

FINAL GLIDE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD GLIDING CLUB

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Edited by Phil Hawkins

UPPER HEYFORD CLOSING DOWN?

Defense Secretary Tom King announced on February 5 that operations at USAF Upper Heyford are to be substantially scaled down.

All F111 fighter aircraft currently at Upper Heyford will be returning to the USA, and the air base is likely to be active for only three to six weeks per year for training exercises. Although ironically the announcement was made at a time when the bombing campaign against Iraq was at its height, this cutback and others are in response to the easing of tension in the international situation.

No definite schedule has been forthcoming, but we are unlikely to see any changes this year. A gradual cutback in the number of flights could begin in 1992, with the base being virtually mothballed by 1994. It was stressed, however, that the base could be re-activated at short notice if required.

At some point, therefore, the BGA must raise the question of the future of the Upper Heyford Mandatory Radio Area (UHMRA).

Although weekend gliding operations are not affected by the UHMRA, there is no doubt that its introduction some years ago created difficulties for gliding competitions and midweek operations generally. It also created a hazardous area for light aircraft to the south and south-west of Enstone airfield. Here, pilots who are unwilling or unable to speak to Upper Heyford or Brize Norton are squeezed into a fairly narrow band of uncontrolled airspace between the two. Strangely, there is often more traffic in this uncontrolled area than in the controlled areas on either side.

Fears that the UHMRA could become active 7 days a week can apparently now be discounted, and there exists the very real possibility that the UHMRA will be scrapped altogether in a few years' time.

Good news, then, for pilots and for residents of Upper Heyford and surrounding villages suffering from noise. But bad news for the 1000 or more local people who work at Upper Heyford, and a setback for the local economy.

M40: NEW LANDMARKS

Traffic is now moving on the new M40 motorway closely to the east of the airfield. Construction of the local section began in Autumn 1988 and it was opened on January 16 this year. It will provide an excellent navigation aid to our pilots, particularly when returning from cross-country flights to the north or south.

The motorway and its junctions may also prove to be good thermal sources in certain wind directions. Pilots from other sites may follow it or use junctions on it as turning points. However, Junction 9 (the one on the Oxford-Bicester road) is within the Weston Danger Area, and Junction 10 is within the Upper Heyford airfield traffic zone. Neither of these junctions have been included in the latest suggested list of Competition turning points published by the BGA Competitions and Badges Committee (see notes elsewhere in this issue).

The motorway may have one other effect on the Club, namely that of increasing the size of our catchment area. There may be more new members from the London area, for example. Our gliders will be highly visible to travellers on the motorway, and access to the Club has been greatly improved.

POLISH PARACHUTES

A number of members have recently purchased Legionowo "Aviotex" parachutes, imported from Poland. At under £400 with an 18-year life span, these appear to be good value for money. Comparable Irvin parachutes, for example, cost nearly double the price and only have a 10-year life.

The Aviotex is essentially a pilot's parachute, as distinct from a jumper's parachute, since it is only guaranteed for five jumps. From the glider pilot's point of view, it is comfortable to wear

and will work in an emergency. What more can we ask? It comes complete with a bag, packing information and a padded back cushion with a removable cover.

Our parachute packer remarked that he was prepared to be unimpressed when confronted by 'chutes of East European manufacture, but in fact commented that they were well-made.

Aviotex parachutes are currently in use in Mini-Nimbus 147, Pilatus DRP and Libelle CLV.

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EDITORIAL

Well, your reaction to the first issue of *Final Glide* was pretty much as I expected. Of the 110 copies which I produced and sent out, the results were as follows:

Positive responses	7
Negative responses	0
No response	103

Robin Bobey tells me that Enstone members are falling over themselves to send in articles and news items for their magazine. I can't believe that you lot are indifferent about the whole thing. So let's have a bit more active participation. I don't expect technical brilliance to rival Frank Irving or Derek Piggot, and you certainly won't get that from me. What I do expect is:

- * The funny stories we miss if we're not in the bar at the right time.
- * Your "howidunits" whether simple or detailed, spectacular successes or spectacular failures.
- * Small ads, events, complaints, absolutely anything you want to

waffle on about, let me waffle it for you in black and white.

The Club will pay for stamps and envelopes to circulate *Final Glide*. If you think this is a waste of money, I trust that you will say so!

With the Gulf War hitting the headlines, I am reminded of David Haigh. A skinny, fair haired and softly spoken lad, he joined the Club in the late 1970s and we taught him to fly. He entered the RAF and within a few short years he was a Harrier pilot. He did a tour of duty in the Falklands (although not until after that conflict was over).

He also made money with an unusual hobby - decorating canal barges with their traditional brightly coloured designs in gloss paint. He had a silly nickname for me - "particle". I never did know the reason for that, and sadly I can't ask him now. He was killed in a midair collision between two Harriers over Cambridgeshire some years ago.

Phil Hawkins

STANDARD TP LIST

The BGA Competitions and Badges Committee have circulated to all clubs a list of turning points. This was compiled initially from several existing club lists, but with suggestions and amendments from task experts. Use of turning points on the list is entirely voluntary, but the BGA do make the point that badge claims which use standard turning points may be processed more quickly since measurement of task distances is computerised.

Two different methods of calculating the distance between two turning points have been detailed by the BGA. The first uses Ordnance Survey grid references and Pythagoras' theorem. This assumes that the world is flat, but the errors are small within the UK, and the sums can be done on any calculator with a square root key.

The more accurate method will obviously be used by the BGA to check distances if things are close. One degree at the Earth's centre, extended upwards to the surface, is equivalent to 1/360th of the Earth's circumference which is 111.32km. Latitude and Longitude co-ordinates and trigonometry are used to calculate the angle subtended at the Earth's centre between any two points. This angle is then multiplied by 111.32 to obtain the distance.

The list will be issued annually by the BGA and will be kept up to date with amendments from pilots. The list is on view in the clubroom together with amendment forms should you feel strongly about any errors or omissions. The BGA will also send you the list, complete with grid references and Lat/Long co-ordinates, on a 3½" computer disc if you send them a disc.



The bird which is heard more often than any other on the airfield during the summer is the Skylark. A fairly small bird, smaller than a thrush for example, it is mainly streaky brown in appearance with some white tail feathers and a slight crest on the top of the head.

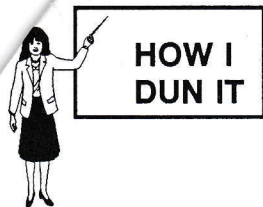
Skylarks are birds of open country and almost never perch in trees. They have a long straight claw on the hind toe which makes perching difficult. They eat insects and worms and make simple nests on the ground, laying spotty brown eggs and sometimes raising two or even three broods in a season.

Nests are difficult to find because the bird will walk, or fly very low over the ground, for some distance before ascending into the sky to sing. The same process is repeated when returning from a song flight. There must be many nests on the airfield - has any member ever found one?

The flight pattern changes slightly depending on the wind conditions. In a good breeze they seem able to rise vertically whilst facing into wind. In very light winds however, they make progress into wind as they ascend. They compensate for this by pausing to fly directly downwind at intervals during the climb, although this does not interrupt the song.

The song itself, delivered in a continuous stream for minutes on end, often from a great height, has fascinated man for a long time. Skylarks obviously think at a much greater speed than we do, for the song can contain 50 or more individual notes per second. Humans must resort to technology to study this, by recording the song on tape and playing it back at a slower speed. The result is an eerie series of trills, crescendos, rising and descending scales, interspersed with longer hoots and haunting cries.

In a 10-minute sample of this incredibly complex song there could be up to 30,000 notes. Some people have compared this in human terms to the composition of a symphony, and there have been attempts to transcribe Skylark song for the orchestra.



TWO 500kms IN TWO DAYS

Presumably there aren't many pilots who have done 15 hours soaring a 1000 cross-country kilometres in two days. John Giddins sends us ti account of his busy weekend last Spring ...

I felt rather tired and disappointed as I de-rigged the DG-202 "515" at 7.30pm on Friday 25th May. I had completed a 511km quadrilateral in 8 hours 15 minutes. It had been a difficult day with four low points, down to 1000 feet at Malvern, Avebury, Pewsey and Wantage, struggling up to a final glide finishing at Bicester at 6.54pm. I had eased myself from the cockpit and whilst the circulation returned to my legs I decided to inspect the barograph, only to discover in dismay that there was no record of my epic flight. It had been ditched off as I pressed down my spare clothes on the battery shelf before takeoff.

As I walked across the deserted airfield to get my car I contemplated my previous attempts which had varied from 460km to 495km. The most recent of these was in June 1989 when I appeared to have it "in the bag". However I deviated too far north which, due to poor visibility and flying into the sun, meant that I was unable to find the last turning point (but that's another story).

GSA members in the bar were sympathetic, and related a previous instance that week when a pilot had inadvertently programmed his electronic barograph incorrectly. However he had successfully completed a 500km flight the previous day, and they suggested that I should go for it again the next day (Saturday). I was home by 9pm in time to see the tv weather forecast, which looked favourable for another 500km day.

Up early on Saturday I arrived at Weston-on-the-Green at 8.30am, only to be advised by the guard house that a Hercules programme was planned for the day. The morning was blue with good visibility. Quickly hitching up the trailer I drove to RAF GSA Bicester.

By 10.00am I had rigged and loaded the DG-202 with 40 gallons of water, with the barograph definitely switched on this time. A 504km task was set, Bicester - Cosford hangar -

Lasham clubhouse - Market Harborough railway station - Bicester. Nimbus 3DT "26" and myself were the only pilots attempting this task.

On levelling the DG-202 wings the port water bag started leaking, which made it necessary to dump the water immediately. All the gliders were then taken to the launch point, with "515" in pole position, where else!

The morning looked good with a NW wind at 10 knots. By 11.30am the Bicester club K-18s were climbing in the blue to 2000ft. I took the first aerotow launch, being towed to 3000ft, and immediately started, at 11.45am. After gliding on a NNW track I took a slow climb at Banbury where "26" came in beneath me. I was thinking that it wasn't a 500km day, and I would be lucky to do 300, but I might as well complete part of the task especially as I hadn't been to Cosford before. Care was needed early on due to convection starting so late and the day being blue.

Climbing to 3000ft I glid at best speed towards Wellesbourne, "26" departing on a more northerly heading. I took a 3 - 4 knot climb at Wellesbourne to 4200ft. Conditions were improving so the cruising speed was increased to 65 knots towards the first cumulus at Kidderminster. I found I had to pay special attention to navigating my way through the Redditch - Bromsgrove - Stourbridge area with Birmingham on my right.

It was great to reach the cumulus with bases at 5000ft and improved lift of 4 - 6 knots, and I was able to increase my inter-thermal speed to 80 knots. I obtained a fix at Halfpenny Green, clearly seeing the letters HG on the hangar roof. By maintaining my 340° heading I arrived at Cosford airfield at 1.10pm. "26" was about 500ft below me.

I positioned "515" in the TP zone aligning the runway NW of the railway track to take two photographs with both cameras. Turned to a southerly track towards Kidderminster, working between 3000ft and 5000ft, cruising at 75 - 80 knots with 300 - 400ft pull-ups in lift. "26" followed my

track but deviated more to the east towards Stratford. I continued on track with a view to getting onto the Cotswold escarpment. Reduced my speed back to 65 knots again as I came to the edge of the cumulus at Pershore, then long glides to a climb north of Brize Norton at 2.38pm.

The blue continued until Hungerford where there were clouds with base around 5500 - 6000ft. The thermals became broken with longer glides to find the strong lift. Turned Lasham TP2 at 3.38pm, then onto a northerly heading.

After a good climb at Pangbourne I flew back into the blue at Didcot with more long glides. Climbed to 4500ft at Bicester at 4.25pm - 120km to go! I felt that I had a good chance but was concerned that the thermal activity might stop early.

A 3 - 4 knot climb to 5500ft at Northampton was followed by another long glide to a point south of Market Harborough, where I found a slow climb to 4000ft. I hadn't seen any gliders since Bicester and thought the day was ending. I turned at Market Harborough TP3 at 5.26pm and tiptoed back to the thermal SW of the turn to climb again to 4000ft.

Best glide speed then until west of Northampton where I made a climb to 5000ft - final glide height. At Towcester I noticed "26" about 500ft below me also on final glide. I finished at 6.15pm for a task time of 6 hours 30 minutes.

It had generally turned out to be an excellent soaring day over the complete area of the task. Conditions varied with blue thermals in a band across the task area, south of Birmingham to north of Wantage/Didcot. On either side of this band there was about 1/8 cumulus with cloudbase at 5000 - 5500ft. Thermals were 4 - 6 knots, with a 4 knot norm, and the best part of the day was between 1pm and 4pm. The visibility was in excess of 30 kilometres.

Christmas 1990 - must start researching 750km flights from WOG and Bicester for 1991!

NOTES FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Launch fee: The Committee has increased the launch fee from £1.75 to £2 with effect from April 1st. The price of "birthday" flights was also discussed. This is the price charged to visitors who wish to book one flight to take place at a particular time. A new price of £20 was agreed, which is an incentive for visitors to book mini-courses instead since these are better value. A new complete list of OGC charges is included in this issue of *Final Glide*.

The latest demand from the Defense Land Agent for the rent of the hangar site is £4000 net per year. Specialists seem to think that this is as low as we can reasonably expect. The Committee have accepted this figure. Just to remind you, this is still a 250% increase on the previous figure of £1500.

A motor caravan which had been semi-abandoned on the airfield has now been purchased for £250 for use as a launch point vehicle. Modifications to the interior have been carried out, largely thanks to the efforts of Roger Pitman. We have also acquired a second Land Rover at a cost of £850.

The Committee has noted that some trailer picketing devices are unsatisfactory since they project above ground level. This is a danger to pedestrians and cars especially after dark, and does not allow grass mowing to take place. Will offenders please take appropriate action!

Annual fees for caravan parking and private glider facilities have once again been held at £30. This is very good value so no whingeing! Fees are due *right now* so please pay up.

It had been suggested that the K-6 trailer is too difficult to use for outlandings. At least four people are required to lift the glider sideways onto the trailer. An alternative would be to adapt the closed K-8 trailer for use by the K-6 instead.

However the Committee have now agreed that the K-6 should be replaced. There have been complaints from our taller members about the contortions required in order to obtain full aileron movement! Our aim is to acquire an easy-to-fly glass glider such as the SZD Junior. The Friday-night flying sessions this year will contribute to this project.

The energy-absorbing foam recommended by the BGA for seat cushions has now been purchased, and will be made into cushions when suitable covering material has been located (it needs to be waterproof). All members should be aware that its effectiveness in preventing spinal injury in the event of heavy landings is completely lost if conventional cushions are placed above it or underneath it.

There is a need for more encouragement for our keenest members to go on instructor courses. The Committee has agreed to reimburse members 50% of course fees.

Get your NOSE in front!

The Committee have proposed that the Club should support the Comic Relief charity fund in the following way: On the first day this year when a flight exceeding 300km is made from Weston-on-the-Green, that pilot (or the one who flies furthest if there are more than one) will pay 1p per kilometer to Comic Relief. Also, *every other pilot in the Club who flies on that day will be asked to contribute the same amount!* On a good day with plenty of members around we could easily top £100.

If you have something for the Committee to discuss, nobble your favourite Committee member before the next meeting which is on Wednesday May 15.

HELP KEEP CLUB RECORDS UP TO DATE!

If you move, don't forget to tell us! Sometimes Club records are six months or more out of date, and then members wonder why they don't get letters. A complete membership list is included with this issue of *Final Glide*. Please notify any changes, missing post codes, new phone numbers etc to Phil Hawkins.

Note: members whose subscriptions were due in November and who had not paid by the end of March have now been removed from the list. February subscriptions which remain outstanding will be removed at the end of June. Needless to say, a dim view will be taken of pilots who fly without having paid for this year.

CFI's Turn

This is the first of what I hope will be a regular column of information to club members on instructional and safety matters.

Firstly, the change to the instructors' rota. In the last six months we have lost four instructors from the rota which has put excessive strain on those remaining. In order to alleviate this situation we will from mid-April have only two instructors per day on duty. The morning instructor will be on duty from 0830 to 1400 hours and will be in charge of the airfield for the whole of this time. The afternoon instructor will arrive at 1200 to instruct in the second K-13, but will not be in charge of the airfield until 1400hrs. This new scheme assumes that other instructors will help to "fill in" on a casual basis, but it must be expected that on occasion the second K-13 may have to fly solo pilots only.

A note to all private owners. Please ensure that after rigging you do independent control checks. There has been a spate of accidents recently involving elevators not connected. You may have to answer to me or even a higher God!

This season I am hoping to revive the long forgotten practice of flying dual cross countries. These are mostly beneficial to pre Silver C pilots, but I hope that some Silver C candidates may fly with our better competition oriented instructors to learn to go faster. If you feel you would like to fly a dual cross country, speak to the duty instructor early in the morning who will find you a suitable instructor (it is unlikely to be him) and will allocate the second K-13 at a particular time. All prospective pilots must have a current CAA Aeronautical chart. No map no fly! I would ask all club members to be patient during these flights and to volunteer for retrieves if necessary. One day it may be you in the front seat!

I wish you all a great season. May the weather be with you!

Steve Evans