FINAL GLIDE

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HOW THE CLUB SURVIVED FOOT & MOUTH

2 March: F&M outbreak reported at Little Chesterton, 1 mile from the airfield. RAF Brize Norton ban aviation activities at Weston-on-the Green until further notice. Military and RAFSPA operations have also ceased. OGC members can fly at Bicester, but WE CANNOT TAKE ANY GLIDERS WITH US either club or private!

6 March: WOG Guard Room have no orders to turn people away. We may go to the club to carry out maintenance. A NOTAM now prevents any flying at Weston, in addition to the ban by the RAF. Bicester are still operating, as they are outside the NOTAM area, but OGC instructors are not allowed to fly GSA aircraft.

8 March: One OGC K13 is undergoing CofA by Toni Cox. When it is finished, we have permission to move it directly to Bicester. DO NOT TAKE IT BACK TO WESTON otherwise it will be stuck there!

19 March: Bicester are resisting RAF attempts to close them down, on the basis that they are acting completely responsibly. They feel gliders being imported from another grass airfield would jeopardise their position. Hinton is also open. Should we split the club, with some private gliders going to Hinton, and the K13 remaining at Bicester?

23 March: Club approaches MAFF to ask for dispensation against the NOTAM, and the RAF to get them to reconsider their view. Individual members are asked not to make their own representations.

28 March: The NOTAM covering Little Chesterton is lifted. Although we are told the RAF ban is still in place, Hercules and RAFSPA aircraft are both flying today!

30 March: We do not yet have permission to move our gliding operations back to Weston. However, events are obviously moving faster than the OGC ground equipment team anticipated, since the tractor is currently in pieces.

2 April: RAFSPA lost a lot of money during their enforced shut-down, and are quite envious that we continued operating at Bicester. However, Weston airfield is now officially open.

7 April: OGC operations resume at Weston.

12 June: BGA partially lifts the ban on cross-country flying, subject to strict guidelines.

13 June: C Emson points out the continuing risks of cross country flying. Outside the infected areas there is still a good chance of adverse reaction from landowners towards pilots who land out. We do not have any equipment at OGC for disinfecting footwear, cars, trailers etc. Standard aviation insurance policies carry an exclusion clause in respect of pollution and contamination caused by the insured aircraft. In other words, if there is an outbreak a few weeks after you land in a field, you will become the prime suspect, and since you are not insured, you personally could be sued for a substantial amount by the farmer.

14 June: The BGA have specifed the clear area as being east of a line through Lyme Regis, Bristol, Cheletenham, Coventry, Nottingham, Ashbourne, Halifax, York and Scarborough. Local TP's such as Gloucester, Worcester, Kidderminster and Evesham are in the "death zone" whilst Bidford and Stratford are right on the edge. Let's be careful out there!

[Abridged from emails on the list server]

In this issue

Our members have travelled far and wide this year sampling flights at other sites and in other countries. Follow their adventures inside!

And.....

Wanderings of a Weston weatherman

Who wants to be a winch driver?

News notes

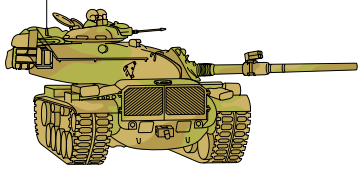
Longest day statistics

NOTAMs online

Full member list

CFI'S TURN

Cris



This has been a particularly bad year for most of us. It started badly with the Foot and Mouth outbreak, and seemed to go downhill from there. The gliding movement was very quick to stop cross country flying once the outbreak was announced, and I do not think any of us believe that to be a bad decision. But frustrating none the less.

RAFSPA

We have had a few difficult days with RAFSPA this year, and Peter Brooks and myself made it a priority to talk to the new CO, Flt Lt Brian Davies, along with the new Station Warrant Officer Dave Woods (he is also the CCI at RAFSPA). The meeting was very positive, as can be seen from the following notes from the meeting.

Grass - there are new contractors, who are not always available for cutting. This has led to problems, and grass is not always cut to order. The CO is still trying to rectify this. If we want to cut parts of the field ourselves, in addition to what is done by the contractors, we can.

Launch Slots - to improve on the number of slots, it was agreed that we can launch when the RAFSPA aircraft is descending, probably up to about turning finals. This will depend on the runs in use on the day.

Radios – the radios at RAFSPA will be improved for next season. These caused no end of problems in trying to make contact for launches. If negative launch is given, a brief reason is to be relayed. This will help us understand why (and go over to discuss if we do not agree), and also to know when the situation changes in our favour again.

Parachutes opening intentionally high - apparently this is a misconception. I suggest we monitor this to check. One of each group dropping is the cameraman, and will always deploy early to avoid hitting the others. So he will pull at about 3500ft, whereas the others will continue down to 2000 or 2500ft.

An incident where an experienced parachutist landed half way down the field on our cables was acknowledged - apparently he had a new rig, and was being over cautious (basically described as having more money than sense).

A phone call to the RAFSPA office was very offhand about gliding at Weston. They were aware of the "personality" of the lady in the office, who is similarly offhand with enquiries about parachuting at times. She has been spoken to, and apparently her manner has improved over the past few months.

I plan to revisit this at the beginning of next season, but basically I get the impression that there is no intentional animosity on their part. Indeed, our presence on the airfield helps them politically in some way. It was reiterated that we have not had an instance where they have stopped us operating - and by implication there should be no reason why they do this in the future.

Bearing the above points in mind, I hope that more slots become available, especially important when two aircraft are operating. In general, if we can see where we should be getting launches, but we are being unnecessarily kept on the ground, we should go and talk to the DZ controller, and get more flexibility for the day. We cannot make general "rules" about things such as two aircraft operations, but we must stress that we want at least one launch between successive parachute drops.

If anyone has constructive comments on how we can better operate with RAFSPA, I would be pleased to hear them.

ACCIDENTS

There have been two accidents at Weston this year – two more than there should be. So we have to learn from these mistakes. The first was a heavy landing in the DG-505. The cause was wet wings, and a very pronounced wind gradient on that day. Remember to add some extra speed on approach in adverse conditions. For glass gliders, you may also like to add an extra 5 knots for the wife and kids!

The second was when a glider ran over the perimeter track and ran up one of the golf course bunkers. Although it ran over the track accidentally, it does serve for me to remind everyone that taxiing on the ground outside of the perimeter track is strictly forbidden. It is specifically written into our operating regulations that all flights must start and end within the perimeter track. The thought of running over the golf course in a glider, where children are often seen playing, I find alarming.

WINTER FLYING

RAFSPA have shut down for the winter, and we have the airfield to ourselves. There are two points to bring to everyone's attention:

Waterlogged airfield – be careful on the airfield as it gets wet. It is already rutted enough. We do not want to add to these problems by driving through standing water and getting bogged down. So treat the airfield with some respect.

Circuits – it is common to carry out circuits in either direction when the airfield is our own. There have been accidents recently (one fatal) with aircraft colliding when both are on base leg in opposing directions. In general, there should be a preferred circuit direction each day. Alternatively, if both circuits are to be conducted, why not impose a rule to land on the same side as the circuit (i.e. do not cross the extension of the launch line, as at Bicester). It is worth considering, and making our flying that extra bit safer!

NEW INSTRUCTORS

We have several keen members who are starting their training as Basic Instructors. We need a steady throughput of instructors, to boost the presently low numbers, and to replace ones that may retire. We have recently had a period where no new candidates have come forward. Fortunately this trend has reversed, and hopefully next year we could have up to 9 Basic Instructors at Weston. Good luck to all of them. ⏮

Letter from the CHAIRMAN

At present there is a big push within the gliding movement to persuade people to take up the sport, and an even bigger effort to retain existing members.

As an existing member you will have noticed that we also have a retention problem! Although recruitment isn't quite such an issue we must not be complacent. If membership declines by 10% the overall static costs (rates, rent, insurance etc) would have to be paid from a smaller income, which inevitably would mean an increase in costs for each of us. So it is in everyone's interest to try and persuade members to either increase their activities at the Club, or at least make sure that when they turn up they can be expected to fly! We need our members just as badly as we need a winch.

So what can you do to help? First, you can be more sociable especially to new members. Remember they won't know the ropes and will be naturally cautious before taking on a task. It is often the little things that we all take for granted like hooking on, driving the Rover, signalling, log keeping, etc. First thing in the morning, it would make life easier if members were asked to get things moving a bit quicker. This gives instructors more time to provide the services they are are here for.

We all know that RAFSPA is one of our main problems in getting the maximum number of launches on any one day, which in turn means that at least everybody gets the chance to fly. Now that RAFSPA has shut down for the winter we should try to speed up our operation to enable us to get more out of each day. Next year I think we will have to push a lot harder for slots in between jumps. Instructors will be encouraged to go over to RAFSPA if we experience any undue delays in getting a launch. The Twin Otter aircraft is not available next year so I suspect two aircraft will be used.

On a more positive note, I and the Committee would like to know what, if anything, the Club can do for you. What are your expectations? Are there any improvements that you would like to see?

Over the winter period there are lots of necessary maintenance jobs to do. If you can spare some time on a Tuesday evening or weekend then please get in touch or just turn up. Any skills are useful. Often just another pair of hands makes all the difference.

In the meantime try to stay current and enjoy the freedom of no RAFSPA in the winter months while we can. Let us hope for a better season next year. ⏮

AGM REPORT

Chairman Peter Brooks noted that, mostly due to Foot and Mouth disease restrictions, launches were 15% down on the previous year, and only 1500 cross country kilometres were flown (9000+ last year). There were at least 4 first solos, and 5 first 5hr flights. Tony Hoskins and Steve Trusler claimed gold heights at Sutton Bank. Three basic instructors were trained this year (Dave Weekes, Maz and Simon W) and there could be as many as 5 more next year.

Retiring Treasurer Nick Hill reported income from flying fees substantially down, but we also used less fuel. Overall the situation was not as bad as had been feared, and the Club still made a modest profit. The increase in hangar site rent, announced last year, has not yet filtered through to our bills, however, and this may be backdated. There was a discussion about the possible uses for the Club's existing capital. The two main projects in the near future were the hangar extension and an upgrade to the winch hydraulics.

A motion had been submitted calling for a £10 levy on subscriptions, the additional cash raised to be at the disposal of the Committee for the purpose of funding instructor courses. A lengthy discussion followed. However, in the light of the Committee's existing plans to cover the cost of instructor courses by reductions in membership fees over a 3 year period, the motion was withdrawn.

John Bridgeman CBE was re-elected as President of the Club. John Gibbons and David Roberts were re-elected as Vice Presidents, and Garry Cuthill is now Vice Chairman. After 4 years excellent service, Nick Hill is standing down as Treasurer, to be replaced by Ian Shepherd.

The Cadet scheme was discussed briefly. Some members were worried about the cost compared with the meagre benefits. However, it was pointed out that Cadets only have credit for launches and flying time, we don't pay them actual cash. Only one of this year's cadets had actually used his allocation. The cost is therefore much less than generally believed.

The Chairman raised the possibility of the Junior Nationals competition returning in the year 2003. The RAF require 18 months notice. Organisers of the 2000 competition felt that more members were needed to help, to make a future event successful. At least 20 members were needed to commit their time, but most thought this was difficult so far in advance. A show of hands revealed that 17 members were in favour and 10 against (presumably the remainder didn't care).

Most of those who opposed did so on the grounds that the 2000 competition had caused extreme difficulties with RAFSPA including, it was claimed, the fact that RAFSPA would not commit themselves to a weekend close-down this year so that the Club could hold a 50th Anniversary Celebration event. The Chairman felt that the show of hands was not sufficiently convincing for the Club to commit itself, and that the members needed more time to consider. He postponed the matter for one year, a further vote to be taken at the end of next season.

The **Ladder trophy** was awarded to Dave Weekes, much to his amazement. The **Dennis Farmer** trophy for the first 5hr flight went to Stewart Otterburn, whilst the **Malcolm Laurie memorial trophy** for the best flight in a Club glider went to CFI Cris Emson for flights in the DG-505 at the Lasham competition. The **Simpson Cup** for the best overall flight of the season was not awarded. A novelty trophy made by Neil Swinton depicting a collapsed tractor surrounded by bits, was awarded to Dave Weekes. He had decided to dismantle the tractor in a big way in late March, just as the Foot and Mouth flying restrictions were being lifted. ⏮

CLUB LADDER

Cris

This year was very disappointing, with very few cross country flights recorded in the book. What was very apparent was that the Skylarks took over completely – with 5 flights out of 12, and 3682 points out of a total of nearly 6000. Does this tell us something?

So if anyone did not put their cross country flight into the book, shame on you! And before anyone accuses me, I must remind you that flights at competitions do not count for the Club Ladder. Otherwise, the DG505 would certainly appear much higher, as it did a lot during the year, proving that it is indeed a useful acquisition for the club.

Congratulations then to Dave Weekes, who is undisputed Club Ladder champion this year, with 2412 points. Matt Gage (781 points) and Tony Hoskins (752 points) come 2nd and 3rd respectively. Tony is also the highest rated (and indeed the only) Junior.

I believe a lot of us have a lot to prove next year. And if nothing else, we have to stop these Skylarks from thinking they are real gliders! ⏮

MEMORIES OF ONTUR

Anticipating that the Foot and Mouth outbreak would scupper the soaring season, Howie, Maz, Haste and I decided to book a week at Ontur in southern Spain. It meant a glut of flying for Maz and I, having spent the previous week being put through the wringer by Simon Adlard at Bicester.

We flew 737 Easyjet from Stanstead to Madrid where we picked up the hire cars, changed some wedge, and headed south. Stopping for food tested our execrable Spanish. I think we only had four words between us - "Quatro cerveza por favor." This was to become a theme. Arrived about 4 hours later on a pitch black airfield in the middle of nowhere with no electricity and not a soul to be seen. Eventually we found our chalets and, despite Hastes' snoring, got some sleep.

A fine morning greeted us, as did George TMB Crawford, Janice and a hangar to be unpacked under the somewhat anxious eye of Brian Spreckley. Check flights were organised in the recently crashed (olive orchard) K21. It was a bit unnerving looking at the bare fibreglass awaiting gel coat.

The runway was tarmac, about 10ft wide and sloping from either end to a low point in the centre. Gliders were dragged to the appropriate end and then wedged in place by shoving a stone in front of the wheel. Everybody then retired, after briefing, until the thermals started to kick off – about midday.

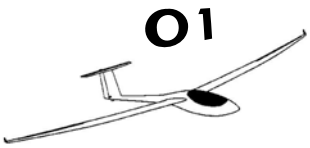
Brian briefed us on the kind of weather and terrain to expect and was very explicit about the lack of suitable land-out opportunities. We purchased our charts, which turned out to be the Spanish equivalent to our OS maps though not as good.

We ate in the local village that night accompanied by bullfighting on the television. The food kept coming as did the local wine and beer and all for the princely sum of £5 per head – magic.

My check ride had been held over until day 2, and Brian organised it the ASH-25, the K21 having been taken off line for its gel coat. I was looking sideways at the ASH thinking *I'm not too sure about flying this bloody great monster - bit of a steep curve.*

Take offs at Ontur are different. You have to hold the glider on the brake until the tug gives it some welly. Sitting at the top of the sloping runway you get the impression that you are about to go tobogganing. If, in the initial stages of the ground run, there is any hint of a wing drop or track deviation you have to release the tow immediately. It can take a couple of attempts to get right, interspersed with pushing a glider uphill under the Spanish sun!

They don't use weak links in the system because there is nowhere to land (apart from the olive grove) if it breaks on climb out.



Well, what a 'check flight' I had. Three hours, a leisurely 350km, astounding landscape, soaring with eagles and an encouraging world champion in the front. I found the ASH a handful for a while until I relaxed, and Brian demonstrated the technique. Thermalling meant sticking the wingtip in the core and bouncing round on top of a flexing wing somewhat like a pole-vaulter. For the most part though it entailed running high above the ridge lines and taking the occasional circling top-up. The damn thing went on forever.

The landscape was very colourful. Non-irrigated fields were a swirling mixture of burnt reds, oranges, yellows and ochres interspersed with the lush greens of richer farmers' irrigated fields. I also particularly remember the "blood red" hills surrounding the marble mining town of Jumila. It is a sharply ridged, mountainous, terrain with wide farmed valley floors. The razor-backed spines of the mountain ranges give off plentiful good thermals but they can be tight and rough.

Getting low (below 3000ft down) can make things difficult. I found out later that week at 800ft over Chinchilla with Maz and George ten miles ahead happily cloud hopping at 9000ft! Thankfully I scraped away. I'm sure the good folk of Chinchilla could hear my invocations (to whichever gods might be listening) from ground level. I had picked my landing area as a section of new road under construction (flat and wide with no vertical nasties).

As far as land-out options go the valley floors are a mixture of olive orchards (very,very bad), vineyards (very bad), ploughed field (big horrible stones), irrigated fields (either good or terrible) or rarely cut crop (best).

There are two basic types of field irrigation in the area. One type has vertical steel poles 10ft high and spaced (...wait for it) on a 14 metre grid pattern. The worst thing is that they are very difficult to spot until you are at, or below, decision height. The other type of irrigation creates a large circular field, a very long rotating arm connected to a central structure. The boom is supported by a series of tractor wheeled 'A' frames. It's OK to land in these fields, crop permitting, but don't let a wing overhang a tyre track and remember to close the DV panel!

Circuits at Ontur are always on the same side due to the local ridge and rising ground. One landing direction is a fairly straightforward procedure followed by a roll out in front of the hangers. Landing from the opposite direction means a bag more speed with a long, long float downhill, aiming to touch down as the runway starts to climb again. Pushing gliders under that sun is not a good idea.

Although checked off and let loose on the LS-4's we had our task wings somewhat clipped by Brian – I think he wanted to keep his LS-4's in one piece for the overseas nationals in Okana the following week. Also, the weather didn't quite live up to the Ontur hype but we managed to enjoy 100km and 200km flights. It would have been nice to stretch the wings a bit further, though.

Boarding the flight home I had a jaded palette - the food was the same wherever we went though the wine never became passé. But, I also had a bag full of good memories.

★ Flying the ASH.

★ Trying to steal lift from disdainful eagles.

★ Vibrant colours.

★ A 40nm final glide from 8000ft (wasn't altogether sure about that one until 5nm out).

★ Sitting in the middle of a Spanish funeral drinking beer with Haste (didn't realise until too late).

★ The low getaway from Chinchilla then just managing to scrape over the ridge edge to drop into the welcoming (it had an airstrip) Almansa valley.

★ George TMB Crawford's obligatory retrieve.

★ My GPS trying to tell me I was somewhere in Africa! (still haven't figured that out).

★ The girl in the local shop. ⏮

At the BGA Conference this year, Volker Halbe, Sales Manager from DG-Flugzeugbau, had brought the brand new DG-1000 prototype. After much drooling and some polite conversation with Volker and Bob McLean they finally had enough and offered me a flight in it at Rufforth. So next day Nick and I drove to Yorkshire, where a bunch of instructors from the Long Mynd were also interested in flying it.

We had a nice day, standing on a freezing cold airfield, and just as the sunset mist was creeping in, Bob and I got our flight. This glider hasn't got a nose wheel but sits heavily on the tail, so the nose is high, and getting into the front seat requires some practice. However, Carole and I had already practised this thoroughly while it was on display at the Conference! And this nose-high attitude means that you don't need anyone to hold down the tail before take-off, as on the DG-505.

Bob did the take-off as I wasn't current on aerotow. DG would not have appreciated it much if I had broken their only existing prototype. We towed to 1500 ft, then I then took over and just floated around for 15 minutes. This glider was very light on the controls, but I've heard since that this may change owing to FAA regulations concerning flutter at high speeds. The DG-1000 prototype feels very much like the DG-505 - only nicer. It is incredibly quiet, even at higher speeds.

Even in 20-metre mode I found it very responsive and easy to turn. It has several rather clever features, one of them is the trim: The trim lever is of the same design as on the DG-505 but has a "lockout" function, a little latch which you can unhook. So you can either fly it with the trimmer, where you constantly adjust the trimmer rather than fight against it with the stick, or you can disable it and won't have the trimmer to fight against.

As the glider is so nose-high, and as I had never landed on a tarmac runway before I was very happy to let Bob do the landing. So - now I've flown the DG-100, 300, 505 and 1000 - this leaves only the 200, 400, 600 and 800 to be ticked off. Or, as far as prototypes are concerned, the ETA is next! ⏮

WANDERINGS of a WESTON WEATHERMAN

Mi-8 rescue helicopter

Martin Harris

At the Club Christmas dinner this year, I heard a friendly young voice announce my arrival with "That's old Martin the weatherman who used to fly here!"

After spending most of my spare time flying at Weston-on-the-Green in the 1960s and 70s, and instructing at Bicester in the 1980's, my consultant work in aviation meteorology has taken me too far away, far too often, for me to keep in flying practice. But I have the freedom to keep the interesting projects for myself. One of these was a summer flight to the Russian Arctic, to see if the ice really was melting away due to global warming.

One of my Russian scientist friends arranged for me to fly as an "extra" on a supply expedition to an Arctic base on the Severnaya Zemlya archipelago at 79 degrees North, 101 degrees East.

As a glider pilot I am used to pre-flight checks, but while I was sitting in a twin-turboprop Antonov-24 during the engine warm-up at a small airfield near St. Petersburg, I was unprepared for the crew to shut down the engines and all leave the plane, carrying a large canvas bag of heavy tools, then the sound of hammering on something very solid near the tail! However, soon we were airborne and heading NE across Lake Ladoga, one of the world's largest lakes.

Antonov 24

The charter price for the original plane had almost doubled overnight, so this was the replacement, chartered and flown in quickly by my hosts for a lot less money, just to prove that the free market economy does exist!

This very smart 42-seater's two Ivchenko turboprops made a most wonderful noise, sounding rather like a cross between a Harvard and a Twin Otter at max rpm. The excellent pilot was also the careful owner, and as I was later to discover, he was a real enthusiast for hurling us into steep final turns followed by immaculate short landings onto very short strips. The rest of the crew were reliable friends gathered together at short notice. The flight attendant was his comely daughter, and the man unwisely placed in charge of the vodka in the galley was said to be his gardener.

After a few hours the Captain asked on an open radio frequency if there was anyone with fuel to sell. After hearing a couple of prices, the Russian Air Force offered the best deal, so we landed at the non-active side of their base in Archangel.

Some 30 passengers got out during the re-fuelling and stretched their legs far enough away from the plane to relieve the numb bum syndrome and various other needs, and it was then that a look-alike for James Bond's *Rosa Klebs* struck.

She sped up the runway towards us in a Russian police jeep, waiving a gun around, saying that she wanted to inspect the luggage and all the passengers' papers. Luckily, I had all the correct documents, but it still took a long while to get her to accept that my Russian friends were probably more important than her boss!

Anyway, this took the heat off the other passengers, and so when a suitable amount of time had been wasted on these bureaucratic pleasantries, the Captain announced that we had to be off, shut the door and fired up the engines. End of discussion!

After another 700 miles flying along the coast of the Barents Sea, we landed at Amderma at 62 degrees East, where the Aeroflot passenger terminal was still flaking its blue and cream paint in the Arctic winds, and I caught my first sight of a Russian Mi-8 rescue helicopter, generally rust-coloured, and streaked with carbon from both engines.

My Russian host told me enthusiastically that I would soon be flying in one just like that. I couldn't believe they even flew! However, the helicopter pilots assured me that there was absolutely no weather that could stop them flying if anyone ever needed rescuing out on the ice, and that the Mi-8 was actually very reliable in the cold conditions. All very reassuring, but where was the ice? All I could see was water.

We flew on in the An-24 over the vast gulfs where the waters of the great rivers Ob and Yenisei empty into the Kara Sea, watching whales in the waters far beneath us. At midnight local time we landed on Dikson Island air base at 80 degrees East. The whole town turned out to welcome us, and gave us a really good meal in what seemed to be a private restaurant.

As a VIP, I was billeted in the disused Officers' Mess, where I noticed that in the land of the midnight sun, cockroaches come out 24 hours a day, and it was necessary to keep bags zipped up all the time. The really big ones came out in the loo, so there was no leisurely reading of *Pravda* in there!

Next morning I was apparently being left behind with my baggage by the other scientists, who flew off after a few quick goodbyes. I was told that their helicopter would be back in a few days, and so with a swirl of dust all my Russian/English translators disappeared over the horizon, leaving me on a nearly deserted Russian base.

I thought it would be daft to waste any time, so I set about erecting my antenna for the satellite picture receiver, with the help of a friendly Russian civilian engineer. He arrived, with a vodka bottle, and enlisted the help of the airfield Fire Brigade who provided a ladder. He went up the ladder onto the roof of the officers' mess, pulled up the antenna for me, dropping a hammer through a top floor window in the process. My antenna was attached to the chimney stack by the Fire Brigade before officialdom finally caught up.

The Fire Chief drove up in his jeep, looking for his fire engine, and he then sent for the airport radio operator as an interpreter, who only spoke English in ICAO acronyms, and the radio operator sent for his children who knew some more English words, and then for his wife who could get the bread, butter, cheese, fish and vodka necessary to celebrate this pinnacle of international scientific co-operation!

So about 20 Russians sat in my bedroom having a party while we received onto my notebook computer the first weather satellite pictures they had ever seen. I did not have the heart to tell anyone that I was really headed for the island bases another 700 miles further on, and that I did not want a permanent installation of this kit on their precarious rooftop.

I was now so famous in the Russian Arctic, that just about everybody on the base came to my bedroom to see how the kit worked, including the exceptionally well-educated CO, the local KGB man, and a very beautiful Russian woman radio operator.....and I never did find out what she wanted.

The Mi-8 helicopter arrived for me after a few days, and flew me low over the shoreline of the Arctic Ocean to Cape Chelyuskin at 105 degrees East. The helicopter proved very suitable for hopping over the ice, was very skilfully flown, and was equipped for long-range communications with a 1945 American HF radio set. I never found any survival kit in the helicopter, though.

I noticed that there was an awful lot of water around where I would have expected ice, and the floating ice looked just like bits of green vinyl lino because of its algal growth on the protected underside in the gradually warming waters. I explored the ice-fields around the islands and recorded miles of digital tape satellite pictures to confirm that most of the sea ice had already melted up to about 80 degrees North. *It will soon be possible for ships to sail along there between Japan and Norway.*

The Arctic scenery is both varied and mind-blowing, and in summer it is now deceptively warm. Flowers whose seeds have been trapped in the ice can now germinate for the first time in hundreds of years. Although it is a desperate climate in winter, there are still small furry animals like lemmings, and of course big ones like polar bears. I always checked for polar bears before going out of any door on the base, as they have developed a nasty habit of hanging around anywhere where food is cooked.

I learned a lot about the problems facing aircraft operators there, and my admiration grew for the professional skill and courage of the Russian pilots. I returned uneventfully to Oxford, only to hear later that a replacement helicopter crew had flown, in very poor visibility, straight into a recently emerged (and therefore uncharted) ice ridge along the same route, killing them all. The victims included an "extra" such as I had been on this memorable series of Arctic flights. ⏮

IT ALSO RAINS IN....

GERMANY

So, what's the point of travelling over 600 miles to fly a K8? Well, on the face of it there doesn't seem to be much point, but that wasn't the point - with me so far?

As some of you may know, Claudia is German, and makes regular trips back to the club in Germany where she was first bitten by the gliding bug and later spanked while leaning over a glider wing. So the idea of a school trip to see and experience Claudia's spiritual gliding home seemed like a good one, though I wasn't over keen on the spanking idea.

Four overgrown schoolboys and Tony were corralled by *tante* Claudia to Stanstead airport for the cheapest flight I've ever had to anywhere. I mean, £64.50 return to Cologne is worth it even if it's just to say you've managed to stay in the air for more than six minutes! So there was no tea or coffee on the flight. And the choice of breakfast roll was take it or leave it, and bits of the interior trim were held on with gaffer tape, but we took off and landed - and it was Cologne and it was in Germany.

Here the party split into two distinct groups - the ones who were going to ride in the air conditioned A-class Mercedes (Claudia booked the cars) and Garry, Neil and me who suffered the delights of an Italian biscuit tin on wheels for the two hour drive to wherever we were going. Surprisingly Neil's navigation proved effective, though there weren't that many A-class Mercedes on the autobahn to confuse him.

2001 ing odyssey

In the fullness of time we were in the middle of nowhere. Turning off the autobahn we were captivated by the familiar sight of a K13 slowly drifting and wafting through the air (their students are as crap as ours) and then shocked and astonished as a Luftwaffe Tornado did a high-g screaming turn, apparently underneath the K13. We immediately felt at home.

Dehausen, for this is the name of the airfield whereas the club is called KLV-Waldeck, is on a small ridge about a hundred feet above the surrounding valley. A single grass strip, not very wide, 800 metres long runs south-west, with a pine forest at the north end which also runs halfway down the east side. The club has an immaculate fleet of aircraft - a K13, a couple of K8s, a K6e, a K21 and a DG300 - and they really are beautiful, except for the K21 which had had its nose wheel stuffed by an early solo pilot.

The club only flies between April and October. During the winter months all club members have to do 30 hours of maintenance work or pay an extra premium on their membership. And, if its been raining, all the gliders are dried off before being put away. The result is canopies which are crystal clear without a scratch on them, wings with such a high shine on them you'd think they were brand new and smooth, crisp controls.

They winch launch this fleet with a thing that looks like an old AAA-wagon, with a couple of drums replacing the 88s, and don't appear to have cable breaks - probably wouldn't dare. The cable is made of some contra-rotating stranding thingy and has a special coating which means it lasts about a year and a half, and if it does break, they put on complete new ones! Interestingly, the cable chutes are from old Luftwaffe Starfighters - apparently they used to have a lot of them, and pilots I'm told.

And so to flying. The first problem was that the dials on the panel were all wrong. The altimeter was upside down with the zero at the bottom and with the launches we were getting, the needle only moved about an inch off the stop. Circuit planning by using the altimeter was complete waste of time. And the ASI - that was a bit easier as it at least went round the right way and had green bits on it, though who knows what the numbers were.

For our check flights in the K13 we were told no less than 90kph on the launch or the approach. Fair enough, I can see a nine on that dial and 6 minutes later I was trying to remember what 4045 was in German to call downwind. Bugger that, they'll understand if I say it loudly and slowly in English.

Calling downwind is vitally important at this site. For the launch you must stick the tail of the glider into the forest to get the longest run, and then you can't see anybody sneaking in over the trees. Thus, sneaking in over the trees is *verboten* as it all gets a bit alarming for the unwary. We all managed to underwhelm our instructors enough to be let loose in their K8s, and during our stay there were even a couple of soaring flights. OK, 13 minutes and a height gain of 'just past the screw on the dial thing' is not great but it was flying.

Landing was different. Avoiding the *grünewald*, the approaching cable retrieve vehicle and other gliders meant landing a bit long was a good option. There was however, a tarmac track running across the strip. Not a problem normally except when there's some poor sod repainting the big letters on it which spell out the airfield and its radio frequency. He and Garry had a battle of wills on one occasion, resulting in England one, Germany nil and a bit of a splodge on the 'h' of Dehausen. I think it was paint. Claudia and Neil got to fly the K6, but the rest of us didn't want to fly it anyway.

It was the social side of the Club that proved to have a lasting impression - mostly on Neil who had a really nasty impression which lasted all the next morning. Every evening, after the debrief (didn't understand a word of it) a wonderful dinner was laid on. Gastronomic delights such as Kraut Kopf (cabbage head) and Trouts were just two of the dishes which were a lot better than they sounded. And after dinner there was a game of bingo - whoever got the winning numbers did the washing up, and won a tot of something that tasted great but was probably fuel left over from that *Komet* plane.

The beer was ridiculously cheap, so it was worth drinking a lot of it and even betting a whole crate on whether the burning embers of a tree-trunk would fall in or out! It's an old Swedish woodcutter tradition, apparently. As the evenings wore on and the atmosphere became more relaxed, we were finally treated to what must be a truly great German tradition not often seen by outsiders - the Stuka dive-bomber pilot impersonation! Awe inspiring in its reality, baffling in its simplicity, and Garry has promised to do the full invasion of Poland back at the OGC clubhouse on a future occasion. But we got our own back by cooking a full English breakfast for anyone who could grip a fork the next morning.

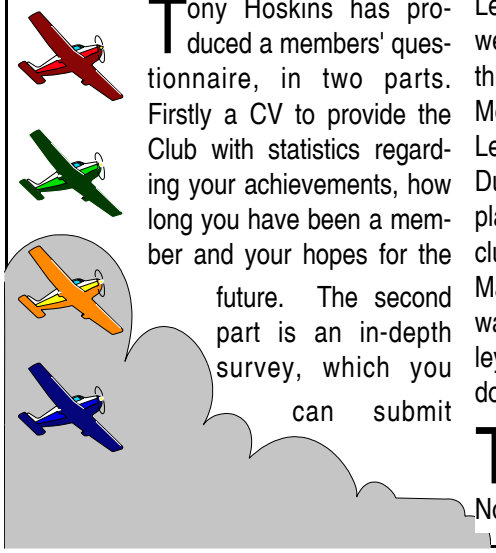
As tourists, we ventured out to see some other bits of Germany. Notably, the Wasserkupe, which believe me is nothing to write home about. Well there's not a lot you can say if the whole place is in cloud and it's raining, but the museum was interesting if you like looking at a lot of German gliders. Didn't anybody else make gliders? And when our stay at Dehausen was over and we'd said goodbye to everyone, we trekked back to Cologne (or Köln as we now knew it) with spare time before the flight home was due. Claudia had time to show us the sites of the city in which she was at university and got pissed in a lot. There's this frigging great cathedral, and I mean it's big, but surprisingly austere inside. We had a look at that and then a look at the 'old town' - a sort of Gothic Bicester Village with narrow streets and Pizza restaurants and nothing is really much over fifty years old. Nothing that's still in one piece that is.

Time for a final cup of coffee at the airport 'cos it was the only thing I'd learned to ask for in German. You've no idea how difficult it is to order a *Grössen Mac.* And an opportunity to get rid of all our funny money before flying back to Stanstead and driving on the proper side of the road, which pleased Neil as he'd never really enjoyed driving from the passenger seat.

So, was it worth going all that way for a K8 flight? Of course it was. The scenery, the beer, and mostly the people were great and I think they liked us because they said come back next year and bring your gliders. Do I want to haul DMH to the middle of Germany? Well, it's a thought. ⏮

News in brief

Garry and Janet Cuthill will be organising Friday night group bookings in 2002, so all enquiries to them, please. As always, we need volunteers for airfield crew and catering. You are only committing yourself to one Friday in three from May to August. Please do your bit to introduce the sport to our visitors and raise extra money for the Club . ⏮



Tony Hoskins has produced a members' questionnaire, in two parts. Firstly a CV to provide the Club with statistics regarding your achievements, how long you have been a member and your hopes for the future. The second part is an in-depth survey, which you can submit anonymously, to tell us how you feel about the Club's facilities, how they could be improved, and your views on a wide range of subjects such as the Club fleet, competitions, publicity, etc. Please take the time to complete both parts. If you have not received the questionnaire by email, there are spare copies in the Clubroom. ⏮

A joint OGC+Bicester team won the Inter Club League final. Locally there were no League meetings this year due to Foot and Mouth restrictions, but other League winners joined us at Dunstable in September to play out the incomplete League to its conclusion. There was only one flying day, but Maz was 2nd in the novice class, Howie was 1st in the intermediate and Ken Hartley (Bicester) was 2nd in the Pundit. Well done to all pilots! ⏮

The BGA AGM, Conference and dinner dance will be held at Eastwood Hall in Nottingham (the same venue as last winter) on 23rd February 2002. Guest speakers will include Paul MacCready, Tilo Holighaus, and of course Lembit Opik MP. Visit the birthplace of D.H.Lawrence nearby (which looks just like Coronation Street), see the BGA trophies being awarded, and bop to the live band "Sould Out." **Recommended.** Tickets £22.50 from Claire Emson. ⏮

We will be running a series of tutorials for the Bronze Exam early next year, plus additional subjects. More information will be posted in the Clubhouse in January, but the tutorial dates are:

Sat 26th Jan. (evening)
Sat 2nd March (evening)
Sat 6th April (evening)

with the exam on Sunday 7th April (daytime).

If you are interested in the exam please phone Karen King on 07970 515037.

Several members have commented recently about the lack of NOTAMs at the Club. This information is not available on paper any more. See: **www.ais.org.uk** ⏮

Our two oldest members, Frank and Dorothy (combined age 179) prepared most of the salads for the evening BBQ every third Friday this summer. They were really keen to make their own contribution to the Club's success. They also attended and enjoyed the annual Christmas dinner in August. ⏮

DOES THE CLUB HAVE ENOUGH
WINCH DRIVERS

Neil Swinton sparked a lively debate in the Spring concerning the fact that often there weren't enough winch drivers on the airfield, and wondering whether a winch rota was a good idea. Here are some of the responses:

"Please limit it to a maximum of 2 hours each from 10am to 6pm. This gives 4 drivers per day = 1 duty every 4-5 weeks assuming that all solo pilots agree to this, and are able to drive the winch. Alternatively, give 1 free launch ticket for each 1 hour winching OR instructing OR duty piloting and increase the launch fee to £5 for solo pilots." *[Matt Gage].*

"A rota sounds like a good idea, but only if people stick to it." *[Carole Shepherd].*

"A rota seems a good option as willingness seems lacklustre." *[Stewart Otterburn].*

"There would be many benefits from having a winch rota of say three people per day. More often than not our first launch is not until 11am or thereabouts, which is far from ideal. Suppose winch rotas were drawn up for (say) 9am-12pm, 12pm-3pm, 3pm-6pm, volunteers after that. The first pilot on the rota can quite easily do all the flying he/she wants afterwards, in what will probably be more thermic weather." *[Tony Hoskins].*

"For a rota to work it would have to be stricly enforced. I would prefer not to have one. I am quite happy to drive the winch for 1-2 hours, whenever I am on the airfield, but I don't want to come out on a day I would not have chosen just to drive the winch, or have yet another rota to swap if I am not available. Even with a rota, I suspect that we would end up with the same few members driving the winch." *[Barry Taylor].*

"Speaking as one of the group whose ratio of launches given to launches received is probably fairly large, I do not favour winch rotas either. If time spent on the winch becomes excessive, and no-one else is volunteering, then close it down and walk away. I've only had to do it once." *[Dave Weekes].*

"I think a rota is unnecessary if all solo pilots take their turn. If we can provide the training and encouragement necessary, there is no excuse for solo pilots not doing their bit. I recall that when I was sent solo in the early 90s, the following week I was stuck in the cab to do my turn and we had gears and a clutch to cope with then too!" *[Paul Morrison].*

"These days we have a lot of cash invested in winch hardware - much, much more than in the past. Consequently, some members may be less willing to have a go at driving it. A rota is therefore unlikely to be effective unless drivers have volunteered. The Friday night rota works because crews are made up of members who want to do it. Even the instructor rota consists of members who actually wanted to become instructors at some point in their lives, during beer-induced haze, maybe, but they volunteered. To increase the numbers of winch drivers, it is probably more effective to train pilots like me who apparently think they have better things to do." *[Editor].*

"It's far easier to drive the winch these days. No slipping the clutch to take up slack, no juggling accelerator to get the launch speed right. A half intelligent ape could do it, but then, half intelligent apes can be trained as glider pilots too!" *[Dave Weekes].* ⏮

STOP PRESS: Neil Turner will be writing about the recent decision to change the winch gearbox, in the next issue of Final Glide.

A WEEK OF WOOD

WITH A BIT OF GLASS CHUCKED IN!

2001

a gliding odyssey

Tony Hoskins

Looking around I could see gliders everywhere, soaring left and right above me. To my right a quick flash of the tug setting off on another tow. I thought to myself that I really ought to be concentrating more, the last 6 3/4 hours on an extremely hot day had just about finished me off.

I had been to school all morning, it was now approaching late evening and I was still not at my goal. All that stood between me and the airfield was a long slow climb in my Morris Minor. This was the start of the Vintage Gliding Club and Slingsby week at Sutton Bank in North Yorkshire.

The bank holiday traffic had slowed progress all day, and I was so tired that I had to decline the aerotow check flight that I was offered upon arrival, unfortunately.

For those of you who don't know Sutton Bank, it is very different to our home at Weston. Situated at the top of a ridge, which falls away 1000ft on two sides, the site is often described as not difficult to operate from, but unforgiving of carelessness. With a long narrow run (three glider widths) of about 700 yards, and a wider (15 glider widths) shorter run of about 500 yards, every flight, be it aerotow or winch, is an adventure. However as those of you who have visited will agree, its location is fantastic, with panoramic views for about 40 miles and lots of lovely wave from the nearby Pennines.

Saturday was a complete change of weather, grey and overcast immediately overhead but a few brighter gaps out to the west. During breakfast, a Yorkshire GC member was seen disappearing off into the murk in a DG300 behind the Pawnee tug, returning an hour later having been to 17,000ft. With more Vintage gliders expected to arrive, the opening of the Rally was postponed to the next day. This gave me an ideal chance to become aerotow current again.

With amazing trepidation I strapped myself into the cramped cockpit of a K21 (well I find it cramped anyway) and got hooked up to the tug. The gusty 25kt wind did its best to try to remove the contents of my stomach into the front cockpit, but I didn't give up my breakfast. Releasing at 2000ft in a wave gap near Thirsk, I spent the next 40 minutes beating up and down the side of the cloud.

My lack of currency showed, however, and I very quickly dropped out of the wave. A bit of ridge bashing brought me up to circuit height, and my check flight ended shortly afterwards.

As a Skylark owner I'm proud to say that this was a day for wooden gliders. Resident ex-CFI Mike Wood completed a 100km task, with a 7,500ft climb, in an Oly 2b.

Sunday was even more dismal, with general ridge bashing all day. I regret to say this was a day for glass ships, with two Yorkshire GC gliders being towed out to the wave. They reached 10,750ft but bad weather came in and they landed out at Rufforth.

Monday was a purely Vintage day, with the hill lift working well. By lunchtime most visiting gliders were airborne and bashing the ridge. Some glass ships had long tows without much success, but the Harbinger and Oly 2b reached 6000ft before the cloud closed in. Descending, they found themselves a fair way from site, but just scraped back in.

The day's flying was slightly marred by one member who allowed himself to get into the awkward position of being too low and too slow in the curl-over. To save himself impacting the side of the valley, he managed to pass a 16 metre K21 through a 6 metre tree in trying to make the airfield.

Tuesday was the day to end all days. Overnight winds had been in excess of 50mph, and at briefing 40kt was the average with only slight gusts over that. The age old tradition of a flat cap throwing competition took place, the winner being the one who could throw his hat furthest over the edge of the ridge. Due to it being physically impossible to throw a cap in that wind, some less energetic competitors changed their projectiles to small flat rocks. The winner, after half an hour, managed to get the said pebble a staggering record of five feet behind where he was standing, the closest anyone got to the edge.

No Vintage gliders were allowed out to play, but I negotiated the use of the DG500. Not wanting to shorten my life, I also found an instructor to stick in as non-jettisonable ballast and shoved him, complete with lunch, in the back seat.

I took a rather bumpy winch launch to 200ft before I got scared and pulled off. Diving over the end of the ridge, I hit a ballistic thermal which by the time I got myself sorted, had settled into a steady 6kts all the way round. Cloudbase was 2,600ft above site which we reached very quickly.

Sunlight could be seen way out to the west, and due to only an hour's limit on the DG, there was no time to lose. The instructor laid down the criteria of at least 100kts, pull up in anything more than 4kts, turn if it's a good 6-7kts. Thirsk and Northallerton were passed before there was a break in the cloud.

Under the guidance of the Yorkshire tones (and sometimes expletives) from the back, a steady climb was established at 2,500ft. The next ten minutes were a bit scratchy, but after continuously pushing west, wave lift steadily increased from about 1/2kt to around 3kts by the time I reached 4,500ft.

By now we had completely lost sight of Sutton Bank, about 45km away. Passing the cloud-tops, we saw an LS8 climbing a little better than us so we went to join him. OK, OK, I admit it I followed this guy everywhere. The lift slowly increased to about 6kts and stayed there. The views were magnificent.

We were running close to our time limit. In a very short time, in what had been my first proper wave climb, I had reached 7,500ft. Having to pull the brakes at that height is enough to make a bloke cry. Vne all the way from seven grand really does cover a lot of ground very quickly. Returning under overcast skies, a long overdue lunch was awaiting me.

Wednesday was an all vintage day again, with the wooden gliders getting to 7000ft easily. Thursday and Friday, although sunny and lovely, were scrubbed due to a North Westerly wind which has in past years added a few unfortunate pilots to the NHS casualty lists.

So, a really good week. I would have liked to have done a bit more flying but, unfortunately during the week the single-seater club fleet was kept in the hangar as the priorities were visiting vintage gliders. Three very kind people did offer me flights in a Slingby Prefect, Ka2, and an Elfe PM3, but the weather put a stop to that.

With that great wave flight on Tuesday, I was amongst a group of about 8 gliders that were the only ones to catch the wave at the right time. Most made it above 10,000ft which gave two people their gold heights (one of them had taken a sickie from work to be there) and one got diamond height at 20,100ft in one straight climb, and he was in ..... the only LS8 flying that day. ⏮

2001 IN A NUTSHELL

Barry Taylor

This year marked the 50th Anniversary of the post-war reformation of the club. Founded in 1937 as the Oxford University and City Gliding Club, it operated initially from sites at Cumnor and at Aston Rowant. All general aviation ceased with the outbreak of World War Two and the club was eventually reformed in May 1951 at Kidlington [see page 13].

To celebrate the Golden Jubilee, a weekend of activities were planned to take place during the weekend of the summer stand-down. Unfortunately, the decision by RAFSPA not to shut down meant that these arrangements had to be cancelled at the last minute. Perhaps some of our younger members could make a note that we should remember to organise something for 2051.

The enforced shutdown due to the outbreak of Foot and Mouth at Little Chesterton affected our operation from the beginning of March, and restrictions on Cross Country flying remained in place for several months. We were grateful to our friends at the RAFGSA Bicester for allowing us to use their airfield.

It is estimated that the club lost £650 due the enforced shut down. Fortunately, this was more than offset by a saving in the annual premium for the glider insurance, which dropped by more than £2000 on that of the previous year. The RAFSPA lost considerable revenue as a result of the crisis, and were under pressure to make up for this during the remainder of the year. This, in turn was to have an adverse effect on our operating efficiency.

A decision was made to sell K8 CYZ to provide hangar space, the asking price being £1600. However there have been no takers, and CYZ may be retained as a "spare." Modifications were made to the rear seat of the DG505 to reduce the possibility of back injury in the event of a heavy landing. The tractor engine had a complete overhaul during the year thanks to Dave Weekes and Mark Pollard.

The Friday evening flying continued to be successful and we were pleased to host a group of residents from Weston village. To generate interest among the residents, an article on the club was written for the village newsletter.

Trial lesson vouchers were provided as raffle prizes to The Fiends Of Bracken Leas School, Eynsham Pre-School, Kirtlington Church of England School, ChildLine, Woodstock Hospice for Children, the Ormerod School for Children with Disabilities, Clanfield PTA, Wood Green School in Witney and Newtown Infant School. There seems to be pattern emerging here.

New tables for the clubroom were purchased for £200, and the existing chairs have been tidied up. A new VCR and TV have also been purchased for the clubroom, and £392 was spent on a new boiler. A modem has been purchased and installed in the club computer for obtaining NOTAMS and weather reports.

Several interesting discussion items were raised in the committee meetings during the year, with the future of the cadetship scheme being one hot topic. A suggestion that the club could improve operating efficiency by introducing a winch driving rota was discussed and rejected. It was also suggested that the club may have reached the optimum membership level and that no further new members should be accepted, but the committee felt that this suggestion was wrong.

After some discussion, it was agreed that mini-courses would be reinstated, but with a number of provisos. All mini-courses would be prebooked with a specified BI, and would take place in the mornings only. No other AM flights would be booked on the same day as a mini-course. The cost of a mini-course would be £60. The situation will be kept under review to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to club members.

The club gained three more Basic Instructors during the year, and five more members will be commencing BI training shortly. It was agreed that the club would meet the full fee for Assistant and Full Category Instructor courses, although this will exclude the flying fees and will be deducted from membership fees over a period of three years.

The longest day event took place on Saturday 23 June. Although the number of launches were down on the previous year due to increased RAFSPA activity, the event was considered to have been successful. Other events organised by our Social Secretary, Fiona, included the 4th annual Christmas Dinner on Saturday 25th August. The Halloween party on 27th October organised by Paul Rogers and others also proved to be very popular.

The statistics compiled at the end of the year exploded a few myths regarding the club operation. As would be expected during a difficult year, the number of launches and cross country flights were considerably down on previous years. However, despite a seemingly large influx of new members in recent months, the number of full flying members has dropped by 11% on the previous year.

This drop cannot be blamed on an increase in the number of trial lessons, as the latter were also down by 18%. The vast majority of these were carried out by our newly qualified Basic Instructors *[including Barry - Editor]*. ⏮

IF YOU ARE GOING TO MAKE A FOOL OF YOURSELF, YOU MAY AS WELL DO IT PROPERLY.....

I can't resist sharing this letter from Patrick Wallace. I hope he doesn't mind - [Editor].

"I almost went gliding near Tucson recently, but the only possible day turned out to be blue-sky and I couldn't be bothered. Later in the week there were towering thunderclouds which was perhaps a bit too far the other way. But in between a couple of days of scattered cumulus with cloudbase at maybe 12000ft, when I was stuck indoors at meetings.

"The trip went seriously wrong - first I was caught by the suspension of air travel and was a week late getting home. Then I sprained my ankle and could barely emerge from my hotel room, let alone get out and about. I'm still on crutches 11 days later. The air travel bit was comparatively easy, though - pushed around in a wheelchair between flights. Great way to jump the queue - almost worth faking.

"I committed a dreadful gaffe on the way out from Tucson. A few airline employees were riding to join their flights in Los Angeles, and a lady of just the right age and general demeanour sat next to me. Having engaged her in an understanding and deeply appreciative discussion about the trials and tribulations of being a flight attendant, I asked what her husband did, to which she replied "He's a captain as well". My face must have been the colour of a flowerpot." ⏮

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WHATEVER MADE ME THINK.....

....That I could instruct !!

It was just a cunning plan to escape from driving the winch on Friday nights, but it was as long ago as 1998 when I started working on what was then known as an AEI rating. Haste was wedged into the K13's front seat, and I made some comment about it being my first go in the back. "Well I can't remember when I was last in the front of one of these things, so try to get it right" was the (not entirely) reassuring response.

I'd heard from someone (probably Tony Cox looking for more repair work) that there was a tendency to round out high when first flying from the back seat. My reaction was to fly it straight onto the ground. Whatever made me think I could instruct? Finally I reverted to rounding out at what felt normal height and the number of "firm" landings decreased somewhat.

Being on the upper side of the population's weight distribution curve, spins had always been a bit of a non-event for me. They always developed rapidly into spiral dives. But from the back seat with some of our less gravitationally challenged instructors in the front, the world rotated much faster and views of the M40 became much more direct. An Andy-induced spin, followed by a "you have control" indicated however that the carefully memorised recovery process still worked, and there was no tendency to pull back on the stick, or anything non-habit forming like that.

But there were puzzling moments – Cris saying "describe what you're doing with the controls". Flying the glider I thought, but control movements had long ago become automatic, so how on earth was I supposed to describe them?

A BGA training record book arrived, with lots of dotted lines requiring signatures. It included "the patter" – which revealed what those control inputs really should be. However efforts to memorise it merely indicated that the brain cells are dying off pretty fast these days. Whatever made me think I could instruct? It was eventually cracked by recording a patter tape to play in the car on the way to work. Reciting patter while driving the Oxford ring-road in the rush hour seemed a reasonable mental workload – or so I thought.

Because the flying was still rubbish. Load an evil minded instructor in the front, get excessively stuck into the patter – and rapidly find yourself at 500ft downwind over the village heading in the wrong direction. Creep back over the hedge at low level – not just once, but several times. Feel like a prat – not just once, but many times. Far worse than when pre-solo.

And just knowing the patter wasn't all. Getting it co-ordinated with the demonstrated control movements was another story entirely. Mostly the manoeuvre was over long before the description of what was supposed to happen. Slowly things improved, but there were still multiple cock-ups – especially "fault finding". It's usually difficult enough to work out what's wrong with my own flying, let alone someone else's deliberate errors. Whatever made me think I could instruct?

But eventually Cris was foolish enough to sign on a dotted line and in April I found myself at Bicester for a Basic Instructor course with Tony Parker, an ex CFI from Aston Down. The patter had stuck fairly well and a couple of fortunate soaring flights got through patter, demos and the infamous spins in the Puchacz – which turned out to be fun!

Cable breaks in their various forms were dealt with, but I was still leaving myself open to instructor-induced cock-ups. Rule 1 of instructing "Bloggs (the pupil) is out to get you. The more Bloggs learns, the more subtle the methods of getting you become." This was amply demonstrated when I carelessly prompted Tony to "use more rudder" in a turn. An instant application of full rudder resulted in some unplanned (on my part!) spin recovery practice. Tony was probably chuckling all the way home. Whatever made me think I could instruct?

Despite all this, more signatures were added to dotted lines and I returned to WOTG to be checked out by Cris. Several classic "check flight syndrome" cock-ups immediately followed – starting with giving yet another lesson going fast downwind, moving on through poor cable break recoveries to absolutely awful landings – whatever made me think I could instruct? Maybe sitting on the winch is the place most fitting my abilities. Talk about demoralised. But Cris signed the final dotted line – not surprising really, it got him out of having to fly with me any more for a while.

And I finally got to fly A/M's. And most of them can fly far better (thank goodness) than an instructor who is pretending to be a hamfisted pupil – especially if the said A/M is under ten years old or female. A few A/M reactions are disappointing – a grudging "that was interesting" but the enthusiastic ones - "that was amazing, brilliant" - far more than make up for the miserable bxxxxxs.

But I tell you, I'm glad that the rules for BI's exclude allowing the pupil to try launches and landings. If there's one thing I've learnt from all this is heartfelt respect for our half and full Cat instructors – the ones who really have to sit there while Bloggs flies them right down to the ground. That thought scares me witless.

So I still don't think I could instruct!

But please don't let all this put you off. The club desperately needs more half and full Cats (and even BI's too). So form an orderly queue please. And working on an instructor rating gives hours of amusement (mostly for everybody else) through the winter. So go for it. Your club needs you!

Dave

LONGEST DAY STATISTICS

This year the Dawn Till Dusk flying day was a great success, particularly since the BBQ was moved out to the launch point for the day, together with gas stove for making tea/coffee and frying the bacon. No excuse for leaving the airfield for breakfast etc!

Nick Hill analysed the statistics for the day, and published the results via email:

97 Launches
3 Cable breaks
1,748 Minutes total (nearly 30 hours)
40 pilots
4 Instructors + 2 BI Instructors
Longest flight - 138 min by Paul Morrison
Most Launches - 6 each by Ian Shepherd and Paul Morrison.

At this point Neil Swinton complained, saying that he'd done 11 launches. Nick explained that the most launches calculation had excluded the back seat. If instructors are included (he continued) then obviously Neil cannot count as according to the log he did 14 launches (he must have been asleep for the other three).

So, the most launches table (including instructing) ended like this:

Neil Swinton -- 14
Dave Nisbet -- 10
Howard Stone -- 9

Stewart "Ottersbum" Otterburn then joined in by making the following unofficial awards for the day:

Worst hair: Ottersbum
Incredible Patience: Howie
Worst Loops: Ottersbum and Ian
Most Reasonable attitude: RAFSPA CCI
Best Knees: Garry

Naturally, Garry had to respond to this:

"Well.....

"What can I say.....

"I am overwhelmed at receiving this award...

"I would like to thank everyone who voted for me and my family for supporting me (Janet financially I mean) throughout my more difficult times.... when I felt like giving up and putting trousers on, Janet said: "Go on, everyone should see them."

"I would obviously like to thank my father, who (genetically) assisted me in getting the knees in the first place...

"Lastly, I would like to congratulate the other nominees - Matt Gage for being such a splendid runner up and Peter Brooks for keeping his hidden, giving everyone else a chance."

(sobbing, walks off stage, clutching award).

I was recently asked in all innocence what there was to learn from gliding competitions. OK, here goes.....

A TYPICAL COMPETITION

DAY 1

Director: Ho hum, harumph, don't do this, don't do that.

Weatherman: Hopefully we will have....

Task setter: Cop this you buggers....

Competitors (mass folding of maps, beeping of GPS buttons, stampede for the loos): Aarggh!

Young lads running after the aerotow ropes: (puff, pant, puff, pant, knackered).

Tug pilots (yawn): Ping! That'll be another £19 you suckers!

God: Hee, hee, time for a sudden thunderstorm.

Airfield PA system: Will the crew of glider 147 please note your pilot has landed at Great Yarmouth.

Crew: Are there any good fish and chip shops at Great Yarmouth?

Esso/Shell/BP (rubbing hands in glee): You won't believe this, but there's yet another bunch of idiots trailing their hardware hundreds of miles around the country for the privilege of winning half a dozen eggs and a wooden spoon.

Crew (on way home): grumble, grumble, belch.

Pilot (on way home): snore.

DAY 2

Director: Don't do this, don't do that.....

Scorer: Yesterday's winner was Septimus Sludgebucket so tell us how you did it, eh?

Septimus: Thanks to everyone who helped me to scrape mud and cow shit off my glider....

Weatherman: Hopefully we will have....

Task setter: Cop this you buggers....

Competitors (mass folding of maps, beeping of GPS buttons, stampede for the loos): Aarggh! Young lads running after the aerotow ropes: (puff, pant, puff, pant, knackered).

Tug pilots (yawn): Ping! That'll be another £19 you suckers!

God: Hee, hee, time for another sudden thunderstorm.

AND SO ON.....

THAT WAS A CUTE LITTLE RHYME.....

There was a young lady called Carol
Whose hips became stuck in a barrel
Her friends only jeered
But in Paris they cheered
At her *avant garde* wooden apparel

There was a young lady called Claudia
Whose parties grew longer and rowdier
Her neighbours got flustered
Attacked her with custard
Her clothes are now soggy and dowdier

There was a young lady called Hilary
Got locked in a whiskey distillery
A whole weekend's boozing
And she started oozing
Glenlivet from every capillary

Once a young lady called Helena
Was told by her Mum she looked well in a
Black pointy hat
She objected to that
And (juggling her frogs) cast a spell on 'er!

There was a young lady called Helen
Who noticed her elbow was swellin'
"Flap those arms - exercise!"
Cried the doc. Now she flies
Back and forth between Hatfield and Welwyn

There was a young lady called Nicky
Whose knees were decidedly dicky
While crossing a field
They suddenly yield-
ed, her landing was soft, warm and sticky!

SING US ANOTHER ONE, DO!

ROCKET ROOS

A shortcut taken by programmers for a Royal Australian Air Force helicopter flight simulator had some amusing results. They coded herds of kangaroos into the scenery (because disturbed kangaroos might betray a choppers position) and while demonstrating the program they made a helicopter 'buzz' the animals.
As expected, the simulated roos scattered.... but then reappeared from behind a hill, launching ground-to-air missiles at the helicopter! The programming shortcut had involved 'tweaking' computer code representing infantrymen to make them appear on screen as kangaroos, but completely forgetting first to disarm the pseudo-marsupials of their Stinger missiles.

(found by Simon Walker).

EXACTLY WHICH JUBILEE IS IT THAT WE ARE (NOT) CELEBRATING?

It was a great pity that we were not permitted to organise a Golden Jubilee "bash" on the airfield this year. However, whilst this event would have celebrated 50 years of continuous post-war operation, there was an Oxford Gliding Club in existence long before that.

The pre-war ancestor of our current Club was the "Oxford University and City Gliding Club," whose inaugural meeting was held 64 years ago at Christchurch college, Oxford on 2nd December 1937.

Flying operations began in the spring of 1938 at a site on Cumnor meadow, which these days is on the bed of Farmoor Reservoir. The Club fleet consisted of two Dagling primaries, one nacelled Dagling, and one trailer. Club members built an access road to the site, including a bridge over a ditch, and a basic hangar.

Robert Kronfeld the well-known gliding pioneer became manager and CFI of the Club in June 1938. The Club boasted other celebrity aviators as members including Amy Johnson. Club pilots and gliders took part in a public Air Show at RAF Upper Heyford in the summer of 1938.

By the end of 1938 *The Oxford Magazine* reported that the Club had "made over 3,000 launches without bruise or abrasion to the person, but landings in unsuitable places or directions have resulted in minor damage to woodwork on four occasions."

During 1938 the Club had also tried hill soaring at Aston Rowant. By 1939 it seems that all Club operations had moved there, since opportunities for soaring at Cumnor were limited. The formation of the Oxford Gliding Company dates from 1939, including the original £4000 share capital that is still on the accounts to this day.

The Aston Rowant site is at the rear of the Lambert Arms pub on the A40, nowadays alongside the M40, near the motorway junction at the foot of the Chiltern ridge. In 1939 the proprietor of the Lambert Arms, John McGown, was a Club benefactor and business associate of Robert Kronfeld.

During the war years and for some time thereafter the Club was dormant but re-started at Kidlington in May 1951, moving to Weston-on-the-Green some 5 years later. Sadly, Robert Kronfeld had been killed aerotowing an experimental flying wing type glider in 1948 (there is a good photo of this machine on the internet at www.gsansom.demon.co.uk/vfaero/oneoff/gal5601.jpg).

The only known link between the pre-war and post-war lives of the Club was the late Lawrie Wingfield, formerly a WW1 pilot, who in 1939 was a fully qualified solicitor. He gave me much of this information about the Club's early history, and was the key figure in re-forming the Club in 1951. He had asked Robert Kronfeld's widow Margaret how she though the great man ought to be remembered. "Re-start the Oxford Gliding Club" was her immediate response. *Our Club is therefore the living memorial to this famous gliding pioneer.*

However, is this the whole story of the Oxford Gliding Club's early existence? Perhaps not. An article by Rika Harwood published in the December 1979 issue of *Sailplane & Gliding* includes the following intriguing but brief paragraph:

1930: The Oxford GC were the first to try auto-towing following an article on this method carried out in America. A Zogling [primary] *was used with about 450ft of rope to give launches to approximately 250ft.*

Where did that information come from? Probably from other magazines of the era. I once went with Jane Randle to visit Chris Wills at Ewelme who had a collection of old gliding magazines starting about 1930. Apparently the 1930 Club did not have a permanent site, the members seem to have travelled around doing their 250ft launches wherever they could. It is quite possible, therefore, that they visited Weston-on-the-Green around this time.

Chris Wills remembers a pre-war trip to the Aston Rowant site. He writes:

"I can remember visiting the 1939 Oxford Club's site with my Father, his Minimoa, and Talbot towing car. It was a beautiful place. I think Kit [Nicholson?] *was there with his Rhönsperber. I remember the signals to the winch from the railway line."*

I have seen references elsewhere to an operation led by Robert Kronfeld at Aston Rowant in 1934, but at present I don't have any documentary support for this. A detailed biography of Robert Kronfeld by A.E.Slater was published in the August 1979 *Sailplane & Gliding.* This includes the fact that Kronfeld settled in England about 1933 after being prevented from flying in Germany (he was Jewish). However the supposed involvement with Oxford GC in 1934 is not mentioned.

At present I have to say there is no evidence that operations in 1930 or 1934 had any direct ancestry to the 1937 formation of our Club. But you never know.

So, take your pick, is the Club 50 years old, 64 years old, or 71 years old?

I will be (occasionally) continuing my research into the history of the Club. For example, I have recently been in contact with the Keeper of the Archives at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. He has located original documents dating from 1937, showing that the University Statutes had to be changed in that year as a pre-requisite to the formation of the Club. Before then, members of the University were specifically prohibited from flying.

Jane Randle has done some research into post-war Club history. She gave me a list of dates when stories about the Club appeared in the local papers, between 1952 and 1981. She compiled this list by examining microfilm records in the Oxford Mail and Times newspaper offices.

I am also corresponding with Peter Davis, Air-Britain Specialist on Aviation in Oxfordshire, who lives at Bampton. He has sent me colour pictures of airfield operations at the Club in 1956-57, at both Kidlington and Weston, showing a T21, Kirby Cadet and possibly an Olympia in use.

One day, when I have time (ha ha) I will attempt to bring together all this information so that a comprehensive Club History booklet can be produced. ⏮

Phil Hawkins

SELF-HELP CULTURE

Our club has long had a culture of self-help. We are not the only ones having this opionion. Justin Wills has been visiting the Club occasionally for many years. As he recalled at the Juniors Competition in 2000, while thanking the OGC for their efforts: *"the good thing about the Oxford Gliding Club is that the members always did all the work."*

Members give up their time to instruct, maintain the gliders and ground equipment, serve on the committee, and take responsibility for various aspects of the organisation that are required to ensure a thriving club. This culture of involvement has contributed greatly to the success of the club, and helps to keep the flying costs low for all of us.

With 14 instructors, 20 Officers of the Club, seven committee members, six directors, the Site Trust trustees, together with the regular Tuesday evening maintenance crew and the Friday evening crews, it is clear that a significant proportion of the members make a valuable contribution to the operation of the club.

If you are not currently involved, and you feel that you could help in some way, there are still many opportunities.

The Tuesday evening team can always do with some additional help, especially with the C of A season approaching. One of the K13s will require new fabric this winter, and most of the club trailers require attention. Glass gliders need to be waxed and polished prior to C of A. If you can help, just turn up on a Tuesday evening.

Following the AGM, the new committee elects the Officers of the Club. They have responsibility for areas such as ground equipment, trial flight bookings, publicity, rotas, radios, etc. If you would like to help in some way, please speak to any member of the committee.

In addition, the successful summer season of Friday night group bookings will continue in 2002. Volunteers are needed for airfield operation and catering. As in the past few years, we need enough members to commit their time so that three complete crews can be organised in rotation.

Our club is entering its 51st year, and is probably one of the friendliest and most cost-effective places to commit aviation. The recent influx of new members verifies this. If we can maintain the self-help culture that has served us so well in the past, the prosperity of the club should be guaranteed for many years to come. ⏮

(adapted from an appeal by Barry Taylor).

FESHIE EXPEDITIONS IN 2001

Two expeditions this year, at the end of May and the beginning of October. The weather wasn't fantastic for either of these weeks, but then it wasn't fantastic anywhere else.

On the first visit we were accompanied by Fiona's family including her sister Marianne. I had a pleasant check ride in the Cairngorm GC Puchacz with local instructor Bob Forrest, but it was a dull day and cloudbase was only just off the hill at the back of the bowl. The slopes here are much shallower than at Talgarth, and there are no handy references such as trees, sheep, people etc down below, from which to estimate your height above the rocks.

On Tuesday of that week I had two wave flights in the afternoon, the first up to about 5000ft under complete cloud cover, with no obvious way through. Later, after de-bugging the Mini Nimbus plumbing system to cure a fault with the mechanical vario, I had another go when the sky had become much more open.

This time it was fairly easy to climb up between the clouds, keeping Loch Insh in view to check my position. Climbed steadily to 8000ft, about a thousand feet above the cloud tops. There was a large oval hole in the cloud stretching from Aviemore to Kingussie, aligned with the river. Later I found another bit of wave that lifted me to 10,700ft for some stunning pictures, with bits of snow on the mountains peeking through the cracks between the clouds.

After haggis and "bashed neaps" for supper, I had a birdwatching first - woodcock flying overhead the house at dusk, emitting piercing whistles and curious frog-like croaking sounds.

The next day also looked promising at first and we did some gentle hill soaring. However, a hasty landing was made when a line of hefty showers advanced from the west. The rest of the week was mediocre for flying, with heavy rain on some days.

Of course, there were other activities such as taking the kids to the Wildlife Park and the trout farm. We also made a trip to Lossiemouth so that Marianne could re-discover her birthplace, and spent a nice afternoon on the beach.

Lynne Barrett came with us for the October trip. She had been looking forward to the fungi hunting for weeks, and wasn't disappointed. She found a big cauliflower fungus on the second day and was absolutely delighted. Generally the fungi season was good especially for the chanterelles. Brian and Lorraine Evans came over from their home near Aberdeen to stay for one night.

This was the first Feshie wave camp wholly organised by the Club, without Barry and Mo Meeks, and it was nice to see so many members helping to make the event a success.

Matt flew on the best wave day of the week, a day which I had judged (wrongly) to be a waste of time. He writes: *"I released at 2000ft in the bowl, and soon found myself in hill lift at 10 up. Set off at 70 knots to the south trying to stay out of cloud. About 10km from Feshie the cloud thinned. Things settled down and I realised I had blundered into wave. Others were reporting good climbs directly over the airfield so I returned to join them. Just above 10,000ft I managed to get the oxygen on, which, rather than switching off the lift, caused the gaps to start closing, so a mass descent followed, half of it in heavy rain."*

We all visited the reindeer on the slopes of Cairn Gorm above Loch Morlich. This is about the only thing that we were unable to do in May due to Foot and Mouth restrictions. They still aren't letting you feed the animals by hand, as they used to, but perhaps this is understandable. Caroline Gage was so taken with them, she went again later in the week.

The Club's annual dinner was held on Friday evening of that week. About 50 members turned up for a good 3-course meal with roast pork. Brief speeches and trophy awards afterwards. A bit more civilised than a buffet with pea shooters, eh? Apparently their formal AGM is held later. ⏮

Phil Hawkins