

VGC News

No. 162 - Summer 2021



Feature Article
100 years of the Vampyr



Part 3
Exploits of French Gliding in Algeria



IVSM 2021
All the action from Harris Hill



and much, much more...



Based upon the original French works of Pierre Jarrige.

Exploits of French Gliding in Algeria

Part 1- 1923-1940

English text by Bruce Stephenson.

VGC News brings to readers for the first time, the rich history of gliding in Algeria before and after WW2. From the earliest days of gliding, Algeria was to play an important part in the story of French and Algerian aero sport, one in which little is known outside either France or Algeria today.

Algeria, with its high Atlas Mountains, its sunny undisturbed highlands, its rugged coastline, and its arid Saharan regions, offers the geographical and climatic contrasts favourable to gliding in all its forms.

Even as early as 1862, aviation pioneers such as Louis Mouillard, and a little later for other theoreticians such as Jean Bretonnière, Clement Ader, Julien Serviès, Joseph Thoret, and Eric Nessler, Algeria has proved to be a geographical magnet to many in exploring the potential of the region. At that time Algiers was under French Colonial rule, it is not surprising that no other country but France was to exploit the regions potential to its fullest.

Early Algerian powered aviation has roots that go back to October 22, 1909, when René Métrot (who was born in Blida in 1873), made the first motorised flight in Africa by taking off from the Caroubier race-course in Hussein-Dey in a Voisin biplane. Julien Serviès later made the first flight in Oranie, in La Sénia, in a Sommer monoplane. These flights were the precursors to firing Algerian imaginations of what was an exciting emerging technology.

René Métrot and Julien Serviès both opened a flight school in Blida and La Sénia and with the aftermath of the WW1, many pilots were demobilised and continued to fly in reserve training at both centres at Algiers and Oran. With a shortage of light aircraft, the 1920's saw a slow start to civil aviation in Algiers. It was not until 1930 that civil aviation really began to develop, after a concentrated effort to publicise and develop aviation through meetings and festivities involving some of the biggest names in French aviation. Within a few short months, Algiers boasted some 92 aerodromes and housed a growing number of aircraft. Soon nearly 30 flying clubs had been established, bringing to-



An Avia 152a during a bungee launch at Hussein-Dey in 1942 (lady unknown).

gether an impressive 176 aircraft, and by 1939, this number had risen to 300 French light aircraft (mainly made up of Caudron Luciole's, Caudron Phalène and Potez 36's). Not only that, Algiers was strategically placed to take advantage of many record breaking flights into Africa and the Middle-East, with names such as Maurice Finat, André Japy, René Lefèvre, Jean Assollant, Antoine de Saint Exupéry, Charles de Verneilh, Maryse Bastié, and Amy Johnson; all passing through the region. This, along with several international rallies, brought together many aviators from all over Europe; the Algerian-Moroccan rally in 1933, the International Tourist Aircraft Challenge in 1934, the Hoggar rally in 1938. Oran-La Sénia was the location where several world record duration and distance flights

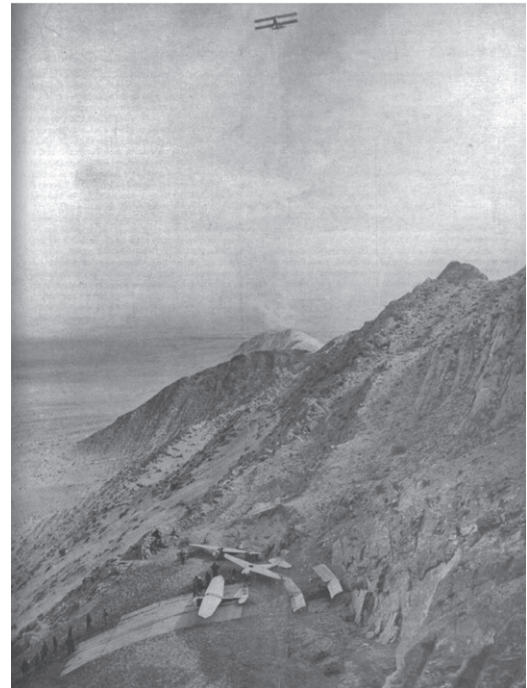
were carried out in 1930 to 1932 by Lucien Bossoutrot, Maurice Rossi, Louis Mailloux, Antoine Paillard and Jean Mermoz.

It was off the back of this activity that Algerian gliding was to also find its place and take an increasing role in Algerian aviation. To begin our story however, first we must look at the birth of French gliding. In September 1919, the L'Association Française Aérienne (AFA) [French Air Association] was formed in Paris to coordinate and facilitate experimental research in aviation and all its applications. For this purpose, the A.F.A. gliding department (2nd Section of the A.F.A) in August 1922 organised the first experimental congress of gliding in Combegrasse (Puy-de-Dôme), bringing together fifteen competitors (this event is now widely considered the birth

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Joseph Thoret (left) in Biskra on February 26, 1933, during the inauguration of the monument erected in memory of his exploits and the opening of the aerodrome in his name. Photo: Marcel Durand



The bungee launch point hung precariously on the side of the mountain, overlooking the sandy wadi 70m below as the Hanriot 14 of Thoret flies over the site. Photo: Original source, the newspaper, L'illustration

of modern French gliding). With the most significant progress being made in Germany (due to the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles), France was just one of the countries to also take up the baton, with a nationalistic approach of promoting a sense of pride and esteem.

The then popular daily newspaper, 'Le Martin' was keen to promote French aviation (like many other nations at the time), and took the matter to heart and for several months began the promotion of gliding. It was through these efforts that soon generous donors had offered some 500,000 F in prize money to encourage pilots to achieve new heights in performance and development of the sport.

It was in this climate that, at the end of 1922, the Under Secretariat for Civil Aviation sent Lieutenant Joseph Thoret to Algeria to survey suitable sites for gliding with a view organising a gliding competition there.

Joseph Thoret and the Biskra gliding competition of 1923⁽¹⁾

Joseph Juste François Thoret was born on January 5, 1892 and entered the Ambérieu Aviation School in Bugey where he obtained the pilot's license (number 708), on January 12, 1912. He later joined the French Army, where he obtained his military pilot's certificate and was assigned to the 35th Air Force Regiment at Bron. Thoret later became fascinated by gliding and was nicknamed 'the pilot of the storms,'

dedicating his life to the study of air navigation (even as early as 1913, Thoret had plunged into a storm aboard his Bleriot to prove the validity of his observations).

In 1920, in Villacoublay, Thoret's activities into his research saw him making his so-called 'backwards' flights, in which he discovered ascending currents created by the walls of the hangars, could carry him aloft and downwind by flying very slowly within the rising air.

After arriving in Biskra, Algiers, Thoret set about systematically surveying the area with an 80hp Le Rhone Hanriot 14; a French-built military trainer aircraft, produced in large numbers in France during the 1920's. He eventually chose upon an area with a predominant huge ridge called the Djebel⁽²⁾ Ed Delouatt, 5 km south of Biskra, whose 3-km ridgeline boasted heights of over 800 feet.

During Thoret's exploratory flights within the region, he often found he could easily soar with the engine at much reduced power when flying parallel to the upwind side of such ridges and this is how, on the 23rd of January, 1923, he performed a resounding feat by soaring his Hanriot for 7 hours 3 minutes, with the motor switched off and propeller stationary. At that time, the gliding world endurance record was only 3 hours 22 minutes!

The choice of Biskra was not by coincidence however. Biskra had been an established aviation field with a rudimentary hangar on the field by 1922. A

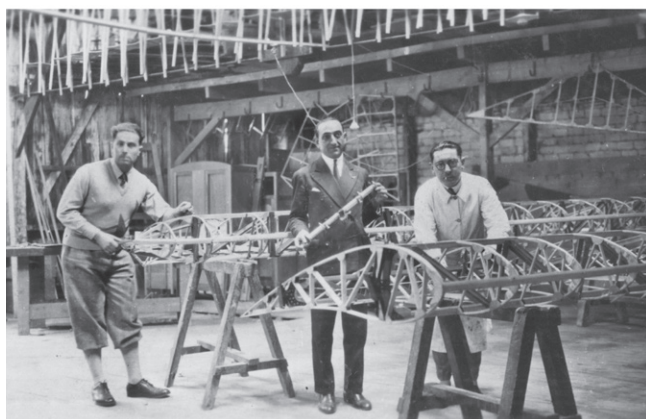
local committee was soon formed under the presidency of César Gonin, and supported by Edmond Cazenave, the Mayor of Biskra, to hold a gliding completion at Biskra.

The proposal immediately received the support of various personalities, including the Governor General of Algeria. The site of Djebel Ed Delouatt, was not an easy location to hold such a contest. The launching ramps were perched precariously upon the slopes and measured only 16 meters by 6, overlooking a sandy wadi, some 70 meters in length, which served as a landing area some 60 meters below. The local regiment of Senegalese Tirailleurs was used for manoeuvring the gliders on ground and to assist the launching.

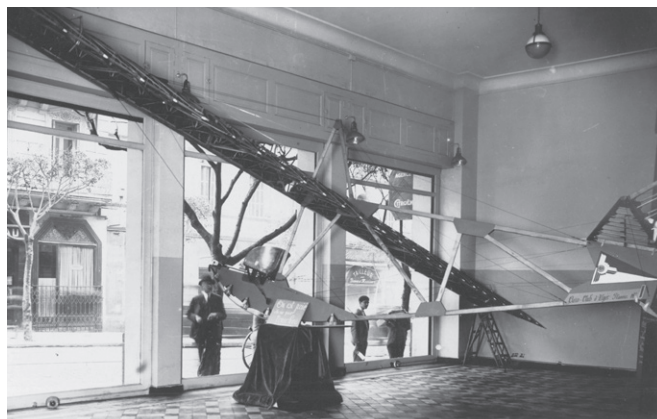
Due to the remoteness of Biskra, only five competitors were present; François Descamps, Alfred Fronval, and Lt Joseph Thoret in two Dewoitine P-3's (rigid-wing), Georges Barbot in Dewoitine P-2 (war-wing), and Lt Petit in a Louis Peyret tandem bi-plane.

The contest itself ran from January 26 to February 22, 1923. The results of the contest are both significant and interesting, and on January 31, Barbot soared the Dewoitine P-2 for 8 hours 36 minutes (not homologated for lack of official timekeeper/observers). On landing, Barbot needed help to exit the glider due to becoming virtually paralysed by the long period of immobility and by the cold, (not to mention the constant turbulence). The same

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In 1930, Pierre Laffargue began the construction of a Primary glider based upon the Avia 11a. Photo: Pierre Laffargue



The substantially completed glider on display at a shop in the north-eastern suburbs of Algiers City. Photo: Pierre Laffargue

day, Thoret, in the Dewoitine P-3, was also caught in severe turbulence, overshot his landing run, turned and ran down the slope. The glider was slightly damaged and left Thoret shaken with slight concussion.

On February 7, Barbot tried again to break his earlier record in the Dewoitine P-2 and was again caught in violent turbulence. He crashed downwind onto the mountain, where the glider hung precariously for a few moments, thus giving Barbot just enough time to scramble clear, before the glider tumbled down the slopes!

On February 12, Le Petit took off in the Peyret and rapidly gained height above the ridge, and soon drifting downwind, crashed into a sandy area, with the glider in pieces and leaving Le Petit with an injured ankle. On February 21, Descamps attempted the distance prize. Following the slopes to the north-east, he later landed in Beni-Mora, covering a distance of 5.1km. Despite only Descamps finishing the con-

test with an intact glider, the competition was to prove fruitful in its teaching and was later considered to having contributed greatly to the advance of French gliding in the region.

The establishment of French-Algerian gliding, 1930-1939

In 1925 Algerian civil aviation came under a branch of administration of Direction de l'Aviation Civil – Algérie (Directorate of Civil Aviation - Algeria), which was set up in the provinces of Oran, Algiers, and Bone. Headed by the First World War French pilot, Gaston Pourcher. Pourcher was responsible for all civil aviation activities including aero club flight personnel and aircraft.

On January 1, 1937, a decree placing all civil aviation service funding under the Établissement régional de la Navigation aérienne (Regional Air Navigation Establishment) ⁽³⁾ in Algeria under the authority of the Governor General with funding from the state Algerian budget.

In 1938, faced with the growing strength of Algerian clubs, which by now numbered 185 planes, the North African Aeronautical Federation (FAéNA) became the Fédération Aéronautique Algérienne (FAA)⁽⁵⁾, chaired by William Billon du Plan.

Gliding activities were very much carried out under the aegis of the Aero-Clubs, with some of the earliest activities going back to the early 1930's.

In 1930, Pierre Laffargue began the construction of a glider, heavily influenced by the Avia 11a and created a Gliding Section of the Aero Club of Algiers City at Maison Blanche, (today called Dar El Beida). This led several Algerian flying clubs to start building and flying rudimentary, low-performance gliders, including the Jamme brothers, who were based at Mascara. Here they built an Avia 32e, which went on to enjoy much success. In the pursuit of more affordable flying compared to the high cost of powered flight, with flying clubs of Constantine, Aïn-M'Lila, Mostaga-



The glider being baptised by Madame Prévost, whose husband, an engineer, supervised the construction. Photo: Pierre Laffargue

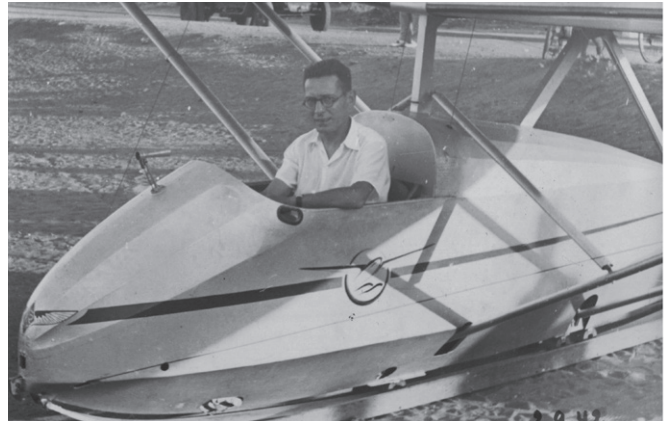


April 24, 1931, the glider outside the Maison-Blanche hangar. Photo: Pierre Laffargue

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Georges Descamps settles at the controls in preparation for the gliders first flight. Photo: Pierre Laffargue



Pierre Laffargue in an Avia 152

nem, Oran, Orleansville, Setif and Sidi-Bel-Abbes, also turning to gliders.

Frequently it made for disappointing results however; often summing up gliding as: a lot of effort and enthusiasm for little, or no, result. Much of these efforts were based upon advice by Avia, a private civilian association receiving official subsidies to study glider design, to promote gliding, and to train instructors in the French centres of Beynes and La Banne d'Ordanche. With Pierre Laffargue at the helm, the gliding section of the Aero-club of Algiers⁽⁴⁾ was to prove an early success however, enthusiastically recruiting more than 160 members, including capturing the interest of most of the leaders in aviation in Algeria at that time. Laffargue, a cabinet-maker and sports journalist had spent much of his life struggling to develop aviation in Algeria. He flew gliders in Algiers, La Banne d'Ordanche and Djebel-Diss and was actively involved in the promotion of commercial aviation, and was responsible

for the arrival in Algiers of several personalities, including Eric Nessler.

The FAA in 1938 invited the French gliding champion, Eric Nessler, and the director of Avia, Pierre Massenet⁽⁶⁾, to come to Algeria. At the time, Nessler was the Chief pilot of the French National Centre of Gliding at Banne d'Ordanche (Puy-de-Dome) and used an Avia 40p glider for exploring the immediate surroundings in Algiers at Oran, Mostaganem (Djebel-Diss), Sidi-Bel-Abbes and Bougie. In total Nessler carried out some 33 flights that amassed 11 hrs. 55 min flight-time. Upon leaving Algiers, the Avia was gifted to the FAA, who subsequently made it available to André Costa at Mostaganem.

Another leading figure in Algerian gliding was André Costa, who was born in Paris on April 15, 1904 and started his aviation military career at the Caudron flying school. After his military career he then went into the airline industry working for the Compagnie Générale Aéropostale, where he

flew a Breguet 14, Laté 15, and the Cams 53. It was while he was working for Levasseur that he was offered a position as an instructor in Mostaganem. A self-taught artist keen on drawing and painting, as soon as he arrived in Algeria, he wrote: 'Here, where I am, there are eight planes in the hangar, there will be twelve in a month. We have two new gliders and two HM 8's whose tests are next ... In front of all this I'm Algerian. I renounce Paris forever, the metro, and the rest. I feel a hand guiding me. The weather is nice, there is a promising sun for this summer, I fly ... life is beautiful.'

A born educator, Costa loved to be surrounded by children for whom he produced articles, drawings and stories and a wonderful book: 'The Art of Piloting'.

With the Avia 40p now in Costa's hands, he was to record some creditable feats at the Djebel-Diss Mountain in Mostaganem, including winning the North African duration record, in 8 hours 03 minutes on



November 28, 1938 saw Eric Nessler (left) and Pierre Massenet, director of Avia, arriving in Algeria in a CAMS 53 Flying Boat (in the background) at the Agha hydro-base in Algiers city. Photo: Pierre Laffargue



Eric Nessler at Maison-Blanche on the 1st of December, 1938 with the first high-performance glider in Algiers, the Avia 40P. Photo: Pierre Laffargue

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André Costa

the 9th of February, 1935. Costa was a key player in furthering Algerian gliding, and became a gliding instructor. He was a keen



André Costa and his wife, Juliette

exponent in promoting the establishment of gliding in Algeria, promoting gliding in general, arranging infrastructure, and developing activities in the national centres of Canastel, Djebel-Diss and Djebel-Oum-Settas.

By December of 1938, the Algerian Regional Air Navigation Establishment then decided upon the creation and funding of a State Gliding Centre at Djebel-Diss. In the meantime, several Algerian pilots went on

to further their training at the Centre, and went on to obtain their instructors certificate.

Also in 1938, the study and building of the two-seater glider, the PLS-1 by the Saucède brothers, saw activity become more established in Constantine at the sites of Oued-Hamimin and Djebel-Oum-Settas.

To be continued...

Notes

- ¹ The Biskra competition will be the basis of an upcoming VGC News article
- ² Djebel in Arabic means mountain
- ³ On April 1, 1930, the French Air Navigation Service was abolished and replaced by 3 autonomous regional establishments located in Paris, Marseille and Algiers.
- ⁴ Not to be confused with the countries name, Algeria. The national capital is Algiers and lies in Algiers Province (named after its capital)
- ⁵ Fédération Aéronautique Algérienne was created and funded by aero-clubs to defend their interests.
- ⁶ Pierre Massenet, a French Engineer, had set up the private French organisation; L'Association pour la valorisation de l'industrie aéronautique (Avia) [The Association for the Valuation of the Aviation Industry], which was created in 1930 with the aim of promoting gliding in France and encouraging the manufacture of gliders. In addition to

organising various events, Avia had a design office headed by the engineer, Raymond Jarlaud, assisting the pilots, Éric Nessler, Roger Cartier or Max Gasnier. Between 1930 and 1935 Avia produced nine different glider models that were built either by subcontractors or by clubs.

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FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA

Based upon the original French works of Pierre Jarrige.

Exploits of French Gliding in Algiers

Part 2- 1939 -1962

English text by Bruce Stephenson.

VGC News brings to readers for the first time, the rich history of gliding in Algeria before and after WW2. From the earliest days of gliding, Algeria was to play an important part in the story of French and Algerian aero sport, one in which little is known outside either France or Algeria today.

War years...1939 -1945

Upon the declaration of war on September 3rd, 1939, all non-commercial French aircraft were prohibited from flying. After the fall of France in June 1940, many military pilots had withdrawn to Algeria. In April 1941, gliding activity resumed, with the Vichy French State Secretariat for National Education and Youth in charge, which saw the reopening of La Montagne-Noire Centre (in France), to train instructors. André Costa, Lucien Saucède, and Antoine Sposito took the opportunity to go to Montagne-Noire to train.

Under the Vichy authorities, at that time Algeria was part of the 'zone libre' (free zone), with Algerian air sports coming under the Air Sports Delegation; Afrique du Nord (A.F.N.), which also included light aviation in Algiers, Morocco, and Tunisia and led by Colonel Régis de Brion.

On July 5th, 1941, the Committee of Air Sports in Algeria replaced the Algerian Aeronautical Federation. The aim was to create centres where young people could practice the art of building and flying model aircraft and gliding in a pseudo-military setting. With its head office located in Algiers City (23 rue Michelet, now named Rue Didouche Mourad), this office was headed by Captain Ackermann. An annex was also established at 103, Sadi-Carnot street (now named Rue Hassiba-Ben-Bouali), Algiers City, which housed the offices of the Technical Education Center, headed by Captain Rene Calleja. These centres also brought together airmen, maintaining their education while 'camouflaging' the German and Italian armistice commissions, as was the case with other structures throughout Algeria.

The Djebel-Diss State gliding centre opened on August 1, 1941. As outlined above, some of the more experienced pi-



The sunset of a vibrant period in Algerian gliding as a Nord 1300 is returned to the launch point at Djebel-Oum-Settas in June 1960.

lots underwent training to become gliding instructors at La Montagne Noire, before returning to Algiers. They were later sent to be based at Hussein-Dey (Robert Ferraris and Jacques Pierchon), Oran (Ferdinand Janis), Relizane (Henri Gantès), Sidi-Bel-Abbes (Ligreau), Blida (Louis Botella), and Constantine (Jean-Baptiste Cometti and Lucien Saucède).

The centres only enjoyed a period of brief activity before the Allied landings of November 8th, 1942. Moreover, as the need for equipment became more urgent, in 1941, the Caudron⁽¹⁾ factory in the Algerian town of Boufarik (approximately 25km to the

south of Algiers city) was established in a former commercial tobacco factory (Tabacop). This factory was to be responsible for the construction of one hundred Avia 152a's, seventeen Caudron C800's, and ten Avia 40p's. All these machines were to be allocated to the various State Centres and associations, not only in Algeria, but also in Morocco and Tunisia.

With Algiers as part of the 'free zone,' after America's entry into the European war, the Allies were keen to maintain their positive influence of Vichy cooperation. With secret talks continuing before the Allied landings in North Africa on November 8th, 1942, this



An Avia 40p flies over the centre of Djebel-Diss in October 1941. Photo: Jean de la Jonquière

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



The Allied landings of 8 November 1942 saw an anxious invasion by the Allies who secretly had sought Vichy cooperation of both military leaders and locals. This flyer in French and Arabic was distributed by Allied forces, calling on citizens to cooperate with the Allied forces.

Photo: Wikipedia



The first of the Caudron C 800's built in Boufarik began to arrive in Djebel Diss in April of 1943. Photo: Clement Torrès

saw a rather relaxed and liberal approach by the Allies to the then existing French laws and governance up until that point. Despite civilian gliding being heavily restricted in the USA and completely banned in the UK, the leaders of the Algerian Air Sports, having proved their effectiveness, were maintained in their functions, but were now placed under the authority of the French Air Force. Most of the centres' heads were soon to come under this new structure. Only the centre of Djebel-Diss was active by early 1943; thanks to valuable personnel that Colonel de Brion had assembled and who were of no immediate interest to the Air Force (and therefore not likely to be mobilised). The only visible change from the previous period was the appearance of cockades on the wings and tricolour bands on the fins of the gliders,

which had become effectively military aircraft. From 1944, other gliding centres in Algiers began to come back into operation. The Djebel-Diss field was located on the beach, on the mouth of the Chéelif river. It benefitted from the regular north/north-westerly winds and was led by Jacques Duchêne-Marullaz⁽²⁾, an experienced and well-known Algerian born pilot who was instrumental in helping to start light aviation before the war in Algiers. Under Duchêne-Marullaz, enrolments included both civilian and licensed military pilots on what was known as 'armistice leave,' (which had been originally set up under the Vichy government). This allowed limited flying of military pilots (and some civilian and student pilots) in civil aircraft like gliders, to maintain basic flying skills. This also allowed for the training of new

students and more advanced training, including the training of instructors. By the end of 1942, some 1,100 of these flights had been carried out without incident.

The Allied landings saw the mobilisation of many instructors. At Constantine, Lucien Saucède, assisted by Maxime Lamort, and Jean Serrières, focussed on the training of young students from all over Algeria and Morocco. The aim was to build upon and continue the encouragement of comradeship and discipline and promote aeronautical vocations. Frequently the training proved difficult, often with the meagre reward of short flights. Despite these limitations, this saw many of the more capable students finding a future path into military and civilian (once peace returned) aviation. In addition to this, the Air Force also sent young interns abroad for further training in flying schools in the United States or Great Britain (as mainland France was still under military occupation).

By this time the Caudron C 800's built in Boufarik were starting to arrive. More than 4,200 launches were made in 1943 and typically 30-45 flying hours accumulated monthly. In early 1944, Lucien Saucède went to Djebel-Oum-Settas to revive activity there. He was replaced by Henri Ferraris, a First World War pilot and pioneer of flying in the Saharan desert. Until then, he had been working at the Hussein-Dey gliding centre alongside Maxime Lamort, who was actively engaged in the continued training of the students at Djebel-Diss. Lucien Saucède and Jean-Baptiste Cometti continued the development of the infrastructures at Constantine.



An Avia 152a on the slopes Djebel Aizeub that runs along the Chéelif river and east of the Djebel Diss airfield in 1943. Photo: Pierre Laffargue

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



Avia 40p at Kouba during Aviation Week.

The Post-War Years leading to Independence. 1946-1962

Aviation Week, Oct 1945

With civil aviation activity resuming after the war, there were obvious shortages of aircraft and equipment after the recent years of conflict. It was decided to highlight civilian aviation to the Algerian public with an Aviation Week. Scheduled to run from the 20-28 October 1945, this event was jointly organised by the A.F.N. and the 5th Air Region, under the direction of Colonel De Brion and Pierre Laffargue. A full range of aerial displays were organised throughout the week, with Sunday, October 28, being dedicated to gliding on an improvised ground in the central suburb of Kouba, in Algiers city. The well-known French gliding champions, Marcelle Choynet and Eric Nessler had travelled from France for the occasion and joined forces with local enthusiasts to stage the displays before a large crowd, flying a Caudron C800 and an Avia 40p.

The 1948 Gliding Expedition

Post-war gliding activity continued to develop with the arrival of more modern gliders (Nord 1300, Nord 2000 and SA 103). Utilising these more modern high-performance gliders, under the authority of the Directorate of Civil Aviation in Algeria, in May 1948 an expedition was undertaken to the high plateaus linking the Atlas Mountains. This steppe, which some call the 'Sea of Alfa,' was so named because of the action of the wind on these grassy meadow ranges, giving the impression of green waves and runs for some 800 km; from Morocco in the west, to Constantine in the east.

The meteorologist, Serge Dahoui, accompanied the expedition giving accurate daily forecasts, based upon daily data and well-known seasonal conditions. He estimated that with an average daily figure of 10 hours of thermals (from 8 am to 6 pm) each day, it would allow for some potentially interesting flights in both south-west and north-east directions.

A team of pilots, composing of Jean Bouvier (who was from Atelier Industriel de l'Air (A.I.A), which ran an Aero Club for the employees), Georges Bricout (Service de l'Aviation Légère et Sportive), Jean-Baptiste Cometti and Lucien Saucède (Constantine flying club), Daniel Robert-Bancharelle (Aero-club of Mascara) and Aurelien Alberca (Aero-club of Oran) brought together all the future leaders of Algerian gliding. Joining them were the Priest, Father Léon Harmel⁽³⁾, who was a member of the Pères Blancs⁽⁴⁾.

The survey flights began from Thiersville (south of Mascara), but it was from Géryville [today known as El Bayadh] where the most interesting flights are made. Eric Nessler landed at M'Sila, after having flown 395 km from north-east of Géryville. Father Harmel, also a former fighter pilot, flew for 7 hours 15 minutes, reaching Setif after flying 488 km. He was still at 1,200 metres when he arrived overhead Setif and could have continued to easily beat the then French record of 508 km, but later



Avia 40p at Kouba.



Djebel-Diss Chief Pilot, Maxime Lamort, and Annie Leroy, of Radio-France, at Kouba in the C-800.

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



Aurélien Alberca (L) and Lucien Saucède during the expedition.
Photo: Lucien Saucède



Nord 2000 (F-CBNN) was used during the expedition, pictured here over Djebel Oum-Settas. Photo: Alain Paumier

said he preferred to leave records to others who would derive far more pleasure in achieving new records.

Post-war development of Algerian light sport aviation governance

By December 1945, the office of the General Secretariat for Civil and Commercial Aviation (S.G.A.C.C.), which was attached to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, no longer wanted to take responsibility for light aviation in Algeria. They were of the opinion that if the General Government of Algeria wished to encourage light aviation, it must do so at its own expense. On the 22nd December 1945, the S.G.A.C.C. created the Directorate of Civil Aviation in Algeria (D.A.C.-A). Headed by François Foguès, the D.A.C.-A. came under the authority of the Governor General of Algeria, who sanctioned the operating budgets for light aviation through Délégation des sports aériens en A.F.N. (created by Air Ministry).

The D.A.C.-A comprised of six services: Air ports, Air Traffic and Telecommunications - Aeronautical Infrastructure in Algeria - Meteorology - Search and Rescue - Transport Section of the Air Group.

In 1949 the Air Ministry dissolved the Délégation des sports aériens en A.F.N., creating sole agencies, with the Algerian agency now operating under the name of Service de l'Aviation Légère et Sportive (Light and Sports Aviation Service [Algeria]- S.A.L.S.). S.A.L.S. was responsible for gliding, light aviation, skydiving, and aero modelling within Algeria.

All former A.F.N. staff were either resettled or dismissed. Existing assets and responsibilities were transferred to the Regional Civil Aviation Directorates in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. As an integral part of the D.A.C.-A., S.A.L.S. Algeria now operated ex-

clusively under the budget of the General Government of Algeria and the D.A.C.-A. This therefore allowed S.A.L.S. to enjoy a higher degree of independence in relation to higher administrations based in Paris and gave the organisation a far greater degree of flexibility in terms of local problems and solutions.

The first person to head this new department was André Costa. When Costa took control of S.A.L.S., much of the equipment was in a poor state of repair, so one of his first priorities was to set up a new glider workshop in Algiers city on Rue Sadi-Carnot, under the direction of Antoine Lasserre.

Costa's term as head was to be a short one however. On the 14th April, 1951, he was

killed, along with his passenger, flying a C 800 at Maison Blanche. After this tragedy, his vacancy was temporarily filled by Lucien Saucède, before Charles Rudel succeeded him in November 1951.

By the end of 1951, only two state gliding centres existed; Djebel-Oum-Settas (Constantine) and Canastel (Oran). Each centre came under the management of the local flying club and were bound by agreements with S.A.L.S., which put professional instructors and other key full-time staff in place. Lucien Saucède became Chief Pilot and Technical Assistant to Rudel, with instructors; Jean-Baptiste Cometti, becoming head of Djebel-Oum-Settas and Aurélien Alberca, head of the Canastel centre. Subsequently, another instructor



M. Gérard et les enquêteurs examinent ce qui reste du fuselage du C-800 d'André Costa (Photo S. Rolando fils)

Leur planeur s'étant disloqué en vol
André COSTA
directeur du S.A.L.S.
et une de ses élèves
Mlle Jeanine ESBERT
s'écrasent au sol à Maison-Blanche

André Costa, directeur du Service de l'aviation légère et sportive en Algérie, avait décollé samedi matin de Blida à bord d'un planeur « C-800 » sur lequel il devait effectuer une démonstration acrobatique au cours du Meeting Aérien de Maison-Blanche.

Il profitait de ce court voyage pour donner une leçon de pilotage à l'une de ses élèves, Mlle Jeanine Esbert.

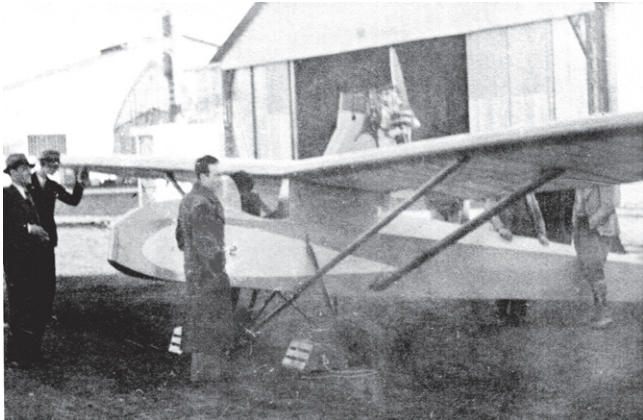
Suite page 3



André COSTA

Newspaper report of Costa's tragic death.

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



S.F.A.N. II Motor glider at Oued Hamimine (Constantine) airport in 1937.



Oued-Hamimin on April 14, 1941 - The PLS 1 with Lucien Saucède in the front cockpit.

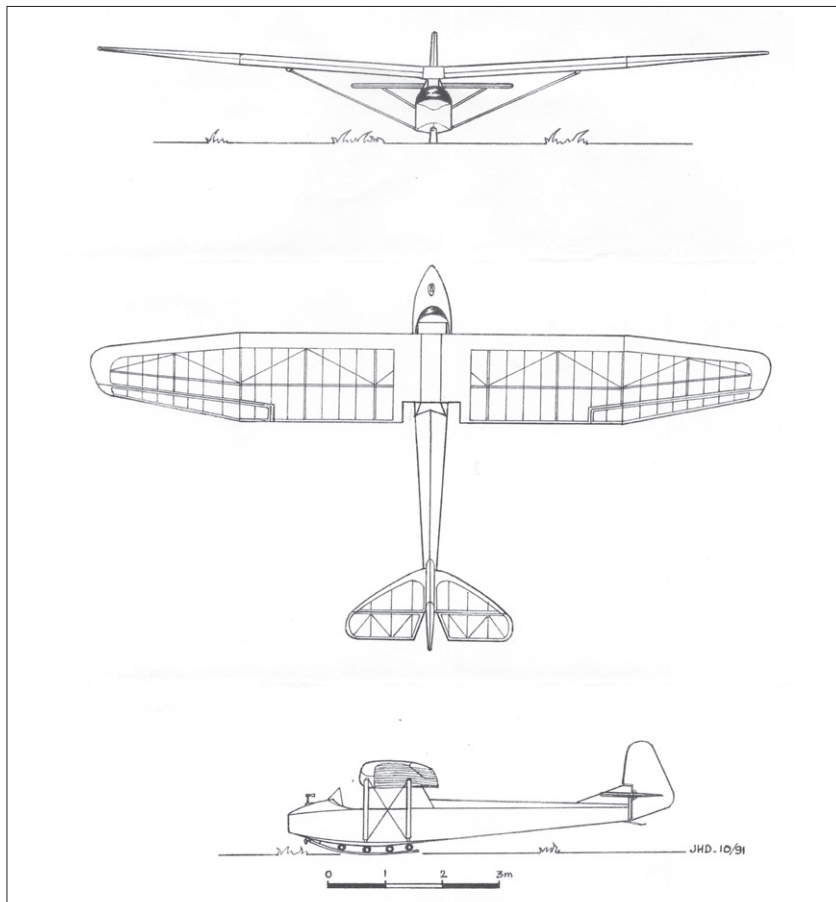
was also later recruited, Joannès Walkowiak. In 1958 Albert Carraz, an engineer, was assigned as Technical Manager to Charles Rudel. Carraz was well-known because he had held the world duration record for 2-seat gliders since 1952. Finally, in 1960, the D.A.C-A authorised S.A.L.S. funding for another instructor to their ranks (Monsieur Chatel), who was recruited to assist Walkowiak, whilst Henri Gantès replaced Saucède, to become Chief Pilot.

S.A.L.S. also provided the gliders, winches, and tow-planes. It also funded any major repairs and overhauls. Grants were issued based upon the activity at the centre, and was scaled accordingly to favour young trainees. This ensured that the schools aligned themselves with the aims of the Education of the Secular Centre of Popular Aviation (C.L.A.P.), a branch of the French League of Education. Each centre was equipped with Caudron C 800's, Avia 152a, Avia 40p, Castel 30S, SA 103 Emouchet, Nord 1300, Nord 2000, a Stampe and two Morane 315 tugs, along with Ford V8 winches. The gliders were repaired and maintained exclusively by the Algiers workshop at the works located at Sadi-Carnot.

The centre at Djebel-Oum-Settas in the early years regularly achieved around 2,000 flying hours a year, with Canastel achieving on average around 600 hours per year. Both centres continued to develop, reaching their zenith in 1960 at 7,000 flying hours for the year. Whilst there were other gliding sites elsewhere, they were not to fully exploit their potential due to the French withdrawal from Algeria in 1962.

in winds in January 1938 at Oued-Hamimin. The wings and fuselage remained substantially intact however, and the two brothers had the idea of turning the wreck into a two-seat glider. The new glider, named the PLS 1, weighed 145 kg empty and was equipped with a drop-off dolly made up of the wheels of the wrecked

S.F.A.N. Lucien Saucède made its first flight on July 27, 1938 at Oued-Hamimin. The glider was then successfully used for training by members of the L'Equipage group, and later, the Constantine Aero Club. Like the S.F.A.N. II, the PLS 1 was destroyed on the ground by a gale in May 1945.



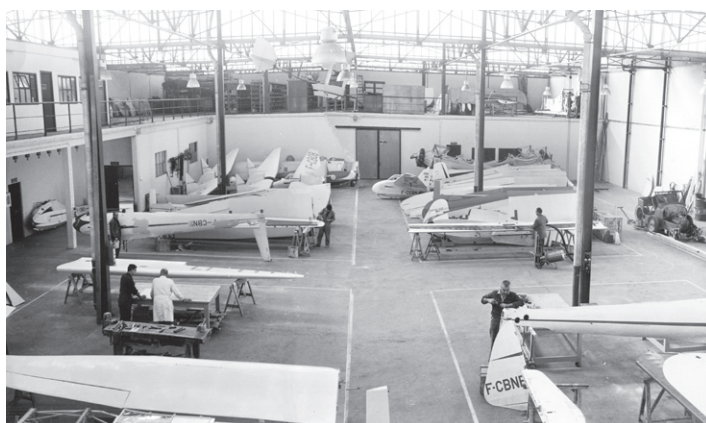
Algerian Glider Production

In 1937, the brothers Pierre and Lucien Saucède bought a 25hp Poinard-powered S.F.A.N. II, single-seater motor glider (based on the B.A.C. Drone), which was damaged

Technical data- PLS-1

Span:	12 m
Length:	6,72 m
Wing area:	16,5 m ²
Empty weight:	145 kg

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



Glider production at Sadi-Carnot in 1960.



The Dacal 105 at Djebel Oum-Settas

Boufarik Production

As already stated, the Caudron factory in Boufarik had built one hundred Avia 152's (both the 100 and 200 series), seventeen Caudron C 800 two-seater aircraft and ten Avia 40p gliders.

Despite the D.A.C.-A. budgeting for the 17 Caudron C 800 two-seat training gliders, they proved to be in insufficient numbers (in addition to this, allocated credits did not allow for the acquisition of more C800's). Unfortunately in practice, the Caudron 800 proved not to be well-adapted to the often harsh Algerian terrain, especially away from the metropolitan grass runways. In more rural settings, the gliders were often exposed to small stones, and in many cases, this was amplified by spasmodic vegetation which often consisted of hardy wild dwarf palms. This often inflicted further damage to the underside of the gliders. Repairs to the fuselage were frequent and expensive in terms of money and immobilisation. In addition, was the accelerated ageing of the structures of the gliders in the heat and dust, which led to S.A.L.S. considering the construction of a more robust two-seat glider.

Sadi-Carnot Production

In 1949, under the direction of André Costa, S.A.L.S. Algeria assessed the poor condition of the equipment he had inherited as S.A.L.S. chief. With the aim of overhauling both equipment and facilities, a glider repair workshop was created at the Technical centre based at 103 Rue Sadi-Carnot, in Algiers City. Typical gliders used at this time included a growing fleet of Caudron C-800's, Avia 152's, Avia 40P, Castel 30's, SA 103 Emouchet, Nord 1300's, and Nord 2000's.

Gliders were repaired and overhauled exclusively by these gliding workshops and were subject to periodic inspections by

Bureau Veritas (which utilised a similar regime used to inspect powered aircraft and it was seven years before a similar system of inspection of gliders was used in mainland France).

The Paris civil aviation administration, which by now had completely absolved themselves of the burden of light aviation in Algeria, left it to local administration to develop their own programme, with the objectives based upon local skills and assets. From 1952 to 1962, the Atelier du S.A.L.S.-Algérie (S.A.L.S.-Algeria workshops), would take on the task of not only building existing French glider designs, but also make a study into developing their own modern 2-seat training glider based upon results of operating equipment in the often harsh North African environment.

The operational issues with the Caudron 800's led to studies being conducted for a tandem arrangement that could be easily utilised as a two-seat instructional glider,

readily suitable for a student's first-solo flight. It needed to be of a simple, robust, construction and inexpensive to repair. It also needed to be relatively compact in size, easily stored, and easy to manoeuvre on the ground. Additionally, as a training glider, it had to be easy to fly, meeting aerodynamically safe criteria and be suitable for low-powered winches and/or tow-planes.

The design of an entirely new glider from scratch was considered beyond the means of S.A.L.S. Algeria. It was for this reason that S.A.L.S.-Algeria looked to existing, well-known designs that were robust, simple, and would easily allow a degree of modification to fit the requirements of the new role that they were expected to fill.

The choice fell on the Emouchet SA 104, which they deemed to have qualities that lent itself to be easily adapted. The resulting design was to become known as the Dacal 105, of which only one was built. The design was further refined to what was to



The Dacal 106 evolved from the Dacal 105, and made its first flight at Djebel Oum-Settas on the 19th May 19, 1956.

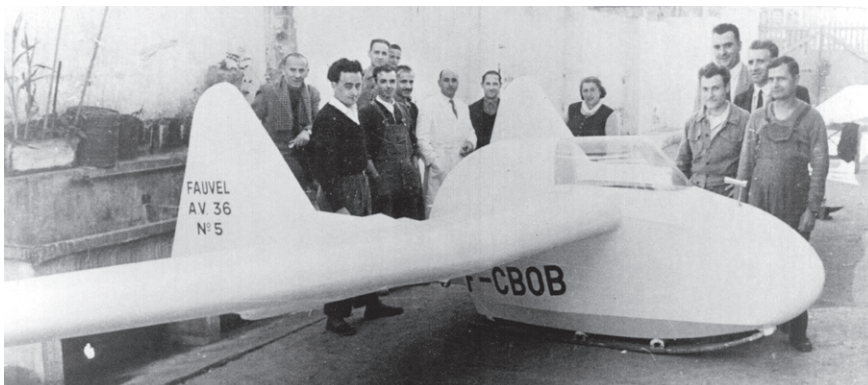
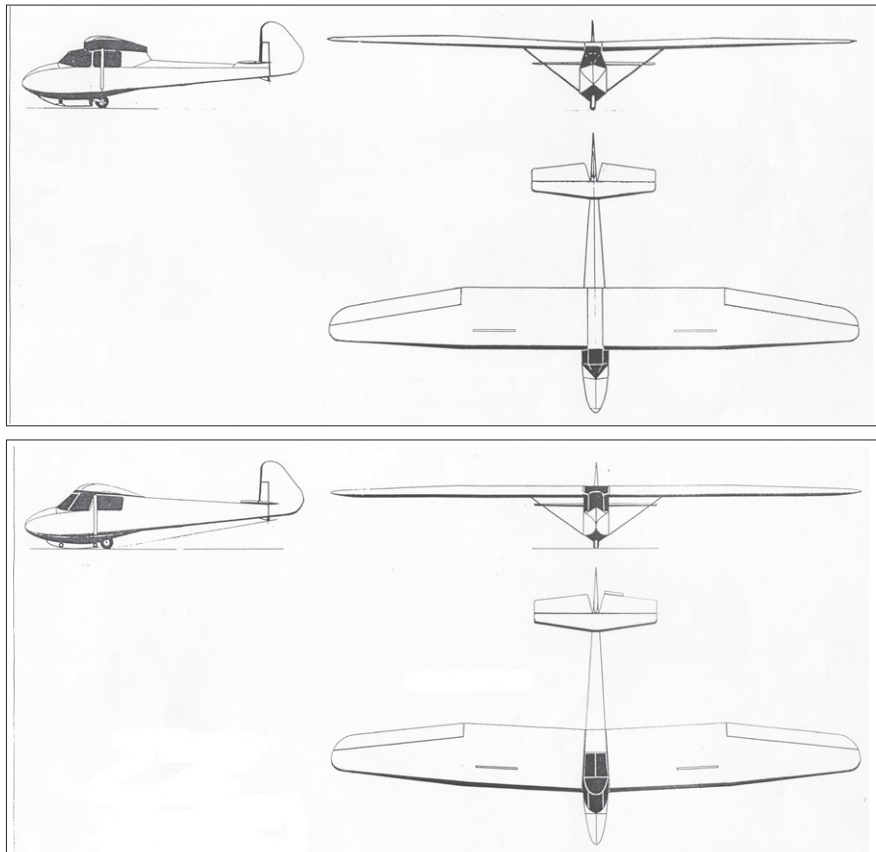
FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA

Technical data- Dacal 105/106

Span: 12,56 m
Length: 6,74 m
Wing area: 16,6 m²
Aspect ratio: 8,5
Empty weight: 195 kg
Payload: 170 kg
VNE: 55 km/h
Glide ratio: 17,2

become known as Dacal 106, of which, there were eight examples coming off the production line between 1952 and 1961. Further orders were placed with the Sadi-Carnot workshops for Djebel-Oum-Settas and the Oran Aero Club, which saw the further construction of existing French designs (built from plans), including five Fauvel AV 36 flying wings and eight Wasmer WA 20 Javelot II's, the last four of which, would never fly due to the last days of the Algerian Revolution and self-determination in 1962. Independence was to see the total demise of civil light aviation in Algeria and all aircraft and gliders were destroyed.

Unless otherwise stated; all photos from the Pierre Jarrige collection



*In 1957 construction began on the first of the five flying wings built by the SALS-Algeria. Here one example is ready to leave the Sadi-Carnot workshop and will be delivered to Djebel Oum-Settas Center and the Oran Aero Club in Canastel.
Photo : Lucien Saucède*

Notes

- Just before the war, Caudron set up a factory at Boufarik to build training planes. None were built however, with gliders only being built there. After the war this factory was dedicated to S.N.C.A.S.E. (Société nationale de Construction Aéronautique du Sud-Est, before becoming Sud-Aviation, and later merging into today's Airbus).
- Jacques Duchêne Marulaz, was one of the first Commercial pilots in Algeria and was based at the Hussein-Dey airfield in 1931 (then occupied by the French Air Force). In February 1934, he set up a repair shop, a clubhouse and a hangar that could accommodate about 20 aircraft and a school under the name Air Algeria, training many pilots.
- Father Harmel will later abandon gliding, but will become well-known throughout Algeria and the Sahara for his exploits with his Nord Norécrin, and as the personal pilot to Bishop Mercier; more commonly known as the 'Bishop of the Sahara'.
- Pères Blancs (White Fathers) or the Society of the Missionaries of Africa are a Roman Catholic society of apostolic life. Founded in 1868 by Archbishop of Algiers, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, the society focuses on evangelism and education, mostly in Africa.

References:

Wikipedia
Claude Lacombe. Le concours de Biskra
Avionsanspilote website

Le Vol a Voile en Algerie (1862 – 1962) by Charles Rudel and Pierre Jarrige.

For French readers who would like to read more about this fascinating history, why not buy your copy of *Le Vol a Voile en Algerie*? Printed in French and running to some 200 pages, this lovely hard-backed edition is crammed full of hundreds of photos. It is a must in every gliding enthusiast's book shelf!

Priced at only €30 plus €5 shipping (mainland Europe only), you can order your copy at: www.aviation-algerie.com



FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA

Based upon the original French works of Pierre Jarrige.

Exploits of French Gliding in Algeria

Part 3-

Gliding sites in Algeria

English text by Bruce Stephenson.

Algerian Gliding sites (1930's -1962)

In parts 1 and 2 we dealt with the general history of French- Algerian gliding. In this final part we take a closer look at the main air-fields of gliding activity located in Northern Algeria. As can be seen from the associated drawing, although there were many air-fields, we only cover the main centres of significant activity; all of which contributed to the rich and varied history to this previously largely untold story of North African gliding.

Oran-Canastel



Canastel Aerodrome located on the outskirts of Oran and 13 km from La Sénia. This photo is from 1958 featuring the layout of runways 02/20 and 08/26. Photo: Roland Didier

In 1923 Louis Poire, a Post Clerk in Oran, (assisted by the military pilot, Paul Grégoire), built and flew a glider of his own design with some success, which was towed aloft by a car. In 1931 the Aero-club of Oran built an Avia 11a, but the gliding section would not see any other activity until August 27, 1942, when the chief pilot, André Janis, made the first flight of an Avia 152A at Es Sénia. The flights continued until Janis found himself piloting a Spitfire with the Free-French 326 'Nice' Squadron during the Tunisia Campaign. Meanwhile, Oran Aero Club, chaired by Yvon Milhe-Poutingon, elected to purchase land at Canastel (on the north-eastern outskirts of Oran), however, this was immediately requisitioned by the US Army. The site was restored back to civilian use in September of 1944, with Maxime Lamort and Henri Ferraris from



Camels mark the return to the land at Djebel-Oum-Settas around the time of the centre closing in 1961

Djebel-Diss as instructors. Chief Pilot, Sauveur Mariette (a veteran pilot of the French Air Force), then led about fifty enthusiasts on the slopes, which proved to be very buoyant under the sea breeze. He is later replaced by the naval officer, Marceau Daydé, under whose instruction, will see some 130 'B' and 'C' badges being issued up until 1949. The gliding group at Canastel was known as the Canastel Vautours (Canastel Vultures).

With the decrease of the activity at Djebel-Diss, Canastel became the main centre for the club and was later equipped with the C 800, Avia 40p, Castel 30s, Emouchet and Nord 1300's. The military sections of Es Sénia and de Lartigue (Naval Air Station) provided a valuable boost to gliding activities. Johannes Walkowiak, a military conscript, was also assigned to the centre as an instructor, and then later becomes chief pilot appointed by the S.A.L.S.-Algeria.

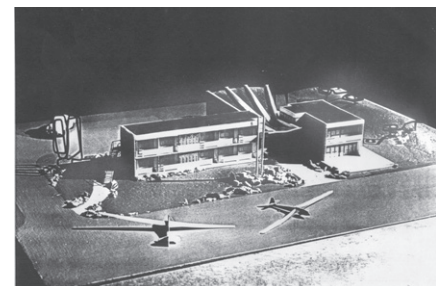
Wave flights were being exploited and the associated performances became of much interest, with high altitudes being achieved (nearly 5,000 m), with many long-distance flights being carried out. Much of this was under the influence of Henri Deloupy, president of the gliding section of the Oran Aero Club. The activity increased considerably to reach nearly 2,000 flying hours a year with the appearance of the newer Javelot, Dacal 106, and a Breguet 905 Fauvette.

In the summers of 1954 and 1955 the Canastel Vultures organised camps to El Aricha (El-Aouedj), approximately 200 km to the south-east of Oran. These camps were organised in conjunction with the Aero-club of Tlemcen (the town of El Aricha lies in Tlemcen province), who had a hangar located at Dayet Al Ferd, on the edge of a large dried salt-lake.

The results recorded in this desert region



An SA103 Emouchet in front of Canastel facilities. Photo: Henri Deloupy



The model of the planned expansion at Canastel that will never see the light of day... Photo: Henri Deloupy

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA

were often exceptional and confirmed the conclusions of the 1948 expedition, where thermal flights commonly reached 3,000 metres or more.

Oran-Canastel continued operations until August 13th, 1961.

Djebel-Diss (Djebel Eddis)*



The facilities located at Djebel Diss, a 1300 foot (400 m) high mountain 10 km north of Mostaganem.

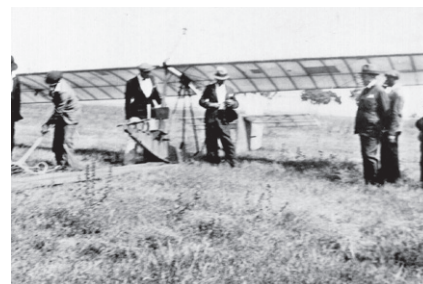
The Djebel Diss is a 1300 foot (400 m) high mountain 10 km north of Mostaganem, which lies on the north-west coastline of Algeria. It is well exposed to the prevailing winds from the west and has a beautiful ridge that ends at a beach at the mouth of the Chélif. After the successful survey flights by Eric Nessler in 1935 and the record duration flight by André Costa in 1937, the Aero Club of Mostaganem began gliding activities here in 1937 with an Avia 11a being constructed locally. In 1941, the Djebel-Diss gliding centre was created by the Algerian Air Sports Committee, which came under the Governmental Services of the Sections d'aviation populaire (S.A.P.), so that the many inactive French military pilots could reconnect with flying. To conceal the military character of the operation, soldiers were mixed with civilian pilots as part of a camouflage of military activity undertaken by Generals Weygand and Juin, to thwart the inquisi-



Adventure is in the air as Canastel Vulture members pose with a AV36 en route to El Aricha. The Fauvel AV. 36 flying wing proved easy to transport on its trailer. Photo: Henri Deloupy

tions of the commissions of German and Italian armistice.

With the opening of facilities at Djebel-Diss in August 1941, courses began in September of that same year, with Avia 152A's, Castel 30's, an Avia 40P and an Avia 11A under the direction of Jacques Duchène Marullaz. Activity continued after the Allied landings and general mobilization. Under the direction of Louis Buet (then later on by Lucien Saucède, and then Captain Henri Ferraris in 1944), the training was to be of much benefit to the young French pilots awaiting departure to the United States or Great Britain for further military flying training. Maxime Lamort, who arrived just before Operation Torch, was chief pilot until the end of the war, with Georges Bricout, Marceau Daydé, and Jean Rideau as instructors. Charles Magneville, Lucien Frison, and Marcel Tello were installed as resident engineers. New additional gliders and equipment were also added in August 1943, with a Caudron C.800 coming from Boufarik, however three Avia 152A's were ceded to the Americans at Sidi-Bel-Abbès, their eventual fate is unknown. After the war, the French State relinquished Djebel-Diss back to civilian status and was reinstated under the control of the Aero-club of Mostaganem with Georges Bernard, Jean Cruon, Jean Rideau, and Jean Margaillan as instructors (who were periodically aided by André Costa).



The Les Aiglons du Chelif (The Chelif Eagles), with the Ecole Primary Training glider. Photo: Françoise Fouques Duparc

With the death of André Costa, activities at Djebel Diss were severely affected, with equipment and flying being increasingly transferred to the Centre at Oran-Canastel. Djebel-Diss failed to receive the recognition it deserved, but despite this, achieved an enviable record of activity. From 1936 to 1955, around 24,500 glider flights took place there, of which more than 20,000 were between 1943 and 1947. All gliding activity ceased at Djebel-Diss in February 1955.

Orléansville (Chlef)*

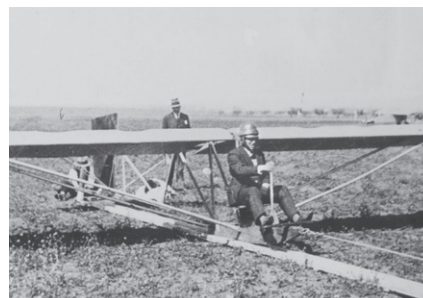
In the summer of 1931, the Aero-Club, Les Aiglons du Chélif (The Chélif Eagles), started operations with a Primary Training glider (thought to be an Eole). Utilising the glider to its full potential, the Eagles were to become very active, meeting each Sunday to fly from a site to the south of Orléansville. Launching was by bungee, with Monsieur Mougeon as lead pilot and Eagle members, Pierre-Albert Monville, Henri Fouques Duparc, and Jacques Adam all trying their hand at gliding. Despite limited results, some flights saw climbs above the launch heights, despite the mediocre performance of the glider. With interest waning however, all further gliding was abandoned by December 1932 when the Eagles turned to powered flight instead.



The Caudron C-800 arrives at Djebel Diss in April 1943. Photo: Robert Furet

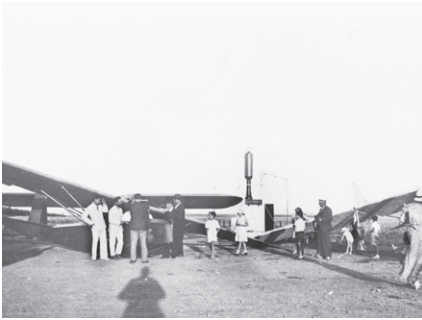


Raising the colours of the flag. The symbolic opening of the Djebel Diss gliding site.



Georges Alberge and the Ara glider at Sidi-Bel-Abbès in February 1933. Photo: Cécile Alberg

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



Sidi-Bel-Abbès circa 1935 with Avia 40P and Avia 11A. Photo: Cécile Alberg



Gilbert Eva-Candela and the track car in April 1950. Photo: Clément Torrès



Oued-Hamimin - Meeting of June 9, 1948 with an Avia 40P launching and SA 103 Emouchet. Photo: Patrice Notteghem

Sidi-Bel-Abbès - The C.A.B.A.

The Bel-Abbès Aeronautical Club (C.A.B.A.) created, in November 1931, a gliding section called Les Milans. Founded by Hippolyte Boukhéris, Monsieur Espy, and Georges Albergé, the gliding section was equipped with an Ara (similar to the Avia XIA), which made its first flight on December 20, 1931, piloted by Chief Pilot, Albert Monville.

This glider was later joined by an Avia 11A and an Avia 32E, both of which had been built by the Jammes brothers. In 1942 and 1943, the section received four Avia 152A's and the instructor, Georges Ligreau, who was also a skilled engineer and successfully transformed one of the Avia 152's into a two-seater glider. Jean Serrière, who was the Chief Pilot in 1945, went on to make more than 300 flights with this two-seater. After the departure of Serrière at the end of 1945, activity decreased, further hampered by the fact that gliding in the lowlands proved difficult and as a result the C.A.B.A. focussed its attentions entirely on the powered flight.

Oued-Hamimin



Oued-Hamimin 1945.

Air activity in the Algerian city of Constantine (regarded as Algeria's eastern capital and 3rd largest city), began at

the Sidi-Mabrouk racecourse in 1912. The racetrack, which had become too small for the activities of both the local flying club and military aviation, was abandoned and land was purchased by the municipality in 1933 for an airfield at Oued-Hamimin, 10 km to the south-east of Constantine (and to the north of the small town of El Khroub).

In June 1934, in the Algerian town of Aïn-M'Lila, 35 km south of Constantine, enthusiasts calling themselves Les Faucons du Guérioun (Guérioun Falcons and named after a neighbouring Djebel/ mountain to the east of Aïn-M'Lila), flew a Sablier 14 (a French ab-initio trainer designed in 1930), launched by a winch of local manufacture. Unfortunately, the venture didn't live up to expectations and the adventure ended with the glider being damaged.

In 1936, Paul Poinot and the Saucède brothers came together at the Grand Café 'Isnard' in Constantine. Along with a small group of like-minded enthusiasts, they formed a club and collected

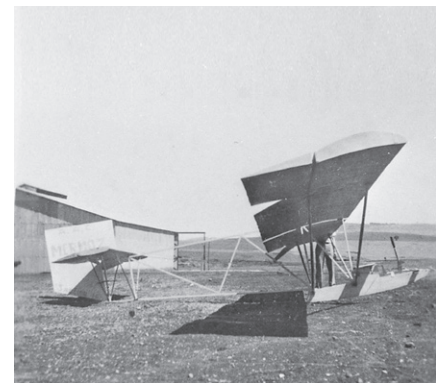
the remains of the Sablier 14, which they christened 'Mermoz'. Repairs were carried out at a local garage, whose owner also supplied a French Rochet-Schneider van, which they immediately christened 'Zizine'. Zizine was soon fitted with a home-made winch and drum and flights began at Oued-Hamimin. Hopes were quickly dashed, however. Despite the robust construction of the glider (which used a steel tube frame for the fuselage), breakages were frequent and severely dampened enthusiasm amongst the group.

In 1938, Lucien Saucède completed an instructor internship in France at La Banne d'Ordanche and made his newly converted two-seat PLS 1 glider available to the club (see Part 2). In 1939, the gliding unit became a section of the Constantine Flying Club, chaired by Léon Gohin, a former military pilot.

All glider flying at Oued-Hamimin ceased with the military occupation of the field in 1943.



Oued-Hamimin 1942 with a 1930 Farman NF2 (40hp straight 6) winch car, Avia 152A, and the PLS 1. Photo: Lucien Saucède

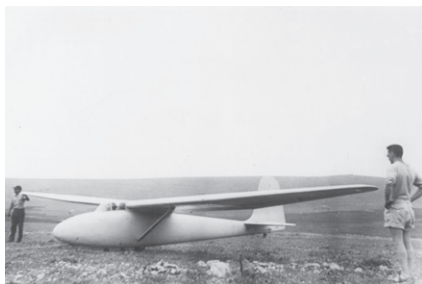


The Sablier 14 'Mermoz' at Oued-Hamimin. Utilising steel construction for the fuselage tubes, the Type 14 proved to be light and manoeuvrable and was a popular school trainer with many clubs in France during the early 1930's.

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



The arrival of the Avia 40p in 1944 allowed for flights of greater duration and performance.
Photo: Henri Dumortier



A Castel 311p arrived on loan by S.A.L.S. -Algeria in 1952



The first of the two Wassmer WA 21 Javelots delivered to the Djebel-Oum-Settas arrived on March 1, 1960. Again, the Javelots were built in Carnot, Algiers city.

Djebel-Oum-Settas



Djebel-Oum-Settas in its heyday in 1953.

1939 was to also see Lucien Saucède carrying out explorations of the local area in a Caudron 600 Aiglon (a 1930s French two-seat monoplane sport/touring powered aircraft built by Caudron-Renault). During these surveys he had noted amongst the hilly terrain approximately 20 km to the south-east of Constantine, a promising site for gliding at Djebel-Oum-Settas. The area was classified as hubous (waqf) land, which in Muslim law was land set aside for either religious or charitable use; in which arguably both definitions could easily be applied to gliding as a sport, in as much being viewed as having a holistic spiritual aspect, and in its make-up, a sport often viewed as charitable pastime! The rolling mountainous terrain at Djebel Oum Set-

tas is 1,314 meters above sea level, and soon saw a group from Constantine, which included the Saucède brothers, Jean-Baptiste Cometti, Jean Serrières, Henri Carbonnel, and Paul Poinot, begin to further explore and develop the site after having previously started gliding at the Oued-Hamimin airfield.

The first flights took place at Djebel Oum Settas on the 26th of May, 1941. A hangar, workshop, and dormitory were built below the summit from the remains of a grain store that had previously caught fire in Constantine. The first of the four Avia 152A promised by the Algerian Air Sports Association arrived in April 1942. The first course took place during the Easter holidays, with the two-seater PLS 1 and the Avia 152A, which was to be the first of many over the following twenty years.

Flying ceased after the Allied invasion in November of 1942, but resumed again at Djebel Oum Settas on January 16, 1944, at which point further work continued to develop the facilities and runway with the additional help of Italian prisoner labour, who were delighted with their fate, pending the end of the war!

The main architects of this later resurrection of the site were Lucien Saucède, Jean-Baptiste Cometti, and Henri Carbonnel, who all tirelessly devoted themselves in organising the monthly courses that be-

gan to take place at the centre. The centre focussed on providing training at all levels; from the complete beginner to the more experienced performance pilot. Soon the centre was one of the most accomplished gliding centres in Algeria, both in terms of activity and gliders.

With the monthly gliding courses becoming quickly established as part of the main focus, participants came from all walks of life, including civilians and soldiers alike, along with instructors from C.L.A.P (Education of the Secular Centre of Popular Aviation).

1946 was to see the arrival of the first Nord 1300's, followed in June 1947 by the first of the Caudron C 800 two-seat gliders, making dual instruction possible again after the destruction of the P.L.S. 1 in 1945. Eventually, four C-800's would be based at Djebel-Oum-Settas, however, the type didn't stand up to the rough terrain very well and were eventually replaced by the Dacal 105 and 106 in 1956 (see Part 2).

By 1948 more advanced gliders began to arrive, including the Nord 2000, and as a result, performances of over 300 km distances began to be regularly achieved. Altitudes of over 3,000 m were common, along with flights lasting eight hours or more. On August 7, 1948, Lucien Saucède managed to fly 300 km to the east and landed in Ed-Dekhila in Tunisia. At the end of August, Saucède again flew east to land 322 km at Sidi-El-Hani (Tunisia), obtaining the 2nd Gold badge to be awarded in Algeria.

The 1950's was to see a continued update of gliders, including two Algerian built Fauvel AV 36 Aile Volante's which arrived in Djebel-Oum-Settas in 1955 to replace the then aging Avia 40p.

The site proved popular with pilots, with 2,000 flight hours regularly being clocked up annually on a regular basis until September 1961, when all flying ceased.



The Dacal 106, evolution of the Dacal 105, made its first flight at Djebel-Oum-Settas on May 19, 1956.



The first Nord 1300's arrived in Djebel-Oum-Settas in November 1946. Photo dates from June 1960.

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



Bungee launching an Avia at Hussein-Dey.

Hussein-Dey- Algiers city

Hussein-Dey, located close to the centre of Algiers city, was to be a short-lived affair. The Algerian Air Sports Association, chaired by Commander Bailly, moved to the Hussein-Dey airfield, located to the east of the city centre, between the sea and the hills just inland. On 13 June 1942 Hussein-Dey received its first Avia 152a built in Boufarik at the Caudron factory. There was feverish activity at the site, with about 50 keen students and three gliders. Bungee launching was used to get the gliders airborne, with the gliders landing in the surrounding beach or market garden fields that were then located there, before being retrieved by hand back to the launch-point. Equipment and gliders suffered from the sea air however and required constant maintenance. The Chief



Not all landings go to plan! On August 19, 1942, one hapless pilot, Albert Guvan, ran out of precious height in attempting to land over the top of the Hussein-Dey hangar with unintended results. (This hangar had been erected in 1941-42 and disappeared after the war).

Instructor was Henri Ferraris, with three other instructors, Jean Laffargue, Jacques Pierchon and Henri Gantès also engaged in operations there.

During the operations at Hussein-Dey, an experiment was carried out in August 1942 at a site nearby at Dely-Ibrahim, located on high ground to the south-west of the city at the place called 'The Great Winds'. The hilly terrain facilitated longer duration flights but made it more difficult to retrieve the gliders back to the launch-point. Governor Yves Chatel visited the Hussein-Dey site in October 1942, however operations there ceased after the Allied Invasion on the 8th November 1942, and were never re-established.



By now healthy numbers of young pilots were coming to Fort-De-L'Eau.

After the inactivity due to the general mobilisation and the departure of most of the executive's staff when Algeria entered the war on the side of the Allies, glider flights resumed in Algiers city on the 20th August 1944 on the new airfield of Fort-De-L'Eau; a former famous beach resort located in the north-eastern suburb of Algiers city. The management of the regional centre for gliding was entrusted to the Aéro-club d'Algérie, which was then based at Maison Blanche (now Algiers city's main airport, Houari Boumediene).

The first flights at Fort-De-L'Eau were carried out in an Avia 152a, flown by André Costa. The gliders had previously been in storage for almost 2 years in the hangar of the Algiers Air Sports Association at the Hussein-Dey Centre. These flights were followed, in September and October, by a hundred or so extended hops, of 10 to 15 seconds, until the arrival on the 15th of November, of a winch. From then on, the gliders climbed to 250 m and hovered for 2.5 minutes, a considerable progress compared to the previous 'giclées' (bungee launches).

Flights continue at a slow, but regular pace and on the 29th of September of 1945, the centre had logged its 1000th flight. It was around this time some experiments were made in car-towing as an alternative launching method.

On the 14th of March 1946, over 2000 flights had now been logged, and on the 24 March of the same year, flights were further enhanced by the arrival of a Stampe SV 4C from the workshops of the Ateliers Industriels de l'Air (AIA) in Maison-Blanche. On 30 October 1946, the Algiers Interclub Centre was created, which saw Fort-de-l'Eau being equipped with C 800s, Nord 1300s and SA 103 Emouchets. By now the number of pilots had increased considerably, especially on weekends. This was partly thanks to a pick-up service organised by Air Sports Association, whose vehicles (Jeeps) ensured the transportation of young people (and the not so young!)

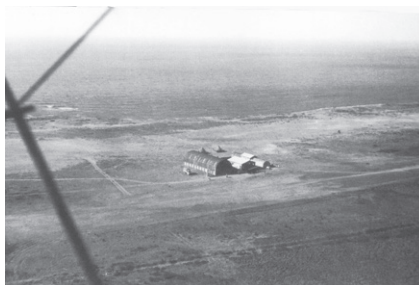


August 1942 saw a series of flights being carried out at Dely-Ibrahim, at a place called Les Grands Vents (The Great Winds), on the western suburbs of Algiers city.



Two Fauvel AV 36's built in Carnot, Algiers city, at the launch point. Note the winch cable attachment points along the leading edge of the wing.

Fort-De-L'Eau (Bordj El Kiffan)* - Algiers city



Fort-De-L'Eau on the edge of the Mediterranean coast.

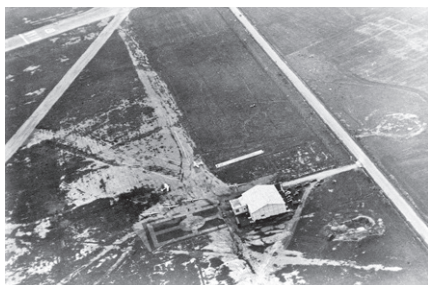
FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA



Under a watchful gaze with an Avia 152a on the slide as an assistant holds the glider back whilst the bungee cord is tightened.

from Algiers city; the rallying point being the famous workshops in Sadi-Carnot. Despite the growing enthusiasm, gliding at Fort-de-l'Eau was to end in 1948. The exact reasons for the closure of the centre after more than 5000 flights in four and a half years is unknown. One can only guess that it may have been partly due to the worsening state political tensions, the proximity to nearby Maison-Blanche, and the general unsuitability for any real thermic conditions being so close to the sea.

Blida



Blida airfield. Photo: Pierre Llopis

In the summer of 1942, the Blida Air Sports Association was founded with four Avia 152A's on the military field that had been established in Bilda at Blida airport, which lies about 45 km south-west of Algiers city. Constantin Feldzer, who had some experience of gliding, ran a school and had the bright idea of taking off from Chr  a for an unprecedented flight to Blida airfield. He made this 20-minute flight on September 9, 1942. Two months later, after the Allied landings, all gliding ceased at Bilda and Feldzer found himself fighting on the Eastern Front with the Normandy-Niemen Fighter Regiment.

With Andr   Costa's new position within the newly created A.F.N., he tried to follow up on the movement, and launched the Interclub Gliding Centre of Algeria, comprising of both the aero-clubs of Algeria (the A.I.A.) and Blida.



2nd April, 1950 the Air Scouts visited Bilda airfield. C 800 in the background. Photo: Max Ozenne

The Centre recovered the equipment used at Fort-De-l'Eau and activity at Bilda was further developed under the guidance of Georges Bricout. Several interesting flights were carried out, suggesting very favourable conditions. But despite the promising start for the centre at Bilda, development there was partly hampered by the increasing activity at the time at Boufarik, Maison-Blanche and La Regha  a. Bilda was closed in 1951 after the fatal accident of Andr   Costa.

Mascara and the Djebel Kallel (Djebel Koullal)*



Tented camp at Au Djebel-Kallel August 1942. Photo: Jean Mercier

The Aero-club de Mascara at Saint-Andr   aerodrome (located to the south-east of Mascara) was created on 14 June 1931. In 1934 Daniel Robert-Bancharelle became chief pilot and began gliding at a mountainous site at nearby Djebel-Kallel, a few kilometres north of Mascara, while working with his uncle's farm nearby. Embarking on a successful career in aviation he then became a military flight instructor and with the beginning of the war, returning to civilian life in August 1940. After the invasion of the Allies during operation Torch, Daniel Robert-Bancharelle was able to resume his military career.

After a few flights in an Avia 32E and Avia 151 at Saint-Andr   in 1941 and 1942, Daniel Robert-Bancharelle created a glid-

ing section of the Aero Club of Mascara and made the first flight from the top of the Djebel Kallel on June 14, 1942, with an Avia (this being the 32nd glider built by the Jammes brothers). An Avia 11A and an Avia 152A were also put into service, for what was in fact, another clever camouflage for courses for the benefit of demobbed soldiers in preparation for future mobilisation. With the help of the Army, around a dozen tents were installed at Djebel Kallel and the courses were run continuously until 1946.

Training was under the direction of Edouard Adamski (assisted by Raphael Thomas), however as often is the case with the single seat training, two serious accidents occurred which caused all gliding operations to cease, but not before some 79 'B' and 18 'C' badges had been issued after amassing some 243 hours of flying and 6,000 launches.

Gliding activity was later transferred to Thiersville (now known as Ghriss and located to the south of Mascara), where Daniel Robert-Bancharelle (Chief Pilot and president of the Aero-club), introduced mixed-school training; with initial training being carried out on powered aircraft to help accelerate the training process before moving back onto gliders for continuation training. The operation utilised a Stampe, a Caudron C 800, two Avia 152A's, two SA 103 Emouchet, and an Avia 40p.

By this time state assistance was beginning to waiver and all the paid staff were withdrawn. The centre ceased operations in 1948 after 625 flying hours, 13,000 launches, and 170 'B' and 'C' badges being issued between 1942 to 1948.

Relizane

Situated some 50 km to the south-east of the coastal town of Mostaganem, Relizane got off to an auspicious start in 1942. In the autumn of 1942, the pilot, Henri Gant  s, was seconded to Relizane with



Relizane, March 1961. A Wassmer 21 Javelot foreground as a Stamp on prepares to land and a Musketeer waiting. Photo: Henri Deloupy

FRENCH GLIDING IN ALGERIA

two Avia 152A's. Unfortunately, all the material was destroyed by the marauding Allied soldiers during the Operation Torch landings on November 8, 1942 and no sooner had operations there started, activity came to a halt.

Henri Gantès (who became chief pilot of S.A.L.S.), was to later organise a gliding course at Relizane, which ran from March 26th to April 4th, 1961. Along with the assistance of the Oran and Relizane flying clubs, he gathered together a Dacal 106, an Emouchet, two Javelot's, and a Stampe tug. During this course, 360 tows, 125 flying hours and 13 'C' and 'D' badges were recorded.

Relizane airfield was built on a beautifully smooth field, with a runway of 1700 metres. S.A.L.S. later planned to establish an air sports centre open to gliding, aerobatics, parachuting and training of instructors. All activity ceased there 1961.

End note:

After the Algerian Republican Government decided to end French presence in Algeria, the political situation rapidly deteriorated from 1961 onwards. In Oran, a partial flying ban was imposed on April 27, 1961, with a final total ban being decreed on August the 13th. Flights at Constantine (Djebel Oum Settas) ended on September 23rd, 1961.

As the bans were introduced, gliders and equipment was taken to the Hussein-Dey workshops, where they were carefully stored in the hope of better days. But the promise of these long awaited days were not to come however and gliding in Algeria was cut short before the full potential of North Africa could be exploited by gliders. This promise was to be broken with the eventual total destruction of all remaining gliders and equipment in an independent Algeria.



Much civil unrest and protests by native Algerian nationalists were to eventually lead to independence and spelt an end to gliding in Algeria. Here Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) protesters storm onto the Souk-Ahras aerodrome.

French rule in Algeria ended with the Évian Accords and the independence of Algeria on July 5th, 1962.

Unless otherwise stated, all photos via Pierre Jarrige

Notes

- * Please note: many of the names referred to in this series refers to the French names and spellings whilst Algeria was under French rule, many of which today are now known by their Arabic names.

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Le Vol a Voile en Algerie (1862 – 1962)

by Charles Rudel and Pierre Jarrige.

For French readers who would like to read more about this fascinating history, why not buy your copy of Le Vol a Voile en Algerie?

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