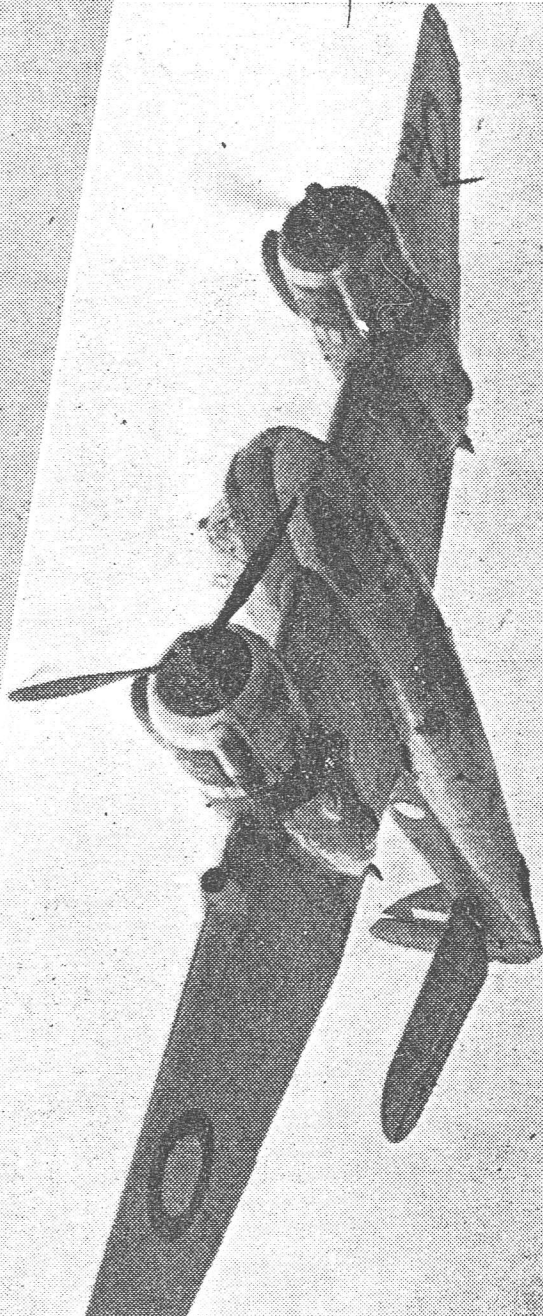
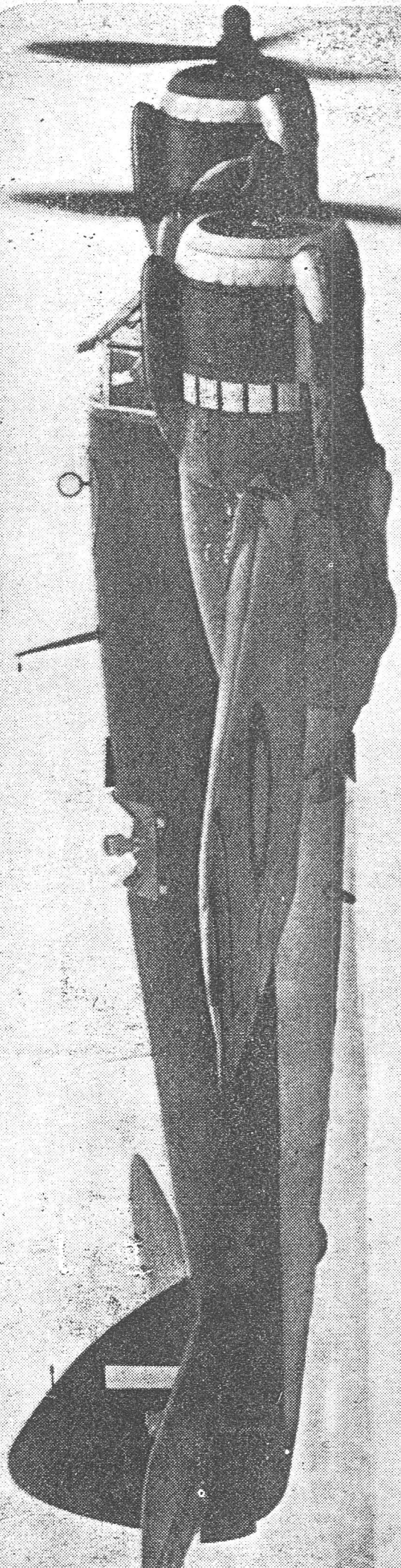


FIRST AUSTRALIAN BEAUFIGHTER READY FOR TEST FLIGHT TODAY



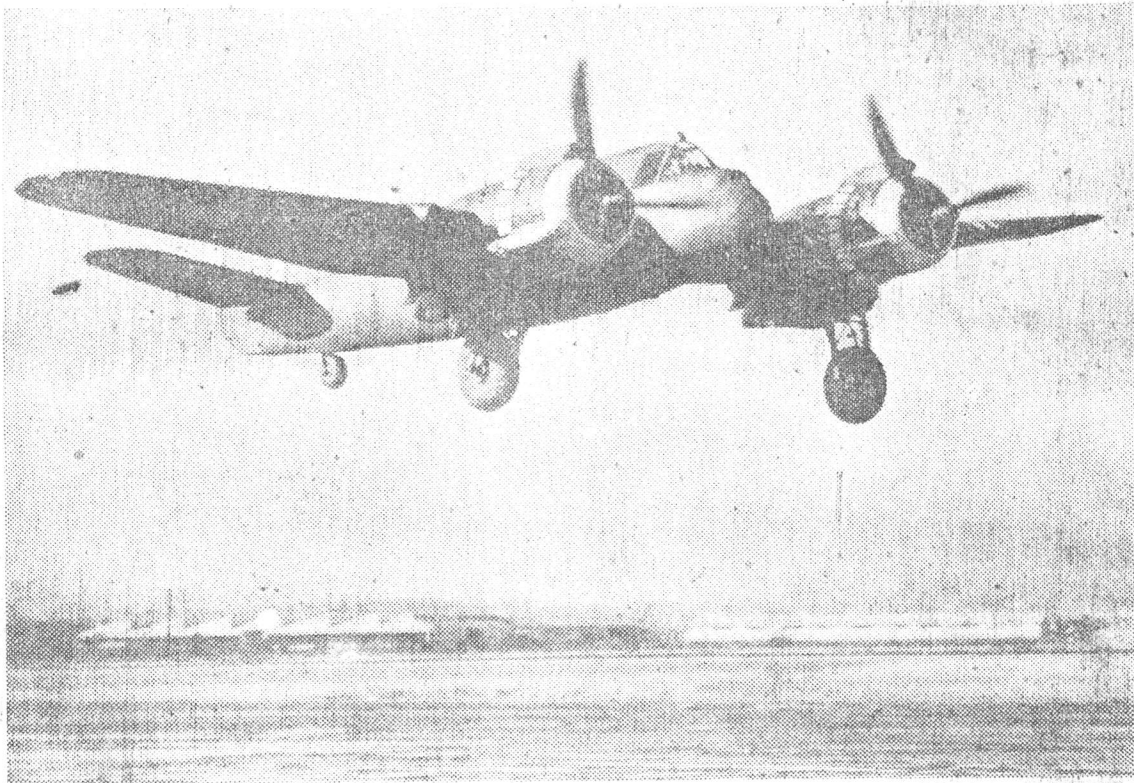
ON THE PRODUCTION LINE at Beaufort Aircraft Production in Victoria, No. 1 Beaufighter, all Australian made, had its final inspection by experts before being taken out to make its first test flight today.

AUSTRALIAN-BUILT "BEAU" ON FINAL TESTS



FIRST PICTURES IN THE AIR of the Australian-built Beaufighter taken by a Sun photographer over Port Phillip Bay during final tests before being handed over to the R.A.F. Above: Testing the Beaufighter for engine performance. This aircraft is of the same type as the Beaufighters which have been in operations over the Pacific and over Europe. Left: Flying on one engine. Note the starboard propeller feathered.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN-BUILT BEAUFIGHTER



SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
1.6.44

The first Australian-built Beaufighter taking off for a test flight when it was handed over to the R.A.A.F. in Melbourne yesterday. It was completed a little more than a year after manufacturing details were received in Australia from Great Britain and incorporates modifications for operational requirements in the South-west Pacific.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN-BUILT BEAUFIGHTER

MELBOURNE, Wednesday.—The first Australian-built Beaufighter was handed over to the R.A.A.F. to-day, 14 months after the first technical data arrived from England and six months after production began.

Other Beaufighters are on the supply lines, and henceforth there will be continuous production.

The new plane provides many changes to meet operational needs in the Pacific—longer range, more deadly attack and provision for effective defence. It has greater fire-power than any similar type of aircraft being produced in any Allied country.

To mark the occasion an aerobatic display was given over Fishermen's Bend by the Australian-built Beaufighter, an English-made Beaufighter, and several Beaufort torpedo-bombers.

On his arrival at the works of the Beaufort Division of the Aircraft Production Department, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal G. Jones, was met by the director of the division, Mr. John Storey.

Addressing a large crowd of employees, Air Vice-Marshal Jones said that the R.A.A.F. would man all the planes the division could produce. The Beaufort bomber had proved of great value and the locally-built Beaufighter would be of great value also in forthcoming operations against the Japanese.

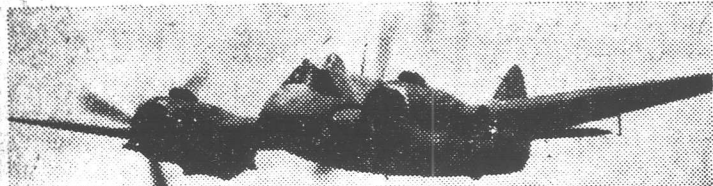
The Air Board's policy, he said, was to support locally-made aircraft to the very limit.

(Picture—page 3.)

BEAUFIGHTER IS NOW MADE HERE

Leads In Firepower

Announcing extension of Australia's aircraft production programme to manufacture heavy bombers, the Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) also revealed last night for the first time that Beaufighters, the world's biggest and probably most heavily armed fighter planes, are now being built in Australia.



A Beaufighter in flight.

Australian technicians are already preparing for production of the heavy bombers, which will go on the assembly lines as soon as possible.

Because of the big advances in aircraft production here, it was stated today, production time for the new bomber would be relatively much shorter than for a Beaufort bomber, completion of the 500th of which was announced last week.

With adequate plant erected, increasing numbers of technicians trained and machines and tools available, it has been possible to reduce progressively the production period for successive new types of planes.

With 10 guns, the standard Beaufighter has total firepower of 815 lb. a minute, which places it top of the revealed armament of all the world's fighters.

This colossal firepower makes it the greatest of all ground-strafters.

Up north, where the Japanese villages and installations have been shot to pieces time and again by its shell and machine-guns, the Beaufighter is known to the enemy as the "Whispering Death"—an allusion to the remarkable quietness of the machine and the silence of its approach at high speed.

The Japanese know of its great firepower, which exceeds even

that of the Mosquito, Spitfire, Hurricane, Whirlwind, Thunderbolt, Mustang and Wildcat fighters, and they have also learnt of its extraordinary "staying power" and range, its strong armor and its considerable speed.

It is a weighty and lethal weapon. As big as a medium bomber—its basis was the Beaufort bomber—it is scarcely recognised by the layman as a fighter.

Beaufighters were the aircraft which helped to provide Britain's answer to the Luftwaffe's blitz on England.

The imperative need was for a night-fighter which would "sit upstairs" at a considerable height and cruise around for hours if necessary, to give battle to night raiders if, and when, they came over.

The normal fighter, with its cruising range of only about 700 miles, was not suitable, and the Bristol Aeroplane Company was given the task of evolving a fighter to provide the answer.

And the answer came somewhat in the shape of the Beaufort bomber. Indeed, the Beaufighter is similar in size to the Beaufort, although it has a shorter nose. Its undercarriage is identical, the tail and rear end of the fuselage are similar, and the wings are identical, except for the provision of guns.

Quickly In Production

Because the Beaufort bomber was selected as the basis, the manufacturers were able to avoid a tremendous amount of tooling and jigging, and got the new fighter into production in minimum time.

For an aircraft designed primarily as a destroyer of bombers, the essentials are reasonable speed, and, more important still, long cruising range and very heavy firepower, including large calibre weapons.

The Beaufighter has these attri-

butes, and probably still is the most heavily armed fighter in the world today.

Further, it is built on such large proportions that it can carry an enormous amount of ammunition by fighter standards. Most fighters today can carry enough ammunition for only 30 seconds' continuous fire. The German FW 190, for instance, has a maximum firepower duration of only eight seconds.

The Beaufighter exceeds these, and fires at the rate of 153.6 strikes a second.

The speed of the twin-engined, twin-seated Beaufighter is more than handy. Its full straight and level speed cannot be precisely stated, but it has at least 330 miles an hour, putting it on fair terms with the Japanese Zero.

The Minister for Aircraft Production (Senator Cameron) today described the Commonwealth's aircraft construction achievements as a "monument to the adaptability and ingenuity of Australian technicians."