



FINAL GLIDE

Clubhouse: 01869 343265
Launch point: 07836 773210
Editor: 01235 519286
Claudia@Buengen.co.uk

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Edited by Claudia Büngen

FROM GROUND SLIDES TO AEROTOWS

John Gibbons is one of the true stalwarts of OGC. Many of our club members will have had the privilege of being taught by John.

Neil Swinton caught up with John recently and had a chat:

Early days

John's introduction to gliding came in Feb. 1952 when he saw an article in the Oxford papers announcing the formation of a gliding club at Kidlington. The club at the time was just starting up

again after it had closed down during the war, and had about 40 members. The CFI was Professor George Varley who was assisted by

Ray Stafford-Allan. The members came mainly from Oxford, both from the university and the town. Other members came from Dunstable and further afield. John remembered George as being experienced as an ex-Yorkshire Gliding Club member, and someone who was professional yet always fun to be around. He said George was always trying to push the club forward and was a great asset to the club. At the time that John joined, the club only owned one glider, an EON primary, together with an EON Olympia, which was owned by George. At the time a lot of other UK clubs were already using two-seaters to train pilots, but as OGC had insufficient funds to purchase a suitable two-seater, OGC had obtained special dispensation from the BGA to continue the 'solo method' of training. John's training began in

correct aileron response was applied. The next step was ground sliding, when the primary was pulled along the ground by the winch at just sufficient speed for the ailerons and rudder to work. Once this was demonstrated satisfactorily (it took John 3 such slides) the pupil moved on to 'air slides'. These involved the glider being launched with sufficient speed to climb to a height of four or five feet before following the cable down the field. John describes this as rather like an aerotow yet on

the EON primary by sitting on the glider with an instructor moving the wing up and down until the

flying this was a big step forward from the primary, not so much in the performance, but because of the fact that the Kadet had an enclosed cockpit and the view was much poorer. The Kadet was equipped with an ASI, altimeter and variometer, but it was not until John flew the newly acquired Grunau Baby that he experienced thermal soaring. In the club there was now a private Slingsby Sky, and the Gull2, a two-seater.

At Kidlington there were a number of powered aircraft suitable for aerotowing, and after a single check flight in the T31 John was cleared for solo launches. This was behind a Tiger Moth, and pretty soon John had also learned to fly the tug. The club infrastructure was limited

continued on page 3



Photo: Andrea Wahl

the winch, and said it was very difficult to fly. It took John six of these flights, before moving onto the next stage, the 'low hop', which saw the glider being launched to increasing heights before dropping the cable and landing ahead. As the glider got higher some 'S' turns were introduced to prevent the glider flying off the end of the airfield. John records that on flight 19 he took a full height launch to 800' and flew his first circuit. John remembers that the fee for a winch launch was 2/6s (12.5p). At about this time the club acquired a two-seat T31, and all further training was flown in the two-seater. Like the primary glider, the T31 had no spoilers, so John had to learn sideslipping (sideslipping not being a necessary skill in the primary!). The EON primary was then replaced by a Slingsby Kirby Kadet. John found that

Also in this issue:

Are airfields magnetic?



Daisy did Parham



2 re-solo reports



Willy Weaklink crossword



Where do we want to go



50 km report



Catch me if you can



Sutton Bank



My week as mum



and more...

EDITORIAL

Oh dear, another editorial. What have we got? Again, lots of excellent contributions, some totally unexpected and some even without major arm-twisting on my part. It is always a privilege to be able to read all the articles before publication - the only drawback is that by the time Final Glide is printed and all pretty and ready to be distributed, I have read everything so many times...

Anyway, in this issue you'll find articles from the usual

contributors (thanks guys that I can always count on your help), then there are a few articles I sort of volunteered people to write (thanks to you as well!), and then there are surprisingly many articles which just appeared in my inbox - several people this year came up with brilliant ideas and sent me their contributions without prompting - this is what makes this year's issue one of the more interesting ones to read.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I have!

Claudia Bungen

CLUB LADDER

Nick Hill

Club Ladder Steward

Has 2007 been such a bad year? In 2007 the ladders both nationally and at OGC have shown a big increase in the points scored so maybe it wasn't as bad as some of us remember, or maybe some just got lucky with the weather!

The two ladders of most interest to OGC pilots are the Weekend ladder that is restricted to flights made at the weekend and the Open ladder for flights on any day of the week.

In both ladders there was a healthy increase in the number of pilots recording flights with 17 different pilots on the open ladder compared with 12 in 2006. In terms of cross-country kilometres flown by OGC pilots this more than doubled from 8250km in 2006 to 19069km in 2007. The number of cross-country points scored has also more than tripled on both ladders with the total on the weekend ladder increasing to 59597 compared to the 16601 of last season whilst the open ladder total was 94935 compared to 28831 last season.

Anyway enough of statistics and congratulations go to Claudia Bungen for topping the open ladder and Howard Stone for the weekend ladder. On the national ladders this placed Claudia at number 80 on the UK open ladder and Howard at number 49 on the UK weekend ladder at the time of writing this article. (Strictly speaking the BGA ladders run January to December but OGC gives out the trophies at the November AGM so they are based on the ladder positions at the end of October...)

Looking forward to the 2008 season I would encourage anyone with cross-country or height gain flights to enter them in the cross-country book that is kept in the clubhouse. Alternatively 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.

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

Open Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Claudia Bungen	2640	2616	2374	2066	1805	1653	13154
Dave Bray	2957	2347	2263	2209	1683	1552	13011
Howard Stone	2932	2423	1938	1853	1805	1739	12690
Damien Dyer	2171	1925	1599	1260	1247	940	9142
Paul Morrison	1588	1577	1488	1213	1098	832	7796
Martin Hastings	2068	1866	1573	866	743	532	7648
Graham Barrett	2078	1923	1719	0	0	0	5720
Louise Walker	1830	1467	700	585	432	277	5291
Paul Smith	2096	1096	564	448	347	0	4551
Phil Hawkins	2247	1201	0	0	0	0	3448
Neil Swinton	2200	637	0	0	0	0	2837
Andrew Butterfield	1816	1019	0	0	0	0	2835
Carole Shepherd	1556	614	0	0	0	0	2170
Chris Shepherd	2100	0	0	0	0	0	2100
Steve Trusler	1695	0	0	0	0	0	1695
Martin Brown	432	0	0	0	0	0	432
Emma Cuthill	415	0	0	0	0	0	415

Weekend Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Howard Stone	1938	1853	1805	1739	1511	970	9816
Damien Dyer	2171	1925	1599	1260	1247	813	9015
Claudia Bungen	2374	1653	1060	901	494	0	6482
Louise Walker	1830	1467	700	585	432	277	5291
Paul Morrison	1213	1098	832	737	688	659	5227
Dave Bray	2209	1552	1076	0	0	0	4837
Phil Hawkins	2247	1201	0	0	0	0	3448
Martin Hastings	1573	866	743	0	0	0	3182
Neil Swinton	2200	637	0	0	0	0	2837
Andrew Butterfield	1816	1019	0	0	0	0	2835
Carole Shepherd	1556	614	0	0	0	0	2170
Paul Smith	1096	448	347	0	0	0	1891
Graham Barrett	1719	0	0	0	0	0	1719
Martin Brown	432	0	0	0	0	0	432
Emma Cuthill	415	0	0	0	0	0	415

FROM GROUND SLIDES TO AEROTOWS (CONTD.)

large Kidlington hangar, there was also a limited clubhouse area in a hangar, and the launch point consisted of a teacher's blackboard, a cash box and a set of bats!

In the mid 1950s a T21 was purchased and the T31 was disposed of. John recalls flying the T21 to an icy 6000' in March 1955, his pupil commenting on how the frost had formed all over John's moustache. This T21 was sadly lost in a landing accident at Weston in the mid 60s, and was replaced by another T21.

In the mid 50s, things started to get awkward at Kidlington, because the airfield owners wanted to use the hangars for an increasing amount of storage. John was put in an awkward position, he was the club secretary and the main contact with the owners, and yet by chance, in the week he worked for Pressed Steel – the new owners. Eventually the move to Weston was proposed, and the club moved from Kidlington to its current home, using one of the hangars and huts, both of which are no longer standing. At the time Weston airfield was run from Abingdon, which hosted the Parachute Training School. This was a mid-week only operation, using aircraft such as the Beverley and Hastings, together with the Weston-based barrage balloon, but increasingly at weekends John recalls the rare 'sports' parachute jump, using any aircraft the PTS had available. This included using a Tiger Moth bi-plane, hardly an efficient way of getting jumpers to 12,000'! As the jumps became more regular, a D.H. Rapide biplane was used, and this became the start of the sports parachute operation.

RAFGSA

One of John's colleagues at OGC was Flt Lieutenant Jamieson who was a serving RAF officer. John assisted Jamieson with a number of projects, including a visit to RAF Little Rissington (then the home of Central Flying School) to fly a Slingsby Prefect, where John 'assumed' the rank of a Flt. Lt. to 'fit in' better. John assisted with the move of the gliding operation to Bicester where it remained until only recently. The newly formed Bicester club were flying a T21, a T31 and the Prefect. John recalls the arrival of an Olympia flown in by Andy Geoff, who later became the CFI at Bicester for many years. Andy flew his Gold distance in the same Olympia. At the time he recalls an aerotow costing 7/6s (36p).

Back at Weston, in 1967 the first K13 (CCE) had arrived at Oxford. This was paid for – in its entirety – by Malcolm Laurie. 'Was he a rich man?' I asked. John thought – 'No not especially – just generous' he replied. When the second K13 arrived the T21 was sold.

John had started instructing in the T21 after being coached by Ann Welch at Lasham; after he completed his Full Cat rating (with Derek Piggott, again at Lasham) John then became CFI at Oxford on two separate occasions.

With his instructor rating, John started helping out at the newly formed RAFGSA at Bicester. There was a general shortage of glider instructors at the time, and John can remember the valuable RAF instructors flying into Bicester and Rissington in any available aircraft, including Piston Provosts, for a weekends instructing. John also took Wednesday afternoons off work to assist.

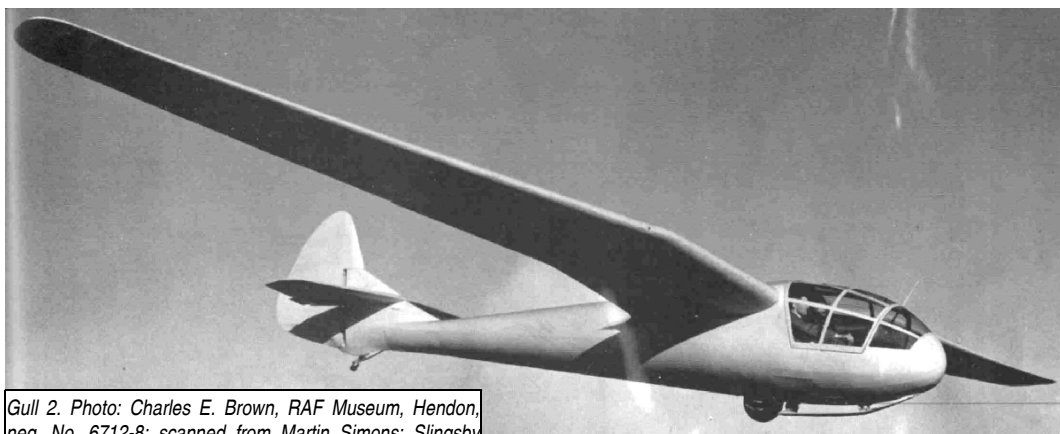
at this time, although the aircraft were stored in the

Weston Aerotows

Even after the club moved to Weston, the aerotow launches carried on. If an aerotow was needed John would pop back to Kidlington and borrow whatever tug aircraft was available, often the Tiger Moth. Later, John was the chief pilot of a syndicate that purchased an Auster J1 for use by the club. Unfortunately the 'powers that be' at Abingdon would not let the Auster be kept at Weston owing to the fire risk, and the tug lived at Kidlington. At the time Oxford Aviation Ltd at Kidlington was providing aerotows using the Kidlington based aircraft for a number of clubs around the south, and John did a lot of the flying – purely for fun. In particular John remembers arriving at Nympsfield one morning and being faced with a daunting queue of gliders and a low powered tug. As aerotows were a new event at Nympsfield he said he quickly had to teach himself the best route out of the field avoiding the trees and power cables and the turbulence off the ridge.

One of the leading lights, and chairman of Oxford Flying Club at Kidlington, was Peter Clifford. Peter was a well-known aviator who had won the King's Cup air race on two occasions and who was running an aircraft sales business at Kidlington which was starting to import Czechoslovakian aircraft.

John's friendship with Peter led to many incidents, most of them seeming to be alarming! In particular he remembers towing a Blanik down to Farnborough for an airshow, being delayed and leaving the



Gull 2. Photo: Charles E. Brown, RAF Museum, Hendon, neg. No. 6712-8; scanned from Martin Simons: *Slingsby Sailplanes - A comprehensive History of all designs*

airfield with a solid wall of rain rapidly approaching him down the runway. A rapid 180-degree turn immediately after take off averted disaster. A second tale involved John's trip to Czechoslovakia to pick up two Blaniks. Rather than driving it was decided to take two tug aircraft and fly them back. This decision seems strange, bearing in mind that Peter Clifford had spent several days in an East German jail after getting lost and being forced down by MIG fighter jets on his previous aerial trip.

Near Disaster

To cut a very long story far too short, the quick 2-day weekend trip there and back with two tugs to fetch two Blaniks turned into an epic 5-day journey which nearly ended up with disaster after attempting to take off, glider on tow, using just half the length of a runway. They spent a night in Karlsbad near Prague in the cold war era, had appalling visibility and subsequently got lost, and nearly overflew a missile launching base. The radio operator of the airbase gave them a heading to fly and further disaster was averted. As one of the tugs had no radio and no nav-aids, and the other only a basic radio, the plan was to lead and follow from Nuremberg back to Kidlington. At one point the only working radio failed and had to be repaired by a helpful American aircraft technician who described the radio as 'never seen one that old before', and said he had no suitable spares. However the technician visited the local car spares shop and adapted some ignition parts to fit. John arrived back at Kidlington – with the glider on tow – after dark and landed by the light of

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car headlights, the other tug/glider combination having landed at Leavesden as the light disappeared. After this trip Peter Clifford confided in John that 'flying was possibly not the best method' and manufactured a road trailer capable of importing two Blaniks per load.

Competitions

John started competition flying with an Olympia, usually sharing the glider with fellow club member Dave Roberts and flying in the Western Regionals at Nympsfield and one or two Competition Enterprises. Initially the tasks had seemed impossible and there was no shortage of field landing practice. However, as time went on their skills improved, but at the same time the Olympia became less competitive against the first generation glass gliders and the Skylarks III and IVs and John updated to an Olympia 460. This was a definite improvement, but things really looked up when John started flying a Ka6E, and the best result was 2nd place in 1976. The summer of that year provided high cloud bases and light winds, and this suited the Ka6E well. The glass gliders however suffered all summer from hordes of bugs, which badly affected their performance.

John has also owned shares in a Nimbus 2 at Aston Down, and an ASW19 and a Cirrus at Weston.

Finally I asked John what the worst and best glider he had flown was. 'The worst – well, the most challenging – was the Gull 2', he said. This was a lovely looking side-by-side 2-seater, with a high, tapered gull wing and rounded fuselage. However when flown at any speed it suffered severe aileron reversal, and became quite a handful. (Some quick internet research revealed a photograph, and the information that the glider was destroyed at Lasham some time later owing to poor aileron response on the ground run.)

The best? "Well, they are all nice really, aren't they!" he told me.



Photo: Claudia Bungen

CFI REPORT

Howard Stone

Instructor numbers are still increasing with Rob Jackson now a BI and hopefully soon Dave Bray who has nearly finished his Instructor training. Claudia and Barry are now Assistant Instructors, which means we now have 5 Full Category, 10 Assistant Instructors and 4/5 Basic Instructors. The 2007 season has not given us the best weather, with the majority of the good days occurring mid week; I think Claudia Bungen and Dave Bray seem to have had the best week of weather during their Regionals where they flew good tasks every day except one.

Some people have asked what the requirements are for flying various club gliders and since these have changed at the beginning of this year. I have posted a note in the bus and in the clubhouse. Can I also remind pilots that your currency is being monitored by the bus computer and will flag any pilots who are outside currency or whose medical has expired.

Relationships with Skydive Weston are very good except a few months ago, when we had a non Weston glider fly straight through the centre of the drop zone. We spotted the glider just as Skydive called live drop. We called them and stopped the drop but half of the parachutists had already left the aircraft, we then waited for the chutes to open hoping that they were not near the glider. When they did open it seemed that they were all round the glider but fortunately the glider was a little lower and just slipped through. The pilot was traced to a club not far away who reported that he was not sure of his exact location, he saw other gliders so decided to fly in their direction. With so many landmarks close to the airfield I find it difficult to understand how he didn't know where he was. On this occasion Skydive filed a near miss. I must stress that anybody who flies solo from Weston must read the daily set-up notes before they fly and if they are still unsure they must consult the duty Instructor.

The new Instructor rota seems to be working well, but can I remind Instructors that on a Saturday one of the Instructors and one K13 should be assigned to pre-solo students only. Post-solo pilots should not use the K13s if possible. This will allow students to progress as quickly as possible.

Vintage Glider Club International Rally 2008

Wels, Austria

July 30th – August 10th 2008



Feel like flying something different, in a different country next year? Oh, and a certain amount of alcohol intake takes place too! Talk to Dave Weekes.

(cheap flights available from London Stansted to Linz, near the rally site)

DAISY DID PARHAM!

Text & most photos: Dave Weekes

OGC's Vintage (glider) Wing had splendid times at the International VGC rallies in Eggersdorf (Berlin) and Angouleme (France) in 2005 and 2006. This year however the international rally was in Slovakia and not to put too fine a point on it, we bottled out – too far to go (1700 km) & too much travelling time. Of course it turned out they had fabulous weather, 10 knot thermals to 7 grand etc etc!

So instead it was decided that we would go to the VGC national rally, which this year was at Southdown Gliding Club, Parham, East Sussex at the end of May. Not far to go, and we had a “mole” already in place at Parham (Tony Hoskins) who has been known to get just a teeny bit enthusiastic about soaring the South Downs ridge.

The creeping spread of older gliders at OGC meant that a record sized group decided to go. In the end it comprised Daisy the T21, Loulou the Capstan, Molly the Oly and BNK the Skylark 4 together with a varying group (depending on the time they could get off work) which included Carole & Ian Shepherd (and Diddus), Pete & Ursula Brooks, Graham & Lynne Barrett, Dave Weekes, Martin Cooper, Rob Jackson, Peter Boulton and a brief visit from Martin Laxåback. An assorted bunch arrived on the Saturday morning, to be greeted by many of the usual VGC suspects, including the infamous “have a small gin & tonic” Pete Redshaw (huge gin, very small tonic!)

By WOTG standards Parham is a tiny airfield, with interesting slopes at either end but it has the South Downs ridge looming nearby – a hundred km of ridge (with gaps). The club has a winch but if you get 1000' you're lucky, and the “land ahead” after a cable break option is pretty limited. So in reality most of their launches are by aerotow (Pawnee or Cub). The winch comes into its own if they're sure the ridge is going to work – northerly winds required – but heading off cross country from 900' means that you have to be pretty sure that the ridge is going to work when you get to it!

Although it's a small club the Southdown members seem to have more money than the average OGC member – two tugs for aerotowing, a winch for when the ridge (or Beachy Head) is working and a lot of pretty smart gliders. A nice clubhouse and bar too!

The previous week the weather had been brilliant, after the hottest spring on record but this was a bank holiday weekend, so what were the chances? Nil. And so it proved. On Saturday afternoon the tents and the Skylark was rigged but the weather was already going to worms and it was a couple of very brief circuits just to see the airfield from above.

And in the night it p***** down, winds blew, temperatures dropped to arctic levels, -happy bank holiday!

All Sunday was no better and was spent in a variety of ways, mainly indoors, which included Peter Boulton and myself doing the Tangmere aviation museum. Monday morning the wind had come round to the north but it was still raining and freezing cold. We were however given a lecture on soaring the South Downs ridge, which clearly in the right conditions (about 20 days/year according to Tony), with the right knowledge and glider can give fabulous (but low level) soaring over about 80 km (if you're brave enough!). In the afternoon it stopped raining for a while,



Photo: Damien Dyer

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Photo: Damien Dyer



"I think it'll brighten up yet"

But the evenings continued to be enlivened by heavy alcohol intakes ----

– and Graham falling in a ditch on the way to the pub (after a couple of small gin & tonics). He was extracted and his pipe retrieved from under him, still alight.

But the Thursday was a lot better. I wandered around bumming rides in Molly the Oly, Loulou and Challock's Skylark 3 (a first) as well as BNK. The afternoon was wonderfully enlivened by a visit from some RAF veterans from the local RAFA home. Coops flew one chap in Loulou who hadn't flown since 1945 but was enthralled to find that he still knew how. And his 80+ wife (Doris) who'd never flown in anything in her life was given a winch launch with Carole in Daisy and thought the experience wonderful.

DAISY DID PARHAM (CONTD.)

aerotow, but it's a lovely aircraft to fly. "Any chance that Carole could have a go?. Oh yes, which put a big smile on her face.

But it got better – while she was flying the Petrel, Peter Boulton was having words with the owner of a Hütter 17 – a ridiculously small glider which looks as if it ought to be on a stand outside a supermarket with a slot for the kiddies to put in 50p for a ride. And Carole found herself doing yet another solo conversion on a glider with no wheel!

And that was pretty much it. We had the rally dinner (very nice). Most folk scarpered on the Saturday morning – which was a very nice soaring day. I stayed behind for some more flying and blew a lot of accumulated brownie points. And we got offered a Grunau Baby for free. We'll see. Maybe the owner has sobered up now!

Right, next year, International Rally, Austria, end of July. We're going (allegedly dressed as nuns). Volunteers welcome.

Friday was also pretty good weather and Graham Saw was offering a go in the Petrel, a fabulous gull winged, one of only two left in the world glider. First it had to be rigged, while being filmed by Meridian TV – the publicity fixed up for the rally was much better than the weather! Unfortunately I got pretty much a downhill slide off the



Land it straight or the skid rips off!

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Contributors to this issue were:

Alberto Araoz, Martin Brown, Emma Cuthill, Nick Hill, Paul Morrison, Mike O'Neill, Ian Shepherd, Howard Stone, Neil Swinton, Neil Turner, Willy Weaklink, Dave Weekes, Paul Wilford,

Photos were taken by Claudia Büngen, Damien Dyer, Martin Laxåback, Paul Morrison, Andrea Wahl, Dave Weekes.

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

PUBLICITY FOR OGC Neil Swinton

The more observant members will have noticed the DG-505 and Daisy being taken away on two occasions this summer for publicity purposes. The first trip was to Abingdon air show at the start of the season, the second to the 'Fly to the Past' event at Blenheim Palace. The main purpose of these trips is to raise the profile of the gliding club with the local community, and also to try to get a few new members. And it's also a good day out for the crews, but please don't tell the committee that!

Abingdon is billed as an 'Air and Country Show', so there is a good mix of aviation, err, anoraks, and other more normal people. For the Abingdon event we only took the DG-505. This was a deliberate attempt to show modern gliding, although the organisers really wanted us to take Daisy as an attraction. We were positioned in front of the ATC contingent with their Grob 109's, to make a 'gliding area'. We had a tent, a table, and the two display boards, covered in 'inspirational' gliding photos. Unfortunately we were also positioned next to the landing area for the RAF Merlin helicopter, which arrived shortly after the glider had been cleaned prior to the public seeing her. Everything was showered with dust, and we nearly lost the tent, displays, and the chairs in the hurricane! The photos and display board are still upstairs in case anyone has missed them. During the day we had a steady stream of people wanting to look in the glider (no-one was allowed to sit in her), and asking lots of daft and not-so-daft questions. We also had a raffle, which raised over £120 for the Air Ambulance fund,

and also harvested a crop of about 60 email addresses, which are useful for further marketing and promotion.

Blenheim was a different sort of event, it was called 'Fly to the Past' and it was a 'themed' day. Sadly this occurred the weekend after the floods, and access to Blenheim was badly affected, reducing the expected crowds considerably. The team took both the DG-505 and Daisy to this show.

The main trouble with these events is that you need to be on-site and all set-up ready before the public arrived, this of course involves leaving OGC at some horrendous hour with a convoy of glider trailer, equipment, chairs, leaflets, tent pegs, food etc.

We also need a flock of willing helpers to transport the equipment, ready the gliders and the display equipment and then finally stand around and answer questions and 'engage' the public. We had one dedicated helper last year who still turned up after being 'out on the drink' till very late the night before. But they still managed to stand still (walking was out of the question it seemed...) and hand out leaflets.

If you would like to help out next year at one of the local shows, or if you can suggest a local event where we should be exhibiting, please make yourself known to any committee member.

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Paul Rogers

left unintentionally blank

Willy Weaklink submitted a few articles that I had no space to print:

'I'll declare 5 hours, it can't be too hard'	various authors
'Camper Vans: The story continues'	Laura
'It's my party, and I am NOT wearing that skirt'	Carole
'Aerotow retrieves - how to save time AND money'	Paul M
'Helicopter Flying is easy... Crunch'	Ian / Howard / Paul / Neil / Steve / Chris / Carole / Martin etc. etc.
'Nothing wrong with just Aerotows'	ESP syndicate.
'It's my party, and I am NOT wearing that shirt'	Paul M
'I won't do the HusBos Regionals, it always rains there'	various
'Have you been to Cowley recently?'	Garry

Sunday - Cloudbase was probably around 1000' as I passed Banbury at 6.30pm and spotted a helicopter groping its way through the rain and clag with a groundspeed that looked like no more than 30 knots. Not a promising start to my planned 8 days and nights camping at Weston on the Green. None daunted, I pressed on and arrived at Weston around 7.00pm to find a few lost souls in the club bar. Amazingly, it appeared that aviation had been committed at Weston that day, though I couldn't elicit any good reason from those there as to why they had bothered.

I busied myself trying to put up my camp (my recently acquired and beloved Mazda Bongo campervan with a bed inside the raised roof and a tent like side awning attached and that gave me my living area) in the wind, rain and fading light. Not huge fun but after a fair amount of stumbling and fumbling I managed it. I discovered I'd put my groundsheet over an ankle threatening rabbit hole and positioned my camping table over it in the interest of health and safety. I heated a can of Sainsbury's tinned curry and boiled some 5 minute rice for my tea and washed them down with a can of Tanglefoot while listening to something boring on Radio 4 for a bit until the unpromising weather forecast was read out. Then I went upstairs to bed.

I'd been promising myself this trip ever since I found I had a little disposable money with which to (temporarily at least) rekindle an old passion that had lain dormant for 12 or so years. I had also got myself a fit to fly declaration signed by my GP (I sent a nice covering letter, pleaded poverty, and gained her cooperation for a £10 fee) But this was more a statement of intent than a serious belief that I would get solo.

Monday dawned breezy and steely grey, dry and flyable (well launchable) if enough people (and a DI) thought it worth turning out to fly circuits. I put a positive spin on it: there was nothing to stop launch rates being high and I should get a few useful and challenging days flying in the bag. In truth, I would have preferred gentler weather and a thermal or two to settle me back in after such a long break. I got 3 short flights in that day with Chris Shepherd, who gave me great encouragement by estimating they could get me solo before the end of the week. I celebrated with a quick pint in the bar and a tin of Sainsbury's Irish stew and some mash before retiring to bed knackered. The electric bike I had brought down with me had proved useful too in allowing me to nip to and fro from launch point to campsite along the peri track, most notably to fetch Haste a fleece to wear over the workman's shell suit which was failing dismally to keep him warm (and looked ridiculous too).

Tuesday found me flying P2 with my old mate (and the person who introduced me to OGC 17-odd years ago – scary how time flies) Andy 'Scratcher' Butterfield. The weather was still breezy and our first launch took us into cloud at 1200ft. Isn't summer weather great. 5 flights that day (well 4 and a practice cable break) and Andy did the old trick of flying me away from the field and then handing it back to me. I decided we could land back at the launch point and we did. Andy couldn't decide if it was good judgement or good luck. I found it strangely satisfying flying a downwind leg right over the parachutists' domain. Andy and I joined Carole and Ian Shepherd and others at a pub in Woodstock for a steak dinner. Something not out of a tin – nice.

I was enjoying my camping routine. Each morning I would take half of the water I'd filled my collapsible camping bucket with and heat it over the cooker while I wandered around in a state of semi undress and eating a bowl of cereal. When that was hot, I'd start fried breakfast off cooking, reunite the hot water with the cold water in the bucket to produce a bucket of warm water, get out my camping shower, stick the submersible pump in the bucket, sucker the showerhead on to the side of the campervan, plug the power into the cigarette socket (can we call

them that any more), step into an old baby bath (campers shower tray to you) and have up to 3 mins of hot shower in complete privacy.(Ed.: sounds complicated – did anyone tell Mike that there's a shower in the clubhouse, and possibly even a cooked breakfast to be had?) Finish that and my breakfast would be all but ready. With a cooked breakfast inside me I could skip lunch and go right through to my evening can of something or other.

Wednesday was very breezy, still grey (though with higher cloudbase) and the duty instructor (and the few others there) really didn't fancy flying at all. Andy B. was going over to Bicester to meet up with John Giddins, whom I'd not seen in years, so I joined him and spent a very pleasant time looking over the wonderful collection of planes in the hangar there and catching up on the news with John. Great to see him so unchanged after all these years.

Thursday, and the wind had dropped and the sun had come out. Thermal activity was minimal and there was a feeling that the air was being upset by wave effects. Chris Shepherd was out again and I got two short flights in with him which went well. The lighter wind made things easier, the only legacy being an urge to cramp the circuit when it

was no longer necessary. On the ground, I spent a pleasant time walking the airfield looking for lost strops and chatting with John Gibbons. John was the first person to instruct me at OGC and also sent me solo way back

in 1991. I found several crisp packets but no strops, though others were luckier.

Friday dawned, and the weather looked much more promising. Dave Weeks arrived and decided to get Daisy out for a turn or two. The T21 was one of the reasons I joined Oxford GC but, by a strange turn of fate, I had never flown in her – a fact I mentioned casually to Dave and which did the trick. He popped me in Daisy with him for the first flight of the day, gave me a quick briefing and off we went. I was astonished at how easy and pleasant Daisy was to fly. I have to put my hands up here and say it's 50/50 with me whether I'd rather be in Daisy or the DG, with the former coming out slightly on top. Too much hurrying about these days for my liking - I just like being up there, and staying up there, maybe with a bit of cross country thrown in for the thrill of it. After a quick flight in Daisy, I flew with Steve McCurdy in the K13 and was rewarded for my efforts by the suggestion I take it up on my own. Wow – I can't believe I'm about to re-solo after all this time. I'd have been happy to carry on as P2 but that might send the wrong signal, and I know I'll be fine, so lets do it. And I did. Off the wire, straight into a thermal, up to 2000', off to another thermal, Dave Nisbet joined me in the Cirrus so suddenly I had to remember how to maintain station in a thermal with a glass ship whose pilot is keen not to have his thermal turns disrupted by a waffling novice. A great thrill though and I manage not to p**s him off while we climb to 2500'. As there was an inversion at around 3000' I decided to break off and find my own thermal, which I did, in the general direction of Blenheim. All too soon, it was time to return the K13, so I practice sideslipping to dump some height and land back after 36 mins. An expensive evening in the bar followed, when I bought a re-soloing round, one of the other pilots bought a 'doing his first K8 flight' round.

Saturday and the parachutists have returned. I now had to remember WOG etiquette. I took a check flight with Gary Cuthill: first flight of the day, with thermal activity only just starting. We launched on the long run to the west and parked ourselves over Weston village, circling lazily in zero sink while discussing the unreliability of Volkswagens, and the reappearance of Red Kites over the Chilterns. A couple of buzzards came out of their perches and started to circle below us – a good sign. The lift improved slowly from zero sink to weak lift, then stronger lift and suddenly, without trying, we noticed we were at 2000'. But as I wanted to fly solo again, I opened the brakes to get back on the ground inside

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WOG

Mike O'Neil

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WOG (CONTD.)

the 20 mins limit after Gary advised I would have to hand the aircraft over. I went off then on my own and did another 27 mins. It became obvious then what a fantastic week this had been for someone like me, even though it had been a huge disappointment for cross country pilots.

Saturday was rounded off with the Fantastic Party, where I bump into Alex Jenkins and enjoy a pint or two with him at the bar while he tells me Tales of Talgarth.

Sunday was my last flying day. Conditions dictated launching to the North West, and I remembered that this circuit used to catch me out. As I had nowhere much to progress to in the remaining time, except perhaps to fly safely, I elected to stay P2 and do stuff that allowed me to pick up tips from the instructors. Dave Nisbet was instructing. I learned to fly around the same time as Dave and it was great to see him now an instructor (or even just still there – I envy him his commitment). He decide to throw a tricky practice cable break at me. Too high to land ahead without a decent headwind, too low to fly a full circuit, I decided to get speed on do a 270 turn and land downwind (the wind had surprised us all by backing to a light NNE after the field was set up). The final turn was reminiscent of a landing at Camphill, where I'd first flown back in 1987. I think Dave felt he'd thrown me a tough one, but I was glad he had. Practice cable breaks can sometimes be a bit too 'obvious'. This one wasn't and it forced me to think quickly. But he felt I'd handled it well, and I got a big confidence boost from it. We launched again, and I got a real cable break, this time very low and just as I was pulling into the climb. Just goes to show! After one very short flight, I didn't fly again until the very end of the day. Nothing was staying up. Chris Shepherd's Jantar wouldn't even GO up until he managed to fit a different towhook on it, which seemed to sort the problem. But me and Dave got lucky and found positively the last thermal of the day, flying for 22 mins before calling it a day.

Monday, and it's time to pack up and go. I nip round the launch point for a last look at the gliders as they ascend into the blue, say my final goodbyes, then turn my back to the airfield and had for home. I've had a fantastic week. Too many people to thank really. As well as those already mentioned, it was great to see Phil and Fiona Hawkins again (though I'd seen them briefly when I dropped in at Feshie earlier this year). Haste, Howie, The Neils (Turner the Winch and Swinton the I'm not Happy with my 300k), Carole and Ian Shepherd, Cloudy, Nick Hill and Lynne Jones (from my class of '91), John Hanlon, Graham Barratt, Jack Miller, Paul Rogers, Tim Elliot etc. etc.. And all the new faces too: Jon Christensen, Paul Smith, Emma Cuthill, John Mart, and Anthony Buck – not a new face but when I last saw him he was only knee high to a bollweevil.

I reviewed my limited budget at the end of the week and decided to forgo an Autumn trip to the Scottish Highlands and spend the dosh instead on a year's full membership at OGC. I don't know how much I'll manage to get down as commitments and cash are against me, but be advised: Gatling Gob is back.

WILLY WEAKLINK'S PRIZE CROSSWORD

Across

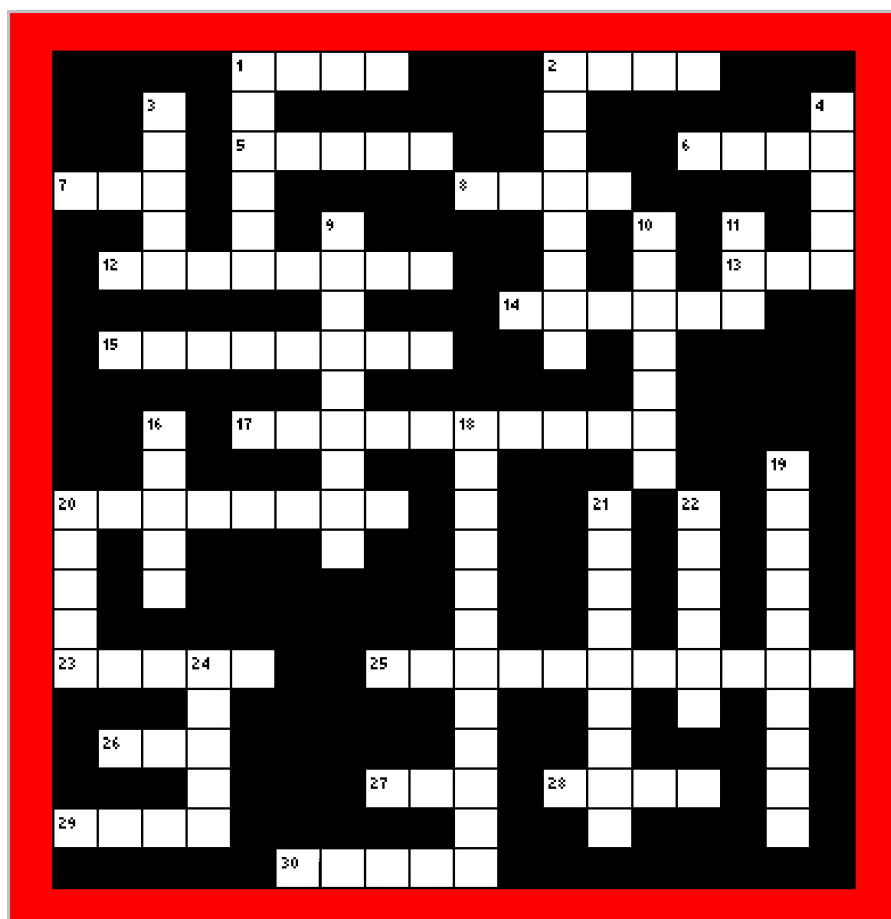
- 1: Aerobatics, in pool
- 2&8: What you buy everyone in the bar after getting your A badge
- 5: Engine off, they all do it
- 6: Produces ridge lift
- 7: Produces thermal lift
- 12: Just a load of hot air
- 13: When warm, it rises
- 14: Type of gliding cloud
- 15: Fix the cables with these
- 17: Icy measure of performance (5,5)
- 20: Out of control; Phil has a wheel for this
- 23: Term of endearment for a small Polish owl (or a dog)
- 25: Qualification between Solo and Silver (6,5)
- 26: Speedo
- 27: Always wear your lucky soaring ____
- 28: Smoothest form of lift
- 29: Daisy's ballast
- 30: Ebay Glider

Down

- 1: Replacement Winter Barograph
- 2: To avoid airbrakes you can ____
- 3: Made by Tost
- 4: A pilot
- 9: Keeps you stable in pitch
- 10: Noisy, keeps us on the ground
- 11: Without this, your launch will sag
- 16: Our T21
- 18: From A to B in a glider (5,7)
- 19: Used to build gliders and boats (5,5)
- 20: "If you don't hook me on to that cable, I will lose my temper!!"
- 21: We have an abandoned one in the caravan area
- 22: Aircraft Store
- 24: If you don't stop and take one, you will be back on the ground

Complete the crossword using the clues. When finished, drop your entries in the bar letterbox, or post to the Editor. The correct entries will be entered into a draw for one prize of TWO launch vouchers.

Closing date 1st January 2008. Willy Weaklink's decision is final.



CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

Martin Brown

For me 2007 started much like it did for anyone else. My logbook reports a general rustiness to begin with followed by a steady stream of solos gradually seeking out the elusive winter thermals. I had been solo since August the previous year and now I had a few vague ideas of Bronze badges and thermal flights to fill the year ahead. As the year began, so did the flying career of Martin Laxåback, a fact that was to have interesting consequences on my own.

Through February and into March I plodded on, building up my solos towards the 50 required to achieve Bronze status. Martin meanwhile was doing rather more than plodding. His full-on approach to learning to fly was not going unnoticed and it was around this time that he uttered the fateful words "I'll get to Bronze before Martin". No way! This just wasn't going to happen. As winter gave way to spring my plod became a purposeful stride. I would take all the P1 flights I could get and I'd stay up as long as possible too, knowing that 10 hours was as good as 50 flights for Bronze.

An excellent forecast for the Easter weekend saw me tempted to stray back to paragliding for Good Friday. When I returned to flying less flexible wings the next day I discovered that Martin had achieved his first solo flights while I was away and was now taking all the P1 launches he could manage (I believe it was 14 by the end of the weekend). I took advantage of the wonderful conditions to bag a few soaring flights. This gave me the two half-hours I needed for Bronze. I can't remember why but I didn't go out on Easter Sunday but when I returned on Monday I discovered that Paul Smith had flown Silver Distance to Sackville Farm the previous day. That sounded like fun I thought to myself but it still seemed a long way off for me. Then, just a fortnight later, Emma turned up and declared she was doing Silver Distance on an apparently unsoarable day. When, to everyone's astonishment, she made it to Husband's Bosworth I decided I wanted a piece of this action. Unfortunately for me things weren't going so well. My Bronze checks with Haste resulted in a complete failure when I nearly attempted to land at the wrong end of the airfield! I was struggling with simulated field landings too; I just couldn't control my speed properly on approach. Martin had a go while we had the field set up and managed a perfect field landing on only his second attempt. There was some good news however; I'd now reached the requisite 50 solos and my hard work studying for the Bronze exam paid off with a first time pass. The following week was my birthday. I'd set myself up to achieve Bronze by then so it was all to play for. My field landings with Simon Walker were in a different league to those a week before and finally I had all the signatures I needed. Martin was close behind me now but he still needed to sit the exam. Inevitably, the next thing he said was "OK, I'll get to Silver before you". I had to concede this was a distinct possibility.

With my Bronze badge now metaphorically pinned to my chest it was time to convert to flying the Club's Astir. As predicted I was amazed at how my thermal search radius was increased. I could see myself coming to like this kind of performance. My new target however was to join Paul and Emma in achieving Silver Distance and this meant progressing on to the Cross-Country Endorsement. With another good forecast before the end of May I declared a 2-hours attempt and launched into a very welcoming sky. The time flew by and there was still plenty of soarable sky left for Martin to make his own 2-hours attempt in the K8 but unfortunately I managed to burst the K8's tyre on my landing, taking the glider out of service for just long enough to deny him the chance. Later that week I made a trip over to Enstone Airfield for the motor-glider part of the endorsement. I proved I could read a map whilst flying and drop unannounced into any tiny Cotswolds field if the sky should suddenly decide it didn't want me any more. With the XC Endorsement now

under my belt my path was clear for my own Silver Distance attempt.

It was around this time that I began to become frustrated with long waits for Club gliders only to get a poorly timed launch and end up back on the ground again a few minutes later. Either that or I'd get up and away but have to bring the aircraft back for someone else's turn just when I was beginning to have fun. A private glider seemed the way to go but I had no idea what was suitable. Claudia seemed keen I should get a DG-100 and, as luck would have it, one appeared on gliderpilot.net's classified ads pages just in the nick of time. Martin and I teamed up for a trip to Tibenham in Norfolk to go and check her out. We persuaded Martin Hastings to come with us to cast an expert eye over the aircraft. A word of warning here; don't try to rig a glider with three people all with the same name. 'Up a bit Martin', 'Down a bit Martin' – it doesn't work! Anyway, we didn't think much of this particular DG so we trudged back home empty handed. Only a few weeks later another DG-100 came up for sale just down the road at Booker. This one seemed much more to our liking and after a number of visits and a bit of negotiation Martin and I became private glider owners.



Photo: Martin Laxåback

By now it was mid-summer and time for OGC's Flying Fortnight. My stated goal for the next two weeks was to achieve the full Silver Badge. I knew this was a long shot but with Martin's attention distracted by our new DG I thought there just may be a chance. In typical fashion the weather for the week leading up to the Fortnight was wall to wall classic conditions. I had a wonderful opportunity to get a bit of XC practice in on the Thursday by flying P2 with Howard in JSX. We had to cut our planned flight slightly short and ended up turning for home from the Long Mynd. We didn't know it at the time but the Mynd was hosting the British Paragliding Championships that week and, fortunately for us, the sky downwind was littered with brightly coloured paragliders marking nearly 100km of cloud street. I think we did something like 420km in just over 6 hours in the end. This gave me an extra boost for the Flying Fortnight and fortunately the classic conditions continued into the first Saturday. I declared Sackville Farm as my Silver Distance destination and nervously prepared myself and HFW for the flight. At first I couldn't get above 3000' but I knew 'base was around 5000' and gliders had been getting to it so I plucked up the courage to venture off towards Buckingham. It didn't take me long to realise that 'my' Buckingham was in fact Brackley so I made a quick right turn and headed towards the real Buckingham. Part way there I finally encountered lift strong enough to get me through the lower inversion and on up to 5000'. A quick calculation told me I had achieved Silver Height Gain so I continued off into a blue hole towards Milton Keynes. I got even higher over the M1 and I knew that I could glide to goal from there. All I had to do was find it! I had practised the flight using the satellite imagery on Google Maps and in reality I had no difficulty picking out the little grass strip between the trees. It occurred to me that there was still plenty of day left so I called base and asked my take-off time. If I could only stay airborne until 18:15 I would have achieved full Silver in a single flight. When my retrieve crew arrived I still had nearly two hours to go but they were very supportive and

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN (CONTD.)

Thanks to Peter, Nick and Stuart for coming to get me and putting up with me on the way back. Martin had been having a good day too. He'd completed his first flights in our DG and seemed very pleased with our purchase. His time came soon enough and only a month or so later HFW was off to Sackville yet again. By now though the days just weren't long enough for 5 hours (but believe me he tried) so we ended the season with me still in front by a nose. I guess it'll just have to be Gold next year then Martin...

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Neil Swinton

As a club, OGC is fortunate in being well equipped. We have a fine clubhouse, a good safe site and a well equipped fleet. In fact, we have been in this situation for several decades. Nothing much has changed. Is this a satisfactorily state of affairs? Can the club continue to stand still in this way?

We had the opportunity some years ago to buy a two-seat training aircraft, but at an EGM it was decided to buy an advanced aircraft, an Acro, which was 'morphed' (with the help of a Cotswold stone wall) into our DG-505.

Since this purchase, very little has happened. Our fleet is still based around wood and fabric aircraft, which, while functional, are hardly 'leading edge'. Consider what impression visitors get when they arrive at the club and see the K13's and Ka8's.

There also have to be some concerns as to how long the K13's can keep flying. The old theory was that wooden wings – if well looked after and not allowed to get wet – should last virtually forever. However recent problems with glue joints found on K7's and K13's have thrown some doubt on this. Several aircraft in the UK have been condemned as write-offs because of this problem. There are now also some doubts as to how badly the steel frames are suffering from invisible internal rust.

We cannot expect our K13/Ka8 fleet to continue flying for ever. And yet, what is the alternative? Purchase of a modern glass 2-seat trainer will not give much change from 50,000 - 55,000 pounds. Second-hand gliders are available – Phil's ETA K21 was bought for somewhere around a third of that, but how well would a second-hand aircraft stand up to the week-in week-out rigors of club flying? The range of available new 2-seat glass trainers is limited, K21, DG-500, Puchacz, and maybe PW6. And many people, myself included, would not really like to see us basing our club two-seater fleet around the Puchacz.

This year the club has made a small operating profit. This is despite the large insurance rise on all gliders in the UK. The hull values of the K13's are quite low, and had we been insuring two K21's this year, we would have made a substantial, most likely an un-sustainable loss. It seems unlikely insurance costs will drop in the near future.

So, if we replace the 13's with a glass fleet, we might not be able to afford to insure them in future. If we keep running the K13's, they may be grounded overnight.

GROUND EQUIPMENT

Neil Turner

Well, since the last Final Glide we have had no major expense in the ground equipment side of things. Towards the beginning of the year the topic of conversations was the state of the winch cable and the constant failure of the cable joints. So one fine Saturday morning with the help of five fine club members we set about to change the cables. Now most members think that it can be done in 2 hours... We started at 10.30 and finished at 4.30!!

This time we have gone back to 4.5mm cable. The 4.2mm had a few problems in the cable curling up and the ferrules not holding.

On the ferrules subject: We now join the cable in a different way. As before using two ferrules, crimp one and hold pressure for 20 - 30 seconds to let the ferrule "set". Then lightly hold second ferrule in the press jaws, then "twist" the crimped cable end clockwise as far as you can. This should twist the cable around itself. Then crimp the ferrule whilst holding in this position, again hold pressure for 20 - 30 seconds to "set the ferrule. This way it spreads the load over the joint and makes it more flexible. Note distance between the ferrules should be a minimum of 6" / 150mm

Just a quick note: Whilst changing the cables we were still operating on the "other" cable. During this time we never had one cable failure and we were launching the DG-505 as well, ask Haste as he was flying it. Good job we briefed the pilots not to pull at the top of the launch. Every pilot blames the winch driver if the cable fails, not so – it's the nut that holds the stick we should be looking at!!

With new cable on both drums and new chutes we should have gone for a very long time before the cable required fixing..... Not so, 35 launches and the cable was cut!!! The reason why? The winch driver had not set the tow out brakes correctly and the drum over ran and they did not notice!!

Winch drivers, set the tow out brakes so the

encouraging so I kept circling while the time ticked by. One final climb gave me the height I needed and I finally landed around 18:30 to claim my prize.

cable "touches" the ground about 15m in front of the winch when being towed out. If in doubt what this means please ask me. This is the major factor to why we mess up the cable.

How much did it cost to replace the cable, fit new chutes, make new strops (more on that later)? Just about £2000.00

We are getting through a lot of strops lately. Please keep an eye on the launch all the way to the top if you are the one who has the buttons in your hand. If you lose one please go and look for it. Yes, I know they can be hard to find but they cost us £50+ each. There is already £350 worth out there still!

Other news.

We have a "new" tow out motor. A Mitsubishi Shogun. 3.0 V6 auto with gas conversion. It works well, has a towbar on the back but it has a few teething problems that need sorting before it goes into full use.

This year our fine group of grass cutters have done us proud, the grass is nice and short. Thanks to you all. The only slight hiccup was the topper bearings went bang, just when the grass needed cutting!!! With a lot of swearing and sweating – and yes Dave it was left hand thread! – I managed to pull it apart and change the worn-out bearings and it is working a treat. So what's happening to Taffy I hear you ask?

I hope to find some enthusiasm and start rebuilding the engine soon.

Final bit.

The club is looking to provide a Winch drivers' training manual. This will be used so that the approved winch instructors all teach in the same way.

This will be hopefully published over the winter months.

In the meantime. When did you last drive the winch??

Best answer so far was 3 years ago!! If you are a solo pilot, please do you share of winning.

As I see it, we have a number of choices:

- do nothing, and see how long the K13's last. When they are grounded, borrow money to buy a 2-seat trainer.
- Sell both the K13's while we still can, borrow money and buy a 2-seat trainer. Leaving us with the 505 and (say) a K21 only.
- Sell both the K13's and the DG-505, and borrow money to buy 2 K21's

There is no easy answer to this. I am sure your local committee member would be interested in your views.

ANOTHER RE-SOLO AT OGC

Alberto Araoz

Having spent the best part of February and March of 1986 at my gliding club in Argentina practicing my favourite activity, I assumed that I was going to resume flying sailplanes after returning from two years of studying abroad. But as that fine Liverpool gentleman wrote, life is what happens when you're busy making other plans. Memories of that summer popped up every now and then but I was to have no connection to gliding anymore.

So it was a great surprise when a friend of mine mentioned he had taken up the sport in one of the new gliding clubs that have sprung up around Berlin after German reunification. They were offering an introductory course for newbies, and at €200 including 10 launches, this did not seem out of proportion so with curiosity I signed up. The weather did not play along for the first couple of days, but then the skies cleared and I took the passenger seat in an ASK 21. Never having had a winch launch before, I found it unusual but not uncomfortable, and the overall experience was great. This was something that I definitely wanted to pursue.

Back in the UK, I found out on gliding.co.uk that there are no shortages of possibilities for gliding in Britain. So off I drove to Booker, which is nearest to where I live, but quickly realised that their prices were out of my range. Later that evening I marked the location of several other sites, and the next day I drove to the first one on my list, the Oxford Gliding Club. Dave Nisbet explained that they had had a party the night before so were starting late. He showed me their two K13s used for training, their DG-505 used for cross-country training and their T21 used for fun. Cable break launches were at no cost since the club placed safety very high on their priority list and thus encouraged their training. This, and the fact that launches were done by winch instead of aerotow, which made them way more affordable than at Booker, convinced me, so I signed up for an introductory course, went to a petrol station to get some food and prepared myself to spend the

day at Weston.

Now I don't know how other German clubs operate but gliding is serious business in Lüsse (Ed.: not so in Dehausen as those who have been there will recall...). The activity on the airfield is very efficient and, especially as a pupil, you are expected to be very quick on your feet pushing gliders around. In Oxford the pace is less hectic, and it took me a while to realise that the joy part of the activity was at the forefront. The flights on that first Sunday went well and I had an excellent overall impression, so I signed up as a member and returned the next Monday, a bank holiday, for more, and have been ever since.

Flying with nine different instructors before my first solo flight struck me as odd at first, but in hindsight made perfect sense. Every one of them knew exactly what I was doing wrong and was quick with good and pointed advice that allowed me to get up to speed quickly, and every one left different impressions on me. Cloudy, taking control of the K13 to position it for me to land and instantly transforming the glider from a sow on roller skates into a ballerina. Dave, explaining safety during circuit, pointing out the large number of airfields in the region and their origin. Howard, telling that lookout is paramount, something not so important when gliding locally in the pampas. And Stewart, soaring with me for one hour, sharing his enthusiasm, offering a glimpse of times to come, and finally sending me on my first solo flight.

I have done a number of them now, but was not expecting to do more than circuit training until next year. Last Saturday, after a check flight with Neil Swinton, I took off with the Ka8 and to my great surprise there was a Standard Cirrus in a thermal. I joined him and was able to gain height and soar for one hour, hopping from thermal to thermal, reaching cloud base at 3,100 ft. and playing beneath them. This flight really brought it all back.

So what's next? Books that I ordered from the BGA online shop have arrived today, so I'll start preparing for the Bronze C written test at once. And winch driving, which is expected from any solo pilot.

SO KM? NOT TODAY! Emma Cuthill

Saturday the 21st of April began like many other days for me. I turned up at the gliding club with some half-baked idea of doing my 50km. Like so many other days when I had considered an attempt, the weather had hinted at promise and thrown it back in my face but I figured I'd smoke a barograph anyway. With a lot of advice from various people (particular thanks to Cloudy), I plotted a route to Husbands Bosworth and took my chosen Ka8 glider to the launch point and looked at the sky.... well I tried but there seemed to be some kind of haze / low cloud in the way! So, having been told it wasn't really going to happen but to "go and fly anyway and see what happens", I launched.

The viz was awful, but I found a weak (1kt!) thermal, sticking with it, drifting downwind towards Bicester, until I got worried I wouldn't get back! Heading back to Weston lost me all the height I'd gained and I started all over again, this time in a slightly stronger thermal. Once again I drifted to Bicester, actually getting over "Windrushers" airfield. I was content with the idea that I could land there if necessary. At this point Weston had disappeared in the haze and I couldn't seem to get higher than 3000' I figured I might as well go on a bit further and use Bicester as my new get out clause. In another thermal I drifted to Turweston and Bicester had vanished. That was it, I felt I had to carry on, not thinking I would actually make it to Hus Bos, but decided to see how far I could get. I skirted around Turweston towards Silverstone and saw a bit of racing.

I began to get low and a little worried, I looked around for a nice cloud to save me... but it was still an awful hazy sky. Luckily I saw another glider appeared and began circling. I went to join it, but it raced off before I got there... I thought that was it and it was now time to pick a field but I scratched away in the weak thermal (there was actually one there) getting ever closer to the M1 and Northampton. I eventually managed to climb to 3500' and crossed the M1 spotting ahead of me two lakes which I remembered Cloudy telling me pointed to Hus Bos. So, staying high (for

the day!), I carried on expecting to see the airfield any minute, but I didn't and the sky was getting duller. I failed to remember about the lake Carole told me about with looks like a gun pointing at the airfield! I began to think I wasn't going to make it; I'd have to land somewhere else and you'd all find that hilarious when I was so close!

On I went until I spotted an airfield, with a large plane parked up...! I'd found Bruntingthorpe, which meant time to turn around. I spotted another glider and knew I must be close but still no field. Suddenly the airfield appeared in front of me. I still had height, so flew up and down parallel to the field planning my circuit and landing. Unfortunately the field was a little higher than I thought and my circuit ended up a little low but I made it ok and was quickly met by a member of the club.

"They let you do your 50k today?" Clearly the day was good enough, as I had made it ... in 2 hours, oddly just as Husbands Bosworth seemed to be packing up. So, I parked the Ka8 safely and headed off to the clubhouse bar to await my retrieval crew (as instructed). It turned out that I'd picked the perfect day to arrive, as it was their AGM, so I got dinner as well!

My thanks to everyone for their support in the morning and to my retrieve crew, Andy Butterfield, Nick Brooks, Janet and Garry. Thanks also to Haste, for holding the fort at OGC and letting Garry leave the field to help come get me.



Photo: Damien Dyer

"EEE IT'S TURNED OUT SHITE AGAIN..."

Paul Morrison

So muttered John Ellis, one of the Yorkshire Gliding club stalwarts as he stuck his head around the kitchen door on Saturday morning, attracted no doubt by the smell of frying bacon wafting from the pan I was wielding at the time.

This concise and informed comment succinctly summed up the weather that the few OGC die-hards ('Fit Martin', Steve 'Big-Nose', John Mart and myself) who had ventured up to Sutton Bank during the second week of October experienced.

With our plans to travel up for a full week dampened by the truly appalling weather forecast for the early part of the week, three of the contingent headed up on the Tuesday with Steve bringing up the rear a day later. Wednesday dawned calm but bright and without too much drama or excitement. John, Martin and myself had our site check / familiarisation flights completed in one of their newer K21s and we were all set to go.

It's worth mentioning at this point that as a visitor to YGC you must have a Medical Certificate before you can fly and that if you are not Silver C standard or above, you can expect three check flights on the different set-ups commonly used at Sutton Bank. As a relative regular to Sutton Bank it is worth also pointing out that the 'runways' are now referred to in the common format, with the take off towards the White Horse being '20' (200 degrees) and the typical launch towards the south west cliff being '24' (240 degrees). Positional radio calls during the circuit are also now the norm.

Wednesday was rounded off with a trip to Sutton Under Whitestone Cliff for the chance to encounter one of their now infamous Mixed Grills. Mere words alone can not do justice to this orgy of meat they place before you.

Suitably ballasted, Thursday dawned full of promise and fired with enthusiasm, an early start found OGC rigging BLW, KHV and 902 before the morning briefing and breakfast. It is common practice to have a comprehensive briefing every morning at YGC and it was during this morning's one the words we all wanted to hear were uttered by Richard Cole (the new CFI) and Andy Parish – good prospects for wave!

Not long after Steve and myself joined the grid and after a reasonable rate of launches we found ourselves leaving the tow at

3,000ft between two layers of cloud in a magical vista. It was a memorable sight. Unfortunately not long afterwards my ineptitude in wave led me to the inevitable descent, having briefly gained about 600ft in the wave. It was also at this point that I had an interesting encounter with the YGC DG-1000 on BI training duty, but this is not the time or place to discuss this.

With the wind strong enough for the ridge to work I spent the next 90 minutes or so going backwards and forwards trying to regain enough height to venture out towards Thirsk and Dishforth. It was during this time I noticed that Steve had fared no better and was on the ground and several of the other visitors from Stratford had also landed. I consoled myself with the thought that at least I was not the only inept one!



Photo: Paul Morrison

By the end of the day, all apart from John had flown at least twice, with Martin showing an annoying ability to be rather good at this 'black magic' sort of wave flying, climbing to 4,300ft from a 2,500ft tow and landing long after the rest of the OGC contingent were deciding on which pub we would honour with our custom that evening. Unfortunately our bubbles were burst soon afterwards when John Ellis landed his Nimbus 3 Turbo even later than Martin, uttering that '*it was easy lad*' and informing us he'd only stopped at 14,000ft as it was getting late and he had a fishing committee meeting to attend that evening. Grrrrr!

Waking from the excesses of the night before and with painful memories of the darts game John & I had played in the pub in the forefront of my mind (don't ever play darts with us if you want to get home!) I noticed that the window seemed covered in condensation. Wiping the window revealed that it was not condensation of the type we soft southerners find down here, but rather it was condensation that covered the entire bank and the Vale of York – yes we were in cloud!

After a lazy day and the obligatory trip to the pie shop in Helmsley (for more ballast!)

Martin displayed a rather worrying penchant for sheepskin as with a glint in his eye and a knife in his hand he set about converting what had once been one of Yorkshire's finest into a new seat cover for the DG-100! Once the fluff had settled (literally!) Steve & Martin dragged their gliders to the launch point as by then the cloud had lifted to about 1,000ft above site.

I'd already decided that any aviating I was going to do that day was to be courtesy of Rotax as whilst the wind was to the west, it was less than 5 kts and thus not worth rigging. Unfortunately though all our plans were scuppered by scudding patches of cloud rolling in which reduced the cloud base to less than 300' at times. John managed another flight in a K21 before departing YGC to go skiing whilst the remainder of us

bedded down the gliders and occupied ourselves with thought of food for the evening.

Saturday morning dawned even cloudier, if that was possible, so again the time was spent shopping in Thirsk & Helmsley and stocking up on provisions for the rugby game that evening. England beat France – need I say anything more?

Sunday was supposed to have more promise but alas the hoped for westerly winds did not materialise and again with 8/8 cloud cover all day at less than 1,000ft above site, another day passed with no flying. Inevitably it was only as the remaining OGC contingent started the drive down the front face with trailers in tow for the long journey home that the sun broke through the clouds.

In all therefore it wasn't the most productive or beneficial Sutton Bank trip we've ever done, but it was good fun and with a tempting reciprocal winter membership deal on offer, one I hope to repeat at least a couple more times over the winter. If you have ever thought about going to Sutton Bank – just do it and if you don't believe me, ask Martin & John but don't mention the sheepskin!

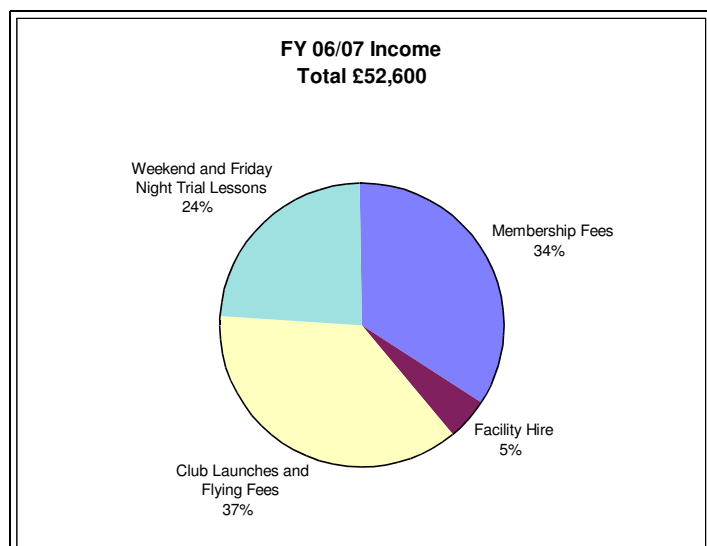
BAH! HUMBUG! A FEW WORDS FROM YOUR TREASURER

Ian Shepherd

In an ideal world we would all get as much flying as we could possibly want for free! Unfortunately, as you may have noticed, this isn't the case and our activities do have to be paid for. Although we like to keep things as informal as possible at OGC, we have to be careful, where money is concerned, to keep track of where it is coming from, where it is going and how much we should be trying to squirrel away for a rainy day. Or, indeed, a rainy season!

So where does the money come from? Where does it all go? And do we have any left over at the end of a typical year? – Oh dear, I can feel some pie charts coming on.....

Here's a nice, friendly pie chart showing how the Club's financial year 06/07 total income of £52,600 breaks down.....



Very nice, but what does it mean?

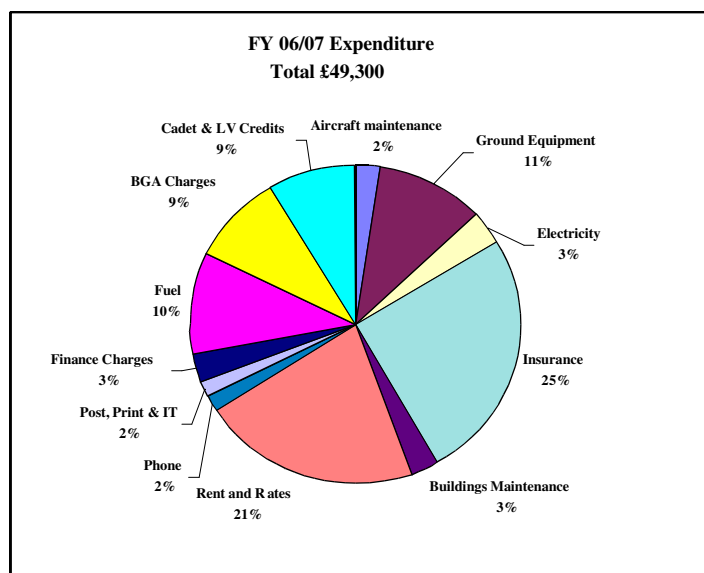
It means we actually had quite a good year despite various rumblings about crap weather, poor Friday Night group flying turnout etc. It shows a healthy split between the main income sources, which, in turns shows that we have the balance about right between Club Flying, Trial Flights and Membership Fees – a tricky balancing act which, if we get badly wrong can hurt the Club. For example if we do millions of Trial Lessons to keep Membership Fees really low this can mean that we spend all of our time flying punters, which annoys our own members because they can't get a launch! Or if we increase the Subs a lot to reduce our dependence on good weather bringing in loads of flying income then we start to look less attractive than neighbouring clubs and we lose members that way.

So, what about Facility Hire? This is made up of caravan and trailer fees plus charges for hiring Club gliders for flying away from Weston (an absolute bargain by the way and a facility that is not used as much as it could be!) Last year we increased the caravan and trailer fees by around 75% as they had been at the same ridiculously low level for at least 15 years and I'm afraid we can expect these to continue to increase to more realistic levels

compared to other clubs over the next few years. In the case of trailer fees, these may need to increase as the trend for people to buy into private syndicates, earlier after solo than in the past, continues and we lose out on Club glider hire fees as a result.

Deciding on how much to charge for things is no easy task but we do try to keep things as fair as possible and there is a way to claw some of that money back through earning Launch Vouchers of which more later.

Ok, that's where the money comes from so where does it go? This is shown on the scary pie chart of doom below...:



As you can see, this year we spent £49,300 which means we made a profit of £3,300 which is not too shabby compared to the previous few years but which is still not really good enough. In order to be able to retain sufficient funds to meaningfully invest in the Club's future – the K13s are not going to last forever for example – we should be making a profit of at least 10-15% of our income i.e. around £5,000 to £7,500. If you go back about 10 years, to much less expensive times, we were retaining almost %25 of our income as profit but times change and the 10-15% target is probably more realistic in these more expensive times.

Let's put on our rubber gloves and have a rake around in the financial u-bend of the Club's expenditure. I am not going to examine all 12 of the expenditure categories listed in the pie chart of doom and will concentrate on the top 6 which (at least in FY 06/07) were where 85% of our spend went.

In equal 5th place we have BGA Charges and Cadet and Launch Voucher Credits with 9% of the spend each. BGA Charges are the various fees we have to pay the BGA for ~~Buggering Gliding About~~ running the UK gliding movement and include membership subscriptions, instructor registration fees and glider Certificate of Airworthiness fees and worth every penny I'm sure you agree.

Cadet and Launch Voucher Credits are effectively free flying! We give each one of the 2 or 3 Cadets we take on each year £400 in flying credit which should be enough to take them to solo. This leaves, on average about £2-3,000 worth of Launch Vouchers which is how we give members of the Club some of their money

BAH! HUMBUG! (CONTD.)

back – arrrgh,
oooerr – sorry
came over all

wobbly there for a minute. Seriously though, it is theoretically possible to fly for free if you can earn enough launch vouchers by:

- ♦ Helping out on maintenance nights (Tuesdays 19:00 – 22:00)
- ♦ Turning up for Duty Pilot stints.
- ♦ Being the first winch driver of the day when at least one early (£2.00) launch has happened.
- ♦ Doing a Friday Night Flying crew duty (must be rostered on – not just turn up and hang about)

If you manage to do all of these in a year (say one Tuesday night a month, 4 Duty Pilot Stints, a couple of early winch driving turns and 6 Friday nights then you will have earned 24 launch vouchers worth up to £144!

In 4th place we have Fuel. This includes LPG, diesel and petrol. Our fuel costs have risen five-fold in the last 10 years not only in line with general energy price rises but also because we now have to spend a lot more on diesel due to the fact that Defence Estates don't cut the grass on the field as often as they used to so we have to cut our own landing areas to stay operational. (Note to mowing team – your efforts are greatly appreciated by all except the rabbits) Clubhouse heating also burns diesel so please don't leave it on when there is no-one at the hangar! If however, you are ever told not to fetch a single cable in the Rover as it is a waste of LPG then don't take any notice. The Rover is there to get cables back to the launch point as quickly as possible! Missing a launch slot due to not having a cable is actually way more expensive in terms of money, time and frustration than a bit of wasted gas (about 50p!)

This year Ground Equipment is in a relatively respectable 3rd place rather than 1st or 2nd as in previous years! This is largely due to the fact that we have managed to avoid breaking too many really expensive things recently and have mostly broken cheaper stuff which Neil Turner has fixed with either WD-40 (for things that should move but don't) or gaffer tape (for things that do move that shouldn't) However we have had to spend over £2,500 on launching hardware such as the rings, shackles, links etc. that make up strops because we have developed a habit of sprinkling them all over the airfield as if they might take root and grow into strop trees. In fact what happens is that they hide in the grass until the mower comes along. So if you are operating the flasher buttons (and even if you aren't!) please remember to **watch every launch and carefully note the fall of the strop in the event of a break** so we have a better chance of finding it. Every lost strop costs the Club £55 so if we lose just one every weekend that's £2,860 gone!

In a magnificent 2nd place are Rent and Rates. Although the Club owns the hangar structure outright, we have to pay Defence Estates (the bit of the MoD that actually owns the land) £7,000 a year to lease the little corner of the airfield we actually occupy.² Add to this an annual charge of around £750 to use the airfield itself and £1,500 a year Business Rates to Cherwell District Council (that's after 80% discretionary rate relief!) and it all adds

up to a lot of money we have to find just to be able to operate at Weston at all.

And so to glorious first place which, this year is, once again, occupied by insurance (boo, hiss). This accounts for a quarter of our total spend and is made up from Club Glider Insurance which represents about 75% of the total insurance cost plus various other insurances such as Airfield Operators Insurance, Premises Owners Insurance and People Being Idiots Elsewhere Insurance. Obviously, I made the last one up but one of the reasons why we are having to pay over £10,000 a year to insure the Club fleet is because there have been a number of multi million pound 3rd party liability claims made against other gliding clubs for bending people over the last few years and the insurance companies have jacked up the premiums of the 3rd party liability element of club insurances accordingly. Actually things could be much worse for us. We have a good safety record, are on very good terms with our insurers (RFIB UK) and have negotiated one of the best insurance deals of any club in the country. However in the words of Sgt. Esterhaus³ *"Hey, let's be careful out there"*

Of course, not every year is the same and sometimes the top 6 expenditure categories will be different. For example this year we spent next to nothing on Aircraft Maintenance (despite some significant repair activities) whereas in previous years we have had to fork out thousands on glass and gel coat repairs, fabric recovers, rewiring, instruments, radios etc. etc.

Also just because this and the other categories "only" represent 15% of our spend that's still about £7,500 so there is no excuse for leaving the lights on, being careless with Club equipment and other wasteful buffoonery.

Also please do remember that we bring in over £12,500 a year from weekend and Friday night Trial Flights so please get involved, help to keep the club a tidy and welcoming place and continue to treat our guests with friendliness and courtesy.

Here's to a profitable FY 07/08.

P.S.:

Q: So what does happen to the profits?

A: How do you think the Treasurer can afford a big extension?

Actually at the end of every financial year any retained profit gets transferred into a Site Trust Fund account where it is looked after by the Trustees until we really, really need it. Whereupon it needs the agreement of both the Committee and the Trustees before it can be spent on another expensive shiny white plastic thing.

¹ Although those people not on the airfield at the time of the launch are excused.

² Currently under review and likely to increase to £10,000+ next year.

³ Hill Street Blues

MY WEEK AS MUM

Paul Wilford

Earlier this year, Dave Bray asked me if I'd crew for him in a comp and I agreed to provide my services at the Hus Bos Regionals. I only set two conditions, one was that he paid for food and the other was that I would only crew if he got a better car (I don't ask much!!).

Now I've always had a slightly warped idea about the responsibilities of a crew. This originates from my days of flying the Juniors. I was rather fortunate back then that my comp kind of turned into a family holiday. There was me flying, my Dad and Sister crewing and my Mum cooking and washing up etc! We also took the dog along for moral support and to generally terrorise the other camp-site dwellers. As a naïve 18yr old I didn't really appreciate it back then. Basically, I'd get woken up 30mins before briefing with a bacon sandwich (thanks Mum) and the news that the glider was already rigged, polished and on the grid (thanks Dad & Louise). I foolishly decided to try and emulate this level of service for Dave this year, completely forgetting that I am but one man and there were 3 of them!

So the day finally arrived to go to Husbands Bosworth and I, in my infinite wisdom, had decided to couple this with the day I moved out of my house – oops. We got to Hus Bos airfield at about 8pm (I think), and I was totally knackered! Dave

bought us fish and chips and let me drive his shiny new car into town to get used to it. Then I finally started to relax.

The weather for the week was good, so good in fact that being crew was a tad frustrating but I didn't let that get in the way of my duties. I was up first thing to cook breakfast for Dave, Cloudy, Nick and myself. Rig 486 (although we only had to do that a couple of times all week), tow out to the grid, go to briefing and make sure Dave had everything he needed. Then we grid squat, on the first day this meant sitting around for hours talking and trying to use as many mind control techniques as we could think of to persuade the director to scrub (about the most advanced technique known to glider pilots seems to be the subtle power of suggestion, shouting 'SCRUB' down the radio). So the first day was scrubbed, at about 4pm. As the weather then cleared at about 4:03pm we decided to have a barbecue (cooking dinner also seemed to be my job for the week).

All the days after that were pretty much the same, all very mundane with 400k and 300k tasks galore, I'm sure nobody really wants to hear about that. Dave did land out once, field was good and retrieve was easy enough. By the time we got back to Hus Bos Dave grumpily pointed out that I'd now driven his new car more than he had! So we went to the pub for dinner and I let him drive (see, I can be nice)!

The last day was a bit of a farce, the director had pretty much decided to scrub the night before, so we all got quite drunk. Well, I did anyway, I think I left the bar at about 3am. The director then changed his mind in the morning and told us to rig, then a squall line or something appeared, approaching fast and just as we finished putting on the last piece of tape, a scrub was called. We then derigged 486 and 251 in about 3 seconds flat. Packed up camp and went home.

I'd just like to point out that Dave put some fairly good flights in through the week and definitely learned that short wing mode is essential in a comp. I refute any suggestions that I made him use the big tips to help avoid retrieves! Cloudy also did very well and rapidly learnt the need to be fast when flying a big task in a DG-100. It only really took one awkward land-out to teach her that one. (Ed.: The slightly awkward bit was that I ended up at Syerston on the last leg after a six-and-a-half hour flight and it then turned out I couldn't get an aerotow retrieve after all. – I therefore have a lot of sympathy for Paul being stranded at the Mynd – at least my supercrew was only one hour away!) On subsequent days she showed a steady and impressive improvement.

Next year I may be available for crewing, all requests should be written on the back of a fifty Pound note and handed to me directly!

Some thoughts on safety.

On a serious note, it is worth mentioning that there were some incidents during the Hus Bos Regionals. I won't go into any detail but I think it possible that currency and complacency were possible contributing factors. Thankfully nobody was killed but it could've been quite different.

In my opinion, the following should be noted:

- Always check everything, a hundred times if you have to, if you ever hear yourself saying 'it'll probably be OK' then you should have serious words with yourself! Make sure that positive checks and a DI have been done on the glider you are about to fly, if you're not sure then check it yourself.
- Always know your limits, don't push beyond them.

Also, consider the fact that the season had been rubbish and suddenly people are doing long flights every day in good conditions. They were definitely current in terms of hours (or certainly were when the incidents took place) but possibly not in

a way that prepared them for this kind of flying, whilst almost certainly becoming more and more fatigued.

To put this into OGC club context, I don't think it's wrong to say that you're current if you've flown in the last six weeks but it's certainly true that you aren't anywhere near your best if you only fly once every 6 weeks. Having a check flight is always a good thing, and flying with other people should be considered fun. I personally think this is something that we don't do enough of at OGC. Don't shy away from check flights, they tend to be painless!

I would say that this year, for various reasons, I've been a lot less current than I ever have been before (excluding my 4 year break from flying!). I will say that I've noticed it, I've made a couple of decisions that would've been different if I was more current and not so tired. I'm not saying that we should all have check flights all the time, just that it's worth taking some time to consider how current you are and what you've been doing in the last few days that might impact your state of mind.

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

The start of the year again saw some changes to the make up of the committee. John Hamilton, Simon Calvert and Karen King did not stand for re-election and were replaced as ordinary members by Neil Swinton, Neil Turner and Paul Wilford. Thanks to those standing down for their time on the committee.

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

The OGC lease with defence estates expired but defence estates notified Ian Shepherd that the presence of OGC on the site was covered as a continuation until a new lease was in place.

The level of club funds was low and arrears were high so in an attempt to reduce expenditure various suggestions for reducing the cost of insurance on the club fleet were investigated. In practice it was not possible to put club aircraft on ground risk only for periods of the year as the insurers would only allow insurance details to be fixed for a year at a time. Suggestions for operating the T21 as a large syndicate were also considered and rejected as following any incident the insurers would view the likely pattern of T21 flying at Weston, especially if used for Friday nights, as being club activity. As the current pattern of flying in Astir DKR was the loss maker for the club it was agreed that the Astir DKR be offered to club members as an insurance syndicate.

On the instructing front Barry Taylor and Claudia Bungen booked onto a half cat course in May to be held at Bicester and various options for BI courses were being considered as the BGA was no longer advertising BI courses.

Several members had expressed an interest in buying a primary style glider for sale on Ebay and storing it hung from the hangar roof. The committee decided it did not want a primary for club use. For one the club was trying to reduce glider insurance costs and therefore did not want an additional glider. Also at least one committee member considered sitting in the open air far too dangerous.

By February the income from flying fees was looking low compared to previous years due to the lack of flying as a result of the poor weather, a recurring theme for 2007. On the plus side Stewart Otterburn was now a qualified BI coach and likely to be able to conduct BI assessments at OGC.

Various people had expressed an interest in syndicating Astir DKR. Jon Christensen and Paul Smith were the earliest contenders but decided to buy their own Mosquito instead, leaving Neil Toogood and Nick Beloff (later joined by Kevin Noel) as the final syndicate.

By April the level of available club funds was still low for the time of year (the weather again), meaning it was still important to keep a tight control on expenditure. Despite the lower level of

flying activity Howard had persuaded Dave Bray and Rob Jackson that flying was so much fun that they should become BIs and do a BI course run by Stewart Otterburn at Weston.

Following an increasing level of discussion and speculation over previous years about the definitive requirements for flying club aircraft CFI Howard Stone documented the experience requirements for flying the various club aircraft.

Given that the level of flying members stood at 91 it was agreed that a more active approach to recruitment was needed. Neil Swinton was also phoning members who had not flown for some time to encourage them to return to flying which resulted in several members returning to flying. Angus Anderson joined as a cadet.

On the non-flying front, in true OGC tradition, Paul Rogers had acquired some fluorescent tubes to replace the failing hangar lights only to find on erecting the scaffold tower to replace them that they were the wrong size. ...

May was a happier time for the treasurer as the level of available funds had improved and arrears had reduced. For the ground equipment and aircraft maintenance teams it was not so good as many hours were required to repair a grass cutter with metal fatigue and a K13 which caught a wingtip in a treetop. Thanks to the skill of club members and hours of voluntary work both were repaired and put back into service.

The OGC stand at Abingdon airshow generated lots of interest on the day and a new member the following weekend. The Oxford Air Ambulance was also very happy with the donation of the funds raised from an OGC raffle held at the airshow.

Barry Taylor and Claudia Bungen completed their Assistant Instructor course at Bicester but the BI course being held at Weston did not progress as planned due to poor flying weather and the accident with the K13.

New ID signs with the OGC logo were displayed in all caravans to keep the RAF happy as they were once more taking an interest in the number and ownership of caravans on site. A skip full of rubbish was also cleared from the Hangar.

The treasurer's happiness did not continue into July as the cash flow for the year to date was - £4325 whereas historically by July it would normally show a surplus. One source of expenditure that was of concern was the replacement of launch strops that now cost around £55 each.

Various ideas for retrieval of lost strops were suggested and tried throughout the summer to no avail :(. July also brought a change in the law designating the club house as non-smoking. Additional no smoking and other safety signs were placed around the clubhouse.

In August the cash flow for the year to date was finally positive! The OGC trips to the Blenheim show again generated lots of visitors to the OGC stand and one new member had been attracted as a result. On the instructing side both Claudia Bungen and Barry Taylor completed the acceptance checks and received their half cat instructor paperwork from the BGA. Martin Brown and Martin Laxåback purchased a DG-100 that was now on-site.

Ian Shepherd had again contacted defence estates about the status of the lease renewal but was unable to get any update.

Following many years of operating first Land Rovers and in later years Range Rovers as tow-out vehicles the club broke with tradition and bought a Mitsubishi Shogun as a tow-out vehicle. This was considered a good buy for OGC as it came at an excellent price and already fitted with a gas conversion kit.

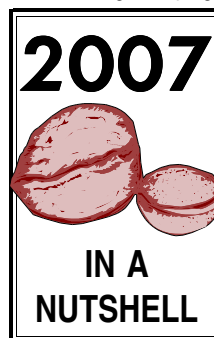
In October Rob Jackson joined the instructor ranks as a BI and flew his first ~~victim~~ punter. Dave Bray still needs to complete the flying exercises with Stewart Otterburn to obtain his BI rating but should hopefully also be a qualified BI in the near future.

The final cash flow for the year 2006/07 in the end did show a small surplus so it was not all doom and gloom from the treasurer. The bar secretary was not quite so happy with the takings in the bar till compared to the stock bought. As there are now a large number of bar keys in circulation coupled with the fact that the lock is now worn making it difficult to open it was agreed that the lock should be changed. New keys will be issued to instructors, committee members and other club officials as required. On another sad note a club member reported the loss of some money from the clubhouse over the summer. Members should remember that the airfield is an open area with little restriction on access and take suitable precautions to secure their valuables from the unwelcome attention of others.

As the year draws to a close operations have in general been running smoothly. The rate of loss of launch strops is still high despite various ideas for aids to locate broken strops being discussed and tried so please watch the launch for broken strops.

The end of this article last year stated that the lease renewals were ongoing and that at the time of writing we were awaiting the next move from defence estates. Since then the lease has expired and been put on continuation pending renewal. Despite attempts by Ian Shepherd to move this forward he has met with lethargy from their side and at the time of writing this is still to be resolved.

After starting the year with lower than normal membership numbers, at the time of writing there are now 98 flying members. Please make all new members welcome so we keep them and help maintain a healthy level of flying in OGC.



Nick Hill

ARE AIRFIELDS MAGNETIC?

Paul Morrison

Newton's missing theory – the attraction of an airfield is inversely proportional to how close you are to home!

Whilst the summer of 2007 won't be remembered as a good gliding season it does have a couple of events worthy of mention. The first is that it was the year I finally had to face up to the fact that I'm now forty and the second is that the first happened to coincide with what I believe were the last two 'day 5' ratings that Weatherjack ever issued!

It was as a result of these seemingly random series of happenings within the universe that I happened to be at Bicester airfield on the morning of Thursday 9th August with Howard & Martin Brown. This was the second 'day 5' forecast and after a slightly disappointing previous day which saw a 500K attempt end in a field near Northampton South I was feeling slightly more cautious. Michael Pettican had set both 300 and 500K tasks and whilst I had kept the significance of this day to me as a secret, at least for the time being, I did begin to ponder how great it would be to do my first 500K on my fortieth birthday.

After briefing and a quick chat with Howie, (him not knowing the secret objective I had for the day!) we decided to throw caution to the wind and go for the 500 – after all, there are more 300K types of days in the UK than 500s supposedly. So, without further ado, Camelbaks were filled, charts duly marked and after numerous nervous toilet breaks we launched at about noon.

The task was to be Bicester (BIC), Alton (ALT), Welshpool (WEL), Moreton In The Marsh (MOR), Towcester (TOW) and back to BIC with the furthest TP being Welshpool to the northwest. The first leg wasn't easy but we made reasonable progress, 902 with a barrel of water aside keeping up rather well with JSX. Onto the second leg now and as this involved a delicate bit of threading between Lyneham, Brize, Rencombe and South Cerney it was agreed that 902 with the advantage of the moving map courtesy of Winpilot would take the lead.

Passing Fairford and fighting the inevitable fond memories of great times spent there and noticing how empty it all looked now,

things were going rather well. The clouds were streeting nicely and we'd had a few good climbs to cloudbase (circa 5,500 I recall) including rather remarkably, a couple of points where JSX had actually fallen behind and below and it was necessary to stop and wait. As someone whose XC speed regularly fails to get above the gliders stall speed, this was a moment to be savoured.

As always though, pride comes before a fall and it was not long before the inevitable dark clouds spreading in from the northwest forced us to slow down and consider our futures. Looking east and back towards home things didn't look that promising either and the chatter on the radio seemed to suggest that things weren't too rosy around Oxford and Northampton at that time either. With about 15K to go the decision was taken that Welshpool was a TP too far and we decided to head home. At this point I made one of the first and I suggest significant mistakes of the flight, "*let's turn the Mynd*" I said, "*at least that way we'll have a good TP for the ladder*". At this point the invisible string between 902 & JSX that had kept us so closely in formation for most of the flight snapped and whilst I flew directly over the Mynd (dumping my water over the site for good measure as I found myself sinking), JSX skirted around to the west.

I decided to head for what looked like the best cloud but this was further to the northeast and the distance between myself and JSX was increasing all the time. Prompted by a call from Howie reminding me how far off track I was heading I gave up and turned to head south-east and to try and catch up with JSX now probably some 500 – 700 feet above me. Here was where the magnetic pull was first felt! Passing over the Mynd small bubbles of lift were encountered off the high ground to the south and east however despite my best efforts I seemed to be unable to make it work for me. JSK was soon established in a climb and despite being underneath her and all around her I was not climbing. It can not be overstated how amazingly disheartening it was to hear Howie call that he's approaching 5K and would have to head off soon. All the time the prevailing wind was taking me further from the Mynd and all too soon Winpilot confirmed that I

was now actually below glide for the airfield there. Gulping hard the comfort blanket that the Mynd represented now seemed to have been taken away from me.

With wishes for good luck traded, I bade farewell to JSK and watched as they headed off down the cloud street that was forming while I continued to scrape my bottom off the hills. After about 45 minutes of scratching in the weeds, at various times being just above and below glide to the Mynd I realised I was not making significant progress. Do I stay in the 0.5 – 1kt of lift I have and drift further away from the Mynd over not particularly hospitable looking terrain or do I cut my losses and head back for the airfield which I calculated I could just make I mused? Do you feel that magnetic pull getting stronger at this point?

Eventually, with Winpilot telling me I had about 300' to spare and having heard that JSX was actually now doing okay, I turned back towards the Mynd and after fruitless attempts to stay airborne courtesy of the ridge, I began to contemplate the inevitable landing there, made more palatable by the thought of a toilet, a cup of tea, a biscuit and an aerotow re-light / retrieve after some five hours or so in the air.

Trundling to a halt and opening the canopy for a welcome breath of fresh air beneath the now cloudless sky I asked in my best attempt at a 'steely eyed glider pilot' how I could get an aerotow retrieve. It was at this point that the magnetic pull became a steel rod holding me firmly in place as the tractor driver imparted the vital bit of information that did I not realise they did not have a tug that week....??!

I won't bore you with the rest of the story but suffice to say that the next few hours passed in a fruitless attempt to find a tug anywhere in southern England. My thanks at this point must go to the Comp Director at Hus Bos who did a sterling job of trying to marry up a tug and a pilot. Not an especially difficult task you may think, but it did elude us this evening; although it did have its light hearted moments where one airfield whose name I will not reveal had a tug but all their tug pilots had landed out that afternoon! I did contemplate taking a winch launch from site but after seeing that none of the Mynd pilots were

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able to stay airborne I retired to the club house to find that the catering had now finished and the best they could offer was a slice of Lemon Drizzle cake. I omitted to ask if they had a candle or two they could spare!

The happy end to this story came in the form of Chris & Ryan Shepherd who drove to the Mynd to get me and delivered me back to BIC safe and sound at 03.30 on Friday morning. Thanks Chris I really do owe you for this one.

Other than not spending my 40th having the expected (and planned!) meal out, what did I learn from this flight?

Did the magnetic pull of the airfield on the Mynd cause me to lose focus and 'give up'?

I don't honestly know, but I think it may have done. Martin Brown subsequently said that he could tell from my voice on the radio I was not going to get home and I guess he was right.

Was I tired after over 5+ hours of flying at the point when I really needed to pull something out of the bag?

Absolutely, how I envied Howie and Martin in JSX with the chance to take a break from flying and to eat and drink. Don't underestimate the deterioration in your core flying skills when you are fatigued and hungry.

Would I have got home had the airfield on the Mynd not been there to distract me?

I think I may well have done, or at least made it another 50K or so back on track. I honestly do believe that in this instance the airfield at the Mynd was magnetic and whilst the safe option is never the wrong option, I think the thought of an easy re-light & aerotow retrieve and the chance to avoid yet another field landing did cause me, sub-consciously at least, to lose focus and the will to fight to get home.

To assume makes an ass of you and me!

Don't always assume that an aerotow is available just because you've had one before from an airfield – check! Would it have made a difference here? At low level probably not, but earlier when things started to get difficult a quick radio call to check would have allowed me to act decisively and maybe have got me re-focussed.

In answer to the question are airfields magnetic, I think yes they are, if you let them become so!



Photo: Andrea Wahl