

M J B Stoker—an appreciation

Most members will be aware that Mr M J B STOKER—or “Max” as he is affectionately known—has been Hon Secretary of our Association for the past 18 months, but perhaps it is not so well known that he has recently resigned and handed over the Honorary Secretaryship to Major J W RICHARDSON

Max first became associated with rotary wings in 1933 when he learnt to fly at the Autogiro Flying School at Hanworth, having previously been in business in South Africa for some years. During the latter part of the 1914/18 war he was an observer in the R F C and was mentioned in despatches, so it will be seen that flying was not entirely new to him. Having taken his ‘A’ Licence in March, 1943, he continued flying autogiros and qualified for a ‘B’ Licence and Instructor’s Certificate, being eventually employed by the School as an Instructor until the out-break of the last war. He immediately volunteered for the R A F and was accepted in the Special Duties Branch for Intelligence work. This work continued until April, 1940, when he was given the job of organising a small autogiro flight at Odiham. A number of pilots were converted for autogiro flying with this flight, and it was amalgamated after a few months with another rotary wing unit at Duxford under the command of Squadron Leader (later Wing Commander) R A C BRIE, and Max returned to the Intelligence Branch at the Air Ministry. It is interesting to note that he was one of the very few pilots flying during the war who had no visible means of support, *i.e.*, a flying brevet or wings, and also that all his flying, which represents some hundreds of hours in total, was carried out on autogiros, and he has never flown a fixed wing aircraft solo. He continued with his Intelligence Duties right through to the end of the war and was decorated by the Norwegian and Dutch Governments for his work.

On release from the R A F he took an appointment with the Ministry of Labour.

He became a Founder Member of our Association and very early on was asked to serve on the Publications Committee. Early in 1947 he was also asked to take the post of Hon Secretary and carry on the good work started by Squadron Leader ARKELL, and has been serving in both capacities until recently.

His plans for going back to South Africa have been maturing for some time, and he has now returned to settle down and start business on his own account.

Anyone who has known MR STOKER will agree that he is a person of sterling worth, and it has always been a pleasure and privilege to work with him. He has done an excellent job of work for the Association and as a mark of appreciation, the Council, on behalf of all Members, recently presented him with a silver ash tray suitably inscribed. A very enjoyable private farewell party took place the night before he sailed.

In conclusion I am quite sure that Max carries with him the best wishes of all our Members for his health and prosperity in his new sphere of life.