



FINAL GLIDE

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Photo: Liisi Laks

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Editorial

I had a look through some old Final Glides and it turns out I've looked after Final Glide for 12 years now. It's a rewarding job, but it's also quite time-consuming. When you send me your contributions (ideally totally unformatted, else it causes more work at both ends), I first check everything for spelling mistakes and I also correct any grammar issues. Then I strip all the formatting from the file and start again so the formatting is consistent throughout Final Glide, and then I insert the pictures where they fit best, and I insert the captions as specified by the authors. Then I do a final sanity check. And I still miss errors. Oh well.

And without your contributions there wouldn't be a Final Glide, so again thank you for your brilliant contributions that make Final Glide such a good read!

From next year Paul Smith will look after Final Glide, thanks to Paul for volunteering! It's nice to know Final Glide will be in good hands.

Final Glide is produced using Word. It is available for download as a PDF in the members' area on the OGC website:
www.oxfordgliding.com.

As Final Glide is available for download from a public website, members' addresses have not been included.



Photo: Claudia Hill

OGC Club Ladders

Nick Hill



Photo: Claudia Hill

Over the years OGC pilots have always compared their flights during the season by entering them on the club ladder. The ladders for OGC and other UK clubs can be found on the UK gliding ladder website (<http://www.bgaladder.co.uk>).

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 nation ladder tables. As glider pilots from all the BGA clubs enter details of their flights on the ladders the web site provides a simple way to compare flights on the same day with both those in OGC and amongst 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. 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
- Junior ladder: For cross-county flights by pilots under the age of 26 at the start of the season (1st January)
- Wooden ladder: For gliders constructed primarily of wood and/or metal

OGC also has a local ladder that only contains flights made from Weston-on-the-Green to better reflect normal club flying. The club ladder trophy is awarded to the pilot that tops this ladder.

The results of various ladders for OGC members are presented in the tables. In both cases only the six highest scoring flights are used to calculate the ladder score for each pilot.

OGC Open Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Richard Hall	2902	2532	2415	2396	2175	2054	14465
Krzysztof Kreis	2827	2703	2601	1746	1632	1076	12585
Paul Smith	2758	2464	2401	1576	1503	916	11618
Claudia Hill	2127	1558	1340	1246	1071	1043	8385
John Hanlon	1957	1721	1652	1213			6543
Jonathan Hunt	894	586					1480
Andrew Butterfield	1291						1291
Mark Brooks	290	265	212	46			813
Ben Vickars	383						383

OGC Weekend Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Richard Hall	2902	2532	2396	2054	1172	1142	12189
Paul Smith	2758	2464	2401	1576	1503	916	11618
Krzysztof Kreis	2827	2703	2601	1746	1076		10953
John Hanlon	1957	1721	1652				5330
Claudia Hill	2127	1043	976	847			4993
Jonathan Hunt	894	586					1480
Andrew Butterfield	1291						1291
Mark Brooks	290	265	212	46			813
Ben Vickars	383						383

OGC Wooden ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Krzysztof Kreis	2827	2703	2601	1746	1632	1076	12585

OGC Club Ladders (contd.)

Nick Hill

OGC WOG only ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Richard Hall	2902	2523	2396	2054	1358	1172	12405
Paul Smith	2758	2464	2401	1576	1503	916	11618
Krzysztof Kreis	2827	2703	2601	1746	1076		10953
John Hanlon	1721	1652	1213				4586
Claudia Hill	2127	1043					3170
Jonathan Hunt	894	586					1480
Andrew Butterfield	1291						1291
Mark Brooks	290	265	212				767

OGC distance ladder

Pilot	Km	Flights	Avg Km
Richard Hall	3484.4	12	290.4
Paul Smith	2148.8	9	238.8
Claudia Hill	1851.2	9	205.7
Krzysztof Kreis	1620.2	6	270.0
John Hanlon	1158.4	4	289.6
Jonathan Hunt	274.5	2	137.2
Mark Brooks	190.2	4	47.6
Andrew Butterfield	189.8	1	189.8
Ben Vickars	75.5	1	75.5
Totals	10993	48	1744.6

Distance ladder summaries for the last three years

Year	Pilots	Km	Flights	Avg Km
2016	9	10993	48	229
2015	11	16625	71	234
2014	10	15841	72	220

A few points to note

The summaries of the last three years show that 2016 saw a noticeable drop in cross country flying both in terms of distance flown and number of logged flights. This seems to fit with the widely-held view that 2016 was not a great year for cross country flying.

Overall Richard Hall made best use of the conditions ending up top of the Open, Weekend, WOG Only and Distance Ladders. Krzysztof Kreis was again the only one on the OGC wooden ladder this year with nothing from the Ka6e syndicate.... When transferred to the national wooden ladder his score placed him second overall for the whole of the UK for the second year in a row.

Some notes on scoring and logger files

Full cross-country points plus a bonus are awarded for declared flights where the task is successfully completed as declared before take-off **AND** a logger file is posted on the web site.

These logger files are also of great use to the BGA airspace committees and others in proving how much glider traffic there is on any given day and where gliders fly including areas with special access rights such as wave boxes to show they are being used.

It is therefore always a good idea to upload a logger trace of the flight to both maximise the points that can be scored and to help the BGA and others in on-going negotiations and activities to keep airspace available for gliding.

OGC Club Ladders (contd.)

Nick Hill

Height Ladder

The height ladder points were dominated by flights chasing diamonds in Scotland. Two diamond height flights put Paul Smith firmly in the lead

Pilot	Flight Points
Paul Smith	2631
Richard Hall	1089
Mark Brooks	451

A reminder of an important change made in October 2015 to IGC rules governing badge claims

The Silver Distance has been redefined to *A straight distance flight of at least 50 km from the release point*. This removes the option to claim a silver distance badge from one leg of a larger task.

Stand-alone barographs (whether mechanical or electronic) are no longer permitted as documentation evidence. This means a 5km silver distance flight or height gain **can no longer be claimed** using only a barograph as. An IGC approved logger or position recorder must now be used for all badge claims.

This second point did cause some last-minute delays for some people trying for silver distance this year as they had to scramble around to find a working logger or position recorder. Just having good weather and a club barograph is no longer enough so it pays to be prepared.

VGC Rally in Finland

Text: Alex Rose; Photos: Alex Rose and Alexander Gilles

Now at the end of my second year as a Skylark owner, July meant the chance to again attend the Vintage Glider Club annual international rally, which this year was held at Räyskälä airfield in Finland. Räyskälä is just over an hour north of Helsinki, and is very stereotypically Finnish, surrounded by trees and lakes, and incredibly scenic. As a 3000 mile round trip from Weston on the Green, with multiple ferry crossings, this year Peter Boulton, Peter Brookes and myself elected to fly out, arriving in Finland late in the evening, with the newest edition to vintage gliding, Oscar Eldridge, arriving the next afternoon as an unaccompanied minor, and once Peter had signed for him much as one would a parcel, we headed back to the airfield to get settled in to our accommodation, which this year took the form of a lakeside chalet, complete with its own sauna, and within walking distance of the airfield! The airfield itself was huge, with three tarmac runways as well as an abundance of grass. The approach from the north brought you right across a lake, so although being an easy large flat site, undershooting was not advisable! Winch and aerotow launches were available, however the winch heights were



more than adequate so I never needed to try the two Pawnee tugs that had been brought in for the event. Soaring conditions were good all week that I was there, and I clocked up a few hours both in the Bocian that Peter had kindly hired for us to fly, and in a variety of interesting single seaters. Affectionately nicknamed "the flying Oxfam shop", OH-339 was painted in a wonderful cream and red scheme, but had obviously missed the guidance on loose articles, as it came equipped with the rudder lock, pillows, parachute bag, and not one but two printed copies of the 20-page manual for the radio, all stored in the wing root! Despite this the Bocian proved excellent for exploring the local area, and

VGC Rally in Finland (contd.)

Alex Rose

after Peter Brooks kindly gave us some site checks in it, was a new solo type for myself and Peter. I also enjoyed P1 time in Dave Weekes' immaculate Skylark, BLW, which he had driven all the way from Scotland, and the Finnish built Pik 3 and Pik 16, both of which were very enjoyable. We were lucky enough to have an excellent restaurant onsite, so we ate here several times during the course of our visit, even if I did fall foul of a liquorish flavoured ice-cream on our first day, I was expecting chocolate! After flying we fired up the Sauna, then headed into the lake to swim, though not before applying a liberal dose of mosquito and midge repellent. The lake behind our cabin was several miles across, and we estimated at least 60 metres deep in the middle, and was the perfect way to cool down after a day in



the sky. Unfortunately I couldn't stay for the second week, but I did get to experience the international evening, which like last year was very enjoyable. We prepared a large pan of Britain's national dish, Chicken Tikka Masala, washed down with some Scottish Whisky, which were enjoyed by all, as was one of the local dishes, *Karjalanpiirakka*, a rye bread filled with rice and egg. Overall a thoroughly enjoyable trip! Nearly time to start planning for Hungary... the more the merrier!



The Grand Tour

(through gliding paradise)

Text & photos: Paul Smith & Richard Hall

Flying the Alps is truly spectacular. The rocks are really, really big! You can easily find yourself in oxygen territory most of the day thermalling, ridge soaring and using the thermodynamic lift to thread yourself through unbelievable scenery. High peaks, long valleys, sheer cliff faces, aquamarine mountain lakes all stretch out for hundreds of kilometres.



Richard approaching Pic du Bure

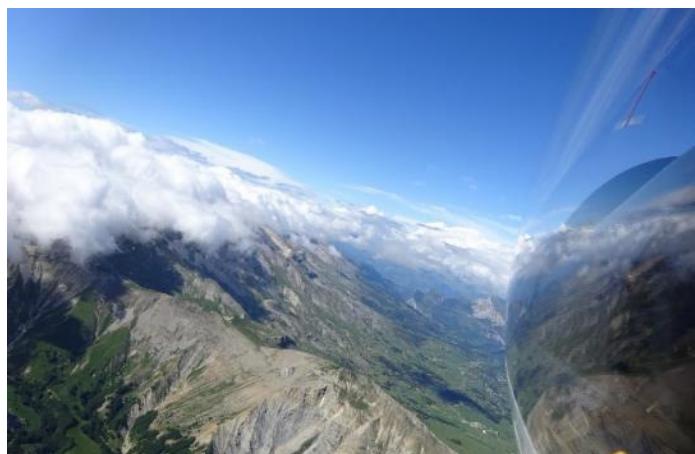


Jon & Richard over Lac de Ste Croix

If that wasn't enough the mountain wave will take you to FL195 for a totally different perspective, not to mention flying with giant vultures that inhabit the peaks. If you like the views skiing, imagine what the experience is like soaring just above inaccessible places you'd otherwise never see up close.



Paul approaching Obiou



Wave Soaring

It is not for the fainthearted. You should feel confident in hill soaring and be very familiar with how your glider handles in challenging conditions. It is also a good idea to read-up on mountain flying and take some instruction from an experienced mountain pilot. The result is a tremendous sense of achievement and an experience that will stay with you for life.



View from Rémy's Duo (alpine instructor and cool dude)



Richard over Lac de Serre-Ponçon

The Grand Tour (contd.)

Paul Smith & Richard Hall

Flying in the region in May/June allows you to skip the crowded airfields and slopes outside the core French holidays. This typically brings lovely weather, perfect for thermodynamic soaring and if you want them, very long days. There's no rush to get going with launches rarely taken before noon still giving 8-9 hours of flying for those with the stamina.



So, the plus side of flying here is huge! But the nitty gritty of getting there and what it costs is also a major consideration...

It costs in the region of £600 to get a glider to the Alps. That is fuel, ferry and péage. A tow costs about £40 or more if you need to go high. Then there are airfield fees, membership etc. It's fair to budget about £500 for flying over two weeks.



On tow with Charlotte at Serres



Breezy crossing on the ferry going to France

Accommodation can be whatever you want. Camping is cheap and very pleasant in Southern France in summer. Renting a gîte is a luxury and the one we have booked this year will cost us about £350 each for two weeks, but there are many cheaper options. If you want to eat out, you can spend a bit more. Realistically, somewhere between £1,500 and £2,000 for the experience of a lifetime.



Al fresco dining after flying at our gîte this year



Out for lunch with Mark, just before the heavens opened

The Grand Tour (contd.)

Paul Smith & Richard Hall

However...

If two people share a glider, then that obviously halves a lot of the cost as well. It is very easy to get two, three hour flights a day so sharing is very feasible. It does not cost any more to get a two seater to the mountains, so again a big saving. Four people with a two seater is very plausible. We have done that in the past with our Janus and still got loads of flying. One glider doing 50 hours in two weeks is certainly attainable. Another option if you want a glider all to yourself, would be to time share – first pilot takes it out, flies for a week or two and then flies home commercial. Second pilot flies out and then brings it back when they have filled their boots. Not very sociable though.



It takes a couple of days to drive out with a glider on the back if you want to arrive feeling ready to fly the next day. You can do it in a day with two drivers. It is about 800 miles, 270 more than Aboyne but the roads are far superior!



We, and many other pilots, consider the Alps to be the **best glider playground in the world**. If you have not done it, put it on your bucket list now!

For a taster: <http://tinyurl.com/ogcalps>

The New FI(S) Instructor Course

Text: Jon Hunt; Photos: Jon Hunt & Claudia Hill

So who'd be an instructor anyway?

With recent changes to instructor training, the process of qualifying as a gliding instructor has become more involved and costly. With the prospect of giving up a flying day every month to teach, whilst your mates go off cross country begs the question; why on earth would you do it?

The answer for me was simple. Being able to share the enjoyment of flying with others is a big attraction. Just being in the air is still a novelty that hasn't worn off; I don't think it ever will. So what better way to spend my weekends than helping others in the same way others helped me? If I can introduce just one person to the sport who enjoys it for years as I am, it would be worth it.



Hours of briefings were completed at Weston

If this was not a big enough incentive, the prospect of massively improving my own flying skills was an opportunity that I just couldn't turn down. 2016 for me was going to be all about instructing!

The flight instructor sailplane rating FI(s) was born of need for EASA compliance and replaced the old style assistant category rating. They are largely the same rating, however the courses are different. Rather than an 8 day course of old, you now complete a modular course (A, B, C & D modules) with a flight exam at the end.

At the beginning of 2016 I found myself in the club house, flicking through a blank training record, full of exercises that I would have to complete. But before I could even start, I had to pass a pre entry test with my CFI. After a few flights, CFI Neil was content to give the go ahead and I was underway, I was now an instructor candidate!

Undertaking the course with me was Liisi. This proved to be a great advantage, as another perspective on things going through the course turned out to be really helpful.

A Module – It's all about the briefing!

The first module you undertake as a 'green' instructor candidate is a weekend course, which is all theory based. Mine was at Bicester and over the weekend I was taught how to structure and deliver briefings. This was combined with numerous theoretical lessons on the flight envelope and threat and error management. I came away with the tools to teach gliding exercises. Not being a natural speaker though, I would have to practice hard to develop a style of briefing that was engaging and relevant, without being long winded

and boring. This remains a work in progress but the more I did it, the easier it got. The principle behind structured briefings is all about delivering better value. Knowing the theory before you get into a glider allows a student to take better advantage of their time in the air.

B Module - Club based training

After completion of my A module it was time to go back to Weston and start covering all the exercises. The training record booklet broke everything down. Every element of the gliding syllabus was there. In total, over 100 key briefing items to be researched, ordered and prepared. The learning was done in the preparation of the briefing. I would go home and read all the theory, then prepare a briefing using the structure I'd been taught and come back to Weston, where I'd deliver it to one of our instructor coaches. It would then get discussed and signed off when satisfactory. This was just the briefing though. I then had to demonstrate that I could teach what I had just briefed. The practical flying elements that had to be demonstrated were no less comprehensive. Over 150 key items to be delivered in the air. At the same time a memorised core script or 'patter' accompanied the lesson.

As you might imagine, combining all this whilst trying to competently fly a glider and monitor a pretend student is quite difficult. Our club coaches and instructors at Weston though were 1st class and patiently helped and encouraged as I developed my new skills.

Homework, briefings, flying and repeat, were to be my weekends for the foreseeable future!



One of OGC's brave instructors playing the part of 'Bloggs' the pretend student

C Module

The C module is a mid-point check of how you're getting on. This for me was at Dunstable.

Completed over a weekend, it included a re-sit of the bronze theory exam and focused on my own ability to fly well, as well as a check on the standard of my briefings and exercises. The flying on day 1 included picking an exercise that I felt I was good at, then brief and demo it. I picked 'straight glide and scan cycle'. The nerves really kicked in at this point. It's made very clear that you will not proceed past a C module if your standard of flying and briefings are not at an acceptable standard. To add to this pressure, I was to fly a Duo Discus. A new type and a new airfield really focussed

FI(S) Course (contd.)

Jon Hunt

the mind and by the end of the weekend I had a happy regional examiner and clearance to return to Weston and complete the rest of the B module.

Passing the C module felt like a milestone. This was the first time I'd flown and been checked by someone outside of Weston. Myself and Liisi were also the first candidates undertaking the course from OGC.

Training us in-house was also a new concept for the OGC coaches. Success on the C module was the thumbs up that everyone's hard work and efforts had been focused in the right direction.

The second half of the club based B module went well.

Gathering momentum and confidence, the exercises were nearly complete and the summer flying week gave the opportunity to get finished.

That was it, the exercises were now finished, it was time to sink or swim, the D module was booked!



Passed

D Module- The big one!

So, it was time for the D module. 5-8 days of flying at Hus Bos. Launching, landing and launch failures, the more advanced exercises were focused on. The order of the week was explained at the start. We would be coached and assessed as we went and when the course instructors felt we were ready, we would be put forward for the final flying examination. The pressure really started to build through the week. After being tested and coached for nearly a year, I was tired and I'd had enough! The coaches were getting increasingly pernickety by their own admission; I was getting crabby and then to top up the pressure a bit more, the examiner arrived!

Motor glider flights looking at approaches gave way to the end of the 5th day and the course coaches gave the news I was hoping for; I was ready! The next day I was to fly with Ged Terry for my final examination. This was what I had been working for all year; I would have to perform, everything hinged on not making any silly mistakes!

Final Exam

The morning of the final exam had arrived and typically cloud base was too low to fly.

The morning dragged, with only a sausage sandwich to break the boredom. Then a glimmer of hope. The cloud started to break and a window of opportunity arose to fly.

The final exam is flown under strict exam conditions. The examiner is someone who has played no part in your training, they're completely independent. We flew 3 flights in all, touching on every aspect of what I'd spent the year learning. I finished de briefing my final flight and handed back to Ged, expecting further instructions on the next task. The words 'well you've passed' took a few seconds to register. When they did the relief washed over me and to say I was pleased would be an understatement.

It appeared to me that the training on the D Module stretches you past the standard required to pass the exam. Looking back on the test, it was really a lot easier than the training.

What now?

With a new FI rating under my belt, new doors have opened. Cross country flying is an area that I enjoy immensely and what better way to spend the coming years, than improving my own cross country capabilities and being able to pass this on to another generation of pilots. Being able to take a direct role in helping my son Daniel to progress is also going to be very rewarding. As will being a part of my daughters learning in a couple of years.

In summary, the new FI course is brilliant and I'd whole heartedly recommend it to those who are considering it.

It's an experience that can be frustrating, exhilarating, challenging but rewarding. But most of all it will stretch you and by the end you'll be a considerably better pilot than when you started.

It just leaves me to thank all the people who trained and flew with me throughout the year; a truly top bunch at OGC in 2016!



Why I did the course

Chasing Scottish Diamonds

Text + photos: Paul Smith

Week 1 – Deeside Gliding Club

Aboyne and Deeside Gliding Club is the UK's leading site for mountain wave, which is reflected in the number of gold and diamond height gains claimed each year. Having only *that* diamond box unticked on my dance card last Christmas, it seemed the obvious choice for an Autumn 2016 expedition¹.

An email went out to the members and a spot in the Christmas newsletter drummed up some interest. A flurry of emails led to a booking of eight gliders with Deeside for what we hoped would be the best week for the equinox winds.

After a great summer with some fantastic high points² the 24th September arrived and we departed Weston in convoy for the Highlands.



It's fair to say it is a very long drive, at over ten hours the Alps feels closer. We all eventually arrived around sunset to park up ready for briefing in the morning. Mark even managed to hold onto his trailer despite losing various bolts from his new tow bar assembly!

Sunday is switch over day for expeditions at Deeside so there were 30+ pilots eagerly awaiting briefing on Sunday morning for what looked like a promising day. It is probably polite to say the briefing at Deeside is minimalist, pointing out only the essentials of their operating procedures and leaving the pilots to work out the complexities of airspace and whether they want a site check.

Given the number of people, the quality of instruction already received and benign nature of the site compared to somewhere like Talgarth or Serres, I skipped the site check to have a go on my own. After an uneventful tow I established my low point with a tight figure eight and continued to climb 2000' in the weak wave I released in. The view to the north, however, looked a lot more promising.



A quick glide over and I was soon climbing in 3-4kts. I turned the oxygen on then worked my way down the wave bar to find 5-6kts to take me up to 18,500'. My release height was 5,300' so I needed to find another 3,200' from somewhere...

¹ Although already happily committed to the French Alps for June 2016, the airspace there seemed unfavourable and summer the wrong time of year, so a trip to Scotland still seemed like a good idea. As it turned out a diamond was possible in the Alps by getting low enough (500' AGL) then climbing to the airway at FL195, both of which I achieved, just on different days!

² See page 7 for our trip to the French Alps and page 23 for the task to St Catherine's Point.

Chasing Scottish Diamonds (contd.)

Paul Smith



Anyone who has completed their bronze knows the dry adiabatic lapse rate is 3°C per 1,000' and moist is 1.5°C , with environmental at 2°C , so a diamond height is going to cost you at least 25°C . You would think anyone trying to achieve one would take something warm to wear. Remember this was my first flight at Aboyne, I was half expecting a circuit. I had a microfleece and summer soaring hat. No gloves, no extra socks, nothing!



I spent the next hour hunting around enjoying the view, looking at the coastline far below, but some 70km away. I eventually returned to some weak lift just to the southeast of my earlier best climb rate and accepted 1kt. It took another hour to climb to 22,000' with my thermometer bottomed out at -30°C , that's an average climb of just over half a knot. The last 200', needed to take me into diamond territory, took 20 minutes. At this temperature, the prolonged time at this altitude was taking its toll on me. Many thanks to Andy who by radio could confirm my maths and earlier ensured the appropriate wave boxes were activated, despite that being far from obvious.



Although every flying day saw some wave we couldn't find anything close to Sunday's 4-mile-high day. I think Richard got to FL195 on Sunday, but didn't stick around long due to the painful cold. Most others saw more than FL100 most days, but no more diamonds appeared. A combination of luck and determination made mine possible.

Chasing Scottish Diamonds (contd.)

Paul Smith

It is easy to see why it is the premier destination for wave flying, but with that comes a busy airfield and the stresses that places on people, I hoped the following week would be more laid back.



Week 2 – Cairngorm Gliding Club

Unlike Deeside, Feshiebridge offers much more of the club feel we take for granted at Oxford. On Saturday Richard, Annette and I drove over the mountains to visit Phil, Fi and Dave and join up with Jon, Coops, Haste and Hilary for Cairngorm Gliding Club's Octoberfest. I took the weekend off gliding to do some sightseeing, which in the bright sunshine was wonderful.

Monday Jon and I drove to the club to see what the day would bring. Moments after arriving Jon was off cross country with the club pundit in his ASH25. I got a briefing and site check from Dave. Feshie is a bit challenging, particularly in a brisk southerly. During the check we went into one of the bowls which turned out to be a really bad idea, as Dave put it, we won't be doing that again today!



Chasing Scottish Diamonds (contd.)

Paul Smith

bars easily visible. After an hour or so of faffing around between 7-8,000' Haste called to say he was passing 15,000' at 7kts with a position banging up against the airway that runs to the west of site. It was an easy climb up to 19,000' taking just under 30 minutes.



At this point I moved out to a beautiful lenticular to the east. A quick glide saw me climbing again and within a few beats I'd reached 21,000', an easy diamond with a release at 3,500'. This time it was much more enjoyable without the pressure of having to hang on for hours in the freezing temperatures. I was unprepared once again without gloves, but the sun was shining giving some radiant heat in the cockpit.



The cloud formation was much better defined this side of the Cairngorms and lenticulars were everywhere as far as the eye could see like flying saucers hanging high in the sky. I could hear many landing back at Deeside over the radio, as the wave collapsed and feel the stress of so much activity.

I floated around for a while enjoying uninterrupted views of the Moray Firth, Cairngorms, Grampians and beyond. Truly spectacular.

For anyone thinking of making the journey to the Scottish wave sites, it is a long way, but the rewards and welcome you will receive from old friends make it a no-brainer. I will definitely return.



Chairman's Corner

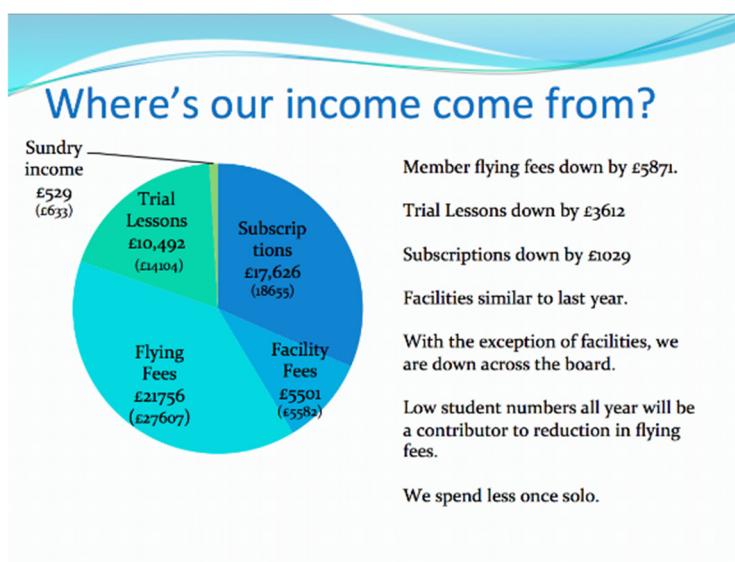
Paul Morrison



Photo: Paul Smith

For an OGC club or Committee member November tends only to mean a couple of things – the AGM and fireworks, some years more integrated than others. This year we did not have any fireworks after the AGM and hopefully those who attended the 66th AGM found it interesting and humorous in the intended places.

The key message from this years' AGM is that whilst financially 2016 has not been a bad year, it's not been a great year either. As the Club's Treasurer Jon explained in his informative presentation, whilst the majority of the Club's income comes from flying and is thus subject to variation, the Club's expenditure is largely fixed and thus a year of less flying does not bring a commensurate reduction in expenditure.

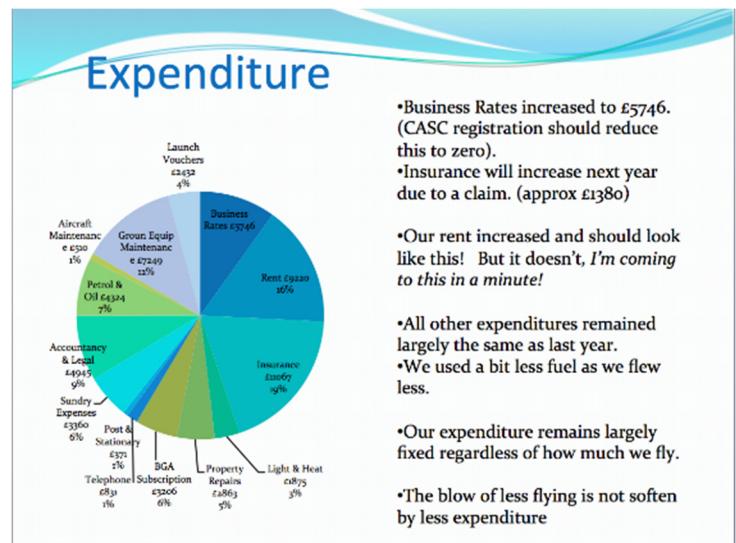


Thankfully as part of the Lease renewal completed last year, it was negotiated that the increase in rent was not backdated to the date of the expiry of the previous Lease as the Defence Estates Surveyor originally proposed. This means that the Accountants were able to reverse an accrual of back-dated rent that they have been allowing for in our accounts. As a result of this reversal, on paper the Club made a profit of just under £11,000.00 but the reality is that

were it not for this reversal of approximately £15,000.00, we would have made an operating loss of over £4,000.00.

Obviously this is disappointing news as we had hoped as in recent years, to be able to transfer some of the profit to the Site Trust Fund. However, the good news is that the Committee saw this coming and had already started taking measure to mitigate this and further plans are under discussion.

As the above slides show, the Club's operating costs have increased recently as a result of both the loss of the discretionary 80% rates relief the Club had enjoyed for a number of years and the increase in the rent. We are hoping to negate the former by making the Club and its parent company eligible to be a Community Aided Sports Club and Motions were unanimously passed to help implement the changes necessary to achieve this. As for the latter, the rent is not due to reviewed again until April 2020, but you can see that with fixed expenditure and reducing income, we will need to take measures to restore the balance.



As a Committee we did not feel that an increase in flying or facility fees is appropriate for 2017, however we will be implementing a modest income of £10 in the Full Membership fee. You do not have to be an accountancy genius to realise that an increase of circa £700 (based on current membership levels) alone will not cover even the rent increase, so we do need to try and increase our membership and fly as much as we can.

OGC is not alone in this situation as at both the recent Thames Valley Club CFI's meeting and the recent national Club Management Conference, the ageing and diminishing number of glider pilots is a perennial discussion point. Nationally the BGA are planning to raise the profile of gliding and considering a number of exciting initiatives we will support if it is appropriate and beneficial to do so. In the meantime though, you can help by becoming an ambassador for the sport and more importantly our club. We need to shatter the misconception that aviation is unattainable for the average man on the street – an impression that unfortunately some recent high profile TV programmes have done little to diminish.

As we have said before, this club is run by the members for the members, but equally members are our lifeblood. We therefore need to increase our membership and how we

Chairman's Corner (contd.)

Paul Morrison

achieve this is the subject of much debate. Clearly trial lessons are our 'shop window' to entice new members into the sport and club but as all clubs are finding, the conversion rate is not encouraging with typically less than 1.5% of trial lessons resulting in new members. We have a couple of ideas in mind, but of course enticing members through the door is only half the story. We need to retain them and the best recruiting campaign in the world will not help if having stepped through the gate into our world, they find the environment unwelcoming or intimidating. We therefore need to be mindful of this and if we are to become a CASC, we will have to challenge the way we have always done things.

In the meantime, whilst we will still continue to investigate and assess possible options for fleet changes as the K series of gliders continue to come under increasing scrutiny, we are focusing our efforts on realising the benefits of becoming a CASC as the potential grant opportunities that this may give would obviously be a huge help in raising the capital necessary to fund any fleet changes, not to mention the increased cost in operating costs that replacing the venerable K13s & Ka8s would bring.

We took the decision several years ago not to become reliant upon Friday Night & Trial Flight income, but with a reduced number of each flown this year, if we can reverse this next year, it will help. Alex who has done a grand job for the last couple of years organising the Friday night bookings is like many of us, struggling with 'real world' demands so we do need someone else to take this on please – don't leave it to others, ask yourself what do you do for your club?

As for what else will 2017 bring us, who knows? However, I can safely predict that with the combined London Oxford Airport & RAF Brize Norton Airspace Change Proposal ('ACP') going out to consultation in early 2017, it's clear that this is something I will need to have on my radar.

Equally, as we have mentioned before, it is apparent that our landlords are now more risk averse than ever before and therefore we will need to formalise our 'business as usual' safety procedures that have served us well over the years. To this end, we are introducing a separate Safety Committee and an incident / near-miss reporting procedure that can be anonymous if you wish. It's not my or the Committee's

intention to introduce unnecessary bureaucracy but we are being required to provide 'demonstrable evidence' of our processes and procedures and I would ask please that you support the club's CFI (Neil Swinton) and Safety Officers (Tim Elliott & Tim Marlow) in this.

Finally, organisational wise, there have been a few changes this year - Gordon Craig has kindly agreed to join the existing Board of Directors of the Company and Ben & Jon C have stood down as Secretary and Vice Chairman respectively. In their place now come Peter Boulton (Secretary from Ordinary Member last year), Richard Hall as Vice Chairman (new appointment) and Haydn John (Ordinary Committee Member). Other posts remain unchanged.

To those standing down I offer my most grateful thanks for all your hard work, support and wise counsel over the years. To those joining the Committee this year, I look forward to working with you as it will be good to use the fresh enthusiasm and energy that you bring to the Committee to help make this Club an even better and safer place to both fly and spend your spare time.

One of the first jobs of the newly appointed Committee is to appoint the Officers needed to fulfil various roles – some defined by the Constitution and others by custom & practice and common sense. By the time you read I would hope that this process is well underway, but as always, if you can help in any way do please get in touch with me or any Committee member. I have already mentioned that we need someone to take on Friday Night bookings this year, but if as we hope our CASC application is successful, this will open the door to new funding opportunities which we will only be able to realise if we have someone to help identify and implement these grant opportunities. Anyone out there?

Thanks for taking the time to read this and for the support and confidence that you have shown by choosing to elect me and my Committee colleagues to represent your interests in the management of your club. Remember, OGC is what you make it, so let's all work together to make the club a friendly, welcoming and safe place to fly.

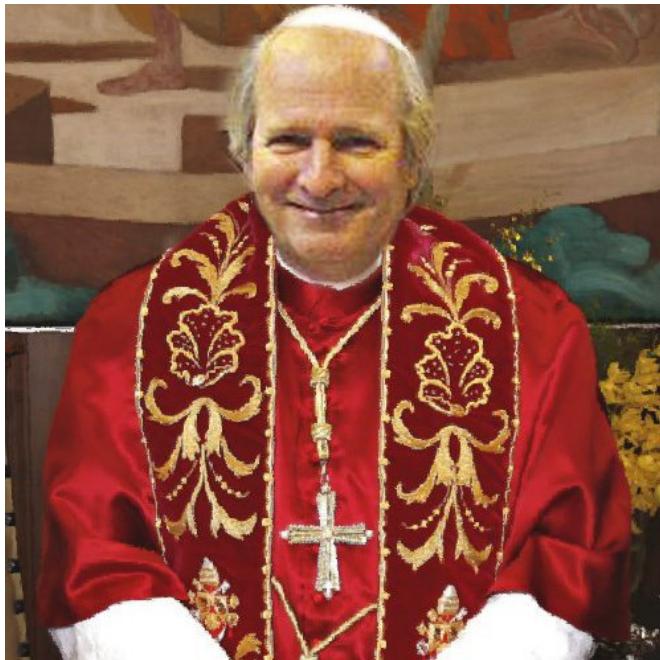
Finally, my best wishes to you and your families for a happy and peaceful Christmas and a wonderfully thermic new year. Don't forget that Mince Pies are not ballast that you can easily jettison!



Photo: Paul Smith

CFI's Corner

Neil Swinton (*with a photo enhanced by Steve McCurdy*)



Launch Failures:

When was your last launch failure? Weeks ago? Months Ago? Not since your last refresher session?

The cables are in quite good condition at the moment, so we have had very few real breaks in the past few months. I know from the turn-over of blue weak-link (£5.00 plus VAT if we find the strop, in excess of £50.00 if we don't) that there have been a number of single seat launch failures however.

Anyway, the point is, how well can YOU handle a launch failure?

The recovery actions you will take following a launch failure should be pretty much the last thing you mention on your 'eventualities' list – then it is fresh in your mind and won't be forgotten in the heat of the moment.

The leaflets in the club house, and the BGA web site have loads of resources about handling launch failures, so I won't repeat them all here, but do remember that one of the most vital tasks for the pilot is first regaining and then maintaining the appropriate flying speed throughout the recovery and subsequent stages of the flight up until the landing. So when the cable goes with a bang, get the glider into the appropriate nose-down attitude, then wait until the correct speed is showing ON THE ASI before doing anything else. And then hold that speed as you manoeuvre to landing.

It is quite fun to practice these with an instructor, between the two of you discuss a suitable height for the practice break, and what actions you will take, what you will see and feel, what an acceptable speed variation will be, and then go and fly it together and give yourself an awkward height break.

Also do remember that landing back at the launch-point is very much a secondary concern – your priority is to land

safely on the field with the minimum amount of manoeuvring. And long walks are healthy for both parties!

Pre-landing Checks:

Please don't forget these, they may save you the embarrassment of landing wheel up, or at the wrong end of the airfield, or squeezing into a crowded area between parked gliders. It would be fair to say most instructors have different views on pre-landing checks, however the key thing for me is that a simple check, of whatever variety is carried out, typically as you enter the 'high-key' area. Any sort of check must be completed well before the middle of the down-wind leg. The check serves two purposes, first it makes sure the wheel is down (all varieties of landing checks seem to include a 'U' for undercarriage), secondly it switches your mind from 'flying' to 'landing', which I believe to be a key part of achieving a safe and predictable outcome.

People who arrive at the final turn position having flown either no circuit, or an aimless wandering one, are very definitely not in 'landing mode' and I don't believe them to be fully concentrating on whatever excitement is about to happen! :)

If you have a preferred pre-landing check, then use it out loud, whether flying solo or with an instructor. If you don't use one, please adopt one and try and embed it into your subconscious so it just pops out when needed, in the same way that (hopefully) CBSIFTCBE does.

The three commonest pre-landing checks – in order of my preference - seem to be USTAL, WULF and WU. Do have a chat to any instructor as to how to use these checks, and can instructors please continue to look out for use of pre-landing checks when flying with people.

Pre-getting-in Checks:

On a similar vein, pre-getting-in-checks are used by many clubs, and they do seem to be a good idea. Certainly when people come back from courses at other sites where they are used they will tell me how useful they are, and I am inclined to agree.

Quite a common check seems to be:

A: Aircraft: is it all there? No need for a DI, but you might just take a quick look around.

B: Ballast: is there any left under the seats or in the nose?

C: Controls: do they move, and do they move in the correct sense?

D: Tail Dolly: is it off?

E: Environment: state of airfield, parked cars, approaching weather, and for **Everything else**.

As it can be seen, all these are checks that cannot be carried out so easily when strapped in. If you find yourself using sunglasses as a mirror to check the rudder and elevator movement is correct, then I would suggest that was better done before you were strapped tightly to the aircraft. I think ABCDE works well, and I try to use it, and I suggest everyone does the same.

CFI's Corner (contd.)

Neil Swinton

Problem Relationships.

No, not marital ones, but between pilots and instructors. I know there have been a few cases this year when pilots have felt belittled, picked-on and generally made to feel small as a result of flying at Weston. Please don't dwell on incidents like these and then disappear, instead, talk to me, or the committee (if the CFI was the culprit!) and we can try to resolve such cases. When it comes down to it, we are all different, and what works for some people may well not work for others. Remember of course that your instructor's main responsibility and concern is for your safety, but

between us we need to find a happy medium and approach for all sides.

Finally, Safety

Somewhere else in Final Glide there should be an article with some more details on the OGC reporting system. I would urge you to use this system to report both incidents (things that have happened) and concerns (things you are worried might happen). It is very easy to have a near-miss, think 'Oh yeah, we must be careful doing that', and then two years later when it has all been forgotten about, simply repeat the incident, maybe with a worse outcome. We are hoping the new system and the new safety committee will reduce this risk, but it can only do this with involvement and active participation of all club members.

Bicester Regionals

5th – 13th August 2016

Text: Liisi Laks; Photos: Liisi Laks & Claudia Hill



Team JSX

Often I get asked how many years I have been gliding and also how I got into gliding. Well my first flight was back in 2008 when my ex-housemate, Paul Wilford, took me up for a trial flight in the DG-505. I have to admit that this was it for me. I joined up as a member the next month, followed by my first solo flight on 22nd August 2009. (I still have a framed picture of my first solo flight proudly displayed at home on the wall!)

I just love the beauty of seeing the world from above and forgetting all your other worries and duties. The nice thing about gliding is (as most of you already know) that it's an affordable way of flying and it gives you what you want to get out of it: be it cross-country flying, aerobatics, instructing, leisurely sight-seeing flights, pottering about at your home airfield and so on.

I did my basic instructor rating in 2015 and passed my Flying Instructor (FI) course in October this year. However, during my 8 years of gliding I have actually only done one solo cross-country flight. I know, I can't believe it myself. It was my 50km silver badge flight from Weston-on-the-Green to Husbands Bosworth. It's not that I am scared to leave the comfort of our airfield boundaries, landing in a farmer's field or getting lost. I suppose I am just happy pottering around the airfield.

Earlier in the year Cloudy approached Cecilia and me regarding an opportunity to do some cross-county coaching with her. Women Glide were organising a training camp for women during the Bicester Regionals. As I had not done many cross-country flights and also not flown in a competition before I thought that this would be a perfect opportunity for me to learn more about a side of the sport I yet to really get going in.



WGUK post-briefing briefing

I have to admit that I did not realise how much preparation goes into competition flying. I was definitely very naïve on that front. Firstly Cloudy had to ask for permission from the committee if they were happy for us to take our DG-505 (JSX) to the Bicester Regionals for 9 days meaning that the club would not be able to use it for 2 consecutive weekends. Fortunately our committee was happy with this. Then we had to register to fly in the comp, which again, Cloudy very kindly did for us.



WGUK debrief & trace analysis

Bicester Regionals (contd.)

Liisi Laks

Next thing on the list was to make sure that the glider and also the trailer were both ready for the comp. JSX was fitted with front and back glider guiders (thank you Nick for loading the latest airspace and TP's), extra battery (3 in total) as we were not sure if the two existing ones would last, which left locating the tail water ballast kit and canopy cover. Cecilia volunteered to polish the glider, Gordon finished off the DG front wheel fairing repair (it was broken into several pieces a month before when it hit a hole on landing). Haste and Nick sorted out the wiring for the glider guiders and the loggers. The glider trailer also needed some serious TLC (new tyre, door stop, floor repair, wingtip dollies needed to be lined with new material, new straps for tailplane holder etc.). As you can see there was a lot of preparation that needed to be done before the comp and I can't say thank you enough to everybody who helped us to get the glider and the trailer ready.



The grid

So now we had an instructor, 2 P2's, nice shiny glider and roadworthy trailer. But, no crew! We needed at least 3 people with the glider at Bicester (in case we needed to rig and de-rig the glider every day). Again after approaching a few people we managed to find a crew for all 9 days (thank you Nick, Gordon and Dave Bray for being such a super crew (ed.: and Alistair, Gordon's brother, who crewed for us while Liisi was still at work)).



P2 on crew duties

Here I was thinking that the hardest part is now sorted, but wrong I was again. As I had not done any competition flying I first had to familiarise myself with the comp rules, how to use the glider guider, needed an up to date map, sort out plumbing, Camelbak as it's so important to drink lots of water and not get dehydrated, soaring hat, food/nibbles...

I am sure I have again forgotten few things to mention. As Cloudy has done lots of competition and cross-country flying she had created a very good check-list that she happily shared with us and was super useful for Cecilia and me. If anybody is interested I am sure she'd be happy to share it with you as well.

Due to my FI training and work commitments I was unable to join the competition during the first 4 days, but luckily this worked out well as Cecilia was available and happy to fly the first part of the competition. As far as I know Cecilia enjoyed her cross-country competition flying as much as I did and, like I, she learned a lot from her flights with Cloudy.



JSXelfie!

My first flight was on Wednesday and I could not have been any more excited. I turned up early to make sure that I wasn't late for the briefing and also to make sure that the glider would be ready for the day. Competition briefing was at 10:00 every morning regardless of the weather conditions. So, we had to be in the hangar beforehand ready with our maps, pens, rulers and glider guiders. I have to say it was very interesting and exciting to see all the other competitors and their crew members. After we were given our A and B tasks for the day we had to draw both tasks (in case the organisers change the A task to B on a very last minute due to bad weather) on our map in case of our glider guider stopped working. We were given a good briefing about the weather, setup for the day, order of launching (there were 2 different classes: club and open class. We flew in the club class). Thanks to our super crew our glider was already ready for us so off we went. I don't think I have ever seen so many gliders lined up and we had lots of tugs ready to tow us up. To make it fair everybody was given a tow to 2,000 feet so once you reached your max allowed tow height the tug pilot wagged the wings which meant that you'd had your lot!



Last day. Scrubbed eventually.

Bicester Regionals (contd.)

Liisi Laks



Briefing

Now flying in gaggles is something I have done before, but on a very small scale. When I say small I really mean small (perhaps 3 or 4 gliders in total). During the comp flying I think this was one of the things I really felt most uncomfortable with. The gliders were just everywhere. If we found lift and any other gliders saw us gaining some decent height they all joined from every direction. I think at one point we were sharing a thermal with at least 10 other gliders. This is when your flying skills and quick thinking really come to hand, juggling a constant lookout with accurate flying. It almost felt like playing a good chess game where you always try to anticipate your opponents every move/position and plan for your safe next steps. As the DG-505 has 20 m wings in a tight thermal we really had to be careful that we had a safe distance between our glider wings and the gliders above and below us.



Ready to launch

Once the start line was opened off we went. Again this is completely different flying to what I was used to. When you just potter around the airfield you take every thermal as you are not in a hurry, as long as you are not losing height. Now in a competition you only use a thermal when it's a strong one (naturally unless you have not found anything and are getting low you can be less fussy). We often found some average 2- 3 knot thermals that I was very happy to start thermalling until I got a very firm prompt from Cloudy "Don't you even think about it" or something along those lines. I find it still very amusing and funny. She had to prompt me a few times. It was difficult to get into the mind-set that between the thermals fly fast (in sink even faster) and if you do find some lift just slow down to take advantage of the weak thermals but don't turn unless they're strong. Also a lot of the time we were trying to anticipate where we could find our next thermal (any obvious clouds or something on the ground that could kick off some thermals). We also kept an eye on other gliders around us (especially ahead of us) to see if they had found any good lift. If yes, we naturally joined them. Also I found it very exciting every time we got to our turning point and set off to our next leg. Such a sense of achievement and especially once the glider guider informed us that we are now above final glide and no longer needed to worry about our next thermal.



Bicester airfield

I flew 2 days out of the 5 days that I was there. We managed 2 good cross-country coaching flights and 3 days were sadly scrubbed due to bad weather. I can't thank Cloudy enough for all the coaching, mentoring, help and support during the entire competition. I know that it would have been so much easier for her to have entered the competition as a solo pilot. I learned so much during the comp and not just about the cross-country flying. It has definitely given me confidence to push myself more and get out there.

Incident Reporting System

Safety Committee

As was mentioned at the AGM, we are now the proud owners of an on-line incident reporting safety management system. There have been a number of teething problems with the system but hopefully these will now be resolved and the Safety Pages can be accessed by following the links on the OGC web site, in the 'members' section.

All members can record incidents, accidents, or concerns onto the system. Indeed, without input from the membership the incident reporting system will be very ineffective.

A new safety subcommittee - quite importantly distinct from the management committee - has been formed, this will consist of the CFI, the safety officer(s) and other interested parties. The current members are Neil, both Tims, and Cecilia.

The major function of the safety committee is in responding to members' safety concerns, assessing and evaluating risk, and finally in making any recommendations back to the management committee. The aim is that any concern or incident raised by a member will generate a response and ideally an action to mitigate the chance of re-occurrence.

What can be reported?

Pretty much everything. Examples could be:

'I cut my hand on a strop',
'Fred did a really low circuit and no-one noticed',
'The Ka8 was ground looped and damaged',
'A visitor got in the way of a launching glider'.

How can they be reported?

- By the form on the web site
- By using an actual paper form – also on the web site, and posting in bar letter box.
- By email to the safety committee
- By talking to the safety committee

Are they anonymous?

If you desire, yes. You will be asked for your name, but it can be left blank. Anything you enter will only ever be viewed by the safety committee if you select the anonymous option.

Do you really want trivial reports?

Yes. If something happened, that could have resulted in injury, or breakage, then please do document and record it.

Is this just for flying incidents?

No, for example burning yourself on the BBQ is significant and should be reported and recorded.

Who will see what I enter?

Initially only the safety committee. They will read and assess what you have written, before producing a 'public' version of your comments. For example, if your report said 'Fred did a low circuit', then the committee would produce a public version like 'A member did a low circuit'. Once a public version is produced, maybe after a few days, then the report will appear in the summary list which can be viewed by all members.

Can I view all the incidents?

Yes, the web site will show a summary of all incidents going back in time.

What will happen to them?

Once an incident report has been posted, the safety committee will leap into action and will assess each report as being one of:

Concern: An alert, nothing happened but might have done.
Club Only: something happened, but relevant only to us.
BGA Incident: The incident will be raised in the BGA safety system

BGA Accident: The accident will be raised in the BGA safety system.

This is not immediate and may take several days.

Incidents and Accidents will be reported into the BGA safety system by the safety committee who may ask for further details and our response. Concerns and Club-Only will produce a report by the safety committee, and a response to the original creator of the incident.

Will anything happen if I report something?

Yes. The safety committee will get back to you and let you know the outcome, which may result in a change of club procedures or practices.

Why should we bother?

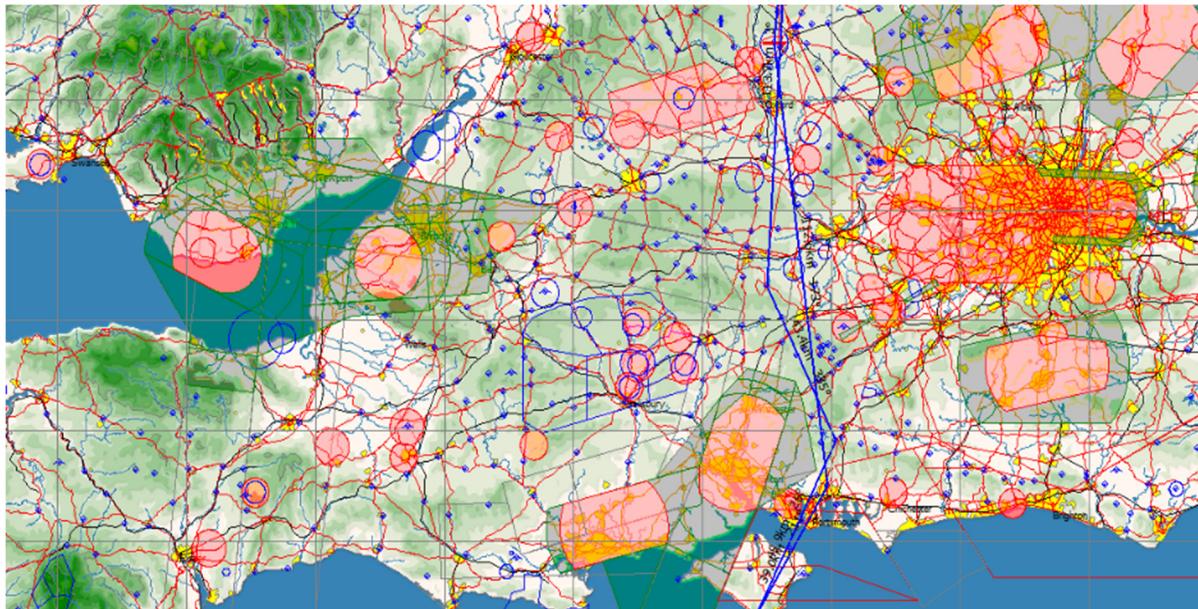
We fly on an RAF airfield, and the RAF have a very good and mature safety system. As MOD tenants it is expected (and indeed, required) of us that we can demonstrate a similar approach to safety management.

Also, it is hoped that with proper use of the incident report system the club will benefit and we can learn from mistakes and incidents. However, as stated above, that will only happen if the system is used. That's down to you.

St. Catherine's Point

Paul Smith

In the 2012 edition of Final Glide I wrote about a great day out with Haste where we managed to reach the Isle of Wight. Having abandoned St Catherine's Point that day, I have been on the lookout for a better one to put things right. That day arrived on the 14th May with good conditions over a large area with, most importantly, a light northerly to keep the sea breeze at bay. The task set was 411km, Havant, St Catherine's, Butser Hill, Kingsclere and Crick. The last turn point added as the forecast was for a late finish. This time we would fly from Weston without parachutes that evicted us to Bicester last time.



The declared task, with points to avoid the airspace

I launched at 10:55 with John in 833, Haste in 902 right behind, and Richard in 147 nearly an hour behind us. The run down to Havant was easy completing the first 112km at over 80kph as the cloud base built, John stayed with me, but we lost Haste.



Topping up at Havant

Unlike last time there were cumulus clouds clearly visible on the island, but how far away? Cloud base was lower than in 2012, but we were seeing good climbs to about 4200' at the coast. Would it be enough? Only one way to find out...

St. Catherine's Point (contd.)

Paul Smith



Starting the glide across The Solent

I left the relative comfort of Southsea at 3,500', some 1,500' lower than last time. That would barely be enough to get me back if it all went pear shaped, but cumulus paved the way and last time I found lift over the water which gave me confidence.



Gliding onto the Isle of Wight with Ryde pier clearly visible

Once again there was lift on the crossing and I approached Ryde high with a nice-looking cumulus forming on the nose and more in the distance – things were looking good. I radioed back a report to John who was climbing over Southsea. Gliding some way inland to find the first cumulus took another couple of minutes, but by that time it was starting to decay with only sink. Had I made a big mistake that would cost us expensive retrieves?

St. Catherine's Point (contd.)

Paul Smith



Finding the first climb on the island some way inland looking back across The Solent

Pushing on past the first cloud I found a nice solid 3.5kts and stayed above 3,500' stopping for every piece of lift encountered, just in case. St Catherine's Point was reached only 15 minutes after leaving the mainland. I'd done it, this leg at 80kph. A 270° view with nothing but water is not something you see very often flying gliders. Now to get home again...



About to turn St Catherine's Point, all you can see is sea ahead

St. Catherine's Point (contd.)

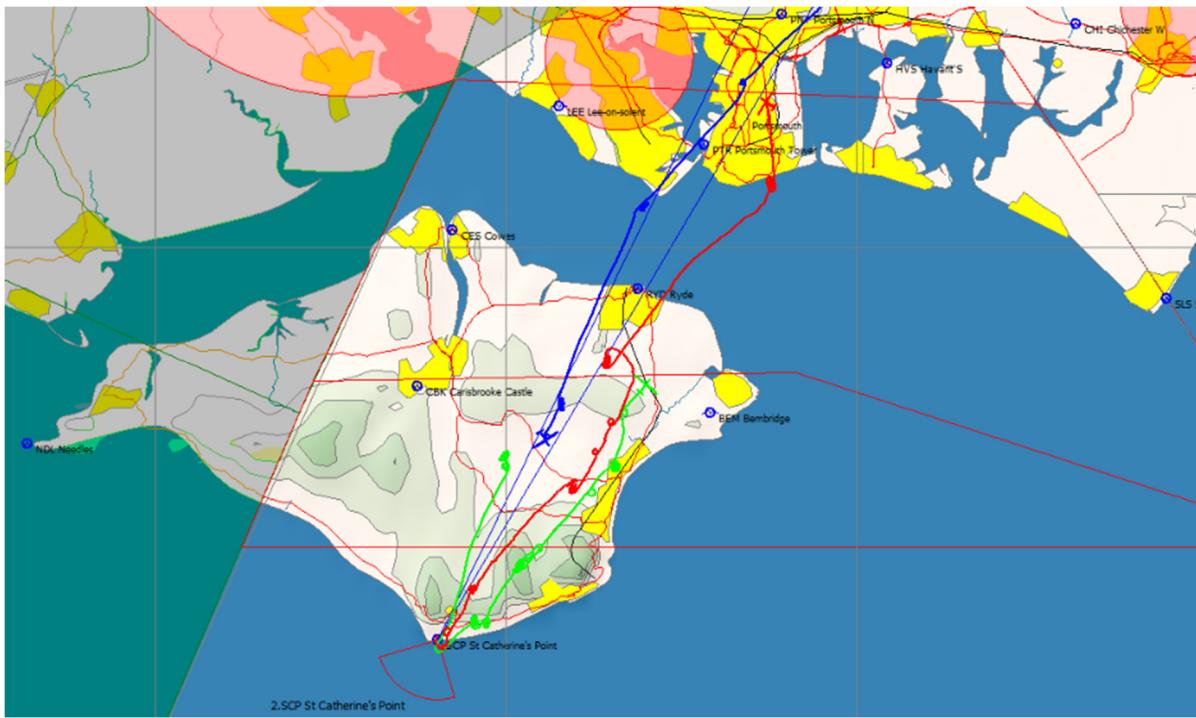
Paul Smith

John was only 10 minutes behind. There was plenty of reliable lift, but I wasn't going to chance a land-out. On the way back to Ryde I stayed high and set off back across The Solent from about 5km inland at 4,000', this time into wind.



Starting the glide short of Ryde, back to the mainland

Richard was now over Portsmouth. We passed each other mid-way across the water. The glide back was uneventful finding lift before landfall having lost less than 1,000'. Just 270km left to complete the task!



Me (red) heading north, John (green) approach Ryde, Richard (blue) having crossed the water going south

We all got back to Weston, but the going was getting soft towards Banbury. Richard and I pushed on to Crick and returned to complete the task. I was in the air for six hours completing the 411km at 72kph – not a great cross country speed, but great fun. Richard finished at 76kph and we landed back at about 5pm, with plenty of day left – another task under set! People who read the 2012 article will know turning St Catherine's Point from Weston was a long held ambition since my first close view of the island in 2010. It was great to finally achieve it unscathed and even better to do it with my mates. I wonder if it has ever been done from Weston before? For anyone wanting to try something a bit different I thoroughly recommend it. Another ambition is to turn Snowdon from Weston, but I think that is going to require an extra special day and some bigger cojones! Who's up for it?

Mystery Instructors and Pupil

(Answers are shown at the end)

1. "Don't fly too slowly, it's dangerous for you and your instructor." Later in the flight he put me into a spin for a second offence.
2. "Keep the horizon in a steady position in the turn. Don't forget to hold off properly."
3. "The trouble with many pupils is they don't turn quickly or steeply enough when they reach a thermal." I followed this advice and flew my first genuine soaring flight with Cecilia during the gliding week.
4. "Today we are going on your first cross country flight." We flew over Bullingdon Prison. "That's cruel being a free bird flying over the prisoners." said the instructor. We did go to Waddesdon Manor and Claydon House as well! Its slightly disconcerting leaving the field behind for the first time but great fun!
5. "Today we are going to do a cable break at 250ft"
6. "Don't spend too long over the top of that Beckley TV mast. It will cook you from the inside out."
7. "This is really good"
8. I bet this lady instructor that she wouldn't be able to find a thermal. She found three and I still haven't bought the drinks.
9. We were the last flight of the day, flying directly over the bus at 90 degrees to the run in a 20-knot gale, quite low! "Right I want you to land it from here" I very nearly made it but ballooned in a final gust on the landing run damn it!
10. We were way too high on the downwind leg not far from low key area. "Use the airbrakes" said the instructor. No – I decided to show off my 360° turn, lost my bearings and the instructor took control and landed. "The reason I didn't give it back to you was I wanted to let you have a few moments to think about that one" What a lovely way to tell a pupil I never want you to do that again ever!
11. Mystery pupil.

Most memorable flight of the year was climbing to 4700ft cloud base on August Bank Holiday Monday with John Hanlon. Now I know how you experts manage to fly cross country when the conditions are like that. We could have stayed up all afternoon and I made John over an hour late for his lunch as it was.

I took this photo later that afternoon when I had a few minutes to sit and reflect on an amazing day.

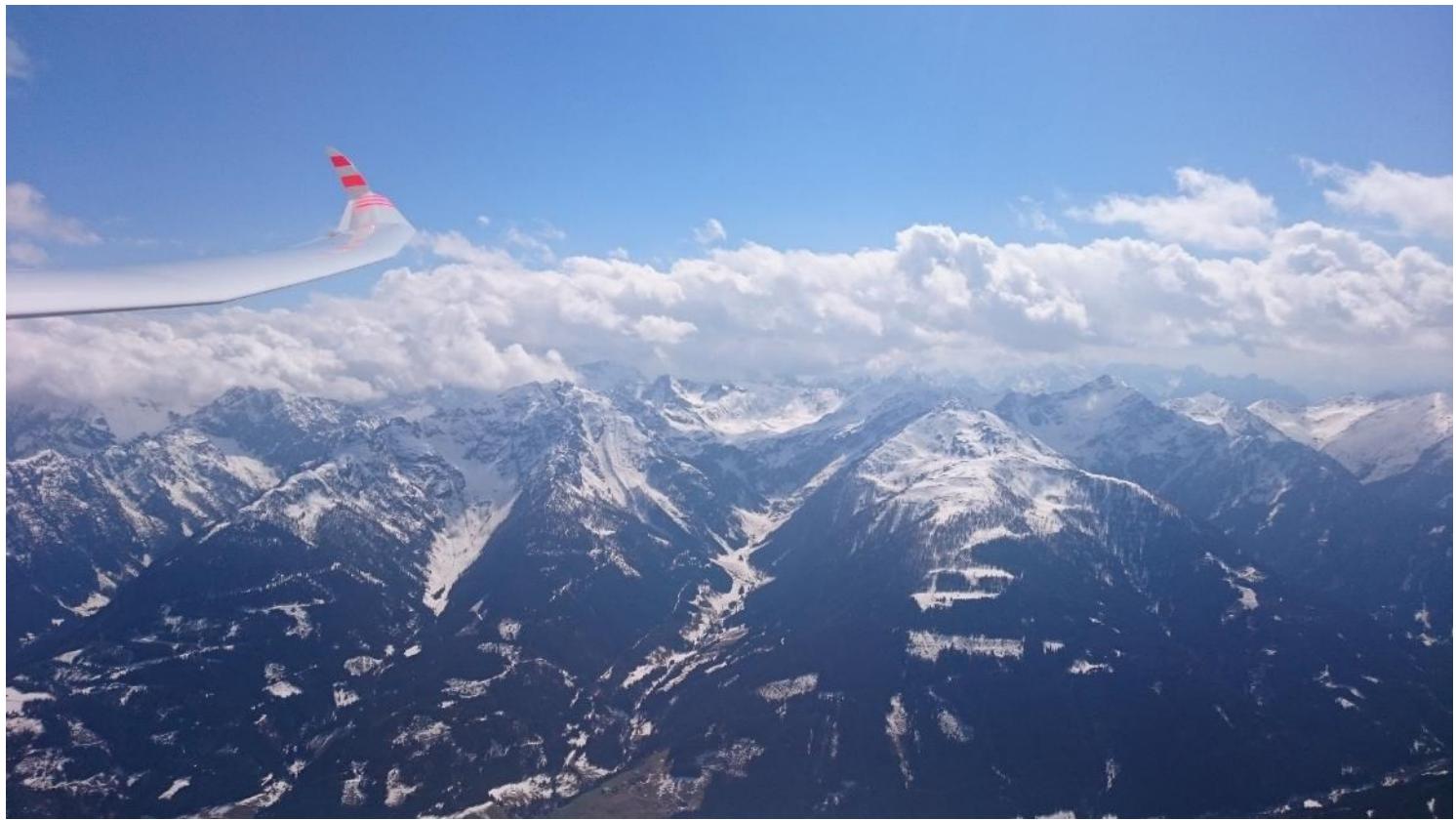


Answers:

1. Rob Jackson
2. Paul Smith
3. George Darby
4. Steve McCurdy
5. Claudia Hill
6. Paul Morrison
7. Cecilia Craig
8. Carole Shepherd
9. Neil Swinton
10. Carole Shepherd
11. Geoff Jones

A German Alpine Soaring Course for Women (in Slovenia)

Text & photos: Claudia Hill



The Dolomites

As I've been involved in Women Glide (UK) for a while I also follow what other similar organisations are doing to get more women into gliding, and that's how I found out that the Angelika Machinek Förderverein (AMF), a kind of more established German version of Women Glide, was organising a mountain flying course in the Alps in April, and there were places available in two-seaters.

I'd never really flown in the mountains before and therefore (and to avoid having to tow my glider all the way to Slovenia) I asked whether I was allowed to gate-crash the party and take one of the two-seater places for a week's mountain flying training in Lesce-Bled/Slovenia.



Team Arcus

"Course you can," the AMF's treasurer Walter Eisele said, who was organising the trip. While I was still trying to find

out the cost of flights and hire cars to and in Ljubljana I was told to fly to Munich or Stuttgart, and someone would pick me up and give me a lift to Slovenia. What a helpful and welcoming bunch! We all arrived at Lesce airfield on Saturday, 22 people in total, with 3 Duos, 2 Arcuses and a number of single-seaters.



I was allocated one of the Arcuses and an instructor from the Alpine Gliding Centre in Unterwössen, Bavaria. My instructor Ute seems to be on first name terms with most of the mountains in the Alps and finds flatland flying a little scary, I couldn't have wished for a better coach!

Each two-seater was allocated a P1 and P2 plus one single-seater. These teams of two gliders each had their own radio frequency and would brief, fly and debrief together, and we had a generic frequency to talk to the others.

We had five flying days. We would come off tow, get some height on the local ridges, then fly into Austria and along a number of valleys, sometimes into Italy, and back again.

Alpine Soaring in Slovenia (contd.)

Claudia Hill

Mostly thermals and some ridge soaring, but on day 2 we stumbled into wave and then struggled to stay under the airspace at FL125. Same again on day 4 but with a lot of rough rotor stuff.

Lesce is a lovely little airfield, with gliding, power flying, model flying and parachuting. Situated in a wide valley and surrounded by mountains on three sides and Ljubljana town and airspace to the south. There's also a very good airfield restaurant.

Much like in Austria they are not too worried about what types of licences people have as long as they fly their own gliders.

Bled with its pretty chapel on an island in the middle of the lake is only a short drive away. Everybody speaks either German or English, and accommodation and food were brilliant and inexpensive.



The local ridges



Lesce airfield and town

The AMF is lucky in that it's got a number of current and previous National Team members (both female and male) who are keen on coaching women and have the time to do so, whether in the Alps or on comp/xc flying. The six coaches who took part this year all seem to be regulars.



"Bayern Yankee"

Alpine Soaring in Slovenia (contd.)

Claudia Hill



"We survived the rotor!" (or: glider pilots are the same everywhere)



(photo: Gudrun Bühler)

Lead And Abandon With Remy

An Alpine cross-country flight with a local legend

Text & photos: Mark Brooks

I guess anyone taking a single-seat glider to the Alps is looking to be able to fly to the best of the scenery, within reason. I'd been lucky enough to live in the Alpes several years ago, and I still have a passion for mountains, and the sports that can be done and food that is grown and cooked there. Then, I'd seen gliders fly along Alpine ridges as I would walk with friends along the top of ridges around Grenoble, but considered that a sport for 'other people', and not a scientist like me, without what I imagined would be necessary means to fly. Now, though, I'd learned to fly, and possibilities had opened up; I also was able to at least try to fly in these mountains solo.

This year, after a bit of a pause from gliding after my trip to the U.S. my objective was to get some more Alpine cross-country flying experience, building on what I'd learnt in a previous trip to Sisteron a few years back. The trip to the Alps this summer that some members had been planning was a perfect way to join friends in flights together and explore the area around the alpine airfield of Aspres-sur-Buesch. Aspres is an airfield west of the aerodrome of Gap, a parachuting centre rather like Hinton, but busier, and surrounded by mountains instead of southern English 'flatlands'.

As maybe others will be writing about in "Final Glide", Aspres is relatively close to another airfield at Serres and, rather further south, there are more famous airfields at Sisteron and St Auban, where the French equivalent of the BGA, called the CNVV, operate from. However, Sisteron, and St. Auban are too far south in my opinion, because the best of the scenery is in the higher Alps, "the Ecrins". This mountain range is further north in a region called Oisans, and it is here where the famous Alpe d'Huez ski station is for example. So, to visit the more northern airfield at Aspres was great location for me, as well as being cheaper than Sisteron, where I'd spent some serious money.

One evening over a dinner and a beer, Remy, the local flying instructor-cum-tug pilot-cum-mechanic (see photos below) had offered to take us for a lead and follow flight. He was booked in already with a super-motivated Japanese client who would be P2 in his beloved Duo Discus. (I had previously asked Remy once what his favourite glider was, and he replied, "If you don't know what to get me for Christmas, get me a Duo!". He loves that thing!) The client had come all the way from Japan just to fly gliders in the Alps. She was covered in zinc sunscreen which was caked on her to a comical degree. The sun is super-powerful in the Alps though, so she may be the wiser of us. Anyway, there was no way she was going to cancel, so it was up to me to try and keep up in old "579".

I considered Remy's offer, and taking stock of my own abilities by then, accepted. My flights in the Alps up to then included a very important (to me) flight with Francis,

one of the founders of the VGC and who runs the Gliding Club at Aspres, in his lovely Falke 2000. This served as a thorough reconnaissance of the area. The best of Francis' advice included "climbing quickly". He criticised me in strong terms for not centring thermals fast enough, and therefore not climbing quickly enough. I found precise flying of this side-by-side motor glider quite hard with the engine off. It was my first flight in this type of aircraft, and while I found it a bit like a K13, I did find it more difficult to fly accurately than OGC's stalwart beige aircraft. I had flown the Dimona at Enstone, but not often yet. All good practice though, and after this flight, I was

armed with a better understanding of the local geography and some extra local knowledge, especially of Pic de Bure, the dominant local mountain. The best advice Francis gave me, though, was to "stay high". I'd recently become a



Above: Remy on tug pilot duty in the Serres' Robin DR400 talking to Richard. Remy's last advice to me before taking off was "Gap doesn't have so nice fluffy clouds", which was later to be a good clue of how to scrape back from there

Lead And Abandon (contd.)

Text & photos: Mark Brooks

cropper in England, quite literally, landing in a farmer's field because I'd earlier rejected a thermal which might have prolonged my flight. Keeping more height might have been useful at that time, and I vowed not to make the same mistake in the Alps. Landing out in the mountains is, I imagine, more problematic and the distance for a retrieve is potentially greater.

As well as the flight with Francis in his Falke, another confidence-booster was a gold-height flight to flight-level 195 (which would be 19,500 feet if the day had been at standard pressure). Paul Smith, then Richard Hall, John Hanlon, Martin Hastings, Jon Hunt and even myself had managed to get into the powerful lift of wave over Pic de Bure. The struggle to get up there in the first place, and then the view from on high gave me a good grasp of the geography and had given me a lot of confidence that I was up to the task of conducting a cross-country flight in the Alps soon, especially if the weather was on our side.

The morning of 11th of June presented calm weather; a clear sunny day, with nice fluffy clouds beginning to pop. A light wind, made take off straight forward, so we elected to fly from Aspres for this flight. Remy was the Tug pilot, who was then to land at the more southerly but relatively close airfield at Serres, and then take off again in "Uniform Romeo", a lovely Duo Discus (see photo). Before Remy strapped himself into the Robin DR400 tow plane, I did ask him quite a good question, "How do you get back across Gap's airspace? Do you call them up and ask permission or do you avoid it entirely?". If you look at the map, Gap has controlled airspace around, to protect the parachutists, for example. Remy's answer was, "You can call them on the radio, but Gap doesn't have so nice fluffy clouds, so why would you want to fly across it?". But, I wondered, what happens when you **do** want to fly across it? Hmm.

So, one by one, we launched, as I recall it was myself, Martin Hastings and John Hanlon who set off, and I was the only one in a "standard class" aircraft, *i.e.* with no flaps and a 15-metre wingspan. The other Oxford chaps both had flaps, while Remy, when he had also launched, had a high-performance aircraft and oodles of talent. I was more threadbare in both departments. I was still having trouble also with my radio, which Andy Butterfield and I had been working on even since late 2014. Even after lots of improvements, and nearly

being awarded an OGC 'flying brick' for the radio's poor wiring, I was having intermittent problems being heard over longer distances, despite radio checks at short range being of great clarity. I can appreciate that I may already be beginning to sound like a bad workman blaming his tools before even the start of the flight. Even so, while 579 is an amazingly powerful tool on one hand, Oxford Gliding Club did seem to be the most frugal when compared to all the Germans in their DG-600 and DG-800 self-launchers at Serres. Anyway, we set off as a gaggle with Remy over to La Ceuse and then towards La Motte du Caire (see map). We crossed Gap's airspace, and Remy made the necessary call to Gap's Tower.

Around La Motte, the going was very, very, tough. Perhaps I hadn't been practicing my scratching (the jargon for 'thermalling in weak lift') skills enough beforehand, but I really wasn't getting any higher. Quite the opposite. I was seemingly getting lower and lower towards the tops of trees in a forested ravine. In the glide towards La Motte, Haste's flapped glider had left him with extra height compared to me, so he could watch me struggling from on high. Even so, from the sounds of his voice over the radio, I don't think even he enjoyed to see how tough a time I was having. More than once, Remy in his wonderful Duo Discus had to pull the airbrakes and join me to demonstrate to me how to thermal out of that situation using the weak 'anabatic lift' (again, jargon for upwards-moving wind which moves up the mountain side).



Above: "les Trois-Évêchés" The 3 Bishoprics in English.
Do you know what a Bishopric is?!

The problem for me was getting away from the mountain which was producing the anabatic lift, to get some real height. This ravine that I was in didn't seem to have any landable fields, and I was a lot lower than the ridges which

Lead And Abandon (contd.)

Text & photos: Mark Brooks

encircled me. But my exit strategy was to descend even lower, probably in curl-over, and scuttle through a V-shaped gulley at the bottom of this ravine towards a more open-looking valley. Looking at my trace in SeeYou software, my height "Above Ground Level" was recorded as being between *minus* 500 to *minus* 1600 ft (!), which seems about right if you compare to the mountain peaks. Squeaky bum time indeed.

Remy finally tired of watching me struggle and fail to gain any useful height, and told me to follow him to Jalinier (see map again). Martin Hastings, with his skill and experience, as well as the superior performance of 902, his flapped aircraft, still had extra height and could choose to go home at this point. Indeed he called it a day, and radioed to say that he and John Hanlon were headed back to Aspres. Because I was so low at this point, I didn't have the luxury of any extra height and was committed to my "exit strategy" down the ravine, following Remy in the Duo.



Above: Remy and his super-motivated Japanese co-pilot, already aboard "Uniform Romeo", Serres' lovely Duo-Discus at Aspres.

I got to the next ridge at Jalinier OK, and the first thing Remy told me to do was put my wing over the cliff face. Jalinier's cliff runs East-West, and with a decent Southerly, I was in luck, finally; good lift. As the ridge ascends going easterly, you're climbing already as you do a beat, as long as you can stay above the cliff. Then at the eastern end, there was a strong thermal kicking off from a warm rock face to give proper anabatic lift, and I could then get up to 7,000 ft. Phew, it was a relief not to be scratching next to the mountain slopes any more. We then headed south, to

Authon, before turning east towards the big pointy mountains towards Barcelonette. By now we were at pretty much cloud base, and there was strong, reliable lift to give us confidence for a reasonably long cross-country flight.

However, I was beginning to realise that I had other problems; firstly, I was having more difficulty being heard over the radio, and secondly, I wasn't even sure that I could locate Remy's glider on my FLARM either. FLARM is a standardised system which similar to transponders in the world of powered aircraft, or like RADAR before that. The skies of the Alps at general aviation altitudes are so busy with gliders that FLARM is mandatory, with good reason. You can locate and identify (theoretically) other gliders, who can see and identify you, and warn you if you're on a collision course. This system didn't seem to be working properly for me, and the last thing you want on a flight like this is problems with your radio or instruments.

Heading east over the mountains, we were going towards the "Parcours des Combattants", literally translated as the "course of the combatants", but meaning the "obstacle course" in this case. Quite a good name, given the high obstacles ahead. This was the fun part though, and where I really wanted to go, to be honest. Remy and his student were getting further and further ahead towards the mountains on the horizon, and despite me calling them on the radio, I couldn't get through. I was later to get told off for being uncommunicative, but at least I had been trying. Again, FLARM was giving me worries; a cluster of signals around Remy's Duo Discus confused me as to which, if any of them, corresponded to Uniform Romeo. I was reliant then on visual contact to follow "UR", which was by then a small speck up ahead. I became thirsty at some point and took a suck of water. In the split second that I looked away, and

looked back again I lost sight of the leading glider and I then realised that I was now flying alone.

Again, it was time to take stock and make some decisions. What should I do? Go home? Continue a reasonable flight as an instructor might do, given the conditions? Since I did know the geography to some degree after a previous holiday as well as flying in the previous days, and there was a lot of lift around, I decided to continue onward-bound. The next question was how to fly the flight? I've been living as a "Flatland Johnny", so could fly on as a cross-country flight *via* the valley at Gap again. Or, I could use the mountain ridges to try and obtain lift. I harked back to Remy's words "Gap doesn't have so nice fluffy clouds". Indeed, looking over that way, it was a large blue hole, whereas the mountains were kicking off clouds from their own

microclimates. So this decision was quite easy- to continue on as a mountain flight.

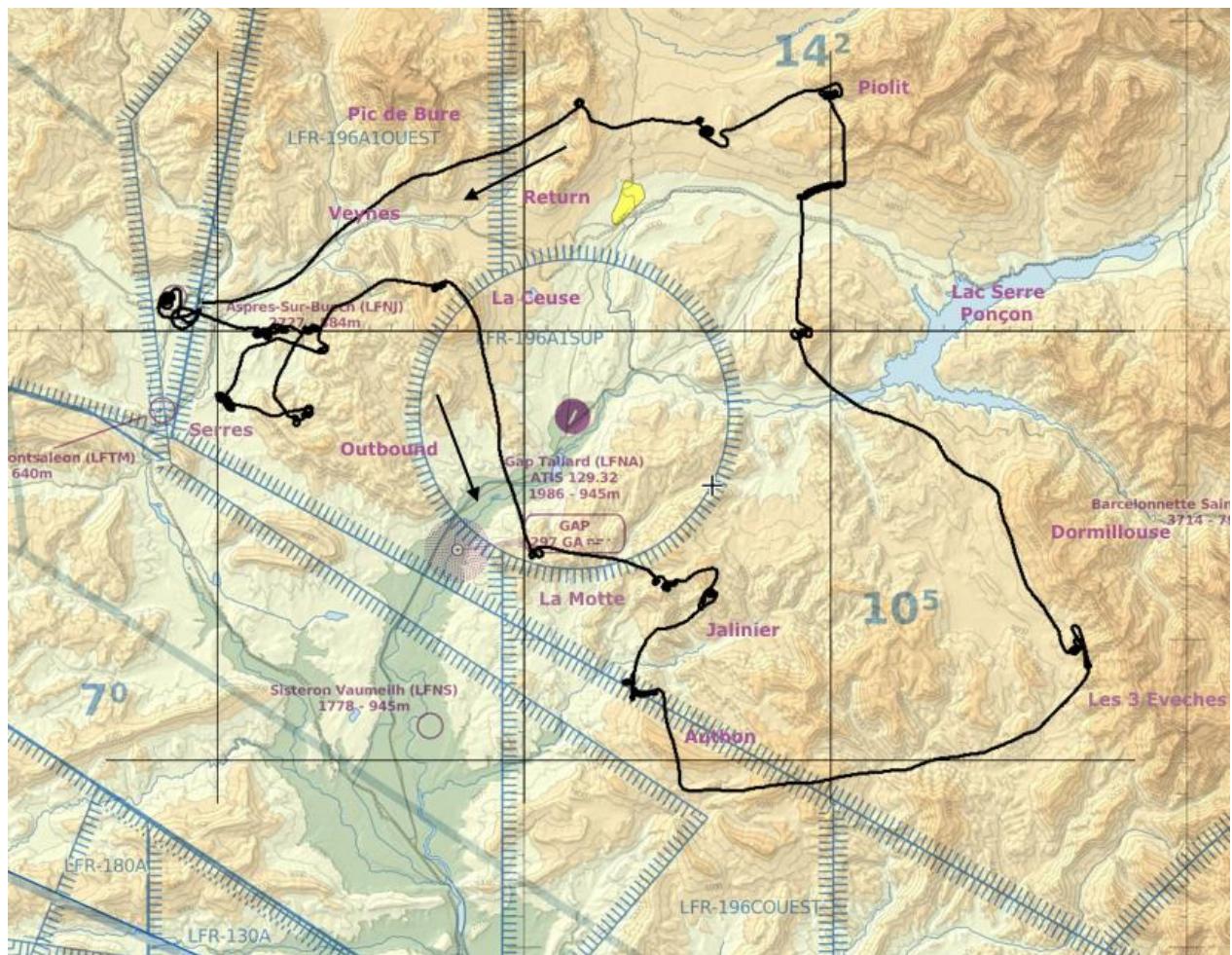
I crossed the valley and ended up at Les Trois-Évêchés (see photo), which was an awe-inspiring place to be. Again, luck was on my side- not only was the ridge working well, but more thermals were kicking off to pretty high cloud base. I got up to 11,000 feet around here. Francis would be pleased, and this height was a good asset for the remainder of the flight. I headed north along Dormillouse, then made the jump across Lac Serre-Ponçon towards Piolit. I was losing height again by then, and becoming concerned that I might have to make use of one of the many fields in the valley floor, but at least I could minimise the retrieve. After scratching on small foothills, and failing to gain any height, I headed for a higher peak at Piolit/Chabrieres. Again, this was a bit of a saviour, and managed to get some more height for another jump across the valley back towards Pic de Bure and then home to Aspres.

Once I'd made the jump successfully to Pic de Bure, I was on the home straight, and took a moment to look at my telephone. It read, "1 missed call, Paul Smith". I phoned Paul to see what the story was, while being impressed that there was a signal next to this cold grey and rocky slope. The folks back at Aspres had been trying to contact me on the radio, and were worried. Oops- more radio problems it

seems. Well, I said I was OK, and was homeward bound without delay.

I got back to Aspres, pulled the airbrakes to lose height and did a pretty nice landing along the dog-legged airfield to round off a fantastic flight. Richard Hall came to throw a rope to me, beaming like a Cheshire Cat and drag 579 back to the OGC trailers. I must say I was happy to be alive, and as I said to Richard, "I'm a better pilot after today, I can tell you!". It's amazing the experience that one flight can do for you, from the experience at the time and from thinking about what could go better.

Lessons learned: sort your radio and other instruments and test them thoroughly. Keep up communication, and keep practicing your scratching technique - you never know when it may come in handy. Having said that, a lot went right too, and this is mainly due to being taught well by many people, and having a reasonable level of experience and set of skills to draw from through flying at Weston as well as other hill sites such as Talgarth or in the Alps. That experience wouldn't have been possible without the teaching and teamwork of the gliding community, from winch drivers and hookers-on, to instructors and mentors, a heartfelt thanks for making this fight, and many others, possible.



Above: Trace of the flight. Gap-Tallard airport is a parachuting centre and one shouldn't cross its airspace without prior permission from them

And finally... a random selection of photos from 2016



More photos



More photos



A visiting Shark



FI(S) prep at Dunstable



Didn't quite make it home.

More photos



Summer at Weston



More photos



More photos (The End.)

