



Predecessor of today's gleaming Viscount fleets, the V.630 prototype is seen on its modest debut at Wisley seven years ago.

## The Story of the VISCOUNT

*Evolution of an Airliner: The First Ten Years\**

**T**HE VISCOUNT'S origins go back to 1945 when the "Second Brabazon Committee" initiated the project as part of its advice to the British Government on how best to implement the recommendations of the "First Brabazon Committee" of 1943 on desirable types of civil transport aeroplane for post-war operation.

The second Brabazon Committee submitted its final report to the then Minister of Aircraft Production, Sir Stafford Cripps, in November 1945. The Committee had, however, taken action before this to initiate the project which later became the Viscount. At its 59th meeting, on March 7th, 1945, the Committee considered Paper No. 141 (R.D.A.T. Note No. 12) which was a study of the "comparative economics of a 30,000 lb aircraft powered with jet units, Merlin engines or propeller turbines." The alternatives considered were aircraft with the following power units: (a) two 1,600 b.h.p. Rolls-Royce Merlin 90 liquid-cooled piston engines, (b) two Rolls-Royce B.41 turbojet engines, and (c) four 850 b.h.p. Armstrong-Siddeley Mamba turboprop engines.

The Brabazon Committee, powerfully influenced by the arguments of Mr. N. E. Rowe (now Technical Director of Blackburn and General Aircraft Ltd. and this year's President of the Royal Aeronautical Society), concluded that the best answer lay in the turboprop. As a result, it agreed that a propeller-turbine aircraft in this category should be developed and decided to recommend the Minister to take immediate action and not wait for the Committee to report formally.

Lord Brabazon accordingly wrote to Lord Swinton, then the Minister of Civil Aviation, on March 13th, 1945, and suggested that steps should be taken immediately to define the requirement for a short-haul propeller-turbine aeroplane which should be developed as soon as possible. This requirement, which later became known as the "Brabazon Type IIB," was for: "a 24-seat aircraft, powered with four gas turbine engines driving airscrews for European and other short-to-medium range services."

An interesting point is that this requirement was seen as a DC-3 replacement, incorporating all the latest advances in design, including the first application of propeller-turbine engines to commercial air transport.

At this time Vickers-Armstrongs, Ltd., were engaged in the design of a "stop-gap" British short-haul transport aeroplane,

*\*Outlining the development of the Vickers-Armstrongs Viscount from 1945 until the present time, this history was first published as an appendix to the lecture "Operating Experience with Turboprop Aircraft," delivered by Mr. Peter Masefield to the Fifth Anglo-American conference at Los Angeles on June 20th last. (Abstracts from the lecture were given in "Flight" of June 24th last.) In his acknowledgements, Mr. Masefield states that Mr. P. W. Brooks, his technical assistant, was largely responsible for compiling this concise and absorbing account of the Viscount story.*

Five stages in design: (A) double-bubble VC-2 project with four Darts (June, 1945); (B) a second VC-2 project with four Mambas (November, 1945); (C) VC-2 Viceroy project, also with Mambas (December, 1946); (D) the first Viscount: V.630 with four Darts (August, 1947); (E) V.700 (January, 1949).

(Below): First flown in July 1948, V.630 later appeared for a while with R.A.F.-type M.o.S. roundels.

"Flight" photograph

