

A magazine of 18 photographic plates is being handed to a 27 Squadron observer for use in the windmill-driven "L" type aerial camera. This photograph also shows very clearly the armament and layout of the D.H.4.



plane with many bullets at close range, to see it fly round in continuous circles. "I said to myself," writes Boelcke, "the fellow is long since dead, and the machine is flying so because its steering apparatus is fixed in the right position. I flew therefore quite close and saw the occupant leaning over to the right, dead in his cockpit. So that I should know which of the machines I had shot down (surely it must go down), I noted the number: 7495, left him, and took on the next." The aircraft was flown by Second-Lt. H. A. Taylor.

The squadron remained in the line for the whole of the first war. In the middle of 1917 the Martinsydes were exchanged for D.H.4s and these, later, gave place to D.H.9s. Apart from its military prowess, No. 27 Squadron was also noted in the 1914-18 war for the development of high-level (14,500ft) photographic reconnaissance and all-weather flying.

At the end of hostilities No. 27 returned to England and was disbanded in January 1920; but the disbandment was not to last long, for the squadron was re-formed in India the next April.

Based on the Indus River, and now equipped with D.H.9a aircraft, the unit found itself mixed up with the tribal troubles of the N.W. Frontier; and in 1928, during the Afghan difficulties, its pilots made some of the earliest flights to Kabul to evacuate civilians from the European legations. In 1939, on the outbreak of war, it became a flying training unit at Risalpur.

When, in December 1941, the Japanese attacked in the Far East, No. 27 was flying Blenheims in Malaya as a night-fighter squadron. It was stationed at Sungei Patani, operating there with No. 21 Squadron. After a comparatively short spell of fighting, and when no Blenheims remained, it was overrun by the enemy; but personnel who managed to escape returned by devious routes to India, where they once more re-formed the squadron. On Christ-

Westland Wapitis of No. 27 Squadron at Kohat, N.W. Frontier, India, where the unit was stationed in the early 1930s.



mas Day, 1942, No. 27 returned to operations as a Beaufighter squadron.

Nearly the whole of the remainder of the war was spent in fighting the Japanese. Hundreds of sorties were flown against road, rail and water transport, troops and enemy installations.

When the war was nearing its end the squadron was transferred to air/jungle rescue and supply-dropping duties. This was difficult work, in which dense jungle had to be searched for wrecked aircraft and supplies dropped to survivors. In February 1946 the unit was disbanded again.

The squadron was next heard of as a Transport Command squadron, having been re-formed yet again in England in 1947. This "life" was short even for No. 27. After doing some excellent work on the Berlin Airlift it was disbanded once more, in November 1950.

As befits a unit with such a splendid record, No. 27 was re-formed—in June 1953—to fly our newest and fastest jet bombers. It was then under the command of S/L. D. H. Chopping, D.F.C., who last year led six of the Canberras in a goodwill and training tour of the Mediterranean countries.

The C.O. is S/L. P. W. Helmore, D.F.C., A.F.C., son of A. Cdre. W. Helmore, who will be remembered for his war-time air commentaries. S/L. Helmore was a "Pathfinder" with No. 105 Squadron and has no fewer than 102 operational sorties against targets in Germany and Europe to his credit. By coincidence it was he who put down the target indicators on D-Day for the Bostons in which his father was flying to get a first-hand view of the invasion.

With its present equipment the squadron's motto, "*Quam Celerrime ad Astra*" ("With all speed to the stars") is very apt. J.Y.

One of the squadron's Bristol Beaufighters engaged on air/jungle rescue duties in Batavia during the last war.

