

FINAL GLIDE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD GLIDING CLUB

Issue 12: September 1994

Edited by Phil Hawkins

GLIDING IN THE ALPS

Ten o'clock on a Friday night is not a good time to start a gliding trip.

Still, there wasn't a lot of choice if the 2.30am ferry out of Dover was to be caught. It all seemed a bit unreal chasing John Hanlon and the Acro trailer around the M25. Then we caught up with Richard and Keith with the PIK just outside Dover, and Phil and Tom were already waiting in the car park having got away from Weston a good hour earlier than us.

Finally we got waved onto the ferry, with ample proof being given that those ramps were not designed for glider trailers. The Acro trailer wheels hung merrily in mid air and the back corners graunched along the ground. The mighty power of the Renault Espace overcame such minor details and we duly boarded.

After a major fried breakfast at 4am France loomed up ahead. There was not a customs or immigration person even to look interested, check passports, anything. Calais was a ghost port. 150 miles down, 700 to go. So we went, at a steady 60mph down the autoroutes, pausing only to change drivers, pay frightening amounts of money to the *péage* toll booths and fuel station cashiers, and to have the occasional stop for coffee intake and discharge.

By 4pm we were at Macon, with about 150 miles to go. And we were knackered. The plan was to stop in a "Formula One" hotel overnight before the final assault on the mountains. 150 miles didn't seem far and there was discussion on whether to push on. Fortunately Richard's advice to stop was finally taken.

Having completed the mountain stretch next morning, there was general relief that we had stopped! Steep and winding wasn't the word, and not a landable field in sight. We didn't arrive in Aspres until after midday on the Sunday. And it was raining. In fact it had been raining all morning, with a huge downpour on the autoroute at Lyons which had even slowed the French drivers.

So there we were at Aspres. 830 miles on the clock. In the rain, with a huge

ridge behind us which made Talgarth look like a pimple. It even had clouds half way up it. *If I just get to soar that ridge, it'll be worth the trip.*

So we hung around the bar until the rain stopped and then expertly pitched the tents. That is, John pitched his. We watched in admiration and then moved in. It only took Robert half an hour to assemble his shelf unit.

The next day was warm and sunny. A lot of it was taken up filling in forms for the aero club and to get French gliding permits. We also continued the habit, started on the *péage*, of handing over wads of French francs. The pound chose this moment to go into free fall against the franc. Howard won the "currency speculator of the fortnight" award. He'd bought all his money in franc traveller's cheques the week before.

Advice from Richard: "Always know where your escape route is, and when to go for it. Forget about field landings. Jump from local soaring one airfield to the next." Time was spent with the local Michelin maps drawing large rings around all the airfields in the district (of which there were quite a few). Even more time was spent drawing circles at 5km intervals around Aspres and marking in heights required to get back at a glide angle of 20 to 1. Later in the trip, some of us started thinking that 20:1 in sink hitting 10 down was a bit optimistic!

Finally we got flying. The tug was a Robin 180 and wasn't exactly overpowered for a hot weather take-off from a strip at 3000 feet, especially with the Acro on the back. Away you staggered from the airfield and were dragged inexorably straight at that ridge. Was the tuggie really a suicidal maniac? No, finally he's turning parallel to it. Remember that you can't keep out from the ridge or you could put him into the trees. *Those trees look close!* The ridge is working here, let's get off tow before you go bankrupt. Oh bother! (or words to that effect), well you *thought* it was working here. So the altimeter says 5000 feet, that's still only 2000 above the airfield.

Try round the corner by the hang gliders. Try down the other end of the ridge. Try over that scree. Get closer in to the trees. Stop turning in the sink.

Keep the speed up when you're near the mountain. And all the time the sun was blazing through the canopy, you were sweating buckets and at least two flies which you hadn't been able to evict before takeoff were buzzing frantically around.

The flies were definitely a feature of Aspres. Everyone rapidly developed the "Australian wave." Fly papers hung in the tents had to be changed every couple of days as there wasn't any space left on them. We thought it was bad, but John, Robert and Andy having landed out at Tallard reported that they didn't have any flies. They had mosquitoes!

Enough of this digression. You got above ridge height (well, parts of it anyway!) That bowl finally kicked off a major thermal and you could circle in it. Higher up the temperature dropped nicely.

The initial aim of all this exercise was to get to the *Pic de Bure* which is a mountain about 20km from Aspres. It goes up to 9700 feet and looks like Hay Bluff on steroids. Over 30°C on the airfield and there were still patches of snow on the Pic. We'd been told to have 7500 on the clock to get back from the Pic to the airfield comfortably, so it was best to start towards it at about 9000. There were a couple of "hills" on the way which couldn't have been more than 7000 feet from which useful thermals could be found to maybe 10,000.

So there you were, 10,000 feet and 20km to go. Then you could hit massive sink and the Pic would start growing in front of the canopy like it was Jack's beanstalk. The sink would finally stop but you could still get there well below the summit. So there's a huge bowl facing the sun which should have had more lift than Mr Otis and what did you get? More sink.

Scuttle back to the side with the vertical face and it could be working at each end but going down in the middle. And no matter what anyone said, you weren't going too close to that face. A quick check over the side for the way home. Then somewhere would boom and you could be up over the cross on the top in about two beats. *Then* you could afford to admire the research station on the top of the bowl and all the chairlifts on the other side. Up to the north, the big mountain tops were still all covered with snow. What a view!

continued inside...

The Pic de Bure goes up to 9700 feet and looks like Hay Bluff on steroids.

GLIDING IN THE ALPS

(continued from front page)

Once you'd got tired of the scenery around the Pic de Bure, and with up to 11,000 feet on the altimeter, you could start thinking of going elsewhere. There was a big ridge running north from the Pic to play on, or you could head east over a big horse-shoe shaped mountain towards Gap and Tallard. Unfortunately, the Gap valley which ran north - south tended to be just that, a great big gap in the way of further progress east and was usually very blue. The big boys could play in that, but not me, not the first time in the Alps. That was how John, Robert and Andy ended up being aerotowed home from Tallard at vast expense. Or an immortal line from Phil over the radio, having scraped away from a low spot. "For a while back there I wasn't a happy little bunny."

There were plenty of alternatives. Head south towards Sisteron, find a few more "hills" to play around. Meeting hang gliders at 10,000 feet is certainly different. And those guys paragliding the "Apostles" were braver men than me too.

Various people had brought their GPS units. Camping near us was a Dutchman who had flown in the area every year for twenty years. He examined a GPS with interest. "Ja, very nice," he said. "But it can give you a course home without telling you that there is a big mountain in the way."

OK, we lost a couple of days when the wind blew from the north and the airfield was at the bottom of the ridge curlover. There was a swimming pool next to the club, it was hot and some of the local ladies seemed intent on getting very extensive suntans. Howard and John were congratulating themselves on the rapid bronzing of their limbs. Until they noticed that their palms were turning brown too! Examination of the French "suntan cream" revealed that it was artificial tan and gave no protection at all.

Howard's gas barbecue, which had fitted neatly into the front of the Acro trailer was a major success, as was Howard's prowess as a cook. Robert and Hazel only moved their tent twice before getting it out of the sun. Richard and Phil saw lots of new birds but no Golden Orioles. During an expedition to the coast vast flocks of Golden Tits were apparently spotted. A million flies were slaughtered, and two million replaced them. Tom learned that "glass" to the French means ice, but was puzzled for a long time as to how to drink his wine out of an ice cube. Howard narrowly escaped death at John's hands due to excessive snoring.

It was a brilliant two weeks.

Dave Weekes

ASPRES sur BUECH From the editor's diary

Before breakfast, walked down the track behind the hangar into Aspres village, to buy *baguettes* from the *boulangerie*. Found a shop which had postcards showing a glider on the airfield. This started a trend, and everybody was going down there today buying postcards.

Incredibly the forecast was even hotter than yesterday. According to the daily 11am weather briefing (*le meteo*) today's thermals would start when the ground temperature reached 34°C, and the maximum would be 37°C.

Bird-spotting expedition with Richard and Tom around the back of the Pic de Bure, over the Col de Noyer and back via main roads through Gap and Veynes. We didn't find any choughs, alpine swifts or eagles, but the mountain roads are spectacular around the Col de Noyer. On the way up we stopped in a layby overlooking a gorge so deep it made me want to hold on to the car as I peered over the railings into the depths. When we got to the top the notice said *Route difficile sur 6km* and they weren't joking. Steep descents, rocks on the roads, a hundred hairpins and dizzying views over flimsy parapets. Oo-er!

Later among the pine forests Richard was excited by the brief glimpse of a brown crow-sized bird which he thought was a nutcracker. He'd never seen one before. I'd never even heard of it before.

After the usual bread and cheese lunch I was launched about 2pm. The aerotow onto the hill just north of the airfield was so rough it was barely controllable. Trying to gain height above the tree-covered slopes I was gradually losing out, so I turned away from the hill in an isolated good bit so that I could start circling.

A fairly slow climb up to operational height (8000ft or so) then followed Richard in his PIK-20 eastwards to Gap and the gorgeously blue *Lac de Serre-Ponçon*. At the eastern end of the lake near Mt Guillaume (8300ft) Richard encountered a lot of sink, so I played things carefully and gradually climbed to the highest point of the day - 12,000ft give or take 50ft. I could hardly believe I was flying so high amid such breathtaking scenery.

After flying back via Gap and then southwards over Sisteron, I joined up with Richard again for the last push of the day towards St Auban airfield, which is huge. The sky was going very blue, and we began a long glide towards home.

Over the U-shaped Mont de St Genis, I demonstrated my flatland mentality by going for the cumulus over the middle, which was intensely worrying as the sink on the way was clutching and I could see craggy ridges on both sides rising up to grab me. Richard, on the other hand, demonstrated his mountain mentality by diving for the sunny slope to get the inevitable thermal off the hot rock. We both got home in the end, landing about 6pm in calm conditions.

The bird I recorded by moonlight the other night sings all day too. At first I thought it was some sort of pipit, but now I'm convinced it is a woodlark. I'd never heard or seen one before.

Apart from the flying and the bird life, this area would be paradise for anyone interested in wild flowers or butterflies. At one high mountain pass we saw alpine meadows straight out of *Gardeners World*. Protruding rocks covered with lichens, tight grasses and literally millions of tiny flowers of all colours bursting from every crevice, so many you could hardly avoid stepping on them. The butterflies are everywhere, particularly Red Admirals, Marbled Whites, blues, browns and Skippers. We also found large caterpillars boldly marked in red, yellow and black, later identified as those of the Spurge Hawk Moth.

The crickets are fascinating too. There are at least five or six different kinds here. The loudest, which make a noise like a circular saw cutting ceramic tiles, are bright bluish-green, the size of your little finger, and fly between the treetops. I tried to record them but my microphone doesn't cope too well with such a harsh sound.

Barbecue this evening again, spotting satellites and teaching star constellations. I took Anne, Keith, Robert and Hazel down the forest path in search of glow-worms. It turned into a hilarious expedition in the dark, but we found a few, like little green stars glowing in the turf.

Heard the nightjar again, much closer this time, out on the airfield rim amongst the conifers and scrub.

"Will you crew for me at weekends?" he asked, knowing that if he had 515 I'd have nothing to fly.

"Of course," I said, trying to hide any hint of wanting to keep a strict eye on my half of the glider. But within a few days I had to withdraw from the first Sunday. Suddenly remembered (fortunately) that it was my wife's birthday. Can you imagine the trauma if I had upped and gone to Enstone while she was still in bed contemplating cards and pressies? As it was I was sacrificing attendance at mother-in-law's anniversary celebrations on Saturday, so I hoped John appreciated what I was giving up to be in attendance on him.

The first day was clearly flyable so we rigged with a refreshing lack of acrimony, filled it with water and parked it on the runway amid several million pounds worth of carbon fibre and microchips, before going to briefing. Spread the maps out. Not one but two. Because the one I was detailed to mark up was the neater, that secured the honour of being carried on the flight.

Whether the task setter got carried away by the presence of the great George Lee to do the opening honours, or whether he

thought we might as well start with a bang, we will never know, but the first task was over 500km. *Now, be considerate to the pilot I thought. Don't hitch up the trailer until he's actually airborne.*

Off they went and as usual the radio gave away nothing – not that our set can transmit over more than 5km anyway. The time came when they should be back. Not a sign of them. The tannoy started a monotonous broadcast of "Will the crew of *so and so* please come to control." Trailer traffic began heading off the airfield. Well, at least I was all ready.

The call came. What a pilot! What a syndicate partner! What consideration! A 500km task and he manages to land near Towcester, on the doorstep comparatively speaking.

Jack did the honours for John on Sunday while I had a dutiful day during which gliding or anything to do with it was mentioned on pain of a severely burnt dinner.

I called into Enstone each evening after work when a task had been flown. Tuesday was terrific. I calculated that the first back should arrive at about 5.30pm. Sure enough, a couple of gliders with

enormous spans streaked over the finish line and shortly afterwards a small one arrived. *A club glider local soaring?* I wondered. Hells bells, it's John! He'd shown a clean pair of heels to many a better glider and won the day in the handicapped class.

The other evenings I called in were not as exciting but at least he didn't land out. He saved that for the weekend when I was crewing again.

Saturday: a despondent John set off on another long task needing a miracle to regain the glory of Tuesday. Some got back. The tannoy called. Control gave me the piece of paper with the bad news on it. Bugger the co-ordinates – where's he landed? Market Harborough? That's miles and miles away. Couldn't have been further away. What's more there are storms brewing all around.

Oh well, might as well set off. I'm not the only one. The glider looked wet and lonely in the very rough stubble field. In the cockpit was a hastily scrawled note, still damp from the downpour but not scorched from the lightning: "Gone to the village."

What a bloke!

EXTRACTS FROM ENSTONE EAGLES NEWSLETTERS

(Issues 10 and 11)

The EEGC lease restricts the areas of Enstone airfield which they can use. They no longer have rigging areas adjacent to the east or west launch point. The old north-south runway should be used for rigging private gliders and the gliders, once rigged, should be towed to the appropriate launch point. If the north-south runway is used for flying, rig on the west part of the grass strip.

Although rigging is not allowed, and trailers cannot be parked, on areas not assigned to EEGC, nevertheless these areas can still be treated as reserve landing areas, as before.

Note that the launch point control caravan is always positioned at the edge of the grass strip, in line with the launch point. No cars or gliders are to be parked ahead of the caravan.

Ken Sparkes, EEGC chairman for the past 9 years, has stood down due to pressure of work. He has BGA commitments and has been elected onto the International Gliding Commission. He has been given honorary life membership of the club.

During the club's 3-day Open Weekend on the Spring bank holiday, 180 Air Experience flights were achieved. A lot of effort goes into these weekends including catering and road signs. It is a pity that we aren't allowed to do something similar.

One article in issue 11 describes an aerotow in a Grunau Baby, an open-cockpit strutted glider about fifty years old with a maximum L/D of 17:1 at 33kt (about 60% of K-8 performance). The aerotow was "interesting" with it coming off the ground at about 25kt, then the stick was moved progressively forward almost to the stop before the tug became airborne. The tow was manageable but with very high stick forces (no elevator trim).

The author relates out-climbing a DG-100 by circling inside it, but with an inter-thermal speed of 45kt at less than 15:1 performance it was a real struggle to get to the next thermal. A real insight into the skill the early pilots must have had, in doing 50km flights and more, in gliders like these.

In issue 10 there is another lengthy article by David Carter, this time concerning the Hamilcar tank-carrying glider from World War 2. One of the largest wooden aircraft ever put into production, the Hamilcar had a span of 110ft (33.5m) and the tip of the rudder was 27ft off the ground. It had a total load capacity of 9 tons, and although designed for tanks and Bren Gun carriers, it was also used to transport other equipment such as bulldozers and Bailey bridge sections.

A total of 412 Hamilcars were built, but the only complete one left is at the Museum of Army Transport at Beverley, Humberside, although David Carter says it is "now in need of considerable repair." The article runs to several pages and is totally fascinating. The editor has a copy which can be borrowed if anybody is interested.

The new editor of the EEGC Newsletter will be Steve Veness. As some of you may know, Steve is disabled, but flies his Open Cirrus using a hand rudder conversion by Tony Cox.

THE LOWS AND HIGHS OF MARCH

Richard H.

Many glider pilots are of the opinion that the soaring season doesn't start until at least April, but I have frequently had good thermal flights earlier than that.

17 March 1994 was certainly good by even midsummer standards. A ridge of high pressure following a cold front overnight, with 20kt north-west wind. Classic. Upwind to the Long Mynd, perhaps?

Takeoff in the PIK at about 12.30, engine off over Lidstone in a six-knotter up to cloudbase at 4500ft (QNH throughout). 2.45-ish finds me getting a bit low 10km short of the Mynd with Wenlock Edge below.

Ah, now. Wenlock Edge is a low (200ft) straight ridge over 10 miles long stretching from Craven Arms to Much Wenlock. I have flown over it many times and had promised myself that one day I would soar it. Having had lots of fun on Edge Hill ridge recently I reckoned it should work quite well, although a little lower than Edge Hill.

Lots of good fields at the bottom of the ridge so I let down gently into the hill lift which held me at 400 – 500ft above the ridge top. The southern 3 or 4 miles was a bit unreliable due to turbulence from the hills upwind, but the northern end was very smooth and predictable.

OK, let's go a bit lower and faster. 80kt, 200ft above the hill, slow up at the end and back up to 500ft, no problem. Now the fun bit – 100kt plus for five miles, wonderful. Chandelle at the end and back along, not so fast or low going south into sun but "down sun" is great!!

Half an hour of this and I've had enough. The concentration is fairly demanding. Running south at 80 – 90kt the wings suddenly flex as I hit a thermal. Pull up hard, turning at the same time I (luckily) centre straight into 6kt lift and climb away from the ridge.

Just relaxing nicely when suddenly at about 3000ft a Tornado F3 roars past about 100yd away. *That was a bit close for comfort* but he's long gone and it's time to get back to Enstone. Downwind and lots of 6kt lift, home in less than an hour.

Well, that was fun. For me, *that's* what it's all about.

Seven days later – I'm at work but not too busy. The sky looks superb with streets of beautiful Cu and a brisk westerly wind.

The plan: upwind to Wales, hook into wave in the mountains as the thermals die and a fast downwind home run from 8 or 10 thousand feet.

I get to the airfield at about 12.30. Derek has a 14-foot grin on his face. He's just been up to 10,000ft in wave, in a Grob 109, within 10 miles of Enstone. *Thinks: perhaps there's no need to go to Wales. If a Grob can get 10 grand, what about the PIK?*

O₂ from car to PIK, bum into PIK, PIK into the air took at least 8 minutes. Shut off beneath superb Cu near Barford St John at 2500ft, good 8kt climb to 4500ft cloudbase. Wind is very strong at this height but forward under the street is no problem. 80 – 90kt with no height lost.

Looking at the cloud shadow on the ground, the upwind edge of the cloud street is stationary, a very good wave indicator. Reaching the end of the street the cloud is just raggy bits of Cu, not a straight edge, but lift continues in clear air. The air is very turbulent with lift ranging from 2 down to 4 up, but a net gain is maintained until at about 5000ft it goes smooth with a steady 3 to 4 up.

The transition from thermal to wave is always a most rewarding achievement and the cloud tops falling away beneath me still gives me a buzz. Six thousand, seven thousand, eight. *How high is the airway base here?* FL85. Oh well, it will probably be better upwind anyway.

From this height I can make out the shape of the wave system as the Cu streets are being broken into wedge shapes, and there seems to be another system near Moreton-in-Marsh. Jumping wave bars always costs a lot more height than one expects. I leave at 80kt and it doesn't look too bad until I hit the down. Then 100kt, down below cloudbase again about 5 miles short of Moreton but the streets are still working and it is not difficult to get upwind to the leading edge again.

Bonus, another thermal to wave transition and this one is going a

treat. I hear on the radio that someone is at 12,000ft in the lee of the Black Mountains and the clever chaps with GPS say the wind is 50kt at 10,000ft.

I don't expect more than about 10 or 11 thousand at this point if they're only at 12 in Wales, but climbing at a steady 5kt gets me to 11000ft PDQ.

The lift reduces to 2kt at this height over the Foss Way. I push into wind at about 65kt and pick back up to 4kt lift. Serious stuff. Time to put on the oxygen. 13000ft, climbing at 5kt – amazing!

A good steady ride up to 17,000ft and the lift drops off. I hunt around, forwards and backwards. I reckon the wind is 65kt indicated, that's 85kt true air speed!

Slowly wind up to 17,800ft and that looks about it. I like round numbers, so I hoik the stick back and use my 65kt to gain the extra 200ft – no problem. 18,000ft over the Cotswolds, incredible!

I push forward again as far as Tewkesbury (losing 12,000ft in the process) but don't find anything as good as the big one. Radio battery had packed up so I didn't immediately hear how high they got in Wales. I was later told it was 25,000ft.

What made it so good?

1. A considerable wind increase with height. 25kt on the ground and 85kt at 18,000ft.
2. Temperature inversion. Ground level temperature about 10°C. Good convection up to cloudbase would indicate a rapid drop to about 2°C (I didn't look). Probably got warmer again up to 8 or 9 thousand. Temperature at 15,000ft was -10°C, and a rapid fall to -20°C at 18,000ft. Yes, it was a bit chilly up there!
3. The weather chart showed straight isobars with an approaching warm front. Classic wave conditions.

To the best of my knowledge no-one has been higher in a glider in this area in wave. If you know different, please let me know what I have to beat!

The swifts are gone now for another year, off on their annual "out-and-return" flights to Timbuktu. Their screaming cries around the rooftops of our towns and villages are gone until next summer. Although British by birth, they spend only about one third of their lives in this country, roughly the months of May to August. If you see small black birds darting rapidly around your thermal with erratic movements, these are almost certain to be swifts catching their insect food.

The adult plumage is actually very dark brown, not quite black, with a barely visible whitish throat patch, although juveniles can be smoky grey in colour. They live virtually all their lives in the air and are supremely adapted for continuous flight. Long primary feathers and short inner wings create a slender scythe-like shape. Their short forked tails are usually closed to minimise drag. Swallows and martins are superficially similar but have pale underparts, shorter wings and less rapid flight.

For the swift, flight is almost effortless. They feed and drink on the wing, probably only touching the ground when nesting. During this period they may roost normally at night, but otherwise they appear to sleep in the air. Flocks can sometimes be seen rising to great heights at dusk in preparation for a short summer night of dozing glides, waiting for the morning when the insects rise again.

Consequently their legs are almost useless. They cannot stand, walk or perch like other birds do. But their feet can grip strongly, and all four toes can point forwards to help them cling to vertical surfaces. Their favoured nesting places are holes under the eaves of high buildings such as churches. Young swifts, on leaving the nest for the first and only time, must have a vertical drop to become airborne. If found on the ground they can be re-launched by hand, but how long they survive after such a shock is debatable.

Newly fledged young swifts head south in autumn, without their parents, and may remain on the wing non-stop for the next three years until they reach breeding age. They live for 10 years or more, during which they may fly more than a million miles, eating up to 10,000 insects a day.

As pilots we view the idea of flight as a pleasant diversion from our ground-based habitat. It seems strange to think of an existence where the air itself is the natural habitat. To a swift *terra firma* is full of dangers, yet providing the necessary support for eggs and young until the power of flight is acquired. They don't need the ground for anything else.

NOTES FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Compiled by Tony Boyce

The Club fell foul of the Commanding Officer in April when it held a social event without obtaining his approval. An apology was made to him. It must be remembered that RAFSPA needs to be consulted about flying matters on a daily basis whereas the Station Commander needs to be consulted about other matters concerning the airfield.

It proved necessary to re-state the rules concerning the hiring of Club gliders. An aircraft which has been hired cannot be flown from Weston. If it is brought back early the hirer forfeits the remaining charge. However, if it is utilised by other Club members, a rebate will be considered by the Committee on application.

The Committee agreed to reimburse members for purchased items but not for time or travelling expenses. However, it was prepared to review this in the light of individual circumstances. The Committee would not agree to reimbursement of substantial expenditure unless it had been approved by the Committee in advance.

The Committee is seeking a volunteer as a new Ground Equipment Officer.

The increase in price of casual trial flights to £20 was discussed following concern expressed by members. The price was eventually reduced to £15 once more, after some comparison with rates charged by other clubs. Instructors were reminded that air experience flights carried a maximum duration of 20 minutes.

The accident to the K-13 was discussed at some length. Everyone on the airfield was urged to keep their eyes open for potential hazards and to do something about them. The cost of repairs was over £3000 in this instance.

The Treasurer had been trying to reduce the arrears list and to obtain late subscriptions. The Committee regarded very seriously the use the Club as a credit facility by some individuals. Any member who has not paid their subscription by the date set in the Club Constitution would not be a member, would not be insured and therefore would not be allowed to fly.

A new four-stroke grass mower has been purchased and private owners are urged to use it in order to tidy up the trailer park. This machine uses unleaded petrol.

A new bar store is to be constructed in the southwest corner of the hangar with access from the outside to permit deliveries.

The jacking device on the winch had been damaged. It is not meant to support the weight of the winch when in use. The pin must be inserted once the winch has been set up.

The Treasurer had forecast about £1800 in the bank and £7000 in the Site Trust Fund at the end of the Club's financial year in September.

The Secretary had taken up the problem of the long grass with the MoD. They had eventually replied that our complaints should be addressed to the Commanding Officer at WoG (whose Warrant Officer already knew of our concerns). An attempt is to be made to meet the CO and the contractor to try to prevent a recurrence.

The wearing of headphones for listening to music while flying was deplored by the Committee. In the interests of safety pilots must listen out on 130.1Mhz whilst in the vicinity of WoG.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

As you may have noticed, the current blue and white Club membership card no longer carries our correct telephone number. The existing stock of cards will be used until next year when all telephone numbers in the country will be changed by the addition of an extra digit. New cards will probably be designed and printed at that time.

For future reference the Club telephone numbers are:

Clubhouse

0869 343265

Launch point

0836 773210

Extracts from AQUILA FLYER

Pilots up to Bronze standard had the opportunity to "fly in" to a farmer's field near Silverstone after a short cross-country hop from Hinton. The field chosen was large enough for aerotowing, so several sorties could be made during the day. Could we do this?

Aquila club members made their fifth annual expedition to the Bowland Forest GC at Chipping, near Preston in Lancashire. Chairman of this club is Bob Pettifer, who also happens to be the BGA's Northern Regional Examiner. One Aquila member gained his AEI rating during the visit.

The arrangement of hills in the locality of Chipping allows ridge soaring in most wind directions, and wave when conditions permit. Paragliders and hang gliders are also active in the area.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ENGINE No. 4 ?

It was Inter Club League weekend at Weston-on-the-Green, and there were a few teething problems to be overcome, but who would have known on the day!

Friday night (as usual) was fun, lots of bods enjoying the flying and they all came back to the clubhouse to enjoy the BBQ and a little of our best bitter. Behind the scenes plans were being laid for mega-eats on Saturday. My family and I (blue blood as well!) have had great fun this year. Long may it last – why not come and join us??

Any way, back to Saturday. I have to confess that I didn't go onto the field to watch the action. I was busy in Sains-

bury's and the clubhouse preparing victuals for the evening. I would like to thank Lynne [Barrett], Jane [Stone] and Annette for their help in the salad dept and Chris for slaving over a hot BBQ.

Whilst we were busy in the kitchen our children were enjoying a nice full cold paddling pool on the "terrace". Well, you will never guess what happened after we had all eaten. It was all the CFI's fault. He must have been too hot. He forced 4 burly pilots to pick him up and lay him gently in the pool. There were some very convenient water carriers lying around and a water gun was found. Hilarious – even the music was watered down!

What evening would be complete without resorting to *the blocks, the matchbox and stool*, etc. Oh, and of course *blow football*. Everyone was full of ideas for new games including Claire from Bidford who introduced us to *Lancaster Bombers* – but you'll have to ask Engine No. 4 about that!

What's to look forward to? I understand Chrissy and Chris are organising a 60's evening. Well, I'm not 60 but I'll be there. See you then or any Friday until the end of the season!

(I'm also looking forward to the fireworks, Chris W!)

Fiona Buck

WHAT HAPPENED ON AUGUST 7th ?

The first week of our annual 2 weeks of daily flying had indifferent weather except for Friday when several pilots attempted a 250km task around Worcester and the Cotswolds. Unfortunately the weather to the west wasn't so good, but locally later on the clouds went up a bit and climbs to 8,500ft were possible.

The forecast for the weekend of 6/7 August was good, but Saturday turned out very disappointing with total cover of wishy-washy grey stuff in the morning. The Standard class National competition at Bicester also began on this day, with Gordon Craig and Cris Emson competing.

It gradually became soarable in mid-afternoon, and the Bicester pilots were flung off into the blue – er – grey, protesting loudly. At one point there were at least 30 of them struggling to stay airborne in one thermal over Bicester launch point. The persistence award went to *Zulu Eight* who had 4 launches at £16 a time, then landed back and calmly informed the finish line that he hadn't completed the task! Nearly everyone else landed out near Bedford.

Gordon's fine stubble field at Bromham was also used by three other gliders and looked like a gliding site when the retrieve crews arrived. We mourned the good thermal going to waste in the chewed-up straw beneath our feet. The friendly farmer had been chatting to Gordon about the good old days when it could be burnt. It costs him £20 an acre to plough it in, so 500 acres = £10,000 of additional cost which he didn't have before. So now you know why bread costs so much. The chip shop at Bromham was difficult to find, but Tony Boyce demonstrated skilful U-turns and reversing with the trailer, and it was well worth the effort!

If you had to imagine the perfect gliding day at Weston, what would it be like? Sunny with shallow cumulus dotted all over the sky at 5000ft, each giving 6 knots plus? Wind just enough to keep the

parachutists at bay, but not enough to worry the K-8 pilots? Short grass at the launch point, no launch hassles and a modest flying list so you don't have to wait long for a flight? It couldn't happen, could it?

Well, it did happen on Sunday 7th August. The weather was absolutely booming. Where was everybody? Only two private syndicates rigged (147 and BNK) and Club gliders were parked due to lack of custom. John Gordon came down after an Acro flight raving about "the best day I've ever flown." Where were all the budding Silver C pilots and the ones who want dual cross-countries? You can hear them now, complaining about what a duff season it's been. How much better does the weather have to get?

The Bicester Nationals pilots had an overly modest task of 200km on this day and were delaying their starts until they judged the best part of the afternoon had begun. By 4.30pm they were finishing half a dozen at a time and Bicester airfield looked like Arnhem re-visited.

The second week at Weston began well with another good day on Monday. Peter Awcock (K-8) and Chris Woodcock (Cirrus) both did 5-hr flights, although no cross-country tasks were flown. Once again cloudbase was around 5000ft, and the Monday turnout at the Club was somewhat better than it had been on Sunday. The Bicester crowd flew 320km mostly around the Welsh borders.

The weather for the rest of the week was poor due to a slow moving depression over the southeast of the country. The doom merchants were confounded, however, when this miraculously cleared away on Friday night to give undoubtedly the best weekend of the year. If you didn't fly on 13/14 August you missed a treat.

On Saturday Phil Hawkins, flying the Mini-Nimbus, celebrated the first anniversary of his north-south 500km

around Salisbury and Lincoln with an east-west 500km around Ely cathedral and Talybont reservoir (near Talgarth). The eastern part of the task was most excellent shallow cumulus with lots of dolphins, whilst the western half was more *climb-and-glide* with cloud flying including a 7000ft climb to final glide height beyond Cheltenham.

Andy Butterfield (K6e) flew around Aston Down and the Long Mynd to claim his Diamond Goal, and Brian Payne (DG-100) also completed this task. Steve "Tulip" Porat landed at the Long Mynd, only to find the club's 60th anniversary celebrations were about to begin, with their own brand beer, brass band in the hangar and a fireworks display! His epic retrieve by Chris Buck and Paul Rogers didn't get back to Oxford until 4am.

Sunday 14th August didn't look quite as promising at first, but developed rapidly into another booming day. Phil Hawkins and Martin Cooper flew to Husbands Bosworth and back in the Acro, Carol Oakes visited Bury St Edmunds in her Cirrus, various other flights around the Cotswolds were made, and Ken Coble did his first solo.

On Saturday the Bicester competitors had a 460km task, and they all got round. Sunday's task was 510km, and again all 45 pilots got round, the first 25 beating the previous UK record. This was our CFI's first 500km.

There were two more good weekends before the end of the season. On August 21 there were a number of 300km flights made, meanwhile your editor was enjoying a weekend break at Talgarth. The Bank Holiday weekend on 27-29 August was too windy for the parachutists but not too windy to prevent Nicola Field, Steve McGurdy and Nick Bown from going solo. Richard Carter did a 50km flight to Husbands Bosworth, where the Inter Club Final competition was being held. But that's another story....

OXFORD GLIDING CLUB FIREWORK EXTRAVAGANZA

12th November

Those of you who attended last year's display will know what to expect – a really excellent professional standard of event orchestrated by John Fox, a master pyrotechnician. 1994 promises bigger fireworks, louder bangs and an *orgasmic finale!*

£8 per adult

Kids under 16 – £1.50

What do you get? A b----- good display and as much food as you can eat, including Chris Woodcock's home made, painted and internationally famous ring slinger ¼lb pure camelburger.

Round up some friends and neighbours, the more the merrier...

BUT

Tickets **must** be purchased in advance from Chris Woodcock or from behind the bar, by Sunday 30th October. OGC members are requested to modify their traditional tight fisted habits (Haste!) and book up front.

Letters



Colin White writes from New Zealand:

"Still flying at the local club 60 miles away with odd weekend jaunts flying away at places such as Wanganui and Paraparaumu. The former is the local civil airport that no longer has an active control tower. It seemed strange to do glider approaches intermixed with the odd small civil airliner.

"The Paraparaumu 300km record in hill lift still stands at 2hr 5min – I suppose it will get broken one day but it means flying in turbulent hill lift at over 100kt. It's a rough ride!"

In a reference to the editor's years of association with the Club, Colin also writes *"I was shocked to learn that you have been gliding 20 years. I still clearly remember flying with you when you were training, and some of your little quirks."*

Now, what can he mean by that?

CFI's TURN...

Morning Briefings

This year we have tried for the first time to introduce the concept of morning briefings. The idea was that at 9.30 every weekend morning, we would hold a Met briefing, followed by tasks for those interested in XC flying. I think this has been reasonably successful, given that it is the first year of trying. We have been hampered somewhat by the fax machine being unable to receive the Met faxes in a reliable way. However, I am keen that we continue with this exercise.

For the winter months, rapidly approaching, I intend to continue the morning briefings. Mainly this will consist of the Met briefing at 9.30am, followed by flying. I would hope as many people as possible can get to the airfield by this time, as it means on the shorter days we can start flying that much earlier. Having a forecast available in the morning means that on marginal days, a quick phone call to the Club at 9.30 will help to decide whether to go flying or not.

However, do bear in mind that if nobody turns up on non-flying days, the Club will slowly grind to a halt because none of the jobs around the hangar and workshop will get done.

In this way, I hope we can make better use of days that start bad, but improve to give perfectly flyable afternoons.

Duty Pilots

This is always a controversial issue, but it is worth repeating the duties of the Duty Pilot, to make sure everyone knows what they are supposed to do. Most, if not all, Duty Pilots this year have done an excellent job, for which I thank them. Those that did not turn up for their duty days should remember that we either had a poorly run operation, or someone else had to cover, meaning twice as much work for them. This is hardly fair on the keen members, so if your rota day comes up, make sure you attend or swap with someone else.

Duty Pilot Responsibilities

1) The Duty Pilot is running the operation ON BEHALF of the Duty Instructor. To make sure that every-

one knows who that person is, the Duty Pilot should wear the orange jacket.

2) The Duty Pilot launches gliders – ensures someone connects the cable, the winch driver knows what glider is next, RAFSPA are called – IN THAT ORDER.

3) Only the Duty Pilot does the signalling – either using the remote signal box or by relaying to the log keeper using arm signals. Only exceptionally should the Duty Pilot allow anyone else to signal the launch (e.g. if the glider is some distance from the launch point vehicle).

4) The Duty Pilot DOES NOT hold the wing and use the signal box at the same time!

5) The Duty Pilot should remain in earshot of the RAFSPA radio, so he or she will always know the situation with respect to parachute dropping.

Instructor Hours

A quick reminder that all instructors must give me their instructor hours up to the end of September. I will send out a form shortly, but you should make sure now that you have all your hours to hand.

Cris Emson

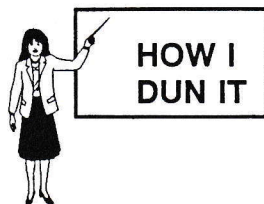
Final Glide is produced using WordPerfect 5.1 software and printed on a Canon LBP-4 laser printer. Photocopying facilities kindly provided by Norman Machin and his staff.

Distributed free to members, ex-members and friends of the Oxford Gliding Club. Contributors to this issue were: Tony Boyce, Fiona Buck, Dick Carter, Cris Emson, Richard Hall, Phil Hawkins, Dave Weekes, Colin White and Chris Woodcock.

Contributions from members are always welcome on any subject, even if only loosely connected with the Club. "How I dun it" stories always wanted, otherwise the editor may carry out his threat to print his own.

Contacts with editors of other club magazines are also wanted, for exchange of information and articles. Promises of articles are already coming in for issue 13, which may be out around Christmas, time permitting.

If you like reading *Final Glide*, think about how you could contribute. This is your magazine. Don't let other people run it (or ruin it) for you !!



Many members will know that I have been trying to complete my Silver C for some time. My gliding days go back to 1953 when the OGC was based at Kidlington, and I went solo in a Slingsby Tutor. Later I had a share in John Ellis' Gull III for several years.

Thermals seemed too unreliable as a form of staying aloft in those days, and I had a yearning for an aircraft with a fan on the front, so I took up power flying and obtained by PPL in 1956. Powered aircraft were exciting to fly in those days, but later I became bored with flying what I call modern "armchair" aeroplanes. Also the cost became too expensive, and I gave up flying for some years.

Three years ago on a chance visit to Weston I had a flight in a K-13 with John Gibbons, and after 45min soaring was again bitten with the gliding bug, and re-joined the OGC.

In January 1994 I went to Australia where I visited Lake Keepit and got my Silver C height and five hours (*that's cheating* did I hear someone say?) Conditions there in January were excellent, and thermals were so good that it was more difficult to find sink than lift!

This brings me to the elusive 50km cross-country. On 29th August, bank holiday Monday, the weather looked promising, and I decided that this was

This pilot's 41 year gap between first flight and completed Silver badge may be some sort of Club record. However, it isn't how long it takes that matters, it's whether or not you enjoy it, and he certainly did.

the day to have a go. I said to John Gibbons that I intended to declare Aston Down, but there was a strong westerly wind blowing and John pointed out that it would be a struggle forging into wind, so I decided to go to Husband's Bosworth instead. This turned out to be a good choice as the Inter Club League Final competition was being held there, in which some OGC members were taking part, so if I made it, there would be some friendly faces to greet me.

I was launched in the Cirrus at 1pm, and I had decided that if I could get to 4000ft I would go. In the event the thermals at this time were not very good and I spent about 30min struggling up to 3700ft. Although this was short of my intended starting height, I thought *just Go For It!* I set course due north to allow for the strong crosswind, but over Brackley I was down to 2500ft and thought of a landing at Hinton. Anyway a good looking cloud just north of Brackley was beckoning and this took me to 4000ft at 5kt. This was much better and I set off again. Soon Daventry appeared on the port beam.

I pressed on until Rugby radio aerals were in sight, when I was down to 3000ft. By this time conditions were very good with many promising cumulus - it was just a case of topping up my height to 4000

feet as required. After Rugby I crossed the M1 at Watford Gap services right on track, and I realised that the flight was "in the bag."

I spotted Sten Gun lake and then Husband's Bosworth with many gliders on the ground. Here I got the best thermal of the flight and was carried at 8kt to 4000ft again. I spent some time studying the airfield as there were a lot of gliders landing and in the circuit. I made a steady approach and landed at 2.40pm after a flight of 1hr 40min. A bit slow, but no matter, I had arrived.

I was made very welcome by our members. Fiona Buck had just brewed up and offered me a very welcome coffee. It did not seem long before John Gibbons and Nils Bartleet appeared with the trailer and we soon had 579 de-rigged and stowed away ready for the journey home. We arrived back at Weston at 6.30pm, where I had the barograph trace signed by Haste (it cost me a beer!) and fixed ready to send to the BGA.

Well, that is the account of my 50km flight (it was 63km actually). Next time it will be 300km, but now I think this will have to wait until next season.

Dick Carter

QUEEN'S FLIGHT TO LEAVE BENSON

It was announced on 23 June that Benson airfield will no longer be the home of the Queen's flight. The royal aircraft have been at Benson since 1939, but are now to be moved to Northolt and merged with another squadron, including the Wessex helicopter fleet. The Queen and other royal personages will be "paying in full" for the use of these aircraft from now on, which will no longer be known as the Queen's flight. This coincides with recent debate on the cost justification of the royal train and the uncertain future of the royal yacht *Britannia*.

NEW TOWN AT UPPER HEYFORD?

The last US Air Force personnel will leave Upper Heyford in October. The air base will then officially be handed back to the Ministry of Defence, who have already confirmed that it will be "surplus to requirements." This announcement was welcomed by Cherwell District Council, who have plans to develop the site.

Some local councillors are proposing that the air base should be converted for use as a "freight airfield" on the grounds that this would create jobs very quickly. However the district council apparently believes the majority of people are against the site being used for flying, and intends to create a "technology town." over the next five years.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 19 November

8.00pm

In the briefing room
above the clubroom