

# FIVE MEN AND A GLIDER

By GEORGE MULGRUE

ON clear, warm days, people in Canberra, Australia's National capital, often see a small glider soaring above the open country around the city. It's the only machine the Canberra Gliding Club possesses, but that doesn't worry the easy-going members, for there are only five of them, and everyone gets a good share of flying. In fact, with one man driving the towing car, another looking after the towing cable, and a third balancing the machine and its pilot before the take-off, nearly everyone has something to do for each flight.

Their machine is homemade and thus inexpensive. It is an intermediate sailplane that one of them began to build before the war. In 1945, he and some friends decided to begin again and the club was formed. Now it's working smoothly and happily, and every fine weekend finds them out in the open, watching the wind and waiting for thermals.

The five men could hardly come from more diverse walks of life. Arthur Powell, who did most of the designing of the machine and is the engineering "brain" of the club, is an instrument maker, although at the moment he's working as a bricklayer. Gurth Kimber, the only Englishman, is official secretary to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom. He's really a yachtsman, but Canberra is one of the few Australian cities which doesn't provide yachting, and now Kimber does his sailing in the air.

Ron Southwell is a beekeeper, who's often away, following the blossoms with a truckload of hives; the same truck that goes off to carry the glider back when someone can't get home. Roy Raymond is a garage hand, and Jack Cotterill is a civil servant.

The glider has a span of 45 feet, a wing area of 157 square feet and an aspect ratio of 13.4. The wing is a two-spar, semi-cantilever type, and to make it took the spare time of four men for a year. It is easily removed from the fuselage, and is dismantled in three 15-foot sections for easy carriage. The fuselage is 18 feet long, with a single wheel, and a skid under the pilot's cockpit. It has two hooks one in the nose for aero towing and ground skids for practicing takeoffs, and a belly hook for auto or winch towing. The whole plane weighs 331 pounds.

All launches are auto-towed across one of the big paddocks near the Canberra airport using two thousand feet of steel cable.

Members have set no particular records. An hour and a half flight is the club's best. But they're improving as they go, and already know quite a lot about the currents and thermals around the Canberra hills; notoriously difficult for airmen. Their best climb is 5100 feet.

And so far there have been no accidents. When they built the wing, they realized that no one was qualified to make delicate computations, so they chose a good thick wing section (Clark Y18), with a nice safe, thick spar.



*Australian Dept. of Information*

**Roy Raymond, garage hand, putting the cockpit hood over Ron Southwell, beekeeper.**

All but one of the flying instruments are homemade. The Air Speed Indicator was once a milliampmeter, and is most efficient down to five miles an hour. The Variometer, which tells whether the plane is rising or falling, is of the Cobb-Slater type. Its tank is an old four-gallon oil drum, heavily wrapped with blankets. Its indicator balls were turned from red and green toothbrush handles. It works remarkably well. The Altimeter, only commercially made instrument on the board, is of the Kollsman sensitive type.

Nearly all the materials are Australian. Main spars and longerons are of mountain ash. Ribs are of Australian coachwood, and all plywood parts are made from Australian coachwood ply. The wings are covered with madapolam, generally used for pillow slips.

Except for the addition of a perspex cockpit cover, the plane is just as it was first made, and has stood up magnificently to the wear and tear of two years' use by five enthusiasts. Although the craft is housed in a leaky shed, forcing members to drill holes in its fuselage to let out any accumulated water, it's probable that there is still plenty of soaring ahead for Canberra's five man gliding club.

**HAVE YOUR CONTEST SANCTIONED BY THE SSA.** To avoid confusion and to derive all the benefits the organizing officials should write to the SSA, 228 Boston Post Road, Weston 93, Mass. as early as possible, for a sanction for their event. (4 to 6 months ahead would be ideal.)

**BENEFITS OF A SANCTION:** Free Advertising in SOARING, Minimum of conflict with other soaring events with regard to dates, Standardization of Rules, Mailing lists furnished at cost, Write Up of event published in SOARING, Co-operation of the SSA on matters of publicity, Aid in the Distribution of Special Bulletins to the entire membership furnished at cost, Further Help by the SSA to aid in the success of the event in every way possible.