

1971 Nationals at RAF Newton.

Ron the Nationals Met man,ⁱ
Said to us one day,
“Go and rig your gliders, folks
There’s thermals all the day.
Cloudbase will be six point five,
The tops will go to ten,
I know I’ve been wrong in the past,
But this time it’s real gen.”

We lingered at the launch point
Uncertain what to do,
We never saw a cloud all day,
From East to West was blue.
The snifter buzzed into the airⁱⁱ
And radioed back to Ron
I’ve got a good six knotter here.
But he had his engine on!

At last we set off on the task,
But some of us despaired.
We knew damn well we’d crossed the line,
But no one said “Obzairved”ⁱⁱⁱ
We scurried down the outbound leg,
Going very fast,
The wind that sped us on our way
Was not what Ron forecast.

We all got to the turning point,
But one, we must relate,
Was down amongst the aerals
We think it was three eight.^{iv}
Once round the turn we struggled back
The headwind made us curse.
Those trailer crews that followed us
Kept having to reverse.

The thermals were both small and rough
Not good for lots of span,
Like wasps around a honey pot
The hot ships swarmed round Sam.^v
They let him find the thermals,
Then drove him from the air,
They carried on, he fell to earth,
It really wasn’t fair.

The moral of this story
Is, if you want to win,
Get Ka6Es to lead the way,
And keep on homing in.
Don’t try to find your way alone,
That isn’t very smart,
Just eat those cookhouse beans each day,^{vi}
And thermal on a *****/like a Dart.

ⁱ Ron Cashmore, Met man at many Nationals

ⁱⁱ Ian Strachan in his self launch SF27M

ⁱⁱⁱ Reference to Rika Harwood, start line observer, Dutch

^{iv} Barry Goldsborough in a Diamant 18. The TP was near the Daventry radio masts

^v Very frustrating. In the Ka6E I was able to get into the core and climb well – but then the open class mob came in at my height and got in the way, killing my rate of climb. So I would push on into wind back to where I’d found the last thermal, get there about 100 feet higher than before and find another core while they drifted back. As soon as I started circling they homed in on me again. After 10 or more times I got fed up and went off at 90 degrees to track hoping to get away from them but didn’t find another thermal so out-landed.

^{vi} We were fed breakfast in the RAF Airmen’s Mess, I don’t remember paying for it. Baked beans figured strongly on the menu.