

Hovercraft Successful In Maiden Public Flight

LONDON, Friday (A.A.P.-Reuter). — Britain's "flying saucer," the possible forerunner of craft a mile long and weighing 100,000 tons, made its maiden public flights yesterday—over land and sea.

Two hundred international journalists and photographers—plus hundreds of holiday-makers at Cowes, in the Isle of Wight—watched the two successful tests, which appeared to mark the start of

a revolutionary era in land-sea transport.

The four-ton, oval-shaped Saunders Roe "Hovercraft, SRN-1," first gave a 15-minute display of its ability to ride on a "cushion" of air forced down by an engine-driven fan.

The onlookers saw the silver and blue craft, 30ft. long and 24ft. wide, hover about a foot off the ground and move slowly, in turn, in all directions.

Later its two-man crew, Commander Peter Lambe and Robert Strath, made their first flight over water seated

first flight over water, seated in a cabin in front of a funnel-like affair housing the 435 horse-power Alvis Leonides engine unit.

Commander Lambe kept the craft stationary for several minutes above the slightly choppy sea, then sent it skimming over the water at 15 to 20 m.p.h., throwing up a mass of spray.

At the height of this marine display, the 81,000-ton liner Queen Mary moved out of Southampton Harbour and, passing close to the

Hovercraft, blew its siren three times in an apparent salute from the British engineering triumph of the 1930's to its successor of the 1950's.

The demonstration came after five hours of highly secret flight testing this week. A long research and development programme still lies ahead.

However, models increasing in size are to be built and the first, likely to be completed within two or three years, will weigh between 40 and 50 tons. The next step will be a craft of about 400 tons.

ABOUT 400 TONS.

A Saunders Roe spokesman said yesterday that a vehicle weighing 1,000 tons would follow and after that 10,000 tonners would still be within the bounds of present-day thinking.

The ultimate development might be a 100,000 ton vehicle one mile long, he said.
