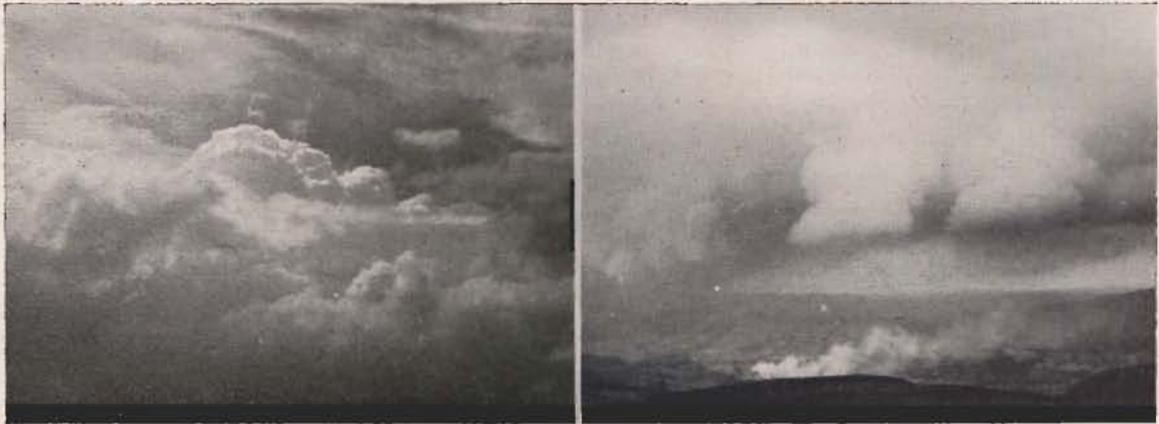


On the Blackpool Trail



Clouds on Friday afternoon, July 14th, at the National Contests. On the left; the approach of the storm in which R. C. G. Slazenger was carried up 7,200 feet. On the right: the cloud scene at 4.10 p.m., looking north-west from Bradwell Edge in the direction in which P. M. Watt has just gone away on the flight described on this page; showing the factory smoke which gave him a thermal and the storm clouds he tried to use.

[Many of those at the National Contests who watched Squadron-Leader P. M. Watt launched over Bradwell Edge, drop below the hill-top, pick up height in factory smoke and finally disappear into the murk below a thunder cloud, must have wondered what befell him and his "Petrel," especially as he had the next launch after Mr. Slazenger who climbed 7,200 ft. in the storm. The following account is extracted from a letter in which the pilot explains how he was able to get 25 miles and rise to a maximum of 3,000 ft. under peculiarly difficult conditions.—ED.]

MY attempt to get to Blackpool from Camphill was so full of incident that I am not likely to forget it for some time to come.

The wind direction was messing around in the afternoon, but at the time of the launch it was about S.S.W. A lot of clouds arrived, and a KITE that had just gone off was circling under the eastern half. I was not due for a launch for some time, but the other pilots stood down and I was flung to the lions. Everything was so hurried that I quite forgot to start the barograph.

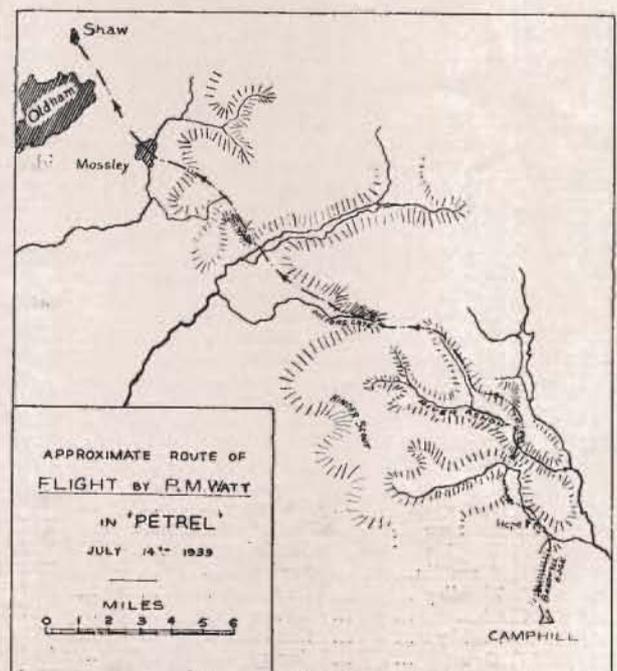
The launch began at 35 m.p.h. and increased to 70 at 400 ft., so I cast off. (I think my cable was underneath the other one which was being used.) There was no lift under the KITE, so the chimney at Hope was the next goal, with a pause for height at the north end of the slope on the way. The clouds were retreating rapidly, but I had to circle because so much height had been lost getting across the valley between the two parts of the storm.

I left the smoke as soon as possible and sat over the hill to the N.W., 1,560 ft. high. Wisps of cloud were forming below the top and were going up very rapidly. The lift was local, and there were violent up- and down-currents. The PETREL got a bit out of control at one period, and took up a 60 m.p.h. left-hand turn in spite of all I could do to hold her. This placed us behind the hill where it was really rough, and I unlocked the

hook. It wasn't a practical thing to do, because I was not high enough to jump, but it felt better.

After spending a little time playing around, a wave of discretion overtook me, and I retreated north over the River Ashop to a hill 1,200-1,400 ft. high. The next two hours were very peaceful. We tramped back and forth, sinking below the top twice. I could not see why we were soaring at all, because the grass hardly stirred at times. The beat was short and the areas of lift kept shifting as the wind was swinging about on entering the valley.

The centre of the next storm was some distance to the west, and it passed by without lifting me, but I



got out when another storm came along. The moors north of Kinder Scout looked forbidding, the lift was rough, local, and only temporary. At Doctor's Gate I made enough height, at the head of a small valley, to reach the hills along the north of Longdendale Reservoirs. After a beat into wind on hill lift to the south end of the reservoirs I made a dash over high ground to Mossley, where the rain came down, complete with buckets. The wind had died away and smoke haze from Manchester was rising slowly. The PETREL lost height gradually all the way to Shaw, between Oldham and Rochdale.

There was no "choice" of a field; it was the only one available by the time I started to look for one. It was quite large, but the effective size was reduced by a hill, houses and factories. The approach in heavy rain was difficult, because the front panel, when wide open, allowed the rain to beat in. I had to take a quick look, slam the panel shut, use the spoilers, then look again to see how we were placed.

The Southdowners were upon me 40 minutes after the landing, and the prompt collection did much to wipe out the memory of a peculiarly unpleasant flight.

P. M. WATT.

Riding the Wave

EVERYBODY saw the great stationary wall of cloud to the north-west throughout Monday morning and early afternoon at the National Contests. But W. E. Filmer was first to notice that its visible surface was perpetually cascading downwards. Its lift, if any, seemed quite out of reach, but Mr. Filmer became so fascinated by it that in the afternoon he set out in his VIKING to investigate.

He first took the VIKING to the north end of Bradwell Edge, and then flew out to the S.W. until he had reached a point two miles from the hill and 2,750 ft. above his start. Here he found himself in a kind of cloud valley between two sloping ridges of cloud: one was the stationary roller with its crest over Kinder Scout, and the crest of the other appeared to be over the Competition site, though this may have been an illusion, as its surface was convex and so its summit was hidden. The "floor" of the valley had somehow formed where none had been seen before from ground level.

Judging that the cloud bank over the site was an upward rebound from that over Kinder Scout, Mr. Filmer skirted its edge and found that, in the clear air outside it, the lift was just equal to his own sinking speed. But when he went inside lift increased to 3 ft. per second, and he flew along parallel to its edge, avoiding going too far in by watching how much light filtered through from the sun, which was dead ahead. Mr.

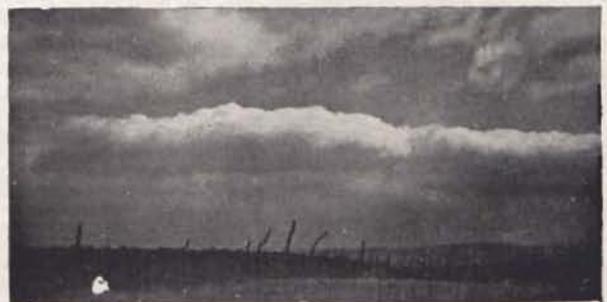


Mr. W. E. Filmer, of the Southdown Club, is here seen standing beside his "Viking," together with his "team," Mr. and Mrs. S. Cox, at the National Contests. How he used this machine for aerial surfing in a wave cloud is described below.

Filmer then turned round to fly northwards in the same way, but in this direction the sunlight no longer acted as a depth gauge, and the VIKING soon lost its way inside the cloud. Evidently the pilot got across into the downward side of the wave, for he emerged from its under side sinking at 5 ft. per second.

He then flew straight down-wind in the hope of reaching a third wave which could be seen some way off. The glide took him 15 miles from a height of 2,000 ft. above start, but he found no further lift and had to land.

It was a unique experience and full of interest for a pilot who knew all about the "Moazagott" wave phenomenon in Germany.



Wave clouds at about 1.30 p.m. on Monday, July 10th. Above is the third wave of the series, looking down-wind from Bradwell Edge. Below is the first wave, apparently over Kinder Scout. 9 miles to the N.W. All but its white top is now hidden by nearer dark cloud, but its great lateral extent can be seen.

