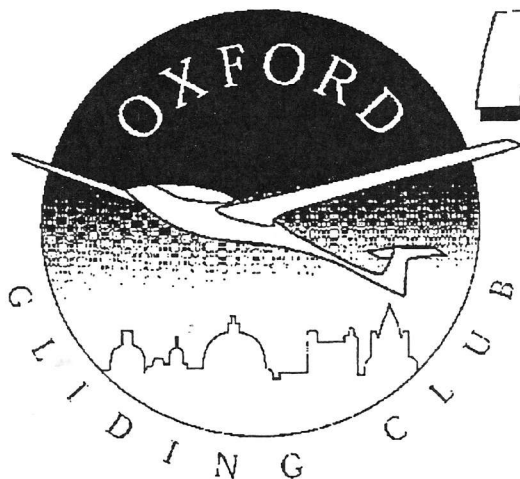




FINAL GLIDE

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Issue 19: November 1999

Edited by Phil Hawkins

THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE ACRO (for a while)

The pilot's story

As most of you will know I have been flying the Acro *hors concours* at Inter Club League meetings for a number of years. When drawing up the provisional schedule for 1999 I was giving some priority to two pilots who had asked to fly with me in 1998, but for whom the opportunities never arose. These were Nick Brooks and Emma Cuthill.

On the whole the weather this season was just as bad as 1998, if not worse. Nick's day in the Acro, for example, was very hard work. An over-optimistic task at the Bicester meeting in blue conditions with a low inversion, which ended with a land-out near Northampton. Emma fared even worse with a completely grey day at Bidford, although she did get a free aerotow with one of the Bidford instructors who wanted to compare the Acro with a K-21 which he had just flown.

The Acro's finest hour this year was probably at Bidford, on the day after Emma's wash-out. Paul Rogers and I romped around a 155km triangle to Worcester and Bicester, rarely coming much below 4000ft. Then I installed Melvin Green in the front seat, took another aerotow and flew the Acro home to Weston-on-the-Green in 38 minutes flat. Boy, was Melvin impressed by that!

Our own League meeting at Weston-on-the-Green began pleasantly enough on Saturday with a task around Little Rissington, Alcester and Oxford. My co-pilot on that occasion was Carole Shepherd. It was a patchy sort of day with long glides between the good bits. You need confidence in the glider's performance to cruise at a steady speed in still air under unbroken layer clouds towards a patch of sunshine in the far distance. I thought that Carole probably learned something from that flight. We turned slightly short of the Oxford TP in calm conditions to make quite certain of getting home in watery evening sunshine. When you're not competing, details like this don't matter.

The weather for Sunday 11th July initially looked much better, with the added novelty of tug aircraft operating out of Weston. It was Claudia's turn in the front seat. Heading south under good-looking clouds I was able to relax as she did all the flying. The task took us around the Chieveley motorway junction at Newbury, then north-west over Swindon

and Cirencester (TP2). Here all the clouds had thinned out to nothing, and we were struggling in weak blue thermals with lower and lower tops, in company with Maz in the Pilatus. The north-easterly wind seemed to be increasing and the third leg was into wind, in theory towards Moreton-in-Marsh although we never got that far.

The flight was obviously coming to an end in the area of Northleach. The terrain thereabouts is uneven, every field seemed to have a slope, and nearly all had deep crop. Then we spotted a possible landing field to the north-west. On closer inspection it was flattened crop rather than actually cut, and worse still the field appeared to have some drainage ditches across it, but there was a small hay field nearby. The only other choice was a field with a domed surface, higher in the middle and lower around the hedges, which looked as if it contained long grass. The thing that made me suspicious about this field was an abrupt change in texture which occurred in a straight line right across the middle, more or less parallel to the landing direction, and right over the top of the dome where I wanted to land.

We were now down to around 1000ft agl and it was time to make a choice. To recap, the available options were:

- a) Crop fields of various sizes, slopes and orientations.
- b) A field with long grass, definitely big enough but with a texture change across the middle, and slopes which limited the available landing area to the bit with the texture change.
- c) A small hay field adjacent to a village.

Choosing (c) I moved across to take a better look at it. I was doing the flying now, of course, and my co-pilot was no doubt making mental notes as I described what I could see down below. The field was small, there was a stationary white object near the middle (a ceramic water trough) and one stack of bales in a corner. It would be possible to land diagonally towards the north-east, with a clear approach over a stone wall, avoiding the obstacles. The slope was gradual, possibly slightly downhill but there were no nearby watercourses to give clues. No power wires and no livestock.

continued inside...

Special issue

This issue will be handed to members attending the 1999 AGM (and posted later to the remainder). Issue 20 is due in early 2000.

The last flight of the Acro.....

Continued from front page:

The fact that the landing was going wrong did not become apparent until the final turn onto the approach, which was too late to do very much about it. My big mistake was that instead of landing into a brisk headwind to help me into this small field, the wind was blowing strongly from the left. My final turn drifted to the right as a result, meaning that I had to make a last-minute correction to avoid a group of trees before resuming my intended landing direction with somewhat increased speed. Unfortunately the majority of the landing field was actually in a wind shadow due to a small wood further to the left, but I did not have time to think about that. Descending through the wind gradient we bumped onto the ground at fairly high speed, the ground fell away, then we bumped and rolled again but the far side of the field was looming so I put the left wing on the ground and we slid towards the hedge sideways.

Both of us were unhurt. I had a small cut on my foot, but I am fairly sure that happened after I got out of the glider, on a broken piece of perspex. My fault for going barefoot all the time. We had come to a fairly gentle halt in the circumstances, with the right-hand side of the fuselage resting against a low stone wall. The hedge beyond the wall had absorbed the majority of the excess energy, particularly a hefty trunk about four or five inches in diameter which had carved a channel along the leading edge of the starboard wing. Whilst this wing looked beyond repair, the port wing was resting on the ground and appeared to be undamaged. The rear fuselage was broken as a result of my intentional groundloop, but the tailplane was OK. Both canopies were cracked, with small pieces having fallen out.

Having seen our "arrival" Maz was calling frantically on the radio, which fortunately still worked. I was able to reassure him that we were OK, but he decided to land with us anyway. He picked an adjacent grass field with an approach towards the north, which I had already rejected because of a terrifying slope downwards. However he had correctly assessed the surface wind, which helped him to come to a halt *before* reaching the bottom of the slope. We puzzled over an audible bang which was heard as he entered the field, until we found a small scrape of paint on the top of a wooden fence post, and a slight scratch on the starboard aileron at the trailing edge. That was close, Maz! His friendship was very welcome that day.

The local people including the farmer were very helpful with tea and sympathy. Bizarrely, the farmer's wife attempted to enlist my support for the pro-foxhunting lobby. She appeared to be much more concerned about Tony Blair's intentions towards her sport than she was about the detrimental effects of my sport on her stone wall. Later Howard, Haste, Fiona and Mick came out to help us recover the remains. I checked first with the BGA accident investigators, but the rules and regulations are few if there are no injuries.

So what can I pass on to you in the way of valuable lessons from this experience? To begin with, here are the conclusions which I included in the BGA accident report.

The things I did wrong were:

a) **Assessing the surface wind incorrectly.** The aerotow takeoff from Weston-on-the-Green had earlier demonstrated the north-easterly wind. This had been confirmed by the direction of drift whilst thermalling. However I merely transferred this to the ground, without taking any account of slopes in local terrain, wind shear or possible wind shift over time.

b) **Accepting a field that was too small,** on the assumption that the wind and glider wheel brake would make a safe landing feasible. I had

actually considered landing in the same field but in the opposite direction, but rejected this because of the supposed tailwind.

c) **Rejecting alternative large crop fields** which would have been safer for the glider, at the expense of annoyance to a farmer and generally bad image for our sport.

d) **Failing to retreat downwind** when I saw how poor the choice of fields were in the Northleach area. There were better fields available near Cirencester. In retrospect this probably would have been the best option in the circumstances.

The things I did right were:

a) **Treating the safety of my student as the number one priority.** I did not want to hit the boundary wall head-on even at relatively low speed. I judged the correct moment to groundloop the glider so that the wing went into the hedge and the glider fuselage hit the boundary sideways.

b) **Not attempting to float over the boundary into the next field.** Although the glider came to rest against a hedge, the majority of the "upwind" boundary was low stone wall without a hedge. However there were two stone walls with a wide farm track between, both walls had barbed wire along the top with projecting wooden posts, and the field on the far side was in deep crop. I was glad I did not attempt that route.

c) **Getting sufficient sleep the previous night.** I don't think fatigue was a factor.

In retrospect I found it quite remarkable how quickly you can think when it matters. The landing changed quite smoothly from a normal field landing to a damage limitation exercise with no dithering and no feelings of "what do I do now?" If you think damage limitation sounds funny, considering the fact that the glider was written off, I guess I'm talking about damage to my co-pilot. If we were going to hit anything, she was going to hit first unless I did something about it. If I could have turned the glider by 180 degrees and slid into the wall backwards, I would have. On a practical note, I was grateful that we had been flying in a glider with a good strong cockpit shell that did not deform. Claudia suffered a slight stiff neck for a day or two, but that was all.

Both Claudia and I were mightily concerned as to whether the other had been seriously put off gliding as a result, but happily it appeared that neither of us have been. Naturally she is now more apprehensive than before about the prospect of solo field landings, whereas I have done lots and I know I can do them (most of the time). Of course I found the whole thing depressing, particularly having deprived other Club members of the pleasure of flying such a wonderful machine. The fact that the weather in the August flying weeks was poor, so nobody missed much, didn't really help. True, the Acro was not popular with some members, but it was the Club's most prestigious aircraft and I loved it. It was very sad to see it taken away in shreds.

I began to wonder if I had been too selfish, hogging the Acro for Club League meetings. The CFI seemed keen on the idea, and those novice pilots who were lucky enough to get good flights were clearly deriving some benefit. It was the pathetic sight of the Acro parked outside the hangar on booming afternoons that usually spurred me into action. In recent seasons I have been taking a large proportion of the risk with the Acro, so if an accident was going to happen, it was probably going to happen to me. Nick Hill later mentioned that the glider had only flown around 700 hours, including its previous life circuit-bashing in the RAF. I personally flew more than 100 of those hours in the back seat.

When the Club acquires a replacement glider, there will need to be a decision about whether or not we continue with the advanced cross-

country training programme, which benefits a relatively small proportion of Club members. The CFI and Committee are likely to be in favour of this, but if you disagree, don't forget they are only acting on your behalf.

There is an argument for concentrating Club operations on less adventurous forms of training, on the grounds that this provides the greatest benefits for the greatest number of our members. **Losing sight of this principle was one of the reasons why our lottery grant application failed.** For the same price as a new DG-505 we can buy two old but serviceable K-21s, or a whole fleet of K-7s (supposing we had the hangar space and enough instructors to fly them). After all, pilots who are convinced of their own ability will eventually buy their own gliders, take on their own risks and make their own way in this wonderful sport of ours. If you want your views to be heard, I suggest you contact the new Committee immediately, whilst the insurance money is still in the bank. Your collective opinion could affect the choice of a replacement glider.

As we all know cross-country flying involves risks, but I think these are outweighed by the benefits of coaching the next generation of competitive pilots. A future world champion could be a novice member of our Club at this very moment, but he or she probably needs a bit of a push-start on the path to glory. I think that's what the Club is here for, partly at least. I was taken for my first 90km cross-country in one of the K-13s in September 1975, less than six months after my first solo. I was, and still am, grateful that the instructor was prepared to take on that risk for me. Five years later I was competing

in the National Championships at Lasham. Now I'm in a position to repay that debt and I want to continue doing it.

In many ways I would support the idea of buying a pair of cheaper glass 2-seaters and maybe selling one of the K-13s. Just think of the fun we could have with two K-21s flying cross-country tasks in competition with each other. Upgrading the top end of the fleet could always come later, when the second K-13 is sold. However I recognise this is largely a selfish viewpoint. If the Club buys something whizzy and new like a DG-505 it's fairly obvious that I'm not going to get as much 2-seat flying as I did before. Everyone else is going to be falling over themselves in the rush to get a leg over the side. My fault for trashing the work horse that most instructors were bored with.

What happened to the Acro? Obtaining a quote from the manufacturers for a new right-hand wing turned out to be a joke. The reply was around £20,000 with delivery in March 2000 if we were lucky. Not surprisingly the insurers agreed to a write-off. The wreck was bought cheaply by a glider repairer who subsequently acquired an intact right-hand wing from the RAF (rumour has it they are crashing Acros quite often.) Once the fuselage has been repaired the glider will be sold at a comfortable profit and will fly again, probably next year. So the chances are you haven't heard the last of EZE. You may have loved it, you may have hated it, you may have thought it was the biggest white elephant in the Club's history, but you can't keep a good glider on the ground for long.

Phil Hawkins

WHAT MAKES A GLIDING CLUB SUCCESSFUL?

A letter from our Chairman

I think that most of us who have visited other clubs realise that the reason behind the Oxford Club going from strength to strength is due entirely to the members.

As with most clubs there is a hard core of "queen bees" who achieve 90% of the work. Day-to-day chores, maintenance, C of A's, modifications to buildings, ground equipment, and the site around our hangar. In an ideal world it would be nice to think that every member was willing to do something no matter how small to improve the Club and keep things running smoothly.

Traditionally there has been a Tuesday night crew who have worked on aircraft and ground equipment. These are vital to keep things working at minimal cost to the Club. The only reward for these members is the odd launch ticket, plus of course the satisfaction of "helping." However there are of course other ways in which people who are not able to spare Tuesday evenings can help.

For example, Friday evening flying is essential to our profitability at the Club - 90% of our annual profit is made on Friday evenings. We have a dedicated crew of helpers, working on airfield duties and catering duties, both essential for a suc-

cessful evening's operation. So if you can spare one evening a month to help with this event, it takes the pressure off the remaining regular helpers. Remember we only fly about 5 months of Fridays so we are only talking about 5 evenings per year!

Lastly on the "helping" scene, we are committed to running a launch point while RAFSPA are operating, with an active Launch Point Marshal. Cris Emson circulates the qualified members well in advance of their prospective duty days, but frequently we find no LPM has turned up! It is the only time you are called individually to help for half a day. **Nobody** has an excuse not to do his duty or swap a duty. I know there are holidays etc but you must please find a replacement for your duty to keep the pressure off those that are co-opted all too frequently for this chore.

To our new members I hope you will understand this is not just another whining letter but hopefully a note of encouragement to continue the success that this Club has achieved over the years. As a new member you may feel you haven't got the necessary expertise to help in some areas, but keeping the clubroom clean, hangar and workshop clean, free from clutter, toys, rubbish, are all vital parts of the working environment.

Next year our Club will be 50 years old, and the new Committee will be looking for ways

in which to mark this event. One way at present under consideration is to replace our Acro with a new 2-seater. Any ideas for our 50th anniversary celebration? Contact a Committee member.

Gliding at Weston has always been the number one activity but nowadays with excellent clubhouse facilities the social scene has been thriving. This is only successful if people are sociable! Sounds obvious doesn't it? Unfortunately there have been a couple of instances this year when members have written to me regarding anti-social behaviour.

I am not an agony aunt but I realise that personalities are clashing at times. Please think carefully before you do or say something which might upset other people. After all we are here to enjoy ourselves. Many clubs have cliques or disagreements between members, but I have always felt in the 30+ years I have been a member that OUR club was above most of this, let's keep it that way.

We must all look forward to our Millennium / 50th year with hope and success especially as we are hosting the Junior Nationals.

Peter Brooks

CFI'S TURN

Cris Emson



The past season has not been a good one, to say the least! It was even worse than last year in most respects (see Club

Ladder Report). A few issues have arisen during the year, that I would like to take some time discussing.

RAFSPA during 1999

Our relationship with RAFSPA this past year was mostly good, although it has been a little strained over the past couple of months. This followed an incident where the radio was used for inappropriate communications, after which our position on the airfield was very clearly pointed out. On a practical basis, we continue to have good relations with RAFSPA themselves, although the pressure they are under due to noise complaints is having a knock-on effect when we try to set up our co-joint operation.

The pilots of the new aircraft are proving less co-operative. We have had (at least) 3 major incidents involving the new pilots, involving them flying directly at a glider on circuit, flying at the winch whilst a launch was in progress (the launch was aborted early, and the cable only just dropped in time!), and the third when the aircraft took off directly at a landing glider, when both were committed to their respective actions, and they missed by only a few feet!

I have spoken to RAFSPA about 2 of these incidents, and I expect to be writing formally to the Commanding Officer over the winter about the actions of the pilots. For the record, the incidents I have mentioned all involved the pilot acting beyond RAFSPA instructions, and as such I believe RAFSPA themselves are finding the whole situation somewhat embarrassing. I hope that together, RAFSPA and ourselves can exert enough pressure to keep the pilots in line with what is normally a safe and tolerable operation.

Duty Pilots

I know it isn't the most popular of jobs on the airfield, but this past season has seen a lot of good Duty Pilots turning up, making the operation very effective. It makes a big difference to the way the club operates, and it is noticeable when a Duty Pilot is absent.

So I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all Duty Pilots that have done their bit during the year. And just so you do not feel left out, a vote of thanks to the Winch Drivers also, without whom we would certainly not be operating!

Safety Issues

Safety has become an issue at OGC this last year, more so than previously. We have had 2 major accidents, one involving the LS6, and the other, as we all know, involved the writing off of the Acro.

The first was a winch accident, where the wing hit the ground on launch, causing a ground loop and subsequent damage to glider (none to pilot). The message - keep the wings level on the ground run. If you are the wing-tip holder, make sure you run with the wing, keeping wings level (or as directed by the pilot). Do not "throw" the wing tip from you when you cannot keep up with the glider - let the wing simply run out of your hands. This will prevent the wing effectively being thrown to the ground by the wing tip holder.

The second was a field landing accident in the Acro. The message here - try to pick the best field you possibly can, as any small miscalculation of slope, size, wind direction, can all accumulate until an accident happens. If it gets to that stage, no matter how hard you try, you will not prevent the ensuing crash, only minimise its impact on the occupants (which is always a priority over the glider itself, which is insured and replaceable - you are not!). All field landings have an element of risk, it is up to us all to think very hard about what we are doing, and apply our knowledge and learning to minimise any risks.

These accidents should not in anyway act to deter us from flying, but it brings home that accidents can easily happen, and we should be constantly aware. If in any doubt, do not launch in long grass, with large crosswinds, and have a confidence boosting flight in a motor-glider to practice your field landings.

Instructors

Just a quick reminder, that I need your instructing hours as soon as possible. I will take them from the club computer, but that is not complete, let me know by Christmas, or I send whatever I have.

FINAL GLIDE is produced using Pressworks 3.04, printed on a Canon LBP-4 laser printer, then duplicated and stapled by Uniskill of Eynsham. Distributed free to members, ex-members and friends of the Oxford Gliding Club. Contributors to this issue were Nicky Beresford, Peter Brooks, Cris Emson, Phil Hawkins, Maz Makari and Barry Taylor. A number of excellent articles were received this summer, and the remainder will appear in issue 20 around Feb. 2000.

1999 IN A NUTSHELL

In many respects 1999 has been a good year for the club. We have finished the year with a healthy bank balance, gained a second Astir, a smart new bus and a second Range Rover.

Our membership level of 102 flying members is probably the optimum number for the facilities we currently have. We have flown more hours, more cross country kilometres and 20% more launches than we did in 1998, despite having fewer flying days due to the vagaries of the British weather.

The club has continued to foster a good relationship with the local community. Trial lesson vouchers were donated to the following schools: Cranfield Primary, Long Furlong Primary, St Swithins, Little Oaks Pre-School, the European School, St Peter's, and St Bartholomew's. A voucher was also donated to a charity auction arranged for Stoke Mandeville Hospital by an inmate at HMP Crendon.

Peter Brooks took an Astir to the St Bartholomews School Fete.

Neil Swinton gained his Assistant Category Instructor's rating and Gordon Craig has renewed his Full Category instructor rating. There have been a crop of first solos, Silver distances and Silver durations, and ten people sat the Bronze paper. The CFI helped secure a place for Rachel Brewin in the Junior Nationals at Bidford.

Astir 360 was added to the fleet just prior to the flying fortnight, as an increasing number of pilots are becoming qualified to fly DMH. Various other options for improving the fleet have been discussed on many occasions, sometimes until the early hours of the morning! The committee still has a mandate to move the club towards an all glass fleet, and the loss of the Acro during the summer made this issue a higher priority. The possibility of replacing the K-13s with K-21s was discussed, but the lack of suitable second hand aircraft would have meant purchasing these gliders new.

Although more expensive than a new K-21, it was considered that a DG-505 would be a better addition to the fleet. The committee are proposing to purchase a new DG-505 at the earliest opportunity, with the ultimate aim of purchasing a second one when funds become available, then selling both K-13s. Peter Brooks has submitted an application to the Foundation of Sport and the Arts, a charitable organisation funded mainly by Littlewoods Pools. If the application is successful, the money will be used for improvements to the fleet.

Under the supervision of Brian Payne and Graham Barrett, the Tuesday evening team have carried out much maintenance and C of A work on the fleet during the year. This has included repairs to the undercarriage door of Astir

DMH and repairs to one of the K8s following the discovery of a cracked rib during a D.I. The wings of K13 CCE have also been repainted.

Nick Hill arranged for a Genesis II demonstrator to be brought to the club, which was flown at Bicester by a small group of members. This unusual American glider, with its stubby fuselage and swept forward wings was well liked amongst those who flew it, but the current version only has an aerotow hook.

Earlier in the year there was some doubt about the suitability of SK94 parachutes. This was triggered by comments from the chairman of the BGA Technical Committee, who was (at the time) also the Technical Director of Irvin, a UK parachute manufacturer. All our parachutes were repacked in March by a designer for GQ Parachutes. The packer provided an independent assessment of the parachutes and declared that the SK94s were perfectly suitable for use. This type of parachute is currently in use at Bicester and Lasham. Two new parachutes were purchased at £485 each. They have a quoted life of 18 years.

Following an incident at Dunstable when a K21 was struck by lightning, the policy of parachute briefings for AM's was discussed. It was agreed that the level of briefing should be left to the discretion of the instructor. However, a decision was made to ensure that parachutes would be made available to members all year round.

This was Norman Hedge's fourth and final year for organising Friday evening flying, and was probably the most successful ever. The 16 available evenings were quickly snapped up, with many groups booking as early as January. The instructors and crews who turn up on Friday evenings help to generate a considerable amount of revenue for the club funds, which helps keep down the cost of flying for all of us.

A large number of strobs have been lost on the field during the year, which presumably end up being consumed by the grass cutting equipment. Various methods of recovering these have been suggested, including radio tags and fluorescent tape. Any other innovative suggestions would be welcomed, as the strobs are expensive to replace.

The Duty Pilot scheme, which was introduced to maximise operating efficiency and reduce the workload of the Duty Instructors, was jeopardised during the year by a small minority of members who refuse to participate. They are placing an unfair burden on the rest of the members.

Further maintenance work was carried out on the winch during the year. One of the pulleys became distorted and was rebuilt by Paul Rogers and Norman Hedge. The rope between the swivel joint and the cable was removed. An automatic throttle control was obtained for evaluation but unfortunately the system did not work as well as was hoped. To provide additional protection for

the winch driver, double glazed glass panels have been fitted to the front and roof of the winch. The guillotines are checked regularly to ensure that they are capable of cutting two cables in order to comply with BGA requirements.

A single deck bus for use as a Launch Point Vehicle was purchased at a cost of £600. Neil Turner and Paul Rogers have been working hard to get the bus ready for use before the winter months. The Land Rovers were sold and a second Range Rover purchased at £1600. It is not intended to convert this vehicle to LPG.

Many improvements have been made to the club premises during the year, mostly due to the sterling efforts of Paul Rogers. Two major projects were the modifications to the ladies toilet, allowing it to be used for disabled access and the installation of a new safe in the clubroom. A new gas tank has been installed and the workshop has been painted. The safety notice board has been moved to a more prominent position, and additional notice boards were made for use on the airfield. A fridge was donated for members' use and was installed under the stairs in the hangar.

During the year Nicky Beresford took on the post of Social Secretary, and immediately set to work on organising a dawn-to-dusk flying day for Saturday 3rd July. The event was a great success with a total of 124 launches, believed to be a club record. The Inter Club League party was another success. On the publicity front, Steve McCurdy contacted the Central TV Sports desk, who are interested in doing a feature on the club. They may also be interested in covering the Junior Nationals next year.

Claire and Cris have been busy organising the 2000 Junior Nationals. Claire has contacted Air Vice Marshall Philip Sturley to gain his support for the competition. AVM Sturley is a keen glider pilot and was very supportive of the project, although his impromptu visit to inspect the facilities caused some consternation among the military personnel at Weston.

The RAF formally gave their approval for the event to take place at Weston and the BGA accepted the proposal. Lembit Opik MP has agreed to perform the opening ceremony and is keen to help with local liaison, in conjunction with local MPs. Pete Stratten will be the competition Director, Tim Newport-Peace the Scorer, Taff Thorne the Tugmaster and Fl. Lt. Al McNamara the RAF contact.

Tugs have been arranged from Bicester and Hinton. The RAFSPA hangar and packing area will be made available for the competition, together with other buildings. There are likely to be up to 60 competitors, 10 BGA gliders and 10 additional people flying. Crown indemnity insurance of £2M has been arranged and sponsorship is being sought from commercial organisations. This is a major event for the club, and will require the full support of the members to ensure that it is a success.

Committee Meeting Notes

compiled by
Barry Taylor

Club Ladder Results for 1998-9 Season

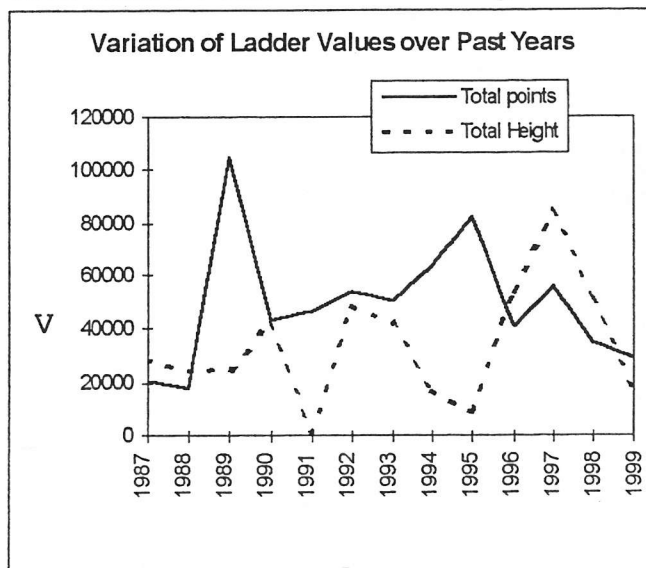
This year has not been a good year, with every metric that can be used being lower than last year. The summary first for the past season. The two tables show the final ladder results (well done Howie – again!), followed by the totals for the year (remember the ladder takes only the best 4 flights for each pilot). It is seen that there are few “good” flights, and mostly a number of medium sized flights make up the totals. If we look at the years statistics compared to previous years, we see a downward trend since last year.

Cris Emson

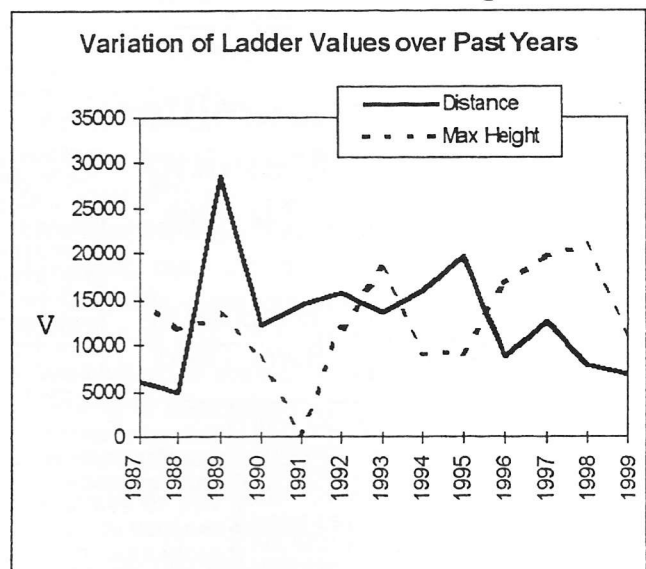
Club Ladder Results					
Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Total
H Stone	2101	1555	1418	932	6006
C Emson	589	1739	1939	378	4645
P Hawkins	2067	805	764	350	3986
J Miller	1209	580	579	413	2781
M Makari	714	698	698	662	2772
D Weekes	756	562	301	229	1848
M Hastings	895				895
M Gage	449	440			889
B Payne	812				812
C Buengen	447	223			670
G Craig	571				571

Season Totals		
No Flights	Distance	Points
6	1263	6459
4	905	4645
9	1399	5292
4	451	2781
8	1144	4471
6	820	2098
1	246	895
2	171	889
1	162	812
2	160	670
1	147	571

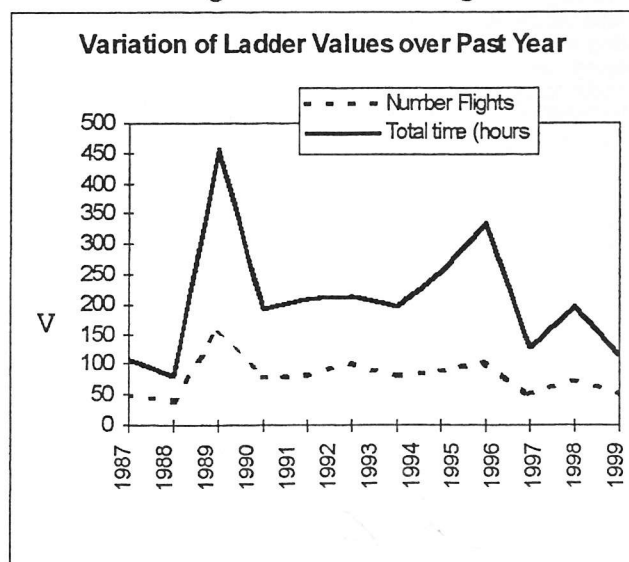
Total Ladder Points with Total Height Gains



Total Distance with Maximum Height Gains



Number of Flights with Total Flight Time



Didn't We Do Well?

Final Glide

Inter Club League Final

Prelude

The Oxford GC team, defending champions, arrived at Nympsfield early on the Saturday of August Bank Holiday weekend. Nympsfield is home of Bristol & Gloucester GC, and at 700 feet amsl, this ridge site provides a superb view of the Severn Estuary and surroundings.

We were all looking forward to a fun weekend of flying, and although the weather didn't immediately look too promising, it would turn out to give some good competitive soaring conditions.

Day 1

Tasks: 140km, 250km, (Basingstoke, Didcot) and 305km (Didcot, Lasham).

We arrived at Nympsfield at 8:30, and got DRP, 360 and 139 rigged before briefing. This was going to be a struggle – we had two Novices (George and I) and one Intermediate (Howard), but no Pundit. It was decided that I would fly Novice, George would fly Intermediate and Howard would fly Pundit.

Conditions didn't look too fantastic, mainly due to the sea-breeze that was killing off the convection. We settled down to breakfast and waited. While we were tucking in to our sausage and egg, unknown to us, our fellow competitors were getting prime spots on the grid and relegating us to the back...

Starting conditions weren't too good and we had to contend with a sub-2000 foot start. The flying was initially more cooperative rather than competitive as 18 gliders struggled to stay airborne. The weather improved tremendously away from Nympsfield, with 6kt average climbs to 4500' towards Basingstoke and Didcot.

The return leg for all the Oxford pilots was interesting – my GPS packed up due to the rollover date bug so I got lost in weakening conditions (must learn to use a map!). Howard and George called up "Nympsfield finish, 10 minutes, marginal" and by now most eyes on the airfield were straining to see what they were up (down?) to. As they called '2 minutes, maybe, maybe not' we saw the two gliders together and rather low. Some of the 'eyes' were betting rather large amounts of money on their chances of successful arrival.

Howard arrived first, and with the big wings of the Nimbus 2, had little trouble, coming in at

about 200 feet over the finish line and then pulling up to fly an abbreviated circuit. George kept his wheel up (less drag) and aimed for the lowest tree on the airfield boundary. As he overflowed this, he dropped the wheel, touched down, and rolled down the hill to cross the finish line at ground level. The tale they later told was of being 10 miles out near Aston Down, 800' above the airfield in blue, flat conditions, so very well done. See Howard's report for more info [I'll put this in next issue - it's worth waiting for - Editor].

Pundit winner was ex-World Champ. Andy Davies (Discus 2a), second was Ed Johnson.

Day 2

Task: Pundit 200+km

Novice and Intermediate classes were scrubbed as conditions were really, really grey. I remember taking a launch just for the hell of it and joining Howard who'd done the same. The best thermal of that flight was 0.001kt, timed, so good luck the Pundits!

Our pundit, Haste arrived late, rigged, pigged out on breakfast, and found himself at the back of the queue! He took a launch, landed back and said "hmmm". Andy Davies (Duo Discus today) and Ed Johnson (LS6-15) were already gone. While Haste was contemplating the situation we heard that Doug Edwards (ASW-17, Lasham) had landed out at Aston Down. Thinking quickly, Haste (Cirrus), worked out that he could launch and do a straight glide to Aston Down, and beat Doug Edwards on handicap. So another £16 to the tuggie, and off he went, landed at Aston down and scored 0 for failing to pass X.

Ed Johnston completed the task at over 60kph, while Andy Davies landed out having completed 194km. Some other guy did 22km (so did pass X) and scored about 3 points out of 1000.

Day 3

Task: Novice 140km, Intermediate 220km, Pundit 300+km

This was a much better looking day, but looks can be deceiving. George would fly Novice, Steve Veness (Cirrus) would fly intermediate and Haste would fly Pundit.

Out of 18 pilots, only George Crawford completed the task, this time with I presume a greater margin on the final glide. Steve

Veness landed out at Enstone, and Haste somewhere near Hus. Bos.

This was an excellent day for Oxford, with George and Steve both 1st, and Haste 2nd having beaten ex-World Champ. Andy Davies!

There were a few problems with retrieves on this day, but that's covered in a separate article [you guessed it, next issue - Ed].

Summary

Although history will show that Oxford came 4th, with a depleted team of pilots, finishing 2 points behind the winners was an excellent result. If you compare our gliders with those flown by the opposition, you'll get some idea of how well we did in reality. Apart from the Nimbus, our gliders had a handicap of 85-100, versus opposition in the form of Discus, Discus 2, Duo Discus, DG600, Mosquito, LS6, Ventus.

We also made one tactical mistake – Howard would have won as an Intermediate on day 1, and yes, George would have been cannon fodder, but had we made this switch, we may well have retained the trophy! We'll know for next time!

Overall Results

	Club	League points
1	London (Dunstable)	14
2	Bristol & Gloucester (Nympsfield)	13
3	Bannerdown	13
4	Oxford	12
5	Essex & Suffolk	6
6	Lasham	5

Oxford Team Results

Day	Novice	Intermediate	Pundit
1	1 st	5 th	4 th
2	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	1 st	1 st	2 nd

Thanks

Crew: Țlaudiă Bünģen, Janice Crawford, Matt Gage, John Hanlon.

Mick 'n' Norman for letting me have the Pilatus all Bank Holiday weekend!

Maz Makari

Millennium Party

**INVITE YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO
THE O.G.C. MILLENNIUM BASH**



EAT, DRINK AND BE SILLY!!

The bar will be well-stocked including some mystery special offers, free bubbly at midnight, and we're indulging ourselves with the biggest buffet you've ever seen including gigantic roast hams, salmon, turkey etc etc.

The BBQ will be lit for burgers, bangers and beans.



BOP THE NIGHT AWAY AND BE EVEN SILLIER!!

We've hired a disco sound system, a karaoke machine and 40ft marquee, just in case floor space gets a bit tight in the clubroom!



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It's all happening at the Club on

New Year's Eve at 8pm

Adults £15, children (under 16) £4

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See Nicky, Paul or phone 01869 248477

BRING AS MANY GUESTS AS YOU CAN!