

# British Executive Flying

*How One Big Business House Utilizes its Rapide*

By  
**BRIAN  
CARNEY**



**E**XECUTIVE flying—the use of company-owned aircraft for the transport of senior staff—has become part of the everyday routine of many large firms in the United States during post-war years. In Britain, executive flying is still little known. That there are serious drawbacks to this form of aviation in the U.K. is obvious: the heavy tax on aircraft fuel makes any form of private flying enormously expensive compared with other types of transport; time saved by flying between two cities may be lost in a traffic snarl on the road from the airport; and as the U.K. is a small island and not a sub-continent it is likely that most businessmen's journeys are of too short a distance to facilitate the economic use of a private aircraft.

But executive flying has its champions even in Britain. One man with a strong belief in the usefulness of company-owned aircraft is Mr. D. C. Maxwell, a director of Ind Coope and Allsopp, Ltd., the large brewing firm with headquarters at Burton-on-Trent. In April this year a D.H. Rapide was purchased from Air Couriers, Ltd., Croydon (through Mr. F. W. Griffith), and Ind Coope's became one of the very few commercial undertakings in Britain to operate an aircraft solely for the purpose of flying directors and managers about their business. A full-time pilot was added to the staff in the person of Mr. D. Lancaster, who until recently was joint owner of a charter company operating from Ringway, Manchester. Mr. Lancaster has spent 3,000 of the 4,400 flying hours in his log book handling Rapides. He is an ex-R.A.F. pilot who joined the Service in 1941, flying Spitfires with the Desert Air Force and Typhoons in the European campaigns. After the war he flew from Croydon with several charter companies before moving to Ringway. His experience has familiarized him with all the major British, European, Mediterranean and African air routes.

The Rapide has been fitted out with modern navigational aids including a Bendix radio compass, two VHF radios and a fan marker. In its modified form, the aircraft carries seven persons and can be operated successfully in marginal weather conditions. It has a cruising speed of 130 m.p.h. and uses 20 gallons of fuel per hour.

The Rapide is based at Burnaston Airport, between Derby and Burton, five miles from the head office of Ind Coope. Trips are made almost daily to destinations as far away as Hornchurch, Alfoa, Ipswich, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cardiff, Portsmouth, Liverpool and the Isle of Man. Cross-Channel journeys are also flown as the company, through their subsidiary B. Grant and Co., purchase quantities of French wine for their tied and free trade houses. The machine has flown to Germany and Switzerland on engineering business.

It is interesting to note how the aircraft has been dovetailed into the firm's ordinary transport administration system. To ensure maximum utilization, the pilot gets his instructions from only one man, who works in the firm's central office and knows the overall commitments for air travel. If a director wishes to use the aircraft for a flight he asks his personal assistant to arrange this with the central office, and if the aircraft has not already been booked for an important flight on the day specified, the journey is scheduled. This flight will be noted on a duplicated sheet which details the Rapide's flying programme for the coming week, and this is circulated to all other directors and senior staff. Requests to join scheduled flights are then accepted up to the maximum seating capacity. In fact, the aircraft is fully committed through the working week.

After two months' continuous operating the Rapide seems to have proved its worth in no small measure. Mr. Maxwell is an enthusiastic private pilot, and he is confident that the Ind Coope aircraft will prove that executive flying has a place in the busi-

ness life of Britain. He does not deny that flying of this kind is extremely expensive, but he has figures to show that "cooping top executives in trains for hours on end" is even more expensive; and the Rapide carries several directors, not one, on most flights.

What about delays between airport and business centre? Here again Mr. Maxwell is more optimistic than most. He claims that many people base their ideas of excessive delays on their experience when flying between large civil airports, such as London and Ringway. But, as he points out to non-flying friends, there are about 130 civil aerodromes suitable for the reception of small aircraft in this country and 50 R.A.F. fields which can be used with permission. Many of these airfields are almost as accessible to business centres as the local railway stations. There are few large towns in Britain which do not have a landing field within five miles.

Even when flying between big cities, careful co-ordination of transport arrangements can ensure a valuable saving in time, says Mr. Maxwell. If possible he arranges for the executive with whom he is to confer to meet him at the airport, so that time spent in driving to the office can be utilized for the preliminary discussion which is essential before most decisions are taken.

It is becoming commonplace for Ind Coope directors to have a daily routine such as this:—8.30 a.m., arrive at the Burton-on-Trent head office, read through correspondence and dictate replies; 10 a.m., leave for Burnaston Airport; 10.15 take off for (say) Manchester; 11 a.m., arrive Manchester for conference and business luncheon; 3.30 p.m., take off from Manchester for Burnaston; 4.30 p.m., leave Burnaston for Burton; 4.45 p.m., arrive back at head office in time to sign letters and dictate any material connected with the conference.

Apart from the time-saving factor in using company-owned aircraft, there are other economic advantages. Hotel charges—normally a very heavy item in travelling expenses—are almost eliminated. Return journeys from the extremities of the British Isles can be accomplished without an overnight stop. There is no need to have breakfast and dinner away from home.

It is likely that other firms with a structure similar to Ind Coope and Allsopp will study the executive flying experiment with care. Ind Coope are, in many ways, an ideal firm for this project: their business interests are spread over a wide area with depots and agencies throughout the country. Most of the depots and agencies have adequate road transport facilities and there is no difficulty in arranging for cars to meet the Rapide at the nearest airfield.

The business is large enough for its directors and senior staff to be sufficiently well paid to make the value of the time saved by personal air transport greater than the cost of flying. There is full utilization of the aircraft because there are enough air-minded people within the company to support the scheme and thus spread the overhead charges.

The possibility of laying down small airstrips in the vicinity of the larger Ind Coope depots has not been ruled out as a future plan to improve even more the efficiency of the executive flying service. As such runways would obviously be very short, this possibility suggests a useful field of investigation by the manufacturers of aircraft with very short landing/take-off characteristics.

Although this is the first time Ind Coope have had a full-time pilot on the staff of the company, Mr. Maxwell has been piloting himself on business trips since 1947. In that year he started using his own Auster for business purposes, flying for the most part from a private runway in the grounds of his home, Bosworth Hall, Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire.

Mr. Maxwell was able to demonstrate that if all his business travel was done by train or car, more than one month in every year would be spent actually on the move from place to place. By flying he showed he could travel 20,000 miles annually and the time taken would amount to only 150 hours. Now he has gained the backing of his board; some of his colleagues admit to enjoying the switch from land to air transport—others regard it as a necessary evil, but at least they accept it.

Ind Coope are giving a lead in the most neglected field of aviation in this country; just how neglected, as compared with the United States, can be judged from a recent American novel which records—apparently without irony—an argument between a Texas oil tycoon and his wife. He tells her she will have to be satisfied with the twin-engined aircraft for her shopping trip—as he needs "the big aeroplane" for executive flying.