

NEWS RELEASE

from



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For Air Cushion Development Limited
Dibden Purlieu
Hampshire

Cushion Freighter

A courageous young man will go on public trial before thousands of people at the Rally and Fete at Luton Hoo, on Saturday June 23. For two years Kenneth Gray, of Dibden Purlieu, Hants, has been giving life to a dream. Convalescing from frightful burns sustained in a car accident, Gray evolved an idea for a load-carrying vehicle supported by and travelling on a cushion of air - but his approach to the problem differed basically from the classical solution evolved by Christopher Cockerell of Hovercraft fame.

Aided by his elder brother, Robert, Gray set about designing and building his craft. In a workshop behind his home, Purlieu House, on the fringe of the New Forest, the ideal laboriously took shape. Now it is finished, ready for trial.

But instead of holding these first tests in secret, where failure would be known only to those concerned, Kenneth Gray has the courage to stand or fall by his convictions - publicly, before a host of people - the quality of courage that has carried him from death's door back to a full life.

The prototype Gray cushion-freighter is a box-like structure 25ft long by 15ft wide and weighing about four tons, It is powered by a DH Gipsy Queen 30 aero engine of 240 horsepower which drives four 3ft diameter 8-blade fans at the front of the craft. The airflow from these fans is ducted beneath the craft and provides both the air-cushion to support it and the propulsive thrust to drive it. The 'pilot' sits in a central cab above and behind the fan intakes, and the vehicle is steered by a pair of control levers (like a tank) which close sets of louvres in the fan intakes and so vary the thrust and lift in either of the ducts. This causes the craft to bank slightly toward the desired direction of turn and by so increasing the water drag on that side, to make the turn.

Kenneth Gray has patented his design and has formed a company, Air Cushion Development Limited, to deal with commercial applications for the vehicle.



21-6-1962

Home-built Hover-Scooter

The thousands of visitors to the Rally and Fete at Luton Hoo on Saturday June 23, including perhaps the Prime Minister, will see an unusual man demonstrating an unusual machine.

Don Robertson, of Kingswood, Surrey, war-time naval test pilot and for many years a jobber in the City of London, will be 'flying' his Skimmer II, a one-man hover-scooter he designed and built at home during the winter for £250.

Beautifully made and with nothing amateur about it, Skimmer II is built of plastic and plywood, is powered with a motor-cycle engine, and with very simple controls is equally simple to operate.

It hovers at about four inches above the ground, will skim over water as well as over land, and although Robertson built it for his own fun and with no thought of production, there would seem to be little doubt that these hover-scooters have a bright future not only as amusing beach-skimmers for holidaymakers, but as serious transport vehicles for men who need to traverse estuaries, sandbanks, mud-flats or, indeed, any terrain not negotiable by conventional means.