



The routine scene: a "Flight" photograph taken at London Airport Central after the arrival of flight BE 919 from Glasgow last Friday evening.

B.E.A. DECADE

The Story of the Corporation's Ten Eventful Years

ON Wednesday last, August 1, British European Airways celebrated its tenth birthday. Ten years is not such a long time in air transport history and it has often been said that to be first means little; it is keeping ahead that is important. B.E.A. has over the last few years been particularly successful in this respect. The introduction of its Vickers Viscounts put the corporation well ahead of its competitors; and although the Viscount is now in operation with many airlines, B.E.A. has by far the largest Viscount fleet in Europe. Until very recently B.E.A. had the largest gas-turbine powered fleet in the world.

In addition to its ten years of operation as B.E.A., the corporation can legitimately claim 37 years of airline operating experience through its direct ancestors—B.O.A.C., Imperial Airways and the pioneer British airlines which began operation in 1919.

British European Airways Corporation was established under the Civil Aviation Act, 1946, on August 1, 1946, the day the Act received the Royal Assent, "with a view to providing civil air services in various parts of the world, and in particular, in Europe (including the British Islands)." This meant that under the Act B.E.A. was to be responsible for the operation of all scheduled air services within the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and all British services from the United Kingdom to the continent of Europe. In fact this stipulation has since been modified and there are numerous independent airlines operating within the United Kingdom and between the United Kingdom and the continent.

The original Board of B.E.A. consisted of Sir Harold Hartley (chairman), Mr. Whitney Straight (deputy chairman), Mr. Gerard d'Erlanger (managing director), W/C. A. H. Measures and Mr. I. J. Hayward. All were appointed from August 1, 1946. Subsequent additions to the Board that year were Sir Patrick Dollan

and Mr. W. A. Edmenson, chairmen respectively of the Scottish and Northern Ireland Advisory Councils for Civil Aviation.

In anticipation of the passing of the Civil Aviation Act, a British European Airways Division of B.O.A.C. was formed on January 3, 1946, and that division took over the operation of the existing B.O.A.C. services to Europe and the non-military services operated between the United Kingdom and Europe by R.A.F. Transport Command. The B.E.A. Division began operating services from Northolt Airport on February 4, 1946. When the new corporation came into being it established its headquarters at Bourne School, to the east of Northolt Airport. Renamed Keyline House, this is still the corporation's head office.

On August 1, 1946, the new corporation took over a fleet of 20 C-47s (military version of the Douglas DC-3) from B.O.A.C., and these aircraft each had accommodation for 16 passengers, although on some routes the full complement could not be carried. Although it has not been possible to find confirmation that it operated as scheduled, the first B.E.A. service was timed to leave Northolt at 0840 on August 1 bound for Marseilles, Rome (night-stop) and Athens. At 0900 B.E.A. services were due to leave Northolt for Stockholm and Stockholm for Northolt, both *via* Gothenburg.

B.E.A. was unable to take over immediately the operation of British Isles domestic services, so for the time being these were operated on behalf of the corporation by the railway group of private airlines working together as the Associated Airways Joint Committee and by Allied Airways (Gander Dower), Ltd., and Channel Islands Airways, Ltd.

The routes operated by B.E.A. at its formation were: London-Paris (three flights daily); London-Brussels (twice daily); London-Amsterdam (twice on weekdays); London-Bordeaux-Madrid-