the Vintage Glider Club of Great Britain

NEWS LETTER

APRIL 1974

One good piece of news is that the British Gliding Association has made us a donation of £50 in connection with the Marquee. This seems to show confidence in our future and we are immensely grateful. The Marquee will be at Long Mynd together with such 'field kitchen' equipment as we can beg, borrow or otherwise acquire (without money!): the gaps which become apparent we can then fill by judicious purchase.

Now that the winter has ended, many are still working on aircraft for Cs of A. As far as is known all the very old gliders have come through the winter without bad effects. Judging by the large number of old aeroplanes, built during the 1930s which are still flying, one wonders whether our climate, in spite of the damp and cold, might after all be suitable for casein glue.

C. of A. work has now started on the Minimoa at Dunstable and preliminary investigation shows the fuselage in good condition. The machine spent the winter in its trailer, in a barn, and the trailer has been worked on throughout the winter. The Weihe at Dunstable has come successfully through its C. of A. The Gull 1 which normally lives at Wycombe Air Park has also been successful, and is temporarily at Sutton Bank. The Minimoa at Lasham spent the winter in its trailer in the hangar and must, almost certainly, be in perfect condition. The Rhönbussard at Wycombe Air Park is about to have its C. of A. work started and looks, from the outside, to be in good condition.

But a recent copy of the Civil Aviation Accident report shows that during August and September 1973 there were the following accidents:

Kite 2	BGA 663 (Built 1947?)	Damaged near Sutton Bank
Olympia	BGA 1697 (Built 1947?)	Found damaged at Inkpen after supposed unreported heavy landing
Olympia 2	BGA 507 (Built 1947?)	Damaged while landing near Camphill
Olympia 2	BGA 1382 (Built 1947?)	Damaged landing at Currock Hill after an attempt to soar locally
Skylark 2	BGA 748 (Built 1954?)	Spun in near Usk after a winch launch to 700 ft. Pilot killed.
Olympia 2	BGA 1912 (Built 1947?)	Damaged landing in a field after running out of lift while hill soaring near Millfield.

150 Olympias were built at Elliotts of Newbury (the first 100 during 1947). If this slaughter of Olympias goes on, then plainly we shall run out of the machine which was the chief workhorse of the British Gliding Movement for at least 15 years.

Another of our very old gliders, a 1943 Goevier, has had its first flight after many years of repairs. The first flight by Lou Glover and Richard Hoskin went very successfully on the 23rd February: this is the third Goevier flying in this country.

The Czech KRAJANEK 1947 which solds the British Single Seat Duration Record (flown by Ladislav Marmol) previously reported to be in poor shape, is we are assured alive and well, in excellent condition, at the Rotherham & District Gliding Club.

The PETREL (Mike Russell/John Byrne) is now having its C. of A. done by Lou Glover at Husbands Bosworth. Mike has just spent 200 hours (2 weeks leave and 'spare' time) completing the trailer and the glider is now in residence. The whole elegant equipage will be at Husbands Bosworth for the week prior to Whitsun Bank Holiday and will definitely be at the Long Mynd for the Rally, though unfortunately the Petrel may not fly for lack of a skid and a complete set of skid fittings - but he's working on it, so your prayers are requested.

The Scud 3 at Nympsfield is understood to be in the last stages of reconstruction. SCUD 2 AND SCUD 3. CAN ANYONE HELP US FIND THESE DRAWINGS PLEASE?

JOHN BENTLEY

John Bentley was unfortunately killed recently when the Pirat he was flying spun during a last turn in to land. It was his first flight in a new Pirat in which he had just bought a share. John was one of the owners of the Grunau 2B at Dunstable. During a short time last autumn he had renovated the Grunau's trailer from an almost hopeless wreck to a 'going' concern. He was present with the Grunau at the last Vintage Display at Wycombe Air Park. We shall miss him. Our sympathies go to his wife and four children.

BUNGEYS

I have to correct a note on bungeys in the last News Letter. After it went out John (Furlong) and I visited the London Club and saw the bungey. John says it is at least twice as thick as the ones he used to use and might well be capable of the 300/1,000 launches claimed. We also found a 'bungey owning syndicate' at the Club with an almost brand new bungey which they are generously lending to us against a small launch charge. So we shall have our own bungey at Long Mynd and North Hill (for use at Branscombe and elsewhere) - and the charge will be the same as the Midland Club's which is around 50p.

THE WASSERKUPPE RALLY 31 May - 9 June 1974

Our entries from this country are: Minimoa - John Coxon and Phil Gardner (non-flying): Minimoa - Francis Russell and Chris Wills: Kite 1 - Ted Hull and Martin Simons: Grunau 2B - Rodi Morgan: Rhönbussard - Graham Saw.

Other members have entered: Kurt Kummel with his Minimoa from Germany, Willi Schwarzenbach with S.18 from Switzerland, and possibly Edoardo Baldessari and his CAT 20 from Italy.

LONG MYND RALLY 24 - 27 May 1974

Full details are given in a separate information sheet which is being sent to those listed in the February News Letter, and Colin Street, Ron Davidson and Angus Munro, shortly we hope to be a new member. If you would like the information sheet and your name is not included, please send an s.a.e. to the Secretary. It is important that you ask for the information and ENTRY FORM if you want meals, dormitory accommodation (in the Midland Clubhouse) or a caravan site.

Among the gliders present will be 2 Petrels, a Gull 1, a Sky, 2 Kite 1s Minimoa, Weihe, Kranich and Grunau 2B. It is hoped that other old gliders will also come. If conditions permit, there will be bungey launching. Road directions for trailers are also being sent, but if you come without them remember that the eastern ascent onto the Mynd is very steep and the western face is very, very steep: on both ascents it is sometimes hard to pass vehicles coming the other way.

NORTH HILL RALLY - 22 - 30 June 1974

Information sheet and ENTRY FORM available on request (s.a.e. would be appreciated). Again most important that you complete an entry form if you want meals, caravan sites and a place in the party on Saturday, 29 June.

The Devon & Somerset Club have now decided to site our caravans among those of Competition Enterprise entrants, so that we shall not be trailing our wash bags across the field each dawn. We may also use the bungey we have on loan at Branscombe. They say that 'during the fuel economy period our Swallow was bungey off the cliffs at Branscombe with a bungee wound up by horse-power applied by a car in some way' - which sounds interesting to say the least.

YOUR APPEALLING SECRETARY

PLEASE HELP ME to give a good impression of our Club by giving fairly accurate numbers and needs to the Midland and Devon & Somerset Clubs for the Rallies. If we prove too vague and difficult we may lose out on good sites in future years.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

FOR SALE

Kite 2 — 1947, with C. of A. and trailer. Enquiries to I. H. Shattock, 9 Church Street, Bedwas, Newport, Mon. Tel: Caerphilly 885233

Weihe — Good condition, recent C. of A. complete with instruments and fitted trailer. £1,100. Telephone Melton Mowbray 4361

Weihe — 1939 Pre-production with C. of A. Enquiries to Risto Pynnonen, Varaslahti, 40800 Vaajakoski, Finland. This Weihe came to England in 1954 to take part in the World Championships. In it, Seppo Relander was placed fifth. Then reg. OH-WAB, now OH-133.

Wren — 1931 Manuel Wren for £750. No C. of A. or trailer. Enquiries to Michael Jones, the Tiger Club, Redhill Aerodrome, Redhill, Surrey Seen at Rochester Aiport. (Full details in our February News Letter)

OFFERS, BIDS AND SWAPS

Norman Ellison, author of British Sailplanes 1922-1970 can supply prints from the drawings in his book. (3-view G.A. drawings only - not the perspective sketches which were lost in the post in 1971). The drawings are generally 1/24th or 1/25th scale, but a few are 1/20th or 1/30th scale). Cost of print, size 30" x 20" would be 30p including postage. Norman also has drawings collected since the book was published.

Write to Norman Ellison
'Glerup'
Springfield Lane,
Kirkbymoorside, York YO6 6LU

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Mike Russell (Peddars, Wood End Green, Henham, Bishop's Stortford, Herts) Henham (027-975) 308 is desperate to buy or exchange the following:

WANTED - Sailplane & Glider

September - November 1944
August 1952
November/December 1954
July/August 1955 and any later S & G issues

Volume 1 Nos. 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 22, 28 to 42
Volume 2 Nos. 1, 3 to 12
Volume 3 Complete
Volume 4 Complete

All the above for exchange against disposals or would purchase

DISPOSALS

1935 August - December complete
1936 Complete
1937 Complete
1938 Complete except for Sept.
1939 Jan/Feb/Mar/May/June/July/Aug/Sept

1938 April December
1935 August
1946 March and November
1947 May (2 copies)
June (3 copies)
July
1948 January/December
1949 February

ADDITIONS TO THE ADDRESS LIST

PREFECT	Ron Tarling, 7 Harris Road, Watford, Herts (co-owner with Colin Street)	*
Editor of PLANEUR	Ary Ceelen, Pieter Stockmanslaan 53, Eindhoven 4508 Holland	*
Cat 20	Italy 1938 Edoardo Baldessari, 39049 Vipitano, Via Villa, Italy	*
Assoc.	Nicholas Cranfield, Broadstone Farm, Forest Row Sussex	*
Assoc.	T. J. Ostley, 'Littlegreen', Compton, Chichester, Sussex	*

NEWS FROM THE U.S.A. by Chris Wills

Dean McMillian has flown his Baby Bowlus. The machine was wheeled out for its first flight on 8th April, after years of restoration, resplendent in its colours of mahogany, clear varnish and Stars and Stripes on the rudder. (Maybe the Stars are not there yet, but all the rest is). The fuselage, aft of the wings, is a polished aluminium boom. Some orange, which seems to blend in with the mahogany, has been painted on the fuselage to warn off modern jet air traffic. This seems to be the only departure from the old colour scheme.

I feel that Dean's efforts should be an inspiration to us all. During the last months of restoration it was necessary, in order that the machine should obtain a C. of A. to use the services of a skilled aircraft worker, and old Bowlus engineer, Frank Kelsey who worked on it for low wages, as a labour of love. In order to pay this engineer, Dean has worked as night porter, all dressed up in brown suit and top hat, at MGM's colossal new Las Vegas hotel, where he earned money through tips. Needless to say, this night work has been very wearing. However, during the day time, in spite of lack of petrel (they have an energy crisis too) Dean has been able to get out and search for more old sailplanes.

Dean has found the remains of TWO Bowlus Dupont Albatross, the great legendary sailplane of American soaring history. This was the machine which was flown by America's pioneer soaring pilots Jack O'Meara, Richard Du Pont, Lewin Barringer, Emil Lehecka, Chester Decker and so on. On 25th June 1934 Richard Du Pont flew a World Distance Record of 158 miles in the type. More coloured photographs, kindly sent by Dean, reveal that at least one of the Albatross fuselages is very much in one piece but that the wings are in a bad way. The very detailed photographs reveal extreme beauty of line and construction. One of the aircraft was last flown in 1948.

We now include detailed drawings of the two types of Bowlus Sailplane mentioned. From the drawing of the large Albatross, one can notice that it has a landing wheel. Thus it is quite possible that Wolf Hirth decided to install a landing wheel on the Minimoa after his visit to the USA.

We thank Dean for sending us so many letters and photographs and hope that his modesty has not been offended by this exposé of his efforts.

About 5 Large Albatross were built, starting from about 1933 - 3 were built during the War. Hardly two of them were the same: some of them had ungulled wings and others were smaller. Two survive in the National Soaring Museum and the Smithsonian Institute.

BABY BOWLUS were built from 1938. The machine has a wing, basically similar to that of a Grunau Baby. It was built in relatively large quantities by the Bowlus firm and others were sold in kit form. Although many still exist (some of them in museums) only three or four still fly.

The BOWLUS SUPER ALBATROSS. Unfortunately I have no 3-view drawing of this type. The machine was a high performance Baby Bowlus with cantilever wings in shoulder configuration, mounted on the pod. The wings were the outer panels of the 1933 large Albatross. Only two Super Albatross were built in 1942. A third was started in 1948. Only one example of this superb little sailplane is still airworthy. It is owned by Herman Stiegelmeier and is registered N.33658.

HAWLEY BOWLUS firm could not keep going after the War because he could not convert his beautiful labours of love to the austere post-War era. He died about six years ago. He was known as a 'hell of a nice guy' and a superb craftsman. His contribution to early American soaring must have been considerable and his sailplanes were among the World's finest.

STOP PRESS — The FIRST US VINTAGE GLIDING MEETING at Harris Hill during August, sponsored by The National Soaring Museum.

NORTH HILL RALLY — If postage weight will allow, NORTH HILL INFORMATION AND ENTRY FORM WILL BE INCLUDED WITH THIS NEWS LETTER

PETREL — News to-day that Mike Russell hopes to have skid and fittings finished for the Petrel to fly at Long Mynd.

President: Chris Wills, Huntercombe End Farm, Nettlebed, Oxon Tel: Nettlebed 650

Published by Frances Furlong, Otford House, Otford, Nr. Sevenoaks, Kent
Tel: Otford 3277

BOWLUS BABY ALBATROSS

The following is reproduced from SOARING January 1974, and written by SOARING's homebuilding editor, Stan Hall who made the flight.

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It was on Easter Sunday in 1938 that a history-shaping event in soaring took place near the rural township of Arvin, California. Here, in the lupine-covered foothills below the shadow of Bear Mountain, a gliding meet was under way. And it was here that the late Hawley Bowlus' prototype BABY ALBATROSS made its first soaring flight. I was there. I was the pilot.

Earlier that spring afternoon I had joined the hundreds of spectators and glider pilots who watched with awe and envy as Stan Corcoran, designer and builder of the famed CINEMA made two quick glides to the San Joaquin valley in the BABY.

This machine was of a new breed, awe-inspiring in its beauty, a CIRRUS or AS-W, as it were, in an age of sticks and gussets and wires. She was sleek, with a polished, natural-finish mahogany pod, a slender aluminium alloy tubular boom carrying a tail spangled with the stars and stripes. The wing was a Bowlus trademark - a single spar, plywood covered D-tube leading edge and single strut. The fabric was treated with clear dope and, like a butterfly, every rib, spar, and auxiliary structure was clearly exposed to the eye. Hawley had a keen sense of form and beauty and it showed in every line and curve of the BABY. I knew that only pilots having a superior skill would be able to handle this spirited and magnificent machine.

You can imagine my astonishment, then, when Hawley and Don Mitchell, his shop foreman, walked up and asked me if I'd like to try my hand at flying her! I was not one of the well-known pilots of the day such as Harland Ross, Woody Brown, Dick Essery, Frank Kelsey, and others. I suspect, however, that my innate ultra-conservatism showed through even then. I didn't question their wisdom, I merely blurted out a "yes!" and before I had a chance to reflect upon my own poor qualifications as a pilot of such an incredible aircraft, I was off the ground, whisked into the air under the steady hand of Jay Buxton, himself a famous designer, but who was serving as winch operator for the day.

I pulled the towline release and headed immediately toward the valley, the same route Corcoran had taken earlier. I was vaguely aware of the almost total lack of sound. Despite there being no canopy, not even a windshield, the machine was incredibly quiet. I was accustomed to the singing wires of the two-place, wire-rigged "secondary" glider I had built with Sven Ingels, and the low sound level compounded the strangeness of this new environment.

All I could consciously think of was Hawley's last admonition as he hooked up the towline, "Corcoran flew too fast. That's why he went down. Keep the speed down to around forty." So, I kept my eyes glued to the airspeed, neglecting even to look out at the wings and bored straight for the valley at precisely 40 miles per hour. Sometimes I dared to move my eyes to the variometer (a new and strange instrument at the time) which always said "down".

As my confidence grew I made some gentle turns, a few degrees in either direction. In doing so I found myself inadvertently trying to rotate the wheel about its vertical axis as if it were a rudder that would make the sailplane turn. I knew better, of course, but I had never before flown anything with a wheel control: I was used only to a stick.

I had been in the air about fifteen minutes and had managed to glide down within 800 feet or so of the valley floor. "Maybe I should start looking for a place to land," I thought. So, with all that altitude (for 1938) to play with, I began to plan for what had to be just the best landing I had ever made - for Hawley's sake, if not mine. Unexpectedly, I felt the bird shudder a little, then surge upward as though the gods of weather had suddenly lifted me by the scruff of the neck. Wow! A thermal! I had never before encountered anything but slope lift in our secondary, and, if I hadn't listened as other pilots described their adventures with "thermals", I would have sailed right through it.

I rolled into a turn - and the lift didn't go away. We were climbing! Now, I concentrated on the variometer, which was now saying "up," and we whirled around and around, while I unconsciously attempted to pull sideways on that wheel as I fed in the rudder.

Nothing else mattered in the world. I had to stay in the lift. And the only thing that seemed to be keeping me there was turning. Centering the thermal be hanged - I don't think many of us in 1938 knew a thermal had a center! After a while I made two important discoveries. One was that the thermal was so large in area that, despite my stumbling around in it, I had gained 500 feet above the take-off point. The other discovery was that the wind had carried me right over the take-off point.

This was simply too much. I had successfully "mastered" the Baby Albatross, I was directly above the field - and, to my chagrin, I had just blundered out of the thermal. What better time to simply spiral down, get on the ground in one piece, and walk away with the knowledge that I had just flown the most beautiful sailplane in the world? But fate was not yet through with me.

As I spiraled downward, I heard a great "pop" in the structure. "May God," I thought, "I've got a structural failure!" But nothing happened other than my heartbeat going over redline, and I continued spiraling down.

After what seemed an eternity, I gingerly exercised the controls. They seemed okay. The wings were still there - but I couldn't turn my head enough to see the tail. "It must be there," I thought, "in the tail." Not wishing to make any unnecessary moves I sat immobile, preferring not to wake the tiger but simply to wait for the time to straighten out and land, hoping that the ship would indeed straighten out. One thing I was certain of - we were going to land, straight or crooked. But I was terrified at the thought of possibly demolishing Hawley's new creation, and maybe myself, in the process. At the appropriate moment I rolled the wheel and pushed the rudder pedal. The ship straightened out and we landed soft as thistledown.

People came running from all directions. I felt like Lindbergh at Le Bourget - except that I was scared stiff. The first person to reach me was Hawley Bowlus, himself. He said, "You're pale as a ghost, Stan. Are you okay?" I replied, "Hawley, something broke in the air and I don't know what it is." Then he turned pale. I crawled out of the cockpit amid the snapping of cameras while Hawley and Don dived headfirst into it. After a few seconds Hawley came up for air with a grin. He said, " I've found it!"

Those familiar with the Baby Albatross will recall that the control wheel sits atop two vertical tubes, inside of which runs a chain that passes over a sprocket on the wheel. The wheel and sprocket, which operate the ailerons, of course are contained in a casting which is riveted to the upper end of the tubes. In their haste to get the Baby completed and to the Arvin soaring site, Hawley and Don had apparently forgotten to replace with rivets the two self-tapping screws that temporarily held the casting in place. What I had done in about an hour's tugging sideways on the control wheel was to break that temporary joint. The only thing holding the assembly together was the tension in the cables. The sound of the joint letting go, amplified by the mahogany plywood pod and my own psychological receptivity was one I'll never forget.

Nor will I forget any detail of the experience that Hawley Bowlus, Don Mitchell and the imcomparable Baby Albatross brought me that glorious, innocent spring day in 1938. It was an important day for me, yes, but more importantly, it signaled a new era in soaring. People from America's four corners began building the Baby from Hawley's kits. And, as a result, many of our best pilots and designers took paths from which to this day they have never swerved. They are now making their own contributions to soaring.

Hawley Bowlus himself was a legend in his own time. The trouble was that nobody realised it. The impact of the Baby Albatross on the advance state of design and soaring as we now know it is felt to this day. He remains, in my mind, as one of the most talented and ingenious designers of that time or any other, including the present one.

Bowlus died in relative obscurity to soaring, and today his greatest contribution, the Baby Albatross, has gone to its reward too. There are still a few around, but when they appear at the gliderport they are mostly objects of amusement to those insensitive souls who, because Hawley left his mark, now ride the wind in sophisticated, space-age fiberglass chariots. But in 1938, and for a lot of years to follow, it wasn't like that. Hawley Bowlus and the Baby were the best. The very best.