

hill to be very much the same as that of the Sopwith type!

It is interesting to compare these figures with the rather higher performances which history generally claims for the originals, particularly the Camel. Having read in several standard works that a Camel powered by a 130 h.p. Clerget rotary could climb at more than 1,500ft/min at sea level and clock up 120 straight and level, we were for some time of the opinion that if the 165 h.p. replica couldn't manage the same thing, the 50-year-old claim must be a little rose-tinted. Now, however, we are not so sure. Leisure Sport's second Camel replica, with a genuine Clerget, was completed by Viv Bellamy at St Just last year—and early flight tests indicate that the performance is markedly in excess of the supposedly more powerful Scarab-engined version! It would appear that either the enormous slow-revving prop of the rotary is considerably more efficient than the mere eight-foot toothpick of the Warner, or those ancient horses are more strenuous than the comparatively modern ones. Probably a bit of each, we suspect.

In general manoeuvrability, the Camel definitely has the edge over the Triplane. Its slightly higher roll rate means that it can be cranked into a steep turn a little quicker than its opponent, and initial acceleration in a dive or out of a high-drag manoeuvre (which means almost any manoeuvre) seems to be superior. Against this, the Fokker can be held in a very steep turn at very low speed which is practically impossible for the Camel to follow. If the fighting was for real, the Triplane pilot could probably shake off the Camel by treading on full rudder and making a horrendous skidding tight turn. We don't do that because this *isn't* for real, and we need to use the aeroplanes again next week.

In a tailchase, one of the biggest problems is the leader's wake turbulence during high-g manoeuvres. The vortices (presumably triple) behind the Triplane as it pulls up into a stall turn may be nothing but a bump and a quick correction when you're practising in a Tiger Moth. But you hit that same vortex in the Camel, and you think you're going to be stuck in it for the rest of your life! Many a time and oft have I sat behind the Fokker holding on full left aileron and hard left rudder while the Camel has continued to roll inexorably to the right, caught in the whirlwind of the Triplane's induced drag. The only certain escape is to push or pull, thus popping out above or below the turbulence, but there are times in a combat routine when these solutions are somewhat less than convenient.

It is, of course, fair comment to say that our dogfight

displays are something of a shadow of 1914-18 combat as it actually was. We are providing an air-show spectacle at comparatively low level, whilst taking care not to impose over-severe demands on a pair of unique aeroplanes: Leisure Sport has made a major contribution to show flying by allowing these machines to be thrown around at all, and nobody wants to see them put at hazard. In the skies of France, half a century ago, things would have been very different. From our own experience we can well see that a novice, fully occupied with the idiosyncrasies of his rotary-engined fighter, would be easy meat for an older hand who had stayed alive long enough to learn the art of stalking from up-height and up-sun. We suspect that prolonged dogfights between aircraft of similar performance, although they undoubtedly did happen, were comparatively rare. The occasions on which pilots of equal ability met on equal terms, and were thereafter prepared to press conclusions to the point of possible structural failure, must have been few indeed. Any sort of extended duel probably consisted largely of tight, high-speed spiral dives with enormous rates of descent, plus probably the occasional wing-wrenching flick in the direction of the rotary engine as a last-ditch escape manoeuvre. This last we may be able to try with our Clerget Camel. If we do attempt any "rotary manoeuvres" with that, you may rest assured that they will be carried out very gently indeed and with due thankfulness that the guns in the Fokkers and the Albatros are not for real! ✻

Leisure Sport owns the 500-acre Thorpe Water Park complex in Surrey, and plans to open this huge sport and entertainment centre to the public next year.

Part of the attraction is a historical display illustrating the activities of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm—hence the need for flying and non-flying full-scale replica aircraft. The non-flying models have fully authentic cockpit detail and controls, and the initial display will give a very good idea of the type of aircraft flown during the 1914-1918 War by the Royal Naval Air Service. Replicas will include a Fokker Triplane and DV11, Sopwith Baby, Camel IIF1 and Fokker Triplane, Albatros DII, SE.5a, DH.2 and Bristol MIC. In addition to the "radial" Camel and Fokker DR1, the 1978 flying season should see in the air a second Camel powered by a genuine Clerget rotary, plus a DH.2, Spad X111, Fokker DV11 and Albatros DVa—the last three, appropriately enough, built in Germany. Any enquiries to Leisure Sport, telephone 09328 64142.

