

# R.A.F. Stretches its Wings

## British Civil Aviation Progresses

RECENT agreement between France and England under which bombers of each nation fly over the other's territory in Europe removes a handicap on R.A.F. training which was growing acute.

When bombers had a range of a mere 500 to 600 miles the British Isles were big enough to afford a reasonable measure of long-distance straight-line flying, but when ranges crept into the thousand, the two-thousands and, now, the three thousands, restrictions became not only irksome to the authorities but a menace to our bombing efficiency. From the bomber aerodromes in the Midlands the longest direct flights possible within the homeland were to the north of Scotland and back, a distance of about 1,000 miles. Circular flights round Britain gave longer routes, but their value was little more than that of normal aerodrome circuit-and-landing to an experienced pilot.

So great is the speed of the modern bomber that the longest runs available within the limits of Great Britain are completed in a few hours; further, the value of such flights diminishes when bomber crews always fly over well-known terrain.

The new liberty acquired under the Anglo-French agreement means a valuable addition to the training facilities available to the Royal Air Force, and provides it with the opportunity it has long lacked of stretching its wings and doing justice to the excellent aeroplanes with which it is equipped.

THE Air Ministry's official report on civil aviation for 1938 records impressive increases in the volume of traffic carried.

In the twelve months ended December 31, regular services operated on home air routes, between this country and the continent, and by Imperial Airways and associated companies overseas, flew no fewer than 13,556,000 miles—nearly three million more than in 1937.

Passenger-miles climbed from 49,729,000 to 54,267,000, and freight ton-miles from 804,600 to 904,000. Mail ton-miles were more than doubled, reaching a total of 9,335,000. This was largely due to the growth of Empire air mail traffic under the stimulus of the "all-up" scheme under which first-class matter is carried by air to Empire destinations without surcharge.

Our internal air services did well, too, flying approximately 3,267,000 miles and carrying 147,500 passengers and 1,200 tons of mails and freight.

Other branches of aviation showing increases were the number of registered aircraft within

the Empire (3,197 in 1937 to 3,260 in 1938) and the number of commercial pilots (1,955 to nearly 2,200). Private pilots rose from 7,552 to 8,700, and ground engineers from 2,961 to 3,500.

Of the 74 light aeroplane clubs in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, sixty-three were included in the Air Ministry's subsidy scheme. "A" Licence holders numbered 3,960, excluding Civil Air Guard members, of whom there



Major Alan Goodfellow, popular North of England Area Commissioner for the Civil Air Guard and a member of the Lancashire Area Club C.A.G. unit—one of the twelve in his area—inspecting other members of the unit at the Club's recent Garden Party. When Major Goodfellow joined the Civil Air Guard he had already logged 1,560 hours of flying in forty-eight different types of aeroplanes.

were, on December 31 last year, 5,762.

The report, all things considered, is satisfactory. It covers a period completely dominated by military aviation, and proves that we are still a long way from saturation point in the development of civil aviation. This will be underlined and emphasised by the 1939 report when it comes out.