

LOOKING BACK

One of the leading aviation magazines of its day, "The AERO," published in England, carried in its October 1910 issue (44 years ago) two articles dealing with motorless flight. One was titled, "Some experiences with a Glider and a Few Practical Lessons," by Horace W. H. Vaughan, the other, "Light Wings for Gliders," was by P. K. Tucker.

It would be interesting indeed if Messrs. Vaughan and Turner could look in upon some of our present day motorless flight operations. While they would see of course that some changes had been made, they would find all the same that many problems and situations are quite similar to those of two score years ago.

Some of Mr. Vaughan's observations from this 1910 "THE AERO" follow:

"To say that the sport of gliding is less advanced than the sport of flying seems at first glance to be an anomalous statement, in that the latter was a much later development of perfection attained in the former by a few pioneers.



There is a strong contrast between the flier and would-be glider. (*He refers evidently to power pilots as 'fliers' and motorless pilots as 'gliders'—Ed.*) The latter is recruited from the ranks of men enthusiastic upon the subject, keen and energetic, determined to take some active part in the movement, and to experience the joy of free-flight through the air upon a full-sized man-carrying machine in spite of long odds.

They are for the most part, however, men of business, with no more leisure than any ordinary business man may permit himself to devote to sport, whether golf or motoring, and in most instances,

rightly do not feel justified in spending more upon their experiment than they would upon either of the pastimes mentioned."

The article continues as the author.

Mr. Vaughan, tells of his "... privilege during his recent holiday to spend a few days in camp upon some southern downs with two enthusiastic gentlemen to test a glider of the tail-less biplane type constructed by themselves."

From that quoted above, and all



Above: The camp on the South Downs.

Below: The 42-foot glider constructed by Messrs. B. Graham Wood and J. C. Maas.

signers and constructors are still wrestling with that one. Somewhere it has been said that "Time changes everything." One wonders really if it does.

While at the business of looking back—we are privileged in an article appearing in August, 1954 "SHELL AVIATION NEWS," to look all the way as it were—this through the medium of a work by a Mr. C. H. Gibb-Smith. It is a new appraisal by this author and is entitled "The Flying Machines of Leonardo da Vinci."

This article causes one to be again forcefully reminded of how very near Leonardo came to being the world's first glider pilot. He could, it seems, so easily have accomplished this feat during his eventful and fruitful life

(1452-1519), and probably would have but for his insistence on flapping the wings of his gliders. Another thing that was evidently a deterrent to this accomplishment was the fact that the great Leonardo, even as a glider man of 1955, was wont to start a project and before completing it start even a newer one.

Mr. Gibb-Smith's article is replete with illustrations which are copies of Leonardo's original sketches. Concerning these the author makes the following observations.

"One would like to think that Leonardo was steadily progressing towards the idea of controlled fixed wing gliders, prompted by the more detailed study of birds which he undertook after about 1500. It is at least probable, but he left no clear indication of how his sober speculations were advancing. We do know, however, from a series of thumb-nail sketches with descriptive notes made at the end of his life that he was interested in human gliding descent based on the zig-zag fall of a leaf."

"Leonardo comes fully into his own as an inventor of the highest order when one considers his only two completely original contributions to flying—the parachute and

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the way through this article, one is continually struck with the fact that some things in gliding and soaring have changed not a whit in 44 years.

Mr. Turner's efforts in this same issue of "THE AERO" is more of a technical article. He is dealing mainly with the problem of wing structures and available materials. He leads off by saying—

"It may have been the lot of others, as it has been my own, to have got into difficulties over the designs of planes (wings) for gliders. To such the following may be useful. The construction of wings divides itself into two parts: ..."

If our information is correct, de-