

A VERY REMARKABLE AEROPLANE

Details of the Handley Page Hampden Disclosed : Unusual Production Methods Based on "Split" Construction

(Illustrated with "Flight" Photographs and Drawings)

THE specialised experience of the Handley Page Company in the construction of multi-engined bombing aircraft is brilliantly reflected in the design of the Hampden monoplane, which for some months has been in quantity production for R.A.F. bomber squadrons. Not only is the Hampden an outstandingly efficient weapon, capable of high speeds, of long range and of carrying a heavy military load, but, thanks to its unorthodox design, would be well able to defend itself if intercepted by enemy fighters.

Ease of production and maintenance has not been sacrificed to military effectiveness. On the contrary, the Hampden is probably the easiest machine of its type in the world to build, owing to features which will be described here. Only by seeing the Hampdens in production at the Cricklewood works can one thoroughly appreciate the ingenuity of its design.

The Hampden is a three/four-seater mid-wing cantilever monoplane of all-metal construction. As at present in production it is powered with two Bristol Pegasus XVIII nine-cylinder radial engines fitted with two-speed superchargers.

When a crew of four is carried it consists of: (a) a pilot, who also operates the fixed gun; (b) navigator/bomber, who has charge of the front lower gun; (c) wireless operator, who is also the top rear gunner; and (d) a lower rear gunner.

The Hampden is unique among our multi-engined bombers in that it has no power-driven turrets, three of its four machine-guns being fired from a manually operated mounting, while the fourth is fixed.



The manoeuvrability and the clear arcs of fire justify the makers in terming the Hampden a fighter bomber. On the occasion depicted, its agility was being demonstrated by Major Cordes. The photographic Hampden was piloted by Flt. Lt. J. R. Talbot.

The pilot's fixed gun is so arranged as to fire through a port in the nose just aft of the transparent section. Below this is a floor mounting for a machine gun which can be completely detached from its mounting and stowed in the fuselage. The top fuselage gun, which is set rather forward of the trailing edge of the wing, would be used mainly to fire aft between the twin rudders. The gunner who operates this weapon is shielded by a spring-loaded transparent dome. Located at the bottom rear corner of the fuselage "box," the lower rear gun has a particularly wide field of fire in a rearward and downward direction. The gunner is entirely within the fuselage, and the gun is easy to train without mechanical assistance.

A heavy load of bombs is carried in a bay in the bottom of the fuselage; additional bombs, carried in the "overload" condition, may be slung outboard of the engine nacelles under the wings. The bomb aimer (who is also the navigator) is situated in the extreme nose of the fuselage from which an exceptionally wide and clear view is obtainable. An optically flat circular Triplex panel is built into the nose section to facilitate bomb aiming.

The Service load includes wireless, which is installed in the rear part of the top rear gunner's

A few of the Hampdens which are now leaving Radlett aerodrome in a nice steady stream for "unknown destinations."

