THE R A F CAIRO-CAPE FLIGHT
Official Report on the Big 14,000-Mile Flight

THE official account of the Royal Air Force flight from Cairo to Cape Town and back, which took place last summer, has just been issued. This report, as it stands, would fill some 14 columns of FLIGHT, and with the present pressure on our space we are unable to publish it in full, in spite of the fact that it makes most interesting reading, and is at the same time an historic record.

In previous issues of FLIGHT, however, we have given particulars of this flight from start to finish, including a special article (in our issue for June 24 last) on the occasion of the arrival of the airmen in this country. We propose, therefore, to give this week a necessarily brief résumé of the official report referred to above, including only the more interesting items contained therein.

To begin with, it should be pointed out that this flight of four R.A.F. machines from Cairo to the Cape and back to England was purely a service flight carried out in the ordinary course of R.A.F. training, and no attempt was made to break records. The object of the flight was to visit the Dominion of South Africa and the various colonies en route; to gain experience in long-distance flying in formation, keeping to a scheduled time-table. and so to test the regularity with which reinforcements can be despatched by air, to gain experience in flying through changing climates and conditions, and over new country, to co-operate with local forces stationed in close proximity to the route followed, and last but not least, to visit the South African Air Force.

The route of the flight was practically the same as that organised by the R.A.F. in 1919, and followed by Sir Pierre Van Ryneveld on the Vickers "Silver Queen" machine 1920. It was divided into three sections—Northern, Central and Southern. The Northern Section was organised by the Middle East Command, R.A.F., and stretched from Aboukir to Nimule. The Central Section, for which an R.A.F. officer with one N.C.O. and three airmen was responsible, lay between Jinja (Uganda) and Abercorn (N. Rhodesia). The Southern Section, for which another R.A.F. officer and two airmen were detailed, commenced at N'Dola (N. Rhodesia) and finished at Cape Town.

The flight was to be composed of four aeroplanes (Fairey 111 D and
planes with Napier "Lion" series V engines). A spare aeroplane, two spare engines and spares were sent to Aboukir; a spare aeroplane, two spare engines and various spares were dumped at Kisumu (Lake Victoria) and a spare aeroplane, four spare engines and appropriate spares were to be dumped at either Cape Town or Pretoria. Thus a total of seven aeroplanes and 10 engines were allotted for the flight. (Note, the whole flight was completed without any change of machine or engine.)

On November 6, 1925, the flight formed at Northolt under the command of Wing Commander C. W. H. Pulford, O.13.E., A.F.C., but was not complete with personnel until December 1. In addition to the leader, the personnel engaged in the flight were:—Flight-Lieuts. P. H. Mackworth, (Pilot) E. J., I.. Hope, A.F.C. (Pilot); L. E. M. Gillman (Navigation); Flying Officers W. L. Payne (Pilot); A. A. Jones (Technical); Sergts. Hartley (Fitter); and Gardener (Rigger).

At Northolt tests and practice flights were carried out as well as the preparation of the final lists of equipment, checking of same. etc., etc. The natural tendency when preparing lists of equipment is to try and take everything so as to be prepared for any eventuality. It is recognised, however, that if an engine is to last the aeroplane must not be overloaded—and as Wing.-Com. Pulford said, "If you carry a lot of spares you will want them; if you don't, you won't feel their need." The weight of equipment that could be carried was 450 lbs. per machine.

Wireless was not carried for the following reasons:

(a) It was heavy. (b) It would be of no value in Central Africa. (c) It required a skilled operator to send and receive signals and to look after the set.

After dealing with the final preparations for the flight the report gives the following narrative by Wing.-Com. Pulford:—"I suppose that there are few countries more interesting to visit than Africa, nor is there, I imagine, a more delightful way of doing so than by air."

"Within the space of six weeks we were able to see such world famous sights as the Pyramids at Ghizeh, the Aswan Dam, the source of the Nile at Jinja, the game reserves in Kenya, the Victoria Falls at Livingstone, the Matoppos Hills at Buluwayo, the diamond mines of Pretoria and Kimberley, and Table Mountain with the blue Atlantic stretching far beyond it.

"Any attempt however, to describe such a flight in detail would, I consider, be a very long and arduous task, added to which anybody who tried to read such a report would either fall asleep from sheer boredom or give it up in despair.

"Had there been any mishaps there might have been something to write about, but as it happened, from start to finish everything ran perfectly. The ground organisation was so thorough that all we had to do was to get in
at one place and out at another and that was all there was in it.

“The strenuous period and the one which gave most work and anxiety was the preparation for the flight. There was so much which had to be provided for and every detail had to be gone into; but once all preparations were complete the actual Flight was easy.”

The Flight started from Heliopolis at 07:10 hrs., March 3, and finished there at 08:35 hrs. on May 27, one day ahead of schedule. The total flying time for the four machines for the flight to the Cape and back to Cairo was approximately 564 hrs. The actual time between Cairo and return for the leader's machine was 140 hrs. 55 mins. - 68 hrs. 21 mins, outward and 72 hrs. 34 mins. return.

During the whole flight very little trouble was experienced beyond having to replace one magneto, two air screws and all the oil tanks no major repairs were necessary. The reliability of the engines and aeroplanes, says the report, was no doubt a great factor in determining whether the flight kept to time-table or not. But it was also very largely due to the efficient ground organisation prepared by the parties of R.A.F. personnel that had been sent in advance.

The rest of the report is devoted to a detailed log, of the flight, a brief résumé of which, with outstanding items of interest included, follows :-

**Outward Flight**

1st Stage, March 1-3.—Cairo-Assiut (220 miles). Assiut-Aswan (261)
   Time, 4 hrs. 57 mins. [The routine on landing at the end of a stage adhered to during the flight is described here.—Immediately on landing, and whilst taxying in, RAF, ensigns were hoisted; they were not kept flying in flight owing to the heavy wear and tear. Air intake plugs, airscrew, engine, cockpit and compass covers were immediately put on. The aeroplanes were then pegged down and flying controls secured. Where the ground was too hard for screw pickets heavy weights such as full oil or petrol drums were used instead. The usual practice was to peg down with one picket to each wing tip, one to the air screw, and one to the tail, the camber gear being wound down to normal. In localities where there was any likelihood of rain all petrol tank air vents were plugged in order to prevent water getting in. Refuelling and routine inspections were then proceeded with.]

2nd Stage, March 3-4.—Aswan-Wadi Haifa (185 miles), Wadi Haifa-Atbara. (350 miles), Time, 5 hrs. 46 mins. This section very monotonous, nothing to be seen but sand or rocky jebels (hills).]

3rd Stage. March 4-6.—Atbara-Khartoum (175 miles). Time, 2 hrs. 27 mins, Flight had to return to Atbara shortly after leaving owing to leaky petrol sight glass in one machine. Sir Alan Cobham landed at Khartoum on Mar. 5, and the leader took the opportunity of obtaining his opinion of the various aerodromes en route.)
4th Stage, March 6-8.—Khartoum-Kosti (173 miles). Time, 2 hrs. 25 mins. [Flight left shortly after Cobham departed for Khartoum. Visibility very bad. Enthusiastic reception at Kosti. Decided to stay a day at Kosti owing to bad weather report.]

5th Stage, March 8-10.—Kosti-Malakal (260 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 53 mins. [Visibility still bad. At Malakal the Shilluks armed with spears and shields gave a war dance in honour of the Flight. Malarial district now reached—Flight started taking daily quinine.]

6th Stage, March 10-12.—Malakal-Mongalla (350 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 54 mins. [Visibility bad, not much of country could be seen—very monotonous. Hot and muggy at Mongalla, even at night.]

7th Stage. March 12-13.—Mongalla-Nimule (124 miles). Time, 1 hr. 32 mins. [Originally intended to fly to Kisumu, but magneto trouble caused delay, and on reaching Nimule it was too late to proceed. Crews slept in hammocks for first time.]

8th Stage, March 13-17.—Nimule-Kisumu (320 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 43 mins. [Before leaving Nimule, Chief of Village indicated—in dumb show—that he remembered the arrival of the "Silver Queen." Visibility increased from 1 mile to 50 miles.]

9th Stage. March 17-19.—Kisumu-Mwanza (240 miles). Mwanza-Tabora (185 miles). Time, 4 hrs. 38 mins. [When leaving Mwanza (on 17th) two of the machines were bogged in soft ground up to the axles, and freeing them delayed the start considerably.]

10th Stage, March 19-21.—Tabora-Abercorn (300 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 13 mins. [Thick forest existed practically all the way to Tanganyika, and a forced landing without damage would have been impossible.]

11th Stage, March 21-23.—Abercorn-N'Dola (342 miles). Time, 4 hrs. 11 mins. [Near Bangweulu they saw a wall of heavy rainstorms ahead, and had to alter course to dodge them, and as a result had slight difficulty in locating N'Dola.]

12th Stage, March 23-25.—N'Dola-Broken Hill (104 miles). Time, 1 hr. 21 mins. [Thick forest over this stage.]

13th Stage, March 25-29.—Broken Hill-Livingstone (303 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 21 mins. [A good deal of cloud encountered, necessitating flying at about 9,000 ft.]

14th Stage, March 29-21. Livingstone-Bulawayo (243 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 6 mins. [Bumps encountered, partly due to nature of ground and partly to clouds. Flight visited Matoppos Hills to see Cecil Rhodes' and Sir Starr Jameson's graves.]

15th Stage, 31-April 2.—Bulawayo-Palapwe Road (200 miles), Time, 2
hrs. 31 mins. [No difficulty experienced in taking off, as experienced by other pilots. At request of Tshkedi Khania, Regent of Bechuanaland, Flight flew over Serowi, the capital, on April 1.

16th Stage, April 2-5. ---Palapwe Road-Pretoria (232 miles). Time, 2 hrs. 43 mins. [Had to fly low when crossing over the tops of a range of hills, and dodge about considerably-at one moment barely missing tree-tops, and the next moment passing over a precipice 600 ft. or so deep. Flight met at Pretoria by Gen. Brink, Col. Sir van Ryneveld, and Mayor:.

17th Stage, April 5-8.-Pretoria-Johannesburg (35 Miles). Time, 1 hr. I min. [Escorted by 14 aeroplanes of S.A. Air Force and the spare Fairey IID, the latter giving “joy-rides” to the Mayor and other influential members of the community during the stay at Johannesburg;

18th Stage, April 8-11 .-Johannesburg-Bloemfontein (227 Time, 2 hrs. 42 mins. On landing at Bloemfontein one machine developed a leaky oil tank, and a spare tank from Pretoria was installed. A good deal of rain was encountered during the stay.]

19th Stage. April 11-12.-Bloemfontein-Beaufort West (304 miles). Time, 3 hrs. 37 mins. [Country flat and open to Jagersfontein, then becomes more broken up.]

20th Stage, April 12-19.---Beaufort West-Cape Town (266 miles). Time, :3 hrs. 41 mins. :-Machines climbed to 11,000 ft. above sea level to clear tops of the Drakensburg Mts. Whilst crossing the range the new oil tank installed at Bloemfontein split, and the pilot climbed above the others in order to have more time to select a landing ground should the engine seize. The oil pressure held, however, so the pilot opened to full throttle and dived at full speed into Wynberg, arriving there some 20 mins. ahead of the others. A firm in Cape Town, therefore, made four new 20-gauge copper tanks, which were installed in the four machines and gave no further trouble throughout the return flight. (in landing at Wynberg the Flight was received by the Minister of Defence, the Chief of the General Staff, and the Mayors of Wynberg and Cape Town.]

Next week we will deal with the return flight.

[To be concluded.]
NEW YEAR HONOURS

IT is announced in a Supplement to the London Gazette that H. M. the King signified his intention of conferring the following New Year Honours:-

Baron
Sir Charles Greenwav, Bart., Chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co., Ltd,

C.B. (Military Division)
Group-Capt. Charles Stuart Burnett, C.B.E., R.A.F.

C.B. (Civil Division)
Henry Thomas Tizard, A.F.C., F.R.S., Principal Assistant Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

PROMOTIONS AND AWARDS

The Air Ministry announces the undermentioned are promoted with effect from January 1, 1927:-

General Duties Branch
Air Chief Marshal to be Marshal of the Royal Air Force. —
Sir Hugh Montague Trenchard, G.C.B., D.S.O.

Squadron Leaders to be Wing Commanders:-
Evelyn Hayley Sparling,
Frederick Charles Victor Laws, O.B.E. ;
William John Ryan, C.B.E.

Lieutenants to be Squadron Leaders:-
John Callagan Brooke, D.S.C. ;
William Ewart Reason ;
George Raymond Albert Beacon, M.C.;
Loudoun James Maclean, M.C.;
Walter Henry Park, M.C.,

Flying Officers to be Flight Lieutenants:-
James Cornelius Stevens ;
Raymond de Lacy Stedman;:
Alan Jerrard, V.C. ;
Alexander Arthur Clarendon Hyde:
.... And here I gave up correcting ;-)

ALBA:- David Stewart. Allan ; Samtal Les.vi, Hope
Rater Lvach, ; Leon Martin ; Alfred Handles Wardle
Claude Andn-ys, M.O.F . ; 17at id Forgham Anden.on, 0.F.C. ; Cyril
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Frederick
Laurence Psarsi ; John Frank Clark ; iturbert George : lewin
Downing Duggau Cyril RaIm1’ ; Robert Hugh Mcou brie Sheppard ;
Di?ruard Thomas Hood ; Reginald .lotes ; John Watson Jean, D.S.M. ; Rater(\nDawlas Muhas Hart ; tieorge Stewart. Taylor ; John Augustine
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Kolpert ■tir- (;11-1- ; George Baker.

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Flight Lieutenant to lie Squadr,«: Leader. -Ci•ril Cornelius James Croydon.

Flying Officir.< ir, ire Flight Lieutenants. -John Freeman-Fowler ; James
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D.P.H.

Legal Branch
Khartoum-Kisumu Seaplane Damaged

MISFORTUNE has soon overtaken the D.H. seaplane "Pelican", which only recently arrived at Khartoum for use on the air service: between that town and Kisumu in Kenya. On December 30 last the machine was about to start off for a test flight from the Nile, but before it left the water it suddenly plunged nose first into the river. Pilot and passenger were rescued unhurt, after a brief inspection of the bed of the Blue Nile, and the damaged
seaplane was brought ashore. An examination disclosed serious damage to
the port float, the bow of which was stove in and ripped open. There is little
doubt that the machine must have struck some submerged object when
taxying along the water. We understand that a fresh float—or parts—will
have to be obtained from England before the damage can be repaired.