

Hardly had I touched down before my brother-in-law and his wife drove up. It was a wonderful relief to be in such competent hands. Blue-O was parked in a hangar of Provosts, telephone messages were sent, and the uninvited guests—my husband had arrived at midnight with the trailer—were most hospitably entertained for the night.

Hardly had we got going the next morning before another trailer closed in behind us. It was Jeremy Brock. We greeted each other like voyagers on an Arctic expedition. Jeremy, keeping further west to start with, had been able to fly part of the way under a cloud street. Like me, he had come up the Severn Valley, but had flown straight on to land at Shawbury, to complete his flight in the fast time of 3½ hours.

On looking back, I can see that my

thanks are due to a large number of people. I should, however, particularly like to thank the instructors and tug pilots at Lasham who, braving the icy conditions in the Tiger's open cockpit, towed me around in the winter months so that I was able to take advantage of opportunity when it arose in the summer.

It is interesting to speculate whether a Gold C distance was possible from Lasham that day. The best chance would seem to have been a start at about 13.00 hours. With 5½ hours' possible soaring time an average speed of 32.5 m.p.h. would have been sufficient (Jeremy Brock averaged about 38 m.p.h.). It would have been necessary, however, to keep slightly north of the wind vector followed by Jeremy and myself, in order to avoid running out of land. On the whole it seems quite a possibility.

HILL BOUND

by W. E. Crease

"A NORTH-WESTERLY airstream covers the British Isles," said the voice of the announcer as I sat up in bed.

"Just the day for an out and return," I said to my crew as we sat down to breakfast.

By the notable efforts of Dave Clayton's Jeep, by dint of some manhandling and *much* argument, we were at last rigged and ready to launch a thousand feet above the Menai Straits.

Below us the hill dropped away to the little village of Aber in a slope of more than Mynd-like proportions. Behind the mountains of Snowdonia reared up in peak and gully and rock-face until they disappeared into cloud. Far away to the south-west, the twin pinnacles of Yr Eifl (The Rivals) marked the start of the Nevin cliffs.

Attached to the end of the bungee, the Jeep trundled off below me. I hoped it would be able to stop. I heard Dave Carrow grunt as he held back to the limit. Then, in two skips and a jump, we were airborne and skimming over the Jeep at 70 I.A.S. to cushion on the updraught beyond.

Ten green! Not bad! I slid off towards the north-east where, some five miles away, Penmaenmawr falls 1,500 ft. almost sheer to the sea.

The gap between the Aber ridge and Penmaenmawr seemed rather large—they always do!—but I slid into the lift level with the top and was rapidly swept upstairs. From 2,700 ft. a.s.l. I headed back for Aber where, behind the foreslope, Moel Wnion (known to us as The Onion) rises into a superb hog's-back to 1,900 ft. It was all just too easy, but I wasn't grouching about this. There would be plenty before the end of the afternoon that would make me sweat a bit.

At 3,000 ft. I hit cloud—drat these thermals! They'd no business to be forming so much cloud right on the coast. I don't care for cloud when the peaks are sticking up into it only a mile or two down—wind. I used the brakes and stayed out.

My next objective was Carnedd-y-Filiast, the end peak of the Glyder (how suitable!) ridge some four miles to the south-east across the Nant Ffrancon valley. It looked a bit unpleasant, as there were foothills in front of it which might mask the lift. However, I had previously earmarked a landing field (quite 100 yards long!) so off I pressed. The lift did not come till I was close to the slope and some 200 ft. below the top. However, when I got to it, it was good and soon shot me up to cloud-base again.

From there to Eilidir Fach was easy.

From Eilidir Fach to Moel Eilio is another biggish gap with the same situation of masking by foothills. Some downdraught in the gap gave me a bad moment, but as soon as we tucked well into Eilio, up we went to cloud-base again.

The next step was to Mynydd Mawr which I remembered from the ground as one of the most savage rock bowls in North Wales. It didn't look less so as I sailed into it from the air, but the lift was superb and two circuits of it put me back to cloud-base ready to jump to Garnedd Goch.

Garnedd Goch is a really nice-shaped mountain and I had time to breathe while I settled down to plan the next bit of the trip.

This is a five mile gap to The Chessmen—so christened by us because their names in Welsh mean Red Peak and Black Peak. These peaks form the ends of a two-mile ridge which rises 1,700 ft. in one clear sweep of scree and rock, straight off the coastal plain.

Five miles cross-wind at, say, 300 ft. per mile meant arriving at about 1,500 ft. a.s.l.—lower if I met any downdraughts. I told myself firmly that even if I got there at a 500 ft., I couldn't fail to climb up such a superb face. All the same, I felt nervous!

In fact, I got there only just below the top and climbed quickly back to cloud-base before pushing on to Yr Eifl.

These "Rivals" are really the most remarkable sea cliffs I have ever seen. And there is definitely *no* landing for some six miles. Since, coming back, I might have to arrive low and climb up them, I made a very careful study of them before pressing on for Nevin.

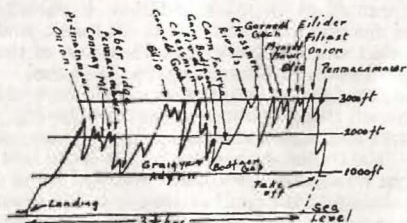
It was all downhill now and I scudded along at 70. I had intended to make my turning-point a lump of hill behind Nevin called Garn Bodfaen, but now, four miles beyond it, I could see a lovely cone-shaped hill, Carn Fadryn (1,250 ft. a.s.l.). To reach it would be easy and I *thought* I could get back.

I reached Fadryn at 1,800 ft. a.s.l. and found that, due to its cone shape and isolated position, 1,800 ft. was about the limit of its lift. I played with it for a few minutes—enough to show it would hold 1,800—then set off back to Bodfaen. This was the lowest yet—1,200 ft. a.s.l. only, when I reached Bodfaen. However, this is a very nice hill and I was soon back at 1,800 ft. and pressing on for The Rivals.

The beginning of the cliffs leading to The Rivals is a headland called Graig-yr-Adyrn (The Birds Rock). It deserves its name, for certainly nothing other than a bird could get foothold there. True precipice is rare anywhere in this country but Graig-yr-Adyrn drops 500 ft. as straight as a plummet into the waves at its foot. Although at 1,400 ft. when I rounded it, it still gave me the "Willies"—quite illogically, for I had not the least need to worry. From there to The Rivals the green ball never dropped below 10.

I began to feel much happier. It seemed to me it was in the bag. I sang love songs to the Olympia, I felt so fond of her.

I didn't stop at The Rivals, but went straight on to the Chessmen. I wanted to see what they were good for. It seemed to me they might produce up to 6,000 ft. or even more. But back at 3,000 ft. I was into cloud again! The thermals were developing even out at sea!



Looking back, I should, of course, have gone up through the cloud and would probably have been able to sit in hill lift above the tops. There was no ground above 2,500 ft. within ten miles of me, so I should have been perfectly safe. But so firmly had I impressed on myself before the flight that I must not, under any circumstances, go into cloud, that the thought, now, never even entered my head.

Instead, on reaching cloud-base, I pressed off without further thought for Garnedd Goch.

Note here the error of over-confidence. Had I troubled to think, I should have seen that to cross a five-mile gap from 3,000 ft. to reach a 1,700 ft. hill fully open to the sea wind is one thing. To cross the same gap to a 2,300 ft. mountain with ground at 1,000 ft. in front of it is quite another.

When I eventually reached the face of Garnedd Goch I was just 500 ft. above the ground, with the mountain sticking up another 800 ft. above me. Decidedly nervous, I tucked myself in to the face, but the lift was there all right and a couple of short beats on the west end of it took me back to 2,000 ft. a.s.l.

Then came the most startling moment of the whole flight. As I set out to extend my beat to the north-east, flying some two spans from the hill and barely a span directly above it, I rounded a spur to find at the other side not a continuation of gentle, heather-covered mountain, but an enormous rock bowl. In a split second, the gap to the ground below me dropped away from fifty feet to fifteen hundred and as I peered down seven or eight hundred feet of naked rock to the screes below, I very nearly dropped the controls and shoved my hands over my face.

However, as I cleared the edge and flew out into the bowl, the sense of vertigo disappeared as fast as it had come, especially as the green ball shot up to 20 ft./sec. and held there. In one circuit I was out of the bowl and another took me to cloud-base.

After that, I had only to skip to Mynydd Mawr, then to Eilio and round by the foothills to the Aber ridge.

The trailer was waiting for me at the foot, but no sign of crew, and I decided I could push on to the limit of the lift in the other direction. So straight along the Aber ridge to Penmaenmawr, rounding it well below the top (I had lost all qualms about soaring below the top of sea cliffs by now). Regain

height to 2,000 ft. on Penmaenmawr and a sweep over the sea to Conway mountain. Along Conway mountain, turn over the river, back round the Conway bowl to see how good it is (the answer is "very"), back round by Penmaenmawr and scream back to Aber at 100 I.A.S.

Still no crew! I regained height over the Onion, had ten minutes aerobatics and came in to land by the road.

Two hours later my crew returned from an expedition into Anglesey!

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Taken over all, *the* outstanding feature of the flight was the scenery. To see it coming up in one endless panorama of lake and peak and pass was like climbing forty mountains in a day. I shall never forget crossing the Llanberis valley, Lyn Padarn brilliant below with gulls dotted all over it, startlingly white against the blue water. Beside and above me, peak after peak towering into cloud and, for full measure of beauty, lying ahead and to starboard and moving with me along the mountains, a complete circular rainbow with its paler shadow lying alongside it, a double ring of vivid colour against the black rock and purple heather beyond.

Not less lovely was flying down the cliffs of the Nevin Peninsula—blue sea on both sides and the waves creaming along the yellow sands.

Anyone can have their six hours in cloud, their Gold distance and Diamond height. I shall be very happy to remain hill-bound for the rest of my days.

Coventry to Lympne

by George Thompson

SATURDAY, April 9th, promised well from the start. Vic Carr was urging me to have a bash, since I hadn't attempted a proper cross-country since my Silver C distance of 42 miles from Bramcote in the 1947 Competitions. I felt that I would like to make an exercise of it by trying to cut across wind as much as possible, and there was some talk about making for the Lympne area, though no specific goal was given. No special preparations were made. I carried my ordinary half-million map, reaching as far as N.W. London, and didn't

feel that a track line was called for.

The aircraft was the Leicester Club's Olympia, until recently in use at Dunstable. The London Club handed it over to us in beautiful condition, only the instrument panel needing to be fitted up to our own liking. Unfortunately we haven't yet obtained a compass and the lack of this cost me a bit of time in the early stages.

Winch-launched at 11.26 to 1,250 feet under a sky full of cumulus, I scatted with some rather elusive thermals, gradually losing height. Meanwhile the Tutor and