

ground was not suited to its purpose. The Committee, who were in a better position to judge of this, were of opinion that, though it had its faults, it had all the makings of a really first-class ground—indeed, it is by nature quite the best to be found near London. But it would involve an expenditure of fully £300 to £400 to develop it into a good flying ground, which the Committee could not get. If a dozen members had come there and had given £50 each for the use of it, matters would have been different. Nevertheless, anyone who witnessed the trials with Mr. Moreing's Voisin machine there would agree that though the area was restricted, in experienced hands the machine could have been made to fly. A space of about 300 by 400 yards was available with perfectly open ground round it, but this was bounded by ditches. If these ditches could have been filled in a run could be made in any direction of fully 600 yards across the flat. As regards the upper part of the ground, which was covered with scrub, the scheme on hand, estimates for which had been gone into, was to clear a circular patch 300 yards across, to be rolled and cindered, and this would have made a perfect starting place. This was actually commenced by the construction of a good cindered track 400 yards long, and on this many trials were actually made with two different machines.

It must also be remembered that this ground was chosen not merely for practice with aeroplanes, but also for all other kinds of experiments in aeronautics, such as gliding, kite-flying, etc. There are other considerations, too, to be taken into account. Privacy, proximity to London, facilities for repair shops, lodging and feeding accommodation, etc., and it is not easy to find all these combined.

If only members would rally together and co-operate, instead of paying high prices for the use of grounds in various places, a good ground could be provided by the Society. But if they hold aloof and only grumble at what is provided by those who have taken a great deal of trouble to do their best, then no satisfactory results can be expected.

B. BADEN-POWELL

SIRS,—The question of the Experimental Ground is a very small part of the case for the appointment of the elected General Purposes Committee which was decided upon at the annual meeting; but since a great deal has been made of it, and the subject is likely to be referred to again in the *Journal*, I should like to make one or two remarks.

It seems idle, at this date, to defend the choice of the ground at Dagenham. In the annual report of the Society it was admitted to be a failure. Mr. Balston, during the discussion at the annual meeting, admitted that it was a failure. Mr. Reid used the words "you cannot blame anybody for being a little wrong in their estimate of the requirements of such a ground." Finally, we have the bill to pay.

The ground was chosen for flying experiments. It is admitted that it is not suited for that purpose. As to not blaming anybody, I think we are entitled to question the judgment of those who were responsible. After all, to an expert, or to experts, the choice of a ground for flying experiments should be quite a straightforward business. What is needed is perfectly well known, and should, I venture to say, have been known at the time this ground was chosen. The slightest element of doubt as to the suitability of the ground ought to have occasioned a pause in the negotiations for it. No doubt there were considerations which made it desirable that the ground should be selected quickly; and perhaps there is no need to criticise harshly those who were entrusted with this matter.

I only raised the subject because it illustrated the growth of the business of the Society and the need that we have of the help and advice of a Committee that can control business affairs, leaving the Council undistracted by them, and with more time, therefore, for the scientific objects of the Society.

CHARLES C. TURNER

Press Club, Wine Office Court,
Fleet Street, E.C., April 14, 1910.

THE FIRST AEROPLANE FLIGHTS

SIRS,—I have had my attention called to your issue of January. On page 40 you give the first aeroplane flights throughout the world. This is of particular interest to me, for my brother, Mr. A. V. Roe, was the very first to leave the ground on a free aeroplane in England. It was on June 28, 1908, that he made his best flight. This was about two feet off the ground for about 60 yards. Of course, it was not a long flight, but sufficiently long to be recorded as the first. He was then using a 24 h.p. Antoinette. This will place Great Britain fourth on the list instead of ninth.

In June, 1909, as you will, of course, know, he made the first flight ever made on an all-British aeroplane.

I am sorry I did not call your attention to this sooner, as it is only fair to my brother that he should have the credit of it.

H. V. ROE.