

Inter-Uni 2015, Bicester

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The 2015 Inter-Uni was hosted by University College London Union Gliding Club (UCLUGC) at our home airfield of Bicester from the 15th to the 23rd August. The Inter-Uni is an annual friendly competition between several university gliding clubs across the country, and focusses upon progression of pilots of all skills whether it be a first solo, better soaring, or cross country flying. There is no limit on the number of pilots that a club can send, and generally the more the better! This year Oxford sent a strong team of nine pilots of varying skill levels; myself, Chris Ballance, Qin Cao, Alex Clarke, Artur Doshchyn, David Felce, Jack Miller, Hayden Peacock and Dinant Riks. Many of our instructors also gave their time to help us during the week, and ensure that we could all fly as much as possible. We would all like to thank them very much for their dedication.

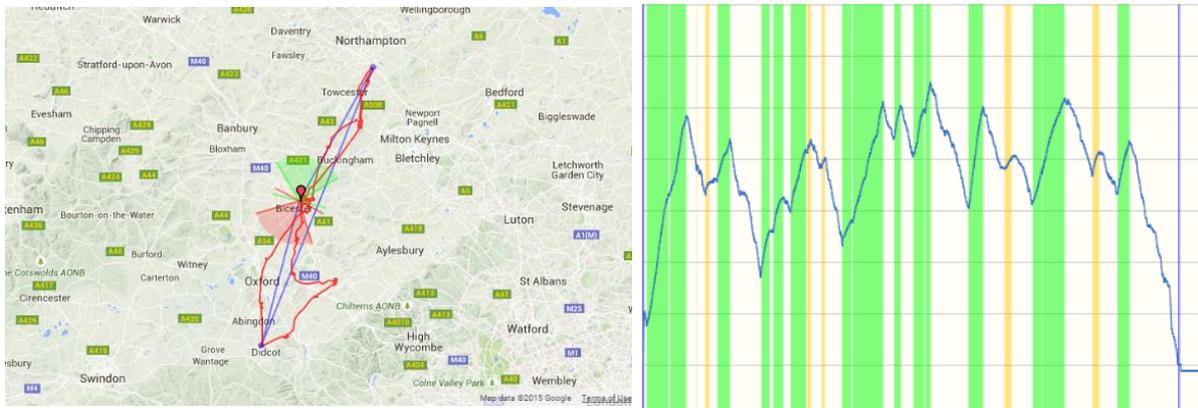
Points are awarded in the Inter-Uni for flying cross country (flying between declared waypoints), soaring (gaining height in rising air) and progression (gaining competence at various gliding skills). The weather for the week was good for general flying with little rain, and so was great for pre-solo pilots, earning a lot of progression points. Unfortunately, only one or two days were good for longer flights involving soaring or cross country.

Some of our team commuted from their homes in Oxford, whilst others stayed in bunk rooms in the hanger, or in tents on the airfield. Everyone had a great time and there was a great sense of team spirit, working together on the airfield to launch gliders and socialising in the bar in the evening. A typical day at the airfield involved getting up and ready for 08:30 to get the aircraft out of the hanger. This was followed by a briefing at 09:00 telling us about weather conditions and airfield operation for the day. After the briefing we all made our way out to the bus at the launch point. Winch launching was very rapid with some days achieving well over 100 launches! Only Wednesday had to finish early due to poor weather.



Teamwork: Our President, Jonathan Pedde, launches Chris Ballance in our Astir, FEF.

Chris Ballance flew our single seater Astir, FEF, on several occasions including a 3 hour, 134 km flight from Bicester to Didcot to Northampton and back. Unlike pilots from other universities, Chris always made it back to the airfield and didn't have to 'land out'. Landing out occurs when a pilot runs out of height and has to land in a field, rather than where planned. A pre-organised crew of people then has to drive to the field, with the glider's trailer, to bring the glider and pilot back to the airfield. Chris ended the competition with the second highest score for cross country flying, winning himself some gliding vouchers.



Not bad without an engine... Left: GPS trace of Chris Ballance's 134 km cross country (red). Right: Barogram (height) of the same flight. Fractions highlighted in green indicate continuous climbs of more than 500 ft in rising air.

Many of our pilots progressed significantly during the week, and I had my first solo flight on the final day of the competition in a K13 glider. It was a great experience that I followed up with more solo flights the following day once the competition had finished. Going solo helped me to win the Progression Trophy for scoring the most progression points during the week, as well as a GPS flight logger. David Felce, an early solo pilot, also reached a milestone by converting from the two seater K13 glider into the single seater Skylark.



Pre-solo training: Me having one of my final instructional flights with Bam Bam in a K13 before going solo. Note the rather stylish OUGC soaring hat (the sun gets very hot under that canopy!).

Overall, Oxford earned the highest combined total points for the 3 aspects of the competition meaning that we won this year's Inter-Uni. OUGC is very fortunate to have many dedicated pilots, many of whom help run the committee, and we are always looking for more people join. Drop our membership secretary (Dinant) an email at membership@ougc.org or browse our website, ougc.org, for more information. Gliding is for everyone, so why not give it a try?