

THE NEW VISCOUNT SERVICE:

On the tarmac of London Airport is the latest version of an aircraft which has earned us millions of experts - the "Discovery" class of turbo-prop - Vickers Viscount airliners. Among the passengers on its maiden flight on the London-Paris run - is a Pathe representative making arrangements for our coverage of the Queen's forthcoming visit to France. Exactly 100 minutes after the passengers reported to Waterloo Air Terminal, their Viscount takes off from London Airport.

The new Viscount 800 is the latest of a series which has proved a victory for British designers. Viconsunts have flown about half a million miles throughout the world - and the Viscount 800 is bigger and more luxurious; you can hardly feel that you're flying. A far cry from 1931 - when the old Imperial Airways Hindibal made her first flight from London to Paris. Less than a third the power of the Viscount, she took exactly twice as long for the trip.

One hour and eight minutes after taking off, the Viscount lands at Le Bourget. Customs formalities are over in a minutes or two, and the coach is on the way to Paris. Here, as in London, the problem is the same - modern traffic conditions, even under petrol rationing, are whittling away the time gained by modern air speeds. Nearly three-quarters of the London-Paris journey is spent on the ground - a drawback to which the airlines will have to find a solution.

Still, thanks to the new Viscount, our representative is in the heart of the French capital less than four hours after reporting at Waterloo. Not bad going! It's not the fault of our aircraft designers that the total journey hasn't changed much in 26 years. Nor has the French way of life.

Nor have the habits of the Englishman travelling abroad.