

FINAL GLIDE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD GLIDING CLUB

Issue 14: October 1995

Edited by Phil Hawkins

IT WAS A "WHEATLEY" DAY

If you haven't noticed how much effort goes into organising social events at the Gliding Club, you must (like Marvin the paranoid android) have had your head in a bucket for the last few years. Apart from the workshop team who keep the gliders and ground equipment operational for the rest of us, and the Club officers who do the paperwork in the background, there are several active members who put in a great deal of thankless toil into improving the Club's facilities and generally uplifting the Club's social atmosphere.

One of these is Fiona. Even if you *have* had your head in a bucket, you must know Fiona. Party organiser, cake baker, barbecue supervisor, quaffer of Beamish, mother of Anthony and Joanne. Years ago she did some gliding but nowadays she doesn't have time. Indeed, it's hard to understand how there are enough hours in the day to do everything that she does, and she has a full time job as well.

The Club obviously owed her a flight, and she wanted to see her home at Wheatley from the air. This is the second year that the Club have allowed me to instruct in the Acro, and for some time Fiona and I had discussed whether or not there was going to be a *Wheatley Day* soon. Working on the premise that I would eventually be right, I had been regularly predicting good weather for weeks. But for most of May and June the weather varied between poor and abysmal, and my reputation as a weather guru began to wear thin.

But then July 22nd happened. What a day! The weather gods, having saved up all our credit, eventually took pity on us and blew it all on one gorgeous moment in our lives. The preceding week had been hot, dry and sultry. As far back as Wednesday rumours about a cold front for Friday had been circulating. Even at the Friday barbecue with the last remnants of frontal cloud illuminated by the setting sun and a fresher feeling to the air, my confident predictions of a boomer were met with some skepticism.

The weekend was also due to be the penultimate Inter Club League meeting, to be held at Aquila. I was booked to fly in

the League on Sunday, so I made plans to fly the Acro on Saturday. For various reasons Fiona wouldn't be free until mid-afternoon but that didn't matter. I didn't envisage any difficulty in filling the front seat for a few advanced instructional flights during the morning.

I couldn't have been more wrong. I had spent an hour patiently washing and polishing the Acro wings, under a sky that looked so good by 10am you could almost hear the thermals rumbling. Steve Evans set off on a 500km attempt before 10:30 by launching straight into a 4-knot thermal. But the launch point area was strangely quiet. Most privately owned gliders were rigged and flown, but it proved impossible to find a front seat pilot for the Acro. Even one of the K-13s was parked for a while. I was absolutely staggered. The best day of the year, probably for at least 5 years, and there weren't enough members on the airfield to fly all the gliders. Eventually John Hanlon appeared with some visitors in tow which he flew in the Acro. Slightly disgusted with this I went off

to rig the Mini-Nimbus, expecting Tom my partner to arrive at any moment.

He never did arrive, and I took off at 12:45 having marked up a 345km task to Belvoir Castle and Newbury race-course, at Graham Barrett's suggestion. Climbed to about 4,500ft straight off the winch into a dreamlike sky, and began to dolphin northwards. There were no obvious cloud streets but the clouds were so closely packed it didn't matter. One straight glide later, having passed underneath Graham who was thermalling near Towcester, I eventually descended to 2,500ft near Husbands Bosworth where I had to circle again. Circling feels like such a waste of time on a day like this. Although cloudbase was nearly 5000ft the lift was stronger in a band between 3000 and 4000, and most of my dolphining was accomplished at this sort of height. One hour after starting I was already approaching Melton Mowbray, and I arrived at the impressive Belvoir Castle about 2.05pm in glorious weather.

The return journey was almost as easy, and with slight assistance from the wind I

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OTMOOR FAIR

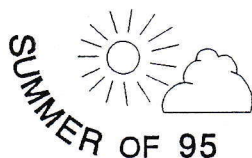
The Club mounted a static display at the Otmoor fair on September 9-10. The star attraction was the Acro two-seater which generated a lot of interest from the general public. At least two former members of the OGC renewed their acquaintance with the Club and promised to visit us again, a total of 86 discount tickets were sold together with two trial lesson vouchers, and one enthusiastic would-be member wanted to join the Club on the spot. We found to our surprise that a pilot measuring 6ft 8ins in height has more head room in the front of the Acro than the back.

The best weather was enjoyed on Saturday, with other OGC gliders circling overhead just to remind us of the good thermals we were missing! On Saturday evening we ate delicious Thai food while guarding the Acro and playing Scrabble by lamplight. After camping overnight on site we awoke on Sunday to find a grey sky that turned to rain by noon. However there was still sufficient interest to delay de-rigging the glider until 5pm.

The Otmoor site is huge and includes something for everybody: a funfair with both new and old-fashioned attractions such as a helter-skelter and coconut shy, all kinds of market stalls and crafts, show jumping, farm animals for the children and also sheep breeds and heavy horses, dog show, working steam engines of all sizes from the smallest water pump right up to ones that saw tree-trunks or crush stone or plough a field, helicopter rides, rifle shooting, clay pigeon shooting, archery, exhibitions of military vehicles from motor-bikes right up to tanks, old cars and commercial vehicles, medieval knights jousting on horseback and every kind of minority interest (including ourselves) such as the Daventry Model Boat Club and the Vintage Lawn Mower Club. Recommended for next year even if the Club doesn't participate.

The tickets we sold entitled their buyers to a £3 discount on trial lessons, and all tickets went into a prize draw on Sunday evening which was won by Mr J Catherall of Piddington near Bicester. He wins three trial lessons, and runners up R Wilson and Lawrence Kittle win two lessons and one lesson respectively. All ticket purchasers receive this issue of *Final Glide*.

Many thanks to all OGC members who turned up to help us sell tickets and talk to the public.



IT WAS A "WHEATLEY" DAY

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was approaching home base again by 3pm. I knew that Fiona had arranged with Lynne Barrett to babysit little Joanne from 3pm onwards, and I tried to call by radio to enquire whether Fiona and/or the Acro were available as planned. I wasn't surprised when no-one answered my call, but I was very surprised to find the Acro still parked at the launch point when I arrived overhead at 1,500ft. Apparently on this day of the decade there were still no takers for the Club's most prestigious machine. I gave Graham a call to say that I was abandoning the Newbury section of the task, and landed back at Weston around 3:15.

Airborne again in the Acro with Fiona a little later. She had a sensible sun hat and was bristling with cameras. A conservative slow climb to begin with, but higher up the conditions were better than ever. I didn't think it was possible, but they were. Cloudbase was now 5,700ft and I discovered that when the vario needle in the back of the Acro reaches 10 up it gets stuck and needs a tap to free itself. The audio unit in the Acro is not a particularly likeable instrument. It probably works well enough but the noises it makes are dreadful - pregnant cow in a thermal and strangled chicken means you're in sink.

We ambled over towards Wheatley, spotting Otmoor and Noke on the way, and Fiona took pictures of her home over the side. Over Wheatley I pointed out a V-tailed SHK with the identification letters ECG just above us, circling under a wispy cloud. Unbelievably, Fiona shrieked about this being her father's glider and asked me to call him on the radio. Unfortunately he wasn't answering but she photographed him as well. The last we saw of him he was heading south at high speed.

After topping up with some vigorous clouds in the Cowley and Iffley areas we flew northwards to Oxford city centre so that Fiona could take pictures of where she worked. From 5000ft the visibility was spectacular. The sunshine sparkling on the Bristol Channel was clearly seen, with the Welsh hills beyond. At the same time I could see the tower blocks in Birmingham and the Milton Keynes shopping centre.

This "advanced instructional" flight was turning into a wonderful experience, heaving this gigantic beast of a glider around the sky in brilliant sunshine and cool altitude air, with my bubbly co-pilot enjoying herself and using film like she had shares in Kodak. After Blenheim Palace (more pictures) we headed north again where we saw the EEGC Twin Astir under another cloud. We overtook him

easily in the climb and Fiona then asked if we could visit Hinton. I pointed the nose at the brown Croughton golf-balls and eventually we could see Hinton airfield on the left emerging from a cloud shadow.

We had heard several pilots finishing Club League tasks at Hinton over the radio but by the time we got there nothing much was happening on the ground except a lot of de-rigging. We saw what might have been the Skylark fuselage disappearing into its trailer but it was hard to be certain from 4000ft.

Arriving back at Weston about 5:45pm we found that they were also packing up. Graham asked me to land up near the winch which I did. He had completed the 345km task with no trouble, and whilst Fiona and I were walking back across the airfield we also saw Steve Evans finishing his 500km in a time of 7½ hours.

The Club had made a fine effort at the League meeting, with wins by Cris Emson and John Gordon, and a second place by Chris Woodcock. One of the Aquila members had flown the first ever 500km from that site. Barry Taylor flew a K-8 from Weston to Lasham for his silver distance badge. Many 750km flights were made from Bicester, Lasham and elsewhere, and the first 1000km flight in the UK was also made (from Bicester) on this epic day. Even after 8pm the cloud bottoms were winking with soaring gliders.

Eleven of us rounded off the day with a communal takeaway meal, yet another of Fiona's delicious ideas. She phoned her father to complain about him not listening to the radio, but apparently it wasn't him flying ECG today. Shame! Another cool evening with the stars shining crisply on the airfield.

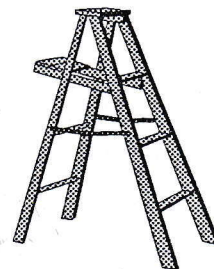
The weather on Sunday was also good (I flew 270km in the Inter Club League) so the weekend as a whole was very successful, but I shall remember the Wheatley Day for a very long time.

Phil Hawkins

WANTED

for the clubhouse and office

Cooker
Freezer
CD player
VHS Video player
Water pistol cabinet
Office chairs
Filing cabinets
Carpets
Scrap wood for BBQ
Good homes for 2 children
(apply to Fiona)



1994-95

Howard Stone is the current ladder champion. "I really went for it this year" he said. Initial results suggested that Graham Barrett had won for the second year in a row but a re-measured flight meant that he was beaten into second place by some 300 points. Cris Emson took third place.

Steve Evans made the only 500km flight this year, on "that day" 22nd July. A good total of 22 other flights of 300km or more were made, including four each by both Howard and Graham.

The fastest handicap speed was recorded by Cris Emson on 31st July flying from Gransden Lodge on a 137km out and return flight to HB - an impressive 121.5kph. He also achieved 107kph on a 318km flight from Gransden on 3rd August (this was the highest scoring flight of the season at 2,505pts). Martin Hastings recorded 104kph on a 114km flight from Hinton on 22nd July.

Here are a few Club statistics about "that day": 8 cross-country flights were logged by 7 pilots with a total distance of 2,064km and a total flight time of 29hrs. Of course many more hours were flown by local soarsers.

Officially we just missed 20,000km this year with a total of 19,739 but unofficially we were well over this figure. So to those pilots who didn't bother to enter their flights in the cross-country book - thanks for nothing. Certainly some pilots made big efforts in this department, particularly "Haste" who entered 14 flights right down to a 35km outlanding in the Acro, and including a flight entered as 410km which was actually around 275km - nice try, Haste. Phil Hawkins went in for quantity rather than quality, entering 17 flights totalling 3,064km. Ten of these 17 flights were in the Acro ranging from 58km up to 209km.

Only 18 pilots submitted flights this year which is 5 less than last year and the lowest number since 1991. Please, can we do better next year? It doesn't matter if you are at or near the bottom of the ladder. The important thing is that we have an accurate picture of our pilots' cross-country achievements.

Next year's ladder began on 1st October, so pilots visiting wave sites since then should bear in mind that a 15,000ft gain of height is worth 1,000 points.

NOTES FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Compiled by Barry Taylor

A new computerised payment system is to be introduced as the current system is proving difficult to reconcile and regularly produces inconsistencies. When paying for flights, members will place their cash or cheques in a small envelope and write their name and the date on the front. A small administration office is to be constructed on the first floor and a computer is to be obtained for processing the data from the log sheets. Masters of all club stationery will also be stored on the computer.

There have recently been a considerable number of unpaid trial lessons. To prevent this from re-occurring, a new system is to be introduced whereby anyone taking a trial lesson will be required to purchase a ticket when they fill in the Temporary Membership application form. The ticket is to be presented immediately prior to flying. Trial lesson certificates are being produced, and will be kept in the caboose. These will be signed and presented to visitors on request.

Ground schooling for the bronze paper took place earlier in the year, with several members subsequently taking the paper.

It is proposed that one of the flying weeks during 1996 will be used for cross country training and will include lead and follow exercises.

A new incentive scheme has been introduced to boost membership, whereby any member introducing a new member to the club will qualify for 5 launch vouchers.

A maintenance day was planned to take place during September, although a club expedition resulted in the event being rescheduled to the following spring.

Thame Scouts held an 'Air Camp' on the airfield during the weekend of 12-13th August. Twelve Scouts participated, and two flights were arranged for each. Although some delays were experienced on the Sunday due to an instructor shortage, the weekend was considered to have been considered a success, and the Scouts have expressed a desire to repeat the event next year.

Two static displays were arranged during the summer. The first was at the Weston on the Green village fete and the second at the Otmoor Show. Both were considered to have been very successful and attracted a number of new members. Club funds also benefited from the sale of trial lessons.

Steve Evans attended a meeting arranged by the BGA to discuss the allocation of lottery proceeds for sports organisations. It was reported that up to 12 months of planning and a good business plan would be required for a grant application. Applications must apply to specific projects and must be considered to benefit the overall community. Two Scottish gliding clubs have already obtained grants, and the BGA have recently received £23250 for the purchase of a Puchacz. The committee are currently investigating possible projects.

CFI's TURN...



It is now the end of the season - but what a good year it has been! We have had excellent weather, especially the latter half of the year, and I think everyone has had a lot of fun. We have also been on very good terms with RAFSPA, with no real problems arising through the year. I have found them to be very helpful, and with the flexibility allowed us in our launching, I have not noticed any real hold-ups in the launch line. I welcome further discussion on our relationship with RAFSPA at the forthcoming AGM.

John Gibbons retires

It may have come to your attention that we have now lost our most experienced instructor. John Gibbons retired from instructing at the end of September, hopefully to carry on his own personal flying. You may still have the chance to fly with John as he will continue to fly with post-solo pilots on an occasional basis. I am sure everyone will join me in thanking him for all his efforts over many years instructing. John first joined the Club in 1951 and was awarded honorary life membership four years ago.

Bronze Badge changes

Finally I will mention that there will

be changes to the Bronze Badge, to be introduced in the New Year. Rumours may start spreading, so I shall outline the changes here, although I will say more about it in the next issue. The Bronze Badge in fact remains the same, but it is no longer a licence to fly cross-country (not that it ever was!) There will now be a Cross Country Endorsement to the Bronze Badge which must be obtained before cross country clearance is granted.

The endorsement requires the following:

- a) A soaring flight of 1 hour.
- b) A soaring flight of 2 hours.
- c) Field selection, landing and navigational flights.

The third requirement would normally be carried out in a motor glider, either in a single flight or more if required/desired.

It is only after the endorsement has been obtained that pilots may apply for cross country clearance - to be obtained from the CFI. Without this, no pilot may leave gliding range of the airfield from which he/she was launched!

MEMBERSHIP LIST

The list with this copy of *Final Glide* is up to date as at 28th October. However there are currently 4 new members whose addresses we don't know, and who may not receive AGM notification for this reason.

There are two methods by which new members' addresses should get onto the club's computer list, and neither of them seem to be working very well. First, the application form filled out by the person concerned should be passed to the Treasurer along with the cash paid on the day they joined. But half the time they don't. PLEASE make an effort to ensure that these forms don't go astray.

Second, new members should be asked to sign the blue book which is kept in the red cash box at the launch point. Only eleven have done so this year, but there have been far more new members than that. If you are at the launch point when a new member pays up, don't forget to ask them to sign the book.

Cris Emson

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WOG

Mike O'Neill



With a wife and 3 small kids, RAF shutdown weeks are my only chance to get cleared for solo flying and do a bit of soaring. With such restricted flying, I need to make the best of what time I do get. I also get the urge to write it up so that I have something to read and re-read as a reminder of what it is that brings me back to gliding, year after year. So here goes....

Saturday 12th - Drove down from Manchester to Weston and arrived to find the northeast corner of the airfield covered with a plague of gliders and deckchairs. Everyone was out enjoying a break from the heatwave with a pleasant breeze accompanying a passing weak cold front and attendant clouds. Got checked out the K13 including a 60min soaring flight with Andy Butterfield when we were joined in a 6 knot thermal by what seemed like all of the Open Class Nationals. Talk about busy. Neil Swinton in K6E 577 made it downwind to Milton Keynes before landing out. Haste and Lynne Jones in the Acro landed out near Banbury. Haste was both pi**ed and off on his return from a Banbury hostelry to WOG. We'll have to start calling Lynne "Landout Lynne" if he continues to keep company like this. I don't think anyone did any serious cross-country flying. Anthony Buck and his scout troop had a wonderful day with many of them having a good local soar in Daisy. Its good to see youngsters get such a great introduction to gliding.

Sunday 13th - The cold front disappointed us by failing to depart smartly and instead leaving behind too much moist cool air and consequent over-convection and spreadout. Finding a thermal off the launch proved a bit of a lottery but after helping Paul Morrison to smoke a barograph and put it in the K8 before launching, he was rewarded with a Silver Height climb, subject to ratification. Chris Lee finally got cleared to fly the Astir at days end. I tried the patience of Chris Buck by finally finding a thermal and staying up until 18.45hrs when officially on a hangar flight. Bought copious beers in the bar as an apology. Got approval of all once they stopped to imagine what it was like to go a whole year without soaring. The Met. was summed up for me today by the sight of a headache ridden Hawkeye walking away from his Mini-Nimbus after struggling down to Shepton Mallett and getting back (a miracle in itself) when he wanted a 13th August hat-trick 500km flight.

Monday 14th - High pressure was becoming established. I went down and did some winching after some patient instruction from Dave Weekes. Howard

Stone & Nick Hill in the Acro were joined by Hawkeye Phil Hawkins in his Mini-Nimbus for a 300km Hungerford-Grafham Water-HB-WOG and they all finished despite imperfect weather. Dave Weekes in the Skylark did a creditable 220k in the Skylark flying WOG-Hungerford-HusBos-WOG. At the third attempt (kindly allowed me by Nicola Field, Sheila Evans and Caroline - thank you ladies) I got away in the K8 and waffled my way finally upwind to Enstone after about 55 mins. The sky was weird (all agreed later) and lift was rarely under the most obvious bit of cloud. Departing Enstone for WOG from a great height at max rough air (70 knots), I sideslipped off remaining height and just as I straightened up on base leg, bumped into such good lift that it quite upset my circuit. Looking out and then banking steeply into it, I was rewarded with a steady 8 knot climb from 500ft to 3600ft in no time at all at which point I packed up and brought the plane back for others to fly. Now I feel like I'm soaring again. Ended the day with a check flight in the Acro before renewing my acquaintance with the Astir in a 20min evening thermal.

Tuesday 15th - The sky was now all blue and I was flying the Astir. Despite early promise, the day was slow to get going with cross-country pilots reporting modest thermals to only 2500ft even at 12.30hrs. A few OGC pilots (Emson, Underhill, Payne, Stone) attempted to go cross country but returned unhappy with conditions. I had declared a 100km WOG-Didcot-Silverstone-WOG for my cross country diploma and launched in improving conditions at 14.15hrs, climbing quickly above the airfield to 3600ft and then to 4200ft over Kidlington. It seemed OK up there and I radioed down I was starting out cautiously. John Giddins in 515 beckoned me to join him over Abingdon but sink taking me to 3600ft over Oxford made me uneasy and I headed back to Weston in search of lift, but found only 6 knots down. Despite flying faster and moving across wind in case I was between blue streets, I was down to 1800ft south of Weston before contacting lift again. I abandoned the task but, after checking no-one wanted the plane, decided to fly locally for a while to try and learn more about how to fly a blue day. I had never flown in conditions

like this before and found them hard to understand. Looking for ground sources seemed to work sometimes but not always (of course not - their performance is as cyclic as it would be on a cumulus day said Hawkeye later). Upper Heyford, a reliable source in the past from my limited experience, repeatedly refused to yield a thermal. A cluster of golden crop fields northwest of the airfield seemed good and over the motorway junction was always reliable. But areas of sink were extensive and powerful and could lose you a lot of height quickly if you didn't move away fast. The problem then was where to go next and the simple answer was back to where it worked last. Hardly a recipe for making progress cross country. By 16.00hrs the areas of strong sink seemed to largely disappear and flying got easier. The thermals, which earlier had been small and bumpy, became a little broader and smoother but still seemed harder to centre and somewhat rougher to greater heights than their cumulus day cousins. I landed eventually after 3½hrs with the feeling that there had perhaps been slight streeting.

Wednesday 16th - I gave up my turn in the Astir for 100km to Barry Taylor to fly his 5hrs (which he did - well done Barry!) and instead, after doing my bit on the airfield including some dismal winching and stamping out a grass fire, took Graham Barrett's advice and hopped into K8 Foxtrot Whisky which no-one else seemed to want. The heat under the canopy was extreme and despite a superb windless launch to 1700ft from Graham I sweated buckets trying to get away in yet more blue thermals. Today was better than Tuesday though and my climb took me up to nearly 5000ft straight away. Easy I thought, until the familiar blue sink turned up again as I tried to get to Enstone. In a K8 I couldn't get out of it so fast and I was soon at 1800ft over the golden crops northwest of Weston and wondering what had hit me. Over to the motorway with mixed results and I eventually struggled back up again. In the K8, I decided, staying high was paramount so I worked thermals to 500ft short of cloudbase then moved on positively to another likely ground source (Bicester, Weston, Upper Heyford). I generally did best over Bicester,

...nton and Weston and the wind had ...ed and was now a light north- ...sterly so perhaps the alignment of ...ermals had changed. I waffled around and enjoyed some well (and some not so well) centred climbs and the sink persisted until perhaps even 17.00hrs. But climbs were to nearly 6000ft (QFE). Almost ready to come down, I found myself leaving a thermal at 5000ft over Bicester at 17.30hrs. The occasional cloud cap had popped up throughout the afternoon marking, I presumed a particularly powerful thermal but none had so far been in safe reach. Now I found myself looking at one over the motorway north east of Upper Heyford and flew straight over to investigate. Almost immediately, I found myself flying in 2-4 knots up and so I held the K8 at 33 knots to soak up what I thought would be short lived lift but which actually persisted for a good 5 minutes *en route* to the cloud. I could feel the K8 and me being wafted up as though some spirit of the celestial realm was welcoming us to a new world. I arrived at the cloud at about 5800ft where I found Hawkeye and Nick Hill in the Acro about 300ft above me and was greeted by 4-6 knots of lift requiring now a proper thermal turn. The Acro left shortly after I arrived and I climbed to 6300ft whilst studying further cloud caps towards Banbury and thinking Edgehill and home was on without any likelihood of a land-out. It was 17.45hrs when I straightened up and dolphined under each of the clouds, never in more than 2-3 knots sink between clouds and soon back in good lift as I approached each cap. 15 minutes later I was atop Edgehill without ever having been lower than 5000ft. To guarantee a fast return I climbed in 4-5 knots to 6000ft before turning for Weston and trimming to 65 knots. 12 minutes later I was turning finals at Weston having had to dump 1000 feet in a sideslip on arrival. What a flight!

Thursday 17th - A persistent cold and the exertions of the previous 3 days caught up with me and I rested. I gather though that was a local soaring only day with climbs limited to around 4000ft, few clouds and a moderate breeze.

Friday 18th - I rejoined the fray hoping to try for my 100km diploma in the Astir but was beaten to it by Howard Stone who wanted to fly a 300km on what the MetFax promised would be a good day with cloudbase rising to around 6000ft, good clouds and strong thermals. Howard loaded Mike Hotel to the gunwhales with water and Simon Hogg (Astir CS), Graham Barrett (Std Libelle) and Martin Hastings (Std Cirrus) all rigged in readiness for a 300km flying out to Ross-on-Wye and Kettering. I had just

set myself to thinking what else to have a go at when Phil Hawkins appeared on the airfield asking for co-pilots to take EZE around an instructional cross-country. Thanks to the generosity of Nicola Field and Mark Rowland (ex-OGC instructor back on the scene after a 3 year lay-off) I got the job and we set off to fly to HB, Cardington and Wog. Two and a half hours of mixed soaring conditions later we returned with me much the wiser on cross-country techniques. If you haven't flown with Phil or one of his ilk, you should make the time to do it. It is an investment you will not regret. I'll never forget coring the Acro two-handed into a thermal at 45 knots with 10 knots+ on the vario and Phil exclaiming from the back that we'd risen 1000ft in 4 turns. The 300km pilots all lost out because their second turning point was clagged, and Nicola completed an upwind dash in a K8 to land at Bicester, from where we retrieved her.

Friday evening involved a barbeque, a little light liquid refreshment and an extended session of bits of songs played badly by me on the guitar to an audience whose altered state helped them make more of the music than was actually there.

Saturday 19th - The MetFax promised great things but the early launchers had a real struggle to stay up, let alone go cross-country and in one memorable broadcast, Dave Weekes announced he was at 5000ft over Enstone in the Skylark 4 and a few minutes later advised us that he was at 1000ft over Enstone and expecting to be a guest shortly (a forecast which proved correct within a few more minutes). Eventually, at around 15.00hrs decent thermals became abundant and I jumped into Mike Hotel to test the air with a view to trying the elusive 100km, flying Didcot-Silverstone-WOG. The visibility was very poor and I soared locally for about an hour before deciding that I was up to the job. With the huge benefit of flying with Hawkeye fresh in my mind, I dolphined around the task, stopping only for the best stuff and got back 2 hours after Steve Evans flying his LS6 over WOG had acknowledged my start over the radio. Andy Butterfield, Steve Evans, Graham Barrett *et al* all got back from various cross-countries of between 150km-200km in length and it was generally agreed that GPS was a real boon on poor viz days such as this. Hawkeye shot around another 185km task with Chris Buck, who pronounced himself a fan of Hawkwind upon their return.

Sunday 20th - After an excellent roast beef dinner on Saturday night courtesy of Lynne Barrett, Fiona Buck and Janet

Jones, Sunday morning marked the end of my leave permit and I left Weston for the M40, points north and a waiting family. Total airborne hours 17+

What a week! What a Club! My grateful thanks to OGC and the talent and enthusiasm that makes flying with them my favourite gliding experience.

NEWS NOTES

Calvert brick works, a famous gliding landmark for local clubs, was finally demolished on 28th June, 62 years after it was built. Over a thousand spectators turned up to witness the nine 210ft chimneys being reduced to rubble by explosive charges set to detonate at one-second intervals. The button was pushed by a 10-year old boy whose father and uncle are directors of the demolition company.

The chimneys were built in 1933-34 when the London Brick Company took over the site, although there had been brick works here since the Victorian era. At times more than nine million bricks a week were produced, using the Oxford blue clay dug from nearby pits and fired in the kilns at 1000 degrees C.

Aylesbury Vale District Council now have plans to build up to 250 homes on the site.

A local businessman has made no fewer than five planning applications to build a HGV service area adjacent to the motorway junction near the airfield. The site proposed is on the airfield side of the junction near the small lake. Mr Les Gardiner of Weston-on-the-Green wants to build a 100-bedroom motel, restaurant and fuel station on the site. At least two previous applications were rejected after public enquiries, and the latest application was heard by the planning committee on 27th July, but the outcome is as yet unknown.

Final Glide is produced using Word-Perfect 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: Fiona Buck, Cris Emson, Phil Hawkins, Mike O'Neill and Barry Taylor.

Contributions are always welcome on any subject, even if only loosely connected with the Club. "How I dun it" stories always wanted, even if only loosely connected with the Club, otherwise the editor will continue to print his own.

RAMBLINGS FROM THE LOG BOOK

Phil Hawkins



*Here are some gems from my log book after what I think was a wonderful summer. Incidentally, if you are getting tired of my waffle, you have basically three options: chuck it in the bin, complain to the Committee and get **Final Glide** funding removed so that I will eventually get fed up with doing it at my own expense, or (shock, horror) start writing your own contributions...*

- 2 Apr Wave at WoG up to 3,800ft. Struggle to keep going at first in rough thermal bubbles which did have some smooth areas. After about 30 minutes it became smooth enough to convince me that it was wave after all. Best lift about 2 knots.
- 8 Apr 184km to HB and Didcot (undeclared). Light NE wind, cloudbase 4000ft, best lift 4-5kt, but thermals rather fragmented below 2,000ft. Interesting landing because the wheel brake has a tendency to jam hard on at present.
- 7 May 159km Club League flight from Aquila. Newbury and back with a dog-leg at Calvert both ways. Blue at first, fairly slow progress around Calvert and beating into wind towards Oxford, taking every bit of lift I could find because others who got low seemed to be having lots of trouble. Better at Oxford with 4,500ft climbs, same at Abingdon and Didcot. Still blue around Newbury, but at Oxford on the way home the approaching front had magically transformed into a thick belt of active cumulus. Climbed to 4,800ft and fast final glide from 20 miles out.
- 15 June [Talgarth]. A highly entertaining flight with Richard in the Vivat "motorised Blanik". Started by soaring the main ridge up to Hay Bluff. After trying some woolly clouds unsuccessfully, soared to the Beacons and Pen y Fan via the Bryn and Mynydd Llangorse. So that's what flying up the footpath is like, but no walkers at the top. Richard managed to soar all the way back without using the engine, using the Bryn again, Mynydd Llangorse and Mynydd Troed. This is what I call a "close to the edge" flight. Whew!
- 16 June [Talgarth]. No wave today but good fun bashing the ridge for a while. Just like the old days.
- 18 June 86km task in the Acro with Haste, around Edge Hill and Silverstone. Good day with 4,500ft cloudbase and 4-5kts. The Edge Hill area was slightly scrappy and we descended below 2,000ft to get round, but no other problems. Haste has a strange centring technique, often doesn't bank steeply enough and tends to wander a bit when cruising.
- 8 July WoG was at the eastern edge of the good weather. Had to glide westwards for the first thermal and nearly didn't make it. Further west conditions were very good and I romped ahead to Cheltenham in no time. Could only get back as far as Enstone, however, as the duff weather had moved. The Nationals pilots were sent eastwards into the grot - har har!
- 22 July Booming conditions - a record-breaking day. See *It was a Wheatley Day* on front page.
- 23 July 270km Club League flight from Aquila. Grafham Water, Chieveley, Aylesbury. Good conditions on first leg, but progress back into wind over Bedford and MK was somewhat slower against the wind, although mostly in dolphin mode quite high. After Aylesbury it was all blue but still good lift occasionally and lots of other gliders about. Approaching the last TP at Aylesbury the clouds had reappeared which made the last leg very quick.
- 29 July Acro flying with Chris Buck. We had declared a task to the south and west but it was blue and flat in that direction. Initial climb away from 600ft was hard work and there were difficult patches later too. Moved east of Bicester following faint clouds. Turned back just past Winslow. Chris often banks too steeply before he has found the core, and like most heavy pilots finds it difficult to keep the Acro back to 50 knots in a thermal.
- Acro flying with Mark "Chewy" Pollard. Good strong thermals, much better than on the earlier flight today. Followed the clouds over Enstone, Chippy and Moreton-in-Marsh. Turned back near Broadway. Mark hasn't done much cross-country flying on his own but his thermal technique was OK. Needs to reject more thermals when high in order to make progress.
- 6 Aug Acro flying with Graham Barrett. Attempted 250km around Stow, Bedford and Worcester but didn't get round the last TP. Blue and scratchy at first to the south. On 2nd leg I edged northwards towards some faint clouds visible at the top of the inversion beyond Banbury. After Banbury thermals were very strong and I rejected several in a row to lose a persistent hanger-on! Just at the edge of good clouds near Olney we hit a duff patch and Graham had to scrape us out of it from about 1200ft (he doesn't like long glides, though). Bedford was rounded in good conditions which lasted as far as Banbury on the way back. Here it began to go blue again and we decided to abandon Worcester.
- 9 Aug Flying from Hinton in company with Haste and Graham. Scratchy and weak at first. At Abingdon some very odd clouds were churning over and over with rough sharp-edged thermals underneath. Good conditions south of Didcot to Chilbolton, and a good run across the Cotswolds on 2nd leg with max. height 5,000ft at Swindon. Didn't circle between Cirencester and Defford where the clouds came to an abrupt end. Set off into the blue towards Worcester but it was dreadful. Massive sink over the city before finding weak lift to scratch homewards. Got back to the clouds near Evesham and had an easy run home from there.

- Aug Declared a hat trick of 500km flights on 13th August but the weather wasn't up to it. Slow start under grey spread-out sky which extended well beyond Abingdon. Some good thermals under the darker grey blobs but a long way apart and hard to find. Generally better by Swindon with half-decent hazy cumulus. Reached Shepton Mallet after about 1hr 35min. Got stuck in a hole on the way back over Frome. Backtracked, dropped water and scratched around carefully to reach better weather again beyond Keevil. The Swindon area was still good and I had two 5000ft climbs but much of Oxfordshire was still covered by the same grey muck that I'd started out under. Back home about 4.30pm with the eastern sky just plain grey. The other end of my hat-trick 500 would have been Thetford.
- 14 Aug 306km task to Hungerford, Grafham Water, HB. Pretty good day but still very hazy. Set off about an hour after Howard and Nick in the Acro so I was chasing like mad all day, although it was hard to race when you couldn't see from one cloud to the next. Reached Hungerford in 38min, immediately hit a low spot under ghastly looking sky but blundered into 8 knots at 1600ft which went all the way to cloudbase. By the time I got to Grafham Water the Acro was only about 15 miles ahead. I had a bad case of stay-high syndrome due to the poor visibility but clouds were good all the way to HB. Overtook Howard during another grey scratchy bit on the way home.
- 16 Aug Acro flying with Nicola around Didcot-Silverstone. Blue day, pretty good with thermal tops around 4,500ft. Grim scratch at 500ft directly overhead the launch point to get going but no problems after that. High point 5,300ft at Silverstone for a very conservative final glide. Nicola's thermal and dolphin techniques are good but she needs more confidence to go and do it on her own.
- Acro flying with Nick Hill around Edge Hill-Silverstone. Another poor launch, only 900ft this time but away somewhat easier than before. Contacted a cloud just by Heyford which lifted us to 6,300ft. Set off on a long-distance dolphin around Edge Hill. Next stop just north of Hinton on 2nd leg but the day was dying. Some gentle scratching needed to get home from Silverstone. Nick turns too quickly before he has reached the core and tends to yank the stick back too hard on entering a dolphin, which rather obscures what the instruments are saying.
- 18 Aug Acro flying with Mike O'Neill around HB and Cardington sheds. Hazy clouds on the first two legs gave moderate to strong thermals. Only two substantial climbs to reach HB in 55min. One of these near Chipping Warden gained us 1000ft in 4 turns. Second leg very similar, crossing Pitsford reservoir and navigating between Northampton and Wellingborough. After Cardington the thermals were slowing down a good deal and the visibility back towards the sun was awful. Mike's thermal technique is OK and he seemed to be learning a lot about "pressing on."
- 19 Aug Acro flying with Chris Buck around Bidford and Woburn Abbey. First leg quite difficult. Hazy cumulus but much lower base than expected, but good thermals at Chipping Camden and Bidford. Heading east on 2nd leg the clouds thinned out again and went scrappy. Down to 1500ft indicated (1000 agl) above Edge Hill airfield, but managed to get away in a thermal which slowly developed to 4 knots then 6 up to 5000ft so we kept going. Next glide took us to Brackley, again the clouds looked doubtful, down to 1500ft again (this time with lower ground beneath us) when I found another gentle thermal which as before accelerated up to 5000ft. More big clouds could be seen to the east, hazy and glowing pink in the evening sun. Long cruise to a climb at the SW edge of M.K. and another long cruise to reach Woburn at about 3000ft, then headed back towards the same cloud at M.K. as there was nothing else to go for. Slow evening thermals got us home, navigating by sun reflecting in the lakes at Calvert and Bicester. Chris learned that it doesn't pay to give up too easily!
- 22 Aug The heatwave has finally produced flying conditions equal to those of 1976. Launched in blue conditions about 3.30pm with only the tiniest indications of cumulus tops far to the west. Climbed to 4000ft locally, increasing to 5000ft near Enstone and Stow-on-the-Wold. Continued to work westwards towards tempting clouds near Cheltenham. First cloud gave a climb to 8,000ft in the company of two delta-wings. Pressed on across the Severn towards other clouds in the distance. At Malvern the cloudbase was 8,300 above Wog and I was still within gliding range. Tried cloud flying over the Cotswolds on the way home but could only manage 9,200ft asl. Eventually got tired of this and dived for home at 120kt starting from somewhere NW of Little Rissington. Back at Weston they hadn't seen a cloud all day.
- 27 Aug Club League Final at Aston Down. Good forecast but the morning sky had a very dodgy appearance - full of streaky bands of cloud with the sun coming up in a foggy blob. Started rather unwillingly about 12.45, but heading south around Lyneham the weather got dramatically better. Around Andover and back up to Oxford at high speed, then the weather went difficult again and the wind got even stronger. Tiptoed around Buckingham with many detours and backtracks to stay up. Working westwards into the teeth of the gale was even harder, but kept edging southwards towards the better weather, eventually finding a good climb to 4,800ft over Port Meadow. Decided to return to Aston Down via the southern side of the Brize Norton zone, which was an excellent decision as I found very strong conditions following the road to Faringdon and approaching A.D. from the direction of Kemble. Good finish dropping water on Haste's tent.
- 3 Sept Acro flying with Norman Machin. Cloud hunting out towards Moreton-in-Marsh, best climb 8,400ft then a cruise above cloud, the glider's shadow decorated with a circular rainbow (a glory). Found the TP in a gap after descending above a long sloping shelf of cloud, then returned home in a more conventional manner. Norman's speed control in thermals is a problem but this may be due to unfamiliarity with the glider.
- Acro flying with Dave Weekes. Who says the Acro doesn't scratch? Getting the hang of this. More cloud-hunting vaguely westwards, but could only manage 6,700ft this time. Memo to OGC Committee - buy an artificial horizon for it! Close look at the Go-Karts at Little Rissington, then more patient scratching to get home. Dave's thermal flying is spot-on.
- 28 Sept Wave flying Cirrus EEN. Squidgy conditions at Feshiebridge. John's GPS got me home through icy clouds.

Saturday – 15kt NW – dry.

Off we set, the fellas went the easy way on the motorway, Howard towing the Pilatus, Chris with the Skylark and Martin with the Acro. Us girls travelled the scenic route via Jane's Mum's. Tulip and Kay came via the scenic route and were spotted in a lay-by, a bit of bother with a broken stabiliser bar on the Pirat trailer. Howard, brave man, had to pull the Pilatus, Acro and Pirat up the hill to save the day. In fact he managed to save the day on more than one occasion!

Check flights were taken in the Acro and flying commenced with Martin managing 1½hrs before tea time. Howard is a bit miffed as we didn't get dreadfully lost and we found our cottage with no trouble, and Jane is upset because she didn't fly today (except occasionally in the car).

Sunday – 15kt NW – cloudy.

Joined today by Paul, Laura, Cris and Claire. Martin and Brett soared for an hour as did Paul and Chris but best flight

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE!

Fiona Buck

for the Acro was Cris and Kays' hour and a quarter (and all without Cris realising that there were three in the glider!) Howard and the Pilatus enjoyed themselves for 2½hrs. Chris and the Skylark were away for 2hrs. Chris Rollings made 10,000ft asl.

Jane climbed well today, in her car up the front face and excelled herself with the best hill start I have ever seen. I didn't say at the time but I was slipping backwards and my exhaust has been replaced since we came home. Jane is still waiting to fly.

We had scrummy roast beef for tea, now traditional Easter Sunday fare. The kids had an egg hunt around the house. Howard drove us to Cris and Claire's house for far too much to drink – fancy mixing red wine and Baileys!

Monday – 25kt W – rain.

More check flights as we are joined by Steve and family, Chewie, Nick H and Simon. Howard had a check flight of a different kind with Steve Allsop (BGA Regional Examiner). With a westerly wind out came the bungee ropes with Tulip, Paul, Martin and Chris on the end and PING! went the Acro off the side for 15 minutes. Rain stopped play at noon.

But no matter, there are always plenty of things to do when you're into this gliding lark. On this particular day Howard had a puncture – has anyone got an inner tube for a size 12 trainer? Only kidding! It

was lucky that there was a spare innuer tube in the MGC workshop which fitted the Pilatus wheel.

Jane and I spent a large part of the day going backwards and forwards up the Burway. Well, I needed the practice! Jane still hasn't flown.

Anthony is fed up with his little sister as she and Rachel disappeared upstairs and were found trying to hide the paper wrappings from his Easter Egg. They said it was the dollies that ate the chocolate!

Tuesday – Northerly – difficult.

Joined by Nicola and Mike (Gatling Gob) O'Neill. More check flights, including an aerotow to 2,500ft for me. I controlled the camera while Howard positioned the Acro. Yes, thankyou, I had a fabulous time. Howard and the Pilatus were away for 45 minutes and then 2½ hours later.

Conditions were very difficult. All gliders were called down at lunchtime due to a hail/snow storm. The Mynd is spectacular at the best of times but more so when it is

White Over. It only lasted for 30 mins and play resumed after lunch.

Jane is

now fairly hacked off – she is still waiting to fly.

Wednesday – thunderstorms.

Richard Hall arrived in the PIK from Enstone. Everyone else flew the Acro. Howard and Nicola had a cracker of a thunderstorm to 3,600ft. Martin and Tulip found a thunderstorm too.

Pat was not impressed. Was it Howard's flying or my driving that made her so poorly on the way back to the house? The winch driver packed up and went home, just before the ridge started to work. Nothing is ever fair for glider pilots, though, is it? Jane is still waiting for her flight – very patiently.

Thursday – windy – cloud with bits of blue.

Dave arrived. He and Chris rigged and flew the Skylark. Anthony was one of the many pilots in the Acro. Howard totalled more than 5 hours today so we're not speaking to him any more!

Pat and I took the kids to Acton Scott working farm. We all learned how to make butter and bread and watched the farrier. We looked at the piglets, lambs, ducklings, chicks and calves.

With four children and two adults in my car with a poorly exhaust pipe I thought it might be a good idea to find the long way up to the Mynd. I can recommend it to the more nervous driver.

Jane has taken to her bed. Nothing to do with not flying – she Shropshire turn.

Friday – FANDABIDOZY!

There is always one day in the week that makes life worthwhile, and this was it. Started by hauling Jane from her deathbed to watch Rebecca and Anthony have a riding lesson. We had booked them in for ½hr, we thought their young bums would cope nicely with that. What we didn't expect was the dressage to start, followed by a cross-country jumping lesson. Joanne and Rachel were thrilled to ride two very tired ponies back to their stables. Rebecca and Anthony were hobbling a little so Pat and I drove them to Welshpool and found a pool with rapids and a slide. It was brilliant fun. We followed a trailer back up to the Mynd, but more of that later.

Brett and Martin had an hour in the Acro. Dave and Chris had 2hrs each in the Skylark. Dave flew the scenic route to Hereford and back. Simon just had to show off and go round Hereford and Worcester. Howard and the Pilatus viewed the Mynd from 7,000ft.

The Coopers spend a large proportion of the day eating – including today large portions of syrup pudding and custard. This may have, in some way, helped to cause the following incident.

Later in the day it was reported that a glider had landed out in the valley on the south side of the ridge. Some poor soul returning from a 300km flight who just couldn't make it back, we thought. After more radio messages and a phone call we found out that the glider didn't manage a task at all, but off the top of the winch sailed into the valley in sink until they hit the deck. The glider was EZE captained by Martin Cooper with chief navigator Nicola Field. Howard "Virgil" Stone dressed in an International Rescue suit dashed off to head the retrieve team (thanks to Brett Cooper and the local Army and Navy stores, yellow sash, badges and cap). The next hour was spent on the retrieve. Very nice farmer who said "That's the first time anyone landed in that field, they usually land in the big one next to it."

EZE was rigged again and Howard and Nicola stayed aloft for 2hrs much to everyone's annoyance as we were all waiting to go back to the house.

Saturday – horizontal blizzard.

It took eight OGC pilots to de-rig the Acro. It was cold, wet and windy and we all went home. Jane is happy – she drove on the motorway.

Join us next year at Sutton Bank – around 8th May. Let me know if you need accommodation.