

GLIDING AND SOARING IN THE NETHERLANDS

By H. SCHWING

THE Dutch gliding movement which was started by a few enthusiasts in 1930 has after a long period of slow progress met with more and more success in the years since 1937.

In 1938 we made several fine flights, one from Ypenburg (the Hague) to Namur (Belgium) 110 miles and the first goal flights of approximately 50 miles. We got our first high performance sailplane, an imported Minimoa. Soaring became compulsory in the training of KLM pilots. Most gliding clubs owned a Grunau Baby and an ESG, the same type of glider as the English primary. All clubs were united in the League of Dutch Gliding Clubs.

May, 1939, saw Mr. Nienhuis win second prize in the "Concours Internationale de Virtuosite en planeur" near Paris.

In the summer of 1939 the League held an Olympic soaring competition with the intention of getting a number of experienced pilots for the Olympic games at Helsinki. Some 1250 miles were flown.

The year culminated in the Third Netherland Soaring Camp; this time held in the neighborhood of Eindhoven. 16 pilots flew with 3 Grunaus, 2 Buzzards, a Kranich two-seater and a Minimoa. Two DH Moths were used for aero-towing and many very fine flights were made into Belgium, Germany and even France. Mr. Nienhuis, who served during the war in the RAF flew to Les Mazures in northern France, while the KLM pilot, Koch, broke the national goal flight record with a flight of 150 miles to St. Quentin. Mr. van Zanten, after a 5½ hour thermal flight became the fourth Dutchman to get his Silver C. Most launches were made by aero-tow but some were by winch. We learned much from this camp, obtained experience and found that in our country and in our climate, too, real soaring is possible.

Unhappily all civil flying was prohibited with the outbreak of war in September, 1939, although Holland was still neutral. Many glider pilots were mobilized and served in the Netherlands Army and Navy Air Forces.

In the spring of 1940 the ban was partially lifted after the same sort of fight as in Great Britain and we got permission to train on several airfields. On May 5 we made our last flights, as six days later the Germans invaded our country and naturally all flying activities were stopped at once.

At that time the Dutch National Records were as follows:

Distance Goal Flight: 150 miles—O. Koch.

Duration: 24 hours, 3 minutes—J. K. Hoekstra.

Height: No official record. Unofficial approximately 10,000 feet.

700 A, 450 B, 100 C and 4 Silver C licenses were issued. Many Dutchmen made two of the required three flights for the Silver C. The lack of good slopes in Holland is a great disadvantage in obtaining the required five hours. This is a real bottleneck!

In the last five years actual flying was impossible but that does not mean that nothing was done. More

secondaries and advanced sailplanes were built and a new form of organization was created.

The "Koninklijke Nederlandsche Vereeniging voor Luchtvaart (The Royal Aero Club of the Netherlands)" to which the League was already closely associated was reorganized on January 1, 1941. The members were grouped into the following sections: Sport flying, gliding and soaring, ballooning, model aviation and aeronautical engineering.

Of course the local clubs continued on the old lines. But the formation of districts was new. A district is a region consisting of one of the bigger towns and its surrounding suburbs in which exist several clubs belonging to the various sections of the Aero Club. The council of the district is made up of representatives of the sections, with the council organizing meetings, conferences, lectures, etc.

The gliding clubs were able to get drawings of gliders and high performance sailplanes free of charge and also had the help of a central workshop established during 1939 by the Aero Club. This workshop carried out the repairs on club gliders for which only the cost of materials was charged. During the time the glider was under repair, a similar one was loaned to the club in order to continue the training of the members without disturbance.

Besides this the clubs got the instruments and barographs for home built sailplanes free.

The clubs obtained a bonus for licenses; 10/— for the A to £5.— for the Silver C. Thus a credit account with the Aero Club towards the purchase of new equipment was created. A similar bonus was given for licenses for instructors and technicians and for cross-country flights. For contests, a Minimoa, a Buzzard, and a Grunau Baby could be placed at the pilot's disposal.

Mr. R. Snellen, who was also known in England, was commissioned to design a new secondary for the Aero Club. This plane was to replace the Grunau. It had a wing of 40 feet in one piece and tail surfaces in V form (as in the American Nomad). The performances are slightly better than those of the Grunau Baby.

The drawings of this plane were nearly completed when the Reichskommissar, Seiss Inquart, appointed a number of Quislings in the council of the Aero Club, with the result that almost all members left the Aero Club. The gliding clubs voluntarily discontinued their activities. This was, of course, with the intention of starting them again as soon as circumstances permitted it, which meant after our liberation. The Aero Club under the new management was active only so far as aeromodelling was concerned.

As the Allies reached the southern borders of Holland most Quislings disappeared in eastern directions.

During the five years of occupation many of our friends were killed; some in the RAF and Royal Netherlands Navy Air Force, several were shot by Germans for active resistance; some died in concentration camps and prisons. Among the latter were Mr. Snellen and Mr. Verwaal (former secretary of the gliding section). Two of our Silver C men were captured some 30 miles