

# PERFORMANCE CAMP AT KIMBERLEY

by E. DOMMISSE

We do get some record breaking weather in South Africa at times, but the standard of the men's records is now so high that good weather alone is no longer enough. You also need a hot ship and an outstanding pilot. I found my own skill somewhat lacking and my Skylark 3b a bit too slow.

Judging however by what I had achieved and looking at the women's records, I realized that these could still be exceeded with what we have. Except that we had no lady to do the flying. It was therefore a very great pleasure to me when Anne Burns, from England, accepted my invitation to come and give it a go with my Skylark 3b. Anne already had nearly all the British ladies records to her name and I believed she could achieve World records here.

Anne and her husband Denis duly arrived and we set off to Kimberley where a performance camp had been organized which was attended by about 40 pilots and crew who had 14 sailplanes to fly.

It rained for the first week and very little was done. This was unusual and a bad blow to our high hopes.

On January 3rd the rain cleared a bit. There was quite a deal of low cu. and a strong west wind. It did not look, and was not predicted to be, a good day. Anne set her goal at 265 miles and got away at about 10:30. Cloud base was about 6,000 to 7,000 ft. (Kimberley is 4,000 ft. above sea level.)

Tim Mouat-Biggs, flying an Air 100, set off also on an attempt for his distance diamond.

Both pilots reached Volksrust after completing 325 miles. Both were a bit sad, Anne because she had set her goal too low and Tim because he had set his a bit too high. These were, however, good flights made possible by the strong and steady tailwind. Both pilots thereby completed their Gold Badge with three diamonds.

Quite a few diamond goal flights were done during the next few days but conditions were not good enough for World records. The weather had cleared, there was little wind, it

was very hot and there was not a single cloud for days on end.

These were the conditions when Anne flew her 300 km. triangle on Sunday the 8th.

Her speed for a world record claim was 66.7 km./hr. (41.5 mph).

The next day was much the same except that thermals started popping very late. A few faint wisps of high cu. appeared late in the afternoon. Anne had gone off on an attempt on the out and return world record. Bobby Clifford, flying the Air 100, nominated the same turning point, de Aar, for an attempt at the South African out and return record. At 6 p.m. Bobby was back, a bit too late to overfly Kimberley for his diamond distance. Anne arrived back at 7:20 p.m. She was very tired and muttered something about "Mountains of the Moon" in a shaken voice. The terrain is pretty rugged down south to de Aar.

This was her second flight due for a women's World record claim. The total distance was 436.4 km. (271.5 mi.)

A comparison of the two barograph traces was most interesting. Bobby attained a better speed on an inferior machine because he was at all times a good 3000 ft. lower but in stronger lift than Anne. Anne sat high where rate of climb dropped off sharply but here she felt a bit

more safe over the badlands.

The next day, January 10th, was the real day of days. Predicted 2/8 flat cu. sat at 13,500 ft. above ground, there was absolutely no wind. Thermal strength was a regular 1,000 ft./min. or better.

Denis Burns nominated Westleigh rail junction to the east as his turning point and set off in the Skylark at 11 a.m. He was back for a world record claim at 7:30 p.m. The distance was 565.5 km. (352 mi.).

Quite a few other outstanding flights were also done on this day. Tim achieved 74.5 km./hr. for a new South African 200 km. triangle speed record.

On the 11th rather too much cloud formed. The day started late and finished early with local thunderstorms. From this Anne snatched a claim for a 200 km. triangle women's world record with a well flown and planned flight. Her speed was 79.01 km./hr. (49.2 mph.).

On Friday the 13th Anne set off on an attempt on the 100 km. triangle record. Large storms built up rapidly and she gave up the attempt, coming back very low over the airfield. Here she picked up lift and was soon at the base of a large cu. directly overhead. She entered this and we watched the cloud building rapidly until it became a very large storm which covered the whole area and poured out heavy rain, hail and lightning.

She was forced by heavy rain at the airport to land 15 miles out, but had attained an absolute altitude of 10,543 meters (34,591 ft.) with a gain of altitude of 9,119 meters (29,917 ft.) which was good enough  
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Anne Burns at left, Denis Burns in center and Boet (E.) Dommisse at right after Denis' 565 km. goal and return flight.

