

THE BRITISH NATIONAL COMPETITION

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BRAMCOTE, R.N.A.S. Airfield, Nuneaton, was threatened by the high cloud of an occlusion on the second day of the National Gliding Contests on Monday, June 23. But the occlusion slowed down over Ireland, the high cloud retreated in the afternoon, and the few weak thermals available were apt to become congested with circling competitors. The most reliable one came off a power station at Hawkesbury, North of Coventry, and was at one time occupied by eight sailplanes at varying heights, the lowest of which fell out of it and had to land (it is rumoured) beside the stokers who had let it down by coming out to watch the fun. Nobody went more than a few miles.

Tuesday, June 24, was tricky. Some pilots came straight down from the aeroplane-tow without catching a breath of lift; others got well away, but, apart from two exceptions, failed to reach their respective goals. The trouble was caused by the same layer of medium-high cloud aforesaid, and it caused me to lose a bet of a pound of strawberries to the Meteorologist, Flt. Lt. Cochemé, who had inside information about it, and prophesied, correctly, that Philip Wills would not reach his goal at Kirbymoorside. This spoilsport overcast occupied the whole area West of a line drawn Northwards from Bramcote and pushed out a projection over Yorkshire. Goal-flying pilots approached it at their peril and nearly all landing points were dotted along its edge.

On this day, the BAFO team showed up best with flights of 102 miles by Captain Claudi, and 110 miles by Flt. Off. Forbes to his goal at Catfoss. The latter pressed Eastwards as much as he could, crossed the water to Yorkshire at Barton-on-Humber, and then encountered a sea breeze which caused the Southerly wind to back to E.S.E., and for some reason was quite a help to the convection.

In that part of England the over-lying inversion was higher than at Bramcote, and C. Nicholson and Lt.-Cmdr. Blake, in a Kranich, put up a new British Altitude Record for two-seaters by climbing 6,700 ft. above release level.

Only one other pilot reached his goal, Sqdn. Ldr. Havercroft, who took an Olympia, entered by its manufacturers, to Finningley.

One puzzled pilot, T. Rex Young, of Bristol, spent over an hour beating along a ridge at Great Hucklow, in Derbyshire, wondering why somebody had not discovered such a magnificent soaring site years ago and established a gliding club there. He landed at the top and was at once welcomed by members of the Derbyshire and Lancashire Gliding Club, whose site it is.

The day's flying totalled over eleven hundred miles.

Wednesday, June 25, was a magnificent day, with the meteorologist going so far as to commit himself, at the 10.00 briefing, to a definite statement that by evening they would all be eating crabs in Cromer. The occlusion had passed over at last, having corrugated itself into a wave or two, which gave it fresh life

and the maritime polar air, which had been hanging about for days, just out of reach beyond Ireland, bathed the site in its benign instability at last. Practically everybody got away. Eleven pilots reached their goals and the day's mileage totalled over 2,100, easily a record for this country.

Twelve pilots covered more than 100 miles, the longest distance being put up by Philip Wills, who once more missed his goal, and this time by only three miles. He was aiming for Caistor, 130 miles away, almost the farthest possible point attainable with a West wind. G. H. Stephenson ran him close with 126 miles to his goal at Beccles, and the Swiss two-seater S-25, though not officially in the Contest, broke the Swiss Two-seater Distance Record (44 miles) by going 125 miles to the coast at Happisburgh. Its two pilots, Karl Haberstick, and Kurt Fährlander, had previously only flown over mountains.

Another Swiss pilot, Julius Seifritz, made a goal flight of 117 miles, and 24 hours later he suddenly woke up to the fact that he had, incidentally, broken the Swiss Goal Flight Record.

Quite a few people landed around Norwich, 115 miles, including Terence Horsley in Lord Kemsley's Olympia and C. L. Russle, who got back to the dormitory at 06.00 and gave a detailed account well worth waiting up for.

Mist over the Fen country was just as good as anywhere else, he found, though two pilots were brought down prematurely beyond Peterborough, and Philip Wills worked North to cross the Fens near the Wash because it was the only place where they put up any cumulus clouds. This caused him to reach the coast at Sheringham, but for some reason the usual sea-breeze effect failed to come up to scratch and let him down at Ormesby, three miles short of Caistor. This was odd because the sea breeze blew inland as far as Coltishall, North of Norwich, where it caused Russle to land down wind. Moreover, both he and the Naval Kranich I crew, J. S. Sproule and H. C. N. Goodheart, found by far the strongest lift there apparently at the farthest point to which the sea breeze penetrated and Russle was lifted to 6,000 ft. It was aggravating to find this upheaval when one's goal had already been reached.

Much credit is due to Flt. Lt. J. A. Presland of the North Wales Cross Country Soaring Club team, who chose Manly in Lincolnshire, 45 degrees off the wind direction, for his goal and reached it after an 85-mile flight lasting from 15.15 to 19.15. His barogram is remarkable, showing 10 peaks at almost equal intervals, or 2½ climbs per hour, each followed by a cross-wind glide to the next thermal.

A Southerly wind on Thursday caused everyone to choose goals to Northward, but only three of the goals were reached, the farthest being Doncaster, 72 miles, where F. T. Gardiner landed his own Olympia. There was a spate of landings just 23 miles to the North and another difficult patch just West of Worksop, where