

## ENGLAND

### DUNSTABLE TO DOVER

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is an account of the 95 mile flight on August fifteenth which won the Wakefield Cup for the longest distance by a British Pilot during the past year. From *The Sailplane and Glider*.

Seldom has a good cross-country day advertised itself so well beforehand. On Friday, one said: "Looks as if it will be good on Sunday." On Saturday, one peered out at the rain of the warm sector of the passing depression and said: "Tomorrow will be a Big Day." On Sunday, one woke up to a cloudless, brilliant morning, with the expected north-west wind stirring the bedroom curtains.

We arrived at Dunstable early, leisurely rigged "Hjordis", took her to the top of the hill, as there was no point in a hurried winch-launch, and were bungy-launched at around 11:30, just as everything began to boil up nicely.

At breakfast, Nicholson (who was giving an aero-towed display at Ramsgate the following Saturday) and I simultaneously said: "How about a goal flight to Ramsgate today?" So I decided on Ramsgate as a goal. The wind was W.N.W., about 15 m.p.h. on the hilltop, 20 to 25 at cloud base. Around mid-day, the Sperber and I caught a thermal, which took us up to cloud base at 3,100 ft. above the top. Nicholson, just above me, disappeared into the cloud, so I hurriedly left, particularly as the turn indicator was not working.

Things ahead looked a bit flat, so I determined to fly down Watling Street, and, failing lift on the way, look for more thermals over St. Albans. Cruising at 50 m.p.h., with wind nearly astern, I must have covered the ground at least seventy, and arrived at St. Albans in a very short time, at about 1,500 ft. I found the expected lift to the windward, and, after a bit of a struggle, climbed to nearly 3,000 ft. I was so determined to stay in the bit of air where I was and let the wind carry me along until something better turned up. This plan produced about 20 minutes' struggling in weak and broken lift, during which I was carried along over some very unhappy-looking landing country, between Hatfield and Hendon, to the banks of the big quadrilateral reservoir at Waltham Cross, which I reached around 1,700 ft. A bit of lift here got me high enough to cut over this spur of London to Epping Forest, where I felt fairly confident of finding lift.

The sky now began to look very promising: cumuli forming everywhere with a tendency to streets. I found good lift, up to 10 ft./sec., where I expected it, and decided to cut across wind for my crossing of the Thames, where I expected to find a belt of down currents. I entered the cloud at 3,200 ft. and climbed rather messily to 3,500 ft. (4,200 ft. above sea level), then took a compass course south towards the Thames. Approaching the river banks, I saw an aerodrome (Hornchurch), rather comfortably on my left, and big power-wire pylons spanning the river ahead. I was rather low by now, and nervous about crossing the river, and

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The "Hjordis"

W. Setz

finally, burning my boats (so far as retrieving went, the far side was certainly two hours further away), so I struggled for some time in rather broken lift over a big factory on the near bank. At last, doing no good, I nervously ventured over the edge, and got the surprise of my life. With a surge, the machine heaved upwards. The variometer popped up to 10 ft./sec. climb, and I could actually feel the warmer air on my face.

I am convinced that, on this day, the waters of the Thames were actually warmer than the land. The combination of circumstances necessary to produce my up-current must be exceedingly rare. To begin with, we had had a fortnight's heat wave, during which the waters must have heated up considerably, followed suddenly by a cool day with a west-northwest wind. This not only kept down the land temperature, but happened to be blowing exactly along the Thames, where I met it, and so had time to absorb heat from the water.

Anyway, my troubles were over. I flew, rather than circled, up to cloud base, along the river as far as Tilbury, through a variety of rich smells ascending from the factories on either bank. Then I turned inland and did a crosswind traverse to Rochester aerodrome. From now on it was not a question of "Where can I go?", but of "Where shall I go?". Lift was everywhere. After some cogitation, I decided that Ramsgate was being presented, wrapped in cellophane on a silver dish, and that I would have a look at France.

I did another crosswind flight to a cloud street over the main Dover line, then flew rapidly down this, proudly ig-

noring lift under 3 ft./sec., to Lympe aerodrome. The French coast was in sight from about Maidstone.

The calculation in my head went something like this. Distance Folkestone—Grisnez, say 25 miles. Thermal from coast should take one at least 2 miles; 23 to go. Flying speed 48 m.p.h., wind averaging 22; total 70. Sink, say (with a bit of down current), 4 ft./sec., hence gliding angle, say 1 in 24 (it took a few miles to work that out in one's head). Therefore, it's in the bag for a husband and father from say, one mile up of 5,500 ft., to be quite sure. A spot of blind flying indicated.

At this juncture, a large black cloud hove up, quite the meatiest of the day, over Dover, and, simultaneously, the insurance premium against my spending the night in a French jail (having no passport) rose to 90%.

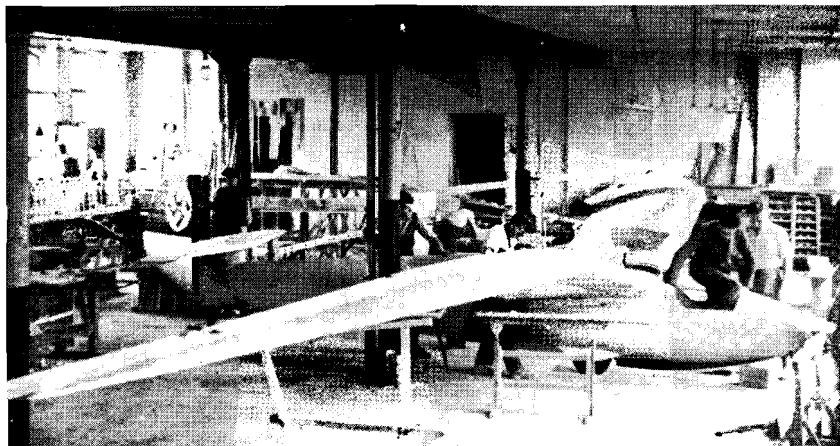
I got to Dover in a raging downcurrent of 10 ft./sec. In disbelief I flew right through it, expecting at any minute to hit the corresponding up. I emerged the other side and found some mouldy little bits which, every time I tried to struggle, carried me out over the cliffs at 1,500 ft. I flew north towards Deal: nothing. The last chance was another hunt around Dover. The downcurrent was still there. I made a rather hair-raising landing in a valley with a violent downcurrent rolling down my field, and landed on a 40 yard uphill stretch of grass between houses, trees, and a sunken road.

It was just after 2:30, and I had averaged, since leaving Dunstable, nearly 40 m.p.h. Three good thermal hours to go, and I sat sadly on the beach, throwing pebbles at the sea. There are some drawbacks to being an Englishman!



## GERMANY

Latest reports from Goeppingen give an indication of the international growth of soaring. Wolf Hirth writes that his Sport Flugzeugbau Goeppingen now has 85 employees and is in full production on the Goeppingen I (Wolf), Goeppingen III (Minimoa) and the H-17, with orders coming in from all over the



A Minimoa being assembled in the Goeppingen factory