

FROM ALL QUARTERS

RAN Wessex Order

PROVISIONAL purchase of 30 Westland Wessex helicopters for the Royal Australian Navy was announced by the Australian Minister of Defence, Mr Athol Townley, in Canberra last week. The cost is estimated at £A6m (£4.8m sterling). Mr Townley said that certain tests had yet to be made before the order was finalized.

Cyrano for Australia

IT is now reported that the Australian Government has signed a contract for the supply of C.S.F. Cyrano fire-control radars to be fitted in RAAF Mirage IIIs. An Australian decision in favour of the Cyrano was reported, but not confirmed, some months ago, although Ferranti still appeared to be very much in the running with Airpass 2. It now seems clear that RAAF Mirages will be identical in all major respects with those ordered for the French Air Force.

Light Aircraft at Heathrow

FULLY equipped twin-engined private and executive aircraft flown by pilots holding an instrument rating may now use London (Heathrow) Airport without prior permission, except during peak times (totalling four hours daily for domestic flights and six hours for international flights) and except for periods of one week before and one week after all public holidays. This was the main message contained in the Ministry of Aviation's Civil Aviation Information Circular No 56/1961 dated June 21, which stated that this new arrangement was to come into force forthwith for a trial period of three months.

Although this concession will be welcomed as a step in the right direction, particularly by the Royal Aero Club and Business Aircraft Users' Association who have campaigned for some time for this type of assistance, pilots may be forgiven for gaining the impression from certain sections of the circular that the Ministry is perhaps not wildly enthusiastic about encouraging this type of non-scheduled air traffic. "London (Heathrow) Airport is provided primarily for the use of civil aircraft operating scheduled passenger and freight services approved by the Minister of Aviation," the circular begins. "London (Gatwick) is fully equipped and available for other types of flight," it continues. And, just in case any wrong impression is given, paragraph 1.3 puts him straight right away: "These revised conditions do not make the airport available for recreational or pleasure flying."

The times during which the airport is *not* normally available to non-scheduled aircraft are from 7.30 to 11.30 a.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. for international flights; and from 8 to 10 a.m. (take-offs) and 4 to 6 p.m. (landings) for domestic flights. During the remaining times when the airport can be used, the conditions are that the aircraft must have two or more engines; that it carries "all the required VHF/RT frequencies and radio aids to navigation in accordance with Article 10 of the Air Navigation Order, 1960, including ILS on all four London (Heathrow) Airport frequencies"; that the pilot holds an instrument rating; and that administrative or diplomatic clearance has been obtained where required. The lucky ones who qualify are further required to use the special call sign "Cigar" when contacting approach control (clearly someone at the Ministry believes himself fully aware of the true nature of business flights).

For the future, the circular holds out hope for aircraft and pilots which do not qualify under these conditions, and in particular for single-engined and light twin-engined machines. Trials are being

made to evolve standard routes and procedures for these aircraft which will avoid long approaches over built-up areas and, when "satisfactory procedures" have been agreed (a further information circular is promised on this), these aircraft will be allowed in also, provided they have at least the VHF/RT frequencies to permit communication with the airport's approach director, tower and ground movement control—but then "only on special VFR clearances and in weather conditions which will permit the pilot to navigate by visual means."

Carvair on Test

THE first flight of the Aviation Traders ATL-98 Carvair is recorded on pages 890-891. As we close for press it is learned that the aircraft has flown at a weight of 69,000lb at heights of up to 10,000ft. It has been stalled at a 15° flap setting and with full flap, with undercarriage down. It was hoped to fly the Carvair to Filton this week for position-error checks. At the time of writing about seven hours' flying has been recorded, and a take-off at the maximum weight of 74,000lb was imminent.

Decca was used as a primary aid during flight trials and will be installed as standard in production Carvairs for Channel Air Bridge.

J. A. D. McCurdy

WE record with regret that John A. D. McCurdy, MBE, LLD, DCL, the pioneer pilot who designed and built the Silver Dart in 1908, with it making the first aeroplane flight in the British Empire on February 23, 1909 (at Baddeck, Nova Scotia), died last weekend at the age of 74. He was a director of the Curtiss Aeroplane Co from 1917 to 1919 and president of Curtiss Aeroplanes and Motors Ltd, Toronto, from 1914 to 1919. From 1947 to 1952 he was Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia.



Denny Hovercraft Starts Trials

LAST Thursday the 4½-ton sidewall hovercraft built as a test vehicle for larger vessels by William Denny & Brothers Ltd made its public debut on Gareloch, near Dumbarton. The purpose of this relatively large test vehicle, which carries a crew of three, is to investigate the performance and behaviour of the sidewall hovercraft layout for larger trading vessels capable of operating at about 35kt in rivers and estuaries. The air cushion is retained at the sides by continuous walls which remain immersed in the water and, at the ends, by inward-inclined air curtains. These and the main cushion air are supplied from four intakes by fans driven by two Excelsior Seafarer III 25 h.p. two-stroke engines. Propulsion and directional control are provided by two Mercury 35 h.p. outboard engines with variable-pitch propellers. The test craft is 60ft long and 10ft wide.

Advantages of the layout for commercial work are that the sidewalls make retention of the cushion, and therefore the lifting-power requirement, fairly low, while the cushion itself reduces drag and eliminates wash. The vehicle can therefore operate effectively in shallow and confined waters and against strong currents. The sidewalls are 1ft deep and the efficiency of the air curtains is indicated in the accompanying picture (below) by the small amount of spray generated.

The test vehicle will attain speeds of 15 to 17kt and will later be tested over a specially prepared measured-mile course in shallow water outside the navigation channel on the Clyde, near Langbank. Hovercraft Development Ltd are co-operating in the project. The sidewall principle was envisaged some years ago by Christopher Cockerell. Denny hope to develop a passenger-carrying "hover-ferry" by next year.

THE DENNY HOVERCRAFT (see Col 2) during trials on the Gareloch. Right, Mr C. F. Morris, technical director in charge of development

