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AIR NEWS:

The Bristol Britannia - the "Whispering Giant" - one of Britain's great hopes in the struggle for the airline markets of the world. Like that of the Comet, its history has been a mixture of achievement which came within an ace of beating the world, and setbacks which our aircraft industry could not afford. And now the worst blow of all - tragedy.

This wreckage, scattered over a housing estate near Bristol, is all that remains of a prototype long-range Britannia 300. All 15 men aboard - a crew of eight, and seven technicians - died when she crashed on a test flight; eyewitnesses say the pilot made a plucky attempt to avoid the houses. No one knows yet what happened in those last terrible seconds.

To balance the picture - a story of success. At White Waltham Airfield, Squadron-Leader Ronald Cellatly pilots the world's first verticed take-off airliner, the Fairey Rotodyne. Jet units at the tips of the rotor arms, fed by pipes inside the arms, power the blades of the helicopter rotor; while horizontal flight is powered by two turbo-prop engines.

The Rotodyne carries up to 48 passengers, and even when she's fully loaded, the 90-foot-diameter rotor lifts her straight up as easily as a conventional helicopter. Once she's airborne, the turbo-props are ready to take over while the rotor "freewheels". Capable of nearly 200 miles an hour, with a range of 400 miles, the Rotodyne is a brilliant answer to the problem of city-to-city flight.