

AIR NEWS:

Wing Commander Ken Wallis and his daughter Vicky had good reason to be excited when they brought their home-made Gyrocopter to Shoreham Airfield for a tryout. He'd built it in his spare time in about seven months, Vicky lending a very willing hand. It weighs only 250 pounds, including the American two-stroke, 72 horse-power engine. Rather different for the Wing Commander from flying bombers in the last war, but the adventure-spirit that's part of all airmen never dies. And it calls for a certain amount of faith, as well, to go up in something you've knocked together yourself. When gyrocopters gather enough speed the roto-blades revolve by themselves (they're not engine-driven) and support the machine in the air.

Just as the gyrocopter took off in a few yards, so it can land, not exactly on a sixpence, but on a tennis court - preferably when nobody's playing.

Even more ambitious in the do-it-yourself field is John Taylor, of Ilford. He designed and built his own plane, and at White Waltham airfield he got ready to see it go up for the first time. But that's not all. At his Ilford home, John built the machine, inside the house. Getting it out, to be taken to the aerodrome, was the best the neighbours had seen for a long time.

The engine was easy; it was brought down the stairs, but the fuselage very nearly had to be left behind.

After that, the house must have seemed quite empty. Back at the airfield the great moment had come. It was a triumph. But the pilot was not John Taylor, because before the plane could be insured it had to be flown by a test pilot. The owner-builder will have to wait another three weeks before he can fly it himself.

He went to hear the verdict. A hundred per cent, said Tich Holmes. That must have been music in John's ears.

Near Calais, 63-year-old Jean prepared to fly the Channel in a replica of a plane in which Bleriot became the first man to do so fifty years ago. Some pilots of experience said as they watched Salis that they wouldn't fly this crate for all the tea in China, but that didn't stop Jean Salis. Coast to coast, his time was 35 minutes, two minutes less than the great Bleriot himself.

At Ferryfield, Lydd, the plane touched down. All honour to Jean Salis for demonstrating how Bleriot did it, in the infancy of aviation. His flight was a part of his attempt in the Bleriot Commemoration Race, between London and Paris. He won't put up the best time, but he deserved something for originality.....