

# London Tests Heard Faintly---Flying To Britain Looming

## New Browning-Drake Design



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—S. P. Andrew, photo.  
GROUP-CAPT. P. T. M. FELLOWES,  
Director of British Airship Development

## WHO WILL FLY TO LONDON IN 1930?

These representatives of the Imperial Airways say that in 1930 it will be possible for those who desire it to fly from New Zealand to London in from 12 to 14 days. Airships now building will make it possible. Accommodation is being provided for 100 passengers and 30 tons of payable freight, such as mails, valuables, etc. Fares will probably run 25 per cent. higher than present mail steamer rates.

It sounds like a dream but so many dream-like things are happening these days. These men are substantial enough to be here, coolly looking for a suitable site for the necessary mooring mast and studying the air-currents and meteorological conditions. They say that airship travel is perfectly safe, that scientific data and carefully tabulated experience have conquered earlier disabilities, and that in airship travel over Empire Airways, the British race will add a final binding tie to the British Commonwealth of Nations, and world unity. Group-Captain Fellowes spoke from both 1YA and 2YA on his mission—and listeners say it was the best talk put on the air here.



—S. P. Andrew, photo.  
MR. M. A. GIBLETT,  
Superintendent of the Royal Airship  
Meteorological Division in Britain.

To endeavour to view airships and their present position in their true perspective, it is necessary to look to the past.

I daresay a great many people in New Zealand think that airships owe their existence to war requirements. As a matter of history this is not so. Before the war Count Zeppelin constructed his early airships for passenger traffic, and he, together with other German companies, had carried approximately 40,000 passengers before the war without damage to a single passenger, a performance immeasurably beyond the capacity of pre-war aeroplanes, and it is doubtful if aeroplanes have reached this pitch of efficiency yet. Comparing this performance with the figures of aeroplane transport of the present day, or even with the P. and P. first-class passenger traffic of 30,000 passengers a year, it is startling in its promise. It must be remembered that in the war airships were not only deliberately written down to discount the Zeppelin menace, but they were also used for a purpose that threw them open to easy destruction once the proper means had been discovered.

### THE WAR AND AIRSHIPS.

Together these two factors created an unfavourable public opinion towards airships. Another factor that has affected airships, and which has, from one aspect, definitely damaged their progress, was their too rapid rate of development and construction during the war. This pressure for production definitely prohibited the necessary scientific investigation of the problems involved.

The Germans produced at great

speed by empirical methods, rigid ships of great and greater efficiency, and we did the same in regard to non-rigid ships. The methods adopted for this period of development can be adequately described as ordinary engineering bridge-building practice diluted by experience and rule-of-thumb methods, a process not nearly refined enough for airship construction where maximum strength at minimum weight is essential to efficiency.

### REVIVAL OF INTEREST.

After the war the development of airships was closed down for all practical purposes. The Americans and Italians kept airships going in a tentative fashion, but it really remained for the British Government to take the responsibility of opening anew the whole question. This they did, first by investigating very thoroughly on a thoroughly scientific basis through the medium of the National Physical Laboratory, and a number of highly qualified scientists, the problems involved in airship construction. To do this they had to make certain assumptions of the conditions to be met in the air, and at mooring towers, and I feel confident that we have not under-estimated them. Finally, there have been carried out certain full-scale experiments in R88 and in the structure of R101, to prove out the reliability of the model and theoretical investigations. I am glad to be able to tell you that these full-scale experiments proved that the assumptions and calculations of the scientists were for all practicable purposes correct, and have enabled the necessary modifications to the formulas used to be made. At the same time the

mooring tower, which I will describe later, was developed and tested out, and unless this had been successfully achieved the regularity of service essential to commercial success would not be possible.

So the position we have now reached is that two 5,000,000 feet, or 150 tons displacement airships, based on these investigations, are now being built, and the necessary sheds and towers for their test in temperate and sub-tropical conditions are in course of erection.

It then remained for the South African and Canadian Governments to come forward with offers to build mooring towers, which will enable airships to be tested out on routes which involve tropical and sub-arctic conditions. Incidentally, the fact that the South African Government came forward in this way will enable the modifications which may be found necessary in the type of airship for crossing tropical routes to be put into production perhaps several years earlier than could have been possible, had they not done so. Also, the erection of a mooring mast in South Africa will enable the route to Australia and New Zealand to be opened earlier. Our programme which you probably have already heard about is to carry out very full tests of these new vessels at Home, and when these tests are complete to fly them out to India and do mooring tests in that country. When these tests are complete, which they should be by the middle of 1929, the period for demonstration flights will arrive, and

It is the present intention to fly a ship to South Africa in July or

August of 1929, and to Australia and New Zealand in 1930 if bases in these two countries are available.

### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

Assuming that all these projects are carried out successfully, it is hoped that the shipping companies or other large organisations will come forward and embark on airship construction and operation. Naturally it is our desire to hasten the commercial development of airships to the utmost possible extent, but I think it is perhaps fortunate that circumstances in the shape of lack of building sheds put a break on the speed of this development. Because, if this were not so, airships might cause serious injury to the important shipping interests involved in this area, due to the superior facilities in regard to speed and in some respects, comfort, which they offer for the carriage of passengers, mails and valuable light freight, such as diamonds and gold. Our aim is very foreign to such a purpose and is rather constructive than destructive. We hope that airships will gradually come into healthy co-operative relations with other established methods, or, for that matter, growing methods of transport, such as the steamer, train, the motor and the aeroplane. Airships will not for a long time, and possibly may never take a large part in overland transport, and I should like to mention here that it is my opinion that airships will increase traffic rather than take away from existing modes of transport, particularly the aeroplane passenger and mails coming from England on a fast passage, say in 12 days, for they will not then be satisfied to take perhaps

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