



# FINAL GLIDE

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Edited by Phil Hawkins

**In this BIG issue**

## FIRST ATLANTIC 5hr FLIGHT

*Maz Makari*

It was a day to remember. Five hours thrashing along at less than 500 feet over the north Atlantic, in foul weather. OK so I had an engine (or two) but it was a great day all the same.

The week hadn't started well. I'd woken at 6am on Sunday morning with that tell-tale tingle in my throat that warned of an impending head cold. Fourteen hours later, Steve McCurdy and I dumped the Astir trailer at the cottage near Feshiebridge airfield, then drove straight down to the Kings Arms in Kingussie where we met the rest of our fellow OGC aviators and their spouses. After an evening of malt whiskey warming our bellies and Steve Evans call of 8am sharp on the airfield, we sped off to our beds for the night, to dream of hoolies blowing up the Feshie valley.

Steve and I drove to the airfield at around 10am, via the corner shop where I picked up a supply of Kleenex and Lemsip. By the time we arrived, a diamond height had already been claimed. I skulked around the airfield all day, following the experts' advice not to fly while bunged up.

That night, the mother of all hoolies blew, and unknown to us all, somewhere in the North Atlantic, a geological survey ship was being pounded by 20 metre seas (that's even bigger than a tipped Cirrus, and nearly as big as a Nimbus 2).

Tuesday was spent in bed supping hot garlic and lemon drink and feasting on Vitamin C pills. I appeared at the airfield on Wednesday to fly my radio-controlled model glider. Steve McCurdy had a go,

and discovered the effect of ailerons in the stall a split second before the model spun in to the 15ft ridge and disintegrated in a cloud of balsa wood and fibreglass. That night I resolved to fly next day regardless. The weather all week had been superb, and surely could not last much longer.

Thursday morning arrived, George Crawford was still high from the day before, but I would have been happy with just a 2000ft tow and a circuit. Another hot garlic and lemon (no one could now come close enough to be infected) and I waited my turn in the Acro. Someone advised me to take plenty of fluids because of my cold, so I did.

*Ah! The new tug's arrived!* someone exclaimed as first we heard and then saw low over the trees the approach of a twin-engined airliner. A Cessna 406 belonging to Air Atlantique landed in half the length of the 900-yard runway and backtracked to the launch point. Two pilots stepped out, orders were issued and 20 or so glider pilots suddenly became window cleaners.

The co-pilot, Alan Mossman, Feshie member, and owner of the airline then requested volunteers as lookouts. Two crusty looking gents stepped forward. I said to Ian Young, *I wouldn't mind doing that, but I guess they've got everyone they need.* Ian disappeared, and came back a minute saying that he'd booked me a first class seat. I grabbed a handful of chocolate bars and jumped aboard.

*...continued on page 4*

Dave Weekes' wooden  
Gold C

23,000ft above Aboyne  
in the big Nimbus

One man's pilgrimage  
to Diana's funeral

Ladder results

Our best effort yet in  
the Club League

Full membership list

AGM Report

Local villagers take  
action against aircraft  
noise nuisance

*....and more!*

It was only 7.30 on a Sunday morning, but slowly the news of the day unravelled itself and I realised why the radio news readers' voice had sounded so serious.

Throughout the following week we could not avoid it, there was simply no other news at all, only the story of the death of Diana Princess of Wales. News which must surely have affected every single person in this land, simply because everyone, young and old, had at some time either read about her in the newspapers or seen news of her on television over the last two decades.

By the middle of that week details of her funeral had been given, and I read in a newspaper that worldwide 2.4 billion people would probably watch this live on television. It was enough to make me think that as Oxford is only 40 miles from London I really ought to go and witness this for real. But I left the final decision until Friday evening.

Friday saw another successful BBQ for our visitors, and catching the late news on the TV I heard that very large numbers of people and cars were expected to descend on our capital for this sad event. Just before midnight I asked Laura if she wanted to go, she knew I wanted to go, so we just went.

The motorway to London was very quiet, not full as I had been expecting. We turned off at White City, headed south for a mile and turned left onto Bayswater Road past the northern side of Hyde Park. Passing Marble Arch I pointed out Oxford Street to Laura as we swung right into Park Lane. She seemed to recognise these names more so than on previous visits, perhaps she has been playing Monopoly recently.

Heading west towards Kensington the traffic started to build up a little, crawling past the Royal Albert Hall. Looking to our right we could see brightly lit food stalls. On the railings facing the road were bunches of flowers. The further we went the number of flowers increased, so I turned left into a side street and parked the car.

Along the main road large scaffolding gantries were spaced at about 50 yard intervals, disguised with dark blue or black cloth coverings, teams of men laying out cables which disappeared off down the side streets to connect to satellite dishes aimed skywards, between the tall residential buildings. Policemen chatting quietly together keeping an eye on whatever was going on. Quite a few people, but not as many as I had expected.

We crossed the road to Kensington Gardens where, just inside the gates we could see the enormity of what was happening. Kensington Palace was floodlit in the distance and in the foreground throughout the grassed area we could see hundreds of flickering candles congregated around the well-spaced trees throughout the park. Behind the railings facing the road we could now see people settled down in sleeping bags, some fast asleep, some chatting quietly, others just watching the world go by.

We walked slightly uphill towards the palace stopping all the time to look at the flowers carefully placed around the trees, randomly laid out but all obviously placed so very carefully. Candles flickering just so gently, some in little glass jars, some just standing on cardboard plates, all of them illuminating flowers of every type and colour. Every bunch had a card or message of condolence that could be read in the gentle yellow light.

We walked on towards a wall of people at the top of the park outside the palace, and as we got closer the scent from the flowers became more and more powerful. Although this wall of people was about six deep a gap became free for us to stand at the barrier. And there before our eyes was the most amazing sight I have ever seen, a sea of flowers, so vast, extending into the shadows of darkness that the floodlights didn't cover. We just stood there for perhaps ten minutes,

## Diana

looking at the extraordinary scene before us, looking at the solid wall of people, all with the same thoughts on their minds, all showing their sadness by their own private quietness.

We left the park and, not really knowing what to do next, I drove around a bit to get some warmth back into both of us. Along Knightsbridge and into the underpass below Hyde Park Corner, up into Piccadilly, past Eros and down Haymarket, around Trafalgar Square. The volume of cars and pedestrians was about equal to that of Oxford's High Street during the daytime, but strangely, it was now just after three in the morning.

The turning through Admiralty Arch into The Mall was closed off so I turned into Whitehall. Here two lanes of traffic crawled forwards between pedestrian barriers. Covering the pavements on both sides of the road were masses of people, either fast asleep in sleeping bags, or sitting, wrapped up well to keep out the chill of their all night vigil, waiting for the event that the following dawn would bring. It must have taken almost twenty minutes to get as far as Parliament Square. We saw Westminster Abbey to our right and the Houses of Parliament on the left. Then, into Millbank and nothing, no people, no traffic, emptiness. I turned right by Lambeth Bridge and back to Kensington High Street, where we stopped at a pavement cafe for some warm drinks. It seemed strange sitting out by the pavement tables as it was only 4am.

We walked along into Hyde Park as dawn was breaking. Bacon butties with more hot drinks warmed us once again. Then we walked back to see the flowers in daylight. The crowds had now swelled but even so the overall quietness that filled the air was amazing, as was the sight and smell of that ocean of flowers, nearly thirty inches deep in places. A continuous stream of hands added to the floral tributes.

At 6am we found a place by the barriers. By 8am throngs of people were coming out of the side streets, joining the thousands already lining the route to see the final journey of a Princess. My radio earphone reported the start of that journey. Some minutes later, through the gates of Kensington Palace driveway and onto the main road the mounted Police Officers came into view, six of them, and then the faces of the soldiers on horses, their red jackets with gold braid looking so bright in the early morning sun.

Marching alongside, soldiers from the Welsh Guards, their busbies tall and black, the expressions on their faces said it all, they were all freshly clean shaven, they had the first glistening of perspiration on their foreheads, they marched slowly, perfectly in time, all looking directly ahead, nothing was going to distract any of them from this duty. All of them looked as though they were extremely close to having tears in their eyes, much the same as the thousands of people who stood watching in such silence.

In the very middle of this group was the gun carriage, immaculate and dark green in colour, and perched high on top the coffin draped with the Royal Standard, topped by three white wreaths. From where we were, even at the such a slow marching pace, they passed us and were gone in ten or fifteen seconds, but those seconds meant so much more than seeing it on television. Even Laura told me she thought it meant a lot to be there and was pleased that we had made the effort to see it for ourselves.

We were back in the OGC clubhouse before the procession arrived at Westminster Abbey, and watched the rest of the day's coverage on television. Saturday 6th September was the day when the world stopped to watch one single event. I'm glad that I went there to witness it myself and perhaps for some of you too.

*Paul Rogers*

## CFI's TURN...

### Instructors

We have temporarily lost Tom Lamb as an instructor. Due to illness he is unable to continue for some months, but we all hope he will be back later in the year. On the plus side we welcome Neil Swinton as an Air Experience Instructor, and congratulate Dave Nisbet on becoming a half cat. We are still left a bit short of instructors for the coming year, so I would ask that all Duty Pilots, if called upon to help, turn up for their duty day. It takes the pressure off the instructor a great deal, and makes the whole operation run more smoothly.

### RAFSPA

I do not anticipate any changes in our operation with RAFSPA this coming year. Dave Woods has retired as Chief Instructor, and is replaced by Nigel Rogoff (who was CCI two years ago). He knows the operation well, and hopefully we can continue as last year. RAFSPA are under a lot of external pressure from noise abatement, which has a knock-on effect for us, but I hope this will not change our day to day operation.

### New winch

I am sure most people are now aware that we have a new winch engine, infinitely better than it was before. Thanks to Neil Turner, Howie Stone, Paul Rogers and others for all their efforts. Since the new winch is so much more powerful, it will be necessary for all winch drivers to obtain tuition from an experienced driver. The techniques for driving it are not quite the same, so please learn to drive it safely from someone who knows!

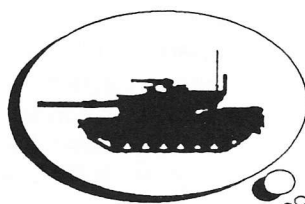
### And there's more ...

I am planning to hold a few lectures during the Spring which should be of interest to everybody. These will be:

- (1) Field Selection and Landing, - to make sure everyone is familiar with the changing surface of fields during the year.
- (2) Airspace - it is useful to know the present status. For example did you realise that it should be quite easy to get permission to cross Brize Norton at weekends? I hope to get one of the air traffic controllers at Brize to give this talk.
- (3) Role of Duty Pilots - I cannot stress how important the Duty Pilot is to our operation. At Bicester for example, the duty instructor stays on the ground running the operation - they feel it is that important. It sounds tedious, but please make the effort.

### The Acro and the ICL

Finally, if anyone is interested in cross country flying in the Acro, that is what it is there for! In particular it should be going to all Inter Club League meetings, so get your name down if you want to try participating in a competition, but want to leave the difficult bits to the instructor!



Criss Emson

## INSTRUCTORS MEETING

In the clubhouse on  
Saturday 7 March

7:30pm

## INSTRUCTORS MEETING

## From yonks ago

Just prior to the start of our annual flying fortnight at the end of July, our intrepid winch builder Keith Plummer and helpers rolled out the trim little green and yellow concoction with the big heart and two drums of gleaming cable.

A number of runs were made with tyres attached to watch the functioning. With "all systems go" the T-21 was launched with a noticeable lack of grunts and moans from the new BMC 3 litre engine which will cope well with third gear operation even on calm days. With only minor adjustments needed we shall be rather sorry to pension off the trusty old V8 winch constructed by Ray Stafford Allen nearly 20 years ago.

The "fortnight" came and went with flying possible on only half the days.

To dampen our enthusiasm even more, on the last day the Olympia was inexcusably too low to reach the airfield with the result that a very late decision to choose a suitable field caused it to bury itself in a large hedge. It sustained considerable internal damage and a complete break of the rear fuselage, laying it up for the rest of the summer.

How important it is to keep a good lookout in cloud and observe the rules of entry. John Gibbons, one of our instructors, records a near miss in cloud at 5000ft when a yellow apparition passed across his front leaving no alternative but to lose height rapidly.

On the brighter side, we are pleased to record that after several attempts Tony Taylor is the first to fly his Silver C distance in our new Skylark 3F with a good cross-country to Old Sarum.

October 1966

# First Atlantic 5hr flight

From front page.....

The P1, who we shall call Steve, wound the two turboprops up to full power before releasing the brakes. We were pushed back into our seats as we accelerated towards the trees 900 yards away. Sometime after Vr but before we hit the trees, Steve pulled hard back and we climbed through the curl-over and over the Feshie valley.

After passing through 2000ft Alan came back and briefed his crew. On Monday night sea-bed survey equipment worth £15 million had been lost in heavy seas. Our mission was to find it. It consisted of 6 miles of steel cable with sono-buoys attached at intervals of 200 yards along its length. These buoys were expected to have sunk since they were only semi-buoyant and kept afloat by hydrodynamic vanes. At the end of the steel cable was a 2 metre square floatation unit housing a radar reflection mast. Another aircraft with side looking radar had failed to find any trace of this.

The floatation unit could be recognised as four 10-gallon drums painted in fluorescent orange, but this might have faded. A map was produced. *It was entirely blue except for a hand drawn grid.* The grid represented the 100x100 km search area, to be flown methodically using a borrowed Garmin 55. We were told to start looking as soon as we broke cloud, and warned that the search would last around 5 hours. I looked to the rear of the aircraft. There were no toilets.

We were now at 10,500ft in an unpressurised cabin. A flask of water was produced and opened carefully (it was boiling at this altitude) and we had hot chocolate all round. The view outside was a spectacular cloud-scape of lenticulars describing the Scottish terrain that had generated it. I was in a way pleased not to be flying this scene solo in a glider. The exposure was quite awesome and made me feel very humble.

The turbos slowed and the descent began. 200kts and 500fpm. Through 8000ft my ears began to ache. Four minutes later the pain was getting unbearable. I had to do something. A quick look around didn't find me anything I wanted, so off came my sweater, and I blew hard into it. A hiss of air from my eardrums and the pain subsided, and I could still hear (phew!).

At around 800ft we broke cloud and the search began, levelling off at 600ft. At first the sea was calm, and visibility was good, in excess of 15 miles. White horses frolicked

and seagulls cavorted beneath us as we cruised on northwards towards the search area, beyond the 60th parallel. Occasionally we'd catch sight of a porpoise or dolphin breaking the surface. After a quick sightseeing detour taking us around an oil-rig we settled down to the search proper. I was beginning to regret the advice I'd been given about drinking fluids, and crossed my legs.

A couple of hours into the search the cloud began to close in around us. Down to 400ft. We could now clearly see the seagulls resting on the surface, preening their feathers. Visibility was now less than 5 miles. One of the crusty gents shared out some cake, for which we were all very grateful.

The next two hours went something like this look out of the window at all that water, check the rear of the airplane to see if there really weren't some loos hidden somewhere, check the fuel situation, no we weren't going to have to land soon, look out at all that water again.

4½ hours into the flight the cloudbase was down to 200ft. I glanced to the rear of the airplane, and then out of the window again. Through the haze I made out a shadowy object floating on the sea. I rushed to the front and pointed, but the object was gone. We circled back, using the GPS to help us and Steve saw the object beyond the nose of the Cessna before we lost it again. Another 2g turn at 200ft but we couldn't find it, the visibility was just too bad. Alan decided that we couldn't continue as the conditions were getting too dangerous, and the fuel situation was becoming critical (yip! pee!).

We radioed the salvage vessel with the GPS co-ordinates and headed for Stornoway. I then discovered an empty 4 pint milk container and helped myself to ¾ of its capacity. A brief climb and descent through the layered cloud saw us at Stornoway airport for a 30 minute refuelling stop.

We were soon on our way back to relocate the floatation unit so that the salvage vessel could find it. However a call on the radio confirmed the missing equipment had already been picked up, so we did a U-turn and headed for Inverness airport. Alan showed us round his fleet of aircraft, two DC3s used for spraying oil-slicks with dispersant, a couple of other twins, some containing enough equipment to put the Houston Space Centre to shame and the occasional single. One aircraft had similar capabilities to the RAF Nimrod at a fraction of the price.

Champagne and beer followed at the airport bar, and then back to Feshie in time for tea and crumpets at the Suie Hotel.

Maz

## P.F.A. and O.G.C. CADETS AT KIDLINGTON

Mike Williams who shares his aviation enthusiasm with the Oxford strut of the Popular Flying Association as well as OGC arranged for us to take one of our gliders along to one of their exhibition days, which the Oxford strut had undertaken to organise at Oxford Airport, Kidlington on 28th September.

Their intention was to give selected young people the opportunity to fly in a powered aircraft with an experienced pilot. After a ground briefing on how wings create lift and effects of controls they were all taken on a flight, from the airfield to Beckley mast, on to "Smoky Joe" and back for a landing. I believe that for most, this was their first flight in a small powered aircraft. All of them were deemed to be "Young Eagles" and I noticed from the registration forms that their names would be entered into the PFA's world-wide logbook somewhere in America.

The OGC glider turned out to be 278, compliments of our CFI Cris and Claire, who also collated all the usual paperwork, display boards and photos to give OGC another impressive exhibition stand, in order to spread the word once again. Claire also managed to get five of our cadets to be on hand to talk to visitors, well, after all we are thinking of next year's cadet intake.

Oh, the aeroplanes - several Jodels, an Auster and some home built jobbies, and even an OGAR from Hinton, a 22 year old Polish side by side two seater, with a fixed pusher prop, very interesting. Rachel also enjoyed all the Helicopters buzzing in and out, and all those that attended had an enjoyable day away from Weston.

Paul Rogers

## AGM Report

About 50-60 members attended the 47th AGM held in the briefing room on 29th November. Chairman Steve Evans reported few difficulties with RAFSPA despite their continuing noise abatement problems. The total number of kilometres flown by our cross-country pilots was 48% up on last year. There were three first solos, one Silver C (Chris Lee) and two Gold C (Andy Butterfield and Dave Weekes). We finished joint 2nd at the Inter Club League Final.

The cadet scheme had been successful and will be continued in 1998. Our lottery grant application has been worked on by an active subcommittee during the year and is nearly ready for submission.

Treasurer Howard Stone, standing down this year after a lengthy term of office, reported turnover slightly up on last year, most of the increase being due to Friday night flying and catering. One major item of expenditure was the new winch engine. The overall surplus for the year was about £8,500 although on paper this is shown as a loss due to depreciation allowances on hangar and aircraft. The Site Trust Fund currently stands at £15,000 with a further £11,000 owed to it by the Club.

Howard noted that he would recommend an increase in the launch fee for 1998, and an increase in associate member flights from £15 to £20, excluding the Friday night package deals.

The meeting voted to accept an increase in the annual subscription from £135 to £140, but there will be a new class of full membership for family members, basically a 50% reduction. The necessary amendments to the Club Constitution were also passed.

During that part of the meeting when honorary members and trustees are elected, it was noted that the Club currently has no President. The local MP Tony Baldry has been approached, also Virgin boss Richard Branson who lives locally, but neither were interested. Further attempts are to be made to appoint a President [for a complete list of Club Officers in 1998 see page 12].

The **Ladder Trophy**, and **Malcolm Laurie Memorial Trophy** for the best flight in a Club glider were both presented to Phil Hawkins. Phil did four 300km flights this year, two of them in the Acro on successive days of the cross country week in August, with co-pilots Alan Lapworth and Brian Payne.

The **Dennis Farmer Memorial Trophy** for the first 5hr flight of the season went to Kevin Duthie, and the **Deep Breath Cup** was won by Andy Butterfield for an impressive 15,000ft cloud climb in the K6e. The **Simpson Cup** for the best flight from Weston-on-the-Green was awarded to Dave Weekes for his 300km in the Skylark 4 [see page 10].

Tom Lamb won the CFI's **Two-Up Award**. Tom is still on crutches recovering from a hip joint infection and may ultimately have a hip replacement, so we wish him well. The **Flying Brick** and the **"Polo Trophy"** were won by Paul Rogers after a landing in Kirtlington Park. Hard luck, Paul.



Dear Gliding Club

*Further to your letter of 10th April inviting me to join your cadet scheme, it gives me great pleasure to tell you that I did my first solo this morning (December 14). I would like to take this opportunity to thank the selection committee, all those that support the club behind the scenes in the hangar, kitchen and bar, in the Land Rover and the winch drivers. Also those on the field that I managed to beat by getting there earlier than they did for the first flight!*

*I would also like to thank the instructors who have guided me, and hopefully will continue to do so, as I start training for my Bronze award! Safe flying and excellent gliding for 1998.*

Tim Charlesworth

Dear Editor

I thought you might be interested to see the difference between what you submit to S & G club news, and what gets into print...

### What they printed

Following last year's cross country week, we are planning another this year. Brian Jones has gone solo. CFI Cris Emson and Claire are promoting their cadet scheme and selection of the first six cadets is under way. A winch engine upgrade is being arranged to cater for the growing fleet of big wings. We were saddened to hear of the death of Colin White.

### What was submitted

Following last year's cross country week, fondly remembered for the CFI's successful attempts to tempt the deputy CFI into field landings, we are already planning this year's. With Steve McCurdy, Chrissie Milner, Maz Makari and Tim Elliott all now roaming the skies in the club Astir, we look forward to even more km flown. Brian Jones decided he did want to go solo after all, so now he has.

CFI Cris Emson and Claire have surprised us all with parenthood revelations, but are still finding time to set up and promote our cadet scheme for young people. Selection of the first six cadets is well under way. A winch engine upgrade is being arranged to cater for the growing fleet of big wings. The whole club was saddened to hear of the death of Colin White.

**And the moral is** - Don't waste your time generating flowing prose and witty asides. The S & G editor knows better than you.

John Gordon



1996-97

Twenty-one pilots entered flights in the ladder last year, and following BGA rules the scores are now submitted in two separate ways. These are termed the Open Ladder, which is for flights on any day of the week, and the Weekend Ladder for those pilots who need not be penalised because they can only fly at weekends. The top ten Open Ladder pilots from the OGC are listed here, but seven of these also appear in

the top ten places in the Weekend Ladder. Phil and Howard occupy first and second places in both lists.

The highest scoring single flight was by CFI Cris Emson in the Cirrus on 15 August, a 419km declared task at 90kph which was worth 2,677 points. The best height gain was 19,600ft by Rick Underhill at Aboyne on 5 October 1996 (23,300ft absolute) which was worth 1,460 points.

|    |                 | Points |
|----|-----------------|--------|
| 1  | Phil Hawkins    | 5906   |
| 2  | Howard Stone    | 4945   |
| 3  | Steve Veness    | 3830   |
| 4  | Graham Barrett  | 3603   |
| 5  | Cris Emson      | 3444   |
| 6  | Rick Underhill  | 2660   |
| 7  | Neil Swinton    | 2415   |
| 8  | Brian Payne     | 2375   |
| 9  | Dave Weekes     | 2221   |
| 10 | Martin Hastings | 1974   |

# DIDN'T WE DO WELL?

The 1997 Inter Club League was a close run thing, with Oxford Gliding Club winning by one point at the end of the year, to qualify for the final in August.

The year started in good form at the first Bank Holiday meeting at Hinton, with three days of competition. Well done George Crawford and Dave Nisbet who both won their day in the Novice class. Oxford and Bidford scored 26 points, Aquila 23, Shenington 18 and Bicester 12.

Shenington managed one day's competition, with Bicester winning two classes. The scores for the day were: Bicester 10 points, Aquila 9, Bidford and Shenington both scored 8 and Oxford trailed with 7.

The Bidford meeting was completely lost due to poor weather.

That left the Oxford meeting to prove ourselves, and fortunately the weather broke in time to have a contest on both days. We performed quite consistently, although Graham Barrett was the only Oxford pilot to win his class. Oxford and Aquila scored 21 points each, Bidford 17, Shenington 16 and Bicester 7.

The final totals were: Oxford 54, Aquila 53, Bidford 51, Shenington 42 and Bicester 29. It could hardly have been closer.

The national final meeting was to be held over the August Bank Holiday at Booker. We turned up early on Saturday morning, but at 1pm the day was scrubbed - as was Sunday - and the Bank Holiday Monday too. What a good weekend that was!

The first day of the scheduled fallback 2 weeks later was cancelled as a mark of respect for the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. That left Sunday Sept 7th as the only competition day - and that was marginal, as seen from the following reports.

As your CFI I am too modest to report on my flight, other than to say with little sleep the night before, and a late start, I was lucky to get to Didcot, where I found looking up at the cooling towers a very sobering perspective, so I opted to land.

## Dave Nisbet

I finally launched at 3:20, the last glider airborne. I was still climbing when Cris invited me to tag along so I declined (good move) and started at the back of the fleet (not so good). After photographing the start I made good progress to Benson but the sky was clouding over fast and I slowed down.

I spotted a returning glider low down and used his thermal but neither of us were climbing fast. I pushed on to Wallingford but the lift was broken and weak. I was starting to flounder.

I spent what seemed like forever searching for something substantial but without much joy. Then luck cut in! A farmer lit up the edge of a field of stubble and, while the fire wasn't intense, it provided good lift to 2000ft - back in the game.

More height loss towards Didcot and down to 900ft. I picked a lovely field and then started to climb away. I pressed on to the edge of Didcot and picked up first one thermal then another over the town which finally gave me enough height to get round the TP and back to my original thermal over the town.

The John Willy said about 3000ft to get back at a reasonable height (taking no chances now) and the thermal started to pick up to 2kts. Cloudbase was about 2000ft so T&S on and carry on up! Luckily the wind was taking me home so at 2500ft I straightened out, realised I was heading west, turned round and drove on out the side of the cloud. 2300ft over Benson was good for final glide and I arrived back at about 800ft.

At an average speed of 31kph I will not be getting any speed points but the satisfaction of finishing more than makes up for that!

## Howie Stone

Wow!..... what a day on Sunday, started well with two 4 knot climbs to 2,600 QFE and then getting closer to Didcot it started getting more difficult as most (sorry all) of the clouds were not working. I think I went passed our CFI just before Didcot, I was at about 1,000ft QFE and he was about 500 feet below trying to thermal away.

I managed to get to Didcot at 800ft and it wasn't working so like good competition pilots I pushed on track for Chieveley. One glider landed out just south of Didcot and another just to the west.

I spent the rest of the flight between 700ft and 1500ft QFE. After rounding Chieveley at 700ft I managed to find 0.3 knot which got me to Goring. A "good" climb to 1500ft here and the computer said I was 500ft below glide (with a 700ft reserve) which meant that I was just in. So off I set, and I made it, getting to Booker with 250ft spare. There was no way I would have tried it without the computer keeping me informed of my progress.

## Official Results

### Pundit

- 1 - Ralph Jones, Lasham, Ventus, 62.9 kph.
- 2 - Stuart Mills, Mendip, Kestrel 19, 53.4 km.
- 3 - Cris Emson, Oxford, Cirrus, 28.9 km.
- 4 - Kevin Bye, Essex, Pegase 102, landed back.

### Intermediate

- 1 - Bob Merritt, Mendip, Kestrel 19, 63.1kph
- 2 - Peter Healy, Lasham, ASW19, 49kph
- 3 - Howard Stone, Oxford, Nimbus 2, 48.5 kph
- 4 - John Gilbert, Essex, SkyLark 4 L/O.

### Novice

- 1 - Dave Nisbet, Oxford, Cirrus, 30.9 kph.
- 2 - Peter Paterson, Lasham, Discus, 45.2 km.
- 3 - Robbie Nunn, Essex, Sport Vega, 43.2 km
- 4 - Denis Heslop, Mendip, Skylark 4, no score

### Overall Placing

- 1 Lasham 10 points
- 2 Oxford 8 points
- 2 Mendip 8 points
- 4 Essex 4 points

Thoughts are now turning to the coming season. Clearly we are always looking for keen pilots to take part, and as you see this competition is aimed at all levels of experience. It is the best way to start competitive flying, and begin to push you ability further than you thought possible.

If you are less sure about taking part yourself, then we plan to make the Acro officially available for each Inter Club league meeting. One instructor and one pilot will be sought per day, so if you are interested, give your name to the team captain early.

*Cris Emson*

## NOISE ABATEMENT MOVEMENT IN LOCAL VILLAGES

*"Weekend aircraft noise from Weston-on-the-Green continues to be a source of complaint from residents. Previously parachuting was limited to military personnel and the occasional charity jump, and this caused few complaints. Unfortunately these rules were scrapped and the airfield was opened up to include parachuting on a commercial basis. As a result there has been a dramatic increase in activity. We know that there are many people who have either not noticed or do not mind the current situation, but for those that do mind we must take action. Therefore, on behalf of all residents who find the increased aircraft noise spoils their weekends, we have joined with the Parish Councils of Kirtlington, Middleton Stoney, Wendlebury and Weston-on-the-Green in asking our MP Tony Baldry to represent our joint concerns. We hope to reach a fair and reasonable compromise in order that both parachutists and residents are able to enjoy their leisure time." This article appeared in Chesterton Parish Council Newsletter. We have pointed out that any "reasonable" compromise should not be at the expense of glider pilots' leisure time!*

# THE MAGNIFICENT



**Now that we have a wonderful new winch engine, it's easy to forget the heroic efforts which were sometimes necessary to keep the old one going. Like the Friday night last summer when the engine made an expensive sounding bang, followed by a fountain of hot oil and water mixed with bits of shredded piston ejected from the oil filler cap.....**

Friday 25th July was just another ordinary visitor's evening at the Club. Booked by Oxford Molecular, a nineties success story that gets good press coverage about its work, and the employer of Maz Makari. From his point of view this evening needed to be just that little bit better, as he would be showing off his sport to his colleagues.

At about 7.30 I was standing on the golf course watching the Acro being launched with John who makes the burgers, when we saw Peter Brooks walking back from the winch. He thought the engine had a broken conrod. If you don't know what that is, its enough to say it lives inside the engine and if it breaks it's very serious. John the beefburger man went home, hoping to fly next week.

Respecting Peter's diagnosis I went to phone Neil Turner.

"I'm in Teignmouth," came his reply, with a chuckle. *Wish I was*, I thought to myself. "And I think Dave Weekes is in Peru," he added. There was a short silence, then: "I'm sure you'll think of something, Paul, see you when I get back...."

The rest of the evening went well, food and drink I mean, but we couldn't give our visitors a definite date to complete their flying. Saturday morning saw an early start, with lots of coffee, always lots of coffee in the mornings. Mid morning saw a group standing around the winch discussing what was to be done. The engine was covered in thick oil, so Peter Brooks went off to Bicester to hire a steam cleaner, and the winch was put outside in readiness for a bath.

The 4 gallons of water that had been added to the engine after it stopped the night before was now mixed with the engine oil, and showed about a foot above the high mark on the dip stick, this was drained off, the engine cleaned, and the plan was to remove enough from the top of the engine to see whether it had blown a head gasket (maybe buy one Monday, fit it Tuesday) or worse. In the meantime Howard Stone and Martin Hastings had gone to Hinton to see if we could borrow another winch, as we knew they had a spare one which they had been trying to sell.

Two hours later, after finding a broken valve sitting slightly askew under a valve rocker, one of the cylinder heads had been removed, and even the most non-mechanical person would have noticed only three pistons instead of the usual four. This was absolutely terminal. There was only one option left - to fit the spare engine that had been sitting in the corner of the hangar for the past eight years.

Coffee break over, length of rope attached to Peter's car, and after some levering with scaffold poles the spare engine was gradually pulled into daylight for a good steam clean. It took some time to release it from the remains of a cement lorry chassis, but eventually after using the block and tackle we had it sat neatly on its dolly in the middle of the hangar. The winch was then reversed in, the broken engine carefully lifted out, and lowered onto another dolly, so both engines stood head to head. We could then compare them, and swap certain parts from one to the other.

Soon the spare engine was being lowered into place on the winch chassis and we all struggled for quite a while trying to align the bell casting and hydraulic pump onto the back of the engine. Neil Swinton saved the day at this point by arriving back from Bicester with seven large portions of fish and chips, an excellently timed break. When we resumed work the parts seemed to mate together much easier! Engine in place we all seemed to be

able to find bits that needed bolting onto the puzzle without having to be prompted, and soon the fuel lines were on and bled by Andy Butterfield.

The batteries, having been on charge all day, were fitted, we all stood back with the exception of Andy who was in the driver's seat, silence fell, probably breaths were held. Andy pushed the start button, *Vrooom!* it started first time. Smiles all round and then a cheer, at half past midnight.

A bit of gentle revving over the next few minutes brought a glow of relief over everyone. The realisation dawned that twelve to fourteen hours' hard work, carried out not knowing whether this engine would run, let alone start, had succeeded. We were definitely onto a winner now.

Andy pulled the stop cable in the cab, and *nothing happened*, the engine just kept on running. He had to jump down and loosen all the injector pipes so that the engine would stop. Obviously it was telling us it wanted to go on and on, showing us how willing it was to work after having rested for so long. The stop device was soon adjusted, and then one little odd job after another, but we finally packed up at 2am leaving just the front grill, top cover and air filter to be fitted in the morning.

The seven members who participated in this marathon session were Andy Butterfield, Michael Moxon, Steve McCurdy, Maz Makari, Peter Brooks, Paul Rogers and Neil Swinton. Neil had already spent from 8am to 6pm on the OGC stand at the Otmoor Show but still stayed on until the job was finished.

The first launch on Sunday was at 1.15pm and the winch worked well throughout the day. The borrowed winch from Hinton which had arrived on Saturday afternoon went back unused, but what excellent friendship from our neighbouring club.

## FOOTNOTE

Over six months have gone by since writing this account, and the second engine worked really well for all of that time. Now we have a new challenge. The Liquid Propane Tank is in place after a small bribe to a passing JCB driver to dig out the foundation and trench for the electrical cable. Shame he wasn't still there when we had to fill it in by hand with shovels. Still it's all done now, filled up with 1000 litres of gas.

The new winch engine, an 8.2 litre Chevrolet V8 with LPG conversion kit was purchased with £11,000 from the Site Trust Fund. We first measured up to see if it would fit the winch chassis in January 1997. During the past few months it has acquired a mounting frame and a new dashboard to house all the instruments that came with it. Most members will have been watching it's progress in the hangar during that time.

Removing the diesel engine and fitting the LPG engine occurred over the weekend of 10th and 11th January 1998, with the first launch (and a successful day's flying) on 17th January. It's smooth, it's quiet and it's powerful. All we're waiting for now is a nil wind day when the Acro comes out, then we'll find out if we've wasted our money. Anyway, up and running about 12 months after the first measuring session, but probably 2 years after someone (Neil Turner) first thought of it.

*Paul Rogers*

# PLEASURE AND PANIC

**After a long journey, 532 miles with no relief driver, bed was the only thing on my mind.**

The next morning looked very unimpressive, light south-westerly winds with a large amount of cloud. Briefing for new arrivals was at 09:30 so we arrived at the club at 08:15, giving us plenty of time to rig and get to the briefing.

The day started to look better with large holes in the cloud as a result of the invisible wave which was now beginning to form. The briefing was short or should I say concise, as everybody was "champing at the bit" to get airborne. The launch in the Nimbus 2 was unexciting, the tug managed to remain in front of me throughout the launch and I pulled off at 3000ft. Gliders which had launched before me were above, tracking back and forth, pretending they were on an invisible ridge.

So I turned with them and opened the airbrakes in order to make a notch on the barograph trace. After losing about 100ft I closed the brakes and joined in with the others performing their swan lake ballet, but now with one more swan. The Nimbus climbed well, and with each beat I outclimbed another glider. Soon I became the highest swan, still performing the same elegant dance but with all the other gliders below.



The wave shifted around and minor movements had to be made to stay in the lift. Soon I was on my own, no other gliders could be seen.

But the wave collapsed and no matter what I did I could not re-establish contact with it. To the west towards Braemar I saw a small lenticular forming so I headed off in that direction at 11000 ft. Lost very little height travelling towards this cloud, as I encounter small pockets of very weak lift and very little sink.

After going around the side of the cloud, so I didn't get caught in the sink, I started

to climb at 3 knots. At 15000ft I told myself I needed just over 19000ft to achieve diamond height, so I kept working on the controls trying to stay in the shifting lift. But at 18000ft I began sinking, and my pessimistic side told me I'd blown it.

I searched the area for any indication of lift and stumbled into 1 knot which soon increased to 2 knots and I was on my way up again. At 19500ft I then told myself I needed 21000ft to be absolutely sure of Diamond height and that this would convince the barograph calibrator.

At 22500ft QFE (23,000 AMSL) still climbing at half a knot the intense cold got the better of me and I started my descent, pausing every now and then for the glider to warm up. It seemed to take ages. With full brakes and 70 knots was achieving 6 knots down.

After breaking through a thin layer of cloud the airfield was quickly found and I said to myself "isn't Aboyne wonderful". So on my first launch on the first day of my first trip to Aboyne I achieved Diamond height. Easy.



Next day, after another early launch we decided to land for lunch. The radio echoed envious thoughts of people who couldn't understand why we would want to pay for another launch in the afternoon when you could stay airborne.

Dave Weekes, Dave Nisbet and myself sat at the outside table enjoying a sausage sandwich (each) watching the takeoffs and landings and listening to the radio chatter from 8000ft. Then panic began to set in as rain approached.

Booker control (in the guise of Booker CFI Julia Angel) called all their gliders down at once, followed by an announcement from the Lasham CFI doing the

same with his fledglings. A frenzy of activity then as gliders appeared from everywhere.

One glider marked the runway with a lovely white line as his undercarriage refused to stay down when not locked properly. Another glider marked the other runway, when on impact his tail skid fell off. Both gliders were flying again an hour later.

The three of us sat there, feeling extremely glad we came down before the rush. The rain lasted about 30 minutes but soaked everything. Dave (Hinton) Lattimer's wife arrived from Inverness Airport. Dave was looking for someone to take her up in the BGA's DG500. He had booked it but no one wanted to fly as the sky looked a bit dark.

I saw fingers pointing at me from a distance. Dave approached and asked if I would do it. With his wife standing there looking pitiful, and as they were going home next day, I agreed.

We released from the aerotow at 3500ft and after a short time located 2 knots of wave. I handed the controls over to her and she kept the glider in the lift which was found close to the edge of the cloud. She handled the glider well, her one-week course paying off.

We reached 9000ft and, still climbing at 2 knots with the weather looking better, we could see over the top of the cloud, marvelling at all the holes in it.

Suddenly Booker control called all Booker gliders down to 4000ft as the weather was deteriorating again. From where we were it was improving, so we decided to continue. Going high enough to use oxygen would have been a first for my co-pilot.

Booker control then told all Booker gliders to land. It still looked good from up top, but we couldn't tell what was happening below, so I decided to descend, thinking it was better to be on the safe side. I tried to pull the airbrakes *but they were frozen solid*. No matter how hard I pulled nothing happened.

I calmly told my passenger it was not a problem and we would descend without them - they would thaw out as we got lower.

We slowly reached 4000ft and at that height we were still in the bottom of the wave system so we could stay there for a while. After 15 minutes the brakes still wouldn't budge.



Not wanting to frighten my passenger or myself, I radioed Dave Weekes in the Astir and explained that we were hanging around trying to defrost the brakes. I knew that Aboyne would be on channel and listening. I then remembered that the DG has a thermometer, tucked away behind the air pipes. It still read minus 4 degrees, so no wonder the brakes wouldn't defrost.

We descended again until the outside temperature became positive. At 2300ft it was plus 1.7 degrees. I tried to maintain height but now we were below the wave system and slowly descending.

At 2000ft, descending, and airbrakes still frozen, I realised that the next 10 minutes or so were going to be interesting. I told Dave that we would be landing soon and the brakes were still frozen. I was still trying not to worry my passenger.

I saw gliders being moved, runways being cleared, and people jostling for position to get the best view. Landing a heavy two-seater, multi-wheeled glider on a hard runway with no airbrake and no wheel brake (It's at the end of the airbrake) was going to be testing.

The flaps still worked OK so I selected landing flap position. At least we'd have some drag. Side slipping onto a 12ft wide runway didn't worry me (he lied). Stopping after touchdown was going to be the hard part.



Aboyne has now knocked down the wall at the end of the runway so at least I could roll off the runway into the grass overshoot field. At the end of this field is a fence, power lines and the river. I thought that retracting the undercarriage half way into the overshoot field might be the best course of action.

I called "97 down wind runway 27" on the radio, and after doing my checks I confirmed that both our straps were secure and tight. Abeam the airfield at 1200ft the air brakes opened with a bang as I pulled hard once again.



A smile appeared on my face which I couldn't shake off as I informed the waiting crowd below that they should

get a refund on their tickets as the show was over.

**For the rest of the week people were seen wiping dry their brakes before take off and some were even applying Vaseline.**

I learnt a valuable lesson that day.

*Howard Stone*

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Distributed free to members, ex-members and friends of the Oxford Gliding Club. Contributors to this issue were: Fiona Buck, Tim Charlesworth, Cris Emson, Steve Evans, John Gordon, Norman Hedge, Maz Makari, Dave Nisbet, Paul Rogers, Howard Stone, Barry Taylor and Dave Weekes.

Stories of the "howidunit" type, factual articles and other contributions are always wanted, otherwise the editor will dig out unpublished material of his own. If any member has news of other clubs visited recently, please share it with us.

## FRIDAY NIGHT FLYING IN 1997

The weather was not as kind to us last year and on several nights flying was cut short. We used all our reserve nights and flew one group on a Tuesday evening during the flying three weeks.

On one Friday (in week 13, of course) after a dozen launches the winch suddenly started making an unattractive rattling noise, dumped the contents of the cooling system into the sump, then blew it out in a spectacular way via the oil filler cap! Visitors and crew retired to the bar and I returned home to contemplate imminent explanations and refunds to all groups booked for the rest of the season.

The next day was Otmoor Show and I departed early with the Acro, leaving a few volunteers pulling on overalls and collecting spanners. When I returned on Sunday evening the winch engine had been changed and was on the field giving launches - the repair team had worked all day Saturday and most of the night too. What stars! [See page 7 - Editor ].

This was not quite the end of "week 13" problems however, as no spare evenings were available to pick up those who had not flown. It was decided therefore that we would accommodate them at 6pm on a Saturday evening. In the event the day was a disaster due to equipment problems and RAFSPA activity and we only just managed to fly our guests. This was unfortunately at the expense of some club members who had been waiting for a launch since 9:30am and were then asked to give up their places. My thanks to all who did so without complaint.

All the above sounds very gloomy but, despite the problems, we maintained our income at last year's level. My thanks to all of you who put in so much effort and gave our visitors memorable experiences. A particular thank you to Steve and Maz who I somehow managed to persuade to run the cash and co-ordination side of groups B and C, and to those who cooked over 850 barbecue suppers. Perhaps we should sell the evening as barbecue with optional flying!

So in 1998 - I am accepting bookings from January and hope to start operations on Friday 1st May. If you helped last year I hope you will do so again, and I will contact you. If you didn't then it's time you did! In particular I would like at least one extra cook and also someone to assist Paul with the bar so that he can eat his supper in peace.

*Norman Hedge*

## IS THIS A RECORD?

It was the annual migration to Feshie again. The long haul up the M6 past Glasgow, Stirling with the comforting thought that with the wind having been blowing easterly for the last week, Feshie couldn't possibly have been working and that a change for the better must therefore be imminent.

Arrive at the airfield and into the old mobile dentist's surgery that passes for a control caravan, to be greeted by Mo and Barry: "You should have been here yesterday. Three diamond heights."

"What? It's been blowing easterlies."

"Feshie gets great wave in easterlies." Another theory out of the window. And yes, the weather had changed, and it definitely wasn't for the better. What with wind and rain, we didn't even get a launch until Wednesday. Maz and Steve, on a limited time budget, were not looking happy. Us there for a fortnight were still fairly relaxed.

Then it was back to aerotowing out of the Feshie strip, with those unnerving few seconds in the turbulence over the trees when there really isn't anywhere to go other than the forest or the river if you get an 'eventuality.' Trevor the Feshie CFI had however cheered us up slightly by having proved during the past year that the river bed is a fairly valid option. His motor glider engine had gone on strike at the wrong moment.

Into the bowl in the ridge behind Feshie, with that wonderful kick in the backside as you start outclimbing the ridge, and a distinct feeling of superiority as you whip over the top of those walkers toiling up the footpath. The superior feeling evaporates rapidly as the ridge stops working and you have to scuttle back to the bowl, eyeing up the intervening terrain. And the bands of cloud and rain were marching in again from the west.

Thursday was rained off too, only enlivened by Feshie club night in one of the more disreputable local pubs, run (naturally) by a club member. Protests at the heathen English grasp of local terminology. "It's noo the Feshie valley, it's Glen Feshie."

Friday morning we were keen - the pub pundits had forecast early morning wave. So Barry and Mo were dragged out early and we launched by 8:45am. No wave, only the bands of cloud coming in steadily. Gain height up the ridge. Push out into the valley. Find nothing. Scuttle back, sweating that you've pushed it too far this time. Repeat for about 3 hours until bum (and brain, if different) are numb. But it picked up slowly. First Howie and then John H reported wave up the Feshie valley - sorry - Glen Feshie. They were at 6000ft and climbing. And there was this lovely sunlit sharp upwind edge to a big cloud bank.

But I was stuck at 3000ft wondering how? Then miraculously above the opening into the bowl, a thermal! Now then, the Skylark knows what to do with thermals, and promptly got us up to 4,500ft. Quick, head up the Feshie and there it was, nice smooth lift, only 2-3 knots but steady. And the sun was shining, the bum wasn't numb any

more and gliding is the world's greatest occupation. Up and down the face of the cloud. Johnny H says "Where are you, Dave?"

"7,500 and climbing." Last year I'd topped out at 9,950ft. Would this year be a repeat?

"Where are you, Howie?"

"13,000ft north of Aviemore." Can't see him. I can see Echo November about 5 miles north so head that way, losing about a thousand feet in the process. No wave bars, just blue. A question of blundering about the sky, just hoping. I can blunder about with the best of them! One knot at Aviemore, and finally I can see the Nimbus shining in the sun above me, looking tiny in the dark blue sky. Wonderful sunshine, gappy cloud well below, a tremendous sight. And the altimeter slowly crept up to 11,500ft. Pull out the oxygen mask - that does it, the lift vanishes. Twelve miles from Feshie. Johnny H is floating along nearby, both of us sinking gently.

Must do something. Try going further north. Hit sink. Be positive, you'll come out the other side in a minute and there'll be lovely lift. The sink gets positively worse. Lose 3000ft far quicker than it

# HOW I DUN A WOODEN

was gained, still sinking, still heading for Inverness. Turn south and fly back through all that sink. Switch on the GPS. 75 knots on the ASI, the GPS says 14 knots over the ground, 14 miles from Feshie. Rats! Fly through a small cloud at 6,000ft and come out the other side with slight airframe vibration due to ice on wings. That won't help either!

There's the strip in the distance, with all those trees and roads in between. Having spent most of the week driving up and down the roads to Aviemore, I know I don't fancy most of the fields, and definitely don't fancy the woods. The GPS is still raising two fingers. Better call Feshie.

"I think I'll be landing out." Sounds of disbelief from Echo November, now at 13,000ft not having ventured north as I did.

Steve comes on the radio, just to cheer me up. "The valley from Aviemore to Feshie is full of sink" he says. So I quietly orbit Aviemore, hoping for an unlikely thermal, playing at picking fields. Find a nice big flat stubble field just outside Aviemore and turn into it. Going over the fence it suddenly doesn't look so big. Field size is relative in Scotland!

Happily the Skylark's airbrakes were designed with me in mind and we trundle to a standstill without any drama. Tell Johnny H where I am, but he can see, still from a great height. The Rothiemurchus

Estate office is next to the field, so go and apologise for the arrival and ask for permission for retrieval. Nae bother, they're off tae lunch.

So what have we got? I reckon a low point of 1,500ft and a high point of 11,500ft. Could be a Gold height! Can't remember exactly what 3000 metres is in real money.

Later, Hawkeye's readings off the barograph trace said low 1,800ft, high 11,700ft, therefore height gain 9,900ft. The required gain of 3000 metres is 9,843ft. *That leaves exactly 57 feet in hand.* Would the BGA accept it? *Yes!*

So that's how I didn't make it back from 12 miles out with 11,500ft on the clock. Now that's what I call a record.

## OWED TO A SKYLARK

I'd always had this strange ambition to do my Gold C in the Skylark - in 34 years it has done more than a few. But Tom Lamb summed things up nicely - "It's done more hours and can fly a \*\*\*\*\* sight better than you, so don't interfere with the controls too much." He was right, but I persisted in interfering with the controls to the severe detriment of my ambitions.

The best I'd done previously was 225km a couple of years back.

# GOLD "C"

This fired me with confidence, but on my first 300km declaration the following weekend I achieved - 15km. Last year I took part in the Inter Club League - which is a terrific inducement to flying cross country. Go for it if you haven't tried! After two good results I was again having delusions that I had cracked soaring, but at the next meeting it was back to normal - 18km. On another occasion from Sherington I achieved a magnificent 24km after getting hopelessly lost. Too much interference with the controls and definitely time to get a GPS.

By the August flying weeks last year I was organised. A week's holiday, a GPS and on Thursday 14th a cold front had just gone through. I managed Worcester and back but a high overcast had ruined the day

The following day was supposed to be blue but the odd cumulus started bubbling up early. Was it worth another session of barograph sealing, declarations etc? I was feeling distinctly idle but was finally persuaded. Howie suggested that I try Newbury - Melton Mowbray, 309km.

There were cumuli all over the sky, but was I getting the thermals? Tried under the clouds, upwind, downwind, in the sunny patches. I finally got to 4000ft just north of Newbury but went round the TP at the racecourse in solid sink simply aided by my normal height losses while taking photographs.

Emerging at 2000ft we headed north for a cloud by Chieveley services, still in sink, and arrived there at 1000ft. There was a tiny half knot, half thermal and we went round and round, keeping an eye on suitable fields. The Skylark wouldn't settle into the thermal like it normally does, probably due to excessive interference with the controls. What did the spectators in the service area down below think I was doing - waiting for lunch to be served?

Half an hour later we'd got to about 1500ft. Howie shot past, much higher, in the DG500. "Lots of lift up here," he cheerfully advised. No doubt, but getting to it was the problem. He was right, though, the lift eventually picked up and I finally seemed to be making a better job of using it (too knackered to interfere with the controls any more). By then it was about 2pm and there were still 200km to go. I decided to go to Hus Bos at least, even if the 300km wasn't on.

The climbs got better and the resolve rekindled. Near Northampton I could hear Hawkeye coming up behind in the Acro, also going to Melton Mowbray. *I'll follow him* I thought foolishly. Fat chance. About two thermals later he'd been and gone. Over HB there was Graham in the Nimbus in some nice lift. "300k beers tonight," he said, extremely optimistically I thought, especially after seeing the Acro low near Melton. But the distance was ticking down on the GPS and there was a PIK shooting around the sky, finding thermals in which the Skylark happily outclimbed him. It was Simon Hogg trying out his new toy. OK Simon, the PIK's good in a straight line, but vertically the Skylark definitely has it.

Another set of photos and height loss flying left handed around the railway bridge TP. Maybe there's something to be said for GPS data loggers too! A stack of gliders at HB pointed to good lift once again but by then it was 5pm.

We trundled on down towards Weston keeping high but the clouds were getting a lot more dispersed. With 25km to go we were down to 1500ft and I was feeling depressed. Was it going to be a case of "so near...." etc? Then in the middle of a blue patch a 1 knot thermal appeared. The Skylark locked into it with that air of certainty when you know that the best thing to do is relax and let it do the flying. I resolved to stay with that little thermal right to the top, hopefully 4000ft, even if it took all night. It nearly did.

300km was now on, even if it meant a final glide straight into a field but 5 minutes later a big blue thermal put us well within reach of Weston, with me in a mixture of total disbelief and euphoria. A completed gold badge and diamond goal by Skylark? Take that, you aviators of white gliders with T tails! At 6hr 45min it wasn't exactly the world's fastest 300km, but deeply satisfying. Gliding can be fun!

The barograph had worked. Would the photos come out, would the film processors cut up the negative by mistake, would they be the right TPs, in the right sector? They looked good, but would the BGA agree? *Yes!*

How about all three diamonds by Skylark? Don't be silly David, you're still a lousy pilot.

*Dave Weekes*

# HOLIDAY AT FESHIEBRIDGE

Sheila and I arrived at Feshiebridge on Saturday 27th September in glorious sunshine and light winds after a very easy tow up from Weston. Apparently it had been sunny with light winds all week, much to the chagrin of those pilots who had arrived the previous weekend.

"Don't worry," I said to those sitting next to their unused gliders, "it will get better next week." Remarkably, it did!

For those who have not been there (come next year!) I will give a quick description of the site.

Situated in the Spey valley, six miles southwest of Aviemore, Feshiebridge is the classic mountain wave site. A rough grass strip 900 yards long and about 50 wide, the airfield nestles against a steeply wooded ridge rising to 1200 feet to the southeast. At the southern end of the airfield the ridge ends and is replaced by a very large southwest facing bowl which rises to over 2500 feet.

Glen Feshie is a beautiful and largely unlandable valley stretching 9 miles to the southeast and can be soared along its whole length in the right conditions. In westerly and southwesterly winds wave is often contacted in this area. To the west of the airfield is Loch Insh and beyond, the A9 runs to the southwest. Both are good landmarks and many good landing fields are to be found near the A9. All launching during the wave camp is by aerotow.

On Sunday, after rigging the Acro, I aerotowed to the bowl with George Crawford for a most pleasant 'rock polishing' flight in the light southwesterly. The scenery is spectacular and George was reluctant to come down. With the wind so light, the ridge was a little crowded

## Steve Evans

and a bit intimidating for the less experienced. By the end of the day the wind speed had increased considerably and the first signs of wave were seen.

Monday dawned clear with high lenticulars but by the time we were all ready to go, considerable amounts of low 'rotor' cumulus had spread across the sky. Everyone launched, Sheila and I in the Acro, and careered up and down Glen Feshie in very strong ridge conditions.

Finally at the far end of the valley several of us contacted wave and moved slowly up through the 7/8 cumulus. We broke off the climb at 10500ft due to painful ears, while still climbing at 4 knots. A few minutes later we heard George above 13000ft having reached his Gold height. The return to the field involved a precision let down through cloud, made a lot safer with GPS.

It had been a good day with most of us in wave at some point. Steve McCurdy and Jack Miller had flights with me in the Acro and learnt just how soarable Glen Feshie can be at low level. Just as the sun was setting George was last to land having flown for eight hours.

Tuesday was mostly notable for the superb evening party we all had in our cottage. Games were organised by Steve McCurdy and everyone consumed large amounts of booze and curry. This was particularly enjoyed by the wives (Sheila, Ursula, Moreen and Margaret) who said they had a wonderful week!

Wednesday was interesting, with very strong winds at 90 degrees to the runway. Barry Meeks quite sensibly refused to launch

two-seaters but the few single seaters that did fly (including George) sat all day at 12000ft in wave with an 80 knot headwind.

On Thursday we all went walking in the morning as there was a solid overcast. On the way back, however, the sky cleared to reveal the best looking wave I have seen in this area. The first person to launch (not one of us) reached 22000ft and diamond height but, as often happens, when we got up there the wave had come down to the 10 to 12000ft range.

I flew with Margaret Miller for two hours of the best wave conditions we saw all week. We went all over the place in the strong conditions and a 300km flight was completed in wave by a local pilot.

Friday again showed signs of wave and I flew with Maz Makari who had been ill all week with a bad cold, missing most of the fun. We bashed the ridge and worked our way up above the cloud tops with Maz learning how to descend safely in the valley when surrounded by cloud.

The wave collapsed around lunchtime but had reformed further to the north by late afternoon. With no one else left to fly in the Acro, Peter Brooks and I decide to try to race downwind to contact the wave towards Aviemore. After some tense minutes we became established in wave over Aviemore and climbed away.

At 10000ft we saw Ian Young and Jack Miller who were both close to their Gold heights. A trap had been sprung, however, as towards the airfield to the south all the gaps had closed and our gap over Aviemore was moving rapidly downwind and filling in.

I suggested that Jack and Ian should let down in the gap and land near Aviemore if necessary.

This is a known area of good fields. With a cloud base of 3000ft or less, return to the airfield was unlikely. Not taking my own advice, Peter and I decided upon an instrument let down closer to Feshiebridge as we both had GPS and Peter had not done this before.

At five miles from the field, the clouds were billowing up to our height and reports from the airfield which had initially said that there were some gaps, now reported that the cloud was down on the mountains and it was raining.

We lined up with the valley between Aviemore and Loch Insh and I noted the compass reading as well as setting the GPS to zero track error.

Just as we were about to enter cloud at about 7000ft I noticed the OFF flag on the turn and slip indicator come up. The battery was dead! A quick call to Peter

and we had switched to the reserve battery, just as the world went grey.

"I've got 262 degrees heading on the GPS, what does yours say?" I called to Peter, hoping for a confirmation.

"Mine says BAD COVERAGE" said Peter, a little bemused. His GPS was clearly faulty and I watched mine carefully, cross referencing with the compass to keep us on a straight heading to Loch Insh.

"I think I can see the ground" said Peter as we passed through 3000ft. I stayed glued to the instruments. It does not pay to come off instruments until you know you are in clear air.

We finally cleared cloud at 1800ft to be met with a wall of drizzle but our GPS waypoint at Loch Insh was just visible a mile ahead and we easily made it to the airfield. Jack Miller also just made it back by

letting down through the hole at Aviemore and creeping slowly along the mountain using bits of ridge lift. Ian Young was less lucky, landing in a small field some miles short of the airfield. But he had just made it to Gold height!

George Crawford landed last (as usual) having been ridge soaring at low level all day. He accumulated an amazing 28 hours flying for the week!

Everyone had a terrific time at Feshiebridge both in the air and on the ground. Especially pleasing was the good time the girls had together while visiting local attractions. Most of us have already booked for next year so if you would like to experience some different flying (or different partying) join us for Feshiebridge '98 starting around 26th September.

Steve Evans

## CORNERED BEEF QUICHE

SERVES 4-6

1 Large tin corned beef  
225g / 8oz very low fat cottage cheese  
3 eggs  
1 onion, chopped  
seasoning to taste  
pinch mixed herbs

Scottish mushrooms, picked while on holiday at Feshiebridge and dried for the winter on wire racks over a central heating radiator, then re-constituted slowly with wine or quickly with boiling water (optional).

*Pre-heat oven at 190 C / 375 F / gas 5. Mix the corned beef, onion and mushrooms together, place in the base of a flan dish and press down well. Beat the eggs with the cottage cheese, season to taste and pour this mixture onto the beef base. Bake for 30 minutes until set and golden brown. Serve hot with green vegetables or cold with salad.*

*May be cooked in a microwave on "high" for 10 minutes and browned under a hot grill.*

### New members note!

Did you know that you can subscribe to the British Gliding Association magazine

**SAILPLANE**

**AND**

**GLIDING**

via the club, the Club will get 10% of the subscription fee and you save the cost of postage.

**Phil Hawkins**

**01869 247 873**

# 1997 in a Nutshell - Committee Meeting Notes

A sub committee was formed to process the lottery grant application for funding to upgrade the club fleet. The five member sub committee met every six weeks, and it is planned that the completed application will have been submitted in early 1998. If the application is approved, the club fleet would eventually consist of a K23, a Discus, two K21s and the existing Acro, Astir, T21 and a single K8. Details of modifications to allow the K13 to be flown by disabled pilots have been obtained and a quote has been obtained for carrying out these modifications to both the front and rear cockpits of one of the K13s. This work will only be done if the lottery claim is unsuccessful.

Steve Evans arranged for the club to have the use of the BGA DG500 from 11-15 August at a cost to the club of £200 with flying charged at normal club rates. This gave many members of the club their first experience of flying a flapped high performance glider.

The committee will be looking at the possibility of replacing the electric vario in the Acro with a GPS based system when funds become available.

A powerful V8 engine, modified to run on LPG has been obtained and is currently being adapted for the winch. An LPG storage tank has been installed in front of the hangar with a protective barrier. A petrol engined tow out vehicle is to be obtained, and converted to run on LPG. The Land Rover gearbox has been repaired and refitted by Dave Weekes. The remains of the old Land Rover have been disposed of.

The annual statistics showed that there had been a significant reduction in private flying during the year, offset by a small increase in club flying. The club made a reasonable operating profit but spent much of this on the new winch engine.

The LGC Met gliding forecast service organised by Derek Sear was suspended and replaced with an alternative service available from the Met Office by fax on a premium rate telephone line. A computer for task setting was put together by Steve Evans and donated to the club.

It was another successful year for Friday evening group flying organised again by Norman Hedge. All evenings were booked in advance and the five evenings originally held in reserve were also booked, with Saturday evenings used as reserves. Reserve

Fridays will be kept next year as contention with club flying on the reserve Saturdays proved to be a problem.

A two page article about the club was published in the *Oxford Courier* which publicised the Cadetship scheme and helped generate 11 applications for the 6 cadetship positions. Publicity for the 1998 cadet intake will be arranged shortly and applications will be accepted in January.

Claire Thome and Cris Emson organised the Inter Club League and a party was held with a pig roast and live band on "our" weekend. The party was considered to have been a success and made a modest profit. Unfortunately the Inter Club League Final scheduled for Saturday 6 September clashed with the funeral of the Princess of Wales and had to be postponed. Howard Stone, Cris Emson and Dave Nisbet represented the club on Sunday 7 September and finished in joint second place.

Noise abatement is continuing to cause problems for RAFSPA, and could have implication on OGC operations. The CO at Brize Norton has stipulated that RAFSPA must use two runways to minimise noise, and in some circumstances this could impose severe restrictions on OGC operations. However, the good news was that RAFSPA did not operate during the summer standdown. A meeting will be arranged with RAFSPA to discuss the situation when parachuting operations resume in the Spring.

A static display featuring the Acro was again arranged for both days of the Otmoor Show which, despite incessant rain on the Saturday, was considered to be a moderate success. Although no new members were attracted this year, approximately 70 raffle tickets were sold. The club was also represented at the 'Young Eagles' day at Kidlington, organised by the Oxford Strut of the PFA. The committee will be investigating the possibility of using the airfield as a venue for the 1998

Weston on the Green village fete.

The clubroom has been redecorated and modifications have been made to the safe. Following the failure of the heating system, a replacement boiler was obtained by Andy Butterfield and installed by Graham Barrett. Paul Rogers has obtained a fridge and cooker which have been installed in the kitchen area. A meeting with Cherwell District Council took place regarding a grant for improving disabled access in the clubhouse, including the provision of disabled toilets.

During the year we heard the sad news that Colin White had died in New Zealand. Colin had been a long standing member of the club and had held committee positions and been an instructor and CFI prior to emigrating. He continued to hold current membership until his death. An obituary was submitted for inclusion in S & G.

The club lost John Gordon and Gordon Craig as instructors, but gained Neil Swinton as an AEI and Dave Nisbet as an Assistant Category Instructor.

Trial lesson vouchers for use as raffle prizes were donated to Witney County Primary School, Crowmarsh Gifford School, Benson PTA, St Swithins school in Kennington and the Friends of Kennington Cancer Fund. A cheque for £100 was sent to the BGA Alps Defence Appeal.

## Compiled by Barry Taylor

### Club Officers for 1998

|                   |                                              |                                        |                |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|
| Chairman          | Steve Evans                                  | Workshop manager                       | Graham Barrett |
| Vice Chairman     | Peter Brooks                                 | Ground equipment                       | Paul Rogers    |
| Secretary         | Barry Taylor                                 |                                        |                |
| Treasurer         | Nick Hill                                    | Instructor rota                        | Cris Emson     |
| CFI               | Cris Emson                                   | Duty pilot rota                        | Cris Emson     |
| Committee         | Paul Rogers<br>Norman Hedge<br>Steve McCurdy | Membership sec.                        | Nick Hill      |
| Technical officer | Brian Payne                                  | Publications                           | Phil Hawkins   |
| Safety officer    | Graham Barrett                               | Starter packs                          | Norman Hedge   |
| Parachutes        | John Hanlon                                  | Bookings                               | Norman Hedge   |
| Radios            | Brian Payne                                  | Inter Club League                      | Howard Stone   |
| Instruments       | Brian Payne                                  | S&G Club News<br>(and other publicity) | Steve McCurdy  |