beneath the fuselage.

Although both B.O.A.C. and PanAm propose to operate first-class versions of the Comet 3, the makers emphasize that the aircraft is fully adaptable for tourist work. A 71-seat version would feature five-abreast seating pitched at 40in and a 14in gangway; by reducing seat-pitch to 38in, the complement could be increased to 76. Gangway-width increases to 20in in the 56- and 60-seat four-abreast tourist versions. It is also possible to offer mixed travel by mounting the kitchen centrally to separate first-class passengers. The Series 3 prototype is fully furnished in B.O.A.C. style, employing new double seats, weighing only 50 lb.

The first phase of flight trials, now in progress, will include basic performance tests and verification of stability throughout the speed range, and will entail some 10-12 hr flying.