

BRITAIN'S NUCLEAR TESTS, 1957.Background Notes.

Rapid progress is being made in the preparation of a Pacific Base for Britain's Nuclear Tests in the Pacific next year. The Base is being constructed on CHRISTMAS ISLAND in the Pacific Ocean, a U-shaped atoll measuring some 50 miles from tip to tip. Men of the R.E's. helped by local Islanders, have already completed 25 miles of good-class roads, an auxiliary air strip and a 7,000 ft. runway suitable for bomber aircraft.

With the co-operation of the Royal and Merchant Navies, many thousands of tons of heavy equipment and miscellaneous stores have been landed. Mail and fresh food are flown in from Honolulu by Hastings aircraft of the R.A.F. Transport Command. The Royal Navy has also made successful landings on Malden Island, a smaller atoll 400 miles to the south, where a forward air strip will shortly be constructed.

Christmas Island is the largest coral atoll in the Pacific with a total land area estimated at about 160 square miles. It was discovered by Captain James Cook in the ships "Resolution" and "Discovery" on Christmas Eve 1777. [The troopship "Devonshire" transported the first troops and stores. One difficulty on the Island is the supply of fresh water and distilling plant has been landed in order to ensure a plentiful supply. Already there is a NAAFI in full swing, and particular care is being taken over the rapid and prompt collection of mail. The spare-time occupations of the men are fishing and bathing and, for this purpose, certain parts of the lagoon have been wired off on account of the presence of sharks. The average temperature is in the 80's by day, but the Island is free from tornadoes and violent storms. The ubiquitous DUKWs are largely used in dealing with the lighter seaborne stores and have proved most valuable in the building up-stage. They are still a most vital link in the ferrying of certain stores from ship to shore. Cargo ships and LST's. have also been largely used for the landing of heavy stores. This has also been facilitated in some cases by driving DUKWs directly into the LST's. to collect the lighter stores from its hold.

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