

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor does not hold himself responsible for the views expressed by correspondents. The names and addresses of the writers, not necessarily for publication, must in all cases accompany letters.

FLIGHT REFUELLING

—of Jet Aircraft: A Comet Suggestion

THE recent 12-hour refuelled flight of a Gloster Meteor, viewed in conjunction with the successful test flights of the D.H. Comet, suggests a method by which one of the greatest difficulties besetting the operation of this fine aircraft may be overcome.

It seems probable that the Comet will be ready for operational service before the present air-traffic control system has been improved sufficiently to permit a large reduction in the exorbitant quantity of reserve fuel that jet transports must now carry to allow for the contingencies of stand-off and diversion. However, flight refuelling can reduce substantially this large amount of reserve fuel, and thus improve the economic outlook of jet transports.

A tanker aircraft stationed over a busy terminal during congested periods could transfer enough fuel to allow jet aircraft a good stand-off period; and in the event of a diversion the tanker could supply the necessary fuel. Bad weather would not interfere with the refuelling operation, as this could be carried out above the weather.

Littlehampton, Sussex.

A. L. MAYNE.

SOARING BY HERONS

Shoreham as a Counter-attraction to Camphill?

ON August 21st, at Shoreham Airport, at 2.30 p.m. in very hot weather, with a cloudless sky and a gentle southerly breeze not strong enough to create slope wind (even if there were any suitable configuration), I noticed four or five herons assemble at about 200ft over the railway bridge and the Adur. I was watching from the north side of the airfield, near the Sussex Pad Hotel and Old Shoreham Bridge. The birds commenced circle soaring in tight turns, gradually drifting north until, when well over the Downs, they could no longer be followed by the eye. By then they had reached a height of at least 1,500ft, though it looked from their size more like 2,000ft. I watched them for quite 15 minutes, and was anxious in case any local aircraft should come in to land—their approach would have been into the sun—but none did so during the period.

I have had a lot to do with soaring in the past, but have not previously been lucky enough to see herons at the game.

Science Museum, G. TILGHMAN RICHARDS,

London, S.W.7. M.I.Mech.E., F.R.Ae.S., past member
of the B.G.A.

THE FIRST AIR DISPLAY

Memories of the Rheims Meeting

From Dr. A. P. Thurston, M.B.E., D.Sc., M.I.Mech.E., F.R.Ae.S.,
M.I.A.E.

HARRY HARPER'S account in your issue of August 18th of "The First Air Display," at Rheims in August, 1909, called up many happy memories.

Hubert Latham's Antoinette monoplane appeared to be the most stable and controllable machine at the meeting. He flew in circles to the then amazing height of 500ft, and then glided safely to earth. Viewed broadside, when racing in circuit, his machine flew in a perfectly straight line parallel to the earth, in marked contrast to the young French pilot Lefevre, in a French-built Wright biplane, who flew in a series of "phugoids" like an exaggerated "linnet" path.

The elevator of the Wright machine was in front, at a negative angle to the main plane. Hence the machine was automatically unstable, and Lefevre's flight, when racing, appeared to be a continual succession of mild dives and zooms. He certainly thrilled a large crowd, but this did not prove that Lefevre's Wright machine was more easily and quickly manoeuvrable than those of other types at Rheims.

Glen Curtiss—the American—was the winner with a wonderful, very controllable, little biplane having biplane "fore-and-aft" control. It will be remembered that this form of control was used by Sir Hiram Maxim in his first steam aircraft in 1894, in his various models for experimenting with gyroscopic

control (the first "George"), and in his petrol machine of 1907, the relics of which are now in South Kensington Museum. Maxim was present at Rheims and was pleased that Curtiss had won, because it proved the correctness of his theories.

Some time before this meeting I made flying models of Maxim's machines which showed Sir Hiram that, if their centre of gravity was in the correct position, they would fly quite well. They glided, however, in a "phugoid" path and nothing would make them glide in a straight path. Sir Hiram did not mind, because he believed that "controllability" was of more importance than stability.

Harry Harper's most interesting account does not mention the British team headed by Cockburn. It will be remembered that Mr. Cockburn placed his experience at the service of the R.F.C. in the first war.

A. P. THURSTON.

London, W.C.1.

EASTCHURCH

Proposed Memorial to the Pioneers

IN the excitement of present-day aircraft development it is perhaps not unnatural that the names and deeds of those gallant gentlemen, the pioneers of aviation, should have escaped from the minds of the public, with the probable exception of a small portion of the community having had actual contact with, or other interest in, these great men.

In this connection the Island of Sheppey, and particularly the Parish of Eastchurch, retains a natural bond of association with the early pioneers of flight, since it was here that the initial experiments in heavier-than-air flying machines (within Great Britain) were carried out, and such notable feats as Col. J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon's circular mile flight on October 30th, 1909, the first ever flown by a British aeroplane. The machine used was designed and built on the spot at the first aircraft factory ever to be erected.

Accordingly, the people of Eastchurch have established a committee to investigate the possibility of the provision of a Memorial to Pioneer Airmen, to take the form of a library/museum, facilities for the siting of which having been previously set aside in the planning of the proposed village hall. In this connection it is considered that, possibly, some of your readers may be interested in this proposal and may be prepared to support such a worthy cause, either financially, or by the presentation of aircraft models, books, pictures or periodicals, etc. (which may be despatched to the address below), and in this way help to bring about the realization of the scheme.

W. E. JAMES, Wing Commander (Ret.),

Eastchurch Memorial to Pioneer Airmen, Chairman.

R.D.C. Offices,

Minster-in-Sheppey, Kent.

No. 4 SQUADRON

A Search for its Trophies

DURING the past few years No. 4 Squadron has had frequent changes of location and command. Now that conditions are more stable the present Commanding Officer, W/C. B. Everton-Jones, is anxious to trace the whereabouts of Squadron trophies and property which have been deposited in various places for safe custody.

As you may know, No. 4 Squadron is one of the oldest in the Royal Air Force and during the past thirty years it has won many trophies. Some of these are still held by the Squadron, but very inadequate records exist concerning the remainder, and enquiries of Air Ministry departments and known past members of the Squadron have failed to bring any more light on the subject.

I am writing to you, therefore, in the hope that you might find a little space in your periodical in which to mention our difficulty. This is certain to be read by some ex-members of the Squadron and some useful information might emerge.

The trophies form a part of the great tradition of the Squadron and I would be grateful for any help you may be able to give us in reassembling them under our care.

D. W. SHANAHAN, F/L.

No. 4 Squadron, R.A.F. Station Wahn,

B.A.F.O., c/o B.A.O.R. 19.