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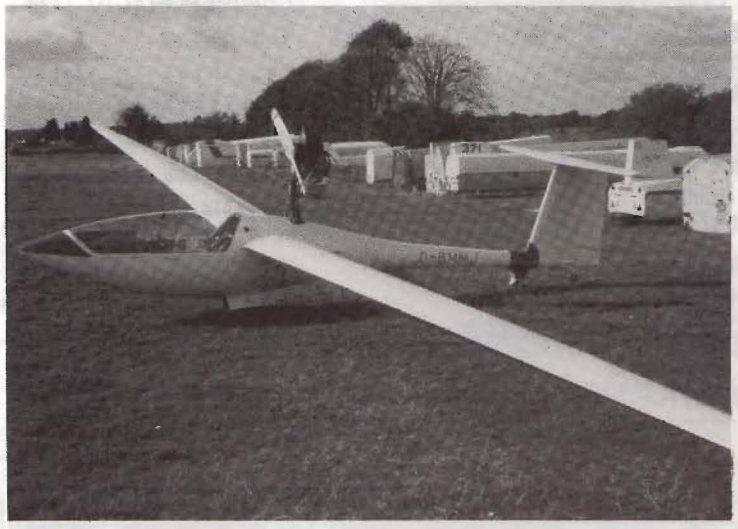
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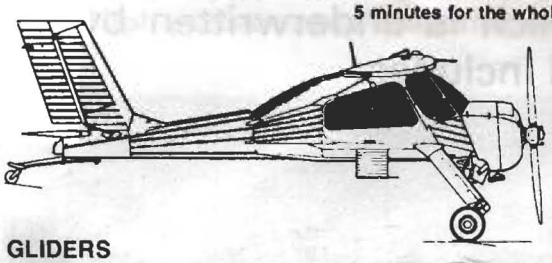
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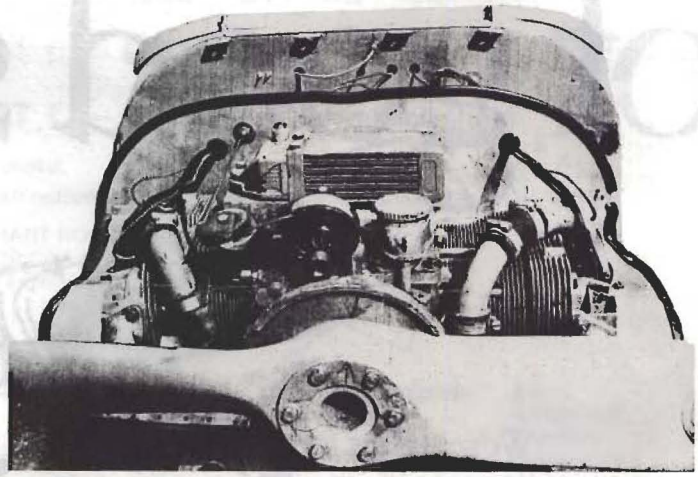
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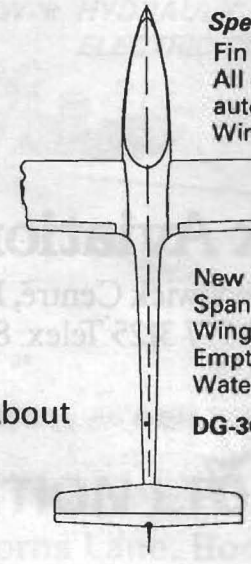
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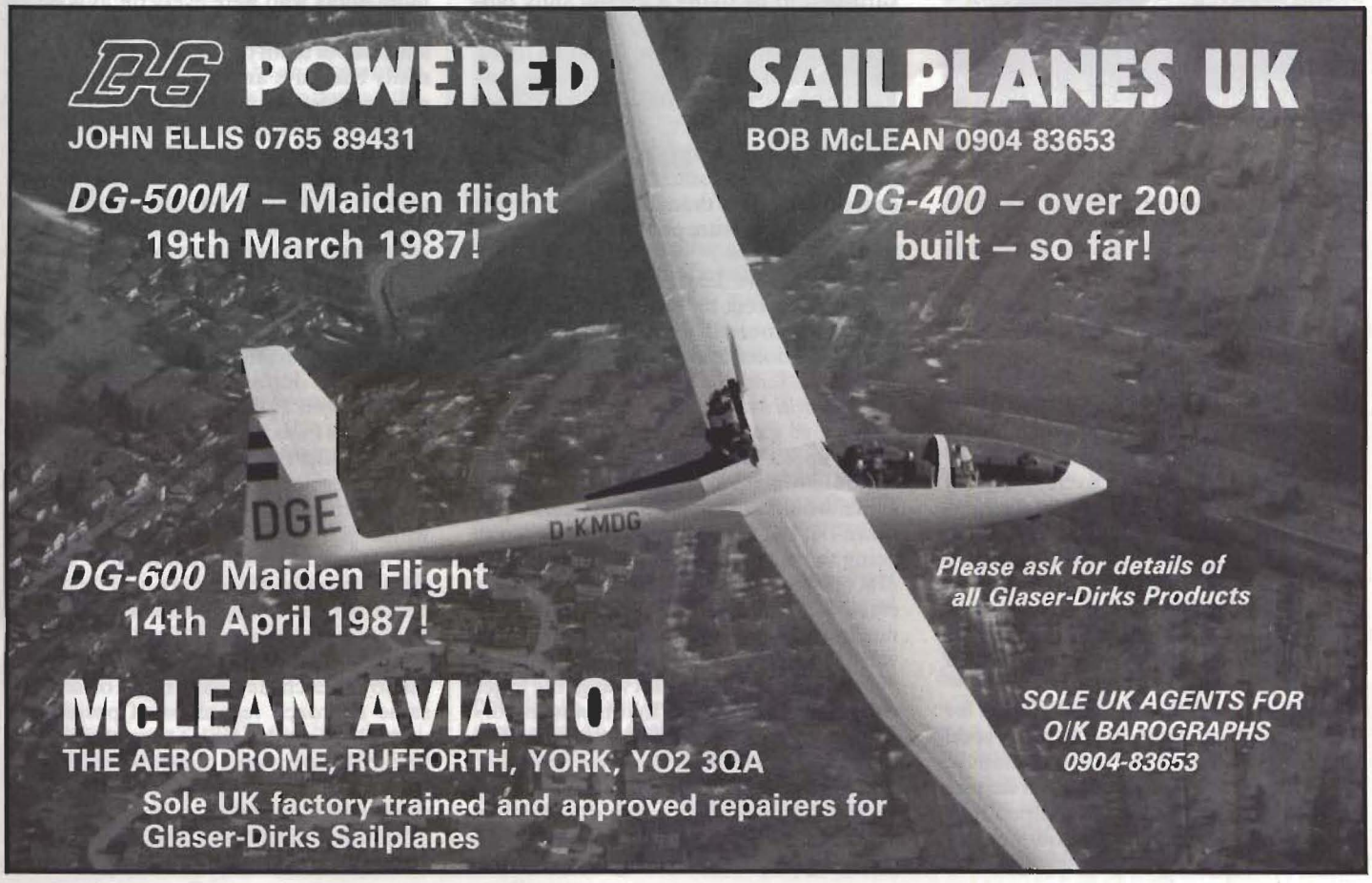
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BRIAN SPRECKLEY

BRIAN'S STRATEGY

Our new 15 Metre Class World Champion tells how he programmed himself to win after realising the possibility six years earlier



It was at Paderborn in 1981 that I realised I could win a World Championship. I had the skill necessary but needed to learn a great deal more about the psychological problems, I also realised the magnitude of the problem and the many factors that work against one winning. The following two World Championships were already scheduled for Argentina and Italy and I did not consider either of these potentially winnable as there would be too many negative factors for me to overcome.

It was when the 20th World Championships were announced to be at Benalla in SE Australia that I saw a real chance. I knew little about Australia but I knew it was reasonably flat, that the competition would be flown in conditions I understand and most of all the top pilots would be on a more or less equal footing.

The first problem was to be selected for the team so it was necessary to ensure good results in the next three years' Nationals, and that part of the plan went well despite the flukey content in British competitions in the last few years due to the poor weather conditions.

I had learnt from Paderborn and subsequent Nationals the need to approach competition flying with as relaxed a manner as possible and not to be over-anxious as to the result but concentrate on the means.

The lesson learnt from watching other winning pilots was most important, particularly overseas pilots who have a much more philosophical approach to their competitions than we do. It is a fact that you cannot fly any better than your basic skills allow and with the exception of a lucky break you will probably be beaten by a pilot who is more skillful than you.

I reckoned that in the 15 Metre Class at Benalla, there would be at least ten pilots who were capable of winning and two or three would stand out above these. A pilot better than me who did not make any significant mistakes would beat me, and there was no shame or injustice in that. My approach was to try and analyse all the factors that would contribute to my not winning - these factors of course also applied to the other pilots I considered a threat.

The preparation began in earnest after the Standard Class Nationals in 1985 when Gill and I decided we would go and fly at Benalla in 1986 Austraglide. I was slightly surprised to be flying a significantly outclassed glider in Austraglide as we had been told that most pilots would be flying **"old"** gliders and that the Comp was handicapped. It was obvious that I was not going to win in a 1971 Cirrus and set about the problems of flying in Aussie and enjoying the Comp. The situation allowed me to experiment more than I otherwise might have which I am sure paid dividends in the following year.

What did we learn in Austraglide in 1986? The need to have complete confidence in yourself when flying alone in blue conditions, leaving the gaggles when their confidence failed them and that the competition was going to be a long one. A percentage game would be necessary but with a speed factor as high as that in the Australian scoring system a percentage game would, by our normal standards, mean flat out every day. Most of all it was going to be a competition allowing plenty of scope for good pilots to fall down which created a dilemma - to push too hard meant too great a risk, to fly too conservatively meant no chance of first place.

I concluded that no pilot was going to get it completely right and that it was important to carry one's mistakes with the minimum of effect on the final results.

The last consideration was one of stamina - it would be an energy sapping contest but more important, a mentally wearing contest due partly to the boring nature of the flying as with such unlimited visibility the view rarely changed during the whole period of practice and contest.

After the 1986 competition Gill and I were even more convinced that this could be an opportunity not to present itself again for some time. We needed a suitable glider and had to get selected for the team. We were fortunate enough to obtain the LS-6 which was promptly christened Lucy - a marvellous glider in every way. Winning the 15m Nationals in 1986 confirmed my view that Lucy was an excellent glider, it also allowed me to practice what I hoped would be my approach to the Benalla competition and raised my confidence to what turned out to be just the right level.

Rehearsed situations which if not coped with would lead to annoyance, irritation, maybe a break in concentration but most to a loss in confidence

To win at Benalla I had to beat ten or more pilots who were every bit as good as me and some better. I could count on at least half of them having at least one or two really bad days and of the remainder, the most consistent one would win.

In considering the problem of consistency I decided that one needed as stable an approach as possible, not only for the whole competition but also during each flight. I started to rehearse those situations which I knew would arise and if not coped with would lead to annoyance, irritation, maybe a break in concentration but most to a loss in confidence.

These rehearsals took place in my mind many times during the year of 1986 - what would I do if I got low and was passed by the gliders I was above five minutes before? What would I think if I had to relight? I even rehearsed how I was going to feel on the morning of the last day if I was winning.

This mental preparation gave me an edge I would not normally have had, particularly in allowing me not to be affected by outside influences during both the practice period and the competition. It allowed me to fly each day with more or less the same approach regardless of position or yesterday's results. It also gave me the confidence to do my own thing and not be held by the gaggles or influenced unduly by other pilots' decisions.

All this preparation would have been futile without the understanding and help

of Gill and the hard work of my brother Roy, who between them made no effort to change my state of mind and put up with not being talked to for quite long periods.

On all but two days I flew as I intended. On one of these days I started shakily but was able to get it back together during the flight only to encounter problems with the final glide. On the other day I started strongly and went completely to pieces at the first TP as a result of a poor run and one missed climb. On the following leg I flew very badly and was not able to get the flight back under control with one bad spot leading to another. After the second turn, I recognised my situation was poor but was able to regain my concentration and prevent a dreadful day becoming a complete disaster. This experience re-affirmed my belief that coping with the minor mistakes during the flight is one of the most important aspects of competition success.

I learnt many things at Benalla, amongst them that gliding competitively is great fun, especially when you are winning – it worries me that in the UK we have a handful of pilots who are all top World Class pilots and we have a large number of pilots who are good to very competent, but there are very few new faces. Maybe there are no young pilots who realise the enjoyment that can be gained from competing in gliders or maybe, and more likely, the weather in England has been so poor for the last few years that they have not had the opportunity to develop their skills or gain the experience necessary.

The thrill one feels after a good run down a cloud street or the correct selection of a building climb is often marred by a collapse in the conditions, leaving mostly memories of difficulties and flying in survival conditions. This in itself is challenging and exhilarating but more successful and fast flights are necessary to boost one's confidence.

After 13 years of professional gliding instruction I have more than enough experience of the disappointment English conditions can bring.

To enjoy success in gliding whether competitively or not, there is no substitute for flying in good conditions and it is necessary for every pilot to engineer this whenever possible. When the opportunity is there use it to make a successful flight, not to set a personal best. It is amazing how one improves with the confidence that success brings.

That confidence made the last day at Benalla surprisingly easy for me. The others had eleven days in which to gain more points than I – they had failed and I sure as hell wasn't going to give them the opportunity on the 12th day.

BRITISH TEAM COMMENTS

We asked the other team members to write about any aspect of the World Championships which made a particular impression and gaggle flying was top of the list

ANDY DAVIS



The great gaggle is alive and well and can be found at international gliding competitions flown over flat country in mundane blue conditions.

Blue weather has always encouraged gaggle flying and, with the exception of the two cumulus days, the gaggle flying in the Standard Class at Benalla was the worst I have ever seen. It quickly became apparent that the penalties for pressing on ahead and alone were severe, involving either an outlanding or a time consuming grovel and low speed points.

So the vast majority of competitors followed the minority of leaders around the task in one or two huge gaggles, safely and relatively slowly. In this way, by showing no initiative or skill whatsoever it was possible to place well overall, the independent pilots and gaggle leaders falling by the wayside as the competition progressed.

With Standard Class gaggles numbering 25 or more on many days, the only decision most pilots had to make was who to follow through the start! It can be argued that these followers were using superior tactics, but in my opinion this is no way to select a World Champion as many top placed pilots *never* had to even find their own thermal. Furthermore, if this sort of gaggle flying continues unabated, somebody is going to be killed. At Benalla there was one serious mid-air collision and several very near misses.

Inevitably if conditions are difficult and blue, gaggles will form around track as faster gliders catch slowers ones ahead. But at Benalla the gaggles formed even before the start and then proceeded around the whole task area. This was due to unlimited height starts being used.

In order to take full advantage of unlimited height starts it is necessary to get as high as possible as close to the start point as possible. Hence huge gaggles would form adjacent to the start point with perhaps the whole Class sandwiched into the feeble last 100ft of a thermal. As soon as a "name" started, the whole gaggle would follow. It was quite impossible to slip away unnoticed!

The key to the prevention of gaggles from the start is a return to restricted height starts, be it 1000m, or otherwise, but in any event *well below the actual convection depth for the day.* It would then be possible to climb up alone and unseen five to ten miles away and start by diving through the start at VNE. A glider moving far below the horizon is hard to spot and before the lemmings realised what was happening it could be long gone. Gliding competition would then revert to a test of soaring ability between individuals.

The technology to control photographic start heights is here already, including patrol aircraft, size of start point imagine on the negative and the Aerograf Fototime combination. Come on Flying Committee, what about a return to 1000m starts before we kill somebody in this country too?

CHRIS GARTON



In the Standard Class we chose to fly as a cohesive group, thinking this was the best strategy to cope with the predominantly blue conditions we expected. Essentially this involved starting at the same time, then staying together whenever possible.

The co-operation between the three of us was extremely good, but, with hindsight, I suspect that some if not all of us might have placed higher in the final ratings had we flown as individuals, since natural caution would then have led us to make more conservative starting decisions. As it was, on several days we started too late relative to the other competitors, or in the light of potential weather risks such as encroaching cirrus bands or premature weakening of thermals. Late starting had served us well during the official practice week tasks, too well perhaps, and may have made us over-confident. Consistency was vital – in a twelve day contest it was more important not to lose points than to go all out to win each day if such a ploy involved risk-taking.

My own personal chances of a good final placing came to an abrupt and ignominious end on Day 8 when I found I had flown the task without a film in either camera, an omission I shall not forget for a long time. Having tumbled as a result from 6th overall to 20th I felt the only policy was to fly harder and take risks. Unfortunately in the last four days the longer tasks (hence fewer pts/min) and the amount of gaggle flying made it near impossible to score significantly higher than the rest, but it was still possible to lose a whole lot more points, which is all that policy achieved for me.

I can at least look back with the satisfaction of winning two days. The first was the outcome of a particularly successful day's team flying. The other was on one of the two cumulus days, when one had the opportunity of making one's own soaring decisions rather than merely indulging in a day-long tail chase.

Benalla '87 was a prodigious feat of organisation, memorable for its sheer size, numbers of tasks, hours and kilometres flown. Yet I found the quality of the flying unsatisfying, with its heavy emphasis on leeching and gagglemanship. Blue thermals and the use of other gliders are part of every contest pilot's repertoire, but the Standard Class competition thrashed out this theme *ad nauseam*.

Towards the end, as the tasks grew longer, more and more pilots realised it was not worth trying to beat the gaggles. Scores would depend on a few minutes' difference in start times, and on the last thermal, so for the rest of the flight, why not take it easy and let the gaggle do the work? Four days in succession, the whole Standard Class rolled up into one or two huge gaggles, all round the course, for hour upon hour. Several pilots admitted afterwards they were glad it was all over and they had emerged unscathed.

DAVE WATT



A peek through the motel curtains confirms yet another brilliant blue Australian morning – and indeed the now familiar team ritual of getting up and breakfasting is well underway. Six weeks of semi-communal living and we all know each others strange little ways, and each morning is just the same. Andy is returning, red-faced, from jogging, Chris and Ben are engrossed in the previous day's provisional score sheet. Gillian appears and scurries off with the Standard Class results to show a presumably semi-conscious Justin. Mummy and Daddy Wells are breakfasting in the sun just outside their room whilst two baby Wells can be seen still asleep inside. Only crews and Spreckleys remain undisturbed.

I rise, dress, inspect my new beard (still no change) and emerge. "What beautiful weather . . .! I think I'll go gliding today –!" I look anxiously around. Will they be able to take this great joke for the 14th time? Apparently yes, I am ignored.

The only difference between today and the others is that this is the last day of the Championships when a 569.9km triangle will be set for the 15 Metre Class with the last TP in the mountains.

We wait now for the temperature to rise. A few throws with the demanding Mark III boomerang gives me a chance to relax and think about Brian's position and how I might be able to help him maintain it for just one more day. Should I go ahead of him? Should he try and start with Holger Back and just stick to him? When should we leave? This is, I realise (in gliding terms at least) a rather historic moment. It is the chance of a lifetime and it would be a shame to overlook any possibility that would help him. What about me? I am lying 5th. Could I play a blinder and win? I calculate the approximate chances of each of the pilots ahead of me losing enough points. I multiply them together (they must each do it today) and answer Definitely No. I must try for 4th or 3rd in real life and look out for my tail.

It is getting hot and we go back to the motel for the final briefing. I agree with Brian that we start together. He suggests that we don't bother with any heroic sacrifices (they never work anyway) – instead we agree to continue with more of the same. After all it hasn't done too badly so far.

Eleven o'clock approaches and we return to the airfield. I am nearly through my second litre of liquid as I get strapped in. At last the rope is tight and I rise out of the dust into the clear. We wheel round the airfield in a big left turn. In a few minutes all the pieces will be set up for the final chess game of the Championships.

The usual hour of local soaring passes, we glean information from above and below. Not until we cross the startline for the last time will the routine be broken. Our optimum start time comes and goes (as usual) and by 1225 only about ten of us remain. Reports of runners down track from our spotters increase the tension. Brian returns from his hiding place some 30km away and we join up as agreed. We circle in zero sink at the top of the inver-

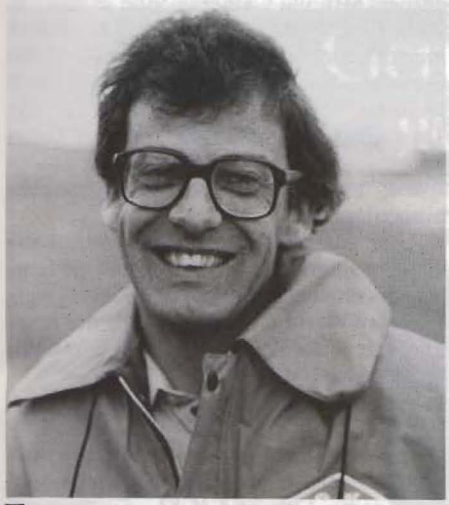
sion as the minutes tick by. No one will be first to leave the gaggle, and this certainly includes us! We must go soon. Doug Jacobs has started in the mid-field and we mustn't get completely out of touch with his gaggle.

"We have played the opening fairly well. We are with the right people at the right time . . ."

"Two more turns" says Brian. We take them and move towards the start point. The others follow immediately. Holger Back and his team mate Werner Meuser and Kees Musters are hanging just above. A turn in sink forces the gaggle on. We are now over the start point; just as we are about to go we hit weak lift again. More turns, more tension, then at last a glider makes the tell-tale overbanked photographic turn and we all rush through the gate at once. We are on the way. We have played the opening fairly well. We are with the right people at the right time, but what about Jacobs? – he is a definite worry. Fortunately Martyn is with his gaggle and we can expect some valuable information later on. Happily there is no time for worry now. Brian and I accelerate to 100kt together in search of a big first climb.

I would like to thank Chris Lyttleton for lending me his glider, London Sailplanes for providing a spares pack, R. D. Aviation for providing equipment and above all my crew, Dave Richardson and Mike Young.

MARTYN WELLS



I find it hard to remember much of the flying at Benalla because it became more mechanical than is usual. One of the major factors was gaggling, brought about by the similar standard of the pilots, blue conditions and a poor scoring system.

One of the real pleasures of competing is beating the other guy by flying one's own route with your own ideas but alas this was not the best formula for Benalla. The scoring system in particular was designed to meet the conditions likely at Benalla and to give an incentive to risk flying separately from the gaggles. However this risk taking often worked so much to the detriment of the solo pilot that the potentially large losses kept the pilots together.

Starting times were critical and as everyone knew it was not good tactics to start early, most would only leave when certain pilots had left in front. This rapidly led to starting at the last available time and sometimes too late to complete the task. When this sort of start was made the first elements of a gaggle were forming before any other forces came into play. On occasions waiting times before a start could exceed the time taken to fly the task.

One very poor part of the competition was the Australian habit of being bound by rules. As low level flying was banned, finishes on most days were a poor spectacle.

There were many magical moments I shall never forget such as when practising at Tocumwal on a 1000km attempt. Towards the third TP I was flying around and through showers full of lightning and it became obvious progress was not fast enough. Having flown from 9500 to 4500ft towards nothing and finding no lift, a landing a long way out late in the day was a certainty. Abandoning the task and running at 120° to previous track at 1400ft there was lift. This was a thermal to remember as it took me to 12 500ft still just beneath cloudbase with enough height to reach soarable conditions and home.

Then there was a day during the competition when the conditions began to decay and the last ½kt climb stopped. Knowing the Class were all behind or abeam there ensued a lonely, quiet glide to the ground from 4000ft. At 500ft landing was no problem as I watched a small white dot flying two miles to the left when it slowly stopped, having flown straight until it landed. With 100ft and a setting sun to land against I chose a field which turned out to be stubble so high that the wings were held level. Talking to Ben on a nearby hill before landing it was now impossible to reach him. However the farmhouse had an elevated aerial and a powerful 720, so I was retrieved just as the sun set and only 30 minutes after landing. Arriving back we couldn't help feeling sorry for the pilots whose crews were only just leaving.

On the lighter side, a small bolt was dropped in the rear fuselage and after much searching it became obvious the only way to retrieve it was to turn the glider upside down and knock it out. Just at that moment a passing pilot was heard to say "All that trouble to find a dime".

JUSTIN WILLS



I have a theory that competitive glider pilots fall into two camps: those who compete primarily against the elements, and then compare their efforts against the other contestants; and those who concentrate directly on beating the other competitors. The outlook adopted by any individual is never quite so black and white, but I am sure the distinction is valid.

It was this direct competitive approach at Benalla which led the entire 15M and Standard Classes to start too late to complete their respective tasks on Day 11. Nevertheless, this was the correct tactical decision for the individual pilots to take; the penalty for landing out with all the others was negligible: the cost in points of starting early, marking the thermals for those behind and have everyone get home faster following a late improvement in the weather, was prohibitive.

On Day 11 the briefing blackboard revealed triangles of 840km, 755km and 695km for the Open, 15M and Standard Classes respectively, with first launch at 10.30am. The weather forecast sounded encouraging with 5kt blue thermals up to 5000ft by 1400hrs increasing to 8-9kt and 8400ft by 1600hrs, and lift continuing until last light.

However, at 10.30 the snifter reported difficulty maintaining 2000ft, and launch-

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ing was delayed for half an hour. Once airborne, the Open Class soon began to start, but the rest of us hung around watching each other, hoping for a late improvement in the weather. As one o'clock approached the first few began to trickle away, and the main gaggle left just before the hour.

Unfortunately I was low and unable to start with Chris and Andy, who departed three minutes behind the pack. I struggled around as the sky rapidly emptied, but 13 minutes later I reached 4000ft and started out in company with Stig Øye.

Chris and Andy were now some 25km ahead and finding conditions little better. I was anxious not to get low so early on a long flight, but despite my efforts found myself at 1500ft only 70km out where I dumped ten gallons of water.

Shortly after this I joined up with both Stig and the other Danish pilot, Jan Anderson. I led out a couple of times, but didn't find anything particularly useful, and my despondency deepened as I heard Chris and Andy increasing their lead ahead. I therefore switched into conservation mode, and simply followed the Danes, using the minimum of effort. In retrospect I was ashamed of such an act, a sad reflection of how an individual, despite a strong belief in sportsmanship, can be corrupted by the system.

Midway along the second leg I finally broke away, heading directly on track whilst the Danes followed the river seeking thermals from the contrasting surfaces.

It was now 1645hrs, I was alone in the blue and only half way round the task. Appreciation of this desperate situation suddenly led me to start enjoying myself, and I began to do much better. An isolated 8kt took me to a surprising 8500ft which advanced me 60km along the last leg. This involved crossing the path of an old bushfire whose blackened area the size of Wales produced nothing; I was thankful to reach the far side and, dumping another ten gallons, joined a circling LS-4. Back up to 4000ft the air had a smooth feel to it, and the day was clearly dying. I could hear Andy climbing at Tocumwal, and it appeared that even the front runners might have difficulty getting home. I was in no doubt about my situation, and called Gillian to roll up the last leg.

I eventually reached Tocumwal at 1500ft, dumped my remaining water, and was fortunate to find a smooth 1½kt thermal that took me back to 4500ft, whilst I listened to Andy landing 30km short of Benalla. Obviously there was no lift to be found south of the Murray river and it seemed that my late start might not prove such a catastrophe after all. One last thermal over the southernmost loop of the Murray river produced half a knot, which I stuck with right to the top at 4200ft. Flying at Max glide took me to a farm strip where I landed at 2035hrs. I had covered 666km for 987pts and 4th place for the day, equal with Andy, 8km behind the winner. Phew.

A FOOTNOTE FROM BEN WATSON, BRITISH TEAM MANAGER

It is fair to claim that this was the best ever World Championships for a British team in terms of results, size of team, sponsorship and publicity. Brian Spreckley's victory was fabulous but all the pilots did well. Four were in the top ten of their Class meeting the Sports Aid Foundations criteria of "competing with distinction". All six pilots were represented in the daily prizes where we won four firsts, five seconds and three thirds.

The cost to the BGA was around £62000. Pilots had additional personal costs of course - probably £2000 each. The BGA cost was financed by the Sports Council £41000, BGA membership levy £10000, team subscriptions £5000 and O&K sponsorship the remainder. In addition we received a lot of support in kind of which the most generous was the free loan of vehicles by General Motors Holden in Melbourne.

Other sponsorship support was; - Mowbray Vale, insurance 50% discount (£700); Rank Xerox loan of two Facsimile machines; Minolta Cameras, loan of three X-7000 time cameras; Salters Melbourne, loan of scales for weighing gliders; Specialist Systems, loan of TR 720 radios and chargers; RD Aviation, loan of TR 720; Trust House Forte 50% discount at Travel lodge in Melbourne and British Aerospace, loan of steadyscope gyroscopic binoculars.

After five weeks of continuous flying over monotonous countryside in large gaggles most of the pilots had had enough. The way World Championships are developing is seriously under question and will be discussed at CIVV.

In spite of this I think we all enjoyed ourselves. If Andy had not landed out on Day 1 he would have come 5th; if Chris had remembererd to load his film he would have come 12th and if Martyn had not landed a field short on Day 4 he would have been 4th. But then if Doug Jacobs had not landed out on Day 5 Brian might not have won!

QUO VADIS?

John, the chairman of Strubby GC, tells a sad story

Once upon a time, a lowly club was formed by a group of dedicated amateurs. The Bumbles Green Athletes were amiable and inoffensive people who sought neither fame nor international recognition and asked nothing more than to be left in peace to enjoy their one sporting activity which consisted of the ambidextrous manipulation of two yo-yos at the same time.

The BGA tenanted a field bordering a river which was fished along its length by the Castle Acre Anglers, a rather upmarket lot who had ideas far above their station. The anglers would have been slapped down long ago had it not been for their policy of being thoroughly disagreeable and making life unpleasant only for associations thought to be smaller and less powerful then themselves.

The CAA first became aware of the possibility for some gratuitous aggravation when, during a public contest, a yo-yo parted from its string. The wooden bit flew through the air, landing in the river with an enormous splash, which upset all the other fish for some yards around and narrowly missed a large pike basking in the sun. Enraged, the CAA resolved to make it impossible for BGA yo-yo contests to continue and to this end brought pressure to bear on other subservient groups who were press-ganged into supporting the CAA's views.

Sensing that non-co-operation would hasten their own demise, the New Annesley Toxophilite Society and a shadowy group called the Upton Snodsbury Agoraphobic Fraternity fell swiftly into line.

Peace and tranquillity——— inhibited them still further——

The forging of this unholy alliance between the CAA, NATS and the USAF completely escaped the Bumbles Green Athletes. Indeed, the peace and tranquillity of mind generated by yo-yo manipulation inhibited still further their purely marginal ability to appreciate the mounting seriousness of their situation. They had never even heard the philosophical proposition that an immovable object cannot co-exist with an irresistible force and could thus be forgiven for failing to appreciate the corollary that an illogical situation cannot be countered by the application of logic.

Thus it was that the BGA allowed themselves to be drawn into endless bogus discussions with third parties who, in any case, had no valid grounds for complaint. This co-operation was rewarded by the sight of their reply to the charges being annihiliated by cant, bombast and rhetoric far and away beyond their power to resist.

The conclusion was never in any real doubt. Free yo-yoing was outlawed immediately and the sport rapidly became emasculated to the point where the sole permitted activity consisted of operating a captive yo-yo fitted with a retractor spring, *le tout ensemble* being bolted to a stout board held between the knees. Naturally, it was not long before the few remaining members tired of sitting in the sun recalling the halcyon days of public contests in the BGA field by the river and over a very short period, the sport vanished almost without trace. Almost, because if you are very lucky, you might still catch a glimpse of one of the last of the Bumbles Green Athletic men with a far-away look in his eyes, old before his time and with a gnarled right hand twisted into a claw as he sits in the grass pulling his yo-yo.

Once upon a time, a lowly club was formed by a group of dedicated amateurs. The British Gliding Association was amiable and inoffensive...

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MIKE GARROD

ON GOING DOWN THE PLUGHOLE!

A frightening experience which could have ended up as a gliding mystery – a totally inexplicable accident

It was the final day of the London Gliding Club bi-annual visit to Shobdon. I had already been to 7000ft in my Vega in wave, but had almost overstretched myself and just made it back to the airfield. It was only 9am and the wave was still working, so I decided to have a second flight. How could I have possibly guessed what was in store for me?

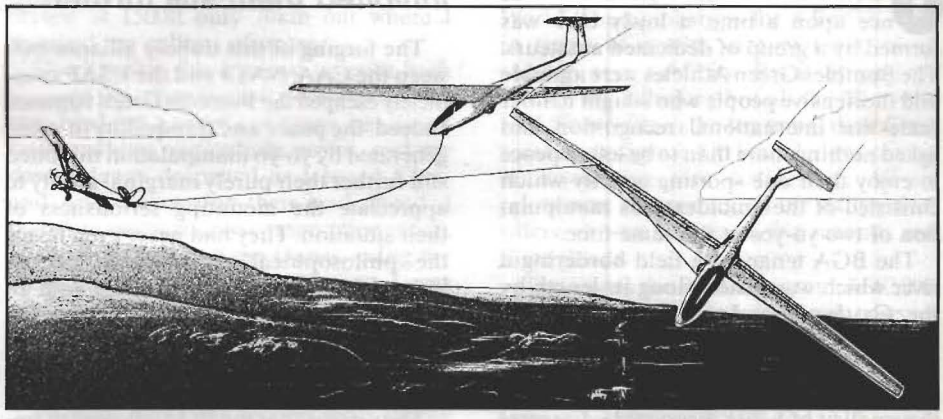
The second launch was a dual tow, headed by a Super Cub piloted by Eric Hamill, and John Jeffries in the K-21 (with a P2) on the short rope. For those unacquainted with dual towing, the glider on the long rope (me) flies in the low tow position.

A Super Cub, dragging two gliders totalling about three quarters of a ton, will not climb very well. I had already experienced this earlier in the week, and found myself picking field after field as the combination crawled upwards at almost the same rate as the ground rising beneath it on the way out of Shobdon towards Radnor. After some four ground miles were covered into a 20kt headwind, the altimeter had gained only 1000ft.

"It did not occur to me that the combination was entering a potentially hazardous position . . ."

Presteigne passed by on our right. Still only 1000ft, but the airspeed had increased from 60 to 80kt. Eric seemed to be in a hurry to get to Radnor. I muttered some rude words about tug pilots, but kept my thoughts off the radio – after all, the P1 in the K-21 with over 10000hrs gliding was better placed to make comments to the tug pilot than I was! I went on picking fields, and the combination slowly edged up as it headed straight at Radnor. We were still well below the peak (2166ft) and only two to three miles short of it, when my altimeter was registering 1500ft above Shobdon. This was inadequate height to cast off, so I held on in anticipation of meeting rising air once we had achieved 2000ft. It did not occur to me that the combination was entering a potentially hazardous position, and I'm a meteorologist!

Quite suddenly, the Super Cub stopped flying straight and level and went into rapid rolling and pitching manoeuvres. In a split second the whole combination was in a state of confusion with ropes flailing about the sky. My eyes concentrated on the other two aircraft, which was my one mistake. My own rope developed a U shape and shot backwards. In a trice it was over my starboard wing. I reacted rapidly and dived for the release. There was no questioning about it! Ropes over wings are an extremely undesirable occurrence! I pulled the knob sharply.



Our artist, Steve Longland, gives his impression of the incident.

The ensuing five seconds I can only describe as hair raising. I have been, in my life on this earth, threatened by rockfalls and avalanches, been in several motor vehicle accidents (only once when I was driving, please note!) and on several occasions been within an ace of complete annihilation while in a powered aircraft (I'm not a power pilot!), but this one beat them all. In under two seconds from releasing the rope the Vega suddenly rotated rapidly to port and pitched nose down into the vertical. It almost seemed as if I had pulled out the bath plug and become the fly in the water!

Now a glider flying at 60kt with controls held in neutral which suddenly decides to enter a spin without any assistance from it's pilot, is something unusual. I have heard of gliders being inverted on aerotow in rotor flow, but not spun round in the horizontal like a sycamore leaf! Gliders should only behave like this when something has created an assymetric flight situation. That rope! It had caught up somewhere! The tail! The rate of rotation had been so rapid that it seemed the only logical explanation. One can discuss all this in retrospect with a clear, unruffled mind, but all these thoughts were flying through my head in a miniscule of time! Something awful had happened and I was staring directly at a swirling green vista ahead of my canopy. I cannot exactly recall my thoughts, but a sort of acceptance that death was close at hand came over me.

Fortunately my instinct for self-preservation took over and my left hand went for the dive brake/flap lever. In the circumstances it was the right choice.

I cannot recall applying opposite rudder, but the fields stopped spinning and I eased back the control column. The hiss of high speed air died away as the horizon returned to it's rightful place. I was now pointing due south instead of west, having executed at least 2-1/4 turns in a spiral dive. Just two short comments were made in the cockpit over a period of ten seconds, which were "Oh no!" when death seemed to be staring me in the face, and "Jeepers! What was that?" once I'd got back into level flight.

I had escaped one precipitous situation, but I was not out of trouble. What state was the aircraft in? I was miles and miles from Shobdon, perhaps with a damaged glider, and an outlanding in prospect. Not a comfortable situation in which to find myself. I scanned the wing surface – nothing. The

ailerons seemed to respond normally. Tail – I craned my neck round, but couldn't see anything wrong. It's not easy looking directly behind oneself when strapped in a cockpit. The elevator was responding normally. I needed time to recover from this shattering experience, so headed straight for the nearest hill into wind.

An hour and a half later I was up at 9000ft. Found another glider, called up on the radio, and requested a visual check. There was nothing visibly wrong with the Vega. I had now fully recovered my composure, and with the knowledge that any damage must be very small, returned and landed safely at Shobdon.

Very little found but just enough to piece together a logical sequence of events

The time for detection work had arrived. I proceeded to examine the Vega from nose to tail, and only two pieces of evidence came to light which clearly had some connection with what had happened. The starboard undercarriage door was damaged, having lost about ¼in from the top leading edge, adjacent to the fuselage. A small dent was found on the aileron securing block at the junction with the flaps/airbrakes. There was nothing else. In all very little, but just enough for me to piece together a logical sequence of events.

The rope, sliding over the starboard wing, had almost certainly got into the gap between the starboard aileron and the brakes/flaps when the aileron was up (counteracting the severe rolling motion) and was promptly scissored. The rope was now attached to the glider at a point 16ft outboard of the centre line of the fuselage. At this split second I had actually released the rings, but with the rope running upwards and backwards over the wing it almost certainly lodged in the narrow gap between the undercarriage door and the fuselage.

The result of the wing hook-up was inevitable. The starboard wing was accelerated forward, while the port slowed down. Everyone who knows anything about flying knows the consequences of that!

Having spun through 180° the rope was promptly pulled out of the aileron gap. It was still attached, however, to the undercarriage door. This offered no resistance whatever, and the rope and rings departed the glider with a few small pieces of glass-fibre. How those rings failed to slam into the bottom of the starboard wing is quite beyond my comprehension.

There are several aspects of this incident which deserve a great deal of thought. First, the release cable on my Vega. Some months previous I had arranged with Mike Fripp to have the cable lengthened by some four to five inches, and then suspended the handle from a thin bungy cord from the instrument panel. This allowed rapid, fumble free access in an emergency. In it's previous situation the handle could easily get lost under heavy layers of flying clothing. Had I delayed release by as much as two seconds the entire aerotow combination could have been involved with potential lethal results. As it was, the delay in pulling the release was under one second, and none of the occupants of the other two aircraft was aware of the fact I had gone – let alone spun off!

My state of health. I know of several glider pilots, some much younger than myself, who have suffered cardiac arrest as a consequence of a highly stressful situation developing in flight. In my experience this particular incident was a humdinger! In spite of a flood of adrenalin my heart rate stayed within reasonable bounds and kept its cool and I cannot recollect it beating any harder than normal. I put this down almost entirely to the fact that for the last five years I have been exercising myself regularly by running and my heart is used to working hard. My normal pulse rate is about 60, and probably doubled as a consequence of this incident. I cannot be certain, but I may owe my life to running a mere five miles a week.

I cannot recollect ever having read an article about decisions in sudden emergency situations. At 5000ft, in the event of a mid-air collision, one has plenty of time to gather one's thoughts together and critically assess the situation – to jump or not to jump. At under 1500ft it's quite something else – it just has to be an immediate decision (if any choice even exists). Had I trained myself in military style to abandon the cockpit rapidly, and done so, I have doubts that I would have survived. In the event I chose to stay with the glider and operate the airbrakes – perhaps the lack of shattering glass-fibre and audible structural failure triggered that thinking, but it could so easily have been "jump". A sobering thought. Had I written myself off, a totally unexplainable accident would have occurred. I doubt the incident was seen from the ground, and even if it had been it is well known that observers of aircraft incidents and accidents are notoriously unreliable.

Finally, can anyone tell me what the loads are on a glider when subjected to this sort of aerobatics? I cannot recollect any significant *g* loads, so perhaps this type of manoeuvre is like any other spin – harmless provided recovery is achieved. Perhaps the experts might care to comment.

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JOHN WILLIAMSON

BLUE SKIES

In the last issue we pressed on, searching the sky ahead for clues to the whereabouts of the next thermal. But suppose it goes blue?

One situation which causes much apprehension for the novice cross-country pilot is the prospect of blue skies – no obvious thermal markers. No one relishes this situation, and indeed, except in a competition, many club pilots in the UK will not contemplate a serious cross-country unless there are cumulus clouds to show them the way. In hotter, drier climates blue skies are the norm. World records are set in those countries when the cumulus *are* present, but the everyday experience is blue, blue all the way. How do *they* cope, and what can *you* do to broaden the spectrum of your soaring experience by tackling blue days with confidence?

You should first understand *why* there are no clouds. Basically it means that the thermals aren't going high enough to cool to the dewpoint temperature of the air within them. Warm air can hold more invisible water vapour than can cold, and air cools as it rises and expands. Dewpoint is the temperature at which some of the water vapour *must* condense out into the visible state – a cloud. (Or fog, or mist, depending on where it happens.) The height at which a cumulus cloud forms atop a thermal depends on the difference between the temperature of the air bubble and it's dewpoint, as it leaves the ground.

If you have the Volmet frequency on your radio you can listen to constantly up-dated reports of temperatures and dewpoints (in °C) at major airports. If you multiply the difference by 400 you have the cloudbase in feet, For example, "London Heathrow ... Temperature 20, dewpoint 8 ..." will mean a cloudbase of (20−8)×400=4800ft. Then follows a recitation of cloud amounts at different heights, always quoted in oktas, meaning heights of the sky. "Three oktas at 4800ft" means ⅜ cover of what *we* know are cumulus! If the report *doesn't* mention clouds at or close to the height we have calculated it means that an inversion – a warmer layer of air already in the atmosphere – has prevented the thermal rising high enough to cool to it's dewpoint and the day is blue. Just because thermals are not reaching condensation level doesn't necessarily mean they are not reaching a useful height. But they *will* be harder to find!

Why it goes blue. Let's examine a few reasons for the sky being, or becoming, blue, in the course of a typical soaring day in mid-summer.

Too early. It is usually quite cold near the ground during the night before a good soaring day, and an early morning launch in an open two-seater often reveals a markedly warmer layer at a 100ft or so. This overnight inversion has to be "broken" before useful thermals can develop. The sun warms the ground, which in turn warms the air above it, and mini-thermals carry this warmth upwards until the temperature of the surface layer matches and exceeds that of the inversion layer. Then the real thermals can rise and the first tentative cumulus will form. How long the warming process takes depends on how cold it got during the night – clear skies mean greater loss by radiation – and how quickly the sun can get at the ground to warm it. So ask the Met man when he expects the inversion to be broken down, and don't set off too soon!

Too cool, too moist

The first cumulus will have formed over the hilly areas, the thermals rising from ground which is well drained and where well placed slopes bask in the morning sun. Adjacent flat, damp lands will not warm so readily and may take several hours longer to generate the sort of thermals needed to form cloud. The damper air will have a higher dewpoint so the cloud, when it does form, will have a lower general base, but it *will* have stayed blue over the flats for quite some time after the hills became productive. So stay near the hills, and steer clear of cool areas, early in the day!

Dunstable, 1976. *We launched, soared easily and quickly as the thermals developed and the forecast cumulus burgeoned over the Downs and the town. Crossing the startline at maximum height and VNE, we raced off towards the first TP – Calvert brickworks and chimneys, set in the heavy clay 15 miles north of Oxford. And nothing happened! It was completely blue! The anticipated three hour race transformed itself into an endless struggle in scrappy, weak, cloudless thermals, until the entire Nationals finally descended into two score fields spread out across the south Midlands. No one got back to Dunstable!*

* * *

Too dry, too hot!

Ironically, the sky over the hot, dry hills may in turn become blue as the surface temperature climbs, while the flat lands keep *their* cumulus! Remember that the air has to cool to it's dewpoint if a cloud is to form. Unsaturated air cools at a steady 3°C for every 1000ft it rises and, if the surface temperature has gone *too* high, the air in the thermal may simply not have cooled enough before it comes up against an upper inversion. So the sky turns blue again, but this time vigorous thermals are still present, even though you can't see them. On such a day the temperature over even the flat lands may eventually rise too high and the skies turn blue all over.

Swindon, 1957. *I first met and was fooled by this phenomenon whilst on my second try for Gold distance. Towed out from Lasham to release just off Farnborough's main runway, I was soon at 7500ft, tucked in under one of the first cumulus of the day, and this at 11am. It was to be 20 years before I flew in better conditions in the UK! My goal was St David's airfield on the far tip of South Wales and I flew on happily enough in the old Weihe (K-8 performance) as far as Hungerford. And then, ahead, dreaded blue sky! In my innocence I tiptoed all the way across the high Cotswolds, anxiously taking every thermal I encountered up into the inversion, not daring to ignore a single one. I didn't once come below 6000ft! Fortunately the slow progress resulting from my caution didn't matter much. The day was long and cumulus reappeared west of Gloucester in the Forest of Dean. After a scare in the mining valleys, where I was actually on downwind leg to land on the moor top heather, I finally got a high climb in a towering cumulus north of Swansea. We glided out in a clear blue sky, the entire south west corner of Wales swept clean by sea breezes.*

* * *

Anticyclonic inversion

When a high pressure system forms, the soaring at first can be quite good. But the air in the anticyclone piles up, and gently descends, warming as it does so at 3°C/1000ft. This has the effect, after a day or two, of forming a distinct inversion which gets lower and more intense each day. Early in the process the skies have gone blue. Thermals are still generated from below, usually starting later each day, but are forced to a halt at ever decreasing height, until even the most stalwart glider pilot gives up and goes sailing instead! At least there should be an onshore breeze to enjoy!

Upavon, 1964. *Harvest time and the late August anticyclone had been with us for a couple of days already. Saturday, and my last weekend as CFI. A prospect of the UK goal and return record?*

Declaring Swinderby, south of Lincoln, as the TP, I set off in the Olympia 419 soon after 10am. Thermals would be strong but no cumulus were expected. What the heck! We would fly completely in the blue. There was no great problem. We rarely reached 4000ft except once when a big stubble fire hoisted us up to nearly 5000ft and into a smoky wisp of cumulus. Swinderby was rounded on schedule and the trip back was uneventful until, with three miles to go, we were 300ft below maximum glide path. Just then a scream of swifts invited us to share their feast of greenfly and we got back – just! I don't think any one else bothered to go cross-country that day.

* * *

Sea breeze

Anywhere within 30 miles of the coast – further if the prevailing wind is on shore – you may see the sky go blue as cool air flows in from the sea to replace that which is lifted aloft in the thermals. The sea air is quite shallow – about 1000ft deep – and, being cooler than the air over the land, it undercuts the latter. A line of vigorous thermals often results at the junction of the sea and land air

masses, but after this junction has passed inland there is a very effective inversion at around 1000ft. Thermals are still generated below this and it is *just* possible, in a sprightly aircraft, to stay airborne. But the constant imminence of a field landing robs all but the most experienced pilots of the concentration required to soar these pint-sized bubbles, which amount to little more than turbulence. So, if you get trapped the wrong side of a sea breeze front you may as well give up, unless you can get back to the cumulus with at least 1500ft in hand.

Exeter, 1956. *The high cliffs of the Dorset and South Devon coasts had inhibited the incursion of sea breezes and the Weihe and I flew in a wonderland of dazzling cumulus several miles out to sea in the spring north-easterlies, heading for Truro and Gold badge. But, suddenly, ahead – blue sky. Angling in to the north and the now far distant cumulus, we tracked over the estuary of the Exe river in silk-smooth air. Lower and lower we went in the cold, clear air, with ice from an earlier but unnecessary cloud climb still encrusting the delicate profile of the scarlet wings. Finally, at 800ft, the first rough, turbulent thermals shook the ice clear and the struggle was on! For nearly an hour we bobbed about at less than 1000ft, slowly heading inland towards the receding cumulus. Sea breezes were still a bit of a mystery and I hadn't the faintest idea of what was going on. Then quite suddenly the drama was over and we were climbing in smooth strong lift to 4000-5000ft. But we had lost too much time and missed Truro by only eight miles . . .*

* * *

Too late

Finally, usually around 6pm on a summer's day, the surface air cools so that the thermals and their cumulus clouds peter out altogether. The last thermal sources to give up their warmth will be those that were slowest to warm in the first place – typically woods, and corn fields in late summer. Unless you can find such a source, you are on final glide to a field landing.

Greenham Common, 1967. *The flight had been hot and difficult and mostly without cumulus. Now the day was ending and each thermal was possibly the last. Most of the others had landed and the Dart and I were out in front. I knew Anne Burns was close behind but then she, too, radioed her landing message as we were approaching Greenham Common's vast runway. The airfield was empty in those days. The B-52s had gone and cruise missiles hadn't been dreamt of. At only 400ft came a trickle, a surge! With 200 acres of concrete to land on I could risk a try. It worked, and the runway's last remnant of furnace-breath lifted us to twice the height needed to get to Lasham.*

* * *

Coping in the blue

You have seen that there are several reasons for the sky to have gone blue but in many cases the thermals haven't stopped. You can still find them – indeed you often don't even have to look for them. If you just fly straight on course, responding to the sensations being fed through the seat of your pants, there is a better than even chance of flying into one. The mechanism of thermal formation still exists, and the presence of one thermal stimulates, through it's adjacent complementary down-current, the formation of the next. This in turn helps trigger the next, and so on until an approximately cellular pattern of convection is formed.

Hawaii, New Year's Day, 1973. *I had observed an almost unlimited expanse of cellular convection over a uniformly warmed surface – the Pacific Ocean – whilst enroute by Hercules from California the day before. Now I had the good fortune to sample this convection at first hand in a Schweizer 1-26 sailplane – a sort of tin Swallow. Each cell, as it arrived over the island, boosted the thermals by two or three knots, so eventually I set off to test my theory over the sea itself. Sure enough, at 1500ft, and two miles off shore, each cell had a smooth one knot at it's heart. Presumably the convective pattern could have been followed right across the trade wind belt, day and night, all the way back to California, since there is virtually no diurnal variation to the temperature of the ocean. But there weren't enough fields for my liking and I aborted the trial after an hour!*

* * *

A cellular structure will be strengthened at obvious hot-spots such as sunny slopes, towns and power-stations, and your search for thermals should clearly take this into account. If a wind of more than 15kt (at 2000ft) is present, the cellular structure will tend to line up into streets, directly up- and downwind, exactly as do cloud streets. In thermal street conditions, of course, there will also be sink streets, so you must be prepared to turn obliquely across wind to get clear of prolonged sink, and back into wind on encountering the thermals again.

You must also learn that the spacing between thermals in a cellular structure is roughly proportional to the depth of the convective layer. In a shallow layer the thermals are closer together; in a deeper one they are further apart. But since your glider still has the same glide ratio in both conditions, you should encounter the same number of thermals on the glide from the top of a thermal down to the ground. This works against you if the layer is very deep, or very shallow. If it is very deep, as for example on a good day in Australia, the blue thermals may go to 10000ft, will be well organised and strong, but very far apart! If you miss one, it doesn't matter. If you miss two it is faintly worrying. When you miss three or four you begin to sweat. After five, and down to 2000ft, you are in bother! But if the layer is, say, only 3000ft to start with, the thermals in it are only two or three miles apart and you find yourself bumping into them every few minutes. Whether you dolphin through them, or stop and climb, is a matter of your choice. The disadvantage is, of course, that you are all the sooner down to your critical height for field selection so that in practice, as a novice, your choice of thermal is more limited in that you don't dare carry on as low as some experts. In the extreme example of the shallow layer to the seaward side of a sea breeze front the thermals are so close together that they become almost unusable.

"when you miss three or four you begin to sweat."

And finally . . . I hope I have shown you that cloudless days are not *all* bad, and that there can be plenty of scope for exciting soaring even if it is a bit more difficult. If you get good at it you might even relish the blue days, with your fellow members or syndicate partners being prepared to give up their turn to avoid having to tackle those blue skies!

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GLIDING IN THE ANDES

Brennig went to Chile earlier this year and thinks he is the first Brit to fly over Aconcagua, or for that matter any mountain over 20 000ft. Previously he has been to 26 000ft over the Apennines near Rieti and to 25 000ft over Mount Blanc

Having retired after 38 years' of undetected medical malpractice I decided to celebrate by sampling gliding in Chile as described by Williams and Radijz in the January 1986 issue of *Soaring*.

In 1976 I got Dr Bill Morgan to trail my glider 11 000 miles to Katmandu. It took him four months at the end of which they would not let us fly. Incredibly he took up gliding, more incredibly he still talks to me.

Aconcagua, at 23 035ft, is the highest in the Americas and the highest mountain flown over by any glider pilot. To do it you take a ten minute drive to the club, twenty minutes later you are airborne. Two hours later you are at 25 000ft above the summit - an hour and a half later you are back on the ground having a drink in the clubhouse.

I took a flight to Santiago and a bus and taxi to the club based at the Municipal Aerodrome of Las Condes. I was treated with the utmost courtesy and friendship by the club members and the staff, for whose kind hospitality I am extremely grateful.

The club is small but for its size must be the best in the world. The club fleet comprises two Mini Nimbus, three Janus, four Blaniks and six Pilatus B-4s for almost 150 members.

"... it is a bit like taking off from Hyde Park and casting off tow over Trafalgar Square ..."

Launching is by aerotow to the hill, nearly 1000m above the city plain which is 700m asl. The club is near the city (population 4 000 000) centre, so it is a bit like taking off from Hyde Park and casting off tow over Trafalgar Square then to the hill at 500m to pick off a thermal to 1500m on a good day. Thereafter progress is from slope to slope, each time getting higher, each time over mountains which are more dramatic than the last and each time pushing on to the north-east.

By a circuitous route one arrives on the western face of Aconcagua, already at about 5-6000m asl since the Mendoza valley on the western side is wide and deep. If Aconcagua does not produce lift you may be unable to cross it and, since the mountain is 10km into Argentina, the results are likely to be embarrassing as well as dangerous.

I turned on oxygen at about 5000m asl. It is a bit of a hassle as you have your hands full flying the aircraft and I had to get my hat off, knock off my glasses, replace my glasses etc. I did not quite feel with it at 25 000ft on oxygen, although I had no difficulty in coping. The blinker is unnecessary in a glider, since the noise of the demand valve is easily heard.

But before I could do all this I had to have two weeks of checking out. When I arrived a contest was in progress so I was put into the back seat of the Janus flown by Guido Haymann. He flew at VNE rough air about one wingspan clear of the mountain and on each day flew long tasks (400-300km approx) at about 100km/h which, bearing in mind the circuitous route, was extremely fast. He did not waste time getting high but pressed on for the next ridge lift as soon as it was practicable. He was 2nd in the plastic Class, beating two Mini



Brennig took this spectacular photograph looking down on Aconcagua from 25 000ft.

Nimbus, but only being beaten by the Ventus, which was highly creditable.

On the next three days I was given three long check-out flights by three separate instructors, but before I could go solo I had to have a one hour power flight to see all the forced landing fields. I was then allowed to fly solo in the Janus for three three hour flights within a 25 mile radius before I could increase my radius of operation and fly in the Mini Nimbus.

The gliders are not insured so I had to make a $1000 deposit. They don't carry parachutes as the main risk is hitting the mountains and that would add to the expense. Their absolute insistence on safe procedures are very reasonable because at each stage I found the flying was fairly difficult. A small change in height and direction altered one's perceptions alarmingly so that the whole geography had to be laboriously learnt by heart.

When flying near the mountain the airspeed must be kept well up (100km/h) as the horizon reference is lost. Great care must be taken turning into the hill because when commencing to circle in the mountains, escape routes must be kept open at all times. Many pilots have had to rush out in the centre of the valley gaining the forced landing field with little height in hand. Once height is lost the valley becomes more circuitous and the escape route longer. I was lucky - I had it easy, but I appreciate the dangers very acutely.

On my trip to Aconcagua I was escorted by two Pilatus who I let press on ahead and below, getting as high as I could as we flew along the Colorado river valley as it ran up to the north of Aconcagua. Little did I know that they had no oxygen and were not out to get a big climb.

I rose to cloudbase, then worked the shear wave to the windward side of the line of cloud. I then saw the coast clear to jump a ridge downwind and beat up and down a ridge like a rusty razor blade on the western side of the Mendoza valley.

"I leapt off this magic carpet on to the western face of the mountain and climbed to 25000ft"

I found a good thermal and circled in 4-5m lift and after a a while glanced up to see a small puff of cloud forming above. Thereafter, although climbing, I never got closer to it until at about 21000ft it drifted past to the north of the summit.

I leapt off this magic carpet on to the western face of the mountain and climbed to 25000ft. A cumulus cloud drifted on to the summit, so I just flew around it. In less than 20 minutes cloudbase had risen locally from 15000 to 21 000ft. Whether it was wave or thermal - in mixed up situations like this I have given up making the distinction - I just like to grab the lift and ask no questions.

I took a lot of photographs and after 30 minutes decided to fly home. "Where on earth am I?" Because at this height all the landmarks had changed a great deal, but with 23000ft in hand I reckoned I could get back 50 miles. Basically it was just a matter of flying west until I hit the Pacific, then turn left - still it was not so easy, as the valleys were full of haze and the mountains all looked the same.

There are thousands of peaks of 15000ft and a few over 20000ft. The Andes are a different league from the Alps. The mountains start there where the Alps give up.

The summit of Aconcagua looks like an enormous chunk of chocolate sponge, flecked with cream. On the northern face is a scree with a footpath zig-zagging up it - just the thing for an evening stroll to the summit, then hurrying down home to watch the news on TV.

Arriving back at the clubhouse the staff asked me if I would like to have something to drink and brought me a beer and a steak.

The next day, Sunday, was another good day, but blue, except for a few irrelevant flecks here or there.

They said "what shall we do today? - let's go to Aconcagua", so the whole club fleet took off for it. About six of us got on to the mountain and beat up and down near the summit, but the lift had a snakes-and-ladders quality which I just could not sort out. Guido Haymann found a bit of weak lift and got over the summit. However, he has already done it half a dozen times, so he is an expert. Half way up I was ordered off the mountain as my height, which I had reported as 4500m, was passed on to Guido as 3000m, but I joined a local gaggle and got back on the mountain half an hour later.

Being 22000ft over the Andres in blue is the experience of a lifetime. Then back to the clubhouse for some beers and a steak - fantastic. (Chilean steaks are the same size as telephone directories!)

The club is small but has a swimming pool and tennis court with a resident tennis instructor. The members have a pleasant social life based on the club, so there is as much enjoyment on the ground as in the air.

I greatly enjoyed my visit to Chile. I am extremely grateful to the club at Las Condes for their hospitality and hope that I may be allowed to enjoy it again.

I hope this article will not earn me their displeasure, since I fear the thousands of pilots descending on their club in search of similar experiences to mine may put an enormous strain on their resources.

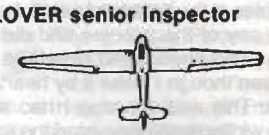
It was certainly a pleasant change from the Himalayas, but a good appetiser for another expedition there.

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LATE STARTER

Terry sets out from HusBos to Duxford on his first cross-country and feels an unexpected sadness when the flight is almost over

During the night the wind changed, and I woke and lay for a long time in the darkness listening to the sound that it made in the trees outside, and thinking that in the morning I would be able to attempt my first cross-country flight.

I was concerned though, and a little surprised, to find that the prospect of the flight was worrying me, because it seemed absurd for a mere Silver distance to assume daunting proportions in my mind. After all, kids of sixteen fly 50km all the time and think nothing of it. What bothered me most was my inability to identify the cause of my sudden nervousness – I knew I could find lift and stay in it; the country for miles around the airfield was familiar to me; and I was sure that if I had to I could land the K-8 on a traffic-island. So why worry?

I tried to be analytical about the problem, and eventually I understood. It was the same old thing that bedevils us all in everything we set out to accomplish. It's called, politely, "fear of failure", but if you're honest with yourself it's just the sin of pride in disguise – vanity – the sin that got Adam thrown out from the Garden. Once I had recognised the old enemy I was able to drift back into a dreamless sleep and when I woke again it was a bright, clean morning with the clouds of the cold front building impressively to the north-west.

A quick glance at the position of the sun showed that the day was already well advanced. As I scrambled to get myself organised the telephone began to ring with a vaguely accusatory tone which acted as a spur to my efforts.

At the club I found that the retrieve crew, made impatient by my late arrival, had pulled out the glider and DI'ed it, leaving me nothing to do except check the wind direction and draw the inevitable downwind line on to the map which I had bought over a year ago for just this occasion. The line ran further than 50km and I felt vaguely aggrieved. Other people had only done a couple of kilometres over the minimum – so why was I stuck with an extra forty! The unfairness of it brought on another bout of apprehension – fifty I

might manage, but ninety was an impossibility. There was no sympathy from the retrieve crew, which pointed out coldly that it had been obliged to telephone me to ensure that I got to the club on time. It consulted its complicated watch which it uses to time its frequent 300km flights and suggested I might like to get going before nightfall.

Then I began to receive advice. Pundits studied the lonely blue line linking me with an unknown airfield and recommended that I fly somewhere else – in fact, virtually anywhere else but where I had planned. Like signposts at a crossroads the arms of the pundits pointed commandingly all around the horizon. So my destination became settled as my own vanity proved greater than my confidence in the opinions of the experts. I trampled the map into the shape I wanted and stuck it down with tape; I polished the canopy; I covered myself in soot smoking a barograph; and I went to the loo so often that I was as dehydrated as a dog-biscuit by the time I was ready to go.

On the line I was surprised by how unaccustomedly nice people were, particularly after they had examined the map and sucked their teeth over my intended goal. A variety of ingeniously insulting remarks were confided to me for delivery to old friends and rivals at the distant club until I felt like a message about to be corked into a bottle and lobbed into the sea. Several times I was told how nervous I would feel as I turned my back on my base, but I knew that was wrong – after twenty years of leaving people and places behind it's no problem any more.

Paradoxically, on a downwind dash you take off in the wrong direction, and as the Chipmunk dragged me away to the west I remember thinking indignantly "that's another bloody mile I'll have to do". Then I was off, turning free, and instantly in powerful lift that took me to 3000ft, drifting me way beyond the airfield within a couple of minutes. I looked back and tried to feel worried, but now that it had started I felt good.

". . . this was more like proper navigation than hopping from motorway to motorway . . ."

I looked away into the hazy distance down the grey lines of the cloud streets which were forming quickly along my route but there was no landmark visible, so I settled happily on to a compass course feeling that this was more like proper navigation than hopping from motorway to motorway, and far beneath me the ripening fields moved in great slow waves under the wind.

Ten miles further the fields vanished under the brick and concrete of three substantial towns that meet along the line of a road that was important even before the Romans came. Until recently it was prosperous here but now it's an area of special economic development, which means that the traditional industries have been torn down to make way for nothing. The tall chimneys and the huge rolling-mills of the old works which used to be the basis of the towns' wealth lie gutted and open to the weather like a wrecked battleship. To the south, the new town has been laid out geometrically and from the air it looks as neat as it must have done on the architect's drawing board. From 4000ft you couldn't see the crowded streets or hear the noise or sense the frustration.

Flying just beneath cloudbase I was in lift so strong and smooth that I felt I could have got out and walked on it, and the K-8 seemed to be sliding along a sheet of ice.

It was icy too inside the K-8. Chill winds stabbed into the cockpit through apertures that Schleicher never designed, making me glad I had worn gloves.

Ahead was a complex of small lakes glittering in the sunlight as sharply as a smashed pane of glass. The blue line passed above them and so did I.

Near my home the fields are small and irregular in shape, moulded partly by the rolling country and partly by the effects of history, marriage and inheritance – but where I was now the landscape had changed scale and become more organised. These fields were wide, carefully planned, and filled with crop which was just beginning to turn pale gold.

A Canberra slid beneath me heading east. In its mottled green and brown camouflage it stood out above the fields like a rattlesnake on a tablecloth. I wondered why military aeroplanes, even ageing Canberras, always give you a thrill, and why it is that while gliders and yachts can often be remarkably beautiful it's only powered aircraft, boats or cars which can also be exciting?

When I was a kid at school I would have given ten years of my life to have flown something like that Canberra. Later, as I grew older and more responsible I appreciated that this was a conventionally childish idea and dismissed it. Now, quite a lot older, and already at that age when you feel that most of the good things that are ever going to happen to you have probably taken place, it occurred to me that the schoolboy – perhaps – had been right.

At this stage in the flight, however, there was something else to think about. Clouds both fascinate and frighten me, but I knew that I could certainly reach Silver height with a cloud climb so very cautiously I let the K-8 be drawn up into the base of an alarmingly large grey cloud. Tendrils of mist seemed to reach down for the glider and to my nervous imagination the whole thing took on the aspect of some awful dark octopus. Then the daylight went and I was concentrating on speed, and turn, and ball in the centre, and I thought damn! I forgot to check the time. At something close to 6000ft I'd had enough and I straightened up towards the lightest area of murk and came shooting out into sudden sunlight and air that was clear and exhilarating.

I was in a gap between clouds that went up high, white and shining to the brilliant blue of the sky above. Below me the villages looked like pebbles at the bottom of a well. I could not recognise any of the pebbles and did not know how long I had been in the cloud – a classic error.

Even though I knew it by heart I looked at my map. This was the map I had studied through long winter evenings – marking routes, checking bearings, noting controlled airspace. Constant folding had cracked and softened it, leaving it as creased as an old handkerchief and there were circular stains where coffee cups had been stood carelessly.

I looked at the map more for reassurance than for information, much as you might touch a lucky charm in your pocket.

Then the countryside ahead changed suddenly from an abstract collection of components into an area, and I knew where I was and swung back confidently on to the correct course.

My next landmark, the last, was soon visible. There were only a few miles to go now but I was struggling in savage sink and rapidly losing height with nowhere to land except in crop. The pundits had been proved right.

". . . the slight satisfaction of having covered the maximum distance I could when they came to retrieve me."

I moved towards the better part of the sky and was shocked to find that the vario needle drooped even further. The altimeter showed less than 1500ft and I knew I ought to select one of the big, useless fields close to me and set up a circuit. The fields were all equally bad – stuffed with subsidised grain, much of it destined to rot unneeded in EEC warehouses, I thought bitterly. I decided to fly as far as I could towards my goal and turn into wind over the last possible field so that I would have the slight satisfaction of having covered the maximum distance I could when they came to retrieve me.

As I entered the big, blue, open, sunlit space downwind of the clouds the glider shuddered then surged effortlessly upwards at a steady 6kt. In a few moments the fields below looked the size of postcards. If there's bad sink, they had told me, there must be good lift somewhere. This was evidently Somewhere.

Later on it was explained to me, with the help of diagrams, that there was wave across the country that day, but at the time I greeted the unexpected lift as some kind of bonus from heaven – a reward for the pure and blameless life I lead. These days.

At a comfortable height I looked along my heading and saw a runway a couple of miles away with sunlight glinting on a familiar, but unexpected, triangular shape. Then I remembered – Concorde was parked there, the star of the static display.

As I realised that I was going to make it there was a brief sadness that the flight was almost over, a sadness that I hadn't expected to feel when I had spent so many months looking forward to this first cross-country.

I lowered the nose. The wind around the canopy rose from a hiss to a roar. The patches on the fabric fluttered wildly in the airstream like a tattered banner and I aimed the old K-8 for the centre of that airfield at a riotous 70kt.

And suddenly the moment was better than I could have anticipated. It was better than all the things I had ever daydreamed – like conducting the last night of the Proms, or opening for England, or beating Moss in the Mille Miglia.

With a feeling like that a man could stay warm all winter.

LAUNCH FAILURE ACCIDENTS

These accidents are on the increase and Bill, BGA director of operations, tries to establish their underlying pattern to give you and your club's management the know-how to avoid becoming a statistic

In the six year period from 1981 to 1986 launch failure was the second highest cause of accidents, accounting for almost 15% (127 out of 858) if all types of launch are considered. In the same period there have been three fatalities (out of 18) and nine serious injuries (out of 37) - 17% and 24% respectively. Worse, the trend is upwards - by 33%.

Where's the risk? A detailed analysis of the accidents is time taking; even though the data is on a computer interpreting it to the extent one would like is not possible. Out of 101 wire launch accidents 35 are to two-seaters which might indicate that teaching this exercise is a problem. What might be called early solo types (K-8, K-6, Pirat, Swallow and Sport Vega) account for a further 27 - an indication that inexperience may be a factor. In fact the average PI hours was 40 (excluding two pilots with 450 and 310 hours) and the average age 39 years. Obviously with relatively small numbers further statistical analysis is probably not valid but a number of critical phases are apparent.

The Initial Ground Run. The critical factor in this phase is failure to release when things start to go wrong. Just dropping the wing can lead to catastrophic results as the following summary shows:

Glider: Sport Vega	***Launch: winch***
Pilot: age - 40	***PI hours: 41***

During the ground run the wingtip touched the ground just as flying speed was reached. Pilot released but glider cart-wheeled and landed heavily on the nose coming to rest some 75 yards from the launch point.

Too late was the cry! The time to release is when the wing is going down and you can't stop it. The critical limit for a Vega (and similar) is reached much sooner than in a K-8 or K-6.

Another possibility is down to poor airfield organisation:

Glider: Sport Vega	***Launch: auto***
Pilot: age - 33	***PI hours: 37***

At the start of the launch the glider veered. Pilot released but failed to steer straight on the ground run. Glider collided with two parked gliders - its wheel brake was not working.

Who's fault was this one - the pilot or the launch point organiser or both? Is pilot experience relevant in this case?

The First 50ft. This phase of the launch is critical, in part because of the wind gradient and also the minimum safe climbing speed. Speed is gained from the power source (winch/towcar) and the wind gradient; what you gain on the way up will be lost on the way down and so a safe climbing speed should include a margin for this loss. Failure to do so gives the following scenario:

Glider: K-8	***Launch: winch***
Pilot: age - 41	***PI hours: 17***

After a normal initial launch the winch seemed to lose power. The glider was at 20-30ft when the pilot released but did not pick up enough speed to round out. The wing dropped and the glider cart-wheeled . . .

The pilot shouldn't have been there in the first place if there wasn't enough speed. Climbing hopefully simply isn't good enough!

Parachute too large

The Cable Parachute. Down the years there have been accidents due to foul-ups with the parachute. The factor common to all the accidents is a parachute which is too large. If, for any reason, the launch cable goes slack then the parachute will deploy. With power still applied the parachute will continue to climb (kite) and the glider either gets the 'chute over its nose or over the wing:

Glider: K-6CR	***Launch: auto***
Pilot: age - 33	***PI hours: 24***

Ground run and take-off were normal but speed decayed at about 20ft. Launch aborted by pilot and cable parachute deployed over glider's canopy. With vision obscured the pilot landed heavily.

Later in the launch the consequences can be much more serious:

Glider: K-6CR	***Launch: winch***
Pilot: age - 50	***PI hours: n/k***

After what appeared to be a normal early stage of the launch the cable released at approximately 300ft and went over the port wing. The glider was seen to turn to port before spinning steeply to the ground.

In fact the cable caught at the inboard end of the aileron as it slid down the wing with fatal results. Would the accident have been survivable, or even avoidable, if the pilot had gone straight ahead? The article "Flying Cable Parachutes" (S&G October 1984, p211) was simulated by this one.

Above the Critical Height. Is there a critical height above which the risks are minimal? Not so according to the accident data. The problems may arise due to haste or judgment or, rather a lack of it:

Glider: Swallow	***Launch: winch***
Pilot: age - 26	***PI hours: 21***

Winch launch failed at about 700ft. Pilot lowered the nose but used the airbrakes before getting sufficient speed. Glider landed heavily. Pilot known to have been flying in a fatigued condition.

If the airbrakes are opened too soon (the going-in-to-land-lever syndrome) one may never get flying speed. How heavy the landing will be is anyone's guess.

Flying a suitable pattern for a given height/position of break or failure can be quite difficult, especially if the site is a restricted one:

Glider: K-6E	***Launch: auto***
Pilot: age - 41	***PI hours: 31***

The pilot had a failed launch during his first flight on type. There was insufficient space to land ahead on the short runway in use so he turned to land crosswind on the long runway. Fast landing with drift hitting runway edge. . .

First flight on type is often critical; perhaps one way of easing the workload is to make the conversion in the easiest possible conditions.

If the crosswind landing is a problem what about downwind?:

Glider: K-6E	***Launch: winch***
Pilot: age - 64	***PI hours: 55***

Cable back released at about 350ft. Pilot attempted downwind landing, overshot and landed in rough heather and gorse.

Judgment of a downwind landing is difficult. If at your site it is a distinct possibility, then obviously it has to be included in the training.

The Launching Equipment. One final thought. Many clubs are still using 1000lb weak links and accepting a higher incidence of cable breaks than is reasonable. The stronger and appropriate strength of link considerably reduces the risk. It would be interesting to have some figures on the proportion of cable breaks to launches which is regarded as acceptable. What figures would you put on it - 1%, 2%, 5%?.

IAN SMITH

CABLE GEAR AND THINGS

Ian, a member of East Sussex GC, gives some advice on how to make your winch more efficient to cut down the launch point queues

Some pilots prefer a winch launch but there is nothing more frustrating than a long wait due to problems with the launching equipment being mismanaged.

[1]Let us start with a roll of new stranded wire on a winch. The winch should be positioned to allow for the maximum length required plus another 100m. After attaching a vehicle such as a tractor to the end of the cable, winch in slowly so that the cable lays fairly tight on to the drum ensuring there are no loops. Repeat this twice to make sure the cable has been sufficiently stretched. So far so good. We now need various items on the end of the cable before we can use it for launching – [2]lock-up swivel, weak link, drogue chute, shock absorber, four metres of cable threaded through a length of reinforced plastic hose and a set of rings. Let's look in more detail at this list.



Ian, a professional gliding and SLMG instructor, has a Gold C and two Diamonds. He started gliding 26 years ago in the RAFGSA and has flown in the Middle East, Kenya and Australia, worked at Lasham last season on holiday courses and is now instructing at Ringmer where he is deputy tug master.

The manufacturers of stranded cable will normally include a warning note not to use a swivel. What this really means is that on no account should this cable be allowed to rotate. In the worse case it will unwind itself and the outside strands will end up longer than the inner core strand.



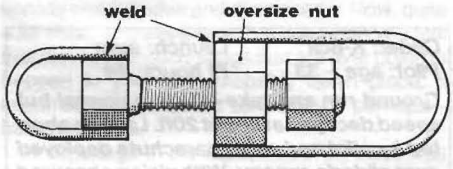
If you use a cable with just a small section partially unravelled all the weight of the launch will be transmitted through the inner core. The result is a break on the inner core producing a weakness which will kink and subsequently break the cable with multiple fractures of the inner core along the whole length of the cable. From this we could deduce that it is better not to have a swivel provided the cable doesn't have a drogue chute, but for reasons I shall give later, we do need the drogue chute. Watch a launch and you will see that it is only after release and when the drogue is deployed that rotation takes place, resulting in the inner core failure on subsequent launches.

We need to prevent the cable rotating after release from the glider and an answer would be an aerodynamically balanced drogue. Although it is feasible to make such a drogue, a slight tear, stretch or any change would result in a loss of balance and it is inevitable that within a few launches some imbalance would occur. So if we introduce a swivel we can allow the chute to rotate freely and independently from our expensive cable.

The swivel

The swivel must *not* rotate when launching a glider but rotate after release. It must be robust enough to survive being dragged over a hard surface at speed and be inexpensive. The design used by the East Sussex GC meets this specification and is well proven from the early '60s in the RAFGSA.

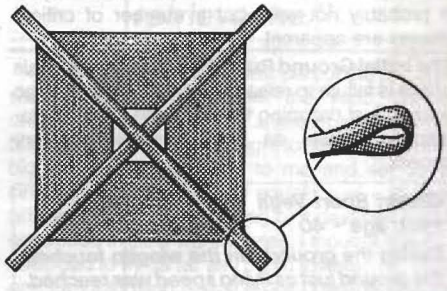
The requirements are one 10mm nut and bolt or similar size, an over-sized nut to slide over the shank of the bolt and two lengths of 5mm steel rod. With a simple welding job we end up with a lock-up swivel shown in the drawing.



The steel rod ends must have sufficient radius to accommodate suitable size shackles. The normal pulling tension is anything up to 800lbs on launch so the friction between the two nut surfaces is so high that the swivel is locked thus not allowing any rotation. After release the tension is down to a few pounds drag and will allow rotation of the drogue independent of the cable.

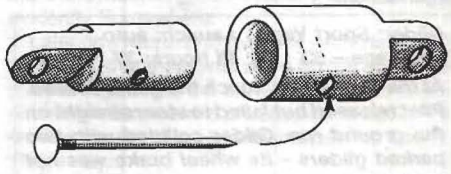
Drogue and shock absorber

This is usually made of heavy duty canvas and webbing straps sufficiently strong so that the launch pull is taken straight through the straps. [3]The size of the drogue is important as it has to give only just sufficient drag to keep loops from being thrown into the cable. Any more drag and it will fly too well making launching in crosswinds a problem, especially so if the gliding site has a road, power cables or any other area where it would create a danger to the general public. The largest size required should be only just sufficient to do the job in no wind conditions. The optimum size therefore is one metre square. Two 3m lengths of rope are attached diagonally from each corner which will absorb any shock on the launch.



Weak links

[4]The most reliable weak link system is at Lasham and at East Sussex GC but is not expensive. It comes in two halves, a male and a female, made in stainless steel with the weak link being a builders' 2in nail in shear holding the two halves together.



Having two weak link/drogue ends for the cable end with a quick change system allows for a low and high breaking strain for light or heavy gliders. This system is used very efficiently at Lasham. However, one weak link system with a breaking strain to cover all glider weights will suffice but failures will be more likely. It is far cheaper to use polypropelene cord of the correct thickness as used at North Weald. Although this is a good system they do tend to wear rapidly.

Retrieving the cable

When retrieving the cable with the tractor or car always use a towing-out weak link attached to the cable end of the lock-up swivel. Just one strand of scrap cable is the well proven type.

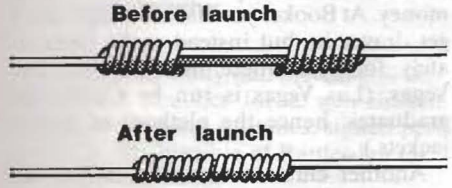
Piano wire

There are a few differences which are worth looking at, the first being that it is better for use on hard, abrasive surfaces than the stranded. When

laying out the new cable it is very important to rotate the roll and not take the easy option of just pulling off the roll laid on the ground. It is hard work done by hand but necessary if you are to avoid kinks at an early stage in the life of the cable. There is one method which automates the laying out and rolling out of the new cable which has been adopted at North Weald. If you have the basic welding skills it would be well worth a visit.

The system of using the drogue, weak link and swivel should be just the same as for the stranded cable. In the use of the lock-up swivel on the piano wire, however, its job is to minimise kinks. Any kink which occurs must be cut out and the ends rejoined.

This operation which takes a fair amount of skill can be learnt fairly quickly. The two ends to be joined are laid together and clamped in a vice, normally mounted on the cable retrieve vehicle, with around 2ft overlap. A right angle bend is put into one of the loose ends and then wrapped tightly and neatly around the other length of cable until you have six or seven turns. The last turn is then taken back one and a right angle is bent into a handle thus giving ample leverage to rotate the last turn several times to produce a clean break. Do the same to the other side to be joined and the knot is then complete. The pilot taking the next launch should be warned that when the knot pulls tight it will be heard and felt as a jolt together with a small bang as the knot pulls together.



In the February 1967 issue of S&G, p19, another technique of joining was shown in an article by Coventry GC which involved welding the two ends together. I never managed to establish how successful this system was apart from the fact that it did work although was rather tricky to get right. However it was proved that the finished join, no wider than the wire, was very much stronger than any alternative method.

Choice of launch system

If you have a usable hard runway available you will find after all the pros and cons have been ironed out that the autotow system will always be the better choice. Finally let us not forget that aerotowing is a great system if you have the money, but remember the future of the gliding movement depends on youngsters joining in to make our essential team that we need to keep going. Out of sheer necessity the majority will want the cheapest way into the air together with learning how to work with each other. The wire launch will always be needed if gliding is to survive.

The footnotes are by Dick Stratton, BGA chief technical officer.

[1] *With the increase in allowable weak link ratings (2000lbs for a K-13) it is essential to uprate the cable itself — 4.5mm stranded wire is now more appropriate.*

[2] *Cable parachute strop lengths. Experience of incidents of parachutes deploying over gliders, with serious damage and equally serious injury, dictates that the strop between the glider and the cable parachute should be much larger than 4m (14ft). The van Gelder winch at Dunstable has 30m (100ft)!*

[3] *Cable parachutes. Where rejected ejection seat drogues are used, the shroud lines should be knotted to prevent the drogue "flying".*

[4] *"Plug and socket type" weak links, with wire nails in double shear, are all right provided (a) they don't rust into a solid mass, and (b) the wire nails don't fatigue during repeated operations. Both Tost and "Mity" links are well worth trying.*

A CREW'S LIFE

Liz, a computer programmer and the wife of Richard Cowderoy, gives an alternative view of the Enstone Regionals. She has a Silver C but at the moment is "resting", having lost her enthusiasm for gliding

Friday. Cleared 3ft high grass and pitched tent while Pilot 640 registered and returned last year's unpolished cup.

Saturday, Day 1, task M50 junction, Ludlow Castle, somewhere. a 200km or so triangle to nowhere in particular *via* somewhere else. Pilot calculated it should take four hours so I went shopping and collected a parking ticket. Then picked up the other half of the crew at the railway station. He hadn't come by train but was still late. When we got back Pilot had landed out as far away as possible. Not a good start to the week. It was a long retrieve, first TPs are always furthest away, and we were low on petrol and out of trailer driving practice. We squeezed into a garage, and out again, scraping the paint off the trailer and a pump. But it was a good field landing near the Peacock Inn at Nash which served the best meal I have had in ten years of retrieving. I highly recommend the field, despite being slightly out of wind, downhill and trees on every side. We got back to the site after midnight and the other-half-of-the-crew pitched his tent at 1am

Sunday, Day 2, Stratford, Sudeleigh Castle near Winchcombe. Boring. Pilot went out, came back, won day. Us crews moped around looking for opposition to psyche up - none, they had all gone on retrieves. In the ladies I found 165 crew who had not crewed before. She commented on the prima donna pilots, "Where's my camera?", "I need my barograph smoked", "... more water-ballast", "... there are flies on my wing!".

Monday. Great day. Super weather for crews as the task was cancelled and we did an O/R to Oxford shops with TP at bookshop. We got some steak and it stopped raining for a barbecue. Pilot looked a bit peeved.

Tuesday, Day 3, Halfpenny Green A/F, M5 Junction 6. Another grovel day. Boring old Pilot got back again disobeying crew's strict instructions to land by a good pub again. Everyone else landed out. Why can't he follow the herd? Sat and watched trailer convoys leaving field. No control to be found, so put Pilot on display to jeer at returning trailers.

Wednesday, Day 4, a 198km triangle, M1/M69 Leicester, M1 junction 14 Milton Keynes. Reasonable size task, and had time to go to hairdressers. Sundry other crews wandering round Chipping Norton market looking for something to occupy them, the kids and the dogs. The market took in more business than usual.

Thursday. Ugh! A pouring wet day. Dragged unwilling Pilot to shops *via* pubs. Went to concert and eventually came back to very damp tent.

Friday. Sympathetic with occupants of tent 291 which was parked in a stream. Spent most of the day grid squatting. Pilots and crews played cricket at the front of the grid. Dog stopped play by abducting ball. We rebriefed three times. "Typical gliding day - don't scrub until we get really wet" grumbled Pilot 397. So we sat in the car or under wings and the rain drips ran. The task board was scrubbed clean at 3pm by the rain.

Saturday, Day 5, 206.5km triangle, Melton Mowbray railway station, Pitsford reservoir. Crew instructed Pilot to stay up and to get home, then other half-of-crew finished his Comp and went home. I heard 175 finishing whilst I was still driving back from station, and broke speed limit to rush in to welcome Pilot 640 back as a conquering hero - but ... "Crew to the tower, 640. He's landed out, you'll have to go ..." Blimey. He's only five miles away and half the field had got back, so went and dug him out of ploughed field and gave him a hard time. Daft Pilot only needed 500ft to get home.

Sunday, Day 6, 214.5km. He hasn't blown it yet, after all he's still 3rd. Oh dear, there's lots of fluffy white clouds all over the sky - he's bound to land out. Pilot is panicking, doing his prima donna act, demanding thousands of pounds of waterballast. Crews are working furiously, cleaning, polishing, rigging to fly.

Pilot went round task okay at 88km/h and came back spattering waterballast in the nice cuppa Mrs 291 and I were having. Drank diluted tea, finished chat, let him stew at end of runway for coming back so quickly. Gale warning so still had to derig him. In the evening in the bar offered Mrs 291 the opportunity of polishing the silver cup for the next year. She didn't look too enthusiastic. Then, since the photos were developed, I tried to pysche up other opposition that they had the wrong TP. It didn't work and I retired to bed disgruntled.

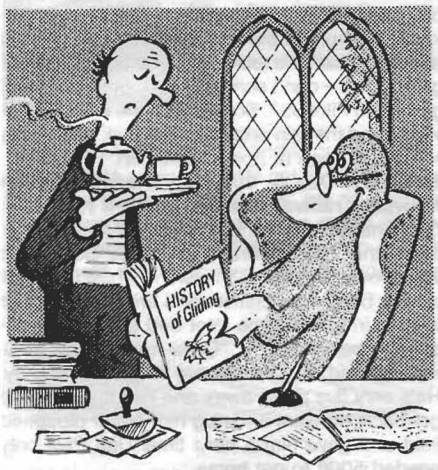
Monday. Day scrubbed. Derigged tent. "Come 4th!" I cried to Pilot still in sleeping bag, but he came 3rd and won a mug.



TAIL FEATHERS

Club Culture or There's No Business Like Show Business

For various reasons I have been accepting invitations to be an after-dinner speaker at a number of clubs during the past winter. I'm glad I did, if only because I admire the old stand-up entertainers who could tell you the precise difference between a Wigan Saturday matinee audience and a Birmingham Tuesday night audience even before the pennies started to fly.



Being waited on hand and foot in ivy-covered Gothic cloisters - beats work any time.

I agreed to give a speech at the Booker annual bunfight chiefly out of curiosity - I wanted to see what they looked like with their clothes on. When lounging around the grid during a Comp, the Booker Boy Racers usually look like something that one of Nelson's press gangs would gladly have left ashore rather than have them crawling all over his nice clean ships. Their piratical swagger comes of knowing they produce more hotshot soaring aces *per capita* than any other club. I don't mind this a bit, partly because I am too old to feel I am in competition with them, and because I've never had much time for false modesty (You never had much time for *real* modesty either. ED) Anyway, with the dazzling exception of Brian Spreckley, making his appearance as the new 15 Metre World Champion, the standard of dress at the Booker dinner was distinctly casual, as I'd been warned.

What a contrast the Cambridge University Gliding Club dinner was! This elegant thrash was held in the Hall at Jesus College. It was the first time I had dined at a High Table in an Oxbridge college, so a



The Cambridge pilot will have forgotten his parachute.

lifelong ambition was realised. I've always wanted to be a don: 28 weeks' vacation a year and all found; being waited on hand and foot in ivy-covered Gothic cloisters - beats work any time. (Furious denial by Dr Anthony Edwards of Caius College follows.) Everyone was in full fig, sporting DJs and ballgowns. Talk about formal: Latin Grace by Dr Edwards; Toast to The Queen; Toasts to The Guests and The Club and Replies on Behalf of The Guests and The Club etc etc, all set out on a beautifully printed menu. Everything ran according to the timetable.

I don't think it would be fair to say that at Booker everything ran a couple of hours behind schedule since I'm not sure there was any schedule. Anyway that meant that by the time my comic turn came on they were all roaring tight and fell about with laughter at pretty well anything I said, including the calculated insults to their club, their clothes and even their flying, which gives you an idea of how much they had put away. If you ignore the wear and tear on the guest speaker's nerves, a delay in the proceedings helps to warm up the audience. Beware, however, those institutions at whose dinners the drink flows like glue: a thirsty crowd can get pretty ugly. However the flow of drink is not normally a problem with gliding dinners, thank God.

Another reason for going and meeting strange clubs (*strange* having no pejorative connotation here) is to compare their distinctive character and style, known in the corporate psychology field as *cultures*. I have already given a subtle hint of one way in which these styles vary. However, these profound differences in culture extend to the way people fly. Take a simple everyday occurrence like, say, the mid-air collision. The chances of having a Dunstable pilot or a Booker pilot ram you in flight are exactly the same: the only difference is that the Dunstable pilot won't have seen you at all, whereas the Booker pilot will have had you in his sights right up to the moment of impact, fully expecting you to vacate the thermal, which is what you would have done if you'd seen him soon enough. And on your way down in your parachutes the Dunstable pilot will say "I'm frightfully sorry" and the Booker pilot will say "You dozy berk, keep a better look-out next time!" The Cambridge pilot will have forgotten his parachute.

Don't play poker at Booker

At the Dunstable poker school you bleed money. At Booker you haemorrhage: don't get drawn in, but instead make immediately for somewhere innocent like Las Vegas. (Las Vegas is run by Cambridge graduates: hence the plethora of dinner jackets.)

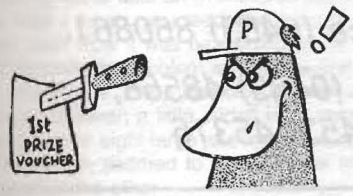
Another club that I visited during the

Beware those institutions at whose dinners the drink flows like





port and oratory season was quite bizarre: everyone there seemed perfectly normal. I failed, however, to take up a unique opportunity to check out the possibility of deeply-concealed eccentricities under the apparently sane exterior: I won in the raffle a free aerobatic flight the next morning with their best pilot. But one look at his eyeballs at around midnight and, as they say in the *Sunday People*, "I made an excuse and left." I remember only too well how the London Gliding Club used to swell the coffers by raffling flights that no one dared claim.



An unredeemed voucher.

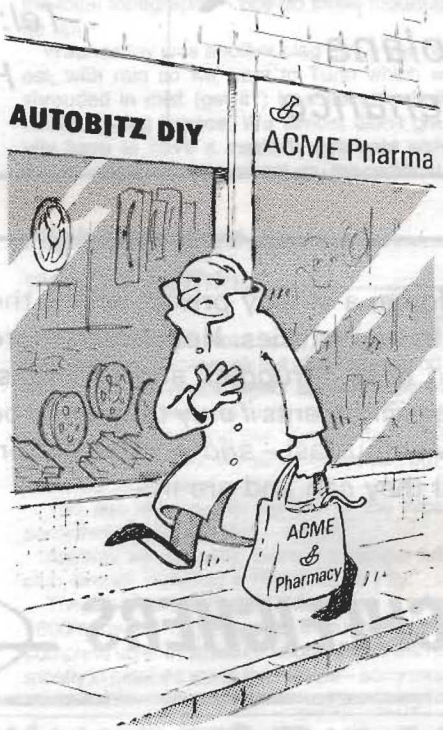
Pinned to my study wall there is still this unredeemed voucher for a well-shaken cocktail of Unusual Attitudes, signed personally by Mr Illegible of Rattlesden GC. Now, what am I bid?

like glue: a thirsty crowd can get pretty ugly.



Mad inventors line up here, please

I had vowed not to write any longer about the subject of having a pee in a glider, but I will make an exception, since it may help to prove, while I'm on this topic of varying cultures, that the further people are from London the more interesting (= weird) they get. At the BGA conference in Harrogate I was told this true story by a member of a famous northern club. He wanted to overcome the classic problem of pushing water uphill, and he had the bright idea of *pulling* it uphill instead. So he built a device consisting of an assortment of plastic tubes with one of those rubber things that have been getting an inordinate amount of publicity recently, a car windscreen-washer pump and a 12 volt battery to extract the fluid by brute force.



An assortment of plastic tubes with one of those rubber things.

"How did it work in flight?" I asked.

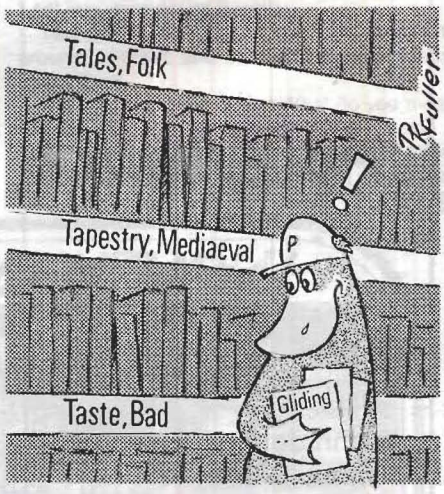
Well, it never quite got to that stage, he said. He first tested it out while lying on his back on the bathroom floor: when he switched it on he found it gave a violent and most disagreeable suck (I forgot to ask whether six volts would have given a more agreeable suck) which left painful marks. His second mistake was to leave the bathroom door open, so that when his wife – who as a gliding wife is more or less permanently braced for the unexpected – heard the strange noises coming from this Heath Robinson machine, shortly followed by even stranger noises from him, she dashed into the bathroom. There is no record of their subsequent conversation, which I leave to your imagination.



No record of their conversation!

To us that narrative is absolutely credible. But I was wondering what the man on the Clapham omnibus would have made of it all if he had read about it in the *News of the World*, which could well have happened if our inventive friend had used 24 volts and had required the immediate aid of the ambulance or police or even the fire brigade. Knowing what Fleet Street journalists are like when they get their teeth into a bit of scandal, I simply shudder to think.

As a subplot for a bawdy novel I give this idea free (which is very generous of me, since the story wasn't mine in the first place) to Tom Sharpe, who could no doubt work it up into a masterpiece of bad taste.



Platypus needs a crew for the Enstone Regionals from August 15-23. Anyone sufficiently adventurous/curious should ring 01-748 6344.

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TRIP TO AOSTA

Part 2

We read in the December issue, p270, how Ivor and his party from South Wales GC planned to go gliding in Italy. Now he reports on the expedition.

Arriving by air at Geneva the trouble was there were three of us. including the pilot there were four. Geneva, lakeside airport in the middle of the Alps with Aosta over the hump (all 13000ft of it) some 110km away to the SE.

The first panic came when in the crowded reception hall at the airport the tannoy or PA or whatever the Swiss call it exuded dulcet female tones asking for Monsieur Chateau to report to the information desk. I mean, it was me, with a French accent, and I'd only just landed in a foreign country. Presenting myself I was immediately besieged by other men who also claimed to be Monsieur Chateau. Of course *they* were but I was an English imitation Shatteux or whatever. The receptionist came to my rescue, showed all of us a notice with Aosta written on it, and all misunderstanding dissolved. But where was the person who left the message? Gone. More panic. He was the pilot. Pilot? We thought we were getting a car and now we had four and a pile of luggage. Yes. Over the Alps.

Roberto said: No way. Too heavy. I agreed. Anything not to take an overloaded aircraft over the Alps. I mean, you read about these things, don't you? Now it was happening to us.

Eventually the problem was solved and four of us entered the 250hp Rockwell aircraft and we queued between a little Jodell on a grass strip and seven or eight large jets forming a constant queue which seemed to grow at one end and take off at the other.

Our turn came to take off halfway up the runway! I wondered what the air was like after the large jets had churned it up and just hoped the controller got it right. We climbed and headed NE. NE!

I soon realised why when I saw the cloud-covered Alps on our right well above us. We turned SE eventually and circled in an upward spiral to 13000ft where I noticed the air temperature was just about zero.

Avoiding cloud and mountains we began our descent through a gap between them aiming for the top of the St Bernard range of peaks to drop over the other side into a sea of mist below.

The thinnest bit seemed to sit in the middle of the valley. On winding down it darkened and gradually revealed – a runway! My first view of Aosta from 5000ft.

We had arrived.

Monday was clag – imported Usk variety and Tuesday only just saw us practising circuits for clearance with full radio control in Italian. I felt like an actor in a prompt corner in the back seat of Nigel's Puchacz in case the Italian messages weren't on time or up to standard – that was after the first flight when I was checked out.

I found it all very interesting feeding eyes and ears with information and sensations regarding the local topography – boy do those mountains go up!

Wednesday was another clag day – yes honest, with rain so we went to Turin which was shrouded in mist (get it?) to collect my Italian official gliding licence. We almost didn't get it; you have to have a medical certificate with a termination date on it – no not you the certificate!

High aerotows yielded nothing

On Thursday we woke up to see almost all of the mountains in clear air but after clearing off all the backlog of check flights several expensive high aerotows were to yield nothing. Even the local pundit boys found 'owt. Several days of high pressure continued. No wind, lots of sun but no thermals to speak of.

You see the weather system of the Alps is something quite different – Italian.

Anyway we are here, there is a hangar full of club aircraft including a Mosquito so I fly.

The weather started at 1200m so I take a 1600m tow. At 1200m we go through an almost complete layer of strato cu about 100ft thick lying mostly in patches along the hillside – sorry mountainside – there is a 3500m mountain each side of the airfield. If you don't believe me or can't visualise it, picture Shabdon with its northerly hill going up to 10000ft and then one on the south as well!

The view was unbelievable. I'm so wound up with it all and in a strange aircraft – all metres and strange esoteric vario systems that I make a complete hash of it and pull off prematurely under a dying cu and fly close to the hill to find the thermal hill lift.

The sun has only fallen on a bit of the mountain above the strato cu so the heating and the thermals aren't there at 1200m.

As I am now down to this height, almost, I find myself trying to pick off thermals at ground level, effectively.

This is extremely difficult especially as the ground is at 45° to the horizontal, is very broken and mostly large murderous rock and trees. After two terrifying chandelles I decide I have got to survive and fly straight along the hill hoping for a large enough thermal to push me away form the impending carnage. I sink.

Turning away from the hill it is T&S and compass and into the murk. I live.

Having grounded myself for the rest of the day I am very grateful to survive.

Two of our chaps took 1600m tows climbed to around 10000ft and haven't stopped talking about it yet.

And that's about it really! What do you mean "that's about it?" Well the weather you see. I mean the weather was such that we could either have sun and no thermals, a big high, or rain. Yes rain!

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Valuable time is wasted by contributions being sent to the BGA office and the advertising agency instead of to the editorial office, 281 Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge CB1 4NH.

JILL POVALL

SOMETHING SPECIAL



Jill, who says she teaches to support her gliding, has 1300+ hours, flies a Swallow from Dishforth, is an Instructor with Clevelands GC and has a Silver C and Gold height.

Jill, the first to accept our invitation to write about a particularly enjoyable flight, describes wave soaring by moonlight

It was our final flight on a routine passenger evening, in the days when we were allowed to call them that. A rough blue July night when the old Blanik 598 and I had taken our quota of satisfied customers up, round and down through the rotor, and now as the golden lights of the hangar began to beckon our thoughts turned pleasantly to canopy cover and bar. Our last passenger was an enthusiastic girl on her second flight, veteran of several parachute jumps and not in the least nervous. We chatted our bumpy way up the standard 1500ft aerotow, and she remarked on the few lights twinkling prettily in Ripon. "Too early," I said, and I tried to describe that magic time, a little later, when the lights would twinkle like fireflies all over the Vale of York, and all good Blaniks should be in the hangar.

Off tow, down to 1300ft by the A1, and my P2 was flying. Below us another Blanik, 631, took off for the last flight of the night. We weren't losing much – there were definite surges in the turbulence, and the vario wasn't just showing stick lift.

"I have." I glanced above. A ragged cloud, very scrappy and a long way up, but the first that had appeared today. Unlikely. I have contacted wave below 2000ft at Dishforth, even from a winch launch, but not often. You were allowed to soar on the last flight of a passenger evening, and occasionally some passengers had been lucky, but it was getting dark.

Still 1300ft, and maintaining, 631, on its way towards the circuit, came and formated below. Hovering into wind on full flap we inched upward and at 2400ft left the rotor behind, my P2 taking control again in a smooth 4kt lift. We looked back at the rapidly diminishing airfield, the waiting coach party already invisible as we made off toward Ripon and the open sky. Joyfully I pointed out the little twinkling towns, and at 4000ft the vario needle hit the stop.

The most consistent off-the-clock lift I have ever encountered – but we were on stolen time. You can't really just fly off into the sunset, and for most stolen moments there are reckonings on the ground.

At 4500ft Blanik 631 left us, and from the silver ribbon of the river north of Ripon we turned to see the scrappy cloud behind us now transformed into a beautiful classic lenticular. Others were appearing all around, narrow and sharp like knives, ghostly white on the darkening sky. It was strange to see them without the customary brightness on their tops: although a fine three-quarter moon shone over Harrogate, the clouds remained pale.

". . . it would have been perfectly feasible (albeit illegal) to stay up all night . . ."

The wicked thought struck me that it would have been perfectly feasible (albeit illegal) to stay up all night; dawn comes early in Yorkshire in mid-July, and the wave was building. But coach drivers don't wait for ever and reckonings have to be paid, and good Blaniks should have their covers on by now. The Leeming approach lights shone accusingly at a small blot on the radar, and I decided I'd better remove it fast.

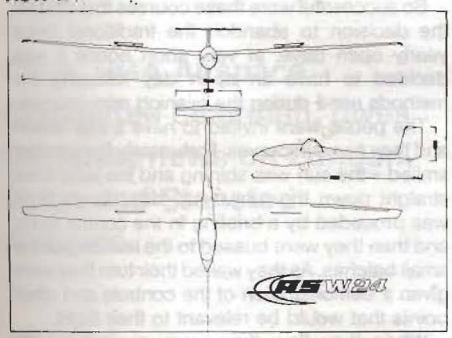
I didn't record how high we actually went; it wasn't anything spectacular. I found some off-the-clock sink and operated the brakes (horrible waste of height!), and the "passenger" flew us down. We were both exhilarated, and approaching the airfield at 2000ft she rather belatedly asked for aerobatics. No rotor now, quite calm, and she was an experienced wave pilot! But 598 was an old lady so we hid decorously behind the hangars and had a quick fling for old times' sake.

Flying upwind to join the circuit, again the vario surged upwards! Back to 2400ft over the A1, but it wouldn't do, you can't really . . . and we made a very fast circuit.

Long after midnight, after the coach had rounded up its errant flock (still starry eyed) and the bar had closed and I had driven into the lights of Harrogate, the wave clouds were still piled up like dinner plates in the Yorkshire sky. They were still there next morning, on my bleary eyed way to work. It would have been possible . . .

SAILPLANE NEWS

ASW-24



The design of Gerhard Waibel's Standard Class ASW-24 benefits from the support of Schleicher's newest recruit, Martin Heide, in its Kevlar/CFRP construction. It should be in competition this summer.

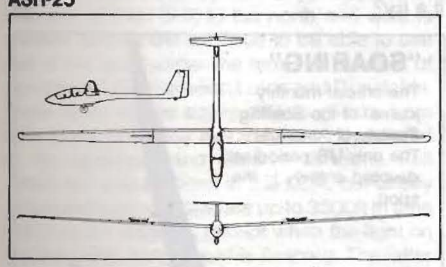
Technical data

Span (m):	15
Length (m):	6.55
Aspect Ratio:	22.5
Wing area (m):	10
Empty weight (kg):	220
Max take-off weight (kg):	500
Max wing loading (kg/m):	50
Waterballast (litres):	170
Max glide (km/h):	43 at 105
Min sink (m/sec):	0.58
Min speed (km/h):	70 (38kt) VNE (km/h) 270

Price: 210000frs (October 1986)

Translated from *Vol a Voile*

ASH-25



The present Schleicher "flagship" is the ASH-25. The initials stand for Alexander Schleicher-Heide. Martin Heide is, like most of the German sailplane designers, an Akaflieg graduate.

The German sport aviation magazine, *Der Adler*, describes the ASH-25 as follows:

"The fuselage is a cross between an AS 22-2 and a FS-31. The wing is a result of the further development of the ASW-22 and is in four sections ... Boundary layer control is achieved by 'turbulators' on the under surface of the wing, as with the ASW-22. The ASH-25 is almost exclusively of CFRP construction; Aramid fibre sandwich construction is used for all flying controls, flaps and the front fuselage section. Only the fin is built from GFRP."

It costs 147000 D-Mark including VAT (February 1987) and, at the moment, only one or two aircraft are being produced each month.

Technical data

Span (m):	25
Length (m):	9
Aspect ratio:	38
Wing area (m):	16.31
Empty weight (kg):	470
Max take-off weight (kg):	750
Waterballast (litres):	120
Max wing loading (kg/m):	46
Min speed (km/h):	65
VNE (km/h):	270

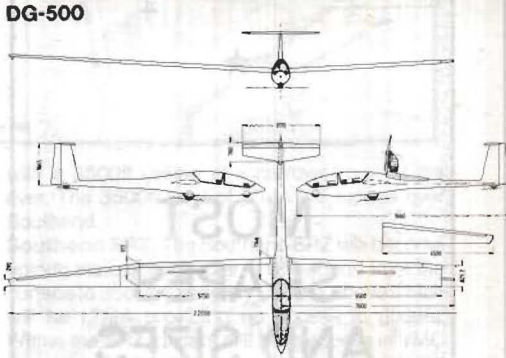
Max glide: better than 57 at 108km/h

Translated by Les Fellows



The DG-500 on its maiden flight when the engine's very low noise level was evident.

DG-500



The maiden flight was on March 19 and the characteristics in general are equivalent to the DG-400 with a 17m wing span. The stick forces are similar to the DG-400 and extremely low for a 22m sailplane. When stalling there is little wing drop.

The aircraft is fitted with a Rotax 535 water-cooled engine which has a very low noise level with a three to one propeller reduction.

TRAVELLER'S TALE

KENYA

Richard and Angela Pollard have moved their gliding operation from Njoro to the Aberdare County Club at Mweiga. Alan Jury had an enjoyable winter gliding holiday with them and reports that the club is easily accessible from Nairobi with several tourist buses going there every day.

In addition to the gliding and excellent food and accommodation, Alan says the club can also offer golf, trout fishing, riding and game drives. It is in woodland slopes overlooking Mount Kenya and is the base for overnight stays at the ARK Game Lodge in the Aberdare mountains, a gathering place for elephants, rhino and numerous other animals.

Alan comments: "Kenya has an ideal and pleasant climate for gliding with plenty of sunshine, very strong thermals and high cloudbases. From the Mweiga airstrip at 6000ft one can fly 25 miles east over Mount Kenya at 17 058ft and see the wonderful snow covered peaks, or 15 miles west to the Aberdare mountains at 13 120ft and observe the game in the forest.

Tourist lodge airstrips for landing

"For cross-country pundits the Laikipia plain stretches for a few hundred miles to the north towards the great dry northern deserts. The Laikipia plain consists mainly of large cattle ranches with plenty of farm and tourist lodge airstrips to land out on if requried."

Richard and Angela have a T-21, K-13 equipped with oxygen, a Swallow and a Tutor. They are hoping to update the fleet with high performance gliders in the very near future.

They expect to be in the UK in July/August and Alan says they would be pleased to give a talk about gliding in Kenya to any club interested. Their address is PO Box 449, Nyeri, Kenya.

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JOHN HOLLAND

MINI-COURSES

John of the Cotswold GC suggests another approach to air experience flying

For most clubs the CAA ruling over air experience flying and their interpretation of "flying for hire and reward" has turned upside down practices followed since before the war to recruit new members and interest the general public in their sport.

In recent years quite a number of clubs have bought their own sites and it has become absolutely vital for them to maintain both their launch rate and their recruitment to service and repay their loans. No where was this more important than at the Cotswold GC where protracted purchase of Aston Down Airfield and the eventual ownership of far more land than originally envisaged had left a very considerable overdraft.

The Cotswold interpretation of the ruling was probably more severe than many others. It was felt that if they were ruled to be operating illegally then an accident involving a "passenger" could lead to far more than prosecution under the Air Navigation Order. In the case of injury, third party claims would be horrendous if the insurance company concerned refused to pay up on an "illegal" operation and the implications for instructors could equally be very serious.

". . . the club began to drift into a pretty appalling state financially . . ."

So all air experience flying came to an end. As last season was pretty horrible anyway, and despite seven day a week operations, the club began to drift into a pretty appalling state financially and membership began heading downwards as the poor weather weeded out more rapidly than usual the less than enthusiastic new members.

Something had to be done!

Fortunately someone came up with the idea of evening mini-courses and these were such a huge success the club ended the season with an all time high membership and a reduced overdraft that would have seemed impossible only six months earlier.

So what is a mini-course, you may ask? For £25 Cotswold offers the public three consecutive launches (if practicable) with qualified instructors, during which the P2 is treated to the normal instructional procedures and given a chance to fly the glider. There is also a pre-flight briefing.

The cost hasn't deterred anyone and the courses have resulted in an unusually high ratio of new members. At no time can the club be accused of flying for hire and reward outside the normally accepted club practices.

The essence of the experience has been that proper instruction reaps its rewards and it is essential that hands on experience be given.

So successful were these courses that despite the decision to abandon the traditional twice yearly open days, at very short notice it was decided to have an open day following the methods used during the evening mini-courses.

The public were invited to have a trial lesson and they came in droves. Fortunately the weather smiled - the sun was shining and the wind blew straight down the runway all day., Every flight was proceded by a briefing in the control tower and then they were bussed to the launch point in small batches. As they waited their turn they were given a demonstration of the controls and other points that would be relevant to their flight.

When they flew they were given hand on experience. By the end of the day we had given 198 preliminary lessons, recruited a considerable number for mini-courses and quite a few full flying members. The day had been a great success.

The disadvantages of this system lie mainly with the instructors. They get a bashing! On the other hand they are not on the treadmill of trying to get as many up in the air as possible. Evening flying now consists of a few enthusiasts having consecutive launches and the instructors find it more interesting because they are actually performing their normal function.

Cotswold would recommend any club to convert to mini-courses. Pre-planning is necessary to fit in briefings on the scale sometimes required (and for an open day it is a good idea to reserve an aircraft for ground instruction on the use of controls etc). It is a very rewarding way to carry out your air experience flying — why not give it a try?

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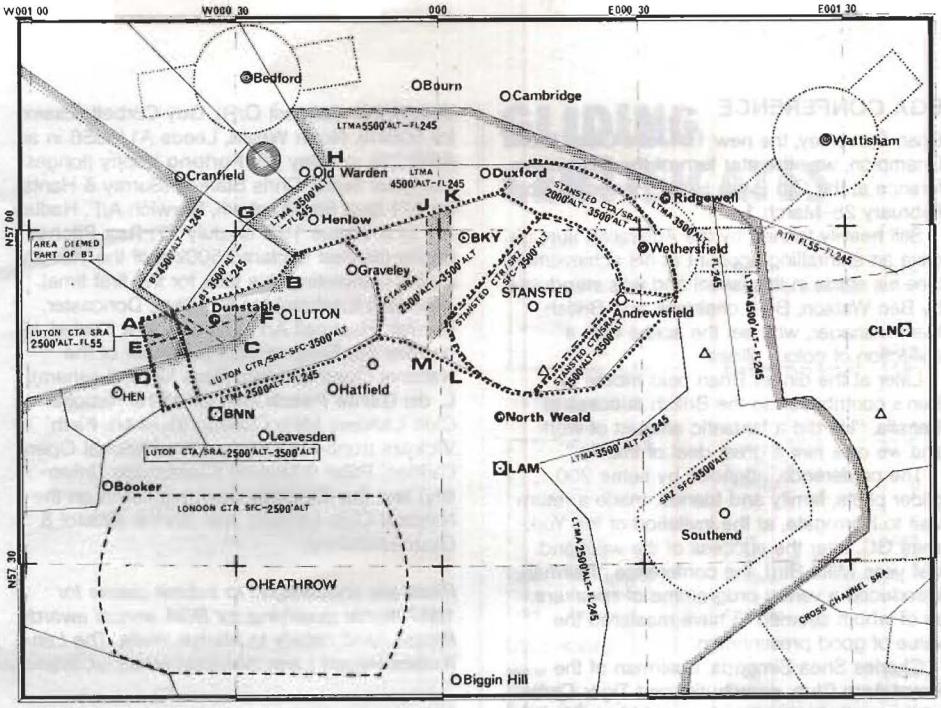


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CHRIS NICHOLAS

AIRSPACE UPDATE

Chris, BGA Airspace Committee chairman, gives the latest news on London, Luton and Stansted Airspace



A map showing the latest airspace restrictions.

Scope and timescale. New airspace for the London, Luton and Stansted areas was effective from May 7, 1987. This has considerable implications, not only for gliding clubs immediately beneath the new airspace, but for pilots from many clubs in the surrounding areas who fly through the affected airspace.

The changes follow the government decision in 1985 to allow Stansted to expand, to handle between seven and eight million passengers a year, and to enlarge the London Terminal Control Area (LTMA) as required to accommodate general growth of air traffic in the region at the same time. In the event, the airspace changes are being implemented in two broad steps. "Stage One" (the 1987 phase) is to cater for air traffic in the period from 1987 to roughly 1990.

Airway changes near Dunstable and Henlow. Because Luton is getting ILS for runway 08, an extension of their SRZ to the north and west is planned. Gliders will continue to be able to use part of this area, under the terms of a Letter of Agreement (LOA) between Luton and Dunstable. These terms should apply also to gliders from other clubs, providing that they are fully briefed on the agreement and observe its terms. Full details can only be seen in the LOA, but briefly gliders and tugs may operate up to 3500ft in area ABCD on the diagram, except when the light on the Dunstable hangar roof is flashing. The latter indicates that Luton is using runway 08, and gliders and tugs may not penetrate south of line EF at such times.

The "stub" of airway Blue 3 at 3500ft over Dunstable and 4500ft to its north-west, near Leighton Buzzard, will continue to be accessible to gliders in VMC, even after the changes to airway crossing rights which have been separately notified to all clubs and are due for implementation in late 1987.

A new piece of Blue 3 from 3500 to 5500ft will be added, filling a gap between the existing stub, the Luton CTR/SRZ, and the base of the Daventry CTA at 5500ft. Gliders will have access to this in VMC.

A new piece of LTMA, similar to an airway "stub" for Amber 2 and Blue 4, has been designed, alongside the Blue 3 stubs and over Henlow, from 3500 to 5500ft. The north-western boundary of the 3500ft portion of this (line GH) is aligned to give room between the stub and the Cardington danger area.

North-East LTMA. The LTMA will be extended to the north-east. To the north and west of Stansted, the LTMA will have successive steps from 2500 to 3500ft, 4500 and 5500ft. Duxford will have a 4500ft ceiling, but is very close to the 5500ft step.

The eastern part of this extension will be at 4500ft, dropping to 3500ft and then 2500ft nearer Stansted. It will adjoin a new fillet of Airway Red One North which will have a base of 5500ft.

Stansted CTA/SRA and CTR/SRZ. The new Stansted airspace has a central zone from ground level to the base of the LTMA at 3500ft. It is partly surrounded by a collar of CTA/SRA with varying base levels – 2500, 2000 and 1500ft. The rules of this airspace would not normally permit access by gliders.

It has, however, been agreed to give a glider corridor (area JKLM) up to 3500ft, between Luton and Stansted for the benefit of gliders from the Essex and Kent clubs, whose pilots must be specially briefed. To summarise, the corridor is 3nm wide, centred on the meridian. To use it, best endeavours must be made to inform Stansted by telephone on those days when significant use is anticipated. Each glider must also establish satisfactory two-way radio contact with Stansted, on 125.55 MHz.

Possible access to more direct routes to and form North Weald, for example *via* Hunsdon disused airfield, and a north-easterly access route, may be requested by radio on a tactical base (though access may be refused if traffic does not permit).

Eastern LTMA. The eastern 2500ft boundary of the LTMA, where it crosses the river Thames, will be moved westwards, enabling glider crossings with a 3500ft ceiling at a narrower part of the river. The 3500ft level of LTMA will extend over Southend.

Southend SRZ. The Southend SRZ will become oblong instead of circular. It will extend from the surface to 3500ft (presently 6000ft), above which will be LTMA providing no access to gliders. Within the SRZ, gliders still have access in VMC (except within the ATZ, which can only be entered with permission as is the case with all ATZs now).

At the time of writing it is understood that the cross-channel SRA will be extended to meet the new Southend SRZ boundary. This area can also be entered by gliders in VMC. Details will no doubt have been clarified, and advised by NOTAM, before publication of this article.

OTHER AIRSPACE NEWS

Gliders crossing airways. The present dispensation for gliders to cross airways in VMC is to be restricted almost entirely to those airways which are ten miles wide. Timing for the new regulations is likely to be late in 1987.

Upper Heyford. It has been confirmed that the Mandatory Radio Area is to be permanent, and glider pilots wishing to use the area must establish two-way radio contact on 128.55 MHz. It is now legally required to have an R/T operators' licence in order to use this frequency – the dispensation during the 1986 trial period has been discontinued.

Aerodrome Traffic Zones (ATZs). New definitions, sizes and in some cases times of activity of ATZ6s have been published. For full details, the UK AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication, or **Air Pilot**) and NOTAMs should be consulted. To summarise, however, ATZs are now circular, centred on the aerodrome's longest runway, and have a radius of 2nm (most aerodromes) or 2½nm (aerodromes with long runways). Times and days of activity vary considerably – although most are seven-day operations, some are less, and some hours of activity cease at, for example, 1700hrs UTC (GMT appears to have been abolished now).

BGA & GENERAL NEWS

BGA CONFERENCE

Brian Spreckley, the new 15 Metre Class World Champion, was the star turn of the BGA conference at the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate from February 28–March 1.

Still heavily tanned by the Australian sun, he gave an enthralling account of his achievement (see his article in this issue) and was introduced by Ben Watson, BGA chairman and British team manager, who set the scene with a collection of colour slides.

Later at the dinner Brian paid tribute to Ben's contribution to the British success at Benalla. "He did a fantastic amount of work and we owe him a great deal of thanks."

The conference, attended by some 200 glider pilots, family and friends, made a return visit to Harrogate, at the invitation of the Yorkshire GC, after the success of the weekend last year. Mike Bird, the conference chairman, introduced a varied programme of speakers, all of whom seemed to have mastered the value of good presentation.

Charles Shea-Simonds, chairman of the Royal Aero Club, parachutist and Tiger Club pilot, was the guest speaker and Mavis Walker, wife of Bill Walker, the MP who is the spokesman on gliding in the House, presented the trophies. (See list below).

The AGM gave plenty of time for discussion with most energy expended on the recent cut in the Sports Council grant.

BGA diplomas went to Dick Boddy for his contribution to the Ouse GC since his founder membership 25 years ago, and in particular in masterminding the purchase of Rufforth Airfield, and to Ken Brown for his services to the BGA Competitions Committee, when he developed and refined the rules and scoring system, as well as for his involvement with Bristol & Gloucester GC as an instructor and senior club member.

The chairman presented Justin Wills with a 750km diploma for his flight of 827.91km to France in his LS-6 on May 29.

The exhibition was larger this year and filled two rooms with a DG-400 rigged on the front lawn.

Annual awards: Wakefield trophy (greatest distance), Justin Wills (Booker) for an 827.91km from Tadcaster to Chateau Gaillard, Corbigny, near Dijon, France, in an LS-6 on May 29; **Seager** cup (longest two-seater flight), Brian Spreckley and Oliver Pugh (Booker) for a 500km triangle, Welshpool, Belvoir Castle, Booker, in a Janus on May 16; **California in England** trophy (longest distance by a female), Gill Spreckley (Booker), for a 503.5km triangle, Sherbourne Castle, Ely Cathedral, Booker, in an LS-6 on June 18; **Frank Foster** trophy (fastest declared 500km with a maximum of two TPs), Dave Watt (Booker), Welshpool, Belvoir Castle, Booker, at 90.18km/h in an ASW-20 on May 16; **De Havilland** trophy (maximum gain of height), Ian Stromberg (Yorkshire) with 31 050ft in a Numbus 2C at Sutton Bank on September 28; **Barry Goldsborough** trophy (highest placed British pilot in World Championships), Brian Spreckley; **Manio** cup (fastest 300km), Chris Garton (Lasham), Bridgnorth, Honeybourne, M1/M45 Nympsfield, with 310km at 99,63km/h in a Ventus on June 11; **Volk** trophy (longest O/R), Guy Corbett (Essex) for 508km, North Weald, Leeds A1/A656 in an ASW-20L on May 16; **Furlong** trophy (longest triangular flight), Chris Starkey (Surrey & Hants) for 671.5km from Lasham, Norwich A/F, Hadley A/F in a Ventus 16.6 on July 17; **Rex Pilcher** trophy (earliest declared 500km of the year by a pilot completing this task for the first time), John Bell (Lasham) for 577,8km, Doncaster, Llanfair, Hucknall A/F, Lasham, in a Kestrel 19 on May 16; **Enigma** trophy (winner of the National Open Ladder), Dave Nunn (Lasham); **L. du Garde Peach** (winner of the National Club Ladder), Mike Cuming (Booker); **Firth Vickers** trophy (second on the National Open Ladder), Peter O'Donald (Cambridge University) and the **Slingsby** trophy (second on the National Club Ladder), Ken Barker (Bristol & Gloucestershire).

Pilots are encouraged to submit claims for 1987 flights qualifying for BGA annual awards. Please send details to Martyn Wells, The Lenticulars, Ascott Lane, Shipston on Stour, Warks.

BRITISH TEAM MANAGER FOR 1989 WORLDS

Nominations are invited for the post of team manager effective from October 1987 to the end of the 1989 World Championships at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Responsibilities include squad training in 1988 with participation in the Europeans and pre-Worlds events in that year. Terms of reference are available from the BGA office.

John Taylor, *chairman of the BGA Competitions and Awards Committee*

NATIONAL LADDERS

OPEN LADDER

Leading pilot	*Club*	*Pts*	*Flts*
1. R. Parsons	London	2030	2
2. R. Davidson	Coventry	1900	2
3. K. Millar	London	1880	2

CLUB LADDER

Leading pilot	*Club*	*Pts*	*Flts*
1. M. J. Wood	Yorkshire	630	2
2. D. Taylor	Yorkshire	577	1
3. P. Johnson	London	550	1

SPEED LIMITED - TRAILER TOWING

Some speed limits prescribed by Schedule 6, Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 have been altered by virtue of amendments contained in the Motor Vehicles (Variation of Speed Limits) Regulations 1986, (SI 1986/1175). The Max permitted speed when drawing one trailer, provided the road is not subject to a lower speed limit, is now as follows:-

Class of vehicle	Motorway	Max speed (mph) on dual carriageway, road not being a motorway	Other road
A passenger vehicle, motor caravan, car derived van or dual purpose vehicle drawing one trailer.	60	60	50
A goods vehicle is a motor vehicle,	60	60	50

other than a car derived van, which is drawing one trailer where the aggregate Max laden weight of the motor vehicle and the trailer does not exceed 7.5 tonnes.

Remember, the above speeds are the legal Max and, depending upon weather conditions and/or the towing vehicle/trailer combination, it may be prudent and safer to tow at a lower speed.

There are a number of other changes in the law affecting trailers and readers are advised to refer to the appropriate section of **Laws and Rules for Glider Pilots,** 10th edition, which is to be published shortly by the BGA.

Arthur Doughty, *BGA Safety Representative on GASCO*

CHANGES AT NORTH WEALD

Pilots flying into the Essex GC's site at North Weald should take care as there have been some recent changes. Their CFI, Peter Molloy, lists them as follows:-

- A wooden pale fence about 1½m high has been erected 80m east of the centre line of the main runway, 02/20. It finishes each side of the cross runway but that gap is filled by metal crowd control barriers.
- There is a new road around the eastern edge of the airfield which crosses the end of the EW runway right on the original threshold and has a metal fence at least 2m high along its complete length.
- The road where it crosses the end of the EW runway has a mixture of lamp standards 5m and 10m in height which it is hoped will be painted yellow/black or white/black on the approach side to aid identification.

The runways are safe, including the EW one, because even if we are operating from the tower end* the metal barriers will have been removed and the wooden fence rolled back some 50m each side of the runways. Be aware of increased power traffic, mainly during the summer, associated with the Aces High group. We are able to send readers a map of the site with shading marking the best grass landing areas.

* or the motorway end.

AIR LEAGUE SCHOLARSHIPS

If you would like 15hrs of free power flying instruction during next summer and will be over 17 and under 22 years of age on May 31, 1988, you might be lucky enough to win an Air League Educational Trust Flying Scholarship. For an application form write to the Secretary, The Air League Educational Trust, 4 Hamilton Place, London W1V 0BQ. The closing day for applications is July 31.



Ian's painting of a T-21 based at RAF Sealand (631 Gliding School).

AVIATION ARTIST

When at an early age Ian Walton started painting aeroplanes, his parents said that if he wanted to make a career in art he should choose another subject because no one would want to buy that sort of picture. But it was as well he didn't take their advice.

Since he sold his first glider painting in 1985 he has not stopped work and was so busy he decided to turn professional last spring. Most of his commissions come from his own club, Midland GC, and the Long Mynd has been the background for many of his paintings.

Obviously it is impossible to work from life, so Ian, who lives at 47 Oakfield Road, Buckley, Clwyd, uses good quality photographs and always works in oils on canvas.

GLIDING CERTIFICATES

DIAMOND DISTANCE

No.	*Name*	*Club*	*1986*
1/340	Wells, P. M.	Booker (in S Africa)	17.9

DIAMOND GOAL

No.	*Name*	*Club*	*1986*
2/1514	Wells, P. M.	Booker (in S Africa)	17.9

DIAMOND HEIGHT

No.	*Name*	*Club*	*1986*
3/787	Barrett, R. V.	Bristol & Glos (in France)	23.7
3/788	Shearer, P. J.	Deeside	17.10

GOLD BADGE

No.	*Name*	*Club*	*1986*
1192	Foster, S. A.	Cambridge Univ	2.10
1193	Harber, J. E.	Chilterns	24.7
1194	Constable, O. H.	Chilterns	24.7
1195	Fellows, L.	Chilterns	1.8

GOLD HEIGHT

Name	*Club*	*1986*
Shearer, P. J.	Deeside	17.10
Foster, S. A.	Cambridge Univ	2.10
Round, M.	Avon	9.10
Haunton, J. E. F.	Newark & Notts	23.10
Peatfield, N. A.	Shropshire	20.12
England, G. S.	Avon	9.10

GOLD DISTANCE

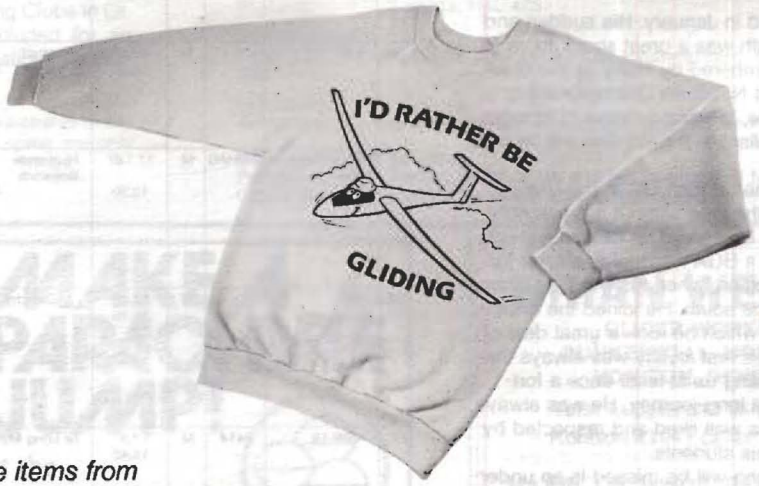
Name	*Club*	*1986*
Harber, J. E.	Chilterns (in France)	24.7
Lacey, T. A.	Chilterns (in France)	24.7
Constable, O. H.	Chilterns (in France)	24.7
Neild, J. R.	Chilterns (in France)	1.8
Fellows, L.	Chilterns (in France)	1.8
Wells, P. M.	Booker (in S Africa)	17.9

SILVER BADGE

No.	*Name*	*Club*	*1987*
7425	Gregory, P.	Booker	11.10.86
7426	Warren, R. F.	East Sussex	15.2
7427	Wheeler, A. P.	Derby & Lancs	31.8.86
7428	Hampton, M. E.	East Sussex	21.2
7429	Buck, M. A.	Bristol & Glos	28.12.86
7430	Filmer, S. W.	Southdown	18.2

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FATAL ACCIDENT

On Sunday April 19 the pilot of a Skylark 4, Stuart Youngson, was killed when the glider spun in at Dallachy Airfield, the Highland GC's site. The glider was being winch launched when at a height of 200-400ft there was an apparent structural failure of the fin. The accident is being investigated by the BGA with the help of the Accident Investigation Branch (Dept of Transport).

OBITUARY



John, as many will remember him, on duty at the Nationals.

John Hands

John Hands died in January. His sudden and unexpected death was a great shock to us all. He will be remembered by many as the chief marshall at most Nationals Championships held at Dunstable, bringing a sense of humour and professionalism to the job that will be hard to replace.

John joined the London GC in the late 1940s, serving the club without a break right up to his death. He served as CFI for a short period and was a BGA regional examiner for the Southern Region, when his work took him many miles to the south. He joined the Southdown GC, from which he took a great deal of enjoyment but his first loyalty was always the London GC, visiting us at least once a fortnight despite the long journey. He was always cheerful and was well liked and respected by all, particularly his students.

To say that John will be missed is an understatement; he was part of the very foundation of the post-war London GC. His family have donated a trophy to the club in his memory to be awarded each year for the most promising new instructor. He leaves a wife, Hazel, and three grown-up children, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

D. W. SEAR, *CFI, London GC*

BGA ACCIDENT SUMMARY – Compiled by JOHN SHIPLEY, Chairman, BGA Safety Panel

Ref No.	Glider Type	BGA No.	Damage	Date Time	Place	Pilot/Crew Age	Injury	Pl/Hrs	Summary
17	Blanik	1824	S	8.11.86 13.10	Thruxton P2	34 50	M M	95 42	On an aerotow in strong winds the rope broke at 120ft and within 110 yards of the end of the runway. Earth mounds and the short distance left made a landing ahead doubtful so P1 decided to turn right, away from a light aircraft centre. Speed was lost in the turn, even when the nose was lowered and the glider hit the ground in the early part of a spin.
18	Bocian 1E	1437	M	18.10.86 13.35	Husbands Bosworth P2	66 23	N N	1155 -	Just before reaching the top of the launch a cable break occurred. P2 released twice, after prompting, but very quickly. A loud clout was heard behind P1 after release as the polypropelene trace whiplashed and punctured the fuselage. Two days later similar damage was found on tailplane. Wire traces now used and there have been no more problems.
19	Falke	M/G G-BFHN	S	15.11.86 11.50	Shrivenham P2	51 20	N N	1100+ -	On a cable break training exercise P1 cut the motor glider's power at 250ft. P2 was told to turn into a nearby field. A high rate of descent developed with full brakes in a poor turn and power was not used in time to stop a heavy landing which damaged the engine and bounced the a/c high into the air. P1 stalled it in as he tried to return to airfield.
20	Pirat	2006	S	13.12.86 13.36	North Hill	63	N	49	After starting the circuit at a good height in a fresh wind the pilot used brakes in the circuit but did not react to a developing undershoot. Unable to cross a row of saplings, he stalled the glider on to the tree tops causing substantial damage but no injury. The pilot could have made a safe landing by closing brakes or landing before the trees.
21	K-7	1112	W/O	3.12.86 14.15	Aston Down P2	0 0	- -	-	Parked, while club members resolved a towcar problem, the glider was left, nose into wind, with two large tyres on a wing, one pushed under the skid and one on the tail. The 20kt+ wind pivoted and slid the glider until the grounded wing caught under a car. The glider's raised wing then caught the wind and the glider turned on it's back.
22	ASW-19	2727	M	6.10.86 11.00	Feshiebridge	56	N	516	At the start of the aerotow take-off run the glider veered to the right towards parked glider. The pilot took avoiding action before releasing the rope, first pulling the rudder and adjustment knob in error. The glider then groundlooped and ended up with the rudder hitting the boundary fence. Poor low speed aileron control was the probable cause
23	Super Falke M/G	G-KDFF	S	28.12.86 13.20	Aboyne P2	37 26	N N	780+ 5133pwr 32+ 80pwr	After a power off approach P2 was in an apparently normal flare when, in spite of P1 applying full power, the aircraft sank heavily on to the ground, right wing first. The aircraft lifted off almost immediately and completed another circuit. The impact had torn off the outrigger and also cracked the outer wing lower spar. Probably stalled during flare out.
24	T-21		M	5.7.86 18.30	Burnford Common P2	48 51	N N	500 280	An experienced pilot was undergoing a conversion flight to the left hand seat on the T-21. On landing he had difficulty holding off and landed heavily on the nose skid, which broke. The damage may have been caused by the aircraft touching down in a fairly deep mud hole?
25	Super Falke M/G	G-BHAG	M	17.1.87 13.30	Husbands Bosworth P2	59 51	N N	2800+ +1900pwr 545 +400pwr	Following a flight for a restricted instructors' rating on motor gliders P2 did a normal landing. After about 30 yards the aircraft ran into a deeper patch of snow than any experienced previously and the tail lifted sufficiently to allow the prop to touch the snow. On opening up to taxi back to the hangar the engine ran rough, so it was switched off.
26	K-8		M	2.1.87 11.10	Dalachy	56	N	350	The runway operating direction had to be changed and the instructor decided to fly the K-8 to the other end of the runway. He took off with the airbrakes out and failed to realise this prior to landing well short of the airfield and hitting a fence. He had not anticipated flying that day and had not really engaged brain before flight.
27	ASW-19	2414	M	1.1.87 15.45	Nr Long Mynd	21	N	32	A visiting pilot on his first launch from the Long Mynd headed out from the ridge searching for wave lift, but failed to contact. On turning round he could not see the site and was for all purposes lost. A field landing was necessary, he wrongly assessed the wind direction, picked a field and started a circuit. In turbulent conditions an approach was made first undershooting and then overshooting. Finally a crosswind landing was made close to the far boundary with the aircraft groundlooping into the barbed wire fence the fuselage finishing astride the barbed wire. No briefing had been sought.

S=serious; W/O=write off; M=minor; N=nil.

CIVV REPORT

Some extracts from a report by Tom Zealley, BGA delegate, who attended the Commission International de Vol a Voile (CIVV) meeting in Frankfurt from March 26-27. Ben Watson attended as British team manager.

Rules. It was agreed there should be a lower number of entries to World and European Championships to reduce the gaggling problem experienced at Benalla. There was a suggestion of two entries per country with further entries from countries achieving high places in previous Championships (to be discussed again next March) and a limit of 30 per Class was agreed.

Motor gliders. France's offer to host the European Motor Gliding Championships in 1988 at Issoudun was accepted.

World Championships. Heinrich Geusau (Austria) reported on plans for Wiener Neustadt in 1989. The provisional dates were May 8-28 and the pre-Worlds would be at a similar time of the year and also be the Austrian Nationals with 30 places for foreigners. It was hoped to include cat's cradles amongst the World Championships tasks.

Bernald Smith (USA) spoke of plans for the Worlds at Minden in 1991 and there was a proposal from India to be the hosts in 1993, but this was resisted on the grounds of inexperience and the premature timing of the bid. New Zealand, France and Sweden all mentioned the possibility of bidding and India asked to be considered in 1995. No decisions were taken.

European and Regional Championships. Finland are to host the Europeans in 1988 and Poland in 1990 with a Southern Cross Competition later this year in Argentina.

Other Championships. Bernald Smith described the Hitachi Masters Championship to be held for the second time in the USA (at Phoenix Arizona this year). The entry is by invitation only (George Lee and Brian Spreckley have been invited) with $10000 of prize money apart from other sponsorship money. The contest is not officially recognised by FAI or CIVV.

Glider Classes. A paper proposing the replacement of the 15m Class by a 17.5m Class had been circulated by Spain. Alvaro de Orleans-Bourbon (now of Monaco) spoke in support mentioning that the majority of people buying 15m gliders also bought tips to bring them to about 17m. Regardless of Championship Classes they were voting with their purses. After much discussion it was agreed that a special sub-committee should determine what the objectives of the Class system should be and how they should be achieved.

Safety. Detailed accident statistics showed stalling to be the major cause of fatalities and suggestions for improving existing gliders included shock-absorbing cushions and five point harnesses. As to new glider design, OSTIV were recommending that the cockpit should be a strong box with the wings and tail section designed to fracture on nose-down crashes. Other points discussed included stall warning devices, canopy releases and maximum design stalling speeds.

The good work of Bill Scull's OSTIV Safety and Training Panel was noted with approval.

Airspace. The questionnaire on airspace problems for gliding circulated by Tom was completed by 19 countries and, as expected, the situation varied considerably from country to country. Multi-channel radio was becoming quite common in gliders and was likely to play an important part in preserving freedoms for gliding.

Other items. Bernald Smith said that there was pressure in the USA for more advanced badges as the levels of attainment had not kept up with the advance in sailplane performance. His proposal that a CIVV working group should look into the whole question was agreed.

Dick Johnson (USA) was awarded the Lilienthal medal.

Sailplane & Gliding

The magazine can be obtained from most Gliding Clubs in Gt. Britain, alternatively send £10.80 postage included for an annual subscription to the British Gliding Association, Kimberley House, Vaughan Way, Leicester.

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YOUR LETTERS

TOO MUCH BUREAUCRACY?

Dear Editor,

I can't understand the fuss the CAA make over the complicated motor glider licence. Or is it the BGA's recommendation to the CAA?

Anyway, I have quite a lot of power and gliding experience and consider that a pilot with at least 200hrs and a Gold C should be perfectly capable of holding a throttle open to take-off. The engine and controls are normally the most basic therefore no sweat. Airlaw and meteorology should create no additional problems as they are not affected in any way.

The bureaucrats fail to realise the engine is for self-launching and saving the necessity of field landings, not for cross-country joy rides – unless you are already deaf!

I would suggest the whole concept stems from some years ago when the ultralight was a near rival to the basic wooden glider with an atrocious glide angle compared with today's performance. So fixing a small power unit to one of these gave a comparable performance!

Why can't the BGA lay down some guide lines, such as 200hrs solo, a Gold C and say three hours instruction on a twin-seater self-launcher and then issue their own endorsements, hence cutting out all the bureaucratic nonsense? There is no doubt designers will tend to use these lightweight, high output power units and as more are bought the price will come down and the numbers steadily increase.

One final thought – safety conscious Australia endorses a pilot for self-launchers on his ability to fly it, not with masses of paperwork!

JOHN L. ROLLS, *Marbella, Spain*

Bill Scull, BGA director of operations, replies: I'm sympathetic to John's views and also feel that the requirements to fly motor gliders might be simpler. There are two problems. One is the wide range of types – from the self-sustainer to the sort which is better as an aeroplane than as a glider – for which a licence is required and the other that a licence is necessary at all. If there is provision for a glider pilot's licence then the motor glider might simply be added to that. The further complication is that there is no international agreement as to whether the motor glider is a glider or aeroplane (and, therefore, to which licence it can be added). Within the present provisions of the UK's aviation legislation the CAA cannot give an exemption from the requirements for pilots of "aeroplanes" to have a licence nor can they wholly delegate their authority to allow a "BGA endorsement".

WATER QUESTION

Dear Editor,

Who do we have to specify at the start of a competition if we wish to carry water or not, when most people have enough difficulty deciding on the amount for any **one** day?

J. ARMSTRONG, *RAF Laarbruch*

John Taylor, chairman of the BGA Competitions and Awards Committee, replies: Glider types with the ability to carry water-ballast are handicapped assuming that ballast is carried when appropriate. If a particular glider of this type is not capable of carrying ballast, the rules allow for a 2% reduction in handicap. Directors of Regional Competitions will normally allow pilots to declare their gliders "incapable of carrying ballast" before the contest begins, thus reducing the handicap to the lower figure. In this case, water must not be carried on any of the contest flights. Pilots who wish to use water will have the higher handicap applied throughout the competition."

HIGH TOW OR LOW TOW

At the Lasham AGM in March there was a discussion amongst tow pilots about which is best, the high tow or low tow. Some said that the low tow was more difficult.



The photograph above is of a pre-war activity of mine which shows clearly that the propeller slipstream expands outwards as it slows down. Naturally it also expands upwards and downwards and, as is well known, when air starts moving the energy of the mass tends to keep it moving.

It is my theory that the rolling of the slipstream goes on for quite a distance, and therefore in the high tow position the airflow is lifting the glider, maybe oh so slightly but *in toto* it makes the tow easier for the tug. *Vice versa* for the low tow.

However, a young friend of mine whom I taught to fly was killed at Lasham by the glider rising too quickly (against the setting sun) and put him into a dive from which he was unable to recover.

So my recommendation and practice is to keep the tug in sight from the low tow position until 500ft, and then transfer to the high tow. When I was aerotowing myself I briefed my pupils accordingly. What do others think?

HUMPHRY R. DIMOCK
Gosport, Hants.

Bill Scull replies: I can't answer Humphry's point about the aerodynamic benefits of high or low tow. If low tow is to protect tug pilots from "upsets" then the glider must be in this position for the critical phase – the first few hundred feet and from take-off. I understand that even where low tow is standard practice the take-off and up to 200ft is in high tow.

MORE ABOUT CABLE PROBLEMS

Dear Editor,

I read with interest and some dismay in the last issue, p77, J. C. Riddell's comments on my article on solving cable problems (February, p25).

I say dismay because Mr Riddell seems to have missed the point of the article – our efforts to eliminate cable break emergencies from flying operations at Shalbourne. Whilst we have not eradicated breaks completely we have cut them down by about 90%. Whereas we could expect six or eight breaks per day – indeed I have been present on the field when eight consecutive cable breaks occurred –now we have one or two per month.

The four roller box design we use swivels with the sideways movement of the wire due to crosswind launches etc, so that the actual pressure on the front rollers is never very large. However I concede that they still wear – but at a much slower rate than if the steel were in its normal condition. One of the reasons for the ATCs significant spending on nitrided rollers was that they could not use mild steel for them due to the nitriding process. It was probably EN40B which is much more expensive. In fact a 16in diameter billet to make a 2in wide pulley costs £108-10+VAT with a five to six week delivery.

The grooving of hardened pulleys is of course caused by cable friction but remember the environment also plays a part – muddy airfields allow the cable to pick up plenty of dirt particles which can act as a grinding paste accelerating wear and tear.

Incidently to recover cable at 50kt assuming no headwind component a 14in diameter pulley rotates at 1380rpm or 23 revs/sec. For 500rpm a 50kt launch requires a pulley of about 40in diameter. Our equipment has been in use for five years and while it still performs well it is now ready for refurbishing.

The company I work for now holds complete roller boxes to the specification in the article for delivery ex-stock and any club interested can contact me using the 'phone numbers from the article.

C. A. ALDRIDGE, *Newbury, Berks.*

TUG PILOTS – LOOK BEHIND YOU

Dear Editor,

Having recently been involved in an aerotow upset, whilst flying a Pawnee in Australia, I feel that the results of subsequent discussions with other tug pilots who have been "upset" are significant. The first point to note is that these tug pilots are still around, so did they do something that other less fortunate tug pilots did not? I think so.

The following is the first paragraph of the accident report in which I was involved, (the glider was damaged).

The rope was hooked on to the glider and the signal to start the launch was given in the normal way. I started the take-off and became airborne, everything seemed normal. Between 50 and 100ft I felt my tail being pulled up, and started to compensate by moving the stick back, looking over my left shoulder as I did so.

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The glider was well above my level and climbing steeply, I was having to apply continuing rearward pressure on the stick and released the glider immediately.

The significant action here was looking over my left shoulder. Had I not been able to see what was happening behind me I would not have released at that point, and at that stage of the upset another one second can be too late.

But what about mirrors? The tugs in question were all fitted with mirrors. My feelings are that they tell you when everything is okay, but are not very good for judging how wrong things are going. It seems that the decision to release the glider soon enough only comes from direct rearward vision, (turning your head).

In discussions with two other tug pilots, Maurie Bradney and Warrick McIntosh, who have both been involved in low level aerotow upsets, it became apparent that in every case the decision to release came from looking rearward as soon as they suspected something was wrong, not trying to interpret what they saw in mirrors or waiting until they had lost control before releasing.

These are the feelings of three tug pilots who have each done in excess of 10000 tows and have each survived one critical height aerotow upset. Further discussions were with two other tug pilots who had been tipped to near vertical dives which in both cases broke the weak link, fortunately at heights great enough for them to recover. Neither of them had looked behind them and therefore didn't attempt to release until only small amounts of control remained. In one case, the tug pilot had put his hand on the release when he could feel that things were not as they should be behind him, but he went from the "it's still just in control" situation to a vertical nose down position so quickly that he didn't even get time to pull the release, and he had his hand on it! It happens very very quickly.

In the case of the low level aerotow upset, below 500ft being the most critical, releasing the glider once you are in a near vertical dive is of little use. You're probably going to hit the ground anyway. So we need to monitor what is happening behind more carefully and be aware enough to release the glider before we have lost control.

So my advice is if the stick needs to come back to maintain attitude, look behind you. If the glider is high and climbing release it. Unfortunately if your tug has poor or nil rearward vision you're flying with increased risks.

I hope this gives tug pilots food for thought.

PAUL H. LITTLE, *Stonehouse, Glos.*

EASIER FOR THE PUPIL

Dear Editor,

Paul Whitehead (see the last issue, p77) is right; "assisting" is a dreadful instructional habit.

Bill Scull is right; it is a common practice. But Bill adds insult to injury for our pupils when he accepts it.

In this imperfect world a clear handover of control is easier for the instructor, safer for all, and clearer for the most important person of all, the pupil.

ANDY MILLER, *Doncaster*

Bill Scull replies: I reiterate the points made in answer to Paul Whitehead's letter. Perhaps I did not deprecate strongly enough the practice of interfering with the controls. Hopefully these letters will reinforce the point.

ARMCHAIR PILOT'S CHALLENGE

Dear Editor,

Some of the best contests are those where competitors have different aims - like when the race between a syndicate partner and me was to see whether he could achieve his Gold height before I got Gold distance (to complete our Gold Badges). I can't remember for sure but I think he won.

As for the Armchair Pilot's suggestion in the February issue, p39, of a competition to see whose Gold Badge No. exceeds by the greatest margin his Silver No., I propose a variation. Who was it who first had the same No. allotted to his Gold as was engraved on the back of his Silver? My No. was 207 in both cases. (Incidentally, it does not have to be a Cambridge Silver even though mine was.)

Subsequent to the type-setting of the above. I have read Piggy's letter in the last issue, p78, and now realise - almost twenty years after the event - that, after all, it was I who won the "contest" mentioned in my first paragraph, albeit by a procedure which immediately ceased to be followed and in consequence of which I sign myself . . .

THUNDERSTRUCK

Dear Editor,

I must respond to the Armchair Pilot's challenge but with tongue very much in cheek knowing that I am bending the rules.

Being a very average sort of glider pilot, my Silver Badge No., is, alas, higher than my very new Gold Badge, and this probably disqualifies me from the competition. However, for the record, while my Gold Badge No. is 1195 my Silver Badge gained nine years ago is No. 18 183, giving a difference of 16 988! Can anyone beat that?

As you may already have guessed, my Silver C is on the German Aero Club register. Goodness knows what No. they have reached by now.

LES FELLOWS, *Aylesbury, Bucks.*

MANY PROFESSIONALS ABOUT

Dear Editor,

With respect to Tony Moss's letter in the February issue, p41, I would be quite happy to write an article on gel coats and FRP generally, but my knowledge is based on amateur experience and there are a large number of professionals about. Both the reinforced plastic industry and the paint industry employ scores of PhDs and spend millions on research and development.

There are professors of the subjects and magazines that Mr Moss can read and end up infinitely better informed than I am, if he wishes. If he fills in a request card for his public library to supply him with a few text books on the subject he would make a good start.

BRENNIG JAMES, *Marlow Common, Bucks.*

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CLUB NEWS

Copy and photographs for the August-September issue of S&G should be sent to the Editor, 281 Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge CB1 4NH, tel 0223 247725, to arrive not later than June 9 and for the October-November issue to arrive not later than August 11.

GILLIAN BRYCE-SMITH
April 8

AQUILA (Hinton Airfield)

An overhaul of the winch means that our wire and aerotow facilities are fully operational.

The recent AGM resulted in a new, eager committee and announcements about the change to our fleet were very enthusiastically received.

J.R.

AVRO (Woodford Airfield)

Our club fleet stands at a T-21B, two K-7s, Pilatus B-4, Vega and an IS-28M2A (motor glider) with a privately owned Grob 109B available to members.

Congratulations to Nigel Jennings and Geoff Law on their Bronze Cs, to Simon Heyes on his first and Fred Molloy on his second Bronze leg and to Shaun Connor, Dennis Hall and Geoff Rayner on going solo on the motor glider.

S.C.

BANNERDOWN (RAF Hullavington)

Owing largely to the sound state of the club's finances and equipment, Grp Capt Culpitt, our new chairman and station commander, conducted the AGM in record time. One of the three bus winches has a rebuilt engine and a new home-built trailer awaits the arrival of the Discus.

We have a fuller flying programme than ever. Though poor weather spoilt the first of our *ab-initio* courses we congratulate Chris Meyers on becoming our first American solo pilot. Over Easter we host the first of the new Inter-Club League meetings.

D.C.F.

BASSETLAW (Gamston Airfield)

After five long years of negotiations the club finally became airborne on March 21. We have leased one of Gamston Airfield's three runways – 16/34 – from the operators, Budge Aviation. John Rice with some helpers has designed and built a two-drum winch with a Rover V8 engine, which is successfully launching our T-21.

John Swannack is the CFI and, with his wife Adele, John Rice, John Launders and Tim Bowles (chairman), has been responsible for getting the club into the air. We already have 40 enthusiastic members and the interest in the area has been most encouraging. We are now going all out to raise the money for a single-seater (anyone wishing to sell a K-8 or Swallow?).

We plan to operate at weekends and the occasional weekdays and evenings. Visitors are assured of a warm welcome, though we can't offer mod cons yet!



Members of the newly formed Bassetlaw GC. John Swannack, chairman, and Alan Marshall, CFI, are in the T-21 with John Launders, a founder member, in the foreground and John's son, James, behind.

Landings on runway 16/34 only, *not* on the main runway – 03/21 – which is used regularly by powered aircraft.

Gamston Airfield (recently renamed Retford (Gamston) Airport!) lies beside the A1 two miles north of the large roundabout at Markham Moor, Nottinghamshire. The club's entrance is off a small side road which runs along the airfield's northern boundary. Travelling north on the A1 vehicles should turn off just beyond the village of Elkesley – signpost Eaton Retford.

T.H.B.

BICESTER (RAFGSA Centre)

We have had some pleasant winter soaring flights. Congratulations to Bill Gibson on achieving his Bronze legs.

After re-roofing the hangar, now the windows are being replaced.

The AGM in February was followed by a disco and party. Results for the year were excellent with over 50 solos, 160 100km triangles, 17 300km triangles and six 500km triangles. The *ab-initio* award went to Fiona Branigan and Ted Richards (yawn, yawn), was presented with the Delafield trophy for the best flight – a 500km in a Standard Class aircraft. Is there no stopping this man!?

Micky Boik has started work on the barbecue patio. Roll on summer!

C. & G.

BLACK MOUNTAINS (Talgarth)

We have operated throughout the winter with maximum wave heights for February being 14 000ft and 11 000ft for March.

Congratulations to Ray Grosvenor for going solo after only 21 launches.

Many thanks to Southdown GC for the loan of their Pawnee tug over the winter. Our Pawnee has now been fitted with a four-bladed prop, with considerably reduced noise levels.

We have hosted expeditions from Dunstable, Bedford and Bicester so far this year.

W.D.M.

BLACKPOOL & FYLDE (Chipping)

Bob Pettifer has become a regional examiner and deposited the CFI's burden on to Paul Myers. Our thanks to Bob for the vast amount of time and effort he put into the job.

John Mitchell was our first solo of the year and Darren Evans the first Bronze. We have three new AEIs, Brian Lomas, Jeff Johnson and Mike Brooks, and have started the hangar extension.

V.H.

BOOKER (Wycombe Air Park)

Our silence in the last issue was a deliberate ploy, folks, calculated to make you think we were all out in Australia. In fact only about half the club was there, but those who did go did quite well (no surprises to report, but it was nice to hear that the lads hoovered up a few British records before rushing home).

We were disappointed, however, in our bid to grab all the BGA trophies at the annual dinner; in fact we scarcely got more than half – must try harder next time!

Meanwhile, the Booker biennial dinner has taken place; if enough volunteers can be found to run it, it may even become an annual event. Fleetwise, the university has at last flogged its Astir and K-7 and bought a K-13 instead, and another Pegasus is arriving shortly.

M.F.C.

BORDERS (Galewood)

We finally moved from Milfield to Galewood at the beginning of the year. The clubhouse and workshop now have mains water and electricity and our new hangar is in use. The 'phone has been reconnected (066 86 284) and we are

hoping the power lines at the east end of the field will soon be put underground.

The AGM in March was well attended and preparations are in hand for full time operations this summer. Flying has also been busy with plenty of soaring. Congratulations to Rob Collin on his 5hrs in the Eagle and to Denis Westgarth on his Silver distance in the SHK, but commiserations to Colin Sim who landed just short.

A.J.B.

BRISTOL & GLOUCESTERSHIRE (Nympsfield)

Our seven-day week season got off to a flying start with two full time instructors, two tug pilots and well attended courses with winter club improvements providing more room and comfort.

The club fleet has grown with a fourth two-seater and a fourth single-seater (Janus 2), Dave Crinson's hard work on the new two-drum winch has provided a valuable addition – we now have three tugs and three winches.

Flying has been interesting and varied and we beat the heavy rain with good drainage and grass care, permitting flying without a break.

N.W.

CAMBRIDGE (Duxford Airfield)

Platypus was an entertaining guest speaker at our annual dinner at Jesus College when trophies were presented to Peter O'Donald, Steve Mynott, Peter Baker and David Harris.

On our first good soaring day, March 29, Penny Minnitt climbed to 5000ft and then Steve Longland took their K-6E to 7000ft. Sunday, April 5, was even better with quick circuits being the exception.

G.K.F.

CLEVELANDS (RAF Dishforth)

We will be celebrating our 30th anniversary with a barbecue on July 4 at Dishforth. All past members are welcome and anyone who can bring a glider previously operated by the club will be especially welcome.

P.W.

COVENTRY (Husbands Bosworth)

After intensive training on mini-courses and Bronze C lectures throughout the winter, many pilots are ready for the season. We have various cross-country courses planned and there have already been many eager attempts to win the cup for the first 100km of the season.

In February our first AEI course resulted in four being qualified.

The Stearman from the *Biggles* film was here for its C of A and test flown by our manager, Harry Middleton, who stood at the front of a queue of 345!

After a few years' break, our newsletter, *Glide Angle*, is being resurrected, edited by Stuart Cooper. All suitable articles will be gratefully received.

The strong winds in March did some damage around the airfield, including turning Doug Sadler's caravan into an Australian tourer!

D.L.S.

CRANWELL (RAFGSA)

Congratulations to T. Cook and B. Porteus on going solo, to Mark Dixon on his first Bronze leg and to Ray Walker on his full Cat instructor rating.

We had some cross-country flying in February and recently Mick Lee and Chris Terry made good attempts at the 100km goal record with speeds of 110km/h. Cross-country pilots please note that the Newark power station cooling towers have been demolished.

S.J.H.

CRUSADERS (Cyprus)

In June many regulars will be departing for the UK including George Mackay, our chairman. But among those we welcome is Derek Smith, our new chairman.

Our thanks to Philip for his work on the Blanik and congratulations to those who have gone solo and to the many badge claimants. The soaring season is over until September and barbecue time is back. John Morris is on an instructors' course. Visitors are always welcome at the weekends and on Wednesday afternoons.

T.J.D.

DARTMOOR (Brentor)

At the AGM Chris Mattin was elected as site manager, Terry Roberts as course officer and Peter Williams is our new CFI.

We are negotiating a long lease on our site and if successful envisage the use of a second winch on a widened main runway, the purchase of another two-seater and our old hangar replaced by one built to John Bolt's design.

We have agreed on special terms to encourage youngsters to fly with us as we must welcome youth and would be happy to have more as enthusiastic as our present schoolboys.

F.J.M.

DEESIDE (Aboyne Airfield)

At the recent AGM members heard that our lease is extended for another 25 years and the airfield rent is not going to mean an increase in fees. Revenue was satisfactory in 1986 and has enabled us to start work on an additional hangar for the tugs and to generally improve the maintenance operation.

Flying continued throughout the winter and most visitors had some successful wave flights.

The doctors David and Alison Symon have taken up new posts and are moving towards Sutton Bank. We thank Alison for her work as secretary.

Competition Enterprise at the end of June is fully subscribed but there are a few places in the task week starting on July 5.

L.E.N.T.

DERBYSHIRE & LANCASHIRE (Camphill)

Our course accommodation has been given a face-lift and another bedroom and two shower rooms have been installed. We say a sad farewell to our steward and stewardess who have taken a pub in Otley. To reduce airfield erosion by tractors retrieving gliders, we have bought a four wheel drive bike.

Congratulations to Tim Robson on gaining two Silver legs on one of the season's first soaring days.

K.H.

DEVON & SOMERSET (North Hill)

We are looking forward to increased activity this season as Les Hill and Ken Jenkins will open the club on Wednesdays and Dave Reilly will do the same on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays when available. These offers are greatly appreciated and mean we can operate for nearly seven days a week.

Inclement weather reduced flying during February and March but we had the first cross-country in the middle of March by Colin Watts who inadvertently landed out about three miles away!

D.A.R.

Shaun Sturland of Coventry GC after going solo on his 16th birthday.



DORSET (Old Sarum)

Dennis Neal has resigned as CFI due to business pressure, and our thanks to him for his three years' hard work. Barry Thomas takes his place.

Congratulations to those who passed their Bronze paper following a successful series of talks and to Stuart Hughes on going solo. John Dabill and Richard Swallow have brought their Mini Nimbus from Shalbourne which should help boost our cross-country statistics!

A correction to our last report – G. Dale and J. Rees in fact gained 3rd place sharing their glider in the Northerns and G. Dale was 2nd at Enstone.

We have our first mini task week at Easter along with a four-day *ab-initio* course for members.

J.R.B.

DUMFRIES (Falgunzeon)

So far this year there has not been much opportunity for soaring but we have flown during each month, thanks to our improved runways.

Congratulations to Ian Carruthers on being our first member to venture into glass with his Kestrel 19. Our site isn't suitable for it yet but we have hopes for the future.

We have a flying week from June 22-26. Anyone interested 'phone 038785 264 any time.

J. McI.

ESSEX (North Weald)

At our AGM in February Chris Nicholas, chairman of the BGA Airspace Committee, reassured us that cross-country flying will continue from Essex despite the reorganisation of London and Stansted airspace. Our thanks to Chris for his efforts to persuade the authorities that we could agree a workable formula. Our thanks also to our chairman, Mike Audritt, for his work in maintaining our position with our District Council landlords. We now have a much brighter future.

Congratulations to John Rollason, Keith Brackstone and Herman Sommersell on their Gold heights and to Andrew Reid for the first outlanding (splash down) of a very wet early season.

J.F.

ESSEX & SUFFOLK (Hadleigh)

Congratulations to Stan Harris on going solo and to Mervyn Gooch, Peter Codd, Bob Adams and John Haugh for being our first members to gain their AEI rating on a two day course with Derek Sear at Dunstable.

At our AGM on March 22 Pauline Allen took over from Steve Horning as treasurer. Our thanks to Steve for a difficult job well done. Presentations were made with the Instructors' cup going to Mike Farr; the Ladder trophy to Vivien Haley; the Club 100km Triangle cup to Mike Haynes; the Geoff Cork Memorial trophy for the longest flight to Paul Robinson; the Tiny Triangle trophy to Peter Codd; the Sodit trophy to Mervyn Gooch and the Members' cup for outstanding contribution to Sally King.

We have another K-6 painted in cream and yellow.

V.H.

KENT (Challock)

A pile of metal and wood appeared in front of the hangar following severe winds at the end of March – the remains of the club's Skylark 4 trailer which was blown over. Fortunately the Skylark was in the hangar. A caravan was also damaged.

At our AGM in March Dave Manser (chairman), Tim Gardiner (treasurer) and John Bailey (secretary) were re-elected. Our thanks to them for their hard work.

We welcome Paul England as course instructor and Andy Presland as resident tug pilot, enabling us to offer aerotowing throughout the week. We have an open weekend planned for the May Bank holiday.

Congratulations to Tony Bradley, Julie Garside, Roy Green, John Horley, Chris Ireland and Ray Smith on their AEI ratings and to Geoff Smith on completing his Silver C.

J.G.

LAKES (Walney Airfield)

We have already had some good soaring in 1987. The slag bank has been working and thermals generated over the airfield and Black Combe have resulted in good wave soaring with David Hannah taking Neil Braithwaite to 10000ft in the Capstan.

Elements of refurbishment include a snack bar in our control van, thanks largely to Keith Butterfield, and work on the dormitory – all very necessary with summer course bookings coming in so well.

M.S.

LONDON (Dunstable)

The cross-country log has (on April 3) about 2500km totted up and the club ladder is filling up accordingly. To encourage non-private owners we are starting a ladder for the club's fleet of K-23s. One of these gliders took young Edward Downham round Gold distance last year on a quite difficult day, so we hope to see some interesting rivalry developing between the two sets of rungs!

There has been a trip to Talgarth, a mission to Aboyne is planned in the autumn with mutterings about Gap, France, next year.

The soaring courses are filling up, we have checked out six new tug pilots and welcome Paul Tickner, our new season's course instructor.

T.G.

MIDLAND (Long Mynd)

The best club height for March was 15500ft amsl. The annual dinner-dance was well attended and a great success. The highlight was the presentation of trophies with one going to Phil Strickland who got a tremendous ovation for his continued selfless assistance to the club.

N.B.

NENE VALLEY (RAF Upwood)

Ray Washer got more than he bargained for when he took his wife for a quiet drink – a surprise dinner party for 40 members to mark his retirement as CFI due to an overseas posting. He was also given an engraved tankard. Ray then presented the CFI trophy to John Young for his achievements – Silver C and an assistant Cat rating.

Horace Bryant, former CFI of Welland, takes over from Ray and has set us a target of 3000 launches for this year.

R.E.

NORFOLK (Tibenham Airfield)

Our club has been allowed to use this airfield on the understanding that we could be asked to move at any time. During the last few years our landlords planned to have the runways broken up so it seemed that we would have to move. But thanks to a mountain of work by the late Ron Brown, Roy Woodhouse (secretary), Evan Harris (chairman) and Ivan Esgate (treasurer) we have managed to buy most of the remaining runways and the triangle of land they enclose.

Now we can develop our facilities in the knowledge we have security, John Gammage found us an old bus to convert into a mobile clubhouse which we park at the launch point.

The soaring season started early with several

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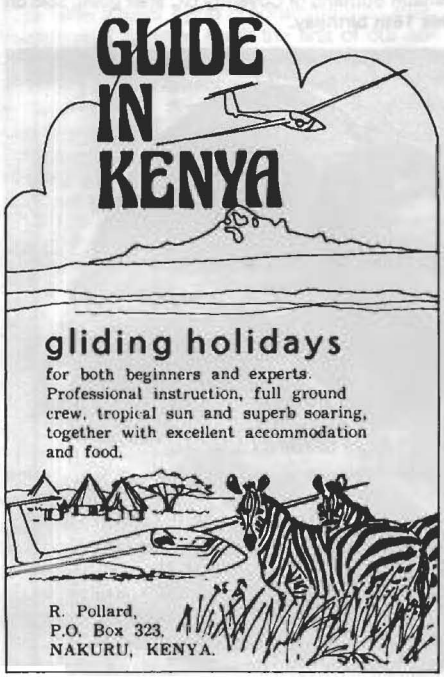
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long flights on February 16 including a cross-country to Ridgewell by Jeremy Moore (Dart).

We were saddened by the death of Bill Woodward after a long illness during which he was often able to visit the club having moved to a bungalow he had built in Tibenham village. "Busby" was a member for about 15 years and did a lot of work to make the clubhouse habitable. Our condolences to Joyce and her father.

M.T.R.L.

NORTHUMBRIA (Currock Hill)

Spring has brought a frenzy of trailer repairing and glider respraying. We began Wednesday flying at the beginning of April and our course weeks start at the end of April.

The first thermals of the year gave Keven Clemence a Bronze leg.

S.M.H.

NORTH WALES (Bryn Gwyn Bach, Nr St Asaph)

We moved two miles down the A55 in December to Bryn Gwyn Bach, a site which is easier to fly from than Pen-y-Parc and offers access to the Clwydian ridge, one of the longest soarable ridges in the country. There is also the chance of wave and being further inland we should be protected a bit from the sea breeze which previously plagued us. After a lot of work preparing the site, it is now ready.

At the annual dinner in December awards were presented to the following: Rob Vaughan (Grunau trophy, best K-8 flight); Don Hyslop (Griffiths trophy, first solo of 1986); Gerry Maddocks (Tweed trophy, best flight) and Geoff Glazebrook (McBrain trophy, most progress). A new award for outstanding service, sponsored by Providence Capitol Life Assurance, which annually includes £150 worth of flying, went to Geoff Balshaw for repairing and refurbishing our Bocian (it's painted yellow and now know as "Balshaw's Banana"!).

We have our dawn to dusk "flyathon" on Sunday, June 21 with a site barbecue and spot prizes. Visitors are welcome.

Congratulations to Brian Sedgewick on converting from his Silver C to PPL at Shobdon.

D.J.

OUSE & HAMBLETONS (Rufforth Airfield)

On April 1 the Ouse and Hambletons GCs merged. The new members are settling in well and we all look forward to a bright future. The second hangar has been completed and with planning permission for 25 caravans, we are landscaping the site.

Congratulations to Paul Hepworth, Graham Vokes, George Spofforth and Julie Atkinson on going solo, Julie on her 16th birthday, and to Meg Stark on her Silver distance.

Our chairman, Dick Boddy, was presented with a BGA diploma at the BGA conference in recognition of his 25 years' service to gliding. (See also BGA News.)

We learned with regret of the death of Wilf Coulsey. He came in 1962 as acting CFI for one month, but stayed until December 1977 when he retired due to ill health. Older members will remember his quiet authority which played a great part in establishing a happy atmosphere.



Ben Watson, BGA chairman, presenting a BGA diploma to Dick Boddy, Ouse and Hambletons GC's chairman.

He will be remembered with affection and respect.

G.Z.A.

OXFORD (Weston-on-the-Green)

The season started frustratingly with us being hampered by military activity. Our winch has a new engine and an extra launch cable.

Several members attended a lecture by a F1-11 pilot from Upper Heyford which sparked interesting viewpoints from both parties and a later tour of the airbase gave a deeper insight into their activities.

Our warmest wishes and thanks to Dave Roberts who has retired from instructing though will go on flying his Libelle. Dave, a long serving member, often provides a tugging service with his Huskey.

Congratulations to Mark Rowland and John Hanlon on their assistant Cat instructor ratings.

C.S.O.

PEGASUS (RAF Gütersloh)

Alan Jones is now an instructor and Darren Wheeler is off to Bicester on an instructors' course. Congratulations to Colin Lake and Brian Rawlins on going solo, Colin getting his B certificate; to Chris Marsden on both Bronze legs and to Bob Kraft for resoloing.

The trailer is nearly completed for its journey to the UK to collect the newly repaired Astir.

Rick Fells, Simon Clark and Charlie Musson have bought the L-Spatz from Al Stacey and hope to have it flying in its new colours in three weeks time.

The club's tenth anniversary will be celebrated at Gütersloh on August 22 and all members, past and present, will be most welcome.

M.S.

PETERBOROUGH & SPALDING (Crowland Airfield)

The annual dinner-dance was well suported with Chris Wills, president of the Vintage Glider Club, as our guest. Our thanks to Rachel, the organiser.

There have been short term problems with the runway extension but we hope to try some experimental winch launches across the fields later in the summer and are getting a Pawnee tug to back up the Huskey in the meantime. The grey Bocian's wings have been re-covered and resprayed.

Tony Noble started the season with a bang in March with 4½hrs in his Carman and the Pirat survived the first outlanding. A T-21 and T-31 owned by VGC members are coming to the site.

The task week is August 10-16 with the accent on fun. The qualifications are a Bronze C and site checks – tel 0733 47176 for details.

P.N.W.

SCOTTISH GLIDING UNION

Some interesting SE wave days have been enjoyed by the hardier members and the winch is working again. We welcome Crawford Sneddon as tug pilot and Isla as cook for the courses. Hamish Wotherspoon (ex CFI) is in charge of summer courses and weekday flying.

We have had two successful instructor courses, have six newly fledged AEIs and congratulate Colin Hamilton and Bob Jones on their

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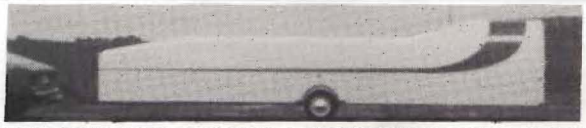
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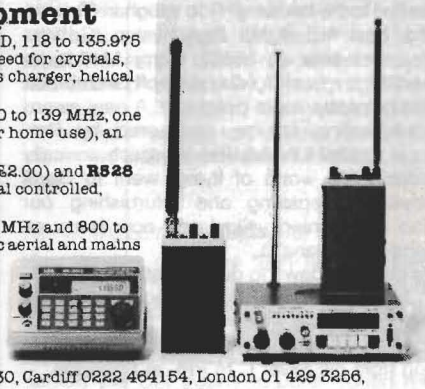
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assistant instructor ratings; also Andrew Wood, John Whitfield, Jim Smith and Chris Inchley on their Bronze Cs.

M.J.R.

SHALBOURNE (Rivar Hill, Nr Hungerford)

We have finished the hangar and winch repairs, the K-7s have been given Cs of A and a new look, due largely to the efforts of Andrew Brind. Alan Pettitt, Gillian Shepherd and Ken Mackley, and the trailers have been tidied up for the club trip to Portmoak at Easter.

The syndicate Dart has been resprayed and a BG-135 has appeared on the airfield.

Congratulations to our new AEI instructors, Robin May, Nigel Kent and Dave Maleham, and also to Jonathan Mills on becoming an assistant Cat instructor.

J.N.M.

SHROPSHIRE SOARING (Sleap Airfield)

Most reports flatter flyers - by name. But this one tells the truth about our treasurer. For ten years Tony Adams has handled our finances with such skill that not only are we on a sound financial basis but each member has been paid back their original loan of around £200 made in 1972. All our thanks to Tony.

We have had some wave flying but typically difficult seasonal weather otherwise.

The Cirrus syndicate has a Nimbus 2, Good blokes, no names, except to say Tony Adams, having started in the vintage era, is part of it with our CFI, Tim Chapman.

P.L.U.M.

SOUTHDOWN (Parham Airfield)

Our AGM was a great success, the high point being Derek Piggott's talk. We thank Dave Hatfield for two years' hard work as clubhouse and premises officer and welcome Maggie Clews as his successor.

Congratulations especially to Paul Hampshire for taking the most promising young pilot award and then justifying it by finishing his Silver C with a height and duration the following day. Many cross-countries were done on the ridge after Christmas and congratulations to Peter Horne for his Bronze C and to Paul Fritche for his 5hrs.

Much C of A work has been done by members - special thanks to Steve Turner, John Ward, Bob Woodhead and Roger Coombs.

Friday evening lectures finished with a talk by Chris Garton and evening and course flying starts this month.

P.C.F.

STAFFORDSHIRE (Morridge)

We are now a limited company so members' assets are protected should we ever have a major damage claim. In the current climate of increasing settlements, this has to be a wise move.

At the AGM hard working Alan Jones retired as secretary to be replaced by Peter Gill. Flying and membership fees were increased to finance an ambitious programme of ground improvements. Additional income will come from the three one-week and several one-day courses.

Andy Oultram and Richard Bills are now instructors following the departure of Mike Golder due to work commitments.

The winter lecture programme was badly disrupted by the weather. However, flying has been promising with several good soaring days.

M.J.P.

(In the last issue, Staffordshire somehow appeared under Shropshire! Apologies to all concerned. Ed).

SURREY HILLS (Kenley Airfield)

Our fleet now consists of two motor gliders, two Blaniks, a Pirat and a Swallow and we operate from Monday to Friday from 9am to dark. Our summer courses will include flights in the motor gliders.

We have started a flight booking system on 01 668 0010 which is working well. Field selection exercises in the motor gliders may be booked this way by visiting pilots.

We hope the cable retrieve winch will soon be operating.

M.J.A.

SWINDON (Sandhill Farm)

Development of the airfield continues with a new entrance and car-park. We have a steady trickle of very welcome new members.

A repeat of last year's warning to anyone dropping in; beware the power wires 30ft above the airfield boundary on the south side. No one has been caught out yet and we want to keep it that way.

P.M.

TRENT VALLEY (Kirton-in-Lindsey)

Our flying weeks are on May 25-29 and August 31-September 4 - all visitors welcome. We also fly on Wednesday afternoons and Friday evenings during the summer.

Our faithful K-8 has been spruced up by a team of hard working volunteers - our thanks to Rex and Ruth Flint, John Cook and Andy Cullum.

L.W.

ULSTER (Bellarena)

The 180hp engine for G-TUGG, our newly acquired Super Cub, was late arriving from the USA after the Citabria had gone and it looked touch-and-go for Easter. With fall-back arrangements made, we were looking forward to welcoming visitors from GB and a strong contingent from Dublin GC to our customary nine-day camp.

Combined with the 150 yard runway extension, levelled and seeded last autumn and usable from May, the up-rated tug will take the *angst* out of still air and crosswind two-up Twin Astir launches and make more days flyable.

The tugless period was used for midweek fettling and C of A renewals on the three two-seaters and the Skylark 2 in the suburban convenience of Castlereagh College and weekend site works, including major clubhouse improvements.

Three members sloped off to Aboyne where Hugh Gowdy achieved what we hope will prove to be a Gold C height gain - just. The others made greater altitudes but still short of a Diamond.

The AGM brought some changes to the committee, now chaired by Harry Boyle. It has set up seven day operations from mid-June to mid-August, during which period nine Monday to Friday *ab-initio* courses will be run. Come on over.

R.R.R.

VECTIS (Sandown Airport, Isle of Wight)

Congratulations to George Hibbead and Andy Noctor on going solo. Andy waited 14 years from his ATC pre-solo check as he was under age - is this a record?

The AGM re-elected the committee *en masse*, Pete Tuppen was thanked for his splendid efforts as treasurer.

Members are planning to visit Angers, HusBos and Waikerie.

J.E.P.

WELLAND (Middleton)

Following our AGM our new chairman is Dave Strachan with Peter Andrews as CFI. At the dinner-dance Barry Chadwick collected the Duration cup (7hrs 22min) and the Mike Till trophy; Keith Scott the Clayton trophy for distance and Bert Creighton the Sedbergh trophy for *ab-initio* of the year.

R.H.S.

WEST WALES (Templeton Airfield)

Since Harry Piper took over from Gil Phillips as CFI we have had a run of exceptionally fine weather with only three unflyable weekends during the first quarter of the year. Peter Harries gained his Bronze C in mid-February and Nielson Logue went solo.

The club's T-21 has been restored to its

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R.R.

WOLDS (Pocklington)

Few flying days have been lost and Tony Spirling started the season well with his Silver distance in March.

An added attraction at The Two-Seater Competition, from August 16-22, will be a Tiger Moth available for tugging, particularly for any single-seaters after the competition launch time.

An April 1 article in the local press claiming our airfield was to have international status with 15 Concordes based here resulted in a flood of calls from locals.

D.B.

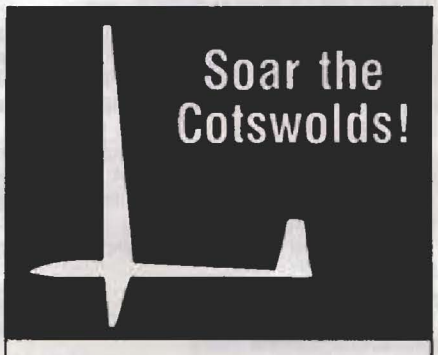
WREKIN (RAF Cosford)

Our statistics are up by 30%, mainly due to the dogged determination of Grif, the CFI - three days in February saw over 100 winch launches.

Many ex-members returned on February 21 to join our 21st anniversary celebrations when most people flew and everyone enjoyed the party. Special thanks to Caroline and Pauline for the excellent food and to Nigel, Barny and Jon for running the bar. Also notable were the excellent after-dinner speeches from John Garrett and Callum McCall.

Mick Boydons gained his Diamond height at Aboyne to complete his three Diamonds and Dave Owen, Jim Coey, Rick Jones, Drew Andersen and Paul Cashmore have gone solo.

Our chairman, John Secker, has been posted and we welcome two more full Cats, Pip Barley and Keith Harsant.



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Dave Cottle's Skylark (No. 308), which Nick Goodhart flew from Lasham to Portmoak, has gone to some Skylark fanatics in Holland.

M.B.

WYVERN (RAF Upavon)

At the AGM on February 28 the awards were presented to Stella Hamblett, Steve Welch, Gerry Sturgess, Mike Law and Pat Faralley. Afterwards there was a disco and party in the clubhouse organised by Paul Lutley to celebrate Wyvern's 25th anniversary.

Graham Sharpe has retired as CFI and been replaced by Eric Smith. Bob Preston has converted to the Astir and Toni Muncaster to the Cirrus.

D.B.

YORKSHIRE (Sutton Bank)

The first wave of the season coincided with the BGA Conference at Harrogate and some of us had the pleasure of "attending" the Saturday lectures whilst at 10000ft over the hotel. Two weeks later we had good thermal soaring, giving 6-8kt over the Pennines and Yorkshire Moors.

Our best wishes to Jean who has retired from the kitchen after many years work and will be missed. Visitors will find we have a full snacks and meals service available at all times.

P.L.

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OVERSEAS NEWS

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FRENCH COMPETITIONS

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Would-be visitors should write to the Federation Francaise de Vol-a-Voile, (FFVV), 29 Rue de Sevres, 75006, Paris, asking for confirmation of the dates and details of the organisers. – *Details from William Malpas.*

OLDTIMER MEETING

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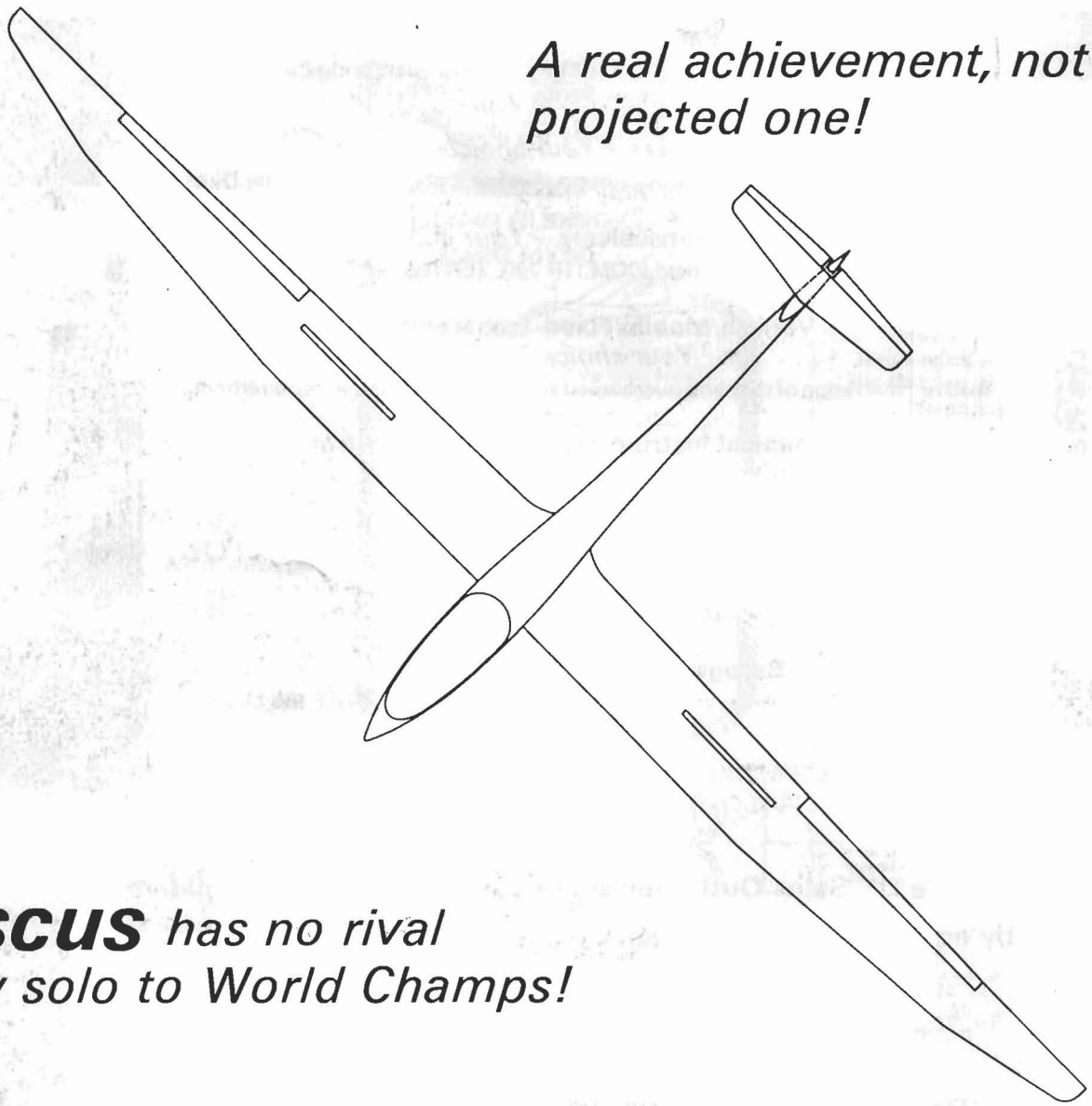
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