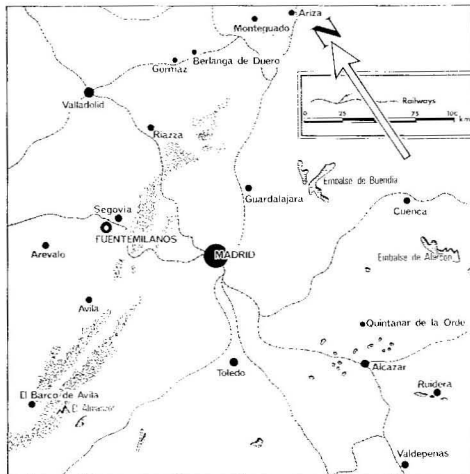


TWO BIGGIES

Brennig James spent another summer in Spain with his Nimbus 3 totaling 150,000km with several flights of more than 7500km



"I am completely lost somewhere in southern Spain"

The second TP was Quintanar de la Orden, and the third Arziza. My plan was to fly east until I found the railway - this is known as FR1. If by railways? The scenery was terrific with plenty of variety but the railway I recognised ran south then marginally curved around to the north-east. Nothing on my map did anything like that! I so reported back to Cerlinghausen: "I am completely lost somewhere in southern Spain. I can see a rail - why goes from S to NE, have you any idea where it is?"

Five minutes later the reply from base was that they couldn't see it on the map either. Anyway there was nothing to do but grind on. I saw a big town (Valdeperas) which seemed right so I turned two towns on, photographed it and went on to O30 looking ahead for the very large lake, Embalse de Buendia, east of Madrid. I came upon some lakes (Lago Lagunas de Ruedera), blue green, round and close together like a necklace of emeralds - very beautiful but not in the right place. So I sidesteered and saw a deserted airstrip. I felt like landing to ask where I was but I thought that was a bit too chicken even for me. In my flying I feel I am a timid and cautious creature that brunders into fraught situations due to my own ineptitude.

At last I came to a lake, a large lake (Embalse de Alarcón), but it was the wrong shape and certainly not the Embalse de Buendia or anything else on the map.

By this time I was enjoying the situation. So long as I kept going something was bound to turn up. By now the sky consisted of isolated streets

running from the north-west, wispy to the west with anvils to the east. You'll remember about two thirds along, fourth 1/4, worked up to the upward edge at 110,000ft and then dove into solid blue for 20 or 30 miles when you repeated the exercise.

I saw a road and a railway running through a ravine. At yes, thought, this is the main line from Madrid to Saragossa and far to the north if I looked hard I might just see the teeny lake at Montegado. I looked and in the distance was an enormous lake, the Embalse de Buendia in all its glory. So now I knew where I was after being lost for five hours - some sort of record! I supposed.

It was now 1pm so I had to take the shortest way home west of Guardalajara. I found 40 or so storks in a thermal. My need is greater than yours I said an they scattered. I couldn't get above 95,000ft as I left the cloud to cross the Carpetanos

but cleared them, with 20 metres in hand and turned west for the airfield at La Salsada. At first I thought I couldn't make it but when I got there I didn't like the look of any of the runways or the ground around it. As I squirmed in the cockpit a voice broke in on the radio and told me to land on the main runway up hill. I did so. The runway is 28mi wide with a substantial metal fence on either side to keep the cows off and my span is 24.5m.

As soon as I touched down I knocked the flap up - 2 to make the airbrakes effective. Just before she stopped she swung a little but I was able to lift the lip over the fence with no damage.

When I saw a map I found I had been 100km south of track for most of the flight and had flown 763km in approximately 7hrs 30min.

On September 6, my last but one day. I don't

have much idea what I wanted to do. It was blue and uneventful but at 12:30hrs, straight off the launch, I got a climb to 70,000 and set off towards Riazza. Soon I caught up with Ingo and asked what he was doing. "Oh just a 750km", he replied and I asked if I could join him.

At first as it was blue we pair flew but it doesn't work because with a wing in the way you can only see him if he is behind, and vice versa, and is only worth attempting if one pilot is in trouble. We went around the first TP at Berlanga de Duero in blue and on the way back we saw a few wisps near Riazza and started to get climbs to 110,000ft. The convergence (and Brennig writes about this in more detail in a later issue) began to form over the ridge approaching Segovia where we got up to 100,000ft.

The expected gap developed so we flew across the 20 miles of blue to near Arevalo where we could pick up the next convergence. However, as we went west the visibility deteriorated, the southerly wind having brought in dust from the Sahara. After 30 miles the clouds at 140,000ft gave out and we went into the gloom to take the TP at El Barco de Ávila and got back to the cloud at 80,000ft. It was working well with the cloudbase now up to 100,000ft.

The visibility improved but the clouds were breaking up and becoming weaker and we were missing the crisp climbs of earlier in the flight. Having been burnt in this situation often enough I knew it was vital to stay in contact with the clouds and accept 4kt when hoping for 6kt.

The Sahara dust came in and he had to land short of goal

After the TP at Gorniz Ingo pressed on a bit longer hoping for a last climb but the Sahara dust came in and eventually he had to land about 30 miles short of goal. The last cloud to go to work but just after I left I got 6kt to 140,000ft and could glide the last 60 miles home the last 40 in thick mark.

Although we were talking all the time during the flight we had only the vaguest idea where we were in relation to each other, but frequently I saw another glider in the same thermal and after 20 miles realised it was Ingo. He was in a 15 metre ship so his achievement was immeasurably greater than my 763km in 7hrs 35min.

The appeal of gliding for me is that nature sets you a little problem, if you get it right it gives you a pat on the back with one hand while slyly slipping in another while your attention is diverted. If you realise there is a problem and solve it, the process repeats itself.

Physically flying can be a strain. On one day I did 500km in 3hrs 50min without water but afterwards I could hardly climb a flight of stairs because of the effort of stopping my limbs flailing around in the cockpit.

It's a new world out there in Spain and it'll be nice to feel that we are still scratching the surface. We have found it already to be unbelievably rewarding, the only limitations being imagination, intuition and one's nerve, and what we have heard about Morocco suggests that flying there may be even more fantastic.

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