

AT SUTTON BANK

1934 B.G.A. Annual Soaring Competitions

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BY far the greatest interest during the soaring flight competitions was centred in the thunderstorm flights on Tuesday evening, September 4, when for the first time in this country three sailplanes were able to make contact with, and disappear into, a heavy thunderstorm.

This was the fifth series of annual competitions held by the British Gliding Association, organised this year with the help of the Yorkshire Gliding Club at the Sutton Bank site recently acquired by the B.G.A. Fifteen sailplanes were entered, of which eight were of British design and construction. Altogether 99 flights were made with a total flying time of 89 hr. 19 min 30 sec., or an average per flight of nearly 1 hr.

On the opening day lack of wind and an overcast sky made soaring flight difficult, and no outstanding flights were made. Lord Sempill, the B.G.A. President, visited the meeting by "Leopard Moth," and brought Herr R. Kronfeld with him. Somewhat similar conditions prevailed on Sunday, but G. E. Collins, in his "Rhoadler," by making use of thermal currents, was able to climb to an altitude of 3,000 ft., after a winch launch. Mrs. Mackie, of the Ulster Club, also made a very good flight, but damaged the "Scud II" on landing. The Ulster Club sportingly brought three machines over from Ireland for the competitions.

The course for the Daily Competition was to Osmotherley and back, a distance of twelve miles. The prize was won by G. E. Collins with a flight lasting over two hours, during which he reached an altitude of 3,250 ft. This was the longest "out-and-return" flight to be made in this country. A two-hour flight in the Ulster Club's "Kassel 20" was made by H. C. Wynne, who at one time dropped to 300 ft. below the hill-top, but by skilful soaring he was able to regain his altitude.

Riding the Storm

On Tuesday, September 4, at about 6 p.m., a large thunderstorm, that appeared to have been forming over the Pennines for some hours, was noticed to be moving over towards Sutton Bank. In tense excitement four sailplanes were quickly rigged and taken to the starting point in great hopes that at last real thunderstorm flying would be added to the history of British soaring flight. The pilots and machines, in the order of taking off, were G. M. Buxton in "Scud II," R. G. Robertson in a "Professor," G. E. Collins in the "Rhoadler," and, lastly, J. Dewsbery in the blue "Willow Wren." For some minutes the four aircraft flew back and forth over the south spur, in a very limited area of lift and with very little gain in height. Robertson lost the lift altogether and was forced to land away from the hill. Then suddenly it was noticed that the other three machines were gaining height, and at an altitude of just over 1,000 ft. Collins disappeared into the cloud, followed by Buxton, and a little later by Dewsbery, who had flown along the van of the storm. The cold front apparently moved from the S.W., met the warmer winds blowing from the S.E., and thus formed a huge cylinder of dark cloud stretching for many miles in a line running roughly N.N.E. to S.S.W. and advancing in a crab-wise fashion to the north-east.

Collins left the storm and headed east, landing at Pickering after a 2 hr. flight of 18½ miles, in which an altitude of 3,000 ft. was reached. Buxton came out of the storm at the rear, flew beneath it to the front and there entered it again. He quickly rose to his maximum altitude (unconfirmed) of 7,970 ft. at the rate of climb of 10 and sometimes 20 ft. per sec., and then flew north to Middlesbrough, a distance of 22½ miles, where he landed three-quarters of an hour after the take-off. This is claimed as a British altitude record.

Dewsbery made contact with a second storm and covered a

distance of 30½ miles in just under two hours, reaching a maximum altitude of 2,750 ft.

Unsuitable weather made flying difficult on Wednesday and Thursday, and nothing of importance was achieved, but on Friday afternoon the wind veered from E. to S. for a short spell. A daily competition was arranged for maximum aggregate duration, and this was won by the "Crested Wren," piloted by S. Humphries and J. Dewsbery, with a total time, for three flights, of 2 hr. 34 min. 6 sec. The "Golden Wren" was second with 2 hr. 28 min. 14 sec., the pilots being G. O. Smith and R. G. Robertson.

Duration Record Broken

A strong South wind on Saturday saw J. Laver up in the "Dorsling" shortly after 7 a.m. on an attempt to win the British duration record. After flying for about three and a half hours he managed to make contact with passing clouds and circled away to the N.E.—a surprising performance for an old "Prüfling" type machine—and later returned to the N. end of Sutton Bank to continue his vigil. The "Dorsling" was followed by the "Tern," "Golden Wren," "Rhoadler," "B.A.C. 7," "Scud II," "Grunau Baby," "Blue Wren," and "Crested Wren," and throughout most of the day from six to eight sailplanes were to be seen in the air together, a sight never before witnessed in England.

G. M. Buxton, in the "Scud II," flew along the south slope to Oswaldkirk and back, nearly seven miles each way, thereby winning the prize for the daily competition. A special prize, offered for maximum height, was won by G. E. Collins, in the "Rhoadler," by a flight lasting 1 hr. 10 min., during which an altitude of 3,600 ft. was obtained by the combined use of hill winds and thermal currents. On the way down Collins executed a number of loops and other aerobatics.

The "Dorsling" was eventually grounded after 8 p.m., Laver having broken the British duration record.

The total flying time for Saturday was 40 hr. 6 min. for 32 flights.

The main competition was concluded at noon on Sunday, September 9th, but a daily competition continued throughout the day for the greatest number of flights made from the White Horse (S. end of site) to Whitestone Cliffs, 1½ miles to the N.W. The competition was open to machines so that any number of pilots could compete with one aircraft. R. G. Robertson in the "Golden Wren" won the competition with seven circuits.

RESULTS

TROPHIES.

Wakefield Trophy (distance).—G. E. Collins, Rhoadler, for flight of 98½ miles* on 5.8.34, from Dunstable to Holkam Bay, on the Norfolk coast.

De Havilland Cup (height).—G. M. Buxton, Scud II, flight of 4.9.34, height of 7,970 ft.*

Volk Cup (duration).—J. Laver, Dorsling, for flight of 8.9.34, lasting 12 hr. 21 min.

Manio Cup (out and return).—G. E. Collins, Rhoadler, for flight of 3.9.34, from Sutton Bank (White Horse) to Osmotherley Church and back, 12 miles each way.

SPECIAL PRIZES.

CLASS I.

Distance.—J. Dewsbery, Willow Wren, 4.9.34, flight from Sutton Bank to Hawsker, near Whitby, of 30½ miles.

Height.—G. M. Buxton, Scud II, 4.9.34, 7,970 ft.* (subject to confirmation).

Duration.—J. Laver, Dorsling, 8.9.34, 12 hr. 21 min.

Out and Return.—G. E. Collins, Rhoadler, 3.9.34, from Sutton Bank to Osmotherley and back, 12 miles each way.

CLASS II.

Distance.—P. A. Wills, Scud II, flight to Ingleby Greenhow, 18 miles.

Height.—1st: G. M. Buxton, Scud II, 2,650 ft. 2nd: W. W. Briscoe, Scud II, 2,000 ft.

Duration.—1st: J. Laver, Dorsling, 4.9.34, 5 hr. 56 min. 2nd: J. Laver, Dorsling, 3.9.34, 2 hr. 16 min.

Out and Return.—1st: G. M. Buxton, Scud II, 8.9.34, flight to Oswaldkirk and back (7 miles).

* Subject to official confirmation of R.A.C.

Some Irish Statistics

During the first six months of the present year aeroplanes to the value of £14,733 were imported into the Irish Free State, as compared with £2,000 in the corresponding period of last year. Spare parts imported in the half-year under review were valued at £1,276, while in 1933 they amounted to only £737. The big increase in the figure for imported aeroplanes this year is due to the purchase of a flight of Avro training machines for use by the Army Air Corps at Baldonnel aerodrome where there are twenty officer-pilots and eleven pupils.

According to official information from the Minister for Industry and Commerce, who is responsible for civil aviation in the Irish Free State, there are eleven current registrations on the aircraft register of that country. Thirty-eight "A" and fifteen "B" licences had been issued by the Minister up to the end of August.

The number of aircraft on the Irish register does not, of course, include several machines which were purchased in England and are registered with the Air Ministry.