



H.R.H. the Prince of Wales with a Sidstrand III at Norwich in 1933.

intricate armament problems we put to him, he always showed a ready inclination to co-operate and undertake special development work in the Boulton and Paul workshops. He was one of the first to realize that an aircraft, no matter how good it might be, was of no use in the R.A.F. unless it was capable of carrying good armament equipment. He suffered many disappointments and I rather doubt whether he received the recognition that was his due."

As from June 30th, 1934, the aircraft business and interests of Boulton and Paul, Ltd., were taken over as a going concern by a newly formed public company—Boulton Paul Aircraft, Ltd.

During the following year, when the Royal Air Force expansion scheme was initiated, the company was engaged in establishing a new factory at Wolverhampton, and was temporarily carrying on in leased premises in Norwich, finishing off the Overstrand contract and tooling up for much larger production of Hawker Demon two-seat fighters. During August 1936 the transfer of plant and work to Wolverhampton was accomplished and most of the Demons were delivered from the new factory. In deciding upon the move the company was influenced by Wolverhampton's high tradition as a centre of engineering, and by the availability of skilled labour. Even so, expansion was so rapid that labour-supply was soon to become a serious problem, and districts as far afield as Clydeside and Northern Ireland were combed for additional staff.

When war came it was necessary to train large numbers of unskilled workers from other industries, and dispersal premises at Cannock were therefore acquired and converted into a school. A number of branch factories and stores were established in and around Wolverhampton, and the main factory was twice extended, until it covered almost three times its original area.

The Hawker Demons were followed by Blackburn Roc carrier-borne turret fighters and by Boulton Paul's own magnificent fighter—likewise armed with a B.P. four-gun turret—the Defiant. Of Rocs, 105 were built; of Defiants, 1,060. The equivalent of 395 aircraft was supplied as Roc and Defiant spares.

While other factories were being equipped for the production of Boulton Paul turrets, the Wolverhampton works carried on with the production of these highly successful devices. Many varieties were developed for 0.303in, 0.5in and 20 mm guns, and for the nose, tail, mid-upper and mid-under positions. Aircraft equipped, apart from the Roc and Defiant, included the Hudson, Ventura, Baltimore, Halifax, Liberator, Albemarle and Lincoln, and installations were also made on the Short "C" and "G" class flying-boats and on the Seaford. Special versions of the 0.303in four-gun turret were adapted for use in mine-sweeping flotilla boats. The company built 1,597 of its own turrets and 207 sets of special turret equipment for training and test purposes. Many thousands of the turrets were made by other contractors.

The last war-time contract for aircraft involved production of Fairey Barracudas of which 692 were completed.

With the coming of peace the pressure of armament development was relaxed, and the technical staff once again turned their attention to aircraft. The first post-war machine was the Balliol advanced trainer, the development of which is later described, and which serves today as standard equipment in the Royal Air

Blackburn Roc turret fighters built by Boulton Paul.



For comparison with the previous picture the turreted nose of the Overstrand is shown in close-up.



Boulton Paul Type E Mk 1 turret in the tail of a Halifax.

Force and Royal Navy, and in the Royal Ceylon Air Force. While the Balliol was under development the company was engaged on the conversion of Vickers Wellington bombers for use by Training Command. There was activity, also, in the development of power-operated controls and on a wide variety of research work in the electronic, aerodynamic and physical fields. In 1950 the P.111 tailless delta-wing research aircraft was completed, and was quite extensively flown during 1951 and 1952. A variant of this machine, the P.120, appeared in 1952 and was flown for many hours by the company's chief test pilot, A. E. Gunn, until it met with the accident later described by Gunn himself. Meanwhile, the P.111 was returned to Wolverhampton for modification, and as the P.111A is still flying today at the R.A.E., Farnborough.

The first Boulton Paul power controls were designed for the company's own deltas, and were followed by units for the Saunders-Roe Princess and for advanced military machines.

At the recent annual general meeting of Boulton Paul Aircraft, Ltd., the chairman, Mr. J. D. North, said that conditions of official secrecy made it difficult to be more specific, but it could be said that already a large majority of the heavy bombers for the R.A.F. were using Boulton Paul power-control systems.

Defiant turret fighters awaiting delivery from Wolverhampton.

