

The Cheap Syndicate Presses On

This is a sequel to the article, "A Cheap Syndicate", published in the Spring issue of GLIDING last year

IF YOU read your GLIDING (pardon, SAILPLANE AND GLIDING) from cover to cover like we do, you will have realised by now that the Druid syndicate had become the Petrel syndicate. If you don't want to know how this came about, we advise you not to read this article.

We had a successful winter with "Druid" (Kite I), mostly at Dunstable, and by Easter had clocked some eighty hours and done another C. of A. Then we took her to the Mynd Rally, where we did *not* come out bottom. The only cross-country was by Roy, who was the first of the group to complete his Silver C by going to Bromsgrove, which he thought was Bridgnorth. This retrieve was epic in that two vehicles were used: Jim's "Sidderney" couldn't pull the trailer up the Clee Hills, so Ted's taxi went along to assist, then carried on for the ride. The Burway hill up the Mynd proved insurmountable, even in tandem, as the taxi, pulling first, had a lower bottom gear and Sidderney was catching up; Frank Irving came to the rescue.

So there we were: we had a nice aeroplane, we had acquired a trailer, a barograph and

a parachute, one Silver C and the promise of more to come. We seemed well set for the summer. But, no! In the Midland Club's little hangar languished Mr Hardwick's Petrel. The more the chaps saw of this the more they liked it. One specification was first satisfied by Jim climbing into the cockpit to see if his stiff leg fitted. After that, consultations with the Midland Club Committee, Sling, Frank Irving, and all available pundits went apace. We left having made an offer, subject to our selling the Kite.

Two weeks later Dr. Kiloh came from Newcastle and bought Druid for an immense amount of money, which same measly sum the M.G.C. were prepared to accept for their Petrel.

The next step was to collect the goods. This was undertaken by Jim, Ted and Roy in Sidderney, with the Surrey Club's Daisy trailer, and turned out to be "one of those retrieves". The expedition set off with tins of food and sleeping bags at 8 p.m. on Friday, and arrived half way up the Asterton hill at, as usual, 0?00 hours on Saturday. They crawled up to the top on foot and slept till Colonel Benson's voice on the phone woke them to the fact that their equipage blocked the hill. The day was



The Petrel at Lasham: The group's first view of her in one piece.

spent making adaptations to fit Petrel onto Daisy's trailer and the homeward journey began at 4 p.m., with some help from a friendly Land Rover until Sidderney warmed up. His final protesting squeak of brakes fell upon a sleeping Lasham.

On Sunday the idea was to rig the beast. But she wouldn't. Dozens of helpful bodies heaved and strained and shouted, but to no avail. Interval for lunch, after which we returned to find that three sialwarts had popped her together—no trouble at all! Then Frank Irving "snagged" her, with the vultures hanging around. When Frank's chisel revealed a smell no cheese has ever equalled in one wingtip, we began to wonder why we had let our nice little Druid go.

Jim hired a barn near Farnborough, and instigated the rebuilding of eight feet of wing-tip. Cables hung from rafters, a primus heated a five-gallon drum of water for bending the plywood, and one tended to step on chickens. There was alarm and despondency when a bug was found lurking in a corner. Jim popped it in a matchbox, and through the help of Malcolm Laurie it was found to be one of the sort which eat woodworm. In case some of its staple diet should also be lurking about, the almost-completed wing was hastily removed.

Soon all the group had their first flights, probably Petrel's first aero-tows. All came down grinning from ear to ear. Jim described her as an aerial goldfish bowl. Ann fulfilled an ambition at least six years old, and said she felt like the little man in the Mickmoa in Lawrence Wright's "Cloud Cuckoo" film. The most gratifying thing about Petrel seemed to be her slow flying speed. Thermal circling could be that much tighter—Skylarks, Olympias and even T-21's were left far below, shaking their fists as we shot up in the most powerful core. The A.S.I. sat nearly on the stop and was useless, so we all flew, most successfully, on the fore-and-aft-level indicator. And all this with better penetration than Druid's. It wasn't at all bad, and we left regrets behind.

The following week-end we flew over ten hours in her, and Jim did his Silver C height. And then came the cross-countries: Ted began by falling less than a kilometre short of the fifty. Jim did a leisurely 44 miles to Godstone, where the crew spent nearly two hours trying to find him in the last half mile. Alan has been evolving a radio homing

device ever since. Then Ted made quite sure of his badge by going 64 miles to a marsh near Eastbourne. The "crash" was reported to the local fire brigade, who tried to cross the surrounding streams, and the local constabulary was in attendance. Petrel was carried in pieces on a haystack to the farm.

She spent the Comps. as a demonstration piece for the crowd, at one point doing a flat bungee launch for their amusement. Nearby an EoN primary was worked on a stand for Hulton Press by the group, for which we earned a handsome sum for the C. of A. and trailer fund. A familiar sight at dusk was the Procter Bradford chugging hangarwards with the "broomstick" in tow. Meanwhile we were working on the Comps. at a great rate, and trips in the Petrel saved our sanity and amused various pundits who were allowed to fly her. Among them was John Simpson, who has originally bought her from Slingsby and had kept her all the war in the grounds of a Reading school. Paul Minton, who was seen getting glummer and gruffer all week "on the gate", descended from a 3,000-ft. aero-tow one evening with a grin that threatened to split his face.

Soon after the Comps. Ted's ideas on gliding were straying from those of the rest of us, and John Bunting joined the group in his place. Meanwhile we were engaged on repairs to the starboard wing. A four-year-old repair had not been done properly and a piece had to be spliced into the rear spar near the root. We recovered the wing while we were at it, and Roy test-flew Petrel one Sunday in the very dusk. Only just in time, as an expedition was planned for the following week-end. The R.A.E. celebrate the Queen's birthday in October with a Monday off, and this week-end we decided to take Petrel to a hill. The wind caused the choice to fall for one near Blandford, and those who had to stay at Lasham were surprised to be awakened on Saturday night by Sidderney's usual squeak. A sodden and sniffling group reported that Petrel had had an argument with a molehill on landing, which had upset the skid and surrounding structure.

It was agreed to begin the monster C. of A. forthwith. We had made her just serviceable in the spring, and now intend to re-cover, paint her pretty colours (the colour card is worn out by much fingering and discussion), and generally make a beautiful job of her.

Jim took the fuselage to Farnborough; the wings are being done at Lasham.



"Sidderney" tows the Petrel.

Our progress report, as of the beginning of November, shows a total of some sixty hours by the group, plus about five given to "odds and sods", Jim Roy and Alan (also Ted) have their Silver C's (Alan completed his in a Skylark), and we had a wonderful summer's flying. We have still

only invested the price of a depressed motor-car, and pay into the kitty 5/- a week running costs, NO flying fees. We can't understand why there isn't a healthy crop of such groups by now. What has happened to private enterprise?

JIM TORODE
ALAN CRONIN
JOHN BUNTING
ROY & ANN PROCTER.

POSTSCRIPT.—The colour decided upon was a good neutral white! Frances Torode: "Now I shall have to wash her every week instead of every other." It is now February and the workshops are cold. However, vast quantities of ripper and dope have been used to good purpose, and our target for test-flying is Easter. With the help of sums by Peter Bisgood we are fitting an anti-balance tab on the pendulum elevator to give some "feel", and there are plans to start building an open trailer before too much of the soaring season has passed. We should be well placed for summer 1956.

BRITISH GLIDING ASSOCIATION NEWS

Records Homologated

U.K. GAIN OF HEIGHT AND ABSOLUTE ALTITUDE: D. Piggott in Skylark II, on 14.7.55 from Lasham, 28,000 ft. absolute altitude and 21,000 ft. gain of height.

INTERNATIONAL AND BRITISH NATIONAL SPEED OVER A 300-KM. TRIANGULAR COURSE: Cdr. G. A. J. Goodhart, R.N., from Urinquinty-Yanko-Oaklands-Urinquinty, Australia, on 9.1.56, at a mean speed of 76.636 k.p.h. (47.62 m.p.h.). It should be noted that this record has been homologated by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale as an International Record.

Whitbread Bursary

Colonel W. H. Whitbread has generously given to the Association, through the Central Council of Physical Recreation, £50 to assist glider pilots with a little experience to continue their training. This sum will be divided between five pupils, so that each will receive £10, to be used as credit for flying fees only during the 12 months following its receipt. The qualifications are:—

1.—The pupil must have attended a course of at least one week's duration, or

have carried out 20 training launches in two-seaters.

2.—The pupil must not, at the time of application, have qualified for his C certificate, or carried out more than 100 flights in gliders or aeroplanes.

3.—Applicants who have taken courses or training prior to January 1st, 1956, are not eligible to apply and the closing date for application for this year will be July 1st.

Alex Orde Fund

The Council are disturbed to note that no claims have yet been made on this Fund, which was set up in 1955 to help young and promising pilots to reach the standard necessary to take part in World Gliding Championships, and has agreed that the qualifying age for the Fund should therefore be raised to 30 years of age, or under. Otherwise the conditions remain as set out in GLIDING, Spring 1955, page 1. (Two flights which should qualify for the fund were made on April 19th: 189 miles from Cambridge by Peter Neilson, aged 21, and 176 miles from Lasham by John Williamson aged 27.)