

# Gliding and Soaring in Finland

By JOUKO HIRVONEN

Soaring activities in Finland are now being reconstructed and it may be said that the restoration has been very rapid, for during the first postwar summer, 1945, results were already better than in any prewar summer.

This has been made possible by the tremendous encouragement soaring has received in this country in the past year. This form of aviation is rather new in Finland as it has been performed here for only twelve years. It has now reached a leading position among various spheres of sport flying. This is indicated by the forty-two gliding clubs, with a total of 1,500 members, active in Finland at present. These clubs are directed and supervised by the Finnish Aeronautical Association (formerly the Finnish Aero Club), the central organization of sports aviation in Finland.

The Association has an aviation school at Jämi-järvi; a low but steep ridge situated amidst heaths and woods about fifty miles northwest of the city of Tampere. The school was established in 1935 and since that year Jämi—as the site is affectionately called—has added an airfield, modern hangars, lodgings and administrative buildings. It was all ready for the Olympic Games for 1940 but, for reasons all too well known, these were not held.

The Association is constructing various types of gliders and sailplanes for the school's use and kits with materials for the clubs. As club members build their aircraft themselves, glider and sailplane kits containing all the necessary materials, some spares and instructions for building the aircraft are very popular and have proven extremely useful. Clubs fly on week-ends; in the winter on frozen lakes and in the summer on airfields. The flights are free to members provided they have worked a certain number of hours on the club aircraft.

Most groups use auto tow or winch launching and since 1937 Finnish soaring clubs have used on their intermediate and high performance sailplanes releases near the CG for better efficiency in climbing. About a 30 to 50 per cent gain in height on a winch tow can be effected with this improvement.

During the summer most advanced club members are given a course or two at Jämi lasting for two or three weeks, depending on the curriculum flown. In addition to the usual soaring courses there are blind flying, instructor, and technical courses. At the beginning of this summer's activities at Jämi there were seven Silver C, 220 C, 920 B and 1275 A licenses in Finland.

A special occasion in Finnish soaring is the yearly National Soaring Competitions. Especially good results might be expected of this summer's competitions as clubs all around the country have trained their best men to participate. It is quite possible that the present Finnish soaring records—150 miles distance, 15,800 feet free climb and 10 hours 14 minutes duration—will be broken.

The aircraft used in Finland are mainly old and well proven foreign glider and sailplane types: the Grunau Baby, Rhönbuzzard, Olympia, Salamandra, Weihe and Kranich. Recently, however, serious aerodynamic and material research has begun in order to provide purely Finnish glider and sailplane types. There are many reasons for this, the most important of which are the special strength characteristics of Finnish timber and the conditions produced by the Finnish terrain with its large woods and tens of thousands of lakes. Some types are already nearing completion and it will be interesting to see whether they meet expectations. Meanwhile, all our soaring circles are doing their best to raise their sport to new and higher standards.



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