

★ And How He Learnt To Fly ★

main consideration always is not to waste good flying weather. If the weather is at all decent, the first aircraft are buzzing around the aerodrome soon after dawn; often there's night flying training to wind the day up.

His First Flight

Three events stand out in Richard's memory—his first flight, for "air experience," his first solo, and his first night solo. Having drawn all the necessary equipment—flying boots, overalls, helmet, and goggles—and having been given a parachute (soon he was calling it a brolly) and told how to put it on, he was introduced to his instructor, a Flying Officer who didn't look much older than himself but who had had a couple of thousand hours up. There were five pupils allotted to this Flying Officer, and one morning, after kicking his heels for what seemed an interminable time, the call came for him to get into his flying gear.

With his parachute awkwardly bundled over his shoulder, he strolled to the bright yellow trainer where his instructor was waiting. He put his parachute on, inserting the suspension straps into the quick-release box one by one, and then clambered into the cockpit.

They taxied slowly across the aerodrome, his instructor plying him with information about aerodrome regulations and rules to observe when taxi-ing. In a far corner they swung round to wait their turn to take off; then it came, and with a roar of engine, the little aircraft began spurting over the short tussocks. There was a slight movement as the tail came up, and before he knew what had happened, the bumping had ceased and the ground was falling away beneath him. They climbed away from the aerodrome, circled at three thousand feet and straightened out.

Like most trainees, he'd had his leg pulled by stories about first solos. There

was the pupil who got safely into the air and made a steady circuit and then tried to land twenty feet above where the ground really was. There was the pupil who made seven attempts to come in, touching down and then giving her the gun nervously and making another circuit, and all the time he had been able to see the fire engine and ambulance standing by.

On His Own

It seemed he would never go solo, that he would never get rid of the helmeted head in the front cockpit. Hour after hour he practised circuits and bumps, turns, figures of eight and spins. He was beginning to think he must be the dullest and slowest pupil ever. But at last, one morning, his instructor said in the most casual manner, "O.K. Take her off and do a circuit and bump by yourself." And before he had time to ask "Do you really think I'm ready to go solo?" he was strapped in and was taxi-ing away.

As he paused before the take-off, his mind was a fierce jumble of worries and anxieties. But he choked them back, and automatically, almost in a daze, went through his drill of vital actions and took off. He climbed straight to 600 feet, adjusted the trim, turned across wind, flew down wind, across wind again and came in for the approach. Here, in spite of himself, he began to sweat as he throttled down, adjusted trim again and tried desperately to keep one eye on the air speed indicator and one on the ground ahead and below him. The ground was rushing up. Quick, back with the stick; back further; here she comes. Then, with a bit of a bump, aircraft and Richard are back on the aerodrome again, miraculously intact.

Another Crisis

His first night solo was another crisis. Again the station humorists had told him stories of how easy it was to fly into



ALL READY for the first flight of the day, but first of all the parachute must be correctly adjusted and fitted. The rip cord is attached to a steel handle which falls under the left arm; it's pulled with the right hand

the trees at the far end of the aerodrome, or to get lost and fly around for hours until your petrol gave out. But once again he survived, and earned further cautious praise from his instructor.

Leading Aircraftsman Richard Roe's time at the E.F.T. School is very nearly up, and soon he will be posted to an Advanced Training School. He isn't at

all keen to go to fighters, as he has worked out that a thoroughly trained bomber pilot will have a good chance of a job with a commercial airline after the war. Strangely enough, it no longer matters to him whether he gets a commission or becomes a Sergeant Pilot. What is important is that three and sixpenny pair of wings. . . .



AN EARLY DINNER for a hungry trainee. To-day's menu: Celery soup, corned beef, baked and boiled potatoes, cabbage, date pudding, custard sauce, cream, tea



OFF FOR DUAL INSTRUCTION. Even alternating flying and lectures, a trainee at an E.F.T. School will get several hours flying a day in fine weather