



# FINAL GLIDE

Issue 37: November 2018

Edited by Paul Smith

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Club Expeditions  
Competition Flying  
300 & 500km Badges  
Welsh Diamond Hunting



Photo: Paul Smith – Andrew Butterfield, Welsh Diamond Hunter

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## Editorial

*Paul Smith, Editor*

Many thanks to everyone for their contributions to this 37th edition of Final Glide. Without people taking the time to tell their tales, report back on what's happened and share their experiences there would be little permanent record of what a great club we all belong to. As you will read there have been some great achievements in 2018, a year that gave fantastic soaring conditions.



## Chairman's Corner

*Martin Brown, Chairman*

It's hard to believe that a year has passed since I was elected to the position of Chairman. Just days after that appointment I completed the purchase of a house in the Cotswolds that needs a lot of work so all in all I've had a very busy year. At the same time as I became Chairman, Dave took on the role of Club Secretary and immediately threw himself into the role with enormous energy and enthusiasm. Dave has made my job so much easier than it might otherwise have been so it's only right I should begin by acknowledging this.

It has also been a busy year for gliding. The summer weather provided some outstanding conditions for those who enjoy cross country flying and records have tumbled as a result. 500km flights are a rare and exceptional achievement but this summer I lost count of how many have been achieved from Weston. Indeed, if I've got my facts right, Paul Smith managed four flights of 500 km or more on four consecutive weekend days! Not only that but the club distance record was extended to some 540 km. Amazing as this is in itself, this was achieved not by one but by three of our members on the same day. So, the weather provided the opportunities but our pilots took those opportunities and really made the most of them.

This year began with an Airspace Change Proposal from Brize Norton and London Oxford Airport (Kidlington). If the airspace changes are approved by the CAA as per the original proposal OGC could be in a very difficult position. The call went out for everybody to put fingers to keyboards and attend consultation meetings to make our objections to these proposals very clear. It's early days but we're just beginning to see glimmers of hope on the horizon in the form of reductions in the amount of airspace requested by both Brize and LOA. Massive thanks to everybody who did their bit to put up a fight. As I say, it's far from over but we are beginning to see reasons to be optimistic.

By the time you read this year's Final Glide our open forum evening will be in the past but as I write this it is still a couple of weeks in the future. This is something that we have decided to try in response to suggestions from a few individuals. The only time the club really gets together is at the AGM but, as a relatively formal evening, there isn't the opportunity to engage with the membership to discuss how you would like your club to operate. The committee do their best to steer the club in the way they believe best but the idea of the forum is to engage everybody in the process. If the forum is successful, we will look at making it an annual feature. The committee has begun looking at defining a future strategy and direction for the club and this is something we will be looking at during the forum. One of the biggest aspects of this is what to do with our fleet of gliders. For many years we have relied on our trusty K13s but they are not going to last forever. I think just about everybody is in agreement that we need to upgrade our fleet but exactly how to go about it is somewhat less clear. As a committee we are working on a plan but we are going to need input from you the pilots, instructors and students to ensure we make the best decisions.



As we all know, OGC cannot exist without voluntary contributions from you the members. Whether it be instructing, glider maintenance, serving on the committee, organizing visitor flying, maintaining ground equipment or any of the other many ways you give up your time to keep the club going it is all very much appreciated. OGC is your club whether you've been a member for 50 years or just a few weeks. At the time of writing we have several unfilled officer roles but I'm hopeful that the forum and the AGM will encourage people to come forward to fill these vacancies. We all have skills that can be put to good use around the club so if there is something you would like to get involved in please speak up.

I will close by wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

## Inter Club League

*Dave Bray, Inter-Club League Captain*

You may be interested to know that this year's ICL planning started in January with emails bouncing between the local clubs sounding out interest. In February, I met up with the club captains from Shenington and Windrushers (Bicester) for a beer and a chat. Following that a few changes were made:

- A new class for 2-seaters, flown unscored around any of the three tasks, the emphasis on learning and experience.
- Tweaks to the requirements of the three classes; Novice, Intermediate, Pundit. Pilots could move up or down a class based on their actual experience rather than the previous hard and fast rules.
- A format change to the usual multiple weekends of contest reduced to a single weekend event in order to reduce the onus on hosting a weekend and encouraging more to join in. The number of entries in some of the classes was therefore increased to 3 Novices, 2 Intermediates but sticking with 1 Pundit.

We met at Shenington, over the first May Bank Holiday. Saturday started with hot, hazy weather and representing Oxford were Alex Rose as Novice, George Crawford as Intermediate and myself flying as pundit. In addition to this, in the new 2-seater class, we had John Mart with Paul Smith instructing. The forecast was for Cu to the west of Shenington and blue to the East, however, due to the worry of sea air coming up the Severn valley the task area was set to the West and North West.

Novices had a 90km task, the intermediates had a 160km, and the pundits had 204km.

In summary, both Alex and George flew round their tasks successfully and when the speeds were compared to the other pilots (there is a bit of a competition after all) both came second in their respective classes. I landed out on my way home after only 165km, fooled by a change of air mass as I transitioned from one where brown fields, towns and villages were all producing thermals and haze caps to one where they weren't, and I didn't realise soon enough! I'm very grateful to my retrieve crew of Richard Hall for coming to get me. Thanks Richard!

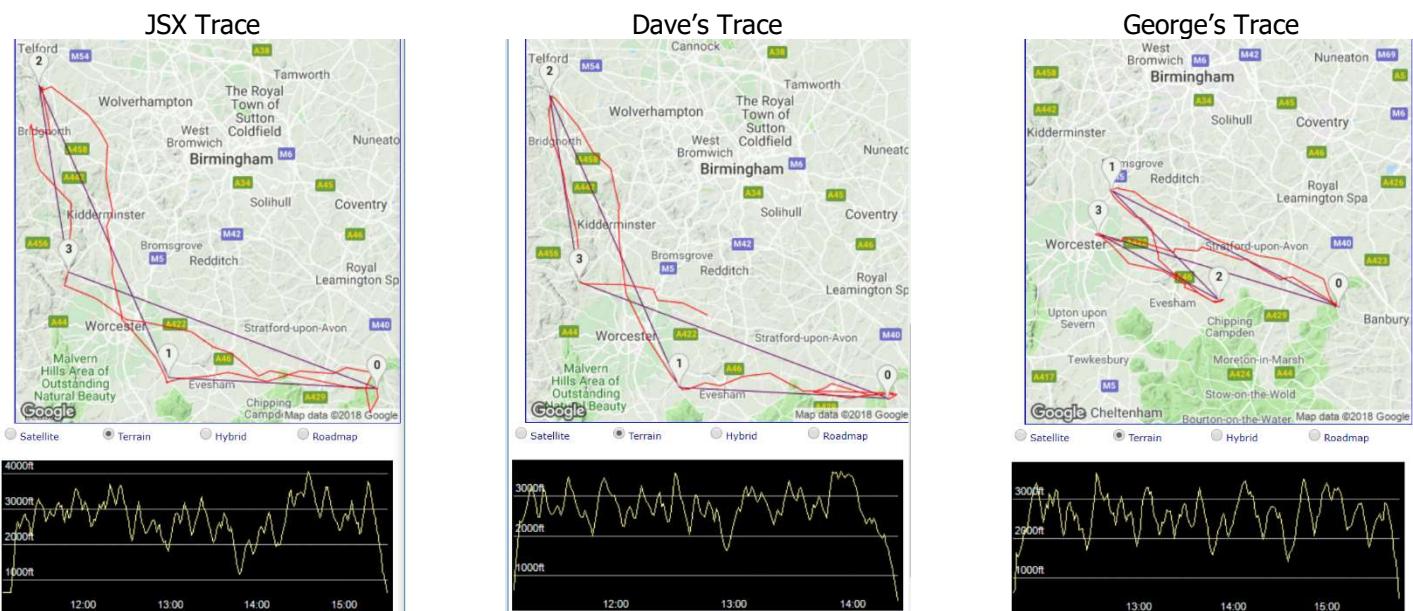
When I got back to the Airfield and chatted to the other pundits I found that they all turned back when it had turned blue and had stayed in the difficult airmass I'd landed out in, never finding the better weather!

John and Paul in the DG505 flew round the pundit task and unlike me, stayed high after Worcester and completed the task. Both of us having seen a lot more of Shropshire and Worcestershire than we expected to at the start of the day!

This put the scores after the first day as: Bicester - 8pts, Oxford - 7pts, Shenington - 3pts.

Sunday, day 2 was a totally blue day and representing us was Jacek and Jon in the DG505 and me again. The day was hot but with the high-pressure system sitting over us it was not enough to trigger reliable cross-country conditions. All the Bicester and Shenington pilots took launches but watching them struggle to get any more than a few km away from the airfield and any more than a few hundred feet above launch height convinced us to stay on the ground. The day was scrubbed around 6pm after those flying had had enough.

Monday, day 3 was again a blue day but the computer models used by the weather forecasting software surprised us all by suggesting that the inversion would break around 3pm, turning low blue thermals into much higher, stronger climbs perhaps even with some Cu. Despite waiting for reports from the club aircraft, the air around Shenington stayed as still as a mill pond so it was decided to scrub. This gave the pilots of the DG505, John Hanlon and Paul Payen, a chance to take an aerotow and prove everyone wrong by gliding back to Weston. They duly did so but reported the visibility was awful. They did however find a thermal around Weston, but it wasn't enough to have done any task though!



It was great fun spending some time at Shenington and seeing how everyone else does it. Bicester went on to represent the Midland League in the National Final and ended up winning it. The first time they've done so. Congratulations to them!

In 2019, the local round is being held at Bicester. Provisionally over 4th-6th May Bank Holiday weekend. Remember, since the ICL is about fun and flying don't be put off entering because you don't think you couldn't do it – anyone with their cross-country endorsement can enter. Just because you've flown a 300km flight it doesn't necessarily make you an Intermediate. If you would like to enter as a novice next year, then you probably can! The same goes for any of you who've flown a 500km at some point in the past!

## OGC Club Ladders

*Nick Hill, Ladder Steward*

The BGA ladder website (<http://www.bgaladder.co.uk>) provides a site where details of cross-country flights can be entered by pilots from all BGA clubs. Once a flight is entered the flights are assigned a score based on nationally agreed rules and the results displayed in a variety of local and national ladders.

For those that enter their flights it therefore provides a simple way to compare flights on the same day with both other OGC pilots and those in the wider UK gliding community. Useful information can be obtained about tasks set, speeds and distances achieved and if people experienced similar problems in the same areas as others.

There are also trophies awarded each year for the best placed pilots and the primary national ladders for which the BGA awards annual trophies are:

- Open ladder: For any cross-country flight
- Weekend ladder: For cross-country flights made on weekends or Bank Holidays
- Height Ladder: For gain of height rather than distance flown



Photo: Paul Morrison

OGC has club ladders for all the above categories as well as a local ladder that only contains flights made from Weston-on-the-Green to better reflect normal club flying. The OGC club ladder trophy is awarded at the AGM to the pilot that tops this club specific ladder.

The results for the OGC ladders are presented in the following tables. The listings here show all flights including those entered without logger trace uploads.

### OGC Open Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Paul Smith	3735	3727	3466	3199	3037	2404	19568
Richard Hall	3625	3485	3423	2949	2265	1023	16770
Dave Bray	3914	2580	2541	2507	2030	1567	15139
Jonathan Hunt	3123	2503	14910	1556	972		10064
Andrew Butterfield	3496	1997	1124				6617
Alex Rose	1934						1934
Gordon Craig	1886						1886
George Crawford	583						583
Patrick Wallace	293	278					521

### OGC Weekend Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Paul Smith	3735	3727	3466	3199	3037	2160	19324
Richard Hall	3625	3485	3423	2949	2265	1023	16770
Dave Bray	3914	2580	2541	2507	1302	783	13627
Jonathan Hunt	3123	2503	1910	1556	972		10064
Andrew Butterfield	3496	1124					4620
Alex Rose	1934						1934
George Crawford	583						583
Patrick Wallace	293	228					521

### OGC WOG only ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Paul Smith	2735	3727	3466	3199	3037	2012	19176
Richard Hall	3625	3485	3423	2949	2265	1023	16770
Jonathan Hunt	3123	2503	1910	1556	972		10064
Dave Bray	3914	2507	783	379			7583
Andrew Butterfield	3496	1997	1124				6617
Alex Rose	1934						1934
George Crawford	583						583
Patrick Wallace	293	228					521

**OCG Distance Ladder**

Pilot	Km	Flights	Avg Km
<b>Paul Smith</b>	5284	16	330
<b>Dave Bray</b>	3290	13	253
<b>Richard Hall</b>	2689	7	384
<b>Jonathan Hunt</b>	1851	5	370
<b>Andrew Butterfield</b>	957	3	319
<b>Gordon Craig</b>	314	1	314
<b>Alex Rose</b>	305	1	305
<b>George Crawford</b>	155	1	155
<b>Patrick Wallace</b>	108	2	54
<b>Totals</b>	14952	49	305

**Summary of recent years**

Year	Pilots	Km	Flights	Avg Km
<b>2018</b>	10	14952	49	305
<b>2017</b>	11	12162	59	206
<b>2016</b>	9	10993	48	229
<b>2015</b>	11	16625	71	234
<b>2014</b>	10	15841	72	220

**OGC Cross Country in 2018**

So how did 2018 compare to previous years? Well the data shows it was pretty good.

From the table comparing different years we can see that whilst there were years where a greater total cross-country distance was flown, in 2018 fewer pilots flew consistently longer flights averaging over 300Km over all flights on the ladder. That is up almost 100Km compared to 2017.

Paul Smith's winning scores on the OGC ladders were also significantly higher than the high scores from previous years with his score of 19176 on the WOG only ladder being 68% higher than the top score from 2017.

July 2018 was also a fantastic month with most high scores being posted during that month. In fact, five of Paul's highest six scores were all posted during three successive weekends in July. These scores also meant Paul finished in 38<sup>th</sup> place in the UK open ladder and an impressive 15<sup>th</sup> in the UK weekend ladder.

**OGC Height Ladder**

The majority of height ladder points were from flights chasing diamonds flying from Denbigh. As last year Andrew came out top once again.

Pilot	Flight Points
<b>Andrew Butterfield</b>	3129
<b>Paul Smith</b>	2524
<b>Dave Bray</b>	353

**Some notes on scoring and logger files**

Any flight can be entered on the ladder so even if you did not complete the declared task, decided where to go after launching or just went for a wander round the countryside then these flights can also be entered and scored on the ladders.

It is always a good idea to upload a logger trace of the flight to maximise the points that can be scored. If you don't have the logger trace to hand when entering your flight on the ladder it can be added later so there is no excuse to not enter the flight when it is fresh in your mind.

There are rules and regulations covering the ladder and scoring system which are a bit detailed to cover here. If you really want to read all the rules, they are at <https://www.bgaladder.co.uk/Rules.asp>

For club ladders I am a bit more lenient and don't vet all flights for absolute conformance or delete flights for minor indiscretions so if you fly cross country then please enter the flight on the ladder.

Welcome to the BGA National Ladder  
Season 2018

The National Ladder is an informal, year-long soaring competition intended for UK-based glider pilots. This site holds information regarding the operation of the Ladder, participating clubs and contact details.

Click [Info](#) for details of how to take part and the [Ladder Rules](#) link for scoring details. If you have any further questions, please study the [FAQs](#) page first.

[Login](#)   [Register](#)   [Info](#)

[Calculator](#)

Pic of the Day: Montagne de Ceuze from Sisteron airfield

[Cookies Statement](#)

For more information regarding the BGA National Ladder please contact the [National Ladder Steward](#)

## French Alps First-Timer

Dave Bray

I'd flown around the mountains of Wales and the hills of the UK, but my trip to the French Alps really was that once in a lifetime opportunity that I fully intend to repeat as soon as possible!

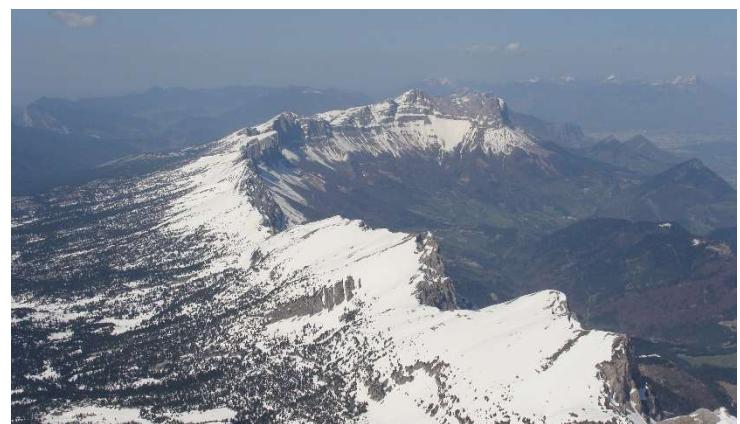
The organisation of this is a big barrier for a first timer, but as the others had been so many times I was pointed in the right directions and that set the ball rolling.

The drive down there is a long one, but in convoy, with lots of CDs the time passes quickly and before long we were setting up the gliders at the airfield and unpacking in the Gîte (French farmhouse).



Briefing on the first flying day was thorough but with so many big lumps of granite I was all ears. Reassuringly, it matched all I'd read on mountain flying – there are some great S&G articles from over the years on the online archive.

We ended up flying 9 out of the 10 days we were there, and we could have flown on the one we didn't but took a calculated rest day. I clocked up 42 hours and over 3000km. I had great guides to fly alongside and it helped that I'd done lead and follow flying before. Most of the lift was thermal as the wind was so light but there was always dynamic lift where knowledge of the mountain slopes and local breezes was important – putting understanding from the books into practice was straightforward.



Some personal highlights include the 50km non-stop ridge run from Grenoble back along the Eastern edge of the Vercors, staring up at 1500ft of rock with 5000ft below. Some of the thermal climbs were off the clock, I regularly had more than 10kts of lift, I think my average peaked at 15kts once. The sheer beauty of the mountains when seen from a glider is hard to explain.

Obviously, we were fortunate with the weather, and I'm lucky to have my own glider to take, however, if you ever find you've a couple of weeks left to take off work then I'd really recommend you look into a gliding holiday. The club has a fantastic asset in the DG505 and perhaps if there is interest one day it could be you sat in it, beating up the side of Mont Blanc!

## A tale of two 300s

Alex Rose

I'm sure most of us are familiar with the adage of the 6 P's... Proper Planning Prevents P\*ss Poor Performance, an excellent bit of advice and something I should have paid more attention to before setting off on my first gold distance attempt! I'd had no previous intention of even going cross country that weekend, but after a Friday evening of pinging visitors around the sky on trial lessons, and a BBQ around the fire, conversation inevitably drifted towards the forecast for the weekend – which was pretty good! With the pundits heading off on a 500km, I figured a 300km triangle in wood might be on. Encouraged by everyone else's optimism, once I got home, I hurried around to find all my cross-country paraphernalia; out came maps, hats, water bottles, pens, food, and whatever else I could lay my hands on that I thought might be useful.

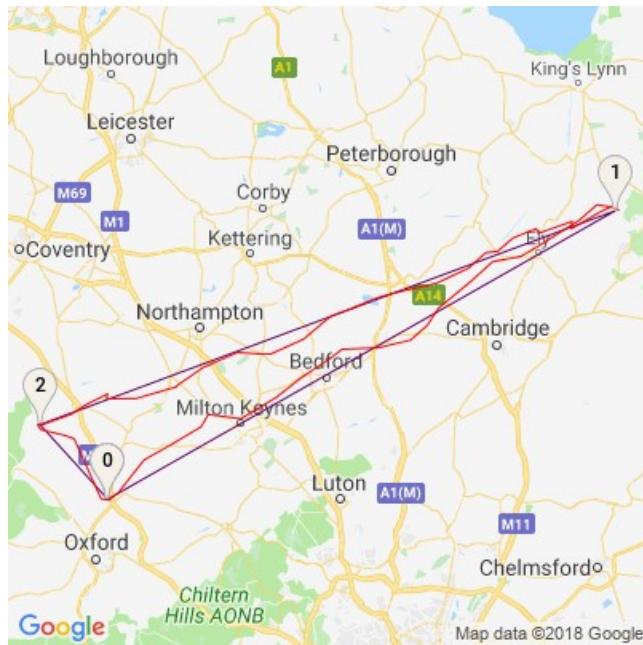
I got to the club nice and early and set about preparing for my flight – batteries and parachutes are found, glider rigged, washed, and DI'd, and map marked up with my task, WOG-ELY-UWH-WOG (Weston, Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, Uffington White Horse, and back home). The task setting this weekend was largely governed by the Silverstone Grand Prix, and so several us were all heading off towards Milton Keynes together.

Getting away from the wire proved relatively easy, and I followed Paul and Richard east, following the ground features to find Milton Keynes, then Bedford, then Gransden Lodge, and finally pushing on to Ely, my first turn point. This first leg was my quickest of the flight, with nice strong lines of energy to follow. I had a great view of the West side of the cathedral (more about this later!) and pulled into a steep turn around it, heading back towards the White Horse. Conditions in the area got a little weak at this point and after a brief struggle I was well on my way, building up to a 6000ft cloud base over Oxford as I headed back past with a quick wave at WOG in the distance.

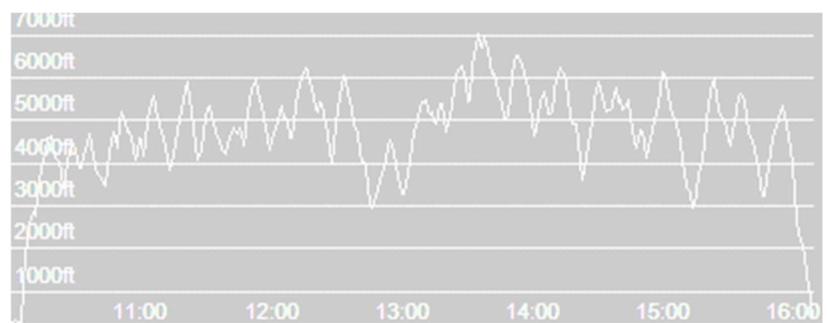


I wound the speed up a bit and after a climb at Didcot pointed at UWH. After a few minutes trying to spot it, the horse came into view, I turned it and headed home. I taxied up to a stop outside the hanger and headed in to find my OO and go through the trace. This is where Ely cathedral becomes important again... In having a good look at the south west face of the cathedral, I'd failed to actually enter the sector and turn the turning point! At this point some unpublishable words were muttered but I was still happy with the flight – it was still my longest XC flight to date (313km), and I learnt a lot!

Luckily for me, 2018 was one of the best years that UK gliding has seen for a long time, and the following weekend's forecast was looking just as good. Determined not to fall foul of turn points again, this time I spent a little longer on my pre-flight preparation and remembered to charge my moving map GPS.



It got to set off time and I sat in a thermal straight off the winch, alongside Dave Bray in his Libelle, before setting off for Buckingham. Today's task was WOG-FWL-SWL-WOG (Weston, Feltwell, Swalcliffe, and home).



The flying felt a lot easier this time as I was now a little more familiar with the area, which made navigation simpler. Getting to Feltwell was relatively uneventful, except for a large blue gap between St Neots and Ely, which in reality was only 25km or so but felt like forever. The Skylark is nice in blue conditions because it will climb in very weak lift, and for its age has a reasonable glide performance.



I turned Feltwell and headed back towards Oxfordshire to my next turn point, Swalcliffe, a small village near Banbury. Once again this was the nicest leg on the flight as I'd got to the best part of the day and could fly along cloud streets at nearly 6500' AMSL. Perhaps I got a little too gung-ho about not taking climbs at this point because I arrived just outside Banbury with only about 2000ft. After a few minutes of scratching I managed to get back up to a sensible altitude and pushed on, turning Swalcliffe and heading home. The nicest thing about this task (thanks to Paul S for setting it!) is that from my final turn point I had an easy final glide into Weston! I got the nose down and flew through the finish, this time having completed my Gold distance/diamond goal!

## Third time lucky for a 500k

Jon Hunt

BGA badge claims are not for everyone! Gliding is different things for different people. For me though 3 diamonds was the challenge I had in my sights after completing my cross country endorsement back in 2015. It's been great fun working through the badges, but ever since the very beginning the 500k distance flight was one I thought might be unattainable.

Not feeling ready to tackle 500 kilometers when the spring came this year, I told myself *have this season to get your speed up and then attempt the diamond distance next year*. However, a great part of cross country flying is the support from friends and fellow pilots, who help with flying aspirations and give you a little push when necessary. I've always had great support at OGC and I recall the first good flying day of the year; a task sheet was handed to me, *500 today then Jon* were the words that accompanied it and that was decided.

2018 was going to be all about the 500k.

### Attempt 1 - Stay high at the end of the day

Weston-on-the-Green – Walford – Blenheim – Old Radnor – Weston-on-the-Green – **505km**

I'd started the day not really expecting to get round the task. With a *cop out and go home* option at Blenheim, I set off with the mindset of "see how I go". I started this task with 3 other gliders and was expecting to be well and truly behind by the time I reached the first turnpoint in Walford, Wales. Losing time in poor thermals on the first leg saw me drop off the front two gliders by about 15k. I was able to pick up the pace though and by the time I got back to Blenheim (turnpoint 2), I was holding my own. The two gliders in front were not notably pulling away any more, they were about 20k in front and I still had a fast glider behind me in fourth place. I had a decision to make, head home or another out and return to Wales. It was marginal but doable and before I knew it, I was heading out west again.

Making good time back to Wales I was given a boost by passing the two lead gliders who were heading back, having already turned Old Radnor. I was only 15 k from the turnpoint, putting them about 30k in front. Pushing on hard with renewed confidence, I made the error that was to be my downfall. The day was weakening and my climbs started to dwindle. Pushing on for better climbs that didn't come, I quickly found myself in 1/2 kt of lift 500ft over my chosen landout field, in the middle of Wales.

I stuck with it and managed to get a couple of thousand feet below me. I'd wasted a good hour though scratching away and in the meantime, the sky had died. I started to limp home, trying to minimise the retrieve distance. The climbs were very poor and every time I left one, I was sure it was going to be my last. My limping tactic continued and in a sky that had finished giving for the day, I somehow found myself at Evesham, about 60k short of home and the 500k flight claim. In neutral air the vario slowly started to show weak signs of life and I spent an hour in the final climb of the day, half a knot all the way to 5600ft... this was going to be a nervy final glide!

I prayed to the weather Gods on the way home for favorable air, but unfortunately it wasn't to be. I was at Enstone with 800 ft, so close. There was denial that I had to land and the temptation to push on was strong with silly thoughts of ground effect when low. Thankfully though the right decision was made and my first 500k attempt saw me landing at Enstone airfield just before 8pm having spent 9hrs in the air. It somehow didn't feel like a failure, I should have been in a field in Wales a couple of hours ago. 490k done, I now knew a 500 was possible.



Photos: Jon Hunt - Waiting for a retrieve at Enstone

## Attempt 2 - Don't get cocky

Weston-on-the-Green – Oakington – Swindon S – Waterbeach N – Weston-on-the-Green – **504k**

The start of this task came with more pressure. It wasn't going to be *see how I go*. I knew it could be done if I flew well and stayed high at the end of the day. I got away well this time and made good initial progress to turn point 1 at Oakington. It was a bit blue, but okay. I took time to stay high and by the halfway mark at Swindon South, things were really looking up. I turned Swindon South and headed for the final turn point at Waterbeach N. The sky ahead was a glider pilots dream! The energy line was strong and ran in the exact direction I needed. A pack of competition gliders joined me for a while and I matched the higher performance ships for pace.

My confidence was growing!

I thoroughly enjoyed that leg. Relaxed and flying fast, I thought to myself, *it's in the bag!* Over confidence was to bite me though as I approached 20k short of the final turn point. The energy line ran out and the big blue hole ahead looked worrying. There was never any doubt, I couldn't turn back here and go home. The plan was top up at the end of the good air, dash in to the turn point, dash back to the good air and belt home the same way I'd just come in, hopefully picking up a climb in the blue on my way in and out. I thought to myself 40k to cover there and back would lose me 4000ft, even if I didn't stop to climb, I should make it back to the good air with 1500.

Off I went into the blue not appreciating just how quickly things can turn sour. The sinking vario appeared impossible to reverse. I'd flown well in the blue at the start of this task but here nothing worked, or at least nothing I could find. I arrived at Waterbeach lower than I wanted; I was worried now but a few wisps of cloud forming off course ahead gave me hope. Remembering to stay high at the end of the day I went for the wisps, which cruelly turned out to be absolutely nothing. Out of position and very low again I found myself over the disused military airfield at Waterbeach.



No amount of scratching would save me this time. I eventually had to give in and land. Thankfully an understanding crew and a cup of tea from the friendly military training facility at Waterbeach eased the pain. This 500k thing was proving tricky!



## Attempt 3 - First 500k

Weston-on-the-Green – Grantham – Newbury Racecourse – Eyebrook – Weston-on-the-Green – **505k**

*You've got to persevere with things that are worth having* is what I was telling myself as I looked at the day's task sheet. The summer of 2018 was giving some great gliding weather and if I was going to get the 500, this was a year to do it. I drew on everything I'd learned over the last few years on this flight. It had highs, lows, times to be confident and times to be cautious. It was another nervy ending in a dying sky but I stayed high, didn't get cocky and completed the 505k.

Just one more diamond to collect and hopefully another story for next year's Final Glide.



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## Taking up the fixed price to Solo Package

*Paul Fuller*

Having recently moved to Steeple Aston from the warmer climes of Tanzania, I was in need of finding a new hobby. I really did not know what I was going to do to give me a focus outside of work. In Tanzania I had great freedoms with sailing and off-road biking, these activities are not so easily accessible where I now find myself.

Driving to Steeple Aston I noticed a sign displaying Weston-on-the-Green. This bought back great memories of the early 90s when I conducted my first parachute decent from the barrage balloon. I pulled into a layby opposite the RAF base to reminisce. Whilst there I saw gliders being launched into the sky from the airfield, I stayed longer than planned to watch this awesome spectacle and thought I would love to have a go.

A week later I found myself along with my wife and two boys at a village fete in Kirtlington. Taking the boys around to keep them entertained I could see in the corner of the field an aircraft without an engine. I walked over to see what this was about and found myself in a great conversation with a young man of whom I now know to be Alex. Alex informed me that I could visit the club for a trial flight and if I enjoyed it, I could join up for lessons. I thought this sounded a bit too easy, and took the details for the club.

A week later I found myself on an airfield, in an aircraft, connected to a cable about to be launched around 1,400 feet into the sky on a trial flight. It was an amazing experience soaring the skies on a beautiful British summer's day. The instructor was also having a good time and thus we landed at Bicester airfield for a coffee!! We then launched and made our way back to Weston-on-the-Green.

On my return I discussed with other members of how I could proceed to be taught to fly to a standard where I could go solo. The fixed to solo package seemed a no brainer. Not only was it good value for money, but would also ensure I dedicated enough time and energy to achieve the goal of flying solo.

I am now on flight 24, with each flight becoming more enjoyable with more control and responsibility given. The instructors have been fantastic, volunteering their time and knowledge to ensure the development of future glider pilots and the club's growth, which is commendable.

I have not looked back since. In fact, I have looked down... from 3,000ft in the seat of a glider.



# Welsh Diamond Hunting

*Andrew Butterfield*

Back in 1997 I achieved my Gold height in my K6E over the Cotswold's from a cloud climb from Weston on the Green to 16000ft. I was not intending to go that high as I had no oxygen but from 12000ft I was trying to come out with frozen air brakes and still climbing at 10kts so ended up at 16000ft as I came out into a glorious blue sky with over 95% cloud below. The rest of the flight was something I don't want to repeat and is another story but after landing and the barograph checked ok, I had completed my Gold badge with my Diamond Goal 300k in the K6 with all flights starting from Weston-on-the-Green. These people with a Diamond Badge must be really good and I could not see me getting that far.

We sold the K6E shortly after and had a Standard Cirrus until 2006 when we changed to our current Glider, a DG202/17. A trip to Sutton Bank gave me my first proper wave flight getting to 16000ft again but not high enough considering my low point after release was too high and I need a height gain of 16500ft to achieve Diamond height.

Over the next few years my cross-country speed got quicker until, given the right conditions and preparation a 500k could be on and after a few failed attempts including one land out after 482km, I finally completed my 500k in 2010 from Bicester and since then 2 more from Weston on the green.

This only left my Diamond height to finish the badge.

As time has gone on the rules and laws have changed, more airspace restrictions and more technology concerning badge flight validation such that you can no longer use the old-style barograph and current IGC flight recorders need certain procedures to be followed to enable a successful badge flight claim to be approved. Everything is recorded and can be viewed after the flight and any airspace infringement or illegal height will invalidate the claim.



Technology can go wrong so my glider has an LX7000-IGC and also LX FLARM-IGC which are both approved for flights to Diamond level.

In recent years in the UK it has illegal to fly above FL100 without a transponder, however there is an exemption for gliders in certain areas up to FL195 where wave flying is likely like Scotland, Wales and parts of Northern England. Some areas need to be pre-activated to day before as in Scotland but the Welsh area is currently always open, but this can change in the future.

Diamond height was no longer realistic from Weston-on-the-Green so in 2016 a few OGC members towed their gliders to Aboyne in Scotland where it's known for its wave lift conditions and I know people who have gone there and had just 1 flight to achieve their diamond height. Special wave boxes above FL195 generally have to be opened to get the needed height gain as the launch is aero tow only and there is no ridge locally. The first day there Paul Smith did just that but I was unwell so could not fly that day so it did not work out for me as later flights that week did not go to the heights needed.

In 2017 we went to Denbigh in North Wales all prepared with oxygen, loggers, etc. Lleweni Park is only 200ft ASL with a ridge downwind in a westerly wind and downwind of the Snowdonia mountain range which gives wave lift sometimes over the site and no restrictions to FL195 and at weekend's further wave boxes can be opened to FL245. The idea is to launch by winch or aero tow on to the ridge for a low point of say 800ft then get into wave so a marginal diamond height could be achieved at 17500ft.

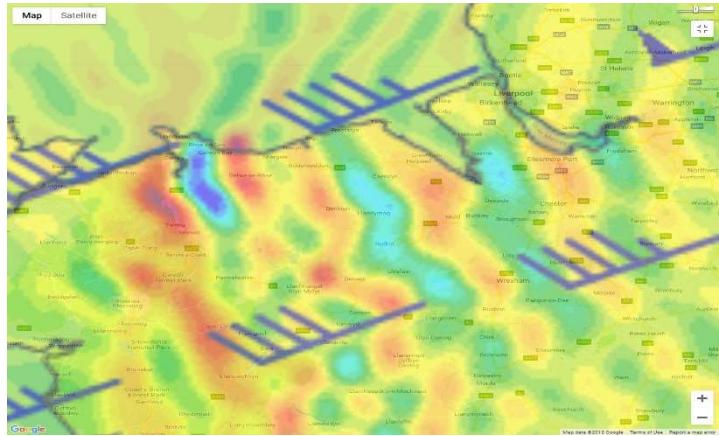
The week we were there the weather wasn't great so apart from walking, cycling and golf we only had a few flights on the ridge. I had the option of staying on for a few days as the weather forecast looked better when the others had to go home. The next 3 days resulted in a ridge day and two wave days, one to 10000ft limited by solid cloud cover, the other from a low point of 1000ft on the ridge to 16223ft so still 1500ft short of what I wanted.

Getting a low, low point was important as is having the least amount of restrictions which is why I wanted to go back to Denbigh again. It is a lot closer than Aboyne and although there are other places in the UK you can go where people do get diamonds all year round if the weather is ideal, you have to be there at that time. Looking at the BGA ladder flights for height gains over the last few years I came to the conclusion that Denbigh, in the first two weeks of October, would be best for me to have another go.

This year the first week in October was booked for the Talgarth expedition, where we hoped for ridge and wave lift. I used that for some practice finding the wave and we got to about 7000ft, a few got a bit more. It was a great week though for the people that came. A better ridge than Denbigh but I didn't expect wave to the heights more commonly achieved at Denbigh.

The following week a few of us were booked in to Denbigh and the weather looked good for Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October but there was some wave on the forecast for Sunday so Paul Smith in 277 and I in 616 took a launch on to the ridge where there were occasional thermal and signs of wave out over the valley. After several searches Paul had to land out but I luckily found some lift into wave where I spent a few hours but could not get above 13700ft and the sun was going down so had to go down as it looked very dark below the clouds. Peter Brooks and Martin Cooper had retrieved Paul by the time I landed.

The Monday arrived with a bit better forecast with the wave gap closer so we were able to be towed onto the wave. Very turbulent tow and I released when it went smooth at 2000ft. Some advice was to dive down to mark a low point for the logger trace then pull back up into the lift so I had a low point of about 1600ft. Add 16500ft so I needed to get to about 18100ft for a diamond with a limit of FL195 to stay legal.



The lift was averaging 4kts to almost 14000ft then pushing into the 45kt wind to the next bar got a climb to about 16000ft so continued on to the main wave over the Conway valley which did not work as we thought so dropped back to the previous climb which gave a constant 3kts all the way to FL195 so my Diamond was done if I didn't do anything stupid on the way down to invalidate it.

Paul flew alongside for some photos and the views were fantastic along the welsh coast but most of Snowdonia was under 8/8ths cloud.

At almost 6km high I just flew around taking photos on the way down enjoying it as there was no rush but had to prepare for the turbulence below cloud and to deal with the crosswind onto the Denbigh strip and roll to the end. Derig and get Paul (as the OO) to retrieve my flight recorder trace which looked ok.

The next day we climbed in wave again to FL195, this time Alex Jenkins also achieved his Diamond height. More photos as there was less cloud. The weather then changed so it was back to doing other things. Being a height gain badge flight, my trace needed to be checked against a calibration chart less than 5 years old, so as mine was older I had to get my flight recorder calibrated when I got home which I did and so Paul could validate my claim at 17829ft and is now sent to the BGA to issue my Diamond badge at last. All the people at Lleweni Park in Denbigh could not have been more helpful and friendly. My thanks go to Alex Jenkins, Martin Cooper, Peter Brooks, Chris Gill and especially Paul and Annette for a successful week.



# Cambridge Expedition

*Neil Swinton*

For the first time in many years, OGC visited a flat-field site for a club expedition during the summer. It was hoped that the trip would replace the sadly-missed *OGC Flying Two Weeks* which we used to hold at Weston in August but we haven't had for several years owing to increased, or at least, unpredictable, RAF activity.

The intention was to choose an easy site which let us take a K13 with us, so as less experienced members and pre-solos can continue to fly an aircraft which they are familiar with, and solo pilots can easily fly solo. This restricts the choice to clubs which would let us hangar the k13 during the week, and luckily Dave Bray narrowed this choice for us down to Cambridge, as their Perkoz would be away at Bicester doing the regionals, this leaving a two-seater sized hole in the hangar for the week. Cambridge also had the advantage of not being that far away, so a day-trip was possible. The club also had on-site accommodation and were happy to let tents and camper vans stay overnight.

Shortly before the trip, a couple of instructors suggested that we should also take JSX, and they were prepared to act P1s for some XC training, so that was added to the plan. The Astir was also de-rigged in preparation for taking. We were lucky in that the weekend chosen was also the weekend that the RAF were holding a mass parachute event at Weston, meaning we could not fly at our home base, even if we wanted to.



The K13's tend to not come apart very often, and get loaded onto a trailer even less often, so it was quite a struggle getting our chosen K13 onto the trailer prior to towing it to Cambridge, but quite surprising the trailer electrics all worked (eventually) so it was all good to go.

We did have a selection of private owners who turned up, for a day, a few days, or the whole week, and all who visited enjoyed the warm welcome from the club and the opportunities for flying. Gransden Lodge – the Cambridge site – does have a reputation for being hard to spot from the air, however when we flew there it was the only (light) green field for miles around, surrounded by parched crop fields, and it stood out very well. Several good cross-countries were flown, and at least one pilot took the chance of a rare stubble-fire climbing to 7000' as the field burned below.

The K13 and JSX were kept fairly busy all week, and we flew a variety of club members, some of whom had never flown at other sites before. At least one Cambridge member flew the K13 *for old time's sake*. Aerotows and winch launches were available all week. It was also an experience watching a club operate with dyneema winch cable, which obviously demanded a very high standard of cable handling and attention to detail to avoid damaging.

This all took place during one the hottest weeks most of us can remember, and by Friday most of the club members had suffered enough, so with thunder storms about to hit the field the gliders were de-rigged rapidly Friday late morning. At this

point we had the only injury of the week when Alex Jenkins burned his hand on the K13 wing paintwork, which had heated in the sun as we de-rigged!

It has to be admitted that the launch fees and day membership fees for Cambridge are at the top-end of most UK clubs, and were more than most members are used to paying, however a discount was negotiated for the day membership, and the flying conditions meant that one launch was usually enough to climb away. The camping and campervan fees were also a lot less than expected when the time came to pay at the end of the week. Indeed, one club member thought he had spent more money on ice creams for the week than he had on any other fee.



Photo: Paul Smith – OGC encampment

This trip did rely very heavily on those experienced club members who made themselves available for towing, rigging and de-rigging K13s, JSX and the Astir, and who also fixed gliders, trailers, lights, brakes, so massive thanks to all of them, as without their help the trip would not have happened.

We are looking at doing a similar trip next year, to another *easy* flat site with good conditions suitable for the less experienced members. Please talk to Neil or Dave Bray if you have any suggestions, or would like to join us.



Photo: Paul Smith – A parched Gransden Lodge

## Club Class Nationals

Dave Bray

Since my last competition, the Australian Junior Nationals "Joey Glide", way back in December 2008, I've been missing the fun and challenge that is competition flying so after buying the H301 Libelle, I've always looked to get back into it.

As many of you know, I have to bid for my time off from work, and for the 2018 competition calendar, this bidding process started back in the autumn of 2017. A primary bid for a week covering a Regionals was submitted, followed by a secondary bid for the Nationals. The logic being that a Regionals would be a good reintroduction to it all, and if work were kind enough to grant me both bids, I'd get to test my metal against some of the best pilots in the UK.



Unfortunately for me work had other ideas, rejecting my primary bid but giving me my secondary one. This led to a couple of complications. To enter a Regionals, you only need a Silver "C". To enter a Nationals, one has to have gained a rating from having competed in a Regionals! I started making some calls to the UK Comps committee and after a bit of toing and froing ended up having my rating from 2008 reinstated, phew! Next, to submit an entry for the comp and see if there would be space for someone at the bottom of the ratings list. This takes a while and those with the highest rating get places first. Would I get a place? Yes! Now the final administrative challenge. Breaking the news to my crew that his week off would be spent in the shadow of Luton at Dunstable, home of London Gliding Club rather than a local Regionals. All that remained was to hope for some good days in 2018 in which to practice and get back up to speed. There are some great books and presentations regarding both competition flying and increasing ones' cross-country speed and it's always worth having a refresher read – I'll come back to this later.

The day before the competition the weather was looking good, so I headed over to Bicester for a flight as a last chance to check everything was working as it should. It wasn't... On the aerotow the moving map turned itself off. Ah, perhaps updating the software a couple of days before while I was checking the complicated Dunstable airspace arrangement wasn't clever after all. Back to good old fashion M.A.P. work for the practice flight.

One of the main differences between Regionals and Nationals seems to be that 50% of Regionals pilots are there to win. Whereas 97.6% of Nationals pilots start the week with that thought (of the 42 competitors that week I was the 2.4% who was just wondering why the bar wasn't open on Friday night).

Social side apart, it was much like any other gliding competition. Get up, shower, breakfast, rig, tow out to the launch point and then sit and wonder where you are going to go flying to. The briefing summons happens and people I recognised started to appear, most of them even remembered me which was worrying but nice.

Over to the glider to program the gadgets, mark up the map and then wait for the weather to get going and the tugs to start their engines. The best bit here is randomly wandering around the grid, meeting old acquaintances and checking out all the other fancy looking aircraft. It was this point I met someone else with the moving map issue and figured a work around – Thanks Andy!

**Day 1** – A 348km race. Lovely weather but a bit of a schooling in the art of contest flying. As all the contests I've done use handicap scoring for each of the gliders, I should have remembered about the start being the most important bit! Start early and every thermal taken acts as a signpost to those behind. I pulled back some time at the end and finished 14th.

**Day 2** – 319km down to Wiltshire. A great day out! Hung around the start zone for ages and got impatient so started before the gaggle again. But such amazing weather so I kept ahead of the chasing pack for the first half of the task – I didn't turn

on the first 20km leg and had multiple other legs at over 100kph. Great conditions until the last leg when I started to tip toe as the final glide calculations between instruments disagreed. Finished with far too much energy – placed 13th. What a great couple of days!

**Day 3** – An Assigned Area Task (AAT). Best described as a “fly within the areas we tell you, finish after 4 hours” task. Generally, I used to enjoy these, but this was the day that brought expectations back down to earth. I was in the first wave of gliders to launch so had already been flying for an hour by the time the start line opened, this was followed by another hour and a bit of milling around while we waited for the right time to start. A great first leg where I ended up at Kings Lynn having done 96kph so turned around and headed back towards Olney and Banbury. Perhaps I’d waited too long before starting, or perhaps I was pushing to catch aircraft I could see ahead. Either way I kept looking at Banbury and telling myself there’d be a climb there.... I didn’t find it and ended up landing at Shottewell. One of only 4 land outs, I’d been managing 88kph until then, but it counted for nothing – placed 38<sup>th</sup> for the day.

**Day 4** – A short task of only 233km. I was adamant I’d make a better start, I didn’t. Furious with myself I turned around and wasted 10 mins flying back towards the start line before I realised I was fighting a 20kt headwind. In hindsight, I could have abandoned my restart attempt and continued on the task, but I spent another 40 mins getting myself back to a restart position. I was the last competitor to start and had a very lonely flight out to East Anglia with low saves and a cloud climb. I ended up catching up with the back markers on the last couple of legs but while they were landing out around me, I got enough of a bubble to make a perfectly judged final glide back home. Was last to land a full hour behind the winner. Placed 30th.

**Day 5** – Better weather forecast again so back up to a 295km task. Having got over the mistake on day 3, realising how it affected me the day after, I started the day well and even with a couple of rookie mistakes adding 10/15 mins to the flight. I had a much better day and finished 13th. 20 minutes behind the winner.

**Day 6** – We’d had a couple of days off after day 5 due to the weather and this looked like the last chance to fly before the end of the comp. A short 209km task was set and it was a great racing day. I ended up flying with the leaders for much of the flight. But with only 40km to go, one climb away from final glide, I left a thermal slightly ahead of the other glider I was with, took a slightly different path and while behind me people found a strong climb, I was suddenly down in the weeds. This mistake meant the person I had been flying with got onto glide and finished 35 mins before me. I spent the remainder of the flight picking fields and fighting a headwind with only weak climbs. I was the last of the finishers. That single missed climb as the day weakened meant I finished 31st.



Over all, it was a great week of flying, I finished 27th out of 42, flew nearly 31 hours, travelled 1600km, had fun, met old friends, made new ones, and I learnt loads. Each evening I ended up having a look through the traces, analysing the good and the bad. I will continue to iron out many of the small mistakes I made but the best research was into the speeds I was flying. There is a great spreadsheet containing data from flight tests ([Google polar 10 glider polar spreadsheet](#)) and this showed I’d been flying the H301 too slowly in good conditions for the last two years! I made the change and got it right on the last two days. While notwithstanding the three big single mistakes on the three days I didn’t place well, in future I will be pushing myself to fly to the data rather than what feels comfortable – it really works!

I need to thank my crew – they were fantastic – helping with the camping arrangements, food and the daily gridding and retrieving. Thanks guys, how about another go next year?

# Talgarth Expedition to Black Mountains Gliding Club

*Richard Hall*

Talgarth is both challenging and exciting. It is also a very good place to improve your gliding skills and experience. This year we had a very wide range of participants ranging from experienced Talgarth pilots to some students who are yet to fly solo at Weston. We took six private single seaters and the club DG505. Quite a few members also flew in the BMGC K13.

The week started well with a nice gentle north westerly which means that the main ridge worked a treat and it was possible to soar the Brecon Beacons as well. We had two days of this and then the wind went around to the south west for two days. It was quite light and the south west ridge was only just working but not to worry, there was WAVE in the Cwmdu Valley! It was quite easy to get into if you were patient and accepted half a knot or less and hung in there!

It only went to about 8,000 feet above site (the local pundit got to 12k) but there was quite a bit of cloud and it was very pretty above cloud. I had great fun doing some photography with Smithy and Andy in the 505. The wave was quite widespread and I was able to fly in wave nearly to Pontypool and then back up out to the west of Brecon. I think Dave went quite a long way north. Most of us had some very pleasant flying a few had an introduction to hills and wave!



## Why go to Talgarth?

The big plus is that it is not reliant on a single wind direction. There is good ridge flying in any wind with west in it from NNW to SSW and also in NE. Wave can happen even in very light winds in most wind directions. Very good wave in SW, NW, W, NE and E. BMGC club record is 31,500 feet!

The site is quite small and slopes in several directions. You do need to be confident in landing accurately. All launches are aero-tow behind a Pawnee. It is, without doubt, quite a challenging site. In strong winds, it can get rather exciting with rotor right over the top of the field.

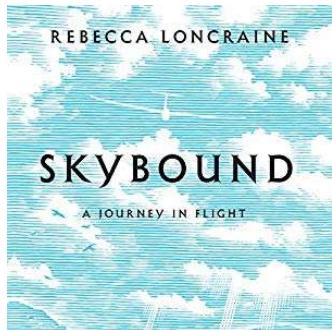
It is only about two and a half hours from WOG! The natives are very friendly and the scenery is stunning. A very pretty site. Personally, I think it is the best site in the UK.

# First Experience of Ridge Soaring

Geoff Jones

Have you ever been to a site like Dunstable and watched gliders soaring? As a child I watched gliders at Dunstable when we went there for lots of family picnics. I always wanted to have a go. It looked scary how closely they flew to each other as they whistled overhead. In these days of Health and Safety its one place where aircraft can fly over people at low level.

Richard Hall mentioned he was organising a trip to Talgarth so I jumped at the chance. By coincidence I also read Rebecca Loncraine's book 'Skybound'. She was receiving cancer treatment and had moved back to live with her parents very close to the Black Mountains Gliding Club. She decided to take up gliding mostly with Bo Nilsson at Talgarth and Omarama in New Zealand. I enjoyed reading it.



To drive to the airfield, you have to negotiate several miles of single-track road winding its way up to nearly 1000ft and enter through a farm gateway. It's a very small field approachable from only three sides. Feelings of trepidation crept over me and I was quite nervous at the prospect of flying from such a small domed airfield. The briefing and airfield walk-round did nothing to allay my fears – just the opposite in fact.

I didn't have to wait long for a flight. An ancient Pirat took off first because the pilot wanted to complete a 5-hour flight and the wind direction was perfect for soaring the main ridge. Off we rolled in the blue club K13 with Tony Bartlett at the controls behind me. It wasn't long before we released from the tug straight into the rising air of the ridge. Tony demonstrated how to soar the ridge by flying slightly sideways with the nose offset into wind. I thought blimey that looks tricky. Once I was on the controls I found ridge soaring was a pure joy. To and fro following the contours along the hill with the birds and just the Pirat. I learnt the rules of the road and tried to keep the speed around 50 knots. Looking down at the end of the ridge on the tiny airfield I thought how can we possibly land in that!



Tony flew the approach and landing keeping his speed rock steady and adjusting with the brake to make an easy touchdown. The flight was totally different to flying at Weston and it was a taste of a different world of flying- in the mountains.

The next day I met the CFI Mike Codd after his morning briefing. We sat down in the crew room and talked over what I was capable of doing. My flight with Mike was one I will never forget. Mike flew the take off and I had a good go at following the tug. I found it tricky, much more difficult than I expected. You can get out of shape very quickly. The extra airspeed means you tend to over control.

The windspeed over the ridge was less on the second flight and it was slightly harder to maintain height. It was still easy to fly and chat to Mike who I really enjoyed flying with. We flew away from the hill over the valley and I managed to thermal to 3000ft even searching for a bit of wave lift. After nearly an hour we headed back down and with a couple of verbal prompts I managed a very nice landing. I was shaking as we rolled to a stop!

Costs of flying are £11 per day Temporary Membership. The tug costs about £25 and glider costs are similar to O.G.C.

I found it amusing that the tug pilot, another Jeff is an ex U.S. Navy carrier pilot. Very useful on your CV when you go for a flying job at Talgarth!

## CFI Notes

*Neil Swinton, CFI*

Firstly, what a terrific and fun year for flying it was. At one point in August the good weather seemed to be here for good, with blue skies and good thermal conditions for week after week after week. It was really quite remarkable. We don't know what next year will bring but fingers crossed it is as good as this year was.

### Navigation

All sky looks essentially the same. It is not immediately apparent which bits are class G (uncontrolled) and which bits are not. It can take many years of experience, and to be honest, an amount of 'trial-and-error' until the needed map reading skills are acquired. It is so very easy to see a ground feature on the map and make it fit to somewhere that is on your route. This all becomes harder and more demanding as the other workloads, that of finding thermals, or picking suitable areas to find fields, increases. Airspace is also getting larger, and also more and more complex.

For many years competition glider pilots have flown with Moving Maps, using some quite sophisticated software that has been developed specificity for the task, most private gliders now have a similar system fitted. This software tends to run on dedicated hardware and it would be fair to say that to use the software, a fair amount of preparation / training by the pilot is needed on the ground before it is used in the air.

There is however a much simpler alternative, software called 'EasyVFR' which is available, for free, for Android and Apple phones. EasyVFR does the one simple job of showing the position of the glider over a normal aviation chart, with no other features or complexity. A simple search for 'EasyVFR' will allow it to be installed on a phone, so it can be played with away from the club and launch point. And it's free, in case you missed that above.



From next year we plan to be asking all X-C pilots to use such moving map software whenever flying out-of-range from Weston. For this reason, the club is fitting a mounting system on most of the club aircraft which will allow pilots of all standards to start flying with a properly mounted smartphone in the glider cockpit. Pilots will provide their own smartphone, and software, which will be securely held in easy view in the cockpit. These mounts will be fitted over the winter period and they will be found in all the club aircraft eventually.

We hope that even a simple circuit flight in the K13's can be done sometimes with the moving map software which will enable people to become more familiar with both using and flying with such software. So please load the software to your mobile phone, have a play with it over the winter, and then fit your phone in the glider mounts when available.

### Do we need lessons in 'clubbing' ?

There are specific flying exercises which all pre-solo students work through. There is also a 'Ground Equipment' card which we might start to use in the near future. But do we also need a 'Good Club Member' training sheet?

The Operations Manual does specify some the rules and methods we use on the airfield. However, it is a large, unwieldy document which is not light reading, and even after that there is still a lot of learned information that can only be picked up by standing around at the club house or launch point. One method that some other clubs use is an 'induction' type session, where new members are shown what to do, and how to get the best out of their day. We possibly don't have enough new members each year for us to run such regular courses, but it is an option being considered in the future, so if this happens please support this endeavour to get 'new members' converted into 'mates' in as short as time as possible.

### Airspace

With the proposed local changes in airspace this has been a stressful year for all of us, but more so for the committee than most! Although we have just now seen the early consultation results, there is a long way to go before we know where we stand as a club. However, I would like to record personal thanks to Committee Member Paul Morrison for a couple of terrific responses to Brize and Kidlington on behalf of the club, in which he pointed out the many flaws, and also the negative effect of the proposals on our own operation. Thanks Paul.

### 'E' for Eventualities

A lot of time us instructors hear the pupils rattle off their 'eventualities', sometime as if by rote, with no thought. This is pretty much pointless, the whole idea in 'eventualities' is to make pilots think about what is about to happen, and have a

least the start of a plan in their heads. It serves the important purpose of 'engaging' the brain to what is about to happen – i.e. we are going flying, and that can be risky, so let's really concentrate.

If you find yourself always rattling off 'If I have a cable-break I will regain speed, turn left and then reassess the situation' as if reciting the Lord's Prayer or a nursery rhyme then please think again.

Finally, after such a great gliding year I have to say thanks to the instructor team who, week-in, week-out, turn up on the airfield and are prepared to give up what is often a precious leisure day to helping the club operate. Thank you all.

## 2018 Safety Review

*Neil Swinton, CFI*

There were two reportable incidents to the BGA this year – in one case substantial damage was caused to a car and glider when the glider fell-off the tow-out gear as it was being towed, and in the second case a small amount of damage was done to the T21 leading edge rendering it unflyable. These are marked with the \*\* on the table below.

All the other incidents are recorded locally and action taken if appropriate. You can view a longer version of the summarised version on the safety pages of the web site given below.

We have had a couple of confidential incidents reported this year, by their nature these tend to receive less of a follow-up as we don't want to risk making it obvious who the original reporter was. It is worth noting that public web page doesn't show the reporter for any incidents, this information at is only available to the safety committee.

We would hope that people will take a regular look at the reported incidents (more details are on the website for each case). In many cases, although not all, there is no one simple 'fix' we can apply to stop them happening again, but by making everyone aware of what 'can' happen we hope the risk of a re-occurrence is reduced.

Date	Summary	Risk (to person)
25/08/2018	Buggy Drove away whilst glider tow rope still attached.	Medium
24/06/2018	Glider came off tow-out gear whilst avoiding landing aircraft – car and glider damage. **	Medium
07/07/2018	Astir overshot into long grass removing tail bumper.	Low
06/07/2018	Radio problems between bus and winch.	Low
06/07/2018	First aid kits out of date	Low
24/07/2018	K13 Battery not secured before flight	Medium
03/06/2018	Glider launched over brow towards oncoming Rover.	Medium
??/06/2018	Astir Heavy Landing	Medium
20/06/2018	RAF staff drove over cables before launch	High
21/04/2018	T21 – wing leading edge punctured by knee.**	Low
14/04/2018	Astir flown outside of ARC and CofA.	Low
11/03/2018	Pilot's parachute hooked up on glider when climbing out.	Low

The safety resource page is on the club web site at <http://oxford-gliding-club.co.uk/Safety.php>

Incidents will tend to happen all year long, and to be honest we could do with a few more of them being reported formally to the safety system. If nothing else, it is a very good way to share your knowledge with the rest of the club. This can be done very easily on the web page given above, or the same page has a paper form for printing out and submitting via the safe. You will find copies of the same form in the filing cabinet in the bus.

## Tuesday Night Workshop

*Peter Brooks, Workshop Manager*

Just a thought about what we get up to on Tuesday evenings.

The Tuesday night crew are now ageing fast and in desperate need of new blood. Anyone with time and interest in maintenance will be more than welcome. A lot can be learnt about glider maintenance by being part of the helpers.



Yes, there are mundane tasks like cleaning and polishing but as the photos show more serious work is required. The range of Schleicher gliders now require a major glue inspection every 3 years. This involves removing the fin and cutting holes to inspect spars etc.

The winch and ground equipment also need continuous work to keep it all serviceable, even simple things like changing oil and filters all helps. So please lend a hand where possible.



## A Glance at the Kerry Safari

Cecilia and Gordon Craig

Up early, confirm the times of the tides, the direction and strength of the wind, who wants to go (everyone usually!) and then make a decision which beach to fly from. All done using our Kerry WhatsApp group! And then we're off to collect the trailers parked in the village.

On average we have between 20 and 30 pilots coming for various lengths of stay to the Kerry Safari each year. The villagers know us well by now. Forty years flying off the Kerry beaches doesn't go unnoticed! They call us *The Gliders* and frequently inquire as to how we're getting on *did you have enough wind today?* Over the years a few have flown with us as a challenge and tell the story to other locals of how they did it!

There are two parallel ridgelines aligned with an approximate west/east orientation along the Dingle Peninsula reaching to just above 3,000ft. Most of the slopes are quite steep with corrie lakes situated just below while others are more gradual with sheep grazing on them. There are one or two short valleys and a large one known as the Connor Pass that can become quite exciting at times with turbulence depending on the wind direction and strength. There are also a number of gullies which probably are best left alone unless you want a little more excitement in your life!



We view our fortnight in Kerry as a holiday and if we get flying it's a bonus. The weather as most know in Ireland can be very wet and frequently the wind blows along the ridge with no hope of lift. There have been years when the gliding consisted of only circuits with no ridge or wave lift. We car launch on the back of a company car if possible, using a parafil cable and achieve heights of between 1100 and 2000ft depending on the wind strength. Our launch capacity is not high and consequently we have to manage the number of people and gliders coming. It is primarily a Dublin Gliding Club (DGC) operation but there are pilots from other clubs around the world that come each year having contacted the CFI of the DGC months in advance to see if there is room.

On the plus side the Irish height record of 24,300ft was flown here in wave. Some of the ridge soaring can be quite challenging with shear drops towards the sea e.g. Brandon Creek. The views are beautiful both from the air and the ground. One beach is situated in a remote area not very well populated and the sense of peace and quietness experienced is not found in many other places. The camaraderie on the beach is great – everyone helping others to get the best out the day's flying. The social life i.e. après gliding consists of meeting for coffee, tea or hot chocolate at some café, for example Sammy's at Inch beach, and of course having a sticky bun is a must! There are plenty of restaurants and pubs and as we say here *the craic can be mighty* with many laughs and stories being told. If we can't soar the hills we can walk or climb them. In particular, the boardwalk around the lock at Glanteenassig is breath taking.

All in all, the Kerry Safari is not only unique but a very different experience. The friendship, craic and gliding all contribute to this and it looks like it will continue on for many years to come!



## Sea Breeze Front

*Phil Hawkins, photos Henry Stott*

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (Mayfest day 8):** A superb thermal day at Feshiebridge, with a pure blue start and small cumulus developing. Several pilots declared 300km via Loch Lochy, Tomintoul and Roy Bridge. Fairly crowded field in the morning but Roger Fothergill the tug pilot was making steady progress getting them away into the air, and nobody was coming back. Once Cecilia had seen Gordon off into the blue we relaxed outside the clubhouse enjoying the *sitootable* weather.

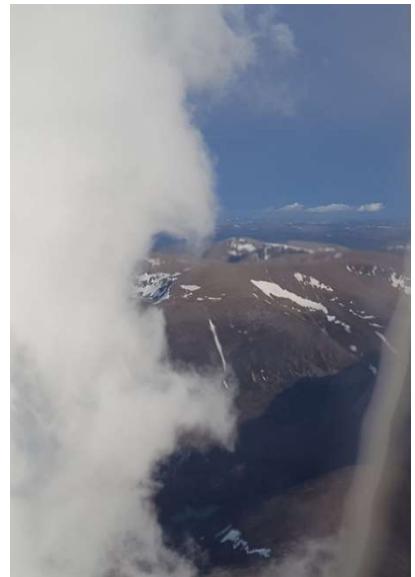
DaisyETA the K-21 was being flown initially by Henry and Yvonne, although they only stayed up for about half an hour. Henry seemed a bit downcast by his lack of thermalling technique. Later I noticed that Andy was flying with a visitor. It was a beautiful day, with light winds and clearly a very high cloud base. I offered to help Fiona in the kitchen, but her duties were light, as she was only planning to heat up leftovers for today's meals, chilli and shepherd's pie. I gave Jean a lift home after lunch when she had finished her sandwich making session.

In mid-afternoon when Andy had finished with the glider, Paul Myers and his daughter Elizabeth went for a flight, and I noticed from the FLARM screen in the clubhouse they were soon up around 7000ft and motoring around the Cairngorms. The thermal conditions were ridiculously good. Yvonne wondered if I might be interested in flying with Henry, to cheer him up after his unsuccessful flight in the morning.

Nick Norman and Dave Weekes went to an inspector's refresher course at Portmoak during the day in Nick's little Europa plane, returning to land in late afternoon. Paul and Elizabeth stayed up for around two hours and landed about 5.45pm. The afternoon sky at this time was still looking quite good although some of the clouds had started to decay, and there were some discrete areas of cirrus that were damping down cloud activity beneath. Henry and I launched about 6pm, not expecting to be in the air for very long, but I just wanted to give him another go at thermal flying really. Nick and Dave had climbed into the mighty ASH and launched immediately after us.

We soon contacted smooth evening thermals over the Spey valley, which took us eventually to around 5,500ft. I explored quite a long way over the Monadhliath mountains, noticing that sea breeze effects from the Moray Firth were causing much lower cloud bases to the north. Slightly better conditions were found back over Newtonmore, and we climbed to a high point of just over 6000ft about half-way from Newtonmore to Dalwhinnie, but by this time (7.15pm) the clouds were definitely decaying. Incidentally there is nothing wrong with Henry's thermal flying so he was just unlucky this morning.

The view back towards the airfield from beyond Newtonmore suggested the sea breeze was advancing, getting closer. I began a long straight glide, aiming for the nearest of the fluffy sea breeze clouds located somewhere near Loch an Eilein. We reached it at 3000ft and found gentle lift of 2-3 knots while surfing along between ragged headlands in a huge vertical cliff. Henry thought it was fantastic, and it's certainly the best sea breeze effect that I've ever soared. At times we cruised so close to the vertical sheets of cloud that our rainbow-circled shadow was huge. The best lift area was concentrated in a short beat extending from Loch an Eilein to the Einich chasm, although it was still gently advancing towards the airfield.



Soon we were back up over 5000ft again, dolphining through the best tally-ho bits of lift and pushing our way through thin patches of cloud sticking out from the cliff buttresses. Other similar clouds could be seen to the north, some of them turning into towering cauliflower heads. The edge of the murky sea air could be clearly seen hugging the ground between folds of the terrain, in contrast to the clear air on our side.

The top of the cliff thousands of feet above began to topple over our heads, producing strange shelves and balconies, but ultimately they were out of our reach because the lift began to die. I noticed that the

warm air was winning the battle as the cloud began to retreat once more to the north. At ten minutes before 8pm we left the cloud at 6200ft and began a long slow descent to land at 8.20pm after a flight of 2hr 11min. Tony Cresswell and others helped us to pack the hangar, while dear wife and Yvonne had kept back our dinners so they were able to eat with us while everyone else was finishing off their desserts. The shepherd's pie, made with minced leftover burgers, was delicious and mountainous on my plate. Alison Myers was topping up my red wine glass and I ended up somewhat wobbly!

# Airspace – Fair Use of a Finite Commodity?

Paul Morrison, Airspace Officer

The constant quest for development land within Southern England to meet the predicted demands for housing is well known by most people. What is far less known or appreciated by those not involved with aviation is the battle that is taking place literally above their heads, for the precious and finite commodity that is airspace within the UK.

At national level, the BGA is fortunate in having some great hard-working volunteers fighting for the airspace that gliding needs and it's literally at the leading edge of all the air sports organisations. What is often less obvious though is the work needed at club and individual pilot level to support the BGA.

Unless you have had your head in the clouds this year it can't have escaped you that 2018 has been a particularly busy and key year for airspace, particularly in respect of the very airspace that OGC needs to continue its operations and to continue to enjoy the access it currently has. Many of you will be familiar with the highly controversial and harmful Airspace Change Proposal (ACP) submitted by TAG Aviation in 2017 and the consultation that followed. My thanks to all of you who made the time to respond to the consultation.

As we entered 2018, the Farnborough ACP was with the CAA whom as the Regulator for airspace in the UK, had to decide whether to approve this or not. Whilst we were waiting, the CAA responded in March / April on another ACP, this time for Exeter Airport and much to the delight of Devon & Somerset Gliding Club and others, the CAA seemed to see common sense and it was refused. You can read the full story on the DSGC website and the decision [here](#).

A sense of optimism prevailed – had the CAA finally got the message? For us at OGC it was particularly encouraging as the consultants behind the Exeter ACP, Osprey Consulting, were also the consultants behind the ACPs for London Oxford Airport and Brize Norton, both of which were hastily submitted at the end of 2017 in order to try and ensure that they were evaluated under the older Airspace Change Process (CAP725) rather than the newer and more stringent CAP1616 which came into effect on the 2nd January 2018.

Unfortunately, what sense of optimism we had was soon dashed when to everyone's astonishment and incredulity, despite overwhelming opposition, the CAA 'approved' the TAG ACP in July! The sense of disbelief & anger felt by the BGA and all of those who opposed is readily apparent in the strongly worded [press release](#) issued by the BGA at the time.

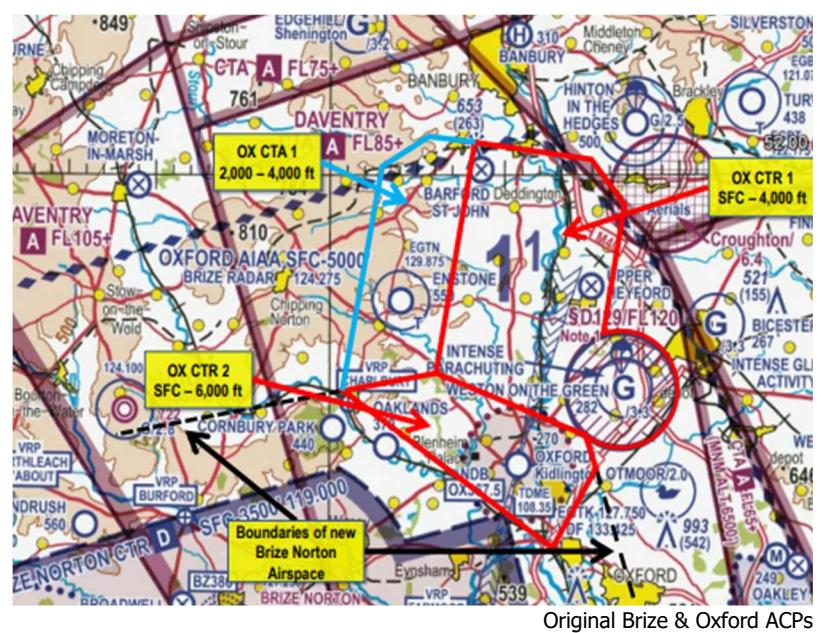
It has been reported elsewhere that the Farnborough decision is a 'line in the air' and this is very true as the cornerstone of the TAG ACP which by approving it the CAA has endorsed, is that the safety of pilots operating outside the area of the proposed controlled airspace can be compromised in order to provide commercial advantage to the sponsor of the ACP. The BGA has taken the view that enough is enough and we are fortunate that one of the BGA's better resourced clubs, Lasham Gliding Society, have taken up the mantle here and following a lack of response to a request to the CAA to withdraw its decision, court proceedings to seek a Judicial Review of the CAA's decision have now commenced.

Please don't underestimate the magnitude of such a course of action though, as just to lodge the application for the Judicial Review, LGS had to submit thirteen volumes of supporting information totalling over three thousand pages!

In the 19th century a leading Judge Sir James Matthew satirically noted that; "*In England – justice is open to all, just like the Ritz Hotel*" and sadly this has not changed. Very deep pockets will be needed to fund this action and LGS are asking for the support of clubs and members to help fund this. Estimates of costs in excess of £200,000 are already being mentioned.

It will be very interesting to see how this progresses. If nothing else, the CAA must be feeling a bit uncomfortable now at the prospect of their decision-making being subject to legal scrutiny which we can only hope, that closer to home, will be foremost in their minds when considering the Brize and Oxford ACPs.

I won't go into all the details of the Brize & Oxford ACPs now as once again there was a consultation that needed to be responded to in detail at relatively short notice and once again my thanks to all of you that did – there were a total of 1,646 responses received for the

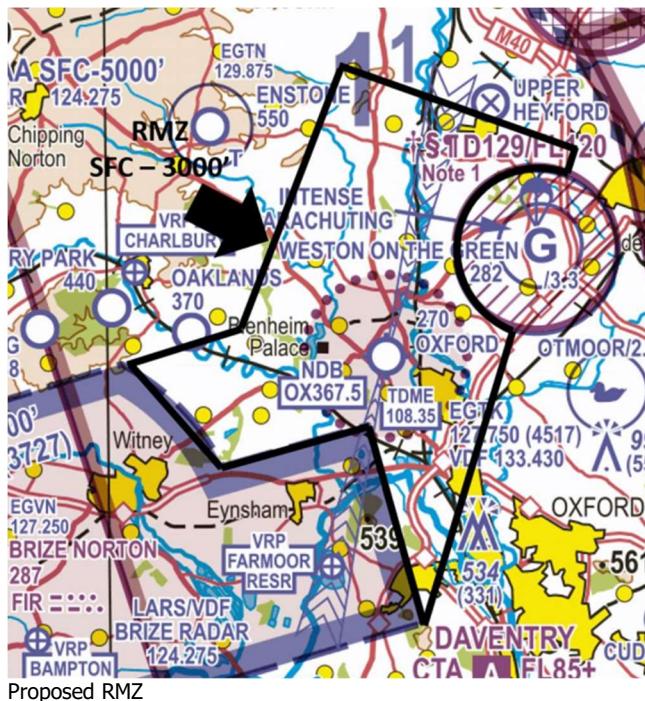


Brize ACP of which 1,597 were opposed. The statistics were similar for London Oxford Airport with 1,707 responses received of which 1,657 were opposed including interestingly, objections from the RAF itself which is remarkable given that the Brize and Oxford proposals first saw the light of day as a joint ACP!

At the time of writing both ACPs, submitted under the previous ACP (CAP725) are now at the stage where having consulted on the proposal, the sponsors have submitted their 'Consultation Feedback Report' and are currently re-shaping their proposals to take account of the feedback received. Once finalised and submitted, the CAA than have a sixteen week period to arrive at a Regulatory decision which we hope won't be taken lightly.

You can read the Consultation Feedback Reports for [London Oxford](#) and [Brize](#) respectively.

I do think we can allow ourselves a degree of optimism as the London Oxford ACP, which was likely to be of greater impact to OGC with its proposed Class D airspace over and around RAF Weston-on-the Green is now been significantly revised with we are told, the proposed Class D airspace being replaced with a significantly smaller Transponder Mandatory Zone (TMZ) and Radio Mandatory Zone (RMZ) primarily to the north of Oxford airport.



What this will mean to OGC remains to be established, but we remain in continuing dialogue with the sponsors to ensure that our interests are represented. This is a standing agenda item at the regular joint-stakeholder meeting for users of the Oxford Area of Intensive Aerial Activity (now snappily called RAUWG!) with the next meeting being mid-November where OGC will be represented.

In the meantime, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation (APPG-GA) which comprises 174 MPs and Peers has announced that it is investigating the way that airspace is managed within the UK on the basis that UK airspace belongs to all and removing it from certain types of users brings with it responsibilities as equal access is paramount. The APPG-GA recently invited OGC and other selected airspace users to provide information for the forthcoming inquiry which OGC supported. If anyone would like to read OGC's response, please let me know.

As 2018 draws to a close and we look towards 2019, we can only hope that the Government and Regulator recognises that air sports and GA needs access to the skies and airfields to fly from in order to flourish and to continue to contribute to the UK economy. Please therefore keep an eye on any updates in the aviation press and club newsletter etc. and where support is required for a consultation, please do your bit in support of all those who are fighting for you.

## BGA Club Management Conference

*Paul Morrison, Vice Chairman*

Many of you will be familiar with the BGA's annual Sporting Conference (and party!) early in the year, but what is less well known is the BGA's annual Club Management Conference which traditionally takes place in late October / early November and which this year, took place a couple of weekends ago.

This conference is open to those volunteers involved with the management of gliding clubs and is an opportunity for Chairmen, Treasurers and CFIs to get together to share best practice and learn from each other. As Martin noted at the OGC Forum last weekend, we are all volunteers and we collectively are the club. This was a common message from the BGA Management Conference too and the forthcoming S&G article covering the event talks about volunteers being the lifeblood of the sport as we all know. It truly is no exaggeration to say that if the dedication and enthusiasm that those present bring to their clubs had to be purchased or remunerated, gliding in the UK as we know it could not exist.

I was in the fortunate position in my role of supporting the BGA to be able to gain an insight into the various separate forums. Thus at various times the Treasurers could be found doing battle with the usual challenges of the systems associated with managing their club's funds, whilst the CFI's considered safety & training related issues and the Chairmen considered the key role that strong governance has in the safe and efficient management of a club whilst finding ways to entice more people to give up time that they did not know they had!

We are all familiar with the issues common to our sport, i.e. an ageing and diminishing number of participants, but it was an upbeat and encouraging conference with several clubs sharing good news stories of marketing initiatives that have worked and in one case, how they manage the waiting list of would be members waiting to join their club!

A key part of the conference is an opportunity to network over mediocre coffee with other club volunteers as perhaps not unsurprisingly, most challenges we face and which we may think are unique to our club, usually aren't. As part of this, delegates are encouraged to compile a list of ideas and initiatives that they will take back to their clubs and we at OGC are already considering several of these.



For example, should we be training new members not only how to fly but also how to become good club members? When a new member joins a club to learn to fly, do they really know what a good club member looks like in both our eyes and theirs or do they mistakenly perceive the club as being something that 'they' do in order for them to learn to fly? The BGA has coined the phrase '*Gliding is > Flying*' this year and you can expect to see more of this in the forthcoming months as to be relevant and viable, we need to make clubs a welcoming and inclusive environment where members want to spend their time. Being amongst friends and colleagues drinking tea in a comfortable clubhouse is gliding too!

To sum up, an upbeat and inspiring way to spend a weekend day away from the club and an opportunity to top up the enthusiasm and energy that volunteers elected to manage a club so desperately need. You'll no doubt be familiar with the old analogy about Alligators and draining swamps – the BGA Club Management Conference gives you ideas about how you can more quickly drain the swamp and how best you can handle those Alligators from others who've not been bitten!

So, let's all get draining, new volunteers are always welcome!



# 2018, What a Year!

*Paul Smith*

A couple of years ago I achieved the last of the *three diamonds* and many said what next? What would keep my enthusiasm for gliding alive? Well 2018 delivered, here are some of my highlights...

## Southern Alps

At the end of 2017 we were already planning how to get 2018 off to a good start. The previous two years a small group of members took a trip to the Alps during June. Not only was it (unbearably) hot in the south of France that time of year it also took out two weeks of soaring in the UK. 2018 we would try an earlier trip in April and enjoy the snowy vista.

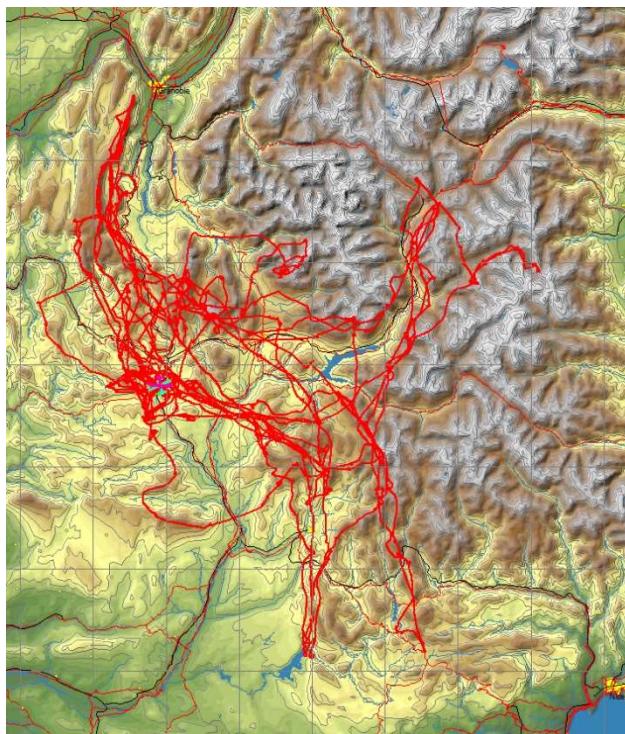
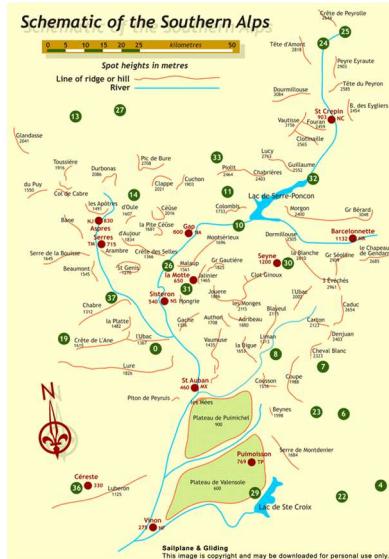


Having familiarised myself with the usual *playground* the last two years and the conditions that can be expected I was keen to explore further and try to reach some places on the map not visited previously. Although the conditions were different to June the kms soon started to clock up and we managed to colour in the map somewhat.

Below: Schematic of the *Playground*

Right: My flights at the same scale  
(Approx. 160 x 200kms)

Photos: Towards Briançon  
Lac de Sainte-Croix



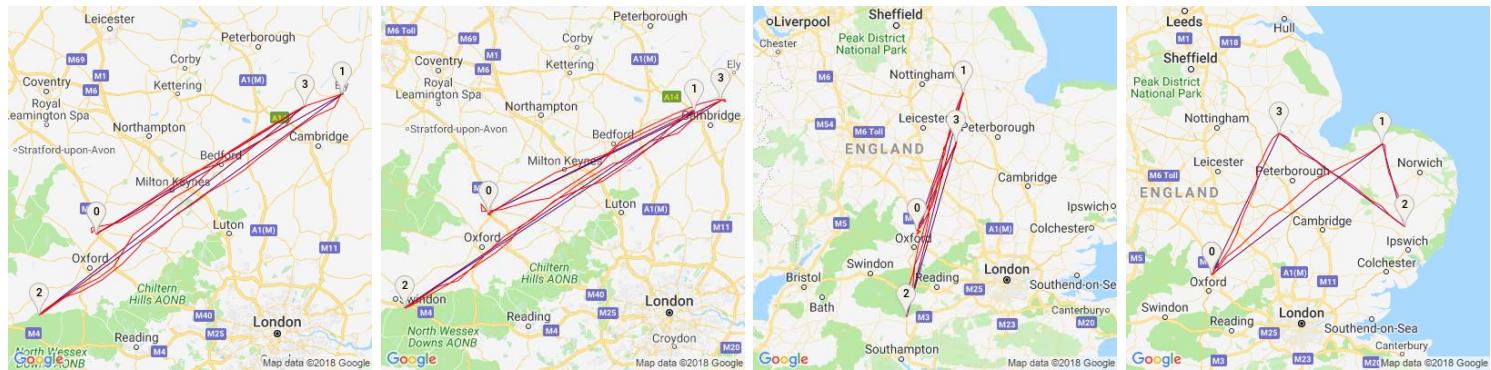
You will have seen us write about flying in the Alps in the last couple of Final Guide editions, so I won't repeat it being the best flying you are ever likely to experience. It was a wonderful way to start the 2018 gliding season.



## 5 x 500kms

In 2013 I crawled out of my glider having completed my first diamond distance after 7 hours on task. I said at the time I would never be able to do that again, barely being able to move. However, in the mean time I got a little faster, more relaxed and having recently returned from the Alps felt confident to try again.

19 May saw 505km at 77kph, not as fast as I hoped, but less stressful than in 2013 as the pressure was off. July came and saw some of the most consistent soaring weather I'd ever experienced. Saturday 7 July 513km at 89kph, Sunday 8 July 504km at 83kph. Had anyone ever flown diamond distances from Weston on consecutive days? What was the club record for a declared task? Saturday 14 July 540km at 87kph and the club distance record. How many diamonds could I get from consecutive winch launches? On Sunday 15 July I did my fifth of the year and fourth from consecutive launches, 502km at 87kph.



Like all things in gliding I could never have achieved this on my own. Special thanks to Andrew for ensuring an effective operation on his duty days and allowing us to launch early, Richard for setting a great last 500 and well done to Jon and Alex for completing their diamond and gold distances on these days.



## Cambridge Expedition

When the trip to Cambridge was planned I didn't have enough annual leave to spare a week in the flatlands. A change in employment status changed all that and I was able to go along to support the club expedition. Cambridge is a well equipped club offering winch and aero tow 7 days a week. The good conditions the previous weekends continued with tasks being possible every day. Several 300kms were flown and on one particular flight I tried to perfect the *final glide* I typically bottle out of. On this occasion I managed a 75km glide back into Gransden, a highlight of the flying for me.



## 2-up Cross Country



Solo flying is fun, but it can be shared with a friend!

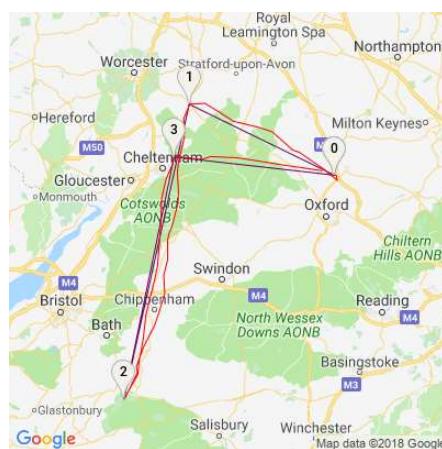
In August we attempted 3 x 300km tasks with three friends in JSX on consecutive days. First was with Mark flown from Bicester where we completed the 300km when all others on task had abandoned. Left you can see Mark climbing in good lift in cloud. We even managed to land back into Weston from a dead sky to a surprised looking Friday night team.

The following day was with Jon Hunt. We set a task out to East Anglia, but had to abandon at Ely as I was unwell. I managed to hold it together long enough for him to return us to base without a problem. I recalled our first 300km together where the situation was reversed.

The next day all was well again and Jon Christensen and I took JSX out west and down to Longleat on a 300km set by Richard.

We were never really close to Richard in 147 to spot him by eye, but by the wonders of modern tech we were able to track our progress against him using Flarm ground tracking and apps like FlightRadar/Spot-the-Glider which worked airborn over 4G.

The conditions were excellent as enjoyed throughout the summer of 2018.



## Talgarth Expedition

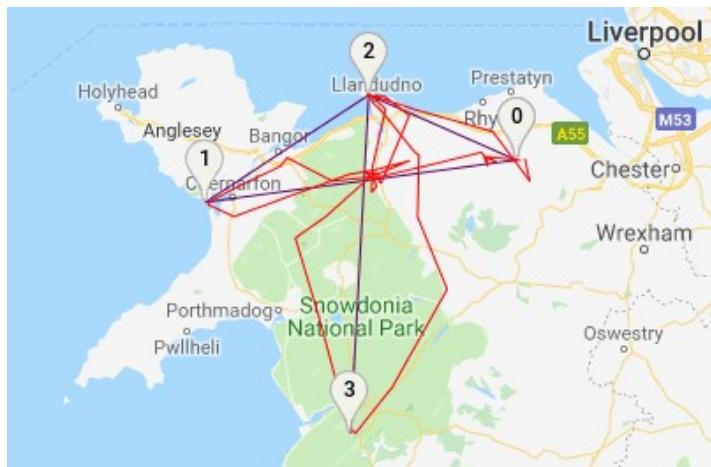
The many previous club expeditions to the Black Mountains Gliding Club at Talgarth allowed me to build the confidence to fly in more demanding conditions. As a bit of a change this year, Andrew and I decided to take JSX and sought the appropriate permissions, fixed the trailer, made sure it was possible to run oxygen for two and ensured the electronic toys would work for a prolonged period. As usual Talgarth delivered with some very nice ridge and wave flying across several days, although not to heights that required the oxygen. A great week was enjoyed on and off the airfield. My enduring memory from this year's trip is the close formation flying with Richard in 147.



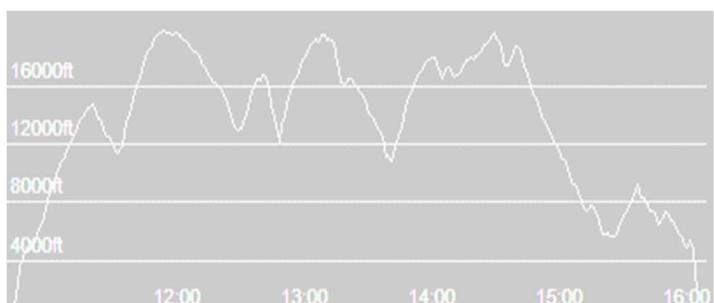
## Denbigh Diamonds at Lleweni Parc

Not content with one outing to Wales, JSX took a trip north to Denbigh Gliding along with Peter Brooks and Martin Cooper. They decided to join intrepid diamond hunters Andrew Butterfield and Alex Jenkins. Conversation turned to diamonds during the Cambridge expedition so we hatched a loose plan to go after Talgarth, the second week in October. Our holiday home in Llandudno was used as a base like last year, but unlike last year we had some stunning weather.

Everyone there that week achieved diamond heights and I was pleased to rack up a few more cross-country kms. You can go a long way from FL195, as you can see from the trace of one flight:



On this flight the primary wave set up downwind of Snowdon over the Conwy Valley with further waves extending to Lleweni Parc. A simple, but rough, tow launched us directly into it. Having explored my adopted second home of Llandudno I flew along the Menai Strait over Bangor to Caernarfon and over the Newborough Beach on Anglesey. Back to the hot spot for another climb to FL195, some photos, then a long glide turning Snowdon, Cader Idris, Bala Lake and the Great Orme again.



The view from such heights in a glider is amazing. Wave lift is very smooth and when pointing into wind there is very little sense of motion. It is a totally different gliding experience from a typical cross-country made earlier in the year.



Not every day can be a great flying day. Having turned Snowdon on the previous two days we decided to take a look on foot on the third with a climb to the summit. Peter really put the rest of us to shame as he trotted up to the summit!



## Denbigh Take-Two

One downside of going to Denbigh the second week in October was a clash with Kerry, meaning Gordon and Cecilia were unable to make it. Gordon has been hunting for diamonds for a few years, so we arranged a second visit for the last week in October before the clocks changed and winter really arrived.



Unfortunately luck ran out and there was no wave high enough for a diamond that week. Instead there was some ridge running and with a reasonable northwesterly forecast Andrew and I tried the Nefyn Run along the mountains running Conwy to Nefyn on the Llŷn Peninsula. We got within about 20km of Nefyn but the wind strength was not enough to make it all the way. A wonderful experience nonetheless in the expensive toys on offer at Denbigh; DG1001M and Arcus-M.



## Final Thoughts

The lesson learned is there is always something more to achieve. 2018 was a great year for many with some unbelievable distances being logged on the ladder around the country in the great conditions. For me it meant 5 expeditions, 145 hours, 8500kms, mountains, diamond heights and distances, 25 hours flying on oxygen, and even a club record?

All with great friends, shared experiences and life long memories. What will 2019 bring?



Photo: Paul Smith, wave over the Black Mountains from JSX

## Happy Christmas 2018

*Liisi Laks & Paula Hastings*

