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COMET INQUIRY.

The future of the Comet - the world's first passenger airliner - hangs upon the outcome of inquiry being held at Church House in London. This is some of the evidence. Mr. Bishop the man who was mainly responsible for designing the 'plane, is attending. So are leading Air Ministry and civilian authorities.

No Comet has flown with passengers since January, for in that month "Yoke Peter" the Comet which smashed all records on a flight to Johannesburg four years ago, crashed with the loss of 35 lives. Yoke Peter took off from Rome airport on schedule. A few minutes later the 'plane exploded. Ships of the Royal Navy hastened to the spot, but there were no survivors. Immediately B.O.A.C. grounded all Comets, and the search began for the wreckage. Thus the most extensive investigation began for the wreckage. Naval units under the command of Admiral Earl Mountbatten, gave every assistance to salvage fragments from the sea-bed.

The pieces of the plane were taken back to Britain, and slowly "Yoke Peter" was reconstructed. And, although the wreckage was scattered over a wide area, 80 per cent of the 'plane was pieced together. Meanwhile other exhaustive tests were being carried out at Farnborough. Another Comet, Yoke Uncle, was to be placed within a giant tank of water and there tested until destroyed. Suitably ballasted, the plane was completely enclosed by the tank which is about 112 feet long and 16 feet deep.

290,000 gallons of water were poured in. A further hundred gallons were forced into the fuselage to place a strain on it equivalent to that encountered in actual flight. The next step was to test the wings, Automatically controlled jacks moved them up and down. "Yoke Uncle" endured the test for the equivalent of 15,000 hours flying time. The water-tank test finally caused a failure in the fuselage. A point of high-stress, at the corner of an escape hatch failed, and the rent developed. This, say the experts, is a result of metal-fatigue. Similar traces were found on the wreckage of Yoke Peter. B.O.A.C. have high hopes that the Comets will soon fly again, and that Comets Two and Three will begin their passenger-flights across the world. Britain salutes the back-room boys who have spared nothing to solve the Comet mystery, and to put record-breaking Airliners back in the forefront of modern aviation.