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Editor's Introduction

BY EIFION HERBERT

As 2020 draws to a close, I'm sure many of you will share with your editor's sentiments that this is one year we are glad to see the back of. However, in compiling this year's Final Glide, what has stood out as remarkable to me, is not what we have missed – though there is much – but what we as a club have achieved, despite a global pandemic and attendant control measures. We have a new launch point vehicle, some new (to us) aircraft. We've welcomed new members and have seen OUGC return to Weston. We've had achievements from first flights to first solos to Bronze and Silver badges claimed. New pilots and new instructors alike have started their training. And this we have done in a rapidly changing regulatory environment, all while keeping members safe and legal. I'm sure I speak for the whole membership when I offer a huge expression of gratitude to the committee and club officers, without whom we simply could not operate. 'Thankyou' does not seem to begin to cover it, but here is all the same. Thankyou.

Thanks also to all those who have contributed material for Final Glide, without you there would be nothing to read over Christmas. I hope you all enjoy reading this year's edition as much as I've enjoyed editing it. I've now rambled on long enough, so without further ado, I bring you Final Glide 2020 – The Lockdown Edition

Chairman's Report

BY MARTIN BROWN

This time last year everything seemed pretty normal. We had enjoyed a very pleasant and well attended Christmas party in Bicester, and we were all looking forward to whatever the new year would bring us...

As tropical storms Ciara and Dennis brought disruption in the form of wind and rain a story was building in the media about a highly contagious and lethal virus sweeping through the population of China. At the time we could never have imagined the disruption this virus was going to cause us - and the rest of our planet.

Gradually our vocabulary began to evolve, with words like Coronavirus and COVID 19 entering our conversations

Then came the concept of 'social distancing' and an end to hugs and handshakes. Before long we were talking of lockdowns, working from home and something called furlough. By the evening of Monday March 23rd, we were being told to stay at home to prevent the NHS becoming overwhelmed.

Needless to say, the introduction of lockdown caught us all by surprise. We sort of knew it was coming, but the speed and scale of its introduction found us unprepared. One day we could operate a gliding club with a bit of caution, the next we were breaking the law if we ventured out of our own homes without a good excuse. At Weston there was still food in the fridge, and everything was still where we left it two days before. We put together a small team of local members who could go to the club for their 'daily exercise', keeping an eye on security as well as emptying the fridge! Boris Johnson originally told us we would be living like this for three weeks, but I think we all knew it would be longer.

Like many businesses we were concerned just how long we could stay afloat whilst we could not generate any income from flying. A grant from the council went some way to allaying those fears but we still had no idea for how long we would be unable to fly. Gradually everyone's flying currency began to lapse, and we looked to the BGA to do a deal with the CAA and the DfT to agree some sort of way back when we were allowed out again. On the bright side, the weather was amazing, and we got 6-month extensions on our MOTs!

As if things could not get any worse, we began to hear news that our closest neighbour, Windrushers Gliding Club at Bicester, had been unable to reach an agreement with their Landlord and that the future of Bicester Gliding Centre as a whole was uncertain to say the least. Various options were explored by their management including the possibility of a sort of merger between OGC and Hinton in the Hedges that might provide a home for significant numbers of their members. Regrettably, no deal was struck and by the end of May the entire operation had been disbanded and broken up. This would have been a traumatic situation at any time, but we should remember that all this occurred at a time of national lockdown when even face to face meetings were out of the question.

For its part, OGC was happy to provide a new home for as many former Bicester pilots as possible but we had to consider our existing members as well.

As a committee we were very conscious that OGC has a particular character and that is something we wanted to preserve. If you have not been to Weston since Lockdown 1 you will not recognise the place when you return. The influx of new members who have joined us as a result of the Bicester closure has unquestionably had an impact on the number of people around the club and at the launch point. All these new members have brought a refreshing influx of energy to our club and, from what I have seen, they have done so with a respect for the existing character. I am sure that over time we can all learn a lot from each other.

Another unfortunate victim of the Bicester closure was the Oxford University Gliding Club. This small but active club has been based at Bicester for many years and they had a well-developed operation there, fitting in with the bigger host club and bringing a steady supply of youthful enthusiasm. When it became clear that they too would need a new home they approached us to see if we could find a way to work together. After numerous Zoom meetings we agreed that OGC would welcome OUGC into the fold. The smaller club owns both a K21 and an Astir and with some careful reorganisation of the hangar we were able to fit their K21 indoors whilst the Astir will live outside in its trailer. In a normal year OUGC would now be well into their busiest time with regular trial sessions drawn from the university's intake of new students. The pesky coronavirus has meant that this just hasn't been possible this year so for the moment we haven't yet seen the full effect of hosting the university club but hopefully, when things begin to get back to normal, we will soon see a lot more activity amongst our new friends.

It would be wrong to think that this year has been nothing more than a series of disasters and should be written off.

Whilst it is true that we have missed out on a lot of flying and socialising we were able to make use of the later summer months and some good progress was achieved. Cross country flying was significantly curtailed this year but there were still a few crackers flown including a tour of the south coast by a number of our intrepid pilots. We have managed a couple of first solos and numerous Silver legs as well as seeing some great progress from students new and old. Oh, and we've got a new bus! The government's Tier system and the likelihood of a third lockdown of some sort would suggest that it could be spring again before we can look forward to anything like a normal operation but hopefully, once the vaccination has done its work, we can look forward to a productive year next year.

Enjoy your socially distanced Christmas everyone. Let us hope 2021 brings a return to normality and lots of gliding!

Martin Brown, Chairman.

Women's World Gliding Championship, Lake Keepit

BY CLAUDIA HILL

I flew my first Women's Worlds (in France, in 2013) when I was still a full member of OGC, and instantly got hooked. International comps are a huge amount of fun – a bit like a giant international school exchange without the weird host parents, and often in an interesting place. And as with any comp, all the pilot must do is get up, have breakfast, fly, land, shower, have dinner, sleep. Everything else is usually organised for us (which is just as well because doing the above almost non-stop for nearly three weeks is quite exhausting).

WWGC 2019 in Lake Keepit, Australia, was to be my third time competing as a member of the British Team. What an opportunity. And what a massive undertaking, from a logistics, cost and time point of view.

SuperCrew™ Nick and I arrived in Australia as soon as work and budget would allow us to so I could get some much-needed practice in, as disappointing weather in the UK as well as time constraints had limited my ability to practice beforehand. We flew into Melbourne to pick up a rental car and an LS4 trailer we had kindly been lent (with support from Matt Gage, whom some of you may remember from the early to mid-2000s when he learnt to fly gliders at OGC and who now lives in Benalla), and we started our adventure with a quick 11-hour drive north from Benalla to Lake Keepit.

Liz (18m Class) and Ayala (Standard Class) were already at Lake Keepit, and unfortunately so was the smoke from the bushfires. The fires were far enough away not to threaten us directly, but close enough for the smoke to affect us. So instead of two weeks of solid practice I only managed a couple of cross-countries and some local-ish soaring. On several days before the comp, we couldn't fly at all because the visibility was too poor.

At least I had the chance to explore the area and conditions a little bit before the comp started. And for the comp itself the conditions improved enough for us to have 10 flying days, 9 of which were contest days, plus three official practice days.



Claudia with the rest of the British team at the opening ceremony



Dust anyone?

New South Wales had been experiencing a draught for the last three years, so there was not much left of the lake that gives Lake Keepit Soaring Club its name, and what apparently used to be a lush, fertile landscape was a stark but beautiful patchwork of different shades of red, brown and terracotta. Any wind would whip up massive dust storms on the airfield, and of course every single thermal was very visible as it crossed the field in the shape of a large dust devil.

Lake Keepit apparently is different from places like Narromine and Benalla in that it doesn't provide uniform conditions over a large area. The days got going reasonably late (1-2pm), so we didn't do massive tasks (usually around 300 to 500km depending on class – have a look on Soaring Spot <https://bit.ly/2GFy2cf> if interested). The conditions were varied: often starting out blue, which I initially found quite difficult (Where do you find the triggers when everything just looks brown? – Farms, lines of trees, little hills seemed to work.), some cu later on, and often good convergence lines on the ridges. There are several different ridges and mountain ranges to consider – it never got boring!

Where do you find the triggers when everything just looks brown?



On one day we all set off and during the flight visibility got worse and worse – unfortunately, right over unlandable hilly terrain. Eventually the organisers cancelled the day remotely as per the local rules – this had been agreed to allow for worsening smoke problems –, but now we all had to get back to Lake Keepit, either the long way round or back through the

hills and the smoke. Not a pleasant experience when you can't really see landing options and know there aren't a lot of them, but we all made it.

Being on final glide from 100km away was also a new experience, as was a sustained 11kt climb to 10,000ft. My perception of scale got very distorted, too – when you do most of the flight between 5000 and 10,000ft it is easy to underestimate distances. Mount Kaputar, which felt like it was about 30km to the north, was actually 70km away, and the Pilliga Scrub, a vast expanse of forest west of Keepit, was also rather further away than I'd thought. The sun, of course, was in the wrong place. Who'd put it up north?



In 42 degrees heat I was glad to have several damp cooling scarves and headgear. I made sure I stayed hydrated (1.5 l of sugar/salt hydration solution beforehand, 3 l while flying, another 1.5 l before bedtime seemed to work). I hid from the sun by always wearing long-sleeved shirts and trousers, a hat and factor 50.

A non-flying, highlight was the wildlife. It was like a veritable zoo around the club: kangaroos on the airfield (I had to modify my landing area on more than

one occasion), a koala which spent the whole duration of the comp sitting in a eucalyptus tree watching us with mild disdain. Pelicans and wedge-tailed eagles to share thermals with, parakeets and all sorts of other colourful birds, a local echidna, iguanas, lizards, and even a couple of snakes.



Overall, as a team we got the Silver medal, and I came 6th, which I'm very happy with, especially considering the stress, cost and anguish of getting there. Ayala came 3rd in Standard Class and Liz 4th in the 18m Class.



My highlights:

Thermalling with a whole gaggle of pelicans

Gold Height in thermals below cloudbase

356km at 123kph in a dry LS4

11kts average to 10,000ft

The "international school exchange" atmosphere – it's always great to reconnect with friends from the other teams and to make new ones

Thanks must go to:

Liisi and Nick for lending me WH, which was shipped out in a container in September and came back in April.

Max Kirschner for taking charge of the biggest logistical challenge, namely to get our gliders to Australia and back – it would all have been even more stressful if he hadn't organised the container shipping for us.

Claire Scutter and Andy Maddocks, John the LS4 owner from Tocumwal, and all the kind people from Lake Keepit Soaring Club who lent us cars, trailers, hangar space, tools and a hand – what an exceptionally helpful bunch, they really bent over backwards to help us.

Our crews Nick, Charlie, Ian, and our team captain Jeremy – we couldn't have done it without you!

And of course, the comp organisers, and everyone at home who supported us behind the scenes and cheered us on.



Storm over Kaputar

From tense to smiling faces: trial lessons and the basic instructor course

BY JONATHAN EDGE

In the second half of this year, I did my training to become a basic instructor (BI). I wanted to share with you my experience with becoming a BI and why I think it was a nice thing to do.

The BI rating allows one to teach the very basics of gliding. This includes the effects of the controls and the basics of lookout, but not much beyond that. It is designed to allow one to conduct trial lessons, for example during our Friday night experiences, but it is also a potential first step towards becoming a "proper" instructor, for example an associate category instructor. I had wanted to do the BI rating for some time, but I was lacking the necessary experience and had to wait until I had at least 50 hours of solo flying. The minimum requirements for obtaining the BI rating are the bronze rating, the cross-country endorsement and 50 hours of solo flying (technically, being the pilot in command, but for most people who are not instructors, that means solo flying).

Late this summer I asked Neil whether he would let me do the BI course, and also prepare me for it. After some reflection he consented. Most of the training for becoming a BI is done at one's home airfield, so Weston on the Green for me. This means that by consenting to let me do the BI course, Neil signed up for many flights with me - hence the need for a little time for reflection. After most of the training has been done and the CFI is satisfied that one is ready, a course is arranged with a BI coach, during which one formerly demonstrates that one is able to safely conduct an enjoyable trial lesson for a student. My BI course was done jointly by Pete Stratten and Neil. Thanks to Neil now having done the training to be a BI coach, we now have our very own person to run BI training.

The preparation for the BI course involves about 15 to 20 flights with the CFI and possibly other instructors. The main objective of these flights was for me to show that my overall flying was good, that I can easily handle situations like cable breaks and spinning, and finally that I could conduct a trial lesson. The first two items, the good flying and handling of cable breaks and other potentially critical situations, are very similar to what I encountered in my bronze exam.

The preparation of a trial lesson is the truly new thing.

In order to conduct a trial lesson, I had to first learn what is called the "patter". This is a standardised text which is used for a trial lesson. I literally learned this text off by heart. At first, I was surprised that one was supposed to learn the text by heart, but I soon found out why this is useful. Once I was able to recite this text without thinking about it, I could talk about the lesson without spending too much mental energy on it, and then concentrate on the flying. So while at first it seems strange to learn an entire lesson off by heart, it does make sense.

After a couple of flights with Neil to convince him that my general flying was sufficiently good, I was ready to start practising trial lessons. I had at this point learnt the patter off by heart and I naïvely thought that all I needed to do was to fly and recite this text. Of course, I very quickly discovered that flying and then remembering the patter at the same time was quite tricky. I don't find learning anything off by heart and then recalling it particularly easy, so at first I had to spend a huge amount of effort recalling the text as I was flying. It meant that my recall was quite bad at first and I was

thinking that it would have been easier to just make up something as I went along. However, with increased practice it became apparent that having this prepared text does significantly reduce the mental workload.

Practising the patter whilst flying was important, but I also realised that I needed to get much more confidence with the patter even on the ground. This I did, by, for example, reciting the patter to myself while I was cycling to the airfield or whilst skateboarding around Oxford during my afternoon breaks. First of all, it provided an additional opportunity to fix the patter in my mind, but also, it allowed me to practice the patter whilst doing something else; pedalling and focusing on the road or keeping my balance on the skateboard.

You have control

The next step, after talking through the patter whilst in the air, is to hand over controls to the student. In this case, Neil was the student, or at least pretending to be the student. Sooner or later the "student" will start flying quite badly and I had to decide at which point I would be taking control again. This is actually a reasonably tricky question which at first I didn't get quite right. During one of my early "trial lessons" I quickly got nervous when the "student" started flying badly. I was told afterwards that I should have let him go on for a bit longer so the "student" could have experienced a little more what happens as you operate the controls. During my next "trial lesson" I took the message a little too much to heart and possibly let the "student" go on for a little too long before taking control. I was told afterwards that had there been a real student in front of me, that student might have scared himself with all the nose-up, nose-down motion he was doing whilst turning. Getting this roughly right of course requires some experience. The most important thing at all times is to never end up in a situation which could genuinely become dangerous. This is something which is emphasised repeatedly during the BI training.

Another pitfall I had to learn to avoid was getting distracted by the student. Neil of course tried his utmost to distract me during critical phases of the flight to see how I would react. For example, just before coming into land he would start pointing out all kinds of things on the ground to me, tell me about his extensive simulator flying experience, ask whether he could have another go at the controls etc. The most important thing of course is not to get distracted and land the glider safely. Similarly, Neil tried to distract me during launch, to then give me a cable break at an awkward height. All this is very good exercise for just concentrating on flying the glider safely, no matter what happens. I am overall very grateful for being subjected to this, since hopefully this will make me a better pilot even when flying just my own.

So after about 15 to 20 of these flights I went to do the BI course. It is usually a one or two-day course in which one shows the BI coach that one can reliably do all the things one has practised at home with the CFI. There is some theory in the morning, which mainly emphasises again how important it is to fly very safely when doing a trial lesson.

I found the entire experience very enjoyable. Hopefully, I will soon be able to take up my first customer. I already have a willing volunteer in my girlfriend, and as we live in the same household, I should be able to share the glider with her, even during our current Covid times. I also hope I can continue with further instructor training once I have gained a little experience with basic instructing. The only sad thing about the BI rating is that it will be downgraded to an IFP (Introductory Flight Pilot) rating in October 2021. Following that, one will still be able to take other people for a pleasure

flight, but unfortunately it won't be possible to teach them the basics of the controls any more. However, as I very much enjoyed the training it will have still been worth doing the course, despite the coming expiry date.



Jonathan with CFI Neil Swinton on completing his BI course. Both still smiling!

Lockdown Photography Competition Recap

BY EIFION HERBERT

Back in the heady days of spring 2020, the nation was plunged into lockdown to help control the spread of Coronavirus which has curtailed so much of what we regard as our normal lives. To keep members interacting with one another and feeling connected as we entered isolation, the committee organised a weekly photography competition, allowing us to enjoy each other's work, as well as seeing beautiful images of happier times. Here follows a recap of the winners, along with some words from the creators about their images.

WEEK 1 – CLUB OPERATIONS - PAUL SMITH



A crack in the canopy was spotted during a normal DI. Cracks can easily grow quickly unless they have somewhere to go. Here Jon's drilling a small hole at the end of the crack to stop it spreading. Without this being spotted during the DI it could have been much worse – Paul Smith

WEEK 2 – WILDLIFE AT THE AIRFIELD - EIFION HERBERT



As a photographer coming to Weston is always a treat for me, as I often get to combine the two genres of photography that interest me the most, aviation and wildlife. In our increasingly urbanised world, airfields are becoming a valuable haven for wildlife, something that I always try to show in my images – Eifion Herbert

WEEK 3 OGC ON TOUR - PAUL SMITH



This was my car on Aspres airfield in the Alps. We'd just arrived after two-day drive to the south of France and we were looking forward to some brilliant alpine flying. As is often usual during the summer the day can end in terrific thunderstorms and our arrival heralded a cracker resulting in the sun setting against the mountains framed by a full rainbow – Paul Smith

WEEK 3 HONOURABLE MENTION – LIISI LAKS



Cambridge expedition back in 2018. We had such a lovely time over there and everybody made us feel very welcomed. It was the hottest summer week in the UK – Liisi Laks

WEEK 4 LANDSCAPES BY PAUL MORRISON



Although I prefer a DSLR, the one thing that iPhones do brilliantly is panorama photographs and returning to the launch point one day when most of the members were airborne, this I thought summed up gliding perfectly! What is it someone wiser once said, it's better to be on the ground wishing you were up there than vice versa? – Paul Morrison

WEEK 5 AERIAL SHOTS – PAUL SMITH



This one is looking west towards sunset over Snowdonia. The light was very nice. Not sure how high, but looks over 15000ft – Paul Smith

WEEK 5 HONOURABLE MENTION – DAVE BRAY



My submission was taken by my crew at the 2018 Club Class Nationals, held at Dunstable. It's actually a racing finish following a 320km cross country task - I think I finished 13th out of 42 that day with an average speed of 94.4kph. The aircraft is a H301 Libelle from 1968 – Dave Bray

I hope you have enjoyed a look back at the summer photo competition. Here's hoping that in 2021 we get the opportunity to go out and take many more new gliding photos.

If you would like to browse all the entries, they are available on Neil's Flickr page here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybxzvams>

Pensioner to Pilot

BY GEOFF JONES

Gliding is a sport for people of all ages from tech savvy teenagers to silver grey sky-surfers. I am definitely in the second group. My route into gliding began at the age of 60 in the late summer of 2014 on a misty morning flying with Alan Smith in a motor glider at Bicester.



Shortly afterwards my employer Terry Kelloway at KTwo in Haddenham gave me a 5-day gliding course also at Bicester. This was for completing 25 years of service with the company. My instructors were Alan Smith, Dave Smith, Julian Bane, David Perkins and Adam Berrisford. I still remember those first winch launches, being initially stunned and pinned back in the seat, flying over Bicester with its ever-expanding housing estates and warehouses.

In August 2015 I joined pastures new at OGC and began flying at Weston on the Green. Cecilia Craig was the first brave soul to sit in the back and she wrote the memorable comments: "Control coordination was not great, so this made the launch difficult. Unusual landing area challenged him."

I'm glad to say I did eventually improve my flying to the point where Cecilia could say "I love flying with you Geoff."

I had found the perfect hobby for someone in the twilight years of his working career. In July 2019 after I retired, I made a return visit to Bicester and flew with Paula Aitken. She wrote "You tend to be a little heavy handed with the aileron so try to use less or more rudder to match. Try to fly more by 'attitude' rather than looking and chasing the ASI. Keep in the float after roundout."

It was not the only attitude Paula sorted out.

"Either you want to fly solo or you don't. If the instructor is giving you 100% you need to reciprocate."

This proved to be very good advice.



Empty back seat at last!

After many happy hours exploring the fields of Oxfordshire, and managing not to land out in one, John Hanlon and Martin Brown sent me solo. It was a memorable day in October 2020. A beautiful sunny late autumn afternoon with just a hint of a crosswind. How fitting it was that Martin sent me solo. At morning briefings, he was always the one cheekily asking:

“Ah Geoff’s here, aren’t you solo yet?”

I know what you are thinking: Why did it take me so long and over 200 launches? The main reason was that I had to take a break of two and a half years, and that older students take longer to learn (more on this later). My progress rate must have improved when I retired as I was awarded the OGC John Gibbons Cup for improved student in 2020. I had more time and flew more often. As Paula pointed out motivation was also a factor. I ended up flying with 38 different instructors in all. Some of these were at Talgarth, Hinton, Husbands Bosworth and on a very special day at Omarama.

A chance conversation with Tai, a young lady from the Oxford University Gliding Club just after my solo prompted my interest in how we learn a new skill like flying gliders - and why it is so good for our health. Our brains are truly remarkable. The brain of a new-born baby immediately receives inputs from its five senses and gradually that baby grows and makes sense of the world around it, its perception of its conscious world formed from all those experiences. The human brain also has a remarkable ability to adjust to a new experience like gliding. New experiences grab the brain’s attention. The initial rush of the winch launch releases us into the world of three-dimensional movement. We are introduced to the coordinated use of stick and rudder and taught the skill of being able to land back at the launch point in a safe way. All this achieved with just hand and eye coordination plus a very occasional glance at the altimeter and ASI. Flying by the seat of your pants!

We rely on the neural plasticity of our brains to create new connections and these actually create physical changes to our brains. Lots of repetition is required to establish these neural pathways. They are like high-speed broadband links speeding up our reactions and enabling us to cope with additional mental workloads.

I can remember memorizing the route of a car journey just from the pattern of the corners and junctions when I was too small to see out of the windows (pre child seats!). It takes London black cab drivers up to 4 years to learn ‘the knowledge.’ It has been found that this process of deep learning only takes place when that person is strongly motivated to achieve that skill. The chemical process is not activated without the desire. The cab driver certainly has the incentive - he needs the knowledge to earn a living. Some of these neural pathways become so deeply embedded it is very difficult to change them. Try riding a bicycle which has reverse steering. It is virtually impossible and takes months to make any improvement.

Changing from driving a manual car to an automatic and back again is tricky. We all know the effect of driving a car along a familiar route and arriving with no memory of the process of driving. Car drivers have difficulty at first making balanced turns because they are used to pressing heavy clutch pedals. That is one advantage of being a cadet pilot.

Use it or lose it

As our brains age this deep-seated learning process slows down but the more we use it, the better it is for our health and wellbeing.

Hence the expression 'Use it or lose it.'

I think gliding with all its other aspects of socialising, volunteering and competing at club level is one of the best ways of 'using it'. Thank you to all my instructors for not 'losing it' flying with me!

Artificial intelligence has now reached the point where an autonomous computer flown aircraft can shoot down even the best top gun pilot every time. You can teach an old dog new tricks, but it takes longer. In the gliding and sailplane world the human brain remains top dog. Even an old one.



The old stalwart K13, which has seen countless pilots take their first solo flights

Committee Notes 2019 – 2020

BY DAVE BRAY

NOVEMBER 19: We welcomed Ben Vickars to the committee as an ordinary member. Plans were made for the 2020 season, with Friday evening group flying a particular focus, alongside changes to the club's online sales and marketing profiles. The Winch was offline for its big refurbishment and refit with dyneema cable. Results from the end of year members survey were discussed with focus on the Launch Point Vehicle (LPV), the vehicle workshop, the club house and the surrounding area. Targets for the upcoming year were set.

JANUARY 20: After another Christmas marketing campaign on social media, it was a positive start to 2020 with higher trial lesson sales than the previous year but the wet weather limited flying. Membership of 80 was considered a good place for the club. The Treasure compiled the GiftAid forms with many volunteers who give their time for the club offering donations for a claim to HMRC. The CFI briefs the committee on the new Sailplane Licencing (SPL) requirements and what it means for members. The fleet wide FLARM upgrade is coming along nicely with the K13 scheduled next. The new winch cable system is live – initial reports encouraging! The club's phone line was converted to VoIP tech ditching our reliance on old coper cable. A club house refurbishment sub-committee was formed to look at updating the facilities. Club expeditions to the Long Mynd and the Alps were approved following strong interest. Approval was given to look into a replacement LPV. In other news, we learnt that our neighbours at Bicester GC had been advised of their lease being terminated at the end of June.

MARCH: Corona appears on the agenda for the first time, moving the meeting to a virtual one - the committee had trialled this back in 2018/19 so it wasn't the big shock that many others found it. The new virus had been a topic of discussion for the previous month with signage and hand gel appearing around the club in an effort to keep everyone safe, however, on the 21st the committee officially suspended flying a week before the country entered Lockdown #1. This was not before the club had acquired a new LPV, refitted for purpose by a hard-working team.

APRIL: The committee moved from 1 meeting every 6 weeks to having 3 meetings during April in what was a very fluid situation. Various cost saving measures were implemented, including the clubhouse refurb plans put on hold. A security team kept a check on the club during our absence during which the rabbits took over the trailer park. The club submitted its GiftAid claim to HMRC. The committee opened discussions with OUGC and BGC following rumours that their negotiations were not proceeding as hoped.

MAY: With the end in sight to Lockdown #1, the restart plan was put together with work done to provide the RAF with suitable paperwork to prove we could resume flying. Our membership secretary was kept busy with enquiries from BGC members, and discussions with OUGC to understand their needs were well underway. Nationally, flying was legally allowed to resume in mid-May, with RAF approval for us coming a couple of weeks later following an intensive parachuting program by the armed forces at WotG. While we waited, a team replaced much of the boundary fence by the hangar.

JULY: Membership levels had climbed to 96 flying members including a number of instructors and juniors although we said farewell to a number of members including Vukan who had served on the committee coordinating all things marketing. Ops on the airfield were very different to pre-covid times with the committee reviewing ever changing restrictions and trying to balance flight safety with viral precautions. The club's Astir (DKR) fell victim to a heavy landing but the club's inspectors

were able to bring DMH out of storage to be flown the following week. BGC loaned K8 "EED" to us which helped get more solo pilots back in the air during the good weather. OGC officially welcomed back OUGC to WotG following 41 years away. A tidy of the vehicle workshop was planned after the scrapping of the old winch and LPV. Arrangements for a Special General Meeting were made to allow the CASC compliant changes to the constitution to be voted on, this went ahead successfully at the end of the month. With 15 or so "juniors", a Junior coordinator was appointed with a review of documentation begun. Looking to the future, the committee discussed plans for various expeditions to Wales and the Alps.

AUGUST: The club acquired a second buggy to cope with the increased demand at the launch point. The CFI reported on future instructor training for four candidates. The Chief Technical Officer helped two candidates submit their inspector tickets. Covid-19 social rules expanding to groups of 30 meant the committee looked into restarting social functions. Restarting of trial lessons discussed with various risk assessments carried out. The Safeguarding team asked to implement the required DBS checks within the club. LOA and Brize Norton's ACP's submitted to the CAA.

SEPTEMBER: Various plans for the next year discussed with recovery from lockdown the priority. The club acquired a new 4x4 to supplement the existing ground equipment. A formal response objecting to the ACP was sent to the CAA. Increased covid-19 cases brought back the rule of 6, quashing any hope for club social events in 2020. We said goodbye to the RAF Officer who had looked after us for the previous two year after he was posted to Essex. Hopefully, his replacement will look after us as well.

OCTOBER: Membership levels the highest for over a decade with 101 flying members. Online Membership forms were approved, and implementation started. The CFI gained approval for running IFP and BI courses, with the club gaining a new IFP and BI as well. However, as Covid-19 cases rise instructor availability reduces. With more changes to government guidance and a new tier system among the latest challenges - the club appoints a Covid Officer to keep abreast of the rules. Further money saving ideas are discussed. Plans for the first virtual AGM are finalised, with the committee having had a very busy 2020!

Local Airspace News 2020

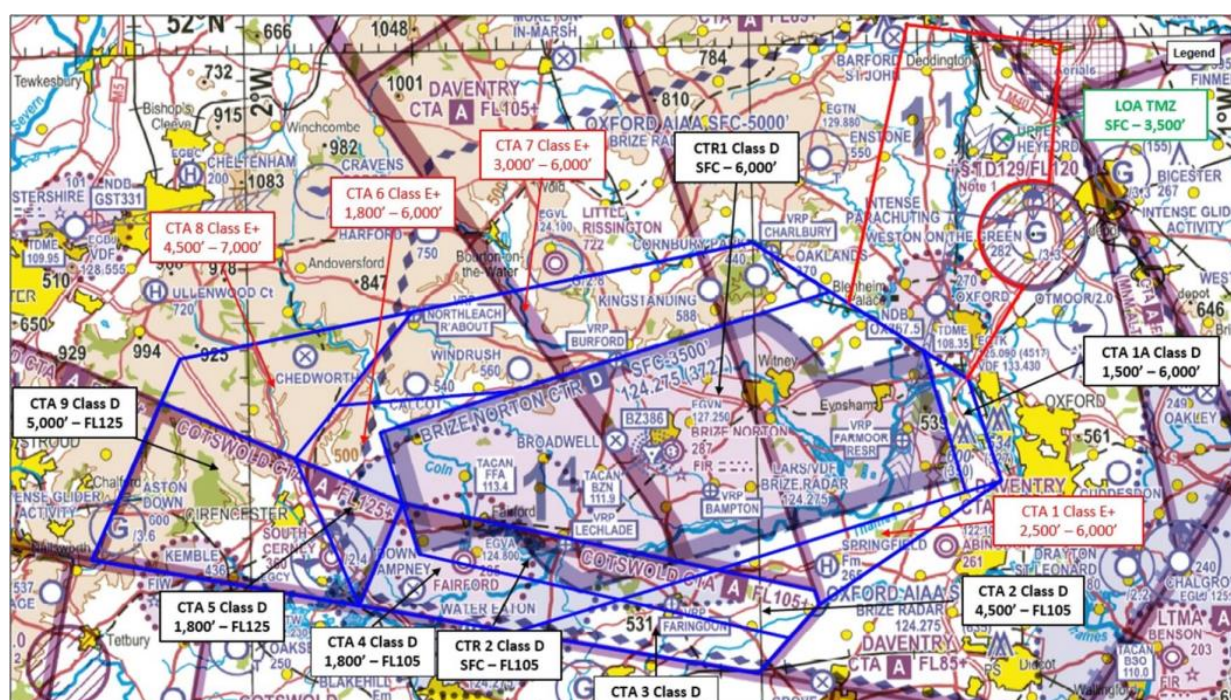
BY PAUL MORRISON

With the unprecedented and unimagined changes that 2020 has brought to both commercial and general aviation it is easy to forget that notwithstanding the reduction in air travel, the battle for the airspace which surrounds us continues.

As I am sure most appreciate, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is the UK's aviation regulator and there are two processes by which applications for permanent Airspace Change Proposals (ACP's) can be requested and approved.

CAP725 is the old process which was due to be phased out in Jan 2018 and CAP1616 its successor which is a fairer gateway-based process and arguably requires a higher standard of proof. There are a number of legacy CAP725 applications still under review including the two which interest us the most, more of this anon.

At the time of writing, from the respective part of the CAA website, I calculate that there are 20 outstanding ACPs under CAP725 and 187 under CAP1616. The impact that these may have on gliding generally & OGC specifically vary from the insignificant to the far more impactful and the most relevant for us are the two CAP725 ACPs currently awaiting determination for London Oxford Airport (LOA) and RAF Brize Norton. Of the two, it is the LOA one which has the potential to most directly affect OGC's operations due to its proposed Transponder Mandatory Zone (TMZ) directly abutting D129 and is what I will focus on here.



Proposed TMZ outlined in red.

For those not familiar with the story behind the LOA application, this starts in July 2012 when LOA got its radar system operational. According to LOA, this resulted in something of a shock in that they suddenly realised how much gliding and GA traffic they had in their area. It hadn't changed, they just now knew of it, however, in their own words, 'doing nothing was no longer an option' and they needed to create a 'known traffic environment' in order to be safely able to continue to offer the

lucrative services that they wanted to, rather than perhaps abandoning the procedural (i.e. IFR) approaches to runway 19 in Class G airspace over Upper Heyford and the surrounding area.

Fast forward now to late 2017 and LOA hastily submits its ACP under the obsolete CAP725 process before its planned withdrawal. Notwithstanding the then Secretary of State for Transport's advice that it expected airspace sponsors such as LOA to follow the new guidance of the replacement CAP1616 and apply it retrospectively, LOA did not do this and disappointingly as regulator, the CAA did not hold LOA to account for seeking to exploit the old process. Between December 2017 and April 2018 LOA engaged in a limited consultation exercise during which time interested stakeholders were invited to provide commentary and feedback on the LOA proposal. Both as individuals and as a Club, OGC responded to the consultation exercise.

For those not familiar with the CAP725 ACP process the way it works will come as a surprise. Essentially, the sponsor undertakes a consultation exercise for which it then summarises the results and whether or not it chose to act upon or disregard the comments received in a final summary document to the CAA. Based on sponsor's own summary, the CAA as regulator then decides whether or not to grant the sponsor the airspace it has sought.

Having published its final TMZ proposal in July 2020 (and having chosen to disregard most of the comments received from stakeholders such as OGC, the GAA, BMAA and the BGA) the LOA ACP is currently at what the CAA refer to as 'Stage 5' (Regulatory Decision). Therefore, we are all awaiting the CAA's determination of this ACP.

As illustrated by the 'Combined Proposal' extract from the final ACP submitted by RAF Brize Norton, you will note that LOA's proposal is to introduce a Transponder Mandatory Zone (TMZ) from the north eastern edge of the extended BZN zone out to Croughton and Barford St John. This is proposed to extend from surface to 3,500' and whilst not encompassing D129 it abuts the western edge of the Danger Zone and therefore to be able to leave D129 in anything other than an easterly direction will require either the glider to be suitably equipped or to operate within the constraints of an as yet unknown 'Letter of Agreement' (LoA) between LOA and OGC / 22 Group RAF.

Much weight has been given by LOA to wanting to work 'with' the other airspace users and there has been a suggestion of a 'glider box' over Upper Heyford that could be activated by arrangement as required, however to date nothing concrete has been proposed. It is clear that OGC's negotiation position on any LoA post CAA approval will be weaker than before it is determined and part of OGC's representation to the CAA was therefore that this should be a condition of any approval.

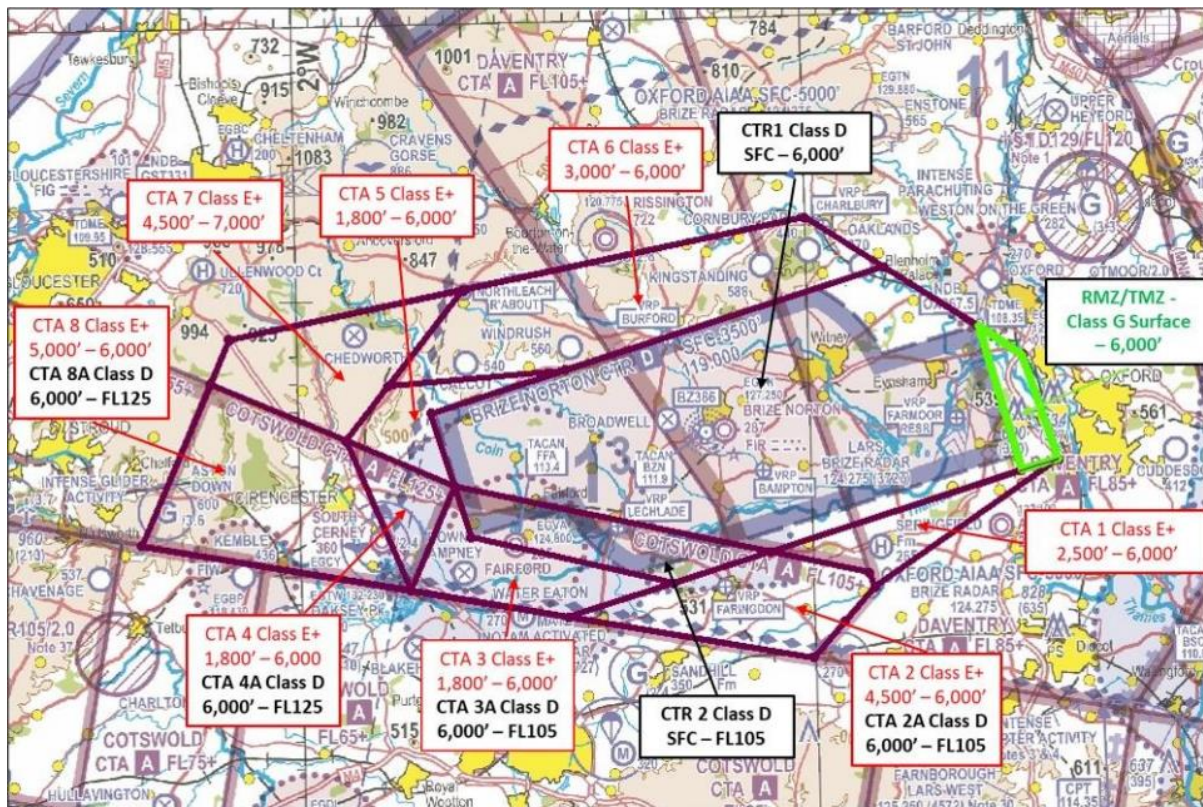
Stage 5 of CAP725 does not allow for further stakeholder engagement but notwithstanding this, various stakeholders including OGC, GAA and the BMAA have all written to the CAA setting out various issues with the process that LOA have followed and arguing that they have not satisfied the criteria required by CAP725 and thus the ACP should be refused. Perhaps not unexpectedly the CAA have acknowledged OGC's 'Statement of Objection and Economic Impact Assessment' but have stated it would be inappropriate for them to provide any further comment lest it prejudices the outcome of their regulatory assessment of the ACP. If anyone wishes to read OGC's representation, please let me know.

On the 8th of September, the BGA wrote to the CAA requesting the CAA 'call in' the ACP for determination by the Secretary of State as any stakeholder is entitled to do so.

The CAA considered this and on the 29th of September it wrote to the DfT setting out its opinion on whether it met the criteria. On the 24th of November, the DfT wrote to the CAA, BGA and others

advising that in their opinion, it does not meet the minimum criteria for a determination by the Secretary of State. Perhaps we should not be surprised by this and must now await the CAA's determination. We can be assured that the club has done all it can to ensure that the concerns it has over the adverse impact the introduction of the proposed TMZ on OGC's operations will have been heard by the CAA.

Turning briefly now to the Brize Norton ACP this will affect cross-country flying more than local club flying, but it is still nonetheless another potential restriction and opportunity to create airspace choke points as illustrated by the proposed complicated extension to the existing zone. My understanding is that although this is a separate ACP to that of LOA, given its proximity it will be considered in parallel but will be determined separately and subsequently.



We will continue to monitor, and report any updates as we become aware but, in the meantime, please respond positively to any requests for help that may be made and if you hear something that you think the Committee may be unaware of, do please let us know.

Best wishes for Christmas and let us hope 2021 brings good news in so many ways.

Paul Morrison, Airspace Officer

A Five Hour Flight

BY HARRY REED-WALLER

Henry, Ollie and I got two Astirs and a Ka8 out for the day. The weather didn't look very good to start off with in the morning - it was grey, low cloud and overcast. After we finished doing the daily inspection on the gliders, we had our morning brief with Neil about the day. During the brief Richard Hall promised "Whoever does their five hours today, I'll get you a beer" - so I knew I had to try my best to get that free beer.

Once we got to the launch point the weather got a bit better. The cloud base looked higher and it was warm. Before we went flying, Henry got us each a walkie-talkie so that we could talk to each other without blocking the club frequency - but of course, Ollie forgot to put his in the Ka8. We waited a bit for the weather to get better and then it was time to go flying. Henry went up for thirty minutes to see what it was like. Once he landed, he said



Myself in DMH. I made sure I had a good look out and enough height before I took this photo

"Guys it's starting to get thermic, think we should set off now"

So, we did! I launched first at 10:38 and got 1,600ft off the launch. I quickly put the gear up, went towards Weston village and got an average of 2kt's. I called Henry on the radio saying that I have a 2kt thermal, but it was very weak. Once Henry and Ollie were up, we decided to stick with this 2kt thermal until we got higher enough to find others.

After half an hour of circling, we finally got to 3,500ft and we decided to leave our first thermal. Henry and I decided to go towards Oxford Road to find something, and we did. I managed to find a 4-5kt thermal which took us both to 4,200ft, and with that we decided to stick with this one as well. Henry radioed me saying "Harry there's a big jet at Oxford, and it looks like it's about to take off, shall we get closer to watch it take off?" I of course said yes. Once we watched the jet depart from Oxford (*ed's note – never closer than 2.5nm away!*), Henry and I went to Upper Heyford. We both found several thermals with an average of 3kt's and flew around Heyford for an hour.

So far, Henry and I were three hours into our five hours, but Ollie was an hour behind us having had to restart his attempt, and we lost sight of him before we went to Heyford. Suddenly, the thermals at Upper Heyford got weaker. We both found ourselves in a 1kt thermal desperate for height and I was still losing height slowly, so I bit my tongue and decided to go towards Oxford airport to find better lift. This was probably the worse move I made which could have cost me my five hours. As I got closer to Weston and Oxford, I was trying to find lift, but couldn't find anything. I kept trying to find thermals, but I was only making myself lose more height. Now down at 1,200ft, I decided to

make my way to Weston for a landing. I was going towards my high key area when I suddenly felt my right wing go up. I looked at my vario and it started to go up. I kept saying "Please, please go up" and eventually it went up to 3kts! "Thank god" I said. The thermal took me back up to 4,300ft. By the time I got my height back I was four hours in. Just one more hour to go.

Henry called me on the radio, saying that he found a 6kt thermal over Bicester and he was with Ollie as well. So, I made my way over to them. Once I got there, I managed to get myself into the core of the thermal and I was getting an average of 7kts up. I looked up and could see Henry and Ollie above me. We all got up to cloud base, which was 5,100ft and we stayed with this thermal until we finished. I was reaching four hours and forty minutes, so I decided to leave and head towards Weston for my final twenty minutes.

That twenty minutes took forever, probably because I had enough and really wanted to get down. My bottom and feet were numb and sore. But eventually I had a radio call from Oxford base. It was John Halon.

"Congratulations Harry, you have completed your silver duration"

I responded back saying thank you and if I should land back at the launch point or hanger. I got a response back for hanger landing and I immediately put the nose down to 55kts and pulled full airbrake. Having landed back at the hanger safely, I opened the canopy, got out of the glider and was greeted by Richard Hall with a "Well done Harry", I responded back with "Thank you Richard, but you owe me a beer!". We both laughed and took the glider back to the hanger.



Harry Reed-Waller, Ollie Ramsey and Henry Morris after their combined near 17 hours of flying that day



Harry Reed-Waller after landing at the hanger, five hours in the bag

Henry, Ollie and I completed our silver duration and Jamie went solo on that day. A big thank you to our CFI and duty pilot on that day, Neil, and the solo pilots for allowing us to take these gliders for the whole day to try to accomplish our five hours.

(Ed's note – Harry, Henry and Ollie have now completed their Silver Height and Durations so just the 50km to go)

Virtual Soaring in Lockdown – Condor

BY OLIVER RAMSAY

I recently joined Oxford Gliding Club over the initial lockdown period, after Windrushers Gliding Club was announced to be no longer flying for the foreseeable future after the lockdown. Like all of you, I had no way of flying in the real world, and after having 3 or 4 weeks at home bored, I saw a message go up on the Bicester Pilots Forum on Facebook, explaining of a virtual competition on a piece of software called Condor.

I decided to join in, and immediately got hooked, I had never experienced cross country flying, let alone the style of competition as well. Throughout the summer, I racked up over 100 hours in the virtual world and flew in many different sceneries around the world.



Starting grid in a virtual Condor competition.

Although not being the best pilot, and my cross-country skill not being the best, I enjoyed flying on Condor (and still do today) and felt like my general flying skills increased. I have learnt about new things such as McCready as well trying out different gliders, which according to the more experienced pilots who had flown these types in real life, were somewhat realistic.

I also think that condor can be used as a great learning tool for newer, and older, pilots. It is easy to load up, set up a quick flight, and begin to try things that are not always possible in real life such as soaring in wintertime. Over the period of time I have flown on Condor, I have tried to practice and improve my thermal technique, and when I returned to gliding in the late summer, I tested some of the things I had tried, and found it really made a benefit. I also tried flying in circumstances I would not like to fly in real life, such as flying at VNE and experiencing flutter multiple times.

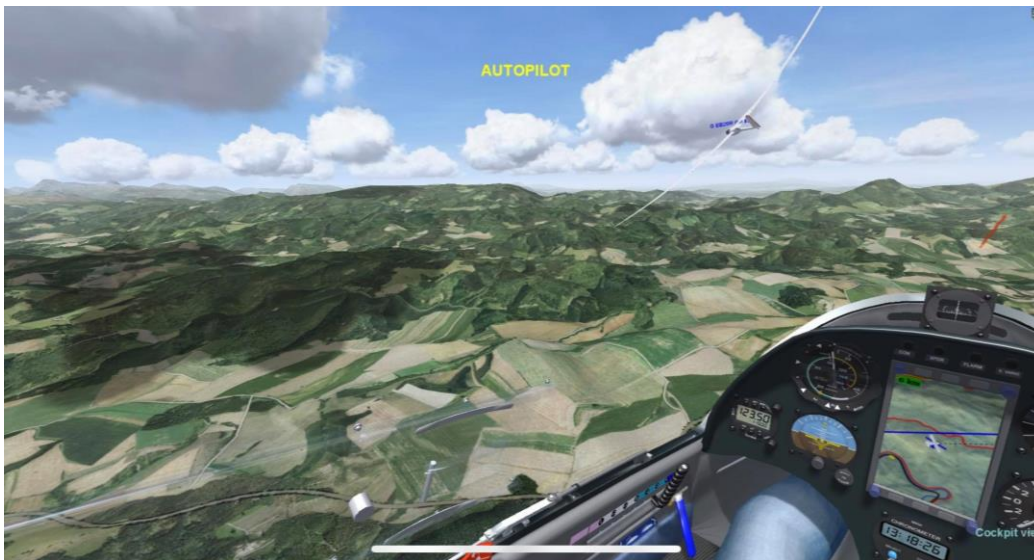
The 'Condor community' is also friendly. I joined a couple of Discord servers (groups where people can communicate and play with each other on a certain piece of software / game) and always have people to fly with, and quite often do weekly tasks as a big group. Everyone is happy and keen to share their knowledge, and there is always someone happy to fly with you.



Over Christmas, and into the new year, myself and a couple of other juniors will be hosting a small Condor 'competition' for a bit of fun, and I would like to invite anyone who wants to have a go to join in, regardless of skill and experience! If you're interested, pop me an email to ramsayoliver@sky.com and I'll send you over some instructions and details on how to join in!

Competition finish

Condor is a flight simulator playable on PC or Mac, which, so long you have at least the minimum system requirements, can be set up with any number of add-on such as flight stick, virtual reality headset or multiple screens.



Visit the website www.condorsoaring.com for details.

Thanks for reading and happy flying,

Oliver Ramsay (OGC Junior)

The Cross-Country Endorsement

BY HENRY MORRIS

The cross-country endorsement is probably (in my opinion) the thing that makes the biggest difference to a glider pilot's career. Sure, the bronze endorsement proves an element of your flying knowledge and skill, and most likely grants you access to some other aircraft – if I remember correctly, the Astirs back at Bicester were only available after you had done your bronze. But the cross-country endorsement allows to you fly distances away from home. Suddenly a whole plethora of places become accessible. You can fly hundreds of kilometres, albeit with a bit of practice, and race round tasks in competitions. It makes the biggest difference because it opens up so much to you. Finishing your silver, then on to the gold and diamond badges, the cross-country diploma, and so much more become available to you.



HK36 Super Dimona at Enstone, one of many local options for the navigation and field selection components.

The whole process took me about two months. The initial phase involves completing a one-hour and two-hour soaring flight separately. For someone who has relatively little soaring experience, these are good things to aim for. The one-hour is achievable on a not very good day, and the two-hour doesn't take much doing either – as long as you can reliably get a thermal centred, you should have no trouble getting both of these checked off. I did mine in CGO and HFW, in my first few weeks at the club – it's a much nicer soaring environment than Bicester.

The next, and probably most formidable part, is the navigation and field landing tests. A lot of glider pilots when they start out spend most of their time hugging the airfield, and maybe only daring to drift even a mile away when they're higher than 4000 feet. As such, navigation isn't something that everyone can do initially, and may require some training. Doing practice cross-country flights with a knowledgeable pilot in a two-seater will greatly help this – JSX has done various practice cross-countries to my knowledge this year, teaching valuable skills to people. I was lucky in that my father has a PPL, so we were able to spend several flights in the weeks leading up to the test doing practice navigation in a Slingsby Firefly. I did these parts of my endorsement at Enstone in their Super

Dimona with a lovely instructor named John, who took me through a navigation exercise to Towcester races, Southam cement works, and got me to navigate home without the aid of the GPS. Next came the field landing test, which involved picking a variety of fields and making approaches to them. This went pleasingly without a hitch, and most pilots shouldn't struggle, providing their circuit planning is up to scratch.

All in all, the cross-country endorsement is definitely something I'd encourage people to do. It's the next step up in terms of qualifications and opens up a whole other world of flying possibilities.

(ed's note – by October 2021, licencing of glider pilots is changing. Those who have their Bronze AND cross country endorsement should apply to the BGA for an Sailplane licence SPL, if you're solo but not got your XC endorsement then why not speak to the CFI to discuss)

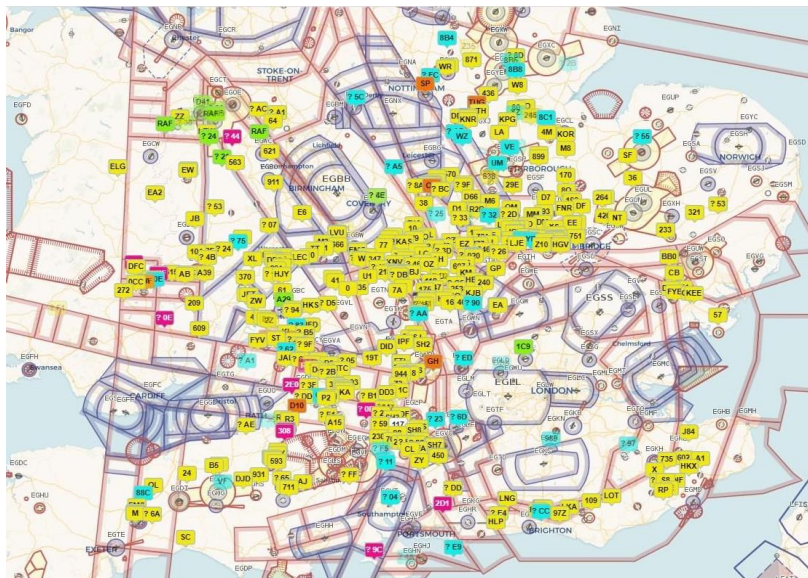
A Flight of two Halves

BY DAVE BRAY

Despite Covid-19 destroying the social side of gliding, the summer of 2020 had several exceptional soaring days and having brought a new glider over the winter before the chaos unfolded, I was lucky enough to fly on a number of them.

This is a write up of a flight on a midweek day with our neighbouring Banbury Gliding Club at Hinton in the Hedges. Although it was not fast or even my furthest flight, it was one I learnt a whole load from. I hope you find it enlightening.

So, the flight. I took off at 11:20, later than ideal but 15 minutes later with cloud base already at 4,000', I crossed the start line heading north. 50km later, the sky ahead was overcast with mid-layer cloud but occasional nicely formed cu under it, despite the lack of sun on the ground. Thermals still worked so I pressed on. 80km later I reach Lincoln. The climbs were noticeably weaker and as I make my turn south, the working height was now between 1,300' and 2,500'. For the next 50km, I'm chatting to the local RAF ATC units, hopping between airfields, land-able fields and thermal trigger points. Once south of Saltby airfield the climbs start to improve, back up to 4,000'. Three hours after starting, I'm near Corby, back into four-knot climbs and a 5,000' cloud base. The sky ahead is stunning, so I romp down the next 150km to turn Chilbolton, turning back towards Northampton. It's a romp back as far as Oxford before the lines of energy stop being quite so well signposted. A 4.9kt climb just before the last turnpoint, gets me onto glide and head home to finish. In the end, the 513km task took 6 hours 28 mins with an overall speed of 79.4kph. Was I happy? yes – to not be in a field in Lincolnshire, to have completed the task I set before taking off, and to have done a 500k in the new glider. And yet.... checking what other pilots in similar gliders had managed around the country showed 14 flights of over 750km. Below is therefore a look into my post flight analysis for my efforts to try to not make the same mistakes next time.



Improvement of any task of course comes with many different approaches. I tend to follow an approach which breaks it down into two categories. Big gains and small gains. One big gain might be very easy and gain you a lot, but on the other hand, if the big gain is difficult but lots of small gains can be made easily, put together those might add up to be worth more than a big gain without all the effort!

So what would my big gain have been? Clearly it was the task area. Looking at the image of gliders across England on the day you can see where the concentration of pilots was – south of Corby! If you look closely, you can see me in 436 between Nottingham and the Wash. So could I have avoided flying in the part of the sky which others had correctly identified as not good? I'm not sure. Flight

planning, with most of my cross-country flights begins long before I get to the airfield, days before in fact. Initially, I keep an eye on the “Potential Flight Distances” PFD from the three gliding weather models to highlight a good day then follow its development each time the computer refreshes the computations, usually twice a day, in the run up to deciding what task might be suitable.

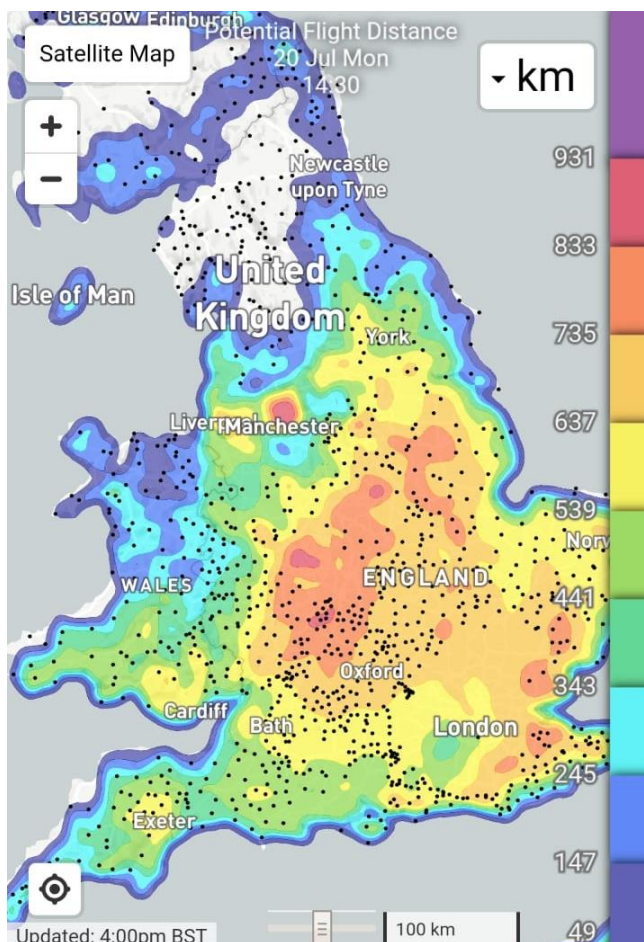
20th July was notable that of the three computer models there was a split decision, one saying good north/south, another saying east/west and the third good all over but slightly more centred around the middle of the country.

Did I look into this? Yes, but breaking down the weather revealed nothing of note. A few of the pundits at the airfield that day were advising against going north but without much reason why – they’d not seen all the forecasts so were going off a single model. Interestingly, the club tasks out of Dunstable that day all went north/south – there were gliders in fields and lots of chatter on the radio about abandoning their tasks. The lesson for me here is on days where the models don’t agree, pick a plan B which takes account of this. My tasks all ran north/south so instead of been able to retask whilst airborne to make the most of the amazing weather, I felt compelled to carry on the original task and have a very challenging 3 hours! A total contrast to the southern half of the flight which was fantastic!

The image is from the forecast a few days prior – note the large area of yellows and oranges stretching from the south coast to Yorkshire, unfortunately I don’t have the picture from the day which showed the deep orange having moved east hence why north / south seemed perfect from the middle of the country.

So what of the little gains? Could I have made less of a hash of the area under the mid-layer spreadout? Was I flying the right speeds between climbs? How about the good part of the day, could I have achieved more?

To answer these questions, I use the trace analysing software “SeeYou”, but I also need to know a number of other things about the glider and its polar curve. Polar curves are usually supplied by all manufacturers and are in the flight manual. If you don’t already, I’d recommend copying it, blowing it up as large as you can and keeping it to hand so you can reference it. If like me, you only have various data points then there are a couple of polar curve calculators which will help you produce something which you can use.



Armed with a polar curve you can produce some fairly accurate speed to fly data based around MacCready theory. (e.g. 1kt of average lift fly 52kts, 4kt average lift fly 83kts) By splitting my flight up into section and taking a very simplistic approach, I've found the following:

Section	Distance (km)	Number of climbs	Average climb strength (kts)	Average Cruise Speed (kts)	Theoretical Best Speed - at a weight of 425kg (kts)	Cross country speed (km/h)
1	53.4	6	3.6	72	85	94.1
2	81.5	11	2.8	63	74	58.2
3	78.1	16	1.6	66	63	54.1
4	158.4	11	4.1	73	93	102.7
5	65.9	3	3.9	63	92	100.7
6	26.2	2	3.1	66	83	98.7
7	30.5	3	4.3	66	94	72.2
8	25.2	0	-	79	-	147.6

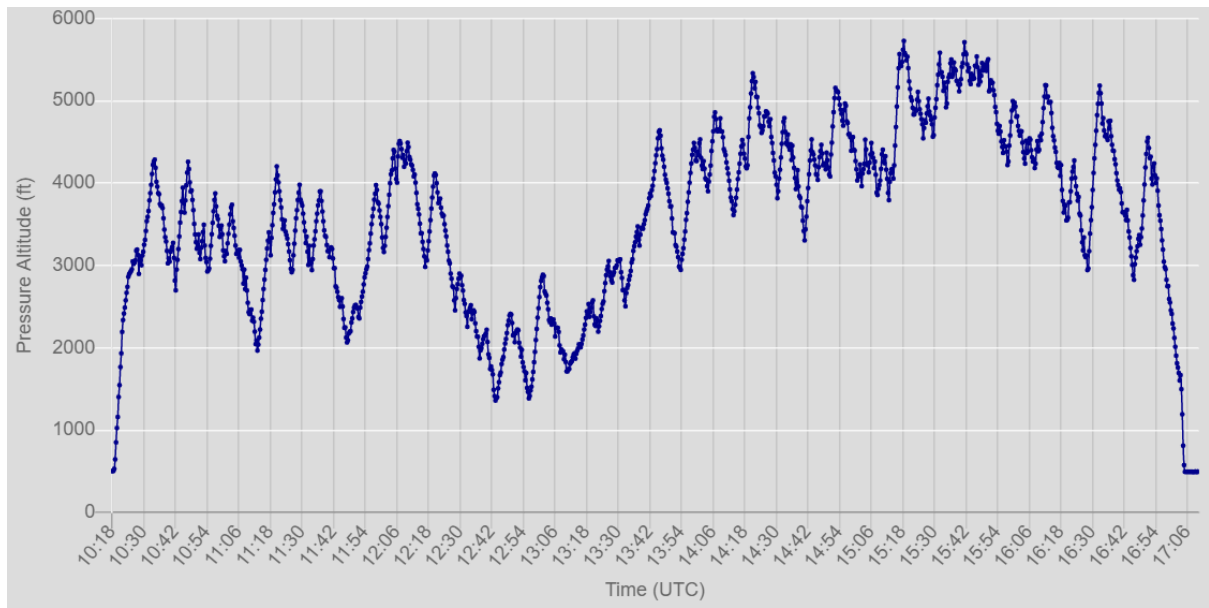
A table with a lot of numbers, but what does it mean? Well, interpretation is everything, but it seems to show that I'm not flying anywhere near the speeds I should be when the weather is good (sections 4-7), and that on section 3, when the day was anything but easy, I was pretty much doing everything possible to stay airborne.

So, what can I do with this data? Gliding, in my opinion, is all about practice and little steps, therefore knowing that I'm perhaps not making the most of the new glider's capabilities, I shall try to force myself to reach the target speed quicker. There are of course many further little gains, such as thermal centring, picking the route between climbs, and linking speed control to the air the glider is in but if I covered these in enough detail to do them justice I'd have sent many of you to sleep!

Roll on next summer, puffy Cu and warm skies. I'll be putting my task setting and speed to fly lessons learnt into practice!

(The flight was done in a Ventus 2bx, a 15m flapped glider)





Barograph trace from the flight on the 20th.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

That's all for 2020 folks, hope to see you all very soon back at the airfield in 2021.

