

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

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AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
THE HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN
HELD AT THE ROYAL AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY, 4 HAMILTON PLACE,
LONDON, W 1 , ON SATURDAY, 23rd APRIL, 1949

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen It has been said that " in practice it is seldom very hard to do one's duty when one knows what it is, but it is sometimes exceedingly difficult to find this out " In this dilemma, and being unable to find a text-book on the behaviour of Presidents to guide me, I ask your indulgence if I approach the matter from first principles

In the first place I thank you for the honour you have done me in choosing me as your first President I can assure you that I regard it as a high honour and a responsibility which I will bear to the best of my ability

I have at least the advantage of being one of yourselves, and I am a firm believer in the great importance of the special work and interest which bind us together I may add that I have held this view for many years during which I have seen reason to alter many beliefs, but I am now more than ever certain of the great service to mankind that will be brought about by the solution of those particular problems we have set ourselves In short, I believe that out of your work will come the real conquest of the air

Our Association is a young organism still in the development stage, and it is fitting that we should at this time put on record briefly the facts concerning our origin Those facts have been assembled by our Honorary Secretary and will be duly recorded in our Journal

(The President then gave a brief Historical Note which appears overleaf)

Such were our beginnings, and the Report of your Council, now in your hands, will make it clear to you how rapidly our responsibilities as an Association are growing If we face up to those responsibilities, we must become the focal point of the specialised knowledge and technique of our chosen field The novelty and importance of the matters with which we must be prepared to deal can scarcely be over-estimated Our particular art concerns no less than the development of the only known method other than the dirigible airship by which the air can be used freely as a medium of transport in the most general sense

The general public are now so accustomed to the technique of conventional fixed airfoil flight that the dangerous and costly limitation of having a lethal minimum permissible speed is accepted as a permanent fundamental condition of air transport

I feel convinced that the brain of man will not rest short of a solution at least as good as can be given by any common house fly, which uses the air with safety, comfort and efficiency The solution which we can provide today no more than indicates the potentialities of the real conquest of the air

We are all aware of its present limitations and those, in fact, constitute our daily problems. To quote a modern philosopher "If history have any meaning, we are upon a journey hardly yet begun"

The challenge of such circumstances has already gathered you together and more especially today, you do not need me to tell you that your task involves "sweat, blood and tears"

Let us not despair for if those unattractive ingredients are alloyed with a certain amount of brains and courage we can be assured of a useful and even happy existence

A NOTE ON THE ORIGINS AND OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The prehistory of the Helicopter Association may be said to commence with the arrival in England of JUAN DE LA CIERVA in 1925, which was followed by the successful development of the Autogiro, and of contemporary gyroplanes such as those of KAY and HAFNER. In 1932 the formation of a specialised flying school at Hanworth attracted a group of rotary wing enthusiasts who formed the habit of meeting together informally from time to time. The late GILBERT ELLIOTT will be remembered as an active promoter of this fellowship.

Early in the war, Wing Commander BRIE laid the foundations of an R A F Unit for radar calibration work. This became 529 Rota Squadron, which drew most of its original pilots from among those who had been trained at Hanworth. From its earliest days until its disbandment in 1945, the Squadron was commanded by our present Chairman, ALAN MARSH. It contained at one time seventeen C 30 "Autogiros," vintage 1935, and its emblem was a vigorous and hairy goat.

Pressure of events had forced this country to leave the wartime development in this field very largely to the U S A. However, some of our original pioneers were able to participate in this, and when in 1943 the American Helicopter Society was formed, two of them became Founder Members of that body. The American Society came into being in order to meet the need for some authoritative central organisation for the co-ordination and exchange of ideas, and with the end of the war in sight it became apparent that some similar body should be formed in Great Britain.

On the 10th July, 1945, a meeting took place among Members of the Squadron—S/Ldr MARSH and F/Lieuts ARKELL, TURNER, HOUDRET, HILL and HARPER. At that meeting, it was agreed that the time had come to form some organisation in this country on the lines of the American Society, and on the 3rd September the first Memorandum and Articles of Association were signed.

The First Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on the 23rd March, 1946, and 54 Members were elected. The original six Members, together with Wg /Cdr BRIE and S/Ldr CABLE (who had joined them in the interval) and Dr BENNETT and Messrs YEATMAN, CARPMAEL, PULLIN and CROCOMBE, were elected to serve on the first Executive Council, the Executive Officers being Marsh, Chairman, Hill, Vice-Chairman, Turner, Honorary Treasurer, and Arkell, Honorary Secretary. The date of formal registration of the Association as a Limited Company was the 27th December, 1945.

The Aims and Objects of the Association were set forth at its foundation as being the bringing together of all those interested in the art by the holding of meetings, lectures and other events, and the exchange of information so as to foster the development of the Helicopter in this country.

From its outset, the widest possible representation has been the objective of the Association, covering the Design side, Technical, Engineering, Flying and Operational points of view. That this concept was sound is witnessed by the fact that the Association now counts among its membership the leaders of the various schools of thought covering this wide range of subjects. It would indeed be hard to find a question relating to Rotary Wing Aircraft which could not be examined and, within the limitations of present knowledge, answered by some Member of the Association on its behalf.