


GLIDE ANGLE

MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB · NEWSLETTER

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The days are getting longer, the snowdrops are out (more about them below), and it's still blowing a gale and freezing on top of the Mynd – Spring must be on its way! At least the time has come for the Spring edition of Glide Angle to land in your inbox, and it's a bumper issue, largely thanks to the great contributions I have received from our members. A big thank you to them all. This time of year is one that glider pilots look forward to, with regular flying once more becoming a possibility, and this newsletter does focus on that with a story of one epic competition flight, an

exciting initiative for relatively low hours pilots, and news regarding how we can continue the upturn in members' use of club gliders. However, the winter months have also seen some fantastic days at the Mynd, and this is a good time to recall them, so there is an account of the fun that was had during the Juniors visit, and your editor's reminiscence of one of these days which has the intention (perhaps?) of encouraging those who missed out to give it a go next winter. I mentioned that I had many quality contributions for this edition, so much so that I have had to hold some over until the

June publication, and they are corkers, just not as time critical as the ones included here. You will get to read them next time, along with all the wonderful submissions you are all planning (I hope). As always, feel free to get in touch if you have any comments on the publication or an idea for an article.

Rob Kronenburg

Editor

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CHAIRMAN'S BIT

by JON HALL

“Better communication has helped us to fly a lot more over these last winter months. Our launch rate and use of the club fleet is greatly increased from historical record over the last ten years”



I hope you all enjoyed the first edition of the new club newsletter, *Glide Angle*, as much as I did. Rob Kronenburg, our new editor, did a brilliant job generating content, and I trust you will continue to support his heroic efforts by sending in lots of new content for the next edition. A vibrant newsletter is one of the strands of a good communications policy that helps clubs like ours to flourish.

Talking of good communications, the WhatsApp groups, set up by our Membership Secretary and supported by Mark Sanders and others, have been a great success. The 'Chat' group enables us to share ideas, plan working groups, make gentle fun of other members, and moan about the weather. But the main group for knowing when we are going to fly is the 'Flying Info' group. The IFPs and BIs have another group to plan and share availability to do Experience Flights during the year, and to arrange swaps where necessary. When we have decided which days we will fly, Mark sets up a group just for that day so those booked in can keep up with any changes to the plans.

If you do not use WhatsApp, I would recommend you consider having it on your smartphone, as it is the quickest way to disseminate

information around our members. It has also proved to be a very effective way of supporting and encouraging our new and early solo pilots. It can seem a long and hard road to achievement at first and all encouragement is beneficial, just as unconsidered criticism can be damaging.

If you prefer not to use social media, we send out email messages regularly to members. Of course, if the information we hold is out of date, you probably won't see them. So please let me know if you change your email address or if you are not receiving club emails. And check your junk folders. Some email clients will put emails from a distribution service, like the one we use, straight into junk as they assume you will not want to see them. Just have a look and mark club emails as 'not junk'. That should do it.

Better communication has helped us to fly a lot more over the last couple of years, despite Covid, and especially these last few winter months. Our launch rate and use of the club fleet is greatly increased from historical records over the last ten years. This of course means we get more return from our assets as we are using them more, with more-or-less the same fixed costs. We are all aware that costs are going up steeply and we

all need to help keep them down and contribute more to the club; by paying our bills promptly, flying more often, volunteering for the many working groups now being formed, and doing work around the club that we do not have to pay outsiders to implement. But the one thing we can all help with is making sure we do not damage our assets, by thoughtless or careless actions, and by keeping them clean and polished. Our insurance costs on the fleet are a significant part of our overall costs, not helped by having a major claim roughly every two years. A couple of years without a claim would make a big difference.

The most important thing, however, is for all of us to have fun. That, after all, is what this game of ours is all about. The MGC has always been regarded fondly by the whole of the gliding movement, at home and abroad. It has a reputation for being friendly, helpful, accommodating, a great place to learn, and eat, and a fun place to fly. Just ask the Juniors. Finally, a reminder that the club AGM will take place in the clubhouse at 1700 hours on the 26th of March (see announcements below).

chairman@midlandgliding.club



CFI'S MUSINGS

by ROSEMARY JOHNSON

Juniors at the Mynd: snowflakes, snowdrops, or the future of gliding?

From the days before political correctness, some of you will remember the old television advertisement that had the punchline: "I like children, but I couldn't eat a whole one." Perhaps someone can even actually remember what it was advertising?

The ambivalent message that it sent out might be reflected in the responses I have had to our efforts in pursuing BGA Accreditation as a Junior Gliding Centre. Many of our members have been supportive and encouraging, but there have been some perplexed faces from others. Nonetheless, we are now able to announce that we have been successful in our efforts, an important step in our longer-term goal to encourage a new tranche of junior members. The junior national group who visited our club in the autumn demonstrated the enthusiastic energy and commitment of a group of youngsters who will hopefully go back to their own clubs and spread the messages that the Mynd is a great place to fly, and that they really enjoyed being here. You cannot

buy advertising like the great article in the February/March 2022 issue of *Sailplane and Gliding*.

In morning briefing, when the cloud was still on the ground, but the forecast looked good, I jokingly suggested that if they "all pulled their finger out" and got going as soon as the cloud cleared, we could get 100 launches in the day. Clearly, they liked the challenge. With the first launch, when there were still a few wisps of cloud at 500ft, and the last three launches after sunset, they managed 104 launches on a November day, with an average launch rate of one every four minutes. All this, despite a couple of retrieve winch breakdowns. The average flight time was probably around 30 mins on a blustery ridge, and they loved it! The evening was spent doing karaoke and playing 'met roulette' (yes, a new term to me as well) until two o'clock in the morning. I have to say I dreaded opening the bar room door the next morning, but they had cleared it all up before they went to bed!

This all reminded me that one of the things I love about our sport and, in particular the Mynd, is that we all sit around the big table and the conversation about gliding is shared between age groups in a way that is unlikely to apply in many other activities. If you need any other persuasion – try instructing! Much as I value our older trainees, it is also lovely (but infuriating in equal measure) to teach the youngsters who learn so quickly and easily. You will probably know the 'snowflake' analogy, but you may be puzzled when you hear the term 'snowdrop', however, the gardeners amongst you will know it as a delicate looking, but tough little thug, that brightens up a grey February day. So, make them welcome, remember they are young, remember they may be shy, nervous, and in need of encouragement. Remember (if you still can) that you were young once and remember that juniors are the future of our sport.

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AIRFIELD SAFETY

Airfield Operations in High Winds

by MIKE GREENWOOD

Some years ago, we had an incident at the Mynd on a day when there was a strong wind. Someone had left the motor glider out whilst it was still sitting on its tail dolly and wind pressure against the fin rotated the aircraft and its wing tip was damaged. The club paid to have it repaired, and the incident reinforced the idea that we must not leave it unattended whilst still resting on its tail dolly.

Move on a few years, time passed. Enough time to forget this lesson, and the same thing happened again. Again, we had a hefty bill... so we all remembered to take the tail dolly off for a while.

Move on a few more years, enough time to forget this lesson again, and one day I walked out of the hangar on a windy day to see the unattended motor glider, resting on its tail dolly, rotating gently around the main wheel with the wings level. There was a brand-new Range Rover parked next to the hangar, and the motor glider wing was heading straight for the windscreen... fortunately, I just managed to stop it in time. A very expensive accident was only just averted. See the pattern? If we are not very careful, we become

complacent over time, and then we damage our equipment through avoidable accidents. Then for a while we are careful, and then we get complacent....

It is important to remember these experiences, which help us understand such risks, and it is also important to act on them to change our behaviour. Recently, I have seen some lax practice on strong wind days, so its time again to spell out the risks. There are many newer members who may not have experienced many strong wind days before or understand why we do things the way we do, and for the older members who will know all this, it's still good to be reminded - see above!

With a body in it, a glider will fly at around 35 to 38 knots. Without its pilot, it's a lot lighter, and pointing into a 25-knot wind it can easily take off. Some time ago, the club lost a K8 in this way. It was being towed into a strong wind with the cockpit empty. The person on the tail pushed it down, the empty glider took off and rotated around the person holding the wing and ended up upside down and written off. That is why a pilot must never climb out of a glider that is pointing into wind on

a strong wind day. If you land a single seat glider you should just wait where it stops, sitting in it until someone comes to get you. Then, when the retrieve starts, you should stay in it until you have been towed back to the hangar or the launch point. If you need to change pilots, turn the glider 90° so it points across the wind, change pilots, then rotate it back into wind again. Never leave a glider pointing into wind unless there is at least one pilot in it

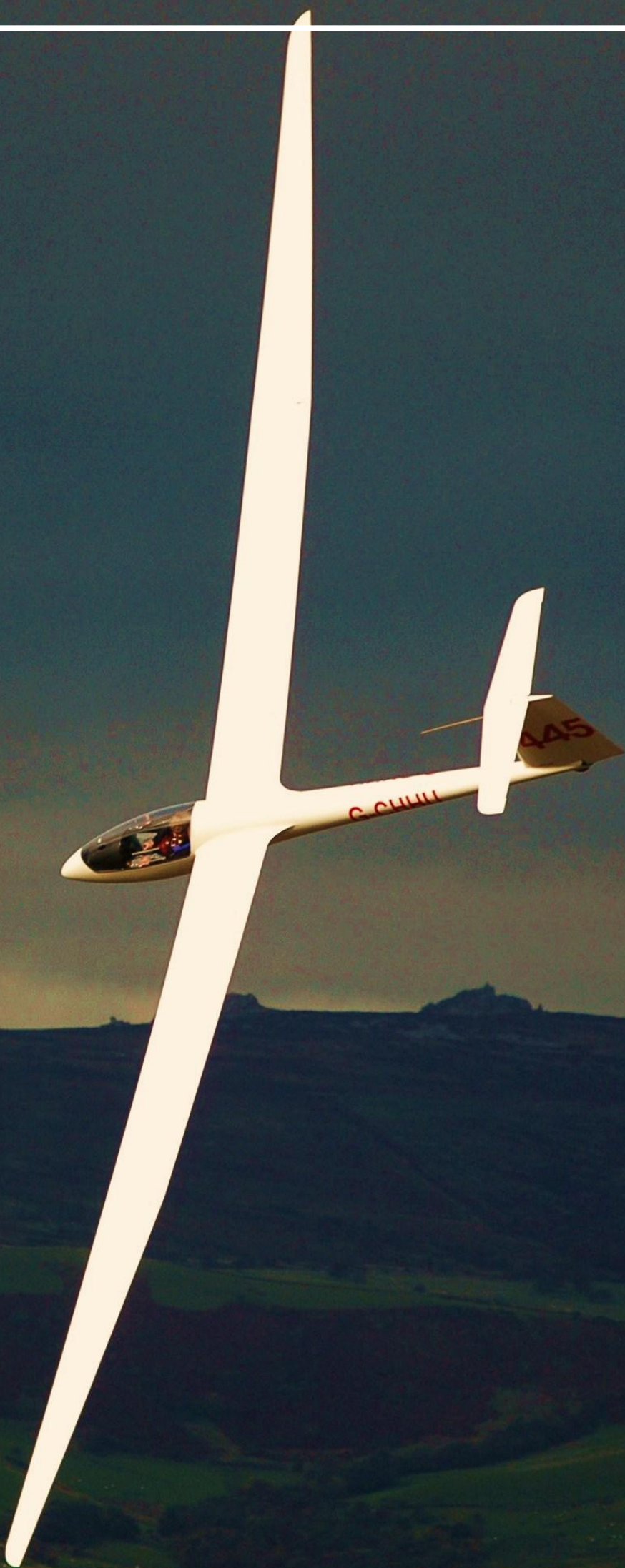
On a strong wind day, if you are towing downwind, gusts can catch the control surfaces and slam them against the stops, which is not at all good for them, so even towing downwind you need someone in the cockpit with their hands and feet on the controls to brace them. If you are the person sitting in the glider, it's easier to hold the controls against a stop rather than trying to keep them centralised. You should also be ready to apply the wheel brake, and you need to be strapped in as if you go over a bump you don't want to bang your head on the canopy. Even if you don't mind a severe headache, canopies are expensive!

If a canopy is closed, it should always be latched otherwise it can

blow open and damage the hinges or break the whole thing. It is necessary for a helper to hold the canopy while people are getting in or out of the glider as it is difficult to climb in and do your straps up while holding the canopy. To repeat - if a canopy is closed, whether or not there is someone sitting in the glider, latch it closed!

Safety is everyone's responsibility, so don't accept bad practice and don't cut corners. If you see anything you feel unhappy about, report it as soon as you can to the Number One of the day. You can also make a report on the incident form accessed via the club's website. Avoidable damage to the gliders and club equipment costs the club a lot of money that we can't really afford, and serious damage to gliders may raise our insurance premiums for years to come. It is important for the future of the club that we have a good safety culture. A good safety culture is about everyone being vigilant all the time to events that could cause an accident or an incident.

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ROSE'S ROCKHOPPERS

The Mynd Novice Cross-Country Ladder

by RUSS ATTWOOD

“Although the local practice of grabbing the most opportune thermal that presents itself or tracking up and down the ridge is useful at developing skills, it does not develop in the pilot a cross-country mind set”

For those of you that read *Sailplane and Gliding*, I will confess to the offence of plagiarism in advance... but only in moderation as this initiative is, at least, a local evolution of the idea outlined in the article 'Glider Pilot to Soaring Pilot' (December 2021, p.24). Towards the end of last year, I had a chat with our CFI about this article, and from that conversation, and with a lot more help from Rose, the idea came together. Rose was the brain really; I just did as I was told!

My own experience of training towards my glider pilot licence was that there is a strong emphasis on general flying and handling through the ab-initio stages of flying up to the Bronze level award. In addition, there is some theory on thermalling and ridge and wave flying, and there are a fair

number of opportunities to practice these techniques locally.

However, although the local practice of grabbing the most opportune thermal that presents itself or tracking up and down the ridge is useful at developing skills, it does not develop in the pilot a cross-country mind set.

Later, when you gain the cross-country endorsement, you embark on your first adventures away from home and this opens up a whole new world of flying that requires a different skill set. Staying aloft can be rewarding as well as fun, challenging and frustrating - usually all the above in the same flight.

However, it soon becomes clear that staying aloft for its own sake and staying aloft and

actually getting somewhere are quite different games! New skills are needed as well as the ability to apply them as the workload increases steeply. Any skills you can build in advance of these first lengthy cross-country flights will therefore free up some space in the mental bucket, the age-old adage of train hard and fight easy stands very true in this circumstance.

When the instructor finally sends you off for that long cross-country on a suitable day you will gain a new level of respect from your peers as you've just taken on the soaring game - this type of flying is for real and it's what gliding is all about.

With this aim in mind why not build your skill set in advance by stretching your wings on some local 'within gliding

range' flights prior to trying for your Bronze cross-country endorsement? This can help you to learn to read the sky, develop the ability to strategize your route whilst in the air, build a greater understanding of the performance of your glider, and practice your navigation using maps and electronic navigation aid in real time. All this will enable you to be a stronger, more confident pilot going forward. So, what are the characteristics of Rockhoppers?

- Its a novice ladder for early cross-country pilots who are post-solo and have yet to graduate beyond silver. It is therefore open to any individual who has not completed more than two 100km flights before 1st March in the current year. Tasks are handicapped and ranked by **distance only** to ensure the focus is on safety rather than speed. No declaration is required (except for the simulator task below) and your top five flights count.
- Until you have completed your cross-country endorsement, all flights must be **within final glide** range of the airfield and briefed in advance by an instructor. You are reminded that even with your Bronze cross-country endorsement, until you achieve your silver badge, you still need an instructor briefing before you can go cross-country. If using a club glider, you must make sure it is available for the duration of your proposed flight.
- One of your flights can be with an instructor in a two-seater but the only part of that flight that will count will be the longest continuous section where the P2 pilot is in control of the glider (i.e., without the instructor's advice or control input).
- Any flights of over 17 km distance count, provided they include at least one BGA turn point (not including the Mynd). Each flight can only have a maximum of four BGA turn points and one leg must be at least 8km long.
- One specific declared simulator task is allowed: Mynd MYN to Seighford Hanger SE2 Distance 57km (Silver Distance). Note that for this flight **ONLY** speed will help your ranking. It must be undertaken with the aircraft type and set of weather conditions listed below.
- Current standings will be displayed on a leader board in the clubhouse together with the task cards for some suggested tasks. As and when you score one of these tasks, **PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE**, make sure you add it to the club's BGA national ladder page as it's a great showcase for the club. Mark Sanders is the club's ladder steward, and he would be most grateful if these scores appear on the ladder by magic (i.e., you do it) rather than him having chase you. It is free to register, and it takes about ten minutes. Later flights can be added in just a few minutes.
- There will be a free piece of cake for the first 5 flights recorded on the ladder, and prizes and trophies for the annual winners. In addition, we should hopefully be able to boost the club bar takings with a rise in the number of potential

silver distances achieved by the end of the year

Here comes the critical **SAFETY** part. Some of the more advanced tasks will result in additional pilot responsibilities regarding **NOTAMS, AIRSPACE, WEATHER, and POTENTIAL LANDOUTS**. As pilot in command, they are YOUR responsibility. If in doubt ask, and of course make sure you have the required instructor briefing.

Some suggested tasks, although any task with the criteria outlined above will count.

- Mynd MYN - Bishops Castle BCS - Mynd MYN Distance 17km
- Mynd MYN - Bishops Castle BCS - Corndon CNN - Mynd MYN Distance 28km
- Mynd MYN - Mynd South MY2 - Corndon CNN - Mynd MYN Distance 35km
- Mynd MYN - Montgomery MON - Mynd MYN Distance 37km
- Mynd MYN - Welshpool Northeast WNE - Mynd MYN Distance 46km
- Mynd MYN - Seighford Hanger SE2 - Distance 57km (Silver Distance)
- Mynd MYN - Leominster N. West LMW - Shrewsbury N. West SHW - Mynd 100km

Declared simulator task. Mynd MYN - Seighford Hanger SE2 Distance 57km (Silver Distance). To be flown in the K21 at standard C.G. and wing loading, zero wind, strong thermals and turbulence, winch launch timed brakes to brakes. Best time counts.

Top tip: The Simulator is great for practicing the cross-country tasks and you can set these on the moving map. However, the simulator is obviously not like the real world - don't allow the simulator to develop bad habits that you carry through into actual flying. For example: make sure you still keep a good lookout scan going, plan ahead for potential field landings, have a plan B if the cloud you are heading for doesn't work, etc.

2021 has been a great year for recruiting a new brood into the club, I can think of at least 20 people from the new cohort that will qualify for this new initiative, and hopefully quite a few established club members will get involved too. If it develops well there is an option to run a local task week alongside the main club task week in August. Those who shine might also be able to take part in the interclub 'Rockpolishers' competition as well.

Finally, I was tasked by Rose to find a suitable way to sign off the article to signify our joint involvement. I started with 'By Rose Johnson. (With a little bit of input from Russ).' Apparently, this dilutes my culpability for any issues arising, so it is officially... a joint effort.

Russ Attwood



ADVERSE YAW

by NEAL CLEMENTS

In this column members describe ideas about how things are run at the club; about the systems we have in place that enable a large group of disparate individuals to work together in relative harmony to get us in the air. This time Neal Clements explains the role of the new MGC Project Office and how it can help the club and its members.

With any organisation evolution is a necessary process to keep up with the times. The Midland Gliding Club is very different now to when it was officially founded in 1934 even though the key underlying ethos stands firm. Many members are enthusiastic and keen to help develop specific areas within the club and their enthusiasm needs to be supported. Areas for improvement or development will be constantly evolving in line with the club's needs and managing change is an entire discipline within itself. To smooth this process, foster and develop ideas, and then deliver them effectively and efficiently a project office has been formed.

What exactly is the MGC project office? Simply put, it's the first

“What exactly is the MGC project office? Simply put, it's the first point of contact to help you develop an idea ... covering all types of projects and changes.”

point of contact to help you develop an idea consisting of a group of people who have practical experience in project management covering all types of projects and changes. The club is formally run by the club's executive committee which, together with some key team leaders, steers and manages the club on a day-to-day basis in line with agreed policies. Putting you in touch with the right people initially will ensure that the idea is explored and developed effectively to the stage whereby it can be put to the committee and discussed with all the required information to hand. If it's a complex idea, then in order to minimise undue work the committee can look at an idea in principle and give guidelines as to any further research that would be required. Ideas are rarely rejected, very often they are adopted or due

to time and financial constraints the idea may be scheduled for a future date.

Why do we need it? A project can be defined as any change that the club both needs and will benefit from. Identifying and prioritising a long list can be difficult. Very often people have similar ideas or may identify things which have been considered previously which can result in a duplication of the initial research. Through effective management the Project Office helps the club to maintain its perspective regarding this process. Improvements do need to happen, and they need to succeed. A failed change is expensive and prioritising changes within the club's strategy is the way of getting the most out of the limited resources available to the club.

After an idea is approved the



Project Office supports the implementation of the proposal in a cost effective and time efficient way. By supervising the delivery of the idea, we can utilise the huge array of skills, resources, and contacts from within the club to ensure the most efficient 'on time and value for money' outcome. As an added benefit the project office is a single repository where all the information relating to a project or idea is held while it is under

development and implementation. Information and documentation are then archived to ensure its retained if required later. In the past, information about club activities and projects has been stored on members' own computers and inevitably things get lost over time. Keeping all the information centrally has vast benefits should the project need to be re-visited in the future.

Finally, who are we and how can you help? I head up Project Office together with Martin Howitt, Laura Martin, and Russ Attwood. Come and find us at the club to chat through your ideas or drop us a line through WhatsApp. If you would like to help us manage some projects then please don't hesitate to volunteer, we use lightweight methods that really achieve results.

Neal Clements



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Member's Weekday Flying:

This year we will be trialling additional opportunities for members without their own gliders to do some 'club flying' during the week. Every Friday during April there will be a two-seater and instructor available for 'check flights', to enable pilots wanting to fly at the weekends to come early and get checked out. Hopefully this will ease the pressure on instructional flights at the weekend and maximise club single seater flying as people will be ready to fly on a Saturday morning. In addition, one of the single seaters will be nominally available for club members that are not on the course to fly at club rates, all week. The other two single seaters will have priority for the course members and obviously course members can still have the third single seater if there is no-one else flying it. If the Friday check flight system proves successful, we will continue it throughout the season, so please make use of the opportunity.

Chief Flying Instructor

AGM and Committee Nominations

The MGC annual general meeting will be held at the club at 1700 hours on Saturday 26th March. The AGM is the time when a new committee is elected by the members to run the club on their behalf. Nominations must be in the club office no later than three hours before the scheduled start of the AGM, i.e., by 1400 hours on 26th March. Such nominations must be on a form which can be downloaded from the club website. Nominations must have the nominee's consent. Persons making and seconding a nomination must be full members of the club.

Chairman

Upcoming Lectures and Courses

MGC 19th March: Pilot Owners and Club Maintainers

Course: A reminder that we are hosting a course presented by Gordon Macdonald, BGA Chief Technical Officer, assisted by Iain Evans of Shirenewton Sailplanes, on 19th March at the club. This course is for club members only. Please let me know if you plan to attend (but only if you have not done so already) by sending an e-mail. Equally please also let me know if you cannot now attend but have previously emailed me to say you will.

Chairman

FLY PAST

This regular column invites members to tell a story about a significant flight from their career aloft. It could be a first or a last, a longest or a shortest, or one they will just never forget for the excitement or (anxiety!) it caused. Here is Julian Fack with his tail of 'The One That Got Away'

The Hus Bos Regionals is a big deal, about 60 gliders in two classes, launched by up to nine tugs, with many very talented glider pilots, including a World Champion on occasions, (although not this time), so a day win there is a real feather in anyone's cap. I had been competing in BGA rated competitions for about 12 years by 2011, but mostly in smaller events, and I had never won a day. Hus Bos seems to be located in a very advantageous weather location, so of the nine possible days in any rated comp (Saturday to the following Sunday) they often managed to task on seven or eight, and one time they managed a full house nine. Other venues sometimes only ran two days, so the attraction was obvious, besides that I fancied testing myself against the big boys.

In July 2011 the MGC offered the club's DG 505 with John Stuart as P1 for aspiring cross-country pilots to experience a proper comp. A few days in John was not well, so rather than abandon the idea Liz Sparrow, UK Women's Team Captain, who was around to help with retrieves, was nominated to fly the DG with the late John Parry, our Task Week supremo, as P2. For those not familiar with comps, all the hard work is done by the organisers, setting a task that most people can get round, forecasting the weather, the NOTAMS, airspace warnings, the start time, the order on the grid, the

launch, and so on, so all the competitor has to do is dial it into the moving map and fly it! A 318k task was set, a more-or-less equilateral triangle 83k North to Tuxford Power Station, West of Lincoln (since demolished), then a leg 140k Southeast to Six Mile Bottom, East of Cambridge, and a final leg 96k West back home to HUS, and the forecast was pretty good. We were near the front of the grid, so we took off close to midday and had to wait a while for the start line to open. I was excited to see how well Liz would go in a similarly handicapped machine to my Duo, and as it happened, I heard her announce a start just a few minutes after mine at 12.44. I said to John Randall, my P2, "I wonder how long it will take her to catch up?"



We had a decent 50k run to Saltby, South of Grantham, but got down to 2000ft near there and had to scrabble around for what seemed an age, but in fact only took eight minutes to get back up to cloud base. We got going again to the TP, and wondered if Liz had gone past, but saw no sign of her. The second leg was a bit of a romp, 140K

in 70 minutes (for 120 kph, with a 12 kt tailwind) and we again saw no sign of Liz, and then we took the last TP, East of Cambridge. Cloud base was quite high at 5,300ft so it was not far down the 100k final leg that we were seeing the possibility of a final glide back home.

The old Cambridge 302/303 is superb at final glides, being very clever at working out the winds, but I was pretty nervous and not wanting to get it wrong, so I played it carefully, leaving a good margin. In spite of watching and listening we had not seen Liz come past, and it looked like we might have done OK. Near Rushden, close to Wellingborough, just 33k from home we were 4,500ft above airfield elevation, 26:1 required to make it home, which should be a doddle in a Duo. I usually reckon 10k per 1000 (33:1) as a rough check, so it looked easy. The clouds were getting fewer, and lift seemed to be at a premium, so I flew slowly, watching the Cambridge like a hawk. Sadly, as we got nearer, we were rapidly losing on the glide, but I felt sure we would find a weak thermal somewhere. This was not to be and West of Kettering, with just 20k to go we were too marginal, given the tiger country close in just East of Hus Bos. John and I discussed it and decided it was too risky, so we reluctantly fired up the iron thermal (see track in red on the map) when we got down to 1000ft over the ground. We therefore lost all speed points for the day, settling for distance points only, but we still had no idea how we had done.

In competitions the day winner scores 1000 points, unless there are some special reasons, for instance the



winning time is under two hours, so the next morning at briefing Liz, who was flying Hors Concours and was not therefore eligible to score



points, was announced as the 'guest' winner and was given more than 1000 points (I think it was something like 1005) as a gesture, since she had been so far ahead of the rest of the field, around ten minutes ahead. As usual the club published all the log traces, and I was able to run her trace against mine on SeeYou just to see what happened out of interest. It turned out the reason we had not seen her was we were ahead throughout, right up to our engine start point. Not just ahead but ten minutes ahead

of her, twenty minutes ahead of the rest. We had failed to finish by less than 1000 feet, six turns in a thermal would probably have done it easily, taking say three minutes, if only we had found one. We could have won by a huge margin, but that's the story of one (of many), that got away!

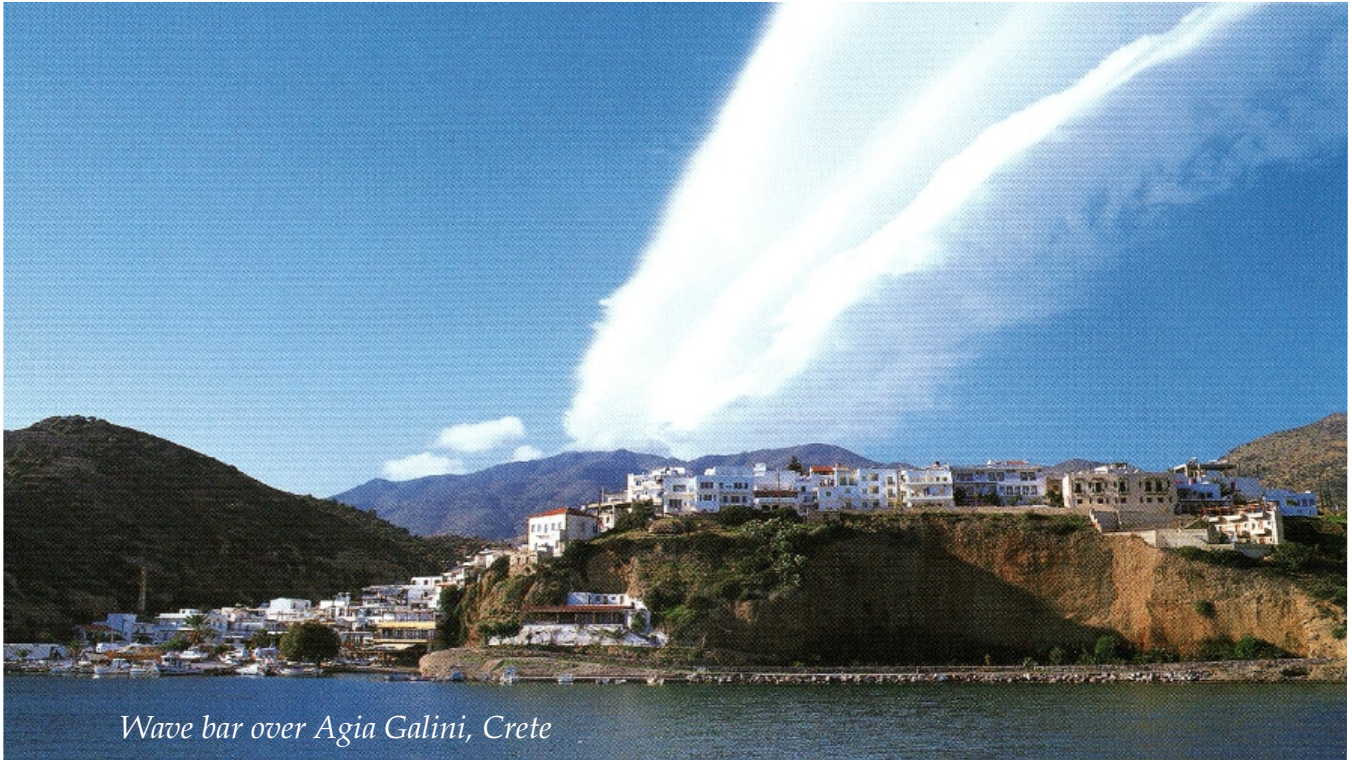
I spoke to Liz asking how she had got on with the final glide and she told me that "everyone knows you don't take the Southerly route coming from the East, as you hit a sink hole with the Northwest wind direction on that day, the locals call it the Hus Bos Black Hole".

She took the Northerly track and still hit sink but not enough to be a problem, apparently. I still trust the Cambridge but since then I set a Macready of 3 or even more for final glides, something I did not do that day, and in future I will take the Northerly route. Live and learn!

Julian Fack.

MY GLIDING INSPIRATION

*This regular column asks members to contribute a short piece on something that has inspired them in their gliding career. Chris Ellis had just a moment whilst on holiday in Crete in 2003. A picture he saw there showed the ancient fable of Daedalus and Icarus, in which the elder was briefing the younger prior to his first solo. Another one alongside showed the well-recorded result of in-flight failure due to heat build-up. The following tale, 'Icarus - The Truth', though previously published in *Sailplane and Gliding* is well worth revisiting here for its salutary lesson – not the one you may think!*



Wave bar over Agia Galini, Crete

History, so it is said
Was writ by folks a long time dead
Relating all the great events
I'm sure with all the best intents
Though most of them I would declare,
Were never actually there.
And with the slow elapse of time
Came subtle changes, quite sublime
To make the story understood
By simple souls for common good
Therefore, some moral tales are told
In myth and legends very old
To keep us on, in many ways,
The straight and narrow all our days.

One fable full of advice sound
To keep our feet firm on the ground
And shoot down dreams, however slight
Of dabbling in wild thoughts of flight
Recounts the tale of dad and son
From Cretan town, Heraklion.
It says the father, Daedalus,
believed that without too much fuss
Wings could be made from things to hand

To sail the skies above the land
And join the birds in joyful play
The goal of man for many a day.
Icarus, a son with guts,
Did not think dad completely nuts.
Together, working as a team
They fashioned wings towards their dream.
Made from feathers bound by wax
The Minoans passed this off as fact.

The wings had just sufficient span
To bear aloft a smallish man
And Icarus - being young and slight
Said "I will make the testing flight".
With wings strapped tight upon each arm
Took off in early morning calm.
As he bravely flapped away
The sun came up to warm the day
And rising higher with each beat,
he soon began to feel the heat.
Soon emotions high with great elation
Were dashed, by wing disintegration.
Feathers came out one by one
Loosened by the blazing sun.



So, Icarus, a son so brave
Ended up in a watery grave.

The moral of this tale of old
Is don't believe a word you're told.
The people of this ancient time
Had brains as good as yours and mine
And when it came to means of flight
Could surely make things turn out right.
As Daedalus sat deep in thought
Atop the cliffs around the port
He noted how the wind did blow
The sailing vessels down below
And how the gannets soared with ease
Above him on the evening breeze
Then came the Idea monumental:
Use those sails - but horizontal.

He and Icarus with a will
And using every bit of skill
Set out to build a kite-like wing
With bamboo poles and cloth and string.
And when at last the task was done
Dad just said "Go and fly my son"
With an air of expectation
They removed their new creation

Halfway up the nearby slope.
Icarus, suffused with hope
Faced towards prevailing zephyrs
Stepped out and rose without effort
Coursing out along the hill
The northerly propelled him still
Higher as he soared the face
Amazed and joyful at the grace
With which he soared the mountains high
up into the evening sky.

Sadly, he did not understand
The wave set up by lumpy land
As gentle lift conveyed him higher
The joy of flight, his great desire,
Along with lack of oxygen
At altitudes where air is thin
Caused him to quietly fall asleep
Rather than plummet to the deep.
Now for all that we may know,
Above those mountains capped in snow
The first to taste the greatest thrill
Is floating, frozen, up there, still.

Chris Ellis



WINTER FLYING

by ROB KRONENBURG

“I decide to risk the Burway anyway and it pays off – half an hour later I'm rolling along in full daylight, crisp white bracken, and grass on either side but a road that's clear except for the odd icy layer on top of the standing pools of water”

I set the alarm clock for 6.30 but I'm awake before it goes off. Get dressed (quietly) and go downstairs, clicking the light on in the kitchen. The dog looks at me balefully from the couch as I pass through to make a coffee for the road. Then I pick up the bag I packed last night and open the front door. The stars are bright in the pre-dawn sky but there's no ice on the windscreen or the road where I live, but who knows what it will be like on the Mynd? I get in the car and start it up, turning the heater to full.

The roads are quiet near home but as I turn onto the motorway it suddenly seems much busier. Half the traffic seems to be large trucks as I weave to the outside and take advantage of the passing lane

whilst I have it. They will soon be slowing me down when I reach the A roads leading to Shropshire. It's a drag this part of the journey, all head lights and roundabouts, but as I hit the ring road around Shrewsbury, I detect some light in the sky and I try to deduce if the weather forecast has been accurate. Now there is a decision to be made; Church Stretton or Ratlinghope? The forecast was 2°C but I know from experience it could still be well below freezing on the top with ice making the single-track ascent impassable.

I decide to risk the Burway anyway and it pays off – half an hour later I'm rolling along in full daylight, crisp white bracken, and grass on either side but a road that's clear except for the odd icy

layer on top of the standing pools of water. My spirits lift further when I come over the rise and gain my first view of the south end of the field. I can see it! Although there's a lot of cloud around there is no hill mist! When I pull up outside the club house, I check my phone and there's a text from the Number One: 'Hangar doors at nine as planned'. I get myself inside for a quick cup of tea and then I'm battling the zips on my Ozee, pulling on gloves, and heading outside with the other early arrivals, preparing to manhandle the gliders out of the hangar.

“We'll start from the knoll, but the wind is forecast to freshen so we might go around to a 'Short West' later” is the instruction: “Looks like a good day”. After an hour pushing the aircraft into place and helping to set up the retrieve winch, I've warmed up a bit and we are preparing for the first launch. That cloud is still there, and its base is low, but hopefully not too low. Everyone watches as the instructor takes the K13 up... and it's a full launch. He doesn't land for twenty minutes and as

predicted the ridge is working too. The second K13 is up by now and we push the K23 online. To the South I can see a bit of activity around the trailers – some private gliders will be out to the launch point soon. I'm running around fetching the cable and anything else that needs doing, not just to be helpful but to keep warm – that freezing Westerly is definitely freshening.

About lunchtime the clouds thicken, and some rain showers come through, turning to sleet sometimes. Most of the gliders land. But the wind is still good, and the decision is made to move the main winch. It doesn't take long and soon we are ready to go again with the worst of the rain behind us. At last, I'm sitting in the glider and waiting for the cable. There are still occasional showers, and the No.1 asks: "Happy with the conditions?" It's a good question for a low hours pilot like me, however, I've been flying all winter in weather like this, and I've had good training on how to be aware of the challenges and make safe decisions, so I reply: "I am, I can always land again." Then the launch procedure comes together quickly. Checks done I sit and wait in that moment of anticipation for the cable to tighten... and when it does the glider hurtles forward and upwards. A few seconds later there is the clunk of a detached cable and I'm turning left over the ridge. By the time I'm over the knoll I've already gained 400', and when I get to 1000' I reckon the cloud is not far above me and I turn around to head North still gaining height, but into a clearer part of the sky. Abreast of Pole Cottage everything overhead is blue though towards Wales there are lots more clouds of all different shades of white and grey. I can see exactly where the falls of rain are and have a good idea which parts of the sky are going to be clear for me to fly in, pushing out towards Wentnor or Bishop's Castle before retreating back to the ridge. When the sun finds a gap, it illuminates the Shropshire Hills a dusky orange,

and the fields in the valley are as many shades of green you can imagine.

I fly back and forth, with plenty of company as at least half a dozen gliders are now sharing the airspace to the West of the Mynd. After an hour I reluctantly decide to land, with the slight consolation of lunch in view. Besides, I might get another go before we finish for the day. I set up my circuit, WULF checks, set my speed, a well-banked turn close into the field because of the wind and I'm down, sitting tight until someone comes to pull the glider back to the launch point. And I do get to fly again, a short but equally enjoyable flight not long before we pack up. There are plenty of pilots around by then to share the pushing and shoving of gliders, weaving them into the puzzle that is hangar packing. At the last minute I remember to grab the log and transfer my flight details to my book – that first flight was 68 minutes – great! But I could have stayed up all day – in fact someone did, another pilot lasted over five hours getting his silver duration flight.

Ozee off, comfy shoes on and the car heater is on full again as I rattle over the cattle grid and head north as night descends towards Church Stretton, and in two hours or so depending on traffic, home. I'm on the ground but I'm still feeling high, that feeling will stay with me all the way home and into the rest of the week. And I know I will be itchy again by Tuesday, scanning the weather forecasts for the following weekend – will it be flyable?

Rob Kronenburg





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