454 FLIGHT

FROM ALL

QUARTERS
The Swift's Record Speed

SINCE S/L. Neville Duke first attempted to break the world's

speed record in the scarlet Hawker Hunter prototype at
the beginning of the month, the speeds have been twice raised, first off the South Coast of England—during the triumphant second attempt by Duke himself—and then in Libya. The Swift F.4, piloted by Lt. Cdr. M. Lithgow, flew to Libya on September 21st to make an attempt over a course laid out along a straight stretch of desert road between Castel Idris and Azizio.

It was hoped to take advantage of high ambient temperatures in order to raise Neville Duke's record of 727.6 m.p.h.—which awaits F.A.I, confirmation—but in the event these very condi-tions caused considerable inconvenience both to those on the ground and to the pilot himself. During a preliminary run on Thursday, the 23rd, and on subsequent occasions, the cockpit temperature in the Swift reached 180 deg F, and the pilot's cooling suit was not functioning satisfactorily.
On Friday a serious attempt on the record was made in an ambient temperature of 102 deg and in bumpy air. But this time a fuel gauge failed and, left in uncertainty as to the amount of fuel he would have in hand, Lithgow decided to ignite the Avon's reheat only five miles before entering the measured three kilometres, instead of ten miles before as originally planned. Secondly, the valve of his oxygen mask jammed as a result of excessive sweating during the previous day's practice flight, and he was forced to rip the mask off during one of his passes at the measured course while flying at between 70 and 100ft. The action of ripping away the mask while travelling at nearly 750 m.p.h. resulted in slight "jinking" which—reports an eye-witness— caused some anxiety among the ground observers.
Lithgow was up against yet another difficulty when he found that the smoke indicators, laid to enable him to pick up his course over the featureless desert, were inadequate; on his third run he nearly missed the course altogether.
In spite of all these obstacles, the pilot achieved an average speed of 737.3 m.p.h. for die four runs. Speeds on each run were 1st, 743.6 m.p.h.; 2nd, 729.5; 3rd, 745.3; 4th, 730.7.
Further attempts were in any case intended, but although, during a subsequent attempt on Saturday, mis speed is believed to have been raised, the recording mechanism broke down owing to the heat, and the after-burner began to give trouble. The aircraft was then due for an engine change, and the timing equip-ment could not be repaired in time for another attempt on Sunday. Because of this, Friday's speed of 737.3 m.p.h. was to be submitted to the F.A.I, in Paris for ratification as a new world's speed record. There is a possibility that the Hawker Hunter will be used in
an attempt to regain the record in a "new" hot foreign climate. Sir Frank Spriggs, managing director of the Hawker Siddeley group, has stated that the Hunter might be sent to Muroc, California, where conditions are ideal for high-speed flights. Meanwhile, from the United States came news of an attempt to raise Mike Lithgow's record. The aircraft was the Douglas Skyray, built for the U.S. Navy, and flown by Lt. Cdr. James Verdin, whose first attempt on Saturday, September 25th, was postponed because of high winds. The next attempt, on Sunday,

was likewise postponed, this time owing*~-by an odd coincidence —to an unserviceable fuel gauge. These attempts were made over the Salton Sea lake-bed in California, and on Monday Verdin tried again; the F4D delta achieved 742.7 m.p.h., i.e., 1.6 m.p.h. short of the one per cent margin necessary to beat the Swift. He was to fly again on Tuesday. Vickers-Supermarine indicated that Lithgow would try again this week, after overhaul of the timing apparatus.
What is, perhaps, the most formidable record attempt, that of the North American F-100, is still to come. It is possible that the F-100, which has already exceeded Mach 1 in level flight, will for the first time raise the world's speed record, which must be made at less than 100 metres altitude, beyond the speed of sound. As we go to press, confirmation of Duke's record, at 727.6 m.p.h., is announced (previous holder, Capt. J. Slade Nash, F-86D, 698.5 m.p.h.). Duke's closed-circuit 709.2 m.p.h. is also ratified as a class and world record.

Aerodrome Owners at Newcastle

"VCORE than 50 members and guests of the Aerodrome Owners' •"•*• Association attended the 1953 Conference, which was held in Newcasde-upon-Tyne at the invitation of the Association's chairman, Alderman R. Mould-Graham, who is also chairman of Newcastle's municipal airport committee.
The two-day conference opened on September 23rd with a visit to Woolsington Airport, where delegates inspected New-castle Aero Club's fleet of Tiger Moths and Austers.
Over coffee in the airport restaurant, Alderman Mould-Graham and the airport manager, Mr. Denyer, announced plans to extend and modernize Woolsington at a cost of £116,000. Improvements will include extension of the present 1,050-yd asphalt runway by 600 yd, extension of the parking apron, a new taxi track, enlargement of the passenger and Customs sheds and erection of a new three- or four-storey control tower.
After reception by the Deputy Lord Mayor of Newcastle and luncheon in the Town Hall, the conference heard a talk by W/C. "Reggie" Brie (who is i/c B.E.A.'s Helicopter Experi-mental Unit) entitled Where is the Helicopter? It brought little cheer to mose aerodrome owners who have lost a high percentage of their revenue following closure of R.A.F. Reserve schools; because, although W/C. Brie foresaw the eventual usefulness of small private airfields as helicopter airbus maintenance stations, he

THE SCORCHER: Lt. Cdr.
"Mike" Lithgow, seen framed
in the eye of the Swift's Avon
jet-pipe (right), is shown
below traversing the 3 km
course on the Azizio plain,
Libya, during his successful
attempts on the world speed
record, as related on this
page. The spectator (below
left) is Col. Preston of the
Royal Aero Club. Below,
right, the observers are seen
grouped round the timing
apparatus as the Swift comes
up to one end of the course.