



FINAL GLIDE

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Edited by Claudia Bungen

OGC Student Survey - Shock Result

Ed.: this was sent to me just in time to make it to the front page, and despite the tabloid-style introduction there are a number of serious points being made.

A survey has revealed the shocking news that sometimes OGC can get it totally wrong. One of our freelance reporters sent this report:

Many of the older and more established members may have forgotten what their first few months in a gliding club were like. They will have forgotten all about the problems and the worries of being a student and early solo pilot. What 'Final Glide' hoped to do with this

evenings were mentioned as something that new members felt they could join in with.

Why did they come here?

Why did our students join Weston and not 'the other' gliding club nearby? The web site was mentioned as showing 'a club, not a business'. Our prices are good value, and again, people were made to feel welcome.

Running the launch point.

We often place great reliance on the students to run the launch point while the more

getting the gliders out, to find 'half the club' inside drinking coffee. One interesting point was made a couple of times, the effect of the Duty Pilot. For example - a good Duty Pilot would ensure our students knew when they would be flying next, and if needed would be taken off the Rover or Tractor well before flying.

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Ten tips for novice crew



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Willy Weaklink Quiz



Molly the Oly



Photo: Claudia Bungen

investigation was record some of the failings, and also successes, of the club's treatment of these new members. By recognising these failings we can maybe avoid repeating them on the next set of new members.

First Impressions.

One thing we definitely get right is our friendliness and openness. Almost every new member mentioned how welcoming the launch point was. Remember, most new members either phone up the booking secretary, or turn up mid-afternoon at the launch point or hangar. No-one can recall being left standing alone for long. One new member reported being strapped into a K13 within a few minutes of arriving and expressing an interest in joining. The bookings telephone was also mentioned as being friendly and helpful. Our evening activities, Friday BBQ's and general 'bar'

experienced private owners are busy preparing and flying their private aircraft. In general this is not seem as a problem, provided:

a) students are actually shown what to do at the launch point.

b) the private owners at least help a bit before or after flying.

One person mentioned being initially very unwilling to help out at the launch point for fear of being 'shouted at'. So instead they sat in the bus, or in their car until it was their turn to fly again. Another mentioned that they had a check sheet with all glider flying activity on it, why did that not include tractor driving, cable handling etc? Another had said that their tractor briefing consisted of being told 'It's just like a car - now go and get that glider'.

Late starts were frustrating to some, a common complaint was arriving at 9.00 am to help

EDITORIAL

Another November, another Final Glide. For a while it looked like this year's Final Glide would consist of the address list and the editorial, as I could not come up with any good ideas. But on the drive back through the rain from Whitby to Sutton Bank in October a very fruitful brainstorming session took place, which resulted in some wonderful ideas (mostly not mine unfortunately!).

Some of the articles born during this brainstorming session are the Ebay glider story, the Regionals and Juniors reports (from the pilots' and a crew's point of view), the BGA Marketing report, the paragliding to gliding conversion report, Willy Weaklink's latest quiz and the BI report.

Interviews of new members were carried out by one freelance

reporter to get their views on the club - we seem to get it right on the social side, but what about the flying?

Also, this year I have successfully bullied the CFI into writing something for the CFI's Corner, which had been dormant for the last four years or so. I've also finally been able to resurrect the Chairman's report after a couple of years of no contribution. It was hard work, but hopefully worth it!

A big and heartfelt thank you to everybody who contributed to this issue of Final Glide, whether voluntarily or with a little bit of arm-twisting on my part - I think this issue again contains some really interesting and entertaining contributions - I hope you'll enjoy reading them as much as I have!

Claudia Bungen

OGC STUDENT SURVEY (CONTD.)

Flying instruction.

One big recurring point was the lack of consistency during the teaching. One person remarked that in 3

weeks, they had flown with 3 different instructors, and they had all told our student to fly a circuit in a different manner. Another example, some instructors teach a pupil to keep pulling at the top of the launch until the winch kills the power others suggest lowering the nose and releasing when ready. On the positive side, almost everyone stated that the standard of flying instruction was universally high, that they felt safe, and had made good progress. However, the tendency to 'hook on and go' with little or no pre-flight brief was mentioned as a common failure. And the best post-flights briefs were sometimes received in the bar after flying, instead of directly after the flight because the instructor had already moved onto the next student. Most people had also 'attached' to a favourite instructor, so an unofficial 'mentor' system was working. Interestingly no-one really complained too much about lack of launches achieved. And the willingness of certain instructors to 'keep going' into the late evening gloom until everyone had flown enough was noted with thanks by more than one person.

'Post Solo' students.

This class of students, who have come to OGC having already soloed elsewhere, we have undoubtedly struggled with. One person mentioned that for the first 7 or 8 weeks, they flew with a new instructor every time, and every time they did some turns, some stalls, and was told 'we need to do some cable breaks and then you can re-solo'. This must be deeply frustrating and quite insulting a solo standard pilot.

Guidance.

Once our student went solo, what then? Were they guided into future tasks, or left to fend for themselves? In general, it was felt that insufficient time was given by instructors to post solo people. 'If they are not on the 13 list, they are invisible' was one quote. Single seat gliders were sometimes not brought out in the morning owing to lack of people. People did feel that they needed far more encouragement, extra launches, help with loggers, even an allocated glider, for their first, important, one and two hours flights.

Theory.

There is much more to being a glider pilot than being able to 'pole' one around the sky. Apart from the pre and post flight briefings, we do almost no theory with our students. Most people mentioned that they would like to attend formal Bronze level lectures.

Top OGC failings	Top OGC Successes
·Insufficient ground instruction	·Welcoming club
·Inconsistent teaching	·Family friendly
·Post solo student handling	·Sociable evenings
·Lack of pre-post flight briefings	·Low prices
·Late starts	

Summary.

Quite deliberately, no conclusions or operational suggestions have been made in this article. It is left to individuals, or the new committee, to address any, or none, of these points as they see fit.

We would like to thank the sample of new members that were interviewed for this story.

Ed.: Note to any students/new members - if you are confused by receiving conflicting advice from your instructors, then simply ask. They are only human after all, and they may have made a mistake, or you might have misunderstood each other. No instructor will mind answering your questions, they will take it as a sign that you are listening and interested.

Billy Blackstrop, in the meantime, had a number of articles submitted that had to be omitted owing to lack of space:

- Techniques for measuring car weight using only a single foot and a larynx: R Taylor
- Advanced BBQ techniques: J Christensen
- Advanced BBQ lighting techniques, or "Eyebrows? What Eyebrows?": B Taylor / P Brooks
- Camper Vans, the first 100 I have owned: L Rogers
- "Yeah - Like - Whatever": P Hastings



CLUB LADDER

Nick Hill

Club Ladder Steward

Every year UK glider pilots can record their cross-country flights on several different national ladders with each flight being allocated a score based on the distance and speed achieved. At the end of the season the pilots with the best scores are awarded trophies for their efforts.

The two ladders of most interest to OGC pilots are the Open and Weekend ladders. As you might have guessed the Weekend ladder is restricted to flights made at the weekend whereas the Open ladder is for flights on any day of the week.

As well as the national ladders the scores are also used to provide individual club ladders and at OGC the winner of the OGC Open club ladder is awarded a trophy at the AGM.

In previous seasons only the four best scoring flights were used to calculate a pilot's overall ladder score but for the 2005/06 season this was increased to six flights. The other change for the 2005/06 season was that flights from regional and national competitions were now allowed to be entered on the ladders.

So how did OGC pilots get on this time round? Well despite an increase in the number of flights that can be included on the ladder the aggregate points scored by OGC weekend flights actually went down this year compared to last year. In 2004/05 the total was 19999 compared to only 16601 for this season. Maybe this backs up some of the moaning in the bar that this year was just not as good as last year. For the open ladder the total increased from 23576 last year to 28593 this year with the increase being down to the inclusion of flights from regionals competitions.

Anyway enough of statistics and congratulations go to Dave Bray for topping the open ladder and Cloudy for the weekend ladder. On the national ladders this placed Dave at number 103 on the open ladder and Cloudy at number 81 on the weekend ladder.

Looking forward to the 2006/07 season I would encourage anyone with cross-country or height gain flights to enter them in the cross-country book which is kept in the clubhouse. I will score all flights entered in the book as well as entering them on the national ladder. Once there are enough flights being logged I will display the current ladder standings on the notice board in the clubhouse so please enter you flights on a reasonably regular basis rather

than leaving them all until the end of the season. Many of the flights on this years ladder were entered by me rather than the pilots using the results from the various inter-club league events. Without these the ladders would have been very short!

For the increasing number of pilots with internet access, entries can be made directly to the national ladder via the web site <http://www.bgaladder.co.uk> This site allows anyone to see the current state of any national or club ladder. The advantage of individual pilots entering their own flights via the web site is that you can enter all details of the flights, i.e. the task, the time, the glider type and any comments you may have on the flight. If I enter your score none of these details are recorded. The system will also immediately calculate your score and reflect the changes in the ladders.

The number of national ladders has now grown to six:

- Open – For all cross country flights
- Weekend – Restricted to flights made at weekends and bank holidays
- Junior – Restricted to Juniors (Under 26 at the start of the season)
- Height – For height gain flights only
- Wooden – For gliders constructed primarily of wood and/or metal (?)
- Distance – Cumulative distance from all cross-country flights

During the year I periodically make sure that what is recorded in the book and on the web site are the same.

If anyone has any questions about the club ladders, national ladders, scoring, glider handicaps used etc., then just ask.

2005/06 Weekend Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
C Büngen	1309	903	840	752	705	632	5141
A Bray	1287	1180					2467
D Bray	1103	1011					2114
M Hastings	1156	677					1833
Carole Shepherd	797	667					1464
R Jackson	1053						1053
S Walker	826						826
S Calvert	604						604
P Morrison	580						580
J Christensen	519						519

2005/06 Open Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
D Bray	2126	2046	1814	1103	1099	1011	9199
C Büngen	1309	903	840	752	705	632	5141
M Hastings	1964	1156	677	495	238		4530
A Bray	1287	1180					2467
P Morrison	1690	580					2270
Carole Shepherd	797	667					1464
R Jackson	1053						1053
S Walker	826						826
D Weekes	671						671
S Calvert	604						604
J Christensen	519						519
N Hill	87						87

GRANSDEN LODGE REGIONALS

For the third of 486's competitions of the year, Mandy and I mounted a major logistics operation to move the glider, tent et al over to the Cambridge club at Gransden, the club with whom I learned to fly, 30 years ago. The airfield is great: huge, quiet and with 3 smooth and well-cut grass runways, though like other clubs they seemed determined to pack all the visiting tents and caravans in the smallest space; social - but Oscar (our dog) was rather too keen to visit the neighbours at every opportunity! Determined to do fewer land-outs than my syndicate partners had done in their respective comps (3 each), I set off gingerly on Day 1 as a thunderstorm approached the airfield – the Comp Director said we'd be fine. He was proved utterly wrong when 10 minutes after the last launch, every single glider was on the ground, scattered round the local countryside! Luckily, things improved a little and in spite of some dreadful weather, we flew most days, though being at the tail-end of the season the tasks were moderately long and challenging rather than absurdly long and impossible, as I'd experienced last year at Bicester! After a good position on the first task day, I clearly allowed myself to become hugely over-confident and my results went steadily downhill. Nevertheless, I was mentioned in dispatches one morning for, on the previous day's task, having flown 90 km more than everyone else, gone over all waypoints for the fallback task as well as the main task and still got back as the rain was falling along with dusk (it's a long story)!

Competition flying is a great way to improve one's cross-country gliding as it makes you go for it when common sense says "go to the bar"! I've found the standard incredibly high, so there's a lot one can learn from the other competitors. From the rush of rigging and preparation to the nervousness at the briefing to the frustration of waiting on the grid to the anxiety of the launch and the scary starts (gliders everywhere!) to the peace of flying to the relief of getting back or the frustration of not – cross country competitions are an amazing buzz. And it was even-stevens in the syndicate for land-outs. Phew!

Andy Bray



COMPETITION STORIES

TEN TIPS FOR NOVICE CREW

Accompanying Andy on his trip to Gransden was a novice, non flying, crew member. She offers these "Tips" (it's a miracle the pilot, glider and kit came back in one piece!)

- **KNOW YOUR CAR:** I don't just mean know where the pilot parked it – but drive it yourself and get familiar with the controls before going on your retrieve – and don't let the pilot fly off with the keys.
- **KNOW YOUR TRAILER:** might seem obvious but is yours the white one or the silver one ... taking the wrong one will lose you Brownie points.
- **KNOW YOUR ROUTE:** that car you are none too familiar with may have a fantastic GPS to get you to your landout (so the pilot in his field claims) but it may not always give you the best route – I don't think anyone noticed me and the trailer as we drove through Cambridge City Centre at 5pm on a Friday evening – did they?
- **GO TO MORNING BRIEFING:** you'll probably have to stand (only pilots get seats) and you may not understand the met or the task but it's *the* place to get to know people.
- **TELL EVERYONE YOU'RE A NOVICE:** No point in trying to hide it, it's obvious to everyone and anyway, it makes them all feel like experts and frankly, the friendlier you are to others the more they rally round when they see you struggling.
- **EAT YOUR GREENS:** rigging and de-rigging that glider will certainly build your muscles and since all launch sites are sited miles from your palatial tent / the coffee bar / the trailer, you'll clock up miles running back and forth fetching things your pilot insists are absolutely essential (like coffee and another bacon buttie!)
- **WATCH THE EXPERTS:** they make it look so easy and luckily they're a friendly bunch – watch and learn, with luck they'll step in and stop you before you really mess up or hurt yourself.
- **PACK YOUR PILOT A SURVIVAL SANDWICH:** he might like tuna mayo but cheese is so much less messy in that tiny little cockpit. He may say he won't need anything as he'll be back for tea ... but even the best have been known to landout – and while he's waiting for you and the trailer to negotiate City Centres, best he has something to munch.
- **TAKE YOUR WELLINGTONS:** it's bound to rain so keep your feet dry and warm while you wait for the Comp Director to finally give in and call 'SCRUB' at 3pm through the sheeting rain.
- **TAKE YOUR CAMERA:** essential to record the gliders on the grid (such interesting rain cloud formations in the background yet again) or just maybe to record that happy moment when your pilot (yes, that really is him!) makes it back to the airfield – complete with water trails and racing finish.

Thanks to everyone who helped me through my first crew duty – thanks to my pilot too, for keeping calm and putting up with me!

Mandy Bray

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

- The progress of a Weston Junior Part 1.

Having been a paid up member since Feb 2001 my 1st entry in final glide is long overdue. Now the editor has twisted my arm enough over details from the last few years I thought I should condense it all down and let you all know what a great move it was when you took me on as a cadet all those years ago.

Things in gliding always seem to happen quickly; my progress has and continues to surprise me on a regular basis.

In a manner of speaking the Lasham Junior Nationals in August 2004 was my first competition. Flying off the back of the grid I realised how much easier I found flying comps; loads of other gliders, all going in (roughly) the same direction, a task set for the weather, and someone to say "go" when it was time to start flying. If ever I've experienced accelerated learning this was it. I flew twice at Lasham and although I never made it back I enjoyed every moment of it so applied as soon as the applications for the 2005 Juniors were opened.

Despite being put on the reserve list for the second year running I received my acceptance about a month before it started – enough time to get some practice in. Fortunately I had signed myself up for one of the BGA X/C courses – held at Bicester for 8 days; I fitted in 14 hrs of a combination of solo, 2-seat and lead and follow cross-countries, clocking over 550km. Also included were all sorts of lectures (yes I have a copy on CD well worth the modest price of a beer or two for your copy)

All that flying effectively doubled the number of cross-country flights I'd done. So, feeling as prepared as I felt I could be I went to the Juniors.

Bicester Juniors 2005

A serious comp, me a nervous wreck. Probably the most important thing to me that whole week was my crew; Katie was as new to crewing as I was to competing but was determined not to let that faze her. From rigging, ballasting, polishing and wing running she tried it all – succeeding and letting me take my mind off all the ground work to concentrate on the important bits. Flying.

The first day was blue. Typical really as I'd never gone cross-country on a blue day. Sitting on the grid with 60 other gliders made me realise just what fun and games I was in for, and, true to form after launching, two huge gaggles formed. I promptly left and headed to the other end of the start line.

I could sit here now and critically analyse my flights for the week and give a blow by blow account. But it's probably best if I don't. To cut a long week short here's a summary.

Day 1

- Task – Broadway, Tetbury, Didcot, Bicester.
- Distance – 196km
- My speed – 67.5km/h
- Position – 23rd
- Lesson learnt – stay on track

Day 2

- Task – 3 hour Area Assigned Task points on Chipping Norton, Northampton South, Mursley, Bicester.
- Distance – 115 / 349km
- My distance / speed – 231km at 77km/h
- Position – 28th
- Lesson learnt – always fly to the end of the first sector if possible

Day 3

- Task – Bedford A/F, Edgehill, Westcott, Mursley, Bicester.
- Distance – 207km
- My distance – 122km
- Position – 1st
- Lesson learnt – Make your own choices

Day 4

- Task – Bedford Bridge, Northampton West, Didcot, Winslow, Bicester.
- Distance – 219km
- My distance – 141.5km
- Position – 15th
- Lesson learnt – every meter counts

Day 5

- Task – 3 hour Area Assigned Task points on Oxford South, Olney, Towcester, Bicester.
- Distance – 119.8 / 359km
- My distance / speed – 271km at 75.6km/h
- Position – 9th
- Lesson learnt – Get home!



Photo: Claudia Bungen

Day 6

- Task – Newport Pagnell, Oxford East, Bicester.
- Distance – 95km
- My distance – 63.2km
- Position – 37th
- Lesson learnt – Navigation, use the right task sheet.

Final position 13th – Unlucky for some but for me it was better than I ever planned for – I said I'd be happy being in the top 40 and was aiming for top 30. A very successful competition.

April 2006

Things haven't really stopped since the end of the juniors. As I write this I'm sat in a Spanish airport returning from a week taking part in the British team's development training. Basically a step up from the cross-country course I did in 2005, I've flown the BGA's new Duo Discus X as well as a selection of the European Soaring Club's LS4s. Although the 12,000 foot cloud base that I was told to expect never materialised the fairly scary terrain definitely did, large dramatic ridge lines, valleys full of unlandable fields. Unlandable due to rows of wires for wine vines or 2-meter high irrigation poles in a grid over the surface.

Over the week I managed nearly 900km from 15 hours flying although this time was probably equalled by the time spent in lectures and discussions. Even in a Duo and with an ex world champion in the back I didn't break my 300km duck, but given half a decent day I think I am now prepared to give one a good go. What a way to start the season! Roll on Dunstable Juniors!

Dave Bray

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

- The progress of a Weston Junior Part 2.

Dunstable Juniors 2006

How to start... Probably best with why I like competition flying. Firstly I like the setup. Turn up at the start of the week, drink a few beers and meet some fellow competitors, get up, rig, go to a briefing about where you'll be flying and then off you go. Anything up to 9 days flying is ahead of you.

Secondly I'm hungry – hungry to learn how some people seem to zip round the sky at such breath-taking speed when others land out or crawl round with tales of their struggles.

And finally I just love knowing where I stand and how I compare to everyone else!

So there you have it. 3 of the reasons I turned up at the juniors this year. Unfortunately so did 45 other hopefuls all vying for the 6 spaces up for grabs to travel to Italy and compete at the Junior World Championships.

We started the week with rain – 2 days of it. Hearing the tales of the interclub competitors at Bicester made us all glad of the decision but it added to the tense atmosphere of people eager to get off the ground. When Monday came around there was a buzz of anticipation. The sky looked good and the weather predictions were hopeful. Briefing told it all, a 326km task. Over to Moreton-in-Marsh, an about turn to Caxton Gibbet, up to Husbands Bosworth then a final glide back to Dunstable.

This was (and still is) my longest task to date and although the competitive nature got in the way I realised that pressure would only come from myself at this stage and I just had to relax and fly my own flight. I started reasonably late; listening to start times being declared confirmed that the expected front runners were still hanging around, but like them I needed to make my handicap work for me. I set off and it was about 20 minutes before I heard them declare start. A 20 minutes head start meant a 20km lead. Following the lines of cloud took me slightly south of track but I soon saw flashes of light ahead of me confirming that other gliders thought that that area was worth being in. Reassuring for a later starter. I soon caught up and passed them - cruising at 100kts is the way to see the countryside and your competitors pass by much quicker. Reaching the first turn point I caught up with a LARGE gaggle. Probably 25 gliders all circling, having already been to the TP. I dashed past them to register my entry into the sector then get back to a marked climb as fast as possible. The next leg saw these guys (and girls) disappear behind me, but the chatter from the guys that I knew had started late suggested that they had made up 5 minutes. Only a 15km buffer. Stick forward, fly faster, turn less. I had a great leg to Caxton, I'd never been over to that side of the country before and I'd not been able to find anyone to tell me what the turn point was. Valuable seconds lost as I started flying towards the wrong roundabout. Now to the leg that changed my day. I'd been running my luck up until that point, following the lines of sun on the ground and getting to them as the big cloud above was at its most powerful. I'd got to that 2nd TP letting my buffer drop by only another 5 minutes from the leader of the late starters. Great. However, not so good at this next leg. All the weather that I'd flown through was at the end of its cycle, a blue gap from Cambridge to Husbands Bosworth. My speed instantly dropped off. A slow glide until the clouds started to build again. I could hear the reports over the

radio of the weather that I was sat in from the guys behind me. They had noticed it and were already planning. Planning to speed up that is. It seems that as I was flying through the leg, bubbles was starting to form. Good for me as I could press on without too much loss but amazing for the others as 10 minutes later these bubbles were powerful thermals that kept them catching up all the time. I turned the last TP and as I found my next climb 5km closer to home I watched the leader from the other group approach the airfield setting his sights on the climbing glider ahead of him. This was the last straw. I swore a bit then pressed on for home taking an indirect route under some huge clouds just reaching the peak of their useful life. I hardly turned for that last 60km, just pushing on and following these clouds. At 30km out I was at 120kts, still not losing height at a fast enough rate to get back within 1000 feet of the ground. This WAS a final glide to remember. The last 15km felt like it passed in a blink of an eye, it wasn't much longer than that as I was shooting along at 135knts. My crossing the line was the first time I've HAD to go round and do a beat-up on a final glide as I just couldn't get rid of the energy. Those 5 minutes of lead at the last turn point had been crucial. I'd pulled back another 5 minutes and set a scorching time of 3 hours 10 minutes! I knew I wasn't enough to beat the guys who were hot on my heels but WOW what an experience for a first 300. When the final logger was handed in and the scores printed out my speed was listed at 103.2km/h and I'd ended up 5th for the day. A very happy day!



The debrief session that was held after revealed some other people had had good days as well, most notably the guys in wood. A K6e, an SHK, and an SF27 went round at 97, 84 and 80km/h respectively; with only the SHK pilot having done a Juniors before. Some very happy people were in the bar that night!

Day 2 followed and a shorter task of 288km was set. This blow by blow account is going to be much shorter. Mostly because the only way I can describe my memory of it is as a blur! I remember looking at WinPilot on somewhere on the 3rd leg and realising that my current task speed was 124km/h. Some of the decisions I made were made for me. I left late again and met up with a gaggle flying similar gliders to me halfway down the second leg. I stayed with these guys until just before the 4th TP and it's probably thanks to them that I kept pushing on, sometimes pushing out first and been caught up by them, other times me doing that to them. As with the day before, the leg from Cambridgeshire to Northamptonshire was horrid. No solid climbs and the feeling of things getting slower and slower. Had I left it too late? My final glide started on that 4th leg. I never want to repeat it. The experience was the complete opposite to the previous day, all the energy in the sky seemed to have vanished. All there was to do was push on. Final gliding to a site that is half way up a hill is incredibly misleading: The angle of the field is "wrong" and judgement is challenging to say the least. I passed over the boundary fence never having a doubt I'd make it but knowing that I would have very few options if a car or a person had tried to cross my path.

A nerve-calming drink and a promise to never scare my crew or myself like that again later, I witnessed my first crash as well as numerous other marginal glides.

The debrief made it clear to us all why we'd all been caught out. Our final glide had brought us back into wind straight towards the hill. For the final 5km of my flight the lowest sink rate I saw was 3kts, it peaked at 8 down. The reason for no thermals was also clear, the wind had disrupted these too.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Part 2 (contd.)

Speaking to someone who had set off from the last TP 2000 feet above the height I had made things clear – experience counts, he knew what he was looking at and adjusted before it was too late.

Overall on day 2 I came 9th. But with a speed of 113.9km/h, it just showed how competitive it was turning out to be.

Day 3 isn't worth a mention except to say thank you to my crew who I am always grateful for. Howie, Neil S, Katie, Ryan Shepard and Ossy Osborne came to pull me out of a field a massive 27.8km away from the start line. Oh dear. The old plan of winning by not losing was out of the window. Placed 29th out of 45. Realised that weak weather days need more practice than strong ones – especially in the British summer!

Day 4 was a 259km day and I was eager to make up for the previous day's mistake. Although there was no mention of it, in the weather briefing a few of the astute people thought that it might turn blue. I wish I were one of those. I watched 3 big gaggles totalling around 25-30 gliders set off in the distance; thinking that this was enough to balance out the handicapping I set off about 20 minutes after. Around 60km down track the sky turned blue. Unfortunately at 70km I caught up and joined the lead gaggle. From here it was tip-toes for the next 110km. when we got back to the line of cloud it was pedal to the floor again as the 13 or so late starters were now nearly with us. The rest of the flight was a lot of listening back over your shoulder, keeping an eye on the people who you didn't want to catch you – The chatter of the weather they could see ahead (the bit of the sky I was in) was fascinating and although I don't know how they do it I was able to start trying with mixed results. This led to the one skill that is meant to be crucial in cross-country flying – route planning. To be able to see lines on clouds and energy stretching off into the distance and follow the one to take you further, quicker. I've tried to do it in the past but with only very short vision – nothing past 15 km before now. Suddenly here I was in the groove planning the last 90km and sticking to it. It works – but looking back it was the only time it has happened and practice is needed to ensure skills such as this come back at the start of next season!

Even with my earlier than intended start I finished 14th with a speed of 70km/h. Of the 13 guys ahead of me, 12 started between 5 and 25 minutes after me.

Day 5 was like day 3 forgettable other than the lessons to be learnt. I picked up penalties on this day – 50 points for been 47 meters away from the turnpoint. My crew Paul and Katie navigated their way to St. Neots where they picked me up and took me back to declare my 70.4km. 30th, not good but serves me right for not knowing what buildings turnpoints are based on.

The final day was a strange one – very windy and predicted to street, however it didn't and a 307km final day dash became a final day struggle. I managed 274km, enough to put me 15th.

I finished 18th from the week and learnt some important lessons: Remember why you are doing something. I wasn't there to win the competition. I was there to learn, to do a first 300 and most importantly to enjoy myself. My goal to finish in the top 20 was successful, and looking back I realise that I fly competitions to do well but also because they are a solid chunk of time dedicated to a sport that I love and that is how I like to spend my time.



Dave Bray

NORTHERN REGIONALS, SUTTON BANK

Regionals are only for sky gods or serious competition pilots – not for me, whose only competition experience until this year consisted in once coming 2nd in the Inter Club League. – That's what I thought until January this year, when during a woman pilots' development day at Bicester I was talked into doing a Regionals competition. Those British team women can be very persuasive!

Anyway, they recommended the Northerns as a friendly and fun first competition. So at the end of July, my ace crew Nick, 251 and I went to Sutton Bank. Unfortunately the weather was less than accommodating, so that we only had 3-and-a-bit competition days.

1st day: Approx. 130km round Pontefract and Burn, into a strong headwind and under a grey sky. If I had only sorted out 251's water ballast – every time I thermal I seem to be back at SUT. I eventually make it round Pontefract (not sure how, as I was convinced I wouldn't even reach Rufforth), hop over to Burn, get a climb and then whizz back to SUT with a nice strong tailwind. This competition flying is fun! The water-ballasted Astir FEF with Ollie, an Oxford University Club pilot, beats a lot of the hot ships on that day and comes 6th!

2nd day: Excellent forecast, 300km are set. Again to Pontefract, then down to somewhere near Newark (the name escapes me as – you might have guessed – I never made it there) and back up north across the Humber. First bit is great. Brilliant climbs, great fun, until I reach Pontefract which is under a grey sky. I find a thermal over a field that

has what looks distinctly like a Duo Discus in it. Round Pontefract, then try to get back into the

sunshine like the other competitors, but 251's legs are too short. Land in a nice big stubble field with a dedicated track leading directly to it from the A1. How's that for a crew-friendly landing field!

I later hear that it was indeed the Duo Discus 3D from Aboyne that didn't actually make it round the first TP and landed in the field where I saw it. The DG-1000 from SUT, flown by Sherington's CFI Mark Stevens, also ended up in the same weather as 3D and 251 and joined 3D in the same field, having flown a shorter distance than me. That's some consolation!

Then there were several days where we either scrubbed, or gridded and scrubbed, or gridded, launched and scrubbed, or gridded, launched, landed out and nobody actually got anywhere.

On one showery day the first TP is somewhere south of the airfield. It's a fresh southerly wind. As we are all launched a big shower approaches from the southwest. I cross the start line in the rain. Several of us try to fly east to get round the shower but the wind direction is now more westerly than southerly. As I thermal in the rain just a few miles east of the airfield I hear several people radioing in as they land back at SUT. It sounds very exciting, with 80kts approaches and full control movements, and as I don't fancy landing on a busy airfield in the pouring rain and strong turbulence I select another nice stubble field

NORTHERN REGIONALS (contd.)

and land in it. In the rain. Phone Nick from inside the glider as it's still raining. Just as

my crew arrives (together with Ollie and his crew, who were bored after Ollie had landed back on the airfield) it stops raining. The farmer turns up and when I apologise for landing in his field, and thank him for the suitable condition of the field, he tells me he had specifically cut it for me the previous week.

Nobody on this day gets round or even past the minimum distance. There is a neat line of gliders dotted over the countryside from SUT to Scarborough, where the DG-1000 came down because he ran out of land!

3rd competition day. Task is set, sky is uniform grey again, but that didn't stop me from going round the task on the first day, so I'm optimistic. This time, however, almost everybody including me lands back on the airfield because we just don't find any lift whatsoever. John Ellis in his Nimbus 3 is the only one to make it round the task today, with a very marginal final glide and an impressive average speed of 51kph! That makes me feel better, as I point out to him later.

4th competition day. Another small task on the last day. Wetherby – Pocklington. 120km or so. We are launched into a grey sky, cloud base is 1800 ft as the SUT comp director calls a max. start height of 2000 ft. When some pilots point out to him that max. start height is above cloud base, he radios back "If you can't cope with the conditions, land immediately". He really is determined to get more than 2 days out of the Northerns this year, which has suffered very bad weather for the last few years.

Cloud base eventually lifts a bit, and even though I never get above 2500 ft QFE and spend most of the time below 2000 ft QFE I make it round Wetherby, where I meet the DG-1000 and an LS4. We set off to Pocklington together, lose the LS4 after a short while and then hear its pilot call downwind at Rufforth – what went wrong there? Local gliders help us find good lift at Rufforth. On to Elvington where both the DG-1000 and I find our last thermal. At Pocklington there seem to be bubbles of weak lift over buildings next to the airfield, but as this is only just outside the airfield boundaries and it's rather busy with local gliders and I'm rather low I decide not to exploit it. The DG-1000 has already landed, I join it shortly afterwards. It was the last day after all, it didn't look like I was going to get back to SUT, and I've always wanted to have a look at the Pocklington launch point vehicle, a modified aircraft fuselage. Very friendly welcome, especially by the tug pilot, who immediately offers an aerotow retrieve – which I agree to because I don't fancy landing out twice. As the Pawnee and 251 set off I see Astir FEF on its downwind leg.

What I've learned:

- Regionals really are like a glorified Inter Club League.
- The Northerns really are a friendly comp.
- You can go cross-country with a cloud base of 1800 ft QFE and a uniform grey sky.
- There are lots of big landable fields south and east of Sutton Bank.
- I need to get 251's water ballast sorted for next year.
- I don't need a map anymore to find Pontefract.
- I've definitely caught the bug!

Claudia Büngen

SARAH TACKLES THE WAVE AT FESHIE - SEPTEMBER 2006

Phil Hawkins

Friday: It poured all day until 5pm, at which time I discovered that Sarah's trailer sidelights didn't work. It took me until dusk to sort it out. Finally got on the road soon after 10pm. The *ALIENS* in the old white Mondeo were even more disorganised than we were, and didn't get started until much later.

Saturday: It was a nice dry night with no wind, and we made good progress driving up the tube. The *ALIENS* passed us at the Scottish border after having been stopped by the Police, who were apparently disappointed at not finding any bald tyres etc. Arrived at the airfield about 8:30am under sunny skies and interesting wave clouds. I don't fly on the first day after an overnight drive, however. Shopping for provisions, then spent the afternoon relaxing at the house and listening to the radio. The best height I heard was 13,000ft. *Score so far: Wave 1, Sarah 0.*

Sunday: Rain all day. Called in at Drake's Nursery for tea and cakes, and watched the woodpeckers and squirrels just outside the window. Picked mushrooms, made bread, made popcorn, spun wool, while the *ALIENS* did jigsaw puzzles and made lots of noise. Lovely.

Monday: Pleasantly warm sunshine with little wind. Wave bars coming and going in various directions. Spent some time pushing gliders on the airfield and waiting for a check flight in *Papa Kilo*. Unfortunately by the time my turn came round the sky had mostly over-convected with ragged cumulus and it was consequently rather gloomy. Bob Forrest and I had 37 minutes gradually descending on the hill in slackening wind, then failing to find any useful thermals over the Bear's Paw. The *ALIENS* went to see a castle at Stonehaven on the east coast but it was closed when they got there, because they stopped for too long at Aboyne on the way. *Score so far: Wave 2, Sarah 0.*

Tuesday: Misty and still in the gloaming. Never known a week here that was so calm and so warm. Some of the *ALIENS* went bike riding, some came with us for a walk up to the waterfall. Crossing a plank bridge over the stream, beloved crew fell in up to the knees, but disappointingly she wouldn't do it again while I held the camera. The weather continued flat calm and overcast. The locals were doing circuits off the winch in the Puchacz, landing in the opposite direction to takeoff. Brian and Lorraine Evans came for dinner and stayed overnight.

Wednesday: Much more wind and low cloud. We took Brian and Lorraine around the wildlife park at Kincaig, then relaxed at the house during the afternoon. About 5pm a wave gap suddenly opened to the south of the airfield, although rain was threatening in the distance. Several brave souls rigged in a hurry and were towed up into the short-lived hole. The best height for the afternoon was almost 15,000ft but most pilots had to descend through cloud and rain. I wimped.

Score so far: Wave 3, Sarah 0.

Wednesday PS: One of the *ALIENS* wrote off the white Mondeo on the Insh road at dusk. There was a coming-together on a narrow bend with a van from the Water Sports centre. No injuries, though. Let's be careful out there!

Thursday: At first the weather looked very good indeed with a wave gap over the river and a clear defined edge of cloud over the hill. Crew and *ALIENS* were busily retrieving gear from wrecked car in McCormack's garage at Kingussie, while I ended up last in the aerotow queue. Before I launched several other gliders had already been over 12,000ft and were on the way down again. I reached 3,500ft in hill lift, but a big rain shower was imminent and six other gliders were diving for the circuit below me. The Feshie discipline of radio calls and taxiing off the runway works well, though, and the strip was clear for my approach. Against my entry in the daily log the CFI

FESHIE 2006 (CONTD.)

wrote: *Last of 7 to land in 7 mins with excellent airmanship by all.* We hung about on the ground waiting to see if the wave would re-establish once the squall line had passed, but the

wind had died by 4pm. Biked around Loch an Eilean later, followed by venison crumble dinner at the Club.

Score so far: Wave 4, Sarah 0.

Friday: The wind had reversed somewhat, with the cloud over the valley and interesting gaps over the hill. Crew were busy taking delivery of hire car and ferrying *ALIENS* from A to B, but I was determined not to be last again and rigged early. In fact I foolishly agreed to be guinea pig and launched first. The aerotow was extremely rough, and when I released supposedly into the wave, I could only barely stay up. The wave was being very elusive, and obviously my performance didn't inspire the onlookers, because no-one else bothered to launch until well into the second hour. In between fleeting bits of wave I was using some rotor/thermal stuff over the valley which was choppy and exciting. After the third hour it was apparent that cloud amounts were increasing and the gaps were closing up. Several other pilots all dived away through the last hole, but I took my chance and soared through, finding a decent climb to 7,000ft. All alone under a hazy blue sky with an endless white desert of dunes and ripples below. Wonderful, but how do I get down again? Let's be careful out there! I checked the Colibri for position, and switched on the horizon for a descent through the bottom of a valley, heading west towards Loch Insh. Broke cloud at 3,500ft over the loch, and the wind conditions on the airfield were flat calm again by the time I landed.

Final score: Wave 5, Sarah 1.

Saturday: Packing early and driving home from about 10:45am. The hire car was entrusted to the *ALIENS* for the day. Let's be careful out there! Early fog at Feshie cleared to sparkling sunshine over the Pass of Drumochter. Trouble free journey with stops at Anandale Water and Killington Lake. Chinese takeaway in the evening.



Photo: Claudia Bungen

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

So where did 2006 go? It actually started for OGC back in 2005, I suppose, immediately after the last AGM. The winter months ticked over and were on the whole quite kind to us weather wise, the Tuesday night workers toiled over the tailplanes on the two Astirs for far longer than was expected, and the club's beloved Daisy, after seeing a huge rise in popularity over the last few years, mostly due to Dave Weekes' lead in having fitted another hook in her underside, finally received a fresh coat of paint, bringing her back to RAF colours. I seem to remember that the first few months of 06 were quite mild, and attributed to a reasonable amount of flying - well, enough to put a smile on the treasurers face at least. Spring started to arrive and whispers of good flying weather could be heard. Oh! Come on you know whom from. The C of A's were getting a bit behind, but did eventually all get done in time.

Laura had volunteered to take the Friday night bookings, a much more difficult task than she had expected, she didn't really get any bookings until a few weeks before the season started. It just goes to show what a good job John Mart did in the previous two years, but thinking back Norman Hedge usually filled all

of the places within the first few weeks of the year. We always had lots of groups from companies that returned year on year, but now most evenings seem to get filled by club members. Fridays will always be a great way of showing off our sport, thanks to our instructors who carry out this task and also the members that turn out to be ground crew, but we always need more volunteers as crew! "Another two weeks" was the regular answer given by Howard Stone on the subject of his Full Cat course, in order that he could take over the position of CFI. It did eventually happen much to Martin Hastings' relief. Whisperings of foreign trips with Daisy emerged, as did "Glider for sale" on E-Bay, I'm sure someone else will tell that tale.

For 2006 I managed to get an early answer from the RAF about flying weeks, two whole together weeks in August, great, but the weather in July was much better, sorry guys. If your car insurance went up ten quid this year, I won't need to describe Ian Shepherd's face, when the club got its renewal for the club fleet. Ouch, just over 20k! Fortunately, Ian managed to get this reduced by about a third, but some fees had to rise to cover this.

The grass posed the normal problems again this year, and it became necessary to invest in

a larger tractor with cutting gear to enable us to take off and land safely. Using it has certainly improved the parts of the field that we use, and I'm pretty sure Neil Swinton prefers it to his Mondeo. This turned out to be one of the year's major expenses, but on safety grounds absolutely necessary.

It would be almost impossible to draw up a list of which ground equipment Neil Turner has mended this last year, but with just a little help occasionally, he has managed to have everything working on time, so few people knew it was broken in the first place, clever that! . From all club members "thank you Neil". I could probably witter on for many more paragraphs, but Claudia is bending my ear for this document. Was 2006 a good year for you? Surely it was, the summer does seem shorter these days, but many soloed and re-soloed (wonder who that was). Tasks were chased across the skies, and the Interclub League Team really went for that winner's title again.

I always describe OGC as a friendly, family-orientated club, with a good mixture of members giving the club a vast range of skills. Everyone should be able to offer a little to help keep the club running smoothly. This year was OGC's 50th year at Weston on the Green, and I'm sure many more will follow.

Paul Rogers

WILLY WEAKLINK'S PHOTO QUIZ

Willy dropped all his photos on the floor, and the labels have come off the back. Can you help him work out which photograph goes with which label?

- A. This glider was developed from the L13. Unlike its predecessor it was not a great success.
- B. Designed by Gerhard Waibel, this glider has an unusual mid tailplane arrangement.
- C. This Polish aircraft is named 'Pirate'.
- D. This glider is 10 times as good as a DG-100.
- I. This glider is a winner in 'World Class'.
- J. Not many gliders came from Italy, but this one did.
- K. The glider is not as good as World Class.
- L. A new build of a 'Poodle'.
- M. One of two Schempp-Hirth gliders named after a high flying cloud.
- N. This glider was developed in the USA.



GROUND EQUIPMENT Neil Turner

Well, it's been interesting on the ground equipment side and the year hasn't finished yet!

As usual things went wrong just as we needed them. The old red tractor as regular as clockwork blew its head gasket again. John Hanlon and I stripped it down and replaced the gasket. Whilst it was in bits I had a good look at the engine condition. The crack in the cylinder liner (Piston bore) had got bigger!

Time to do something about it. More on that later.

It is always the same – one thing breaks and something else decides to break in sympathy!! Now the rover's water pump was leaking, so £170 later we had a new water pump fitted. Mean time the dodgy duo (Carole and Neil S) was out mowing the field like mad with the blue topper, which only cuts about 3 and half foot each time. Sad to say they were losing the battle against the long grass.

Now at this point something funny happened... Haste said he knew a bloke who had a tractor and would give me his number for...FREE!! Two phone calls later I was talking to Martin (not Haste). Now he had a big tractor and a big mower for sale and he would do part exchange for it. So what we ended up with is the International 875 80 hp tractor and a 10' topper for £3200 and Martin would take the old red tractor, red topper and the grass mower in px.

As you all may have noticed the grass now is kept short on all areas we use.

This is due to mainly the grand efforts of Neil Swinton and Carole. The tractor has already done over 40 hours of mowing!

We will have to sort out a rotor of tractor drivers in the new year, so if you fancy doing some mowing (and not giving up after one go!) come and see me.

Just a note about the tractor: Please do not drive or operate the tractor

Unless you have been instructed by me on how too do so!

Well everything was going nicely until the flying two weeks started.

The Tost winch starter packed up in a big way. This time the ring gear had lost it teeth. So Taffy was fired up and used, good old Taffy!!

Carole and I set about stripping the Tost gearbox out, 4 hours later the bits were on the floor. Parts arrived from Skylaunch 3 days later. The auto gearbox had a service (1500 hours over due!!) New ring gear and a new type of starter motor were fitted. With the help of a few "strong men" the gearbox was back in. The winch engine had the oil, filter and spark plugs changed and was ready for winching again.

Now the Tost winch was back in action again. What, it's leaking water!??

Yep the radiator was leaking. A quick look and Taffy was called into action again!!

With the radiator out of the winch the leak was found to be a cowling rubbing on the matrix. Slight problem here, it was made of aluminium and I could not repair it! After few hours on the phone, I found myself at Sercks Services in Botley. I spoke to Ken who said no problem! In the end we decide that a new rad the same as the old one would cost £325 but me being me I wanted to up-rate the cooling so... Ken made a new rad out of copper (I can repair that!) with an extra large cooling core and wider fins so the grass can be cleaned out easier. Cost £350 + VAT. Bargain!

So Taffy saved the day again... Sad to say Taffy is now ill. It is losing water, well that's not quite true, I know where it is going...into the oil sump!!

Taffy has a head gasket problem, so both heads (V8) will have to come off to find the fault. Could be a long job over winter! If and when Taffy is fixed I will then order up 4 new wheels for it so we can move it without the fear of a tyre going bang!

Fingers crossed that the Tost keeps going.

Final thought. Just bear in mind that the ground equipment is just as important as the gliders. One is no good without the other! The cost of maintaining the ground equipment has risen a lot over the past year. This is due partly to wearing out and partly due to abuse. So please treat it with care as you would do a glider.

WHAT HAS THE BGA EVER DONE FOR US?

Steve McCurdy + Neil Swinton

Well, the answer to that could take longer, and be more contentious, than an Andy B debrief. But have you ever thought what we do for the BGA? Apart from giving them vast amounts of money on a regular basis, Neil Swinton and I both give them our time and expertise as members of the Communications and Marketing Committee. Never heard of it? Well what do you expect, it's a communications committee...

Set up around six years ago, it is chaired by Marilyn Hood, or M as she is known. I was coerced into it by Claire Emson as she thought that as I design stuff, I might be useful. Always thought her judgement was a bit suspect as recently I produced a stunning exhibition stand that tells the world how good 'giding' is. Then there's Keith Auchterlonie who the BGA pay to be their marketing manager (yeah really), Pete Masson who's terribly good at gliding and does the BGA web-site stuff, Lu Kennington who does, er, stuff and Helen Evans who does S&G. Neil joined a year or so ago after he helped out by getting some kit to an exhibition and then just kept on turning up. We also have 'on the books' Paul Morrison who brings his camera to take snaps of the punters standing in front of the 'giding' poster.

We meet at irregular intervals and try and think up ways of enthusing the great unwashed out there about gliding. Tough job. Most of the time this involves lugging gliders and the simulator to exhibition halls around the country where we hope some gorgeous totty is going to hang on our every word and then join O.G.C. In reality it's some octogenarian who wants to tell you all about their time in the air cadets and how difficult it was to tie putties. Once I met Peter Brooks who had gone to an exhibition thinking it was all about something else. But then in fairness, once we took the stand, and a bunch of helpers, to the wrong exhibition as well. Told you it's tough.

We do have some successes. Anybody who has gone solo this year should have got the committee designed 'joining pack', stuffed full of goodies. Like a letter from the Chairman, and a free S&G. But it's not all bad, they also get a free cloth 'A' badge!

Of course there is a small financial remuneration. They paid me 24p a mile for towing the BGA chairman's glider through a street market in west London, but that had to pay for the box of aubergines I took out with the trailer on a sharp left turn. Had to share the money with Neil towing the simulator to Birmingham as the electrical connection on the ALFA had gone up the pictures and he had to switch on the rear high intensity lights every time I braked. But after a hard day watching literally hundreds of people not being interested in gliding, the BGA spares no expense to put us up in a hotel - where there are teeth marks on the toilet seat and the reception smells of cabbage. We know how to live!

So, that's the BGACOMMSCOM. And if you've got any bright ideas about how to improve the public's awareness of gliding, keep them to yourselves, the meetings are long enough as it is.

DAISY DID FRANCE!

Dave Weekes

This year's international Vintage Glider Club rally was held at Angoulême in western France (the left hand side, half way down, near enough). Having had a pretty good time at the rally near Berlin last year, Pete Brooks, Peter Boulton, Rob and I were keen to do it again with Daisy and the Skylark and Graham and Lynne came too, along with the Capstan – the OGC Vintage Wing is growing!

There had been a certain amount of concern pre-rally about the poor relationship between the French authorities and British glider pilots owing to the Brits' lack of government issued licences. However the rally organisers had promised that there was a fix in with the DGAC (the French equivalent of the CAA) and that "les Anglais (perfides)" would be able to fly (but only in old gliders, only during August).

And so it turned out – we sent off photocopies of just about every bit of paper we owned relating to gliding (BGA licence, medical, copy of last page of logbook, copy of last page of passport, passport photo, inside leg measurement) and when we got there, there was a bit of paper from the DGAC saying "these Brits are allowed to sully our airspace" (or the equivalent in French), so signing in for the rally comprised handing over money for launch tickets and the campsite and that was pretty much it. So we flew in France!

Getting there was a tad more difficult. Last year we'd hauled the long-suffering Daisy through solid rain to beyond Berlin (and back) on the open trailer, and we'd promised her that we wouldn't do that to her again. However, never do today what you can put off till tomorrow and the pipe bending and conversion of the trailer to covered wagon format was a pretty last minute affair (driven largely by Pete Brooks) accompanied by innumerable "how many asylum seekers will you be able to get in there" quips from humorous (but unoriginal) OGC members.

So we sailed off through the night. The computerised routefinders had said go via the Paris ring road. The computers had not however pointed out that it was the Saturday before a double French bank holiday and that every last car owner in the city would be leaving it. That cost us two hours virtually stationary on the Paris Périphérique, with fuel gauges sagging ominously. Graham and Lynne had gone a day earlier with Loulou and had avoided Paris in any case. They had phoned to tell us that they were encamped in a "smelly cabbage field" – it was only young kale really, it did smell a little bit, but after a while you didn't notice it.

The rally was organised by L'Association des Ailes Angoumoises et Charentaises – but lets call it Angoulême gliding club – which apparently consists of about 20 members! Talk about a stout effort – even more impressive than OGC hosting the juniors. Their site was also interesting – a vast folly of a municipal airport, built by the Angoulême Chamber of Commerce, complete with arrival & departure lounges, huge control tower (with staff), fire crews – and daily traffic of 2 local Cessnas and one executive jet.

Oh and for one week only, 110 multicoloured gliders, 4 tugs, a winch and hundreds of anarchic glider pilots from dozens of different countries wandering about the airfield – heaven knows what the tower controller thought of it – there were desperate loudspeaker messages trying to control people wandering about, gliders landing from all points of the compass – he gave up after a couple of days and sulked.

There was a downside. The airport was a single mammoth tarmac runway, with useable grass on one side only. That meant that the aerotows had to alternate with the winch launches, which slowed things a bit. A lot of vintage gliders soar like bricks and the ability to

do lots of launches in a day is vital at a VGC rally. Hey ho, look on the bright side, there wasn't a parachutist in sight!

The French don't seem to do much winch launching – they have dirt-cheap aerotows so why worry? A deal to hire a German electric winch had apparently fallen through – maybe the flex was too short - and there had briefly been a fear that there would be no winching at all – which unfortunately had put off the Danes with their infamous 2-seater primary. However it turned out that an old Tost truck-mounted winch had been tracked down somewhere in France. It couldn't self-propel though, so it was moved about piggy-backed on another truck. The winch driver was learning on-the-job and was initially a bit rough. He got better through the week!

We'd been good boys and had bought the local charts – which had alarmingly said that there was a 1000 m amsl airspace lid over the site. But it turned out that the French air force was also on its annual holiday and the airspace restriction had been removed - hooray! (P.S. if you want to invade France, do it in mid-August).

So we rigged Daisy, the Skylark and Loulou and were all set for the off. Then Andy Jarvis from Parham, who'd been at the Berlin rally with a rather tatty T21 wandered over looking embarrassed. He'd taken his T21 on to Poland last year, had it completely refurbished and repainted in the 1950's silver with yellow bands RAF trainer paint scheme. He'd then got the Poles to put the serial number on it of the T21 in which he'd gone solo – WJ 306. Now what is Daisy's original RAF serial? – WJ 306. Coincidence or what? So there we were, in the depths of France, with two gliders with the same number – fortunately the DGAC didn't come checking! But ours is legal. Hey ho – he's going to change his to WJ309 – eventually.

It was an excellent week – the weather was a bit mixed but we got to fly on most days – which was more than could be said for the folks back home on the flying fortnight. The launch queues did get a bit out of hand on a couple of days, but Daisy added significantly to her quota of aerotows completed (no they didn't get any more pleasant, but we still have not followed advice and taped the aileron joints, which is said to improve things).

The usual hunt for different gliders to fly went on. Pete Brooks scored a flight in a Hütter 17, a tiny glider with a 9.6 m wingspan designed for flying in very strong Alpine thermals. The 17 refers to its glide angle = aerodynamic house brick. The owner was accustomed to flying very abbreviated circuits. Off went Pete on an aerotow, caught a thermal and went up to 3000'. Nick, the owner, was ecstatic, bless him.

(Pete also scored a ride in a French ambulance after headbutting Daisy's strut, but we won't go into that. Daisy was fine and Pete's head recovered.

The normal vast quantities of free booze were on offer at the "International Evening" but we (mainly) stayed (fairly) sober. Part way through the week however, the caterer decided that he wasn't making enough off these glider pilots, packed his kit and left – the poor fool had made the mistake of not having a bar integral with the catering – you've got to catch them early in the evening with the first cold beer of the day and after a few more they'll stay for your food as well!

Next year the rally is in Slovakia – it sounds a bit far to me, but the lads seem to have got the bit between their teeth and were talking ambitiously on the drive home (we came back on Graham's route, not via Paris). So who knows? Anyone know the Slovakian for "four beers please"?

CFI REPORT

Howard Stone

The current Instructors numbers are now increasing and we now have 5 Basic Instructors, 9 Half Cats and 6 Full cats giving us 20 Instructors overall. Next year we will be losing Graham Barrett who will be retiring from instructing, our thanks go to Graham for his hard work and dedication over the years.

We have two people who will convert to a Basic Instructor next year, Dave Bray and Rob Jackson. Claudia and hopefully Barry will be converting to a half category along with the re-instatement of Martin Cooper as a half cat. Paul Freer has completed the Basic Instructor course but needs to complete his 5 hours before he can take up the BI role.

While some of our members were visiting Sutton Bank they witnessed a very bad accident, which involved two gliders colliding. One of the pilots was killed with the other managing to get out of his glider and pull his chute from a very low height. This accident was likely caused by flying close to the ridge in very poor visibility as the cloud base was reducing, giving the pilots no time to react as you only can see the other glider at the last second. I cannot stress enough the risks associated with flying at cloud base especially in very poor visibility.

The 2006 season has been a good year with a good many of our pupils gaining their A badges, but with a slow influx of new members we are finding that on many days we have no pre-solo pupils to teach. Most clubs are finding it difficult to attract and retain new members and these new members help fill the gap when full members leave or retire. So while the overall membership numbers is fairly stable we need to attract new members. Various events have been organized to help attract new members but the uptake is very low. I have tried to tackle this with a new approach by talking to businesses, which supports their staff with external activities. These activities normally consist of football, sailing, rowing etc. so why not gliding. I have approached people at my workplace and the interest has been very good. I have around 10 people who have stated that they would like to form a gliding activity group. So how do we interface this group within the Oxford Gliding Club. I intend to raise this at the next Annual General meeting to form a new corporate membership type. This new type of membership will also allow other organizations to participate as long as they meet the minimum requirements. The Windrushers club at Bicester has a similar arrangement with the Oxford University club and seems to work very well.

USEFUL INFO from the BGA website: Distress & Diversion Cell Request 22nd July 2005

The D&D Cell has requested that we ask all pilots to let them know if they have landed out and had to leave the glider in the field overnight or if, for any reason, they believe that the landout has caused or is likely to cause alarm. In these events, you should call the D&D Cell on 01895 426 150, letting them know the location and confirming that there are no casualties.

The request follows an incident where a glider was left on a hillside in Wales recently to allow the owner to organize a particularly tricky retrieve. As a result, a helicopter was scrambled in poor weather to check for survivors at a reported glider 'crash site'.

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Andy Bray, Dave Bray, Mandy Bray, Martin Brown, Claudia Büngen, Phil Hawkins, Nick Hill, Steve McCurdy, Mike O'Neill, Paul Rogers, Ian Shepherd, Howard Stone, Neil Swinton, Neil Turner, Willy Weaklink, Dave Weekes, Paul Wilford

Membership list by Ian Shepherd from the Club computer [all corrections to him please].

Willy Weaklink quiz answers:

Oh yes, should have said, one photo fell under the settee, so there was one too many descriptions. Added a bit more interest though...

Picture	Description	
1	I	The Pw5 was designed for, and won the competition for, the FAI 'world class'.
2	A	The L23 'super Blanik'. The prototype lived in Bicester for a while before being converted to cat-food cans after an 'incident'.
3	C	The SZD Pirat. Had a centre section 'hewed from solid oak' it was claimed.
4	B	The ASW15. Willy's favourite glider. Simply beautiful.
5	D	The DG-1000. Willy thinks this aircraft has the world's most ugly wing. Look at it, angles everywhere.
6	M	The Std Cirrus. The other 'cloud' glider was the Nimbus. I don't think there was ever as cloud called 'Discus', was there?
7	L	The HPH Glasflügel 304. HPH recently restarted production of this glider after Glasflügel ceased production in the 80's. Haste calls his (original) the 'Glasflügel Poodle'.
8	K	The Russia AC4. Did not win the World class design.
9	J	The Caproni A21 Calif. One of these famously broke up at high speed in the UK, pitched forwards, and ejecting both pilots through the canopy.

A look back over the past year in notes from the committee meetings:

The start of the year saw some changes to the make up of the committee. Phil Overy left the committee with Nick Hill taking on the role of secretary and Simon Calvert joined as an ordinary member.

The period up to mid January brought various developments from inside and outside the club likely to affect OGC.

Following lengthy discussion about operating efficiency various changes to procedures were proposed 1) Change the instructor rota to have two duty instructors on Saturdays 2) Encourage solo pilots to fly a Ka8 or Astir rather than take a K13 solo when others needed instruction in a K13 3) Limit the majority of booked AM flights to Sunday rather than Saturday with a duty BI on Sundays.

January also brought the news that a civilian operation, Skydive Weston, would be running parachuting operations rather than RAFSPA. Another slight surprise was a letter from Defence Estates (the people who handle our lease and agreement to use the airfield) asking if OGC wished to renew the lease for the land and use of the airfield at Weston from January 2007 onwards. For those that may not know OGC had a 21-year lease on the current site signed in 1990, however this took four years to agree so the period actually ran from 1986 hence the need to renew from January 2007! Needless to say OGC informed Defence Estates that a lease renewal was required.

The general admin during the period up to the start of March continued with the approval of some new cadet memberships, allocation of trial flight vouchers to some good causes and submission to the office of the deputy prime minister of an objection to the proposed reclassification of airfields as brown field sites. More noteworthy to many was the fact that Howard Stone had finally gained his full instructor rating and was swiftly appointed CFI to replace Martin Hasting. Thanks to Martin for performing this role for what he thought was going to be the short period between Chris Emson leaving and Howard gaining his full cat rating! Anticipating his new role as CFI Howard had already been busy persuading the club instructors to adopt the new rota pattern and meeting with Skydive Weston to discuss operating procedures for the forthcoming season. Ian Shepherd had also been establishing contacts with Defence Estates regarding the lease renewal negotiations.

By mid April Skydive Weston was in operation and the joint operation of the airfield seemed to be following broadly along the lines of the discussions initiated by Howard. There was a major financial shock at the end of March when

the Club Insurance was due for renewal as the initial quote saw the annual premium rise from around £9000 to around £20000. Unfortunately despite the good insurance record at OGC this could no longer insulate the club from changes in the insurance market as due to increasingly large claims being made within UK Gliding the Lloyds syndicate who had been providing the OGC insurance cover pulled out of the market. Following further negotiations the cost was reduced to around £13000 for 2006/07. A £4000 increase in operating costs cannot be absorbed into normal club operations so the committee were forced to increase charges. Discussions regarding the lease renewal were proceeding with Defence Estates informing OGC that the MoD had already agreed in principle to renewing the lease but without providing any details of the proposed term or costs. As part of the discussions OGC had submitted a version of the airfield operating procedures developed by Howard Stone and several committee and senior OGC members for consideration by the MoD as the basis of the new airfield operating agreement.

In past years the membership numbers at OGC have fluctuated but a concerted membership recruitment campaign has not been necessary. By May it had become apparent that numbers had now dropped to the point where more active recruitment was likely to be needed. More long standing members may remember that OGC used to attract new members by mounting static displays at various sites and events around Oxfordshire. John Hamilton volunteered to scout the local area for potential sites where such displays could be organized.

In May Defence Estates informed OGC that renewal of the lease was agreed for a term of five years. The committee agreed that OGC should make every effort to obtain a longer term than 5 years and a response from OGC stating a case for a longer lease was submitted in June. Unfortunately the response was that Defence Estates were operating within constraints from on high in the MoD that lease terms offered on MoD property should be limited to five years.

June/July was witness to the great grass cutting incident of 2006 which resulted in chairman Paul being summoned to explain to the RAF just why there were lots of patterns cut in the grass on their airfield and that the words Cut Me in the grass were not appreciated. When questioned Neil Swinton did

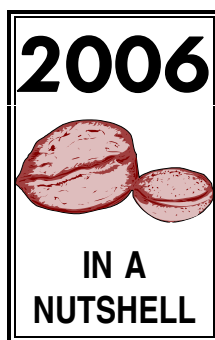
admit that it probably wasn't one of his best ideas! However the visiting Blue Peter camera crew did appreciate it as Neil's endeavours made it onto national TV.

By the end of July the length of the grass on the airfield was becoming a serious safety issue. Despite the fact the MoD has in past years arranged to have the airfield grass cut on several occasions only one cut had been organised in 2006. With this in mind and with a view to improving the condition of the areas from which OGC operates £3200 was spent on a larger tractor and grass cutter.

In late summer a further case based on both financial and organisational reasons was submitted to Defence Estates to justify the OGC request for a longer lease term and minimal increase in ground rent from 2007. Multiple committee members also submitted responses to a CAA survey about the likely impact of the imposition of the requirement to carry Mode S transponders in gliders from 2008. A response to the survey was also submitted on behalf of the club under the small business category outlining the likely seriously detrimental financial impact on the club if this measure goes ahead.

So to recap on the situation with the lease: Ian Shepherd acting in his capacity as Company Director and Club Treasurer has been doing sterling service co-ordinating, consulting and negotiating with Defence Estates, OGC members, Solicitors, and other local clubs on all issues relating to the lease renewal. That the MoD is willing to renew the lease is not in doubt and OGC has submitted a variety of proposals and financial arguments relating to the renewal regarding the likely period of tenure and minimisation of the likely rent increases. At the time of writing the ball is currently with Defence Estates and we await their next move.

The discussions about lease renewals within the club have highlighted a few points I would like to remind people about as several people have remarked that they are unsure about the current status of caravans and glider trailers and some new members have received conflicting information from more established members. As we stand today we are officially limited to eight caravans and with the current layout we do not have plenty of space left for trailers, in fact we are exceeding the area defined in our agreement. For these reasons before contemplating bring a caravan or glider on to site please ask the committee first. This does not mean that a request to bring you shiny new glider on site will be refused, it just means that the committee needs to gauge demand and keep control on how the space we lease is utilised and were necessary plan rearranging how we use the space.



Nick Hill

MOLLY THE OLY - THE EBAY GLIDER

Ian Shepherd

Back in early May 2006 a few of us were discussing the possibility of forming

a syndicate to buy a cheap wooden glider for a bit of fun. Various possibilities were discussed and the consensus seemed to be that an English manufacturer such as Slingsby or EoN (Elliot of Newbury) would be favourite. Vague discussions would probably have gone on interminably were it not for Nick Hill spotting the following item description on eBay: **"Olympia 463 Glider, NO RESERVE"**

This looked promising, especially as Graham and Haste used to own one of the prototype Olys many years ago and have always been enthusiastic about their flying characteristics and featherweight rigging! Here's what the advert said:

I'm selling this glider on behalf of my father. If you have any queries please feel free to phone him. The glider is available for inspection in North Somercotes, Lincolnshire.

It is a reluctant sale due to my father's age (he is now 83) and his deteriorating eye sight. He has owned the glider for the last 10 years or so. The glider has to be sold, hence there is no reserve.

The glider is in fair condition, is lovely to fly, and was last refurbished as per CAA specification in 2003. The last airworthiness certificate was valid until 13 Dec 2004. For the last 3 years the glider and trailer have been stored in one of our farm buildings.

The BGA number is 1217. A parachute is not included with the glider!!

The glider has not been involved in any accidents to our knowledge. Following an airworthiness directive with regard to the mainspars, the necessary work was undertaken in 2004.

The number of launches is 3413. The number of hours is 2145. The maximum cockpit AUW is 212lb. The minimum cockpit AUW is 134lb.

It has not been re-covered during father's ownership. The log book is a replacement log book because the original was lost in 2000 while it was receiving its C of A, hence it is not known when it was last re-covered.

So if this description was to be believed, then what was on offer was a glider with very low launches and hours for its age (she was built in 1954) which could be put back in the air at minimal expense with all mandatory BGA airworthiness mods done and, importantly, with a wide enough cockpit weight limit to accommodate all of the syndicate members.

Best of all was that the starting price was just £500!

Time to get serious. After polling round all interested parties on hand who were actually prepared to commit some cash we ended up with a syndicate of 5 people each prepared to fork out £150 for a one fifth share. This gave us a bidding limit of £750. The syndicate members are; Carole and Ian Shepherd, Graham Barrett, Neil Turner and Paul Rogers.

Obviously we were not going to buy a glider sight unseen (although many do!) so we sent Graham and Paul over to Lincolnshire to give her the once over. To cut a long story short they found her pretty much as advertised, generally sound but a little frayed around the edges, no electrics and a poorly fitting canopy. Of particular importance is the fact that she had been kept dry and there was no sign of corrosion to the roots of the wing spars, which is a known issue with these aircraft. In fact a few years ago a 463 broke up on a winch launch with fatal consequences due to the failure of the compound aluminium and wood spars through water ingress. You may think that this would be a good reason *not* to buy a glider but, as with most aircraft, 463s are perfectly safe as long as they are properly looked after but will bite if neglected. As for the wooden trailer – not too clever – tatty, rotten in places, probably roadworthy-ish and waterproof-able with a bit of TLC. Better get this right for the reason outlined above!

Do we bid on her? Yes, but "only up to our limit of £750 and not a penny more" I am sternly told as I log on to my eBay account. As usual I wait until the last possible moment to bang in our bid of £750 but to my horror, although it is as high as someone else's bid they put theirs

in first so they win and I'm not allowed to go any higher.

Bugger that! I'll just bang in another 20 quid – only 30 seconds of the auction left so I haven't got time to get really carried away.

Hit the return key and hold my breath – Yes!! We really did it; we really did just buy a glider on eBay!

The rest of the syndicate were jolly decent about the extra £20 as £770 is still a pretty good price for a fundamentally airworthy glider and is only £4 extra each. (Plus they knew damn well I'd push it if necessary)

Right, she's ours, so let's go and get her! The following weekend we assemble a crack team of retrieve-hardened pessimists who fill the car with every conceivable aid to getting dodgy trailers home and set off with hope in our hearts but images of seized trailer brakes, shredded tyres and failing tow hitches in our minds. In the event, bringing her home was a breeze! The trailer brakes didn't seize (there aren't any – this is a *light* machine), the tyres were in good shape and she tows like a dream – you hardly know she's there up to about 65mph.

OK, all she needs is a really thorough C of A inspection and she's in the air, right? Wrong. There are just too many fettlers in the syndicate for that and we identify just a few little jobs that we really should do first. Fortunately we have Carole and Graham on board to stop things getting really silly. Even so, after she gets a good wash, various bits of general painting and tidying and the aforementioned through C of A leading to a repair to a cracked wing rib, a replacement tailplane pip-pin and loads of lanolin on the elevator cables she also gets new Dynafoam seat cushions and upholstery, a complete new electrical system, a posh new instrument panel (the original had a huge hole in the middle presumably for one of those ex-submarine artificial horizons) and various new instruments including a Borgelt B50 vario courtesy of a deal with the new DG-202 syndicate (thanks Andy B and Neil S).

Just when we thought it was safe to go back in the workshop Graham went all quiet and then suddenly announced that the aforementioned poor canopy fit is dangerous and that the bubble has got to come off the frame so we can straighten it. "If I break the bubble I'll pay for a new one" he announces and starts undoing about a million screws which hold it to the frame. The frame is straightened and painted, the bubble re-fitted (phew) and the canopy now fits beautifully.

Can we fly her now? Yes! So on Saturday 17th June, 6 weeks after arriving at Weston, BTG (or Molly as she is now known) takes to the air with Graham at the controls. He reports no problems – she flies just as an Oly should – slow and graceful, a joy to thermal and a piece of cake to land accurately. The rest of us have a go but notice that she seems to fishtail on the launch to the point that, if the launch is a bit slow she swings around so much that the winch driver thinks we are signalling "too slow" – oh dear. Over the next few weeks we try different launch settings (launch as a K8, K8 plus a bit, Glass minus a bit etc. etc.) but the only way most of us can keep her straight is to launch at 99.9% of weak link failure speed! What gives? – According to Graham (who has no trouble) and Mike Randle (who was visiting) this is not normal Oly behaviour. Haste has a go and declares that he can't see what all the fuss is about either.

Obviously the less experienced among us just haven't got the Oly touch. However Graham has a theory – Wooden gliders usually have a little bit of aileron droop as they tend to lift in flight. Maybe Molly has a bit too much and this is causing a lot of drag at the tips. A bit of aileron cable adjusting later and we try again. What a difference! She still wanders a tiny bit but I'm sure we'll get used to countering that and she is now a pleasure to launch, her light weight allowing some impressive launch heights.

Over the rest of the season Molly has clocked up 35 launches and 10 hours in the air with Carole leading the field with a couple of 2 hour plus flights. She flies like a dream and can out-climb just about anything. Her glide ratio is about 1:30 which puts her somewhere between a Ka 6CR and a Ka 6E and she is a hell of a lot of fun for the money.

THREE PAULS, A SIMON AND A LOT OF TEA

Paul Wilford

surprising or gut wrenchingly scary situations. It's all about safety and I think they probably know that the nasty stuff happens at the club before going on the course. I remember the attempts of Weston's finest (?) instructors to catch me out in various different ways when preparing for the course. I actually don't feel like any of it was all that testing but you never know what they're going to do. There are two that stick in my mind: Stewart 'Hooligan' Otterburn flying the K13 cross wind in front of the launch point at about 10 feet and handing me control at about 100kts with the bus just off the right wing tip and the trees looming ahead; and Gary 'The Renault F1 team just made me rich again' Cuthill when he decided that he was going to talk absolute rubbish without drawing breath for slightly longer than humanly possible in order to try and get us out of position. So having been groomed and frightened into shape for the course we turned up, got drunk and introduced ourselves to Mike Fox (our coach) when he fell into the bar after a night out with the slightly unhinged Hungarian tug pilot! Something along the lines of 'Hi, I'm Paul', 'Hi, I'm Paul', 'Hi, I'm Paul' and 'Hi, I'm Simon! He looked very confused!

The first morning was off to a slow start as the weather was a bit rubbish and Mike Fox woke up with a headache for some reason. So we had breakfast, necked a few cups of tea, spent the morning chatting and then went out in the motor gliders to run through our patter. The details from this point on are a little hazy (a bit like the weather). We sort of did some practice launch failures in a Puchacz, which is a baptism of fire in the back seat of a glider you've never flown before, flew a motor glider again and did a mock trial lesson with Dunstable's CFI. We also saw a lot of rubbish weather, drank a LOT of tea whilst looking at the rubbish weather and tried our level best to wind up some Warwick university students that were talking a lot of crap about things that they nearly understood!

That's about it really, six months on we're still instructing, my average flight time has plummeted and so has my flying bill! All in all it's a good laugh and I think the Baltic weather conditions in a tent at night were more of a character test than the course itself but it was all fun and I would thoroughly recommend a 5000' tow in a Puchacz to spin all the way down in various ways! It's good fun and quite eye opening.

Dear OGC

I wanted to write and thank you for making me so welcome when I visited Weston for the day back in August this year. Though I've not been an active pilot for 10 years or so now, I've always kept up my associate membership of the Club. I gave Andy Butterfield a ring to say I would be passing through on my way back from Winchester and would love to drop by and rekindle old memories. I had been under a lot of stress at work and it would be good to leave it all behind for day and come out to my favourite Oxfordshire field. Andy came out himself to the club and - with Howard's blessing - got out the DG505, which I had never seen before (one of my last flights had been a 300k cross country with Phil Hawkins in its predecessor, the Grob Acro).

I put my name on the flying list and passed the time helping out at the launch point and rediscovering how to help with the flying operation. With a little encouragement, I even re-soloed on the tractor (might not sound much to the regulars but it was a big kick for me). Andy then flew me in the DG and we managed 40 mins or so in the most modest of lift (never above 2200'). I also met many other old contemporaries and members of the OGC Rogues Gallery, all much more accomplished pilots than I ever got to be: Neil Swinton, Paul Morrison, Paul Rogers, Neil Turner (without whom the OGC fleet would probably be just a large static display) to name but a few. And a crop of my old instructors were there as well; Howard, Graham Barrett, John Hanlon, and of course John Gibbons (of whom it has often been said....well let's not go into that). I also got to witness the eBay Oly 463 being checked out by Carole Shepherd, her husband and others. I like these old wooden machines, and especially at that price (I doubt I will ever afford anything much fancier than that and wouldn't it be great to achieve a first 300k in it).

At the end of the day, I was offered the hangar flight in the DG, where I was given a demonstration of its awesome capabilities. I particularly liked being shown how effective its airbrakes were in developing an undershoot and how easily it recovered the glide path when they were closed. By the end of the day, having helped to put all the gliders away etc., the stress was all gone and it felt great to be alive again.

My sincere thanks to everyone at OGC. I pick up all the small talk from the list server and it is amazing how that keeps a picture of life at OGC in my mind. If time and funds ever reappear so as to allow me to resume gliding, there is really only one place I'd like to return to. So be warned, Gatling Gob may return to disturb the peace of WOG. In the meantime, I'm enjoying restoring some old model gliders I designed and built 25yrs ago. I've attached a photo of one of them just for fun (the grass looks almost as long as Weston's - good thing I don't ROG the models).

Thank you again and Happy Landings

Mike O'Neill

Associate Member



WINGS OF CHANGE

Martin Brown

I don't know why I wasn't comfortable. The conditions weren't rough, the sky was working well enough and the others were mostly staying up. Meanwhile, I headed for the landing field and for retirement from a sport I'd followed like a religion for much of my adult life. Just 2 days earlier I'd flown a personal best of 120Km, spending most of the afternoon at over 4000 metres but today I decided to land. That flight brought to an end 15 years of paragliding all over the world. I'd thermalled with vultures in Brazil, soared the sides of buildings in Peru, battled a collapsed canopy 300 feet above a Spanish village, drifted along the south coast of England at cloudbase and made many friends along the way. But that afternoon in Spain I added it all up and decided I was no longer getting enough enjoyment from the sport to justify the risks. I haven't had the canopy out of its bag since.

I couldn't keep my feet on the ground though. I'd touched the clouds and wanted to get back amongst them. I've never really fancied power flying; it's too noisy, too expensive and too regulated. I've tried helicopters and they're great fun but I really don't have the income to pursue that one. One evening at work I thought maybe I should try gliding. I soon found OGC's website and had a good look at what was involved. The one thing that really stuck me was how affordable it was. I couldn't believe the instruction was effectively free. Paragliding and hang gliding training is highly commercial and to get to a level where you could join a club and fly with your own kit would cost you £2000 in training fees alone – not to mention £3000 worth of kit. I work with Garry Cuthill whom I knew to be a glider pilot but I didn't realise he was an instructor until I mentioned that I was thinking of joining OGC. I arranged to meet Garry at Weston one Saturday in January and begin my conversion.

I won't deny that I had hoped that my previous flying experience would have made me a natural from day 1. Well it didn't. I think I was an average student at best especially when it came to landings. For a start I had the rudder pedals wired backwards in my brain. I only realised this when I first flew a helicopter and kept pushing the wrong pedal. Small corrections don't work when they're the opposite of what's required. I was thinking of them as a steering mechanism like handlebars or the front axle of my old wooden go-kart I had as a child. We don't have rudders or pedals on paragliders, the steering is all done by weight shift and aileron drag. This brings me to another fundamental difference: On a paraglider you have to pull down on a toggle

connected to the rear of one side of the canopy to make a turn. This slows the wing while centrifugal effect acting on the pilot provides the roll. In order to maintain a turn you have to maintain the control input. It's not like that in a glider! I tried it once with Cloudy in the back and we went into a really nice spiral dive. Cloudy eventually took control away from me before things got out of hand!

It took me nearly 100 launches to be anything like comfortable on a winch launch. I've winched paragliders many times and I don't like that either! I don't like the idea of the aircraft I'm piloting being controlled by someone who's not even on board! It's actually quite dangerous on a paraglider. If the glider drifts too far to one side it can lock out and accelerate into the ground just like a kite. I'm always quite relieved when I get to the top of the launch and can concentrate on flying for a while.

The actual flying is all fairly familiar. The difference is that the wings on a glider don't resemble a load of washing when you reach the stall point. You don't get a stall buffet on a paraglider; the wing forms into a horseshoe shape as it drops behind you (OK, you actually swing in front of it) before collapsing completely into a ball of flapping ripstop. If you try to recover the stall too early the canopy can accelerate in front and rotate below you. It's perfectly possible to fall into the canopy at this point so you'll understand why full stalls are best avoided. Spins can be even more fun. It's the familiar set up, you bring the canopy almost to the stall then add a turning input. I have my first ever spin on video somewhere and I distinctly remember my feet being the highest part of the whole aircraft! If you're lucky the wing won't collapse. If you're unlucky it will re-inflate folded in half or, worse still, with one wingtip woven amongst the lines in what's known as a cravat. I've had to recover from both of these and it's not pleasant. It's for times like these that we carry a small parachute in the back of the harness although I've always found I'm too preoccupied with recovering the canopy to think about deploying my 'chute. However stomach churning you find manoeuvres in a glider at least you know the wings will still be in the right places when you open your eyes!

Thermalling techniques are pretty much interchangeable with the exception that the paraglider can turn much tighter due to its lower speed making it far easier to centre in on a core. Sink rates are very similar at just under 1 metre per second but the biggest difference is the speed at that sink rate – the glide angle. Modern paragliders manage about 9:1 with a useable top speed around 30 knots. This

makes upwind glides of any distance all but impossible so most cross-country flights are straight downwind with the occasional detour to avoid airspace needing to be planned well in advance. One distinct advantage however is that it's possible to land in the most restricted of places.

...Which brings me onto landings. I don't think I'm alone in struggling with these but struggle I certainly did. It took me ages to recognise the point at which to begin the round out and then not to over or under-do it. Talk of large elephants meant little to me. It was Carole who finally got the whole thing over to me with a very smooth and progressive demonstration. I finally realised that it needn't be one precise, tiny movement of the stick but could be a series of small adjustments all the way to the ground. I picked up a bad habit of using the airbrakes as speed controls on landing approach. I would make my final turn too fast and haul the brakes out to get the speed down. Then instead of keeping the nose down to keep the speed up, I would let the nose get too high and let off the brakes to keep the speed up as I descended. This tended to mean that I arrived at the ground with little brake applied which exaggerated the effects of my poor round outs. On a paraglider you just point into wind and wait until you reach the ground. If it's windy you don't even need a flare. The other advantage is that you now fold the glider away, pack it into a backpack and make your way to the nearest road to begin hitch-hiking back to take-off!

When I finally got to the point of going solo in a glider it was all wonderfully familiar. I was far more relaxed than I expected to be. After a few solos in K13s I was let loose in a K8. Flying a single-seater for the first time gave me a real feeling that I really was ready to be back up there on my own. Playing with wispy clouds brought back memories of great flights under my canopy. Whatever anyone says about the performance of a K8, it's a long, long way from my familiar 9:1 glide and 30 knot maximum speed...

I offer my thanks to all who've helped me learn to fly this year.



Photo: Neil Swinton



Ed.: and finally... The creator of these patterns and shapes has asked me to point out that this kind of behaviour should not be endorsed, but I needed a space filler.



Photos: Carole Shepherd + Neil Swinton