

The effect is to pull the blades round, and the centrifugal force keeps them extended. One of the great advantages of this system is that the speed of the blades through the air is, within limits, not dependent upon the speed of the whole machine through the air. There can, therefore, never be any sudden loss of lift due to the flying speed dropping too low, as whatever the rate of progress of the machine, the blades still rotate at their correct speed. Thus, the air flow over them is unchanged and the lift remains the same. The reader will appreciate from this

explanation why a vertical descent is possible with the Autogiro and not with the normal aircraft, as the latter is dependent upon its speed through the air for air speed over its lifting surfaces. C. N. C.

#### NEXT WEEK

"Flying the Autogiro" is the title of a second illustrated article to appear in next Thursday's issue of *Flight*.

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

*The first Flight across the Channel was made on July 25, 1909*

**M** LOUIS BLÉRIOT was made an honorary life member of the Royal Aero Club last Wednesday, when a dinner was given in his honour at the Club to celebrate the first flight across the Channel.

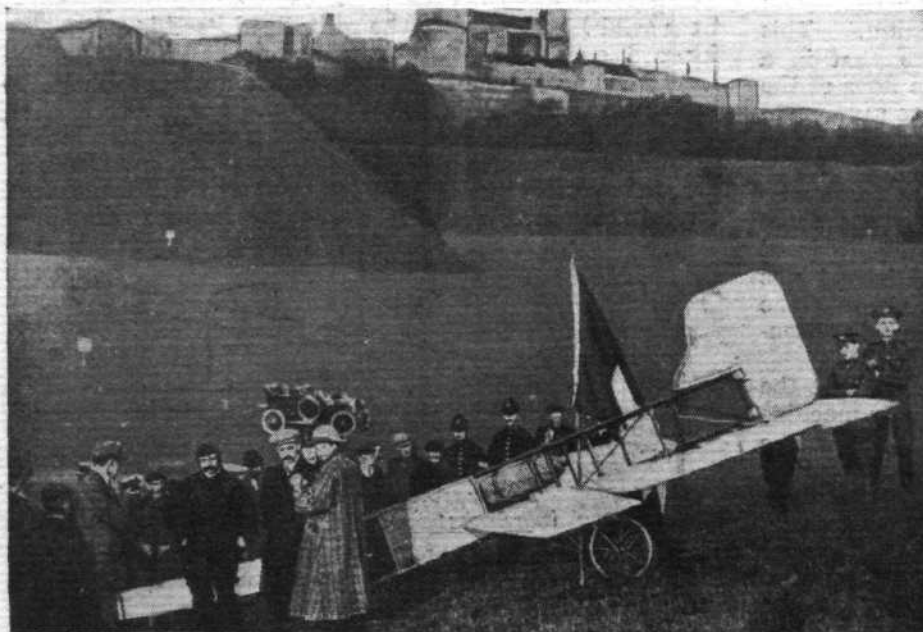
Lord Londonderry, in proposing M. Blériot's health, drew attention to the fact that their guest had done them the signal honour of reserving the actual day of the 25th anniversary of his Channel crossing (July 25, 1909) for this dinner. Speaking of his recent visit to Buc he said he was particularly struck with the contrast between the R.A.F. machines which escorted him and the frail but historic craft upon which M. Blériot had made the first invasion of England from the air. He asked that everyone should look upon the aeroplane as a vehicle of peace for the promotion of friendly intercourse among peoples. He felt sure that wherever France and England could help each other in the progress of their air routes they would do so.

M. Blériot replied briefly in French, speaking of the cordiality with which he had been received in Great Britain, not only on this present occasion but also 25 years ago. He laughingly said that although aviation had progressed considerably since that time, his knowledge of English had remained stationary.

The French Ambassador made an eloquent speech in English voicing the thanks of M. Blériot. Lt.-Col. J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, holder of pilot's licence No. 1 (M. Blériot is holder of the French No. 1 licence), thought that the name of Hubert Latham should be remembered that evening, as he only missed being the first man to fly the Channel by some 300 yards.

Among others present were:—

Commandant Papin (representing the French Air Minister), Mr. W. Lindsay Everard, M.P., Mr. C. R. Fairey, Mr. F. Handley Page, Sir Alliott Verdon-Roe, Lt.-Col. Mervyn O'Gorman, Lt.-Col. F. C. Shelmerdine (Director of Civil Aviation), Capt. A. G. Lamplugh, Maj. R. H. Mayo, Sq. Ldr. C. J. W. Darwin, Sir Francis McClean, Sir Lindsay Parkinson, Mr. H. J. Thomas (Chairman of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors), Mr. C. F. Fairey (President of the Royal Aeronautical Society), Sir Alan Cobham, Sir Walter Windham, Maj. H. P. Petre, Col. W. A. Bristow, Mr. R. Blackburn, Com. James Bird, and Mr. H. E. Perrin (Secretary, R.Ae.C.).



It may be of interest to those of the younger generation—or to those who have forgotten—if we give a few brief details of M. Blériot's Channel flight. In the first place it should be mentioned that the effort originated in the offer of a prize of £1,000 made by the *Daily Mail* to the first aviator to fly across the English Channel. Secondly, prior to M. Blériot's flight, Hubert Latham made a splendid, but unsuccessful, attempt on July 19, 1909, to win the prize, and seeing the chance offered by Latham's failure, and inspired by his own successful cross-country flight accomplished the previous week, M. Blériot promptly entered for the Channel Prize.

The story of his flight is, perhaps, best given by extracts of the account published in *Flight* at the time (July 31, 1909)—thus:—

"It was almost without warning, but nevertheless with a send-off on the French shore from an enthusiastic crowd, that M. Blériot flew across the Straits of Dover from Les Baraques, near Calais, to Northfall Meadow at Dover on Sunday, July 25, thereby incidentally winning the *Daily Mail* £1,000 prize. . . . Seeing that the fates were propitious he lost little time in bringing out the flyer, and in spite of his injured foot he quickly carried out a practice flight over the sand-hills between Les Baraques and Sangatte. A little earlier, too, he had notified his intention to start to the destroyer *Escopette*, which was consequently at that time standing out to sea, with Madame Blériot and others already aboard—all anxiously on the look-out for him. Finding everything working properly with his machine, he speedily effected a fresh start, this time flying straight away over the cliffs and heading towards England.

"That was at about twenty minutes to five (French time) and it was about twenty minutes past five (also French time) that he landed at Dover. Accounts differ as to the exact moment of departure and descent, and as a matter of fact it is doubtful if any reliable timing was made since M. Blériot started without a watch as well as without a compass. The distance of the flight was about 31 miles, and hence the speed was in the region of 45 miles an hour. During the crossing he flew at an altitude of 150 ft. to 300 ft. and thus kept much nearer the water than Mr. Latham did on his attempt.

"M. Blériot's monoplane quickly outstripped the torpedo-boat destroyer *Escopette*. . . . In mid-Channel M. Blériot lost sight of land and of his escort for a very uncomfortably long period—estimated by him to have been ten minutes—and was entirely without means of ascertaining his proper direction. In the circumstances he did the only thing possible, which was to keep straight on, and, fortune favouring him, he sighted the English shore off Deal while heading for St. Margaret's Bay. Turning along the coast M. Blériot flew towards Dover, and put in at a gap in the cliffs where a representative of *Le Matin*, M. Fontaine, was signalling to him with a tricolour flag. The site on which the landing was accomplished was the Northfall Meadow. Although the arrival was noticed from afar by several, and M. Fontaine was on the chosen part of the cliff at Dover, yet even he failed to see the real landing, and P. C. Stanford was the only eye-witness of this great historic event and landing on British soil of the first flyer to cross the Channel.

"The actual contact with terra-firma was rather abrupt; in fact, not only was the propeller broken, but that part of the framework which carries the engine was also damaged."

**ACROSS! M. Blériot's historic landing in Northfall Meadow, Dover, on July 25, 1909. Reproduced from *Flight* of July 31, 1909.**