



## Rassemblement 1969

By HAROLD BEST-DEVEREUX

In "Flight" for September 25 and October 2 we published some impressions of America's Rockford Fly-in by Harold Best-Devereux. Here the same author captures the unique flavour of Gallic homebuilts seen at Laval-Entrammes on August 15

THE CHARM of the French amateur-built aircraft movement, the Réseau du Sport de l'Air, is enhanced each year by the variety of venue for its *rassemblement*. The 1969 meeting, one of the most delightful ever, took place at Laval-Entrammes in the Mayenne, the geographical location of the medieval frontiers between Bretagne and Maine and between Normandie and Anjou. During the weekend of the *quinze août* national holiday the proud owners of a hundred-odd aircraft, either amateur-built or derived from amateur designs, flocked together to discuss grass-roots aviation in one of its purest forms. As is so often the case, the weather prevented several arrivals.

The RSA has a noticeably family atmosphere which has built up over the years. Youngsters are happily following in their parents' footsteps and new blood is being transfused, though perhaps not at a really adequate rate; but youth in aviation is a pretty nebulous quality rarely associated with physical age. The amateur movement in France has achieved tremendous success and has, as a result, failed to gain many adherents because it is so easy, in comparison, to buy a secondhand factory-made bargain, built by an industry generated from amateur design. Certainly the true amateur aircraft constructor is not sharing in any overnight craze, the majority are serious students of aeroplane design and construction.

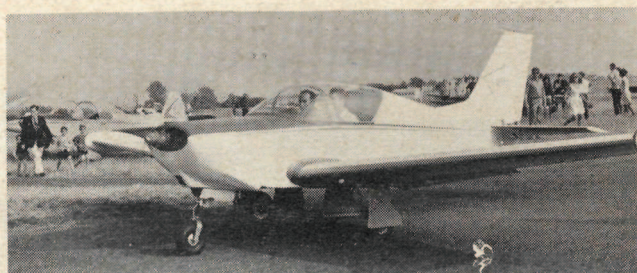
Laval was the perfect spot for a highly productive liaison exercise in which amateur constructors came to grips with government and other statutory officials in the healthy and productive presence of aeroplanes rather than in the interminable and waffling committees and meetings too familiar in Britain. In fact, for a country reputed to have a fierce bureaucracy, the French seem to process the construction and use of their amateur-built aircraft with few problems and little nonsense. Perhaps it is a mixture of Gallic flair for logic coupled with a national awareness of aviation. (In another direction, one feels, some of this sound sense might well brush off on to the genius who has thought up the latest nastiness directed against people flying light aircraft across the Channel.)

As at all rallies and meetings, dedicated groundwork dictates success; and in this case the Aero Club de Mayenne and its animator, M Carlier, had nothing to reproach themselves for, in either the aviation or gastronomic spheres. M Carlier, incidentally, is a moving force in the promotion of formula racing in France; and in practising his preaching has a Taylor Titch well on the way to completion. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future we can hope for some Anglo-French pylon-polishing exercises.

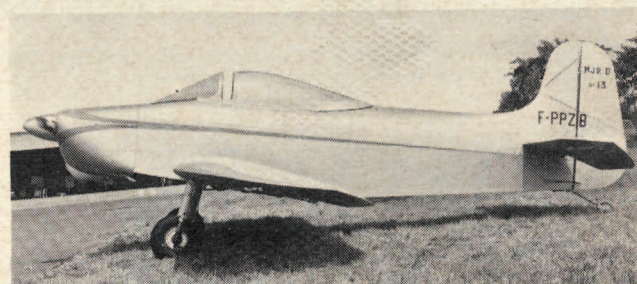
At the RSA meeting there is always a prototype of singular merit. The striking arrival this year was the Dalotel DM.165, a Zlin replacement powered by a fuel-injection Continental. The purchase of a fleet of Zlins by the government stuck in many French gullets and was regarded in many quarters as an episode akin to that of the famous lead Zeppelin. The Dalotel—named after its designer, Michel Dalotel—is a sleek design with a wooden wing, metal-centre spar reinforcement, and



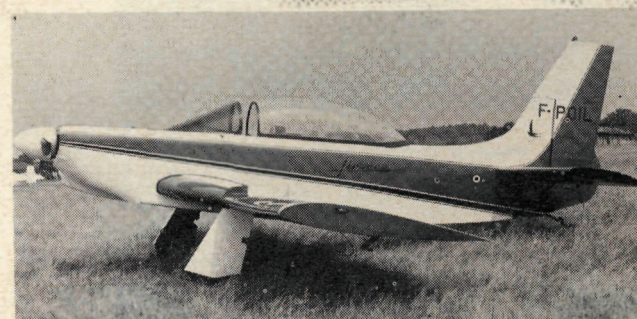
French answer to the Zlin: the Dalotel DM.165 aerobatic trainer



Paumier Baladin No 2 taxis in for top honours at Laval



A Jurca Tempête produced by Andre Phillipe collected first prize in the single-seater class



Increasing in popularity as a rugged aerobatic homebuilt: the Jurca Sirocco. The brothers Cottureau built this one

tubular fuselage, all constructed by Ste Poulet Père et Fils. At Laval a battery of strain-gauges on the centre spar structure showed that the designer was not taking short cuts in his homework. With its inward-retracting undercart there seemed to be a slight touch of Fw190 in the racy lines of the Dalotel, and it looked good as an aerobatic aircraft.

One of the writer's favourite homebuilts is the Paumier Baladin, and this year the second example of the type, constructed and flown by M Marcel Gerard, won top honours. As with so many good homebuilt designs, plans are not available. The Baladin has substantial endplates at the wing-tips and filling the wing tanks involves sliding the plate away from the wing-tip to give access to the filler cap.

The prize for the best single-seater was deservedly won by Andre Phillipe for his impeccably constructed and finished Jurca Tempête MJ2D. Increasing numbers of Jurca aircraft are appearing from year to year, and in addition to the prize-winner a superb example of a Sirocco two-seater was present. It was easy to appreciate the claim of Marcel Jurca that French





Protos Croques Criquet (picture not taken at Laval)



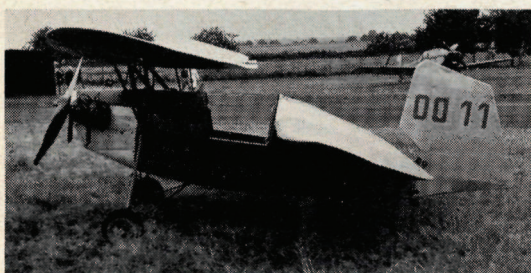
David Hood perambulates the Cassutt



The crowd round the Cassutt forms a background to the fine lines and sleek finish of the Badarel version of the Jodel D.9

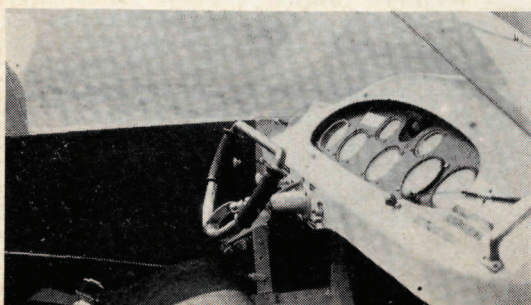


The widely travelled Lederlin 380L, a superbly finished assembly; its owner, Francois Lederlin, is a member of the European Council of the Experimental Aircraft Association



Belgian-constructed variant of HM.293 flown by Fernand Noiset

Croques Criquet control system: rudder is controlled by turning yoke, ailerons are not fitted so can be forgotten



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clubs can now have a Stampe replacement at reasonable cost. Another superb single-seater present was last year's winner, the Jodel D.9 Bebe constructed by Daniel Badarel. This D.9 is certainly the most superb yet built and is in fact a "Sicilised" version using scaled-down features from the famous Robin developments of the basic Jodels. Use of Fournier-style engine cowlings, apparent on several Jodels and Turbulents, added a neatness preferable to the exposed VW cylinders. An equally interesting variant of the basic D.9 has been produced as the Brugger Kolibri—in fact, a straight slab wing version of the Jodel.

Inevitably, the French scene always displays a serious, if small, contingent of tandem-wingers. Most notable among these at Laval was the 380L of François Lederlin an architect from Grenoble, who has flown his *Pou-du-Ciel* (or Flying Flea) all over Europe, has visited Britain in it, and likes nothing better than flying in and out of alpine "altiports". This well built aircraft has a steel-tube fuselage and is fitted with Wittman Tailwind-type landing gear. Power is provided by a 90 h.p. Continental. The wing arrangement is similar to that of the Mignet 380 but has certain detailed refinements. Pitch control is by a stick dangling from the cabin roof and which can move sideways freely without having any effect on control. Rudder pedals are used for control in the yawing plane, with roll being induced by the yaw. All turns are perfectly banked without ailerons although inability to sideslip is a commensurate disadvantage.

Control at the stall is quite remarkable. Fore-and-aft control is by the hinged front wing, and stick forces can be trimmed out by use of a large tab on the trailing-edge of the rear wing. The aircraft flies indefinitely without the need to touch the pitch control. Directionally, the 380L is difficult to cope with initially. The rudder is powerful and seems to lighten-off with displacement.

To make the Lederlin fly straight was quite an exercise, and much more difficult than on another tandem winger, the Croques Criquet. The Criquet is the product of an amateur in the true French tradition and is an all-wooden design. Control is assured by a framework akin to the business end of a tennis racquet frame without strings. It is hinged at the base, and fore-and-aft movement causes pitch changes while side-to-side rocking moves the rudder and induces a correctly banked turn. Roughly translated, a cockpit placard reads "Ball bank indicator, officially required but useless—the Criquet obeys you without treachery always." The laminated-ash landing gear enrobed in glass fibre looks strange at first sight; but it works, and it should be copied by amateurs on other types. As an indication of the ease of control, it may be added that the writer's wife was considered ready for solo on the type after some 25 minutes' instruction.

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## Old wives' tales

By ALAN BRAMSON

**Y**OU WANT TO WATCH THAT ONE on the approach, old boy; she's a bit dodgy at 70 knots." The voice of experience and doom. How often have you heard that such and such an aeroplane has this bad habit or that shortcoming?

Now it is, of course, true that history has its list of aeroplanes best forgotten, but by and large the years have seen more good than bad designs, even if outstanding aircraft have been few and far between. Yet as long as I can remember there have always been the knockers, and unfortunately the breed usually speak with a conviction guaranteed to turn fantasy into deep, unshakeable belief. Like the day I visited an airfield in the home counties to pick-up an American light aircraft of a type then quite rare in this country. "Take the full run, old boy," said the very experienced club CFI. "She's really a runway aeroplane, and a bit of a handful on the approach." "She" was a Cessna 172 with probably the best flaps in the lightplane business.

"If you don't raise the flaps during the landing run the brakes aren't very effective"—a more recent gem from a candidate for a multi-engined instructor's rating, while he demonstrated a landing in a Twin Comanche. One of these days, as sure as anything, that pilot will raise his undercarriage to the accompaniment of appropriate expensive noises. For years pilots all over the world have held the belief that flaps actually help to decelerate an aircraft during the run after touchdown. Yet here was a modern lad with the firm conviction that the brakes would work better if he could get the flaps up immediately on landing.

I know of one sales demonstrator who insists on locking the gyros during the approach—"to save wear and tear," if you don't mind. When I asked what was the use of having a flight panel if it could not be used during one of the most critical phases of flight, his explanation was so ingenious that I haven't been able to work it out to this day.

### Old wives at war

There is nothing new about old wives' tales. During the early part of the War most pilots passionately believed that when an engine failed on a twin it was probably fatal, and certainly so to alter heading with the live engine on the outside of the turn. So firmly entrenched was this belief that a team of wandering trappers had to be assigned to the rounds of Bomber Command to lay this particular dragon. Reaction to the suggestion that pilots should accompany one of the trappers in a Wellington while he turned against a feathered engine varied from "You must be off your head" to "I'd rather go LMF" (a serious allegation of Lack of Moral Fibre). But of course they went, and of course they were eventually convinced that turns *could* be made in either direction on asymmetric power. Yet think of the wasted hours, effort and money expended at a time when we could ill afford hours, effort and money.

By and large, and notwithstanding various rumours to the contrary, most modern light aircraft are remarkably free of vices; yet watch the ritual when vital actions are completed for take-off. There you are with perhaps 1,500 or more yards of runway, a 10kt wind down the centre and a  $V_r$  that must be at least 50kt (or even 55). What do the boys say when they get to the end of their vital-actions mnemonic? "Flaps to take-off position." What ostentatious rubbish! One would think they were flying a fully loaded jet on a hot day, not a 100 h.p. tiddler with a built-in headwind.

I have been involved in many arguments on the subject of flap for take-off, which to me is in the Top 20 of contemporary old wives' tales. There was that aircraft of which it was once said, "we must have lunch during take-off." The test pilot involved insisted that flap **MUST** be used for take-off; and, while I never had much difficulty leaving the ground without it, I am prepared to concede that for psychological reasons

one notch of flap was in this case perhaps a good thing. But when people apply the technique to a light aircraft that leaps off the ground without flap, and then proceed to climb at the flaps-up speed, thus reducing both rate and gradient of climb, the procedure leaves me cold. In any case, why teach new pupils to lower flap? The instructor is merely giving them something else to worry about and the short take-off, steep climb technique could well be delayed until after first solo, when the student is beginning to understand what is going on around him.

It is part of somebody or other's law that to every extreme there must be an equal and opposite extreme, and this brings to mind a well known demonstration pilot, now retired. His party piece was to play down any shortcomings in his aeroplane to the point where those listening to his sales patter would begin to really believe that any fool was capable of stepping in and taking off with no previous flying experience. The day he arrived at the club with the new model, near-perfect flying weather had attracted a crowd of members. We were arranged in rows up the steps to the clubhouse while the great man ranted on, with his pride and joy standing on the grass behind him. "And furthermore, ladies and gentlemen," he said in his Gerald Nabarro baritone, "such is the confidence of my directors in this new machine that I am prepared to let any pilot, however inexperienced, fly it without me." Then, pointing at me (and in the certain knowledge that I was employed as a flying instructor on that very airfield), he added: "Now you, sir—would you like to have a go?"

As I got into the thing I became aware that he was shaking with emotion: "For God's sake don't get your speed down below 60 at any time, old boy," came his hoarse, urgent whisper.

Now, I would not like to determine which is more harmful to the cause of flying—the alarmist, or his opposite number who would have you believe that everything is a piece of cake. Good flying demands skills of a high order even at PPL level. So if anyone tries to convince you that light-aeroplane flying is within the capabilities of everyone, don't you believe it. That's an old wives' tale, too.

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Flown by its pilot/constructor, Fernand Noiset from Belgium, another *Pou* (An HM.293 variant) was to gain a handsome cup for regularity of performance in appearing at most RSA meetings during the last 15 years. The stories associated with the hilarious antics of this aircraft on various trips can only be recounted among those who are believers in a certain type of aviation in which snook-cocking at petty officialdom is a delightful and rewarding sport.

Not since Neil Harrison took a prize with the TK Flying Group's Turbi at Saintes 11 years ago has a British aircraft taken a cup home from the RSA. This year a star turn was the arrival of Tom Storey's Cassutt, flown by Phillip Meeson, who collected the Coupe de la Ville de Laval partly for his presentation of the aircraft and partly as a token of the fact that M Carlier of the Laval club is a leading light in promoting interest in formula racers in France. The Meeson presentation showed that (within the limitations of the permit-to-fly, of course) there is no reason to doubt that four-point vertical rolls and rapid-rate horizontal rolls could well be within the Cassutt's abilities. Those who can remember back to the days of "Batchy" Atcherley will be satisfied that the RAF still produces pilots with just a touch of the necessary tradition normally credited to Nelson.