

FINAL GLIDE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD GLIDING CLUB

Issue 3: July 1991

Edited by Phil Hawkins

OGC WINS INTER-CLUB LEAGUE

For the second time in recent years the Club has won the local Inter-Club League.

In a season dogged by poor weather Oxford Gliding Club pilots have proved their worth against pilots from Avon Soaring Centre (Bidford), Enstone Eagles and the Stratford club at Snitterfield. We will be taking part in the Inter-Club League final against the winners of all the other Leagues. This will be held at Dunstable over the August bank holiday weekend.

The first weekend meeting, organised by ourselves although held at Bidford, was on the May Day holiday weekend 4th, 5th and 6th May. No flying was possible on Saturday or Sunday due to strong winds and rain, but conditions at Bidford cleared early enough on Monday for a task to be set. This was an out-and-return to Cosford airfield for the pundits and intermediates, whilst the novices were given a triangle around Droitwich and Worcester. Melvin Green landed out in a bean field, and Caroline Oakes had the misfortune to land 5km short of the finish line, but they scored a point each. Glenn Bailes completed the pundit task, scoring two points for second place.

It was a day of struggling against the headwind to reach Cosford followed by a much easier float homewards. There were epic tales of scratching around Cosford at 500ft before getting away again. Oxford and Snitterfield had scored 4 points each while Bidford were leading with a total of 6.

The next meeting, also at Bidford but organised by the Avon club, was on the following weekend 11/12 May. Saturday was dull and unsoarable but tasks were set on Sunday in spite of the forecast which predicted complete layer cloud coverage within two hours. Happily the forecast was wrong and it was a reasonably sunny day although the clouds were low and the thermals mostly scrappy and weak. The novices were sent to Edge Hill and back, while the intermediates and

pundits were given a triangle around Enstone and Edge Hill. Steve "Tulip" Porat had an interesting experience on his first launch attempt - the tug pilot's seat collapsed and he aborted the launch during the ground run. But later in the day Steve made a good start, reaching Edge Hill and landing there, winning the novice class for three points.

Club Chairman Graham Barrett started early, struggled with weak thermals all round the task, had a low scrape on the last leg and finally reached Bidford as the only finisher of the day, also scoring three points.

Phil Hawkins, after managing to leave his camera behind on his first launch, re-started late but found the going fairly easy until the final leg into wind from Edge Hill. Here the thermals were being broken up either by wind or wave effects, and he eventually sank to earth in a powdery brown field at Ebrington near Shipston-on-Stour. It was very soft but fortunately this was before the summer deluge began, and it was bone dry. He also scored three points.

The Club had therefore scored a maximum possible nine points for the day, effectively wiping the floor with the opposition! On aggregate scores we were now leading with 13 points, Avon (Bidford) were second with 11 points whilst Snitterfield had 7 points. Once again Enstone pilots had not put in an appearance.

FINAL SCORES

Oxford	16 points
Bidford	11 points
Snitterfield	8 points
Enstone	2 points

The third meeting at Enstone on 1/2 June also began with a scrubbed day, although it did become soarable later. Sunday 2nd June was bright in the morning but rain was forecast for the afternoon. Nevertheless tasks were set, the novices to Hinton, the intermediates to Turweston and the pundits to Towcester. All three classes had Bicester as second turning point. It was a very grey day. Norman Machin reached Hinton before landing, winning the novice class and

scoring two points. Unfortunately we had no competitor available in the intermediates class.

Phil Hawkins found some very weak thermals under the grey carpet of cloud, but then got rained on over Brackley and landed hurriedly at Turweston. However this rain was only a temporary shower. Later on, Tony Cox of Enstone struggled around the Towcester turning point and landed at Bicester to win the pundit task.

Scoring was low since neither Bidford nor Snitterfield had turned up to compete, however we had increased our lead to 16 points against Bidford's 11 points.

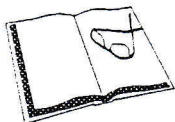
For the fourth meeting at Snitterfield on 15/16 June the weather was even worse. Saturday was again wet, although fine in the evening. We arrived at Snitterfield on Sunday to find another downpour; however they weren't giving up too easily so we had to wait. The landlord of the local pub gave us a very funny look when we walked in at lunchtime and ordered six coffees!

Although there was no task set at Snitterfield, the weather did clear to some extent after about 3pm. Martin "Haste" Hastings and Phil Hawkins went cloud flying and filled their varicos with water. Martin reached 10,500ft, venturing as far as Tewkesbury searching for gold height, then landed at Bidford. He aerotowed back to Snitterfield later.

From a potential nine flying days in the League meetings, only three were actually good enough for tasks to be set and points to be scored. Let's hope the weather improves a little before the Final meeting on August 24th/25th/26th. We need more pilots to put their names forward to fly (particularly pundits) and as many OGC supporters as possible to turn up on those three days!

The League is essentially a team event, and pilots or crews willing to participate yet beaten by the weather should not be forgotten. Thanks are due to Martin Hastings, Tony Boyce, John Hanlon, John Giddins, Tom Lamb, Nick Porat, Donal Meehan, Dave Weekes, Colin Shepherd, Neil Turner and others. And finally thanks very much to Chris Reynolds our team captain, for nagging us into submission!

The Club needs your support at the Final meeting in August. Please come!



EDITORIAL

I can't understand pilots who say "The radio was too noisy - I switched it off." Apart from being a source of information about the weather elsewhere, it gives me many a chuckle listening to the witty, cutting or just plain daft things people say.

Voices 1 & 2: (inane chatter).

Voice 3: "Why don't you two wallies shut up?"

Voice 4: "Because they're wallies!"

How true. Endless waffle on the radio does get irritating, but conversely I am often impressed by the volumes of hidden meaning which some pilots and indeed ground crews cram into their succinct phrases. For example, suppose you were a crewperson and you wanted to convey the following message to your pilot: "999 this is waffle mobile, how are you doing? The weather's gone a bit flat here, we're packing up and I don't really want a retrieve, so get a move on." What would you actually say on the radio?

"Kettle's on, Ralph!"

Lovely. Radio wit takes many forms - here's one example heard on a day with very poor visibility:

"Hey, Fred, what's that place down there?"

Fred (after a lengthy pause): "The ground!"

But others are rather too obvious:

"I've got seven up here."

"Save a bottle for me."

I'm convinced some pilots only want sympathy:

"You know it's not your day when a bird shits on your wing!"

Whilst some exchanges are just too surreal:

"I've just seen a UFO!"

"Where?"

"Above me now, a little round thing, spinning with coloured lights."

"Where, where!"

"Between Bidford and Stratford."

"Is it in lift?"

Hearing someone else in trouble is always good for a grin if you're not:

"I shall NEVER do this again!"

"We all say that."

The put-down, in the characteristic manner of a certain glider repairer who advertises on the back page of S&G:

"I can hear the Booker boys saying how bad it is, so I'll just stay local."

"COBBLERS, IT'S BOOMING!"

It was, too. Sometimes it is just the radio call signs which amuse me:

"Grumpy, Snow White."

Good days are full of them. Listen out for them, remember them and share them with us. To get the full flavour of this final example you must imagine a voice which has a tweed jacket, a handlebar mustache and lives within a clay pigeon's lob of Gatcombe Park:

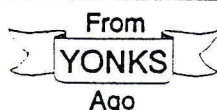
"Rhubarb to custard, we're over Sodding Chipbury!"

JOB LOSSES AT UPPER HEYFORD

The US Air Force has now released more details of the proposed timetable for closure of Upper Heyford Air Base. A total of 367 British civilian jobs will be lost, together with 175 US civilian jobs and 4,380 military posts. There are, however, plans to re-deploy the majority of British job losses within the MoD and other government departments. Some may go to the Bicester Ordnance Depot and the new Bullingdon prison at Arncott.

There are currently 78 F-111 aircraft at Upper Heyford in four squadrons. Two squadrons are due to leave in early 1992, and the remainder in late 1993. Thirty of these aircraft will be moved to Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, the rest being "retired" i.e. scrapped.

RAF Abingdon will close completely within two years. RAF support and repair facilities at Abingdon will move to St Athan (Wales).



August 11 was quite a day. It was Chris Putt's 16th birthday and he celebrated it with two well-judged circuits to join the small band who have soloed at the earliest opportunity. Ian Grant and John Ash flew to Henlow and Andrew Henderson stayed up for five hours, all three completing their Silver C.

These are added to a mounting total which makes this year a record for Silver C, seven having been completed so far. Much of the flying has been done midweek. Achievements are distance by Graham Barrett and Bill Helfrecht with a distance and duration by Alex Mackay. There have also been a number of closed circuit cross-countries in the K-13, the most notable being a 100km triangle by Dave Lidbury and Alex Mackay.

Jane Randle (1974)

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT GETS OFF THE GROUND

I'd like to use this opportunity to inform Club members about an alternative flying newsletter called *Slipstream*, which is sent to all interested female glider pilots in the UK. This is a fairly new venture having only recently launched itself into the flying fraternity with its first edition at the beginning of the year.

Apart from being a "noticeboard" for women's suggestions and ideas related to gliding, it aims to try to improve both training opportunities and general facilities for women already involved in gliding. By so doing it hopes to encourage new female participants. I feel quite sure that there wouldn't be a great wave of protest from the men on site if more women came to fly at OGC (I'll drink to that - Ed.).

It is certainly interesting to consider the imbalance between men and women in this sporting activity - approximately 10% of glider pilots are female. At the moment the BGA Women's Working Group is busy attempting to identify some of the reasons for this shortfall in our numbers as well as looking into ways of improving training.

Above all, it is important not to regard *Slipstream* as an aggressive feminist propaganda publication, but instead as a newsletter full of articles which will hopefully be of interest to everyone, but whose main concern is nevertheless the promotion of the more intelligent sex in gliding!

I shall endeavour to display a current issue of *Slipstream* in the clubhouse for anyone to read. Any enquiries or suggestions however vaguely they may relate to women in gliding would be welcome. As I appear to be the official women's representative for OGC I would be pleased to hear from you.

I'm wondering whether there are any Club members who might be interested in forming a rounders team. In anticipation of the long balmy summer evenings ahead, a game of rounders (interrupted by frequent trips to the bar, of course!) would certainly be a different way to round off the day. We could either entertain ourselves with 2 ragged teams from the Club, or perhaps we could invite some bodies over from the parachuting club to take us on for a friendly game. How about it?

Chrissy Milner

Final Glide

Turn

may have noticed that the weather has not been too good lately. In fact this is the worst spell of May/June flying weather I can remember! I know I have not flown for four weeks and this makes me think that a lot of people may well be getting out of practice. Please remember that if you have not flown within six consecutive weeks you MUST have a check flight. Hopefully you will be able to find an instructor who IS in practice.

In the last few months I have noticed that some pilots have a tendency to climb too steeply at the start of winch launches. Although this may give you an extra 100 feet on your launch, it reduces your safety margins considerably. Consider that at 50 knots in a 45 degree climb, if the cable breaks the average glider will stall/spin within four seconds unless a safe attitude is restored. Below about 300 feet, very prompt action is needed. Below 100

feet an accident is almost inevitable! So please, be careful, don't climb steeply too soon and every flight think CABLE BREAK.

As the weather has been so bad, I have tried to come out on non-flying days to give talks/briefing on gliding related topics. On some days I have arrived at 10.30a.m. to find everyone gone! Can I suggest that when the day is not flyable groups of members persuade the duty instructor to give them a talk on some area of general interest. All instructors are trained to do this and will generally not mind. We have a wealth of experience and knowledge in our instructors that is only partly tapped on the flying field, so ask for a talk on thermalling, cross-country flying, ridge soaring, wave flying or even meteorology!

I hope the weather improves so we can do more flying and less talking!

Steve Evans



SMALL ADS

OGC CAR STICKERS: white on blue, 4½" square, behind the bar or see Neil Turner, £1 each.

OGC POLO SHIRTS/T SHIRTS with small logo on left side. Neil is now taking orders for the next batch. Polo shirts £11, T Shirts £7. Usual sizes, eleven colours available including pink, gold or turquoise. Be different! Neil Turner 08675 71459.

WANTED: Black sheep fleece. Phil Hawkins 0869 247873.

PARACHUTE for sale. EB73 pack fitted with tri-vent round canopy, 12yrs life. £300. Phil Hawkins or Tom Lamb.

BAROGRAPH CALIBRATION. BGA approved. OGC members £10, non-members £15. Phil Hawkins.

YOUR FREE AD COULD HAVE BEEN HERE. Next deadline date September 30 for the October issue.

IT AINT ARF BUMPY MUM!

Late June 91, weather had been dreadful and a week's gliding holiday scheduled!! Where to go? Colin Shepherd and myself decided to travel to north Wales to try out the new site near Denbigh, reasoning that it couldn't be any wetter.

Leaving early on Saturday morning we had a completely trouble free journey, mostly on motorways which, even with a breakfast stop, saw us at Llewenni Parc, home of the Glyndwr Gliding Club in about 4 hours.

First impressions were very good: the field, although slightly convex over its length, was about 1000yds long, 400yds at its westerly end and 200yds wide at the east. But more importantly the sun was shining and there was a nice stiff breeze blowing from the southwest.

The Club operation was underway with K21s wire launching and dropping back to the ridge some 2 miles away. After speaking to Dave Bullock the CFI we rigged and took a launch. I thought the Pilatus looked steep on the wire; on my turn I found out why. Ever had a launch on a supercat when the driver is all geared up to launch K21s? Max launch speed 65kts appeared almost instantly and I managed to hold it there for half the way up but daren't look at the wings. As it increased further, signalling and easing off we went ballistic off the top into what must surely be low station orbit. A tap of the altimeter revealed 1200ft!!

Running back down the field towards the closest hillock, called the Elephant's Tusk, my heart returned to normal and I was able to find weak hill lift to take me back

to launch height and then drop back onto the ridge proper. This consists of a range of hills 27km long with various bowls and spurs enabling soaring in a wide variety of wind directions.

Impressions on the first day? Beautiful country, lots of landable fields, Colin polishing the ramparts of some castle, the late evening thermals in the rain, the approach to land, and that launch.

Sunday dawned clear with huge lenticulars lying over Snowdonia and about 20kts wind from the southwest. By the time we got to the launch point, grey straggly clouds were pouring over the airfield but the ridge was obviously working. The launch? 50kts all the way on the ex-ATC winch to 1200ft (pulse rate normal). Running back towards the hill I found strong lift which took me to 3000ft and in amongst the clag.

Pushing forward I found wave to 4500ft where everybody got stuck. It's at times like this you need a little luck and rounding a grey cloud bank I found a K8 doing large eggshaped turns which I copied. The intermittent 1kt turned into a steady 2-3kts and slowly the clag fell away below and the lenticulars above appeared. I called Colin to say where I was and saw the Pilatus scuttle in beneath me.

At about 8500ft the lift disappeared and with a wag of its wings the K8 moved forward to the next wave bar at what looked like VNE, whilst I waited for the Pilatus and took in the views.

Ahead of me the smooth domed tops of wave spreading over Snowdon and on towards Ireland, to the right the north

Wales coast with Anglesey peeping out under the next cloud. Behind me were the Mersey and Liverpool in the distance. The views inland were just as spectacular.

The Pilatus didn't appear so I pressed forward to the next system over the Conway river and regained height plus some topping out at 10,000ft. Snowdon itself was not visible but a large cumulus-like cloud corresponded to the map position. I pressed on over what seemed like solid cloud cover to take a picture. To be honest there were small gaps but I didn't like the moon country underneath and was unsure of my height above the cloud. So, on latching another bar I swung north and out over the ocean to take more pictures of the coast, this time from the wet side.

A high speed run down the coastline sweeping inland to locate the airfield brought me back to the real world of thermals, wave and rotor. I settled everything down for what I guessed would come. I was not disappointed.

Setting up a high circuit which, with my brakes would normally see me settling down half way up the field, I turned onto base at 60kt. Somewhere during the final turn I hit the rotor and things got lively. Checking the controls had full and free movement all down the approach I descended below the trees at the side of the field and coasted over the brow to land OK.

Final thoughts: 5 hours seemed like 5 minutes, amazing views, magic flight, but it wasn't half bumpy.

Graham Barrett

LAND ROVER DRIVING, OPERATING EFFICIENCY and SAFETY

Q: What is our objective?

A: To fly gliders.

This is achieved by the Land Rover supplying cables to the launch point. The aim should be to deliver as many cables as possible and hence launch as many gliders as possible.

Simple rules can be followed to obtain this:

Do not leave "used" cables at the winch end for longer than 2 minutes.

It takes at least 2 minutes to tow out a cable, so if the driver waits for the second cable every time, there will be a delay in launching of at least 4 minutes; normally it's much more! Every time this happens a launch is lost and the queue gets longer!

It is quite safe to tow out a "used" cable during a launch on the other cable, providing the track is kept at least 20 yards wide of the normal tow-out line.

By doing this it is possible to achieve continuous launching (parachutists permitting).

Q: How many times have we been waiting for cables to arrive when the Islander is on the ground or climbing to altitude?

A: Too many. We should never be waiting for cables at the launch point!

If you are unsure about the requirements of a Land Rover driver, ask to be shown. The number of flights you get is proportional to the effort you put in and how efficient you are!!

TOWING OUT CABLES

Two cables: The correct method for towing out two cables is to position the Land Rover in front of the winch, attach cables and wait for the winch driver's signal. Engage second gear, take up the slack as advised and then gently accelerate to full throttle, keeping the tow-out line as straight as possible to avoid the cables crossing.

When approaching the launch point, start slowing down between 50-100 yards out, until you are barely moving as you reach the caboose. You should not need to use the brakes, but allow the drag on the cables to stop the Land Rover. This will ensure that there is no "over-run" at the winch. Then drive back to the winch to be ready to return any used cables.

One cable: When returning to the launch point with only one cable on the Land Rover, it is possible to change to 3rd gear to ease wear on the engine, providing the change is done early and smoothly. Remember to keep at least 20 yards away from the normal tow-out line.

If you are not bored by now we will look at...

SAFETY

The Land Rover driver is very unlikely to be in any danger at any time. However, the driver's actions could endanger others, especially the winch driver.

When towing out cables, if an over-run occurs at the winch then the cables will come off the Rover.

Q: What should you do if a cable comes off?

Continue with the cable which is attached, at the same speed, to the launch point. On arrival at the launch point, contact the winch driver to be advised on action to be taken!

Do not stop the Land Rover to pick up the lost cable!

Q: What should you do if both cables come off?

If there is no CB radio working in the Land Rover, drive to either the launch point or the winch (whichever is the closest) and find out what happened. When given the OK, return to the cable ends and slowly start to pull cables at the "up slack" signal from the winch driver. Then continue normal tow-out procedures on being given the "all out" signal by the winch driver.

Never start to pull a lost cable without first contacting the winch driver! He could have his hands or feet in between loops of cable as he tries to unravel the mess!

The bottom line to all the above is:- the number of launches we get is down to all of us!

John Hanlon

Editor's note: A few years ago, at a gliding site not far away, a winch driver had a foot severed by a loop of steel cable. They took him to hospital with his foot in a plastic bag. Land Rover drivers, remember this and think about the possible consequences of your actions.

NEW MEMBERS



Chris Lee has recently reached solo standard with his first three solo flights on 13th July. Chris, an electronics engineer with Olivetti, was introduced to gliding by a friend who flew at Bicester, and had his first flight there last year in a K-21. Unable to join at Bicester, he looked around and naturally chose us!

Ron Middleton's first glider flight was at Haddenham in a T-21, after being persuaded to try it by a friend who flew with the Upward Bound group. Ron lives at Wheatley and saw OGC advertised in the local paper. After a Friday evening mini-course earlier this summer, plagued with lots of operational problems, he joined us

and has made around 20 flights so far. Ron works in food marketing.

Andrew Daly initially wanted to do parachuting and was recommended to try Weston-on-the-Green as being the cheapest. However, he then discovered we are even cheaper! He joined in March but has been tied up with exams at Coventry recently. No doubt we will see him again before long. With the weather in May and June he hasn't missed much!

DON'T FORGET! Our annual three weeks of daily flying starts on 5th August. The SZD Junior demonstrator will be here on 10th/11th August.

EARLY SOLO PILOTS!

I want a first flight or first solo "howidunit" for *Final Glide*. Tell us how you as newcomers view the Club, its good and bad points.

Editor

HELP!

Following requests after the last issue *"Final Glide"* is increasing its print run so that visitors can pick up a copy in the clubroom. It will be too time consuming and costly to do them on the Editor's slow printer. We need a source of cheap photocopying to avoid having to pay commercial rates of about 5p per side.

NOTES FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Committee has imposed a new fixed charge of 15p per minute for flying time in Club gliders. This will be payable to the Club, and from 1st July replaces the previous system of "suggested donations" to the Site Trust Fund.

This involved an unusually long Committee discussion, during which it was pointed out that the "suggested" 10p rate has remained unchanged for some considerable time. The increase, voted in by a majority on the Committee, was actually larger than that which the Treasurer had proposed. From the operational point of view, out on the airfield, the main advantage will be that only one cash box will be required.

The cash turnover limit for compulsory VAT registration is now very much higher than the Club's annual income, even when the new 15p/min rate is included. The limit was raised a substantial amount in the last Budget, and it now seems unlikely that we shall ever approach this unless we become a 7-days-a-week Club.

The Site Trust Fund will remain in operation and will continue to accept members' donations, should you feel so motivated. These should be sent directly to the Treasurer or to any Committee member and should not be mixed up with Club income (flying money). In addition, the Club itself will be making cash transfers to the Site Trust Fund as and when appropriate.

The Treasurer has also reported that his purge on the arrears list seems to be working since the list is getting shorter.

Concern was expressed about the apparent lack of proper instruction to Land Rover drivers. New drivers must receive a certain amount of training if accidents are to be avoided.

A discussion also took place concerning the poor standard of filling in log sheets. See notes elsewhere in this issue.

The K-6CR has been advertised for sale in *Sailplane & Gliding*. We are trying to borrow an SZD Junior for assessment trials, possibly during the August flying weeks.

The Club has been approached by the manager of the Gloucester Green complex in Oxford who is keen to see the area used to promote local organisations. We may arrange one or two gliders to be displayed there for a weekend, with Club members to answer questions and give out leaflets. If anyone is interested in taking part please see Neil Turner.

The Club donated a mini-course to Radio Oxford for their Radio Auction in June. We will also be in the next edition of *Yellow Pages* under "sporting organisations".

Sunken drains on the airfield have again been discussed. Two large holes were recently discovered at the eastern end of the airfield near the peri track. A volunteer is required to effect some repair work. Paving slabs are available and we have RAF permission to do this.

Several members have complained about smoke entering the cab of the Land Rover. This will be investigated and reduced if possible. The winch foot throttle control has now been fitted, and the new jacking device is also working.

A secondhand audio vario has been obtained and fitted in the Astir.

There is a proposal to fit a jack plug into the side of the launch point vehicle for easy battery charging.

If you have anything for the Committee to discuss, grab a Committee member before the next meeting which is on 4th September.

LOG KEEPING

The standard of log keeping has reached pretty low levels recently! "So what?" I hear you say. "As long as the Treasurer wrings the money from the members, who cares?"

The Flying Log is more than a means of noting launch and flying fees, important though they are. For a start it is a BGA operational regulation that we keep adequate records and furthermore, information is needed when we apply for certificates of airworthiness for our gliders.

The Secretary has the job of keeping a running total of launches and hours flown on each of the Club's gliders, and of compiling annual statistics for the BGA every September. When he is faced with perhaps twelve flying days' log sheets to total up it is extremely trying on his patience to find that some log keepers cannot read and some cannot write. Or so it seems.

All that is required is to fill in the squares with the right information, not forgetting a DATE on each sheet.

There is space for the aircraft type and identification. Then the names of the P1 and P2. If you don't know what any of these are, please, please ask! The take-off time should be subtracted from the landing time to give the flying time which, in minutes please, should go into the correct column.

Sometimes a whole day's flying is entered in one column, regardless of the various aircraft. Sometimes private owners are denied landing times.

The Secretary doesn't mind doing the adding up but it makes his job so much easier if the details which are entered on the airfield are accurate, legible, complete and in the correct space on the sheet.

Oh yes. And please don't forget to log the landing times of hangar flights.

If we go to Bicester or Hinton for a day, please make sure our standard log sheets are taken and a clear note is made of any special arrangements entered into with the host club.

"What's in it for me?" did I hear you say. Nothing directly, of course, but it's all part of the management of the Club of which YOU are a part. And who knows, maybe one day YOU will be Secretary.

Tony Boyce

SAILPLANE & GLIDING

Anyone who wishes to subscribe via the Club please contact Phil Hawkins. The cost is £11.40 per year or £1.90 for a sample copy. We make 25% profit and you save the cost of postage. This money pays for a stock of gliding books for sale which are kept behind the bar. Existing subscribers who have not paid by the end of July will not receive the August issue!

PUBLICITY MATERIAL

I am organising a promotional display at various venues, the first being on Saturday 17th August. I am looking for photographs showing "life around the Gliding Club" e.g. Club/private gliders, on the ground or airborne, photographs of Oxford landmarks and any shots which would be of general interest to the public.

*Please let me have your photographs by the end of July. I would be grateful if I could **keep** these permanently as display material, and I hope you will be able to spare these in order to promote the Club. Also if you have any outstanding shots that I can **borrow** I would also be interested.*

Phone Neil Turner - Kidlington 71459 - or put in an envelope and leave behind the bar. Co-operation would be appreciated in order to promote the Club successfully.

Does anyone have a small generator we could borrow on 17th August, sufficient to run a video camera and a tv? Also we need plywood for noticeboards, 2ft x 3ft or bigger. If you can help please contact me.

Neil Turner

Or, in Daisy's case, she does the best she can on 1½ wing power....

Daisy is, or rather was, a racing pigeon who lives with us now in Chesterton. She is somewhat unremarkable as far as colouring goes, being grey and brown with flecks of purple. She was found by Lynne Barrett and Caroline Oakes almost two years ago on the airfield. There was a phone number stamped into the wing feathers, but the man who answered their call merely asked them to keep the bird until next morning, then let it go. They fed it, and Caroline kept it in her caravan overnight in a picnic basket.

Next morning Caroline tried to launch the bird into the air, but it simply fell to earth with an obviously damaged wing.

This was during the August flying weeks, and there were people around the hangar area every day. I noticed the bird just sitting on the ground near my glider trailer about three days later and took it home. My neighbour kept doves at that time and I thought he might be able to tell what was wrong. He looked at it but didn't think the wing was broken. He informed us it was female. We fed it, christened it Daisy, and it became a *she*.

For several weeks we kept her indoors during the daytime whilst hoping for her wing to mend. She spent hours walking up an inclined plank of wood, fluttering off the top and going round and round again. At night she was shut into a borrowed rabbit hutch in the garden.

During this time it became clear that although she was slowly adapting to a new and rather *laboured* type of flight, full recovery was probably not possible. She could only take off on hesitant fluttery flights from a high vantage point such as the back of a chair.

I made a little wooden "cot" and fixed it to the outside wall of our house about 8 feet from the ground. Basically this is just a box with a sloping felted roof which lifts up for inspection, and a landing platform outside the doorway. The main problem was going to be installing her into this new home, and able to fly up to it from the ground, before winter set in.

Following my neighbour's advice I confined Daisy into the box for about two weeks. She could walk in and out of the doorway, but the landing platform was covered with a wire cage. I put in fresh corn and water every day, of course.

The big day came and the cage was taken away. She fluttered down to the ground, ate some corn and then showed obvious signs of wanting to get back up to her new home. She was walking around on the ground underneath it, looking up at it and crouching as if ready to spring into

the air although she knew she couldn't. This meant the imprinting process had worked, but unfortunately the enforced period without exercise had apparently reduced her damaged wing to near uselessness again.

Once more we set up sloping planks, in the garden this time, and it wasn't long before she caught on. *Horizontal* flight from the top of the plank across to her little house was soon within her capability, whereas takeoff from the ground was not.

This state of affairs existed throughout the first winter. Daisy was quite happy walking around the garden during the day, even coming indoors to sit by the fire or to bask in winter sunshine coming through the windows. At dusk she would walk up her plank, flutter across and put herself to bed. Midwinter days are very short if you are a pigeon.

Fortunately cats have never been much of a problem in our garden, although an old tabby cat called Tiger Tom does visit us almost every day. In fact he is with us so much his owners gave us half of him (somehow I think we got the half that eats). We always put down food and water in the kitchen for him, and Daisy soon discovered this. She likes his "Brekies" – those hard three cornered biscuit things. They go down in one gulp. Tiger Tom is afraid. He won't go in the kitchen when she is there.

In the Spring we were able to take away the planks in the garden, as Daisy had at last learned how to take off from the ground. Her right wing does most of the work, her tail is all over to one side, and she hops sideways into the air before moving forwards at a shallow rising angle and gradually gaining speed. In some ways it reminds me of a Jump Jet taking off on vertical thrust and then gradually transferring to forward drive.

At about this time my neighbour decided to get rid of most of his doves, and the two remaining ones gradually came over to us. These were a black one with white wingtips which we called Sooty, and a reddish-brown fantail dove who already rejoiced in the name of Mr Cadbury.

Mr Cadbury was Daisy's first husband. In 1990 they had three youngsters, who all came out brownish-grey with tails half way between normal and fantail type. But Mr Cadbury was old, at least seven or eight which is ancient for a pigeon. The strain of having a young wife must have finished him off. One day he just wasn't there. We never found even a feather as a clue to what happened to him.

So Sooty took over, and has been Daisy's mate ever since. They have had two sets of twins so far. One individual

was all grey, but the others have been black and white piebald types. They still come into the house whenever we leave the garden door open. Both Daisy and Sooty will eat from your hand, especially if you have peeled sunflower seeds which are their favourite. One question we are often asked concerns the little heaps on the carpet. Well, you do have to make an effort to clean up after them, but pigeon poo has no smell and it doesn't stain!

Virtually all racing pigeons, city pigeons and ornamental doves are descended from wild Rock Doves. This explains why they are happy living on buildings (i.e. artificial cliffs) and nesting in little wooden boxes (i.e. artificial caves). We now have a total of 8 birds living in 5 boxes, but the population is not all that stable. There have been other disappearances. Perhaps cats or sparrowhawks are to blame, or perhaps they just decide to fly off and live somewhere else.

Watching pigeon behaviour can be quite fascinating. For example, they like sudden showers during a dry spell. They sit on the ground with the rain hammering down, turn their wings upside down to make sure everything gets wet, then fluff themselves up like footballs when the sun comes out again.

Also, they like aerobatics. They take off in a flock, circling above the house and gaining height, waiting for one of their number to start the show. Then one or two will dive away from the flock, building up speed and weaving from side to side, like doing rapid chandelles to right and left. Part of the fun seems to be how closely they can miss their companions. They never seem to stay in the air for more than about ten minutes, however.

Keeping pigeons is easy and they are fun to watch. Their antics are often comical, and they do have their own personalities and their own voices which can be distinguished from each other.

Daisy's wing will never be any better. When flapping, it has only about half the vertical movement of the other one. Also it needs regular exercise to keep it even partly operational. She gets around quite well on short hops, and just occasionally she joins in with the circling flock. Having gained forward speed her performance is not too bad, although she can't do the aerobatics.

But more often she sits on the roof of her little house, watching her husband, children and grandchildren circling the skies and enjoying themselves. Perhaps she dimly remembers an earlier life. Perhaps she is thinking: *I used to do that once.*