

The Eighth Annual Dinner of The Helicopter Association of Great Britain

Three hundred and eighty Members and their Guests were present at the Eighth Annual Dinner of the Association held at the Dorchester Hotel, London, W 1, on Thursday, September 9th, 1954

Prior to the reception by the President and Mrs MENSFORTH, some 250 attended the lecture given by our distinguished American guest, Mr KNUTE FLINT, of Bahamas Helicopters Limited. A full report of the lecture is recorded in this issue of the Journal

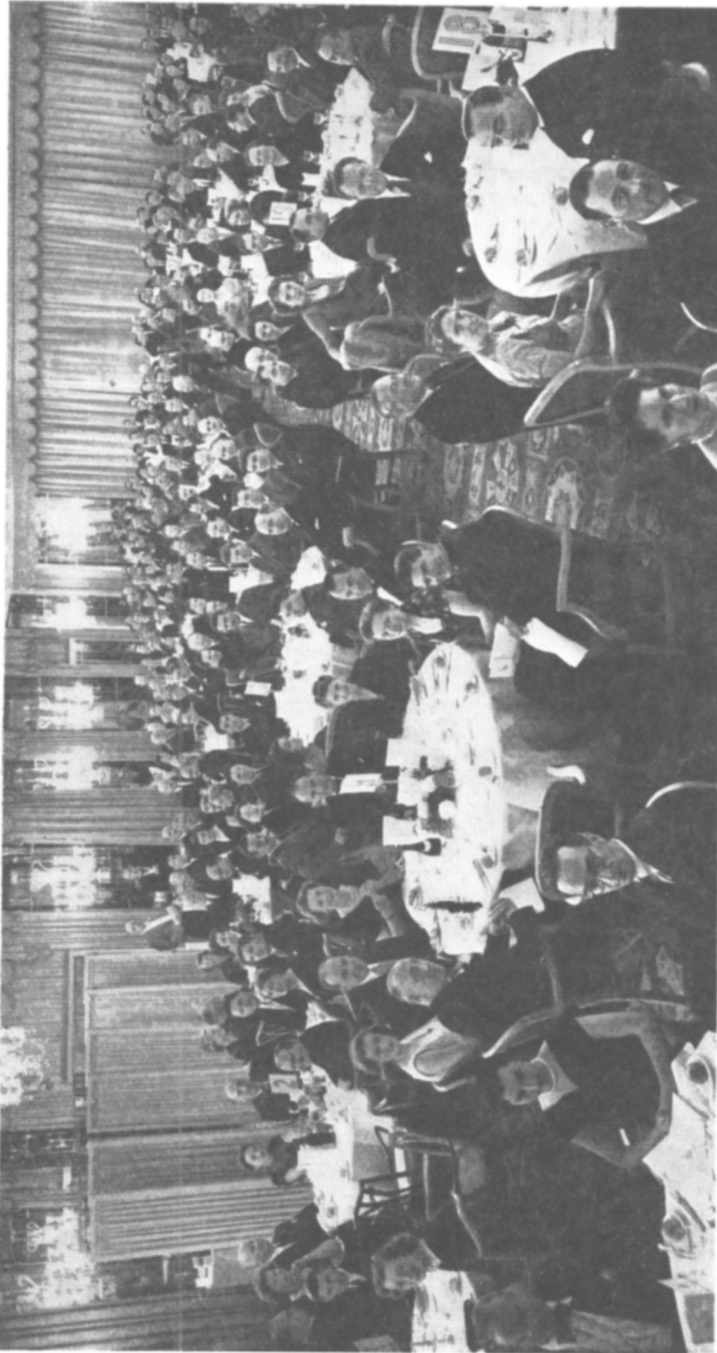
Senior representatives from the three Services and many leaders in aviation attended the dinner as private guests. The Official Guests of the Association were, The Right Honourable Lord Brabazon of Tara, P C, G B E, M C, *Chairman of the Air Registration Board, and President of the Royal Aero Club*, Sir Miles Thomas, D F C, M I Mech E, M S A E, *Chairman of the British Overseas Airways Corporation*, Lady Thomas, Mr J J Parkes, A F R Ae S, *President of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors, and Managing Director of Alvis Limited*, Mrs Parkes, and Mr E Bowyer, C B E, *Director of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors*. Mr and Mrs Knute Flint were also, of course, honoured guests of the Association, and it was a great pleasure to welcome with them a large party of our American and Continental friends. We hope very much that the presence of such visitors will become an increasingly important feature at this annual affair.

The toast of The Helicopter Association of Great Britain was proposed by Lord BRABAZON, who expressed surprise at the size and the distinguished nature of the gathering.

He went on to say that there were some helicopters into which go some brave men and some ignorant ones. This was an improvement on the early days of the Royal Aero Club whose Members used to dream about aeroplanes but only had balloons. Speaking of the early history of rotary wing development, Lord Brabazon said that the name CIERVA stood out and with this should always be coupled the name of BRIE. It was sad indeed that we had never heard more of the autogiro after direct take-off was achieved. In those days he had inspired, and REDER designed, a rotor fitted to a small sailing boat, but its history had been brief and extremely dangerous. Among other things he was interested to see was that even the Military were proposing to use helicopters for supply purposes, and we were told that our convoys will be the safer on their account. But, as the Minister of Supply had said in that very room, the public will put up with a lot in war, but they do expect Civil Aviation to be civil. It was fundamental that one cannot push air about at a very high speed without making a lot of noise, so the jet driven rotor will not popularise the helicopter for backgarden use. Now there was the new Rolls Jet levitation and he advised the Association to embrace it as there should be room for this development as well as for the helicopter. If he had to be rescued from the sea he would prefer that it was by helicopter as he did not fancy being rescued by anything which blew red-hot air downwards on his head.

Tax payers spend very generously on their airfields. There was enough concrete at London Airport to build a twin 30 ft carriage way from London to Edinburgh, so there was a broad field before the helicopter, but we are only at the beginning of things. The British Isles is a country for short hauls and these are the job for the helicopter, but designers must meet the problems of cost, vibration and of fatigue.

America was well ahead of us in this form of transport and it was little credit to us that we had not seized upon this vehicle as being one which suits this land.



381 Members and Guests attended the 8th Annual Dinner of The Helicopter Association of Great Britain held at the Dorchester Hotel, London, W 1, on Thursday, September 9th, 1954

Lord Brabazon was thanked by THE PRESIDENT for his most inspiring speech he then said that the helicopter has now become one of the greatest topics of public interest in this country and that it had reached a highly advanced stage probably more quickly than any other tool of civilised man. The Association, when considering the effect of its work in seeking to develop the helicopter, could be very satisfied without, however, being complacent, as there is still much to do. It could also be noted what an important place within the Aviation Industry it had established for itself from the very significant portion of his speech which the Minister of Supply had devoted to helicopters on the previous Monday evening at the S B A C Dinner inaugurating the Farnborough week. As regards noise, to which Lord Brabazon had referred, and which the Association had often discussed, he felt that the problem was soluble and would be overcome, high initial cost would be cured by bigger sales and consequent volume production. Reference had been made both by the previous Speaker and by the Minister, to the Americans being ahead of us at present in helicopter development, this was no cause for dissatisfaction or jealousy, as co-operation was a two-way traffic and the access which we have to their great experience should help us to early equality, and in any case was paralleled by their using our lead on, say, jet engines.

The Association's affairs were in good heart and financially there was a good balance at the Bank. Mr Norman Hill had, after many years of devoted service in the Chair, handed that task to a man equally enthusiastic, Dr Hislop. Mr Weir, who once again had done great things for the Association had decided, whilst still giving us his support, to relinquish his Vice-Presidency, and Mr Norman Hill had been elected a Vice-President. Lord Douglas of Kirtleside had done us the honour of accepting our invitation to become President for 1955/56. Group Captain R N Liptrot had been elected an Honorary Member of the Association.

The President then proposed the toast of the guests with a special welcome for the ladies. There were present representatives of ten countries, he congratulated our friends from the United States upon their new helicopter world speed record on August 29th, of 156 m p h over a three kilometre course.

In coupling the toast with the name of Sir Miles Thomas, the President said that he was indeed well qualified to talk to us since, apart from his wonderful work as Chairman of the B O A C, he had been one of the driving forces in the growth of the automobile from its small beginnings to now probably the greatest industry in the world.

SIR MILES THOMAS (in reply), said that this vertical take-off which was now causing so much excitement had been practised by helicopter enthusiasts for many years. The object of air travel was in his view, to shorten the journey from the traveller's home to his destination and it was no good to travel at 500 m p h across continents if it took hours to get from home, hotel or office to the airport. Moreover, we do not all live in Great Cities and feeder lines from the municipalities to the termini of the international trunk routes are obviously part of the desirable travel pattern. We must not think that the helicopter is the answer to all problems. It is at present expensive, but so in its early days was the motor car. It was not until the potentialities of a car in service to the public warranted its production in large quantities that its price was reduced.

He thought that the field of development of what he would call "easy take-off aircraft" must be tremendous and the problems of controlling this traffic need not be insuperable. The airports required for that traffic would be very much cheaper and could therefore be far more numerous than the expensive carpets of concrete which waste so much of our valuable food producing land. People criticised the helicopter because it is slow but he, although an out and out Comet enthusiast, stated it as a fact that the faster you go the less time you save in relation to the rate of increased speed, and there was obviously a future for an aircraft which wastes no time taxiing, is undemanding of airport facilities, and needs no high forward speed to remain in the air.

He said that yesterday he had been drinking tea in his Piccadilly Office at 4 15 p m, but by means of a helicopter from the South Bank he was at the Farnborough Show at 5 0 p m. That kind of experience would become, by the technical skill which the Association is fostering now, a commonplace of years to come.