



FINAL GLIDE

Issue 28: November 2009

Edited by Claudia Büngen

Eco Towns

(Hopefully the green airfield won!)

Paul Morrison



Photo: Howard Stone

In last year's Final Glide I wrote an article about the unexpected threat that the Government's proposed Eco-Town development policy posed to both RAF Weston-on-the-Green and the continued presence of Oxford Gliding club there. At the time I explained the back ground to the Eco-Town concept, the current position and the timetable for moving forward.

It is with pleasure therefore that this year I am able to write that on July 16th 2009, the new Housing Minister John Healey announced the four sites that have passed the Government's tough standards and which have been selected after two years of assessment, to go through to the next planning phase; full public consultation and local planning approval. The sites

are Whitehill-Bordon in Hampshire, St Austell (China Clay) in Cornwall, Rackheath in Norfolk and North West Bicester in Oxfordshire.

Thankfully, "Weston Otmoor" the site proposed by Parkridge Holdings as a suitable location for a 671 Hectare town of between 5,000 and 20,000 houses and which would have been built on land bordered by the B430, Akeman Street, the M40 and the Bicester railway line to the south was not selected.

In the Department for Communities and Local Government ('DCLG') publication; "**eco-towns Location decision statement**" published on the 16th July, it commented in respect of Weston Otmoor; "*This location has not demonstrated the potential to meet the*

sustainability and deliverability requirements for successful development as an eco-town at this time". It further went on to say that whilst the key strengths of this proposed location included; '*The provision of affordable and commercial housing in an area of extreme housing pressure*' and '*the proximity to the Oxford-Milton Keynes railway*' there were several key weaknesses too.

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Lest we forget the hosepipe bans



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and more...

Editorial

No space for an editorial - enjoy!

(and apologies to those whose contributions did not make it - they will go in next year, promised...)

Claudia Büngen

the ladder positions at mid November...). Just a reminder that due to a recent change in the national ladder set-up I can no longer enter flights on behalf of others. I would therefore encourage anyone with cross-country or height gain flights to enter them directly to the national ladder via the web site <http://www.bgaladder.co.uk>. The advantage of individual pilots entering their own flights via the web site is that you can enter all details of the flights, i.e. the task, the time, the glider type and any comments you may have on the flight. The system will also immediately calculate your score and reflect the changes in the ladders.

You can of course still enter them in the cross-country book that is kept in the clubhouse but these flights cannot be entered into the national ladders. If anyone has any questions about the club ladders, national ladders, scoring, glider handicaps used etc then just ask.

CLUB LADDER

Nick Hill

Club Ladder Steward

2007 and 2008 were not great cross-country years, so what about 2009? Listening to general chatter around the club the perception is that 2009 was a better year but what do the ladders say?

The two ladders of most interest to OGC pilots are the Weekend ladder that is restricted to flights made at the weekend and the Open ladder for flights on any day of the week. In 2009 the national ladders showed an increase in activity with both the number of pilots recording flights and the total of cross-country kilometres increasing compared to 2008 in line with the perception that 2009 was a better year. However the OGC ladder did not follow this trend. At OGC the number of pilots logging flights fell and the distances recorded on the ladder actually fell by around 20% down to under 10,000km.

The situation at OGC is actually better than that as I know that more cross-country was done but not logged. I would encourage all pilots to log their cross-country flights as the national ladder is now being used to help demonstrate the amount of gliding activity in the UK and such use of data can only help in future when potential air-space restrictions are proposed.

Anyway enough of statistics and congratulations go Claudia Büngen for topping both the open and the weekend ladder. On the national ladders this placed Claudia at number 67 on the UK open ladder and number 61 on the UK weekend ladder at the time of writing this article. (Strictly speaking the BGA ladders run January to December but OGC gives out the trophies at the November AGM so they are based on

Open Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Claudia Büngen	3477	2435	2328	1888	1770	1496	13394
Paul Smith	1557	2435	1439	1390	998	890	7776
Paul Morrison	1875	1434	1381	1374	1117	539	7720
Howard Stone	2627	1699	1071	998	874	0	7269
Carole Shepherd	2030	917	830	275	0	0	4052
Martin Hastings	2103	1332	0	0	0	0	3435
Robert Jackson	2575	0	0	0	0	0	2575
Andrew Butterfield	2364	0	0	0	0	0	2364
Dave Bray	1208	1145	0	0	0	0	2353
Richard Hall	2317	0	0	0	0	0	2317
Neil Swinton	1104	0	0	0	0	0	1104
Louise Walker	1043	0	0	0	0	0	1043
Jon Christensen	1038	0	0	0	0	0	1038
George Crawford	632	0	0	0	0	0	632

Weekend Ladder

Pilot	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Flight 6	Total
Claudia Büngen	3477	2435	2328	1770	1496	1018	12524
Paul Morrison	1875	1434	1381	1374	1117	539	7720
Howard Stone	2627	1699	1071	998	8740	0	7269
Paul Smith	1557	1502	1390	998	890	823	7160
Carole Shepherd	2030	830	0	0	0	0	2860
Robert Jackson	2757	0	0	0	0	0	2575
Andrew Butterfield	2364	0	0	0	0	0	2364
Dave Bray	1208	1145	0	0	0	0	2353
Richard Hall	2317	0	0	0	0	0	2317
Martin Hastings	1332	0	0	0	0	0	1332
Neil Swinton	1104	0	0	0	0	0	1104
Louise Walker	1043	0	0	0	0	0	1043
Jon Christensen	1038	0	0	0	0	0	1038
George Crawford	632	0	0	0	0	0	632

Daisy did Achmer (or: some Germans are crazy!)

Dave Weekes

The end of July saw the now annual ritual of loading Daisy onto the trailer and heading for mainland Europe. The International Vintage Glider Club rally was back at Achmer,



Photo: Dave Weekes

near Osnabrück in Northern Germany. This is where OGC's association with the VGC began, back in 2002, when Tony, Steve Trusler and I discovered the alcoholic attractions of VGC rallies as well as the freedom with which flights in (sometimes very) strange gliders are offered.

OGC's attendance was down on the group of 11 which went to last year's rally in Austria. Northern Germany isn't such a tourist draw as Austria! In fact it was only Peter Boulton, Peter Brooks, Rob and I who ended up going, along with Daisy & the Skylark. And it was really really good, so where were you?

The Monday 2 am ferry crossing and the haul through France, Belgium, Holland and a small slice of Germany was done by about midday. Nothing like going to Austria last year. Paperwork was minimal – pay for the camping and buy some launch tickets and we were ready to go. It was somewhat taken for granted that if you turned up with a glider, you knew how to fly it!

Early Tuesday morning was taken up with setting up the "VGC Sales" stall. Fortunately Pete Brooks offered to help, because it was amazingly busy and during the rally we sold about £2 500 worth of VGC shirts, books, mugs, anything. It was like being attacked by locusts. I should have taken more stock!

Then we got on with the opening briefing and rigging Daisy. There wasn't a lot of lift but the guys quickly appreciated that the vast Mittelland Canal, which runs next to the airfield, is the ultimate "get you home" navigation aid for Achmer.

Wednesday the 29th was a classic circuits-only day, but it's also ideal circumstances for getting rides in other people's gliders. The normal endless queue formed for T21 rides. Pete, Rob and I did our best for the next 10 days, but the queue was just as long at the end of the rally as the start.

Rob scored a couple of quick flights in Nick Newton's immaculate 1934 designed Hüttner 17. The 17 refers to the glide angle, the so circuits tend to be quick. Pete Brooks was loaded into a 2 seat Gö 4 but couldn't reach the rudder pedals or see out! A bit of a wasted flight!

The Wednesday night/Thursday weather forecast was horrendous – gales, thunder, lightning, but nothing severe

actually happened! A bit of rain, instantly soaked up by the sandy airfield. However it was decided it was too windy for vintage gliders – possibly just as well, because it was the infamous International Evening. I'd volunteered OGC to provide sausage and mash as "typical" English food (next time it'll be a takeaway curry!) and we'd imported 200 assorted sausages and English potatoes and had a mammoth peeling session that afternoon. Plus a long period assembling Rob's new Barbie.

There was a period of panic while the potatoes refused to boil, rain was threatening to put out the barbies, Rob was heroically making new batches of gravy and a horde of hungry people were trying to snatch sausages out of Peter Boulton's frying pan, but we won in the end. The problem was that there were too few stands doing "proper" food – a nibble of Swiss chocolate really doesn't soak up the alcohol!

Friday had much better weather. I got a couple of flights, including a first aerotow in the Hol's der Teufel – a "go faster" primary designed in 1928 and a 1950's Doppelraab V – the ultimate weird 2 seater where the poor instructor is supposed to lean over the pupil's shoulder & grab the top of the (one) stick – and which singularly fails to round-out if landed with the brakes open! I'll never complain about K13's again! Daisy & the Skylark soared to 5 000'. Some mad Dutch guys had a wonderful time with their Slingsby T38 Grasshopper primary – not only winching and aerotowing it but producing a bungee to do classic "low hops" along the airfield in the evening. I still want one!

After a promising start, Saturday 1st August deteriorated into a circuits day, but that didn't deter the long list of people wanting the T21 experience. Rob finally had another go on the front of the late 1940's Høgslund/Traugott-Olsen 2G two-seater primary from Denmark.

Also on display was the Horten IV replica which is being built in Germany. The Horten was a pure flying wing glider designed in 1941. The pilot lies on his stomach. Stupendous build quality, both the wood wings and the steel tube centre section (courtesy of the Lufthansa apprentice training school). In the air it will look unbelievable but it'll have to be a brave pilot for the first flight!

Sunday was cloudy with rain forecast. No launching planned, so we went off to the local clothmaking museum. Fabulous old spinning and weaving machinery which they actually run. Now I know where Nick Park gets his inspiration for those strange machines in Wallace & Gromit, especially the ones involving large spiked rollers! – and the noise!

But the rain didn't actually fall, so in the afternoon the Hol's der Teufel crew started their version of auto towing. Take 400 metres of 6mm nylon rope. Attach one end to the glider, the other end to a car. Drive the car away at about 30 mph. Eventually the rope goes tight and starts to stretch. Keep driving. The stretch in the rope builds up until the glider effectively gets bungee launched to about 200 feet, at which point the speed deteriorates until the car gets some tension back into the rope again. Proceed with what is now a "normal" auto tow. I had a go, then Rob had a go (his first in the Hols) and never mind the weather, a great time was had by all.

Things got back to normal on the Monday, with a mixture of soaring flights and circuits depending on luck and glider performance. However I'd been looking for a ride in Achmer's fabulously rebuilt Kranich II, a 1935 designed

Daisy Did Achmer (contd.)

2-seater which set up gliding records worldwide. Harald Kämper, Achmer resident and president of the German VGC, had promised to fix it for me. Late in the day I was invited into the front seat by one of the owners. Out of sight under my left knee were three identically shaped levers, one for the cable release, one for the brakes and one for the wheel jettison – that was a new one for me. “Have your hand on the wheel lever before the launch and drop it at about 5 metres” I was advised. I duly dumped the wheels and flew a satisfactory circuit. I was well pleased and we stowed it in the hangar. Then the two owners appeared. “We’ve talked about it and you can fly the Kranich tomorrow with your club members” What!!!! But who can turn down an offer like that?

But first we had to survive the “German Evening”. That’s the night when the host country provides the food, drink and music – highlighted by a wood fired pig roast but the potato pancakes with apple sauce and the beer were great too!

But on the Tuesday we had over 2½ hours soaring in the Kranich. And it flies just as well as it looks. Sitting on hard, static line operated parachutes can be a trial though. Just before one flight, a spectator asked Stefan, one of the people who built the Kranich “How long did the rebuild take” “About 8 000 hours” “Is it insured?” “Only third party, otherwise it would be too expensive” What??? And they’re letting me fly it?? They’re truly crazy! “Well we built it, so we could fix it” was Stefan’s comment.

The same day Peter Boulton went off in the Skylark. He was firmly told to stay up as long as possible and eventually came back with a silver duration and height on the logger. Now all he needs is to finish his Bronze! Flight of the day had to be Ulf Kern, who did over 5 hours and 5 000’ in the Hol’s der Teufel – in shorts and bare feet! Meanwhile back in the UK, flash floods were reported in Witney.

Wednesday saw a lot of soaring time in Daisy, plus another 1 ¾ hours in the Kranich, at which point I was told that I had more time in it than anyone else this year! In all fairness Stefan has been occupied in getting his latest new build, a sensational Reiher III through its LBA trials.

The day however finished with another new type for me – a 1939 Olympia Meise, cousin of the Oly 2B, and just as nice to fly. Rob joined in the fun.

On the last day I finally got into our Skylark – 2½ hours



Photo: Dave Weekes

soaring along the canal admiring the massive barge traffic. Then it was time to start derigging Daisy. The owner of the Meise vanished in the Skylark and came back very happy after reaching 6 500’ over Osnabrück.

A great trip. The International Rally next year is at Tiverton during the first week in August. Achmer will be a hard act to follow. But book your holiday time off now!

Glow worms at the airfield

Phil Hawkins

Did you know that a small glow worm colony exists at Weston-on-the-Green? It's not often realised that glow worms can be seen in the dry part of midsummer on the airfield, in the rough grass adjacent to the caravans and trailers. For the last few years I have been counting the number of "glows" seen on various dates and sending the results to the UK Glow Worm Survey at: <http://www.galaxypix.com/glowworms>

The glow worm, *Lampyris noctiluca*, is not a worm but a type of beetle up to 25mm long. The wingless female has the strongest glow, its purpose being to attract the flying males.

They favour chalky or limestone areas, but may be found almost anywhere in rough undisturbed land. Look for them from late May to early September (with a peak in mid July), as soon as it gets dark. Don't disturb them and certainly don't take them home as trophies, no matter how many there are on a site. Their continued existence could be on a knife-edge. But a short look by torchlight will do no harm. The males rarely glow at all, and the larvae glow much more faintly, and only intermittently for a few seconds at a time.

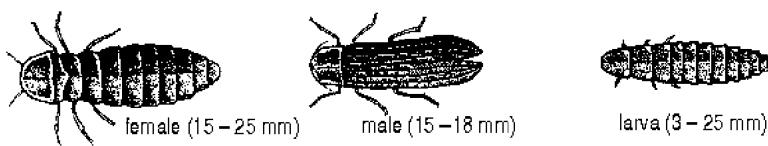


Image copied from: <http://www.galaxypix.com/glowworms/>

Here comes the scientific bit: the light from glow worms is a type of cold bioluminescence with a strong green colour. We are told that it is caused when a molecule called luciferin is oxidised to produce oxyluciferin, with the enzyme luciferase acting as a catalyst in the reaction. The insect can control the light at will by switching the oxygen supply on and off.

Glow worms are not legally protected in the same way as, for example, bats. They are no better protected than woodlice. But if you see them anywhere else, do make an effort to log your sightings on the above web site. The canal towpath at Wolvercote is another local place where they have been seen within the last couple of years, but they were previously unknown in this part of Oxfordshire before I reported them, so we are making a positive contribution to the national survey.

Eco-Towns (contd.)

The weaknesses identified by this document included;

- ‘the location being entirely greenfield’,
- ‘30% of the site falls within the Oxford Green Belt’,
- ‘High grade and versatile (Grade 2) agricultural land’,
- ‘the site incorporates Ancient Woodland, SSSI and a Nature Reserve, with further Ancient woodland and SSSIs adjacent and within close proximity to the boundary. A number of nationally important species have been identified within the SSSI.’
- ‘The area is identified as an area of ‘serious’ water stress.’
- ‘It is close to Bicester and has the potential to prejudice current development plans for the town.’
- ‘It is close to a congested road junction on the M40 and A34 which may both encourage commuting and exacerbate congestion.’

In addition to this it also cited several key sustainability issues with regard to the proposal, all of which culminated in the overall assessment that this was not suitable. Included within these sustainability issues, much was made of the innovative transport proposals which were critical to Parkridge’s proposal and in this respect it concluded;

“Innovative approaches to transport provision, management and travel incentives have been applied in working up proposals for this location, but these are dependent on very substantial infrastructure investments, including rebuilding a motorway junction, rebuilding an existing (and in part disused) railway line, a new station, a major Park and Ride, a substantial new tram system and road toll charges of up to £15 per day. Notwithstanding the ambitious public transport package, car use via the M40 would remain attractive for many destinations.”

Furthermore; “Major areas of deliverability risk remain in relation to the timing and funding of M40 junction rebuilding, delivery of elements of the rail proposals and other transport investments. Critically, the success of the overall approach is dependent on a very high and untested level of incentives/road charging and traffic management. There is high risk of unacceptable impacts on the M40, A34 and other local roads if at any point these systems failed or the road use charging scheme was to be rejected by the new community.”

It is worth noting I feel that at no point was the loss of RAF Weston-on-the-Green in particular cited as a material consideration and therefore with this in mind, we must remain vigilant to the possibility that this proposal could reappear in some alternative guise at some point in the future. In his announcement on the 16th July, John Healey announced that developers in the four successful locations will be able to bid for a share of £60m to support local infrastructure. He also said he wanted to see at least six second wave areas and is making up to £5m available for councils to conduct further planning work on proposals from 2010 onwards.

Hopefully as the only proposed location of the previous short list of 12 sites to achieve a Grade C classification and thus the lowest possible contender, there is no obvious suggestion that Weston Otmoor will be one of the second wave but we must not be complacent. Indeed, it is expressly noted that Rossington near Doncaster and North-East Elsenham in Essex are still developing proposals for their sites and these could draw on the £5m second wave funding and wider government support available for them.

Obviously future development will depend, at least in part, on the current economic climate and in this regard, I think the recession has been helpful with various housing developers all but withdrawing from the housing market during late 2008 and 2009. Clearly if there is a resurgence in house prices and consequently housing development in the next few years, it will make the government’s Eco-Town policy once more an attractive proposition for speculative developers such as Parkridge Holdings. However, it is likely that there will be a change in Government by that time and hopefully the Eco-Town policy, although noble in its intentions, will be quietly sidelined.

It has been a long journey from when in late 2007, the Eco-Town vision was first revealed by the Government, to the July 2009 announcement culminating in the four sites being finalised. During this time there has been extensive lobbying by both Weston Front and OGC (including approximately 2,500 signatories to the online OGC petition) and I would like to thank all members who took the time to participate in the DCLG’s consultation exercise. I have no doubt that the weight of public opinion was an influencing factor in the selection process and this ‘strong opinion’ was acknowledged by John Healey in his press release.

In the 16th July announcement the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, commented; “I am delighted that Whitehill-Bordon, St Austell, Rackheath and North West Bicester have all been chosen to be pioneers for these new green communities and I hope people will seize the opportunity to be at the forefront of Britain’s green revolution.”

Thankfully, at least for the foreseeable future, Weston Otmoor is not part of this revolution and it would appear that the Green Airfield has not been sacrificed for a supposedly ‘Greener Future’!

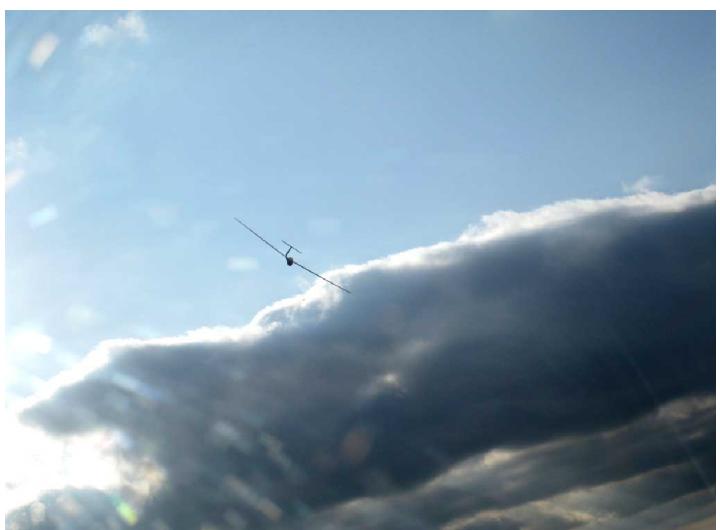


Photo: Paul Smith

Dave and Liisi visit Sutton Bank

Dave Bray

Back in October 2008 and following recommendations from many other Oxford members, I finally went on a trip up to Sutton bank with the glider and invited new member Liisi along as well (for some reason she bravely accepted). We arrived late Thursday night, managing a few drinks with a couple of the others hoping for wave.

Friday morning consisted of the usual site brief, and introducing ourselves to the instructor of the day. The flying itself was fairly tricky, myself and the other flat land visitors from Hus Bos managed some extended flights but nothing higher than 2,200'. The locals however were taking their trial lessons up to over 7,000'! Climbing up through cloud was not what I needed to concentrate on when still getting the hang of the 40kt wind when releasing from tow! Liisi flew after me and found out all the wonders of K21s, ridge sites, stong winds and aerotows all in one go, it didn't stop her though, she managed a longer flight than I did!

Saturday was meant to be a write-off, the rain forecast meant a stop to all flying, therefore we'd planned a trip to York to check out the sites. That rain never showed up though and after some checking of the cloud base from the duty instructor in the motor glider (500' followed 20 mins later by 1,500') we started flying at about 12:30. I took off 3rd in the queue having been advised to play it safe, and get a high tow to the wave bar one up from the one over the site.

I ended up releasing at 3'400 ish, and after a quick search went straight into a steady 2knts up. finishing up at 10,000' above site. having radioed back my progress, you won't be shocked to understand the sudden burst of activity from the other private owners!

Pushing over to the next bar (losing 2,000' and finding 10 down) I made it up to 12k before pushing over to the edge of the airspace and the edge of the next wave bar (same loss as before). from here I managed to get back up to 13,000'. The mathematically amongst you will realise that this means a 9,600' height gain. about 300' short of that targeted gold height. despite my greatest efforts over the next 2 hours I couldn't manage to find that extra bit. Still. not bad for my first wave flight (and i got to try my oxygen system which new as well)

All this called for some celebrating and I must say that the ale in the bar at Sutton bank is particularly delightful! We finished up watching the weather report and with totally optimistic thoughts about the next few days headed to get some sleep!

Waking up and opening the curtains the next day was a real disappointment though. Low cloud and light southerly winds. not ideal but you never know... However, other than a few trial lessons the club members



themselves didn't think it was soarable so after milling around the launch point and numerous cups of tea we knocked it on the head and went out for a walk round Thirsk and a meal.

The weather on Monday was almost as bad - cloud base lower but the wind a bit more westerly. The morning briefing wasn't good either with the duty instructor going through all sorts of charts saying how we weren't going anywhere! A few hours later, a few more cups of tea. and it was felt that pulling the winch up onto the short westerly there was worth a try and that if the ridge

wasn't working (the wave was out of phase with the hill with the down part straight onto the club) no one would have lost anything from trying. The first launch pushed out onto the ridge and after a few mins or floating around the bowls they shot up and radioed back passing 4k pushing out under the wave bar that had moved into phase with the ridge. much pushing of club and private single seaters ensured and Liisi ran the wing as I took off for the third launch of the day on to a ridge that I wasn't 100% sure of where to work it. The 500 foot or so winch launch was certainly interesting as with the floating round I lost around 100 foot, the club house looked very big before I finally found the part of the ridge that worked.

Once I was a thousand foot higher on the ridge I started shooting up, averaging between 5 and 6.2 knots between 3 and 6 thousand (wow). Watching the cloud drop below again was great although it seems everyone else had this idea as well and there were many more gliders at height than on Saturday.

The wave bars themselves were constantly moving and sometimes breaking apart and merging at all sorts of nearly into wind lines. (the trace looks very odd for these bits) Apparently the wave bars aren't usually 40-60kms long without gaps and the local pundits used this do go up and down at vast speed - 110kts maintaining altitude around 6-7,000 where the cloud tops were and the lift was strongest. I on the other hand, was concentrating on climbing higher than the Saturday! after messing on the local wave bars I pushed out and was about 40km up wind from site just on the most easterly Pennine hills to get a week climb that took me to over 12,500 feet before fading away. Success! more great views, photos and a gold height claim! Slowly made my way back down and landed with an almighty sense of triumph. Liisi had also managed an hour in the clubs DG-500 and reached 7000 feet before having to bring it back for the next student. Not bad for what was her 8th flight!

I know we were fairly lucky with our two flying days especially my wave flights as this isn't always the case, but if anyone is interested in going who hasn't been before, they have barely used single seaters that with check flights that are happy for visitors to use. alternatively, dust down your oxygen gear and get up there with you glider before the winter sets in! They were incredibly hospitable and were very good with their advice about how to do it!

And you thought our circuits are too short!

Dave Weekes

George Varley, Professor of Entomology of Jesus College, Oxford was Chairman and first CFI of the "new" OGC in 1951. Having (Jesus) after his name did not (for a change) refer to his status as CFI!

Recently his daughter presented OGC with some papers relating to the club, including four of Professor Varley's logbooks. They make fascinating reading.

Unfortunately Book 1 is missing, but Book 2 starts with flights from Kidlington in September 1951. As shown by the "carried forward" data he had completed his A and B certificates in 1938 and his C in 1939 (number 966). It's not stated where he did them, but he may have had at least some of his earlier experience at Dunstable – The "Totternhoe" glider (whatever that was!) and the distinction between the T21 and the T21b are clues – there was only one T21 prototype and that was at Dunstable. John Gibbons however thinks that George may have started gliding at Yorkshire GC (Sutton Bank).

The logbooks show that before he became CFI, Prof Varley had the following experience:-

	No of flights	Hrs	Min	Average flight time
Open Dagling	22	9	25 sec	
Nacelled Dagling	20	22	1 min 6 sec	

Totternhoe	28	1	19	2 min 50 sec
Cambridge	15	1	33	6 min 12 sec
Tutor	37	15	39	25 min 40 sec
Kite	15	12	9	48 min 40 sec
Olympia	21	13	56	39 min 50 sec
Prefect	3	3	12	24 min 0 sec
Grunau Baby	8	5	57	44 min 40 sec
T21	1		30	30 min
T21b	24	2	6	5 min 15 sec
Scud II	3		6	2 min 0 sec
Tern	4		9	2 min 15 sec
Total:	201	57	7	

Clearly he had clawed his way up the performance ladder from the Daglings – note the differentiation between the open and the “hot” nacelled Dagling! - into gliders which could soar – at least on a ridge. He appears to have become OGC’s CFI with a grand total of 2 hours and 36 minutes in two seaters. It must be said that the average CFI (or even BI) has a bit more experience (and training) these days!

The log book bears a close resemblance to our current ones but with several additional columns (small handwriting essential) comprising landing place, height reached, surface wind and the flight time recorded in hours minutes and seconds – important in a Dagling. Under “remarks” Prof Varley often included a little symbol to show the flight pattern (e.g .circle with a centre dot for a circuit, horizontal 8 etc)

An article in the Oxford Mail said that OGC was re-established

Total Gliding brought forward												57	04	Year 1951	
Serial No. of Flight	Date	Glider		Place of Launch	Type of Launch	Time of Start	Landing Place	Height reached (FEET)	Distance Flown (MILES)	Surface Wind	Cross Wind	Time in Air			Remarks
		Type	Marking									H	M	S	
207.	29.IX.	Olympia	9.	Kidlington	A/T.	1730	-	[3200']	-	-	P1.	36	-	dead calm.	
208.	20.X.	"	9.	"	Winch	-	-	950	-	-	P1.	5	-	Test of winch	
209.	25.XI.	Eon Prim	-	"	AutoT.	-	-	3'	-	-	P1.	1	-	Test	
210.	4.XII.	"	"	"	W.	-	-	600	-	-	P1.	22	30	Test.	
211.	16.XII.	"	"	"	W.	-	-	300	-	-	P1.	2	-		
212.	22	"	"	"	W.	-	-	300	-	-	P1.	2	-		
213.	2.XII.	Olympia	9.	"	W.	-	-	950	-	-	P1.	4	-		
214.	29.XII.	Eon Prim	-	"	W.	-	-	400?	-	-	P1.	1	-	Test.	
215.	30.XII.	"	"	"	W.	-	-	?	-	-	P1.	2	00		
216.	"	"	"	"	W.	-	-	?	-	-	P1.	4	0		
217.	6.1.52	-	-	-	W.	-	-	?	-	-	P1.	20	00	not listed!	
218.	13.1.52	-	-	-	W.	-	-	600	-	-	P1.	00	00		
219.	-	Olympia	9.	-	W.	-	-	1100	-	-	P1.	4	30		
220.	-	" Olympia	-	-	W.	-	-	1000	-	-	P1.	5	-		
221/2	19.1.52	Olympia	-	-	W.	-	-	1000	-	-	P1.	5	30		
222.	-	-	-	-	W.	-	-	900	-	-	P1.	4	-		
223/4	20/1/52	-	-	-	W.	-	-	-	-	-	P1.	9	-	Two circuits,	
225/6	26.1.	Eon Prim	-	"	W.	-	-	-	-	-	P1.	30	-	Two circuits	
226/7	27.1.	O.	-	"	W.	-	-	700	-	-	P1.	6	-	Two circuits	
228.	3/II	Eon P.	-	"	W.	-	-	-	-	-	P1.	05	-		
Total carried forward												58	41	21	Total Gliding to date
												Solo	56	05	Dual 2.36 2551m.

And you thought our circuits are too short! (contd.)

with one Eon Primary and one Olympia but according to John Gibbons (number 37 on the membership list), the Oly actually belonged to Prof Varley. Hopefully it was finally purchased by OGC because it had a number of more or less serious accidents in its life. Type conversion from a Primary direct to an Oly must have been interesting!

Page 1 of his log opens with a 35 minute flight in the Oly from Kidlington on 29th September 1951 and on 25th November he did an auto tow test flight of the EoN Primary (height reached 3 feet, duration 1 minute) with several more winch launched tests on the primary including a 1 min 20 sec launch into cloud with a query against the height reached! 400 – 600 feet with circuit times of less than 2 minutes were clearly the norm with the primary but he did better with the Oly – 1000' launches and 5 minute circuits.

Many of his Oly log entries have a barograph trace attached and indicate that cloud climbs were normal practice. He did his silver distance (Kidlington – Redhill) on 22nd March 1952 off a winch launch, with a max height of 5000' in 1 hr 46 min – pretty good for March! (wonder how much airspace that would include these days!) and got Silver C number 366 but he was back on the primary the following week.

OGC seems to have moved up a class by May 1952, with flights being recorded in a Cadet but things got really fancy in June 1952 with his first recorded dual instructing in a T31 – 13 circuits for a total time of 35 minutes. - but presumably an immeasurable improvement for the pupils compared with "DIY" learning on the primary! On the other hand there is no indication that he had any T31 time, or training as an instructor before his first dual instructing flight.

Prof Varley's last flight on a primary seems to have been in July 1952 – and I expect he was glad to see the back of it!

24th August 1952 records his first T31 aerotow – "to 2800' with J Gibbons". I must ask John if he can remember – was he in the T31 or doing the towing?

By 1953 OGC seems to have added a Grunau Baby to its stable and a Tutor has its first mention. A T21b makes its appearance in January 1954 with the first launch recorded as kited to 2000'. The T31 receives much less mention after that (CFI's prerogative?). In August 1954 the Prof turned a 700'

Oly winch launch from Kidlington into a 12 000' climb (presumably in cloud) for his gold height, with an impressive barograph trace to match. The last mention of the T31 is in late 1955 and the T21 then reigned supreme.

On 28th July 1956 Prof Varley logged an aerotow for the Oly as "delivery to Weston", with the first T21 circuits at Weston the same day. And the rest, as they say, is history.

There are also a lot of AGM minutes and correspondence, dating from 1953 onwards, with tales of feuds, bruised egos, battered gliders, broken tow cars, bent winches, evictions from hangars and problems with parachutists. Plus ça change!

But next time you've done no more than an 8 minute circuit – just remember – it would have been sheer luxury in 1952! And without all those preceding heroic instructors (and possibly even more heroic pupils!) there wouldn't be an OGC today.



1952 - Summary of Gliding Club Activities

John Gibbons did his A Certificate on 20th April 1952, and his B Certificate on 3rd May!

Analysis of the flight times is fun - T31 average 2 min 40 sec/flight, Cadet 2 min 5 sec, EoN Primary 52 sec!

But the Oly did 14min 30 sec/flight. Luxury!

JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD. TEL. 3118.										
Date.	Total Flights	Cloud Wind.	Time	Depression Wind	Time	A/T.	G.C. wind.	Time	Acst B Certs.	
April 5 th	27	9	6.30.	3.	8.15.	-	-	-	-	
11 th	22	16	6.	6	35.30.	-	-	-	-	
12 th	18	5.35	-	-	-	-	-	-	Tribune	
13 th	23	11	6.00	2	6.30	-	10	28.00	-	
14	6.	-	-	-	-	-	6	26.30	-	
20.	36.	30.	20.12.	3	10.30.	-	3.	14-29. Gibbons. House.	-	
19 th	15.	10.	8.	-	-	-	-	-	-	
24.	9.	5	5	3	13.30	-	6	27	-	
26.	19	10 ^{pc}	21.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	
27.	25.	19	13.50	-	-	-	6	29.03	-	
	200	152	106.20	17	1.14.	-	31	2.02	-	
May 3.	10	10	6.40	-	-	-	-	-	Gibbons	
4	21	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
May 8	11	11	7.5	-	-	-	-	-	Farnell	
May 10.	10.	29	8.00	-	-	-	1	845	-	
11	32	27	16.55	-	-	-	5	23.49 Galas. Farnell	-	
May 12	1	11	11.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	
May 17	26	26	20.53	-	-	-	-	-	-	
May 18	35	32	41.57	-	-	2	3	71.35 Run	Ergot	
May 22	15	12	13.36	-	-	-	3	12.26	-	
24	29	24	15.25	3	38.32	-	2	10	-	
25	42	19	16.15	9+05	3.07.16	1.10.00	6	34	Sullivan	
29	21	21	31.09	-	-	-	-	-	Bolt	
31	22	22	25.36	-	-	-	-	-	Bolt	
	285	279	4.13.54	9	3.46	-	24	2.48.	5.10.	
May 18. Sun	845	34								

I don't know if others say that they got into gliding thanks to a Pauline Conversion (you know, he's on his way to Damascus and the Lord leans out of Heaven and ... well, the rest is history - or at any rate, theology)... But that's how it was for me.

My Eureka moment (to switch cultures and indeed religions for a moment) happened while I was walking through Marlow, Bucks, on my way back from a meeting. It was a beautiful day, and as I looked upwards at the cerulean sky I saw – a glider. On the plus side, it was just hanging out, looking for some nice cumulus and minding its own business. On the minus side, it was from Booker, but we must be charitable and not hold that against it.

That was my Pauline moment. I heard no voices from Heaven, nor was I struck blind (although most of the OGC Instructors might dispute that, given the consistent awfulness of my final approaches) but my instant, immediate thought was: 'I'm going to do that!'

I had had, many years ago, one of those Christmas Gift flights at Booker. As a 'Trial Flight', I hung around the airfield being generally ignored – so different from OGC's care and attention to potential fee-paying members – until, as dusk approached, someone shambled up to me and said: 'Haven't you flown yet?' When I modestly, trying to unstuck my boots from the now-frozen airfield, said that I hadn't, yer man said: 'Oh, well Jean-Yves is free, he'll take you up.' Jean-Yves turned out to be the most excitable type of Frenchmen, second cousin to Gerard Depardieu only on acid. Having done the standard Booker aerotow launch to some 1200ft, I was unwise enough (having read my Piggott) to ask him: 'Is it true that in a steep stall, aircraft tend to drop a wing and spin?'

Ah, well', says France's answer to Jeremy Clarkson, '?Why don't you pull back on ze leetle stick and we will see?' The result, in something as I remember similar to the DG505, was the usual novice reaction to staring straight down a farmhouse chimney at an awesome closing speed: 'So, I've paid good money to get scared shitless and throw up in a lovely shiny aircraft...'

After a short while recovering from the experience (10 years), I slunk out to Enstone, where they were still doing autotow. The sight of a sawn-off Rover 3500 gunning it down an old bomber airfield stirred my hormones – principally the ones that dictate fear and flight.

Back to my Damascene Conversion. Having decided that gliding was the Next Big Thing (my friends call me Mr Toad, because I'm always finding some new craze: Boating! Canary-Coloured Carts! Motor-Cars!) I did what I guess we all do – did an internet search, as a result of which I decided that Oxford Gliding Club was the only realistic option.

10oz (300g) SR flour
1½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp salt
8oz (250g) Demerara sugar
2oz (50g) raisins
4oz (125g) melted butter
2 large eggs, beaten
6 fl oz (175ml) milk
8oz (250g) apples, peeled, cored and chopped
Icing sugar for dredging (I forgot this and used Demerara!)

APPLE AND CINNAMON CAKE

Fiona Hawkins

Now, Oxfordshire isn't exactly short of gliding clubs. And I looked at a lot. So why did I end up doing a mini-course at OGC?

Step 1 was the website experience, which captured pretty accurately the whole tone and spirit of the Club. All the stuff like: 'If you want to know what the weather will be like, click here' plus the general impression that here was a club that, while it adhered to the BGA and CAA safety regs, didn't take itself too seriously. And the statement that 'The Club is run by its members' made me think: 'Here's a club that'll let me muck in and be a help around the place and learn while I do it.'

Step 2 was turning up at the airfield. I arrived at around 9:00 on Saturday one June morning in 2007, expecting to see people

How I took up gliding, or: How the hell did I get into this?

Simon Sholl

striding around, barking orders and muttering into walkie-talkies. Instead, I found a few (nameless) members staggering around saying things like '?God, it's really bright today', 'I don't feel well', and 'Oh shit, are you the Mini-Course?' Immediately, I felt at home.

My first flights – according to my logbook – were with Simon W, in the DG. I see that one of the lobs was for 17 minutes: if only I'd known how lucky I was to get that time in the air. He wrote: 'Very well flown – well done' on the first lines of my logbook – which I now recognise as code for: 'Not only am I still alive, but maybe we can get some more money off him at the end of the day.'

He was absolutely right. I was immediately bitten by the bug, and was one of those madmen (oops, natural pilots, oops, no-hoppers that might one day make solo without killing a valued instructor) that signs up immediately for Club membership. Which I did before leaving the airfield.

There's so much more to tell: about my ill-concealed tendency to acute vertigo (now nearly overcome – you can, if you're determined to); about my delighted discovery that Steve McCurdy smokes (almost) as much as I do; about the well-concealed panic that the Instructors must feel when I'm at the controls and they're wondering if they'll see their loved ones again; about the groundloop I did early on; about the tedious business of having to strap lady AMs into their parachutes; the amazing gourmet barbecues; the obscene cheapness of the lager; but most of all about the extraordinary process of learning something totally new, which engages both the intellectual brain ('Where's the wind coming from? Where's the High Key Point in this crosswind?') and the instinctive brain ('What does the angle of the landing area feel like on the downwind leg? Is this the right point to round out?') – and the certain knowledge that the learning is never, ever, finished!

- Sift the flour, cinnamon and salt in to a bowl and stir in the sugar and raisins.
- Mix in the melted butter, eggs, milk and apples and beat until smooth
- (Like you can with raisins and lumps of apples in there!!)
- Turn into a lined and greased 8 inch (20cm) square cake tin
- (Square / round – who cares?!)
- Bake in a pre heated moderate oven, 180°C (350°F), Gas mark 4, for 1-1½ hours until the cake springs back when lightly pressed.
- Turn onto a wire rack to cool, and then sprinkle with icing sugar.

An Instructor Speaks

Steve McCurdy

good time! All that free flying and taking giggling girlies for a spin on a Friday evening while we poor stiffs have to stand around a windy launch point hauling cables about!" Well, it doesn't really work like that.

Take Friday nights for example. The majority of punters seem to come from some Oxfordshire care home and the big worry is that their teeth will shoot out and damage the canopy or jam the controls if we have a launch failure. Then the flight goes something like, "so where do you live? Well, we can't see it from here, but straight ahead over the nose is Oxford and if we just turn this way, you can see Bicester." And you know by the way they're just gazing at the wing tip, that they haven't a clue what's going on. And the fact that they grabbed the sides of the cockpit when you did your 10 degree banked turn to reveal Bicester, that anything more than that will probably bring on a coronary. Then of course there's the spotty yoof. You've just given all his mates a couple of loops and a chandelle and the idea of a burger and a couple of sausages later in the evening is making your stomach slowly rotate. But he wants aerobatics too, so you resign yourself to maybe just a diet Coke and a packet of crisps while the punter mumbles "yeah, ace...!" Ace my arse – though I think I managed to pop some of his zits by pulling 4G! (in the big DG, ed.)

Of course, occasionally, you do get to fly the nubile 19 year old. But there you are, tightly strapped in the back of the glider while what seems like the entire OGC Friday crew help her on with the parachute, strap her in and lasciviously look down her cleavage while pretending to explain the instruments. And all you can see is the back of her head! And the flight – well if she's not telling me all about her boyfriend, the ex-marine who's a fitness instructor, she's obviously noted my greying hair and is asking me how long I've been flying? All bloody evening!

So that's the excitement of Friday nights – what about the days when it's your duty? With me, they have to start with a coffee and a fag. Usually, there's loads of 'keen types' around who understand that this particular instructor is absolutely no use whatsoever until the nicotine and caffeine have kicked in and organise getting the kit out and ready while I gird my loins for the long walk to the paras. I'm an anorak in the middle of a crowd of Lycra clad, testosterone sprayed action men, oh, and women – maybe if I was wearing full SAS gear I'd make a better impression? "Yeah" says the DZ controller "we're operating six aircraft, the wind's 460 at 2000, gusting 95 so you'll want the long run then?" Er, o.k. "And we're running in from the north-south-west so our DZ will be from there to there and around there." We'll just stay over the roundabout then....

With that sorted and the kit on the field, we can start flying. When I was learning to fly, apparently the instructor's edict was that the students taught themselves to fly, the instructor was just there to stop P2 killing the pair of them. Nowadays,

O.K., I bet you all think "those instructors, they have a

what with health and safety and stuff, it's a bit different. We start with a thorough briefing based on what P2 needs to accomplish in their next two flights. P2 hands me their progress card. Have they had that exercise signed off or is that a blood stain? Ah, they need more spinning, why is it always spinning? Better have another fag. P2 gets the 'spaniel wondering if they're going to be kicked' look. "So, spin recovery procedure?" P2 mentions something about not stuffing it into the ground. "Right, we'll talk over that then – difference between a spin and a spiral dive?" "Yes, not hitting the ground applies to both exercises but the recovery procedures are different, we'll talk over that as well." By the way P2 is gazing fearfully up at the sky, the recovery procedures may be extended to a long stay in the John Radcliffe. But the spins go o.k., P2 is happy and I can put some ticks on their progress card.

Then it's a check flight. When I check when this pilot last had a

launch failure, the computer says please load MS-DOS. So, better give them one and better take my fags with me – it'll probably be a long walk back and I'll probably need one. But that's o.k. too and now the weather's looking better and there's lift around.

"Er, that big cloud at 11 o'clock looks good." P2's looking at a quarter past three.... "why don't you try over there?" The left

wing gets a tremendous kick of lift and we immediately shoot off right to half past nine. "If you feel one of the wings being lifted, turn in that direction. Well, not now because we're in a lot of sink." We head back to the cloud and I'm leaning so hard to one side, willing P2 to turn in that direction that I'm worried the side of the glider will fall off. "Ah, there's the lift, can you turn up the volume on the vario?" We almost execute a chandelle while P2 is reaching for the volume control, but we're in lift and bounce up to 3000 feet – oh, there's Oxford and there's Bicester. "Let's try a bit of a cross country, head for Bicester." We chat about stuff, like when so-and-so got caught out by rain or got a bit low and had to land out at Bicester. "So, how's the airfield looking?" "Uh...?" I think P2 thinks I'm quizzing him on the style of the grass cutting. "Do you think we'd get back there if we don't find any more lift?" "Er, probably." Oh that's all right then. What blind faith they have that the person in the back can magic an extra 500 feet when they're actually thinking "how am I going to explain landing out on a day like today and is this my rating going up the pictures?" P2 loves their flight – they've stayed airborne for more than seven minutes and seen another airfield and they've navigated their way back to Weston and landed there. They're a real glider pilot. And I've not had a fag in nearly an hour, so we're both getting better.

At the end of the day when everybody's flown and nobody's broken anything, nobody's died and nobody's shouted at us, I can feel a certain amount of satisfaction that my day's duty has been productive and worthwhile. That everybody, mostly, have had a good day at the airfield and enjoyed themselves. And that's the best bit of instructing.



Photo: Paul Smith

The Circle Game (or getting solo, leaving it a year, and getting solo again)

Mike O'Neill

Once a year, it is my great and pointless pleasure to meet up with the old lags and lagesses at Weston and learn to glide all over again, and maybe get a bit fitter walking around the airfield. 2009 turned out to be a vintage year.....

Sunday

Steal into Weston around 11:00pm, get the campervan roof tent up, rig the pee tube and get straight to bed. I'll save being sociable until morning and hope I can steal a little time to set up my full camp without losing out on the flying list

Monday

Over-convection plagues the day, albeit with cycling producing some thermalling opportunities. Wind is 15 knots WSW. Duty instructor is Andy Butterfield ('Scratcher' as I've named him after watching his skill and determination to stay aloft in the weakest lift when others have given up and headed for terra firma and the club bar). I'm near the top of the list and am soon airborne with him and being checked out. We thermal a bit in patchy lift, practice stalls etc. Apart from a tendency to fiddle with the controls, and some loss of confidence and decision making skill, I seem to be able to take off, fly and land competently. Later that day, we do a 70 min flight where we go over spin recovery technique and I'm asked to demonstrate chandelles (Andy is amazed when I say I can't remember anything about how to do them) before P1 pulls the airbrakes open over Weston and tells P2 to fly home in that condition - gulp :(

An abbreviated circuit results. Great flight though.

I was pleased to bump into Neil the Winch, looking well as ever if – like all of us – a little more grey.

Fiona had left a delicious cake in the bus with a note threatening not to make another unless this one got eaten. I abandoned my ambition to get fit, did my duty, and ate a hefty portion. Yum. A posse brought in fish and chips that night. Double Yum.

Someone mentioned Haste had bought an electric bike (cripes, everyone's going eccentric).

Tuesday

SWalker arrives 1st thing in a pretty looking white and green striped Piper Super Sub and hangs around until midday Wednesday, doing the odd circuit and bump-bump with passengers unknown.

Stratus cloud dominates the day, with only one or two brief sunny breaks. Wind is 10 knots WSW. Stewart Otterburn is Duty Dog. On our first flight he decides (rightly) that I need to relax more at the controls. Dr. Stu gets gets to work on my psyche and blow me down it works and my thermal turns get neater. Then we do a little work on circuit planning. Very impressed with Stewart. I'm starting to feel like I could command an aircraft again.

My mate Pete Wright has come down from Manchester to sample gliding at Weston, and decides to do his mini course today. Steve McCurdy instructs him on 3 short flights (damn stratus) but Pete is bitten and decides to stay on and do some more flying. A pity they found no thermals. Maybe he'll

have more luck tomorrow.

Another cake in the bus today, our reward for finishing the last one.

Takeaway Pizza tonight – still not cooked an evening meal in the Bongo kitchen.

Wednesday

Get waylaid 1st thing by Dave Weekes who treats Pete and me to a movie clip of a 1931 Habicht glider doing an astounding aerobatic routine at the Vintage Glider Rally.

The day is blue. Wind is 15 knots SSW and Neil S as duty instructor makes the difficult, but well judged decision to reset the field and use the rarely resorted to southerly launch, which means a cramped operation. If gliders don't stay up, things could get irritating. Pete has stayed on to fly some more, and my brother Hugh is dropping in for a trial flight (he last flew as passenger with Haste c1994 when they managed a cross-country flight in 40 mins). I give up my turns on the list so they can fly without club members being delayed. Gliders start to stay up (Alan Lapworth does especially well in the K13). Pete gets a long flight with Andy B., with lots of thermal and aerobatic action and a sideslip landing. Hugh gets a virtual repeat of Pete's flight.

At days end, when nothing is staying up and there's no queue left to fly, Andy asks me if I want to take a flight. We launch at 17:50 and I'm expecting to be back on terra firma for 18:00, but the secret weapon in the back sniffs out a thermal which we use to climb to around 3500' before flying from well downwind of Weston to well upwind of it in constant zero sink (some said later that weak wave was about). Later, at 18:50 and 2000' above the airfield I do a sideslip so Andy can get a view downwards to see if they are packing up. This leads to a suggestion that I practice a sideslipped circuit and approach. With a little assistance on circuit judgement, I manage to sideslip in and land on the N/S runway centreline. Never done that before. It felt great.

Keith White does his 2hr XC qualifying flight. Richie Hale has yet to get the 50k day he wants, and Raphael Sofair's 5hr day looks even more remote.

More cake in the bus again today. Tonight it's steak and pud at The Red Cow.

Thursday

Light rain a.m. (clearing midday) and breezy at 20+ knots WSW. Stewart Otterburn is around and JSX (DG505) is obligingly got out as the only thing worth flying today. There's good looking cloud streets by the time Stu launches with Alan Lapworth and they have a tremendous 1hr flight, flying upwind to Blenheim. My mate Pete decides to head home to Manchester rather than hanging on to fly (but he's sold on gliding after his previous flights and will be looking for club to learn with up North). He asked me to pass on a big thanks to everyone who made him welcome during his stay. If he lived nearer he would have joined Oxford GC, no question.

Getting away today is a bit of a lottery but I get lucky and do a good flight in JSX, letting Stewart fly (it's good to study a top pilot at work). After 30 mins I'm happy to return so someone else can catch a thermal in this small weather window, and Stewart throws in a spin demonstration and a barrel roll with inverted hesitation just to spice things up a bit. Nice!

More cake in bus today (never the same type – fantastic). Finally cook in the Bongo tonight - Irish Stew from a tin, and Smashed potato. This is the life – ha ha!

Friday

Thunderstorms a.m. and wind 15-20 knots WSW. Howard Stone is Duty Dog. I spend some time ahead of the first storm walking the long grass in search of strops. Don't find any (surprised?) but am treated to a close up of a (surprised) buzzard, which I disturb barely 4 feet in front of me. Find myself thinking of ways to make strops more visible and less likely to embed themselves in the long grass upon landing.

I did four really good flights with Howard. Each involved encountering a rough, broken thermal at just above min. safety height and having to be decisive about when to abandon thermalling attempts, fly safely and set up the circuit to land. Howard declared my flying to be sound, with no big objections to me getting solo. It was only then I asked him if he was still CFI and he confirmed he was. Probably best I hadn't known that beforehand as it would only have screwed up my flying.

My Friday evening session this year went perfectly (unlike my previous two years) with all four 2-seaters in operation, no cable breaks or other snags, no delays, and a perfect sunset followed by one of Phil and Fiona's magic BBQs. Martin Brown deserves a round of applause for his smooth running of the Friday evening operation – outstanding and I defy any punter to have more fun per £ in an evening than that group had.

Rounded the day off with a lovely ride back to the hangar on my electric bike in the last of the evening light.

Another cake in the bus – how does she do it!?!?!

Saturday

Wind WSW 10 knots. John Hanlon is Duty Dog. Sentimental journey as John was one of my original instructors when I learned to fly at Weston c1990. It was he who famously declared back then that they got me solo quickly so they didn't have to be deafened by my commentary reverberating around inside the cockpit (although – serious moment, students take note – instructors appear to agree how much easier it makes instructing if their pupil talks about what is causing them problems with flying well).

Anyway, the skydivers are operating and as a result the operation has an edge to it not present during the weekday sessions.

Two flights with JH and he declares he's happy for me to take the K13 solo. Seeing that doing so would ease pressure on instructors, I accept the offer. Funny that this is what ended up pushing me into re-soloing, as I'd been a bit 50/50 about bothering. 55 minutes later mind you, when I'd scratched hard, then hit a 10 knots thermal and climbed to cloudbase before later pushing into wind at 75 knots whilst still ascending at 4 knots, I was more than a little bit pleased I'd opted to go solo. Dumping 3000' using sideslip and airbrakes just so I could return the K13 only slightly over the club time limit, struck me as bordering on the criminal. I wanted to fly for 5hrs or more (and would have tried to!) but rules is rules. Upon landing, I mused to JH how great it would be to fly a K8 again after 15 years. He invited me to do just that, so a while later I renewed an old acquaintance and did 35 hard minutes K8ing in unreliable thermals and never above 1600ft.

The other highlight was watching Liisi do her first solo. I soloed on a misty October day with no thermals to pursue, and I

envied (and admired) her as she not only commanded a glider on her own for the first time, but did an excellent job of searching and moving in on areas of lift in order to achieve an extended flight. As the Bermudians say – "Way to go, girl!". I smiled as I remembered discussing women pilots with Cloudy earlier in the week.

John Gibbons was out on the airfield today and we managed a brief chat. It was good to catch up with my main instructor from way back c1990. How lucky was I back then.

More cake for lunch and tea.

Got my camp packed up before going over to Hog Roast dinner and pigging out. Another fantastic effort by Phil, Fiona, and all the other helpers (P&F seem to have the equivalent of Bruce Springsteen's energetic performances when it comes to doing BBQs). Got to know Barry Gleeson, learning to glide at a 'good age' and a thoroughly interesting bloke.



Photo: Richie Hale

Sunday

Decide I can't top Saturday's efforts (plus I've run out of key provisions) and decide it's best to leave on a high and head for home. Lots of goodbyes to say, most of which I got done before having to call time and leave (apologies to anyone I missed). Tipped the last of my vegetable oil into the Bongos fuel tank before a traffic free jaunt home got me there for lunchtime at an astonishing 34.5mpg (in a loaded 2 ton van with aircon on most of the time – with a following wind mind you).

Total time in the air = 6hrs+ Yup - a perfect week alright. Especially nice to meet famous names George Crawford (and his campervan – a fellow anorak) and Brian Evans. Big thanks and adieu again to all good old friends I met and new ones I made at Weston last week. Best club ever is OGC.

Footnote: On the issue of strops.....

What is to be done. My ha'peth worth (which is similar to an idea I believe John Mart had, though the story goes his prototype fell of the Rover accidentally and could never be found – woops!) is to try and persuade them to fall to earth so they don't lie down flat in the grass. Maybe some flat, reflective material sleeving so they fall to earth more slowly while adopting a u-shape so that – just possibly – the whole thing doesn't disappear into the long grass. Maybe search for them at night using headlights. No? I'll fetch me coat then.....

The start of 2009 saw some changes in the committee members. Neil Swinton stepped down as an ordinary member to be replaced by Jon Christensen, and Nick Hill stepped down as Secretary to be replaced by me, with some trepidation. Paul Morrison and Paul Wilford continued as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively, Ian Shepherd as Treasurer, with Emma Cuthill and Steve McCurdy continuing as ordinary members.

Top of the agenda for the New Year was the continuing battle opposing the proposed Eco-Town development of Weston Otmoor. Paul Morrison and Paul Freer led the formal club response during the consultation process and lobbied the members to make individual responses. During the summer it looked like all this hard work was well rewarded with Weston Otmoor absent from the short list of approved Eco Towns, well at least for this initial round!

A subscription to the on-line rota DutyMan which had been successfully trialled by the instructors was purchased for the year. I loaded the system with Duty Pilot data, creating the summer rota, sent out instructions to all concerned and awaited the inevitable confusion and frustration, but to the credit of the members everyone seemed to cope with the new-fangled technology. In addition text message reminders we instigated which together with the ability to swap duties on-line saw an improved level of commitment to duties compared to the previous year.

Not content with the EASA transition of glider airworthiness, mode-S transponders and the dreaded Eco-Town, further proposals in the form of pilot licensing required attention. Neil Swinton submitted the club's formal response to the consultation and the members were lobbied once again to make individual responses. Later in the year the BGA sent out a questionnaire to clubs with respect to a Cloud Flying Rating and its likely affect on club activity, as under EASA licensing proposals hanging around under clouds would not be allowed without further training. The club made its response and this is now with the BGA and EASA.

Barry Taylor undertook some sterling work to revamp the club web site. The new modernised look was launched in January receiving a very positive reaction.

Following the 2008 flood in the club house a new leak was discovered next to the shower. After several weeks worth of work demolishing and rebuilding the shower a few times Paul Rogers and Neil Turner eventually tracked down the cause to a faulty overflow. After dismantling much of the outside corner of the hangar by the shower and gents the suspect pipe

was fixed and club-house returned to a dry state.

In February the Chairman called an extraordinary committee meeting to focus on various aspects of club management, including public liability, catering arrangements, child protection, operating procedures, health and safety, emergency planning and club records. In an attempt to put the club on a more professional footing the resulting actions sought to tidy up a number of loose ends. In addition the role of club cleaner was reinstated and Di Barrett took on the task of keeping the club-house clean despite the best effort of the membership to do the opposite.

March saw the very successful start of season party thanks to the efforts of many members in the preparation and clear-up required and not least Phil and Fiona's excellent catering. In line with health and safety both Phil and Fiona gained certification in food hygiene and proudly displayed their certificates over the coming months of BBQs, along with aprons bearing the tongue in cheek words 'at your own risk'.

On 18 March the webcam picked up some mysterious activity outside the hangar mid-week with a white van and trailer moving back and forth. This resulted in some speculation as to their intent, and after contacting Brize to no avail the Thames Valley's finest were dispatched to investigate. In the meantime Neil Turner rushed to the club to find some innocent RAF contracted gutter clearers. The police were called off and no arrests for leaf stealing ensued. In order to improve communications with SkyDive Weston and pilots flying in the DZ and cross-country two new ground station radios were purchased to replace the aging existing equipment. These were installed on the bus with limited success and an on-going effort to improve the situation continues.

In a continued endeavour to recruit required new members OGC once again exhibited at the Abingdon Show. Sharing a stand with the Swindon Gliding Club, JSX took pride of place and generated a lot of interest with the aviation crowd.

2009 saw a couple of gliding accidents at Weston. The first minor incident was with one of the Ka8's. During a launch failure the strop managed to puncture the material covering the tailplane which was subsequently patched and repainted. The second incident resulted in more serious damage to DMH, which

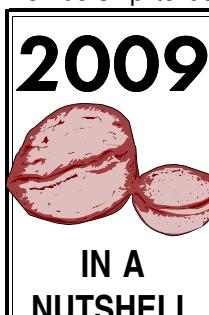
unfortunately couldn't be repaired in-house. It was duly dispatched for repair with Airborne Composites and returned to service only a few weeks later.

In an attempt to reduce the number of broken strops and improve launches a new Launch Assist system from SkyLaunch was trialled in one of the K13's. The system consists of a transmitter connected to the glider's pneumatics which broadcasts the airspeed during launch to a receiver at the winch which displays the speed to the winch driver. Despite some success it was decided the costs involved in equipping the club fleet outweighed to benefit of the system and it was returned. Despite some reasonable weather the RAF did their best to bring operations to a halt with several weeks of planned Hercules drops over the summer. The committee made contingency arrangements agreeing with Windrushers to operate the club out of Bicester in these circumstances at no additional cost to the members. Fortunately this saw only one sortie to Bicester over the summer and gave pilots the opportunity to try some aero towing. It also showed despite the parachutes what an efficient operation OGC runs, with OGC members effectively running the field. Considering the extensive RAF program that was feared, flying operations have not been substantially affected.

August saw the annual flying fortnight and the mid-season party, both of which were a great success. We managed to operate every day except one due to weather with over 400 flights and over 200 hours flown, by far the best in recent years. Pundit for the week was Martin Brown with nearly 14 hours flown. The Pig'n'Fish BBQ on the middle weekend was fantastic and Phil and Fiona kept everyone well fed, delivering delicious homemade cakes to the launch point each day!

Martin Brown did a fantastic job of organising the Friday night flying once again this year, ably supported by a team of volunteers, including Phil and Fiona catering BBQs for visitors and crew virtually every week. Around 200 crew and 500 visitor meals were catered for over the summer, making a small profit to help improve facilities for next year. All in all a great success which was recognised with a meal out to thank Martin, Phil and Fiona.

On the training front several members put themselves forward for instructor training with the backing of the CFI. Neil Swinton as Full Category (we are not worthy), subsequently completing the training and obtaining the rating, Paul Morrison, Rob Jackson, Jon Christensen and I as Assistant Instructors. Unfortunately due to confusion within the BGA Jon and I

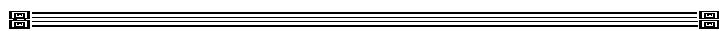


Paul Smith

were unable to jump straight to Assistant without first completing Basic Instructor training. At the time of writing Paul Morrison and Rob have successfully completed the training, with Jon and I now training for Basic Instructor ratings. On a sad note we are losing Howard, Martin Hastings (temporarily), Paul Wilford, David Nisbet and Carole as instructors, so overall instructor capacity will be a little reduced for next season assuming everyone gets the rating they are hoping for. Would anyone like to train to become an instructor?

In planning for next year we have to fill a number of posts. Howard will be stepping down as CFI, Ian will be stepping down as Treasurer after many years of loyal service and Emma will be stepping down from the committee. John Hanlon has been invited to take on the position of CFI, with Stewart and Neil continuing to share the Deputy CFI position. I have expressed an interest to fill the Treasurer role and I'm currently in training on Tuesday nights with Ian. Keith has offered to step in as Secretary. Of course all of this will be decided upon at the forthcoming AGM.

Despite the increasing legislation, threats to the airfield and airspace, the odd mishap, people coming and going, tough economic times, etc.... OGC continues to be a successful, viable and fun club and everyone should feel proud of it and their contribution to its continual success.



The Chairman's Corner

Paul Morrison

Well, where has 2009 gone to? I don't know about you, but if you'll excuse the pun, this year certainly seems to have flown by for me and here we are, almost Christmas!

Looking back over the year, it certainly seems to have been a busy one with various highlights (in no particular order!) being Eco-Towns, Mode S, EASA Pilot Licensing, various consultations and other assorted issues. Despite early promises (and smug self congratulation from yours truly when the "Barbecue Summer" was announced by the Met Office earlier this year!) as I predicted last year in this column, 2009 did not alas deliver the year we had hoped for and which we so rightly deserved after 2007 & 2008. But that said, overall it was not that bad as a glance at the BGA Ladder will show you.

Whilst this was another year when a fast (average KPH greater than my stalling speed!) 300K cunningly eluded me yet again, there were several first and respectably fast 300's flown (well done Sideshow & Smithy) and of course Cloudy did her first 500K. That reminds me Cloudy, about that beer..?? I also added a few more fields to my ever increasing collection and thanks again to those who, with never ending patience and good humour, came and got me. I'm still in search of the famous Tom Lamb field and the farmer's daughter, but 2010's another year!

Statistically, we finished with the same number of gliders we started with which is always a good thing and we flew on 115 days to give a grand total of 1,089 hours and 13,250 Cross Country Kilometres derived from 3,474 launches! As far as club membership is concerned, we added 11 new members to the OGC family to give (as at end September 2009) a total of 90 Full Flying and 23 Associate Members and to those new members especially, welcome to your first 'Final Glide' magazine and the rambling thoughts of your chairman.

As far as promoting this wonderful sport of ours to others is concerned, we flew 370 temporary members over the year and the OGC road show made its annual appearance at the Abingdon Airshow. As always though, new members are always welcome so if you have any friends, colleagues or family you think may be interested, please spread the word. In fact, have you considered what a wonderful Christmas present a Trial Flight voucher represents...?!

Probably the biggest and most welcome news of the year came in July when the spectre of 'Weston Otmoor' which had been looming over the club since early 2008 was finally lifted. I won't go into much detail here as there is a larger article elsewhere in this issue, but the good news for OGC and the residents of Weston-on-the-Green was that Weston Otmoor thankfully did not make the final shortlist of sites to go-ahead in the first batch of Eco-Towns. Whether there will ever be a second tranche of proposed sites or even indeed, whether the first ones will go-ahead in this challenging final climate remains to be seen, but for the time being at least the very real threat it represented has gone away and we can turn our attention once more to future plans for improving OGC.

2009 also saw the conclusion of the CAA's consultation in respect of Mode S and unfortunately whilst they did not completely dismiss this proposal, their proposed way forward is far less draconian and costly than it could have been. Have no doubt, it was I am sure, your responses that helped shape this proposal into its current form which,



Photo: Richie Hale

with the possible risk of TMZ's, should not have a materially detrimental effect on the majority of glider pilots in the UK.

Unfortunately we did lose a couple of flying days this year due to our landlords wanting to use the airfield for their own purposes, often at relatively short notice, but overall the relationship we have with the RAF is I feel positive and productive. Whilst I can appreciate that this is a disappointing annoyance when it does happen, and something we seek to avoid where possible, please bear in mind that this is one of the prices to pay for being granted access to one of Liz's airfields. Comparison is often made to our neighbours at another well known gliding site, but I can assure you that their rent bill is significantly greater than ours and this is reflected in their membership structure and prices. (Ed: ...And if we can't fly at Weston due to parachute activity, said other well-known gliding site

Final Glide

has kindly offered us the use of their airfield and winch at club rates. So military parachuting at Weston does not have to equal no flying in OGC gliders on that day.)

As far as the relationship with our more immediate neighbours, Skydive Weston, is concerned, I personally feel that this is the best that it's ever been and I hope you share this view. I am very much of the opinion that a frank and open relationship with them will be to the benefit of both clubs and I would ask for your support in maintaining this.

Sadly during 2009 we said goodbye to some long standing members and instructors and as we head towards 2010 there will be a few other changes too. As I'm sure you all know, Howard has announced his attention to take a break from instructing next year (JOKE

– Q: What's the difference between God and the CFI? A: God doesn't think he's a CFI!) and I'd like to express my thanks, both personally and on behalf of the club, for all he has done over the years. John Hanlon has, for some completely unknown and unfathomable reason, agreed to step into Howard's admittedly large shoes and I'd like to thank him for this and welcome him into this role. I hope you will all give him your support. Additionally, Paul Wilford & Dave Nisbet will also be taking a break too, as will Dave Bray although rumours that he is trying to find a booster seat for a Boeing 737 are, I'm sure, totally without foundation!

Ian Shepherd is also taking a well deserved break from trying to make sense and keep track of the club's finances and it would be remiss of me not to pass comment on what he has done for OGC over the years. Ian's contribution to making the club what we know it as now can't be overstated. The younger and slightly less greying members of the club may find this hard to comprehend, but at one time there was no computer log on the bus, no automatic uploading of flight data to a PC in the clubroom and the financial cashing up used to require various members to take their shoes and socks off and allegedly an abacus! Thanks Ian, Howard and others, your contribution will be missed.

As to what 2010 will bring, thankfully a few mugs who were willing to subject themselves to the unpaid lunacy of instructing have been found (including yours truly!) and therefore I ask you to be gentle with us, especially me!

Onto the slightly less exciting side of gliding, I would like to say that EASA will take a back seat next year and there will be no further requests from me to engage in consultation exercises, but I think it would be naive to suggest this. Unfortunately I think EASA will, with the eventual introduction of Pilot Licensing in the UK, continue to play an ever more important part in our lives and I would ask that rather than just focusing on the negative issues and lamenting for the good old days, you try to view this with an open mind and see that for the continued existence of our sport, some changes are necessary. In this sadly increasingly litigious world in which we now find ourselves, and with the increasingly vocal demands by other airspace users, I think it would be unrealistic to expect gliding to avoid further regulation.

Looking into my crystal ball, other issues that I think will entertain us next year will include the mandatory implementation of the new 'Vetting & Barring' Agency

policy and processes into the club and the way we do things. Obviously we don't wish to introduce unnecessary bureaucracy, but it is important to appreciate that this is a legal requirement and one under which the club could receive a substantial fine and or potentially prosecution if we don't comply. More details about this will be circulated in due course, but we will seek to minimise the impact of this as far as possible.

Airspace will, I'm sure, continue to be an increasingly scarce commodity and we'll need to be especially wary of any plans to expand or increase the use of 'London Oxford' in the future if this is not to have an effect, not only upon OGC but all airspace users in Central England. So please keep your eyes and ears open for anything you may hear, particularly the more local members.

Safety should remain, and rightly so I would add, uppermost in our minds as sadly 2009 has not been a particularly good year with unfortunately, a few of our colleagues no longer with us. I'm sure that in time there will be further information cascaded from the BGA about these incidents, however as always, please keep safety uppermost in your minds and if you see anything you perceive to be a hazard, please bring this to the attention of an instructor or committee member. I also make no excuse for emphasising this again, the most important gadget for avoiding becoming a statistic is you – so please, keep a good lookout, stay current and fly safe within your margins.

Finally, the current economic climate will no doubt continue to be a factor in 2010 and whilst the club is I'm pleased to say, on a sound financial footing we must not be complacent about this. The cost of running a business such as OGC is not stagnant and I'd ask for all your help in minimising the costs associated with this where possible by protecting the club's assets and helping manage the club's cash flow by settling any long outstanding debt.

To bring my annual meandering (and some say rambling) to an end, when considered overall 2009 has been I think, quite a good year for OGC and I am confident that with your support, 2010 will be better. If I keep on saying that next year will be a scorcher, at some point I must be correct.

On a final personal note regarding this year, thus far at least, I've managed to avoid having to be rescued from the Gent's Loo so here's hoping that trend continues into 2010 and beyond!

Fly safe, have fun and beware of dodgy toilet locks!

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Contributors to this issue were:

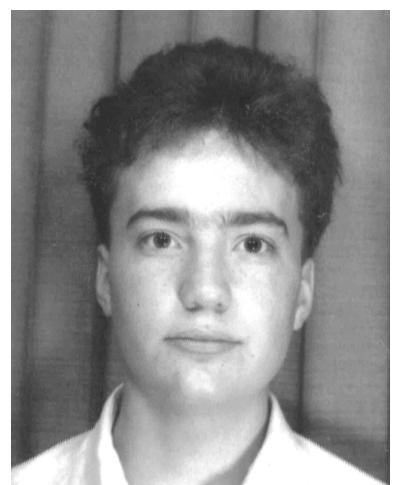
Dave Bray, Fiona Hawkins, Phil Hawkins, Nick Hill, Paul Morrison, Steve McCurdy, Mike O'Neill, Simon Sholl, Paul Smith, Howard Stone, Neil Swinton, Willy Weaklink, Dave Weekes.

Photos were taken by Dave Bray, Richie Hale, Paul Smith, Howard Stone, Dave Weekes.

Membership list by the treasurer from the Club computer [all corrections to him please].

Willy Weaklink's photo album

Willy was looking back at his photo album showing some of his school friends, and oddly all of them are now OGC instructors. Can you spot the familiar faces ?



Inter-Club League 2009

Nick Hill

For some people the arrival of the second May bank holiday is just another holiday but for OGC this traditionally means the

start of the Inter-Club League season and as team captain this means the start of another round of asking OGC members "are you available for the inter-club league next weekend?"

For those of you not in the know the Inter-Club League or ICL is a friendly and fun competition organised between local clubs in various areas around the country held over several weekends through the summer. Teams from each club compete in tasks set for novice, intermediate and pundit class pilots depending on ability and experience. The winners from the local regions then compete in a national final, which OGC has won on three occasions in recent years. OGC compete in the midland league, which for 2009 consisted of OGC, Banbury, Shenginton and Windrushers (Bicester).

Banbury gliding club at Hinton-in-the-Hedges hosted the first ICL weekend of 2009 at the end of May. Unfortunately of the three bank holiday weekend days only the Sunday was flyable for the competition but OGC turned out a full team on the day with John Mart making his ICL debut as novice, Cloudy as intermediate and Dave Bray as pundit. The weather never looked brilliant but it was good enough for the Banbury competition director to decide to send everyone off on task, even though several pilots suggested this looked to be an optimistic decision. In the end six of the twelve pilots made it round the tasks.

For OGC John in the club K8, like other pilots, struggled to get away from the start and landed at Hinton ending up in fourth place. This was a good effort as he had already flown from a winch launch at Weston to Hinton in order to attempt the task whereas the Bicester pilot in an ASW19 launched from Hinton and managed 0.8km down track before landing back at Hinton. The Banbury novice flying a Discus took several attempts at starting the task and eventually made it round the 102Km task at a speed of 46kph to win the day late in the evening. In the intermediates only the Shenginton pilot made it round the 155Km task at 54kph with the others all in fields. A disgruntled Cloudy made it 38km down track for third place in the DG100 but cheered up when told that the Banbury intermediate in a Discus had only managed 22Km. The pundit task of 176Km was a much closer contest with Dave Bray coming first with a speed of 64.1kph in the LS6 only just ahead of the Bicester pilot who completed the task at 63.6kph in a Kestrel 19. Overall after the first weekend Shenginton were in the lead with 9pts followed by Bicester in second with 8pts and OGC and Banbury in joint third with 6pts.

Windrushers gliding club at Bicester hosted the next round of the ICL over the weekend of 13th and 14th June on what turned out to be one of the best gliding weekends of the year. Saturday morning started with a flurry of glider rigging as the weather was looking promising and the OCG novice Simon Calvert in his Astir was already off on his 112Km task by 11:30. Paul Smith flying the Mosquito as intermediate (168Km task) and Martin Hastings in his

GF304 as pundit (208km task) were also off on track by 11:50. Overall only one novice and one intermediate didn't complete the tasks although some reported conditions as having been more difficult than it looked. In the novice class the Bicester pilot was initially scored as winning at 52.78Kph with Simon in second at 52.06kph but on closer inspection it was pointed out that he flew a glider with too high a performance for the novice class and was demoted to fourth meaning Simon Calvert won the day. In the intermediate Paul was third with 59kph and Haste was also third in the pundit class with 67kph compared to the Bicester pilots who won both these classes at around 84kph. For the day this meant 9pts each for Bicester and Shenginton, 8pts for OGC and 3pts for Banbury.

In the evening of 13th June various gliding weather forecasting experts were all talking about Sunday as possibly being the best day of the year so far and on Sunday morning this still looked to be the case. By the time most of the ICL pilots arrived at Bicester various of the locals were already rigged and out at the launch point waiting for the tugs to turn up so they could set off on 750Km flights. By the time morning briefing came round both OGC and Shenginton, who thought they had full teams, found they were one pilot down as,



Photo: Richie Hale

showing complete disregard for ICL team orders, one of their pilots had decided to opt out and go for their next big distance badge flight! Having dispatched Cloudy the renegade intermediate off on her 500Km attempt (successfully completed 8 hours later) I returned to the happy band of team OGC that now consisted of Jon Christensen as novice, Paul Morrison drafted in as replacement intermediate and Howard Stone as pundit. The promise of excellent weather was fulfilled and all ICL pilots were off on task by 12:00 and had great fun on what did turn out to be the best soaring day of the year. In the novice class Jon in his Mosquito came in fourth at 57kph over the 173km task compared to the winning Shenginton pilot's speed of 77Kph in a Vega. Paul Morrison surprised himself by coming second at 77kph over 265km in the GF304 compared to the winning Banbury pilot's speed of 83kph in a Discus. In the pundit class Howard in the LS6 went round 343km at 96kph for second place compared to the winning Bicester pilot's speed of 104kph in a Discus2.

Willy Weaklink's photos:

top, from left: Barry Taylor, John Hanlon, Dave Nisbet
centre, from left: Steve McCurdy, Paul Smith, Claudia Büngen
bottom, from left: Garry Cuthill, Neil Swinton, Jon Christensen

Inter-Club League 2009 (contd.)

Overall for the day this meant 8pts each for Bicester and Shenington and 7pts each for OGC and Banbury.

So after two rounds of the ICL it was all pretty close with Shenington first with 26pts, Bicester second with 25pts, OGC third with 21pts and Banbury in fourth with 17pts. The next round was at OGC on 1st and 2nd August, or it should have been. Having rounded up another team of pilots and helpers as well as two tugs to launch everyone, in the week before the OGC event the RAF decided they needed their airfield to drop parachutists. Initially it looked like we could move the OGC round to Bicester but with the weather not looking good and Bicester having other commitments for tugs and briefing rooms it was called off. That means that as a result of weather and Hercules flights we haven't held a round of the ICL at OGC since 2007. Hopefully 2010 will prove more successful.

With all to play for the final ICL weekend was at Shenington on 15th and 16th August and despite being only 1pt behind nobody from Bicester turned up. Saturday was scrubbed so it was all down to the final Sunday. Team OGC consisted of Martin Brown making his debut as novice, Rob Jackson getting used to being an intermediate as he had now done his 300km, and Dave Bray as Pundit. Once more the weather was not helping and in the Novice class neither of the two pilots made it far enough to make it a competition. In the Intermediate and Pundit a valiant effort from OGC saw both pilots end up landing at Bicester to claim second place and 2pts in each class. Rob managed a commendable 40km out of the 118km task in the Skylark 4 compared to the Banbury intermediate who didn't start and the Shenington intermediate who made it round at 50kph. Dave managed 34km of the 139km task in the LS6 compared to the Banbury pundit who didn't start and the Shenington pundit who made it to 48km. So the final scores for the day were 4pts for OGC and 6pts for Shenington.

Overall after all the competition days the regional winners were Shenington with 32pts, joint second were OGC and Bicester on 25 and fourth were

Banbury with 17pts. As regional winners Shenington took part in the national final flying against other regional winners including Nymphsfield, Hus Bos, the Park and Wormingford who were the eventual national champions.

Overall the ICL is a fun competition that is intended to encourage people to fly cross-country. It is a chance for more inexperienced pilots to see other clubs and meet other pilots and learn from the more experienced ones. However as was proved in the national final it is a team event and despite the current 18m European champion flying for Hus Bos and a two times World standard class champion flying for Nymphsfield Wormingford still won the comp. You can have the best pundit in the world but unless you have an intermediate and a novice you might as well not bother, as it is these pilots that win you the ICL. So next year when I'm asking "are you available for the inter-club league next weekend?" why not say "YES Please"

Consider the scene. The two club Astirs (DMH and DKR) were flying. DKR was about 4 hours 45 mins into a 5 hours attempt.

DMH had been flying for thirty minutes, had just contacted some weak wave over the airfield and was slowly climbing.

"Oxford Base - DKR - Please advise flight time"

"DKR - Oxford base - Almost time - do about another 15 Minutes".

(pause)

"Oxford Base - DMH - Roger - 15 minutes - will return"

(puzzled looks at launch point)

(later)

"Oxford Base - DKR - Flight time please"

"DKR - Oxford Base - Thats it, 5 hours done, well done, bring it down"

"Oxford Base - DKR - Thanks - descending"

(pause)

"Oxford Base - DMH - Understood, descending now"

Both Astirs appear at the launch point, and the pilot of DMH was a bit dismayed to find he was not flying DKR, and could have stayed and climbed in the rare wave over the field! (if you get confused with RT, Willy Weaklink suggests you add silently a 'from' in-between the two names. So -"Oxford base - DMH" should be interpreted as 'Oxford Base FROM DMH')



CFI's report

Howard Stone

Congratulations to Paul Morrison and Rob Jackson who have now become half category instructors and Neil Swinton who has now become a Full category Instructor. We now have Five Full Category, 10 Half Category and one Basic Instructor. Paul Smith and Jon Christensen are looking to become a basic Instructor hopefully by the AGM. Paul Wilford is taking a break and Carole Shepherd has moved to Hinton, our thanks go to Carole for all her hard work and dedication over the last few years.

To allow me to take a break to complete some long awaiting updates to the house which has been neglected over the last few years John Hanlon will be taking over as CFI from the end of November. As I'm going to be away most of November in the Caribbean, John will be completing the CFI tasks at the AGM, so please be gentle with him.

Changes to the Duty Pilot procedures are working well and has helped keep the operating speed and safety as slick as possible. I cannot stress the importance of the Duty pilot as this is the only link to the instructors who could be in the Air. The Yellow jacket seems to be working well and most visitors going straight to the yellow jacket as soon as they are on the airfield. This means we can give them the correct information quickly while maintaining a safe environment. Since we are now in the winter period we do not have a scheduled Duty pilot but please volunteer on the day as it does improve efficiency. The relationship with Skydive Weston has been excellent and we need to try and maintain this as both clubs face some of the same challenges while we continue to keep a good safe separation between the two activities. Lastly, I would like to thank all our instructors for their hard work over the last year, without this the club would not be able to operate.

LEST WE FORGET THE HOSEPIPE BANS

Phil Hawkins

There was a time when you could reasonably expect calm sunny weather for the OGC flying weeks. You could look forward to a relaxed and sociable airfield operation with everyone in shorts and silly hats, spending lazy hours at the launch point with the cables laid out waiting for someone to land, and the hard baked airfield would be straw coloured rather than green. Not any more. That's not a description that fits the modern reality. But has it really been bad for years? Is it getting worse? I've been checking my diary, log book and back issues of *Final Glide* to find out if there are any definite trends. So, here we go with the history of weather for the OGC flying weeks, going back into the mists of time.....

THIS YEAR:

First weekend was windy, although soarable on Sunday afternoon. Hazy sun on Monday, but still soarable. Tuesday mostly cloudy and barely scratchable until a sudden clearance at 6pm. Wednesday blue and windy. Thursday started off drizzly then cleared, but spoiled by the 25kt wind. Friday sunshine and showers, still windy. The middle weekend was pretty good weather-wise, and the pig roast went well too. Monday started dull and drizzly but brightened up later. Tuesday was supposed to be an "exceptional day" according to the Lasham forecast, but was merely exceptionally showery. On Wednesday it rained all day. Thursday still windy with damp woolly clouds, soarable but hard work. Friday saw heavy showers and strong winds. Saturday was still quite breezy but a reasonable day. Howard got round a sizeable task, and various other pilots including Haste, Graham and Paul Morrison also flew across country. Sunday was dull and drizzly. The final Monday started the same way but brightened in mid-afternoon.

Last year:

The first Saturday was wet, and Sunday was too windy. Monday was flyable but not soarable. Heavy rain arrived in the afternoon forcing an early pack-up, and Tuesday/Wednesday were non-flying days with rain, gales and thunder. Fewer showers and some local soaring on Thursday. Friday was very good, several 300km flights were done, and I flew the K21 to Ely Cathedral and back. The middle weekend gave local soaring only, becoming very wet again on Sunday night. The second Monday and Tuesday were windy with low cloud and no flying. Wednesday and Thursday were scratchable with less wind, although it rained later on both days. Friday and Saturday were moderately good with big tasks being set and at least one 5hr flight and several 300kms completed, but patchy conditions and spread-out caused quite a few outlandings. Sunday and the bank holiday Monday were cloudier but flyable.

2007

Fiona and I were at Cropredy for the first weekend. Saturday was hot and blue, and I didn't care whether or not it was soarable because we were sitting in an open field with 19,998 other people listening to some amazing music. By Sunday it had started to rain, heralding a showery unsettled week with little sunshine. Some soaring was done on the Friday afternoon, but not much. The middle weekend was very wet

both days. The beginning of the second week brought persistent north-easterly winds and low cloud. Some sunshine on Thursday and Friday, and again I did some local soaring on Friday afternoon. Saturday was blue, and the massive 185th birthday party was held in the hangar in the evening. Sunday was a reasonable cross-country day, and I flew the K21 with Fiona to Milton Keynes and back. The Monday bank holiday was soarable but overdeveloped.

2006

I've got no record of Oxfordshire weather for the first weekend because we were in Scotland, but it was very stormy there. We drove back on Monday with a soaking wet tent in the car boot, and there had been no Club flying that day. Limited amounts of flying were done in the first week, using scratchy conditions and dodging the showers. Violent storms in the middle weekend, our caravan roof developed a leak, and our gazebo partially collapsed owing to the weight of water on it. The second week was not much better than the first except for Thursday when a couple of 50km flights were done to Sackville Farm. The Club were operating over the bank holiday weekend, but it continued to rain at some point each day. After two weeks our soggy tent was still standing on the airfield where we'd pitched it upon our return from Scotland. It had never become dry enough to pack away.

2005

The flying weeks were unusually early, starting in July. The first Saturday was cloudy but dry, the first Sunday it rained. Monday was dull and damp. Tuesday was weakly soarable at times. Wednesday and Thursday mostly wet. On Friday there was a limited Club operation but the evening's flying was disrupted by Hercules dropping. The middle weekend was to have been the Weston ICL meeting, and the parachutists had gone away, but the weather was awful and there was no flying. Monday was mostly dark and gloomy with small sunny holes, but Tuesday and Wednesday were actually quite good, and I had decent cross-country flights in both the K21 and the Mini-Nimbus. On Thursday Paul and Roz Rogers got married, and many members were absent from the airfield to attend the reception in the afternoon, but the Club operation was interrupted by military activity anyway. Friday and Saturday were flyable although not very soarable, but the final Sunday was absolutely glorious and I did a 300km flight with Fiona in the K21. Carole did her first 300km, Howard did about 600km of a declared 750, Haste did about 340km of a declared 500 in the DG-505 with Nick Hill. George Crawford and Ian Young also did 300km flights, Paul Morrison and Rob Jackson both did the first TP after late starts, and Paula Hastings did Silver Height and was signed off checks. A lot packed into one day to end the fortnight!

Several OGC pilots have done instructor training this year. We are told a few oddities occurring during the course:

- 1) Keen Potential instructor: "Take your hands and feet off the controls, and follow through"
- 2) Worried Potential instructor, at about 100' on the final approach: "Don't forget to round out". So the senior instructor, playing a student, promptly did as told and rounded out...
- 3) Confused Potential instructor: "The airbrakes are next to your left hand knee".
- 4) Bewildered Potential instructor: "Put your nose down". The 'student' in the front looks down at his feet.

2004

The first Saturday was soarable but with very bad visibility, Sunday was mostly grey, Monday was wet. Tuesday was showery but local soaring was possible. Wednesday was very windy with thunderstorms. Thursday not bad in the afternoon and I flew the K21 with Carole for a couple of hours. On Friday there was no instructor on duty, but the day looked absolutely superb until the evening when heavy rain arrived. Saturday was moderately good and I flew the K21 with Brian Evans. Carole, Steve McCurdy and Paul Morrison all landed out, though. Claudia did her first 300km, Howard did about 440km. Sunday saw weak sunshine with lots of top cover, wet in the evening and another wet day on Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday brought frequent heavy showers and brief sunny bits, but the Club was operating. Christmas dinner in the hangar on Wednesday evening with the saxophone player and a disco. The rest of the week was fair but not brilliant, with another wet Friday. Bank holiday Monday saw sunny spells and heavy showers in the morning, although things did improve in the afternoon and I flew the K21 with Stewart Otterburn for about 3 hours.



Photo: Paul Smith

2003

We were flying from Hinton for the first weekend, probably owing to a parachute competition at Weston. Saturday was good and I went to HB and back in the K21 with Fiona. On Sunday I took Paul Morrison for a bit of wave flying near Banbury. Monday and Tuesday were mostly cloudy, Wednesday was better and I flew the K21 again from Hinton with Tim Elliot. Thursday and Friday were mostly overcast, but Saturday was a cloud-hunting day in the K21. Dull start on Sunday but OK in the afternoon. On Monday I did a special flight in the K21 from Hinton with Kitty Lamb, in order to scatter her brother Tom's ashes over Chipping Warden. Weather dry but completely flat. In the evening it was another Christmas Dinner at the Club, our biggest ever with 93 paying customers. Tuesday's weather unknown ~ I was busy relaxing and clearing up. On Wednesday I flew the Mini Nimbus out to Moreton-in-Marsh but conditions were gloomy and the visibility was poor. Thursday indifferent, Friday only good for a short period in late afternoon. Saturday was a brilliant day, in which I flew the K21 with Neil Swinton, reaching 10,000ft in cloud at Cheltenham. Anthony did 300km on the first day of the Junior Nationals at Nympsfield. Sunday weather deteriorated rapidly in the afternoon.

2002

My notes for this year are incomplete due to work commitments. The first Saturday was blue and windy with some hazy cumulus in the afternoon, Sunday was calm with top cover but very hot. Monday wet until late afternoon followed by Hercules drops. Rest of that week unknown. The middle Saturday was promising at first but developed heavy showers, Sunday was windy and overcast. The Christmas dinner was held on Sunday evening, with about 50 customers. Monday bank holiday was permanently dull with a cold northerly wind. Rest of that week unknown. I drove up to Sutton Bank on Saturday for the ICL Final and helped to retrieve Howard from a field of cows on a hilltop. Flew the Mini-Nimbus on Sunday, a task of about 180km in mostly blue conditions. We won the ICL trophy that year.

2001

I have no diary notes for this year, but there is only one flight in my log book on bank holiday Monday, a blue day when I did over 4hrs in the Mini-Nimbus, and Tom Lamb did nearly 3hrs after I landed. Despite the lack of clouds that must have been quite a day.

2000

The first Saturday was blue with small amounts of cirrus. Sunday was wettish and grey. Monday was mediocre with alto-cu. Tuesday was very good at first but deteriorated with rain later. On Wednesday Carole set off in the red K8 to do her 50km to Gransden Lodge with a stiff 20 knot tailwind and managed 5km downwind to Bicester. It was another day of gradually worsening conditions. Thursday was also difficult with heavy showers but I did some cloud flying up to 6,000ft. Friday was wet and stormy, but cleared up remarkably for the booked group in the evening. The middle weekend was pretty good ~ I did some more cloud flying on Saturday and pair-flew a 212km task with Claudia on Sunday. I was busy doing other things on Monday but it was the beginning of CFI Cris Emson's task week. Tuesday was a real mega day in which I did my fastest ever 300km in 3hr 15min. At least five other gliders completed the same task. On Wednesday I flew a shorter task before helping out with the Christmas Dinner in the evening. Thursday was blue and hot, and several pilots clocked up impressive numbers of kilometres on a multiple TP task (Howard won by a huge margin over everyone else). Friday was blue and stable with a low inversion, and preparations were in full swing for the Junior National Championship at Weston, due to start on the following day. The weekend coincided with the ICL Final at Husband's Bosworth. Saturday was very wet, with no flying either at Weston or HB. I flew from HB on Sunday and did a 204km task, but weather at Weston for the Juniors was not so good ~ everyone landed out.

1999

When the flying weeks began this year I had already been on holiday in Cornwall for two weeks previously with Fiona, Anthony and Joanne to see the eclipse of the sun (for which it was cloudy). The flying weeks started with some limited local soaring on Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday were wet with no flying. Rest of that week mediocre, but Saturday of the middle weekend was an excellent day. I did 358km to Bridgnorth and Chilbolton. Howard flew the same task in the Club Astir DMH, and Alex Jenkins flew the DG-100 (251). Graham was flying the big Nimbus (139). After this isolated good day, the weather for the second week was no better than

LEST WE FORGET THE HOSEPIPE BANS (contd.)

average and I didn't bother to fly again. I noted that Tom Lamb, Haste and Andy Butterfield among others were flying radio-controlled models off the soggy airfield, *quote*: "while we waited for proper flying weather" *unquote*. At the weekend Howard, Haste, Maz, George and others went to the ICL Final at Nympsfield and finished only 2 points behind the winners. Fiona and I went to Talgarth with Graham, Lynne and Tom Lamb. On Saturday the wind was virtually nil, and I flew for a couple of hours in very weak thermals and low cloudbase, but judging from the radio chatter the cross country conditions were much better back in England. Sunday was overcast.

1998

Detailed notes survive only for the first week, but it was fairly good on the whole. On Saturday I flew a 300km task from Enstone in the Janus with Richard Hall. After a beat-up finish at Enstone we scratched away again, then landed at Weston where Richard did another launch and a further 100km around Didcot and Silverstone with Peter Brooks. Sunday was mainly blue with small wispy clouds. Monday was flyable but not soarable. On Tuesday I did 215km with Claudia in the Acro, in company with Maz flying the Pilatus. Wednesday was completely blue but moderately soarable. Thursday was windy but scratchable. Friday was still windy but with magnificent streets in the afternoon. I flew the Acro twice out to Moreton-in-Marsh, the first time with Paul Rogers, the second time with Claudia, except we came unstuck and landed at Enstone on the way home. I was unpopular at Weston because we were one K13 short for Friday night flying ~ the other one was having a wing re-covered after Haste's argument with a cloud. On Saturday I did an out-and-return to Bidford in the Mini Nimbus, leading Brian Payne in his DG-100. Claudia attempted 50km in the red K8 but landed out at Little Horwood. Sunday was a wet day. I didn't make any notes about the second week because I was back at work. Over the bank holiday weekend the ICL Final was at Bicester, but Fiona and I went to Talgarth with the Barretts and the Hanlons. It was flat calm with hazy sunshine on both days.

1997

This was it, the last of the great August flying weeks that we all think we remember, but can't quite believe how long ago it happened. A remarkable 11-day period in my log book lists some 32 flying hours and nearly 1,500km:

- 8 Aug: 100km around Didcot-Silverstone in one dolphin without circling in 55 mins.
- 9 Aug: 309km task around Cambridge and Saltby.
- 10 Aug: 200km to Melton Mowbray and back.
- 11 Aug: I flew a visiting DG-500 with Steve Evans.
- 12 Aug: 107km around Didcot-Silverstone with Mark Thomas in the Acro.
- 13 Aug: 100km to Membury and back with Lynne Jones in the Acro.
- 14 Aug: 322km task with Brian Payne in the Acro.
- 15 Aug: 305km task with Alan Lapworth in the Acro.
- 16 Aug: 11,400ft cloud climb in the Mini Nimbus.
- 18 Aug: two more Acro flights with very strong lift to 7,200ft and 5,800ft.

What happened before that?

I'm starting to run out of detailed evidence, but the mid-nineties definitely enjoyed a succession of good summers. The 1996 and 1995 seasons were both acclaimed by various reports in *Final Glide*. This was the era of newspaper stories about water shortages, hosepipe bans and empty reservoirs. The heatwave in August 1995 gave daily temperatures over 30 degrees and occasionally 8,000ft cloudbases. On the 23rd the TV news reported that rain fell for the first time in 35 days. That's five weeks without rain. Can you imagine that in 2009? Certain parts of East Anglia were classifiable as semi-desert under EU subsidy regulations, receiving less rainfall than Israel.

1994 was memorable for the mega-weekend of 13-14 August when vast distances were possible on both days. The entire grid of 48 competitors at a Bicester competition got round a 500km task, the first 25 of them beating the previous UK record. In both 1994 and 1993 I flew 500km tasks from Weston on the same date ~ August 13th.

I can't say much about the 1992 flying weeks but there are only two unremarkable flights in my log book. In August 1991 I was "sniffing" for the Open Class National competition at Enstone, and did several good tasks alongside them including a 375km. I also went to the ICL Final at Dunstable and did a 382km task from there.

In the Augs of the 80s I usually took part in the Enstone Regional competition, which always overlapped the OGC flying weeks. We can get some idea of the general weather conditions by looking at the number of competition flying days in each year. Nearly all of these included at least one task over 300km, and sometimes two or three:

- 1990: seven days out of nine
- 1989: seven days out of nine
- 1988: four days out of nine
- 1987: six days out of nine
- 1985: six days out of nine
- 1984: seven days out of nine
- 1983: four days out of nine.
- 1982: five days out of nine.

I missed the 1986 competition because I was too busy moving house, but I did a 6hr local soaring flight on Aug.17th and a 315km task on Aug.24th. The 1984 season as a whole was particularly good.

The summary

So, getting back to my original question, are we suffering from RTSS (rose tinted spec syndrome) or were things really better in the good old days? Let's summarise the average conditions we've had in the last 25+ years. I'm trying to achieve a generalisation here, applying to the OGC flying weeks in particular and *not* to the season as a whole, and ignoring the single good days embedded in wet and rainy spells:

- 1982-91: a good decade with perhaps only two years below average.
- 1992: unknown but probably nothing special.
- 1993-94: possibly good although evidence is limited.
- 1995-96: definitely good.

1997: very good.
1998: quite good first week, unknown second week.
1999: average?
2000: fairly good especially second week.
2001: unknown but probably nothing special.
2002: fairly poor although evidence is limited
2003: maybe a bit better than average.
2004-2005: average.
2006-2007: poor.
2008: still below average.
2009: average, although usually too windy for decent cross-country flying.

No, I don't think it's just RTSS that makes us long for the way things used to be. The historical record tells us the weather was better 10-15 years ago. In recent years we have become accustomed to grasping at the isolated good days sandwiched between deluges and gales, which unfortunately benefit only the lucky few who happen to be off work on the right day. The unseasonal influence of the jet stream is evident going by the repeated mentions of wind and rain.

All the experts say it's too soon to blame long-term climate change. Nature is merely balancing the dry conditions of the eighties and nineties with the wet and stormy decade we've just been through. If the experts are right, then sooner or later the trend will swing back to more settled and predictable August weather. If they're wrong the storms and floods can only get worse, and maybe we should all consider joining a chess club. Only time will tell.
