

THORNABY HALL

THORNABY-ON-TEES,

YORKS.

26. 7. 37

My dear Daddy + Mummy.

Back in England again,
to a family that is already showing
unmistakable signs of growing up,
and I am feeling worn out.

Vera + Jane are over near Whitby.
I stayed there the night before we sailed
and relied on Baby to wake me up.
I was heavy with sleep when V nudged
me in the back, + then said "Sorry
darling, it's only half past four
and I thought it was half past five".
After having + dressing I went
downstairs at six, to find a puncture
in the front wheel, and I was due
at Kirby Moorside at seven to drive
an Invicta + slider trailer to Hull.
I arrived on time after a fearful
hurry + we set off.
There were not no time to empty

FIRST YEARBOOK

WEST-HO-YEARBOOK

1980

our tanks out, and we hunted round for a long time before we found a couple. we sold the petrol to some lorry drivers on the way and a policeman found the tins, thought they needed "looking after" and locked them up. The foreman was furious because he thought we had lost his tins, and paid us out on our arrival home by unloading the aliders last, after all the paint + stuff we were carrying. We sailed at 7 in the evening after a rush round Hull looking for a Carnet for one of the aliders. It had not unladen in the port + eventually turned up on the S.S. Accrington, our 1000 ton liner. It took 36 hours to get to Hamburg; we ran into fog in the Elbe and had to go very slowly. After unloading the other end we drove

to a place just south of Hannover ②
the first night and then on to the
Wasserkuppe next day, where we
were welcomed warmly by the
Germans. After three or four days
hanging about and exploring the
place from the air in various
aeroplanes we did some aero-towing.
I towed three people off and had a
cine camera which I borrowed in
England, and with which I took a
lot of quite illegal photos of
King Kites from the air!

The competitions started on Sunday
~~the~~ 4th July, and immediately
after my launch I spun smartly
into the ground, without getting
anything worse than a few scratches.
The wind was light + I was forced
to fly as lowly as I dared.

A thermal current came along
in which I started to circle.

Half way round I saw we were too
near the hill, and out of the thermal,
so I quickened the turn + stalled.

It was some days before I got going again, as I went to bed that day & the wind was unmitable after that. When I finally got away, I got to Jena, where Carl Zeiss makes his cameras and field glasses, and where there is a very old university.

The Germans were very kind to me at the military aerodrome where I landed, and the retrieving party arrived next morning at 4.30 to fetch me home. We didn't get back till after lunch & it was too late for gliding because it had been a bad day and there were very few thermals left. A few days after that I got away again. Shortly after leaving the Wasserkuppe at the first attempt the lift failed and I landed at the bottom. I was retrieved and left again at 1.30. After 20 minutes I nearly had to land but was just saved by a timely thermal which came up off a small town.

③

After an hour + a half I had again picked my field to land in, and was once more saved. Shortly after that I went into a cloud and rummled round for an hour + a half flying blind, getting up to 19000 feet. When I emerged there was no more lift and I lost height gradually + finally landed in Czechoslovakia, on another military aerodrome. I put up at a local hotel, the ground party arrived at 5.30, we breakfasted at 6 and were away by 8 after a lot of obstruction on the part of the authorities.

The next time I flew, I couldn't get away from the Wasserkuppe because there was a strong wind that was good for hill soaring but it broke up the thermals. I managed to land on the top so there was no retrieving to do. On the Friday before the end of the fortnight's competitions I got away at 1.25, nearly landed at 1.45 and again several times further on,

but finally landed the kite at 5 o'clock near Leipzig after an awful ride. It was one long struggle in very rough thermals, sometimes down to 100 feet or less and sometimes up at 3000.

I got to bed at 12 + was up at 12.30 because the ground crew had started out after me, and had rung back to the Wasserkuppe at intervals till my call told them where I was.

We arrived back at the start at 8. It was a still day and only the lighter machines got away, + so ended the competition. I was 11th out of about 30, not so bad I suppose considering my lack of experience, but what pleased me most was that I was top of our team although I only got away 3 times.

It was a strenuous time, because we had to manhandle our machines up + down every day, and the lack of sleep on the days I got away did me a bit of no good.

I didn't know till late on Friday whether my broadcast was "on" so couldn't give you more warning. I do hope you had the cable in time to listen. The talk was completely spoilt by being a ten minute affair boiled down to seven because the end of the news was late. Vera said it sounded very nice at Avothland, so perhaps you got it all right.

We are going back to Hookshood on Tuesday (tomorrow) and the family will be going to Sea Mills shortly after that. + we go to camp at Ramsgate on August 15th for a fortnight.

Then comes the promotion exam, + then the AOC's instruction, after which I shall collapse altogether.

Jane smiles and laughs now, and makes awrding notes in her throat to amuse us. She even gets upset if we take too little notice of her while she is lying awake in bed or in her pram. I hope she isn't being too intelligent for her age.

I must rustle off to Avothland now as we have been promised cold duck for supper. Tomorrow I have to make two

trips over the moors because the Ford
is too small to accommodate all
our luggage and I can't ~~to~~ borrow
a bigger car from anyone.

With lots of love

from Percy.