

# FINAL GLIDE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD GLIDING CLUB

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Edited by Phil Hawkins

## THE MIDDLE WEEK WAS BEST!

If you chose to fly during the middle week of the three flying weeks in August, you did well. For consistency of soaring weather it was excellent.

The first week began quietly with pleasant but unremarkable conditions, until Thursday when Chris Emson and Graham Barrett both made 300km flights, invoking the Comic Relief Fund donations from the members on the airfield that day.

The weekend of August 10/11 also saw the beginning of the National Open Class competition at Enstone. It was a windy weekend with lots of wave flying in the big ships at Enstone, but no competition tasks.

Monday 12th was much better. Alex Jenkins flew round Salisbury Cathedral from Weston, and at Enstone John Giddins and Jane Randle flew a 358km task. Several other members had good cross-country flights from Weston including Jack Miller, Colin Shepherd and Martin Hastings.

On Tuesday John Hanlon and Brian Payne attempted 500km tasks but they went south first which was wrong for the weather. They had to abandon after about half the distance. However, Neil Swinton made a successful Silver Distance flight to Old Warden. At Enstone the forecasters sent the competitors north and east into good weather. John Giddins, Jane Randle and Phil Hawkins all completed the day's 375km task.

On Wednesday Chris Emson flew a remarkable 362km in the K-6e, around Cambridge, Husbands Bosworth and Newbury. Graham Barrett attempted 500km but landed at Daventry after 355. Mick Moxon attempted 300km but landed at Leicester. At Enstone, John Giddins completed a 400km task.

Thursday 15th was windy again. At Enstone, both John Giddins and Jane Randle landed out on yet another 300km task. Not much cross-country flying was done at Weston on this day.

Friday, however, more than made up for the lack of achievements on the day before. At Enstone John Giddins and Mike Randle completed another 350km task, while Phil Hawkins decided (wrongly) the weather wasn't up to much and flew home to Weston via Daventry and Silverstone.

John Hanlon meanwhile had completed a 220km declared task, both Andy Barnes and Neil Swinton did 5hrs, and Howard Stone made a successful 50km flight to Old Warden at the second attempt. On his first attempt he had reached Milton Keynes before realising his barograph wasn't switched on. He calmly soared back to Weston, landed, switched it on and started all over again! Numerous other pilots flew cross-country on this day.

Saturday was windy again, and the Enstone task setter gave the competitors their only task of the week which was less than 300km. Several members took two gliders to a static promotional display at Gloucester Green in Oxford city centre. It was convenient to be able to point out gliders circling overhead when explaining thermals to Joe Public!

Sunday August 18th was supposed to be the day of the year according to the forecasters, but although five OGC pilots attempted 500km (Barrett, Evans, Hawkins, Jenkins, Oakes) the weather never lived up to expectations for any of them. Caroline got the furthest, turning back at Malvern at the end of the day and clocking up 473km by the time she got home.

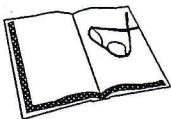
However, those who aspired more realistic tasks came off best. Mick Moxon and John Gordon both did 300km flights for their badge claims. John had previously claimed Gold Distance but not a Diamond Goal. Martin Cooper flew the K-8 to Lasham and easily collected the other two Silver Legs while he was about it, while the final day's task at Enstone was 375km which John Giddins completed. The SZD Junior demonstrator arrived at Weston a week late and generated lots of interest amongst Bronze C pilots.

The next good day was Tuesday 20th when Chris Emson and Donal Meehan flew declared tasks of 238km and 120km respectively, but the remainder of that week was hot and blue with little cross-country flying.

The bank holiday weekend saw the OGC team gathering at Dunstable for the Inter Club League Final (see elsewhere in this issue). Back at Weston, John Gordon flew a 238km task on Sunday, but the best day of the weekend was undoubtedly the Monday bank holiday. Both Brian Payne and Tony Boyce flew over 250km attempting 300, and leading Club Ladder contender Chris Emson clinched his winning position by completing yet another 300km flight in the K-6e. Neil Lawson-Smith took the K-8 to Odiham for his Silver Distance flight.

During August we were pleased to welcome visitors such as John Freymuth, former member Joe Wren with his Olympia 2B, Richard Hall with his PIK-20E and John Smoker with his diminutive K-3. It has a 10 metre wingspan, V-tail, no brakes and no undercarriage (just a skid).

Altogether a successful 3-week period for the Club, which incidentally has boosted our finances considerably for the year as a whole, after a disappointing May/June.



## EDITORIAL

Something exciting is about to disappear from our sport. Pilots who have experienced it will miss it, and pilots learning to fly now are never going to know what they've missed.

Imagine the scene. You are 50km from home, at 2000ft under a hazy blue sky, it's 6.30pm and the air is still. Gliding hopefully on you are beginning to scan the fields ahead, resigned to the inevitable.

Suddenly a welcome sight down below - a spear of flame following a speeding Land Rover as it races around the edge of a large square field. You fly in wide circles above it at min sink speed, waiting for the firestorm to develop. The breeze begins to blow over all four hedges of the burning field, drifting the smoke towards the middle. During this time you are tightening your straps and stowing loose items in anticipation of what is to come.

The air moves uneasily as a menacing dome of smoke builds underneath you. You increase speed as you descend to meet it. Then the air turns brown, the wonderful smell

of burning straw fills the cockpit and the wings are bending and groaning as you are tossed around in wild cobblestone turbulence. Sixty knots minimum for adequate aileron control. You hit a pocket of strong down which leaves you weightless. A half-chewed apple which you forgot to stuff under the seat cushion floats around the cockpit in zero-G.

Then a giant hand pushes from underneath, whooshing the air from your lungs, sending your audio vario into a frenzy and telling you where to start turning. Average rate of climb perhaps 15 or even 20 knots.

Higher up the lift does steady down somewhat. At 6000ft you change channels, run up the horizon and enter the yellowish-brown cloud which the smoke has caused. At 7000ft you emerge into cool still air, totally elated, twiddling the John Willy to convince yourself that 50km is now a simple final glide. The wing leading edges are filthy with smuts but you feel like dropping a bottle of whiskey over the side on a little parachute to say "thank you."

That is what we have lost, largely due to public opinion which perceives straw burning to be an anti-social activity.

The campaign against it is sometimes unfairly exploited by newspaper reports of notable events such as the pile-up in smoke on the A34 near Abingdon a couple of years ago. Without exception, all local papers (and local radio) reported that the smoke had "caused" the crash. Make no mistake - bad driving causes crashes. As we all know, a thick wall of smoke from a burning field is visible from miles away. It isn't something which leaps over the hedge unexpectedly and pushes your car into the ditch.

The number of road accidents which occur in smoke is negligible compared to the number of accidents which occur in fog. Therefore, banning field fires will have a negligible effect on the number of road accidents. No doubt this argument will lead to a newspaper campaign to ban fog.

Phil Hawkins

## INTER CLUB LEAGUE FINAL REPORT

The London Gliding Club at Dunstable were hosts to the Inter Club League final over the August bank holiday weekend. Six winning teams had assembled - Nympsfield, Lasham, Swindon, Saltby, Cambridge and ourselves.

The task briefings were well up to Regional Competition standard, with computer-generated task sheets and turning point photos, weather charts etc. Launching was by aerotow at £15 a time (if you saw their ghastly winch launches at £4 each you would think the extra was money well spent).

Saturday was grey and scratchy with occasional convective bits mixed in. The pundit task was somewhat optimistic at around 200km but Graham Barrett (Libelle) managed over 100km before landing, claiming third place. However the organisers placed him last until he pestered them to check his camera film and landing point. In common with many

others on this day, Martin Hastings and Norman Machin didn't score.

On Sunday the weather was improving. Still lots of grey layer cloud, but thinner and broken by the sun. Tasks were to the southwest where the weather was better.

Chris Reynolds (Skylark) flew 140km around Chieveley/Didcot and was placed 4th in the novices. Tom Lamb (Mini-Nimbus) flew 217km around Pewsey and Swindon in 3rd place for the intermediates. John Giddins (DG-202) flew 330km to Pewsey/Lasham/Blakehill Farm and was placed 5th in the pundits.

Everyone was pleased to get back but felt that the last leg was slow due to increasing layer cloud.

Monday bank holiday was the best day. Hot sun, no wind and good cumulus most of the way. Steve Porat (Astir) flew 159km to Didcot and Towcester for 5th place in the novice class. The intermediate task was 303km. John Hanlon (Cirrus)

went well to Andover but then got lost near Evesham (second TP) before landing at Weston-on-the-Green on the way back to Dunstable. He too was placed 5th.

The pundit task was 382km to Andover/Stourport/Little Rissington. Phil Hawkins (Mini-Nimbus) found conditions good as far as Cheltenham but then the convective clouds became a long way apart, and the second half of the race was slow. He was placed 4th for the day. Donal Meehan also did a self-set task in the Skylark 4.

Overall we were sufficiently consistent in our scoring to be placed third after the big clubs Nympsfield and Lasham. In the circumstances we felt that this was the best possible result that could have been achieved.

A memorable weekend for all concerned, well organised with good task setting, and well supported by OGC members. Thanks to all those who turned up.

## YOU KNOW YOUR MUSHROOMS?

Some Club members regularly pick mushrooms off the airfield at this time of year, but did you know there are at least four edible types commonly found here?

The ordinary field mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*) is most often seen, and is most widely recognised as being edible. The young white buttons range from fingertip size to golf ball size. When first open the gills underneath are pink, fading to brown and later black when the tops are fully open. The largest flat caps would be about 6" (15cm) in diameter. They grow either singly or in straggly lines but are not usually associated with ring formations in the turf.

The horse mushroom (*Agaricus arvensis*) is usually much larger with a stouter stem. New buttons can be anything up to tennis ball size or even bigger, and when fully open the tops can be over 12" (30cm) in diameter. The gills when fully opened are nearly always pale grey rather than pink, and the smell is rather different to the field mushroom, suggestive of aniseed. They tend to grow either in isolated groups or in large ring formations. This year has been particularly good for the horse mushroom.

Much less well-known, but equally delicious, is the Blewit (*Tricholoma saevum*, or in some books *Lepista saevum*). In appearance the flat cap is

clay coloured, sort of brownish-grey, and the gills underneath are white. Blewits grow to about the same size as the field mushroom, and the smell is more or less the same. They always feel heavier and more solid than field mushrooms, but the distinguishing feature in young specimens is a faint purplish tinge on the stem although this disappears as they age. They are nearly always found in ring formations and continue to grow through the first frosts of winter, sometimes until after Christmas. All the textbooks do say that this species should not be eaten raw, but they are particularly good for making soup. The really unfortunate thing is their colour scheme just doesn't look very appetising!

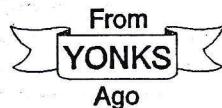
The fairy ring mushroom (*Marasmius oreades*) is a typical "toadstool" to most people. The thin caps are small, barely a couple of inches across (5cm) when fully grown, on a spindly stem. They are sandy brown in colour throughout and have a faint musty smell. The gills underneath are more widely spaced than the other types described here. The fairy ring mushroom nearly always grows in ring patterns in the turf, sometimes including substantial clusters which temporarily kill off the grass for some inches around. It is quite tasty but you would need to collect a lot due to their small size.

The damp weather earlier this year made the mushroom season begin in July, two months earlier than usual. The weather also seems to have encouraged some species not seen here before. The small puffball (*Lycoperdon spp.*) looks like a button mushroom until you pick it up and see that it has no stem and no gills. Although some types are supposed to be edible when young (before the middle starts to turn greenish) I would not personally recommend it.

I have also heard of the yellow stainer (*Agaricus xanthodermus*) being found here although I have never seen one myself. This is similar in appearance to the horse mushroom but with two important and rather obvious differences. First, if you break bits off, particularly at the foot of the stem, the broken area quickly turns bright yellow. The other difference is in the smell. When raw it is something like writing ink, and when being cooked it is even more unpleasant, said to be like carbolic. Some people can eat it without ill effects but others may suffer sickness or allergic reactions.

I have never identified any poisonous species on the airfield (and I have been looking for 16 years), but this does not mean there never will be any. If in doubt, ask for a second opinion or leave well alone!

Phil Hawkins



From  
YONKS  
Ago

The first general meeting [of the OGC] was held on 2nd December 1937 in the Old Lecture Room, Christchurch. It quickly got down to business with great enthusiasm. Questions of site and finance were aired, a resolution for the formation of the Club with the name "Oxford University and City Gliding Club" was passed unanimously, and a steering committee was appointed, charged with looking into all the problems and drawing up a provisional budget.

The steering committee, with advice from the Cambridge and London Clubs, were able to produce a three-year budget by March 1938 with a scheme for raising the finance to match.

Cumnor Meadow at Farmoor near Eynsham proved to be the most suitable site. Both the BGA as a condition of subsidy, and the British Aviation Insurance Group as proposed insurers, required that there should be some security of tenure, and this was soon agreed with two farmers and the landlord.

Permission was granted for the erection of a hangar, and it was hoped to have this finished by 7th May when the Club's first aircraft, a Kirby Cadet, would arrive.

On April 18th half the hangar had arrived at Cumnor Meadow and the contractor promised to get on with the preparation of the site with all speed, the first requirement being a bridge over the ditch.

The Club started flying business on 7th May 1938 with one Kirby Cadet. By the end of June, however, the Club fleet also included two Primary Daglings and a nacelled Dagling, and a trailer.

Empire Air Day was then an established tradition, to be celebrated on 28th May. The RAF Station at Upper Heyford would celebrate it, and its C/O W/Cdr D E Hebbert, already a member of the Club Committee, invited the members to tea at the Squadron Mess for the occasion. Hebbert agreed that the Club should participate in the flying display at Heyford. The Club was allotted one hour, from 2pm to 3pm, for its appearance.

The first public day for the Club was fixed for the following day, Sunday 29th. Many well-known glider pilots were invited, a public address system was ordered and all arrangements made for an enthusiastic launch for the Club.

(Adapted from "The Foundation of the Oxford Gliding Club", written by Laurie Wingfield in 1986. As far as I can determine, the Club's original site at Cumnor Meadow is now underwater thanks to

Farmoor Reservoir. OGC operations moved to Aston Rowant at the foot of the Chiltern ridge in 1939, and the formation of the Oxford Gliding Company Ltd dates from that time. Post-war, the Club restarted in 1951 at Kidlington, moving to Weston in 1956. One of these days I will get round to doing more research on Club history - Editor).

## CALVERT TO CLOSE

The London Brick Company is to close the Calvert works with the loss of 336 jobs. Production will be switched to the company's six other UK brick factories.

A well known gliding landmark east of Bicester, the works were built in the 1890s and currently make Fletton bricks for the construction industry. Production lines will be stopped "shortly" but a final date for the closure of the works was not forthcoming.

## NOTES FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The K-6CR has been advertised for sale at £6750, with a closed trailer, in *Sailplane & Gliding*. Enquiries have been few and far between, however. It will be advertised again in the Dec/Jan issue, and the Secretary is also sending a notice to local clubs.

There were a number of adverse comments concerning the SZD Junior demonstrator which visited the Club in August. In particular, tall pilots would still have trouble fitting into it. As this is one of the main criticisms of the K-6CR, the idea of acquiring a Junior has been abandoned.

Concern was expressed at the length to which the grass on the airfield had been allowed to grow before cutting. The Secretary has written to the Defense Land Agent to point out the dangers to our operation, but they replied that they had no obligation to cut the grass short enough for gliding (or any other activity). The Club has purchased a new grass mower for towing behind the tractor at a cost of £450.

The Club also now has a telephone answering machine, of the type which can be played back remotely.

Various minor problems with the winch were discussed. The O-ring seal problem will be resolved by changing the flanges to an improved type. The water problem was caused by a blocked pipe which has now been cleared. It was generally agreed that the winch is much more reliable than in the past. Further improvements are currently being proposed by Chris Reynolds.

The Club has unfortunately allowed the registration of competition number 361 to lapse, and the number is now in use by someone else. The Astir will be repainted with the letters DMH this winter.

The 1991 AGM will be held on Saturday 23rd November.

Lynne Barrett will be standing down from organising Friday evening group bookings next year so a replacement (preferably a volunteer) will be required. Unless you would prefer your annual subscription to be increased to £150.

## HAVE YOU HEARD...

There will still be up to 800 personnel at USAF Upper Heyford after it becomes a standby base in about two years time. Apart from occasional deployments of aircraft, it will become an administration centre providing medical facilities and general support for other air bases in western England.

Until now there have been housing development restrictions in areas such as Upper Heyford village, Ardley and Steeple Aston, where aircraft noise above 75 decibels is experienced. These restrictions are likely to be eased. Likewise, the compensation scheme for the loss of value of houses affected by noise would only continue as long as the district valuer considers appropriate.



The newest glider on the airfield is the "Mini-Cirrus" number 278, owned by Chris Emson, John Gordon and Martin Hastings. A recent import, this machine began life as an ordinary Standard Cirrus, but met with an unfortunate accident whilst parked on a German airfield in 1988. Its cockpit area was completely destroyed in a collision with a vehicle of some kind. It went back to the Schempp-Hirth works where it was fitted with a Mini-Nimbus cockpit and tinted canopy. At the same time the Vorgelat gelcoat was replaced by Schwabblack which seems to be more in favour these days.

The K-6e formerly owned by this syndicate has been taken over by Andy Barnes, Andy Butterfield and Neil Swinton. It recently suffered slight damage inside its trailer during Andy Barnes' "happening" on the M40, but we hope it will be airborne again soon.



Jane Randle made a 500km diamond distance flight from Aston Down in her Nimbus 2 on August 26. Her TPs were Norman Cross (Peterborough), Andover and Winslow. She found conditions very good for the first half of the task, but progress became very slow after Newbury heading south towards Andover. The clouds looked about the same, but the thermals weren't working so well. She found strange convergence clouds near Didcot on the third leg, and again east of Bicester. The homeward leg from Winslow back to Aston Down was very difficult with weak scrappy lift. She spoke to Brize Norton and was able to fly through their zone, otherwise she might not have completed the task.

On the same day, Alison Randle landed 15km short on a 300km flight, flying an Astir from Bicester. Apparently this was further than many others at Bicester on that day, and she has since been promoted to the LS-4 list.

## CLUB LADDER RESULTS

Twenty-two pilots entered their cross-country flights for the ladder trophy this year. The winner was Chris Emson, whose four best flights included three over 300km. Final points table:

Chris Emson	6684
Phil Hawkins	5428
John Giddins	4432
Graham Barrett	4289
John Gordon	3642
John Hanlon	2553
Mick Moxon	2528
Alex Jenkins	2237
Caroline Oakes	2125
Martin Hastings	1959
Donal Meehan	1311
Tony Boyce	1208
Brian Payne	1034

The total distance logged by all pilots this year was 14,423km. The glider distance league table was as follows:

Cirrus EEN	2538
DG-202 515	2252
Mini-Nimbus 147	2133
K-6e 577	2102
DG-100 251	1460
Libelle CLV	1325
Pilatus DRP	953
Club Astir	620
Skylark 4 438	319
Cirrus 278	315
Pirat CBN	194
Club K-6CR	120
Club K-8	62
Club T-21	30

and 9 other pilots.

Chris Emson's best flight was 362km in 6½hrs in the K-6e, scoring 1972 points. The furthest distance flown by any pilot was 473km by Caroline Oakes on August 18 (1075 pts). The fastest flight was also the highest scoring, Phil Hawkins' 375km task from Enstone at 81.75kph (2024 pts). Graham Barrett also achieved 80kph in a 300km flight on 8 August (1876 pts). All speeds handicapped.

The longest flight time logged was 7h 19m by Alex Jenkins, covering 422km during a 500 attempt. Interestingly, no-one claimed ladder points for height gain this year. Perhaps it was just a poor year for cloud flyers.

In case you're wondering it was Graham Barrett who took the T-21 across country, flying to central Oxford and back in 55mins. His actual speed was 33kph, handicapped speed 76kph! The closed circuit handicap for a T-21 is 43.

For the newcomers who would like to participate in the ladder next year, you should enter the details of your flights in the log book which is kept in the clubroom. Points will be calculated for you, and your four best flights count for the trophy. Briefly, you get more points for a pre-declared flight (whether you complete it or not). Declared completed flights are the most valuable. Alternatively you may claim points for height gain but the gain has to be substantial - the first 5000ft counts for nothing.